Magazine of the World Parrot Trust

PsittaScene

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Lilac-crowns and Citron-crested Cockatoo added to Appendix I at CITES

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Cover Picture By © 2004 Bowles/Erickson www.amazornia.us

After years of intensive research, discussion, and lobbying, the heavily traded Lilac-crowned Amazon (*Amazona finschi*) was transferred to Appendix I of CITES last month in Bangkok - for additional details on the listing and its consequences, please see page 14 in this issue of *PsittaScene*. This bird is one of many feral Lilac-crowns living in urban Los Angeles, California, enjoying a bath on some wet leaves. Please visit amazornia.us for additional stunning images

Carribean underground: Bahama parrots in the wild

Text By CAROLINE STAHALA and Photos by MARK L. STAFFORD
www.parrotsinternational.org

The Bahama Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*) is facing similar threats as most parrots around the world, i.e. introduced predators, small population sizes, habitat loss and natural events such as hurricanes and fires. However, the people and organisations fighting to conserve this parrot are in a very unique position to make the conservation of the Bahama Parrot not only successful, but also provide more insight into their ecology. Prior to 2002, only one significant study was conducted on the Bahama Parrot and this was only with the Abaco parrot population. In 2002 an international conservation effort was initiated in order to prevent the rapid decline and extinction of this parrot from its remaining range. The ultimate objective is to successfully translocate the Bahama Parrot to other islands where it previously existed.

Bahama Parrot sentinel perched above a nest cavity on Abaco Island, The Bahamas.

The Bahama Parrot currently inhabits only two of the major islands of the Bahamas, Great Abaco Island and Great Inagua Island. The fact that these two populations are quite different presents a challenge from a conservation perspective. Great Inagua Island is mostly composed of stunted hardwood forests, whereas, Abaco Island is mostly composed of Caribbean Pine in addition to mature hardwood corridors. In addition to differences in habitat, the two populations also exhibit differences in their breeding biology. The Inagua population begins breeding in March and searches out its nest cavities in low hardwood trees. The Abaco population begins breeding season later in April and they use nest cavities in the ground. Actually they use holes on the grounds, which are formed from dissolved limestone.

The two populations face similar threats when it comes to natural events, however the Abaco population is at a heightened risk due to human actions. Both populations are susceptible to natural disasters, which have detrimental effects on bird populations.

Adult male Bahama Parrot perched in a Caribbean Pine tree guarding his mate huddled in the ground hollow nest.

Hurricanes frequent the Bahamas and can severely limit food supplies (fruits and berries). In 2004, two major hurricanes made their way through the Bahama archipelago. When natural threats are compounded with additional human induced factors, it starts taking a toll on the populations. The Abaco population is currently being faced with just such a case.

During the 2004 breeding season, this population was impacted with two natural events, a forest fire through the nesting area, and category 3 and category 4 hurricanes. Introduced feral cats also predate upon both chicks and adults in the nests. Another problem that plagues the Abaco group is the introduction of raccoons. Raccoons were introduced onto the northern end of the island but are dispersing south towards the breeding area. An impending threat to the Abaco parrot population is the loss of vital hardwood wintering habitat to development. Currently only the pine forest breeding habitat is protected as a national park.

An adult female Bahama Parrot (nick named Victoria by the field team) in her ground cavity nest with her first hatched egg. As the photo was taken Victoria warned the photographer with a low jaguar-like growl that she did not appreciate the intrusion.

A note from the photographer: The Abaco Island Bahamian Parrot is the only parrot in the New World (Western Hemisphere) that nests in the ground. It was amazing to hike with Caroline through the pine forests, walk up to a hole in the ground and see baby parrots inside staring back up at you. It also seemed a bit incongruous to find parrots roosting and feeding in pine trees.

There are numerous examples in the West Indies of how the above mentioned threats have devastated parrot populations. Some of these examples include the Imperial Parrot (*Amazona imperialis*)on Dominica, St Lucia Parrot (*Amazona versicolor*), St. Vincent Parrot (*Amazona guildingii*), Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*) and the Cayman Brac Parrots (*Amazona leucocephala hesterna*). There are also plenty of examples of Amazons, which have already gone extinct in the West Indies such as from the Turks and Caicos, Montserrat, Guadalupe, Martinique, Grenada and Barbados.

In order to prevent the same fate for the Bahama Parrot, a proactive approach was taken by local Bahamian organisations, local Bahamian government, US Fish and Wildlife Service and research universities. In 2002, a program was established to begin monitoring population size of the Abaco Parrot and prepare for the eventual translocation of the Bahama Parrot to an island in its former range. The population size in 2002 for the Abaco parrot was

Three Bahama Parrot chicks in limestone nest cavity.

estimated at 1,600 individuals.

The following year an intensive investigation into the health of the population was launched. Between April 2003 and August 2004 the Abaco parrot population was studied to determine survival rates of adults and juveniles and nest success. Movement patterns were tracked throughout the year to determine priority habitat. The Abaco population was the first priority due to the threat of predators and their unique ground nesting behaviour. These birds use limestone solution cavities on the pine forest floor as nesting cavities. The opening of the cavities can be as small as the top of a teacup to as large as a basketball hoop. The cavities are reused by pairs year after year just as tree cavities are reused by other species. The parrots remove any debris that accumulated in the hole during the nonbreeding season. Adults enter the nest by flying to the ground and entering the cavity tail first. On average, a breeding pair produces 4 eggs and can fledge from 1-4 chicks. The adults feed on green pine cones that are found in great abundance in the pine forest only during the parrot breeding season.

A note from the photographer: The Abaco Bahamian Parrot is the only known fire adapted parrot in the world. When I was Caroline's guest I was fortunate to witness and film a forest fire set by lightening burning over the parrot nests. As the fire raged, I watched a mated pair intent on gobbling berries barely 50 yards from the fire line, presumably to take back to their chicks.The fire was incredibly hot and smokey. We were sure none of the chicks could survive as the fire burned over the nests we had checked and filmed earlier in the day. Miraculously, early the next morning, when we jumped the fire line and ran back into the smoldering charred moonscape, the mother parrots and their babies survived. Obviously they huddled in their ground hole nests as the fire raged over their heads. They were safe and healthy. Truly incredible.

Results

Results of this study show the importance of protecting the wintering habitat. After

A Bahama Parrot pair resting in a pine tree after foraging on Metopium, which excretes a black sap.

The raging Forest Fire which swept through the parrot nesting area and over the ground nests in July 2004. Amazingly no nests or chicks were lost.

The author examining the nest cavity (designated nest #19) the morning after the fire burned directly over the top....with three healthy, live chicks.

the breeding season, the pine trees no longer provide enough foraging resources for them to remain in this area. Due to the scarcity of food during the winter months, parrots move from the central part of the island or pine forest, to the fringes of the island where hardwood stands are producing berries.

Efforts are now underway to begin similar studies on the other population of the Bahama Parrot on Inagua Island. The work on Inagua will be an effort to determine the status of the population as a single unit. This work along with the findings from Abaco will allow for a well thought out plan for the protection of the remaining populations and the translocation of the Bahama Parrot to islands, which they previously called home.

Efforts are continuing to work towards multiple permanent populations of the Bahama Parrot. For any questions regarding the current and upcoming work please contact Caroline Stahala cstahal@ncsu.edu. The field team would more that welcome any support from WPT readers. Top on the list is a used 4x4 field vehicle. WPT will work to make any vehicle donation tax deductible. For inquiries regarding photographs please contact Mark Stafford info@parrotsinternational.org.

A Bahama Parrot foraging on Petitia and Metopium. The Metopium bush, known locally as "Poisonwood", has an effect on humans like poison ivy and poison oak. Contact with the bush creates a red, itchy, very uncomfortable rash for about two weeks. The photographer speaks from experience after trying to keep up with Caroline bushwacking through the undergrowth. The Bahama Parrots love the stuff.

PollyVision - Strictly for Parrots

Reviewed by Louise Warburton and first appeared in *Parrots* magazine (www.parrotmag.com)

PollyVision is a DVD made for viewing by your pet parrot, to entertain it with visuals and sounds from their wild cousins around the world. Sounds a bit wacky doesn't it?

