

COMPASSIONATE NATURE



BY IMAGEN8

ISSUE 14 | PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2023

WELCOME



Hello, Kia ora, and Namaste,

Welcome to the 14th issue of our magazine, our first one available both digitally and in print. This year is coming to a close, and it has been a very enjoyable one seeing all the amazing work created by our students! We are very excited to welcome Ana Lyubich as the editor for this magazine, and look forward to sharing the students' images and words with you.

Wish you all a happy summer (if you are in the southern hemisphere) and a relaxing holiday season.

Keep well,
Tushar Sharma



Kia ora,

I'm absolutely thrilled to join you as the editor for this 14th issue of our magazine. It's an honour to be part of a publication that inspires young learners. The photographs and stories we are sharing in this issue from the young talents will leave you awestruck.

Can't wait for you to dive into this issue. I hope it brings you as much joy and inspiration as it has brought me.

Stay inspired,
Ana Lyubich

When I have a camera in my hand, I have no fear.

Alfred Eisenstaedt

**Compassionate Nature
Issue 14 | October 2023**

Publisher
[IMAgEN8](https://www.imagen8.co.nz)
imagen8.co.nz

Editor
[Excio](https://www.excio.co.nz)

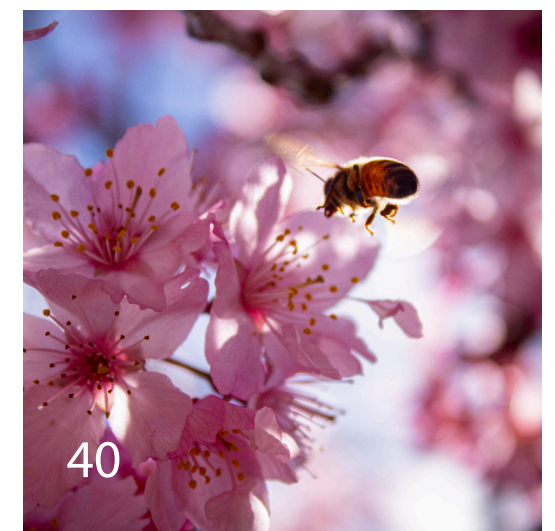
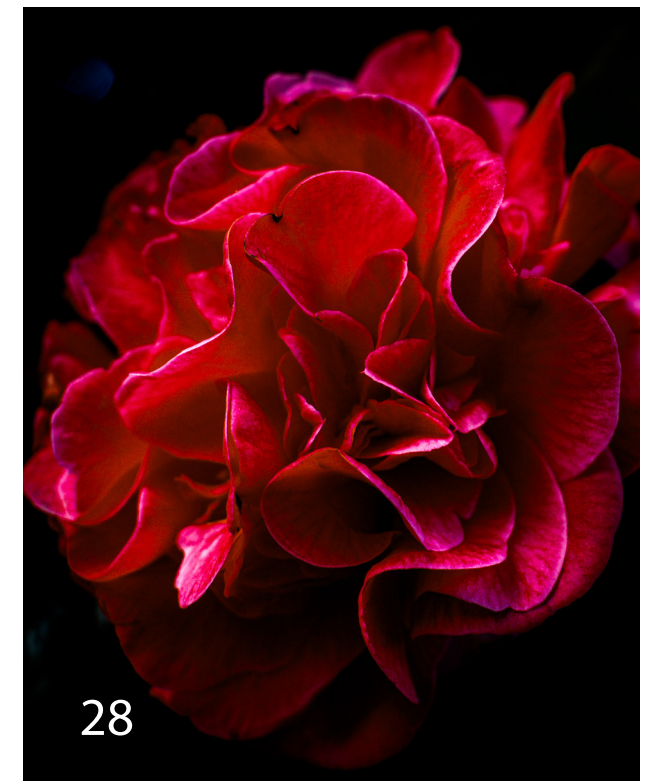
Photographs and content copyright: IMAgEN8 and Tushar Sharma, unless noted otherwise. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of IMAgEN8.

Cover image by Shafeek Allie
All rights reserved @ 2023

Reproduction of any material appearing in this journal in any form is forbidden without the prior consent of the publisher.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Young environmentalists	6
The jewels of Aotearoa: Celebrating New Zealand's treasured landscapes	18
What role does the fauna play in our ecology?	24
Creating art from nature	28
The growing problem of plastic pollution	38
Why do we love nature photography?	40
Young learners dive into nature photography	55
Photography for science	59



Young environmentalists

How can you use photography to be an environmentalist? Our first cohort of the 'Borrow a camera, adopt a reserve' programme show us how their care for the natural environment translated into the images they captured over this 6-month programme, sharing what they liked and learnt.

The 'Borrow a camera, adopt a reserve' project by IMaGEN8 is an innovative endeavour that provides students with an exciting opportunity to intimately interact with nature while equipping them with a powerful tool of expression – a camera. Over their six-month journey, they explore their chosen nature reserves, capturing compelling stories about the local flora and fauna. These photographs serve as their artistic voice, highlighting the need for environmental awareness, preservation, and sustainable living. This project is a shining example of how education, creativity, and environmental consciousness can harmoniously intertwine.

In today's digital age, photography has emerged as an exceptional medium to inspire children to reconnect with nature. It not only enhances their observational skills but also stimulates their creativity, turning their attention towards the intricacies and wonders of the natural world. Photography offers a tangible and engaging way for children to interact with the environment, sparking curiosity and fostering respect for the intricate balance of ecosystems.

The act of capturing images instils in children a sense of responsibility towards their surroundings. Each photograph taken is a snapshot of the environment as it currently stands. These images serve as potent reminders of the beauty we stand to lose if we don't act. They help raise awareness about environmental issues, underscoring the need for individual and collective action. This interaction with nature through photography encourages children to become stewards of the environment, fostering a new generation of conservationists.



JESSICA OLSEN, 11, CHURCHILL PARK

Jessie is a 10-year-old student at St Cuthbert's College and has been getting her hands, feet, and clothes dirty climbing trees, wading in streams, and lying in mud capturing images in Churchill Park.

"I wanted to join this programme because I really enjoy the natural spaces in our community. However, it seems that people don't appreciate or care for them enough. For instance, I often see rubbish, like chip packets, blown around and left on the ground, with no one bothering to pick them up. This really upsets me. I want to help raise awareness of these important places so people value and take better care of them. I chose to adopt Churchill Park because

it's close to our home and has a variety of plants and animals that fascinate me, such as native eels," says Jessica.

Churchill Park comprises about 44 hectares located in Glendowie. It principally drains into the Glendowie stream, which in turn flows into the Tamaki estuary. In this park, you'll find open pastures, woodland areas, and occasionally, grazing cattle.

