PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN PARROT CONSERVATION
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

Psitta scene

The World Parrot Trust

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THE WELFARE OF PET PARROTS

And some 'Guidelines for Parrot Rescue' By Michael Reynolds

ANCIENT HISTORY

Thirty years ago the pets page of a leading UK newspaper wrote a few words about my aim to create a breeding centre for parrots. This brought in 200 letters, some asking for help with their parrots, and a few asking me to take their birds. So I drove all over Britain, visited a variety of pet parrots, and collected eight birds. Two Moluccan Cockatoos (too noisy!), one Umbrella Cockatoo, one Scarlet Macaw, and four assorted Amazon Parrots. Two of these paired up immediately, despite having been kept in solitary confinement for eighteen years and thirteen years respectively. They also defied convention by being different species - a blue-fronted and a yellow-fronted - but at that time neither they nor I knew this was wrong. They hatched two chicks, and a young journalist called Rosemary Low came to see them. But that's another story.

SHOCKING CONDITIONS

The point I wanted to get to is that my visits to about twenty average homes with pet parrots gave me a shock I will never forget. While perhaps half of the birds I saw were kept pretty well, the rest were living in a state of misery. You know what I mean: filthy cages, fed only sunflower seed, never let out of a tiny cage ('he bites'), never sprayed, completely lacking any physical or mental stimulation, and worse. We all know this neglect and ignorance affects pet parrots, just as it does dogs and cats. The difference seems to be that whereas the dogs and cats are quite well funded and looked after by a variety of societies and shelters, the parrots don't seem to receive the same level of support from the general public.

VETERINARY COMMENTS

I asked our veterinary consultant (and trustee) Andrew Greenwood for some input from the point of view of an avian vet. Here are his comments.

"We certainly see a lot of neglected parrots, suffering physical deprivation from poor diet and lack of exercise and psychological deprivation from too little attention or continuous confinement. Neglect has two origins - genuine ignorance, which is usually seen in the pet parrot owner and is easily corrected, and stupid carelessness, which is seen in bad aviculturists and is much harder to correct. The second, of course, often leads to the first when a pet owner buys a bird from a breeder or dealer who fails to instruct the new owner in the correct way to care for and manage the bird. Most of the ailments of parrots are attributable to neglect through bad diet, filthy conditions, incorrect pairing, exposure to hazardous materials, and so on. The wanton spreading of contagious disease knowingly between collections, and thence into the pet market, is all too common and leads to tragedy for both birds and owners.

The solution is simple: education, education, education. We need to educate parrot owners in the use of complete diets, in hygiene and, particularly, in how to train parrots with kindness so that they can safely spend the majority of time out of their cage able to fly. We need to educate breeders that the public do not want or need birds that are fixated on a seed diet, whose wings are already clipped, and who are not properly weaned. Above all, we need to educate both groups that there is absolutely no justification for the importation of wild parrots in mass trade. While this trade continues, people will buy birds which will never make good or happy pets, and breeders will never have an adequate financial incentive to produce the best possible birds."

⇨

"psittacine
(sit'å sîn) Belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like"

NOT A PRETTY SIGHT. This macaw is one of the 'casualties'.

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

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Increasingly, however, many caring members of the 'parrot community' are doing what they can to help the situation. Because the World Parrot Trust has members across the world and communicates with all developed avicultural countries, we know that similar action is being taken everywhere to try to cope with the problem birds - the 'casualties' of our obsession with the parrots. Here is an excerpt from a letter from a WPT member, that strikingly expresses the deep concerns of many who keep and care about parrots:

I do not believe, as sad as it sounds, that realistically parrots and people can continue to coexist on this planet as long as parrot suffering is as commonplace as it is now. Bird Talk (February 1998 issue) printed articles on the subject, bringing attention to the other side of breeding, a first, and I commend them for that. Pretty sugary bird stories are the norm for magazines because it sells and it is pleasant reading.

We can no longer comfortably release parrots into deforested, shrinking rain forests as poachers will run up into trees, grab them up, crate them and cruelly ship them off for export to God knows what kind of conditions all over the world.

As long as parrots are about money, there will be compromise and the parrots will be the losers, no matter how lofty or well-intentioned the organisation, how prominent the collector, how 'caring' the breeder.

Why do we breed them? To preserve the species? For what? To go to more breeders, more pet shops, more collections, homes where the owners cage them all day, usually in too small a cage with the proverbial cup of seed, before they get tired of them and retire them to a dark garage (very common) or sell them to the next 'parrot fancier'. If you doubt this, check the classified section under 'Birds' or the 'Buy, Sell, Trade' in your newspaper bird ads, or attend auctions full of unwanted birds sold with as much compassion as used cars.

We want them to be feathered humans, mimicking our voices. We take all their 'parrotness' out of them when we deprive them of flight and punish them for screaming or biting or making a mess. Probably no other creature is more deprived of the natural elements of his environment than a parrot in captivity.

Parrots should really never have been captive pets! Cockatoos, so demanding of constant affection, are extremely stress or change intolerant and therefore are so often plucked and mutilated. Feather plucking and mutilation are conditions virtually unknown in the wild. These are conditions of captivity only.

A well-known US avian veterinarian has said that there are 176,000 unwanted birds, probably a very conservative estimate. Zoos are overwhelmed with offers of parrots whose owners have tired of them or have had a lifestyle change. There is The Parrot Rescue Center in Holland, containing many insane birds. Why are we breeding more?

We need to better care for what we already have; to rehabilitate the worst cases and love more what birds are here now! An average parrot is re-homed 15-20 times in his life. Imagine the stress to each bird at every change. Bird theft, so common nowadays, is unbearably traumatic to them and often so preventable. Large 'free flight' aviaries, properly wired against predators, are probably the only compassionate, logical solution for captive parrots. Cages, no matter what size, are often nothing more than lonely prisons.

I once asked a very good reputable breeder, 'Do you ever worry what happens to your beautiful babies down the road after they are sold? ' His response was, 'You can't think of that when you're in the business'. This to me is unacceptable, at least for the parrots. I guess that's why I'll never sell or make money off the back of a parrot. If I can no longer care for them, I will find them the best home possible but they are never for sale anymore than a child of mine.

Let us never forget the actual quality of life we are giving parrots in the glorious names of 'conservation', 'saving endangered species', etc., all noble phrases. Let us deal with the reality of those already sharing this planet with us now!

I fervently pray for a kinder future for all parrots and especially for enlightenment of the human race in their regard, on whom they depend for everything. We are their captors, we owe them the best of ourselves.

Sabra Brea
Miami Florida
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Here is a response from a UK parrot rescue organisation:

Dear Mr Reynolds,

I am writing with regard to your proposals concerning guidelines for parrot rescue centres, and would therefore like to contribute our own proposals in the hope of our Charity being perceived as the exemplified standard. But first I would like to mention that I have viewed your own proposals, to which I agree.

The possible introduction of guidelines/standards is not before time. There are many unscrupulous

Green-winged Macaws 'Sparky' and 'Inca', pets of Mandy and Graeme Hartley Havers, helped open the 'Rat & Parrot' pub in Leeds, U.K. Our active member Avril Barton arranged this, and earned a £250 donation to the trust.

people who are jumping on the 'band wagon' and setting themselves up as parrot rescue services with the intention of breeding and hand-rearing offspring for profitable gain. This is unacceptable and, subsequently, has become a serious problem to the welfare of such parrots, as these people are not knowledgeable and thus fail to understand and recognise the terms: neurosis, malnutrition, environmental requirements, stimuli, psychology and specialised avian care, which all rescued parrots need due to their history of abuse. We estimate that only 25 percent of companion parrots are being cared for in the correct manner, which I feel is a generous estimate!

We would like to see the implementation of approved criteria for those sanctuaries that house/rescue/rehome parrots. This is essential if parrot welfare is to move forward, as the present status quo is such that I find myself on the side of anti bird keeping, especially in the category of the companion parrot!

However, who sets the criteria? It should never be said or presumed that a parrot keeper/breeder of 10, 20 or 30 years standing is doing it right because of his/her years of experience - too many are set in their old ways of bird keeping and easily dismiss current data. I feel it is only those who are so deeply passionate who are most able to share an affinity with parrots. Parrot keeping is so contradictory and so controversial because it is charged on the depth of our emotions and understanding.

We are now witnessing the amalgamation of individual people who are highly aware and who deeply care about all aspects of parrot welfare and of their plight. In simple terms this means the result of organised pressure groups campaigning for a higher standard of care for both aviary and companion parrot, not forgetting the abolition of the wild-caught bird trade and a nationwide ban on bird auctions.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that we have now terminated our rehoming service. The simple fact of the matter is that it does not work! We have carried out three repossessions and received half our birds back from their adoptive homes: parrots need stability and to continue such an operation would be doing these parrots a gross injustice. Education on a mass scale is the only way forward, including all societies, sanctuaries, charitable trusts, rescue centres and rehoming services setting an example. This applies to bird magazines which should be more conscientious about the contents of their published articles.

Yours sincerely
Julie Hamilton
Director, New Life Parrot Rescue Service, Huntingdon
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These views are strongly made, and demonstrate the concern felt by many about the plight of large numbers of captive parrots. It has to be said that some scientists and conservationists take only a passing interest in what happens to parrots outside of the wild populations. A major supporter of WPT would prefer us not to spend too much time on the welfare of captive birds, but concentrate on the wild ones.

My response is that we have published 34 issues of *PsittaScene* which have dealt primarily with conservation and very little with parrot welfare. It's true that we have advocated large flights and environmental enrichment, succeeded in having 300 Goffin's Cockatoos returned by trappers into the wild, published words of wisdom from Sally Blanchard on feather-picking, and issued 200,000 copies of 'Who's a lucky boy, then?' our advice to new or would-be parrot owners. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the way most parrots are kept is satisfactory.

So in this 35th *PsittaScene* let us open up discussion of this matter, which affects perhaps one third of all the parrots in captivity. WPT has calculated that there may be as many as 50 million parrots in captivity worldwide. If anyone has an alternative number, please let us know about it. If a third of those are being treated with indifference or actual cruelty, through ignorance or neglect, that is an appalling indictment of our species.

Kirsty at Paradise Park with hand-reared Hawkheaded Parrot. *Photo: Ali Reynolds*

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

I feel the need to accept a share of personal responsibility. As an aviculturist for thirty years I have collected and kept over 200 species of birds, perhaps half of them parrots, and have bred 150 species. With my family and superb staff I still get a terrific thrill from any breeding success, whether it's a nestful of Hoopoes, a Wattled Crane, or a Hyacinth Macaw. We recently reared our first ever Hawkheaded Parrot, and we're really proud of him. Over the years we have brought together numerous breeding pairs that continue to rear young every year, and we would not want to deprive these birds of that essential biological fulfillment. It must also be stated that at Paradise Park we earn a small percentage of our income from the sale of birds, although we also contribute many to breeding programmes free of charge.

What we need to strive for is a fresh and more concerned outlook on the welfare of captive parrots. It is not difficult to understand and sympathise with the anguish of a parrot rescuer who does not want any more parrots bred because they cannot be guaranteed a happy life.

More than anything else we need to provide EDUCATION for the many people who, like us, will succumb to the insidious charm of the parrots, and wish to bring them into their lives. This is proposed in the following 'Guidelines for Parrot Rescue', which I recently circulated to a variety of knowledgeable people, asking for comments and criticism. Nobody has disagreed with these guidelines, although some doubt has been expressed at my admittedly questionable guesstimates on numbers.

A VERY REAL PROBLEM

Please, fellow aviculturists, do not take offence at my review of this very real problem, and the suggestions put forward for trying to remove a blot on our hobby.

And also, fellow conservationists, try to understand the passion that lies beneath the commitment that many of us have to learning more about the intricate, fascinating lives of our beautiful birds. At the time of writing this, using colour tv cameras, we have the privilege of seeing two pairs of macaws inside their nests, brooding their eggs, preening each other so solicitously, the male feeding the female, and engaging in other instructive behaviour. Any day now we hope to see chicks hatching - how wonderful that will be! And what we learn from our captive birds will add to our ability to help them in the wild.

STOP PRESS

In conversation with an executive at Disney's Animal Kingdom I learn that they have just accepted a small group of rescued parrots from the Doris Day Foundation.

The birds will be rehabilitated at the Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida. With a lead like this from the mighty Disney organisation, perhaps others will accept a share of responsibility for the birds that fall by the wayside.

GUIDELINES FOR PARROT RESCUE

INTRODUCTION

The World Parrot Trust (WPT) was launched in 1989 to work for the conservation of parrots in the wild, and their welfare in captivity. In its early years it concentrated on field conservation projects in parrot range countries, but more recently it has become aware of the major welfare problem that exists with the millions of captive parrots in the developed world.

Many parrots are bought on a whim, perhaps as a 'prestige pet'. The purchaser may have no comprehension of the complex needs of a parrot, and will not realize the implications of taking on an animal that may live four times as long as a cat or dog, and will need as much care and attention as a human infant, but for perhaps forty years. In time, when the size of the commitment sinks in, the owner may neglect or even abuse the bird. At that point it may be sold on, given away, or offered to a parrot rescue organization. It has to be said, of course, that some parrots that have been kept in satisfactory conditions may have to be taken on by others, due to the age or ill-health of their owners.

What is the scale of the problem? The World Parrot Trust, with the help of the MORI poll organization, found that there were in excess of 600000 large parrots (excluding budgies) in the UK in 1990. Extrapolating that figure on a population basis suggests that there are at least 3 million parrots in the US, although we are advised that the total may be nearer to 5 million. Globally the total can be estimated at 50 to 60 million captive parrots, since these birds are as popular as pets in their countries of origin as they are in the rest of the world.

In time it may be possible to create an international education campaign to improve the lot of pet birds, but in the meantime we should try to address the problem in our own back yard. Paradise Park, in Cornwall UK, where the WPT is based, has been taking in unwanted parrots for twenty years, but is now full to capacity as are most zoos and bird parks. We know of many parrot rescue groups in the UK, USA, Benelux, Germany, Italy and other countries. These groups vary greatly in size, style, and methods, but what they have in common is a serious shortage of funds.

The great majority of these groups are set up by genuine parrot lovers who recognise the problem and the need for action, and are able to fund the work themselves, or with the help of like-minded friends. Their work is likely to be limited by shortage of funds, space, time, or all three. If we return to the numbers of parrots needing rescue, we can start by noting our experience in the UK, which is supported by input from avian vets. We believe that as many as 30% of all pet parrots are seriously neglected. Inadequate nutrition, cage-bound with no space to spread wings, no spraying, no branches to chew, insanitary conditions, no veterinary support. This is based on visits to homes all over the UK, and no doubt will apply in other countries.

This results in about 200000 cases of neglect in the UK, 1 to 1.6 million in the US, and as many as 20 million worldwide. From the practical point of view it is fortunate that not all these unfortunate birds will be offered for rescue at the same time.

In the UK there may be 20 rescue centres, each handling an average of 100 parrots in a year. If this guesswork is at all accurate, this means that about 2000 parrots are 'rescued' in the UK each year. But that meets only 1% of the need. If, in the US, there are 100 rescue groups handling 100 birds each year, this comes to 10000 parrots, or less than 1% of the birds in trouble. The reader will appreciate that many of our calculations are speculative, but we have to start somewhere. We would welcome information from informed sources in any country.

What cannot be denied is the sheer scale of the problem. There is no likely source of funds that WPT is aware of, that could even begin to meet the cost of this urgent animal welfare task. Individually, and as a 'movement', we can ask for help from companies and foundations associated with aviculture and the pet business, but this cannot be expected to solve the problem.

Our conclusion at this point is that the rescue groups will continue to do their best for the parrots and will relieve much suffering, but will be unable to cope with the majority of birds needing help.

SOME PROPOSALS

Any individual or organization committed to aviculture will naturally have concern for the welfare of all parrots. It has to be recognized, however, that all aviculturists, pet owners, and pet-related businesses have contributed to the creation of this welfare problem. The World Parrot Trust believes we must together accept responsibility, and take the following action:

- *Support a complete ban on the trapping, trading and export of wild-caught parrots from their countries of origin, unless for approved breeding programmes.*
- *Voluntarily reduce the numbers of parrots being bred in captivity. The aim should be quality, not quantity.*
- *Educate potential new pet parrot owners, so that they properly understand the commitment they are making.*
- *Help rescue groups wherever possible, with funding and facilities.*

The point here is that an over-supply of parrots exists, and this leads to lower prices for the producer, and easier access to parrot ownership for people who may not be suitable owners. As well as trying to solve the many individual problems, we should address the structural faults in the world of parrots: too many wild-caught birds still reaching developed countries, to be added to too many aviary-bred birds.

In these circumstances, is it unreasonable to propose that commercial objectives might be given less priority, in favour of welfare objectives?

We must emphasise that the World Parrot Trust was founded and is run by aviculturists, and supports our hobby through thick and thin. Our 'Manifesto for Aviculture' was distributed internationally in February 1997 (write in if you would like a copy), and has had some effect in promoting the concept of 'responsible aviculture'. This responsibility surely includes caring for the parrots that become 'unsuccessful' pets and are condemned to miserable, unfulfilled lives.

GUIDELINES FOR PARROT RESCUE

These are simply a draft for discussion, based on information supplied by rescue groups. We invite further input from all sources of expertise and opinion.

1. Any group engaged in this task should ensure it has sufficient funding, wide experience of working with parrots, suitable accommodation, expert veterinary support, and sound methods of assessing foster homes.
2. The motivation must be nothing other than the rescue, rehabilitation and longterm welfare of the birds. The profit motive has no place in parrot rescue.
3. Stability is vital. This means a total commitment on the part of the people involved, plus reasonable financial status. A business plan is recommended.
4. Some expertise in public relations is important, to maximise publicity about parrots in difficulty, the rescue service available, and the need for funds and other forms of support. It is also important to work effectively with local parrot people, clubs, and authorities.
5. The quality and range of facilities must be adequate. Separate quarantine, hospital, rehabilitation and pre-release sections are essential. Supervision at all stages by an avian veterinarian is strongly recommended.
6. Re-homing of rehabilitated birds is a key element in the work of most rescue operations. This requires inspection of would-be foster homes, the education of those taking on responsibility for the bird, a document recording the precise commitment being undertaken, and effective follow-up to ensure that all is well. Integration of rehabilitated birds of endangered species into an EEP or other approved breeding project is recommended.

CONCLUSION

The World Parrot Trust will publish these notes in *PsittaScene*, and will ask other relevant publications to draw attention to the problem we have described. It will also communicate with authorities that may have interest in this issue. We welcome comment and criticism.

Michael Reynolds
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May, 1998

SECOND FEMALE KAKAPO SINCE 1981 HATCHES!

by Don Merton

Just one Kakapo is known to have nested during the 1998 season - the first ever to have bred on Maud Island. "Flossie" and "Richard Henry", transferred from Little Barrier to Maud Island in July 1996 to enhance their breeding prospects, mated on the night of 30 January and Flossie laid around 4-10 February.

"Flossie" Kakapo's three eggs were fertile and hatched between 6 and 13 March. The first two nestlings were left with their mother and have made excellent weight gains; the third chick was smaller than the other two at hatching (~23 grams as opposed to ~26-27 grams) but was strong and active. Since there was a significant difference in size between this and the other two chicks, number 3 was less successful in competing for food and its weight gains were not as good as those of its siblings. It was therefore removed from the nest at 24 days of age for hand-rearing.

