



Meeting puts focus on falcon

By Nicholas Boyack, Hutt News, April 20 2010

It is on our \$20 note, it is one of the world's fastest birds, and it can still be found in the hills above Naenae and Eastbourne and in the Rimutaka Forest Park.

This week, the raptor fanciers from all over New Zealand will gather at Staglands, Upper Hutt, for the Raptors Association of New Zealand AGM, aiming to draw attention to the plight of the endangered karearea (native falcon).

Anecdotal evidence suggests karearea numbers have increased locally, but nationally they face increasing threats from predators, habitat loss and shooters, who see them as a threat to game birds.

Staglands manager Rodney Owen says the falcon is a stunning bird that deserves to be more widely recognised.

"I just love them. They have speed and agility and are just natural hunters."

The problem is that many people do not even know they exist and they are regularly confused with the much bigger and relatively common harrier hawks. Thus people get the impression they're not rare.

"I get so many people telling me they saw a native falcon on the side of the road eating a possum and of course it was not."
Karearea are hunters and do not normally take road kill.

Staglands has two karearea, including Jet, a young male who it is hoped to breed from.

Jet came to Staglands last year from Kaingaroa Forest, where he and his three sisters were found after being orphaned. He was hand-reared, but never learned to hunt efficiently and could not survive in the wild.

Female karearea can be extremely aggressive towards the much smaller males and introducing Jet was a risk, as he could have been killed. Staff had to stay close with mops and brooms but, fortunately, he was accepted and it is hoped the pair will breed and their offspring can be released to boost the wild population.

New Zealand has three raptors (the hawk, karearea and morepork). Mr Owen says the RANZ conference will highlight the need to treasure all our raptors, but it is the karearea that is most in need of protection.

For information, contact Susie Curry, 021 460 820. secretary@raptorassociation.co.nz



Highly endangered: Karearea can sometimes be seen in the hills above Naenae or Eastbourne but they're hard to spot and the easiest place to see our native falcon is at Staglands, which has a pair.