

Steve Attwood's letter to DOC

Hi team

I am a passionate conservation advocate and bird photographer. I have donated a great many photos to DOC over the years for conservation advocacy.

I was photographing black stilt, banded dotterel, South Island Pied Oystercatcher and terns on the wide wetland in the south east corner of the lake just as you come into the village from the Timaru side.

Normally this is a wide, clear wetland of rock, sand, and low native ground covers ideal for nesting birds especially the braided river species that require open spaces. I have seen black stilt nesting there several times and always lots of banded dotterels, SIPO and other birds.

Sadly during a visit this past weekend the area was largely overgrown with russell lupin. I have never seen this area so overgrown with lupin before. This deprives these birds of nesting habitat.

It's an important reserve. Is there any reason why DIOC has not arranged for it to be kept clear of this invasive weed?

DOC Reply 1

Your email made it to me. While I am now the Supervisor of the Biodiversity Assets team, I was previously on the kaki Recovery Programme.

We are aware of the area you speak of, and have been collecting kaki eggs from the spot now for the last 2-3 years, despite the place crawling with tourists.

Unfortunately we cannot do much directly as the land belongs to the McKenzie District Council. Once this years breeding season is done and dusted, the kaki team plan to approach the MDC and the Tekapo community board to highlight the importance of the area to wildlife and advocate for some protection measures.

With some lupin control, a bird watching hide and perhaps a boardwalk, the area could be a great drawcard for the town. There aren't many towns that have a critically endangered species breeding within the town limits!

Happy to talk more on it.

DOC Reply 2:

Unfortunately it is not just as simple as getting in and spraying the lupins as the site is one of only two known sites left in the country where *Chenopodium detestans* (common name fish guts plant) is found. It is an annual to short-lived perennial

prostrate plant and the attached photo show our monitoring transect points which coincide with the area that dries out when the lake is low. Historically the plant ranged from Canterbury to Otago but due to ongoing decline, *Chenopodium detestans* now has a threat ranking of Nationally Critical which is the same as kaki and kakapo. The other site has issues also – it is also on the shore of Lake Tekapo near the ice rink and where people launch boats so there are pressures on the plant there also.

The lupin site goes under water when lake levels are high which can affect the lupin germination (as in the last season) but in years like this, once it dries out, the lupins take off. I am trying to get some botanical advice on how we best deal with the issue and we have tried to establish populations of the plant elsewhere to reduce the risk, without much success as yet.

While the land is shown to be Mackenzie District Council land, I suspect the actual site, because it is technically part of the lakebed, will be tied up with the Genesis operating area as well so there needs to be some discussion with a number of groups before any management takes place.

As Cody notes, we are very aware of the issue and will be looking at ways to move forward without having an impact on all species values. We are very happy to chat more with you.