

Lizard Monitoring Protocol for Kamau Taurua

Objectives

The KT/QI community would like to undertake long-term lizard monitoring on Kamau Taurua to gain a better understanding of the species present on the island and to determine the effectiveness of the conservation actions being undertaken in their ability to increase populations of lizard fauna. The specific objectives of undertaking lizard monitoring on Kamau Taurua are:

- Gain a baseline index of relative lizard diversity and abundance to inform future conservation actions,
- Assess long-term effectiveness of conservation actions on lizard diversity and abundance.

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 in good weather, checking in the rain won't provide useful results on lizard abundance. Mid-morning checks are best as the equipment will have the chance to warm up and attract residents.

It's important to include environmental variable such as cloud cover, wind speeds and temperature, as this will help to explain variations between, and within, 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 or handling of lizards is not allowed, as all lizards are absolutely protected under the Wildlife Act. Our surveys are permitted to 'disturb' protected wildlife through checking the ACOs only, not to handle them.**

To check ACO:

1. Approach slowly and keep an eye out for any lizards leaving the ACO before you lift your first section. Keep an eye out for any lizards basking on top of the ACO,
2. Carefully lift off the rocks holding the ACO down, be very careful not to drop them and keep an eye out for escaping lizards,
3. Lift the top ACO section first quickly and count what you see, then repeat with the lower section. You can try to have a camera at the ready to photograph any interesting things, but you will be lucky to get a photo!
4. Check the grass and debris under the bottom ACO to ensure no lizards are hidden and at risk of being harmed, and replace the ACO sections and rocks carefully back to their original position.

Lizard Identification

New Zealand has only two endemic lizard families: geckos and skinks. Species from both of these families are found throughout the nearby Otago peninsula. Skinks and geckos are easily distinguished from each other, as geckos have obvious head and body sections and looser skin, and skinks more closely resemble snakes with legs given their longer bodies, little difference between the head and body sections and tightly overlapping scales (see below).

Skink species possibly present on Kamau Taurua:

- Grass skink (*Oligosoma aff. polychroma* "Clade 5"),
- Cryptic skink (*O. inconspicuum*),



Southern Grass Skink

Spine stripe extends down the tail.

Plain stripes, no extra speckling down the body.

(Known to be present on KT)

Cryptic Skink

Spine stripe **breaks up** at the tail.

Extra speckling down the sides of the back and spine.

(No records of this species from KT, but possible)



Gecko species possibly present on Kamau Taurua:

- Korero gecko (*Woodworthia* "Otago/Southland large"),



Photo credit: Sam Haultain

Korero gecko

Mottled brown colouration, loose skin, large head and distinct body sections.

(No records of this species from KT, but possible)

Also keep a look out for signs of lizards having previously been on the ACOs. Lizard faecal pellets are very distinctive:



Photo credit: Sam Haultain

Lizard Faecal Pellets

Look a lot like a mouse pellet with lots of small invertebrate 'bits' and sometimes seeds.

Distinguished by the white uric acid 'cap' that is **always present**.

If in doubt about the species **take as many notes as possible** so that an experienced herpetologist can try to figure out what it was or return for a more detailed survey in future.

This work is conducted under a wildlife act authorisation from DOC (6113-FAU), which is available upon request from trained QI/KT community members or the Island Keeper. Only those individuals trained and deemed suitably capable of undertaking the activity by the primary Authorisation Holder (Sam Haultain) are permitted to undertake ACO checks on the island. Interested community members or public are encouraged to participate in ACO checks being undertaken by those permitted to do so.

If you have any questions at all about the protocol, the lizards or the work in general, please don't hesitate to contact Sam Haultain by mobile (0273741446) or by email (samanthahaultain@live.com).