"As I was walking past a large tree, I spotted the mushrooms. I knelt down and.. click!", says Jessica about this photo.



JAKOB WEBBER, 10, KOHIMARAMA FOREST

Jakob, who is 10 and in his final year at Victoria Avenue Primary School, was thrilled when he received the digital SLR camera. He told his mum he would carry it with him everywhere. Jakob has since adopted the Kohimarama Forest, a large 2.3-hectare remnant urban forest that has never been cleared for pasture. This forest is a biodiversity hotspot, teeming with invertebrates and serving as a breeding ground for piwakawaka, kererū, and many other native/endemic bird species.

"Last year, I was lucky to participate in the IMAgEN8 workshops where I got introduced to digital photography. I used it to capture some

hidden gems around Auckland, making me feel like I was in another world. Since joining the KCC (Forest & Bird Kiwi Conservation Club), I've realised how crucial it is to care for our environment. By preserving areas like reserves, we ensure that there are special places where we can observe native birds, plants, streams, and other wildlife, including eels," says Jakob.

Jakob has been eagerly exploring the forest's rugged, undeveloped trails, capturing striking images along the way. During one of his walks, he even snapped a photo of a ruru! He's particularly proud of this shot, which he later refined using Adobe Lightroom.



ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE

Abigail, who is 10 years old and studies at Glendowie School, has adopted the Tahuna Torea reserve. Always on the lookout for interesting subjects, she spotted a plague skink during a walk and managed to capture a few images before it scuttled away.

Skinks typically have small legs, no pronounced neck, and long tails which they can self-amputate. Their skin is 'tight-fitting', smooth, and features flat, shiny, overlapping scales. In contrast, their cousins, the geckos, possess 'saggy' skin with small granular scales. Unlike geckos, which have a transparent scale instead of eyelids, skinks can blink.

"I find photography both interesting and fun. I'm deeply passionate about it and love capturing the beauty of nature - be it the bush, animals, mountains, or water," says Abigail.

Tahuna Torea is a crucial shorebird roost in the Tamaki Ecological District. Its diverse habitats draw a wide variety of coastal and shorebirds, including tōrea (oystercatcher), poaka (pied stilt), kuaka (bar-tailed godwit), tarāpunga (red-billed gulls), kāruhuruhi (pied shags), and matuku (white-faced heron).



ISABEL POSADA-HINESTROZA, 9, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE

Isabel Posada-Hinestroza, who is 9 and part of the Glendowie Montessori programme, has had a deep love for nature from a young age. She's attended many of our workshops, capturing unique finds that highlight the fresh perspective of youth.

"I chose to adopt Tahuna Torea because it's close to my home, and I love walking there with my parents, learning about its diverse birds and plants," says Isabel.

During one of her recent walks in the reserve, she captured an image of a seaweed species known as *Codium fragile*, commonly referred to as 'dead man's fingers'. This seaweed thrives in the low intertidal to subtidal zones of various locations, including the North Island, South Island, Chatham Islands, Stewart Island, Auckland Island, and Campbell Island in New Zealand, as well as the Falkland Islands.



ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10, ORAKEI BASIN RESERVE

These images aren't just pieces of art, they're also significant scientific observations that contribute to our ever-expanding understanding of the environment. For instance, when we uploaded photos of the plague skink to iNaturalist, the platform identified the species, recording the time and location of the observation. If a researcher were examining the reserve's biodiversity, they'd be informed of the presence of plague skinks here, offering valuable data for their study. It's essential to remember that photography began as a tool for scientific exploration and remains crucial for observation and documentation.

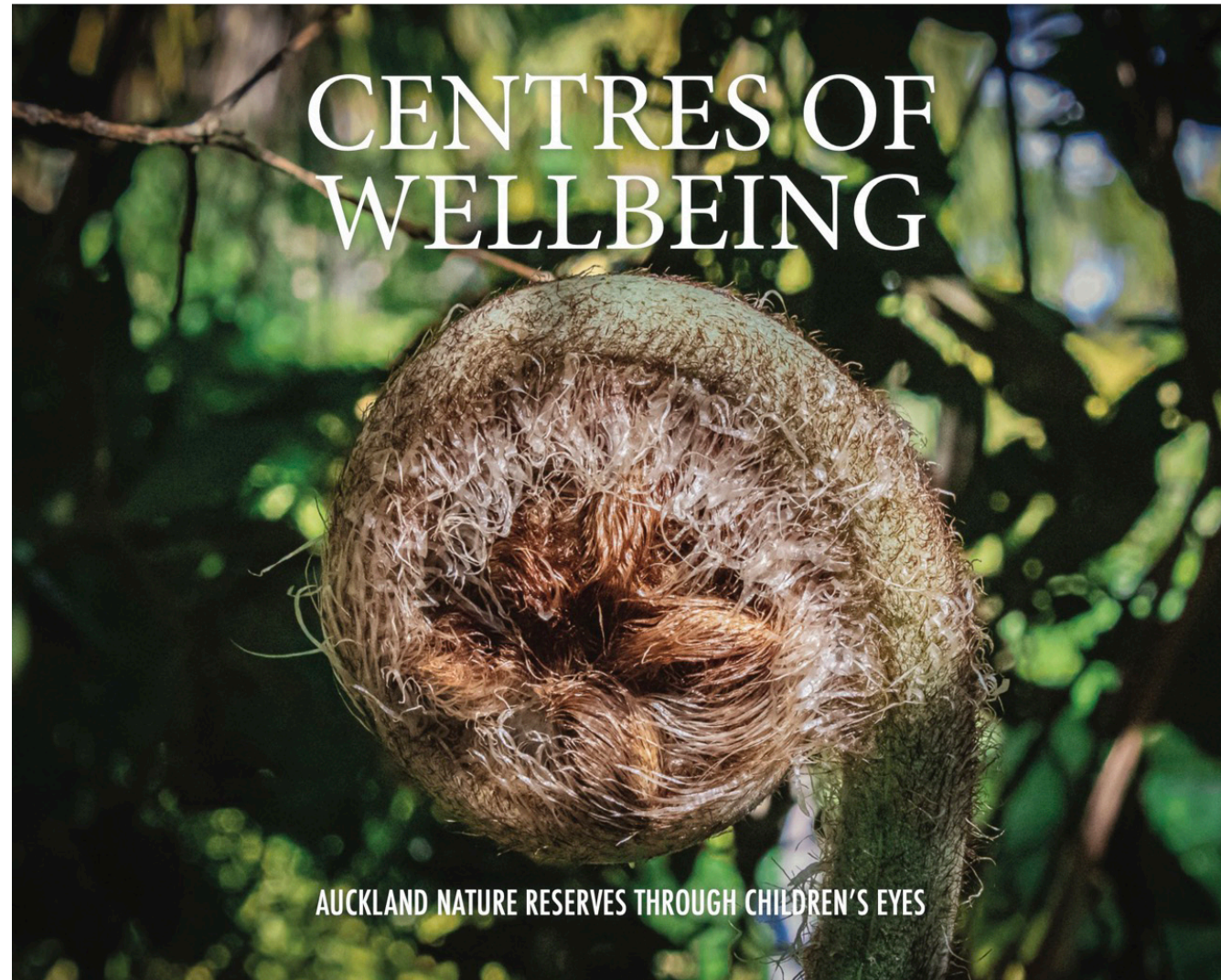
The photo above was awarded 'Highly Commended' at the Auckland Festival of Photography Youth

Award 2023. It brilliantly captures the beauty of these native birds.