I watched it with my African Grey and Lesser Jardine's parrots. Both have very different backgrounds and natures - the Grey is a wild-caught, mostly highly-strung wreck and the Jardine's is a hand-raised humanised brat (in the most affectionate sense!). They are both used to listening to the radio and CDs of African bird calls and the dawn chorus when I am not around.

PollyVision lasts for 80 minutes and will repeat automatically. Except for the introduction there is no music, just the sounds of the wild parrots and their environment. The visuals are divided into five sections denoted by parrot colour and region. We start with the 'Black and White' parrots in Australia, move onto the 'Greens' in Peru, the 'Greys' in the Cameroon, the 'Reds' in Peru and end with the 'Blues' in Brazil.

To begin with it was the audio track that caught my parrot's attention. The African Grey was the first to respond by going into relaxed mode, ruffling his neck feathers and starting to slowly grind his bill. The Jardine's took a little longer because she was distracted by trying to gain my sole attention. I became immediately spellbound by watching the Long-billed Corellas and Galahs going about their natural lives. About ten minutes into the show, when the White/Short-tailed Black Cockatoos squawk and go down for a drink, the attention of the feathered viewers was immediately caught and both turned to view the screen.

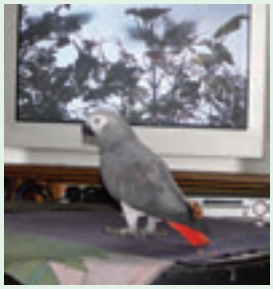
The next time their visual attention was noticeably caught was when a pair of African Greys were shown softly calling to each other at their nest cavity. I wished my birds could tell me what they were saying. In between turning to watch the screen both birds relaxed to the soundtrack throughout. It was obvious that they were listening as I detected slight movements in their neck feathers and eyes when the parrots on screen gave alarm calls and screeched off into the swirling flocks.

This DVD was made for parrots to enjoy, and it works. It also worked for me! I loved it, and can honestly say that it is one of the best things I have ever watched on the small screen. What a pleasure to have an hour and 20 minutes of watching parrots from around the world. Even better that there was no music or voice-over, just the calls of the parrots and noises of their environment, which includes the odd buzz of a passing bee, rumbling of thunder and almost incessant chatter of Weaver birds during the African Grey section.

The footage was of a much better quality than I expected, especially the Australian and Brazilian sections which are 'Attenborough' class. We are treated to fantastic parrot spectacles. We see feeding, drinking, bathing, preening, huge flocks coming to clay licks, bill-tussling, mutual feeding, pairs bonding, pairs duetting, flocks wheeling in the sky … the absolute highlight for me has to be watching a Lear's Macaw pick a bunch of palm nuts and fly with it to the next tree (away from the other macaws) and crack them open to enjoy like a chocolate treat.

I also think we as parrot owners have a lot to learn just by watching these wild parrots: how highly sociable they are, what a variety of foods they feed on both on the ground and up in the trees, how they drink and bathe in the early morning, their need to sunbathe, and how their alertness and agility is constantly stimulated. We can also begin to understand some of our pet's behaviours - no wonder they like to eat when we eat, look at how they all forage together in nature. We see parrots in a wide variety of habitats and watch them as wild birds, superbly adapted to their environment. Hopefully this DVD can go some way to nourishing and stimulating the perceptual senses of my two feathered friends - I certainly believe that it is a comfort to them.

PollyVision is available from World Parrot Trust. Tel:01736 751026 or go to: www.worldparrottrust.org to order. It costs £9.95/$15.00 including worldwide shipping, and all the profit will go back to parrot conservation and welfare - which makes it even better!



From Dorothy Schwarz, WPT Member - Casper (3 yr old Grey) preferred the shots of Grey parrots to any other bird in PollyVision

Tucuman Amazon in Argentina

recent studies of a little known Andean beauty

By LUIS RIVERA and NATALIA POLITI

Tucuman Amazon (*Amazona tucumana*) is a practically unknown endemic species whose population numbers declined drastically in the 20th century; therefore it has been considered a rare species. Approximately 19,000 Tucuman Amazons were exported from Argentina in four years during the 1980s; this fact, together with habitat degradation and loss, led to the striking decline. The species is included in CITES I and is considered vulnerable, with high conservation and research priority.

The Tucuman Amazon's critical habitat is the cloud forests, a narrow forest strip between 1,700-2,200 m in altitude found in montane forests from northwestern Argentina and southern Bolivia (called Yungas). Yungas are disappearing at the alarming annual rate of 1.1%, which is a much higher rate than that of many tropical forests. Indeed, 60% has already been lost due to timber harvesting, land conversion to agriculture, exotic pine plantation (*Pinus* spp.), roads and dams construction, livestock production, human colonization, uncontrolled tourist activities, and gas pipeline construction. Tucuman Amazons distribution range extends from Santa Cruz department in Bolivia to the province of Catamarca in Argentina.

Photo: *Natalia Politi*

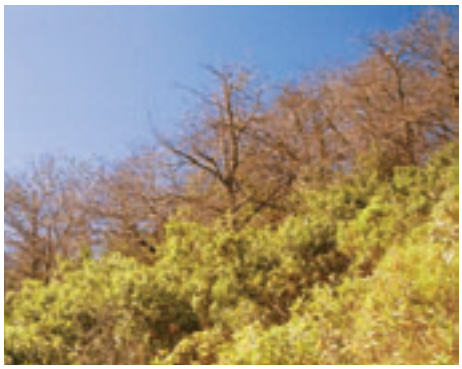
Yungas conversion to corn fields.

No detailed studies had been conducted on the ecology or conservation status of the Tucuman Amazon. Previous studies have been mainly descriptive, and this becomes a problem when comparing data to detect population trends. No specific action had been taken to ensure the conservation of Tucuman Amazon. We evaluated the status of Tucuman Amazon, estimated population size and distribution in Argentina and identified nesting and roosting sites of importance for conservation.

Population numbers and distribution

We recorded approximately 5,500 individuals in 12 localities, 7 of which are new localities for the species. Two areas concentrate 94% of the individuals recorded, one extends between El Nogalar (Salta) and San Francisco (Jujuy) and the other from Sierra (Sa.) de Santa Bárbara (Jujuy) to El Rey NP (Salta). This is the first extensive work throughout the distributional area of Tucuman Amazon in Argentina and is the first assessment of the species' population levels. Along with previous records, this work provides a more precise evaluation of the conservation status of the species. The number of individuals recorded represents less than a third part of the number of Tucuman Amazon exported between 1985 and 1989, demonstrating that those captures had a strong effect on wild population levels. The numbers we obtained may contribute as baseline information to evaluate future trends at these sites. The numbers clearly decreased as we moved southwards in the distributional area of the species. The new records in seven localities enable us to determine the species' population distribution more precisely. Thus, the records for Sa. de Metán, Sa. de la Candelaria and Los Sauces River confirm the presence of the species in almost all patches of the Yungas situated in isolated mountain ranges, defining a possible disjunct distribution of populations.

Photo: *Luis Rivera*



Close-up view of the roost in San Andrés.

Photo: *Uriel Colina*

Tucuman Amazon in nest entrance in Sa. de Santa Bárbara.

Roost sites

We identified four roosts: San Andrés, Sa. de Santa Bárbara, El Rey National Park, and San Francisco. At the San Andrés roost we found the second largest population of Tucuman Amazon. Local people do not appear to have a conflictive relationship with this species nor do they seem keen on capturing individuals. This area is located within Las Yungas Biosphere Reserve, in the most continuous expanse of Argentine Yungas, where possibilities of long-term conservation are high. Local communities show great interest in developing a sustainable use of natural resources. Sa. de Santa Bárbara roost site holds the largest population for the species. This area is under legal dispute by creditors some of which are state banks; this could represent the possibility to create protected areas or

Photo: *Ridgely et al. (2003)*

Distribution of montane forest and Tucuman Amazon in South America.

to extend Las Lancitas Provincial Reserve, located at the foothills of Sa. Santa Bárbara. This mountain range extends southwards to the Sa. Cresta de Gallo, the boundary of El Rey NP. This large stretch of Yungas has been poorly studied in its biological aspect, despite the fact that it holds many endemic species. In the lowest portions, with a physiognomy closer to the Chaco, new bird species for Argentina have been recently recorded. This area should be assigned as a biological corridor between El Rey NP and Calilegua NP.

