

Mike Hunua

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24 March 2026

Ngāmotu / New Plymouth
Office
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Ref: OIAD-6145

Tēnā koe Mike

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), that was transferred from the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) to DOC on 27 February 2026, in which you asked for:

“Has MPI or its predecessor, MAF, ever conducted a search or investigation into snakes being in the wild in New Zealand?

And if so, where, when, and why did this occur?”

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

On 16 March 2026 you clarified your request was focussed on land snakes only.

DOC undertakes surveys, monitoring, and research in relation to New Zealand’s indigenous flora and fauna, as well as certain introduced species where they pose a known or potential risk to native biodiversity. New Zealand does not have any native terrestrial snake species, and there is no evidence of established wild populations of snakes on land.

DOC does, however, have responsibility for native marine species, including sea snakes and sea kraits. These species are native to the wider Pacific region and are occasionally recorded in New Zealand waters as rare or vagrant visitors, typically associated with warmer ocean currents. These occurrences are considered naturally occurring but infrequent, and they do not represent established or resident populations.

Because there are no established wild snake populations in New Zealand, either terrestrial or marine, DOC does not conduct surveys or investigations specifically to search for snakes in the wild. As such, we do not hold any information relevant to your request. Therefore, we must refuse your request in accordance with s18(e) of the Act as the information does not exist.

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) may be published on the Department’s website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'T' followed by a circular flourish and a long horizontal stroke.

Tim Bamford
Director Terrestrial Biodiversity
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai