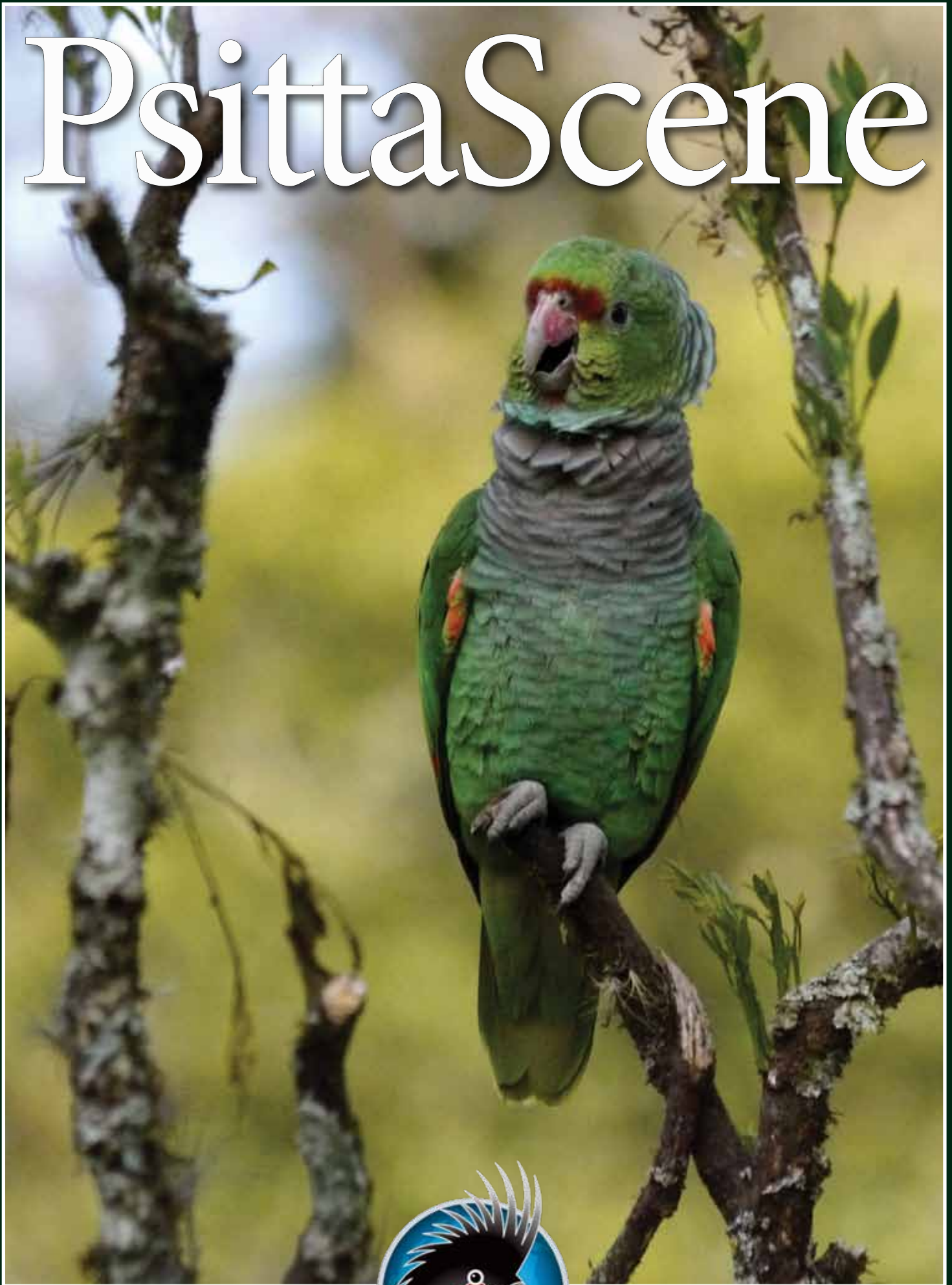


PsittaScene



IN THIS ISSUE
Vinaceous Amazons, Cape Parrots,
Black Cockatoos & Sprouting Seeds



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fromthechairman

We all need inspiration, and this issue of *PsittaScene* provides just that – from the release of confiscated Amazons, to recovery hopes in Africa, to providing variety and enrichment to our own companion birds.

Our work to save parrots is diverse and ever-changing. Our approach varies depending on the needs of the species, the specific situation and the people and places involved. The stunning Vinaceous Amazon is one of a growing number of species that are proving that confiscated birds kept illegally as pets can be successfully rehabilitated and released. André Saidenberg, the World Parrot Trust's Brazil representative, describes this release program and the flourishing lives of the birds.

We also spotlight the Cape Parrot and the loss of mighty yellowwood trees in South Africa. The trees and parrots were perfect partners, but the mining industry demanded timber. Steve Boyes is full of positive ideas in his mission to find a future for the Cape Parrot and its habitat.

At the World Parrot Trust, we know that we share our love of parrots with our members and supporters. Many of you live with pet and aviary parrots that inspire you to learn about the wild birds we are working to save, and also how to make your own bird's lives healthier and more enriching. Inside are some straightforward ideas to help you experiment with sprouting for parrots - we hope you'll give it a try!

