

COMPASSIONATE NATURE



BY IMAGEN8

ISSUE 17 | PUBLISHED MAY 2025

If I had to make a choice between nature and my photography, I would choose nature every time.

Bruce Barnbaum

WELCOME



Hello,

This edition showcases some of the newest images captured by young photographers in their explorations of the natural world. Our cover story is ‘Little eyes, big perspectives’: images that help us envision a world where humans, animals, and ecosystems can coexist and flourish. We also share images from our program at Youth in Transition, scenic locations from New Zealand, a story about insects: the little but important creatures amongst us and more.

Hope you enjoy it!

Keep well,

Tushar Sharma



Kia ora,
Welcome to Issue 17!

This issue brings another stunning set of photographs, full of talent and heart.

What stood out most for me was the Youth in Transition series. It’s close to home—we work with kids on the autism spectrum, with ADHD and other challenges here in Wellington, and we see every day how photography helps them focus, express themselves, and build confidence.

We hope these images move and inspire you as much as they did us.

Stay inspired,
Ana Lyubich

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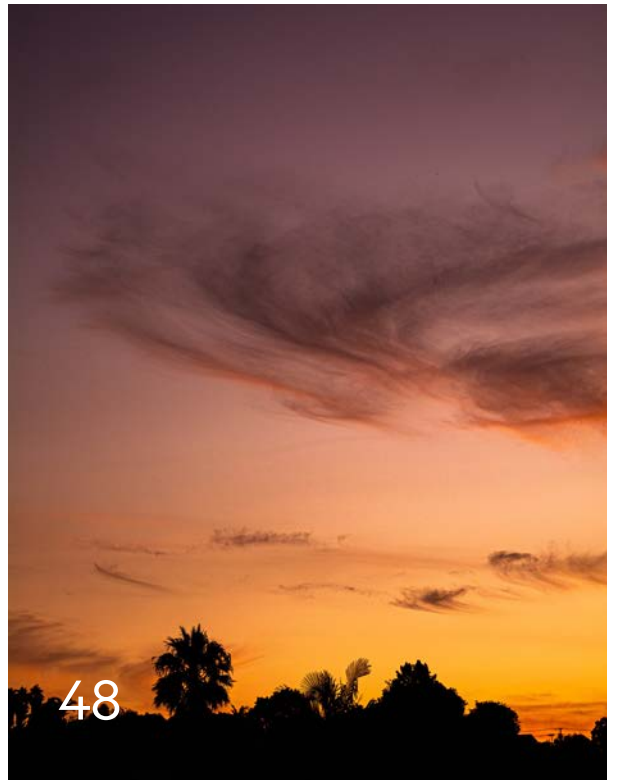
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Little eyes, big perspectives	6
Sing like the birds	26
Youth in Transition	36
Natural beauty	48
Flowers	60
Little creatures	66
Patterns	72

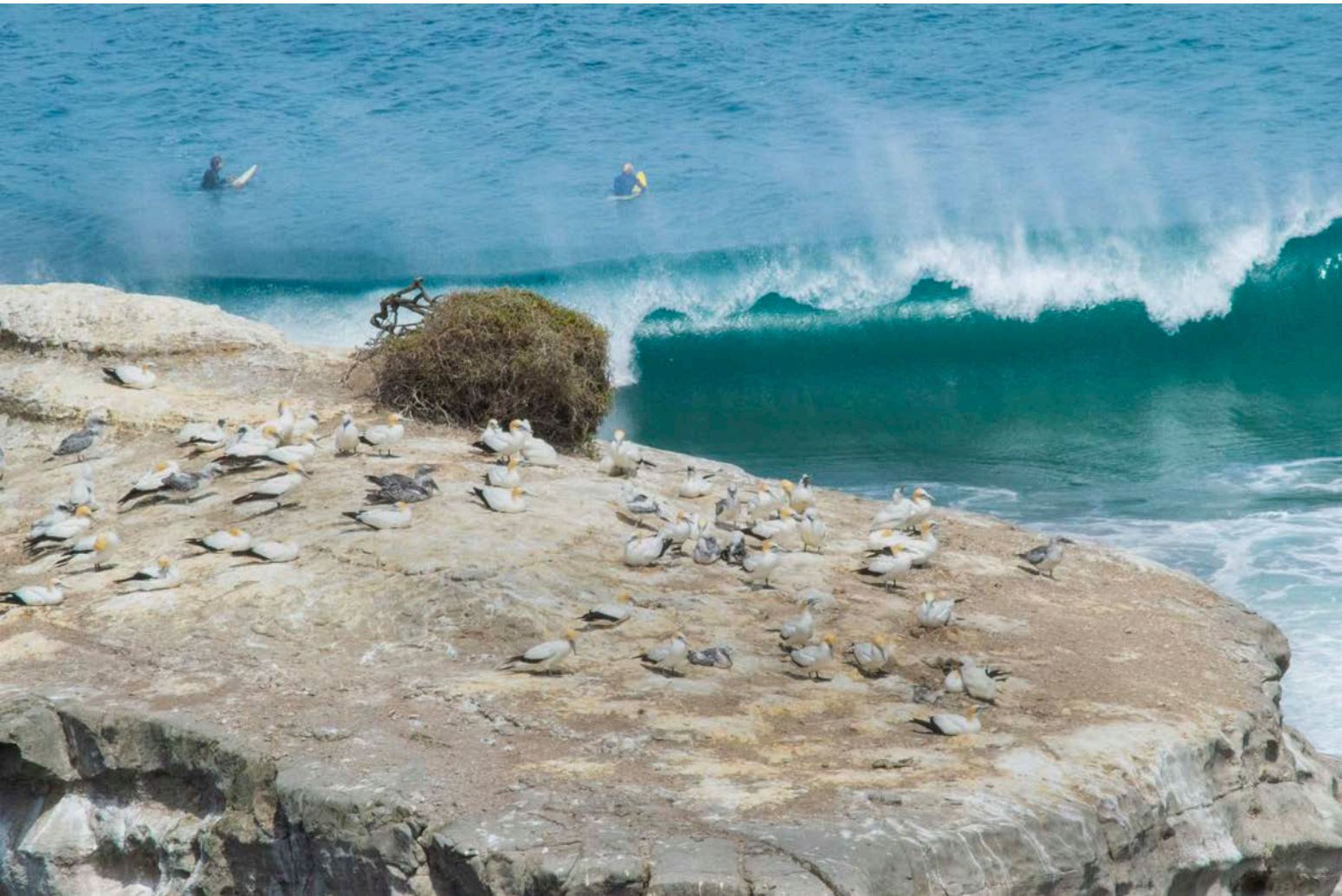


Little eyes, big perspectives

Young photographers showcase images that help us envision a world where humans, animals, and ecosystems can coexist and flourish.

Imagine sitting on a rock by a river, with the deep green of the forests surrounding you on all sides. The river carries on without pause, and it takes your worries and thoughts down to the sea. Imagine another world where the stream

you so loved has a plastic jandal floating down it, and an abandoned grocery trolley lies sideways near the banks. We live in both worlds right now, and humans are the only species on the planet that have the power and potential to shape what we want to see more of - the bubbling brook with forested woods, or the wastes of human consumption polluting our waterways.



