

# PSITTASCENE

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



Winter 2016/17



# PSITTASCENE

WINTER 2016/17



## WORLD PARROT TRUST

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### 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.

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 66 species of parrot.

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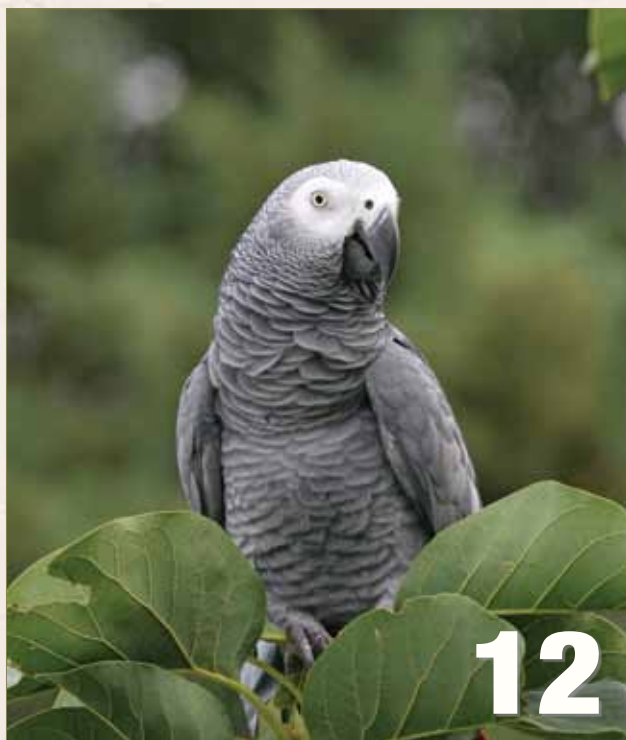
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## ON THE COVER

Two **Hyacinth Macaws** (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) interact with each other near a nest cavity in Brazil. Photo © Charles Bergman

In 1990 WPT's Hyacinth Fund began to support researchers protecting remaining Hyacinth Macaw populations. Their numbers had declined over several decades because of heavy illegal trade, local hunting for food and feathers, and habitat loss. Recently population numbers have gradually increased. WPT is now working to support a small population in Bolivia.

**WPT-Benelux**, celebrating its 25th year, contributed to the Hyacinth Fund as part of their commitment to conservation. Read more about their accomplishments on **Page 7**.





## Letters to the Editor



Cape Parrot © Sam Williams

Have a question or comment?  
Send them to us at [editor@parrots.org](mailto:editor@parrots.org),  
or via postal mail (addresses on page 23.)

**Q** We previously had three *Poicephalus robustus* subspecies (*P. robustus robustus*, *P. robustus suahelicus*, and *P. robustus fuscicollis*), but then they were split between the “true” Cape Parrot (*P. robustus*) and the “no-longer-cape” (two subspecies) *P. fuscicollis fuscicollis* and *P. fuscicollis suahelicus*. But I’m confused as to who recognises this and who doesn’t (i.e. who still views them as three subspecies of the same species). Can you help clear that up for me?

~ Maria R

**A** Thanks for your interesting question, Maria! The answer is complicated. In 2014 BirdLife International (in partnership with Lynx editions) published a new Checklist of the Birds of the World, which used a new system for determining if two different populations should be considered distinct species. The new criteria emphasises information on physical differences and the degree of physical separation of populations over genetics. Under these new criteria *P. robustus robustus* was not considered to differ sufficiently to qualify for species status. The new species list and hence this decision for *P. robustus robustus* was adopted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), who oversee the Red-List process. When lumped with *P. robustus suahelicus*, and *P. robustus fuscicollis*, they together qualify as Least Concern.

In 2016 the most comprehensive study to date of the genetics of these parrots was completed by a South African-based research team. The team concluded that *P. robustus robustus* had been genetically separated from other populations for up to two million years and should be considered a distinct species. These data were considered by taxonomic specialists at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and species status was accepted by CITES in October last year. Most regional authorities in southern Africa also consider it a separate species. CITES has yet to recognise the taxonomy proposed in the new checklist, but there are moves to do this to harmonise with other international agreements.

Regardless of the label, it is clear that *P. robustus robustus* is genetically distinct and an integral part of the afromontane forests in South Africa and demands conservation attention. For more information on a recent molecular study and its findings, see the article in the Guardian at this location on the web: [tinyurl.com/jc3wrhd](http://tinyurl.com/jc3wrhd).



*Desi*

Desi Milpacher,  
Editor

## Your Feedback

I became a first-time member of WPT and bought your 2017 calendar and a package of African Grey bracelets, and also made a donation. First, I want to thank you for the amazing work you are doing to save these amazing creatures. Secondly, I received my calendar, bracelets and all of the other wonderful benefits of being a member. Your quarterly publication is full of important information about parrots, and the photos are stunning.

