



Otago
Regional
Council



Otago Regional Council

Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy 2026

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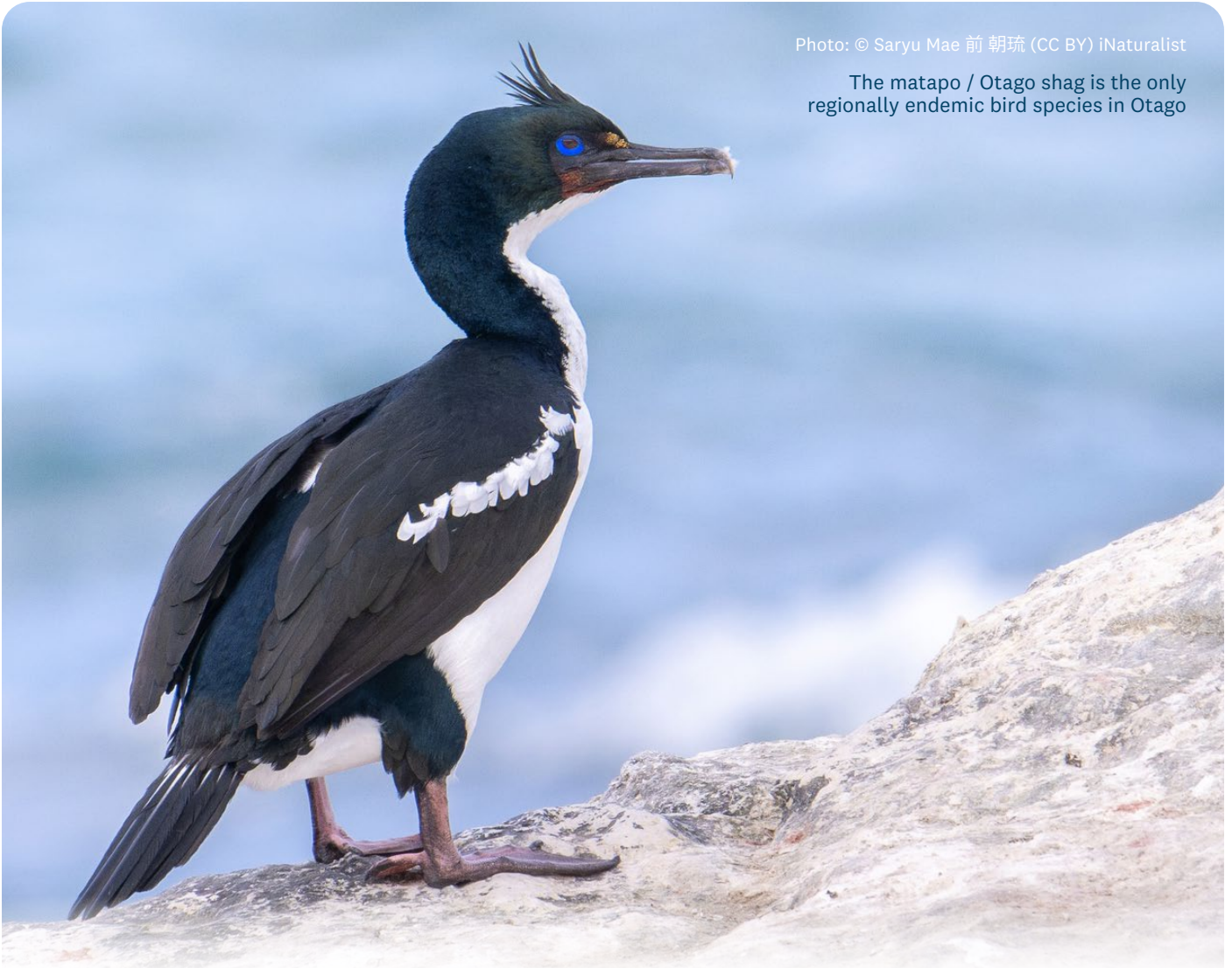
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Pakake / New Zealand sea lion enjoying a beach walk on Otago Peninsula.
Cover image: Toroa / Northern royal albatross, Papanui Canyon.
Photo: Oscar Thomas

Photo: © Saryu Mae 前朝琉 (CC BY) iNaturalist

The matapo / Otago shag is the only regionally endemic bird species in Otago



Foreword

Otago's native plants, animals and fungi — and the relationships between them and how they shape our landscapes — are something we all treasure. They shape who we are, where we live, and the connection we feel to this region we call home.

We rely on our uniquely Otago biodiversity for our wellbeing and our livelihoods.

Toitū te marae a Tāne, toitū te marae a Takaroa, toitū te tangata.

(If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive).

Yet this important living system is under pressure from pests, habitat loss, pollution and, increasingly, climate change.

Otago is rising to the challenge, with projects across the region led by mana whenua,

community groups, and other organisations. Individuals, businesses, farmers, and landowners are taking action at their place and in their operations.

We can be proud of the difference this is making, but there is more to do. Looking after the things we treasure and rely on will take all of us.

This strategy will guide Otago Regional Council's contribution. It is our part in strengthening the Otago-wide effort.

Many thanks,
Hilary Calvert
ORC Chairperson

ORC's responsibilities and this strategy

This strategy is being progressed during a time of resource management reform, as well as local government reform. The work we have done with mana whenua, key stakeholders and the public has made it clear to us that there are some 'no regrets' actions for our biodiversity that will serve Otago well no matter what the future brings. That is the focus of this strategy.

Among its responsibilities relating to indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity, ORC is required to prepare and implement a regional biodiversity strategy¹ and has functions under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to maintain Otago's indigenous biodiversity² and under the Biosecurity Act 1993 to provide leadership to prevent, reduce, or eliminate adverse effects caused by harmful organisms that are present in New Zealand³. These statutory functions are carried out through ORC's various policy statements and plans, as well as other methods⁴ including partnering with mana whenua; supporting and empowering communities, businesses and landowners; coordinating with DOC and local councils; funding projects; and undertaking research and monitoring to ensure those efforts are effective.⁵ Maintaining indigenous biodiversity requires this kind of proactive action.

This strategy includes indigenous biodiversity across land, freshwater, and coastal marine environments, recognising that the environment is an interconnected system

from the mountains to the sea — ki uta ki tai (see Appendix 1 'About the strategy' to read more about its purpose). It replaces ORC's Biosecurity Strategy 2019, as well as the Biodiversity Strategy 2018, bringing together all of the mechanisms ORC will use to maintain indigenous biodiversity (see Appendix 2).

Pests are one of the biggest pressures on indigenous biodiversity, so effective biosecurity is essential to maintain what we have.⁶ Biosecurity is an important tool for Otago's economy and community wellbeing, supporting productive agriculture, animal and human health, disease control, and the landscapes central to tourism and recreation. These broader outcomes deserve dedicated attention in their own right. While biosecurity work in this strategy will often deliver them as co-benefits, they are addressed more fully through the Regional Pest Management Plan and other biosecurity processes.

¹ NPSIB section 3.23

² RMA section 30(1)(ga)

³ Biosecurity Act 1993, section 12B

⁴ As confirmed in *Property Rights in New Zealand Inc (PRINZ) v Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council* [2012] NZHC 1272

⁵ Required under RMA section 35, may be carried out under Biosecurity Act 1993 section 13

⁶ Consistent with NPSIB section 3.4

Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy on a page

Long-term vision

Ki uta ki tai, our awa connect our mountains and great lakes to our beautiful coastline and ocean depths, reflecting the mauri of te taiao. Mana whenua as kaitiaki and our communities as stewards work together to achieve healthy, thriving and resilient indigenous biodiversity across our region’s catchments, coast and ocean, so that both nature and people can thrive.

The problem

We are not on track to maintain Otago’s indigenous biodiversity due to pressures including invasive species, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. These pressures are made worse by division of roles and responsibilities, limited resources and knowledge, and a growing disconnection from nature. However, groups, individuals and businesses are already making a difference across Otago. We can build on this momentum so that both nature and people can thrive.

Why this is important

People are part of the natural world, and indigenous biodiversity underpins life, culture, and livelihoods in Otago. Our wellbeing is tied to the health of native species and ecosystems. For Kāi Tahu, this connection is grounded in whakapapa and the exercise of kaitiakitaka. Indigenous biodiversity holds its own intrinsic value and is deeply connected to our identity and sense of place. A future where indigenous biodiversity thrives will support the wellbeing of people and communities across Otago.

