PsittaScene

The Magazine of the World Parrot Trust

Autumn 2015

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World Parrot Trust

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From the Desk of...

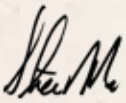
In the seven plus years that I have worked for the World Parrot Trust I have often marveled at the diversity and complexity of efforts needed to protect parrots - a point well illustrated in this issue of *PsittaScene* – at points far-flung across the globe.

First - startling, multi-hued Phillip Island exerts a profound hold on those who visit it – and when you see the photos in this issue you'll see why. Researchers and locals alike revel in its other-worldliness – and as you'll see, recognise its potential to provide a new haven for a rare parakeet that has struggled mightily in the face of habitat destruction. People have historically stripped the island of its trees, but there are signs of transformation. Pockets of vegetation have survived and are spreading tentative links across the island. The resilience of the natural world is remarkable indeed, and the capacity of humans to repair damage is reassuring.

Next, in part two of Evet Loewen's article '***Back to Brazil***' (see part one in Summer 2015 ***PsittaScene***) you will see a deeply personal account of her travels to the South American country and to the projects committed to saving parrots. Science, anecodotes and Vinaceous Amazons on-the-wing sprinkle her text, giving us a glimpse into the challenges of successfully reintroducing endangered parrots.

Additionally, the ongoing and devastating trade in wild-caught parrots, focusing on Indonesia and Chattering Lories in particular, is highlighted in this issue. The images of interactions between local people and the birds – some mild, some unsettling - tell a story which reminds us of the challenges of extreme poverty and parrot conservation, at odds with one another. It makes the search for solutions paramount.

We also bring you a tribute and visual feast for the eyes: one of the premier wildlife illustrators of the last few decades has left us. The legacy that William Cooper leaves is an enduring one, one that vibrantly celebrates the tremendous diversity of life that surrounds us. We will miss him, and all that he brought to our understanding of the parrots of the world.



Steve Milpacher,
Director of Operations

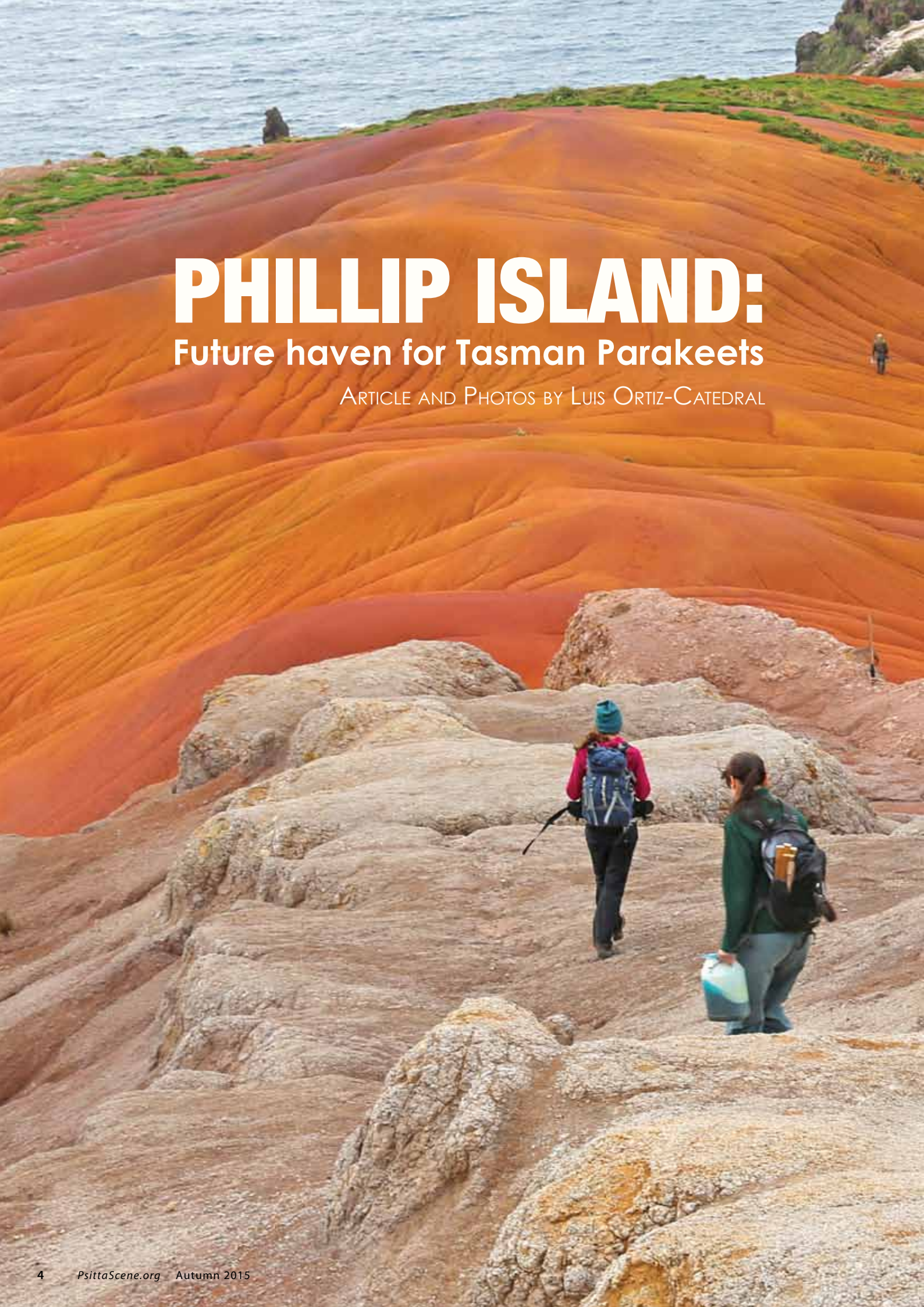
ON OUR COVERS

FRONT A **Vinaceous Amazon** *(Amazona vinacea)* forages on native fruits after being released to the wild. ***Back to Brazil: Part 2,*** **page 10.** Photo © Evet Loewen

BACK A wild **Eastern Rosella** *(Platycercus eximius)* enjoying a feast of blossoms at a cherry tree *(Prunus serrulata)* in Canberra, Australia. Photo © Julie Clark

“Once present on Phillip Island, Tasman Parakeets are now cornered to the last significant native forest patch on Norfolk Island.”

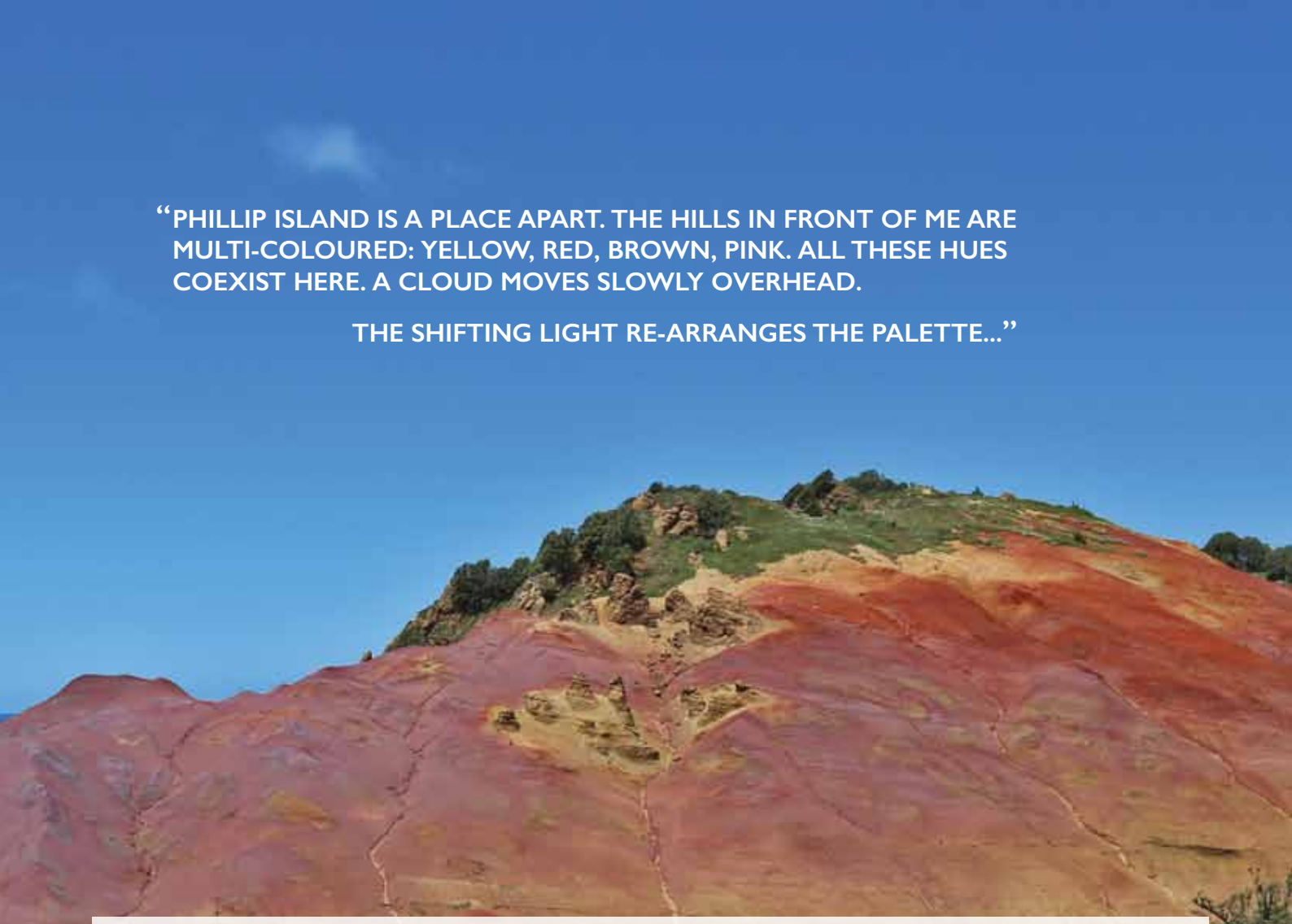
Phillip Island: Future haven for Tasman Parakeets, Page 4



PHILLIP ISLAND:

Future haven for Tasman Parakeets

Article and Photos by Luis Ortiz-Catedral



"PHILLIP ISLAND IS A PLACE APART. THE HILLS IN FRONT OF ME ARE MULTI-COLOURED: YELLOW, RED, BROWN, PINK. ALL THESE HUES COEXIST HERE. A CLOUD MOVES SLOWLY OVERHEAD.

THE SHIFTING LIGHT RE-ARRANGES THE PALETTE..."

"Have you been in a place like this before, Luis?" Dave (Dids) Evans asks me. "No, never," I lie. But I *have* been in a place like this many times during my childhood, except back then, it was only an imaginary landscape: Goab, the desert of colours, from one of my favourite books "*The Neverending Story*".

Phillip Island and its multi-coloured hills are very much real. I could gaze at these hills for much longer, but Dids is already ahead of me hiking at a steady pace. I catch up with him and the rest of the crew: Cass, Abi, Kenny, Joel and Rosco, all rangers from the Norfolk Island National Park. Accompanying me is also Liz, my colleague from New Zealand. Liz and I have been invited to Phillip Island to help with vegetation surveys. Both of us have grins on our faces. Less than an hour here and we already love the place.

Above our heads, soaring terns fly against a background of ominous clouds. The first thing you notice when arriving to Phillip Island, besides its beauty, is that this is an unexpectedly harsh place. The topsoil layer is so thin in places that only grass and dwarf shrubs can grow- that much soil has been gradually washed away, slowly unearthing the gaudy hills below. Local residents of Norfolk Island tell me that after heavy rains, the waters around Phillip Island turn red. Still, one tree in particular, a Norfolk pine, bears new growth and fruits, although there isn't enough soil underneath for its seeds to germinate…life is stubborn.

Another thing you realise when visiting Phillip Island is that there is much more than meets the eye. The thin-soiled areas that I first saw transitioned into verdant ravines where a greater diversity of plants thrive, retaining soil, and allowing more plants to settle. So, this is what the onset of a future forest looks like: the native forest of Phillip Island is coming back.

But…coming back from what state? Phillip Island and her larger sister 6 km away Norfolk Island were covered in subtropical vegetation just 200 years ago: Norfolk Island Pines, Norfolk Island Palms, Tree Ferns, Ironwoods, Bloodwoods...The first accounts on record describe Phillip Island as a lush setting, full of unique inhabitants.

A Tasman Parakeet nimbly balances as it feeds on local fruit

Nowadays, **only about 10% of the original forest that covered Norfolk and its outlying islands persist.** The reason for this is clear: the colonisation of this land by humans, as in other places around the world, caused dramatic changes in the diversity and structure of pre-human ecosystems. During the late 1700's Phillip Island served as a breeding ground for exotic mammals consumed by settlers: pigs, goats and rabbits. In a few years, these voracious grazers devastated the unique vegetation that took thousands of years to assemble.

