

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.

**GALAH** *Cacatua roseicapilla*

Rare Australian introduction

36 cm, 325 g. A noisy pink and grey parrot with paler crown and crest. Immature duller than adult, with grey about the face. **Habitat:** Forest patches in open country; recently established in South Auckland, especially near Hunua Ranges, Pukekohe, and Pakihi and Ponui Is. **Breeding:** Season unknown in NZ.

[Sp 259]



SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO

KAKAPO

KEA

KAKA

GALAH

## 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.

**259. GALAH** *Cacatua roseicapilla*

Plate 60

**Size:** 36 cm, 325 g

**Distribution:** Native to Australia, where they are widespread except for the wet eastern coastal belt and Tasmania. Introduced to New Zealand as a cage bird. A group of smuggled birds that were released at sea off the Horowhenua coast in the 1970s failed to establish. However, cage escapees have recently established in the wild in South Auckland and the northern Waikato, including visiting Pakihi and Ponui Islands in the inner Hauraki Gulf. Most sightings are around Ponui Island/Hunua Ranges, Mangatawhiri, and Pukekohe/Port Waikato areas.

**Population:** Probably fewer than 150 birds; the largest flock recorded is 50 birds.

**Breeding:** Galahs have bred in the wild in New Zealand, but few details are available. Courtship and mating has been noted in August. In Australia, they lay 2-5 white eggs in a hollow tree.

**Behaviour:** Gregarious; they are often in small flocks and pairs during the summer and early autumn, but gather into larger flocks in the winter and early spring. The flocks are highly mobile and somewhat nomadic.

**Feeding:** In Australia, they feed mostly on the ground on seeds of grasses, cereals and weeds; they have been recorded feeding on maize stubble in New Zealand. As they are a major pest of grain crops in Australia, their increase and spread could also cause problems here.