JESSE RADFORD, AGE 13, MURIWAI REGIONAL PARK



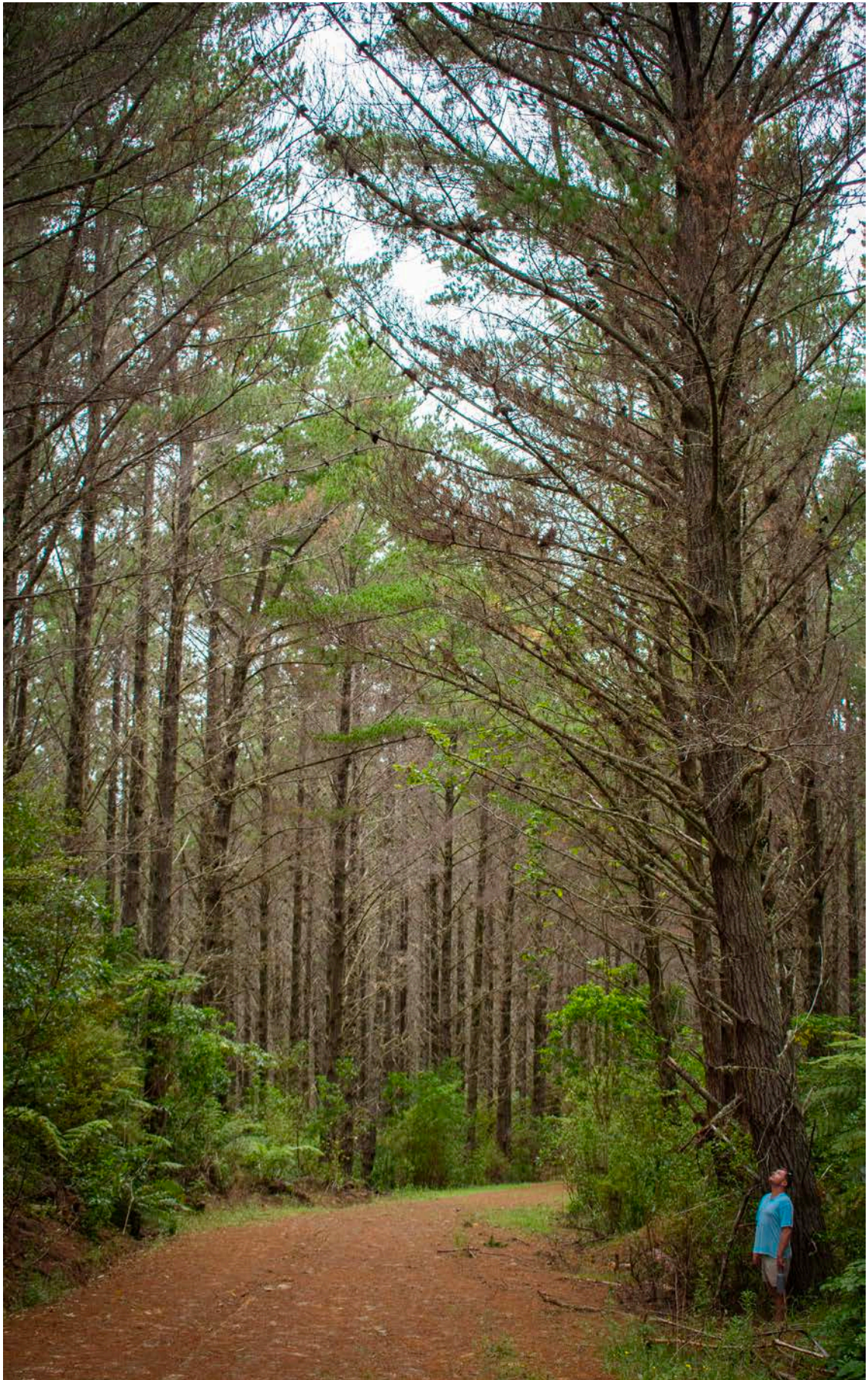
JESSE RADFORD, AGE 13, WHENUA-ROA / D'OYLY RESERVE



JESSE RADFORD, AGE 13, SHAKESPEAR REGIONAL PARK



SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, BAY OF ISLANDS



SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, RIVERHEAD FOREST



▲ SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16
ANCHOR BAY

▼ SAMUEL ZHOU, AGE 10
BLUE LAKE TRACK, ROTORUA





▲ MISHKA SOROKA, AGE 12
WEST LYNN GARDENS BUTTERFLY HOUSE

▼ MISHKA SOROKA, AGE 12
ASIAN SMALL CLAWED OTTER, AUCKLAND ZOO





▲ MIKAYLA VELDHOUSE, AGE 10
CORNWALL PARK

▼ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
ORERE POINT, AUCKLAND REGION





▲ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
ORERE POINT, AUCKLAND REGION

▼ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
THAMES, WAIKATO





▲ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
WHANGAPOUA, COROMANDEL

▼ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
HOT WATER BEACH, COROMANDEL





INDIE FORD, AGE 11
CATHEDRAL COVE, COROMANDEL



▲ GRAYSON HANNAH, AGE 9
FRANKLIN FARM, WAIMAUKU

▼ ELLA CROSSWELL, AGE 12
DINGLE DELL RESERVE





▲ AN VU BACH KHUU, AGE 9
MURIWAI REGIONAL PARK

▼ ABIGAIL SMITH, AGE 14
CHURCHILL PARK





▲ ANJA BREYTENBACH , AGE 16
FARM, COATESVILLE

▼ ANJA BREYTENBACH , AGE 16
FARM, COATESVILLE





ANJA BREYTENBACH , AGE 16
FARM, COATESVILLE



EM MCDOUGALL, AGE 14, PINNACLES, COROMANDEL



HILLARY HO, AGE 11
CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN, SWANSON



ROY MA, AGE 10, ORAKEI BASIN PARK



ANJA BREYTENBACH , AGE 16, ALBERT PARK, AUCKLAND

Sing like the birds

It's highly probable that humans were inspired to sing by listening to birds. While we can't definitively travel back in time to witness the dawn of human vocal expression, there's compelling evidence and logical reasoning to support this idea. Birdsong is a constant and often beautiful auditory presence in nature. Early humans living in close proximity to the natural world would have been continuously exposed to the diverse melodies, rhythms, and intricate patterns of bird vocalizations. Humans across cultures and throughout history have demonstrated an innate appreciation for music and rhythmic sounds. It's plausible that the complex and often pleasing sounds of birdsong resonated with this inherent human tendency.

Humans have a natural inclination to mimic sounds they hear. Just as children learn to speak by imitating adults, early humans may have instinctively tried to replicate the sounds of birds. This act of imitation could have been a precursor to more structured forms of vocal expression

that eventually evolved into singing. In many indigenous cultures around the world, birds and their songs hold significant symbolic and spiritual meaning, often featuring prominently in myths, legends, and rituals involving singing and chanting. This suggests a long-standing connection between human vocal expression and the sounds of birds.

The development of music and singing likely provided evolutionary advantages, fostering social cohesion, communication, and emotional bonding within early human communities. The pleasing and complex nature of birdsong could have served as a natural model for developing these beneficial vocalizations. Human singing now is far more complex than birdsong, incorporating language, narrative, harmony, and sophisticated musical structures. However, the initial spark of inspiration, the recognition of the beauty and communicative power of vocal sounds in the natural world, likely came, at least in part, from listening to the captivating melodies of birds.



EM MCDUGALL, AGE 14, AUCKLAND ZOO



▲ FINN BLACKSHAH, AGE 12
AUCKLAND DOMAIN WINTER GARDENS

▼ ETHAN FULLAM, AGE 10
MURIWAI REGIONAL PARK





▲ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
WHANGAPOUA, COROMANDEL

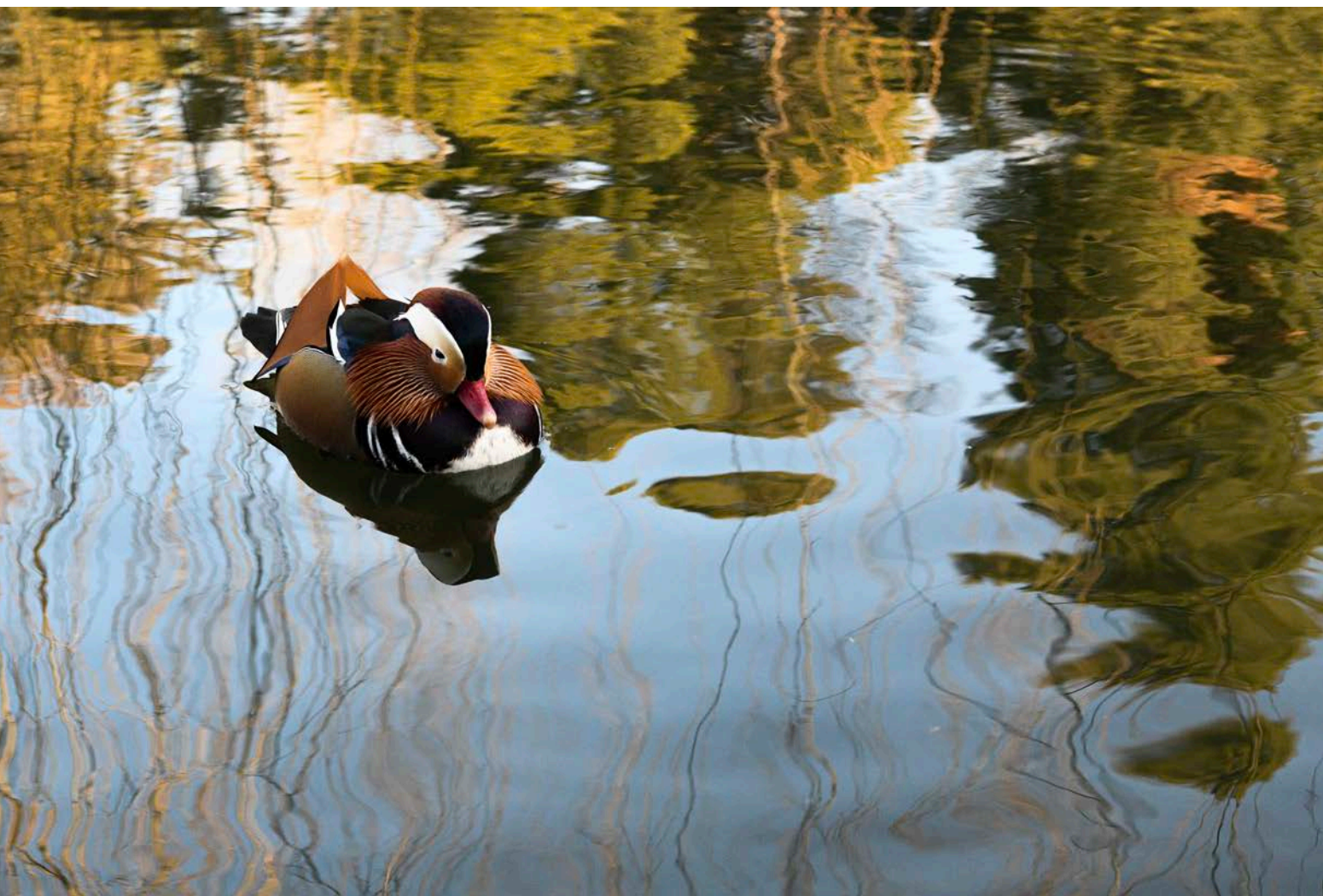
▼ INDIE FORD, AGE 11
WHANGAPOUA, COROMANDEL

