

# PsittaScene



Michael Reynolds

1931 – 2007



# Psitta Scene

World Parrot Trust  
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[www.brewersgroup.com](http://www.brewersgroup.com)



### from the director

**M**ike Reynolds has always been much more than the founder of the World Parrot Trust. Since he created the Trust in 1989, he has been the inspiration behind virtually everything we have done, as well as the chief supporter, organizer, writer, educator, and speaker for all our work.

Mike's passing is a profound loss to the Trust and all that support it. Yet he's inspired us once again as we've delved deeper into the history of the Trust, and his broader contributions to conservation in general. Well before most of us were even aware of such looming crises - indeed as far back as the 1960's - Mike was already voicing his growing concern over the plight of wild parrots and the desperate need for better care for those in captivity. Over the next forty years, he acted on this concern and vision by not only conceiving and launching the Trust but also, as is evident in the following pages, by inspiring and supporting the efforts of countless others around the world.

At the Trust, we are deeply thankful for all the heartfelt thoughts and contributions we have received in Mike's memory, and the Reynolds family is especially grateful for your many kind condolences. We have included their wishes both on the website and on page 3 here. While we were tempted to devote this entire issue to Mike's life and achievements, we decided to strike a balance between his story and the objects of his devotion - the parrots. It's our sense of how Mike would have wanted it - sharing the issue with Palm Cockatoos and Blue-throated Macaws, two of his all time favorites.

As anyone who was lucky enough to spend time with him knew, Mike was a remarkably charming, witty, and astute gentleman who brought positive enthusiasm to everything he tackled in life. He infused the Trust with this same energy, fueled by his love of and devotion to parrots. We look ahead to the challenges facing these remarkable birds and only hope we can live up to his lifelong dream of saving the parrots, once and for all.

Jamie Gilardi  
Director

### on our covers

**FRONT** Mike Reynolds and friends celebrate the launch of the World Parrot Trust in October 1989. The Daily Mail newspaper featured this special occasion in their Mail on Sunday magazine *YOU*. (c) Richard Ansett

**BACK** Despite their distinctive appearance, charismatic displays and vulnerable status, little is known about the ecology of the Palm Cockatoo. Steve Murphy reports on the first systematic study of this species in the wild and how his findings have implications for their survival. (c) D.Parer & E. Parer-Cook

# END of an ERA

With great sadness, we announce the death of Mike Reynolds, entrepreneur and wildlife campaigner who founded the World Parrot Trust. He died peacefully on Saturday 14th April at his home within Paradise Park, the wildlife sanctuary he created in Cornwall, UK.



Photo: (c) WPT

*Mike Reynolds, founder of Paradise Park wildlife sanctuary, with family and staff in the early days. Paradise Park is now an award-winning visitor attraction in Cornwall, UK, and home to the World Parrot Trust.*

**M**ike established the World Parrot Trust as a means of helping the birds he loved. He bought his first parrot in the 1960's and quickly came to realise that these were captivating, intelligent birds which rarely received the care and attention they needed when kept as pets. At that time he could not have known that parrots would become such a large part of his life, and that his work would have an influence on pet keeping and help secure the future of rare species in the wild.

A private family funeral was held on 20th April. Mike had specified that he should have a coffin made of woven willow, and for jazz to be played. The coffin was decorated with flowers and colourful feathers collected at Paradise Park and his ashes were buried within the Victorian walled garden at the Park.

The family has established the "Mike Reynolds Memorial Fund" and requested that donations are made to the World Parrot Trust instead of floral tributes.

At a later date a party will be held with wine, food and jazz music for family and friends to celebrate his life and say goodbye.

Mike leaves his wife Audrey, children Nick, Helen, Alison and Kate plus four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. He also leaves his wider family of staff at Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust - some having built up the Park and Trust with him during the several decades that they have been employed.



Photo: (c) WPT

## Life and Legacy

### The Ad Man

After serving in the British army, Mike worked in advertising agencies in the early days of commercial television. His most memorable and long lived advertising creation is the Milky Bar Kid. In 1961 Mike led the team which developed this character and wrote the words for the tune which accompanied him though 40 years on television. The Milky Bar Kid has come up often in 'top advertising' lists for the past 4 decades and has recently been re-launched yet again.

### Finding Paradise

During his advertising years, Mike's fascination with the beauty and charisma of parrots began. He owned several pairs of birds and began dreaming of moving with his family to Cornwall, where they had enjoyed many holidays, to create a "paradise" where he could indulge his love of birds and share it with visitors. Finding space and acceptance in the seaside town of Hayle was no small task but eventually Mike found Glanmor House. In 1973 he opened Bird Paradise there and over the next 33 years turned it into an award winning sanctuary for rare birds which became Cornwall's top tourist attraction.

### Building Community and Legacy

A year after opening Bird Paradise (later renamed Paradise Park) Mike formed the Cornwall Association of Tourist Attractions (CATA). His aim was to encourage attraction owners to work together to promote each other and raise quality standards. At a time when Cornwall had very few attractions, seven joined. Now, over 30 years later, CATA is a respected organisation with over 40 members.

Mike's commitment to the Cornwall community and to the creation of a premier bird park never ceased as he continued to make improvements to the park. Stable buildings were refurbished into a pub and brewery - the Bird In Hand - which opened in 1977, creating more jobs, a

## Mike Reynolds | Tributes

### >> From David Woolcock

There will be many tributes written about Mike Reynolds, and deservedly so. He was an inspirational individual who achieved so much during his lifetime, in so many fields.

As someone who has had the privilege to work for him, and with him, for more than thirty years, to say that he will be greatly missed is indeed a cliché, but it is also very true.

Mike was inherently a shy individual who really hated the limelight. I vividly remember accompanying Mike to a seminar at which he was scheduled to speak, and during the journey he told me that he would rather chew off his own leg than stand up in front of a crowd and address them! Nonetheless, for the sake of the birds he loved so much, he would stand up for them at every opportunity, no matter how difficult he found the experience.

His passion for birds was obvious. It is no accident that he has left behind a collection that is the envy of many. But he was not a "collector", far from it. His aim from the very beginning was always to work with those species that needed help in the wild. Indeed Paradise Park was originally called "Bird Paradise - The rare and endangered birds breeding centre". It is only when we stand back to reflect now, that we realise how fortunate we are to have the opportunity to work with the species we have at Paradise Park, and that is all down to Mike's vision. If there was one thing for which I respected Mike more than any other, it was the fact that he created the collection honestly and openly. He was a man of morals and integrity.

Mike appreciated effort and valued everybody's contribution within the park. He was always full of ideas and actively encouraged them in others. He was never idle, always busy and rising to any and every challenge that he encountered. He had a great eye for detail and was an inspiration to us all. Whatever he did, he did it well. It was

a pleasure to have known him and it will be an honour to help continue his dream.

### >> From Cristiana Senni

In the late '90s, when I first started volunteering for the Trust (translating *PsittaScene* for the Italian members) I hardly knew anything about the science or the politics of parrots. I had a strong desire to help but no qualifications other than some language skills. Mike was a great teacher for me. Now, looking back, I realise how patient he must have been with my impulsive ideas and how much he guided me towards a more rational approach when dealing with all kinds of parrot issues.

Something that I always really liked about Mike was that his passion for parrots was unambiguous and uncompromising, he had no interest in competition or self promotion, it was all about the birds. He also had a deep respect for sound science, and he shaped the Trust into an organisation that has earned scientific credibility and that has been able to deal successfully with policy makers.

I never had the chance to spend much time with him, and I regret it because he was witty and a pleasure to be with. I am among the many who will miss him very much.



Photo: (c) WPT

Mike and Cristiana outside Parliament (2005) after tea with Baroness Miller, a trade ban supporter.



Mike and Joseph Forshaw on Red-tailed Black Cockatoo project, Australia 1994.

## >> From Joseph M Forshaw

Mike Reynolds belonged to a small but very elite fraternity. First and foremost, he was a gentleman, and that in itself is a rarity these days. But he also had a vision and was gifted with the energy to transform that vision into a reality. Setting up the World Parrot Trust was not an easy task and in the early years he overcame many obstacles and confronted many challenges. Graciously he rose above personal attacks and criticisms, which I believe were motivated primarily by jealousy and which, as some of us know from personal experience, can always be expected from a small, albeit thankfully unrepresentative, section of the avicultural community. During those early years, we had numerous discussions about the role and functions of the Trust. Drawing on my experience as an international bureaucrat, I cautioned against becoming involved in countries where the benefits of funding aid are always compromised by inherent maladministration and corruption. I like to think that Mike took on board that counsel, as undoubtedly he carefully considered advice from many quarters. The outstanding success of the Trust in achieving meaningful and practical results with limited resources is due in no small part to the prudent guidance of Mike in those formative years.

I walked with Mike through the woodlands of southeastern Australia looking at flocks of cockatoos and in the rainforests of Cape York Peninsula watching Eclectus Parrots and Palm Cockatoos. I know that these and other field experiences reinforced his commitment to the Trust and its work. Very few of us are destined to leave behind our footprints when we depart this life, but Mike's footprints still traverse the woodlands of southeastern Australia, the pantanal of Brazil, the rainforests of Amazonia and Cape York Peninsula, and the forests of Mauritius and the Caribbean Islands, where endangered parrots benefit from his efforts. Audrey and family, on whom Mike always was able to look to for much needed support and

encouragement, can take comfort from his achievements, and particularly from his ongoing legacy - the World Parrot Trust which continues to campaign tirelessly for the conservation and welfare of the birds that we all cherish. Thank you Mike.

## >> From Ruud Vonk

WPT-Benelux was founded in June 1991 when Mike Reynolds gave us his approval to be a self-supporting branch at an establishment meeting at Antwerp Zoo in Belgium.

WPT-Benelux organised a yearly symposium about parrots in Holland and Belgium. Mike attended this event for the first time in 1992 as Honorary Director of WPT along with his wife Audrey. A few years later Mike wrote a preface for a book we created from the symposia. It was entitled "If I had a million" and it clearly showed his vision for WPT. The million pounds Mike envisioned would be split into three equal amounts: one third to be invested to give the Trust a sound financial base and provide income over the long term; one third to fund many of the important and urgent projects we currently seek to support; and one third would go to a new educational program which featured parrots as the most logical spokespersons for the preservation of our natural world. We will miss Mike's dedicated leadership.



Ruud presenting a cheque from WPT Benelux branch for Lears Macaw project 2004.

year-round income and a popular local pub. A number of local people have found long-term employment at Paradise Park, some for over 30 years.

Recently, in a continued attempt to increase tourism year round, Mike completed what turned into the biggest investment he had ever made to secure the future of the Park. The addition of the JungleBarn at Paradise Park fulfilled Mike's vision of a year round, indoor facility for families visiting the Park. The new building houses an extensive soft play area for children, three giant slides and a special toddler area. With a café, four party/meeting rooms and an outdoor balcony the JungleBarn has created much needed local, full time jobs, and has become a welcome venue where people come together to visit and enjoy safe, energetic play. A "no junk food policy" and healthy food choices add to the value of the family experience.

Mike's efforts to raise standards in tourism, for the disabled and the local community, were recognised by the Cornwall Tourist Board in November 2005, when Paradise Park was chosen as Cornwall's "Visitor Attraction of the Year".

From the beginning, Mike recognised that Paradise Park not only provided great family entertainment but also an excellent opportunity for them to learn about the conservation of rare animals. Aviaries were built as large as possible, and colourful and informative signs and entertaining daily events all inspire a love of wildlife. Creating strong links with local colleges has meant that students of all abilities find educational placements with the Keeping staff. And because the animals themselves are key to conservation, all rare species kept at the Park are in the studbook system, with offspring often swapped with other zoos to keep genetic diversity within captive populations.



Mike with Katie (Umbrella Cockatoo) when the World Parrot Trust was first created in 1989.

## World Parrot Trust

As he learned more about the plight of parrots in the wild, Mike decided that this family of birds required a dedicated effort if the most critical would be saved from certain extinction. In 1989 he established the World Parrot Trust (WPT) with the aim of preserving parrots in the wild and ensuring the welfare of captive birds. Mike and his wife Audrey provided initial funding to start the Trust, in addition to free office space and facilities.

Under his guidance, first as Honorary Director and then as Chairman, the Trust has grown into a conservation powerhouse with representatives in 10 countries, thousands of members, and parrot conservation projects around the globe.

During the first year, WPT put much of its initial limited resources towards the rare Echo Parakeet of Mauritius. With less than 15 known individuals left in the wild, this unique parrot was likely the world's rarest. WPT has continued to fund this project, contributing over £120,000 in field conservation work and facilitating assistance from recognised experts in Britain and afar. Now there are just over 300 Echo Parakeets (*Psittacula eques*) on Mauritius. It was precisely this kind of recovery that Mike had seen a need for when he launched the World Parrot Trust, and success with the Echo encouraged him to pursue many projects elsewhere around the globe.

Early in the 1990's Mike heard about the plight of parrots in the Caribbean and developed a project to promote local understanding and protective pride in these birds using buses as mobile classrooms. Over the next five years, four brightly painted parrot buses were outfitted with lively interactive displays, games and videos, with the first three buses donated to the Caribbean islands of St Lucia, St Vincent and Dominica. The

## >> From Rosemary Low

If, during your lifetime, you can succeed in one significant and lasting achievement, you are a person of substance; if you can achieve two, you are truly remarkable. Mike Reynolds founded Paradise Park and he founded the World Parrot Trust. Both touched for good the lives of many thousands of people and, equally importantly, thousands of parrots.

I first met Mike in the early 1970s when he lived in Kent and sought my advice on starting a bird park. This was a very unusual project given the fact that, by his own admission, he knew little about birds. I liked his calm, measured and cultured voice which, as I was to discover, reflected his personality. Soon after that, Mike and his family moved down to Cornwall, starting the most exciting venture of their lives. The financial struggle that ensued was great. Most people would have given up - but not Mike. At that time many bird parks were opening but most of them survived only a short time. I can think of only one other started in that era that survives to this day. They made little or no impact where breeding rare and endangered birds was concerned. From the start this was one of Mike's goals and it was gradually achieved.

When the bird park was on a firm footing, he telephoned me one day. At the time I was very concerned at the enormous volume of trade in wild-caught parrots and by the fact that many parrots were becoming endangered due to loss of habitat. Other groups of birds, such as Pheasants and Waterfowl, had organisations that were attempting to address the problems of declining wild populations. Such an organisation for parrots was desperately needed but the task appeared so huge that it seemed unlikely to me that anyone would have the courage to tackle it. For one individual to found a parrot trust to try to address the problems seemed an impossible task, doomed to failure.

Yet in 1989 that is what Mike Reynolds did, with

the help of a handful of people, myself included (I edited *PsittaScene* from 1989 to 2004.) Against all odds Mike Reynolds succeeded. He had exactly the right personality that included tact and quiet determination. He came from an avicultural background, rather than from a conservation organisation and this could have been a major obstacle; indeed, initially officials from certain important bird conservation organisations did not want to listen to him. But within a few years it became obvious to them that he was doing what they should have attempted years before: conserving parrots and their natural habitats. His innovative ideas such as parrot buses attracted attention throughout the world.

Through Paradise Park large sums were raised for parrot conservation. Furthermore, the park's facilities were at the Trust's disposal so that operating costs were virtually nil. This was an extremely fortunate combination of circumstances. Today, I still believe that had Mike Reynolds not founded the Trust, parrot conservation would be a decade or more behind where it is today. Once the success of the World Parrot Trust became evident, other groups started up with small projects in various countries. Although they have not achieved the status of WPT and its founder, they were surely emulating him or inspired by him.

Mike Reynolds wrote thoughtful and inspirational articles in *PsittaScene*. Almost immediately he started to campaign for an end to the importation of wild-caught parrots into Europe. His thinking was then too much in advance of current ethics but he never ceased to work towards this end, which was finally achieved in January 2007. I am so glad that he lived to see that day.

From 1989 until 2000 Mike and I worked closely on the magazine, despite the distance between us in geographical terms. It was always a pleasure



Steve Martin, actor John Cleese and Mike creating WPT promotional video 2001.

to liaise with him. On the rare occasions when we did not hold the same view, he was always ready to listen, quiet, tactful and humorous. He was always a gentleman in a world where, increasingly, the species had become as endangered as some of the parrots he was passionate about saving. As Honorary Director of the World Parrot Trust, he was a figure of honesty and integrity with the highest moral standards. His enthusiasm never faltered and he was forever propounding new ideas.

During the past three decades I have travelled widely and encountered people involved in parrot conservation in every continent. During this period I have never met another individual who worked so steadfastly and travelled at his own expense for this cause and who achieved so much through sheer determination and the help of his family. Often he put the Trust before the family's business. He was indeed a remarkable man. On a personal level I will miss him greatly - but will always remember our final chat just five days before he died. He thanked me for writing with admiration about his work in a recent issue of *Parrots* magazine - and my inadequate reply was "You deserved it." Now he deserves to be remembered by everyone who cares about parrots and their future.

### >> From Steve Martin

I first met Mike Reynolds at a parrot conference many years ago. I remember standing across the room watching him patiently answer questions and interact with the mob of people competing for a piece of his wisdom. I never found the courage to introduce myself to him that day. I was satisfied to just listen to his words, which helped me understand why he drew such a huge crowd.

A year or so later I received a call from Mike asking if I would be interested in helping the World Parrot Trust with a public service announcement he had arranged to film with

John Cleese. Mike had heard about Groucho, an incredible singing parrot that we used in one of our shows and thought the bird would work well for the piece. Soon, Groucho and I were on a plane to Santa Barbara to do the filming. That night, I had dinner with Mike and came to know a bit about the man of parrot conservation legend.

My memory of that evening centers on Mike's passion for parrots and his commitment to helping them. There was no wondering about his motivation or hidden agendas; it was obvious that Mike just wanted to help parrots. In fact, that's what I remember him saying to me that night, "I just want to help parrots." I learned later that he cared more about helping parrots than the petty politics, name-calling, and finger pointing that sometimes exists in the parrot world. He knew not everyone would always agree with his pioneering approach to saving parrots. He was comfortable with the criticism because he knew he was doing the right thing. We talked long into the night about his many ideas for how to help parrots. Though our conversation focused on the future, I was able to pry out of him some of the great work he had done in the past to benefit parrots. He almost seemed uncomfortable telling me of the many projects and incentives he had created to help parrots of so many species in the wild. It struck me that he was beyond the need for recognition of his great work. He wanted to talk about how he, and now, "we", could help parrots in the future. It was one of the most inspirational conversations I have ever had with anyone.

Few people will ever know the full impact Mike Reynolds had on parrot conservation. They will never know his commitment and the sacrifices he made to help parrots. Few people will ever know the influence he had on people and the conservation champions he has inspired. Fortunately, his legacy lives on with the World Parrot Trust. I only hope we, as World Parrot Trust members can carry on his great work and continue to "Just help parrots."

success of this innovative approach to conservation brought not only a turnaround in the fortunes of the target parrot populations, but a major award from the BBC Wildlife magazine.

A champion for all parrots, Mike Reynolds personally instigated the creation of the 1st ever Parrot Action Plan. The Action Plan is a working document which outlines the threats to parrots in general, details the status of individual species and sets a course of action for their recovery. Mike facilitated a gathering of parrot experts from around the world to accomplish this feat of collaboration. The resulting Plan helped set a course which WPT and other conservation groups continue to follow today.

Whilst critically threatened species needed special attention, Mike also recognised a broader threat facing nearly all parrots: international trade in wild parrots for the pet market. With concern for the threat to the wild bird populations and the millions of bird which die in the trade each year, Mike initiated a campaign to end imports of wild parrots for the European pet trade. Since November of 2000, the Trust has pursued this campaign on many fronts, forming a coalition of over 200 NGO's, and working with both member states and the European Commission to develop solutions. To highlight the plight of wild parrots and raise awareness of the role of European imports, the Trust launched World Parrot Day which took place in May 2004. Zoos around the world joined in the celebration, and an open-topped bus provided a centrepiece for a gathering at Trafalgar Square. Supporters with their pet parrots later promenaded to Downing Street to deliver the Trust's petition containing tens of thousands of signatures from dozens of countries, calling for a ban on wild bird imports.



Mike and Paul during his visit to Paradise Park 1990.

A temporary ban (due to bird flu) in October 2005, gave new impetus to the campaign, and the World Parrot Trust's continued work was rewarded in January 2007 when the European Union announced a permanent ban from 1st July 2007.

### British Wildlife

Responding to deep concern about the conservation of birds closer to home, Mike Reynolds set up Operation Chough aiming to help the Cornish Chough, Cornwall's national bird, which after many years of decline eventually died out of the Duchy in 1972. The project focuses on studying these naturally sedentary coastal birds still living in Wales and re-establishing birds back in Cornwall.

Breeding the Chough (*Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*) in captivity proved a difficult task, but Mike persisted in developing new and successful techniques, and a trial release of six birds was made in 2003. Recently, Choughs have been making an apparently natural recolonisation in Cornwall, and Operation Chough has been focusing on education and publicity of issues such as habitat restoration.

Mike's outstanding contribution to the Cornish economy and natural heritage through the creation of Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust cannot be overstated. His unique vision in creating a bird conservation park and his sheer focus on perfecting the park and its role in the community have benefited generations of visitors, both locally and internationally. His successful launch of the World Parrot Trust put the UK on the map as a leader in parrot conservation and welfare. It is a truly rare individual that can accomplish so much with such grace and creativity. Mike has no doubt impacted Britain and the world in a profound and significant way.

### >> From Paul Butler

I don't remember how I first met Mike. Perhaps it was while on vacation in Cornwall visiting my father, or it may have been as a result of a Parrot conference at Loro Parque. What I do recall, was being invited to Paradise Park and walking around the aviaries with Mike as he pointed out the various species in his care and his being especially proud of his collection of Saint Vincent Parrots (*Amazona guildingii*). Having worked with this beautiful parrot in the wild, and having spent more than 25 years on neighbouring Saint Lucia, it was a bird with which I also shared a passion. I recall Mike wanting to support conservation initiatives and how this conversation and those that followed led to WPT and Paradise Park supporting Jacquot Express - a mobile exhibit that squawked its way around Saint Lucia, informing children of the plight of their parrot and its forest home.

Mike was passionate about parrots and passionate about mitigating the root causes of their decline. His founding of the World Parrot Trust provided a mechanism for Paradise Park and a very great many other groups and individuals to channel resources to where they are most needed, in the field. His work made a difference and it will continue to do so after his sad passing.

### >> From Charles A. Munn, III

I first met Mike on the phone in September 1990 when I made a "cold call" to the WPT in Cornwall, England, from my Hyacinth Macaw research project in the wilderness of the Pantanal of Brazil. The idea of making such an expensive call from such a remote place may have seemed like a long shot, but it turned out to be well worth it for the conservation of the Hyacinth and Lear's Macaws of Brazil (and later for the Blue-throated Macaw and Golden Conure, of Bolivia and Brazil, respectively).

The reason for making such an outlandish phone call was that I simply had to congratulate the man responsible for the amazingly high quality of prose and clarity of thinking in the essays and news in one of the early editions of *PsittaScene*, the WPT magazine. Somehow I had received an unsolicited copy of *PsittaScene* in my mail at the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS, where I was a senior field scientist). I recall being amazed by the excellent quality of the publication, especially by its sparkling, focused prose and obvious deep commitment to bettering the lot of wild and companion parrots everywhere.

When Mike Reynolds came to the phone and I explained that I was calling from my WCS research project for Hyacinth Macaws in the Pantanal, we then immediately hit it off, and the WPT and my WCS macaw research projects collaborated fruitfully for years in Brazil, Bolivia and Peru.

I can honestly say that I never met anyone in my 30-year conservation career in South America who matched Mike for the combination of sheer intelligence, generosity of spirit, and unflinching concern for the welfare of endangered parrots.

Having laid such strong foundations for the WPT, Mike has made it possible for his great work on behalf of parrots to continue even after his passing, a towering achievement rarely seen in the world of conservation.

Scientists, parrot lovers, and conservationists in Latin America join me in expressing our highest admiration for Mike and his work. A number of the world's rarest parrots now enjoy a secure future thanks largely to the work of Mike. We all will miss him terribly, but his legacy lives on, literally, in the rainforests of many corners of the world.





# Our New Home www.parrots.org

By Steve and Desi Milpacher

They say anything good is worth waiting for. After about 16 months of effort the World Parrot Trust is proud to announce the official launch of Parrots.org - our new online home. As mentioned in the previous issue of *PsittaScene* the Trust's new website came about as a result of talking to you, our supporters, and the dedicated efforts of dozens of volunteers.

When you arrive at the site you will find a comprehensive online encyclopedia of parrots and reference library containing thousands of photos and website links, hundreds of video clips, and well-researched profiles for the 360+ species of parrots. As well you will be able to

participate in global discussion forums, read first-hand accounts of parrot researchers with our online bloggers and gain knowledge from the specialists and experts who have contributed their time and experience to our efforts. Also represented is the stellar 17 years of work the Trust has accomplished in our Current and Past Projects areas. Finally, we have included downloadable promotion banners and other ideas for advancing the work of the Trust. In short, we wanted to take the very best ideas that you and the Internet had to offer and make [www.parrots.org](http://www.parrots.org) THE place to visit on the web for all things parrot.

## Membership has its privileges

The website has information for everyone, but of course, membership has its privileges. As a member, you will gain access to thousands of pages, 17 years worth, of back issues of the *PsittaScene*, and research from the Parrot Action Plan. You will also be able to directly question recognised parrot experts and communicate with our bloggers and other members in discussion forums. And last, but not least, members will be able to download desktop wallpaper and other interesting items from the website. You will need to sign in and become a registered member to gain these benefits.

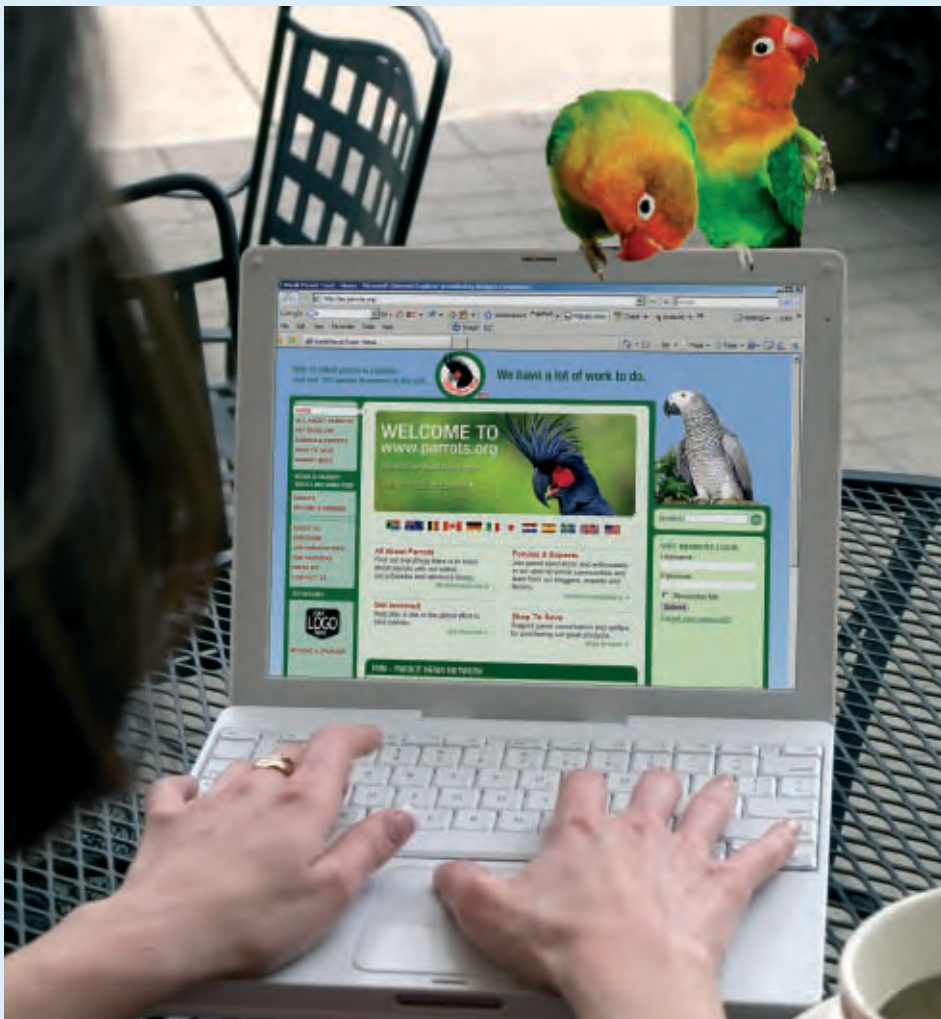
## Sign up Now

To begin touring our new home you will require access to the Internet and will need to go to [www.parrots.org/members](http://www.parrots.org/members). There you will find a short form to complete with your name and membership number that will allow us to send you your unique username and password.

## And we're just getting started

In the future you will be able to participate in interactive online seminars for teaching parrot behaviour, care and more and discover great new products in our eStores. You will also find more downloadable resources and a monthly eNewsletter available for free to everyone to stay abreast of current activities in the parrot world. Watch for the addition of foreign language discussion forums for our global supporters and more detailed and comprehensive regional branch representation, highlighting the work of the Trust's worldwide supporters. 

See you soon at  
[www.parrots.org](http://www.parrots.org)





# Reading Palms

By Steve Murphy

Photos: (c) D.Parer & E.Parer-Cook

It is easy to understand why the World Parrot Trust chose the Palm Cockatoo out of about 350 parrot species as its logo. Watching a displaying male work through his repertoire, from ear-splitting whistles, to drumming with a stick, to eerily human-like greetings with soft clicks and gurgles makes you think you're listening to a conversation. Watching a breeding pair quietly allopreening at their nest in the fading light leaves you in no doubt that Palm Cockatoos are more than capable of emotions, they probably need them as we ourselves do. The Palm Cockatoo is truly a spectacular icon that encapsulates all that is wild and worth protecting. And yet only recently have we begun to learn about their wild ways.

**WPT** was the major sponsor of my PhD research that started way back in 1999, based mainly near Iron Range National Park, on Cape York, Australia. The objectives were relatively straightforward - to learn what we needed to know to better manage Palm Cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*) and their habitats. Little did I know then, that this charter would involve such wide and varied work; from the wilds of Papua New Guinea, to sampling specimens collected by great and famous naturalists in museums around the world. I watched as fire repeatedly destroyed nests that had taken weeks for me to find. Then, just as abruptly, I saw new nests created in spectacular fashion by tropical cyclones. But above all, this project meant that I could live for months on end in one of the most biologically rich and important parts of Australia, while glimpsing the intimate lives of these fantastic parrots.

Among the most intimate of encounters were had whilst studying their breeding habits. A combination of all-day nest watches and in-nest, infra-red video surveillance revealed critical aspects of the Palm Cockatoo's ecology. For example, the males at every nest I examined invariably incubated and brooded during daylight hours, while females always took over for the night shift. On several occasions I witnessed rival males visiting active nests only to be chased away by the resident father, often in a cloud of smoky-black feathers. There were also several instances of their single white egg or even the small, naked chick being found crushed inside the nesting chamber. What could account for such aggression?

The answer, it seems, lies with an understanding of the rarity of their most precious resource - the nest hollow and characteristic nesting platform that they, unique among nearly all the parrots, spend literally hundreds of hours building and maintaining. The platform, which can be up to 2m (6.5 feet) deep is made by the pair (though mainly the male) dropping splintered twigs and branches into the tree cavity. The platforms themselves are an engineering marvel - a foundation of large twigs 20, 30 or even 40cm (8-16 in) long, are first dropped inside the tree trunk and lodged in such a way as to catch hundreds of thousands of increasingly milled twigs. By the end of the construction process, the platform ends up as a beautiful matchstick-like layer of dry bedding that even the fussiest of cabinet-makers would find comfortable. Of course, for anyone who has

experienced a wet-season monsoon, the reason is clear - it's a clever bid to allow deluging rains to pass through the cavity, thereby allowing the inhabitants to stay high and dry. Two other large parrots that live on Cape York (Eclectus parrots (*Eclectus rotarus*) and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita*) do not employ such a strategy, with sodden and often disastrous results. All up, the nesting platform represents an enormous investment both in construction and maintenance (to keep it porous). It means that on the one hand, if you're a newcomer to an area or if you've just lost your own nest, it might pay off to try to usurp your neighbour's hard work. On the other

hand, if you are that neighbour, your hundreds of hours of hard work are worth fighting for.

Despite this significant investment in the nest hollow and platform, I witnessed an ever-increasing list of destroyed nests with each round of nest checking. Between 1999 and 2005, roughly 26% of all nest trees were taken out of circulation. The main cause was fire, lit mainly by people. The reasons people lit the fires were varied and often complicated. Aboriginal men from the nearby community of Lockhart River sometimes burnt their country early in the dry season (May to July) following a practice their forebears had done for millennia. This kept the

**Between 1999 and 2005, roughly 26% of all nest trees were taken out of circulation. The main cause was fire, lit mainly by people**



land open and presumably more habitable, and reduced "invasion" by rainforest. It also had unintentional benefits for the Palm Cockatoo, because they prefer the resulting open woodland. A series of aerial photographs from the Second World War show, very convincingly, that many areas of dry open woodland on Cape York have been now been invaded by rainforest. The timing of this encroachment coincides with the cessation of traditional Aboriginal burning in the early 1900s. Once, these woodlands would have supported high densities of Palm Cockatoos, similar to those areas of woodland that have escaped invasion that I was studying. Now, Aboriginal men and National Park Rangers burn existing woodlands frequently to limit rainforest encroachment and preserve open woodlands. On some occasions they also burn to reclaim "lost" rainforested woodlands, often with great fire intensity. While the rationale is well placed, these fires, both the frequent and intense varieties, often incurred collateral losses in the form of ashen outlines where Palm Cockatoo nests used to stand. It seems that there is a balance between a fire regime that keeps country "open" and a regime that is either too frequent or too hot, which results in nest tree losses.

By early-2005, when field-work started to wind down, the number of nest trees that were destroyed far out-numbered those that were created. But then, in a single episodic event, a severe storm called Tropical Cyclone Monica ripped through the area with 200 km per hour winds. In just a few hours many more potential

nest-trees were created than were lost during the previous years; 16 were lost over 6 years throughout the entire study area of about 1,000 ha and 23 potential new nest-sites were created as a result of the storm in a 122 ha sample area. Astonishingly, only one of my old nests had been knocked down by the storm. Even the most rotten nests remained standing - nests that I had to climb with aid of a ladder guy-roped so that none of my weight ever touched the tree.

But caution is needed when interpreting these results. True, there does seem to be some sort of balance between the gradual loss of trees and the dramatic and episodic creation events like

cyclones. But I could only survey potential nest-trees created by the cyclone and it remains to be seen how many of these actually become bona fide nest-trees. Second, the number of actual nest-trees destroyed right at the centre of the cyclone is unknown (I could not get there) but may be significant. Third, the number of potential nest-trees destroyed by the cyclones is difficult to determine, and may vary with soil moisture and other factors. And finally, and most importantly, the potential for a cyclone to create new trees is entirely dependent on an adequate number of large trees in the landscape, which is a process partly determined by our old friend, frequent fire. Exactly how fire relates to the

establishment and recruitment of big old trees is unclear, and needs further investigation, fast.

If nothing else, fire and cyclones showed me how dynamic the world of the Palm Cockatoo really is. It showed me how quickly I could change my ideas from thinking I was documenting an unsustainable loss of their key resource (the nest tree) to a deeper understanding of the balance that exists with cyclone-induced nest creation, when enough time could be added to the equation. Time, it seemed, was a theme that Palm Cockatoos understood well. They never seem to be in a hurry. They only ever lay one egg, and most (76%) breeding

**"Spectacular and lordly in both appearance and behaviour, Palm Cockatoos are among the most impressive of all parrots, especially when encountered in their natural habitat" - Forshaw & Cooper, Parrots of the World**



*A male Palm Cockatoo at his nest performing a typical foot stamping display.*

attempts fail due to natural causes, like predation by large lizards. They also seem to breed only every other year. Off-setting this is their extreme longevity. The only data available for Palm Cockatoos is from captive birds; the oldest authenticated captive Palm Cockatoo is a 56 year old female housed at London Zoo. A male Palm Cockatoo in captivity in an Australian zoo reputedly reached 80-90 years old. Although speculative, Palm Cockatoos in the wild are likely to live for perhaps 40 to 60 years and importantly, they are likely to be reproductively active for much of their lives.

But what about further back in time? What has happened to these "slow lifestyle" cruisey birds through the ages, when their habitats have been much more dynamic than we see today? Over the past few hundred thousand years, rainforests throughout their range contracted to tiny wind-swept fragments as the Earth cooled and dried out. Over the same time, areas of land that we consider separate today were joined by emerging land-bridges. Incredible as though it may seem, over the past 250,000 years New Guinea and Australia have been joined for 95% of the time, thanks to the shallow depths of modern seas. How did these events affect Palm Cockatoo populations? To answer this, I had to look at their DNA.

DNA is one of the most powerful tools available to modern ecologists. Some forms of DNA (there are a few) can be used much the same way as we humans use surnames to trace family trees. And conveniently for me, this DNA still exists in



museum specimens that are well over a century old. Analysing DNA from museum specimens and blood from chicks I sampled in the field revealed one very important result; genetically, most Palm Cockatoos are very similar. This includes birds found in populations on Cape York, eastern New Guinea and even the Aru Islands, which float half-way between West Papua and Australia. In fact, all Palm Cockatoos east of that little narrow isthmus of land called the Bird's Neck, (that separates the Vogelkop Peninsula from the rest of New Guinea), should be considered one subspecies, *P. aterrimus aterrimus*. The only other currently accepted subspecies that has any validity is *P. a. goliath* which extends west of the Bird's Neck, including

the offshore islands of Misool, Salawatti and Waigeo. Why should this be so? Why should Palm Cockatoos on the Vogelkop Peninsula, that have been continually joined to the rest of New Guinea be so genetically distinct? The answer lies not at the bottom of a shallow ocean, but at the bottom of a very deep one. Two deep marine troughs approach within a short distance on either side of the Bird's Neck. These troughs have meant that only a severe drop in sea level (= 75 m) can expand the Bird's Neck wider than what is seen today and this has only occurred twice within the last 250,000 years. So, for much of the period, it is likely that the Bird's Neck became dominated by a forest of montane species in which Palm Cockatoos would not live, and that this forest was pinched between two deep marine troughs, that rarely revealed a lowland passage. Thus, Palm Cockatoos and many other taxa on either side of this barrier maintained their genetic distinctiveness.

Palm Cockatoos hold a special place for many bird watchers, naturalists and aviculturalists. Often, their only experience with them is in books but the impression is no less powerful because the written descriptions and images are invariably so awesome. A good example is in *Parrots of the World* by Joe Forshaw and Bill Cooper. The image is inspiring and the text equally evocative:

"Spectacular and lordly in both appearance and behaviour, Palm Cockatoos are among the most impressive of all parrots, especially when encountered in their natural habitat."

Indeed, this is exactly how I found them to be. Whether in books or in the wild,

Palm Cockatoos really do leave an indelible impression in one's mind. Hopefully, the insights I uncovered will help that impression last a little bit longer. The WPT is uniquely placed to support research such as mine that goes beyond the three-year funding cycle which plagues so many research institutions. How else can we study birds that live lives every bit as complicated as our own, and for just as long?

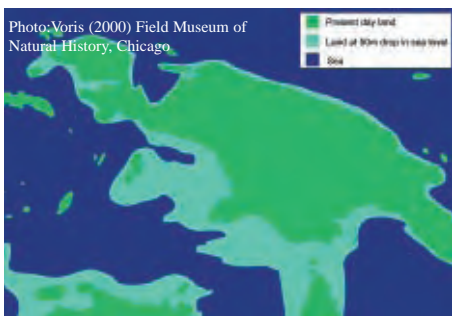


Photo: www.papuaweb.org





## the bar

our knowledge grows along with our goals for the highly endangered Blue-throated Macaw

# Raising

By Toa Kyle



In six field seasons of watching various macaw nests, I've never actually seen a chick fledge. This season I was determined - I watched one nest for five consecutive days in hopes of seeing this special moment. The chick from this nest was quite the tease. It would climb to the top of the exposed cavity and exercise its wings in plain view. It reminded me a bit of a boy taking his first dive off the high diving board. It would teeter at the edge of the nest entrance, leaning forward and spreading its wings, all the while receiving light caws of encouragement from its parents perched nearby. When it reached that critical point where it would either fly or fall over, it would pull back, aborting its exit at the last moment. The camera batteries eventually died from filming this "almost fledging" ritual over the course of five days. On the morning of the sixth day I arrived at the nest tree to find no macaws present, adults or chick. And so the first flight of the macaw remains an elusive, mysterious event for me.

I'm pleased to report that the 2006 breeding season for Blue-throated Macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*) in Bolivia has been the most productive we've had in the past five years, with six chicks fledging from the four successful nests. Since we can account for about 80 birds total where we work in Bolivia, this seemingly small number of chicks actually represents a significant boost for the recovery of the species. Naturally, with each passing field season we tend to raise the bar with respect to what we can

achieve for the recovery of this species in the wild, so we're especially pleased that the birds' performance this year met with our heightened expectations. I was looking forward to the 2006 season to make amends for 2005 which was full of new challenges such as accessing fragile palm nest cavities (see *PsittaScene* Vol 17.1). In 2005, five of the six active nests we located failed in the late stages of incubation. Of the nests that failed, some were flooded due to heavy rainfall, some were predated by toucans. We also



observed that most of the nests were of low quality, being found in motacu palm snags ("snag" - dead tree). These nests are difficult to work with from a management perspective as they're harder to climb, having no branches to swing climbing ropes over. They are also prone to falling over in strong winds because they are dead and poorly rooted. This season I was also curious to see how the severe drought in 2005 might affect nesting attempts in the 2006 breeding season. In general fruit production is

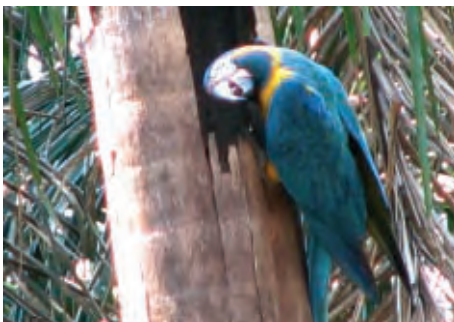
lower the year after a drought. Since Blue-throats are primarily fruit eaters and not seed predators like most parrots, low fruit production can decrease the number of nesting attempts as scarcer food resources leave fewer nesting pairs capable of raising young. I was interested to see how the number of nesting attempts for 2006 compared to past seasons.

## A good year

We found a total of 14 potential nests this season. We define a "potential nest" as any cavity entered by a Blue-throat. Seven of these pairs actually laid eggs, which has been a trend over the past 3 seasons. So, it appears that the 2005 drought did not adversely affect nesting attempts in 2006. Of these seven active nests, four pairs produced a total of six chicks and the remaining three nests suffered some form of predation. Consistent with previous breeding seasons, predation remains the main cause of nest failure. All of the known threats to these nesting pairs are very broadly distributed species, such as Toco Toucans or Great-horned Owls, and none are threatened with extinction. The big challenge then is that common species are effectively feeding on the young of critically endangered ones. This is an area we need to continue to manage aggressively by our persistent efforts to discourage these animals from visiting Blue-throat nest sites and protecting the adults and chicks from ongoing harassment. In the future, still more direct management may become essential, including the trapping and relocating of persistent individual predators.

## Full house

One of the interesting things about this season was the number of nests with multiple nestlings. In previous seasons we'd only seen a single nestling hatch. The average number of nestlings per nest this season was 2.3. In two nests we even saw three nestlings hatch. The third hatched nestling in one of these nests was ignored by the nesting pair. We kept it alive for a couple of days via supplement feeding, but it died after a cold front came through one night. In the other nest



Three's a crowd. Although only 3-5 days younger than its siblings, the third chick (far right) was neglected by its parents or out-competed by its siblings. We fed it and kept it alive for 3 days before it died from exposure.

that had three nestlings both the second and third hatched chick were neglected and unfortunately in this case we arrived too late to save them from starvation. It appears that there is a limit to the number of nestlings Blue-throats are willing or able to nurture, and this appears to be consistent with other parrots as well. If so, this observation strongly suggests that for large clutches, fostering into another nest of the same species or long-term hand rearing may be the only way to aid the chicks through to fledging. We hope to gain permission in the future to remove neglected chicks from nests for fostering to other nests or for hand rearing and release. Obviously any Blue-throated Macaw chick that hatches and can fledge in the wild is important to the species' recovery.

