



OIAD-4743

14 January 2025

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 3 December 2024, in which you asked for:

*the stats for cause of death of native, endangered, and ground-nesting bird species in the Christchurch area.*

*I'd very much like to know what are the main causes of death (example, car run over birds, cats, etc.)*

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

The Department of Conservation (DOC) does not hold a mortality register for birds in the Christchurch area. I therefore regret that I am declining your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information is not held by DOC and I don't believe it is held by, or more closely connected with the functions of, another department, organisation or local authority.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of this decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

My team has, however, provided some information that may be of interest to you.

DOC collects mortality data for specific species with a threat classification of Nationally Critical and for research projects. In the Christchurch area, DOC doesn't have actual mortality data, however has collected other information about two species of ground nesting birds in recent years: the banded dotterel, and the Australasian bittern/matuku-hūrepo.

- **Banded dotterel nest failure:** Monitored from 2019 to 2022 on Kaitorete spit. Main nest failures were due to predation by Australasian harriers, hedgehogs and cats. Some nests were destroyed by flooding and vehicles. Adult dotterels are most vulnerable to cat predation while incubating eggs or chicks.
- **Australasian bittern/matuku-hūrepo carcasses handed into DOC:** Data from carcasses are informing a national research project looking into the causes of death in Australasian bittern/matuku-hūrepo. Most deaths are from car strikes. The findings indicate that these birds are often also starving, which make them more likely to be hit by cars.



The most common causes of mortality in avian species depends on the species, age and sometimes the sex of the bird.

For your information, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is the agency responsible for monitoring and recording mass mortality events in birds for the purpose of disease control/monitoring. If this is your particular interest, then you may wish to contact MPI.

Otherwise, if you require further information from DOC or would like to discuss this response with us, please contact Mailee Stanbury, Biodiversity Senior Ranger Mahaanui by email to [mstanbury@doc.govt.nz](mailto:mstanbury@doc.govt.nz).

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

Nāku noa, nā



**Jo Macpherson**  
Director Regional Operations, Eastern South Island  
Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*