Outcomes What we’re aiming to achieve by 2040 or earlier

1. Indigenous biodiversity is maintained and resilient	2. Indigenous biodiversity is enhanced strategically	3. Mana whenua are supported to exercise kaitiakitaka	4. Communities are empowered as stewards	5. ORC is leading proactive responses to emerging issues	6. The decline of indigenous species and ecosystems is reversed
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Principles How we’ll work

Mauri — Prioritising the mauri, intrinsic value and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity.

Ki uta ki tai — Managing the environment as an interconnected system. Adopting catchment-scale approaches, and align efforts across land, freshwater, coast and marine environments. Creating connections with and among our communities.

He awa whiria — Applying mātauraka Māori, science, and community knowledge as distinct and complementary sources of knowledge.

Kotahitaka — Valuing relationships and being purposeful about how we work together.

Strategic Pou What we’ll do across our biodiversity and biosecurity work

1. Focus action to maintain and enhance — <i>Tiaki me te Whakahaumanu</i>	2. Empower action — <i>Whakahau</i>	3. Get the system right — <i>Tūāpapa</i>
1. Identify indigenous biodiversity focus areas. 2. Partner with mana whenua to ensure the sustainability of taoka species and their habitats, and mahika kai (gathering of food and other natural resources). 3. Work with communities to create landscape-scale visions for maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity. 4. Promote and fund actions to achieve the above, monitor the outcomes, and continuously improve. 5. Monitor for emerging pests and other threats to indigenous biodiversity and respond effectively.	1. Partner with mana whenua on action. 2. Connect people to local indigenous biodiversity to inspire action. 3. Share knowledge and build capability to enable action. 4. Collaborate with those leading action in the community. 5. Build on mana whenua, landowner, and community best practice. 6. Share information about where action is and isn’t happening. 7. Co-design solutions with our communities and coordinate action.	1. Strengthen leadership and collaboration on shared interests with central government and councils in partnership with mana whenua. 2. Explore incentives and co-investment models and encourage investment and innovation to support maintenance and enhancement. 3. Monitor the status and trends of indigenous biodiversity. 4. Make sure that plans and decisions contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.

What does this look like in practice?

Our previous strategies and what we are doing now have made a difference, but we still aren't on track for maintaining indigenous biodiversity in Otago. The three strategic pou (pillars) described in this strategy provide direction and focus for the change needed to achieve the desired outcomes. This section describes what implementing this strategy looks like in practice, and why it matters.

Alpine environment looking towards Mount Awful on the Gillespie Pass in Mount Aspiring National Park



Strategic Pou 1:

Focus action to maintain and enhance — *Tiaki me te Whakahaumanu*



Focus effort where it makes the greatest difference: drawing on ORC science, mātauraka and community knowledge

What are we doing now?

- **ORC's Science team** is working with experienced Otago experts, drawing on monitoring, surveillance and other relevant data across the region — to build our knowledge of the indigenous biodiversity in the region, how its doing, where it is located, the things that are putting pressure on it, and what we can do to maintain and enhance it, building our knowledge base.
- **ORC's Policy and Planning team** has partnered with mana whenua as kaitiaki to identify the issues putting pressure on mahika kai and taoka species through the proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement 2021.
- **ORC's Integrated Catchment Management team** is working with communities, mana whenua, and others to set landscape-scale visions for the environment, which includes indigenous biodiversity, and develop and implement strategies for achieving them through catchment action plans (CAPs). CAPs include a monitoring and review approach that informs continual improvement and brings in up-to-date knowledge.
- **ORC provides funding** to support community action — for example, through ECO Fund.
- **ORC's catchment advisors** provide advice to community groups, mana whenua, landowners and businesses across the region.
- **ORC participates in national-level initiatives and collaboration** to improve biodiversity outcomes, including Predator Free 2050, Jobs for Nature, and various biosecurity and science collaborations.
- **ORC's Biosecurity team** undertakes pest surveillance as part of delivering the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP), including monitoring in freshwater environments, through compliance activities, landowner reporting and coordination with other agencies.
- **ORC works with QEII and Ngā Whenua Rāhui** to support landowners who place land under voluntary legal protection through mechanisms such as QEII Open Space Covenants and kawenata.

What comes next? (strengthening what we already do)

- **We can encourage councils, mana whenua, communities, businesses, landowners and investors** to focus their actions where they can have the biggest impact to maintain indigenous biodiversity, sustain mahika kai and taoka species, and achieve landscape-scale visions. We can make the most of our resources by doing the same.
- **We can make it easy for anyone to understand where action will have the biggest impact** — drawing on ORC's knowledge, strategies in catchment action plans, and our partnership with mana whenua to understand what is needed to sustain mahika kai and taoka species, and identify biodiversity focus areas. We can focus action to address the current and future pressures on indigenous biodiversity and achieve Predator Free 2050 goals.
- **We can channel our funding**, e.g. ECO Fund, towards the highest-impact actions and spread the word through catchment advisors, on our website and through our other communications.
- **We can identify where indigenous biodiversity is already supporting our communities⁷** — filtering water, buffering floods and building resilience to drought — and where restoring it could deliver these same benefits elsewhere in a cost-effective way.
- **We can make ORC's indigenous biodiversity knowledge easy to find and use**, so that territorial authorities, landowners, businesses and community groups can act on the best available knowledge — and so it feeds directly into catchment action plans.
- **We can look out for risks to indigenous biodiversity**, drawing on ORC's knowledge, mātauraka and community knowledge. We can plan ahead through pathways plans to prevent harmful plants and animals from reaching Otago or impacting indigenous biodiversity. We can focus these efforts to secure biodiversity focus areas, values identified in catchment action plans, and to sustain mahika kai and taoka species.
- **Clear decision-making criteria and triggers**, informed by the invasion curve from pest management, will help ensure we respond to both current and emerging pressures at the right time and in the right way (see Appendix 3 'Proactive intervention').
- **We can support biodiversity projects** and those taking action to celebrate success, adapt and learn using a simple 'did it work' approach to monitor outcomes, share learnings and continuously improve.
- **We can support QEII** to focus voluntary legal protection where it will make the biggest difference.

Why it matters

Focused action, acting on risks before they become more expensive and harder to manage, and learning and improving as we go all mean more gets done with the same resources and we have a bigger impact. Focused action compounds over time, meaning a better outcome now and for the next generation.

⁷ Otherwise known as ecosystem services, or nature's contribution to people.



Strategic Pou 2:

Empower Action — *Whakahau*



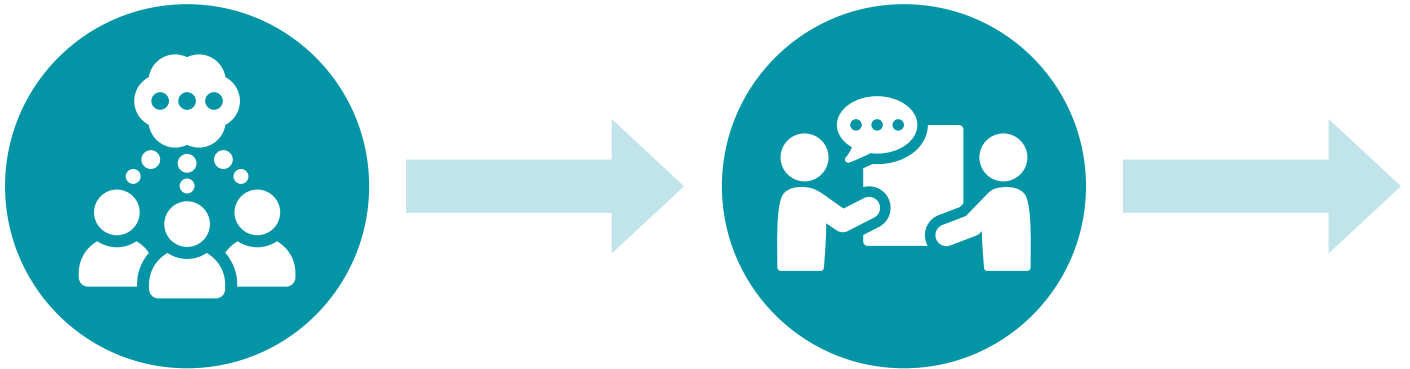
Make it easy to get the know-how and support so mana whenua, communities, landowners and businesses can make a bigger difference, working with those who want to work with us.

What are we doing now?

