

Malherbe's Parakeet

Cyanoramphus malherbi



Maud Island, New Zealand,
March 2007

Photo: © Jack van Hal

Population: ↓
50-249

REASON FOR CR-LISTING

DECLINE POPULATION RANGE

THREATS
Invasives

History

1857 – French naturalist Charles de Souancé (1823-1896) describes the species.

1999-2000 – the population crashes from 200-500 down to low tens due to rat predation during two consecutive summers.

2003 – the taxonomic status, which has been debated for over 100 years, is finally found to be specific after DNA studies by Jonathan Kearvell and Andrew Grant.



2008 – translocations are planned for a third island in Fiordland.

This parakeet, also known as Orange-fronted Parakeet, is known from three valleys in the South Island, New Zealand with sightings from four other sites in the 1990s and is the rarest parakeet in New Zealand. Its former range included North Island, most of South Island and Stewart Island. Birds have been translocated to Chalky Island in Fiordland and Maud Island where they are self-sustaining. Today it is restricted to beech forest and requires mature trees with hollows to nest in. It feeds in low-growing shrubs and in lower forest level on seeds, fruits, leaves, flowers and invertebrates and breeding is linked with the irregular seeding of *Nothofagus* beech. It breeds from December and January, but can extend into the winter if seeding is good, and lays five to eight eggs.

The primary cause of decline can probably be attributed to introduced rats and stoat. As predation occurs on the nest, the female-ratio is skewed and managed beech forests are unlikely to have trees with hollows which cause lack of nesting sites. Browsing by

cattle, deer and possums alter the forest structure and have an impact on feeding.

The species is difficult to separate from Yellow-crowned Parakeet *Cyanoramphus auriceps*, which hampers monitoring and conservation. The two river valleys where it breeds are to be restored and protected through pest management, including culling stoat. There is on-going work to establish populations on predator-free islands, and unbanded birds, i. e. birds that are born and raised there, have been observed breeding. Breeding trees that are found on the mainland receive individual predator-protection and Operation Ark is aiming to rid South Island beech forests of rats and stoats.

A complete survey of current and previous populations should be performed as well as detailed studies on its breeding biology and ecology. People should be trained in identifying the species and further attempts of introduction to predator-free islands should be made.