

PsittaScene



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Five more months!
Busy on Bonaire

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Psitta Scene

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Cover Picture By © SAM WILLIAMS

A wild pair of Yellow-shouldered Amazons (*Amazona barbadensis*) extract seeds from the pods of a mesquite tree. The World Parrot Trust is supporting 2 PhD research projects on this species on Bonaire. It appears that 2006 is a year of plentiful food, and several pairs are successfully raising 3 or even 4 chicks. See article starting page 3.

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From the Director... Five more months!

Thank you for writing so many wonderful cards to the Commissioner in Brussels. Your response was fantastic, and for a moment there, we were a little concerned about too many cards being too much of a good thing. Of course we don't really expect to get a reply from the Commissioner's office, but I'm sure all your cards were received in the spirit intended. The great news is that Mr. Kyprianou just extended the ban yet again, this time for five additional months until the end of December 2006! We won't ask you to thank him again, but if you live in the UK, in a moment I will ask you to write to someone closer to home.



Three additional developments on the bird trade have arisen since our last issue, all very encouraging. In a recent issue of their magazine, the Parrot Society UK published a survey of their membership which asked many questions, including, "Would you support an import ban?" The vast majority supported a ban with 74.9% in favour and 8.6% against. Looking more broadly, the RSPB recently hired a professional survey firm to poll the general public in both the UK and Germany to assess the level of knowledge about and attitudes regarding trade in wild birds. In both countries an astounding 92% of respondents disapproved of taking birds from the wild for the pet trade, whilst only 1% in the UK and 2% in Germany approved. While I had hoped that simple majorities in each of these surveys would support a ban (after all, who really thinks putting wild birds in cages is a good thing?), but even on my most optimistic days, I don't think I could have hoped for such strong results overall!

Adding to this great news is the fact that the British Veterinary Association has just announced a new position calling for a permanent ban on the importation of wild birds into the EU. For such a powerful and esteemed group of experts to speak out is as rare as it is consequential - please see *Psitta News* for more detail.

How to help... act two (for UK members only)

We've had many valuable discussions on the bird trade in the UK Parliament, inspired by Andrew George MP, Norman Baker MP, and Baroness Miller. In fact, just in recent weeks, the Government has admitted to parliamentary questions that there has in fact been no increase in smuggling since the ban last November, and that stopping trade has been very effective and has cost nothing to enforce.

A few weeks back, another supportive MP, John Randall from Uxbridge, tabled a new early day motion (below). You'll note that it includes language which strongly supports the hobby of birdkeeping and simultaneously requests that the government ensure all future imports be truly sustainable. As this EDM already has support from Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat MP's (currently 39 signatories), and because the timing is perfect, we are hopeful that the motion may enjoy broad support from all parties and send a powerful message to the Government that action is required.

So, if you live in the UK, we're asking you to please write your MP and politely request that they endorse EDM 2375 on the wild bird trade. For the name and contact information for your MP, enter your postal code at www.theyworkforyou.com (or call us and we'll look it up for you). You can email your MP directly through that site, but I'm virtually certain that a nice card (perhaps with a pretty parrot on it) will send an even stronger message. If your MP is a sitting minister or a shadow minister, they may not sign this motion, however you could still write to them to tell them how much you support it and hope they'll take action when the motion comes to the floor.

James Gilardi, Ph.D. Director, World Parrot Trust

EDM 2375 Randall, John "SUSTAINABLE WILD BIRD TRADE"

That this House recognises that bird-keeping is a hobby which is enjoyed by many people in the UK and can foster wider interests in ornithology and bird conservation; strongly supports the right of bird-keepers to practise their hobby; believes that the sourcing of birds for aviculture must be sustainable; is concerned that the wild bird trade as currently practised is not sustainable, is depleting vulnerable populations of wild birds around the world and is responsible for the deaths of very large numbers of birds in transit; questions unsubstantiated assertions that this trade brings real income to indigenous communities and conservation benefits in wild birds' countries of origin; further questions the view that restrictions on the legal trade in wild birds will lead to an increase in the illegal trade, a view not supported by the experience in the US following the 1992 Wild Bird Conservation Act; and therefore calls on the Government to support a strong bird-keeping tradition in the UK based on captive-breeding and sustainable imports, and to work with other European Union member State governments for a permanent ban on imports of wild birds into the Union unless they can be proven to meet rigorous sustainability criteria on a case by case basis.

Busy on Bonaire

By SAM WILLIAMS and ROWAN MARTIN

Introduction from Sam Williams' blog - soon to appear on WPT's redesigned website... (Blog is short for weblog, which is a frequently updated journal, or newsletter intended for public viewing.)

I first visited the Caribbean island of Bonaire in 2003 to work with the Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*) and get an idea of their situation. The visit was funded primarily by WPT with contributions coming from the US and UK Amazona Societies and the Parrot Society UK. The fieldwork showed that there are a number of issues that conservation work must tackle to protect the parrots, but the good news is that the people of Bonaire are very keen to do what they can to help. Look back to *PsittaScene Vol 16 No 1 Feb 2004* to see what I was up to.

I worked with my good friend Andrew Beckerman following the 2003 field season to develop ideas of what conservation-orientated research could be done on Bonaire and together we created a research position at the University of Sheffield, England. I am now a PhD candidate, and the main focus of my work will be to look at the factors that limit the parrot population here on Bonaire. My aim is to identify problems the birds face to best direct future conservation efforts.

This time I am not the only parrot researcher on the island. Rowan Martin, another English lad (*with better taste in hats. Ed.*), will also be doing research on the Amazons with WPT support. Our projects are independent but it's great because we can really help each other and achieve more through working together. Rowan's studies will look at the parrot's monogamous mating system and the roles of males and females. Among birds, sexual monogamy (as opposed to social monogamy) is actually very rare and he is interested in investigating the driving forces behind it.



Photo: S Williams & R Martin

Rowan (left) and Sam by the Lora project truck which was purchased with WPT funding.



Photo: Rowan Martin

Amazon parrots rarely come to the ground. The fact that the Yellow-shouldered Amazon does has been helpful to researchers as it provides an opportunity to capture them. Once in hand they can be weighed, measured, ringed and examined before being released.

The Yellow-shouldered Amazon is found in several isolated populations, one of which is the Dutch island of Bonaire in the Southern Caribbean. Our work actually began in October 2005 as we defined our projects and began preparing for the field season. The 2006 breeding season will be our first of three seasons in the field, working with these charismatic birds to learn more about their ecology and endangerment. Between field seasons we'll be in England where we are based at the University of Sheffield.

The World Parrot Trust has been involved with the parrots on Bonaire previously. In 2002 WPT assisted the island wide amnesty of illegal captive parrots, (see *PS Vol 15 No*

1, Feb 03). In 2003 Sam travelled to Bonaire with WPT support to look into the parrot's situation and develop links with people on the island (see *PS Vol 16 No 1, Feb 04*). Our current research projects have come about as a result of that initial visit. We are grateful to have the continued support of the World Parrot Trust, in partnership with the UK funding body, the Natural Environment Research Council.

We have made use of WPT's support to purchase a vehicle capable of getting us and our equipment into the field. We saw this as a good financial move because of the prohibitive expense of car hire. With the WPT Palm Cockatoo logo on the doors, we think it shows the local community that we

are serious in our commitment to help conserve the Lora (as the parrot is known locally). The Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity (CARMABI) foundation, based on Curacao, also contributed to the purchase of the truck.

On many occasions we work together in the field and this is a great advantage of having two research projects running simultaneously. However, our projects are independent and we each aim to explore different aspects of the Lora's ecology. One of us (Sam) is focused on looking at the factors that currently limit the Lora population while the other (Rowan), is investigating aspects of their breeding behaviour.

What's limiting Loras?

By Sam Williams

Parrots are part of an ecosystem and like all animals and plants their population size is kept in check by other species in that ecosystem. The parrots on Bonaire appear to be influenced by numerous factors, some of which are natural, others result from human activities. I'm interested in looking at the extent to which these factors limit the Yellow-shouldered Amazon population. When we know what the biggest problems are, we can make the best use of future conservation efforts.

Examples of natural population limits include competition, disease and predation. Habitat destruction and species introductions are limiting factors that result from human activities. In addition to the usual limits that most species face, almost all parrots are troubled by poaching because they are highly desired as pets. For the Yellow-shouldered Amazon on Bonaire these are all serious factors because like most large parrots they are slow breeders (compared to something like a small songbird) but also because their island population is quite small (due to the island's size).

There are an estimated 400 wild amazon parrots on Bonaire and they have been protected by law since 1952. Poaching continued despite the parrot's status and there are over 600 captive Lora on the



Photo: Rowan Martin

With the infra red camera it's possible to see how mum divides the food.

island. Hopefully poaching is less of a factor since the registration campaign (see *PS Vol 15 No 1, Feb 03*) but it will clearly have had a serious impact on the parrot population. Rats and the aggressive Pearly-eyed Thrasher (*Margarops fuscatus*) may also have a negative impact on the number of fledglings leaving a nest. I will look at various stages of the parrot's lives and hopefully get an idea of which of these is having the biggest impact.

I have been following the bird's nesting attempts to see the number of eggs laid, how many of those hatch, if the chicks survive to fledging, and if not, why not. Most of the chicks we know of are rung (banded). By ringing individuals, whether it's chicks in the nest or wild adults, it will be possible to monitor many aspects of the Lora's natural history including which survive to fledging and on to adulthood.

Most of the breeding parrots we know of nest in cliffs and this is probably because virtually all the trees big enough to have a parrot-sized cavity also have chainsaw holes in them! Poachers have cut holes directly into the tree trunks in order to extract chicks. Nest inspections typically involve abseiling (rappelling) the cliffs. Extracting a chick can be interesting as many of the cavities are deep and have tight entrances. I use a ladle to scoop the chicks up or pull them into reach, but even so I typically have the entire length of my arm in the nest. In addition to checking that the chicks are still with us I monitor their growth and check them for parasites. Rowan and I are also interested in looking at the bird's DNA. I am interested in studying the genetic variation within the population and the level of inbreeding. Both of these factors can influence the long-term survival of a species.

Another component of my research this year involves simply trying to determine what the parrots want. We know where they feed, where they nest and even where some of them sleep but why do they choose those specific locations and not others? To attempt to answer this question I am conducting habitat assessments in many areas throughout the island. To do this I have selected a number of important parrot

Photo: Alison Perry



Photo: Sam Williams

Nests are often deep and chick extraction is difficult - often involving "the magic ladle" and supreme concentration!

locations including feeding, nesting and roosting sites. In addition, I will visit over 20 randomly selected areas to compare the different habitat characteristics between sites the parrots use and those they do not. The kind of habitat characteristics I'm looking at includes plant species composition, food availability and physical structure (e.g. big or small trees).

While I am at each location I also spend 15 minutes counting all the birds and animals in the area. In particular I'm interested in the parrots, the endemic sub-species of Brown-throated Conure (*Aratinga pertinax xanthogenius*), the Pearly-eyed Thrasher and the introduced Troupial (*Icterus icterus*) which at certain times may be a food competitor. As I am out and about a lot I get to have some great experiences, such as watching wild pigs from 1 metre, caracaras hunting on the ground or hummingbirds checking out the pink plastic tape I use to mark the location.

By the time I return to the UK in September I hope to have collected a lot of information on the parrot's requirements and their breeding success. I'll also have a number of blood samples that I will be analysing over the winter to study the population's genetics. I will have to don a lab coat and learn a whole load of different techniques that are as important to the parrot's conservation work as abseiling down cliffs to handle baby parrots. I think I already know which one I will prefer!



Photo: Rowan Martin

An amazon pair tail fanning in display at the nest.

A day in the field.

By Rowan Martin

Perched on a cliff edge I train the telescope on a nest entrance in the rock face opposite and wait. From my vantage point I can look down on the lives of the Loras as they go about their business in the canyon below. A male begins to call and the sound reverberates between the weathered cliffs. Eventually the female responds, leaving her eggs and joining him in a tree to be fed.

She begs and the feeding session begins. Meanwhile, I am frantically recording all that is going on: who is doing what, to whom and when - all information that will hopefully provide insight into why some pairs are more successful than others when it comes to raising chicks.

The purpose of my research on Bonaire is two-fold. On one level I am collecting valuable information on the Lora's breeding biology. I am following numerous pairs at different sites around the island and this will inform local conservation efforts. In the bigger picture - what we learn here will enhance our understanding of why these and other parrots are monogamous and also how this unusual mating system affects the rate of reproduction.

Today, like every day in the field, I am in equal parts enthralled and frustrated. What I am discovering is that each pair is very different. Just as I think I know them and can predict their actions, they change things - a different call, a different time of day or even a different pair arrives to upset things. In this instance the feeding pair is interrupted. Another pair has landed nearby and begun to call. The male breaks off feeding to call back and the screeches echo up and down the canyon. As the conflict escalates, calls are accompanied by the raising of wings and fanning of tails. The sound changes to a more guttural growl before the male flies directly at the other pair forcing them to take off and move down the valley. The female retreats to the nest, perhaps a little hungrier than usual - something I hope the data may reveal.

It is interactions such as these that are particularly interesting. The decisions of males and females and how they respond to each other could be critical in determining which partnerships are successful.

That morning Sam and I had abseiled from



Photo: Alice Rogers

Chicks are checked for parasites, weighed and measured to follow their development.

the cliff to check the nest. Instead of the four eggs that had been on the previous check there were now only 3, but also one tiny naked chick. This is great news and we are following several nests with similarly large clutches. Good rains earlier in the year may have prompted the adults to be a bit more ambitious than usual. Of course more chicks means a greater workload for the parents and this will affect how they interact. It will be interesting to observe how the decisions of each pair differ and in turn affect their breeding success. Over the next few months I look forward to following each of the pairs as they work together to turn the eggs they have into the next generation of Bonairean Loras.

Meanwhile the sun drops lower and the cliffs begin to glow red. For the past half-hour the male has been perched attentively outside the nest. Seemingly satisfied that all is well, he releases a gentle call and flies off up the valley to his roost for the night. I make my final entry in my notebook, pack up my spotting scope and head home for the night. I will be back in the field before day-break to follow a different pair as they continue the job of parenthood.

Once we get our heads around the information we have collected this season both of us will write again for *PsittaScene* and we'll let you know what we have found and how the babies did.



Photo: Andrew Beekman

Trying to locate nests in prime parrot habitat.



Photo: Rowan Martin

Chicks are monitored using an infra red camera mounted in a second nest entrance.



Photo: Sam Williams

Parrot pair preening as the breeding season begins. Notice that the lower bird is nibbling the toe of the other.

Parrots of the World - an Identification Guide

Book Review By Roger Wilkinson

This book written by author Joe Forshaw and illustrated by Frank Knight is very different from the classic "Parrots of the World" by Joe Forshaw and William Cooper that will be familiar to many readers. "Parrots of the World - An Identification Guide" aims to serve the needs of both field workers and those examining birds in the hand. The latter category includes museum workers, aviculturists and also wildlife enforcement staff.

Importantly the book includes descriptions and illustrations for each parrot species and distinct subspecies. Aviculturists in particular may be interested in subspecies identification. Taxonomic fluidity is such that some authorities recognise as species some of the forms included here as subspecies. Conversely Forshaw recognises some forms lumped together by other authors.

The illustrations are less sumptuous than those of Cooper and most are more similar in style to those in a modern field guide. This better suits the identification function of this book. A unique feature is the depiction of the dorsal and ventral aspects of many species in flight. Whilst the technique of illustrating the body and only one wing in these figures is economical and practical, it is less aesthetically pleasing than illustrating the whole bird. A total of 120 colour plates are prefaced by one of extinct parrots. Conservation is a theme running through this volume and the extinct parrots serve to remind the reader of the threats many parrots now face.

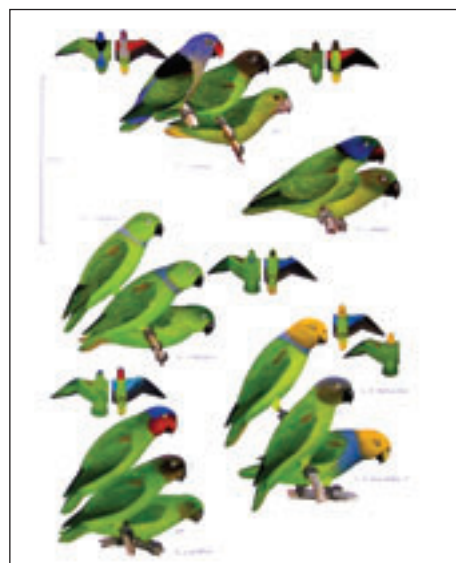
Opposite each colour plate the facing page includes a brief description for each species illustrated, followed by a detailed description for both adults and juveniles. A range map for each species is accompanied by a written distribution account and the current IUCN Red List and CITES status is then given. Red List status designations follow the criteria given by Birdlife International (2004) and not as indicated in "Birds International" which was an excellent but sadly short-lived quarterly publication edited by Joe. The IUCN status has already changed for some species and likely to change for others so readers should check current status from the IUCN Red List website (www.redlist.org). Birdlife International, the arbiters of the IUCN Red List do not themselves offer status designations for subspecies. One advantage of this book is that these are included in this work for the Australian parrot subspecies.

I decided to trial the book by looking first at the Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) section. The Palm Cockatoo is

divided into four rather than three subspecies given in other contemporary accounts. Birds from southern New Guinea and Cape York, Australia, rather than being included in *aterrimus* are separated here as *macgillivrayi*. The text also tells me that *macgillivrayi* is considered to be near-threatened. This is useful information and it is unlikely to be a coincidence that most birds in captivity are probably of this most threatened subspecies.

In that users may first go to the plates and only then wish to consult the texts I found it frustrating that there is no reference on the plate or facing page to the page number for the textual species account. Conversely the species accounts do direct the reader to the relevant plate number.

The species accounts are divided into sections headed "Other Names", "Distribution", "Habitats and Status", "Habits", "Calls", "Similar Species" and "Suggested Localities". The "Distribution" text repeats that given in the page facing the plate and seems redundant but the other sections offer the reader useful additional information. The "Habitats and Status" section describes both the most frequented habitats and the species abundance, and therefore the likelihood of encounter. The "Habits" section describes habits such as whether a species is social or solitary as well as how they appear in flight. "Calls" should be most useful to field workers in identification but to my untrained ear these are often difficult to distinguish and "unmusical shrieks and screaming squawks" apply to many species. Other call descriptions should prove more useful. For example, the call of the Amazonian Parrotlet (*Nannopsittaca dachilleae*) is described as "high pitched, piping notes



likened to the chirping of domestic fowl chicks". Even more helpful would be a CD of calls to accompany the book - perhaps a CD could be included with a paperback smaller format version of this book for field use?

The "Similar Species" section is the most useful for bird in the hand identification in indicating the important points of difference from similar species. "Suggested Localities" is included for parrot "twitchers" who are intent on seeing a particular parrot species. Here the best likely and most accessible locations to see each species are listed. For example if you wished to see a Hawk-headed Parrot (*Derophtus accipitrinus*) one of the sites recommended is Cristalino Lodge, Mato Grosso, Brazil. While on a short stay there before the current site was developed I saw lots of other parrots there but missed Hawk-heads. I did see two nearby in Alta Floresta. Ecotourism makes good sense if you choose locally run hotels and camps.

At £42 (\$76) with 120 colour plates the book offers exceptionally good value for money. The book is large (23 x 31cm or 9 x 12in) and heavy (2.2 Kg or 4.8 lbs) and as such in this edition its usefulness in the field is compromised by its lack of portability. Unless a less bulky volume is produced this book is likely to remain at camp or in the lodge to be consulted prior to or on return from the field. However this is a very valuable reference text to be consulted in the museum, aviary, zoo or airport customs which will be indispensable when challenged with identifying a captive living bird or a museum specimen and I would very much recommend the book for this purpose.

Soon to be available via our online store.



The mystery of mimicry

By JACK BRADBURY and THORSTEN BALSBY, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Despite variations in ability between species, nearly all parrots exhibit some vocal mimicry in captivity. This talent and the birds' clear intelligence are major reasons why so many humans enjoy parrots as pets. But how do parrots use their astonishing vocal mimicry abilities in nature?

Since 1992, we have been trying to answer this question by studying four common species of parrots in the Area de Conservación Guanacaste (ACG) of northwestern Costa Rica. These parrots are important members of the avian community inhabiting the seasonal dry forest that stretches along the west coast of Central America. The two of us and our students have focused on the three smaller species in the region: the 60g Orange-chinned Parakeet (*Brotogeris jugularis*), the 80g Orange-fronted Conure (*Aratinga canicularis*), and the 230g White-fronted Amazon (*Amazona albifrons*). Dr. Tim Wright, a former graduate student in our lab and now a faculty member at New Mexico State University studies the 450g Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*).

Methods

Research on parrot vocal communication requires methods quite different from those used for songbirds. Many parrots live in high forest where it is impossible to follow them for long. Where poaching is high, they are wary and will not allow observers close to them. None of the four parrot species has fixed territories to which the researcher can return daily to perform playbacks and other manipulations. Parrots squat when perched, making leg bands relatively useless for individual marking.

Radio collars allow one to follow individuals, but the birds' large and overlapping home ranges, the requirement that the transmitter not impede entry and exit from narrow nest holes, and transmitter destruction by preening partners makes this a challenging exercise. Capture of wild parrots away from nest sites is constrained by their highly variable and unpredictable daily travels.

However, the ACG has proved to be a superb site for studying wild parrots. The local parrot populations are relatively protected, the vegetation is low and open, and the ACG management staff have been enormously supportive. We have learned enough about the local species' vocal repertoires that we can play back their calls to draw them into mist nets for capture and marking. The ACG is bisected by the Pan American highway and has many old farm roads facilitating radio tracking, nest searches, and sound recording. Locally captured birds are individually dye-marked and held for 5-12 days in aviaries built in the seasonal forest adjacent to our assigned housing quarters. Here we can record individual bird's repertoires and behaviours in depth and up close. Our house is located in an area of intense parrot traffic. As flocks fly over, captives call them in, and we can then record the full exchange between captive and wild individuals. A ring of eight microphones around the



Photo: Thorsten Balsby

White-fronted Amazons are carefully removed from a mist net after being lured in with playback of natural calls. Netting the birds allows them to be held temporarily for individual marking and in some cases, to study their complex communication.

aviary and a laptop computer help us localize where a call is given and thus which bird emits it. Sexually monomorphic species can be sexed from a drop of blood using modern genetic methods, and blood DNA can also be used to assess family relationships.

Daily life and vocal behaviour

Most animals vocalize for specific social functions, and the context in which calls are given is often the best initial clue to a call type's function. Understanding the vocal repertoire of a species requires an understanding of their social organisation. We have spent as much time trying to characterise the basic social organisation of each species as we have studying their vocal repertoires.

The ACG parrots share the same daily cycle during the non-breeding season: leave the communal night roost shortly after dawn in small foraging parties, feed for several hours, play and rest during late morning and midday, forage again, and then aggregate at "staging" areas before entering the night roost just before dusk. While the Yellow-naped Amazons usually spend the day as solitary pairs or small families, the three smaller species repeatedly encounter conspecific flocks at foraging, resting, and staging sites. Intense vocal exchanges between such flocks are then followed by the flocks fusing into one larger group or instead going their separate ways. Perched birds will actively recruit over-flying conspecifics with exchanges of calls. Larger aggregations away from night roosts are unstable and eventually break up into smaller groups, often with different compositions. As with fusion, vocal exchanges seem to play a prominent role in mediating flock fission.



*A mated pair of Orange-fronted Conures share a nancite fruit (*Byrsonima crassifolia*) in the aviary.*

Photo: Erica Spotwood



Newly captured White-fronted Amazon showing red feathers on wing present only in adult males. This is the only one of the four species in the ACG that is easily sexed at a distance.

All of our species sleep at communal night roosts. The Yellow-naped Amazons are the only one of the ACG species that uses a fixed site. One location in our area has been used every night for over 30 years. The parakeets and White-fronted Amazons use the same night roost for 3-6 weeks, and then move to a totally different site that is usually many kilometers away. While they may return to a site in later years, there is no obvious pattern or predictability about such reuse. The conures also shift night roost locations, but they typically change them every night, perhaps because they are a favoured prey of the large carnivorous bat, *Vampyrum spectrum*.

The three species that shift night roosts spend the last two hours of the day "staging" for night roosting. This entails vocal advertisement of a proposed site to recruit passing birds. Often several nearby but competing sites are advertised simultaneously until enough defectors from one site cause all the others to give up and join the main mass. Within a popular site, there are constant vocal interactions, which may function to communicate dominance status and later access to the safer, and thus more favoured, central roosting positions. Staging often occurs in trees near to, but never in, the final sleeping location. Once the time is right, birds begin to slip out of the staging tree and into the denser foliage of the sleeping site. It is impressive how many parrots can pack into a single tree. We have watched up to 150 parakeets pack themselves into one small but densely leafed *Cochlospermum* tree that may be only 5-6 m (16-20 ft) high and 4-5 m (13-16 ft) in diameter. The three smaller parrot species are usually silently packed into their trees by dark. However, any of them can explode out of their initial sleeping tree, wheel madly around the sky for

several minutes, and then begin staging and packing all over again. Since we rarely see any nearby predators when this happens, it may be that one individual finds itself too close to the dangerous periphery of the group. It may spook the others by suddenly flying off in hopes of finding a better location next time round. Because Yellow-naped Amazons use the same night roosts for years, they do not need, nor do we see, active recruitment calling as in the other species. However, we do observe vocal contests between Yellow-nape pairs that presumably establish dominance and access to favoured sleeping locations.

The "chee" call of Orange-fronted Conures

We have concentrated the last few years on conure vocal exchanges. This species has a loud contact call (the "chee") which is given in flight, during recruitment at

feeding or staging areas, when members of a pair become separated, and during fission/fusion events. The basic structure of this call is similar throughout the species' range. However, recordings of short-term captives in the aviary indicate that each individual has its own "signature chee". While a bird can produce other variants, it uses its signature chee for 70-90% of its contact calls. Unlike domestic budgerigars in which males copy their mate's contact calls, conure mates each have their own distinct chee and almost never emit their partner's call.

Because chees are the main signal exchanged by flocks prior to fusions, we have played back these calls to passing flocks using a hidden loudspeaker. When flocks stop and reply, we respond to them with another playback of the same chee. Although only about half of wild flocks stop to "chat", those that do can exchange up to hundreds of chees over a half hour



Short-term captive Orange-fronted Conure in an aviary. One to several individuals are held at a time to record each bird's signature chee calls and monitor interactions with passing flocks.

period. We have been surprised to find that many of these longer exchanges show a gradual change in successive responses of the wild birds so that they match, at least partially, the acoustic structure of the playback chee. Similar matching is observed when playing back chees to short term captives in the aviaries.

Because conures repeatedly advertise their own signature calls, it has been suggested that another bird, even a stranger, could get the attention of the first in crowded or low visibility conditions by mimicking that bird's signature call. We initially thought signature call imitation might be one function of the amazing ability of parrots to mimic sounds. However, exchanges between wild conure flocks go on far longer than is necessary to establish contact. In addition, initial matching of our stimulus chee during long playbacks to wild flocks often peaks and then changes into decreases in similarity. At this point, wild birds usually give aggressive sounds and fly off.

Clearly, our single chee playbacks were not fully emulating natural exchanges. We recently obtained some new insights about where we went wrong by recording exchanges between conures in the aviary and conspecifics who stopped to "chat". In these exchanges, each bird usually sticks to its own signature chee, but may mimic the kinds of changes made by the other bird during the exchange. If one bird lengthens the last part of its chee, so does the other. Either might suddenly introduce some new change, and the other may or may not follow suit. What are they doing?

Foraging conure flocks fly quickly and purposefully; we never see them wandering



Photo: Jack Bradbury

This arboreal termite colony has been excavated by a pair of Orange-fronted Conures to create a nesting cavity. Nearly all nests of this species in the ACG use arboreal termitaria. When this happens, the termites typically seal off the bird's nesting chamber and continue to use the colony.

or performing reconnaissance trips. This suggests that mobile groups have a leader who knows when and where to go. Leaders would be very adaptive given the enormous home ranges and diverse types of foods that these birds exploit. However, when two flocks meet and consider fusing, how would they decide who is to assume the leadership? Perhaps the chee exchanges reconcile this quandary. Since only a few distinct signatures are observed when even large wild flocks interact with our playbacks, we believe that only a few individuals are engaged in the exchange. This is what one would expect were the current leaders negotiating who would lead

after a fusion. We hope to test this interpretation in future experiments using the array recording system and concurrent video recordings to verify that only one or a few birds in a flock respond to playbacks or the aviary bird, and whether these are the individuals that subsequently lead the flock when it leaves. We can also run playback experiments in which we modify the stimulus call in prepared ways and see when and how the respondents produce parallel changes. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to anticipate where a natural flock fusion will occur. Still, we have located a few very popular foraging sites where we will set up our array system, and hopefully



Photo: Jack Bradbury

Computer analysis of the morning's sound recordings during midday when the parrots are resting. This facility regularly houses the parrot team (left three individuals) and a second group, overseen by Dr. Sandra Vehrencamp, studying the functions of male song in Banded Wrens (right hand three individuals).



Photo: Erica Spowood

identify which bird says what during at least some natural fusion events.

Other call types and other species of parrots

We have now examined each of the Orange-fronted Conure vocalization types, and the loud contact call (chee) is the only one for which we have found evidence of vocal mimicry. This does not mean that contact call matching is the original or main reason for vocal mimicry in parrots. Vocal behaviour in a wide range of wild parrot species must be studied before we can answer that question. In addition to our studies on the three smaller ACG parrots, Dr. Tim Wright is continuing his studies on sympatric Yellow-naped Amazons, and our research group has ongoing studies of Brown-throated Conures (*Aratinga pertinax*) on Bonaire (graduate student Susannah Buhrman-Deever), feral Monk

Parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*) in the eastern United States (Buhrman-Deever and undergraduate Amy Rappaport), Green-rumped Parrotlets (*Forpus passerinus*) in Venezuela (graduate student Karl Berg), and Galahs (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) in Australia (graduate student Judith Scarl). A number of other research groups are also studying parrot vocalizations both in the wild and in captivity. Our hope is that comparative work on a number of species will eventually resolve the mystery of why parrots have their amazing vocal mimicry abilities. And that will surely raise neurobiological questions about how they do this, and whether their brains share any tricks with that other ubiquitous vocal mimic, humans.

