

PSITTASCENE

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



Autumn 2017



WORLD PARROT TRUST

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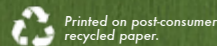
Capture for the live-bird trade, habitat loss and other factors put wild parrots at risk. One in three parrot species are currently threatened in the wild.

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

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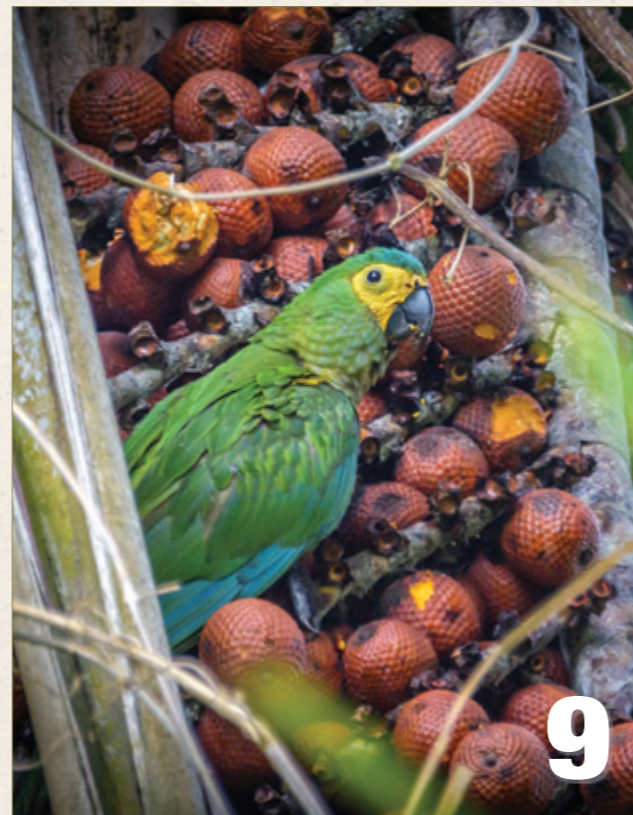
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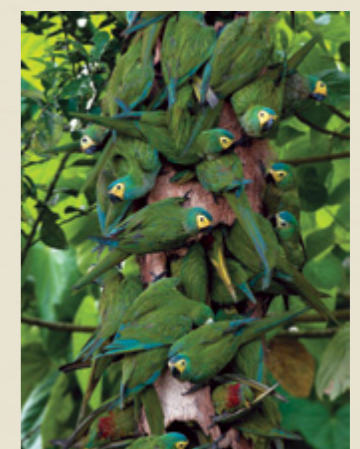
20 Parrots in the Wild
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo

ON THE COVER

Red-bellied Macaw flock (*Orthopsittaca manilatus*) swarming on a palm tree. Other parrots have shown this behaviour; why they do it remains a mystery. Photo © Murray Cooper Photography.

Red-bellied Macaws are some of the smallest macaws of their group, weighing in at only 300g each. These spirited little birds make purring sounds as they feed, and are very vocal in groups. The species are dependent on the Moriche palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*) for roosting, feeding and nesting.

Learn more on **Page 9, Mysterious Macaws of the Aripo Savannas**



A message from... **Steve's desk**

In the final issue of *PsittaScene* for the year, we're learning much about parrots that was previously unknown – the lives of enigmatic Red-bellied Macaws in Trinidad, and more about the status of Grey Parrots in Cameroon through the clear, open eyes of a life-long admirer.

It's interesting to note that Greys are well-known companion animals but increasingly rare in the wild, whereas Red-bellies are now non-existent in captivity, and their population is apparently stable in the wild. It's an interesting juxtaposition, and certainly highlights the differences in the status of parrot species.

And while we're talking about captivity, there is thought-provoking commentary by EB Cravens, parrot expert, on rescues and their inhabitants – the issues that bring them there and how they fare thereafter.

Because of your support, we will continue to learn new ideas (and add to our thinking on old ones) to affect parrots' survival in the wild and their lives as companion animals. For that we are thankful that you're on this journey with us.



