

PSITTAScene

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



Autumn 2016



WORLD PARROT TRUST

Glanmor House, Hayle
Cornwall TR27 4HB UK
info@parrots.org +44 (0)1736 751026
www.parrots.org

ABOUT THE WPT

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

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

For over twenty-five years the WPT has grown to become a global force that moves quickly to address urgent issues and support long-term projects for parrots. WPT has led projects in 42 countries for 66 species of parrot.

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ON THE COVER

Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) experiencing their first moments of freedom after being released back into the wild in Uganda (2011).
Photo © Musiime Muramura

The Grey Parrot is a familiar and well-loved bird, and one that has become increasingly rare in the wild. Unsustainable trapping for the pet trade has driven many populations to the brink of extinction. On October 2, 2016 CITES voted to uplist it to Appendix I, thereby banning international trade in the wild birds. The outcome was a milestone decision for the future conservation of these parrots.

See more on **Page 4, Message from the Executive Director.**





A message from the
Executive Director

People are so often shocked to learn that African Grey Parrots are trapped from the wild for the pet trade. After all, exploiting wild animals for our amusement just feels like something we gave up in the last century, if not the century before that. But it's still been happening, until now: for those who haven't yet heard, we at the World Parrot Trust are delighted to share the great news that the legal commercial trade in wild African Grey Parrots is now a thing of the past!

As readers of *PsittaScene* will be well aware, the WPT has been concerned about the status of Grey Parrots since the early 1990s when we supported some of the first field work ever done on this species in the wild. And as one of the most heavily traded of all birds - at times in excess of over 50,000 individuals a year - the African Grey starred as a flagship for our campaign to end wild birds to the European Union (EU). Made permanent in 2007, that ban dramatically reduced demand for Greys and all wild birds, but they were still traded by the tens of thousands due to demand from importers in southern Africa, the Middle East, and eastern Asia.

Since the EU ban we have focused our efforts on encouraging the confiscation of illegal shipments right across their historic range, and in Europe as well. These efforts have helped slow the illegal trade in the past decade, as well as providing birds for reintroduction in several countries. Despite these important conservation strides, extensive research and trade monitoring in recent years has proven that dramatic declines are still the norm for the remaining populations, and efforts to regulate and monitor trade have been unable to protect this species from widespread over-exploitation.

Working tirelessly to generate and assemble crucial data on these declines and the ineffective regulation of trade, our Africa Program Director Dr. Rowan Martin and our Trade Specialist Cristiana Senni spent a good portion of the past five years documenting the case for ending the legal trade in Grey Parrots. Then with Gabon leading the way, a majority of range states in Africa signed on to the Gabonese proposal for full protection under the UN's CITES convention in October. With the full-throated support of the EU member states, the USA, and many others who shared these concerns, the proposal met the two-thirds majority required for passage, and with that, tens of thousands of these wild parrots can now breathe a huge sigh of relief.

For now, we applaud these countries willingness to save these extraordinary birds from disappearing entirely ... just because we humans enjoy them so much. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all the many supporters and collaborators around the world, including over 100,000 people who were kind enough to sign petitions calling for this great step forward.

We will of course share more about this momentous decision, and our aspirations for the future conservation of these birds in future issues of *PsittaScene* ... until then, here's to Grey Parrots flying a lot safer through the forests of tropical Africa!

*James D. Gilardi,
WPT Executive Director*

NOTES FROM AN EXPEDITION:

Adventures studying the Yellow-naped Amazons of Costa Rica and Nicaragua

By Timothy F. Wright & Christine Dahlin
Blog by Dominique Hellmich



THE EARLY MORNING SUNLIGHT slanted down as I paced up and down the trail, straining my ears. Above me towered giants of the tropical dry forest: native trees planted in orderly lines 100 years ago to shade coffee bushes that were now overgrown with vines.

Around me curved the jagged edge of the caldera of an extinct volcano, and above hulked another volcano, the deadly Casitas, which in 1998 filled with water after a week-long deluge from Hurricane Mitch and burst its crater, sending a flood of mud and stone down its slopes that obliterated two villages and killed 2,000 people.

Today the weather was clear and the risk of floods, or lava, was small. I continued my pacing as my ears sifted through the cacophony of bird and insect sounds around me, waiting for the ringing calls of my favorite parrot, the Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*). The area appeared to be highly suitable habitat, with

an extensive mature forest full of potential feeding and nesting sites. But as the morning advanced I began to fear that this would be yet another Nicaraguan site without any parrots.

