

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN PARROT CONSERVATION
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

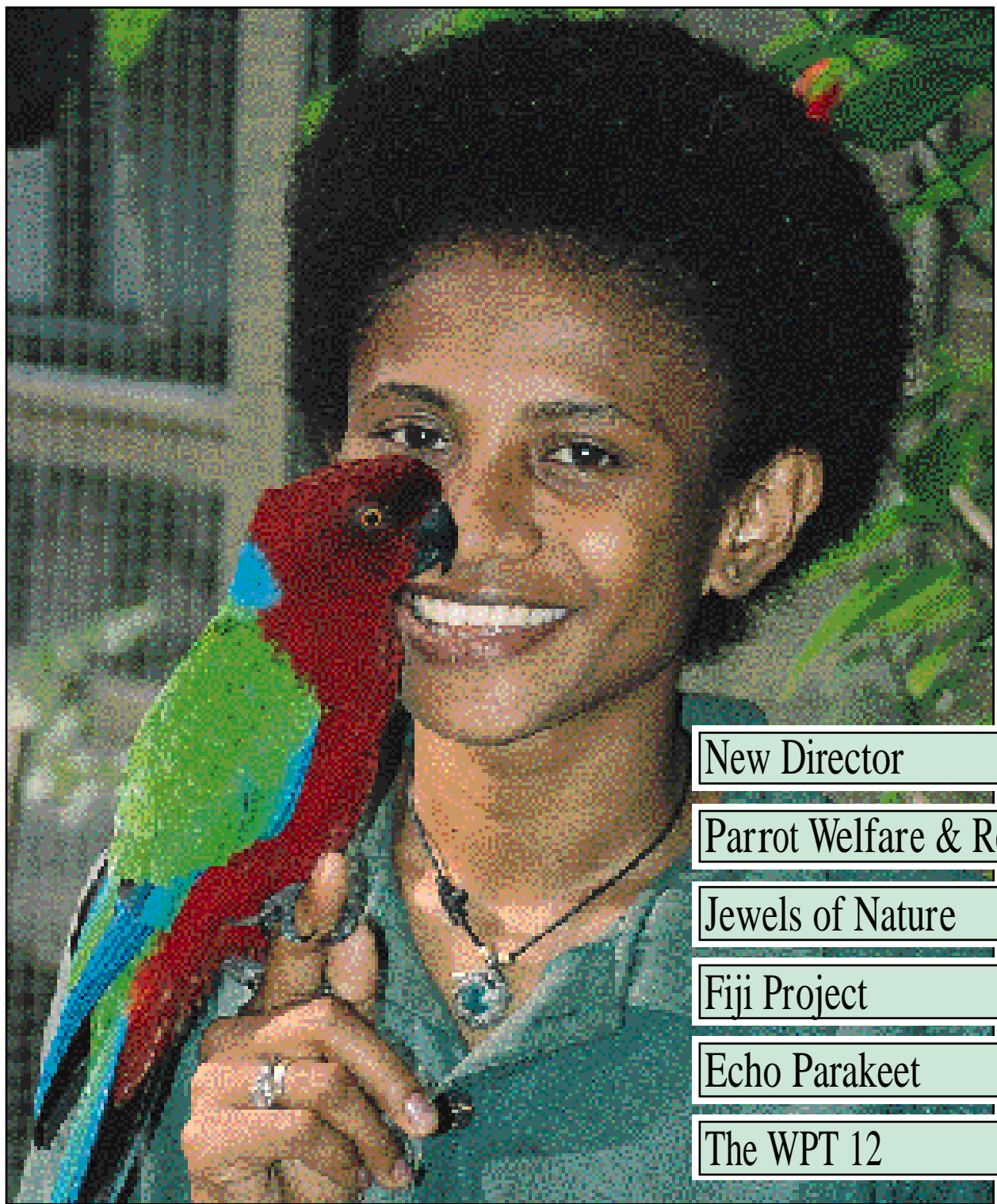
World Parrot Trust
in action



Vol. 12 No. 4 November 2000

Psitta

SCENE



New Director

Parrot Welfare & Rescue

Jewels of Nature

Fiji Project

Echo Parakeet

The WPT 12

psittacine (sit'ã sîn) belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like

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Cover Picture

Kula Eco Park Education Officer Merewairita Senivula holding a Kadavu Shining Parrot. This photo was taken by Kirsty Swinnerton whilst in Fiji and you can read her report on pages 13-15.

The World Parrot Trust does not necessarily endorse any views or statements made by contributors to PsittaScene.

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

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WPT appoints new Director

by MICHAEL REYNOLDS

In *PsittaScene* for May 2000 we advertised our need for a new director to take over from me by the end of 2000. We received a large number of applications from well qualified people in countries across the globe. We finally chose somebody with excellent experience and talents relevant to the job, and this is James D. Gilardi PhD from California.

James - known to all as 'Jamie' - was one of the four joint authors of the recently published Parrot Action Plan, and helped orchestrate the meeting arranged in London by WPT in 1995 that set the preparation of the new plan into action. He has since completed his PhD at University of California, Davis working under Dr Cathy Toft, and went on to work for the Wildlife Preservation Trust International and the Oceanic Society. His parrot work includes running the St. Lucia parrot project for a year, three field seasons in southeastern Peru studying wild macaws, working with captive birds to better understand soil-eating in parrots, and shorter field-stints in St. Vincent, Mexico and Guatemala.

In our ad for the job we listed the following requirements:

- To understand the particular threats relating to the 330 species of parrot.
- To be able to work effectively with individuals and organisations in parrot range countries.
- To design, implement, supervise and report scientifically sound conservation programmes.
- To work co-operatively with other organisations with similar aims.
- To initiate and bring to fruition a range of fund-raising activities.
- To publicise the work of WPT and its achievements.
- To prepare and distribute educational material, for general public consumption, and for owners of captive parrots.
- To represent WPT at all levels and on all occasions.
- To deal promptly and creatively with the extensive communications received by the trust.

- To provide expertise in response to all media and other enquiries.

- To communicate with WPT's membership, primarily through 'PsittaScene'.

Quite a tall order, no doubt you will agree. But Jamie has what it will take, and is greatly looking forward to taking on what must be one of the most exciting jobs available to someone in his area of expertise. He will work out of Davis, California, but will visit our UK base as frequently as is necessary, and will aim to visit our branches when practical to do

so. He will use his field experience to supervise our projects around the world, and will report to you, our members, in *PsittaScene*.

I am sure you will all welcome Jamie, and he can be reached on email at: gilardi@worldparrottrust.org. He will be at the Gabriel Foundation Symposium to be held at Tampa, Florida, from 5 to 7 January 2001. See page 16 for details of this important event.

I will become chairman of WPT-UK and WPT-USA, and will continue to contribute to our trust wherever practical.



Jamie Gilardi

Photo: Chris Huxley, Caribbean Images

Parrot Welfare & Rescue

The World Parrot Trust has written about these critical matters in past PsittaScenes, notably our issue for May 1998, and also in our previous issue for August 2000. In 1998 we commented that perhaps as many as 50% of all pet parrots were kept in cramped and inadequate conditions, and we went on to propose the following action:

Support a complete ban on the trapping, trading and export of wild-caught parrots from their countries of origin, unless for approved breeding programmes.

Voluntarily reduce the numbers of parrots being bred in captivity. The aim should be quality, not quantity.

Educate potential new pet parrot owners, so that they properly understand the commitment they are making.

Help rescue groups wherever possible, with funding and facilities.

We also proposed the following Guidelines for Parrot Rescue:

These are simply a draft for

discussion, based on information supplied by rescue groups. We invite further input from all sources of expertise and opinion.

1 Any group engaged in this task should ensure it has sufficient funding, wide experience of working with parrots, suitable accommodation, expert veterinary support and sound methods of assessing foster homes.

2 The motivation must be nothing other than the rescue, rehabilitation and longterm welfare of the birds. The profit motive has no place in parrot rescue.

3 Stability is vital. This means a

total commitment on the part of the people involved, plus reasonable financial status. A business plan is recommended.

4 Some expertise in public relations is important, to maximise publicity about parrots in difficulty, the rescue service available and the need for funds and other forms of support. It is also important to work effectively with local parrot people, clubs and authorities.

5 The quality and range of facilities must be adequate. Separate quarantine, hospital, rehabilitation and pre-release sections are essential.

Supervision at all stages by an avian veterinarian is strongly recommended.

6 Re-homing of rehabilitated birds is a key element in the work of most rescue operations. This requires inspection of would-be foster homes, the education of those taking on responsibility for the bird, a document recording the precise commitment being undertaken and effective follow-up to ensure that all is well.

Integration of rehabilitated birds of endangered species into an EEP or other approved breeding project is recommended.

Recent Developments

In the August 2000 PsittaScene we picked up on the question raised by Peter Them of Denmark: 'should aviculture continue to mass-produce parrots?' Rosemary Low wrote an article on this, answering the question with a resounding 'NO!'

We have now re-visited Peter Them's 'Parrot Data Email Club', and selected the following quotes from a variety of correspondents:

"I really believe there are too many parrots. I've been in bird rescue for four years now, and I'm amazed at how many babies are being produced. It really saddens me to know that most of them will end up in rescue. I think it's very much like the dog-breeding scene now. There are some good breeders who will take responsibility for all the lives they produce for the rest of their lives, and there are others who just want money, and they produce so many babies that there end up being not enough homes for them all."

