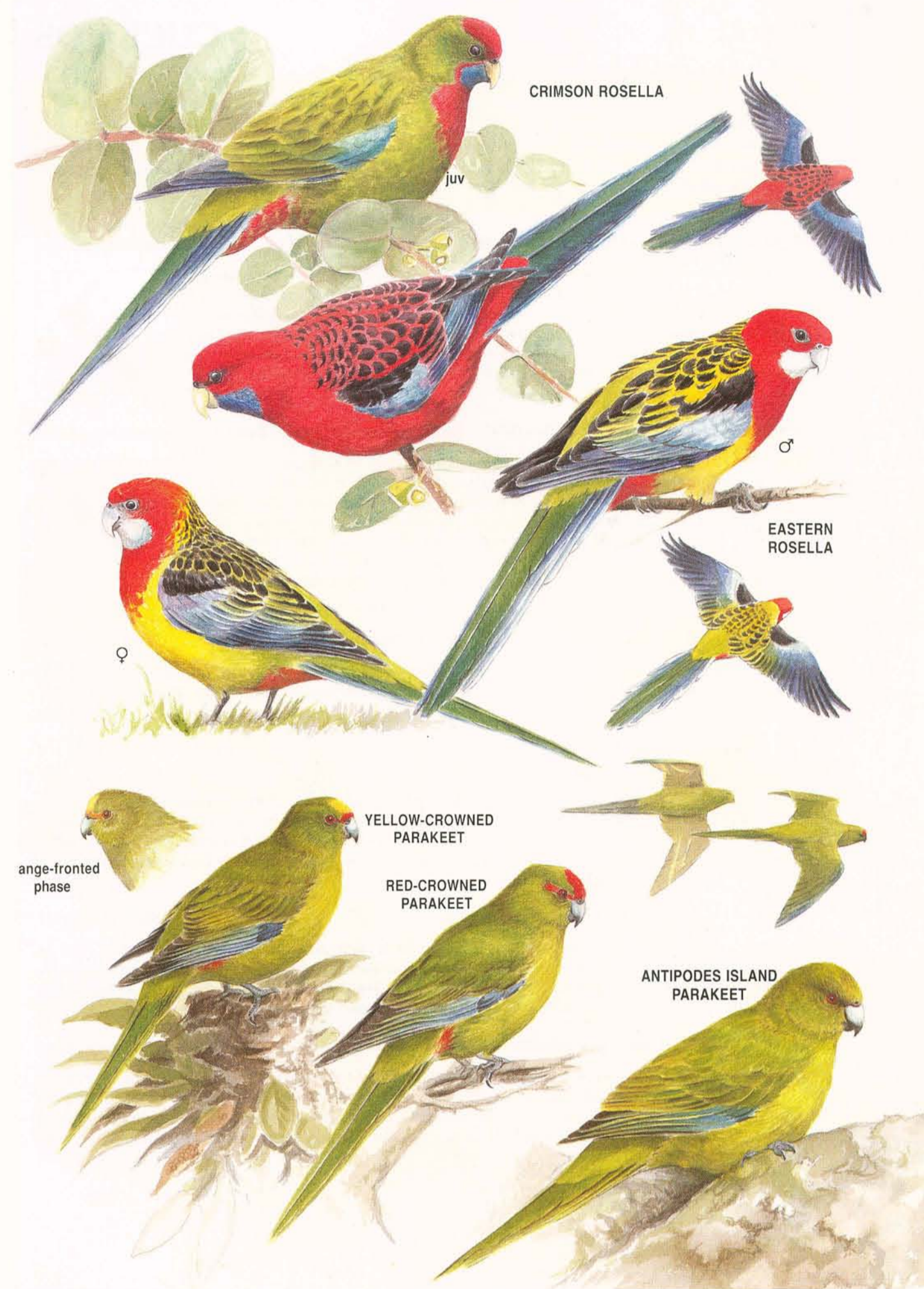
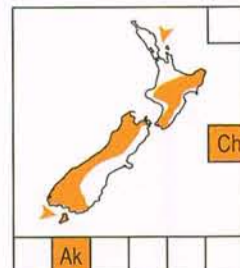


A large cosmopolitan family of often very colourful birds, but the NZ species are relatively drab, mainly green. All have a short bill with a horn covering (cere) enclosing the nostrils. The upper mandible is strongly curved, fitting neatly over the lower mandible. Their legs are short, and their feet have two toes pointing forward and two back.

YELLOW-CROWNED PARAKEET (Kakariki) *Cyanoramphus auriceps* **Locally common endemic**

♂ 25 cm, 50 g; ♀ 23 cm, 40 g. Long-tailed bright yellow-green parrot of native forest. *Crown golden yellow*; forehead and band from bill to eye red, and small patch on sides of rump crimson; violet-blue on wing coverts and some outer flight feathers. Orange-fronted colour phase is plainer green, lacking yellow; forehead and band from bill to eye orange. Flight fast and direct, with rapid wingbeats. *Flight call a rapid high-pitched chatter*. **Habitat:** Native forests; rare orange-fronted phase is seen mostly in North Canterbury. **Breeding:** Oct–Feb. [Sp 267]



COCKATOOS and PARROTS

Cacatuidae and Psittacidae

About 330 species worldwide; 10 breed in New Zealand. Five are endemic to New Zealand, 1 is native and 4 have been introduced.

