

Psitt Scene



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Puerto Rican Parrots
Kakapo Update



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Psitta Scene

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Cover Picture By © 2004 MARIE STAFFORD, Parrots International

This is a mated pair of Puerto Rican Parrots. The female is on the left and the male on the right. The parrots' beaks sometimes become darkly stained from the purplish flesh of the palm nut fruit.

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The crown jewel of Puerto Rico

By Dr. MARK L. STAFFORD,
Photos © MARIE STAFFORD,
www.parrotsinternational.org

High above the pristine beaches of Puerto Rico survives the rarest parrot in the wild, The Puerto Rican Parrot. Only 34 Puerto Rican Parrots (*Amazona vitatta*) now exist in the wild. All are restricted to a small area of the Caribbean National Forest, locally known as the El Yunque Rainforest. Here the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program (PRPRP) of the US Fish and Wildlife Service is struggling to bring these birds back from the brink of extinction.

The Puerto Rican Parrot is the only endemic parrot found within the United States and its territories and is one of the ten most endangered birds in the world.

Upon the arrival of Columbus to Puerto Rico in 1493, the Puerto Rican Parrot numbered approximately a million birds. By the 1930's that number had reduced to approximately 2,000 birds. By 1954 to an estimated 200 birds. By 1964 to 70 birds.



Mark and Marie Stafford at the entrance of the Caribbean National Forest, home of the last Puerto Rican Parrots.

99% of the original parrot habitat on the island of Puerto Rico. The severe deforestation is a result of logging and land clearing for agriculture and urbanization.

In 1967 the Puerto Rican Parrot was designated an endangered species and in 1968 intensive recovery efforts were begun. In 1973 the Luquillo Aviary was established within the Caribbean National Forest and a captive breeding program was



Male Puerto Rican Parrot.

Then, due to the testing of Agent Orange (*Dioxin*); experimental tests on the forest with radiation (*Cesium 35*); military microwave testing; and warfare manoeuvres the population decreased to 24 birds in less than three years. Incredibly, in 1975, the total population had reduced to only 13 individuals as a result of massive deforestation by humans, predation by introduced and natural enemies, and natural disasters. The parrot population has suffered severely due to the deforestation of

initiated. That breeding flock was later split and a portion moved to a second aviary in Rio Abajo at the opposite end of the island to prevent the catastrophic loss of the entire captive flock due to a hurricane or disease.

Disastrous hurricanes have taken their toll. By 1988, through the efforts of the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program, the wild population had climbed to 46 birds. Then the following year, on September 18th, 1989, Hurricane Hugo struck and reduced the wild population by half, to 20-23 birds.



View from the Luquillo Aviary overlooking the El Yunque Rainforest and the habitat of the Puerto Rican Parrot. The large flight to the left is used to train each year's potential release group of birds. Here the birds are encouraged to eat food from their natural habitat and gain flying strength and agility.

Due to the captive breeding efforts of the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program 161 Puerto Rican Parrots now live in the two breeding aviaries. This year the Luquillo Aviary successfully raised 10 chicks, for a total of 58 within the captive breeding program, and the Rio Abajo aviary now has a total of 103. Each year since May of 2000 select individual captive reared parrots have been trained and released into the wild population. A total of 40 parrots have been released so far:

- 10 parrots in 2000
- 16 parrots in 2001
- 9 parrots in 2002
- 5 parrots in 2004

All releases have been into the tiny existing wild population in the El Yunque area of the Caribbean National Forest. The first year survival estimates for the first three



A healthy baby Puerto Rican Parrot from a nest box at the Luquillo Breeding Aviary.

release year is 41%. The radio transmitters used to track the release birds only last about one year due to the tiny size of the transmitter and battery. So far three out of the five birds released in 2004 (61%) have survived the dangers of the wild. The relatively high first year success rate shows that these birds have been well trained to forage and survive in the wild prior to their



Jafet Velez, M.S. checks on a chick rescued from the wild. This chick from nest "2A" suffered a broken leg as it fell during fledging from the nest. Wilfredo Abreu's team rescued the chick from the ground before it became "mongoose meat" and brought it to the aviary to have a cast placed on its leg.

release from the training aviary. The biggest enemy of the young released parrots has proven to be the resident Red Tailed Hawks. About one half of all deaths of wild Puerto Rican Parrots have been due to Red Tailed Hawks.

The present Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program is supervised by Fernando Nunez Garcia of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The program enlists 12 full time employees, four of whom are biologists, as well as many volunteers. The entire project has an annual budget close to \$1 million.

The Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program is divided into three interrelated teams.

- The Luquillo Aviary team, headed by Jafet Velez-Valetin, M.S. is responsible for the captive breeding program. Here Puerto Rican Amazons are bred and nurtured for eventual release in the wild. Additionally,

any birds requiring medical attention from the aviary or the wild can be treated at the on site veterinary operator.

The Luquillo Aviary raised the original birds that were transferred in 1993 to start the Rio Abajo Aviary run under the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental.



Dr. Thomas White and Dr. Mark Stafford confer inside one of the permanent observation blinds used to monitor each wild nest.

- The Field Team, headed by Wilfredo Abreu, a biological technician, is responsible for monitoring and protecting the wild nests, installing artificial nest boxes in the wild and conducting the wild population census. Wilfredo's team will often head into the field by 4:00 am, before the rainforest awakes, and guard the active nests until 8:00 pm, well after dark....sixteen hours days, seven days a week, for weeks and weeks until the last chick safely fledges. If Wilfredo's team needs to rescue an egg or bird it is taken to the Luquillo Aviary for recovery.

This year there was a total of 5 active nests in the wild with total of 14 eggs, of which 12 were fertile and 11 hatched. A total of 7 fledged, of which 3 were later lost to hawks and 1 died from unknown causes. So far three young 2004 babies are flying with their wild parents.

- The Third Team, headed by Dr. Thomas White, PhD, develops and implements strategic plans for the release of the captive bred parrots into the wild population and the subsequent telemetry studies of radio collared birds. It is due to Dr. White's population studies and telemetry that accurate assessments of the 2004 babies' whereabouts can be monitored. If telemetry shows a bird isn't moving around the valley as it should, Dr. White fights his way through the thick jungle to find it, hoping he gets to it before a predatory mongoose.



Dr. Tom White adjusts telemetry equipment to track the frequency of a recently released female in the wild. He has tuned the equipment to track the release bird.

It is conceivable that a single powerful hurricane could eliminate the entire wild population of Puerto Rican Parrots as they are all restricted to a single mountainous valley on the eastern end of Puerto Rico...directly in the path of any approaching tropical hurricane. For this reason an exciting huge release is being planned by Dr. White for 2006 into the more protected Karst region on the opposite end of the island. "The hope is to establish a second, completely new and independent flock of wild Puerto Rican Amazons."



Habitat of the Puerto Rican Parrot, El Yunque Rainforest, Caribbean National Forest.

Despite this amazing effort there are still unanswered questions. Dr. White states a desire to: "find a way to increase the numbers of breeding pairs in the wild...this has been a perennial mystery since historically the numbers of breeding birds doesn't track increases in total population..." Although the total number of birds in the wild has increased, the number actually breeding in the wild has not shown a commensurate gain.

When asked what he would say, if granted one wish for the Puerto Rican Amazon, Supervisor Fernando Nunez Garcia stated: "A new breeding facility to replace the aging Luquillo Aviary." "The Service considers the relocation of the Luquillo aviary one of the highest priorities in the recovery efforts." Fernando is hoping for



A tiny chick nurtured at the aviary. The chick was rescued as it tried to pip from its egg and became hopelessly entangled in the remains of the air sack. Without the intensive and vigilant monitoring by the staff this chick would not have survived.