I was in this dramatic location on the final day of a six-week expedition to Costa Rica and Nicaragua as part of a team co-led with Christine Dahlin of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (UPJ). Our aim was to document geographic patterns in the contact calls of the Yellow-naped Amazon, a parrot found in the dry forest habitats of the Pacific slope of Central America and southern Mexico.

This work extended a study that I had started in 1994 as a young graduate student, in which I described a distinctive pattern in the contact calls of Yellow-naped Amazons in Costa Rica that I described as 'vocal dialects'. Birds at night roosts across Costa Rica used contact calls in a similar

manner, but these calls sounded very different in each of three dialects.

I attributed these differences to vocal learning, with birds in different regions learning their contact calls from other birds in the same regions. In 2005, when Chris was a beginning graduate student with me at New Mexico State University (NMSU), we extended the temporal scale of this study with a resurvey of the Costa Rica calls that allowed us to evaluate how calls were changing over time.

We found a high degree of stability in the dialects, with birds at the same regions generally using the same type of calls as in 1994, with dialect boundaries in the same locations. This stability, and subsequent experimental work by another of my graduate students, Alejandro Salinas Melgoza, further confirmed the importance of vocal learning in maintaining cultural traditions.



The Costa Rica team at the Liberia Hotel: from left Tim Wright, Chris Dahlin, Sophie Nazeri, Molly Dupin, Tom Lewis, Alyssa Trimeloni, and Sam Williams.



© Christine Dahlin

© Molly Dupin



Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*)

World population: 10,000 – 50,000

Where found:
A.a. auropalliata: Pacific slope from Oaxaca, Mexico to NW Costa Rica
A.a. parvipes: Mosquitia of Honduras and NE Nicaragua
A.a. caribaea: Bay Islands, Honduras

An overall decline in the Yellow-naped Amazon's population has occurred throughout the species' range due to trapping for the wild bird trade and the loss and degradation of its habitat.

About the Authors

Timothy F. Wright PhD studies the behavior and evolution of parrots from field sites in Central America and his lab at New Mexico State University, where he is a Professor in Biology. He is a co-author with Cathy Toft of *Parrots of the Wild: A Natural History of the World's Most Captivating Birds*.

Christine Dahlin PhD studies communication and ecology-based questions in parrots and other birds in Costa Rica, as well as field sites in Pennsylvania. Her home-base is the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, where she is an Assistant Professor. She can often be found leading her students through the woods in search of birds and animals.

Now, in 2016, we wanted to extend our study out to 22 years to see what changes might have occurred over a longer time span in Costa Rica. We also wanted to expand our map of cultural variation northward, into populations in adjoining Nicaragua. Finally, we wanted to include a rigorous survey of populations in these two countries, as many reports had suggested they were declining rapidly due to loss of habitat and poaching of nestlings for the pet trade.

To accomplish these goals we assembled two crack expeditionary teams. One, led by Chris in Costa Rica, consisted of recent UPJ graduates Alyssa Trimeloni and Molly Dupin, and Sophie Nazeri and Tom Lewis, who joined us from our partner Project Ara to conduct the population survey. The other, led by me in Nicaragua, consisted of NMSU graduate students Grace Smith Vidaurre and Dominique Hellmich and Martín Lezama, a wildlife biologist from Nicaragua with years of experience working on Yellow-

naped Amazons in that country. What we found was both exhilarating and sobering. Our survey of dialects in Costa Rica again found a striking picture of long-term dialect stability, with birds at most of the sites using calls very similar to those seen in my original survey 22 years ago. There were, however, some interesting exceptions to this basic pattern that we'll be examining with further analyses over the next months.

In Nicaragua we found that birds in the south frontier region used similar calls to those in neighboring Costa Rica, while those just to the north had a different dialect. Perhaps the most striking pattern was seen on the island of Ometepe in the middle of Lake Nicaragua. This unusual island is composed of two volcanoes, Maderas and Concepción, joined by a thin strip of marshy lowlands. We found one new dialect used at two roosts on Maderas, and yet another used at two roosts on Concepción, a scant three kilometers away. With this new data, our study now

represents one of the longest-running and most extensive studies of avian dialects and provides important insights into the formation and persistence of animal cultural traditions.

