

The Editor
Sir

Response to M. Williams

Murray Williams (letter to Editor) raises some valid points that were debated at length by the authors of the most recent iteration of the *New Zealand Threat Classification System manual* (Townsend *et al.* 2008) as well as by the bird threat classification review panel. The 2 main reasons for choosing to submit the manuscript 'Conservation status of New Zealand birds, 2008' to *Notornis* rather than to Department of Conservation (DOC) science publishing were to make the information more accessible to the New Zealand ornithological community, and to clarify that the threat classification process is independent of DOC (Townsend *et al.* 2008). Note that the panel was selected by the panel chair in consultation with the President of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ); all panel members are long-standing OSNZ members, and 3 of the 8 are not employed by DOC. There is also a precedent for New Zealand threatened taxa listings being published in scientific journals, with all 3 vascular plant listings being published in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany* (de Lange *et al.* 1999, 2004, 2009).

The main concern raised by Williams was a perceived lack of verification of the classification process. This was confounded by an inability to access the underlying data that the rankings were based on before 13 Jul 2009. We apologise for this, and were able to supply the spreadsheet to him the following day. It remains available on request from either the panel chair (C. Miskelly) or the threat classification system convener (R. Hitchmough) at the email addresses given below. The availability of this information was mentioned on p.121 of Miskelly *et al.* (2008) in the context of anyone wishing to compare IUCN and New Zealand threat assessments. The population size and trend ranges which were estimated for each taxon are indicated in the "criteria" column of the appendix in Miskelly *et al.* (2008). These constitute hypotheses which can be debated and rebutted.

Two aims of the OSNZ, as stated in the Constitution (available online as a pdf via the OSNZ website), are:

1. To produce a journal and any other publication containing matters of ornithological interest.
2. To assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information from which sound management decisions can be derived.

We contend that the conservation status paper does contain matters of ornithological interest, and that this matter assists in the conservation and management of birds. Thus the paper satisfies two aims of the Society, and so it is appropriate that it was published in the Society's journal.

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C.M. MISKELLY¹; J.E. DOWDING²; G.P. ELLIOTT³; R.A. HITCHMOUGH^{4,5}; R.G. POWLESLAND⁴; H.A. ROBERTSON⁴; P.M. SAGAR⁶; R.P. SCOFIELD⁷; G.A. TAYLOR⁴

¹Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservancy, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 5086, Wellington 6145, New Zealand [author for correspondence] cmiskelly@doc.govt.nz

²DM Consultants, P.O. Box 36274, Merivale, Christchurch 8146, New Zealand

³Research & Development Group, Department of Conservation, Private Bag 5, Nelson 7042, New Zealand

⁴Research & Development Group, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington 6143, New Zealand

⁵rhitchmough@doc.govt.nz

⁶National Institute of Water & Atmospheric Research, P.O. Box 8602, Christchurch 8440, New Zealand

⁷Canterbury Museum, Rolleston Ave, Christchurch 8001, New Zealand