A female Puerto Rican Parrot fitted with her radio collar. Just before release she has submitted to a vet exam, cultures and a visit to the scales to obtain a pre-release weight.

funds to construct a new aviary in a lowland climate that is more conducive to parrot breeding.

The crux of the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program centers on the old and outdated Luquillo breeding facility. The Luquillo breeding facility was originally an emergency, stop-gap, creation in an old army building converted for parrot breeding. That was decades ago, in 1973. At that time it was the only government structure within the Caribbean National Forest (and within the habitat of the wild population) available to the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program. It was never originally intended to be a breeding facility, let alone the breeding facility responsible for saving the rarest parrot in the wild. The FWS Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program has requested funding to relocate the breeding facility.

At this time it is obvious that the original converted army building, and its present site in a harsh area of the Caribbean National Forest of Puerto Rico, is not suitable as a definitive breeding facility to save the parrot from extinction. Numerous problems have been identified with the present dilapidated building and site:

- The present site is within the Highlands,



A rare view of the El Yunque Rainforest, Caribbean National Forest without the characteristic shroud of rain clouds. The arrow points to the Luquillo Aviary.

the harshest, most rainy and humid, area of the Caribbean National Forest highlands. The conditions at this highland site are therefore not conducive to successful parrot breeding. The unfavorable temperatures and humid conditions favor the proliferation of fungus and bacteria within the breeding aviary site, leading to death, failure and illness of the young parrots. Moving the breeding facility to the proposed lowland site will create a favorable environment for successful parrot breeding.

- The present stop-gap building, originally a WW II era building, is badly deteriorating.
- The present breeding facility, due to its remote site in the rainiest portion of the island, is often completely isolated by landslides and rains. Access and communications to the facility are often lost due to the frequent heavy rains and landslides. Power failures due to storms and



Jafet Velez, second from right, with two members of the Luquillo staff. Dr Mark Stafford, the author and president of Parrots International, on the right.

Thanks Rosemary!

By MIKE REYNOLDS

After fifteen years of editing *PsittaScene*, Rosemary Low is giving up this demanding task. Having worked with her throughout that time, I cannot miss the opportunity to pay a tribute to her invaluable contribution to the World Parrot Trust.

When Andrew Greenwood, David Woolcock and I launched the Trust back in 1989 nobody knew who we were - but when Rosemary Low edited the first edition of *PsittaScene*, people interested in parrots had a better idea of our credentials and intentions. At that time, and even more so now, Rosemary was known to be the pre-eminent author on parrots, and was admired and respected by aviculturists and pet owners worldwide.

Producing *PsittaScene* four times a year is quite a challenge, and the fact that we have now despatched 60 issues around the world to our members is a substantial achievement. Under Rosemary's editorship we have tried to find a good balance between reporting WPT conservation projects, dealing with avicultural and pet parrot issues, and generally reporting on the worldwide parrot scene. We will continue to do this, and



Rosemary will continue to contribute articles on subjects of special interest to her.

We've illustrated this 'Thank You' with a picture I took of Rosemary at the St. Vincent parrot breeding centre on that Caribbean island. She has visited every significant parrot location, kept virtually all families of parrots, and continues to provide sensible, practical, realistic advice on any question affecting the conservation and well-being of these very special birds. Like all of us at the Trust, she puts the interests of the birds, both wild and captive, at the top of her priorities.

All WPT members can keep in touch with Rosemary by writing to: Rosemary Low, PO Box 100, Mansfield, Notts, NG20 9NZ, and asking for her list of available books.



falling trees are the norm rather than the exception creating havoc and jeopardizing incubation and veterinary care.

- The proposed new aviary and location at the lower altitude is closer to the altitude and environmental conditions preferable to the Puerto Rican Parrot before it became

so endangered and before its range became restricted to higher altitudes due to habitat loss and deforestation.

Therefore, the proposed lower altitude aviary would provide better environmental and logistical possibilities for the successful breeding for the Puerto Rican

Parrot Recovery Program. Since breeding of this captive population is crucial to the recovery effort, the relocation of the aviary will be a major step in saving the Puerto Rican Parrot from extinction. Additional information about this project can be obtained from Parrots International.



A Puerto Rican Parrot eating the fruit from the Sierra Palm (Prestoea montana) in the El Yunque Rainforest. The parrot's beak sometimes become darkly stained from the purplish flesh of the palm nut fruit.

Parrots International is a not-for-profit conservation partner of WPT dedicated to promoting and fostering international cooperation in the conservation of endangered parrot species. Parrots International works in cooperation with other conservation organizations, donors, field research teams, responsible aviculturists and parrot clubs to propose, develop and fund conservation projects throughout the world. PI supports conservation via aviculture and emphasizes "in situ" conservation with the premise that "Conservation Happens in the Wild."

THE CAROL

For outstanding achievement AWARDED TO



The Trustees of the World Parrot Trust are delighted to announce that their Carolina Medal has been awarded to Joseph M. Forshaw. This medal was introduced by the Trust in 1997, and has only been awarded previously to Dr. Carl Jones for his work in re-establishing the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius.

We received the following Commendation from Dr. Stephen Garnett:

COMMENDATION FOR JOE FORSHAW

Forty years ago this year Joe Forshaw set out for the American Museum of Natural History, New York, under a Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fellowship to study specimens of Australian parrots. It began a career in parrots, and contribution to parrot conservation, that continues to this day.

His first major work was *Australian Parrots* (Lansdowne Press, 1969), a stunning photographic celebration of what we knew about parrots at the time but he was soon to set his sights much higher. In 1971 he was awarded a Churchill Memorial Fellowship and, in collaboration with bird artist Bill Cooper, set out to create *Parrots of the World* (Lansdowne Editions 1973). At the time it was an extremely ambitious undertaking for both author and artist, and I am sure some said it could not be done. But written it was and in so doing inspired parrot lovers all over the world in their efforts to conserve this wonderful group of birds.

With *Parrots of the World* we had a comprehensive account of the current state of knowledge, a catalogue of parrot variety and some indication of where conservation effort was most important. Its value has been further enhanced over the years by Joe's renewal of the text in new editions and it is still a standard work of reference for any new parrot study.

In Australia we were especially lucky to have Joe's skill and enthusiasm for parrots because in 1981 he teamed up with Bill to create a new version of *Australian Parrots*, this time illustrated with paintings. This book has weathered time even better than its global cousin with the most recent edition, its third, appearing just two years ago. In the same year they produced the superb *Cockatoos: A portfolio of all Species* (Nokomis Editions, 2002)

In the meantime Joe's partnership with Bill Cooper has also resulted in many other great works that combine Joe's meticulous scholarship with Bill's equally exact paintings - books like *Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds* (Collins, 1977), *Kingfishers and Related Birds* (Lansdowne Editions, 6 volumes 1983-1994) *Turocos: A Portfolio of all Species* (Nokomis Editions, 1997). A few people are lucky enough to have summarised the knowledge on just one group of birds - Joe has become an internationally renowned expert on five.

Joe's books have undoubtedly contributed enormously to the study and conservation of parrots in Australia and, after forty years, he remains unchallenged as an expert on the group in this country. He is certainly a worthy recipient of the Carolina Medal for 2004.

Stephen Garnett, Professor Tropical Knowledge, Charles Darwin University, Australia

WINNER OF A CAROLINA MEDAL

Presented to Joe Forshaw
for his contribution to
parrot conservation



Carolina Parakeets by Audubon.



On behalf of the World Parrot Trust, Chairman Mike Reynolds presents the Carolina Medal to Joe Forshaw at the June 2004 meeting of the parrot expert group brought together at Chester Zoo to update the IUCN/WPT Parrot Action Plan.



Joe Forshaw in action at the site of WPT's project to protect the threatened sub-species of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo in Victoria, Australia.

