

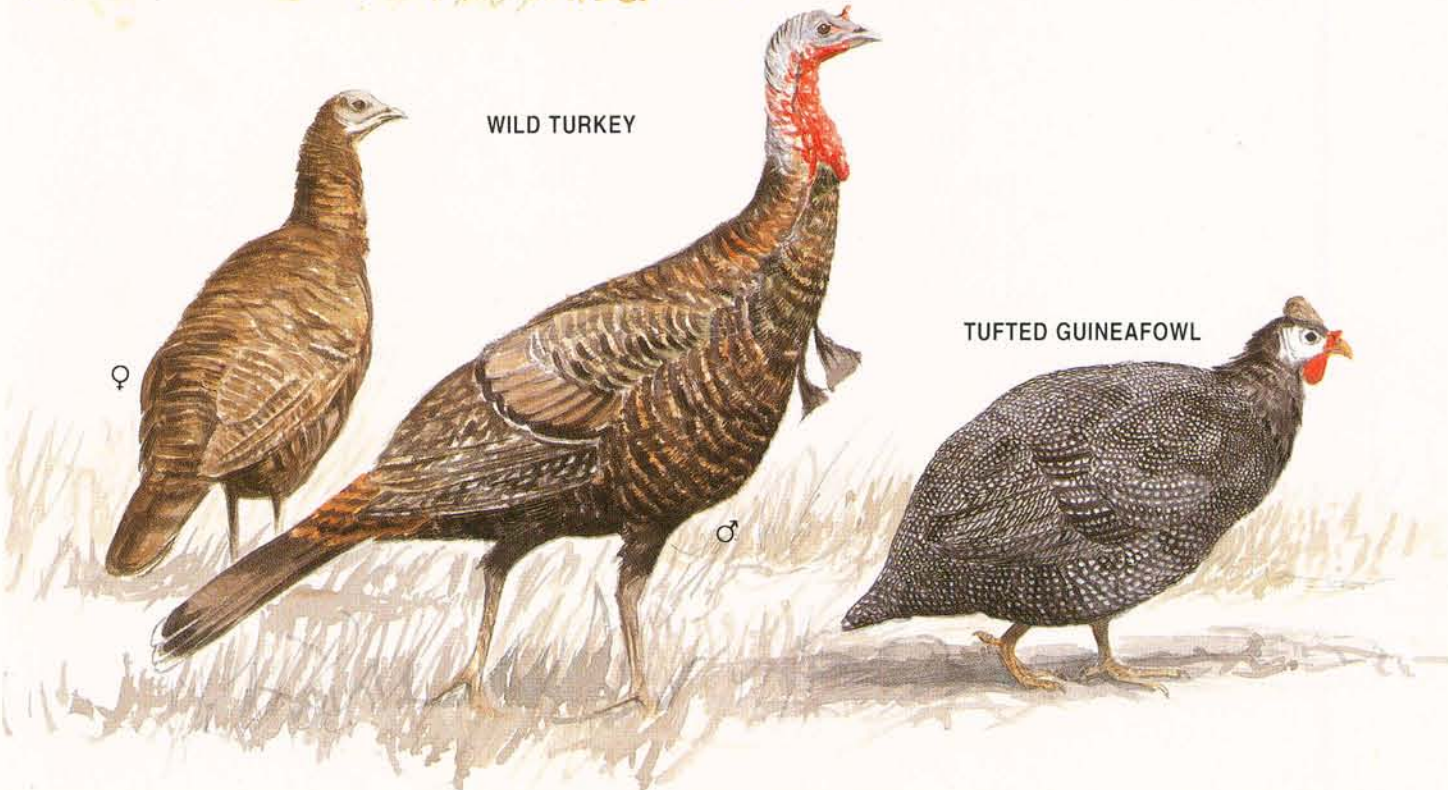
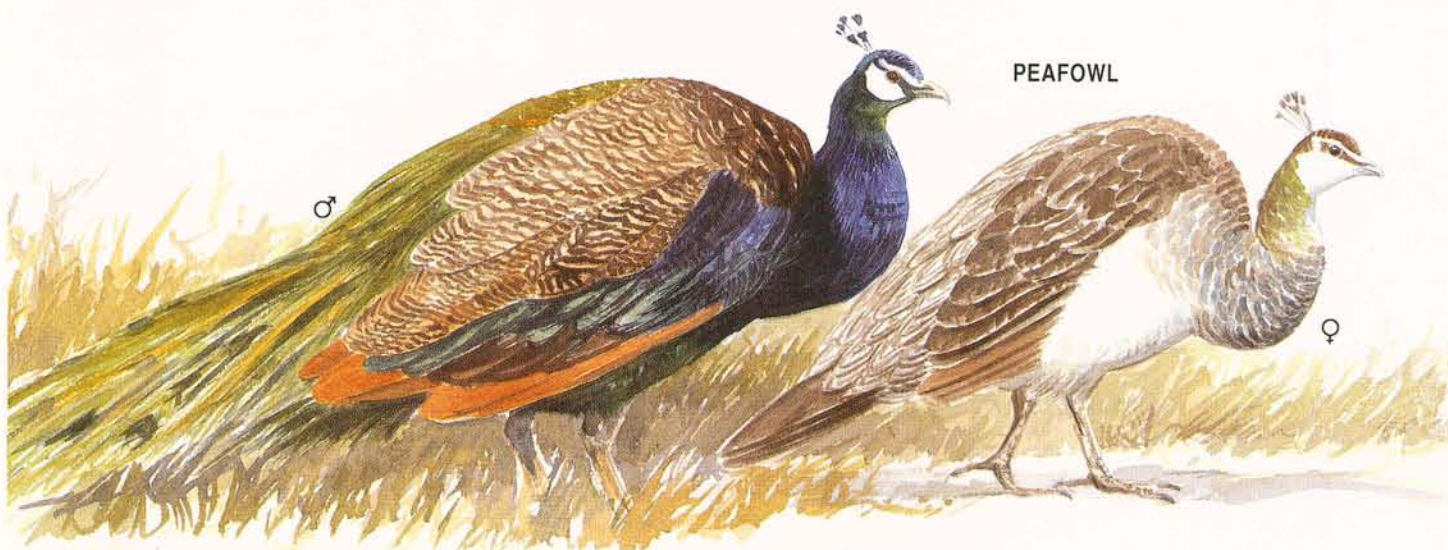
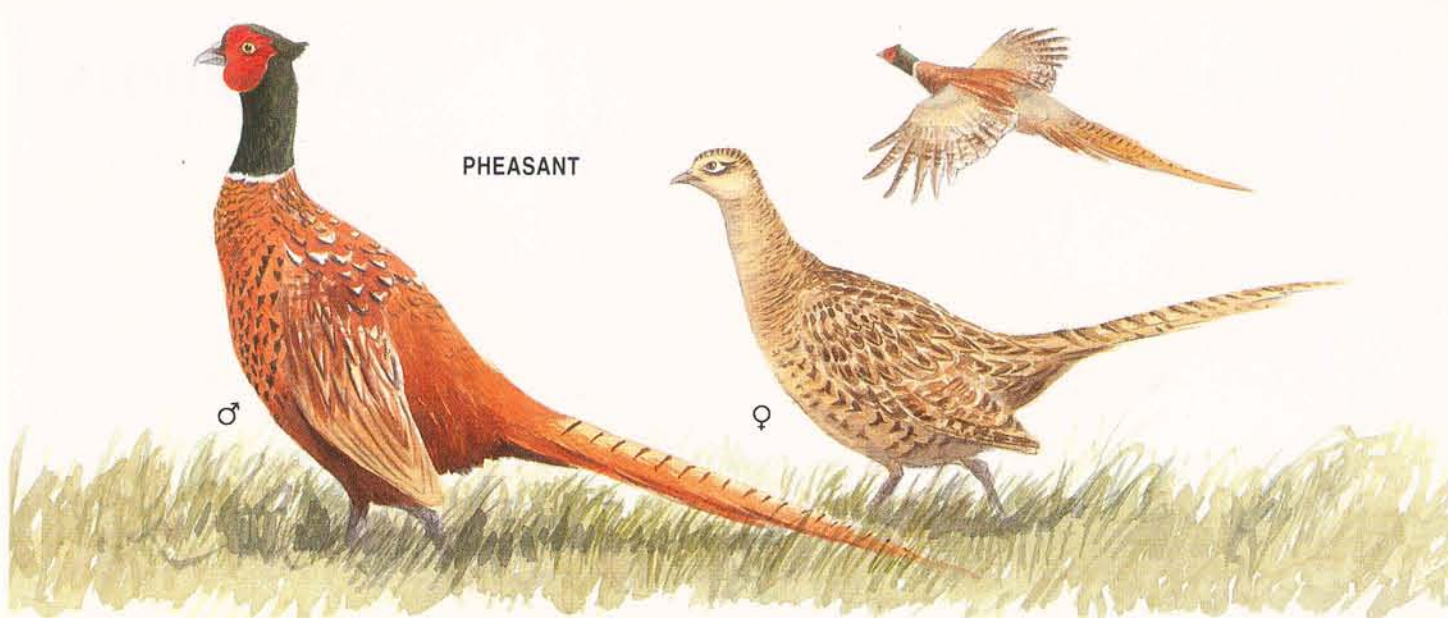
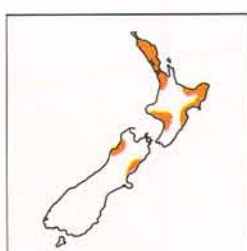
All gamebirds are introduced, often with great persistence and cost. Small to large plump birds that feed on the ground. Omnivorous but mainly take plant food, scratching and digging at the ground surface with legs and strong claws, and bill. When disturbed, they crouch, run to cover, or burst from cover with whirring wings and alarm notes, flying fast and low to pitch a short distance away. Sexes usually differ: females and immatures have subdued plumage that blends with the surroundings; males are sometimes brightly coloured, but even strongly patterned males blend with their surroundings. Immatures are usually seen with adults, so identity should not be a problem.

