

Pukeko crowned New Zealand Bird of the Year

The swamp-loving Pukeko has won Forest & Bird's (BirdLife in New Zealand) annual Bird of the Year election. It won 1480 votes in what ended up as a two-bird race with the Kakapo, which gained 1068 votes. Forest & Bird's Advocacy Manager Kevin Hackwell says the Pukeko is one of the best ambassadors for our wetlands. "These swamp hens love feeding on the grubs and plants that can be found in our wetlands," says Kevin Hackwell. "Unfortunately 90 percent of our swamplands have been drained to make way for farms and other developments, so our Pukeko have taken up the role as scavengers, sometimes picking on crops and foraging alongside motorways. "Wetlands are incredible bird-magnets so protecting and restoring them is crucial." The Pukeko is thought to have landed on our shores around a thousand years ago from Australia. Broadcaster Damian Christie "a long-time Pukeko supporter and former Pukeko campaign manager" says it is a pioneering success story. "It's an immigrant that set off at great personal risk and without the aid of modern navigational devices to build a home here in Aotearoa. And it didn't just survive, it thrived. I like to think there's a little bit of Pukeko in all of us." The Emperor Penguin "not traditionally seen as a New Zealand native but boosted by Happy Feet's surprise visit earlier this year" polled 12th. During the poll, ex-All Black Anton Oliver rooted for the Hoiho, actress Lisa Chappell sang the praises of the Black Robin and singer-songwriter Hollie Smith rallied support for the Kokako. In this year's poll, a total of 7851 votes were cast. This is the seventh year Forest & Bird has run the popularity contest. Past winners include the Yui, Fantail, Grey Warbler, the Kakapo, the Kiwi and last year's victor was the Kakariki. **This year's poll results:**

1. Pukeko (1480)
2. Kakapo (1068)
3. Hihi (756)
4. Kaka (562)
5. Tui (319)
6. Saddleback (304)
7. Ruru (Morepork) 291
8. Kea (209)
9. Kokako (188)
10. Fantail (177)

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