The Carolina Medal is intended to be a constant reminder of the fragile status of one third of all parrot species in the wild, and the welfare needs of millions of captive birds worldwide.

The World Parrot Trust invites nominations for future awards of the Carolina Medal. Individuals or organisations are invited to write to: The Trustees, World Parrot Trust, Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall, TR27 4HB.

Fax: 01736 751028.

Email: uk@worldparrottrust.org

'The Carolina Medal'

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Teaching your bird to talk

By Diane Grindol and Tom Roudybush

excerpt from Chapter 12

Communicating and playing with your bird

This chapter deals with some of the more advanced aspects of keeping an intelligent and talking bird as a companion. Not only is it fun to have a talking parrot, but there are ways that your verbalizations can be used to make life easier for yourself and your bird. Beyond “hello” you can communicate with your parrot and can react to what a parrot is trying to communicate to you. We don’t think of birds as being obedience trained, but there actually are many areas of bird stewardship that are easier with communication.

Verbal interactions with our parrots are one form of play in which we can engage with our avian companions. Birds have an endless capacity for play and willingness to engage in play. Providing an enriched environment for your bird, and coming up with appropriate games and activities is one of the challenging aspects of having a feathered friend. We’ll give you some suggestions in this chapter.

Communication makes life easier

It’s possible to have a relationship with a parrot in which there is some advanced interspecies communication. There are many ways to acknowledge the needs of your parrot and to tell her about your wishes. Some of these are verbal on your part. Even a non-talking parrot can respond to verbal cues and commands. A talking parrot can ask for what she wants as well.

Entering a cage

It’s very useful to have verbal cues for your bird in your daily interactions. One of the very useful commands you can develop a word that means “time to get in your cage.” This makes it easier for other people, such

as a pet sitter or relative, to care for your bird when you are away.

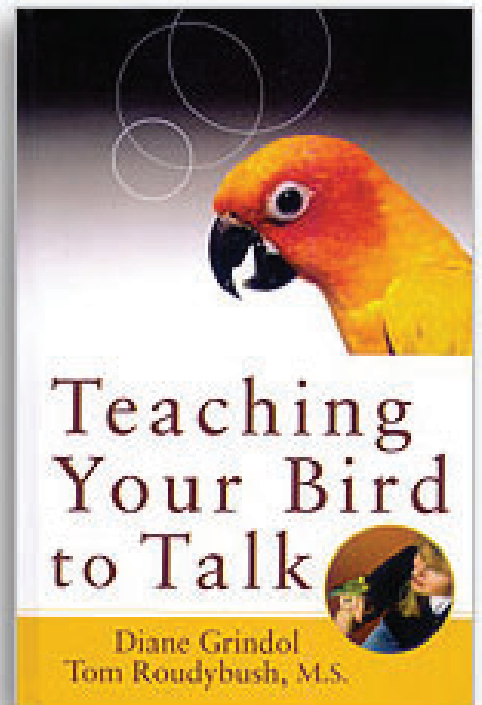
This Blue-fronted Amazon is poised to go into her cage at a word from her human companion. It’s very useful to have a verbal command for an everyday action like entering a cage.

You can choose the verbal cue to give your parrot for this action. The cue might be “time to go in,” “back to your cage,” “home” or “go in.” Say it consistently for a while when you see her going into her cage. Praise her profusely for going in the cage as you say the word. You may even entice your bird to enter her cage by placing a peanut or other favored treat in the cage. That’s a reward for your parrot in itself. Be sure to practice this cue at different times of the day and when different things are happening in the house. It doesn’t take long for a parrot to catch on. You can start saying your cue word in order to get a response, then guide her into her cage if she doesn’t respond.

You can also accompany your cue word with a hand signal or action of some kind. You could tap the top of the cage, sweep your hand into the cage or point to the cage, for example. The keys to shaping a behavior is to be consistent in your words and action, and to praise your parrot profusely when you observe the desired behavior. A talking parrot may begin to use the cue word to ask to go back to her cage.

Good night

Once you establish a good night routine with your bird, she can ask to go to bed. The whole routine usually involves going to the bird, getting her back in her cage as we discussed above, covering the cage and turning off the lights. Many people have a sleeping cage for their bird in a separate area of the house that can be both quiet and dark at a bird’s bedtime. Birds need more sleep than most people, around 10-12 hours per night and so our schedules do not always mesh. The consequences of sleep



deprivation for your parrot range from grouchiness and nippy behavior to increased breeding behavior that could trigger chewing and biting for territorial reasons as well as egg laying in females.

The routine for putting your bird to bed can include a word you repeat throughout the process such as “good night,” “nighty night,” “sweet dreams” or “bedtime.” Your bird then knows it’s time to settle down and go to sleep. If she talks, she can ask to go to bed when she’s getting tired. You are giving her the tools to communicate with you. If your bird doesn’t talk, watch for actions from your bird that signal the same thing. Diane’s parrot Aztec doesn’t say a word, but he communicates in very understandable mime. If he wants to go somewhere, he leans in that direction or takes off on his own. If it’s bedtime, he’s up on his roosting perch and dozing. Diane responds to his body language, and talks to him even when she’s not going to get a verbal response. There’s obviously understanding on Aztec’s part.

No hassles moving around

Our birds are built to fly speedily from one place to another. Many companion birds have clipped wings, however, and rely on humans for transportation around the house. It’s easiest when both you and your bird cooperate to move smoothly and accomplish this without a hassle. When a bird doesn’t understand where you’re going, she may jump off your arm, refuse to go in her cage, or head back the direction from which you were coming.

This male pearl Cockatiel is learning to have a hand laid over his back. Eventually,



this will be a useful action for returning him to his cage.



A bird is immobilized when you hold your hand over her back, keeping her wings at her side. That sounds simple enough. To a bird, this can be a very threatening action. Birds are prey animals, and their instincts tell them that they are about to become someone's lunch when they're restrained. With your reassurance a bird can learn to be restrained in this way. Start in small steps. Practice putting your hand near your bird's back, then over her back, actually touching it. Use a word that will mean you're on the move with her. Next, start gently putting pressure on your bird with your hand, and eventually progress to holding down her wings and taking steps. This method of transportation will become second nature to you and your bird over time.

Of course, there are other ways you two can move. You can grab both her legs and dance from place to place. You can securely hold her toes with a thumb while she's perched on your hand. She can climb on a stick at your command, and be whisked to her cage or a play stand. The important thing is to start talking to your bird while these actions are taking place. Use a word or phrase consistently with these actions. That's how you communicate with her. It eliminates the surprise factor for the bird. When she knows what you want and what you are doing by your actions, she is less likely to feel that you are being unpredictable or even threatening. When she has words or actions she can use to make requests of you, her life is less frustrating.

Going up

Occasionally when Diane's cockatiels are out of their cage and milling around the top of it, a startling event happens. The event is startling to the birds, such as a cat looking in the window, a loud noise or even an earthquake. This stimulates a bird's natural

flight reaction so that there are up to a dozen cockatiels spread out in various parts of the house to which they've flown in their excitement.

The cockatiels, however, know the command "up the ladder" and start heading for long ladders placed near their cages that extend from the floor up to the first bars of the cage. At first, Diane went to the birds, said "up the ladder," and pressed the ladder to them. Cockatiels naturally want to get up off the floor, and would willingly climb on. Diane then placed the ladder so it leaned against the cage, and the bird was returned home that way. After doing that a few times, she started saying "up the ladder" and guiding the birds toward the base of the ladder, which they now knew was a way up off the floor and home.

Now "up the ladder" means that the birds seek out the ladder on their own. It's great to be able to give them a cue that gets everyone back to safety. Almost everyone. Sometimes one of them gets behind a piece of furniture and has to be retrieved. You can establish a similar routine with your bird. This has made a big difference to new owners of chicks who have limited mobility, such as one little stinker who lives with a 92 year old woman.

