



CRUNCH TIME FOR PSITTACINE AVICULTURE

by Michael Reynolds

Across the world, events are moving fast in the long running affair between man and the birds. More than once in the short history of this 'PsittaScene' newsletter we have said that the writing was on the wall for the mass trade in parrots: never was it more apparent than it is now.

Consider the following developments:-

1. Two bills are currently before the US House of Representatives, one of which requires an immediate end to the importation of wild-caught birds, the other allows a five year moratorium. A compromise between these two bills is thought likely.
2. The majority of airlines now refuse to transport wild-caught birds. Soon all will refuse, due to public opprobrium, heavy fines for failure to meet shipping standards, and a lack of commercial viability.
3. A Resolution has been adopted by the European Parliament, proposing a complete ban on the importation of wild-caught birds into EC countries.

Where does this leave parrot aviculture, bearing in mind that parrots represent by far the largest element - financially if not numerically - in the flow of wild-caught birds? The World Parrot Trust believes that these major developments put parrot aviculture on the spot, and in the spotlight, with an urgent need to put its house in order and justify its existence.

Readers will probably know that the World Parrot Trust springs from an avicultural base and is

committed to the survival and welfare of aviculture, just as it is committed to the survival and welfare of the parrots themselves. (See our Aim No.5 on the back cover of this issue, and also 'A new era in parrot aviculture' in 'PsittaScene' Vol. 3 No. 1). This being so, what does the trust suggest in the way of reaction to these critical new developments?

First, we recommend that all thinking aviculturists should accept that the 'free for all' period is over. It has, after all, lasted for thirty years or more, and the rich nations of the world have received from the poorer nations vast numbers of the majority of parrot species. Time to bring to an end the unseemly spectacle of unrestricted greed and

cruelty which has led to the creation of our all-consuming hobby. Aviculturists can no longer plead ignorance; if they wish to continue importing wild-caught birds they must also admit a lack of genuine concern for the birds they profess to 'love'. Please do not confuse the essential facts with concern about loss of income in the countries of origin - we know that the serious money goes to the middle men, and the aim now must be to sustain the birds in the wild where they may become tourism assets.

Second, we must present the true case for aviculture. Present it to the public at large, and also, crucially, to the legislators. In the United States, aviculture and the zoo world are included among the

sponsors of one of the bills, and recent communications from the American Federation of Aviculture indicate that they are fighting their corner with some vigour.

In Europe the position is far less satisfactory. We must apologise for mentioning the British publication 'Cage and Aviary Birds' again, but they have a lot to answer for. For several years they have been brain-washing their hapless readers, giving the impression that their hobby is about to be banned by wicked bureaucrats and 'protectionists'. This is preposterous, if only because the substantial majority of their readers are canary, budgerigar and finch fanciers; parrot keepers are not significant numerically in the



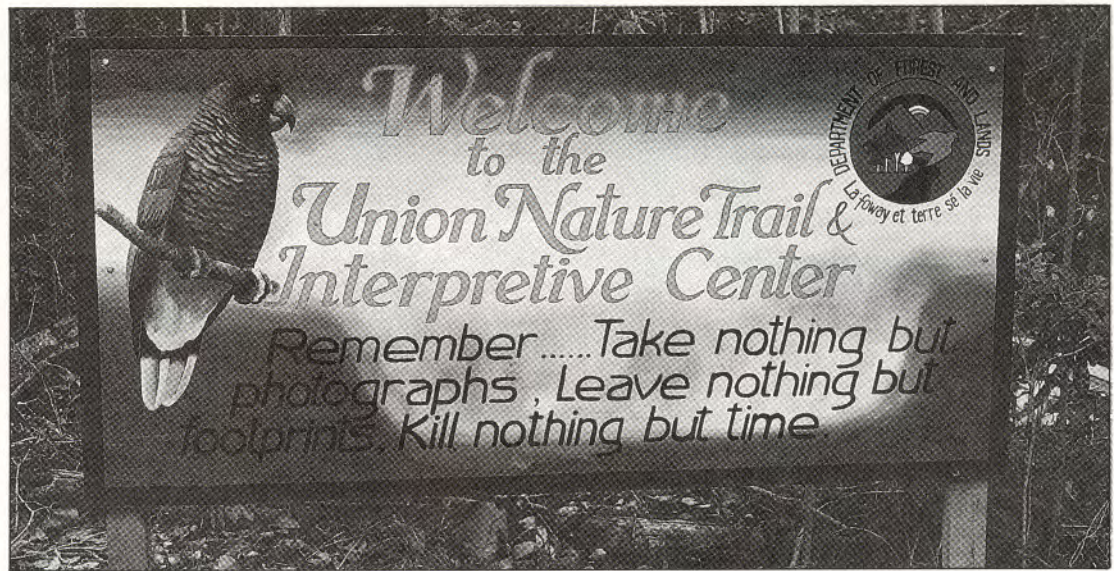
Parrots as tourism assets: a party of visitors on their way to see the St. Lucia Amazon.

“psittacine
(sit'ə sīn) Belonging
or allied to the
parrots; parrot-like”



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readership of 'Cage and Aviary Birds' but they are vitally important financially because their birds are valuable and generate a high percentage of this publication's advertising. That is why all the canary and budgie men have to endure endless editorial drivel about the wicked protectionists. It would be harmless drivel but for one thing: by embroiling aviculture in their attempts to justify and preserve the mass pet trade on which they depend financially, this publication actually endangers the future of aviculture.

That is why The World Parrot Trust has now written to Dr. Caroline Jackson, MEP who proposed the Resolution to the European Parliament, to seek to ensure that she understands that aviculture is a legitimate and fulfilling interest, and one which already plays an important part in the conservation of avian species, and if given encouragement can do

more in the future. We have also asked for the full text of the Resolution. We are also in touch with the Department of the Environment and other bodies to make the same case for what we call 'enlightened, responsible aviculture'. British readers may wish to write to their own MEPs to say that while they accept that the mass trade in wild-caught parrots for the pet trade must end, they must be assured that the keeping of birds for avicultural or pet purposes will not be compromised. It is also vital to insist on the continued free movement of aviary-bred birds around the European Community and around the world.

Third, we aviculturists must work hard to raise standards. It is no good trying to defend the indefensible, and there is much in our field of interest which urgently needs to be improved.

Try this checklist:

- a. Accommodation: do your birds have space, heat and other facilities appropriate to their size and species?
- b. Health: do your birds have an appropriate diet and the services of a competent avian vet?
- c. Conservation: if you hold species for which studbooks exist, do you enter your birds on the list? Also, do you ever place birds on breeding loan, or do you always insist on making a sale?
- d. Legality: have you ever accepted a bird you suspected might have been smuggled?
- e. Commitment: what have you done about 'putting something back' to help the survival of parrots in the wild?

Although incomplete, it's a tough checklist, and few of us will be able to give 100% positive responses. These are, nevertheless, some of the questions we should be asking ourselves at a time when aviculture is under close scrutiny.

MILITARY MACAWS FLY HOME TO GUATEMALA

by Kevin J. Clubb

AVICULTURAL BREEDING AND RESEARCH CENTER
LOXAHATCHEE, FL

Following the background report – PsittaScene Vol. 3 No. 2 we can now report that on May 9, 1991, 11 military macaws began a journey back to the wilds of Guatemala, to repopulate an area from which their ancestors had disappeared some 100 years ago. The Military macaws (*Ara militaris mexicana*) were delivered to the Guatemalan National Council for Protected Areas

(CONAP) for re-introduction into the cloud forest on the eastern slope of the Santa Maria volcano, in the department of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. The birds and major funding for the project were supplied by the Avicultural Breeding and Research Center in Loxahatchee, FL. The Interamerican Tropical Research Foundation (Fundacion Interamericana de Investigacion Tropical – FIIT) is coordinating the project and caring for the birds until release. This joint venture by ABRC and FIIT, has supplemental funding and support

from the World Wildlife Fund, Bird clubs of Virginia, The Miami Parrot Club and the Central Alabama Avicultural Society.

The first group of 11 birds, 10 for release and 1 to be used for local education efforts, were placed in a large flight cage constructed for housing the birds while they are prepared for release. The training cage is 65 meters long, 32 meters wide and 22 meters high. It is located on a hill at the base of Santa Maria Volcano at an elevation of 1,600 m (4800 ft). The view across the valley extends to the western

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

slope of Santo Tomas Pecul Volcano. The upper reaches of this deep valley are heavily forested and will be their future home. A small town, Santa Maria de Jesus, population 1020, lies in the picturesque valley on the Rio Samala.

"Reintroduction of tropical vertebrates is a slowly developing art, not science, which requires fieldwork, foresight, planning, biologists, captive-breeders and considerable financial resources." says Jay Vannini, an American biologist who has made Guatemala his home. Under Vannini's direction the research team of FIIT has made an extensive ecological study of the Santa Maria area. In addition to the Military macaw re-introduction project, FIIT has released Bat Falcons, Spectacled owls, Greater Curassows, and Pacas (a large spotted rodent).

Education is vital to the success of a re-introduction project and FIIT is working closely with residents of neighboring villages and towns

educating them about wildlife and protection of their resources. In their first days in Guatemala, the macaws were greeted by a steady stream of curious and enthusiastic local people who have never had the opportunity to see a Military macaw. The children were especially excited and enchanted by the beautiful birds.

