



Title: “Here comes the sun”

Description: Dawn alpenglow on Mount Elie de Beaumont, Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park

Photographer: Rod Hay

Where, when: Mount Elie de Beaumont, December 2013

Sustainability? The high peaks of Ka Tiritiri-o-te-Moana (the Southern Alps) are amongst the first places on Earth to feel the sun’s rays each morning. Caroline Hut on the Ball Pass route in Aoraki / Mt Cook National Park is a great place to hang out and watch the dawn light show. Although a public shelter is attached, it is the only private alpine hut in the park, and there are calls from NZ Alpine Club (NZAC) and Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) for it to become public when its concession is reviewed. But the builders and owners of the hut, Alpine Recreation, have provided guided alpine experience to many folk over the years. For a lot of them such opportunities would otherwise be limited, and there is also strong support for the concession to be renewed.

National Park planning and management is often a delicate balancing act between the interests of nature, landscape, recreation, tourism, commerce and culture. The Principles of the National Parks Act 1980 are for Parks to be maintained in natural state, and public to have right of entry; and Indigenous plants and animals to be preserved. The Act provides for the recreation facilities which many of us enjoy, and for commercial concessions such as the guiding and accommodation provided by Alpine Recreation. Indeed, without the availability of professional guides, many parts of Aoraki / Mt Cook would be inaccessible to other than experienced mountaineers.

The concept of National Parks Aotearoa New Zealand has its roots in North America, where areas of outstanding natural beauty such as Yellowstone and Yosemite were set aside to the exclusion of the original First Nations inhabitants. Something similar happened here, though our first National Park, Tongariro, was gifted to the Crown by Te Heuheu Tūkino IV, paramount chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa in 1887. The cultural significance of this gift is reflected in the status of Tongariro as one of Aotearoa New Zealand's three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and the only one inscribed as such because of both its cultural and natural attributes.

Our National Parks have featured in some of the Treaty of Waitangi settlements with iwi. In the case of Te Urewera, the settlement with Tūhoe recognises the area as tribal heartland and in 2014 it was disestablished as a National Park, and is protected and managed under a special agreement between the Crown and the Tūhoe iwi. The Treaty Settlement with Ngāi Tahu led to the return of Mt Cook National Park to the iwi, who then gifted it back to the people of New Zealand, with the restoration of the significant Māori place names including the dual names of Aoraki / Mount Cook for both the mountain and the park.

Some features such as the 3109m Mt Elie de Beaumont, pictured here bathed in dawn light, don't appear to have had Māori names recorded or restored. It is named after a French geologist who, although prominent in his discipline, apparently never visited this country.

Photo notes: 1/250s, 275mm, f7, ISO 250, Olympus M75-300 F4.8-6.7 II on an Olympus OM-D E-M5

We only got to spend two nights in Caroline Hut on the Ball Pass Route, and the next morning would be wet, so it was worth getting up early to catch the alpenglow on the high peaks as the sun came up. While Aoraki and the other mountains were spectacular, I was also attracted by the distant form of Elie de Beaumont rising above Mounts Walter and Green at the head of Haupapa (the Tasman Glacier). Somehow, with the great Olympus OM-D stabilisation, I was able to handhold a 550mm equivalent lens to get a sharp shot.

Digital specs: 4608 x 3456 pixels (15.9 MP)

Key words: Dawn, Alpenglow, Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park, Mount Elie de Beaumont, National Parks, Landscape, Rod Hay, Ecosystems Photography, Sustainability, Conservation

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Rod Hay

8 February 2021