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Black swan - pp. 223-224.

Black Swan (Kakianau), *Cygnus atratus* (Latham 1790), Coloniser
1864 New Zealand
26/8/1974 Norfolk Island

Williams (1981) considered its spread and abundance between 1864 and 1868 was due to an influx from Australia, as well as introduced birds. They were also released at Kaitangata Lake, Dunedin between 1860 and 1870. Buller also released them into the North Island in 1864. Kirk (1895) may have been the first to note that immigration had occurred.

“The black swan (*C. atratus*, Lath.) is abundantly naturalised in many localities from the North Cape to Canterbury, and sometimes occurs in thousands, as in the great lagoon at the entrance to the Opawa River, where it seems to have displaced *Porphyrio melanotus*. Its simultaneous appearance in so many localities between 1865 and 1868 proves that it must have been a spontaneous immigrant, and that its naturalisation is not due in any large degree to its having been introduced by man” (Kirk 1895).

“The black swan settled down at once to its new conditions. It was introduced into Canterbury partly with the object of destroying watercress in the Avon, which runs through Christchurch. In a few years the birds had increased largely, but in 1867 many of them forsook the Avon and made long and rather notable migrations to the wild country on the West Coast, and to Otago, and even Marlborough. Less than twenty were liberated on the Avon at first by the Christchurch City Council. These birds did the work desired from them, as they cleared a pathway through the watercress for the current.

In 1880 there were hundreds of black swans in the Avon and Halswell Rivers, as well as the Heathcote, as many as five hundred sometimes being counted on small areas. They achieved the same success in Otago, where about sixty were liberated from 1866 to 1870. Black swans are now found in thousands on lakes, estuaries, and lagoons in many parts of the colony, from the extreme north to the far south” (Drummond 1906).

Widespread and abundant as a subfossil, up until 1998, these were thought to be a separate species *C. sumnerensis* (Forbes 1892). Scarlett (1972) had noted that *sumnerensis* “bones are indistinguishable from those of a Black Swan”, but did not reach the obvious conclusion from this remark. The extinct Chatham Island Swan *C. chathamensis* Oliver 1955 may be a separate species, but this awaits review.