

Lizard Monitoring Protocol for Kamau Taurua (Quarantine Island) 2017

Objectives

The objectives of undertaking lizard monitoring on Kamau Taurua are:

1. To gain a baseline index of relative lizard abundance to assess the effects of future conservation actions on lizard fauna,
2. To help identify what species are present on the island.

Equipment needed

- Onduline ACOs (top and bottoms with dowelling attached),
- Shears,
- Gardening gloves,
- GPS or map,
- Pins or heavy rocks (to stop top sections of ACO from flying away),
- Permanent marker pen.

For Checking the ACOs

- Data sheet (see end of document),
- Camera (desirable for taking quick photos but not essential),
- Map.

Placement Protocol

Because of the limited number of ACOs available, placement will be random within areas where conservation actions are going to be going on (plantings, predator control etc.,). This will allow us to track changes in abundance and occupancy at these sites but may not be a true indication of the entire island's lizard fauna.

When placing ACOs, grass and debris should be cleared before placement to help improve lizard detection. Don't forget to write the number on the ACO and map the location.

Checking protocol

ACO should not be disturbed until it is time to check them for the formal counts; any disruption by early lifting could scare away lizards and skew results.

Only check ACO under suitable weather conditions, mid-morning is best as the equipment will have the chance to warm up and lizards will move in under the equipment. ACO should be checked in good weather only; checking in the rain won't provide useful results on lizard abundance.

It's important to include environmental variable such as okta (cloud cover) and temperature as this will help to explain variations over the years of checks. Use the provided check sheet to ensure that all useful variables are recorded.

For the checks we will be carrying out only the number of individual lizards seen under each ACO will be recorded, with juvenile and adult counts included if possible. Active capture of lizards is not allowed without a permit from DOC, as all lizards are absolutely protected under the Wildlife Act. Incorrect handling of lizards can result in injury or tail loss and it takes significant energy investment for a lizard to regrow its tail.

When checking ACO, approach slowly and keep an eye out for any skinks leaving the equipment before you lift your first section. Lift the top section first and then the lower section and count what you find. You can try to have a camera at the ready to photograph any interesting things, but they scuttle away pretty quickly so you will be lucky to get a photo!

We are likely to only see a single species on Kamau Taurua, the Southern Grass skink. This species is found elsewhere around the peninsula. However, no formal lizard surveys have been conducted on the island before, so you never know what interesting, remnant things may turn up 😊



Figure 1. A typically marked southern grass skink from the Dunedin Area. This species is distinguished from other similar species by a well-defined mid-dorsal stripe which runs down the spine and continues down the tail without becoming broken or indistinct on the tail section.