As beautiful as they are, the colourful hills of Phillip Island were born of devastation wrought by humans. The long road towards the ecological restoration of Phillip Island started in the early 1900's when goats and pigs were eradicated. Another breakthrough was the removal of rabbits in 1986. Various accounts describe the rapid revegetation that occurred following the disappearance of the rabbits. Some of the rarest plant species began a gradual recovery. Many of the species that were once abundant still persist on Norfolk Island and their seeds are being transferred to revegetate larger areas of the island.

But Phillip Island is no ornamental garden: it is a healing ecosystem. To bring the place back to its ecologically functioning state, the "natural engineers" of the native forest need to be returned too, not only the plants. The problem is, the guild of natural engineers has been greatly reduced and there is no backup stock on Norfolk Island. The Norfolk Island Kaka (*Nestor productus*), a large parrot, disappeared from the earth in 1815.

Norfolk Island Kaka had formidable beaks and played a crucial role in stripping bark and digging into logs in search of grubs. Their beaks allowed them to crack open the seeds and fruit pods of many species of plants, indirectly benefiting less competitive species, with smaller or softer seeds, to grow in the undergrowth. The same beak must have been handy to extract nectar from certain flowers and possibly assist cross-pollination. Its surviving relative, the Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*) performs these roles in New Zealand forests.

Another vanished engineer, a fruit disperser, the Wood Pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae spadicea*) disappeared around 1900. The Norfolk Island Kaka and the Wood pigeon are gone, and with them the ecological associations that once shaped the forests of Norfolk and Phillip Islands. They are two of the many shreds torn by humans in the ecological fabric of South Pacific Islands.

These ghosts haunt me.

But not all is lost. As I type these lines, an ambitious plan to restore the ecosystem of Phillip Island is taking place: one of the surviving engineers, a small parrot, plays no small role in the forest ecology of Norfolk Island…and we want to bring it back to Phillip Island.

Armed with a compact beak, it crushes hard seeds with remarkable ease. These small parrots are seed predators. They keep massive seed-producers at bay, allowing less competitive plants to claim space in the forest floor, in a similar way to the extinct Norfolk Island Kaka, but specialising in softer seeds. By feeding on the most abundant seeds, these small parrots allow forests to be more diverse. Without them, woodlands could turn into monocultures – single-species forest tracts. These small parrots, which are fast-becoming my favourite bird, are called Tasman Parakeets (*Cyanoramphus cookii*). Once present on Phillip Island, Tasman Parakeets are now confined to the last significant native forest patch on Norfolk Island.

In principle, Tasman Parakeets could be transferred to Phillip Island relatively easily (a process technically known as 'translocation'). Hundreds of Kakariki (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*) – its close relative – have been translocated to various islands in New Zealand successfully since the 1970's. But Tasman Parakeets are so rare, so precious that before a translocation can take place, their remnant population on Norfolk Island must grow to larger numbers. And while the population grows, so does the plant community on Phillip Island that will nourish a future population of these handsome birds. Tasman Parakeets are now confined to a remnant forest patch and neighbouring vegetation of the Norfolk Island National Park. An emergency intervention in 2013, aimed at providing 80 cat and rat-proof nest boxes, has been at the core of the salvation of the species.

Parallel to the nest-provisioning program, strategic rat and cat control measures have been implemented, including a close monitoring of their activites using motion-sensitive cameras and tracking tunnels. The result? Fifty-one chicks produced within a year. This roughly represents a three-fold increase in chick productivity than in the previous 30 years. A brilliant achievement! But nests, cat and rat control and cameras are no use without the human talent. Training on a variety of survey and nest inspection techniques has been provided to rangers and volunteers and various public talks are given to the community. Also, regular updates on the Tasman Parakeet program are published in the local newspaper on Norfolk Island. Even in the remote outpost of Norfolk Island Tasman Parakeets are fast becoming local celebrities.

All of these measures can contribute towards downgrading the threat status of Tasman Parakeets (currently classified as Critically Endangered), and prepare the ground for a plan that until recently was considered impossible: establishing a second population of Tasman Parakeets on Phillip Island. To the west of Phillip Island, in a sheltered valley, a solid stand of 65 Norfolk pines towers some 25 meters above surrounding bushes. As I walk under the trees, their branches are moving slowly with the wind like a giant sea anemone.

These Norfolk pines weren't here just 30 years ago. In an attempt to revegetate Phillip Island, their seeds were scattered from a passing army plane. The tall trees I am standing under, heavy with Black Noddy nests, are living testimony that can convince the most sceptical about the potential to restore Phillip Island and to bring Tasman Parakeets back: the seeds of Norfolk pines are their staple diet during winter months. Nearly 60% of the trees in this valley bear cones. In places, their trunks are buried under a meter or so of red soil, allowing for other native plants to germinate and grow sheltered under these giants. Without these trees, all that soil would have been washed away.

Could a flock of Tasman Parakeets find enough resources to settle in this island?

The answer is yes. Experiences elsewhere have shown that *Cyanoramphus* parakeets can establish in challenging environments. They have a generalist diet and can nest even on the ground providing rodents and cats are not present. So, given its adaptability, why have the Tasman Parakeets not colonised Phillip Island yet? I suspect it is because of their low density, which reduces the likelihood of dispersing juveniles venturing beyond the confines of the forest on Norfolk Island. A lot

of groundwork is underway and needs to be completed before a translocation of juvenile Tasman Parakeets to Phillip Island can be planned. Perhaps a soft-release approach would be the most successful strategy.

Tasman Parakeets are known to adapt well to semi-captivity, which was central in the 1980's management of the species. If a founder group of Tasman Parakeets can be successfully established in a semi-permanent aviary on Phillip Island, their offspring will be likely to settle as well. A similar approach has made it possible to establish a population of Kakariki right in the middle of Wellington city in New Zealand.

The immediate challenge consist in quantifying just how many Tasman Parakeets can Phillip Island sustain with the current vegetation. This and related questions - how many chicks can be transferred? Would supplementary feeding be necessary? - form the next phase in the race to save Tasman Parakeets. This new stage in the race to save one of the world's parrots is no "one-man show".

The project has counted with the generous support from various agencies and tenacious local and international volunteers. But the basis of this conservation project is made out of the daily efforts of all the field rangers and managers working at the Norfolk Island National Park. Their efforts are turning small wonders into everyday things: *"18 months ago I found a potential site. It's now got chicks in it", "There is an active nest near Mt. Pitt with 8 eggs, all fertile", "The chicks from that nest fledged already", "They are everywhere", "We saw a parent feeding its chick near Palm Glen", "I heard parakeets calling all day!"* These are casual comments by Liz, Abi, Cass, Dids, Joel, Rosco and Kenny. I am always moved when I hear these comments. Yes, I am a big softie. When I first visited Norfolk Island, nearly two years ago the Tasman Parakeet was truly hard to find. It took me four days and long hikes to see the first one. Now, the numbers are going up and the parakeets are slowly becoming more common.

After a morning of measuring and counting trees out on Phillip Island, the crew and I sit down for a cup of tea. We have been talking about Tasman Parakeets and their chances of establishing on this island for a while. At one point all of us are looking towards Norfolk Island in silence. I smile, I know what everybody is thinking: when?

About the Author

Luis Ortiz-Catedral (PhD) was born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1977. Since 2004, Luis has studied the biology and conservation of island birds, particularly parrots. Currently he conducts research in New Zealand, Australia and the Galapagos Islands. He is a lecturer at the Institute of Natural and Mathematical Sciences, Massey University in New Zealand.

The research to assist the recovery of the Tasman Parakeet is supported by The Nature Conservancy, BirdLife Australia, Island Conservation, The Flora and Fauna Society of Norfolk Island, Norfolk Island National Park Service, The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, The World Parrot Trust, The Parrot Society of the UK, Foundation for Parks and Wildlife Australia, The Parrot Society of Australia, WildMob and Massey University.

See Luis Ortiz-Catedral's article *'Hope is the Thing with Green Feathers: Tasman Parakeet'* in *PsittaScene* Spring 2014.

PART TWO

BACK TO BRAZIL:

Stories of conservation in South America

Article and Photos © Evet Loewen

In part one of **Back to Brazil** *(PsittaScene Summer 2015 Issue) WPT supporter Evet Loewen recounted the tale of her trek to the country where she spent her childhood. There she met up with Dr. André Saidenberg, WPT's Brazil Programme Manager, and together they travelled to Ilhabela, where the release area Cambaquara, a rescue and rehabilitation centre, is situated.*

Here in part two she heads to the Lymington Foundation, where we pick up the story…

March 3 & 4 - Countdown to Release

As I generally understand it from the field biologists I have worked with, a "soft release" is one in which the animal has had an opportunity to learn about the surrounding environment so that it can identify a place of security, where it is in the habitat, is fed a diet based on what is in the surrounding forest, and is cleared of health issues. It has been given an opportunity to fly and be as strong as possible. AND, it has the choice of going foraging right away or coming back to the release site for food and security, for as long as is needed.

This protocol for repopulating birds in the wild was used extensively during the restoration of the Peregrine Falcon population in the United States. I've seen a "soft release" of juveniles and it worked perfectly well.

This group of Vinaceous Amazons (*Amazona vinacea*), as I understand it, was seized from individuals who trapped them as chicks and raised them in captivity. While I was photographing them, one decided to fly to my shoulder. André was not pleased with that and told me to brush the bird away. Of course, I was secretly thrilled that the bird came to me because it will probably be the only time I will ever have physical contact with one. But that is the "parrot keeper" side of me. André wants them to become totally wild, and totally free.

The point of all of this is that this group of Vinaceous Amazons had been around humans more than a field biologist would like. So the process of retraining them to be as wild as possible was tricky. However, those wild instincts are all there. How else would there be wild parrots in San Francisco, San Diego, Florida, and many other locales, if that wildness was not evident?

Humans like parrots because they are obviously intelligent. They figure things out. With a bit of help, they would figure out how to be wild again. It will only survive as a species if humans allow it to be in a safe territory, and then basically leave it alone.

So, to prepare this group of 18 *vinacea* for release, a large and tall "flight aviary" had been constructed. It was built around a tree so that palm fruit could be hung from that tree, as one example of teaching the birds what they could eat and where they might find the fruit.

They could easily know the area around the aviary, could see it from the forest on the surrounding hillsides, and could return any time for food or security, as they chose. Strong mesh netting kept the birds in the aviary, and other animals out, quite well for the time they were being acclimated to their surroundings.

I had the opportunity to just sit inside this flight aviary and observe the birds fly, tussle, eat, and clamber over the tree and other structures placed inside. It was clear to me why humans like this species. They are quite charming and beautiful with the almost dusky purple on their chests and the red on their beaks. And of course, they have the direct curious stare of an inquisitive parrot.

I watched the birds, watched André gather the native fruits and foods and place bromeliads (from the pineapple family of plants) in water bowls to associate the plants with finding water. It was all coming together. It was all beginning to make good biological sense to me. Release day was Thursday, March 5th. Precisely at 7 AM. Be there.

March 5 - Release Day

I arrived promptly. Carlos, one of the Lymington staff, was already taking down the mesh, dropping and rolling it so that it would form a barrier about 4 feet tall to keep predators out of the flight to the maximum extent possible. André, Bill and Linda were, of course, all there to watch. Once the mesh came down, it was a waiting game.

A couple of hours passed. Some of the birds were clearly looking around and assessing the situation. The barrier to freedom that had kept them in for probably their entire lives was gone. They could choose to stay or leave.

(left) Dr. André Saidenberg working on one of the aviaries

(top right) The release aviaries at Lymington

(inset right) A Vinaceous Amazon taking tentative steps towards freedom

Bill and Linda were very cool-headed at this point, and left to go on with their daily activities. I had come to see the release, however, and was going to see these birds fly.

Finally, one decided to fly out and settle on top of the metal aviary where the birds spent their time when not in the flight aviary. That one whoosh totally surprised me and my heart began to race.

Then a second decided to explore the top of the door to the flight aviary. Then a third decided to sit on the mesh "fence" that Carlos had made. That bird posed for me and was very nonchalant.

As the noon hour approached, it was getting plenty warm, and I was getting very parched. So I excused myself to re-hydrate and get out of the sun for a bit. André, on the other hand, stayed for every part of this long day. Time ticked on. The birds were not moving out. I think they were waiting to be fed.

Then, all at once, four of them took to the skies. It all happened in a blur. Two went to some nearby trees. Another two seemed to head in the opposite direction, into a densely forested area. The ones still in the flight aviary were making a racket, calling out to their other flockmates in seeming alarm as only parrots can do. It was the first time I heard loud insistent *vinacea* calls.

Three of them were very strong fliers and the fourth seemed likely get there with some practice. As the sun went down, I became more and more anxious.

All right, it was OK for them to go out and fly around. But weren't they coming back in for the night? Wasn't that the deal? I was a nervous wreck. I wanted all of the birds to go back into the aviary for the night and they were not cooperating. However they had not just disappeared -- they were still near the aviary.

Unfortunately I have had parrots that I lost when they somehow escaped the safety of being indoors, and my fear of having something bad happen is quite ingrained. André was very even-tempered about all of this. At one point, he was watching one fly overhead. I clambered up the hillside to crook my neck to see the darkening sky, and must have had a very anxious look on my face. André said "It's OK, it's OK. He is just having fun!" I told myself that I was being silly, that of course it must be fun to finally fly, really fly, and do what this parrot was born to do. This bird settled in a tree where I managed to capture a silhouette photo of him with his ruff up on the back of his neck, looking almost jaunty in the evening.

When it became clear that the four of them would be out in the forest and trees for the night, and the rest would hang around the aviary, I decided to call it a day.

When we saw Bill and Linda, they were quite pleased with the way the day had gone. André reported that the group was doing well, and some were foraging well enough on their own that they no longer had the need or desire to come back to their former "home" to eat.

We had a quick dinner, and then it was time for André to drive me to a hotel by the Garulhos Airport where I would stay until catching a flight to Rio the following day to visit Mary and the Brazilian side of her family. It was a very long day for André, and I was more than grateful for his continued effort to guide me around the centre and its work. It was, as my friend Mary said of her volunteer time at Lymington, a truly transformative experience. I'd do it again in a heartbeat, and this time try to be more helpful on the ground. And more fluent in my very rusty Portuguese.

It is worth it to sponsor a release flight aviary wherever there is a need for one. I highly recommend it, as a donor, and as a conservationist.

About the Author:

Evet Loewen is an attorney who practised municipal law for 30 years with the City of San Jose, California. Her legal experience there included a wide range of legal issues, including environmental law. In 2005 Evet became a lifetime member of the World Parrot Trust, and in 2011 she became a volunteer legal advisor for the WPT. In the past year her involvement in WPT conservation work has expanded to include support of the release of parrots to the wild, focused on projects in Brazil, Bolivia, and Bonaire.

(opposite page) Freedom!

(top right) Balancing on feeding platform

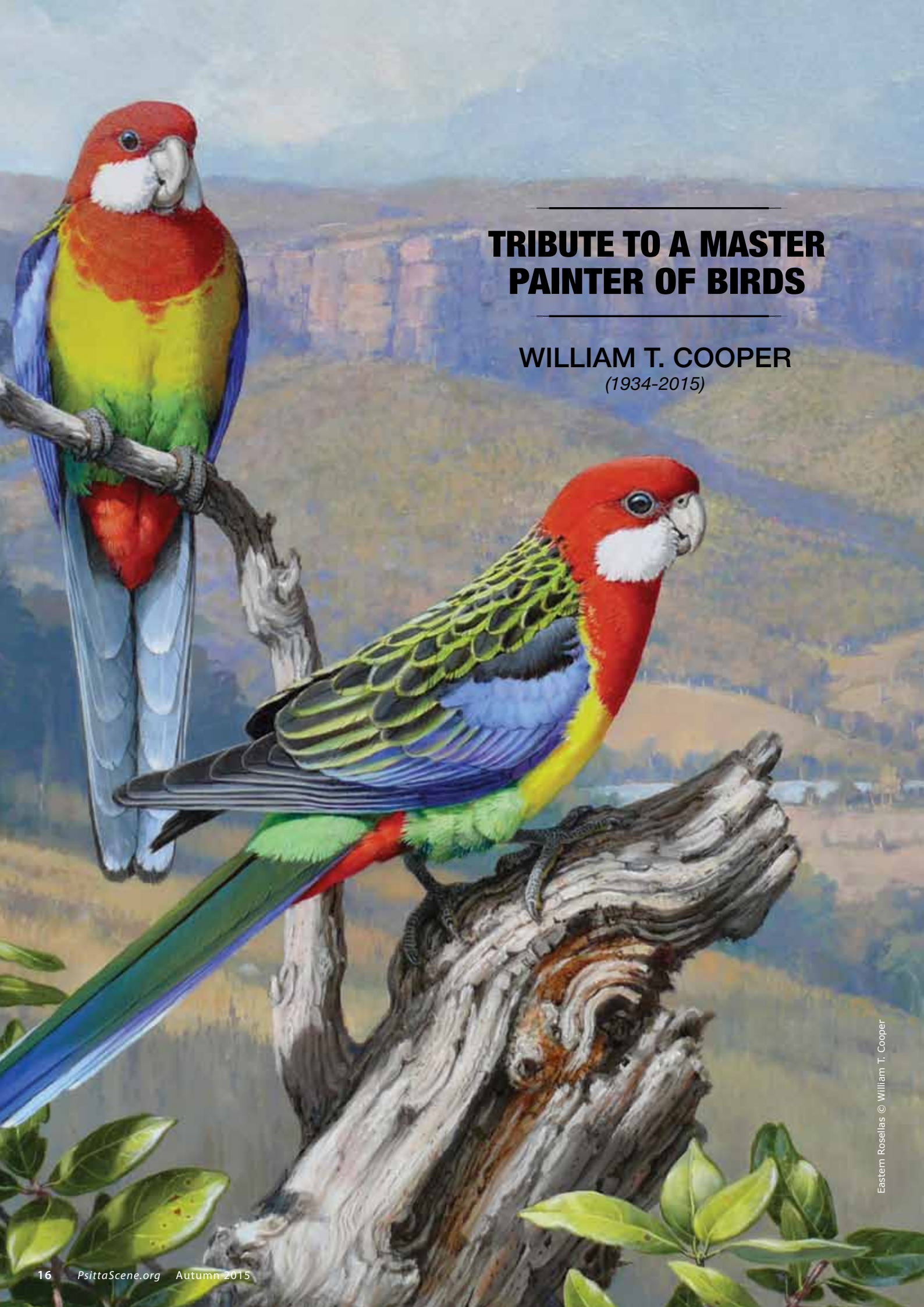
(left - top and bottom) Foraging on local foods

(far right) Up, up and away!

TRIBUTE TO A MASTER PAINTER OF BIRDS

WILLIAM T. COOPER

(1934-2015)



Eastern Rosellas © William T. Cooper

(opposite page) **Eastern Rosellas** as depicted in north-eastern New South Wales. ***(top left)*** The **Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** as seen in North Queensland. ***(top right)*** **Morning on the Moor** Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos as viewed at Myall Lakes on the mid-north coast of New South Wales.

