



Plate 13

Purple Swamphen shielding young

Photo: Carol Cowan

Purple Swamphen Shielding Young

CAROL COWAN

P.O. Box 184, Sutherland, New South Wales 1499
(Email: carsus@bigpond.net.au)

Summary. A Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* was observed and photographed shielding its downy young, possibly from a potential predator.

On 21 September 2005 at the Royal National Park south of Sydney, New South Wales, I observed several Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* adults accompanying varying numbers of young. I observed and photographed (Plate 13) one adult shielding a small downy chick by spreading its wings and standing with its body over the young bird. At the time I formed the impression that the apparently protective posture was in response to the presence of three or four Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita*, which were within about 5 m of the Swamphen. One of the Cockatoos, while calling loudly, flew low over the adult Swamphen and its chick. The adult Swamphen's behaviour appeared to be directly in response to this overflight.

Marchant & Higgins (1993) made no mention of such a protective posture being used by the Swamphen, or by any other of the well-studied large rails such as the Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa* and the Tasmanian Native-hen *G. mortierii*. Marchant & Higgins (1993) reproduced many diagrams of the behavioural postures recorded for the three species but none resembles the shielding stance I observed.

I thank Walter Boles who encouraged me to document this observation.

References

Marchant, S. & Higgins, P.J. (1993), *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, vol. 2, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Received 23 October 2005

