

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN PARROT CONSERVATION
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

World Parrot Trust
in action



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Psitta SCENE



Featured in this Issue:

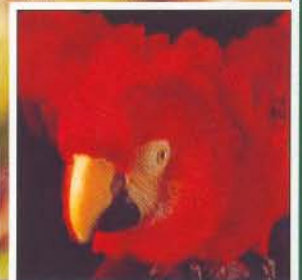
New Global Campaign for the Parrots

Reports on Moluccan Cockatoo

Cape Parrot & Palm Cockatoo

Plus:

WPT News, letters, book review etc



psittacine (sit'a sin) belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like

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The World Parrot Trust does not necessarily endorse any views or statements made by contributors to *PsittaScene*.

It will of course consider articles or letters from any contributors on their merits.

New Global Campaign for the Parrots

It's crunch time for the parrots of the world. After gracing our planet for millions of years, they have suffered dreadfully at our hands, and especially so over the past thirty years. Air transportation has allowed vast numbers of parrots to be taken from the wild and delivered to the richer nations of the world. Habitats are being destroyed at an ever faster pace, culminating in the horrendous forest fires that have afflicted so many parrot range countries in the past two years, notably Indonesia, Brazil and Mexico. Most countries where parrots occur have large internal markets that consume the birds when export is no longer permitted.

Of the 333 species of parrot nearly 100 are threatened, as will be revealed when the 'Parrot Action Plan' (revived and largely funded by the World Parrot Trust) is published later this year by IUCN's Species Survival Commission.

The plight of many parrots kept in captivity as pets or as aviary birds needs to be addressed. Our fascination with the parrots has created a situation where birds are often bought on a whim by people with no real interest in bird keeping, or any aptitude for this rewarding but demanding hobby. Films such as 'Paulie' and frequent appearances by parrots on television result in increased demand. As we pointed out in the May 1998 *PsittaScene* (THE WELFARE OF PET PARROTS and some 'Guidelines for Parrot

Rescue'), keeping even one parrot is like being responsible for a demanding human baby for perhaps fifty years. The general public must be educated to understand the importance of making a cool and careful decision about owning a parrot. If they go ahead, they must then be further educated on how to make a success of their venture. Not only for their own satisfaction, but also for the welfare of their bird.

So where to begin?

Perhaps by reminding readers once again of the stated aims of the World Parrot Trust.

Aims of the Trust

The survival of parrot species in the wild, and the welfare of captive birds.

These aims are pursued by:

- Educating the general public on the threats to parrot.
- Opposing trade in wild-caught parrots.
- Preserving and restoring parrot habitat.
- Studying the status of parrot populations.
- Encouraging the production of aviary-bred birds.
- Creating links between aviculture and conservation.
- Promoting high standards in the keeping of parrots.
- Supporting research into veterinary care of parrots.

All of these aims are covered, we believe, in the wording of our new 'Parrots need help' logo. We go on to say that parrots need help to survive in the wild, and to thrive in our homes. This embraces all our aims in a simple statement, and the design of the logo is strong and effective in both red and black, as shown here, and also in one colour only.

The parrot figure is not intended to be any particular bird, but to represent all the parrots.

The next question is: how to use this new logo? Firstly, we will use it on much of our WPT 'literature', to help get across our concerns for the parrots to

The front cover picture is of a juvenile Imperial Amazon Parrot *A. imperialis*. I took this shot when, to my amazement, in 1978 I found three young Imperial Amazons in an aviary in the Buccament Valley, St. Vincent. I was told that the birds had been removed from Dominica with the permission of the government, and were to go to a collection in Texas. I was not able to check this story, but a few months later I learned that the three birds

had died as a result of St. Vincent's Soufriere volcano erupting and blanketing the island with toxic fumes. If I didn't have the pictures of these incredibly rare parrots, I would have thought I'd dreamed the whole thing. I would be grateful if anybody could tell me more about this mysterious and troubling matter. Did the precious Imperials really die, and if not, where are they today?

Mike Reynolds.

PARROTS NEED HELP



*...to survive in the wild
...to thrive in our homes*

A WORLD PARROT TRUST CAMPAIGN

www.worldparrottrust.org

differing audiences. We need to win the attention of the general public and make them understand that parrots are still being trapped in the wild, and transported in inadequate and often fatal conditions to internal and external markets. This being so, they must understand that the only parrots they should buy are those that have been bred in captivity.

Thriving in our Homes

To help aviary-bred parrots 'thrive in our homes', we need to make sure that every new parrot owner is carefully and completely educated about the needs of their bird. Nine years ago we published a very plain little leaflet entitled 'Who's a lucky boy, then?' and since then we have distributed over 200,000 copies, mostly to pet stores and vets offices, but also to bird shows and similar

events. And of course, there are many other good information leaflets being produced by other organisations, together with more books than you would believe possible. Unfortunately the very people least qualified by temperament and intellect to keep a pet parrot are those most likely to avoid reading anything on the subject. We need to reach these people somehow, and we believe this can best be done by providing pet stores with free leaflets.

Sponsor Needed

We are soon to publish a new leaflet to replace our old one, and would like to hear from any potential sponsors willing to contribute towards the print cost. Our working title is 'The Happy Parrot Guide - essential reading for new parrot owners', and we intend to make it available in English and several European languages.



This Blue-throated Macaw is vocally defending his nest tree. He needs the help of all us if his species is to survive in the wild. Photo: Charles Munn & Eduardo Nycander

We invite other organisations and publications concerned about parrots to make use of this new logo. We have only two requirements: first, please let us know before you use it, and second, please use it in its entirety. We want people to visit our web site, and thus learn more about parrot conservation and welfare.

Parrots in the Wild

As WPT members will know, the majority of our funds go into projects to assist the conservation of parrots in the wild. Over the past nine years the World Parrot Trust and its national branches and support groups have contributed towards work for many CITES Appendix I threatened species, including Spix's, Lear's, Hyacinth, Blue-throated and Buffon's Macaws, St. Vincent, Imperial, Red-necked, St. Lucia, Red-tailed, Cuban, Red-spectacled and Green-cheeked Amazons.

Also Moluccan, Red-vented, Goffin's, Red-tailed and Palm Cockatoos, Kakapo, Cape Parrot, Black-cheeked Lovebird and the Echo Parakeet. Twenty two species in all. Apart from providing cash from our membership fees and donations, we have used

this modest publication PsittaScene to create interest in the urgent needs of these birds, contacting a wide variety of people with special interests in parrots. Aviculturists, pet owners, conservation scientists, zoos, journalists, pet stores, diplomats, bureaucrats. Over 100,000 copies of PsittaScene have made their way around the world, hopefully having a positive influence on a substantial readership, and improving the circumstances of parrots in the wild and in captivity.

Parrot Bureau

We use this 'Parrot Bureau' heading to send out stories to the media, and we intend to increase the frequency of these communications, including the new logo.

We try to provide information for all media on the conservation of parrots, and also give reliable advice on the keeping of parrots as pets. In the UK an inexperienced and poorly motivated person has appeared on television giving inaccurate and unhelpful advice on parrots. This is a pity, when there are many very competent people (not necessarily WPT members) who could advise on this subject.

PARROT BUREAU

PARROTS NEED HELP
*...to survive in the wild
...to thrive in our homes*
A WORLD PARROT TRUST CAMPAIGN

The World Parrot Trust works for the survival of all 333 parrot species in the wild, and the welfare of individual captive birds. It funds field conservation projects, research studies and educational programmes. The Trust created the concept of 'responsible aviculture', where the interests of the parrots themselves are given priority over commercial, political, career or other human concerns.

We need the commitment of everyone who keeps, breeds, studies or protects the parrots, and indeed everyone who cares about these exceptionally interesting and beautiful birds. These are flagship species that vividly illustrate the worldwide loss of biological diversity, and to save parrots from extinction will help countless other forms of life. We look for financial support from all caring individuals and organisations.

To start helping right away, ask for leaflets and car stickers from our new global campaign for the parrots 'PARROTS NEED HELP' to survive in the wild, to thrive in our homes'. Or visit our web site: www.worldparrottrust.org.

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*If you can spare the parrot - do not let your hand be raised.



Threatened Species

We have highlighted the dangers facing many threatened species, such as Lear's Macaw, which, unless circumstances change and it is properly protected from poaching in Brazil for shipment to irresponsible people inside and outside Brazil, will surely be virtually lost to the wild in the same way as Spix's Macaw.

Above all, we insist that the interests of the birds themselves must be paramount, having priority over our human concerns about money, prestige, and other frailties.

So let us see what we can do with this new logo and its slogan PARROTS NEED HELP.

As a statement of fact, it cannot be denied. They do need help, both to survive in the wild, and to thrive in our homes. Let us find many ways of putting this information across to the media, and through them, to the world at large. We have a responsibility to the birds we admire and respect, to improve their prospects wherever they may be.

National Branches

We anticipate that our national branches will make use of the new logo, providing an additional line translating 'parrots need help' into the appropriate language where necessary.

They may also find ways of emphasising the international nature of WPT, using this new 'flags' design which features individual national branches and their flags. This striking and colourful version of our basic WPT logo will be used on a new T-shirt to be introduced in September.

A Long Running Campaign

Our intention is to maintain this new campaign for the parrots for a period of two years, with the clear objective of making the general public achieve a fresh understanding about parrots.

Parrots? What Are They?

They are not nicely coloured animated domestic decorations. They are not guaranteed to talk. They will not make a parrot owner with a dreary personality seem more interesting. They cannot be left alone, without any kind of mental or physical stimulation, for twelve hours a day. They are wild animals that we have partially domesticated. Keeping a pet parrot is incredibly demanding, but if carried out well, can be incredibly rewarding. Having a pet parrot means - whether the owner likes it or not - sharing responsibility for all the wild parrots, and the threats to their continued existence.

New Ideas

Over the past years the World Parrot Trust has introduced several new thoughts to the

parrot world. We have asked aviculturists and bird business people to 'put something back' to help the parrots in the wild. We introduced the concept of 'responsible aviculture', which has become a commonly used expression, and has received support from many aviculturists. From our beginning in 1989 we have opposed the importation of wild parrots, arguing that the developed world had enough birds to provide aviary bred young to satisfy all reasonable demands.

Manifesto

We published our 'Manifesto for Aviculture' and circulated it around the world to make a firm statement in favour of aviculture as a sincere and rewarding hobby enjoyed by millions.

This publication has proved helpful to aviculturists in New Zealand and elsewhere.



This fine looking Blue and Gold Macaw lives in a very large flight aviary in Karunda, Australia.



...to survive in the wild
...to thrive in our homes
A WORLD PARROT TRUST CAMPAIGN

Cape Parrots

Report on the second Cape Parrot Big Birding Day, (25 April 1998)

A Report by COLLEEN T. DOWNS and CRAIG T. SYMES, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Psitta
news

INTRODUCTION



Craig Symes

The nominate race of the Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus robustus*, soon to be described as a new species, is endemic to South Africa, and has a discontinuous distribution from the Alice region of the Eastern Cape to the Karkloof region of KwaZulu-Natal (Harrison et al 1997). A smaller relict population is found in the Zoutpansburg of Mpumalanga which was probably always rare (Boshoff 1990; Harrison et al 1997). The core habitat range is mosaic Afromontane forest patches (Wirminghaus et al. in prep.) yet foraging includes thornveld and bushveld, and coastal and dune forest areas (Skead 1964, 1971; Boshoff 1989; Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). Cape Parrots are reliant on *Podocarpus* spp. Yellowwoods, the dominant tree species in the Afromontane forests, for food, socialising and nest sites (Skead 1964, 1971; Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). They are secondary cavity nesters, preferring a nest site in a natural or previously excavated cavity at a height of 6-15 m (Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). Destruction and alteration of forest habitats, shooting

of birds near crops and orchards, and removal of birds from the wild for the caged bird trade, are major factors responsible for the observed decline of Cape Parrot populations.

The Cape Parrot is listed in Appendix II of CITES and as Vulnerable in the Red Data Book - Birds (Brooke 1984) and is pending full species status recognition which will further affect their conservation status (Clancey 1997, Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). The difficulty of censusing the Cape Parrot is because it is a highly mobile, food nomadic species, with a high frequency of interforest movements, particularly when fruit availability is low (Skead 1964, 1971; Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). Movements of Cape Parrots also occur during dry periods to access sites of free water (Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). They are very active

and vocal in the early morning and late evening but around midday they are usually quiet and easily overlooked (Skead 1964, 1971; Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). Traditional censusing methods (Lawes 1992; Verner 1985) are therefore not feasible because of the mobility of Cape Parrots, and their inconspicuous habits during warmer periods of the day (Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). Consequently it was decided to conduct a national census where temporal variation was controlled to one day only, and all localities were monitored simultaneously. The pilot Cape Parrot Big Birding Day was held on 5 April 1997 and was successful, and the second on 25 April 1998.

Materials and Methods

Localities and areas of all forest patches (Afromontane and Coastal forests) were listed from the Alice region of the Eastern Cape to the Karkloof in KwaZulu-Natal (Cooper 1985, 1992). Permission from land owners or conservation bodies was obtained to visit these various areas. The Cape Parrot Day was advertised in the press, and conservancies Bird Clubs and farmers were notified and requested to assist. Groups of observers were assigned to specific areas and sent data sheets. Use was made of contacts from the first Cape Parrot Big Birding Day and enthusiasm was obtained from all spheres.

Initially groups of observers were assigned to forest patches where Cape Parrots had been recorded in the past five years, and where Cape Parrots were recorded in the first Cape Parrot



A fragment of yellowwood forest, inhabited by Cape Parrots, with cleared land used for agriculture in the distance.

Big Birding Day (Wirminghaus et al. in prep; various pers. comm.). Other forest patches where Cape Parrots were expected to occur were then selected. Observers were assigned vantage points to record the presence or absence of Cape Parrots, and to record numbers. Movement and activity recordings required number of birds and direction of flight. Observations commenced at sunrise and ceased at sunset as Cape Parrots are most active at dawn and the first few hours after sunrise, and at dusk and the last few hours before sunset (Wirminghaus et al. in prep.).

Size of flocks

Sizes of flocks seen ranged from single birds and small groups of 2 to 9 birds, to large groups of 11 to 52. Near Nqadu forest, Umtata, a group of 52 birds was seen feeding on pecan nut trees. At least half of these birds were identified as juveniles in their first year.

Activity

Most recordings of Cape Parrots were of interforest movements in the early morning (06h00 to 08h00) and again in the late afternoon (16h00 to 18h00). Few Cape Parrots were recorded at other times of the day at any of the observation points. Cape Parrots were seen preening and perched on snags in various

forest patches. The Cape Parrots seen feeding on pecan nuts at Nqadu were harassed by a pair of Redbreasted Sparrowhawks *Accipiter rufiventris*. In King Williams Town, Eastern Cape, Cape Parrots were observed feeding on Wild Plum *Harpephyllum caffrum*.

Discussion

Isolated large flocks of the Cape Parrot were observed throughout its range. Core areas where they are seen reliably or predictably were monitored in this census as well as elsewhere. Recent observations suggest the former areas may form important nuclei for remaining Cape Parrot populations (Wirminghaus et al. in prep.). Cooper (unpubl. data) recorded 58 Cape Parrots at Ntsikeni forest during his forest survey in the early 1980s. Such areas need to be highlighted as focal conservation areas for the conservation of the Cape Parrot and indigenous forest in South Africa. Efforts are being made to highlight Nqadu Trading Post as an important area for Cape Parrot conservation. This includes the offer to purchase from the owner, and the implementation of ecotourism ventures in the region. In doing so conservation measures of this species can be implemented. The high proportion of juveniles at Nqadu (> half) suggests that



Rosemary Low visited the Cape Parrot location in 1997. Also present are: Stacey Gelis, Sharynne Hearne, Mike Perrin, Craig Symes, Colleen Downs.

breeding had been successful this season. The Cape Parrot Big Birding Day was planned for this time of the year because juvenile flocks are conspicuous, forest fruit supplies are usually low, and Cape Parrots are required to make searching flights from the forests in flocks.

Most sightings of Cape Parrots were made of birds flying to or from forest patches and their roosting sites. Their direction of flight was noted to prevent the recounting of individuals. Previous estimates of the southern race of the Cape Parrot *P. r. robustus* population include those of Skead (1964) who estimated the population in the eastern Cape at 600 birds, and Boshoff (1989) who estimated fewer than 1,000 birds remaining in the wild. Skead (1964), however, indicated that Cape Parrot

populations in the former Transkei, were less plentiful. On the pilot Cape Parrot Big Birding Day, 1073 man-hours were spent observing at 66 observation posts and overall, 163 Cape Parrots were accounted for. A total population in the Transkei of 199 Cape Parrots at forests with areas greater than 50 ha estimated by Keith Cooper (1980s), recent figures and sightings from the Eastern Cape (including former Transkei), and KwaZulu-Natal (various pers. comm.), and the total population counted on the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day suggest that 1,000 may be a somewhat optimistic figure for Cape Parrots remaining in the wild today. It is unknown whether Cape Parrots are still persecuted as a result of them raiding pecan nut orchards in the Eastern Cape.

The success of this day indicates that this method of censusing is viable for a highly mobile but core habitat-specific species. In future years, however, each forest patch will require observers. Furthermore, there were problems interpreting data sheets. In future Cape Parrot Big Birding Days observers will be requested to fill in a more comprehensive and modified data sheet as accurately and precisely as possible. This will ensure a uniform standard from all participants which will assist in the interpretation of data.

The areas of the forests greater than 50 ha in the former Transkei and KwaZulu-Natal have been well documented (Cooper 1985; 1992), but the

Results

In KwaZulu-Natal, the former Transkei and the former eastern Cape 64 man-hours were spent observing and recording on 25 April 1998. A total of 54 groups of observers participated with 33 groups of observers stationed in KwaZulu-Natal (Weza, Creighton, Bulwer, Boston, Balgowan, Karkloof, Richmond and Dargle), 13 in the former Transkei (Ntsikeni, Ben Cairnie forest, Mbotyi and Umtata) and eight in the former eastern Cape (Hoggsback, King William's Town, Isidenge).

Table 1 Numbers of Cape Parrots seen in relation to time of day on 25 April 1998

Area	Observation sites	Man hours observed		Number of Cape Parrots seen	
		morning	afternoon	morning	afternoon
former eastern Cape	7	162.3	149.0	180	107
former Transkei	13	123.8	74.0	97	56
KwaZulu-Natal	53	345.5	209.4	71	16
TOTAL	73	631.6	432.4	348	179

areas of the former eastern Cape forests, however, still need to be investigated for future data processing. In future years the relative proportions of forest where observations occurred will be calculated. From this, more accurate population estimates can be extrapolated.

