

## New Zealand Game Bird Habitat Stamps

### Introduction

This article looks at the Game Bird Habitat Stamps available from New Zealand, from 1994 through to the present day, as issued under the authority of the New Zealand Fish and Game Council.

If you have ever looked at a New Zealand (NZ) Game Bird Habitat Stamp (examples below) you will have seen reference in the left-hand margin to the “New Zealand Fish and Game Council.” So, the first question is, what is this body and what does it do?

#### 1996 NZ Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*)



Image source: author’s collection and NZ Fish and Game Council

#### 2017 California Quail (*Callipepla californica*)



Essentially, the Council, supported by 12 regional councils, is the governing entity of Fish and Game New Zealand, which is the collective name for the NZ Fish and Game Council and its 12 regional councils.

Fish and Game New Zealand is a non-profit organisation which:

*“manages, maintains and enhances sports fish and game birds and their habitats in the best long-term interests of present and future generations of anglers and hunters.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz/about/>

Through Statute, the NZ Government has entrusted to Fish and Game New Zealand responsibilities in relation to the management, maintenance and enhancement of sports fish and game. However, the funding of the NZ Fish and Game Council is not from taxpayers, but from various licence fees (general licence, hunting licence, fishing licence) as well as other source of income. Annually, Fish and Game New Zealand spends about 40 per cent of its revenue (around \$6 million) on habitat protection (21 per cent) and species management (19 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

## Game Bird Habitat Stamps

The NZ Fish and Game Council first issued a Game Bird Habitat Stamp in 1994, under authority of the Game Bird Habitat Regulations 1993. Those Regulations allowed the NZ Fish and Game Council to create the Game Bird Habitat Stamp Programme, with the aim of raising funds through the sale of the Game Bird Habitat stamp and related products to help protect and enhance game bird habitats. Here's that very first stamp:

### 1994 Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*)



Image source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz>

The NZ Fish and Game Council operates the Game Bird Stamp Programme as a discrete project within its annual plan of activities; and all income and expenditure relating to this Programme is processed through the NZ Fish and Game Council's Accounts. However, the net proceeds from the Stamp Programme are ultimately received and distributed by the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust Board, a charitable organisation, originally established under the 1953 Wildlife Act. Once the Habitat Trust Board has decided where funds should be invested (to create, protect, or enhance game bird habitat) then the NZ Fish and Game Council manages the application of those funds.

Whilst the NZ Fish and Game Council is responsible for managing the practical aspects of the Stamp Programme, approval of each stamp design rests ultimately with the Minister of Conservation, based on the recommendation of the NZ Fish and Game Council, which also has regard to the views of the 12 regional councils and the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust Board.

Since the 1999 issue, the NZ Fish and Game Council has owned the artwork for the Game Bird Habitat Stamps. The designs for the earlier issues (1994-1998) are owned by the US company that the Council contracted to promote the stamps in New Zealand. From 1999, the NZ Fish and Game

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz/about/what-does-fish-and-game-do/>

Council has used NZ Post to market and sell the Game Habitat Bird Stamps. Since its inception, the Game Bird Stamp Programme has raised some \$1,000,000 for game bird habitat protection projects.<sup>3</sup>

## Game Bird Habitat Stamp Gallery

The website of Fish and Game New Zealand (<https://fishandgame.org.nz/>) includes within it a full gallery of all of the Game Bird Habitat Stamps that the Council has issued since 1994. I will not include all of these here, but I have picked out a few examples of some colourful issues:

### 2006 New Zealand Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*)



Image source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz>

The first of these stamps dates from 2006 and illustrates the New Zealand Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*), seemingly a remote relative to my favourite waterfowl, the Tufted Duck. eBird says of the New Zealand Scaup:

*“New Zealand endemic diving duck. Widely but patchily distributed throughout North and South Islands. Compact and dark; floats on water with cork-like buoyancy. Forms large flocks, often congregating in sheltered areas near willows or reed beds. Spends a lot of time underwater, where it can travel considerable distances. Sexes alike but distinguishable. Male has dark black plumage, iridescent blue-green head and wings, and yellow iris. Female is duller brown with brown iris. Flies with very fast wingbeats, often just above the water’s surface.”<sup>4</sup>*

The NZ Scaup has yet to appear on a postage stamp from NZ Post.

