

# PSITTAScene

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



Spring 2018



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 an international leader in parrot conservation and welfare, the World Parrot Trust works with researchers, in-country organisations, communities and governments to encourage effective solutions that save parrots.

Since 1989 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 67 species of parrot.

**CHARITY INFORMATION**

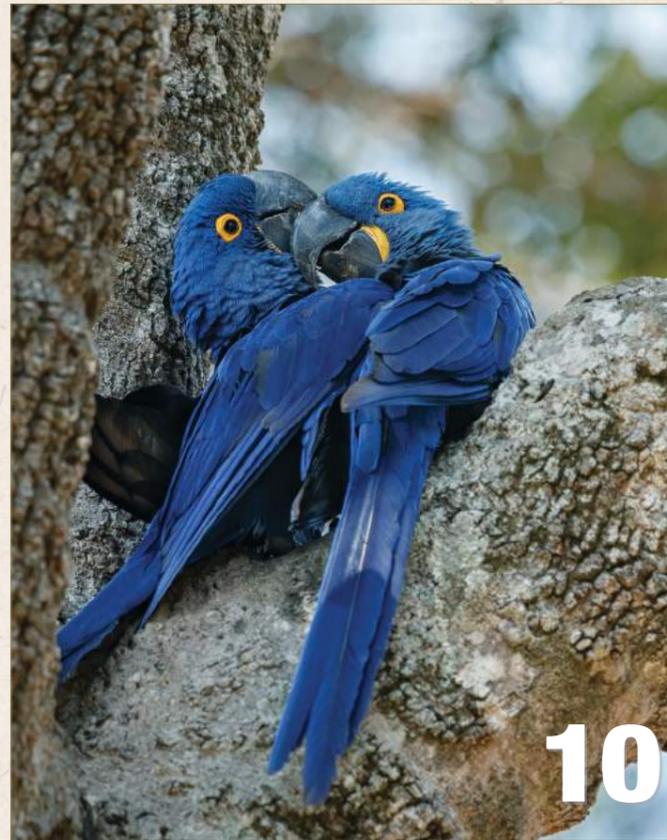
United Kingdom: # 800944  
United States: EIN 62-1561595  
Canada: BN 89004 1171 RR0001



Editor: Desi Milpacher  
Layout and Design: Michelle Kooistra  
Production: Karen Whitley

The World Parrot Trust does not necessarily endorse any views or statements made by contributors to *PsittaScene*. It will consider articles or letters from any contributors on their merits. Visit [parrots.org/psittascene](http://parrots.org/psittascene) for Guidelines. Anyone wishing to reprint *PsittaScene* articles in full or in part needs permission from WPT and the author/photographer(s) and must state that it was copied from *PsittaScene*.  
All contents © World Parrot Trust

# CONTENTS



**4** Message from WPT Chairperson  
*Alison Hales*

**5** Africa Round-up  
*Accomplishments and future plans to protect some of Africa's most at-risk parrot species*

**10** Hyacinth Macaws:  
*Conservation in a Parrot Paradise*

**16** Species Focus:  
*Yellow-naped Amazon*

**18** Grey Parrots of the Sseses  
*Lake Victoria, Uganda*

**22** PsittaNews  
*Parrot News and Updates  
2017 PsittaScene Issues Index  
WPT Contacts*

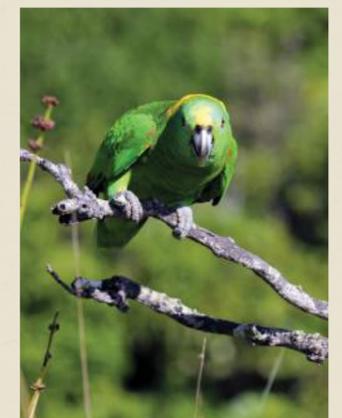
**24** Parrots in the Wild  
*Saffron-headed Parrot (Pyrilia pyralia)*

**ON THE COVER**

A **Yellow-naped Amazon** (*Amazona auropalliata*) warily regarding the photographer. Photo © **J Gilardi**

With wild populations in serious decline in all six countries in its native range, the Yellow-naped Amazon is at risk of extinction. WPT has been supporting a number of studies and local projects aimed at protecting remaining populations, including research on the species' ecology, nest monitoring and population surveys.

Learn more on *Page 16* in *Species Focus: Yellow-naped Amazon*.



## A message from the Chairperson

If you want to know what can be achieved when good people work hard, read this issue of *PsittaScene!*

In Bolivia we see what has been accomplished to help Hyacinth Macaws at the edge of their range, and an update on Lilian's Lovebirds in southern Africa explains how we are finding out about the actions needed to protect them.

We have given Africa's Grey and Timneh Parrots much thought these past few years, in fact for decades – it's been a troubled journey for these wonderful, intelligent birds. Our Africa Programme Director Dr. Rowan Martin updates us on their trade and research.

Plus, we take a look at Greys around Uganda's Lake Victoria through the eyes of Elaine Henley and Lori J DeLeo. They spent time observing the behaviour of wild birds, taking their insights back to benefit companion parrots in the UK, USA and beyond.

And lastly, I am very glad of this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone who supported our 'Make a Change for Parrots' campaign; we have been overwhelmed by your generosity. Learning about and protecting parrots can only happen because good people have been so thoughtful. **Thank you!**



*Alism*

Alison Hales  
WPT Chairperson

## What will be your legacy?

Let your dedication to parrots live on! Leaving a legacy gift to the parrots through your estate may be one of the most fulfilling contributions you will ever make.

Visit our website at [parrots.org/legacy](http://parrots.org/legacy) or contact an office near you (see page 23.)



