

07 December 2022



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 09 November 2022 in which you asked questions about poaching in Wairarapa, and Aotearoa as a whole.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *How many species do you estimate are poached out of Wairarapa per year [or in any other suitable period of time]?*

The Department has received only sporadic reports of native fauna and flora being taken in the Wairarapa. We estimate the number of species being poached out of Wairarapa to be very low, however we strongly encourage anyone with information about poaching of native fauna and flora to contact the Department.

2. *Is DOC aware of any black market trade of native flora and fauna?*

The Department is aware of illegal trade in a small number of species of native flora and fauna. Species that have been noted in illegal trade within New Zealand include native reptiles (geckos and skinks), butterflies and bracket fungus. Internationally, there is a demand for illegally exported geckos and skinks, and smaller markets for native invertebrates and orchids.

3. *In the past 50 years, have there been any reports or prosecuted cases of poaching in Wairarapa? [this can pertain to both native and introduced species]*

Records covering the last 50 years do not exist. In records held by the Department, which only date from 2019 onwards, there are a small number (less than 5) of reports concerning poaching in the Wairarapa. These relate to the illegal take of geckos and butterflies from conservation land. No prosecutions resulted from these reports as of the date of this letter. There are no investigations underway at this time.

4. *Is poaching a concern for Wairarapa and the wider nation?*

The Department is working to ensure that species are protected from declining populations due to a wide variety of factors, including poaching. Where there is demand for New Zealand's native flora or fauna in illegal trade, those species may be at risk of poaching regardless of where they are located in New Zealand.



5. *What species are at the highest risk of poaching?*

The Department's Wildlife Crime Team work to identify where risks exist to species in the wild from poaching. Risks can change depending on seasonal and demand factors. At present, the team has identified native reptiles and skinks as being at highest risk of poaching.

6. *How are species, like bats and lizards, kept safe from poaching?*

A wide variety of methods are used to keep protected species safe from poaching. The Department's Wildlife Crime Team take a lead role in this regard and work to identify potential offenders who may be seeking to poach native wildlife. They work closely with the New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Police, and the Ministry for Primary Industries New Zealand, as well as foreign agencies and INTERPOL, to share information on suspected poachers. Our National Compliance Team sporadically provides advice to conservation groups and academics to help reduce risk to threatened populations through means such as obscuring location detail in publications, and installation of surveillance technology where appropriate.

7. *Have introduced species also been poached?*

The Department holds no records alleging poaching of introduced species.

8. *What species are most at risk of decline in Wairarapa?*

Species in Wairarapa at most risk of decline due to poaching are broadly similar to those other species across New Zealand, including native reptiles. Reptile species are most at risk of being poached due to the comparatively higher levels of demand for them in illegal markets. Other species at risk due to poaching in the Wairarapa include butterflies and native orchids on conservation land.

For further information on species most at risk of decline please refer to the NZ Threat Classification. This system allows you to search for at risk species nationally, however not by area: <https://nztcs.org.nz/assessment-search>

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

Nāku noa, nā

Steve Taylor
Director, Regulatory Services
Department of Conservation



Te Papa Atawhai