Psitta scene

News about parrot conservation, aviculture and welfare from The World Parrot Trust

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THE BLUE MACAW CONFERENCE

by Michael Reynolds

The World Parrot Trust received an invitation to attend this conference in October 1992, and I was able to combine it with my visit to Paraguay the previous week. The conference was organised jointly by IBAMA, IUCN/CBSG, WWF/TRAFFIC, and Biodiversitas. Other participating organisations included CITES, ICBP, Conservation International, AAZPA, and World Parrot Trust.

Spix's Macaw

The main event of the week at Belo Horizonte was the PHVA (Population and Habitat Viability Assessment) Workshop for Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii*. A comprehensive briefing book was supplied to all participants. The various sections covered: History of the Conservation Effort, Committee Reports, Field Research, Avicultural Reports, Chromosome & DNA Analysis, Diseases, Studbook, Small Populations and Related Information.

Undoubtedly the most compelling contribution to the Workshop came from Marcos da-Re, the field biologist who has been working on Spix's Macaw for more than a year. He has succeeded in organising the support and concern of the inhabitants in the area, and in particular the nearby town of Curaca. The blue macaw, known as 'Ararinha Azul', has effectively been adopted as the symbol of the district, and there is even a restaurant named after it.

Much time was devoted to means of determining the sex of the single bird remaining in the wild, and the scope for reintroducing one or more birds to the wild. Although the final report and management plan is not yet available, it seems certain that this will be a first priority. The management of the captive population of approximately 30 birds was also discussed at length. Seven of these birds are held in Brazil, and I was able to see and photograph those at Sao Paulo Zoo and in Nelson Kawall's collection.

The remainder of the birds in the Studbook are held by three collections outside Brazil: Loro Parque, Tenerife; Mr. De Dios, Philippines; Dr. Hammerli, Switzerland. It was a great disappointment that none of these holders attended the Workshop. At a time when aviculture needs to demonstrate its responsibility for the endangered species it has the privilege to have in its care, this is most regrettable. The only positive aspect is that Mr. De Dios has offered to supply a young Spix's Macaw to be paired with the bird in the wild. Another unfortunate fact is that the DNA work carried out on the captive population is incomplete, and therefore of little value. It will probably have to be done again.

The situation of Spix's Macaw

Spix's Macaw at Sao Paulo Zoo. *Photo: Michael Reynolds*

"psittacine
(sit'ă sīn) Belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like"

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Members of IUCN The World Conservation Union

Lear's Macaw . Adult pair and juvenile, near Canudos, Brazil. *Photo courtesy of Biodiversitas*

remains desperate, both in the wild and in captivity. Having had the benefit of attending the Workshop, I believe it is essential to try to maintain the remaining bird in the wild, and provide it with a breeding partner as soon as possible. A second pair should also be released. It is also vital to support the work of Marcos da-Re, thus ensuring that the wild population is safe-guarded. The World Parrot Trust, which in 1990 jointly funded the ICBP expedition to establish the status of Spix's Macaw, has been invited to give further assistance to the species, and hopes to be able to assist the conversion of a derelict theatre in Curaca into a community and conservation centre. Regarding the captive population, the Trust would like to see the Brazilian authorities take a firmer line with the holders of the species in Europe and Asia. It would be a disaster for aviculture if, due to a lack of goodwill and proper cooperation, this species were to be lost in the wild and only sustained as a captive population for primarily commercial objectives.

Lear's Macaw

A separate workshop was held for Lear's Macaw *Anodorhynchus leari*. This species has a small population of about 60 left in the wild. The birds are dependent on the licuri palm for their principal food supply, and during the breeding season are recorded as flying 80km to 100km per day in search of it. Field researchers, including Munn, Yamashita, Hart and Machado, emphasise the need to protect existing licuri palms from goats and cattle and to establish new plantations.

The presence of guards and field biologists in the area where Lear's Macaw roosts and nests is thought to reduce greatly the possibility of birds being taken for trade. It is accepted that continuing research into the general and breeding biology of the species is needed, and The World Parrot Trust has provided funds for such research. The Trust has recently launched a 'Palm for a Parrot' fund-raising campaign. In the case of this species also, excellent environmental education work is being carried out in its immediate locality, and this too deserves support.

About ten captive specimens exist, but these are widely dispersed and the majority are considered too old to form the basis of a successful captive breeding programme. Therefore the emphasis must be on the preservation and expansion of the wild population.

Hyacinth Macaw

In comparison with the two other endangered Brazilian macaws, the Hyacinth Macaw *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* is clearly in a much stronger position. Between 3000 and 4000 are thought to remain in the wild, in four separate populations. Although some birds are still being trapped for the pet trade, it is considered that ranchers and other landowners have come to value and appreciate these macaws, and that there is a reasonable prospect of the populations stabilising at around the current numbers.

The Hyacinth Workshop heard excellent reports of continuing field work from Carlos Yamashita, and from Neiva Guedes, working with separate populations. With this species also it is evident that the presence of researchers in the field encourages the local people to take a proprietorial interest in the macaws and help protect them from trappers.

The World Parrot Trust, through its Hyacinth Fund, has supported the work of Carlos Yamashita and Charles Munn during the past year, and will continue to do so in the future. Neiva Guedes has been funded by WWF but it seems there is some doubt about this being continued. For the reason given above, this would be very regrettable. Incidentally we have supplied over 100 of our special Brazilian Hyacinth T-shirts for use by Carlos and Neiva in their vital field work.

The Hyacinth Macaw is well established in aviculture, with perhaps as many being held in captivity as there are in the wild. Breeding success is being achieved increasingly, although the vast majority of young birds are hand-reared for sale as pets. This, hopefully, relieves the pressure on the wild population, but it is very unlikely that such imprinted birds would ever be of use in a reintroduction programme. The World Parrot Trust advocates the production of parent reared Hyacinth Macaws wherever possible.

Above left: Unusually, this Hyacinth Macaw nest contained a clutch of three eggs. Photo: Carlos Yamashita

Above middle: Two Hyacinth chicks in a natural nest. Photo: Carlos Yamashita

Above right: Probably the first Hyacinth Macaw chick to be reared in the wild in an artificial nest box. This programme is part funded by the World Parrot Trust. Photo: Carlos Yamashita

Concluding Remarks

It was extremely valuable for The World Parrot Trust, and for me personally, to meet and work with the delegates to the Blue Macaw workshops at Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Many useful contacts have been established, and it is clear that the Trust is well regarded by the conservation community. In our three years of existence we have demonstrated our ability to pursue parrot conservation projects in Australia, the Caribbean, Central America, Indonesia, Mauritius, Mexico, Paraguay, and of course, Brazil.

As funds allow, we will continue to expand our work with endangered parrots, both in the wild and in captivity. We have recently agreed to make a contribution towards a new ICBP initiative to research the problems facing two Brazilian Amazon parrots, *A. pretrei* and *A. vinacea*. The Trust also intends to continue its support for all three endangered Brazilian Macaws: Spix's, Lear's, and the Hyacinth Macaw.

CONSERVATION OF THE LEAR'S MACAW: Management of an Endangered Species

by Judith K. Hart MD

INTRODUCTION

Not much can be added to Professor Helmut Sick's original description of A. leari, in a paper presented at the I.C.B.P. meeting, St. Lucia, 1980. Professor Sick was reporting observations made by him in 1978. I will summarize his findings which are the first observations of the macaw and its habitat.

A. leari resembles the Hyacinthine macaw, *A. hyacinthinus,* but is smaller, slightly greyer in color and has a shorter tail. The most important morphological characteristic of *A. leari* is the big, nearly triangular, folded, yellow skin at the base of the mandible instead of the flat yellow band of skin that curves around the mandible of *A. hyacinthinus. A. leari* lives in flocks which roost together at night in high eroded sandstone cliffs. The macaws leave at dawn and fly long distances to find food, returning to the cliffs at dusk.

Yamashita (1985) adds that in comparison to *A. hyacinthinus, A. leari* has a proportionately longer wing and a shorter tail.

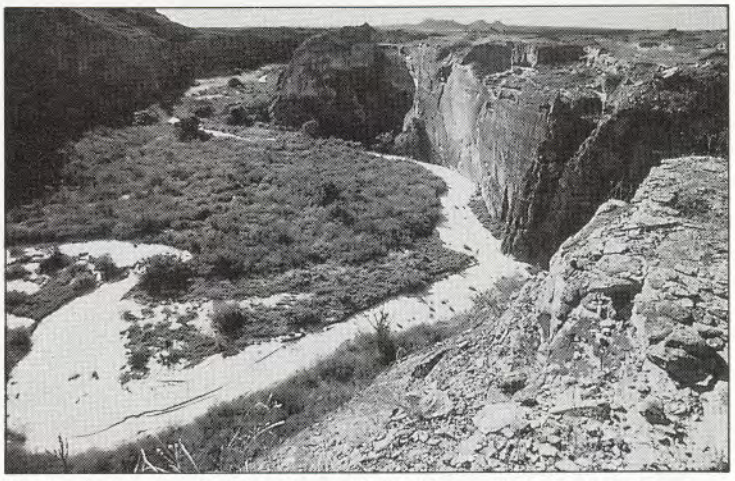
A. leari is adapted to the very hot dry climate of the region where the daily temperature range is between 59°F and 113°F. The macaw has rarely been seen drinking water and probably gets all of its liquid from the milk of the immature nuts of the Licuri palm and from other wild fruits.

