

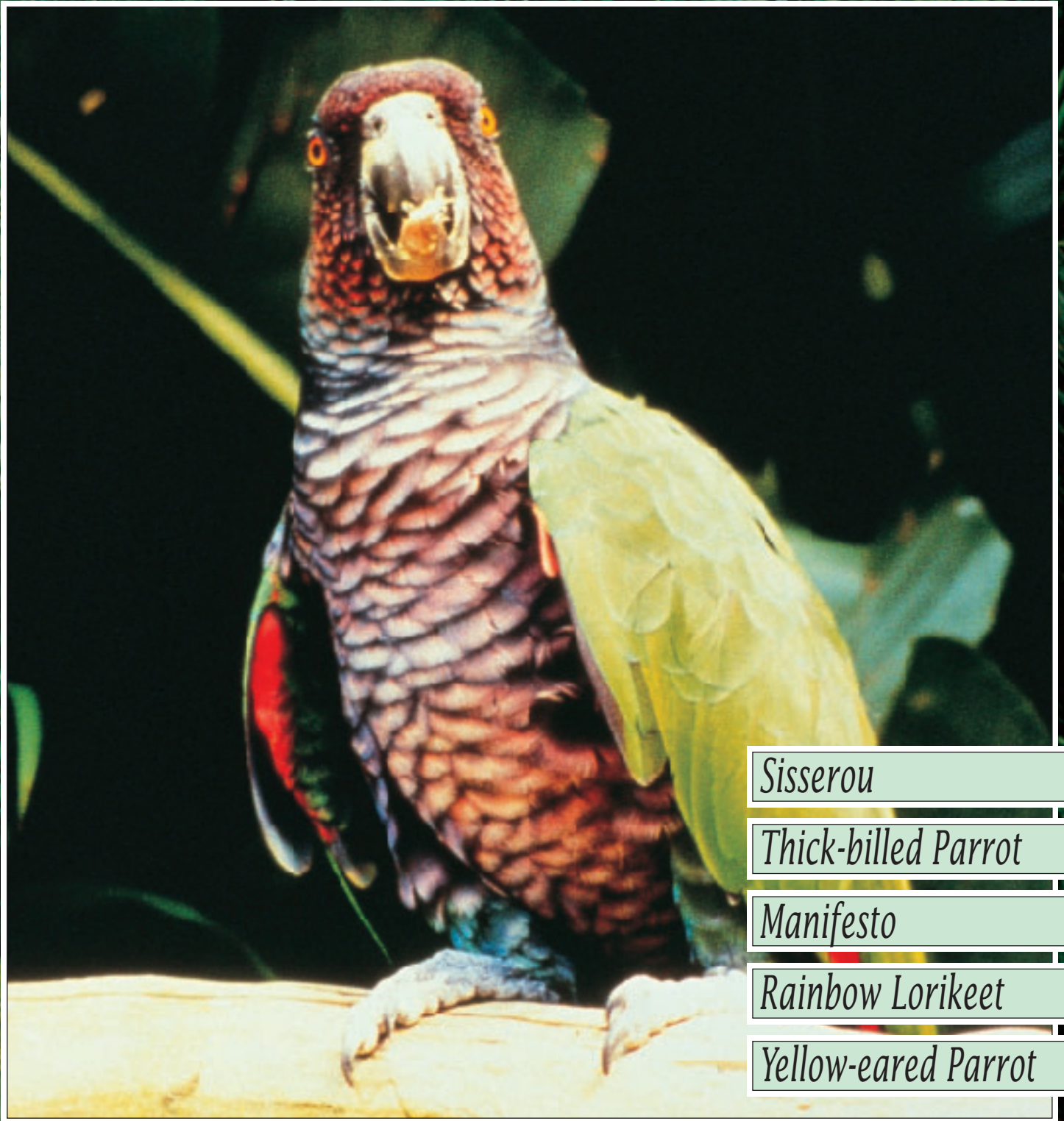
PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN PARROT CONSERVATION
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

World Parrot Trust
in action



Vol. 12 No.1 February 2000

Psitta Scene



Sisserou

Thick-billed Parrot

Manifesto

Rainbow Lorikeet

Yellow-eared Parrot

psittacine (sit' à sin) belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like

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Cover Picture

This bird is the only Imperial Amazon, or Sisserou, in captivity. It lives in a government aviary on Dominica, West Indies. This male bird has a deformed beak, but the picture disguises this to some extent. The following article by Paul Reillo PhD describes the exciting new development of the Morne Diablotin National Park on Dominica. WPT Canada and WPT USA have both helped with funding this park and we intend to stay in close touch with this important project.

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It will of course consider articles or letters from any contributors on their merits.

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Sisserou to the Rescue

— how an endangered parrot promotes biodiversity protection in Dominica

by PAUL R. REILLO, Ph.D.

Staring out with lifeless eyes from her bottle of alcohol, Martha the pickled parrot casts a vigil over me as I write. Unlike so many museum specimens archived only for their reference potential—for measurement, genetic analysis, all sorts of comparative research—Martha's preserved remains also carry an additional, sobering epitaph: she was the last female of the rarest Amazon parrot on earth, the Imperial Amazon, in captivity. And yet, despite her present state, her story is one of hope for a parrot species facing extinction. Brilliantly coloured, and among the largest of the Amazon parrots, the Sisserou, as it is known locally, is the national bird of Dominica, the largest and most pristine of the Windward Islands in the West Indies. Sandwiched by Martinique and Guadeloupe, Dominica is a picturesque, volcanic land 29 miles long and 16 miles wide blanketed by some of the finest virgin stands of rain forest in the Caribbean. It is the only Caribbean island to have two large, endemic Amazon parrots, the Sisserou (*Amazona imperialis*) and the Jaco (*Amazona arausiaca*). These parrots are surprisingly well-known even though few people have seen them in person—neither species has ever been kept in any number in captivity, and Dominica's terrain defeats many bird-watchers. In many respects, the rarity and obscurity of Dominica's parrots, particularly the Sisserou, has been the source of fascination and intrigue for ornithologists and aviculturists for decades. What we know about these birds is very recent.

More importantly, what we have yet to discover may well hold the key to their survival.

While the Jaco, a robust, gregarious, noisy parrot boasts a population of 1,300 or more individuals, the shy and elusive Sisserou is among the rarest of Amazon parrots. There are probably fewer than 200 Sisserous inhabiting the rain forests surrounding Morne Diablotin, the Caribbean's tallest volcano. It is located in Dominica's Northern Forest Reserve. It was never abundant, but was in serious decline following hurricane David in 1979.

Since endemic island species are surrounded by unbridgeable sea, they are at much greater risk of extermination. With nowhere to go to escape hurricanes, predation, poaching, and the

endless environmental assaults brought by man, many island species disappear quickly along with the ecosystems that surround them. Dominica offers the rare contemporary alternative to this grim scenario, possessing forests so pristine that it is the only Caribbean

island that Christopher Columbus would recognise today.

Our organisation, the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation (RSCF), was introduced to Dominica through the urgings of a close veterinary friend and colleague, Matthew Bond, DVM, who had visited the island to see the parrots first-hand. Bond was instrumental in rejuvenating interest in the Sisserou among U.S. aviculturists and conservationists in the early 1990's.

With such a wealth of nature in such a small, topographically challenging space, the Forestry and Wildlife Division of Dominica's government has shouldered the daunting responsibility of studying and managing the forest's resources and particularly its green, feathered ambassadors. Without question, the Forestry Division has been the lifeline to Dominica's environmental well-being, and the stimulus for vital educational programmes that ensure lasting pride in Dominica's natural history. Thanks to instructional programming and financial assistance from the RARE Centre, MacArthur Foundation and the Nature Conservancy, every Dominican, from child to elder, is a spokesperson for nature. And the Sisserou, undisputed symbol of Dominica and her lush forests, is everywhere — on flags, stamps, T-shirts, billboards — even the Coat of Arms.

The logistical difficulty of sorting out the Sisserou population's status with some measure of confidence might



The Caribbean island of Dominica.

Photo: Paul Reillo

help explain why few tangible conservation efforts appear to support the species in the wild.

To the astonishment of many ornithologists in the U.S. and Europe, Dominica's Forestry Division has supported a parrot monitoring programme since 1981. Vigilant foresters have clocked tens of thousands of hours observing parrots and nest trees in remote areas, often from dawn to dusk throughout the breeding season, January-June. Forestry's programme has been championed by Forestry Officers Arlington James, Michael Zamore, Stephen Durand, Ronnie Winston, Matthew Maximea and Bertrand Jno. Baptiste, assisted over the years by biologists from the Wildlife Preservation Trust International, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jersey Trust, BirdLife International, and Dr. Peter Evans, who received funding from the Loro Parque Foundation.

The parrot monitoring programme has yielded a wealth of descriptive information about species' distributions, nest-tree preferences, foraging behaviours, diet and courtship. Helping Forestry with its parrot programme is where our little organisation fits in. Since 1996, scientists with the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation have worked directly with foresters, tramping the hills of the Northern Forest Reserve, devising study methods for the Jaco and Sisserou, and improving the aviary at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau. With the help of donors and corporate sponsors, Forestry has received boots, ponchos, waterproof binoculars, specialised video equipment, tools, forestry ladders and a Nissan 4x4 pickup truck. Martha's friends in the aviary have benefited from an improved diet.

Jaco eggs and chicks documented

In our first joint efforts with Forestry, we set out to gather basic ecological data, particularly breeding cycles and clutch sizes. With a specially designed telescoping video probe and a time-lapse recorder,

we were able to document Jaco eggs and chicks in natural rain forest nests. These techniques permitted Forestry officers like Stephen Durand and Michael Zamore, who have studied the parrots since the monitoring programme began nearly 20 years ago, to finally see baby parrots in the nest. We now know that the Jaco clutch size is three, and that in good years with ample food, parents can raise three chicks through full-feather and fledge two. We also know the activity schedules for Jaco parents, how much time they spend feeding chicks and foraging, and that Jacos exhibit a high degree of nest site fidelity.

Despite concerted efforts, Sisserou nests have proven elusive, and those known to have had activity in the past have been abandoned. All were beyond the reach of even the craftiest of researchers and their fancy cameras. Population-level studies have not fared much better—rarely are more than two birds, presumably pairs, seen in a given patch of forest.

Just when the parrot team needed it most, a miracle of sorts occurred in January 1999. While scouting familiar terrain in the Northern Forest Reserve near the base of Morne Diablotin, Forestry officers took a lunch break along a well-hewn trail, resting on the buttresses of a 220-foot-tall Chatannye tree. Soon after, they recognised the unmistakable, hollow yodel of Sisserous above. The foresters had stumbled (and sat!) on an active Sisserou nest tree.

This tree was along a slope unsuitable for time-lapse video surveillance—the 150-lb. batteries would have had to be slogged nearly half a mile over near-vertical terrain. To make matters worse, the nest cavity was complex—roughly 80 feet from the ground, and embedded beneath huge epiphytes at the crotch of the 10-foot-diameter Chatannye. After observing the parents entering and exiting the nest, we surmised that the nest chamber was likely to be deep within the tree. By all measures, our telescoping video probe would be useless. The decision



Pair of Imperials

Photo: Paul Reillo

to watch and wait was unanimous. We cautiously watched the nest from January through June, usually no more than once per week, observing when the birds came and went, and how they interacted with one another. The female, the smaller of the two, spent considerably more time in and around the nest, and was vocal only when the male was nearby. The male vocalised whenever he arrived at the tree—he even would direct his calls at us some 300 feet away and fly with an intimidating, noisy display. As the weeks passed, both parents spent increasingly greater time foraging and less time in the cavity. Visits to the nest tree yielded fewer observations as parents would spend up to three hours out of the cavity, and only 10-15 minutes inside. We knew a feathered chick was growing within, and by late May, fledging was imminent.

With June came the early summer rains and the familiar sounds of young Jacos and their parents exiting nest trees and filling the forests with chatter. Upon visiting the Sisserou nest tree during the first week of June, the Forestry parrot team found the area silent. Up-slope, the team discovered two adult Sisserous accompanying a clumsy juvenile exhibiting characteristically erratic flight and performing uncoordinated crash landings in the canopy above. Given the close proximity to the nest tree, and no observations of Sisserous in this area during the season, we surmised that the trio must be the family we had anticipated.

Population estimates

To conduct a parrot census on Dominica, one would need at least a dozen teams of observers placed strategically all over the island, most in areas that take most of a day to access. Wonderful as it would be to count birds as we see them, meagre resources demand a more indirect approach. Here's one method: we know that Jacos congregate, sometimes 30 or more birds per roost tree. Estimates of local density, or numbers of birds per unit area, are known to equal or exceed one bird per 30 acres (0.033 birds/acre), in many parts of the island. Given that there exists at least 60,000 acres of potentially suitable Jaco habitat and if the average density across all habitats is only 2/3 of our rough density estimate (0.022), a very conservative guess at the Jaco population is ~1,300 birds.

Since the Sisserou has not been seen in greater local abundance than roughly one bird per 200 acres, and its range is confined to no more than 40,000 acres of forest within and adjacent to the Northern Forest Reserve, (a distribution well documented following hurricane David in 1979), the total population, theoretically, cannot exceed 200. Of course, as with Jaco habitat, much of the available forest has not been systematically monitored, offering hope that Sisserous are more locally abundant in areas presently unknown to researchers. Unfortunately, until hard data can be assigned to

these local sub-populations, potentially boosting our very rough average density estimate, the safe assumption is that 200 or less Sisserous currently survive on Dominica. One sits alone in a cage at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau, Dominica's capital. An eight-year-old male, blown to the ground during a tropical storm in 1992, he has been alone since June 1998.

Despite their influence as educational icons, as ambassadors for conservation, and even as effective examples of carefully managed breeding programmes in zoos and conservatories, endangered creatures born in captivity virtually always die there. Even so, captive breeding can offer an undeniable refuge from extinction, especially for island species like the Sisserou, reduced to such low numbers that a direct hit from a single hurricane could wipe it out forever. When contemplating the Sisserou's status in the wild while staring at the only caged Sisserou on earth, even the staunchest of field conservationists has to admit that it would be nice to have at least a few breeding pairs safely tucked away somewhere.

RSCF has long supported Forestry's position that the unreleasable birds in the Roseau aviary should be given every opportunity to reproduce. In

1998 one of the captive Jacos laid a clutch of three eggs—infertile, but a first step. This event, repeated in 1999, corroborates our field observations of natural Jaco nests: the Jaco clutch size is unquestionably three. Even Martha made history during her time in captivity. She died egg-bound. Sadly, her advanced age and poor health spelled disaster all around.

Is aviculture an option for the Sisserou? Maybe we could pull an egg or chick from the active nest to provide a mate for our lone bird. With new blood-sexing techniques, we could even verify a chick's sex before we took it. Maybe we could learn enough about raising and breeding Sisserous, even from a single pair, to propose a bona fide captive breeding programme.

In early October 1999 we knew the birds were not entering the nest, even though they were in the area keeping a close eye on us. Cradled in a saddle, I inched along the 80-foot climb to the nest cavity and got a clear view of the cavity entrance, thickly camouflaged with anthuriums; after inspecting from a safe distance, I descended. We proved we could get to the cavity, and likely get inside—if need be.

Sadly, our discoveries offer little immediate consolation for

Martha's 'husband' in the aviary. For the time being, Mr. Sisserou lives a lonely life, though he does get to argue with his Jaco neighbours. As field exploration expands, more nest trees are discovered, and data accumulate, the chance of recruiting a mate for Mr. Sisserou increases, along with the number of conservation options. Early in 1998 we realised that what the Sisserou needed was a novel approach, and soon. But when you don't know what specifically to do to help conserve a species, because the root causes of its population status are beyond grasp, then what do you do? That's when we started thinking about the Sisserou as a conservation fulcrum to leverage protection for the entire rain forest ecosystem.

Bringing all or part of the Northern Forest Preserve under Dominica's National Parks System has been the dream of many conservation groups and the Forestry Division, since the late 1970's. In the mid-1980's, RARE (with its "Project Sisserou"), the Wildlife Preservation Trust International, The Nature Conservancy, Rosemary Low and other conservation collaborators proposed a new national park which would forever protect, under Dominica's constitution, the primary rain forest habitat of the Jaco and Sisserou. Of particular concern was the eastern boundary of the Northern Forest Reserve, known as the Syndicate Estate area, because of the pressures placed upon it by agriculture. Case-in-point: more rain forest trees in or near the Northern Forest Reserve have been cut down in the last twenty years than during the previous 100.

New national parks

To their credit, and despite the economic enticement to sacrifice forests to farming, each of the two previous Dominican government administrations has managed to create a new national park. Morne Trois Pitons National Park, Dominica's most famous, was one of the Caribbean's first national parks, established in 1975, and became the Caribbean's first and only

Natural World Heritage Site, sanctioned by UNESCO in 1997. The Cabrits National Park, encompassing the grounds of an extensive English garrison at Fort Shirley and over 1,000 acres of marine sanctuary near Portsmouth, was added in 1986. With the national trend toward eco-tourism gaining momentum and banana profits beginning to slip in the early 1990's, government saw an opportunity to create another park, the Morne Diablotin National Park. In 1991, it almost happened.

The culmination of a dozen-plus years of brainstorming, small land grants, encouragement from conservation, local and international groups and much political manoeuvring, the Forestry Division's 1991 proposal to create Morne Diablotin National Park was inspiring, particularly in light of government's precarious finances. The Park would include nearly 10,000 acres of pristine rain forest, all within government-owned land, stretching from the Syndicate area across Morne Diablotin itself, encompassing vast riverine valleys and all known nesting and foraging areas for the Sisserou. It would include a small interpretative/welcome centre for visitors, complementing a mile-long, flat, trail loop (currently known as the Syndicate Nature Trail), where visitors could experience some of the finest old growth forest in the Caribbean without having to become mountain goats. The trail had been manicured by the Forestry Division years before. Signs identify rain forest plants and trees, many in excess of 200 feet, as the trail winds along a scenic ridge overlooking the Picard River Gorge, which spills from the base of the mammoth Morne Diablotin, which at 4,747 feet, is the Caribbean's highest volcanic peak. Visitor access would be naturally restricted to the Nature Trail and the famous Morne Diablotin Trail (offering Dominica's most physically demanding day hike), defining the Park as a true bioserve for one of the most biologically diverse and largest remaining oceanic rain forest ecosystems in the New World.



Red-necked Amazon, or Jaco.

Photo: Paul Reillo

The park plan was pursued with vigour by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, which was prepared to present it to Dominica's Cabinet, so that the Morne Diablotin area could be protected formally and permanently under the National Parks and Protected Areas Act of 1975. That's when the Division of Surveys discovered a privately held tract of 1,301 acres within the proposed park. How could the government establish a national park around private property that in the future could be legally logged, farmed, or used in some other manner incompatible with a surrounding nature preserve?

Conservation schizophrenia

We at RSCF became intrigued by the notion that a new national park and the resultant protection for vast expanses of Sisserou habitat could hinge on a 1,301-acre land deal. A form of conservation schizophrenia overcame us in early-1998, as the urgencies of parrot field research became tempered by the looming, unequivocal land conservation priority. A confluence of factors—government's endorsement of the park, a looming agricultural/economic downturn, national pride in the Sisserou, Forestry's upcoming 50th anniversary and Dominica's

21st birthday in November 1999, and the soon-to-follow millennium—identified a rare opportunity to create a park conceptualised nearly 20 years before. We suddenly found ourselves in the real estate business, a somewhat unusual role for a scientific organisation, as we immediately co-ordinated with government to help underwrite the land purchase, and get the Morne Diablotin National Park on the books as quickly as possible.

I don't know which is more compelling, the feeling of moral superiority while undertaking a good cause, or the feeling of complete inadequacy and resignation when even best efforts fall short. Since the land was in an area with a long agricultural history, its value, recognised by the owner and government alike, was considerable—just over one million U.S. dollars. If we could secure \$750,000, government agreed to pay the rest over time. By mid-1999, a series of Dominican Cabinet decisions authorised creation of the Morne Diablotin National Park, its boundaries, and the terms for acquiring the private land parcel. But despite all of the presentations, grant proposals and the many generous contributors—private individuals, family foundations, even corporate and zoo sponsors—we were missing the \$750,000 mark by a mile.

In late September 1999 we decided to put RSCF on the line and use every asset imaginable to close the deal. I called in favours from everyone I knew, begged some from friends who owed me none, and charged forward. RSCF threw its mortgage money into the pot with the blessings of the donor who had given it, along with every spare dollar we could find. A single contributor, Mr. Peter Allard—a true hero already underwriting RSCF operations and the establishment of a companion wildlife sanctuary in Barbados—was footing a full third of the bill, \$250,000. Grants and gifts took care of a big chunk, and in the end RSCF was in debt for over \$200,000. But at least the money was in the restricted escrow account, the contracts were signed, and the die was cast. With much fanfare and enormous pride, on 21 January 2000 the Government of Dominica officially declared the Morne Diablotin National Park at the State House in Roseau.

With six billion humans now crowding the planet, arguably sealing the fate of many endangered ecosystems, it is sometimes difficult to identify the people who truly stand apart. I have been lucky enough to meet and work with many of them in support of the Dominica programme, without whom the quest to create the Morne Diablotin National Park and

thereby buy the Sisserou and its forest more time might simply have ended. All of us know that the work has really just begun, and that the Sisserou's future is far from secure. Money and effort must be committed now if the parrot research and conservation efforts are to be expanded. The arduous process of managing this bioserve—scripting policies and programmes, inventorying its resources—will challenge the international conservation community's technical resources. I welcome this future, continually reminded how a shy bird came to symbolise, and ultimately rescue, the rain forests on this beautiful island. With the Morne Diablotin National Park comes a promise to maintain a course set long ago by Dominica's extraordinary people, to sustain natural resources by preserving them, thereby setting an example for the rest of us. Just as Martha has become my sentinel, so must humanity become nature's steward. What a privilege it is to watch over the Sisserou as this magnificent species survives and inspires.

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The summit of Morne Diablotin.



The Parrot Team, from left Stephen Durand, Matthew Maximea, Ronnie Winston and Paul Reillo.

Thick-billed Parrot

- an historic agreement

by ERNESTO C. ENKERLIN-HOEFLICH

After two years of delicate negotiations an historic agreement was signed to protect the most important nesting area known for the Thick-billed Parrot. The Thick-billed Parrot is an endangered species endemic to the Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico and the sky-islands that extend into the south west US in New Mexico and Arizona.

Work conducted over the last five years in a collaborative project between Wildlife Preservation Trust International (WPTI) and Monterrey Tech (ITESM) with support from a number of institutions had identified this area as the most important nesting site with over 100 nests possibly representing around 10% of the total breeding population of the species. The site, comprising over 4,000 acres of a very diverse and beautiful forest and although not strictly old growth, had remained relatively undisturbed, unlike 98.5% of the Sierra Madre which has been logged; it was targeted for logging in 2002.

The agreement calls for a 15 year moratorium on any cutting of timber in the area, Bisaloachic (or Cebadillas) which represents 10% of the timber potential of the 40,000 acre Ejido Tutuaca, a rural forest cooperative. To offset in part the losses in timber potential a number of organisations notably The Wildlands Project, Pronatura (Noreste) and Naturalia will provide the community with a number of incentives including a "rent payment" representing over time 50% of the net value of timber that will not be harvested. These organisations together with WPTI and ITESM will continue monitoring and provide community services including consultants to obtain forest certification in their remaining forest, promotion of ecotourism and participatory rural development. The importance of this strategy lies in making the pristine forest worth much more in the long run to the people than timber so that once the 15 year agreement expires they will continue protection based on self interest and pride.

It is important to consider that

the community is composed primarily of very poor foresters/peasants who in the short term have to give up about 6% of their expected annual income to make the deal happen. They do this in the hope that the offer of conservation for a better future will come true and will shortly offset this short term sacrifice. Over the life of the binding agreement they will make sure that conservation values on the land area are maintained and



Thick-billed Parrot



Photo: Keith Ewart

participate with conservationists in all necessary work to achieve this.

The negotiation itself that day was quite intense. The turning point was when the most important community leader, a man in his thirties who opposed our offer, noted; "If you want a deal give us more money and give it quick, I won't be around in fifteen years to see what happened". To this, one of the elderly community members, a woman in her seventies

responded; "Look I am quite older than you and will certainly not be around here in fifteen years but my children and grand children will. They will benefit from this and we want it to happen." The crowd cheered. Another woman noted, "Give him what he wants, he can take it from our part and lets agree on conservation of Bisaloachic". On the way back to Chihuahua City the forester that supervises the common public land told me that in all his years, over 20, working with Tutuaca and many assembly meetings, he had never seen women participate until that day. I never thought you could convince them, he said. In the end everyone but one agreed on the plan, including the young leader.

Now, even before the first material results of the agreement reach Tutuaca, they are already different because they have hope for the future in alliance with conservation. This will be formally announced at a "fiesta" in the summer. When the sun set on 22 January, 2000 the horizon looked brighter for man and parrot in the Sierra Madre.

News for WPT Members

By MICHAEL REYNOLDS

A lot has been happening in the world of the World Parrot Trust, and it is time to bring our members up to date. We should begin by passing on some excellent news on a variety of financial matters. You may recall that Steve Shaw reported in *PsittaScene* Vol 10 No.3 about a legacy from our late member Kyle Brown. This generous and committed member left WPT-USA the proceeds of a life insurance policy worth \$50,000. This sum has now been increased by a further \$23,000 from the residue of Kyle Brown's estate. This means that in the USA we have, in addition to our modest operating account, an important reserve fund of \$80,000.

In the UK we have been advised that a legacy of approximately £94,000 (\$150,000) will reach us in the next few months. This is a staggering amount of money by WPT standards, and leads to a number of interesting options. The present intention of WPT's trustees is to allocate 50% of these exceptional funds (totalling \$230,000) to our general project fund, and the other 50% to an improvement to our structure. This is the appointment of a new (paid) director, to take over from me. I have done the job (unpaid) for eleven years, but I am now almost 70, and it makes sense to hand the task over to a younger scientifically qualified person. The arrival of these funds makes this possible, and we expect to have a new director in place by the end of 2000.

More Good News

Other donations deserve to be acknowledged, as follows:

After making a donation of \$10,000 from his Texas State Fair conservation booth in 1998, Steve Martin of Natural Encounters Inc. has repeated this generous sum from the 1999 show. The 1998 funds went directly to support a group of 12 neotropical parrot projects, as reported in the February 1999 issue of *PsittaScene*, while the latest \$10,000 will go towards our support for Lear's Macaw in NE Brazil.

In *PsittaScene* for August 1999 we described the problems facing the Cape Parrot in South Africa, and asked for donations towards its survival. One of our UK members - who wishes to remain anonymous - sent in \$4,000, which was sent on, without deduction, to the project directed by Dr. Colleen Downs and the University of Natal. In his letter, our member wrote: 'I am pleased that my donation will greatly assist the cause of the endangered Cape Parrots - perhaps a little something in return for the many years I have spent in West, Central and Southern Africa and appreciated its wonderful wildlife, and the great companionship of an incomparable African Grey.'



Golden Conure at Paradise Park.

Photo: Keith Ewart

For several years now we have enjoyed the consistent support of the Keith Ewart Charitable Trust. Keith was a man of many talents, a brilliant film maker and photographer, and the owner of some of the most treasured and pampered parrots in the world. Before his death he helped WPT with photography, and his trust has helped us fund the survival of eight parrot species. We recently received a further £3,000, which was divided equally between Lear's Macaw, Golden Conure, and the Imperial Amazon.

