

10. COUNCIL SUBMISSION ON REVIEW OF LEVEL OF PROTECTION FOR SOME NEW ZEALAND WILDLIFE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment, DDI 941-8656
Officer responsible:	Transport & Greenspace Manager
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of a submission to the Department of Conservation on the public discussion document "Review of Level of Protection for some New Zealand Wildlife" (the "discussion document").

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Minister of Conservation has requested the Department of Conservation to review the level of protection afforded to some species of New Zealand wildlife, under the Wildlife Act 1953. The Department of Conservation has produced a public discussion document and invited submissions. The closing date for submissions was 26 January 2007, but Department of Conservation staff have indicated the Department would value receiving a submission from the Council and will accept a late submission. This will need to be before early February 2007 to enable it to be included in the Department's analysis of submissions received.
3. Under the Wildlife Act, nearly all species of wildlife (including birds, mammals, reptiles and frogs) are automatically absolutely protected, unless an individual species is listed in one of Schedules 1-6 to the Act, which means it will then have a lesser level of protection.
4. The Council considers there are potential future implications on the Council's responsibilities for management of biodiversity, pest species, health and safety, outdoor recreation and open space arising from both the status quo or a shift of status of specific species covered by the Wildlife Act, following the Department of Conservation's consideration of submissions on the discussion document. Consequently, the Council feels it is necessary to comment on the discussion document, particularly with respect to Canada Goose, which has emerged as a bird strike hazard at Christchurch International Airport and as a fouling nuisance on a number of city waterways and parks. The Council also wishes to comment on bird species that are of some interest in Christchurch, but which do not generate any nuisance issues or management problems. These comments are included in the attached submission.
5. The following table illustrates the current status under the Wildlife Act of each species that the submission refers to:

Schedule	Covers	Level of protection afforded	Status of species referred to in the submission	
			Current	Suggested
1	Species declared to be 'game'	Protected, except to holders of game licences to hunt, kill or hold these birds.	Introduced Canada Goose and the native Grey Teal, New Zealand Shoveler and Pukeko	-
2	Species that are 'partially protected'	Protected, but may be hunted or killed if they cause injury or damage to land or property.	Introduced Little Owl and the native Black Shag and Harrier	Little Owl and Pukeko
3	Species that can be hunted or killed	Can be hunted or killed, subject to conditions specified by the Minister.	Native Pied Shag and Little Shag	-
4	Unprotected species	Species unprotected throughout New Zealand, except where the Minister of Conservation gives absolute protection.	-	-
5	Unprotected species	Species unprotected throughout New Zealand, unless it is a domestic animal or bird.	-	Canada Goose, Barbary Dove and Feral Chicken

Schedule	Covers	Level of protection afforded	Status of species referred to in the submission	
			Current	Suggested
6	Unprotected species	Species not protected under the Wildlife Act 1953 and which are administered under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977.	–	–
7 and 7A	Protected species	Absolute protection, to some terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates and marine species by declaring them to be “animals” for the purposes of the Wildlife Act 1953. May not be hunted, killed or held, unless with an appropriate authority.	–	–
Not listed in any schedule	Protected species	Absolute protection, with the Department of Conservation able to issue permits for control when required. Covers almost all native and migratory birds.	Introduced Barbary Dove and Feral Chicken, and the native Spur-winged Plover	Black Shag, Little Shag, Pied Shag, Spur-winged Plover, Harrier, Grey Teal and New Zealand Shoveler

6. Fish and Game New Zealand has responsibility for managing game bird populations; that is, species listed in Schedule 1 of the Act. As Canada Goose is currently listed in Schedule 1, Fish and Game are the statutory managers of this species and they undertake this role pursuant to the Draft South Island Canada Goose Management Plan 2000. This plan requires Fish and Game to manage the Canada Goose population in the recreational interests of hunters, while having regard to the impacts of geese on other stakeholders (such as landowners, local authorities and airport companies).
7. Increasing local populations and redistributions of Canada Geese have resulted in the species becoming a nuisance by feeding on crops and pasture, fouling land and waterways, and occupying urban parkland and sports fields. Control by hunting alone (even with extended seasons and relaxed bag limits) does not seem to be working and culling (undertaken at moult time when geese cannot fly) has become necessary.
8. The discussion document considers a range of options for the future management of Canada Geese, including retaining the status quo, removal of this species from the list of game species (Schedule 1) and making it an unprotected species (Schedule 5). If Canada Goose was made an unprotected species, it would still be available as a hunting resource, but landowners would have more freedom to utilise a range of methods to reduce nuisance-causing populations (such as egg/gosling control, moult culls and poisoning). The Council believes this would probably cause an initial rapid decrease in numbers and would require a transitional management period during which responsibilities for Canada Goose control would pass to agencies other than Fish and Game.
9. Council staff are of the view that the status quo management of Canada Goose is not working and expresses in its submission its preference for Canada Goose to be removed from Schedule 1 to Schedule 5. It proposes that the Christchurch City Council support regional councils being able to declare the Canada Goose to be a ‘pest species’ in regional pest plans and, where necessary, manage nuisance-causing populations of this species by inclusion in regional pest management strategies.
10. If the Canada Goose is to remain in Schedule 1, Council staff recommend that the Draft South Island Canada Goose Management Plan 2000 be reviewed to provide for more effective control of this species in those parts of the country where it is becoming a significant pest.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

11. None with respect to the lodgement of the submission. It is important, though, that the Christchurch City Council advocate its view on the future management of wildlife pest species as this may have some financial, environmental and recreational open space management implications for the Council. The Department of Conservation has indicated its desire to receive the Council's viewpoint on the matter and has accordingly accommodated this, by agreeing to accept a late submission. This should be received by the Department in early February 2007.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council grant approval for the attached letter to be lodged with the Department of Conservation as a formal Christchurch City Council submission on the "Review of Level of Protection for Some New Zealand Wildlife" discussion document.