

PSITTAScene

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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Nanday Conure

ON THE COVER

Blue-and-yellow Macaws Photo © Corey Raffel

Though still fairly common in much of their range, Blue-and-yellow Macaws are declining in some areas due to deforestation and have been subjected to heavy trapping for the wildlife trade.

More macaws in *Journey to the Kiwa Centre*, Page 13.





**Why I support the WPT:
A Donor's Story**

By Evet Loewen, J.D.

My first introduction to psittacines was in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, where my family moved in 1969. A hotel near our apartment building had two Red-and-green Macaws (*Ara chloropterus*), each in a separate round cage that was not much wider than the two birds, for guests and visitors to see when in the hotel lobby. They were striking and truly exotic to me, a teenager born in Texas, who had never seen birds like these two stunning creatures.

My Mother was a bird lover, enjoying them wherever we lived. At the time I was a teenager, not necessarily attentive to the same strong beliefs my Mother had, and had little reaction to the effects that rash human actions have on wildlife.

Decades later, however, my interest in parrots surfaced and became a passion. It was more like a spontaneous, sustained fascination with small macaws and conures and the education that I received over six years of keeping captive birds. The jump to becoming an avian conservationist occurred when I realised that no matter how hard I worked at it, and no matter how closely I followed the advice of knowledgeable behaviourists and scientists, the life the birds would have in my care would not match that of the wild.

There is a lot more to this slow trot to becoming an avian conservationist, but there was one seminal event which I regarded as key. Between 1998 and 2005, my collection of parrots had expanded to approximately 20 individuals. Acquiring more species and birds was becoming an issue of ethics for me as my thinking evolved. I was aware of but had not engaged with the World Parrot Trust (WPT), but that changed quickly when my avian veterinarian, Dr. Fern Van Sant DVM, sponsored a presentation with Dr. Jamie Gilardi, Executive Director of the World Parrot Trust, on the Blue-throated Macaws in Bolivia. Watching the work of dedicated individuals on the ground in Bolivia, it was very clear how difficult it was to protect the remaining greatly threatened individuals unless there was a sustained effort to help the birds repopulate their historic range.

That was an education. I knew of the work to save the Peregrine Falcon and California Condor from extinction in California and as I left the presentation, it was clear to me that my wish to keep uncommon parrots had to change to help parrots in the wild. I resolved that I would not purchase another parrot unless I first made a donation to the WPT in an amount equal to the cost of the bird. From that point on, my involvement became more avian conservation-oriented. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

The Impact of the World Parrot Trust

After a time, the WPT received my full attention. First I was a donor, then I accepted the invitation to serve as WPT's pro bono legal counsel. As a volunteer, I was able to work with Jamie and Steve Milpacher, lending support to furthering the Blue-throated Macaw project.

I travelled to Washington DC on WPT business, and to meetings in Florida to connect with WPT partners and parrot NGOs to establish communication and cooperation. Most recently in the 2000s, I made three visits to Brazil to see

Vinaceous and Mealy Amazon releases, which my gifts helped make possible.

In all of this, the work of the WPT has been transparent, effective and professional. The biologists and scientists I met were first rate. As with any complex restoration project, sometimes progress seems slow. It isn't easy to assist partners in other countries. I have never experienced any qualms about the way the WPT pursues its objects. The volunteering and donations to the World Parrot Trust has been, for me, incomparably rewarding. I have no reservations in encouraging others to join and donate to the work of this nonprofit. They do not disappoint in making progress in saving wild parrots.



About the Author

Evet Loewen is an attorney who practised municipal law for 30 years with the City of San Jose, California. Her experience there included a wide range of legal issues, including environmental law.

In 2005 Evet became a lifetime member of the World Parrot Trust, and in 2011 she became a volunteer legal advisor, a position she held until 2021. She currently lives in Athens, Georgia and enjoys working on a range of issues for the WPT whenever invited to do so. Her background in conservation includes the founding of an education project in San Jose for Peregrine falcons at City Hall, and ongoing contacts with University of Georgia students who want to learn about psittacines.

In recent years, her involvement in WPT conservation work has expanded to include support of the reintroduction of parrots to the wild in Brazil, Bolivia, Bonaire and Costa Rica.



Dignitaries and local dancers welcome the birds to Trinidad © Steve Martin

Bringing Blue-throated Macaws Back Home

The World Parrot Trust is pleased to share the successful repatriation of 14 critically endangered Blue-throated Macaws back to their native habitat in Bolivia. With an estimated 400 of these stunning birds left in the wild, efforts like this are vital for their future.

The journey brought eight male and six female macaws from WPT partner Natural Encounters, Inc. to Bolivia's Beni region. This mission marks the third successful repatriation in the past year, bringing the total number of Blue-throated Macaws returned to 33—a milestone that moves us closer to ensuring the survival of this species.

