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New Zealand little bittern: p 99.

E) **New Zealand Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus novaezelandiae* (Purdie 1871), Endemic
March 1868 Kanieri River, Westland

Ellman (1861) mentioned a “very diminutive bittern” shot by a missionary, but no further details were given. Two birds were collected on the Kanieri (sic) River in March 1868. This river runs from Lake Kanieri to the Hokitika River. Potts described it in 1871, but Purdie had actually validly described it previously in the same issue, and his description takes priority. Hutton (1871) and Buller (1888) referred to Purdie's description, as did Oliver (1955), but Kinsky (1970) had Potts as the author, without comment. Hutton (1871) also mentions Haast describing this species.

“This bird was killed at the head of the Wakatipu Lake, above Queenstown, and forwarded to the Museum by Mr. J. S. Worthington. It is not described by Mr. Buller in his Essay “On the Ornithology of New Zealand”; but a similar bird is referred to in a paper read by Mr. Buller last year, before the Wellington Philosophical Society, as having been received at the Canterbury Museum.

This bird is provisionally named the New Zealand Little Bittern (*Ardeola Novae Zelandiae*), and the following is a description of it...primary quills of wings and tail bluish black above, shading into slate colour below; wing coverts buff; scapulars, back, and centre ribs, dark brown, shading into rufous down each web; margins light buff; flexure joint tipped with a rufous or rust-coloured spot; top of head bluish black; back of neck rusty brown; front of neck or throat reddish brown with broad white webs or margins; breast chestnut colour with light buff margins; under body and thighs brown with greyish white margins; legs and bill yellowish green; eyes rufous brown” (Purdie 1870).

Only nine specimens are extant, and it had died out by 1900. The reasons for its disappearance are a mystery. It was largely confined to Westland.