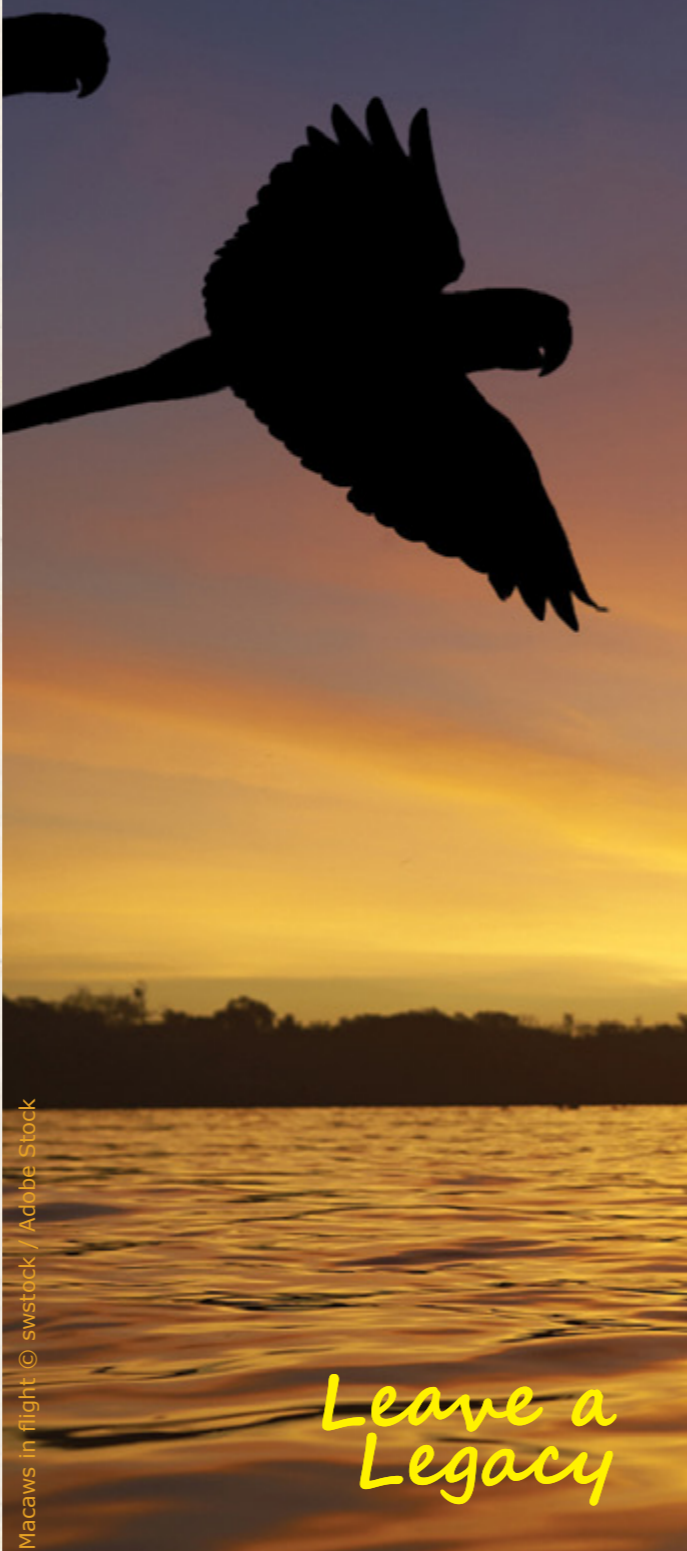
Steve M.
Steve Milpacher,
WPT Operations Director

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Macaws in flight © swstock / Adobe Stock

Leave a Legacy



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grey parrots in the wild: a dream come true

article and photos
© Sascha Düker

EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I had a wish to see my favourite bird, the African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*), in the wild. I remember photographs in the early 2000s from my much-loved German parrot magazine, of huge flocks congregating at an open water-hole in remote and dense rain forests somewhere in Africa.

While my dream of keeping this bird as a companion changed during my personal development and education, my dream of becoming a wildlife biologist and study these animals in their natural habitat persisted.

Finally...there it was.



Left: A forestry assistant readies ropes for climbing.
Right: Carefully navigating the Mana Bridge at the entrance to Korup National Park



At last, my first wild Grey!

AFTER WORKING IN A VETERINARY practice specializing in birds, I studied biology and welcomed the chance to go and see my parrots in the dense rainforest of Cameroon in West Africa.

As part of my Master's Program in Biodiversity, Ecology and Evolution I have had the unique opportunity to make field excursions with my fellow students to several marvellous destinations, including tropical countries with biodiversity hotspots like Costa Rica, Papua New Guinea and Cameroon.

After careful planning of visa, research permits, funding and having endless discussions about the research proposal, it was time to finally leave Germany and fly towards the Cameroon adventure.

The first three weeks in Cameroon were quite relaxed, as all the excursion planning was already done by my professor and a PhD student from his team. We were to visit a number of areas and have meetings with conservation groups. In advance, I sent plans for artificial Grey Parrot nesting boxes that

I wanted to install in the region around Mundemba, to the PhD student who went there ahead of us. He showed my plans to the local carpenter. When I arrived in Mundemba, the nest boxes were already waiting, just how I imagined them to be.



So, I began to arrange my nest boxes, design the project and set the camera, which I brought from Germany to install in one of the boxes. In the middle of planning there were some hardships: the students got typical tropical stomach problems one after the other. Additionally, the extreme heat and humidity made working quite hard. I did not want that to ruin

my trip though, so I just carried on working.

Until this point, I had not seen nor heard any parrots and was looking forward to finally going to Korup National Park, which I expected as a primary forest, to be packed with my favourite birds. We left Mundemba, driving in a 4-wheel drive through the muddy roads of the oil palm plantation of PAMOL Ndiian, but didn't yet see parrots in the palm trees.

Crossing the Mana Bridge into Korup National Park and entering the dense forest was an experience I will never forget. I had never seen such an intact and huge rainforest with gigantic trees before. Even my travels to Brazil in the Amazon Forest were nothing compared to this.

