

PsittaScene



IN THIS ISSUE:

Three Rare Parrots Added
To Appendix I of CITES!



no 53

Psitta Scene

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Cover Picture By Ray Hales

The elegant Citron-crested (*Cacatua sulphura citrinocristata*) is a familiar cockatoo in aviculture - yet it is also endangered. From the Indonesian island of Sumba, it has suffered the twin threats of loss of habitat and excessive trapping for trade. Captive-breeding unfortunately centres on hand-rearing young for the pet trade, so a question mark hangs over the future of this lovely cockatoo.

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Truly stunning displays

By JAMIE GILARDI

In mid-October I had the pleasure of visiting Bolivia with a group of avid parrot enthusiasts. My goal was to get some first-hand impressions of two very threatened parrots: the Red-fronted Macaw (*Ara rubrogenys*) and the Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*). We have published very little about the Red-fronted Macaw in *PsittaScene*, a species that is globally Endangered, and lives in the foothills of the Andes in central Bolivia. I had been told that these birds were beautiful in flight, but that didn't prepare me for the truly stunning displays of colour we encountered nearly every time we saw these birds. We spent three days in their mountain home, watching them fly through the valleys, drink from the river, and eat from the trees and cornfields. Since we had several very gifted photographers on the trip, I thought it might make a stronger impression on our readers to present the trip in a collection of photos.



Mark Stafford

Below: A flock of sheep being driven across the Mizque River itself by a sprightly gentleman. Sheep and goat grazing is one of several threats to all the parrots in the region. Grazing prevents the recruitment of many species of trees on which the parrots depend for many essential resources such as food, roosting habitat, and in some cases nest sites.



JDG

Right: Late on our third afternoon, we discovered a group of birds on the ground in a large tilled field. It turned out they were looking for and eating the remains of a corn harvest. They would either eat the cobs on the ground or fly to a nearby tree, bounce around in the wind, and eat the corn there.

Above: After tracking the Red-fronts through two afternoons, we found that they were partial to one tree near a cornfield - it had very fine leaves and branches which swayed dramatically in the wind making telephoto shots like this one very difficult.



JDG.

Above: One of the many herds of cows, goats, or sheep we encountered in the Red-fronted Macaw habitat - typically driven by dogs, elderly men, or children. Like the goats and sheep, cattle are the reason for much of the habitat conversion in these valleys which helps drive the parrots to crops like peanuts and corn for food.



Bill King

Right: After an overnight flight from Miami and a six hour drive through the Andean foothills, we descended along a steep winding and dusty dirt road into the Mizque Valley. Our intent was to spend the remaining light checking out the blind and the general vicinity, and maybe if we were lucky, to see some birds. Other than a few conures flying over on the way, these birds - a group of more than 20 Red-fronted Macaws - were the first parrots that we saw. It proved to be a highly impressive introduction to the species, as they bounced around on the stiff afternoon breeze, vocalizing and socializing, then gathering and flying off down the valley and out of sight.

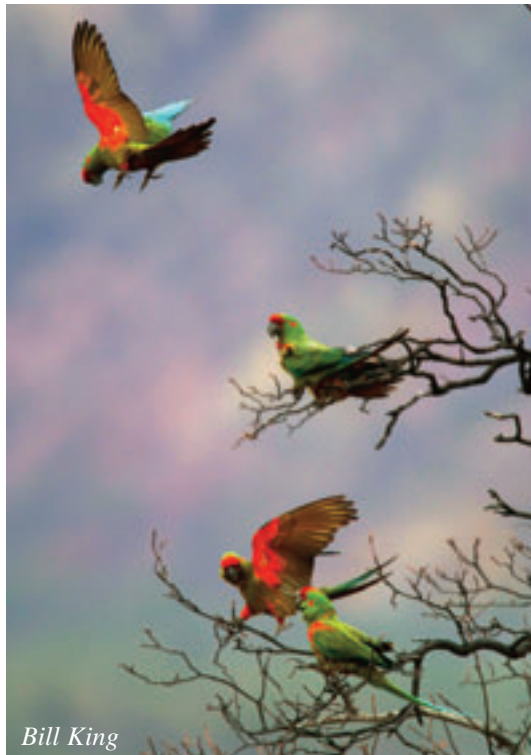
Below: The Red-fronted Macaw lives only in three major river valleys in central Bolivia, where steep dry canyon walls descend into lush river valleys like the Mizque River valley pictured here.



Mark Stafford



JDG



Bill King

Right: As part of a continuing series of bird-phones, the town of Santa Cruz has a collection of these beautifully sculpted and painted birds. These included several different species like this toucan, various waterbirds, and a Blue and Gold Macaw.



JDG



Mark Stafford



Bill King

On our second afternoon in the Mizque, we searched the valley looking for the birds and found many of them at one end of the valley. They were mostly perched in a bare tree at the top of a ridge, the strong wind making it easy for them to take flight and soar around on the updrafts in an impressive display of green and orange.



Mark Stafford



Bill King

Reintroduction of captive-bred Gold-capped Conures in Bahia



Pedro Lima.

By PEDRO CERQUEIRA LIMA and SIDNEI SAMPAIO, BioBrasil Foundation translated by TOA KYLE

The Gold-capped Conure (*Aratinga auricapilla*) is classified as vulnerable by IUCN/Birdlife International and is listed under Appendix II by CITES. Given that little is known of the species in the wild, there is an urgent need for knowledge of the geographical distribution, population size and threats to its survival. In the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia, *A. a. auricapilla*, a subspecies endemic to the state, is distributed along the entire length of the coast. Flocks in the southern range of this subspecies tend to be smaller than those found in the north (south; max. 8 individuals vs. north; max. 30 individuals).

This difference may be due to the presence of large coconut (*Coco nucifera*) plantations that dominate the landscape of the northern coast. Old or dead palms provide ideal nest sites for many bird species. Woodpeckers such as Lineated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*), Campo Flicker (*Colaptes campestris*), and Green-Barred Woodpecker (*C. melanochlorus*) excavate nest cavities in the trunks of palms, which when abandoned by these species, are used by Tropical Screech Owl (*Otus choliba*), Ferruginous Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*), American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Orange-winged Amazon (*Amazona amazonica*), and most importantly, threatened Gold-capped Conures.



Confiscated birds

Since 1997, the wildlife protection division of CETREL, an environmental assessment agency based in Camaçari, Bahia, has been responsible for the care and reintroduction of birds confiscated through the illegal bird trade. In 1997, the authors received 10 Gold-capped Conures, eight adults and two juveniles, from IBAMA, the environmental protection wing of the Brazilian government. The adults were presumably all chicks robbed from nests in the wild while the juveniles were hatched in captivity. After a quarantine period the birds were banded and reintroduced at the CETREL reserve, a 700 ha mosaic of *cerrado* (dry, savannah forest), *restinga* (shrubs and grasses found on sandy, acidic soils) and secondary stands of Atlantic coastal rainforest. Over 290 species of

birds have been recorded in the reserve, including potential predators of Gold-capped Conure, Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and White-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albicaudatus*).

Feed stations used

To assist the readaptation process to a natural environment, platforms and feeders were distributed in the area, offering the fruits and seeds of regional species. Although flocks in the area still visit the feeders, banded individuals have been observed as far as 5 km from the reintroduction site. Normally a seed predator of native species, it appears that Gold-capped Conures may be acting as dispersers of Dendê palm (*Elaeis guianensis*) fruits by carrying them in their beaks to distant locales where the fleshy mesocarp is eaten and intact seeds are discarded. Although Dendê palms (also known as African oil palms) are an exotic species, their fruits are an important resource for many other frugivorous species of northeastern Brazil.

In order to study the reproductive biology of Gold-capped Conure we constructed artificial nests made of PVC tubes with a diameter ranging between 14-20 cm and a length of 50-70 cm. Nests were

painted on the exterior in either green or brown. As of yet we have not determined a preference for nests based on size or colour, as all models have been repeatedly used by different flocks of birds. Gold-capped Conure that utilized the artificial nests laid between 2-4 white eggs, weighing on average 5.6 g (n=9). The shell weight composed 6% of the total weight of the egg. Eggs were incubated for around 22 days, after which chicks hatched and remained in the nest for approximately 45 days prior to fledging. Chicks were hatched with pinkish-white skin and white down. With time the beak and feet acquire a black colouration.

Flock formation

With the growth of the reintroduced population, we observed the formation of up to six flocks that varied between 5-16 birds. These flocks were composed of chicks fledged from previous nesting





seasons, that appear to assist with current nesting attempts. On numerous occasions groups of up to 10 birds entered the same nest, with the behaviour being observed most frequently at the start of the nesting season. More research is needed to verify the existence of this unique behaviour, which if true, places Gold-capped Conure alongside Golden Conure (*Guaruba guarouba*), another neotropical psittacid that is believed to practice altruistic rearing of offspring.

We estimate that the current population of the Gold-capped Conure in the environs of the CETREL reserve now stands at around 60 birds. This rapid increase may be due to the fact that the reintroduced population reproduces twice a year, in July and December. Whether or not the same adult pair reproduces twice in a given year is still

unknown. It is likely that the current population of Gold-capped Conures are direct descendants from reintroduced birds, as native Gold-capped Conure were rarely observed in the area prior to the release in 1997. As this population continues to grow and expand its foraging range, it will presumably mix with other subpopulations of the Gold-capped Conure, thus increasing the genetic integrity of the offspring of reintroduced birds. Education outreach programs implemented by CETREL are already under way in surrounding communities to ensure that birds that migrate away from the source population will not end up back in cages.

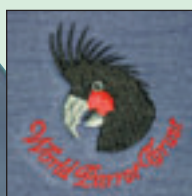
A promising reintroduction

The reintroduction of captive raised parrots

is still a fledgling enterprise whose chequered history seems to highlight more failures than success stories. Captive-bred birds are seen as possessing 'behavioural deficiencies' that impair their chances of survival in the wild. Although time will tell if the birds in our project survive in the long term, it is nonetheless encouraging to see the population grow each year, despite the absence of wild birds to serve as 'teachers'. Perhaps with certain parrot species instinct plays a larger role in survival than thought previously. It is hoped that our work with the recovery, reintroduction and study of the breeding biology of Gold-capped Conures yields important tools for the future conservation of other parrot species worldwide.



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Great Green Macaw: flagship species of Costa Rica



Olivier Chassot and Guisselle Monge Arias

Article By OLIVIER CHASSOT and GUISSELLE MONGE ARIAS

Photos by ROSEMARY LOW

Over the past 8 years, we have pursued a multi-faceted, science-based, conservation project, using the endangered Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambigua*) as the focus of a campaign to conserve a unique lowland Atlantic forest assemblage in Costa Rica.

The lowland rainforest ecosystem is distinguished by a high density of almendro (*Dipteryx panamensis*) and provides habitat for the Great Green Macaw and other endangered species. The macaws depend on the huge almendro trees for nesting and as a primary source of food. In Costa Rica, the almendro forest, and consequently the macaw, is currently restricted to the north-eastern corner of the country, between the San Juan River (the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua) and La Selva Biological Station.

The almendro tree has become the primary hard wood for flooring, truck beds, and other such specialised uses. Consequently, as the species becomes scarcer, price for the wood has increased dramatically. Unfortunately, Costa Rica's exemplary system of protected areas includes Tortuguero National Park as its only representation of this Atlantic forest. That park consists primarily of swamp forest and contains very little of the upland sites that are required by almendro; no Great Green Macaws nest in the park. In the absence of

official protection, lowland Atlantic moist forest is disappearing as a habitat in Costa Rica. As a direct consequence, the Great Green Macaw is threatened by habitat loss and is currently recognised internationally as an endangered species. (It is on CITES List 1).

The macaw's historic nesting zone in Costa Rica has been reduced in size by 90%, principally by the country's uncontrolled logging and land clearing for cattle and bananas. The macaws face other threats, including their sale as pets (chicks are sold locally for between \$150 and \$300) and hunting pressure for sport and feathers.

The breeding range of the Great Green Macaw is limited almost exclusively to Central American almendro forests in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and adjacent zones in Colombia and one isolated site near Guayaquil, Ecuador. Our radio-telemetry studies have revealed that breeding pairs of these macaws use large, non-overlapping home ranges. After the breeding season, they disperse from the

lowlands to higher elevation forests in the piedmont of Costa Rica's mountain ranges to the west, as well as to drier forests to the north in Nicaragua.

Project achievements

We have selected the Great Green Macaw as a "focal species" for identifying and publicising priorities for conservation action in the region. Our objective is to establish a nucleus of protected natural forest that is interconnected with surrounding ecosystems as required to sustain a viable population of macaws. Protecting habitat required by the Great Green Macaw will also result in the conservation of a viable population of almendro and other biodiversity that is unique to the area.

We have been pursuing a radio-telemetry-based study and have developed the techniques for capturing and radio-tagging adult macaws and then monitoring their movements through the difficult lowland rainforest habitat. We have a database on nesting ecology (nest site selection, nesting success, habitat use, overlap among breeding pairs), fledgling survival through the first year, foraging behaviour including diet, habitat use during the non-breeding season, and adult survival.

We helped initiate a regional environmental awareness programme developed around building local pride in the macaw. This has heightened awareness of the plight of the macaw and its habitat among school children and the general public. A National Great Green Macaw Commission was formed in 1996 as a result of our discovering and publicising that the macaw and the almendro tree were being eradicated from Costa Rica. This organisation is made up of 13 governmental and non-governmental organisations with the common objective of protecting the macaw and sustainably managing its habitat. One of the Commission's first accomplishments was to establish a legal decree that limits the extraction of the almendro, though even under this decree, the allowable harvest of this species is not sustainable. Thanks to



Great Green Macaw.

legal action that we had undertaken against the Ministry of Environment in 2001, harvesting of the almendro has been temporarily suspended by the Minister of Environment, until new technical studies are undergone to determine the current state of the population of this tree species and its relationship with the Great Green Macaw clearly established.

Importance of habitat

Our efforts to focus attention on this area have recently taken on added meaning because the last remaining nesting habitat for the species in Costa Rica (estimated to be less than 10% of its original range) is located in a critical juncture of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. The macaws' remaining breeding habitat is situated between Nicaragua's Indio-Maíz Biological Reserve and the large conservation complex in Costa Rica that includes La Selva, Braulio Carillo National Park, and other smaller interconnected national parks, such as Volcán Poás Poás and Juan Castro Blanco National Parks. At the local scale, the future integrity of La Selva, a small (around 1,500 hectares) lowland biological field station, depends on the maintenance of biological connectivity with the much larger Indio-Maíz Reserve. At the regional scale, the area provides ecological linkage between highland and lowland ecosystems for species that migrate seasonally between these areas. At the continental scale, this area is the last remaining connection between Nicaragua and Costa Rica of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

In 2001, the Executive Committee of the San Juan-La Selva Biological Corridor was formed. It consists of 15 organisations, including the Tropical Science Center and the Wildlife Conservation Society; they are now responsible for implementing the Corridor (246,608 ha) and its associated Maquenque National Park (30,359 ha).

The protection goals of this effort are based in large part on findings from biological research on habitat use by the Great Green Macaw.



Tambor Lagoon, home of the West Indian Manatee, within the area of the proposed Maquenque National Park.

The size and location of the proposed Maquenque National Park and surrounding biological corridor are based on scientific data. The corridor will connect key habitats. The creation of a new national park in Costa Rica's northern zone would also diversify the local economy, creating opportunities in an economically-depressed area that currently depends on limited-potential forestry and agricultural activities. This area's scenic rivers, rich biological resources, and small town hospitality are all attractions that will contribute to small-scale ecotourism. The Maquenque National Park would also protect the Great Green Macaw population of Nicaragua, which maintains genetic interactions with the Costa Rican population.

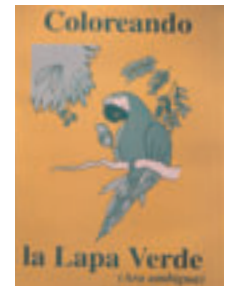
We built an alliance with Fundación del Río, a Nicaraguan NGO working in Southeast Nicaragua, along the San Juan River banks and the buffer-zone of Indio-Maíz Biological Reserve. This co-operation gave birth in 2002 to a joint campaign titled "The Great Green Macaw, Pride of the San Juan River Basin", including educational materials such as leaflets and calendars. Four workshops and field trips were organised in Indio-Maíz Biological Reserve's buffer zone, Nicaragua. They reached the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), members of the National Army's outposts along the San Juan River, local community leaders, young people, schools, NGOs, local government and researchers. A campaign to report macaws' nests in Nicaragua was launched in January 2002.

As Costa Rica and Nicaragua's population increasingly recognise native charismatic species like the Great Green Macaw, the programme will have major payoffs, in terms of biological conservation and the enhanced commitment by the Costa Rican population to conserving their exceptionally rich natural heritage.

Corridor concept and zoning

In order to consolidate habitat into an effective biological corridor, we propose a three-level classification of public and private lands within the corridor area: a core protected area (Maquenque National Park); a series of corridor nuclei, or priority areas, that could serve as stepping stones for species that depend on relatively large blocks for corridor functionality; and the basic corridor matrix, that would surround the core and nuclei areas.

This zoning is designed to protect the full complement of native species and fulfill basic corridor functions of connectivity, while maximising compatible sustainable forestry uses and benefits from environmental services.



Don't buy wild animals! Save the Great Green Macaw! sticker and a colouring book for children produced as part of the conservation education programme.

Macaw festival in May

Due to this excellent collaboration, we decided to turn the yearly small-scale Festival into the First Bilateral Macaw Festival in Boca San Carlos, on the San Juan River banks on the border with Nicaragua (the San Juan River itself). Twenty six organisations were involved. The Great Green Macaw Research and Conservation Project raised US\$8,000 with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and private donors to finance the event.

This sum allowed us to bring 125 Costa Ricans and 125 Nicaraguans to the event, and to provide them with free transportation, food and lodging. Despite the rainy weather, and slippery muddy roads, more than 500 people attended the event, most of them coming from surrounding communities. The mayor of San Carlos (Costa Rica) and the mayor of El Castillo (Nicaragua) opened the event together, symbolically planting the 'Almendro of Brotherhood'. Other activities included a beach volley tournament, a drawing contest previously organised with local schools, folk dancing, craft exhibition, music groups and play featuring macaws and almendros from both countries. The central piece of the Festival was the annual presentation of prizes for nest caretakers, with eighteen local farmers receiving awards.

Due to perseverance through the years and a continued awareness campaign in Costa Rica focused on the Great Green Macaw and conservation actions the newly elected Minister of the Environment, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, declared the establishment of Maquenque National Park one of the country's top priorities and promised to inaugurate the new park on August 26, 2004, National Parks National Day. He agreed to politically back up our initiative to reach its goals, a new state of mind compared to Minister Elizabeth Odio's last administration. We have now all the support needed on our side and will use the next four years to do whatever be possible to establish Maquenque National Park, with the help of the World Parrot Trust and other organisations.

Behaviour issues



Steve Martin

To fly or not to fly? - that is the question!

By STEVE MARTIN

It happened again, someone sent me an email asking how to teach his or her parrot to fly free outside. If I only had a nickel for ... you get the point. My standard response to this question normally involves a short, professional cautionary note couched within a biology lesson detailing the fundamentals of learning flight skill. My politically correct response does not include the questions I really want to ask like, why in the world would you want to let your parrot fly outside exposing it to all the dangers a caregiver is supposed to protect a bird from? And, have you asked your bird if it wants to be forced into this risky, great unknown? The bird's entire life has been spent indoors, protected from the dangers of the highway, pond, dog, electric wires, and countless more hazards awaiting the naïve parrot. "My bird loves to go outside" is the chorus I have heard too often from well-meaning owners who often misinterpret the flapping of the half-panicked, clipped-winged parrot gripping tightly to their fist closed securely over its feet. "He loves to exercise his wings when we go outside. If I let his wings grow in he will be able to know the joy of flight." This scene has been played a million times, and unfortunately will be played a million more.

Introduction

One of the hottest topics on the parrot list-serves these days is whether or not a parrot owner should clip the wings of their bird. One side says "it is your responsibility as a parrot owner to clip the bird's wings to protect it from injury and allow it the freedom to experience the outdoors without fear of it flying away." The other side counters that "it is cruel and unusual punishment, indeed it is abuse to clip a parrot's wings. How can you deny the bird its right to freedom?" It is amazing to me that the two camps are so far apart. I believe when two sides are so adamant about opposing views the best answers usually lie somewhere in the middle. So, I'll take this opportunity to share my views and explore this contentious subject.

To clip or not to clip

Whether or not to clip a parrot's wings depends on many factors. I believe the most important of these factors should be the health and welfare of the bird. For a true assessment of the value of flight to parrots you should start with its natural history. Why do parrots need to fly in the wild? It occurs to me that the most important reasons parrots fly in the wild is to locate and establish breeding sites and territories, locate and acquire food, access safe roost sites and, very importantly, they fly to escape predators. I am sure there are other reasons parrots fly, but these are the most important. Some people might say that parrots fly for fun. This may be true, but let's leave it for later.

Can we accept the reasons I mentioned above are the main reasons parrots fly in the wild? If so, can we also accept that these reasons are not important in captivity? Parrots have food, water, territory, safe roosts and no predators in



Red-fronted Macaws take off after drinking along the Mizque River in Bolivia - like many wild parrots, these strong fliers travel for miles at a stretch on the wing. Photo: JDG

their captive environments. So, is flying important to companion parrots? Some people believe flying is important because it helps keep birds more physically fit and healthy. I personally think this may be true. However, I suspect if someone researched the longest-lived parrots in history they would find those birds had clipped wings, or at least had limited access to flight opportunities. Some other people believe it is important for a parrot to fly because it is fun, enriching and as much a part of a parrot's nature as walking is to humans. This may be true as well.

Let's fly

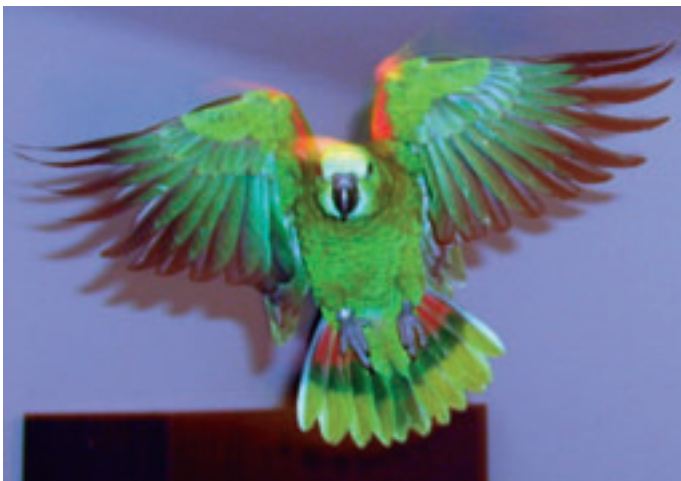
Okay, for whatever reason, let's suppose that you have decided you want your parrot to have the power of flight. The next step is to investigate whether or not your bird is capable of flight. The fact that your bird has flight feathers does not necessarily mean it is going to be a competent flyer.

Many parrot owners have let their companion parrot's clipped wings grow-in only to be disappointed when the bird did not exercise its new flight power. Parrots, like most other birds, develop their flight skills in the first few months of their lives. Nature provides motivation for a young parrot to launch itself out of the nest cavity and try its wings for the first time. Like a child learning to ride a bicycle, a young parrot will make many mistakes as it develops the skills and coordination required to become a master of the sky. A companion parrot that had its wings clipped before it learned to fly will miss out on this very important period of its life and may never develop good flight skill. When the owner allows the bird's wings to grow-in, the bird's first attempt at flight may be similar to putting a person on a bicycle for the first time in his or her life and sending them racing down a steep hill.

The techniques

For the past 26 years, I have flown many parrots outdoors in the shows we produce. The training I give these birds before they ever fly outside is far more involved than most people might think. We raise our birds in groups, or pairs, in large cages where they can fly from perch to perch (usually around 8 feet apart). We also have three large flight pens (up to 50 feet long) where we conduct two or three training sessions per day ... every day. It takes about two months of intensive training before I am comfortable flying a parrot outside. Plus, I have a great staff of professional animal trainers who play a very important role in educating these birds. They have an excellent working knowledge of Operant Conditioning and Positive Reinforcement training techniques, and they have developed insights and sensitivities that are simply not required when working with parrots that have clipped wings. One more thing to consider, what I have mentioned here is only a fraction of our training process. There are many more key elements and several more steps that we take to ensure the safety of our birds. I believe anything less would be putting the birds in jeopardy.

The flight pens I mentioned above are great alternatives for anyone who wants to allow their birds to enjoy the outdoors or express their power of flight without the risks associated with flying free outside. The size and materials used for the flight pen would depend on the budget, but the larger the cage the better for flight confident birds. I believe a flight pen should be at least eight feet wide, eight feet tall, and 16 feet long. Of course, larger is better. Strong wire mesh is the best material to use for most parrots. However I have used a strong nylon netting for some parrot flight pens with good results. It is important to note that most parrots can chew through the nylon netting so the perches should be situated in the center of the cage and not



*Flying is important because it keeps a parrot physically fit.
Photo: Jiri Holý.*

come close enough for the bird to grab hold of the netting. Also, it is best to monitor the birds anytime they are in the flight pen, and do not leave a bird in a nylon netted flight pen over night. Owls can startle a bird in a flight pen and can easily grab the parrot as it hangs on the side of the nylon netted cage. A large flight pen is very beneficial, both mentally and physically, for birds that are confident flyers. It is also a great place for young birds to learn their flight skills. However, a bird that did not learn to fly at an early age will have some trouble learning the flight skills required to use the entire facility and may just choose not to fly at all. One last point, be sure the flight pen offers shelter from the sun and easy access to food and water.

The human factor

My job not only involves training free-flight birds, I also train people. I have trained over 500 professional bird trainers to fly many species of birds in free-flight programs. I have also given countless workshops and talks to companion parrot owners. These experiences have taught me that the most important factor in free-flying (or even owning) parrots is "humans." The human factor often outweighs the animal factor when I consider free-flying birds. Not all humans are created equal. Some people have a talent for understanding birds; an empathy that allows them to sense what is going on inside that bird's mind. Still, others are so far away from even the most basic understanding of what makes a bird tick that in my opinion they should not be allowed to have birds. These are often the people who obtain a bird simply for self-serving purposes. One guy wanted me to teach him to train his bird to do tricks so he could "pick up more chicks at the beach." Unfortunately, anyone can own a parrot.

Owning a parrot is like driving a car ... anyone can do it. However, free flying a parrot outside is like driving a car in the Daytona 500. It should be reserved for only the most experienced and talented people who have the right equipment. In the case of flying parrots free outside, the equipment must begin with a good working knowledge of behaviour modification techniques that are based on positive reinforcement, and a bird that is a confident and capable flyer.

Flying birds free outside is something I can readily discourage. Flying parrots free inside is something that I choose to leave up to the individual parrot owner. However, I will offer the following thoughts. Many parrots enjoy the opportunity to use their natural flight skills. These birds are the ones that have good flight skill and confidence, the ones that can manoeuvre around corners, change direction in mid air, and make controlled landing each time they fly. These flight-confident birds are less likely to get injured than birds with lesser flight abilities, but they are not immune to accidents. Even the best flyers have drowned in toilets, crashed into exposed windows, gotten hurt landing on hot stoves, or have flown out open doors or off the shoulder of their owner who forgot they were with them. This list of lethal possibilities is probably just as long, or longer, for parrots with clipped wings. For instance, many parrots with clipped wings are stepped on by their human caregivers each year, something that rarely happens to parrots with good flight skills. Even parrots with clipped wings have flown away when taken outdoors. Clipping a parrot's wings does not guarantee that it cannot fly. Plus, a parrot with clipped wings outdoors is still vulnerable to accidents involving cars, dogs, cats, bodies of water, traumatic impact with the ground or other hard objects, etc.

Summary

The debate over whether or not to clip a parrot's wings will likely continue as long as humans keep parrots as pets. There are valid points to consider on both sides of the argument. My hope is that people will consider the health and welfare of the birds, plus their own personal abilities and living situation, when making this very important decision.

I will continue to caution people on the dangers of free-flight parrots and will avoid encouraging anyone to free fly a parrot outside through my books, lectures, or videos. For me, this is the only ethical position I can take. If I include free-flight in a book, lecture, or video it would be similar to giving instruction on sky diving without following up with personal attention. I would have to assume that the person would read the book and understand it enough to be successful. If something went wrong, I would have to share in the responsibility.

I believe most parrot owners are responsible people who want only what is best for their bird. Sometimes this means leaving the bird full-flight, and sometimes this means clipping the bird's wings. Let the choice be made with the bird's welfare in mind.



One man's vision of the Trust

Mike Reynolds, the founder of the World Parrot Trust, retired as Director at the beginning of 2001. He is still very much involved with the Trust and the decisions that are made and he now has a little time to reflect on what has been achieved. Rosemary Low put some questions to him.

You founded the World Parrot Trust about 16 years after founding Paradise Park. Was this an idea that gradually crystallised in your mind or did it arise as a sudden inspiration or in response to a particular situation?

We started Paradise Park in 1973, and we quickly found that the parrots were of special interest both to us and our visitors. Like many other people, we enlarged our collection, looking for the rarest species. We were very fortunate to be sent a pair of St. Vincent parrots by the St. Vincent government, and a year or two later my wife Audrey and I visited the island and saw the birds in the wild. This was a true revelation, and the sight and sound of them courting each other in the forest remained in my mind, then and now.

In the early 1980s I suggested to a few friends that a Trust to work for the parrots would be a good idea, but I had little support. Finally in 1988 I asked the international zoo vet Andrew Greenwood if he would be interested, and also our Paradise Park curator David Woolcock. They agreed, and in January 1989 The World Parrot Trust was formed and

registered with the Charity Commission.

I had been impressed by the excellent work of the International Crane Foundation and the World Pheasant Association, but I soon found that starting a Trust for the parrots was likely to be a more complex task. The reason was simple: money. Cranes and pheasants are wonderful creatures (we keep and breed many species at Paradise Park) but they are usually kept and admired by zoos and a very few private individuals, and do not have much monetary value. Moreover, they are not kept as pets in people's houses. The parrots have considerable commercial value, and for generations have been kept as pets all over the world; we estimate that there are now about 50 million captive parrots.

This may well be a larger number than the total of parrots left in the wild.

A huge commercial business has been built around the parrots, with an estimated \$5 billion being spent each year on birds, cages, aviaries, feeds, publications, advertising, transportation, shows, employment, veterinary costs etc. This exploitation is unique, and in much of the commercial parrot world the welfare of the birds is hardly considered. In the 33 years since I first fell under the spell of the

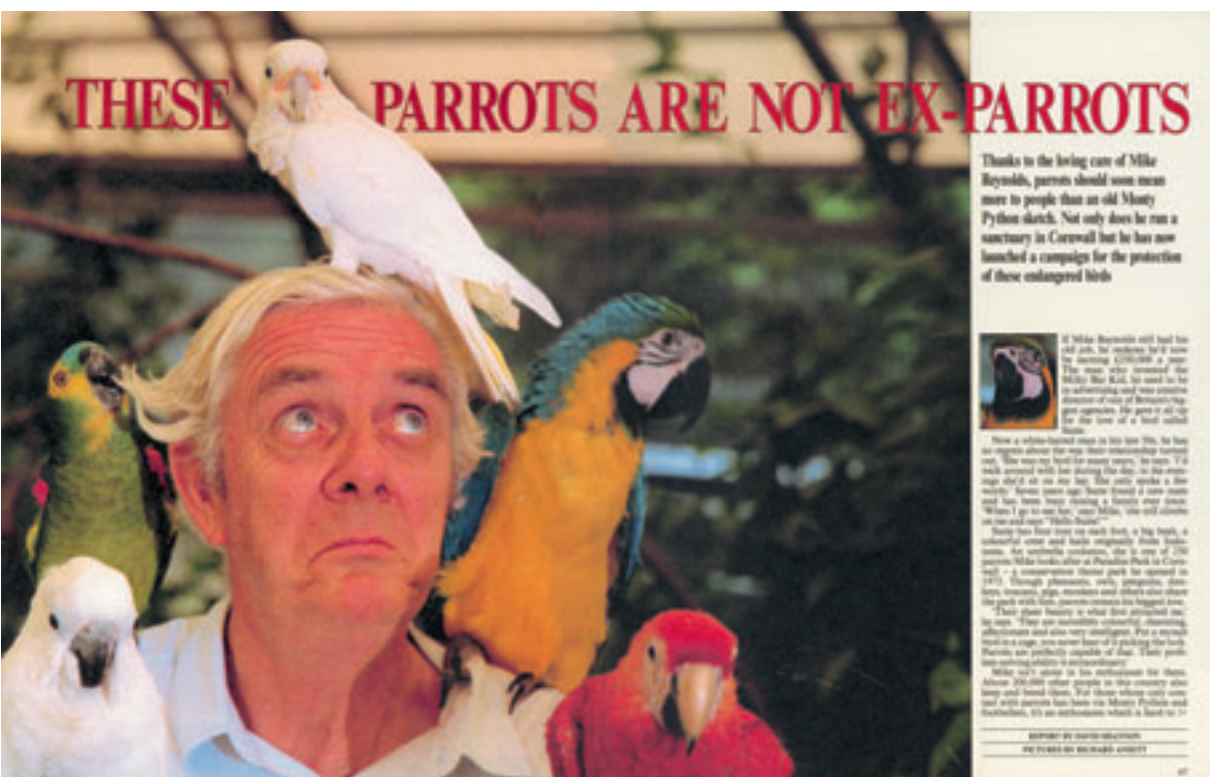
parrots I have found that the true hobbyist, enjoying his or her birds in a limited number of aviaries, breeding a few young and perhaps selling some to help with the expenses, is becoming a rarity. Instead, many parrot factories have been created around the developed world, where pairs are kept in dark, restricted spaces and induced to produce as many chicks as possible, all to be hand-reared, wing-clipped, and sent to market to be sold to ignorant people in search of a 'talking point' for their home. You may gather that I hate this over-commercialisation and lack of care and concern for individual birds.

On the credit side, I have met and admired large numbers of owners of pet or companion birds. Such people have devoted themselves to learning how best to keep their birds, and spare no effort or expense to give them the best possible living circumstances.

When you founded the Trust, how did you visualize the membership - as being predominantly pet owners or people interested in conservation - or who?

There are quite a few categories of people interested in the parrots: scientists, pet owners, hobby aviculturists, commercial aviculturists, zoos, vets, parrot business owners, publishers. In any of these categories you will find conservationists - people who are concerned about our misuse of our planet, and who will seek to preserve nature and correct excessive exploitation of our natural resources. You will also find plain straight-forward 'parrot lovers', who will do anything for the birds they may own, and also understand how important it is to be aware of the intelligence and sensitivity of these birds.

I originally thought that all parrot aviculturists would like to join our Trust, and help us in our stated aims: 'the survival



The article that launched the World Parrot Trust in 1989

Photo: Richard Ansett, The Mail on Sunday, You Magazine.

of parrot species in the wild, and the welfare of captive birds everywhere.' A few joined, together with representatives of all the categories listed above, but as time went by it became clear that commercially-minded aviculturists were not interested in our aims. Our membership now is composed largely of those who CARE about the survival of wild birds, and those who CARE about the wellbeing of individual pet parrots and have the imagination and generosity of spirit to extend their concern to all the parrots in the world.

I think it was a bold initiative because at that time anyone from the world of aviculture or zoos was viewed with some suspicion by conservationists and established organisations like BirdLife (then ICBP). How was it that the Trust managed to win the respect of major conservation organisations?

Andrew, David and I visited organisations like ICBP and RSPB, and explained our intentions. We met a certain amount of scepticism, but in time we were able to give financial support to an ICBP expedition to look for Spix's Macaw in Brazil, and help the RSPB by teaching some of their staff how to catch and handle birds in aviaries. These and other organisations came to realise that we were well-intentioned and genuine, and that with the backing of Paradise Park were able to do useful work for the parrots. It was a big step forward when the British Foreign Office funded some of our work in St. Vincent and Paraguay.

With hindsight, would you have approached any differently the ambitious task of starting the Trust?

No, we really didn't have any other options. The whole thing was begun on a shoestring, and for several years funds were very limited. Audrey and I started off the Trust with a donation of £11,000, and other funds came in very slowly. As you know, Rosemary, we started publishing 'PsittaScene' right at the beginning in 1989. This was a great decision, enabling us, with your editorship, to reach out around the parrot world.

In your opinion, what are the most significant achievements of the Trust during its 13 years of existence?

These were published in 'PsittaScene' for August 2002 where eleven aspects were highlighted from our 13 year history. I would like to pick out four key events, however: first, the series of four educational 'Parrot Buses' that we created in the UK and sent to St. Vincent, St. Lucia,

Dominica and Paraguay; second, our twelve year (and continuing) support for the recovery, carried out by Dr. Carl Jones and his team, of the Echo Parakeet on Mauritius from only 8 to over 120 birds in the wild; third, our tenacious funding and progressing of the IUCN / WPT Parrot Action Plan 1999-2004; and finally, our appointment of Dr. Jamie Gilardi as our Director in 2001. The new leadership provided by a well qualified parrot biologist and co-author of the Parrot Action Plan meant that the World Parrot Trust at last had a proper scientist in charge, instead of a well-meaning aviculturist (me).

Which aspects of your work with the Trust have given you the most satisfaction?

First, the development of our international network of associated trusts and branches. It is wonderful to find that our aims are being pursued in so many countries (see list on page 19 of 'PsittaScene').



*A recent photo of Mike and Audrey.
Photo: Alison Hales*

Second, the support we have received from so many outstanding individuals. These include our scientific committee, trustees, national representatives, committee members, donors and friends around the world.

Third, the achievement of publishing, without fail, 53 quarterly issues of 'PsittaScene'.

Is there one particular project which has given you a lot of satisfaction?

This has to be the Echo Parakeet programme on Mauritius. So far as I know, there is not another parrot conservation project that has been such a clear and meritorious success.

Your work with the Trust has taken you to a few countries overseas. Which one has been the most enjoyable?

I've been fortunate to go to the Caribbean, Paraguay, Brazil, Australia and Mauritius, and seen World Parrot Trust projects in every country. Incidentally, I've paid personally for all travel expenses, except when receiving free tickets from British Airways Assisting Conservation. I've enjoyed every country, but been daunted by the loss of habitat in Brazil and Paraguay, and for that matter, in every other country too.

How do you envisage the work of the Trust in, say, 20 years' time?

I would like to see the Trust operating with global support to preserve parrot populations and habitat, skillfully directed by outstanding conservation scientists, enthusiastically aided by a million caring parrot people, and funded to such a greatly increased extent that it has a chance of actually saving parrot species from extinction.

What is it about parrots that has caused you to devote a large part of your life to them - in a very intensive manner?

I think I respond as millions of others do, fascinated by their beauty and intelligence. On top of that, they seem to demand our help in dealing with the many assaults and indignities they suffer.

Do you have a favourite parrot species? And why?

I have three: Hyacinth Macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), Golden Conures (*Guaruba guarouba*) and Leadbeaters Cockatoos (*Cacatua leadbeateri*). The reason? All are species I longed to keep as a budding aviculturist and have since succeeded in breeding.

Is there a message you would like to give to individual members regarding how they can play their part in securing a future for the parrots?

Please give all the help you can to the World Parrot Trust. In all the world, you could not find a more committed and sincere group of people than its trustees, staff and helpers. Our best progress has resulted from a number of legacies to the Trust, that have enabled us to employ great people to carry out worthwhile tasks. Please consider a legacy to the Trust - it is without doubt the best way to say a lasting 'thankyou' to the parrots that have given you joy.



The wild parrot trade: stop it!

Article and Photos By Rosemary Low



Rosemary Low

In Europe we are not yet civilised or concerned enough to follow the example set by the USA in 1993 when the Wild Bird Conservation Act became law. It prohibited the importation of all wild-caught parrots except in certain rare circumstances. I would strongly endorse the importance of this Act and the need for similar legislation to be passed in Europe and elsewhere. At present in the UK there are double standards. In most circumstances trapping of our native birds is illegal, as is taking their eggs or even disturbing them at their nest, and can result in a prison sentence. Yet we legally import thousands of wild-caught birds from other countries. The World Parrot Trust is campaigning for a ban on the importation of wild-caught parrots into the European Union. A petition has been signed by more than 16,000 individuals in 83 countries. We ask you to sign this petition if you have not already done so and to persuade at least three other people to do so.

The trade in wild-caught parrots is cruel, wasteful and unnecessary. The arguments in favour of continued trade, often heard in Europe, are all invalid and based on misconceptions. They include the following.

“New blood” is needed: false

Many breeders state that “new blood” is necessary to maintain the rarer species in aviculture. I maintain that past history shows that enormous numbers of certain species have not resulted in them being established, simply because they are not “commercial”. One example is that of the Orange-flanked or Grey-cheeked Parakeet (*Brotogeris pyrrhopterus*) from western Ecuador and extreme northern Peru. It was heavily exploited during the 1980s before which it was abundant in the wild in its limited area of distribution. Then from 1983 to 1988 at least 60,000 birds were exported. Most of these had been taken from nests and hand-reared. They were very popular as pets in the USA. Despite the tens of thousands exported, it is now a rare bird in aviculture, with probably fewer than ten breeders in the USA. Last year I made extensive enquiries and advertised in several avicultural magazines in the UK but I was unable to locate a single bird. If a species cannot be established in aviculture when 60,000 were exported during a five-year period, the argument that trade in wild-caught parrots should continue to



Orange-flanked (Grey-cheeked) Parakeet: tens of thousands of nestlings were exported.

provide unrelated birds for breeders, is not very convincing. The total population of the Grey-cheeked Parakeet, which is now classified as Endangered, is estimated to be only about 15,000 birds - just one quarter of the number exported in that five year period. In this case trade had a lasting impact on its numbers and, due to deforestation, there is now no possibility for recovery.

Trapping supports local communities: false

Some purchasers of wild-caught parrots purport to believe that they are contributing towards the financial support of local communities. In fact catching parrots makes very small sums of money for trappers or anyone else in the country of origin who needs the income. In Mexico, Katherine Renton is studying the Lilac-crowned or Finsch's Amazon (*Amazona finschi*) where the trade in the native Amazons is highly detrimental. See her article on page 14 of this issue, where she lays to rest the myth that it is the poor people who benefit from trapping parrots.

Most of the profits of the parrot trade go to already wealthy middlemen in the importing countries.

Breeding contributes towards conservation: false

Some breeders claim that by breeding the rarer parrots, which are still being imported from the wild, often illegally, they are contributing to their conservation. In the UK there was an unfortunate case of the breeder who obtained wild-caught Lear's Macaws (*Anodorhynchus leari*), a critically endangered species, and was imprisoned as a result. He claimed that his sole aim was the conservation of the species. One weekly avicultural magazine received many letters in his support, with the opinion that his sentence was harsh and unjustified. They were apparently unable to

comprehend that his action, and the actions of others who buy such birds, are the reason why the species is critically endangered.

A major reason why private breeders cannot participate in breeding programmes for endangered species is the disease-risk. In the past couple of decades viral diseases have had a very serious impact on parrot collections worldwide. These diseases are the result of mass export of wild-caught parrots, where birds are held in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions. Wild parrots might have lived with these viruses for eons but in times of stress they surface. Also, when birds from different continents are kept in the same premises, they encounter viruses to which they have no resistance, with fatal consequences. I refer to outbreaks of psittacine beak and feather disease (PBF), proventricular dilatation disease, Pacheco's disease and others. Many of them surface in breeders' aviaries, no matter how good the conditions are. The high incidence of disease in collections where various parrot species are kept means that releasing captive-bred birds poses an unacceptable risk to the wild population. This is why breeding and release programs of endangered species must be *in situ*, such as those for the Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*) on Mauritius and the Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*) on Puerto Rico.

Such breeders also claim that it is important to have captive stocks of the rarer species for restocking wild habitats when a species becomes extinct. The fact that hand-reared birds are usually poor candidates for release is another reason why private breeders are unlikely to participate in the conservation of endangered parrots. Although many are bred in captivity, most are not parent-reared, in order to maximise production (and income).

Pairs can nest again: false

Some people in favour of continuing trade

WILD PARROT TRADE: STOP IT!

claim that if the young of a pair are removed from the nest, the pair will nest again. Data collected between 1979 and 1999 from investigators conducting ecological or behavioural studies of neotropical parrots showed that overall the poaching rate was 30% (Wright and Toft, 2001). If a nest failed, nesting by pairs (various species) in the same year was extremely rare: only 1% of pairs nested again.

Other reasons to outlaw trade in wild-caught parrots are as follows:

Cruelty

Trapping methods are inhumane. Those in doubt should watch the World Parrot Trust's video *Where the wild Greys are*. It demonstrates the appalling treatment and rough handling of Greys being trapped in nets in the Congo, including many adult birds. This is the worst and most wasteful kind of trade because many adult parrots will die of stress after enduring days or weeks or months of intense fear. Trapping of adult birds should not be permitted because:

- a Many can never adapt to a life in captivity. They do not make suitable pets and are soon unwanted.
- b The breeding population is decimated and
- c Trapping deprives some mated birds of their partners and probably results in chicks starving to death in the nest.

The trade in chicks removed from nests is equally cruel. One dealer in the Argentine Chaco stated that the average number of young Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva*) that passed through his hands in one year was 7,000 and that in 1973 he fed 13,500 chicks. As many as 300 chicks could be fed in an hour. An infamous piece of film, shown on television many times, shows chicks of this species being fed and over-fed. Those which were over-fed died, probably almost instantly, and were thrown aside.

Trapping eliminates populations

Trade alone, or trade in conjunction with habitat destruction (as in the case of Spix's Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*)) can and have, resulted in extinction. A number of formerly common parrot species familiar to us all have suffered catastrophic declines due to trapping. In Venezuela, for example, the Yellow-fronted Amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*) is the most preferred of all parrot species due to its linguistic skills.

Desenne and Strahl (1991) thought that it might "reach threatened status within Venezuela due to the huge numbers of this species that are captured for the national and international trade".

The Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea sulphurea*) is one of the 15 Critically Endangered Parrots of the world - solely due to over-trapping for the pet trade. Numbers of parrots trapped are enormous. A study in the late 1990s of the international trade in parrots listed by CITES found that 1.2 million parrots were exported between 1991 and 1996, with the majority of those birds coming from the neotropics. These figures are thought to be a gross underestimate of the actual numbers of birds taken from the wild because they exclude pre-export mortality, which has been estimated to reach 60% of all birds trapped or taken from nests.

International trade figures do not account for the substantial illegal international trade and the equally serious domestic trade. When these factors are taken into consideration, the number of chicks taken from the wild in the neotropics was estimated at 400,000 to 800,000 per year from 1982 to 1986.

Destroys nest sites

Lack of nesting sites is depressing populations in many areas, often as a result of selective felling of the larger trees. However, researchers in the Argentine Chaco who studied the impact of trade on the Blue-fronted Amazon there, estimated that approximately 100,000 of its nest trees were destroyed or damaged between 1981 and 1989 by poachers when they stole chicks from nests (Bucher et al, 1992).

CITES

The Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has had some impact - but not enough - on controlling export. This is the only global treaty designed to protect endangered fauna and flora from excessive



Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo: almost trapped to extinction.

trade. According to the degree of threat which dealing in wild-caught birds would impose on a species, it is listed under three Appendices. On Appendix I are the species threatened with extinction on which trade would have a catastrophic effect. On Appendix II are species that could be threatened if export was not regulated effectively. Trade in these species is permitted if it is sustainable and the specimens were obtained legally.

Also on Appendix II are the offspring - but not those of the first generation - of species on Appendix I. The treaty was signed in March 1973. On June 6 1981 nearly all members of the parrot family, excluding those listed in Appendix I, were placed on Appendix II. At the time of writing, 136 countries were signatories to CITES. Unfortunately, some countries that trade in enormous numbers of wild-caught parrots are not signatories. Parrots on Appendix II continue to be trapped and exported although no research has been carried out on most species and it is not known whether trade is sustainable. Annual quotas, such as those established by the governments of Guyana and Argentina, were apparently not based on research and might have been, or still are, in excess of sustainable trade levels.

Exporting countries

Over the past few decades, there have been changes in the main countries exporting neotropical parrots. Brazil banned the export of its fauna in 1967, Costa Rica and Venezuela did likewise in 1970 and Colombia in 1973. In the early 1970s the major exporters were Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Paraguay. By the early 1980s, Belize, Ecuador, Mexico and Colombia had ceased to export wild-caught birds and the major exporters were Argentina, Bolivia, Guyana, Honduras and Peru. In 1984 Bolivia banned the export of wildlife and Argentina was the single largest exporter of neotropical parrots for several years. Guatemala banned export in 1986 and Honduras in 1990. By the 1990s most of the parrots exported into Europe came from



The Yellow-fronted Amazon could reach threatened status in Venezuela, due to the huge numbers captured.

WILD PARROT TRADE: STOP IT!

Guyana and Nicaragua. It should be noted that most of these countries retained a large internal trade in wild-caught parrots and the illegal export and smuggling of many species continued as before. Many parrots cross borders illegally.

Note that two Mexican species appear on this list. One of them is the endemic Lilac-crowned or Finsch's (*Amazona finschi*), the subject of a conservation programme. After nearly 20 years of prohibiting export of its fauna, Mexico changed the regulations. This is being strongly challenged by conservationists.

Species with high mortality

Some species are exported despite the fact that their survival is almost nil. It is well-known that the Long-tailed Parakeet (*Psittacula longicauda*) seldom survives more than a few months, at most, in captivity. Breeding successes have been very few and have never been sustained over the long term. In the year 2000, 648 were exported from Malaysia. It is unlikely that any are alive today. Many do not even survive the journey, partly because they are badly packed, to save transport costs.

Another species from Malaysia with an extremely low survival rate is the little Blue-rumped Parrot (*Psittinus cyanurus*). It is classified as Near-threatened (close to qualifying as Vulnerable, which means it faces a high risk of extinction in the medium-term future.) Survival is also low among Blue-crowned Hanging Parrots (*Loriculus galgulus*) exported from Malaysia, although a small number of birds



Nicaragua is still exporting the Yellow-naped Amazon. Its survival is threatened by trapping.

are bred in captivity. Clearly, the export trade is solely aimed at making money with absolutely no consideration for the birds involved. While this should not surprise anyone, trade in species with an exceedingly high mortality should be outlawed. Unfortunately, it is likely to be many years (if ever) before ethics play any part in the export trade.

Trade in Indonesia

In July this year the Indonesian organisation KSBK (Animal Conservation for Life) issued a report on the parrot trade in Indonesia. In the province of North Maluku, for example, 15,000 parrots are trapped annually. There is no limit to the numbers of some species (such as the Umbrella Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*)) that can be trapped. Even in the case of species with zero export quotas, the local conservancy unit (SBKSDA) issues many trapping permits. The birds are sent to Jakarta and Bali. In Java, many of these parrots are sold in markets.

The National Army of Indonesia (TNI) is involved in this trade. Soldiers returning from duty bring hundreds of parrots back in warships. Species include Chattering Lorries (*Lorius garrulus*), Violet-necked Lorries (*Eos squamata*) and Umbrella Cockatoos.

From January to March 2002 KSBK, supported by the RSPCA, carried out an investigation into parrot trade in five markets in Java. The most traded species was the Black-capped Lory (*Lorius lory*). Other *Lorius* lorries, *Eos* lorries, Eclectus (*Eclectus roratus*), Green-winged King Parrots (*Alisterus chloropterus*) and *Tanygnathus* parrots were also heavily traded. Dealers in Jakarta and Bali ship to Pakistan, Qatar, Taiwan, Italy and Spain. Most of these birds are erroneously reported as captive-bred. Of the species trapped, 47% are "protected" by law. Trade has resulted in the local extinction of Lesser Sulphur-crested and Moluccan Cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*), Red and Blue Lorries (*Eos histrio*), Purple-naped

| PARROTS EXPORTED | | 2000 | 2001 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| AFRICA | | | |
| Senegal Parrot: | five states | 39,541 | seven states 14,432 |
| Grey Parrot: | nine states | 34,282 | nine states 23,116 |
| Timneh Grey Parrots: | four states | 6,332 | three states *2,660 |
| Ringneck Parakeets: | Africa and Pakistan | 27,675 | *11,478 |
| SOUTH AMERICA | | | |
| Monk Parrot (Quaker Parakeet): | | | |
| | Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay | 12,923 | 3,381 |
| Lesser Patagonian Conure: | Argentina | 10,275 | 4,120 |
| Orange-winged Amazon: | Guyana | 6,844 | 6,997 |
| | Suriname | 3,411 | 2,196 |
| | Total: | 10,255 | 9,193 |
| Red-lored Amazon: | Nicaragua | 2,262 | * |
| Mealy Amazon: | Guyana | 753 | 752 |
| | Mexico | 0 | 80 |
| | Nicaragua | 553 | * |
| | Suriname | 352 | 256 |
| | Total: | 1,658 | 1,088* |
| Blue-fronted Amazon: | Argentina | 1,678 | 1,252 |
| Yellow-fronted Amazon: | Guyana | 892 | 762 |
| | Suriname | 483 | 414 |
| | Total: | 1,375 | 1,176 |
| White-fronted Amazon: | Nicaragua | 1,297 | 8 |
| | Mexico | 0 | 60 |
| Yellow-naped Amazon: | Nicaragua | 673 | * |
| Finsch's Amazon: | Mexico | 73 | 355 |
| Yellow-lored Amazon: | Mexico | 42 | 48 |

* Totals incomplete at time of going to press

Book Review

Lories (*Lorius domicella*) and Chattering Lories (*Lorius garrulus*).

Our member Stewart Metz, M.D., has created the Stop Smuggling of Indonesian Birds Petition to Indonesia's President Megawati Soekarno Putri. You are urged to sign this petition also on-line at:

www.PetitionOnline.com/cockatoo/petition.html

That the Wild Bird Conservation Act (WBCA) had the effect of lowering nest poaching in South America was shown in ten species for which direct comparison was possible: the poaching rate was 48% before the Act was passed in 1992 and 20% after the act became law.

Research has shown that after the US banned the importation of wild-caught parrots in 1993, export of some parrot species from the neotropics did decline. It would decline further if the European Economic Union (EEU) were to follow suit. The EEU accounted for more than 75% of all parrots legally imported in the three years immediately following the enactment of WBCA.

However, there are still many countries, especially in the Far East, that import large numbers of wild-caught parrots. It seems probable that in due course most countries will not allow the importation of wild-caught parrots. However, by the time that occurs many parrots will have declined so much that the export trade will not be viable. It has already done irreversible damage to many parrot populations and caused incalculable suffering to millions of individual parrots.

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Acknowledgement

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Note to magazine editors

Please reproduce this article. You may do so without seeking permission but please acknowledge: "This article first appeared in *PsittaScene*, November 2002, the magazine of The World Parrot Trust." 

First published in 1969, is one of the classics of parrot literature. Many, or most, members will have the second edition, published in 1981. They might therefore ask why they need the third edition. The answer is that this new volume is the most complete and up-to-date rewrite that can possibly be visualised. The number of pages has doubled from 312 to 640. The book has become an even more formidable source of reference for ornithologists and aviculturists. Indeed the avicultural information has been greatly increased and even includes details of mutations.

In addition, the more modern typeface of the text, the improved headings (bold face), clearer layout for each species and the colour distribution maps makes it more user-friendly. At the top of each left hand page the genus name is printed, and at the top of the right hand pages the common and scientific names of the species covered on that page: a great improvement. In addition, new habitat photographs have been used, and these are in colour. Probably the most significant improvement in terms of appearance is in the reproduction of William Cooper's colour plates. Although the page size is unaltered, the images are slightly larger. They are thus much more effective and show to better advantage, especially as a slightly glossy paper is used throughout.

On the subject of the plates, executed by one of the world's leading bird artists, there are ten pages of new illustrations. Several of these feature the cockatoos, due to systematic changes resulting in, for example, Carnaby's Black Cockatoo and Baudin's, now being recognised as distinct species. The Yellow Rosella is now treated as a sub-species of the Crimson Rosella (Pennant's). A double-page illustration in contrasting field guide style illustrates all the sub-species, including Adelaide's. A surprising and, for many, welcome addition, is three pages of colour illustrations (also field guide style) depicting mutations. The dust jacket now features Red-winged Parrots (Crimson-wings to Europeans) on the front and Major Mitchell's Cockatoos (Leadbeater's) on the back. The latter is a beautiful illustration but, to my eyes, is spoilt by the curious frayed edges to the crest feathers of the male. Their feathers don't look like that! Also, the new plate of the Western Corella (pastinator) is not good. If you did not know the bird it would give the impression of being small and short-bodied. It fails to depict the incredibly wonderful personality of this cockatoo. William Cooper is an exceptionally talented artist and most of the plates are accurate and beautiful - but I have noticed before that he is not at his best with white cockatoos. But who am I to criticise? I'm definitely no artist.

But I am an author and, as such, I am filled with admiration for Joseph Forshaw's painstaking revision which took several years. This was a mammoth task and, in fact, revising a book can be more difficult than writing a new one. In this third edition, there is so much more information, especially concerning conservation status and habits. As Ian Rowley states in the new Foreword: "... the most up to date information on taxonomy, ecology and conservation status of all the Australian psittacines... it provides readily and easily read accounts of each species... and serves to bridge the gap between the sometimes daunting scientific paper, the maze of information in Volume 4 of the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, and the lighter popular articles in the press or magazines."

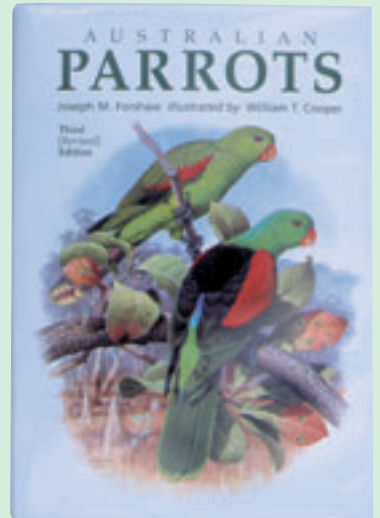
A significant amount of new material has been added for some species. For example, the number of pages on the Glossy Cockatoo jumps from 3½ to 14. The avicultural information has been increased throughout. Here Joseph Forshaw has drawn on his own experiences in keeping and breeding native parrots, as well as on the avicultural literature. At the end of the book is a new section on Australian Parrots in Aviculture.

The order of species, with cockatoos first, has been changed to reflect the fact that the cockatoos are now recognised as a family distinct from all other parrots. A new addition is a section on the Fossil History of Parrots, otherwise the order of the book is mainly unchanged.

Australian Parrots (ISBN 0 958 1212 0 6), a weighty tome of over 3kg, costs £75 in the UK from avicultural booksellers, including postage. In Australia, where it is published by Alexander Editions, it costs AUD\$150 plus \$12 postage, or \$20 for overseas shipping. There is also a special collector's issue with a full leather binding, limited to 95 signed and numbered copies, at \$850. For more information on the latter contact Avi-Trader Publishing in Queensland, telephone +61 755 620 870.

My review copy was provided by a bookseller who asked me to send it back. No way! I had to buy it!

ROSEMARY LOW



Psitta News

Three rare parrots get a leg-up from CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) held its 12th Conference of the Parties in Santiago in November. While the dust has not yet settled and the conference is not over, we have some excellent news to report. Under discussion were proposals to upgrade four parrot species from the Appendix II to the Appendix I - roughly the equivalent of changing their status from "relatively tradeable" to "relatively untradeable."

The four were the Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*), the Yellow-headed Amazon (*Amazona oratrix*), the Blue-headed Macaw (*Ara couloni*), and the Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*). The first three proposals passed and the last one was apparently withdrawn for reasons unknown at this time. Although it's difficult for non-governmental organisations to contribute to these discussions, the Trust was able to work with Defenders on fact sheets for the first three species, providing them with some technical and photo input, just as these were being finalized and sent to all the governmental delegates.

Additionally, Switzerland proposed to remove many parrot color-morphs from CITES jurisdiction effectively loosening trade regulation on more than 20 parrot species. Because such a change would create additional difficulties for border guards and make it difficult to identify and stop illegal shipments, the Trust provided extensive comments to the IUCN on this proposal, strongly opposing this effort to weaken CITES. We are pleased to report that the proposal was turned down and CITES will not be weakened.

Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak in Southern California, parrots not yet infected

The California Department of Food and Agriculture discovered an outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease in backyard poultry. They have established a quarantine in parts of Los Angeles, San Bernadino, and Riverside counties covering the

following birds: chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, grouse, partridges, pheasants, quail, guinea fowl, peafowl (peacocks), doves, pigeons, swans, and ratites. To date well over 1,000 poultry have been euthanized and the owners compensated for their losses at fair market value. There are currently 266 people working on this task force and the state and universities are working hard to keep current information available on a daily basis. If you live in southern California or plan on visiting there in the near future with your bird, we recommend that you keep a close eye on the following web sites

http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/Newcastle_info.htm and http://animalscience.ucdavis.edu/avian/disease_control.htm or call 1-800-491-1899 for information or to report suspicious cases. This news follows a confirmed and well contained outbreak of the same disease in Denmark this past summer. The Danish outbreak was quickly and efficiently managed and we hope for similar results in California.

Good and bad news for Cape Parrot

Natal Witness 20 June 2002

There is good and bad news for the critically endangered Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*), according to the results of May's Cape Parrot Working Group (CPWG) population count.

The bad news is that the Cape Parrot - South Africa's only indigenous parrot - is now listed as "critically endangered" in the IUCN Red Data Book. This is due mainly to the destruction of its primary habitat, the rare and indigenous yellowwood forests. A "critically endangered" animal is as such if there is a possibility that it will become extinct within 20 years.

But the good news is that its numbers are up from 459 in 2000, to 634 in 2002.

Another bit of good news is that three times as many people participated in this year's count, leading to excellent coverage of habitats and possibly the most accurate count yet.

"We are really grateful for the increased interest," CPWG member Colleen Downs said yesterday. "A lot of people were disappointed that they did not see parrots at all, but this was also important information. We need to know where they are as well as where they are not. Any information is vital for conservation decisions."

That is the end of the good news. The survey highlighted the patchiness of the birds and revealed that it is no use attempting to conserve the parrot without conserving its habitat of yellowwood forest.

In October the Wildlands Trust allocated R61,000 to preserve patches of yellowwood forest. These patches are currently under

pressure by rural communities who clear the trees for firewood.

The grant was given to the research section of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, which has formed a working group. They have volunteered to work with rural people to establish if there are possible alternatives to the yellowwood.

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife community coordinator Bill Howells said Ezemvelo relies on census data to plan conservation. "It is used when we go to the communities. This is also the information we use when we decide on the action we must take."

For further information, contact Colleen Downs at the School of Botany and Zoology, University of Natal, on 033 260 5127, or view the New Website at www.cpwg.unp.ac.za, or Wildlands CEO Andrew Venter on 083 324 7484, or ecopart@iafrica.com. Publish Date: 20 June 2002

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Letter to editor

I've just returned from a weekend break in Barcelona - a beautiful city successfully combining tradition and history with the modern and progressive. However, I was horrified to see one tradition, both cruel and totally unnecessary continuing on the lively tourist walkway known as La Rambla. This is the bird market, a collection of about 10 pet shop traders, selling all kinds of animals from the exotic to the familiar household pet.

Having a particular interest in parrots, knowing them to be highly intelligent and knowing their precarious place in the world, it was a shock to see literally hundreds of them, including African Greys and Amazons huddled together in small cages in completely unsuitable conditions. The only cages for sale were tiny; these creatures' future was utterly bleak.

Can a parrot be merely a disposable commodity? How can this be tolerated, particularly within the EU? The appalling bird market in Bruxelles was recently closed, so how can it continue elsewhere? I have written to my MEP to voice my concern and would encourage other WPT members who encounter similar cruelty while holidaying in Europe to do likewise. If you know of any organisations that are actively campaigning on this issue please let me know, as I would like to lend my support.

By the way, I very much enjoy *PsittaScene*. Keep up the good work!

Oliver Fry

Book Review

It was inevitable that a book would be written to tell its story: Spix's Macaw, a bird of extraordinary grace and beauty. We have all heard of the Dodo, never depicted as beautiful, only odd, a strange flightless bird that became the symbol of extinction. Perhaps already, this macaw has become the symbol of impending extinction, a fate that, tragically, hundreds of bird species will not avoid in this 21st century, but it is doubtful whether any will have such a high profile as this slender, powder-blue parrot. By the end of the year 2000, the last Spix's Macaw known in the wild had gone forever, presumed dead from natural causes. It had become the most famous endangered bird on earth, every sighting of it documented by scientists and local people during the previous decade.

Its story is told by Tony Juniper in Spix's Macaw, *The Race to Save the World's Rarest Bird*. He tells it with tact and flair, researched it well and presents many interesting facts. Indeed, he was a brief player in the drama that unfolded. His book starts in April 1987 with an account of the trapping with birdlime (glue) of one of the last three known Spix's Macaws. The chapter ends on Christmas Eve of the same year, when the female of the last pair was torn from the nest, her mate managing to evade capture and fighting his way to freedom and fame. But what is freedom when you are alone?

In the second chapter Tony Juniper describes how Spix's Macaw became known to science, following it with a chapter on man's fascination with parrots for centuries past, and another on the charismatic blue macaws, of which Spix's is one of the four species.

The next 200 pages are devoted to the Spix's drama, starting in 1990 when the author was working for *ICBP*, now *BirdLife International*, a very important bird conservation organisation. With four Brazilian ornithologists, Tony Juniper became a member of the expedition designed to discover the fate of the species. That part is now history. Often overlooked in this story is that the expedition members

finally realised a very disturbing truth: the macaw's specialised habitat, tall caraiba trees (*Tabebuia caraiba*) along creeks, was almost gone too. Logged and grazed out of existence, it was as rare as the macaw. There was no regeneration in the ruined and ecologically bankrupt landscape in which it occurred, because goats and cattle were eating the seedling trees.

At the time of this discovery, only a dozen or so Spix's Macaws were known in captivity. The fate of those birds and how they increased to today's total of 60 or so, will make gripping reading for those who do not know the story. But do not think that this is a saga that proves the value of captive breeding. Curiously, the existence of the captive population is ignored at one point, perhaps to emphasise that the last male was now alone in the wild. This could be forgiven as artistic licence had not the publisher's chosen to highlight this paragraph on the back cover:

Unlike all other mortal creatures that must one day face the inevitable reality of their own demise, the death of this bird would mark the end not only of himself but his entire kind.

At the time, there were 40 or so Spix's Macaws in captivity, mainly the result of breeding success in one collection.

Let me leave you with these words from this compelling book

Before our eyes, the most closely observed extinction of a wild species ever to take place has just occurred. But while news bulletins broadcast images of the Afghan Taliban blasting with anti-tank artillery unique thousand-year-old Buddha statues carved into an ancient mountainside, the world heard hardly a murmur about the loss of Spix's fabulous blue macaw. It was one more reminder of the human propensity to regard the destruction of its own creations as tragic and immoral while the annihilation of creation raises hardly an eyebrow.

The last paragraph states an undeniable truth. Perhaps not until we have learned to value nature above art and human achievement, will there be hope for the millions of species now struggling against man for survival.



The author was a guest on Radio Four's Midweek programme on September 11. A member of the 1990 expedition that searched the remote Minas Gerais area of Brazil when the last remaining bird in the wild was found, he said that crossing the interior of Brazil, looking for a possibly extinct bird was a "curious experience". He went on to tell of a remarkable chain of coincidences. After several weeks searching in vain, a chance meeting with a bird trapper elicited the information that the expedition members were in the wrong area. At the trapper's suggestion they drove east, 600km. Then they stumbled upon a man who had a Polaroid photo of a caged Spix's. Tony Juniper described the "incredible drama" of the story, as this turned out to be the mate of the very last wild bird. All this is recounted in the book.

Talking to Diana Madill on Radio 4, he told her that the current state of parrots in the wild and the story of Spix's Macaw in particular, send out a warning about the way we are treating our planet. "We are now embarked on a mass extinction episode and we need to look at what we are doing - habitat destruction, global warming and exploitation of wildlife - in a geological time-scale. All these actions are avoidable."

Tony Juniper said that one of his reasons for writing the book was to convey a sense of emergency and the scale of the problems. Focussing on one species helps people to understand the implications of what is happening.

Spix's Macaw (ISBN 1-84115-650-7) was published in September by Fourth Estate of London and costs £16.99 plus postage from booksellers (296 pages and eight pages of colour photos). It is a lesson in how easily man can destroy a species and its habitat.

ROSEMARY LOW



WPT E-mail List

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

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!

Progress on trade in parrots

So where are we in the process of stopping what we feel is a destructive and short-sighted trade in wild-caught birds? From the start, we've felt this would be an uphill battle, but there is good news to report.

Anti-poaching

We at the Trust are currently funding anti-poaching activities in three countries, Bolivia, Indonesia and Cameroon. In Bolivia we have sent tens of thousands of dollars to support the protection of clay-licks and other areas where parrots and macaws congregate. These were formerly ideal trapping and hunting sites, and the protection we are supporting has now stopped these exploitive activities, and in some cases, replaced them with ecotourism which protects and creates real jobs for local people at the same time. In Indonesia where trade in Cockatoos, Lorikeets, and other parrots is widespread, we are supporting a local group called KSBK which seeks to end destructive trade practices and educate local people on the value of protecting their wildlife resources.

In Cameroon, we are supporting the protection of a recently established national park which includes several clearings which attract tens of thousands of African Grey parrots. With our support of their anti-poaching efforts, our local contact there Dr. Leonard Usongo feels that he has been able to make a significant impact on the poaching of some 15,000 Greys from that area each year. Our intent is to end the unsustainable trade in wild-caught African Greys. Financial support for any of these projects is greatly appreciated and can easily be done through our on-line store at www.worldparrottrust.org/storeindex.htm.

Bird trade research

We also feel that it is crucial to know exactly how the trade is impacting wild bird populations. A ground breaking study was published in the scientific journal *Conservation Biology* last year and this documented the impacts of on-going poaching of parrots throughout the New World (http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/~beis/Pubs_PDF/pub_docs/PoachCB.pdf). The paper found that collecting parrot chicks from nests is widespread and in many cases has a dramatic impact on parrot populations. Data from the 23 studies also showed a dramatic change in poaching levels



Mortality in wild-caught Grey parrots is very high.
© Jan Rodts-Royal Belgian Society for the Protection of Birds.

following the passage of the Wild Bird Conservation Act in the USA - the country that was at the time the largest single importer of wild-caught birds. Last winter, we met with several staff members at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK to discuss the on-going trade in wild-caught birds, particularly into the EU. They too felt that it would be helpful to expand this research to the Old World to see if capture for the pet trade was having similar impacts on wild bird populations there. Recently the RSPB has funded a research effort directed at this specific question and we hope the results of this will help us approach all bird trade issues with stronger and more current knowledge.

How you can help Trade ban stickers

We are currently launching a bumper sticker campaign to help get the word out in Europe that the trade in wild-caught birds (not only parrots) needs to be ended - you can view the image at <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/trade/bansticker.htm>. Supporters in Italy have helped design the stickers and a supporter in the USA has agreed to help with the printing costs. These stickers are available on our website and we hope you'll help us get them out there to raise awareness and funds to aid in our campaign to ban the trade for good (10 stickers for a donation of £10, 50 stickers for £30). Please help the wild birds further by getting as many stickers as you can possibly afford, and give them out to your like-minded friends to help spread the word about the need to ban the trade in wild-caught birds for good.

Help collect more signatures

Of course we are continuing to collect as many signatures as possible to show the various government bodies in the EU how strong the support is for such a change. Please recall that anyone can sign this, young or old, it just has to be someone willing to lend their name to help save the wild birds. The Trust has created a new and easy way for you to help gather these signatures - we've made an Excel spreadsheet available for you to download at <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/trade/signatures.xls>.

Please fill these in as fast as possible and return them directly to tradeban@worldparrottrust.org or send hard copies to the UK office so we can tally up the figures quickly and efficiently. We prefer electronic contributions because we have few staff to work on this, but we're happy for any signatures you can send. If you'd like to support this campaign further, please take the time to download this file and get as many friends and family members as possible to fill it out.

Write to your government representative

Finally, there is nothing like writing to elected representatives to let them know that you care about how trade is impacting wildlife around the world. We encourage you to write to your CITES representatives or other government officials about Europe's on-going exploitation of developing countries' wildlife resources. Since we are sending this message to dozens of countries with nearly as many languages, please take a moment to look up your country's CITES representative at http://www.cites.org/common/directy/e_directy.html and write to them directly. Simply tell them how you feel about catching birds from the wild and putting them in cages - they need to hear just how many people feel strongly about saving the nature we have left on this Earth.

Again, thank you for your kind support of this campaign. We're convinced that with the kind of grassroots enthusiasm we've seen on this campaign so far, we'll continue to make important strides toward the long term protection of millions of wild birds.

Sincerely,

James D. Gilardi, Ph.D. Director. World Parrot Trust.
Email: TradeBan@WorldParrotTrust.Org

Trade Ban Petition

Petition Signature Total so far:

16,116

A Special Thanks to Tomoko Imanishi, Brenda Martin and Mr. S. Price, Nottingham High School for Girls for their support and promotion of this Trade Ban

Buy Now

These stickers are available on our website **10 stickers for a donation of £10, 50 stickers for £30**. Please help the wild birds further by giving them out to your like-minded friends to help spread the word about the need to ban the trade in wild-caught birds for good.

This sticker is the brainchild of Cristiana Senni WPT-Italy and Trustee, the design was created by Alfonso Filippi in Italy, and the printing costs generously donated by Kevin Kendall in Hawaii; all big WPT supporters. The Amazon pictured, Filippo, is a wild-caught bird who was recently rescued by Alfonso from a pet shop. He had been kept for almost one year chained to a t-stand, and was terrified of everyone, until the owners of the store decided to give him away. We feel that Filippo represents the plight of all wild-caught birds - we thank Alfonso for his work and for offering Filippo a better life.



Aims of the Trust

With thousands of members in over 50 countries, our branches work 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 everywhere**

To Achieve these Aims, we:

- Restore and protect populations of wild parrots and their native habitats
- Promote awareness of the threats to all parrots, captive and wild
- Oppose the trade in wild-caught birds
- Educate the public on high standards for the care and breeding of parrots
- Encourage links between conservation and aviculture

Member, Donation or Legacy

If you become a member of our Registered Charity you will receive a new member package, four of these *PsittaScene* magazines and one free entry to Paradise Park in Cornwall, UK per year with your membership card. You can also join our members only group email list and gain access to many other members for parrot information and support.

Each renewal year you will receive the quarterly magazines and one free entry into Paradise Park (Winner of Good Britain Guide, Family Attraction of the Year, for 2 years).

100% of money donated to designated funds get spent directly on parrot conservation.

Please consider a donation or legacy to the Trust.



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WPT Web Sites:

Main: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org>,
Canada: <http://www.canadianparrottrust.org>,
Italy: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/italy>

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PsitttaScene

Parrots in the Wild

Rüppell's Parrot

Poicephalus rueppellii

By RUDOLF K. WAGNER

When Rudolf Wagner visited Namibia he found Rüppell's Parrots at four different locations. They live in bush, forest and mopane savannah. Numbers varied from single pairs to small groups totalling up to about 30 birds.

Among the items on which they feed are figs, the fruits of *Acacia eriolaba*, and the seeds of the bloodwood tree (*Terminalia prunoides*).