Re-introduction of psittacines is in its infancy, and risks are inherent. This pilot project was designed to reduce anticipated risks and optimize the potential for learning as much as possible. The fauna and flora of the release site was extensively studied, including a complete survey of possible food sources, predators, competitive species and nesting opportunities. Other potential risks, such as theft and shooting, were identified and a plan developed to address these concerns as much as possible. The training cage is protected by guards.

The release is planned for late summer when the rainy season is

over and food is abundant. Until that time the birds will be introduced to wild foods. Prior to release, the birds will be fitted with radio collars to monitor their activities after release. Radio collars were specially designed and tested by Noel Snyder. Dr. Susan Clubb of ABRC tested the size and durability on macaws.

Health considerations are of primary importance to this project to prevent introduction of disease into wild populations, and to protect the re-introduced birds from diseases they may encounter. Although no macaws are present in the area 5 species of smaller psittacines make their home between the volcanos. With this in mind the macaws were carefully selected and screened for this project. All were captive bred and of known healthy parents from stable collections. All but two were incubator hatched and hand-raised. The other 2 were parent raised and carefully monitored during the time

they were in the nest. Each bird was given a thorough physical exam. They were tested for intestinal parasites, papillomas, chlamydia (psittacosis), papovavirus (polyomavirus) and had complete blood counts, tests for kidney and liver function, and bacterial cultures. To protect them from disease that they may encounter in the wild they were vaccinated for parrot pox, pacheco's parrot disease, salmonella and Newcastle disease.

In order to provide as much genetic variability as possible, chicks were obtained from 6 breeding pairs. Additional birds from 4 additional blood lines are now being prepared for export by ABRC. "This is the first project in which captive bred macaws will be released into the wild" said Richard Schubot, owner of ABRC. "Hopefully we can learn alot from this pilot project that we can apply toward future reintroduction projects for captive bred psittacines."

THE RED FRONTED MACAW

(Ara rubrogenys) The Original Macaw by Marc Boussekey & Jean Saint-Pie

This bolivian endemic, spread over a very limited range, has adapted to the constraints of a semi-desert, mountainous environment. In 1830, the French naturalist d'ORBIGNY collected this rare parrot from Bolivia, for the first time.

In 1847, LAFRESNAYE, after having described it, called it *Ara rubrogenys*, otherwise known as the

red-cheeked macaw. It later became known for the English as the *red-fronted macaw* whilst the Germans named it the *red-eared macaw*.

In the 1980s, after having been forgotten for over a century, two American researchers, RIDGELY and LANNING finally took an interest in the geographical distribution and living habits of *Ara rubrogenys*.

A Semi-Desert Habitat for a Tropical Parrot!

Rio Caine, Central Bolivia in October 1990.

In this Andean valley, situated at 2,000 metres altitude, our small camp was perspiring amidst the relative shade of a wild pepper tree *Schinus molle*. It was two o'clock in

the afternoon. The thermometer was around the 40°C mark and the hand of the hygrometer was fixed below 30%. Just that morning, at 5 o'clock, the air had nonetheless been cool and humid!

Round about, the scanty vegetation proved to be a wonderful lesson on how to adapt to these extreme conditions of climate.





The Indian cultivation area where *Ara rubrogenys* feeds.

Photo: Oliver Morvan

There were only racket and cereiform cacti, bromeliads, nettled shrubs or spiked with thorns. One of them, *Prosopis kuntzei*, stayed our attention: it is a kind of broom whose leaves are more like 10 to 15 cm long, thick spears. The quechuas Indians – about fifty families live in the valley – use them dried to build impenetrable protective hedges around their fields.

As well as we could, we tried to protect ourselves from the debilitating effects of the heat.

Suddenly a series of short, jarring cries stirred us from our torpor: two birds of a lush meadow-green colour, flew above our camp and then, as they gradually lost altitude, soared in direction of a nearby field. They were a pair of *Ara rubrogenys*! The presence of a macaw in such a habitat is the subject of an ecological paradox; the genus *Ara* is usually confined to damp, forest regions of low altitude. Here, there were few trees and therefore little possibility of perches and nesting sites. Fruit is so rare that it seemed that our macaw was condemned to starvation.

How could he survive in such a poor and inhospitable environment?

A Macaw which has to walk...

The pair had just landed on a small tree. It was obvious that this tree had been used to make regular stops: the ends of its branches had been stripped by the parrot's powerful mandibles. The two birds, which were highly excited, were meloading loud and clear. They were about to begin a quick preening performance. Before long,

other *rubrogenys* macaws, equally nervous and noisy, joined them. Finally, they all decided to fly down to the ground. Some time ago, the Indians had sown some *mani* (groundnut); the young shoots were beginning to stick up out of the ground. A windfall for our thieves as they extracted the seeds with one snatch of the beak.

This was when the systematic exploration and exploitation of the crops began: each macaw paced up and down the surface with a firm stride, virtually without a single flap of its wings, just using its legs! Its walk was hardly helped by the unevenness of the ground and the bird's long, cumbersome tail. What did it matter! *Ara rubrogenys* will spend no less than four hours a day, wandering up and down this

ground, looking for its means of sustenance. It is therefore a good walker, thereby fully justifying the local nickname given it, *loro burro*, otherwise known as the "donkey-parrot"!

Combining life as a pair with life in a group

There was now gathered together over 30 macaws, living in complete promiscuity. But only in appearance. We had, in fact, been following the two members of our pair since they arrived. They had mingled with the crowd, but were careful never to lose sight of one another; in this respect the bond between the pair is strong so that out of sight necessarily means out of mind! This

constant and compulsory closeness brings with it a certain amount of tension. The two mates that we were observing, had just set their heart on the same choice piece: accompanied by piercing shrieks they fought over the food and, with wings spread out, faced each other warding each other off with their claws.

Close by, an immature, recognizable by the presence of a thin, frontal strip of brown feathers, claimed its sustenance with a raucous cry. With a ruffled head, it pestered one of its parents with assiduous attention. The parent, grown tired of resisting, finally complied: after repeated shakings of the head, it regurgitated food into the open beak of the troublesome beggar.



Ara rubrogenys spends more than 4 hours per day walking on the ground to feed.

Photo: Oliver Morvan

A Rare Species?

In actual fact, at the time of our observations, *Ara rubrogenys* was one of the most common birds, one of the easiest to spot and one of the noisiest too! Being quite tame, we were able to approach it at less than 40 metres away without frightening it. On more than one occasion, we caught it pecking in perfect tranquility amidst animals in a farm-yard.

Is this the image we have of a rare species? However...

Our macaw is pledged only to the dry valleys of the Andes of Central Bolivia. This proves that its habitat hardly stretches over more than 150 kilometres from East to West, and 180 kilometres from North to South. LANNING has estimated its total population at 3,000 individuals, maybe 5,000! Which, all in all, is very little. At the beginning of the 80s, there were fears about the species as mass captures were beginning to be organised. Due to swift and appropriate legislation, brought in both nationally and internationally

such captures have been forbidden. As for the quechuas Indians, they hardly bother *Ara rubrogenys* in spite of the damage it causes to their crops. So *Ara rubrogenys* can sleep safely...

But where exactly does our macaw sleep? In spite of all our investigations, the puzzle still remains unsolved. Locals whom we questioned claim that it spends its nights in inaccessible cliffs higher up in the mountains. Also, they apparently nest there in a semi-colony, in a natural cavity. At what period? It's a mystery...

So, more than a century and a half after its discovery, *Ara rubrogenys* has not yet revealed all its secrets. It is hardly surprising of a species which, apparently, does not want to lapse into what is merely the commonplace!

A more complete and scientific study will be published in the January issue of BIRD CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL, the magazine of I.C.B.P.



A pair of *Ara rubrogenys* roosting in a wild pepper tree. Photo: Oliver Morvan

IMPROVED OUTLOOK FOR THE BAHAMAS PARROT ON ABACO

by Rosemary Low

The Bahamas Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala bahamensis*), a handsome sub-species of the Cuban Amazon, was once so numerous that, according to Christopher Columbus, great flocks darkened the sky. He probably observed it on Crooked Island, San Salvador, where it is long extinct. By the end of the 18th century, the Bahamas had lost most of its large tracts of forest – and the decline of its native parrot was under way. Today it survives on only two islands, Great Abaco – one of the most northerly – and Great Inagua – the most southerly. It became extinct on Acklins Island comparatively recently, for it was described as common there in the 1940s.

In Volume 2, issue no. 3, of *PsittaScene* we promised more information on the Bahamas Parrot – and it is encouraging to report that the news since then is good. This species on Abaco is unique in being the only parrot in existence which habitually nests underground (due to the absence of large trees). This fact, and the presence of feral cats on the island, is a recipe for disaster which could lead to rapid extinction.

