

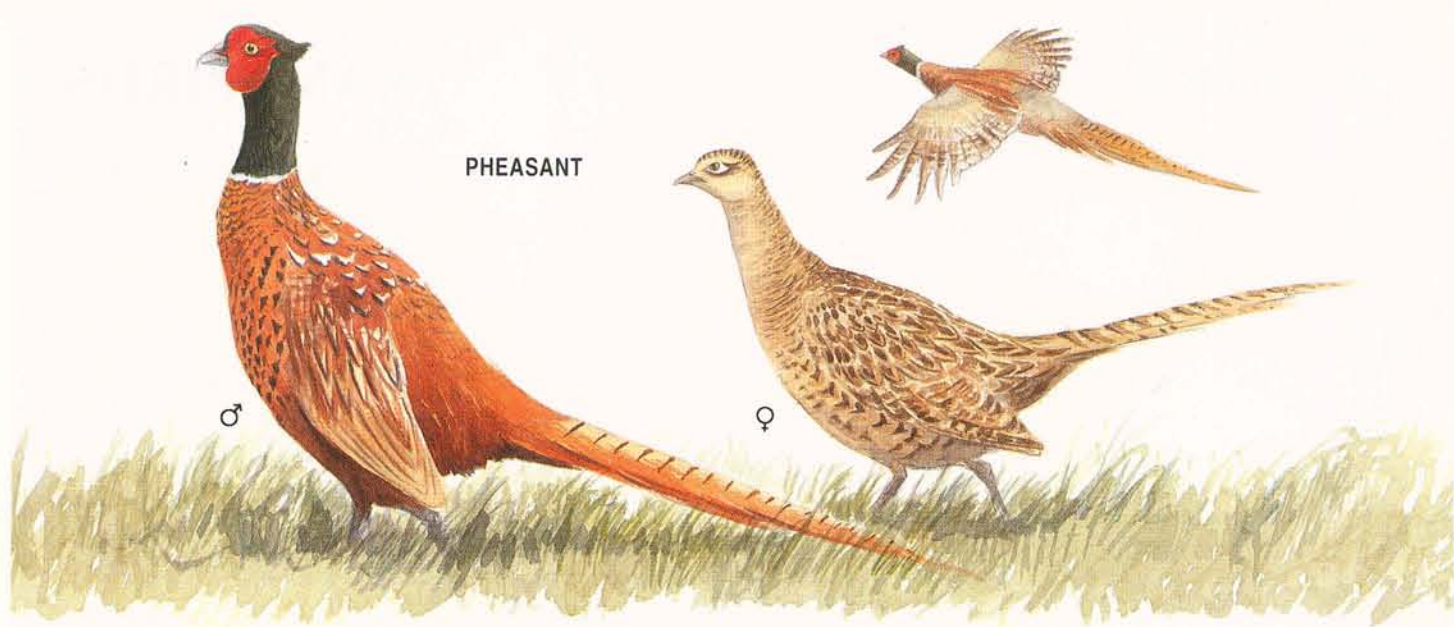
All gamebirds are introduced, often with great persistence and cost. Small to large plump birds that feed on the ground. Omnivorous but mainly take plant food, scratching and digging at the ground surface with legs and strong claws, and bill. When disturbed, they crouch, run to cover, or burst from cover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