Support from USA

Bird Clubs in the United States have been great supporters of WPT-USA. In the last twelve months no less than 18 clubs have made large donations totalling \$9,690. Here is the list:

Southern Maryland Cage Bird Club \$500
CSRA Exotic Bird Association ..\$500
Maryland Cage Bird Club\$750
National Capital Bird Club ..\$540
Peninsula Bird Club.....\$1,000
Central Indiana Cage Bird Club \$2,000
Aviculturists of Greater Boston..\$100
South Jersey Bird Club\$100

Emerald Exotic Bird Society \$300
Georgia Cage Bird Club\$400
Las Vegas Aviculture.....\$100
Michiana Cage Bird Club\$200
SW Virginia Cage Bird Club \$250
Emerald Coast Avian Society.....\$250
Ann Arbor Cage Bird Club ..\$700
Dallas Cage Bird Club\$1,750
Tennessee Valley Exotic Bird Club \$250

We do not get many similar donations from bird clubs in other countries, perhaps because the US clubs are unique in that many hold annual fund raising events, and are looking for worthy organisations to receive the proceeds. We are very grateful for this help, but how wonderful it would be if many more of the 600 US clubs decided to help the parrots through WPT-USA. We invite them all to join our crusade to help the parrots survive.

We have had several donations from Col. Eugene Klinedinst in the USA. Recently he sent us \$550, and said he had challenged his bird club to match this amount. Last week he wrote again to say his club York Area Pet Bird Club had agreed. Other club members may be able to emulate the Colonel's excellent idea.

Additional Donations

It is a fact that many more WPT members are sending an additional donation when they renew their subscriptions. These are usually between £5 and £100, or \$10 to \$200. These 'extras' are very welcome for two reasons: first, we do not want to increase the low basic subscription and possibly discourage new members; second, the cost of printing and distributing *PsittaScene* takes 50% of the subscription, and we need extra income to boost our project funds - the vital money that actually goes to work around the world for parrot survival.

Another consistent funder of WPT is the Kilverstone Wildlife Trust. Over the past five years we have received donations to be spent on the South American species that are the special interest of Lord and Lady Fisher. It was a sad day when their beautiful wildlife park in Norfolk, UK, had to close, but it is good to know that they are still able to help the parrots and other animals of the neotropics.



Lady Fisher from the cover of her book 'My Jungle Babies'

WPT Finances

While writing on the delicate subject of the World Parrot Trust's finances, I would like to take the opportunity to invite members to consider including a legacy to WPT in their wills. As described above, and as a direct consequence of two large legacies, we are about to move into an expansive second phase of development, with sounder finances overall, a more professional management, and more funds available for our projects. After eleven years it is clear that the trust is here for the long term, and has an outstanding and unmatched record of achievement. For anyone wishing to make an immediate or eventual financial commitment towards parrot conservation and welfare, we would seem to be the best and most reliable people to support.

IAATE

Another donation came the way of WPT in February 2000. I was invited to be the keynote speaker at the annual conference of IAATE, the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators. This took place in Memphis Tennessee, and I have to say it was the best organised and most

enjoyable event of its kind I have ever attended. The 200+ delegates were young, talented and enthusiastic people from most of the major US zoos. They present the bird shows that do so much to inform and educate over 27 million annual visitors, and due at least in part to the influence of IAATE, the message now is about the importance of conserving wildlife, rather than how clever it is for a cockatoo to ride a bicycle. At the closing banquet the World Parrot Trust was given a conservation award, with a cheque for \$500.



If any reader would like more information about IAATE, contact
INTERNET:iaate@email.msn.com.

More Members Needed

May we ask members to seek out NEW MEMBERS for WPT? Our numbers are steadily growing, but not fast enough. We have 2,500 members, but that is a trivial number when compared

to all the people in the world who keep or breed parrots, or have a scientific, commercial or other interest in them. We estimate there are over 50 million people who keep captive parrots, so that leaves 49,997,500 still to join the World Parrot Trust. Plenty of scope there! You could consider copying page 19 of this *PsittaScene*, and giving it to anyone who may be interested.

Manifesto

Finally, I would like to mention the WPT 'Manifesto for Aviculture' that is on the centre four pages. We first published this in 1998 and distributed it to the embassies and relevant government offices of the majority of countries where parrots occur, or where they are widely kept by aviculturists. The aim was to present a positive view of aviculture, and try to curb a tendency for unnecessary and even punitive new legislation. We have now slightly revised and updated this Manifesto, and will again send it out to offices worldwide where it may be of help to our hobby, interest, pastime, or obsession.

If anyone would like to comment on this news section, please feel free to email me or write to the WPT-UK address.

Letter from EB CRAVENS, Waiohinu, Hawaii

I just received my *PsittaScene* for Nov 99. I thank you for such a quality quarterly with high ideals and numerous conservation programmes in the field to back them up. While reading through 'Some thoughts for the Millennium', I was inspired to write this letter, by your mention that the European Union has no plans to introduce any legislation to prohibit the importation of wild parrots.

It perhaps should be noted that the U.S. Wild Bird Conservation Act, while a landmark for the international conservation scene as far as it goes to stop the importing of wild-trapped psittacines for the pet trade, does not, in fact, stop all the wild bird trade in softbills, finches, thrushes, barbets, jays, bee-eaters, and on and on....

But more to the point of this letter, it would be well for those aviculturists and bird breeders in the European Community (and their close brethren in South Africa!), to begin looking into the future where their parrot breeding interests are concerned.

These birdkeepers and the associated trappers and importers who regularly supply them have historically been predominately AGAINST restrictive legislation on the free importation of more wild-trapped parrots into their countries.

But, as an active writer, speaker and aviculturist in the U.S., a country that has taken the captive breeding of psittacines to a massive level of numbers in the past decade, let me assure those defenders of parrot importation that they are working to curtail a significant portion of their own futures.

The longer imported psittacines are brought into birdkeeping nations, the more breeding pairs become available, often at very affordable prices and the more amateurs and hobbyists begin to acquire said extra pairs to set up their own breeding operations. When this copious amount of imported parrots is available in birdkeeping households and

aviaries throughout the country in question, the numbers of offspring produced each year begin to skyrocket. When a certain saturation point is reached, monumental adverse effects ensue.

Prices start to plummet, numbers of excess birds, free birds, adopted and unwanted birds increase manyfold. Diseases among mediocre and unprofessional breeders may proliferate and are passed into other collections when these poor and dirty facilities give up and sell off birds without telling buyers they are sick!

Commonly kept and bred hookbill species become so common they cannot be sold at any price....

And the number of innovative, expert aviculturists, those who led the field and shared their knowledge and who now decide to totally get out of the psittacine breeding business, also skyrockets. So many of my close friends and mentors have done this in the U. S. that I lament over their loss to the world of parrot aviculture.

Make no mistake, a continued millennium 2000 importation of cheap wild-trapped psittacines into your country is going to cut the throats of those aviculturists who presently earn a living producing parrots for the pet and breeder trades.

If it were my choice as a breeder in a nation with a slower growth curve of parrotkeeping than that seen in the U.S., I would certainly begin to agitate for a stop in the importation of any more wild-trapped psittacines. The sooner this is accomplished, the sooner a stable avicultural community can begin planning for the future days when trading and shipping of captive-raised only parrot species should be more commonplace between breeding countries, even continents.

I wish you all the best of luck in the European Union. May your avicultural foresight extend further ahead than that of most of we Americans.

With much aloha

Sincerely, Eb Cravens



A Manifesto for Aviculture



Victorian child with Leadbeater's Cockatoo

A Manifesto f



*Charming, educational, but demanding.
Pet parrots live in forty million homes worldwide.*



Ancient 'Sultan' poultry.



*1745 engraving of an
Ornate Lorikeet.*

Published by The World Parrot Trust on behalf of many millions of parrot aviculturists and pet owners worldwide and despatched to the appropriate authorities in every major country where parrots live in the wild or are kept as pets or breeding birds.

This manifesto will also be sent to relevant international bodies and institutions and to the media. Comments are invited from interested parties.

A Brief History of Aviculture

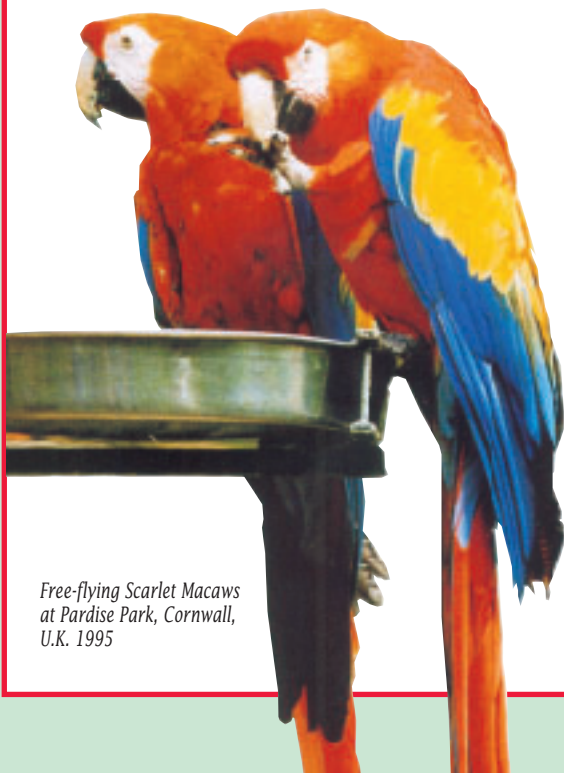
This activity is almost as old as mankind itself. We have confined poultry, pigeons and other birds for domestic and commercial reasons and kept songbirds and other caged birds in our homes. So the keeping of birds, often called 'aviculture', is by no means a modern development.