By 1980, when I visited Abaco,

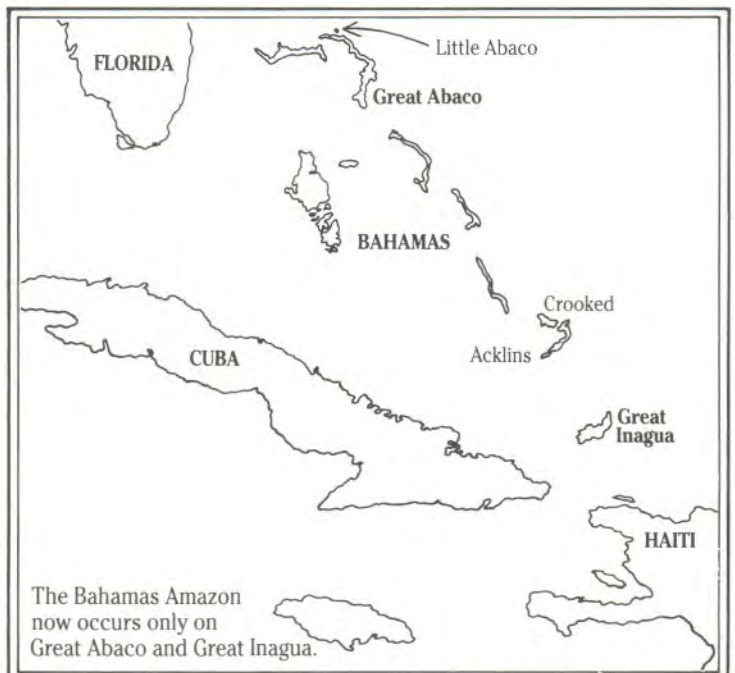
the parrot was confined to about 39 sq km (15 sq miles) at the south-eastern end of the island. Its population on Abaco was believed to be in the region of 750 birds. The month was October, the breeding season was over and the parrots were the wariest I have ever observed. It was not difficult to understand why, for the ground was littered with spent cartridges. Twenty years previously new roads had opened up the inaccessible southern part of the island. It was then frequented by hunters who took mainly White-crowned Pigeons but who were probably not adverse to a parrot or two.

At that time (1980) no field work had been carried out on Abaco and it was unknown that feral cats were the greatest enemy of this species. It was realised, however, that a field study was urgently needed. Also at that time, a young lady called Rosemarie Gnam was working in a New York office, in no connection with natural history or conservation biology. Fortunately for *bahamensis* she decided that her line of business was not at all rewarding and that New York was not where she wanted to be. Thus in 1985 she found herself on Abaco, investigating the breeding biology of *bahamensis*, and fortunately for this

parrot, she has been there every year since.

When I met her in 1988 a clearer picture of the breeding biology of this parrot on Abaco was beginning to emerge. The total population had been estimated as about 1,500 with another 400 or 500 birds on Inagua.

However, by 1989 the Abaco population was estimated at about 1000 birds. On Abaco, it was believed that 10% to 15% of the population was breeding but in 1988 only 30% of the laying pairs had been successful in fledging young. The greatest problems the parrot





Bahamas Amazon on Abaco, the last stronghold of this sub-species.
Photo: Rosemarie Gnam

was facing were feral cats and loss of habitat. That year 14 cases were known of nests being predated by cats, plus five others where cats may have been responsible. Abaco is only 1,600 sq km in extent and people invariably threw unwanted kittens into the bush.

That cats, more than any other factor, determine the success or otherwise of the breeding season on Abaco is demonstrated by the results of the 1990 season when 64% of nests fledged young. During the years 1985-1988 46% (average) of egg-laying pairs fledged young. Why was 1990 the most successful year in the study so far? It is believed to be due to the fact that during the winter of 1989-90 fires in some of the nesting areas cleared the forest of its understory, causing cats to

disperse into non-burnt areas where there was more food available, but where few parrots were nesting.

Of the two nests predated by cats in 1990 one was located in an unburnt area and the other suffered predation late in the nesting cycle when the shrub understory had regenerated. An ample food supply for the parrots, with pine cones as abundant as in previous years, aided the success rate.

Of 34 nests monitored, eggs were laid in 33. Here it should be pointed out that nests are in limestone cavities. Of those studied during 1985-87, (75 nests), 76% were 51-150cm below ground level, and averaged 124cm deep. The clutch size then was 3.5 eggs whereas in 1990 it was 3.8. In 1990 the number of chicks hatched per nest was 2.0.



Note the more extensive white area on the head of *bahamensis* which distinguishes it from other races of the Cuban Amazon. Photo: Rosemarie Gnam

The percentage of nests which fledged young (all nests) was 64% and the percentage of nests with chicks which fledged young was 84% (Summer 1991 report of Friends of the Abaco Parrot).

Unfortunately, in 1990, two chicks were stolen from one – the same nest from which chicks were stolen in 1987. Increased education and the creation and management of a well-protected and patrolled parrot reserve could help to thwart illicit poaching. But this can only be achieved if the funds are available. It was for this reason that Rosemarie Gnam and a group of enthusiasts on the island launched Friends of the Abaco Parrot last year. If they can raise enough funds, a protected reserve will become a reality.

One of the first projects of the "Friends" was to produce a "Let's get to know the Bahama Parrot colouring book". As many of us know, Paul Butler has already demonstrated on other Caribbean islands the vital importance of

by Bahamian government ministries, non-governmental organisations and international conservation groups.

Thirdly, everyone who cares about this parrot must contribute to Friends of the Abaco Parrot, c/o O.Gottlieb, P.O. Box 405, Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas. If sufficient funds can be raised, some birds will be translocated to Little Abaco island.

What about a captive-breeding programme? some of you may be asking. This Amazon has never featured in international trade and it is illegal to keep captive birds on the island (except those which have been in captivity many years, and these are few). There are no legally held *bahamensis* outside the Bahamas; if there are any at all then it is only those which have been removed illegally from one nest, as already mentioned.

Most aviculturists would be unable to distinguish one from a well-coloured Cuban Amazon, although there are well marked



Eight week-old chick in one of the few nests ever to fledge four chicks.
Photo: Rosemarie Gnam

involving schoolchildren in parrot conservation, and the excellent results which can be achieved. Involve the children, and conservation of such an identifiable creature as a colourful parrot soon becomes a popular issue! And provided that the education programme is a long-term project, a whole generation of children will grow up with the awareness that their parrot is important and must be conserved – and that its conservation may even boost the economy of their island one day, when the Bahama Parrot becomes a tourist attraction.

So what does the future hold for *bahamensis*? What can be done to ensure its survival? First, perhaps, the fight against feral cats must continue. In July 1990 a US Fish and Wildlife Service biologist spent a week on Abaco evaluating the cat problem. The report he submitted must be acted upon.

Secondly, Rosemarie Gnam's recommendations, resulting from six years of study, must be acted upon

differences, such as the white on the forehead extending round and behind the eye and the black margins of the green feathers being more pronounced. Most specimens have more intense red on the face and upper breast; the vinous patch on the abdomen consists of no more than a few scattered feathers or may be entirely absent. Size is slightly larger, that is, about 34cm (13in).

In the 1970s three pairs were held in the Bahamas for a captive breeding programme – but this failed. What a pity that no one had the foresight and courage to give these birds to Ramon Noegel in Florida who, during two decades has bred literally hundreds of *leucocephala* of all sub-species except *bahamensis*. He was refused permission to obtain it. I feel certain that had three pairs been in his hands, there would be a thriving captive population by now, thus adding another cog to the wheel which is now turning to ensure the survival of yet another endangered Caribbean Amazon.

THE BIG FLIGHT

This is how we always refer to the substantial aviary we built at Paradise Park, Cornwall, UK, in early 1990, even though it is labelled 'The World Parrot Trust Aviary'. It was undoubtedly inspired by the aviary created by Harry Sissen (see 'PsittaScene' Vol. 2 No. 1) to give his large macaws exercise during the winter months.

Our aims were a little different from Harry's when we set about designing and building our big flight. Certainly we intended it to provide exercise for breeding pairs during the winter, but it also had to provide interest and enlightenment for the visitors to Paradise Park. It has been sited just inside the entrance to the park, and enables us to arrange a spectacular display of many species of parrot at a vital location. A further aim is to give our home bred young birds every opportunity to develop their physical and social potential.

It has to be said that the big flight has met, and indeed surpassed, all our aims. The public love it. At a time when zoos are subject to some criticism for the housing they provide for their animals, we have a flood of complimentary remarks in our visitor's book, and verbally. 'So much space, so many beautiful parrots, wonderful to see them fly so freely' are typical comments.

From our own point of view, the main benefit is to see so much natural behaviour, often for the first time in an avicultural setting. For example, it is thrilling to see a group of twenty young cockatoos – Leadbeaters, Galahs, Goffins – flying from end to end, wheeling and swooping as a flock, while keeping in touch with contact calls. I now hear calls which I have never heard before in over twenty years of keeping parrots. We put two pairs of Hawkheaded Parrots in the flight. In three years in 'normal' size aviaries we have rarely heard them call, and I had never seen one raise its crest. Within two days they were acting like kids let out of school, with flashing eyes, raised crests, and their penetrating repetitive cries being heard half way round the park.

A pair of Palm Cockatoos, normally shy and reclusive, spent July to November this year in the flight, becoming more assertive, red-faced and vocal as the months went by. After their summer break, they are now back in a breeding situation, and filling their nestbox with slivers of ilex oak, which is somewhat similar to eucalyptus. I should point out that it is essential not to put anything resembling a nestbox or a hollow log in a big community flight. This would undoubtedly lead to disputes and

injuries. Without nestboxes we found we were able to keep fourteen species, a total of sixty birds including some adult pairs, living happily together.

The landscaped floor of the flight is about two thirds grass, and one third sand and rocks. It is interesting to see how much time the Galahs and Leadbeaters spend eating the young grass shoots, and picking up microscopic items from the sandy areas. It may not be completely natural behaviour, but on several occasions I have seen a pair of Scarlet Macaws rain-bathing in long grass. I have not seen any other species of macaw do this, although the Keas do it and may have taught our Scarlet Macaws. I could sum all this up by saying that a very large aviary increases the scope for an aviculturist to study and enjoy his birds, and learn things which will lead directly to better breeding results. As for the parrots, it is plain to see that their natural instincts are better served by the generous space and they are happier and healthier. I would like to be on record as advising any aviculturist lucky enough to have the necessary space available, to consider building a 'big flight'.

