

British Nature Guide

Rare and endangered birds around the Mediterranean



The Western Swamphen lives in swamps and along wide rivers where there are lots of reeds for them to hide and nest in. They used to be called the Purple Swamphens because of their purple feathers, lived in a swamp and behaved like wild chickens.

Since Roman times they have been hunted for food and their swamps have been drained. There are very few left in the countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

Luckily they are now protected and most of the places they live are nature reserves.

They have a large red bill and long red legs. They use their huge feet to hold their food while they eat it. They mainly eat the new shoots of reeds, but will also eat fish and insects.



Red-knobbed Coots live in swamps and have also become very rare. They eat grasses and waterweeds and do not use their feet to hold their food.

The adults have blue legs, a white bill, and two red blobs on the front of their heads. The young have red bills, bald heads, and fluffy brown and golden feathers.

The adult birds in the photographs have been released in a nature reserve in Spain. They have white collars with numbers on so that the scientists can tell which birds are wild and which have been released. The collars do not harm the birds.