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Nankeen night heron: p 100.

Nankeen Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus australasiae* (Vieillot 1817), Coloniser
September 1888 Catlins Rivermouth, Otago

Colenso described a heron he saw on the banks of the Maungatautari, Waikato in 1842. Colenso saw “in a very deep swamp... a beautiful bird of the crane kind... under plumage light yellow or ochre, dark brown upper plumage” (Buller 1878). This description seems rather inadequate for a first record, but is accepted by the Checklist Committee (OSNZ) (2010). They were unsuccessfully introduced in 1852 to Wellington. Hutton (1871) mentions records from both islands, but with no details.

There are 19th century records from Wellington (1856, possibly one of the introduced birds), Catlins near Owaka (August or September 1888), which was shot and exhibited (Buller 1890b), “Pahau River” (= Pahaoa River?), Wellington east coast (March 1890? & December 1892), Lake Ellesmere, Okarito and Hokitika.

“I have also to exhibit another New-Zealand-killed example of the Nankeen Heron, differing from those already recorded in being furnished with the beautiful occipital white plumes, rolled in the form of a pointed queue, 7in. long. This was shot at the mouth of the Catlin River, about a mile from the sea, about August or September, 1888. As already recorded (Birds of N.Z., ii., pp. 139, 140), Sir George Grey, when Governor of the colony, in 1852, introduced some of these birds from Australia, and liberated them at Wellington.

But as early as 1845 the Rev. Mr. Colenso met with one in the Waikato district; and, as the bird is only met with rarely, singly, and at long intervals, it is most reasonable to suppose that these are stray visitants from Australia rather than the descendants of the imported stock. The example described in my first edition, and now in the Colonial Museum, was shot in the neighbourhood of Wellington in 1856, and may have been one of the introduced birds” (Buller 1890).

Since 1994 a small breeding colony has become established on the banks of the Whanganui River between Pipiriki and Jerusalem.