A few technical details. The aviary is 150 feet long by 22 feet wide and 14 feet high. The length was decided by the space available. The width was decided by our desire to allow ample space for 'two-way traffic' of large macaws. The height was limited by our need to catch the birds without too much trouble and confusion. I can say that after eighteen months use we would not want to change any of these dimensions, and indeed regard them as optimum for accommodating the

larger parrots. We will build a second aviary on this scale as soon as it can be afforded.

The main structure of the flight is made with tanalised (preservative treated) timber poles 20 feet long by approx 9 inches in diameter. These are sunk four feet into the ground at intervals of 8 feet. The roof beams are 4" by 2" galvanised steel beams. The wire used is 1" square 12 gauge galvanised Twilweld. At each end of the flight are substantial shelters constructed of shiplap timber. Also at each end are small internal flights approx, 8 feet by 16 feet: very useful for introducing, releasing, and catching up birds. There are many perches at each end, and a number of feeding and roosting stations throughout the flight. Our visitors walk along the front of the aviary, separated from the birds by a 'stand-off' fence and shrubs. The wire is painted black to facilitate vision, and trees planted outside the back wall make a green wind-break.

The total cost, including materials, labour, landscaping, alarm systems etc., was £12000 (\$22000). The reason it cost so little is due to Paradise Park being privately owned and chronically underfunded. Twenty years of daily contact with financial reality create valuable skills in low cost building. The reverse is also true: London Zoo, which has received almost £30M from the government in recent years, spent a reported £750000 last year on an aviary of similar dimensions to ours. Yes, we could have built sixty of our 'big flights' for this amount of money. But then, their aviary was architect designed, and the British taxpayer was paying for it.



The Big Flight, built and landscaped, but before any birds had been introduced.

WHO'S A NAUGHTY BIRD SMUGGLER ?

On 16 August 1991, David Deans, 36, of Deans Cage and Aviary Birds, Mansfield, in Nottinghamshire, was found guilty of smuggling 11 blue-cheeked amazon parrots *Amazona dufresniana* from Guyana to Britain. Also, though he was acquitted on several counts of forgery, he was convicted of forging veterinary certificates that pronounced the birds healthy.

In fact, six of the eleven parrots subsequently died from psittacosis, which affects domestic poultry. Potentially, they might have been carrying the highly infectious Newcastle's disease. Either way, the consequence for any collection they might have landed up in would have been a real 'own goal' for aviculture. The remaining five birds, all males, are being cared for by the World Parrot Trust while their fate is decided.

Blue-cheeked amazons are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which allows trade in them, providing that they have been issued with export and import permits and health certificates. Deans applied for the necessary papers in the summer of 1989, expressing a wish to import the birds from Guyana. He was refused permission by the Department of the Environment on the grounds that Guyana had put a stop to any trade in blue-cheeked amazons by imposing a 'nil quota' for that year, because of concerns about dwindling numbers of the species in the high-altitude forests of the country's interior. But Deans went ahead all the same. On 1 February 1990, he was apprehended trying to bring an illegal

consignment of blue-cheeked amazons through customs at Heathrow.

The subsequent investigation and prosecution, brought by HM Customs and Excise, has taken more than a year, has involved detective work both here and in Guyana (including the presentation of three Guyanese witnesses at Isleworth Crown Court, where the trial was heard), and has cost more than £12,500. And yet Deans walked from the courtroom, guilty, with £250 in fines and costs of £250.

There is no ceiling on the fine the court could have imposed, and the maximum penalty for Deans's smuggling offence could have involved a seven-year prison sentence (though custodial sentences are virtually never handed down in cases involving wildlife). Blue-cheeked amazons are rare, and Deans's customers would have paid up to £1,500 per bird.

Peter Knights of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) described Deans's punishment as "... a real kick in the teeth for Customs. Traders can just treat fines like this as a cost of business. They are absolutely no deterrent to others." Richard Porter, head of species protection at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, commented that "This is a sad day for customs and all those fighting to stamp out the illegal trade in wild birds." But customs officials stressed that the result would not deter them from bringing other prosecutions.

And what of Deans? Under current EC legislation, his subsidiary company, Deans Import Agency, can continue trading in



Cheeky. It cost 18 times more to have six blue-cheeked amazons die of psittacosis than it did to be convicted of smuggling them into Britain.

parrots, despite his conviction, because, under existing law, there is no provision to withhold CITES exemption certificates or other trading papers from those previously convicted of smuggling.

But new, replacement EC legislation, which will come into effect on 1 January 1993, is likely to include such a provision. People like Deans could then be banned from trading for specified periods, depending on the gravity of their offences and their previous records. Perhaps being put out of business for a while will serve as a better deterrent than a paltry fine.

JESSICA HOLM

• Encouraging news that, where the law may fail, people-pressure can turn the tide comes with the current total of airlines which have refused to carry shipments of wild birds: now 23. This stand is already having a major effect on the trade. The EIA reports that, in April, as a direct result of the airline embargoes, traders in Senegal (a major African exporter) were reporting a 40-50 per cent drop in the number of birds exported.

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TRADE IN INDONESIAN PARROTS

As readers of these columns will be aware, the Moluccan Cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*), the largest and arguably the most beautiful of the white cockatoos, is on the edge of extinction. Certain Indonesian lorries, such as the Chattering Lory (*Lorius garrulus*) and its sub-species, have suffered very serious declines. The Purple-capped Lory (*Lorius domicellus*) has never been common in captivity and is now very rare.

The Moluccan Cockatoo and the Chattering Lory have been exported by the thousands in recent years. Sadly, their popularity as cage and aviary birds has been their downfall.

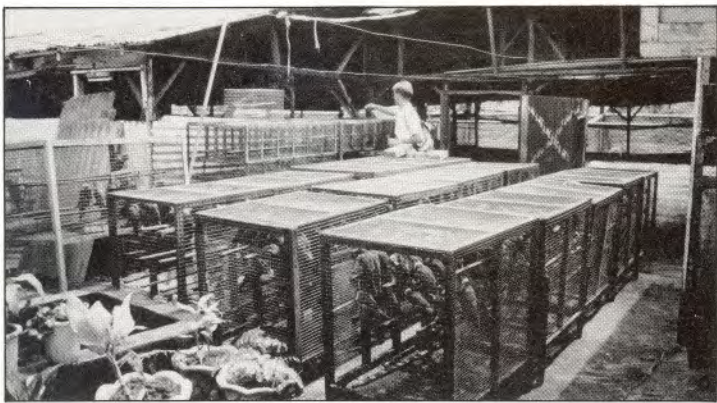
In 1989 the Moluccan Cockatoo was placed on Appendix I of CITES, the Appendix which should control very strictly trade in the endangered species. Yet CITES is powerless to stop these birds being taken from the wild. One of our members,

Armin Brockner, from Germany, visited the Moluccan Islands of Amboina and Ceram in the summer of 1991. In one bird market he saw 40 Moluccan Cockatoos and met one dealer who, the previous year, had handled more than 1,000 Moluccan Cockatoos.

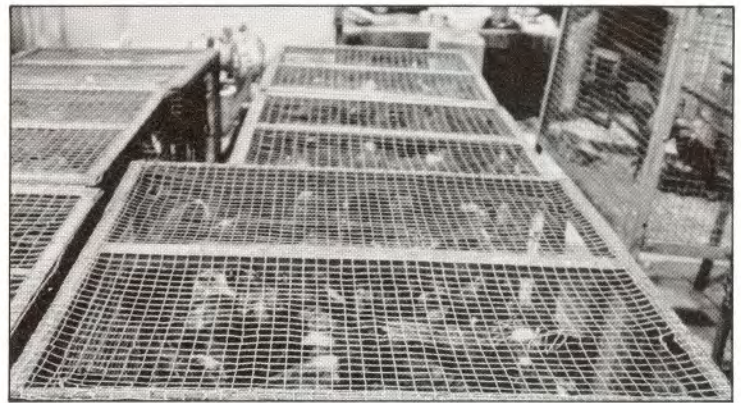
In Amboina he visited a dealer who had cages packed solid with Yellow-backs, Blue-streaks (both island endemics which cannot

tolerate trade on a large scale), also the more common Red Lory (*Eos bornea*) which is not immediately threatened. We publish these photographs, taken by Armin, to bring home the reality that the capture of Indonesian parrots continues unabated.

Many of those that survive capture, transport and quarantine look healthy. Unfortunately, when so many are held in such a small area,



Holding facility for Indonesian Parrots on Amboina. Photo: Armin Brockner



Yellow Backed Lorries – a species now greatly reduced in numbers due to overtrapping. Photo: Armin Brockner

they are stressed and at their most susceptible. They contract diseases such as salmonella, and viruses which are difficult to identify and impossible to treat. This is often not evident until they have been some months in the collection of a breeder or zoo. Then they are stressed, perhaps by aggression, cold weather or a poor diet, and the problem surfaces. It usually spreads

to other birds in the collection and the resulting losses can be very high. Today there are a number of very serious viral diseases among parrots which were unknown in captivity 20 or even 10 years ago.

The careful breeder will quarantine for at least two months any new birds acquired, whether or not wild-caught. This, however, cannot prevent the spread of a

disease, which could be incubating for months.

The really wise breeder simply says "No" to wild-caught birds. They are a danger to the very existence of his collection. Currently popular methods of housing parrots just add to the problem. In birds closely confined in small suspended cages, often indoors or in large enclosed buildings with poor ventilation,

disease can spread like wildfire...

