

NZ Falcon



COMMON NAME: **NEW ZEALAND FALCON** – Gmelin, 1788; OR **SPARROW HAWK** – Gmelin, 1788

LATIN NAME: ***Falco novaeseelandiae***

LATIN MEANING: *Falco* Late L. *falco*, a falcon (L. *falx*, a sickle; ref. the hooked talons). *Novaeseelandiae* L. *novus*, new; Mod. L. *Zeelandia*, Zeeland, Netherlands; after New Zealand, which received its name from the explorer Abel Tasman who explored the West Coast in 1642, naming it *Nova Zeelandia* after his Dutch home.

MAORI NAME: Karearea

CLASS: Aves

ORDER: Falconiformes

FAMILY: Falconidae

GENUS: *Falco*

SPECIES/SUB SPECIES: *Novaeseelandiae*

DESCRIPTION:

An endemic species, the males are around 43 cm weighing 300 grams, females 47 cm and weighing some 500 grams. The colouring is generally black above, buff barred and streaked below. Thighs and under tail-coverts are a rufous brown with darker streaks. Legs, feet and cere are yellow, claws black.

HABITAT / DISTRIBUTION:

Widespread in the high country of the South Island and lower North Island.

BREEDING:

Nests are a simple scrape on a sheltered cliff ledge or high in an *Astelia* clump within a tree. Breeding is from October–December. 2–4 eggs are laid, which change from white to reddish-brown. Incubation is around 30–33 days. Chicks fledge at around 55 days.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

A strongly territorial and mainly sedentary species, although less so in the winter when food is scarcer.

DIET:

Mainly a diet of birds, which can include such native species such as pigeons, tui, kakas, parakeets, grey warblers and fantails. A range of insects and small reptiles also add variety to the diet, along with the occasional rabbit or hare.

PRINCIPAL THREATS:

- Introduced mammalian predators such as stoats, ferrets, feral cats (taking young from the nest) and rats (stealing eggs)
- Habitat loss and shooting.
- Chemical sprays used in agricultural also affect breeding chances.

CONSERVATION STATUS:

Endemic, endangered.



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