TUFTED GUINEAFOWL *Numida meleagris*

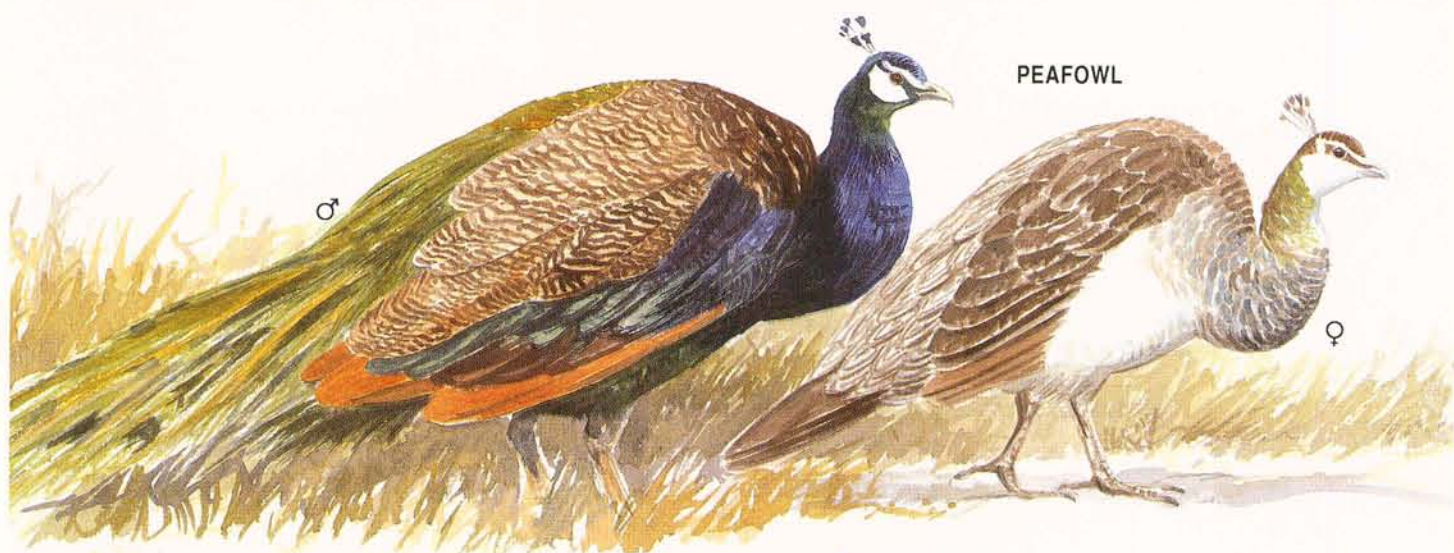
Rare African introduction

60 cm, 1500 g. Large rounded gamebird with a small blue-grey bare head, red wattles, and a bony horn protruding from the crown. Body slate grey thickly spotted white. Sexes alike. Roosts in trees. **Habitat:** Semiferal at many farms and rural homesteads; a few are feral in rough agricultural land in Northland, Waikato, Rotorua and Wanganui.

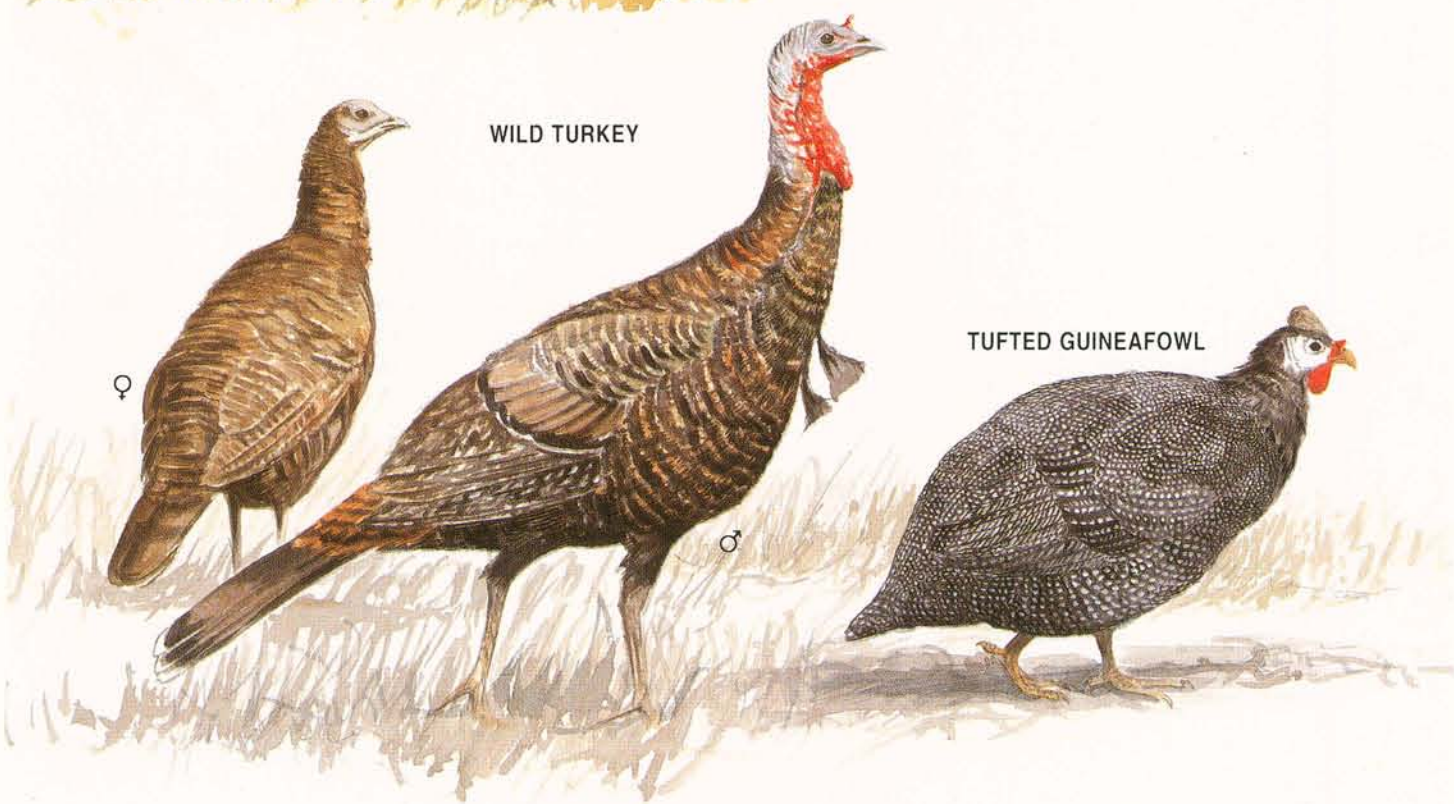
[Sp 155]



PHEASANT



PEAFOWL



WILD TURKEY

TUFTED GUINEAFOWL

GAMEBIRDS

Phasianidae

213 species worldwide. The only native member of this family, the endemic New Zealand Quail *Coturnix novaehelandiae*, 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.

155. TUFTED GUINEAFOWL *Numida meleagris*

Plate 34

Other name: Helmeted Guinea fowl

Size: 60 cm, 1.5 kg

Distribution: Natural range is Africa south of the Sahara Desert. They have been widely

introduced to farms and aviaries, and have become feral in rough farmland in parts of Northland, Waikato, Rotorua and Wanganui.

Behaviour: Noisy and gregarious, but wary.