Photo: *Natalia Politi*

Panoramic view of montane forests of Argentina or Yungas.

Nest sites

During the breeding season we surveyed for nests on 74.5 h in San Francisco and

Photo: *Luis Rivera and Natalia Politi.*

Tucuman Amazon's distribution in Argentine Yungas.

Photo: *Uriel Colina*

Tucuman Amazon (Amazona tucumana).

72.5 h in Sa. de Santa Bárbara and found 6 Tucuman Amazon nests, 3 in each site. Nests were found from 1,400 to 1,950 m, in elevation, where 2 different plant communities occur: the highest part of the montane forest (*Mirtaceae* forest) and cloud forest. It was very difficult to find the nests because parents are silent when entering the nest during the breeding period, although they seem to vocalize noisily in the vicinity. In the presence of a disturbing factor (e.g., researchers or assistants), adults stay far from the nest for long periods, or come near the nest furtively to avoid being seen. We found a nest that was not in use because it had been cut with an axe at the level of the incubation chamber, presumably for nestling poaching. This suggests that this species is still subject to occasional capture by local people. In the area of San Francisco a selective forest exploitation of Cedars is being conducted. Parrots are susceptible to logging disturbances, which may lead them to abandon the nests.

Conservation efforts

Two areas harbour most of Tucuman Amazon individuals recorded, and also hold the last mature cloud forest remnants, as well as continuous forested areas. Long-term efforts for the conservation of this endemic species should prioritize these two areas. As a precautionary measure, we propose that *Amazona tucumana* be maintained in Appendix I of CITES and be placed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List. We designed a brochure with basic information on the ecology and conservation of Tucuman Amazon and the Yungas. The brochure was a useful tool to inform local communities, government and non-government organisations about the problems of the species and its habitat.

Photo: *Luis Rivera*

Mature cloud forest in El Nogalar National Reserve.

This research project was funded by BP conservation Programme. We wish to thank the students of the University of Jujuy who helped with fieldwork and we are grateful to Rosemary Low for her encouragement.
If you would like more information please contact loro_alisero@yahoo.com

Trapping and smuggling of Salmon-crested Cockatoos

an undercover investigation in Seram, Indonesian

By STEWART METZ and ROSEK NURSAHID

Background

In theory, the trapping of cockatoos in the forests of Indonesia should have been reduced to a trickle. Three of Indonesia's cockatoos - the Moluccan, Palm and Goffin's - are listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The others are on Appendix II and *C. sulphurea* has just been included on Appendix I at last month's CITES meeting in Bangkok (see Psittanews, this issue). Presidential decrees have been issued giving some of these cockatoos "no-take" status, and Indonesia currently has no export quotas for wild caught birds. As discussed in *PsittaScene* (Vol. 15 No 2: May, 2003, pp. 6-7) much of the pressure to halt illegal bird trapping came from the all-volunteer, non-governmental group ProFauna Indonesia (formerly KSBK, www.profauna.or.id). In their first undercover investigation, they documented widespread cockatoo and parrot smuggling. That investigation focused on trapping in the Northern Moluccas (and therefore, *Cacatua alba*) and West Papua (and therefore, *C. galerita triton*).

Trapping on Seram

Little is known about the southern parts of the Moluccas (now usually called Maluku), especially Seram, which is the last remaining natural home of the magnificent Seram (or Salmon-crested) cockatoo, *Cacatua moluccensis* (Fig.1) Therefore, Project Bird Watch (www.indonesian-parrot-project.org) commissioned ProFauna Indonesia to carry out an undercover study on Seram and the neighboring island Ambon, and follow any smuggled birds to the Jakarta markets. This study was carried out between December of 2003 and May of 2004.

Photo: *ProFauna Indonesia*

Fig 1. This magnificent Seram cockatoo was photographed during the undercover investigation.

Photo: *ProFauna Indonesia*

Fig 2. Seram cockatoo caught in snare.

Trapping on Seram was observed in Manusela National Park at the center of the island (ironic since 'manu sela' means "Bird of Freedom"); it also was found to occur in towns more on the periphery of the island. Most of the trapping on Seram employs a snare shot into a cockatoo sleeping tree at night using a sling shot (Fig. 2). This is in contrast to the method most often used in West Papua or North Maluku, where the cries of a 'decoy' bird attract a second bird to a tree where it becomes stuck in sticky gum from a breadfruit tree mixed with coconut oil. There are several bird collectors on Seram, the largest being Madame Kartini who has been in business for ten years. In a given month, she might receive 20-50 Seram cockatoos, 200 Red Lories (*Eos bornea*) , and 350 Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haemotodus*). Nineteen cockatoos were seen there by the investigators on a single occasion (Fig. 3). Currently, she pays the trappers less than US$10 per cockatoo.

Photo: *ProFauna Indonesia*

Fig 3. Cockatoos at the middleman Kartini's house

Each trapper can catch as many as 16 cockatoos per month. Birds are taken by motorboat to Ambon, the small island to the southwest of Seram, where trappers board boats after readily obtaining illegal permits for less than $5 per bird. By this point in their journey to market, the price of the cockatoos has risen to $40-80 each

Smuggling out illegally taken Salmon-crested Cockatoos

Those cockatoos which are part of large shipments going to the Jakarta Bird Markets are placed, ten at a time, in the center compartment of a crate 100 x 60 cm wide x 60 cm. high. On either side of this hidden compartment, are two exterior compartments which are packed with hundreds of lories and lorikeets acting essentially as decoys to divert attention from the illegally-shipped Seram cockatoos deep inside the crate (Fig 4) . In actual fact, the lories and lorikeets were also illegally trapped, but were not questioned due to the presence of a dubious trapping permit for violet-naped lories. The fate of cockatoos bought and sold individually is often just as tragic. In order to smuggle a cockatoo on board a ship leaving Ambon harbor, these individuals are often stuffed inside a large thermos bottle, with a hole cut at the top for air (Fig 5).

For the birds in the large commercial shipments, most are flown to Jakarta, where some actually received a police escort to the market. Some of these birds are confiscated and are delivered to a network of wildlife rehabilitation centers which have recently sprung up at several sites in Indonesia (see www.JaringanPPS.org).

Photo: *ProFauna Indonesia*

Fig 4. Crate used to ship Seram Cockatoos (not visible) inside outer compartments containing Lories and Lorikeets

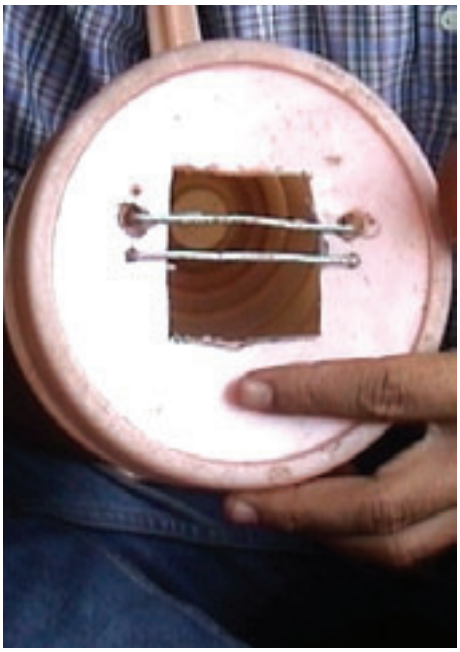


Photo: *ProFauna Indonesia*

Fig 5. Hole cut in the top of a thermos bottle typical of those often used to smuggle cockatoos onboard a boat

However, some of the confiscated birds actually ended up with wildlife exporters, police, or other government officials after their initial confiscation. For those cockatoos or parrots lucky enough to reach a rehabilitation center, medical care, food, and rest are provided. The complex issues of their subsequent fate, and their outlook for a chance at a successful return to life in the wild, are currently being broached by Project Bird Watch in collaboration with Jaringan PPS.