The success of this day and the interest of birdwatchers, farmers and conservancies suggest it becomes an annual event. Not only data on Cape Parrots were recorded, but also evidence of other birds and mammals. These results will be processed in a forest data base. In future years this information will be of vital importance for the survival of the Cape Parrot, and for monitoring the status of indigenous forests in South Africa. It is therefore important for the conservation of the Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus robustus*, that indigenous forests are preserved.

Acknowledgements

All who participated in the organisation and in observations at forest localities for the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day are thanked. In particular Craig Breedt, Doug Burdon, Jenny Frean, Malcolm Gemmel, Donald Kemp, Sandy Laurens, Stuart Maclean and Gavin Shaw are thanked for their assistance.

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Female *P. robustus robustus* in South Africa.

Photo: Rosemary Low

WPT Support for Cape Parrot

We recently sent £1,000 (\$1,600) to Colleen Downs to be used to help the on-going conservation work for the Cape Parrot. This follows the WPT policy of expending all receipts from 'parrot range' countries within the country in question. We would like to do much more for this parrot, especially in view of the alarmingly low population figures reported here. Any contributions from readers will be sent on immediately to the project.

Palm Cockatoo Research

By STEPHEN GARNETT and GABRIEL CROWLEY

Report to the Queensland Department of Environment on the feasibility of conducting field research on the Palm Cockatoo at Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Papua New Guinea.

In 1996 a proposal was put forward to the Queensland Department of Environment by the World Parrot Trust and the Wildlife Conservation Society that research be conducted on the Palm Cockatoo. (See PsittaScene February 1997 and November 1997). To this end a proposal was drawn up by ourselves to facilitate this research which was followed up in October 1996 by a visit by all concerned parties to the potential field study site at Iron Range, Cape York Peninsula. At this meeting it was decided to proceed in stages as money became available. Initially visits were to be made to the Iron Range and Weipa areas during the wet season to assess the level of Palm Cockatoo breeding activity.

Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area

The CMWMA is a large area of high quality rainforest on the southern edge of the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea south of Goroka. Four major villages occur within its boundaries. Maimafu and Herowana in the north and east are owned by Gimi peoples, Haia and Wabo to the west and south by the Piotura. Management of the CMWMA is facilitated by the Research and Conservation Foundation, a Papua New Guinea based Foundation funded by Wildlife Conservation International and other international conservation funding bodies. The management aims to promote the concept of Integrated Conservation and Development. Landowners are encouraged to develop small businesses, such as tourism, and artefact and coffee production, and assist with research while agreeing to maintain the integrity of the overall ecosystem. Research is seen as a means of increasing cash flow to the CMWMA residents who help outside

researchers as guides and carriers and also charge rent for use of land. Some people have also received basic training in biological research and become Trained Local Observers who receive higher rates of pay.

In return for access to research money local land owners have set aside parts of their land as places where no hunting or gardening is to take place. There is also an education programme that aims to persuade landholders to resist the short-term gains offered by large logging companies or miners seeking access to timber or minerals on the site in exchange for the long-term benefits that will arise from gradual development of local economic enterprises and support for research.

Most research has so far been based at the well-appointed if remote Crater Mountain Biological Research Station at Wara Sera, a day's walk east of Haia on Piotura land. Here some fundamental research on birds, frogs and plants has been carried out that has added greatly to the knowledge of the highly diverse mid-mountain ecosystem.

Physical Conditions

Overall the CMWMA extends from over 3,000 m at the top of Crater Mountain to about 100 m at Wabo. Haia is at 800 m. Most of the area is covered in continuous rainforest with the canopy broken only by scattered gardens, cliffs along the fringes of the Crater Mountain massif and vigorous, boulder-filled streams. Rainfall is from 6.5 to 8 m a year. This rain is spread through the year but some periods are cloudier than others - in the 10 days I was there the sun was seen only on the first day and the full moon was glimpsed but once. As with any young and active landscape, hills are steep and landslides common. The physical conditions have two consequences for research.

The following notes are a combination of personal observations and accounts provided by local residents, some of which require further investigation. Palm Cockatoos, known in the Piotura language as 'Mitoio' after their call, appear to be patchily distributed through the CMWMA below about 1500 m. They are rarely seen in Haia itself as a result of hunting, although I saw one about 1 km south, but may still occur in Herowana. In fact I saw or heard birds only a few times during my stay but, given the amount of country I had to cover, that is not surprising and is not an indication of their abundance. There should certainly be enough in the area to allow adequate data collection.



Here is a young Palm Cockatoo, perhaps planning his first flight.

The patchy distribution is also likely to be reflected in the dispersion of nests. I saw two nests, both within a kilometre of one another. Both were in the dead remains of the host tree of strangler figs. Another old nest a kilometre away had been cut down to remove the hornbill occupying it at the time. One nest was climbed by my guides, Stiben and Heroape Turoi, and found to contain fresh small sticks on a platform a metre below the entrance but no birds were seen near it in the evening. The other had produced chicks in May 1995 and June 1996 and Pero Turoi saw a pair of birds perched nearby the evening we were there, one of which added fresh sticks.

There was considerable knowledge of food types taken by Palm Cockatoos and four were seen. These, listed by their Piotura names, are described.

Ti, a *Terminalia* sp. The fruit are known as Okari nuts in pidgin. Several people describe how Palm Cockatoos knock these fruit to the ground where they are eaten by cassowaries. The cassowaries then digest the flesh and pass the seed. Palm Cockatoos then fly down to the cassowary droppings and extract the kernels from the seed. Mack and Wright (1996, Emu 96, p 97) were apparently told that the Palm Cockatoo is the 'brother' of the cassowary. Our informants, after much puzzled discussion of his quote, corrected us - the Palm Cockatoo is in fact the 'nephew' of the cassowary!

The fruits weigh about 225 g (206-250, n=7) and measure 93 x 72 x 55 mm. They have average kernel weight of 23 g (20-26, n=5), about 10% of fruit weight, so offer a relatively

enormous return on the investment in opening them. However people like eating it too and most fruit found on the forest floor had already been split and eaten by people. The kernel is extremely oily and has the flavour of creamy fresh peanuts. Only one small fruit was seen that was said to have been knocked down by a Palm Cockatoo. However the tree does also occur away from the well-frequented paths where I saw them and was common from Haia to Wabo. It is not known whether the cockatoos also feed on the fruit in situ but it is larger than any other single fruit the birds are known to eat.

Another fruit is We'e, possibly *Cerbera floribunda*, mentioned by Wright and Mack (Emu 96, p100, AM#1). A tall simple-leaved rainforest tree that produces a large elliptical blue drupe of about 95 g (66-126, n=7) with dimensions 76 x 49 x 41 mm. The single kernel is about 14g, 15% of total fruit weight which the cockatoos extracted by removing one end of the fruit. We'e that I was assured had been foraged by Palm Cockatoos were found at several sites in the Taido area and the fruit was also found on the forest floor at several sites between Haia and Wabo. It is not traditionally eaten by people and the one I tasted was particularly bitter.

Pio is another tall simple-leaved tree that produced a smaller round green fruit. This fruit dehisces along four lines of cleavage revealing four rows of four to five shiny black seeds to each of which is attached a large, brilliant orange ant. Fruit weighed 76 g (55, 103) and measured 59 x 47 x 47 mm. Each seed weighed about 0.18 g (0.97 x 0.55 x 0.54 mm) with the aril weighing a third as much. This is not a traditional food but the aril has an oily flavour with the sweet subtle aftertaste of globe artichokes. It was so oily that it could be spread like butter. The name Pio apparently refers to at least six unrelated trees which share the habit of dehiscing along three to six lines of cleavage so is not very useful for identification.

Sewe is another *Terminalia* sp. (possibly AM#240 in Mack and Wright (Emu 96, p100) that the

cockatoos had been eating just south of the Wara Pio. The fruit of this species is smaller than that of Ti and the cockatoos had apparently been extracting the kernels in the canopy. Misoape also told me the cockatoos eat fruits ('arbo') of another *Terminalia* Ju'u as well as fruits of the Oo, which are produced at a different time of year, the Pene and the Jeud.

The cockatoos are said to be present throughout the year and sometimes gather in small groups to roost. Two behavioural differences with the Australian population were noted. First no-one I spoke to had any knowledge of the drumming on hollow logs recorded in Australia. Also the Crater Mountain birds are said to roost in a manner quite unlike any other bird, and unlike the Palm Cockatoos in Australia which roost normally in trees. Paul and I were shown on three occasions sites where our guides said they had seen birds roosting. These consisted of straight slender saplings which had been broken off half way to the canopy where less than 5 cm in diameter. The bark near the top of each appeared worn while beneath one there were fresh droppings, a single grey feather that could have come from the throat of a Palm Cockatoo and a freshly cut spray of leaves that could have been trimmed from the roost tree. To roost on these stems the cockatoo apparently plants the tip of the beak in the end of the stem and hangs. Our informants described how the cockatoo shuffles all night against the stem but is truly suspended from its upper mandible because, when a breeze comes, the body of the cockatoo is blown out from the stem. Sadly I did not witness this behaviour but I have left a 25 kina reward with Paul Igag for whoever manages to show him a Palm Cockatoo roosting in this manner.