All three nestlings were sexed using DNA extracted from blood remaining in their egg shells after hatching - there are two males and a female. The female was the first of the three to hatch. Apart from "Hoki", now 6 years old, this is the only surviving female to have hatched since 1981!

Flossie is obviously exploiting an outstanding food source. We have discovered (through analysis of plant cuticles from chick droppings) that the key to this outstanding growth rate is - believe it or not - the introduced Monteray pine tree!! Flossie's nest is in a 20ha plantation of mature *Pinus radiata!!* Pine needle tips comprise a major part of her diet and that of the chicks.

SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH

I think this is a most significant break-through in the Kakapo programme, for unlike the other locations where breeding has occurred in recent times this event indicates that Kakapo can adapt to, and breed effectively, in, an alien environment - a pine plantation on a small, heavily modified island!

It is now 24 years since Wildlife Service colleagues and I transferred the first two (male) Kakapo from Fiordland to Maud Island. The following year (1975) John Cheyne and I caught and transferred Richard Henry (RH) - believed at that time to be an aged male - from the Gulliver Valley, Milford, Fiordland, to Maud. RH Kakapo was named after Richard Henry of Resolution Island, New Zealand's visionary pioneer conservationist who in the 1890s and early 1900s devoted the latter years of his life to trying to save the Kakapo. When in 1982 stoats reached Maud Island I moved RH together with three other Kakapo from Maud to Little Barrier Island (LBI).

RH spent the next 14 years on Little Barrier and although he developed several bowl systems and boomed in a number of years he apparently did not hold a track and bowl system ("court") on the summit courtship display ground ("arena") and he is not known to have mated. Since he was obviously unlikely to breed on LBI yet his genetic contribution was considered by all to be of vital importance to the species (he is the last known surviving Kakapo from the New Zealand mainland) I advocated over several years for his return to Maud where his prospects of breeding were likely to be much better (smaller, lower island and fewer males to compete with).

In 1996 the Kakapo Management Group and Kakapo Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee resolved to return RH to Maud, and in July of that year we transferred him and Flossie to Maud. After only 18 months RH has been one of the more vocal of the four males on Maud this season and has the best developed booming bowls. He is also the only male known to have mated - almost certainly for the first time in the last 23 years and very likely for the first time in his life! We do not know how old RH is - at least 30 years, and very likely more than 50!

The current nest on Maud is significant for many reasons. For instance:

- It is a first for Maud: breeding occurred in the "11th hour" when most of those involved were convinced that Kakapo there would never breed, and were in fact planning to remove all three females to other islands within the next few months;
- RH's genetic contribution has long been recognised as important and was a prime consideration in his recent relocation to Maud. His genetic input is likely to be of great significance to the tiny Kakapo gene-pool since he is the only known surviving Kakapo from the New Zealand mainland - ie other than of Stewart Island origin;
- the knowledge that both RH and Flossie are still able to breed - so far as is known RH has not mated in the last 23 years and Flossie did not attempt to breed during 14 years on LBI;
- the fact that both bred only ~18 months after relocation from Little Barrier and (in Flossie's case) commencement of regular supplementary feeding, is of great interest to Kakapo managers;
- growth and development rates of Flossie's two older nestlings are superior to those of (single) chicks raised by supplementary-fed females elsewhere; and finally,
- if Kakapo are sufficiently adaptable to survive and breed on Maud then other small, modified, but mustelid and rodent-free islands are likely to be suitable for Kakapo - so dramatically increasing the management and recovery options for this critically-endangered New Zealander. (Recovery efforts to date have generally focused on large, relatively unmodified islands - which are exceedingly few in number and Kakapo on them are very much more difficult and costly to manage intensively.)

The two other females on Maud did not breed this season. There has been intensive and sustained booming on both LBI and Maud, but no sustained booming or breeding on Codfish Island this season. There has been one mating on Little Barrier but since none of the three known (ie transmitterised) females there appears to have been involved we suspect that one of two females not seen for 12 or more years may still survive - and may have mated. Dog teams searched likely parts of LBI in early March, but failed to find a nest.

Most Codfish Island Kakapo were transferred temporarily to Pearl Island during April so as to enable Southland Conservancy to attempt rat eradication on Codfish this winter.

Young Kakapo of about 4 weeks old, waiting for his mother to return with food. *Photo: Don Merton*

The Conservation Status of African Parrots: A Review for the World Parrot Trust - Part 1

by Roger Wilkinson

Africa and its outlying islands are home to around two dozen parrot species. The exact number depends on whose taxonomy is followed and for that reason it is important that well differentiated forms, some currently variously treated as species or as sub-species, are included in any current conservation assessment.

African parrots belong to five genera of which four, *Psittacus*, *Poicephalus*, *Agapornis* and *Coracopsis* are restricted to the African region with Coracopsis endemic to Madagascar. The fifth genus Psittacula is mainly Asiatic with one representative on mainland Africa and one on Mauritius.

Although the importance of Africa as a centre for parrots is more concerned with the endemic status of the first four genera than with its total parrot diversity in terms of current species conservation it is the Echo Parakeet *Psittacula echo* which is the most critically threatened.

This report reviews the wild status of African parrots as assessed from a review of the scientific literature and where available adds more recent information from correspondents.

For many parrots there is relatively little published information on their biology and wild status. This is the case for most African Parrots and especially the case for parrots in West and Central Africa.

The welcome upsurge in parrot research in the southern half of Africa over the last few years has largely been the result of Mike Perrin's initiatives in recruiting researchers and founding the Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation at the University of Natal, South Africa. Some recent work is already suggesting that parrots which until recently were considered common are now much more restricted in their distribution or occur at low densities.

Trapping for the avicultural and pet trade has occurred on a significant scale over many years for Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* and Senegal Parrots *Poicephalus senegalus* apparently without major impact on their global conservation status. However there are suggestions that the relatively recent increase in exploitation of other species as indicated by the renewed trade in previously unfashionable *Poicephalus* may be depleting some wild populations. Whether recent attempts to legitimise trade by ranching will lead to acceptable sustainable exploitation or increase the problem by masking illegal trading and providing an opportunity for laundering remains uncertain.

This review, written by a biologist no longer working in Africa, has relied greatly on the often scant published literature and the generosity of those workers who gave more recent information. If the review serves only to stimulate those with specialist knowledge to indicate omissions or errors in the following species accounts then it will have been useful. It is hoped that it may also help indicate where research is still needed, especially as regards parrot distribution and population estimates, serve to engender discussion about conservation priorities and stimulate further work on the biology of African Parrots.

GREATER VASA PARROT *Coracopsis vasa*

Greater Vasa Parrots are endemic to Madagascar and the Comoros Islands. Two subspecies occur on Madagascar with the darker, larger *Coracopsis vasa vasa* in the east intergrading with the paler western *C. vasa drouhardi.* The Comoros subspecies *C. vasa comorensis* which occurs on Grand Comoro, Moheli and Anjouan, differs in being smaller and paler with brown rather than grey under-tail coverts.

Contemporary accounts indicate Greater Vasa Parrots to be common or fairly common on Madagascar where they were once very common or abundant (Dee 1986, Langrand 1990).Greater Vasa Parrots on Madagascar are on the Government list of harmful animals being considered to damage rice and maize crops. They are hunted for food and captured as pets.

Between 1983 and 1988 nearly 3,000 Greater Vasa Parrots were exported from Madagascar to CITES countries (Thomsen et al 1992) and ca 500 imported into the U.S.A.. Since February 1995 an import ban on Greater Vasa Parrots from Madagascar into the European Community has been imposed by the E.C. CITES Committee. However concern remains that these parrots continue to be hunted and trapped on Madagascar and that levels of exploitation may be excessive (McBride 1996, Collar 1998).

Young Greater Vasa Parrot in the wild. *Photo: P. McBride*

Both races of the Greater Vasa Parrot on Madagascar and the subspecies on the Comoros were listed as vulnerable/ safe in the second draft IUCN / Birdlife International Parrot Action plan (Lambert et al, unpublished). The biology of Greater Vasa Parrots particularly with regard to their social organisation and breeding system deserves long term study in the wild (Wilkinson 1994a, Wilkinson and Birkhead 1995) but it would be presently difficult to justify this as an immediate conservation priority.

LESSER VASA PARROT *or* BLACK PARROT *Coracopsis nigra*

Lesser Vasa Parrots occur on Madagascar, the Comoros and Praslin Island in the Seychelles. On Madagascar the nominate *Coracopsis nigra nigra* occupies the more humid eastern regions intergrading with the paler *C. n. libs* of the drier west. The Praslin Black Parrot *C. n. barklyi* and the Comoros form *C. n. sibilans*, found on Grand Comoro and Anjouan, are markedly smaller and arguably could be treated as a separate species. These two latter forms are themselves rather similar and may not be distinct from each other (Gaymer et al 1969). Clearly the taxonomy of this group should be addressed because of the important conservation implications.

Lesser Vasa Parrots are considered to be common on Madagascar and, like the Greater Vasa Parrot, are listed on the Government list of harmful animals and hunted as food and captured for pets. Between 1983 and 1989 some 2500 Lesser Vasa Parrot imports were reported to the CITES authorities (Thomsen et al 1992). Although Lesser Vasa Parrots would currently appear safe their status should be periodically monitored as this may be negatively affected by the level of hunting and by the rapid rate of forest loss on Madagascar (Snyder et al, in press).

The Praslin Black Parrot *C. n. barklyi* has a small but presently stable population centred on the Vallee de Mai Coco de Mer reserve. The entire population is estimated at only 70-100 birds (Collar and Stuart 1985, Collar 1998) and together

with its very restricted distribution must be considered endangered. Wilkinson (1994b) reported being concerned and puzzled that 44 *C. n. barklyi* were recorded as imported into CITES countries in 1983 and 1984 as he was unaware of any having been held in captivity outside Praslin. This may simply have resulted from errors of reporting. The CITES annual report data compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre indicates all were imported by the USA with 30 from Madagascar via Belgium, 8 from Belgium (including 4 listed as captive bred!)and 6 from Ghana via Sweden (D. W Morgan, T. Mulliken pers comm).

Information on the current status and sizes of the Comoros Island C. n. sibilans populations would be desirable, not least because of the suggested similarity of this form to the endangered Praslin Black Parrot.

GREY PARROT *Psittacus erithacus*

African Grey Parrots are widely distributed and regarded as common to abundant in rainforests and mangroves of West and Central Africa from Sierra Leone west to Zaire (Fry et al 1988).

Grey Parrots are especially fond of oil-palm fruits, and occasionally maize when they could then be considered a pest. However there are no reports of direct persecution of African Grey Parrots as crop pests although large numbers are collected for the pet trade.

Although Fry et al (1988) argue that there appears to be no evidence of reduction in numbers due to trapping except near towns there is concern that some populations have been reduced. Grimes (1987) regards the species as uncommon and local in Ghana where it is now mainly confined to forest reserves. Whilst flocks of 500-1000 African Grey Parrots were reported from Ghana in the 1940's only two's and three's were recorded at Bia in the 1970's; illegal export for the wild bird trade is held as the main reason for this decline. In Nigeria the African Grey Parrot is local but not uncommon in mature high forest and mangroves but numbers are declining through human persecution and forest destruction (Elgood et al 1994).Grey Parrots were formerly fairly common in Kakamega and Nandi forests in western Kenya where continuing forest destruction and resultant loss of nest-sites has resulted in the only remaining population in Kakamega being reduced to fewer than ten birds (Zimmerman et al 1996).

The 1997 export quota for Sierra Leone was 1,000, for Guinea 450 *(both P. e. timneh)*, and for Zaire 10,000. A zero export quota was indicated for Cameroon for 1997. For 1996(& 1995) export quotas of Grey Parrots for Cameroon were 12,000, for Ghana 5,000 ,for Guinea 450, and for Zaire 10,000. The large export quota for these years for Ghana is surprising as some ten years earlier it was considered to be local and uncommon because of illegal trade (Grimes 1987).

There are two well differentiated subspecies, the smaller darker

A pair of wild-caught Cape Parrots *P. robustus*, being kept as 'pets' in S. Africa. With a population of only 1000-2000, this is most regrettable.

P.e.timneh in forests west of the Bandama River in Ivory Coast west to Sierra Leone, and the nominate larger "silver" *P. e. erithacus* east from the Bandama River to Kenya. Thiollay (1985) notes "there is no gap between the two subspecies *erithacus* and *timneh* supposed to come in contact along the Bandama River". This suggests to me that the two taxa may on review/further research be candidates to become accepted as full species.

Parrots from Bioko and Principe, Gulf of Guinea, formerly separated as *P. e. princeps* on the suggestion of darker plumage (Forshaw 1989) are considered to be insufficiently distinct on examination of British Museum specimens and included with *P. e. erithacus* (Fry et al 1988).

Current research on the feeding ecology of Grey Parrots in Cameroon is being presented as a PhD thesis by Awafor Tamungang (University of Ibadan, Nigeria) supported in part by N.E.Z.S. (Chester Zoo) and W.A.O.S. (West African Ornithological Society).The results of this study are awaited.

From a conservation perspective there is no concern over subspecies and conservation needs are local to particular geopolitical units. In summary it seems that Grey Parrots generally remain common in the centre of their large range but are locally endangered on the edge of their range. Trade should continue to be monitored and in those countries where there have been recent population declines the possibilities of conservation action may need to be investigated at a national level.

BROWN-NECKED PARROT *or* CAPE PARROT *Poicephalus robustus*

The taxonomic treatment of Brown-necked or Cape Parrots has important consequences if conservation resources are to be prioritised for species with less concern being given for subspecies. The three taxa *robustus*, *suahelicus* and *fuscicollis* are together considered as a single species by most authors (Fry et al 1988) although there has been a recent move to treat the Cape Parrot *P. r. robustus* as a separate full species (Perrin pers comm.). This is contradicted by Dowsett and Dowsett-Lemaire (1993) who note the voices of *suahelicus* and *robustus* to be identical and consider the differences in morphology between them to be of only racial importance. Although morphological differentiation may be slight *robustus* is separated from *suahelicus* by head colour, bill size, and habitat preference (Fry et al 1988, Snow 1978, Low 1997a) and would be worthy of conservation attention even as a well differentiated subspecies.

Suahelicus and *fuscicollis* are geographically distant but more similar to each other morphologically and in sharing similar wooded savanna habitats. They are also linked in that the isolated Lower River Congo population of suahelicus is intermediate between the main population of *suahelicus* and *fuscicollis*.

Notwithstanding the similarities between *suahelicus* and *fuscicollis* it may be prudent to focus conservation attention on the latter which is generally scarce with the main populations centred in wooded savannas in Ivory Coast and Ghana and local populations in the Gambia. The Gambian population is largely restricted to Kiang West National Park with sightings across the river from mangrove forest in Bao-bolon Wetland Reserve. This population has a low density and is thought to be sedentary. Recorded also in the vicinities of Pirang, Marakissa, and Gambia River National Park there is concern that this parrot has declined in the Gambia (Barlow, Wacher and Disley 1997, Murphy, Barlow et al 1997). Population estimates and a better understanding of the distribution and movements of *fuscicollis* (it is said to be a casual visitor to Nigeria) would be essential to better assessing its current status.

Suahelicus appears to be widespread and although sparse over much of its range is not presently a conservation priority. Work by Mike Perrin's team on *robustus*, which on current knowledge is the most critically endangered form, should clearly continue to be supported.

RED-FRONTED PARROT *or* JARDINE'S PARROT *Poicephalus gulielmi*

This parrot occurs in primary forest. Three subspecies are recognised: the nominate P. g. *gulielmi*, frequent in lowland forest from Cameroon and Angola through Zaire to montane forests of south-west Uganda; *P. g. masaicus*, locally abundant in montane forests of Kenya and Tanzania (Fry et al 1988); and *P. g. fantiensis* which is a rare and local breeder in Ivory

Coast (Thiollay 1985) and Ghana, and also occurs in Liberia (Dowsett and Forbes-Watson 1993).

The 1997 export quotas for Togo was 50 birds, and those for Guinea and Tanzania were both zero suggesting that international legal trade is presently very small. (Large numbers of wild-caught birds have been imported into Europe during the past couples of years – Ed). However Collar (1998) indicates up to 16,000 may have been in trade between 1987 and 1993 and that year-round trapping on Mt. Kilimanjaro may lead to local extinction.

Red-fronted Parrots are also locally threatened in Kenya through loss of primary forest as a result of deforestation (Collar 1998). Although still locally common and widespread in East Africa, this species would benefit from population monitoring.

In West Africa *fantiensis* is rare and local and may be of conservation concern but as a poorly differentiated subspecies this may not be a priority. However coupled with a study of *P. r. fuscicollis* a population assessment of *P. g. fantiensis* in Ivory Coast and Ghana would certainly be of West African interest. Renato Massa (pers. comm.) suggests that the number of Jardine's Parrots remaining in Kakum National Park, Ghana, may be as low as "a few pairs".

MEYER'S PARROT *Poicephalus meyeri*

Meyer's Parrot is a common and widely distributed resident in savanna woodland occurring from Chad, Central African Republic, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea south through Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia to South Africa. Numbers and range in Transvaal are now much reduced (Collar 1998).

Meyer's Parrot is considered a pest in Zambezi, where it competes with people for *Ziziphus* berries, and in Angola where it takes crops. It is now scarce and local in Transvaal where it was previously a pest of orange orchards and cereal crops (Collar 1998).

Although this and other *Poicephalus* were previously in little demand for the cage-bird trade significant numbers were traded through the 1980's with recorded annual exports from Tanzania peaking at just under 12,000 in 1987 but declining to less than 1200 in 1990 (Edwards and Broad 1992). The 1997 export quota for Mozambique was for 100 ranched specimens. In some areas, e.g. the Transvaal, numbers have declined due to habitat destruction (Fry et al 1988).

Five subspecies, differing mainly in size and shade, are recognised by Fry et al (1988). This species would appear to be presently safe but may be subject to local hunting pressure.

SENEGAL PARROT *Poicephalus senegalus*

The Senegal Parrot is a common West African parrot occurring from Senegal and Gambia west throughout savanna woodland to Nigeria and northern Cameroon. Senegal Parrots are widespread and common in Nigeria (Elgood et al 1994) and in Ghana where they have recently increased in coastal areas (Grimes 1987, Fry et al 1988).

Meyer's Parrot *P. meyeri*. Photo from 'Parrots in Aviculture – a photographic guide' by Rosemary Low and Ron & Val Moat.

Although popular as a cage-bird, with for example ca 40,000 exported from Senegal in 1990 (Edwards and Biteye 1992), the populations appear robust and there is no evidence that the trade is unsustainable (Fry et al 1988).

The 1997, 1996 and 1995 export quotas for Senegal were set at 16,000 birds and for Togo at 300.

Three races *P. s. senegalus*, *P. s. versteri* and *P. s. mesotypus* are recognised but none appear isolated or of obvious conservation concern.

NIAM-NIAM PARROT *Poicephalus crassus*

The status of the Niam-Niam Parrot is uncertain although Fry et al (1988) ventured that it is "probably frequent to common in its little explored range".

