

PsittaScene



IN THIS ISSUE
Amazon Country
Hyacinth ID's

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Psitta Scene



fromthechairman

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Hello,

Those who have been World Parrot Trust members for some time may have wondered why they had not heard much from me in the past year or so. Unfortunately I have been quite ill, but am happy to have regained some health and glad to be able to write a few words.

In this time, avian flu (H5N1) has become a worry to us all (as previously covered in *PsittaScene*). However, the temporary ban on bird imports into the European Union due to the flu, has created a real opportunity to permanently stop imports of wild-caught parrots for the pet trade. This is a long-held aim of the Trust, and has almost unimaginable benefits in terms of conservation and welfare.

I'm also excited that the Trust is again able to offer 'Action Grants' for parrot projects, as this is a great way to encourage interesting work on the species identified as most at need in the Parrot Action Plan.

We know that targeted funding can be a lifeline, as shown by the dedicated work (overseen by Carl Jones) on the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius. This was the first species supported with WPT funds back in 1989, and the population has since grown from just a handful to hundreds. It still faces challenges from introduced species and disease, but its future is certainly much improved.

Recently I have been able to visit the birds here at Paradise Park (the home of the WPT in Cornwall, UK) again, and can't express how much I have enjoyed this. The aviaries are looking good, and the birds, including many parrots but also toucans, touracos and pheasants, are a joy to quietly observe as they go about their daily business.

I urge you to take time with the parrots you have in your lives, and consider their wild cousins. Watch them, learn about them, and do your best to give them fulfilled lives in return for the pleasure they give you.

Regards

Michael Reynolds
Honorary Chairman

onourcovers

FRONT A rare glimpse of a wild Blue-fronted Amazon (*Amazona aestiva*) on the nest in Argentina. The legal harvest of thousands of these birds under a government management plan could have serious repercussions for their population. New research attempts to answer important questions about the breeding ecology and population dynamics of this species. The hope is that good science will guide the management plan and guarantee the long-term health of the population. © Igor Berkunsky

BACK Normally from western Ecuador and extreme north west Peru, the Red-masked or Cherry-headed Conure (*Aratinga erythrogenys*) has found a new home in the "wilds" of urban San Francisco, California. The founders of the flock were former pets that managed to find each other and eventually thrive, much to the delight of their neighbours and visitors alike. Photographed at Telegraph Hill. © Mark Bittner

Amazon country - Argentina's "Impenetrable" Forest

By IGOR BERKUNSKY and BÉRÉNICE CHARPIN

We wake up as early as possible, around 5 or 6 am while it's still dark. One of us prepares breakfast (tea or coffee with cookies or crackers) while the others gather all the equipment needed for the day: ropes, harnesses, measuring equipment, and water, lots of water: at least 2 litres per person. You don't want to forget anything since the parrot nests we are studying are far away from the campsite. Yes! We all stay in tents throughout the breeding season (mid October to early March - spring and summer in Argentina).

Depending on their location, the nest-trees are linked with paths forming "circuits" or "tours". "Circuits" can be as far as 20 km (12.5 mi) from the campsite and once you leave the road behind, you may need to walk 1 or 2 km (0.6 - 1.2 mi) through the dense forest.

We work in pairs, each checking a dozen nests every morning. By the time we reach the first nest the sun and the temperature are usually up! The most exciting part of the day starts: nest checking in the Chaco forest. This will take many hours and we need to be efficient: data has to be collected quickly so that chicks aren't bothered and because we have to be back to the campsite by noon - it's impossible to perform any task during the hottest hours of the day. Temperatures may be as high as 49° C (120 ° F). Not even the lizards dare to muck around!

After lunch, it's time to process the data collected in the morning, prepare the activities for the afternoon and of course, take a rest in our hammocks!

From 4 to dark (around 8-9 pm) we go out again checking nests or doing observations on the vegetation - this will enable us to monitor changes in food availability throughout the season.

Blue-fronted Amazon Parrots (*Amazona aestiva*) are one of the most popular pet birds in the world. Their flamboyant, interactive personalities, talking ability, and striking colouration are some of the qualities that can make them wonderful companions. In the wild, they are found in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia, South America. We have been studying the reproductive ecology and population dynamics of this species in the Chaco region of Argentina since 2002. The aim of our study is to determine the main factors that affect the reproductive success of Blue-fronted Amazons in this region. This information is particularly relevant in estimating the impact that harvesting could have on wild parrot populations. The World Parrot Trust recently committed major funding for our 2006-2007 field season.

The demand for parrots as pets has resulted in an significant international trade. The sustainability and implications of this trade have been extensively analysed and discussed. Parrots face many pressures including habitat destruction and poaching for the pet trade. The effect of these factors is exacerbated by the low reproductive rate of most parrot species as a result of relatively late age of the first reproduction, small clutch size, low survival of chicks and fledglings, absence of second broods, reproduction that does not take place every year, and restrictive nesting requirements. Some people think that in a few cases sustainable harvesting programs might be feasible for some parrot species. The Blue-

fronted Amazon is viewed by some as one of those species.

In Argentina, most Blue-fronted Amazons breed in the dry forests in the Chaco region where our study takes place. This thick, thorny forest, locally known as "Impenetrable", is dominated by hardwood trees, which offer excellent nesting cavities. The Impenetrable is also home to a diverse fauna including jaguars, peccaries, anteaters, giant armadillos and over 300 species of birds.

Current management

The exportation of wild Blue-fronts has been banned in all countries except Argentina, where so many chicks and adults are being legally captured and exported every year that their populations are potentially being threatened. From 1983 to 1991 approximately half a million Blue-fronted Amazons were authorized by the Argentinean government to be collected for the pet trade. This so-called "off take" peaked when about 75,000 Blue-fronted Amazon permits were granted in 1985 alone.

After a four-year total ban (1992 through 1995), an experimental management plan was launched in 1996. From that, a long term management plan was created which is still being followed today. Currently this plan involves the capture of chicks and adults under specific rules (such as harvesting all-but-one chick from a nest) and authorizes the extraction of more than 5,000 parrots each year.



Photo: Angel Nuevo Gonzalez

However, this management plan lacks scientific support. No exhaustive research has been conducted about Blue-fronted Amazon biology and as a result very little is known. Thus, most of the rules and principles of the management plan are arbitrary. The current number of chicks and adults harvested each year could have an important impact on Argentina's Blue-fronted Amazon population.



Photo: Igor Berkunsky

The Argentinean government's management plan for Blue-fronted Amazons allows harvesting all-but-one-chick from a nest, a plan that can only be assessed with thorough study of the species' biology.



Chicks are weighed and measurements are taken of the tarsus, wing, and head regularly until fledging. Feather development is also carefully tracked. This data helps researchers understand how the wild chicks evolve and grow over time.

Amazon ecology

We collected data on different reproductive parameters of Blue-fronted Amazons during four consecutive breeding seasons and evaluated:

- 1 nest survival and main causes of nest failure, and
- 2 egg survival, hatchability and chick survival in successful nests.

We also studied the characteristics of nest cavities, including reoccupation during the following breeding season, and if nest predation and chick removal affected cavity reoccupation.

Blue-fronted Amazons are highly mobile. All but a few of those breeding in Chaco leave their breeding grounds in flocks after their chicks have fledged and the season of fruits and seeds ends (March-April). Where these Chaco Blue-fronts go is unknown, though it is likely that they move northwest, where ripe fruit is still available.

Arriving back at their Chaco breeding grounds in September, Blue-front pairs begin to scope out natural nesting cavities in "Quebrachos" (*Schinopsis* and *Aspidosperma* trees), often re-using their cavity from previous years. Eggs are laid between October and December, and the last chicks are fledged (though not weaned) by mid-February. A clutch consists of an average of 4 eggs though in general two chicks per nest survive to fledge.

In the "Impenetrable" forest, breeding pairs of Blue-front Amazons occur in large

numbers. We work with two groups of nests: "natural nests" located at the Provincial Park (nests without harvest of nestlings), and "harvested nests" in

Photo: Igor Berkumsky



Plastic bags set in 3-litre water bottles serve as an inexpensive parasite removal and sampling system. While appearing disheartened, chicks are unharmed and parasites drop off into the bag for later processing in the laboratory.

neighbouring areas where the local people participate in the national Blue-fronted Amazon harvesting program.

Our team consists of a permanent core group of field technicians and volunteers (mainly biology students) from around the world. Each breeding season we search intensively for nests. We find nests mainly by observing the behaviour of breeding pairs and revisiting cavities used in previous years. Each nest tree is fully measured and described - 30 to 60 nests are studied every year. So far, we have followed 140 nesting attempts in 89 different cavities.

