

Psitta scene

The World Parrot Trust

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HELPING THE SURVIVAL OF THE KAKAPO

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A Veterinary Review of the Kakapo Management Programme

After about eighteen months of discussion and difficulties with funding, my invitation to visit New Zealand finally came through in April 1997. Don Merton and his colleagues, who make up the New Zealand Department of Conservation's (DoC) Kakapo Management Team, asked me to spend two weeks with them assessing all the veterinary and husbandry aspects of their programme. Needless to say, I did not need to be asked twice and by the middle of April I was on my way. The timing proved to be perfect.

We have read much of the Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) and its plight in recent issues of *Psittascene*. Suffice to say that by April 1997 it stood at a population of 50 birds with a high preponderance of males, and all the birds were "marooned" in semi-captivity on small offshore islands where they were under increasingly intensive management. A single handreared captive female "Hoki" resulted from the last successful breeding which occurred in 1992. The species is officially extinct in the wild.

Getting to New Zealand is no joke. The fastest flight is via Los Angeles on Air New Zealand and even that takes a crippling 24 hours, arriving early in the morning. This allowed me to catch an internal flight the full length of the country to Invercargill at the southernmost tip, the nearest airport to Codfish Island which was my ultimate destination.

Codfish Island is where the majority of surviving Kakapo live, and where the current management effort is greatest.

At Invercargill airport, which is a bit like Stornoway or Bangor, I met up with Bill Moffat, who was to pilot me over to the island in his small plane. There would be a delay until the late afternoon, Bill said somewhat cryptically, because of the tide.

Not fully taking this in, I set off into the small town to visit the Southland Museum where I learned a little about life in the South Island and watched their fascinating and unique exhibit of breeding tuatara (*Sphenodon punctatus*). Invercargill in April is a cold damp little town which could easily be in the

Hebrides. Back at the airport in the afternoon, Bill loaded me into a small, single-engined aircraft along with tanks of fuel and other supplies and, with a tremendous roar from a very powerful engine, we took off straight out over the Southern Ocean, apparently headed for Antarctica. For the next 45 minutes I felt extremely vulnerable until the reassuring bulk of Stewart Island appeared in front of us, but we passed it on our left and pushed on to a much smaller island which was Codfish (I had not had time to do my geography homework before setting off). The obvious feature of Codfish was that it was hump-shaped and hilly and could not possibly conceal a landing strip, which is when the significance of

the tide hit me - we were going to land on the beach! A quick pass to make sure all was clear, and Bill flipped the plane around, dropped it seemingly within inches of some rocky outcrops, and made a perfect landing just at the water's edge. I had finally arrived at the other end of the earth.

Waiting to meet me were Don Merton, legendary saviour of the Black Robin and the leading expert on the Kakapo, Grant Harper and his colleague Ros Cole who run the island, and an assortment of DoC staffers and volunteers working on the birds. They all grabbed my bags and the rest of the supplies and led the way through the sand dunes to an extremely well-appointed wooden house, which was the island



"Zephyr" Kakapo and her 40 day old (1.24kg) nestling "Tiwai", Codfish Island.

Photo: Don Merton

“psittacine

(sit'ă sîn) Belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like”

If we can save the parrots, we may yet save ourselves © WPT



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base. As is the rule on all New Zealand's predator free islands, nothing could be opened until all the bags had been placed in a sealed room, and then everything was thoroughly searched for any rodent stowaways.

Despite the remoteness of the island and the difficulties in keeping it supplied, the base was very comfortable and well-equipped, although with so many people around Grant had had to enlist the help of his mother to cook for everyone. At the peak there were sixteen people working from the base, most of them looking after the Kakapo but a couple of them working on the nesting petrels. The great news was that I had arrived in the middle of the first breeding season of the Kakapo on Codfish since 1992, and the team were guarding two nests with chicks and handrearing one rescued bird.

THE KAKAPO TEAM

The core members of the Kakapo Management Team number four. My interpretation of the different roles they play is my own, but basically I saw Don Merton as the wildlife manager, Graeme Elliot as the scientific ornithologist and Paul "Scratch" Jansen as the manager of the team and electronics wizard, although each of them could perform well in any of these roles. The fourth member, Daryl Eason, I had met before when he came over to Britain to study handrearing techniques at the World Parrot Trust's base at Paradise Park and with Shirley Lawton. It was Daryl's crucial and unenviable job to handrear any rescued chicks. At some time or other during my stay all of the team came through the island to play a part in the work. Other DoC staffers came from all over the place to lend a hand for shorter periods, and each of them had fascinating stories of their work all over the Southern oceans, from the Pacific Islands to the sub-Antarctic and on everything from the New Zealand dotterel to right whales.

I had been regularly briefed by Don by fax and telephone as to progress with the breeding season. Nine of the ten females were believed to have mated and, of these, six actually laid. Of seven fertile eggs, five had hatched, two attempts having been made to pull eggs. There were four surviving chicks but one had been with a female which was not supplementary fed and she was unable to support it. The chick had been pulled at 12 days, hand-reared by Daryl to 21 days and fostered back to a fed female still sitting an infertile clutch. She had seemed to



Andrew Greenwood of World Parrot Trust, UK with injured Kakapo "Ken". Photo: Don Merton

take to it well. The other three chicks were in two other nests with fed females.

Don then brought me up to date. The fostered chick, now called "Gromet" had had to be rescued again because of inadequate weight gain. So it was back under Daryl's care. Of the two chicks in one nest, there were concerns about the respiration of one bird, although it was growing well, and the others seemed fine.

Kakapo management falls into two parts. In the winter and non-breeding seasons, the majority of birds are supplementary fed. Each bird carries a radio-transmitter on a harness so it can be easily located and the transmitters have alarm signals which indicate when a bird is immobile for too long. Kakapo are fed at feeding stations which have specially designed feed hoppers to exclude rats and other birds. To reach the hoppers, they have to stand on a scale, which records their weight and downloads it to a data logger buried nearby. Feeding is mostly done by visiting volunteers together with the resident island managers. Food is prepared in a purpose-built kitchen and all food items weighed before and after feeding to determine the food intake and preferences of the birds. At feeding times the information from the data loggers is collected and returned to base. Activity of the birds and their movements are followed by triangulating their position with the radio receivers.

BREEDING SEASON

When a breeding season starts, activity increases dramatically, both for the birds and the biologists. Kakapo are nocturnal and the biologists have to become nocturnal too. The birds breed on a lekking system: males boom from set positions and females move into their areas to be mated. Soon after this, long periods of immobility on the part of the females indicate possible nesting, and each nest is

located and a watch set up.

Nest management of the Kakapo is the most astonishing operation I have ever seen. The biologists move into a routine which resembles a cross between an SAS close protection squad and a premature baby unit. A camp is established 50 metres from the nest, which is usually in a hole under a fallen tree and whose site has been marked by a transmitter. While the female's behaviour is constantly monitored by radio, a predator exclusion grid of rat traps and poisoned bait is set up extending out to 100 m. from the nest. Fortunately, the only predator on Codfish is the Pacific rat or kiore (*Rattus exulans*) which is small but still capable of taking eggs and chicks. A video camera system is set in the nest, using infra-red light, from which cables run back to the camp to a time-lapse recorder. The system is based on the technology of the video entry-phone. Nests are watched from dusk to dawn, which is when the females leave to feed. So when the nestminders arrive, they switch on the screen in the tent to check the nest. When the female leaves on a foraging trip, a beam triggers a bell in the tent. The screen is switched on and one minder watches for rats while the other makes for the nest and remains there on guard until the female, signalled by her transmitter, returns. If there is a rat-attack in the time it takes for the second minder to reach the nest, the first minder presses the "entry" button which remotely triggers a small detonator on the camera to frighten the rat! When the female is on the nest, the minders can rest until wakened by the "door-bell" as she leaves again. The battery powered time-lapse recorder runs continuously and tapes are taken back to base for analysis and detailed record keeping over breakfast. And this goes on all night, every night, through the entire nesting period. Back at base, the nest controller is in touch with

the minders by radio or mobile phone throughout the night to help with problems and decision-making.

My first tour of the island was in the daytime with Graeme Elliot, who showed me the layout of the feeding areas and the lekking grounds, the so-called “track and bowl systems” where the males boom out their invitation during the months of late winter and early spring.

Two days later, after my knees had recovered, Don took me up for a night in the woods. This was a chick-weighing night and so we were able to go right up to a nest and handle one of the chicks. I never actually saw an adult wild Kakapo except on a video-screen, but Don has had them walk over his feet while sitting in the dark.

