

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE  
IN PARROT CONSERVATION  
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

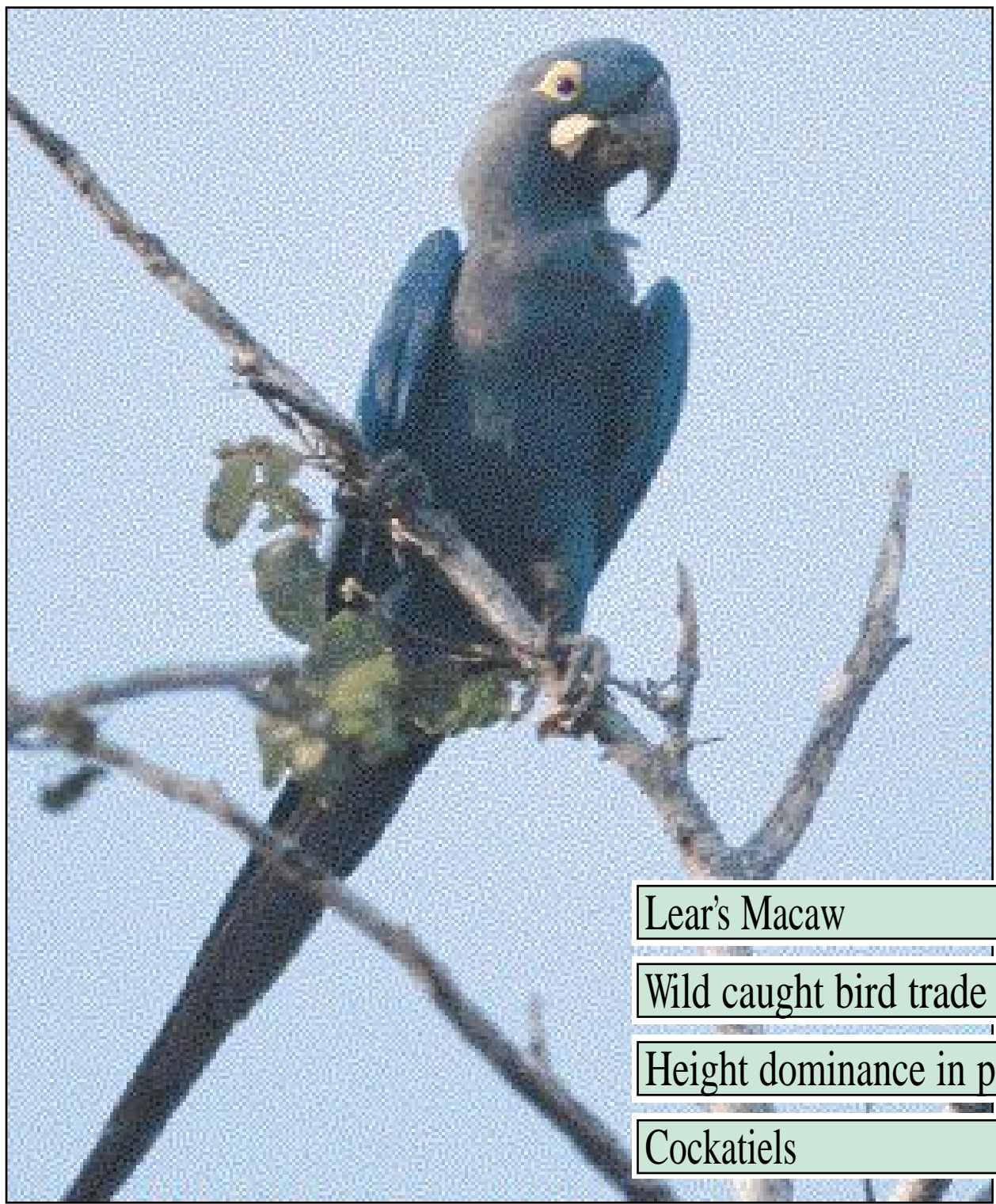
World Parrot Trust  
in action



Vol. 13 No. 3 August 2001

# Psitta

## SCENE



Lear's Macaw

Wild caught bird trade

Height dominance in parrots

Cockatiels

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

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### Cover Picture

A Lear's Macaw at the Serra Branca site, enjoying the evening sun.

Picture Jamie Gilardi

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# Good news from the Land of Lear's

By JAMIE GILARDI

It was well after dark when we left the gravel road and headed up the rough trail toward the Lear's nesting cliffs. Despite the ruggedness of the two vehicles, the ancient Jeep leading the way broke down and the sturdy BioBrasil 4x4 ended up with a severely punctured tire. Par-for-the-course apparently and we arrived no worse-for-wear. We pitched our tents surrounded by moonlit cliffs. Once the jeep pulled away, the peace and quiet of the 'caatinga' dry forest took over and we plotted our next few days of exploration.

We timed our trip to the state of Bahia in eastern Brazil to coincide with the end of the Macaws' breeding season, just after the fledging of this year's chicks. As readers of *PsittaScene* know, the Lear's population hovers just under 200 wild bird total, and the Serra Branca cliffs hold about 15 of the 20 nests that the wild Lear's make each year. So our expedition took us to the epicenter of this species miniscule range. I was lucky enough to visit this site as an advisor to the BioBrasil Lear's Macaw project - the Trust has supported the work of this foundation for many years and finds their commitment to parrot conservation to be consistent and effective. The BioBrasil field team is now laying the groundwork to protect and study the nesting birds, to develop methods to



Lear's in flight.

Photo: Jamie Gilardi

photographically identify all the wild birds, and to test ways of restoring and enhancing their palm habitat.

Our slumber late that night was broken by a falling tree. The exhilarating part was not the crash of the tree itself, but the

raucous squawks of the Lear's I heard for the first time. Responding to the tree fall, the birds growled first on one side of the gorge, then on the other, as if to say, "what the heck", except in Portuguese of course. A few hours later at the crack of dawn, the first Lear's Macaws to arouse growled a few times and flew off down the valley to forage. These were followed by literally hundreds of other parrots who spent the morning flying about and filling the gorge with a cacophony of screeches and squawks - in addition to the Lear's, we saw dozens of Cactus Conures, White-eyed Conures, and Blue-fronted Amazons.

I was traveling here in the Serra Branca with biologist and veterinarian Pedro Lima, of the BioBrasil Foundation and Cetrel Corp, and Richard Hartley, who



Pedro Lima at Lear's cliffs.

Photo: Jamie Gilardi

manages BioBrasil's day-to-day operations. The three of us set off early to climb up to a dramatic natural arch that we jokingly called the "eye-of-the-Lear" from which you can see three nest sites and get a fabulous view of the whole area. It was a hot climb from the valley floor, but we saw brilliant bromeliads and flowering cacti along the way. We arrived at the top to discover not only shade, but also a refreshing breeze flowing through the 'eye.' If this wasn't enough, we were greeted by a column of ten King Vultures rising from the valley floor in the distance.

The vantage point also afforded us a great opportunity to observe the distribution of Licuri Palms in the valleys on either side of the 'eye.' Although these palms are now scarce in many areas, we were encouraged to see several patches of very high palm density. The Licuri (*Syagrus coronata*) is a slow growing palm that seldom reaches more than about ten meters in height. Although the Lear's occasionally eat other foods, it is essentially dependent on the seeds of this one species of palm for its entire diet. So the conservation of the bird is inextricably linked to the health

and distribution of the palms - as the Licuri goes, so goes the Lear's. If we can determine what limits seed production by the licuri palm, what seedling palms need to survive to adulthood, and how adults can thrive in the presence of fire, goats, and cattle, we'll have a chance to develop solid plans for the restoration and sensible management of the parrots' palm habitat.

We spent the day visiting all the historic nest sites in the area, including the place where the local ranch hands found a rope left behind by poachers. The rope was simply more hard evidence that, until recently, about a quarter of nests were being poached every year. Clearly there is a need to halt this poaching immediately if the Lear's is to recover.

Early the following morning, we met a large group of officials from the IBAMA Bahia office - these are the people who protect and manage wildlife in Brazil. It turned out that the landowner at Serra Branca, Otavio Nolasco Farias, had clear evidence of trespassing on his property in the previous week. He promptly informed IBAMA in hopes that they would investigate. The fact



*Licuri Palms in cattle pasture.*

Photo: Jamie Gilardi

that they made the long hard trek to the nesting site is an encouraging sign, indicating to us that they're taking a deep interest in protecting the rare macaws.

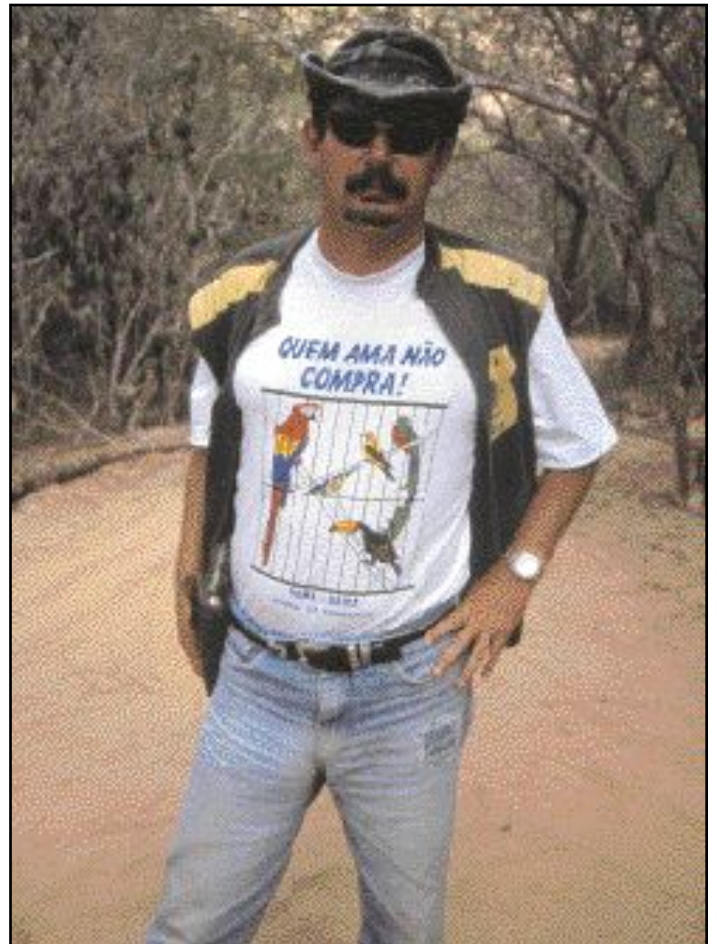
Back down in the valley where most of the wild Lear's forage, I assisted the BioBrasil team in setting up a pair of blinds for photographing the birds. By baiting the sites with natural food, the hope was to photograph the birds using extreme telephoto lenses (1200mm), to try to document individual differences in beak markings. Doing so will allow BioBrasil biologists to study

the basic natural history of the Lear's Macaw by calculating the population size, monitoring their recovery, and detecting potential problems such as low juvenile survival. By placing a huge quantity of licuri seeds in one palm, we managed to attract several birds, and I'm pleased to say that we were able to document the individual beak markings of several individuals. Improving the blinds, increasing the number of sites, and baiting the sites over time should provide enough photo documentation to generate these key insights into the life



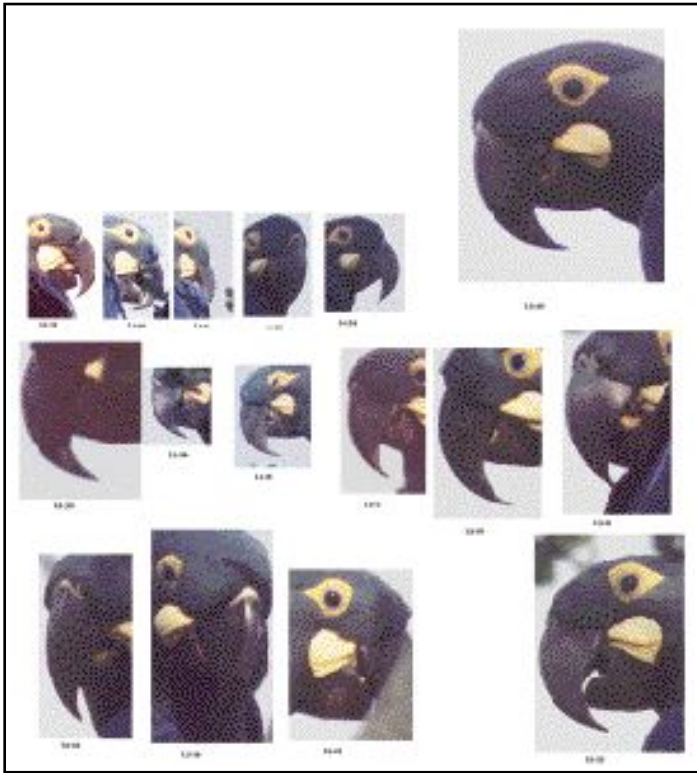
*Bait tree.*

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



*IBAMA enforcement.*

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



*Lear Dossier.*

history of the Lear's Macaw.

Returning from the blind in the evening, Pedro, Richard and I had a chance to discuss the future of the Lear's with Otavio. Because he owns the land that contains critical breeding and foraging habitat for the Lear's, his views and decisions are crucial to the birds survival. Luckily, Otavio is eager to see the birds protected

from poachers and has been extremely helpful in facilitating BioBrasil's habitat restoration work. Just after my return to the States, he signed his name to a long-term agreement with BioBrasil that will provide this World Parrot Trust partner group with the opportunity to help protect and save the Lear's for many years to come. As with many conservation issues, the

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



*Yamashita with Lear's.*

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



*Licuri Plantation.*

Photo: Jamie Gilardi

future of many species lies in the hands of private individuals. One of our biggest challenges on nearly all field projects is to develop flexible approaches to land use so we can work productively with all the critical parties and facilitate their contributions to conservation.

On my last day in the Sierra Branca area, Gil Serique took me to visit the licuri palm plantation which we've reported on several times in past PsittaScenes. This program which was supported early on by the World Parrot Trust, has been run as a collaboration by BioBrasil, Cetrel Corporation, the Biodiversitas Foundation and WPT. Growing from seed planted in the mid-1990's, the palms are doing well and the project has provided a wealth of insight about how to restore palm habitat. While examining the palms, their individual cattle-exclusion fences, and the elaborate watering system in place, we were greeted by the loud squawks of several groups of Lear's arriving for their morning feed near the plantation - almost as though they were anxious for these young palms to get cracking and make loads of licuri nuts. Now the focus of the restoration experiments is to test the relative

merits of different techniques for managing palm habitat, such as fire, grazing, seed and seedling planting, and the possible value of transplanting juvenile palms.

In the last two months, we have heard two additional pieces of great news on the Lear's Macaw front. Carlos Yamashita of IBAMA wrote to say that the recent Lear's census indicated that Lear's numbers are up to 246 individuals! That's a substantial increase from 170-180 animals back in the late 1990's. And very soon thereafter, the Lear's Macaw got a huge shot in the arm when the Disney Conservation Initiatives funded a Lear's Macaw conservation proposal to the tune of \$19,500! The proposal includes the habitat work described here, the protection of nest sites, and the photo identification work. Now we not only have a clear plan of attack, we also have some much-needed support to carry it out!

Please stay tuned for more progress reports. And of course if you're interested in supporting this project, as always, we at the World Parrot Trust will happily ensure that every penny will go straight to the field to speed the recovery of these spectacular birds.



*Baby Licuri, 6 years old.*

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



# 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 updated 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 collectors. 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 well over 100 and climbing. WPT has funded this work since 1990, providing over US\$150,000.

**Golden Conure** Photo: K. Ewart  
Threatened by loss of habitat and trapping for the domestic and international pet trade. Its nesting and roosting trees are being logged, it needs the purchase of key areas to help it survive. WPT is working with Dr. Carlos Yamashita, aided by the 'Golden Conure Survival Fund' which has now raised over US\$25,000 for this species.



**African Grey Parrot** Photo: R. Low  
Although not globally threatened by IUCN criteria, the Trust believes its ruthless trapping and exporting from West Africa will lead to the extirpation of this species throughout much of its range in the near future. Enforcing existing protected areas and eliminating unsustainable trade in this species are both desperately needed.



**Great Green Macaw** Photo: S. Winter  
Numbers reduced to double figures in Costa Rica and extinct in much of its historic range. This bird relies on the large Almendro tree for nesting and these vital trees are being logged out. WPT is supporting solid conservation work in Costa Rica which is supervised by Dr. George Powell. WPT's 'Great Green Macaw Fund' has now raised over US\$15,000 for this species.



**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 on this little known species in Cape York, Australia and has recently launched the 'Palm Cockatoo Conservation Fund' with plans to support future conservation work in New Guinea.

**St. Vincent Amazon** Photo: M. Reynolds  
This spectacular bird, like all Caribbean *Amazona*, is regarded as globally threatened by the IUCN. Another conservation success story, its numbers are up to around 800, but support is still needed to restore degraded habitat. 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  
Found only on the island of Dominica in the West Indies. Imperial numbers hover near 100 individuals. 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 and intends to follow through with support of conservation action to aid the recovery of this critically endangered bird.



**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. Recent work to protect foraging and breeding areas is helping and ecotourism to see the wild Hyacinths is doing wonders for their protection. WPT's 'Hyacinth Fund' has supported this conservation work for many years, but now needs new funding to continue.



**Moluccan Cockatoo** Photo: WPT  
One of the most beautiful cockatoos, the Moluccan is threatened by domestic and international trade as well as widespread habitat destruction. Supporting the innovative work of Project Bird Watch, the Trust is encouraging a program to protect cockatoo habitat by harvesting and exporting Molucca Nuts – a delicious and nutritious treat for birds and their human companions alike.



# Nest Poaching for Trade

## Europe should bring in the equivalent of the US Wild Bird Conservation Act

By TIMOTHY F. WRIGHT and CATHERINE A. TOFT

Parrots constitute one of the most endangered groups of birds on Earth. Their status is particularly acute in the Neotropics, where over one third of all species are identified by the recent Parrot Action Plan as at risk of global extinction. Of the factors identified as leading to this global decline, two are of paramount importance: habitat loss and capture of nestlings for the pet trade. Despite widespread agreement that the pet trade hams many parrot populations, there have been surprisingly few data available on the magnitude of the parrot trade and the poaching of nestlings that fuels it. Estimating the long-term effects of poaching has therefore proven difficult and has led to controversy about the conservation value of efforts to diminish the international and national trade in parrots.

To estimate the impact of the pet trade on decline of parrot populations, we coordinated a large-scale, international, analysis of nest mortality in 21 Neotropical parrot species. We used data from 23 studies of parrot ecology conducted independently by investigators in 14 different countries. Each investigator provided data on the number of nests that they had observed during the course of their study and on the fate of each nest. Nests were classified as successful if they fledged at least one chick. If a nest failed to fledge even one chick the investigators classified the nest as "failed naturally" (i.e. from predators, disease or other natural causes), "poached" or

"suspected poached" (if evidence of human disturbance) or "other" (less than 1% of all nests).

### 30% of nests poached

The results were striking. Across all studies, an average of 30% of all nests were poached. Poaching rates varied widely among species, with some species such as *Amazona vinacea* and *A. kawalli* experiencing poaching rates of over 90%, while others such as *Myiopsitta monachus*, *Forpus passerinus*, *A. collaria* and *A. versicolor* experienced no poaching in any of the populations studied. Overall, thirteen studies reported greater

than 20% of nests poached, and 4 studies reported greater than 70% of nests poached. Mortality from poaching was significantly higher than mortality from natural causes for species that experienced poaching, and total mortality was higher for these species than for those that experienced no poaching. These results reveal that nest poaching is a widespread and significant cause of nest mortality in Neotropical parrots.

Many of the studies included in the analysis were conducted over several years. This continuity allowed us to compare rates of poaching before and after the enactment of the US Wild Bird Conservation Act, which bans the import of most parrot species into the US in 1992. We found that for the ten species in which direct comparisons were possible, poaching rates were significantly lower in the period following the enactment of the WBCA than in the years prior (20% post-WBCA versus 48% pre-WBCA). These results attest to the effectiveness of the Wild Bird Conservation Act in reducing illegal poaching in Neotropical countries.

Just as importantly, these results support the contention that the legal and illegal trades are directly correlated. With the parrot and other wildlife trades, such as the trade in ivory, supporters of the legal trade



Robbing of Blue-fronted Amazon chicks from nest tree. Photo: Enrique H. Bucher

frequently argue that the legal and illegal trades are inversely correlated. That is, this argument says that banning the legal trade will simply serve as incentive to poachers to expand the illegal trade. Our results contradict this argument. Instead, they suggest that, as found in the ivory trade, a legal trade in wild-caught parrots supports a companion illegal trade, thus reducing the legal trade also reduces illegal poaching.

### Import restrictions

We believe that were Europe to enact measures similar to the US Wild Bird Conservation Act that bans the import of wild-caught parrots, poaching could be reduced even further. It is important to note that, in many countries, internal demand for pet parrots may also contribute to the high rates of poaching observed. Nonetheless, such import restrictions would be perhaps the single most effective measure for improving the plight of endangered parrots.

We are pleased to report that the results of this study will be reported in the journal *Conservation Biology* in May of this year. Such a comprehensive analysis was possible only through an unprecedented effort at international collaboration by individual parrot biologists, and the result was a whole that was much more than the sum of its individual parts. We hope such collaborations will serve as a model for future efforts at grappling with widespread conservation problems facing parrots and other endangered species.



Confiscated *Aratinga Cactonum*, Cactus Conure at Cetr el Corp, Salvador Photo: J Gilardi

# A Proposal to Ban the Importation of Wild-caught Birds into the European Union

## A Campaign of the World Parrot Trust

### The Problem

There is an on-going and dramatic decline of wild parrots worldwide. The parrot family has more globally threatened species than any other family of birds. The "Red List" contains 94 species of parrots that are currently considered vulnerable, endangered, or critically threatened with extinction, and many more sub-species are equally at risk of disappearing forever.

For most threatened parrots, capture for pets is a primary cause of decline. Recent scientific findings from studies throughout the Neotropics demonstrated that the demand for large expensive parrots is a key driving force for this trade. A clear and positive correlation between the legal and illegal trade further suggests that restricting or eliminating the legal trade will reduce the illegal harvest, rather than driving it underground as is often suggested.

Existing regulations are only partially enforceable and consequently fail to protect the species they target. CITES track record suggests that the regulations are not based on current scientific data, they are easily by-passed, they are only partially enforced, non-compliance is generally tolerated, and sanctions rarely implemented. It's time to move on to more effective solutions which eliminate the demand for these wild animals.

The existing trade is cruel and inhumane to tens of thousands of highly intelligent and social parrots. Figures on the unacceptably high mortality that occurs during the trapping, shipping, and quarantine of these birds demonstrate that the trade impacts far more wild birds than the numbers which end up for sale in Europe and Asia. Wild-caught birds are generally unsuitable as pets in when they arrive in European homes and thousands of these birds end up unwanted and ill-cared for.

Legislation which eliminated the demand for wild caught parrots has been enormously successful in the USA. Legal and illegal imports have been reduced to a trickle, and captive bred parrots are now more available and less expensive than ever for pet owners, breeders, and collectors. This Wild Bird Conservation Act converted the USA from the largest importer of wild-caught birds to a non-importer of wild-caught parrots. Recent scientific data on poaching levels in the Neotropics found significant declines in poaching since the passage of the Act, indicating that

legislation of this kind can be a highly effective solution.

Between 1997 and 2000, the European Union officially imported 469,602 wild caught birds of 111 species.

By importing wild caught parrots, the developed nations of Europe and Asia are in fact exploiting the resources of developing nations by creating a harvest which is neither biologically sustainable, nor economically sustainable. As long-lived, slow-breeding birds, most commercially desirable species are not capable of supporting large scale harvest of adult and chicks. With a relatively constant market demand coupled with the increasing availability of captive-bred birds, the monetary value of these wild-caught birds is consistently in decline. If one includes the costs of monitoring the harvested populations and the responsible oversight of the trade, then the notion that this trade is 'supporting developing countries' is turned on its head. In fact the trade creates a drain on both natural and financial resources of these developing countries and preempts less consumptive solutions such as tourism.

The spectacle of wild parrots is now an enormously popular ecotourism attraction and generates millions of dollars annually for tropical nations. Tourism creates solid employment for indigenous people as guides and lodge operators, and if implemented well, ecotourism facilitates the long term protection of natural areas. In addition the international attention that comes along with the tourism also builds local pride in natural heritage which further facilitates nature conservation. In contrast, harvesting parrots for the pet trade provides small numbers of temporary jobs and the financial benefits fall primarily in the hands of middlemen in large cities rather than indigenous people.

### The Solution

It is our position that the only effective and enforceable solution

to this problem is to immediately cease the importation of wild caught birds into the European Union. All birds arriving at an EU port of entry would be assumed wild-caught and refused entry unless they arrive with paperwork (including genetic records) and markings (unbreakable bands) which demonstrate clearly that each individual has been bred in captivity by an IUCN approved facility. In addition each individual imported would require the appropriate CITES permits from the country of origin and from the importing country in the EU as well as any health certification required by either country.

Under three very specific conditions, exceptions could be made for:

1. Bona fide scientific purposes for which captive bred birds are demonstrably inappropriate or unavailable and the capture of the birds from the wild will cause no significant impact on the wild population.
2. Conservation breeding of globally threatened species by an IUCN-recognized effort in which the individual birds or their progeny are determined by IUCN-endorsed parrot biologists to have a high probability of being released into the wild and that those releases will make a significant contribution to the recovery of the species.
3. Personal pets that have been in possession of the individual for a minimum of two years in the country of origin, up to a maximum of two birds per person per lifetime (consistent with WBCA and Australia's existing exceptions if appropriate).

### What the World Parrot Trust Brings to the Table ...

A TRACK RECORD AND EXPERTISE IN PARROT CONSERVATION. Through the generous contributions of our members and supporters, the Trust has now raised over US\$1.5 million to help 37 species of endangered parrot in 22 countries. Between our trustees and staff, we have one of the world's leading avian Veterinarians, experts on bird behaviour and captive breeding, as well as several Ph.D.'s in the biological sciences.

PUBLICATION OF THE PARROT ACTION PLAN. Following a stalled effort in the early '90's, the Trust reinvigorated this project, involved over 150 parrot biologists from around the globe, supported an international meeting in London, and saw the project through to publication last year.

FIELD NETWORK. The Trust has built and maintained strong connections with field personnel worldwide. Through a combination of funding, technology exchange, and through our work with the action plan, we now have positive and productive relationships with field personnel in the majority of parrot range countries.

STRONG CONNECTIONS TO AVICULTURE. With its roots in aviculture, the World Parrot Trust has maintained its positive relations with this community worldwide and has played a leadership role without alienating this diverse group.


GLOBAL COVERAGE OF BRANCHES. With our thirteen branches around the world, including six in the European Union itself, the Trust is well positioned to collaborate with other organizations on this campaign to encourage the passage of responsible EU legislation.

### How You Can Help ...

One of the strongest messages we can send to the European Union is the fact that there are thousands of people from Europe and around the world who feel that it's time to stop capturing birds from the wild. The process is cruel and represents the unacceptable exploitation of the natural resources of developing countries. The EU has now become the largest importer of wild caught birds and the existing legislation in Europe is ineffective at stopping the inhumane and unsustainable harvesting of these wild birds.

Although we plan to take several approaches to see this campaign through to its rightful conclusion, you can help a great deal by simply signing the petition below to add your voice to thousands of others in support of our goal of allowing wild birds to remain where they belong ... in the wild.

Please take a moment to fill out the petition at <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/trade.html> and make your voice heard.

Thank you very much for your support on this critical issue. 

# Behaviour issues:

## Height Dominance

By STEVE MARTIN

As companion bird owners search for answers to complicated behavioural issues the term Height Dominance often surfaces. What is it about Height Dominance that causes it to be touted as the source of so many parrot behavioural problems? "Don't let your bird get above eye level or he will feel dominant over you and bite." What is it about this concept that works for people? Does it also work for parrots?

My perspective on Height Dominance is a bit different from others, probably because my experience is different from others who promote it. I have studied and trained parrots for over 40 years. For more than 25 years I have been a professional bird trainer. One of the most important things I have learned over the years is to ask good questions. The two most empowering questions I have learned to ask are "what's the motivation" and "how does it apply to the behaviour of the species in the wild?" These questions provide great insight into what a bird is thinking and takes the interpretation away from the anthropomorphic point of view that is so easy for people to use.

So, what would the motivation be for a parrot to want to dominate a person? What does he have to gain? Is he trying to dominate you to force you to do something for him? Is he trying to teach you a lesson or punish you for something? Why would a parrot want to be dominant over you?

That leads me to my next question: How does it apply to the behaviour of the species in the wild? Some have said that is it "natural" for a parrot to want to be dominant. Many people have talked about, and even described in great detail, hierarchies in flocks of wild parrots. Some even go as far as to state that you can tell the rank a parrot holds in the hierarchy by its height in a tree. The higher the perch in a tree the more dominant the parrot is over the others. I am fortunate in that I have had many opportunities to observe several species of parrots in the wild. I have never seen anything that even remotely

resembles a hierarchy in wild parrots.

But, don't take my word for it. I have also talked to parrot field researchers (at least six) whose profession is studying parrots in the wild. None of these experts could recall ever seeing any form of hierarchy in wild parrots. Plus, the description of ranking the dominance position by the height a bird takes in a tree brought puzzled looks, laughter, cynicism and worse from almost every expert I spoke with. All of these experts talk about the aggression they see in parrots on a daily basis. These aggressive acts are generally associated with the acquisition or protection of resources. They relate that the winner of one confrontation may just as easily lose the next confrontation with the same bird later. There is no consistently dominant bird in a group of wild parrots. Also, none of the experts could recall ever seeing aggression for the sake of establishing dominance. And, none of them have ever seen any form of hierarchy related to the way parrots position themselves in a tree.

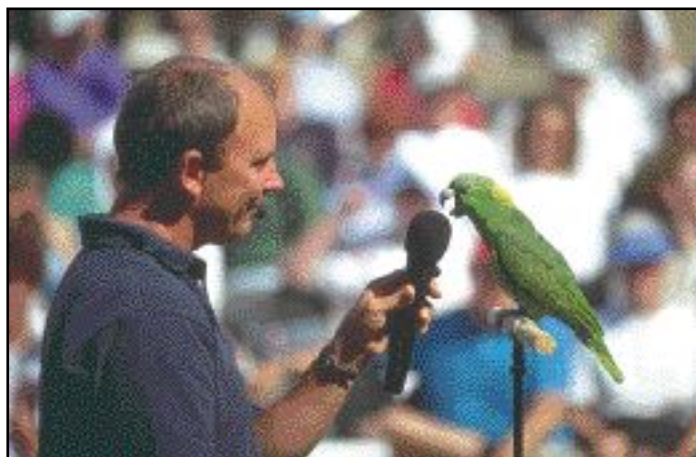
To put it bluntly Height Dominance does not exist in parrots. It is most likely just a projection of someone's personal beliefs that for some seem to make sense when applied to parrots. Naïve bird owners searching for easy answers to complicated problems readily buy into the concept that a parrot will feel dominant over a person when held above eye level and that the bird will express this dominance through aggression. The accompanying myth about wild parrots forming hierarchies that are coordinated with the position a bird takes in a tree is equally inaccurate. Parrot behaviour is far more complicated than this.

Why then do so many people subscribe to the height dominance theory? To begin with, hierarchies are common in human societies. When people were young it was the taller people who were dominant over them (height dominance?). Even as adults, most people experience relationships with other people that are hierarchical in nature. These relationships are more associated with social relationships than with physical relationships such as

height. Some people are successful using physical force and aggression in a dominance-based relationship with their pet dog (which the dog inherently understands, but don't try it with a cat). Also, it is not uncommon to see dominance hierarchies in groups of captive pet parrots. Unnatural environments encourage unnatural behaviour. Groups of parrots confined in small environments will most likely work out dominance hierarchies as a matter of survival. However, this hierarchy is established through the relationship the birds have formed and not by the height of the position a bird takes in the cage. Also, if these same birds were in the wild they would not be forced into these close relationships and they would avoid aggressive encounters with the other birds, eliminating the desire to establish a hierarchy.

It is easy for some parrot owners to misinterpret aggression as a parrot's desire to dominate. Aggression for the purpose of establishing dominance is common in many mammal species, including humans, however, it does not occur in parrots. Parrots have no natural inclination to form dominance-based hierarchies with other parrots in the wild, or with humans in captivity. Parrots may be moved to show aggression for many different reasons when they are higher than human eye level. However, the desire to dominate should not be considered as one of those reasons.

Take the case of a parrot on top of a cage that bites its owner when he or she attempts to pick it up. Is the bird trying to establish dominance over the person?



Steve Martin with a singing Amazon parrot.



Think about what usually happens just after a parrot's owner takes it off the cage. The person puts the bird in the cage, closes the door and locks it away for a period of time. It seems to me that this is a much better explanation for why the bird bites the person. It doesn't want to go back into the cage, simple as that! Plus, it has probably learned that biting is an effective way to communicate with humans.

Before a bird bites, it has usually used up a vast array of body language other forms of natural communications in an attempt to express his desire to stay on top of the cage. Few people have the insights and empathy to read this body language. Most people blindly continue to force themselves upon the bird even when the bird is displaying aggressive body language. As a last resort, or final attempt to communicate its discontent, the bird lashes out and bites the person. Then, the person pulls their hand away and stops, even momentarily, trying to get the bird on their hand. Sometimes the person will stop long enough to go get a perch or dowel to step the bird onto. The act of biting is reinforced, or encouraged to occur again, the moment the person stops chasing the bird. Consequently, the bird learns that biting is an effective way to communicate with people.

Simply stated, parrots like being in high places. Their survival instincts tell them to be up high where they are less vulnerable to predators, get a better view of their surroundings, can make quicker escapes, etc. Companion parrots may also learn that being on a person's shoulder, or even their head, is desirable. Some like the shoulder because they like to be near their owner's face. Others may enjoy sitting on the relatively stable perch a shoulder affords. And some like being on the shoulder because they are away from the person's hands that they may have had some negative associations with in the past. For whatever reason, shoulders, curtains, tops of cages, etc., are all desirable perches for most parrots.

Obviously, most people can't leave the bird on its cage all the time. So, how do you get a bird back into its cage? Again, ask yourself "what's the motivation?" Why should the parrot want to go back into the cage? "He's

supposed to" may work for your dog, but it will never work for your parrot. "He has to" can work if you force him with a stick, gloves, or perseverance and maybe some blood-letting. But, it is far better to create an environment where "He wants to" go back into his cage.

Positive reinforcement is a teaching tool that can revolutionize your relationship with your parrot. It is a procedure where an action is immediately followed by

force a bird to do something he doesn't want to do. For example, many birds decide to give up and go into their cages just to avoid being chased by your hand or stick. Positive reinforcement teaches your bird what to do; negative reinforcement teaches your bird what to avoid. That's why it is unfortunate and unnecessary when people use negative reinforcement more often than positive reinforcement with companion parrots.

With positive reinforcement, you



Green-winged Macaws in the wild. Any sign of dominance here?

something your individual bird finds really rewarding. For companion parrots, the reinforcer can be anything really desirable, such as verbal praise, a scratch on the head, or a favourite food treat that is not part of his usual diet. The result of such a positive consequence is that your bird will more readily repeat the action that preceded the reward. Negative reinforcement, on the other hand, is also a procedure that can be used to encourage an action but it works by removing something the bird doesn't like immediately after it responds. For companion parrots, negative reinforcement is at work when we

can teach your bird to respond to your request for him to go into his cage in only a couple days (often a few minutes). He can quickly learn to climb down the side of the cage and wait patiently inside as you get up out of your easy chair and walk over to close the cage door; all this on a simple verbal cue like, "time to go to bed."

Start by putting a peanut, a few sunflower seeds or another one of his favourite treats in the food cup and see if your bird will walk into the cage on his own. You may have to go sit in a chair or leave the room before he will perform

the behaviour because he may be afraid you will lock him inside. Do not close the door the first few times he goes in. Let the bird realize that he is just going in to get a treat and can come out if he likes. Each time you put the treat in the cage present the cue (any word, phrase, or hand gesture you like) and wait for him to go into the cage to get the treat. Soon he will associate the cue with the action of going into the cage to get the treat. Once he is performing the behaviour without hesitation, give him the cue before you put the treat in the cage and see if he will go in. If he does, tell him "good" and go directly over to reinforce the behaviour with a nice big treat. If he does not go in on cue, back up a step and give him more experience associating the cue with the reinforcement and the act of going into the cage. At this stage you can also begin closing the door for a short time when he goes in the cage to get the treat. Open the door to let him out when he is finished eating the treat to help him understand he is not getting locked in each time he goes into the cage. When you finally need to close the door and leave him inside give him a large reinforcement or special treat that will take him a while to eat before he realizes the door is locked. He will soon learn that going into the cage is a positive, not a negative experience.

Dominance, in all societies, is based on much more than a few inches of height. Dominance is about relationships, history, and genetics. Many species are predisposed to establish hierarchies to establish social order in their community. Parrots, however, do not establish fixed hierarchies in the wild, especially ones related to height. Explaining away something as complicated as dominance hierarchies with something as simple as a few inches is very misleading and does not provide a clear understanding of a bird's behaviour. It is best to avoid anthropomorphic interpretations and let natural behaviour be your guide when evaluating parrot behaviour. Ask empowering questions and find ways that will encourage a bird to do what you want rather than force a bird to do what you want. In your bird's eyes, you will never be its master the best you can be is his friend and partner.



# Cockatiel behaviour - more sophisticated than once thought?

By SISTER LAZARUS GENT

I own one pet Cockatiel, a two year old male. I have never kept a pet bird before and this has been a very interesting and rewarding experience. It has also been very challenging at times because these birds are very demanding pets, needing a great deal of nurturing, far more than I realised when I acquired the bird. I have learned much and I want to share some discoveries I have made about Cockatiel behaviour: use of tools and sign language. I have never read about this behaviour in any book on Cockatiels therefore it seems that this information is not generally known. I believe that it should be known because of the implications it holds for good petcare and for the ethical treatment of wild Cockatiels.

I believe that Cockatiels are one of the most abused of our pet birds, not because people are intentionally cruel but largely because people are ignorant of the proper care they require. Because Cockatiels are sold at very low cost they are readily available and I suspect people buy them without really thinking through the responsibility. Even though I live a very retired life I have heard of several instances where pet Cockatiels have been abandoned out-of-doors, presumably because they proved to be too demanding to keep. I have also heard of pet birds being intentionally injured by humans e.g. wilful damage to beaks (chopped off with scissors) - presumably



Cockatiels need items other than traditional toys with which to play.

'revenge attacks' on Cockatiels that bite or scream. There is an urgent need to educate the general public about the demands these pets make on their carers.

Pieces of paper, cloth or leaves (e.g. spinach or cabbage) are used to wrap hard, smooth seeds and similar tough-to-crack or slippery-to-hold objects so that they can more easily be held in the beak and thus opened. I observed this for months before I realised that it was tool use. I think many people will have observed this behaviour in their own pets and have not realised what they are seeing - rolled paper is not what we usually think of as a 'tool'. I noticed that even as a very young bird my pet enjoyed taking strips of paper or leaves into his beak and rolling them up (like a scroll) and unrolling them again repeatedly. I have seen other Cockatiels do this. e.g. in pet shops, so I believe this is an innate, natural behaviour. It looked like a nervous mannerism and I had no idea why he did this. I now realise that this was an exercise to develop the dexterity of tongue and beak needed for making tools and using them to wrap objects.

## Tool Use

I see tool use frequently because I quite inadvertently supplied both the means and the necessity for making and using tools. I cut up a kitchen towel to make 'poop papers' therefore small pieces of paper are always available in my pet's environment - paper is his preferred raw material for making tools. The seed mixture I feed includes small, tough seeds such as hemp and white sunflower. These are usually ignored if easy food is available such as millet seeds or soft vegetables but if I do not refill the seed bowl as soon as these easy foods are eaten then eventually my Cockatiel is 'forced' to eat these tough foods - which prompts his tool using behaviour.

He also uses these tools to try to eat other tough or difficult objects such as metal items (e.g. teaspoons, keys) which are also wrapped in paper and chewed through the paper in an attempt to crack them open - suggesting that he likes playing with keys, etc. because they seem like tough, odd-shaped seeds.



Cockatiels in flight: a sight of unforgettable beauty.

Photos: Rosemary Low

Another item which is wrapped is Kaytee NutraPuffs' a puffed cereal treat for parrots which either rolls away when my parrot tries to bite it or sticks to his beak like a cork on a pin. He wraps paper around the NutraPuff to stop it rolling or sticking to his beak. Seeing him doing this has convinced me that he has a sophisticated problem-solving intelligence.

I believe that when people realise that their pet can make and use tools this will prompt them to provide the raw materials and the necessity to use tools. This then promotes a general improvement in the quality of the petcare provided. When people see for themselves the evidence of high intelligence they will find it impossible to ignore the responsibility to provide a rewarding environment, plenty of opportunities for play, exercise, tool-use, social interaction. Doing this will be good for their pet, and it will be good for them because watching and sharing in the wide range of activities of a happy parrot is a very rewarding aspect of petcare and a source of constant amazement and new discoveries.

## Sign Language

I supply my Cockatiel with fresh fruit and vegetables every day. The vegetables, e.g. celery, carrots, cabbage stalks, are usually cut into slim sticks (about the thickness of a pencil and 4" long) so that they can be held in the beak or foot. I find that he plays with these sticks rather than eats them. The games he plays have convinced me that in his imagination these sticks are Cockatiels. For example, he likes to

build 'nests' in waste-paper baskets and similar locations and then carries celery sticks to the 'nest' i.e. bring his imaginary bird-friend into the imaginary nest. He sings to 'her' and tries to mate with 'her'. Wild cockatoos play with sticks, e.g. drumming near their nests. Research has not been able to explain why they do this. Watching my pet Cockatiel I believe he plays with sticks because they are 'dolls', vehicles for role play, and therefore allow him to rehearse social activities such as bonding. When wild birds hold sticks I think they are advertising their social skills - they are showing they can 'bond' with an imaginary bird or doll (i.e. the stick) therefore they can bond with a real bird and thus will be a good mate/parent. There is a great deal of fascinating material here which should be studied by an ethologist. Watching pet birds can help us understand wild birds too.

The behaviour which I want to focus on is associated with this imaginary role playing behaviour. When he is playing and wants me to pick up the stick he raises his right foot and holds it open above the stick and then looks directly at me. This is a sign for 'pick up'. When I go to pick up the stick he usually hops onto my hand and rides on my hand with his 'imaginary friend' to a new location. Perched on my hand, he stretches his head in the direction he wants to go and flutters his wings to direct our 'flight' from place to place. Thus by using this sign he has created a way whereby he can move around from place to place and take his 'bird friend' with him. He makes no effort to fly carrying the sticks in his



This abandoned Cockatiel, unable to fly, was found in the street.

beak; maybe they are too heavy.

The open foot sign is also used when he wants me to continue an activity. For example, I often play with him by singing or whistling to him. When he wants me to do this he brings a stick to me and drops it near me. If I ignore this prompt he holds his foot over the stick meaning 'pick up and sing'. If I then pick up the stick and sing to him he sings back and we have a duet. If I put the stick down or stop singing he uses the open foot gesture to prompt me to continue. Thus the open foot gesture can mean 'pick up the stick and carry it (and me) to another location as I direct you' or 'let's sing a duet' or 'continue this activity with me' and several other things, the exact meaning of the sign depends on context.

Cockatiels do not imitate human speech very well. Mine imitates a few words and phrases. He imitates whistling well. He also improvises many tunes. These interactions are very pleasant. However, the development of this mute sign language is a fascinating and unexpected reward of caring for a pet parrot. I stress that I did not teach this sign language, my pet taught it to me. I believe that the open foot gesture is an imitation of my behaviour i.e. he has seen that I pick things up in my (right) hand and he prompts me to pick things up by imitating this action with his right foot. I believe this sign use reveals great intelligence, maybe even self-awareness or consciousness, and is a behaviour which should be noted by scientists and professionally studied.

Knowing that Cockatiels may use sign language and have the ability to communicate on a relatively sophisticated level must prompt people to provide the best possible petcare. I am sure that if I was told my pet has such abilities I would be fascinated and delighted and want to do whatever was necessary to support these abilities and give a

petcare routine that allowed them expression and gave my pet fulfilment.

## Conclusion

I am aware that there is considerable snobbery in petcare. People seem happy to accept that exotic animals or expensive pets such as dolphins, chimpanzees or African Grey parrots or cockatoos may have tool using abilities, be intelligent or have human like language abilities but that a 'working class', cheap, common, pet like a Cockatiel may have such abilities is dismissed as laughable. **'People have to overcome these attitudes and provide petcare which meets the real needs of the birds: provides stimulation for the intelligence and satisfaction for their social and emotional needs.'**

I have not discussed evidence of the complex emotional needs of my Cockatiel here but the emphasis he puts on role playing games in his daily activities is an index of this. Also, one of the most unexpected discoveries when I became a parrot-owner was how 'touchy-feely' these animals are. My parrot likes to be cuddled many times every day, he comes and asks to be cuddled by nestling against me. Such an animal cannot be kept confined to a cage without profound cruelty. Rest periods in a properly designed and furnished cage are healthy and desirable. Keeping Cockatiels in a cage all day, every day, as is common practice, is quite simply wrong.

When people realise that these animals use tools and sign language, are highly intelligent and may be self aware, then I hope they will be willing to accept that they also have a complex range of emotional needs too.

**'Therefore people will come to realise that taking on a pet parrot, even a small parrot like a Cockatiel, is a major commitment, almost like adopting a child, and should not be undertaken without considerable reflection and planning.'**

Ideally, these animals should not be kept as pets but should live a natural life in the wild where they should not be viewed as 'vemmin' but protected from abuse by humans. However, given that Cockatiels ARE kept as pets then they should have the best possible care. Providing such care for these wonderful animals should be seen as a privilege, which my experience has taught me it certainly is.

For further reference please see [www.gent01.fsnet.co.uk/cockatiel\\_behaviour/index.html](http://www.gent01.fsnet.co.uk/cockatiel_behaviour/index.html)



# The Mystery Cockatoo

By CATHERINE A. TOFT

The best known cockatoo also happens to be the least known cockatoo. The diminutive Cockatiel, *Nymphicus hollandicus*, is found in homes throughout the world and has been one of the most popular companion cage birds for 50 or more years. Yet little is known about its wild counterparts, in part because of the wild Cockatiels' nomadic habits, their wariness and swift flight, making them difficult to study in the wild. And much mystery and controversy surrounds its evolutionary origins. The cockatoo family (*Cacatuidae*) has been recognized for some time as an ancient lineage, and all of the large cockatoos are accepted as family members. But what to do with the Cockatiel? Its small size has given it some odd traits, perhaps; it has the audacity to scratch itself by lifting its leg over its wing, for example. Traditionally systematists (the folks responsible for figuring out evolutionary relationships) were limited to what they could see, feel and measure about the animals, either from museum skins or watching the animal's behaviours, and the Cockatiel was confusing. Was it even a cockatoo at all? Some systematists placed it in another family for a while. Eventually, everyone recognized the affinities with other cockatoos, including the elegant and expressive crest feathers, the powder down, the muted colours (gray, white, with splashes of orange and yellow) and some other, more technical traits. But where to put it within the family? Most experts relegated the Cockatiel to its own lonely (monotypic) subfamily, the *Nymphicinae*.

Enter DNA, the genetic code that has become the magic bullet for evolutionary biologists seeking to understand phylogeny, the evolutionary order of lineages. Although not perfect, DNA is less likely to deceive the eye than are the superficial traits that often evolve quickly and in response to immediate environmental conditions. The first tries at a phylogeny based on molecular information could not resolve the relationships within the family *Cacatuidae*. When my former student David Brown and I entered the scene, the best attempts thus far placed the Cockatiel lineage in a trichotomy between the mostly white cockatoos and the black cockatoos. Evolutionary biologists hate getting trichotomies, they are not allowed. They mean we don't know the branching sequence of the lineages in question. David and I decided to focus on a segment of mitochondrial DNA that seemed to evolve at just the right rate, not too quickly or too slowly, for discovering how the cockatoo lineages arose from their common ancestor. We focussed on the origin and relationships of the genera within the family.

So, what, then, is a Cockatiel, really? Stop reading for a moment, and focus on an image of the little gray Cockatiel, with merry orange cheek patches, bright yellow faces in the males and barred yellow and gray tail feathers and spotted wing feathers in the female (that is, Cockatiels are sexually dimorphic). What other cockatoos share those traits? Right! The genus *Nymphicus* is deeply embedded in the clade of black cockatoos.



More research needs to be carried out on Cockatiels in the wild.

Its sister genus is *Calyptorhynchus*, meaning this group of cockatoos contains its closest relatives. These two genera are in turn sister taxa to the genus *Callocephalon*. This clade contains all of the sexually dimorphic cockatoos and includes cockatoos with cheek patches (although not all as cheerful as that of the Cockatiel) and barred feathers in the females. When David and I got this result, we could only say "Of course! How could it be otherwise?" The mystery of the origin of the Cockatiel is solved.



# Reintroduction and conservation education in Trinidad

By ROSEMARY LOW

In January, I was glancing through the current issue of the *ASA Bulletin* when an article caught my attention. It was entitled 'Returning Birds to Paradise'. The opening paragraph read:

'Bemadette Plair grew up on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, surrounded by the beauty that nature's most divine combination - water and warmth - can produce. Her childhood was enriched by scenes of sunrises, sunsets and flocks of Blue and Gold Macaws'.

It was widely recorded that those flocks were no more, that the species was long gone from the island. So when I read that for the past six years Bernadette Plair had been working with the governments of Trinidad and Guyana on a reintroduction project, I was elated. Bemadette, said the article, was a research associate at Cincinnati Zoo's research centre for endangered wildlife. So I immediately sent her a fax.

A few days later I received a telephone call from a softly-spoken lady. It was Bernadette. She told me the exciting news that Blue and Gold Macaws had been flying in the Nariva Swamp for approximately one year. She also mentioned the conservation education programme which had been initiated to ensure that the importance of their reintroduction was realised.

I spoke with Bemadette again a couple of weeks later. It was becoming obvious that she was a person with wide interests. She was much too modest to tell me about her achievements which I gleaned from articles about the project, and about CREW (the

zoo's Center for Research of Endangered Wildlife). Her work has included *in vitro* collection of plants for CREW's 'frozen garden' and *in vitro* fertilisation and embryo transfer of endangered animals.

But this project was different! Bemadette grew up in the village of Sangre Grande, not far from the Nariva Swamp, the only location on Trinidad where the macaws occurred. When she left Trinidad to go to college in Ohio in 1963, the macaws were almost gone. Trapping for the pet trade and degradation of habitat (caused by illegal rice farming) were to blame. Meanwhile, Bernadette made her life in Ohio, married and brought up three children.

When the youngest was 11, she began to contemplate on how she would use her life when her children were independent. In 1998 she received a degree in biology from Cincinnati University. She had been able to visit Trinidad on a more regular basis and to become involved in environmental issues. She had dreamed about seeing Blue and Gold Macaws flying over the Nariva Swamp once again, the sunlight striking their gleaming



Bernadette Plair at the Macaw Workshop.

Photo: Rosemary Low

blue plumage as they flew above the wetlands.

In 1993 a wildlife officer from Trinidad visited Bernadette. In discussions with her and David Oehler, Curator of Birds at Cincinnati Zoo, the plan to reintroduce the macaws to the swamp was born. Bernadette began to research the possibility of using captive-bred birds. Her findings told her that wild-caught birds would be a better proposition. Guyana has a thriving population of this macaw, so in 1994 the government was approached. It was agreed that 18 birds could be bought from a dealer and transferred to Trinidad for release.

Compared with other groundbreaking projects on which CREW had worked, such as producing the first ocelot kitten (and the

first endangered cat) from the transfer of a frozen / thawed embryo, this sounded easy! But, alas, some unexpected problems were encountered which were not related to the birds themselves! It was not until October 1999 that the macaws arrived in Trinidad. Bernadette told me how she had made careful negotiations with an exporter in Guyana who could provide her with full-winged birds. The barbaric practice of hacking off the flight feathers of macaws with a machete as they are captured is the reason why some wild-caught macaws never again regain their powers of flight. She wanted to ensure that this would not happen. However, due to circumstances beyond her control, it did happen, and four of the 18 birds will never be released.

In May, Bernadette was due to conduct a macaw workshop in Trinidad. I quite unexpectedly found myself as the most minor participant of this workshop, along with Bernadette, David Boodoo and two other Forestry Division officers, Leo Lendore and Nolini Harrypaul. Here I was, at the community centre in Plum Mitán, one of the villages close to the swamp, witnessing first hand what conservation education really is. I learned about PRIDE - Plum Mitán Residents In Developing Ecotourism. The participants distribute



The Blue and Gold Macaws in the pre-release cage in the Nariva Swamp.

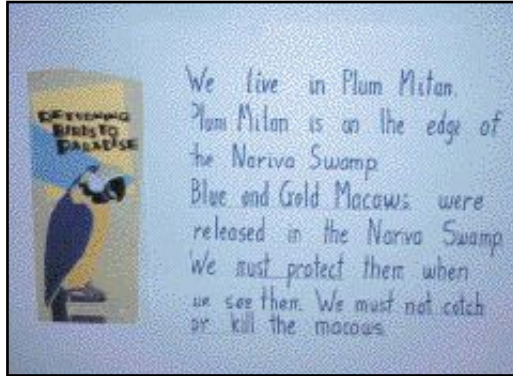


The macaws feed on the fruits of the moriche palm (Mauritia setigera).

Photo: Rosemary Low



The 'Macaw guardians' at the Plum Mitan camp. In the background are the palms inhabited by the macaws. Photo: Rosemary Low



Macaw leaflet and conservation statement at the Plum Mitan Presbyterian School. Photo: Rosemary Low

information to the school and to local people on issues that affect the wetlands which, once again, are home to the Blue and Gold Macaw, now the flagship species. The long-term objective is to change the attitude of people towards the swamp and, eventually, to promote ecotourism there.

On the previous day I had observed an unforgettable example of this when I visited the Plum Mitan Presbyterian School. An environmental education programme has been incorporated into the curriculum in an imaginative way which makes learning about biodiversity and the natural treasures of Trinidad great fun. The enthusiastic young teachers (some of whom are leading players in PRIDE) had put enormous time and effort into this. Every morning an environmental talk is given to the assembled school of 140 children. People are invited from various institutions to lecture on environmental issues concerning the swamp. Competitions relating to these lessons are held weekly and prizes are awarded every Friday to the 'Green Samaritan' of the week.

The classrooms are decorated with posters and paintings of Trinidad's fauna. These included children's paintings of the macaw. Bernadette was presented with a folder containing dozens of essays and drawings of the now famous bird. We were treated to a performance of a song which had been written about the swamp, with one girl playing bass drum and a boy on keyboard.

This whole environmental programme was designed to run from World Wetland Day on January 29 until World Environment Day on May 31. I was enormously impressed. Here was a model for schools throughout the world! And it originated in a tiny swamp village whose resources are extremely limited. The teachers can be very proud indeed of their achievements. I only wish we could see the equivalent in the UK.

An equally extraordinary example of dedication to the environment came later that day when Bernadette and I, with David Boodoo, visited the swamp camp near Plum Mitan which is manned around the clock. Here a remarkable group of men, originally formed as unpaid fire

fighters, keep watch over the area which the macaws inhabit. Their leader, Bim Rampaul, assured me that no stranger could enter this region of the swamp, to light fires or to attempt to harm the macaws.

Dusk was approaching (and with it the mosquitoes!) as we waited to see if the macaws would show themselves. As we watched, Orange-winged and Yellow-fronted Amazons flew in pairs to their roosting sites and Egrets and Hawks were much in evidence. In a swampy area close by a Purple Gallinule made an appearance. We did not see the macaws, which had been sighted there three days previously. However, my expectations had not been high. The protected Bush Bush Wildlife Sanctuary, in which they were released, covers 3,800 acres. Finding the ten macaws known to survive in such a vast area was a tall order.

Bemadette had planned an aerial survey from a small aircraft, to which I had keenly looked forward. This had to be cancelled on the previous evening because smoke from the fires had reduced visibility from the air. After a long

dry season, the fires were the most serious for many years. Palls of white smoke arose from every corner on the horizon.

We were not to see the macaws - but it was enough to know that these men watched over the locality day and night, leaving their families for days at a time to do so. I was pleased to learn that they now receive small stipends for their role as guardians of the macaws.

We left Trinidad, for a couple of days in Tobago - a paradise for bird watchers and nature lovers in general. In the grounds of a large hotel we saw a single Blue and Gold Macaw, a sad bird which had resorted to feather plucking. We learned the story behind this macaw, which was very interesting. A local resident had a pair which he allowed to fly at liberty. They reared three young and the whole family flew together. They took a liking to young green coconuts on the trees on his property. Unfortunately, when they went further afield to satisfy this taste, four of the macaws were shot by an angry landowner.

I now knew the origin of the report that five Blue and Gold Macaws survived in Tobago until the 1990s. They were not wild birds and there is no evidence that this macaw ever existed in Tobago where there is no area of swamp comparable to that of Nariva.

Due to the kindness of Bemadette and David Boodoo and the hospitality of many people I met, I was privileged to have a unique insight into the natural wonders of Trinidad and Tobago, and also into the culture of the friendly people of those beautiful islands.



They also feed on the black seeds of the mahoe tree (*Sterculia caribaea*). Photo: Rosemary Low



Ker nahan villagers. Will ecotourism one day bring prosperity to their area? Photo: Rosemary Low

# Blue and Gold Macaws

## Back in Trinidad

By STEPHEN MALOWSKI, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens  
and DAVID BOODOO, Forestry Division of Trinidad & Tobago



Blue and Gold Macaw pair and youngster at Emperor Valley Zoo, Trinidad. Young might be used for reintroduction

Photo: Rosemary Low

For approximately 30 years the magnificently coloured and equally animated Blue and Gold Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) could not be found in its historical range in the Nariva Swamp on the island of Trinidad in the West Indies. This wonderful species of macaw was extirpated from its range due to poaching for the pet trade and pressures from agricultural interests. On Trinidad these macaws typically utilized the Moriche palm (*Mauritia setigera*) as a food source in addition to being a favourite roosting and nesting site. While poachers were felling annual nest trees for the valuable macaw chicks that they held, local farmers were cutting and burning these palm stands to create workable farmland. In the late 1960s, the last few wild Blue and Gold Macaws were documented, never to be seen again. That is, until the late 1990s when a multinational effort to restock the Blue and Gold Macaw to its historic range began.

The idea was to translocate a flock of equal gender, wild-caught Blue and Gold Macaws from Guyana to the Nariva Swamp where legislative measures were taken to protect the habitat. There they would become acclimated and released. Cooperation between the governments of Trinidad and Guyana, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden and the Endangered Parrot Trust of Ocala,

Florida, led to the release of a flock in the swamp in late 1999 and early 2000. Every effort was made to ensure that this flock was not only physically healthy and disease free, but also properly protected from human intervention. The well-publicized use of stainless steel leg bands and subcutaneous transponder microchips would act as a deterrent to poachers. Anyone illegally caught possessing one of these marked birds would face a severe penalty of fines and/or incarceration. (A detailed account of the translocation and release of these birds will be found in the June edition of *Bird Conservation International*).

One of the most encouraging aspects to come out of this effort is the dedication and enthusiasm of members of the community monitoring system put in place by the Forestry Division. The division has recruited and trained members of several communities surrounding the release area in habitat protection. This has led to intensive monitoring of not only the macaw flocks movements, but possible nest sites, poaching and forest fires as well. Several members of the surrounding communities, Ker nahan to the south, Plum Mitan to the north and Manzanilla Cocal to the east, have been designated as honorary game wardens for the Forestry Division for this purpose. This

idea was modeled after a Fire Prevention and Suppression Plan utilized by the Trinidad government a few years back. One fine example of this dedication was the submission, from a farmer from Plum Mitan, of a steel leg band from the only known mortality of the released flock to the Forestry Division. This farmer went well out of his way to make this report and such effort is greatly recognized and appreciated. There is no doubt among the participants of this project that without the involvement of these locals, the project's future and success would be at risk.

At this writing, the majority of the flock has been thriving for over a

year and are now well into their first breeding season on Trinidad although it was not known if breeding had occurred yet. In March, the authors, along with their guide Sham Ramsubaj, will be making several excursions to the Nariva Swamp and the surrounding areas. We will meet with the local communities and attempt to track the flock for observations regarding nesting and breeding. Towards the end of this exercise, as before, the discussions will always come around to the future of the project. Currently, the priority is augmentation of the released flock with Blue and Gold Macaws from other sources. An equally important priority is that community relations must be maintained to ensure continued cooperation from the dedicated honorary game wardens recruited for this project. They ask little and give much.

The discussions regarding the future of this project usually occur at the estate of the Head of the Manatee Conservation Trust, Mr. Gupte Luchmedial. His estate borders the Nariva Swamp and he has personally spearheaded an effort to save the endangered West Indian Manatee there. He is an avid supporter of the macaw project. He loves the swamp and he knows the swamp. He talks about it as if it is a person. As the discussion goes into the night, we hear a flock of Red-bellied Macaws on their way to their favourite roosting site for the night. We know that they are not Blue and Gold Macaws, but the hair on the backs of our necks stands on end just the same. The future of the Blue and Gold Macaws in the Nariva Swamp looks good.

For more information on this project, contact us directly at [Sinornis513@aol.com](mailto:Sinornis513@aol.com).



Steve Malowski (right) is assisted by a keeper from the Emperor Valley Zoo, in a pre-release examination of one of the Macaws.

# The Scapegoating of Aviculture

By TOM MARSHALL

As a former president and a Life Member of the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA), and simultaneously, as an enthusiastic supporter and Life Member of the World Parrot Trust (WPT), I am experiencing a certain cognitive dissonance. This psychological conflict of mine results from some of the new editorial positions taken by WPT that seem to belie their stated support of aviculture.

In the United States, AFA is the only recognized national organization by the U.S. Congress as the grass-roots association representing aviculture in our country. The WPT (along with AFA) has become one of the most prominent umbrella organizations promoting parrot conservation among American aviculturists and pet bird owners. Membership and support of these two organizations should be compatible for all aviculturists, pet owners and amateur conservationists. After all, avicultural techniques and knowledge gleaned from captive breeding are now almost universally seen by a growing number of conservationists working in the field, (such as Carl Jones and his work with the Echo Parakeets of Mauritius) as invaluable in designing management programs for wild birds.

These two organizations, seemingly share similar goals, with AFA emphasizing the advancement (and defense) of aviculture, but with a history of supporting conservation and research in avian welfare and WPT continuing its growth in influence (and ability) through its fund-raising efforts in the conservation and avicultural communities by "promoting excellence in parrot conservation, aviculture and welfare".

Has WPT adopted new and incongruous beliefs and attitudes that are in conflict with their professed support of aviculture as a result of their recent association with the Gabriel Foundation Symposium that met this past January in Tampa, Florida?

Recently, in the pages of the *Psittascene*, there have been a number of articles where the focus was on issues of sanctuary, rescue, rehabilitation and adoption of former, now unwanted, companion parrots. These articles have tended to put the blame on unwanted parrots squarely on the shoulders of the bird breeder, and secondarily, the pet store, which sell birds bought directly from the larger or commercial breeders. (See: *Parrots And The Need For A New Aviculture, Vol 13 No. 1 February 2001 and Over-Production of Parrots, Vol 2 No 3 August 2000*) At the Symposium in Tampa, where the Gabriel Foundation and the WPT-USA had symbiotically merged their respective identities (if only for that weekend), it seemed that the majority of the scheduled speakers adopted a "blame the breeder" mantra. The very articulate Dr Stewart Metz and most of the rather emotional attendees seemed bent on placing blame on breeders. There are problems with unwanted parrots and the increase of sanctuaries to house these unfortunate, long-lived birds are indicative of the magnitude of the concern.

"I feel your pain", as President Clinton might say, but why the irrational hostility directed at aviculture when there is enough blame to go around for everyone.

Only in America (I thought) do people find it difficult to accept responsibility for their own actions without the claim of mitigating circumstances. It is not the primary responsibility of the bird breeder or the pet shop to determine who should or should not buy a companion parrot. It is mainly the responsibility of the individual making the purchase. If the aviculturist is only motivated by money, as some indicate, the economic "law" of supply and demand will dictate when a breeder should cease and desist from breeding certain parrots. In reality, many groups of breeders are maintaining certain species alive in aviculture for the future, despite the vagaries of the buying public, for the sheer love of the bird. The growth in societies promoting certain species of parrots, such as those devoted to Pionus and Amazon parrots are good illustrations of genuine concern breeders have about the fickle nature of pet-buying public.

## Rosemary Low's Reply

Tom Marshall has supported the WPT for much of its existence, which I appreciate. During that period of 12 years the disturbing problem of unwanted (and abused) parrots has increased to the point that it has become a major issue. We must all change our attitudes and actions in an attempt to alleviate this problem.

Tom Marshall states that it is not the responsibility of the breeder or the pet shop to determine the suitability of purchasers of companion parrots. I know owners of pet stores who will not sell a parrot to someone they deem unsuitable and I applaud this responsible attitude. Most pet store staff do not have the option to make such a decision as they are merely sales people. It is for this reason that caring breeders never sell their young to pet stores. I also know many breeders who refuse to sell to individuals who do not measure up to their expectations of a suitable owner because they care deeply about the future of the parrots they have raised. Breeders who do not care have motives which are commercial only. Unfortunately, there are too many of these breeders.

During recent years I have seen an increasing trend among caring breeders to cease breeding parrots (although like myself, they still keep parrots) because they are so disturbed at the trend parrot keeping has taken and have no confidence in finding committed people who will own a parrot over the long term.

The statement that 'breeders primarily breed for pleasure' used to be true of all breeders a couple of decades ago. Anyone who believes this today is deluding themselves. If this is true, why are the majority of breeding pairs kept in totally inadequate conditions from the aspects of space and stimulation? There is little

The problem of unwanted parrots will be solved by the market place and by education --- the information is out there. It makes no sense to put the onus on the bird breeder, who primarily breeds birds for the inherent pleasure it brings as an ancient and natural pastime.

So why is WPT publishing articles that support the premise that the bird breeders are producing parrots without giving any thought to the consequences of their actions?

I believe that some of the rhetoric we are hearing from rescue groups as well as from certain contributors to the *Psittascene*, is a disservice to aviculture in general, and a contradiction to the World Parrot Trust's "A Manifesto for Aviculture", in particular. As an AFA member, I am concerned that the enemies of aviculture, which include groups who do not want you to keep a bird in captivity, as a companion or as breeder, will use these statements to call for more regulations designed, ostensibly, to promote the welfare of birds, but which will have the intentional or the unintentional effect to make it impractical to keep birds in captivity.

Who is the enemy? Is he saying that WPT do not want anyone to keep a bird in captivity, as a companion or as breeder - I don't think so. The regulations will only be impractical if they are inappropriate.

One of the seven proposals of The Manifesto states: - Do not create new difficulties for aviculture --- "Most aviculturists are simple hobbyists, they are not major entrepreneurs. Do not burden them with unnecessary paperwork. Recognize and reward their contribution to parrot conservation, as continuing success in aviary-breeding reduces the demand for wild-caught birds."

Those individuals, who have never bred birds in their life, should not lecture aviculturists on what the bird breeder should, or should not do, to prevent the unfortunate phenomena of unwanted birds. These individuals are going out on a limb and it is the wrong limb!

*Psittascene* Editor, Rosemary Low, for whom I have the greatest admiration and respect, has probably done more to promote the breeding of birds in captivity than has any other person in the world, given her prolific contributions to avicultural literature that for the most part emphasizes the many facets of breeding! Yet, she too, seems to be joining the anti-breeder chorus. Others, many of whom claim to be avian "behavioral consultants", and who have never bred a bird in their life, although they have a captive-raised bird or birds provided to them, directly or indirectly, from a practitioner of aviculture are frequently in the forefront of placing blame for unwanted birds on the backs of breeders. These "experts" are either guilty of biting the hand that feeds them or cutting off the hand that gave them their birds in the first place.

First, let these crusaders solve the problem of unwanted dogs and cats, not to mention human spouses and even babies, and then we will study their proposals for unwanted parrots. Let them solve the incongruities in human behaviour and explain to us why people who buy pet birds should not be held solely responsible for what happens to them. Let them explain, or better correct the disposable mentality that permeates societies in the Western World, and maybe then, we can get grasp on why there are so many unwanted birds in need of rescue and sanctuary.

Better yet, let all of us who claim to be interested in the welfare of birds sit down at a conference, perhaps at the next AFA Convention, and allow non-judgmental brainstorming in the hopes of reaching a group consensus on how each facet of avicultural interest --- pet stores and breeders, pet owners and sanctuary operators, conservationist and commercial interests --- can best identify how they can contribute to ameliorating the problem of unwanted parrots.

Breeders can be educated and encouraged to do what they can do to help mitigate the problem of unwanted birds, but they should not be vilified or used as scapegoats for individuals who are impulse buyers and/or who don't take personal responsibility for their behavior. To do so is unfair and unproductive to aviculture.

pleasure to be gained (except monetary) in keeping intelligent, playful and sensitive birds in this way. Why do so many breeders' set-ups resemble all-wire breeding factories?

Tom suggests that the problem of unwanted parrots can be solved by education. Impulse buyers and fringe parrot people do not read avicultural literature. How do we reach these people? Suggestions would be welcome. Also that I and others who believe that breeders are partly to blame for unwanted parrots, should first solve the problem of unwanted cats and dogs, and even human babies and he can then get a grasp on why so many unwanted birds need to be rescued. The bottom line is that it is breeders and (outside the USA) importers who provide the birds which sadly become unwanted. The statement that the law of supply and demand will dictate when a breeder should cease breeding a certain species sounds logical but is not borne out in practice - at least in the UK. The overbreeding and importation of some species results in very low prices and this is partly why so many parrots quickly become unwanted. Little thought is given to the purchase and disposal of inexpensive items. It is sad that the monetary value of some living creatures is so low. The only way to increase it is to reduce numbers bred and (outside the USA which country had the sense to stop parrot importation nearly a decade ago) to prohibit importation.

I do agree with Tom that it is not only breeders who are to blame. Many of the parrots they sell have the potential to make wonderful companions. That potential is never realised because too many owners have neither the time, commitment nor sensitivity to care for a parrot. Those who are giving up breeding them are well aware of this.



## Parrot Society of Los Angeles Trip

The 2001 PSLA Brazil Trip was a tremendous success. The Group visited Hyacinth Cliffs, the Gabriel's Valley and enjoyed themselves observing some 50 Hyacinth Macaws in the Hyacinth Valley. Red-bellied Macaws, Green-winged, and Janday Conures. Many other representatives of Cerrado avifauna had been frequently observed by the group. Subsequently we visited Fazenda Serra Branca in which BioBrasil Foundation carries a conservation project on Lear's Macaws, which is being sponsored by The World Parrot Trust. The Parrot Society of Los Angeles granted us with funds for the whole improvement of Hyacinth Valley, which includes the purchase of a generator, the construction of a water-well and landscaping at the lodge area. The 2002 PSLA Brazil Trip is scheduled for next June. One can obtain more information by accessing [www.parrotsocietyoflosangeles.org](http://www.parrotsocietyoflosangeles.org)

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## Thanks for Golden Conure Print

Dear Mr Hacking

We just purchased your Golden Conure print from the WPT, and I must say that it is the most



Hyacinth Macaws from Parrot Society of L.A. Trip.

Photo: Gil Serique



Hyacinth Macaws feeding on fallen Licuri Palm nuts.

Photo: Gil Serique

brehtaking parrot print that I have ever seen. I am anxious to get it mounted and hung on the wall where everyone can see it. We have a Golden Conure, and her name is Hanna, and she is the most loveable little girl that we have. I just wanted to let you know how much we love this piece of work that you did, and I am happy that our purchase is helping the Golden Conures.

A parrot lover,  
Chris Posey

## New Fiji Project needs Help

In November, Kirsty Swinnerton will be setting out to do a survey of the Red-throated Lorikeet *Charmosyna amabilis* on Fiji and other islands. Kirsty is well known for her long term work with the Echo Parakeet and Pink Pigeon teams on Mauritius. This survey will take a minimum of three months, and the majority of the funding will be provided by the

World Parrot Trust.

One of the major expenses is the necessary purchase of two Suzuki TS 185ER or Yamaha trail bikes, one for Kirsty and one for her Fijian colleague. These cost about £1,600 each, and we would be most grateful for any contributions towards this part of the budget. This is a most exciting project, seeking to establish the present status of this mysterious little lorikeet. Here's a chance to play an active part in it.



## New Trustee for WPT

The board of trustees of WPT has appointed a new trustee, Glenn Reynolds (USA). Glenn (no relation to other Reynolds's in the UK) has been working tirelessly for the trust for four years, and has been responsible for setting up and running our successful Golden Conure Survival Fund. He is now working on our Great Green Macaw Fund, and keeps a busy schedule of talks to bird clubs about WPT's activities.

WPT-UK and WPT-USA are separate charities, but we have appointed the same list of trustees to both of them, so as to ensure that they work together effectively. The

trustees (directors in the USA) are as follows: Mike Reynolds, Audrey Reynolds, Andrew Greenwood, David Woolcock, Alison Hales, Victoria Ewart, Nick Reynolds (all UK), Charles Munn, Steve Martin, Glenn Reynolds (all USA), Cristiana Senni (Italy).

## Eastern Ground Parrots still out west

From 'WINGSPAN' Vol 11, No 1, March 2001 the membership magazine of Birds Australia.

Eight Eastern Ground Parrots have been 'rediscovered' near Nelson on the Vic. -South Australian border. In a survey in October 2000 initiated by the Portland Field Naturalists Club and co-ordinated by the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE), birds were heard calling at late dusk. Andy Govanstone of NRE reports: 'It was extremely pleasing to find the birds here again. With populations in trouble in most places on the mainland, particularly at the margins of their range - for instance they are almost certainly extinct in South Australia, and there are no recent records from the Otways - we feared we may have lost them from the western edge of their range.'

It's good that the birds were located within the Discovery Bay Coastal Park, so we can work on appropriate management regimes for fire and feral predators. We are also looking forward to follow-up surveys to determine the full extent of this isolated population.





Eastern Ground Parrot fledgling (approx. 3 weeks).

Photo: Birds Australia collection

If we can stabilise, and perhaps increase this population, we may even be able to get birds to disperse across the border and thus return them to South Australia after more than 50 years.

[www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

## Announcing the First Ever Conference on African Grey Parrots

Sponsored by The Grey Play Round Table, the African Grey

magazine.

When: September 13-16, 2001  
Where: Atlanta, Georgia at the Atlanta Hilton Northeast

The key focus of the conference is to discuss all aspects of African Grey behaviour, particularly their wild instincts and how this translates into the home. Diana May, graduate student from the Pepperberg lab, will discuss and show film of wild Greys. Other expert speakers include: Phoebe Linden, Jane Hallander, Liz Wilson, Alicia McWatters, Irene Pepperberg, Maggie Wright.

For more details, refer to the [www.africangreys.com](http://www.africangreys.com) web site or call Maggie at (212) 888-1784.



African Grey Merlin.

Photo: courtesy Maggie Wright

# The Jewels of Nature Project

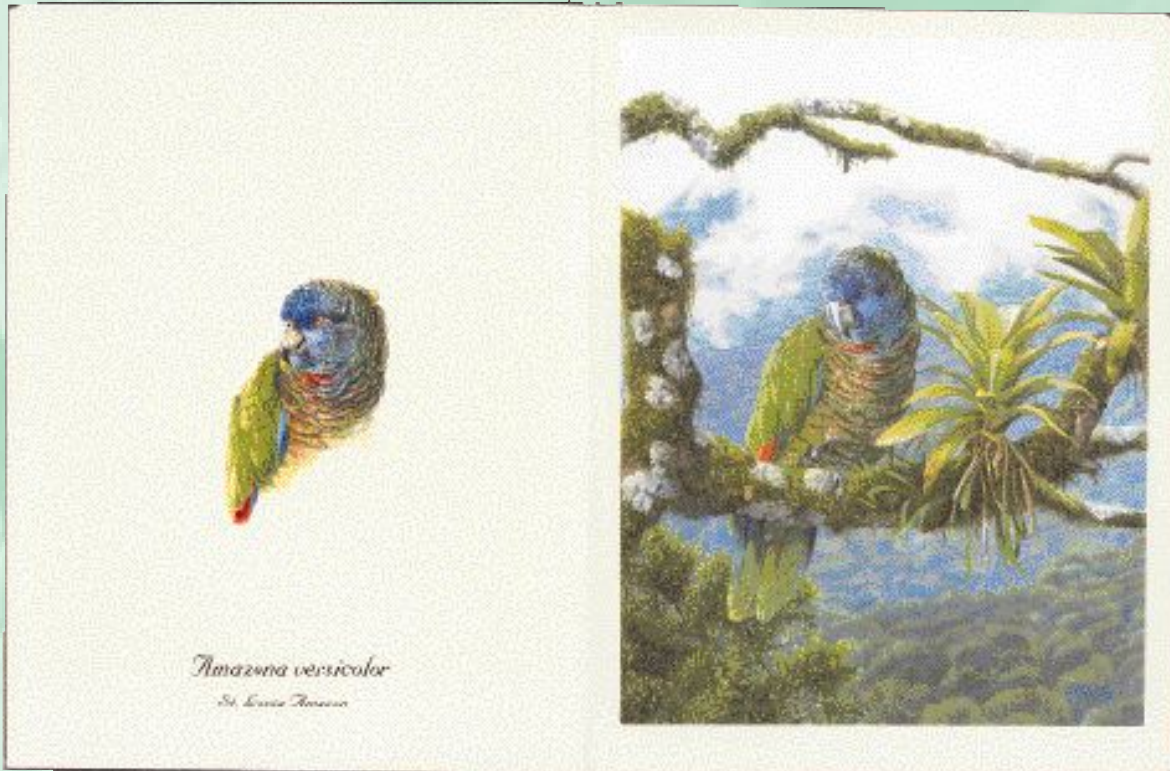
## Press Release

Ten years of research and development by the publisher and three and a half years of dedicated hard work by the artist Gordon K. Hanley, have finally culminated in the production of Volume One of the Jewels of Nature Project. A publishing triumph in its own right, the planned two-volume set is quite unlike any other book published in the last hundred years. Strictly limited to a once-only publication of 2,000 sets, it will be highly sought after by collectors worldwide.

