

Tongan Megapode

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The Tongan Megapode (*Megapodius pritchardii*) is a species of bird in the Megapode family, Megapodiidae, currently endemic to Tonga. The species is also known as the Polynesian Megapode, and as the Niuafu'ou Megapode after the island of Niuafu'ou to which it was restricted for many years. The specific epithet honours British consul William Thomas Pritchard.



Tongan Megapode
(Malau)

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Galliformes
Family:	Megapodiidae
Genus:	Megapodius
Species:	Megapodius pritchardii

The Tongan Megapode is the only remaining species of Megapode in Tonga out of the four or five species that were present on the islands in pre-human times, and indeed the only species of megapode that survives in Polynesia.

Habitat: Tongan Megapode's natural habitat is tropical moist low land forests. On Niuafu'ou it is most common on the central caldera.



The Tongan megapode, like all megapodes, does not incubate its eggs by sitting on them; instead the species buries them in warm volcanic sands and soil and allows them to develop.

Conservation: The Tongan megapode is principally threatened by the same factors that caused its decline in the rest of Polynesia. Its eggs are still harvested by local people in spite of government protection, and some hunting still occurs. Because of the vulnerability of the single population an attempt was made translocation of eggs to new islands, Late and Fonualei.