Of course captive-bred birds can also be a disease risk because most of them have been in contact with wild-caught birds. For the welfare of our parrots, we all need to work more closely with avian veterinarians. The advances in veterinary medicine (and surgery) in the past few years have been remarkable. Take advantage of them!

No. 5 IN OUR SERIES

"If I could keep only one pair of parrots ..."

by Nancy and Inge Forsberg

Inge Forsberg and his wife Nancy are Sweden's most experienced breeders of large parrots, especially Amazons, Cockatoos and Eclectus. They have bred multi-generations of several species. Nancy is an expert in hand-rearing – almost a pioneer of this science in Europe. For years she has maintained detailed weight records for chicks of all species reared. Together the Forsbergs have had a greater influence on aviculture than perhaps anyone in Sweden.

Rosemary Low.

What an alarming thought! Maybe appropriate as well. The time will come when we will HAVE TO reduce the number of birds we keep, sadly

enough. Having been bird fanciers for more than 30 years and bred tropical finches, lovebirds and parakeets, Australian and South American parakeets, African and South American parrots, Eclectus parrots, lorries and cockatoos – try and choose ONE PAIR!

OK, many are called but few are chosen. We choose the yellow nape amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala auropalliata*). We got the opportunity to care for 2 breeding pairs four years ago when our friends Heinz and Ingalill Martin moved abroad and WE were chosen. We were allowed to take care of 2 breeding pairs, whereof pair no. 1 was the first breeding pair in Europe. On 28 February 1974 the first chick hatched. Pair no. 2 consist of a female from pair 1 and an unrelated, imported male. In 1990



Ingalill and Heinz Martin

pair no. 1 bred successfully for the 17th consecutive year and we are looking forward to the 1991 result with confidence. In fact, they produced their first egg of the year on 5 March.

We are choosing the yellow napes since they are the most "personal" parrots we have been in touch with, honest and straight forward. Being the friend of a yellow nape, one has a friend for life... With eggs or youngsters in the nest box, however, that is a different ball game. The yellow nape is also such a beautiful bird.

As a visible sign of the yellow napes superior qualifications: We have now together with the family Martin 11 sexed, true pairs of the yellow nape amazon parrots in our aviaries. In each and every pair male and female are unrelated. With these words we leave the final word to our friends Heinz and Ingalill:

It is easy to agree with the above superlatives. After 12

successful years of breeding the yellow napes for two generations we had to go for an assignment abroad, which did not give us a chance to bring our parrots. Our despair was changed into happiness when the Forsbergs agreed to care for them till we are back again. Both the male and female of pair no. 1 came to Sweden in 1967. None of them had any yellow on the nape. That started to develop in 1968. Based on the experience of some 30 youngsters which the pair have nursed themselves, that are now 25 years old and still going strong. At least four of their female offsprings have produced youngsters; one of them producing her first egg at 3 years and 8 months of age.

Yellow napes are truly fascinating. They are on a higher 'intellectual' level than all other amazon species that we have met. There are no doubts, they have been, are, and will remain our choice.



Inge Forsberg

BOOK REVIEW



Some of the best ideas are the most simple ones. In this case it amazes me that no-one has done it before – to publish selected articles and features from the volumes of an avicultural magazine published over two years. That bi-monthly publication *Australian Birdkeeper* is full of bright ideas – and this is one of the best.

Australian Birdkeeper – Special Edition is packed with interesting articles – 42 in all, of which 26 are specifically about parrots. They cover the native Australian species plus the others available in Australia, *Psittacula* parakeets and Conures. The articles selected are extremely informative, with the accent on breeding.

The illustrations used (all in colour) – not necessarily those which accompanied the original publication – are superb. The book is a riot of colour, with illustrations on virtually all the 128 pages. Good quality glossy paper and attractive presentation, add up to a very

pleasing and highly useful book, one that would make an ideal present.

You can buy it in soft cover for A\$19.95 (which includes postage within Australia) or a gold leaf case-bound edition which is limited to 500 signed copies for A\$39.95, from Australian Birdkeeper, P.O. Box 6288 Sth Tweed Heads, NSW 2486, Australia. – R.L.



Photo: Rosemary Low

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Members write . . .



17th September, 1991

Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Co-operatives, Castries, Saint Lucia, West Indies.

Dear Mr. Reynolds,
It is with pleasure and a deep sense of appreciation that I write to thank you and your organization "World Parrot Trust" for your gift to the Government of St. Lucia through my Ministry of a bus for our conservation and environmental awareness programmes.

The bus was officially presented to the Forestry Department of my Ministry on 4 April at a ceremony at

which I was present with other officials and prominent well wishers.

I am delighted to inform you that a number of local organizations has rallied to the cause, by actively assisting in its operation and maintenance such as providing alternate servicing, spares, gas and lubricants.

The bus has been named "Jacquot Express" after my country's national bird, is decorated with forest motifs, squawks like a parrot and is proving a useful educational tool.

It has toured various communities from the north to the south of the island, assisting in Forestry Extension Programmes, Library Summer Programmes, School Visitation Programmes, highlighting environmental and wildlife protection, preservation and conservation concerns. The bus is also being used during the Tourism Career Showcase to highlight the role of forestry in the development of green tourism. Visiting

Ornithologists attending the Ornithological Society's Conference in August were fascinated at viewing the bus and its exhibits.

Considering the small size of our communities, the bus has been toured by over two thousand four hundred persons in about twenty outings, and has been praised by the local media.

Our experience convinces me that replication is worth consideration elsewhere in our region.

Please convey to the World Parrot Trust my thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Government of St. Lucia and my Ministry. Our thanks will go also to the co-sponsor 'Rare Centre for Tropical Bird Conservation'.

Kindest wishes

Yours sincerely,
FERDINAND HENRY
Minister

Georgetown (Guyana)
22 October 1991

Dear Sirs,

Please find enclosed my membership contribution to The World Parrot Trust. I attach a lot of importance to your activities. I currently work in a country where I have had the pleasure to observe parrots and macaws fly free but which is also the scene of trapping and killings. Guyana is the second largest exporter of wild birds in South America.

Please continue your campaign against this hideous trade. Publish samples of cards to be sent to airlines, trade officials, parliaments and other law-makers. Please continue to raise public awareness, in both "developed" and developing countries, in respect of love and protection of these wonderful and complex creatures.

Thank you
Robert Rensi

Dear Rosemary Low,
I am an Englishman who has lived in Norway for 20 years. I am a musician and play the viola in the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra. For some years I have been keeping and breeding Lovebirds and Senegal Parrots. Our dream has been to breed Amazons but Norway stopped the import of all parrots in the early 1980s. Even although the Ministry of Agriculture will occasionally grant an import licence for breeding purposes, nobody is allowed to import a parrot as a pet. If you want a young bird you therefore have to buy one of the very few Norwegian-bred birds which are very expensive. We have hand-fed and sold 55 Lovebirds and saved the money by buy Amazons. It proved impossible to get the birds we wanted here so we are to obtain a pair of sexed Yellow-winged Amazons (*Amazona aestiva xanthopteryx*) bred by Inge Forsberg of Sweden. We had to apply for

special permission to import them. Before we could obtain a licence from the Ministry we were visited by a state-appointed veterinarian who inspected our facilities. He had no hesitation in recommending us. We should have the birds in about six weeks so the first part of our dream has soon come true.

I would like to relate an incredible Amazon story which will probably amuse and horrify you. We were recently contacted by a Norwegian seaman living on a small island off the coast. He had bred three Blue-fronts, although he knew nothing about birds. We went to visit him and this story unfolded. The man's father-in-law gave him the parents some years ago; this spring he was surprised when the birds started to mate. He decided to build a 'cage' for them and a large wooden nest-box. Downstairs the man had partitioned a cellar room into two by means of transparent plastic sheeting which hung from floor to

ceiling. It was weighted on the bottom by a big plank and the birds were loose behind this curtain. This was the cage!

Three eggs were laid and, the owner, who had no idea of the incubation period, became restless after 26 days, took the first egg, made a crack in the shell and replaced it in the box. Despite this, all three eggs hatched! The owner then became anxious that the birds might not feed the chicks properly so, knowing nothing about hand-feeding, he set about supplementary-feeding the chicks with the aid of a syringe. Once a day he removed them from the nest and fed them a dose of *ice-cold* fruit purée straight from the refrigerator. During these feedings he was constantly attacked and badly mauled by the parents, losing several litres of blood! He was relatively unconcerned about this – which just goes to show that you can still find the remnants of the old

viking fighting spirit tucked away in the remote fjords of Norway!

In spite of all the 'help' they received all three survived. The owner is now away at sea and his wife, who is expecting a baby, wanted the young Amazons out as soon as possible. Not intending to take advantage of the situation, we paid them a very decent price for one and arranged the sale of another. Since they now realise that they have valuable birds and have made a lot of money from the young, I have no doubt that they will want to take better care of them in the future.

Before closing, let me say that we find *PsittaScene* tremendously informative and enjoyable. It is so professional compared to the literature of most groups and societies.

With good wishes,
Allan Williams
Melhus, Norway.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP

AUSTRALIA

Two issues ago (Vol 3, no. 2) we published an article by Peter Brown entitled "The Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Effort." It described the steps taken to try to prevent the extinction of this species, Australia's rarest Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) whose population numbers between 100 and 150 birds. He described the captive breeding programme, whose potential breeding stock consisted of seven males and 18 females and concluded the article by stating: "We are now at the stage where we have sufficient captive stock to undertake a release of birds back into the wild."