More sobering, however, were the low numbers of Yellow-naped Amazons encountered throughout our survey, suggesting a rapid decline in their population. This downturn was best documented in Costa Rica, where we had counted numbers at many roosts during our last survey in 2005. The comparisons between these sites showed an overall decline of 50% in the last eleven years. The decline was even more alarming in Nicaragua, with parrots now absent from many sites where our colleague Martín has formerly observed healthy, if small, populations.

We have already communicated the results of this survey to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) so that it can be used in their current assessment of the conservation status of this species. We believe our data on severe

declines in populations in this species' former strongholds of Nicaragua and Costa Rica are sufficiently dire to trigger a change in this species status from "Vulnerable" to "Endangered". While this change in status is bad news for this charismatic species, it is our hope that it will motivate an increased level of conservation efforts on its behalf.

For my own part, my final day of fieldwork ended on a high note. Just as I was starting to pack up my recording equipment, I heard in the distance the sounds I'd been waiting for: the counterpoint calling of a pair of Yellow-naped Amazons.

I took a bearing and raced towards the sound, crashing through the vines and head-high grasses clogging the space between rows of coffee bushes. When I got close enough I flipped on my recorder and started recording their calls, carefully narrating who gave which call as the pair switched from contact calls to duets and back.

I recognized the contact calls as similar to those we had recorded on two of the neighboring volcanoes, confirming that we had found another new vocal dialect, this one confined to the northwest corner of Nicaragua. I also saw that this pair was accompanied by another, silent, pair of Amazons. Close inspection confirmed that these lacked the yellow napes of adults, suggesting that they were the recently fledged offspring of the calling pair. This happy news was tempered, however, by the fact that neither Grace nor Dominique had heard any Yellow-naped Amazons at other spots in the caldera that morning.

As with most other sites in Nicaragua, there were many fewer birds present than available habitat might support. It was a final reminder that, if we hoped to hear the calls of this marvellous bird ringing through the tropical dry forest at some time in the future, then sustained action to protect remaining populations was urgently required. ☐

Stories from the field ➔

PAGE 10 -
Adventures in Conservation

Read an exciting journal excerpt written by UPJ research team member Dominique Hellmich.



Tim Wright and Christine Dahlin and their team had many adventures on this expedition, learning some important lessons about parrot behavior, conservation, and life in the tropics. The following is an excerpt from blog posts written by the team for the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (UPJ) website, which can be found at: upj.pitt.edu/en/about-us/faculty-blogs.

Dominique Hellmich, entry 7/1/16

5 a.m.: to my left a motorbike putters along the road; in the distance a rooster crows incessantly. Then, brilliant flashes of butter yellow as a trio of Yellow-naped Amazons wheel through the clear dawn air, their frantic, fluttering wing beats mirroring the sudden quickening of my pulse.

With a chorus of raucous shrieks they alight upon the nearby treetops and I point my microphone in their direction, eagerly scooping calls from the air like butterflies with a net. Within minutes a dozen more birds are flitting between the trees of the roost, either crooning sweet duets with their mates or squawking harsh contact calls as they prepare to leave for their daily rounds about the island. Caught up in the excitement, in the vitality of these charismatic birds in the face of a beautiful dawn, I suddenly don't mind the early rising very much at all.

OMATEPE ISLAND, NICARAGUA.

As if twin volcanoes rising from the middle of Central America's biggest lake weren't already impressive enough, the island boasts a remarkable population of the endangered Amazon. In fact, we found more birds here than at any other location along Nicaragua's Pacific coast thus far, a much-needed respite for our demoralized crew. During the previous week we were lucky to find even a handful of birds at any one location. Whether this was due to the unreliability of our early scouting or simply because local populations were so low we couldn't know. Most likely it was a combination of both, as poaching pressures on this long-lived and iconic parrot remains extremely high throughout the country.

On Omatepe - among beachside resorts, ox-riders, and more speed bumps than could realistically be considered necessary - not only did we find our Amazons, we found them using startlingly new and exciting dialects that have not been observed before in any other area of Nicaragua. Previous reports of disjointed breeding schedules for groups of birds on either side of the island, corresponding to the two volcanoes Concepcion and Maderas, seemed to mirror our findings of distinct dialects for each region.

As I look up at the roost growing quiet under the rising sun, I feel a similar sense of calm and satisfaction. Since stepping foot on the island, Omatepe has proved to be a land of firsts: First time I managed to record the desired number of birds and their calls. First time I saw a man riding an ox. First time we realized our advisor was actually a local legend, the infamous Chico Largo. First time I ate momones, a local fruit.

And the first time I've seen flocks of wild Yellow-naped Amazons and felt a faint hope for their future.