Robinn, USA

"I took time to read some of the responses to your original query before responding. There were, by PIJAC (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council) statistics 14 million exotic birds in 5 million homes (in the US)



NOT A PRETTY SIGHT – As seen in earlier PsittaScene.

in 1990. By 1996 the numbers were 40 million in 5.5 million respectively. We have extrapolated, at the continuing rate of growth that today, in 2000 there are approx. 60 million exotic birds in only 6 million homes in the US. Apparently, based on what our writers have said, in parts of Europe there is a "glut" as well.

The Oasis Sanctuary Foundation, Ltd. incorporated in early 1997 with 68 birds. By the time we received our 501(c)(3) in Dec. of the same year we had over 90 birds. Today we have over 260 birds and a waiting list of approx 20 birds due to arrive this fall

after our move to larger facilities. (A 71 acre ranch in Southern Az.).

Most frighteningly we have turned away over 100 birds in the past two months. These birds, without exception, were the "left-overs" the non-breedable or pet quality birds from large "collections" whose owners were either unable or unwilling to pay the \$150+ per bird that their vets would charge for the medical testing we require. (In individual emergency cases we will pay for this but cannot do it, at this time, for large numbers of birds.) Who knows what will happen to these birds? It keeps us up nights with worry but we do not

have the \$15,000 to spend either.

In addition to what we see as overbreeding of some of the birds who are "high maintenance" and perhaps are not suitable for most pet homes (Example: we have over 30 cockatoos including numerous "mate-killers", mutilators etc.), we are now receiving many 15-20+ year old birds, whose owners are undergoing life-changes: having families, career changes, retiring and whose family members, friends etc do not want the animals. The market is so saturated that plucked or more hormonal birds cannot always find good homes. They end up here...

...If breeders insist that they should continue unrestricted breeding, then we believe it is time that they give good and long thought to supporting the long-term care often two or three generations of humans per bird, costing tens of thousands (\$36,000+ for 50 years is our conservative estimate) of dollars.

There are no simple solutions. Legislation certainly only creates more problems. Education, self-examination and introspection leading to a larger more holistic view of the birds and their place in the world and in our lives is a goal more in keeping with our views."

Sybil Erden, Director
The Oasis Sanctuary, USA

"...Speaking for myself, I am not "mass-producing" birds, and so far, I have been able to sell youngstock within a few weeks, or occasionally months, at moderate, but to me quite satisfactory prices.

To conclude, we will have to adjust to changes resulting from advances in aviculture, but bird-breeding remains a wonderful and rewarding hobby."

Sue Embury, UK

"We have not noticed any lessening of demand for our birds. We have over a hundred pairs of larger birds. African greys and amazons make up most of them but we do have some pairs of macaws and some pairs of pionus and moustache sized birds. We sell all we hatch, primarily to qualified hand feeders at 2 to 4 weeks of age. We don't seem to be able to hatch enough to lessen the demand. The only thing that we have had a problem selling this year was some green cheek amazons. They tell me that large numbers of them are still being smuggled into the U.S. and destroying the market."

Bob, Golden Oak Aviaris

"...I'll send you now some of my thoughts about "Are there too many parrots...".

Perhaps you know that I'm writing some articles for German-language bird-magazines.

So I have many contacts to breeders and owners of neotropic parakeets (and other parrots, too) all over the "German-speaking world" and the neighbouring countries.

So I can give you some information about the situation of parrots in captivity here in Germany.

The last few years the "parrot market" has collapsed completely.

The prices for the most parrot species are at the lowest point. Even the rarest species you cannot deal.

So a little group of parrot breeders (like myself) have decided to stop the breeding for a certain time.

Some breeders (I hope it will become more and more) want to reach a "really good life" for their birds; they want to have less birds in the same room, that means more room for flying. I think this is a good development, isn't it?..."

Volker Würth, Germany

"I read this post/request with bewilderment and a sense of astonishment.

Here in the U.S. all parrots remain in high demand. Even the common Cockatiel has seen a resurgence of demand. It is true that research and import restrictions have made the business self-sufficient as you say. But the idea that we are able to "Mass Produce" parrot babies is highly laughable...

We have waiting lists for our babies and almost all have deposits placed on them prior to weaning. We deliver only weaned, healthy, vet checked, banded and guaranteed babies...



A tame Scarlet Macaw is a companion for life.

Like any business, there are those that do not advertise, have poor people skills, lack any marketing talent, or are just lousy business people...

In conclusion, the term mass production and serious Aviculture in the U.S. do not mix. The price structure and demand are remaining stable, and we see many more families owning numerous pet birds. Pet quality is of high importance to most buyers. As is health certificates and DNA sexing. A sweet, gentle hand fed baby bird is what the pet market is demanding, there is no market for young wild caught or parent raised birds any longer. I see an up turn in demand in our future, not the dumping of unsold stock as you suggest."

Take Care and God Bless,

John,
The Shop Out Back Aviary, USA

"...The Cleveland Zoo receives up to 200 calls a year from people wanting to "dump" the parrot/s that they no longer want to keep

in their home because they have suddenly realized that these creatures are not so easily cared for and live a long long time!

The number of rescue organizations continues to grow and many are already bursting at the seams and turning birds away because they just cannot accommodate all the ones needing placement. And these are just the ones who are at least fortunate enough to have an owner who is willing to "place" them in a rescue or sanctuary situation.

This does not include the parrots that have been relegated to the basement or the garage or other

realization hits home and the problems begin, the majority of these people (whose original intentions were probably good) are ready to bail out... get rid of the bird!

It is my opinion that there are far too many people in the US breeding parrots for one reason only and that is to MAKE MONEY! Some raise their babies in a caring manner, others don't, many sell unweaned babies (misleading buyers by telling them the handfeeding will provide that ultimate bond), and YES many mass produce as many babies as possible by pulling the eggs, incubator hatching, gavage feeding the babies.

It is my opinion that in the US we absolutely DO have situations with parrots that are nearly identical to the PUPPY MILLS that have been exposed as being breeding pits of horror run by unscrupulous, money hungry, thoughtless people. Have I seen this first hand? The answer is YES!...

My conclusion is that there are far too many parrots being bred in the US for sale into the pet trade by far too many breeders whose only goal is to make money. If one realistically looks at the plight of the companion parrot in the US, it is hard not to think that we will eventually see these magnificent creatures facing the same fate as the millions of dogs & cats that enter shelters and never again live in someone's home as the companion they were once intended to be."

Judy, USA

"YES, YES, YES. There are too many breeder birds, baby birds, and people who breed birds, in the pet trade today. I know that in the US, many healthy birds as well as sick, injured, handicapped birds are being deliberately killed at an alarming rate.

As the US's first and largest parrot sanctuary, we are against the euthanasia of healthy birds, but fear that because of a lack of places for these unwanted birds, the nightmare has already begun.

Breeders and their advocates, are butting heads with the advocates of sensible parrot care. Most of the birds we get into our sanctuary (we house them all here permanently... no adoptions...no sales) are coming from pet bird owners who are just now finding out for themselves that these animals are WILD, yet very human

like creatures. This mix of wildness, beauty, ability to talk and to understand human language on some level, coupled with their ability to think, reason, and make decisions (if allowed) is what makes them so attractive to the pet trade.

We are on the brink of a disaster here in the US, and I would imagine worldwide, of where are all of these unwanted birds to go. The market is already dropping, and so are prices. Many who have purchased parrots are now warning their friends NOT to indulge in getting one, therefore, the trend to euthanising these nearly extinct creatures crawls nearer every day.

I have some ideas as to the solution to the problem, one of which (that tops the list) is to STOP breeding these birds IMMEDIATELY. So much for the excuse that they are bred to preserve the species. They are being bred for PROFIT and nothing less. If not one more baby bird were to hatch out in this world, we already have more in captivity that humankind can manage."

Mary Bradford,
The Tropics Exotic Bird Refuge,
USA

"I recently heard of one parrot rescuer with 85 unwanted birds. She struggled to care for them as long as she could. Her heart was simply too big for her pocket book. Now why she did not turn to the community and ask for help I do not know. However, her solution for her rescued flock as she faced what I assume was imminent bankruptcy, was to have all 85 of them killed with the aid of a veterinarian. She found this preferable to seeing them suffer a miserable existence in the hands of humans. It was her way of being responsible for them. I do not fault her. I weep for her, for it must have taken incredible courage to endure such a thing. She was after all a rescuer of the unwanted.

In 1988 I found parrots. I wanted to do my part for conservation of the species to keep them on the planet. We were still importing birds. I selected 2 species of amazon not common or currently being bred in the US. By the time I had 2 pair of juvenile Panama Amazons and my pair of Mealties in 1991 - 92, things were beginning to change. My birds are just now of an age to breed. Guess who will not be breeding her birds. I cannot bear the thought of my babies ending up discarded...

I heard that BirdTalk was undertaking a survey of all the rescuers in the country trying to inventory the birds in their care to get some sort of reliable figure of the actual number of discarded parrots and the species. I anxiously await their results. I am not looking forward to their revelations, however. It is my hope that all who breed birds will also look at those figures, acquired in one to possibly two decades of concerted breeding efforts in the US. Then decide whether or not you are serving the birds or yourself when you produce more."

Eileen Michaels, USA



Two bright eyed and stimulated Yellow-fronted pet amazons.

"As parrots are bred for the US pet market they will enter into the same realm as dogs and cats. Every week thousands of dogs and cats are killed in animal shelters in every significant city Millions are killed each year. Refuge and sanctuary will not be able to cope with the problem. We will have to humanely destroy parrots.

This will be fact if parrots continue to be marketed as pets... they will receive no better treatment than man's best friend."

Jack C Eitnearn, USA

"I would like to make comment brought up by several readers. Some are of the opinion that the mere existence of a business that claims its primary purpose is to "rescue" unwanted parrots, supports the idea that there are too many parrots. I could not disagree more strongly. My disagreement is based on many different facts about many of these "operations". For example, before we saw the advent of these operations, where were unwanted parrots being sent? If memory

serves me right, generally they were being sent to zoos or back to breeders. There are always companion or livestock animals being "recycled", it is nothing new.

I have interviewed a few owners of some of the better known "rescue" operations in the United States. It turns out that a greater percentage of the owners that are offering birds to these people actually want money for them. Therefore, they are being sold, not rescued-or at best, they are being rescued from owners that want some money. But there are also the owners that have valid reasons to give up a pet bird to these

the salaries of the PhDs that work on many projects. If we cannot "profit" from all we do, then the whole system breaks down again and we might as well just eat the parrots. A little "profit" is actually what is needed to support conservation of wild parrots etc. Without it, there is no incentive to conserve the animals or the habitat. Emotion, and the "warm and fuzzy feeling" only goes so far after that, someone better have some money or the end result will be disaster."

My Opinion... Rick Jordan,
USA



By this greeting from Denmark I have the pleasure to introduce the worldwide:

PARROT DATA E-MAIL-CLUB

The aim of Parrot Data E-Mail-Club is to collect and report data and news about the Parrots - Psittaculture in the wild as well as in the aviculture protected environment.

BUT please note: Parrot Data E-Mail-Club will not deal with Pet Birds or Cage Birds.

You and your friends are welcome to subscribe to this free Parrot Data E-Mail-Club.

All mails will be sent as BCC (blind copy holders), to avoid spammers getting hold of the list of addresses.

You are most welcome to send me news about or related to Parrots.

But, please note: Do Not send large mails, pictures, sound-files or attachments

Best wishes from
Denmark

Peter H Them
Parrot Data

Email:
parrotdata@post4.tele.dk

A Parrot Welfare Proposal: Hands Across the Water

by STEWART METZ

I do not personally direct a parrot rescue and adoption center, a foster home or a parrot sanctuary. However, I do have a deep and abiding concern about the welfare of parrots; therefore, I offer one person's vision for the creation of an international organization overseeing the stewardship of abused or abandoned parrots.

Parrot Welfare Organizations or PWOs (as I will combine them) are springing up all over. Some have heroically rescued many parrots from horrid abuse at the hands of man, at considerable personal sacrifice. Unfortunately, others are more interested in their own aggrandizement. Others simply do not have the means to do the job well. Money is scarce and different sanctuaries may even be competing for some of the same donors or sponsors. Thus, an individual trying to donate or acquire a rescue bird faces a quagmire having to choose from among all the listings. It quickly became clear to me, after examining those web sites purporting to provide links to PWOs in the U.S., that none has a complete, up-to-date list or can provide sufficient information required to guarantee the quality of each PWO. I concluded that a single, united organization is needed which can set minimum acceptable standards and ethical practices for sanctuaries, as well as provide a readily accessible "international clearinghouse" to whom others can turn for information not only on the most proximate Sanctuary, but on its standing in the "parrot community" at large. Until that happens, PWOs will remain like a quilt whose patches have not yet been sewn together.

Several small versions of such an oversight organization have been established by leaders of a few respected PWOs. In my opinion, however, this can create an appearance of a conflict of interest, tantamount to asking the owner of the Yankees to become Commissioner of Baseball! However these efforts may therefore prove divisive, no matter how well-intentioned. The time has come for all those concerned about parrot welfare to come together to objectively and dispassionately develop and implement a single set of common ethical and practical guidelines applicable to all PWOs. They must be willing to toss ego aside and work together with others for the parrots' sake. The

clout in this approach lies in the fact that failure of a particular PWO to satisfy the standards developed by such an organization would result in the international disapproval or even outright condemnation of that



All the best parrots read PsittaScene.

Photo: Rosemary Low

Organization; consequently, donations of both parrots and money to it would be restricted.

A working committee – a summit, if you will – should be convened to deal with these issues. I propose that the following be among the distinguishing characteristics of the Organization arising out of the deliberations of such a working committee. It should be:

1. **IMPARTIAL** – It should be overseen by an independent, respected authority which can disseminate the principles adopted by the Committee under its aegis. The World Parrot Trust would be the logical choice. It has branches in many countries and an official publication (*PsittaScene*) edited by Rosemary Low, indisputably one of the most respected and compassionate leaders of the parrot community. WPT has years of expertise in psittacine matters, a selfless dedication to improving the lot of parrots, and the knowledge and participation of some of the most respected minds in the field. Of course, such oversight should work hand-in-hand with other actively involved organizations (ie,

veterinary organizations) and would complement, rather than replace, the local teaching and outreach efforts of each individual member PWO.

2. **INCLUSIVE** – It should allow for a range of views and approaches to be expressed during open, face-to-face discussion, and for the contributions of anyone seriously devoted to the welfare of psittacines.
3. **INTERNATIONAL** – Despite the tendency of those of us in the United States to see ourselves as the center of the universe, parrot welfare issues (and solutions!) involve many other countries as well.

4. **FLEXIBLE** – There is often more than one way to deal with each issue. For example, an excellent sanctuary might be non-profit; non-profit with 501(c)3 status, or for-profit. The key is that the approach taken must be clearly identifiable and, above all, it must be clear that the only critical outcome will be to safeguard the welfare of its parrots. I know of Sanctuaries which are limited in funds and resources and perhaps cannot do everything as "finely" as they might like; yet they provide great love and an improved quality of life to those parrots under their stewardship. Sam Foster has suggested that, added together, the total number of parrots helped by such "Mom and Pop" PWOs may exceed the number of parrots aided by the more polished, but less numerous, organizations.
5. **ENFORCIBLE, ENFORCED AND UNBENDING** – Once acceptable standards are worked out, means must be established to determine where they are or are not being met. As indicated above, there is need for some flexibility in determining acceptable approaches, but once

an approach is deemed unacceptable or unethical, denunciation of it, and of any PWO using it, should be unbending and unequivocal, until the problem is corrected. Therefore, some form of inspection and accreditation process will be needed.

6. **FUNDED** – Activities of such an oversight committee will require funding, and therefore, in all likelihood, an initial accreditation fee plus smaller annual dues (perhaps pro-rated based on size) would be assessed. However, the banding together into a single, respected international body should facilitate application to large national and international agencies and philanthropies for support, which can then be redistributed (in part) to member PWOs. Furthermore, a percentage of dues can be held back in an emergency fund designated for use by member organizations as a safety net during crises such as sudden illness or death of a major caregiver at a member PWO. Some funds could also be donated for avian research.
7. **SCHOLARLY** – One shortcoming which ensues when each Sanctuary acts in a virtual vacuum is the failure to systematically analyze and disseminate experience (and hopefully, formal scientific studies) accrued from dealing with the unique problems of rescue birds. Which approaches worked? Which didn't? Until such information is gathered and disseminated, PWOs will continue to act empirically, rather than using systematic approaches based on experiences worldwide. The oversight Organization itself might periodically release (via e-mail and, where desired, snail-mail) a non-glossy, non-'slick' newsletter, addressing practical and ethical issues involved in the treatment of sanctuary birds.

We all SAY we love parrots. I throw down a gauntlet and ask: Do we love them enough to work TOGETHER for their betterment? Can an international body be convened to hash out the specifics for a truly global approach to parrot abuse, and to fight on their behalf? Look into the eyes of any mistreated parrot who has had the look of trust and joy replaced by one of fear and withdrawal. You'll find a clear answer there: for "the birds of the air...they will tell you"

An insider's look at Rescue and Sanctuary

By Julie Weiss Murad, Founder and President
The Gabriel Foundation, Post Office Box 11477, Aspen, Colorado 81612 USA

It is clear that the parrot is a creature generally admired, coveted and sought after by man. Today's parrots in captivity have virtually no say or control in the manner of their being kept. The small amount of "commentary" they have is usually demonstrated in a negative manner that may cost them their home. Parrots can bite, act aggressively and develop other types of behavior related problems that label them as undesirable. Parrots may fail to thrive and die as a result of their captive situation when the keeper fails to meet the critical needs of the bird. Where do our responsibilities as keepers belong? Unwanted parrots and sanctuary efforts are considerable in countries where parrots are commonly kept captive. Observation suggests that reasons for "getting rid of the bird" are universal. We are failing the creatures that we profess to respect, love, admire and protect.

Serious attention must be given to the numbers of organizations emerging to cope with the problem of discarded parrots. According to a colleague, "A basic truth is that many of the behavior problems which cause a parrot to lose its home are the result of a really bad environment and poor nutrition. Simply providing advice regarding a healthful diet, exercise, adequate light, proper caging as well as mental and physical stimulation will resolve many problems." To improve the parrot-human relationship, consider how does one evaluate the substantial commitment, cost and quality of life required by the provider to appropriately care for an animal that may potentially live for decades? How does the concerned aviculturist, veterinarian, conservationist or breeder tackle the plight of birds "owned" by uninformed caretakers or those living in uncaring, neglectful and/or abusive situations?

