



Title: *“Sea Lion Pup Trio”*

Description: New Zealand sea lions, Papanui Inlet, Otago Peninsula

Photographer: Paul Sorrell

Where, when: Otago Peninsula, May 2006

Sustainability? Since the 1980s, a small colony of New Zealand sea lions has been living on the Otago Peninsula, around 650 kilometres from the species' stronghold in the subantarctic Auckland Islands. They started to breed here in 1993, and every year around Christmastime a few pups are born into the colony. Each mother gives birth to a single pup, and feeds and protects it for its first year of life.

When they are a few months old, the pups are left to fend for themselves while their mothers are away hunting for fish out at sea, returning every few days to feed their young on a nutritious formula five times richer than cow's milk. Far from feeling bereft as a result of their mums' apparent abandonment of them, the pups – banded together in creches – relish the opportunity to frolic and let off steam.

Finding a pool left by the receding tide, at the the edge of Papanui Inlet, these pups – three of a group of six – seemed to have boundless energy. Fascinated, I watched them chasing, tumbling, diving and play-fighting for hour after hour, all at top speed.

The Otago colony is slowly expanding, despite departing from the breeding ecology found on the Auckland Islands, where dominant males must fight to retain a harem of females. All pups born here are descended from a single female known as “Mum.” The main threats they face are impacts from fisheries and disease, resulting in high pup mortality levels in their subantarctic base.

Photo notes: Camera: Canon EOS 20D. Lens: EF75-300mm f/4-5.6L USM. Settings: 300mm f/9 1/500 sec ISO 400.

Digital specs: 3504 × 2336 pixels (24.6 MB).

Key words: Sea mammals, pinniped, sea lion, rāpoka, whakahao, *Phocarctos hookeri*, Otago Peninsula, marine ecology, environmental threats, biodiversity, Paul Sorrell, Aotearoa, New Zealand, sustainability

Price: \$200 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image.

Visit www.ecosystemsphotography/sales for details & to order, and to get a quote if you want a high-quality print.

Donation: The price includes a \$100 donation to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice, or otherwise for the *The New Zealand Sea Lion Trust*.

I recommend that the donation goes to the *The New Zealand Sea Lion Trust*. Founded in 2003, the Trust provides protection for and education about this critically endangered marine mammal species. The Trust work with the Department of Conservation, identifying and monitoring the local breeding population around the Otago and Southland coasts. The Trust offers education programmes to schools and community groups as well as supporting scientific research.

Image Ref: PS#006 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence).

Paul Sorrell (paulsorrell.co.nz)
9 March 2022