Our local guide Nortan tells us that poaching pressures still do exist on the island. And maybe we are just seeing birds concentrated in a relatively small area that lends to their increased exposure and contact with human habitation. But I'm choosing to look past the potential negatives and appreciate the fact that Omatepe Island transformed my experience in Nicaragua, and only for the better.

DH

➔ Watch for more Stories from the Field in future issues of PsittaScene!



WORLD PARROT TRUST

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Anatomy of a Dispute

Copyright © Ganesh H Shankar
Winner 2016 Natural History Museum Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Birds
Photographed at Bharatpur Wildlife Sanctuary, India.

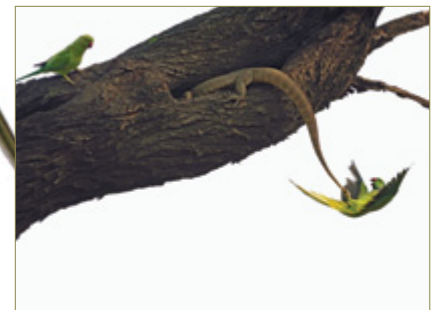
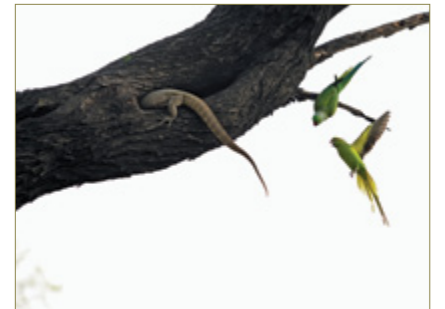
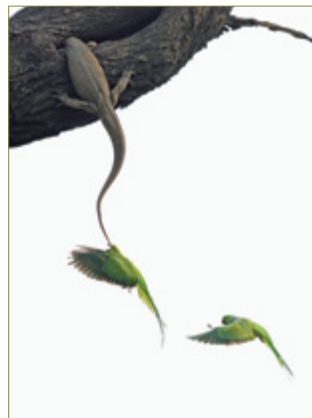
“The parakeets were not impressed. They had returned to their nest to find a Bengal Monitor (*Varanus bengalensis*) had settled in. The birds immediately set about trying to evict the squatter: biting and hanging off its tail.

Ringneck Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) are intelligent birds that usually nest in small holes for better protection from predators. Monitor lizards are good climbers, particularly young ones, which seek safety in the trees. They scavenge for anything, from small invertebrates to frogs, birds and small mammals – as well as eggs.

What happened next? Your guess is as good as mine!”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER:

Ganesh has been photographing nature for over two decades. He is currently focusing on creative and artistic expressions of subjects in nature. View more of his work at: www.naturelyrics.com



YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOOS

of Komodo National Park

Article and photos © Oka Dwi Prihatmoko, DVM

Komodo Island is a dry and rugged place. It is part of the Lesser Sunda chain of Indonesian islands, and is made up of rust-coloured volcanic hills, grasslands and forests. Its surrounding waters of seagrass beds, mangrove shrublands and coral reefs are rich in life. To protect it, Komodo National Park (KNP) was established in 1980.

The main purpose of the KNP is to protect the Vulnerable Komodo dragon, but by extension another extremely rare species finds refuge in this park: the Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea parvula*), a bird about the size of a large pigeon, with startling white plumage and bright yellow in its crest and cheek.



By all accounts the KNP has the largest population of Yellow-crested Cockatoos. Continuous monitoring of the species on Komodo is necessary in order to ensure that the population remains stable there. That's what brought me to the island of Komodo in mid-April 2016 — to survey the population of Yellow-crested Cockatoos in the Park and the surrounding area, identify the threats that could affect their survival and to search for nest cavities.

The guides and I selected several villages known for sightings to monitor. We also visited several locations on the neighbouring island of Flores - Warloka, Tebedo, and Dao villages — as we had heard about sightings in these areas. It was at the end of the rainy season, and the forests and savannahs were still green. Mangrove fruits, tamarind, and sugar apple were plentiful everywhere. Exploration of the area on foot proved to be challenging: the rain-saturated mangroves and mudflats were a test in endurance.

Loh Liang

Our first stop was in Loh Liang, the main landing area on Komodo. Here wild almond, gebang, tamarind, sugar apple, India jujube, and ketapang dominate the landscape — all potential resting and feeding trees for our snow-white subjects. We began the search with high hopes.

