

PsittaScene



IN THIS ISSUE

Golden Conure

Patagonian Conure

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PSITTAScene (SIT UH SEEN) BELONGING OR ALLIED TO THE PARROTS; PARROT-LIKE

Psitta Scene

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CONTENTS

Gold Rush	2-5
Golden Conure notes from the 2005 field season	5-6
Please stay tuned for Red-fronted Macaws	6
Kakapo update 2005	7-9
Notes on The Parrot Society UK	10-11
Education benefits largest parrot colony	12-14
Lear's homeland inspires community revolution	15
Psitta News	16-17
Save a life - get banded!	18
WPT general info	19
Parrots in the wild	20



Cover Picture By © Gideon Climo 2005

With only 86 individuals left in the world, every Kakapo is an important player in the recovery of the species, particularly new recruits like these new chicks - dubbed "dit" and "dot" - who represent half of this years reproductive output for the species.

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Gold Rush

The search for Golden Conures in western Pará, Brazil

Text and Photos By TOA KYLE



Dawn rises in the eastern Amazon. The mist hangs heavy in the air owing to the massive amounts of water vapour released by the surrounding vegetation overnight. In the distance I locate the rapid, high-pitched calls of my study subjects. Imagine puppies on helium gas and you'll have an idea what a flock of Golden Conure sounds like. Within seconds a group of seven birds arrives to a large isolated snag found in a cattle pasture. I observe them for half an hour as they conduct their morning ritual of preening and play at this tree. What is evident from the behaviour of this flock is the strong family bond that exists between flock members as opposed to simply being a collection of individual pairs. I focus my attention on a single bird that "makes the rounds", allopreening with three other flock members in a 10 minute period. Others appear to be conducting a game of hide and seek by repeatedly crawling in and out of numerous holes found in the snag. The playful energy of Golden Conures is contagious making them hands down, one of the most entertaining parrot species I've had the privilege of observing in the wild. As the light of the sun begins to dissipate the morning fog, the birds leave the tree for foraging areas. In decent light, seeing a flock of these stunning, saffron-coloured birds in flight is an unforgettably breathtaking experience.

The aim of this study, undertaken in April-May 2004, was to conduct surveys of Golden Conure (*Guaruba guarouba*) in two reserves located in western Pará. It is a continuation of work done by myself in 2002 in the eastern range of the species along the Capim River south of the state capital, Belem. This area has suffered from heavy deforestation and active poaching pressure on the birds was observed. The state of Pará has lost over 70% of its primary forest as logging, cattle ranching and soy bean production have steadily decimated rainforest in a wave heading westward and northward from the state of Mato Grosso. In contrast to eastern Pará, the western side of the state possesses larger tracts of undisturbed forest, including two large reserves, Tapajós

National Forest (TNF) and Amazônia National Park (ANP). Given the tenuous future of private lands in the eastern Amazon, these reserves may be crucial to Golden Conure survival. Research on conures was carried out in these areas in the mid 1970s and 80s by David Oren and colleagues but since then no information of the status of the species in this key region has been reported.

The results from the 2004 survey are encouraging. I located at least four flocks of Golden Conure along a 40 km stretch of the Cupari River which forms the southern border of TNF. Knowledge of birds here is a credit to the efforts of Gil Serique, an ecotourism guide based out of Santarém. He came to the Cupari River for the first



Typical landscape outside the Tapajós National Forest. The land was cleared within the past year by a local farmer to create pasture for his small herd of cattle. A flock of 4 Golden Conure are occasionally seen in this area.



Photo: Luiz Claudio Marigo



This picture of the Conures preening in the early morning mist was taken through binoculars.



The Cupari is an attractive river to travel on, being bordered by lush vegetation for most of its course. Flocks of Golden Conure are occasionally seen along the river, but for the most part the species is found in the rolling upland or terra firme forests in the area.

time in 2000 to look for Hyacinth Macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) after reading Henry Walter Bates' account of the species there in the 19th century (Bates makes no mention of Golden Conure during his expedition). Not only did Gil see hyacinths here, he also unexpectedly found 'ararajubas', the common name for Golden Conure. It is of interest to note that the name ararajuba is an indigenous word for 'yellow macaw'. Recent genetic analysis of neotropical parrots has shown that the natives were right, Golden Conure were shown to be more related to Red-shouldered Macaw (*Diopsittaca nobilis*) than any of the *Aratinga* parakeets systematists originally associated it with.

Ironically I'd intended on assessing the status of conure within the TNF reserve but the vast majority of sightings came from the non-reserve side of the Cupari River. This is in part due to the lack of trails in this section of the reserve, making incursions difficult, but also to the apparent preference the species exhibits for isolated snags as roost or nest sites, most often found in areas cleared for cattle pasture. Utilizing isolated trees for nests is a common defense among parrots against arboreal mammals, such as monkeys that

may otherwise be able to gain access to eggs or nestlings from adjacent trees. Golden Conure nests are still vulnerable to avian predators however. Several locals in the Cupari region told me they've witnessed Channel-billed Toucans (*Ramphastos vitellinus*) robbing conure eggs on occasion. Previous researchers have suggested that Golden Conure's communal nesting behaviour may have resulted as a defense against nest predation, as multiple pairs of conures would be better able to repel toucan attacks compared to lone nesting pairs.

Despite the presence of Golden Conure on the non-reserve side of TNF in conspicuous roosting trees, I saw no evidence of nest poaching there. This is strong contrast to the Capim River survey in 2002 where I was offered chicks on numerous occasions for as little as us\$10! The most obvious threat to the species along the Cupari is the continued deforestation opposite the reserve's borders, as local farmers clear forest to grow subsistence crops such as rice and manioc. Several times I found a flock of conures feeding on murucí seeds (*Byrsonima crassifolia*) in forest fragments recently separated by the clearing of 2 ha of forest to plant a meager amount of rice. While it may be argued that deforestation outside the reserve is inevitable, any continued habitat loss for the species, no matter where it lies, should be addressed



A Golden Conure nest tree located directly next to the road connecting a Cupari River community to the Transamazonica highway. The landowner where the tree is located is proud to have the birds on his land and has prohibited anyone from climbing it to take chicks. A flock of 12 conures were observed at dusk briefly visiting this tree in late April before flying to another unknown roost site, suggesting post-fledging dispersal following the breeding season.



The new visitors' guide for Amazônia National Park. Golden Conure were an obvious choice for the cover, as they are a charismatic species endemic to the region, as well as being frequently observed along the highway that transverses the eastern edge of the park.

especially if it is preventable. In this particular example the improved productivity of existing agricultural plots or possibly purchasing important tracts of habitat along the Cupari would better serve Golden Conure populations.

Murucí: An important resource for western birds

The prevalence of murucí in the Golden Conure's diet along the Cupari during the course of the study was echoed by the time spent at ANP on the opposite banks of the



Flowers of the murucí tree. The fruits of this tree are the most often cited food item of Golden Conures by locals in western Pará. People also collect the fruits to make juice and ice cream.

mighty Tapajós River. Murucí fruits are the shape and size of blueberries with two 3-5mm seeds encased in a hard, black seed pod. I was able to observe conures daily while in the park due to the discovery of a 2 ha grove of murucí trees frequented by two flocks of birds. On one occasion I witnessed the smaller flock of 10 birds chase the larger 14 bird flock away from a fruiting tree. Although only one observation, this may suggest that Golden Conure family units maintain and defend foraging territories from one another.

The prominence of murucí in the diet of Golden Conure during this period of the year is supported by interviews conducted with locals. On several occasions along the Cupari River I was shown murucí trees that conures had been observed feeding in during previous weeks. In some communities I was told that the species was only seen when murucí trees were in fruit. The fruiting period for murucí is roughly April to August, thus making it a potentially important resource for recently fledged chicks as well as adult birds during the dry season.

Begging displays

Based on two mornings of observation in the murucí 'grove', I was able to witness flock members repeatedly begging from other birds feeding on murucí seeds. This begging involved a display in which the birds would extend and curve their wings out, while leaning forward and shuddering with head and body feathers raised. A high

pitched wailing call accompanied the display and it was the incessant noise made by these birds that first led me to the feeding area. The display was repeatedly made around foraging birds until they regurgitated a meal to the 'beggars'. On several occasions I witnessed up to three individuals beg-displaying around a single 'donor'. I've observed both recently fledged chicks and juveniles begging thus making it likely that these younger birds are incapable of efficiently opening murucí seed pods.