Cactus Conures in Brazil © Hecke71 | AdobeStock

Lilian's Lovebirds © John Leverton

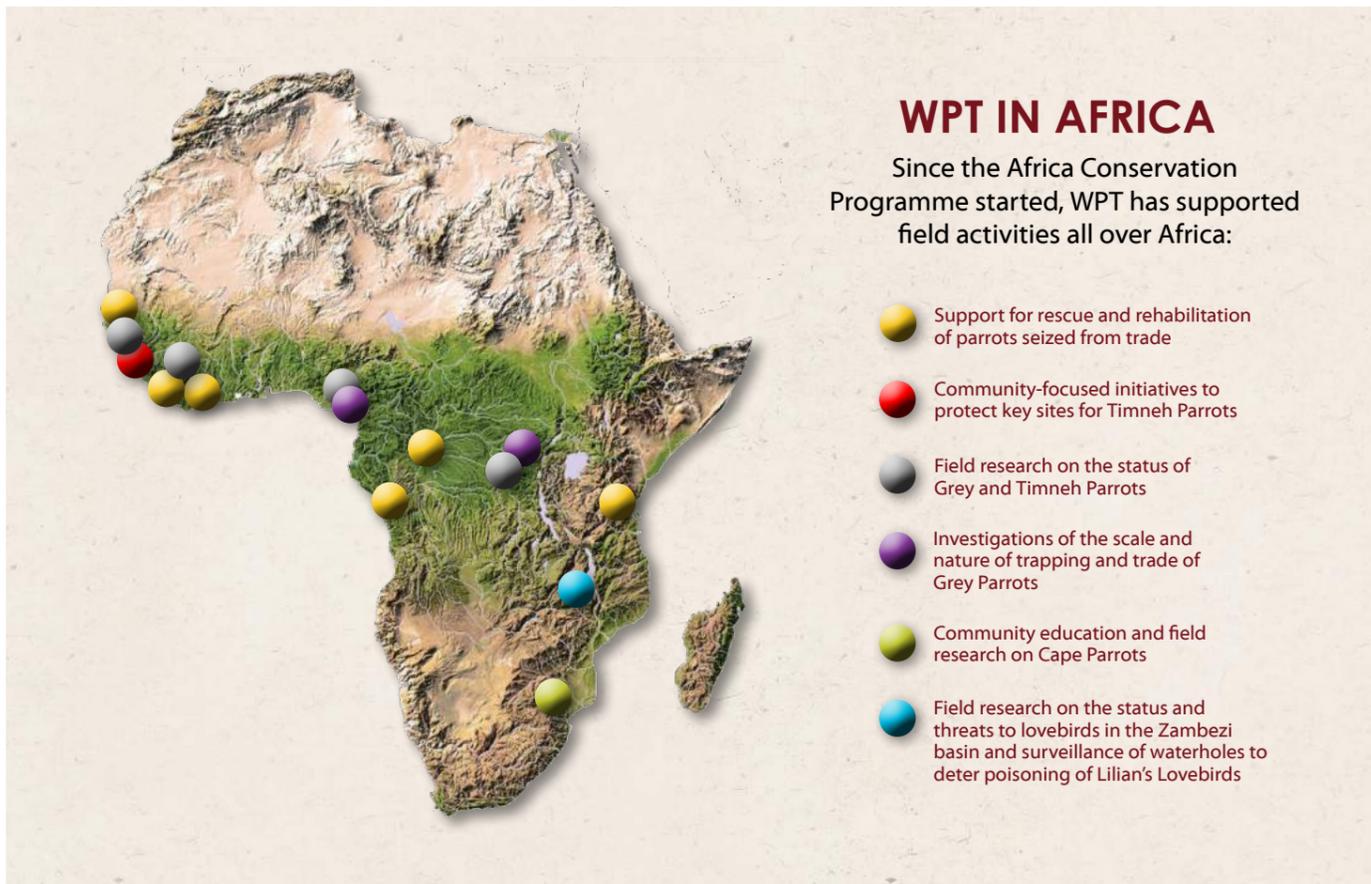


Dr. Rowan Martin heads up the World Parrot Trust's Africa Conservation Programme. Established in 2013, the programme works with partners throughout Africa to address threats to wild parrots through supporting primary research, direct conservation interventions, raising awareness and education, and help for parrots seized from illegal trade.

# AFRICA ROUND-UP

Working for the World Parrot Trust there is never a dull moment. Whether it's dealing with a broken down vehicle as night falls in a remote corner of west Africa, hauling nest boxes 30 metres up into giant trees, speaking to international delegates at a CITES meeting in Geneva, or staring in disbelief at a screen while researching illegal online trade, it's impossible to know what challenge lies around the corner.

While there's always more to be done, it's always worthwhile taking a moment to reflect on what we've achieved and plan carefully where we can make the biggest difference in the future. Here is a round up look at our recent work in Africa and where we're headed in 2018.



## Protecting threatened Timneh Parrots in West Africa

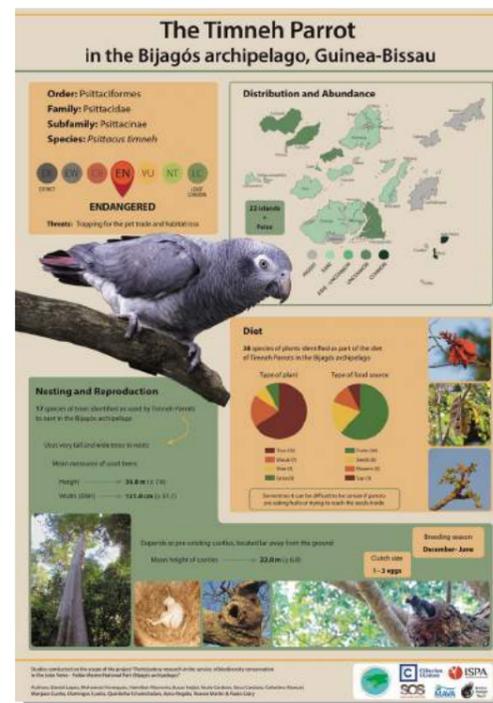
Timneh Parrots (*Psittacus timneh*) were recognised as a distinct species in 2012 - their smaller size, subtler tail and horn-coloured bill distinguishes them from their Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) cousins. Largely restricted to forest fragments of the Upper Guinean region in West Africa, they were recently declared globally Endangered by the IUCN. Despite concerns over declines, very little is known about the status of wild populations, threats or basic aspects of their ecology – in fact, it was impossible to even track down a photo of a wild Timneh parrot when the Africa Programme started.

