

Media release

19th September 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



New Study Urges Caution Over Growing Trade in Captive-bred parrots

A new study published in *Conservation Biology* has raised concern about the effectiveness of commercial captive-breeding of parrots as a strategy to reduce pressure on wild populations.

The comprehensive review, conducted by researchers from the World Parrot Trust and World Animal Protection, highlights significant knowledge gaps and potential pitfalls in commercial farming of parrots. The report issues a warning that current practices are not a straightforward conservation solution and inadvertently threaten wild parrot populations.

Alisa Davies, lead author of the report, said: *"In recent years, captive-breeding of parrots for the exotic pet trade has increased dramatically. While this practice has been proposed, and often assumed, to be a viable method for reducing pressure on wild parrot populations from trapping, our study revealed significant knowledge gaps in the actual impacts of such breeding practices."*

The study investigated how the commercial production of parrots could impact conservation efforts, both positively and negatively, for some of the world's most threatened species. The researchers reviewed primary and grey literature to evaluate evidence to support five pre-established criteria. Focusing on a sample of 16 threatened parrot species that are heavily traded or have experienced population declines due to unsustainable trade, the researchers aimed to provide a thorough understanding of the situation across different taxonomic groups, life histories, and native regions.

The study found that the potential for captive-breeding to reduce demand for wild-sourced parrots varies greatly depending on the species and context and that significant knowledge gaps exist in key areas. Among them is the lack of quantitative data on the productivity of commercial breeding practices, particularly in growing markets like Asia, and the financial viability of captive breeding in some species if adequate checks and balances to prevent laundering are put in place. The research also identified multiple pathways through which captive breeding can increase demand for wild parrots.

Dr. Rowan Martin, the study's senior author and Director of Bird Trade Programmes with the World Parrot Trust, said: *"An important finding of the study was the complexity of interactions in the trade between different species. Given the existing knowledge gaps and the potential for unanticipated consequences, it is essential to consider the cross-linkages between trade of different species to avoid inadvertently facilitating illegal and unsustainable trade. We know that increasing the supply of one species can stimulate demand and lead to people 'upgrading' to other rarer species, and that trade on scale increases opportunities for laundering. With many species already on the brink we've got to get this right. The stakes are just too high."*

Dr. Neil D’Cruze, co-author and Head of Wildlife Research with World Animal Protection, said:
“Even if animal welfare and public health risks associated with commercial captive parrot breeding are completely set aside, the practice raises serious concerns from a conservation perspective. Our study highlights that the rapid expansion of parrot farming and potential loosening of trade restrictions for some highly endangered species taking place in some countries risks worsening conservation challenges, making it crucial for policymakers to seriously reconsider the practice’s viability as a “go to conservation tool.”

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Notes to Editors

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Source

Davies, A. J. D’Cruze N. C., Martin R. O. (2024). A review of commercial captive breeding of parrots as a supply-side intervention to address unsustainable trade. *Conservation Biology*. 38 (5) e14338

Link to Open Access paper <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.14338>.

The study was published as part of a Special Issue of the journal *Conservation Biology* titled “Beyond Charismatic Megafauna in Illegal Wildlife Trade”.

About The World Parrot Trust

The World Parrot Trust is an internationally recognized parrot conservation non-profit, whose work covers 80 species of parrot in 45 countries. We work protect parrots in the wild and help them thrive in our homes. A major focus of our programmes a multifaceted strategy to end harmful trade in parrots through empowering local communities, dismantling trafficking networks, caring for seized parrots, and encouraging “responsible aviculture”.

About World Animal Protection

World Animal Protection is the global voice for animal welfare, with more than 70 years of experience campaigning for a world where animals live free from cruelty and suffering. We have offices in 12 countries and work in 47 countries. We collaborate with local communities, the private sector, civil society and governments to improve the lives of animals. Our goal is to change the way

the world works to end animal cruelty and the suffering of wild and farmed animals. Through our global food system strategy, we will end factory farming and create a humane and sustainable food system that puts animals first. By transforming the failed systems that fuel exploitation and commodification, we will give wild animals the right to a wild life. Our work to protect animals will play a vital role in solving the climate emergency, the public health crisis, and the devastation of natural habitats.

Photos

Photos to accompany the release are available at this [link](#).