

PSITTAScene

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



Summer 2021



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ABOUT THE WPT

Capture for the live-bird trade, habitat loss and other factors put wild parrots at risk. Nearly 30% of all parrot species are considered by IUCN to be at risk of global extinction.

As an international leader in parrot conservation and welfare, the World Parrot Trust works with researchers, in-country organisations, communities and governments to encourage effective solutions that save parrots.

Since 1989 the WPT has grown to become a global force that moves quickly to address urgent issues and support long-term projects. Over that time WPT has led or aided conservation and welfare projects in 43 countries for more than 80 species of parrot.

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Canada: BN 89004 1171 RR0001

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ON THE COVER

Photo © Christian Peters | Getty Images

The **Blue-fronted Amazon** (*Amazona aestiva*) is one of the most heavily trapped of parrots. The World Parrot Trust works with dedicated partners to return confiscated birds to the wild.

See the article: **Until They Can Fly Free Again, Parrot Rehabilitation in Brazil**, Page 14.



a message from...
Jamie's Desk

After more than 30 years in action, we at the WPT might have thought we'd seen all the ups and downs the world had to throw at us - political upheavals, economic booms and busts, and enormous progress in parrot conservation and welfare. And although we're acutely aware of biosecurity issues due to Avian Flu and other disease outbreaks, we never seriously planned for the possibility of global pandemic we've all been navigating this past 14 months. It has been a long and challenging time, and many in the WPT family around the world have dealt directly with infections and tragic losses among family, friends and colleagues.

And while we in North America and Europe are relieved to be increasingly protected by remarkably effective vaccines, many parts of the world where we work are still struggling with dangerous rates of infections as well as new and scarier strains, including Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Indonesia as well as parts of Africa.

As a charity, we are of course only able to thrive due to the support from parrot lovers like yourselves, along with grants from zoos and foundations. With the global economy in turmoil last spring, and a deeply uncertain future ahead with virtually all zoos and bird parks closed, we were concerned not just about the trajectory of the pandemic, but also about our own ability to keep all our WPT projects and partners afloat. Although we're not out of the woods yet by any stretch, I'm both pleased and relieved to report that we've been overwhelmed by both the generosity and understanding of our supporters around the world.

Thanks to all of you, we've successfully navigated what we hope will be the worst of the pandemic, and we and our partners are all thrilled to be getting back up to speed as the world opens up again. We hope you'll enjoy these updates from around the world, including more tips on enriching your own birds' lives.



Jamie Gilardi
Jamie Gilardi
WPT Executive Director

Red-fronted Macaws, Bolivia © Corey Raffel



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Visit our website at parrots.org/legacy or contact an office near you (see page 27.)

Leave a Legacy

“ The moment these birds were released was met with smiles and relief as the parrots cautiously ventured out into the wild... ”



The first ever Grey Parrot release in the DRC. © Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Centre

GREY PARROTS FLY FREE:

Patience pays off in the Congo

by WPT Staff

On the 18th November 2020, 39 Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) flew free over the lush forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Their whistles rang out over Kahuzi Biéga National Park as they stretched their wings for the first time in many months — in some cases, years.

The release of these parrots, seized from traffickers and rehabilitated by WPT partners in eastern DRC, not only provided them with a second chance in the wild but represented an important step in the fight to end trafficking of these special birds.

Grey Parrots have been captured in the wild in vast numbers to supply the global pet trade. Over the last forty or so years, over 1.2 million wild Greys have been reported legally exported from Africa. This trade, in combination with the loss of forests, has driven the collapse of wild populations throughout their range from Guinea-Bissau to Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Uganda.

In 2017, countries around the world took the collective decision to end the international trade in wild Grey Parrots for commercial purposes by transferring the species to Appendix I of CITES. It was a momentous and vitally important decision.



Grey Parrots in Odzala-Kokoua National Park, Republic of the Congo. © Godong via Alamy

PRIOR TO 2016 THE DRC WAS THE LARGEST EXPORTER OF GREY PARROTS (*PSITTACUS ERITHACUS*). Each year it issued an export quota for 5,000 wild Grey Parrots but the fraudulent use of permits resulted in much higher volumes being exported – importers reported bringing in over double this number on average since 2005.

Moreover, like CITES quotas for most other parrot species, these quotas lacked scientific basis. There was no monitoring of the impact on wild populations. However, anecdotal reports painted a worrying picture.

In 2013 WPT began working with a local NGO in eastern DRC, the Lukuru Foundation, who had observed a worrying surge in trapping activity in and around one of their focal areas, the Tshuapa Lomami Lualaba (TL2) landscape. Seven teams of trappers had started operating in the area, systematically trapping at forest clearings and breeding areas. With the support of the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, field workers conducted a rapid assessment of trapping and trade in the area.

The results were disturbing – trapping teams reported that they had moved to the area following collapses in populations elsewhere and monitoring at airports revealed that many hundreds of parrots were being exported from the province every month.

In response, the provincial government took the decisive step to place a moratorium on trapping and trade of Grey Parrots, including through the province’s airports. This decision was communicated locally through a press conference, radio announcements and face-to-face meetings with communities living close to the most vulnerable sites.

The research findings were also communicated to the international community, highlighting the real world implications of the existing regulations governing

international trade under CITES. It was clear that these were doing little to stem the flow of parrots from central Africa’s forests, and that a change of approach was needed to break the cycle of exploitation and population collapse that had been seen elsewhere.

In addition to fighting for stronger protections under international law, a core part of WPT’s multifaceted strategy to end trade in wild parrots is providing support for enforcement agencies responsible for seizing illegal shipments from traffickers. Removing the burden of caring for large groups of parrots and ensuring a positive outcome for all involved (not least the parrots) invariably leads to further enforcement efforts. However, the DRC has no dedicated rescue centres for parrots and there is little capacity for any seized wildlife in much of the country.



Top: The 2019 seizure in Kindu
Bottom: Conducting initial health exams after confiscation
Photos © Lwiro Primate Rehabilitation Centre



Preparing foods from the forest for the birds © Lwiro Primate Rehabilitation Centre



When groups of Grey Parrots were seized at Kindu airport in 2018 and 2019 WPT's Bird Trade Specialist Cristiana Senni leapt into action, coordinating with local partners for the parrots to be transferred to Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center (CRPL) near Bukavu.

Here they joined another group of parrots seized from trappers near Kahuzi-Biéga National Park. WPT has worked with CRPL since 2010 providing technical and financial support, including sending experienced avian vets to provide training and funding the construction of a dedicated aviary.

In June 2019, WPT's Africa Programme Director Dr. Rowan Martin met with staff from CRPL, the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) and the Director of Kahuzi-Biéga National Park to determine a

strategy for the return of the rehabilitated parrots back to the wild. A release site was selected, plans made and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) drawn up. But then COVID struck. Restrictions on movements meant delays and a switch to an alternative release site. However, an improving security situation in part of the National Park opened up new opportunities nearby, and before long a temporary release aviary was being constructed and the first group of parrots selected for release.

Dr. Aristide Matata, a Congolese veterinarian who had been receiving specialized training in the care and rehabilitation of parrots from CRPL vet Dr. Luis Flores over the previous year, was selected as the focal person to oversee the release. He was assisted by two other young Congolese vets, Huguette Kamavu and Ernest

Kalaliz, who also received training in avian medicine and parrot care.

In September 2020, a group of parrots were given final health checks and transferred to the release site. Dr. Matata stayed permanently on site monitoring the parrots, providing food and security and training park rangers in basic skills for the four-week period while they became accustomed to the area. The parrots were treated to a variety of foods that they would encounter in the surrounding forests to ensure they were well equipped to survive when the time came for them to fly to freedom.

This was the first time a "soft" release of Grey Parrots had been conducted in the DRC, and provided an important opportunity to raise awareness about the threats they face while sending a positive message about what can be done.

RETURNING 39 PARROTS TO THE WILD MAY SEEM LIKE A DROP IN THE OCEAN compared to the hundreds of thousands that have left the continent, but this moment represents an important turning point for a country that has been one of the largest exporters of Grey Parrots and supports important remaining strongholds.

Significantly, the release was attended by the Deputy Governor of South Kivu province Marco Malago and the Provincial Director of ICCN and Head of the Kahuzi-Biega NP De Dieu Byaombe, showing high level support for these efforts. The presence of local media, including interviews on provincial radio stations, ensured the message was spread far and wide.

The moment these birds were released was met with smiles and relief as the parrots cautiously ventured out into the wild, hopping first to feeding platforms positioned outside the aviary before venturing further afield, building confidence as they went. Food has continued to be placed at the feeding stations but gradually reduced over time as the parrots explored the greater area.

Ongoing monitoring by park rangers reports that the parrots were still being seen as we go to press. Preparations are now underway to release a second group to join the others, soaring over the forest and bringing hope for a future where Grey Parrots are left to fly free. 📺

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WPT gratefully acknowledges the following donors:
Funding for the DRC Grey release:
 Celltei, Zoo Atlanta, and Parrot Society UK.
General funds for trade work in Africa:
 Folke H. Peterson Foundation, Ft. Wayne Children's Zoo, Shades of Grey Parrot Tours and Lafeber International.

Top: Veterinarian Aristide Matata and the monitoring team
 Middle: Grey Parrots stretching their wings before the release
 Bottom: Freedom! Grey Parrots leaving the release aviary
 Photos © Lwiro Primate Rehabilitation Centre



CACTI AND PARROTS:

Working with the Yellow-shouldered Amazons of Bonaire

Article by Megan Hill

As I plonked myself down on the dusty ground, I got out my Swiss army knife and began the joyous task of tentatively picking out the prickly pear cactus barbs from my ankle.

My partner, Jack, smugly looked at me and rightfully said "I told you they hurt".

A well-deserved I told you so after I offered little sympathy when he first encountered the spiky foe at the start of our trip.



© Birthe & Bent Pedersen

Up until now I had been, like a gazelle, carefully tiptoeing around the thousands of cacti plants that spread across Bonaire's alien and inhospitable, yet strikingly beautiful, landscape. On this particular day however, I was far too focused on the sky to worry about the imminent doom of being stabbed in the leg.