Until the last thirty years, the hobby of bird-keeping centred on low-cost birds such as canaries, fancy pigeons and domestic strains of budgerigar. What is comparatively new is the discovery that the successful breeding in captivity of some birds, primarily members of the parrot family, can provide a fascinating hobby that also brings a profit opportunity. This has caused a great expansion of interest in aviculture and an increasing demand for the importation of wild-caught parrots into many prosperous societies. With the ready availability of air transport, large numbers of parrots were removed from the wild, reaching a peak in the years 1970 to 1990.

Many species were put at risk and not surprisingly this traffic was opposed by concerned nations and conservation bodies. All but two common species of parrot are now covered by CITES, the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna. Together with national legislation and controls, this convention has gone some way to reduce this threat to the survival of parrots in the wild.

Aviculture Today

Every aviculturist is a lover of nature, captivated by the beauty and character of the birds he or she keeps. The well-being of the birds themselves lies at the heart of the hobby and the devotion of bird keepers to their charges is usually plain to see. To succeed in the captive breeding of exotic birds requires study, dedication, intelligence, persistence, a natural understanding for wildlife, financial investment and endless hard work. For the majority of aviculturists today, it remains an enthralling and decent special interest, one that can last a life-time and be shared with family, friends and fellow enthusiasts.



*Free-flying Scarlet Macaws
at Paradise Park, Cornwall,
U.K. 1995*

For Aviculture



International cooperation: at Paradise Park, UK, Rosa Elena from Peru helps to hand-rear a rare St. Vincent Parrot.



Spacious aviaries lead to breeding successes and awards.



Aviary-bred parrot chicks reduce the pressure on wild populations.

***"Parrots are amusing and never die.
You wish they did"***
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



It is unfortunate that within this community, as in any other group, there are a few individuals whose activities tarnish the reputation of the many. In the avicultural world there are some who are not genuinely concerned about the welfare of birds and who are prepared to act illegally, either for profit or to satisfy the 'collecting mania' that can sometimes be seen. These are the smugglers, many of whom have recently been brought to justice.

Aviculture disclaims these people. They are not representative of our community. We also reject those who fail to give adequate care to their birds, or who treat their fellow hobbyists unfairly.

In recent years much progress has been made in the science of aviculture and in particular the veterinary care of birds. Most aviculturists have the help of an expert avian vet and there is a wealth of publications on every aspect of the hobby.

What is more, many avicultural organisations now fund conservation projects for parrots in the wild and these contributions will undoubtedly increase.

When The World Parrot Trust was launched in 1989, one of its stated aims was to see the importation of wild-caught parrots for the pet trade replaced by aviary-bred birds. This aim was derided by some and strongly opposed by some commercial elements. Now, however, virtually every individual and organisation in our field has accepted the correctness of that aim. Attitudes are changing fast and illegality or excessive exploitation hold little attraction for aviculturists in general.

Responsible Aviculture

The concept of 'responsible aviculture', conceived and promoted by The World Parrot Trust, is gaining ground, encouraging high standards in avicultural practice and the need to accept a degree of responsibility for the conservation of wild populations, from which all captive birds have sprung.

With our support groups in eleven countries around the world, we are able to detect a growing understanding of the need to improve the way aviculture is perceived, both by the general public and by regulatory authorities.

In our opinion, this is a time for restraint in imposing further restrictions on 'responsible aviculture'.



A glove puppet is used to rear Echo Parakeet chicks in Mauritius. Advanced avicultural expertise and support from the Mauritius Wildlife Fund, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and The World Parrot Trust has helped increase the population of this critically endangered species from about fifteen to seventy-five in four years.



This painting of Hyacinth Macaws in the wild fully expresses the spirit and beauty of these superb parrots. Let us work together to keep every parrot species flying free, to be enjoyed by future generations.



Please address all comments and enquiries to:-

**The World Parrot Trust,
Glanmor House, Hayle,
Cornwall, TR27 4HB, UK.**

Tel: (44) 1736 751026

Fax: (44) 1736 751028

Email: uk@worldparrottrust.org

Website: www.worldparrottrust.org

Promoting excellence in parrot conservation, aviculture and welfare.

Some Proposals

We fully accept that the international community and every individual country has the right to regulate the movement and keeping of wildlife, in the interests of human health, avian welfare and conservation. Like all citizens, aviculturists simply ask that regulations be reasonable, easy to understand and comply with and operated with speed and consistency. We therefore propose the following:-

1. Enforce CITES effectively in every country.

Some countries have yet to join the convention, while others have signed up to CITES but do not implement it effectively.

2. Use CITES to stop the mass importation of birds into developed countries.

Large numbers of parrots are still being exported from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

3. Ensure that legal trade is sustainable and has regard for avian welfare.

Some countries still allow export quotas that lack scientific justification.

4. Ensure that departments responsible for wildlife regulation act efficiently.

In some countries unreasonable delays occur in processing documents.

5. Do not create new difficulties for aviculture.

Most aviculturists are simple hobbyists, not major entrepreneurs. Do not burden them with unnecessary paperwork. Recognise and reward their contribution to parrot conservation, as continuing success in aviary-breeding reduces the demand for wild-caught birds.

6. Continue efforts to combat illegal activities.

No responsible aviculturist condones illegal activities of any kind, or examples of cruelty or incompetence in the keeping of birds.

7. Please consult.

Aviculturists are very approachable people and there are a number of organisations that represent them well. Please consult with them and arrive at practical solutions that will ensure the long-term health of this commendable hobby.

Summary:

Aviculture is an ancient and natural human pastime which gives pleasure to millions of people.

This fulfilling hobby has been compromised by the actions of a small minority.

Attitudes in aviculture are changing, will lead to the correction of past errors and the further development of 'responsible aviculture'.

Authorities should recognise the legitimate aspirations of legitimate aviculturists and should work with them to arrive at mutually acceptable regulations.

Renewed hope for Yellow-eared Parrot

by ROSEMARY LOW

One of the species assisted last year by the World Parrot Trust in conjunction with the American Bird Conservancy was the Yellow-eared Parrot or Conure (*Ognorhynchus icterotis*). A major boost to our hopes for its survival was given by the location of a third flock of 20 birds last May. This brought the total of known individuals to 82 birds. This discovery was made at the study site in Colombia.

Fieldwork was conducted by Bernabe Lopez-Lanus from June 1998 until September 1999 with the aim of locating the species, then determining its ecological requirements, distribution and status. A total of 5,623 field hours have been accumulated in the search for and study of this critically endangered species. It is associated with wax palms (*Ceroxylon quindiuense*) (another endangered species) of which only three groves remain in Colombia. The study site is a heavily-fragmented landscape, dominated by pasturelands with only scattered remnants of wax palm groves.

In June a radio-transmitter was attached to one Yellow-eared Parrot, thus this bird continues to provide daily data for one flock. An active nest, situated deep within a dead wax palm cavity, was located on April 26. The nest was intensively studied until an adult pair and a "nest helper" successfully fledged one youngster on June 9. This nest provided the first ever breeding biology data. This was supplemented in September with four additional active nests. At two nests there were co-operative breeding assistants, or "helpers" - the first recorded instances in a neotropical parrot.

At dawn the three flocks disperse far into highland forest



Yellow-eared Parrot

(above 3,000m) on the main ridge of the Central Cordillera, before slowly returning, feeding at lower elevations and arriving at the roost site by mid-afternoon. The parrots feed extensively on the wax palms (490 observations) and on *Citharexylon subflavescens* (111 observations) around the roost locations. Adult palm mortality is accelerating for unknown reasons and palm recruitment is almost nil. This gives great cause for concern.

The Yellow-eared Parrot is strongly seasonal and highly mobile. From at least 1983 until 1989 a flock would appear at La Planada Nature Reserve, Narino, almost on the same day each year. The birds often stayed until May. The flock increased in size, reaching a maximum of 21 birds in 1985. In 1990 the flock did not appear and has never been seen since. Sadly, it is now believed to be extinct.

Nevertheless, the fact that 40% of the known 82 birds are believed to be young, gives great hopes for the survival of this handsome parrot. The researchers are able to distinguish immature birds by the green speckling on the

yellow underparts and by the distinctive vocalisations. When begging for food the young bird flutters and bows down its head, and the bright yellow head feathers are agitated.

There is evidence within the communal breeding area that young have been extracted from nest holes. Two heavily damaged dead palms, containing large holes made by axe or machete, had chicks removed in or about 1990. One young bird was known in captivity. It was caught in a cattle salt trough, fed on leftovers of food such as rice, beans and potatoes, then sold to a priest. Fortunately, it escaped one week later and possibly returned to the flock, which regularly passes over the village. In another case, a campesino trapped a young bird, but it died a few weeks later. It has been suggested that this species is difficult to keep in captivity. Fortunately, the campesinos have no special interest in this bird, which they call "guacamaya" (macaw). The FARC guerilla have prohibited the commercialisation and / or capture of wildlife in the region for the past ten years.

Rio Toche study site in Colombia

Intensive surveys were conducted in this area (at 2,000, to 3,400m) during 11 months from 1998 to 1999. It includes a vast area of wax palms and forested valleys. Although Bernabe Lopez-Lanus was unsuccessful in locating Yellow-eared Parrots, there have been several probable sightings since 1995, ranging from one pair, to a flock of 24 birds. It is suspected that the species no longer breeds or resides in the area and that its spasmodic occurrence may be related to seasonal fruiting.

Several new areas were prospected for *Ognorhynchus*, including the highland areas of Volcan Tolima-Ruiz on the edges of the Los Nevados national park and the Alta Rio Quindio reserve in the departments of Quindio and Risaralda. Approximately 60% of this area has an abundant presence of wax palms - but there was no sign of nesting, despite intensive searches.