WPT has been collaborating with partners in Guinea-Bissau since 2013 to build knowledge of the species and engage local communities in conservation. Former parrot trappers have been employed to help protect nests, monitor breeding areas, and assist with other activities such as installing

artificial nest cavities. Studying parrots is rarely easy and especially challenging on remote islands in West Africa, however the efforts of a hugely dedicated team came to fruition earlier this year, with the publication of the first study of the breeding ecology of Timneh Parrots. Check out some of the findings of the research in the infographic (pictured at right © Daniel Lopes).

Encouragingly, there are signs that trapping at two of the most important breeding sites has declined. Community-focused efforts at these sites are ongoing, with emphasis on inspiring better stewardship of forest habitat and sharing the benefits of conservation more broadly within communities. In 2017, WPT began supporting new initiatives for Timneh Parrots in Sierra Leone and Grey Parrots in

View the infographic in larger format online at: [tinyurl.com/Timneh-poster](http://tinyurl.com/Timneh-poster)



Nigeria to understand the status of wild populations and identify key sites for conservation.

*The message is now clear, "there is no legal international trade of wild African Grey Parrots."*



Wild Timneh Parrot at a nest in Guinea-Bissau.

## Ending harmful trade in wild parrots

2017 started on a positive note with Grey and Timneh Parrots being officially placed on Appendix I of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). With this move the legal international trade in wild-caught Grey Parrots came to an end. This was a huge landmark for parrot conservation. More than 1.2 million Grey Parrots have been reported in legal trade since the early 1980s, with many more dying before export or trafficked illegally.

Announcements by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to take reservations to the listing on Appendix I caused some initial concerns over how effective it would be for protecting key populations in the Congo Basin – under the rules of the convention, reservations can be taken by countries that wish to continue trading among themselves. Worryingly, this might have led to some exports from the DRC, which acts as a conduit for illegal trade from other countries, although a

pre-Appendix I suspension on exports remained in place (CITES rules can be complicated). Following concerted international pressure, and led by several Grey Parrot range states, the EU and others, the three countries with reservations pledged in November 2017 to stop all trade in wild Grey Parrots. WPT's role in this process was conducting research into trapping and trade, liaising with partners in the DRC, preparing reports and peer-reviewed publications, and travelling to CITES meetings to ensure that the latest information got in front of the right people.

These efforts have paid off and the 'loop-holes' that remained are now closed, providing clarity much welcomed by enforcement agencies. The message is now clear, 'There is no legal international trade of wild Grey Parrots.'

The listing of Grey and Timneh parrots on CITES Appendix I will not itself end trade in these species, and it is critical that enforcement agencies are supported in its implementation.

## WPT Science

Conducting rigorous science is critical for identifying ways to best protect wild parrots, prioritise resources and build consensus for conservation approaches. Research is therefore a core pillar of our conservation strategy. Recent publications from the WPT Africa Programme include:

Martin, R. O. 2018. **Grey areas: temporal and geographical dynamics of international trade of Grey and Timneh Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus* and *Psittacus timneh*) under CITES.** *Emu - Austral Ornithology* 118, 113–125. doi:10.1080/01584197.2017.1369854

Martin, R. O. 2018. **The wild bird trade and African parrots: past, present and future challenges.** *Ostrich-Journal of African Ornithology*, 1–5. doi:10.2989/00306525.2017.1397787

Lopes, D. C., Martin, R. O., Henriques, M., Monteiro, H., Regalla, A., Tchantchalam, Q., et al. 2018. **Nest-site characteristics and aspects of the breeding biology of the endangered Timneh Parrot *Psittacus timneh* in Guinea-Bissau.** *Ostrich-Journal of African Ornithology*, 1–8. doi.org/10.2989/00306525.2017.1369467

The WPT investigations team have been continuing to closely monitor trade in Grey and Timneh Parrots and share information with CITES authorities and enforcement agencies so they can take swift and decisive action.

In 2018, a new collaboration with World Animal Protection is increasing capacity to do this vital work. While trafficking remains a major concern, there are signs of improvement, with reductions seen in some key importing countries. Two recent seizures of Grey parrots at the point of export in DRC and in transit in Istanbul are very encouraging - such enforcement is critical for disrupting trade networks.

### Ending trade through support for seized parrots

Efforts to support the care of parrots seized from trade are central to WPT's strategy to end illegal trafficking. By providing support in emergency situations, and by building local capacity to manage seized parrots, we are able to free up enforcement agencies to get on with the job of stopping traffickers, so we can be sure the parrots get the care they need.

In 2017, WPT supported rescue efforts in Senegal, Liberia, DRC, Sierra Leone and Tanzania, providing technical support and emergency funds where necessary to build housing, provide food and other vital care. In 2018, we are excited to be part of a new project in Angola, partnering with the Government of Angola, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Wildlife Impact to build capacity and provide training to local staff in the care of rescued wildlife, including Grey Parrots in Angola.



**Top:** Veterinarians David Grant (left), Andrea Pizarro (centre) and Jorge Caro (right) perform health checks on rescued birds at Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Sierra Leone.

**Bottom:** Lilian's Lovebird at a nest cavity, Zambia.

### Understanding threats to southern Africa's lovebirds

Lilian's Lovebirds (*Agapornis lilianae*) are one of two lovebird species that are restricted to the Mopane woodlands of the Zambezi basin in southern Africa. This unique ecosystem is under threat, with trees being converted to charcoal, cleared for agriculture and felled for timber, as well as being impacted by mega-herbivores including elephants. In 2014, WPT began working with partners in Zambia and Malawi to determine the status of the species and understand threats to populations.