These four students belong to our inaugural 'adopt a reserve' cohort. This initiative was made feasible with the generous support of the Orakei local board.

We initiated our engagement with students in these nature reserves two years ago, launching free workshops in the Orakei region of Auckland, sponsored by the Orakei local board. The images from more than 10 photography walks have been compiled into our new book titled 'Centres of Wellbeing'.





"Forests are immensely beneficial for our well-being. There is something highly therapeutic about being in the middle of a bush where all you see are trees, and all you hear is flowing water and birds. New Zealand's national and regional parks area treasure, but we can't get to them every day. Nature reserves in our cities, like the ones in the eastern suburbs of Auckland, are a treasure for the city. If you live in the neighbourhood, you can walk in the bush if you only have an hour to spare. Well-being from that hour in the forest brings us and everyone we touch great benefit. These nature reserves are 'Centres of Wellbeing' in our beautiful peaceful city."

The book 'Centres of Wellbeing'



JESSICA OLSEN, 11, CHURCHILL PARK

This image paints a vivid picture of how cattle remain an integral part of the Churchill Park landscape. If you resided in one of those two homes, you'd have a front-row seat to the herd's activities right from your windows. Jessica captured this for an assignment, documenting the human impact - both positive and negative - on her adopted nature reserve.

In September, we showcased these students' images at an exhibition during the Auckland Climate Festival. The event was warmly received by visitors, the proud students, and their whānau.

"Beautiful prints showcasing the talents of these budding photographers. Nature is depicted in such a way that inspires us to cherish and protect it for future generations."
Meike Funk

"Active environmentalism is not just about making a stand with a microphone beamed into our living rooms. To me, real climate engagement and activism start with things we know, the things we see, and eventually that natural world that we all come to love and care for in our

local area. We are so fortunate in our own Orakei Local Board area that we—and future generations—are reaping the benefits of former residents who gifted land and nurtured the environmental areas, shaping 'our place' to its present beauty. My sincere wish is that we pass on these inherited spaces to our next and upcoming generations in an enriched and meaningful way," says Margaret Voyce, a keen environmentalist and member of the Orakei Local Board.

We are excited to see how these students' environmentalist journeys unfold over the coming years. They are deepening their bond with these reserves, and through that bond, they will be able to share the value of these natural spaces with our community through their creative skills and become involved in other community activities like pest control and tree planting.

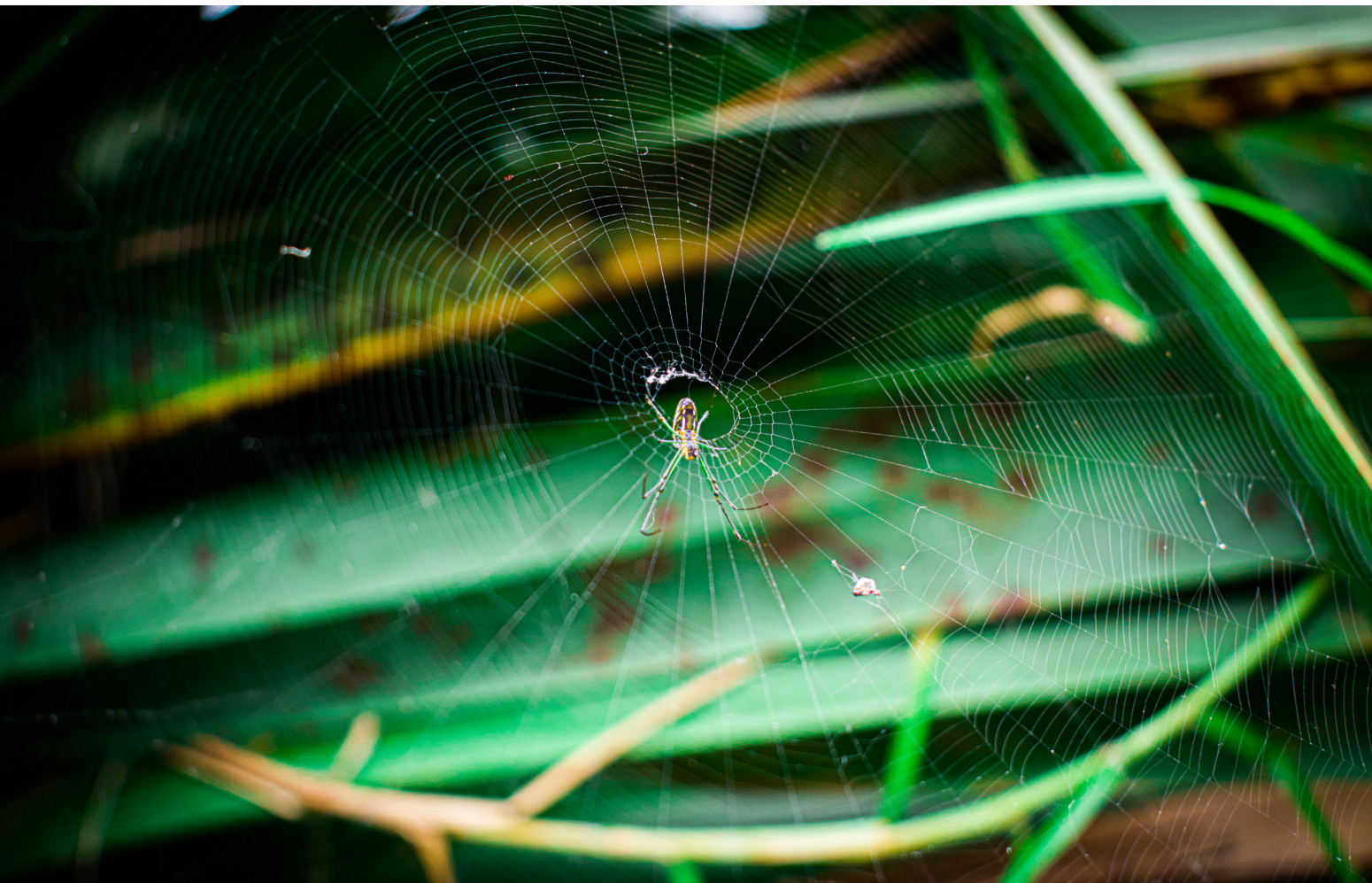
Our second cohort of 'Adopt a reserve' students is starting their programme in October. If you want to follow their journeys, sign up for our email updates or follow our Instagram channel.



