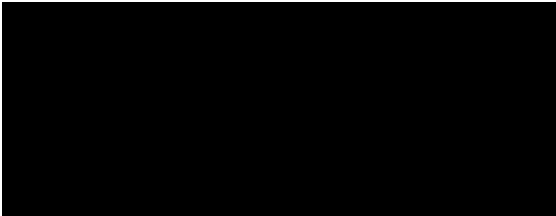


14 July 2022



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 15 June 2022 in which you asked for:

- 1. Please provide details on the number of kororā/little blue penguins found/reported dead from 2017 to 2022 in Aotearoa.*
- 2. Please provide details on the region where the kororā/little blue penguin was found deceased from 2017 to 2022.*
- 3. Please provide the month when the kororā/little blue penguin was found/reported deceased between 2017 - 2022.*
- 4. Please provide the kororā/little blue penguin's reason for death between 2017 - 2022.*
- 5. Please provide details on the age of the kororā/little blue penguin reported/found deceased.*
- 6. Please provide details on the weight of the kororā/little blue penguin reported/found deceased.*
- 7. Please provide details on the height of the kororā/little blue penguin reported/found deceased.*
- 8. Please provide details on the kororā/little blue penguin population between 2017 - 2022.*
- 9. Please provide details on the number of kororā/little blue penguins nests across the country from 2017-2022.*

Your questions and our responses are listed in the following paragraphs. I regret that I am not able to provide you with all the information you seek, sections 18(e) and 18(f) of the Official Information Act refers. I would like to outline why this is the case.



Kororā/little blue penguins are classified as “At Risk – Declining” within the NZ Threat Classification System. DOC has not established a national recovery programme for kororā/little blue penguins as other species are viewed as being in greater need due to their threat status. This means that DOC does not have a central or standard collection mechanism for incidents involving kororā/little blue penguins. The information is held throughout different parts of DOC, for example, a region may hold some information on penguins reported as dying or injured, or on nests and nesting success in that region; and the Marine Species team may hold information on reports of penguins bycaught in commercial or recreational fisheries. In some instances information is held by other government agencies or by conservation groups. Collating information from across DOC, other agencies and conservation groups on kororā/little blue penguins would require significant effort and may not provide a clear and accurate picture on mortalities of the penguins on a national scale.

DOC’s management of kororā/little blue penguins is largely through indirect actions e.g., habitat protection or predator control aimed at protecting more threatened species. Specific actions can include advocacy for dog control and engagement in RMA process where kororā/little blue penguins may be significantly impacted.

My responses to your queries include some further context relevant to your request.

1. *Please provide details on the number of Korora/little blue penguins found/reported dead from 2017 to 2022 in Aotearoa.*

Deceased kororā are from time to time reported to DOC offices, sometimes through the 0800 DOC HOT number. Not all reports are able to be followed up, there are sometimes multiple reports for the same bird(s), and occasional misidentifications.

Where mass mortality or other unusual/suspicious deaths occur, birds may be sent to Massey University’s Wildbase for necropsy, in which case detailed information is available. A summary of this data for 2017-2022 is attached as Item 1. This summary includes mortality data collated from other available sources and includes body mass where provided. Please note this summary does not include information recently collected by the Ministry of Primary Industries regarding Northland kororā.

Additional records of dead birds found on beaches are, in some areas, compiled by Birds New Zealand in their National Beach Patrol Scheme database:
<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/beachpatrolscheme/>.

In general, Birds NZ members only record location, date, numbers found dead and sometimes age classes. Weight and measurement data is unlikely to be recorded and cause of death only where obvious (for example, killed by dog, run over by vehicle, caught in fishing gear).

2. *Please provide details on the region where the kororā/little blue penguin was found deceased from 2017 to 2022.*
3. *Please provide the month when the kororā/little blue penguin was found/reported deceased between 2017 - 2022.*



4. *Please provide the kororā/little blue penguin's reason for death between 2017 - 2022.*
5. *Please provide details on the age of the kororā/little blue penguin reported/found deceased.*
6. *Please provide details on the weight of the kororā/little blue penguin reported/found deceased.*

As noted above, DOC has no national programme for recording the deaths of kororā. Please refer to the summary of the limited data available attached as Item 1.

7. *Please provide details on the height of the kororā/little blue penguin reported/found deceased.*

There is no data available on the height of Korora/little blue penguins reported or found deceased. This is not a measurement that is normally collected.

8. *Please provide details on the kororā/little blue penguin population between 2017 - 2022.*

The kororā population in 2017 was estimated by Birdlife International to be 64,700 mature individuals, however, confidence in this figure is not high. There is no more recent estimate.

The 2021 NZ threat classification for the northern and southern blue penguin sub-species of kororā is at 'At risk – Declining'. These have the important qualifiers of "data poor" in both status and trend. This reflects the difficulty of counting a widespread species that comes ashore in the dark and nests underground.

I consider that the best available summary of kororā numbers can be found in the report - Mattern, T. & Wilson, K.-J. 2018. New Zealand penguins – current knowledge and research priorities. Report to Birds New Zealand. <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/1904-NZ-Penguin-Research-Priorities-Report-Mattern-Wilson.pdf>.

9. *Please provide details on the number of kororā/little blue penguins nests across the country from 2017-2022.*

DOC does not hold records of the number of kororā nests across the country as it has no active national work programmes for kororā.

Kororā are monitored at several sites by community groups and other organisations. Nest numbers may be among the data recorded at the following sites:

- Mount Maunganui (Western Bay Wildlife Trust)
- Port Taranaki (Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society)
- Napier (Port of Napier)
- Mana and Kāpiti Islands (John Cochrane, Massey University)
- Matiu/Somes Island (Matiu/Somes Community Initiative)
- Port Tarakohe, Golden Bay (Mohua Blue Penguin Trust)
- Kaikōura (Kaikōura Ocean Research Initiative)
- Flea Bay, Banks Peninsula (Pohatu Penguins)
- Oamaru Harbour (The Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony)
- Pilots Beach, Dunedin (Blue Penguins Pukekura)
- Westland & Buller (The West Coast Penguin Trust)



I trust my response is helpful in outlining the information that is available.

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 Official Information Act.

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

[Redacted]

Nāku noa, nā

[Redacted]

Ian Angus
Director, Terrestrial Science
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Document schedule:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	30/06/2022	<i>OIAD-2119 - Release Attachment 1: Kororā mortality 2017-2022</i>	<i>Released in full</i>