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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Nankeen night heron: pp 93-94.



### NANKEEN NIGHT HERON

**Family** Ardeidae

**Species** *Nycticorax caledonicus*

**Common name** Nankeen Night Heron

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Rare

**Size** 560 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, White-faced Heron 670 mm)

**Habitat** In New Zealand it is only found along the Whanganui River, preferring this habitat when the willow trees are in leaf.

**Worldwide range** Widely spread from Indonesia to Australia and New Caledonia where it inhabits swamp areas, lake verges and river boundaries.

**New Zealand range** Has been recorded breeding near Pipiriki on the Whanganui River. It roosts by day and flies to feeding grounds at dusk but will venture out and start feeding before dark, especially when feeding young.

## **Description**

**Crown and nape** Blue-black. Two white plumes protrude from the nape on birds in breeding plumage. **Face** Greenish in front of eye and white above and behind eye. **Back, neck and wings** Chestnut-red. **Throat and neck** White, with a pale chestnut wash on upper neck. **Underparts** White. **Iris** Yellow. **Bill** Black with a short and stout appearance. **Legs** Yellow.

## **Description – young birds**

**Overall** Brown spotted with white.

## **Conspicuous features**

- The blue-black head.
- Yellow eye and legs.

## **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Rather hunched appearance.
- Has a squat appearance when feeding.
- Regularly stands and then walks slowly.
- Stands hunched on branches in trees.
- Generally viewed in late afternoon and at dusk.

**Call** Harsh croaks or quacks often heard when feeding. The young when in the nest have a noisy cackle.

**Nest** A platform of loose sticks in a tree usually high up. Up to 4 pale greenish-blue eggs are laid.

## **Where to find – North Island**

**Wanganui** – Pipiriki from the Pipiriki Wharf on the Whanganui River and from the stretch of river between Pipiriki and downstream to Jerusalem. To get to Pipiriki, if driving south, turn off Highway 4 at Raetihi and take the Pipiriki sign. Travel for about 21 kms. P. 335.