Thank you for your support of the World Parrot Trust and our work to help these rare parrots. We appreciate the opportunity to share their stories and we welcome you to share yours. We wish you and yours a healthy and happy holiday season.

Alism

Alison Hales,
World Parrot Trust Chairman

onourcovers

FRONT Just released, a Vinaceous Amazon (*Amazona vinacea*) calls to members of the flock. New efforts to re-patriate confiscated birds like this one back to their historic homes in the Atlantic coastal forests of Brazil are yielding positive results. © Wallace Wittkoff

BACK The African Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*) once flourished on a diet of fruit from yellowwood trees. With the yellowwoods mostly gone, preferred food and nest sites are also lacking. Community action to plant trees, supply nest-boxes and generate awareness gives hope for this Critically Endangered species. © Rodnick Biljon

“South Africa’s Cape Parrot
“grew up” throughout
history on the fruits of
yellowwood trees...”

TREES OF LIFE, page 8



Free to Be

Watching a pair of parrots investigate a nest box, I think back just a few months when they were freed - part of our first group of released birds.



These two were already very bonded in captivity but when they first started to fly together outside, one was clearly in much better shape than the other. They flew short distances at first, one lagging behind the other. The stronger bird immediately realized and adjusted. Showing their strong bonds, the first bird would stop flapping and glide a little in order for its companion to catch up and enter in the formation for another maneuver. They did this until both had equal flying skills and they could stay together all the time. To me this shows obvious emotions of sharing and receiving. Now these two birds are the first released birds to have eggs (3!) in the nest box.

THE BIRDS ARE VINACEOUS AMAZONS (*Amazona vinacea*). In Brazil, where these releases are taking place, both international and domestic trade in parrots is a major threat. Several Amazon species have been very hard hit, including *vinacea*. Fortunately, after long preparation and planning we are beginning to release these endangered birds back to some of their historical homes in the Atlantic forests.

THESE BIRDS ORIGINALLY CAME from several sources. The vast majority were previously illegal pets that were either confiscated or delivered to IBAMA after they became a problem. Ages are varied and unknown but all of them are clearly adults, as they show breeding behaviour and the pairs located at the breeding area did lay eggs last year (unfortunately infertile).

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED this species when we (WPT) were working with a rescue centre that held a significant number of birds, but where the birds were languishing without a plan. Eventually most of them

were transferred and now make up the group which we have just released or are preparing for future releases. In the meantime I also participated in releases of *vinacea* with the R3 Animal NGO in the state of Santa Catarina (Southern Brazil). Those birds were reintroduced in 2011 to a National Park in the first project of its kind involving this species.

Setting the stage

For this project we brought together a team of people to create what we think is a model release program for the Vinaceous Amazon. We have had many



Photos © André Saldenberg



Photos © Wallace Wittkoff



discussions to plan and satisfy the needs and goals of all involved. Each partner brings special skills to the table. Our expertise at the World Parrot Trust is with the wild birds – how to prepare the birds for release, test them, release and monitor them. The Brazilian Institute for Natural Resources (IBAMA Sao Paulo) works to enforce wildlife laws, confiscate birds and get them to places where they can be released. We also worked with the Environmental State Agency which is going to take over IBAMA's duties supervising release projects in the state of Sao Paulo. The

last important piece of the puzzle is the Lymington Foundation. Owners Bill and Linda Wittkoff have provided tremendous support, dedication and commitment to conservation. Their organization has extensive experience working with captive birds, captive breeding, and supporting projects for other endangered parrots and to protect habitat. They also have a choice release site – a safe and spacious property where the released birds can thrive.

Vinaceous Amazons had not been recorded for at least 30 years in this region. To bring them back requires a lot of planning and preparation. All of the birds had spent a considerable amount of time in quarantine and were routinely checked for their weight/breast muscle score, behavioural and flight abilities. Our tests showed them to be very healthy pre-release. Testing is required by law and is also part of my PhD study.

Release

The birds spent 6 months honing flight skills and acclimatizing to the release area. They were taught to recognize local wild foods and how to find water. As individual birds were deemed ready, they were given access to the outdoors in small groups of 3 or 4 birds.

When they first see the world out from behind bars the birds' excitement is obvious. Once free, they often return and vocalize enthusiastically with the ones that are still waiting for their freedom. Some pairs can't be released together because of their strength or moulting condition for example. In those cases, the first released will wait patiently until it's the right time for the reunion. I love watching these interactions and also seeing the birds develop their flight skills after release. First they start to fly in simple formation and as the days pass after the release they are performing more and more incredible maneuvers.



(far left) Before release, the birds are housed in a large aviary where they can adjust to the sights and sounds of the area. (left) Extern student Marcela Fanco from Mexico collects samples as Lymington keeper Carlos helps restrain the bird. All are tested thoroughly before they are cleared for release. (above) Once free, some of the birds immediately investigate nest boxes provided for them in the area.



Photos © Marcela Franco



While the birds are allowed free access to the release cage and feeding stations post-release they are also taught to recognize natural foods and sources of water. Many begin foraging immediately after release.

Post-release

For some birds foraging on their own is automatic, for others it takes some time. Supplemental feeding is enough to satisfy all their needs so it is really up to them when to start exploring the area and foods. Everything is very gradual.

