PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN PARROT CONSERVATION
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

World Parrot Trust in action

Vol. 13 No. 4 November 2001

Psitta scene

Philippine Cockatoo

Imperial Amazon

Blue-throated Macaw

Echo Parakeet

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

Psitta scene

Editor
Rosemary Low,
P.O. Box 100,
Mansfield, Notts.,
United Kingdom
NG20 9NZ

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Philippine Cockatoo in the wild

Photo: Olivier Morvan & Philippe Garguile, Pygargue Productions, France

Philippine Cockatoo hanging by a thread

By ROSEMARY LOW

The lovely little Red-vented or Philippine Cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) has the dubious distinction of being classified as Critically Endangered. The definition of the threat category is that it may suffer an estimated 80% reduction in the next ten years in the wild, or the next three generations (estimated 45 years) with decline which has happened based on direct observation, decline in extent of occurence, area of occupancy and / or quality of habitat plus actual level of exploitation. It joins 181 other birds in this sad category.

The other cockatoo in the same predicament is the Lesser Sulphur-crested (*Cacatua s. sulphurea*) - which might come as a shock to some members. In contrast to the Philippine Cockatoo, it is a very familiar avicultural subject. And that is precisely why it is so endangered; it has been trapped almost out of existence, although no wild-caught birds have been legally imported into Europe for more than a decade.

The principal reason for the decline of the Philippine Cockatoo is deforestation of lowland forests. Trapping for the local cage-bird trade seriously affected its numbers but the fact is that most of its habitat had already gone. Eighty percent of the Philippine forests and many of the mangroves have been cut down. As recently as 50 years ago this cockatoo was still common in the wild; now it has an estimated population of 1,000 to 4,000 birds. If this figure might not seem critically low, it would be because the rapid rate of decline has not been considered. In any case, the figure of 4,000 might be over-optimistic.

For the past ten years a number of initiatives have been taken to try to prevent the extinction of this cockatoo. Unfortunately, laws have had little impact because they are largely unenforceable. In 1992 there was a total ban on logging; the forests continue to be depleted. In the same year the cockatoo was placed on Appendix 1 of CITES; commercial trade in Appendix 1 species is forbidden. But local illegal trapping continued. It has become obvious throughout the tropics that laws without conservation education are more or less useless.

Also in 1992, Marc Boussekey from France took up the cause of this cockatoo. From the zoo of St Martin-la-Plaine, Marc visited the Philippines on many occasions. He persuaded the zoo to sponsor a poster showing the cockatoo and describing its plight in three languages. Three thousand of these posters were distributed throughout the islands of the Philippines. From September 1994 until March 1995 the zoo sponsored a public awareness programme. This included a one-hour radio programme, broadcast every Sunday morning. More than 130 listeners responded, resulting in the location of more than 300 cockatoos and over 30 nest sites which were previously unknown to researchers. Even former trappers co-operated. The radio programme has continued weekly between January and August every year, resulting in a network of informants and protectors.

Philippine Cockatoo. *Photo: Olivier Morvan & Philippe Garguile*

The island of Palawan is the last stronghold for this species, with an estimated population of between 750 and 2,800. This figure assumes a mean population density of one bird per square km of suitable habitat. On the island of Tawitawi the estimated number of 100 to 200 might be over optimistic according to Nigel Collar et al in '*Threatened Birds of the Philippines*' due to a mistaken estimate of intact forest. On Mindanao the cockatoo is close to local extinction with only 130 to 350 left in three locations. There are 50 to 70 on Masbate. There might be a few other populations which are so small they have no long-term prospects of survival.

In 1992 it was estimated that 50 to 100 birds remained on the islands of Siargao and Dinagat. In 2001-2002 these islands will be surveyed with funds donated by private breeders in the USA. Illegally collected birds are still to be found in the bird market in Manila which are thought to originate from these islands. The cockatoo is extinct on Cebu and probably also on Negros. There is one pair left on Siquijor. Two recent records from Luzon probably represent escaped cage birds.

One of the earliest field surveys of this cockatoo was made in 1991 by Dr Frank Lambert for the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Dr Lambert is one of the most experienced field workers in the region and is now based in Indonesia. He suggested that this cockatoo might need mangroves as a refuge, if it is to survive.

On Palawan, the rapid human population explosion in recent years has been highly detrimental to the cockatoo's survival. Nearly all the nest holes are known to trappers. The young are removed as soon as they are old enough, sometimes also the brooding parent. A few nests have been guarded since 1996 but the majority are too inaccessible to make this possible. Some former trappers are used for this purpose; known as wardens, they received cash incentives, radios, rice and T-shirts for their services. As a result, in 1997, for example, ten young actually fledged into the wild. This is extremely important because the population was obviously an ageing one, as nearly all young birds had been poached. So even though several hundred birds still survive, many or most of these will soon be beyond reproductive age, with no young birds to replace them, until the nest incentive scheme was introduced. Hopefully, in future years this will be more widespread.

In 1994 students from Palawan State University became involved with their native cockatoo. They formed a movement whose name meant Save the Cockatoo. Together with the Philippine Environment Ministry and the Palawan Local Authority, Marc Boussekey initiated a conservation programme. A protection network was set up in five areas where the cockatoo still had viable populations. A co-ordinator and several members spread the information and tried to obtain the participation of the rural people. From July 1994 to March 1995 a certificate of participation was offered to 130 local people, including 16 ex-poachers.

Young hatched in protected nests are now ringed with stainless steel rings bearing identification codes. One ringed bird was snared in a rice field. When its presence was discovered the man who trapped it stated that the cockatoos were eating his crop but was persuaded not to trap any more.

Looking into the future, the wardens have gathered saplings and seeds from trees preferred by the cockatoo for nesting, feeding and roosting. Two small nurseries have been established, with saplings cultivated in bags. In September 1996 the first mass tree-planting was carried out. This has become an annual event which eventually will hopefully result in increased food availability for a growing cockatoo population.

Rasa Island

The small island of Rasa (8sq km), by Palawan, is now the main focus for research. The PCCP (Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program) is mainly funded by Loro Parque Fundaçion and coordinated by a new team since September 1998 (a German ecologist, Peter Widmann and two Philippino officers Indira Lacerna and Siegfried Diaz) through 'Le Parc des Oiseaux', the Birdpark of Villars-Les-Domes, France since June 2001. During the breeding season from January to June 2000, 15 nest trees were located. It is of interest that horizontal rather than vertical nesting cavities were preferred. Six eggs were lost to predation by the common monitor lizard. One noteworthy nest fledged four young. Five other nests held three nestlings. The normal number of young is two. Other very positive news was that no cases of poaching were recorded. Intensive monitoring of nests was carried out by wardens from the middle of February until the middle of July. The 'Adopt a Katala' fund-raising project was launched to raise funds. Interested people 'adopt' a cockatoo and receive a certificate with information relating to a specific bird, identified by its ring.

In aviculture

Marc Boussekey has worked with tireless energy and enthusiasm for the Philippine Cockatoo. He was responsible for setting up the EEP (European programme for an endangered species administered through zoos). He states: 'Even if priority is currently being given to *in situ* conservation of the remaining wild population of the Philippine Cockatoo, the possibility of future reintroduction of captive-bred birds should not be ignored, particularly for those islands where the species has been eradicated. Co-ordination of effort, including co-operation between private aviculturists and institutions maintaining the species in captivity, is required if the captive-breeding programme is to be effective.'

EEP programme

By the end of the first full year (1993) of the EEP and its studbook, 32 males, 21 females and five unsexed birds were held in 16 collections; 11 of these were private. At the end of 1994, the total had risen to 48 males and 39 females. Of the 24 participants, 16 (67%) were private breeders. The participants were from six European countries. By the end of 1996, 48 males, 41 females and one unsexed bird were registered in the EEP, of which 52 (57%) were captive-bred. The 22 participants consisted of seven zoos and 15 private aviculturists from seven countries in Western Europe. By the end of 1999 the EEP population consisted of 41 males and 25 females. This reduced figure reflected the fact that some private holders of this species had left the EEP and, in 1999, nine birds were transferred outside the programme.

From 1992 to 1996 50 chicks were hatched from nine pairs. Numbers reared annually fluctuated as follows: 1992 - 9; 1993 - 11; 1994 - 12; 1995 - 13 and 1996 - 6. The number of breeding pairs had gradually declined from six to three and the number of non-breeding pairs has increased from 13, no doubt because some were too young to breed. (This cockatoo does not usually start to breed until the age of six or seven years). The latest studbook available, that for 1999, shows that seven young were reared.

The Philippine Cockatoo is by no means as easy to breed as most of the *Cacatua* species. However, the co-operation of private aviculturists has been disappointing. In 1997, for example, five left the EEP without explanation, which lost at least 10 cockatoos from the programme. Furthermore, some breeders sell young to non-EEP participating collections.

On the other hand, responsible breeders refuse to sell young females to breeders with mature males, knowing that there is a high risk of an immature female being killed. Sadly this has happened in the past. Some breeders are not responsible enough to have this critically endangered species in their care but, of course, a breeder is at liberty to sell to anyone.

There is a regional studbook for the United States in which 100 birds are registered. In the Philippines, Antonio de Dios, holder of the world's largest parrot collection, also has the largest group of Philippine Cockatoos, approximately 20 pairs of which are breeding. Some of his young birds have been exported to Europe.

Marc Boussekey believes that the integrated approach to the conservation of the Philippine Cockatoo, involving *in situ* protection, captive-breeding and fundamental research, represents a real hope for preventing its extinction. It is my hope that all private breeders will take a more responsible attitude to this critically endangered cockatoo.

Cockatoo Walkabout 2002

This is the male of the pair of Philippine Cockatoos in California owned by the respected cockatoo breeder Chris Shank. After many years in her care they bred for the first time in 2001, producing two young which are destined to have free-flying sessions with her other cockatoos, including their parents.

In May 2002 Chris will host the second 'Cockatoo Walkabout' to be held at her property, Cockatoo Downs in Grass Valley, USA. This meeting will focus on the behaviour, care and conservation of cockatoos. Jamie Gilardi will be a speaker at this event. We are also delighted to announce that any profits will be donated to the World Parrot Trust.

Further information can be obtained from Chris Shank, telephone (001) 530 268 3593 or email her at cockatoodowns@earthlink.net.

Photo: Rosemary Low

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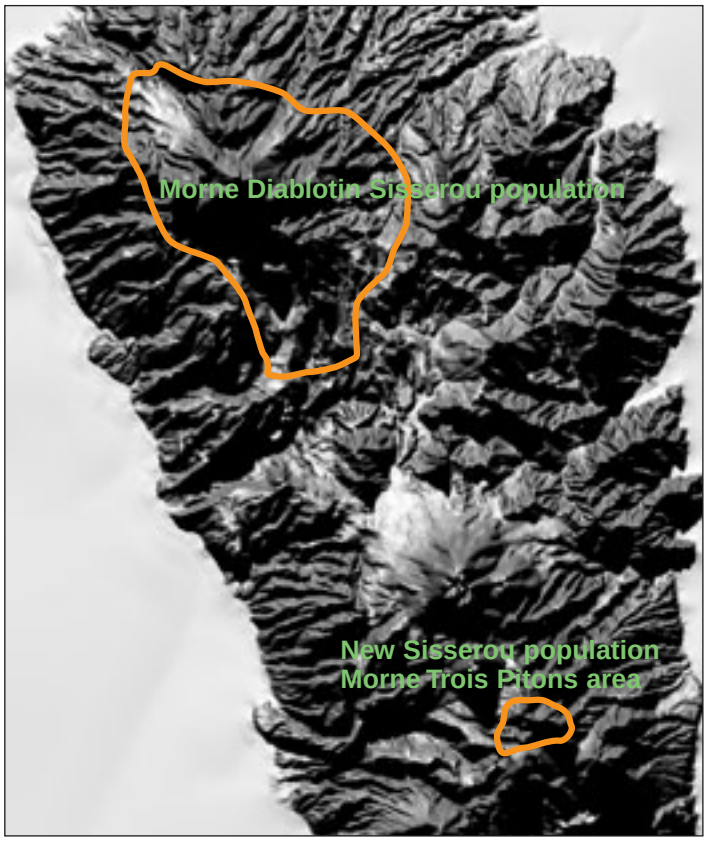
Imperial Recovery: Dominica's flagship parrot on the comeback

Text and Photos By PAUL R REILLO, Ph.D, Rare Species Conservatory Foundation (RSCF)

Dominica's Amazon parrots (*Amazona imperialis* and *A. arausiaca*) are flagship species for the largest remaining oceanic rainforest ecosystem in the eastern Caribbean. A joint parrot conservation programme between the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation (RSCF) and Dominica's Forestry and Wildlife Division has included parrot monitoring in the field, implementing a strategic recovery plan for the Sisserou (*A. imperialis*) Dominica's national bird and among the rarest of Amazon parrots and, most recently, establishing the new Morne Diablotin National Park. Recently developed field techniques have yielded essential data on life histories, behaviour, recruitment rates, and population parameters. Currently an estimated 350-500 Sisserous reside in the forests of Dominica, and only one pair is captive-housed at the Parrot Conservation and Research Centre at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau, Dominica's capital. Parrot conservation efforts have proven enormously effective for promoting island-wide, ecosystem-level conservation, emphasizing the need to protect oceanic rainforest at a broad scale. Recent field surveys reveal the beautiful, shy Sisserou as a compelling indicator species, whose population dynamics and life history show how long-term forest protection schemes enable island parrot populations to recover following devastating hurricanes.

In terms of biodiversity per unit area, degree of species density and degree of threat, Dominica's oceanic rainforest ecosystem is among the Lesser Antilles' highest conservation priorities. As the "Nature Island of the Caribbean," Dominica is the largest and most pristine of the Windward Islands. Mountains consume roughly 75% of this independent nation, with most slopes carpeted in virgin forest; some 52,000 acres are State owned (28% of the total land area). Dominica's mountainous rainforests boast high species diversity (>60 woody plant species/hectare, over 1600 flowering plants) and Gommier trees *(Dacryodes excelsa)* exceeding five feet in diameter. Animal biodiversity is similarly impressive, represented by 166 bird species, 20 species of freshwater and land crabs, 12 native terrestrial mammals, a myriad of amphibians and reptiles (including the Dominican iguana), and a number of spectacular invertebrates highlighted by 55 species of butterflies and the goliath beetle. Dominica is the only island in the eastern Caribbean to have two, endemic Amazon parrots, the Jaco *(Amazona arausiaca)* and the Sisserou *(A. imperialis)*, Dominica's national bird, the largest and one of the rarest of Amazon parrots. The Sisserou is probably represented by no more than 500 birds confined to 22,000 acres in and adjacent to the Morne Diablotin and Morne Trois Pitons National Parks. Ever since hurricane David in 1979-the most devastating hurricane in Dominica's recorded history-conservationists have feared for the Sisserou's extinction, as the species was reduced to a small remnant population on the slopes of Morne Diablotin. The Sisserou's recovery has been the subject of intense field research over the past 20 years championed by Dominica's Forestry and Wildlife Division, but such work is daunting: the Sisserou is very sparsely distributed across vast, mature, mountain rainforest, is exceedingly shy and reclusive, and exhibits a low reproductive rate. Meanwhile, with the ever-present hurricane threat, the Sisserou's recovery has become a race against time.

Parrot Team L-to-R: Stephen Durand, Randolph Winston, Paul Reillo.



Satellite image of Dominica's topography, showing locations of northern and southern Sisserou populations.

Since 1997, RSCF and the Dominican government have partnered to research Dominica's parrots and conserve the Sisserou-flagship species for the eastern Caribbean's largest, intact oceanic rainforest ecosystem. Sponsorship has been international and diverse, recently including substantial support from the Loro Parque Fundaçion, Amazona Society U.K., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the World Parrot Trust (UK, Canadian, and USA) and a number of American zoological societies including Palm Beach, Chicago, and Cleveland. The program has produced a number of significant results, including first-ever, intra-cavity documentation of reproduction in the Jaco, using a specialized video probe, and quantitative analyses of bi-parental care and recruitment in the Jaco and Sisserou, using direct observations and time-lapse video surveillance. The existing parrot aviary at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau has been enhanced and renamed the Parrot Conservation and Research Centre (PCRC), which now comprises a self-contained parrot incubation, rearing and general research laboratory, as well as a center for field data archival and analysis.

Most significantly, on January 21, 2000, culminating a two-year, $1.086 million campaign

spearheaded by the Dominican government and RSCF, Dominica formally declared the new Morne Diablotin National Park, encompassing 8,500 acres (measured flat) of pristine rainforest and a stronghold for the Sisserou. Taking into account the extreme topography of the park, the protected surface-area acreage is at least 20,000 acres. This conservation milestone probably will become the second Natural World Heritage Site for the Caribbean, and the second for Dominica, after the Morne Trois Pitons National Park, established in 1975.

The core of Dominica's parrot program is its stalwart team of field researchers-Stephen Durand, Randolph Winston, and Matthew Maximea, veteran forestry officers with the Forestry and Wildlife Division. The depth of the Division's field expertise is manifest not only in the parrot team, but also across the entire range of staff, many of whom have conducted exhausting parrot surveys and monitoring expeditions across miles of near-vertical terrain. Thanks to the Division's tireless commitment to land stewardship and conservation, Dominica has produced a legacy of forest protection unrivaled in the Caribbean. As a result, parrot populations have persisted, and the RSCF/Forestry partnership has been afforded the opportunity to design and implement a comprehensive parrot conservation and research strategy.

Recently, the parrot team engaged in a series of field surveys that punctuate the importance of Dominica's aggressive, comprehensive forest conservation policies. During the 2000 and 2001 field seasons, the team began applying Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies to parrot monitoring efforts, initiated with support from a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service GPS training grant and a Loro Parque Fundaçion grant (for population surveys) to RSCF. Although the Forestry Division has been engaged continuously in parrot monitoring since 1981, efficient methods to quantify the spatial distribution and abundance of parrots have proven elusive. Rough terrain, dense forest canopy and inaccurate topographic maps have thwarted a comprehensive assessment of habitat utilization by both parrot species. The Sisserou (*A. imperialis*) has been of tremendous conservation concern for decades, but especially since hurricane David in 1979, which

Female Sisserou (Amazona imperialis).

brought its population to the brink of extinction-perhaps as few as 50 individuals. Although once distributed in mountain forest above 700 meters elevation in both the Morne Diablotin and Morne Trois Pitons areas, since 1980 the Sisserou has been largely restricted to the slopes of Morne Diablotin, located in the north, central portion of the island. Exhibiting a shy, secretive demeanor and local population densities rarely exceeding one bird per 300 acres, the Sisserou has proven to be a challenging research subject. Despite years of intensive study, few active nests have been examined, and eggs have yet to be described. Only recently have juveniles been monitored in the nest, and data from the past few field seasons suggest the Sisserou may lay a single-egg clutch, perhaps only every other year.

Re-established in the south

While engaged in GPS/GIS field training sessions during early December 2000, the parrot team sought to explore an area known as Morne Prosper, in the southern portion of Morne Trois Pitons National Park, to investigate a possible Sisserou vocalization detected by a forester during a patrol. Confirming that Sisserous reside in this area would prove that the species had reestablished itself in the southern portion of its historical range-an event that had been anticipated since powerful hurricane David, 20 years prior, which drove populations in the southern half of Dominica extinct. With GPS technology and co-registered topographic maps and satellite images courtesy of the U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS), the parrot team could now identify the precise location of the Sisserous-if the birds could be located.

Sure enough, on 6 December 2000, following a two-hour climb over steep, rocky terrain to the heights of Morne Prosper, the parrot team was rewarded with a clear sighting of a small Sisserou population, in protected forest at the base of Morne Watt and Morne John. Four birds were seen in flight, and a total of five birds vocalized in the valley beneath the lookout point, on a ridgeline from Morne Prosper that demarcates the Morne Trois Pitons National Park boundary. With good satellite tracking, our receiver recorded our precise position (accurate to within three feet), and the tracks and waypoints were downloaded to map software. For the first time in 20 years, a southern Sisserou population-however small-had been identified and located with pinpoint accuracy.

Thanks to new technology, training, and field support provided to the parrot team, an exciting conservation milestone was documented. The Sisserou's comeback, albeit slow, is both measurable and significant. As an endemic reliant upon the largest of Dominica's rainforest trees for survival, the Sisserou represents a compelling indicator species for rainforest rejuvenation and recovery. Moreover, as mature forest is least susceptible to hurricane damage, the species is a sentinel for evaluating the magnitude of forest perturbations. Indeed, the Sisserou's near-extinction caused by hurricane David in 1979 signaled the opening of a research window on the characteristics of Windward Island catastrophes and how they relate to long-term ecosystem and species recoveries, the details of which we are only now beginning to appreciate.

Clearly, Dominica's parrots have evolved with their biological and physical environments-including hurricanes-soundly proven by the species' persistence despite centuries of assaults by man and nature. The central element in the Sisserou's survival has been an intact habitat, which affords researchers and nature lovers alike the unique opportunity to observe an oceanic rainforest ecosystem and all of its biological, physical, and temporal dynamics. Our recent Sisserou sighting in the south of Dominica confirms that the government's protected area policies and strong conservation ethic are working. Since its creation in 1975, the Morne Trois Pitons National Park has been maintained as an intact bioreserve, enabling Dominica's national bird to rebound here-20 years after the most devastating hurricane in the island's recorded history. With Dominica's terrestrial park system anchored by Morne Trois Pitons National Park in the south and the new Morne Diablotin National Park in the north, we look forward to the Sisserou's steady recovery to pre-hurricane David levels.

A sobering reality is that the Sisserou's future rides with the next wave of tropical storms rolling westward across the inter-tropical convergence zone. But for now, Dominicans, the parrot team, and ornithologists everywhere can cheer for *Amazona imperialis*, as this magnificent parrot ambassador expands across the blanket of forest that defines Dominica, the Nature Island of the Caribbean.

Blue-throated Macaw Conservation In Beni, Bolivia

Critical Steps Toward The Recovery of One of The World's Most Threatened Birds
A Proposal from the World Parrot Trust

Photos By E. NYCANDER and C. MUNN

As readers of the *PsittaScene* and the Parrot Action Plan know, the Blue-throated Macaw is the highly-threatened relative of the better known Blue-and-Gold Macaw. Unlike the larger Blue-and-Golds which are found throughout tropical South America, the Blue-throats are found only in north-central Bolivia. Although there have been effective efforts to study and protect this species since its discovery in the wild in 1992, the World Parrot Trust is pleased to announce that we are gearing up for a fully-fledged field conservation program for this species. To do the job right will likely require US$40,000 per year for the next several years. We have just received word from some very generous donors - Norah and Bruce Broillet - who have contributed an astounding US$21,500 to launch the recovery of this species. Norah and Bruce are key supporters of the Parrot Society of Los Angeles which has helped link their captive Blue-throated Macaw to the conservation of this spectacular species in the wild (www.parrotsocietyoflosangeles.org). Please read on to learn more about the current status of the bird and how we think we can help bring the species back from the brink of extinction. We realise that not everyone can manage the generosity of the Broillet's, but every contribution will be a huge help for these birds - for instance, $100 will build and place 2 nest boxes and $500 will buy protection for one nest for a whole season.

Charlie Munn with Norah Broillet and Rocne (the bird) in Los Angeles, linking their captive Blue-throated Macaw to conservation.

Background

The Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) is one of the rarest birds in the world. Recent estimates put the wild population in the range of several dozen birds and captive estimates are in the range of several hundred to the low thousands (Hesse and Duffield 2000). Although the Blue-throats appear to be like many other macaws specializing on one or two species of palm for food and nesting requirements, it was apparently not this habitat specialisation that drove them to the brink of extinction. A great deal of their habitat still exists and is highly compatible with cattle ranching in central Bolivia. The Blue-throats have however faced a unique challenge from a dramatic and well-documented pet trade. Although the exact location of the wild birds has been a mystery to ornithologists for decades, trappers apparently discovered the wild birds sometime in the late 1970's or early 1980's. Between the early 1980's and early 1990's, somewhere between 400 and 1200 birds were exported from Bolivia (Thomsen et al. 1992, Yamashita and Machado de Barros 1997) many of which are now in captivity in the European Union and in North America. It was not until 1992 that the last wild birds were discovered by Charles Munn, who posed as a wildlife filmmaker and was led to the site by an ex-trapper (Jordan and Munn 1993). By then Bolivia had banned the export of birds, the Wild Bird Conservation Act had been signed in the US, and the last remaining trapper had been converted to a guide and protector of the Blue-throats. In the ten years since, most of the effort on behalf of the Blue-throated Macaw has focused on looking for more birds, protecting a handful of nest sites (usually 3-4 depending on the year), and continuing to support ex-poachers to protect all remaining known birds (Hesse and Duffield 2000, C. Munn in litt.).

There are several approaches that we feel will contribute to the recovery of this critically threatened bird: a brief description of each follows:

Nest Guarding

Clearly every nesting pair of wild Blue-throats is critical to the survival of the species. Ensuring that each pair that attempts to nest has every imaginable advantage is a top priority. Approaches include stationing guards at each nest to protect the pair from all threats: human, mammalian, reptilian, and avian predators. Nest entrances should be manipulated to make it harder for larger birds to enter the cavity, guards should be armed with sling-shots or light weapons like pellet guns to discourage avian predators, trees should be flashed with metal to prevent climbing predators, and the branches from neighbouring trees should be trimmed so predators can not get to the nest from these trees.

Nest Enhancement

For every nesting attempt, all avicultural techniques should be employed to maximize the reproductive output. Although little is known about nesting patterns of wild Blue-throats, if the captive birds and other *Ara* species are any indicator, there will be substantial opportunities to enhance the reproductive output of each nest - in many cases doubling or tripling output. Approaches include the incubation of abandoned eggs, supplementing the feeding of the youngest chicks, fumigating the cavity to ensure that neither the chicks nor their parents are suffering from ectoparasites, and medicating all chicks that require veterinary support.

Nest Box Provisioning

Observations of nesting Blue-throats in the last decade have indicated that the larger Blue-and-Gold Macaws (*Ara ararauna*) are

Blue-throated Macaw juvenile at nest entrance.

normally present in the area and can be very aggressive toward pairs of the smaller birds. This is not an idle concern as adult Blue-and-Golds in Peru have been observed physically removing large chicks of the same species from a nest site, they then take over the site only to abandon it a few days later (Renton in litt.). As recently as October 2001, observers at a Blue-throated Macaw nest site in Bolivia witnessed this exact conflict. Luckily in this case, the more lightly-built Blue-throats were able to chase off the larger Blue-and-Golds. A viable alternative to shooting all the Blue-and-Golds in the area is to provision all nesting areas with extra nest sites that are large enough and desirable enough for both species. This will minimize potentially-lethal competition for nest sites during the critical period when the birds are deciding whether and where to nest. A variety of nest box designs have been evaluated on several *Ara* species in Peru and the two most likely to work on Blue-throats will be used at each nesting area. One design uses a long hollowed-out section of the Blue-throats' favourite nesting palm (*Attalea phalerata*), which is then attached to a live palm. Another design is to use a long tube of PVC tubing which is roughly 14" in diameter with an access door at the bottom. These 'boxes' are also mounted to existing live *Attalea* palms.

Captive Blue-throated Macaw Coordination

Since the vast majority of the individuals are in cages around the world, it makes good conservation sense to develop an understanding of where these birds are, how many are wild-caught, whether they are reproducing, and whether any have the potential to contribute directly or indirectly to the conservation of the wild birds. The primary target of this effort is to work with captive collections in Bolivia itself which we see as valuable for two reasons. One is that many of these birds are close to their source of origin and have never been exposed to other captive birds. Given the disease considerations of birds housed in multi-species facilities with birds from all continents, these 'local' birds could have substantial advantages for use with the recovery effort either through future fostering potential, captive breeding, or outright release. Second, some of these facilities have until recently provided cover for the laundering of wild-caught birds for export. Working directly with these facilities will have the added benefit of providing oversight to prevent any future trafficking of wild Blue-throats.

Nest Searches

It is very likely that there remain unknown small populations of Blue-throated Macaws in central Bolivia. Locating, protecting, and monitoring these will be crucial to the long term conservation of this species. The most effective way to cover ground in this part of Bolivia is to travel in pairs of small off-road motorcycles - these allow excellent flexibility on areas without roads and a full 360˚ view for sighting flying birds.

Results

The results of this project will be measured by quantifying the output of each known nest for the next several years and by monitoring the population size of the wild Blue-throated Macaws. Although some nesting failures are inevitable, the critical status and lack of knowledge of the Blue-throated Macaw's biology encourage every possible action be taken to improve their chances of a rapid recovery. It's helpful to bear in mind that several parrots have been rarer than this species, including the Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula echo*) on Mauritius and the Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*), and there is every reason to believe that orchestrated action now will lead to a substantial recovery of this species in the next decade.

BirdsFirst and the UK Trade in Parrots

By GREG GLENDELL

Those who work for the welfare of birds are often disgusted at the conditions in which birds are sold. In Britain you can still go to sale days and auctions where you will see wild-caught parrots growling in sheer terror as a gullible public are duped into purchasing a 'bargain bird' for a pet. There are still plenty of vile, dingy high street pet shops where traders profit by deliberately keeping parrots in cruel conditions so that it will be 'rescued' by a buyer. The bird is soon replaced by yet another one. Often, we feel we need new, better laws to prevent such cruelty (perhaps we do). However, the UK has several laws relating to animal welfare, which are simply not being enforced. The RSPCA usually use the Protection of Animals Act 1911 against cases of cruelty regarding housing and treatment of animals. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 is also used, particularly with illegal trade in British birds.

However, it is the Pet Animals Act 1951-83 which makes it a criminal offence to operate "a business" selling any pet animals (vertebrates) without a pet shop licence. This Act is enforced by local government environmental health officers. It requires pets to be sold only from "premises" which are a "licensed pet shop". The Act has powers to control the conditions in which birds are sold, and the numbers that can be sold.

For many years this law has been openly flouted by the organisers of bird sale days and auctions. Traders, breeders and even some national avicultural 'charities' are all involved in this illegal trade and thousands of pounds can be made on a day's trading. Many people new to bird keeping visit these sales but on seeing such appalling conditions, caring newcomers are unlikely to make further visits.

Most sale events will have birds with bleeding and damaged wings, faces and feet due to transport conditions; birds kept in cages so small they may not be able to stand up; and filthy overcrowded cages without food or water; home-made cardboard cages with chicken wire sellotaped on. Birds whose only food is that thrown onto the floor of the cage where it is mixed with their own excrement. And of course recently imported wild-caught birds terrified at being trapped in cages. For many bird keepers and traders this is seen as a perfectly normal way to treat birds and anyone objecting to such conditions is likely to be dismissed as a 'do-gooder' by those who profit from such cruelty. Mere complaints will not result in any improvements being made. Even if 'improvements' were made, unlicensed trade remains a criminal activity.

You might wonder why we don't see thousands of terrified dogs and cats sold in these conditions: but again in cases of animal welfare, birds always seem to come off worse. This state of affairs is due to several reasons. There is a serious lack of training with regard to local government officers whose duty it is to enforce this law. Most RSPCA officers, though well-meaning, lack adequate training in recognising cruelty in exotic and non-domesticated species. And the RSPCA seems to lack the will to take offending traders to court. Traders will even use RSPCA attendance at the sales to gain credibility for their activities. Organisers will also invite vets to attend some of these sales to lend an air of 'respectability' to the event.

With these points in mind, BirdsFirst has been running a campaign to ensure this and other animal welfare laws are properly enforced. The environmental health officers' own advisory body, the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health is of a similar view to us regarding how this Act should be enforced and many local authorities are enforcing the law in the spirit intended. However, some organisers are attempting to find loopholes in the law to enable them to trade as before. They have tried to claim that 'members only' sales can be run without a licence, but this has failed. They are now claiming to hold events where birds on sale are not pet birds but 'breeding birds' to get around the law. In our view, itinerant trading in birds results in them being treated like items in a car boot sale. When the law is properly enforced by local government officers this will reduce the suffering of thousands of birds immediately.

For more information on this issue contact Greg Glendell at: greg@petparrot.freeserve.co.uk or call Greg 0870 757 2381.

Behaviour issues:

Once a picker always a picker?

Text and Photos By MICKEY MUCK

There is a widespread belief that parrots that are chronic pickers and/or mutilators cannot be rehabilitated. My experience the past 11 years demonstrates otherwise. I offer two case studies to demonstrate this.

Case One

Corky is a 12-year-old female Moluccan Cockatoo and still the worst-case picker/mutilator that her avian veterinarian has ever seen. Corky was hatched in captivity and hand-raised. She lived with a wonderful family who made sure she had the best cage, diet, toys and whatever else she wanted or needed. Nonetheless she started mutilating at approximately 9 months old.

Early one morning after Corky had been in her new home for approximately 6 months her family woke to find her in her cage soaked and completely covered in blood. Not knowing what was wrong they immediately wrapped her in a towel and called her avian veterinarian's emergency number. They lived about an hour's drive to the animal hospital but they got there as quickly as they could. The vet was waiting. Corky was alert but quiet. She had chewed over half of the skin off one leg and put a huge gash in her chest that was very deep. She was stable so the vet put her under anaesthesia and immediately starting cleaning and stitching her up. They also ran a complete blood work up to make sure that there was nothing medically wrong. Corky's lab work came back normal and she was able to go home after two nights in the hospital, but she had to wear an e-collar and was wrapped up like a mummy in gauze. Her vet actually made a full gauze slip on shirt so she could not get to her sutures or her skin. Her family tried to figure out what could have happened that night that set Corky off. Nothing had changed in the environment. Her cage and toys were the same, her family's schedule had not changed and diet was still very good. Corky had always been a great eater. They were heart broken that maybe they had done something wrong.

Corky spent the next two months healing and she did that beautifully. Her personality and high level of animation returned and she seemed happy. She was completely healed; the stitches and the e-collar were removed. Approximately two months later her family woke to the same horrible sight but this time it was much worse. This time the hole in her chest was much deeper and she had gotten at both legs. There was barely enough skin to stitch the wounds together. Not only was the family heartbroken but also they were confused why and how this could happen to their beautiful baby bird. Corky did not seem as alert as the last time so she was hospitalised for a longer period of time. After being sutured up and collared again, Corky was ready to go home after a week in the hospital. Unfortunately her family was afraid to take her home. They still blamed themselves for this unique behaviour and did not want to put her through that again. They really felt it was they or their home that made Corky do this.

So many times it seems easy to pin point why birds will do this to themselves, lack of enrichment, poor diet, too small a cage, bad wing clipping, not enough sleep, stress in the home, infection or other medical problems. Sometimes the problem is obvious but in Corky's case she seemed to have received everything possible for a bird in captivity. Corky's family loved her very much and did not want to give up on her but they were afraid to take her home. The veterinarian suggested a foster home close to the hospital while Corky was healing so she came home with me. She fitted in my home immediately and the healing began. Her family came to visit over the next three months but the visits got fewer and further in between. Finally they decided that they could not bear the fact that she might do this again, therefore I adopted her permanently.

Corky has been with me for the past 10 years and has healed completely. She has not picked or mutilated at all during that time. Even in the last four years feather have grown in on her

Corky Original.

Corky After.

Another feather picker - Pretty Original.

Pretty After.

legs where it appeared she had a lot of follicle damage. Corky is still very animated and is living happily with no reoccurrence of picking or mutilating. In the case of Corky I believe her healing was due to an environmental change.

Case Two

Lilly is an approximately 8-year-old female Umbrella Cockatoo. She arrived at the animal hospital, poorly collared, with a wardrobe of dresses made from colourful cotton she was to wear to keep her from picking her feathers. Also she was being treated with Prozac. Her family had given up on her and she did not have a good future. She had completely picked her chest and leg feathers out and had made about an inch and half cut across her chest. Another veterinarian had stitched Lilly up and it just did not look right. Still, it was time for the stitches to come out. Lilly was taken off of the Prozac and moved into my home during the healing process. She seemed happy and settled in quickly. Her new avian veterinarian had done a complete blood work up and physical examination and she was in good health. She immediately started eating a wonderful diet and her feathers started growing in. She appeared to be very happy. One morning after being with me for about one month I woke her up to find blood on her chest and rash like open sores. The sores looked like she had been excoriating them all night. I took her to the animal hospital to see what the problem was and we realized her feathers were in grown on that area of her chest. It was the area that had been sutured. When the first veterinarian stitched her up he did in fact fold the skin under instead of debriding it and suturing it together, which did not allow the feathers to grow in normally. Her vet put her in an e-collar and I brought her home. I hot packed and massaged her chest daily to facilitate regrowth of feathers. Once they had all regrown and did not irritate her anymore the collar was removed. She has been with me for four years and has not picked at all.

I have had the opportunity to work with many picking and mutilating birds over the past 11 years. 10 Moluccan Cockatoos, 6 Umbrella Cockatoos, 1 Ducorps Cockatoo, 2 Goffins Cockatoos, 3 Blue and Gold Macaws, 1 Hyacinth Macaw and 1 Green-wing Macaw. Only one Moluccan started picking again, a success rate of 96%. Some are in my home, others are living with wonderful well-educated families. Some were found to have medical problems, which were treated, and others just seem to need some understanding. We must remember that they are birds and have special needs, and that it is up to us to do everything possible for them while they are sharing their lives in captivity with us. But once a picker doesn't mean always a picker!

Helpful Tips

After any medical problems have been ruled out by your avian veterinarian the following are some basic changes and additions that I have had success with and which can be easily implemented into your birds daily routine.

1. I do not clip wings on birds that are picking. They appear to have more confidence when they have their wings, whether they fly or not. I do not recommend that the wings be allowed to grow in if the lifestyle in the home is not conducive to this. There is always a risk to having a full flighted bird indoors or out. There are some cases where it appears a poor wing clip was the cause for shredding and picking.
2. Make sure your bird is getting enough dark quiet sleep. This is about 10 to 12 hours of quality sleep every night. So many times our birds share our living space but they can't get the rest they need if they are subjected to the TV or family conversation until midnight and then are awakened early in the morning. Sleep cages in another room are great for this and the bird is still able to be part of the family.
3. Be sure your bird is eating the good foods they are fed. It is up to us to observe and make sure they are eating what they need as well as what they want. I find nuts in the shell are a great addition to a pickers diet. This not only gives them a project to occupy them but a food treat they usually like. Flax seed oil is a great source of essential fatty acids, which many birds are lacking. Mix a couple of drops in the fresh foods that the bird is eating. This is another easy way to make sure their diet is more complete.
4. So many pickers are not bathed often enough or at all, soaking showers and baths are very important a minimum 3 times a week.
5. Enrichment is also lacking in so many cases of feather picking. A study from C.L.Meehan, J.A. Mench and J.P.Garner, Department of Animal Science U.C. Davis states: "Our enrichment protocol effectively modified fearfulness and effectively prevented the development of abnormal behaviours. It also reduced the performance of established abnormal behaviours." We need to observe and make sure that our birds are enjoying the toys and projects in their area. They need all kinds of different projects to work on. Toy boxes can be easily made from a shoebox; these can be filled with left over toy parts, other boxes, nuts, treats, etc. Most cockatoos will spend hours destroying their toy box. One of the most effective toys I have found for pickers is simply tying together other bird's feathers. This gives them a colourful object that they can preen. We sometimes forget that our birds are left in their cages for long periods of time and it is up to us to make sure they are able to stay busy.

Echo Parakeet

THE WPT 12

2000-2001 Season

By DAVID RODDA, PETE HAVERSON, DR CARL JONES, Ph.D. and DR CLARE MAUREMOOTOO

Introduction

The season of 2000 - 2001 produced 17 Echo chicks, a similar number to the previous two years. Eleven chicks were hand-reared and released back into the wild, six were fledged from wild nests. This success came despite it being a very poor season in terms of fruiting in the National Park. Most of our identified objectives from last season have already been achieved, others are in progress and further objectives for the coming season have been identified.

Objective One

To enable wild Echo Parakeet population to produce the maximum possible number of healthy wild-reared fledglings each season:

* Through provision of artificial nest boxes and
* Through establishment of Echo Parakeets in additional areas of the National Park.

Achievements

Population increasing. At the beginning of the season the population was estimated to number 106 - 126 individuals. This season we released 11 hand reared chicks into the wild. Six chicks were fledged from wild birds. Four deaths of adult birds have been confirmed from September 2000 to date. The wild population is now estimated at between 120 and 130 individuals. Thus the steady population increase has been continued.

Released birds nesting with wild birds. Two released females are known to have paired with wild males and successfully nested this season. This is a significant occurrence as it demonstrates that released birds can integrate successfully into the wild population.

Nest boxes established in key wild sites, and design adapted. At the beginning of this season eight pilot design nest boxes were set up in the main release site area. A further two boxes were set up in the Combo area to enable males released in that area to become accustomed to them. Ten more nest boxes are currently under construction and will again be set up in the main release sites. The design has been modified to make them deeper and darker. It is envisaged that these changes will deter Indian mynah birds from nesting in the boxes and keep the nest cooler. Access to the nest boxes by staff has also been improved by shifting the access hole from the front to the side.

Marie Michelle from Mauritius meets an Echo Parakeet at Paradise Park, UK. (3 members of the Mauritius team have spent time at Paradise Park this summer.)
Photo: Nick Reynolds

First ever pairs nesting in nest boxes in the wild. Released females nested successfully in artificial nest boxes for the first time ever. It appears that released birds are more willing to nest in artificial boxes than wild birds, as no wild birds have ever nested in an artificial box. We intend to release more females so we can increase the use of artificial nest boxes:

* They can be placed in areas with terrain that allows easier access by staff for cavity and chick management
* Placed in areas within the trapping grid where there are less predators
* They can be weather and predator proofed more easily than natural cavities
* The use of artificial nest boxes by Echoes will also lessen the competition for natural cavities, which are becoming more of a limiting factor as the population increases.

Productivity enhanced by females taking supplementary food. Two released females used hoppers while rearing chicks. One of these females reared two chicks of good weight in a season when most nests failed completely due to lack of wild food (native fruits in particular). This demonstrates the usefulness of supplementary feeding to increase chick production.

Cavity protection against invasive cavity nesting species. This year we developed a nest guard which successfully protected cavities from invasion by tropicbirds. This guard effectively excluded them while still allowing Echoes access.

Pilot releases at Combo field station. This year four males have been released in trials that aim to establish Echoes in new areas of the National Park. They settled in well and are being monitored with the new radio-telemetry equipment (see Objective 3 for details).

Establishment of Echo release aviary at Bel Ombre. The new release aviary, funded under this year's budget, will soon be constructed at Bel Ombre. The design is currently with Manzer Saxon - a Mauritian building contractor. Thus we expect the process of producing and constructing the Echo aviary to be smooth and rapid, and that it will be ready well in advance of release dates for the coming season.

Objective Two

To use captive-rearing and captive-breeding to produce the maximum possible number of physically and psychologically healthy Echo Parakeets for release into the wild population - through further development of captive techniques, with a focus on upgrading facilities and enabling earlier socialisation.

Achievements

Captive-rearing and captive-breeding success. A total of 11 chicks (two of which were from captive birds) were hand-reared and released back into the wild.

Hand-rearing routine. The high standards and survivorship (90%+) of hand-reared chicks was maintained this season, despite most chicks arriving in a malnourished condition and a complete change in hand-rearing personnel.

Radical improvements in juvenile socialisation. We have now adapted our hand-rearing techniques to allow the following early socialisation improvements:

* Chicks are now brooded together from an early age (7 to 9 days) as compared with previously being reared in isolation until weaned.
* Chicks are also weaned at a younger age - 65 to 70 days old instead of at around 100 days.
* Socialisation with adults was provided before weaning also for the first time ever. The first batch of hand-reared chicks of this season were housed pre- and post-weaning for a total period of three weeks in an aviary adjacent to the main Echo flight aviary. Later release batches were taken directly to the release aviary from the hand-rearing aviary, and weaned during and

after the release process, in full contact with wild adult Echoes.

Upgrading of captive-rearing equipment for next season. For next season we hope to reduce intrusion by using closed circuit cameras to monitor nesting birds and chicks without disturbing the nest. Four cameras have been purchased and are in the process of being installed. Important biological information such as the number of times eggs are turned, chicks are fed and which parent feeds, will allow us to better manage hand-reared chicks and build a more complete picture of Echo biology.

Most captive females now lay eggs. Most captive females are now mating and laying eggs, this compares with the past where only one or two pairs laid each season. However most of these eggs laid now are infertile which highlights one of our future challenges.

Government of Mauritius will build new GDEWS Captive-rearing facility. The Government of Mauritius has confirmed that it has earmarked funds for a new captive-rearing laboratory complex to replace the currently very basic hand-rearing room we work in at the Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary.

Objective Three

To maximise the successful establishment of released Echo Parakeets into the wild population - through improvement of psychological health in captivity and supported by more detailed post-release monitoring.

Achievements

Improved release techniques. We have learnt how to release the birds at a younger age (70 - 90 days old) comparable to an age when they fledge in the wild. Previously the birds were released when fully weaned and fully developed physically (120 days old or more). This season we used hand-rearing staff to complete the process of weaning in the field after the birds had been released. For some birds, this included being fed in the tree tops rather than in the release aviary. This wild weaning meant that the birds were able to go through the process of early social learning and habitat facilitation at an age comparable to wild birds.

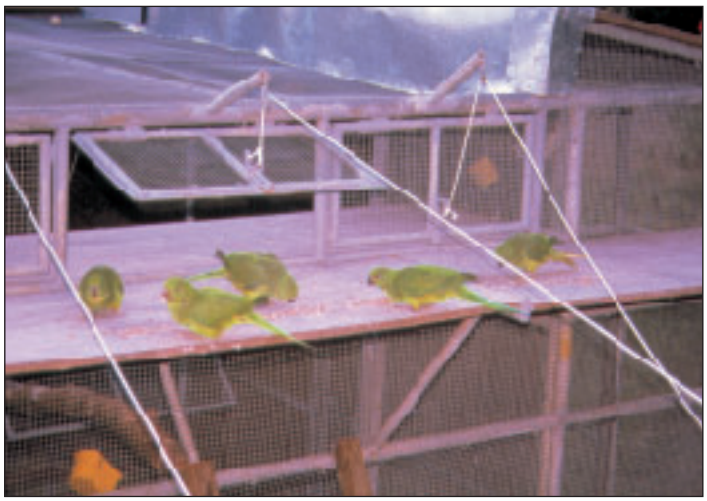
Post-release monitoring - radio-tracking study of released birds in progress. Unfortunately transmitters could not be sourced early enough in the season to be used on the main batch of release birds this season (due to a combination of funding, production and customs delays). It was thought too risky to recatch and radio-tag precious released females already established in the wild. Instead, 2 male pilot release birds were recaught at Combo field station and fitted with tail mount transmitters.

The transmitter study at Combo is intended as a pilot study to test the validity of using radio tracking equipment as a means of studying Echoes. From this study we expect to develop techniques to monitor, via radio tracking all of our future release birds. This will enable us to develop a picture of survivorship/cause of death, habitat utilisation and dispersal of released Echoes.

Objective Four

To ensure the survival of the full range of genetic variation currently available amongst wild and captive Echo Parakeets - through scientifically informed genetic management.

Members of the Mauritius team relax at 'Camp', from where the Echo fieldwork is run. *Photo: WPT*



Young Echoes at the release aviary. *Photo: Lance Woolaver*

Achievements

Continued female-biased sex ratio for releases at Plaine Lievre. It is still very difficult to accurately estimate the numbers of female Echoes in the wild. We know from observations of the wild population, for example when Echoes are prospecting for nesting cavities, that there are a significant number of excess males. Thus we continue to release mainly females into the main population at Plaine Lievre - this season five females and two males were released at that site.

Goals 2001-2002

Sustain increase in the wild Echo population. We aim to support an increase in the wild population to 150 free-living Echoes by the end of the coming season, with an annual target productivity of 20 - 30 birds per season for the coming years. The target of 500 free-living birds will be the next major milestone.

1 Wild Population Management Objectives

Continued hands-on wild nest management. We expect to manage 10-20 nests per year for the foreseeable future using the techniques proven successful over the past five years in particular.

Nest boxes at all field stations where we release Echoes. Natural cavities are absent from some areas and can be more difficult to manage if inaccessible or difficulty in predator proofing. Additional nest boxes will be set out in areas adjacent to all release sites.

2 Echo Release Programme Objectives

Boost numbers of Echoes in Bel Ombre area. There is a current 'subpopulation' (or part of the main breeding population) at Bel Ombre of at least three breeding pairs plus an estimated seven surplus males. A large area of good quality native forest exists, capable of providing habitat to more pairs. It is important that the 'surplus' males are brought into the breeding group, as they may be genetically unique. Thus mostly females will be released at this site in the coming season.

Establish breeding subpopulation in Combo area. We intend to release more birds at this site to continue the establishment of a new subpopulation.

To continue to redress the male biased sex ratio imbalance in the main wild population. Continue to release mainly females at Plaine Lievre, and similarly to release mainly females at Bel Ombre.

Detailed monitoring of released birds. We aim to make more detailed monitoring of released birds using radio telemetry equipment acquired this last season. Key issues are determination of where released birds disperse to, any deaths and investigate their habitat utilization. This is particulay important in the new release areas.

3 Echo Captive Programme Objectives

Establish aviary database. We are setting up a database system for more automatic and systematic record keeping.

Modernise captive facility. Research will be conducted by the Echo hand-rearing Coordinator to assess what other equipment may help us make further improvements. The MWF captive team will also continue to research, and give advice to the Government, for the design of the new captive rearing laboratory. We hope that construction will be started in March 2002 and completed for the following season.

Sales Items

To place an order for any of these items *(while stocks last)*:

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Book Review

by ROSEMARY LOW

The Parrot Who Owns Me

Do not let the title of this book mislead you into believing it is a simple tale of a woman whose 'pet' is a Salvin's Amazon. Joanna Burger is no ordinary woman. She is a Professor of Biology at Rutgers University, the author of 14 books on bird behaviour. Her style is eminently readable but it is her empathy with her Amazon and her ability to interpret his feelings and behaviour that make this book remarkable. As I read, I realised its significance. This book has the potential to change the way people perceive their parrots, to provide their owners with a deeper understanding of their bird's needs which can improve their quality of life to an unimaginable degree. In this age of careless acquisition of parrots and often even more careless disposal, this book is timely. It conveys the message that a parrot is a remarkable being that deserves the utmost respect and understanding.

Tiko is a Salvin's Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis salvini*) whose elderly owner died. The way his story unfolds will provide an insight into what an unwanted parrot suffers and perhaps make parrot owners more responsible for their actions. Tiko came into the care of her former owner's niece, Josie, who lived near Joanna Burger. Unfortunately, Tiko did not like Josie who could not communicate with him. He was lonely and became very noisy.

As the months passed, Joanna noticed how Tiko's plumage was becoming duller; he seemed more lethargic and morose. Josie said he would not eat. "You know I'm not crazy about him. Anyway he doesn't like me". Tiko spent his time pacing his cage or staring into space. Then he huddled silently with drooping wings, his feathers fluffed, his head withdrawn. Josie covered his cage to quieten his anguished shrieks.

Joanna found it painful to watch him deteriorate and was relieved when Josie called her to say "You can have him". Five months later Tiko started to moult. "With the moult he shed much of his suspicion: he was truly a bird of a different feather. This, of course, also had to do with his own frame of mind; the moult and the brilliance of his fresh feathers renewed my sense of confidence in my role as a caretaker in Tiko's life. His, or rather our, mutual adoption had not been a mistake; he was thriving. And as his new feathers came in, he finally bonded with me."

The touching story of how Joanna won his heart is one of inspiration for anyone who rehomes a parrot or takes on a wild-caught bird. Her remarkable insight and perception of what Tiko needed would give entry to many people into a hitherto unknown world. The door to this world too often remains closed and it prevents them from forming a happy and close relationship with their parrot. One of the keys that unlock this door is the recognition that anthropomorphic values are highly relevant. I realised this many years ago and found it satisfying to read:

"Our training drills into us [scientists] an aversion to anthropomorphic judgements. I once considered it the epitome of bad science to attribute human thought, feelings, and language ability to animals. But over the years I have changed my mind. I have come to regard it as at least equally benighted to automatically assume that animals lack these qualities. I find myself amazed, in fact, that anyone could doubt that the animals closest to us - dogs, cats, horses, parrots (especially parrots) - have emotional responses to the things around them, or that anyone could question the proposition that they form ideas about the situations they find themselves in or the people they meet. No one who has lived with a parrot will for a second doubt that they have thoughts or feelings similar to ours."

Unfortunately, many people who live with parrots lack the perception to understand this. Many of the situations that the author describes so lucidly will surely make them aware that their parrot deserves much more consideration and respect. With her husband, she tried to uncover Tiko's motivations, and to 'ease her way into a bird's eye view'.

After several years, Joanna found that: "the balance of power between us shifted. I stopped treating Tiko like a pet. I began to see him as an autonomous creature whose dependence on me only highlighted the need to really understand, deep down, that his life was as important as mine, his desires and inclinations equally valid."

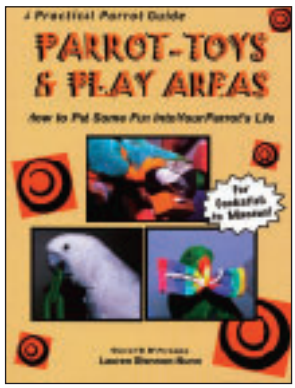
Tiko's story is interspersed with her experiences in watching parrots in the neotropics. Near La Selva Biological Reserve in Costa Rica (where I, too, have watched Salvin's Amazons) she observed a courting pair, and tenderly describes their behaviour. There is no doubt that watching parrots in the wild reinforces the fact in one's mind that they are wild creatures and that living with humans is not easy for them.

We can make it easier by truly trying to understand them, as Joanna Burger understands Tiko, who was 46 years old when she wrote about his life and made so many apt observations. She points out that among animals: "Their capacity for intimacy and connection with one another and with us isn't fixed. It grows and develops. It has untapped depths and reserves. It can, perhaps, be taught. It is influenced by experiences and events."

This touching story, from someone with a deep knowledge of bird behaviour and ecology, has the potential to change for the better the lives of so many parrots. Please go and buy it - for yourself or for another parrot owner. It could be the biggest step forward in understanding parrots that we will see for many years.

The Parrot Who Owns Me is published in the UK by Sidgwick & Jackson, price £15.99 Tel 0207 014 6000, Fax 0207 014 6001. The UK edition has eight pages of colour and 245 pages of text. The American edition, published by Villard of New York, lacks the colour photographs.

Parrot toys made easy?



We all know that occupying our birds can be one of the most expensive ventures in owning them, but it is very critical for their mental health. Many times I have spent $40 to $60 on a bird toy only to find it in shreds at the bottom of the cage after a few minutes.

The author of this book, Carol, has meticulously categorised parrots into eleven different types based on their interactions with their toys. While reading the book you will surely think of certain birds that fit perfectly into a given group. After identifying the play styles of these birds Carol offers quick, easy, common sense, inexpensive ways to use everyday items to provide a given type of bird with toys that match their activity type. In most cases Carol gives simple instructions that anyone can follow to build bird toys that don't cost a fortune, but will keep their bird occupied and happy for hours. The second half of the book is completely dedicated to simple inexpensive ways to build play-stands. This could be the best US$16.95 (£12) that any bird owner would ever spend, or as a christmas gift to a parrot owner.

Carol S D'Arezzo has very kindly donated a percentage profit of this books sales towards the World Parrot Trust's conservation projects.

This book is available from WPT UK or WPT USA please see details on page 19.

This year's donors to THE WPT 12 projects

Example of Fundraising leaflet by Pip Rowe.

Example of Fundraising leaflet by Greta John.

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BARBARA JOHNSON
BARBARA HARDIMAN

African Grey Parrot Fund

K & L KENDALL
MARIA GRAY
SUSIE ROBERTS

Hyacinth Macaw Fund

MARIA GRAY
M & M STAFFORD
PARROT SOCIETY OF LOS ANGELES
PIP ROWE
C L GODSALVE

Palm Cockatoo Fund

DOUGLAS WINKFIELD
ELSA AGLOW
EVERETT BUTLER
LESLIE REISSNER
WHITE OAKS FOUNDATION
EUGENE KLINEDINST
OLIVIER ARNOULT
MARIA GRAY

Winning Bid for Elizabeth Butterworth's Study of the Great Green (Buffon's) Macaw (*Ara ambigua*)

Congratulations and Many Thanks:
Lee Gardiner, UK
£1,250

New World Parrot Trust Logo T-shirt

Spanish Artist Tony Sanchez (tonysanchezart.com) has graciously allowed us use of his brilliant head study of a Palm Cockatoo for a new 'Logo T-shirt.' A graphic artist in San Francisco who happens to be our Director Jamie Gilardi's brother-in-law created the design, and Cyd Riley at Firefly will produce the final product (order from WPT-UK or WPT-USA offices, price £15, US$20 or □23 inc. postage and packing).

We'd like to extend a warm thank you to all these contributions of assistance and hope you'll all find a big need for these in the various stockings you'll have to stuff in a few weeks.

New Opportunity - Silent Bidding

Framed Original painting of Golden Conure *(Guaruba guarouba)* - by Grant Hacking

GLENN REYNOLDS writes:

The prints of the Golden Conure painting by Grant Hacking have provided a steady source of income for the Golden Conure Survival Fund. It seems that everyone who has purchased one, has had something positive to say about it. We have sold over forty of the 250 limited editions since this time last year. Because of this and the generous contributions from all of the bird clubs and concerned individuals, the fund is doing well, but to accomplish all of our goals we will need continued support over the next several years.

My personal goal is to raise whatever is needed to see this project through to its completion; therefore, I am announcing the availability of twenty enhanced artist's proofs. To produce them the artist is adding brushstrokes of oil paint over the canvas prints. He selects the objects in the foreground and creates additional depth and details by adding thick brushstrokes of rich colour. To further enrich the colours and increase the depth of the entire print, he then adds a heavy, glossy coat of varnish. All of these factors combined give the proofs a very three-dimensional look and is why they are referred to as enhanced; furthermore, each one is unique. In the words of Jamie Gilardi, "they are very impressive". The artists proofs are available for US$330 (£230) plus US$10 (£8) shipping.

Lately we have been receiving inquiries about the original oil painting. All along I knew this time would eventually come, but I am really going to miss it hanging on my fireplace. I compare it to spending eight or nine months raising a baby Hyacinth Macaw and then watching its new owners walk out the door with it. It has been very inspirational for me. Every time I look at it, it makes me realise why I am doing this, which in itself, is why we have decided to put it up for auction. Over the last year it has become the Icon of the Golden Conure Survival Fund. It is world-renowned and has recently been featured on the cover of the Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery. The original is a 20" x 30" oil painting on canvas. It will be sold framed. The frame was hand-made by the artist, and as you can see, it is quite impressive itself.

We will be holding a silent auction from November 15, 2001 through December 31, 2001. Only bids in excess of US$8,000.00 (£5,505) that are postmarked prior to January 1, 2002 will be considered. Bids may be sent to our USA or UK offices by mail, fax or email. The appropriate addresses can be found on page 19 of this issue.

Please send silent bids before 31st December 2001

Psitta news

Quality of life in a pet store

By MONICA ENGEBRETSON

While visiting a Petco in Vacaville a few months ago I decided to satisfy my curiosity and investigate what types of birds they were selling and how the birds were housed. In this particular store the birds are kept in a separate 'bird room' and are held in rather barren cages under florescent lights. Many smaller parrots, such as pionus and conures had only a single small toy in their cages and most parrots were housed individually so they begged for attention when customers came in. That is except for one small conure who lay at the bottom of his cage with eyes half closed, beak open, feathers ruffled and one leg splayed out to the side. I took a closer look and seeing no movement, I called to the bird, 'hey sweetie, are you O.K.?' No response. I immediately went to the checkout counter and told the first employee I saw that I thought there was a problem with one of their birds. She promptly came to investigate, tapped on the bars of the cage and called 'hey buddy,' but to no avail. 'Oh no,' she exclaimed and left to get the store's bird caretaker. When the caretaker arrived and saw the bird in question she sighed, 'oh him again, he does this all the time.' To my surprise the moment she approached the cage the little conure perked right up and stood expectantly at the cage door. His little act paid off as he was allowed to leave the cage with the caretaker and ride around the store on her shoulder for a while. This incident speaks both to the intelligence of these birds as well as the pitiful lives they are forced to lead when displayed and sold like mere merchandise in pet stores.

Good news from Komodo

Classified as a critically endangered species, the Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea sulphurea*) has suffered massive declines in recent years due to trapping for trade. It was formerly common throughout the Indonesian islands, from Bali to Timor. It is now extinct on many islands and approaching extinction on most others. The most significant populations are on Komodo, Sulawesi, Buton and Moyo.

Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (C.s. parvula), female. Photo: Rosemary Low

Red-fronted Kakariki in New Zealand. Photo: Rosemary Low

A report in the September 2001 issue of *World Birdwatch* (Birdlife International) brings good news as the result of a survey in the World Heritage Komodo National Park. An estimated 600 Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*C.s. parvula*) were found there, making this the largest known population of any sub-species outside of Sumba, where the Citron-crest (*C.s.citrinocristata*) occurs. On Komodo one flock of 136 cockatoos was seen.

Aviculturists do not usually have the opportunity to work with critically endangered parrot species. (The definition of critically endangered is that the species has a 80% chance of becoming extinct within the next ten years or within three generations.) Sadly, breeders have totally wasted their opportunities with the Lesser and Citron-crested Cockatoos. Almost all captive-hatched young are hand-reared for the pet trade. This happens despite the fact that it is well known that hand-reared male white cockatoos are usually a useless proposition for breeding purposes and worse still are often serial killers of females.

So, cockatoo breeders who like to think that they are conservationists, will ensure that they allow a number of their young birds to be parent-reared as potential members of future breeding pairs.

Pacific island Cyanoramphus Parakeets

DNA analysis is increasingly throwing light on parrot taxonomy and systematics. The Red-fronted group of 'Kakarikis', the distinctive green parakeets including the well known nominate race from New Zealand, has a number of island forms. These were previously thought to be sub-species. DNA research has recently shown that the Norfolk Island Parakeet, previously *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae cookii*, and the New Caledonian Red-fronted Parakeet, previously *C.n.saisetti*, are highly divergent from all other members of the genus. They should be treated as separate species (*Emu*, volume 101).

The Norfolk Island species is now confined to the National Park of that name and to adjacent forested areas and orchards. In 1996 the population was as low as 13 pairs in the wild. It was estimated at 100 breeding birds in 2000 and was rapidly increasing (*Threatened Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International). Rat-proof nesting hollows are being installed in the park for this parakeet and on adjacent private land. All known nest sites are protected and monitored. There is an *in-situ* captive breeding programme that produced 58 young between 1985 and 1999.

Response to Tom Marshall letter *(PS 13.3)*

Thank you, Rosemary, for publishing both the article by Tom Marshall and your reply. I agree wholeheartedly with the reply. I would hope that the AFA would continue to support the WPT, however this may not be possible. I hope that the WPT will not compromise its position in support of parrot welfare in the home in order to keep the AFA in its folds.

Ruth Mannich.

The World Parrot Trust is committed to improving the welfare of parrots kept in the home and, of course, to the conservation of parrots in the wild. The views of other organisations which do not share these commitments, do not influence us in any way.

Rosemary Low.

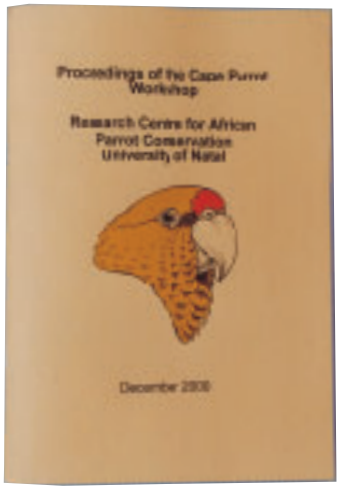
First breeding of introduced macaws in Trinidad

By ROSEMARY LOW

The story of the release of the Blue and Yellow macaws from Guyana into Trinidad's Nariva swamp was related in the August issue of *PsittaScene*. This can now be considered as a real success story. In October two pairs were flying with newly fledged young, one with each pair. This development was reported to Bernadette Plair by Bim Pampaul, one of the 'macaw guardians'. He said "The young macaws looked vibrant and kept up well in flight with the parents". Everyone concerned with the project is delighted.

Bernadette Plair has received US$5,000 in funding from Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden to assist with paying stipends and to organise workshops for the communities that help to monitor the macaws. In addition, she has received a grant of $5,000 from the Scott Neotropical Fund of Cleveland Zoological Society. It will be used to study availability and use of nesting sites for macaws in the Nariva swamp.

Proceedings of the Cape Parrot Workshop



Published by the Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation, University of Natal

The Cape Parrot is South Africa's only endemic parrot. It is also the most endangered. Fieldwork commenced nearly a decade ago. Many of the resulting conclusions are published in *Proceedings of the Cape Parrot Workshop*. This meeting was held in December 2000 at the University of Natal and has previously been referred to in *PsittaScene*.

In the opening paper Prof. Mike Perrin mentions that there are an estimated 500 Cape Parrots in the wild today. They mature late and recruit few chicks in a lifetime, thus their capacity to recover from disaster (such as loss of their habitat, yellowwood forest, which has been reduced and fragmented) is questionable.

David Johnson contributes a paper on upgrading this species to Appendix I of CITES. Mike Perrin discusses the evidence that the Cape Parrot is a separate species from *suahelicus* (now called the Grey-headed Parrot) and from *fuscicollis*, now called the Brown-necked Parrot, and the implications that this has for its survival.

Distribution and abundance of the Cape Parrot is the subject of the paper by Colleen Downs. She mentions shortage of food, leading the parrots to congregate in areas outside the forest, such as plantations of fruit and pecan nuts. A table lists fruiting forest species which are utilised.

Craig Symes writes about breeding biology and describes some nest sites. Lack of these might be one of the factors limiting breeding success.

The second half of this 47 page booklet covers avicultural aspects, including Psittacine beak and feather disease, which has had disastrous consequences for the captive population in South Africa.

The Proceedings are dedicated to the memory of the late Olaf Wirminghaus who sadly died before completing his study of this species.

Hyacinth Macaws. *Photo: Mark Stafford*

Parrot Society of Los Angeles funds Hyacinths ... Again!

After speaking to the PSLA in late October, the Society handed Jamie another check for US$4,500 for the Hyacinth Fund! This generous donation will complete the funding for a new generator and well, which will provide much needed power and water to the field site. You'll recall that two of the founders of the PSLA (www.parrotsocietyoflosangeles.org), Marie and Mark Stafford, contributed this same impressive amount a few months back, so the PSLA has now donated a total of $9000 to the Hyacinth Fund.

The Gabriel Foundation holds its 3rd annual symposium in San Diego, California

Following on the great success of their first two symposia, the Gabriel Foundation (thegabrielfoundation.org) will be holding its third meeting in California from the 7th-10th February 2002; please see their website for additional details. A great collection of speakers and panelists will again be assembled and we encourage all WPT members who can possibly make it to attend this event. The World Parrot Trust will be well represented as we were last year in Tampa with several keynote speakers. As we did last time, the WPT-USA will be holding a World Parrot Trust meeting for members only just before the Gabriel event. We have currently scheduled this event for 3:30-5:30 PM on the 7th of February - beverages, snacks, and a lively discussion with WPT staff and members will be on tap ... see you there!

Request for Feedback

By DR JIM GROOMBRIDGE, Project Coordinator, Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project, 2465 Olinda Road, Makawo, HI 96768, USA

I am currently working on a publication of a cytochrome-b phylogeny of the *Psittacula* parakeets, which deals with the evolutionary origin of the rare Mauritius Parakeet. This work was part of my PhD which dealt with the rare avifauna of Mauritius, during which time I worked for the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation.

I am now looking to set up some further additional work on the *Psittacula* parakeet phylogenetics, and I would like to obtain samples of all the *Psittacula* species and subspecies. The *Psittacula* genus is a good one to study extinction rates, because it includes continental species, island species, extinct species and recovering species, as well as non-endangered island species. I am aiming to sequence DNA from the two extinct museum species of the Seychelles and Rodrigues and add these on to the phylogeny, and study the evolution of the whole genus by looking at morphometric characters across the different phylogenetic clades, thereby revealing patterns of extinction and evolutionary processes. *Psittacula* species such as the Longtailed and Moustached parakeets have many different subspecies from different geographical locations. I realise that some of the subspecies will be difficult to get hold of.

I was wondering if anyone could suggest any good contacts/collectors/suppliers (in/out of UK) that deal with *Psittacula* parakeets who I might be able to obtain blood samples from. Fresh (i.e. not museum) samples will be much easier to obtain DNA from. So. I am aiming to accumulate about 10-15 unrelated samples of each species and if possible, subspecies as well. I have one or two samples from the majority of species already, but to accomplish what I want to do, I need to extend sample sizes and fill in the taxonomic gaps.

Any help/advice/suggestions you may have would be great regarding contacts that may have large/small/diverse *Psittacula* collections and may be able to provide fresh (feather or -preferably- blood) samples would be much appreciated.

kindest regards, Jim.

Request for Feedback

By ALLEN FRIIS, 3 Nichols Street, Lorn, NSW 2320, Australia

I have recently joined the World Parrot Trust and had my first magazine delivered. After reading it, I wished I had joined a long time ago. I am concerned that so many of our wonderful parrots and cockatoos are endangered, mainly through man's intervention.

I would like to ask if you have any information on a book I purchased recently for $3. It is called The Natural History of Cage Birds, written by J. M. Beechstein MD and published in 1899. This is the third edition. Can anyone tell me where the first edition was published, or anything about the author?

WPT Members List - Please join

Since we have a very impressive collection of researchers, aviculturists, educators, and all around committed parrot owners among our ranks, we thought it might be helpful to have a venue for:

- Asking and answering questions about parrots, parrot care, and parrot conservation.
- Updating members on the latest news from the field, faster and with greater depth than in *PsittaScene*.
- Providing information on upcoming meetings and events that might be of interest to members.

Signing up is easy. Just send a message to **wptmembers@worldparrottrust.org** along with your name and member number (that's on your mailing label) and we'll send you a welcome letter with the details on how the whole thing works. Please give it a whirl, and we'll look forward to seeing you there!

WPWA - We Welcome Your Support

World Parrot Welfare Alliance - we want to be inclusive. If you care about parrots and want to help, we welcome your input and suggestions - whether you are involved with a large, incorporated sanctuary; a small, informal "Mom and Pop" shelter; a parrot breeder, or are "just" a parrot lover not directly involved in parrot welfare.

WPWA was created to bring together people in all countries who are concerned about the current crisis in the welfare of captive parrots, and to seek solutions. Our objectives are -- in brief--to fight for the well-being of all parrots and against abusive predatory practices.

Please Contact: Stewart Metz, M.D. ,
Chairperson (Steering Committee),
Email parrotdoc@msn.com, e-Fax 208-445-0898,
Web **www.worldparrottrust.org/WPWA/wpwahome.html**

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

A Campaign of the World Parrot Trust

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 this 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** or complete the tear off section below and return to WPT UK and let your voice be heard.

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

Petition Signature Total so far: 980

I support the proposal to ban the importation of wild-caught birds into the European Union

First Name*.....

Last Name* .....

Street Address .....

City .....

State/County/Province .....

Zip/Postcode .....

Country* .....

Age .....

Email .....

Principal Interest*

- ☐ Aviculturist
- ☐ Bird Collector
- ☐ Environmentalist
- ☐ Animal Welfare Advocate
- ☐ Animal Rights Advocate
- ☐ Conservation Biologist
- ☐ Biologist / Scientific Researcher
- ☐ Behaviourist
- ☐ Birdwatcher / Birder
- ☐ Other (please specify) .....

Comments .....

.....

.....

*An asterisk * denotes fields that are required*

Please tear off and return to: WPT, Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall, TR27 4HB, UK.
If you would like additional copies of this or the actual Proposal to Ban the Importation of Wild-caught Birds into the European Union (PS Vol 13 No 3) then please do not hesitate to contact me on Tel: 01736 751026

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*

A note from the Director

As I've become familiar with all the Trust's activities over the past year, without question the most impressive feature of the World Parrot Trust is the commitment and dedication of the huge number of people who volunteer their time, energy, and money to help us save the parrots. It is a pleasure to spend much of my workday communicating with all these people from around the world who help with our projects, run the Trust branches, represent the Trust at parrot meetings, and in some cases help manage the species funds that we've set up for many of the WPT-12. Even our PsittaScene Editor, Rosemary Low, generously donates her time on each issue to bring us all informative and beautifully illustrated updates on the Trust's activities. It is the work of these committed volunteers that creates the foundation of the World Parrot Trust, and I just want to underscore what these efforts mean to us, and ultimately to the parrots.

In a category all it's own, is the special support we receive from Paradise Park in Cornwall, UK. Since spawning the World Parrot Trust 12 years ago, Paradise Park has been contributing office space and all the expensive goodies that fill the modern office: phones, faxes, colour copiers, you name it, we use it. But more important still has been the never-ending help of the Park staff on every aspect of the Trust's work. Whether that is the contributions of our founders Mike and Audrey Reynolds with their enduring support of the Trust everywhere we work, David Woolcock who pursues every opportunity to link the Paradise Park operation to our conservation work, or Nick Reynolds and Alison Hales who have now joined Mike, Audrey, and David as Trustees of WPT, and manage to find time in their days (and travel schedule!) to help the Trust save parrots worldwide.

Thank you one and all!

Jamie Gilardi

WPT NATIONAL CONTACTS

United Kingdom
Karen Whitley, Administrator,
Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HB
Tel: (44) 01736 751026 Fax: (44) 01736 751028
Email: uk@worldparrottrust.org
Chairman: reynolds@worldparrottrust.org

Africa
V. Dennison, PO Box 1758, Link Hills, Natal 3652, S. Africa
Tel: (27) 31 763 4054 Fax: (27) 31 763 3811
Email: africa@worldparrottrust.org

Asia
Catherine Carlton, Hong Kong
Tel: (1) 415 430 2160 ext 6445 Email: asia@worldparrottrust.org

Australia
Mike Owen, 7 Monteray St., Mooloolaba, Queensland 4557.
Tel: (61) 7 54780454 Email: australia@worldparrottrust.org

Benelux
Peter de Vries (Membership Sec.), Jagershof 91,
7064 DG Silvolde, Netherlands
Tel: (31) 315327418 Email:benelux@worldparrottrust.org
Belgium enquiries: Romain Bejstrup (32) 32526773
Netherlands enquiries: Ruud Vonk (31) 168472715

Canada
Sandra Metzger, PO Box 29, Mount Hope, Ontario, L0R 1W0
Tel: (1) 519 823 8941 Fax: (1) 519823 8941
Email: canada@worldparrottrust.org

Denmark (Scandinavia)
Representative needed –
Call WPT-UK

France
J. & G. Prin, 55 Rue de la Fassiere, 45140, Ingre.
Tel: (33) 2 38 43 62 87 Fax: (33) 2 38 43 97 18
Olivier Arnoult, 16 Chemin du Peyronnet, 06500 Menton, France.
Mobile: 33 62 026 1957 Email: o.arnoult@e-media-corp.com

Germany
Representative needed –
Call WPT-UK

Italy
Cristiana Senni, Email: italy@worldparrottrust.org
Freddi Virili, via Matarus 10, 33045 Nimis, Udine

Spain
Ana Matesanz and Andrés Marin,
C/Cambados No1, 2°Dcha, 28925 Alcorcon (Madrid), Spain
Tel: (34) 91 6425130 Email: spain@worldparrottrust.org

Switzerland
Lars Lepperhoff, Lutschenstrasse 15, 3063 Ittigen
Tel: (41) 31 922 3902

USA
Joanna Eckles, PO Box 353, Stillwater, MN 55082
Tel: (1) 651 275 1877 Fax: (1) 651 275 1891
Email: usa@worldparrottrust.org
Director: gilardi@worldparrottrust.org

WPT Web Sites:
Central: http://www.worldparrottrust.org
Canada: http://www.canadianparrottrust.org
Italy: http://www.worldparrottrust.org/italy
Denmark: http://www.image.dk/fpewpt

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (please tick)

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- ☐ Single membership £20 / US$30
- ☐ Joint membership £27 / US$40
- ☐ Club membership £100 / US$150
- ☐ Fellow (Life Member) £300 / US$500
- ☐ Conservation membership (Life Member) £1,000 / US$1,500
- ☐ Additional donation of .....

(or equivalent exchange currency, credit card payments by Visa/Mastercard only)

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Signature .....

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Parrots in the Wild

Psitta scene

Red-throated Lorikeet

Charmosyna amabilis

As a bird that has been seen only a few times in the last hundred years, and with no live birds in captivity, we thought for a time that the Red-throated Lorikeet might well have never been photographed, period. Then recently, Dr. Kirsty Swinnerton ran into a striking photograph of this bird on the internet of all places, shot by a researcher by the name of Dr. William Beckon. Not only was he kind enough to share this image for readers of the *PsittaScene*, but the shot is actually of a wild bird, so we are pleased to highlight it on our Parrots in the Wild series. Dr. Swinnerton incidentally just left for the field launching the first field study of these Fijian jewels; a project funded exclusively by the World Parrot Trust.

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