- **ORC has collaborated with community groups and landowners and partnered with mana whenua** as kaitiaki on projects that protect and enhance biodiversity. We also have relationships with a wide range of groups, businesses and individuals taking action across the region.
- **ORC's Science team** is working with DOC and other experts to identify methods to address pressures on indigenous biodiversity and shares these with people wanting to take action.
- **ORC's website and other communications channels** are used to share resources that showcase Otago's unique species and ecosystems and tell success stories about their protection and enhancement.
- **ORC's catchment advisors** engage with schools and community groups to inspire action for stream health, delivering stream health workshops for farmers and supporting community groups.
- **ORC's Biosecurity team** raises awareness of pest species across the region, including face-to-face, at community events, through various stories and fact sheets, our online 'Pest Hub', and by coordinating community rabbit programmes and site-led work.
- **ORC's Integrated Catchment Management team** is working with communities, mana whenua and others — through CAPs — to identify the things they value in their catchment, identify what puts pressure on those values and co-design solutions to those pressures. CAPs also map where action is already happening, where there are gaps, as well as planned action.
- **Staff across ORC contribute to inspiring and supporting biodiversity action through their day-to-day work** — including communications and engagement that showcase Otago's unique species and ecosystems and tell success stories about their protection and enhancement.
- **ORC is funding action to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity across Otago, e.g. through ECO Fund.**

What comes next? (strengthening what we already do)

We can continue to collaborate with community groups and landowners and partner with mana whenua as kaitiaki on projects.
We can increasingly work with businesses and industries too.



The starting point to empowering action is inspiration. Through our website, social media, community events, enviroschools, and our catchment advisors, we can inspire people to care about Otago's biodiversity and recognise the pressure it is under. We can do this by sharing stories about the native plants, animals and fungi that live in Otago and encouraging people to connect with them by:

- discovering which ones live on their farm, in their backyard, neighbourhood or the places they're visiting
- visiting ecosanctuaries or existing projects where they are thriving
- visiting a local walk, park or reserve run by DOC and local councils, or a tourism experience where they can be seen
- learning more about them through citizen science.

From inspiration to enablement. Drawing on ORC science, mātauraka and community best practice, and through our website, social media, staff attending community events, Enviroschools, catchment advisors and other teams:

- When people are ready, we can make it easy to act — whether that's growing a native plant, setting a rat trap, making lizard habitat or applying best practice on the farm.
- For those ready to do more, we can make it easy to support an existing project or community group or learn how to look after the biodiversity on their place through a farm biodiversity workshop or an industry-aligned farm assurance programme.
- And for those already taking action, we can provide the know-how and support to have a bigger impact, connecting them with the right people, guidance and methods, filling gaps in guidance where they exist, and encouraging action at the right landscape scale.



From enablement to collaboration. We can collaborate with the projects, groups, and businesses already leading the way to:

- bring people together to share their experience and celebrate success
- build ‘communities of practice’ to share know-how and improve best practice
- contribute their on-the-ground knowledge to inform ORC science.

We can co-design strategies with our communities to address the pressures on Otago's biodiversity through catchment action plans. We can coordinate the right parties at the right landscape scale to address these pressures, applying best practice, and sharing what works across the region.

Through our biodiversity work, funding, and relationships with DOC and local councils, we can map where action is happening across Otago. Knowing where action is happening makes it easier to celebrate success, connect people through communities of practice and identify gaps.

We can continue to be trusted advisors.

Why it matters

To achieve our goals we need more people across Otago to become active stewards, working alongside mana whenua as kaitiaki. Our knowledge and relationships mean we can meet people where they are and support them to go from being inspired to having an impact — creating a movement that delivers better outcomes now and for the next generation. Co-designing solutions builds ownership and makes success more likely. Many of the pressures on indigenous biodiversity can only be addressed at landscape scale, and ORC is uniquely placed to bring the right players together to do that.

Strategic Pou 3: Get the System Right - *Tūāpapa*



Rally everyone around a shared strategy, attract investment, make sure our plans and decisions support biodiversity outcomes, and monitor to see if we are making a difference.

What are we doing now?

- **ORC has a robust and constructive relationship with mana whenua** and good working relationships with central government and other councils.
- **ORC leads the Otago Biodiversity Forum**, promoting effective collaboration between staff from central government, local councils and mana whenua.
- **ORC provides rates relief for land protected by open space covenant** and funding support for resource consent processing fees for eligible environmental projects.
- **ORC collaborates and advocates** for collective approaches to biosecurity and biodiversity with neighbouring regional councils and nationally.
- **ORC's Science team is working with experienced Otago experts**, drawing on monitoring and other relevant data across the region, to report on a number of indicators of the state of Otago's indigenous biodiversity and where it is headed, including how threatened our species and ecosystems are.
- **To achieve its functions, including maintenance of indigenous biodiversity**, ORC prepares and implements the Regional Pest Management Plan, Regional Policy Statement, and regional plans; makes decisions on resource consents; and monitors, educates and enforces compliance.



What comes next? (strengthening what we already do)

Building on catchment action plans, mātauraka and ORC's knowledge, we can rally everyone around a shared action plan for Otago's biodiversity with landscape-scale visions and strategies for achieving them. We can form an alliance of those with responsibilities for biodiversity and biosecurity in Otago: a leadership group of central government agencies, councils, and mana whenua, supported by the Otago Biodiversity Forum and communities of practice. This will enable us to combine our efforts to achieve the action plan and do more with what we have.

We can:

- explore incentives that support landowners taking action that has additional benefits to indigenous biodiversity
- make it easy for funders and investors to find information that helps them to have the greatest impact
- make it easy for projects to be investment-ready and access investment through things like co-investment mechanisms and biodiversity credits
- encourage businesses to focus their nature-related disclosures where it matters most
- work with local councils and larger businesses in Otago to make it easy to offset emissions in ways that benefit indigenous biodiversity, mana whenua aspirations and community goals
- encourage innovation in the tools and methods needed to address the challenges facing Otago's indigenous biodiversity.

Across regional boundaries we can continue to collaborate with neighbouring regional councils and learn from each other to better respond to pressures on indigenous biodiversity as well as biosecurity. Nationally, we can advocate for solutions to issues that require a national approach or those we don't have the tools to address.

We can provide a shared picture of the state of indigenous biodiversity in Otago, whether it is being maintained and where it is headed, biosecurity issues and successes, as well as cultural health indicators for taoka species and mahika kai. We can do this at a scale that supports local councils and we can use remote sensing and other innovative methods to keep the cost down and gain an even better understanding of the resilience of Otago's indigenous biodiversity.

Working with our communities, local councils, government agencies, and existing conservation organisations and partnering with mana whenua, we can prepare and implement a fit-for-purpose Regional Pest Management Plan, including addressing pests that impact indigenous biodiversity, in alignment with the Biosecurity Act 1993.

We can make sure the RPMP and other regional policies and plans implement national direction regarding the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity. We can keep stewardship and kaitiakitaka at the centre of our policies and plans as a holistic approach to maintaining indigenous biodiversity, because we will need more than just rules to do this. We can make the most of plans as a backstop that supports voluntary action, e.g. through good neighbour rules. Where someone taking voluntary action intends for it to be additional to effects management or consent requirements, we can make sure it is counted as such.

When making investment and other decisions across our functions, we can explicitly include benefits to — and from — indigenous biodiversity, including nature-based solutions.

Kōtare / kingfisher



Why it matters

An alliance with clear roles and a shared plan means coordinated effort, less duplication, and collective impact none of us could achieve alone.

Meeting our goals will require more resources — emerging mechanisms like biodiversity credits, nature-related disclosures and incentives can help, and ORC can make sure Otago is positioned to make the most of them. Incentives do more than offset cost, recognising effort and connecting landowners to a shared movement. Innovation is closing gaps too — new tools have already cut the cost of Predator Free 2050 by two-thirds.

Monitoring tells us whether what we're doing is working and where to focus next.

Fit-for-purpose plans and policies are important tools in maintaining indigenous biodiversity, providing a credible regulatory backstop to support community stewardship.

Getting benefits for Otago's biodiversity throughout our work makes the most of what we have.



Indigenous biodiversity in Otago

Otago's indigenous biodiversity is remarkably varied.

It ranges from the cheeky kea in Kā Tiritiri o te Moana/ the Southern Alps, to mokomoko/ skinks sun-basking on schist tors in Central Otago, from giant wētā literally freezing on the Rock and Pillar Range/Pātearoa, to hoiho / yellow-eyed penguins on our coast. Galaxiid fishes cling to refuge streams, while threatened cushion plants and native grasses eke out a living on wind-scoured ridge-tops. Lowland podocarps, kānuka shrublands, and rare dune systems hold remnants of once-dominant ecosystems. Tuaki/Cockles in coastal estuaries and offshore, pakeke (New Zealand sea-lions), forests of Giant Kelp/Rimurapa and sponge gardens play their part. Beyond these familiar plants and animals, are untold numbers of species both big and small.

