

# New Zealand Falcon Survey Newsletter Fourteen 1 June 2017

*Hi*

Welcome to this our 14th Newsletter that marks the completion of eleven years of the New Zealand Falcon Survey. Your contribution has been very much appreciated and provided valuable data on the distribution and presence of the NZ falcon.

A total of 15,216 records have been received up to and including 31 May 2017 of which 7,956 are for within the 11 yrs of the survey, the remaining being historical records from before 1 June 2006. In addition, a total of 21 records for NZ falcon encountered in the Auckland Islands, in the sub-Antarctic Ocean have been received/collected to date.

Of course, we are still very interested in receiving one and all reports you may get in the future as we keep an eye on the distribution of the falcon in NZ and learn more and more about their behaviour and activities.

## **The Good, The Not So Good and The Bad News**

### **The Good News**

Historically, three loosely-defined 'forms' (not sub-species) of the NZ falcon have been recognised; Bush, Eastern and Southern. But recent research has clarified the situation and indicates that morphological difference between forms is closely aligned with Cook Strait, consistent with earlier taxonomy. This research has recommended that two sub-species of our NZ falcon now be recognised – *Falco novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae* for the South Island and *Falco novaeseelandiae ferox* for the smaller North Island form.

### **The Other Good News**

The latest updated 'Conservation status of New Zealand birds, 2016' published in May 2017 by the Department of Conservation, acknowledges the above research but has kept the 'common names' of Bush and Eastern falcon. They have also reduced the threat classification from :Threatened" to "At Risk – Recovering" which as many respondents to our survey would very much agree with.

Unfortunately, the powers to be considered that the research above "included few birds from within the range" of the Southern falcon and therefore they have left that form as Taxonomically Indeterminate and classed as Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable, with the qualifier of Data Poor.

If interested the Conservation status of New Zealand birds, 2016 can be downloaded from: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/science-and-technical/nztcs19entire.pdf>  
The parts referring specifically to the NZ falcon can be found on pages 3, 13 and 22.

### The Not So Good News

During the course of the survey a number of encounters between NZ falcons and White-faced herons were reported, including some very good video footage that is on the website. Subsequently a paper detailing these was prepared and submitted for publication.

Regrettably the paper was not accepted for publication but a modified version has now been posted on the website and if interested can be viewed and downloaded from here: <http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/uploads/NZ-falcon-and-WFH.pdf>

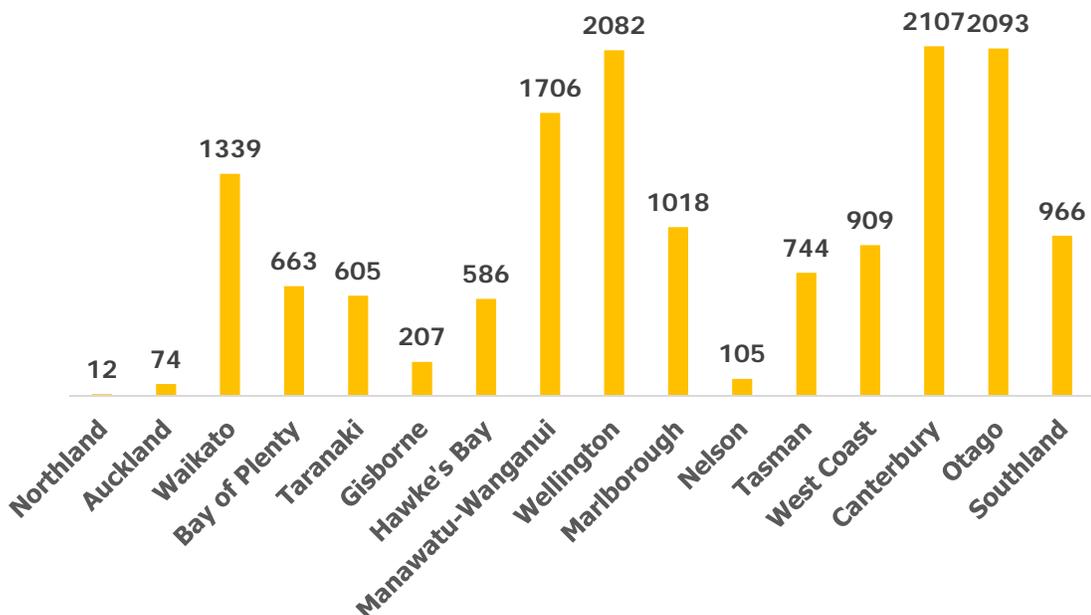
### The Bad News

Recently the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment released a report on "the desperate state of New Zealand's native birds". A very comprehensive and detailed report that makes for sobering reading. A copy can be downloaded from: <http://www.pce.parliament.nz/publications/taonga-of-an-island-nation-saving-new-zealands-birds>

