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**Bird Banding Database: “FALCON” is flying!**



The new FALCON Bird Banding System keeps track of bands, banders and banded birds. The application allows banders to input and search band and bird information, find the locations of birds on a map, collate records into managed projects and much more. The public can also report sightings of banded birds in FALCON allowing the Banding Office to verify the information before uploading these (see page 7 for more detail).

FALCON went live on 12 August to a Reference Group who will continue to provide feedback. More than 800 certified banders will be invited to become FALCON users over the next few weeks and months, as well as other interested stakeholders. Those that are curious can have a look at the homepage in the meantime at <https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/> (open this link in Chrome/Edge, not Internet Explorer).

**Why call it FALCON?**

FALCON is an acronym for the components of the System: File upload, Accessibility, Locality (mapping), Certification, Open-Source and Notification (communication) – coined by Rob Hill, the Business Analyst that worked with the Banding Office to draw up the project requirements.

The New Zealand falcon, kārearea, is an apt choice to name the new Bird Banding System after. A threatened native species, the falcon has a wide distribution, being found on both the North and South Islands and several offshore islands, including Stewart Island and the Subantarctic Auckland Islands, and previously on the Chatham Islands. It is rare for a falcon to have adaptations that enable efficient hunting both in dense

forests and open habitats as the kārearea can. It is one of only four forest falcons out of a total of 38 species of falcons worldwide. They are also fiercely territorial, especially when nesting. Our kārearea New Zealand falcon is truly special and unique, having adapted to fulfil the roles that several species usually fill overseas.



The FALCON System has equally been designed with “adaptations” that enable it to be efficient for a broad range of New Zealand bird banding projects, while also fulfilling requirements of managing banders and band stock. The System can also adapt to other marking methods such as colour bands, transponders and transmitters – and other species such as bats. As with our kārearea, this is a unique and specialised New Zealand product!

### FALCON grounded?

While most of the planning for FALCON was done from 2017 to 2019, the actual build of the application mostly took place during the 2020 COVID-19 national lockdown. In keeping with the falcon analogy, the kārearea nests on the ground, during which time the chicks are vulnerable to predation.

The project team, led by Mike Sheridan, coordinated with our development partners [Pikselin](#) and [Fronde](#) during this challenging time. With the use of Microsoft Teams and on-line collaboration practices, the project team was able to continue uninterrupted during all lockdown levels; despite being “grounded”, FALCON developed its flight feathers on schedule. Mike mentions that “we benefited by having a very competent project team made up of people from DOC, Pikselin and Fronde, all working on a common goal of delivering a quality solution that we could all be proud of.”

Throughout the development of FALCON, we drew on many analogies with the “\$20 bird”:

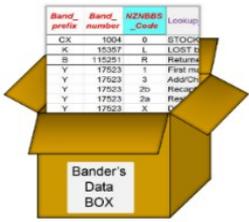
- While waiting for the Detailed Business Case sign-off, FALCON was being “incubated”
- The initiation of the project saw FALCON “hatched”
- During the development phase, we watched FALCON grow in the “nest” from a naked “chick”, developing different components that all had to work in unison – it needed our constant attention and “preening”
- There were “teething” problems (falcons have a tomial tooth) leading up to “fledging” when we released a beta version to a select user group
- We ensured that the Reference Group were not “hooded” or kept in the dark
- The term “a feather in his cap” is drawn from falconry, whereby a feather from the first prey caught by a falcon is added to the bird’s hood. The FALCON System is certainly a feather in DOC’s cap!
- Even a fledgling falcon requires training – in our case the training will be focused on the users of the FALCON System.
- And now, our FALCON is being released “into the wild” in full “flight”!



