

shrill high-pitched *aarh* or *ah-el* of the male would find both calls difficult to turn into anything resembling *kiwi*.

While reading Peter Child's article (1981, *Notornis* 28: 32), I noticed that the Cook Islanders' name for the Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*) is *kivi*. It is now commonly accepted that Hawaiki, the ancestral homeland of the Maori race, was a group of islands in Eastern Polynesia, including Tahiti and the Cook Islands. Physical and linguistic similarities bear this out, with Rarotongan being the closest language to Maori (B. Biggs, 1971, in *New Zealand's Heritage* 1 (6): 160). However, resulting from isolation, the Polynesian letter *v* corresponds to a *w* in Maori. For example, Cook Island numerals, *tai, rua, toru, a, rima, ono, itu, varu, iwa* became *tahi, rua, toru, wha, rima, ono, whitu, waru, iwa* in Maori.

From a long association, the ancient Cook Islanders had developed an awareness of the common birds around them. On islands and atolls, the wildlife consisted mainly of seabirds and migratory waders. The rather large *kivi*, a summer migrant, was especially well known. When the Maoris arrived in New Zealand they promptly gave names to all the new things they encountered. Often these names were derived from known objects 'back home.' Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a strange hen-sized land bird with a characteristic long, slightly downcurved, beak was called *kivi*, or *kiwi*, after the curlews with their long curved beaks. Not only did the first Maoris notice this similarity, W. R. B. Oliver (1930, *New Zealand birds*, p. 14), when describing the kiwi, stated that "The bill is very long, similar in this respect to the bill of wading birds, especially the Curlew . . ." G. R. Gray (1844, *The zoology of the voyage of HMS Erebus and Terror*, p. 11) gives one of the earliest accounts of the kiwi, mentioning that it was called the *kiwikiwi* or *kivi*.

Since New Zealanders take such pride in calling themselves Kiwis, this note may perhaps provoke discussion as to why our kiwis were so named.

ROGAN COLBOURNE, 2 Waiho Terrace, Elsdon, Porirua



IMMATURE NIGHT HERON IN OTAGO

The immature Nankeen Night Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) shown in Figure 1 was present on the property of Mr W. B. Miller at Tarara, near Owaka, in the Catlins district of Otago, from mid-June 1980 to mid-September 1980.

It was first noticed by the Millers because of the droppings containing remains of freshwater crayfish (*Paraneuphrops zealandicus*) under its roosting tree. It spent its daylight hours roosting in a macrocarpa tree close to the house, and every evening it flew heavily away to feed, sometimes at least in the farm creek nearby. It roosted regularly in the same place, fairly well hidden by the foliage. Several times, it stayed away for two or three days, and once after a topdressing plane had been working close by all day. When I saw it on 21 June, after a morning of very severe frost, it was perched on a limb of the

tree in direct sunlight but not disturbed by my presence or by talking.

The bird had the spotted and streaked plumage of an immature. The facial skin between bill and eyes was yellowish green, the bill was heavy and black, and the iris yellow.



FIGURE 1 — Immature Nankeen Night Heron, Owaka, 1980.

Photo: R. Bayley

TIM JACKSON, *South East Otago Reserves Board, Owaka.* Present address: *Ranger Station, Urewera National Park, P.O. Box 56, Taneatua.*