## Flood insurance

We were able to encourage more nests past the incubation stage this year for several reasons. For one, the weather was more cooperative. In 2005 there were some really horrific "nest killer" storms that caused nests (snags) to collapse or flood. This season we purchased a 12m (35ft) extension ladder that was instrumental in accessing nest cavities in palm snags, something we couldn't reliably do in 2005 for fear of the snag collapsing if we attempted climbing with ropes. We were also more pro-active during the incubation stage. In 2005 we were always wary of causing abandonment by climbing to put in drain holes while a nest was being incubated. Still exercising utmost caution, we made a policy

of putting drain holes in all nests this season. With this more aggressive management and the benefit of fewer storms, no cavities flooded in 2006. Furthermore, we had only two motacu palm snag nests this season, compared to last season's four, and in our experience, motacu snags are low quality nests. That said, for the first time in four field seasons, we saw one of these nest types successfully fledge young.



Secured by 8 ropes to adjacent trees, our new light-weight extension ladder allowed us to access fragile palm snag nests without contacting the tree.

## Head-shots

Continuing analysis of Blue-throat facial photos has yielded valuable information on the nesting habits of the species. WPT-Canada generously donated a digital camera with an optical zoom and an image stabilizer function which has allowed us to get good facial shots of Blue-throats. This digital technology is especially helpful because photos can be referenced in the field and compared to others taken in past years. To date we have 35 individuals photographed, which is nearly half of the known birds in our study area. By comparing photos taken over the past three field seasons we've determined that nesting trees are not always used by the same pair in consecutive years, and that pairs that fledged young in 2004 didn't attempt to do so in 2005 but then nested again in 2006. This suggests that with Blue-throats, chicks will stay with their parents for a full year, after which they will nest again. With clear photos we can learn the major features of each individual's face and track life histories on specific birds without having to trap and band them. If we can continue this study long term, we may be able to do for macaws what Jane Goodall did for chimpanzees (although I haven't gotten around



Unique facial line patterns allow researchers to individually identify adult Blue-throats. This technique can be used for other macaws but is more difficult in species such as Blue-and-Golds (3rd bird above) that have fewer lines.

to giving the birds names like 'David Bluebeard' yet). An advantage to studying Blue-throats is that their facial feather patterns are more complex (5-6 main lines behind the eye), compared to, for example, Blue and Gold Macaws (which only have 3 main lines) thus creating more distinct patterns for each individual. Blue-throats are also sexually dimorphic (males are larger at about 800g; females 600g), so we can generally determine individuals' gender in the field which is not something you can reliably do with other macaws. Our study is the first to confirm that, with wild Blue-throats at least, it's the female that incubates. This is likely predictable based on observations in captivity but has been difficult to demonstrate in previous studies of wild macaws.

## Mortality

One disturbing trend this season was our observations of dead or injured Blue-throats. We found the remains of one predated bird, possibly a juvenile that fledged in 2004. We would regularly see this juvenile as it came to visit its parents as they tended to their nest in 2006. Following the discovery of the Blue-throat carcass and feathers we never saw the juvenile around its parents nest again. In another case we saw a female from a potential nesting pair bleeding in the head and neck area. We still don't know what is predated (or attempting to predate) the adults. Two possible culprits are Great-horned Owls and Crested Caracaras. The caracaras would seem unlikely as they are generally considered scavengers. However, I witnessed an unsuccessful attack by caracaras on a pair of Blue-and-Gold Macaws (*Ara ararauna*) one afternoon during the 2006 breeding season. Also this year, a four week old nestling was lost to predation when it was too large (450g) for a toucan or Crane Hawk to kill or extract from the cavity. The message from this observed mortality is that we need to get more chicks fledging into the wild, to offset the realities of predation, severe weather, disease and old age.

**'We need to get more chicks fledging into the wild, to offset the realities of predation, severe weather, disease and old age.'**



## Ex-trapper stories

Due to wet road conditions we were forced to take a major detour on our way back to Trinidad after a month in the field. This longer route took us through a town I'd never been to, where we rested for a day in order to recover from all the toiling in the mud the previous day. Of course we drew attention driving around in a muddy white truck with a six-meter ladder attached to it. When I explained to a local what we were doing he recommended that I look up an ex-macaw trapper who was active in the area in the '70s and '80s. Sure enough I found him and he turned out to be a wealth of information on the historical status of Blue-throats where he had been active. Other ex-trappers had told me that Blue-throats in the Llanos de Moxos, where they are endemic, were always rarer than the





We're now banding nestlings at 10-15 days of age when the band still slides over the tarsus. Bands will help us monitor juvenile survival in the future.

two larger macaw species of Blue-and-Gold Macaws and Green-winged Macaws (*Ara chloroptera*). Not so, according to this guy. He told me of a clay lick where he'd see groups of Blue-throats, Blue-and-Golds and Green-wings visit in equal numbers of 20 individuals on average, usually exclusive from one another. This claim is fascinating as it is the first account I've heard of Blue-throats consuming clay and if his numbers are accurate, it means that the idea that Blue-throat numbers can be equal to those of Blue-and-Golds in a given site is not just a pipe dream. Turning the tide so that these numbers become more balanced over time is thus a realistic goal for this project. The trick once again is getting more Blue-throat chicks into the wild.

## Nest boxes

In an attempt to provide the birds with alternatives to motacu snags we put up 15 nest boxes at the start of the field season. The design of the boxes included a metal plate at the entrance aimed at excluding larger macaw species, notably Blue-and-Gold Macaws which outnumber Blue-throats by a factor of six to one



where Blue-throats are found. Blue-and-Golds also compete with Blue-throats for resources and natural nest cavities, so nest boxes that aid their numbers are undesirable. Since toucans are responsible for the majority of the nest predation we inclined the entrance to the nestbox by 45 degrees. Toucans have weak perching feet (unlike macaws) and would be unable to perch at the entrance of the nest box and climb in at this angle. By late December only two of these boxes were used by macaws, alas by Blue-and-Golds. We made the entrance plates with the smallest entrance hole diameter we'd seen in a wild Blue-throat nest (9.8 cm or 4 inches) but obviously we need to make them even smaller. One new nest cavity this season was only 8.3 cm (3.3 in) wide so that the pair would enter sideways! In addition, we put up the boxes during the months of August and September. We saw that during these months most Blue-throat nesting pairs had already committed to natural nests. Hopefully some of these boxes will be used next year. If they are, we won't have to monitor them as intensely as we do natural nests (to prevent nest predation). Recall that in the Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*) program they experimented with around 100 designs for nest boxes until the birds finally accepted one.



Nestbox entrance holes must exclude the larger and more common Blue-and-Gold Macaw. Generally the two species co-exist peacefully, but when a nest site is involved, competition can become violent. One solution is to find your own cavity with a tiny hole, like this pair that had to squeeze in sideways!