Park guards told me I was fortunate to find the conures during my stay as flocks seemingly disappear for months on end. Whether birds are moving into areas deeper within the park or migrating out of its borders is presently unknown. I was told one story, however, of a nest tree located close to the park's entrance in cattle pasture. This nest was cut down by the land owner to gain access to nestlings. Such stories are tragic because not only are chicks likely killed in the process but a valuable nest site is lost for untold numbers of future nesting attempts. Although I was unable to locate nest trees in the park during my visit, I've recently been informed that one nest has been found in a lagoon bordering the main road which passes along the park's eastern border. This is good news for future park visitors as there now exists a potentially reliable location for Golden Conure viewing. As conures are the most sought after species by guests to the park, it has recently become it's symbol, being prominently featured on the cover of a newly published educational pamphlet. Personally, it's a relief to know that protected areas exist for Golden Conure populations. Such is not always the case for other threatened neotropical parrots such as Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) and Red-fronted Macaw (*Ara rubrogenys*).



The Golden Conures perch for isolated snags for nest or roost trees brings them into contact with humans when they select trees in cow pasture, for example here along the transamazonica highway linking Pará to Rondonia.

Future conservation efforts: east vs. west dynamics

Results from the 2002 and 2004 Golden Conure surveys undertaken by WPT raise questions as to where to direct future conservation efforts for this species. In the eastern range of the species, deforestation is widespread and active poaching of birds is taking place. Conversely, in the west large tracts of intact forest still exist and I found little evidence of trafficking in the birds. These basic trends are reflected in the average flock size in the west, 10.3 birds compared to 7.6 in the east. A dilemma exists of whether or not to conserve the more critically endangered eastern birds or concentrate our efforts on western populations which offer more hope for long term survival. These types of decisions are never easy to make, especially when dealing with limited financial resources. Nonetheless at this stage of our project it is still hoped that

Photo: Luiz Claudio Marigo





Brazil's national gas company, PetroBras, has chosen the Golden Conure as its mascot, thus this five foot cartoon effigy of the species is found at hundreds of service stations across the country. Hopefully this raised profile for the species will translate into more concern for those flocks which still persist in the wild.

conservation efforts in both regions of the species' range can be initiated, applying a different suite of methods in each case.

Results from this survey are encouraging in terms of confirming the presence of Golden Conure within protected areas. Future research may utilize these sites for comparative studies of the species' ecology in natural and degraded habitats. IBAMA (the Brazilian government's environmental agency) offices for both the TNF and ANP issued research permits promptly and were receptive to the possibility of future conservation efforts. Given the history of rapid deforestation in the state of Pará these reserves have taken on strategic importance in preserving the state's rich biodiversity. However the tendency of Golden Conure to select nest and roost trees in human altered landscapes illustrates the concept that the presence of a reserve does not necessarily guarantee protection for the birds. Education efforts aimed at communities bordering these reserves, enhancement of enforcement of existing laws, and direct protection of nest/roost sites will minimize negative human impacts on these unique, spectacular parrots.

One final story from the 2004 survey involves a banana farmer I met along the Cupari River. I told him I was looking for Golden Conures and he smiled. Apparently, the birds occasionally raid his banana trees. When I asked him if he shot them to protect his crops, he replied, "No. I don't kill beautiful things."



Golden Conure notes from the 2005 field season

Text and Photos By TOA KYLE

Conservation efforts for this year's Golden Conure work are progressing well thus far. We've just completed a three week stint in the Cupari river region bordering the Tapajós National Forest and are presently initiating community outreach work and searches for conures found outside Amazônia National Park.

The decision was made to work in western Pará over the eastern part of the state due to security concerns. Brazilian colleagues basically talked me out of working in the east this year. An American nun, Dorothy Stang, was brutally murdered earlier this February in southeastern Pará. Stang was an active force in the region, attempting to preserve rainforest and help the rural poor secure small parcels of land to grow subsistence crops on. Powerful landowners with vested logging interests in the same area allegedly paid gunmen to assassinate her in broad daylight. In addition, Brazilian parrot biologist, Carlos Yamashita, was apparently threatened the last time he worked with Golden Conures on the Cupim river in eastern Pará by loggers who didn't want conservationists in the area. Violent killings are less common in western Pará but conflicts are not unknown. An acquaintance I met last season who was working for IBAMA in Itaituba, requested a transfer after she received a death threat from a local logger. The shotgun diplomacy of Pará is an unfortunate reality for anyone conducting

conservation work in the state.

The goal of this year's efforts is to concentrate more on conure populations found outside reserves, as well as implement educational efforts geared towards those communities living with these 'nonreserve' birds. At present we still don't know if conures regularly migrate in and out of the reserves in search of food resources and nesting sites. Golden Conures, like many other parrot species, readily utilize degraded, open habitats, so ensuring the continuity of flocks in these areas is crucial to the species' survival. The challenge is convincing locals to minimize impacts on remaining habitat and refrain from nest poaching.

André Ravetta, a Brazilian biologist, assisted me by conducting interviews with people living along the non-reserve side of the Cupari River in order to get a better sense of what sort of land use activities occur in this area. We also gave presentations to schoolchildren. To initiate the dialogue with locals we created a poster featuring a beautiful photo of Golden



Brazilian biologist André Ravetta explains the Golden Conure poster to school children at a community found along the Cupari river. This was the first time students had received any kind of environmental education presentation at their school.



Conures taken by acclaimed Brazilian wildlife photographer, Luis Claudio Marigo. The text features basic information on the species, as well as a toll free number that can be accessed to report illegal trafficking. The poster ended up being a great way of getting people to open up and talk not only about their local knowledge of conures but their attitudes towards nature in general.

What really surprised me was the receptivity of locals to the poster. Most people immediately put it up in their house in a place of prominence. I didn't get the feeling they were merely being polite, rather that they found the colourful poster a welcome addition to their home. On several occasions, I was even approached by individuals we hadn't yet spoken to requesting posters for their homes as well. It is very gratifying to find that these people found the conures as beautiful as I do, their appreciation being deepened by the realization that the bird is unique to this part of the Amazon and found in no other country but Brazil. Interestingly in western Pará, many people erroneously refer to Golden Conures as 'jandayas' (*Aratinga jandaya*), instead of the correct common name, *ararajuba*. One possible explanation may be that many *colónos* (the name for the migrant rural poor in the Amazon) are originally from northeastern Brazil where Jandaya Parakeets are found.

The more sobering details of our visit to the Cupari river region involve the living conditions of the *colónos*. On average most couples have ten children, families of 15 kids not being uncommon. While some individuals will likely migrate to larger towns when they mature, many will remain in the area to raise families of their own thus placing more stress on the remaining forest. On the whole most land properties were relatively small. By Brazilian law, *colónos* are entitled to 100 ha of land, 80% of which must be left as virgin forest. Most inhabitants practice subsistence

agriculture, mainly growing crops of manioc, rice and corn. When the soil quality in a given plot wanes after 3-4 years, more forest is cleared and burned, perpetuating the cycle of forest degradation. The process of actually receiving title for a property is a confusing and slow process. I met one gentleman who'd lived along the Cupari for 18 years and still didn't have official title to his land. The 80% rule didn't appear to be respected either. In one community we visited, two bulldozers were busy opening up the road that connects the settlement to the nearest highway. We were told later that the work was being done to clear the way for logging trucks in the upcoming dry season.

Residents are paid as little as \$20 per tree, some of which will fetch over \$1,000 at the saw mill. Local government agencies are simply understaffed and underfunded to adequately control illegal logging. And there's the issue of the ever present *capangas* or hired gunmen who take care of anyone who gets in the way of logging interests. In short, the plight of these Cupari birds is the same for countless other species throughout the Amazon. At least in the case of the forest bordering the Cupari, logging and agricultural is not happening on a large scale, for the time being.

