[redacted]

20 August 2026

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Ref: OIAD-9490

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 24 July 2026, in which you asked for the following information relating to a reported feral cat sighting near the Toroa/Northern Royal Albatross nesting area at Pukekura/Taiaroa Head:

1. Evidence of predation

i All photos, video footage, and written reports of dead native birds at Taiaroa Head that DOC attributes to feral cat predation from 1 Jan 2024 to present.

ii Specifically, any photos or necropsy reports showing cause of death as feral cat for sooty shearwater chicks or other species mentioned by DOC staff.

2. The Cat sighting itself

i The full webcam footage/Royalcam clip of the "ginger cat" stalking the albatross chick referenced in the RNZ article.

ii All ranger field notes, trap data, and sighting logs relating to this specific cat from the date it was first observed to present.

3. Context

i DOC policy/guidelines used to determine if a carcass was killed by a cat vs scavenged.

ii Number of confirmed cat kills of albatross chicks at Taiaroa Head in the last 10 years, with dates and evidence.

4. Methodology & Contradiction

i Please provide DOC's written methodology for determining cause of death as "feral cat" when a carcass is found, and any data on scavenging rates at Taiaroa Head".

ii Any data held by DOC on scavenging rates and predator behaviour at Taiaroa Head.

iii DOC policy/guidelines used to rule out scavenging vs actual predation when attributing deaths to feral cats.

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

1. Evidence of predation

i. and ii. There have been no reported native bird deaths at Tairoa Head attributed to feral cats in the time period requested.

2. The Cat sighting itself

i. On 3 August we emailed you to seek clarity on whether you were requesting footage of a ginger cat, or the black cat referenced in the recent RNZ article. As we have not heard from you, we have interpreted this question to be in relation to a ginger cat. The only footage of a ginger cat is dated 24-May-2016 and is available here #RoyalCam 2016 highlights: Predator spotted near the nest.

ii. Ranger field notes and sighting logs of a black cat from April 2026 are provided in **Item 1**. There is no trap data in scope of your request as no black cat has been caught over this time.

3. Context

i. DOC has no policy or guidelines to determine if a carcass was killed by a cat versus scavenged by a cat. When a Toroa/Northern Royal Albatross dies at Pukekura/Taiaroa Head, DOC may send the carcass to Massey University so a wildlife pathologist can undertake a necropsy to help determine the cause of death.

ii. There have been no cat kills of Toroa/Northern Royal Albatross chicks at Pukekura/Taiaroa Head reported in the last 10 years.

4. Methodology & Contradiction

i. Regarding DOC's written methodology for determining 'feral cat' as cause of death, please refer to response 3.i. above. Regarding data on scavenging rates, DOC does not hold such data as either the predator takes the carcass to an unknown location, or the carcass is too damaged from the scavenging to obtain any useful information from a necropsy.

ii. Regarding scavenging rates, refer to response 4.i above. Regarding data on predator behaviour, from decades of predator trapping DOC understands the seasonal occurrence of predators in this area. Relevant trap data is provided in **Item 2** and **Item 3**. We have interpreted this question to the best of our ability as we did not receive a reply to our 3 August request for clarification of this question.

iii. Regarding DOC's policy/guidelines used to rule out scavenging vs actual predation, refer to response 3.i. above.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Aaron Fleming MNZM
Regional Director
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Attachments:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	Aug 2026	Ranger field notes and sightings black cat	Released in part
2	Aug 2026	Historic trapping records annual summary	Released in full
3	Aug 2026	Pukekura seasonal capture 2022-2026	Released in full

I have decided to release in part document 1 listed above, subject to information being withheld under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA 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 OIA.