I adopted a Congo African Grey Parrot (Max) 15 years ago. He passed away from heart disease on September 1st 2016. He was the most amazing creature to come into my life. He gave me such joy and love. My close friends loved Max and enjoyed his antics; I gave each of them a bracelet to wear in honor of Max and to celebrate the African Greys who are living in their natural habitat. Thank you again for the wonderful work you do!

~ Patricia Merrill



Max & Patricia

PsittaScene is one of the best publications about parrots. It is SO positive. Those of us who keep parrots or who are involved with them in other ways know what a tough time these birds can have. We don’t need to be constantly reminded of the bad things – there are good stories out there and we are all lifted by them! Your photos are brilliant, too. Keep doing what you are doing, and keep publicising the importance of parrots and their welfare and, equally important, keep telling everyone out there just how wonderful these birds are and that they deserve better, both in the wild and in captivity.

~ Alison Ward

## A message from the **Executive Director**

At the World Parrot Trust we are generally so focused on what we must do now and what we should do next that we don't often take the time to look at what we've accomplished, and most importantly, what we've learned.

Each of our programs requires a unique set of skills and tools, presenting a challenge to us at the WPT along with our many collaborators, because it forces us to be creative and to seek partnerships with others who have complementary skills. Our activities are extremely varied in practice: from growing and planting trees, to working with government agencies, to rescuing and releasing thousands of parrots caught in the wild bird trade. For example, in this issue of *PsittaScene* we touch on a development that our Bolivian partner has worked on for Blue-throated Macaws, and what's next for Grey and Timneh Parrots after the recent trade ban.

I am also pleased to report that thanks to our many generous supporters around the world we raised an astounding \$138,000 (£110,000) through our *Be a Parrot Hero* campaign ([parrots.org/hero](http://parrots.org/hero)), which ran from November to January. This means we will be able to continue our critical efforts to support parrots rescued from the trade, protect habitat and nest sites, and improve the overall welfare of parrots throughout the world. Thank you!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Gilardi'.

James Gilardi, Ph.D,  
WPT Executive Director



Yellow-crested Cockatoo © Victor Soares

**Thank you  
for being  
his hero.**



## GOOD NEWS! Bolivian Community Creates Vast Reserve

*Park will benefit Blue-throated  
Macaw population*

**THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED BLUE-THROATED MACAW** (*Ara glaucogularis*) is under severe threat in its native Bolivia. Now, the people of Loreto, a local township in the Beni Department of Bolivia, have worked together with government officials and NGOs to establish a new conservation area protecting these and other rare animals.

In August of 2016, officials with the municipality of Loreto began planning to build a park to preserve the locals' cultural and natural heritage.

On February 22nd 2017, after months of meetings and workshops, a municipal law for the declaration of the Municipal Park and Natural Area of Management Integrated Gran Mojós was signed.

The area is massive at a total of 580,000 hectares (1.4 million acres), and includes a wide range of ecosystems such as wetlands and savannas.

The local people will be in charge of managing the land: reducing habitat clearing, protecting water sources, and preventing fires, hunting and poaching. To the south, the park connects with

Isiboro Secure National Park and to the north, it joins Ibare Mamoré Municipal Protected Area, creating an essential corridor for wildlife. The tract's creation will protect a wide diversity of flora and fauna - over 20 parrot species, 465 bird species and over 50 endangered species including jaguars, tapirs, and giant river otters live there. Critically, the area is very important for the Blue-throated Macaw, with 35% of the entire known wild population and 50% of known breeding pairs residing there.

Additionally, everyone living in the area will have equal access to the benefits of sustainable development and the conservation of natural and cultural resources, and will have a voice in decision-making processes for future conservation actions.

For this project The Municipality of Loreto had the support and advice of the Foundation for the Conservation of Bolivian Parrots (CLB), the World Parrot Trust (WPT), the Research Center in Biodiversity and Environment (CIBIOMA-UABJB), and the Blue-throated Macaw Project and its affiliated institutions. □

# WPT-BENELUX: Celebrating 25 Years

By Ruud Vonk  
Photos © WPT-Benelux

After the establishment of the World Parrot Trust in 1989 in Hayle, Cornwall, UK, people began to enthusiastically support the Dutch “Werkgroep Papegaaien” (‘Workgroup Parrots’). In 1991 we decided this was a good reason to establish WPT-Benelux at Antwerp Zoo, with WPT founder Michael Reynolds present. Here “Werkgroep Papegaaien” officially became part of the WPT, an independent branch run entirely by volunteers. Our group is now 200 members strong.

To raise funds and awareness for parrots WPT-Benelux has given talks and seminars all over the Netherlands and Belgium. Our yearly Parrot Congress quickly became a powerful tool for conservation awareness during the first fifteen years, with well-known speakers making appearances and spreading knowledge at our events. To capture a record of these talks, the symposium committee decided to publish a summary of the previous ten symposia in paperback form, which also included articles from prominent scientists, directors of policy institutes and policy makers. The book was printed as a glossy paperback of 640 pages and presented to the public at the symposium at Antwerp Zoo.

## Donations to WPT-Benelux

In the past 25 years the Benelux branch has received many donations for parrot projects run by WPT, beginning with funds donated by dedicated private individuals in the Netherlands and Belgium. We’ve also received funds from the Pakara Bird Institute for parrots, cockatoos and macaws. Dr. Peter Wüst of Germany has organised parrot symposia on various occasions. In recent years we have a loyal supporter in BVP (the Belgium Society of Parrot Lovers), which organizes a two-yearly parrot event “Dag van de Papegaaï” in prominent zoos across Belgium.

We have appreciated these generous gestures, and in recognition we created the trophy “Sponsor of the Year” for private donators as well as bird societies. The trophy is our famous inscribed statue, a stately black Palm Cockatoo.



**From the beginning WPT-Benelux has financially supported parrot-related actions and projects:**



Raised funds for **Lear's Macaw conservation**. Young and old alike have taken part in these events, with Ruud Vonk's daughters dressing in Lear's costumes to celebrate.

Contributed to the costs of printing "*The Parrot Action Plan*".

Printed a Dutch translation of the "*Happy Healthy Parrot*" leaflet for circulation on the islands of the Netherlands Antilles.



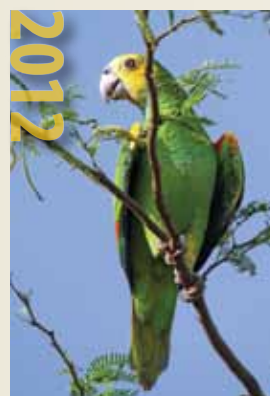
Supported the **Echo Parakeet** project on Mauritius.



Donated to the **Hyacinth Macaw** project.



Celebrated WPT's 20th jubilee with a congress in Paradise Park in Hayle, Cornwall. WPT-Benelux financed production of the **Palm Cockatoo jubilee statue**.



Donated to **Echo** project on Bonaire to protect the Yellow-shouldered Amazon.



Funded parrot sanctuary in Belgium "**Nally's Papegaaien**".

Provided a camera for University of Leiden field research "**Ringneck Parakeet versus native birds**".

**2017**





(Top left) Bouwteam WPT-Benelux in 2004  
 (Top right) Donation made to the Lear's Macaw Project. WPT founder Mike Reynolds holds the cheque.  
 (Middle right) Colourful and informative WPT-Benelux banner, used at group presentations and conferences.  
 (Second from bottom) WPT educational bus created in 1995.  
 (Bottom right) WPT-Benelux in attendance at Eindhoven parrot conference in 1998.



In the past 25 years WPT-Benelux has donated over £12,000 (\$15,000) to parrot projects.

Inspired by WPT-UK we came up with a plan to duplicate a successful conservation tool: the Educational Bus. Previous buses had proven popular in the Caribbean, where they had been used to spread awareness about rare parrot species to the local people.

Our bus, which was donated by a member, was second hand and previously used by a certain savings bank! We converted it into an educational bus to attend exhibitions and congresses. It is used less now due to the disappearance of the larger parrot events at Den Bosch and Eindhoven. Smaller exhibitions are the norm now.

Still going strong under the flag of the WPT are lectures about visiting parrot habitats and projects. Our most recent talk is about our visit to The Ara Project in Costa Rica, which provides a sanctuary and breeding centre for Scarlet and Great Green Macaws. These lectures are received very well!

Our promotional activities have been moved to the WPT website and the *Flock Talk* newsletter which are a great success. We also promote the *PsittaScene* magazine and have provided for over 20 years the enclosed Dutch translation, plus our "Nieuwsflits" for WPT-Benelux.