Living with an animal that is essentially not domesticated provides a challenge to supplement the needs of a creature removed from its natural environment. The reality of living with a parrot might be

substantially different than originally perceived. Parrots are essentially loud, messy and destructive. Proper housing, diet and veterinary care can be costly. If well educated prior to a purchase, the prospective parrot "owner" has some clue about the responsibility that he/she is about to undertake. The purchaser needs valuable support



Birds will sometimes pluck one another – as seen with these rescued cockatiels.

concerning their bird regarding the environmental, psychological and physical factors that must be created to satisfy some of the parrot's natural, instinctive behaviors to pre-empt the "behavior problems" often the factor which costs the bird its home. The human individual or family essentially becomes a substitute flock for the highly social psittacine bird, whether a budgie or a macaw. Committing to a long-term relationship with a parrot is not unlike living with another human being. Learning how to have and maintain a compatible relationship with one's pet bird begins by having a healthy respect for who and what it is, as well as a willingness to accept complete responsibility for its emotional and physical well-being. Incompatibility usually begins with the human's unrealistic expectations of the animal. This can be the result of lack of knowledge or misinformation. The person who chooses a parrot as a pet must acquire many useful skills to live successfully with that animal if the relationship is to thrive.

Is there a need to establish

standards of biosecurity and veterinary protocol for humane societies and sanctuary groups specializing in parrots? Is there a need to establish standards of care for individuals and groups that are performing rescue functions and creating permanent sanctuary for the rising number of parrots entering such facilities? Keeping parrots can be costly. Many sanctuaries with bare bones paid staff or volunteers close for a variety of reasons. We must be responsible for standards and protocol established for long-term flock health of the avian population. Observation of this emerging field in aviculture suggests that this type of facility

birds, and former pets can be substantial when the numbers are factored in. Often, the caring pet owner with a heart of gold in his or her desire to help displaced birds becomes overwhelmed. Time involved in the birds' care is twenty-four/seven with a high rate of burnout. With no standardized criteria for the care and provision for birds in a sanctuary, rescue or rehabilitative parrot facility, the necessity of establishing a healthy prototype and database is critical to the longevity, success and reputation of all of these organizations and the birds.

Where do the monies come from? Some funding sources are memberships, donations, grants and potential corporate underwriting and gifting resultant from estate planning, endowments and trusts. Fiduciary responsibility to the financial contributors of these organizations is imperative. The parrots are forever our responsibility. This type of organization is a fledgling and needs your help with education, support, and liaison. If rescue and sanctuary organizations are to succeed and continue to provide this invaluable service to the public and to the birds, we must become an integral part of aviculture. A protocol for standards and accountability from each rescue and sanctuary organization is imperative if the number of birds entering these facilities is to have the quality of life that they deserve. Community involvement, strong veterinary contacts, assistance from bird clubs, humane organizations, school systems, rotary and retirement organizations, pet stores, retailers, breeders and the media are imperative. Passion and good intentions are not enough; they do not pay the bills. How do we make our concern YOUR concern? How do we spread the message that "this living fragment of the rainforest" needs our help, now more than ever?

The Gabriel Foundation's motto from *The Little Prince* by Antoine de St. Exupery reminds us, "Many have forgotten this truth, but you must not forget it. You remain responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."

For further information contact The Gabriel Foundation at www.thegabrielfoundation.org or Sam Foster, Symposium coordinator at 352.686.8955 (ph/fax) or e-mail at GabrielTGF@aol.com

The Parrots of the World - a critical question for us all

by MICHAEL REYNOLDS

It is now nearly twelve years since we launched the World Parrot Trust, dedicated to the survival of parrot species in the wild and the welfare of captive birds. Despite our efforts, however, during that time the position of both wild and captive birds has continued to deteriorate severely.

The birds in the wild are subjected to accelerating habitat loss and trapping for the pet trade. If we make a global estimate that half a million young parrots are stolen from the wild each year, that's six million birds lost to the wild and condemned to a variety of levels of distress as captives.

A small number of parrots kept as pets in the developed world may be fortunate. Their owners may have the financial resources and the intelligence and understanding to give their birds adequate accommodation, food and veterinary care. Even so, such conditions cannot possibly be equated to the freedom and fulfillment that a wild bird will experience, from enjoying a glut of figs, to producing young, even to the drama of sudden death inflicted by a predator. Pet parrots in the parrot range countries number many millions, and again, only a minority of these will enjoy a decent quality of life. If we say that perhaps ten percent of all captive parrots are kept in satisfactory conditions, that would be a generous assessment.

What can we, the 'caring parrot community', do to help the remaining 90% of pet parrots, denied space, stimulation, a proper diet, veterinary care and sensitive concern for their welfare? Estimates vary, but the World Parrot Trust believes there may be between fifty and sixty million captive parrots worldwide. In the USA there are thought to be over 5 million parrots, not surprising in a nation that is a hotbed of parrot keeping and breeding. Even with the restricted inflow of parrots from wild sources brought about by the Wild Bird Conservation Act, the ease with which parrots are now aviary bred means constant pressure of an excessive supply of young birds at ever lower prices. The result is a vast population, perhaps in the millions, of parrots in transit from one home to another, or to a shop, or some kind of 'sanctuary'. It is a testament to the genuine commitment of so many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of concerned parrot people, that all over the developed world parrot sanctuaries are being opened. We

have to hope that many of the deprived 90% of parrots will eventually encounter adequate standards of care, but in reality



**PARROTS
NEED
HELP**

...to survive in the wild
...to thrive in our homes

A WORLD PARROT TRUST CAMPAIGN
www.worldparrottrust.org

only a tiny fraction will be so fortunate.

Let us speculate that in the USA five hundred capable parrot sanctuaries are each looking after an average of one hundred rescued parrots. That adds up to 50,000 birds, or around one percent of all captive parrots in the USA. Frankly, my opinion is that the total of birds in sanctuaries is far less than 50,000. At any rate, we still have around five million parrots in the United States suffering miserable lives. We simply have to accept that all this misery cannot be eliminated by the caring parrot community taking over responsibility from the uncaring people.

Trouble is, writing about this in 'PsittaScene', 'Pet Bird Report', 'Bird Talk', 'Parrots' or other specialist publications, is preaching to the converted. The people who are mistreating the parrots are most unlikely to read anything that might improve their knowledge or understanding. What we propose,

on behalf of the birds we all care about so deeply, is the following: Stop breeding so many birds. Back in 1989 I wrote a piece in 'PsittaScene' about how our hobby was one of the few in which one might be able to earn a little money and thus pay for our interest. In our furiously commercial western societies this has been taken to extremes and the time has come to call a halt. Aviculturists of all kinds should consider reducing their breeding activity, going for quality rather than quantity.

Educate the ignorant. We need to reach the kind of people who buy a parrot on a whim, find it interesting for a week or two, then just neglect it or move it on to

the wild, to thrive in our homes'. We consider that this statement is still very relevant and if parrot organizations, publications, bird clubs, zoos and conservation and welfare activists were to get behind this campaign, it could open many doors to create publicity for the plight of the parrots.

One of our assets is the video made for us by John Cleese. In this, John explains the importance of our PARROTS NEED HELP slogan. This video was shown twice on UK television, but not in the USA or other countries. It could well be used globally, supported by every kind of publicity arranged by our associates and supporters in the parrot community. It will be essential to distribute a simple leaflet that explains our concerns and is suitable for reproduction in print media generally. We should aim for a 'World Parrot Week', to be held towards the end of the year 2001.

The World Parrot Trust and its 13 branches around the world are willing to coordinate this activity. So who would like to join us in this endeavour?

This brings me to the critical question mentioned above: do you care most about the parrots themselves, or more about the money you make from them? This is the crunch question. Do you support the reduction of mass, abusive, sub-standard parrot keeping, or would this objective be unwelcome to you for financial reasons? We hope you will decide that the welfare of these marvelous birds has to be the priority.

Five years ago in our 'Manifesto for Aviculture' we introduced the concept of 'responsible aviculture', which encouraged '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.' This concept has been taken up and repeated by many parrot groups and individuals, but perhaps now we should make it clear that the conscientious keeping of pet parrots is a vital part of the whole.

In this issue of 'PsittaScene' we have inserted a new print of our PARROTS NEED HELP car sticker, and a copy of our 'Happy, Healthy Parrot' leaflet. Please take a look at these and consider how we can all work together to improve the quality of life for our friends, the parrots. If you want to take part, please write directly to me.

Jewels of Nature - The Parrots



Jewels of Nature The Parrots Volume 1



Rainbow Lorikeets

An artistic and publishing triumph, and a generous innovation in funding parrot conservation

Two Inspirational Australians are attempting to raise A\$20 million to help rescue the world's endangered parrots through the sale of their lavish limited-edition art books.

Well known Australian artist Gordon Hanley and business partner Okko Boer, a Sydney art dealer and publisher, are putting together a unique and audacious publishing project that plans to contribute \$A20 million to parrot preservation around the world.

Okko Boer, who has marketed Australian art around the world for more than 30 years, says the process is transparent from start to finish. "The reason we chose the WPT is that they have already spent a lot of time and effort on preserving 37 parrot species. They have the expertise to direct the money to where it will do the most good."

If all goes to plan, the A\$20 million will end up in the fund that will roll on year after year, with the annual interest earned going into preservation projects. An important point to realise is that with funding of this nature, it becomes possible to ensure a continuous flow of money into vital projects. Put another way, critical projects do not fall over as they have in the past when vital funds dried up. As

Okko Boer points out, "If they do it wisely, the perpetual fund will be delivering results long after we're all gone. It's the only way to look after these matters because you can't continually knock on doors asking for money". Hanley and Boer acknowledge that at first sight A\$20,000 is a lot to ask for a couple of books, but buyers will receive something that is an absolutely unique and valuable investment: in fact, it's a bargain. Put simply, there has been nothing quite like this ever published before. No one artist has ever attempted to portray parrots as they actually are, in their natural habitat. This is not a bird identification book. It is a portrayal of these beautiful birds as objects of art in their own right. Every page in the book seems to pose the question "Is this what we could lose forever?"