▲ JAKOB WEBBER, 10, KOHIMARAMA FOREST ▼ ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE



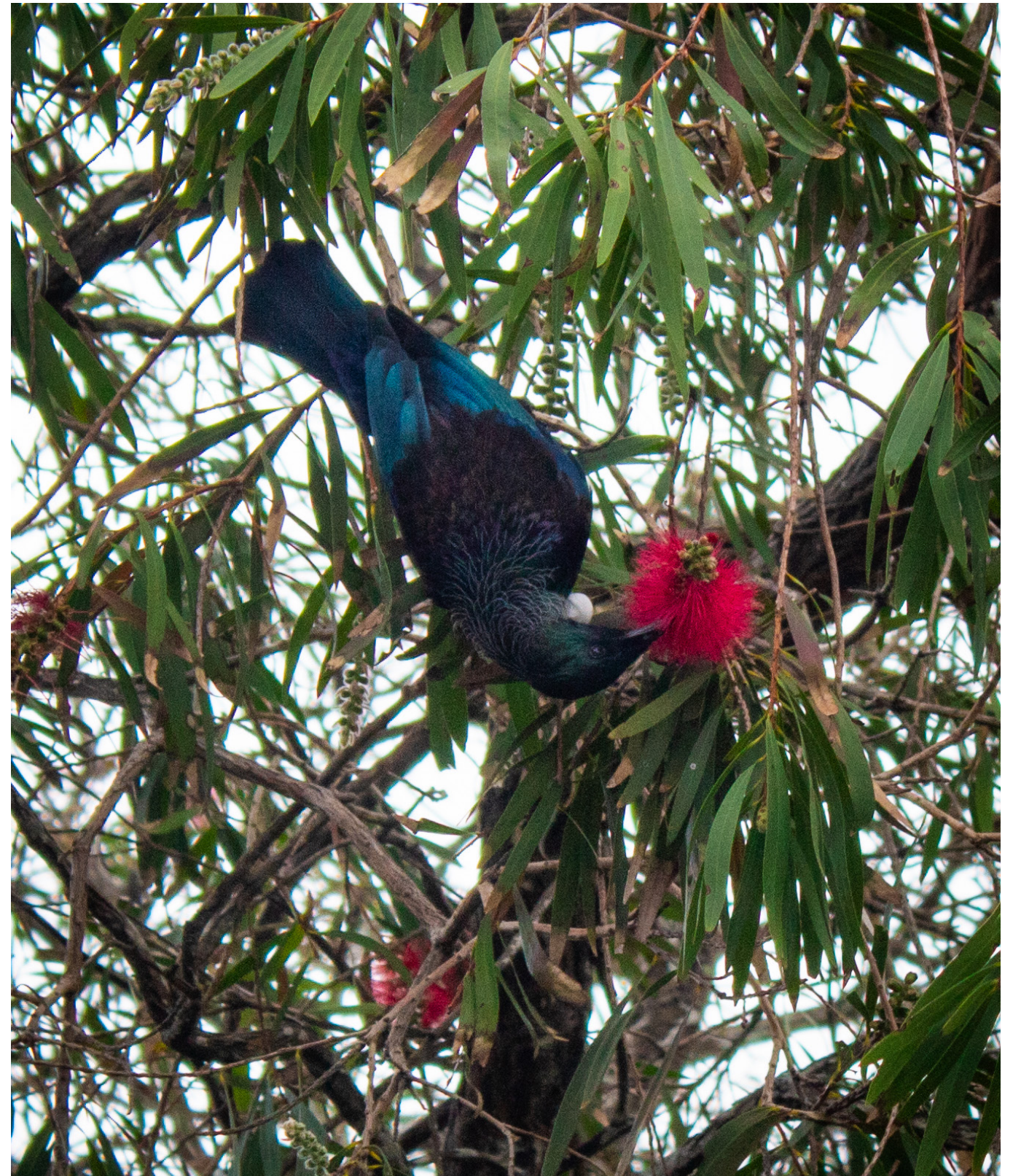
▲ ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE ▼ JESSICA OLSEN, 11, CHURCHILL PARK





▲ JESSICA OLSEN, 11, CHURCHILL PARK

▼ JAKOB WEBBER, 10, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE



JAKOB WEBBER, 10, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE

The jewels of Aotearoa: Celebrating New Zealand's treasured landscapes

Our students have been exploring New Zealand landscapes as part of our assignments and during travels with their families. I am thrilled when they share outstanding images captured in the great outdoors around the country.

As we continue to expand our programmes to other parts of the country, we look forward to the varied sights and natural wonders captured by these young creatives.

"I am 11 years old and the eldest child in a family of four living in Auckland. My family and I enjoy visiting sights, going on hikes, and almost every year, we go skiing. So, I have a lot of experience with nature, like valleys, taking photos of the sea, mountains,

expansive bush areas, and even selfies. I particularly enjoy capturing photos from a wide perspective because it offers so much more to see, making a picture far more captivating.

I appreciate how altering parts of the exposure triangle can produce varied images from a similar scene. I also enjoy photographing animals, water, mountains, landscapes, and much more! This dramatic dead tree appeared quite eerie and stark against the darkening clouds. I was drawn to the sculptural nature of the tree contrasted against the backdrop. I wanted to convey the drama of the sky, the jaggedness of the dead tree, and the shimmer of light on the water," says Abigail.



ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE



REANNA HINDS, 16

This image tells a compelling story about human presence in this vast, beautiful world. It's superbly composed, with our gaze naturally drawn to the island at the centre. The sunlight is captivating, and the bottom portion of the image frames the primary subject effectively.

Only upon closer inspection do we notice the tiny figure on the beach, imbuing the image with an even deeper significance – it underscores just

how minuscule we truly are in the grand scheme of things. Nature experiences serve to connect us with the vibrant energy of this ever-evolving planet, rejuvenating us to excel in our pursuits, be it study or work.

With its engaging subject and narrative, the editing choice evokes a contemplative mood. This image not only inspires us to delve deeper into New Zealand's natural splendour but also fosters a sense of humility.