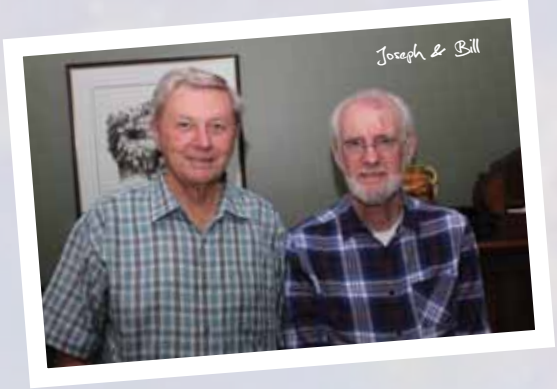
Some years ago, at an exhibition of wildlife paintings, I overheard a conversation between two visitors as they approached a painting of feeding fig parrots with the artist's signature hidden under the frame. The conversation was along these lines:

"Oh, that is a Cooper painting."

"How can you tell that?"

"Look at the moss-covered branch, the fruits, and the insect-damaged leaves. Nobody else paints foliage as well as that!"

I recall this incident to highlight the meticulous attention to detail that is an unmistakable hallmark of wildlife paintings by William (Bill) Cooper. He was an experienced field observer with an 'eye for detail', a legacy of his lifelong love of the Australian 'bush', and that experience was expertly translated into his artwork. I have been privileged to have enjoyed a close friendship and fruitful working partnership of more than 40 years with Bill, and can say that the success of that partnership was based on mutual respect.



Bill was a consummate professional and a master craftsman, qualities that are manifestly apparent in his wonderful paintings of wildlife, especially birds. Readers of *PsittaScene* would be particularly familiar with his paintings of parrots, and it is with parrots that he is most commonly associated. He certainly liked painting parrots, especially the Australian black cockatoos with which he felt a strong affinity.

Shortly before his passing, Bill told me that he could look back on a 'good life' because he was able to do what he loved doing. He was particularly gratified that all paintings from *Parrots of the World*, our first book, are held in the collection of the Australian National Library, and certainly would have been pleased to learn that all paintings from *Pigeons and Doves in Australia*, our last book, have been acquired by the State Library of New South Wales (the Mitchell Library). These institutional acquisitions attest to the esteem accorded to his paintings in Australia and elsewhere.

Our partnership has come to an end, and all I can say now is – Thank you, Bill!

~ Joseph M Forshaw

Research Associate, Department Of Ornithology,
Australian Museum
Corresponding Fellow, American Ornithologists Union

AN OVERLOOKED PARROT TRADE HOTSPOT:

North Moluccas, **Indonesia**

H. Eden W. Cottee-Jones and John C. Mittermeier

Pak La Gode is a farmer on the remote island of Obi in Indonesia's North Moluccas. He grows and sells a range of crops, from cacao to rice, owns several cows, and harvests cloves from a small hillside grove. He lives with his wife and five children in a simple house with a tin roof and open well to provide water. He is a friendly and generous man, earning both popularity and respect from the rest of his village.

He is also a very skilled hunter, and to supplement his income, once a month he ventures deep into the forest and up one of the highest mountains on the island. It takes several days to climb the mountain, and all he takes with him is a small hammock, some dried fish, and a parrot.

Pak La Gode, like many other farmers in the North Moluccas, is a parrot trapper. He uses a pet Chattering Lory as bait, with which he can catch entire flocks of wild lories, ready for sale once he returns to his village. But while as a young man he could catch parrots in the forests around his farm, now he must travel further and further in pursuit of his quarry.

Parrots,* he admits, *are becoming harder to find.

A parrot trapper returning from a successful trip on Obi Island, Indonesia.

Chattering Lories © Mehd Halaouate

Situated between Sulawesi and New Guinea, the North Moluccas are an overlooked but richly biodiverse group of islands in Eastern Indonesia. They achieved fame amongst 16th century Europeans as the origin of valuable spices, specifically cloves and nutmeg, and then again in the 19th century for their role in inspiring Alfred Russel Wallace and his theory of evolution. Today they are home to many endemic plants and animals, and parrots are no exception.

Several species of parrot are confined to these islands, including the White Cockatoo (*Cacatua alba*), Chattering Lory *(Lorius garrulus)*, and Violet-necked Lory (*Eos squamata*). The Eclectus Parrot (*Eclectus roratus*), which is more widespread, also inhabits these forested islands, and can often be seen flying over the forest in pairs as dusk approaches.

All of these species are targets for the parrot trade, and are listed on Appendix II of CITES, prohibiting their trade internationally without a permit. Under Indonesian law, trading these species domestically also requires a permit, and as none have been issued since 1992, this trade is illegal.

Despite this legislation, the trade of parrots both domestically and internationally is common in the North Moluccas, although little information exists on how many parrots are trapped in the wild each year.

A parrot trapper with a recently trapped Chattering Lory on Obi Island, Indonesia.

A young boy with his pet Violet-necked Lory *(Eos squamata)* in Kampon Buton village, Obi Island, Indonesia.

Trapping parrots in the North Moluccas

The primary local method for trapping parrots is to use branches pasted with sticky glue made from the breadfruit tree, and draw wild birds in by using a captive individual as a lure. After the trapped parrots are removed from the branches, they are wrapped in leaves to ease transport out of the forest. The birds are then bathed in kerosene to remove the glue once they have reached the trapper's home.

Parrots are either sold for low prices to local residents of the trapper's village (IDR 100,000/US$10 for a Chattering Lory), or for much higher prices to international traders offshore (IDR 500,000/US$50 for a Chattering Lory).

Prior to shipping, the birds are kept in small cages, with up to 14 observed in one container. The cages are then taken offshore in small boats where they meet the larger ships of international traders—both the financial transaction and transfer of parrots occurs at sea.

There are also reports of soldiers and miners, who often work on different islands around Indonesia, purchasing parrots and bringing them back to their home island in sawn-off water bottles and plastic tubes. These parrots are either kept as personal pets or given away as gifts. In these instances, it is unclear what the mortality rate is at each stage of the trapping and transportation process, or overall.

Chattering Lories

The Chattering Lory is under particularly high trapping pressure. It is a very popular cage bird in Indonesia, but has been so heavily trapped in some areas that it has disappeared, and consequently has been listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. This status was assigned on the assumption that 5,000 Chattering Lories are trapped each year across its entire range.

However, recent research by the University of Oxford and University of Indonesia has conservatively estimated that 6,000 Chattering Lories are trapped annually on the island of Obi alone (Cottee-Jones et al. 2014). Although the wild population of Chattering Lories is unknown, if other islands are subject to similar rates of harvest, the Chattering Lory may be far more threatened than previously believed.

Furthermore, three subspecies of Chattering Lory are found on the islands of the North Moluccas, including a distinctive golden-mantled race on Obi and Bacan (*L. g. flavopalliatus*). Considered as separate units, each of these unique subspecies is undoubtedly Endangered. It seems that by overlooking the extent of the parrot trade in this region, and the complexities of taxonomy, we may be ignoring the plight of some of the finest parrots in South-east Asia.

Chattering Lory conservation

Three measures are needed to ensure we do not blindly permit the extinction of the Chattering Lory in the coming decades. First, we need an idea of their wild population size: a single researcher calculated the last estimate in 1992. Although the size and rugged terrain of the islands in the North Moluccas presents a challenge, this task is certainly within the competencies of several Indonesian NGOs. We urgently need a baseline population estimate to assess the speed at which the Chattering Lory is declining, while comprehensive surveys would also indicate the locations of the most promising strongholds to conserve the species.

The distinctive Golden-mantled Chattering Lory (*L. g. flavopalliatus*) at a dealer's house on Obi Island, Indonesia.

Second, although regulatory changes are highly unlikely to be effective on their own, especially given the limited capacity for law enforcement in the North Moluccas, both the IUCN and CITES should re-evaluate the status of the Chattering Lory. Upgrading the species to Endangered, and re-listing the species on Appendix I, respectively, would be justified based on our recent research on trapping in the North Moluccas. These steps may raise the profile of the lory's plight and create the right regulatory environment to address this overlooked conservation issue.

Finally, it would be worth investigating softer, low cost solutions that may prove effective in this region. Parrot trapping efforts are not evenly spread across the North Moluccas. Instead trapping is concentrated in certain villages, which often have good ferry connections to aid export. While Chattering Lories are unlikely to persist in the forests surrounding trapping villages, they are still fairly common in areas where they are not trapped—such as logging concessions where trapping bans are enforced by logging companies. Although it still needs to be tested on the ground, one potential method is to work with local trappers to designate no-take zones.

By engaging with the relatively small number of trappers operating in the North Moluccas, it may be possible to establish a handful of no-take zones on each island. These zones would hold source populations of Chattering Lories, which would safeguard the survival of the species within these areas while also maintaining a regular harvest of Chattering Lories that trappers may catch beyond their boundaries.

It is worth noting that parrot trapping is very rarely the primary source of income for trappers in the North Moluccas. Provided that trappers such as Pak La Gode have a prominent role in setting the boundaries of no-take zones, this strategy of self-regulation may deliver effective conservation outcomes.

References:

Cottee-Jones, H. E. W., Mittermeier, J. C., Purba, E. C., Ashuri, N. M., & Hesdianti, E. (2014) An assessment of the parrot trade on Obi Island (North Moluccas) reveals heavy exploitation of the Vulnerable Chattering Lory *Lorius garrulus*. Kukila 18(1): 1—9.

Chattering Lory

Lorius garrulus

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
CITES Listing: Appendix II

Chattering Lories are found on several islands in North Moluccas, Indonesia. The world population of these birds is currently unknown and decreasing, due to trapping for the wild bird trade and loss of nest sites from logging.

Did You Know?
Up to 70% of a lory or lorikeet's day is spent searching for food. These birds will fly up to 48 km a day to forage.

About the authors

Eden Cottee-Jones is a Visiting Research Associate at the University of Oxford, where he recently completed his PhD in tropical bird conservation.

John Mittermeier is a PhD student at the University of Oxford, where he has spent three field seasons studying the birds of Eastern Indonesia.

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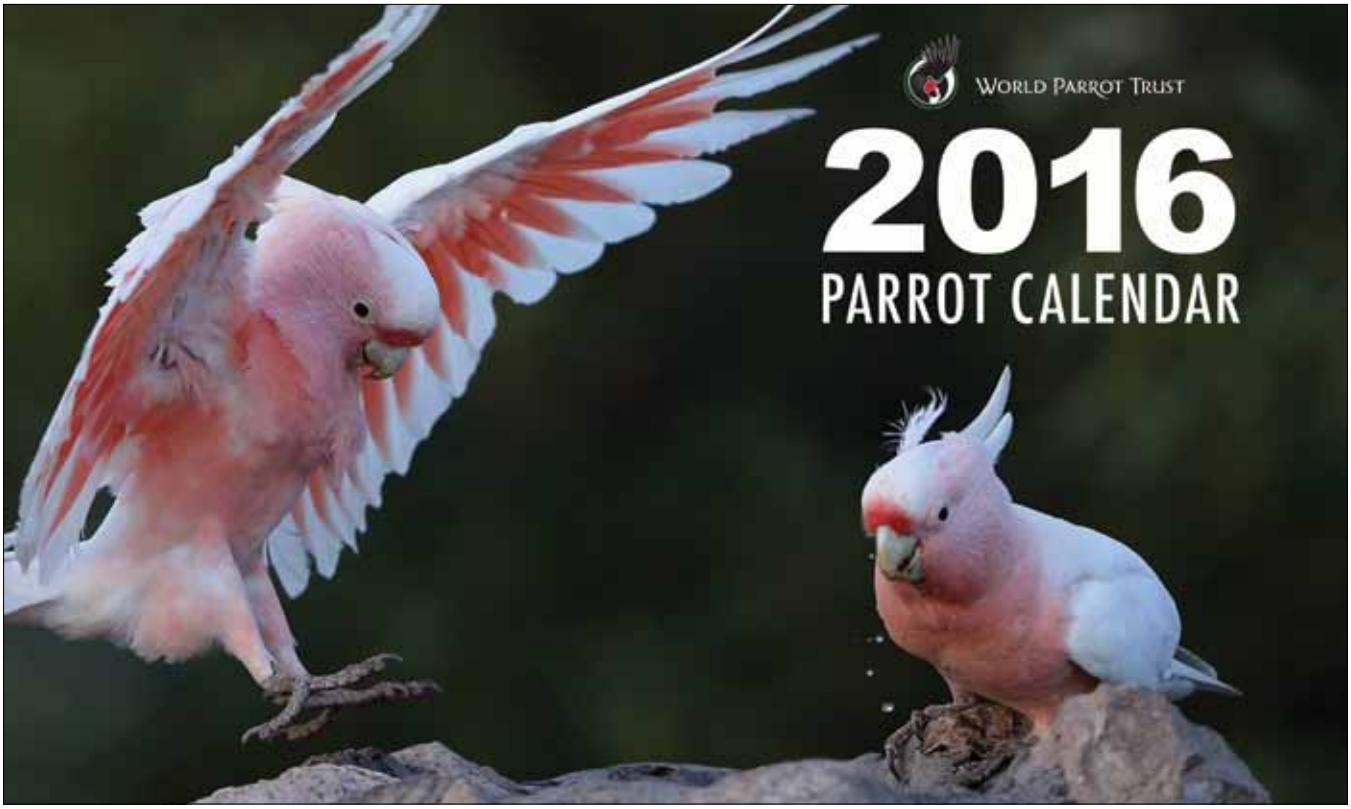
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STAFFING UPDATES

WPT Staff Appointments -

Meet our newest team members

Sam Williams, Ph.D.
Director of Special Programs

Sam's love of parrots led him to the fortunate opportunity to spend two months working with the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation and the wild Echo Parakeets, where he learned a great deal from Carl Jones and the other conservationists working with the wild parakeets. Sam later observed Lear's Macaws in Brazil, and following that, he received support from the World Parrot Trust to research the Yellow-shouldered Amazons on Bonaire. On completing his doctorate studies Sam launched *Echo*, an organisation benefiting the Yellow-shouldered Amazon. In 2015 Sam was made WPT's Director of Special Programs, where he will focus on projects that further WPT's conservation and welfare objectives in Central America and the Caribbean, with a special emphasis on Costa Rica and Bonaire.

Richard Switzer, M.Sc.
Aviculture and Species Restoration Specialist and Zoo Liason

Rich is a new recruit to the World Parrot Trust team in 2015. He has a background in both aviculture and conservation biology and specializes in the implementation of hands-on bird management as key components of bird recovery programmes. His previous efforts with parrots include working with the Rimatara Lorikeet Translocation team, and acting as Bird Curator at Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation in Qatar. Rich joins the WPT as its new Aviculture and Species Restoration Specialist and Zoo Liaison, working closely with staff and collaborators on a worldwide basis to better assist WPT program goals in parrot conservation and welfare.

Richard Kooistra
Technical Assistance Provider

Richard has a background in Information Technology (IT) with an emphasis on web development. He discovered his love of parrots when he and wife Michelle - who also works with the WPT - began sharing their lives with a pair of cockatiels a number of years ago. He has been a steadfast volunteer for the World Parrot Trust for many years, beginning back in 2007 with his efforts to help build a new web presence for the Trust. He has graciously offered up his technical skills on many other Trust projects over the years. Richard officially joined the WPT flock in 2015 as a staff member, kicking off his new position with the launch of the re-developed parrots.org website *(see Pages 22 - 23)*, coming full-circle in his efforts.

NEWS

Land purchased to aid the Orange-bellied Parrot


© Chris Tzaros

Environment and Conservation Minister Ian Hunter announced that the South Australia government has purchased 40 hectares of land to help protect the habitat of the Critically Endangered Orange-bellied Parrot *(Neophema chrysogaster)*. The two properties are on the lower southeast coast, where the birds are known to migrate, and augments a 50-kilometre area of habitat.

Minister Hunter stated, *"It's very important that we can actually consolidate these areas of protected reserves so we actually increase its range and increase its ability to produce young in the wild."* The minister also said that a number of conservation and parks organisations aided the purchase of the land.

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/obp-land

Baudin's Black Cockatoos fitted with solar-powered GPS trackers before release to wild


© Keith Lightbody

Nine rehabilitated Baudin's Black Cockatoos *(Zanda baudinii)* will have their movements monitored with solar-powered GPS trackers in the southwest region of Western Australia by researchers at Murdoch University and the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Murdoch University Associate Professor Kris Warren said, *"We are going to be able to tell where they are flying, where they are feeding, whether they are roosting, and that very specific and detailed data has been lacking in previous studies.""*

The hope is to track these birds over a year and beyond to gain information on the species' requirements for breeding and critical feeding sites. This program is funded by the Department of Housing and WWF Australia, along with Parks and Wildlife, Perth Zoo, University of Amsterdam and the Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre.

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/baudingps

Events

Parrot Lover's Cruise 2015

Western Caribbean
October 25 - November 1, 2015

Departing from New Orleans, LA, ports of call will include Montego Bay, George Town and Cozumel on this spectacular cruise! Plus, this year's guest speaker will be animal training, behaviour and enrichment specialist Lara Joseph, of The Animal Behaviour Center. Also on this year's list: Joanna Eckles of Audubon Minnesota will speak on the current projects of the World Parrot Trust and other groups around the world.

Book your spot today!
parrotloverscruise.com

Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre - call for volunteers

Kaarakin is a non-profit conservation organisation located in Western Australia with a focus on saving the black cockatoos, and they are in need of extra help. If you live in the Perth area and have experience in the clinical care of birds, the centre could use your help. Clinic volunteers must commit to a regular 4-hour shift (or more if desired) on the same day each week.

Learn more:
kaarakin@kaarakin.com
blackcockatoorecovery.com

Opportunities

Belize Bird Rescue

Looking for a chance to work with parrots in Belize?

Belize Bird Rescue is looking for interns and volunteers who are passionate about wildlife and want to use their skills to help return wild birds back where they belong. The Belize Bird Rescue is a non-profit rescue, rehabilitation and release centre for indigenous birds of Belize. Contact them to learn more and find out what you can do to keep birds flying free:

belizebirdrescue@gmail.com
belizebirdrescue.com

Echo and Ara Project - call for volunteers

WPT partners **Echo** and **Ara Project** are carrying out important work for parrots, in Bonaire and Costa Rica respectively, and they always need volunteers to help! If you have time to spare, take a look at their ongoing opportunities by following the links below, and see if you fit the bill.

Volunteer at Echo:
echobonaire.org/volunteer

Volunteer at Ara Project:
thearaproject.org

Correction Notice

Orange-bellied Parrot Omission

In the article *'Orange-bellied Parrot: Searching for Answers'* (*PsittaScene* Spring 2015) we accidentally excluded one important breeding facility from the list: **Moonlit Sanctuary** is the only institution breeding these birds located *within* Orange-bellied Parrot habitat. The facility will be releasing captive-bred birds into the wild population soon.

Visit the website at:
moonlitsanctuary.com.au

Access Past Issues at: PsittaScene.org

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