Since that article was published the decision has been made to release 12 birds in October 1991. This decision was discussed at a meeting of the Avicultural Society of Australia held in August. Len Robinson, the well known ornithologist, proposed that the society should write to the Orange-bellied Recovery Team and suggest that, before releasing any aviary-bred *chrysogaster*, the co-operation of "reputable and responsible private aviculturists" should be sought to establish further captive-breeding facilities. In addition, it was suggested that eggs from captive-bred birds should be placed in wild nests where clutch size and incubation status permit, also that natural logs and/or nest-boxes should be placed in accessible positions in the nesting areas of the Orange-bellied Parrot.

This was reported in the October 1991 issue of *Australian Aviculture* (magazine of the Avicultural Society of Australia), together with the reply received

from David Rounsevell, the senior wildlife scientist. He replied that the release was to take place as planned and that there would still be 10 pairs in captivity. He gave the assurance that the suggestions would be considered at the next meeting of the Recovery Team.

Is the decision of the Recovery Team in the best interests of the species. What do you think? The Editor would be pleased to publish letters arguing the case for or against the planned release.

Rosemary Low and Mike Cannon (veterinarian) are the featured speakers at a mini-convention to be held in New South Wales. The date: Sunday March 8 1992. The place: Ingleburn RSL, Chester Road, Ingleburn. Cost is \$39 per person. More information can be obtained from Ted Lowe (telephone 02 759 3998). The convention will be presented by Macquarie Fields & Districts A:S: and by The Feathered Friend Bird Shop.

Readers may be interested in an update of events connected with the story of the Night Parrot's rediscovery.

In October 1989, Mr Dick Smith, chairman of the Australian Geographic Society, offered a reward of \$50,000 for the first acceptable evidence of the Night Parrot's continued existence. This offer was valid for two years from its announcement.

When Wayne Longmore, Max Thompson and I found the dried carcass in October 1990, we were unaware of this offer. We stopped in Bouliua to ring the Australian



Museum and tell a few people of our find, before disappearing for another week of fieldwork in remote country. During this time we were oblivious to the growing excitement surrounding our discovery and the consternation at the Museum's inability to contact us.

After our return to Sydney, the Australian Museum made a claim on the Australian Geographic reward. In February, Dick Smith presented the cheque for \$50,000 to Dr Des Griffin, the Director of the Museum.

The confirmation that the Night Parrot survives has raised hopes of finding living individuals and studying them in the wild. By finding out more about this elusive species we can determine if its existence is threatened and start to make informed decisions about its conservation. Such a program will not be easy—nor inexpensive.



Pesquet's Parrot, hatched at Palmitos Park, Gran Canaria in April 1991, and reared to independence. There is not a more wonderful species of parrot in existence, says Rosemary Low!

Thanks to Dick Smith's generosity and commitment to the Australian environment, we have been able to establish the Australian Geographic – Australian Night Parrot Fund to finance field-work dedicated to finding and studying the Night Parrot.

Australia is a big country, and the distribution of the Night Parrot occupies the majority of it, albeit much of it remote. This species seems to move according to local conditions. To avoid a 'needle in the haystack' situation, we hope to start our hunt by following up recent, reliable sightings. In this endeavour, the Museum would be grateful to hear of any good Night Parrot reports in the future. Updates on this project will be made periodically.

Walter Boles
Australian Museum

Excerpt from the Australian Natural History Magazine

GRAN CANARIA

At Palmitos Park in the Canary Islands, a Pesquet's Parrot (*Psittichas fulgidus*) hatched on April 28 has been successfully hand-reared from the egg. The breeding pair had been together less than five months when the chick hatched. The male had been received from Switzerland the previous year, where he had been for 18 years, most of that time at Zurich Zoo – and alone. Rosemary Low, who was responsible for hand-rearing the chick, believes that it is not difficult to persuade Pesquet's to nest – the essential stimulus being a palm log which they can excavate. Hand-rearing of the chick was totally uneventful and resulted in the, beautiful young bird, depicted here aged exactly three months.

INDONESIA

Trade in Parrots in Seram

A recent expedition to study the mammals of the Indonesian island of Seram, was also asked to survey Moluccan cockatoos, *Cacatua moluccensis*, by the Department of Nature Conservation based on the neighbouring island of Ambon.

It soon became apparent that a systematic survey would not be possible. In a three week period during August 1991 only one pair of Moluccan cockatoos was seen. A further two pairs were seen in western Seram on the return boat journey from Wahai (on the northern coast) to Ambon. In 1979-81 Moluccan cockatoos were already regarded as being locally common, but much rarer than ten years previously owing to trapping for the pet trade (Smiet, 1985). Roosts of 16-20 birds were seen at that time, but only a handful of birds

were seen in August 1991.

Moluccan cockatoos have been traded in huge numbers in the last fifteen years or so. For example, more than 6,000 were exported from Seram and Ambon in 1983 (Smiet, 1985), but this rose to more than 8,000 per year in the mid-1980s (Bowler, 1988).

Today the Moluccan cockatoo is protected in Indonesia. In part this protection seems to be successful because there are apparently so few wild birds left to trap. However, there is evidence of continuing trade in this species. On the return boat journey from Seram, at least one cockatoo was being transported to Ambon along with many other parrots. On the local market in Ambon eight birds were on sale at a maximum price of RP 125,000 (\$40) each.

Other species of parrot are still being traded in large numbers. One person in Wahai is exporting 100-300 parrots per week (5,200-15,600 per year). This compares with a total of more than 40,000 birds exported from the whole of the Moluccas in 1983 (Smiet, 1985). It is likely that many more birds are being exported from southern Seram where boats to Ambon are more frequent and journey times are much shorter. During August 1991 among the species being caught locally in Seram, and being transported to or sold in Ambon were the following: red lory, *Eos bornea*, blue-eared lory, *Eos semilarvata*, rainbow lory, *Trichoglossus haematodus*, purple-naped lory, *Lorius domicellus*, Moluccan cockatoo, *Cacatua moluccensis*, red-cheeked parrot, *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*, great-billed parrot, *Tanygnathus megalorhynchos* and Amboina king parrot, *Alisterus amboinensis*.

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Dr Andrew Kitchener, Curator of Birds and Mammals, Dept. of Natural History, Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

MEXICO

Smuggled Birds

AFA President Jack Clinton-Eitniewer was at the National University of Tamaulipas (Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas) in Ciudad Victoria (the capital of Tamaulipas, Mexico) October 23-25 to view progress and construction of the new parrot rehabilitation aviary. This facility will be used to house and rehabilitate confiscated parrots in

Mexico, in preparation for re-release into safe habitat areas. In contrast, birds confiscated in the United States wind up being held for quarantine then sold at public auction. Aviculture can help this program succeed by sending additional donations of materials or money. Contributors so far include AFA, Avicultural Society of America, Arizona Seed Crackers Society, Long Beach Bird Breeders, Orange County Bird Breeders, Sun Seed Co and Thee Birdie Bordello. For more information on how you or your club can help, contact AFA President Jack Clinton-Eitniewer evenings at (512) 828-5306. When animal rights activists support activities such as this, they are "protecting wild birds from trade". Aviculture has an opportunity to help return smuggled birds to the wild – species not currently allowed in international trade.

NEW ZEALAND

Earlier this year the editor received a telephone call from a member in New Zealand regarding a very distressing event which had occurred there. A number of parrot eggs which were illegally smuggled into the country were confiscated by the authorities and placed in an incubator. However, the officials responsible seemed unable to adopt a logical policy regarding the fate of the eggs. When the chicks started to hatch instructions were given that the incubator must not be opened and that the chicks must be left to die. Needless to say, our member was appalled at this inhumane decision and had organised a delegation of aviculturists to meet an official. Let us hope that by now a decision has been made which will ensure that such an unfortunate event could never happen again. It is too much to hope that the outcome will deter smuggling, since those involved in such activity are normally solely concerned with how much income will result.

USA

Captive Breeding Survey Update

AFA has helped World Wildlife Fund/TRAFFIC USA in distributing the 1991 Captive Breeding Survey. To allow everyone an opportunity to participate, the dead-line for returning completed surveys has been extended until November 30th. This survey will document captive breeding for the 1990 calendar year, as a continuation of the successful survey last year. For those who still don't have one, 1991 survey forms are available from Kurt Johnson; TRAFFIC USA/WWF; 1250 24th St; NW; Washington DC 20037. The phone number is (202) 778-9679.

PARROT MEETINGS

It is an indication of the importance of the parrots that so many meetings concerning them are held every year. Here are some notes on six such meetings.

In October 1991 a meeting of the *St. Vincent Parrot Consortium* was held at the New York Zoological Society offices in Central Park, New York. Present were representatives of most organisations holding this species, including Houston Zoo,

obtained, and that if they made this concession to St. Vincent they might have to make similar concessions to perhaps twenty governments.

Members of the Consortium agreed to provide funds for additional breeding aviaries at the excellent facility in the Botanical Gardens, Kingstown, St. Vincent. (See picture). A mist net to trap a group of non-endemic parrots has been supplied to the Forestry Division, and the cost of re-printing a handbook to assist keepers of pet parrots on the island will be met by the Consortium.



Consortium members visiting the breeding facility on St. Vincent.

New York Zoological Society, Walsrode, Loro Parque, Paradise Park, Dr. Tom Nichols, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, and the St. Vincent Forestry Division. Mr. Ramon Noegel was unable to attend.