These are the highlights of our 25 years as WPT-Benelux. Here's to another decade! 📺



Ruud Vonk,  
 Chairman WPT-Benelux  
 Trustee WPT





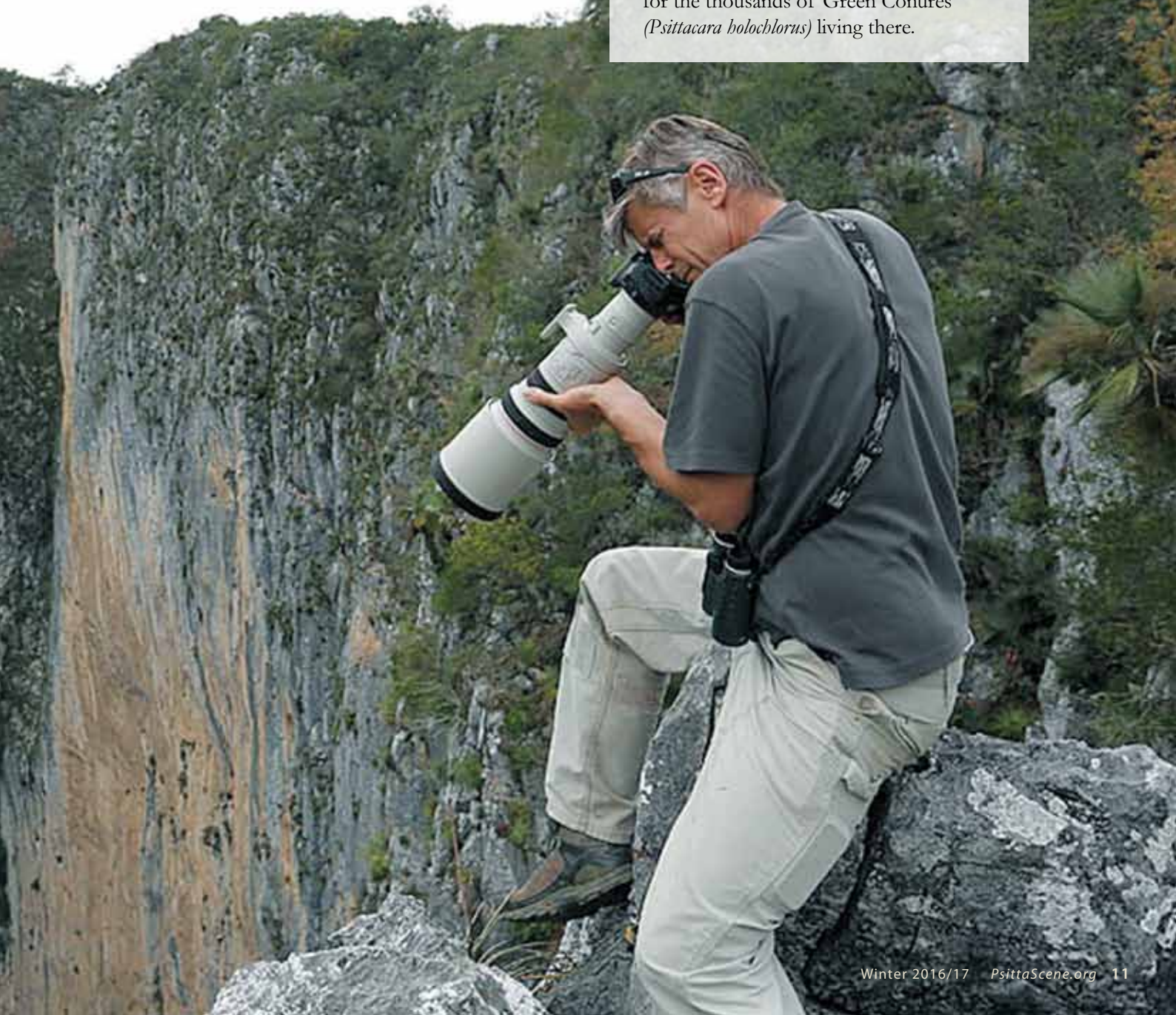




# adventures in CONSERVATION

**Sótano del Barro** is a 450m (1463ft) deep oval depression located in the municipality of Arroyo Seco, state of Querétaro, in Mexico. The area is well-known for the Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*) that call it home. It is the last remaining site in the world where Military Macaws nest in sinkholes, so protecting it is a high priority.

*Below:* On a recent project visit WPT's Jamie Gilardi perched high on the rim of the sinkhole in search of a perfect shot. *Far left:* Military Macaws on the wing. A parrot's-eye view of Sima de las Cotorras, a circular sinkhole in the karst plateau of the Mexican state of Chiapas, municipality of Ocozocoautla, in El Ocote Biosphere Reserve. This site is known for the thousands of Green Conures (*Psittacara holochlorus*) living there.





# WHAT'S NEXT for Grey Parrots?

Interview with Dr. Rowan Martin,  
WPT's Africa Program Director

African Grey Parrots are some of the most recognisable birds in the world; their popularity as companion animals is legendary.

Unfortunately this celebrity comes at a cost: they are also one of the most heavily trafficked birds on the international market.