Rafael Mounzon, Executive Director of Fundación CLB, shared his reflections, "It is very satisfying to see both the departmental and central governments of Bolivia, as well as their responsible agencies, show interest and commitment

to the conservation of the Blue-throated Macaw. This repatriation sustains it, and we hope that together we can do more to preserve it in the plains of Moxos."

The repatriated macaws began their stay in quarantine, where they adjusted well to their native environment and diet. By mid-November they transitioned to a flight aviary, where they are beginning to adapt alongside their wild counterparts.

Since establishing a breeding population in 2006 Natural Encounter's sister company, the Natural Encounters Conservation Fund (NECF), has worked towards the goal of repatriating genetically important Blue-throated Macaws to Bolivia to breed and eventually to release Bolivian-bred offspring to increase the resident population. NECF is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organisation founded to help endangered wildlife through conservation education, raising and donating money for *in-situ* conservation programs, and

directing conservation efforts such as the captive breeding of Blue-throated Macaws.

The WPT began its conservation efforts for the Blue-throated Macaw in 2002, working with local and international partners to research the species' ecology and determine the factors limiting the recovery of its wild population. Key data showed that the species' tiny and fragmented population covered a vast distance and would benefit from active nest management and reintroductions.

Based on these findings, ex-situ breeding programs were developed with partners African Lion Safari in Canada, Paradise Park in the United Kingdom and NECF. With the support of the Bolivian government, which sought to repatriate the birds, and after extensive international collaboration between NECF, WPT, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and several Bolivian governmental agencies, all necessary permits and transport arrangements were finally approved.



Top, left: NECF's founder Steve Martin and Curator Rob Bules arrive in Trinidad.

Top right: The birds are health checked prior to being released into the quarantine aviary.

Bottom, left: Releasing the birds into the aviary.

Photos © Steve Martin



On September 24th of this year, NECF's founder Steve Martin and Curator Rob Bules transported the macaws from Florida to their native Bolivia where they will take part in the local conservation program.

The journey

Steve Martin shared the experience: "Our flights from Miami through Bogota to La Paz were routine. However, getting the birds to their destination in Trinidad, Bolivia was an unexpected and substantial challenge. Two flights were cancelled due to smoke from brush fires that closed the Trinidad airport. When we went to rent a van for the 8-hour drive to Trinidad, we found out a workers' strike blockaded the only road from La Paz to Trinidad. The birds spent that night in quarantine in the clinic at the La Paz Zoo.

"When we arrived at the La Paz airport the next morning, there were camera crews and government officials waiting to see the birds and wish them well on their trip to their ancestral homeland in the Beni Savanna near Trinidad, Bolivia. Fortunately, the overnight rains cleared the smoke enough to open the airport and we were able to fly to Trinidad with the birds. Upon arrival, we were met by more government officials, dignitaries and a huge celebration complete with indigenous dancers, which showed up to celebrate the arrival of their most revered bird, the Blue-throated Macaw.

"Shortly thereafter, the birds were in their quarantine facilities just outside of Trinidad. The birds took right to the native food found in the region, especially the fruit of the local Motacú palm trees, a favorite of the wild macaws. After quarantine, these 14 macaws will join 19 other Blue-throated Macaws previously repatriated from Canada and the UK. These 33 birds now form a strong foundation of an important in-situ conservation program for this critically endangered species.



