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Ref: OIAD-4989

2 April 2025

Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 7 March 2025, in which you asked:

*Could you please help me with a request for information under the OIA?*

*We have been looking at the Hector's and Māui dolphin incident database. There is a spreadsheet on your website which covers the period 1921 to 31 October 2024. There is also a table with incidents from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.*

*Could we please have a database which contains up to date information, to today's date, including coordinates of bycatch, and all other details included in the spreadsheet?*

*Also, do you have an incident database for boat strikes of marine mammals? If so, could we please have this (going as far back as you can and to today's date). If not, could you provide documents around any proposal or consideration of the development of such a database, or collection of such data or information?*

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

Whilst the Department holds information about Hector's dolphin bycatch events, this information is usually collected and provided to us by Fisheries New Zealand. The provision of fisheries information, such as the details of bycatch events, is guided by the ['Guidelines for Release of Fisheries Information'](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/guidelines-for-release-of-fisheries-information/) (mpi.govt.nz) which states that information should be summarised and/or anonymised:

- Location data is truncated to 1 degree of accuracy (or statistical area)
- Date and time data are truncated to month and year
- No individual vessel, person, organisation identifying information, nor attribute is released
- No month and 1-degree (or statistical area) strata has less than 3 vessels or persons, or organisations present.

To align with these guidelines, the Department publishes truncated coordinates and dates of Hector's and Māui dolphin bycatch data, and removes other private information:

- Removal of database fields containing names, contact details and vessel names.
- Wherever possible personal details are removed from comment fields.
- Dates are only provided to the month - these will show as the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month in excel and the date accuracy field ('Date\_event\_observed\_confidence') will say "Estimated".
- Coordinates are truncated to one decimal place and the location confidence ('Capture\_method\_(DWC)') will say "Estimated location".

In view of this, your specific request for coordinates of bycatch was transferred to Fisheries New Zealand under section 14(b)(ii) of the Official Information Act 1982 on 19 March 2025. We hope this addresses your query of 20 March.

Your remaining requests and our responses are listed below:

1. *Could we please have a database which contains up to date information, to today's date, and all other details included in the spreadsheet?*

The online spreadsheet is updated quarterly in early February, May, August, and November. It was last updated in early February 2025, but the file name wasn't updated due to an error. This has now been amended.

This schedule of updates is in place due to the high level of interest in Hector's and Māui dolphin incidents so we can share data in a timely manner but minimise disruption to the normal functioning of the Department. It also allows time for the collation of information and documents between District offices and the national team and, in most instances, for the necropsy results to be available. The schedule also helps us manage regular requests for this data. We acknowledge that people are interested in these events and want information as soon as possible, which is why we provide basic details of events via the annual tables.

As an updated copy of the database will be available shortly as per the scheduled quarterly updates, and the basic details of the incidents that have occurred since the last update are available in the annual tables, I am refusing this component of the request under section 18(d).

2. *Also, do you have an incident database for boat strikes of marine mammals? If so, could we please have this (going as far back as you can and to today's date). If not, could you provide documents around any proposal or consideration of the development of such a database, or collection of such data or information?*

Yes, the Department maintains a database of most marine mammal incidents including boat strikes; exceptions are largely restricted to general fur seal deaths. Boat strikes are generally beach-cast animals that have evidence of prop marks or blunt force trauma, though there are some instances of whales caught on the bow of ships. Any Hector's or Māui dolphin boat strike incidents can be found in the online spreadsheet that you have already accessed.

An extract of the database is attached which includes known boat/ship strike events or incidents where there were injuries consistent with boat strike. Some of these conclusions were from post-mortem dissections, others were speculation by DOC officers based on visible wounds.

Please consider the following caveats when viewing this data:

- The data is limited to records received by the Department's National Office from a number of different sources and independent field offices and there are no guarantees that it is fully representative or accurate.
- The quality and quantity of data collection has improved over time, particularly with the advancement of technology.
- Processes for strandings and data collection have changed over time and have not necessarily been followed evenly around the country.
- The ownership, storage and formatting of this data has changed over time

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	18/03/2025	Extract of NZ Marine Mammal Database containing known and possible boat strike incidents.	Released in part

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the document listed above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- personal contact details of officials and personal information about external persons, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

[Redacted text block]

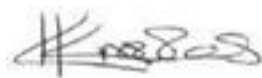
In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

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 Official Information Act.

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

If you would like to discuss this response with us, please contact Malene Felsing, Marine Species Manager by email to [mfelsing@doc.govt.nz](mailto:mfelsing@doc.govt.nz).

Nāku noa, nā



Kirstie Knowles  
Director Biodiversity System and Aquatic  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*