Although ostensibly a protected species within the CMWMA hunting still continues when the opportunity presents itself. Both chicks produced from the active nest near Taido were killed. In each case the young cockatoo was seen at the mouth



Daryn Storch inspects a Palm Cockatoo nest in the Iron Range National Park, Queensland.

of the nest which then fledged prematurely when the nest tree was beaten and was caught, killed and eaten. The scarcity of cockatoos around Haia village is also attributed to hunting, the hunters shooting Palm Cockatoos using bows and arrows after building platforms and hides beside known roost sites.

Other Large Parrot Species

Apart from the widespread and common Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*, two less well known large parrot species are resident in the CMWMA, Eclectus Parrots *Eclectus roratus* and Pesquet's Parrot *Psittichas fulgidus*.

Eclectus Parrots ('Anari') were common in all areas visited and were seen both in the understorey and in the canopy. Nests are apparently known, although I saw none, and my informant, Timoti, told me how some clutches have two males, some two females and some one of each sex. Nests are apparently used repeatedly.

Pesquet's Parrots ('Kavare') I heard at Taido (Paul saw four) and at three other widely separated sites within the CMWMA. Like Palm Cockatoos they are patchily distributed. I was told by Timoti that Pesquet's Parrot excavates its own nest each year in a rotten tree trunk and that, as the young matures in the nest, it fills the hollow with chewed shavings from the inside of the nest until, at fledging time, the floor is level with the entrance. Supposedly it was about fledging time when I was there. At that time the parrots are said to feed on the small red fruit of a climbing Pandanus. Some of the fruit is knocked down where it is also

eaten by bandicoots and cassowaries. A young Pesquet's Parrot was captive in Haia where it was raised from a small chick on sweet potato and little else. Pesquet's Parrots are an important part of the bride price and so probably face hunting pressure but I was assured they are still relatively common.

Research Proposal

For effective conservation management of Palm Cockatoos it is necessary to obtain some basic biological data on breeding and ecology. This can be obtained from Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area by drawing on local knowledge and experience. The same knowledge and experience could, at the same time, be used to obtain useful data on Eclectus and Pesquet's Parrots, two other species which are being hunted or traded extensively and whose natural history is little known.

Various data would be collected on breeding and feeding. Local landholders would be paid a fee for each active Palm Cockatoo, Eclectus or Pesquet's Parrot nest that they find. They would then be paid a guide's daily fee to return to those nests in the company of a Trained Local Observer. The Trained Local Observer would describe the nest and its setting and, where possible, details of nest contents and the level of cockatoo/parrot activity at the nest. If young are present in the nest and it is climbable, it would be visited by the landowner and the TLO every fortnight to record growth rates of young.

Data collection would take place for two years from the time money became available.

Crestfallen

By STEWART A. METZ, M.D., University of Wisconsin Medical School, Madison, Wisconsin

A Glimmer of Hope for the Moluccan (Seram) Cockatoo

Psitta
news

Although I am an investigative scientist by vocation, I find it hard to speak objectively of the Moluccan Cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*). At least in captivity, this parrot embodies most of the charisma and magic of psittacines. This cockatoo is a wondrous bird, with white-to-pink feathers that puff up, during its display, like a flower opening. It has saffron colors awash under the flight and tail feathers, and the characteristic deep salmon, full, tall crest, swept back like the pompadour of some psittacine rock-and-roller from the 1960s! The large, dark eyes of this parrot are amazingly expressive, showing a range of emotions matched by an intelligence which is both impressive and unHINGING (at least to anyone whose ego does not take to being outsmarted). To complete the picture, the Moluccan Cockatoo can be the very embodiment of loyalty and affection, at times mimicking a puppy more than a bird. If there is anything else in Nature which can mirror its beauty, it would have to be a pure saffron rose.

Surely, then, such an avian treasure would be cherished, and therefore protected. Unfortunately, this is not the case; rather, paradoxically, this bird is severely endangered in the wild and may be close to extinction. Extant knowledge on the subject up to 1996, and the reasons for the imminent extinction of this parrot, have previously been summarized in detail (ref. 1). To reiterate in brief, this cockatoo was originally felt to be indigenous to the island of Seram (alternate spelling: Ceram), as well as to Saparua and Haruku, three of what were referred to in the past as Spice Islands in the east-

central Indonesian island chain. Thus, its natural habitat is confined to the Province of Maluku. Its status on the latter two islands is unknown, but its last remaining stronghold is Seram, a densely wooded and mountainous island of 18,400 square kilometers which still contains animist tribal people in the interior. At least two tribes exist on Seram: the Naulu (Nuaula) people (a warrior tribe, at least previously felt to include headhunters) and the Bonfia people in the East (who are classified generally as more shy and peaceful). Recent evidence (see below) suggests that the bird may also be

present on Ambon (a much smaller island to the south), which is the current capital of the province. In the center of Seram exists a national park (Manusela) of approximately 1,890 square kilometers (ironically, Manusela means 'Bird of Freedom'). It is an arduous trek to reach the centre of the island by foot and, at least until recently, required a guide and the permission of the village head. A road has been introduced through Manusela which, unfortunately, also increases the risks of logging. The bird is severely threatened on Seram due to habitat loss related to logging, as well as capture for the sake of the pet bird trade, or even for eating or hunting. (The cockatoo was considered to be a pest, because it attacked young coconuts in plantations to get at their milk and soft interior pulp).

Most Threatened Fauna

The fauna of Indonesia are perhaps the most threatened in the world. There are data suggesting that 7-11% of the bird species are endangered there. This figure is comparable to that in the United States, with only the

Philippines and New Zealand having a higher percentage (12-15%). However, Indonesia is the 'leader' in terms of the total number of endangered birds (and other species; ref. 3).

Essentially nothing is known of the natural history and breeding habits of this cockatoo in the wild. This author has not been able to find a single photograph of this bird in its native habitat! Aviculture has its own problems re. the continued existence of this bird; it has been suggested by authorities such as Rosemary Low, that this bird could die out in captivity if all young were hand-reared, since males have poor breeding successes under those conditions and have commonly shown aggression towards the females.

Since the author last reviewed this topic, there is some new information regarding the status of this bird. The Wae Bulu Cambridge University Expedition in 1997 observed apparently significant populations of cockatoos outside of Manusela Park. This observation has been confirmed by the experienced ornithologist, K. David Bishop (personal communication; see also ref. 9) as well as by Y. Cahyadin, Head of Birdlife International's Programme Maluku (see below). In addition, Poulsen and Jepson have reported in preliminary form the presence in 1995 of this cockatoo in the forested hills on the north coast of the Hitu Peninsula on Ambon Island to the southwest. Nonetheless, the only stronghold of this cockatoo is likely to be Seram, almost exclusively outside of the borders of the national park.



Where have all the Moluccan cockatoos gone? These could be anywhere in the world, if still alive.



Portrait of a perfect companion Moluccan cockatoo.

Photo: Bonnie Jay

Due to the imminent threat to this cockatoo (despite its classification as CITES I), recent interest has finally risen in efforts to conserve this bird. Such an effort would probably utilize a combination of approaches, but centrally, one based upon the concept of bringing financial gain to the local peoples in excess of what they could earn by killing, hunting or exporting this bird. Chiefly, this would involve establishment of ecotourism sites on Seram Island. As many readers are aware, this approach has been pioneered by Dr. Charles Munn of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and demonstrated to be effective in South America. A programme is underway under the auspices of WCS to do just this on Seram.

New Initiative by the Wildlife Conservation Society

The WCS has recently received a Memorandum of Understanding from the Indonesian government, permitting them to work on conservation-related matters in this region. This programme will be carried out locally under the aegis of the Indonesian branch of the Wildlife Conservation Society, with the project to be headed up by Drs. Tim O'Brien and Margaret Kinnaird. In addition, Yusup Cahyadin (the Head of Programme Maluku, of Birdlife

International-Indonesia) has stated that one of the projects of the World Bank (the MALCONAR project) may include conservation efforts for all parrots of Maluku in the foreseeable future.

Is there reason to believe that ecotourism might take root in such a remote setting? Ambon has an international airport receiving jets daily from Indonesia and other sites, and good beaches and snorkeling exists in Ambon and Seram. Furthermore, Seram is felt to be a treasure trove for birders, featuring such gems as the purple-naped lory, the Moluccan thrush, the red lory, eclectus, the great-billed parrot and the red-cheeked parrot, not to mention a significant mammalian presence. One problem may be the distance of Seram, and the expense of access. The weather may be a problem, since there are long monsoonal seasons and no clear times of the year when weather is ideal for tourists. Most of Seram receives between 2,500 and 3,500 mm of rain per year, more in the east and northeast; however, August and September have lower rainfall totals.

It is necessary to learn much about the habitat, populations and life history of this cockatoo, since almost nothing is known about these three critical areas. Accurate census figures need to be obtained, possibly involving the use of aerial surveys. The

infrastructure of ecotourism will, of course, need to be established. In addition, it will be necessary to convince the inhabitants of Seram that it would be to their advantage economically to maintain populations of this cockatoo, since this will be a continuing source of income as opposed to a one-time earning for 'usage'. In addition, it is to be hoped that local pride of the people of Maluku, can be increased, using techniques pioneered by Paul Butler in the Caribbean, so that the local residents begin to realize that they are the sole guardians of one of the most beautiful animals on earth, which they can play an indispensable role in saving.