Studies of the vegetation and food types available in this vicinity show both are appropriate and abundant for most of the year. Supplemental feeding helps us guarantee that their transition is as smooth and successful as possible. The birds were offered food at several locations – right on the edge of the release/hatch window as well as on a high feeder, and on the top of the flight itself. They can be tracked by visual observation and by their calls. Every bird responds differently to their newly gained freedom. Some just go to the platform to feed and return to the release section of the flight, not leaving again until it's time to feed – this pattern repeats for a few days until they are confident and decide to take a longer flight. Others leave flying from the very first moment and land on the nearby trees, exploring the area and returning to feed. A few just decide to leave the release area on the first day. They may or may not return to feed.

IN POST-RELEASE MONITORING we are finding that most of the birds were coming back to socialize and roost in the vicinity with supplemental feeding being used less and less. Some are not regularly seen and are clearly eating on their own, feeding on wild food types all the time.

Besides food, an important consideration in a release location is safety. Fortunately, it is uncommon to trap adult parrots in Brazil (except for the really rare species like Lear's Macaws). As long as the birds nest in safe areas where we are setting up nest-boxes, the possibility of active poaching is pretty small. Most of the birds, even though they were previous pets, are making their own decisions to stay with their kind. They quickly realize that humans should be avoided. Besides, being able to fly, eat, sleep, play, and breed whenever they want appears to be more attractive than being subjected to our "human schedule". As extremely intelligent animals, parrots shouldn't surprise us with this kind of behaviour and attitude. Even though I saw the same thing happening on other releases, amazingly I still feel surprised by this clear manifestation of their high intelligence and individuality.

The Future

We have over 20 Vinaceous in the wild now and there are plans for a continued release project in the area depending on the availability of birds and additional permits.

We are now observing breeding attempts (constant copulation) by three released pairs as well as a huge interest in the nest-boxes set up around the release area. The first eggs have just been reported. Breeding success shouldn't be seen as the only goal to judge the success of a release but it definitely helps to prove that this works and that the species is back where it belongs.



© Wallace Wittkoff



© André Saldenberg

Vinaceous Amazon

(Amazona vinacea)

THIS STUNNING AMAZON gets its name from the purple-maroon patch on the chest, as “vinaceous” relates to the colour of red wine. Both adults are brilliantly coloured with intricate scalloping and bold dashes of red.

WORLD POPULATION: 1,000 – 2,500

STATUS: Endangered (CITES Appendix 1)

THREATS: Loss of habitat, selective logging; colonization and agriculture threaten remaining forest. Increasingly vulnerable to both domestic and international trade.

RANGE: Primarily in the coastal tropical and subtropical montane forests in Brazil, extending into a tiny bit of northeast Argentina and eastern Paraguay.

THE WORLD PARROT TRUST is supporting a series of releases of confiscated birds to re-establish the species in areas of their historic range.



WHETHER OR NOT THE BIRDS STAY in the release area really depends on their individual choices. Some appear to consider the immediate release area as their home and stay there the whole day. Others spend part of the time flying around the area and return to roost on nearby trees or inside the release section of the flight. For these birds this behaviour usually changes after about 3 months and they stop being so dependent on sleeping inside the flight. Others just stay away for the very first day, perhaps returning to feed. It really depends on the individuals. One pair was formed with a male from the first release and a female

from the 4th. They disappear for weeks and are occasionally (once a month or so) seen flying really high over the valley, not stopping by to check the others.

We hope there will be future releases of this species at other sites throughout their historic range. For example, the state of Rio de Janeiro is still considered to harbour *vinacea* even though the species hasn't been recorded there since the 1860's! Sadly, there is still a lot of closed mindedness against restoration projects like this despite their evident success in Brazil and elsewhere. Hopefully with additional success stories, even those who were once opposed to this powerful new conservation tool will come around to see the impressive benefits. We are offering these birds not only freedom but also the option to make a choice. Choices are what determine the outcome of everyone's lives – I say let them make theirs at last.



André is the WPT Brazil Program Director as well as a Brazilian veterinarian and a PhD candidate in Veterinary Epidemiology. He is working with confiscated birds that are undergoing the release process back into the wild. André has been working with WPT as a translator (Portuguese) since 2007. He has also been helping to form partnerships in Brazil with conservationists and scientific groups.



Trees of Life

Saving the Cape Parrot

By Steve Boyes



Photos © Steve Boyes

The perfect fat content.

The perfect protein content.

The perfect carbohydrate content.

The perfect parrot food.

SOUTH AFRICA'S CAPE PARROT (*Poicephalus robustus*) "grew up" throughout history on the fruits of yellowwood trees. Not only did the vast majority of their food come from these trees, but the 200+ year old giants also provided community. They were roost, nest, watering hole and playground.

