



Media Statement

2 November 2020

Kārearea has hunters backing for Bird of the Year

New Zealand's hunters have overwhelmingly decided to back the kārearea/NZ falcon in this year's Bird of the Year competition following a poll run by the Game Animal Council (GAC), the NZ Deerstalkers Association (NZDA) and Hunters for Conservation.

Given a choice between the kārearea, which was last year's hunters choice and another community favourite, the whio, 62% of hunters chose the kārearea to back in the Bird of the Year.

"Personally, I am a big fan of the whio," says NZDA's Gwyn Thurlow. "However, the hunting community has spoken and to be honest it won't be too difficult to vote for the kārearea in the Bird of the Year as it is New Zealand's original hunter and it is pretty cool seeing one out hunting."

"Many people probably won't recall but the kārearea won Bird of the Year back in 2012, and I don't think there has ever been a repeat winner, so if hunters could push it over the top it would be a wee bit of history."

"Regardless of which bird wins, Bird of the Year is a great opportunity to inspire and educate New Zealanders on the importance of preserving our native species and just how precious they are," says the GAC's Tim Gale. "It's also a bit of fun after what has been a pretty trying last six months or so."

"The fact is that hunters typically spend far more time in the conservation estate than most people and are passionate about the preservation of our indigenous species. We often just don't do a good job of talking about it."

Jason Van Beers of Hunters for Conservation concedes that entrenched perceptions have contributed to an imagined divide between hunters and conservationists

"There may always be aspects of conservation policy that hunting organisations do not agree with Forest & Bird on and vice versa, and it is really easy to get hung up on those. However, we have far more in common than is frequently acknowledged as can be evidenced by the thousands of volunteer hours hunters undertake as part of conservation projects every year."

As well as giving it their vote, hunters are encouraged to report sightings of kārearea to either the Wingspan National Bird of Prey Centre (www.wingspan.co.nz) or at www.nzfalcon.org.nz.

Forest & Bird's Bird of the Year competition runs until 15 November and people can vote at www.birdoftheyear.org.nz.

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