Each of these species is a thread in a wider ecological fabric. When that fabric frays — through habitat loss, the impact of pests, or climate stresses — every other thread is put at risk. Maintaining indigenous biodiversity is both a duty and a practical necessity for the health and resilience of Otago's environment and our communities.



The pīwauwau / southern rock wren has a regionally critical status

For Kāi Tahu, the relationship with indigenous biodiversity is through the Te Ao Māori world view, anchored in whakapapa (genealogy), which begins with the union of Rakinui and Papatūānuku. Raki coupled with a number of wives, including Papatūānuku. From Raki's many unions came offspring, who together were responsible for creating the elements that constitute the taiao (natural world) today, including the mountains, rivers, forests and seas, and all fish, bird and other animal life (including humans). Kāi Tahu claim the same descent from Raki and his wives and are therefore connected to all things by whakapapa (genealogical ties). This is reflected in the exercise of rakatirataka, the inherited authority to give effect to Kāi Tahu culture and traditions in the management of the natural world. Kaitiakitaka is the practical expression of rakatirataka, and in this context, it can be briefly summarised up as having the right and responsibility to care and look after the environment.

People are part of the natural world, and indigenous biodiversity underpins life, culture, and livelihoods in Otago. Our wellbeing is tied to the health of native species and ecosystems. Otago communities have expressed a deep connection to indigenous biodiversity and a strong desire to maintain and enhance it. Indigenous biodiversity is valued in its own right, as well as for the sense of place and identity it provides. Our tourism industry relies on it for its branding, and it is an important part of functioning natural systems. These systems contribute essential services like clean water, fertile soil, climate regulation, and protection from floods and erosion. In Otago, these support farming, tourism, and community wellbeing.



Rich biodiversity and resilient ecosystems are important stores of carbon and landscape stability, they have the potential to shield us from the worst consequences of increasingly severe weather.

Maintenance of indigenous biodiversity is one of the Otago Regional Council's (ORC) core responsibilities under the RMA and achieving no net loss of indigenous biodiversity is a Regional Council function in the currently proposed Natural Environment Bill. Legislation provides clear, complementary definitions for indigenous biodiversity:

Together, these definitions tell us that **indigenous biodiversity is not just the species themselves; it is the full tapestry of genes, species, habitats, and ecological relationships that occur here naturally.**

Maintaining the native plants, animals, fungi, and the places they live is a core part of how ORC gives effect to the RMA in Otago. Community expectations clearly reinforce this mandate and call for leadership, ambition, and meaningful action, indicating the need for a strategy ('see Appendix 5 The role of ORC in indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity').

RMA definition (as “biological diversity”)

“The variability among living organisms, and the ecological complexes of which they are a part, including diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.”

National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (definition of indigenous biodiversity)

“The living organisms that occur naturally in New Zealand, and the ecological complexes of which they are part, including all forms of indigenous flora, fauna, and fungi, and their habitats.”

Otago species and ecosystems found nowhere else on earth

1
bird



6
reptiles



39
vascular
plants



101
spiders



8
freshwater
fishes



1
naturally
uncommon
ecosystem



Where are we now?

Otago's extraordinary mix of alpine, freshwater, lowland and marine ecosystems is in crisis as a result of invasive plants and animals, habitat loss, exploitation, pollution and climate change.

Otago's extraordinary mix of alpine, freshwater, lowland and marine ecosystems is in crisis as a result of invasive plants and animals, habitat loss, exploitation, pollution and climate change.

Rats, stoats and cats predate kea, wētā and mokomoko/skinks, while possums and deer browse on Otago's remaining beech and podocarp forests. Rabbits, goats and wilding pines are reshaping and eroding tussocklands. Water weed (lagarosiphon) and exotic seaweed (like undaria) are squeezing out native vegetation in our lakes and on our coast.

Longstanding habitat loss from land use change and urban growth has pushed galaxiid fishes into ever-smaller refuges and steadily reduced the estuaries that tuaki/cockles depend on. Otago has retained more wetlands than most regions, yet still lost 76% of what was here, taking with them a natural buffer against flood and drought, and the remarkable range of plants, birds, and invertebrates that depended on them.

Urban pollution and nutrient runoff affect habitat for tuna/eel in our lakes and rivers, and sediment fills our estuaries and blocks the light from forests of rimu/rapa/giant kelp which shelter blue cod and kōura/crayfish. The hunting behaviour of rūrū and other nocturnal species, and the navigational systems of seabirds returning to coastal and inland roost sites, are both disrupted by artificial light at night.

Population growth, urban development and intensification will add to these pressures.

As a result Otago's indigenous biodiversity is in decline, with 20% of native birds, 97% of lizards and 40% of plants now threatened or at risk of regional extinction; many ecosystem types survive at only a fraction of their pre-human extent. This means natural hazards and emerging diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza can be existential for some species and ecosystems.



A wilding conifer overlooking Lake Hāwea



This crisis of biodiversity loss is interlinked with climate change.

Otago's ecosystems are vulnerable to increasingly extreme weather and risk of wildfire, sea level rise and ocean acidification. This will compound existing and long standing pressures, invasive plants and animals will no longer be kept in check by our southern climate, and the places suitable for our native plants, animals and fungi to survive will change as well.

Biodiversity decline carries clear economic, resilience, and water and food security costs including higher pest control expenditure, lost export and tourism brand, less secure water, soil and nutrient cycles and reduced buffering against extreme weather and erosion. It also brings cultural and social costs for Otago communities who rely on and value indigenous biodiversity for identity, recreation and our mental and physical health.

For Kāi Tahu, who are connected with Otago's indigenous biodiversity through whakapapa, the loss of indigenous biodiversity and the growing distance between the people and what indigenous biodiversity remains affects the ability to exercise rakatirataka by undermining this relationship, responsibilities and practices. The loss of mahika kai and taoka species and habitats has had a drastic effect on cultural identity, the ability to fulfil kaitiaki responsibilities and pass on mātauraka to future generations.

While ORC's current strategies have moved us forward in many ways, efforts to arrest the decline remain fragmented across agencies and initiatives. We don't yet have the mechanisms to coordinate action, build capability, focus and sustain investment, or measure the difference we are making.

But action can be taken to address these pressures and increase the resilience of Otago's indigenous biodiversity to a changing climate. Across the region, people are already taking action. Kāi Tahu lead place-based projects grounded in whakapapa and mātauraka. Landowners and communities act as stewards of indigenous biodiversity on their whenua. Community groups, farmers, catchment groups and businesses are taking action and establishing best practice, and many are highly effective. Otago even has three international Dark Sky Reserves. Central and local government initiatives complement this work (see Appendix 6 for the roles of other agencies).

Example of a naturally uncommon ecosystem found in Otago



There is growing ambition across Otago to increase and enhance our indigenous biodiversity.

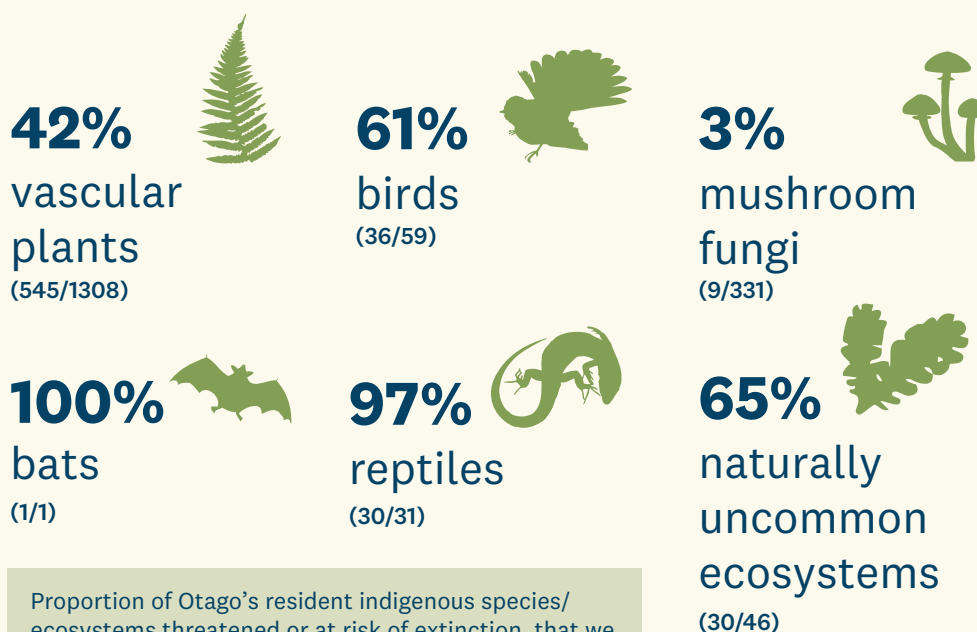
At the same time, there is recognition that our first responsibility is to protect what remains; the ecosystems and species we still have are irreplaceable foundations to build from.

