

# Kea



COMMON NAME: **KEA** – Gould, 1856

LATIN NAME: ***Nestor notabilis***

LATIN MEANING: *Nestor* (Greek myth). Nestor, wise old king of Pylos at the siege of Troy, formerly a great warrior and universally respected for his wisdom; ref. the grey, hoary head of the Kaka *N. meridionalis* L. *notabilis*, remarkable striking.

CLASS: Aves

ORDER: Psittaciformes

FAMILY: Nestoridae

GENUS: *Nestor*

SPECIES/SUB SPECIES: *Notabilis*

## DESCRIPTION:

The sexes are similar, although the male is larger with a more outward curving upper mandible. The overall colour is an olive green with scarlet under wing coverts. The iris is dark brown, the mandible and legs dark brown to black. Size 46 cm. Juveniles crown immediately after fledging. The nape is olive/yellow, the cere and mandible bright orange-yellow. Legs are light grey.

## HABITAT / DISTRIBUTION:

Kea inhabit the South Island high country and alps.

## BREEDING:

Kea do not usually breed until they are five or six years old. Breeding commences in mid-winter with a clutch of 3–4 eggs laid and incubated by the female alone for around 25 days. The male will feed the female on the nest; chicks spend up to 12 weeks or more in the nest and once they have left are fed by both parents for a further three months.

## SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

Kea are intelligent, playful, social animals and require considerable mental stimulation.

## DIET:

Kea are opportunists and are generally willing to eat a wide variety of food.

## PRINCIPAL THREATS:

- Degradation of their habitat by fire
- Over-grazing by domestic stock and browsing by feral animals (eg. thar, rabbits).
- Predation at nests by introduced mammals such as stoats
- Illegal shooting and poisoning
- Illegal capture and trading in Kea.

## CONSERVATION STATUS:

Category B threatened species.



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