

PSITTAScene

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



Winter 2018/19



WORLD PARROT TRUST

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ABOUT THE WPT

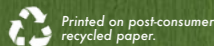
Capture for the live-bird trade, habitat loss and other factors put wild parrots at risk. One in three parrot species are currently threatened in the wild.

As 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. Over that time WPT has led or aided conservation and welfare projects in 43 countries for 70 species of parrot.

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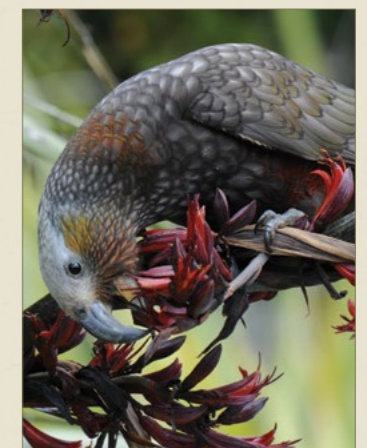
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ON THE COVER

The Kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*) uses its unique brush-like tongue to take nectar, pollen and sap from trees. It also collects excretions from scale insects, and its specialised beak can be used to search for and locate grubs. These birds are found in New Zealand and its offshore islands and are threatened by forest clearing, hunting and predation by introduced species.

Photo © Birthe & Bent Pedersen

Read more about Kākās in our *PsittaNews* section, page 19.



A message from the Chairperson

It's a difficult subject, the wild parrot trade. Difficult to understand how the simple joy of sharing life with a fascinating bird turned into a massive trade, difficult to comprehend the numbers involved and imagine each bird's experiences. Very difficult to fight the destructive *illegal* trade, especially now that social media is being exploited by traffickers.

But we fight on, using every available method – sometimes a sprint is required and sometimes it's a marathon. Immediate action to give care to confiscated parrots as soon as we hear about them, rehabilitation, and release once they are safe. Plus education and promoting alternative means of income in local communities, working to tighten legislation where scientific research shows it is necessary, and publicising the plight of parrots.

This edition of *PsittaScene* gives several views on the trade in parrots; not all easy reading but knowledge is power, so it is essential for parrot-lovers to be aware of these difficult issues.

We have some great uplifting reading tool We thank Evet Loewen for her story of a little parrot's journey to a happier life as a companion, and we review a new book which features photographs of many species in the wild taken by a well-travelled author.

Our special thanks go to all the amazing people who donated to our year end campaign, you have helped us in our fight towards a world full of happy, healthy parrots.

Please enjoy your parrots this year – whether they share your home or you have the opportunity to see them living in their natural habitats.



Alism

Alison Hales
WPT Chairperson

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR PARROTS



Hyacinth Macaw © Corey Raffel

What will be your legacy?

By including the World Parrot Trust in your will, trust or beneficiary designation, you are creating a personal legacy that will have a lasting impact for parrots and the places where they live.

For more information about including WPT in your planned giving opportunities, visit www.parrots.org/legacy, or contact the branch nearest to you (see page 19.)

Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release: Saving Peru's Native Parrots from Trade

by Rosa Elena Zegarra, WPT Central America Representative and Catalina Hermosa-Guerra, President, Peruvian Association of Wildlife Vets

In September 2018, after a one-hour flight and a three-hour journey by car, 120 survivors from a group of 350 seized parrots were received by the dedicated staff of Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural, in Tingo María province, Huánuco, Peru.

They were there to begin the long road to recovery from their ordeal, which began when they were trapped in the wild by poachers.

When they were first intercepted in July, the birds were crowded into wooden boxes normally used to transport fruit and were thirsty, starving and stressed.

The group was comprised of three widely-distributed native species: Canary-winged Parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolorus*), Dusky-headed Conures (*Aratinga weddellii*), and White-eyed Conures (*Psittacara leucophthalmus*). Peruvian authorities (*Peruvian Police and ATFFS-Lima, one of the operative branches of the National Forestry and Wildlife Service of Perú - SERFOR*) seized them as they were being transported after being trapped in the Peruvian rainforest. They were on their way to Lima city, one of the main hubs for illegal wildlife trade.

Once they were in the hands of the authorities, the birds were given urgent first aid by the ATFFS-Lima staff, and the search for a place to house them began. Thankfully, the Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural works to rescue, rehabilitate and release rainforest-dwelling species,

mainly psittacids and xenarthras (*armadillos, sloths and anteaters*), for the purposes of wildlife conservation. The facility already had 94 Canary-winged Parakeets, survivors of a group of 220 birds received two months prior. They were seized in similar harrowing conditions in Lima. The centre has been caring for the birds since then at their own expense.

For the latest confiscation, SERFOR requested help from the World Parrot Trust, which provided funding for food for the birds during their rehabilitation, and will be funding the release flights. At the moment, the two groups of birds are recovering in preparation for their release into the Peruvian skies, along with a resident group of six Canary-winged Parakeets and two Cobalt-winged Parakeets (*Brotogeris cyanopectera*) given to the centre by the regional authorities of Huanuco in 2017.

From the route followed by the truck that brought the newly-rescued birds to Lima it was discovered that they were trapped in Central Peru. In a meeting held between SERFOR, the rescue centre and the department of Ornithology of the Museum of Natural History-UNMSM, it was agreed that Puerto Inca province, adjacent to Tingo María, would be a good place to eventually release them.

The museum will chose an area with adequate habitat and food resources in order to prevent competition with local parrot populations. Likewise, the museum has provided the supplies and protocol for future genetic identification of rescued parrots. Genetic testing would have been ideal to carry out before the current release, however it will have to wait for more funding.

The birds are being rehabilitated in a three-step process, beginning with the **clinical phase**, which assesses the birds' overall condition. The birds in better health were placed in quarantine for 45 days, where they adapted to their temporary captive diet and began to recover their muscle and feather condition. Although these birds were the "healthier" ones upon arrival at the centre, they presented with wing feathers dirty and cut by their captors which made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to fly. Ten sick birds had to be separated from the group to receive individual veterinary treatment. Their main health problems were dehydration, trauma from poor handling, and starvation.

After 30 days the first thorough veterinary exam was carried out to assess feather and body condition, along with faecal tests and treatment for parasites. The birds were all also given vitamin supplements. As of this writing, most of them had regained their lost weight but sadly, in spite of intensive treatment, 11 did not survive.

The more fortunate birds went on to start the **resocialization phase**. In this part of the transition, the groups are brought together in large enclosures where they can exercise and gain strength, with staff providing environmental enrichment and opportunities to forage on local plants and fruits.



© Rosa Elena Zegarra



© Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural

Top: 350 parrots crowded into wooden fruit boxes
Bottom: Their first night at the facility, receiving rehydration formula

Finally, there is the **pre-release and release phase**, which consists of a detailed study of the release environment, and a look at how education and awareness has been established in the local community. It is hoped that local people can be involved in helping to spot and report on the parrots' welfare once they've been released. Lastly, strategic agreements with different institutions have been put in place to help prevent disease transmission upon release.

The birds will be transported to aviaries set up in each of the two zones where the releases will take place. It is expected that the birds will be housed there for a period of two or three weeks prior to the release so they can familiarize themselves with the surrounding environment. Once the cages are opened and the birds are set free, supplementary food will be provided until they are able to forage completely on their own.

The three groups at Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural have completed their quarantine and treatments, and are now well into the resocialization phase. The resident group has been united with the first group of Canary-wings and the second group (91 Canary-winged Parakeets, 13 White-eyed Conures and 16 Dusky-headed Conures) has been brought back together, since upon arrival they were separated by species to aid their recovery. As a final part of the path to freedom, the birds will go through testing to rule out the main diseases that could affect their health and that of the local wild birds.

These parrots have been lucky; so many are not when it comes to illegal trade. There is hope for these little ones and others, thanks to the collaboration and expertise of many people in Peru working to help their native parrots be free. ☐

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The authors wish to thank the staff of ATFFS Tingo María of the Regional Government of Huánuco, who gave their time and resources to make a six-hour trip to Huánuco and back to pick up the birds and take them to the Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural. As the regional authority they will also provide technical and logistical support when the birds are eventually released.



© Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural



© Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural



© Centro de Rescate Mundo Natural

Top: A White-eyed Conure receives a health check by veterinary staff
Middle: Canary-winged Parakeets rest in the quarantine area
Bottom: One of the aviaries set up with natural enrichment and foraging stations

TEACHING TO TARGET



Target training affords all of the enriching aspects of other foraging experiences – anticipation, problem solving, discovery and reward.

© Chris Shank

THERE ARE SEVERAL BENEFITS TO HAVING A PARROT THAT TARGETS. YOU CAN USE THE TARGET TO TEACH OTHER BEHAVIOURS, SUCH AS THE 'TURN AROUND', MOVING TO A NEW LOCATION, GOING INTO A CARRIER ON CUE, OR CLIMBING A LADDER.

Targeting is the behaviour of touching a body part to an object. Here's how to teach a parrot to target:

- 1 Select a target stick you will use for training, such as a chopstick.
- 2 Prepare an assortment of favoured treat rewards such as small nut pieces or seeds to use for positive reinforcement. *(The smaller the better.)*
- 3 Have your parrot perch on his cage, or at another comfortable and familiar spot.
- 4 Offer a treat to assess his interest. If he takes it readily, eats it and looks to you for more, you are free to proceed to the next step as this indicates he will be motivated to participate in your training session. If he eats it slowly or takes it and drops it, it will be best to postpone training for another time, such as right before a meal.

! TIP: YOU DON'T WANT THE BIRD TO GET FULL TOO QUICKLY, OR TAKE TOO LONG TO EAT EACH TREAT, AS THIS LIMITS THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU CAN SPEND TRAINING.

- 5 Watch and wait to ensure you have his attention; stand with arms at your sides, treat in one hand and target stick in the other.
- 6 Slowly raise the target stick so that it is right in front of his beak. If he doesn't reach out to touch the stick, lower your arm to your side, wait a few seconds, and then try again. (Don't reward a slow response.)

- 7 Watch carefully to see if the sight of it frightens him in any way. If he seems wary of the target stick, you may need to pair it with reinforcers that will counter condition him to interact with the target:

- Hold the target stick against your side as you begin to offer very small treats. Very slowly, begin to move the target stick upwards toward your elbow.
- Once you can offer him treats with the target stick at your elbow and he takes them readily, you can begin to move it along your forearm slowly toward the hand that is offering the treats. By doing so, he will begin to regard the target stick as a positive thing, because you are pairing the sight of it with treats he values.
- Eventually, you will get the target stick up to where it is even with your treat hand. When you think he is ready, move the target stick slightly forward so that he touches it before you give him the treat.

! TIP: IF AT ANY TIME HE SEEMS WARY, YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAST. GO BACK TO THE LAST STEP AT WHICH HE ACCEPTED THE TREATS EASILY.

- 8 When he does touch the target, say "Yes!" and quickly reward him with a treat. As you do so, lower your target hand back to your side.

- 9 Continue in this way, holding the target stick up so that he can touch it and rewarding him each time with a treat. *(If he bites the stick, try holding it a little further away so that he can physically only touch it.)*

- 10 When he understands exactly what he is supposed to do, start to make the targeting a bit more difficult by holding the target an inch to the right and then the left so that he has to lean a bit to touch it. Hold it a little higher than his beak so that he has to reach up, or lower so that he has to bend down to target.

- 11 Next, hold the target so that he has to take a step in one direction or another in order to touch it. Continue to work in this manner until he will walk the length of the perch or the cage in order to come and touch the target stick. Always reward him with a "Yes" and a treat.

Once he targets well and repeatedly in the spot you have chosen to work, expand your training to other desired locations around the house so that the behaviour becomes generalized.



© Thomas K3 via CC0

MORE TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Duration

Keep training sessions limited to about five minutes. You can have more than one session in any given day, but the length should be limited.

Motivation

If your parrot seems to lack motivation, try the following:

- Find a different reinforcer that has more value than what you have been offering.
- Try training at different times of the day.
- If your parrot eats a seed mix, you may need to cut down on the amount you offer in his dish and use the balance for training.

Frequency

Don't feel obligated to train every single day. You'll be amazed at his ability to pick up where you left off.

Download the full article

Adapted from Pamela Clark's article "Teaching Your Parrot to Target", available online at: parrots.org > Learn > Reference Library > Behaviour & Training



About the Author

Pamela Clark CPBC, CVT is an IAABC certified parrot behaviour consultant whose base of experience includes work also as a trainer, veterinary technician, breeder, and rehabber.

To book a consultation or read more of her free resources — including her popular behaviour blog — visit her website pamelaclarkonline.com, or find her on Facebook (@TheParrotSteward).



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MADEIRA CONURE *(Pyrrhura snethlageae)*

The pint-sized Madeira Conure or Parakeet is found south of the Amazon river in SC Brazil and northernmost Bolivia, and in the Madeira river basin east to the Tapajós and the Tele Pires rivers in the south. Wild numbers are not known, but it is likely that the population will decrease, by as much as 50% over 20 years, from trapping and rapid deforestation.

This parrot is generally found at altitudes up to 300m in riverine *terra firme*, and *várzea*, or seasonally flooded forest. It can also be seen along forest margins and nearby clearings with scant tree cover. Its wild diet consists of *Mauritia* palm fruits, and likely berries, flowers, seeds, and vegetable matter in the form of leaves and buds.

The Madeira Conure is usually seen in small flocks of up to fifteen birds, wheeling in and out of the forest canopy in an erratic and conspicuous fashion.

P. snethlageae was once considered a conspecific (subspecies) of the Painted Conure (*Pyrrhura picta*).

A Brave New World: Fighting parrot trafficking in the age of social media

by Rowan Martin PhD, WPT Africa Program Director and Cristiana Senni, WPT Trade Specialist

DEFINITION: 'A BRAVE NEW WORLD' — USED, SOMETIMES IRONICALLY, TO REFER TO A NEW AND OPTIMISTIC SITUATION RESULTING FROM MAJOR SOCIETAL OR TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp. It's indisputable that the rise of social media is disrupting many aspects of society and the way we live our lives.

While greater connectedness between people offers new opportunities for the exchange of ideas and for educating people around the world, it has also brought with it challenges. Social media has been blamed for the rise of 'fake news' and for polarising politics, but less reported are the ways it has opened up new avenues for traffickers of threatened wildlife, including parrots.

The World Parrot Trust has been quick to recognise the emerging threat and has been at the forefront of efforts to understand and tackle this problem. Investigations, led by WPT Trade Specialist Cristiana Senni, have monitored trade in parrots on social media for several years. Information gleaned from publicly available social media posts have been combined and verified with data from other sources, such as CITES records and national shipment records, to build a picture of trade. Details of specific shipments

as well as trade routes, key actors and the extent of illegal activity, have been shared with law enforcement agencies, CITES Parties and other groups. This information provides a basis for targeted enforcement as well as for decisions on how to regulate trade.

In 2017 WPT teamed up with World Animal Protection to take a systematic approach to investigating the role of social media in the trade of wild Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*). Wild populations of Grey Parrots have been decimated by both legal and illegal trade – estimates vary but it seems likely at least 1.2 million wild Grey Parrots have been trapped since 1975, and the true figure could be much higher.



In the four years between 2014 and 2017 we identified 259 posts featuring shipments of wild Grey Parrots. While it's possible a small number of these were scams – people soliciting sales for parrots that don't exist – information that accompanied photos and videos in other posts could be used to verify that shipments had indeed taken place, in some instances identifying the time, date of the shipment and the airlines involved.

The research has provided some fascinating and at times disturbing insights. Many of the posts made for difficult viewing. Images of parrots crammed into containers or piled on the floor are difficult to unsee, but highlight the way parrots and other birds are treated as simple commodities. Over 50% of the trade activity in 2015 and 2016 was considered to be in some sense illegal – the true figure may have been greater but due to the complexity of the regulatory system at the time it was often difficult to determine with certainty if shipments were illegal. The transfer of the species to CITES Appendix I in early 2017 ended legal trade in wild Grey Parrots. This move, which was welcomed by range states, provided valuable clarity in making

it much easier to identify illegal activity. There was a notable spike in trade activity in the 90-day period following the decision by CITES Parties to end the trade, but before the new rules came into effect.

This shines a light on how the legal trade provided cover for trade that was illegal or non-compliant with CITES. Significantly there was no increase in trade in wild parrots as a result of the new rules, which also required international exporters of Grey Parrots to register with CITES. Owners of breeding farms, who produce thousands of Grey Parrots for international markets each year, had argued that the mass production of parrots for export served to offset demand for wild parrots, and that increased regulation would undermine their businesses. The data would suggest otherwise.

Encouragingly we also saw imports into Pakistan, one of the major destinations for wild birds from the Democratic Republic of Congo, all but end in mid-2017. However, illegal trade to other countries continues, and there remains much work to be done. Fortunately our research also points the way. By tracking the trade routes used to traffic parrots, it is possible to identify opportunities to disrupt the trade. Ethiopian and Turkish Airlines were found to be pivotal, and Istanbul airport is a commonly used transit point.

Together with World Animal Protection, WPT is working with the airlines and CITES agencies to encourage more action. In November 2018 WPT helped organise a symposium in Istanbul on the trade in Grey Parrots. The event was introduced by key CITES figures, and a seminar by WPT field vet Gino Conzo on the care of parrots rescued from illegal trade was well received by local veterinarians. Additionally, a seizure of over 300 Grey Parrots transported on a Turkish Airlines flight from Kinshasa in the DRC to Istanbul in early 2018 was an important step in the right direction, but parrots continue to move via this route. Illegal shipments transiting Istanbul have been identified as recently as December 2018.

Social media has opened up a new front in the ongoing battle against the trapping of wild parrots. While providing new opportunities for traffickers to ply their trade, it also affords valuable insights into how to stop it. And while creating new opportunities to educate people about the conservation and welfare of parrots, traffickers are also wising up to how social media can be used to spread disinformation and undermine global regulations.

It's a brave new world, but you can be assured that WPT will continue to adapt and fight tirelessly to protect wild parrots around the globe. 🌐

Trade in Southeast Asia

Using social media to illegally trade parrots and other birds is far from unique to Africa. A recent report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime highlighted the role of social media in the parrot trade in Indonesia and identified the rise of couriers for transporting parrots between buyers and sellers who might never meet, protecting the identity of the parties involved. In 2018, investigations by the Wildlife Conservation Society noted a big increase in sales of Critically Endangered Yellow-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*).

For many years WPT has been working to spread awareness about the cumulative and devastating effects of trapping, and helping to manage confiscations wherever they happen, particularly in the Moluccas and Sulawesi Islands.

WPT has aided efforts to rescue Chattering Lorries (*Lorius garrulus*), White Cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*), Eclectus parrots (*Eclectus roratus*) and Red-and-blue Lorries (*Eos histria*) among others, and has assisted in building a network of rehab workers and local and regional officials in a collaborative effort to halt trade.

Research

The research by WPT and WAP was published in leading peer-reviewed Journals. They are available open access and can be found via search engine:

- Martin, R. O., Senni, C., and D'Cruze, N. C. (2018). *Trade in wild-sourced African grey parrots: Insights via social media*. Global Ecology and Conservation, e00429. doi: 10.1016/j.gecco.2018.e00429
- Martin, R. O., Senni, C., D'Cruze, N. C. and Bruschi, N. (2019). *Tricks of the trade—Legal trade used to conceal Endangered African Grey parrots on commercial flights*. Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation, 53 (2)



BIRDIE:

A 're-feathering' success story

ARTICLE BY EVET LOEWEN

ONCE A YEAR AT LEAST, I MAKE MY WAY TO PHOENIX LANDING IN ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA FOR A MAJOR TOY AND BIRD SUPPLIES RUN, OR PERHAPS A SEMINAR.

OR TO ACTUALLY ADOPT A BIRD.

I've known founder Ann Brooks since 2005 as she was growing Phoenix Landing into the superlative nonprofit it is today. Since then I have learned a lot about parrots from her and the volunteers.

In late 2017, I journeyed there to adopt a boisterous Orange-winged Amazon, Sirius, on the premise that perhaps my old Green-cheek Amazon might seem more content with a new friend. Before heading home, Ann took me to look at Birdie, a White-bellied Caique that she and colleague Mary were concerned about.

This little parrot was making trademark sharp vocalizations and wide, red-eyed warning glares that clearly said, "Leave me alone!" After this disconcerting display, Birdie would reach down and pluck out a feather in an apparent act of self-mutilation. Ann and Mary had been working with Birdie on behavioural modification but found it very slow going.

I think Ann has some sort of sixth sense about pairing up parrots with humans. Ostensibly, the purpose of meeting Birdie was to see whether I had any insight on the plucking behaviour. Well I hadn't really, at the time. I have had several birds who had feather-plucked and had not handled those issues especially well. Nonetheless, Birdie was a very intriguing caique with some expressive whistles, and for those reasons I was drawn to this little bird. So I left that day with not one, but two adopted parrots.

Developing a Recovery Path: Birdie's Background

Birdie's previous owner had kept her for only 6 months before surrendering her to Phoenix Landing. Part of the reason was that she had aggression issues that can be in the repertoire of behaviours of caiques. And, there was the disastrous plucking behaviour. There are so many potential reasons for plucking it is hard to know where to start. So, I decided to begin with what I had done with several of my other flock members. Birdie was going to be in an entirely new environment anyway, so making some changes and starting with basics sounded like a good initial approach.

At the time of adoption, neither Birdie's gender nor age were known. Due to this bird's aggressive stance, it was assumed that she was a male. Ann had sent away a DNA test, and eventually we found out that Birdie is a female. That result caused me to think that hormonal issues might be involved along with everything else, and did partly affect how the plucking issue was addressed.

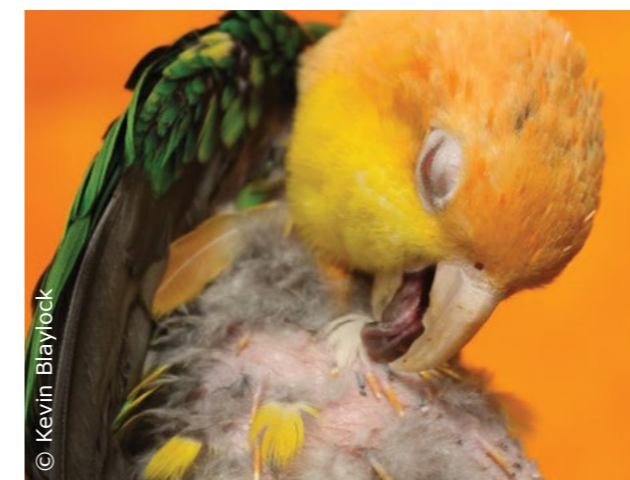
Game plan

Within 24 hours of arrival, it became clear that Birdie had a "short fuse," even for a caique. She did not want to be handled, would easily be set off into a "fit" that resulted in removal of feathers right before me, and to me seemed like an unhappy bird overall. So what to do with a high-strung caique who bit hard and attacked feet, and seemed fearful and highly anxious? I set her up in a separate room from the rest of the aviary right away, to give all the birds a chance to hear one another before any other interaction could occur.

I then established a regular routine, so that Birdie knew what to expect throughout the day:

- In the AM, Birdie would be placed in a small moveable cage in the kitchen and given breakfast. I gave her Lafeber's maintenance *Nutri-an Cakes*, which are a good way of introducing new foods and supplements to birds. To this I added .05 cc of Buriti oil, which is extremely rich in essential fatty acids, vitamins E, C and A, and carotenoids.
- Once the rest of the aviary birds were fed, I would wheel Birdie's cage to a location where she could see into the aviary, but not enter it.
- When the temperature was right, I would set her up in an outside aviary in her travel cage near to the other birds to give her fresh air and exposure to full spectrum light in as protected a manner as possible. She really responded well to being outside.
- Because Birdie was still very high-strung, in late afternoon I brought her inside and she would either stay in the travel cage while I fed the other birds, or I would return her to her regular cage for more food, which was veggies, rice, quinoa, etc.
- By 6:30PM she received nuts, a Lafeber's *Nutri-Berry*, and Harrison's *High Potency* pellets in her regular cage.

This routine was followed consistently until it was clear that some variation would not negatively affect her behaviour.



Opposite page and above: Wee Birdie in her plucked state, and receiving treatment

Medical Protocols

Birdie had plucked a lot of her chest and thighs and was beginning to work on her back. Feathers were returning, but she would re-pluck them. A couple of weeks after I brought her home, it became clear to me that having a chest full of incoming blood feathers was probably painful. At that point I contacted my avian vet, Dr. Rhoda Stevenson, DVM Dipl ABVP Avian, whom I regard highly. Dr. Stevenson looked at photos of Birdie's feather loss, and prescribed .03 cc of Gabapentin and .03 cc of Meloxicam twice a day to provide some relief. She also advised me to give her foods high in Vitamin A. Birdie is a famished caique most of the time, so this was not hard.

I realized that in giving Birdie her medications, wrapping her in a relatively stiff towel must also be very irritating. So I started using a soft microfleece baby blanket. No matter if she was in one of her caique fits or in attack mode, it seemed to calm her immediately. My observations of other caiques seem to indicate that they don't object to a gentle hold in a soft cloth.

Once it was determined that Birdie was female, she was administered a Lupron shot to help calm her naturally occurring hormones. At a subsequent wellness exam I thought that a Deslorilen (also a hormone) implant to deliver ongoing treatment would be merited. Dr. Stevenson agreed.

Husbandry Issues and a Breakthrough

Birdie's feather re-growth was extensive -- chest, legs, and back. With all the re-growth, she needed all the nutrition she could get. So her food bowl was always filled, and she ate all the time. Birdie had a good diet at her prior home – fresh fruit and vegetables, along with a pelleted diet. As time has passed I have learned that she loves to “murder” strawberries and other berries, shaking their innards all over her cage. And sweet potatoes! She will try almost any vegetable and likes all kinds of fruit.

Birdie had one major setback in her recovery in the winter of 2017/2018, when it was too cold for her to sit outside in the outdoor aviary for sun and fresh air. She was now spending time indoors in the aviary room itself, with much greater exposure to the mini-macaws and conures. An exam in March 2018 revealed she had developed an *E. coli* infection.



Top: Birdie, a contented and fully feathered bird
Below: With her good friend Emily

In a later exchange with Ann, I learned that setbacks were common. So I simply continued the routine I had established, along with treating the infection.

I think one critical change occurred in Birdie's recovery. Emily Sprague is a veterinary technician who helps out in the aviary. While there, Emily started communicating with Birdie every time she encountered her. Since then, Birdie has responded extremely positively to Emily.

Eventually, the call-and-response to Birdie's vocalizations resulted in her stepping up for Emily. That led to games of “peekaboo” and other funny antics. For example, Birdie loves to be on the floor and seems to think that if she is on the floor, it belongs to her. She gets to chase, jump on and try to bite people's feet. When Birdie jumps on Emily, they play a game of carnival ride, where Emily slowly swings her foot back and forth with Birdie in tow. This distraction takes Birdie's focus off of a negative behaviour and re-directs it to play.

Now, Birdie starts whistling and chattering the second Emily is in the aviary and loves to hang out with her. Birdie is still absolutely fine with me, has a good relationship with another caretaker, and is not focused hormonally on any one of us—any such behaviour is immediately discouraged. She likes recognition and interaction with her three humans.

A Happy Outcome

As it turned out, no one thing caused her problems, it was multiple issues: hormones, stress, diet, and a lack of interaction and play with caregivers or other birds. Now I rarely regard plucking or self-mutilation as a one-factor issue; instead, I look at every possibility. My takeaways from this re-feathering tale?

1. **Don't give up.**
2. **There is usually more than one factor involved.**
3. **It takes time.** It took time for the problem to develop and it will take time to resolve it.
4. **Use good veterinary folk** (and other insightful people) to tackle both medical and behavioural issues.

The project to re-feather Birdie and reduce her negative behaviours took months. Looking back on her life I now realize that she was, in a way, unwell from all of her woes. But by June of 2018, after a lot of persistence, I was able to report to Ann that she was no longer on any medications, although I would not hesitate to reinstitute them if needed. Birdie is now a real charmer with her favourite humans. And a fully-feathered, healthy, beautiful little parrot. 📷

Related Resources:

For more articles on dealing with feather plucking issues in parrots, see “*Feather Destructive Behaviour - Finding Solutions*” by Pamela Clark, available at: parrots.org > Learn > Reference Library > Behaviour & Training



About the Author:

Evet Loewen, JD is an attorney who practised municipal law for 30 years with the City of San Jose, California. Her legal experience there included a wide range of legal issues, including environmental law. A lifetime member of the World Parrot Trust since 2005, in 2011 she became a volunteer legal advisor. In caring for her flock of parrots for the past two decades, Evet has incorporated treatment and dietary regimens learned from experts in the field, principally behaviourists, scientists, wildlife biologists, and avian veterinarians. While Evet doesn't represent herself as an expert in any of these areas, she believes that the expertise of others has contributed greatly to the health and longevity of her companion parrots.

NEWS

The Ara Project Evolves

For more than three decades the team behind *The Ara Project* has worked tirelessly to ensure the long-term future of Scarlet and Great Green Macaws (*Ara macao* and *Ara ambiguus*, respectively) in Costa Rica. Through the years they have gained extensive knowledge that has enabled them to improve and expand their mission. Begun as an operation on the Frisius family property in Alajuela, the project evolved to include new facilities constructed in Punta Islita, Guanacaste and Manzanillo, Limon, They have since begun working in other areas of the country.

In 2019 they take the next step in this evolution. Thanks to the team's breakthroughs at both the Great Green and Scarlet Macaw reintroduction programs, they now have the experience to embark upon more in-depth efforts towards the conservation of these species. *The Ara Project* has branched into two new NGOs — **Macaw Recovery Network** and **Ara Manzanillo**, each entity existing independently and working towards macaw conservation in their specialized areas. Each will maintain *The Ara Project's* drive for species restoration, contributing to the scientific community, education and conservation, as well as training new team members who will uphold their core values and vision. The teams take this step with excitement for all the new things to come, and hopes their supporters and allies continue to support them in the future.



Macaw Recovery Network
macawrecoverynetwork.org



Ara Manzanillo
aramanzanillo.org

Swift Parrot has a new threat to its survival



Swift Parrots (*Lathamus discolor*), which are found in Tasmania, are IUCN Critically Endangered. They face a number of threats, and now a new one: an unbalanced sex ratio. Wild

birds have been seen mating with a number of partners, which in Swift Parrots is an unnatural condition.

An ongoing shortage in females, caused by predation by invasive Sugar Gliders, has left the species' males with little option but to solicit females that are already incubating eggs, disrupting the cycle. This has further lowered the survival rate for young hatchlings, and is causing fights between the bachelor and paired males.

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/yb2q7ode

Kākā chicks being raised at Natureland to boost native population

With a population of fewer than 10,000 individuals left in the wild, Kākās (*Nestor meridionalis*) are at serious risk of extinction. One organisation dedicated to stopping that from happening is the Natureland Wildlife Trust, whose work is part of an initiative with Project Janszoon.

Project Janszoon works to bring wildlife back to Abel Tasman National Park, while controlling non-native species which either compete for resources or predate the area's native animals. Kākā chicks have a survival rate of about 40% in the wild, due mainly to predation by introduced mammals. Natureland staff are raising a group of chicks from eggs taken from wild nests in areas where the population is doing well, with the hope of releasing them into Abel Park.

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/ycgsw2pe

Spix's Macaw and other parrots edging closer to extinction

Spix's Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) is one of eight species of parrot that are either highly likely or confirmed to be extinct, according to a recent study by BirdLife International. Five out of the eight species were in South America, with four of those in Brazil, pointing to the catastrophic effects of severe deforestation there. In general, the eight-year study sought to analyse 51 Critically Endangered species in all using three factors: intensity of threats, timing and reliability of records, and the timing and quantity of search efforts for the species.

Read more online:
tinyurl.com/yd2p37pg

BOOK REVIEW

Parrots of the World - Up close with the world's cleverest birds

Author: Steve Brookes
Page Count: 176
ISBN: 978-1921517716

This colourful volume is chock-full of photos of parrots (by Steve and other photographers) from the smallest to the largest – and everything in between. Steve Brookes is a world traveller who loves the parrots and loves to photograph them. He's included a selection of birds here that represents a broad cross-section: there are parrots from the Americas, Australia, Africa and more, caught in the act of being themselves – a story of their lives in pictures. Accompanying each photo is part capsule commentary of their ecology and part travelogue, with 'did you know' facts sprinkled throughout. A nice volume for someone who's casually interested in parrots and wants to learn a bit more.

Purchasing information can be found on the author's website:
wildparrotsupclose.com



EVENTS

Think Parrots 2019
Sunday 9th June 2019
Kempton Park Racecourse,
Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey, UK TW16 5AQ



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. Three leading UK parrot experts, including Paradise Park's David Woolcock, will be presenting. Avian vet Alan Jones, MRCVS will be microchipping companion birds at a special show price.

Get your tickets:
www.thinkparrots.co.uk

CORRECTION NOTICE

We apologise for mis-crediting photos in the article 'Hyacinth Macaws: Conservation in a Parrot Paradise' in the Spring 2018 issue of *PsittaScene*. Ten of the thirteen photos were taken by Edward Winfield; the others were taken by José Antonio Díaz Luque.

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PARROTS IN THE WILD:

Southern Mealy Amazon (*Amazona farinosa*)

Gathering at claylicks in Peru, Southern Mealy Amazons engage in *geophagy*, which is the consumption of clay soils to gain nutrients and self-medicate against toxins in the foods they regularly consume. They often congregate at these sites with other parrots, including Cobalt-winged Parakeets (*Brotogeris cyanoptera*) and Orange-cheeked Parrots (*Pyrilia barrabandi*.)

Photo © **Corey Raffel**