Further field observations on Yellow-faced Parrots in Ethiopia

By MARC BOUSSEKEY, CATHY & FRÉDÉRIC PELSY

The *PsittaScene* readers may remember that we were able to initiate a preliminary study on a poorly known *Poicephalus* species, the Yellow-faced Parrot (*P. flavifrons*) (see *PsittaScene No 52, August 2002*). We were lucky enough to make a new trip to Ethiopia in order to gather more field data from 18th December 2003 to 4th January 2004.

Photo: *Cathy Pelsy*

Yellow-faced Parrots eating grass on the floor.

Well, the story looks like an enigma: the Yellow-faced or Yellow-fronted Parrot, an endemic species in Ethiopia, has never been specifically studied and never been brought into captivity. Both its biology and ecology are poorly known. This species is categorised as "least concern" by Birdlife International in the 2004 IUCN Red List because of its supposed large geographical extension (130 000 km≈) and its believed "common" status in at least parts of its range. But the exact limits of its distribution remain quite uncertain (see maps in *PsittaScene No52*) and "the global population size has not been quantified" yet: in fact, nobody knows exactly how many specimens are left in the wild and this is exactly the reason why we decided to get a closer look at it!

During our first 17 day mission in February 2002 to the South of Addis Ababa up to the Bale Mountains National Park, we discovered the Yellow-faced Parrot was to be found more in the South (around Dolo Mena) than usually described by authors. We were also able to collect new data on feeding (several species of fruits and seeds), habitat (for example gallery-forests along rivers in lower areas in addition to the usually described *Juniperus* and *Podocarpus* high forests) and behaviour (a roosting site and a nesting site were observed).

Photos: *Cathy Pelsy*

Adult (on the top) and juvenile Yellow-faced Parrots.

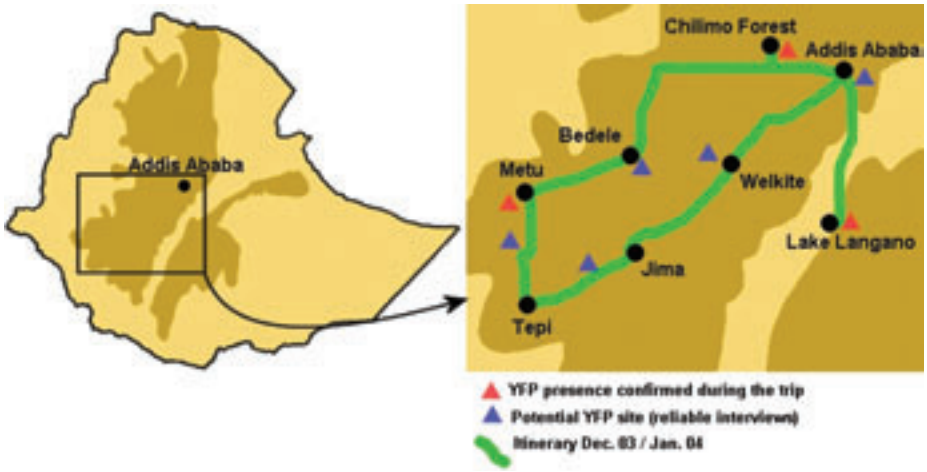
More information obtained on the species biology

Juvenile plumage colouration

We were able to visit the forests located on the Western side of Addis Ababa: Western Welkite (Kotchori), around the cities of Jima, Tepi, Gore, Metu, Bedele, along the Didessa river and at Chilimo (80 km from Addis). We also spent 3 days around Lake Langano together with Hirpo Dube - a dedicated Ethiopian wildlife guide - in order to get more data on the biology and ecology of this parrot which is quite easy to spot there!

The same simple methods as in the previous mission were used: direct search and observation, interviews of local populations. The latter are always difficult to conduct because of the general poor interest and knowledge regarding the wildlife : as a matter of fact, Ethiopians rarely hunt and do not eat wild meat!

As far as the western distribution of the Yellow-faced is concerned, we have got interesting information: according to some reliable interviews, the species is likely to be found at Kotchori, around the Gojeb River, in the vicinity of several cities like Masha, Metu, Bedele and in the Chilimo forest. We were lucky to personally observe parrots near Metu along the Sor River and in the Chilimo forest.



At several locations (Metu, Chilimo forest and Lake Langano), one adult bird was observed feeding or flying alone when only pairs or family groups with juveniles had been seen in February 2002. We supposed their mate had likely stayed at the nest site, our observations being made earlier than 2002.

We made also excellent observations of some juvenile parrots within family groups near Lake Langano. They had probably fledged recently since they were still begging for food to their parents who were seen regurgitating food. Their plumage was clearly different: if the body, the wings and the tail showed the same green as the adults, the head, from the beak to the nape, had a dull brownish olive-green colour without any yellow feathers on the forehead. Nevertheless, a few of them showed some yellow feathers on the head and we guessed they were a bit older (as those we saw in February 2002).

Diet

Several times we saw parrots feeding on

the seeds of an Acacia tree but we were a bit puzzled when we saw (and even filmed in excellent conditions) a parrot perched on a fruiting bush (*Gymnosporia buxifolia*) feeding not on the ripe fruits as we were expecting but focused only on its green rounded leaves! Very conscientiously, it was silently eating 2 or 3 leaves every minute and kept on doing so for a quarter of an hour! Moreover we were lucky enough to see quite a big group of Yellow-fronts (at least 10 birds) landing on the ground by early morning: for almost half an hour, they chewed and swallowed the leaves of a kind of small rush growing on wet saline soils. This behaviour had been previously reported to us during an interview on another site (Kotchori). According to Hirpo Dube, this grass would be naturally rich in minerals and so would balance the parrot's diet: we learnt from Hirpo that cattle and even local people are used to eating it also!

Local counterpart

Hirpo Dube, an ex-teacher who guided us around the Lake Langano, is now employed as a wildlife ranger in a private lodge. We met this knowledgeable wildlife observer for the first time in February 2002 and were amazed to discover he was regularly observing the Yellow-fronted parrot on his own. We provided him with field observation forms. Between February 2002 and December 2003, he sent us his detailed notes regularly by mail and since our second expedition, has sent us some more. Up to now, we have received from him a total of 117 observations with complete data like date, time, precise location, habitat and tree species, number of observed specimens, observation duration and bird activity (flying, feeding, perching, nesting, other…).

Hirpo's dedicated collaboration was really welcome and is extremely useful since we are thus able to get regular data from a precise site all year round. In order to facilitate his work, we provided him with good binoculars and a field bird identification guidebook.

Photo: *Cathy Pelsy*

The Yellow-faced Parrot Team (from left to right): Cathy Pelsy, Frédéric Pelsy, Marc Boussekey, Brook Kassa, Hirpo Dube.

Museum specimens

Since 2002, we have been trying to get information from museum skins on the parrots previous range and on detailed morphological parameters (body measurements and head colouration distribution and intensity). Up to now, we have collected data from a total of 64 specimens from Paris (France), Tring (UK), Turin (Italy) and Frankfurt (Germany). Two additional stuffed birds were studied at the Addis Museum during our last trip.

Additional data needed for the future

To summarise, the following information was obtained from our last expedition to Western Ethiopia and to Lake Langano: more locations for the species have been found and several already known sites checked, new data on the parrot biology (diet and body colouration) have been collected or precised, a small but effective network of Ethiopian informers (Hirpo Dube and Brook Kassa, our driver) have been set up on a regular basis.

Since we would like to complete the data we have on *Poicephalus flavifrons* distribution, we are preparing a new expedition for 2005 in the North of the country, from Addis to Lake Tana and further North to the Simien Mountains which have never been explored in this regard.

We also hope to have the opportunity to employ Hirpo for at least 12 weeks a year: so, he will be able to work full days to get more detailed information on this elusive parrot, especially on its nesting and roosting sites around Lake Langano.

