

OIA 19-E-0344 DOCCM - 5965044

14 June 2019

Ms Bridget Percy  
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Dear Ms Percy

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, dated 18 May 2019.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

*Kiwi Numbers & Monitoring*

*Official Information Act requests indicate that 148 kiwi have been brought into, or hatched at, Pukaha Mt Bruce since 2013, but there are currently only 20-30 left (10 of which are in enclosures) and only two female kiwi produced eggs in the Pukaha Forest this breeding season.*

*In 2011 Pukaha staff started removing monitoring tags from female kiwi once they reached a certain age/weight, despite knowing that mainly adult (not juvenile) kiwi had been predated in the Pukaha Forest up until that point. In 2016 the first kiwi call count was held by DOC staff and an Official Information Act request in October that year confirmed that there were only seven monitored & seven unmonitored kiwi left in the Pukaha Forest (despite 64 kiwi having been released between 2011 and 2016, and 47 having been released previous to 2011).*

*In an OIA response dated 4 April 2019 Reg Kemper (Director Operations Lower North Island and Pukaha Board member) stated "learning how to protect kiwi in this type of habitat with financially sustainable techniques is critical for potential reintroduction or protection or remnant populations in this sort of area".*

- 1. Why, in a project so beset by predator problems, are kiwi still being released into the Pukaha Forest and why are they still having their monitoring tags removed once they meet a target age/weight?*

Kiwi raised through Operation Nest Egg (O.N.E) at Pukaha are released when they reach adult weight. This increases the kiwi chances of survival, but there is no guarantee that they will not be predated. This is true for all kiwi on New Zealand's mainland that are not held in captivity or fenced enclosures.

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The purpose of monitoring is described in the Department's letter to you dated 4 April 2019.

- 2. Why, when it became apparent that there were just seven unmonitored kiwi in the forest in 2016, did DOC continue to remove tags from adult kiwi when it was so obvious they needed more monitoring, not less?*

Kiwi monitoring is not used as a means to prevent predation. The purpose of monitoring is described in the Department's letter to you dated 4 April 2019.

- 3. I understand that DOC are responsible for the welfare of kiwi as described in the Wildlife Act. Please explain how releasing so many kiwi into such a predator-prone area with such a poor record of kiwi deaths and continuing to remove their monitoring tags (and therefore any accountability for the many which have died) is compliant with the Wildlife Act.*

The Department supports the Pukaha Board in its efforts to establish a population of kiwi at Pukaha. The operations at Pukaha are authorised through a number of permits that are issued under the Wildlife Act and the Department provides ongoing technical support to the Pukaha Board.

Your questions about releases and monitoring are addressed in question 1, and previous correspondence dated 4 April 2019.

- 4. An estimated \$3-4 million dollars has been spent by DOC, the Pukaha Board, Horizons & Greater Wellington Regional Councils on predator control in the Pukaha Forest and in the surrounding 'buffer zone' on this project since 2013 but there are only 20-30 kiwi left from 148 bred there or introduced. Please explain how the techniques used in this project can be considered 'financially sustainable'.*

The Pukaha Restoration project benefits the health of the Pukaha forest and all native flora and fauna species in it, not only kiwi.

Where the forest was previously silent, there is now an abundance of native birdlife including kaka, kokako, kereru, tui, bellbird, whitehead, tomtit and rifleman.

The restored forest is an integral part of the visitor experience at Pukaha. Visitors to Pukaha learn about predator control and are inspired to get involved in conservation.

Additionally, the restored forest generates economic, cultural, social and educational benefits for the local community.

*Kaka Numbers & Monitoring*

*Media reports in October 2013 indicated that kaka numbers were booming at Pukaha. However there have been four 1080 drops over the Pukaha Forest since 2014 and regular visitors to the forest now note that there are just a handful of kaka left. According to Reg Kemper, (Director Operations, Lower North Island) these birds, like kiwi, are also no longer monitored and no formal Kaka Census is planned.*

5. *Why, when it is so obvious that kaka numbers have dropped are DOC still not monitoring kaka and why is no Kaka Census planned?*

Kaka numbers at Pukaha have not decreased.

*Kokako Numbers*

*A recent newspaper article indicated that there are 80 kokako at Pukaha.*

6. *How was this number derived and are any of these birds monitored? If not, then how can DOC be sure of this number?*

The Department is not aware of the newspaper article quoted.

A survey conducted in 2016 estimated the population of kokako to be approximately 30 pairs and approximately 9 singles.

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact Wairarapa Operations Manager Kathy Houkamau on 027 839 4626 or by emailing [khokamau@doc.govt.nz](mailto:khokamau@doc.govt.nz).

Naku noa, na



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