

All My Homies Love Native Manu – 95Bfm

5th November 2025 – Pūtangitangi (Paradise Shelduck).

1) Play call

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/native-animals/birds/bird-song/paradise-duck-song.mp3> (DOC recording). Lower zonking is the male and the higher pitched call is the female.

- 2) **Classification** – Endemic shelduck – only found in Aotearoa. Not Threatened- Least concern. Shelducks are large, long-necked, semi-terrestrial waterfowl that are kind of half duck, half goose. These manu have thrived with the opening up of forested lands to pasture farmlands, plus urban parks and sports fields. They have thrived despite being 'gamebirds' so you can shoot them during duck shooting season. They got quite hammered in the 19th century due to overhunting but in more recent times since about 1990 they have thrived with a current population around 600-700 thousand, and that is with about 200,000 being shot each year for game! AND, If they cause too much of a nuisance on farms they can be culled as well.

3) Māori relationship to the Pūtangitangi.

- a. Pūtangitangi is an onomatopoeic (o·nuh·ma·tuh·**pee**·uhk) name meaning it reflects the sound of the manu – a wailing lamentation or crying type sound similar to women wailing at a tangi/funeral. When you hear their cry you can easily imagine they are calling out in sorrow.
- b. Ngāi Tahu call the manu Pūtakitaki
- c. Traditional important food source for Māori during the summer moulting period when they were easy to catch. The harvest was regulated through using rahui when numbers got low.
- d. Pūtangitangi also refers to a small seashell that can be used as a whistle or mouth organ.

e. Whakatauki:

- i. **"He aha te kai a te rangatira? He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero."**
(*What is the food of the leader? It is knowledge, it is conversation, it is communication.*) Links to the Pūtangitangi being an important food source.
- ii. The pūtangitangi is often used in the context of "Te reo o te repo" (the voice of the wetland), signaling its presence and the health of its habitat.

4) Where are they found?

- i. Most wide-spread waterfowl across Aotearoa – NI, SI, Rakiura, near-shore islands with grasslands present, Aotea, Kapiti etc.
- ii. They love pasture lands, river flats, protected bays. Get them in Maraetai Bay at Port Waikato. Also inhabit sports fields and urban parks

5) How would you describe the manu Piet? And what do they eat?

- i. I love the Pūtangitangi – beautiful honest straight forward manu – nothing secretive or sneaky about these birds.
- ii. Very loud chatty chatty manu – you often hear them high above you before you see them. Life long pairs that constantly talk to each other and I hear something like: *'Are you with me darling? Yes I'm always with you darling, you know that. Yes I know that I just like to hear you say it – hey shall we go and check out that bay down there? Awesome idea darling, let's go down there right away. Hey all of you down there WE ARE COMING! COMING NOW! HELLO EVERYBODY! What's been happening, Whats the goss, and did you hear about....?' "*
- iii. *These shelducks are just gorgeous – the males are dark grey/black with a bit of iridescent green on head and patch of white on wings and a bit of brown on body. Females are flashier with striking white heads and necks with a distinctive line where it changes to chestnut brown body, dash of white on wings and green wing tips.*
- iv. *Eat grass and clover mostly but also leaves, seeds and some land and aquatic insects.*
- v. *When nests are threatened they display the broken wing technique to draw intruders/predators away from chicks.*

6) Annual moulting

- i. Communal moulting Jan-March (safety in numbers) – gather in large numbers on large ponds, lakes or big riverbeds – large moulting areas include Lake Brunner, Lake Haupiri, sites along the Grey River, West Coast, Gisbourne, near T`okomaru Bay and Tolaga Bay.
- ii. During moulting they lose all of their wing feathers and can't fly for 6-7 weeks. Regrow new wing feathers so they are all set for a year of flying. This was the traditional harvest time for Māori.

7) Breeding

- i. They nest in tree holes up to 20m off the ground, or in tree bases, rock crevices or under buildings or debris piles – they have a simple selection criteria: Cover overhead and a single entrance. Very straight forward manu.
- ii. Lay eggs August – Sept. Sometimes Oct for young birds or repeat nesters. Lay 5-12 eggs (often around 10). Sometimes females do 'brood merging' and can have 12 plus eggs in the nest.

- iii. Incubation only done by wahine for one month, but both feed the chicks. Fledge at 8 weeks.

8) Threats

- i. Biggest threat is hunting with 200,000 shot each year, and farmer culling at times.
- ii. Usual predators – stoats, ferrets, weasels, rats, feral cats, possums,
- iii. But also native predators - eels grab some, Kahu also target them

BUT the Pūtangitangi has proved to be a strong survivor and is thriving in Aotearoa. I think their motto is “You can shoot us, you can cull us, but we will survive and thrive and we will not be silenced – zonk zonk zeet zeet!”

Song: The Swingers, Counting the beat – this song captures the vibe of the Pūtangitangi in full voice.