

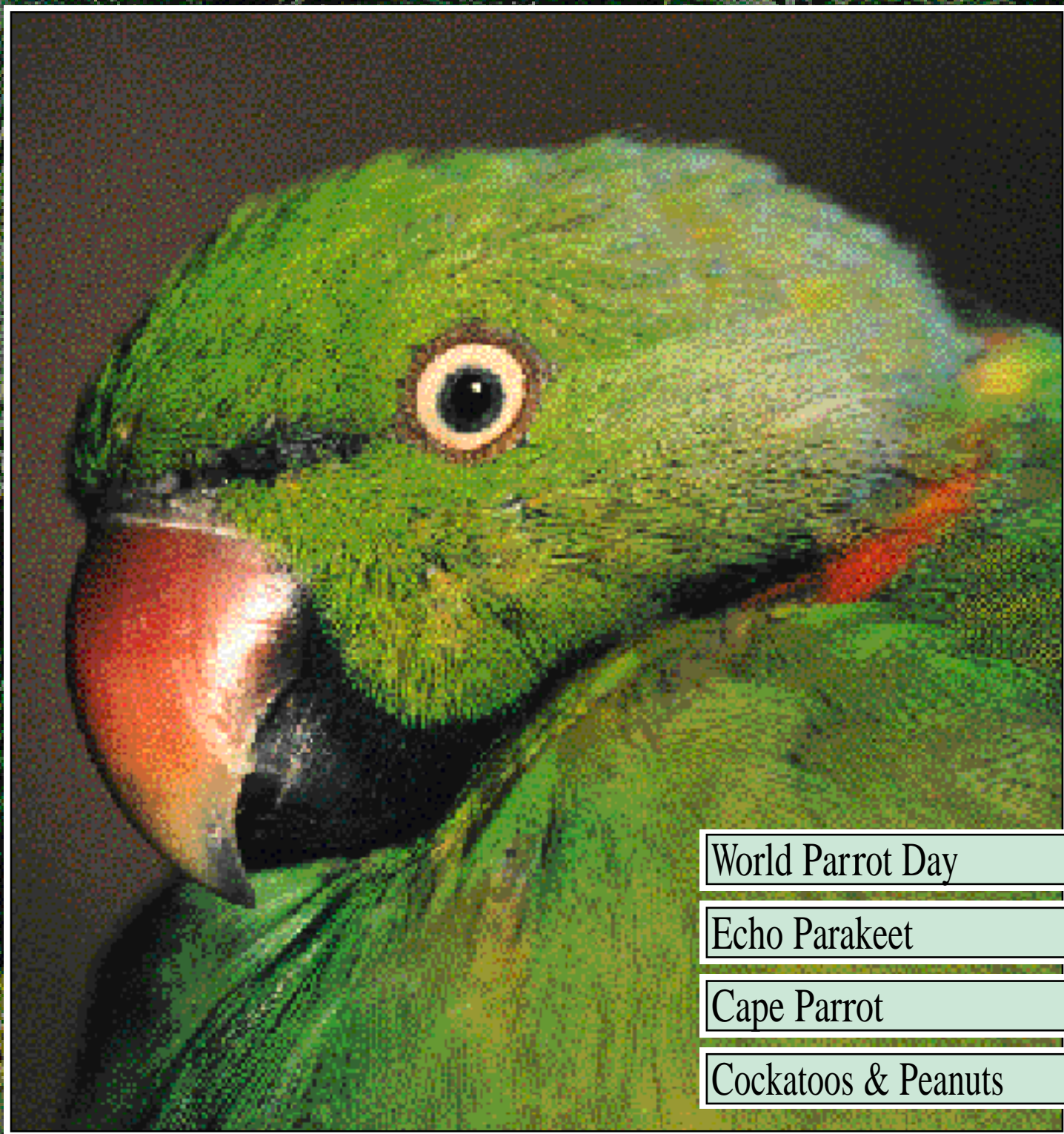
PROMOTING EXCELLENCE
IN PARROT CONSERVATION
AVICULTURE AND WELFARE

World Parrot Trust
in action



Vol. 11 No.3 August 1999

Psitta



World Parrot Day

Echo Parakeet

Cape Parrot

Cockatoos & Peanuts

psittacine (sit' ă sîn) belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like

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COVER PICTURE

This is 'Pablo', one of the first Echo Parakeets to be released into the wild by Carl Jones and his team on Mauritius. Pablo is now three years old and has developed his full plumage as an adult male. Still very tame, he frequently visits the Camp location in the centre of the Echo territory, and poses for pictures, like this one by Lance Woolaver.

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

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

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5th August, 1999

World Parrot Day At the Rainforest Café

After many months of preparation we finally arrived at August 5th, the day we had decided on as 'World Parrot Day', and the beginning of what we had rather ambitiously called 'World Parrot Month'.

The idea was clearly laid out in pages 2 and 3 of our February 1999 PsittaScene - the following extract stated the aims of the event:

WORLD PARROT MONTH

Highlighting the charismatic parrot family, in the wild and in our homes.

In the month of August 1999 we will ...

RECOGNISE the urgent need to protect and preserve parrots in the wild, especially the 90 species in danger of extinction.

CELEBRATE the companionship that millions of pet parrots give to people in every country in the world.

MOTIVATE everyone who cares about the conservation of wildlife to see the parrots as logical 'spokespersons for nature.' The character and beauty of these birds can help save rainforests and other habitats for the whole of nature, including ourselves.

RAISE FUNDS for parrot conservation and welfare.

Three Major WPT Initiatives

SEE NEXT 2 PAGES FOR DETAILS

As we approached our planned date with the media we realised that this was the right opportunity to bring together and launch no less than three WPT initiatives. First, the John Cleese 'Live Parrot' video, likely to enhance public interest in, and concern for, the parrots in general; second, to present our 'Carolina Medal' for outstanding parrot conservation to Dr. Carl Jones for his work with the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius; third, to launch the IUCN 'Parrot Action Plan', revived in 1995 by WPT, and coordinated and almost entirely funded by us.

Good Fortune

In several ways, fortune smiled upon us as we put together our programme for August 5th. We asked the Rainforest Café in Shaftesbury Avenue, London, if we could hold our press conference there, where live macaws and cockatoos are part of the attraction. They agreed, and were extremely helpful throughout (they have previously given WPT substantial funds from their 'conservation crocodile pool').

Next, Julian Pettifer, well-known broadcaster and President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) agreed to make the presentation of our Carolina Medal to Carl Jones.

Finally, we were offered the help of the press and public relations department of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), to improve our prospects of achieving media coverage of the event.

All of these developments increased our chances of attracting the interest of editors and environment correspondents, and when the day arrived we were delighted to have journalists from virtually all the national papers and broadcast media including BBC.

89 Parrot Species Face Extinction

On the advice of the communications experts from WWF we concentrated on getting across the fact that 89 species of parrot were listed in the Parrot Action Plan as threatened with extinction. This is 27% of all the parrots, compared with a figure of 10% for all bird species. So the parrots are, regrettably, the most threatened bird family on the planet.

The media understood the importance of this, and extensive coverage took place on August 6th, with interviews on national radio and television programmes, which were picked up by local programmes later. Major articles appeared in 'The Times', 'The Guardian', 'The Independent', 'The Express' and 'The Daily Telegraph', and these reports were also used in papers in Canada, Australia and Brazil. You will find half-size versions of some of these on pages 6 and 7.

How John Cleese And A Dead Parrot Helped All The Live Parrots

Parrots are funny. That is the point of view of most Britons and many Americans, almost entirely because they remember the hilarious 'Dead Parrot Sketch' made by the Monty Python gang in the late 1960s and shown many times on TV around the world.

This wonderful piece of comedy is so well known that any national media references to parrots are likely to mention it, and so diminish the effect of any serious point that may be under discussion. Since 1989 when we launched the World Parrot Trust, we have nursed a wildly improbable ambition to film a repentant John Cleese admitting that the famous sketch - though wonderfully funny - was not helpful to parrots, and he would like to tell the world how important it is to preserve parrots in the wild and look after them well in captivity.

Just a dream. But it came true! John Cleese's stepson was a member of the team working for the recovery of the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius, and this led to our being able to invite Mr. Cleese to help the parrots. John is, in fact, a committed conservationist who has supported many wildlife conservation issues; recently, for example, the restoration of lemurs in Madagascar.

So we wrote a script which involved John Cleese meeting Steve Martin's amazing singing Amazon parrot Groucho, preferring such a marvellously 'alive' parrot to a dead one, and



Steve Martin, John Cleese, Mike Reynolds and the 'Swedish Red' parrot, during filming at Santa Barbara Zoo, California.

going on to deliver a message about the importance of helping the parrots 'survive in the wild, and thrive in our homes'. He also explains that by saving the rainforests for the parrots, we also help ourselves to survive.

In March we all met up at Santa Barbara Zoo to make our unique video. Steve Martin came from Florida, bringing Groucho and his special friend and trainer Misse. The zoo staff were most generous with their help. Everybody donated their time and travelling expenses to the project. The World Parrot Trust thanks them all.

We decided to use this 5 minute video to launch WORLD PARROT MONTH in August 1999. This is our attempt to make the general public more aware of the destructive pressures faced by parrots in the wild, all over the world. We want everyone to understand that birds, especially

accelerating decline in the health of our planet and its ability to support our increasing population.

We also seek to educate people on the need to take better care of the parrots in our homes. While many birds live wonderful, fulfilled lives in the care of intelligent, thoughtful owners, we all know that many thousands of parrots are not so fortunate.

As John says in our video "All parrots desperately need our help. Help from me, help from you. What exactly can you do? Simple: support the international conservation work of the World Parrot Trust."

high profile birds like the parrots, are the best indicators of the loss of biodiversity, the

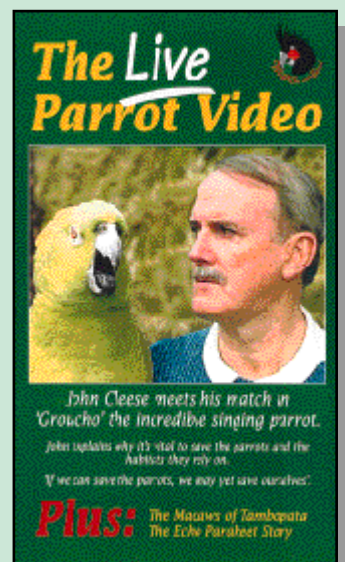
YOU CAN BUY THIS VIDEO

Order it now from our UK or USA offices listed on page 19.

For USA:
Send \$25 plus \$4
Shipping and Handling.

For UK:
Send £15 plus £2.50
Postage and Packing.

OR:
Get it from our website
www.worldparrottrust.org.



The Carolina Medal

It is over two years since we launched our Carolina Medal, to be awarded 'for outstanding achievement in parrot conservation'. Readers wanting to know exactly what the plot was can look up our issue of PsittaScene for February 1997. In essence, we chose the name Carolina because the Carolina Parakeet *Conuropsis carolinensis* was the last species of parrot to go extinct. The final captive specimen died at Cincinnati Zoo on 21st February 1918 and the last reliable sighting in the wild was in 1920. We wrote: 'The Carolina Medal is intended to be a constant reminder of the fragile status of one third of all parrot species in the wild, and the welfare needs of millions of captive birds worldwide.'

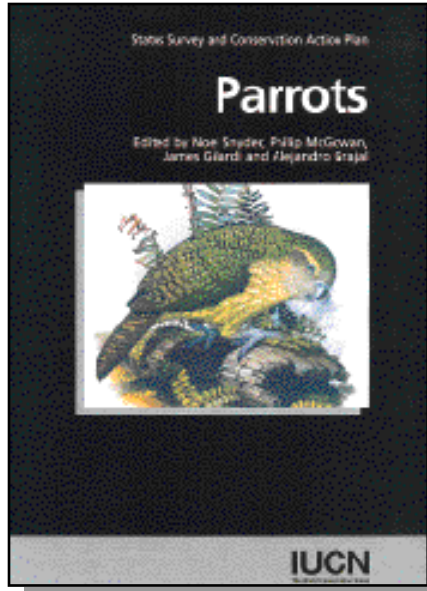
So it was very appropriate for this medal to be awarded as part of our 'World Parrot Day' media event at the Rainforest Café on August 5th 1999.

When our trustees came to consider potential recipients of the medal, one name stood out. This was Carl Jones PhD, for his remarkable achievements with the Echo Parakeet on Mauritius. Having previously brought a group of only four Mauritius Kestrels up to 400, and 30 Pink Pigeons to around 300, Carl began his work with the Echos in 1987 with only 8 to 12 birds, including just 3 females.



The population has now reached 100, and we have described the development of the project in PsittaScene since 1990. On pages 10 and 11 you will find some fascinating insights and history in an article by Carl.

Awarding the Carolina Medal will not be an annual event - it will only be presented when the trustees of WPT consider it to be thoroughly justified. But if anyone anywhere would like to draw our attention to an individual or team responsible for 'outstanding achievement in parrot conservation', we would like to have full details and a formal nomination for our award.



Parrot Action Plan 1994-2004

To sketch in some background, this action plan is one in a series published by IUCN, the World Conservation Union (The World Parrot Trust is an international member of IUCN). Seventy or

more categories of threatened animals, from whales to snails, have previously been covered by action plans. In the early 1990s an attempt to put together a Parrot Action Plan failed, largely due to fundamental disagreements among leading scientists in this field of interest.

In 1995 it was proposed by Rod Hall MBE, founder of British Airways Assisting Conservation, that we try to bring together the key parrot people for a meeting in London to re-start the effort to create a Parrot Action Plan (PAP). British Airways would provide all the necessary flights, free of charge! We were able to arrange this meeting under the very effective chairmanship of Joe Forshaw (author of 'Parrots of the World'), and in two days of discussion the 15 participants ironed out all the major problems. It only remained

to find a dedicated group of authors/editors (Noel Snyder (USA), Phil McGowan (UK), James D. Gilardi (USA), Alejandro Grajal (Venezuela)), and then request area and species reports from the relevant local experts (too many to list here, but all are acknowledged in the PAP).

WPT was given the task of 'progress chasing' the action plan; we thought it might take a year or 18 months, but it actually took a full four years. WPT also provided most of the funding, around £15,000 (\$25,000).

At our London media event on August 5th we handed out a preview version of the PAP. The full version, over 200 pages, will be published in November 1999. It will contain: an Introduction to the parrots and the structure of the action plan; General Principles for Parrot Conservation; Threatened Parrots of the World; Regional overviews; Species accounts, with 'Priority Projects' identified; References etc.

The Parrot Action Plan is absolutely not an academic exercise. It will become the starting point and the primary source of information for everyone interested in the parrot family and its conservation. The World Parrot Trust is proud to have been involved in its conception and execution, and is deeply grateful to all who have contributed towards it.

89 Parrot Species Face Extinction

Global Action Plan Launched to Save Them



London - A global action plan has been launched by the World Parrot Trust and WWF to help save 89 parrot species from extinction. The World Conservation Union's Parrot Action Plan assesses the status of the world's most endangered parrots and finds that a staggering 27% of the world's 330 species of parrots are on the brink of extinction, making them the most endangered bird family on Earth.

The Parrot Action Plan is the first ever attempt to launch a global strategy to save the world's parrots. It recommends that Recovery Teams should be set up to save each threatened species and emphasises that urgent action is needed to combat the two principal threats to parrots - habitat loss and the trade in parrots for the pet market. Over 50% of the world's forests have now been lost and the global trade in parrots is a significant part of the \$5 billion a year international wildlife trade. For every bird that survives the trading process, at least four will die along the way. There are 58 species of parrot threatened with extinction as a direct result of this trade.

"Habitat destruction and a rapacious trade threatens the world's most magnificent birds with imminent extinction", said Dr Paul Toyne, Conservation Officer for WWF-UK. "The Parrot Action Plan will play a vital role in helping forge action to save them from the brink. To be truly effective though, Governments must take firm action to increase protection for forest

habitat, promote the independent certification of managed forests by the FSC, and enforce CITES, the Convention which regulates the trade in wild animals."

John Cleese, internationally famous for the Monty Python "Dead Parrot" sketch, is supporting the call for action to save the world's parrots. He says "All the parrots desperately need our help. Help from me, help from you. What exactly can you do? Simple: support the international conservation work of the World Parrot Trust."

Due to hunting and habitat destruction at least 27 species have already become extinct, including the Cuban Macaw, the Seychelles parakeet and the Carolina parrot in the United States.

There are 39 threatened parrot species found in the Asia-Pacific region, with the highest numbers occurring in Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. The resurgence of forest fires in Indonesia this week has increased the risk to parrots in this region. The famous New Zealand Kakapo is now extinct in the wild and only 54 remain in semi-captivity.

There are 47 threatened parrot species that occur in Latin America and the Caribbean region with Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Ecuador supporting the highest numbers of threatened species. The Spix's Macaw is the world's most endangered parrot in the wild, with a

solitary male remaining in its natural habitat in Brazil. Its population has been decimated by the demand from collectors.

The Hyacinth Macaw is one of the world's largest and most striking parrots. With a population of around 3,000 it is listed as vulnerable to extinction and is threatened by illegal trade and destruction of its habitat.

The news for parrots is not all bad however. At a ceremony to launch the Parrot Action Plan, the World Parrot Trust's Carolina Medal for parrot conservation was awarded to Dr Carl Jones who has been instrumental in helping bring the Echo Parakeet back from the brink of extinction. In 1987 there were only 8-12 birds left in the wild due to habitat destruction. Following a dedicated conservation programme, part funded by the World Parrot Trust and the UK Parrot Society, there are now up to 100 birds in the wild. In the last year alone 22 captive-reared Echo parakeets were released.

"If we save the parrots we might yet save ourselves," said Mike Reynolds, Director of the World Parrot Trust. "We need the rainforests as much as the parrots do. The rainforests are the lungs of the planet, essential for human health. These forests also provide vital medicines with many more yet to be discovered," he added.

Help stop this bird from being an ex-parrot



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT: The spin, from Cleese's pet shop, which

Cleese's pet shop plea as 89 species face extinction

BY JOHN BIRMAN

In the wilds of Brazil, the Spix Macaw is a very lonely parrot. It is the sole survivor of the species it is named after, that once thrived with the colourful birds.

The parrot, the Spix Macaw, is a very lonely parrot. It is the sole survivor of the species it is named after, that once thrived with the colourful birds.

The man whose television has helped to bring attention to the plight of endangered birds is John Cleese, the Spix Macaw's pet shop.



destruction and a massive trade in the world's most beautiful birds. Half of the world's forests have been lost to development, logging and fires, he said.

The world's most beautiful birds were traded locally around the world in 1995, a significant drop from 300,000 sold in 1990. Deforestation has led to development, logging and fires, he said.

But the World Parrot Trust and the World Parrot Fund are not the only groups to have been launched to help save the birds. In 1991, the World Parrot Trust was founded to help save the birds.

The World Parrot Trust is a charity that helps to save the birds. It is a charity that helps to save the birds.

© PHILIP HAYES

Dead parrot takes off

COMEDIAN John Cleese is quizzically breathing life into an old joke. He has resurrected the Monty Python Dead Parrot sketch in aid of a charity to save exotic birds from extinction. The conversation with a living parrot instead of the one Cleese called to his parrot. But buying one dead parrot joke means a worthy price to pay if it saves a whole species.

Cleese out to save parrot

John Cleese, who took part in the classic Monty Python "Dead Parrot" comedy sketch, helped conservation groups launch an action plan yesterday designed to save many of the birds from extinction.

Eighty-nine of the 330 parrot species are in danger of dying out, says the World Wide Fund for Nature and the World Parrot Trust. At least 27 species have already become extinct. Deforestation and trade in wild parrots for pets have been responsible for much of the collapse in populations. The new plan spells out ways in which nations can help save rare species.

Clockwise from Top Left: The Express, The Express (Editorial), The Daily Telegraph, Western Morning News, The Times, The Times (Editorial)

DEAD PARROTS

The demise of the world's most vivid and talkative avian

Rumours of the parrot's demise have not been exaggerated. More than a quarter of all remaining species of this precious bird are endangered and John Cleese, who once so famously made fun of a defunct *Psittacus*, has decided to adopt a more sympathetic stance. He has offered his support to a World Wide Fund for Nature scheme to help to preserve the parrot and its rainforest habitat.

Right from the beginning these tropical avians have been prized as much for their particoloured plumage as for their mimicry of human speech. In fact Ctesias, who made the first ever literary mention of a parrot in his *Indika*, appeared to believe that this bird squawked quite naturally in an Indian tongue, and he was only amazed that it could also be instructed in Greek. Parrots were later to be celebrated by a succession of classical poets and became quite fashionable in Rome where they would be displayed sitting prettily in elaborate filigreed aviaries. Parrots have always made popular pets. Intelligent creatures which have adapted to live in a complex physical and social environment, they have developed a capacity for learning and interaction which, like their habit of feeding themselves with their claws, is unique among birds.

In classical times some parrots would certainly have ended up on the banqueting table. One emperor is even supposed to have fed them to his lions. But in modern times they would make a somewhat over-expensive menu item. In an avaricious pet trade which creates an illegal market for endangered species, a single bird can change hands for thousands of pounds. And though zoos, parks and licensed dealers are increasingly resorting to captive breeding programmes, birds and their eggs still continue to be stolen from the wild and smuggled overseas.

The beauty of the parrot's plumage has been the main cause of its demise. They are coveted for their conspicuous colouration. But now the time has come to turn their attractiveness back to their advantage. Because the *Psittacidae* are so appealing — even if only in the form of the budgie or cockatiel — public support for any appeal should be easier to rouse up. The gradual destruction of the tropical habitats is the single most threatening factor in the parrot's disappearance. So if the bird will put in a publicity appearance, not only will some of the world's most vivid and talkative avians be rescued from the fringes of extinction, but a host of other less conspicuous creatures will benefit.

Governments given action plan

The World Parrot Trust, founded in 1991, has today launched an action plan to help save the world's most endangered bird species from extinction. The plan, which is the first of its kind, sets out a series of measures to be taken by governments and conservation groups to protect the birds. The plan includes measures to protect the birds' habitats, to control the trade in wild parrots, and to promote captive breeding programmes. The plan also calls for the establishment of a global network of parrot conservation groups. The plan is the result of a series of consultations with conservation groups and governments. The plan is the first of its kind and is a landmark in the history of parrot conservation.

Global bid to save parrot



ENDANGERED SPECIES: Parrots at Paradise Park, Hayle

A TINY Cornwall-based charity has inspired a global campaign to save the most endangered bird species from extinction.

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A survey has shown that 89 of the world's 330 species of parrots are on the brink of extinction, and on Wednesday the WPT and the WWF launched their strategy. This includes recovery plans to help such threatened species.

and many action to combat the two principal threats to survival — habitat loss and the trade in parrots for the pet market.

Canadian John Cane, in a visit to his former "Dead parrot" sketch, helped promote the Action Plan, telling the conference: "Can we really accept the extinction of these beautiful creatures? Please support the international conservation work of the World Parrot Trust."

Last night the man who founded the Trust, conservationist Mike Reynolds, said he was delighted by the support of the WPT in what was such a huge and important task.

"We're not a small family-based charity, and we are very pleased indeed that we have managed to get activity going globally on behalf of these lovely birds," he said.

...so where do we go from here?



By Michael Reynolds

Undeniably, our 'World Parrot Day' on August 5th was a great success in putting across to a wide international audience the unwelcome news about 89 species of parrots being in danger of extinction. The World Parrot Trust is greatly indebted to the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) for its help in putting the media event together, and attracting the interest of far more journalists than we would have managed to do on our own.

It is also worth noting that it is not every small specialised wildlife charity that would be acceptable as a partner to a major charity in such an enterprise. In addition to WWF, the welcome participation of Julian Pettifer, President of the RSPB, to present our Carolina Medal to Carl Jones, is an indication of the progress the WPT has made since its beginnings in 1989. How we do this with our very modest resources is a bit of a mystery, but our leading role in reviving and funding the Parrot Action Plan has no doubt given WPT some credibility as a serious conservation organisation.

We have to accept that the splurge of parrot publicity we have just created will quickly fade away, and experience suggests that another opportunity like this will be a long time coming. There are some ongoing possibilities of further publicity, for example CNN have asked for a copy of the John Cleese video, but we should be looking for ways to turn publicity about parrots into cash for parrots. This has to come to WPT largely in the form of new memberships and donations.

So let us discuss money. Readers may be interested to know that the combined income of the RSPB and WWF is almost one thousand times the income of the World Parrot Trust. Our ability to do much more than point the way to solving problems is very limited. We have previously calculated that the cash receipts enjoyed by all those businesses deriving income from the parrots is well in excess of \$5 Bn globally. We have proposed that everyone involved with the parrots should 'put something back' to help the parrots in the wild. Now we know more about the massive need to help with the rescue and rehabilitation of unwanted pet parrots, that is another task that should get financial help from

those who have helped create this problem in the first place.

I mention this because I can count on the fingers of one hand those businesses that actually do recognise their debt to the birds that are making them rich, and give funds either to WPT or other organisations. High time the whole parrot business community accepted a proper share of responsibility to fund the conservation of parrots in the wild, and the welfare of captive birds.

On the credit side, many private individuals do accept responsibility for all the parrots, not just their own, and WPT is very grateful for the support of many aviculturists and pet owners around the world. There are also many others who don't keep parrots but want to help us to help these remarkable birds. We recently received our first legacy, and this prompts us to list the following ways in which our members can help us achieve our aims.

Find New Members

Everyone reading this is bound to know several people who would enjoy reading this publication, and participating in our work for the parrots. Please encourage them to join us right away. After all, £15 or \$25 is a

trivial sum of money, about what you might spend on a take-away, or take-out meal!

Become A Life Member

About 8% of our members are Life Members, and if you can afford it, a single payment of £250 or \$400 saves you and us a lot of paperwork over the years, and such a significant sum will be a great help with our many projects.

Write WPT Into Your Will

Our UK, USA and Canadian branches are all fully registered

charities and able to receive legacies. For information on other countries, or possible tax advantages, please contact our UK office.

Adopt One of Our Projects

We are currently funding field conservation projects for many parrot species, notably Lear's Macaw, Palm Cockatoo, Citron-crested Cockatoo, Golden Conure, St. Vincent Amazon, Echo Parakeet, Cape Parrot, and many others. You could adopt one that especially interests you, and send us an annual or monthly donation.

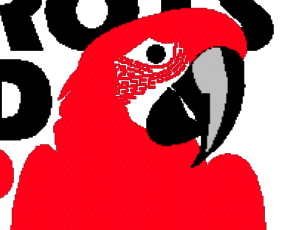
Give A Talk For WPT

Several of our members (Hi there, Bonnie, Alan, Ken) regularly give talks to bird clubs for us, and win new members and donations. Let us know if we can supply slides and other materials to help you do this.

New Ideas

Let us know if you have any other ideas about how we can do more to raise funds for the

**PARROTS
NEED
HELP**



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

A WORLD PARROT TRUST CAMPAIGN

www.worldparrottrust.org

Monty Python in Zambia

by LOUISE WARBURTON,
Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation, University of Natal

I was interested to read about the upcoming WPT Parrot Week, and wish you all every success. I was particularly amused to read that John Cleese is lending his support (I'm a big fan), and thought you'd be interested to know that Monty Python's infamous dead parrot does indeed have a role in parrot conservation.

As part of my research project on the Status, Ecology and Conservation of the Black-cheeked Lovebird (*Agapornis nigrigenis*) in Zambia I am attempting to map the distribution and seasonal movements of the lovebirds through direct observation and by conducting interviews in the local villages.

Two other parrot species occur within the Black-cheeks range: Brown-necked Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus suahelicus*) and Meyer's Parrot (*Poicephalus meyeri transvaalensis*). The locals call all three parrots by the same name: 'Sichikwele', usually associating the birds with their noisy calls and as crop pests.

To help confirm the species identity during the interviews I

have borrowed three specimen skins from the Livingstone Museum. After the initial greetings, Monty Python always comes to mind as I take a pew on a battered wooden stool outside the interviewees mud hut. Most of the conversation is conducted through my Zambian assistant in the local languages of Tonga or Lozi. The field guide and box of parrots is produced – usually causing much



The Monty Python parrots: Brown-necked, Meyer's, Black-cheeked Lovebird.

amusement – and are carefully examined.

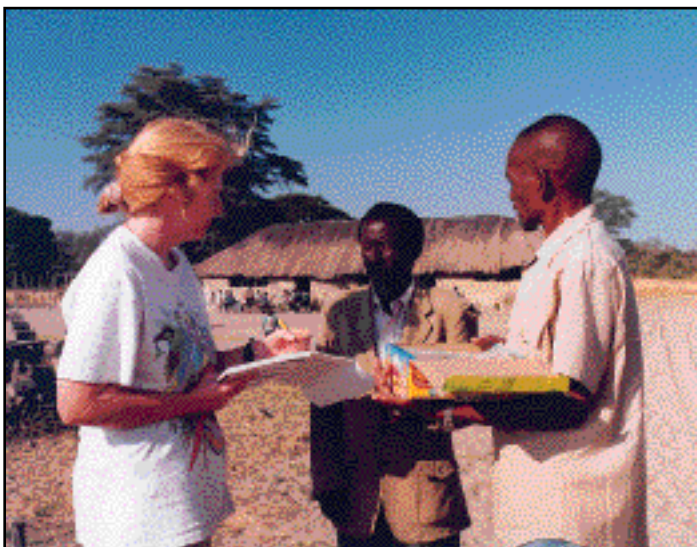
Useful Specimens

The specimens are also useful when talking to school children, asking them if they know these birds, whether they catch them, and when trying to explain that the Black-cheeked Lovebird is a very special bird in Zambia. Conservation awareness is non-existent, and it is a delicate balance to promote the conservation of a species that feeds on the millet and sorghum subsistence crops.

Survival Dependent on Villagers

The long-term survival of

Black-cheeks is without doubt dependent on the local villagers. Humans, like the Lovebirds, depend on the limited water resources. Birds are trapped for food, including Lovebirds (and Brown-necks and Meyer's); usually by young boys who make snares around waterpools, or near the seed heads in ripening crops. Also by lining trees near pools where birds perch prior to drinking, or with a catapult. Educating children in Lovebird Conservation is clearly a priority – following in the crazy tradition of Monty Python is the first step on the long dusty road.



Louise Warburton and her assistant explain their mission.



The village children are asked about the lovebird.

Listening to Echos and Searching for Ghosts

Parrot Conservation on Mauritius by CARL JONES



Carl Jones

It is a wonderful privilege to accept the Carolina Medal for myself, and on behalf of the conservation team on Mauritius, in recognition of our work on the Echo Parakeet. But we should not forget that without the help of the World Parrot Trust we would not have achieved as much.

The conservation work on the Echo Parakeet started in 1974 but due to a shortage of funds did not really take off until 1990 when we were lucky enough to join forces with the World Parrot Trust. Like many important unions our meeting was fortuitous. I was talking at a captive breeding conference. In my presentation I mentioned that the Echo Parakeet had a perilously low population and would likely become extinct, not because we did not know how to save it, but because there was not enough money to make the project work. After my talk Mike Reynolds approached offering the help of the World Parrot Trust. This offer of help was what we had been looking for, since for several years we had battled to save the Echo Parakeet with few resources and little moral support. Mike and his colleagues at

the World Parrot Trust helped mobilise funds including an important grant from the Parrot Society and with this money bought a four-wheel drive vehicle. Since then we have not looked back and the World Parrot Trust have provided us with annual funds and with the wise council of Andrew Greenwood who advises us on avicultural and veterinary problems. In recent years we have also had the able and enthusiastic help of several of Mike's staff from Paradise Park who have worked in the field managing the wild Echo Parakeets and with the hand rearing of baby parakeets.

Listening to Echos

We have learned a lot from the Echo Parakeet, not only how to save this beautiful parrot but also techniques that can be applied to many other species of rare and declining birds. For example some of the techniques used on the Kakapo project in New Zealand have been adapted from our work on the Echo Parakeet and we in turn have taken some of their ideas and used them on our project. Similarly our experiences on Mauritius are being adapted and applied to bird conservation projects in the Seychelles and Hawaii.

Many of the successes with the Echo Parakeet have been due to the application of avicultural techniques to wild birds, taking captive breeding into the field. As a life long aviculturist it gives me much pleasure to think

that the skills and intuition I developed as a schoolboy keeping birds in the back-garden, I am now using to save endangered species. Aviculture has a huge part to play in bird conservation on the global stage, not only by breeding birds in captivity but by the development and application of techniques for use on wild birds.

Aviculturalists manipulate the productivity of their birds and control mortality by good management. The key is to learn how to apply these techniques to wild populations.

When we started our work on the wild Echo Parakeets we worked on a broad front and tried to minimise the problems that they may have been having. We provided them with additional food, improved their nest-holes, controlled nest

predators and restored small patches of native forest. Remarkably all of these techniques have worked and some, such as nest hole improvement and the restoration of small patches of habitat have worked very well and we have parrots living and breeding in and around our restored areas.

In the 1970's and 1980's few birds bred and of those that did lay eggs few succeeded in raising young. In 1987 we only knew of eight wild birds of which there were only two females. Many felt the species was doomed. In the 1990's the birds have been breeding more frequently, due in part to our efforts, and breeding success is much improved. We have guarded nests, keeping a close eye on what happens. As soon as there have been any signs that a nest was going to fail we

have removed the eggs and young for captive rearing, thereby saving many birds that would have otherwise perished. These birds have been used to establish our captive population or have been returned to the wild.

We found that few pairs, if they succeed, rear more than a single baby even though they may lay and hatch three eggs. If birds are left with a whole brood, all the young may be compromised and die, but if we remove young and leave the adults with a single chick there is a good chance they will succeed in rearing it. The young that are harvested in this way are then used to foster to other pairs that have failed to hatch any eggs or they are hand-reared for release when older. Hence in the 1997-1998 breeding season, of eleven pairs of wild Echo Parakeets, ten pairs fledged young. This management and the release of 22 birds, a mixture of captive bred and harvested young has greatly boosted the population. The total free living population is now about 100 birds.

While we feel confident that the Echo Parakeet is well on the way to recovery and hope that they will always fly over the forested mountains and gorges of Mauritius, we must not forget that it is the last native parrot left in the Mascarene Islands. Unfortunately we are too late for many species.

Searching for Ghosts

The forests of Mauritius resonate with the presence of ghosts, the ghosts of the

animals and plants that have become extinct in the four hundred years since man first colonised the island. When a species dies out it may leave an ecological gap, that if not filled may have deleterious effects upon other species. The forest trees may be dependent upon fruit bats and parrots to disperse their fruits and in turn the parrots, fruit bats and many other species need the forest trees to provide them with food. Today on Mauritius the forests are largely silent and many of the large forest trees are dying. But there is much that can be done to revitalise the forest and fill the missing gaps....

Once Mauritius and the other Mascarene Islands were home to a dozen or more species of parrots. If we could travel back in time we would find an island alive with birds and reptiles, herds of giant tortoises, large lizards, the dodo, flightless rails, as well as a large flightless 'black cockatoo' larger than any parrot alive today, possibly similar to the Black Cockatoos of Australia. This was the Broad-billed Parrot that may have lived in the palm rich forests in the lowlands and fed on palm fruits. There was also another smaller grey crested parrot, which was good to eat. On the other Mascarene islands there were several parakeets; on Rodrigues was a blue-grey one; others were described as having red epaulets and another apparently had a red head and tail. Rodrigues also had a larger all green parrot and Reunion (and also possibly Mauritius) had the Mascarene



Mascarene Grey Parrot *Lophopsittacus bensoni*. Extinct c.1760's. This is the first time a reconstruction of this extinct parrot has been published.

Parrot, a russet brown bird with a lilac head, black forehead and a bright red bill.

Researchers and historians are working through the early accounts and examining sub-fossil bones to try and piece together the identity of several other species known from vague early accounts and a few assorted bits. What is all this work going to tell us? We may well lament the passing of spectacular species but does this have any relevance to the conservation of the living? While the resurrecting of the extinct in a Jurassic Park type fashion is still a long way off and may belong to the realm of science fiction there are other possibilities for filling the gaps left by extinct species.

Can the Echo Replace the Missing Species?

Many of the forest trees in Mauritius produce large fleshy fruits with incredibly hard seeds. These fruits come in different sizes; we know that fruit bats and Echo Parakeets love some of these fruits, often carrying them away to feed on the edible pulp and rejecting the hard seeds. Undoubtedly dispersing the seeds in the process. However, in today's Mauritian forests many fruits fall on the ground and fail to germinate. The result is that the forests are dying due to poor regeneration. While this is a complex problem, I believe that



Mascarane Parrot *Mascarinus mascarinus* which was found on the island of Reunion and maybe also Mauritius died out in the early part of the 19th Century. This is one of only two museum species, from Paris Museum

if we could restore the extinct species we could once again get parts of the forests functioning as they should.

If we know enough about the missing species, there is no reason why other species that can fill the role of the missing species can not be introduced to become ecologically equivalent species or ecological analogues. Perhaps the Echo Parakeet can be introduced to the forests on the neighbouring island of Reunion to replace the parakeet that used to occur there two centuries ago. The Echo Parakeet may also be an appropriate analogue for the extinct parakeets of Rodrigues and Seychelles. And one day we may introduce one of the Black Cockatoos to replace the Broad Billed Parrot.

While these wild speculations may seem like dreaming we will soon be seriously considering replacing the extinct Mauritian Giant Tortoises with closely related and ecologically similar analogues. We hope to introduce these onto offshore islands around Mauritius where they can become important grazers, browsers and seed dispersers. I hope I will one day see analogue species of parrots being introduced into restored forests of Mauritius. It was not so long ago that we were speculating about restoring species and rehabilitating forests and now we are doing both.

We already know enough so that we can save most of the endangered parrots of the world



The Broad-billed Parrot *Lophopsittacus mauritianus* a large cockatoo like bird which may have had similarities with the Black Cockatoos of Australia.

and restore their fragmented and damaged habitats. The day is not far off when we will be able to rebuild whole ecosystems, provided we still have the building blocks. These building blocks are the species and the parrots are keystones in these systems.

Reasons for Optimism

I believe that the work on Mauritius gives us great reasons for optimism. With modest financial resources but with a clear vision and the unlimited drive and dedication of the conservation team we have been able to achieve the following:-

- Establish the Echo Parakeet's entire remaining habitat as Mauritius' first national park
- Restore areas of forest in which the Echo Parakeet feeds and breeds
- Learn how to manage the wild parakeets to improve their productivity
- Establish Echo Parakeets in captivity where they are now breeding.
- Develop release techniques for captive reared birds. Twenty-two birds have been released during the last three seasons.
- Establish released birds in the wild. One of our released birds 'Gabriella' has started breeding and last season reared a fostered chick. Several other birds are showing signs of pairing and breeding.

Much remains to be done but I feel proud of what we have been able to achieve and we must also pay tribute to those that have made this work possible. No one works in isolation and we would not have progressed this far without the help of our supporting organisations. The World Parrot Trust and others. I must also pay tribute to the staff who made all of this happen. I especially thank Kirsty Swinerton who has worked on the project for twelve seasons doing some of the early field work, looking after the captive birds, hand-rearing chicks and supervising field teams. And finally I thank the parakeets that have taught us much.

Final Blows for the Cape Parrot?

Authors: MIKE PERRIN, COLLEEN DOWNS, CRAIG SYMES

To prevent the extinction of one of South Africa's rarest and most charismatic birds, the Cape Parrot, captive breeding is being undertaken. Aviculturalists, some of whom contribute to the demise of the species, through capture and illegal trade, are making a significant contribution to its survival, through a breeding programme. This is welcome and beneficial. The parrots already decimated in the wild, have recently been subjected to another threat, in the form of parrot beak and feather disease, which has caused the mortality of most of the birds in captivity. This is despite every precaution being taken and at great expense. There is no vaccine to treat infected birds and even diagnosis is a complex biochemical procedure. To ensure a disease free colony for the future, diseased birds are quarantined, and at the last resort euthanised.

A major problem that has also just surfaced is the capture of wild birds by rural people resettled in close proximity to indigenous forests. These impoverished and malnourished local communities are applying for deregulation of the forests to enable some income generation. There are two large flocks of Cape Parrots that nest in the vicinity which are at great risk. Injured birds are now being sold at the road side, but fortunately some have been rescued and treated by a veterinarian. However, they cannot be rehabilitated into the wild, not only because of their injuries but because they are infected with beak and feather disease. They can only be used for breeding if a vaccine is found. Attempts in the USA have been unsuccessful, but there may be a source in Australia.

Previous research on the biology of the Cape Parrot has shown that it is a habitat and diet specialist, dependent on yellowwood forests for its food throughout the year, and for nesting sites during the breeding season. Decades ago these forests were heavily exploited for furniture, as the wood is beautiful and durable, but not replanted, and cattle grazing has prevented natural regeneration. Recent afforestation of upland areas with exotic pines, gums, wattles

and expanding agriculture, have further reduced the extent of natural montane forests. The parrots now fly great distances to find sufficient food and suitable roosting sites, which may well negatively impact on their abundance. The world population of these attractive parrots, which are endemic to South Africa, now approximates 500 birds. Indeed, the effective or breeding population of the birds is significantly less, because many birds are sub-

adult and will not reach breeding age, owing to predation, capture or disease.

During a recent nation wide census of the wild parrots, two birds were seen that were apparently feather plucked, mimicking the symptoms of beak and feather disease. This was cause for concern but not alarm. However, our worst fears have been confirmed in the last few days, eight of eight wild caught parrots have shown to be

positive for the disease. This has potentially drastic consequences for wild and captive birds. Any wild caught birds introduced to existing colonies, of African or other species of parrots, may well spread the infection. This could reduce the trade in wild caught birds, which would be beneficial, but may cause mortality in the wild population, which would be detrimental. It isn't known whether the wild parrots have natural resistance or are particularly sensitive to the disease. This will depend on whether the disease is naturally-occurring or introduced.

One frightening concern is that as the species becomes rarer, it also becomes more valuable to collectors, which increases demand and trade price. This could start a spiral which would be difficult to break. The only solution appears to be a dedicated co-operative recovery programme undertaken by conservators, aviculturalists and ecologists. This is the aim of the KwaZulu-Natal Avicultural Forum, the Cape Parrot Working Group, the World Parrot Trust Africa and the Research Centre for Parrot Conservation at the University of Natal.

The only thing that is certain is that the future of the Cape Parrot is now at greater risk than ever before.



An Appeal for Funds

by ROSEMARY LOW

The Cape Parrot from South Africa is now one of the world's most endangered parrots. As one who has been fortunate to see it in the wild, to listen to its cheerful chortling calls and to watch it in the early morning sun, when the frost was on the ground, I know that it would be a tragedy and a great loss if this charismatic parrot was to become extinct.

A small population has been studied for several years by some very enthusiastic people at the Research Centre for African Parrots who

are gravely concerned about the future of the Cape Parrot. Their work has revealed facts about this species which would aid its conservation and survival. The problem is that they lack the funds to implement the field work which so urgently needs to be carried out.

Now I would like to make an appeal to all our members - and to everyone else who reads PsittaScene - to raise some money on behalf of South Africa's most endangered parrot. Please don't ignore this appeal. If every member wrote out a cheque for only £5 the sum of £10,000 would be raised. If some of the many cage bird or parrot societies in the UK donated a modest sum from, perhaps, a raffle or a bird sale, those funds could be instrumental in helping to save the Cape Parrot.

If you are one of the generous ones who wants to help, please send your donation to the World Parrot Trust in Cornwall (see address on page 19).

Project Proposal:

The Ecology and Status of the Cape Parrot in South Africa

(Part of the Forest Biodiversity Programme and the African Parrot Research Group, School of Botany & Zoology, University of Natal, P/Bag XO1, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 3209)

by Dr COLLEEN T. DOWNS

Introduction

The nominate race of the Cape Parrot, *Poicephalus robustus robustus* has recently been described as a separate species based on size, colour, distribution and habitat preference. It is classed as rare and vulnerable.

Progress

The field work of the initial project has been completed and the presentation of a posthumous thesis by J.O. Wirminghaus is in the final stages. The results include:

- a) Species Status.
Morphological differences of the three races of the Cape Parrot using national and international museum collections of Cape Parrot. It is proposed that *P. r. robustus* be given full species status.
- b) Distributional data of Cape Parrots using South African Bird Atlas Project were mapped, and analysed further for gross movement patterns and densities. Historical evidence shows a contraction of the core range of Cape Parrots.
- c) Importance of yellowwoods, particularly *Podocarpus falcatus* (a forest canopy tree), for breeding, feeding and social interactions of Cape Parrots is evident. Most frequent use of any tree species shows dominance of *Podocarpus* spp. for feeding and as perches. Kernels of *Podocarpus* spp. fruits are preferred and eaten while the exocarp is discarded. Monthly fruit availability of the different forest trees shows that for most species fruiting is unpredictable and that certain species have extended fruiting periods. However, during November - December there is usually a fruit shortage. Movements of

parrots between forest patches shows them to be a food nomadic species based on monthly observations of temporal and spatial activity patterns and feeding observations. Cape Parrots are strictly diurnal though most active during the first and last few hours of daylight. Most feeding also takes place during this time. Between periods of activity the birds mostly remain perched, call, preen, allopreen, rest or occasionally feed.

- d) Drinking sites are important for the parrots, particularly during the dry winter months when very little free water is available.
- e) Breeding success at the two study sites during the past three summers, based on counts of fledged juveniles present was low. Only three nests during the 1993/1994 season and two during the 1995/1996 season were used at the study sites, while one

that had been used previously fell over during strong winds. All nests (n=11), except for one in a live blackwood, have been in holes in dead emergent, dead canopy *Podocarpus* spp. Such dead trees are a scarce resource in the study areas, and thus have important conservation implications.

- f) Population size estimates show that numbers throughout the Cape Parrot range have declined dramatically with large flocks rarely seen. Presently it is tentatively estimated that less than 1000 Cape Parrots in total remain, which is exceedingly low (Downs & Symes 1998).

Proposals

Conservation of Cape Parrots requires conservation of their forest habitats, in particular mature *Podocarpus* sp. The Cape Parrot population decline is caused by habitat loss as forest

area has diminished. It is also exacerbated by selective felling of large yellowwoods for timber that occurred during the last century and the first half of this one. To counter these impacts, corrective measures for the conservation of Cape Parrots are required. These measures include:

- a) Termination of yellowwood timber extraction from Afromontane forests
- b) Provision of additional nesting sites and
- c) Planting of additional preferred food plants.

Long term monitoring of this highly mobile food nomadic species is required together with its food resources, breeding success, population numbers, and the success of the implemented conservation action.

Proposed Research 1999-2005

- 1) Continued monthly monitoring of Cape Parrot populations at Weza and Hlabeni.
- 2) Continuance of the nest box provision project to determine whether nest sites are limiting.
- 3) Availability of snags in Afromontane forest. In particular, determination of abundance of snags, their alteration with time and their potential as nest sites for hole-nesting birds.
- 4) Monitoring of captive breeding programmes and implementation of a studbook for Cape Parrots.
- 5) Liaising and advertising the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day each April, which involves birders, landowners and other interested people.
- 6) Liaison with International Parrot and Bird Conservation Bodies.

References

- Downs, C.T. & Symes, C.T. 1998. Cape Parrots: Report on the second Cape Parrot Big Birding Day, (25 April 1998). *PsittaScene* Vol 10 No 3 pages 5-7.
- Wirminghaus, J.O. In prep. The ecology and status of the Cape Parrot *Poicephalus r. robustus* in South Africa. Posthumous Ph.D thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.



Captive female Cape Parrot.

Cockatoos and Peanuts at Lakeland

by STEPHEN GARNETT

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 2066, Cairns, Queensland 4870

Photographs by Stephen Gamett

Peanuts grow well at Lakeland. The nuts flourish in the rich volcanic soil while its isolation in southern Cape York Peninsula means there are fewer weeds and diseases. Though the work is hard and the investment enormous, good farming is amply rewarded. Each year many truckloads of peanut head south to be turned into oil and butter and salted sachets at the corner pub.

But such bounty has not gone unnoticed by local wildlife. Red-tailed Black Cockatoos have probably been visiting Lakeland for hundreds of years to eat seeds from the bloodwoods. Having bred during the wet season, adults bring their newly fledged young to socialise during the eight months of the dry season. Just when they recognised peanuts as food is not known. They probably began feeding on nuts that had been left behind after harvesting. Then they realised that the best pickings were to be had after the nuts had been

pulled and were drying on the surface. Finally some clever cockatoo had the wit to pull a living plant from the ground and discover the rich bounty of soft, oily food beneath. Others soon learnt and about eight years ago the flocks came regularly to get their fill, working methodically from the edge of the crop or from any patch where the crop was thin. Between feeds they exercised their beaks on the huge pivot irrigators, shorting the wires so that one wheel would go faster than the others until the whole contraption tripped and twisted into a tangle of

expensive disaster. One property lost over \$50,000 per year to the cockatoos, others their entire crop.

Retribution

The farmers hit back with high-powered rifles and there were rumours of illegal poisoning. They tried scaring devices or patrolled their crops all day to scare the cockatoos away. Farm work was constantly disrupted by faulty irrigators. However, though the cockatoos grew wary, they did not stop eating peanuts. When anyone approached within shooting

distance they would simply ease into the nearby trees and drift across to another paddock. Shooting released the farmers' frustration but it did not reduce the damage.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service was generally held responsible for this damage because they would not give permits to shoot more than 30 Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. Red-tailed Black Cockatoos are not only charismatic but are rare in southern Australia. The Service gave advice on scaring devices and suggested leaving part of the crop for the birds but would not countenance wholesale destruction, even if in the unlikely event this was possible. Until this year the advice did as little to help the farmers as did their shooting. In 1999, however, things changed, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service grew its first peanut crop - though in fact credit for the crop must really go to the farmers of Lakeland and the industries who support them.

Generosity of a Local Farmer

The peanut crop was made possible through the generosity of local farmer Martin Garate. Martin had long been convinced a sacrifice crop was the only way to control cockatoo damage and made available 40 acres of land where he had grown peanuts himself, only to lose the lot to cockatoos. With Martin's generosity as an



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and peanuts in Lakeland.



A happy peanut farmer.

example, everyone pitched in to help. The Peanut Company of Australia gave a special deal on seed peanuts and the Interbitzens of Swiss Farms prepared the ground in time for the first rains. Another farmer, Graham Green, lent his seeder and on Christmas day 1998 Martin and another local farmer, Andy Stemmler, put a tonne of seed peanuts in the ground. The Hoskins brothers then took over care of the crop, spraying weeds as required and applying thousands of dollars worth of fungicide donated to the project by Bayer Chemicals.

At the end of March the nuts were just starting to fill. Two weeks later local Birds Australia convenor and former peanut farmer, Jon Nott, visited the crop. He had with him a despondent local shooter who had been employed to keep cockatoos off commercial crops, but who could find none to shoot at. The reason for their absence was obvious as soon as they reached the sacrifice crop. As they approached the fence, 500 Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos rose from the ground in a panic of black and red and perched, with guilty, muddy beaks, in the distant trees.

