

06 November 2020

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 08 October 2020 in which you asked:

- *I am seeking information to understand how the Department of Conservation determines whether external researchers require DOC permits, or not, to undertake research on threatened New Zealand wildlife.*
- *I would like to know of all instances of external researchers (external to DOC regardless of affiliation or agency) undertaking research with either the Kākāpō and/or Takahē recovery programs in the period from 2016 to the present (note this covers the 2016 and 2019 breeding seasons of Kākāpō).*
- *For each above instance of external researchers undertaking research with the Kākāpō and/or Takahē recovery programs, I request the following information:*
 - *The species (to identify the recovery program; Kākāpō or Takahē).*
 - *The researcher affiliation (agency or organisation).*
 - *A brief statement of the purpose of the research, which is enough to understand what the research broadly investigates.*
 - *Whether the research was undertaken under DOC's management umbrella. That is, the researcher did not require DOC permitting for the research to be done as the research was included in DOC's management (YES or NO).*
 - *Were permits required (YES or NO)?*
 - *If permits were required, list the permit number(s) (in the instance of an international researcher, I would also like to know if the permit number corresponds to an export permit).*
 - *A rationale for why each instance of research was either included under DOC management or was not, and hence required DOC permits to be undertaken.*

As requested, we have provided a response in a tabulated format. Please refer to the attached document detailed in the table below.



Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	06 November 2020	OIAD-299 support information	Released in full

As additional context, in 2017 the Department adopted a new internal permitting process which included a national focus on improving the consistency of permitting. In line with this and additionally due to an increased number of research collaborations, the Kākāpō/Takahē team also sought to improve the consistency of their approach. This approach is that research which is initiated, contracted by or led by the Department is considered part of management and does not require a permit. Projects that are initiated and led by external parties are advised to seek appropriate permits.

We acknowledge minor inconsistencies in relation to the information provided here, specifically in relation to low risk sampling which required no bird handling (plants, faeces). These occurred prior to the Department's new permitting process changes.

The Department aims to support researchers throughout the DOC permitting process, and strives for continual improvement. We note that some research projects, despite receiving full support by the Kākāpō/Takahē team, have been either inconvenienced due to the time taken to complete the permitting process, or the research has not taken place due to the application being declined.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents will be published on the Department's website. As a courtesy, the researchers involved with the projects listed in the provided table will be made aware of the information released with this OIA.

Nāku noa, nā

Aaron Fleming
Operations Director Southern South Island
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai