Aquatic birds with a small rounded head, short flattened bill, rounded body, short legs, webbed feet and a webbed or gaping bill. They fly strongly, with weak cocked feathers. Some, like its swans and geese, but male ducks are usually more colourful than females. Lay large clutches. Chicks leave the nest within days but are guarded for several months until they can fly.

**Chestnut-breasted Shelduck**

Tadorna tadornoides

*Rare native*

65/65 (1600 cm) 190 g. Like male Paradise Shelduck, but darker chestnut and chin are less prominent. Male has upper back and breast orange chestnut, white ruff, and occasionally a small white spot on breast. Female lacks underparts, chestnut back and breast orange chestnut, white ruff and occasionally a small white spot on breast. Juvenile is similar to female but more prominent. Habitat; freshwater and brackish lakes. First recorded in 1975 and has bred at least twice in eastern South Island. Breeding: Season unknown. (NZ) [Dip 1752]

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**Waterfowl**

Swans, geese and ducks are found worldwide in freshwater and marine habitats. There are about 160 species, of which 14 (4 endemic, 4 native and 6 introduced) breed or have bred in the New Zealand region since 1920. A further endemic species (Orotopus australis) became extinct in the early 1960s, and another 6 species are vagrants to the region.

All species have webbed feet for swimming in freshwater rivers and lakes, or coastal waters. Their bill is modified for filter-feeding; water and small food particles are sucked in at the tip of the bill and expelled through fine comb-like lamellae at the base which catch small particles and seeds. Amongst the most fest in this way, some species gain energy on aquatic or terrestrial vegetation and pick seeds (e.g. peas or wheat) off the ground, and the megapodes use them for catching fish.

Anatidae

In New Zealand, most introduced and some native species of waterfowl are legally harvested during a strictly controlled shooting season. Each year, Fish and Game Councils determine the length and timing of the seasons and the allowable bag for each species, and monitor the licensing of hunters and annual hunting statistics. A voluntary organisation, Ducks Unlimited, works to create and protect wetland habitats suitable for waterfowl and is also involved in captive breeding programmes for some threatened and rare species.

Reading:

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**Chestnut-breasted Shelduck**

Tadorna tadornoides

Plate 30

Other names: Australian Shelduck, Mountain Duck

Size: 61 cm, males 160 g, females 130 g. Distribution: Breed in southwestern and southeastern Australia and in Tasmania. They are mainly sedentary, although birds move several hundred kilometres between breeding territories and traditional molting sites, including crossing Bass Strait. In drought years, some are forced to seek more distant and less reliable feeding grounds and may make long journeys to reach new territories.

In New Zealand, they were introduced from New Zealand in 1957, but small invasions occurred in 1994. In 1995, they were seen in singles and 6 flocks of up to 22 birds in the 1995 summer. They were seen on the Thames and on Auckland and Campbell Islands. The numbers were gradually declining, except around Lakes Ellesmere and Hawke's Bay, where a few have been seen regularly in late summer and autumn during the 1990s. Further individuals or small flocks have appeared from time to time, e.g. a pair at Bass Island (March 1994), three on Hoki Island (December 1997) and three in the Manawatu (April 1998). Populations: In 1993, at least 56 birds were in New Zealand, but 30 years later there were probably fewer than 20 birds, which are likely to breed. The male’s alarm call, a loud, deep, honking sound, is answered by the female’s higher-pitched call. Feeding: Graze on grass, cereal and weeds, mostly in Marahau.

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**Waterfowl**

In New Zealand, the introduction of self-native species is minimal. They maintain only a tenacious hold, and breeding has been confirmed only twice: a pair with gull breeding young at Lake Yipai in January 1985, and a pair with flying young at Lake Canatara in May 2004. They are probably extirpated for Paradise Shelduck during the shooting season.

Breeding: Not studied in New Zealand.

In Australia, breeding occurs in July-October, extending later in the season. The rest is largely unknown. Diet: In May-July, mostly eggs (yolk 60 mm, 88 g), laid daily, but those of 10+ gags are probably laid by more than one. The female incubates for 30-35 days and the ducklings are led out to food. The ducks can be very fast and agile, capable of 15 km/h. The ducks have a distinctive pattern of brown plumage and white down, but when the chickens fly to 60 km/h, they look like the fluff but are smaller, duller and have white flecking on the face, lack the white collar and have a fine green neck. Web and upper back.

Behaviour: In New Zealand, Chestnut-breasted Shelducks have been seen mainly in small flocks at lakes to be used as molting sites, seldom at nesting sites where they also feed on grass and weed seeds, and on aquatic vegetation, which they obtain from the surface or by upwelling.

Reading: