

02 February 2026

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 15 December 2025, in which you asked for:

1. *All South Island Kākā Breed-for-Release Programme draft and final documents over the last year.*
2. *All 'studbook' data for SI kaka for the past two years.*
3. *Evidence/reasoning to support the statement "a significant weather event in October, where Dunedin received four-times its average monthly rainfall, seems to have disrupted the breeding season for several pairs." - see South Island Kākā Breed-for-Release, Programme Outline 2025-2030, April 2025 at page 2 (in **GREEN**).*

DOC says that: "The South Island sub-species is still widespread, becoming progressively more common from Nelson (where it is relatively rare) down the West Coast to Fiordland. South Island kākā are also found around Halfmoon Bay (Stewart Island), Ulva Island and on Whenua Hou/Codfish Island."

The rainfall on the West Coast, Fiordland and Codfish Island was about twice the rainfall of Dunedin's. Codfish Island had more rain on 3 October than Dunedin; as did other parts of the South Island, that are home to Kaka, over that period.

Was the aviary itself not able to handle that much rain in October 2024? Or is it being presumed that Kaka don't do well in the rain?

4. *All SI Kaka breeding data obtained from Orokonui in the last year (particularly the end of the 2024-2025 season)*
5. *A record of all birds 'held back' from release to 'support the long-term breeding program.' IE- What birds were part of a breed in captivity and then not released.*
6. *Clarification on "Over the past year, we have encountered two cases of captive birds with chronic health conditions that rendered them unsuitable for release."*
7. *Clarification on "Early diagnosis and proactive decision-making are essential to mitigating risks for the birds and minimizing the financial burden on holding facilities. Timely assessments and appropriate action will help ensure the best outcomes for both the birds and the program. By doing so, we can ensure bird welfare is prioritised,*

reduce care costs, and ensure that the birds in the Programme can display the full range of natural behaviours. This is a critical and ongoing aspect of our work.”

8. *Clarification on “In cases where euthanasia is considered, the Animal Welfare Act says a vet must euthanise if animal welfare is compromised, but they must make reasonable attempts to talk to the owner first - DOC on behalf of the Crown in this case. This allows DOC to consult with appropriate experts, if needed, and engage with iwi on the decision. A decision to euthanise a bird, unless critical for the humaneness of the individual bird, is to be made by the accountable T4 Manager in DOC. Equally a decision to retain a bird which might have ongoing chronic health issues needs to be justified to the accountable T4 Manager in DOC.”*
9. *How will DOC and facilities such as DBGA categorize birds that are ‘burdensome’? and Does DOC consider Charlie or Jimmy burdensome?*
10. *All communications about euthanasia discussions for Charlie and Jimmy.*

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

On 22 December 2025 we transferred part of your request to Dunedin City Council (DCC). We also requested you clarify aspects of your request related to questions 5, 7 and 8. As we have not received this clarification, we have responded to your questions to the extent possible. However, in some instances we are unable to provide a substantive answer.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *All South Island Kākā Breed-for-Release Programme draft and final documents over the last year.*

The February 2025 draft of the South Island kākā Breed-for-Release Programme Outline 2025 (Item 1) is withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act in order to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression by or between or to members of DOC. The 11 April and 20 May draft and 20 May final versions of the South Island Kākā Breed-for-Release Programme Outline 2025-2030 April 2025 are attached as Items 2, 3 and 4.

2. *All ‘studbook’ data for SI kaka for the past two years.*

This information is attached as Item 5.

3. *Evidence/reasoning to support the statement “a significant weather event in October, where Dunedin received four-times its average monthly rainfall, seems to have disrupted the breeding season for several pairs.” - see South Island Kākā Breed-for-Release, Programme Outline 2025-2030, April 2025 at page 2 (in **GREEN**).*

2024 was the wettest October on record in Dunedin with a total rainfall of 244mm, including a significant amount of rain falling between October 3 and October 4¹. The average rainfall in Dunedin for October is 58-70mm. DCC informed DOC that the kaka at the Dunedin Botanic Garden Aviary were attempting breeding before the weather event and were not after the weather event. There were no other factors identified that may have contributed to the interruption to breeding. Accordingly, the weather event was likely the cause of the disruption to the breeding process.

Was the aviary itself not able to handle that much rain in October 2024? Or is it being presumed that Kaka don't do well in the rain?

This question was transferred to Dunedin City Council on 22 December 2025.

4. *All SI Kaka breeding data obtained from Orokonui in the last year (particularly the end of the 2024-2025 season)*

DOC has not obtained any breeding data from Orokonui in the last year, or for the 2024-2025 season. Therefore, this aspect of your request is refused in accordance with s18(g) of the Act as the information is not held by DOC and we have no reason to believe it is held by another department or agency.

5. *A record of all birds 'held back' from release to 'support the long term breeding program.' IE- What birds were part of a breed in captivity and then not released.*

On 22 December 2025, we requested you clarify the time period you are interested in for these records. As we have not heard back from you, we are providing information related to the last two years. Information for previous years cannot be made available without substantial research or collation and is therefore refused in accordance with s18(f) of the Act.