My professor and several local assistants guided our study group through the dense forest to reach the "chimpanzee camp" in the middle of the southern part of the Park. On our way, we came across some Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) trails that a fellow student was working on.

However, there were again no signs of parrots. I felt disappointed; even though it was in the late morning, around 10 a.m. I still expected to see or at least to hear the birds. *"It was a hot day and we are quite late, so maybe the parrots had already stopped their activity and were resting,"* I thought.

We arrived at the chimpanzee camp and set up our tents. The camp was a small clearing in the forest with one hut and a small shelter. The toilet was some holes in the ground, which we realized was worth a visit especially during the night if you are interested in insects, spiders and scorpions!

Close to the camp, there was a small stream which provided drinking and bathing water for the next five days. Every day involved walks in the forests where we were advised to record sightings and signs of bigger mammals (especially monkeys and elephants) and Grey Parrots; we would evaluate all this data in the evenings.

We found several monkeys, duikers, warthogs and even a rare primate species (the Calabar angwantibo *Arctocebus calabarensis*) during one of the night walks. Still, no one heard or saw a Grey Parrot during our stay. That was very disappointing and I left the camp on our last day with a sad feeling. Would my dream of

seeing Grey Parrots in the wild not be fulfilled? Where can I expect to see them if not here in their natural habitat in the primary lowland rainforest?

The moment of seeing a wild African Grey was closer than I expected, I just did not know it yet: surprisingly, on our way out of the park one of the local assistants approached me quietly, whispering that he could hear parrots close by. He took me away from the others, calmly approaching the tree where he had heard the noises.

I began to hear their whoops and caws.

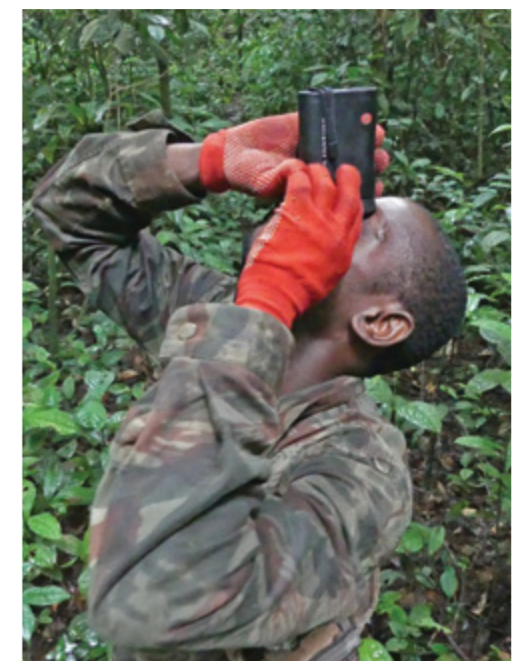
Finally, after five days in the Korup National Park, I saw my first Grey Parrot thirty metres up on a tree branch, looking at us while talking to his mates!

I quickly got my camera ready even though my hands were shaking from nervousness and fear that it would fly off. It decided to stay and I took my first picture of a wild African Grey. Wow!

Never had I seen such a healthy and good-looking African Grey. Obviously, the parrots that come to a veterinary surgeon are mostly sick, but even others in aviaries did not look as healthy and fit as this

individual. According to my assistant there were three individuals, which I then noted in my book, including the distance from our path to the tree, to include in my thesis. What a relief! I now saw for myself that there were African Greys left in the forest.

In spite of my happiness, this experience made me realize that my ongoing survey for Grey Parrots proves an upsetting reality. Only one encounter after so many walks through the forest was nothing! I knew that recent perspectives were horrible for them as studies in Ghana showed declines of *P. erithacus* of over 90%.





Left and upper right: Nestboxes being installed.

Lower right: PD Dr. Matthias Waltert with his students from the University of Göttingen and local forestry staff

Still, I was hoping that eastwards from Ghana, in Cameroon, I would find bigger numbers. I continued my work with my assistants after the rest of the study group from Germany left and what I found in the next 3 months – **or did not find** – was terrifying.

I continued counts in the park and surveyed the oil palm plantation, as well as the small villages surrounding the park. The park was nearly empty apart from a few encounters. Every now and then we heard and saw parrots flying over.


The monoculture oil palm plantations showed a slightly higher density of birds than in the Park. There the parrots could find food. Although, according to one landowner the numbers had decreased and parrots in such low numbers “are not a problem anymore” in terms of eating the fruits.

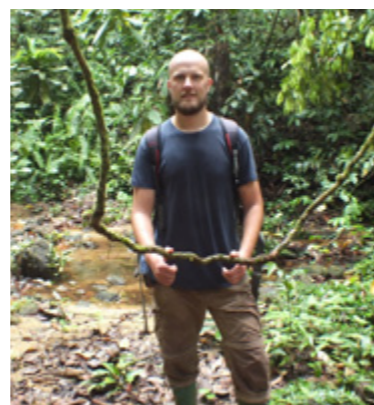
Installing my nest boxes now seemed pointless since there were not many parrots around. However, out of the three surveyed landscape types, parrots were most abundant in the villages and

their surroundings. There, they found food as well as nesting trees. Still, even here densities were close to non-existent in comparison to what was surveyed in 2008-2010. *How could populations decline in such a dramatic way, only six years after, in 2016?*

Four months after I came back to Germany in October 2016, CITES voted to uplist both species of African Grey Parrots *P. erithacus* and *P. timneh* to Appendix 1, which banned international commercial trade of these species.