The Niam-Niam Parrot occurs in forest-savanna mosaic and is virtually restricted to the Central African Republic although extending west into south west Chad and east barely into north west Zaire and southern Sudan. Its biology is very poorly known with no information on its breeding habits. There is no suggestion of recent range contraction but Carroll (1988) in the most recent review of birds of the Central African Republic lists the species as uncommon with birds rarely observed in the Manovo-Gounda-Saint Floris National Park but also recorded in the Lobaye Prefecture.

Carroll warns that changing land use and the increasing use of pesticides with felling of forests and selective logging will have drastic consequences for the local avifauna. This indicates it is important to determine and continue to monitor the status of this restricted range species.

RED-BELLIED PARROT *Poicephalus rufiventris*

This parrot is an East African endemic in dry wooded savanna from Ethiopia and Somalia south through Kenya to Northern Tanzania, where it is reported as fairly common and widespread (Zimmerman et al 1996) or frequent to common (Fry et al 1988).

Between 1983 and 1990 a total of 16,000 Red-bellied Parrots were recorded to be exported from Tanzania but this peaked with ca 4700 birds in 1986; less than 600 being reported for 1990 (Edwards and Broad 1992). Although Tanzania indicated no export quota for *Poicephalus rufiventris* for 1994 some, which had been captured under the 1993 quota, were exported in 1994 (Rosser and Milliken 1995). Zero quotas for export from Tanzania were set for 1995, 1996 and 1997.

Two subspecies of *Poicephalus rufiventris* are recognised with the northern populations *P. r. pallidus* being paler. Neither would presently appear to merit priority conservation action although there is some concern that population densities may be lower than generally believed. Renato Massa and colleagues (Massa 1995, Venuto et al in press) made studies of Red-bellied Parrots in Tarangire National Park, Kenya, in February 1993 and Massa (pers comm) suggests that their numbers in Tarangire may be "in the order of magnitude of hundreds".

BROWN-HEADED PARROT *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*

The Brown-headed Parrot is resident in forest-savanna mosaic and drier woodland from coastal south east Kenya south through eastern Tanzania, Malawi, south east Zambia and Mozambique to the Transvaal, Swaziland and east Zululand.

Forshaw (1989) recognises three subspecies: the nominate *cryptoxanthus*, *tanganikae* and *zanzibaricus*. Only the first two subspecies are recognised by Fry et al (1988) and other authors consider it monotypic (White 1970, Zimmerman et al 1996). This suggests that geographic variation is slight. Clancey (1977) indicates that *zanzibaricus*, previously confined to Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, is now extinct. Hybridisation between the Brown-headed Parrot and Meyer's Parrot has been suggested where their ranges meet in south east Zimbabwe and north east Transvaal (Clancey 1979 cited in Fry et al 1988). However if this occurs it is very rare as the two species appear mutually exclusive with no mixed parties (Rowan 1983, S. Taylor pers. comm.).

Fry et al (1988) refer to the species as common. In Kenya and northern Tanzania the Brown-headed Parrot is localised in coastal bush and woodland, mangroves and coconut plantations where scarce except for near Kifi, Shimoni and on Pemba Island (Zimmerman et al 1996).Collar (1998)suggests the species is not globally threatened

noting it as common in Malawi and Pemba, the common small parrot of Mozambique, and locally common in East Transvaal, especially in Kruger National Park. Juniper and Parr (1998) note that Brown-headed Parrots are 'in places common, especially near coast and in south of range' but increasingly vulnerable to habitat loss and fragmentation and probably undergoing a general decline. The differences between the earlier and recent reports suggest a rapid recent decline in this parrots range and numbers. Stuart Taylor (pers. comm.), who has worked with this parrot over the last two years , considers Brown-headed Parrots to be now locally extinct over much of their former range in South Africa and Mozambique. The only substantial population in South Africa, estimated at 1,500-2,000 birds, is now confined to the Kruger National Park (S. Taylor, pers. comm.).

Some export trade occurs but documented trade has been relatively small with ca 500 birds reported as exported from Tanzania in 1990 (Edwards and Broad 1992). In common with other *Poicephalus* zero trade quotas were set for Tanzania for 1995, 1996 and 1997. Wild caught birds are commonly sold in Mozambique for very little money and this illegal trade has led to a decline in numbers (Perrin 1997). Stuart Taylor (pers. comm.) suggests that 2,600-5,200 individuals per annum may be traded from Maputo, Mozambique. The 1997 export quota for Brown-headed Parrots from Mozambique was for 200 'ranched' birds. This does not refer to captive-breeding but the harvesting of wild chicks. The whole issue of 'ranching' of wild parrots for the pet trade would repay further investigation especially with regard to the formulation of guidelines for best practice. However in Mozambique the major concern has to be that the scale of the present local trade would appear unsustainable.

The recent declines in range and numbers indicate it is important to continue to monitor this parrot and understand its ecology and biology. Trade, habitat loss and habitat fragmentation have been suggested as reasons for this decline with capture for the bird trade of particular concern in Mozambique. A reassessment of the regional and ultimately global conservation status of this parrot would be valuable.

RÜPPELL'S PARROT *Poicephalus rueppellii*

Rüppell's Parrot is restricted to south west Angola and Namibia where it inhabits a range of habitats including sub-desert dry grass steppe and dry woodland . It is considered locally common but although its capture is now illegal in Namibia its numbers have been much reduced by trapping (Fry et al 1988).

The estimated population in Namibia is only 9000 birds (Selman 1996). Small population sizes together with its restricted range and illegal trapping may have led to a recent decline as suggested by smaller flock sizes (Juniper and Parr 1998). This monotypic species has been the subject of recent research by Richard Selman and Margaret Hunter whose report is expected to provide the basis for decision making about future research or conservation action.

African Grey Parrots *P. erithacus*, in a traders's premises.

YELLOW-FRONTED PARROT *or* YELLOW-FACED PARROT *Poicephalus flavifrons*

This is a restricted range species endemic to highland Ethiopia. The Yellow-fronted Parrot is locally frequent to common above 1800 m in *Juniperus* and *Podocarpus* forests; uncommon below 1000 m (Urban and Brown 1971, Fry et al 1988). This parrot is unknown in trade. Although two captives were reported to the International Species Inventory System (ISIS report, June 1997) by a collection in the Netherlands and one was reported by the same collection in the European Endangered species Programme (EEP) Parrot Taxon Advisory Group's recent survey (Brouwer et al 1997) further investigation indicated both were in error.

White (1970) recognises two races of the Yellow-fronted Parrot; the nominate *P. f. flavifrons* from the north and central highlands and *P. f. aurantiiceps*, noted to have the yellow areas more orange tinted, from the south-west. Forshaw (1989) considers these doubtfully distinct, and Fry et al (1988) consider the species monotypic.

The biology of the Yellow-fronted Parrot is virtually unknown and its breeding habits entirely unknown (Urban 1980). Hilton (1997) notes that Yellow-fronted Parrots were previously found in northern Ethiopia, and until recently also in the southern suburbs of Addis Ababa. They are now confined to the National Parks of the south; the Arsi, Harara, Akobo and Bale mountains and the Jikao forest.

Although they now have become more restricted in distribution, Hilton (1997) considers the Yellow-fronted Parrot not to be presently rare or endangered. Collar (1998) notes that outside the National Parks the Yellow-fronted Parrot is considered a minor crop pest and potentially at risk from chemical spraying to control damage by other birds.

The Yellow-fronted Parrot's restricted range is included within that of another Ethiopian endemic, the Black-winged Lovebird *Agapornis taranta*. Forshaw (1989) notes that Yellow-faced Parrots are often seen in the company of Black-winged Lovebirds *Agapornis taranta*. Although this is contested by Hilton (1997); both parrots could usefully be surveyed together to give current abundance estimates against which future estimates could be compared to enable closer monitoring of these two restricted range Ethiopian endemics.

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The parrots of Buton Island, South West Sulawesi by Mark Catterall

I have been a member of the World Parrot Trust for a number of years and have a keen interest in parrot conservation. During 1996 I was involved, initially as a volunteer and subsequently as expedition leader, in a survey of the remote Indonesian island of Buton. This is located in south-east Sulawesi and the expeditions formed part of Operation Wallacea's Buton and Tukangbesi bird and marine surveys. The project has been running for over three years and 1 understand that there are proposals for it to continue over the next few years.

Buton has recently been designated as a transmigration site, despite being comparatively small (150km long by 10-30km across) and the unsuitability of many areas for agriculture. The island is coralline and large areas are exceptionally rugged, with little soil. Extensive areas in the south are covered in cashew-nut plantations and areas of poor subsistence cultivation. Forests in the south are largely restricted to the steeper slopes, although loggers are now moving into these areas. Large areas there have been designated as protected forest (watershed protection) but this appears to mean little. An extensive area of protected forest exists in the north, centred around Buton's only mountain which reaches an altitude of l,l00m.

Proposals are currently being considered for the upgrading of the area into a national park but a large transmigration site has recently been established within the existing boundaries of the protected area. Huge areas of primary and mature secondary forest still exist, especially on the higher slopes. The aim of Operation Wallacea is to establish the national park in the north of the island and to encourage local initiatives in conservation. When the collected data is written up, it is hoped that recommendations will include educational programmes aimed at schoolchildren. I am hoping to obtain approval for a separate education programme for the Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. The Bupati (local governor) has expressed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm in the project as a whole, so this could well be successful.

LESSER SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO *Cacatua sulphurea*

According to a recently completed status assessment by BirdLife International and the Indonesian Department of Nature Conservation (PHPA), populations of the Yellow-crested (or Lesser Sulphur-crested) Cockatoo have crashed since the 1970s. The subspecies sulphurea is known to have vanished from many parts of Sulawesi and the largest known population, in the Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, numbers only about 150 birds.

