

30 January 2025

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 14 December 2024, in which you asked for:

*Data related to the interactions between purse seine fishing vessels and protected species over the past 5 years (if available from the past 10 years). Specifically:*

*1. Protected Species Encounters and Mitigation Efforts:*

*Please provide a complete list of all protected species (seabirds, marine mammals, rays, sharks, turtles, etc.) that were captured (dead or alive) or involved in deck-strikes by vessels operating in the purse seine sector. This includes information on mitigation measures taken for each encounter.*

*2. Species Identification and Tagging Information:*

*I request information on any tagged protected species (including rays, sharks, turtles, etc.), including tag numbers, species identification, and data on the location and date of capture. If available, please include photographs of the tagged species.*

*3. FNZ Observer Review Reports:*

*Please provide any relevant FNZ Observer review forms or audits related to the handling and mitigation of protected species in purse seine fishing operations. These forms should document both the actions taken and any areas requiring improvement.*

*4. Sea Mammal Handling Protocols and Records:*

*Please supply any records related to the handling of marine mammals, including any instances of seals, dolphins, and other marine mammals encountered during fishing operations. Include any protocols followed and the outcome of such interactions.*

On 29 January 2025 you clarified that in regard to point 2 of your request, you are seeking information on any tagged protected species that were caught or interacted with during purse seine fishing operations. This includes:

- a) Animals that were already tagged prior to the interaction (i.e., tags were observed or recorded during the encounter).
- b) Animals that were tagged as a result of the interaction.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982. Please see our responses to your requests below.

1. *Protected Species Encounters and Mitigation Efforts: Please provide a complete list of all protected species (seabirds, marine mammals, rays, sharks, turtles, etc.) that were captured (dead or alive) or involved in deck-strikes by vessels operating in the purse seine sector. This includes information on mitigation measures taken for each encounter.*

Please note that information on all reported Protected Species interactions from the past five years is already publicly available on the Ministry for Primary Industries website, and can be found here: [Seabirds and protected marine species caught by commercial fishers | NZ Government](#)

Further information on observed Protected Species interactions dating back to 2011, is provided in the Conservation Services Programme Annual Research Summaries, which can be found here on the Department of Conservation website: [Previous Conservation Services Programme Annual Plans](#)

In the past five years there have been 155 reported Protected Species interactions with purse seine fishing vessels, 61 of which were observed by a Fisheries Observer. In regard to your request for mitigation measures taken for each of these interactions, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA because this information can't be made available without substantial collation or research. This is due to the large volume of observer forms and liaison officer reports associated with each interaction. If you requested a subset of these by time or type we may be able to answer your request in future. Please feel free to get in touch with us if you would like to discuss categories that we hold prior to submitting any new request.

2. *Species Identification and Tagging Information: I request information on any tagged protected species (including rays, sharks, turtles, etc.), including tag numbers, species identification, and data on the location and date of capture. If available, please include photographs of the tagged species.*

In relation to part a of your request, we do not hold any records of previously tagged bycaught Protected Species in the purse seine fishery from the past five years. I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA as the information does not exist. In relation to part b of your request, I would like to direct you to information that is already publicly available on the CSP website on spine-tailed devil rays that were tagged as a result of interaction with purse seine fishing vessels: [INT2018-05: Updated analysis of spine-tailed devil ray post-release survival](#).

3. *FNZ Observer Review Reports: Please provide any relevant FNZ Observer review forms or audits related to the handling and mitigation of protected species in purse seine fishing operations. These forms should document both the actions taken and any areas requiring improvement.*

This part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, due to the large volume of observer forms provided for each protected species interaction with purse seine fishing vessels over the last five years. For your information, if you requested a subset of these by time or type we may be able to answer your request in future.

4. *Sea Mammal Handling Protocols and Records: Please supply any records related to the handling of marine mammals, including any instances of seals, dolphins, and other marine mammals encountered during fishing operations. Include any protocols followed and the outcome of such interactions.*

In the last five years, there have been four observed marine mammal interactions in the purse seine fishery. I can confirm that these interactions all occurred during a single fishing event with one vessel, where four common dolphins swam into the seine before it had completed encircling a school of fish. The observer reported that as soon as the crew noticed the dolphins in the net, they started net rolling leaving a large open gap for the fish and dolphins to exit, alive and seemingly unharmed. As there was no handling undertaken, I must refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA as the information does not exist.

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) may be published on the Department's website. If you wish to discuss your request please contact [GovernmentServices@doc.govt.nz](mailto:GovernmentServices@doc.govt.nz).

Nāku noa, nā



Kirstie Knowles  
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Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*