

## SHORT NOTES

### Hybrid parakeet on mainland

On the afternoon of 26 November 1985, during a bird survey of Big Bush State Forest c. 55 km south-west of Nelson, I played taped calls of Yellow-crowned Parakeets (*Cyanoramphus auriceps auriceps*) along a road through native forest characterised as hard beech/ red-silver beech (*Nothofagus truncata*/ *N. fusca* - *N. menziesii*) (D Hunt, pers. comm.). One bird responded, calling and flying into the top of a large beech and then down to a dead tree 10 metres above the ground and about 30 metres from me. Observing it for several minutes in excellent light with 7 x binoculars I noted the following: crown red above bill grading into orange by three-quarters of the way back, last quarter yellow; a patch of red in front of the eye joining the red of the crown, a spot behind the eye distinctly orange (both sides seen). Other plumage features noted were blue on the wing coverts, rump patches either red or orange (not seen clearly) and a general green colouring as in Yellow-crowned Parakeets. A visit to this site on 22 November 1985 had elicited responses from two birds clearly identified as Yellow-crowned Parakeets and this bird appeared similar in size to the smaller of these. In responding to the tape it came down lower than they did.

It is considered that this bird must have been a hybrid between the Yellow-crowned Parakeet and the Red-crowned Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae novaezelandiae*) and most resembles a first cross hybrid between the two — sharing features of the head colour of each species (R. H. Taylor, pers. comm.). Hybrids have been observed on the Auckland Islands and on Mangere Island in the Chathams, where they showed considerable variation, including individuals that were clearly 'closer' in plumage to one or other species than this bird (Taylor 1975). Veitch (1979) observed a male Yellow-crowned Parakeet sharing a nest with a female Red-crowned Parakeet on Little Barrier Island, but it is not known whether young were reared. However, although aviculturists will hold some hybrids, there are no apparent records of hybrids in the wild on the mainland.

Different habitat preferences and ecological differences normally keep the two species from hybridising in unmodified habitats (Taylor 1985). Suggested factors leading to hybridisation on Mangere Island were a highly modified environment conferring no survival value to parental forms over hybrids, together with low numbers of colonists of each species (Taylor 1975). Similar factors could well be involved in the Nelson region. Firstly, much of the region's original lowland forest cover has been removed and the area of this observation is typical of the pattern of vegetation remaining. It was within a block of c. 2200 ha of native forest (at 590 m altitude a.s.l.) bounded to the north and west by c. 3500 ha of exotic plantation forest (mostly *Pinus radiata*) and to the south and east by farmland except for a narrow strip 2-3 km wide connecting to a further larger area of beech forest. Secondly, recent surveys have shown that one of the species, the Red-crowned Parakeet, occurs in only very low numbers in the region. Bull *et al.* (1985) list seven records for the Nelson Province 1969-79, one in Nelson City in 1971 and probably an escapee, two at Nelson Lakes on Mt Robert (one of which was doubtful — M. Clarborough, pers. comm.) and four in Mt Richmond State Forest.

NOTORNIS 33: 58-62 (1986)

During my involvement in a bird survey of Nelson Lakes National Park (Butler, in prep.) the 43 parakeets identified to species were all Yellow-crowned, as were the five others seen to date in Big Bush. This was the only species observed at Mt Misery, Lake Rotoroa, during ten recent years of bird surveys by DSIR Ecology Division, Nelson. The one known recent sighting of a Red-crowned Parakeet in the region was made by the author in beech forest on the east side of the St Arnaud Range in the Upper Wairau, Marlborough, on 18 September 1985, a single bird accompanied by two Yellow-crowned Parakeets.

It is considered that Red-crowned Parakeets now occur in such low numbers in the Nelson region (note: little information available for North-west Nelson Forest Park) that some interbreeding with Yellow-crowned Parakeets is a likely consequence. A significant pure-bred population of Red-crowned Parakeets has yet to be found here.

I am grateful to Rowley Taylor for his comments on this note.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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### Second record of a Manx Shearwater in New Zealand

On 25 January 1985, Mrs B. A. Tennyson found a decaying medium-sized shearwater on Waikanae Beach, Wellington west coast, after several days of strong northwesterly winds. This bird was later identified as a Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*). Comparisons with skins in the National Museum confirmed the identification (J. A. Bartle, M. J. Imber, A. J. D. Tennyson).

#### Description

Many feathers from the head, neck and inner wing were missing. Otherwise the plumage was fairly complete.

*Head and body:* Forehead, back, scapulars, rump and remaining crown, nape and hindneck feathers sooty brown. Breast, belly, flank and remaining throat feathers white.

*Wings:* Upperwing coverts, secondaries and primaries sooty brown. Inner vanes of primary undersurfaces somewhat silvery. Underwing coverts white, except for the conspicuous dark feathering along the leading edge, widest at the elbow region and poorly developed past the carpal joint. Some dark dusting of the greater-underwing-covert tips. Long axillaries white with pointed tips, terminally black for 2 cm, nearly reaching the trailing edge of the wing. Shorter axillaries white with black tips.

*Tail:* Upper tail-coverts and tail feathers sooty brown. Exposed under tail-coverts mostly with black on outer vane, some with a dusting on the inner.