Many individuals, corporations, and public collections appear willing to invest. With marketing now gaining pace, over one third of the Australian allocation has already been sold, with buyers ranging from the National Library in Canberra to individual lovers of avian art who see an opportunity to purchase something rare and beautiful for a very worthwhile cause. International marketing has just commenced in the United States with strong interest from Europe and Asia.

News about the artist, Gordon Hanley

Gordon Hanley, a biologist turned professional artist, likes to use every available source of material in creating these stunning images. "Museum skins are important because you can get individual detail in the feathers etc., (he is Wildlife Artist-In-Residence at the Queensland Museum). Sketches of live birds capture character, poses, proportions, and accurate colour. Photographs are extremely useful in confirming these, and in obtaining quick records. Often you don't get very good material at all and that's where the artist takes over".

Gordon Hanley points out he is creating fine art, not a field guide. "What I've got to keep in mind is all those qualities that make a painting desirable to look at - composition, colour balance, the painting process. I'm not about photo-realism. If that was important, we might as well do a book of photos. This is personal, and I'm trying to convey the impression these wonderful birds have had on me."

It is also important to portray each bird in the correct habitat. The particular plant species depicted in each image is carefully researched: work that would be very difficult without the invaluable assistance of Dr. Phil Cameron, curator of the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. Backgrounds unify the entire painting and work in harmony with the subject. Of course this involves a lot of travelling, both to access specimens which are not available in Australian collections and to experience at first hand their respective habitats.

So far Gordon has completed 78 major paintings and 76 life-sized studies, more than enough for the first volume. The paintings are bold and



Biologist turned artist Gordon Hanley



Imperial Amazon



White-tailed Cockatoos



Mealy Amazons

lively, all done in watercolour, a difficult medium to work in because unlike oils or acrylics, it is essentially non-correctable. "But once you have mastery of the medium, it's excellent for doing this sort of work. It's easy to use in the field, it can lend itself to high precision and hard-edged clarity, but is also capable of producing subtle and unpredictable effects. So it's a medium that has great flexibility." It's why Gould, Le Valliant, Audubon and half a dozen others used watercolours.

The authors for the book include Dr. Charles Munn, (Macaws) Prof. Mike Perrin (African parrots and Ringnecks), Dr. Paul Reillo and Howard Voren (sharing the amazons, conures and remaining South American parrots), Neville Connors (cockatoos) Dr. Stephen Garnett (Australian parrots) and the world's most prolific parrot author, Rosemary Low, (Iories and Indonesian/Papua New Guinea species).

The internet is used extensively, paintings are digitally photographed and emailed to experts who check them for accuracy and provide swift feedback. The need for detail, accuracy, and realism is paramount, but good fine art can still be created within these parameters.

This ambitious project has already consumed over 2 years of the artist's life, with a further two years to go and Okko Boer, having initially devised the plan, and now in control of production and marketing, will be involved for even longer. Yet the only goal that really matters, after completion of the paintings, and sale of the books, is that the JON Fund can reach its full potential in helping to save the parrots of the world.



White-bellied Caiques



Hawk-headed Parrots

Parrots, as a group, possess the largest number of threatened species of all of the bird families. There are around 350 extant species, with 90 of these listed by CITES as threatened. We have lost some 20 parrot species, worldwide, since the year 1500. Parrots are under

attack on a number of fronts - habitat destruction, introduced predators, the illegal live bird trade and simple persecution. There are a dozen endangered parrots in Australia, a situation worsened by lack of adequate funding.

Interested? Here's what to do next:



First - visit the website
www.jewelsofnature.com.au



Second - register your interest on the website
Or use the reply form below

Wherever you are in the world, arrangements
can be made to show you the actual books

Jewels of Nature, The Parrots comprises two large books, each measuring 660mm by 510mm. Each leather-bound volume will contain 60 full-page paintings and 62 life-size studies of parrots, many of them in danger of extinction. In addition to Gordon Hanley's artwork there will be detailed text on each parrot species by seven of the world's foremost parrot experts.

Made in Australia from the finest materials available, each hand-crafted volume will be delivered in its own protective carry case; an essential feature, as each book weighs an impressive 16.5 kg.

The first volume is expected to be available early in 2001 with the second to follow at the end of the year. Only 2000 of the individually signed and numbered sets will be printed, and the number to be sold in Australia has been limited to just 200. After production, all of the plates will be destroyed, thus ensuring the integrity of the limited edition.

At a pre-publication price of US\$12,400 a set it isn't exactly cheap, but then again, nothing about these volumes could be described as cheap. Seeing is believing. No expense has been spared in the production of these exquisite books. The paper for example, is the same stock as that specified by the Louvre Museum in Paris for their published artworks. The production cost, using the finest materials will run into millions. On top of this, there are the research trips and a worldwide marketing campaign that will cover over 100 countries.

Mike Reynolds has seen Volume One of 'Jewels of Nature - The Parrots', and says: "You will be overwhelmed by this fantastic publication. Painting after painting sets new standards for the dramatic representation of parrots in the wild. Every parrot lover will be thrilled by this outstanding work and will find it to be a superb investment. Moreover, your purchase will help save the birds we love."

Tell me more!

For more information, phone Australia (61) (2) 45 75 5299 OR visit the website www.jewelsofnature.com.au

Please complete and return this form to:- Okko Boer, Fine Art Collectables Pty. Ltd, "Hillside" River Road, Lower Portland, NSW 2756 Australia

Please Send me More Information about 'Jewels of Nature':

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WPT visits Fiji

by KIRSTY SWINNERTON Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada (WPTC)

At the beginning of the year, the National Trust for Fiji (NTF) contacted the World Parrot Trust on the advice of Mr Michael Dibben, the British High Commissioner in Fiji. Mr Dibben was instrumental in the World Parrot Trust's education work in Paraguay and had suggested that WPT might support NTF's parrot conservation programme. Thus I found myself on a 26-hour flight via Los Angeles and Hawaii, on behalf of the WPT to spend 12 days in Fiji as a guest of the NTF. My trip in May was to coincide with the launch of a parrot conservation poster produced by the NTF but I was also to investigate the problems facing Fijian parrots and look at ways in which the WPT could become involved.

I was fairly used to tropical islands, having lived in Mauritius in the Indian Ocean for 12 years, but Fiji was nearly ten times the size with half the population, more forest and a lot more wildlife. Fiji comprises over 300 volcanic and coral islands covering a total land mass of 18,300km². There are 4 main islands of which Viti Levu is the largest at 10,390 km² and Kadavu is the smallest at 411 km². Fiji ranks third for numbers of restricted-range bird species in the Pacific and 26 species are endemic. Fiji has 6 parrot species, the most charismatic of which are the Shining parrots, *Prosopaea sp.* In Fiji Shining parrots are known as Musk parrots on account of their musky smell and are also referred to by the island on which each species or sub-species lives. The Collared Lory *Phygis solitarius* is the most common parrot and the Red-throated Lorikeet *Charmosyna amabilis* is the rarest with less than 2,500 restricted to mountainous areas. The Blue-crowned Lory *Vini australis* is found only in the southern islands of Fiji but also on Samoa, Tonga and several other islands in central Polynesia. The Red-throated Lorikeet and the Vini lorikeets were identified in the recent Parrot of Action Plan as priority species for conservation.

I flew in to Viti Levu and was greeted by the Director of the NTF, Birandra Singh, who drove me to the capital city Suva where I would be based. Birandra told me about recent news of illegal trafficking in the Kadavu Musk parrot *P. splendens* and how NTF had begun an



A pair of Collared Lorries (*Phygis solitarius*)

Photo: K. Swinnerton

awareness programme to educate the Kadavu people about their unique wildlife. On our way back from the airport we stopped at a print shop where the final changes were being made to the parrot poster due to be launched that week. A ceremony was to be held in Kadavu to coincide with the Provincial Administration meeting and several thousand people were due to attend. However all that week heavy rain flooded the runway which prevented us from landing and the ceremony was cancelled. My first week was therefore spent meeting Government officers and local organisations involved in conservation and getting to know the NTF.

National Trust for Fiji

The NTF is affiliated to the

discovered in 1979. They have help from many overseas organisations such as Taronga Zoo and the Brehm Foundation who advise on species recovery programmes. In addition to species work, the NTF manage the Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park and the Yaduataba Iguana Sanctuary. At the headquarters in Suva I met a group of very dedicated and enthusiastic staff including local and overseas volunteers working on many aspects of conservation. During the week I also met NTF Park staff, Deputy Director Elisabeth Erasito and Vice Chairman Robin Yarrow. Through them I was able to make some assessment of the priority problems facing Fiji's parrots and glean some ideas of how WPT could contribute.

Finding wild parrots

But so far I had not seen a parrot. Asesela Waqairoba, a venerable volunteer for the NTF, suggested that we visit Colo-i-Suva, a small reserve only 20 minutes from Suva, where we might find some. Within 10 minutes of arriving and despite the rain a flock of 4 to 5 Yellow-breasted Musk parrots *P. personata* (known locally as the Viti Levu parrot) flew into the tree above us and squawked. Unlike the other 2 species, these birds are bright green with a large splash of yellow and orange on their breast. They were very noisy, constantly calling to each other and after 10 minutes flew off with a peculiar gliding flight. Inspired, the next day I visited the neighbouring Wailoku Forest Reserve. Although the tall trees obscured good views over the



Habitat degradation in Nausori Highlands, Western Viti Levu. Photo: K. Swinnerton



Red-shining Parrot (*Prosopeia tabuensis*)

Photo: K. Swinerton

valley, once I recognised the Musk Parrot's calls I seemed to hear them constantly and watched several small groups perched by the path. One particularly inquisitive individual sat just 20 feet from me.

