

JUNIOR JOURNAL

59



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JUNIOR JOURNAL 59 CONTENTS



ARTICLES

- 2 **Bird of the Year** *by Iona McNaughton*
- 10 **And the Winner Is ...** *by Iona McNaughton*
-

STORY

- 18 **Nian, the New Year Monster**
a Chinese tale, retold by Chris Tse
-

POEM

- 24 **Garden Angels** *by Sarah Penwarden*
-

PLAY

- 26 **The Competition** *by Chris Lam Sam*
-

BIRD OF THE YEAR



by Iona McNaughton

Every year, people vote for their favourite New Zealand bird in the Bird of the Year competition. The bird that gets the most votes is the winner. The competition is run by Forest & Bird, an organisation that helps look after New Zealand's birds and wildlife.

I asked Megan Hubscher from Forest & Bird some questions about the competition.



Iona



Megan



Why does Forest & Bird hold the Bird of the Year competition?

We want people to know more about the wonderful birds we have in Aotearoa New Zealand and to learn how to keep those birds safe.

Can people vote for any bird?

No, the competition is only about native birds. That means birds that have always lived in New Zealand or birds that have flown here from other countries, but not birds like blackbirds and sparrows that have been brought to New Zealand by people.

Why native birds?

New Zealand has 168 kinds of native birds, but most of them are in danger of becoming extinct. This means they may die out. The fairy tern, the 2014 Bird of the Year, is our most endangered bird. There are only twenty of them left. We want people to know how they can help stop native birds like the fairy tern from dying out.

Some of our native birds can be found in other countries as well. For example, the pūkeko and kororā (little blue penguin) also live in Australia, but they have different names there. These birds flew or swam to New Zealand many years ago.

Ninety-three of our native birds are also endemic. This means they live only in New Zealand. The kiwi, the kākāpō, and the tūī are all endemic – you won't find them anywhere else in the world.

The Bird of the Year competition helps people to understand what makes our native birds special and why we need to look after them.



A fairy tern – tara iti

Why are New Zealand birds in danger?

There are three main reasons why New Zealand birds are in danger. The biggest danger is from animals such as possums, rats, and stoats. These animals are predators. They kill the birds and eat their eggs.

Another danger is from changes to the birds' habitats (the places where the birds live). For example, many birds live in forests, but people often cut down the trees to make space for houses. People also use a lot of plastic, and that can get into the ocean and kill seabirds.



Kea live in the mountains.



Kākā live in forests.



Tarāpuka (black-billed gulls) live on the seashore.



Whio (blue ducks) live in rivers.

Changes in the weather can also be dangerous for birds. For example, in Northland, hot weather has made the ground so hard and dry that some kiwi have been starving because they can't get their beaks into the ground to eat the bugs and worms that live there.

Do you think the Bird of the Year competition is helping to save our birds?

I'm sure it is. Every year, more and more people take part. In 2018, around 50,000 people voted in the competition. All those people are learning more about our native birds.

Forest & Bird also has the Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) to help Kiwi kids learn about New Zealand's birds and other wildlife. KCC members get together to find out more about places such as the bush and the beach and the birds and animals that live in these places. They also get a magazine called *Wild Things* four times a year.

When did the Bird of the Year competition start?

Bird of the Year started in 2005. When it began, it was the only competition in the world where people could vote for their favourite bird.

Who can vote?

Anyone can vote. The only rule is that you can vote only once. You can vote online, by email, or by posting a letter.



Kiwi Conservation Club members

Can you tell me more about the competition?

Bird of the Year takes place in October every year. A list of the birds that people can vote for is put up on the Forest & Bird website.

The competition gets people very excited. They make videos and posters to try to get other people to vote for their favourite bird. They write songs, make speeches, and take photos. In 2018, the prime minister asked people to vote for the black petrel. And former All Black captain Richie McCaw painted a picture of his favourite bird, the kākārīki (orange-fronted parakeet), on his helicopter.

How can school students get involved?

