

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)  
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New Zealand owlet-nightjar: p 256.

**New Zealand Owlet-nightjar** *Aegotheles novaezealandiae* (Scarlett 1968)

Ron Scarlett (1968) found some unknown bones in cave collections, but had to await comparative material before he could establish their identity. The type locality of this unexpected addition to the New Zealand avifauna is Harwood's Hole on Takaka Hill, Nelson.

Andrew Crossland has mentioned unconfirmed reports of its continued existence in Canterbury in the 1860s (T. H. Potts) and 1960s (D. H. Braithwaite). Ellman (1861) and Potts (1871) called a small nocturnal bird *Strix parvissima*. It was the size of a kingfisher, rufous with yellowish breast markings. Potts never saw it, but was told it was found in inland Canterbury forests, around the Rangitata River and Mount Peel Forest.

Buller also knew that the Maoris were aware of a small owl. Buller, however, also reported an exceptionally small owl specimen, which was identified as an immature female Morepork. The owlet-nightjar may have begun to decline before Polynesian settlement. Holdaway et al. (2002) surmised that this decline would be consistent with the effects of predation by a new predator - most probably the Pacific Rat or Kiore *Rattus exulans*.

### **SUB-FOSSIL SPECIES**

This species is considered to have become extinct since human settlement in the 14th century.