



Falcon dices with death in courtship

The Dominion Post, August 24, 2009

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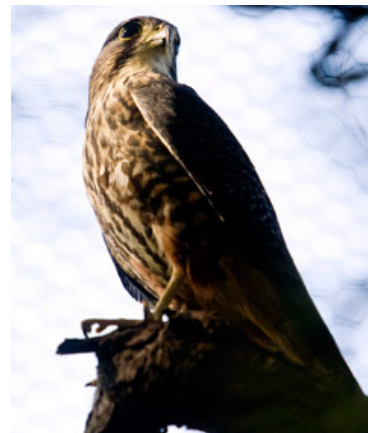
Jet the falcon can be forgiven for a few nerves before his big date - his potential mate is also his potential killer. The young New Zealand falcon was welcomed into Staglands Wildlife Reserve's aviary, near Upper Hutt, on Friday.

"Jet's fate is very much in the hands of the resident female falcon," Staglands park manager Rodney Owen said. Female New Zealand falcons have been known to kill and eat their much smaller mate. For that reason, Staglands staff will be keeping a close eye on the pair for early signs of marital tension.

"We've got a broom - it sounds rudimentary, but it's pretty effective," a Staglands spokeswoman said. The falcons' relationship got off to a slow start yesterday, with the pair eying each other from a safe distance. "Hopefully the date will be successful and the pair will produce offspring that will eventually be released into the wild," Mr Owen said.

Jet originally came from Kaingaroa Forest, with three sisters, orphaned from their parents. His sisters were fostered to another falcon, but Jet never accepted his surrogate mother and was hand-reared.

"Jet can't survive in the wild, so being at Staglands is the best place for him," Mr Owen said. The endangered New Zealand falcon, or karearea, is one of the world's fastest birds and an aggressive hunter. They can reach speeds of up to 230kmh as they attack their prey.



Jet in her new home