

Reviewing the Wildlife Act 1953 is a key lever for tackling the biodiversity crisis

We need to urgently address biodiversity decline

The Wildlife Act plays a key role in protecting indigenous biodiversity. But it cannot effectively regulate some activities and has no specific tools for managing risks to threatened species.

- **500 species** face a severe and immediate threat of extinction due to a range of threats. For example: wandering albatross, long-tailed bat, flax snails, giant wētā, native orchids.

We need to embed Treaty principles

The Wildlife Act has barriers to the exercise of kaitiakitanga and rangatiratanga and does not recognise mātauranga Māori or tikanga.

- The Waitangi Tribunal has found that the Wildlife Act ignores Crown obligations under the Treaty to safeguard Māori rights to control or manage taonga species.
- The Crown owns feathers on korowai that may have been in a family for years, leading to harm and loss of mana.

We need to reflect the values people hold for species

The Act is out of step with the many ways people value, relate to, and want to interact with species. For example:

- Getting permits can be difficult and lengthy, and some activities cannot be authorised under the Act. Permit requirements can be a barrier to research.
- The Act has no process to resolve conflicts between uses.

The review will help to achieve the outcomes in Te Mana o Te Taiao–Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy

Messages from targeted engagement

In 2022, DOC held 40 hui with tangata whenua, key stakeholders, and statutory bodies. There was strong support for reforming the Wildlife Act.

Aspirations for a new system include:

- For indigenous species to be thriving.
- To ensure habitats support species to thrive.
- System changes to restore threatened species.
- To give effect to the Treaty through:
 - tangata whenua being involved in governance, management and decision-making;
 - restoring cultural practices;
 - te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori underpinning the system.
- The new species system to consider community values and wellbeing.
- For species to be restored to levels that could support sustainable use.

Objectives for getting legislative settings right

- To protect, restore, and enhance species and their habitats so they are naturally thriving and resilient.
- To partner with tangata whenua to design and implement frameworks that support their relationships at place with taonga species and te taiao.
- To consider the connections between people and species in our communities, in our heritage, and in New Zealand's nature-based economy in our decisions about how best to protect, sustainably use, and manage species.
- To provide a governance and strategic species management framework that appropriately supports local and national values and outcomes.

These objectives will provide a framework for developing and evaluating future policy proposals.



Repealing and replacing the Act

Operational improvements alone cannot address the issues and aspirations. The right legislative settings are also needed. Achieving these for the Wildlife Act will require repealing and replacing it.

Many problems relate to core components (e.g., its purpose), and the Act has already lost coherence due to repeated past piecemeal amendments.

The next stage of the process in 2023/24 will be to identify options

Policy options for the framework for a new species-related Act may include:

- What the general purpose of the Act should be.
- Its relationship with other conservation and natural resource legislation.
- The governance and decision-making system.
- How to give effect to the principles of the Treaty.
- How the Act addresses threatened indigenous species.
- How to update the Act to reflect modern values and uses.

2022

2023

2024

Key steps

Targeted engagement

Analysis of feedback, key issues, objectives

Decisions on objectives

Analysis of options

Decisions on options

Develop and approve discussion document

Public consultation