Dr. Tiwonge Gawa, a Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Cape Town and Ornithologist at the Museums of Malawi, has led several expeditions, together with field staff from BirdWatch Zambia, Zambian students and researchers from the University of Edinburgh. Following a break, Dr. Gawa has been working with Dr. Hemant

Tripathi, using the latest statistical tools to analyse the mass of field data to understand the habitat requirements for Lilian's Lovebirds, and infer their current and historical distribution.

Using this approach it is possible to identify which forms of land use are most (and least) harmful to Lilian's Lovebirds and bird communities in general. With pressures on land increasing rapidly, this information is vital for decision-makers seeking to balance economic development with conservation.

Looking forward, WPT will be working to ensure that land use is compatible with lovebird conservation, and examining ways in which the negative impacts of development can be mitigated, such as establishing new roosting areas using artificial cavities. 

### Acknowledgments

WPT is incredibly grateful for the hard work and dedication of many individuals and organisations who have helped to make huge strides for African parrots over the last few years. The Africa Programme in particular would like to give a heartfelt thank you to the following (*in no particular order*):

IBAP - Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas of Guinea Bissau, University of Lisbon, ISPA, Dr. Paulo Catry, Hamilton Monteiro, Mohammed Henriques, Daniel Lopes, Aissa Regalla, Quintino Tchantchalam, Bucar Indjai, Seco Cardoso, Celestino Manuel, Manjaco Cunha, Domingos Cunha, Explore Trees, David Wiles, Martin Spooner, BirdWatch Zambia, Zambian Wildlife Authority, the University of Edinburgh, the Museums of Malawi, Dr. Casey Ryan, Dr. Tiwonge Gawa, Dr. Hemant Tripathi, Chaona Phiri, Guida Bell-Cross, Chinga Lufwino, Thor Kirchner, Munyamadzi Game Reserve, Roddy Smith, Mwambashi River Lodge, Dr. Craig Symes, Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge, Lisa Martus, David Letsoalo, Paul Nkhumane, Aeri Wittenburgh, World Animal Protection, Wildlife Conservation Society, University of Cape Town, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Dr. Arjun Amar, Libassa Wildlife Sanctuary, Julie Vanasche, Wara Conservation Project, Charlotte Houpline, Cecile Viry, Davide de Guz DVM, Jean-Pierre Chollet, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, University of Sierra Leone, Momoh Sesay, Dr. Arnold Okoni, Wildlife Impact, Every Living Thing, Yusuph Musanja, Ifeanyi Ezenwa, Dr. Ulf Ottoson, the TL2 Project of the Lukuru Foundation, John and Terese Hart, Robert Abani, Leon Salum, Andrew Barnard.

*And our funders:* Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust, Zoomarine, Pamela and Neville Isdell, The Isdell Family Foundation, Save Our Species, Folke Peterson Foundation, Painted Bunting Fund, Companion Bird Club of Charlotte County, IFAW, Bridging Peace Foundation, Parrot Wildlife Foundation, World Animal Protection, Bill and Terry Pelster, and last but by no means least, the many WPT members and donors whose generous contributions have made much of our work possible.



Thank you!



# HYACINTH MACAWS:

Conservation in a Parrot Paradise

by Willy Armin Montaña Villarroel  
and José Antonio Díaz Luque

**Bolivia is a parrot's paradise. With over 50 species - three of them endemic - the country proudly hosts one of the largest collections of psittacines in the world.**

**Sadly, one-third are under threat in the wild.**

Among all the incredible parrot species in Bolivia, there is one that is virtually impossible to not fall in love with the first time you see it in the wild: the Hyacinth Macaw.



Clockwise from top left: Team member surveys a nest cavity.  
Upper right: A single Hyacinth egg resting in a nest cavity.  
Middle and lower right: Palm nuts, preferred foods of Hyacinth Macaws.

Photos © José Antonio Díaz Luque



IT ACTUALLY TOOK A LONG TRIP TO eastern Bolivia to see them for the first time in the wild. It was an interesting initial encounter. We travelled in a caravan with four other 4-wheel drive vehicles to the San Matías Protected Area, spending a lot of time digging each other out of the rainy-season mud.

We arrived at San Fernando's village, in the heart of the Protected Area, after a full day's driving. The mayor of the village had kindly given us space at his house for our camp, so we got to work setting up our tents. We remember being so exhausted from that and the day's effort that we finally just stopped and looked up.

**And there they were.** Hyacinth Macaws, up in the sky. It was 10:20 at night but the moon was full and bright, so we could see them moving quietly between the roosting sites. Hard to forget such a wonderful experience!

Hyacinth Macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) are distributed mainly in the cerrado and pantanal ecosystems in three countries: Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia. Brazil holds the biggest population; Paraguay the smallest. A very charismatic species, the Hyacinth Macaw has commanded attention from both enthusiasts and conservationists. It is considered Vulnerable by IUCN and is on the Bolivian Red List of Wild Vertebrates.

Threats to its survival include capture for the pet trade, and the degradation and loss of its habitat.

There were three projects between 2008 and 2011, one of them funded by the World Parrot Trust. The aim was to better understand the species' status, and to develop conservation activities based on the data collected. In 2016, we began a serious conservation initiative with these macaws in Bolivia, under the umbrella of the Hyacinth Macaw Project (Proyecto Paraba Azul).