Chicks are weighed and carefully examined every two days and, when they are young, are kept warm on the nest while the mother is away using a heated cover on the end of a long pole. Some of the nests can be quite damp and removing the chick safely demands some deft work with poles and bags. Moving in the woods at night, guided only by head lights, is quite tricky and you never know what you are going to meet. It was astonishing for me to see the Yellow-eyed penguins (*Megadyptes antipodes*), the rarest penguin in the world, walking through the trees 200 metres from the sea, for all the world like Pooh looking for honey. I simply had not realized that these sea birds nested in burrows high up on these small islands.

The gradual development of respiratory distress and wheezing, only detectable because of the close surveillance, led to the rescue of a second chick for hand-rearing, which came to be named “Sirocco”. Daryl had to share his rearing facilities with the kitchen where the bird food was prepared, keeping the chicks in brooders, but eventually we commandeered Ros’s bedroom after she went on leave, so as to be

able to keep the chicks in open buckets in a more stable warm environment. Kakapo chicks are extremely fat and covered in thick down, so they can easily overheat.

The chicks were reared on Lake’s diet, which was the only one available. I had brought some Kaytee Exact with me, but the Department of Agriculture would not allow it in without a permit. Lake’s seemed to do the chicks quite well and they grew quite successfully, reaching weights over one kilogram whilst I was there.

RESPIRATORY PROBLEM

We treated Sirocco’s respiratory problem empirically with antibiotics and antifungals and he (as he turned out to be) did well. Gromet became “Gromette” as it became clear later on that she was female. Both chicks were later moved off the island and reared elsewhere, but unfortunately “Gromette” eventually succumbed probably as a result of her difficult early start. The other two chicks went on to fledge with their respective mothers but both turned out to be males, raising the male number to 34 in total. Sirocco has since been released onto the island.

Another bird needing treatment was an adult named “Ken”, who had been suffering for some long time with an unhealed wound from a transmitter harness. Ken had been in captivity in an enclosure on Codfish for three months doing well, and I had previously been consulted about him by Graeme over the phone, the longest distance consultation this practice has ever had. The staff had become adept at cleaning his wound and changing his bandages, which he submitted to with a grace unusual in parrots, but there was a lot of work still to be done. Now, almost a year later, he has finally healed and should be ready for release soon.

When I was due to leave Codfish, the weather was too bad for even Bill Moffat to attempt a landing so,

giving some indication of the financial input into this programme, the team summoned a helicopter to take myself and one of the petrel biologists back to Invercargill. The low level flight over the sea gave a tremendous view of the thousands of petrels, albatrosses and mollyhawks which quarter the Southern oceans and follow the fishing boats. From Invercargill, I travelled back to Nelson to meet up with Graeme Elliot. Graeme and I then drove down to the coast where we were met by Gideon Climo, the Kakapo warden on Maud Island. Gideon ferried us out through the fiords to the Island where we stayed overnight and had a chance to see Kakapo management on another, totally different, island. We also spent time with “Hoki”, the only surviving female chick since 1981, who was by then 5 years old having been hand-reared at the Auckland Zoo. Hoki lives in her own large enclosure, but was free to come and go through a cat flap and consort with the other eight Kakapo on the island. Hoki has since been released on Codfish Island.

After two weeks in New Zealand it was time to leave, but on the way Graeme and I were able to have a brief discussion with Peter Stockdale, Dean of the Massey University Veterinary School and a keen supporter of the Kakapo project, and I was able to spend a day at the Auckland Zoo. This was not entirely tourism, as the zoo has established an Endangered Species Centre where they are doing important work with Kiwi and other New Zealand birds and also breeding the North Island Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*).

The last Kakapo chicks to be rescued had been taken to Auckland Zoo in 1992 and so the zoo had some valuable experience and were naturally lobbying to take on further responsibilities. Then it was the long trip home and a long and comprehensive veterinary report to

write for the Management Team.

My brief from the Kakapo team had been to review all the veterinary and husbandry aspects of the programme. I was able to range as widely as I wished, which led me even into discussions about what kind of general wildlife veterinary service was needed in New Zealand. Quite a lot of my ideas and suggestions had already been under consideration locally by others, and it was gratifying to see that a considerable number of them were taken up very quickly. The best one can hope for is to act as a catalyst in these situations, particularly by promoting the cross-fertilisation of ideas and cementing the technical and personal ties with other similar projects elsewhere. New Zealand’s DoC works particularly closely with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and there are New Zealand field workers working on the Echo parakeet every season. Indeed this year three of the people I met on Codfish are on Mauritius.

FIELD MANAGEMENT

I looked at all aspects of the field management of the Kakapo and the risks connected with different types of interference with the birds, at disease threats to the species, especially from other birds, and the need for a comprehensive health audit of the species. I also reviewed nutrition and hand rearing, particularly considering concerns which have been expressed from outside the programme about the possible influence of plant hormones on the breeding of the birds. More generally, I reviewed the needs for future research, the possible role of captive breeding and the requirements for future veterinary support to the field programme.

The more one sees of these projects, the more one realises the problems are the same. Supplementary feeding of birds, for example, although crucial to help



Andrew Heaphy on “nest minder” duty at “Alice”
Photo: Don Merton



Andrew Greenwood and Co. aboard Trevor Green's helicopter taking section of board-walk up to top. Photo: Don Merton



Kakapo Management Team (left to right): Graeme Elliott (Scientist), Don Merton (Senior Technical Officer), Paul Jansen (Manager) and Daryl Eason.

some species in marginal habitat rear their young, causes inevitable risks, both from the quality and quantity of food provided and from the “bird-table” effect, which tends to concentrate other species into the feeding area, including in the Kakapo’s case other psittacines like Kakariki (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*) and Kaka, which may present special disease risks. Selection by the birds from a mixed diet is a problem, just as in aviculture, and development of a Kakapo pellet is now under way in New Zealand. The work of the feeding volunteers was very well done and hygiene standards were very high.

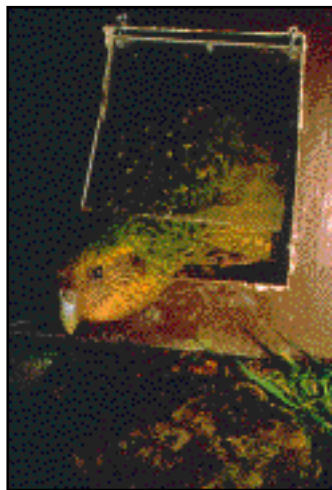
I could find very little fault with the management of breeding Kakapo, but was able to introduce some techniques we have used in Mauritius, including regular changes of nest substrate (Kakapo are poor house-keepers) and its treatment with safe fungicides and insecticides to reduce the risk of aspergillosis and parasitism. Petrels are also a risk, using and sometimes invading Kakapo holes and, like all sea birds, are probably carriers of chlamydia and influenza virus.

A lot of the past failures in the Kakapo programme, as the team would readily admit, were due to an imposed policy of hands-off management, attempting to increase the number of parent-reared chicks without risking that process in any way. Efforts around the world are beginning to show that this is not necessarily the best way to rapidly increase absolute numbers of birds, which is the only insurance against chance events leading to extinction. This season, Don and the team finally had their way and intervention at all stages led, eventually, to considerable success. Necessarily, birds will come into captivity as a result of the rescue process, and it was important that the facilities for their care were up to the best avicultural standards. I recommended that Kakapo continue to be reared near their natal home. The advantages to this are easy interchange with the wild, minimizing external disease risks and transport and immediate involvement of the rearing team with rescue decisions. The disadvantage is mainly the lack of support facilities and the strain on the hand rearer, so I recommended two people be involved and the facilities improved to provide a separate brooder room. Closer disease monitoring through simple microbiology on site and more

standardised record-keeping were also needed. For the future, Codfish has been selected for the major Kakapo breeding effort and it is to be hoped the facilities can be upgraded in parallel.

DISEASE RISKS

The Kakapo has been a remarkably disease-free species; in fact there has been no adult mortality for four years, and very little in the last ten years. Nevertheless, in order to assess disease risks and to have the background information against which to respond should a problem arise, I recommended a much more comprehensive testing programme. The Kakapo is probably the only species in the world in which every



“Hoki” Kakapo using modified cat-door in pen fence. Photo: Gideon Climo

single individual is not only known and marked, but also handled annually (for transmitter changes). This provides a unique opportunity to conduct a complete health audit on the species, instead of just surveying a representative sample. The birds are also large and easy to handle, which allows substantial blood samples to be taken. My recommendations were for best possible practice and no doubt not all of them can be carried out, but I believe this sort of study to be a priority for all endangered species. Testing should also be extended to the wild species, especially other psittacines, to see what risks are present in the environment.

The large number of workers, both professional and volunteer, involved with close management of the birds led to a recommendation for increased human biosecurity. This simply meant that staff should stay away from pet birds and poultry, use separate protective clothing on the islands and the recognition that visiting experts (including vets!)

represent a disease risk to the birds.