How To Help

This will involve education, hopefully reaching the children of the island, as well as convincing the bureaucracy of Indonesia itself that this task merits a high centralized prioritization. A letter sent by the author to the President of Indonesia did in fact reach President Suharto and was relayed by him to Mr. Joop Ave, the Minister of Tourism, and locally to staff of Programme Maluku. Nonetheless, the islands of Indonesia are spread over a vast area, with major political and economic turmoil. Although the recent fires on Irian Jaya (and elsewhere) in Indonesia are said not to have affected Seram, they clearly will

change priorities of this nation in a way that might derail the Seram Cockatoo project. The involvement of groups such as the Wildlife Conservation Society, the World Parrot Trust, and Birdlife International-Indonesia bodes well for efforts in this region. If anyone can help this cockatoo, these organizations can.

How can readers help? The efforts indicated above will be expensive and long term; funding is desperately needed. Readers who wish to help the survival of this magnificent bird can send donations to the World Parrot Trust UK, which will match the first £1,000 and send the total amount on to the Wildlife Conservation Society.

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The European trade in wild-caught Greys

by ROSEMARY LOW

Would you buy a wild-caught Grey Parrot? I doubt it. Readers of *PsittacScene* are well informed people. They care enough to join the Trust or to read a friend's or family member's copy. Unfortunately, there are many people who don't ask or don't care about the origin of the cheap Grey Parrot or, for example, Orange-winged Amazon that they buy. Yes, wild-caught birds are cheaper than captive-bred ones to purchase, usually about half the price.

In this issue Mike Reynolds reminds us of what we all know: "Parrots are still being trapped in the wild, and transported in inadequate and often fatal conditions to internal and external markets. This being so, they [the general public] must understand that the only parrots they should buy are those that have been bred in captivity."

Unfortunately, education is not enough. It is a sad fact that as long as wild-caught parrots arrive in the UK and elsewhere there will be buyers. Over the years I have received countless letters from these buyers, or read their sad stories in magazines which cater for parrot keepers. Many of the birds they bought lived only days or weeks (unknown to the purchaser they were already harbouring disease, such as salmonellosis) or they proved to be untameable and totally unsuitable as pets. Most of these people, sadder and wiser, lament the fact that they did not pay the extra for a captive-bred bird. It would have been so much cheaper in the long run and saved a lot of heartache.

That is the situation from the human perspective. If we were talking about inanimate merchandise the reaction could be: "Tough! You should have done your homework before buying". But we are talking about a highly intelligent and extraordinarily sensitive creature. This description applies to many parrot species but more so to the African Grey than to any other I can think of. They suffer so much from capture through export to quarantine to final destination.

Twenty years ago we were much less aware of what was involved in the parrot trade. Even if the cruelty and wastage of life was known, many would have turned a blind eye because there was no other way to obtain these birds. Today, Greys, also Amazons, for example, are bred in large numbers in the UK and other European countries. Greys are available year round, not being seasonal breeders (as a species - individual pairs may be seasonal). There is absolutely no reason to import these birds from the wild.

So what can we do, those of us who are in favour of banning the importation of wild-caught parrots? In the UK the Department of the Environment is the organisation responsible for issuing licenses. A DoE spokesman told me that comparatively few Grey Parrots are imported into the UK now and inferred that because of this it seemed unlikely that there were grounds to challenge their import from the viewpoint of "sustainable use". There would normally need to be sound scientific reasons for importation to cease.

The first step was to obtain the facts. How many Greys have been imported into Europe during the past ten years? A telephone call to John Caldwell at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge resulted in the figures being faxed to me the same day.

The figures show that there is still a huge import trade in Belgium and the Netherlands. They indicate that importations of Grey Parrots (not Timnehs) into the U.K. have declined almost annually over the past decade. Although any imports might be considered too many, with only just over 1,000 birds imported into the U.K. each year in 1995 and 1996, trade in this species is no longer significant in the view of, for example, the civil servant.

So it all comes back to educating the public. And if the public do not read magazines relating to aviculture or pet keeping, it is very difficult to reach them. Word of mouth is the most effective way. When someone admires your parrot, make a point of mentioning the



A healthy, happy English-bred Grey.

importance of buying a captive-bred bird. Emphasise the number of birds which may have died for each wild-caught bird that reaches these shores. Many people would never have considered this but once it has been pointed out to them, it stays in their minds.

And don't shrug your shoulders and say: "So what, we are only talking about one thousand birds per year." That number could rise again. Note the immense numbers of Greys still being imported into Belgium. Many of these birds and other parrots are finding their way into the UK. I would be very surprised if they all did so legally.

There is one way in which members can help. Let us have your sad stories, perhaps your experiences some years ago, or current ones of an acquaintance, who bought a wild-caught Grey and soon had cause for regret. I will collate some of these stories in the form of an article. As a deterrent, it could prove powerful if widely circulated.

Grey Parrots (<i>Psittacus e. erithacus</i>) imported into Europe										
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Austria	850	750	851	451	598	451	233	7	6	3
Belgium	2363	3235	4998	6759	7109	8365	6221	9551	9636	7300
Germany	8211	8188	5027	5437	6697	5513	4385	4366	3079	1874
Denmark	6	114	0	206	1	2	2	4	4	3
Spain	502	1205	644	4	577	8	5	199	1579	4138
France	4995	4865	1565	1667	2688	4536	3337	2905	3538	976
U.K.	5215	4219	3373	3452	2516	2844	2837	2110	1067	1040
Greece	13	9	12	1	2	0	4	1	26	21
Italy	400	966	420	370	321	820	3	210	218	205
Netherlands	1833	3786	403	2967	3558	4163	3883	2734	6168	5459
Portugal	763	664	27	227	428	157	170	343	607	354
Sweden	11	601	0	6	54	7	2	16	3	128

Letters

Responses To Our Article on "The Welfare of Pet Parrots" in the May 1998 PsittaScene

Dear Mr. Reynolds;

Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Dennis Saydak and I am a parrot breeder. I consider myself to be a responsible aviculturist and I hope I have earned that reputation among my peers. For example, I am an active-member of several related local, national and international organisations. My breeding facility is MAP certified and I provide comprehensive information and on going help to those who purchase my parrot babies. As a breeder, I genuinely care about what happens to the babies after they are sold.

I have read your article "The Welfare of Pet Parrots" in the May 1998 issue of PsittaScene several times with considerable interest. I completely agree that there is a major need for education in order to improve the welfare of pet parrots. However I am very concerned about a secondary message your article also delivers. That is: breeding and selling birds for a profit is wrong and perhaps even immoral. This message reflects very badly on those of us who breed parrots and especially on "commercial" breeders. Consider for a moment the following quotes taken from excerpts contained in your article.

1) "As long as parrots are about money, there will be compromise and the parrots will be the losers" "no matter how caring the breeder."

2) "Do you ever worry about what happens to your beautiful babies down the road after they are sold?" His response was, "you can't think of that when you are in the business."

3) "I guess that's why I'll never sell or make any money off the back of a parrot."

4) "why are we breeding more?"

It is a simple fact that we live in a society that is economy (money) driven. It seems that everything in life has a monetary value attached to it including Parrots. That is not about to change in our lifetime.

Breeding parrots is an expensive undertaking especially if it is to be done right. Proper housing, good food and decent care doesn't come for free. A breeding facility must at least break even, if it is to survive even in the short term. It must turn a profit in order to grow, improve or contribute in a meaningful way to aviculture in general. There should be no shame attached whatsoever to earning a profit from breeding and selling birds as long as it is done in a legal, ethical and responsible manner. Notwithstanding your disclaimer, when I read comments such as the previous quotations in PsittaScene I become confused and concerned about the support that will be given to aviculturists in the future by the WPT.

The average lifespan of a parrot in captivity is short compared to its potential lifespan. Accidents, poor nutrition and ignorance of many important issues by the owners all play a role. If all breeding activity were to be curtailed until all captive parrots were better cared for, I'm afraid that there would be insufficient numbers of them left to maintain captive populations. Considering their plight in the wild, it would be a mistake to stop breeding them.

Respectfully,
DENNIS SAYDAK

Dear Mr. Saydak,

Thanks for letting me have your views on our article about welfare of pet parrots. The quotation you draw attention to is from Sabra Brea's letter/article, and I thought I had made it clear that she holds a rather extreme view in my opinion. When I met with her earlier this year in Florida she

actually urged me to stop breeding parrots because it is impossible to be sure that the offspring will have perfect lives for thirty or forty years. In the final two sections of my article I explain my own point of view, and you will see that I am a committed aviculturist, and also expect to create some income from the sale of young birds.

The WPT is willing to print opinions it does not agree with, as this is the only way we will succeed in bringing together all sections of the parrot world, to work for the wellbeing of the birds themselves.

Thanks for getting in touch. No doubt I will hear more from other readers.

All the best.
Mike Reynolds.

Dear Mr. Reynolds;

Thank you for the speedy reply to my previous E-mail. This was unexpected but much appreciated. Further to my original letter please consider the following additional points.

1) When extreme view-points such as Sabra Brea's are printed in PsittaScene, there is potential to do great harm to aviculture. The WPT adds credibility to her words simply by putting them in print. Please bear with me for a moment while I explain why.

2) When you add in your own words "These views are strongly made and demonstrate the concern felt by many about the plight of large numbers of captive parrots", additional credibility is given to her view-point.

3) Here in Canada, we are constantly being bombarded by attempts to introduce restrictive legislation against exotic pets at every level of government. I suspect the same holds true in many other parts of the world.

