

Pānui 2: Whanganui Region

COVID-19

General

The Department of Conservation's priority is to support New Zealand in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.

New Zealanders are being told to stay home to break the chain of community transmission of this deadly virus. DOC is playing its part. Right now, that means DOC facilities and offices are closed, and tracks and national parks are out of bounds unless they are right by your home.

Recreation in the great outdoors needs to be put on hold as the country goes into lockdown for the next four weeks.

All DOC staff who are not involved in Incident Management Teams are working from home. This includes rangers and other field staff.

We have arrangements in place for essential care services for threatened native species held in captivity. DOC will be monitoring the situation over the coming days and weeks and may respond in specific situations, should safety issues arise in conservation areas.

Visit DOC's website for information including track updates, closures and safety advice: www.doc.govt.nz

Go to <https://covid19.govt.nz/> for the latest all of government updates.

DOC facilities

DOC has closed all huts and campsites and asks no one uses these until further notice.

DOC accommodation should not be used for self-isolation.

For everyone's safety, at alert level 4 people should not head into the backcountry or remote areas, nor should they undertake outdoor activities (such as adventure sports or hunting) that would expose them to higher levels of risk.

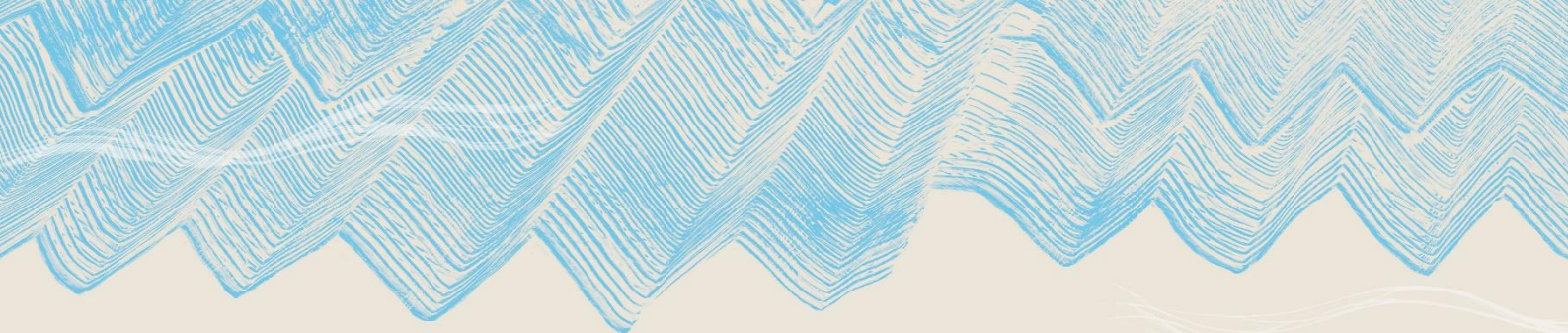
This is because hut wardens will not be in place, communications may be limited, and we do not want to place unnecessary strain on health services.

New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) is asking people to stick to simple outdoor exercise and avoid areas where they could get lost or require search and rescue. NZSAR want to ensure that emergency services are available to help those in the greatest need

Enjoying nature during the lockdown

Take time in nature but stay close to home

Time spent in nature keeps us fit and calms the mind. We must all look after ourselves and loved ones during this time.



To prevent the spread of COVID-19, choose a quiet location close to home, keep a safe distance from others and follow all government guidance.

Work with wildlife

Most of DOC's work with wildlife will be on hold for the next month while under alert level 4 unless it's essential for animal welfare or to deal with a significant hazard to public health and safety.

On hold work includes non-essential work (in the context of the COVID-19 response) with wildlife such as monitoring species in the field, monitoring pests, deploying technology like cameras, weed control, checking traps and undertaking predator control operations.

Our priority is the health and safety of our staff and wider communities and complying with the government's directive to remain at home and so there is a high threshold to meet before we will deploy staff outdoors to respond to wildlife emergencies and issues.

Responses will be limited to meeting significant animal welfare needs and incidents where there is a significant hazard to public health or safety, and only where staff can do so safely and in a way that meets the requirements to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

DOC will continue essential care for animals such as kaki/black stilt, takahe and other species held in captive facilities provided this can be done in a way that is safe for staff and meets requirements for minimal contact under alert level 4.

Conservation institutes and facilities looking after native species on behalf of DOC can also continue essential care of wildlife provided they meet the government's COVID-19 directives.

DOC's emergency hotline is still operating as an essential service and responses to incidents of injured wildlife and marine mammals including whale and dolphin stranding will be assessed on a case by case basis, but in most cases our ability to respond in the usual manner will be constrained during this time and our advice will be to let nature take its course.

Hunting permits and ballots

All hunters should stay at home while NZ is at COVID-19 Alert Level 4.

Hunting will expose hunters and others to higher levels of risk and put pressure on the emergency services if they need to respond.

To reduce the risk of people further spreading COVID-19, no hunting permits are being issued until further notice.

Hunting blocks assigned to hunters as part of the 2020 deer roar ballots are cancelled until further notice.

For further information see link below <https://www.doc.govt.nz/covid-19-and-hunting>

Any questions or enquiries, please direct to:

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