

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)  
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Page numbers follow Watola, G. 2009 (2nd Edition)  
Spotless crane: pp 115-116.

**Spotless Crane** (Puweto) *Porzana tabuensis tabuensis* (Gmelin 1789), Native  
1790 Norfolk Island  
1835 New Zealand

It was figured in a 1790 drawing by Watling from Norfolk Island (Hindwood 1970). J.E. Gray described *Rallus tenebrosus* from Norfolk Island based on the “Dark Rail” of Latham from 1824 (Holdaway & Anderson 2001). This was a Spotless Crane (Ripley 1977; Penhallurick 2008).

“Putoto – A small black bird, about the size of the thrush, found in the swamps of New Zealand, which it appears never to leave. Its legs are short; and the beak about two inches long, admirably adapted for the purpose of procuring its subsistence; as it lives by suction, thrusting its beak to the roots of the reeds and rushes upon which it feeds. The plants, whose roots have been attacked by this bird, turn of a dark brown, and sometimes entirely wither away. The eye is red and glaring; and has a ring round it, composed of light-brown feathers, which gives the bird an angry and fretful appearance. It makes a screaming noise in the night; and is but rarely caught, or even seen” (Yate 1835).

Mathews designated the type locality of *P.t. plumbea* (J.E. Gray 1829) as New Zealand. Onley (1982) considered this race doubtful, although Kermadec birds might be distinctive.

The first definite mainland specimen appears to be a bird collected by Percy Earl in Otago in 1840, where it was said to frequent swamps.