The project, jointly funded by Zoo Berlin and the World Parrot Trust, also involves a diverse group of international and local organisations

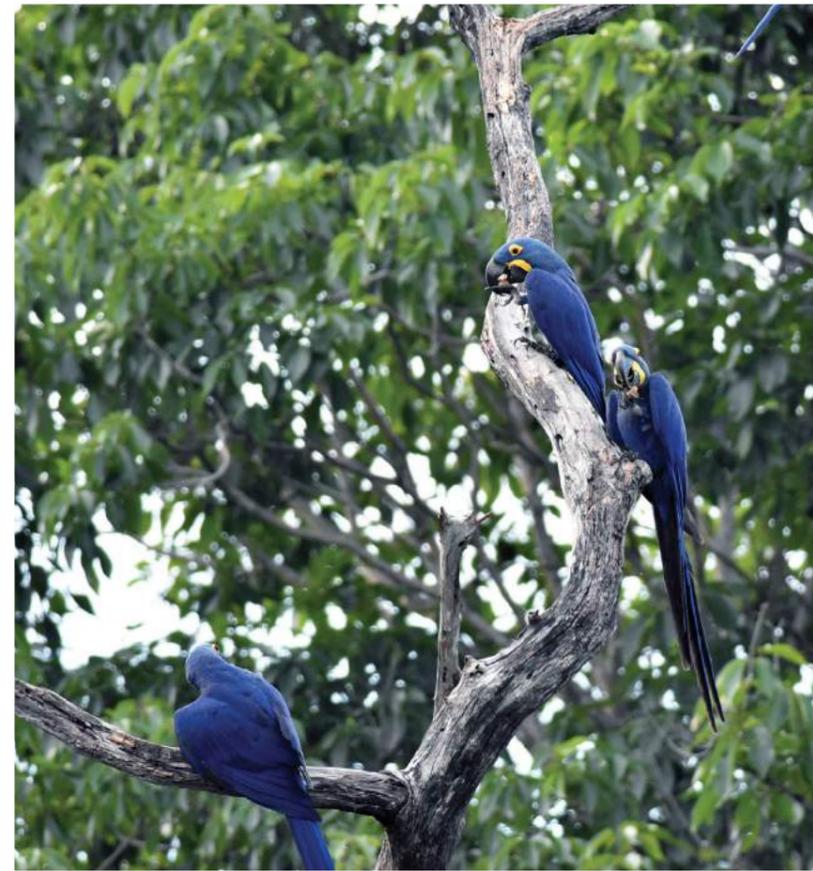
with the same vision: to support the species with direct conservation actions along its natural range. The San Matías Protected Area, a parcel of land rich in biodiversity in Santa Cruz department in Bolivia, holds the majority of Hyacinth Macaws found in the country. Thankfully, officials working for the preserve are more than interested in this initiative, supporting the project as much as they can.

The fieldwork started in June at the beginning of the dry season in the Pantanal ecosystem, mainly inside San Matías Protected Area. We were lucky to have a lot of past published information collected by other researchers, including the important work done by the World Parrot Trust and the Noel Kempff Mercado Foundation. This definitely made our lives easier, but we still had limited knowledge of the population's status (abundance and trend), and underlying ecology (breeding, recruitment, dispersal, mortality, food preferences, habitat use).



Clockwise from left: Hyacinth Macaws forage in a palm. Above: Researchers José Antonio Díaz Luque (left) and Willy Armin Montaña Villarroel. Far right: Macaw beaks are vital tools in obtaining food. Far upper right: Collecting data on food sources. Far lower right: Seasonal rains in the Pantanal can slow progress!

Photos © José Antonio Díaz Luque



Knowing the answers is very important for developing the best conservation strategy for the species. And just as crucially, we wanted to start developing a relationship with some of the people living in the San Matías Protected Area. Conservation is all about good relations with the locals, as they interact with the wildlife every day. We needed to take time to sit down and listen to them because they were the real experts. In addition, we surveyed transect routes within the study area by car, boat, horseback, and on foot.

Much of the park is inaccessible, so the area sampled in our surveys has a bias for road-accessible, and therefore developed, habitat covering more than 50,000 ha in each habitat type: dry chiquitano forest, cerrado, and pantanal. We found that the threats to habitat were very similar to what has already been recorded, with burning affecting mainly chiquitano and cerrado, while the pantanal is more protected, surrounded by swamp areas.

We also found out that the macaws don't really like dense chiquitano, so they stay on the edges. Interestingly, these are the areas that are the most heavily degraded by humans. In an ideal world, we would love that the areas these birds exist in be full of pristine forest, but the evidence shows that they can potentially benefit from some level of clearing of their habitat.

Another key aspect of our work was the surveys. We visited known nesting and roosting sites, accessing 32 different properties and communities on the North and South sides of the San Matías protected area. We recorded 180 Hyacinth Macaws, with 38 of them exhibiting signs of breeding behaviour. This is near the high end of the 20% breeding propensity noted for macaws in general. Among these paired birds, we found just three juveniles. Based on our observations, young birds surviving to be added to the population, or *recruitment*, is potentially not very high. It's unclear if the

population here declined in past years or if the birds moved to other areas. We also studied the availability of nest sites and food resources. Most breeding activities were found in the pantanal, and numbers suggest there are enough nest sites for the breeding population of Hyacinth Macaws. We found nest competitors - Collared Forest Falcons (*Micrastur semitorquatus*), African Bees (*Apis sp.*) and Toco Toucans (*Ramphastos toco*) – but overall, resources are available for the macaws.

From the four active nests we found, we confirmed that one of them had been predated. The other three successfully fledged one chick each. More data is needed to determine what else is affecting the breeding success of the species and on what scale, but it appears that this is one of the areas in which we need to intervene to increase the breeding success of the wild pairs.

The birds' diet consists mainly of motacú and totaí pulp and nuts, which are abundant. The nuts are often

found on the ground, and the macaws forage for them there among the locals' cows, goats and sheep. It's incredible, their strong relationship with humans. It's sometimes hard to believe they are macaws, especially since we've been working with Blue-throated Macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*) for almost 10 years now and had never seen them on the ground!