C.s.sulphurea is an uncommon and evidently localised species on Buton, which appears to occur predominantly in the drier forests in the south of the island. All birds were closely associated with forested habitats, including degraded forest. It was generally encountered in pairs and small groups of 3-9 birds. A total of 34 birds were recorded in 1996 from nine widely spaced squares, all in the south of the island. In 1995 nineteen birds were recorded from four squares, including the only northern record for this species - five birds seen near Maligano in north-west Buton. Fairly large areas of Buton have still to be surveyed, including extensive areas of lowland forest and more birds will undoubtedly be found. The total Buton population of the Yellow-crested Cockatoos is probably between 50-100 birds, but numbers are decreasing due to trapping and the species is under enormous pressure. Cockatoos are still widely trapped for the pet trade despite being fully protected by Indonesian law. No Yellow-crested Cockatoos were observed during brief visits to the Tukangbesi Island south-east of Buton in the Banda Sea, but surveys were restricted to the small island of Hoga. According to local people interviewed at Wanci on nearby Wangiwangi Island, the species is still present in small numbers but is widely trapped.

On November 5th, 1996, two Cockatoos were shot and injured at Airjatuh by local trappers during a visit by one of the survey groups. The police were called who arrested the two men involved and confiscated the birds. Both birds were observed chained to a tree outside the Bau-Bau Police Station later in November and the current fate of the birds is not known. A single, extremely wary bird remained at Airjatuh but was impossible to approach and was not observed to visit the nest cavity, although the bird appeared reluctant to leave the area. The fate of the young bird is unknown, although it is unlikely that the birds were removed from the nest as the huge tree in which the cavity is found is situated above a 50 foot high waterfall and is thus inaccessible. This site is the only known breeding site for this parrot on Buton; according to local people the site is used yearly by this species. The nest cavity was situated at the base of a thick clump of tree ferns on the main trunk of the tree. (The tree was also used by a pair of Red-knobbed Hornbill *Rhyticeros cassidix* - the hornbill cavity being some 2-3 metres higher up the tree). A number of captive Cockatoos were seen throughout the island (around 10 birds); all had been trapped locally. This species is readily available in the bird market at Kendari, where birds are offered for as little as US$50.

The Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoos is one of the species threatened by deforestation and trapping on Buton.

ORNATE LORIKEET *Trichoglossus ornatus*

An incredibly beautiful lory which is common throughout Buton wherever there are flowering trees and patches of forest. It is most often seen in areas of more open woodland, secondary growth, forest edge, lightly wooded cultivation and coconut plantations. It was also noted in mangrove forest. It is regularly attracted to red-flowering trees along the sea-shore. Flight is swift and direct with very rapid wing-beats; it typically flies low above the tree tops. It is a noisy but difficult to observe species in the dense foliage of fruiting trees, despite its bright colouring. Locally nomadic on Buton but absent from certain areas where it was previously numerous, the occurrence of this lory obviously depends on the presence of

flowering and fruiting trees. As a very popular and commonly kept pet in most villages throughout Buton, populations must ultimately suffer as there is no regulation of the numbers caught. Most captive birds were tethered to the perches by wooden shackles - these were shaped like a figure of 8, the birds leg going through the smaller hole directly above the larger hole. The birds leg was thus always kept at an angle and a number of birds were seen to have badly damaged and dislocated legs.

MEYER'S LORIKEET
Trichoglossus flavoviridis meyeri

This is a highly localised and very rare species on Buton, with only a handful of records from areas of hill forest. It appears to be confined to areas of mature forest, and was never seen in the open. On mainland Sulawesi this species is shy and elusive, which could help explain the paucity of records on Buton. On mainland Sulawesi this lorikeet is confined to areas of hill and mountain forest, but it seems that mature forest, not altitude, is the limiting factor in the distribution of this species. It is threatened by forest clearance on Buton.

SULAWESI HANGING PARROT
Loroculus stigmatus

The commonest of the two hanging parrot species on Buton, it was regularly met with around habitation, especially in coconut plantations. Birds were frequently attracted to flowering trees in more open country. It inhabits a wide range of forested and wooded environments, including areas of mature forest, degraded secondary forest, forest edge, cultivation with scattered trees and mangrove forest. Generally encountered singly and in pairs or small flocks of 3-10 birds; occasionally in large concentration in flowering or fruiting trees. More conspicuous than *L. exilis*, particularly in fig trees and coconut palms, it is not particularly wary. In the morning, it is regularly observed perched in the open on the tips of rattan spikes above the tree tops. Flight is fast and direct, but slightly undulating. With care it is possible to identify this species in flight once the general size and frequency heard call are learnt. Hanging Parrots are not commonly kept as pets and only two birds were seen in captivity during 1996. Breeding was recorded between August and November during 1996.

GREEN HANGING PARROT
Loriculus exilis

Less common than *L. stigmatus*, it is found in smaller numbers and in fewer locations around the island. This parrot appears to be restricted to more forested habitats the *L. stigmatus*, where it keeps to the canopy. Repeatedly confused with *L. stigmatus* during the early stages of 1996, all Hanging Parrots without red crowns were attributed to the latter despite the fact that juvenile and female Sulawesi Hanging Parrots often have little or no red on the crown. It is thus inevitable that earlier records for this species are erroneous and misleading. Due to its small size, cryptic colouring, and habit of feeding quietly in the canopy of forest trees, this species was extremely inconspicuous and easily overlooked. In flight it appears tiny; flight is swift. It produces an indistinct short single very thin *psst*; frequently heard in flight. It was occasionally seen in the company of the larger Sulawesi Hanging-Parrot at fruiting trees. Never seen in captivity.

Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo nest near Baubau. the hole is situated at the base of the fern dump on the left trunk. A cockatoo is perched on a branch above the nest.

GOLDEN-MANTLED RACQUET-TAIL PARROT *Prioniturus platurus*

A locally common even abundant species, frequenting areas of forest, especially in hilly areas. Generally in flocks of 3-15 birds, rarely singly. In one forest in the hills above Maligano over 150 birds were observed, during a 30 minute period, in the late afternoon flying high overhead in small (4-7 birds) loose flocks. Almost all birds were flying in a northerly direction, presumably to roost.- It is a difficult bird to observe, being shy and very wary. Birds freeze in the foliage when approached, before exploding out of the canopy screeching loudly. Attracted to trees with small fruits and seeds, birds keep to the mid-storey and sub-canopy of larger trees. They were regularly observed hanging upside down in order to reach small fruits at the ends of thin branches. Noisy flocks were regularly encountered in most forested environments, although birds were surprisingly absent from some of the drier forests in the south. Flight was swift with continuous rapid wing-beats. Active and noisy at night, it often flies around at height screeching continuously. Two females seen in Maligano were the only evidence of this species in captivity. According to Forshaw, this Racquet-tail was formerly caught in large numbers on Buton. Reports of the much larger Yellow-breasted-Racquet-tail Parrot *Prioniturus flavicans* are in error and no substantiated records were made.

BLUE-BACKED PARROT
Tanygnathus sumatranus

An uncommon or locally common species on Buton, which was widely distributed, in inhabited areas of forest, including degraded secondary forest, open woodlands with remnant forest patches, and cultivation with scattered trees and scrub. It was frequently seen around habitation in the north, around Maligano. Generally difficult to observe, in certain parts of the island birds were more easily approachable (presumably due to less persecution). Flight was relatively slow, but direct with shallow rapid wing-beats. It is very noisy when in flight, especially at night. Generally observed in pairs or small flocks of 3-7 birds; rarely it was seen singly or in larger flocks of up to 20 birds. Attracted to fruiting trees and ripening crops, it is often seem at night. A common bird in captivity, especially in the south of the island, seven birds were found in one small village.

An unusually coloured bird was seen on July a 5th in forest near La Bundo-Bundo in the south-east of the island. General plumage was similar to the ordinary Blue-backed Parrot, but differed in having a brownish wash on the breast and neck, plus rufous-brown undertail feathers; the individual had a white bill and iris. The bird was seen clearly in the canopy of a large tree in the company of a pair of Great-billed Parrots *T.megaloryhnchos*. Forshaw describes a similar bird, the Rufous-tailed Parrot *Tanygnathus heterurus* which is only known from the type specimen (Forshaw, 1989). According to Forshaw this specimen probably represents an aberrant form of *T.sumatranus*.

GREAT-BILLED PARROT
Tanygnathus megalorynchos

Some confusion surrounded the identification of this species and the more widespread and abundant *T.sumatranus*. Great-billed Parrots are, however, present on Buton in small numbers. Most records are from the south of the island, particularly in coastal areas. They inhabit tall secondary forest, both in the lowlands and nearby hills, and in mangroves. Occasionally found in the company of *F. sumatranus*, although birds appeared not to mix. Found singly, in pairs and small flocks of 3-5 birds; a single record of 22 birds is the only large concentration of this species. It is present on the Tukangbesi Islands, and two birds were observed in November 1995 on the tiny island of Hoga. People in the Tukangbesi claim that this species is not uncommon in the few remaining forest patches. Available habitat on the four main islands in the Tukangbesi is an important centre for the illegal trade in parrots and other species. Birds from all over the region are shipped through the islands in order to meet local demand and for shipment out of the area.

NEWS...VIEWS...ACTION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I would like to comment on the article by Rosemary Low on the parrots of Mexico in the November 1997 issue of *PsittaScene*. Regarding the Maroon-fronted Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta terrisi*), most people in the sierra know about the "guacas" as they call them. They do not understand them in a biological sense but these parrots are a conspicuous part of their daily lives and they know that they nest in the area on the cliff faces, eat pinyon and leave during the colder months of the year. This is one of the few parrots that does not inhabit the Neotropics but the Neartic temperate conifer forests. Captive birds are uncommon but found in several homes across the Sierra Madre Oriental where people have them, as they say, out of "curiosity". Fortunately there is not a market for them and the people and authorities in Mexico have done a good job to keep this species out of trade.