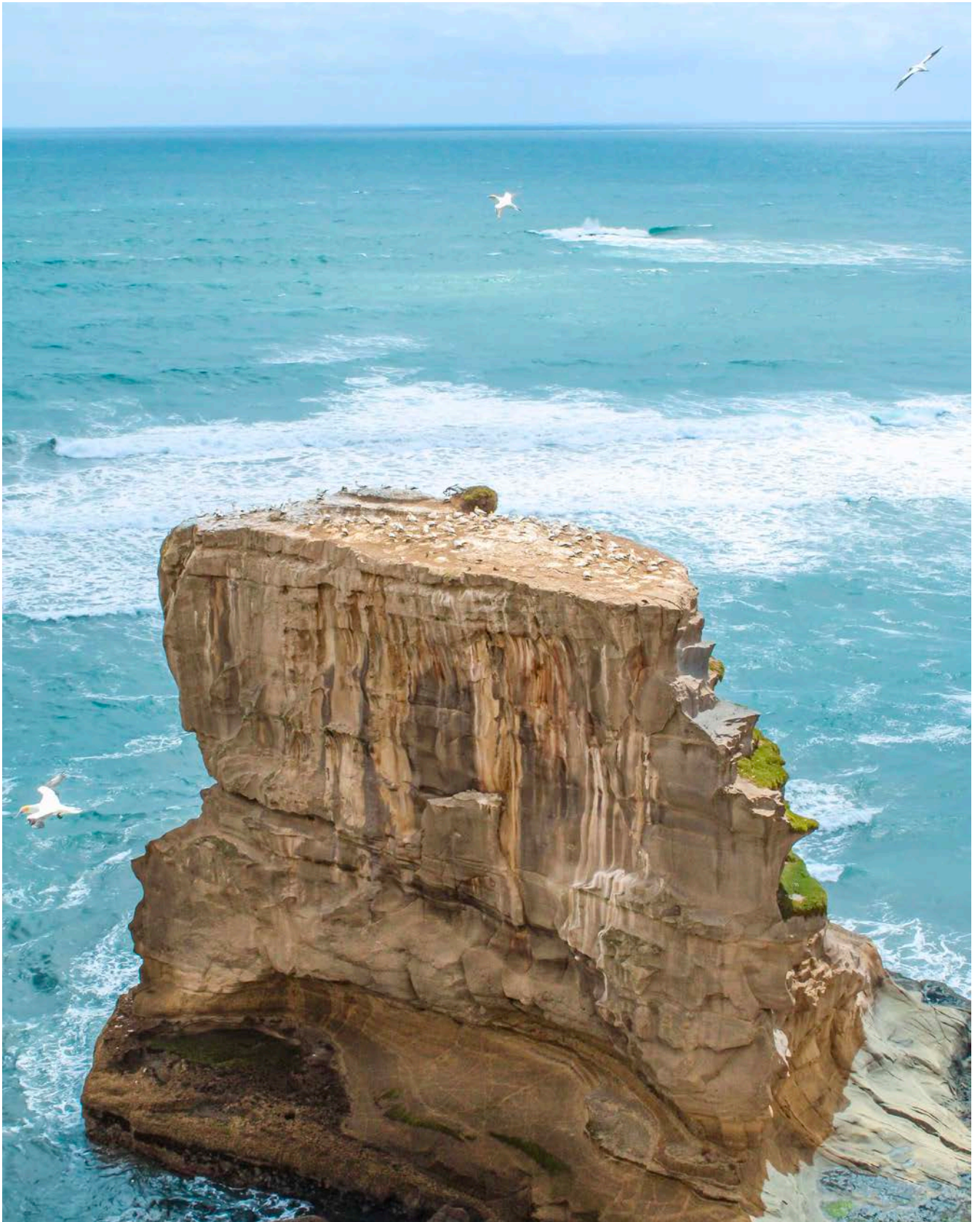




▲ TANAV NALLA, AGE 12
MURIWAI REGIONAL PARK

▼ YI FEI FAN, AGE 13
TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY, CHINA



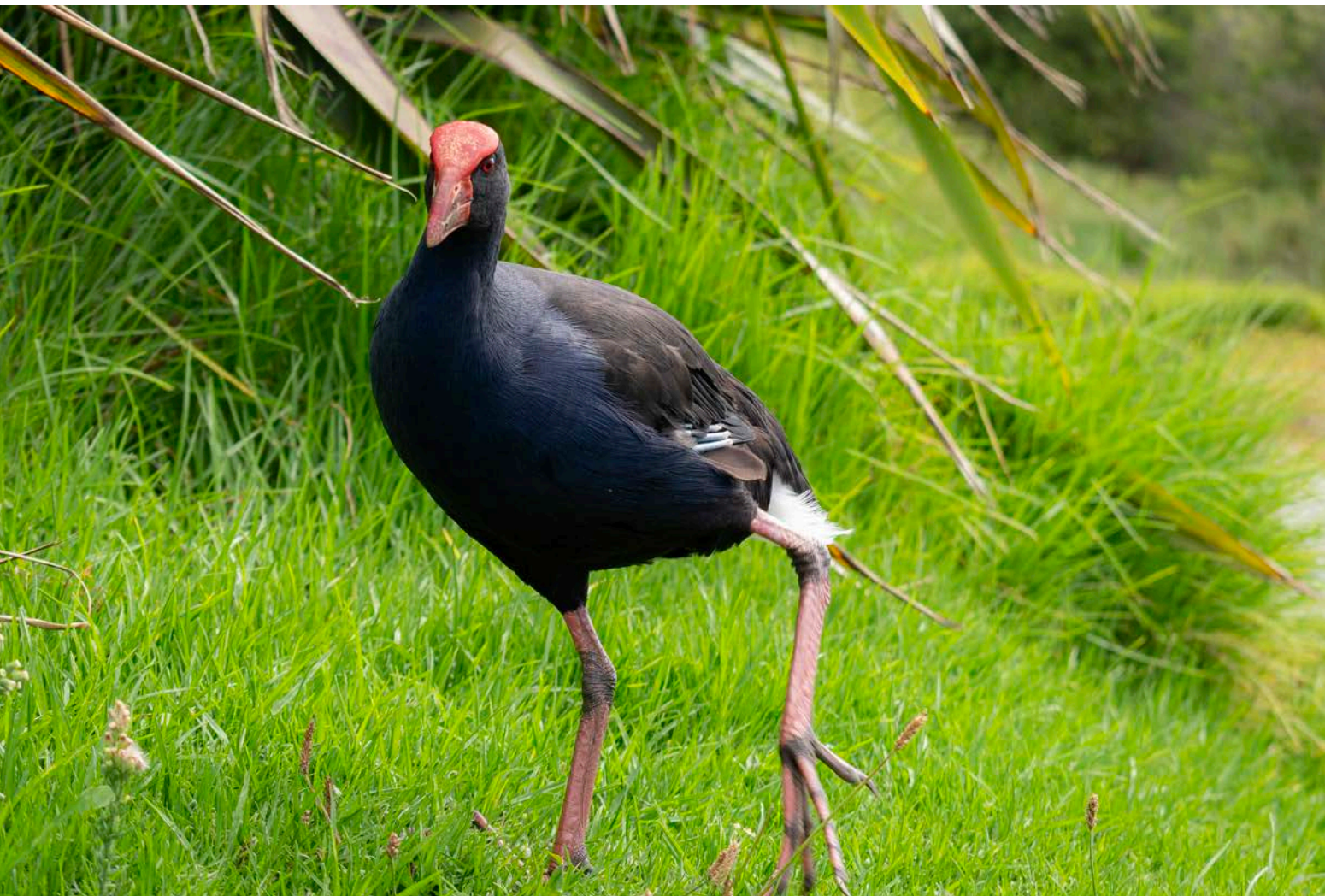


SAMUEL ZHOU, AGE 10, MURIWAI REGIONAL PARK



▲ INDIGO JONES, AGE 11
AUCKLAND BOTANIC GARDENS

▼ MAISIE COMESKEY, AGE 8
TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE





GABRIEL AUSTIN, AGE 13, MURIWAI REGIONAL PARK



ROY MA, AGE 10, MARTYN WILSON FIELD, AUCKLAND



ALISSA KANE, AGE 14, KEPA BUSH RESERVE

Youth in Transition: Wellbeing workshops

PHOTOGRAPHS BY YOUTH IN TRANSITION (DUKE HOUSE)

We conducted workshops at Youth in Transition (www.youthintransition.org.nz) last year that brought the powerful combination of nature and photography to enhance the wellbeing of the participants. Nature photography workshops merge the therapeutic effects of being in the natural world with the creative expression of capturing it. Development of mindfulness is a significant advantage. By focusing on the elements needed for a great shot – a flower’s intricacies, light patterns in the forest, or animal movements – photographers naturally become more present. This heightened awareness is a key element of mindfulness, known for its ability to reduce anxiety and improve mental focus.