Parrots are well known for their colourful plumage and are widely held in captivity.

All have a large head and eyes, a short neck, and a short, deep bill. Mainly herbivorous, although some also eat invertebrates. The upper mandible of the bill is strongly curved, sharply pointed, and hinged at the base so that the parrot can crack nuts or other

unyielding food. Parrots can use their bill as an extra limb, showing great agility at climbing. They have a large fleshy cere, surrounding the nostrils. Two toes are pointed forwards and two back, giving a strong grip. Parrots can hold food while shredding it and pass it to their mouth. Most parrots are gregarious, and many have loud, harsh voices. They mostly lay white eggs in holes in trees or in crevices in rocks.

Reading: Forshaw, J.M. & Cooper, W.T. 1978. *Parrots of the World*. Melbourne: Lansdowne.

267. YELLOW-CROWNED PARAKEET

Cyanoramphus auriceps Plate 61

Other name: Kakariki

Size: Males 25 cm, 50 g; females 23 cm, 40 g

Geographical variation: Two subspecies: the Yellow-crowned Parakeet *auriceps* on the New Zealand mainland, offshore islands and at the Auckland Islands; and Forbes' Parakeet *forbesi* on the Chatham Islands. The Orange-

fronted Parakeet (*C. malherbi*), recently thought to be a colour phase of the Yellow-crowned Parakeet, is again recognised as a distinct species. It is known mainly from inland North Canterbury and in the Nelson region.

Distribution: New Zealand only, breeding in the North, South, Stewart, Chatham and

Auckland Islands, and on some offshore islands. They favour podocarp forest and beech forest on the mainland and taller forest and scrub on offshore islands. Mixed flocks with Red-crowned Parakeets were an occasional serious pest of crops, orchards and gardens in the 1870s and 1880s; but with the introduction of feral cats, ship rats and stoats they became uncommon. In the North Island, they are now mainly in forested areas across the centre from Taranaki through the King Country and the Urewera to the Raukumara Range, and in the Tararua and Rimutaka Ranges; also on some offshore islands, including the Three Kings, Hen and Chickens, Little Barrier, Great Barrier and Kapiti, but in much lower numbers than Red-crowned Parakeets. In the South Island, they are widespread: western Marlborough (including the Chetwode and Titi Islands), Nelson, Westland, inland North Canterbury, western Otago, the Catlins and Fiordland. They are on Codfish Island, and Stewart Island and its outliers. In the Auckland Islands, they are common on main Auckland Island but outnumbered by the Red-crowned Parakeet on the other islands. On the Chathams, Forbes' Parakeet is uncommon on Mangere and Little Mangere Islands, and a few have been seen on Chatham Island.

Population: The Yellow-crowned Parakeet is widespread and uncommon throughout. On the Chathams, the total number of Forbes' Parakeets in the 1970s was 56 pure birds, mostly on Little Mangere Island.

Conservation: Protected native; Forbes' Parakeet is threatened. Yellow-crowned Parakeets are susceptible to mammalian predators (especially cats, stoats and ship rats) because they sometimes feed on the ground and nest in holes, but have probably survived better on the mainland than Red-crowned Parakeets because they generally have more arboreal feeding and nesting sites. They are probably secure on island reserves, but they are nowhere common and well outnumbered by Red-crowned Parakeets.

Between the early 1900s and late 1960s, Forbes' Parakeets were virtually confined to

Little Mangere Island. With the removal of stock and the resultant flush of rank grass, Mangere Island was colonised by Forbes' Parakeets, but much larger numbers of Chatham Island Red-crowned Parakeets, and in this artificial environment these two species hybridised. Since the 1970s, conservation effort has concentrated on removing hybrids and the more common Red-crowned Parakeets, and this will have to continue until the habitat improves to allow the usual habitat segregation between these species.

Breeding: Yellow-crowned Parakeets favour holes in branches and trunks of trees, particularly holes in mature or old trees. Eggs can be laid at almost any time of year, but mostly in October–December. They lay 2–5–6–9 white eggs (24 x 19 mm). The female alone incubates for 15–20 days starting mid-way through the clutch. She is called from the nest and is fed by the male. The fledging period is 37–45 days. Both sexes feed the chicks by regurgitation.

Behaviour: Usually solitary or in pairs, but in autumn and winter they form small flocks. In flight, they make a rapid high-pitched chatter: 'ki-ki-ki-ki-ki'. Silent or chatter and babble when feeding. On Little Barrier, a frequent call of males, perhaps territorial, is a loud 'err-e-e'.

Feeding: Diet varies seasonally but is dominated for most of the year by invertebrates (particularly scale insects, leaf miners and aphids), flower buds and flowers (especially of kanuka, rata and beech) and seeds (especially beech). Leaves, shoots and fruits are also taken as they become seasonally available. They feed in the canopy rather than on the ground, and often follow mixed feeding flocks led by Whiteheads in the North Island and Yellowheads in the South Island.

Reading: Elliott, G.P. *et al.* 1996. *NZ J Zool* 23: 249–265. Greene, T.C. 1988. Unpubl MSc thesis. Univ Auckland. Kearvell, J.C. *et al.* 2003. *Notornis* 50: 27–35. Nixon, A.J. 1981. *Notornis* 28: 292–300. Nixon, A.J. 1994. *Notornis* 41 (S): 5–18. Taylor, R.H. *et al.* 1986. *Notornis* 33: 17–22.