GABRIEL AUSTIN, 12, MURIWAI BEACH

"My name is Gabriel. I'm 12. I live with my mum and dad and have two cats: Susie and Vita, as well as a dog named Wolfy. I enjoy DJing, reading, and playing video games. Nature photography appeals to me because it immerses me in nature and encourages me to take a moment to appreciate my surroundings. I'm inspired by bold colours, intriguing shapes, and patterns. My advice to other young photographers is to be patient and value what Mother Nature provides," Gabriel Austin.

Muriwai Beach exudes a power and energy that revitalises the spirit. Gabriel has beautifully

captured and conveyed the energy of the ocean in this image.

The editing presents the beach in a light distinct from its typical portrayal. The trees at the bottom frame the beach, while the curve of the shoreline guides the viewer's eyes towards the horizon. The misty hills and lush greenery weave a narrative about this expansive and untouched beach. The discernible human figures on the sand underscore our relative insignificance in the face of nature's grandeur. This image beckons us to experience the wild allure of Muriwai Beach firsthand.



REANNA HINDS, 16

Walking on a beach offers numerous benefits for both physical and mental health. The sound of the waves combined with the warmth of the sun can have a calming effect, reducing stress and enhancing one's mood. Additionally, the sand's natural resistance aids in strengthening the muscles of the legs and feet.

What role does the fauna play in our ecology?

One of the enriching aspects of nature photography is that when we observe something closely enough, we see how that subject integrates with its ecosystem. Bird photographers are well aware that one must invest a significant amount of time, and a considerable amount of patience, to capture outstanding images. And when you dedicate that much time to a subject, you learn more about it purely through observation.

For instance, birds fulfil a vital role in our ecosystems. They serve as key pollinators and seed dispersers. Additionally,

they help control insect populations by consuming vast quantities of insects.

Birds are also significant indicators of environmental health and can assist in monitoring the effects of pollution and habitat degradation. Furthermore, they contribute to the economy via ecotourism and birdwatching. They hold a special place as cultural symbols, having been celebrated in art and literature for centuries. They are an integral component of our ecosystems, and their conservation is paramount for sustaining a healthy planet.



SHAFEEK ALLIE, 17

Shafeek discovered this frog on a hill in Muriwai. Well done on such keen observation! Spotting frogs in the wild is a challenge in itself, capturing a fantastic image even more so.

The focus on the frog's head and eyes immediately draws our attention. Its colours harmonise with the surrounding leaves. The composition effectively showcases the frog's habitat, narrating a story about its preferred environments for living or hiding. The quality of light is excellent, accentuating the colours and textures. The editing remains natural, which is just right.

KAVISHA KANAGASOORIYAM, 10

"I captured this image to portray the humility and calmness of a bird during its resting moments. I wanted to share the beauty and tranquillity of a bird with people, hoping to evoke a sense of peacefulness and appreciation in those who view it," says Kavisha Kanagasooriyam.

This image enlightens viewers about this particular frog species, indicating its presence in Muriwai, and encourages us to delve deeper into understanding them and safeguarding the habitats they rely on. According to iNaturalist, this frog belongs to this genus: [Ranoidea](https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/517030-Ranoidea) [inaturalist.nz/taxa/517030-Ranoidea]. These are indigenous to Australia, making this a significant discovery in New Zealand.

Pied shags are primarily found in New Zealand, with smaller populations in southern Australia and the Chatham Islands. They inhabit rocky coastlines, islands, and cliffs.



GABRIEL AUSTIN, 12

Australasian gannets are seabirds that breed in expansive colonies on offshore islands. They typically partner for life, returning to the same nesting site annually. During courtship, pairs participate in a detailed dance, showcasing their wings and bills while bowing to each other. They construct their nests from seaweed, grass, and feathers, either on the ground or on rocky outcrops.

Females usually lay one or two eggs each season, and both parents share the incubation responsibilities for

about 44 days. After the chicks emerge, both parents alternate in feeding and nurturing them for several months until they are ready to fly. Gannets are renowned for their dramatic plunge-diving technique, utilising their wings and aerodynamic bodies to dive swiftly into the water in pursuit of fish. Following the breeding season, they migrate northwards to warmer waters for the winter months. Observing and studying their nesting behaviour is truly captivating.



KARLA TREMAIN, 12

Tui birds hold an integral place in the New Zealand ecosystem. Native to the nation, they're celebrated for their melodious song. Tuis significantly contribute to pollination, feeding on nectar and, in the process, transferring pollen between blooms. Additionally, by consuming fruits and berries, they aid in seed dispersal.

These birds also keep insect populations in check, feeding on various insects and spiders. Simultaneously, being prey for larger avians like hawks and owls, they contribute

to the ecological balance. Tuis are deemed a keystone species due to their substantial influence on the environment.

Moreover, they hold cultural value for the Maori people, who cherish numerous tales and legends about these birds. Yet, Tuis face threats from habitat diminishment and predation by invasive species, including rats and stoats. Current conservation initiatives aim to safeguard these pivotal birds and their role in New Zealand's ecosystem.

Creating art from nature

Nature has been the most significant inspiration for art created by humanity in our brief history on this planet.

Creating art inspired by nature can be a deeply rewarding and fulfilling experience. Nature offers a vast palette of colours, shapes, and textures that can serve as a source of inspiration for various art forms. While some artists opt for realistic depictions of the natural world, others adopt a more abstract approach. Regardless of the style chosen, nature is a rich wellspring of subject matter.

From landscapes to wildlife, the possibilities for artistic expression are limitless. Many artists find that immersing themselves in nature clears their minds and sparks their creativity. They might take photographs, sketch, or simply observe their surroundings to gather ideas for their artwork. Through their nature-inspired creations, artists can also highlight environmental issues, urging others to appreciate and safeguard our natural world.

Indeed, nature acts as a potent muse for artists across all mediums, including photography.



JAKOB WEBBER, 10

"I'm Jakob Webber. I'm eleven years old and will be attending intermediate school next year. Right now, I study at Victoria Avenue school. My friends and I are passionate about sports like football and cricket, among others. This year, I've been involved with the Kiwi Conservation Club, participating in outdoor activities. I thoroughly enjoy bush walks with my family. Completing the Tongariro Alpine Crossing in summer was both a significant challenge and a remarkable experience for me.

Experiencing nature is serene, and it's fascinating to view it from a fresh perspective."

This image instantly grabs our attention with its beautifully symmetrical leaf pattern. Both the quality of light and the editing are spot-on. The subject is captivating, with the composition lending the image an abstract touch. I appreciate the emphasis on the leaves, achieved by darkening the corners, which guides our focus. Potential distractions in the background have been seamlessly masked through strategic cropping and shading.

This photograph highlights the inherent beauty of simple plants we often overlook in our local neighbourhoods.



ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10

Abby has captured a stunning flower, crafting a mood that draws us into the image.

