

# New Zealand Falcon Survey Newsletter Twelve 1 October 2015

## *Hi there*

Another very successful year for the NZ Falcon Survey with reports of observations continuing to be received regularly 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 12,900 records now we are gaining invaluable data on this special endemic species of ours.

Also when observation reports are accompanied with photographs and even some great video footage 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 get ever closer to the 10 year anniversary (31 May 2016) it is anticipated that a further report will then be prepared that will provide a more comprehensive picture of the presence and distribution of the NZ falcon in New Zealand.

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 12,975 observations records all up, as at 30 September 2015. A very pleasing figure for which there have been some noteworthy contributions in the past year:

**a. Manawatu-Wanganui Region.** Jess S from DOC at Taupo, who has a keen competitive nature sent in 268 historic records from in and around Tongariro NP, many of which were for within the Manawatu-Wanganui Region. This managed to lift this region to second place in the Records by Region, but 'unfortunately' it has since been overtaken again by the Otago and Wellington regions (see below).

**b. Queenstown Otago.** Chris H from DOC at Queenstown also forwarded 141 records from that area, valuable additions and what is more pleasing is that Chris has been working with the local lines company to try and mitigate the danger of electrocution of NZ falcon from power poles in the area.

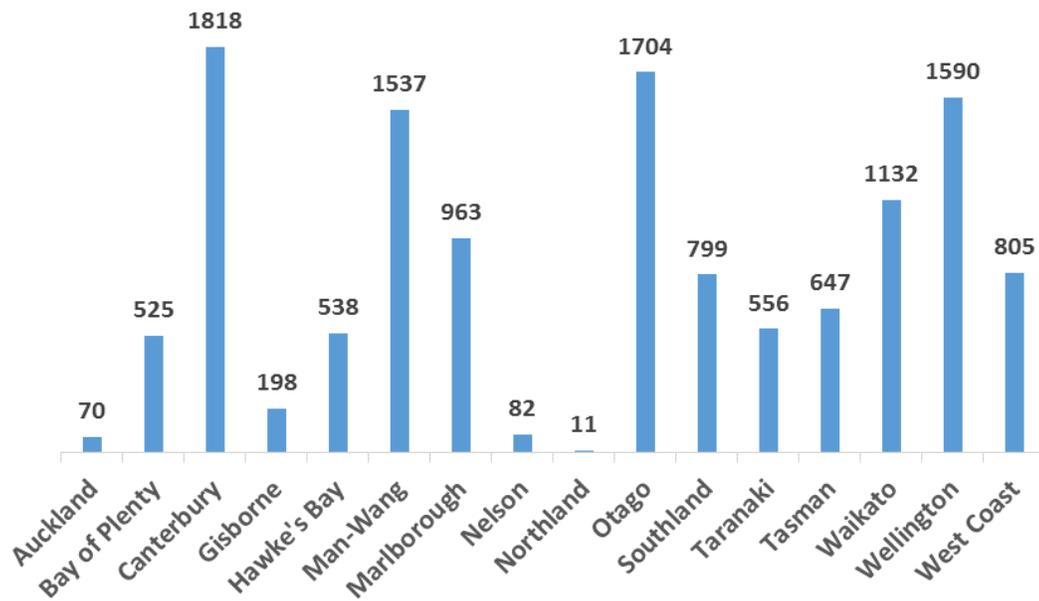
**c. Groups, couples and individuals.** There have been many valuable contributions to the survey and without getting too selective mention needs to be made of a few;

- (1) **FishnHunt Forum** – over 117 records have been provided from members of this internet forum. What has proven particular worthy is they have tended to be from some of the more remote places.
- (2) **Dave and Gail T-V** – at last count Dave and Gail, together or individually have submitted 190 records from all over the South Island and Gail holds the record of three separate falcon from separate places on the same day!
- (3) **Graham McB** – Graham goes hunting to Fiordland and for three years (2011, 2014 and 2015) has managed to video juvenile NZ falcons in the Sounds, very unique indeed and valuable to know that falcon are breeding there. (See below for details for the 2015 footage).
- (4) **The Wellington Region** – once again the Wellington Region has provided some highlights, particularly for the Hutt Valley. In Feb/Mar this year a family of four falcons moved into end of Stokes Valley where the parents were busy catching and teaching their offspring the skills needed to survive, this event resulted in many reports including from neighbouring Naenae and Taita and some outstanding photos. More recently regular reports (and photos) have been received for along the Western Hills of the Hutt Valley (Maungaraki, Belmont and Kelson) that only go to reinforce the suspicion that there is a breeding pair in the Belmont Regional Park. Special thank you to those that reported these events.

