

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Ninth Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group <i>Swakopmund, Namibia, 25 May 2026</i></p> <p>Surveillance sampling in New Zealand and across its Subantarctic Islands during 2023- 2025 fails to detect HPAI</p> <p><i>Stephanie Waller, Jemma Geoghegan, Kate McInnes, Johannes Fischer</i></p>
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SUMMARY

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus presents an increasingly concerning threat to bird species around the globe, including ACAP. HPAI has been detected on various Subantarctic Islands where many ACAP species in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, but so far, Subantarctic Islands in the South Pacific have appeared to form a refuge from the virus. New Zealand has been conducting an extensive HPAI surveillance sampling scheme since 2023 to ensure early detection if the virus were to arrive. Here, we report on preliminary analyses of 2,233 swabs collected from 41 species (including nine ACAP species) at 21 New Zealand locations, including all of its major Subantarctic Island groups, during the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Austral summers. Although no HPAI was detected, we recovered a low-pathogenic avian influenza A/H1N9 virus from Red Knots (*Calidris kanutus*). In addition to HPAI surveillance, the collected data allows for detailed insights into the virome of the New Zealand avifauna including the ecological networks that may have led to this (largely undescribed) diversity. The 2025/26 sampling season is still ongoing, but there have been zero signs indicating the presence of HPAI in New Zealand. As such, it is likely that the South Pacific continues to remain a refuge from HPAI. However, the recent detection of HPAI on Heard Island, approx. 4,000 km from Australia, highlights the importance of ongoing surveillance monitoring. Further analyses will build on these already insightful results and ongoing surveillance sampling will continue to ensure early detection and growing insights.