#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bird Banding Governance Group		Jonathan Dreadon	DOC Database Administrator
FALCON Reference Group		Revati Nanote	DOC Test Analyst
FALCON Project Team:		Bhushan Umamaheswaran	DOC Test Analyst
Mike Sheridan	DOC Project Manager	Steve Barnard	Pikselin Account Manager
Julian Lees	DOC API developer	Brian Smith	Pikselin Lead Designer
Jing Zhou (Yoyo)	DOC Data analyst	Ross Woodley	Pikselin Developer
Paul Harrison	DOC Developer	Tony Birtwistle	Fronde Account Manager
Shekhar Barpande	DOC Architect	Richard Perfect	Fronde Architect
Jarrold Carmichael	DOC Change Analyst	Kevin Kay	Fronde Project Manager
Louise Yau	DOC API developer	Iain Lumsden	Fronde Developer
Florence Esson	DOC Project Coordinator	Markus Giebel	Fronde Developer
Michelle Bradshaw	DOC Subject Matter Expert	Rob Hill	Former DOC Business Analyst
Craig Brady	DOC Business Analyst	Dom Driver	Former DOC Architect

## Data submission – in bulk via spreadsheet, or singly via web-form?



In order to cater for bulk record uploads as well as ancillary data such as moult and morphometrics, we will continue to use the [Bander's Data BOX](#) for the foreseeable future. An updated version can be downloaded from <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/how-to-submit-banding-data/>. [Yes, yet another iteration of the Bander's Data BOX! This time no changes to the structure of the template, only lookups and features that improve data entry.] Please note that the FALCON System will only accept data submitted using *this* template for bulk record upload.

### Don't like the Data BOX? Use the FALCON form instead!

You will be pleased to know FALCON includes an alternative to the Data BOX: the Add Record Form – herewith a snapshot:

**1** Type of sighting

**2** Banding event

**3** Marking configurations

First Marking	Re-marking	Resighting/Recovery
---------------	------------	---------------------

**Primary mark**

PRIMARY MARK <sup>\*</sup> ⓘ

BANDING SCHEME

**Event details**

DATE OF EVENT <sup>\*</sup>

DATE ACCURACY

TIME (24H)

REGISTERED PROJECT <sup>\*</sup>

EVENT TYPE <sup>\*</sup>

CAPTURE CODE <sup>\*</sup>

WILD/CAPTIVE <sup>\*</sup>

STATUS CODE ⓘ

CONDITION ⓘ

**For First marking add primary mark and/or any other markings <sup>\*</sup>**

Upper left leg

Lower left leg

	BAND TYPE	BAND FORM	BAND COLOUR	NUMBER/LETTER ID
<b>1</b>	<input style="width: 80px;" type="text" value="Metal"/>	<input style="width: 80px;" type="text" value="BUTT"/>	<input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100px;" type="text" value="d-191457"/>

**4 Bird details** Common name - or - Species code\* AGE SEX

105 - Chatham petrel, ranguru - Pterodroma X p Unknown (U)

**5 People involved** L3/Provider (ID & Name)\* Bander/Reporter (ID & Name)\*

David Boyle - db0379 X Edin Whitehead - ew0496 X

**6 Location** Find on a map

You can use a map to quickly pin-point a location to populate the coordinate fields, or you can enter the coordinates and check where these plot on the map.

**Keep track of progress**

A 'breadcrumb trail' indicates your progress through the form, and can be used to jump to various sections. If you have missed a section or a field, then this will be indicated so that you can return to complete required fields.

**Sighting progress**

- 1. Type of sighting
- 2. Banding event
- 3. Marking configurations
- 4. Bird details
- 5. People involved
- 6. Location
- 7. Additional comments

**Duplicate your record**

After entering the first record, you can select which aspects to duplicate (pre-populate) before entering the next record, thereby speeding up data entry as well as reducing errors. You can even select a previously reported event and duplicate it for quick data entry.

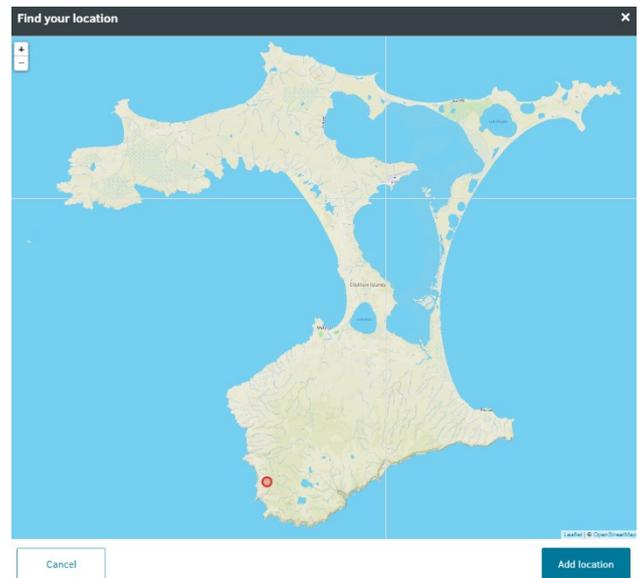
This would be the quickest way to enter data without needing to use the Data BOX. The only limitation is that this only caters for compulsory fields and has not been designed for entering ancillary data such as weight and wing length.