Predator Free 2050 and government investment in Jobs for Nature projects show what's possible when investment and shared goals align, projects like WAI Wānaka, Southern Lakes Sanctuary, Toitū Te Hākapupu and Predator Free Dunedin have built capability, strengthened relationships, and demonstrated that landscape scale

action is achievable. While Jobs for Nature funding has ended, Predator Free 2050 is preparing to accelerate, and there is growing interest in investing in indigenous biodiversity, for philanthropy, to offset emissions, to secure water supplies, to buffer against flooding and drought, and for cultural and community reasons.

Biodiversity loss is not inevitable — but reversing current trends will take focus, sustained investment, capability building and coordination across the many groups and sectors who have a part to play.

Threatened or at risk of extinction in Otago



What are we aiming to achieve?

Long-term vision

Ki uta ki tai, our awa connect our mountains and great lakes to our beautiful coastline and ocean depths, reflecting the mauri of te taiao.

Mana whenua as kaitiaki and our communities as stewards work together to achieve healthy, thriving and resilient indigenous biodiversity across our region's catchments, coast and ocean, providing for the health of the people.

Toitū te marae a Tane-Mahuta.

Toitū te marae a Takaroa.

Toitū te takata.

“When the land is well and the sea is well, the people thrive.”



Two hoiho / yellow-eyed penguins
(Regionally Critical status)



Photo: © Samuel Purdie
(CC BY-NC) iNaturalist



Photo: © Diego Carena-Santiago
(CC BY-NC) iNaturalist

Above: *Powelliphanta spedeni*, one of two
carnivorous snail species in Otago.
Right: *Peripatoides otepoti*, a type of velvet worm.

Outcomes

What we are aiming to achieve by 2040 or earlier

Indigenous biodiversity is maintained and resilient

The condition, quantity and diversity of indigenous biodiversity is maintained to meet national policy,⁸ and indigenous biodiversity is resilient to current and future pressures, such as pests, pressures on habitats and climate change.

Mana whenua are supported to exercise kaitiakitaka

Kāi Tahu exercise rakatirataka in indigenous biodiversity management. Kāi Tahu are supported to exercise kaitiakitaka, with mātauraka and mahika kai practices valued and upheld.

ORC is leading proactive responses to emerging issues

ORC leads a region-wide approach; threats to indigenous biodiversity are being detected early; and timely, appropriate responses are happening even when the issue was not predicted.

Indigenous biodiversity is enhanced strategically

Biodiversity enhancement beyond that required to meet national policy, e.g. expanding indigenous ecosystems where they do more than provide increased resilience or connectivity, are targeted to achieve shared visions that are developed with our communities, to reflect their aspirations.

Communities are empowered as stewards

Community and catchment groups, businesses, landowners and individuals across Otago are enabled to take action, with support tailored to their role, place and stage of their journey as stewards of indigenous biodiversity.

The decline of indigenous species and ecosystems is reversed

Loss of species and ecosystems is stopped, as a result of action to target key drivers of their decline, and species are beginning to bounce back.

⁸ National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, Section 1.7

How we'll work

Principles

Mauri

We will prioritise the mauri, intrinsic value and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity and recognise people's connections and relationships with it. The health and wellbeing of people and communities are dependent on the health and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity, and in return, people have a responsibility to care for and nurture it.

Biodiversity in Otago includes valued introduced species, many of which are important for our everyday lives, the primary sector, and recreation and commercial opportunities. To reflect our specific role, however, we will work to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity.

He awa whiria

Valuing our diverse knowledge systems

We will apply mātauraka Kāi Tahu, science and community knowledge as valuable, complementary and distinct knowledge systems in the management of indigenous biodiversity.

We have distinct responsibilities to each. We will identify where these knowledge systems mingle and mix, like the ever-changing streams of a braided river, to generate new approaches and ways of understanding for better results.

Ki uta ki tai

From the mountains to the sea

We will embrace ki uta ki tai, recognising that the environment is an interconnected system which depends on its connections to flourish and must be managed as interdependent across land, freshwater, coast and marine environments — from the mountains to the sea, from urban to rural.

This acknowledges the web of interconnectedness between indigenous species, ecosystems, the wider environment, and the community, at both a physical and metaphysical level.

We will adopt catchment-scale approaches and align efforts across land, freshwater, coast and marine environments.

We will reflect ki uta ki tai in the way we connect communities, organisations and those taking action.

Kotahitaka

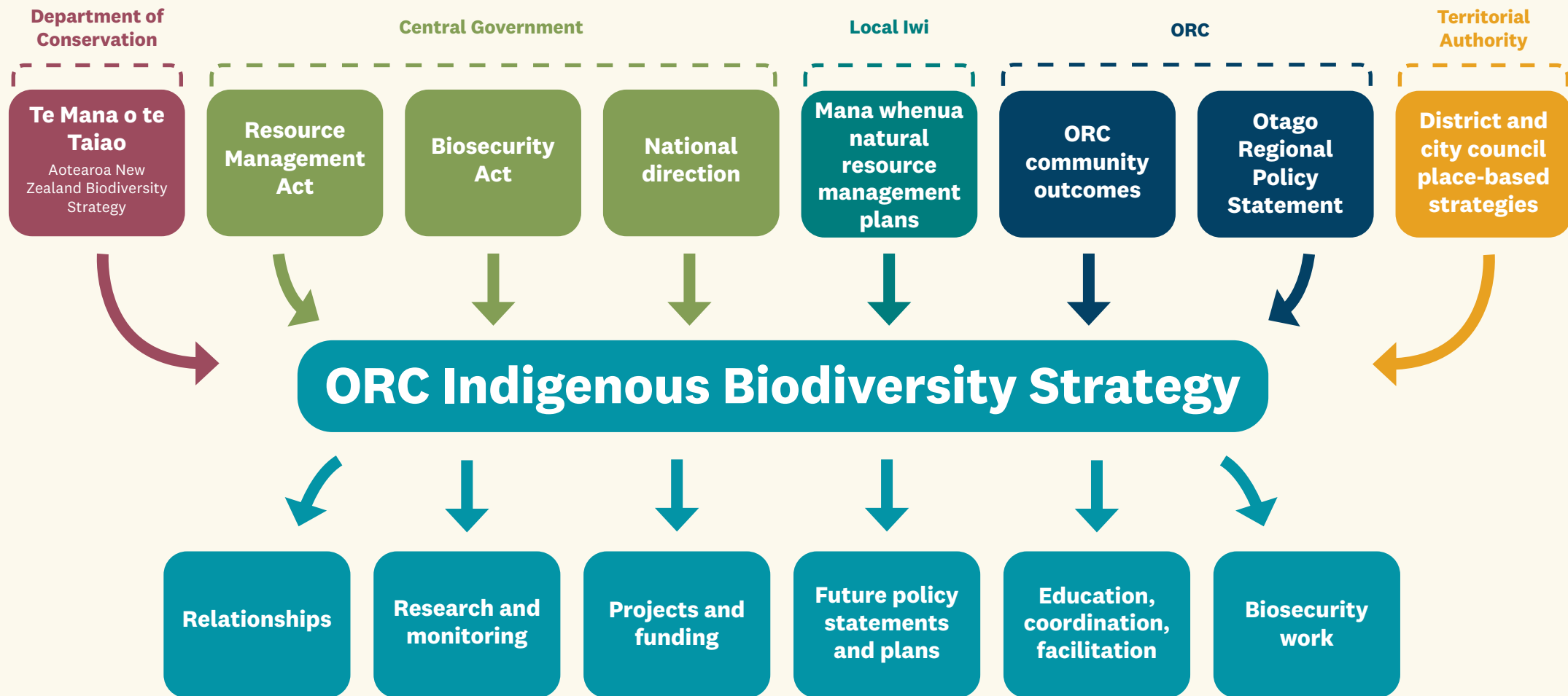
Investing in working together

We will value and invest in relationships and ways of working together as a foundation for knowledge sharing, working to our strengths, combining efforts, and enabling clear and decisive action.



View of Karitāne Peninsula

Where does the strategy fit in?



This strategy sets out how ORC will deliver its functions under the RMA and Biosecurity Act and respond to community expectations for Otago's biodiversity and biosecurity.