The last item we focused on in our research was to determine how extensive parrot trade is in the area, and also examine the possibility of developing ecotourism in the area. Thankfully, parrot trade is not a big problem here now. But people from San Fernando's village were telling us incredible stories about the 1990s, when Paraguayan traders came in airplanes to the villages to exchange tools for Hyacinth Macaw chicks, which were transported to Paraguay and probably sold on the international market. We were amazed to learn that some of the local people decided to stop the exchange of birds, as they were

alarmed by the decline of the population in their area. We were delighted to hear that these people were practicing conservation long before we got there! We were also happy to learn that they are very interested in ecotourism centred around the Hyacinth Macaw and the incredible biodiversity there.

Amazingly, there's never been ecotourism here. What a treat it would be for visitors to see Hyacinth Macaws resting on trees around the central plaza of the village like they were right at home. We thought that there must be a way to help the villagers to realise this dream, and help protect the macaws, too.

This work was a great experience for all of us, and we are looking forward to the second season in 2018, where we can provide educational programs and training for forest rangers to help with the project. These activities are important to ensure the medium-to-long term conservation of the species. ☐

#### About the Authors:

**Willy Armin Montaña Villarroel** leads the Hyacinth Macaw Project. Willy grew up working with his father, a forest ranger at Amboró National Park. He is finishing a Degree in Biology at the Gabriel René Moreno University, and has extensive fieldwork experience with a variety of species. He has been involved in parrot conservation projects since 2011.

**José Antonio Díaz Luque** is WPT's Bolivia Programme Manager and the Executive Director of the Bolivian Parrots Conservation Foundation (CLB). He has worked in conservation projects with macaws and Amazons in Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Bonaire, and has been involved with surveys, nest protection activities, and captive bird releases.

**Thanks to Zoo Berlin** and the project team and assistants who make this work possible. We also thank the dedicated forest rangers of the San Matías Protected Area, Sr. Marcel Caballero, the Bolivian National Protected Areas Service, project leader Biodiversity Institute of San Simon's University, and the Bolivian Parrots Conservation Foundation (CLB).



Photos © J. Giardi



## Yellow-naped **AMAZON**

*(Amazona auropalliata)*

With wild populations in serious decline due to trapping and habitat loss in all six countries in its native range, the Yellow-naped Amazon is at risk of extinction.

The World Parrot Trust has been supporting a number of studies and local projects aimed at protecting remaining Yellow-naped Amazon populations, including research on the species' ecology, nest monitoring, population surveys, and education and awareness.

WPT has recently backed surveys and research in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua, and an effort in Mexico in the Biosphere Reserve La Encrucijada to disperse environmental education, monitor parrot populations and stop illegal trade. In Costa Rica, there are plans to implement monitoring of the wild Yellow-naped Amazons there and to regularly track the effectiveness of release programs.

WPT will also support confiscations of wild-caught birds, which will be rehabilitated and released back to the wild if possible. Any birds unable to be released will be held back for a breeding program. A release program and community awareness will be developed in select locations in the birds' former range, building local support for these parrots.

# Grey Parrots of the SSESES

by Elaine Henley and Lori J. DeLeo



© Elaine Henley



© Elaine Henley

Referring to Uganda as “The Pearl of Africa” is far more accurate than one might imagine. The myriad landscapes – rain forests, mountains, lakes, savannahs – are on their own, magnificent. When then considering the extraordinary variety of wildlife that calls this nation home, one is left at a loss for superlatives.

WE FIRST VISITED UGANDA’S LAKE VICTORIA REGION IN 2016, hoping to observe the Grey Parrot in the wild. During our stay, we spent several days on one of the 84 islands that comprise the Ssesse Islands in the lake’s northwest region. During our visit we had the privilege of watching small groups (numbering 4-9) of visiting Grey Parrots forage in trees, socialize in Musizi trees (*Maesopsis eminii* - a tree of a softer wood than those in which they choose to roost), and, on one afternoon, we had the rare opportunity of observing a pair of Greys mating.

Wanting to learn as much as we could about the Grey Parrots’ travels between islands and their presence, if any, in the lives of local people, we hired a boat and travelled to a nearby island. There we spoke with some villagers who identified the trees from which the Greys feed and areas of the island where they roost in



the evenings. What we learned in 2016 inspired a return trip to the Ssesse Islands in November of 2017 to observe the behaviours of the Grey Parrots and interview villagers as well.

Upon returning to the Ssesse Islands, we looked to examine trends in the parrots’ flight patterns, threats to their population, and their behaviours in the wild, to help better meet the needs of Greys in captivity. That is what we expected. What we did not foresee was that the knowledge garnered through observation of wildlife and conversations with local people would create an experience more rich and disturbing than we could have imagined. As we were ferried to the Ssesse Islands, we were awed by their lush beauty, friendly regattas of fishing boats, and small crowds of people eagerly awaiting the catch of the day to work its way onshore and into the homes of hard-working families.

Moving forward, we watched large tree trunks piled high on barges and in boats, but were unaware of what was yet to come, nor did we realize that this activity was part of a larger story. But, the birds and the people had their own stories to share.

Leaving the villages, we were struck by the abundance and variety of trees and wildlife. All too soon, however, the only vestiges of what had once been dense forest were acres of tree stumps and palm seedlings eventually laying way to miles upon miles of palm trees. These thousands of hybridized palm trees (cross bred for disease resistance from varieties native to Ivory Coast and Costa Rica) yield large fruits beneath the dense canopies, completely inaccessible to most wild birds. At that moment, it seemed we were in an area created by man, but serving as the antithesis of a natural forest.

From this location atop the island, the silence was deafening – not a single bird call could be heard. We became as silent as our surroundings; as if sadness had stolen our ability

to express ourselves similar to the way the palm industry had stolen the habitat of the island’s wildlife. There are 1,061 species of birds in Uganda – and yet, we neither saw nor heard a single one. The abundant, rich habitat of so many species – including the Grey Parrot – had faded into the past.