After my three-month survey, I knew it was more than necessary to do so, since trapping and habitat loss are the main factors Grey Parrot populations suffer from.

There is a lot of work for nature conservationists to do now. Nevertheless, I hope that the ban will contribute to the preservation of African Greys in the wild so that in the future we will still be able to hear their marvellous sounds in the rainforests. 

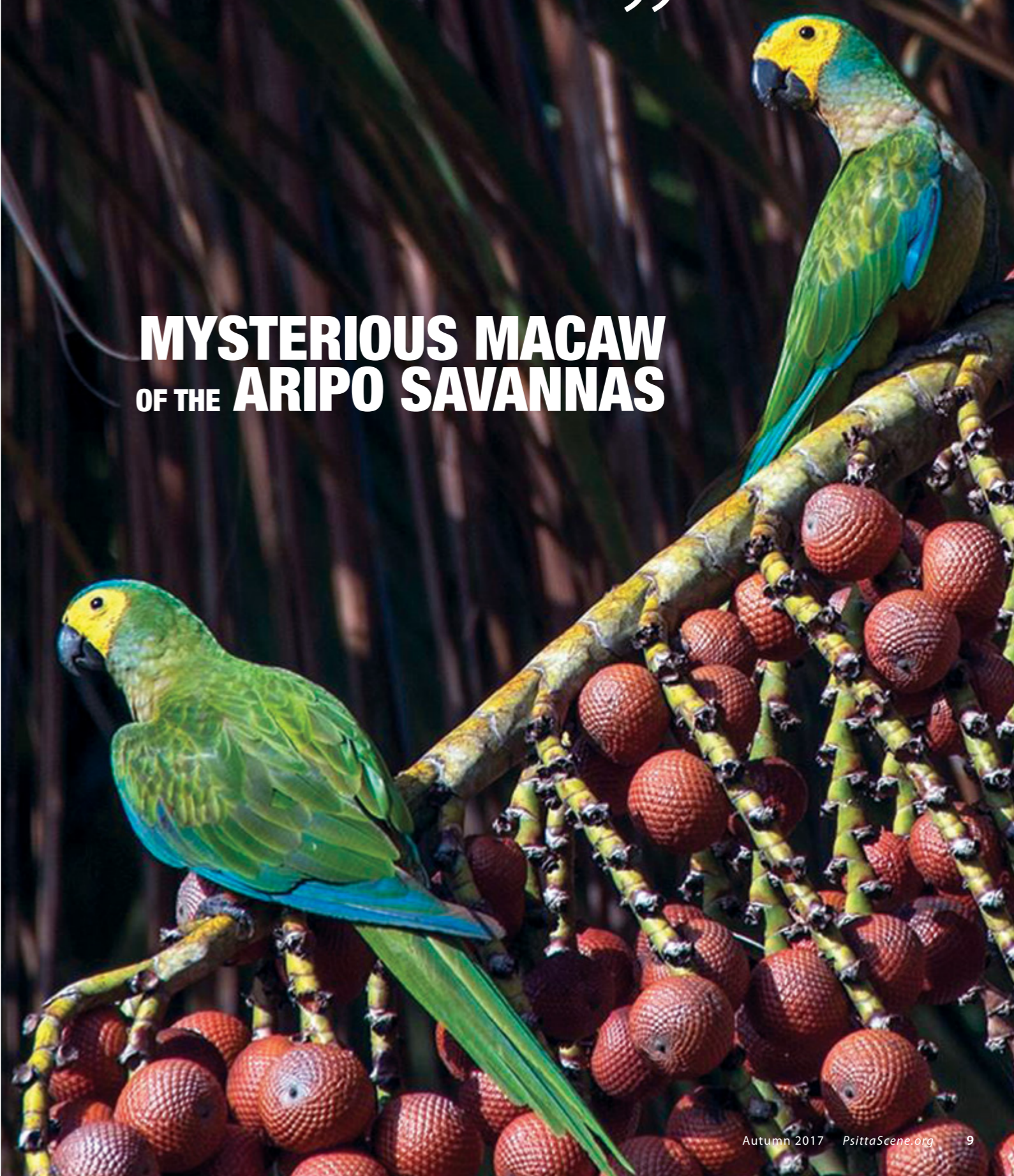


About the Author

Sascha Düker is a German Masters graduate in Biodiversity, Ecology and Evolution with a major focus on Nature Conservation and parrots. He is currently working on the Seychelles Black Parrot Project for the Seychelles Island Foundation SIF in Vallée de Mai National Park and is planning to do a PhD on parrots starting in 2018.