I needed to see first-hand some of the problems facing the parrots in the wild and I also wanted to see the terrain in which the Red-throated Lorikeet lived so that I could assess the potential for fieldwork. I recruited 2 Australian volunteers and we set off for a two-day trip across Viti Levu via the central highlands. I was told there was only one road across the island, it was not tarred and I had no idea what conditions to expect, but getting lost did not seem likely. However, we found ourselves in a maze of small village roads with no signposts and the mountains far ahead. Fortunately, villagers spoke excellent English and after a few wrong turns we were on the 'main road'. As we climbed into the highlands, immaculate villages with manicured gardens appeared in between peaks and valleys cascading with lianas and lush with trees. We stopped and watched Golden doves, Many coloured fruit doves, Vanikoro flycatchers and Fruit Bats but surprisingly few Musk parrots. I had expected to see more as the forest seemed ideal habitat, but they were hard to

find. As we were nearing Tomanivi or Mt Victoria, the highest point of the island, a bright green bird shot across the windscreen, possibly a Red-throated Lorikeet as we were in the right place, but it disappeared. When we reached the peak it was cold and wet as we were in cloud; the trees had gone and were replaced with stunted bushes and tree ferns. We descended to Tavua on the northern coast where we spent the night before heading the next day for the Nausori Highlands in the west. The west of the island was in total contrast to the east, which gets much more rainfall. We drove all day through a sea of sugar cane and grassland where the only forest was in tiny sheltered pockets or on remote mountain tops. The grasslands are burnt every year which prevents any forest regeneration. There was certainly little habitat for parrots left, although we saw flocks of Collared Lories which seem to live anywhere, even in the centre of Suva.

Kula Eco-Park

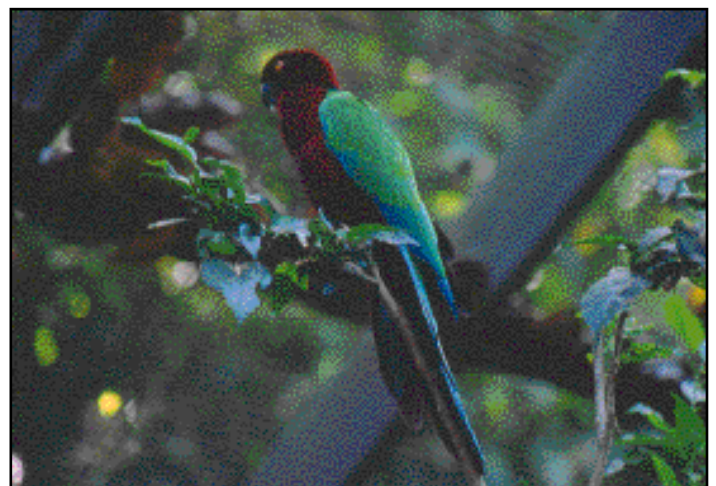
Kula Eco-Park is a small privately funded wildlife park owned by Philip and Judy Felstead on the south coast of Fiji. The Felsteads rescued the Park from ruin in 1997 and have restored it into a centre for native Fijian wildlife with a

strong emphasis on environmental education. I was interested to visit the centre as I had spent the last five years as Manager of the Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary in Mauritius and was keen to see similar projects. Judy and the Park Manager, Ramesh, gave me a guided tour and explained what they were trying to achieve. Kula is currently involved in captive-breeding programmes for the Crested Iguana and the Fiji Peregrine Falcon, working with the NTF, Taronga Zoo and the Brehm Foundation. Ramesh showed me around their state-of-the-art falcon breeding facility which housed several pairs of Peregrines as well as the endemic Fiji Goshawk. The Park has a collection of about 25

Musk parrots from several islands, with a large proportion of the Kadavu species. Some of the parrots were in a huge planted free-flight which must have been like home for them. Many of the birds had been rescued and birds had not yet bred but a captive-breeding programme was their next goal. Judy and Ramesh showed me their plans for an Endangered Species Breeding and Research Centre which included artificial incubation and hand-rearing rooms and off-show breeding enclosures for Musk parrots. I was very impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff at Kula and with the facilities they had built. I knew from experience that running such a centre in the tropics, where supplies are hard to get, electricity is erratic, food rots within a day and ants live in the fridge is very hard work.

Kadavu

The highlight of my trip was a visit to Kadavu, the fourth largest island which sits 100km south of Viti Levu. Kadavu is about 75% covered in forest with only 8,000 inhabitants. In addition to 20 native species of birds, 4 of which are endemic, Kadavu boasts one of the world's largest coral reefs, the 50km long Great Astrolabe Reef. As Asesela and I approached the runway in our colourful 20-seater plane, I could see why we had not been able to land before. The runway was as wide as the island, stretched across an isthmus separating the eastern from the western half and very exposed. I thought I was pretty blasé about tropical



Red-shining Parrot in Kula Eco-Park, Fiji.

Photo: K. Swinerton



Asesla Waqiroba handing over a WPT T-shirt to the Tui Namuana, Kaduva Island, Fiji. Photo: K. Swinerton

island paradises but Kadavu took my breath away. Turquoise seas, lush green forests, palm-tree lined beaches and birds everywhere! Kadavu parrots were sitting in the trees behind our guesthouse and the landlady said that they fed early morning in the cassava plantations. That afternoon, Asesla and I were invited to meet the 'Tui Namuana' who was the headman of the nearby village. We were welcomed into the meeting house and offered 'Yaqona', a mildly narcotic drink made from the root of a pepper plant. I found that it numbed my tongue and it also apparently numbs the legs, but fortunately being a woman I was not expected to drink a lot. Asesla presented the Tui with some parrot posters and I presented him a WPT T-shirt. Asesla was well respected in Kadavu having been the Provincial Administrator there for 16 years, and discussed the NTF's project and my trip with the villagers. We left worse the wear for mosquitos but happy that the villagers were very interested in the information we had given them.

The Kadavu parrot is brilliant red with blue-and-green wings and tail and a blue nape. The females are slightly smaller than the males with daintier heads. I watched them flying around the slopes above the villages, apparently using native and exotic habitats and feeding in vegetable patches. The high number of endemic species still remaining on Kadavu may be due to the lack of introduced mongooses, mynah birds and

red-vented bulbuls which are so abundant on other islands. However, the potential for these pests to disperse between islands has increased in recent years owing to better transport, and they are a constant threat to wildlife in Fiji. Leaving the island I had a birds-eye view and realised how much of the interior seemed untouched. Most villagers travel around the island by boat and there were few paths. Kadavu was a true jewel in this fantastic archipelago.

Problems and solutions

One of the problems facing wildlife conservation in Fiji seemed to be a lack of local and scientific knowledge and little is known about species' status, ecology and current threats. Obtaining this basic information means that we could anticipate population declines caused by habitat degradation and trade. Much traditional wildlife knowledge seems to have been lost through the generations and there is little concept of sustainable land-use. The NTF's education campaign is a step towards providing information to villagers but further support is needed. In Fiji the indigenous people retain ownership of 83% of the land which could make them ideal wildlife protectors.

Captive-breeding can be a valuable component of an endangered species recovery programme, to safe-guard wild populations, to aid in recovery of depleted populations and as an educational tool. A captive-

breeding programme had been suggested for the Kadavu Musk parrot and the Red-throated Lorikeet. The lorikeet is unknown in captivity and the Musk parrots breed poorly outside of the Pacific. I did not think that an international breeding programme was a high priority for these species at the moment, and firstly information was needed about their status in the wild. If a breeding programme was necessary in the future, Kula Eco-Park would be an ideal site particularly if reintroduction was a long-term aim.

Politics

On my return to the UK, I was quite optimistic that funding for parrot conservation in Fiji was available from the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). However a few days later, Fiji went into political turmoil. The Prime Minister and his cabinet were held to ransom and civil unrest broke out. Consequently, overseas donors were reluctant to invest in any new conservation initiatives and the WPT also felt it prudent to wait. I subsequently heard that the NTF's already small budget was

reduced to only 40%. Unfortunately it is often in these situations that wildlife needs even more help. As peace breaks down, lawlessness may result in illegal poaching, wood-cutting and wildlife trafficking with everyone trying to survive. Fortunately, the situation in Fiji has now largely been resolved and we hope that stability will return and WPT can continue their efforts to support the NTF and Fiji's parrots.

I would like to thank Birandra Singh, Asesela Waqiroba and all the staff at the NTF for welcoming me so warmly to Fiji and making my trip so successful. Thanks to Jo Andrews for all her support and to Dick Watling for advice and hospitality. Many thanks to Judy Felstead and Ramesh Chand at Kula for an inspiring visit and to Michael Dibben for his help. Thanks to William Cross, Dieter Rinke and Greg Sherley for help and advice. My grateful thanks go to my employer Elaine Williams and WPTC who continue to support me and to Andrew Greenwood and the World Parrot Trust for making the trip possible. 



National Trust for Fiji Team at HQ in Suva.

Photo: K. Swinerton

Conservationist South America,
Soshi Matsumoto TSUBASA Avian
Rescue Japan and Eb Cravens
Aviculturist and Author Hawaii.

For complete and updated
Symposium information,
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Florida USA at 352 686 8955,
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The Gabriel Foundation - Symposium 2001

The Gabriel Foundation is proud
to host its second annual 'Parrots
in the New Millennium: Symposium
2001'. This year's event will be
held in Tampa, Florida at the
Radisson Riverwalk Hotel on
January 5, 6 and 7, 2001.

