

**From:** [Rue Statham](#)  
**To:** [Maxine Joubert](#)  
**Cc:** [Jane Andrews](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Bittern ecologists reports on nesting / breeding season  
**Date:** Friday, 13 February 2026 11:36:30 am

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Maxine

I don't think we've got much more from DoC that's not been said before.  
The correspondence reaffirms, in my opinion, what I discussed yesterday.

To my knowledge our aerial surveys only revealed male Bittern (not much chance of nesting if birds don't breed, needing both a male and female pairing), the Regulation in question doesn't only refer to wetland birds.

*(9)(c) the activity must not disturb the roosting or nesting of indigenous birds during their breeding season;*

### S 7(2)(f)(i) Free and Frank Expression

we must be mindful of *all* indigenous birds.

So for completeness, unlikely that the majority our native birds species would be nesting in the wetland, most are not wetland birds and as far as I know we didn't pick up any others that we thought would be there (e.g. Spotless crane).

Other indigenous birds found in and around wetlands are more likely to prefer more suitable habitat for their nesting needs and forest birds are unlikely to be present in the Willow canopy.

There are records of Fernbird (most recently 2021) in the wetland and they have similar breeding season as Bittern, likely to petering out Feb/March when the chicks fledge. They're recorded around the edge of the wetland, but as they prefer thick dense vegetation to form their bowl-like nests, they maybe present in some parts of the wetland. I'm unaware if our surveys would have picked them up, given their size, or indeed if we were looking for them. Have to check.

### S 7(2)(f)(i) Free and Frank Expression

I'll look into the survey reporting, but it was focussed on our Regional Bittern programme, and I think it's also important to have the threatened plant survey I mentioned yesterday too. (noting the mention below of *nationally critically endangered flora*).

Regards  
Rue Statham  
Senior Ecologist  
Ecology Advice Team  
Environmental Services Department

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**From:** Maxine Joubert  
**Sent:** 13 February 2026 9:42 AM  
**To:** Rue Statham  
**Cc:** Jane Andrews  
**Subject:** FW: Bittern ecologists reports on nesting / breeding season

Hi Rue,

Are you happy to take a look at this and provide a response please?

I know we also contacted DOC, so wondering if the information we have is the same as wat the complainant is also providing from DOC?

Yesterday we spoke of the following:

- Wetland avifauna generally have a long breeding seasons

It's assumed any birds are finished nesting & fledged

- Council done surveying and did not find many indigenous species.
  - Only male Bittern were found.
  - Bittern are quite mobile & it is a large wetland
    - Data end of last year (survey) - males were booming - but snapshot at the time of the survey.
    - Information from Hugo & team - regional monitoring programme?
      - **Is there some publication / report / memo on this survey we can quote for the complainant? They may request a copy.**

Your help will be much appreciated.

Ngā mihi | Kind regards,

**Maxine Joubert** (*she/her*) | **Principal Specialist Environmental Monitoring Licensing and Compliance Department** | Te wāhanga mō te Tuku Raihana me te Ū ki ngā Ture Community Directorate | Te kāhui o te tari ā-hapori  
Phone (09) 301 0101 | Mobile 027 206 2811  
Auckland Council, Level 7, 135 Albert Street, Auckland Central  
Visit our website: [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

**Important: There are changes coming to the RMA which will take effect on Thursday 04 September.** For more information please see [Resource Management \(Infringement Offences\) Amendment Regulations 2025 \(SL 2025/162\) – New Zealand Legislation](#)

Useful Council contact numbers:

**24hr POLLUTION HOTLINE: 09 377 3107**

**COUNCIL CALL CENTRE: 09 301 0101**

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**From:** levonnets

**Sent:** Friday, 13 February 2026 9:06 am

**To:** Maxine Joubert ; PCE ; Phil Wilson

**Cc:** Peter Brahne ; Brendan Hoare

**Subject:** Bittern ecologists reports on nesting / breeding season

Good morning Maxine

Peter Langlands report on bittern for the nesting time review .

DOCs head scientist Colin O'DONNELL findings

And the bittern doc Manuel..

My Bittern research and reference

Along with Peter Tounders release on bittern

You will find all of their information is the same .. which proves that the nesting and chick and fledging season is NOT over in December to allow spraying in jan or feb.

Laying eggs sept -Dec

Incubation of eggs 25 days (til end of jan )

Chicks stay in nest 7 weeks ... (till end of march)

So it is very clear an offence of the wildlife act, a breach of nes-f 55

And a breach of coastal policy 11

And a breach of the Agrochemicals NZS-8409

On no aerial spraying of nesting birds.

Therefore along with the non target damage their cannot be anymore aerial spraying . These breeches of regulations and legislation

Along with incorrect permit lacking correct regulations must be addressed . With the appropriate actions for such breeches.

This would also make this activity non discretionary as it should have been originally considering the overlays and the nationally critically endangered species..

This must be actioned appropriately and all regulations and legislation applied for the spray zone and overlays.. and appropriate resource consent applied.

This cannot happen for another two years the damage to the wetland will be irreparable, The damage to the community irreparable and spraying of agrochemicals over a significant ecological area with nationally critically endangered flora and fauna should be of your highest protection ?

The damage done is major and unforgivable

And again spraying when birds are nesting a major offence ..

Peter Tounder-Bittern Review

<https://95bfm.com/bcast/me-and-all-my-homies-love-native-manu-matuku-h%C5%ABrepo-h%C4%81nuere-28-2026>

from podcast: Breeding:

Female builds the nest platform of reeds about 20-30cm above water in in the depths of a swamp.

Lay 3-5 olive-brown eggs between August and December, peak in November. Incubated by female alone for about 25 days until they hatch. Chicks stay in nest for about 7 weeks.

Males are polygamous and spend breeding time defending their territory. They can have multiple female partners on the nest incubating. So I suspect the males are so busy defending their harem they forget about partner support activities.

DOC Colin O'DONNELL email attached.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/sfc341.pdf>

matuku nesting breeding season forest and bird information

The Australasian Bittern, or matuku-hūrepo, is a critically endangered, shy, and secretive heron species in New Zealand that relies on healthy wetlands for breeding and feeding.

They are considered "nationally critical," with fewer than 1,000 birds left.

Here is a summary of the nesting and breeding information, based on studies and conservation efforts highlighted by Forest & Bird, DOC, and NZ Birds Online:

Breeding Season and Behavior

Season: The breeding season for matuku-hūrepo occurs during spring and summer, with eggs laid between August and December (peaking in November) and chick-rearing happening from October to February.

"Booming" Season: The breeding season is marked by the male's "booming" call, which is a low-frequency, resonant sound used to attract mates and defend territory. This booming typically peaks from mid-September to mid-November.

Courtship: Males are polygamous and may mate with multiple females within their

territory.

**Nest Type:** The nest is a platform of reeds and rushes (often raupō) built by the female. It is typically a semi-floating structure built in dense vegetation, usually 20–30 cm above the water, often in shallow water (20–60 cm deep).

**Nesting Facts**

**Clutch Size:** 3 to 5 eggs are usually laid.

**Incubation:** Incubated by the female alone for approximately 25 days.

**Fledging:** Chicks stay in the nest for about 7 weeks.

**Habitat:** They require dense, wetland vegetation, specifically favoring raupō reed beds.

Sent from my Galaxy