However, if we receive stakeholder feedback as to the importance of certain ancillary fields, we can still incorporate these into the FALCON System.

**Clean data, dirty data?**



Both the spreadsheet upload and the single record form will include various data validation rules that will provide banders with feedback regarding potential errors in data submitted.



**Choose data to duplicate**

- All
- Increment primary mark by +1
- Date
- Registered Project
- Capture Code, Wild/Captive
- Species
- Age
- Sex
- People involved (all fields)
- Location (all fields)

## Hitting the Million Mark

During the 1987/88 banding year 26,497 birds of 105 species were banded and 434 previously banded birds were re-banded, bringing the grand total of birds banded in New Zealand over all years to 1,012,135. One species previously not banded (Leach's Fork-tailed Petrel) was added during the season. The number of species banded over all years increased to 224. Banding was regulated by 55 permits.

Roderick O Cossee  
June 1988

So where are we now? With the aid of FALCON we will soon be able to produce all sorts of interesting statistics. Watch this space!

## Please report sightings of banded humans

Bird bands have many uses... including as jewellery! The Banding Office would like to ensure that we have records of all of these bands, since they are uniquely numbered and we need to keep track of whether bands are on birds, in boxes, lost, used for practice, or adorning a human finger or ear! You may keep your jewellery (19-prefix bands are a perfect fit for fingers) – simply report the band number and some information as to its current use to [falcon@doc.govt.nz](mailto:falcon@doc.govt.nz).



## Quote

*The most difficult thing is the decision to act,  
the rest is mere tenacity.*

*Amelia Earhart*

## From the Archives – Lance Kevey

Prior to the lockdown interruption to volunteering at the Banding Office, Lance spent 63 days over 18 months diligently ploughing through old archived band recovery letters. During this time, he saved 497 scanned files, with each file containing up to ten reports. That tallies to over 4,000 records so far! This is an immense effort and one for which the Banding Office is very grateful. Here are some interesting anecdotes he recorded:

45495 - Mallyhawk got tangled in a fishing boat's line on 18-5-04 at "top end of King Bank, Three Kings Islands"; the bird's tag read 0-15871.  
Once untangled "... the bird flew away quite well but indignant of the experience!"

42859 - Red Billed Gull sighted on 10-3-98 on Rotorua Lake Front had been sighted by same person two years earlier. Was banded as a chick on 4-12-84, making bird just over 13 years.  
Average life span of females is 9 years; males is 6 years though oldest recorded bird lived at least 28 years.

51280 - Buller's Albatross banded on The Snarcs, North East Island on 23-3-15 died caught on hook of a Tuna longline on 3-6-15 at the southern Challenger Plateau; bird banded as a 1 year or older Female.

51275 - Knot banded as a 1 year old or older on 25-11-06 at Miranda shot and killed on 18-5-15 at Ust-Kamchatsk, Lake Takhirka, Russia aged 8 yrs 5mths 22 days. Bird had moved 10,440km

42841 - Wandering Albatross found in very weak condition on beach near San Antonio Oeste, Patagonian Coast (ie South Atlantic coast of Argentina), after a week-long storm along the entire coast.  
The bird was accepting fish and causing "...a minor sensation in the town." The bird also had large external parasites on it.  
Bird was recovered on 21-2-98 and had been banded as a pre-fledge juvenile on Campbell Island on 3-10-97.

45485 - Southern Giant Petrel banded at MacQuarrie Island on 22-2-04 found "beach-washed" at Birdlings Flat, Kaitorete Spit NZ, on 11-4-04.  
Bird had flown 1572 km in 1 month 20 days.