The encouraging news is that Golden Conures flocks persist in the region. We found eight flocks of birds, up from the four found in 2004. As was the case last season, no signs of poaching were encountered. For once it seems, conservationists have arrived to an area before the bird traffickers. Locals have been very helpful in recommending other sites to be searched, including rumours of nest trees thus more flocks likely remain to be found. It is hoped that a more permanent field presence can be maintained in the future, not only to better understand the conservation needs of the species but also to nurture the relationships we're creating with local communities. Clearly, the survival of these Cupari flocks depends upon the cooperation and support of the people that share their environs with these special birds.



Please stay tuned for Red-fronted Macaws

We indicated on the back of the February issue of *PsittaScene* that we'd fill you in on our field conservation work with Red-fronted Macaws in Bolivia. As that is not yet complete, we very much appreciate your patience through a one-issue delay, and we'll look forward to providing you with a full report with lots of pictures in the next issue. Until then, here's a view from the top of a nest cliff of a pair Red-fronts returning to the next cliff at the end of a long day of foraging.

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



Kakapo Update 2005

By DON MERTON, www.kakaporecovery.org.nz

The National Kakapo Programme is implemented by the New Zealand Department of Conservation in collaboration with Threatened Species Trust partners Comalco NZ Ltd. (sponsor) and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc.

With no breeding since the bumper 2002 season, kakapo numbers remained stable at 86 birds until July 2004 when three deaths occurred. In July, three two year old females died from acute Erysipelas infection following transfer from Whenua Hou/Codfish Island to Te Kakahu/Chalky Island. And, one of the original males (of unknown age) transferred from Stewart Island in February 1988, was found dead in May 2005. Thus, the global population now stands at 86 individuals (38 females: 44 males - plus four chicks from the current season, three of which are thought to be female). These are located on four off-shore islands to which they have been relocated since 1975 to protect them from introduced predatory mammals. Forty of the 86 kakapo (46.5%) are progeny of translocated birds. The remainder (46) are from Stewart Island, with the exception of an aged male known as "Richard Henry"

(RH) - the last known survivor from mainland New Zealand. No natural population remains. In spite of the four recent deaths, mortality generally has been low: a total of five (fully grown) birds lost in the last 11 years. Age is known for 42 birds (~48.8% of the population) hatched since 1980. The remainder are of unknown age.

Movements

Four males not currently needed for breeding were moved from Whenua Hou to Pearl Island in May 2004 to create space on Whenua Hou for genetically under-represented males from Te Kakahu: "Felix" was moved so as to avoid him dominating the new generation with his genes. As well as fathering a high proportion (~30%) of the current sub-adults, Felix is also implicated in a high number of dead



Photo: G. Climo

Zoe at 33 days old.

embryos (up to 31% of fertile eggs). And, "Joe" is known to have abnormal sperm and to have mated with females producing infertile eggs in 2002. The other two males moved - "Manu" and "Tiwai" - are progeny of Felix.

In July 2004, 18 of the 24 juveniles raised in 2002, plus one adult male, were transferred from Whenua Hou to Te Kakahu so that they could become familiar with beech forest and recognise beech (and rimu) masts as triggers for breeding. In addition, 12 birds including seven adult females and RH, were moved from Te Kakahu to Whenua Hou. As well as re-positioning adult females, the latter move was intended to re-position RH and other

Kakapo Productivity in 2005

Female [Sup-fed: W= green walnuts; P= green pine conelets]	Male/s Yet to be DNA -confirmed	Eggs Laid	Fertile	Hatched	Fostered	Fledged	Chick provisional name
Alice [P]	Waynebo [nil]	3	0	-			
Bella [W]	Merty [W]	1	1	1	Egg B.1 to Cyndy 3/3; B.1 chick to brooder 5/4/05; to Nelson 18/4; died 9/5.		
Cyndy [W]	Bill [W]	3	0	-			
Flossie [P]	Bill [W] & Ox [pellets only]	3	3 1 DE	2	Egg Fl.3 to MM on 13/3 - died during hatching. Fl.1 & 2 chicks to brooder on 10/4; Fl. 1 & 2 to	2	Dit & Dot
Fuchsia [P]	Waynebo x2 [nil] & Piripi [P]	3	3 2 DE	1	Egg Fu.3 to Sarah on 17/3 - DE 2/4; Eggs Fu. 1 & 2 to Alice on 21 & 22/3; Fu.2 DE 2/4; Fu.1 to incubator 2/4, hatched 12/4; Died 13/4 ~36h. old.		
Lisa [W]	Sass? [W]	3	0	-			
Margaret-Maree [W]	Nog [pellets only]	3	2 (1 EDE)	1	MM.2 chick to brooder on 23/4 & to Nelson on 24/4.	1	Pukunui
Sarah [P]	Waynebo x 2? [nil]	2	2 (1 EDE)	1	S.1 egg to incubator 2/4/05. hatched 6/4, S.1 chick returned to Sarah 7/4; to brooder 11/4; to Nelson 18/4.	1	Zoe
Sue [W]	Basil [W]	3	0	-			
Suzanne [P]	Luke x2 [P]	2	0	-			
10 (of 20 adult females [P5; W5])	7+ (of 17 adult males [P2; W4])	26	11	6	5 (eggs)	4	

All birds fed walnuts or pine conelets during months prior to breeding were also fed pellets;

Pellets alone were offered once breeding commenced.

Fertile females: walnuts 2; pine conelets 3; Fertile males: walnuts <2; pine conelets <1; pellets alone <2.

EDE = early dead embryo; DE = dead embryo / 10/20 (50%) adult females laid / 11/26 (42.3%) eggs fertile / 6/11 (54.5%) hatched / 2/6 (33.3%) nestling mortality
100% hand-raised (due to: poor weight gain while parent-fed [4/5 chicks] - 'ie natural food (rimu) crop failed and pelleted formulation inadequate as a substitute diet; and 1/5 [MM.2] nestling, attacked by sub-adult males while alone in nest at night.

genetically under-represented males in the best position for mating. And, in April 2005, four genetically-under represented males from Pearl and four males and one female from Te Kakahu were moved to Whenua Hou. Preserving genetic diversity, especially that of RH and of males with no surviving progeny, is considered crucial to the long-term viability of the intensely inbred kakapo species.

In early April 2005 two young hand-raised males (Sirocco & Sinbad) whose presence near nests on Whenua Hou was cause for concern, were moved temporarily to Maud Island.

Health

Three of 18 juveniles transferred from Whenua Hou to Te Kakahu in early July 2004 were found dead near their release sites within a few days of being released. All were female, and all had been health checked before being transferred: "Aroha", transferred on 3 July was found dead on 8 July, and "Vollie" and "Aurora" transferred on 8 July were found dead on 9th and 12th July respectively.

Necropsies carried out by Massey University's Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences (IVABS) confirmed that all three died from acute Erysipelas septicaemia, a bacterial infection caused by *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*. The disease occurs in domestic animals including poultry and turkeys in many countries including New Zealand, but apparently has rarely been reported in free-living birds. It had not previously been encountered in kakapo. *Erysipelothrix* bacteria is commonly found in fish and other marine animals, and very likely reached Whenua Hou by way of petrels and shearwaters that breed there in large numbers. It has since been identified from bone marrow from long-dead seabird carcasses recovered on the island. Outbreaks are often associated with environmental or management stress factors such as the onset of cold, wet weather, high stocking rates or handling of birds. Younger birds are more prone to the disease than older individuals.

All surviving kakapo on Te Kakahu were subsequently held temporarily in captivity while receiving a course of antibiotics in case they too were infected. Fortunately, a vaccine exists, and although no other kakapo have shown symptoms all birds have since received a course of vaccination. Tests being carried out on blood samples taken before and after inoculation may indicate whether individuals have been exposed to the bacteria and have acquired antibodies. If in fact kakapo are naïve to this organism, then ongoing annual vaccination is likely to be necessary.

In July 2004, the juvenile female "Pearl" was found to have a swollen and inflamed cloaca so was confined to a pen on Whenua Hou while undergoing treatment. By early September her cloaca had not healed so she was moved to Massey University's IVABS for more invasive veterinary investigation. Her problem was found to be dermatitis of the mucosa-cutaneous junction of the vent, compounded by shallow ulcerations of the skin of the vent. Following several surgical procedures Pearl made a good, if slow recovery and was returned to Whenua Hou in March 2005.