Join us for this informative
international event to address the
issues of providing for the parrots
in our care and for making
provisions for them when we are
no longer able to do so. Over
thirty speakers and panelists will
participate in the 2001
symposium, including leading
members of the avicultural
industry, avian veterinary
communities, conservation and
wildlife organisations and rescue
and sanctuary groups from
around the world.

Keynote speakers to date include
Mike Reynolds World Parrot Trust,
Ray Dorge Author and Aviculturist
British Columbia, Charles Munn
Bio Brasil South America, Klaus
Uhlenhut Kirrama Wildlife Tours
Australia, Gil Serique

Lear's Painting

Members will be pleased to hear
that we have just sold the original
painting of Lear's Macaw, by the
distinguished wildlife artist David
Johnston, for the excellent sum of
£5000. This amount will go
towards the work carried out to
help Lear's Macaw by BioBrasil,
the Brazilian NGO that is studying
the biology of this threatened
bird, and helping to protect it
from bird thieves.

This sale reminds me to remind
readers that we still have a few
prints left from the original
limited edition, and these are
available for a mere £38 or \$65.
This would make a great
Christmas present for macaw
lovers, and the price includes
post and packing. Simply place
your order with our UK or USA
offices.

Once again we must thank David
Johnston, whose generosity
towards WPT has brought us
many thousands of pounds from
limited edition prints, plates and
statues.



A £5,000 picture - yours for £38.

Book Review

by ROSEMARY LOW

International Zoo Year Book Vol 37



The latest volume of the zoo world's
bible, The International Zoo Year Book,
will be of greater interest to
aviculturists than is usually the case.
Every volume contains a special
section: in this volume it is devoted to
Psittacines. As it covers 316 pages of
the volume's total of 440 pages, it is
evident that this is a book which
should be on the shelf of every
serious student of parrots. There are
32 papers on parrots, all of rare depth
and quality.

The section starts with Nigel Collar's review of globally threatened
species. Nearly 26% of parrots are threatened with extinction and
another 11% of the 350 or so are listed as near-threatened. He
describes criteria, characteristics and remedies. In the latter
category are research, site and habitat conservation, control of trade
and awareness. He concludes that captive-breeding is unlikely to
play a significant role in the conservation of most endangered
species. For certain forms, eg, Kakapo, Echo Parakeet, Spix's Macaw
and the Puerto Rican Amazon, there is a role.

He writes: 'Ironically, there is a wealth of books, magazines and
societies concerned exclusively with parrots, but their focus is on
the superficial matters of identity, captive maintenance and
breeding, not the elucidation (so necessary for their long-term in
situ management) of the complex environmental and social
interrelationships of the birds.' (This is true -except for the existence
of The World Parrot Trust in the UK and its branches worldwide).

Other papers include Roger Wilkinson's overview of captive
management programmes and regional planning for parrot
collections, reviews of EEPs for Hyacinthine and Buffon's Macaws,
Lilacine and Red-tailed Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis lilacina* and
A. brasiliensis), environmental enrichment for parrots at Edinburgh
Zoo and at the Max-Planck Institut in Germany and very important in
the era, a review of common viruses in parrots.

Papers which focus on individual species cover the Collared Lory
and the Blue-crowned Lory at San Diego Zoo, the Palm Cockatoo at
Rotterdam Zoo, Calyptorhynchus (Black) Cockatoos, Blue-eyed
Cockatoos at Chester Zoo, breeding Moluccan Cockatoos at Loro
Parque, Philippine Cockatoo Conservation and Kea management at
Paradise Park, UK. Lesser known species are covered in a paper on
breeding the Red-browed Fig Parrot at Curumbin, breeding Pesquet's
Parrot at Jurong BirdPark and another on the same species at San
Diego Zoo and Orange-bellied Parrot breeding and reintroduction in
Australia.

Conservation papers include one by Neils Krabbe on the critically
endangered Yellow-eared Parrot, the work of Loro Parque Fundacion
and of course, Paul Butler's Promoting Protection through Pride.

The scope is very wide and the amount of solid information is
enormous.

This volume of the Yearbook is unusual in that it omits two
reference sections: zoos and aquaria of the world and the records of
species born and hatched in the relevant years in zoo's worldwide. It
does contain the international studbooks for rare species. This
volume follows volume 36 in 1998, which contained the zoo
reference section and births and hatchings for 1995 and 1996.

The rest of volume 37 contains articles on The Developing Zoo
World and includes information on the California Condor, the Black
Stilt (*himantopus novaezelandiae*) and the Writhe-billed Hornbill
(*Aceros leucocephalus*).

This volume of the yearbook costs £67 post paid in the UK from The
Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY,
Surface postage to the rest of the world costs £6 extra.

First use of an artificial nest box by an Echo Parakeet in the wild!

by LANCE WOOLAVER

We've just started the 2000/2001 Echo Parakeet season here in Mauritius and already have a new and exciting advance in the conservation program. One of our released females, "Txiki" has laid eggs in an artificial nest box in the wild. One of these eggs has hatched and she is presently rearing a healthy 4 day old chick. 'Txiki' was released at Plaine Lievre in April of 1998.

She was seen with a wild male early this season and began prospecting one of the eight nest boxes soon after it had been put up in August of this year.

Three other release Echoes have been seen prospecting in nest boxes but have not yet chosen their nest site for the season so we are hoping for more. This is an important step for us as it is another technique we can use to quickly increase the Echo



Txiki and others at a food hopper

population over the short term. We are able to choose the nest sites which are easier to access and are also easier to protect from rats and nest competitors such as Indian Mynahs and White-tailed Tropicbirds. White-tailed Tropicbirds were one of

our main problems last season.

Three Echo chicks were killed in a nest cavity which had been taken over by a pair of Tropicbirds. This was fortunately a problem easily solved for this season. During

the off season all of the known cavities were Tropicbird proofed by making their entrance holes smaller. Echoes are quite tolerant of changes to their nest cavities as long as they are given some time to adjust to these changes. Despite the loss of these three chicks to Tropicbirds and another four chicks lost to nestfly infestation, the 1999/2000 season was a resounding success with a record total of 19 youngsters fledging in the wild! The upcoming season is also progressing very smoothly. We already have two pairs with healthy chicks and another four pairs incubating eggs. Seven more pairs are prospecting cavities, four of which are release females.

We have been pleasantly surprised with the level of interest that many of our one year old females have been showing in nesting. Most of these youngsters have been observed copulating and looking in nest cavities. We were expecting this from the two year old females but are encouraged by the interest shown by the one year olds. This gives us great hope that within a few years the Echo will be even closer to being removed from the list of critically endangered species here in Mauritius. We would like to thank Mike Reynolds and all of the members and staff of the World Parrot Trust for helping us as we get closer and closer to that goal.



Txiki in her artificial nest box



Lance at an artificial nest site



THE WPT 12

Twelve parrot species

that highlight the threats to all parrots and all of nature



In its twelve year history the World Parrot Trust has been able to help fund conservation work for 37 species in 22 'parrot range' countries such as Australia, Brazil, Mauritius, South Africa. It has formed support groups in 13 countries and won thousands of members among thoughtful people in the global 'parrot community'. In all its activities the interests of parrots – not people – are paramount.

WPT has now chosen twelve species to illustrate the reasons why PARROTS NEED HELP to survive in the wild. With one exception, the parrots shown here are included in the 90 species given priority in the Parrot Action Plan, a vital document published by IUCN, the World

Conservation Union. This global plan was progressed and largely funded by the World Parrot Trust.

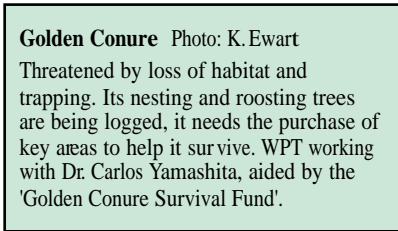
Please study these twelve birds, each of which has a brief status report. Every one of these parrots has received support from WPT, but much more is needed. We suggest that individual members, bird clubs or zoos might like to select a particular favourite and raise funding to help ensure its survival in the wild. This is a golden opportunity for WPT members to participate directly in the future prospects of a particular parrot species. *PsittaScene* will list all donations received for The WPT 12.



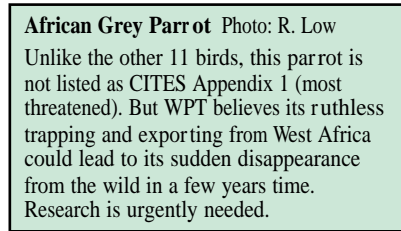
Lear's Macaw Photo: M. Reynolds
Numbers reduced to around 150 by trapping for the pet trade. Also threatened by shortage of palm fruits, its primary food source, and shooting by farmers. WPT funds research and protection activities by BioBrasil, an effective Brazilian NGO



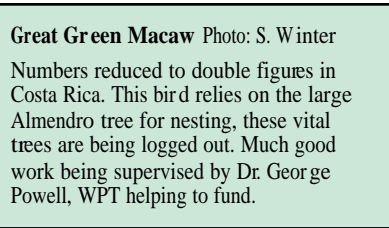
Echo Parakeet Photo: L. Woolover
At last, a success story! This Mauritian species was reduced to about 12 individuals, but Carl Jones and his team have used their exceptional skills to bring numbers back to over 100. WPT has funded this work since 1990, providing over £90,000.