51296 - Yellow-Eyed Penguin banded as a chick 28-2-00 at Flea Bay, Banks Peninsula, and found injured but alive at Goughs Bay, Banks Peninsula on 27-11-15, aged 15 yrs 8mths and 28 days. Not the oldest bird on record but getting on.  
(Band removed and bird micro-chipped).

51276 - South Island Kaka banded as a Pullus on 1-3-99 north of Rotoiti, Mainland Island trapped and released on 9-10-15 at Rotoiti, Mainland Island - aged 16 yrs 7m

## New FALCON form for reporting sightings of banded birds

We would like to invite readers of this *BirDBanD* newsletter to submit resighting records of banded birds via the new FALCON Sightings form (no login required) at <https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings> (open in Chrome, not Internet Explorer). A map allows for easy pin-pointing of the locality, and various drop-down options simplify reporting of colour bands, flags, etc. This form will also re-size for use on tablets and mobile phones.

Report a sighting

1 Bird details      2 Bird location      3 Marking details      4 Your details

**Bird details**  
All fields are required unless stated

**Is the bird marked?**  
Can you see any metal or colour bands or other marks on the bird?  
Yes No

**Condition of bird**  
 Alive  
 Injured  
 Freshly dead  
 Long dead

**Can you recognise the bird?**  
For example Kea, kākā, tūi. If unsure of species please note this in the comments field at the end of the form.  
Yes No

Example of a bird with bands. Numbers refer to band placement (configuration)

Upper right leg: 1

	BAND TYPE	BAND FORM	BAND COLOUR	NUMBER/LETTER ID	TEXT COLOUR
1	Colour	FLAG	Blue	A3	White

Lower right leg: 3

	BAND TYPE	BAND FORM	BAND COLOUR
1	Colour	BUTT	Orange
2	Colour	BUTT	Red
3	Colour	BUTT	Purple

Would you like to receive an email of the banded bird's history?

Yes, send me an email

## Please register all banding projects

This is a reminder for all banders to ensure that banding projects have been Registered – this includes historic (inactive) as well as current and future (planned) projects. Use the Project Registration tab on the [Bander's Data BOX](#) and forward this to the [Banding Office](#). All data submitted to FALCON will need to be linked to a registered Project.

## Updated Price List and Order Form

Project information will be requested whenever we receive equipment orders. Please refer to the updated Banding Office [Price List](#) and [Order Form](#); please also note new prices.

Project details	Notes, examples	Project 1
Project Name > Project Name (once registered on the FALCON System) will be selected when records are uploaded.	E.g. "NZ Wader Study Group", "OSNZ Auckland Seabird Group", "DOC Takahē Recovery Group" > Use this Project Name in the file name of submitted data associated with this project.	
Project description Project state	Short description of project purpose AWAITING APPROVAL (in process of being registered) INACTIVE (data collected in the past but not currently) ACTIVE (this is an active, current project)	
Project time-frame	Year-range (historic, current or predicted) of project e.g. 1983-1990, or 2016-2024, or 2020-ongoing	
<b>Project Manager</b> Full name	<b>Who is/was in charge of this project?</b> Name of person that manages project, orders bands, submits schedules - this will be considered the "data owner"	
Bander ID email address	NZNBBS number of project manager email address of project manager	
<b>Project Team Members</b> (note: these will all be granted access to the Project's dataset)	<b>Who else is/was part of this project?</b> <b>What is their bander certification level on this project?</b>	
Team member 1	e.g. Name surname1, L3	
Team member 2	e.g. Name surname2, L3	
Team member 3	e.g. Name surname3, L2	
Team member 4	e.g. Name surname4, L1	
etc.	Add rows as needed	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Under whose auspices was/is this project carried out?</b>	
DOC project yes/no	Is this a project carried out by or on behalf of DOC?	
Other organisation	Organisation, Trust, Private, etc. Provide full name/s	

### New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme (NZNBBS) PRICE LIST

To place an order, please complete the [ORDER FORM](#) and email to [bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz](mailto:bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz)  
Please contact the Banding Office well in advance of your need for bands and equipment, as there may be a turnaround time of up to three months if you order something not in stock.

Note that we do not process orders during June or December.

## *No flights? No worries! PAP's tropical island OE*

During a year of Covid-19 woe and restrictions it has been nice to see wildlife just get on with life. There have been bird observations aplenty but perhaps the best story so far has been about a small bird who clearly thought a winter break to a tropical island was in order. In July David Ugolini, from the [Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie](#), reported to the Banding Office that one of their members, Liliane, had seen a banded *Charadrius bicinctus* on 9 July 2020 feeding at Nakutakoin, near Noumea, New Caledonia. Further observations and photographs were taken on the 11<sup>th</sup>, which showed that the bird had a white leg flag with text PAP on its right leg.

There was great excitement (to quote Mike Bell: *"Wow ... Holy smoke!!!"*) when it was found that this Banded Dotterel (CP-11617, White Flag PAP) was banded as an adult male on 20/10/2017 at Eastbourne, Wellington. PAP is part of an ongoing study by MIRO ([Mainland Island Restoration Operation](#)) along with Greater Wellington Regional Council, Hutt City Council and Taranaki Whanui, to monitor two coastal-breeding populations of the Banded Dotterel along the Eastbourne coastline. Since 2016 there has been a project to catch and band a sample of locally-breeding adults and fledglings to collect data on survival rates and movements.



Photo: Liliane Guisgant

PAP was last seen at Nakutakoin on 27 July 2020, but for such a small bird he made short work of the over 2000-kilometre journey home. On the 2nd August 2020 PAP was seen at the Eastbourne foreshore looking very healthy after his winter sojourn to the tropics. PAP, with his partner PAT, has been observed nesting twice but they have not been able to get their chicks to the fledgling stage due to cat predation. Fingers crossed that PAP's remarkable story continues with a successful nesting season this time.

PAP has now many fans in New Caledonia since his story was published on the SCO website: <https://www.sco.nc/articles/actualites/l-histoire-de-pap-355096>.

## *Longevity record contender*

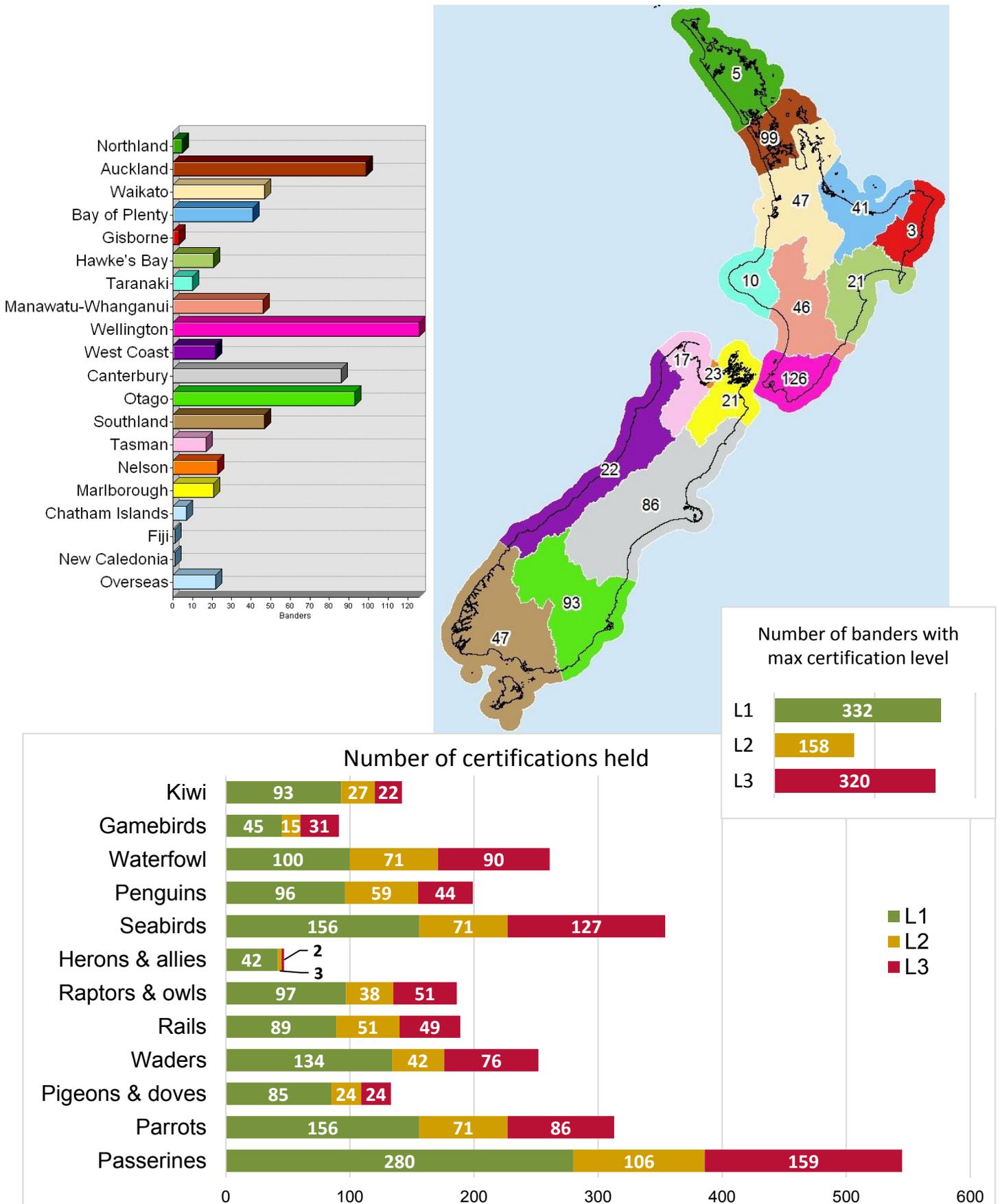
A male Kākā has been sighted on Kāpiti Island 31 years after he was banded as part of a Victoria University research study. This is surely a contender for a longevity record. Lee Barry, Kāpiti Island DOC ranger, experienced one of the perks of her job on 1 April 2020 when an adult Kākā perched on her deck. It wore a metal band that had been painted yellow on its right leg, and Lee reported that the bird was so tame that she could read the number, L-26805. Banding data held by the Banding Office revealed that this bird was banded as a juvenile on Kāpiti Island on 30/01/1989 by Ron Moorhouse. Lee said: "I figured it was an old bird by the look of it... very worn feathers and unfortunately body condition didn't look super great. A bit small/skinny. But it could fly well, eyes and beak looked good, etc. Got a close look as it is quite tame".

