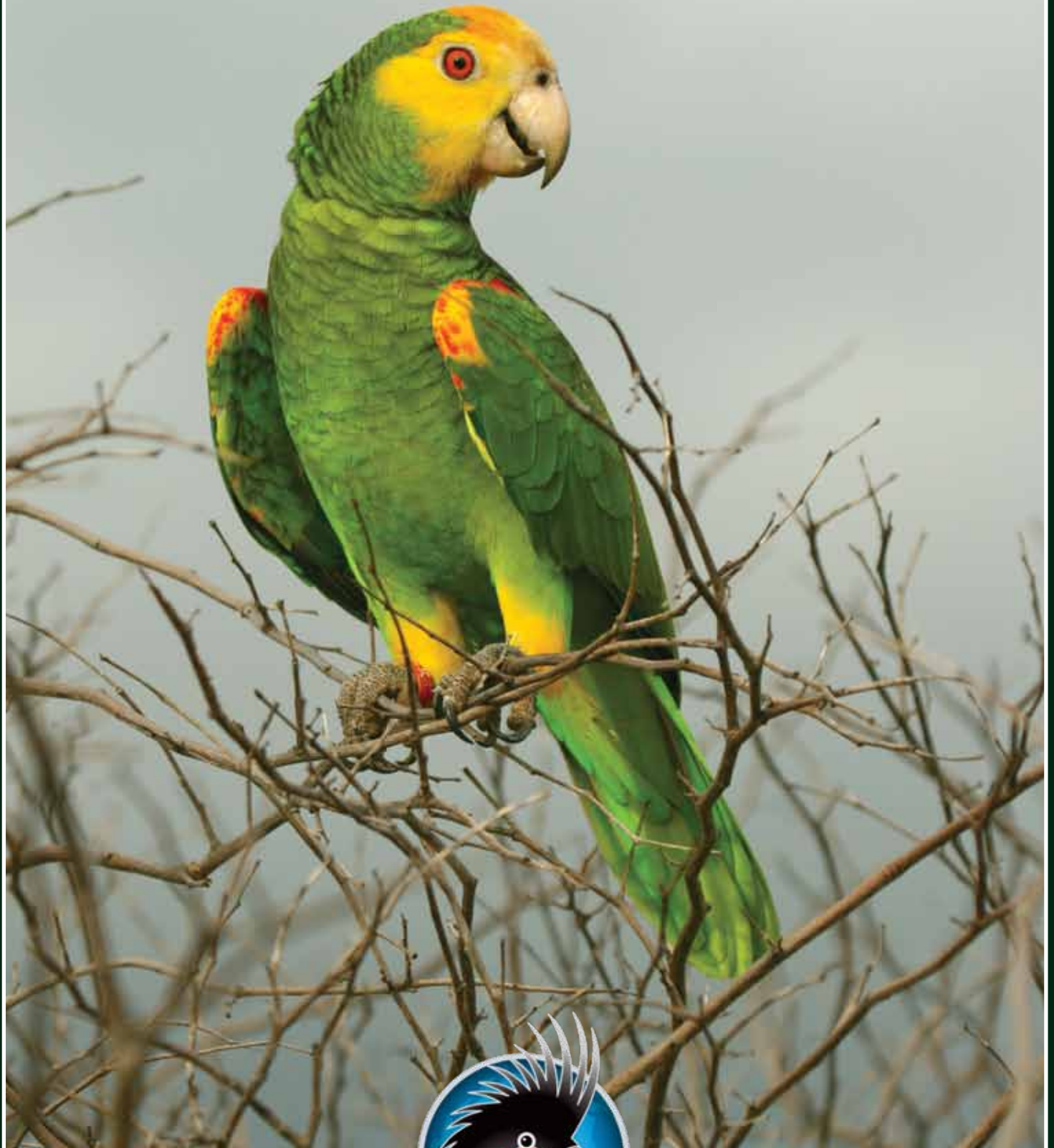


PsittaScene



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Friedman, PhD, Parrot Lover's Cruise



www.psittascene.org

February 2013

Psitta Scene

World Parrot Trust
Glanmor House, Hayle,
Cornwall, TR27 4HB, UK.
www.parrots.org

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fromthedirector

For decades, the Trust has been helping parrots in many different ways, both in our homes and around the world. Our progress and successes come in many different flavours. Sometimes it's the recovery of a critically threatened species like the Echo Parakeet. Sometimes it's a reader inspired by an article in *PsittaScene*, *FlockTalk* or on *Parrots.org* to improve their parrot's care.

This past month, we heard of an entirely different kind of success, one which was as unexpected as it was gratifying. Many of you have followed our HUGO BOSS campaign supporting macaw conservation in Central and South America. We've been quietly working on a project at a Mayan ruins called Copan in Houduras. We'll tell that story more completely in a future *PsittaScene* issue. For now, suffice it to say that we've worked with a number of great partners there to help restore their local Scarlet Macaw population by releasing confiscated and captive bred birds.

After years of FlyFree reintroductions and dozens of success stories, we've told a lot of inspiring stories of parrots once again thriving in the wild, so what's different about Copan? Well, it's a tourist destination for hundreds of thousands of visitors, mostly international. In working with park staff, we knew the macaws were doing well. What we didn't know is that the tour guides are now starting their tours earlier in the day because of them. Apparently word got out that the macaws like to fly around the park entrance early in the morning. Tourists began asking to see and photograph them *before* visiting the ruins!

With the birds thriving and breeding well, the staff getting excited about them, the tour guides seeing their evident value, and the tourists seeking them out - it's about as great a success as we can hope for, and it bodes well for the future of these resplendent birds in their magical home in Copan.