Breeding results were reported from Paradise Park (1 female bred in 1991) and St. Vincent (9 birds bred in last 4 years). The Consortium controls or has information on 108 birds, and the genetic potential of these birds was reviewed. It was considered that the birds available represented a more than adequate founder stock for a viable longterm captive population of this species. Various movements within the Consortium were discussed, and a report will be prepared for the consideration of the St. Vincent Government. One recommendation will be for the government to demand the return of any St. Vincent Parrot to St. Vincent if that bird has not been exported with official approval.

It is important to note that members of the Consortium are required to sign a document confirming that all birds held, and any offspring, are the property of the St. Vincent Government. At the meeting Vogelpark Walsrode became signatories to the Consortium, but Loro Parque refused to sign, stating that their two males had been legally

Caribbean Parrots PVA

The World Parrot Trust was invited to attend this meeting which took place on St. Vincent, immediately following the St. Vincent Parrot Consortium meeting in New York. PVA stands for 'Population Viability Analysis', and this is a technique employed by the Captive Breeding Specialist Group of IUCN, under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Ulysses S. Seal.

The Caribbean Parrots PVA brought together an impressive group of experts including Paul Butler, David Evans, Noel Snyder, Rosemarie Gnam, forestry officers from St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Dominica, and representatives from a number of institutions breeding Caribbean parrot species. The status of island species was reviewed, and the news was generally encouraging.

The St. Vincent Parrot population is now estimated at around 500, with modest growth in numbers each year. It is thought possible that the Forest Reserve may be approaching its maximum holding capacity. The habitat is subject to only minor encroachment, although the loss of forest is estimated at 1% per annum. A successful captive breeding programme has been established on the island, and a significant number of birds is held outside the island.

The St. Lucia Parrot now has a population estimated at 300, a dramatic improvement over the situation 10 or 12 years ago when perhaps only 100 existed. The only captive breeding programme outside St. Lucia is at JWPT.

On Dominica the Imperial Amazon is estimated to have increased its population from around 50 birds after Hurricane Hugo to around 80 today. The Red-necked Amazon is now thought to number about 300, which is also a good increase.

It is clear that the improving status of these endangered parrots has been brought about by the outstanding efforts of the forestry staff on each island, and the inspirational work of individuals such as Paul Butler and David Evans. Over a long period of years much valuable assistance has been provided by the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, including aviary construction and regular census taking by David Jeggo and others.

If only the solutions which have helped the Caribbean parrots could be so readily applied to parrot disaster areas such as Indonesia or parts of Brazil.

The UK Parrot Convention. Chester

This three day meeting took place in November, with almost 200 delegates attending. We took the opportunity of holding the first ever public meeting of the World Parrot Trust. This was well attended and we conducted a somewhat informal review of the first two years' work of the trust. The programme included many distinguished speakers, including Joanne Abramson and Richard Schubot from the USA and Tony Silva from Loro Parque. George Smith departed from his scheduled subject to describe his journey in search of the Glaucous Macaw. (He didn't find it, but came across a number of tantalising clues.) The organisers are to be congratulated on this convention, which ran smoothly and with a most friendly and positive atmosphere.

Parrot Action Plan

This meeting has been arranged by ICBP (International Council for Bird Preservation) and takes place in January 1992 at their Cambridge UK headquarters. The World Parrot Trust are among the limited number of participants, and the intention is to review and coordinate the work being carried out on behalf of psittacine species around the world. A future PsittaScene will report on what transpires.

Europarrot 92

We reported this proposed forthcoming meeting in Denmark in our last issue, but unfortunately this potentially valuable affair has had to be cancelled for logistical reasons. The main purpose of the meeting was to have been to explore the consequences for parrot aviculture of the arrival of the 'New Europe' at the end of 1992. The World Parrot Trust will aim to keep abreast of developments and report them to readers of PsittaScene.

7th Papagaaien Symposium 1992

This important symposium will be held at Amersfoort, Holland on the 4th of April 1992. For the first time, it will be held under the auspices of The World Parrot Trust, as arranged by our new Benelux Chapter. Previous symposia have included members of a number of avicultural organisations and clubs, but the intention of this symposium is to focus the attention of delegates on the conservation aims and activities of the World Parrot Trust. A new opportunity for us to remind aviculturists of all they have received from the parrots, and the urgent need for us to 'put something back' to help preserve the parrots in the wild.

All are welcome to attend, and delegate application forms can be supplied by: B. Keresboom, Dillenburg 7, 3871 DE Hoevelaken, Netherlands, or from: S. Coeck, 't Withof 4, 2280 Grobbendonk, Belgium.



Inaugural meeting of WPT's Benelux chapter, held at Antwerp Zoo.

NEW YEARS RESOLUTION

This is the first issue of PsittaScene for 1992, the Trust's third year of existence. The World Parrot Trust has reported regularly on its progress and the projects it has supported. In addition the Newsletter has acted as a focus for debate on avicultural issues and reported on research and news from around the world.

It is time to make plans for 1992, so lets start by making a new year's resolution to "Actively Support Conservation". Many of you have been very generous in donating sums in addition to your annual membership fee and we are very grateful for this sign of your commitment to the trust. But have you supported any projects or

appeals with sums exceeding £100? Have you held a Fund Raising Event like those reported on our action page?

You have chosen to join the World Parrot Trust because you care about Parrot Conservation, so please make the World Parrot Trust your CHARITY OF THE YEAR for 1992. Talk to your friends and colleagues about our achievements. Consider ways of raising funds. If you can afford it, support one of our projects (Remember, in the U.K. any gift from a company over £600 will attract capital gains relief, a gift of over £600 from an individual will reduce the liability for higher tax or smaller sums can be paid free of tax through the P.A.Y.E. Scheme).

During 1992, we hope to continue our support for the research programme for the Red Tailed Black Cockatoo, the Echo Parakeet on Mauritius, and further mobile interpretive centres to help the parrots in the Caribbean. With your help we can continue to support these vital projects and make a real improvement in the survival chances of these birds. Every one of us *can* play a part in halting their decline. If we all work together we *can* provide a future for many beautiful parrot species, so lets make 1992 a year of hope and optimism, a year of fund raising and a year of real progress.

Judith Venning
Enthusiastic Administrator!

AMAZON STUDBOOKS

Mark Pilgrim, UK Studbook keeper for the Green-cheeked Amazon (*Amazona viridigenalis*) and the Lilacine Amazon (*A. autumnalis lilacina*) is disappointed at the lack of response he has received from aviculturists. If you keep either of these species, we appeal to you to contact Mark (North of England Zoological Society, Chester Zoo, Caughall Road, Upton-by-Chester CH2 1LH) so that details of your birds can be entered in the appropriate studbooks. Confidentiality is respected - so your participation will not result in a visit from the taxman or from bird

thieves.

Both these species are endangered in the wild and all aviculturists who maintain them have a moral obligation to play their part in helping to ensure their future in aviculture. It is important that non-breeding birds or same-sex pairs are identified now, while UK breeders still have the opportunity to obtain mates for them. Without this vital co-operation, the number of breeding pairs in the UK will be small.

We would also appeal to breeders not to sell their young as pets, but to contact Mark Pilgrim who can put them in touch with other breeders. In this way, more unrelated breeding pairs can be formed.

USA STUDBOOKS

Following several requests from American members wishing to register their birds in studbooks we have been in contact with Robert Wiese who is the AAZPA's* Conservation Biologist. He kindly provided us with the following details of regional studbooks currently in operation in North America.

Palm Cockatoo

Ron Young
Mesker Park Zoo
2421 Bement Avenue
Evansville, IN 47720-5500

Thick Billed Parrot

Susan Healy
Sacramento Zoo
3930 West Land Park Drive
Sacramento, CA 95822

Hyacinthine Macaw

Bob Wilson
Franklin Park Zoo
Franklin Park
Boston, MA 02121

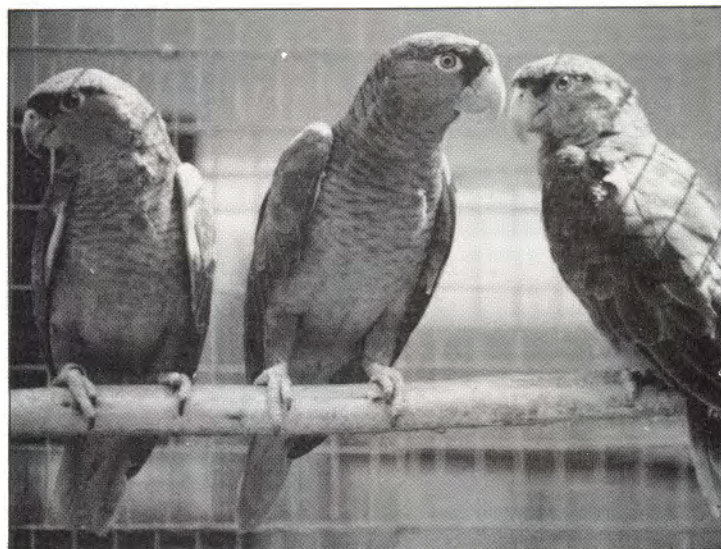
Red fronted Macaw

Wendy Turner
Cheyenne Mountain Zoological Park
4250 Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Road
Colorado Springs, CO 80906

Hawk headed Parrot

Don Rhoades
Riverbanks Zoological Park
PO Box 1060
Columbia, SC 29202

* American Association of Zoological Parks & Aquaria



Pair of Green-cheeked Amazon (male centre) with one of two young they reared at Palmitos Park, Gran Canaria, in 1991.