As we continued our journey over the next several days, we enjoyed the opportunity to be among the local population and to interview more than 70 island residents. The majority of the Ugandan people we met – from hotel managers to fishermen – enthusiastically expressed pride in their country’s wildlife, flora and fauna alike.

When asked about the Grey Parrot, most commonly, Ugandans expressed their admiration and fascination with the Grey Parrot (called “Enkusu”) often noting their playful nature and mimicking their calls. But, they also lamented the fact that the flocks have dwindled over time. Not long ago, residents claim Grey flocks numbered in the hundreds; however, today flocks range between two and thirty, and

they are seldom seen unless they are feeding on certain seasonal fruits before flying off to other islands. Many of the people spoke quite openly of the manner in which the palm oil industry hyped the benefits the palm trees would bring to their communities in the form of money for families that sold or leased their farmland to the palm oil companies.

However, what the families did not realize was how this would impact their ability to grow dietary staples or would affect the wildlife they enjoyed as a part of their daily lives.

Our goal of observing the natural behaviours of Greys in the wild was best met in a place we called “Enkusu Village” -- the woodland grounds of a hotel compound on the banks of Lake Victoria. There, small flocks (12-16) of Grey Parrots gathered each morning to socialize with each other before flying off in search of food.

Preferred trees for socializing included the Enziru (*Pseudospondias microcarpa*) and Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus grandis*).

Similar to the Greys that we observed in 2016, these parrots chose to visit trees that bore no fruit and were located close to staff quarters. A similar phenomenon was reported by Tamungang et al (2013) in Central Cameroon, who hypothesized that the Grey Parrots visited local villages and thus gained their protection.

Enkusu Village was a flurry of activity as Grey Parrots flew from tree to tree and made a "whoop" call to each other when landing on a tree. Then, however, the parrots remained quiet if humans were around, except for those calling when they were leaving their tree or responding to another's flock call.

In the presence of humans, the Greys would either ignore them and engage in previously noted normal behaviours (share drinking water from holes in a tree or chew branches for beak maintenance and perhaps pleasure – just as they do in captivity), or sit quietly and observe the humans in their midst. When relaxed, they spent significant time preening themselves and, occasionally, each other in much the same way captive parrots have preening sessions with their caregivers.

It is often thought that mutual grooming among parrots is an activity shared between pair-bonded individuals only, but we learned that this is not the case, as we observed individuals from different groups preening each other, too. We also observed that two Greys would often rub beaks with each other and another Grey who joined them in that tree. This suggests that rubbing beaks is not purely sexual in nature, but also an affiliative behaviour as well.

Nearby the village, we saw a nest with a chick inside along with a female Grey who did not leave the nest. Instead, the male Grey flew to the nest and fed her – she, in turn, fed the chick. When an African Hawk-eagle (*Aquila spilogaster*) landed close to the nest, the female disappeared into the nest and did not reemerge for a significant time until the hawk had left. During this time, the male Grey and two other adult Greys remained quiet and still on nearby

branches of the same tree. Similarly, whenever we saw a juvenile Grey, at least four adult Greys would follow the young bird from branch to branch or fly overhead. Our observations led us to believe that it is more than just the parents who look after the safety of the young.

In this region, contrary to what we expected, Grey Parrots' preferred food is not the palm nut. Indeed, we watched as they chose to eat olives and fruits, even when ripe palm nuts were readily available. Preferred foods come from the Msasa tree (*Brachystegia spiciformis*) and Empafu tree (*Canarium schweinfurthii*).

We watched the Grey Parrots cross to other islands at dawn and dusk. Only when there was an early thunder and lightning storm did six Grey Parrots remain overnight and, on that evening, they roosted in three separate Kiriundi trees under a flock of kites. This was surprising, as it has been assumed that Grey Parrots roost together as a flock,

separate from other species, either on the same tree or in close proximity to each other. One day, we enjoyed a visit to the home of an island resident named Benny, and here we met Cookie, a 40-year-old Grey Parrot originally from the Congo, who was perched on a small tree about 15 feet from where a cage sits. The cage door is opened every day and Cookie is free to come and go as he pleases because Benny believes that Cookie ultimately belongs to nature.

Some days Cookie flies off to forage with wild Grey Parrots in the area while, on other days, the wild birds visit Cookie. Still, when the wild parrots fly off to other areas of the island to roost for the evening, as Cookie does not join them, locals often return Cookie to his "home."

You see, Cookie can be easily distinguished from others of his kind by his gift of human speech. Ironically, this unique ability to use human speech—not to merely mimic, but to use language in context—is one of the primary reasons the Grey Parrot population has been

poached for the pet trade. Surprisingly, we met and spoke extensively with several people who admitted to knowing certain individuals involved in the poaching of Grey Parrots both in the past and present. But, indeed, they shared this information with reluctance explaining that they feared retaliation from poachers whose identity might be revealed.

One young man gave a detailed account of how nets are placed over fruiting trees to capture the birds as they are feeding, and he provided a

vivid, visceral description of the birds' screaming as they are being caught in nets. Our knowledgeable guide, Johnny Kamugisha, is a life-long birder who is passionate about protecting the birds of Uganda. His passion and vision were evident as we listened to him speak with this young man and others about how pride in and protection of wildlife translates into benefits for communities through ecotourism.

Now we must ask ourselves what we can do to preserve and protect that which remains of the Grey Parrots'

habitat and continue to study their behaviours in order to provide the best possible life for those already held captive. The writers will return to Uganda to continue to study Grey Parrot behaviours and work on these multi-faceted questions through the engagement of people and improved understanding of the inhabitants, the wildlife, and the landscape of which they are a part. □



#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Elaine Henley** P.G.Dip CABC, is a Full member of the APBC, an ABTC Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist, and an IAABC Certified Parrot Consultant. Passionate about Grey parrot conservation, she has dedicated her free time to learning more about wild Grey behaviour, using this information to help parrot caregivers.