The ecosystem that supports *A. leari* is called Caatinga. Caatinga formations develop in areas receiving less than 800mm annual rainfall and on sandy soils poor in organic material. The range of A. leari is partially within an area called the Raso da Catarina. In the "Raso", plateaus, 300m to 800m in height, are cut by canyons and rimmed by sandstone cliffs. The Vasa Barris river runs through the "Raso". This river and its flood plain provide arable soil to feed a relatively dense human population, which has existed here since 1870.

Sixty to 100 years ago, the Lear's macaw was common in N.E. Bahia, around the head waters of the Vasa Barris river. Grand parents of the current residents remember seeing large flocks of these blue macaws flying overhead. Within the last thirty years, *A. leari* has ceased to exist in the northern part of its range. Coinciding with or contributing to the disappearance of *A. leari,* was the tremendous oil exploratory effort of Petrobras, the Brazilian national oil company, begun some twenty five years ago in the region. The roads built by Petrobras opened up large areas of the wild Caatinga to human settlement, ranching, farming and hunting.

The favored food of *A. leari* is the fruit of the Licuri palm, *Syagrus coronata.* The fruit contains a nut filled with a fatty meat similar to coconut. The palm trees grow best in arable soil and are often left in farmer's fields as an indication of the productive level of the land. The foliage and raceme of unripe fruit are often cut to provide food for cattle.

The original estimate of the size



The Toca Valley near Canudos. Home of Lear's Macaw. Photo: Biodiversitas

Lear's Macaws in flight. *Photo: Biodiversitas*

of the macaw population was 200, based on the assumption that other flocks of macaws would be found. Later estimates put the total number of Lear's macaw at about 70 when discovered in 1978.

The discovery of *A. leari* and subsequent writings by Professor Helmut Sick became known to me in 1984 just as I finished a five month study of the breeding behavior of *A. hyacinthinus* in the Mato Grosso of south western Brazil. In 1985, World Wildlife Fund and I, with the assistance of SEMA (now IBAMA), Carlos Yamashita of IBDF (now part of IBAMA) and Luis Gonzaga of the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro, began to put together facts and guesses about *A. leari.* This lead to the creation of the Lear's Macaw Project. The ultimate purpose of the project was to provide money and a plan to protect the macaw. However, the project soon became a series of problems, the solutions to which have been found after a good deal of research and observation.

PROBLEMS

Several separate problems were seen to exist. They were:

- Guarding of the area to prevent hunting and trapping of the already endangered macaws by smugglers
- Delineation of feeding range and identification of roosting and breeding sites
- Understanding of feeding patterns, breeding behavior and general flock behavior, surveying of food sources, their importance and availability
- Determination of an accurate flock census
- Education of the local populace and the promotion of the public awareness of the Lear's Macaw Project
- Determination of the causes for the observed decline of the species
- Reversal of this decline

SOLUTIONS

Now, five years later, the Lear's Macaw Project has solved most of the original problems, identified new ones and in so doing, uncovered facts that led to both favorable and unfavorable conclusions.

PROTECTION

The guarding of the area has been accomplished through two strategies: employment of local guards and enlistment of protective landowners.

In 1979, SEMA hired two local men as guards of a canyon where the original roosting site was identified. The Project augmented the salaries paid to these two guards, provided them horses to increase their effective range, and set up a communication network for their support. The movements of strangers in the area are monitored by the guards and access to sensitive areas has been somewhat controlled. The Project was able to utilize the infrastructure of a local SEMA office set up to administer an ecological station for the protection of the Caatinga Ecosystem in the Raso da Catarina.

Wealthy land owners were contacted and found to have a protective interest in the macaws and other wildlife. These owners will "shoot to kill" to protect their land from hunters and smugglers.

SURVEY OF RANGE and Identification of Roosting and Breeding Sites

Singly or in small groups, Project members surveyed the surrounding area, questioned farmers and ranchers and studied all available reports. This information was given to two graduate students in biology, Alexander Brandt and Ricardo Bomfin Machado, who had applied for grants to research the macaws' range, roosting and breeding sites. They also studied feeding and flock behavior. They were able to make an accurate census of the macaw, 54 as of 1989.

An additional roosting site was found, 50km from the site found by Professor Sick in 1978. We had hoped that this site was used by another, as yet, unidentified flock. To our surprise, however, the original flock of fifty four macaws had a range of 100 square miles and at night, used whichever roost was nearest to their days' forage.

FEEDING BEHAVIOR AND FOOD SUPPLY

In studying the macaws' feeding habits, the researchers found that when the Licuri palm nuts are scarce, the macaws eat corn, maize and the seeds of the local Pião (*euphorbiaciae sp.*).

Researchers tagged and monitored representative groups of Licuri palms in all of the feeding areas. The age, abundance and seasonality of their fruit was calculated. All the palms were old (thirty years or greater) and only half of them were producing well. Very few seedlings or young palms were found.

The Licuri palm nuts are most abundant, December through March, and sparse the remaining months of the year. Corn, on which the macaws show an increasing dependence over the past ten years, is usually planted when there is a chance of rain, August–September and December–January. The pião, which grows best in any disturbed or cleared area, produces a small tripartite nut, ripening one month after a significant rain.

REVERSAL OF POPULATION DECLINE

Our first priority is therefore to halt the killing of the macaws. We made sure that everyone understood that jail or worse awaited anyone who injured a macaw. A macaw was shot in front of a witness. The macaw was wounded and lived long enough to engage public sympathy. The government police were notified and arrived from the capital (an eight

Family living in the Toca Valley. *Photo: Biodiversitas*

hour drive away), complete with automatic weapons. The unfortunate macaw shooter groveled and pled for mercy. He was let off but warned that if another macaw was injured in the area, he would be taken to jail immediately. The police stayed overnight in the area and impressed everyone greatly with their mercy and wisdom. The killer was a poor man with many children to feed. It would benefit him in the future to prevent any more killings of macaws. The whole incident was an "event" and served to show the people that the macaws were important. Our prestige was enhanced by the fact that the police responded to our call.

More effective than threats has been simply dissemination of information about the macaw. There is a good deal of local pride and residents have come to feel proud of "their macaw", since there is no other such bird anywhere in the world.

Owners of corn fields in the area were consulted about the macaw's destruction of their corn. We have promised them benefits if they tolerate macaws in their fields. These benefits include replacement of lost corn as well as up to date cultivation information through the local government agricultural agency, EMATER. EMATER has a large enough infrastructure to undertake this part of the project.

The plan for large scale planting of Licuri seedlings has been delayed because of the lack of personnel to do the work. The seedlings are available but protection from cattle and goats is a problem.

One wealthy land owner has fully understood our concern with food supply for the macaws. He has bought a large amount of land around an old plantation near one of the macaw roosting sites. Over a period of five years, during which cattle and goats were excluded, the land has returned to a wild state. A large number of young Licuri palms has grown up. These vigorous young palms bear a large amount of fruit.

During the year of 1989, the macaw count increased to 61 as the young chicks rejoined the flock with their parents in May and June. We hope that these gains are permanent and indicate the positive effects of increased awareness, decreased hunting and a moderate increase in food supply.

Editor's Note:

We are grateful to Dr. Judith Hart for permission to publish extracts from her paper. The planting of Licuri palm seedlings which she recommends is being vigorously sponsored by The World Parrot Trust through its 'Palm for a Parrot' campaign. Readers may like to help with donations for this vital project.

RECENT OBSERVATIONS OF LEAR'S MACAW

by Charlie Munn III, Ph.D.

Dear Mike and all at World Parrot Trust,
Here is a summary of a recent visit to the Lear's area.

Mariana, my wife, and I tried to fly from Lima to Brazil on 3 January on Aeroperu, but five minutes after taking off, the plane returned and made an emergency landing, complete with firetrucks waiting for us next to the runway. They said it was landing gear problems, but we don't necessarily believe them. So we transfered to the next VARIG flight from Lima to Brazil (which was just after midnight on the early morning of 6 Jan). We thus arrived to Salvador, the capital of Bahia, in the late afternoon of 6 January.

The next day, Jan 7, Mariana and I took a bus and a taxi to pick up the WCI four-wheel drive NIVA car that Carlos Yamashita had trucked to Salvador from Sao Paulo. In early December 1992 Cristiano Moura (Carlos's assistant for Hyacinth nest monitoring in late 1992) had driven this car from the Pantanal to Sao Paulo. That day and the following day, Jan 8, we prepared for our trip into the dry outback of the state of Bahia. On the afternoon of Jan 8, we left Salvador for the outback, stopping for the night in a small hotel in the city of Alagoinhas just north of Salvador. There, we bought a couple of small pots, some beans and rice, two machetes, and matches, etc., for camping out in the bush.

On Jan 9, we drove to the tiny town of Canudos, which, together with the medium-sized town of Euclides da Cunha, are the two towns that flank the nesting and feeding grounds of the Lear's Macaws. Canudos is famous throughout Brazil as the desperately poor bush town that was the site where a messianic figure named Antonio Conselheiro led the largest peasant revolution in Brazil's history. This 1897 revolution culminated in a huge battle near Canudos between Conselheiro's followers and the Brazilian Army in which 30,000 people died. The government troops killed every single man, woman, and child in Canudos and then burned and leveled the town. The old, destroyed town of Canudos lies at the bottom of a lake produced a few decades ago by a small dam on a small river, and the new town of Canudos, which is our base of operations, lies on a higher bluff overlooking this lake, which provides water and electricity for the tiny "New Canudos".