Nests are checked on average every three days until the chicks fledge or the nest fails. Data on the number of eggs laid, egg size, number of chicks hatched and fledged are recorded in order to determine breeding success. In addition, chick growth and development are monitored using regular weights, measurements and diet analysis. The chicks are banded and checked for ectoparasites. Blood samples are taken for DNA analysis and endoparasites. Adults are also banded and censused and blood samples are taken.

We also study the vegetation which allows us to better understand their environment: what kind of forest patches they prefer, how much available food there is, when each kind of fruit is available, how many available cavities there are, etc.



When holes made to harvest parrots are not carefully repaired, precious nest cavities become useless for future breeding.

Significant Results

One of the most common methods for harvesting parrots is to collect some, but not all, of the chicks from the nest. The main argument that supports this approach is that these chicks would not survive or would have a very low probability of survival because in most nests natural brood reduction occurs. Therefore, theoretically, partial chick removal would not greatly affect the number of chicks fledged. However, in most cases this assumption is not based on good quality scientific data.

Our preliminary results show some interesting facts about the "brood reduction" theory on which Argentina's harvesting plan is based. Although, in theory, the removal of chicks does not affect the number of fledglings, we found evidence to the contrary. In practice, chicks are harvested when they are 40 to 50 days old and we now know that at that age, the probability of survival is actually really high. In fact, brood reduction as a result of starvation was relatively uncommon and it was restricted to the first week after hatching. Therefore chicks harvested based on brood reduction theory would most likely have survived to fledge.

Another important observation came from our work, this one about cavity reoccupation. Both legal and illegal harvesting involves making a hole in the tree at the base of the cavity. Those cavities that are not properly repaired (carefully covered with mud which fades away in a few months) are consequently not reoccupied the next breeding season. On the contrary, cavities

that are well covered have reoccupation rates similar to those observed for cavities without chick removal. This means there doesn't seem to be any direct effect of partial removal of chicks on cavity reoccupation. This observation led us to perform educational activities with parrot harvesters to avoid cavity destruction in the future.

Modelling harvest impacts

This is the first long term study of the reproductive ecology of Blue-fronted Amazons in the Chaco region. They are one of the preferred species for the parrot pet-trade and Argentina's local community based national harvest program allows exporting approximately 5,000 young parrots per year. Therefore, the data collected in this study are important to correctly model the impact that chick harvesting could have on parrot populations. Our results indicate that the harvest of chicks does not affect cavity reoccupation (provided that the hole is repaired appropriately). However, because chicks are harvested after natural brood reduction occurs, the harvesting of chicks results in a 50% reduction of fledglings produced per nest. Our results also provide good quality data on the reproductive ecology of some of the most important populations of this species. This allows comparisons with other studies conducted

on the same species elsewhere and in other species of the same genus.

Having completed four breeding season studies, we are beginning to fill in some of the knowledge gaps regarding Blue-fronted Amazon breeding ecology. We still have more seasons to go and many things to find out. Our hope is that with the information we will generate, a review will be made of the harvesting management plan in order to guarantee the long-term survival of our Blue-fronted Amazon population.

Our research is possible thanks to those who have believed in and supported it. We require climbing equipment (ropes, carabineers, ascenders, etc), measuring equipment (i.e.: scales), and many other items such as leg bands, digital cameras, GPSs, laptops, etc. We always need and welcome help and can be contacted at aaestiva2002@yahoo.com.ar.

Thanks to: Our core team - Román Ruggera, Joaquín Carrera, Chantal de la Fournière, Sarah Faegre and Angel Nuevo González, Scientific Argentinean institutions CIC and CONICET, University of La Plata, University of Buenos Aires, The World Parrot Trust, The Amazona Society, Parrot People Fundación and Parrots International, all of our volunteers and the local people (Park rangers and neighbours of the Reserve) that have been helping us during all these years.



Because the eggs are incubated immediately after laying, differences in size become apparent soon after hatching. Although clutches of up to 6 eggs have been recorded, a more typical brood contains 4 chicks with 2, on average, surviving to fledge.



A young Hyacinth must gain strength and skill to open tough palm nuts.

On top of the plateaus or mesas and throughout the wide valleys, three other species of palms hide their trunks underground to protect their hard-won biomass from the dry season fires that are typical of this dry forest. These palms present their leaves and nut bunches at ground level. The rock-hard, golf-ball-sized nuts are the favourite (and almost only) foods of the Hyacinth Macaw.

The Brazilian government created the world's largest protected area of dry tropical forest and named it Parnaíba Headwaters National Park (Parque Nacional das Nascentes do Rio Parnaíba) in this region in 2002. At 1.8 million acres (1/3 the size of New Jersey) this park protects more Hyacinth Macaws, Maned Wolves, and dry tropical forest than any other protected area in the world. To put this in context, the world's wet tropical forests have been 50% destroyed since 1930, while the world's dry tropical forests have been more than 90% cleared for crops and cattle grazing. Consequently this large park is of exceptional conservation importance. The dry tropical forests of central Brazil are by far the most biologically diverse in the world, and this new park is the finest example of this diversity.

Bordering the eastern edge of the park is a private property of 2,500 acres (four square miles) of dry forest and palm-lined streams belonging to 49-year-old Lourival Machado Lima. Since 1995, Mr. Lima has been the field director of a conservation project for Hyacinth Macaws, and currently he is hosting a research team that is conducting the world's first direct study of the reproductive rate of a protected population of Hyacinth Macaws.

Since 1996, Mr. Lima, with support from Charles Munn, the nonprofit Tropical Nature, Kaytee Avian Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Brazilian nonprofit BioBrasil Foundation, and the Minnesota Zoo, have been actively

Turn the other cheek

Hyacinth photo ID's are revealing

By CHARLES MUNN PhD

North of the Brazilian capital of Brasília, at the junction of four states in NE Brazil - Piauí, Tocantins, Maranhão, and Bahia - lies a 50,000-square kilometre (Costa-Rica-sized) wilderness of 1,000-foot-high red-rock cliffs topped by brushy plateaus ranging from 50 acres to 100 square miles in size. Beneath the cliffs roll broad, open valleys covered with dry tropical forests; open woodlands, and golden grasslands dotted with 100-foot-tall *Mauritia* palms. Through the valleys run transparent streams bordered by thicker gallery forests dominated by these same majestic palms, which are favourite food and nest trees of Blue-and-Gold Macaws (*Ara ararauna*), and favourite roost and loafing trees of the world's largest and most spectacular parrots - Hyacinth Macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*).

protecting the macaws of his lands and of the surrounding 100,000 acres of wilderness, most of which is now inside the new park. As part of this protection, he and his team spend an enormous amount of time and effort combing distant valleys for palm nut bunches to put out at a feeding location on his land during the non-nesting season (February through August). Each year since 1996, the flocks have grown larger and larger as the protected location kept the birds from roaming close to towns and small roads where they can be shot (illegally) by subsistence and "sport" hunters. In 2005 and 2006, on some days, the count of macaws at the feeding location was in excess of 100 birds, once reaching 105 individuals, but more typical numbers of birds visiting during a morning or afternoon feeding session is 30-60 birds. Often there are 30-40 birds on the ground all at the same time, all in perfect golden light, all within 9-16 meters of the cameras of visiting photographers, film crews, and select ecotourists.

After years of watching the birds at the feeding spot, Mr. Lima and Mr. Lima's sister-in-law, Edilene Gonçalves Nobre, who is a third-year biology student at the Universidade Estadual do Piauí (UESPI), a local state university, decided to census the individual birds on Mr. Lima's land through digital photography. Accordingly, Ms. Gonçalves spent five months (Feb through April in 2005 and 2006) gathering data about this large population of Hyacinth Macaws. The beaks of Hyacinths (and other large macaws) make them individually identifiable. They display an enormous amount of information as they are full of lines, cracks, gouges, dots, chevron patterns, and innumerable other small irregularities that change very slowly over a number of months. Ms. Gonçalves found that working within the period of 2-3 months, these visible beak irregularities allow you to build up a unique, unambiguous, definitive photo dossier of each and every Hyacinth at the site.



Large flocks of Hyacinths gather at a palm nut buffet provided to give awestruck ecotourists an exceptional view. Close-up photographs taken from the blind allow researchers to identify individual birds within the flock.



Images of both sides of the beak of one individual Hyacinth show a variety of unique features. High quality close-up images of the skin around the eye may prove even more promising than beak images for individual identification. The tiny periorbital dots remain unchanged over time unlike the ever-changing beak.

During the 2005 census, Ms. Gonçalves received major photographic assistance and training in computer manipulation of the beak images from Paula Linsemeier and Brett Backhouse, two generous zoologists from the Adelaide Zoo in Australia. The photo census techniques involved using a 600 mm, f 4 Nikon lens (left over from WCS macaw photo census work in the late 80's in Manu, Peru) with a D70 Nikon camera body to photograph at very close range the beaks of at least 187 Hyacinth Macaws.

In 2005, Ms. Gonçalves was able to photograph both beak sides of a total of 93 birds, six of which turned out to be

recently-fledged birds from the 2004-2005 (September - January) nesting season.

In 2006, after improving her techniques, she photographed both beak sides of 121 different Hyacinth Macaws, seven of which were recently fledged birds from the 2005-2006 nesting season. The marks, lines, and other irregularities on the beaks were always easy to match when the photos were of sufficient quality.

In 2006, another 66 unique left beak sides and 46 right beak sides were not matched left with right. In general, the predominance of perching while showing the left side may reveal a preference related to the best escape routes to safe perches in trees, which were to the left of the birds. These leftover beak sides represent a minimum of 66 other unique birds, and possibly a few more (if some of the 46 leftover right beak sides represented individuals whose left sides were never photographed...). As it is likely that most or even all of the unmatched right sides go with the 66 unmatched left sides, we assume that the population of birds in the 2006 season was a minimum of 121+66, or 187. Now that Ms. Gonçalves has refined and improved her techniques further, it should be possible to match almost all beak sides to achieve an even more definitive count in the upcoming 2007 post-nesting season (Feb through July).

In both years, the new fledglings were easy to detect by their habit of fluffing their head feathers, flipping their wings (part of typical begging by fledglings), and by their relatively smooth beak sides when

compared with the adults. They also showed less angular, more rounded, slightly smaller head profiles as a result of their less muscled skulls. They will build up jaw muscles quickly over the first few weeks post fledging.

Mr. Lima's team of macaw guards (who protect not only his land, but also more than 100,000 acres of the most vulnerable, most wildlife-rich parts of the national park) know of approximately 12 nests of Hyacinth Macaws within a radius of 20 miles of Mr. Lima's property, but so far, there has been no regular photography of the birds at their nests to test whether the same birds nest every year in particular cliff cavities. In most cases, such photography would be difficult, as the distance from lens to nest cavity would be too great to permit good definition of the beak lines and cracks. In practice, Mr. Gonçalves discovered that reliable, usable results for the beak photos were obtained when the birds were in good light (not back-lit) and at a distance of 8-18 meters (25-60 feet) from the lens. Typically, most of the birds near the blind on Mr. Lima's land regularly were within this distance and could be photographed for the beak survey.

When Ms. Gonçalves compared the beaks of all the birds from the 2005 census to those of the 2006 census, she noticed that a number of them appeared quite similar but were not identical. In order to determine if similar looking beak sides were really the same bird whose beak had changed from one year to the next, an accessible subset



Charles Munn (left) and Lourival Lima have worked together for years to protect and study the Hyacinth Macaws on the Lima family's land.

of birds needs to be monitored year round. By taking new photos every 2-4 weeks the very gradual changes in the beak patterns could be monitored throughout the year. As we do not foresee being able to carry this out in 2007, we inquired about possible ways to use skin wrinkles around the base of the lower mandible or around the eye to match birds from year to year without having to follow the slow but steady changes in their beak cracks.

Mr. Carlos Yamashita, the outstanding Brazilian field biologist, suggested a novel approach based on the yellow skin characteristic of Hyacinths. He advised us to try to photograph from even closer range and to study the dots of raised skin around the eyes of the Hyacinths within two or three millimetres of the eye itself. Ms. Gonçalves starting testing this idea in 2006, and she believes that Mr. Yamashita may be correct, in that the dots around the eyes seem to be irregularly distributed around the clock face, as it were, and also showed certain unchanging angles. In 2007, we hope to use these dots to try to build up an "eye ring dot dossier" and match the eye ring dots to the beaks. Then in 2008 we will check to see if the dots allow us to test whether beaks that look quite similar from year to year are in fact the same birds. In practice, Ms. Gonçalves found that, if light conditions were good, she could photograph these small periorbital dots well with the 600 mm lens from distances up to 14 m (45 feet) though the closer the better.

All these techniques rely simply on good lenses and good photographic technique

combined with painstaking sorting and comparison of the images. Using these straightforward techniques systematically, we might soon be able to monitor a population of individually identifiable Hyacinths year round at these feeding spots, and maybe even some birds at selected, more accessible nests. Furthermore, in the high season for these feeding flocks (February through July), we might be able to detect rare cases of natural deaths by seeing a particular bird show up over and over again without its mate. When the mate does not appear again during the season, we would assume that it has died, for it seems unlikely that a bird, even if suddenly divorced, would stop coming to the feeding location.

Another particularly useful application of this beak photo technique would be to try to figure out if the same Hyacinths nest in the same low, eminently photographable, traditional tree cavities in the Brazilian Pantanal year after year, because, surprisingly, no reliable data exist to date to address even this most basic question.

Interesting, the 2006 figure of only seven fledglings out of a minimum of 187 is a very, very low recruitment rate. We don't believe we have missed other fledglings among the 187 birds in the 2006 season, but we would like to redouble our efforts in 2007 to make sure that there is no possibility of undercounting fledglings. Because the images were analysed a bit differently in 2005, we are not yet sure of the recruitment rate for that season or how it compares to 2006. Fortunately, in the



Photo: Lin Inamishi

Wild Hyacinths may take up to 6 minutes to open a single palm nut.

future, the photo analysis should be able to proceed with much greater efficiency now that these techniques have been further refined.

We believe that this direct count of fledglings in a large population of wild Hyacinths is a first and we hope to extend this work to allow us to understand population dynamics in this population and also among other individually recognizable macaws around the Americas.

Persons wishing to participate in the daily photo census of the Hyacinths on Mr. Lima's land should contact the World Parrot Trust or Ms. Gonçalves edilenegnobre@hotmail.com.

For those wishing just to photograph these amazing birds for fun please contact Tropical Nature Travel at liz@tropicalnaturetravel.com. The tours offered by Tropical Nature Travel to this dry forest region offer some of the best wildlife viewing and photography in Brazil.



Photo: Joana Eckles



A group of Hyacinths eating their favourite food, where the palms present their leaves and nut branches at ground level.

British vets back ban



By SEAN WENSLEY BVSc MSc MRCVS, UK Vet. Surgeon

In May 2006 the British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF) invited me to give a talk entitled "Welfare Concerns in Parrots" at the Foundation's annual Discussion Forum in London. The Foundation's mission statement is to "improve the welfare of all animals through veterinary science, education and debate" and the Forum is attended by representatives from various animal welfare organisations. This was a prime opportunity to draw attention to the unacceptable welfare conditions endured by parrots in the international wild bird trade, and to raise awareness of the welfare problems that I was seeing all too frequently in pet parrots in companion avian veterinary practice. The Forum was also an opportunity to attempt to persuade the BVA to back a permanent ban on the import of wild-caught birds into the European Union.

The BVA had renewed their interest in the bird trade in response to a case of H5N1 avian influenza at a UK quarantine facility where imported wild birds were being held. As *PsittaScene* readers are likely aware, this case, in October 2005, led to the temporary ban on the import of wild birds into the EU, and to the UK government ordering an independent review of avian quarantine (The Dimmock Report). The BVA discussed the trade at its Council meeting a few months later, and supported welfare arguments favouring a permanent trade ban. Fears were raised, however, that a ban might be difficult to police and that it might drive the trade underground, increasing the risk of imported disease like avian 'flu (because quarantine would be bypassed).

I was concerned that both the BVA and the Dimmock Report had suggested that there is an inverse relationship between legal and illegal trade - i.e. as legal trade falls, so illegal trade rises - when there is no evidence to support this. On the contrary, research conducted in the years following the US ban on wild bird imports (the 1992 Wild Bird Conservation Act) gave evidence to suggest that the opposite was true, as illegal trade dropped significantly following the Act. I was keen that this should be made clear in my presentation at the Forum, and also that delegates should be left in no doubt of the suffering and mortality experienced by birds in trade.

My presentation at the Forum was 7 days before a decision was to be made on whether the temporary ban should be extended, dropped or made permanent. I thanked the AWF for inviting me to speak at such a key time and urged the audience to consider action with a 7 day deadline in mind.

My talk incorporated the 3 major areas of concern outlined in the EU Wild Bird

Declaration which calls for a permanent ban on imports of wild birds in to the EU on the grounds of:

- 1 Infectious disease risk (e.g. avian 'flu)
- 2 Species survival (the trade endangers species because the birds are taken from the wild faster than they can reproduce), and
- 3 Animal welfare

Given the nature of the event, greatest

“The BVA's position will not, by itself, spell the end for the EU trade in wild-caught birds, but it is a powerful voice to feed in to imminent decision-making meetings that will determine the trade's future.”

attention was given to animal welfare, and I outlined welfare concerns from the point of capture, through dealers, exporters, international transit, and quarantine in the importing country. I began by describing capture methods, which include spring-loaded netting of flocks attracted to tethered call birds, and the use of "bird lime" - an adhesive applied to branches which sticks to parrots' feathers when they alight. Trappers, dealers and exporters, I explained, may all hold the birds at facilities where pre-export mortality is estimated to be 40-66%. This is attributable to poor handling, inadequate provision of food and water, hypothermia, inadequate ventilation, infectious disease outbreaks and aggression. Before arriving at pet shops, I told delegates, approximately 6 out of 10 wild-caught parrots will have died.