Grey Parrot © Martina Berg





FORMERLY WIDESPREAD OVER MUCH OF TROPICAL Africa, Grey Parrots are disappearing rapidly. WPT first supported research in 1992-1993 and has, over time, exposed the true volume of parrots being extracted from the wild.

Since 1975, gross exports of over 1.3 million wild African Grey Parrots have been reported in international trade from eighteen African range States, with mortality rates as high as 60%. This has resulted in a calamitous decline in their wild populations.

WPT has assisted with the confiscation, rescue and release of thousands of birds from illegal trade. Most recently, with many international partners we presented compelling evidence which underpinned a CITES proposal to uplist Grey and Timneh Parrots to Appendix 1, an action that will save thousands of parrots from the devastating effects of trade each year.

The ban that took effect January 1, 2017 now raises questions: because international trade of wild African Greys is restricted by CITES, what does the future hold for these birds in the wild and as companion animals?

The following interview with Dr. Rowan Martin details the potential impact of the ruling.



**Q What's next for these parrots? Presumably there's a need for increased law enforcement to ensure the ban is observed, and maybe more education in Africa where the trapping is taking place?**

This is the start of a lot of initiatives that are needed for African Grey Parrots; Appendix I listing in itself on a piece of paper is not going to change anything. What's needed is meaningful enforcement involving increased international collaboration to ensure illegal shipments are intercepted and loopholes are closed.

The major benefit of the listing is that enforcement in importing countries will be much simpler and easier. It will no longer be necessary for customs officials, faced with a shipment of wild birds, to determine the authenticity of permits, ensure export country's quotas are being adhered to or verify the true origin of a group of parrots. All Grey Parrots from the wild will be illegal and this clarity will do much to stem the flow of thousands of wild birds each year from Central and West Africa.

These improvements to enforcement in importing countries will effectively drive down demand for wild birds, in turn reducing the burden on range States to regulate trapping on the ground.

Hand in hand with improved enforcement, there must be efforts to develop livelihoods in key areas to reduce the incentives for people to trap parrots in the first place. The World Parrot Trust has already helped develop livelihood-focused and awareness-raising projects in some sites and now these projects will no longer be undermined by demand from the international market.

Finally there is a need to encourage breeders in non-range states to end their reliance of cheap wild-caught birds as breeding stock, and raise awareness among would-be pet parrot owners about the implications of the Grey Parrot trade for conservation.

**Q And there was a notable announcement made by**

**breeders of Grey Parrots in South Africa, correct?**

South Africa has very recently emerged as one of the leading exporters of captive-bred Grey Parrots. In recent years they have exported tens of thousands of birds, and it's a very lucrative industry. The offer by the Parrot Breeders Association of South Africa to actually put a levy [tax] on their exports of captive-bred Grey Parrots, which would be directly used for conservation in range States, is very welcome and an important step in the right direction.

**Q Presumably this separate decision by breeders will be important, as they can legally export Grey Parrots while contributing to conservation. Could that make quite a difference?**

It's a really great outcome of the meeting. It's important to note that the expansion of the South African breeding industry has resulted from





Timneh Parrot © Mark O'Flaherty



Grey Parrot © Ivonne Wiernik

investment in some large industrial-scale facilities to supply new markets that have been actively developed overseas. Breeders have relied on cheap imports of wild-caught Greys as breeding stock, while exporting the more valuable captive-bred chicks.

As a result many thousands of wild Greys have been imported from central Africa in recent years. With the Appendix I listing combined with this pledge to support conservation in range States, rather than being part of the problem breeders could become part of the solution. However with an industry of this scale it's essential that adequate safeguards are put in place and it is important that anyone who is considering buying a Grey Parrot makes sure that they come from a reputable breeder that doesn't use wild Greys as breeding stock.

**Q** So this move to Appendix I is good news for African Greys; there is still plenty of work to do to reverse the declines in the wild, but this is a very positive step.

Yes it is a positive outcome and we are optimistic for the future, although there is still a stack of work to be done. It is very sad that it has come to a point where populations in many parts of Africa collapsed dramatically before this action has been taken. In parts of the Grey Parrot's range there has been substantial habitat loss and that has contributed to their decline, but there are still tracts of good habitat where Grey Parrots can live and thrive. I hope that with this action those areas can now be protected in the way they need to be. At the World Parrot Trust we'll be doing everything we can to ensure wild Grey Parrot populations can fly free from the threat of trapping. 📺

**Online  
Extras** ➔

#### Listen to the Full Interview

Go online to listen to the full interview between WPT's Rowan Martin and Charlie Moores of *Talking Naturally* in the **Learn > Podcasts** section of our website.