Starting at 5.45 AM the first day we visited Sulphurea Hill, located 500m from the jetty. We were rewarded with the sounds of

cockatoos calling shortly after. We saw two medium-sized flocks on the tops of massive 30-metre almond and tamarind trees on the east side of the hill, and smaller flocks on the other side. The charismatic birds were perching, preening, sunning themselves and vocalising with each other. It was a wonderful sight to see. After approximately 20 minutes, they flew off, and we moved on.

Later on, not far away in Banu Nggulung, we heard more calling. After a search, we found six of them perched high in an almond tree, shading themselves from the now-hot sun.

At 2 pm we began the long trek to a known site, Rudolf Hill. About 2km from the jetty, there were cockatoos signaling that they had seen us coming - four perched in a tamarind tree alarm-calling. Then our ranger spotted an altogether different animal - a cobra slithering slowly into a tamarind tree-hole to hide. We watched in fascination as it disappeared, but the encounter left us with mixed feelings as the snakes predate the cockatoos' chicks and eggs.

We found four other cockatoos near the hill. From the top we watched two of them being chased by another predator, a Brahminy kite. They swooped down the hill towards the lower forests, with the raptor in hot pursuit. They escaped just in time.

After trekking to a few more areas we had our total in Loh Liang valley: 71 cockatoos, a good start to our survey.

Loh Lawi

Along the edge of Loh Lawi valley there are narrow mangrove forests and even narrower beaches. Beyond the forests there are wide areas of mudflats. By the time we got there it had dried up from the heavy rains, so the walking was now much easier. There is a pathway to the deep, dense forest beyond used by Komodo villagers but on most of our treks we had to clear new trails.

Almost immediately we spotted two cockatoos perched in a dead tree and screaming. We also saw a far-off flock of white birds, seventeen in all, in the gebang treetops. But as we approached we were mildly disappointed - they turned out to be Pied Imperial pigeons, a similar-looking species. From then on we had to be careful not to confuse them with the cockatoos.

Loh Lawi and Loh Sebita are two favorite locations for Komodo villagers to seasonally harvest tamarind and sugar apple fruits. The activities do not appear to be disturbing the cockatoos that live there. Thankfully there also appears to be no nest robbing, as villagers are regularly checked by rangers.

Loh Sebita

There were more sightings of cockatoos to come. We moored our boat to the jetty bridge of Loh Sebita just as a flock flew from the mangroves. They flew up and over then landed, hiding amongst the trees, and foraging on fruit. Later on we were delighted to discover three nest cavities in the area.

In the midst of our searching we were abruptly reminded that we had to be careful at all times: an active lizard nest, 4m in diameter of soil, sand and twigs, was in the middle of the forest. We kept a wary eye out for a dragon – thankfully, none appeared.

Further on we spotted 15 cockatoos and seven nest cavities in gebang palms.

And there was something more: we suspected one was active since mating had been seen there! Unfortunately, the good news was tempered; some of the other gebang appeared burned from fires that occur every year in August and September. This is a potential threat for the cockatoos, since gebang palms are favorite trees for nesting.



Komodo Dragon



Brahminy Kite



Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*)

World population: <1,000

In Indonesia, the Yellow-crested Cockatoo is threatened by unsustainable exploitation for the wild bird trade, and habitat loss and conversion to agriculture.

Range:
C. s. sulphurea: islands of Sulawesi
C. s. parvula: Nusa Penida, Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Komodo and the islands between Flores, Alor and Timor
C. s. citrinocristata: Sumba Island
C. s. abbotti: Masalembu Islands, East Java Province

We decided to stay one night at Loh Sebita ranger post to see where the cockatoos went first thing in the morning. The next day we heard calls from inside the mangroves, then suddenly 30 cockatoos flew out in a great cloud of white. The birds separated into several groups, some flying along the mangroves, some gliding into the secondary forest area. What a great moment! That brought the total to 67 cockatoos in Loh Lawi and Loh Sebita.

Rinca and Bero Islands

The village on tiny Rinca Island has a population of 3000 people, mostly fishermen. But there are over a dozen wild cockatoos there, too: during the rainy season they are seen in the woods behind the local school. But when the dry season comes, the birds are often found inside the village, seemingly unbothered by people, eating *Moringa* seeds which are widely planted by residents for food.

The ranger in Rinca village advised us to next travel to Bero island, which he believed had the largest population – over one hundred birds. The island is located in the southern part of Komodo National Park.