Getting carried away

Most companion birds are going to be getting into a carrier at some point in their lives. Your bird will need to travel to the veterinarian safely in a carrier, may make a daily trip to work in a carrier or might need emergency accommodations on a trip or in the event of a natural disaster. Use a word, command or hand signal consistently to mean "get in the carrier" consistently and your bird will learn to calmly enter a carrier. You'll need to practice this daily for a few weeks. Just get in the habit of using a carrier to travel between rooms or up and down stairs. Or start taking your bird on errands with you.



Did this Meyer's Parrot arrive at her destination via a carrier? Communicate with your parrot about getting into a bird carrier "let's go" and make sure you take her to fun destinations in one, as well as to those necessary trips to see an avian veterinarian.

It's nice when a bird doesn't associate getting in a carrier only with a trip to see the avian veterinarian. Take your bird on "walks" in her carrier or on car trips to friends or out to the store.

Lassie come home

We think of obedience commands like "come" as being in the realm of dog training, but this is a useful command for a bird to learn as well. What would happen if your bird ever, ever got outside by mistake? Most companion birds are not familiar with the environment outside their home and can't find their way home. Remember, birds are very visual. Many birds don't have a homing instinct either. Cockatiels, for example, are nomadic by nature, and many parrots forage over a vast territory in the wild and don't instinctually stay within a small area. For some reason, many companion birds who fly onto a high perch outside don't necessarily have the skill of getting down out of a tall tree or off a phone wire. You'll want to have a command for your bird that means "come to me." And you want to use it before local predators catch on that your bird is vulnerable.

Start using your "come" command whenever your bird is heading for you. Say: "Good come, come on, you're a good bird to come to me." Praise your bird for coming to you. Since your bird knows how to step "up" on your finger, give that command a few inches away and force your bird to come over to step up. I think it's especially important to use both a hand signal and a voice command for "come" in case your bird is far away but within bird vision.

What's next, are we going to ask you to teach your bird to come, sit, stay and heel? Think what fun a talking bird will have turning the tables with this command. I can just see them learning come here, come cage, come kitchen, come couch and so on to call you to a location!

Want some?

If we are observant, our birds try to tell us what they want. In fact, that's usually what they're doing. Our avian companions don't try to please the way a dog does. They want to satisfy their own wishes and ensure their own survival. As a prey animal, some of their actions are dictated by instincts to survive.

Offer your bird a dish of water or a treat food and ask her if she wants a drink or if she wants a bite? Often shaking the head means “no.” If that’s not the case with your bird, notice what reaction she does give. There will be times that the answer is “yes” and your bird will take a drink, grab the treat or bite into it. As you make these offerings, name the treat. Your talking bird could learn to say what she wants. Your non-talking bird will learn to identify favorite foods. Diane has no doubt that Aztec knows what a “nut” is, and he answers yes or no by body language when offered a drink from a cup.

Grooming is a breeze

Bird grooming consists of keeping wing feathers and nails trimmed. You can combine verbal commands with your actions to get into a routine for grooming that does not involve a lot of stress for your bird. Toweling a bird every once in a while, with no explanation of what’s going on can be traumatic for our prey species pets. However, being conditioned to having her wings and feet handled regularly can make grooming chores just part of everyday life for your companion bird.

In case you’ve wondered about beak grooming, that is a grooming job that should be done by a professional. If your bird’s beak needs to be groomed, take her in to see your avian veterinarian. In some cases beak overgrowth indicates a health condition, so you will want to have that assessed. In some places there are bird groomers who have become expert at beak grooming and can competently do that job too. A bird’s beak is an important part of her anatomy. To her it’s an extra foot, a hand and a mouth all in one. A beak also has a great many nerves and blood vessels in it. And of course the beak is attached to a bird’s tongue, another important part of her anatomy. You do not want to accidentally cause permanent harm to your bird by making a mistake while grooming a beak. Most healthy birds do not need much maintenance on their beaks. Many never need any beak grooming at all. Performing birds might have their beaks shined up so they look good on stage, but the typical healthy companion bird doesn’t need regular beak grooming as a general rule.

Some birds naturally extend their wings to show off. That seems to be a regular and natural behavior for many macaws and sometimes for cockatoos. Your bird will learn to do this behavior on cue if you start using a word consistently when you see her do the behavior. To prepare your bird for clipping her wing feathers, also start handling her feathers when her wings are outstretched, and sometimes pull her wings up to get her used to the handling and restraint. Go through all the motions you’ll

use when trimming a wing feather, except actually doing so. This is good conditioning, good practice for the actual act so that wing clipping is not stressful for your companion bird.

Some birds readily display their wings and can learn to do so on command, like this Red-fronted Macaw. It’s a simple step from there to groom wing feathers.

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



Birds in the wild, like these Red-fronted Macaws in Bolivia, are athletic and fly great distances daily. Encourage your companion bird to flap wings for exercise.

With smaller birds, on a regular basis play games with a towel or practice the restraint you will be using when clipping wings. Even our smallest birds can get used to being picked up with a hand over the back, being held in a towel and being held against your chest while you pull out their wings to inspect them.

One low stress way of trimming a large parrot’s toenails is to ask your bird to put her foot through the bars of her cage, or to hand you her foot when she’s on the back of a chair. Then use a metal file to file at least one of her nails. She can learn “next,” “foot” or some other relevant command so that this becomes routine.

Danger!

A bird, whether she verbalizes in English herself or not, can learn that you have exclamations designed to keep her safe. One of these Diane uses to talk to her (non-verbal) Pionus is “hot” to warn Aztec that a serving of food is still too hot to eat. She first used this when he dived into a plate of steaming spaghetti and was unpleasantly surprised by how hot it was. She uses it to stop him from tasting hot foods and imbibing of hot drinks.

In your everyday life, perhaps “stop,” “no,” “watch out” or “tsk tsk” would be useful phrases to use when a bird is too near a predatory animal, a hot stove, an open window, a poisonous plant or some other danger.

Fetch, a la bird

You know how the game of fetch goes with a dog. You throw a stick or a Frisbee, and the dog brings it back to you. Then you start over. This goes on endlessly if you have a retriever breed! Birds can become quite adept at a form of fetch, too. The rules are a little different with them, though. You give them an object or a group of objects with which to play. This could be bottle caps, small craft sticks, buttons or beads. Then the bird throws an object overboard, off the top of her cage or over the ledge of a table. She will then most likely go to the edge and look over, eyeing the damage done below. This seems to be an important part of the ritual.

You fetch the object and return it to the bird, then the game starts over again. Birds happily do this with more than one item, such as a whole selection of colored sticks or a whole bowl of freshly cut veggies (this is to be discouraged). You can have fun teaching your bird how to throw items into a specific container or from a specific area. Maybe you will be training a birdie basketball star.

Verbalizations you can use in this game include naming objects, asking your bird to get a specific object, or using a word to tell her that you are about to play this game. There are also exclamations of fun and joy you can associate with throwing objects and with watching objects fall. “Wheeeeeee, ohhhhhh, oh-oh!” This topic and many more are covered in great depth in “Teaching Your Bird to Talk.”

This book is available at www.avianpublications.com.



Photo: Diane Grindol



Fabulous Feathers, Remarkable Birds

A new book by Rosemary Low



Did you know that female ducks that are forcefully separated from their chosen mates and force-paired will, in their anger, harass to death the new male?

That parakeets can show such devotion to their mates that one fed her sick mate for six months until he could feed himself again? A goose whose gander could not fly went south every autumn with their offspring to direct them to the migration route, and then devotedly returned to her captive mate. In *Fabulous Feathers, Remarkable Birds*, Rosemary Low recounts remarkable stories of birdlife.