“ Little is known about the Red-bellied Macaw on Trinidad besides that it is very fond of Moriche Palm fruits. ”

MYSTERIOUS MACAW OF THE ARIPO SAVANNAS



MYSTERIOUS MACAW OF THE ARIPO SAVANNAS

by Aliya Hosein

Don't let its flat terrain fool you: walking in the Aripo Savannas Environmentally Sensitive Area (ASESA) on the island of Trinidad is a true test of balance and endurance.

USED AS A UNITED STATES ARMY BASE in World War II, roads, bunkers and drainage canals reminiscent of its occupation are still present today.

After the base was abandoned, the area suffered unregulated quarrying, illegal logging and hunting as settlements were established around the ASESA. But beyond its 1880 hectares of tricky terrain and history of human disturbances, it is known for its striking vegetative communities and biological diversity.

The ASESA consists of three habitats: open savanna where only grasses, sedges and herbs are able to survive because of the proximity of the hardpan layer of clay to the surface, marsh forest where trees and other woody vegetation grow because the hardpan layer is found at a greater depth below the surface, and palm marsh forest where the dominant plant

species is the majestic Moriche Palm *Mauritia flexuosa*. Trinidad is the only island in the Caribbean where these iconic savanna palms can be found.

Several mammals including the Red-rumped agouti *Dasyprocta leporina*, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, insects and crustaceans call the ASESA their home. In terms of birds, a total of 132 species of birds have been recorded so far, some of which are residents (non-migratory), like the rare Moriche Oriole *Icterus cayanensis chrysocephalus*, the Sulphury Flycatcher *Tyrannopsis sulphurea*, Fork-tailed Palm-swift *Tachornis squamata* and the Red-bellied Macaw *Orthopsittaca manilata*. There are two other recorded parrot species at the ASESA: Lilac-tailed Parrotlet *Touit batavicus* and Orange-winged Amazon *Amazona amazonica*.

Little is known about the Red-bellied Macaw on Trinidad besides that it is

very fond of Moriche Palm fruits. To date only Peter Bacon and Wayne Bonadie have done research on the species at the Nariva Swamp in Trinidad.

So, I set out to uncover if fruiting Moriche Palms had an effect on Red-bellied Macaw and Orange-winged Amazon abundance and distribution at the fragmented ASESA for my Master's research project (University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus).

The adventure began with a reconnaissance visit to the ASESA with my advisor Professor Adrian Hailey. Our mission was to locate potential transect lines and roughly assess the number of fruiting palms within these areas. It was late August and the rainy season was already upon us but luckily – or so I thought – it was a sunny day.

We started off at the southern end of the ASESA along the abandoned Trinidad Government Railway (TGR) which is now a grass/gravel road. It had been raining for days leading up to this visit and the ground was wet but not flooded.

We walked at a leisurely pace, distinguishing mature Moriche Palms from immature ones and keeping count of those that were fruiting. We occasionally inspected fallen palm fruits alongside for tell-tale signs that a macaw or parrot fed on it.

I decided to check the base of a palm that was about 5m off the trail. I scanned the ground for sleeping fer-de-lance snakes *Bothrops asper* and with none in sight proceeded towards the palm. Confidently I walked straight into a depression that was overgrown

with grasses! We agreed there that we would stick to the designated trails. We continued our survey into the savanna just north of the TGR. Instantly my eyes caught the tall and elegant Moriche Palms fringing the wide open savanna with the Northern Range in the background. I never tire of seeing that vista.

Continuing and breaking our promise to stay on designated trails we used a fallen palm as a bridge to cross the canal that was separating us from the savanna. Once successfully across we continued checking the palms.

But unlike the TGR the savanna was waterlogged and we were stepping on tufts of grass to prevent sliding on the slippery clay or getting our boots stuck. It definitely slowed me down but not Professor Hailey.



Red-bellied Macaw feeding on Moriche Palm fruit

“It is quite amazing to me how they can just disappear in plain sight if you don’t pay attention.”



Orange-winged Amazons quietly keeping an eye on the survey group

When we were about to wrap up our recon mission I miss-stepped and missed the tuft of grass I was eyeing. The clayey savanna soil gladly clamped my left boot. Professor Hailey was too far ahead and honestly I didn’t think I needed his help. I tried wiggling it out of the savanna’s grip but instead I wiggled my foot right out of the boot and was left standing like a flamingo. I ended up pulling it out with my hands. When I caught up with him, he asked me what caused the delay and I told him that the savanna had tried to steal my boots.

A month later my project officially kicked off. Every weekend Vishal Rangsammy (field assistant, photographer and all-around bird enthusiast) and I would make our way to the ASESAs. Like clockwork at 6:15am we would hear the squawks of flocks of Orange-winged Amazons flying over.

The Red-bellied Macaws made their appearance shortly after and more often than not would settle upon

a fruiting Moriche Palm to have their breakfast and maybe discuss activities for the day.

The area really becomes a hive of activity when they are feeding; calling to each other, hanging upside down on the palm fronds, dropping the fruit to the base of the palm or carrying the fruit to another tree, the latter being critical for maintaining genetic diversity in Moriche Palm populations, particularly in such a small area.

The macaws sometimes left the fruit attached to the bunch while feeding, leaving the exposed pulp available in the canopy layer to other bird species. Overall, we mostly saw the macaws at the southern end of the area where fruiting Moriche Palms were most abundant.