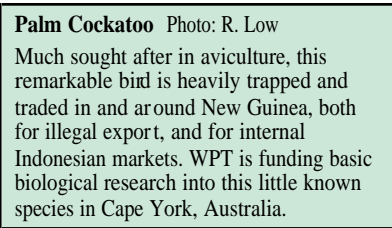
Golden Conure Photo: K. Ewart
Threatened by loss of habitat and trapping. Its nesting and roosting trees are being logged, it needs the purchase of key areas to help it survive. WPT working with Dr. Carlos Yamashita, aided by the 'Golden Conure Survival Fund'.



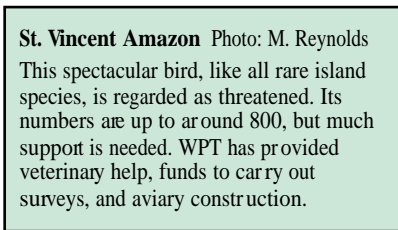
African Grey Parrot Photo: R. Low
Unlike the other 11 birds, this parrot is not listed as CITES Appendix 1 (most threatened). But WPT believes its ruthless trapping and exporting from West Africa could lead to its sudden disappearance from the wild in a few years time. Research is urgently needed.



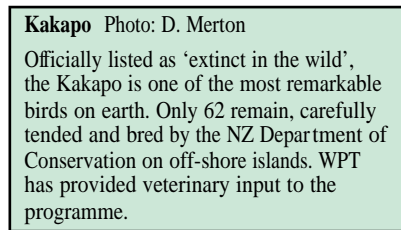
Great Green Macaw Photo: S. Winter
Numbers reduced to double figures in Costa Rica. This bird relies on the large Almendro tree for nesting, these vital trees are being logged out. Much good work being supervised by Dr. George Powell, WPT helping to fund.



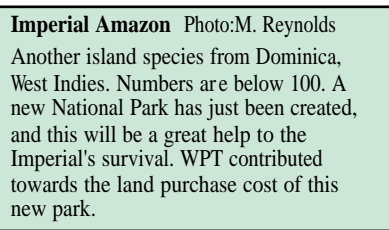
Palm Cockatoo Photo: R. Low
Much sought after in aviculture, this remarkable bird is heavily trapped and traded in and around New Guinea, both for illegal export, and for internal Indonesian markets. WPT is funding basic biological research into this little known species in Cape York, Australia.



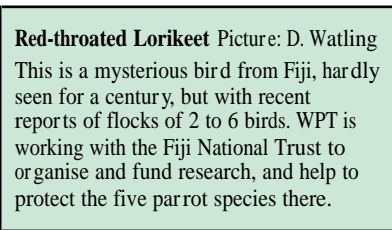
St. Vincent Amazon Photo: M. Reynolds
This spectacular bird, like all rare island species, is regarded as threatened. Its numbers are up to around 800, but much support is needed. WPT has provided veterinary help, funds to carry out surveys, and aviary construction.



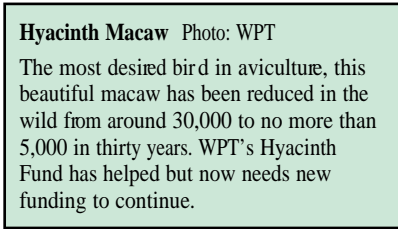
Kakapo Photo: D. Merton
Officially listed as 'extinct in the wild', the Kakapo is one of the most remarkable birds on earth. Only 62 remain, carefully tended and bred by the NZ Department of Conservation on off-shore islands. WPT has provided veterinary input to the programme.



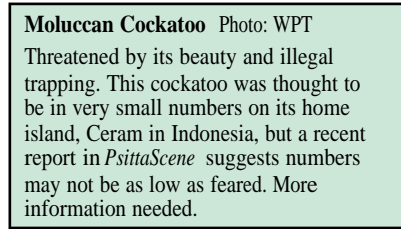
Imperial Amazon Photo: M. Reynolds
Another island species from Dominica, West Indies. Numbers are below 100. A new National Park has just been created, and this will be a great help to the Imperial's survival. WPT contributed towards the land purchase cost of this new park.



Red-throated Lorikeet Picture: D. Watling
This is a mysterious bird from Fiji, hardly seen for a century, but with recent reports of flocks of 2 to 6 birds. WPT is working with the Fiji National Trust to organise and fund research, and help to protect the five parrot species there.



Hyacinth Macaw Photo: WPT
The most desired bird in aviculture, this beautiful macaw has been reduced in the wild from around 30,000 to no more than 5,000 in thirty years. WPT's Hyacinth Fund has helped but now needs new funding to continue.



Moluccan Cockatoo Photo: WPT
Threatened by its beauty and illegal trapping. This cockatoo was thought to be in very small numbers on its home island, Ceram in Indonesia, but a recent report in *PsittaScene* suggests numbers may not be as low as feared. More information needed.

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.

**WILD PARROTS, CAPTIVE PARROTS....
WE WANT TO HELP THEM ALL**

Money Matters

By MICHAEL REYNOLDS

Cost of membership

It's quite a while since we talked to WPT members about financial matters, but there are now some points that need to be raised. First, it is a fact that our subscription remains the same as when we started twelve years ago. At only £15 or \$25, it covers the cost of publishing and distributing *PsittaScene* four times a year (£8 or \$13), and our very frugal basic operating costs (£4 or \$6). But this leaves only £3 or \$6 from each member to go towards the main purpose of the World Parrot Trust, its work to help the survival of parrots in the wild and their welfare in captivity.

We feel sure that our members would like to see *PsittaScene* continue, and we know for sure that it is well received and much appreciated for its reporting of parrot news generally, and WPT's projects in particular. So if we are going to increase our funding of projects, we think now is the right time to increase our subscription charges to an annual £20 or \$30, or the equivalent in other currencies. All of this increase will go directly to add to our funding of projects, both for parrot conservation and welfare. This increase will apply as from January 1st 2001. It is still possible for anyone to become a Life Member for a single payment of £250 or \$400, and we have added a new category for those able to be even more generous. This is our 'Conservation Member' category, which requires a single payment of £1000 or \$1500. Details are on the right, or otherwise contact our list of 'National Contacts'.

Legacies

Regular readers of *PsittaScene* will recall that WPT has been fortunate enough to receive two substantial legacies in the last year or so. First, we received a total of \$73,000 (£50,000) from the estate of David Kyle Brown, a US member. Then we received £94,000 (\$140,000) from the estate of Leonard and Sheila Hodge, who lived near Paradise Park in Cornwall and were WPT members. Last month we were advised of a legacy due to come to WPT from a French aviculturist, M. Philippe Maisonneuf. This may amount to about £20,000 (\$30,000). So we have received three large amounts from three different countries.

It is worth pointing out that it is only because of these legacies that WPT has been put in a position where it can employ a new director, as reported on page 2. Legacies can be a vital part of a charity's income. I am a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), a very strong organisation with over a million members. Their accounts show an increase of income in one year from £41m to £49m, and of this latter sum no less than £15m came from legacies. This suggests that people interested in birds are likely to think of helping the birds they care about in their wills, and I am therefore bold enough to suggest that leaving a legacy to the World Parrot Trust is a fine way of remembering treasured pet parrots, and providing help for threatened species in the wild.

Any member considering this request can write to WPT-UK for a form of words suitable for inclusion in a will. We very much hope that our members will see the merit of leaving funds to WPT, as an organisation that has stood the test of time and done much good work for the parrots. Thank you.

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WPT Web Sites:
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Canada: <http://www.cwparrot@canadianparrottrust.org>
Italy: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/italy>
Denmark: <http://www.image.dk/pewpt>

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
exchange currency, payment by Visa/Mastercard preferred)
 Plus donation of £/US\$

Name

Address

..... Zip/Postcode

Please charge my Mastercard/Visa No.

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Exp. date Amount £/US\$

Signature

OR:

I enclose a cheque made payable to the WPT

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

Join Now!

Price increase from January 2001

Parrots in the Wild

Psitta Scene



Rufous-fronted Parakeet *Bolborhynchus ferrugineifrons*

by OTTO PFISTER, Bogota

During our past visit into 'Los Nevados' Nationalpark, located between 3,200 and 5,300m altitude in the Colombian Central Andes region, minimum four small flocks of the rare and endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet *Bolborhynchus ferrugineifrons* were discovered. No previous record of this endangered species originated from the place of our encounter: the known areas of the species restricted distribution include the Nevado El Ruiz-Nevado del Tolima - near Laguna Otun -, plus Volcan Purace. Our observation took place west / south-west of El Ruiz, near the area called 'Casa el Cisne', and therefore would enlarge the originally known species' occurrence more towards the north / north-west. The park authority informed was not aware of the existence of this little known parakeet in the described location.

The parakeets were observed at 3,950m in bush covered, dry slopes. Usually a flock, consisting of 9-14 individuals, stayed closely together while feeding on seeds in the crowns of shrubby trees. A single bird

observing the surrounding would utter a twittering call when suspicious, the remaining members rejoining as a chorus, before the entire group would take wing at once. Before dusk a flock was watched flying into the cliffs of a nearby rock-face not to appear again - the exact location of the roost could not be discovered due to a fog-cloud covering the section.

Since rare and endemic, the Rufous-fronted Parakeet is extremely vulnerable to any changes in its confined distribution range. Fortunately this expanse lays almost entirely in the National Park, therefore no immediate threat to the species is observed. However, increased potato growing activities resulting in clearing of shrub-vegetation in the temperate zones destroy the species habitat especially in the lower sections of its distribution limits. Appropriate research would certainly offer proposals for conservation and encourage better understanding of these attractive birds listed under CITES Appendix II.