A Successful Experiment

The cockatoos have stayed on

the sacrifice crop for the duration of the peanut growing season. It is even possible that they will leave enough for Martin to get some return for his generosity. For relatively little outlay, but with much community goodwill, the farmers not only saved thousands of dollars worth of peanuts but were also able to get on with other farm work during the peanut season. No more than a handful of cockatoos died.

Concerns Remain

Farmers still have concerns



Peanuts pulled up by Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, Lakeland.

about the project, particularly that the cockatoos will increase rapidly as a result of the free food, but that is a problem for the future. For at least the next two years Birds Australia volunteers will count cockatoos regularly to see

whether there are increases and management can be adjusted accordingly. In the meantime the farmers, from now on in conjunction with the local catchment management group, have an alternative to killing that actually works.



Red-tailed Black Cockatoos in flight.

••• STOP PRESS •••

The full text of the Parrot Action Plan can now be seen at our website www.worldparrottrust.org

Message from Sumba

by MARGARET KINNAIRD

Readers will recall that we are funding part of the work of Margaret Kinnaird and Tim O'Brien in Sumba, with the Citron-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua sulphurea citrinocristata*. Here is a brief message from Margaret. No doubt we will have a more detailed report in a future issue of PsittaScene. For now, see PsittaScene for February 1999 for more details.

"I've just returned from three wonderful weeks in Sumba. The release went extremely well and now six birds are bleeping around the Melolo forest. Everybody was so excited about the release - all the way from the local villagers to the Bupati. The latter wanted to attend the release and have a formal ceremony but we had to discourage it and in the end, got the plans cancelled. The publicity would have been wonderful but it would have required a change in the release site and of course, much stress to the birds. Nonetheless, they were very thankful for our help and



Citron-crested Cockatoo

proclaimed over and over again how wonderful it was that so many people from so far away cared about their birds and that they realised they were taking very poor care of them. My student, Hendra Kurniawan, his counterpart from PHPA (forestry) and a representative from the Forest research branch in Waingapu had a formal meeting with the local villagers and village chiefs before my arrival and explained the research, the serious conservation issues surrounding cockatoos and got a promise that no one would harm the birds. Amazingly, they were all complaining that too many people have been capturing and that they no longer see cockatoos in their forest. Everyone seems honest and willing to help."

Thailand Island Habitat Destroyed

If you care about habitats, whether or not they contain parrots, you can voice your displeasure at what happened on Phi Phi Leh island in Thailand. It was the location for Leonardo Di Caprio's new film *The Beach*. Thailand's Royal Forestry Department violated their own regulations and were allegedly bought off by 20th Century Fox who paid the government 4 million Baht (about £70,000). The native vegetation at Maya Beach was bulldozed to create more space for a scene depicting a football game. Sea pandanus trees, spider lily and other beach grasses were replaced with 100 non-native coconut palms to make the island look more like Hollywood's version of a tropical paradise. Conservationists feared that destroying the natural vegetation would create serious erosion. They were right. The beach has already

been eroded and there are fears for its survival after the monsoons.

A key to the local tourist economy, Phi Phi Leh Island is supposedly protected as a national park. Thai conservationists are asking people worldwide to boycott the film when it reaches the cinemas. A petition against 20th Century Fox is circulating on the internet. Or you can express your outrage by writing to the film's producer, Andrew MacDonald, Producer, The Beach, c/o Carol Sewell, 10201 W. Pico Blvd, Building 89, Room 224, Los Angeles, Ca 90035, USA.

Canada

The tenth Canadian Parrot Symposium will take place on November 20 and 21. The venue is, as usual, the Toronto Airport Hilton Hotel. This convention provides a rare opportunity to hear Paul Butler speak. He is renowned for his innovative methods of conservation education, which started in the Caribbean with the St Lucia Parrot. His unique methods are now being copied worldwide. Paul is a winner of the prestigious United Nations Environment Programme's "Global 500 Award" for his work in St Lucia. He is also an absorbing and entertaining speaker - winner of the award for best speaker on both occasions he has spoken at the Loro Parque Convention. Currently he is taking conservation education campaigns to Latin America.

Other speakers at the convention will include Mark Hagen, Sally Blanchard, Dick Schroeder, James Murphy, Pamela Hutchinson and Liz Wilson. Registration costs are from Can\$55 for one day (basic) up to \$175 for two days with

meals. Further information can be obtained from the organiser, Jacque Blackburn, 108 Meadowvale Road, West Hill, Ontario, Canada M1C 1S1, telephone 416 282 7375 or fax 282 8995.

FABULOUS NEW WPT SHIRT!



Hot off the press comes this new t-shirt featuring a Golden Conure design by Cyd Riley of Firefly T-shirts. Once again, Cyd has generously donated her beautiful painting to WPT, and all profits from the shirt go without deduction to our Golden Conure Survival Fund.

You can order this shirt from our USA or UK offices (see page 19). The price is \$22 plus \$4 shipping (USA), or £15 plus £2.50 shipping (UK).

Parrot Nutrition Information Required

Agnieszka Kleczkowska is in her fifth year at the Agricultural University in Warsaw, Poland. She is preparing a master's thesis on feeding parrots, including origins of food and food additives. She is requesting information on feeding parrots

in general and fig parrots in particular. Published work from avian nutritionists would be especially valuable. Anyone who can provide such information is asked to contact her at Ul. Arniki 14, 04-903 Warszawa-Miedzeszyn, Poland, or e-mail her at office@kock.pf

UK Conference

November 7th will be an important date in the diary of pet parrot keepers in the UK. The first one-day conference on the better care of pet parrots will take place. The venue is the Charlecote Pheasant Hotel, Stratford-on-Avon. The conference will be organised by BirdsFirst in Birdkeeping, a new charity dedicated to raising the standards of care for all birds in aviculture, and by Parrots Magazine. There will be speakers from the USA as well as two vets from the UK, Neil Forbes and Peter Scott. Places will be limited to 100. Further information can be obtained from Greg Glendell, BirdsFirst, Box 227, Shrewsbury, SY4 5WU, telephone 01630 685518.

Young Kakapo Doing Well

by DON MERTON

The six Kakapo chicks reported in the May issue are all doing well. Lisa's three females are weaned and in a pre-release pen on Codfish Island. They will be released via a two-way cat door when the (Austral) winter has passed. The other three are in a pen on Maud Island and are not quite weaned at the time of writing (mid July). They include the smallest whose growth rate had given much cause for concern. He now weighs 1.7kg and has been named Morehu - Maori for survivor.

News from WPT-Benelux

Ruud Vonk, Chairman of this major branch of WPT, gave a talk at the 9th International Symposium at Bietigheim, Germany, on the theme of 'Threatened Parrots'. His presentation was very successful, and he was able to



Yellow-eared Conure

describe several WPT projects. One result of this was a donation of DM600 from the organiser Dr Peter Wüst, and Ruud has allocated these funds to our Echo Parakeet project. Our thanks to Ruud, and to Dr Wüst.

ABC/WPT Conservation Grants 1999/2000

To follow up on last year's grant round American Bird Conservancy (ABC) working again in partnership with World Parrot Trust will consider parrot conservation projects both from current grantees and from new applicants. ABC has produced a list of priority species for conservation action, and proposals addressing the needs of these species are particularly encouraged.

Although primary emphasis will be given to these themes, as usual ABC will also consider proposals for other bird conservation projects in Latin America and the Caribbean undertaken by or involving local conservation groups and individuals. Most grants will be for amounts below the maximum of \$5,000. For full details contact: Luis Naranjo, American Bird Conservancy, PO Box 249, The Plains, VA 20198, USA or visit the ABC website: www.abcbirds.org.

Note: Deadline for applications is September 25th 1999.

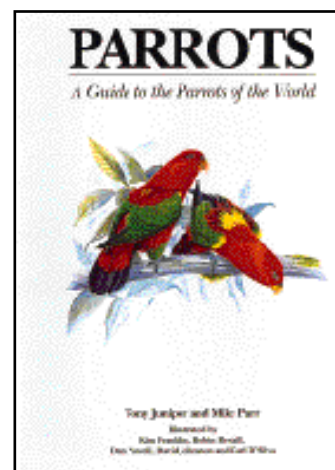
Award for 'Parrots'

'Parrots' A Guide to Parrots of the World by Tony Juniper and

Mike Parr has won the 1998 McColvin Gold Medal of the British Library Association for the 'Most Outstanding Reference Book'. The award was presented to Tony Juniper by the Bishop of London in a ceremony on Tuesday June 22nd.

Tony Juniper is Policy and Campaigns Director for Friends of the Earth (www.foe.co.uk), and Mike Parr is Director of Program Development for American Bird Conservancy (ABC). ABC has an active parrot conservation programme, and working in partnership with World Parrot Trust, is currently supporting parrot projects in ten countries in the Americas. More details can be found on ABC's website at www.abcbirds.org. The authors have also distributed copies of 'Parrots' to customs officers and conservation groups in Latin America to assist with the identification of threatened parrots in illegal trade.