In mid-May 2005 Gunner, a male of unknown age transferred from Stewart

Rimu fruit developing on Whenua Hou, Te Kakahu and Anchor Islands was sampled in March 2004, and that on Whenua Hou was assessed again in October 2004 and February 2005. Individual rimu trees were found to have a reasonable amount of fruit, but (at ~11% branchlets with fruit) overall the crop was below the lowest level that was known to have triggered breeding on Whenua Hou in the past (viz 17%). Thus, it seemed unlikely that breeding would occur in early 2005 unless it could be triggered artificially - through supplementary feeding perhaps.

It is not practical to pick tiny green rimu fruit in sufficient quantity for storage and



Photo: G. Climo

Ditt and Dot at 22 days old.

Island to Whenua Hou in 1988 was found dead. Necropsy results indicate that severe, acute, multifocal, necrotising hepatitis/hepatopathy due to aflatoxicosis was the cause of death. Aflatoxins have since been found in organically-grown walnuts stored as per SOP's, fed to the birds.

Feeding trials

For many years the kakapo team has been trying to establish exactly what initiates breeding in certain years, and a great deal of research time and effort has been devoted to this elusive goal. If we could identify the trigger we might be able to simulate it - and so induce breeding at more frequent intervals: This could speed recovery dramatically! On Whenua Hou, kakapo feed on the green, developing rimu fruit, and breed in synchrony with the ripening of heavy ("mast") crops that occur every 3-5 years. Clearly, the birds are able to anticipate these mast crops many months in advance, since hatching is timed to coincide with ripening of the fruit. We suspect that hormones contained within the green developing fruit may be the key.

subsequent supplementary feeding since the fruit is produced high in the forest canopy and each weighs ~150th of a gram! We assume that plant hormones present in green rimu fruit, are also present in some other developing fruits, & it seems likely that exotic pines may serve a similar role in this regard as native conifers. For example, *Pinus radiata* foliage, stems, pollen cones & small green cones are readily eaten by some kakapo, & in 1998 "Flossie" & "Richard Henry" kakapo bred successfully on Maud Island on this unlikely diet! Walnuts are another favourite food of kakapo, and one of the few that might be fed as a supplement while fresh & in a partially developed green state during the weeks leading up to a potential breeding season.

Having exhausted other options in previous years (eg pulse feeding, ad lib feeding, manipulation of nutrient levels, feeding freeze-dried & frozen ripe podocarp fruit), we opted this season to feed them small green walnuts & pine conelets. Screening green podocarp fruit for unspecified hormones would be expensive since it is likely a large number of hormones is

present - and once identified, we'd then need to trial each at the appropriate season on the few kakapo - and that could take years! Feeding green pine conelets to one group of birds and green walnuts to another just might short-cut all of this!

We therefore ad lib fed green walnuts to half of the adult females and some genetically under-represented males, and green pine conelets to the remaining females and other males on Whenua Hou from early November 2004 to early February 2005 in an attempt to stimulate breeding. We are, as yet, uncertain what sparked breeding this year, but if in fact it was the green supplementary foods, then this will represent an important breakthrough!

Rimu fruit developing on Whenua Hou was checked in April 2005. Results indicate that ~15% of branchlets have developing fruit. Thus, a low level of breeding may occur again in early 2006.

Breeding activity

Several male track & bowl systems on Pearl and Whenua Hou Islands showed signs of grubbing in October 2004, and activity at bowls increased during November and December. By late December 8 of the 17 adult males on Whenua Hou were booming, and by late January 2005 16 were vocal - including the partially hand-raised male "Sirocco" who resumed occupation of his bowl system on the track to the camp's toilet & attempted to mate with anyone who dared visit the toilet after dark! He was therefore moved to a more remote and safer spot! The only adult male not involved in courtship display this season was RH - the last known survivor from Fiordland - whose genetic contribution is of highest priority! By



Photo: D Eason

Sarah's newly hatched chick 'Zoe'. Codfish Island 6 April 2005.

contrast, only about a third of males on Pearl Island were booming during a visit there in mid-February.

Signs found at track and bowl systems on Whenua Hou indicated that from early February up to 14 matings, involving ~9 females took place. Ten of the 20 adult females nested and 26 eggs were laid. Eleven of these were fertile and six hatched. One chick died soon after hatching, and since the natural (rimu) food crop failed once again and pellets proved an unsuitable substitute, four of the five surviving chicks were removed from nests for hand-raising. The remaining nestling was attacked and injured by young males while the female was away foraging at night - so it too was removed for hand-raising. Four fledglings currently survive having been hand-raised in Nelson.

General

A further attempt was made in February to collect (through electro-ejaculation) and evaluate the viability of sperm from certain males on Pearl Island. This was only partially successful since few of the males were booming well (ie sexually active). However, two males whose transmitters had malfunctioned, were recaptured and fitted with new transmitters.

During January, the hut on Te Kakahu/Chalky Island was moved to Anchor Island (1,400ha) in Dusky Sound to serve as a base for kakapo management there. Male kakapo are to be moved from Pearl to Anchor Island this winter so that rat eradication can proceed there. Sub-adult birds currently on Te Kakahu are also to be moved to Anchor Island this winter. Stoats were eradicated from Anchor in 2002 and although within stoat swimming range it is hoped the island can be maintained free of stoats through ongoing trapping.

No stoats have been seen or trapped on Te Kakahu or Anchor Islands - or their associated 'stepping-stone' islands since stoat eradication was completed in 2001 & 2002 respectively.

An external review of the National Kakapo Programme was completed in early February 2005 and the Team's report has now been received by the Department. The current recovery plan, prepared as a result of an external review in 1994, draws to conclusion in 2005. Already the recovery plan goals have been exceeded in a number of areas and the plan has outlived its useful life. It is appropriate now to set in place new directions and goals for the next decade (2006 - 2016). The review team's report will serve as a basis for the new plan.



Photo: G. Climo

Dit 53 days old.

Notes on The Parrot Society UK

The World Parrot Trust has a mixed history in its relations with The Parrot Society UK (PS). I have been a member of the PS for over 30 years, and like many aviculturists I have found its pages advertising parrots for sale to be very useful. In 1990 WPT arranged a meeting with their committee to see if we could work together for the benefit of parrot conservation and welfare. There seemed no meeting of minds, and nothing developed from this.

Over the next few years we invited the PS to put some of their funds into WPT conservation projects, and this was done in the case of the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius. At the time of our 'World Parrot Day', a year ago in May 2004, we worked very happily with their then Chairman Alan Jones MRCVS to arrange for PS members to join us at our WPT rally around London and in Trafalgar Square. Unfortunately Alan did not remain as Chairman, and since then the PS has fallen into a series of disputes about membership of their committee and other matters. Several committee members have recently resigned, others have been co-opted.

The *Parrot Society Magazine* for August 2004 published an article in which Tony Pittman - a committee member - claimed that (a) the World Parrot Trust had allegedly paid \$1000 a month to a former Brazilian poacher named Carlinhos, and (b) that WPT had been involved in an attempt to poach two fledgling Lear's macaws that had fallen from a nest. We were outraged by these totally untrue allegations, and wrote to PS telling them that we intended to sue them if they did not publish corrections. Their solicitors wrote and offered us an opportunity to reply to their article in a following issue of their magazine, and after taking legal advice we decided to accept their offer. To use our hard won funds for legal expenses would be a serious mistake.

This letter from our director, Dr. Jamie Gilardi PhD, was eventually sent to the Parrot Society for publication, but they then refused it on the grounds that we had submitted it too late. The delay, incidentally, was caused by our need to double-check the correct facts with the people on the ground in Brazil, including Brazilian government officials. We are taking new legal advice on this matter and may decide to take the issue of the PS magazine publishing a correction to court after all.

We regret that the Parrot Society is enmeshed in difficulties and not functioning effectively in the interests of its members, and the parrots that should be their special interest. Among its problems is the presence of Tony Pittman on their committee. This individual has a history of making untrue statements about the World Parrot Trust, and it is unwise for the Parrot Society to allow him the use of their magazine for his fantasies. A recent report shows that the Parrot Society's solicitors have charged a sum of £1,022.25 for 'WPT libel work and Tony Pittman.' Other costs will follow. For the record, WPT's legal work is done for nothing by a supporting solicitor. A barrister's opinion cost £235, and I paid this personally.

The Parrot Society's disarray is reported to have reduced their membership to only 4003, less than half what it was only a while ago. A key matter that needs attention is the revision of their status with the Charity Commission. I understand that PS members have written to the Charity Commission to ask for an investigation. This is particularly important bearing in mind that the PS has large accumulated funds, reported in July 2004 to be £433,847. Imagine what could be done for the conservation and welfare of parrots with such a huge amount. If we can be of any help, we would be only too pleased to advise on how to make good use of these funds. Apart from the financial aspect, this may seem to be a bit of a storm in a teacup, but we have to protect the good name of the World Parrot Trust.

Michael Reynolds, Chairman & Founder.
World Parrot Trust
reynolds@worldparrottrust.org



Photo: Sam Williams

5th April 2005

Leslie Rance
The Parrot Society UK
92A High Street
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 2BL

Dear Parrot Society,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Mr. Pittman's 'Postscriptum' on Lear's Macaws (*Parrot Society Magazine August 2004*), which made factually incorrect and misleading statements about the World Parrot Trust (WPT), our partners in Brazil, and the nature of our conservation work there.

Surveys and chicks: Our partner organization in Brazil Biobrasil Foundation (BBF), collaborated with the research wing of the Brazilian government (CEMAVE) on the development and implementation of a new Lear's census method for the Serra Branca, where the vast majority of the known Lear's nest. This work has proven extremely fruitful and has facilitated accurate tracking of the Lear's population recovery.

During a visit to the Serra Branca in 2003, a biologist from Praia do Forte named Adriano Paiva reported that he discovered two Lear's chicks below a nest cliff while visiting the project with Dr. Carlos Bianchi from IBAMA Brasilia and Ana Cristina de Menezes from CEMAVE/IBAMA. He and his wife were visiting the project to help count the Lear's Macaws. At the bottom of a nest cliff, they apparently found two large baby Lear's Macaws, which had fallen from the nest; the birds were too young to fly. The two young Lear's were taken care of by Ana Cristina and the birds are now in Serra Branca in a large cage built for the purpose. As we understand it, all involved acted in the birds' best interests. Please note that none of these individuals were or are directly involved with the WPT or BBF.

Carlinhos I and II: Not surprisingly there is more than one man in the region who answers to the nick-name "Carlinhos". Carlos Arajo Lima is a famously convicted trafficker of rare Brazilian parrots and lives in Petrolina. Another named Jose Carlos Ribeiro (Carlinhos II) is a local field hand from Agua Branca. On meeting with the landowner mentioned by Mr. Pittman, we were surprised to hear him insist that "Carlinhos" be fired from the project because he was poaching and selling Lear's Macaws - that he was not only "caught" with Lear's chicks earlier in the year, but he was selling Lear's from his own home.

Although the discovery and rescue of the chicks could easily be misconstrued as something any of the fieldworkers was involved with (although as explained above, he was not directly involved), we had a hard time imagining this dedicated fieldworker protecting the Lear's by day and then selling them on his days off. Upon visiting Carlinhos at his home in Agua Branca, he produced several Lear's Macaws which he was indeed hoping to sell. They were - as you will have guessed - macaw sculptures carved from local woods and hand painted: mystery solved.

Trafficker vs. poacher: Most parrot conservationists recognize a clear distinction between a "trafficker" and a "trapper" or "poacher" of parrots. In most parrot range states, there are a few people who make money travelling around the country, buying up cheap birds and then selling them either in the big cities or overseas. These "traffickers" are generally unfamiliar with the birds' biology, and they typically see parrots only as a money-making opportunity. The actual "trappers" or "poachers" are, in contrast, the people who actually live in the field who have grown up close to and loving nature. In the past, they have occasionally found the opportunity to sell parrot chicks to augment their family income, and when they have done so it is for a minuscule portion of the bird's value on the international market. Virtually every parrot conservation project I know of has benefited from the help of ex-trappers or ex-poachers, none have benefited from the help of ex-traffickers.

Although some conservation groups have done so with success, the Trust has made it clear to the BBF and other partners that we do not support ex-traffickers, primarily because we are in no position to evaluate the relative merits and risks of such tactics. That is, and has always been, our express policy at the World Parrot Trust, and BBF has clearly stated that not a penny of WPT funds have gone to support convicted traffickers like Mr. Carlos Arajo Lima, nor will they in the future. Mr. Pittman's allegation in the August 2004 issue of the *Parrot Society UK's magazine* that the WPT, "paid \$US 1,000 a month" to Mr. Lima is therefore entirely untrue and without foundation.

Palms and corn: After the successful development of a photo-id method for Lear's Macaws, BBF then found that adding licuri nut clusters to select palms also worked to help ensure that ecotourists could view and photograph the Lear's in the wild. During a palm nut shortage, the field crew tried out the alternative of hanging corn cobs from the same palm trees. When BBF learned of this activity, they quickly pointed out that feeding corn to Lear's was unacceptable for nutritional and other reasons, and the practice was stopped immediately. It is worth noting that Lear's Macaws are extremely familiar with corn as a crop and have been eating it for decades in Bahia, so the suggestion that a few ears hanging in select palm trees might endanger the wild birds is highly unlikely.

If any reader wishes to have more information about WPT's projects for Lear's Macaw and other species, also our conservation objectives in general, they can find us at www.worldparrottrust.org

J.D. Gilardi, Ph.D., Director
World Parrot Trust
gilardi@worldparrottrust.org



Photo: Jamie Gilardi

Jose Carlos Ribeiro, aka "Carlinhos" visiting the Lear's chicks found by CEMAVE, IBAMA, and others below a nesting cavity in 2003.

Education benefits largest parrot colony

Text and Photos By DR. JUAN F. MASELLO and DR. PETRA QUILLFELDT

As *PsittaScene* readers may know, we have been conducting a study on the breeding biology of Patagonian Conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*), also known as Burrowing Parrots, since 1998 at the largest and most important colony of this species. The colony, which appears to be the largest known colony of parrots in the world, is located west of the village El Cóndor, 30km southeast from Viedma, in the province of Río Negro, Patagonia, Argentina.

This extraordinary natural heritage, the largest known parrot colony of the world, has been seriously threatened in many ways (see *PsittaScene Vol 15 No 4*: 12-13 and *PsittaScene Vol 16 No 2*: 7-9). The list of past and present threats is long and worrying: poisoning of sectors of the colony with Endrin (or DDT) in an attempt to reduce the number of parrots, sectors of the cliff with the colony dynamited for the building of a pedestrian and car access to the beach below the cliff, clearance of vegetation on top of the cliff with the use

of big machinery, disturbances produced by cars and races along the beach below the cliff, aggression from tourists towards adult Burrowing Parrots bringing food to the nestlings, illegal shooting of parrots by tourists during the holiday season just for entertainment, local farmers shooting parrots during the breeding season on their private land supposedly to protect crops, illegal poaching, illegal hunting, urban expansion, and unregulated paragliding along the breeding cliff. The colony lacks legal protection and until now, our fieldwork was the only protection this colony has against illegal poachers and irrational local management.

fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva* in northern Argentina for sale to the international pet trade) asked the provincial government in Río Negro to authorise the "harvest" of nestlings and adult Burrowing Parrots from the colony at El Cóndor for the international pet trade. Fortunately and following our advice, the provincial government of Río Negro answered the Argentinean federal government that the only authorised uses of the colony will be those related to eco-tourism.