I have no doubt that animal rights activists are included in the WPT membership. It would be naive to think otherwise. They can easily use self serving excerpts from PsittaScene articles to say "Look Mr. Politician, even the WPT and its members are admitting in print that parrots should not be kept

in captivity and vast numbers of them are in fact being abused. You will likely not even be aware when this sort of situation occurs let alone be given the opportunity to defend aviculture. And therein lies the danger.

It matters little that your own opinion was also expressed because it conveniently would have been deleted by the Rights group in their own documentation.

4) All factors considered, I must ask the question "Is it really necessary to provide the enemies of aviculture with ammunition that can be used against us from our very own publication?"

Thank you for the opportunity to express my own views.

Regards,
Dennis Saydak

Dear Ms Low

THE WELFARE OF PET PARROTS
(PsittaScene, May issue, 1998)

As a PsittaScene subscriber, I wholeheartedly endorse the aims of The World Parrot Trust, and I welcomed Michael Reynolds' article in the May issue with its inclusion of two letters from greatly concerned parties.

The unpalatable fact is that virtually all modern advice on pet parrot behaviour and upbringing (particularly from the American contingent) is based on the premise that no responsible owner will allow full flight, and indeed that such liberty would place the bird beyond its owner's control.

This is the general view in the U.S.A, and first-rate publications promote it with an almost religious fervour.

A change of attitude on wing clipping may well mean that fewer people will opt for a pet parrot, but for those who sincerely want a parrot and are willing to put in the maximum effort for its welfare, more guidelines on training an unclipped pet are definitely necessary.

Yours sincerely
Kristin Shay
London W14

Alex the Blue Crown & Julius the Gray

By STEVE SHAW

The World Parrot Trust has gained two new "members." It has also lost a member. And I am both happy and sad to report this. The new "members" are Alex, a blue-crown conure, and Julius, a Congo African gray. This is the story of how they came to the WPT, and all the craziness that brought them there.

Alex and Julius belonged to a close friend of mine, Kyle Brown, a WPT member, bird lover, and aerospace engineer. I had known Kyle since high school, and for nearly twenty years, we were good friends.

Kyle got bitten by the bird bug in college, when he had a parakeet named Sylvia. Unfortunately, Sylvia did not live long, but Kyle was extremely fond of her, and her sweet personality and playfulness.



Alex, Blue-crowned Conure



Julius, African Grey

After college, and returning to the Los Angeles area, Kyle purchased a lovebird. She was sweet at first, but underwent a personality change for the worse after Kyle moved into a new condominium. She became mean and ornery, which led to a name for this still-unnamed bird: Vicious. Vicious lived for a few irascible years, finally passing away in 1993.

Kyle's next bird was the aforementioned blue-crown, Alexander (The Great) Brown, or Alex. This time, Kyle was determined to make no mistakes in raising him. He read everything he could find on the care and feeding of parrots. It did not take him long to become an expert. This isn't an exaggeration; Kyle was one of the quickest studies I've ever seen. When he decided to take up skiing, he spent little time on the beginner slopes. He simply took a couple of lessons, and in practically no time, was negotiating the advanced slopes like an expert.

So it was with the raising of Alex. Alex was wild-caught, so Kyle had the added duty of taming him, but it seemed there were no obstacles. Alex quickly became tame, tender, and loving. He received a diet of fresh vegetables, Harrison's bird pellets, and Kay-Tee treat sticks. He bonded to Kyle completely, and became a great companion.

It did not take long for Kyle to want to try his hand with a larger bird. He met a Congo African gray at a bird show, and "just had to take him home." The gray was named Julius (Caesar) Brown, or just Julius, and sometimes Jules. Julius was hand-fed from the beginning, and was already tame. He was friendly and extremely curious



The late Kyle Brown

about all goings-on around him. He made a welcome addition to the family.

I became known as "Uncle Steve," and agreed to take responsibility for the birds if the situation ever required it.

Although Alex and Julius never became good buddies, they got along reasonably well. At worst, there was a sort of tolerant indifference between them, and at the best there seemed to be some genuine affection. Julius did learn to imitate Alex's screech perfectly. At least I couldn't tell them apart if I wasn't looking at them (Kyle could).

Julius seemed to be on his way to being a good talker. He picked up a few words and phrases almost right away. Generic things, like "hello," but he was certainly on his way. Once again, Kyle immersed himself in books and literature, this time about the African gray.

Around this time, Kyle discovered the World Parrot Trust, joined, and did what he could to teach others about the goals of the WPT, and about the proper care of parrots (both at home and in the wild) in general.

Unfortunately, this is where the tale turns tragic. Like most of us, Kyle had his share of health problems, and his may have been worse than most. He was afflicted with Crohn's disease, an intestinal inflammation. He lived a "normal" life for the most part, but Crohn's also usually requires occasional surgeries. And so, every few years, an operation would be required to remove some inflamed tissue, after which all would return to normal.

You wouldn't have guessed.

Kyle led a very active lifestyle. He worked full time as a carbon composite engineer at Jet Propulsion Laboratory/NASA, was a licensed pilot, loved skiing, and hiking. There didn't seem to be much that could slow him down. But in the summer of 1994 he had another surgery, and this time, it was clear that something had gone very wrong.

For the sake of space, the next three-and-a-half years must be condensed into a few paragraphs. This is extremely difficult. A lot happened in those three-and-a-half years. Kyle found himself in a seemingly endless round of doctors, pain-killers, procedures, devices, and in-patient and out-patient surgeries all with the same goal: to cure the pain.

Nothing worked. Or things would work for a little while, and then the pain would return. Kyle became a helpless guinea pig in a downward spiral of pain "specialists." The Mayo Clinic and the best pain doctors at UCLA tried and failed to cure it. It was mysterious, and very exasperating.

In 1998, things got even worse. The latest experiment, an internal pain medication pump, and "last resort" was causing problems. The pump itself caused quite a lot of pain, as well as failed to control the pain from the old incision. Kyle spoke of having it removed, and going back on the pills, which everyone, Kyle included, knew would be a mistake. The future looked very bleak.

When Kyle died on March 29, 1998, it didn't come as a surprise.

The provisions of the will were fairly simple. Most all possessions were left to me, and all money and the two birds were left to the World Parrot Trust. He had told me about the will, and I never questioned his decisions. He wanted his money to go to something worthwhile, and the WPT was his favourite charity. My main concern was about whether they would take Alex and Julius.

I was delighted to learn that the World Parrot Trust would, in

fact, take the birds. I think I had assumed (incorrectly) that they were primarily a fund-raising organisation, and that their programs mostly cared for parrots in the wild. I wasn't sure they would accept two domesticated parrots for the rest of their lives. Fortunately, I was wrong.

After several conversations with Cynthia Webb, I made arrangements to ship Alex and Julius to Memphis.

I wired the cage doors shut and placed cardboard over the doors to block the view (and fingers) of anyone who might get too curious. I wasn't taking any chances. And bright and early the next morning, I took the cages and set off for the airport.

The rest went fairly smoothly. Except that as I took the boys into the terminal I suddenly realised how much I would miss them. They had been a big part of my life for four years, and I felt as if I was saying good-bye to two close friends. "Uncle Steve" didn't understand how attached he was to the boys, and I genuinely felt sadness as I turned them over to the airline officials.

I was nervous for the rest of the day. I worried about the boys continuously...it seemed there was so much that could go wrong. It was a great relief when Cynthia Webb called that evening to say that they had arrived safely. She said that someone had removed the cardboard covering the doors, and that the boys were being admired by many people at the airport while they waited to be picked up. (Not hard to understand, actually.)

Cynthia also said that it was Julius who was being a model citizen. It was Alex who was still mad, and not dealing well with the situation. I hope that by now, he's settled down!

After their quarantine period, Alex and Julius will go to their new home in Florida. I wish them well, I will miss them, and I will always be grateful to the World Parrot Trust for accepting them. They are two really good kids, and I hope their new life is a happy, healthy, and long one, with many new feathered friends.

This very sad story about Kyle Brown and his birds touches upon a number of issues of interest to the World Parrot Trust. First, it illustrates the pleasure and fulfillment of keeping birds, especially those with the intelligence of parrots. Second, it shows what a heavy responsibility it is to keep even two birds, especially when personal problems multiply. Third, it makes clear the difficulty of finding satisfactory long term solutions for the future of much loved parrots that have become virtually 'members of the family'.

Such situations occur frequently, and in our May 1998 issue of PsittaScene we published some 'Guidelines for Parrot Rescue' which attempted to outline some thoughts on the re-homing of parrots affected by a variety of circumstances. We printed some alarming numbers, suggesting that perhaps 30% of all captive parrots are neglected (200,000 in the UK, over 1 million in the US) and nobody at all has challenged our figures.

Obviously, neither the WPT nor any other organisation can handle such numbers, and ensuring the welfare of so many birds is an impossibility. For now, we have done what we can, which is to draw attention to the

problem and suggest some solutions.

Returning to Steve Shaw's account of 'Alex and Julius', we wish to express the World Parrot Trust's condolences to Steve, and to Kyle Brown's family and friends. The Trust has received a very substantial legacy from Kyle's estate, which will have much influence on the future of WPT. The trustees are considering the best way to employ these funds for the benefit of the parrots.

Alex and Julius are now living happily at the facility of a trustee of WPT-USA in Florida. In conversation with Steve Shaw, he mentioned that Kyle had been especially enchanted by Hyacinth macaws, but had never owned one. We have named one of our 1998 Hyacinths, bred at Paradise Park in the UK, after Kyle. So all being well, Kyle's name will live on for many years.