To travel there we have to pass between Rinca and Flores island, where the waters can be treacherous. Only experienced captains with sea-worthy crafts could navigate the Molo strait. We made it over without incident, but the birds make it look

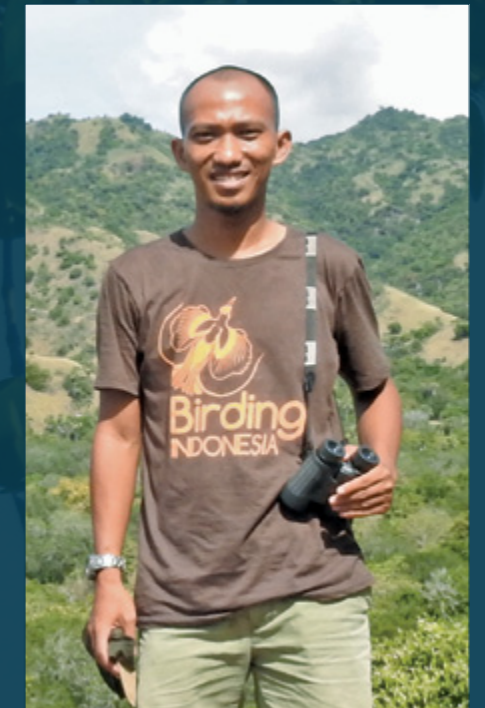
easier: small flocks of cockatoos fly between Bero, Flores and Rinca on a daily basis. On Bero, many of the mangroves are large, and there are plenty of tree cavities that could potentially be used by cockatoos. In one of the trees I found the telltale signs of a nest: soft white feathers inside a hole 50cm deep, but its occupants had long since vacated the cavity.

Further results were mixed: in Soknar, Lenteng, Warloka and Tebedo villages the cockatoos either flew over the area without settling, or were not seen at all. In the village of Golomori we relied on second-hand information from wildlife officials about a population of 69 birds.

Once we had completed our treks, we found out some good news: since 2010 the national park authorities have been conducting ongoing surveys of the Yellow-crested Cockatoos on Komodo and, according to their records, the population is increasing every year. Last year (2015) they counted 695 birds; by comparison in 2010 they counted 558 cockatoos. Besides the increase in population, range size changes have also taken place, possibly due to savannah fire in some areas, and available food and shelter in others. One example is Bero island, where in 2002 officials observed only twenty-six cockatoos. But since 2010, it appears the island is becoming a favorite place for these beautiful birds.

We were happy to conclude that the population of Yellow-crested Cockatoos in Komodo National Park area is still healthy, but it's a tenuous status: they're still very much in peril from the dangers that lurk on the island. Direct threats to the birds include young Komodo dragons and snakes that climb into nest holes to prey on chicks, and savannah fire. On Rinca, Long-tailed macaques are starting to compete for fruit but are not a threat. Park authorities have also dealt with deer poachers in recent years, but thankfully there is no evidence the hunters also take cockatoos.

The main focus of KNP authorities is to protect the birds' habitat and let the cockatoos breed naturally. We concurred that the species could also benefit from the installation of nest boxes to aid breeding, and reforestation of areas destroyed by fire. One thing is clear: Yellow-crested Cockatoos will likely always need protecting on all of the islands where they are found, but thankfully they're on fair footing on this one. 📷



About the Author

Oka Dwi Prihatmoko, DVM
WPT Indonesia Program Coordinator

Oka Dwi Prihatmoko's experience as a veterinarian includes work with various conservation NGOs on several islands in Indonesia carrying out avian influenza monitoring in wild birds, population surveys, nest protection and reintroduction.

During his years in a clinic for small and exotic animals, and as zoo veterinarian at Bali Safari and Marine Park, he worked closely with Eclectus Parrots, lorries and lorikeets, and Yellow-crested, Palm and Moluccan Cockatoos.


Oka served as Editor-in-Chief of the digital publication *Biodivesitas Indonesia*, has written popular articles related to wildlife, travel, and adventure and worked as a freelance guide for the Indonesia Ecotourism Network, most recently with *Birding Indonesia*.

Oka joins WPT's Indonesia team to track, locate and monitor wild and released parrots, ensuring the successful rehabilitation of confiscated birds, and to develop and manage projects overseen by the World Parrot Trust in Indonesia.