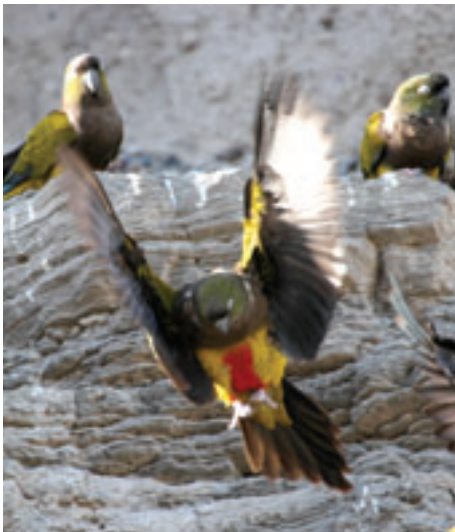
Since 2003, we have been promoting the importance and necessity of protection of the colony among local people and the national and international community. The former through an educational campaign targeted to children at local primary schools, the latter through divulgation articles in conservation journals. As we announced in *PsittaScene Vol 16 No 4*: 16, an educational campaign was carried out in primary schools of Viedma, El Cóndor and San Javier (province Río Negro, Patagonia,



One of the road signs guiding the tourist to the colony.

Argentina). Generous donations from the World Parrot Trust, the WPT - Spain, Rosemary Low (WPT - UK) and Franziska Vogel (WPT - Switzerland) made it possible (see also *PsittaScene Vol 16 No 4*: 16). In 2004, Verónica Seijas, a local teacher in charge of the lectures, gave thirty-two lectures to local children between the ages of 8 and 12. A total of 668 children attended the lectures. A short video clip about the colony at El Cóndor, the breeding behavior and the daily activities of Burrowing Parrots was

Photo: Don Preisler



of big machinery, disturbances produced by cars and races along the beach below the cliff, aggression from tourists towards adult Burrowing Parrots bringing food to the nestlings, illegal shooting of parrots by tourists during the holiday season just for entertainment, local farmers shooting parrots during the breeding season on their private land supposedly to protect crops, illegal poaching, illegal hunting, urban expansion, and unregulated paragliding along the breeding cliff. The colony lacks legal protection and until now, our fieldwork was the only protection this colony has against illegal poachers and irrational local management.

Despite our conservation efforts, some of the threats persist. Just as a very worrying example, last February, some federal authorities of Argentina (in charge of the programme Elé, which harvests Blue-



A guided visit to the colony during nests controls.

All Photos: Juan Masello

produced and shown in the primary schools as a complementary educational material to the lectures that Verónica gave. The video clip also alerted the children about the threats faced by the colony and the necessity of their help to protect it. The reaction of the children was almost immediate. A few days after the first lecture at El Cóndor, children of that school proposed Verónica to start themselves an educational campaign for the tourists visiting the village and the colony. They designed simple posters alerting the tourists and the local community about the parrot colony, their feelings about it, its immense value and necessity of protection. Since last October, these posters have been displayed in local shops of El Cóndor and effectively attracted the attention of the public, locals and tourists.

During the last breeding season, a total of 230 children attending schools in poor neighborhoods of Viedma and San Javier participated in guided visits to the Burrowing Parrots colony at El Cóndor. Verónica describes those guided visits as 'full of strong emotions'. Most children knew nothing about the parrot colony (although they knew many techniques of how to capture the birds in the fields) and many of them saw the Atlantic Ocean for the first time during the visit to the colony. The coast is only 30km from their school and homes! One of the strongest experiences was when one of these children, who suffered serious abuse from his parents, told Verónica after visiting the colony that he was going to immediately release his pet parrot because 'my parrot is



Verónica and the children at a rural school.

going to feel better here at the colony; my parrot is for sure missing its mum'.

Another highlight of the educational campaign 2004 was the day Verónica gave a lecture at a rural school. She was expecting to find a lot of resistance to the parrots and the idea of protecting them. Farmers of the region consider the Burrowing Parrots a serious pest to be persecuted and eliminated if possible. But the sons and daughters of those farmers think different. They told Verónica that thanks to the Burrowing Parrots and their

loud calls early in the morning they know exactly when is time to go to school!

As a result of a joint initiative of the World Parrot Trust (main contributor), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Fundación Patagonia Natural (Argentina), the Wildlife Division of Río Negro and Aves Argentinas (member of BirdLife International), four road signs advertising the parrot colony were set up at the start of the tourist season at the major roads of El Cóndor. Two of the signs guide the tourists to the colony and the other two provide information regarding the breeding biology of the species and the main features of the colony. The first of these two information signs is located close to the recently opened Tourist Information Center at El Cóndor and the second one in the vicinity of the colony. The road signs turned out very popular and effective, attracting an extensive coverage by the local and national media, in particular the national TV.

Also in order to divulge the importance and necessity of legal protection of the Burrowing Parrot colony at El Cóndor we gave two lectures during last fieldwork at El Cóndor. The first one, on 08/12/04, was given at the university in Viedma (Universidad Nacional del Comahue) and organized by the members of the Association of Tourist Guides of Viedma. The second one, on 07/01/05, was given at the local library of El Cóndor and organized by the library members. Both lectures were very popular and many people assisted.



One of the posters made by the children of El Cóndor.

As a result of the educational campaigns

2003 (by Fundación Uñopatun, see *PsittaScene* Vol 16 No 2: 7-9) and 2004 and an intensive contact with local authorities we observed considerable progress, at a level of the understanding of the local people as well as in the preparation of direct measures in conservation. For a part of the local population, the parrots have now a completely new meaning: instead of a noisy nuisance, they are interesting and intelligent creatures worth protecting. This is shown in initiatives that children and adults are developing. For some people, the prospect of eco-tourism as a way of adding value to the colony is convincing. On the other hand, we have recently achieved support across a wide spectrum of authorities, which allowed us to enter an Act proposal at the provincial Parliament of Río Negro for the legal protection of the colony in form of a "Natural Monument". We wrote the Act proposal with the help of Daniel Paz Barreto, Claudio Chehébar (National Parks Administration, Argentina), Mauricio Failla (Wildlife Division, Río Negro) and Luis Castelli (Fundación Patagonia Natural). The proposal was then re-structured by two representatives of the provincial Parliament of Río Negro, Luis Di Giacomo and José Luis Rodríguez, who finally presented the proposal on 29/12/04. This Act proposal is going to be considered by the provincial Parliament of Río Negro during 2005.

The educational campaign 2005 also involved the design and uploading of a new Web page of the Burrowing Parrot Project. The new Web page is in English and Spanish in order to reach both the international and the local public. Through *PsittaScene*, we would like to invite you to visit our new Web page:
<http://vowa.orn.mpg.de/mitarbeiter/masello/>

We also would like to thank Georgina Strange (New I. South, Falkland Is.) for the design and Wolfgang Fiedler (Max Planck Institute for Ornithology, Vogelwarte Radolfzell, Germany) for providing the Web space. New donations of the WPT will enable Verónica to continue with the lectures in 2005 in Viedma, El Cándor and



An interview at the most important broadcasting station in Río Negro.



One of the road signs providing information about the colony and the parrots.

San Javier. We expect to soon get official permits for extending the educational campaign this year to the nearby city of Carmen de Patagones in the province of Buenos Aires. And we will conduct more guided visits during next breeding season in October-December.

We hope that we will remember the year 2005 as the year in which the legal protection of the colony was achieved giving us the opportunity of generating a management plan that ensures the future of the largest parrot colony of the world! We will keep you updated.

Photo: Jamie Gilardi



Lear's homeland inspires community revolution

By CID SIMÕES, BioBrasil Foundation , www.biobrasil.org

Since early 2000, the BioBrasil Fundacion set a priority to save the habitat of the threatened Lear's Macaw. We undertook several actions in order to protect habitat and at the same time to provide environmental education to the local communities where the Lear's Macaw lives in the state of Bahia. Thanks to the generous support of World Parrot Trust, Minnesota Zoo and Disney among others, BioBrasil was able to implement a conservation project in the Lear's Homeland. This project included heightening protection to 20,000 hectares of the main nesting area of the Lear's, conducting a monthly census of individuals that resulted in an official number more than 450 individuals, the survey and cataloguing of the avifauna, developing ecotourism and providing education for the local communities. The last two activities resulted in a local revolution that has yielded the best results we could hope for: self-sustaining programs.