I raised my concerns about the unfounded belief that a rise in illegal trade following a permanent trade ban would be "inevitable" and I argued that a permanent ban would

be easier to police than the current situation, because a "no birds allowed" policy (with necessary exceptions) is easily enforced by border officials and does not require training in the identification of a large number of similar-looking bird species. I also stressed that the influential Dimmock Report only focused on the disease aspect of the trade, because it was written in response to the avian 'flu outbreak. The Report did not address the serious conservation or welfare concerns.

As I had hoped, my presentation prompted a degree of discussion and concern, and it was with tense anticipation that I followed events at the BVA in the following weeks and months. I was invited to contribute to another Council paper on the issue of wild bird imports and the subject was once again considered at a BVA Council meeting in July 2006. I was delighted to read a report on that meeting in the *Veterinary Record*, 10 days later, which stated: "The Council strongly supported

a permanent ban on the importation of wild-caught birds".

Within weeks the BVA published a position statement, accompanied by a press release (see *PsittaScene Vol 18 No 3*), outlining their views on the importation of captive live birds and calling for a permanent wild bird

import ban. I was not, of course, solely responsible for this fantastic result, but I was extremely grateful to the BVA AWF for having given me the opportunity to raise awareness of this issue at such a critical time. I was also extremely grateful to Dr Jamie Gilardi, Director of the World Parrot Trust, for assistance whilst I was researching for my presentation.

The temporary ban has now been extended until the end of December 2006. The BVA's position will not, by itself, spell the end for the EU trade in wild-caught birds, but it is a powerful voice to feed in to imminent decision-making meetings that will determine the trade's future. It is important that the BVA position is communicated to decision-makers, and I have been pleased to continue to liaise with Dr Gilardi and the World Parrot Trust to consider effective ways in which this might be achieved.

The BVA has made the right decision. Let's hope, for the birds' sake, that the EU will do the same.



Think outside the (donation) box

Wouldn't it be fun to be one of those rare individuals with the means to help all your favourite causes with substantial monetary donations every year? These donors are the wonderful exception but not the rule. At the World Parrot Trust most of our donations come in small increments by many valued supporters. Most people lament that they simply can't give more. Luckily, more and more creative ways of giving seem to arise everyday, often coming from our supporters themselves.

Photo: Will Campbell



Biking for the birds

Bikers, Runners, Movers and Shakers take note! If you are up for a challenge consider this... A few years ago, WPT member Karen Poly and 2 friends embarked on an ambitious biking journey "for the birds". They covered 473 miles from San Francisco to Los Angeles, California in 8 days and raised well over \$4,000 in pledges to benefit the World Parrot Trust. A young James Rosindell also participated in a sponsored bike ride as well as other creative activities in support of WPT. Marie Pope and Eleanor McMahon each entered a sponsored run and collected £120 and £300 respectively. Another innovative young lady, Lucie Lim, organised a sponsored skip at her school.

Car talk and cameras too

Long-time member Lacy Hartford and her husband Chris recently donated their car to WPT. We quickly sold the car on eBay to benefit the Trust. Lacy and Chris are just the most recent visionary supporters to link used cars and parrot conservation. Scott Johnson wasn't even a Trust member when he contacted us a few years back with a zippy little red sports car to donate. Of course, WPT Director Jamie Gilardi had to do some essential test driving upon delivery but he did promptly list (and sell) this car on eBay too.

Other quality items can be used or sold as well. You may be familiar with Loretta Erickson and Mike Bowles fabulous Amazon photos (see Parrots in the Wild - May and August 2005). In addition to making their gorgeous photos readily available for *PsittaScene*, Loretta and Mike have also donated cameras and accessories to WPT, not once but twice. Some of this high quality equipment went to Brazil to

assist our field crew working on Red-browed Amazon and other items were sold online.

It doesn't have to be a hot red sports car or top notch camera gear. If you or a friend has a car, boat, camera, computer, etc. (in good condition please) contact us and we'll happily discuss the possibility of donation and resale. Under certain circumstances these donations work quite well.

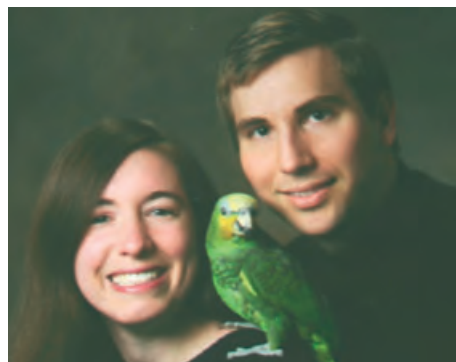
Small (quality!) items can be worthwhile donations too. We received boxes of items such as candle holders, vases and notebooks from an antique dealer in London and we hope to hold a raffle at Paradise Park (UK) with these and additional items we have gratefully received over the years.



Photo: WPT

Give when you sell!

We recently discovered a group called MissionFish that not only makes it very economical and efficient for us to sell these donated items on eBay but also opens up a whole realm of gifting for you. MissionFish allows you to sell ANYTHING on eBay and designate a portion of the proceeds (up to 100%) for the Trust. You simply register



Lacy and Chris Hartford, with their pet Amazon, donated a car to WPT.



Photo: WPT

Roseate Cockatoo 'Billy' and her friends, collect donations at Paradise Park.

on www.missionfish.org one time as a "Community Seller" and thereafter when you list something on eBay, you select World Parrot Trust and choose the % of the sale you would like to come to us. They take care of the rest for a small fee which keeps them afloat as a non-profit.

Cell phone junkie?

Do you have 3 old cellular phones on the shelf and a new one on the way? Do you always need the latest model with the coolest new features? Great! Send us your old cell phones (even if they're broken). Not only do these addictive little devices contain potentially hazardous waste, they also have pieces and parts that can be recycled. In great entrepreneurial fashion, there is a company (Ecophones) that has found a way to squeeze a profit from old phones and pass it along to charities, while properly disposing of hazardous materials therein. In the USA, send your used cell phones and batteries to Glenn Reynolds (see page 19).

Share sharing (in the US)

So, you have a stock or mutual fund that has done very well... now what? You cringe at the federal and capital gains taxes you'll face if you sell. But, did you know that you can avoid those taxes, get an income tax deduction (full market value) AND help parrots by donating your shares to WPT? You may be able to make a much larger contribution and as a non-profit we don't pay taxes on the gain. Brilliant! One part of our crazy tax system that actually works!

Ink jetters

Can you believe how quickly those ink jet printer cartridges run out! It's criminal really. It's a good thing we can get paid for those too. No laser or toner cartridges please (TIP: If the cartridge is larger than the palm of your hand it is not an ink jet cartridge).

*. In the US, send your used ink jet cartridges to Glenn Reynolds.

- *. In the UK contact Karen or Michelle for a FREEPOST envelope to mail your used cartridges (not EPSON).
- *. Elsewhere send cartridges directly to the UK office.

Jet setters

With all the airlines going into bankruptcy negotiations aren't you worried your frequent flyer miles will just evaporate some day soon? Poof! Gone! We have the perfect solution - donate your miles to WPT! Kevin Kendall of Marietta Georgia recently donated enough miles for a transatlantic flight! We can save valuable project funds by using your donated miles to get to conferences, field projects and meetings.

Got skills?

Although with all your parrots - or even just one or two "spoiled" ones - we can't imagine how some of you do anything else, we do realize you have skills and interests beyond parrots. Maybe some of your talents or your workplace resources could benefit the Trust. For example, Kevin Kendall (our air miles donor) came through for us again when he donated the printing of 1,000 of our popular "No Imports" window stickers.

Photo: WPT



Marilyn Handscomb and her creative friends each stitched one bird on this unique needlepoint and passed it on. They then kindly donated it to the Trust. It is now framed and ready for purchase from the UK office.

Charity 101

Bear in mind that the US is not the only country that offers tax deductions for donations. In the UK, you have Gift Aid. You donate to the World Parrot Trust and the government kicks in a bit as well. Surely there are as many charity laws as there are nations supporting the Trust. There are also many ways to give. We appreciate your creative fundraising ideas as just another manifestation of your generosity and caring for parrots.



