

Conference Abstract

The Preservation of Two Leopard Seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*), Ten Years Apart

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Received: 15 May 2018 | Published: 04 Jul 2018

Citation: Burns E, Fyfe J, Ferrall-Heath H, Hupman K (2018) The Preservation of Two Leopard Seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*), Ten Years Apart. Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e26682.

<https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.2.26682>

Abstract

Discussing the process from death to display for two significant *Rāpoka*, leopard seals, (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) undertaken as preservation projects by the Otago Museum. The first of these is a large female which died within the takiwa (district) of *Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki* in 2008. This seal was significant in the sense that it was the first marine mammal preservation project undertaken by the museum in collaboration with local iwi in the following the Ngāi Tahu Treaty of Waitangi settlement, where iwi regained the management rights of *kā kararehe o takaroa* (marine mammals) remains within the Marine Mammal Protection Act framework. This preservation project became a successful model for collaboration between iwi, government wildlife organisations, researchers and the museums when a marine mammal dies in the Otago Region.

In 2017 the death of a neonate leopard seal pup, significant given its birth on St Kilda Beach, Dunedin within the *takiwa* of *Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou* sees the Otago Museum working to preserve this important leopard seal. This talk discusses the parallels and differences between the two projects, the importance of collaboration, recent applications of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computed Tomography (CT) scanning preservation methods as well as using more traditional methods of taxidermy and skeltonisation. The guiding principles have been to preserve voucher information for the

future, educate visitors about this Antarctic species, to expose our local community to the ongoing links between Māori and the natural world, and to demonstrate how wildlife management, science, museums and practitioners in indigenous knowledge can successfully collaborate in the practical and interpretive context of curation.

Keywords

Marine Mammals, Collaboration, Preservation, Indigenous

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