



19-E-0523 / DOC-6042325

2 September 2019

T Benseman
via *FYI.org.nz*

Dear T Benseman

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, dated 5th August 2019. You requested the following:

Please provide a copy of any studies you have done on the increased risk your workers pose to our native creatures by standing in the entrances of their burrows/nests where scent is likely very high, then traipsing this scent over long distances, thus increasing the likelihood of interdiction by predators, which are then able to locate nests and kill the occupants.

Context to your request

We note that information previously provided by the Department under the Official Information Act 1982 has subsequently been edited and republished on various media and social media platforms. This has been conducted in a manner that misrepresents scientific evidence and facts provided by the Department. In addition, we are conscious that information released by the Department has been used by others to misrepresent the work carried out by the Department to protect New Zealand's native species.

Bearing that in mind, we have decided to provide the following contextual information as it may assist your understanding of some of the issues you have raised in your request. This contextual information is also provided for the benefit of the general public.

Visiting nests and burrows of native species

DOC staff may visit areas near nests and burrows of native species where it is necessary to do so, for example,

- To collect eggs or capture animals for captive breeding programmes which will enable them to breed with captive support and ultimately allow endangered populations to recover;
- To translocate animals to alternative sites in circumstances where it is no longer safe for them to remain within their original location, or, where there is an opportunity to start a new population at another site for the purpose of species recovery;
- To conduct research or monitoring of animal species within a particular habitat or region;
- To attach bird bands, tags or transmitters on to birds and mammals for monitoring purposes; and
- To remove or replace bird bands, tags or transmitters that have been attached to birds or mammals for monitoring purposes.

The importance of monitoring native species

The Department's Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting System provides comprehensive information about New Zealand's native species and biodiversity across public conservation lands. This monitoring information:

- Provides a foundation of sound data to better inform effective management planning and policy development;
- Improves understanding and reporting on the health of New Zealand's biodiversity and trends in ecological integrity;
- Reduces reliance on anecdotal evidence and expert advice by delivering factual evidence to inform decisions and report on progress towards outcomes;
- Improves DOC's ability to compare between projects and know what interventions worked best;
- Helps further identify what work should be focused on; and
- Helps DOC and New Zealand meet national and international reporting requirements including state of the environment reporting.

The Department's monitoring programme therefore forms a crucial part of identifying threatened or endangered native species and ensuring that they are given ample protection and support to increase their population size.

Your OIA request

We have searched for papers, internal reports and university theses that may contain studies that are relevant to your request.

The following research paper falls within the scope of your request and is attached:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	24 June 2002	Keedwell, R & Sanders, M (2002) Nest monitoring and predator visitation at nests of banded dotterels. <i>The Condor</i> 104:899–902	Released in full

This research paper discusses a study which tests whether visiting dotterel nests for monitoring purposes increases the chances of those nests then being visited by predators. The study also examines whether there is any correlation between the direction of approach by the humans and the predators that visit the nests.

The study found that there was *no* significant correlation between the proportion of monitored nests that were visited by predators and the proportion of unmonitored nests that were also visited by predators. The study also found that there was *no* evidence to suggest that the directions of approach of the humans and predators that visited the nests were related, and predators approached nests from seemingly random directions that did not correlate with human scent trails to nests. The study concluded that "*approaching nests had little influence on how predators located [those] nests*".

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents will be published on the Department's website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Iftikar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fathima Iftikar
Director (acting), Terrestrial Science Unit