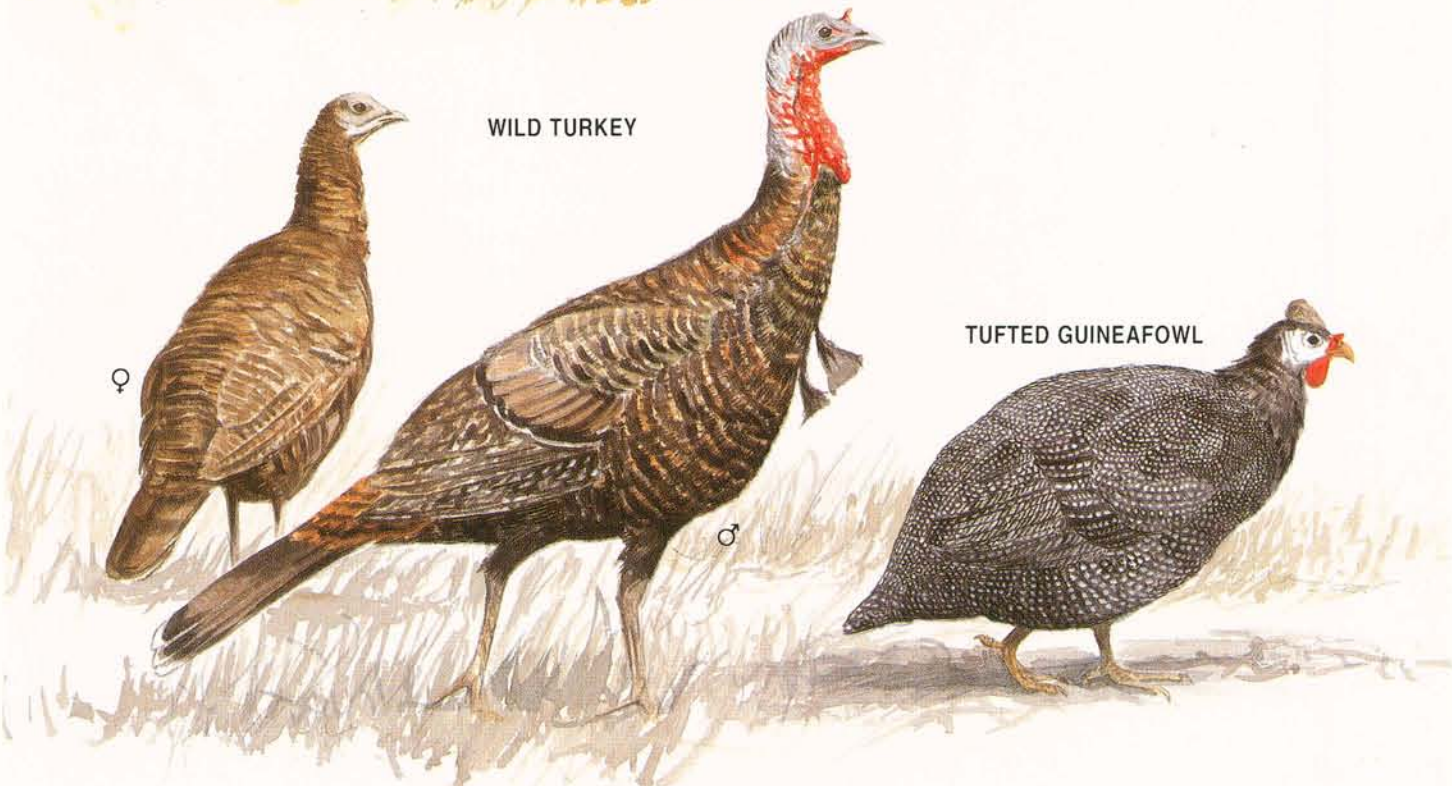
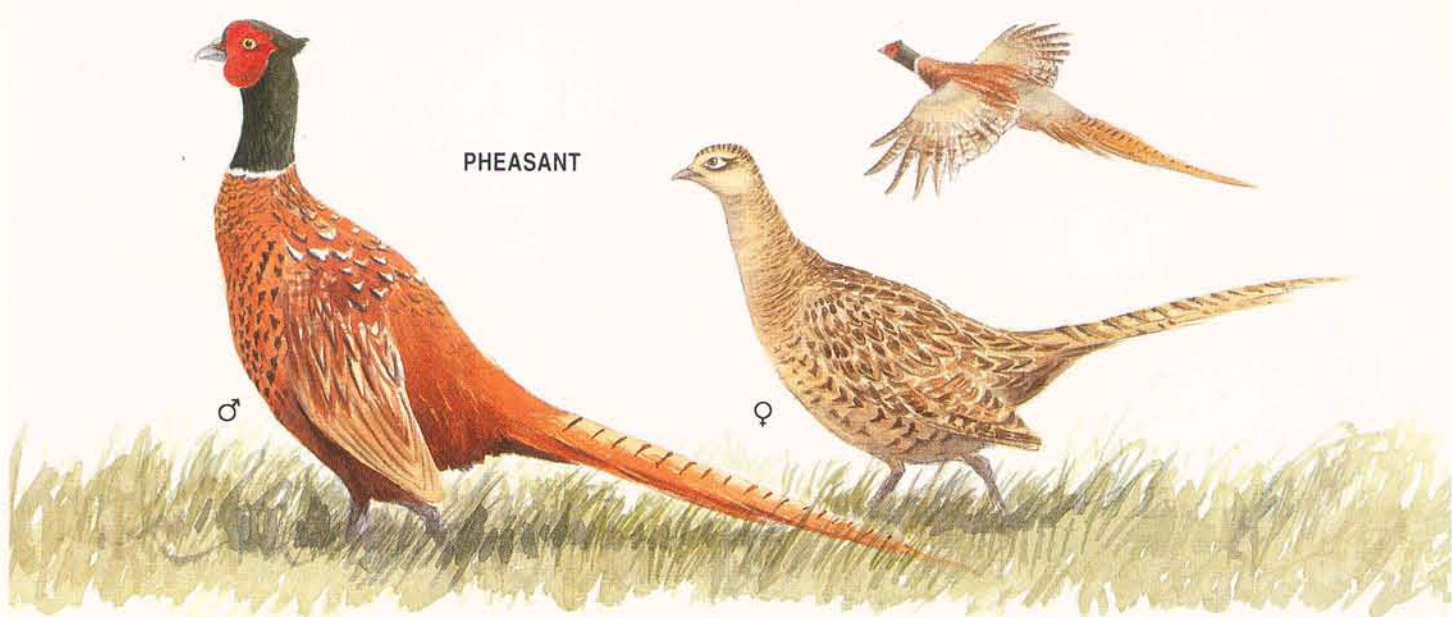
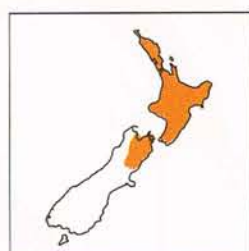