The Fish and Game New Zealand website indicates that there are four key species of ducks in the country which historically have been hunted: the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*)<sup>5</sup>, Australasian Shoveler (*Spatula rynchotis*) and Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*).

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz/environment/nz-game-bird-habitat-trust/game-bird-habitat-stamp-program/>

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://ebird.org/species/nezsca1> (edited)

<sup>5</sup> Also known as the Pacific Black Duck

The Mallard was introduced into New Zealand from the United States in the 1930s and 1940s and today they number around 4.5 million across the country.<sup>6</sup> The Mallard forms one of the main targets for hunters. By contrast, the future of the Grey Duck, which is a native of New Zealand, is at risk through hybridisation with the abundant Mallard, such that within New Zealand, the Grey Duck is now regarded as critically threatened at national level.<sup>7</sup> Below is the stamp showing the Australasian or New Zealand Shoveler:

**1995 Australasian or New Zealand Shoveler (*Anas rhynchos*)**



Image source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz>

Alongside these waterfowl which can be shot, there are four native ducks which are protected from hunting: the NZ Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*), as illustrated in the stamp above; the Grey Teal (*Anas gracillis*), the Blue Duck (*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*) and the Brown Teal (*Anas chlorotis*).<sup>8</sup>

The Paradise Shelduck has appeared on NZ Post stamps (in 1988, 1989 and 1990), as has also the Grey Teal (1959), the Blue Duck (1987, 1993 and 2018) and the Brown Teal (1987). The Blue Duck has “Endangered” conservation status on the IUCN Red List; the estimated population is between 1,500-2499 mature individuals.<sup>9</sup> For obvious reasons, the Grey Duck does not feature on any of the Game Bird Habitat stamps.

As regards appearances on the Game Bird Habitat Stamps, the score is as follows: Paradise Shelduck (3), NZ Shoveler (3), Grey Duck (3), Mallard (3) and Grey Teal (1). One of the stamps showing the Grey Duck is appended below:

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<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz/game-bird-hunting-in-new-zealand/new-zealand-game-bird-species/waterfowl-ducks-and-swans/ducks-2/>

<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://rarespecies.nzfoa.org.nz/resources/threat-categorisation/>

<sup>8</sup> Source: 2021 Game Bird Habitat Hunting Guide – Regulations and Hunting Areas, South Island.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22680121/214275489>

### 2016 NZ Grey Duck (*Anas superciliosa*)



Image source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz>

### 2008 Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)



Image source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz>

The next stamp I have selected is from 2008, illustrating the Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*). According to eBird, the Red-legged Partridge is:

*“Distinctive gamebird of farmland, grassy fields, and open heathland. Seen mainly as pairs and small groups, often along the edges of fields. Plumage is ornate and handsome, with a red bill, white throat, black streaked necklace, boldly barred flanks, and buffy belly.”*

Interestingly, the Red-legged Partridge is normally found in Europe. However, it is probably one of the species of bird that was introduced into New Zealand specifically for hunting. The Wildlife Act 1953 sets out the birds that are deemed to be game birds (and available for shooting). Schedule 1 of that Act includes the Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), except on Chatham Islands; and the Red-legged Partridge, except those on Chatham Islands and the designated upland game reserves that are also defined in law.<sup>10</sup>

The Wildlife Act 1953 defines all the game birds that can be hunted. These include Pheasant, Partridges and three Quail species. Here’s one of the Pheasant stamps, from 2011:

<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/>



### 2011 Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)



Image source: <https://fishandgame.org.nz>

We now fast forward to the 2022 Game Bird Habitat Stamp that features the Common or Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*). Previous Game Bird Stamps have illustrated the Common or Ring-necked Pheasant (in 2001 and 2011, the latter shown above). The 1953 Wildlife Act also identifies any bird (other than a domestic bird) of the genus *Phasianus* as being a game bird for shooting, except those in Chatham Islands and in the upland game reserves.

