



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Media Release

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More than meets the eye at Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary.

The endangered NZ Falcon or Karearea is one species which has taken advantage of the idyllic environment behind the pest-proof fence at Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary.

For the last five years, an adult pair has set up home and nursery at the sanctuary. The nests, behaviour and progress have been closely monitored through a collaboration of Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary staff, falcon volunteers, and Department of Conservation rangers. The falcon pair have been aptly named Par and Birdie.

This season started tragically in September when the adults abandoned their first nest after losing their clutch to a very heavy squall and rainstorm. It is believed the chicks drowned when the nest filled with water.

Not to be deterred, Par and Birdie were back on eggs at a new site within two weeks. They produced three healthy chicks, one male and two female and last week the young ones were banded with a special colour scheme to identify them as birds from the sanctuary.

Soon they will be given the nudge by the adults and politely told to depart and find their own territory; this piece of paradise is already taken.

Falcon volunteer Betty Shepherd says, "it's always fascinating to watch the chicks develop into juvenile birds.

"It takes approximately 38 days from hatching until the first flight. The males always make the break first and JD was no exception. He was up flying and hoovering up cicadas on the 11th fairway while the girls took up to five days to follow him into the skies.

"Falcons generally nest on the ground and the chicks are incredibly vulnerable, so it is always a huge relief to see them in the air, having the protection of the predator free sanctuary ensures they get to that first level of independence," Betty says.

Reporting any sightings of these chicks helps both the Department of Conservation and the Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary to monitor the chicks. Keep an eye out for Thelma, who wears a red band around her leg, Louise has a light green band and JD a dark green band. Any white banded birds sighted are specific to the birds born at the sanctuary for identification when they leave. Please report any sightings to the Department of Conservation Taupo; 07 376 0072 or taupo@doc.govt.nz

The first year for the young birds will be tenuous, and it is estimated 75% will not survive to see their first birthday. Predators, starvation during the winter months and accidents including hitting power lines while hunting contribute to this low survival rate.

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Background Information: