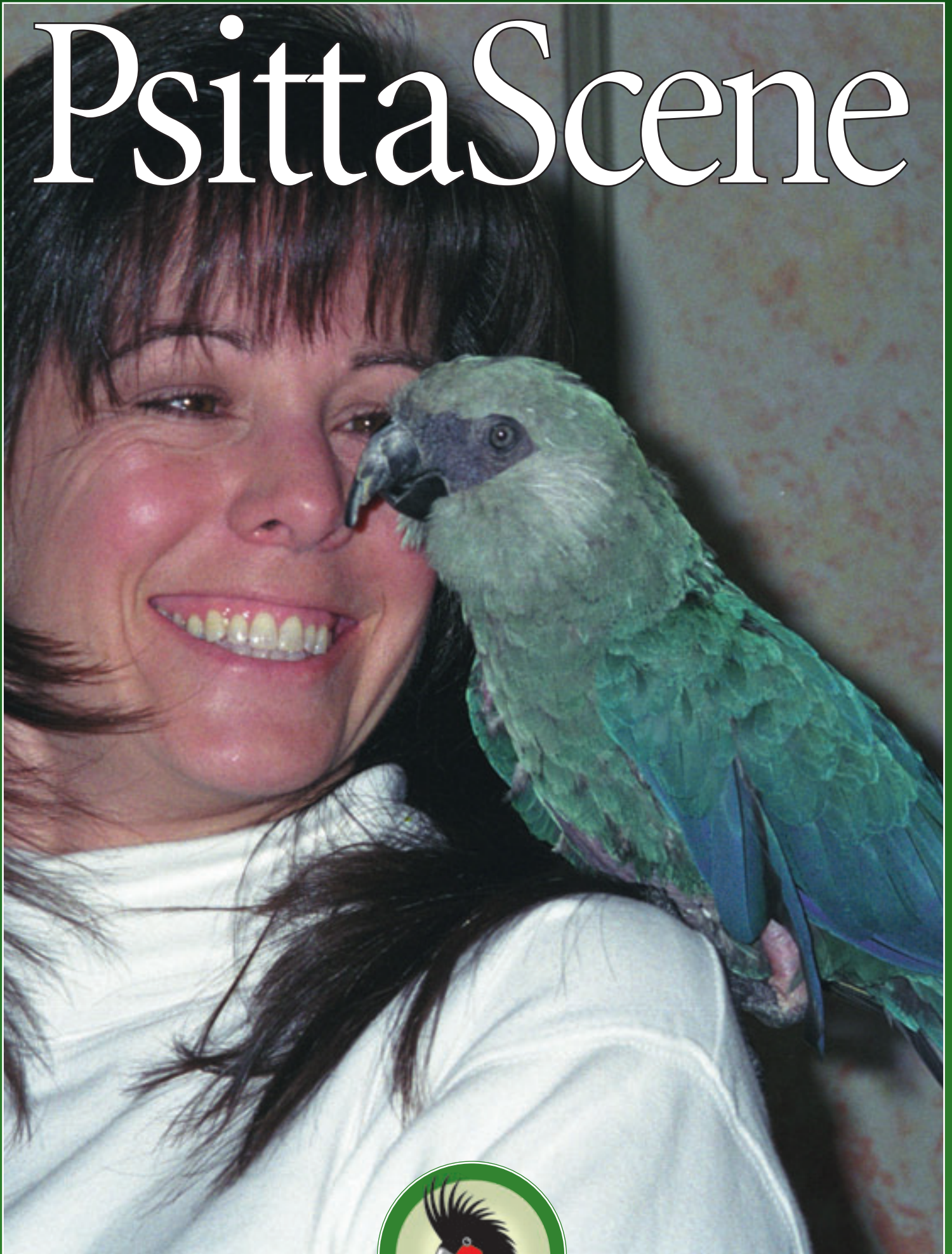


# PsittaScene



IN THIS ISSUE:

Spix's Macaw discovered in the USA  
Moluccans as pets?



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## CONTENTS

Presley the Spix Macaw goes home .....	2-4
Yellow-shouldered Amazon campaign .....	5
Successful Lear's season .....	6-7
Behaviour: Moluccan Cockatoos .....	8-9+12
Red-fronted Macaw poster .....	10-11
Zuni to Rome .....	12
Parrot play .....	13
Parrot adoption education .....	14-15
Lear's pictures gallery .....	15
PsittaNews .....	16-17
WPT August expedition .....	18
WPT general info .....	19
Parrots in the wild .....	20



Cover Picture By ALAIN BREYER.

Mickey Muck and 'Presley' the day before he left USA. A long lost Spix's Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) recently repatriated to Brazil as detailed in our leading article.

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# Presley returns



Photos courtesy of Alain Breyer

Naturally, at the Trust we hear a lot of stories about all sorts of parrots - sick parrots, feral parrots, mistreated parrots, and rare parrots - sometimes very rare parrots. Occasionally these stories prove to be true, and such is the case with Presley. We've compiled several different parts of this story in this issue of *PsittaScene*: an expansive piece from the Washington Post, Mickey's personal account of bringing Presley up to speed for the transfer, and two personal letters, one from Presley's older 'sister' and one from his once-and-current home in Brazil.

It was a great pleasure for the Trust to be involved with Presley's discovery and safe repatriation, especially since everyone involved rose to the occasion and made the whole process work smoothly. At the Trust, we are deeply thankful to all involved, from the owners, to the government agencies in both countries, to the Parrot Society of Los Angeles for contributing tissue samples, and to several researchers in San Diego for testing and developing tissue culture methods (more details in the *Post* article). Although we had to keep this story quiet for Presley's safety, in the end, we had to reach out to a number of people for various forms of help, so we extend a special thanks to: Mike Taylor and Scott Citino, DVM at the White Oak Conservation Center; Steve Martin and Glenn Reynolds at Natural Encounters, Inc., two veterinarians in Colorado Kris Ahlgrim, DVM, who provided an initial health check, and Jeff Baird, DVM from the Denver Zoo, and Alain Breyer for his tireless support of Mickey's efforts and his many excellent photos.

Naturally we are most thankful to Mickey Muck, who brought this Spix's Macaw to our attention in the first place and radically changed her life for months, all to ensure Presley's full recovery. As a token of our appreciation for her efforts, we've made Mickey a Life Member of the Trust, and we're sure she'll appreciate hearing from you what a wonderful job she's done to help save this bird and this species ([mickeymuck@atbi.com](mailto:mickeymuck@atbi.com)).

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## A rare bird flies home for good

On Sunday, one of the rarest birds in the world took wing from Denver, heading for Miami in a small cage wedged under a coach class seat on an American Airlines jet.

In a quiet corner of the Miami airport, officials handed the blue Spix's Macaw to a Brazilian conservationist - marking the conclusion of an extraordinary five-month effort by American bird enthusiasts, geneticists and government officials to bring the native Brazilian bird back from the brink of extinction.

The parrot was the only known Spix's Macaw in the United States. Protected by international treaties, it was probably illegally snatched from Brazil at least 25 years ago and smuggled into the United States. High hopes are riding on its return to Brazil, because it promises to add a shot of healthy genetic diversity to Brazil's remaining collection of a few dozen inbred birds - perhaps even saving the species from extinction.

The parrot was discovered by accident in Colorado when a woman from a Denver

suburb called an avian veterinarian's office in August. Mischelle Muck, a parrot enthusiast, happened to answer the phone. The woman said she owned a Spix's Macaw and asked for suggestions on how to take care of the bird.

Muck, knowing that bird owners sometimes made outlandish claims, was sceptical. The Spix's Macaw was extinct in the wild, and there were only about 60 birds in captivity. Most were in a Brazilian breeding program. Although there had been rumors about a Spix's Macaw somewhere in Colorado, Muck had long discounted them as gossip.

Muck got the woman, whom authorities have not identified, in touch with the World Parrot Trust, an international group of enthusiasts. James Gilardi, its director, immediately pushed for repatriating the bird to Brazil.

In August, after several phone conversations, the owner agreed to have Muck come to her suburban house outside Denver.

As soon as she entered, Muck saw a small cubic cage - about two feet on each side. Then she saw the bird, and her heart skipped a beat. It was definitely a blue Spix's Macaw.

For years, Muck had followed the fate of the vanishing species, which went extinct in the wild two years ago. Its numbers were decimated by smugglers, who snatched birds out of the rainforest and smuggled them to sell to wealthy collectors around the world. It's a trade that outrages animal lovers, and the sight of a Spix's Macaw in a suburban American living room brought tears to Muck's eyes.

The owner has told authorities that the bird was left with her in the late '70s, and investigators believe she is a step or two removed from the smuggler. Special Agent George Morrison of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who worked on the case, said the trail of the smuggler is now cold, although an investigation is still open.

Saying she was initially unaware that it was a rare bird, the woman paired it with an Amazon parrot. She named it Presley. Macaws are deeply social birds, usually mating for life, and the parrots grew attached. The Amazon parrot died this year, leaving the Spix's Macaw deeply listless.

Since the parrot's origins were vague, the parrot experts could only estimate that the bird is between 25 and 50 years old. Gilardi said parrots can live for 50 or 60 years in captivity and are thought to be capable of breeding until death.

Muck noticed that the perches in the parrot's cage were too wide, causing the bird to stand flat on its feet instead of gripping. Its legs had grown weak, and its balance was poor. The woman had fed the bird regular commercial pellets; Muck knew that parrots need a richer diet. The woman also had trouble bathing the bird.

Over the next few weeks, as Gilardi worked with U.S. and Brazilian officials to return the parrot home, Muck began changing the bird's diet and giving it toys. Because of the ongoing investigation, everything was done in secret.

Muck said she bought nothing from pet stores - she didn't want to accidentally infect the Spix's Macaw by bringing anything contaminated by other birds. Toys

came straight out of crates shipped to wholesalers, seeds straight from the manufacturers. Many of the suppliers were Muck's friends in the birding community. They gave her supplies and asked no questions, even when she instructed them to wash before they touched the supplies.

"You need to go for a ride with me and bring your stuff," Muck once told a veterinarian, whom she took to see the parrot. "You need to shower before you come out."

Because it is difficult to visually determine a parrot's sex, a small number of feathers and a blood sample were shipped to the San Diego zoo, where geneticist Oliver Ryder conducted DNA tests to determine that the parrot was a male. He also isolated some cells, multiplied them into millions, and preserved them in the zoo's frozen bank.



The cell culture is the only known frozen sample of Spix's Macaw cells, and may one day open the door to new research - perhaps even cloning - if the species goes extinct.

In Colorado, Muck and Special Agent Morrison moved the bird to a secure site. Muck designed a five-foot-high cage with multiple perches and a variety of foods. She exercised the parrot twice a day, spreading its wings and strengthening its

muscles, getting it used to different foods by placing them next to different perches.

She took care not to make the bird dependent on her, since the goal was to return him to the society of other parrots. Muck brought another parrot to give the Spix's Macaw company.

Because birds held in captivity are often deprived of hearing the cries of their own species, Muck taped the parrot's cries and played the tape back to him. The sounds excited Presley, who gradually emerged from his listlessness. Officials at the Denver zoo helped determine when the parrot was ready for a 20-hour flight to Brazil.

On Sunday, with Presley weighing nearly 14 ounces - three more than when she started - Muck and Morrison took him to the Denver airport. Security officials stared as Muck, who paid for her ticket herself, placed the parrot inside her shirt and walked through the security gates. On board, Presley's cries drew attention.

Children nearby asked, "What's that noise?" and Muck heard their parents reply, "It's a parrot. Like Grandma's parrot."

She thought to herself, "I hope Grandma doesn't have a parrot like this."

At the Miami airport, Muck and Morrison handed the parrot to Iolita Bampi, a senior Brazilian wildlife protection official. Muck bid the parrot farewell, and, after at least a quarter century of captivity in another country, Presley returned home.

Yesterday, biologist Fernanda Vaz at the Sao Paulo zoo said Presley was doing fine, that he was eating well and was very healthy. Officials plan to move him to Recife, where the breeding program is underway.

"In 15 years, there's every likelihood we will be talking about Presley having reproduced or his genome having been cloned," Gilardi said. "In some way, he will contribute to the continuation of his species."

Staff writer Guy Gugliotta contributed to this article.



## 'Thank you' from a family member and a Brazilian

Thank you for helping Presley return to his home land! I miss him so much! He has been with us as long as my little brother, so he is a major part of our family! Thank you for the lovely pictures on your website, it was nice to see him again! I miss his kisses, his Squawk we could hear throughout the neighbourhood on a warm summer day! His sweet "Hello" when we would come home, his Squawk for attention, and his slicking of his feathers when he would flirt with us, but most of all his laugh! I am so happy to know he is doing well! *(from a family member that he spent many years with)*

As a Brazilian, I must thank yours and Mrs. Muck's efforts in returning a blue Spix's Macaw to Brazil. As a member of the Brazilian foreign service I once helped in the prosecution of a Singaporean smuggler who took 2 Lear Macaws to his home country. While working in that case I understood how important it is to stop the trade of these beautiful birds and became convinced that only by the provision of quality information to current and potential owners of endangered animals will we stop their illegal trade. I am certain that, through the actions of organizations such as yours, the world will understand that animals as beautiful as the Spix's Macaw do not belong to a person or a country but to the whole of our small world. Once again please accept my deepest appreciation to your and Mrs. Muck's actions in the return of the Macaw to Brazil. Yours truly, André Carvalho

# Presley's rehab

By MICKEY MUCK

Presley's rehabilitation was challenging at best. We did not know how long we would actually have to give him the best opportunity to succeed. We needed to be assured he would be strong enough for the long flight, quarantine and a total environmental change.

The first challenge was to get Presley physically strong enough. He needed to have the strength to perch and hold himself up for a long period of time in a carrier. His estimated travel time was 20 hours. The cage he lived in before had very large perches and he spent his days sitting next to his mate of 20 years preening her and not getting a lot of exercise. We set up a cage with many different size perches and placed food dishes and toys throughout to try to encourage him to exercise on his own. After just a couple of days he got curious and started exploring. The first day I watched him go from one perch to another and he fell to the bottom of the cage. I put my hand in to pick him up and he was not happy about that. Although he was a very calm bird he was not handled a lot. He hesitated and then stepped on my hand. It was then I realized how poor his grip and balance were. He did not even try and spread his wings to catch himself. We started exercising him out of the cage 2 to 3 times a day. By this time I had noticed that he really liked pine nuts so that was his incentive to exercise. Once he realized that was what he had to do for his pine nuts he started enjoying it. He would sit on his perch and I would gently extend his wings, and move them in an up and down motion. After about two weeks he started helping extend them, you could feel him getting stronger. One day around the third week he stepped up on my hand and lost his balance. His reaction was to spread his wings and catch himself and he did.

The next challenge was a change in diet knowing that what we changed him to would be changed again soon. He was on a pellet diet and nothing else. This was because an avian veterinarian had told his caregiver that was the healthiest way to feed him. He had been fed some seed, nuts and fresh foods in the past but this Dr. said pellets and only pellets was the best for Presley. It did not take a lot to get Presley interested in different foods. Every morning he would get a dish of warm food and twice a day he would get a dish of assorted fresh fruits and veggies approximately 5 of each. We thought the more variety he would be exposed to the easier it would be to change to his new diet in Brazil. In his cage at all times were assorted dry foods, seed, pellets, nuts, grains, etc. He really enjoyed going from perch to perch to see what new foods were in the dishes. He learned to eat and exercise at the same time. You could see him get stronger almost daily.

The next challenge was enrichment in his cage. He had become very listless after



losing his mate and he had never learned how to play with toys because he had her to occupy his time. He had lost her two months earlier. Knowing that Presley would be in quarantine for approximately 30 to 40 days he needed to be able to occupy himself. We tried many different types of toys and Presley picked his favourite a plastic green frog with leather and bright plastic pieces hanging from it. Although he would pick at the other toys this was his favourite. We had two inside and one hanging on the outside of his cage. He would push, swing and pull on these alot throughout the day. There was one on his play stand and one on top of his cage. When he would come out of his cage and climb to the top the first thing



he would do is grab the frog and throw it around. It was great to actually see him get stronger everyday through things that he really came to enjoy.

Presley was very strong, healthy and ready for his long trip. We sent all of his toys and extra frogs so he would have familiar things around him. We sent a very detailed list of what he was eating. Sent with him was also a variety

of dry foods so he would have familiar foods while they were changing his diet.

Although rehabilitation is a very important part of Presley's story, the only reason this was possible was because of a family that wanted to do the right thing, a caring Agent with the FWS and the amazing commitment of WPT.



Mickey Muck, Presley and Alain Breyer

# Yellow-shouldered Amazon project



By PETER MONTANUS

Hundreds of people on Bonaire keep a Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis rothschildi*) as a pet. They have had these birds in cages in their homes for many years and have taught them to speak. While the birds give their owners great pleasure, the drawback is that these Loras, as the parrot is called on Bonaire, are collected from their nests in the wild as young birds. If this continues, the Lora of Bonaire faces extinction. Because Bonaireans are proud of their island and its splendid nature, they cannot allow that to happen.

For that reason the government of Bonaire, together with its population and the nature and environment conservancy organisations started an amnesty campaign.

Now the campaign is over, all Loras in captivity without a band are simple to recognize as illegal. Anyone who keeps a Lora without a band faces punishment and the loss of the Lora. With this campaign, Bonaire is protecting nature and also satisfies the national legal obligations and honours international treaties.

## The campaign

The campaign started on July 1st 2002 with a get together at one of the primary schools. The councillor of environmental affairs symbolically banded the first Lora. The press were present. The Action Team; consisting of four Bonaireans were presented to the public and the children of the school sang the special Lora song. In the first week Odette Doest, a vet from Curacao who specialises in birds, volunteered to come over to assist. She did a tremendous job by training the members



of the Action Team on how to handle and band these parrots. A leaflet with an explanation of the amnesty was delivered house to house all over Bonaire. Further communication instruments were: press releases, tv-commercial, advertisements, flyers (from WPT), posters and stickers.

Four languages were used: Papiamentu, Dutch, English and Spanish. We didn't charge money for the banding and the Action Team went from door to door all over Bonaire. In the beginning there was some resistance, but after we went to the most popular radio station to explain the campaign it vanished. We worked from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and gave feedback to the public on the amount of banded parrots by issuing press releases. We believe the campaign enlarged awareness, not only on the preservation of the Lora but also on the beautiful nature of the island as a whole.

Bonaire is an island located in the southeastern Caribbean Sea. It belongs to the Netherlands Antilles. The distance to the coastline of Venezuela is about 85 kilometres. The surface area is about 315 km<sup>2</sup>, half of which is a protected area. The island is 40 km long and 5 to 12 km wide.

## Next

Now the campaign has been achieved we are concentrating on enforcement of the laws and regulations which protect the Lora.

WPT researched and organised discounted band options and sent the Dutch 'Happy, Healthy Parrot' leaflet. Thanks again for your support.



# A successful season for the Lear's Macaws of Serra Branca



Sam Williams

By SAM WILLIAMS

**With an estimated wild population of around 240 individuals the Lear's Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*) is very much on the brink of extinction. There can be no doubt that saving this species will require broad and far-reaching conservation efforts and that these will only be achieved through considerable work, co-operation and investment. In the 2002 season the combination of successful nest protection and sustained rains helped the Lear's of the Serra Branca (White Mountains) fledge 25 chicks. This is great news for the population and clearly there is a lot of potential for future conservation efforts.**

At the time of my visit to the Serra Branca nest cliffs I was not convinced that the continual rain was such a good thing but the effect on the habitat was unquestionable. The Lear's Macaw live in a habitat known as the "caatinga" which translates to white forest and in this region of north east Brazil rain is typically limited and unpredictable. During long periods without rain the vegetation of the caatinga loses all its foliage and the area does indeed appear white. However in 2002 the caatinga appeared lush green and very productive. Licuri palms (*Syagrus coronata*) are found in this habitat and the kernels of their nuts form around 90% of a Lear's Macaw's diet. The men who are responsible for guarding the nests have a great understanding of the local ecology and they believed that there was a good crop of Licuri fruit in the region because of the high rainfall. They believed that this was the main reason the Lear's Macaws were having such a productive season.

The BioBrazil foundation employs guards who protect the Serra Branca nest cliffs around-the-clock throughout the Lear's Macaw breeding season. During my visit I was fortunate enough to learn some



Protected Licuri palms, as they take many years to grow.

Portuguese and get to know these men and their families. They take great pleasure from being outdoors surrounded by fascinating wildlife just as I do and they are all very proud about the conservation of the Lear's. One of them in particular is very passionate about the cause and he carves natural wood or paints pictures of the macaws on anything he can lay his hands on, paper, wood, t-shirts and even his house. I soon learnt not to leave things lying around! It is through their efforts that the nesting Lear's Macaws are protected from trappers and when you consider there was no evidence of poaching during the 2002 breeding season, they have every right to be proud.

The threat of poaching is ever present because unscrupulous collectors worldwide still generate a demand for these birds. Raising public awareness locally has without doubt played an important role in protecting the Lear's. This has been achieved through poster campaigns being run by the various groups involved and within the local towns just about every shop or bar has one of these posters on their wall. Educating the local people about the Lear's Macaw's plight and conservation



efforts has given them a lot of pride which has also helped raise awareness within the community of the fact the nest cliffs are continuously protected. This is almost as important as the guards actually providing the protection. Ultimately though, it is the demand for these rare species that is the problem and it can no longer be socially acceptable among parrot keepers to keep such endangered species.

## A typical day in the white forest

Even before first light there are muffled macaw squawks escaping from deep inside cavities on the rock walls of the Serra Branca. As dawn creeps upon the scene, pairs of Lear's appear and leave their roost or nest holes often joining others in flight above the cliffs where they call and interact with each other before flying purposefully towards their feeding sites. As the Lear's head out, the Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona a. aestiva*) begin their attempt at a dawn chorus. These social birds fly from tree to tree around the small valleys forming large but fluid groups and all the while making amazing and entertaining sounds.

After having flown over 12 kilometers from the cliffs some of the Lear's Macaws begin to arrive at the feeding station where food is provided everyday at a safe location. The Lear's are able to cover much greater distances in search of food but in times of low Licuri availability this has occasionally caused conflict, because at these times they have been known to raid the crops of local farmers. This of course is not the case on the Serra Branca ranch and there they are able to feed without the risk of causing



problems. Normally a pair will land in the fronds of the Licuri and then climb down towards the raceme (bunch) of fruit. They will then bite off a stem of 8 to 20 or more fruit and either sit in the palm or fly to a nearby tree before working their way through each fruit. It is not the fruit itself that the birds are interested in and this is quickly stripped off to reveal an incredibly tough nut. After rotating the nut within its beak a Lear's will split it clean in two revealing the white meat, which they scoop out and eat before moving on to the next fruit. Interestingly the macaws often move a palm frond along their beak when attacking the nut. Whether this is to clean their beak of slippery juices left by the fruit or to pad their nut cracking effort is not known but it is a clear example of tool use.

Once satisfied with their collection the breeding adults will return to their nests to feed their chick(s). I would generally go to the nest cliffs with Jose, one of the guards. This was great for me as he would inevitably see a track of some kind that I had walked straight past. Then as we sat up a tree waiting for the birds to return I'd try and learn as much as I could from him whether it was about Lear's, the mammals

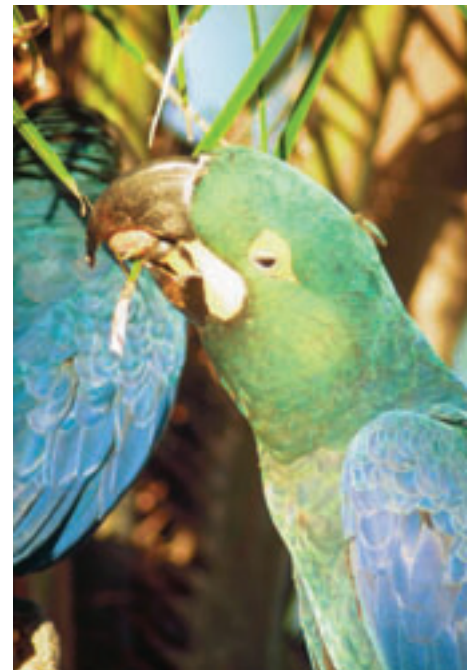


or just life in the caatinga. Upon return the Lear's would often perform a display, flapping their long wings and flying in circles high over the nest cliffs before flying directly onto the entrance ledge of their nest. As my visit was fortunately during the fledging period we often got to see the maturing chicks as they would look out when they heard their parents arriving with their first feed of the day. Only in the very last days before fledging did we get to see the chicks being fed at the nest.

Like most parrot species the Lear's are most active in the early morning and evening and during these times they are busy feeding. In the middle of the day though they relax and groups of 20 or so would often gather in a few trees to hide away from the hot sun. This was the same for the other parrot species of the caatinga but in the evenings the activity at Serra Branca was at its highest. As in the morning the Amazon parrots would be socialising - loudly! The Lear's would be returning to their nests, or roosts in the case of non-breeding birds. They are incredible agile flyers and would fly around the cliffs in displays but also often dive down onto each other. Whether this was play or territorial fighting is difficult to say. There are two species of Conure found at Serra Branca. These are the Blue-crowned (*Aratinga acuticaudata*) and the Cactus Conure (*Aratinga cactorum*). Both would roost on the cliff tops and would gather in huge chattering flocks swooping together as a black cloud. This was amazing to see especially on a night with a good sunset where the few clouds are turning pink and the rock walls of the Serra glow orange! On a lucky night you might also get to see a pair of Illiger's Macaws (*Ara maracana*) flying over. That would be a real treat because in my opinion they are the most beautiful parrots in the caatinga.

Once the Lear's chicks fledged they could often be seen at the feeding site along with their parents. They can easily be told apart from their parents as the yellow on their face is paler and they are very clumsy. On more than one occasion I saw a chick almost fall out of a Licuri palm and nearly take one of its parents with it. At first they show no interest in the fruit but over time it was possible to see a progression up to the point they could get down to the nut. However, I suspect it would be quite a while before they actually managed to split one open to get their own food.

The 2002 breeding season was clearly a great one for the



Lear's Macaw. Not only had the men at Serra Branca found no sign of poaching, the Lear's had taken care of themselves and had been very productive. The continued supply of food on the estate probably contributed towards the success too. With continued attention to public awareness and maintaining the guards at Serra Branca the threat of trapping at this site should be kept as low as possible. What has to be the next step in the conservation of these birds, at least in terms of efforts on the ground, is to learn more about their biology. Only with greater insight will we be able to determine the factors that are influencing their reproduction and then look for ways to minimise such limits in order to increase the number of wild birds as quickly as possible. The conservation of the Lear's Macaw as a whole will certainly require a lot of effort but the result from the 2002 season clearly indicates that saving this remarkable species is achievable. However next year is predicted to be an El Nino year which usually brings drought to the region!

Sam wishes to thank the World Parrot Trust, Disney Wildlife Conservation Initiatives, BioBrazil and the North of England Zoological Society for greatly aiding his visit. The experience provided an excellent opportunity to have a look at the Lear's Macaws and Serra Branca to determine what research could be attempted in the future. As a result Sam is currently proposing to conduct a Masters research project through the University of Stirling, Scotland. This project will investigate Lear's Macaw ecology and behaviour. It will also look at the community's views on conservation.

*If you would like more information and to make a donation for this essential research, please contact us at the usual address.*



## Moluccan Cockatoos

### Truth or consequences

By KIM CALVERT

**When I first moved to California I had a roommate with a wild-caught Moluccan Cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*) named Coco. Coco liked to crawl under the covers with me in the morning. I never realized a parrot could be so affectionate. Fifteen years later, I saw one in a pet store and decided it was time to have a cockatoo of my own. I started with the classified ads, then considered adoption, then decided I wanted a young bird that hadn't been "ruined" by someone else.**

It took six months of searching before I found Phoebe Linden at the Santa Barbara Bird Farm. Phoebe insisted I read her book on parrot care and do even more research. I finally passed Phoebe's screening and put a deposit on a three-week-old Moluccan, that still featherless, looked like a miniature pink dinosaur.

Mimi came home when she was five months old. Even after my recent cockatoo education, nothing could prepare me for the real thing. Life with a Moluccan Cockatoo; an amazing creature so incredibly beautiful, so emotionally complex, so intelligent, so energetic, so in need of social interaction; was akin to keeping a dolphin in a backyard swimming pool. Now I understand why these parrots were frequently surrendered to rescue organizations.

The fact that Moluccans are an endangered species made it even more disconcerting. CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna and Flora) lists Moluccan Cockatoos under Appendix One: extremely rare and threatened. Other animals on this list include tigers, chimpanzees and elephants. The treaty was created to protect high-risk species in their native countries. It does nothing to protect domestically bred Moluccans that are frequently sold to unprepared, impulse buyers who realize too late their cute, cuddly pet is actually a profoundly intelligent, emotional wild animal that only appears "tame" because of its flocking instinct.

Yet despite their endangered status and the rigorous demands of keeping a Moluccan happy in a human home, many top breeders defend this parrot's suitability as a pet. Dr. Walt Frey, A.F.A. member, President of the Cockatoo Society and cockatoo breeder since 1964, believes that "people have the right to own a pet parrot of whatever species they can afford to buy and take care of." He takes offence to what he describes

as a negative propaganda campaign about cockatoos perpetrated by "the PETA types." According to Dr. Frey, "These cockatoos are magnificent parrots and if I had to keep only one species of birds they would be Moluccans. They are beautiful, gentle and as satisfying a pet as possible."

Frey also acknowledged that educating customers was important, but did not wish to get involved in the education process himself. He sells exclusively to a small number of pet stores. "My shops do not encourage impulse buying but rather encourage the future owner to come in and play with their pet for some time before taking it home. All of these relationships will not work out and that's ok too. My shops will usually repurchase unwanted pets, sometimes to sell them again and sometimes to retire them on my farm."

Cockatoo breeder and A.F.A. member, Kelly Tucker of Tucker Farms in New Mexico, has bred Moluccan Cockatoos and a variety of other parrots for twelve years. She describes Moluccan cockatoos as "delightful, happy, entertaining and loving pets." Responding to questions about the future of these parrots Tucker said: "As aviculturists, we choose to accept the responsibility of helping to save Moluccan Cockatoos from extinction. It will be up to aviculturists to breed enough of these birds to preserve the species."

Terry Timberlake, sales manager at Florida's Avicultural Breeding & Research Center in Florida also thinks Moluccans can make good pets. In a telephone interview Timberlake said, "People love them. Everyone's begging for them. In an average year we sell 30 to 40, and we've sold 12 in the last few months." Timberlake said that ABRC educates their customers about the needs of this parrot. "If there's a problem with Moluccans its because the customers don't take the effort to educate themselves and the breeders



don't take the time to educate their customers."

Frey, Tucker and ABRC are considered quality bird breeders, but they are not the norm. Doing an informal survey among Moluccan owners in my local bird club, there seemed to be an abundance of not-so-pleasant experiences recounted by Moluccan owners.

For example, Linda Epperson found her Moluccan at the Pomona Bird Mart. The breeder told Linda the baby cockatoo would be weaned in two weeks. "He lied to me about the weaning process," Linda said. "He also told me I didn't need to take him to the vet. But I did. The vet said he was severely malnourished. If I'd followed the breeder's instructions he would have died."

Joan Duma purchased her Moluccan from a breeder in Riverside, California. She found the breeder on the Internet and drove out to see the babies. At first she wanted a macaw, but thought a Moluccan, being smaller, would be more "manageable." The breeder had no interest in Joan's lifestyle or her experience with parrots. She was sold an unweaned Moluccan on the spot. She described life with her cockatoo as equivalent to parenting a two-year-old child and has sought the services of a parrot behaviourist.

Lorrie Mitchell has two Moluccans: a 50-year-old male and a 25-year-old female. Both are wild-caught, so their ages are estimates. The male was rescued from a pet shop after being recycled through numerous homes. Long before he came to Lorrie's home, his wings were amputated at the last joint to prevent flight. The female came from a family that didn't have the resources to keep such a high maintenance



pet. Mitchell, who works with a Los Angeles Parrot Rescue, has personally removed severely neglected Moluccans from people's garages and basements.

Marc Johnson, who runs Foster Parrots, a large parrot rescue in Massachusetts said, "This year has been a cockatoo nightmare. These birds should never have been made into pets. They sell Moluccan Cockatoos like it's a cuddly bunny rabbit with feathers - as this really wonderful, ideal pet. There's no mention of the pitfalls that lie ahead."

According to Sybil Erden, who heads Oasis, the largest parrot sanctuary in the United States, "Moluccans, as well as Umbrellas (*C. alba*) and Sulphur-crested (*C. sulphurea*)'toos are what we are most likely to receive calls about. The larger cockatoos are wonderful companions while they are immature, perhaps 2-5 years. Thereafter, they need an amount of tactile social interaction that most human households can't provide."

Bonnie Kenk, founder of PEAC (Parrot Education and Adoption Center) in San Diego frequently sees the results of Moluccan Cockatoos that cannot adjust to the role of happy household pet. In an article she wrote for the Jan/Feb 2001 edition of *Original Flying Machine*, Kenk describes her efforts to rehabilitate a self-mutilating Moluccan:

"After living with a Moluccan Cockatoo for over five years, I've come to the conclusion that while most parrots do very well in captivity, Moluccan Cockatoos (and probably male Umbrella Cockatoos) should never have been taken out of the wild and made to come live in our living rooms."

Phoebe Linden acknowledges that many Moluccan Cockatoos end up in inadequate, inappropriate pet situations. "Only two per cent of the people who are interested in owning a Moluccan cockatoo are qualified to keep them," Linden said. But on the other hand, she sees the survival of the species as being dependent on cockatoos produced by breeders in the United States.

"If they are ever to fly again in the wild it will be from the ones that are in this country," Linden said. "Indonesia is going to blow itself off the face of the earth and with it goes these cockatoos. If that area on the planet does survive, it will be the progeny of these captive-bred birds that will be the key to repopulation. It could be the Moluccan's only hope."

I asked Phoebe how a hand-raised cockatoo could create progeny with the survival skills only wild caught parents could provide.

She acknowledged that allowing captive Moluccans to raise their chicks is extremely difficult. "The pets that we've bred this far can't make that transition into a breeding bird. Traditional aviculture has created crazy, neurotic, freaked out messes

worse in third generation hand-feds who are even more aggressive than their fathers. Her solution was to surgically mutilate the beak of the male cockatoo, something referred to as "disarming" - a disfiguring procedure that removes a portion of the cockatoo's upper and lower beak. The article resulted in a huge outcry from animal lovers who were appalled by the actions some breeders took in order to produce product for the pet bird trade.



Hannah the Moluccan Cockatoo. Photo: Don Preisler

that should never be bred. But we're in a new generation of breeding birds, in a new generation of nurturing them, so I'm hopeful that maybe these birds will be able to do dual duty." (Be both pets and breeding birds.)

Linden's comments about the failure of breeders to successfully breed Moluccan cockatoos in captivity is illustrated in an article written by Jenni Jackson for the *AFA WatchBird* (Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, 2001) entitled "Male Aggression in Cockatoos: The Ultimate Challenge." Jackson operates a parrot breeding facility in Florida called JJ's Jungle Birds. In the article, Jackson writes about her captive-bred male Moluccans maiming and even killing their mates. She reports that the aggression occurs least in her wild-caught breeders, with their handfed babies displaying an alarmingly high incidence of aggression. According to Jackson, the problem gets

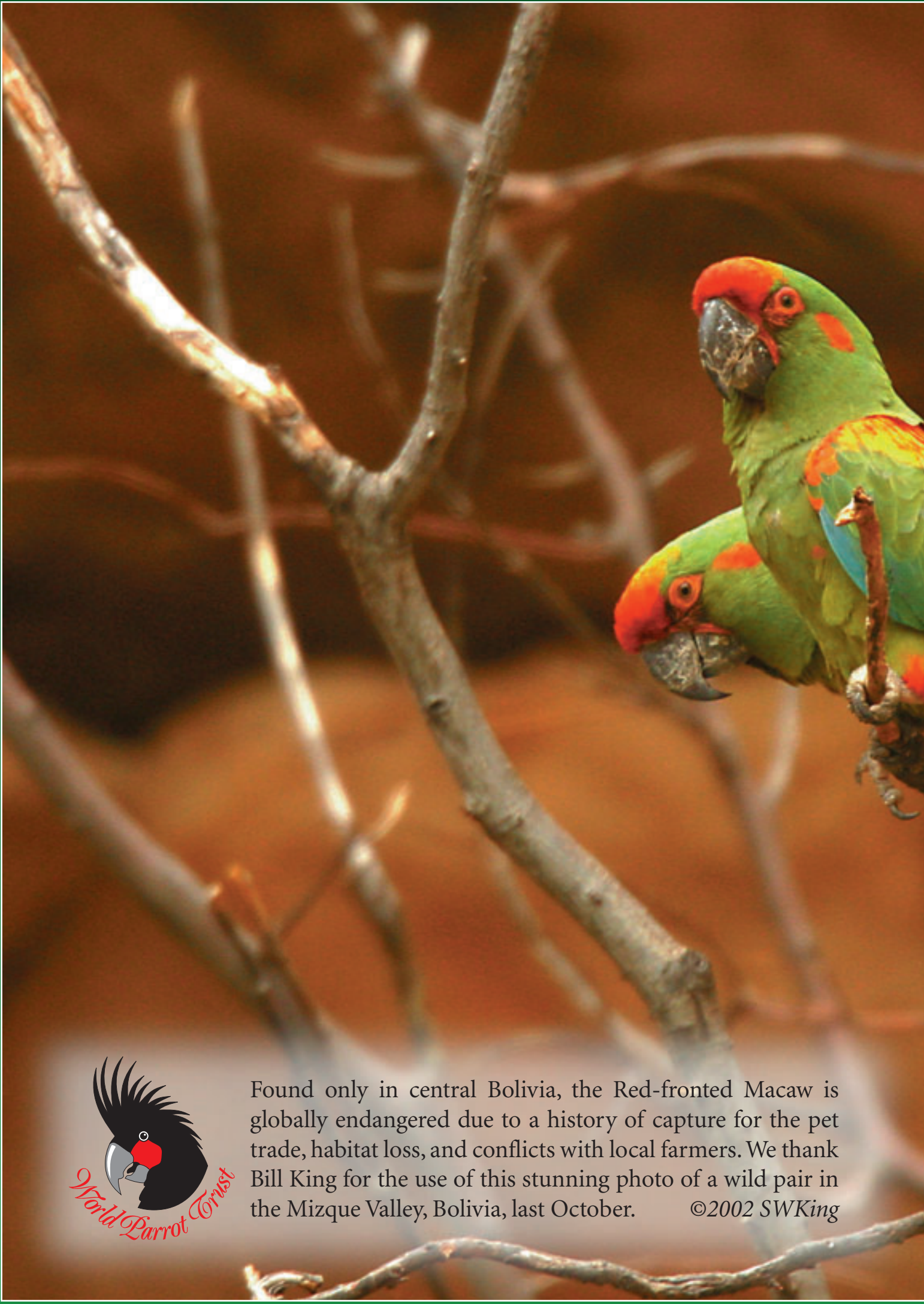
Layne Dicker, a parrot behaviorist and frequent contributor to *Original Flying Machine*, *Bird Talk* and other parrot specialty magazines believes that much of aviculture is outdated and morally bankrupt, and that commercially driven aviculture can never serve the needs of the Moluccan Cockatoo.

In the October 2000 issue of *Bird Talk*, which had a special feature entitled "Cockatoos: Love 'Em, Don't Leave 'Em," Dicker was one of several writers contributing cautionary articles about life with a cockatoo. He writes that even if a person buys a cockatoo from a wonderful breeder, they would still have the problems of noise and the potential for biting, feather picking and self-mutilation.

Dr. Stewart Metz, a graduate of the Yale School of Medicine, now works fulltime for the welfare of parrots. He founded the World Parrot Welfare Alliance and wrote the widely circulated "Parrots Bill of Rights." Dr. Metz is cautionary about the suitability of Moluccan cockatoos as pets and agrees with Dicker that breeders do nothing to preserve the species from extinction. In an email interview Dr. Metz wrote:

"The concept that breeding Moluccan cockatoos in captivity helps their species in any way is sheer self-delusion and self-interest. In fact, rather than trying to confine these creatures to 60-80 years in a cage, usually in multiple homes, we should be doing everything possible to save them from extinction in the wild. I doubt that captive-bred Moluccan cockatoos will ever be reintroduced in their natural habitat. Having breeders pull the babies rather than letting them be parent-raised further increases their inadequacy as potential breeding stock. In the case of the Moluccan cockatoo, the concept that "Aviculture is Conservation" does yet more disservice to this wonderful creature that should never have been removed from its forest home and has already suffered too much at the hands of mankind."

Continued on page 12



Found only in central Bolivia, the Red-fronted Macaw is globally endangered due to a history of capture for the pet trade, habitat loss, and conflicts with local farmers. We thank Bill King for the use of this stunning photo of a wild pair in the Mizque Valley, Bolivia, last October. ©2002 SWKing

# The Red-fronted Macaw

*(Ara rubrogenys)*



Rebecca Margison, Director of the Avian Protection Society believes Moluccan Cockatoos raised for the pet trade will be the first to see euthanasia used as a way to control their numbers, despite their endangered species status: "Breeding rates will continue, these birds will continue to flood the pet market, unsuspecting buyers will purchase the feathered cuddle bugs, many of these buyers will fail in their attempts to provide adequate amounts of attention and stimulation for these birds, the birds will act out their frustration by screaming, biting, destroying wood and furniture, destroying their feathers and mutilating their bodies, and then the folks will either put the bird in a basement or dark room or give the bird up. Considering their long lifespan, it will simply be too difficult to properly care for these birds long-term. So we will see them being euthanized, probably within five years."

Terry Jones runs the Northern New Jersey Bird Mart, one of the few marts that forbids the sale of unweaned parrots. A few months ago, Jones adopted a male Moluccan cockatoo. Things were going fine until she received a visit from three-year-old granddaughter. The bird flew off the perch and attacked Jones without warning. She was in the emergency room for three hours and said her arm looked like it was mauled by a dog.

"I don't blame the cockatoo," Jones said. "I blame whatever was done to this bird before it came to my home. The bird business needs to get control of itself and start taking responsibility for what it's doing to these parrots. These are wild animals - not domestic pets. Some of these birds should be illegal to own without a permit. People in the bird business complain about possible legislation, but if the bird people don't start policing themselves, then they deserve to have the government come into and take control of the situation."

For those of us who have experienced the loving nature of a Moluccan Cockatoo such stories are horrific - but at the same time, credible. We've seen what can happen when their needs aren't met. So to those rare breeders who care about the future of the magnificent Moluccan, please educate prospective owners. Make sure they know this is a longer-than-lifetime commitment. If legislation is needed to remove parrots from abuse by the unscrupulous breeders, then I support it. And to those who think they want a Moluccan Cockatoo as a pet - before you buy one, consider taking an eco-tour to their natural habitat, a small island in Indonesia. See them as they were meant to be; spirited, wild and free. Then decide if you want to keep one in a cage.



# Across the miles from Zuni to Rome

By AVRIL BARTON

2002 was a very eventful year for me, as I had decided to spend a lot of it talking to both adults and schools about the loss of parrot habitat and how we could help to slow it down, by doing simple things like using less paper products etc. and getting everyone interested enough to at least study what this far distant thing called the rainforest does for the world. When you live in the centre of a major city and you just jump in the car at the drop of a hat, global warming are usually just words that mean little or at the most, something that won't affect us too much in our lifetime.



When you go out in the garden and see all the spring flowers showing through the soil in January, the trees in bud long before they should be... think about it, for every tree that is destroyed in some far distant forest, not only have the parrots lost another nesting place and possible food source, but it is affecting us close to home, so now is the time to do something, however small, to help prevent it.

I started 2002, 6 thousand miles away in Zuni in New Mexico, an unforgettable visit to the Zuni tribe of North American Indians, who I had been sending discarded macaw and parrot feathers to for their religious and ceremonial costumes. This tribe is one of the oldest known and the macaw / parrot / golden eagles are their most revered bird. The story of my visit can be read in the August 2002 issue of *PsittaScene*. While visiting the school there I promised to visit the British International School in Rome, as the two schools had been writing to each other since my first contact with the Zuni in the year 2000.

So in December of 2002 I went to Italy to meet my new school friends in Rome. The time spent with the class was lovely, I was able to tell them all about the Zuni children and more importantly, thanks to excellent videos loaned to me by Rosemary Low, I was able to show the children the parrots in their natural world, chicks being hatched and fed in the nests and one of Glossy Black Cockatoo babies being taught to fly by their parents.



The result of this visit and talk is the children are now aware that for every piece of unnecessary paper used, every plastic carrier bag used when a product is invariably already wrapped twice on manufacture, somewhere a bird, animal, insect or plant life will suffer directly from their action.

There are 16 children in Rome who now take conservation seriously ... we are only the caretakers of the future, if only each one of us could get 16 of the next generation to do their bit no matter how small, there would be a future for everything including our most precious parrots.



Finally on my last day in Rome I visited the Vatican and found a painting in the galleries there called 'Adam and Eve in the garden of paradise' (my translation from Italian). It was painted by Peter Wenceslao and was hundreds of years old. I was amazed to find all kinds of parrot-like birds painted in the trees. Just goes to prove how long these wonderful birds have entranced humans.



# Parrot play

By KATHERINE RENTON.

Estación de Biología Chamela, Mexico

**Why are the parrots disappearing? What are the problems they face, and how can we help? These are some of the questions we tried to address with local village children in Mexico, through the implementation of an interactive parrot play. The development of the play arose out of the severe pressure from nest poaching which we have experienced over a number of years in the Chamela-Cuixmala Biosphere Reserve in Jalisco, on the pacific coast of Mexico.**

Despite the fact that the reserve is a protected area in which hunting is illegal, and that the Lilac-crowned Parrot (*Amazona finschi*) is a protected species in Mexico, nest poaching and parrot trapping is widespread and wildlife laws have little effective application in rural areas. Added to this, it was troubling to find that the attitude among local children was one of pride at the “cleverness” of the male adult members of their community in being able to catch so many parrots. In response to this pressure and in order to present another side of the issue to local youngsters, we developed the parrot play.

The play tells the story of a group of parrots, the animals in their forest, the pressures they face, and what the people of a nearby village were able to do to help the parrots and themselves. The children actively participate in the play, acting out all the character roles (parrots, animals, and local people) under the guidance of the narrator (in this case myself). The children are selected from the audience as the play progresses, so most of the children get a chance to participate. All of the materials, props, and masks were made with whatever we had locally available, partly due to financial and logistical constraints.

The play was hugely successful with the children and produced some immediate effects. In interviews conducted with children prior to participating in the play, when asked to name three animals which live in the forest, the usual answers were: cat, dog and horse. However, after having participated in the play, the children responded: parrot, coati and snake (all characters in the play). In addition to the parrot play, we also conducted evening sessions of talks and slide shows in the local towns aimed at adult members of the community.

## Environmental education

In truth, we had no great expectations of a miraculous change in attitudes as a result of these efforts. Environmental education and outreach is a long-term effort, which may only succeed to a certain level; some attitudes may never change. However, it is

important to bear in mind that it is usually only a handful of people in a community who are involved in parrot trapping and nest poaching. It is also often falsely assumed that those involved in parrot trapping are “poor and hungry”. This frequently is not the case, as it requires a certain economic level to maintain and transport the birds, as well as a level of business acumen to sell and trade the birds. Having become familiar with which individuals in a community are involved in parrot trapping, it is surprising to find that they are not the poorest members of the community, but rather tend to have means of employment, large houses and good vehicles. Where a poor campesino may be involved in parrot trapping, they usually receive only US\$10-20 per bird, and therefore do not make any great economic gain.

## Peer pressure?

However, the vast majority of people in a local community are not involved in parrot trapping and nest poaching and they can often be your greatest allies. In particular, elder members of the community have the authority of experience, and are able to make comparison with the huge flocks of parrots they observed in their youth, which are no longer seen. This adds weight (and truth) to the message you are trying to convey, as local communities will not necessarily accept your version of events, unless members of their own community corroborate it. The peer pressure exerted by these members of the community is



Materials, props, masks etc are made with whatever is locally available.

Photo: Katherine Renton



Katherine Renton is currently carrying out parrot conservation work in Mexico.

A public broadcast TV station there has produced a conservation programme about the Lilac-crowned Amazon and the research of Katherine and her colleagues, which has been broadcast at least four times.

Unfortunately, nest-poaching and illegal trade is widespread. Interviews with local people indicate that they see far fewer Lilac-crowned Amazons than ten or 20 years ago. Katherine and her colleagues are currently conducting a nationwide evaluation of the status and distribution of this species and the Yellow-headed Amazon (*Amazona oratrix*) in Mexico, funded by the Mexican agency CONABIO.

more likely to succeed where other efforts may fail.

An unexpected effect of implementing the play and talks in local communities was that the following year, for the first time in 7 years working in the area, we received reports from local people as to which members of the community were poaching parrots. This provided the opportunity to visit and talk with these individuals, with the result that for the first time we had no parrot nests poached in the reserve, with apparently few nests poached in the surrounding area. While it may be nice to think that the poachers were convinced by our argument, I rather suspect that the social pressure from peers in their community was the important influence.

News of the parrot play, which we initially implemented in communities close to the reserve, has now produced requests from schools in other communities and we hope to extend the scope of the play and outreach activities in future years. It will require long-term efforts in order to have a lasting effect. However, the very nature of close social integration in small rural communities may mean that such efforts have a greater likelihood of success.

So, as we tell the children ... “Not very long ago, in a forest not far from here, there lived a group of parrots...”

For further information or if you would like to make a donation towards one of Katherines projects please contact WPT at your local branch - see page 19.

(Rosemary Low refers to this article in our last issue. We apologise for omitting this article last time)



# Parrot Adoption Education

By JUDY HILL

When my husband David and I decided that we had a mission to start a Parrot rescue and rehabilitation group, we had many decisions to make. We of course had to agonise over the name, and then thinking of a better one after the fact. Then the big decisions came. The largest was how were we going to house the birds placed in our care? After careful research we chose to operate out of foster homes. We chose this method for many reasons. The first and most important reason to us was the quality of care for the birds. We knew that we were unable to be at a site every day to give quality care, since we also needed to work to continue to pay our bills. So we took out an advertisement and started screening potential homes. We decided upon guidelines for eligibility. They didn't need to have parrot experience, just a willingness to learn. We try and match foster family and parrot well. We don't want to overwhelm a volunteer with a more difficult bird than they can handle, although it is fun to see someone take on a challenge they were uncertain of and do fantastic with the bird. We've found that with guidance, "rookie" bird people can come up with very clever ideas. We do often hope by taking as much time to match a right foster home, it may turn into a permanent home.



Judith Hill, Bobo (Caique) and Nelson (Grey)

When the parrots live in our homes we can spend much more time with them than if they were at a centre. We can monitor everything much more efficiently; see how they interact with a family and watch their weight, which is critical during this adjustment period, especially if we have to convert them to pellets and get them on fresh foods. Yes, all these items can be watched at a centre, we just feel problems are more likely to be missed there. The parrots act very differently in a home

setting versus a hectic centre.

As with any rescue organisation the most critical part can be quarantine procedures. We try to ensure the birds are taken to a vet before they enter our program. If that isn't possible we take them to a vet whom we work closely with. We have them tested for contagious diseases as a minimum requirement. We have to decide by each bird's history, type of bird and good advice from our vet what tests we run. This is the most costly part of our operation. It is frustrating to need to spend a couple of hundred dollars on a sweet Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) to make sure he's healthy, and know we can maybe recoup \$25 on adoption fees. Some adoptive families are willing to take on all the medical bills. Our vet has been very good to us with regards to fees. She recently preformed an amputation of a wing for us at no charge.

Using foster homes makes the process of showing someone many birds, a more time consuming process. However this does give us more time to get to know the families. We do home visits on all adoption homes, but it's nice to spend more time with them. We tell people who call us they had better get used to us, because we are going to be part of their lives if they adopt through us. We have made many friends through adoptions. Once someone has adopted they usually want to volunteer for us.

## Limits on fostering

We set limits on how many each of us can foster at any one time or adopt. We don't allow any one person to take on too many birds. We don't adopt to people who are collectors or breeders. Because we are careful to set limits, at times we have to put in-coming parrots on a waiting list. Sometimes the people aren't willing to wait for a spot to open and get rid of the bird another way. This has started another dimension to our program. When someone calls us needing to give up his or her bird,

we spend a great deal of time talking to them. Most often people call that had purchased their bird for all the wrong reasons from a place that didn't educate them. Usually they are experiencing "normal" parrot ownership problems. We offer our other service, which is helping with behaviour modification with the emphasis on owner education. The parrot is acting like a parrot should in captivity, but the person had no idea what was in store. If they are a good home, we work with them to try to fix the situation. We tell them if their bird had a vote, they'd vote not to lose their home. We do ask for donations for this, but often have to do it for free. We love to help. Keeping a flock together is the statistic we are most proud of. The sad thing is by the time most people call us, they are angry and just want the bird gone! They bought a sweet baby and it has become a biting screaming toddler. We find more often than not, that simply getting the bird away from the owner and the situation, the bird stops exhibiting the negative qualities the owner complained about. Besides, what parrot isn't loud?

I would say that with most groups the biggest problem is funding. We need less money not having the expenses of a permanent facility. However we have so much put into vet care, food, toys and cages. We need big funding coming in on a regular basis in order to stay alive. We could be much more efficiently run if we could do this full time, and not have to run our pizza shop. Right now we need it to pay our bills just like many of the organisations. We often have to personally pay for the vet or a new cage for a neglected bird.

The hardest part for me personally is the emotional aspect. We tend to fall in love with the under dogs. Those "perfect" birds get homes fast so we get the privilege of living longer with those that need help. Often they come to us with medical conditions. We don't always discover them right away because they may hide them



A parrot with problem behaviours will need special understanding from its new owner. 'Peter' plucked out all his feathers after his longterm human companion passed away. Photo: Ray Hales

well. The majority of them seem to be caused by poor diets. We see African Greys (*Psittacus erithacus*) with vitamin deficiencies and poor bowels due to not enough fresh foods. We get Amazons with fatty liver disease. We had a sad scared wild caught Green-cheek Amazon (*Amazona viridigenalis*) come into our lives a couple of years ago. She had been taken care of poorly for 16 years. She had no idea how to be a bird. She lived with us and was developing into a strong confident girl, when she died abruptly from a burst vessel due to arterial sclerosis. We do see a lot of heartache.

## Hot topics for debate

There are so many things I could share about running an organisation such as this. It has formed many thoughts I have about parrot ownership that are often hot topics for debate. I spend as much time counselling people as I do handling birds. So with that in mind I'd like to stress a couple of points. If you are looking to purchase or adopt a parrot, get educated! No one person has all the answers. We all should be constantly learning about the care of these magnificent creatures, and be willing to change what we are doing if we discover a healthier way. Get a parrot that fits your family and life, not because you want it to fit a certain mould. Don't expect your bird to be more than it can be. Try to envision the next 30-50 years with this bird. I tease people that they often spend more years with their parrot than their spouse! If you are buying a baby, what kind of breeder are you buying from? Do they allow the parents to teach their chicks to be a confident bird? Do they allow them to fledge? Is it fully weaned? What are the parent's dispositions?

I'd ask breeders to screen who is purchasing their babies. Don't be afraid to question them. I encourage you to not sell to just anyone, and raise only the number you can realistically sell to good homes. If you have a parrot and find yourself in a situation where you have to surrender your bird don't be ashamed and just give it to anyone that calls themselves a rescue group. Interview the organisation. Ask to see the birds they have in their care. Do they have more than they can possibly give quality care for? Look at their contracts. Do they offer on-going relationships with adoption families? Be careful of collectors portraying themselves as a rescue group. Donate funds to the group to help care for the parrot you need to place.

Parrots are highly specialised, exotic animals that are trying to adapt their wild instincts to living in our homes. Let's all try and make it easier for them and give them all the love and understanding we can.



Photos courtesy of Sam Williams



# Psitta News

## Appreciation of *PsittaScene*

I just received *PsittaScene* no. 53 Nov 2002 and am bowled over by the cover photo of the gorgeous Citron-crested (*Cacatua sulphura citrinocristata*) by Ray Hales. My companion Josselyn, a 20 year old Eleonora Cockatoo (*C. galerita eleonora*), shows her approval of the photo by raising her crest and looking at it with both eyes. Next, the photos from Bolivia of the Red-fronted Macaw (*Ara rubrogenys*) are without peer. I'm trying to choose a favourite but cannot decide between "golden wings up for landing" by Mark Stafford or "jumping around on the ground" by Bill King. I can readily imagine the hundreds of shots they must have taken to get these gems. Now we all benefit. Thank you for printing these!

Have not read the rest of the magazine yet. The photos keep stopping me.

Phoebe Greene Linden



## Appreciation continued

I finally finished reading the latest *PsittaScene* no. 53 Nov 2002. I appreciate them so much, and thought I should write to tell you how great they are. Each time I receive one, I say, "This is the best one yet."

We are existing through a cold winter. Fortunately, we don't have a lot of snow, but the thermometer is not cooperating! I hope to have our birds in the sun before too long...at least for a few minutes each

morning. We have them in full spectrum lighting, and they seem to do well, but I always feel better when I can give them some natural light each day.

Thank you again for the wonderful edition, and the articles that keep us informed about the welfare of parrots throughout the world.

Sincerely - Priscilla Old

## China arrests 318 people for illegal bird hunting, trading

January 4, 2003 Agence France Presse English

BEIJING - State media were cited as reporting Saturday that China has arrested 318 people for illegally hunting, killing or trading some 107,000 birds during a 10-day nationwide crackdown.

Police in 14 provinces and municipalities - including Beijing, Shanghai and south China's Guangdong province - confiscated more than 107,000 birds, of which 1,223 were protected species, the China Daily quoted the State Forestry Administration as saying.

The campaign involved police raiding more than 3,370 bird markets to inspect birds, as well as 16,380 hotels and restaurants where even rare birds are openly served to earn huge profits.

## Kakapo latest

DON MERTON

The good news is that all 86 Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*), including the 24 juveniles from last year are alive and in good health. Sadly however, Kakapo are not going to breed this year - there's been no booming activity at all on Te Kakahu / Chalky Island and very little on Whenua Hou / Codfish Island. Four of the Codfish females still have ~10 month old young with them in fact. After a highly successful breeding season last year its not surprising that they are having a year off. However, we were hopeful that there would be a beech mast (= exceptionally heavy fruiting) on Chalky and that at least some of the females there would breed again. (These are females that did not raise young last year...They are productive birds, but we removed their eggs for fostering to others!) The beech mast anticipated on Chalky has been a bit of a fizzer...Contrary to predictions, neither it, nor the rimu "mini-mast" on Codfish eventuated.

All adult females and selected males have been supplementary fed for the last 3-4 months in anticipation of breeding, however, in the absence of breeding, supplementary feeding is now being phased out and, (but for the odd special case), will



cease in February. One of the juveniles - "Takitimu" - was a little light, but since being supplementary fed has regained some condition. He (and any others erring on the light side) will continue to receive supplementary food for as long as necessary.

Kate and Daryl of the Kakapo team visited Pearl Island recently to attempt to collect (via electro-ejaculation) and assess the viability of Kakapo sperm from further birds. However, with no breeding activity there, they were unsuccessful. Similar efforts involving several of the Codfish males were also unsuccessful. Miraculously however, they were successful in finally catching the long-lost male "Ben" who has been without a transmitter for the last couple of years and had no microchip (for individual identification). He, and in fact all Kakapo are now transmitterised and microchipped!

Since the recent eco-terrorism threat - letter, from a hunter disgruntled with DOC's policy on introduced mammals, stating that stoats will be released on Codfish Island - staff have been even more vigilant than usual. Thankfully, to date no sign of stoats (or other mammalian pests) has been found.

So, I guess its fingers crossed for a Kakapo breeding event in 2004, or failing that - 2005!

## Parrot Virus News

We've had a recent report from Louise Warburton of what appears to be Psittascene Beak and Feather Disease (Pbfd) in a wild Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*) in South Africa. This is consistent with other observations of Pbfd in other African parrots, captive and wild. For more information, please contact Dr. Warburton at WarburtonL@nu.ac.za.



In recent weeks, we've also heard from WPT Trustee Dr. Andrew Greenwood that two Echo Parakeet chicks from the same nest showing signs of feather loss have come up PBF positive. Fortunately, they were pulled and isolated. He added that it is possible the disease exists in the feral ringnecks parakeets there in Mauritius.

In the USA, there has been rapid westward spread of west Nile virus which appears to infect a wide range of captive and wild birds. In recent months, it has arrived on the Pacific coast and will presumably be present throughout much of North America after this summer. A vaccine is available for birds and provides some protection with little risk. For parrot owners anyway, the disease has not yet shown itself to be a major problem. As a mosquito borne disease, we can expect it to be more of an issue in the warmer and moister months of the year. Insect screens and mosquito traps are likely to reduce risk.

Although we'd like to report that the Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak has been stamped out by now, we're sad to say that END has now shown up in Nevada and Arizona, and more commercial poultry farms have recently tested positive in southern California. More than two million birds have now been destroyed. So far this outbreak has been isolated primarily to poultry farms and owners, and few parrots have been directly affected. The USDA and other agencies are working hard on this outbreak and have recently released policies for caged bird owners as well as veterinarians. Permitting policies for moving birds out of the quarantine area are in the works as well, but this remains a major challenge for the many exotic bird breeders in southern California and anyone wishing to acquire birds from them. Please see the WPT website or the links included there for current information, or contact your nearest WPT branch for more detailed information.

## South African parrot tour

LOUISE WARBURTON

Would you like to come with us on an 18 day tour around southern Africa to see all the parrot species in the region? The tour starts in Durban, South Africa on July 7th and ends in Windhoek, Namibia on July 24th 2003.

The price of the tour is R22, 178 (approx £1,584 / US\$2,218) this covers all your transport, food, park entry and guiding fees - you will need to organise your transport from home to Durban for the start of the tour and to get back home from Windhoek at the end.

The parrot species we're looking for are the Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*), Grey-

headed Parrot (*P. fuscicollis sauhelicus*), Meyer's Parrot (*P. meyeri*), Rüppells Parrot (*P. rueppelli*), Brown-headed Parrot (*P. cryptoxanthus*), Black-cheeked Lovebird (*Agapornis nigrigenis*), and the Rosy-faced Lovebird (*A. roseicollis*).

Bookings need to be confirmed by March 20th 2003 and places are limited to 12 persons. If you are keen to know more, please contact Louise Warburton on tel: 27-33-260-6032, fax: 27-33-260-5105 or email WarburtonL@nu.ac.za.

## Lesser Vasa Parrots

Anton Schreuders from the Netherlands reports on the European Conservation Breeding Programme for the Lesser Vasa Parrot (*Coracopsis nigra*). There are now approximately 20 members, including zoos and bird parks. The founders met in Leipzig, Germany, in November 2002. The first newsletter has now been e-mailed to those interested. Further information can be obtained by e-mailing atschreuders@planetnl

## 6th Canadian Parrot Symposium (West)

This will take place on May 17-18 at Dunsmuir Lodge, Victoria, BC - a beautiful location.

Speakers include Michael Taylor, DMA, arguably Canada's most experienced avian vet, Eb Cravens (breeder) and Rick Jordan who will speak on hand-feeding, incubation and conservation.

For further information contact Gladys or Ormand Lavenne, tel: 01-250-727-2962, email lavenne@horizon.bc.ca or Doreen

Albion, tel: 01-250-477-9962, fax: 477 9935 or email: dealbion@shaw.ca. Accommodation with Dunsmuir Lodge can be reserved by tel: 01-250 656 3166, fax: 01-250 656 1999 or email: rh@dunsmuirlodge.com

## USA branch news Make a wish for parrots

Late last summer we were afforded a great opportunity for fundraising and exposure by the folks at the Endangered Species Stores. This national chain of 11 stores throughout the USA sells a variety of animal related gifts. They also participate in activities in support of endangered species. Their Mall of America store in Minneapolis, Minnesota offered the World Parrot Trust a prominent spot in their store to display a spiral wishing well to raise funds for our projects. If you have ever been mesmerized by the coins spiralling around these wells and the youngsters lining up to be next, you can imagine their fundraising potential. It was an opportunity we could not pass up. We promptly found the one company that makes these devices. Briefly stalled by the hefty price tag, we did some quick calculations with special consideration for the venue. The Mall of America is one of the most visited destinations in the United States with around 40 million visitors annually. We had to give it a whirl, as they say, and the sooner the better. Our wishing well was in place by late September and by year's end it had already paid for itself. We look forward to a long relationship with the Endangered Species Store and will update you on any future projects we undertake with them.



# The World Parrot Trust announces a Member Expedition to visit South American Parrots

Travel with Rosemary Low and Dr. Charles Munn to see the Parrots of the Bolivian Highlands and the Clay Licks of Southeastern, Peru, in August 2003. Arrive at Santa Cruz on 23rd August, until the evening flight to Miami on 1st September. Itinerary available on request.

Assembling in the highland town of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, this small group of no more than 14 travellers will be led by Rosemary Low and a local guide on a 10 day exploration of Bolivia and Peru, in pursuit of some of the world's rarest and most beautiful macaws, parrots, and an incredible diversity of plant and animal life. You'll first spend two days visiting the rare and spectacular Red-fronted Macaws (*Ara rubrogenys*) in the Bolivian highlands (see *PsittaScene* no. 53 Nov 2002 for recent photos), the group will travel to Cusco, Peru. There they will have options of exploring this ancient Incan city, sampling delicious local or international cuisines, and visiting Machu Picchu or the Sacred Valley. From there, you'll take a jet flight to Puerto Maldonado and a motorised canoe down the Madre de Dios, then south upstream along the Rio Heath which forms the Bolivia-Peru border. Spending two days at the Heath lodge will provide stunning views of a clay lick packed with parrots - especially Scarlet (*Ara macao*), Chesnut-fronted (*A. severa*), and Red-and-Green Macaws, not to mention hundreds of Amazons and Pionus. There is additional great wildlife viewing along this small unpopulated river, and the lodge is a short hike to spectacular tropical grasslands known as pampas where Bat-falcons and even the maned wolf can occasionally be spotted. You'll return via the Sandoval



Lake for an incredibly comfortable and beautiful lodge overlooking this huge oxbow lake. The forests here teem with wildlife, including Red-bellied Macaws (*A. manilata*) which nest in the palms surrounding the lake, Blue-headed Pionus (*P. menstruus*), White-bellied Caiques (*Pionites leucogaster*), several primate species, and a family of giant river otters thrives in the lake despite the high density of pirañas and caiman (swimming not advised!). Rosemary will lead the group through the entire expedition, Charlie will be joining the group for a minimum of three days.

PRICE PER PERSON BASED ON  
DOUBLE ACCOMMODATIONS: 5/6  
CLIENTS: US\$2,815.00, 7/9 CLIENTS:  
\$2,489.00, 10/12 CLIENTS: \$2,142.00,  
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$287.00

INTERNATIONAL PLANE TICKETS  
MIAMI -SANTA CRUZ/ LIMA -  
MIAMI \$643.00 OPTIONAL TOURS: to  
Machu Picchu or Sacred Valley, prices  
depend on the number of participants.  
City tour and nearby archaeological sites  
(group tour) \$27/person

Price INCLUDES: All ground and air in  
South America, all meals (unless  
specified otherwise in itinerary),  
accommodations based on double  
bedrooms, guided excursions, entrance  
fees, airport departure taxes in Bolivia  
and Peru. Gratuities, personal items, and  
alcohol are not included.

DEPOSIT: A Deposit of \$250 per person  
deposit upon acceptance of the quote.  
Final payment is due 60 days before  
departure (JUNE 23)

CANCELLATIONS: Refunds may be  
given up to 30 days before departure, less  
a \$50 per person booking fee. Refunds  
will not be given for cancellations made  
29 days before the departure.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, Please  
contact ELIANA at: TOLL FREE USA  
and CANADA: 877 827 8350

PHONE/FAX: ++(803) 933 0058 E-  
MAIL [eliana@tropicalnaturetravel.com](mailto:eliana@tropicalnaturetravel.com)

Deposits should be SENT TO: Elizabeth  
Sanders, Tropical Nature Travel,  
P.O. Box 1065, Alachua, FL 32616



# 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>

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

### MEMBERSHIP TYPE (please tick)

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- Club (Annual) £100 / US\$150 / €162
- Fellow (Life) £300 / US\$500 / €490
- Conservation (Life) £1,000 / US\$1,500 / €1,620
- Additional donation of .....
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# PsittaScene

## *Parrots in the Wild*



### **White-bellied Caique**

*Pionites leucogaster*

By MATT DENTON

White-bellied Caiques inspecting an Ironwood (*Dipteryx alata*) tree cavity. These birds apparently spent a lot of time around this cavity which the locals called a 'chew hole' but I don't think anyone ever figured out what they were doing there - eating wood, grubs, drinking?