Efforts to introduce the project to local communities and enlist their help in the detection of the species included more than 50 informal talks, 4 presentations in local schools and the distribution of 47 posters. (Those used for this species in Ecuador, entitled "Salvemos el Caripero"). Hunting is not considered a serious threat in Colombia; the Yellow-eared Parrot has not been persecuted there for more than ten years.

The Yellow-eared Parrot is the American parrot most threatened with total extinction. The project to try to save it is one of the most important with which the World Parrot Trust has ever been associated. It is supported by other leading conservation organisations, including the German Zoologosche Gesellschaft/Fonds fur Bedrohte Papageien and Loro Parque Fundacion. It is good to know that international co-operation is providing funding for the dedicated biologists Paul Salaman, Bernabe Lopez-Lanus and Niels Krabbe and others who have put in so many hours in the field in their quest for sightings. The information given here was obtained from their latest progress report.

The Rainbow Lorikeet

- a modern witch hunt

by ROSEMARY LOW

In the league table of countries world-wide with a high number of endangered bird species, New Zealand comes 11th. But a sizeable proportion of its unique endemic species are already extinct. By about 1600 the Moa had gone, along with the Giant Eagle and about 32 other species. Since about 1840 ten more land birds have become extinct, including the Huia and the Stephens Island Wren. These more recent extinctions were mainly caused by the introduction of alien mammals such as rats, cats and stoats and food competitors such as deer and brush-tailed possums. Since 1840 more than 80 alien species of mammals, birds and fish have become established in New Zealand.

As the native fauna evolved in the absence of land mammals, bloodthirsty animals such as rats and stoats caused the extinction of some species, while others, such as the Kakapo (extinct in the wild) are critically endangered and survive in very small numbers. In recent years the Department of Conservation (DOC) has been acclaimed for its work in eradicating predators from offshore islands which have become intensively managed reserves for endangered species.

Here they breed and thrive in the absence of predatory introduced creatures such as rats, stoats, ferrets and weasels which, of course, are unprotected species. Nevertheless, it would be quite within the law there to breed and release these pests. Recently however, another introduced species has been declared a pest in New Zealand, a species which DOC considers potentially so deadly it has been designated as an 'unwanted organism' and unlike rats, stoats etc., is now covered by the Biosecurity Act (1993). This means that if you breed one of these infamous creatures and let it go, you could be jailed for a year.

What manner of creature could be accorded such status, more lethal than a stoat, a potential plague species which (according to DOC) could carry disease like a rat? None other than Australia's Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus moluccanus*) - one of the world's most beautiful birds! Before you gasp with incredulity, you will doubtless believe that DOC must



Rainbow Lorikeet

Photo: Rosemary Low

have very good grounds indeed. They have made the decision to spend NZ\$245,000 (approx. £74,240) to trap and kill (by breaking their necks or by lethal injection) and to poison and shoot the feral Rainbow Lorikeets in the Auckland area.

In a 'fact' sheet issued by DOC to justify their action they make various claims about Rainbow Lorikeets:

1. They may carry avian disease ... salmonella, avian cholera and avian TB.
2. They are prolific, with pairs known to rear as many as three successive broods in one season.
3. The six or seven Rainbow Lorikeets released in Perth in 1968 had expanded their numbers and range by the 1980s and had become a nuisance. The same could happen in New Zealand.
4. The lorikeets are aggressive and often dominate all other birds trying to use the same food source.

5. Australian horticulturists regard them as a significant pest. In Darwin, 80-90% of some tropical fruit crops are lost to Rainbow Lorikeets.
6. Because of their ability 'to travel' they pose a threat to species which can survive only on the Hauraki Gulf islands which have been cleared of predators.

Let us examine these claims

1. They may carry disease. This is true of any bird. However, in February 1999 DOC trapped and killed 17 Rainbow Lorikeets in Auckland. According to the Rainbow Trust, an organisation set up to put in perspective the impact of these lorikeets in Auckland, not one of the birds killed showed any trace of avian or human disease, nor any internal or external parasites. The Trust asks why the result of these post-mortem examinations were not made public. As far as it is known,

Rainbow Lorikeets are no more susceptible to 'avian cholera' (caused by the bacterial organism *Pasteurella multocida*) than any other bird. This organism can affect most types of birds; rodents and wild birds are important vectors for this disease.

2. They are prolific. Rainbow Lorikeets lay two eggs in a clutch and might rear one or two youngsters in each clutch. Is there any evidence that they rear as many as three clutches in New Zealand?
3. The birds which have become established in the Perth area live in mature suburbia full of winter-flowering trees. There is not enough food for them to live in the new suburbs or in the native bush. According to Professor Recher of Edith Curtin University in Perth "the effect of the Rainbow Lorikeet on the avifauna of Perth is neutral". No private or commercial fruit grower has complained about the lorikeets to the Vertebrate Pest Officer.
4. Observations in New Zealand indicate that small birds such as Bellbirds are ignored by the lorikeets and feed with them. Indeed, they might benefit from the protective presence of the lorikeets against aggression by the larger Tuis. It has been suggested that this could even help the Bellbird to restore the range it once had.
5. More than a slight degree of exaggeration here. I have no figures for Darwin but in the northern part of Australia, in the Northern Territory for example, tropical fruit losses to flying pests average 2-3% - and this includes fruit bat damage. If losses were in the region of 90% fruit farmers would have gone out of

business or netted their crops years ago. In temperate areas of Australia, with a climate not unlike that of Auckland, Rainbow Lorikeets have a negligible impact on fruit or on other crops which are grown in New Zealand. As an example, in the Lenswood area of the Adelaide Hills in Australia, crop damage reported by apple and pear growers averages about 5%. Rosellas are the worst pests, followed by Must Lorikeets. Rainbow Lorikeets are lesser pests. The last time I was in the Auckland area, I saw feral Rosellas. How is it that this introduced parrot, along with the feral Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in the area, have escaped the attentions of DOC?

6. If the Rainbow Lorikeets reached the Hauraki Gulf islands they would pose a threat to the endangered species for which these islands are a sanctuary. This is a ridiculous claim because they would be unable to survive in native bush. Pollen and nectar from blossoms form about 90% of their diet. They could not survive the winters in these islands any more than they could live in Tasmania. In fact, the native bush might not provide enough flower sources for them to survive the summers, so they would soon return to the mainland.

When I first heard about the campaign against the Rainbow Lorikeet in the Auckland area, my first reaction was that there are as many introduced European birds to be seen in the suburbs as native species. We are not talking about an area of native habitat but one which has been totally altered by man, by introduced exotic flora and fauna. More than 1,600 species of introduced plants thrive in New Zealand today.

If the Rainbow Lorikeets had infiltrated island reserves and could thrive there, my reaction would be that they must be eradicated at all costs, as a danger to the unique and threatened endemic bird species. Or if, even in the suburbs, the lorikeets could have a serious impact on native birds by taking over their nest sites, this could be cause for concern. But four introduced



In Australia Rainbow Lorikeets are an excellent tourist attraction. Photo: M. Reynolds

hole-nesting species - Indian Mynahs, Rosellas, Cockatoos and even Kookaburras - got there first! Indeed, it has even been suggested that by taking over nest holes that the mynahs would otherwise be using, the lorikeets would be helping to keep down these pests. But realistically, there are not enough lorikeets to make an impact on the mynahs.

I deplore the liberation of non-native species as their influence is rarely beneficial so I believe it was an irresponsible act to liberate the lorikeets whose numbers have since increased. On the other hand, some Australian birds have colonised New Zealand's shores naturally. These include Silver-eyes and White-faced Herons.

There are two aspects of this story and DOC's attitude to the Rainbow Lorikeets on which I would like to comment. First, why has DOC chosen the Rainbow Lorikeet as the subject of its witch-hunt when other animals are known to have an extremely harmful or lethal impact on the native avifauna? There is no such proof in the case of the lorikeet.

Secondly, the sums of money that DOC propose to spend on eradicating the lorikeets are nothing short of scandalous. Last September DOC advertised inviting applications for the position of Rainbow Lorikeet Project Manager - a contract for a minimum of two years. The budgeted salary for this position was in the region of NZ\$58,000 (£17,575) per year or \$116,000 (£35,150) for the two year contract. On top of this is the sum of nearly one quarter of a million dollars already mentioned which has been

budgeted for the killing of lorikeets. How can DOC afford to squander such sums before it even has evidence that the Rainbow Lorikeet is, or is potentially, such a dreadful menace?

The funds could surely be used more appropriately to protect Kaka from stoats. In a recent published newsletter DOC stated that Kaka chicks are likely to be at risk from stoat attacks this year, adding: "We are in the luxurious position of having all the kaka nests monitored and we will not allow more than two females to be lost. If this happens we will fall back on a contingency of intensive trapping..." In other words, trapping will not be a priority until two female Kakas have been killed. Given the small number of female Kakas of breeding age known to survive, this policy seems incomprehensible.

How can DOC justify spending or budgeting so much money on eradicating Rainbow Lorikeets yet leave nesting Kakas to the mercy of stoats?

Furthermore, surely some kind of lorikeet census should be carried out to confirm that this expenditure is justified. According to Rex Gilfillan, who lives in Auckland, reported sightings in the Birkenhead area which is at the centre of the controversy, have fallen drastically. On January 18 he sent me a fax to the effect that the Birkenhead lorikeet population had fallen from 121 last year to 3 at the present time. Some lorikeets may live in areas outside Birkenhead but from his own experience he knows that the birds in the area do not move far from an

assured daily food source. Many reports of supposed Rainbow Lorikeets actually refer to Eastern Rosellas.

