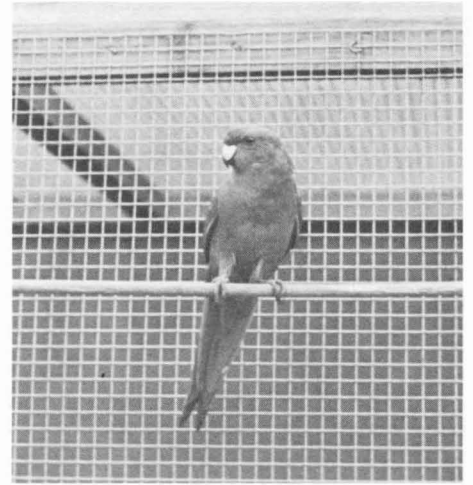


*Red-fronted Kakariki.*

# Breeding Kakariki Parakeets

(Genus *Cyanoramphus*)

by Jerry Jennings



A playful, attractive group of birds, the genus *Cyanoramphus* is comprised of six species, two of which – the Society and Black-fronted Parakeet – are extinct. Of the remaining four species – the Antipodes Green Parakeet, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Red-fronted Parakeet, and Yellow-fronted Parakeet – only the latter two can be found in captivity in the U.S.

The Antipodes Green Parakeet is native exclusively to Antipodes Island, where it is quite common (Forshaw). The Orange-fronted Parakeet occurs on South Island, New Zealand, and is rather scarce. The Red-fronted occurs on North & South Island, New Zealand, the surrounding islands and New Caledonia. The Yellow-fronted occurs throughout New Zealand and the outlying islands. Because of their distribution they are frequently

referred to as “New Zealand Parakeets”, however, in Europe and the U.S. they are more commonly known as “Kakarikis”.

Since Red and Yellow-fronted Kakarikis are the only species available to the American aviculturist, only they will be described. Detailed descriptions of the other species may be found in Joseph Forshaw’s *Parrots of the World*.

Both the Red-fronted (*C. novaezelandiae*) and Yellow-fronted (*C. auriceps*) are uncommon in America, although small numbers have been imported during the past two or three years.

The Red-fronted Kakariki’s basic plumage is emerald green. The forehead, crown, and ear coverts are bright red as are two small patches, one on either side of the rump. The outer primary flight feathers are blue, the legs grey-black.

The iris is red-orange. The beak is unique in that it is a silver grey color tipped in black, and appears as if it were made of steel. Sexes are alike except the males are generally larger than females and often have more extensive red on the crown and ear coverts. Approximate length of the Red-fronted is eleven inches.

The Yellow-fronted Kakariki is similar in appearance to, but smaller than, the Red-fronted. General plumage is emerald green. A narrow red band extends across the forehead. The crown is yellow. The Yellow-fronted lacks the red ear coverts found in the Red-fronted, otherwise it is identical. Again, males are generally larger than females. Approximate length is nine inches.

Kakarikis are gregarious birds in the wild and get along well together in groups



An ‘informal’ group of Zebra Finch and Kakariki. Yellow-fronted Kakariki – left. Red-fronted on right.



*Breeding pair of Yellow-fronted Kakariki.*

in captivity. They are extremely hardy birds in the wild, having adapted to a wide range of habitats from mountain forests to lowland scrub and grasslands. In captivity they are hardy, as well. They should be kept in a dry environment, however, as they spend considerable time on the ground.

Kakarikis are prolific breeders, nesting nine months of the year in the wild and all year in captivity. Generally, they will rear a brood of young, follow that with another, rest a month or two, then begin again. It is not unusual for them to rear six young at a time. Eggs are elliptical, white, and average seven to a clutch. Incubation takes 18-20 days.

The Kakarikis at Walnut Acres are housed in four by ten foot flights six feet high — one pair to a flight. The rear four feet of each flight is sheltered and the floor is dirt. The birds are provided one nest box, either a standard Budgie box or an English Budgie box — either of which serves equally well. The boxes are filled to a depth of two inches with wood shavings.

Diet for the Kakarikis consists of small sunflower seeds, finch mix, parakeet mix, spray millet, and fresh water containing

Headstart Poultry Vitamins (1 tsp/gal) daily. Supplementing this every other day, each pair receives a handfull of mixed corn, peas, and carrots which are purchased from the local market's frozen food section. The birds will also enjoy fresh fruit and mealworms.

The most delightful aspect to breeding Kakarikis is their charming personality. They delight in playing with each other, running around on the ground, up and down the walls, and upside down along the roof. They are very active and quite tame. Kakarikis often quickly learn to be fearless of their keeper, greeting him at the door as he enters the flight. Some will even take food from the hand.

Without a doubt they are budding flowers in American aviculture.

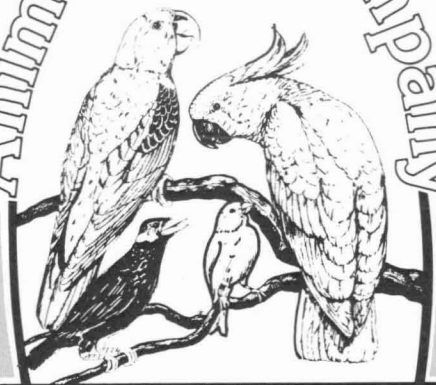
#### EDITOR'S NOTE

The Red-fronted Kakariki is currently on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, indicating the bird is becoming rare in the wild. Although not on the U.S. Endangered Species List, it's importation is regulated. All imported Kakarikis are imported from Europe, where they are bred in captivity.



*Yellow-fronted Kakariki chicks.*

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