**PEAFOWL** *Pavo cristatus*

Uncommon Asian introduction

90 cm (+ male's 100 cm tail); ♂ 4.5 kg, ♀ 3.5 kg. Peacock distinctive and well known; peahen smaller, brown mottled black and white, and with a pointed tail. The peacock's loud wailing trumpet-like cry – 'kay-yaaw' – draws attention. Roosts in trees. **Habitat:** Parks and private gardens, rough agricultural land with good cover in warm, dry districts.

[Sp 153]



**GAMEBIRDS**

Phasianidae

213 species worldwide. The only native member of this family, the endemic New Zealand Quail *Coturnix novaezelandiae*, became extinct about 1875.

dig at the ground surface with stout legs and strong claws and bill. Most roost in trees.

Some 20 species of gamebirds have been introduced to New Zealand, but about half have failed to establish. All were introduced for domestic or hunting purposes, often with great persistence and at great cost. Some are still supplemented yearly by captive-reared stock raised by Fish and Game Councils (the former acclimatisation societies), paid for from hunters' licence fees.

The sexes often differ; females and immatures have subdued plumage that blends with the surroundings, males are often brightly coloured in the larger species or strongly patterned but cryptic in the smaller ones. Many species are polygamous, the male having a harem of females in the breeding period. Their nest is a shallow hollow scraped in the ground with little or no lining. Clutches are large, but, although most eggs hatch, few chicks reach independence. The chicks leave the nest soon after hatching and feed themselves, attended by the adults. Most young can fly within two or three weeks of hatching.

Most species favour farmland, swamp margins and open ground with plenty of coarse grass or scrub for cover. They feed on the ground and are omnivorous – grain, other seeds, berries, roots, together with whatever invertebrates are revealed as they scratch and

**Reading:** Delacour, J. 1977. *The Pheasants of the World*. Hindhead, UK: Spur Publications. Johnsgard, P.A. 1988. *The Quails, Partridges and Francolins of the World*. Oxford: OUP.

153. **PEAFOWL** *Pavo cristatus*

Plate 34

**Other name:** Indian Peafowl  
**Size:** 90 cm plus male's 1 m tail; males 4.5 kg, females 3.5 kg  
**Distribution:** Natural range is India and Sri Lanka. They are now very widely distributed as ornamental species for parks and private gardens. They were brought to New Zealand

in the 1840s and have become truly feral in rough, mainly hill-country, farmland in many warmer and drier North Island localities and in northwestern Nelson and the West Coast. When feral, they become shy and wary.  
**Breeding:** Peahens lay 4–6 pale cream to warm buff eggs (69 x 51 mm) and incubate for 28 days.