[parrots.org/podcasts](https://parrots.org/podcasts)

## Notes for African Grey Parrot Owners

- The new CITES listing requires that all facilities (worldwide) breeding African Grey Parrots (which includes Greys (*Psittacus erithacus*) and Timnehs (*Psittacus timneh*) for export are to register with CITES.
- The uplisting technically only impacts birds that are sold internationally, and not birds that are sold within the country where they have been bred. However, individual countries may have their own regulations that could be triggered by the listing.
- For most African Grey Parrot owners in the USA, this change will be inconsequential. In a few states, Maine and Arkansas for example, there may be registration requirements.
- For African Grey Parrot owners in the EU, there are requirements for marking their birds and for movements within Europe. There may also be requirements for registering them - check with your national CITES authority.
- For commercial breeders of African Grey Parrots seeking to export them across international borders, check with respective national CITES representatives for details specific to their country.

*Separate laws specific to different countries can confuse matters: CITES and the US Endangered Species List are two lists that serve different purposes - an Appendix I listing does not correspond to the same species being listed as Endangered or Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Find out more online at: [tinyurl.com/zfeqzfd](http://tinyurl.com/zfeqzfd)*

International CITES authorities and their contact information can be found at: [cites.org](http://cites.org)





RESTORING FORESTS ON BONAIRE



The Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) is listed as Vulnerable in the wild due to loss of dry forest habitat, persecution by people and poaching of nestlings.

WPT partner organisation Echo has cultivated thousands of native seedlings in its plant nursery and planted out several hectares of forest to restore vital habitat that the Yellow-shouldered Amazon and other native species need for food and breeding. These planted areas are protected by fencing from feral grazing animals such as goats and donkeys, and hand watered to ensure growing success.

400 TREES PLANTED



13.5 HECTARES of forest protected



500 SEEDS

harvested to test and perfect new watering regimes to help ensure success rates



Yellow-shouldered Amazon © Sam Williams | Echo

View the full Impact Report online at: [parrots.org/report16](http://parrots.org/report16)





# Height Dominance in Parrots - Fact or Fiction?

By Lisa Desatnik

## A question that is often asked by companion parrot owners is - should birds be allowed on shoulders?

Well, let's first ask – is there *really* such a thing as height dominance? Steve Martin, renowned trainer and president of Orlando-based Natural Encounters Inc., wrote the following:

*“To put it bluntly, height dominance does not exist in parrots. It is most likely just a projection of someone’s personal beliefs that for some seem to make sense when applied to parrots.*

*It is easy for some parrot owners to misinterpret aggression as a parrot’s desire to dominate. Aggression for the purpose of establishing dominance is common in many mammal species, including humans, however it does not occur in parrots. Parrots have no natural inclination to form dominance-based hierarchies with other parrots in the wild, or with humans in captivity.*

*Parrots may be moved to show aggression for many different reasons when they are higher than human eye level. However, the desire to dominate should not be considered as one of those reasons.” (Read the full article online at: [tinyurl.com/height-dominance](http://tinyurl.com/height-dominance))*

Talking to those in the know – ornithologists, field biologists, and wild bird behaviorists – there is no such thing as an alpha parrot. Aggression between

wild parrots is brief, and a parrot that loses in one confrontation may very well win in the next.

A frustrated bird owner may question that. “Well, of course my bird gets dominant when he’s up high. He bites me every time I try to pick him up from somewhere high,” that person may say.

My response to that? Let’s do a little behavior analysis and look at a scenario that bird owners frequently use as an example of their pet showing ‘dominance’:

Butch – a macaw – is on top of his cage playing with a toy when his owner, Suzy, needs to put him into his cage. She reaches for him and when he steps up, ‘without any warning’ (as is often described) he nails her.

Let’s look at some potential things that could be coming into play here:

- Birds are more comfortable stepping up. However since Butch is up high, unless Suzy gets on a chair, more than likely he is needing to step down to her and may even catch his long tail on the cage. Not very fun for Butch.
- Butch was perfectly happy playing with his toys. His past experience of stepping up for Suzy when he’s playing with his toys is that the consequence of his stepping up means he goes into his cage, more often than not. And being inside that cage is just not as fun as being on top of it. (He’s at least taken away from doing something he was enjoying.)





- Before Butch actually bit Suzy, he tried to show her he didn't want to step up by pinning his eyes or other body language but she ignored or didn't pay attention to it. Therefore biting her is the only behavior he can do to get the message across that he really does not want to step up at this time.

So, now, is this really a case of height dominance or is the bird simply behaving to escape something negative from the bird's point of view?


**Now back to the original question. Is it okay to let your bird on your shoulder?**

Well, there are a number of factors to take into consideration with regard to that decision. None of them have to do with height dominance.