It builds on and replaces our Biodiversity Strategy 2018 and Biosecurity Strategy 2019 — carrying forward what is working, refining our approach where it is needed. Evolution, not revolution.

The strategy aligns with national direction for biodiversity,⁹ freshwater,¹⁰ the coast¹¹ and biosecurity,¹² which informed its development, the principles and mechanisms it adopts, and the role ORC plays in the wider system. It aligns with Te Mana o te Taiao — Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, and uses its three Strategic Pou as an organising framework, connecting ORC's work to the national effort.

It draws on regional policy¹³ for its ambition and operationalises many of the policy's methods.

It takes inspiration from city and district council biodiversity strategies as well as place-based strategies, including Waiwhakaata Rautaki / Lake Hayes Strategy and the Upper Clutha Biodiversity Strategy.

Implementation will be through ORC's policy statements and plans, communications, funds, projects and work programmes. Our relationships across the region and our partnership with mana whenua are central to implementation.

Catchment action plans are a key mechanism, and this strategy aims to provide a framework for these to be implemented, continually improve and guide collective action.



Werewere-kōkako /
Entoloma hochstetteri
mushrooms

⁹ National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023

¹⁰ National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020

¹¹ The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010

¹² National Policy Direction for Pest Management and Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement.

¹³ Otago Regional Policy Statement 2019 and proposed ORPS 2021

Biodiversity vs biosecurity — what's the difference?



Biodiversity is **what** we protect.

Biodiversity is the species, ecosystems and habitats that occur naturally in Otago and are part of our regional prosperity and identity.

Protecting indigenous biodiversity requires a team effort between mana whenua, communities, agencies, landowners and businesses.



Biosecurity is **one way** we protect it.

Pests are one of the things that cause harm to our indigenous biodiversity. They also cause harm to productive land and many other things we value.

Biosecurity is about managing pests to reduce this harm. It includes trying to prevent their introduction into Otago or managing their impacts should they get here.

It works best when mana whenua, agencies, communities and businesses work together across the land and water to control, contain or eradicate pests.

Both are part of ORC's role

ORC has distinct but complementary biodiversity and biosecurity roles: working to maintain biodiversity under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and providing leadership of pest management in Otago under the Biosecurity Act 1993.



Maintaining indigenous biodiversity: why it's a huge task

The scale, effort, and ambition required just to hold the line

Maintenance doesn't mean standing still, it means working constantly to hold the line against loss. This requires effort every day — across our landscapes, rivers and coastlines.

Maintaining indigenous biodiversity requires more than just setting policies and regulations. It also depends on the actions of many others beyond ORC's direct control. This reinforces the need for ORC to combine policy and regulation with effective pest management, coordinated leadership and collaboration, and to enable kaitiakitaka, empower stewardship, and support action on the ground.

The National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) provides direction for regional councils in how they deliver their RMA function to maintain indigenous biodiversity. We use the terms 'maintain' and 'maintenance' throughout this strategy. When we use those terms, we are referring to the definition of maintenance found in the NPSIB:

“the maintenance and at least no overall reduction of all the following: (i) the size of populations of indigenous species; (ii) indigenous species occupancy across their natural range; (iii) the properties and function of ecosystems and habitats used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity; (iv) the full range and extent of ecosystems and habitats used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity; (v) connectivity between, and buffering around, ecosystems used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity; (vi) the resilience and adaptability of ecosystems; and (b) where necessary, the restoration and enhancement of ecosystems and habitats.”

Maintenance sets a high bar; in some cases, it requires active restoration and enhancement, not just preventing further loss.



Many of our most threatened species survive only because of constant effort. Landowners, mana whenua, communities and councils all have a role to play.



Appendices

Mountain daisies at
upper Beans Burn

Appendix 1

About the strategy

Strategy is about choosing a particular approach or course of action to achieve desired outcomes.

It is essential for navigating our complex environmental challenges, such as managing the region's indigenous biodiversity. Strategy helps us to prioritise actions and investments, coordinate with other councils, central government, mana whenua and stakeholders, and manage our limited resources responsibly. It also helps us to respond proactively to emerging issues while ensuring transparency and accountability to ratepayers.

The purpose of this indigenous biodiversity strategy is to provide clarity on what we're aiming to achieve and how we plan to get there. It sets out the approach that we will take and provides a framework for decision making. It helps us plan our actions, allocate resources effectively, coordinate across different areas of responsibility, and build capability and capacity where it is needed. It provides the rationale to help communicate both what we are going to focus on and what will not be a priority for us just now.

By taking a strategic approach, we can ensure that our work is focused, future-proofed and aligned with the long-term wellbeing of the people and places we serve.

The strategy:

- Describes the approach that we, ORC, will take to achieve the desired outcomes for the region's indigenous biodiversity
- Outlines the activities that we, ORC, will prioritise when developing work programmes and budgets and when making strategic decisions about resource allocation
- Informs our business planning processes for each long-term plan and annual plan
- Guides the development of policies and regulations
- Is referred to in Council papers to support our elected members when making strategic decisions
- Helps us understand how all our activities interact.

The strategy is a non-statutory document that shows how we intend to give effect to ORC's ambitions, legislative and statutory responsibilities.



Photo: Carey Knox

The kowarau gecko is regionally endemic and found in Central Otago



The dusky galaxias is regionally endemic and found in East Otago. Classified as 'Nationally Endangered', they share the same threat status as the rare South Island kākā.

The strategy is owned by Otago Regional Council, but it also describes how we will work with others in pursuit of our common ambitions. Key relationships for the delivery of this strategy include:

- Mana whenua, due to our ambition of further strengthening effective and meaningful partnerships and to go above and beyond our statutory responsibilities (as prescribed in local government and treaty settlement legislation) to support the intention of the Crown to uphold the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi
- The region's district and city councils, due to our aligned legislative and moral responsibilities to the region's communities, which are best delivered when we work together
- Other agencies with clear mandated responsibilities in this space, such as the Department of Conservation and research and educational institutions
- Groups with strong interest and influence in this space, such as environmental conservation community groups
- All those people and groups who will be directly affected by our activities.

Successful implementation of the strategy will be evident through decision making that results in the desired shifts and outcomes for the region's indigenous biodiversity. We will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this strategy and ensure it is reviewed if it is not having the desired impact and/or changes to the operating environment mean that it is no longer fit for purpose.

Appendix 2

Our journey so far

The 2018 Biodiversity Strategy and the 2019 Biosecurity Strategy have guided ORC's biodiversity and biosecurity work, laying the foundation for where we are today. While this strategy replaces them, they helped build the strengths we will benefit from in the future.



Our Living Treasure | Tō tātou Koiora Taoka

Otago Regional Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2018

The 2018 Biodiversity Strategy laid important groundwork for ORC. It clarified ORC's role in maintaining indigenous biodiversity and led to a better indigenous biodiversity knowledge base, improved relationships, and collaboration with mana whenua and other agencies, along with an increasing ability to empower communities and collaborate with those leading action, and better internal coordination.

To protect what we treasure

Otago Regional Council Biosecurity Strategy 2019

The 2019 Biosecurity Strategy led ORC to build strengths in best practice pest management and step into an enabling, coordinating leadership role aligned with the Biosecurity Act 1993. It also led to a focus on prevention, early response and sustained control.

Combined with our recent catchment action plan work, these strategies have established the foundations this strategy now builds on.

Rainbow at dawn, Ōtepoti Dunedin



The development of this strategy has been a shared effort.

ORC and mana whenua have worked in partnership throughout, including through the Council and Mana Whenua Reference Group. We have worked closely with Otago's city and district councils and the Department of Conservation to align our respective roles and contributions. More than 50 key stakeholders — from community and catchment groups; primary sector, tourism and conservation organisations; government agencies; and others — contributed their time and expertise through one-on-one conversations and workshops. Many people across Otago put significant time into their submissions during public consultation, sharing the perspectives and aspirations that have shaped the strategy.

The feedback we received showed strong support for the direction of the strategy, including from groups whose interests don't always align — a reflection of how much Otago cares about its indigenous biodiversity.

This strategy does not start from a blank page. Across Otago, mana whenua, community and catchment groups, landowners, businesses, agencies and individuals are already doing the work — restoring habitat, controlling pests, protecting taoka species, and caring for the places they call home. The strategy builds on that foundation and is shaped by it.