In November 2004 BioBrasil and Cetrel Corp. published the Lear's Homeland Bird Guide online

(http://www.ao.com.br/download/l_caatin.pdf). This is a new publication about Brazil's unique Caatinga biome, home of the Lear's Macaw. Since Dr. Helmut Sick's study in 1978, other publications have worked toward a complete survey of the birds and other mammals of the Lear's Homeland. Thanks to Pedro Cerqueira Lima, who authored the book and took many of its great pictures, the Lear's Homeland Birds Book is completely illustrated with pictures of the endemic species and has been made available to anyone who wants to download and enjoy it. The book has had a big impact on the communities, principally in the community of Jeremoabo, Bahia, in the heart of Lear's country. The capacity of the book for raising awareness on the richness of the region was surprising, and the book

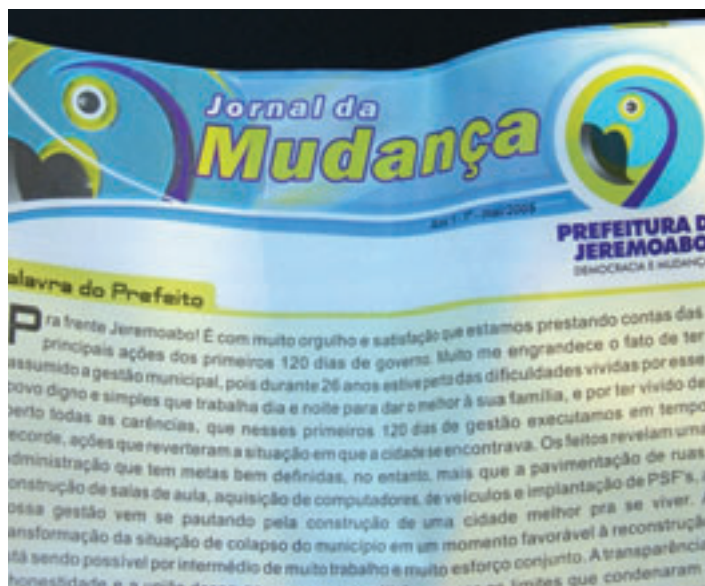
soon generated positive comments from all over the region. Among the many positive reactions to this publication, one story in particular is worth sharing in detail.

In early 2005, Mrs. Josilda Monteiro da Silva, who is a teacher of a primary school in Jeremoabo, asked BioBrasil and Pedro C. Lima if she could use the original pictures of the books in her classes. Of course the answer was yes, but Mrs. Josilda went beyond our expectations. She decided to create a program that she proudly titled as "Life Saving Life", which was based on using the pictures of the fauna to create t-shirts to be sold to help a mother of one of her students who was suffering from cancer. The idea was that the life, represented on the wildlife pictures, was helping to save a human life. Mrs. Josilda's program was successful, and more than 500 t-shirts were sold in less than 2 weeks. The money was enough to help her student's



mother, who was previously unable pay for the expensive treatments for the cancer. The program "Life Saving Life" became a revolution in the city of Jeremoabo, and as expected, Mrs. Josilda has requested more t-shirts. At the time, BioBrasil decided to support the first 100 t-shirts to start the program that would generate money to be used on the program. Very soon, the Program became very well known in the region, and today, after starting only with 100 t-shirts, Mrs. Josilda is producing key holders, hats, handbags, napkin holder, etc. and the program still running.

Thanks to Mrs. Josilda and her attitude, pictures of Lear's Macaw and other caatinga avifauna are being seen in all the corners of the Lear's homeland, and the program is now self-sustaining. The program also got the interest of the local enterprises, who are happy to support the program. The municipality of Jeremoabo decided to put the pictures on their public vehicles and more products are being requested from Mrs Josilda. The Program became a revolution in the gateway to the home of the Lear's, and thanks to the local community a vibrant awareness campaign is now running. Every day, more and more people now know how important their region is for the recovery of the endangered Lear's Macaw.



Psitta News

Parrot smugglers receive sentencing in Los Angeles, California

Hesperia residents selling wild birds at Ontario swap meet; some infected with Exotic Newcastle Disease

By GARY GEORGE/Staff Writer,
Tuesday, May 10, 2005,
<http://www.vvdailypress.com/2005/111573060230703.html>

LOS ANGELES - A Hesperia resident was sentenced to six months in a halfway house and home detention for smuggling into the country hundreds of wild parrots from Mexico and Central and South America.

Another Hesperia resident received two

months of home detention for her role in bringing the birds into the country, U.S. Attorney spokesman Thom Mrozek said.

Juan Gonzalez-Villavicencio pleaded guilty in January to a conspiracy to smuggle protected wildlife into the United States and to making false statements to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Corrina Leanna Conn pled guilty to one count of making a false statement to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Gonzalez-Villavicencio was sentenced last week to spend six months in a community correction center - basically a half-way house - then three more months in home detention, Mrozek said. He also received three years probation.

Conn was sentenced to two months home detention, Mrozek said. Both will share a \$2,500 fine.

Some of the birds smuggled into the U.S. were infected with Exotic Newcastle Disease, a highly contagious and nearly always fatal viral infection that can affect all birds.

An outbreak of the disease in the fall of 2002 cost millions of dollars to fight and caused the destruction of more than 3 million chickens in California, Arizona and Nevada.

In 1971, a major outbreak infected nearly 12 million birds in Southern California and threatened the country's entire domestic poultry and egg supply, the Justice Department said.

Gonzalez-Villavicencio had been convicted in 1999 for smuggling birds and spent six months in federal prison.

After that conviction he recruited Conn who made 30 trips from abroad to smuggle the birds. The birds were sold at the Macklin Swap Meet in Ontario for up to \$500 each.

Help count Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters

18 May 2005

http://narooma.yourguide.com.au/detail.asp?class=news&subclass=local&category=general%20news&story_id=394542&y=2005&m=5.

A NATIONAL survey over the weekend will be conducted again in August and the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is looking for volunteers to help count the highly endangered Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater.

The survey goes along the NSW coast as well as the State's western slopes from Queensland to the Victorian border.

It has been timed to coincide with the

autumn migration to the mainland following summer breeding in Tasmania.

National coordinator, Debbie Saunders, said the survey aims to monitor the populations and habitats of the birds.

"Over the past decade the total population of the Swift Parrot has plummeted by some 30% to around 2,500 individual birds," she said.

"This is a frighteningly big drop over such a short period of time. The main reasons for their decline appears to be loss of the bird's breeding habitat in Tasmania and foraging habitat on the mainland."

The biology and requirements of the Swift Parrot are reasonably well understood for Tasmania, but much less so on the mainland. These surveys will help us to develop a better picture of what kinds of habitat are important for the long-term survival of these species and enable more focused conservation efforts in these areas.

The nationwide survey runs again on the weekend of August 6-7 but any additional records are always welcome.

People who are interested in becoming involved in these bi-annual bird surveys as a volunteer or who have property with suitable habitat containing winter flowering tree species, are invited to contact Debbie Saunders (Swift Parrot recovery coordinator) on 02 6298 9733 or David Geering (Regent Honeyeater recovery coordinator) on 02 6883 5335.

Philippines culls 500 parrots on bird-flu fears

Reuters, 24 May 2005

GENERAL SANTOS, Philippines, May 24 (Reuters) - The Philippines culled about 500 parrots imported from Indonesia as part of efforts to prevent the spread of the bird-flu virus from other Southeast Asian countries, officials said on Tuesday.

The Philippines, which has remained free of the virus that ravaged poultry farms and killed 53 people across large parts of Asia since late 2003, has banned the import of poultry from countries affected by bird flu.

"The country remains bird-flu free, so we are very strict in implementing our existing ban," Victor Atienza, assistant director at the Bureau of Animal Industry, told Reuters.

Atienza said the parrots, seized on Sunday by coastguard officials from a boat en route to Manila from the southern province of Sarangani on the Philippine-Indonesia border, were destroyed on Monday.

The parrots, in 14 cages, were on their way to Manila for export to Europe, coastguard officials said.

Photo: Loretta Erickson



Lilac-crowned Amazons are commonly smuggled across the Mexico-USA border, leading to their uplisting to CITES Appendix I last year.

In February last year, quarantine officials destroyed 350 lovebirds a week before Valentine's Day after they learned that the birds had passed through Bangkok en route from Amsterdam.