The immersion in nature that often accompanies photography offers substantial benefits for both mental and physical health. It frequently involves physical activity like walking and exploring, leading to increased fitness. Regular movement is vital for physical health and positively impacts mental wellbeing. Furthermore, exposure to natural light and fresh air has been shown to improve sleep and increase energy levels, contributing to overall wellness.

Nature photography also serves as a valuable creative outlet, fostering self-expression and personal satisfaction. The artistic process of composition, experimentation, and editing can be deeply rewarding, providing feelings of accomplishment and joy. This creative engagement not only lifts spirits but also offers unique and beneficial stimulation for the brain.

'A huge thank you to Tushar and Keerti at Imagen8 from us all at Youth In Transition for delivering an incredible photography course at our retreat at Duke House. Over the course, they shared their expertise with our young people, and the results were truly inspiring. The venue provided the perfect backdrop for capturing beautiful moments, and it was wonderful to see the young people discover and showcase their hidden talents through photography. Your engaging and thoughtful approach made a lasting impact, and we're already looking forward to the next course in May. Thank you both for your dedication and for making the experience so special!'

Nick Schanschieff, Youth in Transition























Natural beauty

In this story, young photographers share the natural beauty of New Zealand in its diverse forms, from the beaches of North Island to the mountains of the South Island. There is also beauty in the sunrises and sunsets of our daily lives in the big city. These images inspire us to find those moments and to travel to places we may have never been.



ELLA CROSSWELL, AGE 12, CORNWALL PARK



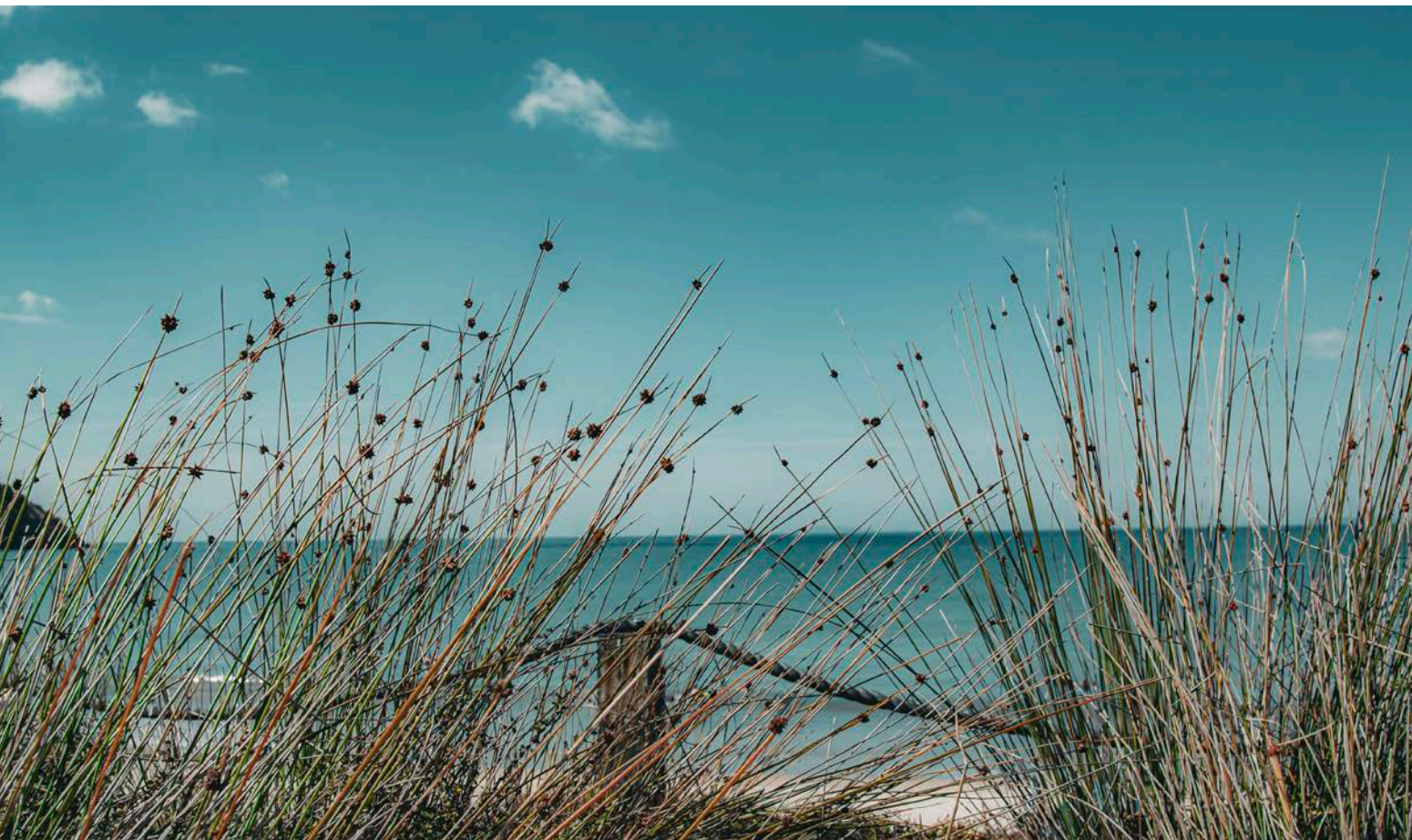
INDIE FORD, AGE 11, HAHEI, COROMANDEL



INDIE FORD, AGE 11, CATHEDRAL COVE, COROMANDEL



INDIE FORD, AGE 11, WHANGAPOUA, COROMANDEL



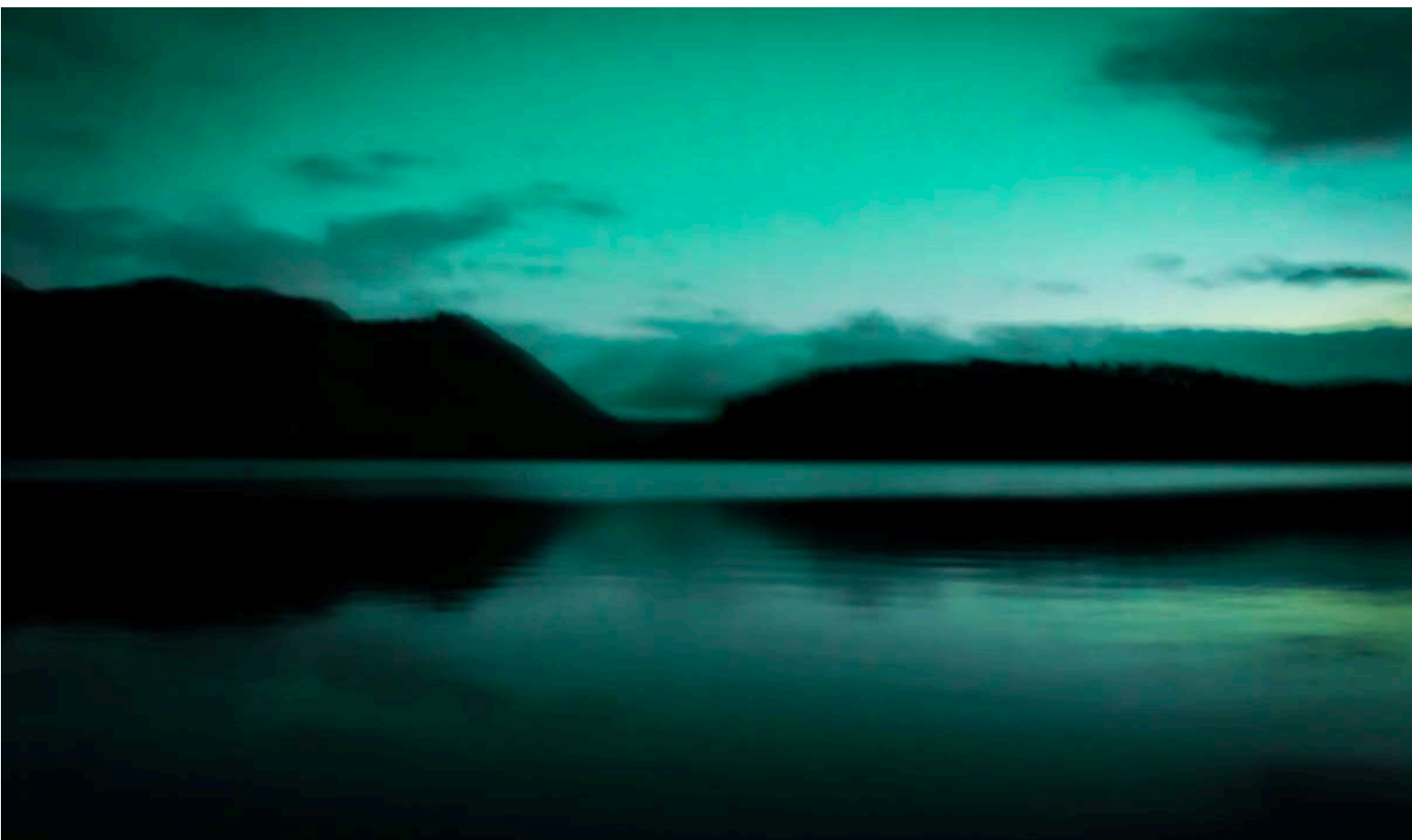
INDIE FORD, AGE 11, WHANGAPOUA, COROMANDEL



