

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.
Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.
Pukeko: pp 140-141.



PUKEKO

Family Rallidae

Species *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Common names Pukeko, Swamp Hen, Purple Gallinule

Status Native

Abundance Common and on the shooting list as a game bird

Size 510 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Habitat A bird of wetlands, lake verges and pasture often seen feeding along road verges.

Worldwide range A cosmopolitan species well-spread through parts of southern Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and many of the Pacific islands. Its ancestry is linked with the Takahe.

New Zealand range Found throughout North, South and Stewart Islands and on

some offshore islands. A small population is found on the Chatham Islands.

Description

Upperparts Black. **Underparts** Purple. **Undertail** White. **Bill and frontal shield** Red. **Legs and Feet** Orange-red.

Conspicuous features

- Purple breast and underparts.
- White undertail.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Flies with rapid wing beats and reddish legs trailing.
- If alarmed, runs rapidly through grass or rushes with head down and showing conspicuous white tail patch.
- Birds when in territories during the breeding season noisily challenge and fight birds from neighbouring territories.

Call A variety of harsh screech sounds and a booming “pu-ku pu-ku” are common. Also a rapid “kuweek kuweek”.

Nest A platform of grasses in among rushes. Up to 10 buff, brown-blotched eggs are laid. Birds usually form pairs but polygamous relationships are sometimes established, with all birds sharing incubation and rearing.

Where to find

Common anywhere where there is water. Often seen alongside roads and motorways.