Birds inspire devotion in millions of people worldwide. Through the ages these denizens of our skies have played an important role in the life of man. They have provided convenient sources of food, feathers for decoration and for practical purposes, sport, pets and spiritual inspiration with their beauty and songs.

Now they need our help. Escalating human populations have had serious consequences for 12% or more of the world's birds. They are at risk of extinction within this century. Two hundred are already on the brink.

In this book Rosemary explains why, taking us to many corners of the earth to give examples. From the flightless, nocturnal, endearing Kakapo (a giant parrot) of New Zealand, to the amazing California Condor, saved from extinction by captive breeding to the recently-discovered Amazonian Parrotlet in Peru, she recounts their fascinating and often inspirational stories. And those of the players in the dramas of their saving or of their extinction.

Rosemary has been passionately involved with birds since she was five years old. It was a pet duck that she pushed around in a doll's pram! Birds, and ultimately parrots, became her way of life. Writing and travelling to over 40 countries to observe them, this is her 24th book on birds. *Fabulous Feathers, Remarkable Birds* (ISBN 1 903 138 49 3) is illustrated with colour and more than 100 black and white photographs, 370 pages. It is distributed by the author and can be obtained priced £16.50 post paid UK, (Euros 25) from Rosemary Low, PO Box 100, Mansfield, Notts, NG20 9NZ. Please make cheque payable to Rosemary Low.



Companion parrot workshop series

The Art and Science of Behavior and Training

A comprehensive two part series: The first part, "Foundation Skills", will be two days of lectures and demonstration. The second part, "Advanced Skills", will be a full week of advanced lectures and hands-on training at Natural Encounters Inc's 34-acre facility in Winter Haven, Florida.

Speakers:

Steve Martin, President/Director, Natural Encounters, Inc.

Steve Martin is the President of Natural Encounters, Inc. and, The World of Birds Show, Inc. (doing business as Natural Encounters Conservation Fund, Inc. NECF). He began his professional animal training career when he set up the first of its kind, free-flight bird show at the San Diego Wild Animal Park in 1976. Since then he has produced educational animal programs at over 30 facilities around the world.



Steve provides a variety of professional services to zoological facilities world wide, such as producing and presenting educational animal shows; consulting on animal welfare, enrichment and training; and delivering zoo-wide animal training programs. These programs consist of workshops on the art and science of training exhibit animals for husbandry, medical procedures, and enrichment, as well as developing visitor education programs. Steve also teaches a one-week course on animal training and educational animal show production, annually at his ranch.

Steve is a Trustee of the World Parrot Trust, a core team member of the California Condor Recovery Team, and International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators.

S.G. Friedman, Ph.D., Utah State University

Susan Friedman is a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at Utah State University. She currently teaches courses in research methods and learning and behavior. Susan's past work as an applied behaviorist with children exhibiting severe behavior disorders provides the basis of the humane philosophy and scientifically sound teaching technology she advocates for non-human learners of all species. Foremost in this cross-disciplinary effort is her interest in teaching the fundamental principles of learning and behavior and problem solving tools of Applied Behavior Analysis to lay people and professionals associated with companion parrots.



As a consultant to the Natural Encounters Inc. training workshop team, Susan has taught at a several zoos and two week-long animal training courses. She has written articles for parrot magazines; is the lead author of two chapters on the natural science of behavior in two new avian veterinary texts (in press); runs the Behavior Analysis Solutions internet list at www.parrottalk.com; and is a core member of the California Condor Recover Team.

Foundation skills:

October 22 - 24, 2004 in Orlando, Florida or November 19 - 21, 2004 in Orlando, Florida

Advanced skills:

January 8-13, 2005 or May 21-26, 2005 in Winter Haven, Florida (must attend Foundation Skills to qualify)

Visit the Natural Encounters, Inc. web site for more details:
www.naturalencounters.com

The parrot world in 2004

BY MIKE REYNOLDS

These notes aim to review the conflicts between pristine nature and man's special interests in the parrots. These interests can be scientific, hobbyist, commercial, protectionist or regulatory. We start by introducing the birds themselves. Over three hundred species, from tiny lovebirds and budgerigars to magnificent metre long macaws, most in brilliant colours and with spectacular individual characteristics. One of the largest bird families, and the most endangered, it occupies its niches around the world, established over millions of years. Because they are beautiful, fascinating and robust, they have for centuries been sought after and kept in captivity by our societies.

Next up are parrot habitats, primarily tropical rainforests, but also including deserts, tundra, sea cliffs, and even snow capped mountains in New Zealand. As we know only too well, virtually all these habitats are under threat, from logging, agriculture, cattle ranching, global warming and other hazards resulting from our greed and carelessness. If we don't save the habitats we won't save the parrots.



parrots from their nests and selling them for a pittance to traders. Often they destroy the precious nest sites by cutting into the trees. Poverty kills millions of wild parrots; for every bird that reaches a market in the developed world as many as four die along the way.

The traders and middle men who deal in these wild caught birds are, almost without exception, a blot on society. Much photographic evidence demonstrates their total lack of concern for the sensitive creatures they trap or steal from nests, to be crated up and shipped off, often illegally, to local or foreign markets. Those bird dealers who received the parrots - often dead, or sick and terrified - are only interested in them as a potentially profitable commercial commodity. How strange it is that some supposed bird protection organisations actually support the idea of live parrots and other birds being a part of the 'sustainable use' that has become a hackneyed catchphrase for heartless theoretical environmentalists.

So where do the surviving traded birds go? They appear in markets or shopping malls around the world, and are bought by well-meaning people who may have seen a cute cockatoo on television, and would like to have one for Christmas or as a present for the kids. After a couple of weeks when the bird fails to talk or act in a friendly way, it is likely to be shut away in its cage for many years, or be given away to a 'parrot rescue' organisation. Thousands of these unwanted birds are washing around in Europe and the USA. It has to be said that many parrots are lucky enough to be taken on as treasured pet or companion birds by thoughtful and committed owners who treat them as the intelligent wild animals they are. Experience tells us that such people are in a minority. The World Parrot Trust does what it can to educate would-be parrot owners on the heavy responsibility they are taking on.

The next group interested in the parrots are the aviculturists or breeders. These are people who, in previous generations, might

Photo: Lars Lepperhoff



Now meet the indigenous people who live in close proximity to the parrots. For millennia they have used these birds, for the pot and as companions. Struggling to eke out a living, many have found they can get a modest income by taking young

Photo: Bent & Birh Pedersen



Photo: Mark Norton



have kept canaries, budgies, pigeons or poultry as a hobby, almost entirely for pleasure, with little expectation of profit. Around the 1970s many found that it was possible to breed parrots in captivity, and in almost every country aviculturists developed their hobby into a money-making enterprise. This led to an increased demand for wild caught parrots as breeding stock, and through the 1970s and 1980s millions of birds were imported. Eventually, however, a flow of aviary-bred young parrots, often tame from being hand-reared, became available to would-be pet parrot owners. The way in which these breeding birds are kept varies greatly, from palatial conditions to grim parrot farms.

Photo: Linda Adam



Street bird seller in Spain.

recognise that the parrots are first class ambassadors for nature wherever they exist. Many zoos and specialised bird collections exhibit these birds, and find them useful in attracting visitors. IUCN, the World Conservation Union, has co-published with The World Parrot Trust a 'Parrot Action Plan', that provides information on the conservation needs of 98 of the most endangered parrot species. This plan, available to all on the Internet, has been widely consulted, and is about to be updated by The World Parrot Trust.

but in many cases implementation is inadequate or non-existent.