'Parrots' is published in the USA by Yale University Press and in the UK by Pica Press (01580 880 561).



Major Disney Grant for ABC/WPT Projects

The Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund have announced a major grant award to two of the projects jointly supported by American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and World Parrot Trust in the small grants for parrot conservation program. The funds will support on-going work on the Yellow-eared Parrot, Red-tailed Amazon, and also support a project in northwest Mexico which will help Military Macaws and Thick-billed Parrots.

More than forty of the parrot species occurring in the Americas are listed as globally threatened by IUCN. ABC's Small Grants Program has, over the years, supported dozens of projects relating to the conservation of these species, but given the critical situation now facing some of the most threatened, ABC teamed up with World Parrot Trust to launch a special program to address their conservation needs. During summer 1998 a call for proposals, accompanied by a list of priority species and suggested conservation actions was circulated. The program received a number of extremely high-quality proposals, and thanks to additional funding from the Barbara Delano Foundation, was able to support thirteen projects in ten countries. The projects include an emergency effort to protect the last remaining population of Yellow-eared Parrot in Colombia; three separate projects tackling the conservation of the threatened northern subspecies of Scarlet Macaw; three Caribbean projects to protect the endemic Amazons of Jamaica, Dominica, and Cayman Brac. A project to assess the population of Blue-winged Macaw in the Brazilian Pantanal; an environmental education project for the Yellow-headed Amazon in Belize; a project to protect the Great Green Macaw in western Ecuador; a project to protect the Blue-fronted Amazon from illegal trade in Brazil; a community development project

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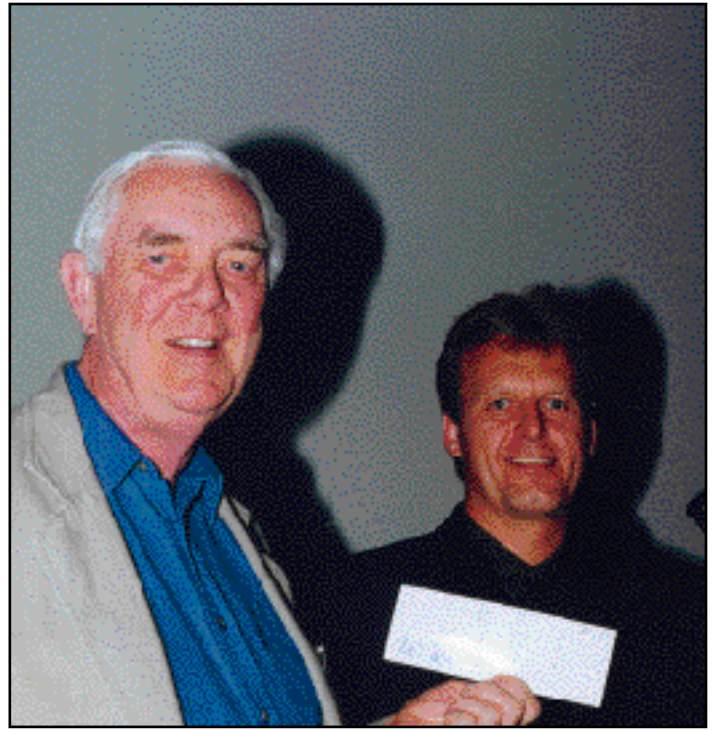
to conserve habitat for the Red-tailed Amazon at Superagui National Park, Brazil; and a generic project to investigate the habitat requirements of wide-ranging species based on the Mealy Amazon in Guatemala. ABC and World Parrot Trust will again be requesting parrot conservation proposals in 1999 to follow up on the success of the programme. Application details can be found on the ABC website www.abcbirds.org

'Birds 99 Convention', Brisbane, Australia June 1999

by MIKE REYNOLDS

This was an extremely well organised and enjoyable convention, and congratulations are due to Bruce Beattie and his

team. It has to be said, however, that Australian aviculturists are not too interested in the conservation of parrots in the wild. I had an opportunity at the gala dinner to remind the 250 delegates that anyone who keeps parrots in captivity has a clear and undoubted responsibility towards the parrots in the wild, and can meet a part of that responsibility by joining the World Parrot Trust. The next day, eleven delegates visited our WPT Australia booth and became members. Which leaves 239 people still to be convinced! One excellent outcome was Mark Hagen's donation of his A\$1200 expenses (as a speaker at the convention) to WPT Australia. This was very welcome, as it will go towards our three year commitment to provide A\$30,000 for research on the Palm Cockatoo. Many thanks Mark!



Mark Hagen presents a cheque to WPT at the 'Birds 99 Convention' in Brisbane.

More on Spix's Macaw

By Michael Reynolds

Readers who have closely read the newspaper articles on pages 6 and 7 will have seen that the fate of Spix's Macaw attracted much interest from the environment correspondents at our press conference. These shrewd and knowledgeable people picked up on the fact that there was only one bird in the wild and forty or so in captivity, and wanted to know why the captive birds were not being put back to support the last wild bird. A reasonable question. They asked who held the captive birds, and I told them that to the best of my knowledge there were 30 plus at Mr. Antonio de Dios's Birds International in Manila, Philippines and, about 12 with Dr Hammerli in Switzerland.

A brief history of this matter is that during the 1980s local trappers in NE Brazil regularly took fledglings from the last one or two Spix's nests, sold them to middlemen in Brazil or Paraguay, who sold them for very large sums to collectors within Brazil, and also to others outside Brazil. All of these movements were completely illegal under Brazilian law, and contrary to the CITES convention. In 1992 an amnesty was negotiated under which the holders of Spix's Macaw were spared prosecution in return for their co-operation in joining a recovery committee which would work to restore the species in the wild.

Since then, a female (recovered from a Brazilian collector and thought to be the original mate of the wild male) was released, but this bird disappeared after some months. Other experiments involving Illiger's Macaws have been made, but my personal view is that the extreme urgency of the situation is not being adequately recognised by the Spix's Macaw Recovery Committee. Alternatively, the problem may be that the holders of the captive birds simply refuse to co-operate in taking the actions that are clearly essential, but require them to send some of their birds back to Brazil to be carefully prepared for release.

Time is of the essence. As Tony Juniper of Friends of the Earth, and also co-author of the new 'Parrots' guide, told 'The Times': "It is vital that political and moral pressure is put on the collectors. If this last one goes, then the chances of re-establishing a wild



population might become almost impossible. The last male is needed to teach captive-bred ones how to survive. It knows what predators look like, it knows where the food is, it knows where there is water in the dry season and where nesting sites are". The Times continued: "The urgency of getting

birds back to Brazil has been intensified by the remaining male's liaison with a female Illiger's Macaw. The collectors might be concerned that their birds will be poached if returned to Brazil and released into the wild, but this is unlikely, since local people are fiercely proud of their rare parrot and have pledged to defend it. Since the last male was discovered, camera crews, scientists and twitchers have descended on the area, bringing money to a hard-pressed region. Local people take an immense pride. They even have a pizza restaurant called the Blue Macaw. It is an enormous boost for a poor part of the world".

You will see that Dr. Hammerli says he has sold his birds to somebody else in Switzerland. This demonstrates with absolute clarity that he is not a person with any interest in conservation, and regards his financial interest as the only important factor.

We have written to the person responsible for environmental matters at the Brazilian Embassy in London, offering any help that the World Parrot Trust can supply. In particular we have proposed that Dr. Carl Jones could be asked to carry out an independent review of the Spix's Macaw situation. After all, if anyone can improve the prospects of this bird surviving in the wild, it has to be the man who has saved the Mauritius Kestrel, Pink Pigeon, and now the Echo Parakeet.

Will the Brazilian authorities allow us to help? We will keep our readers informed.

Parrots in the Wild

Psitta Scene

Red-tailed Amazon Parrot

Amazona brasiliensis



This bird was photographed by Paulo Martuscelli, a Brazilian biologist who has spent several years studying and protecting this very striking amazon parrot in its small coastal distribution in Sao Paulo and Parana States of Brazil. The World Parrot Trust has funded some protection work for this bird, following an investigation carried out for us by Dr. David Waugh (now Director of Edinburgh Zoo) See PsittaScene for August 1994 for more information.

The Red-tailed Amazon is a CITES Appendix 1 ENDANGERED species, has a population estimated at around 4,000, but continues to be threatened by habitat loss, trapping for the pet and for trade. A recent study showed that of 49 nests, no less than 41 had been illegally robbed of nestlings. No wonder this species is one of the 89 listed by the new Parrot Action Plan to be heading towards extinction.