It is quite possible that the macaws compare foraging sites across the ASESAs and decide where to feed based on the relative abundance of fruits. Additionally this suggests that their behaviour is unaffected

by habitat fragmentation since the southern end is located near the village of Cumuto and it is where all education and tourism activities take place. They were scarce in the northern and northwestern areas where although there were a lot of Moriche Palms, actual fruiting palms were hard to come by. I found that macaw group sizes changed between seasons; in the late rainy season, when I had started looking for them, there were at most four individuals per group, which increased to six individuals in the early dry season.

In the rainy season some days were particularly horrible; with no Red-bellied Macaw sightings and water filled boots, we were left disappointed thinking over and over- why? I did not consider that some of the macaws were pairing up and exploring a larger area for prime real estate in which to raise their chicks. It was breeding season!

On the other hand, the Orange-winged Amazons were observed throughout the ASESAs and group

sizes between the seasons remained relatively similar. They were consistently found perched in the palm fringes of the savannas as well as in the marsh forest at the northern end.

Unfortunately during surveys we did not observe any Orange-winged Amazons feeding on Moriche palm fruits or the fruits of any other plant species such as Gri Gri *Acrocomia aculeate* and Pois Doux *Inga ingoides*.

They either flew across the trail or perched on the trees quietly preening or looking at us. It is quite amazing to me how they can just disappear in plain sight if you don’t pay attention. At other times one would pop into the view of my binoculars that I had no idea was on the tree or even looking in my direction.

Fortunately the Red-bellied Macaw is not targeted for the pet trade on Trinidad and at present, the ASESAs are able to

sustain populations of Red-bellied Macaws and Orange-winged Amazons. But keep in mind that if the ASESAs become increasingly modified and palm fruit availability decreases it will be a disaster for the Red-bellied Macaws since they rely heavily on the palms for food and nesting sites.

As for the parrots, it is highly likely that we will see a switch from food resources within the ASESAs to cultivated crops in surrounding villages thereby creating competition for food between villagers and parrots.

All in all, it really was a remarkable seven months observing free-living macaws and parrots. It has left me with an insatiable thirst for more adventure and a fierce pride in myself, my work and the untamed ecological beauty of the Aripo Savannas. 📷



Aliya Hosein chose to write about Scarlet Macaws for her undergraduate Animal Behaviour project and has followed parrots and macaws ever since. She is interested in where they live and how they are able to thrive in ever-changing habitats.

She holds a BSc in Biology and MSc in Sustainable Development and Conservation in the Caribbean (with Distinction) from the University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus. She is currently with the Conservation Leadership in the Caribbean Fellows Program (CLIC) to gain relevant skills in protecting the Caribbean’s biodiversity.

reflections on: Parrot Rescue and Adoption

article and photos © EB Cravens

April and I made another journey to our local adoption refuge a while ago. This time it was for the purpose of dropping off two pairs of conures no longer wanted by their keepers (retiring aviculturists.) It was our second such journey in two weeks—the first had been to deliver a twenty-four-year-old male Moluccan Cockatoo and two unhappy Amazon parrots of different species.



EB CRAVENS is a science writer by training; he was for years a regular contributor for AFA's Watchbird Magazine and the Companion Parrot Quarterly. EB currently writes a number of monthly columns; "The Complete Psittacine" in PARROTS Magazine, "The Hookbill Hobbyist" in Australian Birdkeeper, and his monthly series of articles "Birdkeeping Naturally" is sent out to bird clubs and individuals across the United States.

All three [parrots] were given to us to re-home when their owners could no longer care for them because of serious personal health issues. While there, we took our customary tour around the premises to see the most recent arrivals in the 12-meter aviaries and smaller cages and flights up and down the hill.

I will not say it was depressing because there were about as many happy birds and positive rescue stories as there were sad ones and negative 'placements'. What it really was: a healthy dose of *realism*. One thing stands out in my mind however as I compose this writing:

"Every single parrot breeder, hand feeder, pet store worker, aviculturist, and birdkeeper of any sort should be persuaded to make a similar excursion to the avian sanctuary nearest them to see firsthand what is happening at such places..."

The sundry inhabitants of all those wire enclosures in the shelter on our island and in hundreds more sites like it around the U.S. and the

globe, along with all the lamentable accounts of many of these parrots' lives in captivity, are certainly not the *only* outcomes to the process of breeding psittacines for the commercial pet market, but they are unquestionably *one* of the results of some of the avicultural and pet keeping practices that have been going on for decades and continue as we speak.

Wherein Lies Responsibility?

Now as a sometime hobbyist I am not so naïve as to presume to tell aviculturists that they should not be reproducing psittacines in captivity. Others have done that at various times. And scores of conscientious hobbyists and smaller breeders have shrunk their reproduction agendas in recent years.

What is more important, however, is that perhaps if some of those parrot breeders who earn their living selling baby birds would venture to explore personally the avian occupants in psittacine refuges, they would take more seriously the responsibilities they have assumed.