The Vini Lorikeet Nest box Appeal

Parrot Society of Australia News

Nest predation by rats has been identified as the major threat facing the Vini Lorikeet and other land birds of the south pacific islands. We must provide artificial rat proof nest boxes to encourage breeding in a safe environment. Our education programme will raise awareness of the plight to save the birds of French Polynesia. We will involve secondary school children in the production and construction of rat proof nest boxes.

Funds raised are for the purchase of materials and tools urgently needed. If you would like to contribute to the conservation of the Ultramarine Lorikeet, please send a donation to the World Parrot Trust. This project has the support of Birds Australia Parrot Association and WPT.

A man and his wife are expected to be charged with at least 40 offences related to the seizure.

Among the protected animals seized were a blue and gold macaw, two red-bellied macaws, six scarlet macaws, seven green-ringed macaws, 19 yellow-headed parrots and a red-headed parrot.

Game wardens also took away five monkeys, robins, and two cages containing about 100 silver-beak birds. Many of the birds were left behind because there was no place to keep them.

The animals are believed to have been smuggled in from Venezuela to support a thriving illegal pet store trade in exotic birds and other wildlife. The raid came after a month of surveillance, and warrants will be issued for the suspects, who were not at home when the wardens came calling.

New licences for Uganda's parrots

By Will Ross, BBC News, Uganda
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4249587.stm

An amnesty has been announced in Uganda. Not for former rebels this time, but for African grey parrots. Although they are an endangered species, several hundred of the birds are being kept as pets.

For the first time ever, I find myself whistling to try and get a response from my interviewees.

But Kappie and Chick are not up for a chat, maybe because this is a big day in the lives of these two African Grey (*Psittacus erithacus*) parrots.

Their owner Tony Ogen has brought them in a small cage to the offices of the Uganda Wildlife Authority to be registered and licensed during the three-month parrot amnesty.

Tony approaches the desk clutching a wad of Ugandan shillings.

It is at this point that the accountant behind the desk gets a little suspicious as Tony begins, "Yes I did have three parrots, but sir you will remember the letter I sent you explaining what happened."

The Uganda Wildlife Authority is against the keeping of parrots as pets, but knows that there are hundreds in cages across the capital having been captured in Ugandan woodland or sneaked across the Congolese border, along with other precious commodities.

It has decided to work with the parrot owners to make sure they are well looked after and there are plans for a breeding programme in captivity.



Photo: Frances Leveque

Juanita, the Goffin's cockatoo, was the most successful fund raiser of the event!

WPT Spain

The second Conference on Care and Conservation of Pet Parrots held at the Universidad Popular de Alcorcón (Madrid), organized by WPT-Spain, was another success. People from all over the country attended this special event devoted to pet parrot owners. In this Conference we tried to innovate by introducing not only new topics, but also a workshop on home making parrot toys, that gathered more than 60 people. The attendees received a talk and a manual in advance. In the workshop they used home recycled consumer objects to build the toys with the guidance of four experts.

This year we also introduced a number of new topics:

- CITES regulations regarding pet parrots
- Feeding: adequate use of pellets, seeds, fruit, vegetables and sprouted legumes
- First Aid on parrots
- Parrot Language
- Zoonosis (disease transfer from birds to people)
- Rescue of abandoned parrots
- Tricks to teach at home
- WPT12 Conservation in the Wild. WPT campaign to ban the trade of wild-caught parrots. The Patagonian Conure conservation program and the educational campaign

WPT-Spain wants to thank the sponsors: Guarouba Consultores, www.yacomania.com, www.loroadictos.com, www.parrotaddict.com, Loroadictos tienda, Hablemos de Loros, Europarrot, Sun Parrots, Exotics, Clínica Veterinaria Exovet, Clínica Veterinaria Serenguetti, and Vitafauna. And of course, our special thanks to the Star of the whole show: Juanita, a Goffin's Cockatoo, who raised money for the Trust collecting coins from the public while it performed tricks!



Photo: Tim Laman



Ultramarine Lorikeet.

Thousands of birds seized in Rio Claro, Trinidad

Richard Charan South Bureau, 14th May 2005

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/index.pl/article_news?id=77686346.

Game Wardens yesterday raided what they described as probably the largest ever illegal wildlife operation in the country, seizing thousands of protected birds, monkeys and a rare Tyra-a wild dog.

The wardens were unable to remove all the animals from room-sized cages, which they said could hold as many as 200,000 birds.

Wildlife with a black market value of more than \$100,000 was found at a compound at Eccles Road, Rio Claro.

Save a Life - Get Banded!

While we are delighted to be entering into a variety of political arenas with our trade campaign (see update in *PsittaScene Vol 17 No 1*), we're doubly pleased to be launching a new product to raise public awareness about the wild bird trade. This product is especially fun because all our members and supporters - even school children - can get involved, helping to save millions of birds per year.

In collaboration with Defenders of Wildlife, we've just produced an awareness bracelet - or "**TradeBand**" as we've dubbed them - to help spread the word about the wild bird trade and how to work with us in urging the EU to stop the imports.

The TradeBands are made of flexible and light silicone rubber. The outside of the band is carved with the expression "Fly Free" along with a number of flying macaw silhouettes. The inside of the band includes



a new website at www.BirdsAreForWatching.org and additional macaws. The bands are nearly impossible to break and one size fits all but the smallest children (who like to wear them on their ankles!). We've produced them in three colours to date - an Amazon Green, a Scarlet Red, and a Lemon-Lime which is half green - half yellow.

We've now sold several thousand TradeBands just in the first six weeks, mostly at Paradise Park in the UK, but they have also sold well off the USA site and in person in Italy and Spain. So far, it seems that if people see them, they want one, or better yet, they want one of each colour. Naturally, all profits will go toward the trade campaign, so we're very hopeful that these will continue to sell well raising funds and awareness about the trade in wild birds.

So, how can you get involved beyond getting banded yourself? Perhaps the most fun option is to buy a pack of bands in each colour, then either give them or sell them to all your friends who like birds or wildlife, or just like to support a good cause. If you are a member of a bird club, talk to the club about getting all the members banded and maybe give a short presentation about the bird trade at your next meeting. Consider talking to your avian veterinarian or the owner of your favourite pet store to see if they might be willing to stock TradeBands for their clients.



Cristiana Senni of WPT Italy has produced the innovative countertop display pictured here - and apparently the TradeBands are selling very well in Rome.

For more information on the TradeBands and the campaign, please visit

BirdsAreForWatching.org. This new site is an NGO collaboration which brings together the Trade Petition and the Wild Bird Declaration to a common site with the clear goal of ending the EU's unsustainable imports of wild birds. It includes links to all the signatories of the Declaration (now at 240).



available in:

Green or Red or Lemon & Lime

sold in packs of 10 minimum (thru the post) for **£10 / €15 / US\$20,**

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



Donation / Legacy

Please think of us!
Donations and Legacies are vital in our bid to help conserve the parrots in the wild.

Languages Available

We have our *PsittaScene* translated into: Italian, Spanish, Swedish, German, Dutch and Japanese.

We are currently looking for a French translator - if you could help please contact us

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WPT Web Sites:

Main: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org>

USA: <http://www.parrottrustusa.org>

Italy: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org/italia>

Germany: <http://www.germanparrottrust.org>

Japan: <http://www.worldparrottrustjapan.org>

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

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (please tick)

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- Joint** (Annual) £27 / US\$40 / €40
- Club** (Annual) £100 / US\$150 / €150
- Fellow** (Life) £300 / US\$500 / €500
- Conservation** (Life) £1,000 / US\$1,500 / €1,500
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Parrots in the Wild



Red-crowned Parrot

Amazona viridigenalis

By ©2005 Bowles/Erickson,
www.amazornia.us

A juvenile Red-crowned Parrot, also known as a Green-cheeked Amazon, playfully foraging on blossoms of a Coral tree (*Erythrina variegata*) in southern California. Now considered Endangered by the IUCN, the Red-crowned Parrot continues to decline in its native range in east-central Mexico due to capture for the pet trade and loss of habitat. Meanwhile, this introduced population in Los Angeles thrives in a highly urban setting.