



Kakariki Care

The Kakariki (meaning little parrot in Maori) originates from New Zealand and its surrounding islands. There are 2 species :- the more commonly available Red-fronted *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae* and the Yellow-fronted *Cyanoramphus auriceps*. Both species are now very rare in their native lands, but as they have been bred for many years in captivity there is a healthy stock in Europe and the UK.

Both species are relatively easy to sex, with a little experience, as the head and beak of the male is quite a lot bigger. The plumage of the sexes is similar. The normal body colour in both species is a rich dark green. The Red-fronted has a scarlet band above the beak, whereas the Yellow-fronted has a orangy-yellow band. The beak is silvery grey and the legs are grey. The two species have been interbred and the resultant offspring are fertile, so a number of the Yellow-fronted available are accidentally or otherwise hybrids. These hybrids are to be avoided and if keeping both species they should not be kept in the same enclosure. A number of colour variants have been selectively bred. Most include varying amounts of yellow – a few patches of yellow will designate the bird a “pied”, whereas a completely yellow bird will either be a Lutino (this has pinky red eyes) or a completely pied bird (this has black eyes).

The Red-fronted is approximately 11” long including the tail, with the Yellow-fronted being slightly smaller. Although, they are quite a stocky, large parakeet they are quite peacable in a mixed aviary and can be housed perfectly well with Canaries, Budgies and small finches. Having said this Kakarikis are incredibly inquisitive and may disturb the nesting of these companions. Do not keep them with other Parakeets as there is likely to be squabbling (one pair to each flight cage is recommended).

Kakarikis mature at approximately 8 months old, however I would try to dissuade them from breeding until they are a few months older. They are quite long lived – 15 years+ is not unheard of – and they will certainly breed up to the age of 10 years. They are quite hardy and given a dry, draughtproof shelter will be able to live outside in the UK all year round. In fact, some pairs will attempt breeding at any time of the year, so be particularly vigilant in the winter for hens becoming eggbound. New Zealand gives the impression of being a warm tropical country, but there are large areas that are quite cool and Kakarikis are most numerous in these areas. Therefore if we have a long warm summer you may see your Kakarikis being a little uncomfortable. In this instance try and shade the aviary and provide bathing facilities at all times. I have sometimes sprayed them gently with a hosepipe.

Kakarikis are enthusiastic climbers, rarely using their beaks whilst doing so. If you house parrots in adjoining aviaries it is prudent to double wire the partitions to protect the Kakarikis feet from neighbour’s beaks. A flight aviary of at least 2 metres is required, but 4 metres is much better. The framework can be timber as they rarely do much damage by chewing it. The flight should have a variety of perching, preferably of natural branches.

A standard “Parakeet” mix of seeds is ideal for their basic fare, however this should be regularly supplemented with fruits and vegetables. Kakarikis tend to waste a lot of seed as they dig through the dish searching out their favourites. The rest is vigorously thrown around, with a large proportion ending up on the floor. A tray affixed under the dish may catch a good proportion of this. Calcium supplies such as cuttlefish, crushed oyster shell or calcium blocks should always be available. Some add a soluble Calcium additive to the drinking water.

A nestbox 10” square and 15-18” tall will be perfectly adequate. The parents will lay a clutch of about 5 eggs, which will take 3 weeks to incubate. The chicks will stay in the nest for 4-5 weeks and be independent at 8-10 weeks. If you wish to close ring your chicks then size M is the correct one to use. The chicks should be removed when they are completely independent and feeding themselves to avoid any aggression from the parents wanting to nest again.

Both species are quiet birds and will be hardly noticeable to close neighbours. The call being a “rattling” chatter. Even pet birds are unlikely to talk or whistle tunes. Although I have not kept Kakariki as housepets I understand that they can become quite nippy if inquisitive children put their fingers in the cage. They are unlikely to seriously damage the furnishings in the house with their nibbling.