EU bird cards: Keep 'em coming

In preparing for upcoming meetings in Brussels about the future of the bird trade we were pleasantly surprised when asked, "Why did all those beautiful bird cards stop coming?" This was music to our ears since, quite honestly, we had a little trepidation in making our bold request of you to write (*PsittaScene Vol 18 No 2 p2*). A deluge of letters thanking the EU Commissioner for his decision to temporarily end bird imports, made due to Flu, seemed like a good idea. But could it backfire on us? Well, apparently it did not. You made a big impression and we thank you. And, since there is still much discussion on the issue there's still time to participate. Please, if you haven't already sent Commissioner Kyprianou a card, take a moment to express your appreciation for the millions of birds that have already been spared in the year since that fateful decision was made. Your card will be a reminder that citizens the world over are paying attention and are calling for the trade in wild birds to come to a permanent end.



Mr Markos Kyprianou
Commissioner for Health & Consumer Protection
European Commission
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

Eco-tour - Feb 15-21 2007 Rancho Los Ebanos, Tamaulipas, Mexico,

WPT member Marie Digatano of Vista de Pájaro Eco-tours sent this announcement:

We begin in Harlingen, TX at the famous refuges of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and proceed to Los Ebanos, a fantastic ranch on the Gulf Coast of Tamaulipas, Mexico, where parrot watching is awesome! We'll thrill to see 3 sympatric Amazona species, *oratrix*, *autumnalis*, *viridigenalis*.

- Clean, comfortable cabanas, tasty local cuisine, plenty of time for relaxing
- Excellent value at \$1,199 including incredible, guided bird viewing, room/board but not airfare (return to Harlingen, Texas) tips, or restaurants on the road.
- Limited to a maximum of 7. Reserve by December 1.
- SPECIAL OFFER: Groups of 3 - 7 receive \$50 each discount.

Make a difference by your travel choices! Your dollars and enthusiasm encourage preservation of critical habitat! See them "en el monte," in the wild! Join us for an unforgettable trip.

www.vistadepajaro.com

763-315-1749



Not doing enough for your parrot? Get creative!

By KAREN WINDSOR, Foster Parrots

Our position on parrots as pets has been well established nationally. While we will continue to advocate for parrots as wild animals, the fact is that millions of parrots live in people's homes and many millions more will be born into captivity in the years to come. A large percentage of captive birds live discontented lives in uninspired environments that often result in incompatibility issues between parrots and their people. If we are going to keep birds, it is important that we put the effort into keeping them well, and learn to provide sustainable and creative quality care that will result in harmonious relationships and parrots that are as well adjusted and as happy as possible in their captive situation.

Because I work in rescue and field dozens of calls each week from people wanting to surrender their birds, I am continually reminded that these wild animals, sooner or later and in general, tend not to succeed as captive creatures. The top two reasons why parrots are surrendered to rescues are

- 1 guilt on behalf of the humans forced to confine these highly social and intelligent flighted creatures, and
- 2 aggression on the part of confined and frustrated parrots.

If a person's decision to buy or adopt a parrot were based on the quality of the environment they were realistically able or willing to provide, there would be far fewer guilty people walking around in need of unloading irate parrots. And if parrot guardians were to channel their guilt productively and creatively, they might make the improvements necessary to help them keep their birds.

Territoriality and the creative cage environment

Even if one buys the biggest macaw-sized cage on the market it is still an inadequate environment for an animal born to inherit the skies. But can birds like their cages? Of course they can. Territorial by nature, birds take possession of their cages. But where some cages are homes, havens and safety zones, others are prisons. Sometimes an open door is all it takes to make the difference. We need to be creative in order to provide environments that are stimulating, engaging and natural in their appeal to the wild animals we live with.

In order to protect them (and sometimes others) from harm, most captive parrots are confined in one way or another and for varying periods of time. Consequently, cage or enclosure interiors are of paramount



Photo: Karen Windsor

If you're not lucky enough to find a hollow log, try providing a cardboard box for your parrot to explore.

importance. A variety of perches must be provided for climbing, roosting, and foot conditioning. Natural branches with both rough and smooth bark are ideal for interior landscaping. Cloth, sisal and hemp ropes can be enjoyed as perches, swings or simulated vines.

There should be plenty of wooden toys for chewing, but these need not be store bought. While the colours of retail toys are nice, the price tags can often be hefty for an item that will potentially be reduced to splinters in a matter of days - or even hours. Blocks of untreated pine can be drilled and strung on ropes in order to provide affordable chew toys.

One of the most intriguing diversions one can provide for their parrot is a cardboard box. Better yet - a box inside a box. This offers a bird the opportunity to engage in the innately compelling activity of excavating a nesting hole. If you are fortunate enough to come across a hollow log, this is the ultimate parrot accommodation item. Knotted balls of shoe-lace strings provide parrots with chew toys that are curiously like feather sheaths. Rolls of paper calculator tape are happily shredded and unravelled. Quaker parrots (*Myiopsitta manachus*) are industrious nest builders! Provide them with handfuls of twigs that can be woven through bars and grates. Cockatoos love puzzles. Let them dismantle toys made of nuts, bolts and screws. Contrary to the impression traditionally offered by the pet trade, parrots are not "easy-to-care-for" companions. They are arguably among the most difficult. Living with a parrot requires observational skills, a lively imagination and an overall extended investment of mental energy if you are to provide activities and distractions that will keep that parrot engaged.



Goffin's Cockatoos enjoy their bird room outfitted with natural branches, chew toys, ropes and swings.

Photo: Marc Johnson

At the Foster Parrots sanctuary where most of the parrots are free flighted, we witness birds trying to put themselves into cages all the time. Cages that have been vacated become coveted territory or intriguing domains to explore. As many times as we've witnessed happy birds putting themselves into cages, we've witnessed frustrated, hostile birds settle down and become significantly less aggressive when they've been freed from consistent confinement or, more importantly, when they've been given the freedom of choice.

Atticus is a Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*), approximately 15 years old, who has been a Foster Parrots resident for 5 years. A decidedly solitary bird, Atticus lived for a time in a large floor to ceiling cage. He wasn't an aggressive fellow by any means and really did not require caging. He simply liked his cage. His door was always open. However, when we took in a pair of wild and potentially dangerous Amazons that did require confinement, it became necessary to evict Atticus. He spent the next several weeks trying to figure out how to get back into the cage. We offered him a very attractive, mid-sized, dome-topped cage placed in a premium spot in front of the largest window, but he didn't want that cage. Finally we dragged a monstrosity of a cage out for Atticus. Eight feet high and nearly 5 feet deep and wide, it sits squarely in the middle of the floor. His door is always open and he comes and goes at will but mostly he sits contentedly triumphant in his giant cage.

On the other hand, consider JoJo, a Moluccan Cockatoo (*Cacatua molucensis*). Having been confiscated from drug lords, warehoused for several years, then passed through a couple of homes before landing at the Foster Parrots sanctuary, JoJo had become cage-bound. We placed his large cage in a prominent area where two Umbrella Cockatoos and another Moluccan lived freely, and where staff and volunteers passed by frequently or stopped to chat and play with birds. We never closed JoJo's door. People would stop and talk to him and reach in to pet him. He was able to observe the relationships between people and other birds from his safe place without feeling either isolated or threatened. He was provided with ample hanging toys to play with, chew on - or hide behind. He was always welcome to join the activity of the room, and in his own time he began to venture out - just a little, at first. He would stick a head out the door, then a head and a half a body. In time he could perch for longer and longer periods on top of his open door. He was liberally praised whenever he was interactive. Soon he began to swing upside down and to play. When he exercised his massive voice, he didn't seem to do it to solicit attention, but

for the joy of hearing himself. No one ever yelled at him for it. A year after his arrival JoJo would finally leave his cage altogether and march around comically or hop about like a bunny. Preferring women, he began to trust a few people and could be found snuggling in a lap every now and then. He also found comfort and community with his fellow cockatoos. Eventually JoJo would seek out the haven of his cage, but it was always his choice, and this power helped build his confidence. The key to drawing him out was to situate him in the most active room in the facility where interaction with people and other cockatoos would strengthen his social skills, yet he always had the option to retreat.

Most of us may lack the financial resources to construct elaborate outdoor aviaries. That should not impede us from creating indoor environments that can vastly improve a bird's quality of life. Start by finding a way to simply open the cage door. Spare rooms or neglected sun porches can be converted into dedicated bird space. Inexpensive wood-framed screened doors can be installed to keep bird rooms safe without completely cutting them off from the rest of the home. Even a corner of a busy family room can be transformed to fulfil a parrot's needs.