Finding ways to boost production of the Kakapo is the main concern of the Management Team. At the current rate of progress, we will all be retired before the bird is saved. Inevitably there were questions about both the success rate under “natural” breeding regimes and the possibilities for manipulation. Fertility is quite good (for a critically endangered bird), eggs hatch well but too many chicks have been lost and all the work initiated in this last season should go towards maximising survival in the future. Some males clearly are not succeeding in producing fertile eggs, however, and their basic fertility needs to be investigated. One male has been known to mate with a researcher’s sweater, opening up the possibility of semen collection and evaluation using a surrogate or dummy bird. Artificial insemination has been widely discussed, but I did not feel it was a viable option nor a priority at present. Increasing egg production is another approach, but Kakapo show no inclination to recycle after a clutch fails. It may be that work done on the King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) may have some relevance here. The penguin’s long refractory period can be overcome by using drugs used in human fertility problems. Other hormone manipulations might induce females to return to the lek for another mating.

CAPTIVE BREEDING

Captive breeding of Kakapo has long been a controversial subject. They have always proven very difficult to keep alive in the past, and a review of the programme in 1995 came out strongly against this as an option. However, that review overlooked the inevitable fact that close attention to the breeding birds will result in captive birds as a result of rescue, and the success in keeping Ken and Hoki alive suggests that this is not impossible. The natural mating system of the Kakapo was also felt to mitigate against captive breeding, but there are a number of lekking species, most notably the capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), which breed readily without needing to carry out their full display. Those of us who work with captive species rapidly become aware that birds and mammals only appear to need certain items in their behavioural repertoire to breed successfully, and the rest is really “froth”. My feeling was that the best way to break the cycle of dependency which the Kakapo

appears to have on the intermittent fruiting of trees which severely limits the frequency of breeding attempts, would be to try with a very small number of birds in captivity, keeping those which become captive through rescue. Such birds would also provide the opportunity for research on many aspects of the bird’s biology which are not understood. Of all my recommendations, this is the one which I am most disappointed has not been taken up, since all the birds, including Hoki, have now been released onto Codfish. There are signs, however, of another possible breeding season starting up this year, which would be good news indeed.

FUTURE SUPPORT

Future veterinary support for the Kakapo programme is essential, both for monitoring the birds and reviewing the health of the population, and for coping with handreared and rescued birds. My recommendation, which backed up plans already under consideration, was that there be a wildlife pathologist appointed at the Veterinary University to oversee wildlife disease problems in New Zealand, and also a wildlife clinician who could look after all DoC’s operations and undertake the field side of the programme. So I was thrilled to hear recently that my old friend Wayne Boardman, a British vet who has worked with Kakapo at the Auckland Zoo and also worked at the Perth Zoo, has returned to New Zealand to take up a wildlife post.

The Kakapo programme is a tremendous project and certainly deserves to succeed. The faith which the New Zealand government has put in the team (to the tune of one million NZ dollars a year!) is fully justified in my view. The cross-fertilisation of ideas between this and other similar programmes is vital; all these efforts to save endangered birds run into similar problems and seem to be run by scientists of immense ingenuity. Indeed it is as a result of this collaboration that my veterinary review came about.

It only remains for me to thank all the members of the Kakapo team for the unique opportunity to see them, and the Kakapo, at work, and the Department of Conservation and their sponsor Comalco for funding the trip, and to wish the whole project the very best of success in the future. The Kakapo is in very good hands indeed.



A visit to Paradise **By Dana Ripper**



Conservation of birds presents both problems and benefits unique to the group. The appeal of birds, especially parrots, to humans makes them excellent for promoting conservation to the general public. Further, because birds are highly evolved, specialised organisms, they may be used as indicators of the overall quality of their resident ecosystems. However, these factors are but the complementary side of the infamous double-edged sword. Because we have such an affinity for birds, they are highly at risk for capture for the pet trade; because they are so specialised, habitat destruction and human overpopulation often takes a larger toll on bird populations than on any other group of animals.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Based on the complexity of this situation as well as my own love for birds, I decided to undertake a research project which led me to spend two weeks at Paradise Park in December of 1997. The purpose of this project was to analyse the role of private bird sanctuaries in the overall context of contemporary wildlife conservation. As you are probably aware, over the past 50 years, zoos and private animal collections have been undergoing an 'evolution' of sorts, from simple, often exploitative exhibition centres, to effective components of species and habitat conservation. Such establishments are becoming an increasingly important part of the effort to halt the global extinction crisis for which we are responsible. Conservation centres such as Paradise Park, in concert with not-for-profit organisations like the World Parrot Trust, are in a unique position to make significant contributions to conservation in the following ways:

1. EDUCATION OF THE ZOO-GOING PUBLIC:

It is estimated that, world-wide, approximately 620 million people visit zoos on a yearly basis (Wheater 1995). This provides an enormous potential student body that may be taught about the need for conservation. I will maintain that the education of the public is the largest contribution zoos can make, for several reasons. From a practical standpoint, residents of developed countries in the United States and Europe collectively possess the money necessary to realise the goals of environmental organisations. In many cases, they also have the ability to support (or deny support to) political actions that affect wildlife and the environment. To take a more idealistic perspective, education about threats to biological diversity is necessary because only with a change in the way the natural world is viewed can long-term preservation of this diversity be sustained.

Paradise Park works to educate its patrons in a number of ways. Displays at the exhibit cages indicate the birds' geographic distribution and conservation status. Posters displayed at various points in the Park and literature available in the gift shop indicate the problems faced by birds and the measures being taken to help them. As readers of this newsletter are aware, the World Parrot Trust educates its members about all aspects of parrot conservation around the world, from recent field research to avicultural news. I have found the articles in *PsittaScene* to be incredibly informative and, in most cases, provided information unavailable elsewhere.

2. CAPTIVE BREEDING AND MAINTENANCE OF A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CAPTIVE BIRDS.

In many ways, the modern zoo has been forced into becoming a Noah's Ark for species threatened with extinction. Interactive management of wild and captive individuals, such as in the case of the Echo Parakeets reared for release, is sometimes necessary to maintain genetically viable populations or to boost the numbers of dangerously small ones. On other occasions, such as in the case of the Guam Rail, captive populations are maintained because the species has been extirpated in the wild (Wiese and Hutchins, 1994). While usually the primary objective of such programs is reintroduction,

increasing loss of habitat may mean there will be no place to return birds to (see point number 3).

The large number of parrots already maintained in captivity (albeit often at the cost of the wild populations) provides a large resource on which we may draw both sheer numbers of individuals and genetic diversity, if captive birds are properly managed. There is an increasing realisation that successful breeding is considerably enhanced by a positive, intellectually stimulating environment (Shepherdson, 1994). This also makes for happier, healthier birds! Paradise Park provides its birds with large aviaries fitted with vegetation and natural perches of various sizes. Birds are able to interact with conspecifics as well as members of other species. Most impressive are the three large flight cages, in which large parrots of several different species are housed. I was told by several staff members that the Park would like to build more of these larger flights (I observed that they definitely have the space for them), but funds for such a project are simply unavailable at the moment. To date, many rare birds have bred at Paradise Park, the offspring of some of which have been moved to other collections for further breeding. In such a way, the Park has added considerably to the genetic resources of captive birds.

3. HABITAT CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION OF LOCAL PEOPLE

Fact: The most well-planned ex-situ conservation programs, carried out with the best of intentions, in the finest zoos, can not save the world's birds unless their wild homes are also saved. Even if we could indefinitely maintain every species of bird in captivity, I believe we still would have lost not only the battle for true conservation but also would have fallen short of our ethical potential as human beings. Conservation of habitat, especially in areas of high biological diversity such as the tropics, requires not only the support of government but also the education of local people.

Establishments like Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust can (and often do) contribute to in situ conservation in two extremely important ways. 1) By funding field research that will result in data to support recommendations to appropriate government bodies, which can lead to the designation of

crucial habitat as a nationally protected area, and 2) by funding and taking part in education programs that teach native people about the aesthetic and scientific value of their indigenous wildlife. The latter endeavour must be tempered by the establishment of a sustainable use ethic. People in developing nations (where a high percentage of the world's threatened birds reside) can not be expected to halt their exploitation of natural resources simply because we feel that it is wrong; financially viable alternatives must be provided to such activities as clear-cutting forests for agriculture and harvesting parrots for the pet trade.

