

New Zealand's Long-tailed Bat

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In news- Recently, Pekapeka-tou-roa, a native New Zealand bat, has won the country's annual Bird of The Year award, hosted by Forest and Bird, an independent conservation organisation.

Why has it been added to the Bird of the Year list?

- It has been added to the list, because these flying furballs are threatened by the same problems as native birds – predators, habitat loss and climate change.
- It was for the first time that the organisation has let a native mammal enter the competition.
- The title, awarded to a native mammal instead of a bird, has rung up controversy in the country.
- While the competition only includes birds every year, they decided to include long-tailed bats to raise awareness about the species and their critically endangered status.

About the Long tailed bat of New Zealand(Pekapeka-tou-roa)-

- It is also known as the long-tailed wattled bat.
- It is one of 15 species of bats in the genus *Chalinolobus* variously known as “pied bats”, “wattled bats” or “long-tailed bats”.
- It is **one of the two surviving species endemic or native to New Zealand.**
- They are present throughout the mainland and can also be found on some offshore islands in the country.
- The species is a **small-sized bat with a long tail**, which is the only difference between long-tailed bats and New Zealand's other land mammal, the short-tailed bat.
- The **long-tailed bat is classed as 'nationally critical'** and short-tailed bat subspecies range from 'nationally vulnerable' to 'recovering'.

They fly at dusk using echolocation calls to hunt moths, mosquitoes and insects.

About Forest and Bird-

- Forest & Bird, also known by its formal name as the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand.
- It is an environmental organisation specialising in the protection and conservation of New Zealand's indigenous flora and fauna and unique wild places and natural ecosystems.
- It was founded in 1923.
- Forest and Bird is a nature conservation organisation working across New Zealand to conserve land, fresh water, oceans, climate and economy.

Bird of the Year competition-

- The Bird of the Year competition was started to raise awareness regarding New Zealand's native wildlife, their habitats and the threat they face.
- The competition requires every voter, through their e-mail IDs, to pick the top 5 birds out of the listed birds every year, and then the results are tallied.
- The birds listed in the competition change every year.