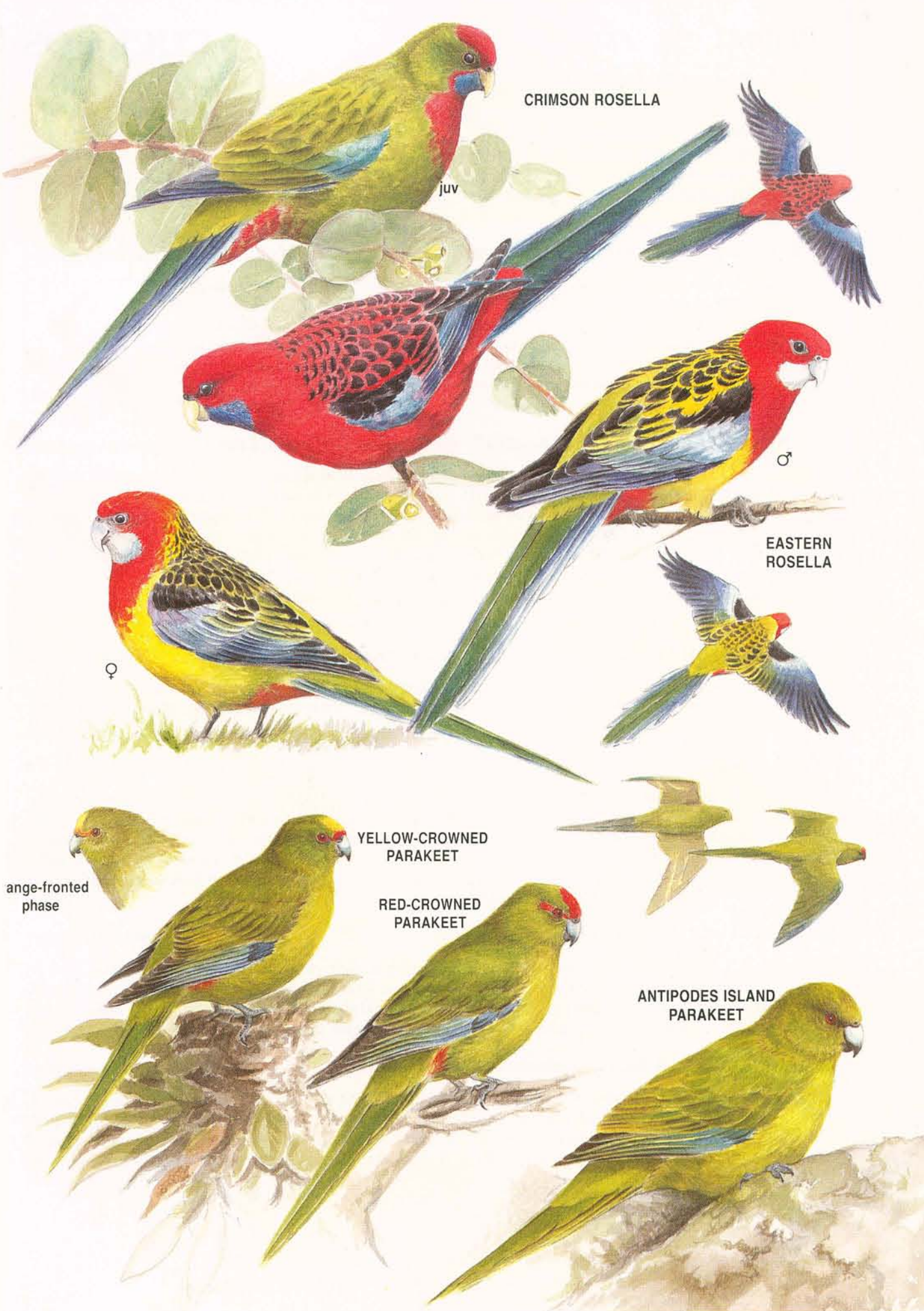
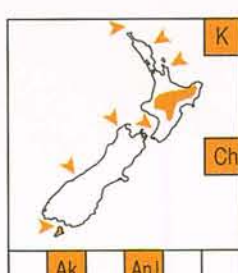


A large cosmopolitan family of often very colourful birds, but the NZ species are relatively drab, mainly green. All have a short bill with a horn covering (cere) enclosing the nostrils. The upper mandible is strongly curved, fitting neatly over the lower mandible. Their legs are short, and their feet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

**RED-CROWNED PARAKEET (Kakariki)** *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*

Locally common native

♂ 28 cm, 80 g; ♀ 25 cm, 70 g. Very like the Yellow-crowned Parakeet but larger and with red crown, forehead and band from bill to behind eye; rump patches crimson. Flight direct and rapid, often above the canopy, or side-slipping through the trees. *Flight call a rapid loud chatter*, lower-pitched than Yellow-crowned Parakeet. **Habitat:** Rare in native forests on the main islands but common in forest and scrub on Stewart I and many predator-free offshore and outlying islands. **Breeding:** Oct–Mar. [Sp 266]



