

seen to be tending a chick. Thus M-19006 would possibly have returned to The Snares as an advanced pre-breeder in the following January or February, had it survived.

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FALCONS BREEDING IN THE WESTERN KING COUNTRY

Very little is known about the status of the New Zealand Falcon *Falco novaeseelandiae* in the North Island. Much of the data to be obtained from the literature is of scattered, individual sightings giving little indication if breeding is taking place. Fox (1978, *Notornis* 25: 317-331) gathered data from the literature and from local observers to produce national distribution maps for this species, but we consider that his estimate of the breeding range of falcons in the North Island is too limited.

We have seen falcons in the western King Country, north of Marokopa, for two years and our data show that this district still supports a viable breeding population. We have found pairs breeding successfully on Mt Pirongia and at Pirongia South, Te Toi, Taharoa, Marokopa, Waitomo and Ohakura, and unsuccessfully at Moerangi, Te Kauri and Hikurangi. Falcons occur throughout the western King Country in association with blocks of native forest but are uncommon in the north of the district, especially where forest canopies are greatly modified and the birds are likely to be shot. Further south, around Marokopa and Tawarau State Forest, falcons are more numerous with reports of multiple sightings and wandering juveniles relatively common. We have little data as yet from the very large forest area surrounding the Herangi Range between Marokopa and Awakino but the information we do have suggests the presence of a fairly substantial breeding population.

Fox estimated the breeding range of the falcon in the North Island to cover some 24 986 km² to which we would add approximately 923 km² from the western King Country, and as breeding has been confirmed south of Mokau, at Tapuiwahine, Okahukura, Otunui and Ohura (C. F. J. O'Donnell, pers. comm.), this extensive forest area could also be regarded as part of the falcons' breeding range. We are unsure of the extent of this latter area but suggest that if the western King Country and central Taranaki forest areas were included in Fox's estimate, and falcons are found to breed regularly in other districts such as the Coromandel and Kaimai Ranges, the total area of the North Island breeding range would be over 30 000 km².

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