At our visit site, some of the older birds, many elderly former breeder pairs or singles, were obviously alarmed by all humans—this after decades in captivity and usually several different living situations.

But it was the former handfed pets that most evoked melancholy from me.

These parrots were bred to be close companions to people, and it is not unusual for their move to a holding cage in an adoption center to be quite traumatic. For example, Wasu, the cockatoo we dropped off, was one of the most incredible male pet Moluccans I have ever known.

Friendly, social around strangers, tolerant of smaller birds, not excessively loud when given plenty of diversion, he was an integral part of the household life of his original family. But to see his life fractured by being loaded in a carrier and taken to a strange place seemed like such a letdown. We expected him to get quite excited about all the other squawking white cockatoos living at the rescue.

But, Wasu reacted not at all to the noisemaking of his white relatives. He made no effort to communicate with the female cockatoos we showed him. In fact, he was altogether a bit startled by their active demeanors. All he wanted to do was court humans and beg for hands-on attention from his new and doting keepers.

His total lack of social habits towards others of his kind is a stark void—a failure of sorts—for aviculture and the way it chooses to produce numerous pets. The very same behavior attitudes could be seen in some of the Sun Conures, a Patagonian Conure, large macaws, and Eclectus Parrots at this facility.

They begged to humans, even though it was humans who abandoned and gave them up in the first place. Perhaps it is precisely the fact that human owners have forsaken them that makes these psittacines so needy. Yet after years of raising a number of self-reliant, well-



Though once highly valued, Hyacinth Macaws (above) are now among many species given up for adoption.

Many rescued psittacines are feather mutilators: this Eclectus hen (below, right) has since been moved to an aviary with two boys and a play box and she has grown back all her feathers!



behaved baby parrots that know they are parrots and can entertain themselves without constant human input, I can't help but believe that many bird breeders are inadvertently doing the chicks they profess to love a major disservice by fawning over them and frequently cuddling them after taking them away from their parents and siblings so hastily that the future pet has had no family life, no personal *identity*.

What Kind of Parrot Did I Raise?

We all know the importance of proper teaching for the character

development of human children. Well, where are the teachers for our baby hookbills? Obviously in a great deal of pet bird cases, humans are the teachers. But, what are we teaching these birds? **Don't bite. Don't scream. Step up. Step down. Scratch your head.** Dozens more psittacine commands exist than have ever been tried on domestic cats! Why is this?

Most of the parrots April and I saw in that adoption center have those orders down pat. Are they happy because of it? Do such rudimentary skills prevent them from being discarded by their original owners?



A surrendered Derbyan pet exults in his new 40-foot planted aviary.



Wouldn't our psittacine chicks be better served learning intricate lessons from their own parents and species, so that they might comprehend a smidgeon of healthy birdlike behavior in a world dominated by people?

After all, many an expert parrot keeper has indicated that some of the best-behaved pets they ever encountered were former wild or parent raised psittacines.

They come to love their humans; they respect humans, but they maintain their "parrotness." But such species-specific teaching takes an out-of-the-ordinary setup, not to mention quite a bit of focused time. And in the commercial breeding establishment time is money, is it not....?

The Dilemma of Retired Breeders

I have always believed firmly in keeping mature parrots in twos whenever it is plausible. That is certainly the best way to "retire" older parrots for the last phase of their captive lives. The problem with this conviction, as revealed at our rescue sanctuary, is that so many pet parrots are dysfunctional to the point that they cannot accept what would be the best thing for them—a birdie friend or companion. Many have absolutely

no idea that another psittacine of their same genus or species is something they should relate to. Often the only preening any of these birds has ever experienced has been done by human fingers—not a very efficient mechanism for grooming and comforting single feather shafts, I can assure you!

If you are taken from the nest or incubator/brooder weeks before your plumage is fully grown, the chances that you will have experienced the joys of being allo-preened by a parent or another bird are oftentimes nil. Yes, now and again, birds spend a relatively short time in clutches with brothers and sisters, but more often pets are sold off early (even unweaned!) or clutches are split up and go to different destinations, etc.

Certainly, few chicks have the opportunity to fledge and wean with members of their family and their own kind. Is it any wonder that their species identity is lost to the degree that they will hardly be able to look upon another like parrot as something to provide reassurance and camaraderie?

Put such birds into a human environment as a single pet for a decade or two and the situation may

become worse. In the past I have written about baby parrot loneliness, I have written of chicks being raised as orphans, but truly, as evidenced at our local rehab center, if there is one rather convoluted rationale of pet birdkeeping in the world these days it is the fixated owner concept that, "My parrot does not think he is a bird."

"My bird thinks he is human," I have heard said on sundry occasions. What a totally mixed up affront to both the pet parrot and to those persons that formerly raised or are presently keeping it. If you have a psittacine such as this currently living in your home, may the gods bless you both—hopefully the beloved pet will never be alone and forced to cope with a crowded rescue/rehab facility.