Upon arriving in Canudos after dark, we checked into a small hotel and spoke with the woman owner, who, of course, knew Ricardo Machado from his 1988 – 1989 field work and Cristina Carvalho of Biodiversitas from her 1991 – 1992 environmental education work in the town. As Carlos instructed me, I spoke that night with the IBAMA guard who is stationed in Canudos. I had traveled with the guard and with Carlos and Marcos da Re to see the Lears at the Serra Branca (the White Mountain) in Jan 1992 and did not expect any problem in getting his OK to visit the areas briefly now to look at palms and to check the feasibility of climbing into nest holes in the future.

The following day Mariana and I

Carrying water near Canudos. *Photo: Biodiversitas*

Environmental Education. Cristina Carvalho talking to local people in the market at Canudos. *Photo: Biodiversitas*

went to the Sunday street market in Canudos and found one of the poor ranchowners from the closest nest site, Toca. He comes to town on Sundays to sell mangos that grow on a couple of trees behind his mud house in Toca, which is 9 kilometers from town. For two dollars I bought all 50 mangoes that were left and gave them away to people there in the street in order to free up his 10-year-old son to come with us as guide to go see the nest sites that same afternoon and evening. So Mariana and I packed up the car and took off for a 10 minute drive (in four-wheel-drive) through a sand and boulder track to this family's house in Toca. We arrived at the house at about 5.00pm, with just enough time to hike the remaining 2.5 kilometers out, along a dry, sand streambed to the nest site that Judy Hart had observed so many times. Everyone here knows and respects Judy (Editors Note: Judith Hart is an M.D. from the United States who has in effect 'adopted' Lear's Macaw, and has invested much time and funds studying and helping protect the birds. An extract from her paper 'Conservation of the Lear's Macaw: management of an endangered species' appears in this issue of 'PsittaScene'.

We hiked out to the spot, waited until 7.55pm (forty minutes after sunset), until it was nearly totally dark (we watched satellites crossing the sky), and only saw two birds arrive at about 7.25 (sunset) and fly by at a distance of 150–200 meters, whereupon they disappeared up a side canyon. So we only saw those two birds, and there was no sign of activity at the nest holes that Judy had watched over the years. We also noticed that there are no food palms at all for the birds in the Toca region, so obviously Toca is only useful as a roost and nest site. This was my first visit to Toca, and I was not too impressed, per se, as the lack of food palms makes its usefulness seem limited. Also, the birds arrive near or after dark, so you cannot learn much of use there. It may still be possible, however, to look into the nests that are there, but it does not seem as promising in general as Serra Branca, the nesting cliffs and palm-filled terrain owned by the gun-toting petrol station owner, Otavio. Carlos told me in Brasilia a few days later that the birds often arrive to Toca even later than I stayed there, and that it is common for them to arrive when it is completely and totally dark.

Anyway, Mariana and I pitched a tent in the bush near the mud house of the mango-selling rancher, and spent the night there and left in the morning, 11 January to drive the half hour of sand and boulder roads back to the town of Canudos. I then started calling Cristina at Biodiversitas to seek her advice on how to get into the Serra Branca to see Lear's Macaw. She advised me that she would speak by phone with Otavio in his home town of Jeremoabo (95 kilometers east of Canudos), I could then go there and negotiate directly with him and get permission to go up to the nesting area in the Serra Branca cliffs with my WCI four-wheel-drive car. So, after lunch, Mariana and I packed up the car and drove to Jeremoabo and found Otavio at home after work. He remembered our visit to the Serra Branca with Carlos, Marcos da Re, and the IBAMA guard in January 1992 (a year earlier), and he listened at length and with interest to my description of the proposed project of the World Parrot Trust and the People's Trust for Endangered Species. He asked us to come visit him tomorrow morning at his office, where we could see a video tape of the Serra Branca area made by Biodiversitas.

That night we camped a few kilometers outside of Jeremoabo in the bush, and returned the next morning, Tuesday 12 Jan, to talk with Otavio and to see the video. The video is good but is of inadequate image quality for any substantial use in fundraising or broadcast. After our meeting the previous evening, Otavio had called Cristina at home and asked her more about us. Her kind words about our macaw conservation work made Otavio much friendlier and more open than he had been the previous evening, and when I described the conservation status of other species of macaws and showed him photos of the other macaw species with which we work, he became increasingly interested. We concluded by describing how in all large macaw species that we had studied, the second (or third) nestlings often or nearly always died and that they were only for insurance purposes anyway in case the first nestling died quickly of some unexpected problem. We described how in Peru we had shown that it was cheap and easy to pull these moribund nestlings and hand raise them to independence in open air facilities. We also described how these birds handraised on site then successfully and quickly integrate themselves into the wild population of macaws but still come back to visit the project scientists for handouts.

He loved this idea and said that it should be done for the Lear's nesting in his cliffs, but he said that getting into the nests would be tricky. Anyway, he ended up giving us carte blanche to drive around on his ranch, to visit the nesting cliffs, to try to climb the cliffs, or whatever else we thought might be useful. We left in the early afternoon after our long meeting with him (and after repairing a faulty latch on the bonnet of the car) and drove the 53 kilometers west (back toward Canudos) to his ranch, which is half way along the roughly 93 kilometer road between Canudos and Jeremoabo. His ranch hands helped us load up 15 gallons of water containers from their primitive well in the valley next to the road, and

The Serra Branca. *Photo: Charles & Mariana Munn*

showed us the 13 kilometer sand road up into the "Serra Branca" cliffs and to the base of the great, flat plateau of the "Raso de Catarina". We left the ranch hands at their house at the road and drove up to the base of the cliffs and camped that night and saw in the golden afternoon light a total of 26 Lear's Macaws returning from foraging grounds perhaps 60km to the south to sleep in holes high up the cliff faces.

The next day, 13 Jan, Mariana and I tried to recall how to find the valley with the cliff faces that contain most of the nests in the Serra Branca region, and after a 45 minute walk along narrow cow paths through the thorn scrub, we found the nests. We had eaten well in the morning, and we carried machetes and three liters of water to drink as we hiked and cut trail. At 10.00am we were observing the nest sites, which you have photos of. The holes are about 45–60 meters up the cliff face, which itself is about 60–75m high. After exploring for about an hour further up the valley (out of sight of the nest holes), I climbed a tree and could see that there was one spot near the very top of the valley where the vegetation ran up the side of a slope and onto a level equal to the top of the nest cliff. This vegetation then ran along the side of the cliff in a narrow band about 15–30m wide, and might allow us to cut trail for about 400–500m back to the vegetation on the flat top above the nest holes.

Having seen that it might be possible to use this vegetation corridor to walk to the top of the nest cliff and then hang down with climbing ropes (which we had back in the car 2.5 kilometers away), we spent an hour cutting through a mere 150m of god-awful cactus and thorn scrub to reach the bank of vegetation along a cliff face. After reaching the level of the nest holes, I alone cut through about 200m of the 500m to reach the top of the nest cliff when I blundered too near an open nest of African bees ("killer bees") that was nestled under a ledge in a higher cliff that rose above the nest cliff. To escape from the bees, which only stung me twice but were flying above the scrub looking for me, I had to crawl fast on my stomach down the narrow band of thorn scrub, hoping not to topple off the edge of a 50m cliff just below me. I screamed for Mariana to come orient me, as I was scared that I would lose my bearings and end up at the edge of the cliff in my haste to crawl down through the thorns away from the bee nest and towards the cliff face. Mariana called to me to help me find my way sideways through the scrub and to avoid the cliff, and we scrambled back the 200m I had come and then descended the slope back to the valley where I contemplated my close call.

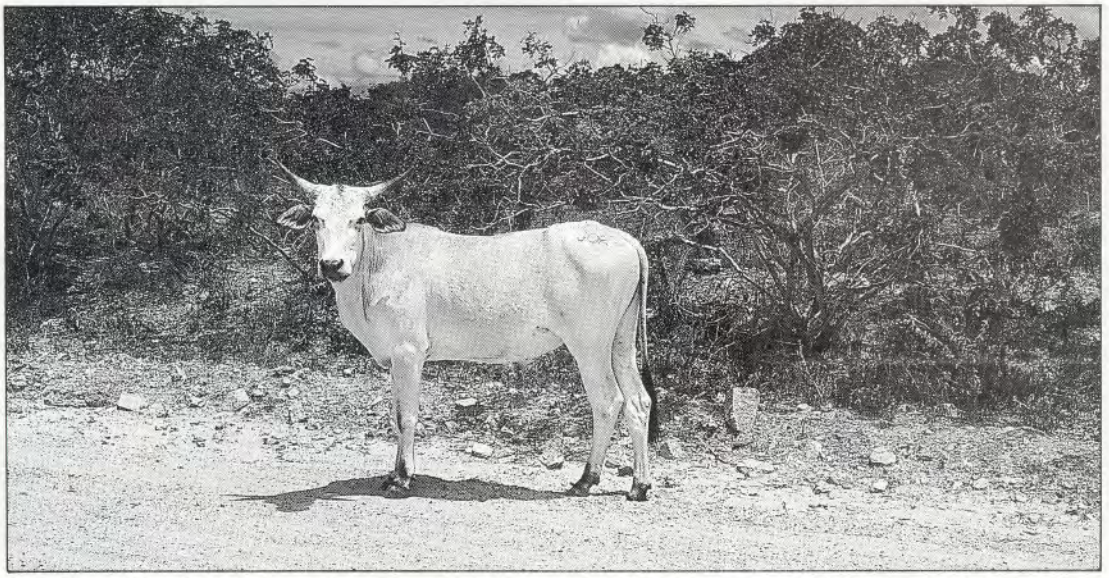
After I recovered my composure and energy, Mariana and I then scrutinized the cliffs and the vegetation bands and slopes and imagined three other alternatives to going by these mean bees to get to the top of the cliff above the nest holes. The rest of the afternoon was spent cooking, eating, and tending our many cactus spine injuries.