Our research has found a close relationship and apparent dependency of Cape Parrots on *Afrocarpus* and *Podocarpus* yellowwoods as feeding and nesting sites. Emergent yellowwood trees are over 250 years old in old growth forests and continue growing for another 800-1,000 years. Their branches are laden with moss and lichen that are hundreds of years old and safely shelter sunbirds, flycatchers, robins and much else. Cape Parrots have even been recorded drinking dew drops caught in "wizard's beard" or "Spanish moss" hanging from ancient, emergent branches that sit in the thick, silent mist. Broken branches provide nest cavities for Cape Parrots, woodpeckers, barbets and many other cavity-nesters. Over hundreds of generations these ancient bastions become culturally important feeding and nesting sites for local forest specialists like Cape Parrots, producing thousands of

offspring in their branches and cavities, feeding entire local populations, and providing safety from predators.

Sadly, over the last 350 years loggers and industrialists have decimated South Africa's yellowwood forests, removing vast tracts of large hardwoods to supply railway sleepers and mining timber for the economic boom that resulted from the discovery of gold and diamonds.

Where did that leave the Cape Parrot? They are now among the most endangered parrots on earth with less than 1,000 adults remaining in the wild and the constant threat of starvation and disease. In fact, after centuries of logging, most of the African mountain forest (Afromontane) specialists are hard to find these days. The parrots hang on due to their intelligence that allow them to literally "make a plan" to adjust to drastic alterations to the forest habitat that they depend on. We need to rebuild these forests or we stand to lose endemic species that cannot be replaced.

Cape Parrots evolved over millions of years by specializing their diet to focus on the highly-nutritious and historically super-abundant yellowwood fruits. Thousands upon



(left) A 1,000 year old yellowwood tree now stands alone. There are only three yellowwoods this size left on earth.

thousands of Cape Parrots frequented these ancient forests, busying themselves like honeybees, moving from feeding patch to feeding patch, dispersing thousands of yellowwood fruits to the ground to kickstart the next generation of forest giants. The fate of these charismatic parrots was linked over thousands of years of mutual benefit to these grand forests. Or was it?

Our research indicates that the destruction of South Africa's yellowwood forests was so catastrophic, so immediate, that the Cape Parrots that associate with these same forests today behave more like an introduced species, investigating new food items that they have not encountered as a species before and struggling to find a new, sustainable way of life in a significantly different landscape.

Cape Parrots are considered one of the most intelligent parrots in captivity. They are adapting and have re-invented themselves as opportunistic generalists feeding on available food resources. It has been our mission for the last 5 years to determine how best to help these endangered parrots sustainably persist in their historic range.

By the early 1970s, the Cape Parrots' preferred coastal summer feeding grounds had been degraded to the extent that they could not rely on them for seasonal food resources integral to their ecology. This situation marked the end of their daily feeding forays to coastal areas and their increasing reliance on exotic food resources available during the summer months. It was

“From the moment we discovered these trees we’ve had a romance with them and that ended with us chopping down virtually all the yellowwoods...”

then that they discovered a new crop in the region, the first commercially productive pecan orchards that started providing huge crops from the mid-1970s.

So began the “Pecan Wars” during which thousands of Cape Parrots were killed by shooting and netting them in the orchards. Conservation authorities stepped in too late, halting the shooting by paying compensation to farmers and buying the actual pecan orchards. Cape Parrots disappeared from these coastal areas in the 1980s and have not been seen since.



(left) A Cape Parrot feeds on an exotic fruit from south Asia. Food shortage in early summer requires reliance on a variety of non-native foods.

(right and below) Community nurseries in local villages supply 100s of yellowwood saplings. Nestboxes bridge the gap until nest trees grow to the desired size.

rate in 48 samples taken from a local population of approximately 275 Cape Parrots. Alarming to say the least! What is causing this outbreak? Our research indicates that their new diet and limited access to food at the end of summer are contributing factors.

We are currently looking at the degree to which wild Cape Parrot populations are inbred and whether low genetic variability could contribute to increased susceptibility. Our research has revealed that the strain of PBFV virus attacking the wild population is endemic and has probably been there for a long time.

It is our responsibility to restore South Africa's Afromontane yellowwood forests to their former glory and work everyday to stimulate positive change for wild Cape Parrots.

In 2011, we launched the iziKhwenene Project in the Amathole Mountains of South Africa. Our main goals were to plant our first 25,000 indigenous trees and erect 600 artificial nest boxes with local communities to stimulate positive change for the Endangered Cape Parrot and other Afromontane forest specialists. The Cape Parrot Project is the long-term research project that informs all conservation actions (e.g. tree-planting) based upon high-quality empirical research. It is the umbrella project administered by the Percy FitzPatrick Institute that supports the iziKhwenene Project. We are committed to achieving significant population growth and range expansion by South Africa's national parrot, and hope to reintroduce Cape Parrots to forests where they appear to have gone locally extinct.

Nowadays, the remaining Cape Parrots feed on the plums from Japan, pecans from the USA, acorns from England, wattle seeds and eucalyptus flowers from Australia, Chinaberry tree fruits from South Asia (above), and Jacaranda pods from South America – all of which have replaced the yellowwood fruits that they used to rely on for the vast majority of their diet.

Today, the parrots do not even waste their time looking for yellowwood trees in fruit, as there are so few female trees left that bear fruit. In fact, they “know” when these groves are ready, which

happens every 3 years. A hundred years ago there would have been a grove of yellowwoods in fruit somewhere along the mountain range all year round – groves that could provide food for many multiples of the currently existing Cape Parrot populations.

Their new diet has too much fat and sugar in it, and comes up short between January and March when there is hardly anything to eat. In drought years, starving, malnourished parrots seem to become more susceptible to Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFV). In 2011, we discovered an 100% infection



The dire state of affairs for the parrots in many ways mimics that of many in the local villages. We decided to work in partnership with local people to stimulate positive change for their communities as well as for the birds by providing employment and investing them in the future of the forests they effectively own and manage as communal land. Cape Parrots are the perfect ambassador for these threatened African forests – their plants, their animals and their people.

Research and conservation priorities for the immediate future:

- Conduct a “Population and Habitat Viability Assessment” for Cape Parrots;
- Initiate an in-depth survey of population numbers and demographics in all remaining Cape Parrot populations by professionals as part of a funded research project using the latest technologies available;
- Locate and monitor the breeding biology of Cape Parrots in the wild for comparison with results from breeding trials in captivity using different indigenous food resources – does lack of yellowwood fruits in their diet undermine breeding success?;
- Plant 500,000 more indigenous trees (mainly *Afrocarpus* and *Podocarpus* yellowwoods) in the Amathole Mountains and launch pilot tree-planting projects in other Afromontane forests used by Cape Parrots;
- Erect 600 more Cape Parrot nest boxes along the Amathole Mountains;

- Establish the iZingcuka Research Station as the base for the Cape Parrot Project and iziKhwenene Project; and,
- Develop long-term partnerships with 24 villages along the Amathole Mountains establishing them as custodians of the indigenous forests they have heritage rights over and develop pilot community projects in villages near other Afromontane forests used by Cape Parrots.

The World Parrot Trust has been a project partner since the launch of the Cape Parrot Project in 2008. Donations to the Trust are an important source of project funding.



“Southern afromontane forests without old, emergent yellowwood trees are like oceans without coral reefs...less alive, less diverse, less colourful...”

Special thanks to: the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, Conservation International’s Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund, the National Geographic Conservation Trust, Centre of Excellence at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, the iziKhwenene Cooperative, Percy FitzPatrick Institute (University of Cape Town), the Wild Bird Trust, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Rance Timber, the Border Rural Committee, BirdLife Border, the Arminel Mountain Lodge, the University of Fort Hare, and the Hogsback Inn.

Steve Boyes is an ornithologist from the University of Cape Town’s Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology. He grew up in South Africa and has a passion for African parrots and the forests they depend on. He has dedicated his life to conserving both.





three black 'toos

Jessica Lee is studying three species of black cockatoos in Western Australia for her Doctorate program at Murdoch University in Perth.

WE RECENTLY TALKED TO JESSICA about her work with these iconic birds.

Q. How did you first get started working on the cockatoos?

A. I've had a keen interest in birds, particularly parrots, since I was a child. After a life-changing experience working on a macaw project in Central America, I was inspired to continue my postgraduate studies in parrot conservation. After completing a postgraduate certificate in ornithology at James Cook University in North Queensland I started my research with Murdoch University and got a chance to work with these beautiful birds.

Black Cockatoos are nearly exclusive to the Australian continent. There are four species native to Western Australia. I have the pleasure to work with three of them – the two white-tailed black cockatoos: Carnaby's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) and Baudin's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*), and the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo – a subspecies (*Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*). These birds are listed as threatened in state and national legislation and listed by the IUCN. They are endemic to only the southwestern corner of Western Australia.

Q. What do you find most interesting or surprising about their lives or behaviours?

A. First, they are cockatoos and they are black! Having grown up in Singapore,

I had only been exposed to white cockatoos. Whenever I'm back there I almost always get the same response when I talk about the birds I work with: "Wow...there are black cockatoos?" The usual image that comes to mind is a big white bird with a bright yellow crest.

Second, in Western Australia, black cockatoos are known by the locals as "rain-birds" because of their close association with water in the dry Australian landscape. Flocks of black cockatoos often roost near watering holes and they make a post-breeding migration into areas of higher rainfall – more fodder for the nickname.

Q. What are the main questions you are hoping to answer with your research?

A. Specifically, the aims of my project were to:

- Describe the general ecology of black cockatoos in a mining landscape including group size, site occupancy and habitat use.
- Document feeding activity within rehabilitated mine pits.
- Examine any associations between feeding and structural and/or floristic features of the re-vegetation.
- Review the use of artificial hollows by black cockatoos in Western Australia as a tool for mitigating hollow loss.
- Experiment with the use of artificial nest hollows to support breeding on-site to compensate for the loss of natural hollows cleared by mining.
- Investigate the use of natural and artificial water sources by black cockatoos.

Overall, there is a lack of baseline information on how these threatened

black cockatoos will use rehabilitated mining landscapes. Research is needed to characterize the habitat needs of the species so we better understand how to protect the habitat or restore it after mining. Black cockatoos are large and highly mobile which makes them challenging study subjects. We need to know what resources are present for roosting, feeding, breeding and watering in general and also within the mining landscape. We also need to know how black cockatoos use these resources and any risks of interactions between the birds and mining activities.

Q. How many individuals of each of your study species remain in the wild?

A. According to black cockatoo experts and recent studies in Western Australia, the recovery plan population estimates for Carnaby's Cockatoo are about 40,000, Baudin's Cockatoo at 15,000 and the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo at 15,000 individuals.

Q. What are the key threats they face to their survival and breeding success?

A. The major threats for all three black cockatoos in Western Australia are:

Habitat clearing. Some 60% of the original vegetation across southwest Australia has been cleared for agriculture and natural resource production. This land clearing has greatly reduced habitat available for black cockatoos. The birds have suffered substantial range contractions over the last five decades and are considered to be in decline. Overall, the region is severely fragmented and the remnant vegetation is often disturbed. The situation is aggravated by the lack of regeneration, increasing urbanization, altered hydrology, changing fire regimes, competition with exotic species, the spread of plant pathogens and climate change.



Carnaby's Cockatoo

© Ralph Green, licence Creative Commons



Baudin's Cockatoo

© Rick01, licence Creative Commons



Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo

© Pedro Martinez

Carnaby's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) and Baudin's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*) are the two white-tailed black cockatoos, and the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo is one of the red-tailed subspecies (*Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*).

The Jarrah Forest in southwestern Australia (red area on map) is an important focus of conservation efforts because all three black cockatoos are dependent on it for breeding and feeding habitat. It's the only forest type and associated ecosystem of its kind and is exclusive to the southwestern corner of Western Australia.





© Jessica Lee

Black cockatoos are often found roosting and living near water sources, giving them the nickname “rain-birds.”

Loss of veteran and snag trees with nest hollows. The clearing of land that removes potential hollow-bearing aging or dead trees has led to a scarcity of suitable nest hollows for cockatoos.

Nest site competition. Black cockatoos are usually outcompeted for nesting sites by invading superabundant species such as galahs and corellas, as well as the introduced European honeybee.

Loss of pine plantations. Land clearing also removes feeding sites. Large migratory flocks of black cockatoos have become dependent on introduced pine plantations that provide food over winter. The removal of plantations along with the loss of native Banksia woodland is likely to impact the number and movements of birds in the region.

Mining is an important industry in the Jarrah Forest, but it removes all the vegetation from the mine-site. While post-mining rehabilitation aims to restore the original forest habitat, in reality, the replanting differs structurally and compositionally from mature forest. Furthermore, the youngest suitable nesting trees for black cockatoos are about 130 years old so the replacement of suitable breeding habitat takes centuries.

Groundwater extraction. This process removes standing water needed by the black cockatoos for drinking and may

also have impacts on the condition of remnant vegetation.

Fire. Intensive wildfires, which may be more frequent under climate change scenarios, may change landscapes and can have major impacts on the survival of local resident cockatoo populations.

Poaching. The taking of eggs, chicks or birds for the aviary trade is a major threat because poachers often damage nest hollows or trees, making them unsuitable for future breeding.

Vehicle strikes. Large numbers of all three species are killed each year by vehicle strikes, especially when they come down to the ground to feed or to drink.



© Jessica Lee

Climate change. Rainfall has declined significantly over all of southwestern Australia in the past few decades, which may have led to changes in the distribution of species (e.g. Carnaby’s Cockatoo has shifted westwards and southwards). The declining rainfall and warming climate may shorten or halt migratory movements by black cockatoos, forcing birds to remain year-round in certain rainfall zones (e.g. Baudin’s Cockatoo and the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo may be restricted to the higher rainfall zones of the southwest). Climate change also alters vegetation which may lead to the loss of feeding and breeding areas, potentially changing foraging ecology and leading to the formation of new wintering areas or migration routes.

Illegal shooting or persecution.

Some groups consider these birds a nuisance. In Western Australia, more Baudin’s Cockatoos are shot illegally by orchardists than can be replaced naturally.

Q. How do people in Western Australia perceive these birds?

A. I believe for the most part, people view black cockatoos as iconic species. They are large flashy birds with loud

Nest boxes help overcome the shortage of nesting hollows caused in part by mining.



The male Carnaby's Black Cockatoo has a pink orbital ring - the female's is dark grey. He passes a seed to her from a native Hakea tree.

calls. Their bright white or vivid red tail feathers contrasted with black plumage make them spectacular. You can't miss their large chorusing flocks! They do sometimes wreak havoc in gardens or orchards and leave quite a big mess behind after feeding, especially when they gather in large numbers (sometimes reaching 1000 or more individuals).

On the other hand, black cockatoos have been a subject of long-term research for various conservation groups in Western Australia. This work has led to a number of well-publicized conservation programs such as Cockatoo Care and The Great Cocky Count. Together these efforts have led to the widespread increase in public awareness and increased involvement in conservation efforts.

Q. Are you optimistic about the future for these birds?

A. I'd like to be optimistic and believe that if we continue to put initiative and effort in the research and management of black cockatoos, we will increase the chances of a brighter and longer future for these beautiful birds. I also agree

with the importance of continued efforts to educate the community and to "egg on" conservation efforts.

Q. What steps will help secure a future for these species in the wild?

A. Land clearing has reduced the total area of available habitat for all three black cockatoos. In general, the future of these species in the region requires conservationists to better understand and protect the birds and their feeding and nesting habitat.

Ongoing research to determine population numbers and how the birds are using the landscape will help identify the most critical sites the birds need to survive.

