

Orange-fronted Parakeet a New Bird Species

The orange-fronted parakeet has just been confirmed as a separate bird species, not just a different colour-form of the yellow-crowned parakeet. Research conducted by the Department of Conservation, in association with Victoria, Canterbury and Lincoln universities, is in the process of 'scientific publication'.

There are only two known populations of the orange-fronted parakeet — a small population in the Hawdon Valley within Arthurs Pass National Park, and a significant population in the South Branch of the Hurunui River, within the Hurunui 'mainland island'. (See feature, page 30.) Population estimates of the new bird species are somewhere between 150 – 500 indi-

vidual birds.

The taxonomic status of the orange-fronted parakeet has long been a subject of debate. Since its first formal description in 1857 it has been regarded at various times as a full species, a fledgling variation, or merely another colour version of yellow-crowned parakeet. Genetic studies have now shown it to have a closer relationship with the red-crowned parakeet.

The DNA research was supported with field observations, to determine whether interbreeding occurred between yellow-crowned and orange-fronted parakeets in the wild. This fieldwork revealed no mixed pairs, which indicates that they sustain separate gene pools.

The orange-fronted and yellow-

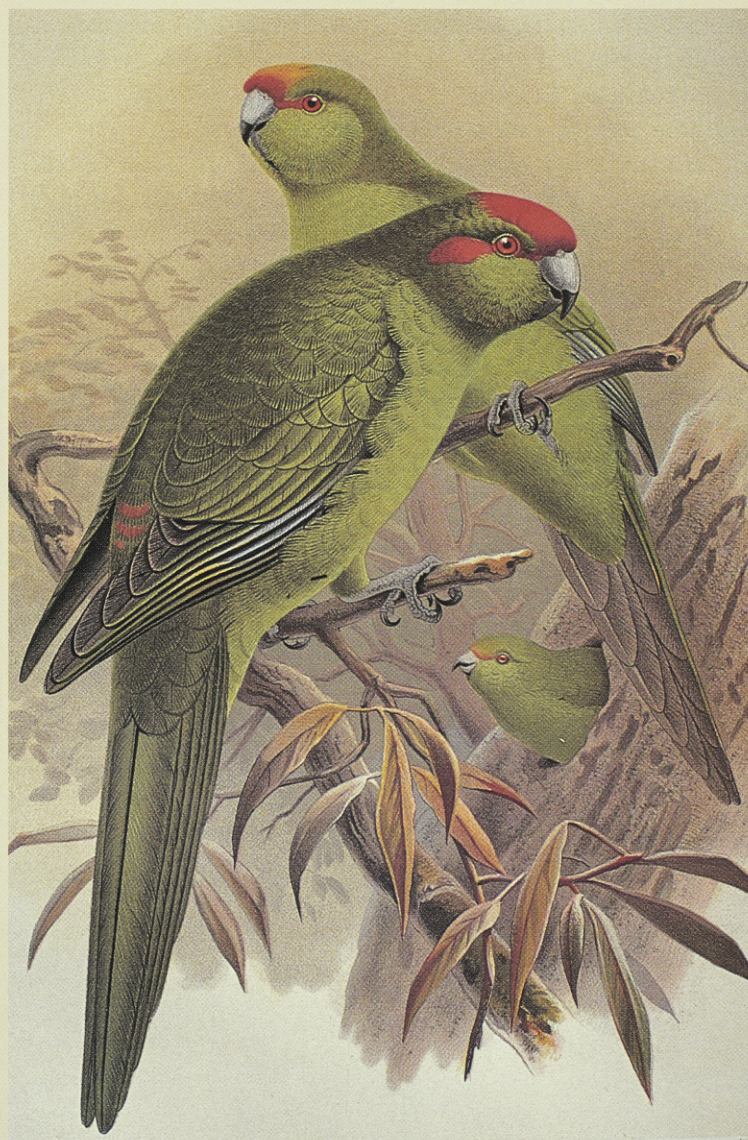
low-crowned parakeets are virtually identical, except where the yellow-crowned has a crimson band across its forehead and crimson rump spots; the orange-fronted has an orange forehead band and orange rump spots. The calls of the two parakeet are not audibly different, but the orange-fronted tends to call much less often than the yellow-crowned. Both parakeet species are highly active, non-territorial birds, living in the beech forest canopy.

Current research indicates

their diets may be different.

The Department of Conservation's goals for orange-fronted parakeet are to prevent extinction, to promote research that will aid management, and to survey for and establish new populations. Continued intensive management and ecological study of the remaining orange-fronted parakeet is essential for its continued survival.

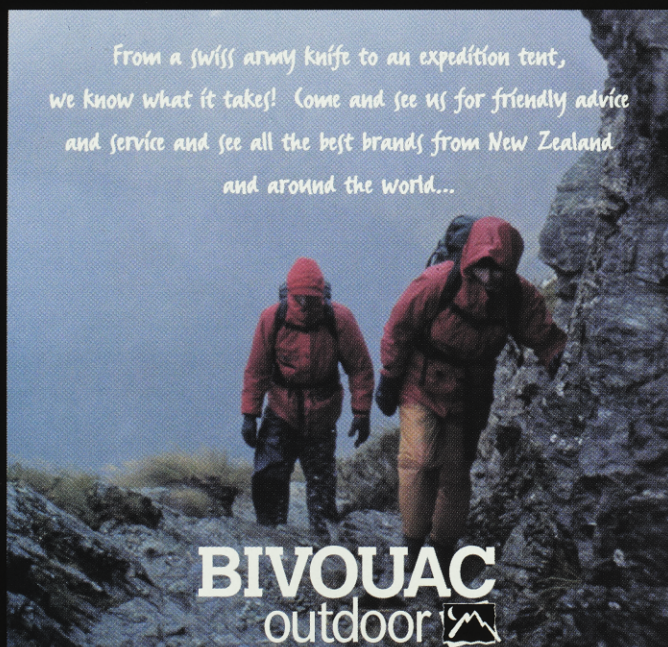
— Sarah Mankelow,
Department of Conservation,
Christchurch.



An orange-fronted parakeet peeks from its nest hole in this illustration of the different frontal feathers of New Zealand's three kakariki — red-crowned, yellow-crowned and orange-fronted. Now established as a separate species by recent DNA testing, the biological status of the orange-fronted parakeet has been the subject of controversy for more than a century. Pioneer ornithologist Sir Walter Buller also regarded it as a separate species publishing this stone engraving by J.G. Keulemans in an 1880s work on New Zealand birds.

Adventure gear? Get it here!

From a swiss army knife to an expedition tent,
we know what it takes! Come and see us for friendly advice
and service and see all the best brands from New Zealand
and around the world...



BIVOUAC
outdoor

6 specialist outdoor clothing and equipment stores nationwide:
Auckland 109 Queen St. Newmarket 326 Broadway Hamilton 611 Victoria St.
Wellington 16 The Terrace, Christchurch 76 Cashel Mall, Dunedin 101 Stuart St.
Phone 0800 Bivouac Email bivouac@bivouac.co.nz