In its short existence, the World Parrot Trust has made admirable contributions to *in situ* conservation. The Echo Parakeet project and the educational buses provided to several Caribbean islands and Paraguay address both the conservation of habitat and the need for involvement of local people. Further, the field research projects funded by the WPT and the on-going Parrot Action Plan will help to provide necessary data to fill gaps in our knowledge of the biology and ecology of parrots. The need for strong scientific data in the field of conservation biology can not be overemphasised: we will not be able to save that which we do not understand.

Acknowledgements: I must say that I was very impressed with the overall organisation of Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust, as well as the goals upon which each was constructed. Everyone on the staff - in fact, everyone in the entire county of Cornwall - was wonderful to me and made my visit not only informative but also pleasant. I would like to thank the Richter Fellowship Committee of North Central College for funding this trip, as well as the Reynolds family and David Woolcock of Paradise Park and WPT for providing me with their knowledge and a gracious welcome.

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Action Sampiri - Can we save the Red-and-blue Lory?

by Jon Riley

The beautiful Red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*) is rapidly becoming one of the rarest parrots in Indonesia. The lory is endemic to the small islands of Sangihe and Talaud, scattered to the north of Sulawesi, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Within its extremely small world range, the future of this charismatic species is threatened by a combination of the accelerating loss of its forest habitat and over exploitation for the wild bird trade. In the last three years the Red-and-blue Lory has been the focus of much international effort to ascertain the threats faced by it and to begin urgently the required action needed to prevent the lory from drifting towards extinction.

Almost nothing was known about the species' population status, ecology or present distribution when, in 1992, many hundreds of Red-and-blue Lorries suddenly began to appear in traders' markets in Singapore, one of the hubs of the trade in South-east Asian wildlife. Concern was expressed by international conservation bodies that such large numbers of birds, of a species virtually unknown to science, should be so vigorously traded and, in 1994, as a result of a suggestion from the Indonesian government, the Red-and-blue Lory was placed on Appendix 1 of CITES, banning all international trade in the species.

ISLAND SURVEY

In 1995 I led the first ornithological expedition to survey comprehensively the Sangihe and Talaud islands this century; our primary target was the Red-and-blue Lory. The key conclusions from this expedition were: first, that the lory, historically known from four islands in the Sangihe group, was now restricted to the largest island, Sangihe and very rare, being found at only one site; secondly, that on Talaud the species was commoner than previously thought, but suffering from exploitation by bird trappers, and was almost extinct on all islands except Karakelang. It was our opinion that more work was needed urgently on the islands and we resolved to organise a follow-up project in 1996. Action Sampiri was born.

Taking its name from the local name for the Red-and-blue Lory, Action Sampiri aimed to gather

more information on the species' ecology, distribution and population size and the bird trade on the islands, whilst at the same time attempting to raise awareness of the species' plight, both on Sangihe and Talaud and in northern Sulawesi. Action Sampiri lasted for a total of six months. Two months spent on Sangihe, three months on Talaud and a month in Manado, the provincial capital of north Sulawesi. It is now clear that the Red-and-blue Lory is currently experiencing a massive population decline and, that without immediate corrective action, there is a strong possibility of the species becoming extinct or, at the very least, extremely rare, in the near future.

On the Sangihe islands no sightings were made of the lory, which is represented on these islands by an endemic subspecies, by our research team in 1996. It is not known if this population still persists. On Sangihe there has been almost total conversion of natural forests to agricultural plantations and any lory population undoubtedly will be small. The few scattered forest remnants on Sangihe are also small and are unlikely to support many parrots. Despite the lack of sightings, local people still reported the lorries to be present, and it is suggested seasonal movements of birds in search of food resources, could explain their absence from the site lorries were observed at in 1995.

The Talaud islands now support the vast majority of the world population of the Red-and-blue Lory. Even on these isolated and undeveloped islands, the lory is close to extinction on two of the three islands and is found in large numbers only on Karakelang, the largest of all the Talaud islands. Action Sampiri estimates that the total world population does not exceed 4,000 birds, yet on Karakelang the lory is experiencing a rapid population decline due to one key factor, trapping. In 1996 we estimate that 1,600 lorries were trapped on Karakelang and wherever we travelled within Talaud there was evidence of the effect this was having on the birds' wild population. In October 1995 at a village called Tuabatu in central Karakelang, I counted at least 253 lorries flying into roost at a

traditional roosting tree. In February 1997, I counted only 52 birds roosting at this tree - a decline of 80% in just 18 months. Local people often describe roost sites that must have held hundreds of birds and in 1889, a British naturalist called Hickson describes watching hundreds of birds flying to a roost on two small islands offshore of Karakelang. This latter site is now deserted and the largest roost we counted in 1997 held just 130 birds. In southern Karakelang the largest roost we found held just 31 birds.

NOW VERY RARE

The Red-and-blue Lory is now very rare on Salibabu and Kabaruan and in southern Karakelang, where trapping and loss of habitat have combined to bring about a dramatic population decline. Lorries have always been popular as cage birds on the islands; they are attractive birds, inquisitive and charismatic and can be obtained easily. Low intensity trapping has probably always taken place, but organised exploitation did not begin until the early 1990's, coinciding with the sudden appearance of the species in Singapore. At this time an order for 3,000 Red-and-blue Lorries was received by the few active trappers

on Karakelang. In order to fulfil this order, more trappers were trained and as a direct consequence trapping intensity increased and over exploitation began.

Against this background, Action Sampiri began to tackle the immediate problem of trapping. Our strategy, developed in consultation with experienced professionals, such as BirdLife International, was relatively simple. Very few people on Talaud appreciate that the Red-and-blue Lory is special to their islands; our key message was therefore "If the lory goes extinct on your islands it is gone forever!". Another important factor in our planning was that, from our experiences in 1995, we knew that people on the islands were interested in our work, would listen to us and make informed judgements about their environment. It was important to us that local people decided what to do, given full access to accurate information; our reasoning being that the problem faced by the Red-and-blue Lory was created by the islands' residents and they should be the ones to solve that problem.

Action Sampiri identified six villages on Karakelang where there was known to be a concentration of



Red and Blue Lorries at Loro Parque, Tenerife, where this species is reared on a regular basis. Photo: Rosemary Low



Roosting area of Red and Blue Lorries on Karakelang.

Photo: J. Van Oosten

trappers. We visited each of these villages and at each one followed a standard programme of action. First the team would explain to the village head the purpose of its visit to his village, supported by the correct letters of permission, without exception, people were willing to listen to our message. Next, the team would address the village at a general meeting, open to all residents, to outline some basic facts about the project, the importance of Talaud and the Red-and-blue Lory, and then why we thought trapping should stop. Presentations were followed by a question and answer session, usually lively, with villagers keen to express an opinion. Then prayers and a summary from the village head brought meetings to a close. We also held smaller meetings attended by all trappers in a particular village. These followed a similar theme, but were more like seminars, with trappers asking for detailed information on the birds' decline and news from other villages on the island, whilst Action Sampiri tried to obtain details of local roost sites, population trends and the mechanics of the bird trade. The team also visited the village school. In the course of the project we spoke to over 4,000 children, introducing them to the idea of special birds, the threats species face and how they themselves can help birds.

EDUCATION EFFORTS

We supported our work with a variety of resources, such as stickers, posters, simple bird booklets, bird poster boards and introductory leaflets and maps, many made cheaply on the islands. However, our greatest resource was conversation - all UK team

members are fluent in the Indonesian language - and at every village, on every bus journey, at each stop, we would talk to people about the lory and the problems it is facing. The Talaud islands are poor, remote and underdeveloped: there are few roads, no telephones and one ferry each week to Manado. This has made the islanders fiercely independent and proud, something we tried to encourage with respect to the Red-and-blue Lory. In our meetings we tried to emphasise that the lory is now found only on Karakelang and if trapping does not stop it will become extinct. People did believe us as they have already seen this happening on their island; in the past birds would flock to coconut trees around villages, but no longer, and by seeing Action Sampiri asking lots of questions, camping in the forest, counting roost trees and simply being on the islands, people could trust what we were saying.

But the key question is, did our approach work? In short, yes. People believed us when we said the bird is becoming rare and already knew this was a direct result of trapping, but they didn't know it was their special bird - some islanders were amazed to learn there are no lorries flying around my village in northern England! In some areas an anti-trapping feeling in the people already exists. In fact, most people on Talaud want trapping to stop; most significantly for the lory's long term prospects, these include all local government officials the team talked to. The most eloquent testimony to this statement was that after Action Sampiri had visited Tuabatu, a major trapping village, two of the trappers joined the team to help communicate our message to other

villages, one trapper remaining with us for five weeks.