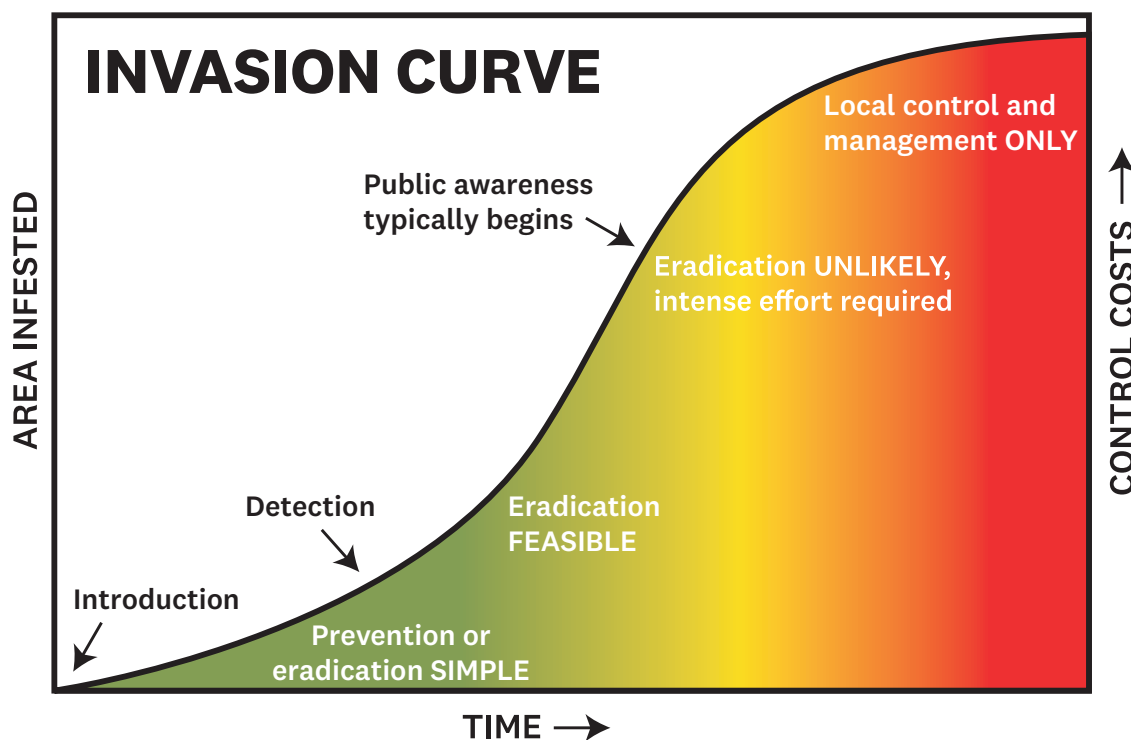
We acknowledge and thank everyone who contributed to the strategy's development, and everyone whose ongoing work it now seeks to support.

Appendix 3

Proactive intervention

So that monitoring and surveillance for emerging pests and threats to indigenous biodiversity lead to effective action, we will use the invasion-curve concept from pest management to guide decision making and prioritise effort.

The invasion curve illustrates that the earlier a pest or threat is detected and addressed, the more cost effective and impactful the response is likely to be. Early action — such as exclusion or eradication — offers the greatest ecological return, while delayed responses often require more sustained and costly control with diminishing benefits.



Appendix 4

Measuring progress and review

Measuring progress on actions that result from the strategy

An implementation plan, including actions to implement the strategy, will be prepared. This will inform the Long-Term Plan, and progress on actions will be reported to council annually.

Measuring progress to maintain indigenous biodiversity across Otago

To understand the effectiveness of the strategy, we will track measures that help us understand whether indigenous biodiversity is being maintained. These measures will cover what we measure and the trend that would indicate we are maintaining indigenous biodiversity. They will draw on available data, and be reported annually. Data sources include national datasets, data from other agencies, and ORC's own monitoring programmes across land, freshwater, wetland, estuarine, and coastal marine environments.

These measures don't cover every aspect of indigenous biodiversity, but tracking the health of ecosystems, and key ecosystem drivers, as well as the threat status of a range of species will give us a good indication of how it's doing overall.

Measure	Source	Trend we aim to see
Indigenous species threatened with extinction, terrestrial, freshwater and marine	ORC regional threat assessments	Fewer at risk or threatened species
Ecosystem extent, terrestrial, wetland, freshwater, coast and marine	ORC ecosystem mapping	Ecosystem extent staying the same or increasing
Ecosystem condition, terrestrial, freshwater, wetland, coast and marine	ORC ecosystem condition monitoring	Ecosystem condition, staying the same or increasing
Estuary muddiness, as a key driver of ecological health in coastal ecosystems	ORC estuary monitoring	Trending toward or remaining at the level that supports ecological health

Other relevant indicators that ORC measures, that are reported separately, include: freshwater, groundwater and lake quantity and quality, and soil health.



About our monitoring programmes

In response to requirements in national policy statements and the Resource Management Act ORC has been building its ability to monitor indigenous biodiversity in Otago.

These programmes are beginning to be established and have been developed in line with national best practice. Monitoring is repeated on a regular cycle. Some programmes are already beginning to show patterns, while those more recently established will do this over time as monitoring is repeated.

During the course of strategy implementation these programmes will begin to provide a more complete picture across Otago's land, freshwater, wetland, estuarine, and coastal marine environments and both the status and trends of indigenous biodiversity in Otago. Building on the trajectory understanding that regional threat assessments provide we will also begin to infer indigenous biodiversity trajectories using historic datasets where possible, allowing us to identify emerging patterns and anticipate future risks and opportunities.

Measuring the outcome of actions on the ground to inform adaptive management

In areas where action is being taken, we can help projects to get the know-how and support they need to undertake targeted monitoring to assess whether those actions are effective. This can support adaptive management, adjusting our approach as needed to improve outcomes. This can be aligned with the monitoring that is part of the catchment action plans produced through ORC's Integrated Catchment Management programme.

Review

This strategy will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

Appendix 5

The role of ORC in indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity

Otago Regional Council has two complementary responsibilities when it comes to supporting indigenous biodiversity in the region: maintaining biodiversity under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and managing pests under the Biosecurity Act 1993, among its other functions under the RMA.

ORC is currently responsible for establishing, implementing, and reviewing objectives, policies, and methods to maintain indigenous biological diversity under the RMA.¹⁴

Resource management reform is reshaping the legislative framework for these functions. The Natural Environment Bill proposes to replace the RMA and introduce a statutory no net loss obligation for indigenous biodiversity. The detail is still being worked through, but the direction of travel reinforces rather than redirects this strategy. The strategy has been designed to be durable across the transition — built on relationships with mana whenua as kaitiaki, and the stewardship of communities and landowners that will remain essential regardless of which legislation is in force.

Maintenance of indigenous biodiversity is detailed in national direction for biodiversity,¹⁵ freshwater,¹⁶ the coast¹⁷ and biosecurity,¹⁸ including a definition of what maintenance involves:¹⁹

“(a) the maintenance and at least no overall reduction of all the following:

- (i) the size of populations of indigenous species;*
 - (ii) indigenous species occupancy across their natural range;*
 - (iii) the properties and function of ecosystems and habitats used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity;*
 - (iv) the full range and extent of ecosystems and habitats used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity;*
 - (v) connectivity between, and buffering around, ecosystems used or occupied by indigenous biodiversity;*
 - (vi) the resilience and adaptability of ecosystems; and*
- (b) where necessary, the restoration and enhancement of ecosystems and habitats.”*

This is what is meant when the term ‘maintenance’ or ‘maintain’ is used throughout this strategy.

These statutory functions are carried out through ORC’s various policy statements and plans, as well as other methods,²⁰ including partnering with mana whenua, supporting and empowering communities, businesses and land owners, coordinating with DOC and local councils, funding projects, and undertaking research and monitoring to ensure those efforts are effective.²¹ Maintaining indigenous biodiversity requires this kind of proactive action and depends on the actions of many others beyond ORC’s direct control.

¹⁴ RMA section 30(1)(ga)

¹⁵ National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) 2023

¹⁶ National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020

¹⁷ The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010

¹⁸ National Policy Direction for Pest Management and Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement.

¹⁹ NPSIB section 1.7

²⁰ As confirmed in *Property Rights in New Zealand Inc (PRINZ) v Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council* [2012] NZHC 1272

²¹ RMA section 35



ORC sets policy and applies these other methods across land, freshwater and the coastal marine area, and makes regulations for freshwater and the coastal marine area (including the seabed).

ORC is responsible for monitoring the status and trend of indigenous biodiversity in Otago²²

This monitoring helps the council and the community understand whether policies and actions are working. It also provides a basis for science-informed decision making, adaptive management and early intervention when issues emerge.