The best way is for a class to choose their favourite native bird and find out all they can about it. Then they can tell their friends and family why it should be the winner and try to get everyone they know to vote for it.

Which bird has won the most times?

It's really interesting – no bird has won more than once. I think we have so many amazing birds that people like to share first place around. It's hard to pick just one favourite bird!

Me pōti - Vote for me

In 2018, some students from Bethlehem School in Tauranga wanted the kakaruaia (black robin) to win Bird of the Year. They made a video about why people should vote for it.

Their main message was “Ahakoa he iti noa, he pounamu”, which means although it is small, it is a treasure to the world.

The students also made biscuits and soap in the shape of black robins. They sold these to raise money to help the birds.

Although the black robin didn't win, the students now know much more about this beautiful little native bird. They've also learnt a lot about other New Zealand native birds and what people can do to help keep them safe.





AND THE WINNER IS ...

by Iona McNaughton

The Bird of the Year competition was started as a way of making people more interested in native New Zealand birds. Many of our native birds are endangered, so if people know more about them, they can help to keep the birds safe.

New Zealand native birds are given a “danger status”. This shows how much danger they are in of becoming extinct. The birds are either “doing OK”, “in some trouble”, or “in serious trouble”. Sadly, only about 20 percent of New Zealand native birds are “doing OK”.

This article has information about some of the birds of the year – including their danger status.





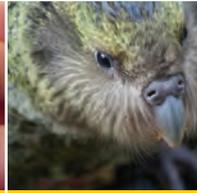
2005



2006



2007



2008



2009

The Winners So Far

2005: Tūī

2006: Pīwakawaka – Fantail

2007: Riroriro – Grey warbler

2008: Kākāpō

2009: Kiwi

2010: Kākāriki karaka – Orange-fronted parakeet

2011: Pūkeko

2012: Kārearea – New Zealand falcon

2013: Mohua – Yellowhead

2014: Tara iti – Fairy tern

2015: Kuaka – Bar-tailed godwit

2016: Kōkako

2017: Kea

2018: Kererū – New Zealand pigeon



2010



2011



2012



2013



2018



2017



2016



2015



2014



Bird of the Year 2005: Tūī

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Danger status | Doing OK |
| Description | Endemic A large bird (up to 32 centimetres long) with shiny green-black feathers and a tuft of white throat feathers |
| What it eats | Insects. Also sucks nectar from flowers |
| Habitat | Forests, orchards, and gardens |
| Where it's found | Widespread (found in many places) |
| Interesting facts | An amazing mimic, it can copy sounds including other birds' calls. Long ago, some Māori kept pet tūī that they trained to speak. |



Bird of the Year 2006: Pīwakawaka – Fantail

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Danger status | Doing OK |
| Description | <p>Endemic</p> <p>Small body with a long tail that it can spread out like a fan</p> <p>About 16 centimetres long</p> |
| What it eats | Insects |
| Habitat | Forests and gardens |
| Where it's found | Widespread |
| Interesting facts | <p>The fantail is very active and often uses its fanned tail to disturb insects so it can catch them. It may also fly around people to catch any insects they stir up.</p> <p>Fantails are often found in pairs or groups.</p> |



Bird of the Year 2008: Kākāpō

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Danger status | In serious trouble |
| Description | <p>Endemic</p> <p>A large, flightless parrot with green feathers and a pale, round face</p> <p>Nocturnal (awake at night and asleep during the day)</p> |
| What it eats | Fruit, seeds, leaves, buds, flowers, bark, roots |
| Habitat | Native forests |
| Where it's found | Only on three small New Zealand islands |
| Interesting facts | <p>The kākāpō is the world's heaviest parrot. The male can weigh up to 2.2 kilograms.</p> <p>When in danger, the kākāpō stops moving or “freezes”, which makes it very easy for predators to catch. This is one of the reasons there are not many kākāpō left. In the 1990s, there were only about 50. These birds were put on three predator-free islands, and now there are over 200.</p> |



Bird of the Year 2012: Kārearea – New Zealand Falcon

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Danger status | In some trouble |
| Description | Endemic A large hunting bird with long legs and talons (claws) |
| What it eats | Small birds and animals |
| Habitat | Forests and farmland |
| Where it's found | Widespread, but in low numbers |
| Interesting facts | Adult kārearea can fly at 100 kilometres per hour and can kill birds and animals bigger than they are. One of the reasons kārearea are “in some trouble” is that predators eat the young birds in their nests. |



Bird of the Year 2015: Kuaka – Bar-tailed Godwit

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Danger status | In some trouble |
| Description | Native A large bird (around 40 centimetres long) with long legs and a long beak. It has brown and grey feathers on its body and bands (or bars) of brown on its tail. |
| What it eats | Snails, crabs, and sea worms |
| Habitat | Places with water, sand, and mud, such as harbours and river mouths |
| Where it's found | Widespread |
| Interesting facts | Every March, the kuaka flies more than 11,000 kilometres to Alaska, where it breeds. About 80,000 kuaka return to New Zealand every September to feed and grow strong, ready for their long journey back to Alaska. |



Bird of the Year 2018: Kererū – New Zealand Pigeon

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Danger status | Doing OK |
| Description | Endemic A large green pigeon with a white chest and a long tail |
| What it eats | Leaves, buds, flowers, berries, and fruit |
| Habitat | Trees |
| Where it's found | Widespread |
| Interesting facts | The kererū can swallow large fruit and berries. The seeds pass through its body, which is an important way for the seeds of our native trees to spread. |



NIAN, THE NEW YEAR MONSTER

a Chinese tale, retold by Chris Tse

It was spring. The snow was starting to melt, and as they did every year, the people in the small village of Peach Blossom were getting ready to leave their homes and go to the mountains. They knew that if they stayed, they would be in great danger.



All their lives, Yen and Jun had heard stories of the terrible monster Nian. They knew that every year, at the end of winter, Nian would appear, rampaging through the village and eating everything in sight. Yen and Jun had never seen Nian, but they could picture him very clearly. Their grandmother had told them about his teeth and claws that were as sharp as knives, the horn on his head that could tear through doors, and his fearsome roar that could be heard across all of China.



The children were helping their grandmother to pack when there was a knock on the door. Yen opened the door to see an old man. He had a thick blanket over his shoulders, and he was carrying a large bag. The man told Yen he was on his way to visit some relatives.

“I have travelled a long way, and I am tired and hungry,” he said. “Can you spare me some food?”

Yen looked at his grandmother. She smiled, invited the old man in, and gave him a bowl of rice and vegetables. As he ate, he asked, “Where are all the other people?”

“They have already left for the mountains,” Grandmother told him.

“We are leaving, too,” said Jun. “You should come with us before Nian arrives.”

The old man sat up when he heard the name of the monster. His eyes shone. “I’ve heard of this Nian, the monster that comes looking for food once a year.”

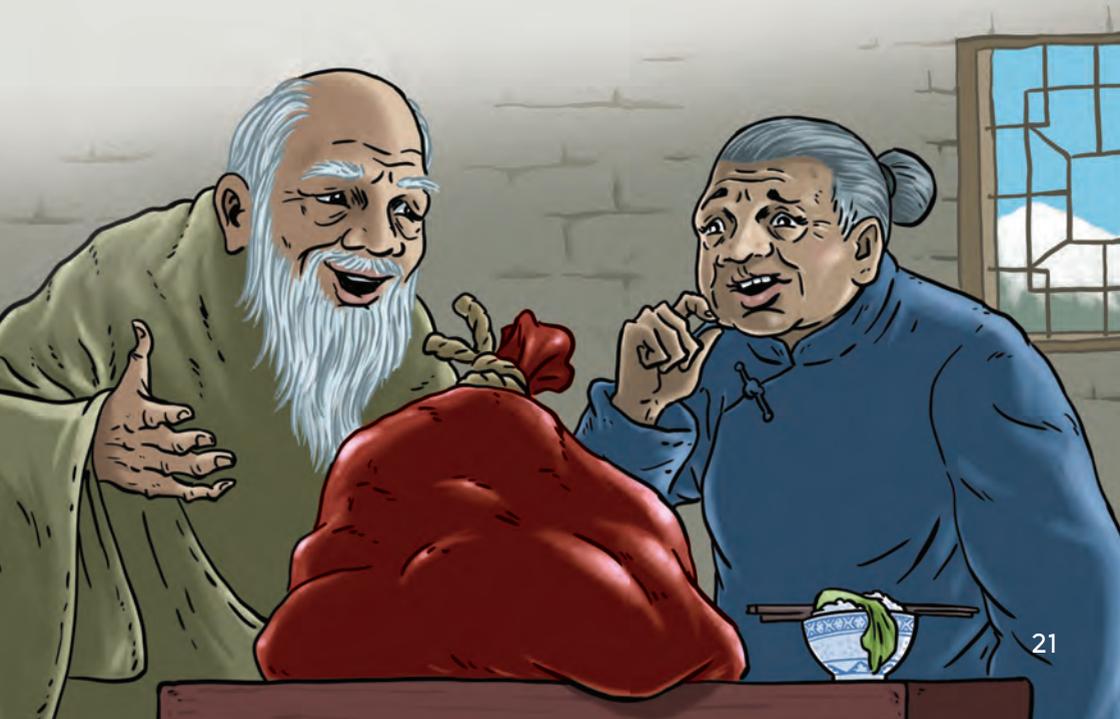


He picked up his bag and placed it on the table, smiling. “There is no reason to be scared of Nian,” he said. “In this bag, I have three secret weapons. They will keep Nian away for good. If you wish, you can use them. I will help you.”

Yen and Jun looked at their grandmother. They could see that she was deep in thought. Could this stranger really help them? At last, she turned to the old man. “Yes, please. We’d like you to help us get rid of Nian.”

“Wonderful!” the man exclaimed. “Then let’s get to work – we have a lot to do before the night comes.”

The day passed quickly as the children and their grandmother followed the old man’s instructions. They finished just as night fell. Then they sat and waited for Nian’s arrival.



After a while, they heard a sound. At first, they thought it was the wind, but then the sound changed to a low rumbling. As it got closer, they realised it was the sound of breathing – deep, heavy breathing that could only come from a very large creature ...

“Wait here,” said the old man. He slipped quietly out through the back door and hid in the shadows beside the house. The children and their grandmother waited nervously.

Nian walked slowly through the village streets. There was no one in sight. The monster sniffed the night air. He could smell people. He could smell *children* in one of the houses very close by. He let out an angry roar.

As Nian approached the house, he saw that it was covered in red banners. Candles were burning in the windows and bright red lanterns were hanging from the roof. Nian began to tremble. He was scared of fire and the colour red.

Then, suddenly, he heard loud screams and thunderous bangs. There was noise and smoke all around. Nian was terrified. He turned and fled, whimpering.

Yen, Jun, and their grandmother ran outside just as the old man lit the last fireworks and tossed them into the air. They saw Nian disappearing into the dark night.

“He won’t be back,” said the old man.



When the villagers returned the next day, the old man had gone, too. The children and their grandmother told the people how the strange old man had helped them scare Nian away. The villagers were very happy. Now they knew that fire, the colour red, and loud noises would keep the village safe from the monster.

Today, at New Year, when winter is over, the people of China still light lanterns and set off fireworks. They wear red clothes and hang up red banners to bring good fortune into their homes and keep bad luck away. Chinese New Year is a wonderful time to celebrate with family and eat lots of delicious food, especially when there are no monsters around to steal it!

GARDEN ANGELS

When we stop the car
outside Nana's house,
it's quiet in her garden –
a tūi hops
from branch to branch,
a cat sleeps in the long grass.
But then, while
Mum and Nana drink tea,
we set to work.

Uncle Kevin rakes the leaves,
Aunty Ana trims the bushes
growing down the wall,
Aunty Glenda gathers branches
broken by a storm,
Cousin Tom mows the lawns while
I turn on the hose
and spray the ferns.
In the mist, I see a rainbow.