The 2022 stamp and related "First Day Cover" illustrations are by Jeanette Nee, from Tauranga, New Zealand. Jeanette Nee's image (from a photograph) won the competition to design the 2022 Game Bird Habitat Licence Stamp. Jeanette Nee has called this stamp: "A Cock Pheasant Gliding into Land" and it was issued on 1 February 2022.

I thought that the design of the stamp was interesting, as it shows the cock Pheasant in flight. As I have written elsewhere, unscientific evidence from my random observations of Pheasants in Scotland is that they spend more time wandering around the fields of Dumfries and Galloway rather than flying over them. If Pheasants are ever contented, then based on my sightings, such happiness is probably more likely when they are strolling across their territory rather than when up in the air. If you look through the Pheasant postage stamps that are available on [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org), then you will see that only a few of them – and there are around 100 in total - illustrate the Pheasant in flight, so at least this one adds to the variety.

### 2022 Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)



Image source: author's collection and NZ Fish and Game Council

## Variants of the Game Bird Habitat Stamps

Beyond the basic Game Bird Habitat Stamps, the New Zealand Fish and Game Council have also made available a variety of other stamp products, including:

- A Governor General edition of the 1994 stamp, which bears the following additional text on the stamp: “+ \$100 GOVERNOR GENERAL’S EDITION”;
- Single stamps printed in a pane, attached to a booklet;
- Booklets of 50 stamps, comprising ten strips of five stamps (1994-95);q
- Sheetlets of six stamps;
- Miniature Sheets of one stamp; and
- First Day Covers (FDCs) with the basic stamp and/or the single stamp miniature sheet.

Examples of these variants are illustrated below. We start with an example of a First Day Cover, with a single stamp miniature sheet:

### 2015 Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) - FDC with Single Stamp Miniature Sheet



Image source: author’s collection and NZ Fish and Game Council

Each stamp issue is, in general, available either with the single stamp FDC and with the single stamp miniature sheet.

Second, we have this early issue from 1997 both illustrates and reminds us that the Game Bird Habitat Stamps did have a practical purpose, which was to provide hunters with a valid hunting license. The reverse of the above document has on it the name and address of the license holder.

Below the license, as our third variant, is an example of a single stamp sheetlet from 2002, featuring the Pūkeko, or Purple Swamphen.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Pūkeko is the New Zealand name for the local Purple Swamphen. See <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds/birds-a-z/pukeko/>