We were at the largest known roost site on the island, waiting for the sunset spectacle to count the Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrots – or *loras* as they are affectionately known in the local language of Papiamentu. We heard a familiar rolling *kravq* sound and both whipped our heads in the direction of the call. "There's two in the distance! now four... six" I excitedly yelled to Jack. Finally, the moment we had been waiting for; the blood-red sunset was just about to disappear beneath the horizon when the huge flock of loras came into view.

I scrambled for my camera, excited at the prospect of capturing this beautiful moment forever, but the playful parrots were already pushing across the crimson sky. I stepped back to get them in frame, with my eye up to my camera, finger on the shutter. Just as the awe-inspiring scene filled my viewfinder...BAM, the needle-like spine

of the cactus pierced my skin. Needless to say, I didn't manage to capture that perfect moment of parrotty nirvana. I did however, manage to get a wonderful keepsake of the painful moment in the form of a fuzzy picture of some roughly bird-like smudges against a reddish blur backdrop. It was a far cry from the reality of what I was seeing moments before, where flashes of the green and yellow flock swooped and swirled in an amazing acrobatic display across the burnished sky. Despite my disappointment (and now throbbing ankle), I knew that tomorrow was another day, and I would be able to photograph the loras at sunrise during their routine fly-by past the Echo Conservation Center where Jack and I were staying.

We were out in Bonaire to work alongside Echo, a partner of the World Parrot Trust's and a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting the Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*). Their multifaceted approach to conservation is working towards a future where parrots and people coexist on the island. During the three months I was there, I witnessed hundreds of loras, a privilege that is experienced only by the lucky few. Unfortunately, these wonderfully charismatic birds are now categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and can only be found on Bonaire and a few regions of Venezuela.



© Megan Hill



© Megan Hill

As a Digital Communicator, a large part of my work requires me to be stuck behind a laptop screen, tip-tapping away at my keys, creating content to share with wonderful supporters like yourselves. Thankfully, I'm not chained to my desk; I love going into the field to experience first-hand the majestic parrots and the work being done to protect them, and fortunately Jack regularly invites me to assist him in the field. However, as a wildlife biologist he regularly drives into the field, hikes a small mountain, finds a nest site, collects his data and returns to the field station all before I have even had the chance to finish my breakfast, a commitment I was only willing to make once or twice a week!

In Bonaire, Jack's enthusiasm and eagerness to research the loras meant that he could juggle several projects at once. In addition to teaching husbandry skills and training the field team, his work alongside Julianka, the Executive Director of Echo, involved developing the wild lora monitoring project, splitting it into two phases, breeding season and non-breeding season. As we were there during the non-breeding season, at the start of our trip his

efforts centred around the annual roost count, a long-term research project that estimates the minimum population on the island.

I was excited to be a part of the annual roost count this year, along with the 93 other people who had also volunteered their Saturday morning to count parrots. On the day of the count, although it felt like a military exercise (everyone had their strict instructions, pre-assigned roost counts, carpools timed to the minute, and alarms set for pre-dawn), the reality was much more fun and calm. Really, it's almost a perfect day for me to start with a gentle hike to an impossibly gorgeous vista, then watch the sun rise while listening to a tropical dawn chorus and lazily scanning the skies for a glimpse of the cheeky lora.

After the pre-determined two hours of counting, I headed back to Echo Conservation Center for a "Drive-thru" breakfast and to hand in my results. Due to social distancing measures and crowd restrictions, we couldn't stop and chat about our morning adventure for long, but we could all *oob* and *abb* at the numbers being added to the roost

count tracker. Unfortunately, mine was a big fat zero! But as I get to see them in large flocks almost daily, I was happy that the other volunteers were able to see the loras from their viewpoints on this special day. Out of the 36 roost sites, a total of 955 loras were counted.

In addition to being an excellent way to spend a Saturday morning, the roost count is a vital population tracker allowing Echo to monitor and track population trends, detect external factors that could be affecting the parrots' distribution and to gather data to help assess the effectiveness of conservation actions. It is also a day where the island community comes together to connect with nature and be a part of the environmental movement that is helping their wild feathered friends.

I found being a part of the research an incredible experience. Contributing to on-the-ground conservation is not only incredibly fun and interesting, but it's also hugely valuable to the organisations that run such citizen science projects. I would recommend that everyone to take part in a roost count if they ever get the opportunity.

After the roost counts and all the necessary follow up work, Jack's focus shifted towards training the Echo field team so they had all they needed to move into the breeding season fieldwork. He spent a lot of time working with and training Etienne, Echo's new field assistant. Specifically, they were locating and monitoring lora nests, a skill that Jack says "requires thick trousers, strong coffee, good navigation and the eyes of an eagle!"

To help Etienne during his first season of parrot monitoring, Jack set up a rather nifty smartphone app that allows the Echo team to input all their nest monitoring data straight into a database whilst out in the field. By simply answering a few questions, the app collects all the necessary data and stores it in an easy to access and understand format, something that saves a lot of time and frustration. Along with the app, Jack taught Etienne field skills such as navigation, tracking and the specific breeding behaviours of the lora. It all must have been worth it though, as I can't count the number of times that they would come back covered in scratches but with huge smiles on their faces

because they had been able to locate a new nest site.

The training will be invaluable to Etienne during the breeding season as he will be responsible for managing and checking the nests, collecting data on chicks, and deterring potential poachers.

Our time in Bonaire all too quickly came to an end; we felt like we had only just arrived when we were already saying goodbye to the kind-hearted Echo team and the vivacious parrots that we had grown so attached to. We felt connected to the island's nature, from the hundreds of lizards that would scamper across the road to the surprise thunderstorms that forced us to always carry an umbrella. Bonaire has a delicate and beautiful ecosystem that allowed us to create wonderful memories that we will enjoy for a lifetime.

We are privileged to have been a part of the conservation of the Yellow-shouldered Amazon and will continue to support the wonderful partnership of WPT and Echo and their efforts to protect this playful, beautiful parrot. 📷



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Megan Hill has spent the past five years working with WPT partners as a communications and fundraising coordinator. She is now putting her design background and experience into her new role as WPT Social Media Coordinator. She loves channelling her enthusiasm for wildlife through photography and has recently moved from her home country of the UK to Paraguay to immerse herself in her passion.

Until They Can Fly Free Again: Parrot Rehabilitation in Brazil

Article by André Becker Saidenberg



WPT's Brazil Program has been involved in many different parrot projects over the years ranging from field research, technical visits, contacting and developing new partnerships both in Brazil and abroad, and sharing expertise with local governmental and private conservation groups.

But one main objective is to provide rapid interventions such as financial, logistical and hands-on help with confiscated birds, and support their subsequent release in the wild. I find this last role personally deeply emotional both as a veterinarian and having rescued parrots of my own.

From 2009 to 2016, through WPT initiatives we participated in several meetings to determine the practicality of building parrot rescue centres.

The idea for rescue and release in Brazil was still considered by many as experimental, even though successful projects were already taking place in the country. We exchanged ideas and experiences, provided emergency aid to confiscated birds, encouraged captive breeding and release, and gave much-needed equipment.

In this article I highlight some of last year's many efforts of three of WPT's Brazilian partner projects.



Far left: Wild Blue-fronted Amazon
Top: Confiscated Blue-fronted Amazons of different ages
Upper right: Released birds at feeding platform
Lower left: Adult birds feast on fruits
Photos courtesy Caatinga Parrots Project

CAATINGA PARROTS PROJECT:

We provide ongoing aid to this vital project in the northeastern part of Brazil (featured previously in *PsittaScene* Autumn 2018). Their work is continuous, as there is never a shortage of wild bird and other animal confiscations taking place. To help, the WPT has provided much-needed supplies like medications, leg bands, specialized surgical materials, and helped to locate an anaesthesia machine for the project's use.

The Caatinga Parrots Project is also involved in the reintroduction of Blue-fronted

Amazons (*Amazona aestiva*) to areas where the species once occurred and is now locally extinct, onto farms and protected reserves where in the past trapping for the pet bird trade was so severe that whole populations disappeared.

In January, more than 40 Blue-fronted Amazons from different origins (confiscated chicks and adults or surrendered companion birds) were released in new partner areas; these groups are currently being monitored for their dispersal (movements) and adaptation to their surroundings.

The Blue-fronted Amazon's situation is emblematic of a problem common in the parrot world: the species is considered of low conservation concern by policy makers and most in the scientific community up until it disappears.

We need only remind ourselves that the vast majority of critically endangered or extinct species of parrots were once very common and thanks to human interference - directly or indirectly - they exist on the edge of survivability, or vanish completely.

ASM CAMBAQUARA:

ASM Cambaquara (see *PsittaScene* Summer 2016), on the island of Ilhabela off the southeastern coast of Brazil, is a well-known, highly capable WPT partner for several years now. The tireless efforts of Silvana Davino have resulted in some very touching stories among the many rescues that took place from 2020 to 2021.

Birds that sustain concussion from colliding into windows and vehicles are unfortunately very common on the island. These cases require immediate attention and extreme dedication if they are to be saved. Most of these patients are too critical due to delays in being brought to the centre, but miraculously some do recover. A Maroon-bellied Conure (*Pyrrhura frontalis*) which had suffered concussion was comatose on arrival, but following a specific anti-inflammatory course and many hours of intensive care by Silvana with rehydration, additional heat and slowly introducing chick formula, it responded to the treatment and was able to recover completely.

The fortunate bird was soon released close to the place where it had been found, as its flock likely frequented that region and a quicker adaptation (hard release) was still possible as it was a wild adult. The released bird has been seen (thanks to its new leg band) returning to the backyard feeders of the concerned citizen who first rescued it.

In another dramatic case, a Scaly-headed Pionus (*Pionus maximilliani*) was brought in with a reported history of collision which later proved to be false, as is the case with many birds brought to Cambaquara. This can immensely complicate diagnosis and treatment and has taught rescue centre staff to always be open to other potential causes and subsequent treatment.