Sarah Penwarden





The Competition

by Chris Lam Sam



SCENE: A city park beside the sea. The **MAYOR** and the **MAYOR'S ASSISTANT** are on a stage with **WATER WIZARD**, **MAXI MUSCLES**, **TINY TOT**, and **BIG BLUSTER**. The **CROWD** is standing around the stage. There is rubbish everywhere.

MAYOR. Dear people of Messy City. As your mayor, it brings me great joy to welcome you all to our first City Superhero competition!

CROWD. Hooray!

They throw hats, plastic bottles, paper cups, and other items in the air to celebrate.

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT (*stepping forward*). And as the mayor's assistant, it has been my great honour to gather these superheroes from far and wide. They've come here today to help us solve one of our city's biggest problems!

CROWD (*frustrated*). It's SO messy!

MAYOR (*stepping forward*). In fact, it's messy and *smelly*!

CROWD (*holding their noses*). That's true!

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT. The winner of this competition will be the superhero who makes our city clean and tidy.

MAYOR (*holding up a medal*). And their prize will be this gold medal! Now, let's meet superhero number one.

MAXI MUSCLES (*stepping forward*). I'm Maxi Muscles, the strongest superhero in the world! My arms are strong, my legs are strong, even my eyebrows are strong!

He raises his eyebrows.



MAYOR. How will you help clean up our city?

MAXI MUSCLES. That's easy! I'll use my great strength to smash all your rubbish into tiny pieces!

CROWD. Hooray!

They throw more items in the air.

MAXI MUSCLES. Now watch me make mincemeat of this mess!

He bends down and pounds the rubbish with his fists. The ground shakes, making everyone fall over. They quickly stand up again and dust themselves off.

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT (*helping the MAYOR to stand up*).

Thank you, but I don't think that's the solution we need. I don't think we can cope with all that noise and shaking.

MAYOR (*dusting herself off*). And the rubbish isn't gone – it's just in smaller bits.

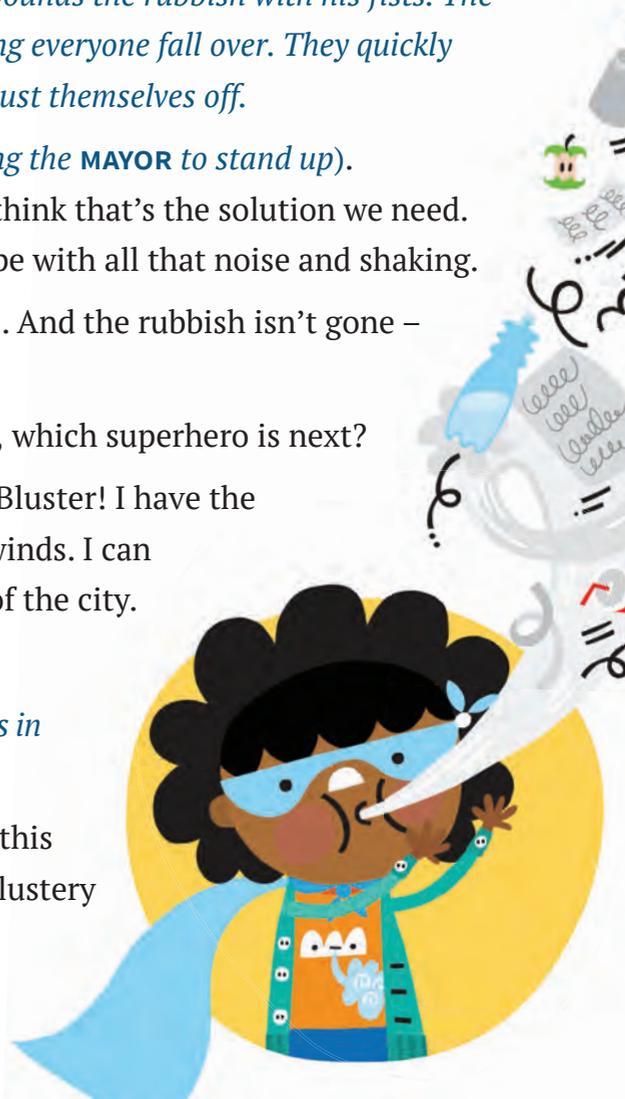
MAYOR'S ASSISTANT. Right, which superhero is next?