The purpose of Ron's study (which took place between 1988-1992) was to identify aspects of the Kākās' ecology which relate to its decline on the mainland. Kākā were banded and radio-tagged to allow study of their habitat use and foraging behaviour. A worthwhile study that is still providing valuable information about the species years after it officially concluded. This shows how important it is to band birds correctly AND submit banding data as, although the project may be over, the birds still carry the bands for life. As Ron says: *"This kind of record really shows the value of banding and filing banding returns."*

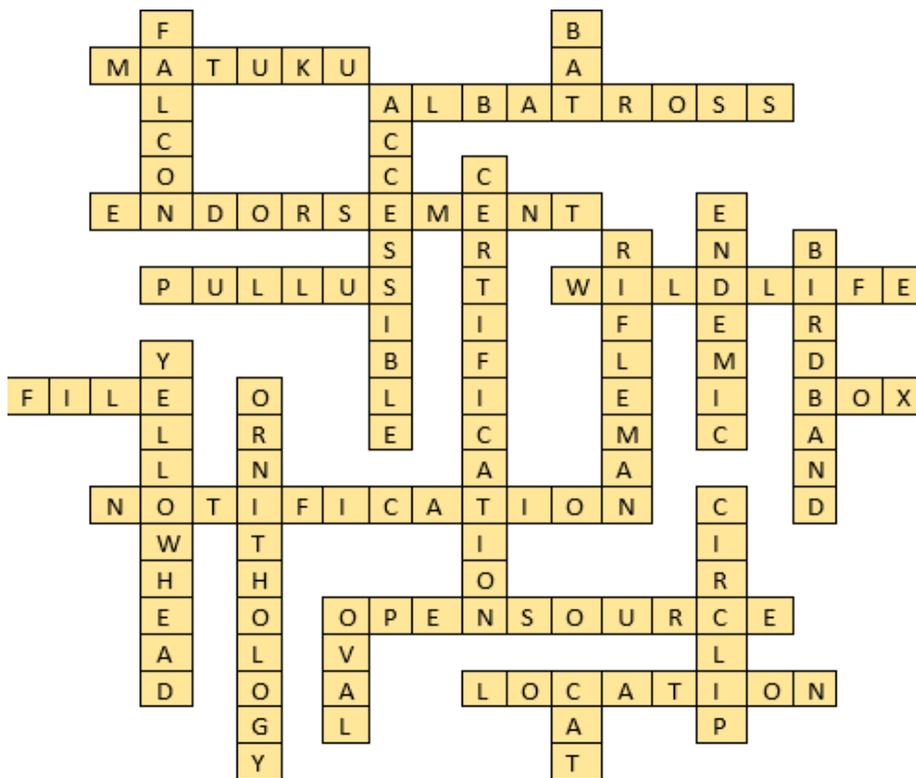
**If you have any longevity records of New Zealand birds, please get in touch with the Banding Office – we would like to collate these for publication.**