All gamebirds are introduced, often with great persistence and cost. Small to large plump birds that feed on the ground. Omnivorous but mainly take plant food, scratching and digging at the ground surface with legs and strong claws, and bill. When disturbed, they crouch, run to cover, or burst from cover 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.

WILD TURKEY *Meleagris gallopavo*

Locally common North American introduction

♂ 120 cm, 8 kg; ♀ 90 cm, 4 kg. Large black bird with blue and red head; familiar farmyard Turkey. Male black with paler barred wings and tail; beard of long feathers hangs from upper chest; head and neck naked and wrinkled, blue and red. Female smaller and browner, and lacks beard and neck wattles. The familiar territorial gobbling is mainly by males. Seldom flies, except to roost in trees. **Habitat:** Farmland, especially where there is good cover. [Sp 154]



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.

154. WILD TURKEY *Meliagris gallopavo*

Plate 34

Size: Males 120 cm, 8 kg; females 90 cm, 4 kg
Distribution: Natural range is North America, from northeastern and central USA to Mexico. They were first introduced to New Zealand about 1890 and have become common on farms as domestic birds. Some have become truly feral on rough farmland in many North

Island and a few South Island localities, as well as on Moturoa Island in the Bay of Plenty.
Feeding: Diet is mainly leaves of clover, grasses and weeds, supplemented with a few large insects.

Reading: Schemnitz, S.D. 1992. *Notornis* 39: 126–129.