Jamie Gilardi
Director

onourcovers

FRONT A wild Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) is stunning against the morning sky on the Caribbean island of Bonaire. Local efforts to save and protect this species include research, population monitoring, conservation management and outreach. © Sam Williams

BACK Two Great Green Macaws (*Ara ambiguus*), raised by the Ara Project in Costa Rica, enjoy their freedom after being the very first of their kind ever to be released to the wild in 2012. © Steve Milpacher

“After investing so much time and energy caring for them it seemed crazy to just let them out into the big wide world.”

STRETCHING OUR WINGS, page 4





Parrots confiscated from poachers on the island of Bonaire, are taken to Echo, a WPT FlyFree partner, for emergency care, rehabilitation and eventual release. “Sid” a feisty Yellow-shouldered Amazon (above and right) was among those released. He was less than 10 days old when authorities stepped in and rescued him.

STRETCHING OUR WINGS

Article and Photos by **Sam Williams**

THE DAY BEGINS at Echo’s conservation centre with wild parrots calling from huge old Mango trees. Other birds also chime out their chorus in the cool (Caribbean) winter morning air (24°C / 75°F!). By the time the sunlight creeps over the eastern hills, the 30 or so resident parrots have already stretched their wings and flown circles around the valley. Thrill seeking parakeets race down the hillsides, tearing through the air. In the release aviary a group of rescued parrots call out, eager to join them. After all, most of

the “wild” parrots here were also stolen from their families. Some even did time behind bars. Now they are free!

The sad reality is that parrot chicks are still being illegally poached on Bonaire. Taken from their nests before they have reached fledgling age, the parrots are then sold as pets. This may be for trade on Bonaire, or the parrots are shipped to the neighbouring islands of Curaçao and Aruba where they may enter into the global pet trade.

BACK IN JULY 2011 we were called in by law enforcement in time to rescue a single shipment including 16 Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrots (*Amazona barbadensis*), 94 endemic

Brown-throated Conures (*Aratinga pertinax*) and two Cockatiels (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) – see *PsittaScene* 23.3 Aug 2011. Most of the 112 birds were young chicks. One parrot, Sid, was less than 10 days old. All were in terrible condition.

A team of wonderfully dedicated people worked tirelessly over many months to rehabilitate these birds and prepare them for release.

IT WAS WITH INCREDIBLE GOOD FORTUNE that at the same time we had the opportunity to move our project, Echo, to “Dos Pos” (meaning two wells). Dos Pos is a farm with water and fruit trees. It is a parrot hotspot recognised as a Birdlife Important Bird Area. This new kunuku (farm) provided a perfect location to release inexperienced young birds. We immediately got busy building facilities including: a 15-meter-long and 4-meter high (50 x 13 feet) release aviary, a separate rehabilitation aviary and a hospital shelter for injured birds. Although the house didn’t have doors, shutters or even doorframes it represented a significant upgrade on our first kunuku where the rescue began.

We moved the birds in and they appeared to approve as it was an upgrade for them too. In the aviaries, we provided fresh branches of many different species to help the birds learn the local foods





to eat in the wild after release. We still do this twice a week, every week! Over many weeks and months, they developed flight and foraging skills and before we knew it, it was time to let them go. We had mixed feelings when we did the first release. After investing so much time and energy caring for them it seemed crazy to just let them out into the big wide world. They were hardly what you'd call streetwise but of course this was what we had been working towards, almost from the moment we opened those sad filthy boxes a year earlier.

WE WERE CONFIDENT that by releasing some but not all the birds at the same time, those first ones would stay close by while learning to forage on wild foods. On the morning of the first release a group of volunteers peered over bushes near the aviary. Food bowls were put out on the platform next to the release hatch at the top of the aviary. We also put food bowls on a table a few meters from the platform. The aviary had been partitioned and eight parrots were in the section with the release hatch. This first group knew something

was going on when the bowls were put in the “wrong” place. The excitement and nerves among the parrots and the people were tangible.

Slowly the cord was pulled and the release hatch opened. At first the parrots looked on quizzically. Then slowly one plucked up the courage and stepped out towards the food bowl. The releases are initially very calm events, which often surprises people. Soon another parrot joined the first on the platform and then a third. By now, we found ourselves urging them on: “Go on... jump!” After the longest few minutes ever, one parrot jumped. It was only to the feeding table but it was progress. Soon another followed. More birds emerged onto the platform and then...

One bird flew away from the food and into the wild. His rapid flapping seemed to express his confusion. He had never flown in a world without boundaries. He circled above the aviary, calling out in sheer joy. The birds in the aviary and even those in the open section darted from side to side with





screams of excitement. Those on the table looked up and quickly joined. It was a marvelous moment, an honour to witness. After so many months of hard work it was incredibly emotional too.

The flyers got more and more confident, mastering take off and (more difficult) landing and learning the area. Others joined and those still to be released seemed to offer encouragement. Over the following weeks as more birds were released, the flock became progressively more adventurous. They roamed further on their foraging trip and to areas beyond Echo's feeding stations. It was a monumental success.

All 16 Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrots from the 2011 rescue survived. We were able to save 87 of the 94 Brown-throated Conures. Most were suitable for release and are now thriving. Demonstrating that we could care for rescued parrots helped Echo establish our position on Bonaire. Since the 2011 rescue, 15 more confiscated and injured parrots have been brought to us. Seven

of these birds (including three who arrived with broken wings, one with a broken leg and another who had been shot) have been rehabilitated and released back into the wild. Eight more were confiscated as (older) illegal pets and they too have been released.