The subject is exquisite, with the central portion sharply in focus and the petals gently fading out – a beautiful touch. The surrounding darkness accentuates the flower, ensuring it stands out. The

composition is spot-on, showcasing the entire flower without any distracting elements.

The lighting is soft and just right, and the editing lends a unique quality to the image. This photograph encourages us to truly appreciate the beauty of flowers.

ABIGAIL CULLINAN, 10





KARLA TREMAIN, 12

"I'm Karla, a 12-year-old with a love for nature and photography. I'm blessed with an amazing family and some genuine friends. When I'm not behind the camera, I'm into gaming, visual art, swimming, and embracing the outdoors. Nature photography is just fantastic. Capturing the beauty of flowers, wildlife, and landscapes fascinates me. It's astonishing how a single photo can narrate an entire story, immersing you right into the scene.

I'm often inspired by the subtle wonders in nature that might escape the casual glance - like the

intricate details of an insect or the patterns on a leaf. Viewing the world through my camera's lens heightens my appreciation for everything around me. Looking ahead, I aspire to elevate my photography, venturing to new places and experimenting with different techniques.

To my fellow budding photographers, here's my advice: Relish your time connecting with nature, always seek the unique, but above all, have fun doing it."



KARLA TREMAIN, 12

Flowers are believed to have evolved around 140 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. The precise origin and evolution of flowers remain topics of debate among scientists. However, it's generally agreed that flowers evolved from primitive cone-like structures that produced seeds. Over time, these structures became more complex and developed various adaptations, allowing them to attract pollinators and produce a wider variety of seeds. Today, flowers are an essential component of many ecosystems, playing a crucial role in plant reproduction and biodiversity.



SHAFEEK ALLIE, 17

I'm 17 and live with my mum and stepdad. I have a tight-knit circle of friends. I'm passionate about nature and love observing it. Nature photography appeals to me because it captures fleeting, extraordinary moments in a digital form. If something catches your eye, even for a brief moment, and you think it'd make a good photo – take it. You can always delete it later."

This photograph was 'Highly Commended' at the Auckland Festival of Photography (AFP) Youth Award in 2023. It was also featured in our two-week exhibition at Mt Eden Village Centre in May, alongside works from 15 other students.

Shafeek describes this image as, 'An early morning sun illuminating the newly-fledged monarch'.



SHAFEEK ALLIE, 17

Beautiful, with all its imperfections, highlighted by the artist's apt removal of colour. In traditional Japanese aesthetics, wabi-sabi is a worldview centred on the acceptance of transience and imperfection. The aesthetic is sometimes described as one of appreciating beauty that is 'imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete' in nature.



REANNA HINDS, 16

"I'm Reanna. I'm 16 years old and live with my mum, dad, brother, a dog, and a cat. I love swimming, underwater hockey, and tramping. I really enjoy hanging out with my friends at school and at church. Going out and capturing photos of nature is something I treasure. I'm inspired by colours and patterns."

The simplicity of this image evokes the elegance of a haiku. The red of the pear matches the red of the pohutukawa leaves, and the bruises add character to the subject. This photo was part of our exhibition at Mt Eden Village Centre in May, which showcased works from 16 different students.



KAVISHA KANAGASOORIYAM, 10

"I'm Kavisha, and I'm 10 years old."

I was born in Sri Lanka but moved to New Zealand when I was two. I live with my lovely younger sister and my parents. We really enjoy our life here in New Zealand. I've been interested in photography since I was 8. I always love exploring and capturing nature's intricate details and its breathtaking beauty.

Nature photography lets me connect deeply with the beauty and wonders of the natural world. Taking photos, exploring, learning, and interpreting our environment helps me feel a deeper bond with our ecosystems.

Nature photography truly captivates me and fuels my passion. Through my photos, I aim to unveil the wonders of our world to others."

The growing problem of plastic pollution

Plastic pollution is a global issue. Every year, between 19 and 23 million tonnes of plastic waste leak into aquatic ecosystems, contaminating lakes, rivers, and seas. Every day, the equivalent of 2,000 rubbish trucks filled with plastic are dumped into the world's oceans, rivers, and lakes.

This pollution can alter habitats and natural processes, diminishing ecosystems' ability to adapt to climate change. This directly affects millions of people's livelihoods, food production, and overall well-being.

Plastic pollution also poses a significant threat to bird populations. Birds can easily mistake plastic for food, leading to ingestion and subsequent health issues. Sharp plastic fragments can cause internal injuries or obstructions. Furthermore, plastic pollution can adversely impact bird habitats, such as wetlands and coastal regions, which are vital for feeding and nesting. Plastic debris can also ensnare birds, leading to injuries or fatalities. It's imperative to reduce plastic waste and ensure its proper disposal to safeguard birds and their habitats.



JESSICA OLSEN, 11, CHURCHILL PARK

"I'm an 11-year-old girl living in Glendowie with my mum, dad, and two younger brothers. I enjoy spending time with my friends and doing fun activities like rock-climbing and tenpin bowling. I love reading, maths, and solving Rubik's cubes. Besides, I also participate in jazz ballet and play netball.

I have an eye for the small details that others might overlook. My advice? Always take your time and give it a shot.

This image aims to highlight how human actions can negatively impact our nature reserves. The sight of a plastic

bottle floating in the stream felt jarring, a clear imposter amidst the surrounding natural beauty. It got me thinking about how long it had been there and where the stream might carry it.

I want this image to remind people of the inherent beauty of nature and how vital it is to cherish it. Our streams and trees deserve protection, not pollution. I hope these photographs prompt reflection on the pollution encroaching upon our natural world and the subtle details we often overlook in our fast-paced lives.", shares Jessica.

◀ ISABEL POSADA-HINESTROZA, 9, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE

"My name is Isabel and I'm 9 years old. I live with my mum, Gloria, and dad, Santiago. I love my family and friends deeply. I'm passionate about nature photography because it allows me to capture diverse subjects and observe many plants."

The image beautifully captures a duck in a pond, framed by water plants blossoming with striking yellow flowers. The colours exude a soft, natural aura. However, upon closer inspection, an upside-down bottle emerges in the pond, shifting the image's narrative towards the pressing issue of water pollution and the global challenge posed by plastic waste. Both the main subject – the duck – and the surrounding elements, including the water plants and the bottle, are sharply in focus. The lighting is apt, and the natural editing further enhances the image. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, this photograph serves as an educational tool about water pollution and urges us to initiate steps to cleanse our waterways.

Why do we love nature photography?



MOANA FUNK, 9, ST JOHN'S BUSH RESERVE

It's a delight to see young photographers exploring the world with a camera in hand, observing the fine details of flowers or watching the piwakawaka flitting around them!

"My name is Moana, I'm 9 years old, and I attend Glendowie School. I love looking after nature, and capturing its beauty through photographs is something

I cherish. I especially enjoy taking pictures of interesting plants and birds.

