

SHORT NOTE

North Island Kokako with orange wattles

On 24 September 1990, at Kaharoa (23 km north of Rotorua), I saw a North Island Kokako (*Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*) with orange wattles. I encountered the bird, together with its colour-banded mate, at 8.15 a.m. They were feeding in a tawa. The wattles of the unbanded bird looked dark orange-brown, but the bird was not in bright light.

I saw the bird nine more times between 26 September and 8 October, several of them in direct light at close range. On all nine occasions, the wattles looked dull orange, perhaps closest to colour number 06 - E - 51 in the British Standard Series 5252 colour range.

The wattles were small with a gap of at least 5 mm between them, whereas its mate had normal large overlapping cobalt blue wattles. The dull orange described is quite unlike that of juvenile Kokako. The wattles of Kokako nestlings are pink, changing to lilac on fledging.

This is not the first time North Island Kokako with orange wattles have been reported. The Hamilton Junior Naturalists' Club (*Notornis* 1975, 22:283-290) referred to three other reports. In 1851 at Kopaki near Te Kuiti, a Mr Hone found a Kokako dead on a road with wattles "pale orange yellow". Major Mair in 1867 saw a Kokako near Lake Tarawera with "bright orange wattles". The Hamilton Junior Naturalists' Club reported a Kokako with "orange-yellowish" wattles at Te Kauri Park near Kawhia on 24 January 1969.

There are no other sightings of Kokako with these wattle colours despite the large number of Kokako that have been followed by researchers in central North Island forests in the last 10 years (J. Innes, pers. comm.).

My observations were made while I was working at Kaharoa establishing a predator control programme for Kokako as part of a research/management project. I am an experienced Kokako observer, having surveyed them on Great and Little Barrier Islands and on the mainland.

I thank Rhys Buckingham, Rod Hay, John Innes and Paul Jansen for commenting on this note.

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