Top: A Maroon-bellied Conure arrives after a collision
Middle: Undergoing intensive care treatment for concussion
Bottom: Successful release back to the area it was discovered
 Photos courtesy ASM Cambaquara



Left: Recently rehabilitated Maroon-bellied Conures post-release
Top Right: Conures released in 2015 spotted in 2020; photo taken by a young birdwatcher
Bottom Right: Chester the Southern Mealy Amazon (left) in the pre-release aviary after a long recovery from a dog bite
 Photos courtesy ASM Cambaquara

This individual could not support its weight and seemed to have a leg or spinal injury. Thanks to intensive feeding and pain management care, the bird was stabilized enough to be brought to the city of Sao Paulo (4 hours away), where Wildvet Clinic is able to treat the most serious cases. A spinal lesion and air sac disease were seen on the lateral X-ray. Nebulisation (medication in vapour form inhaled into the lungs) was added to the treatment begun by Silvana.

This bird not only miraculously recovered enough to perch again but also to fly and deemed competent again to be released.

A parrot named Chester is the subject of another great but equally dramatic success story: This wild Southern Mealy Amazon (*Amazona f. farinosa*) was rescued after being attacked by a

dog. Deep wounds went through parts of wing, chest, and the back. Luckily, the wing was not damaged, but the wounds had reached his left lung.

If the people who found him had not immediately brought him to the rescue centre septicaemia surely would have claimed him. Euthanasia to avoid further suffering is frequently the best option in cases like this, but Chester is one of those individuals that simply refuses to give up, responding quickly to the appropriate treatment of strong painkillers, sedation, careful forced/assisted feeding, temperature control, antibiotics, nebulisation, and a lot of care to minimize stress.

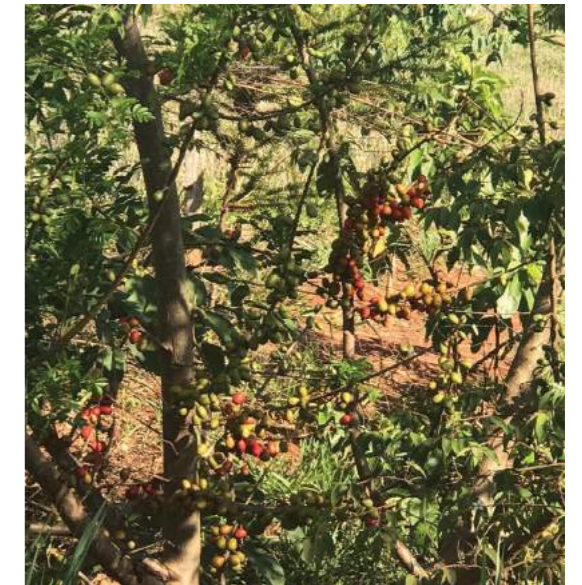
This is exactly what Cambaquara is able to provide. After treatment for the dropped wing and some nutritional support, Chester managed to survive even

after experiencing complications. Once he stabilised he travelled to the continent for X-rays and evaluations where the extent of his wounds was confirmed. He steadily improved from there and was released with 16 Mealy Amazons in March of the current year.

Conure releases regularly take place at Cambaquara after a frantic time of hand-raising chicks in need of help, usually two times per year. Happily, birds from many different years of previous release events have been seen again, including one from 2015 which was photographed in 2020 mating with another conure (that had no leg band, hence a wild bird). The interesting part of this story is that this photo was taken during the local school's monitoring and environmental awareness activities by a boy who participates in birdwatching.



130 confiscated Blue-fronted Amazon chicks of different ages arrive to begin rehabilitation
Photos courtesy Lins Ecological Farm



Upper Left: Awaiting freedom in one of the release flights
Lower Left: A released bird stays close to the aviaries
Upper Right: Trees planted as part of the restoration efforts already bearing fruit for the parrots
Lower Right: Donated sign by private funder made in honour of a beloved companion parrot. (Bosque da Kiki stands for 'Kiki's Wood')
Photos courtesy Lins Ecological Farm

LINS ECOLOGICAL FARM:

Lins Ecological Farm is a new WPT-funded partner. The facility, located in the state of Sao Paulo in southeast Brazil, focuses on helping the heavily trafficked Blue-fronted Amazon.

Farm owner Ivan Tadeu is a neurosurgeon who decided to dedicate his spare time helping birds, including toucans, songbirds, macaws and the Amazons from the central areas of Brazil. Lins has documented many success stories, with the farm actively being used by the released birds as roosting and breeding sites.

WPT's partnership with Lins started in 2020 when the facility received a large confiscation of Blue-fronted Amazon chicks of varying ages and a single green-winged macaw chick, all in critical condition. The team cared for one hundred and thirty birds in total according to their stage of development and then transferred them to different-sized aviaries

Lins Ecological Farm: A History

Dr. Ivan Tadeu began rescuing birds at a young age. He saw the other youngsters in his town hunting birds with slingshots and rifles and decided to save them if he could. Before long he built a large aviary to house them all.

As he got older he trained as a doctor but keeping and rescuing native birds, parrots included, was important to him and ongoing. Once qualified he moved to the city of Lins. There he met a patient who became interested in his activities and helped him acquire land to protect and restore the forest, and release rescued birds.

Over time Dr. Tadeu and his team have built an ecological corridor to link fragmented forest, drinking fountains and feeders for the released birds, large acclimation aviaries, and cold storage to stockpile the foods they will grow for their charges.

