

New Zealand Falcon Survey Newsletter Eleven 1 October 2014

Hi there

The NZ Falcon Survey progresses very well with reports of observations continuing to coming in together with many photographs and some video footage. Your contribution is very much appreciated.

For those who have contributed to the survey more recently might appreciate knowing that copies of previous Newsletters are available on the website or you may request paper copies using the contact details shown below.

The Importance of Records

Often respondents to the survey ask how 'important' their single NZ falcon observation report might be, the simple answer is **all** reports are valuable as they provide an insight as to where and when falcons have and are being observed.

But the real value with individual records becomes obvious as the number and years of records mount up over time. With over 11,800 records now we are gaining invaluable data on this special endemic species of ours.

Take for example the instances of our oldest NZ falcon record from January 1942 from Lake Gunn/Cascade Creek area in the Eglinton Valley, Fiordland National Park - more recently we have had reports in for the same area from Gail T-V and Shellie E (aka FlyingKiwiGirl) from 16 and 21 March 2014 respectively. That is over 72 years that NZ falcon are known to have been in the area.

Also when observation reports are accompanied with photographs and even sometimes great video footage (see below at **New to Website**) additional information can be ascertained, such as adult or juvenile or perhaps male or female.

Continuation of the NZ Falcon Survey

Commencing on 1 June 2006 the original NZ Falcon Distribution Survey ran for three years till 31 May 2009 and the 1,761 records collected for that period were written up as a Short Note in Notornis, the peer reviewed publication by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ), a copy can be downloaded at:

<http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/uploads/attachments/02Bell&Lawrence2009.pdf>

The collection of NZ falcon observation records has continued very successfully as the NZ Falcon Survey. As we now approach the 10 year anniversary (31 May 2016) it is anticipated that a further report will be prepared that will provide a more comprehensive picture of the presence and distribution of the NZ falcon in NZ.

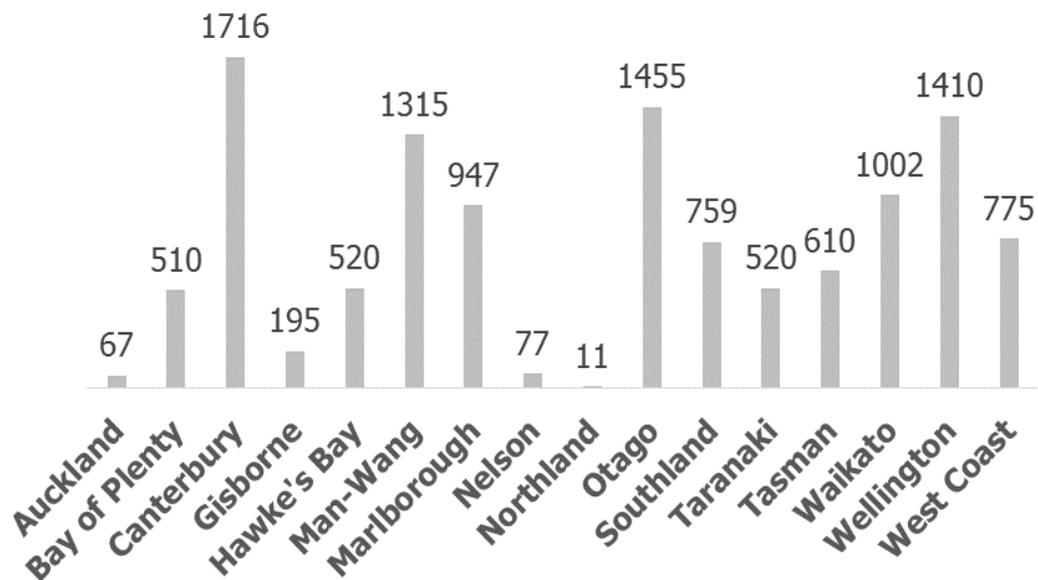
To this end we are very keen for everyone to please continue to submit one and all observations of the NZ falcon gained at least until May 2016.

Some Facts and Figures

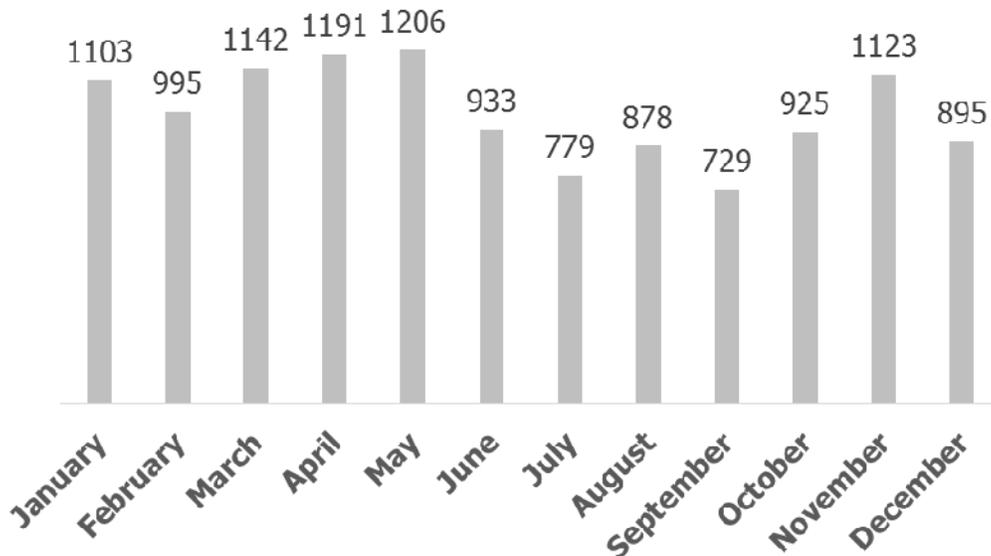
We now have a total of 11,889 observations records, as at 30 September 2014. As mentioned above our oldest record is for January 1942 and the latest in to date is for 28 September 2014.