CONCERN ABOUT SEXING TECHNIQUE

Since requesting information about readers experience with parrot sexing techniques, we have received a significant number of complaints about inaccurate results. These seem to indicate that chromosomal sexing of parrots in the UK is not to be relied upon.

A few examples:-

A Leadbeater's Cockatoo was reported to be a cock. It was sold as such, but subsequent surgical sexing revealed it to be a hen. Result: a substantial financial loss for the breeder.

A group of eight cockatoos were hatched, reared and 'sexed' by the same organisation providing the chromosome sexing service. Surgical sexing showed that 3 out of eight were incorrectly chromosome sexed. Correspondence with the sexing service brought no satisfactory explanation.

A correspondent reports that he sent two samples from the same Hawk Headed Parrot. One came back as a 'hen', the other as a 'cock'.

Two leading zoos report a number of chromosome sexing results subsequently proved incorrect by surgical sexing.

We could go on, with other examples relating to Macaws, Amazons and other parrots. In making this report we have felt it necessary to put the interests of aviculturists ahead of the interests of those offering this service. Nothing is more frustrating than waiting for years for two birds of the same sex to breed.

GREETINGS CARDS

Packs of Ten for \$4.50 inc postage. Blank inside for you to include your own message.



FUND RAISING IDEAS

Tracy Coots raised the magnificent sum of \$646.69 during the summer. She gathered together a group of friends and colleagues and launched a "Parrot Day". Everyone dressed in parrot costumes, took their collecting tins onto the streets of Jersey and mingled with the holiday makers. A local bank was also persuaded to contribute to the cause. Tracy Coote reported that everyone had a wonderful day.

Back at the Trust's base in



Cornwall, a small team of volunteers set up a display at the local Safeway Store and raised £560.00 during one short weekend. If anyone else would like to have a go, contact Judith Venning, the Administrator, who will be pleased to give you a few hints and get you started. If you have any good ideas of your own, do let us know.

Don't Forget: RAFFLE TICKETS are still available to U.K. members for you to sell amongst your family or at your local bird clubs. Unfortunately regulations prevent us from offering tickets abroad.

Parrot Studbook Keepers

Once again we publish a list of Studbook Keepers. All readers holding these species would do well to register their birds with the relevant studbook keeper. **The development of these vital studbooks is being seriously damaged by the non-participation of leading aviculturists. If they are as conservation-minded as they pretend, they will register their birds right away.**

BLUE-EYED COCKATOO *R*
PALM COCKATOO *R*

Dr. Roger Wilkinson, North of England Zoological Society, Chester Zoo, Caughall Road, Upton-by-Chester, CH2 1LH.

GREEN-CHEEKED AMAZON *R*
LILACINE AMAZON

Mark Pilgrim, North of England Zoological Society, Chester Zoo, Caughall Road, Upton-by-Chester, CH2 1LH.

MOLUCCAN COCKATOO *R*

Rob Colley, Pencyrnor Wildlife Park, Cilfreu, Neath, Glam., S. Wales.

GOFFIN'S COCKATOO *R*

SCARLET MACAW *R*

BUFFON'S MACAW *R*

RED FRONTED MACAW *R*

David Woolcock, Paradise Park, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY.

THICK BILLED PARROT *R*

David Jeggo, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Les Augres Manor, Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands.

HYACINTH MACAW *R*

Colin Bath, Paignton Zoological & Botanical Gardens, Totnes Road, Paignton, Devon.

GOLDEN CONURE *I*

Alan Lieberman, San Diego Zoo, PO Box 551, San Diego, California, 92112-0551 USA.

GOLDEN CONURE *R*

RED-VENTED COCKATOO *R*

BLUE-STREAKED LORY *R*

c/o The Parrot Society, 108b, Fenlake Road, Bedford MK42 0EU.

R = UK REGIONAL STUDBOOK

I = INTERNATIONAL STUDBOOK

T-SHIRTS

Hyacinth Fund "Proteja" T-Shirts and World Parrot Trust T-Shirts available for £10 plus post and packing £2 in UK or Europe, or \$4 airmail elsewhere.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

We hope to continue the steady increase of members during 1992, and to encourage our existing members to help, we have the following incentives:- If you can introduce FIVE new members during 1992, we will give you FREE OF CHARGE an unmounted limited edition print of the Hyacinth Macaw "The Noblest of Them All". If you introduce two or more, we will give you a FREE poster depicting the Caribbean Parrots. If you introduce one new member, we will send you our exclusive World Parrot Trust badge.

HYACINTH HOLDALL

This is a lightweight white linen bag, measuring 40cm x 38cm, available for only £3.50 including post and package. An ideal small gift for a friend.

If you are in a hurry, all items can be ordered by telephoning Judith Venning on 0736 753365 during normal business hours, and paid for by visa or access.

AIMS OF THE WORLD PARROT TRUST

The objective of the trust is to promote the survival of all parrot species and the welfare of individual birds.

- 1 By educating the general public worldwide about the threat to parrot survival, and seeking their interest, concern and support.
- 2 By action to protect and preserve the natural habitats of parrots worldwide.
- 3 By gathering and disseminating information on the status of parrot populations in the wild and in captivity.
- 4 By advocating effective controls on the international trade in wild-caught parrots, and its replacement by captive-bred birds.
- 5 By encouraging co-operation in the breeding of parrots by aviculturists and zoological institutions, and better liaison between the captive breeding community and conservation bodies, with the aim of creating self-sustaining populations of endangered species.
- 6 By promoting high standards in the keeping of parrots as pets.
- 7 By encouraging research projects, i.e.: the veterinary care of parrots, and the preservation of genetic diversity.
- 8 By any other means that may be appropriate.

WORLD PARROT TRUST A Brief Progress Report

This charity was launched in October 1989 to work for the survival and welfare of the world's 320 species of parrot, of which 100 species are endangered. It is the only international organisation devoted exclusively to the parrot family. In its first 18 months it has raised over £80,000, and supported the following important parrot-related projects around the world.:

Australia: Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. Research to assist the survival of an endangered population of this spectacular Cockatoo in Victoria. A four year programme to which we contribute £8,000.

Brazil: Spix's Macaw. Helping with the cost of an expedition to investigate the population status of this most endangered of all macaws. Only one remains in the wild. Our contribution: \$2,000.



Brazil: Hyacinth Macaw. Field research into the breeding biology of this species, carried out by Dr. Charles Munn. A contribution of \$6,000. Also a donation of \$600 towards work carried out by a team of Danish biologists.

Caribbean: St. Lucia Parrot. Providing posters and badges for an educational campaign designed to reach every child on St. Lucia: \$2,500. Followed by our largest project so far, the purchase and conversion of a 'conservation bus', the Jacquot Express. This has been delivered to St. Lucia and is being very successful in promoting the preservation of the remaining forest where the endangered St. Lucia parrot lives. Cost to the World Parrot Trust: \$14,000.

Central America: Endangered Macaws. We supported the 1991 Honduras Workshop on Macaw Conservation and Management with a donation of \$600.

Indonesia: Endangered Cockatoos. We made a small contribution towards a British expedition to study and report on the Moluccan Cockatoo and other species, declining rapidly due to deforestation and trapping for the pet trade. £500.

Mauritius: Echo Parakeet. Undoubtedly the world's rarest parrot. Only about 12 or 15 birds left in the wild. Captive breeding and other conservation measures being pursued by Carl Jones, known for his success with the Mauritius Kestrel and Pink Pigeon. The trust has provided general financial support, plus the cost of a four-wheel-drive vehicle (approx. £12,000, of which £2,500 was kindly donated by The Parrot Society). Total contributed to date: \$20,000.

Mexico: Maroon-fronted Parrot. This is Mexico's most endangered parrot: perhaps no more than 600 still exist in a small part of the Sierra Madre. The Trust recently visited this area to assess the situation, and conservation measures are planned. Cost of this visit was approx. £1,000, but these expenses will be met by our Hon. Director, not the Trust's funds.

We hope you will agree that the above summary indicates a charity that is active and full of initiative and concern for its objectives. We urgently need the support of everybody who keeps parrots as pets or in aviaries, or who simply cares about their survival and well-being.

Michael Reynolds



YES

I WANT TO BE A PARROT CONSERVATIONIST

Helping the **SURVIVAL** of all parrot species, and the **WELFARE** of every individual parrot.

Name Mr/Mrs/Ms _____
Address _____
Postcode _____

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (please tick)

UK and Europe Single £15 UK and Europe Family £20 Fellow £250 Overseas Airmail £25 Surface Mail £18

Additional donation £ _____
If you can afford to give more than the basic subscription rate, your money will help us fight harder to save the parrots.

I enclose cheque/P.O. for £ _____ payable to The World Parrot Trust
OR Please charge my Access/Visa Ac/No.

Card expiry date _____ Amount £ _____ Date _____

Signature _____
OR better still, please sign this Banker's Order

BANKERS ORDER

To: The Manager _____ Bank
Address _____

Postcode _____ Sortcode _____

Please pay The World Parrot Trust, the sum of £ _____
every month/year, starting on _____ (date), and
debit my account no. _____

Signed _____

Pay to The World Parrot Trust, A/C No. 91144022
Midland Bank plc, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1HF.
Please send to The World Parrot Trust, **NOT** to your bank.
The World Parrot Trust, Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY, U.K.

The World Parrot Trust
Glanmor House, Hayle
Cornwall TR27 4HY, U.K.
Regd. UK Charity No. 800944
Tel: (0736) 753365
Fax: (0736) 756438

