

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai
Conservation House
18 Manners Street
Wellington 6011

doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-5466

1 August 2025

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 16 July 2025, in which you asked for:

1. *The estimated kiwi population (split into various sub-species if possible)*
2. *The number managed areas vs non-protected areas.*
3. *The population growth or decline in protected and unprotected areas.*

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

The trajectory of most kiwi populations is positive because of the successful management of their mammalian predators by many community groups, iwi and government agencies. This good news is often misrepresented in the media who often focus on what is happening in unmanaged populations rather than giving the complete picture. Being nocturnal and distributed broadly, kiwi population estimates and growth rates are indicative rather than precise.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *The estimated kiwi population (split into various sub-species if possible)*

The latest kiwi population data that the Department holds was calculated in 2021 for the c.5-yearly assessment of the threat status of birds in New Zealand. These estimates were generally extrapolated to 2021 from the figures estimated in *Saving a national icon: preliminary estimation of the additional cost of achieving kiwi population stability or 2% growth* by Innes et al. (2015). This paper is available here:

https://ndhadeliver.natlib.govt.nz/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE37740115

In some cases, the figures were updated as new information became available. For example, the population of Rakiura Tokoeka is now believed to have been close to stable for decades. Previously, the estimated decline rate was based on that observed at a study site that was atypical of the whole island. This is detailed in the paper linked here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/publications/habitat-loss-drives-population-decline-and-reduced-mass-of-rakiura-tokoeka-apteryx-australis-australis-stewart-island-brown-kiwi-at-mason-bay-stewart-island-rakiura/>. Based on more recent studies, the total population estimate of 20,000 Rakiura Tokoeka in 2021 is likely to be conservative, but no updated figure has yet been calculated.

The table below gives the population estimates for each kiwi taxon, as well as the estimated growth rates for each taxon.

Taxon	Population estimate (2021)	Estimated annual growth rate
Northland Brown Kiwi	9300	2.8
Coromandel Brown Kiwi	2300	3.4
Western Brown Kiwi	7800	1.3
Eastern Brown Kiwi	6700	-0.7
Rowi	650	2.0
Haast Tokoeka	400	2.2
Northern Fiordland Tokoeka	7900	-0.8
Southern Fiordland Tokoeka	3700	-0.7
Rakiura Tokoeka	20000	0.1
Roroa/ Great Spotted Kiwi	14600	0.7
Little Spotted Kiwi	2000	0.8

2. *The number (in) managed areas vs non-protected areas.*

The table below estimates the number of kiwi in each taxon that is under some form of continuous or pulsed management and the number not being managed.

Taxon	Population estimates (2021)	# under management	# unprotected
Northland Brown Kiwi	9300	6050	3250
Coromandel Brown Kiwi	2300	1950	350
Western Brown Kiwi	7800	4300	3500
Eastern Brown Kiwi	6700	2000	4700
Rowi	650	600	50
Haast Tokoeka	400	300	100
Northern Fiordland Tokoeka	7900	1750	6150
Southern Fiordland Tokoeka	3700	650	3050
Rakiura Tokoeka	20000	200	19800
Roroa/ Great Spotted Kiwi	14600	7300	7300
Little Spotted Kiwi	2000	2000	0

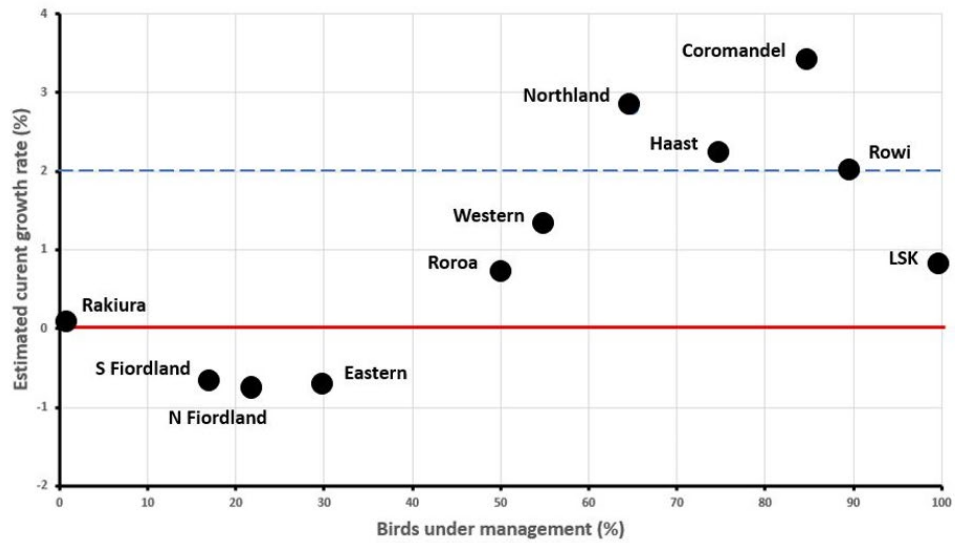
3. *The population growth or decline in protected and unprotected areas.*

The table below provides modelled growth rates of each kiwi taxon with and without management in 2021.

Taxon	Growth with management (%)	Decline without management (%)
Northland Brown Kiwi	6.0	3.0
Coromandel Brown Kiwi	4.5	3.0
Western Brown Kiwi	5.0	3.0
Eastern Brown Kiwi	4.5	3.0
Rowi	2.5	2.0
Haast Tokoeka	3.5	1.8
Northern Fiordland Tokoeka	2.0	1.6
Southern Fiordland Tokoeka	3.7	1.6
Rakiura Tokoeka	0.0	0.0
Roroa/ Great Spotted Kiwi	3.4	2.0
Little Spotted Kiwi	0.8	2.2

NB: the growth response with management depends on the various types of management (e.g., trapping aerial 1080, Operation Nest Egg, kōhanga releases, captive releases) being done to protect that taxon, and so these figures give the estimated average growth achieved with all management tools combined.

The above information is summarised in the following graph which shows the growth rate of each taxon plotted against the percentage of that taxon that is under management. This is not too dissimilar to the graph that appears on Page 14 of the Kiwi Recovery Plan (2018-2028): <https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/science-and-technical/tsrp64entire.pdf>.



I trust that this information addresses your questions.

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

Nāku noa, nā

Tim Bamford
 Director Terrestrial Biodiversity
 Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai