

PsittaScene



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Psitta Scene

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Cover Picture By © DON PREISLER

A group of Burrowing Parrots or Patagonian Conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) jostle for space on the edge of the cliff that is home to their enormous extended family. Juan Masello and his team have been studying their remarkable colony in Argentina for several years. With so little known about so many parrot species we are pleased to pass along the results of their most recent work to *PsittaScene* readers. This work provides a baseline for monitoring and conservation of these stunning birds.

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From the Director EU extends ban on bird imports

As we reported in the last *PsittaScene*, the temporary ban on bird imports to the EU was extended from January through May. With the new deadline approaching, the EU Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health, which reviews these decisions, recently voted to extend the ban until July 31st! This will give our coalition additional time to gather and submit further information on what has and hasn't happened as a consequence of the ban over the last six months. Most importantly, the trade has stopped entirely. We're learning that trapping ceased virtually within days of the original trade moratorium announcement back in October 2005.

Oddly, it's what did not happen which has been most interesting to EU authorities. The dogma on animal trade would have us believe that such trade bans simply drive trade underground and cause an increase in smuggling. Since smuggled birds go through no quarantine whatsoever, the ban would hypothetically increase the risk of disease importation. As we've seen in other parts of the world, as we predicted for the EU, and as we have now seen as a consequence of the temporary ban, no such thing has occurred. If anything, the rate of smuggling (as evidenced by the rate of confiscations) has even gone down in recent months.

Of course, the best part of all is that this extension of the temporary ban alone will spare an additional 600,000 wild birds ... to add to the 2,000,000 it has already saved. By any measure, that's a LOT of birds!

It's your turn to help ... here's how!

At the Trust we are continually impressed by your enthusiasm for this campaign to end the wild bird trade. We are frequently asked, "What can I do to help?" Tens of thousands of you have helped already by signing the petition, buying trade bands, ex-poacher produced parrot carvings, and the like. Now we're asking for a different kind of help. It won't take long, it's a bit fun, and it really will make a big difference. Here's what we need you to do, ideally in the next week.

A bit of background first ... These decisions about the ban (and its extension) and about whether or not to end the trade permanently are made by real human beings in the European Commission. Most of their work is highly bureaucratic and political and largely thankless. They typically only hear from people when someone thinks they've done something wrong! In our meetings in Brussels last month it dawned on us that those involved with instigating the temporary ban have taken a personal interest in the wild bird trade. In fact, they felt quite good about having taken that step. Ostensibly the choice was made for biosecurity reasons, but it appears that they felt pretty good about the side effect of saving millions of beautiful wild birds. No mean feat, I'm sure you'll agree.

Our plan is as simple as it is fun. We would like to send thousands of bird cards to the Commissioner who made this decision, just to thank him on behalf of the birds for making such a fantastically positive gesture. Our hope is that he'll not only discover just how thankful we all are for his leadership, but also that he'll bear in mind how many millions of birds he will be saving by continuing along this path in the future.

So, please just take a minute, find any postcard, greeting card, painting, photograph of a bird, any bird, and just write a quick thank you message on it. It needn't be long or detailed, just a thank you for helping wild birds. If you're from a non-English speaking part of the world, please write in your native tongue - that's even better!

It's a great reminder that his decision has saved birds from all over the world! And please ask your friends, children, anyone you can think of who likes birds to do the same and hopefully, together, we'll get this positive message of thanks across loud and clear!

Send all cards to:

Mr. Markos Kyprianou
Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection
European Commission,
B-1049 BRUSSELS,
Belgium

Our continued thanks for your partnership in this important endeavour,

James Gilardi, Ph.D
Director, World Parrot Trust



Full house

the Burrowing Parrots of Patagonia

By JUAN F. MASELLO, CHRISTINA SOMMER and PETRA QUILLFELDT

Imagine the largest colony of parrots in the world. With over 35,000 active nest burrows the Burrowing Parrots (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) of El Cóndor, Patagonia, Argentina, hold this impressive distinction. Birds in the colony are the nominate subspecies *Cyanoliseus p. patagonus*. Counts during the 2001-02 breeding season showed that the colony extended along 9 km (5.6 mi) of a sandstone cliff facing the Atlantic Ocean in the province of Río Negro, Patagonia, and contained 51,412 burrows, an estimated 37,527 of which were active. Additionally, 6,500 parrots not attending nestlings were found to be associated with the colony during the 2003-04 breeding season. To our knowledge this population is the largest known colony for the entire order Psittaciformes (Parrots and Cockatoos).

Some key features of the breeding biology of Psittaciformes contributing to the fragility of the order, include the almost invariable habit of nesting in holes, the commonly monogamous breeding system, and the absence of territorialism beyond the immediate vicinity of the nest, which contributes in several species to conspicuous breeding colonies. In addition, for most parrot species there is still a lack

of basic biological data, which are necessary for the identification of specific threats, the monitoring of populations, and the evaluation of the conservation measures to be taken.

Burrowing Parrots are colonial Psittaciformes. In Argentina, the species occurs from the Andean slopes in the north-west of the country to the Patagonian

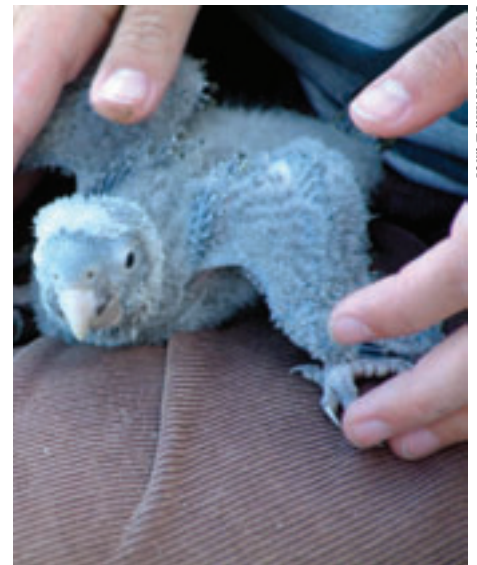


Photo: Christina Balfier

steppes in the south. Generally, they inhabit bushy steppes, marginal xerophyte (adapted to live in dry conditions) forests, grassland and farmland but they require sandstone, limestone or earth cliffs to excavate their nest-burrows. The species is migratory, occupying the breeding colonies some months before laying and leaving them gradually as the young fledge. Adult Burrowing Parrots excavate their own nest-



Photo: Petra Quillfeldt

The coastal cliffs of north-eastern Patagonia are home to a truly spectacular colony of Burrowing Parrots or Patagonian Conures. The colony is susceptible to many threats from erosion and paragliding to beach-goers and poachers. Detailed study of the biology and behaviour of the birds provides invaluable information for their conservation.

burrows. The nesting pairs use burrows that they have dug in previous seasons, but they enlarge the burrows every year. Each burrow is occupied by a single pair, who are socially and genetically monogamous and provide intensive biparental care. They lay one clutch of two to five eggs per year.

The conservation status of Burrowing Parrots was last studied in the early 1980s. Formerly very common in Argentina, they are now only regionally abundant and have disappeared from large parts of the country. The decline of the species in Argentina is a result of conversion of grasslands to croplands, hunting, trapping for the pet trade and persecution as a crop pest. Burrowing Parrots are officially considered an agricultural pest in Argentina although the damage to agriculture is a local phenomenon. Several scientists have observed that their diet is comprised mainly of wild seeds, fruits and berries. Burrowing Parrots have also been described feeding on soft parts of plants and we observed buds and other soft vegetable matter in crop contents of nestlings especially during their first weeks. Therefore, except for some marginal agricultural areas and discrete events, damage to agriculture is not intense (see also *PsittaScene* Vol 17 No 4: 10-11). Despite this, lethal methods of control have been carried out in various years, without objective quantification of real damage and adequate consideration of alternatives and consequences.

The aims of our study were to describe the Burrowing Parrot colony, to investigate patterns of daily movements to the feeding grounds during the breeding season, patterns of nestling provisioning and flock size. We also studied the proportion of Burrowing Parrots not attending nestlings but present at the colony during the breeding season. With this information, we aim to provide a baseline for further monitoring and conservation of this remarkable colony.

Study area

Our study was carried out at the Burrowing Parrot colony mentioned above which is located 3 km (1.9 mi) west of the mouth of the Río Negro River, Patagonia, Argentina. The easternmost part of the cliff is mainly composed of soft sandstone, whereas the westernmost part contains a very compact layer of clay at the bottom, which is not used by the parrots, and layers of soft sandstone on top. The habitat surrounding the colony is characterised by bushy steppes and marginal xerophyte forests. Much of the land is used for crop production and low-density cattle grazing.

We used a sector of the easternmost kilometre of the colony for detailed studies. The study sector is 30 m (98 ft) long, 25 m (82 ft) high and contains about 500 nests. A

total of 96 to 109 nests were monitored by direct observation through climbing the cliff. The number of nests monitored varied between years due to the collapse of nests and parts of the cliff, which occurs frequently in this part of the colony. We could not find a suitable place for monitoring nests in more westerly sectors of the colony, mainly because in the very few sectors suitable for safe climbing the density of nests is too low to obtain a representative sample. In addition, most sectors of the colony can be accessed only during the few hours in which low tide exposes the beach.



Direct observation of nest burrows and nesting birds is accomplished by climbing the cliff in the few suitable areas that provide safe access. Author Juan Masello inspects a young Burrowing Parrot chick.

Nest counts and description

The number of nest-entrances in the entire length of the colony was counted from photographs. For the densest part of the colony (the easternmost 4.2 km or 2.6 miles), a complete series of 58 photographs was taken. For the westernmost 4.8 km (3 mi), where nests are sparser, sample photographs were taken every 450 m (1/4 mi), and the total number of nests was extrapolated from these samples. We used the data from the study sector to estimate

the percentage of nest-entrances that correspond to active nests in the entire colony. We assumed that the different sectors of the cliff are equally suitable for the parrots for the following reasons: (1) parrots use sandstone layers of similar geological characteristics and belonging to the same geological formation both in the east and west of the colony; (2) the surrounding habitat is identical; and (3) the regime of tides does not differ noticeably between east and west. The only factor that differs appreciably between parts of the colony is the degree of human disturbance by beach tourists, which is highest in the east. The present methodology could therefore underestimate breeding success in the colony because the study site is subject to human disturbance during the last 2 weeks of the nestling period.

We validated the accuracy of our nest-counts from photographs by comparing this data with direct counts. To describe the dimensions and shape of Burrowing Parrot nests, 40 nests were selected in the study sector. Nest-entrances were measured with a rule, and the depth of the nest was measured with a telescopic stick.

The height of the cliffs where the colony is located range from 11 to 27 m (36 to 90 ft) above sea level. Nests were found in layers of soft sandstone between 3 m (10 ft) above the average level of high tide and 0.5 m (1.6 ft) from the top of the cliff. No nests were found in the compact layer of clay at the bottom of the westernmost half of the colony.

The total number of nest-entrances counted along the colony was 53,443. In the study sector, 96.2% of inspected burrows had one entrance, and 3.8% had two entrances. Assuming that the proportion of burrows to nest-entrances is homogeneous within the colony, we estimated that the entire colony contains 51,412 burrows. The compact clay layer in the west does not seem to be suitable for the parrots, as no nest-entrances were observed in it, and this structural variation in the cliff (i.e. more soft sandstone layers in the east than in the west of the colony) appears to be the main factor affecting the distribution of nests in the cliff.

The burrows are depressed cylinders dug in the softest layers of sandstone. Some burrows have two entrances leading to a single nest-chamber and occasionally single entrances lead to two nest-chambers, although only rarely do the latter contain two broods. The burrows follow the stratification of the cliff. The nest-entrances are elliptical, with the major axis horizontal (width range 14-49 cm or 5.5-19 in) and the minor axis vertical (height range 8-25 cm or 3-10 in). Most of the burrows are about 1.5 m (5 ft) deep, but vary from 0.6 m (2 ft) to more than 3.5 m (11 ft). The

nest chamber is about the same width as the nest-tunnel but is higher because the parrots dig a shallow cavity in which the eggs are laid and nestlings are raised.

Provisioning activity

Burrowing Parrots have evolved behavioural mechanisms to cope with fluctuations in food supply, which include flexible time-budgets in adults, and flexible growth rates in chicks. During drought, poorly fed chicks may retard growth processes in response to dietary restrictions. As a result, they may still fledge successfully despite severe food shortages during their development, and breeding success alone would poorly describe the quality of the season. Therefore, chick-growth and feeding rates are important parameters for monitoring.

During December 2001, provisioning activity patterns were determined using a video system consisting of a black-and-white miniature camera, with six infrared light emitting diodes (LEDs) as the light source, and a built-in microphone. The video system was placed in the entrance-tunnel and directed toward the nest-chamber but the nest was not modified in any way.

Three accessible nests were chosen and provisioning activity was recorded during 4 days at the first and second nests and during 3 days at the third nest. Further recording was not possible because the video system broke down during heavy rain. All recordings were done close to the time when nestlings reach peak mass (i.e. maximum demand for food), and in nests with brood-sizes close to the mean brood-size for that period in order to allow comparisons between nests. All other monitoring activities in the study sector were suspended during recordings in order to avoid possible disturbance of provisioning activities. For the same reason, recordings were done only during days without tourists on the beach. We recorded the time of adult arrival, the time of adult departure and whether feeding of the nestlings occurred.

During our monitoring, nestlings were fed 3-6 times per day. In all three monitored nests and observation days, both adults stayed in the nest overnight. The arrival of the adults in the evening was always followed by feeding of the nestlings. All nestlings were fed again in the early morning, before the adults left the nest. Adults departed early and returned to the nests 4-6 hours later. There was a peak of feeding activity at this time when 75% of the pairs returned to feed the nestlings. Feeding activity was less synchronous during the afternoon. All recorded departures from and arrivals at the nest, except for one departure, were by both parents.

Daily movements and flock sizes

From the colony, Burrowing Parrots used two main flight routes to the feeding areas. We recorded flight activity over 3 days during the period of maximum nestling provisioning activity (i.e. all the nestlings in the study sector had hatched but none had yet fledged). With binoculars, observations were made from the top of a hill with a clear 360° view of the surrounding area. We recorded the number of parrots, the flock sizes and the flight direction. Tests of inter-observer reliability revealed that flock-size was simple to determine.

As expected, daily movements of foraging flocks mirrored the feeding of nestlings at the colony. We found that adults made 1-4 trips per day to the feeding grounds with a pronounced peak in numbers immediately after sunrise, and another peak when the birds returned to the colony about 4 h later. Flying activity in the afternoon showed no such synchronization. In late afternoon very few individuals were observed flying to the feeding places. Parrots not attending nestlings but roosting in the village of El Cónдор during the night (see page 6) may join breeding birds flying to the feeding grounds and contribute to the morning peak of flight activity.

Our observations follow a common pattern of daily activity in Psittaciformes which consists of an active period beginning at

sunrise and lasting several hours, followed during the middle of the day by a period of inactivity or reduced activity. Activity recommences a few hours before sunset through until sunset. In most studies, the decrease or break in activity appears to occur around the hottest part of the day and is related to the need to avoid activities requiring elevated metabolic rates in that period. The relatively mild temperatures during December in north-eastern Patagonia (daily maximum temperatures ~27°C or 80°F), compared with those in habitats of other parrot species, could be a reason for the activity observed at El Cónдор during midday and the afternoon. Alternatively, the relatively low or sparsely distributed food supply in the Patagonian steppes may force the birds to forage throughout the day.

Burrowing Parrots are among the species in which large flocks are common. Adults travelled in flocks of up to 263 parrots to the feeding grounds in early mornings and in smaller flocks later in the day. Overall, the most frequent flock size was two, indicating that the pair is the basic social unit during the breeding season. Single Burrowing Parrots were also observed flying to the feeding grounds. A number of hypotheses have been put forward to explain variation in flock-sizes, some of which focus on the distribution of food, some on the degree of aridity, some on the level of feeding competition and others on predation.



Photo: JDG

Parrots show great variation in flock sizes between species although the primary social unit appears to be the pair, or pairs with additional individuals that are likely to be young of the year.



Petra, Juan and a student make counts of commuting birds on their way to feeding areas. These counts along important flight-lines can provide useful monitoring data. They are often most useful as indices of abundance if carried out over long periods of time.

The large flocks observed in our study during early mornings, together with the aridity of the region around the Burrowing Parrot colony at El C6ndor, are in line with the hypothesis of aridity as a determinant of flock-size, and, as in many other parrot species, the pair was the basic social unit. Further studies on flock-size outside the breeding season would be necessary to test adequately the hypothesis of aridity as a determinant of flock size in Burrowing Parrots. But for this it would be necessary first to discover the wintering places, which are still unknown.

Daily flights to the feeding areas

Over 6 days in December 2004 and January 2005 we searched exhaustively for feeding flocks of Burrowing Parrots around the colony. This ~1400 km² (540 sq mi) area has only three roads and a few accessible tracks. The land is privately owned and permission of the landowners is necessary to enter the fields. An average of 120 km (75 mi) of roads and tracks were covered at low speed in each of the surveys. Parrot flocks were easily detected in this flat and almost treeless area.

In January 2005, we conducted an aerial survey of the area mentioned above. Observations were carried out from a Cessna 182, at an altitude of 150 m (500 ft) covering a total linear distance of 400 km (250 mi). Two observers each covered a 180° view to the right and left side of the plane. We recorded the flock sizes and the flight direction. The locations of feeding flocks and their linear distance to the

colony at El C6ndor were calculated with the use of a global positioning system.

The habitat surrounding the Burrowing Parrot colony at El C6ndor is rapidly being transformed to agricultural land. Our results suggest that the birds may perform long daily movements in order to reach the remaining large patches of natural vegetation. The combined results of terrestrial and aerial surveys over 2 consecutive breeding seasons showed that feeding flocks of Burrowing Parrots regularly travel 58 and 66 km (36 and 41 mi) over the two main routes to the feeding

areas. Sixty-four feeding flocks were located in patches of natural vegetation, six were found in pastures, and only two were located close to crops in an irrigated area (see also *PsittaScene Vol 17 No 4: 10-11*). Although most of the feeding flocks were small, supporting an earlier observation that the Burrowing Parrots disperse in small flocks to feed in patches of natural vegetation, we also observed several large feeding flocks up to 100 individuals. The nature and distribution of their food resources undoubtedly influences the daily movements of the parrots. Species exploiting ephemeral or widely dispersed food resources may be forced to travel long distances to find suitable feeding locations.

Non-breeders attending the colony

Video observations in the 2001-02 breeding season indicated that breeding pairs of Burrowing Parrots spend the night with their young in the nest during the nestling period. These observations were confirmed by direct inspection of nests in the study sector during the late evening in the 2003-04 breeding season. Thus, Burrowing Parrots roosting outside of nests during the nestling period were not attending nestlings. Between the end of November and the end of December, flocks of Burrowing Parrots spend the night in the village of El C6ndor, roosting mainly on power lines. The village and its peripheral streets are the only roosting place associated with the colony in a 30 km (18 mi) radius. On two nights in December 2003 a team of six trained people, in two vehicles, counted all Burrowing Parrots in the village at dusk. The counts were done



Protecting the parrot colony requires a good knowledge of the foraging needs of this population and the identification and protection of the feeding areas that support it.



Thousands of Burrowing Parrots line the power lines in the village of El Cóndor, Patagonia, Argentina to roost. Since breeding birds spend the night with their chicks in the nest burrows, these birds are all non-breeders associated with the colony.

after the late broods hatched and well before the first sightings of fledglings outside their burrows. Thus all the counted parrots were close to the beginning of their second year of life or older.

We counted an average of 6,471 non-breeders associated with the colony over two separate count days. These non-breeders may have been birds that had attempted to breed but failed, birds that had not yet attempted to breed, or young birds digging nests to be used in later breeding seasons.

Threats to the colony and the necessity of monitoring

The extraordinary size of this colony has not been described until now, although earlier estimates indicated that the colony extended between 5 and 10 km (3-6 mi) along the cliffs. The importance of the colony has so far been largely overlooked, and it has no legal protection at present (see also *PsittaScene Vol 17 No 2: 12-14*).

The number of threats is large, and some are difficult to control. The major threat to the Burrowing Parrot feeding areas is the loss of natural vegetation. The annual rate

of clearance of the native vegetation has been estimated at 3.7%. In addition, large sectors of the steppes are burnt every year, supposedly in order to protect private property from natural fires. At the top of the cliff supporting the colony of Burrowing Parrots, vegetation is cleared annually with the use of heavy machinery apparently to protect power lines from natural fires. This, combined with the burning of the margins of the road that runs along the top of the cliff, leads to much erosion in some sections and poses a serious threat to the stability of parts of the cliff supporting the colony. Rain often falls as violent thunderstorms and areas of soil unprotected by vegetation are easily washed away.

In addition, the colony itself has been seriously threatened during the last 25 years by a range of assaults. Parrots have been poisoned in an attempt to reduce their numbers. A section of the colony was dynamited to allow the building of a pedestrian and car access close to the beach below the cliff. Cars cause disturbance and erosion along the beach below the cliff. At the same time trapping for the pet trade has been intense at times and adult birds continue to be shot by tourists while bringing food to the nestlings. In addition,

the expansion of the village has brought buildings to within less than 30 m (100 ft) of the first nests. Commercial extraction of sand and intense paragliding activity in some years causes further disturbance.

Earlier reports indicated that the highest densities of nests were in the easternmost kilometre of the Burrowing Parrot colony at El Cóndor. During the first years of our study (1998-2000), we observed the same pattern. Present data show that the densest sector is now the second easternmost kilometre of the colony. This apparent displacement of birds could be related to high levels of human disturbance detailed above. All these activities affect mainly the easternmost kilometre of the colony.

The colony should be closely monitored until legal protection can be achieved or a conservation management plan reduces human pressure.

Conclusions

We have identified basic parameters for subsequent monitoring of the colony. This information will help in determining population trends and to measure progress of conservation efforts. The most imminent threats to the colony are the impact of the expanding nearby village, including the access road to the beach, and the diverse tourist activities taking place only metres from the nests. We recommend regular annual population studies of this colony in its entirety, including formal, regular population estimates, studies of breeding success, chick growth and feeding rates and measurement of recruitment and loss from the colony. The number of non-breeders associated with the colony should also be monitored, and as an additional index of abundance, counts from stationary locations should be continued. Radio-tracking should be carried out for breeding adults in order to determine precisely the feeding areas, and for fledglings to estimate survival rates.

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For information about how to visit the colony or for those interested in downloading our scientific papers please visit: <http://orn.mpg.de/~masello>
An update of the web page is coming soon!



Feral parrots in Monterrey, Mexico

another result of the illegal bird trade

By RENÉ VALDÉS PEÑA and JOSE I. GOZALEZ-ROJAS, Laboratorio de Ornitología, Facultad de Biología, UANL

Background

Parrots are desired as pets for their showy colours and for their ability to imitate the human voice. They are readily available as pets and potential buyers usually have very little ecological conscience with respect to the critical situation of parrots in the wild.

In Mexico there are 21 species of Psittacines, of which 8 are of the genus *Amazona* and 6 are protected by Mexican laws. In spite of their protection many are obtained illegally as pets. Captive birds often escape either as a result of the owner's negligence or after being deliberately released. Many of these feral parrots end up in a different habitat than they are accustomed to but which may provide the means for survival. Green areas provide native and introduced trees, many of which may be similar to those of their native habitat. The birds manage to adapt, find food sources, a safe place to sleep and other parrots to colonize with. In the best cases, the birds follow their instincts and form pairs and produce young.

In recent decades, there has been an increase in biodiversity of birds in large cities, specifically in the United States, partly due to the large populations of feral psittacines found there. Many of these parrots are from the *Amazona* genus due to the popularity of Amazon parrots as pets and their adaptability to these new habitats. In Mexico there have been documented



A Red-crowned Amazon Parrot photographed during the study using a water fountain for a convenient drink.



A Lilac-crowned Amazon Parrot in a Monterrey city park, Mexico.

feral populations of Red-crowned Amazon Parrots (*Amazona viridigenalis*) and Lilac-crowned Amazon Parrots (*Amazona finschi*) in several cities including Monterrey in Northeast Mexico.

Studies in Mexico

In Mexico there have been very few studies of the biology of feral parrots. As a result, the Ornithology Lab of the Nuevo Leon University (Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo León) began studies during the Amazon parrots breeding season in the Monterrey area in 2004. Twelve species of psittacine were found including the Red-crowned Amazon, Lilac-crowned Amazon, Yellow-cheeked Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*), Yellow-headed Amazon (*A. oratrix*), White-fronted Amazon (*A. albifrons*), Green Parakeet (*Aratinga holochlora*), Orange-fronted Parakeet (*Aratinga canicularis*), Mexican Parrotlet (*Forpus cyanopygius*), Military Macaw (*Ara militaris*), Blue & Yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*), Budgerigars (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) and Black-hooded Parakeet (*Nandayus nenday*).

Nest sites description and nest inspection

Nests were located by observing the behaviour of pairs in the study areas.

Monitoring was done from dawn to 9 am and from 4 pm to dusk during the nesting season from March to mid-June. We found 22 nests distributed in 2 big parks with large trees (more than 40 m). One of the parks held 20 of 22 nests and included one tree with four nests in different parts of the trunk and branches. Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) were the preferred trees used for 86% of the nests found. Of the 22 nests, 15 were Red-crowned Amazon Parrots and 7 were Lilac-crowned Amazon Parrots. Twelve nests were accessed by climbing with ropes or using a large ladder. The characteristics of the cavities were recorded for these nests. The presence of chicks was observed in 2 Red-crowned and one Lilac-crowned nests. The other cavities were inaccessible due to the height of the nest holes or the condition of the tree, some of which were very old and rotten.

The feral population of Amazon Parrots in Monterrey, Mexico has been increasing in recent decades partly due to escaped birds and also due to reproductive success. Although these birds are not in their natural wild habitat, they are still protected by Mexican laws. We recommend that the authorities enforce our laws to protect the birds from illegal traffic, which is so visible in the streets of our cities.

Baby blues

By JOANNA ECKLES, World Parrot Trust

In conjunction with our fieldwork on the Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) we continue to work towards establishing a captive breeding and release aspect of the project in Bolivia. A captive flock there could help bolster the work being done with the highly endangered wild population.

In late 2002 we acquired the first captive birds that could eventually populate the Bolivian captive breeding program. They are being housed and cared for at Natural Encounters Inc, (NEI) in Florida. See photos and an article about these birds in *PsittaScene Vol 17 No 1 February 2005* issue.

The captive birds appear to be on board with the plan! Of 11 birds acquired from Saint Catherine's island, The New York Zoological Society, four pairs have been set up in private chambers with nest boxes for breeding at NEI. Two of the pairs have already hatched at least one chick each.



Six-week old Red-crowned Amazon Parrot chicks in the nest.



Lilac-crowned Amazon Parrots in different stages of growth.



Photo: Natural Encounters Inc

The NEI staff first heard the oldest chick in the nest box in January 2006. The breeding birds are given as much privacy as possible and were allowed to rear their chicks on their own. Unfortunately, as this chick matured, the keepers suspected one of the parents might be over preening it. The male of the pair has a bald head from over preening by the female. To protect the otherwise healthy chick from being plucked bald, it was removed to complete rearing and will be returned to the flock as soon as possible.

The second chick is now five weeks old and doing well under the watchful eye of its parents. We will keep you informed on this flock and on further plans, if any, for moving them to Bolivia. If you've read our many articles about working with the wild birds, you know that permits and related logistics are sometimes very cumbersome to navigate. You also know that in general we don't stress captive breeding and release as a 1st tier solution for most wild parrots. We continue to discuss the captive breeding aspect of this project with Bolivian authorities and collaborators because it may be a tactic we use down the road. Our utmost priority to date has been to support the wild population in every way we can.



Photo: Natural Encounters Inc

These birds are the focus of our work. It may be that the many and varied ways we can assist these wild birds in successfully fledging chicks in the wild will be enough. But because it may not, we are thankful to NEI for their continued dedicated care for the captive flock. Ultimately, what they and other breeders have learned about successfully raising Blue throats could have real positive repercussions in the wild.



'Ménage à trois' in captive Fischer's Lovebirds

Article and photos By WERNER LANTERMANN

According to LACK (1968) 90% of all bird species are monogamous. However, modern DNA molecular techniques have showed that many monogamous species obtain extra pair copulations and fertilizations with varying frequencies. This discovery has led to a revision in terminology so that species are now classified either as genetically or socially monogamous. Genetic monogamy refers to an exclusive mating relationship between a male and a female. Social monogamy refers to an association between a male and female for the purpose of reproduction. However, in socially monogamous species the mating relationship is not necessarily exclusive.

During our aviary studies in parrots of the African genus *Agapornis* we saw mated male Fischer's Lovebirds (*Agapornis fischeri*) and Masked Lovebirds (*Agapornis personatus*) copulate with single females of the group while their rightful mates were breeding in the nest box. In the 2003 season we observed a group of seven Fischer's Lovebirds with two pairs and three solitary females. One single female that lost her male several weeks prior began nest building and later laid four eggs. Three young hatched and were raised to maturity solely by their mother. This observation raises some questions. It is possible that this was an exceptional case due to the conditions of group composition in captivity. Perhaps the single female was even fertilized by its male before his death. However, there is not enough information about sperm conservation in Lovebirds to confirm this suggestion. It is much more plausible that this female obtained extrapair copulations and fertilization from one of the two mated males in the group. This possibility raises questions about the

evolutionary value of such extrapair mating relationship.

Above all, it is evident that the unmated female was able to lay fertilized eggs and raise young so that the reproductive success of the group increased and one of the males was able to transmit his genes at least twice. This could, at least in free-living populations, be regarded as an evolutionary strategy within a flock breeding parrot species, due to the sudden death of a group member or due to an imbalanced sex ratio within the group.

What conditions promote extrapair copulations? There are some theories, including the breeding synchrony hypothesis and the breeding density hypothesis. A comparative study found a significant positive relationship between the degree of breeding synchrony and the frequency of extrapair fertilization. Synchronous breeding allows females to more effectively compare males competing for extrapair copulations at the same time.



Young Fischer's Lovebirds at the age of 3, 4 and 6 days.

Furthermore males would benefit, because there would be more fertilizable females available, which would increase extrapair copulation opportunities.

A positive relationship was also found between breeding density and extrapair copulation frequencies. A comparative study found "Colonial species or those species nesting at high densities are predicted to have higher extrapair fertilization frequencies than species that nest at lower densities, because it is plausible that opportunities for both males and females to obtain extrapair copulations should be much greater when individuals are nesting in close proximity."

These theories have not met unlimited support and there is a lot of research still to do, especially in the field of parrot sociology.



Young Fischer's Lovebird at the age of 27 days.



Extra-pair paternity is not uncommon in a captive group of Fischer's Lovebirds.

Member missives

This posting came to our Members Listserv in response to a question about Avian Behaviour and Training

There are many different roles that will need to be covered if we are to stem the tide of force and coercion for all learners, regardless of species. The role I'm most comfortable is quite narrow and well defined. I've chosen to teach people who want to know how behaviour really works and the way in which science supports the effectiveness of non-forceful, non-coercive behaviour-change strategies. To that end, you are all always welcome to reprint and disseminate any of my articles in any way you believe will help achieve this goal. I try to keep the list current at www.thegabrielfoundation.org/html/friedman.htm

A good companion article to the one you cited ("Alternatives to Breaking Parrots") is "He Said, She Said, Science Says." In this article I discuss more completely (though still briefly) the research on the relationship between behavioural health and an individual's control of one's own environment (the outcomes of behaving). I think you will find it important information regarding the scientific basis of empowering, rather than overpowering, learners. It is part of what force advocates are missing.

Another related article may be helpful as well that was published in last November's Bird Talk magazine is called "Empowering Parrots". It is a photo essay demonstrating

the way in which an animal's choice to engage in training improves the process and the outcomes. This is uniquely achievable with positive reinforcement and obliterated by force and coercion. It is heart-breaking and unfortunate for parrots indeed when caregivers support practitioners whose sole knowledge of behaviour is personal recipes and whose sole criterion for success is fast, apparent effectiveness. In this day and age, effectiveness is not enough to value a strategy. We have the teaching technology to be both effective and humane (at least as compared to the inhumanness of force and coercion).

Albert Einstein said "Science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be,

Join the discussion....

As a member of the Trust you have the opportunity to join other members on a group email list. Any questions, concerns, news or items of interest are welcomed.

If you would like to join at any time please email Karen at uk@worldparrottrust.org and ask to be subscribed.

and outside of its domain value judgments of all kinds remain necessary." I'm counting on this combination, the science of learning and behaviour combined with a value for most positive, least intrusive effective strategies, to win the day! In fact, we have already had a big impact turning this ship, in my opinion, each one of us, all taking the roles we feel most able to achieve.

Keep thinking and doing.

All best,

Susan G. Friedman, Ph.D.
Utah, USA

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'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 members would be interested in? Contact us at uk@worldparrottrust.org with suggestions or submissions.

Is captive breeding for the pet trade really 'responsible aviculture'?

By GINA KORNBLITH, WPT member, The Netherlands

My submission for "In my opinion" resulted from a debate on the WPT email list on keeping parrots as pets. It is MY opinion and takes other views in account only to the extent that they have influenced my thinking; I do not claim to represent any one's ideas but my own.

The WPT is opposed to the trade in wild-caught birds and is working to end it. However, parrots continue to be bred in captivity, mainly for the pet trade. I believe that we are failing to promote responsible aviculture if we do not question the consequences of this practice. The following reasons help to explain my view:

1 Parrots have become all the rage as pets and can be bought as merchandise by anyone with the money and a whim to have one. This casual demand has led to "factory production," reports of euthanasia of unwanted birds (www.parrots4ever.org), and overflowing parrot refuges and adoption services. There is a glut of parrots on the market, lowering prices and making them disposable consumption items. Parrots are "big business" and people lose sight of the fact that each individual parrot is a sentient living being with a right to quality of life.

2 Wild-caught parrots have been kept in captivity at least since ancient Greek and Roman times. In recent years more and more species are being bred in captivity but, with a few exceptions, no one would say that they have become "domesticated." Parrot-like birds appeared at least 35 million years ago, thus they have an infinitely longer history of evolving to survive in the wild than in captivity. Even second, third and later generation captive-bred birds are still "wild" in the sense that they have not adapted to being kept in captivity. In a letter to the Avian Welfare Coalition (www.avianwelfare.org), veterinarian Todd Wolf wrote, "These are wild animals and many of them adapt very poorly to life in captivity. This misadaptation manifests as a

huge array of behavioural problems." We may comfort ourselves with the thought that a parrot in a cage with food provided for him so he doesn't have to go looking for it and who has no need to be ever on the alert for predators is grateful for these boons, but until a parrot can tell us how he experiences this from HIS standpoint, we cannot attribute our feelings to him. Many parrots in captivity find the stress of boredom intolerable and they resort to maladaptive behaviours to 'cope' with such alien conditions. Hence we commonly see self-plucking and other serious behavioural 'problems' in companion parrots. Parrots have evolved to cope

with the stresses they encounter in the wild, but many do not have the ability to cope with the stresses of captivity. We do know that birds instinctively hide signs of sickness or disability as long as possible. In the wild this is adaptive because a bird that looks sick or disabled is more vulnerable to a potential predator. This may also be a factor in captivity - birds who don't appear stressed, may be so. In research with penguins in the wild a heart monitor in an artificial egg was placed in the penguin nest. When the researchers approached the nest, the bird's heart rates increased before any visible signs of distress were apparent.

3 Dolphins, the great apes, and the crow and parrot families are the animal groups whose intelligence, as far as we know, most approaches human intelligence. Of all these groups, only parrots are kept in large numbers in captivity, often in conditions which cause them terrible physical and psychological damage.

4 The combination of their high intelligence and their behavioural needs as wild birds make parrots very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain in captivity in conditions that are physically and mentally healthy for them. As a very minimum, the following must be taken into consideration:

- Mental requirements: parrot intelligence



Photo: World Parrot Trust



Photo: JDC

- Physical requirements: flight, chewing, foraging, varied diet, humidity
 - Social requirements: a flock, a partner
 - Medical requirements: diseases due to improper breeding, housing, feeding
 - Longevity - usually outlive their owners
- 5 Ignorance of parrot requirements, and/or the inability or unwillingness to try to meet them means that the vast majority of pet parrots are kept in substandard to deplorable conditions. Even the wealthiest most benevolent owner can only go so far towards creating a safe, stimulating, varied environment that even modestly begins to approximate the parrots' natural habitat. And how many wealthy benevolent caring owners are there? Most parrots end up in a cage with an inadequate diet, with insufficient exercise and little or no social interaction. In short, an abbreviated life. They are capable of, and have a right to, so much more.
 - 6 Because it is so easy to acquire a parrot without having the knowledge of their special needs, the birds will almost invariably experience many problems. And when problems begin, the bird is either dumped at a refuge or passed from one owner to another, sometimes numerous times throughout its life. Common problems for the owners include noise, mess, destruction of furniture and aggressive behaviour. Problems for the parrot include plucking, self-mutilation and stereotypic behaviours. Parrot refuges already have to turn away parrots every day because they cannot keep up with the numbers coming in. Many of the birds arrive in deplorable physical and/or mental condition and need expensive and extensive professional veterinary and behavioural care before they can be rehomed (www.fosterparrots.com). Too many parrots are bought "on impulse" and when the buyers find out what they have gotten themselves into, the bird is dumped or re-enters the market. The prevalence of professional parrot behaviourists and books and articles dealing with these issues shows how widespread such problems are. The existence of some "parrot behaviour consultants" who still use out-dated cruel methods is an indication of woeful ignorance, and/or the desire for a "quick-fix". The appearance of these problems to one degree or another in the majority of parrots kept as house pets is a clear a sign of the birds' inability to cope with captive conditions.
 - 7 As with most markets, that for parrots is money driven, and when "market research" shows that there is a bigger premium for "cuddly hand-reared baby

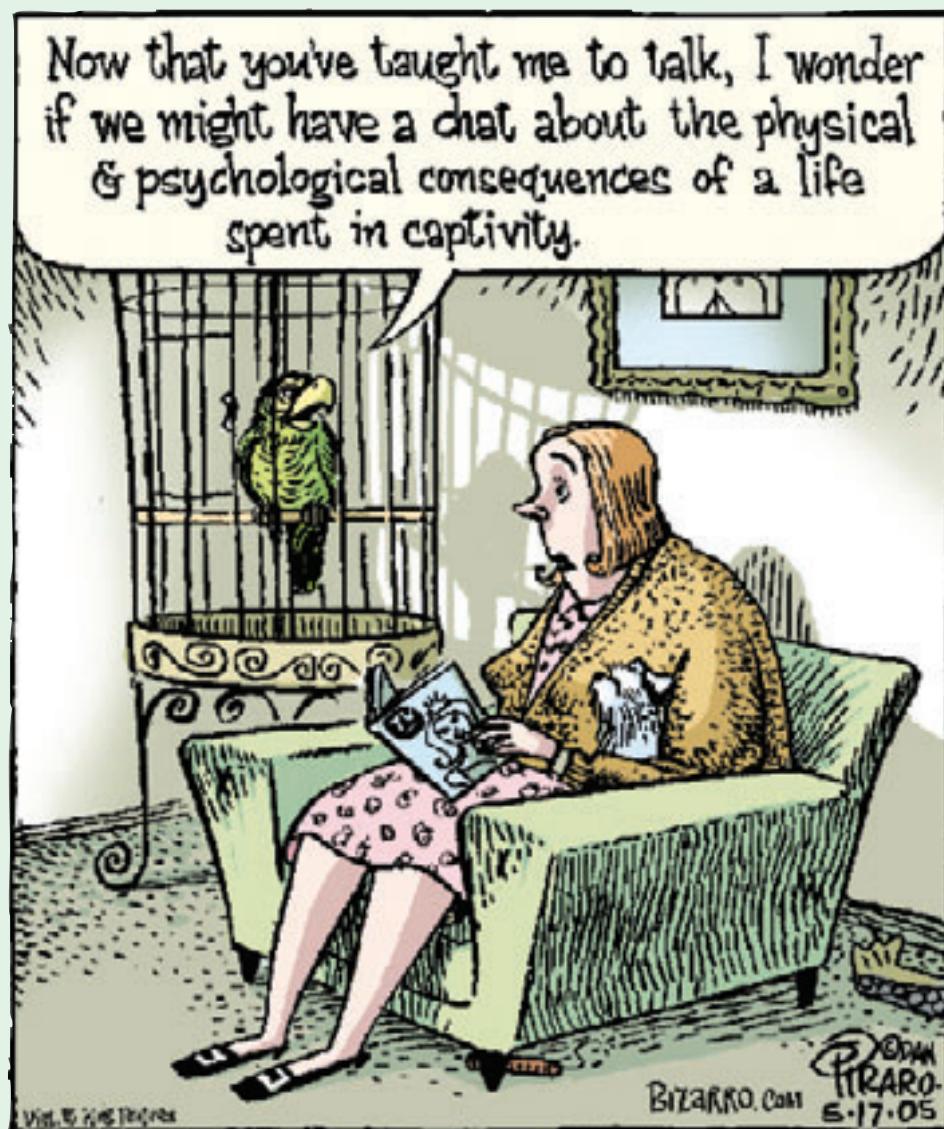
parrots," there is an increase in the "production" of such birds. Research has shown, however, that it is just these babies who grow up to be adults with the most problems. They seem not to know whether they are bird or human, or something in between. Their socialization and coping skills are sadly wanting, leading to screaming, plucking, biting and self-mutilation (Low, Rosemary. The importance of parent reared parrots. *PsittaScene Vol 13 No 1, Feb 2001 12-13.*). Furthermore, research by avian vet Harcourt-Brown indicates that in the nest with their parents, chicks are tightly packed together and are largely immobile. Removing them from the nest for hand-rearing results in mobility that contributes to structural defects in their bones.

- 8 As long as there are parrots in adoption services and refuges that need homes, it seems at the very least superfluous to have more parrots being bred for a market which is already over-supplied. Education about parrot keeping is needed to reduce the number of parrots going to inappropriate homes. We also need publicity about adoption possibilities in

order to provide good homes for homeless parrots.

The relationship between people and animals has been changing for as long as there has been human/animal interaction. As someone dedicated to bird welfare, I feel it is time that we take a serious look at our relationships with parrots and how we use them at present. Breeding parrots may be rewarding for those individuals who do this, but parrots do not exist to please us. Rather, the onus should be on us to address issues of welfare more honestly and openly, even if this requires a radical change in thinking and acting. Perhaps the only responsible aviculturists are those dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of "unwanted" birds. We should be supporting these people far more than we do at present.

Author's note: I would like to thank the members of the WPT on-line forum whose well-thought out contributions to a lively discussion on this topic helped to modify and clarify my ideas on this subject. And special thanks to all those who are out there working now for the welfare of present and future parrots.



Used with permission - see Bizarro.com

In memory of Eugene Klinedinst

On the anniversary of his death we would like to remember World Parrot Trust Life Member Col. Eugene Klinedinst who passed away on April 19th, 2005 at age 80. Eugene was a wonderful supporter and advocate of the Trust and of parrots. He shared his life with his wife of 18 years, Judy, and 3 macaws in addition to his 6 grown children/stepchildren, 11 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. He was an active and adventurous character with many diverse interests and accomplishments. His wife Judy said, "I miss Gene very much. His enthusiasm and vitality



Hanging out with 'Macho' (Hyacinth) - by far Gene's favourite Macaw!

and his sense of humour is what made my life interesting." Gene will also be missed by his friends at the York Area Pet Bird Club and York Audubon Society as well as various Chess clubs and the long list of Historical and Military Societies where he was active. He was a veteran of both Vietnam and WWII and was honoured with a long list of awards and decorations during his lifetime. After living in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Biak Island, Luzon and Layte, Philippines, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Tokyo it's no wonder that he had a penchant for travel. As a tourist Eugene even visited Antarctica. We appreciate having known Eugene and being able to count such a fine citizen among our supporters. Our best wishes go to Judy and their family and friends.



Gene with Macaws 'Lady Blue' (Blue & Gold) and 'Matilda' (Scarlet)

Choc Full of Life!

One of Hampshire, UK's most outspoken and colourful residents and World Parrot Trust Life Member has died after a highly eventful life. Peter Cadbury, grandson of the founder of the chocolate empire bearing his surname, was 88. Mr Cadbury, who lived in Upton Grey, was involved in the establishment of Tyne Tees Television and later founded Westward Television. He had an early career as a test pilot during the Second World War and was a barrister at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, before turning to commerce.

Although he did not enter the family business, he worked for the George Cadbury Fund, a Quaker charitable foundation that has donated to St Michael's Hospice and the North Hampshire Medical Fund in the past. The famously-frank Mr Cadbury leaves his wife, Janie, five children and six grandchildren. He and Mrs Cadbury - his third wife - married in July 1976 after meeting at a dinner party in London. They moved to Upton Grey in 1993 and he was well known in the village, regularly seen walking his Great Danes until recent years. His dogs and his parrot were among his great loves.

Following a knee replacement in 2003, he suffered a severe post-operative stroke and was unable to walk. Mrs Cadbury, 65, said: "He had always been as fit as a fiddle but, since December 2003, he was totally disabled. It was tragic because he was such a fun-loving outdoor man. But he never complained - he was tremendously courageous and he was a pleasure to look after in the later years. It will be very lonely without him." Mrs Cadbury added: "Peter could be difficult but he was very good to his friends. He called a spade a spade and was very honest and forthright with his views. He did not mind having a good fight with people over something he believed in." Mr Cadbury attracted much attention for his colourful personal life and for the boardroom rows in his successful business career. He also battled with neighbours in Upton Grey - once over the use of automatic bird scarers and again over manure spreading.

Mr Cadbury had two children, Felicity and Justin, with his first wife Benedicta Bruce, one son, Joel, with his second wife Jennifer Morgan-Jones, and two sons, George and James, with Janie Cadbury. He died at his home on Easter Monday and was cremated at Basingstoke Crematorium on Monday, April 24. He had specifically requested that his casket was made from willow as he did not want any wood from trees that might have been chopped down from forests where parrots fly. All donations are being given to the World Parrot Trust, honouring Mr Cadbury's wishes. His ashes will be buried where his parents are laid to rest in Bristol and his family is planning a service of thanksgiving in his memory to take place in June.



Photo: Gazette Newspapers Basingstoke

Birds of a feather

Our sincerest thanks go out to Kevin Kendall of Marietta Georgia for his generous donation of frequent flyer miles. His donation allowed Joanna Eckles to spend a week in our UK office at Paradise Park. During the same week Jamie Gilardi visited following Trade Ban meetings in Brussels and London. This rare opportunity to work face to face was invaluable to our widely dispersed team. While the modern conveniences of email and instant messaging keep us in touch across the ocean, there is still nothing quite like sitting in the same room to discuss issues pertinent to the Trust - our members, our plans and projects and our magazine.

Since parrots are a worldwide phenomenon and their conservation issues are of concern across the globe it is critical for the World Parrot Trust to operate in many languages and currencies. We now have volunteer translators for *PsittaScene* who navigate our somewhat haphazard publishing schedule every quarter to allow us to serve our members in 8 languages including Japanese, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish. Our Happy Healthy Parrot brochure has also been translated into 7 languages including Finnish, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian and Russian.

If you are fluent in another language and are willing to help with translations please contact Karen Whitley in the UK at uk@worldparrottrust.org or (44) 01736 751026

If you have frequent flyer miles you are willing to consider donating please contact Karen (above) or Joanna Eckles in the US at joanna@worldparrottrust.org



Photo: WPT

From left: David Woolcock (WPT Trustee, PP Curator), Jamie Gilardi (WPT Director), Michelle Cook (WPT Intl Admin), Nick Reynolds (WPT Trustee, PP Director), Karen Whitley (WPT Intl Admin), Alison Hales (WPT Trustee, PP Director), Joanna Eckles (WPT) and Ray Hales (PP).

Bird clubs of Virginia rally for WPT

By GLENN REYNOLDS, WPT USA Representative

Bird Clubs of Virginia Inc. is a non-profit federation and an umbrella organization providing consistency and a means of communication for its five member bird clubs in Virginia which include: Commonwealth Avicultural Society, National Capital Bird Club, Parrots Breeders Association, Peninsula Cage Bird Society, and Southwest Virginia Bird Club. It was formed in January of 1985 when bird enthusiasts met in Hampton, Virginia to plan a state federation. The result of the meeting was the creation of Bird Clubs of Virginia (BCV), founder Dick Ivy's brainchild. Five months later BCV hosted its first convention in Hampton, Virginia. Since then BCV has hosted an annual convention and has contributed to and facilitated the awarding of over \$60,000 for avian research studies, education, and conservation projects. Furthermore, it provides an avenue of communication for its member clubs and bird clubs all over the United States through its participation in

Bird Clubs of America. Bird Clubs of Virginia serves as a catalyst for raising money to support avicultural endeavors ranging from providing grants to budding avian veterinarian students, research in nutrition and disease prevention of parrots and other cage birds, and the conservation

of endangered or threatened parrot species.

Bird Clubs of Virginia is a remarkable organization, and its accomplishments are far too great to list in full here. If you wish to learn more about BCV visit their web site <http://www.birdclubsva.org/index.htm>



Photo: Sue Husson

John Long, Administrative Coordinator of BCV (on the right), presenting one of the donation checks to Mark Sargent WPT member on behalf of WPT.

At the 2006 Bird Clubs of Virginian Annual Convention in Williamsburg, Virginia the following contributions were collected and presented to the World Parrot Trust.

Bird Clubs of Virginia	\$1,200
Commonwealth Avicultural Soc	\$300
National Capital Bird Club	\$300
Parrots Breeders Association	\$200
Peninsula Caged Bird Society	\$300
Southwest Virginia Bird Club	\$100
Tom Marshall, WPT Life Member	\$100

The World Parrot Trust greatly appreciates the dedication and continued support of BCV and its member clubs.

Psitta News

Endangered Salmon-crested Cockatoos released following confiscation from smuggler

By **BONNIE ZIMMERMANN**,
bzimmerbird@gmail.com

In March 2006 three Salmon-crested (Seram) Cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*) were released back to the forest where they were trapped eighteen months earlier on the island of Seram, in the Maluku archipelago, Eastern Indonesia.

The birds were confiscated in September 2004 when Forestry officers from Manusela National park rescued nine Salmon-crested (Seram) cockatoos along with seven other parrots and arrested a smuggler from Sulawesi. The birds had been purchased from members of Huaulu village.

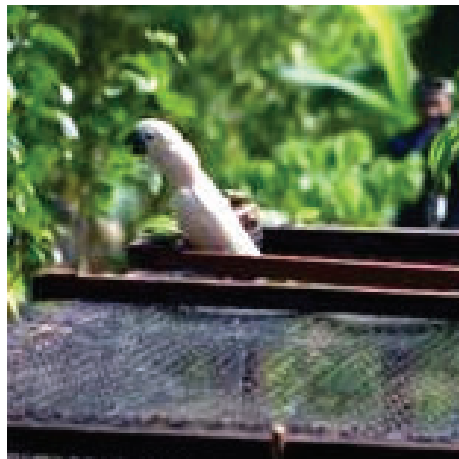


Photo: S. Metz

The decision to release birds confiscated from smugglers, with its attendant risks to the birds and the ecology of the region, received support from the World Conservation Union (2002) as well as CITES. In fact, many of the people from the nearby village of Masihulan, and the children from several local schools, came to witness the first release. It was seen as a major event on the island and hopefully a new beginning for more endangered birds to go back to their forest homes. To minimize risks to the animals and the environment, the release followed the principles of both CITES and IUCN. Prior to the release, each bird had been fitted with an open stainless-steel leg band;

tagged with an Avid micro-chip; and had its tail feathers marked with a different colour of 'indelible' ink for short-term, post-release monitoring.

Two new species discovered research bolsters case for Philippine conservation

By **GREG BORZO**,
gborzo@fieldmuseum.org

Scientists have discovered two new species - a parrot and a mouse - that live only on a small island in the Philippines. This island, Camiguin, is the smallest Philippine island, of which there are 7,000, known to support a bird or mammal species that is endemic (lives nowhere else).

The scientists' research, which is embargoed, is described in the April 5 issue of *Fieldiana: Zoology*, a peer-reviewed, scientific journal about biodiversity research published by The Field Museum.

These new discoveries and the biological diversity they document strengthen the case for preserving the small area of natural rain forest still found on the island.

"Knowing that at least 54 species of birds and at least 24 species of mammals live on Camiguin, and that some of these animals are found nowhere else on earth, makes us realize how important this island is in terms of conservation," said Lawrence Heaney, Curator of Mammals, at The Field Museum and a co-author of several of the reports in this publication. "For these animals to survive, we've got to save the dwindling forests where they live."

The island was once almost entirely covered by rain forest, but by 2001 only 18% was still forested, Heaney said. That amount has dropped since then, as logging, agriculture and human settlement have continued to erode the forests. In fact, almost half the island is now covered with coconut plantations.

"The Philippines is increasingly recognized as a global center for biodiversity, with exceptionally high levels of endemism," said Blas Tabaranza Jr., Director of the Terrestrial Ecosystems Project of the Haribon Foundation, a Philippine conservation NGO based in Manila, and a co-author of several of the *Fieldiana* reports. "Unfortunately, the Philippines has also vaulted into notoriety as one of the most severely deforested tropical countries in the world."

The scientists have declared Camiguin's rain forest to be a key global conservation priority. Efforts to protect the remaining rain forest in which these animals live as a national park have been underway for several years, in collaboration between The

Field Museum, Haribon Foundation, local government, and Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Camiguin's forests are not only necessary to protect endangered wildlife, such as the two newly discovered endemic species. They are also essential for the ecotourism that provides much of the island's income. In addition, the forests provide ecological support for the coral reefs surrounding the island that require low levels of runoff and siltation.

According to Tabaranza, the rain forest protects watersheds on the island's steep slopes, helping to control soil erosion and prevent landslides. In February 2006, a mudslide on denuded slopes on the neighboring island of Leyte virtually obliterated the farming village of Guinsaugon and killed an estimated 1,500 residents.

Camiguin is only 102 square miles (265 square kilometers). It has been continuously isolated from its neighbors, even during the Ice Ages of the Pleistocene, when sea levels dropped to 130 yards (120 meters) below present levels. This isolation contributed to the differentiation of the island's animals.

Detective work

The two new species were discovered as the result of recent and earlier field studies.

The parrot is a Hanging-parrot, or Colasisi, with bright green feathers covering most of the body. The throat and thighs are bright blue, and the top of the head and tail are brilliant scarlet-orange. Males and females have identical plumage, which is quite unusual in this group of parrots.

The description is based on previously unstudied specimens in The Field Museum and the Delaware Museum of Natural History collected in the 1960's by D. S. Rabor. The name for the new species is *Loriculus camiguinensis*, or Camiguin Hanging-parrot.

"This description is based on a series of specimens that had been part of The Field Museum's collections for almost 40 years, so our work highlights the value of collecting and preserving scientific specimens, because you may not initially realize the significance of specimens," said John Bates, Curator of Birds and Chair of Zoology at The Field Museum, and a co-author of one of the *Fieldiana* reports. "If we did not have a series of specimens from Camiguin and additional series of Hanging-parrots from other Philippine Islands, we probably would have assumed that the single bird that prompted our investigation was just odd looking, and we would not have been able to recognize it as distinctive."

One of *L. camiguinensis*' characteristics that was key to identifying it as a new species is the fact that its plumage is relatively dull compared to other Philippine Hanging-parrots. This is consistent with the documented tendency for some isolated bird populations to lose bright plumage, the authors note.

Photo: Michael Skakuj, Courtesy of The Field Museum



Striking, color illustration of new parrot and mouse. Both these animals are endemic to Camiguin Island in the Philippines (found only here). The growing realization that this tiny island is rich in biodiversity has made it a global priority for conservation.

Because *L. camiguinensis* has not been recognized as a separate species, little is known about its habits, and it has been overlooked in terms of conservation. The discovery has spurred interest in the field studies needed to establish the population size and requirements as a prerequisite for conservation planning and action.

After learning about the Fieldiana manuscript, Thomas Arndt, a German parrot enthusiast, made a trip to Camiguin to look for these birds. He photographed the parrots and is preparing a publication about his findings.

The new mammal is a Philippine forest mouse, now identified as *Apomys camiguinensis*. It has large ears and eyes, a long tail and rusty-brown fur, and it feeds mostly on insects and seeds. The description is based on mice captured on Camiguin during a biological survey Heaney and Tabaranza conducted in 1994 and 1995, high on the steep slopes of one of the island's volcanoes.

Local people had not previously known of the mouse, though they have known of the parrot because of its value in the pet trade.

In 2002, Heaney, Tabaranza, and Eric Rickart, of the Utah Museum of Natural

History, described a different species of forest-living rodent, *Bullimus gamay*, from Mt. Timpoong, the same mountain where the new mouse was collected. A frog (*Oreophryne nana*) named in 1967 had been thought to be the only vertebrate restricted to the island prior to the surveys by Heaney and Tabaranza.

"Very few states in the United States, and few countries in Europe, have four endemic species of vertebrates, making it clear why tiny Camiguin Island is deserving of international attention," Heaney said. "And it is almost certain that other organisms on Camiguin are also endemic; they just have not been studied yet."

Minister defends wind farm veto

By Jordan Chong, April 6, 2006

Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell said he would be derelict in his duty not to reject a proposed \$220 million wind farm in South Gippsland (Australia) to protect the endangered orange-bellied parrot.

But State Planning Minister Rob Hulls has disputed Mr Campbell's claim, saying the decision is politically motivated.

"They (wind farms) do kill birds, they kill them in relatively low numbers, which is a good thing, but in the case of this particular site and this particular bird, the best independent advice I've got is that this would put the entire species at risk," Mr Campbell told ABC Radio this morning.

While Senator Campbell denied campaigning on the issue during the last federal election, Rob Hulls said the Senator had written letter to the constituents of McMillan on the matter.

"This is a political decision that's been made to stop a \$220 million wind farm investment and regional jobs for the sake of one, theoretically, dead parrot a year," Mr Hulls said.

According to a consultant's report commissioned by the Federal Government, no orange-bellied parrots were seen near Bald Hills and the likelihood of a parrot hitting turbines "may be very small, even barely noticeable, compared with natural mortality."

