



Kārearea at UC

The University of Canterbury have begun flying a native New Zealand falcon (kārearea) above its Ilam campus to naturally deter pest birds, the first time a University has adopted such a tactic.

Kārearea are rare, only an estimated 6000 birds are left, with most people having only seen one on the \$20 banknote.

The University of Canterbury has a history of research into kārearea; Nick Fox obtained his PhD from UC in 1977 and in 2005 established the Falcons for Grapes project. This programme reintroduced falcons to the Wairau Plains of Marlborough.

Sara later studied the descendants of these birds and found that the country's only remaining endemic bird of prey is a perfect match for vineyard pest control. She remains an advisor to the Marlborough Falcon Trust (MFT).

MFT handler Rob Lawry also has links with UC, graduating with a MSc in Biochemistry.

Seeing a kārearea flying regularly at UC is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the plight of New Zealand falcons – continuing the outreach work that Sara is so passionate about.

Dr Sara Kross

2005 BSc, Animal Science, Cornell University, New York

2007 MSc, Environmental Biology, University of St. Andrews

2012 PhD in Zoology, UC

As a conservation biologist, Sara is interested in farming landscapes and human-wildlife conflicts and was also a founding member of the Marlborough Falcon Conservation Trust.

Her PhD research at UC focused on the efficacy of reintroducing the threatened New Zealand falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) into the vineyards of Marlborough, New Zealand's largest wine region, as both a conservation scheme and as a source of natural pest control. The research combined behavioural ecology, ornithology, and conservation biology to examine the changes that occurred in the falcons themselves and in the vineyard ecosystems.

Currently Sara is a Post-doctoral Research Scholar in the Department of Wildlife, Fish & Conservation Biology at the University of California Davis where she

is constructing predator-prey models to determine whether barn owls are able to control rodent pests on Californian farms.

Prior to this Sara was a 2013 David H. Smith Conservation Research Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of California Davis and The Nature Conservancy where she used field experiments, landscape ecology and economics to quantify the value of wild birds to farmers in California.

Sara believes that outreach is one of the most rewarding parts of doing research, and views it as an important component of her commitment to conservation. She has developed and led education programmes alongside the Department of Conservation and started the 'Falcon Ambassadors' programme in schools. She is also on the executive committee of the Bird Education Alliance for Conservation.