Photos: *Cathy Pelsy*

Observation site near Metu along the Sor river.

Yellow-faced Parrot feeding on Gymnosporia buxifolia leaves.

In search of Military Macaws in Mexico

By KATHERINE RENTON,
Estación de Biología Chamela, Instituto de Biología, UNAM

Seeking out Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*) involves travelling into the remote hilly valleys at the foothills of the Sierra, to get to the unpopulated areas where macaws may be found. Often, it is only the inaccessibility of these mountain valleys which affords some protection for the macaws from human activities. Occasionally, we may encounter human activities of illegal plantations, so we sometimes need to proceed with caution. Bouncing along dirt track roads, fording over streams, and struggling up steep mountain tracks, takes its toll on both vehicle and occupants, and my pick-up truck has left us stranded in the mountains a couple of times, with nothing but a long hike back. This was experienced by Ruud Vonk, of World Parrot Trust Benelux, who valiantly accompanied us on one of our field trips into the mountains, only to have the truck break-down at the furthest point out. We had to hike back 15km (10 miles), under the mid-day sun, with little water and no food, covered in dust, behind a herd of cattle - the only human activity being two 'vaqueros' (cowboys) who were bringing their cattle down from the hills.

Military Macaw (Ara militaris).

Little is known on the ecology of the Military Macaw, and the species now occurs in discontinuous, localised populations throughout its range. Internationally, the Military Macaw is listed in Appendix I of CITES, and considered vulnerable in the IUCN Parrot Action Plan. In Mexico, the Military Macaw is listed as Endangered in the Wildlife Protection Act, and has been highlighted as a priority species for conservation action in the Mexican Parrot Conservation Plan. Both the IUCN Parrot Action Plan and the Mexican Parrot Conservation Plan, highlight the need for ecological information on the status of existing populations in the wild.

Tropical forest along the Pacific coast of Mexico has suffered high rates of deforestation. This combined with pressures of capture for trade have impacted wild populations of macaws. The aim of our study was to assess the status and distribution of the Military Macaw on the coast of Jalisco. We also aimed to evaluate the ecology and resource requirements of Military Macaws, and provide recommendations for the conservation of the Military Macaw in Mexico.

Over the past year, we have conducted field surveys at a number of sites in the lowlands and highlands of the coast of Jalisco, to detect the presence of macaws and identify important areas for macaw conservation. We also established permanent survey plots at our main study area of Cajón de Peña, which has been designated an Important Bird Area, though it has no official protected status. To evaluate food availability for Military Macaws, we conducted phenology transects at three month intervals to determine the number of trees providing food resources for macaws, and estimate food resource abundance. At the same time, we conducted point counts to determine the number of macaws recorded within a 50m radius of each survey point.

Ruud Vonk valiantly accompanies us on a long walk home after our truck breaks down.

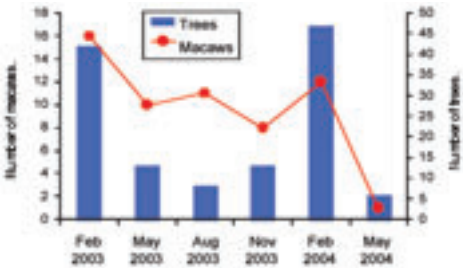
Photos: *Katherine Renton*

Military Macaws eat the seeds of immature, green fruits of Hura polyandra, but do not consume the mature, brown fruits.

During our field surveys we observed Military Macaws feeding on seeds of the trees *Hura polyandra*, and *Brosimum alicastrum*, as well as the palm *Orbignea guacoyula*. We also observed macaws feeding on bromeliad stems. In fact, *Hura*

polyandra appears to be an important food resource for Military Macaws. We most frequently observed macaws feeding on the seeds of immature fruits of *Hura polyandra*, and the macaws tended to occur in areas where *Hura polyandra* was abundant.

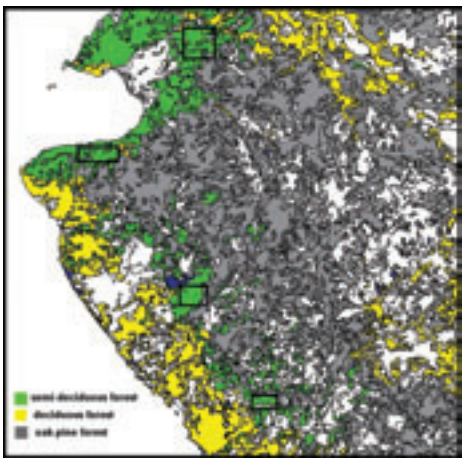
Our results from the phenology transects at Cajón de Peña demonstrated a peak in food resource availability for macaws during the dry season months of January to March, when Military Macaws are nesting (see Figure below). This peak was mainly due to fruiting of *Hura polyandra* and *Brosimum alicastrum*, and it seems these may be important food resources for macaws during the breeding season. Interestingly, *Hura polyandra* can be irritating to the skin, and local people report that the leaves are eaten by cattle against parasites. One of my Mexican students, Adrián Gutiérrez, is now analyzing seeds of *Hura polyandra*, and other plants, to determine the nutrient and toxin content.



Number of Military Macaws recorded in surveys, and number of trees providing food resources for macaws, with a peak in February when macaws are nesting.

From our surveys conducted along the coast of Jalisco, we have identified areas used by Military Macaws on the western foothills of Sierra del Cuale and Sierra Cacoma (see Map below). Each of these sites has relatively conserved habitat of semi-deciduous forest in which *Hura polyandra* is a dominant tree species.

Of the surveys in which we recorded Military Macaws, 85% occurred below



Military Macaws were found in a few areas along the coast of Jalisco (dark squares), where intact semi-deciduous forest still remains.

Mexican student Lorena Morales measures fruiting trees at Cajón de Peña

500m elevation, and we did not register macaws at sites over 1,000m above sea level. Most of the sites where macaws were present had little or no habitat loss, and no macaws were registered in sites with more than 30% habitat loss, even though these sites may have abundant trees of *Hura polyandra* which are left by farmers as shade for cattle. We only found macaws in the lower valleys on the western slopes of the Sierra, where there still remains relatively conserved habitat of semi-deciduous forest (see map).

Though Military Macaws may occur in pine-oak forest up to 2,000m elevation, their preference for semi-deciduous forest along the coast of Jalisco may be related to the availability of food resources, making this an important habitat for macaws during the breeding season. Semi-deciduous forest along the coast of Jalisco occurs from sea level to 1,300m elevation. However, much of this vegetation type has been lost through conversion of land to farming and agriculture, or for forestry activities. None of the sites in which we recorded Military Macaws are in a protected area. Logging activities are being undertaken in the forests around Cajón de Peña, and a new road development is impacting the southern-most site where we recorded Military Macaws, whilst macaw populations near the tourist centre of Puerto Vallarta to the north, are threatened by capture for trade and tourist developments.

Photo: *Peter Oxford/Tropical Nature*

A pair of Military Macaws in the Lower Urubamba, Peru, near the southern extent of the Militaries natural distribution.

Mexican students Maria Ramos and Adrián Gutiérrez survey Military Macaws at Cajon de Pena, Jalisco.

We are continuing to obtain information on the ecology of Military Macaws, and are exploring ways to conserve the remaining areas of semi-deciduous forest, which provide an important refuge during the dry season for many birds and mammals of dry forest, as well as providing abundant food resources for Military Macaws during the breeding season. These patches of semi-deciduous forest also form critical ecological corridors between existing protected areas such as the Chamela-Cuixmala and the Sierra Manatlan Biosphere Reserves. Nature tourism may provide an opportunity for non-

Military Macaw (Ara militaris).

consumptive use of wild Military Macaws through bird-watching trips. However, most of the tourism in the region is concentrated around beach tourism, with a tendency towards large, intensive developments which further impact macaw habitat. We are continuing to work with local communities in macaw areas, and have been approached to help establish a feather donation programme for native Huichole communities in the north of Jalisco. These communities use Military Macaw feathers for ceremonial and medicinal practices, and are interested in obtaining macaw feathers from aviaries, in exchange for which they agree not to hunt the macaws.