The Piwakawaka hopped close to us for quite some time, almost as if it wanted to be photographed. Eventually, it settled on the tape fencing off a fallen tree, and I seized the moment with a click. Even in New Zealand's largest city, birds adapt to changing environments."



▲ INDIE FORD, 10
ST JOHN'S BUSH RESERVE

▼ VITHURSHA KANAGASOORIYAM, 8
TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE





SIENNA SWAIN, 12, KOHIMARAMA FOREST



VITHURSHA KANAGASOORIYAM, 8
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS

Flowers, with their inherent charm, are excellent subjects for our budding photographers learning to handle a digital SLR camera.



ISABEL POSADA-HINESTROZA, 9
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS



▲ ISABEL POSADA-HINESTROZA, 9
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS

▼ CHARLOTTE CHOW, 9
EPSOM NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL





▲ DITYAA JAISIMHA, 9
EPSOM NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

▼ KISARA HETTIARACHCHI, 9
EPSOM NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



▲ ALLEN ZHENG, 9
EPSOM NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

▼ YASMEEN SLAIMANKHEL, 9
EPSOM NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL





▲ EMILY TE MAARI, 12
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS

▼ NEVAEH SANELE, 12
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS



▲ TIMOTHY VAIVAO, 12
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS

▼ SHANTY ROPATI, 12
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS





▲ BROOKLYN BARNES, 13
ROSCOMMON SCHOOL

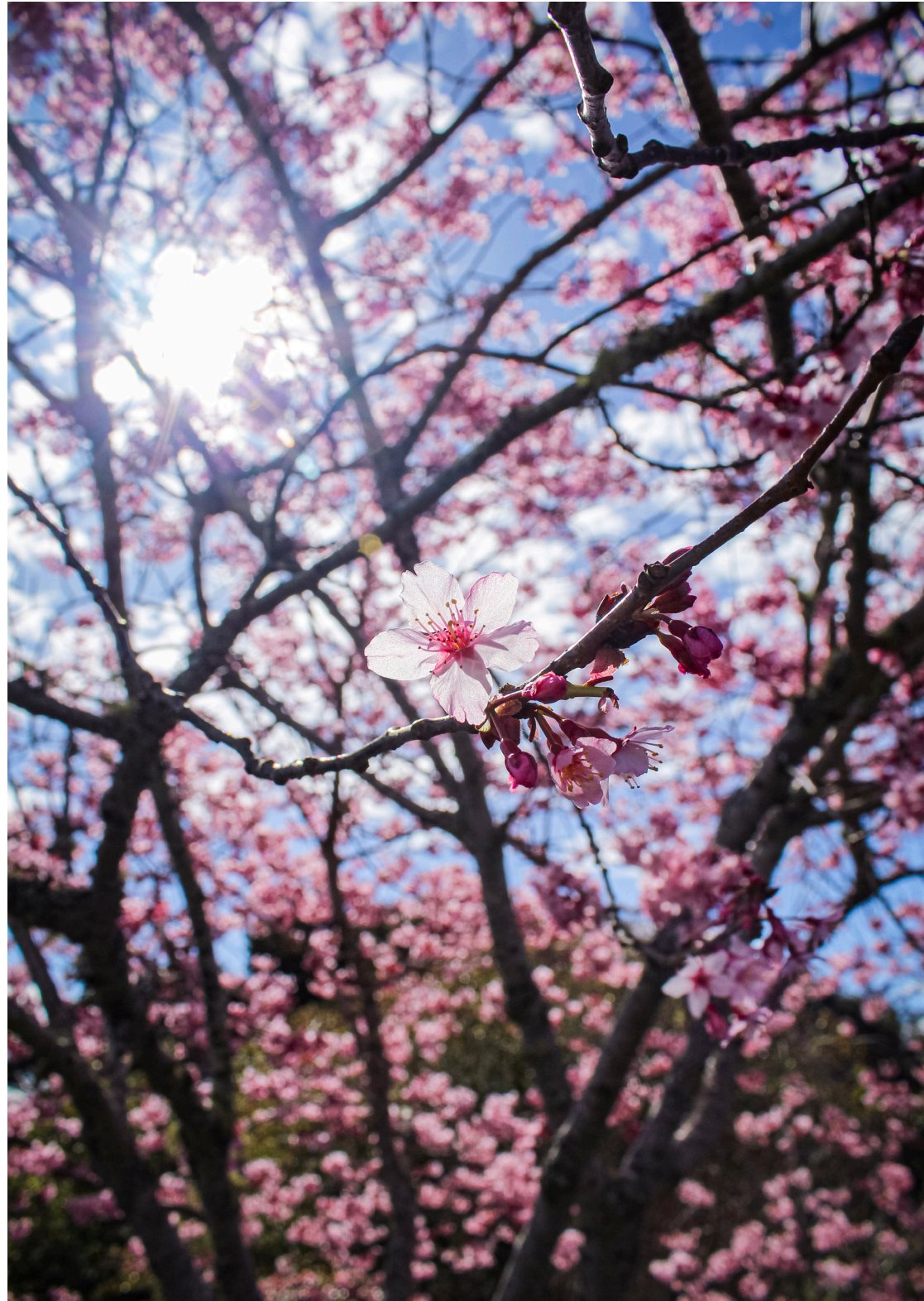
▼ SIAUTU ALEFAIO, 12
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS



▲ KAVISHA KANAGASOORIYAM, 10
EPSOM NORMAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

▼ SAANVI BHARGAVA, 8
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS





JAMES MATAMUA, 13
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS



KERIANN BANDEEN, 11
ROSCOMMON SCHOOL



**KNIJUAN CHADWICK, 11
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS**

Students love spotting insects, birds, butterflies, and any other moving creature. Observing nature's activities is a joy and helps draw our attention away from the self-absorption that often consumes us.



**KHYRAH STUBBINGTON, 11
AUCKLAND BOTANICAL GARDENS**

Spending time in nature can profoundly impact our mental health and wellbeing. Immersion in natural beauty can mitigate stress and anxiety, elevate mood, and instil feelings of happiness. Nature offers a sense of calm and tranquillity, aiding relaxation. Interaction with natural environments is associated with enhanced cognitive functions and creativity. Additionally, nature encourages physical activity, potentially boosting immune systems and reducing illness risks.

Nature instils perspective, allowing introspection on our lives and values. It fosters mindfulness, anchoring us in the present. Beyond the immediate surroundings, nature connects us to something grander, imbuing a sense of purpose. The natural sounds, like birdsong or cascading water, soothe the mind and body. It provides a respite from modern life's relentless pace, inviting appreciation for life's simplicity.