Why is DOC conducting this witch-hunt? The Rainbow Trust says that the Department of Conservation calls this 'protecting our biodiversity'. Others call it a prostitution of science.

In February the North Shore Times Advertiser published the latest information from DOC as follows:

"DOC staff are getting reports of lorikeets attacking native birds and gathering in flocks around North Shore City.

...Last year DOC backed off plans to kill the birds and will now sell them to the bird industry, as a way of recovering costs for the capture programme. Mr Keeling [the conservation officer] says only one capture of the birds was made in Birkenhead last year and since then no further birds have been caught. Mr Keeling describes the DOC's work as 'ground breaking' because it involves catching lorikeets in suburban backyards. He says that DOC now has two officers working on the lorikeet project and may employ a third officer.

DOC will approach colleges and schools with new fact sheets about the rainbow lorikeet programme in the hope children will become an important source of information. Arborists and golf course managers will also be given the information because they are also people likely to notice large lorikeet flocks, says Mr Keeling."

So how many lorikeets are there now in the Birkenhead-Northcote-Glenfield area? According to Rex Gilfillan, who has closely monitored their numbers from the start of this controversy, there are SIX!

I am asking WPT members to make their views on this matter known by writing to the Hon Sandra Lee, The Minister of Conservation, Beehive Suite 6.6, Parliament Buildings, Wellington, New Zealand (fax number 64 4473 6118)

For further information please contact The Rainbow Trust, PO Box 34-892 Birkenhead, New Zealand or visit their web site at www.rainbow.org.nz

Cape Parrot Information Needed

Craig Symes, of the University of Natal, urgently needs data on the breeding biology of the Cape Parrot (*suahelicus* & *fuscicollis*). All or any of the following information would be very useful:

1. Date each egg laid
2. Hatching date
3. Weights of chicks
4. Method of rearing (hand-reared and from what age, or parent-reared)
5. Notes on development (including attaining adult plumage)
6. Age of breeding pair; wild-caught or captive-bred
7. Sub-species plus country or area of origin, if known
8. Remarks on breeding pairs

Please forward all information to Craig Symes at the Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation, Dept of Zoology and Entomology, University of Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, Natal 3209, South Africa.

Cockatoo Seminar in California

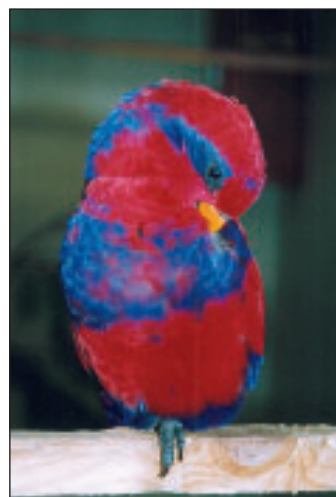
Cockatoo Downs Walkabout 2000 will take place on May 6th at Cockatoo Downs in Grass Valley. This seminar will focus entirely on cockatoos. Sally Blanchard, Sam Foster and Julie Weiss Murad will speak on companion cockatoos, and WPT member Stewart Metz will discuss cockatoo conservation programmes. A highlight of the day will be the display and interaction of Chris Shank's free-flying cockatoos. The cost for

the day will be \$90. Proceeds will benefit the Gabriel Foundation.

Please contact Chris Shank, telephone 530 2268 33593 or on the Internet at cockatoodowns@webtv.net.

Indonesia: Red and Blue Lory

In 1994 the Red and Blue Lory (*Eos histrio*) was placed on Appendix 1 of CITES. Two years previously its population (only in the Talaud Islands) was estimated at 2,000 birds and 50% of the population had been trapped that year and exported. Placing it on Appendix 1 of CITES had absolutely no impact on stopping that trade. Who, on the Talaud Islands, had even heard of CITES? From 1996 to 1999 the Action Sampiri project, a joint British and Indonesian effort, operated there. It did much to educate the people of the Sangihe and Talaud Islands to the importance of their endemic avifauna, especially the lory. Despite intensive efforts by some local people, trapping continued, though on a smaller scale. A joint effort between Action Sampiri and North Sulawesi's Forestry Department resulted, in 1999, in the endemic species from Talaud and Sangihe at last being protected under Indonesian law. Will this stop the trapping of the Red and Blue Lory? We shall see...



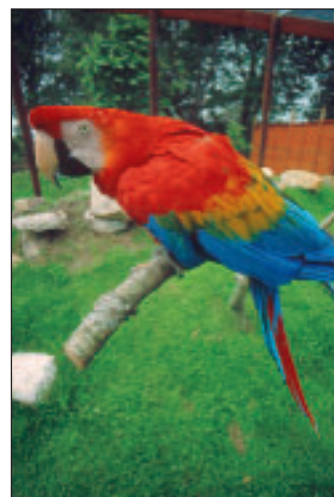
Red and Blue Lory

Belize: Chalillo Dam

The projected Chalillo Dam in Belize will cover about 760 hectares of rainforest and

threatens to destroy two valuable river systems. The flooded area will destroy some of the richest rainforest remaining in Belize, including the area inhabited by the country's last surviving population of Scarlet Macaws. This is believed to number about 250 birds. The Belize Audubon Society is concerned that the Belize Government is intent on constructing the dam without having reviewed all the options for electricity generation. Electricity could be obtained, instead, from wind power, solar energy and as a by-product from citrus fruit growing and from sugar and sawmill industries. Furthermore, Chalillo is fringed by limestone which means there are probably cave systems in the region. This would have serious implications for dam construction.

The Scarlet Macaw has only just survived in Central America. It is already extinct in El Salvador, nearly extinct in Guatemala where it survives only in the Peten region, it is almost extinct on the Pacific side of Honduras and Nicaragua and a small population survives in Costa Rica. Surely the Belize population is more important than the construction of a dam? At least Costa Rica is aware of the eco-tourist potential of the species and how many visitors it already attracts to their country.



Scarlet Macaw

Canada

The Canadian Parrot Symposium (West) is held annually in Victoria, BC, in the lovely setting of the Dunsmuir Lodge. Its sweeping vistas and hiking trails

make this a venue of note. The dates are May 19-21. This year's speakers include Joseph Forshaw from Australia, veterinarian Louise Bauck from Ontario and several speakers from the USA. The symposium aims to educate people on care, breeding, behaviour, nutrition, health, intelligence and conservation of parrots. It funds research into disease, conservation and avian veterinary student scholarships. For further information contact Roz Webb, Tel 250 479 1183, email ramsmith@bigfoot.com or visit the symposium's website at www.islandnet.com/~2parrot

Parrots Need Help sticker



C.A.P.E. (Children's Alliance for the Protection of the Environment) Campaign

As the result of our appeal "Parrots need help", the C.A.P.E. in India, responded strongly. They launched a campaign for the protection of parrots and their habitat at the City Birds Sanctuary in Chandigarh, where most of the birds are parrots. The Alliance produced a colourful sticker, using our phrase "Parrots need help to survive in the wild ... to thrive in our homes".

Bird Stamp Collecting

I have been collecting bird stamps for many years now and have over 2,000 in my collection. Bird stamps are a very popular theme for stamp collecting and many can be valuable. There are many parrots featured on stamps and they are quite beautiful and decorative to collect. If members and friends have any stamps they do not want would they be kind enough to send them to me



International Bird Contest - Japan

at my home in any quantity and condition, new or used. I will then catalogue them and present them for auction with all proceeds donated to the World Parrot Trust.

Please send to:

Mr R J Lee, 26 Lansdowne House, Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3JS, Dorset or send to WPT UK and we will forward them.

Letter

from HITOSHI SHIMURA

Parrot Keeping in Japan

Japan imports substantial numbers of parrots, some of them from Europe. However, there is not a lot of contact with Japanese parrot lovers, mainly because of the language problem. Some of our members may have met Hitoshi Shimura from Tokyo at the parrot conventions in Tenerife.

Rosemary Low asked him for an outline of parrot keeping in Japan today. He reported:

"There are many bird fanciers in Japan but the professional breeders breed only budgies, cockatiels and finches because they want to produce many chicks all year round. Few people try to breed big parrots such as amazons, cockatoos and macaws because they require a spacious aviary. It is difficult to find space for aviaries in our country. And these birds are very noisy!

There is a growing interest in hand-tame parrots among young women at the moment. Dealers import hand-reared birds from the USA, Europe and other countries. I am a member of the Tokyo Piichikukai bird club. It has a membership of 160 people, from children, up to 85 year olds. We meet every other month and hold photo



Media event at the Rainforest Café, London.

competitions and contests for hand-tame birds. There is a bird contest twice a year.

I saw a Red-fronted Macaw in a bird shop some years ago but it did not have a certificate to show that it had been legally imported. Also, a few years ago rumours were circulating that there were Palm Cockatoos in Tokyo but I never confirmed their existence. Very few birds are smuggled into Japan.

I keep Queen of Bavaria's Conures, Major Mitchell's Cockatoos, Horned Parakeets, Golden-shouldered Parakeets and Grass Parakeet mutations. I have already succeeded in breeding Golden-shouldered Parakeets.

I visited Paradise Park five years ago. This coming May I will be going to Plantaria Bird Park in Germany and Parc Paradisio in Belgium."