Finally, we would like to invite other WPT members to consider remembering the World Parrot Trust in their wills. We believe that after nearly ten years of commitment to the conservation and welfare of the parrots, we have established our credentials as true friends of the parrots of the world.

Michael Reynolds



The newly named Hyacinth 'Kyle' meets a young visitor to Paradise Park, UK.

What's Up Doc?

News for World Parrot Trust members

To bring our members up to date on a variety of WPT activities and interests.



Parrot Sanctuary

The idea is to build a small sanctuary for up to 100 birds in need of rescue and rehabilitation. We launched this plan in our May 1996 PsittaScene, and invited our readers to help the fundraising by adopting a group of four rescued parrots at Paradise Park, Cornwall. We had a good response to this, and from a variety of sources we have accumulated £12,000 (\$20,000) for the sanctuary. Our thanks to all who have contributed to this fund.

Recent discussions with our local authority suggest that we have a good chance of getting matching funds from the European Union to help the construction, and other funds to help employ staff especially for the sanctuary. The downside is that we will have to wait until about February 1999 to get decisions on these proposals. In the meantime we want to increase our funds to £20,000 (\$33,000), so as to maximise the government funds we hope to receive, perhaps to a total of £40,000 or £50,000. Here is a sketch of one of our proposed buildings. We should point out that one element of the project will be to design ideal pet parrot accommodation and recommend it to visitors. All part of our PARROTS NEED HELP campaign.



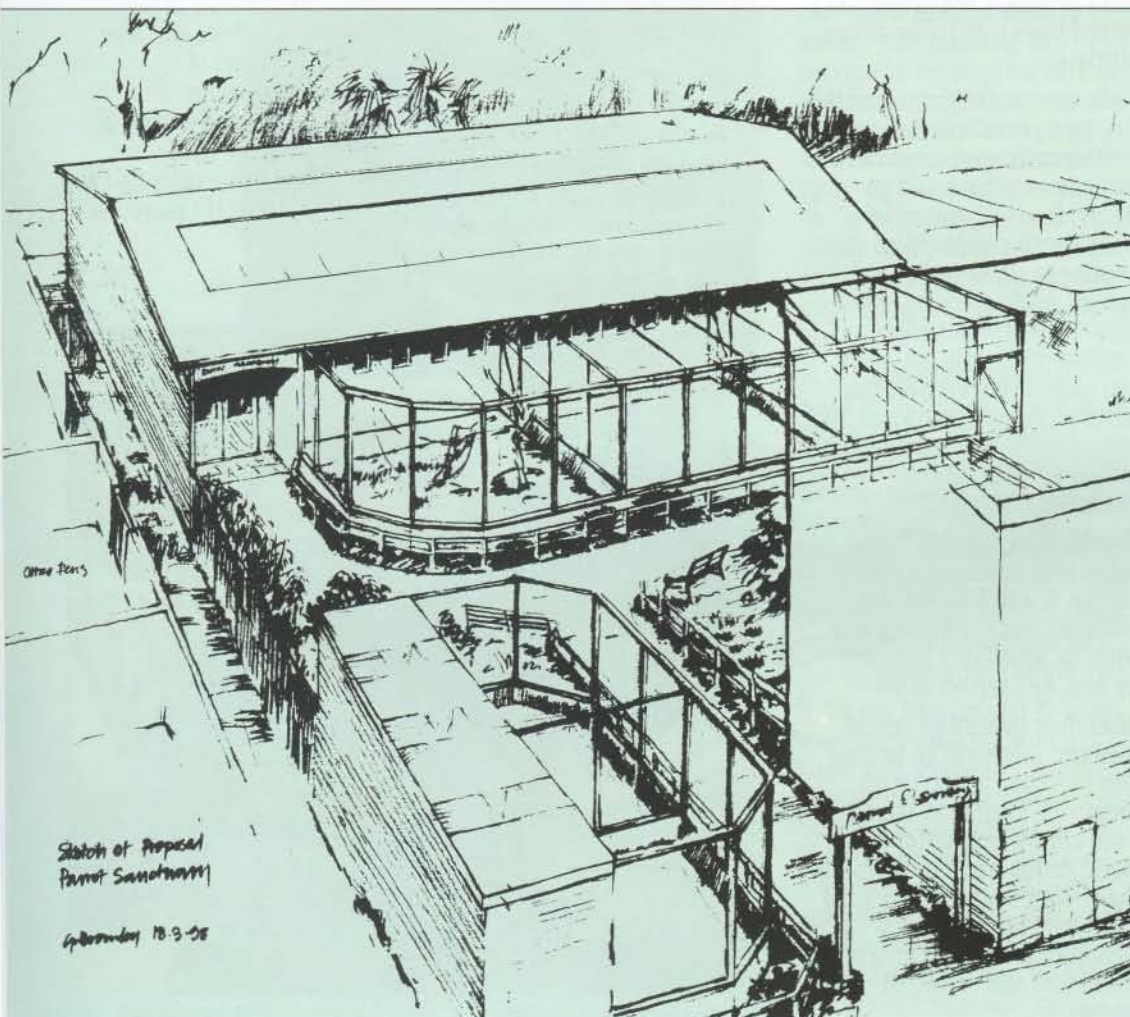
You can adopt this bird!



Readers may recall that Oscar, the most popular of our adoption parrots, sadly died last year. The next most popular bird was Rocky, a Blue-crowned Conure found in Gibraltar and flown in to us by the RAF. As the species featured in the film 'Paulie', Rocky is often pointed out by visitors to Paradise Park, and this year he has successfully raised two chicks. We would welcome new adoptions for Rocky to help build up our Parrot Sanctuary Fund. You can be an 'Adopter' for £25 (\$40), a 'Benefactor' for £50 (\$80), or a 'Patron' for £100 (\$160) or more. All categories will receive a certificate with details of the bird they have adopted.

Parrot Action Plan

This all began back in June 1995, when the WPT organised and funded a meeting in London attended by the top brass of parrot conservation. British Airways Assisting Conservation flew in ten people, without whom the meeting would have been seriously incomplete. The World Parrot Trust was asked to



coordinate the work on the new plan. After three years, and the welcome cooperation of parrot experts the world over, the four authors of the plan (Noel Snyder, Phil McGowan, Jamie Gilardi and Alejandro Grajal) met in New York in March this year to review their joint efforts.

Subsequently they completed the text and delivered it to IUCN/SSC in Switzerland. There will be a short delay while SSC check over the contents, but publication is expected by the end of this year. We will keep you informed.



Parrotroopers

One of our less serious projects (unless it is taken up and produced by a major animation studio), this concept of a group of environmentally aware parrots cleaning up the world has been inspected with interest by several production companies. At the time of writing, however, we still await a positive decision. What would help would be a donation of £20,000 to pay for a pilot film, which would assist the imagination of bean counters in film companies to grasp the potential of our troopers. When you consider that the famous turtles were so boring they had to wear different coloured headbands so you could tell them apart, imagine how exciting it would be to base your cartoon stars on over 300 species of birds of all shapes and sizes and myriad colours! Creative suggestions and contacts would be much appreciated.

WPT Branches

First to Benelux, where our founder chairman Han Assink has handed over the chair to Romain Bejstrup. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Han, who was instrumental in forming our first national branch, and has contributed his experience and wisdom for more than five years. Our sincere thanks to him.

We have a new national representative in Australia. This is Mike Owen, who lives near Brisbane, and runs a successful and highly ethical pet store. Mike is a geology Ph.D who previously worked for the Australian Government, and is well acquainted with many avicultural organisations and individuals. The Parrot Society of Australia has also offered its help to WPT, and we now hope to make further progress with our membership down under.

Canada

The World Parrot Trust booth at the first ever Canadian Parrot Symposium (West) was an outstanding success. It took place on Vancouver Island at the beginning of May. Tribute must be paid to Mike Pearson and Sharon for selling goods to the value of Can\$3,527 to the 130 participants. This is an average of \$27 per person! The new WPT Canada T-shirts and the baseball caps were best sellers. Mike Pearson reports: "We signed up ten new members, three of which were courtesy of the Hagen promotion of a free membership to those who spent over \$1000 on Hagen products. I signed up four new members from the USA. We owe a big thank you, yet again, to Mark Hagen, the Rolf C. Hagen Co and the Hagen staff who operated their booth, for their tireless efforts on behalf of the World Parrot Trust. The organisers have indicated that they intend to repeat the Symposium next year at the same time and I have advised that we will be in attendance."

The proceeds from the Hagen booth totalled the magnificent sum of \$2,202. The Trust joins Mike Pearson in extending their

thanks and appreciation to Mark Hagen and everyone at HARI.

Spain

We have just agreed to set up a new branch in Spain. This will be run by Andres Marin and Ana Metasanz, who are managers of the Guinate bird park in Lanzarote. They have wide experience of parrots, both in the Canaries and in mainland Spain, and have contacted friends who will help form a small committee to cover the whole country. They will also translate PsittaScene articles into Spanish, which will be helpful both in Spain and in Latin America.

Denmark

From Denmark, we hear that the funding provided by that enterprising branch to help the construction of Charlie Munn's Heath River (Peru) tourism and security lodge has been matched by other donors. The result is that the lodge will shortly be open for business. More news on this in a future PsittaScene.

One of our Danish members has a range of exciting jewellery items featuring parrots, as illustrated here. Suppliers of parrot related merchandise may be interested in taking on the wholesaling of this range. If so, please contact WPT-UK in the first instance.