Lilac-crowns and Citron-crested Cockatoo added to Appendix I at CITES

Dear Members,

As many of you may have already heard, last month the CITES delegates voted on three parrot proposals at their biennial meeting in Bangkok. Two heavily traded species which have been seriously threatened by trade have now been elevated to Appendix I, effectively eliminating all commercial trade in these species. The two are the Yellow-crested or Lesser Sulphur Crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea* - all subspecies included) from Indonesia and Timor Leste, and the Lilac-crowned Amazon (*Amazona finschi)* from Mexico. The third proposal to remove the Peach-faced Lovebird (*Agapornis roseicollis*) from Appendix II, co-sponsored by the governments of Namibia and the USA, also passed.

From talking with border agents, it's clear that this Appendix I distinction will make a huge difference for the Lilac-crowns which are still confiscated along the USA-Mexico border with some frequency. The agents and the smugglers have been very clear about how this change for *Amazona oratrix* and *auropalliata* has already made a dramatic difference in reducing traffic in these species. For the Cockatoo, the benefit will largely play out in a reduction in laundering of the wild caught individuals being passed off as captive bred.

We're concerned about the removal of the Peach-faced Lovebird from Appendix II, because the status of this species in the wild is not well understood, harvest of wild birds continues, and there are several species that look quite similar which will likely face new threats due to the elimination of this important monitoring. Surely there were other ways in which to facilitate the paperwork for the tens of thousands of captive bred specimens in trade. On a positive note, I'm pleased to say that WPT was joined in its opposition by Defenders, SSN, TRAFFIC, the IUCN, and even the CITES Secretariat.

In any event, on the two very pressing conservation decisions, we're quite pleased that the CITES delegates voted for the much-needed added protections of Appendix I, and we hope these changes will aid these species toward rapid recoveries. Certainly the governments of Mexico and Indonesia are to be commended for their efforts on behalf of their threatened parrots, as well as the many individuals and NGO's who worked so hard to make these proposals successful.

Long live the parrots!!

Jamie Gilardi

How the Lilac-crown got to Appendix I

In preparation for the 13 Conference of the Parties of CITES, and as part of a policy of public consultation, the CITES Scientific and Administrative Authorities of Mexico requested public participation in the development of amendment proposals for species included in the CITES Appendices. The Mexican Subcommittee for Parrot Conservation *(Subcomité Técnico Consultivo para la Protección, Conservación, y Recuperación de los Psitácidos)*, which was established under Mexican law in 1999 as a consultative organ to advise government agencies on issues relating to parrot conservation, collaborated closely with the Mexican CITES authorities in the development of a proposal to transfer the endemic Lilac-crowned Parrot *(Amazona finschi)* from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES.

The proposal was based on a national evaluation study, commissioned in 2002 by the CITES Scientific Authority of Mexico (Conabio), to determine the current status of the Lilac-crowned Parrot in Mexico, and the impact national and international trade has had on wild populations. The results of this evaluation study indicated that wild populations had suffered a marked decline owing primarily to capture for trade and secondly to habitat destruction. As a consequence, the species has been extirpated from the many parts of its original distribution.

The habit of Lilac-crowned Parrots of gathering at communal roosts makes them an easy target for professional bird trappers, who place nets across flight paths to roost sites, and capture hundreds of birds at a time. The national evaluation study in Mexico revealed a widespread, illegal trade in Lilac-crowned Parrots, with a large number of captured birds destined for illegal trade across the US-Mexico border. The inclusion of the Lilac-crowned Parrot in Appendix I of CITES will help in the efforts for conservation of this species in Mexico, and we thank the many government agencies, NGOs, and individuals who dedicated much of their time and effort for the success of this proposal.

Dra. Katherine Renton, President, Subcomité Técnico Consultivo para la Protección, Conservación, y Recuperación de los Psitácidos, Mexico.

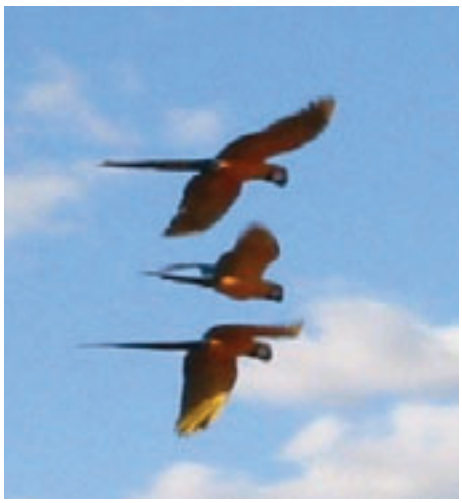
Blue-and-yellow Macaws feeding on soybeans in Brazil's cerrado

By STUART J. MARSDEN & JOELY L. WRIGHT. Applied Ecology Group, Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences, Manchester Metropolitan University.

In August 2003, during a short visit to Emas National Park, Goiás state, Brazil, we noted flocks of Blue-and-yellow Macaws (*Ara ararauna*) flying out of the reserve to feed on soybean fields near the reserve boundary. The reserve is dominated by cerrado scrub, but also includes extensive grasslands and some forest, mostly mesophytic forest along rivers. The boundary of the reserve is sharp, being fenced in all places we saw. In contrast, the landscape outside the reserve is dominated by enormous soybean fields and, in some areas, cotton fields. We came across few areas of cerrado grasslands outside the reserve and almost no wooded areas apart from shelter belts of planted trees. Soybean fields are known to be a severe threat to wildlife in Brazil and while they are certainly not ideal habitat for parrots, they may be used, at least temporarily, by macaws.

Birds were recorded feeding in recently harvested fields, walking along the ground amongst the chaff, and appeared to be feeding on the beans spilt during the harvest. While it could not be confirmed that the birds were indeed eating the soybeans rather than invertebrates, we believe this is highly likely given the birds' behaviour and the apparent rarity of invertebrates on the dusty earth. The IBAMA park guard at the national park gate was well aware that macaws feed on soybean fields at this time of year and agreed that it was indeed the beans on which they were feeding. The largest concentration of birds was recorded in fields adjacent to the reserve itself and indeed birds could be seen flying, almost always in pairs, from the reserve itself (birds often alighted in small trees at the reserve fence before flying on to land in the fields). Once feeding in the fields, they were reasonably approachable but when we occasionally flushed groups of feeding birds, they flew 200m or so and landed elsewhere in the field and recommenced feeding.

Several groups of feeding macaws were observed along the areas we drove. Two groups of 17 and 14 were seen only 3-4km from the town of Chapadão do Céu on the dirt road towards the reserve (and some 4km distant from it). Another group of 22 birds was seen around 8km from the reserve along this road. The main concentration of birds, up to 84 individuals, was in fields adjacent to the reserve around 2km from the national park gate at Portão Guarda do Bandeira. These birds were first observed at about 16h00 (2 hours before dusk). Some were already feeding but many other birds, almost always in pairs, were seen to arrive at the field from the inside the reserve. Some pairs flew straight to the field while others perched in large trees above the reserve boundary fence before flying down to join the feeding party. The maximum counted in the group was 84, although another 15-20 birds were seen flying distantly to land in other fields. Early the following morning, macaws were again feeding in the field but only around 30 birds were observed.



Ara ararauna was also seen inside the reserve during the day (between 10h00 and 14h00) and on the evening when birds were seen outside the reserve. The only birds seen within the reserve were 9-10 individuals along the river at the National Park Headquarters in lush riverine vegetation rich in palms. No macaws were seen in the dry cerrado vegetation that dominates much of the reserve during around 14 hours of driving the reserve's tracks.

There are certainly large quantities of soybeans left in the fields around Emas after harvest, although for how long they are available to birds and how far from the reserve macaws are willing to fly to feed on them is not known. Macaws were seen feeding in soybean fields several kilometres from the reserve, but it is not known whether these were birds that had flown from the reserve or whether they were based away from the reserve.

Recently harvested soybean fields adjacent to Emas National Park with feeding Greater Rheas.

Flying Blue-and-yellow Macaws over soybean fields.