**1997 Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) – Stamp on License**



Image source: author's collection and NZ Fish and Game Council

**2002 Pūkeko or Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) Single Stamp Sheetlet**

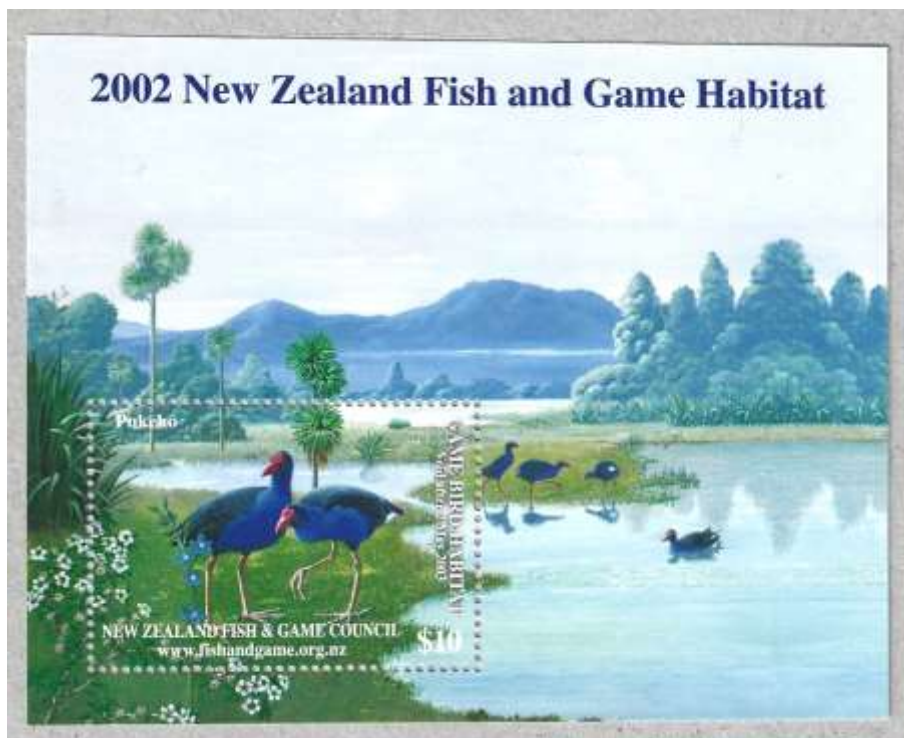


Image source: author's collection and NZ Fish and Game Council



## Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to complete this article without the information provided on the Fish and Game New Zealand website, as referenced throughout the text. I am also grateful to eBird and Birdlife International (Data Zone) for information on specific birds; and Kjell Scharning's website [www.birdtheme.org](http://www.birdtheme.org) also proved to be, once again, an invaluable resource. I have also used information from the NZ Post website for the 2022 Game Bird Habitat issue. Last but not least are the back issues of *Flight* that were invaluable. I have footnoted sources where appropriate.

## Endnote

If you are interested in additional reading on New Zealand Game Bird Habitat Stamps, then David Cox included articles and updates in *Flight* on Duck Stamps, from September 1991 through to December 2002. The articles by David Cox on the New Zealand duck stamps gave me the impetus to do this research, as well as providing an important source of information underpinning this article.

