

# Birds of the Pauatahanui Wildlife Management Reserve

## Pied stilt

Slim black and white bird with long, skinny red legs and long spiky beaks. They feed in shallow water at the edge of the tide or in pools left by the receding tide.



## Spur-winged plover

Chunky birds with dull brown backs, small black heads and white breasts. They are usually in small flocks of 3–10 birds and make a lot of noise if disturbed and when they are flying.

## Ducks

The three kinds most likely to be seen in the reserve are mallard, paradise shelduck and shoveler

### Mallard

The mallard drake (male) has a shiny dark green head with a distinct cream ring around his neck. The female and young ducks are mottled brown with darker brown wing feathers.



Mallard drake

### Paradise shelduck

Paradise shelducks are almost always in pairs. The female is the colourful one with a distinctive white head and a chestnut brown breast. The male is mainly greenish black.



Paradise shelduck female

### Shoveler

Shovelers are very similar to mallards, especially the females, but the males don't have a cream neck ring. Close up, you will see that a shoveler has a wedge-shaped beak.



Shoveler

## White-faced heron

White-faced herons are grey, lightly mottled birds with a white front and neck. They move slowly and quietly through the shallow water, or stand very still at the edge of the tide looking for small fish. Because they also feed on grubs and worms, you can often see herons feeding in wet or boggy paddocks.



## Shags

At Pauatahanui you'll see black shags, little black shags and pied shags, which are black with a white front. They roost on sand banks or rocks, or on posts or trees above the water. Often you see shags holding their wings out to dry. They need to do this if they have been swimming for more than about 10 minutes. You can easily identify shags when they are swimming because their whole body is under water, with only their neck and head sticking out, a bit like a snorkel. The large shags eat small fish and especially eels, which they swallow head first.



Black shag



Little black shag



Pied shag

## Pukeko

Big dark blue birds with strong red legs and thick red beaks with a wide red 'shield' at the base of the beak. Pukekos have a tuft of white tail feathers which they flick as they walk. When their chicks are small, the parent birds get very aggressive and noisy to frighten people away.



Pukeko

## Kingfisher or kotare

Listen for this bird! His call is peep, peep, peep, peep ..... peep. Then look around for a small bird with a creamy yellow breast and shiny blue-green head, back and wings. You'll probably see it sitting on power or telephone wires, a post, or an old dead branch. At Pauatahanui, their favourite food is mud crabs. Sometimes, you can find little piles of crab legs that have been bitten off as the kingfisher chomps the body of the crab.



Kingfisher

## Starling

This is not a native bird but you often see starlings feeding on grubs and worms in the ground cover plants that grow among the rushes. Starlings are shiny greenish-black with a mottled or spotty look. They have a short stumpy tail, not much longer than their wings. They strut or walk very briskly and busily, pecking often at the ground.



Starling

## Swallow

Swallows catch insects for their food so they spend most of their time in the air. You'll see them as a small dark shape with a distinctly forked tail, darting swiftly around, especially over bushes or water. You'll often see them behind you as they try to catch tiny insects that you have disturbed as you walk by.

## Skylark

Another one to listen for. The skylark makes a long trilling call as it dips and soars high overhead, usually in the brightest sunniest part of the day. If you manage to see it, the skylark will be so high in the sky that it will look smaller than it really is.