I honor and befriend those who run these sanctuaries, but I am aghast at the lack of training that went into producing so many of the birds that occupy them. ☐

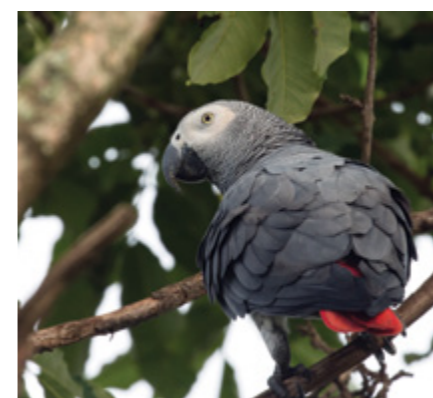
NEXT ISSUE:

PART 2 - Solutions that Might Benefit the Rescue/Adoption Situation



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2018
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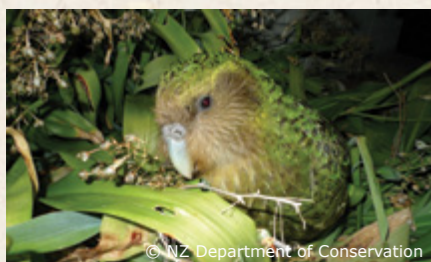


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NEWS



Kākāpō research reveals new conservation challenge

New research reveals that the Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptila*) supplements its reproductive hormones with compounds that are comparable to those found in native fruits and seeds. The Critically Endangered ground-dwelling parrots breed only every few years and usually in conjunction with mast fruiting events, when native trees produce abundant fruits and seeds. The Rimu Tree (*Dacrycarpus cupressinum*) in particular produces fruit that Kākāpō relish. These fruits are high in oestrogen-like hormones called phytoestrogens, which may help promote fertility. Scientists are working out how this happens in the birds.

Read more:
tinyurl.com/yae7mhav

Researchers to document Red-tailed Black Cockatoo calls

In the only study of its kind, tiny sound recorders will be set up near the nests of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) in SE Australia to monitor the breeding habits of these threatened birds. The joint effort between University of Queensland and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) will see scientists placing recording equipment near nests across farmland between Portland and Edenhope in Victoria.

It is hoped that mainly automated methods can be developed for distinguishing breeding calls from the other types that are recorded. The data will allow managers to better plan habitat protection in relation to nesting habitat, fire planning and the placement of nest-boxes, and to judge breeding success with the pairs monitored.

Read more:
tinyurl.com/y7p36x8u



Orange-bellied Parrot breeding program to be trialled at Adelaide Zoo

Populations of the highly-endangered Orange-bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) could soon be receiving a boost from Adelaide Zoo, which is trialling a new breeding program. The Zoos SA trial will use newly installed enclosure lighting, used to mimic daytime lighting, to try to bring on early mating. This will hopefully result in a greater chance of more eggs being laid throughout the year. It's the first time it's been tried with Orange-bellied Parrots in captivity.

Read more:
tinyurl.com/yczlmqjp

UPDATE

Hurricanes in Puerto Rico: Some Puerto Rican Amazons have survived Irma and Maria

Many unique plants and animals are found on Puerto Rico, including the Critically Endangered Puerto Rican Amazon (*Amazona vittata*). In the last decade their numbers had begun to increase, and central to that recovery was the aviary complex located at Rio Abajo, where dozens of parrots have been raised and released to the wild over the years by the facility's dedicated staff.

This year, within two weeks of each other, Hurricanes Irma and Maria slammed into Puerto Rico, cutting a wide swath of destruction that has proven devastating to people, wildlife and ecosystems. It will take many months, possibly years, for the island to recover.

After hunkering down with the captive-breeding project's 230 Puerto Rican Amazons during the two storms, staff at Rio Abajo have now observed many of the previously released birds in the surrounding area - up to ninety in total.

Now begins the intensive work to rebuild the foundation of the project and support the wild birds. Communications and other critical infrastructure were lost, the aviaries and buildings suffered damage, and the surrounding forest was all but destroyed. The project team has been scrambling to help themselves and the birds in the midst of widespread chaos.

Much of the wild parrots' habitat was lost and with it, valuable food. Rio Abajo workers have been stocking feeders to help sustain the parrots while the surrounding vegetation regenerates, which it is slowly starting to do. The numbers of birds visiting the feeders has grown dramatically since they were installed, as 'word' spread of the new, reliable food source.

WPT stepped in with an awareness and funding campaign to help rebuild this important project, raising over \$30,000(USD) thanks to people's deep concern about these iconic birds. The staff of Rio Abajo - and the parrots - couldn't be more grateful.

Learn more:
tinyurl.com/pramaz-update



OPPORTUNITIES

Great gift ideas for parrot lovers!

Looking for ideas for the upcoming season of giving? Come check out the new items that have been added to the World Parrot Trust store!

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parrots.org/lp/wpt-gift-ideas



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PARROTS IN THE WILD:

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Galyptorhynchus banksii*)

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo feeding juvenile. Photographed at Taylors Beach, Queensland, Australia.

Found over most of Australia, some subspecies of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo have been affected by human pressures: subspecies *graptogyne* by the loss of *Eucalypt* trees, their primary source for nesting and food. Subspecies *naso* is also in danger from loss of habitat through timber harvesting and agriculture.

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