With all this data available there are some interesting facts and figures that can be ascertained:

- a. **Observation Records by Region** – once again it is the Canterbury region that leads the way and despite all the best efforts of those from Wellington that region has slipped back to third place as Otago regains second spot.



- b. **Observation Records by Month** – these monthly totals are again for all 11,889 records.



- c. **Breeding Records** – to be considered as a breeding record either a nest needs to have been observed or for the observer to have been dive-bombed. A suspected breeding record is for when two or more falcons are seen together, whereas single falcon observations are listed as no for breeding.

No Breeding	7539 records	80.6%
Suspected Breeding	1468 records	15.7%
Confirmed Breeding	346 records	3.7%

Note – these figures do not include the 2,536 records from the OSNZ Atlases, as those surveys didn't have 'suspected' as a recorded category.

New Report on NZ Falcon in Taranaki

A new report has been written on NZ falcon in Taranaki, titled Presence and Distribution of New Zealand Falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) in Taranaki. The report provides information on the 653 records held for falcon in Taranaki and examines in closer detail the previous 10 years (September 2004 – August 2014) of records and includes two maps. A copy can be download from:

<http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/nz-falcon/distribution-of-nz-falcon.html>

For those without the internet please make contact and a copy can be posted out.

New to the Website (www.nzfalcon.org.nz)

Three new video clips have been added to our website:

a. **NZ Falcon vs White-faced Heron** - On 28 April 2012 whilst fishing in the Nokomai Gorge on the Mataura River in Southland, Rick Gerrard witnessed a NZ falcon and a White-faced Heron (also known as Blue Heron) having "quite a scrap mid-air over the river". It was obvious that the falcon was getting the better of the encounter and the heron tired and landed in the river for a breather, but the falcon continued with one more "substantial smack" that appeared to be the end for the heron. The falcon then proceeded to tow/swim with the heron towards the river bank. By this time Rick had his camera out and managed to capture the final part of this unique event. You can view at: <http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/nz-falcon/resources-on-nz-falcon/flim-footage/nz-falcon-vs-white-faced-heron.html>

b. **Inquisitive Juvenile NZ Falcon** - On 26 February 2014 close to the outlet creek for Lake Alexandrina in the Mackenzie Country, Steve Prattley captured some very unique footage of an inquisitive juvenile NZ falcon that "flew down from an adjacent tree" and "showed no fear" as it "walked around" only 2 metres away from him. Very obviously the first human this young NZ falcon had encountered. You can view at: <http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/nz-falcon/resources-on-nz-falcon/flim-footage/inquisitive-juvenile-nz-falcon.html>

c. **Juvenile NZ falcon in Fiordland** - For 10 days in April 2014 whilst staying at Worsley Hut on the shores of Lake Te Anau in Fiordland, Kim Dawick and fellow hunters had the company of a juvenile NZ falcon of which some awesome video footage was taken. Including a number of successful attempts to feed it, with the falcon once catching the offering on the wing and also observing the falcon with its own prey of a White-faced Heron.

You can view at: <http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/nz-falcon/resources-on-nz-falcon/flim-footage/juvenile-nz-falcon-in-fiordland.html>

New NZ Falcon Trust

A new conservation trust has been established by Donna Falconer for the 'Eastern' NZ falcon, with the mission "to ensure that the New Zealand falcon (eastern falcon) are sustainably re-established throughout the open dryland ecosystems of Canterbury, Otago and northern Southland". Check out their website at www.easternfalcon.org

First Sign of Courtship

The first report in for what could only be describe as 'courtship' behaviour for this breeding season was from 5 June, when a pair of NZ falcon were observed calling and the male with a prey item, seen and reported by Lisa D at Seatoun Heights in Wellington.

Many Thanks

Again many thanks to you for taking the time and energy to participate in the NZ Falcon Survey, though some might not be aware they have! The information collected is adding greatly to our knowledge of the NZ falcon and providing an invaluable resource and record of their presence and distribution around New Zealand.

End Note

Please remember we are still very keen to hear about any additional observations records you might have had and would also welcome all future reports of encounters with our endemic NZ falcon.

Dave Bell

Coordinator
NZ Falcon Survey

Address: 9 Spencer Place
New Plymouth 4312
Phone: (06) 757 2570 or (027) 432 9570
Email: nativebirds@extra.co.nz
Website: www.nzfalcon.org.nz