The next day, 14 Jan, Mariana and I did a numerical census of palm regeneration in the valley just next to the nest cliff. There are thousands of small palms trying to grow up through thick thorn scrub in that valley. There are plenty of cow trails, but there is no sign whatsoever that the cows are hungry enough to touch even the smallest, tenderest leaves of these regenerating palms. Under every palm large enough to have had fruits were palm nut shells opened by Lear's Macaws, so obviously the birds like to feed in that valley right next to their nests. Otavio had earlier suggested clearing competing vegetation away from the regenerating palms. Upon seeing the situation first hand in detail, Mariana and I concluded that such a simple plan would be both appropriate and cheap. Thus, in the next six months or year, at the most, I would like to have a reliable conservationist technician (possibly from one of WCI's long-term macaw projects) come and use a small chain saw to clear just the area over the fronds of all small palms in that valley.

Lear's Macaws resting in tree. *Photo: Biodiversitas*

In addition to looking at the encouraging situation and options for palm regeneration there at the Serra Branca, we also made a list of all the gadgets that we will require in June to try to reach the nests. We definitely need to take precautions against these bees, so a bee suit is a must. Also, we will need some rock pitons to allow us to negotiate the overhang above the nests. Also some very large, very sharp machetes to make trails to the highest points from which we shall try to watch the arrival and departure of macaws from the cliffs. As I had lost one of our two machetes, and we needed more manpower to cut kilometers of trails through the thorn scrub to get to the highest observation points, we felt that we had accomplished all that was feasible or practical in this visit, and so we might as well press on to the feeding ground areas south of Canudos nearer to Euclides da Cunha. So that afternoon, we drove out of the Serra Branca to spend the night in Canudos.

The next day, 15 Jan, we drove early to Toca to take some pictures of the local people and their house and then drove to the ranches near Euclides da Cunha that serve as the principal feeding grounds for the birds. There, we met with "old Cesarino", the uncle of the owner of "California", one of the principal ranches where the birds feed on most days. He showed us a couple of regenerating palms in the protected yard of his house and



Part of the problem. Cattle and goats destroy young palm trees. *Photo: Charles & Mariana Munn*

said that when there were no other green leaves to eat, all grazing and browsing animals would eat the palm leaves. He confirmed what we had seen a year ago and saw again with our own eyes-there is no regeneration whatsoever of palms on his ranch or on most ranches that have relatively high densities of goats, cows, and horses.

In contrast to the typical management of pastures at California, Otavio does not have any goats in the majority of the important areas at Serra Branca. Otavio also has very few cows in the Serra Branca, does not intend to cut thorn forest to put in pastures for his cows, and is not highly motivated to maximise income from cattle on his lands. Rather he lives from the income from his three gas stations in the towns of Canudos, Jeremoabo, and Paulo Alfonso, and seems genuinely interested in preserving the thorn forests and helping the macaws.

We discussed with Cesarino all imaginable details of fencing in and growing palms in the corners of the fields on his farm ("California") and other normal cow and goat ranches nearby. He told us how to build the fences, what the going rates were for fence building and fencing materials, and he gave us the name of a reliable fence builder who lived just down the road. He understood all aspects of macaw conservation and ecotourism potential, and in general was one of the most impressive and likeable persons that we met on this trip. He could be useful to incorporate into the negotiations and education program for the ranchers on the adjacent properties. We drove down the road, met with the recommended fence builder, who gave us quotes for building the fences to protect palms in the corners of the fields in California and other ranches. We then drove to Salvador, arriving at midnight.

The next morning, 16 Jan, we took a 745 flight from Salvador to Belo Horizonte, arriving there at about noon. After two hours of confusion with broken telephone lines at the Biodiversitas office and confusion in finding the offices of the organization, Mariana and I finally sat down to meetings with Cristina Carvalho, Ricardo Machado, and other biologists at Biodiversitas. We met all afternoon, and discussed different approaches to the conservation of the Lear's Macaw. In the evening, only Ricardo and his wife, Ludmilla, who is also a biologist, were able to join us for dinner, and we discussed macaw conservation until about 10.30 at night.

The next day Mariana and I spent the morning phoning Dr. Marcio Ayres and other WCI scientists in the Brazilian Amazon. You may recall that a year ago Ayres was the director of ecosystems for IBAMA, but since then he left that job to direct the original WCI field conservation program in the flooded forests of the central Brazilian Amazon. In the afternoon, we went with Ricardo and his wife for a two and a half hour drive to a small park in mountains east of Belo Horizonte to see the wild Maned Wolf come in from the forest to take bits of meat from the monks at a remote monastery. It was a spectacular event, which I highly recommend. Of course, during the total of five hours of driving and the two hours at the park waiting for the Maned Wolf, we discussed the Lear's Macaw project. Ricardo agreed to participate on several trips in 1993 and to become much more active in 1994 and 1995. In late February he agreed to go out to Canudos and to contract for fencing and to arrange to plant the first few scores or hundreds of palms in the corners of fields at California or other ranches near California. He also agreed to come with Carlos and myself in June, after the nesting season is over, to do a proper census of the birds and to cut trails to the tops of the highest viewpoints in the Serra Branca and to try to gain access to the nest holes in preparation for monitoring of the nest holes from January through March or April of 1994. Either in June or earlier, I would also like to get one of WCI's reliable field staff to go to the Serra Branca and clear vegetation away from the small palms there.

At noon on Monday 18 Jan, Mariana and I flew to Brasilia, where Carlos was attending official IBAMA meetings. We managed to meet alone and uninterrupted with Carlos for six hours and at 11.00pm we flew directly from Brasilia to Washington. During our six hours of talks with Carlos, we went over all aspects of the upcoming Lear's project. Carlos reiterated many times and with great forcefulness that the most important thing is to start planting palms, no matter how we do it. He and I are all in favor of making the palm planting as efficient and successful as possible, and to this end, between now and the end of February, Carlos, Ricardo, Cristina, WPT, and I will all be trying to obtain the best advice on planting this species of palm. But Carlos convinced me and Mariana that the important thing at this point is to

Nursery in Euclides da Cunha, raising licuri palm trees. *Photo: Biodiversitas*

Charlie Munn and Cesarino examining young licuri. Photo: Charles & Mariana Munn

Mature licuri palm tree. *Photo: Charles & Mariana Munn*

plant, plant, plant, even if we are not 100% certain of every single detail at this point. He and I are both advocates of getting as much good advice as possible now, but then experimenting between March and June with palm planting and fencing so that we can evaluate the planting program on site in June.

At this point, then, in 1993 we have decided to:

1. clear overtopping vegetation away from 1,000 – 2,000 (or more) naturally regenerating palms in the Serra Branca.

2. fence off several areas of 0.1 to 0.5 hectares each in fields at the California ranch or other ranches and to plant or transplant at least 100 and possibly several hundred small palms in those plots. Ricardo Machado agreed to contract this work on a trip he will do for us to the area in late Feb 1993.

3. in June 1993, Carlos, Ricardo, palm expert Nikolaus von Behr, and I will visit the site with some strong field assistants (probably local people who can machete for hours without getting exhausted) and cut trails to the top of the highest viewpoints near the main nest cliffs in Serra Branca to make observations with the WCI Questar telescope of the macaws leaving the cliffs and flying off to forage. We also will use one of four possible techniques to get to the top of the nest cliff (and we shall have bee suits on hand to protect us) and to hang down by ropes and look into the nests. During this trip, we will all evaluate the progress in the palm planting and fencing programs and decide what modifications, if any, are in order.

That is all for now. I realize that this is much longer than you asked for, but I thought you deserved a more detailed account of the trip so that you could understand the dynamic of getting conservation done in Brazil.

Cheers,

Charlie Munn

BREEDING A LUTINO MUTATION OF THE ROSEATE COCKATOO *(E. Roseicapillus)* by N.D. Cooper

This lutino mutation converts a pink and grey bird into a pink and white bird. The white is a pure white with the feet and legs pink, the eyes start off bright pink until the bird is a few months old and then they start to change as do the eyes of a normal hen. So far they have not completed this change and are presently a plum colour.

This mutation is thought to have originated in West Australia, two or three hundred miles inland from the coast, a pink and white bird was seen leaving a nest hole by a farmer who had a friend who kept birds. It was eventually taken into care since it was unlikely that it would have survived long in the wild being such an outstanding colour in a flock of normal Roseate cockatoos. As far as I know this happened a few years ago.