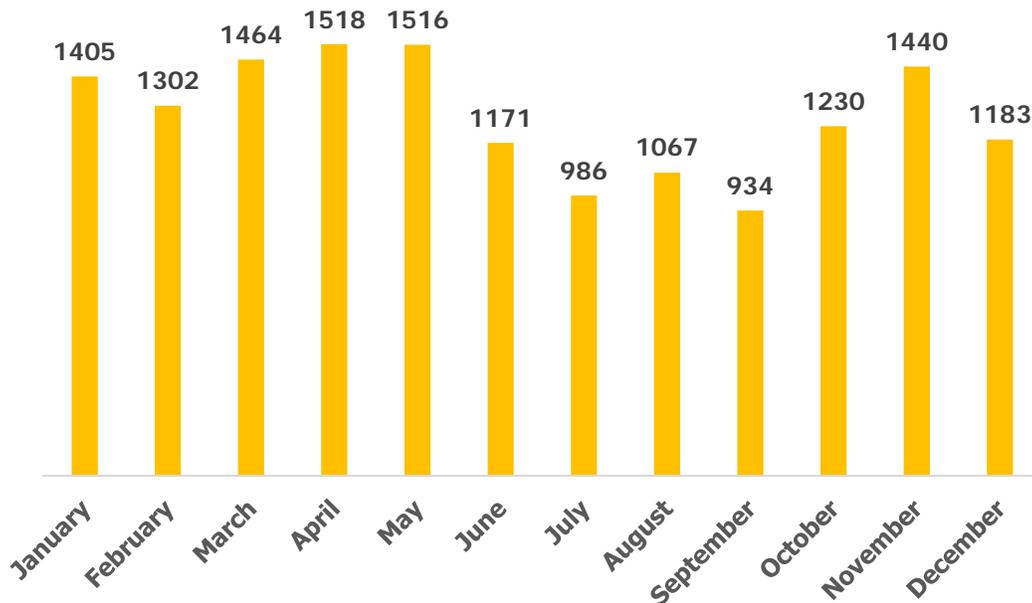
### Some Facts and Figures

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

- a. **Observation Records by Region** – Canterbury still manages to just hold on to first place but Otago has again closed the gap with Wellington coming in a very close third.



**b. Observations Records by Month** – these monthly totals make for interesting viewing when taking into consideration the seasons involved.



**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 when two or more falcons are seen together, whereas single falcon observations are counted as no for breeding.

No Breeding	10,329	80.5%
Suspected Breeding	1,917	15.0%
Confirmed Breeding	434	3.5%

**Note** – these figures do not include the 2,536 records from Birds New Zealand (previously OSNZ) Atlas schemes, as these two surveys didn't have 'suspected' as a recorded category.

## Some Comments

During the survey, many have commented that they are encountering the NZ falcon more often and in new locations than previously and this has now been reflected in the reduced threat classification mentioned above.

It is considered virtually impossible to be able to undertake a 'population survey' for our very elusive and cryptic New Zealand falcon, that is why this survey is so valuable in providing long term data and the latest maps clearly illustrate the increased presence nationally.

One facet that is obvious is that our falcon is adapting well to life in the changed New Zealand environment. This includes a definite trend of life in urban areas that has included increased encounters for Hamilton, Taupo, Wanganui and Wellington, particularly the Hutt Valley and with breeding confirmed closer to human habitat.

## A Unique Encounter



Whilst heading down to the sea at the Seaview Motor Camp just north of Mokau on 15 April 17, to take a photo of a setting sun the group disturbed a NZ falcon off the ground that flew up into a tree right beside them. Joanne Austin managed a great photo of the juvenile NZ falcon with its prey – a mouse! Joanne has generously shared her photo here.

### 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.

### ***Dave Bell***

Coordinator  
NZ Falcon Survey

**Address:** 9 Spencer Place  
New Plymouth 4312

**Phone:** (06) 757 2570 or (027) 432 9570  
**Email:** [nativebirds@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nativebirds@xtra.co.nz)  
**Website:** [www.nzfalcon.org.nz](http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz)