

3 April 2025

Ōtautahi/Christchurch
Regional Office
Level 3, Grand Central
161 Cashel Street
Christchurch
doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-4991

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 7 March 2025, regarding gulls nesting on properties on Armagh Street.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982. Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *During 2024 did DOC make contact to any of the surrounding business to caution them of the up and coming breeding season after DOC were made aware in July 2024 that an attempt was going to be made to prevent the gulls from nesting on 119 Armagh St and also prevention from the gulls nesting in the empty property that had stone piles situated over the fence from 129 Armagh St.*

DOC communicated with the site manager of 119 Armagh Street to advocate and encourage them to deploy gull nesting deterrents at the site prior to the 2024/25 nesting season. This is consistent with advice DOC has provided to the site manager for the last 5+ years. The main difference this year, as far as DOC is aware, is your own involvement in setting up the deterrents on behalf of the site manager.

DOC did not actively approach any other business owners prior to the breeding season, which is consistent with every other year. DOC was, however, contacted by several business owners/building managers through November, December and January.

2. *If yes:*
 - A) *what advice was given*
 - B) *which businesses were given advice.*
 - C) *when was advice given if any.*

When contacted by business owners, DOC provided advice on:

- a) what is and is not allowed under the Wildlife Act 1953. Namely that the disturbance of 'active' nests (once eggs or chicks are present in the nest) is prohibited;
- b) advice on how to manage a building in a gull breeding area that is in line with the information on the website: [Red-billed gulls | Waitaki District Council](#).

The advice on this website was put together by DOC staff and the Waitaki District Council following similar issues that nesting gulls were causing on building roofs in Oamaru.

After being contacted at the beginning of November by businesses DOC provided advice to:

- Casa Publica;
- a neighbouring building that overlooks Casa Publica (who has been removing gull nesting material on a twice daily basis to stop birds breeding on their roof);
- at least two other business owners on New Regent Street;
- the Central City Business Association.

This advice was provided during November and December 2024.

3. *Was there any wildlife safety plan or advice given to property owners, managers to ensure that any work done around breeding birds and unfledged birds was within the bounds of the wildlife act.*
- A) *if so, what advice or management plan was given.*
- B) *if no advice or plan was given, why not.*
- C) *as DOC were made aware that there would be nests on the site 119 Armagh st and that tarapuka had nested on top of Casa Publica, what advice was given to the property owners and businesses regarding red and black billed gulls.*

No wildlife safety plan was provided by DOC to property owners or managers. The responsibility for writing wildlife safety plans for any work proposed to be carried out around protected breeding birds on private land sits with those carrying out the work.

No management plans were provided by DOC, for the same reason as above. Advice was provided by DOC staff in line with the Wildlife Act, outlining what is and is not considered 'disturbance' of a protected species while breeding, and what building maintenance could or could not be carried out in the presence of active nests (those with eggs or chicks).

DOC also pointed building owners and managers to the published web resource: [Red-billed gulls | Waitaki District Council](#).

4. *Had any of the businesses who had gulls nesting in their property asked if they can be removed? If so please supply each individual request (apart from the volunteer who had put up netting in 119 Armagh St and had stated that if he saw any nests with eggs or chicks he would be contacting DOC to notify them and would carefully work around them as not to disturb them.)*

Yes. Every business owner who called the DOC phone line to speak about the nesting gulls on Armagh and New Regent Streets, started with either a request for DOC to remove nesting gulls from the vicinity, or a query about how to remove nesting gulls and clean up the mess being created by them.

In every case, the business owner was informed that both red and black billed gulls are protected, what that means under the Wildlife Act 1953, and what the implications are for working around active nests.

They were also informed about how and when to deter gulls from nesting in coming seasons and given some guidance about gutter maintenance, which is necessary to avoid irreparable damage to a building.

Only one request to remove nests was captured in email. We supply the individual written query made on 19 November 2024 about gaining permission to remove nesting material, and DOC's response, below:

Querent:

Because of the rapid population growth, is there any permission we can get to remove the nesting material sooner than end of February to avoid further damage to the roof?

DOC response:

There is no regional or national rapid population growth – both black-billed and red-billed gull species are still in decline. DOC is only able to grant permits to move active nests containing eggs or chicks of protected at risk species for conservation purposes.

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

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janine Sidery', with a large circular flourish at the end.

Janine Sidery
Acting Director Regional Operations, Eastern South Island
Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*