Eventually I had the opportunity to buy a split lutino cock, by the way this mutation is a sex-linked recessive, I mated this split cock to one of my good breeding hens. During 1991 they had two clutches, the first consisted of two lutino hens and two normal cocks (possible splits). The second clutch consisted of a lutino hen and a normal hen. During 1992 the first clutch consisted of two lutino hens and two normal cocks (possible splits). A second clutch was lost due to the entry of a fox into the garden which killed an Umbrella cockatoo and a sitting pair of African Greys and disturbed several pairs of sitting Roseates, as a result their eggs were broken in the nest of sitting was ended.

The lutino chicks are very obvious as soon as they hatch, like most other lutino mutations their eye area is very light coloured, whereas the normal coloured chicks have a dark coloured area prior to their eyes opening.

My breeding results are interesting since the normal expectation from this pairing of a split cock to a normal hen is – 25% lutino hens, 25% normal hens, 25% cocks and 25% split cocks, my results gave 50% lutino hens, maybe next year (1993) I will only breed normals in order to level things up.

Another interesting result from these breedings was the fact that the first two chicks to hatch in the first 1991 clutch were the two lutino hens and the first chick to hatch in the second 1991 clutch was the lutino hen. Again in 1992 the first two chicks to hatch were the two lutino hens. Does this indicate that the mutation sperm is stronger than sperm not carrying the mutation, that it can either swim faster or has the stronger ability to penetrate the hen's egg?

The normal cock whose hen I used to mate with the split lutino cock was provided with a young 1990 hen. At the age of 51 weeks she laid, hatched and reared three chicks.

My Roseates are housed in aviaries 21ft x 4ft x 7ft high with an open fronted shelter, they are therefore exposed to our low winter temperatures which sometimes touch -10C. Their food consists of Sunflower, Hemp, Canary and a few oats, I feed them once a week and ensure that they have sufficient food for a fortnight, this way they can decide themselves which seed they prefer. Sunflower is their favourite. Their favourite greenfood is seeding chickweed especially when they have young in the nest and it is impossible to get sufficient to satisfy their needs. At the start of the year they relish any old chickweed, just because it is greenfood, however their appetite is soon fulfilled and from then on they are only interested in the seeding heads.

I provide them with a Grandfather clock type of nestbox four to five ft high with an internal measurement of between 8 to 12 inches square depending on the material available. It is absolutely essential that their aviary be kept clear of stones, large pebbles and other suchlike objects as they have a habit of carrying them to the nestbox and dropping them on their eggs, this practice does the eggs no good.

The four *possible* split cocks are mated with a view to finding out if they are in fact splits, when I mentioned this fact to a friend he asked me how many normals I would expect to produce before writing them off as normals. Since I have no idea he told me about a split lutino Cockatiel he had mated to a normal hen, they produced 17 normals before a lutino appeared, I hope my Roseates do better than that. It will be interesting to see if the ratio of true splits is similar in percentage to the lutino hens produced.

Lutino Roseate Cockatoo 1992 Hen aged 6 months *Photo: N.D. Cooper*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Members write . . .

Royal Ontario Museum
Musée royal de l'Ontario
100 Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 2C6

Dear Editor,

This is written as a follow-up to your article concerning the mauling of female cockatoos by their mates which appeared in a previous edition of Psittascene (3(2):3-5). Yesterday, a female Goffin's cockatoo which had been in my collection for some twelve years was killed by her mate. The birds had been together since 1985 during which time no aggression was observed. The first (and fatal) attack followed the typical pattern that you and others have described previously. The female suffered damage to both upper and lower mandibles; there were also bites on the throat and the lower left eye lid was damaged.

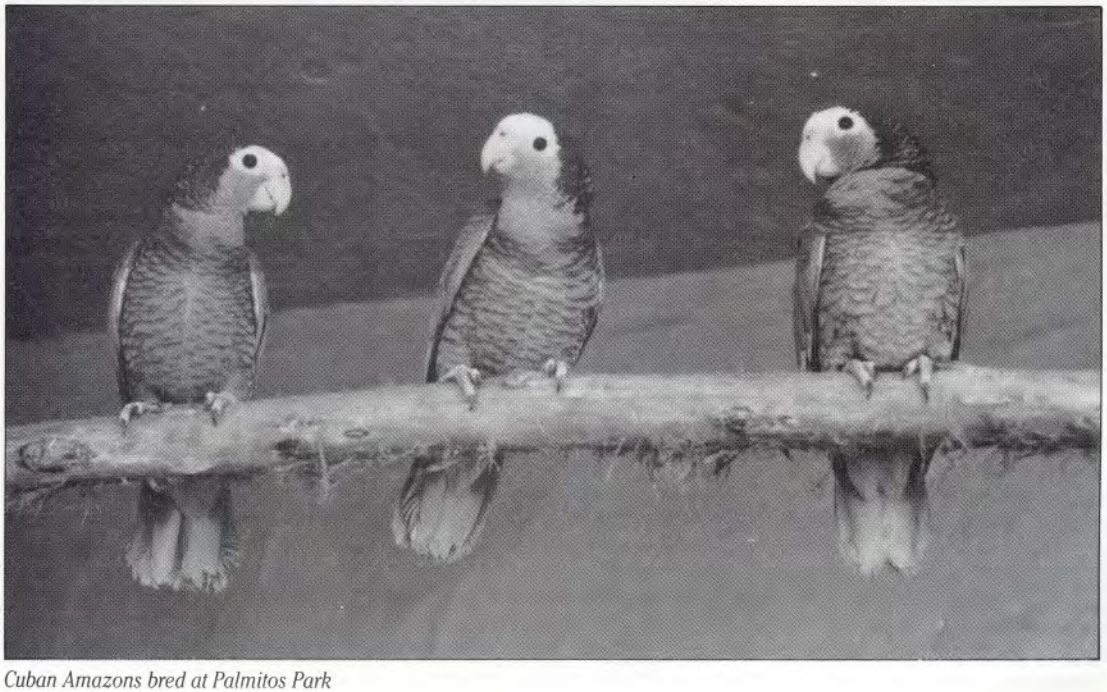
Both birds were wild-caught and not particularly tame, although over the years they had gradually become steadier. When first acquired, both birds would dash about their suspended flight during routine feeding and cleaning operations. More recently they would perch calmly as I went about these activities. The pair had been generally kept in rather small quarters while under my care except during the summer months of several years when they were moved outdoors to a suspended flight approximately 4m in length. As there had never been any indication of aggressive behaviour by the male, his flight feathers were not clipped.

In the days leading up to the attack, several changes had been made to the bird's environment. Extra lighting had been installed which significantly brightened their area, and they had been relocated to a new flight, the same size as the original flight but suspended a little higher above the floor. The new location was situated only a few feet from the previous location. The original flight had a nest box installed but it had not been used recently, to my knowledge, except as the object of some very minor chewing (the pair had never been serious wood chewers). The new flight had no nest box, but since they had shown no interest in the nest for some months prior to the move, I didn't view this as a problem.

Another pair of Goffin's had been housed in the same room in a similar flight for approximately 18 months. Ironically, I had been more concerned about the safety of the female of this pair since I had observed the male chasing her on a few occasions. For this reason I have kept the primary flight feathers of one wing of this male clipped. For most of the 18 months the two pairs did not take much notice of each other, but on a couple of occasions very recently I noted the male of the first and the female of the second pair displaying to one another. In hindsight this should have been recognized as a warning sign. Successful breeding pairs of macaws have been observed to change mates while housed in large communal aviaries after the breeding season. This might have been the case in this instance; the male of the first pair had possibly rejected his original mate in favour of the second female.

This incident has been extremely disturbing for me personally, as any aviculturist who has experienced the "cockatoo mauling syndrome" will undoubtedly agree. That this pair had bred previously makes this an added tragedy in light of the reluctance shown by a large proportion of pairs of this species to breed in captivity. Wild populations of Goffin's cockatoos, and all other Indonesian cockatoos, have been all but exterminated over a very short period due to the live bird trade. Given the obscene numbers exported in recent years there is no doubt that the size of the captive population greatly exceeds those of the remnant wild populations. Private aviculturists and pet owners therefore control the bulk of the existing genetic diversity present in these species. In future years, sex ratios of captive populations may become skewed in favour of males (due to males killing females). If this occurs the effective population sizes of these species will actually become much smaller than the actual numbers of birds suggest. For this reason it is vital that steps be taken *now* by all who keep these birds to ensure that captive populations, and particularly females, are protected. Every effort must be taken to see that as many of the wild-caught birds in captivity as possible are given the chance to breed so that present levels of genetic diversity are represented in future generations. In order to achieve this end sex ratios must not be permitted to become skewed. This means that females must be protected from injury from males. Aviculturists must be constantly on the lookout for any indication of aggressive behaviour by cockatoo males. In many cases subtle behavioural changes indicate that all is not well. Breeders of Indonesian cockatoos are strongly urged to take this matter very seriously since failure to do so may well result in the disappearance of these birds from the aviaries to tomorrow. Given the present state of wild populations, it is very likely that future aviculturists will have no source of these species unless present captive populations are managed properly.

Sincerely yours
Tim P. Birt, Ph.D.



