

Return of kakariki to Mana Island

What are kakariki?

A member of the parrot family, the yellow-crowned parakeet was once common on mainland New Zealand, but it is now mainly confined to predator-free islands and large tracts of forest on the mainland. Notable for its colourful bright green, red and yellow plumage, it loves to nest in holes in branches and trunks of trees, crevices in cliffs, and in burrows in the ground.

Kakariki are usually solitary or found in pairs, although in autumn and winter the birds may form small flocks. In flight they make a loud rapid chatter and may also chatter and babble when feeding.

Why were kakariki transferred to Mana Island?

The yellow-crown parakeet or kakariki was once part of Mana Island's ecosystem. Its bones were found in midden (rubbish heap) material on Mana. It was one of the bird species recommended by DOC for reintroduction to the island. We have already seen the introduction to the island of fairy prions, diving petrels, takahe, North Island robins, flax weevils and five species of skink and gecko. Their return has been made possible by the removal of mice, and a native forest replanting project that is being undertaken by Friends of Mana Island. There is now abundant food for kakariki, including kanuka nuts, coprosma berries, and the extensive grass seed.

Where have the birds come from?

Twenty six birds, eleven female and fifteen male birds, were relocated from Te Kakaho Island in the Chetwode group, Marlborough Sounds which hosts the closest genetically suitable population to Mana Island. The Chetwode Islands population is thriving and will easily replenish itself.



Above: A yellow-crowned parakeet shortly after its release on Mana Island.
Photo: Doreen ????

Top: Yellow-crowned parakeet.
Photo: C.R. Veitch/Department of Conservation



***What if they
decide to
leave?***

Kakariki are good fliers with the ability to travel large distances. Despite their great flying ability, they are not expected to leave Mana where there is an abundance of food, habitat and breeding sites, but it's possible they may decide to venture out and explore their new surroundings. They may be seen flying to adjacent mainland sites or Kapiti Island, especially if those sites have a favourite flowering or fruiting plant. Birds transferred to other islands have been observed leaving to exploit nearby food sources, but on most occasions they return to their island home.

The transferred birds will be colour banded on their legs to enable identification of the individuals. It is likely, however, that enough will remain to establish a population on Mana Island.

***Who is
behind this
project?***

This project was initiated by the Friends of Mana Island which has obtained sponsorship from a range of businesses and individuals: Mana Community Grants Foundation, Porirua; Aquaheat Industries Ltd, R.R. & G.A. Renshaw, Plimmerton; Brights Building Supplies, Paremata; Plimmerton Technology Centre teachers and students; David Blakiston and Conservation Corps students at UCOL, Levin.

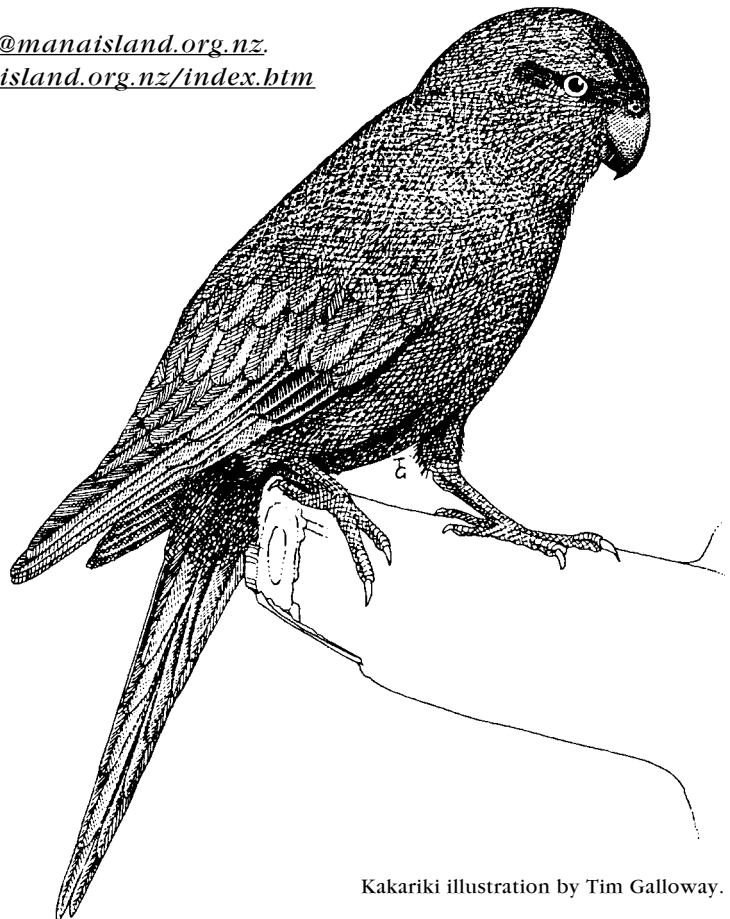
Volunteers have also helped make nesting boxes and will monitor the birds following their transfer to the island. Ngati Toa and Ngati Kuia actively support the project and transfer.



This is one of several projects that the Friends of Mana Island support, if you would like to volunteer to monitor kakariki, know more about the Friends and any future projects they may be involved in, please contact:

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Kakariki illustration by Tim Galloway.