BIG BLUSTER. Me! I'm Big Bluster! I have the power to make strong winds. I can blow your rubbish out of the city.

CROWD. Hooray!

They throw more items in the air.

BIG BLUSTER. I'll clean up this city with just one big, blustery breath of air! Here I go!



BIG BLUSTER takes a deep breath and blows. The rubbish just flies around the park and lands again. The wind makes the **CROWD** fall over. They quickly stand up once more.

MAYOR. That didn't work, either. It's just blown all the mess around.

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT (*looking out to sea*). And now some of it has been blown into the ocean!

WATER WIZARD (*stepping forward*).

I can fix that! I'm the Water Wizard, and I can control water with my superwand. Watch me. Hey, Ocean, bring that rubbish back here!

MAYOR. W-w-what's that watery noise?

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT (*pointing*). It's a giant wave of rubbish!

CROWD. Aaagh!

They are all knocked over by the wave of rubbish.

MAYOR. Oh dear. None of these superheroes has managed to solve our problem. The town is messier than ever!

CROWD. And now we're all wet.

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT. Sorry, everyone. It looks like we'll be stuck with this mess forever.



TINY TOT. Um ... sorry to bother you, but I might be able to help.

MAYOR (*turning round in surprise*). I didn't see you there.

Who are you?

TINY TOT. I'm Tiny Tot, the tiniest superhero in the world!

MAYOR. And what's your superpower?

TINY TOT. I come up with small solutions to big problems!

MAXI MUSCLES (*laughing loudly*). You must be pulling our legs!

BIG BLUSTER. That's the silliest superpower I've ever heard of!

WATER WIZARD. In fact, that's not even a superpower!

CROWD. Boo!

TINY TOT. I may be tiny, but I know how **everyone** can win this competition!

CROWD. Everyone?

MAYOR. Well, go on then.

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT. Tell us.

TINY TOT. All it needs is a plan and for everyone to do something small. We can clean up this city **together**.

CROWD. What?



TINY TOT (*pointing to a messy pile of rubbish bins*). This city has rubbish bins, but no one is using them! Maxi — take those bins and put them all around the city. Big Bluster — blow all this rubbish into one place and then put it in a bin. (*He unfolds a large net.*) Water Wizard — this net can go into the sea, and you can make some gentle waves so that the rubbish floats into the net. And everyone else — instead of dropping things on the ground, put them in the bins, like this. (*He picks up a piece of rubbish and puts it in a bin.*)

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT. Amazing! We've never thought of doing that before!

MAYOR. It might be just the thing this city needs. Everyone, let's cooperate and clean Messy City together!

CROWD. Yeah!



Everyone begins picking up rubbish and putting it in the bins until the park is clean.

MAYOR'S ASSISTANT. We've done it!

CROWD. Hooray!

MAYOR. That means Tiny Tot is the winner of our competition!

She hands the gold medal to TINY TOT.

TINY TOT. Thank you, but I'm not really the winner because everyone helped. You are all the local superheroes that every city needs.

MAYOR (worried). I see. Then I'm afraid I have a new problem for you to solve, Tiny Tot.

TINY TOT. Oh, what's that?

MAYOR. I need you to find me a lot more gold medals!

EVERYONE *cheers.*



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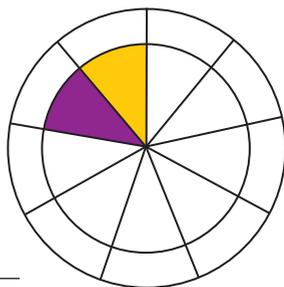
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| And the Winner Is ... | Gold 1 |
| Nian, the New Year Monster | Purple 2 |
| The Competition | Gold 1 |



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