## Politics & conservation

Finally, a discussion of 2006 would not be complete without mentioning the political situation in Bolivia. The current president, Evo Morales, is the first indigenous president Bolivia has ever elected. He is a socialist who is closely allied to Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Fidel Castro of Cuba. He aims to repossess large tracks of land deemed as being unproductive or acquired illegally and redistribute them to the nation's poor. This worries cattle ranchers in the

Beni who essentially lay claim to all the land where Blue-throats are found. To further complicate matters, a large separatist movement is gaining momentum in Bolivia's eastern departments. Basically these departments want more regional autonomy. If the federal government doesn't grant autonomy in the near



We endured many bee stings removing a hive from this nest and were rewarded when the female laid and then successfully fledged two chicks (above at 8 weeks).

future, civil war is not out of the realm of possibilities. Although working in Bolivia is difficult in the best of times, an armed conflict could mean a suspension of field work with Blue-throats until safe conditions resume.

On the whole I believe this season has been a success. For the first time we've observed nests with multiple nestlings. We've also seen that these 2nd and 3rd nestlings that die in the early developmental stages from starvation due to parental neglect could possibly benefit from more intense management. I'll be recommending to the Bolivian government the need to manage these chicks more aggressively, including the possibility of fostering them into other Blue-throats nests, or even raising the nestlings in captivity. Ideally we can release these birds into the wild while taking maximum precautions in order to minimize the transmission of disease to other birds. Captive raised birds have their work cut out for them in terms of learning to locate food resources and avoid predation but I'd rather give them that chance at survival instead of leaving them in the nest where their prospects are poor at best. This type of undertaking will be complicated and require more funding and expertise, but we feel it could become an important component in future improvements in the number of fledged chicks each year, and ultimately the recovery of the species.





## Parrotnews

### Bonaire's Cyber-Parrots go Global

In an ambitious attempt to raise support and awareness of the Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*), the Bonaire Parrot Project has launched [www.pparrotwatch.org](http://www.pparrotwatch.org). Visitors to the website will be able to watch movies from inside the nests of wild parrots, follow the development of chicks and see wild parrot behaviour.

"We hope this will capture peoples imagination! Watching tiny chicks hatch from eggs in natural nests and following them as they develop into real characters that you can identify is just fascinating" said website creator Sam Williams.

The stage will be set on the Caribbean island of Bonaire and three wild parrot pairs will be thrown into the limelight. Each week there will be new nestcam movies from the three pairs. Parrotwatch.org visitors will also be able to view movies of the parrot parents, of the parrot team doing chick check ups, interviews and much more.

As raising awareness is a big motivation of the venture, the site will have educational material from parrot facts through to online diaries from the project personnel describing their work. To reach people on the island, many of whom are

not online, [parrotwatch.org](http://parrotwatch.org) movies will be shown on the island's television station too.

To get access to all the movies [parrotwatch.org](http://parrotwatch.org) visitors will have to sponsor a parrot pair online (through paypal). The minimum donation is a trifling £4 or \$8 and 100% of this sponsorship money used for conservation and research. Sam Williams and Rowan Martin, WPT supported conservation biologists on Bonaire, and [Parrotwatch.org](http://Parrotwatch.org) are closely linked with Salba Nos Lora (Save the parrot) the local parrot conservation group that will benefit from sponsorship raised through [parrotwatch.org](http://parrotwatch.org). Sam also writes a blog on the new WPT website and you can expect to hear more about the work on Bonaire in a coming PsittaScene.

So what are you waiting for?!  
Go check out [www.pparrotwatch.org](http://www.pparrotwatch.org)

### Research Volunteers Needed

The Ecosystems Sustainable Management Program of the Monterrey Tech is looking for volunteers to assist with the study of Maroon-fronted Parrots in Mexico. Since the beginning of the project we have had volunteers from US, Canada, Spain, Guatemala, Hungary, and from throughout Mexico. Volunteers are mainly undergraduate and/or graduate students of biology or environmental sciences. With a minimum stay of a single month, volunteers increase their knowledge of wildlife and habitat management, and conservation strategies. Researching the Maroon-fronts, (*Rhynchopsitta terrisi*) volunteers have the unique opportunity to be close to this rare parrot. In addition, friendship and team work are part of every day in the field and the data collected benefits the Maroon-fronted Parrot's conservation.

### Who can participate?

Natural Sciences, Veterinary or Biology students, people interested in conservation, (especially birds) or in learning more about conservation projects in Mexico.

During field trips volunteers will use project facilities, will stay at local people's houses or will camp. Participants must be disciplined, responsible, patient, and have the ability to get along with different people in remote places. They should be able to carry out field work with little supervision, have patience enough to

## Parrotevents

### Soho Festival 2007

This year's event will be held on Sunday afternoon of 15th July, in the Garden of St. Anne's church in Wardour Street, London. I have a stand at the festival where I bring my parrot, promote WPT and talk to people about parrots. Visitors are friendly, supportive and interested.

Do you have a parrot that would be happy to attend with you? Are you someone who feels passionately about the plight of our feathered friends? There will be a police presence if you have a concern with safety and a place nearby you can take your parrot for a rest, food and water.

For more information please call: Kaye de Ville  
Tel: 020 7 439 3746 or 07956 821473





Photo: (c) Fernando Cerra

**Want to see wild Maroon-fronted Parrots? Volunteer as a research assistant!**

monitor continuously up to seven hours and be willing to work daily up to ten hours, as well as be resistant to adverse climate conditions, such as intense cold or heat, hail or rain. Also, people will have to be in good physical condition in order to walk through difficult trails at altitudes up to 2000m above the sea level. Spoken Spanish is preferable, or at least some knowledge of the language. Participants must be committed to stay on the project for at least one month.

Volunteers will pay their travel expenses to Monterrey, Mexico. Food and travel expenses during the field trips are covered by the project. To apply please send a brief resume, 3 professional references (including e-mail) and an intention letter addressed to René Valdes Peña at [ravp@itesm.mx](mailto:ravp@itesm.mx) by June 1st 2007.

**Stoat Seen on Kakapo Haven**

A predator has been seen on the shoreline of a Kakapo island sanctuary, the Department of Conservation (DOC) says.

A member of the public reported seeing a stoat on Anchor Island in Dusky Sound, Fiordland on Good Friday. DOC said the island was home to 86 Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*), large, flightless, nocturnal parrots native to New Zealand. The island is of high ecological and conservation value and has been pest-free since 2001.

Kakapo team leader Emma Neill said DOC was pleased the member of the public was aware of the significance of the stoat and promptly advised the local area office in Te Anau.

As a precautionary measure DOC staff moved 10 female kakapo to another island refuge. The island's predator traps were checked and re-baited and a dog trained to follow stoat scent would be deployed. DOC said stoat numbers were high in Fiordland due to the increased numbers of mice in the ecosystem.

Source: [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz) 9 April 2007

**Preserving Parrot Perches**

San Francisco city officials are prepared to go out on a limb for the world-famous wild parrots of Telegraph Hill, offering to take responsibility for maintaining and insuring a pair of aging trees where the flock hangs out to the delight of bird lovers and tourists.

The deal -- an unusual one in which a city would care for and maintain private property -- would protect the owner of the lot where the trees are located, against any legal claims should the two old Monterey cypresses collapse and cause damage or injury.

According to the measure, the "wild parrots have become a valued aspect of the identity and culture of the Telegraph Hill neighborhood, bringing curiosity and joy to both residents and visitors to San Francisco." The supervisor also credits them with helping to "expand the public's interest in urban wildlife and to engage local residents in preserving the urban forest."

Source: [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com) 14 February 2007 

**Online**

- Main: [worldparrottrust.org](http://worldparrottrust.org)
- USA: [parrottrustusa.org](http://parrottrustusa.org)
- Germany: [germanparrottrust.org](http://germanparrottrust.org)
- Japan: [worldparrottrustjapan.org](http://worldparrottrustjapan.org)

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# Parrots in the Wild