ORC has a leadership role in pest management within Otago

Under the Biosecurity Act 1993, regional councils provide leadership within their regions to prevent, reduce or eliminate adverse effects caused by harmful organisms that are present in New Zealand. ORC holds this role in the Otago region. This role includes the preparation and delivery of a Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP).

This plan sets out which organisms are considered ‘pests’ in Otago and the approach to excluding, eradicating, containing or controlling them to reduce their impact on biodiversity, productive land and community values. This plan can set rules that landowners and occupiers, and in some cases agencies, must follow.

ORC’s role can also include encouraging public support for pest management, coordinating action across the region, monitoring pests and unwanted organisms, and developing pathway management plans to address the ways pests or diseases might spread into or around Otago.

These roles cannot be carried out in isolation

These responsibilities cannot be carried out in isolation. Indigenous biodiversity spans ecological boundaries — across land, freshwater, coastal and marine systems — and crosses institutional boundaries between local, regional, and national authorities. The pressures on it are no different — successfully maintaining and enhancing biodiversity requires collaboration across these domains.

Mana whenua hold a central role, with responsibilities grounded in whakapapa, rakatirataka, mātauraka Māori, and kaitiakitaka.

City and district councils play a part as well. In Otago they have been transferred²³ the function to control the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity.²⁴ Maintaining indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity is a significant part of their other work as well, through direct work on biodiversity enhancement, climate change, their parks, reserves and other land, and many other operational activities. The Otago Regional Policy Statement and NPSIB provide direction for this, and ORC is required to support them²⁵ and monitor the effectiveness of their actions as well.²⁶

²² RMA section 35

²³ RMA section 62(1)(i)(iii)

²⁴ Otago RPS 2019 Part C

²⁵ NPSIB section 3.8 (4)

²⁶ RMA section 35

The Department of Conservation (DOC) contributes deep expertise in threatened species recovery, manages extensive conservation lands, and plays a key role in marine protection.

Many community groups, landowners, and businesses are already leading action on the ground, bringing place-based knowledge, resources and commitment.

The scale and complexity of biodiversity challenges call for deliberate coordination across these roles. ORC's success depends on working collaboratively to identify shared priorities, align actions, support complementary strengths and fill gaps where needed.

The map below illustrates the spatial scope of ORC's role in maintaining indigenous biodiversity and managing biosecurity — across Otago's land, freshwater and coastal marine environments.



ORC's area of responsibility
— land, freshwater and
coastal marine area (CMA).



Appendix 6

The roles of other agencies with statutory responsibilities for indigenous biodiversity and biosecurity

Territorial Authorities (TAs)

Otago's five territorial authorities — Dunedin City Council, Clutha District Council, Central Otago District Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, and Waitaki District Council — have been transferred the RMA function to control the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity within their districts.²⁷ This is delivered through district plans, consent conditions and compliance.

Each TA manages reserves and other council-administered land and is responsible for pest management on that land where required by the Regional Pest Management Plan. TAs are also required to give effect to the NPSIB and to ensure land-use decisions support the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity. Several are already leading, facilitating and funding on-the-ground action in their districts.

Resource management reform is reshaping the legislative framework for TAs as well. The Planning Bill will be central to their role, and the Natural Environment Bill places responsibility for no net loss of indigenous biodiversity with regional councils — with implications for the functions currently transferred to TAs. Regardless of how those functions settle, TAs will remain essential to achieving biodiversity goals through their operations and decisions — managing land and taking action. The direction of travel reinforces the continued importance of the relationships between agencies and with mana whenua, communities and landowners.

Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)

MPI is the central government agency responsible for leading New Zealand's biosecurity system. Its role includes preventing the introduction and spread of pests and diseases, undertaking national and regional surveillance, and leading responses to biosecurity incursions. MPI administers the Biosecurity Act and provides national direction through key frameworks such as the National Policy Direction for Pest Management 2015, the Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement, and the Pest Management National Plan of Action 2010.

MPI leads national and sub-national biosecurity responses, working in partnership with other agencies, iwi/Māori, industry and communities.

All MPI functions are carried out under ministerial direction and within available government funding.

Department of Conservation (DOC)

DOC is the central government agency responsible for protecting New Zealand's natural and historic resources. Its indigenous biodiversity role focuses on managing 8.75 million hectares of public conservation lands and waters, preserving native species and ecosystems (s6 Conservation Act), and delivering on-the-ground programmes such as weed and pest control. DOC prepares conservation management strategies, develops recovery plans for threatened species, and delivers species- and ecosystem-focused programmes based on conservation priorities and resourcing.

²⁷ Otago RPS 2019 Part C

DOC provides legal protection to certain species and habitats — including indigenous freshwater fish and their habitats — under the Wildlife Act 1953, Fisheries Act 1996 and other legislation. DOC also plays a significant role in marine protection, including the establishment and management of marine reserves under the Marine Reserves Act 1971.

Under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, DOC manages wild animals, such as deer, goats, pigs and tahr, on public conservation land to limit ecological harm by using targeted control, permits and regulated hunting. DOC is also responsible for undertaking pest management where required by regional pest management plans.

DOC acts as a conservation advocate under the Resource Management Act 1991, participating in planning and policy processes and making submissions. It is also responsible for preparing and monitoring the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS), which sets national direction for the management of the Coastal Marine Area (CMA). All DOC functions are carried out under ministerial direction and within available government funding.

Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)

LINZ is the central government agency responsible for managing Crown land not administered by other agencies. It oversees around 1.7 million hectares across Aotearoa — about 8% of the country's land area — including high country pastoral leases, Crown forest licensed land, surplus railway land and the beds of many lakes and rivers.

This land contains or contributes to indigenous biodiversity values, including habitat for native species and ecological connectivity. LINZ is responsible for biosecurity on the land it manages, undertaking pest control programmes in collaboration with regional councils and other partners. These efforts contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and help meet obligations under regional pest management plans.

All LINZ functions are carried out under ministerial direction and within available government funding.

Otago Fish and Game Council

The Otago Fish and Game Council is one of 12 regional Fish and Game councils established under the Conservation Act 1987. These councils operate as independent regional entities, each governed by councillors elected by licence holders, with a coordinating New Zealand Fish and Game Council consisting of one representative from each regional council. Fish and Game councils are funded primarily through hunting and fishing licence fees and receive no direct government funding.

Under section 26Q of the Conservation Act 1987, Fish and Game councils have the statutory function to "manage, maintain, and enhance the sports fish and game resource in the recreational interests of anglers and hunters." This includes indigenous waterfowl, such as paradise shelduck/pūtangitangi.

Otago Fish and Game Council contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity through ensuring the sustainable hunting of game birds, including indigenous waterfowl. The Council also owns and manages wetland reserves and wildlife management areas that provide important habitat for indigenous species. It advocates for wetland and freshwater habitat protection through resource consent and planning processes under the Resource Management Act 1991. The Council also undertakes direct conservation action, including wetland restoration, control of unwanted sports fish populations, pest plant control, installing fish passage facilities and native revegetation projects, often in partnership with community groups and government agencies.



Appendix 7

Risk management

Risk	What we'll do about it
People may expect ORC to do everything. Some may think ORC is responsible for all biodiversity work, including on-the-ground action.	We're clear that ORC's job is to lead, coordinate, collaborate and empower. The strategy explains how outcomes will only be achieved by working together.
The targets are ambitious. People may expect big results quickly.	Throughout this strategy, we have emphasised the importance of working together, using methods such as the ICM programme and regional forums to co-develop plans and share responsibility.
Insufficient capacity to support collaborative work. If ORC under-resources its capacity to collaborate with others, it may limit the ability to achieve the outcomes.	Right-size the investment in our ability to collaborate.
Fragmented action across land, freshwater, and marine — outcomes are undermined if work is siloed by environment type or agency boundary.	We will apply a ki uta ki tai lens across planning and delivery using methods such as the ICM programme to strengthen coordination between ORC teams and with external partners.
Community burnout or unclear support boundaries — if ORC oversteps or under-supports community-led efforts, trust and momentum may be lost.	We will communicate that ORC's role is to enable and not to require people to act, and not to replace community stewardship.
Inability to anticipate or respond to emerging threats.	We are investing in monitoring and science and using flexible planning so we can respond quickly as new challenges and opportunities arise.
RMA reform could change ORC's legal responsibilities.	We are prioritising no regrets actions: a strong knowledge base, strong relationships and trust. These will help us stay effective no matter how the legal framework evolves.



Myosotis bryonoma
Photo: © Blanchon Catherine (CC BY-NC) iNaturalistNZ



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Native forest, Mount
Aspiring National Park