The Black-tailed Native-hen - *Tribonyx ventralis* - is a medium size bird (30 to 38 centimetres). Upper parts are dark green-brown with a prominent black tail held erect and flattened side-on. Underparts are dark-grey with blue tinge, grading to black under the tail; a few large white flecks on the flanks. The eye is distinctive; round and bright yellow; the upper bill mandible is pale green or dark green, the lower mandible red. Legs and feet are pink.

Adult male and female are similar in appearance; there are no seasonal plumage change. Juveniles are similar to adults but duller in colour. Downy young are greenish black with adult coloured bills.
Lives around permanent or temporary wetlands (fresh or saline) of semi-arid regions. Usually seen in loose flocks of five to fifty birds among lignum on inland swamps grazing on flat mud-pans along the edges of surface water keeping more to dry ground than similar species. Feeds by day and by night on vegetable matter as well as snails. Communal, nomadic and non-territorial, rather silent.

Left. Head with prominent round, yellow eye. The pale green of the shield and upper mandible extends onto the tip of mandible and contrast with the mostly red lower mandible (Peterborough, SA). Right. The black tail is usually held vertical. (Peterborough, SA)

Adapted to arid conditions. Follows rains and floods, appearing on newly filled swamps in hundreds and leaving when they dry out; travels at night. Flies well, if heavily, with steady and silent wing-beats, taking off and landing with a run. Breeds rapidly after rain in semi-desert; forming large new flocks foraging around pools or green patches of ground. Probably breeds at any time of the year depending on rainfall. The nest is a cup of plant material on or near the ground close to water, usually in a thicket, sometimes with a partly woven roof of reeds. Usually five to seven eggs, oval, 44 millimetres by 30 millimetres, glossy, pale-green with red, brown or purple blotches and small spots. Found throughout inland Australia, mainly in areas of unpredictable rainfall. Highly nomadic. Common, but population varies with conditions. Common names include Black-tailed Water-hen, Bantam.