Psitta News

Special Lory meeting

A special meeting for everyone interested in lories and lorikeets is being organised by Rosemary Low for 20th February 2005. It will take place at Shirebrook Village Hall, Park Road, Shirebrook, Derbyshire (near Mansfield, Notts), commencing at noon. The renewed interest in breeding lories and lorikeets makes it important that breeders should be in touch with each other and have a means of exchanging stock. Those attending can bring birds for sale or exchange. Rosemary Low will give a talk and slide show on these brush-tongued parrots. Refreshments will be available and the meeting is expected to end about 3.30pm. Entrance will cost £4 per person on the door. Any profits from this meeting will be donated to the Patagonian Conure Conservation Education Fund of the World Parrot Trust. For further information telephone Rosemary on 01623 846430.

For catering reasons, please notify Rosemary a few days beforehand of your intention to attend. Many thanks.

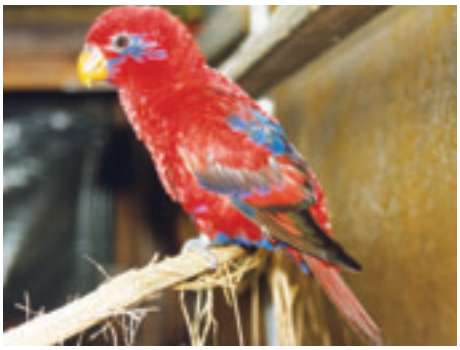


Photo: *Rosemary Low*

Blue-eared Lory (Eos semilarvata).

Educational campaign for Patagonian Conure

By JUAN MASELLO

An educational campaign is going to be conducted in primary schools of Viedma, Carmen de Patagones, El Cóndor and San Javier (provinces of Buenos Aires and Río Negro). Together with Verónica Seijas, a local teacher in charge of the lectures, a written project has been presented to the local authorities. Lectures are going to be given to children between the ages of 8 and 12, and the formal approval is expected in the next few days. Several talks to the

schools directors have also been conducted in order to get their support (in the region, additionally to the ministry permits, the permits from each school director are necessary). The local team is working at present on a short video clip regarding the colony and the birds. The video is in the editing phase at the moment. This video is going to be shown in the primary schools as a complementary educational material to the lectures that Verónica is going to give. A simple but illustrative brochure will also be supplied to every child in order to take it home and show to their families. We are now working on the brochure and expect to have it printed soon. The Wild Fauna Division of Río Negro offered to print them for free. Lectures are expected to start in 20 days time. Guided visits to the Burrowing Parrots colony at El Cóndor, for children attending schools in poor neighbourhoods, will start one month later. The project received good response from the authorities: it has been declared 'of the interest of the Wild Fauna Division of Río Negro' and a similar declaration is expected within the next few days from the Ministry of Education of Río Negro. These official 'declarations' are common practice in Argentina. They are considered very important, a kind of government back-up. Extensive publicity of the educational campaign between the local media is being carried out at present. The subsistence for Mrs. Seijas and associated costs to the educational campaign were paid through donations from Rosemary Low, Franziska Vogel and the World Parrot Trust.

Funds for the Patagonian Conure educational campaign

WPT's Spain representative has donated the amount raised at the first 'Conference of Care and Conservation on Pet Parrots' held on the 11th and 12th of June at Universidad Popular de Alcorcón in Madrid.

The amount raised, 1.208 Euros, will go directly to the Burrowing parrot (*Cyanolaseus patagonus*) educational campaign. WPT Spain would like to thank all the attendees and sponsors: Sun Parrots, Hablemos de Loros magazine, Europarrot, Guarouba, www.yacomania.com, www.loroadictos.com, Team Marketing and Exotics magazine; and the lecturers Ana Matesanz, Francisco Lapuerta Amigo, Angel Nuevo, José A. Sierra, Dr. Pilar González, Dr. Andres Montesinos and Juan José Mantero for their support.

World Parrot Day celebration in Cameroon

By PETER MU_NYETE

The Department of Animal Biology in the Faculty of Science, University of Dschang, organised a Public Lecture and Film Show to celebrate the 1st World Parrot Day in Cameroon, under the distinguish patronage of the Vice Rector (Deputy Vice Chancellor) In-Charge of Research and Cooperation, Professor Samson Abangma,

Vice Dean of Science in the middle feasting with Dr. Tamungang and Dr. Payne.

sitting in for the Rector of the University of Dschang. The main speaker at the public lecture was Dr Awafor Tamungang, a Parrot Research Specialist and a Senior Lecturer of Wildlife Ecology and Management in the Department of Animal Biology, University of Dschang. Welcoming participants at the ceremony, Dr Khan Payne, sitting in for the Head of department of Animal Biology, Professor Paul Tan, said that the World Parrot Day gave a unique opportunity for conservationists and scientists to reflect on birds in general and parrots in particular in respect of the ecological role they play in the life of human beings and other living organisms. Dr Tamungang is an internationally recognised researcher on the Ecology and Management of the African Grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*). His recent works on this bird shed

Partial view of feasting after the lecture in the University.

Dr. Tamungang and Ushers.

light on feeding habits, diet types and habitat preferences of the Grey parrot.

Dr Tamungang revealed that the wild bird trade, together with loss of habitat have resulted in many species of parrots becoming endangered. Each year, thousands of birds are ferried to Europe and North America legally and illegally but many do not survive the journey. In Cameroon, trappers who succeed to obtain licences from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry transport their caught parrots through official channels. Unofficial parrot trappers smuggled the birds across the borders into neighbouring countries like Nigeria, Tchad and Gabon where they are sold. These birds are often stuffed into spare tyres, handbags, luggage or falsely labelled cargo boxes. Dr Tamungang however praised the initiative of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry for putting up an Anti-poaching Committee to enforce the laws in the country against poaching of parrots and other wildlife species in Cameroon. Dr Pierre Watcho coordinated the occasion. Financial support came from the Head of Department of Animal Biology and the Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of Dschang. The World Parrot Trust, United Kingdom contributed conservation education materials.

Zuni Indian tribe seeks feathers (from USA only)

The Zuni Indian Tribe in New Mexico, United States is asking for assistance in obtaining parrot, macaw, and other feathers for religious ceremonies.

Zuni is the largest and most remote of the New Mexico Indian Pueblos (as detailed in *PS 12 3 Aug 00*). It has remained one of the most traditional and orthodox tribes in North America. The Zuni language is the primary language spoken here, and the vast majority of people still practice the Zuni religion. Like many Native American religions, wildlife plays a vital part in its practice. Many species of animals are sacred and some are considered to be incarnations of Zuni ancestors. One of these is the parrot or macaw. Many aspects of the Zuni religion call for the use of parrot and macaw feathers, which are used for offerings and to decorate dance costumes. The feathers used in offerings are used in such a way that they cannot be re-used. All religiously active males make many prayer offerings per year, and each offering requires a different assemblage of feathers, depending on the specific ceremony or time of year and the individuals religious responsibilities. Thus there is a constant demand for parrot, macaw, and other types of feathers. Many Zuni ceremonies involve prayers for rain and prosperity not just for the Zuni people, but for all humankind.

How did a tribe in the American Southwest come to rely on parrot and macaw feathers?

Early Puebloan civilisation depended on well-established trade routes to every point on the compass, including Mesoamerica. Trade items were varied but generally consisted of salt, turquoise and buffalo robes going from the Zuni area in return for shells, coral, cotton, and parrot and macaw feathers. Parrots and macaws were also occasionally brought alive into the region and kept as pets for the moulted feathers.

We are calling on members of the aviculture community to send us especially parrot and macaw feathers. Any species from anywhere in the world will suffice. Also, feathers from all parts of the bird are needed, even down to the smallest body feather. Larger feathers are used for dance costumes. Again, the feathers are used in one-time offerings, so there is a constant demand.

Please send all the feathers to: Zuni Fish and Wildlife Department, Bldg. 2, Route 301 North, P.O. Box 393, Zuni, NM., 87327. If you have any questions, please contact us at; phone: (505) 782-5851, fax: (505) 782-2726, email: apovil@ashiwi.org. Elahkwa (Thank you).