Further details on the parrots of the ACG can be obtained at:
http://www.acguanacaste.ac.cr/loras_acg/parrots.home.html



Photo: Thorsten Balsby



Orange-chinned Parakeet shortly before being released back into the wild after its recording stint in the aviary.

Akron Zoo honours WPT

Each year the Akron Zoo (Ohio, USA) selects four "Champions for the Planet" for making a positive impact on wildlife and conservation. For 2006 the World Parrot Trust was selected as the Global Champion for the Planet for championing the cause of conservation around the globe for all parrots. The Zoo also honours a National, Local and School Champion each year. A personalized kiosk for each honouree will be displayed in the Barnhardt Family Welcome Center atrium at the Akron Zoo for a full year.



Parrot Behavior and Training DVD

Did you know that training can help you develop a better relationship with your bird? This first DVD in a series by Barbara Heidenreich teaches the basics in parrot training with positive reinforcement and illustrates how parrot training can be used to resolve behavioral problems. Available in both UK and USA



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Counting Capes

2006 Cape Parrot big birding day

By COLLEEN T. DOWNS, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Despite the bitterly cold weather, observers braved the conditions and assisted with the 9th annual Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*) count or Cape Parrot Big Birding Day (CPBBD). The Cape Parrot is endangered and their numbers have declined considerably in the past 30 years. This event was initiated to track numbers of birds in the wild over time. The count also increases public awareness and involves the public in conserving South Africa's only endemic parrot. It also highlights the need for protecting their forest habitat. The Cape Parrot's decline is attributed to forest degradation, food and nest-site shortages resulting in poor breeding success, removal of birds from the wild for the avicultural and pet trade, and diseases, especially the beak and feather virus, and predators.

This year 282 volunteers were posted at 103 observation points in three provinces. A total of 1,108 parrots were seen during the afternoon count while 1,322 were seen the following morning. These results are significantly higher than numbers in previous years. Observers saw parrots at 65% and 78% of the localities for the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning respectively despite the cold and misty weather.

Variability of results between years and discrepancy between the morning and afternoon counts can be a consequence of poor weather, double counting, and simply missing areas where parrots are, on that particular day. Still, over the years there appears to be a positive trend of gradually increasing Cape Parrot numbers, particularly this year. However, we cannot get complacent because of the patchy distribution of the parrots and their dependence on yellowwood forests. The CPBBD should continue, as it is important to monitor trends. Our hope is that the population will continue to increase.

On the negative side, observations may suggest that suitable natural fruit is limited in the indigenous forests. This year parrots were observed feeding at sites away from forests on the CPBBD, often in areas where they have not been previously seen or have been absent for many years. Furthermore, this year parrots fed on exotic pecan nuts before they ripened and visited orchards earlier than previous years. In some areas they have been feeding on the ground

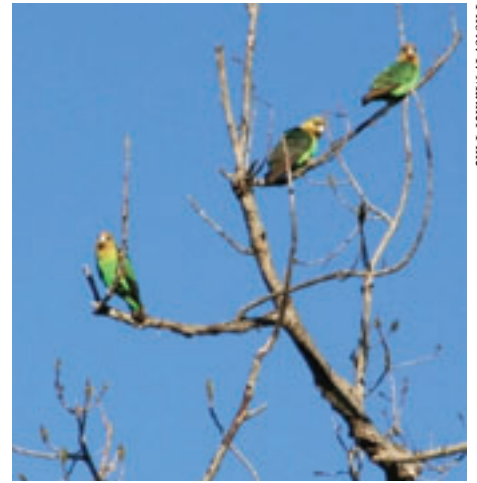


Photo: P. Mather-Pike

While most people only get to see Cape Parrots flying over, these birds were very cooperative during the 2006 CPBBD.

(something they rarely do) on acorns that are high in tannins to discourage animals from eating them. At these non-forest feeding sites the parrots are often congregated in great numbers.

As mentioned in previous reports, one of the problems of covering the range of the Cape Parrots is that some observers do not see parrots at all. However, these nil counts are important too. One group of observers have diligently participated in the count for 9 years and were rewarded with their first sighting of Cape Parrots this year. Historically the parrots were common there according to my grandfather who grew up in the area and who turns 100 years old in September.

Next Cape Parrot big birding day

The 10th CPBBD will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 5th May and the morning of Sunday 6th May, 2007. Please email downs@ukzn.ac.za if you would like to assist.



Photo: Kirsten Wimberger



Bertus Boucher and some of the volunteers from the Umtata area.

Photo: Kirsten Wimberger



Some of the students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal that assisted in the Weza-Ingeli area for CPBBD 2006.

High Court rules on UK pet markets

Bird markets in the UK have long been a contentious issue - are they an opportunity to meet and buy a pet from others interested in parrots, or a place for traders to unload stressed, wild-caught, cheap and possibly ill, parrots to novices? It was hoped that forcing a judicial review of the legislation would help to clarify the legal issues, but while some legal decisions have immediate and specific consequences, others - like this one regarding UK pet markets - may take months or even years to become clear. In hopes of reporting on this High Court decision with the broadest possible coverage, we solicited two disparate views on the matter: each with a unique interpretation and each portending dramatically different consequences. Time will tell...

By DONALD TAYLOR, Editor, Cage & Aviary Birds, Bird Keeper, National Cage & Aviary Birds Exhibition.

Animal rights extremists barked, but Mr Justice Walker ruled that pet fairs should go on, with even less red tape than before.

To the extremist, the judicial review was about whether or not parliament had banned the sale of pet birds in public places with its 1983 amendment to the 1951 Pet Animals Act; to aviculturalists, it was about whether or not they could get together to sell surplus stock, buy fresh breeding stock, meet old friends, renew club and society memberships, buy the tools of their hobby and exchange views.

There simply was, and is, no meeting of minds between the two sides on the issue. Nor is there any sign that there will be. The judgement will do nothing to change that.

Those that view today's large modern pet fairs as street markets akin to car boot sales are as far removed from reality as it is possible to get. The 1983 amendment to the law around which the case hinged was designed to bring a halt to puppies being sold to impulsive buyers off the back of open topped barrows in London's Club Row. It was never, in my view, or in Mr Justice Walker's, intended to stop the sale of pets in properly regulated, controlled environment events offering every requisite possible for the type of animal or bird on offer.

In his judgement Mr Justice Walker sought to define the key words at issue behind the existing law, in particular the meaning of the word 'market', as the law says pets cannot be sold by businesses in markets.

His definition of a market as 'a concourse of buyers and sellers' not limited to franchise markets, street markets, open markets or public markets now takes in every pet fair in Britain.

As a result, none can now entertain traders selling birds as pets. But is this the victory the antis claim? No, because very few pet fairs actually sold pets in the first place, what they sold was breeding stock, which was then used to breed pets for Britain's 2.5 million pet bird keepers. At the last Parrot Society UK sale, for example, just 2.5 per cent of the birds present could be classified as pets, while at the last National Exhibition, only around 100 birds out of the 23,000 present at the event, could be classified as pets.

As Mr Justice Walker has ruled it illegal for traders to sell pet birds at a bird fair, local authorities can no longer issue a pet shop licence to traders to do so. This in turn means local authority environmental health inspectors can no longer insist on the high welfare standards previously agreed with traders through show organisers.

They can still attend and inspect the birds at shows, they can still prosecute for lax welfare standards but they cannot in future insist on standards higher than in a pet shop. Sadly, as most pet shops operate only on the basic model pet shop licence conditions, this will mean that welfare standards for many pet birds will slip.