At Foster Parrots most birds live freely on "hanging frames" - natural wooden branches that are joined together in interesting configurations and suspended from the ceiling. Food and water cups and a wide array of toys are attached. Sometimes these frames are suspended directly above a bird's cage, providing a whole new

dimension to the living arrangement and an opportunity for the birds to climb and gain height. Sometimes the frames are hung to act as "cages without bars". While we generally discourage wing-clipping, some people do find it necessary. Birds with clipped wings are unable to leave their frames, but enjoy a more natural arrangement of living up high on branches. Interestingly, many of our flighted parrots become possessive of their frames and tend to like to stay on them.

Social behaviour and routine

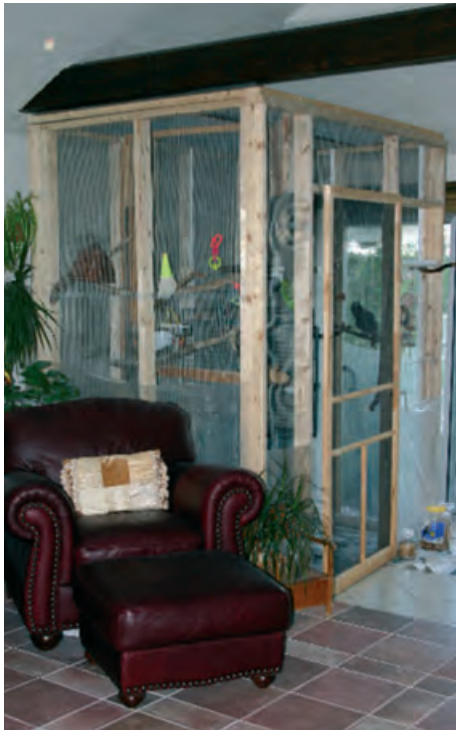
It is the highly social nature of parrots that makes them attractive as companions. They are capable of transferring essential bonding behaviour to people, which, in a captive situation, is an arrangement preferable to social isolation. And although we love our parrots and hope to do everything in our power to make them happy, we are not birds. We are humans, our primary bonds are with other humans and our lives are full of responsibilities and diversions that constantly tear us away from our parrots.

Parrots are superior in their ability to adapt to our inadequacies as companions. Still, we have found that by establishing a dependable routine for our birds, we minimize the stress and confusion of a haphazard world. The result, very often, is a parrot that feels less compelled to assert control over us through excessive vocalization, and a parrot more at ease with its world.



A hanging play frame of natural branches with toys and dishes attached can be a coveted environment away from (or even in place of) a cage.

Photo: Karen Windsor



A floor to ceiling enclosure built in an underused corner can be an inexpensive way to give your bird more freedom and enrichment.

Get your parrot up and out of "bed" every morning at the same time. The breakfast ritual of preparing food, cleaning a cage and loving a parrot should be something your bird can depend on everyday.

Presumably, you must go off to work or run the errands of the day. Your parrot should know that next comes several hours of having to entertain himself within his confines. Playing a radio or keeping him in front of a large window where he can observe wild birds feeding and interacting can become an essential part of a parrot's day. When you come home from work, it's bird time. Take your bird out. Play with him and make a big deal over what a wonderful bird he is. He should be able to anticipate and count on this special one-on-one time every day.

Direct interaction time can be followed by several hours of having your bird out with you and the family, but not necessarily attached to your body. Have a play stand or hanging frame in the areas of the house where you spend greater periods of time or in rooms that tend to be central to overall family activity. A parrot needs to have a sense of involvement in the flock dynamics. At dinner time after the cooking has been completed, parrots can be welcomed into the kitchen and involved in the dinner ritual. Parrots are social eaters. They are apt to eat better and accept healthier foods when those are the foods being shared by the family flock. They take greater enjoyment in eating out of your hand than out of a lonely dish. When the day has drawn to an end, it should be "bed time for birds" at the same

time every night. Keeping in mind that parrots require 10 to 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, we recommend that a parrot's sleep area be located away from the area of general family activity, in a room that can be made quiet, dark and peaceful. Your parrot's natural inclination is to tuck himself away to "roost" each evening, so a "sleeping cage" quickly establishes itself as an expected and desirable finish to a parrot's day.

Knowing precisely what to expect from us and knowing the behaviour that is expected of them gives a parrot just as much a feeling of control over its life as its ability to decide whether it wants to be inside the cage or out. Old aviculture used to dictate asserting dominance and control over a parrot through wing clipping, consistent caging and keeping them perched at a height lower than one's head. But parrots are not dogs and they do not respond to subjugation. Their wild and instinctual nature must be acknowledged, accommodated and respected. Make a cage a compelling and engaging environment by providing boxes, chew toys, and rope vines. Then open the cage door. Let your bird out

Give him an aviary or bird-proof a room and let him fly. Install hanging frames made of natural branches way above your head and let him be up high. Feeling guilty because you're at work all day and your bird is home alone? Birds belong in flocks. Have more than one bird. Two or more birds are not twice as much work as one bird. They're half as much work.

We force our parrots to live in our world, and then we don't understand why they scream, beg, become aggressive, become phobic, feather pluck, self-mutilate... Sometimes it is necessary to force ourselves to live in their world before we can understand how to address the issues of parrot guardianship creatively and help ease their experience with us.

Knowing that, overall, people tend to fail as companions to parrots; we do not advocate parrots as pets. However, we are highly motivated to help people understand the needs of their birds and to improve the quality of care they are able to deliver. We want people to keep their birds. Here at the sanctuary we are short on space.



Get creative! Give your parrot an inexpensive and entertaining treat by filling a paper tube with surprises and simply folding over the ends of the tube to close.

A Tribute to Avril Barton (1942 -2006)

SAM WILLIAMS

It is with great sorrow that we bring the news of Avril Barton's death. In her last months Avril battled with deteriorating health. She endured her illness with great courage and good humour until Sunday the 3rd of September when she sadly passed away. Avril was 64 and a proud lady of Yorkshire, England.

Avril's passion for parrots was life-long and her accumulated knowledge and understanding was vast. She remained interested and open to new ideas, and was enthusiastic to share her knowledge with others. Avril regularly brought parrots into the limelight through radio and television, and her writing appeared in numerous publications. Her motivation was incredible and she was fearless in fighting for what she believed in. Avril would give up hours of her time to help people and their parrots and her efforts to improve the lives of pet parrots were truly honourable.

Widely known and well liked Avril spoke for various audiences. She would always attend these occasions with her "partner in parrots" Eileen Cole. With Avril's experience in pet birds and Eileen's with breeding parrots they could tell some entertaining stories.

In 2000 Avril began helping the Zuni Indian tribe in New Mexico, North America, by sending moulted macaw feathers for their religious and ceremonial costumes. *PsittaScene* readers may remember in 2002 Avril accepted an invitation to visit the tribe. She later wrote that the trip had been "the most incredible 10 days of my life". Her US trip led to her visiting a school in Rome where she talked about the Zunis and conservation, as she did with many of her local schools.

Avril was one of the first World Parrot Trust members and she promoted WPT efforts wherever she went. On World Parrot Day 2004 Avril stationed herself at her local bird garden Lotherton Hall and shared her passion and knowledge with visitors. Avril was a remarkable lady and her continual motivation and passion to help parrots was an inspiration to many.

She will be dearly missed.

LOUISE PROWSE

Avril was larger than life - a loyal friend and for some a worthy adversary. She had a wealth of knowledge about pet parrots which she loved to share.

Although I knew Avril was seriously ill, I still felt a huge sense of loss when I was told of her death. As the days go by I realize how much a part of my life Avril had become. She was the one person that I could rely on to tell me, honestly, what she thought about various issues, especially related to parrots.

Parrots had become her life and everything else, with the exception of her cat Eric, took second place. She worked tirelessly both in and out of the media for any cause that she felt was honest and just. Avril debated the why's and wherefore's with many, often in heated exchanges, over the years. Still, she was never too resolute to listen to the other side. Although some may have found her abrupt and may not have liked what she said they could not fail to have a great deal of respect for her. She could be totally relied upon to do her utmost to help any parrot she knew to be in distress.

Avril was one of the first members of the World Parrot Trust and remained a stalwart supporter. She raised money for the Trust in so many ways over the years and never missed an opportunity to sing its praises and advise people to join. She gave her time at meetings, seminars and talks for a donation to the charity.

Avril was a great campaigner and always stood up for what she knew to be right. The parrot world has indeed lost a great ambassador and I have lost a valuable and truly valued friend. I miss her telephone calls, which at times were lengthy, at times came at inopportune moments. I so, so, wish I could be interrupted by her now.

I shall miss you Avril - the world is an emptier place without you.

MICHAEL REYNOLDS

These tributes express the thoughts of all of us at the Trust about Avril, but I would just like to add a brief personal note. Avril's straight thinking and straight talking was a joy to experience, and marked her out as a true friend of the parrots. She was completely devoted to the birds that shared her life, and went out of her way to help many others with parrot problems, being both inventive but always practical. Her energy in promoting parrot conservation and welfare was boundless.