Cuban Amazons bred at Palmitos Park

Tenerife Zoo
Apartado 248
Los Cristianos
38650 Tenerife
9/12/92

Dear Mr Reynolds,

I am working on a small new zoo, opened in July 1991.

Ever since I arrived to Tenerife I started seen an unusual amount of Cuban Amazon Parrots. I soon learned that they arrive on Russian boats that stop in the Canaries on their way to Europe from Cuba. In the pet shops they were sold cheaper than Blue-Fronted Amazons because they were so abundant. As local authorities learned about this, they started confiscating them, as well as Cuban Crocodiles that travelled on the same boats. We have gotten some of these confiscated animals, but I know that only a small percentage of them are caught.

I also do a little bit of private practice on exotic pets, and I can tell you Cubans is the species I most

often see as a private parrot.

Cathy King and Koen Brower were here last week, and suggested that I wrote to you, alerting you on these facts. It seems alarming to see so many birds of such an endangered species smuggled out of their native country.

Should the Parrot Trust decide to do something about this matter, let me know if I can be of any help. Sincerely,

Gonzalo Fernández
Curator-veterinarian

American Federation of Aviculture
PO Box 56218
Phoenix, Az 85079-6218
(602) 484-0931

Dear World Parrot Trust:

As the President of the American Federation of Aviculture I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your recent generous donation. Your contribution of $1000.00 will allow us to continue our work in research, conservation, disaster relief and/or legislation which have made us the premier avicultural organization in the Americas.

I know that when times are tough it is difficult to choose which charitable organizations are deserving of our contributions. Rest assured your choice was an excellent one and that the funds you donated will enhance our efforts at disaster relief, legislation, supporting avian medical research or the conservation of birds in the wild.

Thanks again, for your generosity.

Sincerely,

Jack Clinton-Eitniear
President

Résidence "Russie et Méditerranée',
10 avenue Aristide Briand,
03200 Vichy, France.

Dear Rosemary Low,

I am the President of the French Parrot Breeders' Trust which is part of the CDE (Trust of French Exotic Bird Breeders): We have about 4,000 members, many of whom are involved with parrots. We fully agree with the aims of the WPT and we are attempting to organize and promote breeding programmes for endangered species. No serious work of this kind has been carried out in France until now – even in zoos. Many breeders seem ready to co-operate and work closely with groups such as WPT. We should like to reproduce articles from *PsittaScene* in our magazine *La Revue des Oiseaux Exotiques*. We should also like to exchange information on breeding with WPT members and to participate in any censuses, and in stud books. I hope that you will consider our request and that we will be able to co-operate further with the WPT whose efforts are particularly efficient.

Dr Didier Leportois

Editor's reply:

Dear Dr Leportois,

We are very pleased to learn that your members are interested in breeding the rarer parrots. We would be pleased to help them in any practical way and for them to participate in any further censuses. As most of the stud books operating to date are not operated by the World Parrot Trust, we suggest you write to the various studbook keepers to explain your interest in participating. You are welcome to reproduce in your magazine articles by Michael Reynolds and myself without specific permission. For articles by other authors please first write to the World Parrot Trust as articles remain the copyright of the author and we must first seek their permission for them to be reproduced elsewhere.

Rosemary Low

Dear Sir,

Please ask your authors to supply the proper name as well as the common name for the plants they mention. What is a Brown Stringybark? (*E. baxteri*, Ed.) Is it the same tree that Gang-Gangs feed in? I am looking for the tree, but no one seems to know what it is without the proper name. Is the River Red Gum tree the same species as the Red Gum?

I am having the same problem finding *licuri* Palms. I wish to breed the Hyacinth Macaw and wish to plant some food sources at my home. How about some information on what plants some of the parrots feed on?

What plants do the Goffin's Cockatoos feed on? Mr. Reynolds mentions the natives catching the birds "when the village corn crops are ripening". What kind of corn? American or European, or is it some other grain crop? If the locals do not catch the Goffins for the pet trade, will they kill the birds as crop pests?

Please ask Mr. Reynolds to compare the density of Goffin Cockatoos, Blue-streaked Lory, and Eclectus Parrots. The first two birds have been in the Bird trade and the Eclectus has not. If the bird trade is the reason for a decrease in populations, then the Eclectus should have increased in relative numbers while the others decreased. Do the facts support this?

When you do a paper such as "Emergency in Indonesia" please tell us about the condition of the habitat. How much Virgin forest is left, are there any parks set aside and what size are they? Are Goffins a source of food? (Reportedly not. Ed.) Do the natives think the Goffin is a pest to be destroyed at every opportunity, or is it a beloved pet? This is information that is needed.

I feel very strongly that we must know why populations of birds are decreasing. It is very simple to say that the Pet Trade is the cause of a species die off. The Blue Macaws are good examples of this. It is currently widely accepted that the Pet Trade has destroyed most of the wild populations of these birds. We point to the thousands of Hyacinth Macaws that have been removed from Brazil. We talk about an estimated population of 100,000 reduced to 3,000. Does this mean the 97,000 birds were exported from Brazil? Or were numbers of them eaten. How many birds entered the Bird Trade? I do not know, but I am afraid that we will spend all of our time stopping the Pet Trade and then find the birds are gone anyway. How many Lear's Macaw ever entered the International Pet Trade? How about the Glaucous Macaw and the Spix's Macaw. Were there ever 1,000 birds of any of these species in the wild during the last 500 years? Time after time I see numbers that can't be verified, or are just wrong and used to prove a point. How many Hyacinth Macaws entered the United States? I don't think there were 20,000, but I do think the number was over 5,000. This was over a period 30 + years.

Many of these birds are kept by Brazilians and they are not making a concerted attempt to breed them. I have seen pictures of the Lear's Macaw in chicken wire cages in Brazil. It seems that we are concerned about saving wildlife and the locals are not. I realize that this is due to our experience of losing species, but do not stop aviculturists from keeping and breeding species of any animal. We need to keep a genetic pool going until the local people realize what they have lost or may lose. In the South Pacific it seems that the time the island was settled determines the loss of species of birds. The longer man was on the island, the fewer species are left.

Another example may be the Purple-capped Lory as mentioned in the August 1992 PsittaScene. Trade in this Lory was stopped in about 1980. Still it appears only in small numbers on the island of Ceram. How could this be due to trade and with who. It is very easy to say that the cause is the international pet trade and concentrate on the Pet Trade while the bird is lost through other causes.

The Moluccan Cockatoo just went on Appendix I due in part to a study done by walking through their habitat in Indonesia where almost no birds were seen. Just what is the status in the wild of this bird? I have seen published figures of 35,000 permits issued to export Moluccan Cockatoos a year. The Maximum number arriving in the United States (TRAFFIC) was about 6,000. Where did the rest of the birds go, if the United States is the major importer? These questions need to be answered to get a clear picture of why birds are in trouble.

Or is the problem "local trade" in these birds. Do we get countries to stop international trade and then find that the local trade in birds is doing just as much damage. Mexico stopped international trade in Parrots years ago, but their markets are full of local parrots for local consumption and the Mexican government does not stop it. Many of these birds are on the endangered species list. What we may need is a massive reeducation plan to convince the local people to harvest on a sustained yield basis and to breed locally native birds. Currently all the effort seem to be to stop the international trade in animals and local trade is neglected. People will keep pet birds. Our job it would seem should be to supply pet birds in a way that does not damage the species. I do think this is the direction that we should explore.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Lannom Jr.
Escondido, California.

In this stimulating letter Mr. Lannom raises a considerable number of questions. If our readers feel they have some of the answers we would be very pleased to hear from them. Ed.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP

GOOD NEWS FROM MAURITIUS

We have a brief but positive note from Dr. Lesley Smart who is now the aviary manager at Carl Jones's facility on Mauritius, where she is primarily concerned with helping the survival of the Echo Parakeet. She says:–

'Here are a few snaps I thought worth sending – a full report will be coming soon. 'Kev' is fledged and in with the other three baby Echos. 'Charlie' the sub-adult with the feather problem seems to be recovering – now flying well and his tail is regrowing. He's a male. The 'pair' *are* a pair, both with beautiful tails now. Good news all round really.

The food units are being installed – Carl loves them – it makes life so much easier. The rope has gone down a treat also. The young Echos love it, and Charlie has a swing. All are very bright and lively and I'm keeping my fingers crossed. Young Echos take forage although their foster parents do not, which is great. Thanks for everything. In haste, Lesley.'

Members may like to know that Lesley Smart spent training periods at Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and at Paradise Park in Cornwall before taking up her job in Mauritius. The World Parrot Trust has supplied her with a computer and other equipment, including revolving feeders kindly supplied at cost by Emmi Industries Ltd. (Phone No. 0903 814796). We have also sent a quantity of hemp rope following our own successful use of rope for 'environmental enrichment'. Once again we, and the parrots, are indebted to Rod Hall of British Airways Assisting Nature Conservation for sending all these materials to Mauritius free of charge.

