

Cranes are tall elegant birds with a stout straight bill, longer than the head. The inner secondary flight feathers form plumes that overhang the tail, like a 'bustle'. Sexes alike. They often soar in thermals.

BROLGA *Grus rubicundus*

Rare Australian vagrant

115 cm; ♂ 7 kg, ♀ 5 kg. Very tall stately grey crane with scarlet head and nape, except for grey crown and ear coverts; eye yellow. Juvenile has pink face and crown. In flight, shallow wingbeats, neck and legs extended, grey wings with black primaries. **Habitat:** Swampy margins of lakes and ponds, and damp pasture.

[Sp 166]



CRANES

Gruidae

About 15 species worldwide, except in South America and much of the Pacific. One species is a rare vagrant to New Zealand.

straight bill. The Australian species are often associated with water but also frequent dry floodplains and open grassland. They fly strongly with neck extended and legs trailing.

Cranes are very large, long-legged and long-necked birds with a large head and a long

Reading: Johnsgard, P.A. 1983. *Cranes of the World*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ Press.

166. BROLGA *Grus rubicundus*

Plate 27

Size: Males 125 cm, 7 kg; females 100 cm, 5 kg
Distribution: Breed in southern New Guinea and northern, eastern and southeastern Australia, and are especially common in Queensland. Two vagrants have been recorded in New Zealand: Clevedon (March–May 1947), and Punakaiki, West Coast (January 1968).
Behaviour: Cranes, Brolgas included, are

noted for their graceful dances (year-round) and their high flying, often out of sight but with audible trumpeting. They fly with their neck stretched out, unlike herons but like spoonbills and ibises.

Reading: McKenzie, H.R. & Cunningham, J.M. 1952. *Notornis* 4: 198. Westerskov, K.E. 1968. *Notornis* 15: 248–253.