Although the Worldwide Edition of 2,000 sets may represent a large number, by the time possible allocation of available sets to individual countries is made the number becomes relatively small. For instance,

only 85 sets can be set aside for the United Kingdom, 25 sets for all of the Netherlands, 20 sets for Denmark and Singapore respectively. These limitations will no doubt add greatly to the intrinsic value of this superb publication.

Delivery of Volume One has now commenced, both in Australia and Overseas. The response has been exceedingly positive and well beyond our expectations. Orders have been fulfilled for the State Libraries of Queensland, Western Australia, The National Library of Australia, private collectors as well as early Institutional and private orders received from abroad. For more information write to: [okko@jewelsofnature.com.au](mailto:okko@jewelsofnature.com.au).



Example of page layout of the books.

Note: Vol. 1 of Jewels of Nature can be viewed by appointment at Paradise Park, Cornwall, UK.

Copyright: Jewels of Nature

# Raising funds for the Great Green Macaw

The plight of the Great Green Macaw in Costa Rica and the need to raise funds to support its conservation there, were highlighted in the last two issues (February and May) of *PsittaScene*. Rosemary Low offered some fund-raising ideas and has raised more than £400 through raffles and a sales table. At the June meeting of the Notts Parrot Club she organised a special raffle of attractive parrot-related items (including WPT baseball caps which were very popular) and raised £78 from the 40 people present. This is an idea which could easily be copied at other meetings.

The response from other UK members to this appeal has been disappointing with a total of £115.50 raised to date from other sources which includes a sum from Anne Morrison in Alice Springs, Australia, for the sale of bookmarks. We would like to thank all those who responded and encourage others to have a fund-raising event. Our members in the

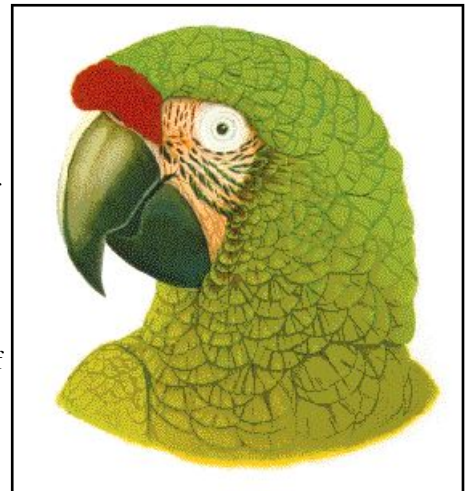


These items raised £78 for the Great Green Macaw Fund at a meeting of the Notts Parrot Club.

USA have been very active and very successful in raising cash for this macaw, for which we are extremely grateful.

As a result of the appeal, funds have been raised in Switzerland thanks to our representative Lars Lepperhoff who is promoting the fund through the magazine *Gefiederte Freund*. In Germany, a symposium on endangered parrots took place on April 6th, organised as usual by Dr Peter Wuest. One of the speakers, Christian Maierhofer from Austria, contacted Rosemary Low in order to borrow some slides of endangered parrots. The outcome of alerting Mt Maierhofer to the plight of the Great Green Macaw was that participants at the symposium donated DM900 to the project, and a further DM100 was donated for the loan of the slides. This sum (about £312) has been transferred directly to Costa Rica for the project.

We would like to remind members that the silent auction for Elizabeth Butterworth's painting of this species (as featured in the May issue) closes on October 1. The highest offer over £750 will secure the painting. We already have a bid of £1,250. The successful bidder will be named in the November issue of *PsittaScene*. This is a unique opportunity to own the work of this acclaimed artist!



**WE INVITE BIDS FOR ELIZABETH BUTTERWORTH'S STUDY OF THE GREAT GREEN (BUFFON'S) MACAW**

## Colourful Fundraiser

Without a doubt, the most effective and colourful fundraiser to date has been a Galah at Paradise Park, Cornwall, UK. The speed at which she collects pound coins and drops them into a WPT collecting box must be seen to be believed! Curator David Woolcock added this trick to the bird show at the park two summers ago. After the show, members of the

audience line up for the privilege of having her collect a pound coin (she accepts nothing less!) from the hand. She flies over to David who is holding the box, and back to the queue of people to pick up the next coin. In two years more than £12,000 has been donated in this way. This season's takings will all go to the Great Green Macaw Fund.



'Billy' collects a £1 coin from a young member of the audience and...



...places it in the WPT collecting box, held by David Woolcock. Photos: Rosemary Low

# Aims of the Trust



With thousands of members in 54 countries, our branches work cooperatively to achieve the stated aims of the World Parrot Trust, which are:

## The survival of parrot species in the wild

## The welfare of captive birds

These aims are pursued by:

- Preserving and restoring wild parrot populations and their habitats
- Educating the general public on the threats to all parrots, captive and wild
- Opposing trade in wild-caught parrots
- Promoting high standards for the care of captive parrots
- Encouraging the production of healthy aviary-bred parrots to end the demand for wild birds
- Supporting research on nutrition, disease, and other parrot health issues
- Creating links between aviculture and conservation

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

ANY Donations and support of all kinds are gratefully accepted; including monetary, auction items, legacies, sales items, time or creative ideas!

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Canada: <http://www.canadianparrottrust.org>  
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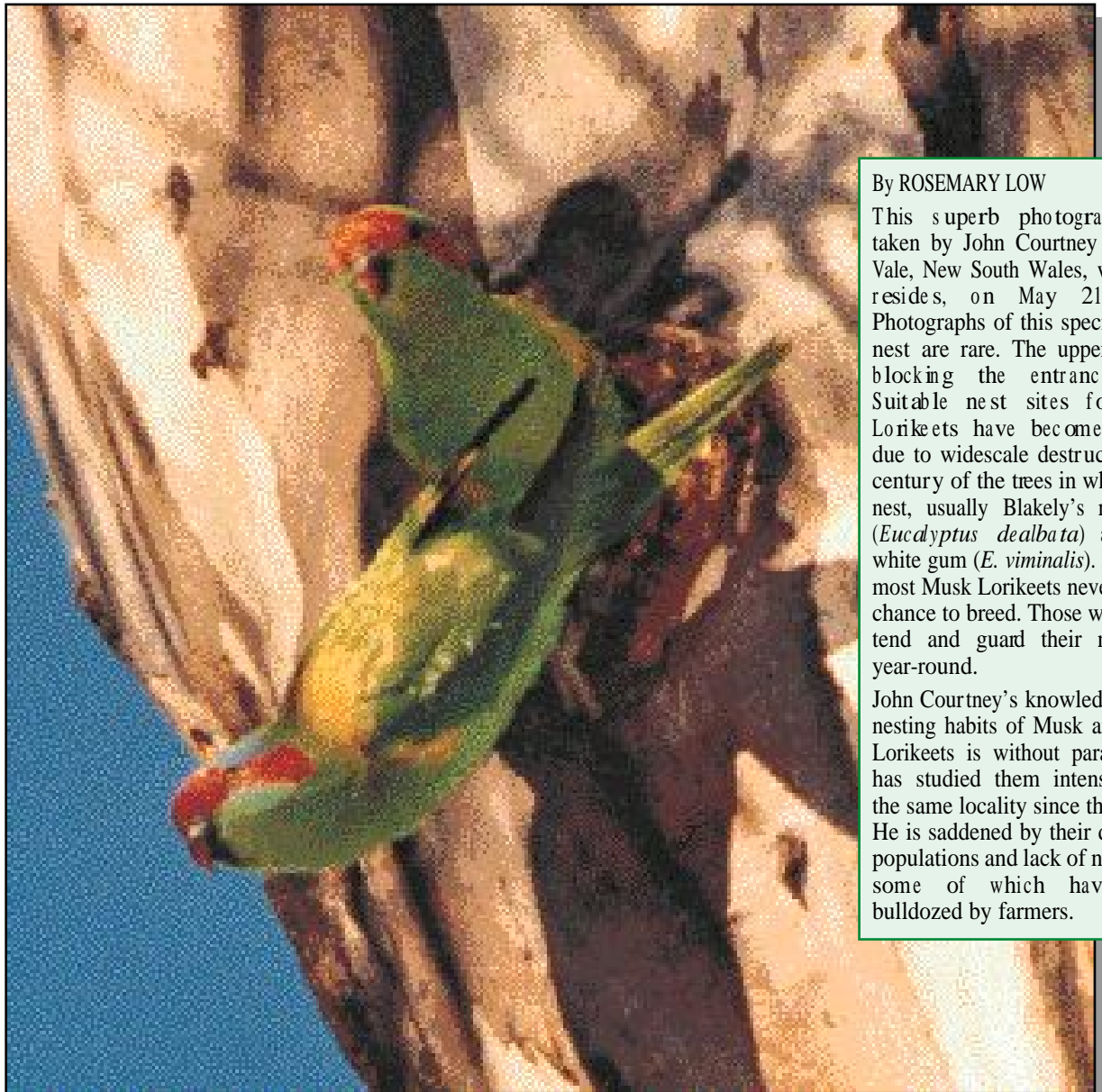
'The WPT 12' projects

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# Parrots in the Wild

# Psitta Scene

## Musk Lorikeets *Glossopsitta cincinna*



By ROSEMARY LOW

This superb photograph was taken by John Courtney at Swan Vale, New South Wales, where he resides, on May 21 1989. Photographs of this species at its nest are rare. The upper bird is blocking the entrance hole. Suitable nest sites for Musk Lorikeets have become scarce, due to widescale destruction last century of the trees in which they nest, usually Blakely's red gum (*Eucalyptus dealbata*) and the white gum (*E. viminalis*). Probably most Musk Lorikeets never have a chance to breed. Those who do so tend and guard their nest site year-round.

John Courtney's knowledge of the nesting habits of Musk and Little Lorikeets is without parallel. He has studied them intensively at the same locality since the 1950s. He is saddened by their declining populations and lack of nest sites, some of which have been bulldozed by farmers.