What is your relationship with your bird? Does your bird reliably 'step up' onto your hand?

One problem with having your bird on your shoulder is that you can't see his body language. Therefore you can't effectively allow your bird to communicate a fear or aggressive response, thus you may be setting both of you up for a possible bite.

Another consideration is that, while it's fun companionship to wear shoulder birds it's healthy to offer a variety of enriching activities for your pet that encourage independent play, foraging, and more. Encouraging your bird to stay perched in one place for long periods of time limits the time he could be learning and playing in different ways.

I do want to just mention that if it is a goal of yours to let your parrot on your shoulder, a good first goal would be to teach a reliable 'step up' behavior. 

## About the Author

**Lisa Desatnik**, CPDT-KA, CPBC, is a certified parrot behavior consultant through the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC). She is a pet trainer (working mostly with dogs, but also offers parrot behavior consulting) in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has been a student of positive behavior management and Applied Behavior Analysis since meeting and being inspired by her first teacher, Dr. Susan Friedman, Ph.D., professor emeritus, Psychology Dept. at Utah State University. Lisa is also a member of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers and the Pet Professional Guild.

Find Lisa's behavior blog online at: [SoMuchPETential.com](http://SoMuchPETential.com).





In our last issue (*PsittaScene Autumn 2016*) Drs. Tim Wright and Christine Dahlin and their research team wrote of their experiences in Central America searching for the rapidly disappearing Yellow-naped Amazon.

This is another of their stories.

The Nicaragua team taking a break from avoiding volcanoes: (Left to right): Martín Lezama, Dominique Hellmich, Tim Wright and Grace Smith-Vidaurre.



Entry 7/10/16  
by Grace Smith-Vidaurre

We left Ometepe's bountiful Yellow-naped Amazon populations to record their northern Pacific counterparts. Preserved forests in northern Nicaragua tend to fall within the country's long line of volcanoes. Setting off for Momotombo volcano, we learned most of the reserve is guarded by Momotombo Power. The geothermal enterprise holds cryptic offices in Managua and guards its borders well. Albeit not its first priority, the company consequently preserves the forest and about 40 Yellow-naped Amazons within it.

Martín Lezama and I drove up to the power company's outpost. Ready to negotiate with more bureaucrats, we hadn't reckoned with Momotombo itself. The volcano rose steeply above us in a perfect cone, belching massive smoke rings. Three tremors had shaken the area the morning before, and all entry to the reserve was barred. We considered sticking around to discuss this injustice with the manager in charge, and I pondered a strategy to entirely disregard the ban on entry.

Then Martín astutely pointed out that Momotombo is known for its Strombolian explosions.

Strombolian volcanoes spit out red-hot rocks in projectile trajectories, ending in bomb-like explosions. Even driving around the edges of such a volcano is a great risk. My visions of jumping barbed wire fences to obtain long recordings packed with contact calls were quickly replaced with images of explaining one team member or another's fiery demise to indignant loved ones.

The Nicaragua team moved north. We experienced Yellow-naped Amazon populations less fortunate than those under the protection of Momotombo Power. Martín had counted birds at various sites in 2004. Having worked with this parrot species since 1999 he confirmed that populations up and down Nicaragua's Pacific coast have been in steep decline. The Nicaraguan CITES chapter and Ministry of the Environment became concerned with the impact of legal parrot trade on wild populations. In the 2004 survey, Martín found that, excluding Ometepe:

"in the Pacific, the reduction (in Yellow-naped Amazon populations) was very strong...for example, here in León, or near Managua...we're talking about more than 50% reduction."





© Molly Dupin



© Christine Dahlin

Yellow-naped Amazon populations are traditionally larger on the Atlantic side of the country, but populations across the country have experienced similar declines. We encountered the parrots at altitudes higher than expected in northern Nicaragua. We do not know if these populations have traditionally been found at higher altitudes, or if the parrots have dispersed to high elevations to escape human pressures.

Of all the sites we visited, the Cosigüina reserve has suffered the greatest human-induced environmental damage since Martín's last visit. The Cosigüina peninsula once supported extensive mangroves and estuaries, which are prime Yellow-naped Amazon habitat. These have been razed to make way for shrimp farms. A small group of Amazons still uses patches of mangrove that remain.

For Martín, Yellow-naped Amazon conservation is fundamentally intertwined with governmental action. A parrot recuperation plan is worthless with compromised habitat and current levels of poaching, both of which arise from economic hardship and lack of environmental

education. Local communities survive economic hardship by mining forests for firewood, meat, agriculture or animals to sell for a profit. Martín thinks MARENA (the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources) could dedicate more resources to the conservation of native forests, and could discourage poaching by actively enforcing current environmental laws, while funding environmental educational programs up and down the Pacific coast. Tourism has helped several local communities, replacing poaching and deforestation as a source of income. It's no coincidence that Ometepe, one the most popular tourist destinations in Nicaragua, has some of the highest employment rates and greatest abundance of parrots we experienced along the Pacific coast.