Happily, though, the judgement does nothing to stop the UK's 100,000 bird breeders selling their birds as pets through pet fairs. So long as they don't do it as a business, they will be able to sell their birds direct to the public at a fair instead of through a pet shop.

Equally happily, the ruling may unintentionally reduce impulse purchases of pets by itinerant buyers while at the same time benefiting bird breeders and show organisers. If more pet birds are on offer from breeders at pet fairs, there will be greater choice available at such events, and more buyers will pay to attend. The likelihood is they will pay more for their birds than the local pet shop. And since pet fairs don't take place every day, intending buyers will have to wait to buy, allowing a cooling off period for those not so serious about acquiring birds.

Perhaps best of all, Mr Justice Walker's judicial review made clear he believes that pet fairs are entirely lawful. The government is of like mind, and proposes to regulate fairs according to their type and size in its new Animal Welfare Bill, and not to ban or curb them. The future for pet fairs is rosier than ever before.

By GREG GLENDELL, Hon Director, BirdsFirst

In the UK, trading in pet animals (all vertebrates) is regulated by the Pet Animals Act 1951. In order to trade in pets, traders must hold a pet shop licence from their Local Council. Until 1983, it was common for dealers to sell pets including parrots in markets, some even in street markets. For animal welfare reasons, these sales were outlawed in 1983 by an amendment to the P A Act, which states:

"If any person carries on a business of selling animals as pets in any part of a street or public place, or at a stall or barrow in a market, he shall be guilty of an offence."

Despite this legislation, bird markets, often mischievously called bird 'shows' or pet fairs, continued. The main organisers and supporters of public bird sales where itinerant traders sell birds are the Parrot Society and Cage and Aviary Birds (IPC magazines). According to an authoritative estimate, 50% to 75% of birds on sale at large bird markets - prior to the temporary ban on wild bird imports into the EU - were of wild-caught origin. The P A Act has always been poorly enforced by local councils and many failed to stop itinerant traders selling pets to the public at one-day sales. In the 1990's BirdsFirst and other animal welfare groups began a campaign to close down these illegal bird markets by reminding local authorities of their powers under the P A Act. The Animal Protection Agency (APA) joined this campaign soon after this. By 2004, bird markets had been curbed substantially with only three local councils (out of over 340) still 'licensing' these sales. The last bird market organised by Cage & Aviary Birds ('licensed' to sell 100,000 birds) was in 2003.

In 2006, Malcolm Haynes, a local resident to the UK's largest bird market in Stafford, sought a judicial review of the P A Act. In *Haynes vs Stafford BC* and others, Mr Haynes contested the practice of selling pets at temporary, usually one-day markets and challenged Stafford BC's issuing a pet shop 'licence' to the Parrot Society for its sales. The legal action was supported by BirdsFirst and the APA who have brought about numerous, shocking exposés of these events. Mr Justice Walker ruled in the High Court that according to the P A Act it was unlawful to trade in pets in a market: a market being a "concourse of buyers and sellers". The Judge also ruled that Stafford BC had no powers to 'licence' these sales. While offences under the P A Act are a crime, a judicial review has no remit to examine the criminal liability of those who sold birds. In effect, the judge clearly ruled that such trading in pets was not lawful, as we had always believed.

For merely commercial reasons, organisers and traders will still try to run these events by using dubious means to avoid prosecution. At their last sale, the Parrot Society claimed they were selling 'breeding' birds and not 'pet' birds. However, these definitions have no legal weight and the local council is dealing with my formal complaint that they failed to enforce the PA Act as required. On 20th July the PS finally appeared to be acknowledging its legal obligations and wrote to its traders saying they would not be allowed to sell birds at its next sale.

In February 2006, the APA conducted an Ipsos MORI poll on pet markets. This found only 4% supporting one-day pet sales, with 68% opposing such sales (others did not express a view or didn't answer). Despite this, and the obvious animal health and welfare implications, the UK government remains wedded to the notion that pet markets should be 'licensed' under its so-called Animal 'Welfare' Bill currently before parliament. Anyone with concerns for bird welfare should write immediately, as a bird keeper to their MP objecting to pet fairs being decriminalised by the A W Bill.

In 2000, in relation to pet markets, the Editor of IPC's Cage and Aviary Birds, Donald Taylor wrote: *"We won't brook any interference from groups claiming to have animals' interests at heart"*. This sinister phrase reveals the true attitude of supporters of pet fairs: parrot-lovers should memorise this hideous strap-line of the pet sales organisers.

A film of a UK bird market can be viewed at www.apa.org.uk/apatv

'In my opinion...':

is a regular feature in *PsittaScene*. Here we include submissions on whatever pertinent issues you would like to see discussed. What issues do you think our readers would be interested in? Contact us at uk@worldparrottrust.org with suggestions or submissions.

Free flight

By CHRIS SHANK, Oregon, USA

I believe that a companion parrot should be allowed her natural birthright - the right and freedom to fly outdoors. Admittedly, these are very controversial words especially when read by caretakers who adamantly believe their parrots should remain clipped at all times.

I've been free flying cockatoos outdoors for over twenty-five years. And, yes, I have had my share of trials and heartbreaks. Despite those, I have never considered not flying my cockatoos. To me, free flying is a natural extension of my way of bird keeping. All twenty of my cockatoos live outdoors in large aviaries. It seemed to me a logical next step to allow some of the 'toos flight outside of their aviaries. I released my first flying cockatoo, a Sulphur-crest, with a minimum of flight training and I was fortunate that I didn't lose him. Despite this dubious beginning, he has been successfully flying outside for twenty-seven years. Of course, now I know better and ensure that birds I intend to free fly have the training to do so.

I was once a clipping advocate. Maybe advocate is too strong a word. I kept my birds flighted, but recommended that other people clip their parrots for safety's sake. This seems now a rather arrogant view. Why did I think other people's birds would be unsafe flying? My full-winged birds were certainly as safe as clipped birds, both indoors and out. Did I think the average parrot caretaker not able to develop the training skills needed to keep a parrot with full wings secure? Although I did not consider myself an elitist, it appeared as though my advice to clip was saying otherwise.

Please understand I certainly do not endorse outdoor free flight for everyone. Let me emphasize that not every parrot owner has the aptitude to train a free flying parrot, has the desire to fly her or his parrot or even has a parrot that is a good candidate for free flight. That said, I know enough about many parrot caretakers to understand that some of them are very successful in learning how to train for free flight and subsequently train their

companion parrot to do so. It's not an activity just for parrots trained by professional trainers in bird shows.

For those who do undertake this most extraordinary and demanding mission of free flight training, a highly rewarding experience awaits them and their birds. To succeed in flight training you need an education in proper training methods, patience, consistency and an acute ability to observe and interpret a parrot's behaviour. These skills must become second nature to you as the trainer. Just as a person must meet certain criteria to be successful at free flight, so must the parrot. The requirements are many and include: physical fitness and ability to fly, thorough training, familiarity with the outdoors and predator savvy. With proper and successful training, the relationship between caretaker and parrot is lifted to new heights, both figuratively and



Photo: Dean Moser

literally. Trust and respect between trainer-caretaker and a flying parrot reach pinnacles unknown to owners of clipped birds.

Free flying a parrot is not a casual undertaking. It can be full of dangers and pitfalls. This cannot be overstated. However, it can also be heart soaring, exuberating and life changing for the caretaker. Personally, I feel privileged to have developed a relationship with my flyers that extends beyond the cage or play stand. Watching as my cockatoo soars down from a tree to my hand or gazing at my small flock of five play together in the air or just having my 'toos keep me company while I garden adds a dimension to the world of parrot keeping that is hard to explain. Daily I experience awe for the



Photo: David Baca

miracle of flight and the nature of my birds.

For the parrot, free flying is among the ultimate of enrichments. Parrot behaviours that may otherwise be suppressed in the home or cage environment are acted out naturally while the parrot flies. Making decisions, thinking "on the wing," revelling in the sun, wind and clouds and developing a superb physical state are just a few of the enrichments the flying parrot attains.

As it stands now, resources for learning to train a parrot to fly outdoors or even indoors are few and far between. Indeed, training a parrot, let alone for flight, is not common. But changes are happening. Workshops in positive reinforcement training methods for companion parrots are now being given around the country and for this I am encouraged (*see Psitta News p17 and PS Vol 18 No 2, May 06 p19*).

Optimistically, I see a day where it will be common for the companion parrot owner to seek out and enrol in a series of local parrot training classes - similar to puppy or dog classes that are available now. I see a day where workshops will be held to introduce people to the world of free flying parrots - what it entails, what it's all about and whether or not it is for them and their parrots. I

envision a day where training for parrots will advance beyond behaviour management and trick training and move on to free flight. Flight classes will be easily accessible for those who have the desire and ability to pursue it. I see a day where experienced people with their skilled flyers will gather at fly meets in a welcoming and supporting environment to fly their parrots outdoors or gather in large buildings for indoor flight. It may surprise many to know that, in fact some, if not all of the above is taking place now. Ultimately, I'm looking forward to the day when a person watching my birds fly will say, "Can I learn to do this with my parrot?" rather than say, "Won't your birds fly away?" It's coming... 

Macaws amuck

By CARI CLEMENTS, Natural Encounters, Florida, USA. Photos By DAN KLEIN



This summer I am again fortunate to be spending time at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh. This is the third summer that Natural Encounters, Inc. (NEI) has produced an outdoor free flight bird show in their rose garden. We work with 3 of the trainers from the National Aviary to present an educational show with a strong conservation message. In our show we free fly over 20 birds representing 16 species, ranging from parrots to raptors and everything in between. I have been working closely with this group of birds for 5 years and have produced free flight shows at a number of facilities in 6 cities. Our birds are very well generalised to flying in different environments and desensitised to most environmental distractions. In over 30 years of free flying birds, NEI has only lost one bird - an African White-necked Raven (*Corvus albicollis*) that was spooked by a large construction crane swinging over the theatre during a show.

Pittsburgh hosted Baseball's All Star game on July 11th. Along with the game, the city held a huge festival the weekend before the game. Our story begins just after we started our afternoon show on Sunday, July 9th when the Goodyear blimp made an appearance over Pittsburgh. It circled the stadium which just happens to be next door to the aviary...

While most of the birds showed at least some concern, the parrots were the most distressed about this ominous intruder. We end our show with a grand finale of parrots, beginning with our Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*), Palmer, followed by a flock of 6 macaws who delight the audience by circling high overhead. Our macaw flock consists of 2 Green-wing (*Ara*

chloroptera), 2 Scarlet (*Ara macao*) and 2 Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*). After taking one look at the blimp, Palmer took refuge in one of the surrounding park's trees. Three of the macaws refused to even leave their enclosures, while the other three, brave enough to venture out, made one pass through the garden and disappeared. While I have experienced many 'fly offs,' this was the most interesting yet. Four birds out at once!

Palmer was too scared to fly down. Every time the blimp circled by he almost fell from the branch. We used a 20 ft ladder to climb the tree and I was greeted by Palmer with his foot held high in the air, ready to step up and be rescued. One bird secure, three to go! With no sign of the macaws

(the pair of Greenwings and one Scarlet), we split up to comb the surrounding park. After about an hour of searching, we enlisted the help of the rest of the aviary staff.

We followed the only lead we had - the last direction anyone saw the birds flying. That brought us to a hillside that overlooks the Aviary. Around 6 pm, we had an eye witness in the north hills give us an account of 2 large red birds hopping from tree to tree outside their house. It sounded like Moe and Curly, our pair of Greenwings! About 10 people converged on the scene! We spent an hour combing the area - nothing...

We spread out throughout the area to sit and listen. We decided to see if the approaching sunset would prompt the birds to fly home to roost for the night. Unfortunately, sunset came and went uneventfully. As we were locking up for the evening, about to head home for a sleepless night, a woman pulled up to the aviary with some interesting information. She and her family had been watching a bright red bird, with a very long red tail and yellow on the wings, squawking up a storm. She lives in a town about 3-4 miles away! It was a great lead to our Scarlet Macaw, Ruby's, whereabouts. Unfortunately, it was dark at this point. We decided to meet at 5 am to split up and look again at dawn.

We met at the aviary while it was still dark. The plan was for a group of us to investigate the Scarlet sighting, another group to investigate the Greenwing sighting and yet another to maintain vigil in the park. Off we went. Sunrise came and went with no sign of the macaws. Then, the phone calls started to come in!

A man in Oakland said he was watching and listening to a large red bird, squawking loudly outside his business. I was certain it was Ruby! We sped in that direction, with her partner Red in the van. This sighting made sense - just down the hill from the previous evenings sighting. Unfortunately, she was gone by the time we got there. The men there gave us their account and a possible direction she flew.



Cari with Palmer during his regular show routine.

I should mention that this is a very urban area. We are talking sky scraper construction, a college campus, several hospitals, very busy intersections and the morning commute!! Red was screaming his head off, as were the trainers. I don't know if we would have heard Ruby or not. We combed the area on foot and in the van for over an hour. Meanwhile phone calls were still coming into the Aviary about a red parrot flying around Oakland. Every time we arrived at an address, we came up empty handed.

Frustrated, worried, and exhausted - Erin and I were out of ideas. We continued driving the streets of Oakland. All of a sudden, Erin yells "There she is!" And there she was! One of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen - a Scarlet Macaw flying right over the van. I jumped out before we could even stop! I called to her so she would know we were there. If ever there was a look of recognition on a macaw's face - that was it! She landed in a tree overhead, turned and not 3 seconds later, flew right down to us! Ruby had crossed the Allegheny River, several freeways and several miles to end up where she was! We shared a huge hug and some tears, regained composure, and headed



Moe and Curly were eventually reunited with their keepers.

back to the Aviary. It was 10:30 Monday morning - 2 down, 2 to go!

At 11 am we regrouped at the Aviary. Call me crazy, but we decided to fly the Military Macaws. If the Greenwings were anywhere in the park, they would hear and see them and fly home. The Militaries flew, screaming the whole time but still no sign of the Greenwings. Back up into the north hills we went. After another few hours of searching, we received a tip. An hour earlier and 8 miles away, a woman saw two large red birds fly over squawking loudly.

We raced back to the aviary, threw some cages in the van and headed out with a caravan of 4 cars. At 4 pm we had just taken our exit when we received another call from 4 miles back in the direction we had just come! The caller was looking at 2 red parrots on her roof as we spoke!! We quickly made a u-turn and within 10 minutes ascended on the location like a SWAT team - car tyres squealing and all!

The first thing I saw was Curly on the roof of a house. I yelled "HI!" - she said "HI!" and launched toward me. My hand raised to catch her and out of nowhere, Moe was on his way toward me. Curly ended up at my feet, Moe on the next house. No sooner had I put Curly in the van, Moe was in flight. He landed on my hand and into the van he went. More hugs, more tears, it was quite the moment! We were headed home.

Twenty-four hours later, all were safe and sound. What a day! When a reporter asked me the value of one of these birds, I honestly couldn't give her an answer. Who these birds are as individuals, their experiences as performers, the time spent building positive relationships, what they have taught me as a trainer - priceless.

Used with permission - see Bizarro.com



Psitta News

British Veterinary Association joins call for a permanent ban on wild bird imports

Launching a position statement on the import of captive live birds from countries outside the EU, British Veterinary Association (BVA) President Dr Freda Scott-Park announced that the veterinary profession called for the current ban on the import of wild birds to be made permanent because of concerns for the welfare of the birds during capture and transit.