Engaging with nature can improve sleep quality. It promotes self-care activities, such as meditation or yoga. The awe and wonder inspired by natural surroundings spur creativity and imagination. Nature's resilience and adaptability impart lessons that aid in overcoming personal challenges.

Interactions in nature can foster social ties and deepen relationships. The allure of the wild beckons exploration and new experiences. Nature also offers a reprieve from digital screens, fostering genuine connections with those around us.

In essence, tranquil nature profoundly enriches our wellbeing, spanning physical, mental, and emotional dimensions.

Young learners dive into nature photography

Last month, IMaGEN8 and [Excio Photo Community](#) teamed up to launch the first ever [Young Learners Nature Photography Workshop](#) in Wellington. Twelve kids, aged 8-14, got their hands on professional DSLR cameras, and the results were truly impressive.

Though Wellington's unpredictable weather meant a shift indoors, this unexpected twist actually spurred on the kids' creativity. Working with readily available materials like beautiful sea shells, vibrant plants, cool sticks, and shiny gems, they crafted incredible images from nature's treasures.

Why are nature photography workshops important for kids? A recent study by the Tertiary Education Commission showed that only 0.95% of kids aged 7 to 13 consider photography as a potential career. This is a concern because photography has so much to offer. Not only does it encourage kids to spend time outdoors, but it also enhances their self-expression, creativity, and communication skills, benefiting them at school and later in life.

Photographs of the workshop by [Kreate More Visuals](#).



Taking photos in nature, first of all, helps kids feel closer to the outdoors. It's a fun way to teach them to really look at things, be patient, and appreciate the beauty around them. Plus, picking up a camera can boost their creativity and thinking skills. These handy skills – like spotting details and telling a story through photographs – will help them in school and even in future jobs. It's more than just snapping photos, it's about learning and growing!

But these are not the only benefits. Photography also provides an essential outlet for mental well-being. As kids grow and navigate the complexities of the world, they often grapple with emotions they can't easily articulate. Photography becomes a powerful tool in such moments, allowing them to express feelings

when words fall short. Being immersed in nature, with a camera in hand, offers a therapeutic escape. It's a space where they can reflect, process, and creatively channel their emotions. This can be especially crucial for youngsters, helping them cope with mental health challenges and understand their place in the world. Through the lens, they not only capture moments but also communicate their unique perspective and emotions, making their journey of self-discovery both meaningful and healing.

The next workshop for Wellington is coming up in November. Don't miss out! Register your interest here: home.excio.io/young-learners and be among the first to know about it. Let's champion the next generation of photographers! Your kids will thank you later.



LIAM MCDONALD, 14



▲ HENRY LEASK, 12

▼ SAMUEL TROJCA, 9



Photography for science

We've recently kicked off a programme at Tamaki College where we're incorporating photography workshops into the science learning curriculum for Year 10 students.

Here's what Gloria Hinestroza, the project lead, mentioned about the kaupapa of the programme and how photography ties in:

"The title of the programme is 'Nurturing Our Kaitiaki Connection with Our Communities and Natural Context'. The aim is to strengthen our bond with our communities and the natural environment around us. We want to fuse creativity, curiosity, and care to work together

towards our shared and individual goals. By doing this, we hope to foster a sense of belonging and enhance wellbeing for our students.

We'll utilise visual arts to delve into and communicate STEM/Biological sciences. This part of the programme is designed to integrate natural photography, making the learning journey more interactive. This way, students can really take charge of their learning process. They'll pick up natural photography techniques and use these to chart their learning journey. They'll also design visual reports and presentations, boosting their creativity and critical thinking."

Here's an image taken by one of the students. The lesson was centred on understanding the role of seeds in a plant's lifecycle. In it, Taylor has crafted a lovely representation of a tree and its root system using a variety of seeds.

**TAYLOR
WARSAME, 15**





NATALIE SINGH, 15

Check out this photo by Natalie. She took it while wandering the school grounds where the soil's being prepped for vegetable planting. This cluster of snails is quite the sight.

"Photography, birthed from and moulded by science, changed how we observe and broadened our understanding of knowledge and our place in the world. From the get-go, photographs were used to tackle both practical and deep questions like: What's that? Where are we? Who are we? And, what comes next?" Marvin Heiferman

IMAgEN8 is a registered charity. Our aim is to nurture lasting connections with New Zealand's natural environment in our varied communities, using education, photography, and technology.

Without a doubt, our planet faces unprecedented stress. Numerous species have vanished, and many teeter on the edge. Human actions are leading to significant habitat loss, decimating biodiversity. Climate change looms as a major challenge, threatening human safety and global peace. At the same time, our collective mental wellbeing is declining – a result of the Covid pandemic, economic strain, worldwide disputes, a hectic lifestyle, and excessive use of social media and technology. Our everyday lives are deeply intertwined with the environmental backdrop.

Cultivating a passion for nature is vital. It motivates us to become stewards of our environment. After all, we safeguard what we hold dear! Plus, spending time in nature is crucial for our mental health. This insight has been a part of global cultures for millennia. Now, scholars from both the East and West have substantial scientific data backing this. Simply put, a love for nature ensures our wellbeing!

By forging profound ties with our natural surroundings, we're not only happier but also kinder. We cherish and preserve what we adore, leading to a sustainable way of life.

Participating schools

St Cuthbert's College (Jessica Olsen, Indie Ford)

Glendowie School (Abigail Cullinan, Isabel Posada-Hinestroza (Montessori), Karla Tremain, Moana Funk, Sienna Swain)

Victoria Avenue School (Jakob Webber)

Pinehurst School (Shafeek Allie)

Mt Albert Grammar School (Reanna Hinds)

Remuera Intermediate School (Gabriel Austin)

Epsom Normal Primary School (Kavisha Kanagasooriyam, Vithursha Kanagasooriyam, Charlotte Chow, Dityaa Jaisimha, Kisara Hettiarachchi, Allen Zheng, Yasmeen Slaimankhel, Saanvi Bhargava)

Roscommon School (Emily Te Maari, Nevaeh Sanele, Matamua, Knijuan Chadwick, Keriann Bandeen, Khyrah Stubbington, Brooklyn Barnes, Siautu Alefaio, Timothy Vaivao, Shanty Ropati)

Tamaki College (Taylor Warsame, Natalie Singh)

Edendale School (Devam Gandhi)

Hutt Intermediate (Henry Leask)

Home education (Samuel Trojca, Liam McDonald)



Nurturing a Love for Nature

This magazine is free - [subscribe](#) for new issue notifications. Follow our weekly updates on [Instagram](#).

Back cover photo by Devam Gandhi.

Nurturing a love for Nature
imagen8.co.nz

IMAgEN8 is a registered charity.

The printing of this magazine is made possible thanks to the support of Keen2print Limited.