## Certifications at a glance

The certification scheme is continuing to expand at a rapid pace. In the past year alone there have been over 100 new banders register with the scheme (and that doesn't include all of the certification upgrades processed during that time!). We have put together some graphics to show the spread of banders across the country and different species groups. It's interesting to see which areas are hotspots for banders and which might need a little encouragement to get more banding up and running!



## Puzzled: answer to previous crossword



ACROSS	
3:	Australasian bittern
4:	Large oceanic bird
6:	The act of saying that you approve or support someone's certification application
10:	Chick, nestling
11:	Undomesticated animal species
13:	A collection of records arranged in a convenient order
15:	Banding Office eXcel
16:	A notice or announcement
18:	Denoting a system whose origins and design are freely accessible (2 words: 4, 6)
19:	A place of settlement or activity
DOWN	
1:	NZ bird of prey
2:	NZ's only native land mammal
4:	User-friendly, within reach
5:	Process of providing someone with an official document attesting to their level of achievement
7:	Native to a particular locality or region
8:	NZ's smallest bird
9:	NZNBBS newsletter
12:	Mohua
14:	The study of birds
17:	Type of pliers used to remove metal bands
18:	The shape of an egg
20:	Significant predator of birds and lizards

## Quiz: True or False?

1. If a bird band will be used as a wedding ring, the Banding Office must be invited to the wedding.
2. Bird banding in New Zealand has been carried out since at least 1911.
3. 90% of all banding records in New Zealand have been loaded onto FALCON.
4. All banders, including trainees, need to be registered as Certified Banders with the NZNBBS.
5. Orders for bands and banding equipment are only processed and posted on a Tuesday.
6. All data in the new FALCON Bird Banding System can be assumed to be correct.
7. Transponder insertion has been formally incorporated into the NZNBBS Certification System.
8. Banders may never transfer bands between one another.
9. CP, CX, DP, YP and T-prefix bands are made of incoloy and are manufactured in the UK.
10. A Level 1 bander cannot hold their own Wildlife Act Authority for banding birds.
11. The Banding Office has three full-time staff that are also the Administrators of the FALCON System.
12. A Level 3 operator may supervise/train up to five Level 1 trainees at once during a banding session.
13. The Banding Office can be bribed with chocolate to prioritise urgent equipment orders.
14. The FALCON System can cater for multiple resightings of the same bird on the same day.
15. A Level 2 operator may supervise/train Level 1 banders under the direct supervision of a Level 3.
16. All records in FALCON will be openly available for anyone to search, view and download.
17. Level 3 operators may delegate data entry to Level 2 operators under their supervision.
18. Banders will be informed if the data they are submitting to FALCON are considered "dirty".
19. All data submitted via the Record Upload Form must also be submitted via the Data BOX.
20. Band stocktakes will no longer need to be submitted via the Data BOX.
21. Certification will be granted based on the urgency of the requirement to band birds for a given project.
22. Neon/Fluoro/Hot Pink colour bands are no longer available to order.
23. The Banding Office does not process orders for bands or equipment during June or December.
24. FALCON will only accept data submissions that are linked to a Registered Project.
25. Banders should offer honest and constructive assessment of the work of other banders.