Thanks to recent work by Mexican scientists at the Monterrey Institute of Technology with assistance from colleagues in the USA, it is one of the best known in the Americas. Between 1994 and 1997 the research team at Monterrey Tech with support from over 10 different national and international foundations and charities has logged over two thousand observer-hours at different nesting cliffs and documented phenology, movements of flocks and productivity of nests. We captured several adults in 1997 using special nets and are currently following two of them with radio-collars. A juvenile that fell out of the nest in 1997 will be rehabilitated at ARA for six months and then conditioned on site by our team for release in September 1998.

The most important site for the species is El Taray which has harboured between 35% and 40% of all breeding pairs known of the species during the last three years, up from the 25% we estimated when we recommended it for acquisition and conservation. El Condominio has varied in importance between second and third with more breeding pairs. The Jay seen was the Mexican Jay (*Aphelocoma ultramarina*). The scrub Jay is also present in the area but not found in the environs of El Condominio.

As stated in the *Psittascene* article of February 1996, the total population was at least 1400 and in October 1996 we documented about 2500 of which 2213 were in a large extended flock. The species is fortunately not declining but stable from all evidence accumulated to date and very likely more than 3000 birds survive still. Local climate and rainfall are not affected by local felling of forests, therefore forest cutting cannot lead to drought. There is no evidence that the Maroon-fronted Parrot is the least in numbers of Mexican Parrots and even though with a very restricted range it is a species that has remained stable and productive through the years as our studies demonstrate. All this information is part of conservation oriented research to benefit the Maroon-fronted Parrot due to continue for at least two more years.

We are currently in the late stages of a land use planning project that would allow for conservation of the four most important cliffs for the species which comprise about 80% of all breeding pairs known. Much of this information on the ecology and conservation of the Maroon-fronted Parrot, before December 1995, is also expanded in the February 1996 issue of Psittascene. Fundacion ARA to date has no research program devoted to Maroon-fronted Parrots although they have taken important steps towards conservation of El Condominio area. They have apparently started some research with Military Macaws and since 1996 have a research program with Golden Eagles and Peregrine Falcons. We hope to eventually establish collaborative work between Monterrey Tech and Fundacion ARA that benefits conservation by pooling knowledge and resources.

Professor Ernesto Enkerlin
1 TESM,
Monterrey
Mexico

Dear Madam,

May I say how disappointed I was to read of the trouble a small number of critics have been causing Mike Reynolds and the World Parrot Trust. The work Mike has done with the Trust has been outstanding. It is no small feat to get an international conservation organisation up and running, and produce excellent results.

Mention must also be made of the work Paradise Park does with other endangered species, especially the ones local to the Cornwall area. Paradise Park, which after all is Mike's bread and butter, also supports the WPT through its falconry show and other activities.

I have discovered that in any field of human endeavour, people can be divided up into two classes: doers, and critics. In the field of parrot conservation, Mike is without doubt a doer. Long may he continue to do so.

Yours faithfully
Michael Johnson
PO Box 350,
Pearcedale Vic. 3912
Australia.

After reading the February issue of PsittaScene, I want to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to and my support of the Trust. It is one of the few organisations which gives details of its expenses and accounts. Some people are not so supportive - but I am sure that you will agree that criticising is always easy. The ones who are criticising are often the ones who have not succeeded in doing anything interesting. A French proverb says: "Criticising is easy but art is difficult..."

OLIVIER ARNOULT
Menton
France.

MARKHAM PETS RAISES £270

One of the UK's leading pet stores, Markham Pet Centre, in Brodsworth near Doncaster, held its annual open night in March. It was attended by over 300 customers of this excellent store, which will not offer for sale any wild-caught bird or animals. A raffle held to raise funds for the Trust resulted in the donation of £273. We would like to thank Ray and Peter Gill for their support of WPT.

MORE HELP FROM BRITISH AIRWAYS

For the seventh year in succession, British Airways Assisting Conservation (now part of the BA Environment Branch) have allocated flights to be used by the World Parrot Trust. As we described in our last issue of *PsittaScene*, these flights have made possible many of our projects that would not otherwise have been practical.

These include our work in St. Vincent, Paraguay, Brazil, Mauritius, and the all-important meeting of international parrot experts in London which began the process leading to the Global Parrot Action Plan, due to be published by IUCN later this year.

What does this mean to WPT members? In our humble opinion, it means that when booking your own flights you may care to give preference to the airline that helps the environment in general, and your special interest in particular. Their main contact number in the UK is 0345 222111.

NEW ZEALAND GOOD NEWS FOR THE KAKA

There were grave fears for the future of the Kaka, after studies showed a decline in females, mainly

South Island Kaka. *Photo: Rosemary Low*

due to predation by stoats. Then on 27 December 1997 the *Christchurch Press* reported that Kaka had started to nest in the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project area in a year in which they were not expected to breed. Peaks of nesting activity occur only every three or four years, when beech trees seed heavily. Ron Moorehouse, the Kaka research coordinator, reported: 'Discovery of the nesting birds meant staff have had to move into full alert to project the nests from predation by stoats. Kakas nest in holes in beech trees where they are vulnerable to stoats, which prey on nesting females, chicks and eggs.'

Protection measures include placing aluminium bands around the trees and surrounding each tree with stoat traps.

In February our member Dawn Stewart reported that the four nesting sites had hatched at least ten chicks. By the beginning of that month three had fledged from one nest, there were three in another and four in the third. The fourth nest was too deep to investigate. It has taken four years' work with help from MP David Carter and more recently Prime Minister Jenny Shipley to convince the DoC to appoint a South Island Kaka Species Coordinator - Ron Moorehouse. His Rotoiti Mainland Island team have started to turn round the decline towards extinction of this fascinating parrot. Dawn added: 'May successful breeding of the South Island Kaka continue into future years to safeguard this wonderful species.'

The latest news from Dawn Stewart is that the Kaka pairs hatched and fledged 12 young. No females were predated at their nests. One young one died soon after fledging, probably as the result of an injury which had been recorded earlier. A second young one was found dead recently, apparently killed by a stoat, despite having reached an age where it freely flew with its family group. Of the ten surviving young, eight have been radiotagged.

Science and research team, Ron Moorehouse and Les Moran, have radiotagged five females and 12 males. Banding of tr ees where the birds nest, and of neighbouring trees, has been done with sheet aluminium. Two trees were banded above the nests to prevent stoats reaching them from the canopy. Each nest is circled by 25 traps on the ground.

A wasp-poisoning programme was carried out over the 800 acre recovery area. This resulted in a wasp reduction of 42 percent in Rotoiti and a 74 percent reduction overall, with 2,300 nests destroyed. As a result, honey dew has increased dramatically. It took two days' work to put out 900 bait stations and to monitor by collecting droplets of honey dew and measuring for energy, per drop.

Kaka nests were found at altitudes ranging from the lake shore up to 800m. Nests are rarely found above 1,000m. Coloured ribbons were used to mark the nesting sites. Bait stations were also put out for opossums, resulting in more mistletoe for Kaka to feed on. Suddenly the future is looking brighter for the Kaka.

MACAW FEATHERS FOR PANAMA by Sue Armitage

Readers will no doubt remember some time ago seeing my advertisements in various magazines for feathers from Macaws which were to be sent to Panama to help save Macaws in the wild.

I had been under the impression that these feathers were going to a remote indian tribe in the jungle to be used by witch doctors in some ritual dance. This I can now tell you is far from the case. The dance is performed in the Herrera province on the S.W.Pacific coast of Panama by individuals of Spanish descent generally at religious carnivals in urban areas. The origins of the dance can be traced back to Spain and are possibly even pre-Christian.

Costume consists of "pyjamas" made up of red and black 20mm wide strips of cloth in a chevron pattern, an extremely elaborate papier mache mask and of course a headdress consisting of ten to thirty Macaw tail feathers,red being the most highly prized. I estimate it would need at least five hundred hours work to complete one of these outfits. Some are self made, others are made by professionals. Children also participate usually using wing feathers. The tradition is deep rooted and well respected locally and nationally.

There are no Macaws left in Panama except in the Darien province in the East. Those seeking new or replacement feathers have been going on illegal expeditions to Darien in order to get the indians there to obtain feathers by of course killing Macaws. These are usually kept in a cardboard tube and wiped with paraffin to deter moths when not in use. Francisco Delgado has come up with the solution of providing a "bank" of feathers available for hire, against a deposit, to bona fide dancers. Other tactics are an education programme for schoolchildren, use of goose and pheasant feathers and use of artificial substitutes. This hopefully will depress the scarcity value of feathers so deterring professional collectors.

Francisco himself is a professor at Santiago University (Panama) and seems to spend all of his spare time and cash in a crusade to educate the population on the environmental situation in Panama. This he does by a daily radio programme, "exhibitions" and lectures.

A demonstration of this dancing was laid on for us specially at a private house. Seven dancers were there and a large number of onlookers to enjoy the spectacle and very convivial it was too.

Panamanian dancers using macaw feathers.

So far I have sent off approximately four thousand feathers, in batches in order to minimise any losses in the post, which he has received. We did not take any with us for (needless) fear of trouble with the customs.

Please keep the feathers coming in, also any material you think may be useful in Francisco's "exhibitions" e.g. posters as he has difficulty in obtaining such in Panama. Many thanks also to the people who have sent feathers over the years.

My address is :-
Tyr Ywen Farm,
Mamhilad,
Pontypool,
GWENT.
NP4-8TT.
Email:- susan.armitage@virgin.net

OUR YOUNGEST MEMBER?

David Wade (6 yeasrs old) is crazy about parrots and has just joined WPT.