A major conservation breakthrough was the introduction in 1992 of the 'Wild Bird Conservation Act' in the USA. This closed the legal importation of parrots into the USA, saving the lives of thousands of wild parrots, and providing new opportunities for the breeders of parrots in captivity. The World Parrot Trust is campaigning for a similar bill to be introduced into the European Union.

A majority of national governments has signed up to CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. This sets out to prevent the international transportation of endangered parrots, among other species and animal products,

This brief excursion around the parrot world shows that the exploitation of the parrots continues unabated. Their future is very uncertain, and every individual and organisation interested in them must aim to work cooperatively for their survival.

Photo: Alison Hales



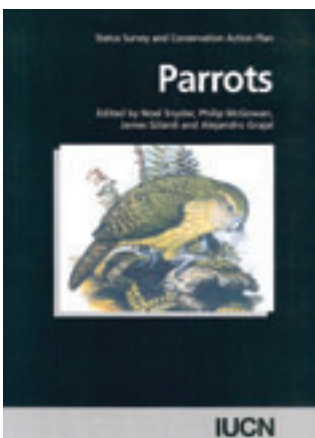
Because of the vast expansion of parrot keeping in its various forms, large commercial opportunities have arisen in many areas. It is estimated that as many as fifty million parrots are kept in captivity worldwide; this may equal the number of parrots left in the wild. All these captive birds need to be housed, fed with special diets, attended by expert avian vets. Many publications help owners with information on all aspects of bird-keeping, including sales, insurance, breeding, health and other issues. It is estimated by trade sources that the global expenditure on parrots may exceed six billion dollars. This is a hugely profitable industry, but there is virtually no attempt by the companies involved to put any funds back into helping preserve parrot species in the wild.

Scientific interest in the parrots is considerable. They present great opportunities for study in interesting localities around the globe. Conservationists

Photo: Sam Williams



WPT protestors in London on World Parrot Day 2004.



Kakapo update

By DON MERTON, New Zealand Department of Conservation

Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) numbers have remained stable since the last breeding event (2002) at 86 birds (41 females : 45 males). These are located on three off-shore islands to which they have been relocated since 1975 to protect them from introduced predatory mammals. Thirty nine of the 86 Kakapo (45%) are progeny of translocated birds. The remainder (47) are from Stewart Island, with the exception of an aged male known as "Richard Henry" - the last known surviving individual from the New Zealand mainland. No natural population remains. Survival continues to be remarkably high: the last adult death being in 1998. Age is known for 41 birds (~48% of the population) hatched since 1980. The remainder are of unknown age. Location, age and sex of surviving birds is summarised below.

Movements

No Kakapo have been moved between islands since May 2003, when the last five birds from Maud Island were transferred to Te Kakahu/Chalky Island in south western Fiordland - so ending Maud's 29 year association with Kakapo recovery. While Kakapo placed on Maud since 1974 have shown that they are capable of maintaining good health and condition, only one breeding attempt is known to have occurred (in 1998 when 3 chicks were raised). The remaining birds - one adult male, three subadult males & one subadult female - were therefore transferred to Te Kakahu where breeding is more likely to occur.

Health

All birds are in good health and condition. "Doc", the two year old male that in March 2003 was found to have a deep flesh wound above his right groin caused by a sharp stick, has now fully recovered following veterinary treatment and a total of ~6 months in captivity. In mid-October 2003 he was moved to a portable (fabric) release pen and in early November released to

free-range. Since being freed he has remained in the release location, his weight has stabilized and he has been integrated into the routine supplementary feeding regime.



Alice feeding Manu.

During January 2004 two adult males were found to have minor injuries caused by their transmitter harnesses. Back-pack transmitters were removed and wing units fitted. The injuries are healing satisfactorily, but as yet back-pack transmitters have not been replaced.

Photo: Gideon Climo



Feeding experiments

With neither a rimu nor beech mast (= heavy fruit crop) predicted on Whenua Hou or Te Kakahu during the summer of 2003/2004 there was an uncompromised opportunity to trial supplementary diets - the object being to attempt to induce breeding in a year when, clearly, breeding would not otherwise occur.

Three supplemental diets were trialed -

- 1 Dried rimu, kahikatea or totara fruit;
- 2 Nutritionally-balanced pellets;
- 3 Pellets based on the nutrient profile of green rimu fruit.

On Whenua Hou, all 13 adult plus three 5 year old females, together with 12 of the 20 adult males took part in feeding trials, and on Te Kakahu, all 10 females and 7 of the 9 males took part in feeding trials during the lead-up to the (potential) breeding season. Supplementary feeding on Codfish had been discontinued in February 2003, but resumed in September (males) & November (females). On Te Kakahu feeding had continued throughout 2003, with quantities being increased in September for males and November for females.

Supplementary food was primarily a nutritionally balanced pellet developed specifically for Kakapo, but in addition five females were offered dried podocarp fruit (kahikatea, rimu and totara). A second pellet recipe simulating the gross nutrient content of green rimu fruit was offered. However, these pellets were not eaten in any quantity.

Freeze-dried rimu was the least favoured podocarp fruit fed. Dried kahikatea fruit and frozen kahikatea seed was the most favoured - three females consuming 7,332g and the other 5 birds, 600g during the period November to February. Dried totara fruit and frozen totara seed was more palatable than rimu but not as palatable as kahikatea.

	Female		Male		Total
	Sub-adult	Adult	Sub-adult	Adult	
Fiordland	<i>Believed extinct since ~ 1987</i>				
Stewart Island	<i>Population relocated 1980-97</i>				
Whenua Hou	18	13	13	16	60
Te Kakahu	2	8	3	6	19
Pearl	-	-	-	7	7
TOTALS	20	21	16	29	86

The trials were intended to trigger breeding, but failed to do so! Supplementary feeding was phased out on Whenua Hou during March 2004, but is being continued at a reduced level on Te Kakahu.

Courtship and breeding activity

As in 2003, no mating or breeding is known to have occurred in 2004.

By late November 2003 grubbing had been noted at 17 track & bowl systems on Whenua Hou, and two males had been heard booming - one regularly. By late January 15 (of 25 breeding-age males) had been recorded booming/chinging - 11 of them regularly. Booming peaked in mid February, then declined markedly in late February.

Photo: Don Merton



Kakapo displaying at night.

In January, a 7 year old hand-raised male ("Sirocco") took up residence near the hut. He was twice removed to remote locations but returned within a couple of nights. Sirocco developed two display bowls on the track to the camp toilet and has since maintained a routine of booming & chinging from this site each night - and attempting to copulate with any humans using the track! His courtship activity is expected to end by late April and we hope he will then leave the area since his presence so close to habitation is a concern.

On Te Kakahu, some grubbing was apparent from November, but no bowls were found and no booming heard.

Rimu fruit developing on Whenua Hou, Te Kakahu and Anchor Islands was sampled in March 2004 and no masting (or Kakapo breeding) is anticipated on these islands in 2005. Further supplementary feeding trials are therefore planned - including the feeding of unripe fruits. Kakapo are known to feed extensively upon undeveloped podocarp and other fruit during the months prior to breeding, and we suspect this may contain the elusive breeding "trigger".

General

In January, a further attempt was made to collect semen, from certain displaying

males to establish fertility/sperm viability. Nine males on Whenua Hou were anaesthetized and electro-ejaculated - 5 supplementary fed, & 4 non supplementary fed. Seven produced semen of varying quality and quantity, however results were generally poor. It was concluded that either the male breeding activity was too low, and/or that the timing of collection was

wrong. Further attempts will be made when the males again indulge in courtship display.

No stoats have been seen or trapped on Te Kakahu or neighbouring Passage Island since the eradication phase was completed there in ~2000.



