

# PSITTA SCENE

Magazine of the 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. Nearly 30% of all parrot species are considered by IUCN to be globally threatened.

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 the WPT has led or aided conservation and welfare projects in 45 countries for more than 80 species of parrot.

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### ON THE COVER

Military Macaw Photo © Corey Raffel

Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*) are classified as Endangered in Mexico and Vulnerable worldwide due to poaching. Conservation efforts in one sanctuary revolve around monitoring the birds and providing safe nest boxes.

Learn more in *El Santuario de las Guacamayas*, Page 8.



# Celebrating 20 Years of World Parrot Day

The 20th Anniversary of World Parrot Day, which took place on May 31, 2024, was a remarkable event that united our supporters, partners, and zoos in a collective celebration to honour these magnificent birds. The occasion highlighted the strong bonds within our community and showcased our shared commitment to parrot conservation and appreciation.

One of the most memorable moments was Simon the Scarlet Macaw being awarded with the title of Parrot of the Year. We are thrilled to announce that WPT supporter Lynne Latham won a Symbolic Adoption Kit of dear Simon, along with a virtual tour of his home at the Kiwa Centre.


Also, a part of Lynne's prize was to be featured here in *PsittaScene* magazine. We had the opportunity to learn more about Lynne and her longtime love for our feathered friends, and now we'd love for you to meet her, too...

*"I'm Lynne Latham and live in Atlanta, Georgia with Chia, my 28-year-old Severe macaw, and Cricket, my 33-year-old Cockatiel. I can't believe I was lucky enough to win the contest. All of the Kiwa Centre's parrots deserved to be Parrot of the Year, but Simon's plucky attitude despite his disability especially touched me. That, and of course his beauty!"*

*I first heard about the World Parrot Trust in 1994 at the American Federation of Aviculture annual convention where Dr. Charles Munn of the Wildlife Conservation Society presented on his ecotourism work in the Tambopata National Reserve in Peru. I have been a follower and member of WPT ever since with perhaps a few short lapses.*

*I also support, whenever possible, not only the call for support when natural disasters occur, but also parrot sanctuaries and rescue and adoption facilities. There are too many wonderful, adoptable parrots in need of new homes or sanctuary and too few people and acceptable facilities to accommodate them, as illustrated by the reason for the Kiwa Centre's founding. I believe that we who love parrots have a moral obligation to ensure their well-being in both their natural habitat as well as in our homes."*

Congratulations again, Lynne, and an extra special thank you to everyone who participated and donated to our fundraiser which raised more than \$10,000(USD) for parrots across the globe.

 To learn more about the Symbolic Adoptions supporting the birds of the Kiwa Centre, visit [www.parrots.org/shop](http://www.parrots.org/shop)



Twenty years ago, the first World Parrot Day landed in Trafalgar Square, London, England in the form of an open-topped, double-decker bus filled with dedicated parrot enthusiasts and conservationists including World Parrot Trust founder Mike Reynolds and WPT Director Jamie Gilardi. The group was packed with banners, signs and a number of companion parrots - well experienced at being out in public - perched firmly on shoulders.

A costumed Nick Reynolds, of Paradise Park UK, was a boisterous presence as Superparrot.

Despite the levity, the group's mission was serious: deliver a 33,000 signature petition to then-Prime Minister Tony Blair, calling for a ban on the import of wild-caught birds into the European Union. Author Quentin Blake led a march to the 10 Downing Street residence where Superparrot, Blake, his Blue-and-yellow Macaw and a few others presented the appeal. This was all accomplished with great fanfare, with zoos across Britain joining in with their own special days and television and print media providing wide-reaching coverage.

And so World Parrot Day was born and has continued with the World Parrot Trust's ongoing outreach and messaging with special events.

And best of all: after the first official World Parrot Day, the import ban was adopted in October 2005 and a permanent embargo announced in January of 2007.



update from the field:

# FORBES' PARAKEETS

by Luis Ortiz-Catedral, Ph.D  
WPT Director, Oceania Region

**When it comes to remote wild islands, Mangere takes the prize: located 800 kilometers from mainland New Zealand, and buffeted by strong cold winds and rainfall, the island is definitely not for the faint of heart.**

“It is so wild you might not get off the islands for five to ten days because the weather can be so bad. The remoteness is next level,” says Jamie Cooper, Biodiversity Ranger from the Department of Conservation-Chatham Islands.

Mangere, along with other nine islands, forms the Chatham Islands archipelago. This group of islands harbours some of the most unique and endangered species on the planet. While some might be put off by the prospect of conducting fieldwork on such an isolated place, others embrace the challenge with genuine enthusiasm. “It is fantastic to have a job in one of the wildest places you can be!” says Jamie.

Mangere is home to the endemic Forbes' or Chatham Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus forbesi*), a relative of the more widespread Yellow-crowned and Red-fronted Kākāriki (*C. auriceps* and *C. novaezelandiae*). Forbes' Parakeets were originally described in the late 1800s and for the next 200 years were at the centre of passionate taxonomic debates.

Some authors considered them a separate species while others argued that they were simply a subspecies of the more common Yellow-crowned Kākāriki.

Like many other island species, Forbes' Parakeets succumbed to introduced species brought by humans, especially feral cats. Interestingly, Forbes' Parakeets once disappeared from Mangere. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the island's vegetation was heavily reduced by introduced sheep while introduced feral cats hunted the parakeets and other bird species which were behaviourally naïve to these mammals.

As luck would have it, a small population of Forbes' Parakeets persisted on Little Mangere, a speck of land merely 25 acres in size, located a stone's throw away on the SW side of Mangere. From a historical low of approximately 100 birds in the 1970s, the species has increased tenfold. At present, Forbes' Parakeets only occur on two islands: Mangere and nearby Little Mangere.

“  
They are very curious ... you could be making noise in the field and suddenly a head pops up from behind a rock and you realize it is a Forbes' Parakeet looking at you...



Mangere Island © Zoe Stone



© Stephen Pilkington



Forbes' Parakeet habitat © Zoe Stone



© Stephen Pilkington

Forbes' Parakeets inhabit forested areas but occasionally venture into open grasslands. Like other *Cyanoramphus* parakeets, they feed on flowers, fruits and seeds of a variety of plant species, as well as invertebrates. As they go about their business, sometimes Forbes' Parakeets stumble across human visitors to the island. “They are very curious you know; you could be making noise in the field and suddenly a head pops up from behind a rock and you realize it is a Forbes' Parakeet looking at you as if to say, ‘What the heck are you doing, you crazy human?’” Jamie laughs heartily.

In 2022, the New Zealand Parrot Trust and World Parrot Trust provided financial support to Jamie's team so they could conduct critical fieldwork on Mangere. “The support has helped us better monitor the population and scope other sites for future translocations of Forbes' Parakeets,” Jamie explains.

The news is music to my ears because a potential new site to translocate these parakeets would certainly help increase the global population of the species. 📍

# El Santuario de las Guacamayas: A Family Effort

by Marcela Franco Ochoa, MSc, DVM,  
WPT Veterinarian and Field Researcher



**In Cabo Corrientes, Jalisco - Mexico, there is a population of Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*) which, like most parrots, faces the fragmentation and destruction of its habitat. In this case it is mainly illegal trafficking.**

This species is classified as Endangered in Mexico and Vulnerable worldwide. As a result of the trapping of these birds in this region and on private property, a family's passion and interest arose in caring for and conserving the Military Macaws on their land.

Francisco Ibarra, coordinator and co-owner of the site, during a tour in 2013 noticed that one of the pines where these macaws were nesting had fallen and later realised that the tree had been intentionally cut down to extract the chick. It was not long before the Santuario de las Guacamayas was born, with Ibarra and his family striving to protect and promote the development of wildlife, particularly the Military Macaw. In 2021, the Santuario de las Guacamayas became a Management Unit for the Conservation of Wildlife (UMA) registered by the Mexican environmental authorities.

The actions that Francisco and his family carry out in the UMA Santuario de las Guacamayas consist of building, placing and maintaining artificial nests to provide shelter and nesting sites for the macaw pairs. Other different species have also benefited from these nests, including Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*), Collared Forest-Falcons (*Micrastur semitorquatus*) and native bees. The first two species were able to raise their chicks to fledglings, whereas the

honeycombs were removed and the bees relocated to particular sites in the region to protect them.

The Macaw Sanctuary has a 15-metre observation tower where, during sunrise and sunset, you can see about 10 to 20 Military Macaws flying over the site, offering a wonderful spectacle. In the month of October, 30 to 40 individuals can be observed. Occasionally, you can also see and hear flocks of Lilac-crowned Parrots (*Amazona finschi*) and Orange-fronted Parakeets (*Eupsittula canicularis*) as they depart to feeding sites. Likewise, the Sanctuary has camouflaged blinds so that visitors can more closely observe the macaws nesting without disturbing them.

To date, 30 nest boxes have been placed and have been favourably accepted by the macaws, 70 chicks have hatched and successfully fledged, and around 30 pairs have been formed.

In addition, several tours and environmental education talks have been given in the area to promote the conservation of these birds.

The Ibarra family continues to develop this great work, including the improvement of facilities, habitat management and monitoring the Military Macaw, with the support of the World Parrot Trust.



**Top:** Ibarra family members prepare for a nest check

**Middle:** A breeding pair at their nest entrance

**Bottom, right:** Francisco Ibarra checks a nest

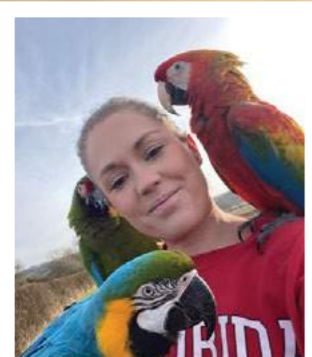
**Bottom, left:** A Military Macaw chick alive and well after Hurricane Lidia hit

**Background:** Military Macaw in flight © Corey Raffel



# Clicker Training for Parrots:

Enhancing communication and behaviour with your feathered friend



**Carlie Thomas, WPT Parrot Care Communications Coordinator**  
Carlie has devoted the past 15 years to gaining an in-depth understanding of companion parrots and the specialised care they require. Her passion has evolved to focus on improving the way people look after their parrots. She currently shares her life with three free-flighted macaws.



© Carlie Thomas

Parrots are renowned for their exceptional intelligence, vibrant personalities, and capacity for learning complex behaviours. Unlike traditional training methods that often rely on repetition and reward, clicker training introduces a novel approach, focusing on positive reinforcement to cultivate a deeper bond between you and your feathered friend. This guide delves into the essence of clicker training for parrots, offering insights into its benefits, foundational principles, and a step-by-step methodology to get you started.

## Understanding Clicker Training

Clicker training is a dynamic, reward-based training technique that utilises a distinct sound to signal to your parrot that they have performed the correct behaviour and a reward is imminent.

This method is grounded in the science of **operant conditioning**, where behaviours are modified based on positive reinforcement rewarding desired behaviour, thereby increasing its likelihood in the future.

The clicker's sound serves as a consistent, precise marker that bridges the gap between the desired behaviour and the delivery of the reward. This clarity and immediacy make it an effective communication tool, helping your parrot understand exactly which action earned them a treat. The unique sound stands out from everyday noises, capturing your parrot's attention and fostering faster learning, marking the desired behaviour more precisely than a verbal marking (*i.e.* "good bird") could accomplish.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED



#### CLICKER:

A small, handheld device that produces a distinct clicking sound.



#### TREATS:

Identify your parrot's favourite treats to use as rewards. These should be small and quick to consume.



#### QUIET ENVIRONMENT:

Choose a calm setting for training sessions to help your parrot focus. If your bird is on a perch, it should be free of toys or other distractions.

## 1 Introducing the Clicker

Begin by associating the clicker sound with a positive reward. Simply click and immediately give your parrot a treat. Your parrot doesn't need to be doing anything in particular now, so don't focus on your bird's behaviour just yet.

Repeat this several times until your parrot shows excitement at the sound of the click, indicating they understand the connection between the click and the reward. This may be evident when you bird looks at your hand, expecting a reward, when they hear the click. Once they show some sort of expectation of a reward upon hearing the click, you know your parrot is clicker conditioned. This usually only takes a few repetitions.

## 2 Capturing a Behaviour

Choose a simple behaviour your parrot already does naturally, such as stepping onto your hand. Wait for them to perform the behaviour, click the moment it happens, and then reward them. This process teaches your parrot that the behaviour leads to a click and a treat.

## 3 Shaping Behaviours

To teach new behaviours, break them down into smaller steps. Reward your parrot for each step that approximates the final behaviour, gradually requiring closer approximations before clicking and treating. This method, known as shaping, guides your parrot towards the desired behaviour through successive approximations.

## 4 Adding a Cue

Once your parrot consistently performs the behaviour in response to the shaping process, you can introduce a verbal cue or hand signal. Say the cue or show the signal, (for example saying "Big Wings" when training your bird to open up their wings) then wait for the behaviour. Click and reward the moment your parrot performs the behaviour in response to the cue.

## 5 Practising & Expanding

Continue to practise the learned behaviours, gradually reducing the reliance on treats by clicking and treating intermittently. As your parrot becomes more adept, introduce new behaviours and tricks to keep the training sessions engaging and challenging.

### TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON CHALLENGES

#### Lack of Interest:

Ensure the treats are highly desirable and sessions are short to maintain enthusiasm.

#### Confusion:

If your parrot seems confused, simplify the steps or go back to a behaviour they've successfully learned to rebuild confidence.

**Overexcitement:** If the clicker causes overexcitement, work on desensitising your parrot to the clicker sound by associating it with calm, positive experiences.



Loki the macaw practising the step up command  
© Carlie Thomas

Always reward the click sound with a treat 100% of the time to ensure the best results from your training sessions.



### Benefits of Clicker Training

The possibilities are endless when it comes to using a clicker as a training tool, but some examples include: reducing screaming, reducing / stopping biting behaviours, stepping up, giving medication and health exams, getting into a carrier or sleep cage, learning to enjoy showering, and many more instances.

- **Enhances Communication:** Clicker training strengthens the communicative bond between you and your parrot, promoting mutual understanding and respect.
- **Boosts Mental Stimulation:** The training sessions challenge your parrot mentally, keeping boredom at bay and preventing negative behaviours.
- **Encourages Positive Behaviour:** By focusing on rewarding positive actions, clicker training encourages your parrot to repeat those behaviours.
- **Builds Trust and Confidence:** Successful training sessions boost your parrot's confidence, while the positive interaction strengthens their trust in you.
- **Flexible and Fun:** Clicker training is versatile, allowing you to teach a wide range of behaviours and tricks, making learning enjoyable for both you and your parrot.

Clicker training offers a powerful, effective way to enhance your relationship with your parrot, fostering a bond built on mutual respect, understanding, and communication. By following these principles and steps, you'll unlock a new realm of possibilities for you and your feathered companion, creating a harmonious and enriching living environment.

Remember, the journey of clicker training is not just about teaching tricks; it's about enhancing the quality of life for your parrot through mental stimulation, emotional bonding, and the joy of learning together. 📺

### BASIC PRINCIPLES

#### Timing is Key:

The click must occur immediately after the desired behaviour to be effective.

#### Consistency:

Use the clicker consistently for *positive* behaviours only, to avoid confusion.

#### Short Sessions:

Parrots have short attention spans. Aim for sessions lasting 5-10 minutes to maintain their interest and prevent fatigue.

#### Patience and Positivity:

Approach training with patience and a positive attitude. Avoid showing frustration or disappointment.

#### Rewarding:

Always reward the click sound with a treat, even if you press the clicker by accident. It is important your bird associates the click sound with a treat 100% of the time to ensure the best results from your training sessions.

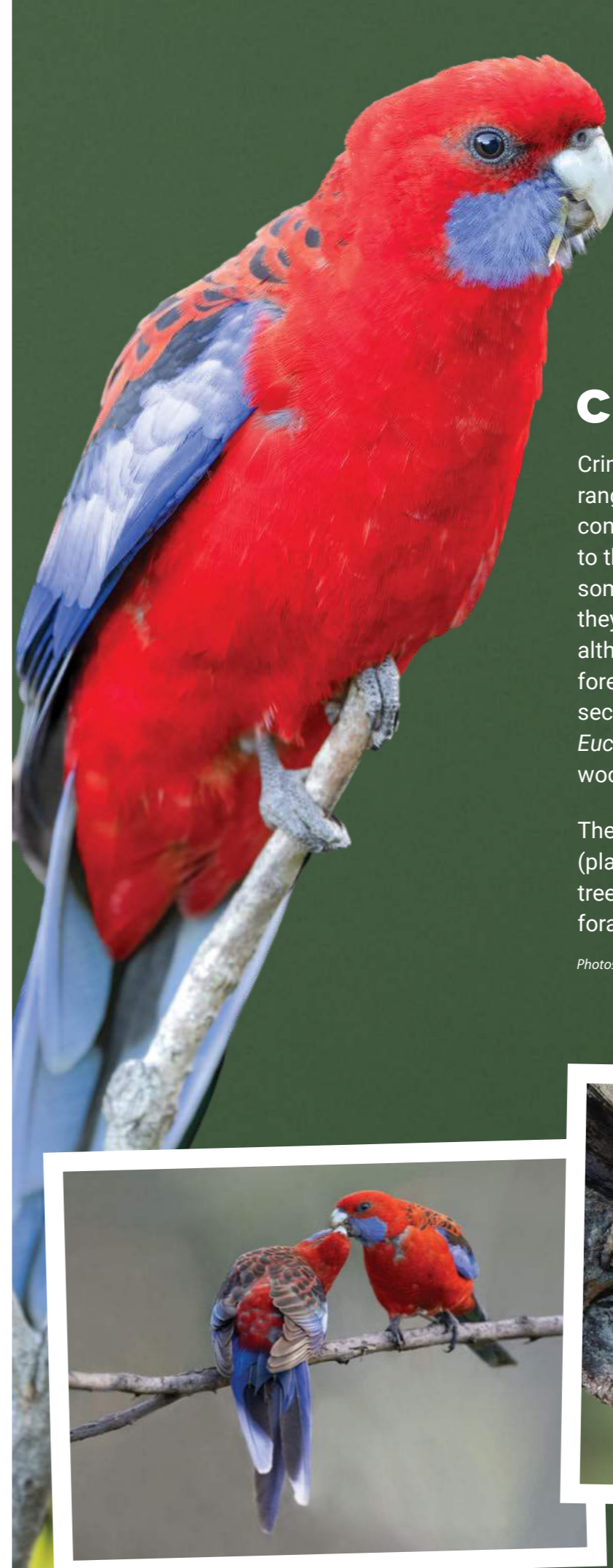
### SPECIES PROFILE:

## crimson rosella

Crimson Rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*) range from eastern Cape York in Australia, continuing down the coast in patchy sections to the south where their distribution widens somewhat. Their numbers are unknown but they are described as common to abundant, although declining. They are found in upland forests, preferring margins of rainforest, tall secondary growth, river red gums and closed *Eucalypt* forest. They may also go to open woodlands and cultivated areas.

These parrots feed on insect larvae, psyllids (plant lice), blossoms, nectar and seeds from trees such as *Eucalypt* and *Acacia*. They also forage for foods from introduced plants.

Photos © Corey Raffel



# Stories from Costa Rica: Yellow-naped Amazon Breeding Season

Article and photos by Ignacio Gutiérrez Vargas, WPT Field Researcher

I began to notice the Yellow-naped Amazons (*Amazona auropalliata*) after working with the Great Green Macaws in the north Caribbean of Costa Rica. The Amazons had been recently upgraded from Endangered to Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. The next level would be extinct in the wild.

So, the situation was a bit bleak on paper; main nesting sites had been destroyed as the cattle ranches, where the parrots nested in isolated trees, were transformed into sugar cane farms and all of the trees were cut. To top it off, recent population counts of the species had shown a decline of around 50% in the numbers of parrots. Nevertheless, not everything was as bad in reality; over the last three years we have found a number of new nesting sites in protected and unprotected land. We also found private landowners that care about their parrots and want them to fly free.

## A natural nest, a normal season

The second year of my time with the Yellow-naped Amazons I found some nests in an unprotected nesting site. Some of them got poached. That year the parrots used the same dead palm tree for nesting. I monitored the contents of the nest using a GoPro on a long stick to reach the nest entrance. I saw three eggs after confirming that the nest was active. The next couple of weeks everything was going well until one day I found a broken egg, a normal egg, a parrot chick, a dead Pacific Screech Owl (*Megascops cooperi*) and signs of a feathery fight. It seems that the owl came into the nest cavity maybe to nest or to eat unprotected eggs, but found a very angry parrot. The owl was missing a wing that was never found. I removed the owl and the parrot chick developed normally; the parent involved in the fight survived and raised it. Unfortunately, the nest got poached at the end of the season. We captured the poacher in a camera trap but police couldn't determine who it was so they never apprehended him.

After this incident and others like it, I developed a couple of solutions to prevent the poaching of parrot chicks.

The first approach was to move the chicks from very likely to be poached nests to least likely ones. This is a tough action to take as it involves knowing the parents really well and trusting them to be able to handle a new chick. Where it was possible, we fed the chicks after moving them so the work was less heavy on the parents.

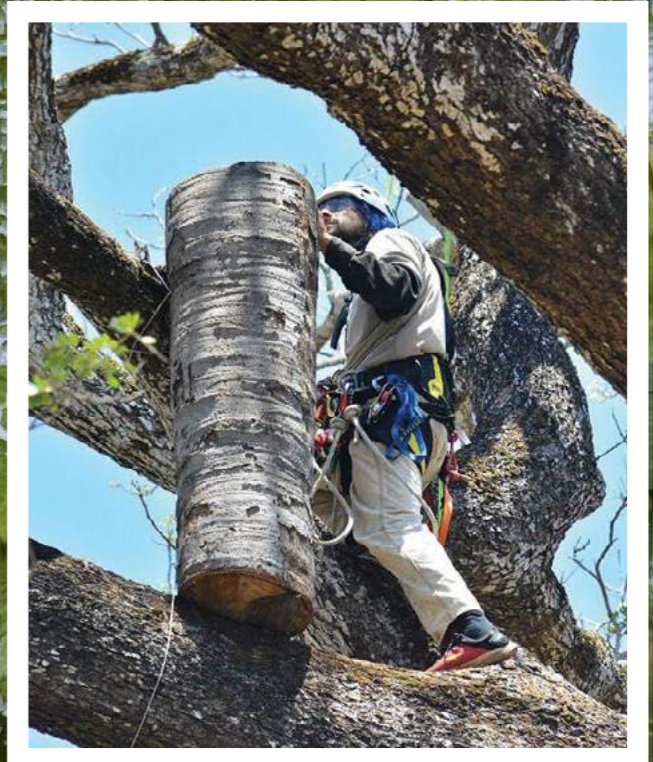
Other nests we transferred chicks to made supplemental feeding impossible as we couldn't reach the chicks after putting them inside their new home. Fortunately, we knew our parrots enough to know which ones were able to handle three or four chicks. Also, during the season there were a lot of unfertilised eggs so normally big nests were smaller than usual and that allowed us to move the new chicks. Why the eggs were unfertilized is a big unknown. We monitored the nest exhaustively after placing the new chicks inside them, checking for footage of the parents feeding them or checking their crops to see if they were full of food. Thankfully, all the chicks we moved fledged successfully.

But moving chicks around is not always possible; nests could be very tall or very deep, so only by destroying them

could we access the endangered chicks, which we didn't want to do. Instead, I gave it some thought and came to the realisation that artificial nests could help the species' conservation a lot, as we can put them in very high trees close to landowners that care about the parrots' safety. This may sound obvious and other people have thought about the same solution in the past, but one problem is that Africanised honey bees invaded the artificial nests and caused breeding failure. But we had an advantage and it was that Yellow-naped Amazons use a dead palm as their main nesting tree. And none of the ones I had found had bees because they lacked a roof, so they resembled a cylinder with their top open to the sky. This stopped the bees from invading, as they make their beehive by attaching it to the roof of the cavity. So, we went ahead with the idea but it took a couple of years to actually find and put up enough artificial nests to make it worth it.

Thankfully we found out that there were places that produce an alcoholic beverage called "coyol" from the sap out of the same species of palm tree that the parrots use. And the people farming these areas were willing give us a bunch of palm trees for free to set up artificial nests. My assistant Amilkar and I got and set up 40 of these nests. So far, two of them have been used as nests and another five have been visited by parrots.

All in all, it has been busy for us here in Costa Rica, with some ups and downs. Hopefully the changes we've put into action for the parrots will help them to continue their recovery. 📷



Top: Nestbox being attached to tree

Middle: Camera trap photo of Amazon pair tending to their chicks in a supplemental artificial nestbox

Bottom: Pair at natural nest in a dead palm

Left: Former nesting site cleared for crops

Right: Unknown poacher caught by camera trap



# LOVEBIRDS OF LIWONDE:

My Journey of Passion and Resilience

by Tamara Chirwa



Lilian's Lovebird © Ondrej Prosimsky, Getty Images

**I**n 2021, I found myself in the heart of Malawi's natural and protected wilderness amid rustling leaves of the mopane forest and distant calls of large African wildlife. It was there that I embarked on a transformative journey as an environmental education intern with the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM).

My work focus was on the conservation of the captivating Lilian's Lovebird (*Agapornis lilianae*) through the Lilian's Lovebird Conservation Project in Liwonde National Park. Little did I know that this endeavour would spark a deep-seated passion for parrot conservation and led me toward my current pursuit of a Master's degree in Biodiversity Informatics, focusing on another of Malawi's four native parrots, namely the Brown-headed Parrot (*Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*).



The author climbing a tree to check a nest



Left: Nest box monitoring after Cyclone Anna hits the area  
Right: The author holding a Lilian's Lovebird after DNA sampling

I grew up in the bustling city of Blantyre being used to little wildlife around me. My first exposure to the world of ornithology came as I ventured deep into the wilderness of Liwonde National Park. The purpose was to secure the future of the endangered Lilian's Lovebird, a parrot species that in Malawi is now restricted to this protected area.

Within the park, these highly specialised birds are known to roost in Mopane trees, using the natural cavities these trees provide. Sadly, these trees are rapidly declining outside protected areas because they are in high demand for timber and charcoal with, at least for Malawi, no existing habitat for Lilian's Lovebirds left outside Liwonde National Park.

Within Liwonde, the birds stick to mostly intact mopane forests that suffer some in parts from the growing elephant population that feeds on leaves that can stunt the trees' growth over decades. As part of the project, our efforts aimed to address the issue of cavity loss by providing suitable

nesting sites. The study involved the installation of artificial nest boxes in both roosting and non-roosting areas within the park. The study design comprised the placement of a total of 60 artificial nest boxes across the park. Specifically, we positioned 30 nest boxes in three roosting sites and another 30 boxes in three non-roosting sites. Each of the six sites accommodated 10 nest boxes, expanding the potential breeding spaces for the Lilian's Lovebirds.

The project was a collaborative endeavour, with key contributors including Dr. Tiwonge Gawa (WPT Malawi Coordinator and professor at the Malawi University of Science and Technology), Sascha Dueker (WPT Lovebird Conservation Coordinator), Patrick Katundu (Mulanje Outdoor Adventures) and myself. Within the project, my responsibilities included recording GPS coordinates for all nest box locations, measuring the height and diameter of mopane trees at breast height (DBH) and identifying natural nests within the project sites. This comprehensive approach allowed

us to gain insights into the nesting preferences of Lilian's Lovebirds to contribute to their conservation.

One of the most impactful aspects of the project was seeing another Malawian woman and scientist, Dr. Gawa, lead the team with expertise and dedication. It was during this project that I found my inspiration to pursue a career in wildlife conservation, dedicated to safeguarding the biodiversity of our natural world for the future. Dr. Gawa is not only my role model but also my mentor and supervisor in my ongoing research. Her leadership and the collaborative efforts of the team have left an enduring impression, nurturing my passion for wildlife conservation and shaping my aspirations as a dedicated conservationist.

Another study simultaneously carried out, and led by Sascha Dueker, focused on lovebird genetics. Besides being involved in the nest box project, I got the opportunity to assist and learn in this study too.

This experience allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the species and enriched my journey as a wildlife conservationist. With the help of Sascha and Dr. Gawa, the team successfully took blood samples of ten Lilian's Lovebirds. We took blood samples for DNA studies, recorded body measurements and rung (leg-banded) the birds for future monitoring and identification. My role was to assist Sascha in taking these samples and measurements.



Carrying out DNA sampling

The most exciting moment was when I held a lovebird for the first time and released it back to the wild after taking DNA samples. Participating in this study was not only exciting but also highly educational. It provided me with the opportunity to learn the process of bird ringing and collecting blood samples. These skills were new to me and mastering them during this project was a significant milestone in my journey as a wildlife conservationist.

We would arrive at the roosting sites in the early morning, around 4:30 a.m., just before the lovebirds began to emerge from their nests. Armed with binoculars, we observed the cavities where the lovebirds would emerge. This was a critical part of our work, allowing us to gather essential data about the lovebirds' natural nesting habits. We also repeated this process in the evening when the lovebirds were returning to their nests. This approach ensured that we had a complete understanding of the birds' natural nesting behaviours which, in turn, contributed significantly to our conservation efforts. From this activity and by reviewing literature, we found that the majority of the natural nests were facing southeast so we also placed our nest boxes facing southeast.

In February 2022, we embarked on a venture to monitor the nest boxes, seven months after their installation. We took on the task by revisiting six different sites within the captivating landscape of Liwonde National Park. There were no signs of Lilian's Lovebirds inhabiting the boxes. Instead, traces of occupancy by other cavity-dwelling species caught our attention. Mopane leaves adorned some boxes, while others displayed the presence of mopane bark. We remained uncertain about the specific species responsible for these additions.

We persevered despite not seeing any lovebirds, returning for the second monitoring phase in October. This time, the landscape of the nest boxes had evolved. The number of boxes exhibiting signs of usage had increased from 22 to 34 boxes. Despite the positive shift, Lilian's Lovebirds remained elusive. Instead, the team discovered the species responsible for the leaves and bark in the nest boxes. Squirrels had brought the mopane leaves and dorm mice the mopane bark.

As the project continued to unfold, the team's journey reflected a blend of curiosity, challenges, and innovative solutions. With these new insights, the team acknowledged the need for a more advanced monitoring approach: the implementation of camera traps. The cameras would become a vital tool, unraveling the mysteries of usage patterns and shedding light on the dynamics of the diverse species of Liwonde National Park, ultimately contributing to the ongoing conservation efforts and understanding of the region's rich biodiversity.

As the years have passed, my passion for ornithology and bird conservation has grown stronger. The Lilian's Lovebird project became more than just a task, it transformed into a profound connection with nature. Witnessing these birds, so vulnerable yet resilient, instilled in me a sense of responsibility and commitment to safeguard not only Lilian's Lovebirds but also the rich avian diversity of Malawi. 📷

Arable crops in many parts of the world are sustaining bird damage. In places like India, where agriculture is a year-round livelihood for many farmers, this problem is concerning and demands great attention.

Although the problem of pest and crop yield loss is worrying, several native and ecologically vital species of birds are facing population losses due to the indirect and direct losses caused to the farmers. For example, the Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Alexandrinus krameri*) faces serious threats, including the illegal wildlife trade.

But there's some hope on the horizon; collaborative efforts are underway in Odisha to tackle illegal wildlife trade and crop losses head-on and give the parakeets a fighting chance.



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## Assessing the Impact of Net Farming and Illegal Trade on the Well-being of Parakeets in Odisha, India

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**B**irds play a crucial role in ecosystems, but they can also cause significant crop damage, especially in areas reliant on agriculture. Understanding the full extent of this damage and its environmental and economic ripple effects is essential for balancing conservation efforts with agricultural needs.

Farmers try everything from age-old tricks to modern gadgets to keep birds away, some of which do more harm than good. The old methods aren't working well as the birds become used to them. Farmers now are using chemical sprays, giant nets and even loud noise makers to scare the birds off. But it is expensive and it damages the environment.

In India, especially in places like Odisha, situated on the Eastern coastal belt where farming is important for folks living in rural areas, farmers frequently use nets to keep birds away from their crops. However, we need to find a balance between farming and looking after our feathered friends. That means finding smart ways to use our land that don't harm wildlife and working together to keep both our crops and our environment healthy.



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**Left:** Rose-ringed Parakeet entangled in a crop net  
**Right:** ECO staff rescuing a Rose-ringed Parakeet using blindfolding restraint

The deployment of plastic netting, primarily made of polypropylene or polyethylene, poses significant risks to avian populations. Instances of entanglement and subsequent harm, from hunting by feral dogs or poaching, have been documented, highlighting the unintended consequences of agricultural practices on biodiversity conservation. The nets set up by local farmers to prevent crop raiding by various pests are a major threat to Rose-ringed Parakeets in particular.

Earth Crusaders Organisation (ECO) has created a Quick Response Team, which involves community members in rescuing parakeets and other birds from crop netting.

### The Effects of Illegal Trade on Parakeets

Among the many native species of parakeets found in India, some regularly illegally traded include Alexandrine, Rose-ringed, Plum-headed, Red-breasted, Malabar, Himalayan, and Finsch's (Grey-headed) Parakeets. People in India traditionally keep parakeets as pets

mainly because they are easy to keep and have no special needs. This has led to an organised illegal trade in parakeets across the country. According to Ahmed (2011), ornithologist and bird trade consultant to TRAFFIC India, the Alexandrine Parakeet, *Palaeornis eupatria*, is one of the most sought-after species in the Indian live bird trade and is traded in large volumes throughout the year. Many specimens are smuggled by Indian dealers via Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh to bird markets in various parts of the world.

The Alexandrine Parakeet, a well-known native species in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam has established itself as an invasive species in Japan, Europe and Mediterranean countries. The global population has not yet been quantified. It faces numerous human-caused threats, including habitat loss and illegal trade, and is classified as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. The species remains a target for illegal wildlife trade due to its ornamental value and vocal abilities. The illicit trade in parakeets, made easy by sophisticated networks involving poachers,

smugglers, and consumers, continues to exert pressure on wild populations, including those in Odisha.

In Odisha, it has been observed that traders use an extract exuded from the Catechu (*Senegalia catechu*) plant to mark the wings of Rose-ringed Parakeets to resemble Alexandrine Parakeets. This is referred to as 'Forced Identification'. There has been continuous observation of significantly higher by-catch of adults and sub-adults of Rose-ringed Parakeets as a result. This species has a highly distributed population and gets caught easily, as the birds are attracted to the cereal farms. According to the IUCN Red List, it is categorised as a Least Concern species.

Efforts to distinguish between Alexandrine Parakeets and closely related species such as the Rose-ringed Parakeet are complicated by illicit practices of wing marking with plant extracts. While Alexandrine Parakeets demonstrate behavioural traits that confer a degree of resilience against capture, mature Rose-ringed Parakeets are more susceptible to entrapment, particularly in agricultural landscapes.



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Ultimately, Rose-ringed Parakeets that get caught face the loss of their freedom or lives. Either they are sold in the illegal pet trade markets or left to their fate. In many cases, as we have seen, the birds have not survived after suffering injuries and post-trapping shock.

### Conservation Efforts

Despite these challenges, there have been great efforts to tackle the illegal wildlife trade that

impact parakeet populations, especially in places like Odisha. Collaborative projects involving government agencies, conservation groups, and local communities have successfully rescued and protected many parakeets. However, a lot of work and effort has to be put forward. We should continue to focus on protecting these species with more hands-on projects and initiatives on the ground. ■



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**Top:** Alexandrine Parakeet  
**Bottom:** Rose-ringed Parakeet

Traders have been observed applying colour to the wings of Rose-ringed Parakeets in an attempt to make them look like Alexandrine Parakeets, which are more valuable in trade. This practice occurs in other parts of the world, with parrot feathers being altered in a similar manner to increase the birds' value on local and/or international markets.

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NEWS

WPT attends ZACC Conference

The Zoos and Aquariums Committing to Conservation (ZACC) conference took place May 13 - 17, 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah (USA) after a 4-year hiatus. The event aims to promote increased involvement of zoos and aquariums in field conservation efforts on a local, national, and international scale. Tracy Aviary, long-term supporters of the World Parrot Trust's Great Green Macaw program, played a significant role in this year's conference as one of the hosts alongside Utah's Hogle Zoo.

The WPT was represented by Jack Haines, Neotropics Regional Manager, and Megan Haines, Digital Outreach Coordinator. Jack delivered a compelling presentation on 'Supporting the Conservation of Yellow-naped Amazons by Developing Local Capacity and Regional Partnerships'. His talk highlighted the crucial work being done by our partners across the Yellow-naped Amazon's range through community engagement and strategic partnerships. In addition to the presentations and discussions, the conference featured a field gear fundraiser. Thanks to generous contributions, WPT acquired essential equipment including a pair of binoculars (from Phoenix Zoo) and SD cards (from Central Florida Zoo and Beth Armstrong, ZACC committee) for camera traps.



The ZACC conference was an inspiring event, fostering connections not only with zoos dedicated to conservation but also with other field partners. The conference was also a key networking event that introduced the WPT to many new potential collaborators. There will hopefully be more news to follow about where these connections lead in terms of developing new projects and collectively better supporting in-country partners. These collaborations are vital for the protection of parrots, which inhabit diverse ecosystems. By working together, all of us can make a significant impact on the preservation of both parrots and nature.

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Think Parrots 2024



After a 5-year hiatus, WPT staff attended the Think Parrots Show 2024 on June 9 at Kempton Park Racecourse in Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey, England. On hand at the boisterous event were a number of WPT staff who greeted throngs of parrot enthusiasts from around the region. On display were goods to buy for people (t-shirts, mugs and more) and parrots (natural hand-made foraging toys and bird-safe browse), with proceeds going towards the World Parrot Trust's parrot conservation and welfare programs.

Visitors learned about WPT's new symbolic adoptions available through the Kiwa Centre's Conservation and Welfare program, with many choosing to symbolically adopt one of the facility's macaws. Attendees also learned about the WPT's many other programs and projects across the world. A massive THANK YOU is in order for everyone who came by and said hello. Your support means the world to the parrots and us here at the WPT!

Watch a video recap on YouTube:  
[tinyurl.com/tpwpt2024](https://tinyurl.com/tpwpt2024)

Announcing the IUCN SSC Wild Parrot Specialist Group

On May 31 - and World Parrot Day's 20th anniversary - the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) announced the creation of the IUCN SSC Wild Parrot Specialist Group (WPaSG). Parrots encompass over 400 species, with many near-threatened or threatened globally. The new initiative aims to detect, monitor, and manage the dangers affecting this group of birds worldwide and provide advice and information to decision-makers, funders, scientists and the public to raise awareness about these threats. The World Parrot Trust congratulates the IUCN on this new endeavour.

Learn more:  
[tinyurl.com/WPaSG](https://tinyurl.com/WPaSG)

Symbolically Adopt a Parrot

We are thrilled to introduce our new Symbolic Parrot Adoption Kits! Now you can adopt a special feathered friend from the Kiwa Centre, our rescue facility in the UK. Support their care while contributing to WPT's broader conservation efforts. Plus, you'll receive all kinds of special goodies, regular updates about your favourite bird, and details about their life at the Centre.

Adopt your parrot:  
[parrots.org/shop](http://parrots.org/shop)



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**PARROTS IN THE WILD:**  
**Red-breasted Parakeet**  
*(Psittacula alexandri)*

This colourful parakeet is native to Southeast Asia. It is suspected to be undergoing a moderately rapid population decline due to the wild bird trade, persecution and habitat loss.

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