Since the beginning they have rehabilitated and released close to 100 parrots, countless other species of birds and have planted hectares of new forest. Native Blackbirds that had been extirpated from the area have returned and are nesting there. Released Blue-fronted Amazons return to nest there, raising their chicks in peace.

on the farm. Now, two groups have been acclimated to their surroundings and released, and a third will be sent to a nearby state where they will be part of the reintroduction program in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul. More than 45 White-eyed Conures (*Psittacara leucophthalmus*) have also been released, to which Cambaquara contributed several

individuals that were rehabilitated on Ilhabela. They could not be released there as the Atlantic Rainforest is not in their natural range; hence, they were released at Lins in February 2021.

In addition to this, Ivan has also invested a lot of his time and resources to reforesting and transplanting trees to restore

the farm to its original state so that it may eventually serve as roosting/breeding sites and food sources for the released birds on the farm. A private donor who is funding Blue-fronted Amazon conservation is having one of these areas named "Bosque da Kiki" (Kiki's Wood), in honour of a beloved companion parrot.

Happy endings...

These are just a few of the many stories that take place every day in the originally named "*Terra papagallorum*," or the land of the parrots, as it was named by the Portuguese and Spanish sailors in the early 1500s. Hopefully, with WPT's continued support and the dedication of staff and volunteers in each of the projects, there will be more happy endings. 📍



NOTES ON... PARROT NESTS

by Desi Milpacher

Birds across the planet need nests to lay their eggs in, from the simplest divots amongst the rocks to elaborate woven structures.

Parrots have their young in a number of different types of nests, all of which have their own unique characteristics and potential problems.



Opposite page: Red-lored Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*) at tree nest cavity, Costa Rica © Jeff Edwards via Getty Images

This page, left: Termite mound at Cape York Peninsula, Australia © Mike Lane via Getty Images

This page, right: Golden-shouldered Parrot (*Psephotellus chrysopterygius*) at termite mound nest © Zbindere via Getty Images

Many bird species, parrots included, lay their eggs in tree cavities. Birds that can hollow out their own cavities are primary cavity nesters (or excavators), while parrots that nest in trees are secondary cavity nesters, as they lack the beak equipment to make the openings. They instead rely on wood-boring species such as woodpeckers, termites and beetles or natural aging processes to create them. Once a parrot has chosen a cavity it will usually line it with dried wood chips for the nestlings (Toft and Wright, 2015).

Trees aren't the only lodgings that parrots use - some species nest in seemingly odd places.

Bahama Parrots (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis* - a subspecies of the Cuban Amazon) are found on the islands of Great Inagua and Abaco in the Bahamas. The islands are composed of carbonate rock, or limestone, which has hollows created by natural erosion. The parrots on Abaco use these cavities for nesting, which is a behaviour thought to have evolved due to a lack of aging trees or to the benefits that nesting underground can offer (Gnam, 1992, Stahala Walker, 2016).

Ground-nesting parrots in other parts of the world include Kākāpōs (*Strigops habroptila*),

the ground parrots (*Pezoporus sp.*), Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) and Rock Parrots (*Neophema petrophila*).

A number of parrots nest much higher up in cliff tunnels. Lear's Macaws (*Anodorhynchus leari*), and Patagonian Conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) have their families in cliff caves dozens of metres high. There can be dozens of these tunnels in a colony and each can extend for metres inward. Maroon-fronted Parrots (*Rynchopsitta terrisi*), Thick-billed Parrots (*Rynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) and Red-fronted Macaws (*Ara rubrogenys*) nest in cliffs but will also seek out closely packed trees.

Insect mounds are ready-made parrot family residences. These large cemented-earth

structures are built by termites (a termitarium) or ants, and occur above ground or in trees. The tree, or arboreal versions, are used by a number of parrot species such as pygmy parrots and *Brotogeris* parakeets. Australian species such as Hooded and Golden-shouldered Parrots (*Psephotellus dissimilis* and *P. chrysopterygius*), and the extinct Paradise Parrot (*P. pulcherrimus*), nest in the terrestrial (on the ground) forms of these behemoths. The species that still exist appear to live peacefully with the insects in these nests.

Some parrots are more industrious - *Agapornis* lovebirds and Monk Parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*)

actually construct complex nests out of thorny sticks, bark and other plant debris. The Cliff Parakeet (*Myiopsitta luschi*) builds a stick nest in a cliff burrow in its native Bolivia range.

Four of the *Agapornis* species build dome-shaped nurseries in tree cavities, while the Peach-faced Lovebird (*A. roseicollis*) constructs a stick cup in a cavity. *A. taranta* and *A. canus* line theirs with twigs, leaves and other plant litter, and *A. pullarius* uses burrows in arboreal ant or termite mounds. In addition, all lovebirds except *swindernianus* carry construction material back to the nest under their wing and rump feathers (Eberhard, 1998).