NZ declares environmental emergency after deaths of rare parrots

ABC Radio Australia 13th July 2004 17:00:35

In New Zealand, three of the world's rarest parrots, the big green Kakapo, have died within a space of 24-hours, prompting an environmental emergency.

The deaths, apparently from septicaemia, a form of bacterial blood poisoning, came after New Zealand Department of Conservation officials last week moved 19 birds to an isolated island.

Our correspondent in New Zealand, Gillian Bradford, says conservation officers are preparing an emergency regime of hospital-style intensive care for the 16 still on the island.

The Kakapo is a large green flightless parrot that can live for up to 100 years.

There are just over 80 left in New Zealand.

All the Kakapo live on predator-free islands in the country's south.

New Zealand's Conservation Minister says no expense will be spared to keep the species alive.

Kakapo recovery website: www.kakaporecovery.org.nz

Photo: Don Merton



Psitta News

EU extends ban on imports of Asian poultry

The European Commission decided on Monday to prolong until December 15 a ban on imports of chicken products and pet birds from several Asian countries hit by avian flu.

The commission said that the countries concerned were: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

The current suspension was due to expire on August 15, but the commission said it had extended it until December 15.

The commission said in a statement that it had "adopted a decision to continue the suspension of imports into the EU of chicken products and pet birds from several Asian countries where avian influenza has been confirmed since the beginning of this year."

It said: "In some of these countries, outbreaks of avian influenza still occur and the overall disease situation in the area remains unclear."

At the beginning of this year the virus spread through 10 countries in Asia, killing 16 people in Vietnam and eight in Thailand.

In recent weeks outbreaks have been diagnosed in Thailand, China and Vietnam.

The EU decided on January 23 to suspend imports of poultry from Thailand to prevent the disease from being introduced into Europe. Shortly afterwards it suspended imports of pet birds such as parrots from south east Asia

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Endangered bird trade in Maluku takes off

JAKARTA - Illegal traders exploited the religious conflict in Indonesia's Maluku province in May to traffic and sell hundreds of endangered birds, wildlife conservationists said yesterday.

ProFauna, Indonesia's leading animal protection group, claims that markets in Jakarta have been flooded in recent weeks with rare Salmon-crested Cockatoos from

Maluku - a species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Tension between Muslims and Christians in the Maluku islands flared up in May, resulting in a week of sectarian fighting in the provincial capital Ambon that left 37 people dead.

"The traders are making the most of the chaos there. There were no officials checking the transportation of endangered birds," said Mr Rosek Nursahid, ProFauna's head, citing the group's report. Mr Nursahid said the report was based on a five-month study that ended in May, during which time the group monitored bird catchers, government officials and sellers.



Photo: Don Preisler

Local conservation officials and police have declined to comment on the report.

Copyright © 2004 AP, 23 July 2004

Man jailed for egg smuggling

THE severity of a Malaysian man's prison sentence for attempting to smuggle bird eggs into Australia should act as a deterrent to other would-be smugglers, the Australian Customs Service said today.

A 39-year-old Malaysian national was sentenced in Downing Centre District Court today to two years and three months prison after he admitted to importing regulated live fauna specimens without a permit.

The judge imposed a mandatory custodial period of 15 months before Phui Kunne Lee would be eligible for release to be deported.

Customs officers at Sydney airport stopped and searched Lee when he arrived on a flight from Singapore on April 10.

He was found to be wearing a purpose-built body vest which contained 41 parrots eggs, some of them Macaws.

New South Wales Customs regional director David Collins said the prosecution was the result of excellent work by customs officers at Sydney airport.

"The severity of the sentence reflects the seriousness with which this crime is viewed," Mr Collins said.

"Apart from quarantine issues, such as the risk of introducing bird flu by bringing eggs into Australia, the smuggling of eggs threatens conservation of endangered species."

Those eggs considered viable for hatching were returned to Singapore to a centre specialising in captive breeding of endangered species, such as the Macaw.

Copyright © Herald and Weekly Times, 1 August 2004

Couple quit to save passive parrot

4th August 2004, Daily Mail.

A couple have stopped smoking to save the life of their pet parrot.

Father-of-four Kevin Barclay, 42, and partner Sharon Wood, a caterer in her 30s, of Shoeburyness, Essex, quit on the advice of a vet six weeks ago. Mr Barclay, a house husband, said their African, Orange-wing Amazon JJ was wheezing and had a blocked nose. Vet Glen Cousquer, who runs a surgery in nearby Wickford, told the couple that the bird was suffering from passive smoking. "We stopped for the sake of our parrot," said Mr Barclay. "We stopped about six weeks ago and within about two weeks JJ was fine.

The vet thought it might be aerosols or perfume, but he eliminated all those and said the problem was passive smoking. I was smoking about 35 roll-ups a day and Sharon about 20 cigarettes a day."

Mr Cousquer added: "Passive smoking can be a real problem for pets, especially birds. It's amazing that the issue doesn't get a lot more publicity."

It makes perfect sense if you think about it. Birds in the wild live in trees and clean environments. They will suffer in smoky atmospheres. They can develop problems which can be fatal.

My advice is, if you have a pet, especially a bird, don't smoke."

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Willemstad

By ODETTE DOEST

Translated from 'Amigoe' 19th of May 2004 edition. The Amigoe is a local newspaper in Curacao

The captain and two crew members, all of which from Venezuela form the Venezuelan ship Sol Caribe were arrested yesterday after they did not want to pay the fine of \$16,700 for illegal transport of 32 parrots aged from 3 till 5 months.

The thirty Yellow-crowned Amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala ochrocephala*) and the two Scarlet Macaws (*Ara macao*) were found yesterday during a customs check. Fifteen of the birds were already dead due to the circumstances under which they had to travel. All together cramped in a way to small box. These birds are part of CITES list I and II. Due changes in the law in

2001 smugglers of endangered / protected animals can be given fine \$55,000 or a maximum of 4 years in jail.

The government has confined the boat. The surviving parrots have been housed at the veterinary services, they will be kept there in quarantine and also watched so that they won't be stolen from the property. The

Photo: 2004 Eric Newton



department of health will try to return the birds back to Venezuela. One of the veterinarians of the veterinary services Mr Dwarkasin says he hopes that they will take them back but in the past there have been some difficulties, he recalls, maybe because of a lack of adequate rehab in Venezuela. The birds that were confiscated were severely malnourished. Some of them will not survive.

Usually the amazons and macaws are resold to local (illegal) retailers for about \$50 who then sell them to local people for between \$200 and \$400.

The birds that were confiscated were severely malnourished. Some of them will not survive.

Footnote: At the beginning of August the surviving animals were returned to Venezuela to The Direccion

Photo: 2004 Eric Newton



Smuggled birds often suffer through horrific conditions, many of the amazons above did not survive their journey from Venezuela to Curacao.

News from Africa

By Prof. MIKE PERRIN

Henry Ndithia, a Kenyan sponsored by DAAD (a German-based funding agency), is completing a course-work masters project on aspects of the biology of Rosy-faced Lovebirds in Namibia. In this first study of the species in the wild, Henry has discovered that the Lovebirds nest in natural and artificial cavities at various heights above ground facing all compass directions. The mean clutch size is four, but owing to low breeding success rate, caused by infertility and predation, only one or two chicks are fledged from each nest. As for Ruppells Parrots (*Poicephalus rueppelli*), some loss of fledglings is caused by Boomslangs, arboreal snake predators of nests.

The cause of the apparent infertility is unknown, but blood samples will be tested for PBF, as this is known to occur in wild populations of Black-cheeked Lovebirds (*Agapornis nigrigenis*) in Zambia. Like Black-cheeked Lovebirds, Rosy-faced Lovebirds feed primarily on grass seed on the ground, but likely take seed from a wider range of herbs and perennials. The birds are semi-social forming small flocks, and we are currently monitoring their movements using radio telemetry. A similar study is currently being launched in Malawi where Lawrence Luhanga will be investigating the ecology and conservation of Lilian's Lovebird (*Agapornis lilianae*) for his masters. He will address questions posed by Louise Warburton and Henry Ndithia.