It is also necessary to continue to learn about the effects of mining since it is such a prevalent activity in the key areas being used by all three of these black cockatoo species.

Research is needed to better understand how to rehabilitate forests after mining.

Q. What would you like to do when you're done at the university?

A. I would like to travel and embark on a bird-watching expedition starting in the north and ending at the southern tip of the Latin Americas. It's something I have been planning to do for years.

After that, it's always been a dream of mine to join a research group working with macaws in South America.



© Jessica Lee

sprouting for parrots

Finding ways to provide parrots with a healthy and diverse diet can be challenging, especially if you hope most of the food ends up in the bird rather than on the bottom of the cage or aviary. One option a lot of us have tried is sprouted seeds or beans, although from an informal survey of friends and colleagues, initial attempts aren't always successful. I like the idea of providing variety for captive parrots and thought it might be useful to share some of what I've learned through my own (first failed, later successful) attempts at sprouting, in hopes it might help others get started.

Before delving in to the details of "how to" sprout for parrots, I should say something about the "why". It's not hard to poke around the web and find all sorts of fantastic claims about the phenomenal healing and nurturing properties of sprouted seeds – sprouts touted as super foods, miracle foods that cure what ails you (or your bird)! In addition to claims about vitamins, enzymes, proteins, and anti-oxidant potential, I even bumped into one pro-sprouts website claiming an increase in sodium levels of 690%. While there has been some legitimate science done

on the nutritional changes which occur during the first few days for select sprouting seeds, addressing this question is well beyond the scope of this article. If you're interested in delving deeper, follow the links on www.psittascene.org.

Although I'm not going to make grandiose claims about the miracle of sprouts, there are good biological reasons to believe that there are nutritionally meaningful differences between seeds and sprouts. In principle, to compare the nutrients available in a seed vs. a sprouted seed, you're comparing resources which are stored and dormant (dry seed), with a living bit of a plant which has mobilized those stored resources, and converted them into rapidly growing tissue which is very much alive. Consequently, there are a huge number of changes in the physiology of the plant, and those really do correspond to substantial changes in the nutritive compounds we're interested in feeding our birds, including proteins, enzymes, vitamins, etc. That said, minerals for the most part are neither created nor destroyed, so any claims about major changes in mineral content should be taken with a grain of salt!

shop

So let's assume you're interested in sprouting some seeds for your birds. First, you need some raw materials. And when I say raw, I really do mean raw. Seeds, beans, nuts, and pulses are often treated for human consumption. For example, you can't start with roasted nuts and I've had little luck with packages of dry beans sold in plastic bags at the grocery store – they look nice and clean and ready to go, but they just wouldn't sprout for me no matter what I tried. If you have a health food store or co-op which sells beans, seeds and lentils in bulk, that's probably your best option, especially if they're labeled as "organic." It's not necessarily because they were produced without pesticides – although that too is a good thing for your birds – but because they're less likely to be treated and therefore more likely to sprout well.

Just about any raw seed which is whole will sprout easily, including oats, rice and other grains and cereals, peas, beans, lentils and other members of the pea family. Any of the oil seeds like safflower, sunflower, and even sesame are also possibilities. I would recommend buying a handful of each type for starters. Then proceed based on how well they sprout and ultimately how well your birds like them.

Generally speaking, the process comes down to two stages:

1. Soaking to start the germination process and,
2. Rinsing to encourage healthy growth as the seeds begin to sprout.

Seeds suitable for sprouting are generally found in bulk at co-ops or natural food stores.





by Jamie Gilardi

soak

Now you've arrived home with various bags of seeds and you're ready to start sprouting. Find some wide mouthed containers, ideally glass, which will hold at least 8 oz (.25 l). Wash them well and fill each about 1/4 full of seeds – one for each variety. Smooth, vertical walled containers are best. Fill with water and swirl as needed to wash. Then fill the container 3/4 full of water and set it aside to soak overnight. Some people recommend treating the seeds initially with either chlorine or grapefruit seed extract; I haven't found these steps to be necessary.

Some seeds (especially beans) soak up a lot of water and grow in size, some swell very little, but all will expand as they sprout so make sure you leave enough room. Soaking the seeds overnight is enough to get them started. I usually rinse them a couple of times after that overnight soak, drain them well, and then set them aside in their jar to let them do their thing.

Sprouting seeds for your parrot can offer a valuable new source of nutrition as well as enrichment. Many types of seeds can be sprouted easily at home.



rinse

After that initial soak, rinse and drain your seeds at least twice a day, perhaps when you normally feed your bird(s).

Some people use a bit of window screen or other light mesh to aid in the rinse and drain procedure. You can also buy special sprouting containers. Though screens and special jars work great, your hand and simple canning jars or other repurposed containers can do the job nicely too.

Some beans sprout very quickly. Mung beans swell fast and start putting out a root in less than 24 hours. Others take several days before you can see them sprouting. Some just never sprout, and those you can toss and then pass up that variety next time you're shopping. For some reasons white beans (cannellini and limas) tend to smell bad when you're sprouting and our birds (two African Greys) just ignored them – so I don't bother with them anymore.

feed

We currently feed our birds 3-6 different sorts of sprouted seeds twice each day, along with their other foods - fresh fruits, seeds, pellets, etc.