Even now the aviaries are far from empty. A small group of broken parrots who are not suitable for release remain. We call them The Ambassadors and they are great for outreach with local children. There's also Sally. We call her "Fat Sally" as she is a formerly (very) fat parrot who is now on a strict training regime in the hope that one day she will fly like a parrot should. If we can get her flying we're hoping that we might even get her out into the wild too.

In 2012 four young parrots were brought to us in various states of disrepair. The worst, by far, were Forest and Bubba. We were told they were five months old and that made sense for the time of year, but neither of them had the physical development of even a two month old fledging. At

ADOPT SALLY



Have your **support doubled!**

Parrot-keeper **Cornell** (Connecticut, USA) has pledged to match the first \$2,000 raised for Sally

www.adoptaparrot.org

some point Forest has also had his leg broken and sadly it is too late for us to do anything about it now. They were incredibly malnourished and desperately underweight. We gave them some intensive care to which they responded very well. Both improved dramatically and very soon they were looking like porcupines with all their new feathers.

(far left) Bubba was one of four Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrots brought to Echo last year for rehabilitation. Extremely malnourished and underweight upon arrival, he was slowly nursed back to health **(left)**.

Rehabilitation and release are part of Echo's work on Bonaire. Research and population monitoring programs are on-going. Outreach efforts get local children **(below)** and adults out to see parrots and their habitat - allowing them to experience and understand the native treasures on the island.

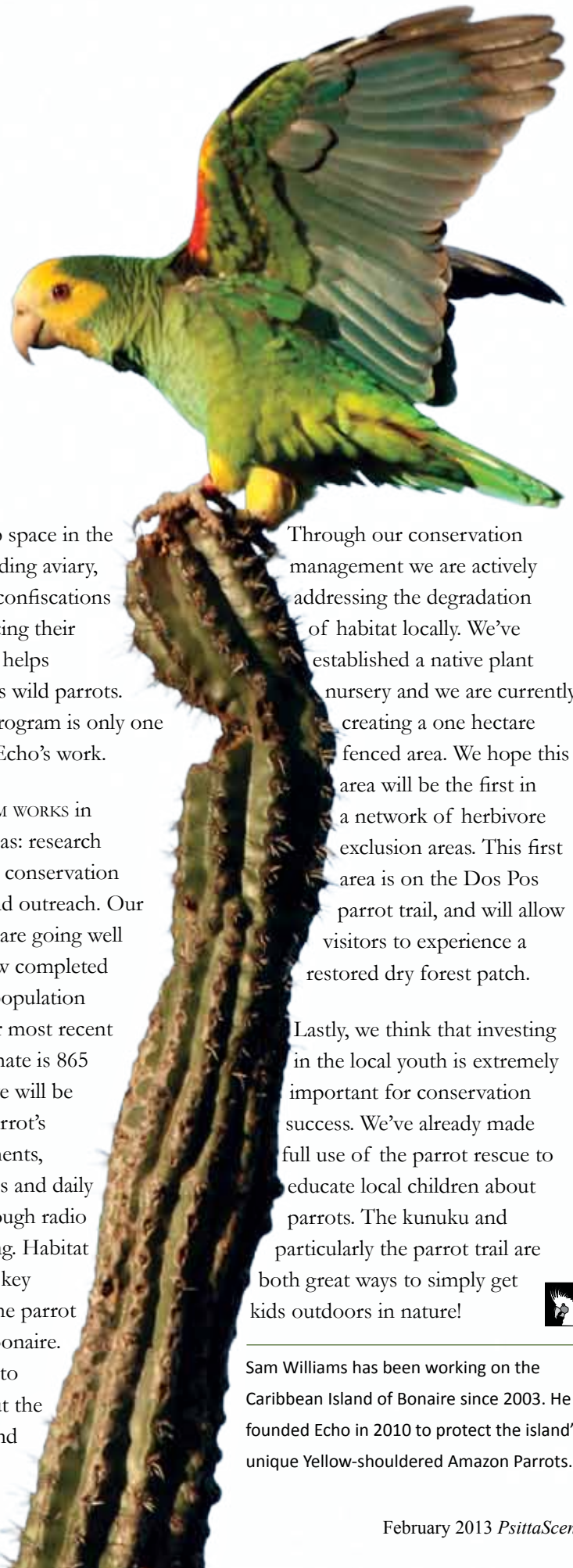


The time of their arrival coincided perfectly with the development of an adoption program long in our plans. So if you'd like to help give "Fat Sally" a chance to fly, or to help ensure the future of Bubba and Forest please visit us online. Olivia is also up for adoption and she's wild! Find out more about these charismatic individuals, read their blogs and much more on the website (all links are on psittascene.org).

Echo's rescue, rehabilitation and release programs are funded by Disney's Worldwide Conservation Fund. These programs help individual parrots but

they also free up space in the government holding aviary, making further confiscations possible. Enforcing their protected status helps protect Bonaire's wild parrots. However, this program is only one component of Echo's work.

THE ECHO TEAM WORKS in three core areas: research and monitoring, conservation management, and outreach. Our research efforts are going well and we have now completed seven years of population monitoring. Our most recent population estimate is 865 birds. In 2013 we will be exploring the parrot's habitat requirements, home range sizes and daily movements through radio and GPS tracking. Habitat degradation is a key factor limiting the parrot population on Bonaire. We are working to learn more about the parrot's needs and problems.



Through our conservation management we are actively addressing the degradation of habitat locally. We've established a native plant nursery and we are currently creating a one hectare fenced area. We hope this area will be the first in a network of herbivore exclusion areas. This first area is on the Dos Pos parrot trail, and will allow visitors to experience a restored dry forest patch.

Lastly, we think that investing in the local youth is extremely important for conservation success. We've already made full use of the parrot rescue to educate local children about parrots. The kunuku and particularly the parrot trail are both great ways to simply get kids outdoors in nature!



Sam Williams has been working on the Caribbean Island of Bonaire since 2003. He founded Echo in 2010 to protect the island's unique Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrots.



parrots.org

- Launched July 1, 2007
- 1.5 million visitors from 222 countries / territories
- 6,552 pages of content
- 8.9 million page views
- 3,465 images in gallery



<http://www.facebook.com/WorldParrotTrust>

- 11,662 likes
- WPT facebook pages for: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Sweden (Scandinavia), and United Kingdom



<http://twitter.com/ParrotTrust>

- 2,291 followers



<http://www.youtube.com/parrotsdotorg>

- 1,444 subscribers
- 1.9 million views



Other WPT websites:

- www.parrots.org/flyfree
- www.parrots.org/wpt3
- www.parrots.org/bossorange
- www.savelories.org



<http://www.parrots.org/flocktalk>

- WPT monthly eNewsletter
- Launched September 2007
- 11,891 subscribers (current)



Cristiana Senni joins World Parrot Trust

Introducing the World Parrot Trust's new **Bird Trade Specialist / Social Media Coordinator**

...

[See more](#)



Like • Comment • Share 115 Promote • Thursday at 10:56 am

Born and raised in Rome, Italy, Cristiana spent 8 years in New York after art school before moving back to Italy. Cristiana always loved animals and started keeping parrots - four male Amazons, and a female Grey parrot - about 15 years ago. When she first joined the Trust in 1997, Cristiana volunteered as a translator for *PsittaScene*. Over time she took on more responsibilities and became our representative in Italy. In 2000, Cristiana became a WPT Trustee.

In recent years, the majority of Cristiana's work with us has focused on the wild-caught bird trade including representing WPT at bird-trade related meetings with the EU Commission, DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and CITES.

In her new role at the Trust, Cristiana will help to facilitate all aspects of our efforts to end ALL international trade in wild-caught parrots. While she will continue to engage in CITES-related activities, research, and communications, she will also be very actively engaged in on-the-ground solutions – working closely with our Fly Free partners to get them emergency guidance, equipment, and veterinary support.

In addition, Cristiana will also be using her talents to manage WPT's social networks - Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Please join us in welcoming Cristiana to the World Parrot Trust staff!



Jamie Gilardi We've been thrilled to have your help as our Trade Czar (Czarina?) and Trustee for many years, now we're thrilled to have you join our staff - welcome aboard Cristiana!
Thursday at 11:18 am • Like



Steve Milpacher Great News! Looking forward to it!
Thursday at 12:22 pm • Like



Karen Whitley Its an honour to have you with us Cristiana - wishing you every success!
Thursday at 3:48 pm • Like



Michelle Kooistra So great to have you as the voice of WPT on our social networks, Cristiana! See you on Facebook! :)
Friday at 07:20 am • Like



Alison Hales Benvenuta Cristiana, great to have even more of your time working to end the wild bird trade – and look forward to many more posts and tweets!
Friday at 1:30 pm • Like



Joanna Eckles So glad to have you on our side!
Today at 8:30 am • Like



Glenn Reynolds Welcome Cristiana!
2 minutes ago • Like

Psitta News



Photo: © ?

parrotnews

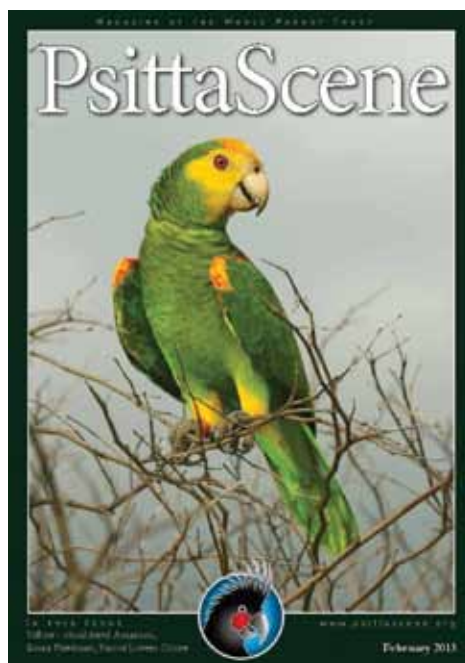
Puerto Rican Parrots dispersing

At least three captive raised Puerto Rican Parrots (*Amazona vittata*) reintroduced in the Rio Abajo Forest flew east and are co-mingling with a flock of about 150 Orange-winged Amazons (*Amazona amazonica*) at a new site, away from the release area. The discovery was made when a bird was spotted with a wire around its neck. Turns out, the wire was the antenna of a radio transmitter. Biologists also found at least two other Puerto Rican Parrots with the flock.

This remarkable discovery adds a whole new dimension to management of the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program. The plan is to capture the birds and install new radio transmitters before releasing them into the habitat that they selected and monitor their movement, habitat use and breeding behaviour.

Source: www.fws.gov (read more online)

moreonline



Lead Poisoning in Keas

Recent research suggests that the insatiable curiosity of the Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) is causing widespread lead poisoning and endangering the birds wherever they live near human habitation.

Visitors to New Zealand's Southern Alps often find gangs of Kea "eating" their rental cars. They use their beaks like a Swiss army knife to strip out wiper blades and window seals, and to snap off radio antennas. Any tourist silly enough to leave a window open may find seats and dashboard dismantled too.

Their distinctive curiosity and intelligence gives Keas the behavioural flexibility to exploit new sources of food. But such a pervasive presence of lead may be impairing their best coping strategy - their intelligence.

Source: news.yahoo.com (read more online)

Read more online with easy links to related information including:

- Links to Yellow-shouldered Amazon project sites, interviews, adoption information and articles
- Parrot Behaviour and Training links
- Parrot Lover's Cruise 2013
- Links to all the websites in our articles, news and events

www.psittascene.org

LANGUAGES AVAILABLE: Dutch, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish

Pictures with Santa

For five years now Dave and Tammy Kramer of DJ Feathers Aviary in Virginia (USA) have held "Parrot Pictures with Santa" sessions and collected WPT memberships from parrot lovers in the Northern Virginia area, all in support of the World Parrot Trust.

Dave says, "We have more fun with this event every year. We've had several of the same people come back each year, too - kids we've watched grow from infant to kindergarten." This generous and creative pair has covered the costs of Santa, props, advertising, photography, printing and developing every year to bring in funds for WPT's conservation programs, with this year's collection totalling \$1,000. Our sincere thanks go to Dave and Tammy and DJ Feathers Aviary - your gift is truly appreciated!

parrotevents

Think Parrots 2013

Woking Leisure Centre - Surrey

The second "Think Parrots" meeting is taking place in the UK May 19th, 2013. The World Parrot Trust will have a stand with parrot-related merchandise like t-shirts, DVDs, bags and aprillas. Eb Cravens and WPT Trustee David Woolcock are both leading workshops.

www.thinkparrots.co.uk

Paradise Park Parrot Pampering

27th & 28th July 2013

Come together to celebrate parrots, enjoy the amazing birds of Paradise Park Cornwall UK, follow the quiz trail and make a remarkable array of enrichment toys.

www.paradisepark.org.uk

Thanks

OUR SINCEREST GRATITUDE to the many generous supporters of this year's WPT3 campaign. With matching donations provided by Natural Encounters Conservation Fund, Mr. Jack Devine and two anonymous donors, more than 600 parrot enthusiasts from around the globe answered our call.

SPECIAL THANKS

for major contributions

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OVER THE COURSE OF 76 DAYS you raised an extraordinary US \$120,011 (£77,227). These gifts will directly support conservation activities to save the Blue-throated Macaw in Bolivia, the Yellow-crested Cockatoo in Indonesia and the Great Green Macaw in Costa Rica and Ecuador.

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Thank you for your support.



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ORGANIZATIONS

- Blackpool Zoo
- Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund
- DJ Feathers Aviary
- Downtown Aquarium (Houston)
- Eleanor Lloyd Dees Foundation
- Folke Peterson Foundation
- Friends of Banham Zoo
- Illinois Bird Fanciers
- International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators
- Isdell Family Foundation
- Kaytee Avian Foundation
- Keith Ewart Charitable Trust
- Lynne Heim Connecticut Parrot Society
- Naples Zoo
- Natural Encounters Conservation Funds
- New Mexico Bio Park Society
- Oklahoma Avicultural Society
- Paignton Zoo Environmental Park
- Paradise Park
- Peninsula Caged Bird Society
- Raleigh-Durham Caged Bird Society
- San Francisco Zoological Society
- Shared Earth Foundation
- Smoky Mountain Cage Bird Society
- Vogelpark Avifauna
- William Haddon Charitable Trust

Parrot Hero

Susan Friedman >>



Susan Friedman Ph.D., is a psychology professor at Utah State University. She is one of the few college professors with this professional background in human behavior combined with a deep interest in the behavior and training of birds and other animals. Susan has helped pioneer efforts to apply to animals the scientifically sound teaching technology and ethical standard of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Susan teaches two on-line courses, one for veterinarians and other animal professionals, and another for pet owners; and she presents cross-species seminars around the world. Her articles appear on the Internet in 10 languages.

We applaud Susan's undying passion for the health and dignity of all animals and her tremendous support of the World Parrot Trust.

Tell us about your work with children and how that prepared you for working with companion animals and their caregivers. Early in my career I worked with two populations of children with special learning needs that were extreme enough to warrant living at our residential treatment center. One group was adolescents referred to as emotionally disturbed and behavior disordered, and the other group was children with autism. It was there that

I first learned about the school of psychology that views the study of behavior change as a natural science. This science is called behavior analysis, from which emerged the teaching technology called applied behavior analysis.

Working with children, the standard of humane and effective treatment is of course very high. I hoped to bring this standard to our work with parrots and other captive animals. This standard is embodied by the "least intrusive" guideline. That is, given a choice between different, effective behavior change interventions, we are ethically bound to use the intervention that is most positive and provides the learner with the greatest degree of empowerment. By empowerment I mean the freedom to control one's own outcomes.

For example, many birds comply with their caregiver prying the bird's toes off the perch to get them to step up. However, the bird that has been

taught with positive reinforcement to autonomously step onto an offered hand has a more positive experience and a higher degree of empowerment. An empowered animal, with a lifestyle of positive experiences, has a better quality of life. Detractors sometimes argue that empowered parrots means birdy bedlam; but this is not an either/or situation. With knowledge and skill about how behavior works, we can have empowered *and* well-behaved companion parrots. Force and coercion cannot produce such wonderful results.