In only three months it would be impossible to stop trapping, but Action Sampiri has made a start. People in Talaud now know there is a problem and appear to agree it needs solving. But will this happen? The majority of the population are subsistence farmers and all trappers catch birds to boost a meagre income. This is important because it means no-one on Talaud is entirely dependent on bird trapping. Profiting from the bird trade has bred some resentment within communities; trappers are seen to gain financially from exploiting a common resource and residents of non-trapping villages commonly expressed concern about the "theft" of their birds. Following this argument and appealing to the common good will be one approach Action Sampiri will utilise during further work on the islands.

A second argument is that driving the lory to extinction means a permanent loss of income; other parrot species are unpopular as cage birds in comparison to the lory; if this resource is exhausted there are no alternative species to turn to. Another strategy is to try to reduce the demand for lorries in the future; our work in schools, with teachers and with village heads on Talaud is important, as is work in the provincial capital with appearances on local radio, television and in the press. But perhaps the single most important act Action Sampiri can facilitate is the implementation of an island law banning all trade and trapping of lorries. At present there is no legal basis in Indonesian law on which to prevent the over-exploitation of lorries; on many occasions on Talaud local officials expressed exasperation seeing large numbers of birds being exported from the islands, but were powerless to do anything to stop this. Meetings were held between Action Sampiri and the head of government on Sangihe and Talaud in 1997 and, after a positive discussion, we are confident that progress can be made toward protecting the lory in law.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

The Red-and-blue Lory is now critically endangered with extinction and if no efforts are made in the immediate future to reduce its exploitation and protect the remaining forests on Talaud, the prospects for the lory are poor. Another factor to consider is that, in 1997, Action Sampiri found evidence that commercial logging

has recently commenced in northern Karakelang, which will obviously have a major negative effect on the Red-and-blue Lory.

Action Sampiri is already developing plans to return to Talaud for a long term project, as soon as the required funding has been secured. We plan to visit every village on the island and continue our work programme, using a similar methodology to that successfully initiated in 1997 and developing the themes discussed above. Action Sampiri is confident that, together with the communities of Sangihe and Talaud, it can make a real difference to the future of the Red-and-blue Lory, one of the most stunning birds in Indonesia.

The author would like to thank the following organisations who provided financial sponsorship for Action Sampiri: British Petroleum, BirdLife International, Flora & Fauna International, Oriental Bird Club, The Parrot Society, Percy Sladen Memorial Fund, The University of York, Stiftung Avifauna Protecta, Royal Geographical Society and British Ornithologist's Union. Research in Indonesia was conducted jointly with Universitas Sam Ratulangi, Manado, Sulawesi and under the sponsorship of Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Biologi, Bogor and Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia.

For further information and a more detailed report summarising Action Sampiri's findings can be obtained from the author: Jon Riley, 1 The Croft, North Sunderland, Seahouses, Northumberland, NE68 7XA. England. Telephone: ++44 (0) 1665-720325. email: 113077.1066 @compuserve.com.



Young Red and Blue Lory at Beo on Karakelang in the Talaud Island.

Photo: J. Van Oosten

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Time to answer untrue allegations against The World Parrot Trust

By Michael Reynolds

In any field of human endeavour, one of the penalties of successful action is that it stimulates various forms of reaction. This certainly applies to The World Parrot Trust, now beginning its tenth year of work for the conservation and welfare of the parrots. Reactions to our activities range from feverish imitation to complete indifference, and from loyal support to active opposition.

From a small base we have developed an international membership and raised over \$1M to help 23 endangered species in 20 countries. We have steadily pursued our aims (listed on page 15 of this *PsittaScene*) and made contributions of money, time and moral support to all of them. We have done this as a volunteer, unpaid group of parrot enthusiasts, and even today have only one paid member of staff, our UK administrator. We have consistently stated that '... the trust seeks to promote the concept of 'responsible aviculture', where the interests of the parrots are given priority over commercial, political, career or other human concerns.'

MANIFESTO FOR AVICULTURE

A year ago, we published our 'Manifesto for Aviculture' and circulated it to all the 140 CITES management authorities around the world, other government bodies, and to non-government organisations and media we thought might be interested. Our aim was to do what no other group has ever done: speak up internationally for the legitimate interests of aviculturists, the vast majority of whom are genuine hobbyists, not villains of any description whatever. We were trying to repair the damage done by people convicted of smuggling endangered parrots, and the consequent increase in unwarranted restrictions on our hobby. But even this effort has been criticised, as you will see.

Envy is one of the deadly sins, and we are all subject to it. I personally envy the multi-million funds received by the mega-charities, such as (in the UK) the World Wildlife Fund, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds with its million

members, the RSPCA, and others. Such organisations are sometimes criticised for their bureaucracy, but they achieve a great deal, especially in the protection of the habitat they can afford to acquire. They don't do as much as they might for the parrots, and that is where WPT can be seen to be active, very cost effectively, on behalf of our special interest. But I envy those vast incomes of the big guys, and would appreciate a crumb from their laden tables.

So I can partly understand the envy of others in the parrot world who may have tried to achieve similar objectives to those of the World Parrot Trust, but have failed to make any impact. For several years we have been aware of one person in particular who has made untrue statements about the WPT. In our *PsittaScene* issue of February 1995 we published, with our latest accounts, an articles called 'Putting the Record Straight'. We mentioned a 'globe-trotting member' who had been heard to tell a group of German aviculturists at a bird convention that the WPT 'spent all its money on expensive lunches and dinners'.

WITLESS PROPAGANDA

This kind of witless propaganda may seem ridiculous, but when it continues over the years, it is bound to be damaging to the trust, its reputation, and its ability to achieve its aims. We have decided that we have no choice but to advise WPT members once again about an individual currently making libellous statements about the trust.

Unfortunately, for legal reasons we cannot name him. He has, however, made the mistake of putting some defamatory remarks in writing, and has confirmed having done so. He sent a fax to Rosemary Low in which he said: 'By the way, I have decided to resign from WPT since I can no longer justify supporting it. The last straw was the manifesto, which I find sickeningly hypocritical knowing MR's views on private aviculture. I also believe WPT is more and more blatantly used to promote private interests. I understand some \$850,000 has been

raised in total, but no information is provided on how this is spent. If it were a membership organisation, it would have been placed under close scrutiny long ago.'

I wrote to this person quoting his remarks, and asking him the following questions:

What makes you think you know my views on private aviculture?

In what ways is WPT 'used to promote private interests'?

Why do you state that 'no information is provided on how this is spent'?

Why do you say 'If it were a membership organisation it would have been placed under close scrutiny long ago'? WPT is a membership organisation, and is closely scrutinised by the Charity Commission.

I concluded by saying: 'Before I take this matter further, I feel it necessary to invite you either to substantiate or withdraw your remarks.' He did reply, confirmed he had written to Rosemary Low, but failed to substantiate or withdraw his remarks.

My solicitors inform me that we have a strong case for libel or malicious falsehood. Such legal actions are time consuming and costly, and would not be an appropriate activity for a charity such as the World Parrot Trust (although I will not rule out taking action on a personal basis). I am therefore using our *PsittaScene* magazine to draw attention to this person's libellous activities and warn our members and other readers against the untrue statements he and a few associates have been spreading.

PARROT WORLD GOSSIP

Ill-informed gossip is contagious, as we all know in the 'parrot world'. I have been made aware that a well-known aviculturist and author, attending a meeting in London last year, told a US visitor that he had heard that money donated to WPT was spent on Paradise Park, the commercial bird park where the trust is based. As it happens, the exact reverse of this is the truth. The late unlamented Dr. Goebbels advocated that if you are going to lie, make it a big one. But this one

is so monstrous that I must bore you with some quotes from our official accounts, which are required annually by the UK Charity Commission. Notes within the accounts say:

'No remuneration directly or indirectly out of the funds of the charity was paid or payable for the year to any trustee or to any person or persons known to be connected with them.' And also: 'The Trust continued to receive substantial uncharged benefits from Paradise Park. These included free office facilities, computers, telephone, electricity and staff time.'

FINANCIAL DETAILS

To put more detail on that, my wife Audrey and I gave £13,000 (\$20,000) for start up funds for the World Parrot Trust, and between 1989 and 1997 Paradise Park raised donations from its visitors of £110,000 (\$190,000), given at its 'Eagles of Paradise' flying demonstrations, and passed on this substantial amount, without deduction, to the World Parrot Trust.

I have made further calculations (not professionally confirmed by our accountants) that the annual value of 70% of my time as unpaid director of WPT could be put at £14,000 (\$22,000); over nine years this adds up to £130,000 (\$200,000). Over the same period, the time of many other Paradise Park staff should be valued at approximately £65,000 (\$100,000), and the facilities provided free to the Trust by Paradise Park are worth at least another £65,000 (\$100,000). In addition, travel costs paid personally by me for parrot related visits to Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, USA, Paraguay, Mexico, St Vincent, Puerto Rico, Mauritius, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy etc. must amount to over £27,000 (\$40,000).

This comes to £410,000 or \$650,000 in cash, staff time and facilities, and is more than the net profits made in that period by Paradise Park. Please pass on this information (or this entire article) if you hear anyone questioning our integrity or our commitment to the parrots.

USA STATUS

Incidentally, in the United States the World Parrot Trust USA Inc. is registered with the IRS as a federal tax-exempt organisation, which means (a) that it is subject to strict regulation, and (b) that US citizens can make a donation to WPT-USA and deduct it from their tax bill. Similar factors apply with the Canadian World Parrot Trust, a fully established charity under Canadian law. WPT Benelux and WPT Scandinavia are closely regulated by the appropriate laws of their countries, and by their vigilant and effective committees. WPT Australia is also registered as a charity.

I am sorry to take up valuable space in *PsittaScene* with this unfortunate issue, but our trustees decided it was necessary to stop these lies before they went any further. We cannot forever maintain a stoic silence despite years of unjustified attacks. One of our most devoted supporters has written to us from Miami to say that she is appalled to hear (apparently reported on the internet) that I use air tickets donated to WPT for my personal holiday travel. Let me dispose of that also.

I have received four tickets in nine years. These allowed me to go to Washington USA to attend the inaugural meeting of the Association for Parrot Conservation, to Belo Horizonte in Brazil to attend a conference on the conservation of the 'Blue Macaws', to Asuncion, Paraguay to follow up an invitation from the British Ambassador to supply a 'parrot bus' for that country (which we did), and to the USA to a meeting of the International Aviculturists Society. Not much holiday in that bunch of flights.

HELP FROM BAAC

Let me take this opportunity to record the invaluable help that the World Parrot Trust has received

from British Airways Assisting Conservation (BAAC). This body was created by Rod Hall, a senior engineer with BA and a committed conservationist. He does a tremendous amount of work in his own time and with no reward, save the satisfaction of helping save the planet from its folly. Rod was recently awarded the MBE by the Queen, for his services to conservation. BAAC has now been absorbed into the British Airways Environment Branch.

Here are some of the WPT activities that have been aided by BAAC:

Rosa Elena Zagara, a Peruvian biologist, brought to the UK for 6 months parrot keeping experience at Paradise Park.

Andrew Greenwood MA, VetMB, FIBiol.MRCVS sent to Mauritius to advise on the Echo Parakeet programme, on four occasions. His veterinary and avicultural input has made a major contribution to this most successful recovery programme.

Andrew Greenwood also sent to St Vincent to advise on the government's captive breeding programme for the St Vincent Parrot. Further funding provided by HM Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

David Woolcock, Nick Reynolds and Andrew Greenwood sent to Paraguay to (a) fit out the 'parrot bus' with exhibits made in the UK, (b) create a new aviary at Asuncion Zoo for macaws, (c) advise the zoo on its redevelopment. FCO funding here also.

Two Paradise Park staff (Kirsty Jenkin, Pete Haverson) sent to Mauritius to spend a total of six months as part of the Echo Parakeet recovery team. Note: Paradise Park paid their usual salaries, plus the cost of their temporary replacements. WPT provided each person with a less than luxurious allowance of £50 (\$80) per week for their living expenses.



The first of four WPT parrot buses, in St. Lucia.

The Parrot Action Plan meeting, June 1995. This important conservation initiative was proposed by Rod Hall, and provided tickets to bring the world's leading parrots experts to London to revive the embattled Parrot Action Plan. BAAC tickets were supplied for Joe Forshaw from Australia, Mike Perrin from South Africa, Charlie Munn, Noel Snyder, Jamie Gilardi and Alejandro Grajal from the USA, and Mariano Gimenez-Dixon from IUCN HQ in Switzerland. This action plan is coming together with much help from WPT, and will be published by IUCN this year. It will stimulate and direct new funding for the conservation of those parrot species that need it most.

I could go on, but the above examples should give you the picture, and an idea of the genuine contribution of British Airways to wildlife conservation. Needless to say, we have written to the lady in Miami to tell her the true facts, and will do what we can to correct untrue statements on the internet. For a start, this article will be added to our World Parrot Trust Web Page, which can be found simply by using your browser to search for 'World Parrot Trust'.

TV ATTACK ON ZOOS

There is another important matter. In October 1997, a television programme shown in the UK set out to attack the Federation of Zoos regarding the disposal of surplus animals. This dealt primarily with large mammals such as big cats, but Paradise Park, as a member of the Federation, was caught up in the process, and was criticised for selling an Illiger's Macaw. (I should tell you that this bird was listed in official UK and European zoo surplus lists as being available on free breeding loan, but no zoo asked for it.)

A tape of this programme is now being circulated by our enemies.

This programme libelled me personally, suggesting that I did not care about my birds, and was only interested in making money from them. My solicitors will shortly issue a writ for libel against the T.V. company. Writs may also be issued against any person or organisation shown to be giving further publication to the libel in any form, and in any country.

WPT MEMBERS CAN HELP

May I ask WPT members to help us - and the parrots - by taking every opportunity to correct the untrue statement I have described. Or indeed, any new ones these people may dream up. The essential facts about the World Parrot Trust are recorded in the 33 issues of *PsittaScene* (available from our UK office at £2.75 (\$5) each including postage), and in our eight sets of annual accounts on file at the Charity Commission. Our latest accounts will be published in the May 1998 *PsittaScene*. Any member who has any questions about our finances or other matters is invited to email me direct on worldparrottrust@compuserve.com. Also, if you are able to identify anyone passing on incorrect information, please let us have the details, and we'll try to put them right.

As ever, Shakespeare put it neatly, in 'Othello':

'Who steals my purse steals trash;
'tis something, nothing;

But he that filches from me my good name

Robs me of that which not enriches him,

And makes me poor indeed.'

Be sure that the World Parrot Trust will do everything necessary to protect its good name. As our member in Miami put it: 'If you can't trust the World Parrot Trust, who can you trust?' Exactly.

Perhaps we can now return to what really matters: the survival and welfare of the



A pair of Echo Parakeets in the wild. The recovery of this species is a major WPT project.



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Wild Bird Trade In Coimbatore, South India

by Brij Kishor Gupta and B. Rathinasabapathy

ABSTRACT

Six surveys and interviews were conducted in and around Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, southern India during December 1995, January 1996 and October 1996 to find out species of wild birds in illegal trade.

We found that 25 species of wild-caught live birds were being sold in and around Coimbatore. It was also noticed that birds were being kept mainly as pets. A total of 7 bird traders were interviewed. Two traders were found having good knowledge of bird distribution, feeding habits and captive husbandry as they have been engaged for a long time in breeding exotic birds. The native species of birds included Great pied hornbill, Blue-winged parakeet, Rose-ringed parakeet, Black-headed munia, Blue rock pigeon, Grey junglefowl, Grey partridge, Common peafowl, Rosy pelican, Shikra and many more. The birds are priced from Rs.10 to Rs.300. An average of 5-8 birds are sold per day. The majority of birds were sold in local fish markets by local owners and individuals

involved in the fish aquarium business.

On two occasions it was also recorded that birds arrived late in the night into Coimbatore City from Bangalore and these were brought in small cages in the local transport buses along with the luggage.

To check this illegal trade, wildlife authorities have to strengthen law enforcement especially in areas like Pollachi, Kinathukudavu, Siruvani, Mettupalayam, Bhavani, Gudalur and Trinurthi where birds are being caught.

The illegal trade in birds is global in nature and India is not an exception. People have been trading in live, wild-caught birds for hundreds of years, but over the past few decades the increase in their numbers has been overwhelming. Every now and then we encounter new species being used in such illegal trade. About 200 species of birds have been documented to be involved in trade in India (Menon, 1995). The majority of birds are captured in the wild and are condemned to spend the rest of their lives in small cages. There are

recent records on bird trade from northern India (Ahmed, et al., 1996), north-eastern India (Menon, 1995) and also in western India.

We made six field surveys during December 1995 and January 1996 and recently in October 1996. Locations visited were the fish markets, pet shops, bus stands, poultry farms, streets and general stores in Coimbatore city and adjoining areas. A questionnaire was used for obtaining information from bird traders and others involved in associated business. A camera was used for documenting the trade.

During our study a total of 25 species of 16 families of wild caught birds were recorded in the trade. Most of the surveyed locations were crowded and it was difficult to identify wild birds in steel cages because the cages were thoroughly packed with exotic birds. Most native small birds were housed together with exotic species and larger birds like partridges were kept with the poultry. Birds like parakeets were kept isolated. Dull looking Rose-ringed parakeets in large numbers were being sold for 50 rupees a pair. Grey partridges were priced 80 rupees per pair. A steel cage was full of apparently fresh caught black headed munias. White-throated munias and spotted munias were also recorded. Their condition explained one of the pathetic aspects of the continuing commercial trade in wild-caught birds. We were told that birds in Coimbatore come from Pottachi, Salem, Erode, Mettupalayam, Siruvani areas. Some of them arrive from Bangalore. During this study we witnessed birds landing in Coimbatore on a private bus from Bangalore. It was noticed that all birds were starved. Each day a number of birds die probably because of starvation, suffocation, and stress due to overcrowding.