Translations

Our total number of languages has now reached seven: English, French, German, Danish, Italian, Dutch, Spanish. Our sincere thanks to our translators, all WPT members who give their time and skill freely to the trust, and are often given insufficient time to do their

invaluable work. Without their help we would find it difficult to expand our membership in non-English speaking countries.

Conventions

Most imminent is the Loro Parque Convention, Tenerife, 17-20 September 1998. Many WPT trustees, scientific advisers, national representatives, members and friends will be there, and we will hope to arrange an informal meeting for WPT members one evening. Mike Reynolds and Andrew Greenwood can be contacted at the Botanico Hotel (Tel: (9) 22-38.14.00) for information on this, and the availability of WPT shirts etc.) We have not been granted the privilege of a WPT booth at this event.

It's late to book in for this convention, but you could try calling Loro Parque on (34) 37 38 41, or email: loroparque@jet.es.

Next in line is the Canadian Parrot Symposium 14-16 November in Toronto. Information available from Mike Pearson, PO Box 29, Mount Hope, Ontario L0R 1W0, Canada. Email: cwparrot@worldchat.com.

In Italy, our national representatives Freddie Virili and Cristiana Senni have arranged for WPT Italy to have a free booth at the European AAV (Assn. Of Avian Vets) conference to be held in Pisa May 17-22 1999. For details contact: New Team, Via Ghiretti, 2, 43100 Parma, Italy. Email: newteam@mbx.vol.it.

Australia comes next, with the major 'Birds 99' Convention taking place in Brisbane June 18-21 1999. The organisers have invited Andrew Greenwood, Charlie Munn and Mike Reynolds to attend. The good news is that only Andrew and Charlie will be giving talks.

Information about attending is available from: Bruce Beattie, PO Box 600, Numdah 4012, Queensland, Australia.



Coxen's Fig Parrot (on right).

This illustration is from *Parrots - a Guide to Parrots of the World* by Tony Juniper and Mike Parr, by kind permission of the publishers, Pica Press.

In connection with this convention, readers may like to know about an exciting expedition planned to follow on from it, organised by Joe Forshaw and the Currumbin Sanctuary in Queensland. This will go for four days to the Iron Range National Park, where it will be possible to see such birds as Palm Cockatoos, Fig Parrots, Eclectus Parrots, Magnificent Riflebirds etc. Please write for more information to: Iron Range Expedition, Currumbin Sanctuary, Currumbin, Queensland 4223, Australia. Email: mail@currumbin-sanctuary.org.au.

Fundraising Challenges

We receive quite a few funding proposals each year from conservation biologists and others, and these are reviewed by our scientific advisory panel, which consists of Charles Munn, Andrew Greenwood, Joe Forshaw and Roger Wilkinson. We do what we can to help wherever justified, depending on our financial position. Mostly, however, our donations are quite small, but experience shows that when WPT makes a contribution this often

encourages other organisations to chip in also.

Currently we are wrestling with the biggest challenge we have ever undertaken, and that is to find £35,000 (\$55,000) a year for three years to meet the cost of the Echo Parakeet programme in Mauritius.

We have published several reports in previous issues of *PsittaScene* which describe the importance, and the success, of this trailblazing conservation effort. This work is master-minded by Carl Jones, to whom we will present our 'Carolina Medal' in London on September 24th. It's interesting to note that when WPT started helping with the Echo, less than 12 birds existed, and only three females.

At the time of writing we have raised only £24,000, half of it donated by The Parrot Society, to whom we, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and the Mauritian Wildlife Fund are all most grateful. The World Parrot Trust UK is providing £10,000, and another £2,000 has been subscribed. That leaves £11,000, or \$18,000, to be found by the end of 1998. A lot of money, but we must have readers who would like to be associated with what is

arguably the world's most exciting and parrot conservation project. Please think hard about what you may be able to do personally, or by using contacts with sources of funds for conservation. We all know a few well-heeled people, and this is a most worthy cause. We can supply a copy of the full report on the Echo Project, if this will help fundraising efforts. Thanks.

Lear's Macaw

In our next issue we will be discussing the complex situation surrounding Lear's Macaw.

WPT has provided substantial funds over several years to support the work of Dr. Charles Munn in NE Brazil, where Lear's Macaw lives, and we intend to keep this funding going.

Last year our donation of \$8000 was used twice: first, to help establish the financial viability of BioBrasil, a new conservation foundation based in Salvador, Bahia (Charlie Munn has helped create this organisation), and then it was used to provide protection for Lear's Macaw.

Any fresh news about Lear's, inside and outside of Brazil, would be appreciated.



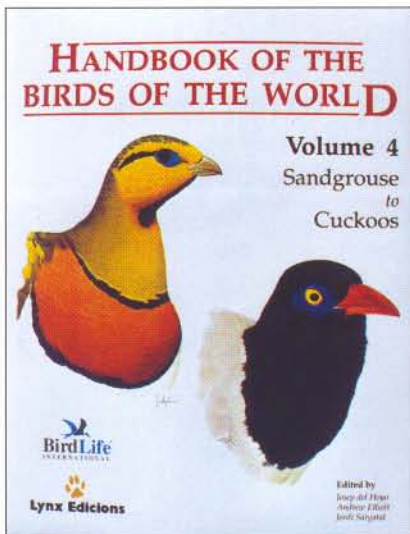
A Lear's Macaw at Busch Gardens, Florida.



An adult Echo Parakeet in the wild.

Book Review

by Rosemary Low



HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD is a unique and extremely ambitious series. When complete, every bird species in the world will have been described and illustrated. The scope and quality of each volume is unparalleled. The latest volume, volume 4, is one of great interest to aviculturists. It contains every species of Parrot, Pigeon and Turaco, also Cuckoos and Sandgrouse.

This volume covers 837 species in its 679 pages. The Cuckoos, for example, cover 33 pages written by Australian Ian Rowley, and the Parrots 202 pages (from Dr Nigel Collar of Birdlife). The format is as follows for each order of birds, using the Parrots as an example. There are 23 pages of introductory text containing 24 photographs in the Cuckoo section and 59 pages with 67 photographs in the parrot section. There are some outstanding photographs: Stephen Dalton's Scarlet Macaw in flight, and Roland Seitre's Tahiti Blue Lory at a banana palm, are breathtaking. Another Seitre photo shows a Blue-fronted Amazon emerging from a terrestrial termite mound in which it may have been nesting. Less spectacular but so appealing is Gunter Ziesler's photograph of six little Mountain Parakeets drinking from a stream in the Andes. Without exception, all the photographs in the book are excellent (it is a veritable treasury of photos of birds in the wild). The introductory pages are followed by those in which all the species are described and illustrated. There is a distribution map for each one. Blue areas show the non-breeding range and

green areas the sum of the two. For each species there are notes under the headings of taxonomy, Sub-species and distribution, Habitat, Food, Breeding, Movements and Status and Conservation. Red print draws one's attention to the status Vulnerable and Endangered. The Bibliography for each species, usually very extensive, is one of the most remarkable aspects of the book. It allows the serious student to research further information. In total, Cockatoos and Parrots span pages 246 to 477.

Each colour plate shows about 15 species; male and female illustrated where appropriate. The plates were executed by 18 artists. The artistic style varies somewhat. One can distinguish different styles. Some are excellent; evidently the artist was familiar with at least some of the birds in life. The African parrots, and the Caiques and *Pionopsitta*, for example, are extremely life-like and a joy to look at. In contrast, some of the Hanging Parrots, Kings and others Australian parakeets remind one of stretched museum skins. The colours on some of the *Pyrrhura* Conures and the rotund forms rendered some species unrecognisable to my eyes.

The text for each species is good although, of necessity, brief. Some sub-species have been re-named; for example, the Greater Patagonian Conure (*Cyanoliseus patagonus byroni*) becomes *C.p.bloxami*. The German species names should have been checked by a German-speaking person; there are quite a few mistakes.

However, these comparatively minor points do not detract from the overall value of this monumental work. It is quite outstanding and will surely remain a most valuable general reference for many years to come. It is impressive to note that a tome of this size, published in December 1997, can contain so many references to papers published in 1997. Quite a feat!

Handbook of the Birds of the World, volume 4 (ISBN 84-87334-22-9) is published by Lynx Edicions of Barcelona in association with BirdLife International. It costs £110, and can be obtained from: St. Ann's Books, at Gt. Malvern, WR14 3DR. Tel: 01684 562818.

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WPT Web Sites:

USA: <http://www.funnyfarmexotics.com/WPT>
Canada: <http://www.worldchat.com/parrot/cwparrot.htm>
Italy: <http://www.mediavillage.it/wpt>
Denmark: <http://www.image.dk/fpewpt>

Parrots in the Wild

Psitta Scene



Blue & Gold Macaw

Ara ararauna

We are indebted to Charlie Munn for this inspiring shot of a pair of Blue and Gold macaws flying to a clay-lick near Tambopata, Peru. This species is still relatively numerous in many parts of its enormous distribution area, which is equalled, among the macaws, only by the Green-winged macaw.

Like others of the larger parrots, the Blue and Gold Macaw is still

hunted for the pot in some areas, and is subject to trapping for the pet trade. For example, Guyana still allows a quota of these birds to be exported, and many hundreds still come into the UK each year. This is regrettable, when one considers that this species is easily bred in captivity, and seems to stand up to a domestic life better than most.