Lesley Smart using an Echo Parakeet 'puppet' to avoid rearing imprinted young birds

AUSTRALIA

The World Parrot Trust is jointly funding a four year study of an endangered sub-species of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii graptogyne* in Victoria and South Australia. Joe Forshaw has very kindly represented the Trust in Australia, and now sends us a report of a recent steering committee meeting. Here are some of the key points reported:-

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Review of Work Conducted, Mainly Since Last Meeting

Nesting

Only three nests were found in the 1991/92 breeding season. One of these appeared to fail, the other two each fledged one young. During the present breeding season (1992/93) we have already located eight active nests. B. Emison also reviewed the

nesting data gathered over the past five (including 1992/93) nesting seasons. 43 nesting attempts have been recorded, of which 40 have been located in three small nesting areas. Only three nests have been located outside of these three small areas.

Supplementary nest hollows

Early this year (1992) numerous dead hollow trees were pushed over on a large property SW of Casterton. Reg Hill, a farmer/naturalist who lives in the area, learned of this and cut out about 100 hollow logs from the fallen trees. CNR paid Mr Hill for the operation and he now has the hollow logs stockpiled on his property for our future use. After last nesting season (1991/92) W. Caldow and T. Baxter put up four of these hollow logs in dead trees in a known RTBC breeding area. A female RTBC was seen entering one of the hollows this season (1992/93).

Fruiting of stringybarks and Bulokes

The fruiting of the Brown stringybarks in February (1992) was exceptional and the crop from this fruiting is now being eaten by the RTCBs. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the large number of nests already found this season. Also, the Buloke fruits which matured last February/March were numerous and were heavily utilised by RTBCs at that time.

Incentive Schemes

Both the Horsham and Portland Regions had funds last fiscal year (1991/92) to assist landowners with revegetation projects on their properties. W. Caldow conducted some of the assessments and was able to assist some of those landowners who had either nests or feeding habitat (e.g. Bulokes) on their properties.

Works Proposed for the 1992/93 Breeding Season

The main activities will be:

1) searching for new nest sites and breeding areas;
2) enlisting the support of the rural community for the conservation programme on the RTBC;
3) initiation of a genetics study (DNA); and
4) the placing of more supplementary nest hollows in the known nesting areas of the RTBC.

Publicity

Poster displays

Two poster displays have been produced, one is in use in the Horsham Region, the other is in the Portland Region. Emison hopes to produce others this fiscal year; a single poster with several photos and text on it is also being considered.

Brochures

There have been 10,000 produced and over half of these have been distributed. Contact Emison if more brochures are needed.

Media

W. Caldow will continue to provide material for newspapers, radio and television.

Security and Enforcement

The following resolution was passed by the committee:

- Expressing concern about the vulnerability of this small population of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos to interference with nesting sites, and
- Noting that the activities of persons exploiting the population by robbing nests for eggs and young could in the long-term result in its extinction.

The committee urges that all steps be taken to protect these birds and their nesting sites from interference.

Removal of Dead Trees

The committee suggests that publicity about the importance of retaining dead trees on properties be continued. The importance of such dead trees to various species of animals, as well as the RTBC, should be emphasised.

Long-term Directions of the Project

Genetics study

Dr C.M. White of Brigham Young University (U.S.A.) will be working with Mr. Emison and Mr. Caldow during January and February (1993). He will be examining the feasibility of a study involving DNA finger printing of this population of RTBC.

Supplementary nest hollows

More supplementary nest hollows are to be placed in the known nesting areas of the RTBC. J. McGuire is to liaise with the SEC about the possibility of them donating and placing poles (to support nest hollows) in RTBC nesting areas.

Profile of preferred nest sites

It is proposed that a series of measurements be made on each known nest tree as well as on a corresponding number of trees without nests. These data will be computerised and a profile of a typical nest tree will be generated. If money is available, this aspect of the study could be undertaken this fiscal year. B. Emison to speak to S. Bennett (CNR-Melbourne) about the computerisation of the data.

Enforcement

The amount of protection to ensure the security of this population of RTBCs needs to be increased. To achieve this, more funds will be required.

Botanic investigation

More information on the relative quantities and phenology of Brown stringybark and Buloke fruits is required. The effects of fire on the production of fruits should also be examined.

Liaison with South Australia

This committee should be formally recognised by both the Victorian and South Australian Governments. B. Emison and J. Forshaw to discuss the best way to accomplish this.

USA

Summary On The Wild Bird Trade

From Wildlife Conservation International

While bird populations around the world are declining from the threats of habitat destruction and overhunting, for many species, especially some parrots, the international bird trade for pets is the most immediate threat. Over 40 species of parrots, which are particularly valuable in the trade, are listed by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) as threatened specifically by the international bird trade.

About 3.5 to 5 million wild birds are documented in the international commercial trade each year. However, since as many as three-fourths will die before they ever reach the pet store, it is estimated that 14 to 20 million birds are actually taken from the wild annually. Destructive capture techniques along with poor confinement and transport conditions all contribute to losses at each stage in the trade process. In addition, millions more undocumented birds are caught for sale in domestic pet bird markets.

The United States and Europe are the largest international markets for birds. Five countries currently meet most of the huge demand for songbirds and parrots: Senegal, Tanzania, Argentina, Guyana, and Indonesia. Most of the profits from the wild bird trade go to middlemen and dealers in exporting and importing counties. Governments of four of the current top five exporting nations realize little revenue and rural people, the primary trappers of wild birds, derive the least economic benefit from the trade. Though numerous international and national laws regulate the wild bird trade, it is thriving because of ineffective controls and inadequate enforcement in both exporting and importing nations.

From the standpoint of conserving wild bird populations around the world, the wild bird trade as it currently exists must be stopped. NYZS and WCI believe that a moratorium on the wild bird trade is a vital step toward protecting many endangered bird species. Time is needed in order to institute appropriate international and domestic controls on the bird trade and to collect basic biological and ecological data on most bird species in the trade.

The aim of the moratorium would be to redirect the entire bird trade. Birds used for pets, zoological display, scientific research, breeding, or education should be bred in captivity or collected from wild populations that are being managed for long-term sustainability. Whether either alternative is feasible to produce birds for various markets will be determined by economic, social, and political conditions, as well as the biological status of bird populations in each country.

In addition, we propose the following recommendations: launch biological studies of wild bird populations, experiment with sustainable harvesting projects, improve laws that regulate domestic and international trade and their enforcement, create a uniform identification system for birds in trade, keep accurate records of the internal and international bird trade, reduce mortality rates and protect the welfare of the birds, address land tenure issues in tropical nations, and educate people about the problems of the wild bird trade.

ACTION PAGE

REPORT ON VISIT TO PARAGUAY – OCT. 1992 by Michael Reynolds

I was invited, on behalf of The World Parrot Trust, to visit Asuncion by H.M. Ambassador to Paraguay, Mr. Michael Dibben, who had visited Paradise Park – headquarters of the World Parrot Trust – last August. The purpose of my visit was twofold: first, to pursue the idea of developing a 'conservation bus' similar to the ones we have supplied to the Caribbean, and second, to advise on the future of some Hyacinth Macaws *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* currently held at Asuncion Zoo.

The Ambassador kindly arranged a reception at which I had the opportunity to address an audience of ministers, conservationists and business people on the subject of the World Parrot Trust, and in particular the possibility of joint action to put a 'Paraguay Wildlife Express' on the road. I am pleased to be able to report that much interest was shown, and there is a good possibility of a cooperative effort between a leading Paraguayan conservation foundation and a British bank. The basic plan is for them to locally purchase, restore and paint a secondhand bus, while the World Parrot Trust supplies much of the exhibit material, and general advice based on our experience in the Caribbean.

The question of the ten Hyacinth Macaws at Asuncion Zoo is more difficult. There is no doubt that the conditions under which they are kept are quite unsatisfactory. They live in small iron-roofed pens with no opportunity to rain-bathe, their diet seems inadequate, and they have no breeding facilities. The perches are either iron pipes or bamboo, whereas all parrots should have fresh branches to chew. One pair reportedly laid eggs on the ground and tried to incubate them; even then, no nest box was provided. They have been there for some years, and their numbers have dwindled from 16 to 10.

On both welfare and conservation grounds they should not remain there. The ideal solution would be to reintroduce them into the wild, but this is ruled out due to the risk of passing on diseases to the wild population, and the debilitated condition of the captive birds. An experimental reintroduction in Brazil was reportedly unsuccessful. Transfer to a reliable breeding and rescue station would be the next preferred option, but no such station exists in Paraguay; a new and potentially promising private establishment is not yet adequately equipped, supervised or staffed to provide the necessary care.

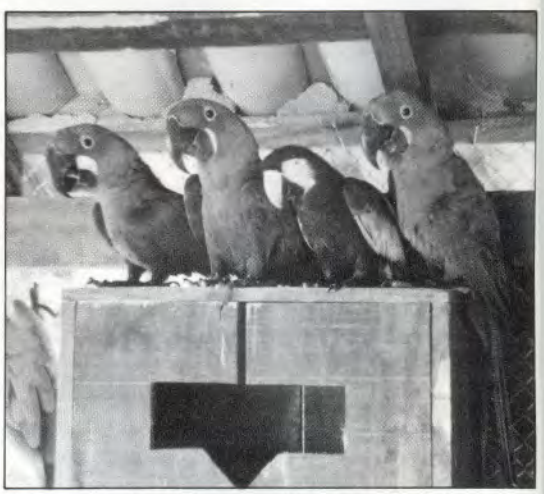
This brings me to the solution sought by the Paraguay CITES/TRAFFIC office: the transfer of the birds to the United Kingdom. There is in existence the Parrot Working Group of the Federation of Zoos of Great Britain, which administers a Studbook for this species. I have spoken to Dr. Roger Wilkinson, Curator of Birds at Chester Zoo and Chairman of this working group, and the Studbook Holder, Mr. Colin Bath of Paignton Zoo, and they advise that eight or ten birds could usefully be added to the Studbook and distributed among zoos currently holding this species. These birds and their offspring would remain the property of the Government of Paraguay, would not be sold, and the Government of Paraguay would be kept informed of their whereabouts and progress. Incidentally, none of the birds would be placed at Paradise Park. We already have two breeding pairs, and would not want to be exposed to criticism for seeking to bring in these macaws for our own breeding programme.