SEIZED IN BULGARIA: Many hands help Grey Parrots

WPT's Trade Specialist Cristiana Senni reports that last February, a shipment of African Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) was seized in northern Bulgaria. They were brought to the Lovech and Stara Zagora Zoos to await the decision of the country's Court. The confiscation was confirmed and the parrots entrusted to the WPT for future rehabilitation and release in the wild. Dr. Melinda de Mul of Central Veterinary Clinic in Sofia checked, medicated and applied WPT coded leg bands and microchips to all of the parrots.

With an eye to the birds' reintroduction the WPT has partnered with Le Biome in Toulouse, France, a rescue and conservation facility. The organisation has offered to look after the parrots until it is possible to release them in the wild in one of their African range countries. On 27 July, twenty-six African Grey parrots were transported to Sofia where they were boarded on a Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt and then on to Toulouse. They are now settling well in their new home.

WPT is deeply grateful for the support of the CITES Management Authority of Bulgaria, Dr. Melinda de Mul, Jérôme Pensu of Le Biome, Svilen Stamatov of Bulgarian Animal Transport, Lovech and Stara Zagora Zoos, Zeleni Balkani, volunteer Francisco Acedo, and Lufthansa Cargo, which very generously transported the parrots at no charge. 



© Lufthansa Cargo, Sofia



© Melinda de Mul



© Jérôme Pensu

Top left and right: Boarding for flight across Europe.
Bottom: Some of the birds settling into their new aviary after arrival in France.



A BELIZE BIRD RESCUE STORY

ZACK & KIKI'S FIRST BIG ADVENTURE THE GREAT ESCAPE

Author: *Nikki Buxton*

Illustrations: *Karin Harvey*

Reviewed by: *Desi Milpacher, WPT Publications Editor*

At first glance this book looks comical and youthful. But almost immediately the reader is thrust into the murky world of the wild bird trade following the trapping of two terrified youngsters from a wild Red-lore Amazon nest. The rest of the story from there can, by turns, be childlike and deeply unsettling.

The lighthearted illustrations ease the telling of a disturbing story which, thankfully, in the end has a happy outcome. It nevertheless serves as an important reminder of the gravity of the wildlife trade, and a gentle admonition to humans young and old to never give in to adversity.

Proceeds from the sale of this book benefit parrot conservation projects at Belize Bird Rescue.

Purchase your copy at:
belizebirdrescue.org/zack

About the Author

Nikki Buxton is the Founding Director of the Belize Bird Rescue. Although the Centre works with every species of indigenous birds, her passion will always be for the parrots.

About Belize Bird Rescue

The Belize Bird Rescue is an avian rehabilitation centre and bird sanctuary whose mission is to encourage empathy for and awareness of the importance of the preservation of indigenous bird-life by means of education, conservation, enforcement and rehabilitation. Learn more at: belizebirdrescue.org





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World's only alpine parrot faces extinction

The Kea (*Nestor notabilis*), the world's only mountain-dwelling parrot, is threatened with extinction in its native New Zealand. The birds, which are maligned by some New Zealanders and loved by others, are found only in the mountains of the South Island. After years of monitoring, conservationists have begun raising the alarm about their population numbers, thought to be as low as 1,000. The Kea Conservation Trust has recently found that two-thirds of all chicks die before fledging, taken by stoats, rats and possums.

Tamsin Orr-Walker, chair of the Kea Conservation Trust, says, "One of the most interesting things about Kea is they are one of the few wild species that seek out humans. That is really rare, and it is that inquisitive nature that is getting them into trouble because a lot of the ways humans interact with them is endangering their survival."

These threats include introduced species, lead-poisoning from old alpine dwellings, and interactions with humans. Education programmes have gone a long way in helping to spread awareness about the birds, but there's still a long way to go.

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/keaparrot

Scientists take first picture of Night Parrot nest – but who ate the eggs?

In 2013 a bird which hadn't been recorded for 75 years was re-discovered: the Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*). Until that night it was believed extinct in the wild, but recently, ecologist Dr. Steve Murphy discovered and photographed something else very significant: a nest with two eggs. It was the first time since the 1880s that anyone had seen an active nest belonging to the parrot, and it raised hopes for the beginning of a recovery. Unfortunately it was not to be. A week later Dr. Murphy discovered the nest had been raided, with virtually no clues left behind. Murphy had some guesses as to what had happened, but nothing substantial. DNA testing of a few shell fragments finally revealed the culprit: a king brown snake.