Bird trappers and traders in Coimbatore consider that birds like mynas, parakeets, partridges, owls, munias, pigeons and junglefowls, which are on Schedule IV, can be exploited on a sustainable basis. Immediate measures are required to correct this thinking. If not, the situation could get worse in coming years.

Members of the Psittacidae (there are about 2 species) are the most commonly traded birds in Tamil Nadu. Blue-winged parakeets are

recorded with traders. During the survey we saw falcon species for sale despite its inclusion in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act of India. Its decrease in numbers may not only be because of forest destruction or habitat loss but also because it is in trade. The rarer they get, the higher the price bird collectors are prepared to pay, and the greater the incentive for the trappers in the forests of India. We also found that trappers are prepared to deliver a bird of your choice at your residence on payment of a nominal advance money. Therefore, the traders network seems to be well knit in Tamil Nadu.

To cope with these problems the wildlife authorities will have to strengthen the law enforcement especially in the areas where birds are being caught. In the past, wildlife authorities have made some achievements in controlling wildlife trade on rare species but more efforts are needed to control trade in Schedule IV species. Wildlife authorities should set up a separate wing for controlling trade.

It is also important to conduct a long term study on the species involved in trade. Both a careful evaluation of the socio-economic factors effecting the trappers, and also consideration of their financial needs, are required. Campaigns of various types which include distribution of materials via the news media can play an important part in raising people's awareness, a programme which will go a long way in controlling the illegal trade. More than anyone, however, people who have created a market of these forest dwelling birds should realise their error and curtail the purchases of any wild bird for any purpose. Once there is no demand in the market, the trade will slowly die out.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Coimbatore Zoological Park Society in particular G Rangaswamy, secretary for the support and facilities. We are grateful to K Maruthachalam, Photo Centre for his assistance. Thanks are also due to Dr. Rahul Kaul, Regional Co-ordinator, south-east Asia, World Pheasant Association, New Delhi for comments on the manuscript and P Bharath Kumar and Nagarajah for their help while conducting the survey.



Above: Juvenile Rose-ringed Parakeet



NEWS... VIEWS... ACTION

LETTERS

Dear Ms. Low,

It was disheartening to read in the November 1997 issue of *PsittaScene* about the plight of Kaka in New Zealand. If it is true that "some top people" believe that extinction is better than captivity, these people would do well to study the recent history of the California Condor in the United States. After a prolonged argument in the 1980s, in which some people held that extinction was better than captivity, the pro-captive-breeding side won out. The result was a spectacular success which has allowed the reintroduction of captive-bred California Condors not only into their most recent strong-hold in California but also into the Grand Canyon area of Arizona, where they had not been seen since early this century.

It seems inconceivable that "top people" in any country would even consider surrendering to extinction a magnificent species like the Kaka. Perhaps the World Parrot Trust could invite a reply from those in

New Zealand who are so strongly against captive breeding of the Kaka so that we could hear their side of the story. At present, their stand sounds untenable, but maybe they have some arguments we should hear.

Yours truly
Doris Applebaum
Michigan, U.S.A.

Dear Jo,

Enclosed you will find cheques for the value of £155.

On the second of November my dear mother, Dorothy Siddall, died. She was in her late eighties and had loved animals and birds her whole life, and was a keen supporter of various charities dedicated to their welfare. She held parrots in particular affection, and was very attached to her beloved parrot, Polly Jo, who died only two years ago at a grand age. In view of this, it was decided that the World Parrot Trust should be one of the charities to which people might care to donate in her memory.

Yours very sincerely,
Hilary Siddall (Ms)



Mark Hagen and some of his products.

When we corresponded with Ms. Siddall, she wrote in a second letter: "...Yes, I do indeed think it would be a nice idea for you to mention in a future issue of *PsittaScene* that in lieu of flowers, charity donations were requested in my mother's memory, and that WPT was one of two charities named, and there was a positive response.

I think that apart from being personally touched by such a mention, she would have like it from the point of view that it just might encourage other individuals to make similar arrangements. It is, I feel, so important for a smaller yet so worthwhile charity like WPT to be included...."

HAGEN RAISES FUNDS FOR WPT IN CANADA

The eighth Canadian Parrot Symposium was a huge success from every angle. Held in Toronto in November, it attracted more than 230 participants. They listened to nine speakers over two days on a wide range of topics. Overseas speakers were Jos Hubers from the Netherlands, and Rosemary Low. Organised by Jacquie Blackburn and Silvio Mattacchione, without the backing of any club, the organisation was a smooth as usual. Everyone enjoyed the pleasant atmosphere.

From the point of view of fund-



IAS CONVENTION
MARCH 4 - 8, 1998
ORLANDO FLORIDA

CONVENTION SPEAKERS TO BE ANNOUNCED

INTERNATIONAL AVICULTURISTS SOCIETY CONVENTION

Orlando North Hilton, 350 South Lake Blvd,
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32715-9004
Hilton Reservations: 800/445-8667, 407/830-1985

A "Meet the Exhibitors and Speakers" function will be held in the hospitality room Wednesday evening following registration. Seminars will start on Thursday morning. Lectures and question and answer sessions will be scheduled Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Additional meetings and discussions will take place on Thursday and Friday evenings. Speciality Society meetings will follow. Saturday night participants will enjoy the gala 'Vegas Nite' fund raiser to benefit Avian Research and Conservation. The IAS annual meeting will be early Sunday followed by an expanded Companion Parrot Behaviour Seminar from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with an extensive Q & A.

IAS Registration:

Jackie Sites, PO Box 233524, Anchorage, AK 99523-3524
907-563-2213 email: jsites@alaska.net

Exhibitors:

Phyllis Martin, 1314 State Road 60W, Plant City, FL 33567-9282
ph/fax 813-737-2504 email: jsites@alaska.net

COMPANION PARROT BEHAVIOUR SEMINAR

Sponsored by the IAS & the Pet Bird Report
Sunday March 8, 1998 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Contact IAS Registration for details about price.

SPEAKERS: Sally Blanchard • Phoebe Linden • Liz Wilson • Sam Foster

BOOK REVIEW

Rosemary Low's PARROT BREEDING REGISTER

All the records for your birds under one cover! This register contains 82 pages for record keeping. The pages are designed for breeders to enter the following information in the columns provided:

- Current stock list (species, sex, ring no, hatch date, origin)
- Records of breeding pairs (date laid, number of eggs, date hatched, days lay to hatch, ring number, date left nest, etc.)
- Birds bought (date, species, ring number, hatch date, price, bought from)
- Birds sold (as above, plus sold to)
- Veterinary records (date, species, ring number, weight, treatment, result).

The register contains a valuable table listing 150 parrot species. For each one is given the incubation period, clutch size, ring number (British, mm and American), usual age at ringing, and age at fledging. Common and scientific names are listed. There are also notes on ringing chicks.

ISBN: 0-9531337-2-9

PAGES, BOOK SIZE: 96 pages, 29cm x 21cm

PRICE: introductory £7.45 post paid in UK (overseas postage extra).
£8.75 after March 1st.

AVAILABLE FROM: Insignis Publications, P.O. Box 100, Mansfield, Notts. NG20 9NZ Fax: (44) 01623 846430.





Mike Pearson and his wife manned the Canadian WPT stand throughout the symposium.

raising, the symposium was excellent, showing how this can be done in an apparently effortless way. In fact, a lot of thought went into it. On the first evening parrot-related items (such as a \$100 gold coin showing the Bahamas Amazon, stained glass parrots, beautiful rugs made by Jacque Blackburn and a porcelain cockatoo) were auctioned. The proceeds, \$2,645, was donated to a graduate award in avian studies at the University of Guelph, Ontario.

Mark Hagen had given some of the most sought-after items. His company, Rolf. C. Hagen, made a generous gesture in donating the entire proceeds from the sales of Hagen products at the symposium to the Canadian World Parrot Trust. In this way CWPT's funds were swelled by \$5,138! CWPT's stand was manned by Mike Pearson and his wife Sharon. They had an attractive display of T-shirts, videos, books and other products and did well on sales and membership. Twenty one new members joined, and thirty five members renewed, contributing towards a total of \$3,164 taken on the booth.