**Lori J. DeLeo**, MAT, LMFT, is a psychotherapist and adjunct professor. Lori employs her interpersonal and therapeutic skills to connect with people, sharing their connection to wildlife while educating others with her personal knowledge garnered from keeping parrots and travelling to observe their natural behaviours.

☐ UPDATES

**Dry forest restoration continues on Bonaire**



The Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) and other wildlife will be benefitting from the latest round of tree plantings on the island of Bonaire. Echo, a WPT partner committed to protecting the Yellow-shouldered Amazon, recently completed a Herculean effort, with the help of 155 volunteers, to plant 5,000 trees in 5 different exclusion areas during the island's rainy season. The event was part of the Roi Sango valley rehabilitation project, with the contribution of the BEST 2.0 Programme funded by the European Union. Twenty-six hectares have now been protected by fencing against invasive herbivores, such as goats and donkeys.

Read more:  
<http://www.echobonaire.org/>

☐ NEWS

**Predator-free islands not enough for Swift Parrot conservation**

Predator-free islands were thought to be the solution for saving the Critically Endangered Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*), but research has found that efforts on the mainland are also necessary. The new study shows that the birds are nomadic, therefore isolation does not guarantee protection. There is only one population of Swift Parrots spread throughout the Tasmanian mainland and its off-shore islands, with the birds moving to and fro between these areas. This highlights a need for increased conservation, as Swift Parrots are particularly vulnerable to predation by introduced Sugar Gliders and other invasive species.

Read more:  
[tinyurl.com/yc9dq2zn](http://tinyurl.com/yc9dq2zn)



Swift Parrot © JJ Harrison

☐ EVENTS

**Think Parrots 2018**  
**Sunday 10th June 2018**  
**Kempton Park Racecourse**  
**Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey, England**



Back for another year, the popular *Think Parrots* event is always an excellent opportunity for those who are passionate about parrots and want to provide the best care for their birds. A wide diversity of exhibitors will be there providing all things parrot, and will again feature the UK's most knowledgeable experts to discuss the important topics concerning companion and wild parrots.

While you are there, be sure to drop by the World Parrot Trust booth to say hello to David Woolcock, WPT Trustee and Curator at Paradise Park (Cornwall) and chat about all the new and exciting things happening in the areas of parrot conservation, and beyond.

Get your tickets:  
[thinkparrots.co.uk](http://thinkparrots.co.uk)

# PSITTASCENE

## 2017 INDEX



29.1  
SPRING

- From the Operations Director: Steve Milpacher
- Lear's Macaw Research & Recovery
- Cape Parrots Holding On
- Are Cape Parrots a Separate Species?
- Progress for Blue-throated Macaws
- Free at Last: Release of Rescued Maroon-bellied Conures
- Parrots in the Wild: Grey Parrot vs Casqued Hornbills



29.2  
SUMMER

- From the Editor: Desi Milpacher
- Hope for Fighting Bolivian Trade: CREA
- Story in a Feather: Art of Chris Maynard
- Restoring Bonaire: Ensuring the survival of species that rely on its dry forest
- Species Profile: Cuban Amazon
- Pet Pages: The Parrot that Chews
- Tribute to Audrey Reynolds
- Parrots in the Wild: Yellow-eared Parrot



29.3  
AUTUMN

- From the Operations Director: Steve Milpacher
- Grey Parrots in the Wild
- Mysterious Macaws of the Aripo Savannas: Red-bellied Macaws of Trinidad
- Reflections on: Parrot Rescue and Adoption
- Parrots in the Wild: Red-tailed Black Cockatoo



29.4  
WINTER

- From the Communications Director: Matthew Kirchhoff
- Back from the Brink, Again: The Decline and Recovery of the Tasman Parakeet
- Slowing Parrot Trafficking in Indonesia
- Rimatara Lorikeet: Population Re-established on Atiu Island after 200 Years
- Parrots in the Wild: Purple-crowned Lorikeets

ACCESS PAST ISSUES AT: [PSITTASCENE.ORG](http://PSITTASCENE.ORG)  
English, Dutch, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish

## WPT CONTACTS

**ON THE WEB**  
[parrots.org](http://parrots.org)  
[psittascene.org](http://psittascene.org)  
[facebook.com/WorldParrotTrust](https://facebook.com/WorldParrotTrust)  
[twitter.com/parrottrust](https://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](mailto: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](mailto:usa@parrots.org)

**CANADA**  
Michelle Kooistra, Administrator  
4377 Gordon Dr., Kelowna, BC, V1W1S7  
Tel: (1) 250 766 7828  
[canada@parrots.org](mailto:canada@parrots.org)

### ADDITIONAL BRANCHES

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



## 10th Annual Parrot Lovers Cruise

November 9 - 17, 2018: Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao

Imagine cruising crystal blue waters while experiencing some of the most incredible sightseeing in the world! Join fellow parrot lovers aboard the Royal Princess for eight days of enlightening seminars and exciting excursions visiting a variety of stunning locations, all while supporting parrot conservation. Don't miss out - contact Carol Cipriano to book your cabin today.

**Book today!**  
☎ [carolstraveltime@gmail.com](mailto:carolstraveltime@gmail.com)  
☎ 1-510-200-5665 (USA)

[PARROTLOVERSCRUISE.COM](http://PARROTLOVERSCRUISE.COM)

## PARROTS IN THE WILD:

### Saffron-headed Parrot (*Pyrilia pyrrilia*)

The little-known and rarely photographed Saffron-headed Parrot is found in humid lowland and lower montane forest in parts of Central and northern South America. These parrots are usually seen high up in the canopy in small animated groups, calling raucously to each other. These splendid birds have seen their habitat lost over many decades. Deforestation and forest fragmentation has been most destructive during the 20th century.

Photo © **Murray Cooper**  
**Wildlife Photography**