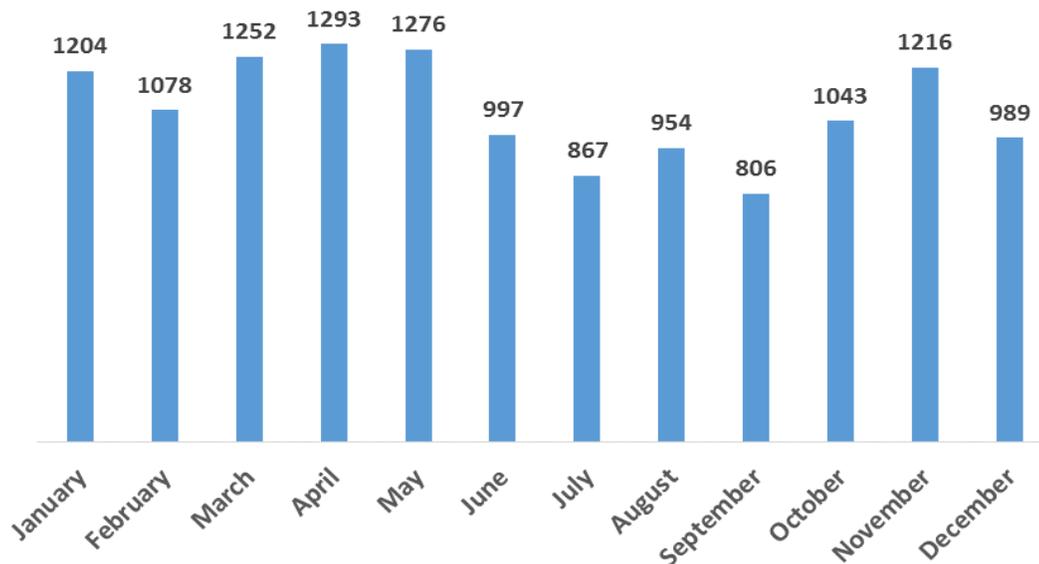
With all this great data now available there are some interesting facts and figures that can be ascertained:

- a. Observation Records by Region** – once again it is the Canterbury region that continues to lead the way and despite all the best efforts of those from Wellington that region is still in third place behind Otago.

It should be mentioned here that there are a number of factors that need to be kept in mind when comparing these figures, including size of the region, the urban/rural mix and the population of possible observers.



**b. Observation Records by Month** – these monthly totals are for all 12,975 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	8406 records	80.5%
Suspected Breeding	1642 records	15.7%
Confirmed Breeding	391 records	3.8%

**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 to the Website ([www.nzfalcon.org.nz](http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz))

Two new additions to the website:

- a. **Bay of Plenty Photo** – one new photo added to the Bay of Plenty gallery of a juvenile falcon perched on a fence post near Whakatane. Can be viewed here: [www.nzfalcon.org.nz/gallery/Bay-of-Plenty/64.html](http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/gallery/Bay-of-Plenty/64.html)
- b. **Film Footage from Fiordland** – Graham McBride and hunting companion Andrew were in Wet Jacket Arm, Dusky Sound when they encountered “this missile” (juvenile NZ falcon) capture a wax-eye and proceed to pluck it while Graham filmed. You can view this great footage at <http://www.nzfalcon.org.nz/nz-falcon/resources-on-nz-falcon/flim-footage/wet-jacket-arm-dusky-sound-fiordland.html>

## YouTube Video Clip

On 29 March 2015 Duncan Watson observed a juvenile NZ falcon at Te Ahumairangi Hill, Wilton in Wellington that he managed to video. Duncan has posted his footage on YouTube and can be viewed here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkVOrpviY5Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkVOrpviY5Y)

## First Sign of Courtship

The first report in for what could only be describe as ‘courtship’ behaviour for this breeding season was from 2<sup>nd</sup> May, when a pair of NZ falcon were observed “calling, elaborate flight displays, plaintive mewling” reported by Steve A at Grey River Nature Walk in the Ashley Forest, near Amberley, Canterbury.

## 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.

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