Avril will indeed be much missed.



Avril teaching the younger generation about the needs of captive and wild parrots.

EILEEN COLE

My Friend, Avril.

Avril Barton devoted her life to the conservation of parrots in the wild and the well-being of pet parrots. She bought her first parrot, a female Spectacled Amazon, in Leeds market 34 years ago. Sam, as she called her, has been with her ever since and was soon joined by other feathered friends.

My friendship with Avril grew from giving her a lift home from Parrot Society meetings, to driving her to various functions. These outings were always entertaining. In the early days

of our friendship I discovered that she didn't read maps. She was always very confident of the route until the first wrong turn - "I could have sworn it was down here, but just keep heading over that way..." - and we'd stop and I'd consult the map or we'd 'keep heading over that way'. Things improved more recently when we got 'Maud', a satellite navigation system which she named and grew to love.

Wherever we went Avril would be on the lookout for little gifts for the children of the International School in Rome that she had once visited, or for friends that came to mind. She was generous of her time, thoughts and efforts.

She was never at a loss for words in any situation and once she took on a task she would spend every spare moment planning it and worrying at it. My 'phone would start ringing several times a day as she ran ideas past me.

How I miss her and what a loss to the motivation of her life - the parrots!

Psitta News

Parrotevents

Parrot Festival 2007

James Gilardi (WPT Director) will be speaking in Houston, USA, January 26-28 2007. See www.parrotfestival.org

The Parrot in Art

A series of spectacular parrot paintings have been lined up for the forthcoming exhibition, *The Parrot in Art: From Dürer to Elizabeth Butterworth*, which opens at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham in the New Year.

The exhibition will be opened on the evening of Thursday 25 January by the world-famous artist, illustrator and parrot-lover Quentin Blake - and one of his own pictures will be featured in the exhibition.

The show runs from 26th January until 29th April 2007, and it will be a huge event in art terms and in parrot terms.

Parrots as portrayed by a huge range of artists from the Renaissance to the present day will be on display, including paintings by Albrecht Dürer, Tiepolo, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the poet Edward Lear (a keen zoological illustrator, as you'll know), Roberts as well as Quentin Blake. The show will culminate in a series of large colourful parrot illustrations by one of the greatest living parrot artists, Elizabeth Butterworth.



Johannes Siegwald Dahl (1827-1902) - *A Monkey stealing Food from a Parrot*, 1865

These paintings and many others will be featured in a glossy and colourful catalogue, available for purchase. The exhibition curator, Professor Richard Verdi, is himself a parrot-lover and owner and WPT member. Professor Verdi is combining his twin passions - art and parrots, for this ground-breaking show, which aims to raise awareness about these colourful, flamboyant, intelligent and fascinating birds.

During the exhibition, there will be a series of lectures on the parrot in art, as well as one day when the show will be brought vividly to life with a visit by many real-life parrots.

www.barber.org.uk

Parrotnews

Blow to UK pet fair traders

Huge pressure is being brought to bear on traders at pet fairs in the UK this week after a government turnaround. Following a judicial ruling (see *PsittaScene Vol 18 No 3*), the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, (Defra) has announced proposed new measures to stop the commercial sale of animals at pet fairs, to be introduced under the Animal Welfare Bill, (AWB). The proposal is receiving widespread support.

While commercial sales of animals will be banned, there will be exemptions in the cases of koi carp, racing pigeons and poultry which will need to be licensed by the local authority.

Ben Bradshaw, Minister for Animal Health and Welfare, said: "I believe that the revised measures on pet fairs, together with our proposals to raise the standards of pet vending generally and the introduction of the welfare offence for companion animals, provide the best protection yet for animals at pet fairs."

Pet fairs that do not involve the sale of animals, or that do involve the sale of animals but not in the course of a business, can continue without the need for a licence.

Liberal Democrat Rural Affairs Spokesperson, Baroness Miller said: "Animal lovers should be pleased with the Government's announcement, only animal abusers will be unhappy. The risks to animal welfare at commercial pet fairs is clear, as are the risks to public health. Many animal welfare groups have campaigned for this for a long time. However, it took a judicial ruling to bring the Government around."

Parrots call chicks by name

In a discovery that is likely to rekindle the debate about language in the animal kingdom, researchers in Germany have discovered that some parrots appear to give their offspring individual names.

Animal behavioural scientists at the University of Hamburg say that spectacled parrotlets use a distinctive call for each of their chicks, with no two chicks being given the same 'name' call.

The small South American parrots also apparently have name calls for their mates.

'The birds very definitely use a particular call exclusively with a particular bird and never for

any other bird,' says Dr. Rolf Wanker, head of the Hamburg University Zoological Institute's behavioural research laboratory.

Source: © ERNEST GILL, Aug 06, 2006 dpa - Deutsche Presse-Agentur

\$3.2m to save controversial parrot

The Howard Government will spend \$3.2 million to ensure the future of the orange-bellied parrot, the rare bird used by Environment Minister Ian Campbell to block a \$220 million wind farm in Victoria.

Senator Campbell said today the funds, to be spent over the next two years, represented the largest federal investment ever in a threatened species.

"The orange-bellied parrot is considered to be one of the world's rarest and most endangered animals, with only about 50 breeding pairs known to exist, which puts it in the same position as other iconic species such as the Giant Panda and Siberian Tiger," he said.

"Very substantially increased Australian Government support will increase important work protecting, enhancing and expanding key habitat across the parrot's range."

Senator Campbell said the parrot faced a number of major threats, including habitat loss and modification, predators, death caused by collision with structures and catastrophes such as storms.

Twice a year, the parrot travels across Bass Strait between breeding areas in Tasmania and its wintering habitat in coastal Victoria and South Australia.

"One of only a very small number of migratory parrots in the world, this bird is a real battler," Senator Campbell said. "Every year it undertakes the ornithological equivalent of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht race - it's every Australian's responsibility to help this bird survive for future generations."

"It is clear that that the future of this bird depends on us doing much more to protect its habitat," Senator Campbell said.

Source: EWIN HANNAN, Aug 06

Turbines moved to protect parrot

FEDERAL Environment Minister Ian Campbell has won a concession from the developer of the Bald Hills wind farm in Victoria, with the company agreeing to move six turbines out of the potential flight path of the orange-bellied parrot.

Senator Campbell blocked the wind farm in April, claiming a threat to the parrot.

The minister has agreed to reconsider the wind farm after legal action by the company. Opponents of the project said yesterday the company's decision was an admission of guilt and showed the original proposal threatened the bird.

The parrot's migratory path is mostly within 2km of the coast. Six of the 52 turbines proposed for Bald Hills are within 2km of the Victorian coast or along the 2km boundary.

A director of Wind Power, Andrew Newbold, told The Australian the decision to move the six turbines....2km line was "definitely" a concession.

The shifting of the turbines and the company's offer to spend \$750,000 on Orange-bellied Parrot recovery programs contradicts claims that the wind farm would have no impact on the bird.

In its new submission to the Government, the company has provided advice from wildlife expert Brett Lane to rebut Senator Campbell's reasons for rejecting the wind farm.

Mr Lane said he was unaware of any record of the parrot within 5km of the proposed wind farm site, and there was no suitable habitat for the bird at the site.

He said the Biosis report used by Senator Campbell to veto the project overestimated the risk of parrots hitting the wind turbines.

Source: *EWIN HANNAN, Sept 06*

Bird species recovery hailed

The first global audit of threatened species has revealed that 16 species of bird that were on the brink of extinction in the mid-1990s have been saved by determined conservation efforts.

The majority of the bird species, ranging from the Norfolk Island green parrot to the Mauritius parakeet, had populations of less than 100 in 1994. Most were tipped for imminent extinction. Yet conservationists said the findings showed that, with international co-operation and adequate funding, they can halt and even reverse a worldwide decline in bird types. But they also warned that governments around the world are still doing too little to save millions of birds from being lost for ever.

Dr Stuart Butchart, author of the report and an expert with the British-based group BirdLife International, said: "These successes show that preventing extinctions is possible, given political will and concerted action.

"We need to scale up our efforts considerably to prevent wholesale biodiversity loss and many more extinctions in the coming decades."

In his study, published in the journal *Oryx*, Dr Butchart looked at 27 species of bird that were classed as Critically Endangered - the highest level of extinction threat - in 1994. The birds were being targeted with conservation efforts in the few places where they were still found.

Source: *MAXINE FRITH, Aug 06*

<http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article1222222.ece>

Echo Parakeet competition

The company Catovair, the local funder of the Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*) program launched a national drawing and naming competition among the Mauritian school children. Three Echo Parakeet chicks were to be named and in order to create awareness about this endemic bird a drawing of the bird in its natural environment was also requested. The competition was very successful, almost 2,000 drawings were received. The winners were:

Sandesh Saddul, Tania Naigum, Emilie Wong Chong and the three names retained for the Echo Parakeet chicks were: Zoliver, Lolita and Bocato.