WPT's Press Conference

In August 1999 WPT and WWF held a joint press event at the Rainforest Café in London, to launch the Parrot Action Plan and the John Cleese video, and present the Carolina Medal to Carl Jones. This was extremely successful, resulting in extensive tv and radio coverage, and large articles on the threats to parrots in most of the major UK newspapers. At the time we did not have photographs from the event, but now have this shot showing (l to r): Julian Pettifer, President of the RSPB, who kindly presented the medal to Carl Jones; Carl Jones; Paul Toyne of WWF; Mike Reynolds.

In foreground, members of the press. Our thanks to everyone involved.

The IUCN/SSC Parrot Action Plan will be published very soon and we will introduce and describe it in the May 2000 issue of *PsittaScene*.

Galahs Rainbow Lorikeets

Also in the May 2000 issue we will feature the 'Jewels of Nature' project. This is the most ambitious publishing project for parrots ever created and will make a great contribution towards their conservation.

Book Reviews

by ROSEMARY LOW

A Guide to Australian White Cockatoos



The 15th title in the highly successful Australian Birdkeeper *A Guide to...* series, covers the Australian White Cockatoos. The term "white" is used to mean non-black, thus Galahs and Gang Gangs are included, in addition to the *Cacatua* species. The author is Chris Hunt from Victoria who, with his wife Maree, breeds cockatoos, some of which are hand-reared for the pet trade.

This is a very practical guide, starting off with advice on purchasing cockatoos, transportation and the quarantine of new arrivals. The correct way to handle a cockatoo, with and without a towel, is illustrated with photographs. Housing, rodent control and aviary design are discussed, along with the fact that suspended cages are not suitable for most cockatoos because they like to forage and play on the aviary floor. This section includes a photograph of an upright cylindrical outdoor cage for a pet cockatoo. Sadly, I have seen these cages used on many occasions in Australia, although they are totally unsuitable as the cockatoo is hardly able to open its wings. There is much good advice on size and gauge of wire mesh.

The section on nutrition is very well illustrated and the need for fresh cut branches is emphasised. Australians, of course, are able to supply a wealth of natural foods such as branches containing eucalyptus gum nuts. In Europe we have to make do with pine cones.

The section on hand-rearing includes a useful table of weights of chicks being hand-reared, from the ages of 15 days to weaning. To wean Greater Sulphur-crests at 54 days seems too early, to me, likewise Long-billed Corellas at 7 weeks. But then in my opinion most hand-feeders wean cockatoos much too early, often with lasting psychological damage. The husbandry section covers 41 pages. It is followed by a 19 page section on diseases, contributed by Stacey Gelis, BVSc, MACVSc, an avian vet and aviculturist. This is a very valuable section, especially that describing what to do with a sick bird, and the problems caused by dietary deficiencies. Discussion on the diseases to which cockatoos are most susceptible, such as PBF (circovirus), polyoma and chlamydiosis, is followed by information on disinfection, treatment and supportive care. Bacterial infections, aspergillosis, candidiasis, bumblefoot, worms, parasites and heavy metal poisoning are all covered in a lucid and readable manner. The various causes of feather plucking are also detailed, including allergies (dust mites, grasses, etc).

The following 40 pages are devoted to species descriptions, with notes for each one on breeding, sexing, mutations, etc. For the Galah there are tables showing expectations from pairing together the various mutations. This book is profusely illustrated and contains a wealth of useful information. It is essential reading for all keepers and breeders of cockatoos, Australian or otherwise.

Kea, Bird of Paradox



The mischievous and destructive nature of the Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) is legendary. It is, I believe, the most intelligent (and among the most endearing) of the more than 200 species of parrots which I have had in my care. New Zealand's mountain parrot evolved in harsh conditions; it needed to be very resourceful to survive. Unfortunately, only an estimated 3,000 survive today. Yet it is an enormous tourist attraction in some localities - and has also

attracted much unfavourable publicity due to its playful habits, such as turning vehicles into junk heaps.

In *Kea, Bird of Paradox*, Judy Diamond and Alan Bond from the University of Nebraska, explore certain aspects of the Kea's history and natural history. They start by reconstructing the pre-human environment in which the Kea evolved, an environment it shared with moas and other long extinct species. They continue by describing how an expansion in Kea numbers appears to have coincided with European settlement of the high country. But soon Keas had earned a reputation as sheep killers - and there was a bounty on their heads. Thousands were killed.

In chapter 3 they describe the social behaviours of birds which they studied. These are illustrated with delightful line drawings (this description does not do them justice) of different aspects, such as play behaviour, and a male feeding a fledgling. (There is no colour in this book - only black and white photographs and drawings). Mark Marcuson's drawings are simply outstanding. They include those which show bill shapes of male and female, and "facial expressions" (in fact, the way the head feathers are erected) to demonstrate aggression, defensiveness, submissiveness etc.

The chapter on growing and learning describes the role of young birds in Kea society. In another chapter, aspects of behaviour and ecology are compared with those of the other member of the genus, the Kaka. In the sixth and final chapter the authors describe modern contacts between Keas and people. These are not just damaging to human property but often result in Keas risking or losing their lives.

The book seemed to end abruptly at page 150. As far as it went it was excellent - but there were so many other aspects which could have been explored. The species' breeding biology was hardly mentioned. Here avicultural experience could have been drawn upon to include an enlightening and fascinating chapter. For example, those who have worked with Keas for so many years at Paradise Park would have been an invaluable source of information.

Pages 151-230 consist of appendices, notes and index. *Kea, Bird of Paradox* is published by University of California Press (ISBN 0-520-21339-4, California and London). In the UK it costs £18.95 plus postage from, for example, Natural History Book Services in Totnes.



Working for Parrot Conservation and Welfare Worldwide

The World Parrot Trust was founded in 1989 as UK Registered Charity No. 800944. International expansion has been rapid and the Trust now has linked charities and support groups in Africa, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Scandinavia, Spain, Switzerland and the USA.

Funds raised for the parrots have now reached £1,000,000 (\$1.6M) and have been used to initiate and support conservation and welfare projects in 20 countries for 37 species of parrot. Despite this wide-ranging activity, the Trust is run on a volunteer basis, with only two part time administrators worldwide. This uniquely cost-effective approach is made possible by substantial financial and logistical support donated by Paradise Park, the UK home base of the World Parrot Trust.

The objective of the Trust is to promote the survival of all parrot species and the welfare of individual birds. It pursues these aims by funding field conservation work, research projects and educational programmes. The Trust seeks to promote the concept of 'responsible aviculture' where the interests of the parrots themselves are given priority over commercial, political, career or other human concerns. The World Parrot Trust and its members wish to be recognised as the 'True Friends of the

Parrots', and to win over the majority of aviculturists, pet owners and scientists to its point of view. The task is huge – our resources are limited. We need the commitment of everyone in the 'parrot community': those who keep, breed, study and protect the parrots. Beyond those special interests, we look for support from everyone who understands the crisis facing the world through the loss of biodiversity. We aim to continue using the special charm of the parrots to win the hearts and minds of thoughtful people everywhere.

Michael Reynolds
 Founder and Hon. Director
 World Parrot Trust



Mike Reynolds meets 'Pablo', a hand-reared Echo Parakeet released to join critically endangered wild Echoes in Mauritius.

Join us

If not already a member, please join. Receive our PsittaScene newsletter, know that you are actively contributing towards our aims and projects.

Help fund our Projects

We are currently supporting parrot conservation, education and welfare projects in 20 countries. Your generosity towards the parrots could help us expand current schemes and start new ones.

Aims of the Trust

The survival of parrot species in the wild, and the welfare of captive birds.

These aims are pursued by:

- Educating the public on the threats to parrots.
- Opposing trade in wild-caught parrots.
- Preserving and restoring parrot habitat.
- Studying the status of parrot populations.
- Encouraging the production of aviary-bred birds.
- Creating links between aviculture and conservation.
- Promoting high standards in the keeping of parrots.
- Supporting research into veterinary care of parrots.

YES, I WANT TO HELP SAVE THE PARROTS OF THE WORLD

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (please tick)

- UK and Europe (Single) £15
- UK and Europe (Joint) £20
- Fellow (Life Member) £250/US\$400
 Corporate (Annual)
- All overseas Airmail £17/US\$25
 (or equivalent currency, payment by Visa/Mastercard preferred)
- Plus donation of £/US\$

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

..... Zip/Postcode.....

Please charge my Mastercard/Visa No.

Exp. date Amount £/US\$

Signature

OR:
 I enclose a cheque made payable to the WPT

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 Canada: <http://www.cwparrot@canadianparrottrust.org>
 Italy: <http://www.mediavillage.it/wpt>
 Denmark: <http://www.image.dk/fpewpt>

Or join us on our website: www.worldparrottrust.org

Parrots in the Wild

Psitta Scene



White-breasted Parakeet *Pyrrhura albipectus*

This parakeet is found only in south-east Ecuador. Up until 1990 very little was known about this endangered bird. However, support from The World Parrot Trust and other conservation groups enabled Dr Paul Toyne to lead a series of expeditions called Parrots in Peril comprised of British and Ecuadorian scientists to find and study this beautiful parakeet (see Psittascene Vol 6 No 3 for more information).

The expeditions were a success and much of the information

collected has been incorporated in the Global Action Plan for Parrots. Here the parakeet is listed as vulnerable, CITES Appendix 2. The parakeets' one known safehaven is Podocarpus National Park in Loja Province, where within its altitudinal sub-tropical range of 940 - 1800 m it is fairly common. However, outside of this protected area habitat loss due to agricultural encroachment, gold mining and road building appear to be the biggest threat.