



Title: 'Joie de vivre'

Description: Yellow-crowned parakeet (kākāriki) on Motuara Island

Photographer's name: Noelle Bennett

Where and when: Motuara Island, Queen Charlotte Sound, May 2021.

Sustainability: Yellow-crowned parakeets are small, bright green and noisy!

I find it fascinating that although their conservation status is listed as not threatened, they are described as being rare or uncommon in most places. The only places they are described as being common are on predator-free islands (Motuara is one such island) or in a few valleys of eastern Fiordland and West Otago. Otherwise they are known to be present in many large native forests throughout the main islands of New Zealand. They inhabit what is described as 'tall forest' on the main islands but on the predator-free offshore islands they are commonly seen in low scrub or even open grassland. This is a recurring pattern in New Zealand ecology – the impact of introduced predators doesn't just depress numbers overall, it can lead to retreat of the species into just part of its range and habitat. Ecologist refers to it having a reduced 'niche' because the new force of predation tips the balance and restricts where it can survive and prosper. New Zealand's offshore islands give valuable clues of what the birdlife and insect life must have been like before stoats, weasels, ferrets, house cats, dogs, rats, mice and hedgehogs were introduced.

It is thought that the total population of kākāriki may be in the tens of thousands although it has become much scarcer in the last few decades. In eastern Fiordland and West Otago they become very abundant for a short time when the beech trees seed heavily. Ironically, beech mast years tend to be followed by plagues of stoats and rats. When this happens, predation of the kākāriki becomes very high and consequently nesting success is low. One of its other main threats is human destruction of its habitat.

Photographer's notes: This yellow-crowned parakeet was photographed on Motuara Island which is in Queen Charlotte Sound. It is one of the predator-free islands that these stunning wee birds have been introduced to. Certainly you are never in any doubt as to their presence there. As soon as you set foot on the island you can hear them chattering away. Often, trying to photograph them is very challenging though both because of the lighting (or more accurately, the lack of it) and the fact they tuck themselves away in amongst the trees. There is one spot soon after you start walking along the track on the Island which has a small pond and some wet rocks. It is buried away in dark undergrowth and often one or even two kākāriki can be found here enjoying the fruits that have fallen from the surrounding trees. This is exactly where I found this one - in the least photogenic place imaginable on an otherwise stunningly beautiful island.

I do try really hard not to anthropomorphise the animals I photograph, but this wee bird seemed to be having such

an awesome time.

Photo specs: This image is a composite produced from one single image which has been used multiple times with differing effects applied to each iteration, plus one additional image to provide a more aesthetically pleasing background and end result. Technical specs: The image was taken using a Panasonic DC-G9 camera and a Panasonic Leica DG 100-400mm f/4-6.3 ASPH lens. Exposure details - 1/60 sec at f5.3 with an ISO of 800 and a focal length of 236mm (472mm full frame equivalent).

Digital specs: 8789 x 8110 pixels (71.28MP) @ 300dpi

Key words: birds, kākāriki yellow-crowned parakeet, endemic, Marlborough Sounds, Motuara Island, island refuges, introduced predators, niche reduction, Noelle Bennett, Ecosystems Photography, sustainability.

Price: \$300 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image. Visit www.ecosystemsphotography/sales for details & to order, or to get a quote if you would like a high-quality print.

Donation: The price includes a \$100 donation to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice, or otherwise to *The Wildlife Hospital*, Dunedin. <https://www.wildlifehospitaldunedin.org.nz/>

We recommend that the donation goes to *The Wildlife Hospital*, Dunedin because of the amazing work they do, treating a wide variety of native species, including parrots, penguins, reptiles, and sea lions. The hospital is important to the survival of so many of our beautiful native creatures, including ones that have been hit by cars, flown into windows or blundered into powerlines.

Image ref: NB#007 (please use this reference in all orders and correspondence).

Noelle Bennett
6 December 2021