RAYEN BAO, AGE 13, AUCKLAND



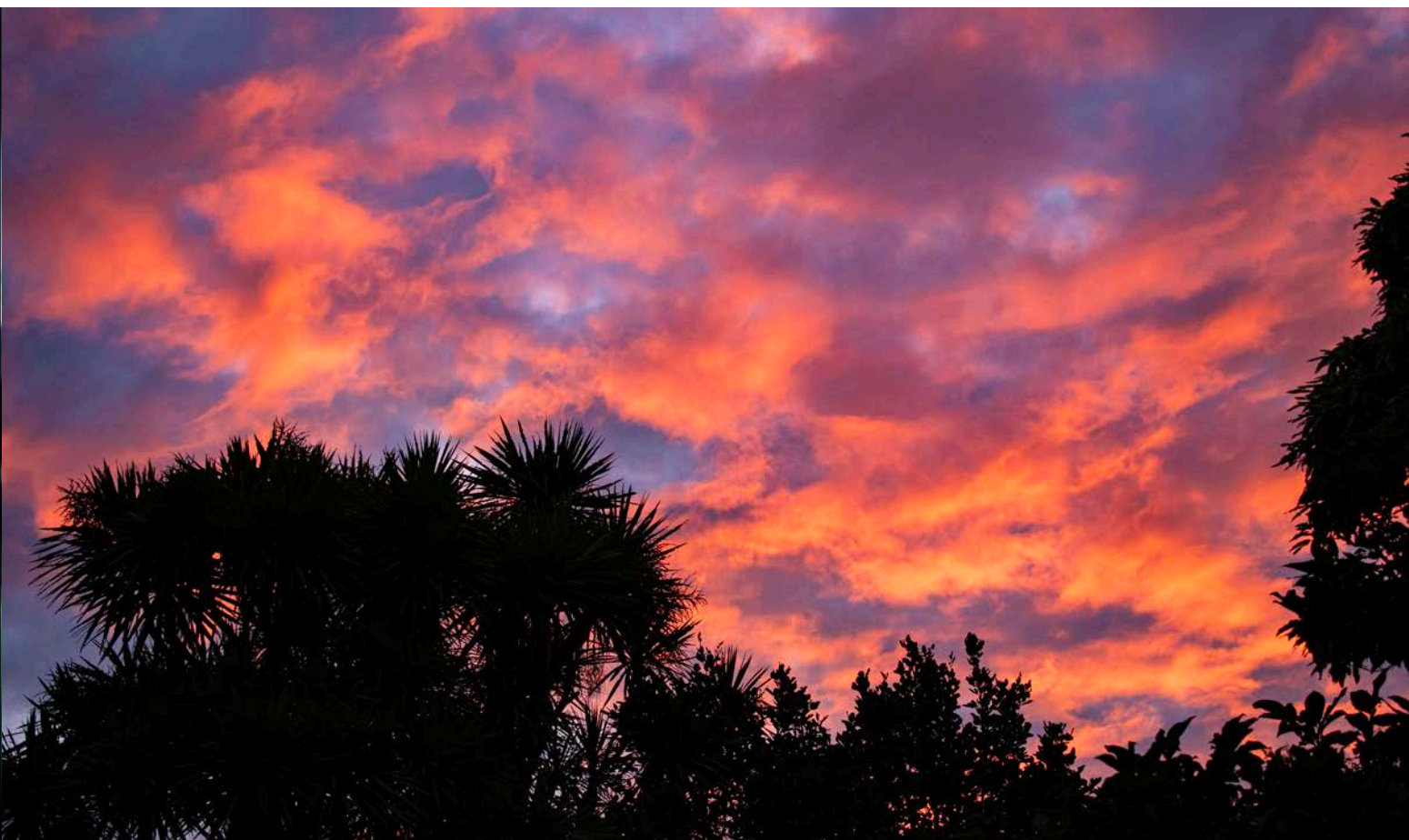
INDIE FORD, AGE 11, HOT WATER BEACH, COROMANDEL



SAMUEL ZHOU, AGE 10, BLUE LAKE, ROTORUA



SAMUEL ZHOU, AGE 10, ARATIATIA RAPIDS, TAUPO



SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, COATESVILLE



SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, BAY OF ISLANDS



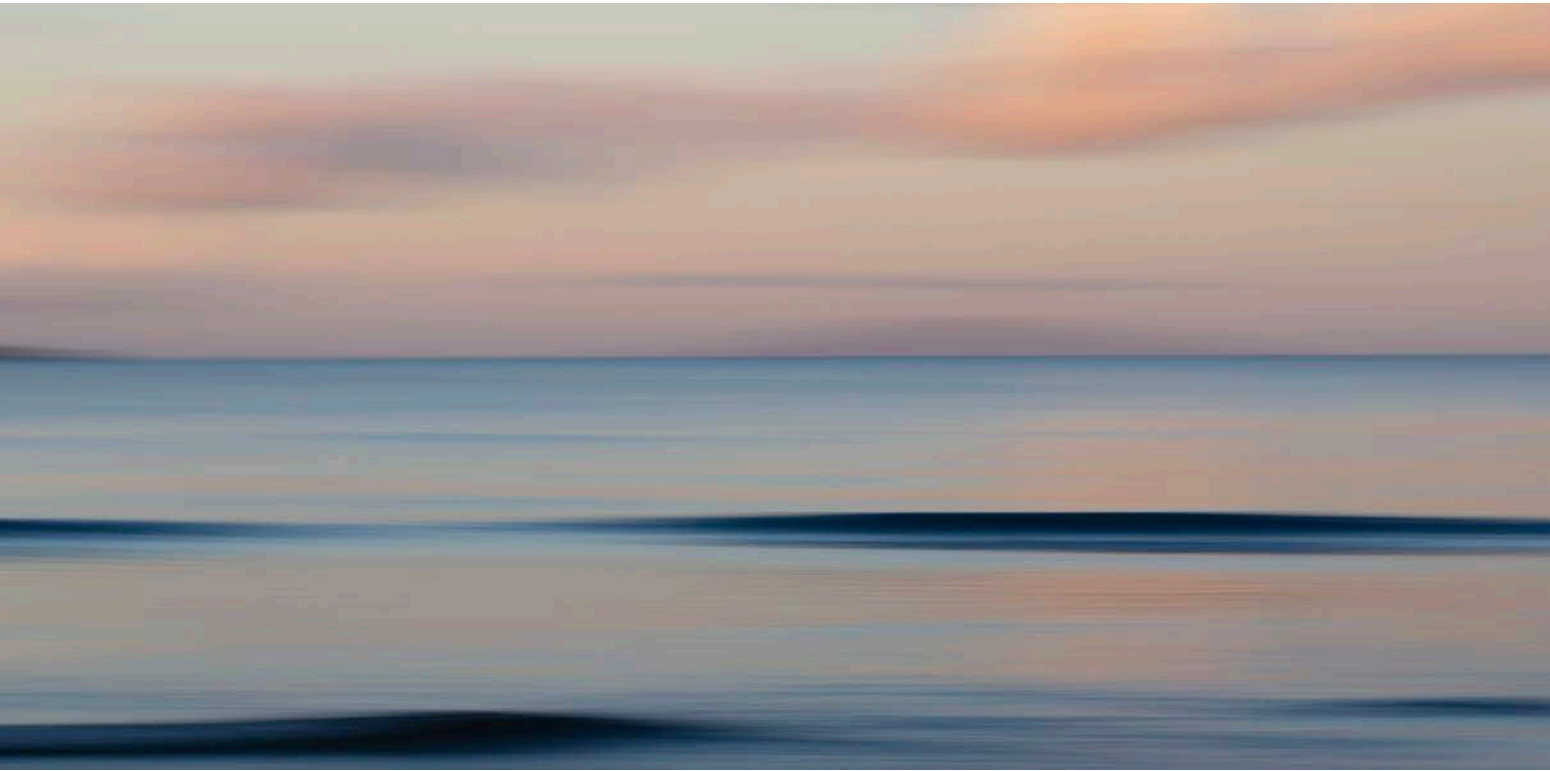
SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, URUPUKAPUKA ISLAND



SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, RUSSEL



BENJAMIN PEENS-HOUGH, AGE 14, ARROWTOWN



ETHAN FULLAM, AGE 10, LONG BAY REGIONAL PARK



SAMUEL ALARCON, AGE 8, LONG BAY REGIONAL PARK



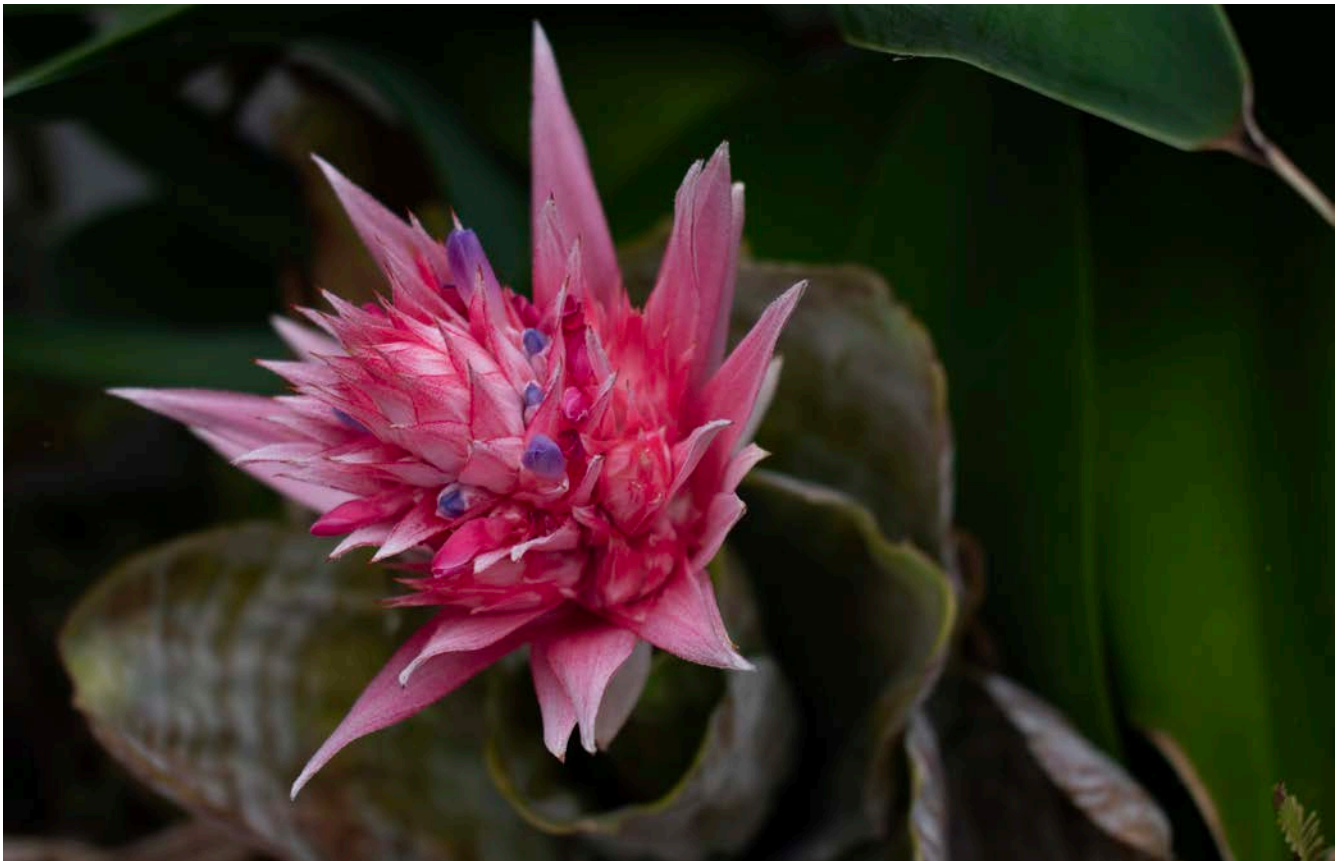
ETHAN FULLAM, AGE 10, LONG BAY REGIONAL PARK

Flowers

"Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul."

Luther Burbank

Flowers offer a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits, impacting us both mentally and physically. Being around flowers triggers happy emotions, increases feelings of life satisfaction, and reduces feelings of depression, anxiety, and agitation. They can lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone) and promote relaxation. Certain floral scents, like lavender and jasmine, have calming effects that can help improve sleep quality. Giving and receiving flowers creates positive social interactions, strengthens bonds, and reduces feelings of loneliness. The vibrant colors and beauty of flowers can create a more positive and inviting environment in homes and workplaces. Having flowers in a study or work environment may improve focus, concentration, and even creativity.



AN VU BACH KHUU, AGE 9, WEST LYNN GARDENS



AN VU BACH KHUU, AGE 9, WEST LYNN GARDENS



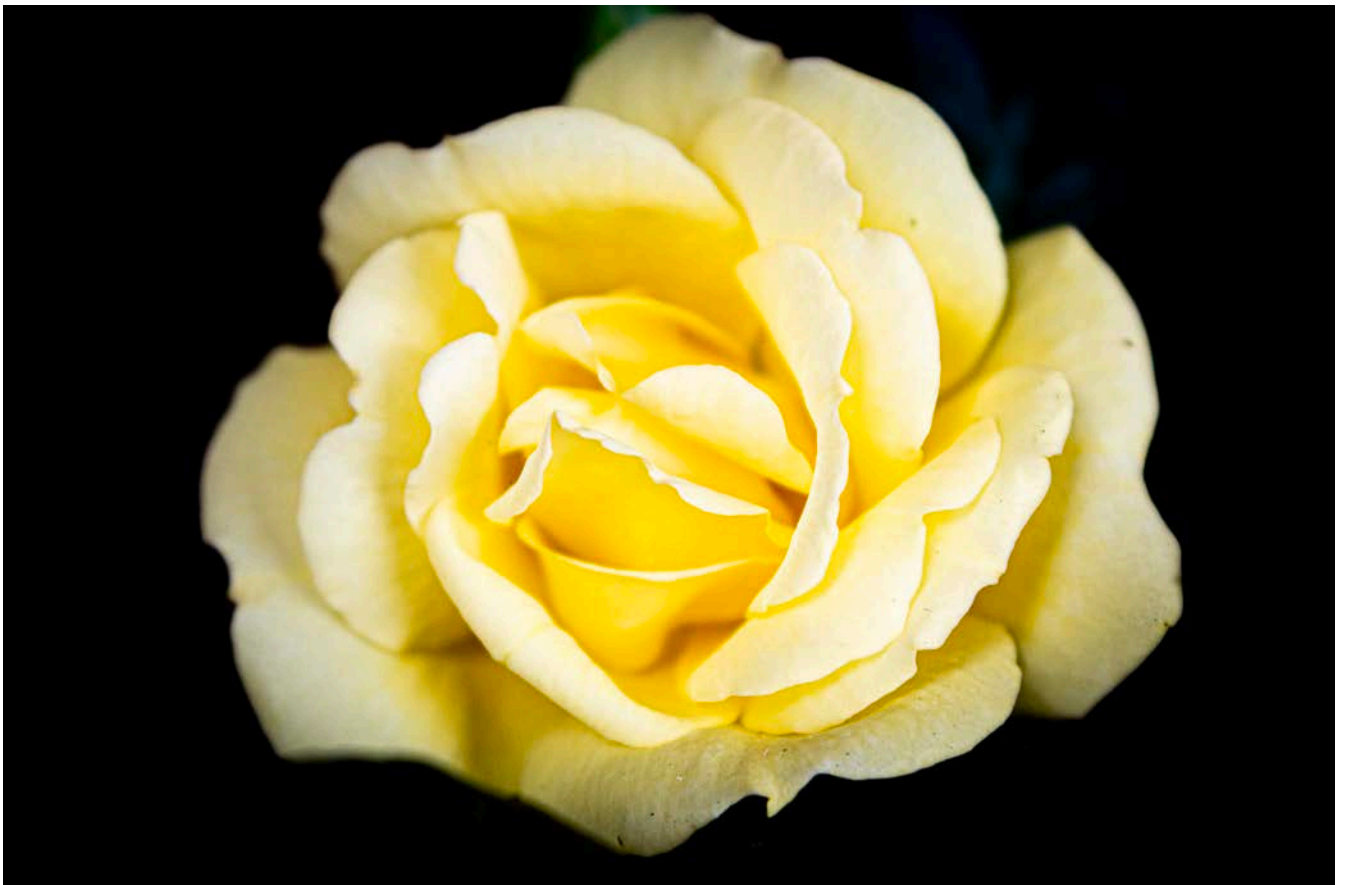
ETHAN MCRAE, AGE 14, GREENHITHE, AUCKLAND