**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.

**266. RED-CROWNED PARAKEET**

*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae* Plate 61

**Other name:** Kakariki

**Size:** Males 28 cm, 80 g; females 25 cm, 70 g

**Geographical variation:** Of eight subspecies, two are extinct (*subflavescens* of Lord Howe Island and *erythrotis* of Macquarie Island). The Green Parrot *cookii* breeds on Norfolk Island, the New Caledonian Red-crowned Parakeet *saisseti* breeds in the forested mountains of New Caledonia, and the other four subspecies are in New Zealand: the Red-crowned Parakeet *novaezelandiae* breeds on the main islands, many offshore islands, and at the Auckland Islands; the Kermadec Parakeet *cyanurus* breeds in the Kermadec

Islands: the Chatham Island Red-crowned Parakeet *chathamensis* breeds in the Chatham Islands; and Reischek's Parakeet *hochstetteri* breeds at the Antipodes Islands.

**Distribution:** Common on the Herald Islets and occasionally visit nearby Raoul Island; abundant on Macauley. On the North and South Islands, they mixed with Yellow-crowned Parakeets and 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 rare. In the North Island, a few are now found in heavy forest of western

Northland, the central North Island and the Ruahine Range, and vagrants visit bush patches along the eastern coast of Northland from nearby islands; they are common on many offshore islands from the Three Kings, through the Hauraki Gulf to the Bay of Plenty, and on Kapiti Island. Now largely gone from the South Island, although some may persist in Nelson, the Catlins and South Westland. Widespread on Stewart Island and its outliers; vagrant to The Snares. Common at the Auckland Islands except for Auckland Island itself. A few Chatham Island Red-crowned Parakeets are on Chatham and Pitt Islands, but they are numerous on Mangere, Little Mangere and South East Islands. Reischek's Parakeet is on Antipodes, Bollons and smaller islands; most common on the more open parts of the central plateau and in coastal places. **Population:** Common to abundant on many islands free of mammalian predators. Very rare on the mainland.

**Conservation:** Protected native. Red-crowned Parakeets are particularly susceptible to mammalian predators (especially cats, stoats and ship rats) because they often feed on the ground and nest in holes close to the ground. They are secure on many island reserves; however the Macauley Island population of Kermadec Parakeet fell from c. 20,000 to less than 2000 between September and November 1988, probably due to a drought, but had recovered to c. 9000 by 2002.

**Breeding:** Red-crowned Parakeets favour holes in branches and trunks of trees, particularly decaying trees, but they also use crevices in cliffs or among rocks, burrows in the ground or densely matted vegetation. Most eggs are laid in October–December, but

re-laying can continue through to March. They lay 4–7–9 white eggs (26 x 21 mm, 6 g), which the female incubates for c. 23 days. During incubation, the male calls the female off the nest and feeds her by regurgitation. Both sexes feed the chicks, but the male usually transfers the food to the female, which then feeds the chicks. The fledging period is 40–50 days, but sometimes the chicks leave the nest earlier and are fed on the ground before they can fly. In captivity, the young first breed at less than a year old, but they probably breed later in the wild. Occasionally they interbreed with the Yellow-crowned Parakeet.

**Behaviour:** Usually solitary or in pairs, but in autumn and winter they form small flocks. Non-migratory, though they may fly long distances to get to good sources of food or fresh water. In flight, they make a loud, rapid chatter: 'ki-ki-ki-ki-ki'. Silent or chatter and babble when feeding.

**Feeding:** Mainly herbivorous. Diet varies seasonally and includes seeds of many kinds (particularly flax, beech, sedges, grasses, tussocks, *Mariscus* and *Muehlenbeckia*), fruits (particularly *Coprosma*, ngaio and *Solanum*) flower buds, flowers, nectar, leaves, shoots; also invertebrates and carrion. They often feed on the ground rather than in the canopy.

**Reading:** Bellingham, M. 1987. *Notornis* 34: 234–236. Dawe, M.R. 1979. Unpubl MSc thesis. Univ Auckland. Greene, T.C. 1988. Unpubl MSc thesis. Univ Auckland. Nixon, A.J. 1994. *Notornis* 41(S): 5–18. Sagar, P.M. 1988. *Notornis* 35: 1–8. Taylor, R.H. 1975. *Notornis* 22: 110–121. Taylor, R.H. 1985. Pp. 195–211. In Moors, P.J. (ed.) *ICBP Technical Publication No. 3*. Cambridge: ICBP.