Start out with small amounts added to their regular diet, adding more as you note your birds eating more of the sprouts over time. Feed any time after the soaking period and use up before they're putting out green leaves (although that's not necessarily a bad thing for them).

One aspect of sprouting which I can't really address is the virtue of using pre-packaged sprout mixes available for parrots. There are lots of options available, but while the mixes are convenient, they are also more expensive than buying your own in bulk. It really depends on your preferences and what is available in your area.

be safe

Speaking of off-odor Canellinis, I find most of the sprouts smell really good and fresh, maybe like a salad with no dressing on it. And just like anything you're eating, feeding to your friends, your kids or your birds, if you have any concerns about a particular batch of sprouts, just dump them, wash the container well and start over.

Another word of caution regarding sprouts and parrots: by creating a moist environment for days at a time at room temperature, you are creating an environment in which other things can grow too. It really helps a lot that 1) you've rinsed them well before soaking, 2) you're rinsing them at least twice a day, and 3) that the seeds themselves are alive and growing. But as you've likely heard, sprouts sold for human



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consumption have very occasionally become contaminated by nasty microbes like Salmonella. For this reason, I only start the amount of sprouts that I know our birds will consume while they're young, fresh, and growing rapidly. I don't store them in the refrigerator for use at a later date – that to me is asking for trouble. One last thought along these lines: don't buy any seeds which include a lot of broken bits – those will not germinate but the bits will potentially encourage microbial growth which you're aiming to minimize.

I like the idea of offering lots of options to our birds and seeing what they really like and what they ignore. As when offering anything new, it's a good idea to be patient and give them time to experiment and maybe even develop a taste for new food items. Our birds are well into their third and fourth decade, and as far as we know, sprouts are an entirely new experience for them both. They ignored all sprouts for weeks, but eventually they grew more interested and now sprouts make up a large portion of their diet.

Experiment with a variety of seed types to determine which sprout best and what your bird(s) prefer.

Early on, I would occasionally “sweeten the pot” by pouring a bit of coconut oil or red palm oil over the sprouts and that seemed to help get them started. I also found that slightly sprouted sunflower seeds were immediately attractive to them and may have helped them develop a taste for other sprouts. Now, their favorites are still sunflower seeds and red beans, but I have a lot of options yet to try. In any case, once you have a sense for what your birds like, you can make your own mix of just the seeds your birds prefer, or if you can find a commercial mix that's similar, that may be your best option.

Although sprouting may sound complicated it really takes only minutes. Put some seeds in a jar, wash if needed and soak them overnight, then rinse them twice a day. In a few days, sprouts! Enjoy!



Jamie Gilardi is the Executive Director of the World Parrot Trust. He earned a Ph.D. in Ecology from UC Davis studying parrot social behaviour, foraging ecology, and soil-eating in south-eastern Peru.



thankyou

Great Green Ambassadors

Tracy Aviary is an 8-acre oasis located within an urban landscape in the heart of Salt Lake City, Utah (USA). Tracy Aviary strives to connect people to nature by introducing more than 115,000 visitors a year to approximately 400 birds representing 135 species. These birds serve as ambassadors for their wild cousins, and for the habitats upon which those birds depend.

Included in the collection are two Great Green Macaws (*Ara ambiguus*), **below** with trainers Megan and Helen. The birds participate in free-flight demonstrations and conservation education programs, providing an example of a species that is at risk in the wild. They also help aviary staff promote conservation action among visitors.

The Tracy Aviary is supporting the World Parrot Trust by collecting conservation contributions from patrons through the organization's Conservation Station. To learn more about Tracy Aviary and how you can get involved please follow the link at www.psittascene.org.



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Morgan



Parrot Toy Donation

We would very much like to Thank Philippa and Edward Smith for the parrot toys, food and cage equipment given to the World Parrot Trust as a donation, in memory of their 40 year companion African Grey "Morgan." We will ensure the items are put to good use, to help other parrots in captivity thrive in their homes!

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Wendy's Fund

In memory of the late Wendy Duggan Riches the World Parrot Trust is creating "Wendy's Fund" which will be dedicated to supporting the conservation of parrots all over the world.

Over the years WPT has amassed quite a collection of interesting, and often quite unique, parrot related artifacts including ornaments, books and prints and paintings donated from a variety of very generous sources. Without exception all these items were given with the specific intention that they be sold to raise funds for parrot conservation. Wendy Duggan Riches herself was an avid collector of all things parrot related. She too left much of her treasured collection to the World Parrot Trust. It seems only fitting that we now create a system to sell these items to other dedicated parrot lovers who in turn can enjoy them. By so doing they contribute directly to the conservation of the parrots in the wild.

We are working to set up online sales of these items, with all funds going directly into "Wendy's Fund".

READ MORE ONLINE with easy links to related information including:

- Links to extensive Cape Parrot information including videos, interviews and in-depth reports.
- More photos of Cape Parrots, Black Cockatoos and Vinaceous Amazons.
- Links to all the websites in our articles, news and events
- **LANGUAGES AVAILABLE:** Dutch, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.

www.psittascene.org

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Parrots in the Wild