GRAYSON HANNAH, AGE 9, FRANKLIN FARM, WAIMAUKU



MIKAYLA VELDHOUSE, AGE 10, AUCKLAND DOMAIN WINTERGARDENS



MIKAYLA VELDHOUSE, AGE 10, AUCKLAND DOMAIN WINTERGARDENS



ALEXIS BOWATER, AGE 11, AUCKLAND BOTANIC GARDENS



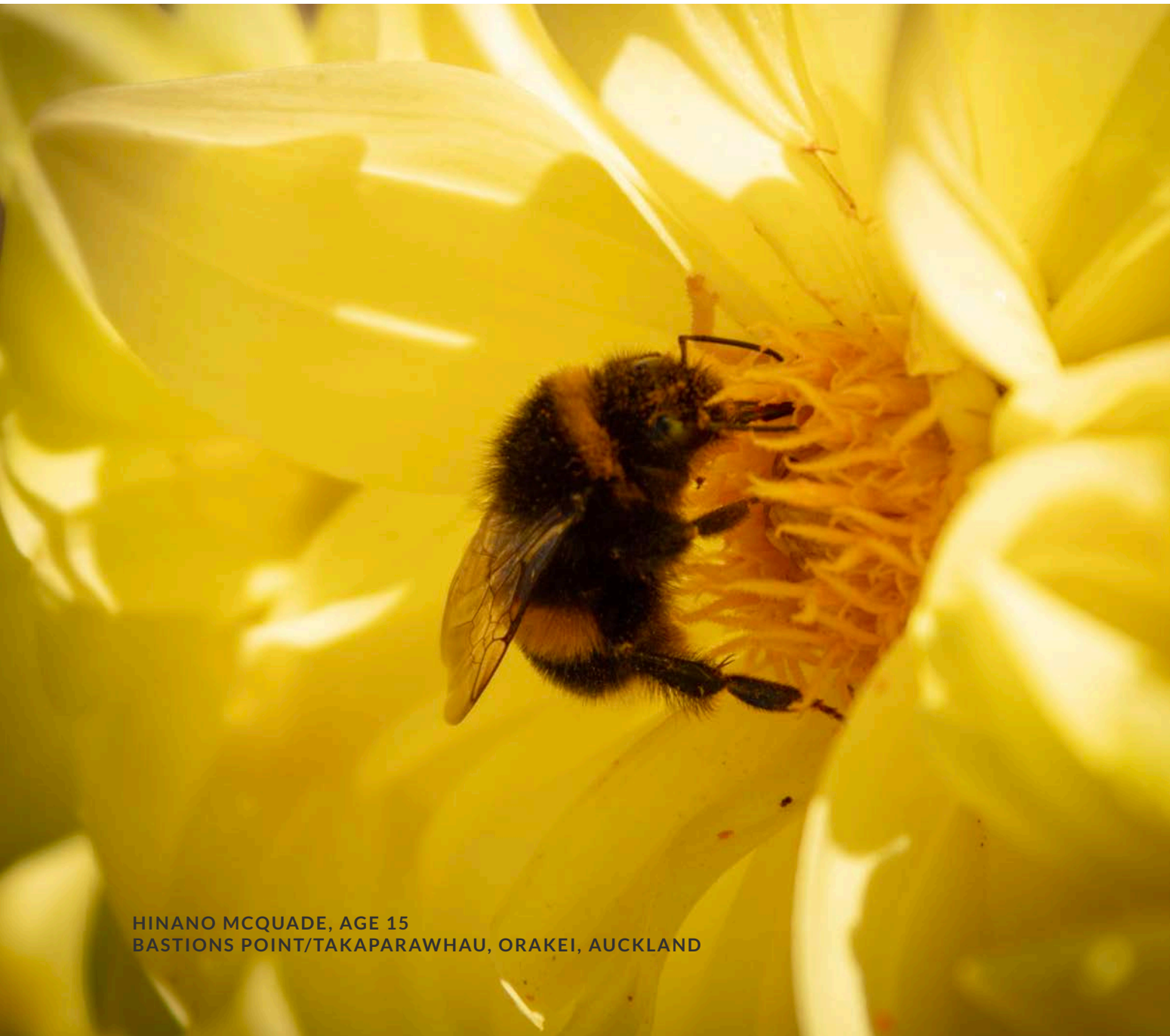
REX BOWATER, AGE 8, AUCKLAND BOTANIC GARDENS