FIRST CANADIAN WEST PARROT SYMPOSIUM

The first Canadian Parrot Symposium (West) in Victoria (British Columbia) will take place from May 15-17. Overseas speakers include Charles Munn and Rosemary Low. The venue is Dunsmuir Lodge, set high on the wooded slopes of Mount Newton, 15 miles of Victoria. It overlooks a panorama of islands, mountains and ocean. The lodge has extensive hiking trails in a natural woodland setting. Further information can be obtained from Roz Webb, 502 Broadway St., Victoria, BC, Canada V8z 2EB, tel: 250 479 1183 or fax: 250 479 8078.



CARL JONES
Mauritius Programme Director

THE MAURITIUS PROJECT

FORESTRY QUARTERS • BLACK RIVER • MAURITIUS



Dear Mike

I would like to thank you and Audrey Reynolds and everyone at Paradise Park for the support that they have given us this season and over the years, without which we could not have progressed nearly as far as we have with the Echo Parakeet project. This last season has been a watershed with the parakeet work and this was in no small part due to the help we received from Nick, Kirsty J and Pete. They really are a winning combination. Nick is an excellent organiser who kept camp working and organised and greatly reduced the usual entropy present in running a field camp, he took a lot of the organisational burden off the shoulders of myself and Kirsty S. At the aviaries, Kirsty Jenkin took to the work like an old hand, got on very well with Aranxia and had a wonderful time. It is due to the excellent work of Aranxia and Kirsty J that we successfully reared 11 out of 13 young, and several of these were rescued birds from failing nests, and not at all easy to rear. Pete fitted into camp life and his no nonsense approach and practical skills

were appreciated by all. He organised one of the most successful and enjoyable Christmases I have had here and his butchering skills came in very useful while preparing wild pig and venison for Christmas dinner. They are a winning combination and worth a huge amount to the project, and we would very much like to see them out here again as a part of the Echo Parakeet team. This would be a very useful contribution by the World Parrot Trust / Paradise Park.

The last wild Echo fledged a few days ago (27th January) the seventh successfully fledged from seven nests. The best productivity from the wild birds for well over twenty years. You will recall that we attempted a different management strategy this year to help the wild birds. In the past we have tried to maximise productivity by double clutching. This does not always work and if it does it means that the young of the second brood fledge very late in the season when there is a very real risk of them dying during cyclonic weather. I was unhappy that as a result of these egg manipulations not all pairs in the wild were rearing young themselves. As you will be aware it is very important that pairs rear their own young since it helps maintain a stable pair bond and develop a good breeding pair. We have also noted that in the wild, chicks in broods of two or three do not do as well as single chicks. So this year we "down brooded" all pairs with young. We let them hatch a brood and then harvested all but one of the young. These harvested young were then either fostered to pairs that had no young (due to them failing for one reason or another but still on infertile or dummy eggs) or reared in captivity.

In captivity we have reared eleven young from both captive birds and harvested/ rescued eggs and young. All of these are due for release and the first group of three young were taken up to camp yesterday afternoon and placed in the release aviary. Within minutes the three Echo's released last summer flew in and landed on the top of the aviary to meet their new friends, with much calling between them. I have heard this morning that the already released Echo's are around most of the time taking great interest in the new birds.

We have had ten of the eleven hand-reared young birds sexed and there are eight females. Someone is smiling upon us. We had originally planned to capture up surplus released male birds, since the wild population is skewed towards males and we wanted to balance the sexes as best we could. However this is not an immediate problem and we will leave as many of the birds at liberty as possible. The other young will be going up to the forest for release over the next month or so. We will probably be keeping them in the release cage for a week or ten days before release and then monitoring them intensely for a month. The earliest we are going to be finished is going to be late April. Kirsty S is returning to the UK at the end of the month since she is totally whacked and needs the rest. I will be staying on until early May to keep everything ticking over. The first release of last summer has been a great success and the three birds are now interacting with sub-adult wild ones and they have been seen going around in a group of four or five - the three released birds with one or two wild ones. We have also had a wild bird feeding at the supplemental food hopper with the released birds.

I will keep you informed as the releases progress.

Best wishes

Carl Jones.

Yes, Please!

We want to join the ...



... and get our
Beautiful Colorful Certificate

Please mail to:
WPT-USA, PO Box 341141, Memphis TN 38184.

NAME: (Parrot)

NAME: (Person)

ADDRESS

City State Zip

DONATION: (Min \$15, Max \$100)

Check MasterCard/Visa

Credit Card No _____

Expiration Date __/__/__

Signature Date



NOTE: This certificate was designed for our WPT-USA members and supporters, but we will gladly send one to anyone in any country for a minimum donation of £12 sent to our UK address.

YOU CAN HELP US...



Charles A. Munn III PhD.
 Founder Trustee WPT-USA.
 Senior research biologist.
 Wildlife Conservation Society.



Andrew Greenwood MRCVS
 Founder Trustee of WPT-UK and WPT-USA.
 Zoo and wildlife veterinary consultant.



Audrey Reynolds
 Director, Paradise Park.
 Founder Trustee of The World Parrot Trust UK.



Rosemary Low
 Author of 'Endangered Parrots' and 20 more parrot books. Editor of PsittaScene.



Wm. Richard Porter MD
 Director of the International Aviculturists Society.
 Founder Trustee of WPT-USA.



David Woolcock
 Curator, Paradise Park.
 Founder Trustee of The World Parrot Trust UK.



Michael Reynolds
 Founder of The World Parrot Trust, Hon. Director of WPT-UK, Trustee of WPT-USA.

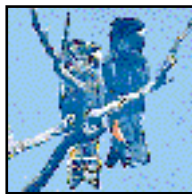
...SAVE THE PARROTS!



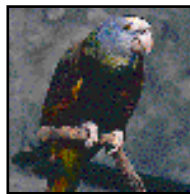
Lear's Macaw



Echo Parakeet



Red-tailed Black Cockatoo



St. Vincent Parrot



Red-vented Cockatoo



Red-tailed Amazon



Hyacinth Macaw

Join us.

Become a member of the World Parrot Trust, receive our *PsittaScene* newsletter, know that you are actively contributing towards our aims.

Help fund our Projects.

We are currently supporting parrot conservation, education and welfare projects in Africa, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, the Caribbean, Equador, Mauritius, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru and the Philippines. Your generosity towards the parrots could help us expand current schemes and start new ones.

FEEL FREE to copy this page and hand it out to potential WPT members. Thanks!



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 public on the threats to parrots.
- 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.

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (please tick)

- UK and Europe (Single) £15
- UK and Europe (Family) £20
- Fellow (Life Member) £250/US\$400 Corporate (Annual)
- All Overseas Airmail £17/US\$25 (or equivalent currency payment by Access/Visa/Mastercard preferred)
- Plus donation of £/US\$.....

Name

Address

.....

.....

..... Zip/Postcode

Please charge my Access/Visa Acc./No.

Exp. date Amount £/US\$

Signature

OR: I enclose cheque payable to the WPT

I heard about the World Parrot Trust from

PLEASE SEND COMPLETED FORM TO 'WORLD PARROT TRUST' AT-

UNITED KINGDOM

Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY

USA

Cynthia Webb, PO Box 341141, Memphis TN 38184

BENELUX

Romain Bejstrup, Boomgaardstraat 76, B2070, Zwijndrecht, Belgium

CANADA

Mike Pearson, PO Box 29, Mount Hope, Ontario LOR 1W0

DENMARK (SCANDINAVIA)

M Iversen, Alsikemarken 48, 2860 Soborg.

FRANCE

J & G Prin, 55 Rue de la Fassiere, 45140, Ingre.

GERMANY

G & D Harries, Vodestr. 39, 44625 Herne.

ITALY

Freddie Virili, via Matarus w.10, 33045 Nimis, Udine.

AUSTRALIA

Peter Sipek, 1 Rossell Pl., Glenfield, NSW 2167.

AFRICA

V. Dennison, PO Box 1758, Link Hills 3652, South Africa.

SWITZERLAND

Lars Lepperhoff, Sagemattstrasse 31, 3097 Liebefeld.



PARROTS IN THE WILD



MAJOR MITCHELL'S COCKATOO

Cacatua leadbeateri

These breathtaking Major Mitchell cockatoos were photographed from a hide as they came to drink at a water trough, in the Australian outback of New South Wales, past Cobar. The Cockatoos (“cockies” in Aussie lingo) were attracted by putting nearby, piles of wild melon, which they love to open and savor the seeds. An interesting point about these cockatoos is that they seem to fling their crests forward to open them in demonstrative displays, rather than merely raising them (like Umbrella Cockatoos, for example).

We are grateful to our US member, Dr. Stewart Metz MD, for this superb shot. More “Parrots in the Wild” shots are still needed.

Rosemary Low