Patagonian Conures at cliff nest, Argentina © Mikhail Mironov via Getty Images



Monk Parakeets at a large nest with multiple cavities
© Michael Gaylard [CC BY 2.0]

Monk Parakeets have taken nest building to a new level of complexity, building large colony nests (Forshaw 1989). These apartment-style twig dwellings, used year-round as brooding and roosting centres, can measure several feet across and be used simultaneously by the parakeets and other species of birds. Feral Monk Parakeets found in several Mediterranean cities co-nest with White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), possibly for protection (Dailos Hernández-Brito et al, 2020). In South America, American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) and Speckled Teals (*Anas flavirostris*) have been recorded nesting with the parakeets in chambers not being used by the birds (Eberhard, 1998).

So parrots have a number of options in which they can settle down and have a family, but what about being able to find suitable sites and keep them safe? These nests are highly valuable to parrots and other wildlife, and the ones that are available are vulnerable to many threats. Most cavity nesters need old growth, large trees that are found only in primary forest - habitat that is rapidly disappearing.

Forest clearance by people, brush fires, and shifts in climate leading to drought are reducing the number of suitable trees parrots can nest in. Competition with other birds, including non-native ones, is too. Nest characteristics are important, with research revealing that four Amazon species in Mexico appear to select nest sites based on tree species, size, height from the ground and entrance size (Enkerlin-Hoeflich 1995, Renton and Salinas-Melgoza 1999).

A lack of suitable trees is just the start of the threats: nestlings are at risk from outside dangers such as predation by snakes, lizards and feral mammals and marsupials; there are also dangers from external parasite infestation and attacks by introduced Africanised Honey bees (*Apis mellifera* hybrid).

Trappers will climb or cut down trees and scale cliffs to take nestlings for trade. In the 1990s a portion of a Patagonian Conure colony in Argentina was dynamited to make a car-park for visiting tourists (Massello and Quillfeldt, 2003). Wild chicks are sometimes lost to old trees collapsing, and during the wet season in the Neotropics, cavities can flood in seasonal downpours.

Despite the variety of nest types potentially available to parrots there are many ways they can be permanently altered by humans or taken by other wildlife. Urgently, these important nest sites need protecting or augmenting with artificial cavities in many cases. The survival of many species depends on the availability of these nurseries. 📧

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In Part One of this article (*Spring 2021 PsittaScene*) Louise Caddy addressed visual and auditory sensory enrichment for parrots. In Part Two she talks about satisfying your parrot's touch and taste senses.



Louise Caddy, Head of Parrots at Paradise Park, UK
(Home of the World Parrot Trust)



© MD Sabbir via Getty Images

A Feast for the Senses, Part 2: Touch and Taste Enrichment

Much like ourselves a bird's skin has sensory nerve endings that detect pain, pressure and temperature, possibly explaining why parrots are such tactile creatures. This should be considered when providing enrichment for your bird, and you should aim to provide a variety of toys not only different in size and colour but also in texture.

Tactile (Touch)

Most parrots when given a new toy or play item will immediately explore it thoroughly with their beaks and feet. Some will even rub an item over their feathers and under their wings. When considering different textures for them to examine the first thing I always think of is coconut shells. I use fresh coconut as part of my macaws' diet and often save the shells for other birds to explore with their tongues and beaks. It's amazing how long a bird will spend pulling the fibres off the outside of the shell. I have even seen some smaller birds use the fibres as nesting material.



© Louise Caddy/Paradise Park

Another item I like to use, and I think is often overlooked, is dried, mould-free tree bark. It can also be used fresh if it is to be used straight away. Always check it is from a tree that has not been sprayed with any chemicals. There are many different safe trees that have completely different bark textures. I regularly use oak tree bark due to its hard, nobby texture. I have attached this to my birds' cage beside the food bowl and they will often rub their beaks across it to clean off any bits of food after feeding. *Eucalyptus* bark too has a completely different texture for parrots to explore.

Ideally you should offer your birds a variety of different safe greenery types. (See parrots.org > Learn > Reference Library > Health & Nutrition > Common Household Poisons for information about toxic plants and woods.)

As well as chewing and destroying, birds love to climb through and explore the different leaves and bark. I have often collected piles of clean dry fallen leaves from around the park and put them on the aviary or cage floor, where some birds love to come down and run through the piles whilst destroying them. You can also hide small treats or seeds inside the piles to encourage foraging.

Sadly, birds being so tactile can lead to problems if not managed correctly. In the wild birds will spend a lot of time during the day grooming themselves or their mates. It is a natural behaviour for birds to clean and rearrange their feathers and when they do

it to a mate it strengthens the pair bond. I knew of a Goffin's cockatoo that would spend hours every evening preening its owner's hair; it got so good at this that it sometimes plaited her hair into her jumper!

Birds that don't have an outlet for these natural instincts can over-preen themselves, which in time leads to damaged feathers and feather plucking. There could be several reasons why your bird over preens; stress, boredom and breeding behaviour are some triggers. In these cases, it's an idea to try and find something that your bird can preen so they can express this behaviour safely.



© Arturogi via Getty Images

Rope toys are a good option as birds like to play with the fibres which they can preen, rub themselves on and arrange. Personally, I only allow my bird a toy like this under supervision due to bits of material that could potentially be chewed off and ingested. Some safer options are sweetcorn husks or strips of shredded paper woven through the bars of your bird's cage.

