

# Takahē



## World record-holder

The takahē is endemic to New Zealand but disappeared from Dunedin well before Europeans arrived. Similar in colour and shape to pukeko (swamp hen), takahē – the world’s largest rail – lost the power of flight after a long period of isolation in New Zealand. They are more than twice the size and weight of pukeko and their bill, legs and feet are much sturdier. These flightless giant rails were thought to be extinct until 1948, when a small remnant population was discovered in the Murchison Mountains of Fiordland. Mammalian predators such as stoats and rats, coupled with competition from voracious red deer that destroy the tussock, led to increased mortality and poor breeding. Once widespread throughout New Zealand, they are now classified as ‘nationally critical’. Only about 260 are left in remote Fiordland and several mainland and offshore islands.

## Takahē Facts

- An adult takahē stands about 50cm high and can weigh up to 3kg.
- The average lifespan in the wild is around 15 years.
- They have excellent eyesight.
- They breed only once a year and raise only one or two chicks.
- Tussock provides shelter and the main source of food.
- Takahē territories can be up to 60 hectares.

Takahē Recovery is a partnership between the Department of Conservation and Mitre 10. Takahē are a taoka (treasured species) of Kaitiaki Roopu o Murihiku.



Photo: Stephen Jaquierey