



New Zealand to the Fore

OUR MAY 1990 CALENDAR PHOTO has come in for high praise recently. Entitled "Odd Man Out", the Darryl Torckler image won best overall photo in the US International Underwater Photography

competition. It is the second time in a row that Darryl has won the competition. Congratulations! Darryl Torckler's brilliant photos will be featured again in our 1991 calendar and diary. 🐟

Minding Humphrey

FOUR TONNE BULL ELEPHANT SEAL in a Tauranga carpark is a rare and wonderful sight, but all that blubber could cause a nasty accident if provoked. So when he came to town, Tauranga Forest and Bird set up a "Humphrey minder" to see that the people and Humphrey didn't get in each other's way.

Humphrey has been around the Bay of Plenty and Coromandel beaches for five summers now, at a time of year when elephant seals should be heading south to the sub-Antarctic islands to breed. He is an elderly bull, perhaps too old to defend a harem of

cows from younger bulls, and seems to prefer summer in the warmer north. Despite his bulk and awesome mouth, an elephant seal eats only fish and shellfish and is unlikely to bite people, unlike the smaller and more dangerous leopard seal. However Humphrey could move very fast in a caterpillar-like motion, and the "minder" had to keep a path open to the sea should he retreat back to the water in a hurry.

After entertaining crowds over Christmas, Humphrey left the harbour at the New Year and has not been sighted since.



Humphrey minds Meg Graeme and dog Toby, and the subject of all that attention. Photo: Bay of Plenty Times

CRA – Turning Up the Heat

AS CONCERN about the greenhouse effect increases, governments around the world are increasingly questioning the need for developments which might add to the problem. In New Zealand, however, despite Geoffrey Palmer's and the Ministry for the Environment's rhetoric about the dangers of global warming, Australian giant CRA are proceeding with plans for a coal-fired power station at Marsden Point.

The effects of the 1000 MW proposal are major.

- 9 million tonnes per year of carbon dioxide will be released – an increase of 22 percent of the total released in New Zealand now.
- 90 million tonnes of coal will move through the site over 30 years, and at any one time there will be 700,000 tonnes of coal stockpiled.
- 200,000 tonnes of ash will be produced a year, requiring a dumping site of 42 ha over 30 years.
- Even if the station's filters are 99.9 percent efficient, 436 kg of fly ash would be emitted each day from the plant's chimney.
- 23,870 tonnes of sulphur dioxide will be released into the atmosphere every year unless CRA filter it out in a very costly process.

From a biological point of view the greatest impact of the station will be on the marine life of picturesque Bream Bay. Vast quantities of cold sea water – possibly 3 million tonnes per day – will be sucked in to cool the plant, and then discharged, but it will then be up to 7 degrees Celsius warmer than the surrounding sea water.

Marine ecologist Lou Ritchie says there will be massive marine life mortality, especially of the larval stages of fish such as snapper, trevally, kingfish, kahawai, plus shellfish and crayfish, when up to 3 million tonnes of sea water is pushed through the plant.

In Whangarei, locals have formed the group Stop CRA Pollution (SCRAP) to halt the proposal. Despite the enormous environmental risks attached to the project, and the apparent lack of necessity for such a massive plant when New Zealand is already oversupplied with power, the Government is adopting a hands off approach. Under the new de-regulated power supply structure, if CRA can supply energy to the Auckland market cheaper than Electricorp can, then the coal-fired station could proceed. The proposal points up the need for a national energy policy which takes into account factors other than just the short term cost benefits. 🐟