In spite of the disappointment, surveys for the elusive bird are ongoing. A field trip earlier this year in Bush Heritage's Pullen Pullen Reserve revealed brand-new information. "The whole objective here is to try and recover night parrots," Dr. Murphy said. "And you can only do that if you know where they are spending their time feeding and therefore where to invest money in managing their habitat."

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/nightparrotnest

Mike Gammond

It is with great sadness that Rosemary Low reports the death of Mike Gammond after a long illness. Mike was Rosemary's assistant curator at Loro Parque and at Palmitos Park, 1987-1994. He was, she noted, the most hard-working and dedicated person on the staff. From 1994 until 2014 he was curator of Birds Kingdom in Bahrain. According to Rosemary it was an outstanding collection of parrots and softbills of more than one hundred species; formerly a private collection, it opened to the public in 2013. Breeding successes such as those with Palm Cockatoos and Hyacinth Macaws were numerous.

Mike will also be remembered by his colleagues in the Marines and for his bravery during the Falklands war. Condolences are extended to his mother and family.



© Rosemary Low

WPT partner in macaw preservation honoured

Ecuador's Fundación Pro-Bosque has a lot to be proud of with the work it has accomplished, but these days there's more to celebrate: they've won the Green Latin America Prize for their project "Restoration of Dry Forest in the Cerro Blanco Protected Forest", which was one of 1,407 projects from a total of twenty-five countries in the region. The US and Spain alone were submitted in 10 different categories this year. Pro-Bosque competed with 57 other projects in the category "Forests and Flora" and was selected as one of three finalists that included projects from Peru and Colombia. The prizes are significant; in conservation circles they are considered to be the "environmental Oscars." Pro-Bosque wishes to thank the World Parrot Trust for all of its support, which helped make possible this recognition.



© Ivette Solis

In the meantime, the organisation continues its good work: recently, in conjunction with Jambeli Rescue Foundation, a total of five Great Green Macaws (*Ara ambiguus*) were released to the wild after a stint in a pre-release flight. Three have stayed together as a flock near the feeding stations, although one flew off and has since been brought back to be with the others. The organisation is hopeful that it can bolster the wild population of at least six macaws, which visited the pre-release flight cage where the macaws were being held last year.

Follow Pro-Bosque on Facebook:
facebook.com/fundacion.probosque

OPPORTUNITIES

Echo and Ara - 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 The Ara Project:
thearaproject.org

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

ACCESS PAST ISSUES AT: PSITTASCENE.ORG

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WPT CONTACTS

ON THE WEB

parrots.org
psittascene.org
facebook.com/WorldParrotTrust
twitter.com/parrottrust

MAIN BRANCHES

UNITED KINGDOM (Main Office)

Karen Whitley, Administrator
Glanmor House, Hayle,
Cornwall, TR27 4HB
Tel: (44) 01736 751026
Fax: (44) 01736 751028
uk@parrots.org

UNITED STATES

Glenn Reynolds, Administrator
P.O. Box 935, Lake Alfred, FL 33850
Tel/Fax: (1) 863 956 4347
usa@parrots.org

CANADA

Michelle Kooistra, Administrator
4377 Gordon Dr., Kelowna, BC, V1W 1S7
Tel/Fax: (1) 250 766 9363
canada@parrots.org

ADDITIONAL BRANCHES

- Africa** Rowan Martin
africa@parrots.org
- Australia** Nicholas Bishop
australia@parrots.org
- Benelux** Ruud Vonk
benelux@parrots.org
- Belgium** Ronald Coens
belgium@parrots.org
- Brazil** André Saidenberg
brazil@parrots.org
- India** Avin Deen
india@parrots.org
- Indonesia** Oka Dwi Prihatmoko
indonesia@parrots.org
- Italy** Cristiana Senni
csenni@parrots.org
- Japan** TSUBASA
japan@parrots.org
- Netherlands** Ria Vonk
netherlands@parrots.org
- Peru/Spain/Central America** Rosa Elena Zagarra
centralamerica@parrots.org
- Sweden** Maria Rogstadius
sweden@parrots.org



Parrots in the Wild:
Ringneck Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)

A wild Ringneck Parakeet does battle with a Bengal Monitor (*Varanus bengalensis*) in a valiant attempt to send the lizard off.

Photographed at Bharatpur Wildlife Sanctuary in India, home to a recorded 366 bird species, 379 floral species, 50 species of fish, 13 species of snakes, 5 species of lizards, 7 amphibian species, 7 turtle species, and a variety of other invertebrates. See more on *Page 12, Anatomy of a Dispute*.

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