Smuggled eggs 'hidden in pants'

www.theaustralian.news.com.au/ 19 Oct 2004

Customs investigators in Sydney have charged two men over separate bird egg smuggling offences. Both men were detected by Customs officers at Sydney Airport within two days - one of them had just arrived and the other was about to leave.

On Friday (15 October), a passenger who had arrived on a flight from Johannesburg, South Africa, was detained for a frisk search. During the search, Customs officers found that the passenger was wearing a second pair of underpants which had a number of pockets sewn into the inner lining. In the pockets were nine eggs; three of which were crushed. Preliminary findings indicate they are parrot eggs although the species has yet to be determined.

A 36-year-old man, from Devoren Park in Adelaide, has been charged under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act with importing regulated live specimens. He has been released on bail to appear in Waverley Local Court in Sydney on 10 November.

On Saturday (16 October), a passenger who was about to fly out to Johannesburg, South Africa, was detained for a frisk search. During the search, Customs officers found that the passenger was wearing an outer corset style garment and a vest under the corset around his waist. The inner garment had pockets sewn into it. In the pockets were 22 crushed eggs and two viable eggs. The viable eggs, one of which has been identified as being that of a Black Cockatoo, are currently being incubated.

A 57-year-old man from Bankstown in Sydney has been charged under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 with exporting regulated native specimens. In addition, he was charged with hindering a Commonwealth official under the Criminal Code Act. He has also been bailed to appear in Waverley Local Court on 10 November.

The penalty for the charges under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is a maximum $110,000 and/or ten years jail while the maximum penalty under the Criminal Code Act is two years jail.

These latest cases follow another wildlife smuggling case last week in which Customs officers at the mail handling unit at Sydney Airport Mail found 50 Shingle-back Lizards, one Inland Bearded Dragon and one Eastern Long-necked Turtle in ten postal packages destined for Japan. Customs Regional Director NSW David Collins said the cases highlight Customs vigilance at the border.

"Customs officers are committed to stopping wildlife smuggling. Once again, these concealments demonstrate the heartless nature of this cruel trade," he said.

Two newly-minted Ph.D.'s on Wild Parrots

We thought readers of *PsittaScene* would be especially pleased to hear that two researchers working with wild parrots have just finished their Ph.D. degrees in the USA, one in Arizona and one in Oregon. Long time readers will recall Dr. May's work in western Africa on Grey Parrots as the Trust supported her early work and we've enjoyed previous reports on her work, and of course her photo and video contributions of Greys in the wild have been extremely powerful in a number of contexts including two WPT video-DVD's and for our trade campaign as well.

Dr. Robin Bjork's work will be somewhat newer to you, although she has worked for years on Great-green Macaws in Costa Rica - the same project that Olivier and Guisselle now frequently report on - and more recently, she has on these Mealy Amazons and Scarlet Macaws in northern Guatemala. On a final note, some of the language here is a bit technical because these abstracts were written for their newly minted Ph.D. science dissertations, but we're hoping you'll enjoy the parts that are easily understood, and any excessively technical bits you will simply find amusing.

The vocal repertoire of Grey Parrots living in the Congo Basin

By DIANA LYNN MAY, Ph.D, The University of Arizona, 2004, Co-Directors: Irene M. Pepperberg and Aurelio José Figueredo

This dissertation is a report on the investigation of the vocal behavior of free- living Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) that inhabit the Congo Basin in Central Africa.

I observed Grey Parrots in the Central African Republic and Cameroon and made audio recordings of their vocalizations. The results of spectrographic analysis of vocalizations lend support to the assertion that Grey Parrots produce calls that fall into four major acoustical classes—tonal, harmonic, noisy-harmonic, and noisy—and that these call classes may be subdivided into as many as 39 different acoustical types. A reliability study of this classification scheme demonstrated that both clustering of these acoustical types into aggregate categories and the combined method of visual inspection and basic spectrographic measurement enable reliable classification of calls into classes, types and also subtypes. The majority of calls in the observed repertoire belong to the pure tonal call class, which may suggest that a large proportion of Grey Parrot calling behavior is adapted for tonal call production. Grey Parrots may also adjust the acoustic characteristics of their calls to better adapt them to their environment and communication needs. Both observations of Grey Parrots and analysis of the acoustic and production characteristics of their calls indicate that Grey Parrots may share functional call types of some New World and Australian parrot species. Some Grey Parrot calling vocal behavior parallels that of captive Grey Parrots in the laboratory. I conclude with an exploration of possible reasons why Grey Parrots possess such a diverse vocal repertoire.

Delineating process and pattern in tropical lowlands: Mealy Parrot migration dynamics as a guide for regional conservation planning

By ROBIN BJORK, Ph.D

The design of reserves is among the most pressing issues in conservation. Competing interests for land and resources force conservation strategies to focus on minimizing reserve size, which often compromises ecosystem integrity and species viability over the long term. Methods to determine defensible dimensions of reserves and reserve networks are needed. The primary goal of this study was to develop such methods for lowland tropical forests by examining habitat- and spatial-use patterns of the Mealy Parrot (*Amazona farinosa*) in northern Guatemala as a model focal species to complement other strategies being used for conservation planning in Neotropical forest ecosystems.

During the period 1998-2001, I sampled parrots using population- and individual-based methods that were developed in this study. In each of four years, radio telemetry revealed that adult Mealy Parrots breeding in northeastern Guatemala engaged in predictable seasonal migrations within mature lowland forest. Although the area covered by these parrots was considerable (10,000 km≈), more significant was the consistency of their movements and specific locations utilized. Canopy-based population surveys were used to estimate densities of all 6 locally occurring parrot species as a function of landscape type and season over a two-year period; the data suggest that migration is common in this parrot community.

Mealy Parrots rely on mature lowland forest arrayed along regional environmental gradients. Over distances of a few hundred kilometers and a range in elevation of ~200 m, variation in fruiting phenology, forest composition, and rainfall shape this species' movement patterns. Basing reserve design on size alone is insufficient. Large protected areas, such as the 600 km≈ Tikal National Park and even the 21,000 km≈ Maya Biosphere Reserve, will not maintain this population of Mealy Parrots without inclusion of areas that encompass the range of spatiotemporal variability governing migration patterns.

Mealy Parrots proved to be a useful focal or landscape species for identifying regional patterns and processes on a spatial scale not currently recognized through other regional conservation analyses. Intra-regional differences in the spatiotemporal habitat-use dynamics among sub-populations were used as a scaling guide to begin deciphering the ecological pattern (i.e. habitat heterogeneity) and process (e.g. habitat linkages or connectivity) influencing these dynamics. The species occurs from Mexico through Amazonia and may serve as a valuable focal species for conservation planning in other parts of its range.

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

Members Group Email List

We would like to apologise to all our members for the problems we have been experiencing with regard to our group email list. We have now fixed the problem and the list is up and running again. An email will have been sent to all members who previously wished to be on this list. Any members who would like to join, with any questions, concerns, news or items of interest then please contact Karen at uk@worldparrottrust.org
Once again, please accept our apologies for the long absence and we look forward to hearing from you all.

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Parrots in the Wild

Blue-headed Macaw

Ara or Primolius couloni - *taxonomy under review*

By Luiz Claudio Marigo

On a good day in the tropical forests where Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia come together, one occasionally catches a glimpse of a Blue-headed Macaw. Seldom seen in aviculture or on display in zoos, these birds have been highly sought after by collectors in recent years. Due to a combination of low numbers and high demand, CITES upgraded the species to Appendix I in 2002 (see *PsittaScene No 53, Nov 2002*). As our NGO partner in the region, Peru Verde, works extensively in the heart of this birds' range, we are currently developing a regional survey of the Blue-headed Macaw to determine its status in the wild, and to learn whether capture for the trade, shooting for food, or habitat destruction are of serious conservation concern. The Brazilian photographer Luiz Claudio Marigo shared this stunning image captured recently at a clay lick in Peru - for more of his impressive photographs, visit www.lcmarigo.com.br.

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