Gillian Blue has completed her masters thesis which assessed the genetic diversity of captive Cape Parrots (*Poicephalus robustus*) using RAPD (Randomly Accessed Polymorphic DNA) analysis. Measures of genetic identity and genetic distance as well as phenotypic diversity

Photo: Mike Perrin



were used to analyze each of three captive sub-populations. The mean level of heterozygosity is high for captive birds, which is pleasing to know, but there was also evidence of inbreeding within and between the captive sub-populations. The results will enable recommendations to be made about optimal breeding scenarios for the captive population. Similar research, using DNA microsatellites, is needed for the wild population, but this will be very expensive and logistically difficult.

Dr. Tee Taylor will be driving the Darwin Initiative Project 'Building Genetic Forensic Capacity to Reduce South Africa's Illegal Trade' which focuses on two keystone species, the Endangered Cape Parrot, and South Africa's national bird, the Blue Crane. Tee is a leading molecular geneticist whose doctoral thesis was based on parrots, and she is playing a pivotal role in the programme, in conjunction with the project leader, Prof Terry Burke at the University of Sheffield, and myself, at the Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The project will be developing South African manpower, through masters training, to address current problems in illegal trade that can be prevented using forensic, molecular DNA sequencing, employing the very powerful and precise microsatellite technology.

Craig Symes, who obtained his masters for a study of the ecology of the Grey-headed Parrot, and who also worked on the Cape Parrot project, recently participated in a court case in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A successful conviction was made for illegal trading in Cape Parrots.

In the laboratory, Stephen Burton has started a study of the thermal biology, water turnover and metabolism of African Lovebirds and Australian Grass Parakeets using a state-of-the-art oxygen analyzer and respirometer developed by Barry Lovegrove and Colleen Downs. Luthando Maphasa is continuing his doctoral research, and is currently investigating the protein nutrition and amino acid requirements of breeding Lovebirds in collaboration with David Dennison of Aviproduct. The condition of the breeding birds throughout the trials will be monitored using an EM (electromagnetic) body scanner.



Who is your Avian Veterinarian?

By JOANNA ECKLES, Administrator WPT-USA

We are excited about a new initiative to promote the World Parrot Trust through Avian Veterinarians and Clinics. We began by extending an invitation to our current supporters who are Veterinarians and asking them to partner with us. Now we would like to connect with individuals you know and trust from your own experience, but who may not know about the World Parrot Trust.



Our goal

By partnering with the trusted professionals that care for our companion parrots, we hope to reach new members we wouldn't access otherwise and strengthen the connection between companion and wild parrots. We all know how valuable each is to the other. Understanding wild parrots helps us to care for those in our homes. At the same time, the stronger our network of support, the better we are able to help parrots to survive in the wild.

Here's how the partnership works

The vets (or other clinic/practice representatives) join the World Parrot Trust at any membership level. They are a member for a year like anyone else but they get additional information from us to display at their clinic. They receive 3 copies of each *PsittaScene* magazine labeled for display, along with brochure holders for both our Membership brochure and our educational brochure "How to Have a Happy Healthy Parrot."

Here's how you can help

Just contact either our USA or UK offices (contact information on page 19) and give us the name and contact information for your trusted avian care provider(s). We'll check to see if they are or ever were WPT members and make an informational packet for them. We will then mail that packet to you to carry to them personally. Your personal involvement will surely make the effort more successful. Of course, if circumstances make this plan difficult for you we will gladly send the packet direct to them saying who recommended them. Perhaps you can follow-up with them personally at a later date.

We sincerely appreciate your assistance with this endeavor and will keep you informed as we move forward and continue to evaluate our plan.

Many thanks.

Welcome to our new Vet Partners!

The following World Parrot Trust members have agreed to partner with us by displaying *PsittaScene* along with our membership and Happy Healthy Parrot brochures in their clinic/practice waiting rooms. Please consider them if you are looking for a vet in the area. We appreciate their support of the World Parrot Trust and promotion of good animal welfare.

USA Vets

Kris Ahlgrim DVM - GoldenView Veterinary Hospital 885 Lupine St., Unit C Golden, CO, 80401, 303-279-9182

Ann Bourke DVM - Kensington Bird & Animal Hospital, 977 Farmington Ave, Kensington, CT, 06037, 860-828-7736

Tim England DVM - Crossroads Animal Hospital Inc, Jackson MI, 517-784-1111

Carol Gamble DVM - Brookeville Animal Hospital, 22201 Georgia Ave, Brookeville, MD, 20833, 301-774-9698.



Dr. Lisa Tell a WPT vet member and long time supporter of the Trust is here anaesthetising a Green-wing Macaw at the University of California, Davis.

Melissa Kling DVM - Perry GA

Jerry LaBonde DVM - Avian and Exotic Animal Hospital (Homestead) 6900 S., Holly Circle, Englewood, CO, 303-290-8233

Bob Stonebreaker DVM - Animal And Bird Hospital of Del Mar, Del Mar CA, 858-755-9351

Lisa Tell DVM - University of California, Davis

Candy Tooley RVT - Dallas TX

Fern Van Sant DVM - For The Birds, 1136 South De Anza Blvd. Suite B San Jose, California 95129 (408) 255-1739

UK Vets

John A Knight, Les Eturs Vet Clinic, Guernsey, 01481 257708

Michael Griffiths, Jubilee Vet Centre, Newtownards, Ireland, 02891 812226

Roger Gordon, MRCVS, Edinburgh

C N Gorman, Falkland Vet Clinic, Wash Common, Newbury, 01635 46565

Emma Ashby, Scott Vet Clinic, Bedford, 01234 261622

Mark Evans, Valley Vet Group, Whitchurch, Cardiff, 02920 529444

Craig Hunt, MVetMed, Lydney, Glos

Steve Otty, Rosevean House Vet Surgery, Cornwall, 01736 362215

J P Hickerton, Rhianfa Vet Centre, Rhyl, North Wales, 01745 332553

Bruce Maclean, Bird & Exotic Animal Vet Services, Reading, Berks

Dr Maute, South Beech Vet Surgery, Wickford, Essex, 01268 560660

R S Broadbent, Stow Vet Surgeons, Stow-on-the-Wold, Glos, 01451 830620

Siuna Reid, The Veterinary Health Centre, St Annes-on-Sea, Lancashire, 01253 729309

Roy Earle, Amicus Vet Centre, Solihull, West Midlands, 0121 733 1439

C P Baxter, Cedar Vet Group, Alton, Hampshire, 01420 82163

John Chitty, Strathmore Vet Clinic, Andover, Hants, 01264 352323

F Jennings, Manchester Street Vet Surgery, Oldham, 0161 6244596

M G Brash, Battle Flatts Vet Clinic, Stamford Bridge, York, 01759 371066

Lamorna House Vet Centre, Camborne, Cornwall, 01209 712009

Ben Bennett, Colne Valley Vet Practice, Colchester, Essex

Vicky Weeks, Milcroft Vet Group, Cumbria, 01900 826666

Della Barbour, Elm Cottage Vet Centre, Plymouth, Devon, 01752 56767



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 is 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>,
Italy: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/italia>
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Parrots in the Wild



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Amazona leucocephala bahamensis

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The Bahamian parrot, recognized as a larger subspecies of the Cuban Amazon, is found only in the Bahamas on the islands of Abaco and Inagua. Easily reached via a one hour plane hop from Miami. More in the next issue of *Psittascene*.