While studying and seeking solutions to behavioral challenges in both humans and parrots, what parallels do you see? This is one of the truly exciting things about Earth: All the planet's animals learn according to the same basic principles. Although what we do and our motivation for doing it can be very different across species and individuals, there is no doubt that we all behave for a reason. That is, behavior is an evolved tool to operate on the environment for meaningful outcomes.

“ I think of behavior like a stone tossed into calm waters. ”

All animals experience the consequences of behaving. People often think of consequences too narrowly. Consequences are essential feedback about the benefits and costs of behaving in that way, under those conditions. In short, behavior that works is repeated; behavior that doesn't work is suppressed or revised. This performance-feedback-revision loop is the source of animals' flexibility, which is needed to meet the demands of an ever-changing environment. With this contemporary understanding, it is no longer sensible to engage in the nature vs. nurture debate. Learning, defined as behavior change due to experience, *is* our nature.

What are some of the recurring issues you encounter while working with parrot caregivers? At the general level, there is so much misinformation about how behavior works that I have borrowed the term “cultural fog” to describe the obstacles to the scientific analysis of behavior that many people

face. One of the main obstacles is a prevailing belief that animals behave largely from an innate, involuntary repertoire rather than their learning history. In fact, for parrots as for people, learning accounts for the largest part of their behavioral repertoires in the wild and in captivity. This is good news because learned problem behaviors can be replaced with positive behaviors, if one knows how to teach new behaviors well.

Another general problem is the over-reliance on labels to describe behavior. People are unaware that the names they call their birds are vague and uninformative from a teaching point of view. For example, we can call a bird “dominant” but that doesn't tell us the three most important things we need to know to change behavior: 1) what the bird is actually doing in observable terms; 2) the antecedent conditions that signal to the bird do x now; and, 3) the consequence that gives the behavior function, the purpose served,

by behaving in that way. The dominance label doesn't tell us whether the bird is lunging, biting, flying off, chasing, or grabbing the perch tightly with its feet. It doesn't tell us the conditions in which the behavior arises, e.g., on the cage top, or at night, when a hand is offered, or with a particular person or bird. And, the dominance label doesn't tell us the consequence the behavior produces that gives the behavior value for the bird, e.g., withdrawal of a hand, or access to food or a favorite perch. This behavior unit – antecedent, behavior, consequence – the ABCs, is the minimum information we need in order to teach the bird to behave differently, more successfully, living among people.

At the specific level, people commonly report that their birds refuse to come out of their cages, bite offered hands, and scream loudly for long durations. With a careful ABC assessment, we can retire vague labels (e.g., hormonal, abused, phobic) and set well operationalized behavior targets to teach parrots positive,

Throughout her career, Susan has worked with an amazing variety of species and people - from macaws to potbelly pigs; pet owners to professional trainers.





Behavior & Training Resources

Susan's website | www.behaviorworks.org
>> also includes information about on-line and in-person courses / events.

Steve Martin | www.naturalencounters.com

Barbara Heidenreich | www.goodbirdinc.com

WPT Experts | www.parrots.org

Cambridge Center | www.behavior.org

>> All sites linked from www.psittascene.org

alternative behaviors. Behavior change programs can be simple but they're not always easy; they require the careful application of learning principles and consistent implementation. Still, with a sound teaching plan, change will occur. To change behavior, change conditions, including what you do.

For example, when teaching a bird to step on your hand, first offer your hand about 6 inches away from the bird. Allow the bird to show you with its body language that it is ready to step up, then steadily move your hand toward your bird in the step-up position. When the bird steps up, be sure to reinforce that behavior immediately with a food treat or other consequence the bird values. Finally, allow the bird to step right back down. The freedom to choose to step down also reinforces the previous choice to step up. Resist the temptation to dash off with the bird to the living room until the bird performs this step without hesitation. Then move to the next step, walking with the bird perched on your hand.

Have your experiences working with parrots provided any insights and solutions helpful in raising your own daughters? It was my work with special needs children and adolescents that best prepared me for both motherhood and

working with parrots. One of my early mentors, Ogden Lindsley, taught me that if you want to really understand a particular behavior then study the extremes. The learning needs of those children were extreme. By comparison, except for a few noteworthy instances, both my children's and parrots' behavior were less complicated to guide, for which I was continually amazed and grateful.

Having the privilege to help teach individuals from many species, the widespread applicability of best teaching practices always rings clear. Where some people see punishment opportunities (i.e., stopping behavior), a skilled teacher sees teaching opportunities and arranges the environment to make the right behavior easier and more rewarding for the learner. People often expect too much too soon from children and parrots. Behaviors are best taught by shaping, i.e., small reinforced steps, called approximations, towards the desired goal. In this way, the opportunity for positive practice and the rate of reinforcement is high – two necessary conditions for learning success and emotional wellbeing.

Great teaching is a dynamic process, not a dogmatic process. It is a dialogue

in which essential information is exchanged with the learner. Rather than teaching things to animals, the sensitive caregiver teaches things with animals. No matter how much experience a caregiver brings to a training session, the learner always adds critical information to complete the process. This is the art of teaching – the knowledgeable application of learning principles and the sensitivity to lead the learner while being led yourself.

What guidance can you offer caregivers of older birds or birds that have been through many homes, to help them get off on the right foot?

I think of behavior like a stone tossed into calm waters. When behavior is tossed into the environment, concentric circles result. The first circle closest to the behavior's entry point represents the current conditions. It is current conditions that are the strongest and longest lasting influencers of future behavior.

This is great news for caregivers of "seasoned" birds because we can't change an animal's history but we can change the current conditions right now. It all starts with answering the single most important question any caregiver can ask: What behavior do I want this bird to do? Clearly describe



Susan's passion is unmistakable; her goal: to provide the essential tools people need to empower and enrich the lives of the animals in their care.



All photos © Steve Martin and NEI

the desired behavior in observable terms and make your positive reinforcement, shaping plan. Waste no time on what you want the animal not to do. The problem behavior will naturally decrease when the bird has a well-reinforced alternative behavior in its repertoire. Behavior follows where positive reinforcement leads.

We encourage all our readers to take your courses! Meanwhile what resources might serve as an initial step in that direction? Recently, Steve Martin and I were discussing a shared insight: It's very important that people ask self-proclaimed experts where they learned about learning and behavior. We can all buy a guitar but we don't all make beautiful music. Sometimes people think that training is all too easy and they launch off to change an animal's behavior with little more than a dinner conversation. So, I am glad to encourage parrot caregivers to dedicate themselves to the study of learning and to arrange hands-on experiences where they can improve their training skills. I can promise that in doing so your relationships with your own species will improve too!

It would be a great honor if people found the information on my website helpful to their work with all the learner's

with whom they interact. Everything on the website is available for free download and distribution. There are some great graphics for T-shirts and fun videos I call Pocketsize Behavior Science to share with other caregivers.

Steve Martin has a gift for translating scientific information into practical application and decades of experience training animals humanely; he has excellent articles on his website. Barbara Heidenreich's contribution to companion parrot caregivers has been substantial. Sid Price, Chris Shanks, Cassie Malina, Chris Jenkins, and many of the contributors to the WPT's Expert Corner are on my list of resources, as well.

There are also superb resources in the larger world of learning and behavior worth mentioning. For example, Susan Schneider, a renowned behavior analyst, has written a fabulous new book called *The Science of Consequences* that I know your readers would find enlightening; Paul Chance's *Learning and Behavior* text is an eye opener. Murray Sidman's groundbreaking book, *Coercion and Its Fallout*, is a life-changing read, and the Cambridge Center website is worth perusing to get an idea for the far reaching relevance of our science of behavior change.

A lot has changed in aviculture and parrot-keeping in the last 15-20 years. Do you think caregivers are increasingly well-informed, or is there still a long way to go? Of course our work to improve the quality of life for all learners is never done. However, it is inspiring to see people's awareness of humane, effective training practices growing steadily. The current trends in animal behavior research and practice represent a new awakening. We see now the learning potential of animals, as never before.

At the same time, I try to stay mindful of the need to extend compassion for one another. It's a lot to ask people to take the leap out of the cultural fog, away from practices they believe to be effective, toward new ways of understanding, predicting and changing their world. I can't imagine a more amazing planet than this one, where animal life is at once so different and yet so similar. It is the similarities that intrigue me most, and learning principles are one great unifying feature across species.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Thank you Susan for your work and your passion for all learners.



JUST IMAGINE...



Sea turtles at Xcaret (Mexico) and wild Grand Cayman Amazons were among countless 2012 cruise highlights.

JUST IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT; waking up to a beautiful sunrise over the ocean, eating breakfast whilst flying fish and dolphins entertain you, spending the morning observing beautiful parrots in the wild, a barbecue lunch on a tropical beach, palm trees gently swaying in the warm sea breeze, taking a leisurely swim in the afternoon, before joining friends for a sumptuous meal in a five star restaurant as the sun gently sets. Then it's off to see a show! If only you could be helping to conserve parrots at the same time your life would be perfect – but it can! Just join us for the 2013 Parrot Lover's Cruise.

If the above all sounds like an idyllic holiday then just remember, that is only one day – on the Parrot Lover's Cruise you will have seven such days to remember and treasure forever.

Allow me to tell you more about the 2012 Parrot Lover's Cruise as it might encourage you to dig out your passport, dust off your camera and make plans to join the 2013 cruise.

The cruise departed from the beautiful and vibrant port of New Orleans. As

we boarded the *Carnival Conquest*, its vast size and opulent decoration were far beyond my expectations. Glass elevators and stunning staircases gave access to all fourteen decks of this most magnificent of vessels. The cabins, or staterooms as they are known, were exceptionally well equipped, spacious and luxurious. As a first time cruiser I confess I was a little apprehensive about making such a trip, but once onboard all my fears and apprehension melted away as I rapidly settled into the cruising lifestyle.

The first evening onboard, the parrot lover's all got together for an icebreaker that enabled us to get to know each other and to renew old friendships. This was the fourth Parrot Lover's Cruise for some!

The next two days were what the cruise line calls "Fun Days at Sea", and in truth they were just that. As we sailed the ocean between New Orleans and our first port of call, Montego Bay, we were free to enjoy all of the facilities that the ship afforded us; everything from pools, bars, restaurants, sundecks and a gymnasium, to shops, a beauty spa and even a casino. During the afternoons of these first two days we were treated

to presentations from Phoebe Green-Linden, Dr. Scott Echols and Pat Anderson, all true experts in their fields and without exception, inspirational people.

As we awoke the following morning we could see the coast of Jamaica. By 9am we had docked and were in Montego Bay. This day we were free to do whatever we pleased. We could remain onboard the *Conquest* and simply soak up the Caribbean sun or we could partake in any one of a number of excursions laid on by the cruise line.