I am unable to assess the practicality of moving these birds from Asuncion Zoo, but am perfectly clear that their present circumstances should be changed as soon as possible. Perhaps the pair that made a breeding attempt could be left at the zoo, provided suitable new accomodation could be constructed quickly. I left some sketches and suggestions with the zoo staff. Many school children visit the zoo, and they should have the opportunity to see such a striking endangered species endemic to Paraguay. I think it only fair to note that the present staff have not been responsible for these macaws for very long, and that there is a drastic shortage of funds to make improvements.

(Update: in late February '93 there are no definite moves to find a better solution for these macaws).

I must express my appreciation for the initiative taken by H.M. Ambassador, and for the kindness and hospitality shown to me by him and by his mother Mrs. Eileen Dibben. I am also most grateful to British Airways Assisting Nature Conservation for their help with my flights to and from South America. My visit to Paraguay led on to my having the chance to visit Brazil also, and in both countries exciting new opportunities have opened up for the World Parrot Trust to pursue its objectives.

Private 'rescue' aviaries in Paraguay, owned by Raul Morinigo (centre). With him are Sylvia Frutos of CITES, and ornithologist Jorge Escobar.



A group of confiscated macaws. They were clearly in good condition and being well fed and cared for.

GOFFIN'S COCKATOOS STILL CAPTIVE IN INDONESIA

As readers will know, we have been trying to solve the problem of the 500+ Goffin's Cockatoos being held in cages on Yamdena in Indonesia. Matters are progressing slowly, but we now know that when an official visit was made to the farm where the birds are being kept, fifty blood samples were taken. The results show no evidence of Newcastle Disease or any parasites.

When we heard this we proposed that the authorities could take the view that releasing the birds represented no serious disease risk to the wild population. We are still waiting to hear whether our suggestion is acceptable.

If a cold scientific decision is to be made, the birds may have to be euthanased. It appears that the traders in Indonesia know that this species is on Appendix 1 of CITES and is no longer of value as a bird to be traded. There is little demand for them on the internal market. The World Parrot Trust understands the scientific viewpoint, but is deeply committed to its stated concern for the welfare of every individual bird. Because the blood tests were negative, we believe there is a good case for releasing the birds immediately.

The latest report we have indicates that the Goffin's Cockatoos are no longer being properly fed, and some die every day.

DONATIONS RECEIVED

The Trust has received a number of very generous donations recently. Our thanks are due to:-

The People's Trust for Endangered Species
The Keith Ewart Charitable Trust
The Northern Illinois Parrot Society
Mr. S. Bengtsson, Sweden
Benelux Chapter of World Parrot Trust
Mr. P.W. Brinkley
Mrs. M. Dandridge
Mrs. F. Vogel Steinhart
RTZ plc.
Rosemary Low
Ms. Sue Groves
Mr. T. Calvert Lee
Mitchell Trust
H.D. Wills Trust
Tides Foundation
Walker 597 Settlement
Golden Triangle Parrot Club, Canada
Russell Foreman Trust
National Foundation for Research in Zoological Gardens
Tracey Coote

Make sure you buy the right T-shirts

A range of colourful parrot T-shirts has been on sale in a number of countries, accompanied by leaflets claiming that a donation is made to The World Parrot Trust for every shirt sold. Unfortunately, for reasons too boring to explain, the Trust will only benefit by a derisory cent or two per shirt. So please, do not buy these shirts.

If you want a parrot T-shirt, buy one of the two designs available direct from the Trust. These are the 'Palm Cockatoo' shirt featuring the Trust's logo, and the Hyacinth shirt complete with the message in Portugese which says: 'Protect the heritage of the Pantanal'. With the generous assistance of British Airways we have sent a good supply of these shirts to field biologists working to preserve and study Hyacinth Macaws in the Pantanal, and you can buy the identical and authentic shirt. We charge $9.95 each for these, plus post and packing, but this price includes a contribution of $4.50 which goes directly to help our work for the parrots.

Possible New Support Groups in France, Denmark and Spain

Over the past few months the Trust has been approached by members in several countries who are interested in starting support groups. Naturally we always like to hear of initiatives which will add to the Trust's activities, membership and funds. It has to be said, however, that starting and maintaining a support group or branch is a demanding and time consuming responsibility.

We like to proceed slowly and with caution, and we have a set of guidelines which we send to serious applicants. In the cases of France, Denmark and Spain we would like to invite any member interested in joining a steering committee to write to us, so that informal exploratory meetings can be arranged.

Existing Support Groups

The Trust has well established support groups in Benelux and Canada. Readers wishing to make contact with those groups should telephone:–
Benelux:
Mrs. Juim Fiege (31) 8859 55038
Canada:
Mr. Leslie Reissner 613 741 7606

WPT Benelux organise Parrot Convention

Our very active Benelux Chapter are the organisers of the 8th Parrot Convention to be held on 24th April at Antwerp Zoo. Speakers include: T. De Meulenaer (European CITES regulations), L.E.M. de Boer (European Captive Breeding Programmes), H. Sissen (Large Macaws and Cockatoos), W. Hetherington (Control of Australian International Wildlife Trade), G. v.Eijken/R. Lorentsen (Australian Impressions), G. Dorrestein (Healthcare of Parrots), Charles Munn (A Macaw's Eye View). Approximately half of the convention will be in Dutch, and half in English. The Convention opens at 10am and closes at 5.15pm with a guided tour of Antwerp Zoo with the Curator.

All are welcome to attend the Convention, and the attendance fee is Bfr.1000. Please contact Mrs. Juim Fiege on (31) 8859 55038, or fax (31) 8859 54797.

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, Penscynor Wildlife Park, Cilfrew, 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

REDUCED OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTION RATES!

Due to currency fluctuations we have been able to reduce membership costs for overseas members. Please see panel on back page.

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.

THE WORK OF THE TRUST: A BRIEF REVIEW

Hyacinth Fund
This special fund, launched in 1990, has provided over £13,500 to help conservation measures for both the Hyacinth and Lear's Macaw. Current work focusses on our 'Palm for a Parrot' campaign.

Caribbean Buses
The 'Jacquot Express' was sent to St. Lucia in 1991, the 'Sisserou Express' was sent to Dominica in 1992. We are now about to send the 'Vincie Express' to St. Vincent. This unique 'conservation bus' scheme is remarkable value for money. Each bus costs around £25000.

Indonesian Parrots
Many Indonesian parrots are under threat, and with the particular help of our Benelux Chapter we are doing all we can. Currently we seek the release of over 500 Goffin's Cockatoos held by traders, and we are supporting an ICBP survey of Yamdena.

Amazons in Brazil
The Trust has been invited by the Brazilian government to help with the conservation of all its parrot species. We have recently contributed towards a new survey to establish the status in the wild of two Amazon parrots: A. pretrei and A. vinacea.

Black Cockatoos in Australia
The Trust provides half the cost of a four year programme to assist the survival of an endangered sub-species of this spectacular cockatoo in Victoria. Cost : $8000

Echo Parakeet
This is the world's rarest parrot, as only about 17 still exist on Mauritius. The Trust has provided continuous support for this species, including supplying a four wheel drive vehicle, a computer and other equipment, and helping with training and diets. Our total investment is over £20000.

Other Activities
The Trust has supported and attended parrot conservation workshops and conventions in Brazil, Paraguay, Honduras, Mexico, Holland, Spain, UK and the USA. It has contributed towards hurricane relief for aviculturists in South Florida. It is researching ways to improve the conditions in which pet parrots are kept. Through its 'Parrot Bureau' it seeks to inform the public about parrot conservation and welfare. Principally through this publication, 'PsittaScene', it sets out to inform parrot aviculturists and others about developments in conservation. The World Parrot Trust aims to represent the interests of enlightened, responsible aviculture in its contacts with national and international bodies and authorities. In all its work, the interests of the parrots themselves come first.

HELP SAVE THE PARROTS OF THE WORLD

Please join the Trust, or encourage friends to join

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(please tick)

- ☐ UK and Europe (Single) £15
- ☐ UK and Europe (Family) £20
- ☐ Fellow (Life Member) £250/US $400
- ☐ Overseas Airmail £20/US $30
- ☐ Overseas Surface Mail £15/US $25
- ☐ Additional donation of £ _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____ Postcode _____

Please charge my Access/Visa Ac/No.

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Expiry date _____ Amount £ _____

OR:
I enclose cheque payable to World Parrot Trust

Signature _____

Michael Reynolds
Hon. Director

The World Parrot Trust

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TR27 4HY, U.K.
Regd. UK Charity No. 800944
Tel: (0736) 753365 Fax: (0736) 756438

Psitta scene