URGENT REQUEST! EGGS WANTED

For research into PDS (Macaw Wasting Disease)

A team at the Central Veterinary Laboratory (UK) is seeking to isolate the virus causing this disease. The success of this project is dependent on the availability of fertile psittacine eggs, particularly those from macaws or African Greys, to produce cell cultures for virus isolation and cultivation.

Any World Parrot Trust members who can supply such fertile eggs are requested to get in touch with Sally Drury (Tel: 01932 357397) or Dick Gough (Tel: 01932 357349, or Fax: 01932 357856) at the Central Veterinary Laboratory.

This project receives financial support from the Parrot Society, and is of great importance to aviculture, as well as the conservation of parrots in general. Please help if you can.

THE WORLD PARROT TRUST

UK Regd. Charity No. 800944

TRUSTEES' REPORT & ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1997

REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The trust continues to expand its membership, now in 64 countries, and thereby increase its influence on the global conservation and welfare of the parrots.

The funds available to the trust seem to have levelled off at around £65,000 to £70,000 annually, but new membership drives and fundraising activity are expected to bring about an increase in future years.

Expenditure on staff is kept to a minimum and only one full time administrator is employed. As a result of this approximately 80% of all receipts are able to be expended on the conservation, welfare, and educational activities of the trust.

The World Parrot Trust must thank Paradise Park for providing it with a home base free of cost. The trust enjoys free of fice space, use of office machines, telephone, storage, vehicles etc., and benefits from much uncharged staff time. Details of these contributions have been published in the trust's newsletter PsittaScene.

This is the ninth year of the World Parrot Trust, and its records show that it has helped the conservation of 23 species of parrots in 20 countries. As an example, it has provided over £40,000 for the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius, and this has helped raise the numbers of this critically endangered bird from about 8 to nearly 100. Recent initiatives include publishing a 'Manifesto for Aviculture', providing funding and central coordination for the IUCN 'Parrot Action Plan', and announcing the 'Carolina Medal' award for outstanding achievement in parrot conservation.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AND AFFAIRS

The financial results reflect the activities of the World Parrot Trust operation based in and run from the United Kingdom. Other international charities exist using the World Parrot Trust name which are based in other countries. The results of these foreign operations are not reflected in these financial statements other than in respect of amounts received from these foreign operations in the forrn of contributions towards the United Kingdom activities such as donations and purchases of goods.

THE WORLD PARROT TRUST
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1997

	General Fund	*Restricted Funds*	*Designated Funds*	*Total 1997*	*Total 1996*
Income and Expenditure					
Incoming Resources					
Donations	28,008	7,128	–	35,136	43,935
Membership fees	20,792	–	–	20,792	19,121
Bank interest received	1,159	–	–	1,159	1,894
Trading activities for fund raising	6,374	–	–	6,374	1,049
Total Incoming Resources	**56,333**	**7,128**	**–**	**63,461**	**65,999**
Resources Expended					
Conservation projects	17,082	1,590	4,183	22,855	37,110
Educational Literature	13,308	–	–	13,308	10,327
Personnel costs	11,495	–	–	11,495	8,044
Artwork and printing	2,542	–	–	2,542	2,049
Advertising and promotion	4,383	–	–	4,383	2,275
Postages, stationery and telephone	4,679	–	–	4,679	11,179
Conferences and travel	3,069	–	–	3,069	5,141
Independent examiner's fees	400	–	–	400	400
Other accountancy charges	658	–	–	658	1,116
Bank charges	651	–	–	651	305
Sundry expenses	977	–	–	977	1,548
Professional charges	3,956	–	–	3,956	1,143
Depreciation	2,668	–	–	2,668	1,594
Total Resources Expended	**65,868**	**1,590**	**4,183**	**71,641**	**82,231**
Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources for the Year	(9,535)	5,538	(4,183)	(8,180)	(16,232)
Fund Balances b/fwd at 1st April, 1996	26,858	–	4,183	31,041	47,273
Fund Balances c/fwd at 31st March, 1997	**£17,323**	**£5,538**	**£-**	**£22,861**	**£31,041**

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

	General Funds	*Restricted Funds*	*Designated Funds*	*Total 1997*	*Total 1996*
Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust - Echo Parakeet Project, Mauritius	6,128	1,500	2,614	10,242	4,740
Parrot Action Plan	5,985	–	–	5,985	–
Parrot Sanctuary	–	90	–	90	–
Buffons Macaw	2,574	–	–	2,574	–
Other projects	2,395	–	–	2,395	3,540
St Vincent Parrot	–	–	1,569	1,569	500
Paraguayan Ecobus	–	–	–	–	12,978
Lears Macaw	–	–	–	–	7,900
Red-tailed Amazon	–	–	–	–	4,807
Alex Foundation	–	–	–	–	1,645
Moluccan Cockatoo	–	–	–	–	1,000
	£17,082	**£1,590**	**£4,183**	**£22,855**	**£37,110**

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:
M W REYNOLDS
13 May 1998

EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

The quarterly production of the newsletter PsittaScene fulfils an important role in the objectives of the Trust. Readers are alerted to the plight of endangered parrots and are kept informed of current or planned research work. It also acts as a means to encourage sponsors to provide funds. Topical issues on the care and welfare of parrots are discussed. Contributors range from those interested in general conservation and welfare issues to scientists and veterinarians with special interest in psittacines.

TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

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 except for £2,156 paid to Andrew Greenwood for services charged in his professional capacity as a veterinarian with the International Zoo Veterinary Group.

Reimbursements of expenses incurred by a trustee on conservation projects amounted to £3,746, of which £2,846 related to costs incurred during the year ended 31st March, 1996. A further amount of £274 is due at 31st March, 1997.

MORE MEMBERS PLEASE!

Here we go again, asking everyone to help us increase our membership around the world. Our reasoning is quite simple: the more members we have, the more influence we have when it comes to the conservation and welfare of the parrots.

After nine years of activity, the World Parrot Trust is recognised and trusted by most organisations and individuals in the parrot world. We perform a delicate balancing act as we seek to bring together all elements and interests to work together for the birds that are our special concern. The reason why we haven't yet fallen off the high wire is that we consistently state that the interests of the birds must have priority over our various human objectives.

RESPONSIBLE AVICULTURE

This is so obvious, so fundamental, that the concept is now accepted by most people, and is played back in other publications, together with our phrase 'responsible aviculture'. We have no doubt we have been a real help to the often beleaguered parrots in the wild places of the earth, and have contributed to the wellbeing of aviary and companion birds in the 'developed' world. The beauty and charm of the parrots gives them a high profile with the public at large, opening up opportunities to educate people on wider conservation issues, such as habitat destruction and pollution.

At the same time, we work to improve the image of aviculture, sometimes damaged by media reports of illegal activities or excessive commercial exploitation. Our 'Manifesto for Aviculture' has been circulated worldwide and has been of benefit to many genuine hobbyists.

To support and make the best educational use of 'our' birds, however, the WPT needs to at least double its membership, to increase both the moral and financial strength of our trust. The aim is to get to 5000 fully paid up members by the Millenium. Not a large number to be found within the millions of people who keep pet or aviary birds.

You can help achieve this! If every member recruited just one more member, we would reach our target right away. That is why we have included our 'you can help save the parrots of the world' leaflet in this issue. Please take it to your bird club, pub, workplace or wherever, and find some lucky person who would like to join. By doing so, they immediately belong to a thoughtful, caring and intelligent community and demonstrate their concern for the future of our planet, its wildlife, and indeed the whole of nature including ourselves and our own problematic future.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

With membership of WPT comes a list of benefits:

A share in our nine year campaign to keep the parrots flying strong and free in their wild domains. WPT has helped the survival of 23 species of parrot in 20 countries.

A stake in our future, including making good use of the new Parrot Action Plan. This vital IUCN plan was revived and funded by WPT, and identifies the most critical species and situations needing investments of expertise and funding.

Our PsittaScene magazine, edited by Rosemary Low, with news about what is really happening in the parrot world. Readable, non-technical articles describe conservation activities by WPT and others, discuss global problems, bring the news others may fear to publish for commercial or political reasons.

Membership certificate, car sticker, sales offers of tee-shirts etc., invitations to WPT meetings, and the knowledge that you belong to the world's premier parrot society.

Please help us find new members to enjoy all these privileges. It's not enough for people to say 'I belong to my local bird club, and that's all I need'. Many clubs support conservation, often through the World Parrot Trust, but we need the active direct support of everyone who keeps, breeds, loves, admires, or is simply interested in the parrot family. Every parrot person should join at least two clubs, and one of them should be the World Parrot Trust.

To encourage new members to join right away, we will send a new WPT baseball hat (value £10 or $16) to everyone who joins before the 31st of July 1998.

Thanks for reading all this.

Mike Reynolds.

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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

PARROTS IN THE WILD

GREEN-CHEEKED AMAZON
Amazona viridigenalis

Photographs and notes from Prof. Ernesto C. Enkerlin-Hoeflich

This faithful and long-lived female has been a successful mother several times in eight years while we have been fortunate to track her nesting attempts. She has undergone loss of the whole clutch to snake predation, apparently lost another whole clutch of three chicks to exposure (too much heat or cold in the nest), and then some of her chicks in different clutches, but in all she has successfully fledged 12 chicks in that time. Two years (six chicks) were successful thanks to snake excluders we installed as part of our program on the ecology and conservation of this species.

Unbelievably the Green-cheeked or Red-crowned Parrot is present in many established populations in suburbia while in trouble in the wild. A team of Mexican researchers has conducted studies of three species of Amazon Parrots in Mexico to provide valuable information for the conservation of these species in the wild. We have also become guards to the nests as part of our study. To date we have accumulated probably the largest and longest term data set on movements, nesting success, natural mortality factors, diet through direct crop sampling, nest characteristics, etc. of any Amazon parrot with the exception of the Puerto Rican. We are currently designing strategies for ranchers and other landowners to improve conservation of parrots on their land.

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