### 2012 Bobwhite Quail F (*Colinus virginianus*) First Day Cover – Single Stamp

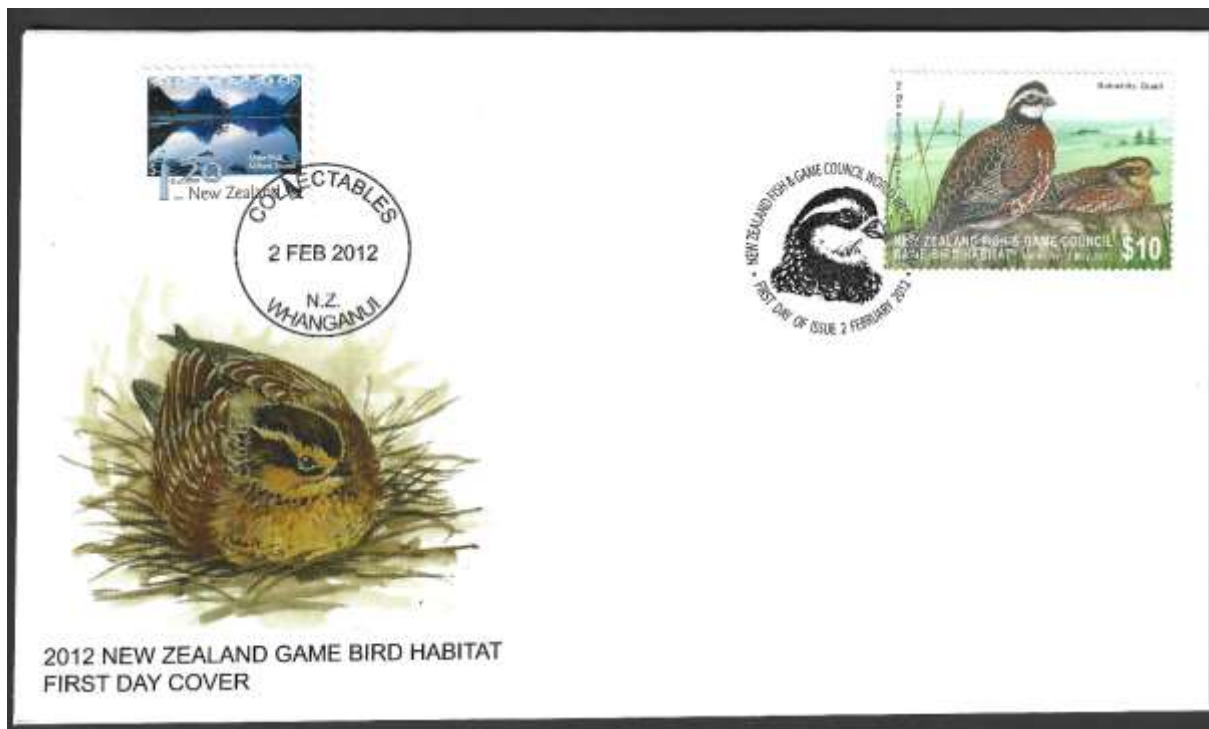


Image source: author's collection and NZ Fish and Game Council

## Catalogue of New Zealand Game Bird Habitat Stamps

Listed below is the complete list of the New Zealand Game Habitat Stamps from 1994 to 2023, though it does not include the variants discussed above, just the basic issue. I have used as a reference source the inventory of duck stamps from around the world, compiled by member Randy Shore. These listings appear in: *Flight* March 2003 Vol 17 No 3, June 2003 No 4; and then December 2003, Vol 18 No 2. Note that I have indicated the artist where known, all of whom are New Zealand based, except where indicated:

NZD01	1994	\$10.00	Paradise Shelduck by Adele Earnshaw [See also Note 1]
NZD02	1995	\$10.00	Australasian or New Zealand Shelduck by Adele Earnshaw
NZD03	1996	\$10.00	New Zealand Grey Duck by Adele Earnshaw <sup>12</sup>
NZD04	1997	\$10.00	Black Swan
NZD05	1998	\$10.00	Canada Geese
NZD06	1999	\$10.00	California Quail by Paul Martinson
NZD07	2000	\$10.00	Mallard by Pauline Morse
NZD08	2001	\$10.00	Ring-necked Pheasant by Peter Mathios (Oregon, USA)
NZD09	2002	\$10.00	Pukeko by Ronald Cometti
NZD10	2003	\$10.00	Grey Teal
NZD11	2004	\$10.00	Paradise Shelduck by Jeanette Blackburn <sup>13</sup>
NZD12	2005	\$10.00	Chukar
NZD13	2006	\$10.00	New Zealand Scaup
NZD14	2007	\$10.00	Brown Quail
NZD15	2008	\$10.00	Red-legged Partridge
NZD16	2009	\$10.00	Australasian or New Zealand Shoveler
NZD17	2010	\$10.00	Mallards
NZD18	2011	\$10.00	Ring-necked Pheasant
NZD19	2012	\$10.00	Bob White Quail by Janet E Marshall
NZD20	2013	\$10.00	Australasian Bittern
NZD21	2014	\$10.00	Pukeko by Jeanette Blackburn
NZD22	2015	\$10.00	Black Swan by Karen Baddock
NZD23	2016	\$10.00	New Zealand Grey Duck by Sandra Whyte
NZD24	2017	\$10.00	California Quail by Jeanette Blackburn
NZD25	2018	\$10.00	Mallard by Karen Baddock
NZD26	2019	\$10.00	Chukar by Stephen Fuller [See Note 2]
NZD27	2020	\$10.00	Paradise Shelduck by Matt Winter [See also Note 3]
NZD28	2021	\$10.00	New Zealand Shoveler by Matt Winter
NZD29	2022	\$10.00	Ring-necked Pheasant by Jeanette Nee
NZD30	2023	\$10.00	California Quail by Paula Gillet

<sup>12</sup> Source: artist name courtesy of <https://www.brookmanstamps.com/Netcat/Internat/NZ.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Source: <https://www.jeanetteblackburn.co.nz/achievements>

## Notes

1. 1994-2018: For these issues, the artist who painted the artwork for the stamp issue also designed the artwork on the First Day Cover.
2. The 2019 stamp was based on a digital illustration by Wellington artist Stephen Fuller.<sup>14</sup>
3. 2020-2022: For these stamp issues, the NZ Fish and Game Council decided that the images would be based on photographs, determined through a photographic competition.

### 2021 New Zealand Shoveler (*Spatula rhynchotis*)



Image source: author's collection and NZ Fish and Game Council

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<sup>14</sup> Source: 2019 Annual Report of the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust Board