

## A GUIDE TO THE KEEPING OF KAKARIKIS IN CAPTIVITY

### Authority required

Of the four full species of parakeets native to New Zealand only two, the red-crowned and the yellow-crowned (and/or their hybrids), are permitted to be kept in captivity. Written authority in the form of a permit is required, and this may be obtained by applying to the Secretary for the Department of Internal Affairs.

Also, these birds, their progeny, or their eggs, may be obtained only from persons holding the proper written authority to have native parakeets in their possession. Except with the prior written consent of the Secretary for Internal Affairs, these parakeets, their progeny or their eggs, may be sold or disposed of only to persons possessing this written authority. Further conditions are set out on the permit.

### Housing

The Wildlife Service has laid down no definite requirements for the housing of red-crowned and yellow-crowned parakeets. However, if the birds are to remain healthy and contented in confinement the following guidelines should be borne in mind by anyone who is contemplating keeping them.

Both species are extremely active, almost constantly on the move, and possessed of a seemingly boundless energy which is expended mainly in rapid flight. Consequently, they are not really suited to cage life unless the cage is particularly large. If it is essential that they be kept indoors, their enclosure should be not less than ½ metre high, at least 2-5 metres in length, and have a perch at either end to allow the birds at least some opportunity for flight. No more than two birds should be kept in a cage of these dimensions.

Because of their active nature, kakarikis are best housed in an outdoor aviary; and the larger this can be, the better. It should certainly not be much smaller than 4 x 2 x 3 metres, and should include as an extra a draught-proof, all-weather shelter, enclosed on three sides, to protect the birds against heavy rain, chilling winds and strong sun. If part of the flight section of the aviary can be covered with manuka or broken brush this will provide extra shelter and additional variety for the birds. Wherever possible, install natural perches. Pieces of dowling or lengths of pipe should never be used. The enclosure must be really extensive, otherwise the birds' foraging and droppings will soon kill any living trees and shrubs planted unless they are protected with a cone of wire-netting to allow only the protruding growth to be eaten.

### Food

Kakarikis are not demanding in their food requirements and do very well on a basic diet of sunflower seeds, canary seeds, and a little white millet. (Grit of assorted sizes should be made available in a separate container). Green-food in almost any form, but particularly apples and apple cores, seeding grasses (half-ripe dock is especially popular), fresh grass-clumps, willow weed, puha, and lettuce, should be provided as often as possible. Small limbs covered with fresh green foliage should be placed in the aviary periodically, as the birds derive great benefit and enjoyment from feeding on these. Remove them, though, before the foliage becomes stale.

Fresh water, changed regularly, is essential, and should ideally be provided in two receptacles; one small, for drinking, and one larger, for bathing - an activity in which the birds frequently indulge (and another reason which makes them unsuitable as cage birds).

### Breeding

Kakariki are not difficult birds to breed in captivity if they are well fed and well housed. To avoid fighting and possible injury, only one breeding pair should be accommodated in an aviary. Use a nest box 23 x 20 x 41 cm with a 10 cm layer of earth and dry rotten wood or coarse shavings at the bottom. The box may be placed either inside the shelter or in a secluded corner of the flight, and should be situated near the top of the aviary to give the birds a sense of security.

When the parents are feeding their young, a very valuable supplement to their diet is bread (brown) and water, with the water well squeezed from the bread, and soaked oats. Also much appreciated by the birds is the addition, for about one week during the breeding season, of weeping willow branches and ti-tree berries at the stage where the flowers are just finishing - the nuts are still very green at this time, which is the way the birds like them.

The young kakarikis are fully-fledged when about six weeks old, but may be fed sporadically by either parent for a short time after this before finally becoming independent.

### Conclusion

Many aviculturists have their own methods - and very successful ones - of breeding kakarikis. The above advice is meant primarily as a guide for the novice breeder. For information concerning the finer points of raising these delightful parakeets it is best to consult with an experienced breeder.

Please read and comply with the conditions set out on your permit. These are designed to protect our native parakeets from ill-usage and exploitation, and to enable aviculturists to have the pleasure of including them in their aviary collections.