

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)
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Page numbers follow Watola, G. 2009 (2nd Edition)
Royal spoonbill: pp 104-106.

Royal Spoonbill (Kotuku-ngutupapa) *Platalea regia* Gould 1838, Coloniser
1861 Castlepoint, Wairarapa
7/7/1963 Norfolk Island

Ellman (1861) wrote of “a single specimen shot at ‘Castle Point’ on the east coast of the North Island”. Buller attributes comments to Ellman (“a Spoonbill was known to the Natives residing at Castle Point”) that were not actually made by him.

Jim Moore (in litt.) pointed out that Ellman referred to the ‘Koutuku-ngutu-papa’ or (Moore’s translation) ‘white heron (with) broad flat beak’. Ellman called the Spoonbill *Ardea latirostrum*.

One was shot by Mr Blake at the Manawatu estuary in April 1876, which had been present for 5-6 months previously i.e. c. December 1875.

“I HAVE much pleasure in laying before the Society a fine specimen of the Australian Spoonbill, recently obtained at Manawatu, and kindly forwarded to me by Mr. Charles Hulke, of Foxton, to whom I am further indebted for the following notes:— ‘This Spoonbill was shot in April last, near the mouth of the Manawatu River, by Mr. Blake, who, from having served under Messrs. Speke and Grant in Africa, never loses sight of any curiosity if possible. It was sitting on the sand in company with three Paradise Ducks (*Casarca variegata*.) Mr. Blake saw that the bird was a stranger, and he was attempting to get the four birds in line, when his dog startled them, and up they flew. Sacrificing the ducks for the sake of getting the stranger, he fired and the bird fell upon the sand with a heavy thud.

From the small size of the occipital crest, I judged that the specimen was a female. It was evident also, that it had almost finished moulting.

This bird has been seen for some five or six months about the lagoons in the vicinity of Mr. Robinson’s homestead. By his sons it had been taken for a White Shag. Only one had been seen by them, but I have been informed by a person who is in the habit of crossing the country between Foxton and Rangitikei, that he is confident he has seen another specimen near the Rangitikei River. No other specimen has, however, been seen in company with the one sent herewith’ ” (Buller 1876b).

Downing (1859) refers to a Spoonbill from Norfolk Island, recorded in 1854, but this was not specifically identified (J. Moore in litt.). The 1892 bird mentioned by Bassett-Hull (1910), Schodde et al. (1983) and Marchant & Higgins (1990) was actually taken on Lord Howe Island (J. Moore in litt.)