Taste

I have often wondered how good a parrot's sense of taste is after watching Amazons happily munching on some seriously hot chillies! In the wild a bird's sense of taste is not as important as its sense of hearing, explaining why it has not evolved as much over

the years. And whilst it is easy to think birds do not have the best sense of taste, any pet owner will tell you that their bird has favourite foods along with foods they refuse to eat.

Bearing this in mind I do feel it is important to vary your birds' diet and try and include as many different fruits and vegetables as you are able. Sometimes a bird will need to try a new food several times before accepting it. I have had birds that would not eat carrots until I presented them steamed and then they accepted them. Sometimes just lightly cooking them makes them more palatable to your bird. Bearing this in mind I have been keen to try different smells out on the parrots at the Park to see if and



© Agnali via Pixabay

how they react. We grow many herbs at the park that we can cut and give to the birds fresh on a regular basis. These include basil, parsley, mint, thyme and coriander, to name a few.

There are so many ways you can try to enhance your bird's life with sensory enrichment, and it should be an enjoyable experience for both them and you. It can be so rewarding seeing what they react to and enjoy. For more information on enrichment ideas, head to parrots.org/fun. 📷

NEWS

NEWS RELEASE: Conservationists call on G7 leaders to take coordinated action on the online wildlife trade

The World Parrot Trust has called on G7 leaders meeting in Cornwall, UK to take coordinated action on online wildlife trafficking. Ahead of the G7



Summit Alisa Davies, WPT Wildlife Trade Specialist and Dr. Rowan Martin, Director of WPT's Africa Conservation Programme, met with UK Secretary of State for the Environment George Eustice MP, to discuss the devastating impact the global wildlife trade is having on the world's most endangered

parrots. During the visit to Paradise Park, the home of WPT, Eustice was briefed on WPT's research into the role of social media in facilitating and amplifying wildlife trade and the critical importance of coordinated regulation by the world's leaders to address this threat.

At the summit, G7 countries pledged to work together to address wildlife trade to protect biodiversity and prevent future pandemics.

Read the full release: tinyurl.com/g7visit

Pictured from left: Alisa Davies, Dr. Rowan Martin, MP George Eustice and Nick Reynolds, Co-director of Paradise Park and Trustee of the World Parrot Trust

Australia forestry legislation challenged; dangers to Swift Parrots highlighted

Swift Parrots (*Lathamus discolor*) are IUCN Critically Endangered, with recent studies suggesting that there are fewer than 300 left in the wild. They are threatened by ongoing deforestation in their native Tasmania, with legal logging being the main culprit. Unlike other industries forestry operations are not required to seek federal environmental approvals.

Recently, environmentalist and former leader of the Green Party Dr. Bob Brown issued a legal challenge to the current forestry legislation in Federal Court, highlighting the threats to Swift Parrot habitat. It was dismissed, leaving Brown and his conservation foundation to appeal to High Court.

Read more: tinyurl.com/2stmyjj8



Swift Parrot © JJ Harrison | [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Experts provide testimony on wildlife trafficking to the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources

Recently The Center on Illicit Networks and Transnational Organized Crime and a number of conservation and other organisations gave testimony to the US House Committee on Natural Resources outlining the prevalence of wildlife dealers selling on social media sites. The Committee learned that Facebook and other tech platforms are not taking enough steps to prevent these activities.

Rep. Jared Huffman, chair of the subcommittee, explained during the hearing that the illegal wildlife trade is a US\$23 billion dollar crime enterprise and the fourth most profitable one in the world.

Read more: tinyurl.com/us-house-test

Fortescue Metals Group confirms population of elusive Night Parrot at Western Australia iron ore mine

New recordings by Fortescue Metals Group's monitoring system have confirmed the presence of a least one and possibly several other Night Parrots (*Pezoporus occidentalis*) in the proximity of the company's Cloudbreak iron ore mine in Western Australia. The calls were verified by Night Parrot researchers Nick Leseberg, Steve Murphy and Nigel Jackett of Adaptive NRM. There had only been a few confirmed sightings in the area in the last century.

Read more: tinyurl.com/y32wt7jj

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Correction Notice

In *PsittaScene* Spring 2021, article "The Littlest Psittacines: Pygmy Parrots, Pages 20-21," one of the pygmy parrots was incorrectly labelled as: Meek's Pygmy Parrot *Micropsitta bruijini*, five subspecies. It should have been listed as: Meek's Pygmy Parrot *Micropsitta meeki*, two subspecies. Our apologies for any confusion this error caused. The corrected version can be viewed online here: tinyurl.com/psitta-spring-2021

A QUICK PRIMER ON PYGMY PARROTS

- RED-BELLIED Pygmy Parrot**
- YELLOW-CAPPED Pygmy Parrot**
- BLOSSOM Pygmy Parrot**
- SOFT-FACED Pygmy Parrot**
- MEEK'S Pygmy Parrot**
- HOUSE'S Pygmy Parrot**



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PARROTS IN THE WILD:

Black-winged Lovebird

(Agapornis taranta)

A Black-winged Lovebird digs deep into a seed pod looking for the choicest bits in its native Ethiopia. These tiny birds can be found up to 3800m (12,000 ft).

© Mehd Halaoute