Family Phasianidae
Species *Phasianus colchicus*
Common name Pheasant
Status Introduced
Abundance Common
Size 800 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)
Habitat Prefers a wooded country environment with plenty of cover.
New Zealand range Ranges throughout the North Island away from forests, and in the Canterbury areas of the South Island.
Discussion Three subspecies of Pheasant were originally introduced to New Zealand for hunting purposes. They were the Black Pheasant (*P. c. colchicus*) from Europe, the White-collared Pheasant (*P. c. mongolicus*) from Mongolia...
and the Ring-necked Pheasant (*P. c. torquatus*) from China. Today the most common subspecies is the Ring-neck Pheasant. There is also the Melanistic Mutant Pheasant (*P. c. tenebrosus*) breeding true to form in some areas but not recognised as a subspecies by most authorities.

**Description – male bird – (*P. c. torquatus*)** (above)
- **Face** Red. **Head** Black, with bluish tinge on neck. White neck-collar. Two short ear tufts are on each side of the crown. **Wings** Grey with light brown. **Back** Golden-brown with black speckling. **Rump** Golden-brown. **Tail** Buff-striped horizontally, with up to sixteen separate black bars. **Underparts** Golden-buff with some black speckling. **Bill** Light brown. **Legs** Grey.

**Description – female – (*P. c. torquatus*)** (below)
- **Overall body** A dull, buff coloured, bird.

**Description – male – (*P. c. colchicus*)**
- **Overall** Less colourful than *torquatus* being darker and lacking the white neck-collar.

**Description – female – (*P. c. colchicus*)** (P.129)
- **Overall** As for *torquatus*.

**Description – male – (*P. c. mongolus*)**
- **Face** Wattle larger, plumage darker, and neck-collar thinner than *torquatus*. **Wings** Lack grey colouring of *torquatus*.

**Description – female – (*P. c. mongolus*)**
- **Overall** As for *torquatus*.

**Description – male – (*P. c. tenebrosus*)**
- **Back, breast and underparts** Purplish-blue, scalloped with buff and red. **Wings** Olive-black. **Tail** Olive-brown with black horizontal barring.

**Description – female – (*P. c. tenebrosus*)**
- **Overall** Purplish-black.

**Conspicuous features**
- Short ear-tufts.
- Male birds highly coloured.

**Conspicuous characteristics**
- Often seen gliding across gullies.
- When disturbed in grass it rises quickly with very fast wing beats.

**Call** Loud “kor-r-kok” crow, accompanied whirring of wings before and after calling.

**Nest** In dense grasses on the ground. Up to 9 olive-brown eggs are laid.

**Where to find – North Island**

**Northland** – Common in many areas especially in the far north.

**Auckland** – Comes into city parks such as Cornwall Park in Epsom and Waiatarua. P. 297, 298.
South Auckland – At Miranda and Kaiaua the Melanistic Mutant Pheasant (*P. c. tenebrosus*) is regularly recorded near the town. Further north of Kaiaua and south of Miranda *P. c. torquatus* becomes the common variety. P. 302.  

**King Country** Common in many areas.  

**Where to find – South Island**  

**Marlborough** Regularly seen from Picton through to Collingwood.  

**Canterbury** Regularly seen from Kaikoura south to Oamaru. Not recorded further south in Otago and Southland.