After recording birds at Cosigüina, we planned two last recording sessions further south to fill a geographic gap. Dom and I pushed hard for the pristine and previously forbidden slopes of Momotombo. Tim wisely chose Argelia, a large hacienda on the slopes of less active volcano Casitas. Or in the equally sage words of Don Martín: "Momotombo bomba - no!"

GSV

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

**Changes to IUCN Red List; several parrot species affected**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides public, private and non-governmental groups with knowledge with the aim of forwarding economic development and nature conservation. The IUCN Red List provides taxonomic, conservation status, and distribution information on species that are facing a high risk of global extinction. Once a year the list is updated to reflect current research, and in this round Grey and Timneh Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus* and *P. timneh*, respectively) have each been uplisted to Endangered, the Chatham Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus forbesi*) is now Endangered, the Brown-backed Parrotlet (*Touit melanonotus*) has been downlisted to Vulnerable, and Scarlet-breasted Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus forsteni*) are up to Vulnerable.

Read more at:  
[tinyurl.com/h59elmv](http://tinyurl.com/h59elmv)

**Night Parrots sweating over climate warming**

Not much is known about the newly rediscovered Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*), but one thing is fairly certain: the changing climate in Australia from hot to even hotter is certain to have had an effect on their population. Historically, uncontrolled fires, introduced predators and climate change have been assumed to be the main culprits, but with so few birds to study, concrete conclusions have been hard to come by. New data has shown that limited access to water resources and a lack of cooler nesting areas, both attributed to climate change, have played a part in the Night Parrot's steep decline.



Illustration of Night Parrot  
 © Martin Thompson CC 3.0

Read more at:  
[tinyurl.com/zj7p3lq](http://tinyurl.com/zj7p3lq)



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**2016 Great Cocky Count**

The 2016 Great Cocky Count is a community-based survey for Carnaby's Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) and Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*) for the southwest region of Western Australia. Results are compiled by BirdLife Australia, Department of Parks and Wildlife, Swan Region, and Department of Parks and Wildlife, Animal Science Program. This year over 700 volunteers surveyed 398 sites, and the data showed that overall Carnaby's Cockatoo numbers have decreased year over year (2010-2016), whereas the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo's population has increased. The 2016 count recorded about 28% of all black cockatoos in SW Western Australia.

Read more:  
[tinyurl.com/zu8mw9x](http://tinyurl.com/zu8mw9x)



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## EVENTS

### Think Parrots 2017

The World Parrot Trust will be at the 'Think Parrots' event once again this year on 11th June at Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex TW16 5AQ, UK. This is a great opportunity to meet people expert in many aspects of parrot care and conservation. WPT will have a stand and is also presenting eight 'Mini Workshops' through the day.

David Woolcock (WPT Trustee and Curator of Paradise Park, Cornwall) along with Sarah-Jayne Cooke (Keeper, bird trainer and show presenter at Paradise Park) will be leading the workshops. These will be aimed at improving the relationship between companion parrot owners, particularly those with birds that bite or scream. Come out to join a workshop, to meet us and get lots of free advice on parrot care and enrichment, and to buy natural toys, t-shirts, books and DVDs.

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



## PLANNED GIVING



### Leave a Legacy

Leaving a legacy gift to the World Parrot Trust through your estate may be one of the most important, easiest and fulfilling contributions you will ever make. A bequest is a gift that ensures that the WPT can continue its critical work to protect parrots, and the places where they live, now and into the future.

Bequests and other planned gifts play a crucial role in WPT's continued ability to save endangered species by supporting innovative and effective conservation programs. Every legacy donation we receive – large or small – is put to work helping parrots to survive.

Let your dedication to parrots live on. Visit our website at [parrots.org/donate](http://parrots.org/donate) or contact one of our administrative offices directly.

ACCESS PAST ISSUES AT: [PSITTASCENE.ORG](http://PSITTASCENE.ORG)

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**Parrots in the Wild:  
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo  
(*Cacatua leadbeateri*)**

“In Western Australia volunteer groups have arranged the installation of over 1,000 artificial hollows for wild cockatoo populations to replace nesting sites lost to them through habitat clearing, bush fires, feral bees, competitor species, etc.

Replacement trees require 200-300 years of growth to become large enough to develop suitable breeding hollows. This breeding log — placed at Eyre Bird Observatory — was an immediate hit with these Major Mitchell's.”

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