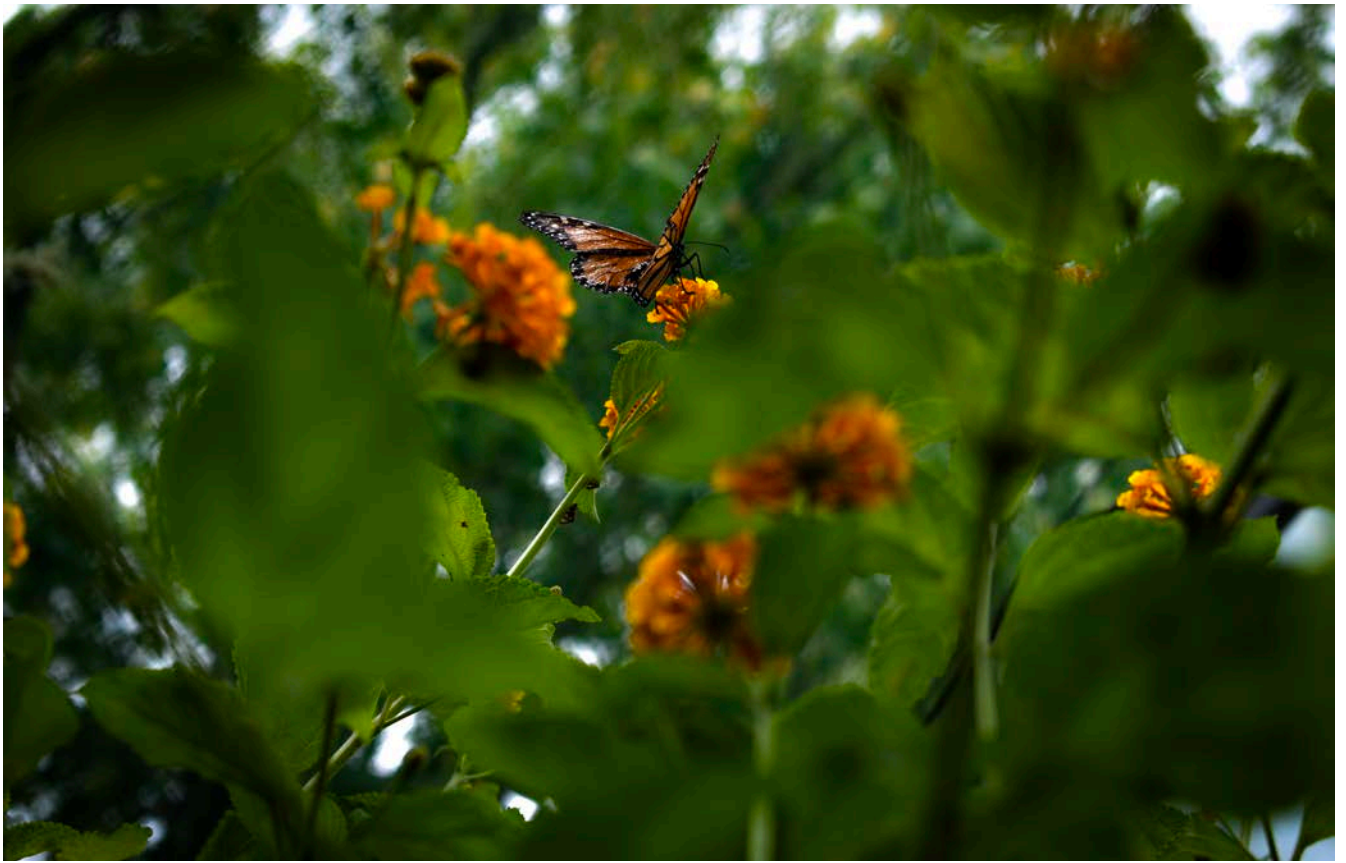


ROSE BAO, AGE 11, WEST LYNN GARDENS

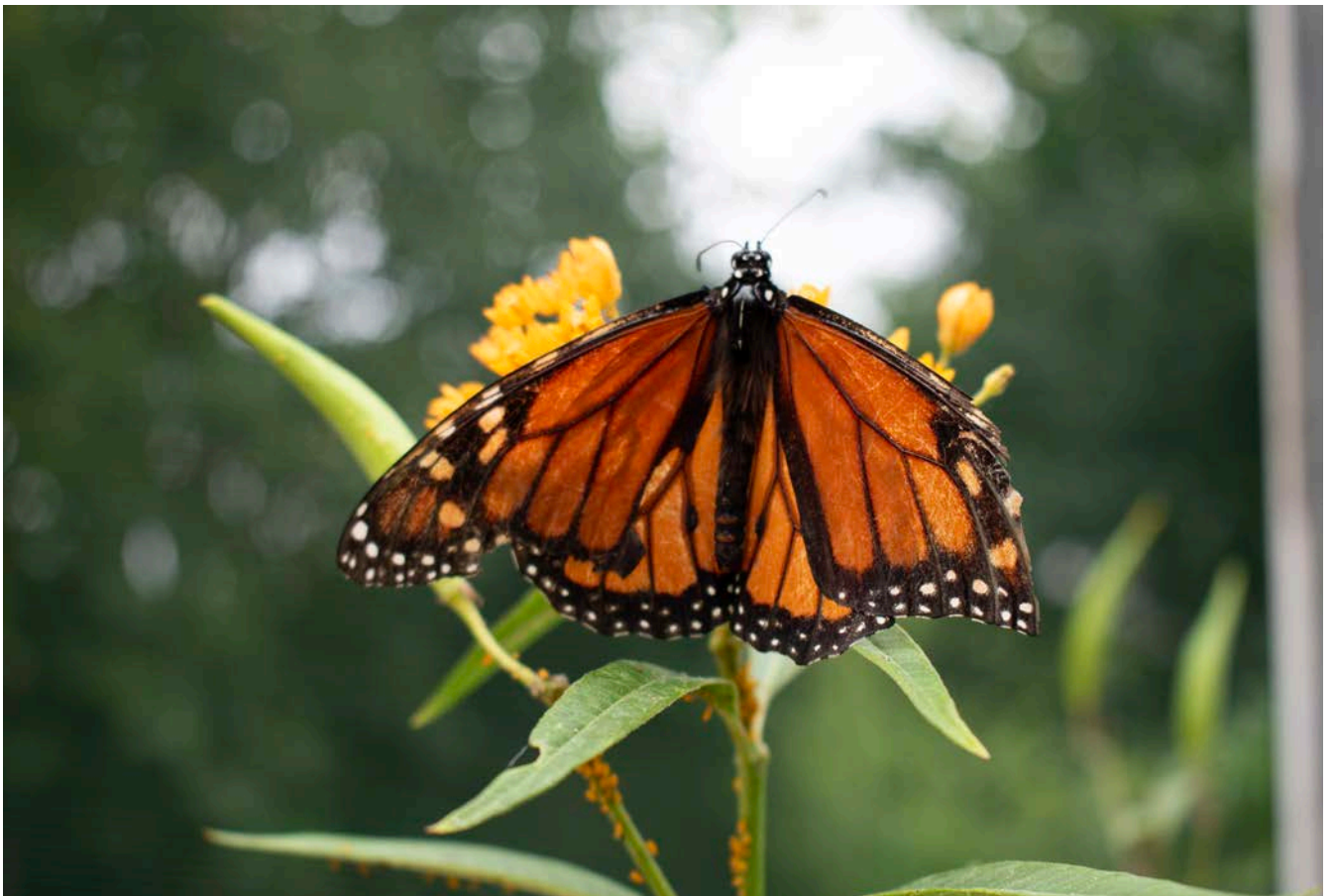
Little creatures

Insects are the unsung heroes of our ecosystems, playing vital roles in maintaining balance and supporting life. As pollinators, they are essential for the reproduction of countless plants, including many of our food crops. They act as natural pest control, with predatory insects keeping populations of harmful species in check. As decomposers, they break down organic matter, recycling nutrients back into the soil. Insects are a crucial food source for numerous birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals, forming the base of many food webs. Their presence ensures healthy soil, clean water, and the continuation of essential ecological processes. They deserve our respect, just like all other components of our vast and complex ecosystem.





ANJA BREYTENBACH , AGE 16, WEST LYNN GARDENS BUTTERFLY HOUSE



AN VU BACH KHUU, AGE 9, WEST LYNN GARDENS



GRAYSON HANNAH, AGE 9, FRANKLIN FARM, WAIMAUKU



MIKAYLA VELDHOUSE, AGE 10, WEST LYNN GARDENS BUTTERFLY HOUSE



MISHKA SOROKA, AGE 12, WEST LYNN GARDENS BUTTERFLY HOUSE



ROSE BAO, AGE 11, WEST LYNN GARDENS



ROY MA, AGE 10, AUCKLAND BOTANIC GARDENS



SOFIA MANDLE, AGE 16, WEST LYNN GARDENS



ANNABEL TAYLOR, AGE 9, TAHUNA TOREA RESERVE



LOREN WEBBER, AGE 9, AWARUKU RESERVE

Patterns

Artists have long drawn inspiration from natural patterns, replicating or abstracting them in paintings, sculptures, and textiles. Polynesian and Australian Aboriginal art deeply integrate patterns, reflecting their connection to nature, spirituality, and ancestral stories. In Polynesia, repeating geometric motifs like spirals, waves, and chevrons are meticulously carved or woven, often symbolizing genealogy, navigation, and the interconnectedness of life. These patterns possess mana (spiritual power). Australian Aboriginal art utilizes dots, lines, and concentric circles to depict Dreamtime stories, land features, and ancestral journeys. These seemingly abstract patterns hold profound cultural meaning, representing landscapes,

waterholes, animal tracks, and the spiritual realm. The patterns act as visual narratives, passed down through generations, connecting people to their land and heritage.

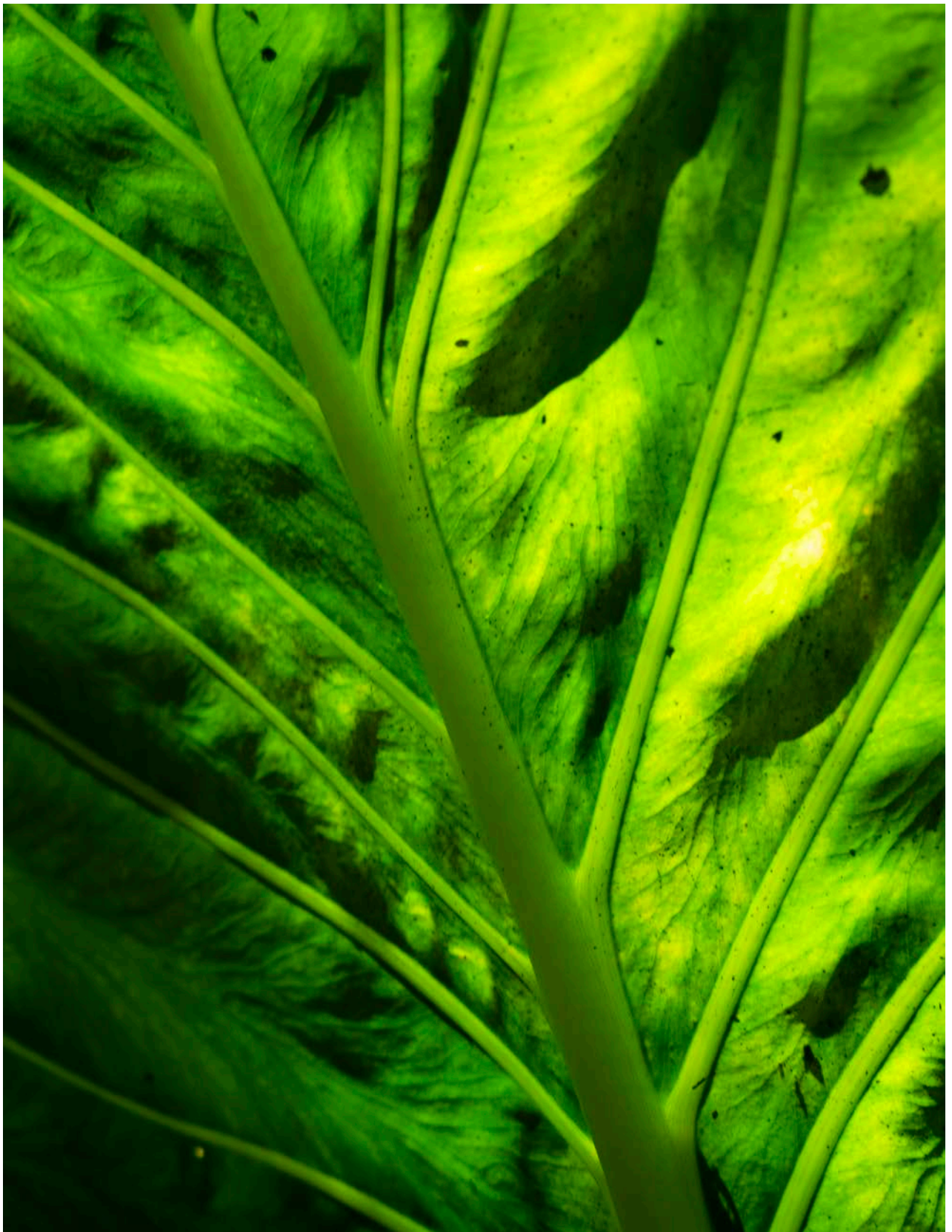
Natural patterns replicated in our art evoke feelings of awe, tranquility, and connection to the natural world. They are woven into cultural identities, reflecting a deep-seated appreciation for the inherent beauty and order found in the world around us. These patterns continue to inspire and inform artistic expression and cultural understanding, bridging the gap between the natural and the human-made.



INDIE FORD, AGE 11, OFF THE EAST COAST OF NZ



MISHKA SOROKA, AGE 12, ARDMORE AIRPORT



AN VU BACH KHUU, AGE 9 (CHURCHILL PARK



FINN ELSMORE, AGE 10, AUCKLAND BOTANIC GARDENS



ALEXIS BOWATER, AGE 11, AWARUKU RESERVE



TANAV NALLA, AGE 12, KITEKITE FALLS



EM MCDUGALL, AGE 14, AUCKLAND DOMAIN WINTERGARDENS



October's poplars are flaming torches lighting the way to winter.

Nova Bair

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