The next day was the first of the special Parrot Lover's excursions arranged by Carol Cipriano, the inspiration behind the Parrot Lover's Cruise back in 2009. To this day Carol runs each and every one with skill, efficiency and great attention to detail. I had been eagerly anticipating this excursion for the chance to see Grand Cayman Parrots in the wild. By 7am we had arrived just offshore and were swiftly transferred by small boat to the island itself. Grand Cayman is only about eighteen miles in length but what it lacks in size it more than makes up for in natural beauty. Two coaches then took us on the short



BY DAVID WOOLCOCK
PHOTOS BY DAVID & VICKI WOOLCOCK

PARROT LOVER'S CRUISE

drive to the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Gardens. Excitement was growing as we neared the entrance to the gardens, we were all anxious to see the Grand Cayman Parrot in the wild but realistic enough to realise that there were no guarantees. We should not have worried. As we got out of the coaches we were met in the car park by Stuart Mailer, a field officer of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands. Stuart pointed us in the direction of a tree near the entrance to the Botanic Gardens where three of these most beautiful of Amazon Parrots observed us as we arrived! The day was off to a cracking start! Stuart showed us around the Botanic Gardens and told us of the ongoing work to protect the Grand Cayman Parrot and its close relative the Cayman Brac Parrot which lives on the neighbouring, smaller island of Cayman Brac. The gardens were truly stunning, boasting some of the rarest orchids on the planet and some of the most beautiful trees and plants that you can imagine. Birds were everywhere and Stuart was expert at identifying them and pointing them out to us. Woodpeckers, Mockingbirds, Bananquits and even the endemic Vitelline Warbler made an appearance. We were lucky enough to see several more Grand Cayman Parrots as we toured the gardens. Stuart then introduced Paul Watler, The Environmental Programmes Manager of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands who told us about the conservation programmes that are

ongoing on the islands. One of which is a highly successful project to protect and conserve the endemic Blue Iguana. The captive breeding centre for this large and very impressive reptile is situated within the Botanic Gardens and the animals themselves can often be encountered as you walk through the gardens.

On leaving the Botanic Gardens we made our way, for a late lunch, to Seven Mile Beach where a sumptuous barbecue awaited us. Seven Mile Beach is truly a Caribbean Paradise. A palm fringed, white sand beach, on the edge of the beautiful Caribbean sea, what more could you want? We even had time for a swim after lunch before returning to the ship. The day we spent on Grand Cayman will always be a treasured memory for me, and, I know, many others.

Overnight the ship steamed on to Mexico. By morning we had arrived at the Island of Cozumel. The excursion that Carol had arranged for the Parrot Lover's meant that we were to take a small ferry from Cozumel back to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico – our destination was Mexico's largest theme park Xcaret.

Xcaret has something for everyone. It was created to promote love and respect for nature and Mexico's cultural heritage. If you want to learn about Mayan history and culture, see traditional Mexican horsemanship or swim in underground



Yellow-headed Amazon on exhibit at Xcaret (Mexico)

caverns you can do it all here and plenty more besides. What we came to see were the macaws! Xcaret is famous for its free flying macaws and the breeding and release programme for Scarlets.

Our guide, Fernando Mendoza, very kindly gave us a behind the scenes tour of their facility. We saw the breeding aviaries for the Scarlet and Military Macaws and an enormous pre-release enclosure that contained fifty Scarlet Macaws that were soon to be released into the wild. Everyone was then given the opportunity to work with one of the free flying macaws in a large training aviary. By now the whole party were carrying beaming smiles, but it was to get even better. Fernando offered everyone the chance to carry a macaw to a special release point within the park. With macaw on hand, everyone made their way to the dais. On the blow of a whistle all the macaws took flight en mass, as part of the 12 noon "Free Flight of Macaws" show. It was a breathtaking spectacle only surpassed by the ecstatic smiles on the faces of the group.

After that our tour wasn't even over! We then met Gabriela who specialised in



Cruise participants got a chance to work with macaws from the release program at Xcaret in Mexico.

the hand rearing of the birds at Xcaret. She gave us a tour of the hand rearing facility and introduced us to some young Scarlet and Military Macaws that she was raising. "Oohs!" and "aahs!" abounded during that part of the tour! Xcaret had bred more than a hundred Scarlet Macaws during 2012. After such an exciting morning, and much discussion over lunch, we were then free to roam Xcaret to discover more of its delights. Their turtle breeding facility was truly impressive and a personal highlight for me. You could see the tiny turtle hatchlings in the first of a series of crystal clear pools. Walking on, you could see their progression with older turtles in each successive pool. Finally you were awed by the massive full grown adults. It would be very easy to spend several days at Xcaret enjoying everything that it has to offer, but sadly our time was limited.

Our final full day was another "Fun Day at Sea" whilst the ship sailed back to New Orleans. It was on this day that I gave a presentation to the

cruisers during the afternoon, and they graciously listened. Following on from my talk was a silent auction where all manner of, often unique, parrot related items were offered. I was amazed and humbled by the kindness and generosity shown to the World Parrot Trust by the cruise goers; particularly as I know just how much we can achieve as a result of their support.

When we debarked at New Orleans it was the end of a marvellous journey, upon which we had made many new friends, found inspiration, and above all helped the parrots.



David Woolcock is Curator at Paradise Park, Hayle, Cornwall, UK. He was one of the founders of the World Parrot Trust in 1989 and remains a valued Trustee to this day.



Back on board, the silent auction is full of enticing parrot-related items.

3 PARROT 1 LOVER'S 201 CRUISE

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Then hop aboard the ship for departure from San Juan, Puerto Rico. You'll be visiting St. Croix, St. Kitts, Dominica, Grenada, and St. Thomas.

Speakers include World Parrot Trust Director Jamie Gilardi, parrot enrichment expert Robin Shewokis and more speakers to be announced.

<http://parrotloverscruise.com> carolstravelttime@gmail.com

PsittaScene

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Parrots in the Wild