Following discussions at BVA Council and the recent BVA Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF) forum the BVA now believes a permanent ban is essential, not least due to the high mortality rates associated with the trade. "These rates, which can be as high as 60% before they reach the pet shops, are not accepted in any other industry and should not be accepted in the wild bird trade" said Dr Scott-Park. "We were appalled to hear, following the reported case of H5N1 in a quarantine centre, that mortality rates of 12% (dead on arrival or during quarantine) were considered as 'the norm' in the industry."

In addition to calling for a ban on the wild bird trade, the position statement urges tighter controls on the import, quarantine and identification of captive bred birds for the pet trade. "The vast majority of birds sold into the pet trade in the UK could and should be captive bred within the EU. This would reduce the high mortalities caused by

stressful capture techniques and cramped and stressful conditions during transit."

Dr Scott-Park also urged pet owners to consider carefully the types of birds they purchase in the future and to try and seek assurances from the seller that the birds were captive bred for the pet trade. "The trade is driven by consumer demand and pet owners have the ability to significantly improve the welfare of the birds they purchase" she said.

According to Dr Scott-Park, Government also has a significant part to play. "There is an urgent need for improved border controls across the EU to stop illegal trade from third world countries and, in line with the recommendations in the Dimmock Report on Avian Quarantine, to ensure that conditions in quarantine centres across the EU are secure and effective. The Government also needs to encourage stricter identification and certification measures to allow traceability of individual birds and to ensure that buyers have confidence that they are actually purchasing captive bred birds and not illegally smuggled wild caught birds, which are then passed off as captive bred."

For further information please contact the BVA Press Office on 020 7636 6541 or media@bva.co.uk.

The FlyAbout 2006 at Cockatoo Downs in Salem, Oregon

"The FlyAbout Flight School was created under the belief that a companion parrot should be allowed her natural birthright - the right and freedom to fly."

So reads the mission statement of the FlyAbout 2006. However, many people feel clipping parrots' wings is the only way to safely keep birds in a home environment. Contrary to this popular acceptance of clipping, we believe that properly trained flying parrots can and do live successfully and safely in the home. To this end, we will

be holding a two-day seminar and training workshop focusing on teaching parrot caretakers to responsibly train their birds to fly using positive reinforcement training methods. Positive reinforcement is highly effective and also has the great benefit of developing a trusting bond between caretaker and parrot. The FlyAbout 2006 will feature expert avian flight trainers who will teach the attendees positive reinforcement training through discussion, PowerPoint presentations and live bird flying demonstrations. A percentage of the profits from this event will be donated to World Parrot Trust. For more information please call Chris Shank, 503.743.9195 or visit <http://cockatoodowns.com/>

Schedule of FlyAbout classes

Saturday, October 7, 2006, 9am to 4pm

Barbara Heindenreich will cover indoor flying using positive reinforcement techniques. She will teach using lecture, PowerPoint, video, live bird demonstrations and audience participation.

Saturday evening, 6pm to 8pm

Roundtable discussion with all trainers and attendees on the formation of a free-flight parrot organization.

Sunday, October 8, 2006, 9am to 4pm

Jim Dawson and Sue Tygielski will teach outdoor free-flying using lecture, audience participation and live outdoor flying demonstrations.

Saturday and Sunday

Special presentations by Chris Biro, Jim Dawson and Chris Shank and their free-flying cockatoos and parrots. Sue Tygielski will present a spectacular flying raptor demonstration.

Exceptional breeding success

By Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation

The picture on the left shows the first 7 Spix's Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) chicks of the 2006 breeding season at Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation (AWWP).

These seven birds represent almost 10% of the entire known world population of this species. Together with the off-spring reared in 2004 and 2005, the AWWP has now successfully bred 12 Spix's Macaws.

All chicks have been hand-reared by specialist staff at AWWP, but it is hoped that more clutches will soon follow from the respective pairs, allowing them to parent-rear some of their young. We also hope that other pairs will start reproducing and bring AWWP one step closer to re-establishing this species back to the nature in Brazil as part of the international recovery effort.



Photo: AWWP 2006



Parrot painting donated to support the Patagonian Conure project



Artist Paul Staveley painted the wonderful African Grey images that we sell at the World Parrot Trust. He has very kindly donated an original acrylic painting of a Patagonian Conure for us to sell especially to help fund the Patagonian Conure project. The painting is unique, 16" x 20" x 0.75" in size; framed and is valued at

£950.00

If you are interested in purchasing this painting then please contact Karen at, the UK office on 01736 751026.

**Thank you very
much Paul**

Limited Edition (500)
African Grey prints
available via UK
office or
worldparrottrust.org
online store
17.75" x 23.5"
unframed incl p&p
£33.00



The Parrot in Art a forthcoming exhibition

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts
The University of Birmingham, UK
26 January - 29 April 2007

In 2007 the Barber Institute of Fine Arts - recently voted Art Gallery of the Year in the Good Britain Guide - will be mounting an exhibition on the theme of The Parrot in Art. It will explore the ever-changing importance of these fascinating birds from the Renaissance to the present day and include important loans from throughout Europe and the United Kingdom, including the National Gallery, British Museum, Natural History Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The exhibition will focus on four main themes:

1. Parrots as symbols (especially of the Virgin Mary and Eve)
2. Parrots as pets
3. Parrots as surrogate 'people', and
4. Parrots as parrots (i.e. their importance in natural history illustration)

It will feature works by artists as diverse as Dürer, Schongauer, Rubens, Tiepolo, Reynolds and Landseer and will culminate in an extensive display of the truly magnificent drawings and prints of Elizabeth Butterworth. There will be a fully illustrated catalogue available, published by Scala Publishers, London, and a wide-ranging programme of lectures and activities for all ages, including a special day when live parrots will themselves be 'on show' in the Barber Institute.

The exhibition will be curated by Richard Verdi, Director of the Barber



Institute (and member of World Parrot Trust). In addition to being a professional art historian with many major national and regional exhibitions to his credit, he is also a life-long parrot lover (and owner), who will be uniting two of his greatest passions in this exhibition, which will be intended both to instruct and delight and (above all) to raise public awareness of these captivating and intelligent birds and of their endangered status in the wild.

A note from the US Administrator

I wanted to take the time to thank all of our US members for being so patient as I took over administration for WPT USA. The move from Minnesota to Florida went better than expected. In the last five months I have been learning the ins and outs of the position, and I am now feeling comfortable with my new duties.

I also wanted to thank all of the members that have decided to use our Recurring Credit Card and Bank Debit Services. This is proving to work very well and streamline our services to the membership. It eliminates the need for me to send out membership renewal notices to those who are enrolled, which saves both time and money. It is a very simple process to set up your credit card for recurring charges, and the only time that I will need to send you a notice is when we are nearing the credit card expiration date. The bank debit services work similarly except there is no expiration date to deal with, so it completely eliminates the need for notices unless you change bank accounts.

Both the recurring credit card charges and the bank debits are very easy to modify or cancel, so don't worry if you need to make changes. If you are not enrolled in these services and wish to do so send me an e-mail at usa@worldparrottrust.org or give me a call at 863-956-4347, and I will promptly take care of your needs.

Thank you,
Glenn Reynolds
Administrator,
World Parrot Trust USA



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

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Parrots in the Wild



Hyacinth Macaw

Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus

A flock of Hyacinth Macaws gather near the Hyacinth Valley ecotour site in NE Brazil. Thanks to the conservation efforts of WPT, Kaytee, Tropical Nature and other individuals, Hyacinth numbers are on the rise. In fact, Hyacinth Valley has become the best site in the world to photograph them in the wild. Lin's group saw 40 macaws on average and more than 70 birds on one occasion as they came in to feed on their favourite palm nuts.

By © Lin Imanishi