"An Environment Minister who ignored that report I think would be doing a bad thing for the environment," Mr Campbell said.

"I think that the Environment Minister, as I am, is put in a position where you could make no other decision."

Citing the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, Mr Campbell yesterday overturned Victorian Government approval of the Bald Hills wind farm, near Tarwin Lower, on the grounds that it may

affect the endangered parrot.

The company behind the Bald Hills proposal, Wind Power, said the decision was "completely unreasonable" and would deter businesses wanting to invest in infrastructure projects in regional and rural areas.

Tim Le Roy, spokesman for the Tarwin Valley Coastal Guardians, said most locals would be delighted with the ban. "There were over 1500 objections to the proposal," he said.

Mr Broadbent described the decision as a win for locals. "If people want to put wind farms in sensitive areas, they need to take a close look at how the local community is going to respond," he said.

theage.com.au, with Liz Minchin, Nassim Khadem and Peter Ker

www.theage.com.au

Bird project set for launch

Tuesday, April 18, 2006,

A major initiative aimed at saving threatened bird species in Fiji and other Pacific Islands could be launched next year.

The project will be funded from sources in England, confirmed BirdLife International's Pacific regional programme manager, Don Stewart.

He said profits from this year's British Birdfair would be used to launch a regional project aimed at saving threatened parrot species in the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

"The British Birdfair is the largest ornithological event in the world" Mr Stewart said.

"Held in England in August each year, it attracts some 20,000 visitors and 300 exhibitors over a three day period."

The theme for this year's fair will be Saving the Pacific's Parrots, with the entire proceeds from the event, expected to be up to £200,000 (F621,214.79) being handed over to fund the Pacific project which will start early in 2007. The main focus will be taking action against invasive alien species, particularly by eradicating rats on islands where they are known to be responsible for a serious decline in parrot species.

BirdLife International is a world-wide partnership of non-government organisations working together to protect biodiversity with an emphasis on birds and people.

The partnership operates in 100 countries globally and is present in the Pacific in Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau and Samoa.

www.fijitimes.com

New website

An innovative new web-site, www.iloveparrots.com, has recently been launched to give parrot lovers the opportunity to be part of an on-line community, find advice on parrot care and shop on-line for accessories and food.

The web-site, created by Lynne Boon and Jennifer Smith, has been launched to enable parrot lovers to have access to an on-line forum where they can meet fellow parrot fans and share their common interest. Current articles featured on the site focus on parrot dangers and how to encourage play. For advice on parrot care and answers to any parrot-related questions, log on to www.iloveparrots.com.

Monks black out Connecticut

Texas utility tries to foil Parakeet nests

By JULIA GLICK

Frustrated by parakeets that tirelessly build huge nests on electrical equipment, power companies have tried about everything to stop the cute green birds. They've used chemical repellents, lasers and fake predators, and even killed some, to the outrage of bird lovers.

Now a Texas utility is trying a different approach, building a 40-foot platform near electrical towers to lure monk parakeets away from sensitive equipment. TXU Electric Delivery hopes other companies

can eventually adopt the idea, but so far the parakeets refuse to leave their original digs.

"They have trees all around them, and now the platform, and yet they prefer the (electrical) switches," spokeswoman Carol Peters said recently as about 40 lime-green birds chatted loudly and ignored the new nesting area.

Workers even placed twigs on the platform, but the birds carried the nesting materials back to their old homes.

In Connecticut, the nests have caused as many as 12 power outages and four fires since 1998, said Al Carbone, a spokesman for the power company United Illuminating. Last year, the utility handed about 190 captured birds over to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to be euthanized.

Experts believe the tenacious monk parakeet, a small parrot from South America, entered the U.S. when some birds escaped from shipping crates, probably in the 1960s. Many states now consider them an invasive species and prohibit people from feeding or caring for the creatures.

No one knows for certain why they like to nest at electrical substations and in utility poles. The nests can grow as big as a small car and include multiple compartments for large flocks, said Mattie Sue Athan, a parrot behavior consultant who has written several books on the birds.

But the birds have achieved a loyal following of fans who admire their cleverness and the splash of tropical color

they bring to urban areas. Bird watchers in Edgewater, N.J., market T-shirts, calendars and other parakeet merchandise, and a New York man leads tours of their Brooklyn nesting grounds.

"It is hard to argue with cute, and they are cute and smart and appealing birds," Peters said. "But they are nesting in equipment that provides an essential service."

Associated Press Writer, 4th May 2006

On a lighter note - Parrot serves time in prison during custody case

By AYINDI O CHASE, 27th April 2006

Buenos Aires, Argentina (AHN) - A parrot has spent five days under police "interrogation" in prison in Argentina in a related custody case.

Two neighbors, Jorge Machado and R. Vega, were disputing ownership of the bird and locked in a fierce custody battle.

Judge Osvaldo Carlos, in an attempt to solve the unusual case, ordered the parrot to be sent to prison until he said the name of his owner.

It took five long days but finally, Pepo said Machado's name and then broke into song singing the anthem of Machado's favorite football team San Lorenzo.

Machado says, "I knew he wasn't going to let me down, he is a real friend and we support the same football team."

www.allheadlinenews.com



Birthday support by WPT member

My name is Lars Christiansen and parrots have been part of my life since childhood. As a young man I kept several species, unfortunately some have since become rare in their habitats. Some of them bred of course, but my bird-keeping was mostly "consuming" as I think was the case with those of us who were young in the seventies when a wide variety of species were available even in ordinary pet-shops. Today I keep only two Senegal parrots, born and bred in Sweden, as pets. Over the years I've become an interested collector of books and prints relating to all aspects of parrots, aviculture as well as natural history and conservation. So, when planning my 50th birthday and thinking of some good subjects for fund-raising, the conservation of parrots, through World Parrot Trust came up as quite a natural thing! I decided that I would ask my guests to donate money towards the fund instead of buying birthday gifts for

me. I received a Swedish WPT-folder containing specific parrot conservation material that related mainly to the WPT 12, which I distributed to my friends.

What I hadn't quite expected though, was the interest that my friends and acquaintances actually showed in this project. For most of them this was something completely new, even though they knew about my passion for parrots. The result was not only the donation to WPT through the generosity of the guests at my birthday party but also, quite a lot of information on saving parrots in the wild was spread! A representative of WPT in Scandinavia, Mr. Dan Paulsen was very helpful in all of this.

Mr. Christiansen and his friends raised more than 8,300 SEK (£600 / US\$ 1,140) earmarked specifically for the conservation of the Imperial Amazon and the St Vincent Amazon through the work done by WPT.



Photo: Sam Williams

The World Parrot Trust thanks Mr. Christiansen and his friends very much indeed for their creativity and support.

Parrot Behaviour, Training and Enrichment Workshop

Co-hosted by **WPT** and **Paradise Park Wildlife Sanctuary**
Presented by **David Woolcock**, Curator Paradise Park

Designed for the current or prospective pet parrot owner who would like a rewarding and fulfilling relationship with their bird. This two-day Workshop will give the attendees the basic methods and tools required to teach their birds using positive reinforcement.

Topics covered in the Workshop:

- * Understanding bird behaviour *
 - * The basics of training *
- * Reading and interpreting a bird's body language *
 - * Training basic behaviours *
- * Problem behaviours and solutions *
 - * Training advanced behaviours *
 - * Enrichment principles *
- * Enrichment design and implementation *

The course will consist of lectures, practical sessions, interactive activities, written materials and live presentations.

Please note that attendees may **not** bring their own birds to the workshops for welfare reasons, although videos / DVDs of problem behaviours will be welcomed.

The two day Workshop aims to be both a fun and educational experience.

Sat 9th & Sun 10th September

for WPT members: **£200** for non members **£220**
please contact WPT UK office

The price includes:

Admission to Paradise Park Wildlife Sanctuary UK, over the weekend; all course materials; morning and afternoon tea or coffee and lunch.

WPT International Contacts

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

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (please tick)

- Student** (Annual) £10 / US\$15 / €15
- Single** (Annual) £20 / US\$30 / €30
- 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
- Additional donation** of
- (or equivalent exchange currency, credit card payments by Visa / Mastercard only)

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Parrots in the Wild



Camiguin Hanging Parrot

Loriculus camiguinensis

As detailed in Psitta News, this newly described Camiguin Hanging Parrot is only found on the Philippine island of Camiguin. The tiny island is especially rich in biological diversity but increasingly threatened by logging, agriculture and human settlement.

By © Thomas Arndt
Courtesy of The Field Museum