The Echo Parakeet program is also funded by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, North of England Zoological Society, World Parrot Trust and National Parks & Conservation Services (Mauritius).

Source: *TRAFFIC Bulletin, July 06*

Refugee's incredible journey

Two parrots owned by 15-year-old Tamil refugee Bhovana Nishanthini Lombert mean absolutely everything to her.

So devoted is the teenager to her feathered friends that she was willing to take them and nothing else in the arduous journey by sea from war-torn Sri Lanka to a refugee camp in the south of India.

The birds remained on her shoulders throughout the voyage.

Bhovana is one of about 4,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees who have fled their homes in the north of Sri Lanka because of the increasing number of skirmishes between the army and Tamil Tiger rebels.

The refugees travel across the 30km (18-mile) stretch of sea that separates Sri Lanka from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, crammed into small fishing vessels.

Sometimes there is no room to sit down - let alone carry a pair of parrots - with as many as 20 people standing huddled over their meagre belongings.

On her arrival in India, Bhovana - like other refugees - underwent tough questioning by Indian security agencies.

But Bhovana's entry procedure provided welcome relief in what sometimes can be a tense and bad-tempered bureaucratic exercise.

"I love these birds as much as I love my three brothers and parents. They are part of our family," she said.

Sadie the parrot, at your service

Sadie could well be the only certified service parrot around. Sadie herself is new to the job, officially speaking. Her registration papers and ID card arrived from the Service Animal Registry of America only six weeks ago.

Nevertheless, the 2-year-old Congo African grey parrot has been enrolled in ongoing, on-the-shoulder, on-the-job training with James Eggers of Maplewood, Missouri for more than a year. The work has been a lifesaver for both of them.

Eggers has been diagnosed as bipolar with psychotic tendencies. He suffers from severe depression and potentially dangerous mood swings. Medication helps to control the problem. Sadie controls it without any side effects. Negative side effects, that is.

On the positive side, Sadie is as much Eggers' best friend as she is his service bird. Because Eggers is slightly hearing impaired, Sadie serves partly as a hearing aid. When the phone rings, she automatically says 'Hello,' Eggers says. "When someone is at the door, she asks, 'Who's there?'"

But Sadie's primary service job is to help Eggers "interact with people in a positive way." Because of his illness, that used to be difficult for Eggers. "But all the experiences I have had with people when Sadie has been with me have been very positive," Eggers says.

"Sadie definitely picks up on my moods. When I start having anxiety attacks, I start talking louder, and she tunes into that. She'll say, 'Jim, I love you. You're OK,' or, 'You're gonna be OK.' She'll tell me to relax. She's really pretty amazing," Eggers says.



Even though the Americans With Disabilities Act does not require that service animals be licensed or certified, Eggers felt that registering Sadie with the Service Animal Registry of America would make it easier for him to keep her by his side.

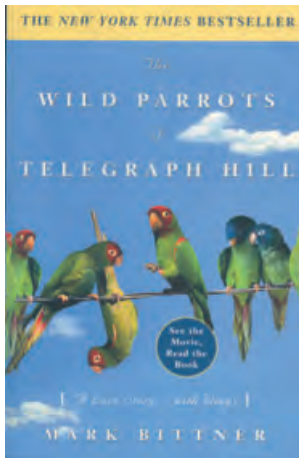
It has. "Before I had her ID card, we could pretty much only go out on the street. Now we can go into places. We can ride the bus. We can go just about anywhere," he says. "I pull out the card automatically and nip any confrontation in the bud."

"Sadie's like an American Express card," Eggers says. "I don't leave home without her."

Source: *SARAH NEWMAN, St. Louis Post-06/10/06*

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/lifestyle/stories.nsf/pets/story/0F7DB0853BFC6C95862571FE007E89A1/>
OpenDocument





The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill

Book Review

By **JAMIE GILARDI**

Author Mark Bittner

We each have our own personal stories about how parrots entered our lives. Every story is unique and these initial encounters often influence how we relate to parrots for many years to come. Mark Bittner's story is extraordinary because it was a flock of wild parrots that entered his life and because they found him in the middle of a large American city.

We, the readers of *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, are lucky for two reasons. First because this chance encounter might not have happened at all. Mark might have discovered squirrels in a park or gulls on the bay, or some other urban wildlife outside his San Francisco door. Instead, it was parrots. And second, with hundreds of thousands of possible humans to choose from in that city, the birds settled upon someone (literally and figuratively) who was willing and capable of sharing this remarkable story in a deeply personal and delightfully honest way.

Incidentally, Mark's story is fodder for any one of several different and genuinely interesting books. It could have been a story about discovering beauty and wildness in a sprawling metropolis, or about the miraculous and thrilling 'taming' of wild animals, or the social insights of living in this parrot society for over a decade. It could have been about how wild parrots helped Mark through a number of personal discoveries and realizations. Without retelling the story, I will say that *Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* is all of these stories and more, all rolled into one engaging and eloquent narrative.

Anyone who has lived with parrots will find a lot of Mark's experiences with the flock to be familiar - sometimes fun and comical and sometimes terribly sad. While his explorations of personal philosophy and his days living out of a VW bus might be less familiar, these adventures are also engaging because of Mark's open, honest, and comfortable writing style.

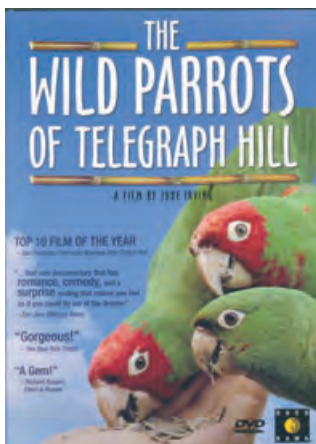
One of the unexpected pleasures for me was how Mark's long relationship with the flock provided a window into the social lives of these birds. As a parrot researcher, I've studied many parrot species in the wild and also many in captivity, but I have never had the window into their personal relationships that Mark experienced by becoming deeply integrated into this flock. Surely wild parrots living in social groups exhibit many, if not all, of the flock politics Mark walks us through with great and respectful attention. But until he did so, we could only guess.

Although not intentionally, Mark's insights might help wild parrot researchers in designing their studies as well as in the interpretation of their results. And for those of us with parrots in captivity, this book holds a wealth of thought-provoking material for pondering basic questions about parrots' choices about their mates, companions, diet, and all other facets of their complex lives.

There are many good reasons for this book's rapid and impressive success, as Mark's story clearly appeals to the broadest of audiences, not just bird lovers or parrot lovers. For readers of the *PsittaScene*, it's a "no-brainer" - read this book - you'll be very glad you did!



Photo: Jim Herd



DVD Review

By **JOANNA ECKLES**

Directed by Judy Irving. (83 minutes)

The DVD version of *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* is not intended as a film version of the book. It is a gem on its own accord. The real treat is being immersed in the sights and sounds of these fabulous birds and getting to know Mark Bittner "in person." While you won't get all of the detailed tracking of individual birds and their relationships over years that you'll enjoy in print, you'll get a genuine glimpse of their lives in the "wilds" of San Francisco and Mark's life as their companion and ambassador. You'll appreciate his gentle nature and unique philosophy, his personal education in parrot biology and his genuine rapport and attachment to the flock. We screened this film at our home for a mixed audience ranging in age from 4 to 45 and it was a hit by all accounts!

The Book and DVD are available on our online store.

Shop WPT for the holidays



Members will find enclosed with their *PsittaScene* a sales catalogue. Another great way to give to the World Parrot Trust is by shopping at our online store. Pick up the Telegraph Hill book and DVD, a shirt, a hat or some cards. Do you have a friend who would enjoy getting *PsittaScene* in 2007? Sign them up as a gift! Or, give a donation to your favourite project for each of those hard-to-buy-for friends and relatives on your list.

Just in!

The wildly popular balata parrot ornaments are purchased directly from carvers in Guyana, creating a sustainable industry to help replace income formerly made by trapping parrots. These flying balata parrot tree hanging ornaments are brand new and just in time for the holidays. A perfect gift for everyone. Purchase singly for \$5/£3 or 5 for \$20/£12 incl p&p.



9cm x 7.5cm with hook on back



The 2007 Parrots at Play Calendar was produced to benefit parrot causes and features wonderful photos and stories of pet birds from around the world. The photos represent the winning entries in the Parrots as Play annual photo contest. Northern Parrots (24parrot.co.uk) kindly donated 50 of these Calendars to the UK office and they are available for £6 incl. p&p. For more information or to join in next year's contest see www.parrots-at-play.org.

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