The following table outlines the birds that were retained in captivity and the reasons for those decisions. Retention occurred either to allow further assessment of birds representing unrepresented genetic lines within the managed population, or for short-term operational reasons associated with aviary capacity during the breeding season. These decisions were made in accordance with captive management and population management practices.

| Bird(s) | Reason held back from release |
|---------------|---|
| Nestor SK2424 | Entered the captive population as a rehabilitation bird. Represents an unrepresented genetic line and is currently being assessed for their suitability for release |

¹ https://niwa.co.nz/sites/default/files/inline-images/Climate_Summary_October_2024_Final.pdf

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| | | and for their potential contribution to the long-term breeding programme. |
| Cascade SK2425 | | Entered the captive population as a rehabilitation bird. Represents an unrepresented genetic line and is currently being assessed for their suitability for release and for their potential contribution to the long-term breeding programme. |
| Kowhai SK2418 | | Captive-bred chick retained due to representing an under represented genetic line within the managed population and is currently being assessed for their potential contribution to the long-term breeding programme. |
| SK2306, SK2303, SK2405, SK2307 | | Captive bred juvenile birds retained for potential integration into the captive breeding population or eventual release. Assessment and planning ongoing |

6. *Clarification on “Over the past year, we have encountered two cases of captive birds with chronic health conditions that rendered them unsuitable for release.”*

The South Island Kākā Captive Management Programme recommended euthanasia for two captive kākā, SK2411 and Snowy (SK2416), due to serious health and welfare concerns that make them unsuitable for release, long-term captivity, or display. SK2411 has severe neurological and behavioural impairments that would prevent survival in the wild and require lifelong specialised care, while SK2416 had a chronic, recurrent respiratory condition that has not resolved despite extensive veterinary diagnostics, surgery, and treatment. Continuing to retain either bird would have ongoing welfare risks for the birds.. Euthanasia was considered the most humane and ethical option, with guidance sought on appropriate tikanga.

7. *Clarification on “Early diagnosis and proactive decision-making are essential to mitigating risks for the birds and minimizing the financial burden on holding facilities. Timely assessments and appropriate action will help ensure the best outcomes for both the birds and the program. By doing so, we can ensure bird welfare is prioritised, reduce care costs, and ensure that the birds in the Programme can display the full range of natural behaviours. This is a critical and ongoing aspect of our work.”*

On 22 December 2025 we asked that you clarified the specific information you were seeking. As you have not provided this clarification, we are unable to respond to this question. I note that, as per s12(2) of the Act, information requested shall be specified with due particularity in the request.

8. *Clarification on “In cases where euthanasia is considered, the Animal Welfare Act says a vet must euthanise if animal welfare is compromised, but they must make reasonable attempts to talk to the owner first - DOC on behalf of the Crown in this case. This allows DOC to consult with appropriate experts, if needed, and engage with iwi on the decision. A decision to euthanise a bird, unless critical for the humaneness of the individual bird, is to be made by the accountable T4 Manager in DOC. Equally a decision to retain a bird which might have ongoing chronic health issues needs to be justified to the accountable T4 Manager in DOC.”*

On 22 December 2025 we asked that you clarified the specific information you were seeking. As you have not provided this clarification, we are unable to respond to this question. I note that, as per s12(2) of the Act, information requested shall be specified with due particularity in the request.

9. *How will DOC and facilities such as DBGA categorize birds that are ‘burdensome’? and Does DOC consider Charlie or Jimmy burdensome?*

DOC does not consider any wildlife as ‘burdensome’. Therefore, this aspect of your request is refused in accordance with s18(e) of the Act as the information does not exist.

10. *All communications about euthanasia discussions for Charlie and Jimmy.*

There have been no communications about euthanasia discussions for Charlie and Jimmy. Therefore, this aspect of your request is refused in accordance with s18(e) of the Act as the information does not exist.

With regard to your question to DOC management regarding whether DOC can guarantee they will not euthanise Charlie or Jimmy, DOC cannot guarantee they will not euthanise any animals as DOC and captive holders are required to follow the Animal Welfare Act.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed in the Document Schedule at the end of this letter, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- personal information, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people;
- free and frank expression under section 9(2)(g)(i) – to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs; and
- preventing undue pressure on officials, under section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect Ministers, officials, or employees from improper pressure or harassment.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

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 OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tim Bamford', written in a cursive style.

Tim Bamford
Director Terrestrial Biodiversity
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Document schedule

| Item | Date | Document description | Decision |
|-------------|---------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | February 2025 | South Island kākā Breed-for-Release Programme Outline 2025 DRAFT 1 | Withheld in full |
| 2 | 11 April 2025 | South Island kākā Breed-for-Release Programme Outline 2025 DRAFT 2 | Released in part |
| 3 | 20 May 2025 | South Island kākā Breed-for-Release Programme Outline 2025 DRAFT 3 | Released in part |
| 4 | 20 May 2025 | South Island kākā Breed-for-Release Programme Outline 2025 FINAL | Released in part |
| 5 | May 2025 | Item 5 - SI Kaka Husbandry data | Released in part |