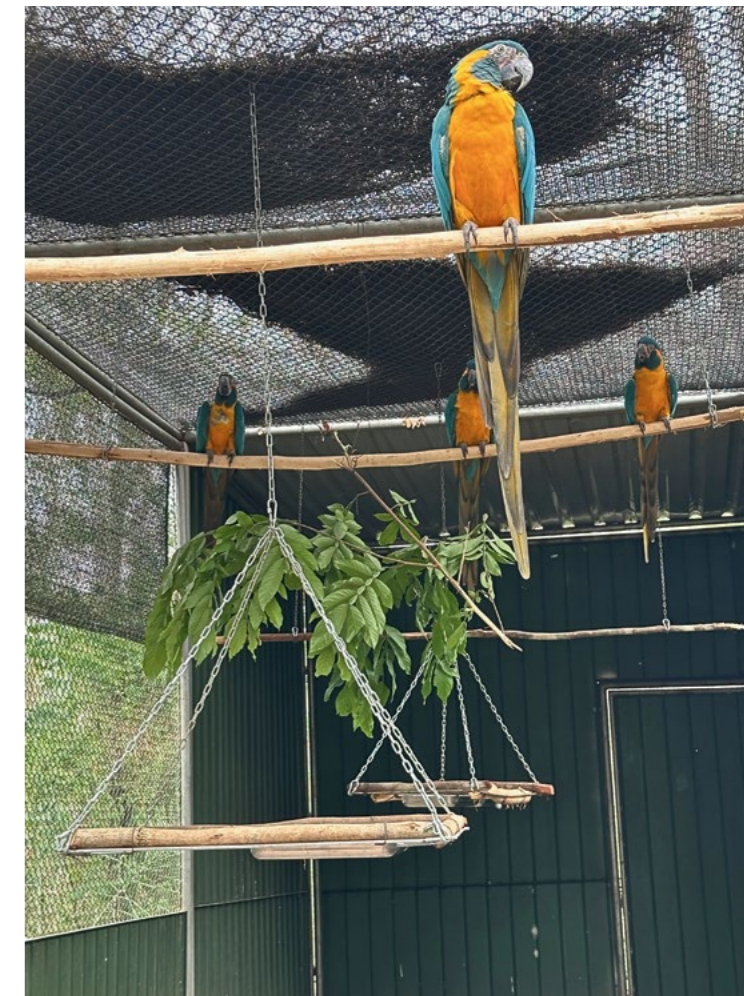
"This repatriation process was anything but easy. Permitting took over 12 years, the scheduled 24-hour journey to Trinidad took over 48 hours, there were six cancelled flights, a 9-hour bus-ride and our travel home took more than three days. The birds are safe and well-adjusted to their new home, and conservation efforts for this magnificent species received a significant boost. We look forward to starting a new permitting process to repatriate more Blue-throated Macaws to their native homeland and continuing our efforts to help this spectacular bird."

The future

In ongoing partnership with the Bolivian agencies, WPT, AZA and USDA, NEI and NECF are committed to continue providing financial, logistical and informational support to the Bolivian program. Repatriation of younger proven pairs of genetically valuable and unrepresented Blue-throated Macaws is required to establish new breeding populations within Bolivia.

Over the next five years, NEI plans to pursue further repatriation transports, while also sending staff to assist with the breeding efforts of the current repatriated population. These transports will deepen the partnerships established with Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Agropecuaria e Inocuidad Alimentaria (SENASAG) and ultimately will benefit and bolster the wild population of Blue-throated Macaws.

The World Parrot Trust owes its deepest gratitude to the Bolivian government and dedicated partners, including SENASAG, Dirección General de Biodiversidad y Áreas Protegidas (DGBAP), the Gobierno Departamental del Beni, and Universidad Autónoma del Beni, José Ballivián. 🇸🇰



Top, left: The birds arrive at La Paz Zoo clinic.

Top & bottom, right: Blue-throated Macaws in the quarantine aviary enjoying motacú fruit.

Photos © Steve Martin

Voices of the Mangrove

The Battle for the Yellow-Naped Amazon on Tasajera Island

Article and photos by Fundación Zoológica de El Salvador staff

The Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*) is an iconic species in El Salvador, admired for its beautiful yellow and green plumage and its remarkable ability to mimic human speech from a young age. Unfortunately, these traits have made it vulnerable to exploitation by humans for many years.

In El Salvador in the Jaltepeque Estuary lies the tiny island of Tasajera, home to important ecosystems such as mangroves, beaches and wetlands. At only 21 square kilometres, this small island is believed to host a significant population of the Yellow-naped Amazon, a species critically endangered worldwide.

The mangroves protect the coasts from erosion and provide habitat for various species such as the Yellow-naped Amazon, while the beaches are key nesting areas for endangered sea turtles. Additionally, the wetlands support biodiversity and regulate the water cycle. These ecosystems are not only vital for

environmental protection and ensuring water quality, but also for the local economy as they sustain fishing and ecotourism. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), through the Wildlife and Animal Welfare Act, is taking action to protect and rescue these species.

While local residents have reported sightings in Tasajera Island, particularly linked to the consumption of cashew crops, the exact extent of the parrot's presence and activity in the area remained unclear. To address this gap, a collaborative project was launched in 2022 between the Zoological Foundation of El Salvador (FUNZEL) and the World Parrot Trust. The aim is to better understand how this species utilises the island, with a special emphasis on determining whether it serves as a breeding site.

Severe threats to Yellow-naped Amazons

The species has experienced a significant decline range-wide over the past few decades; in just 12 years, it has been uplisted from Least Concern (LC) to Critically Endangered (CR) according to the IUCN. The rapid decrease of these parrots

is attributed to a range of threats, but nest poaching for the pet trade and habitat destruction are the main dangers. According to recent estimates from the MARN, only 500 individuals remain in the wild in the country, including approximately 200 breeding pairs.

Amazons on Tasajera

Conducting regular population surveys is key to understanding the conservation status of these birds throughout their range. The count on Tasajera Island took place in two phases, from February to June 2022 and from July 2022 to June 2023, and focused on observing and recording their roosting sites and feeding areas.

During monitoring, we recorded up to 101 individuals flying in the area, indicating a significant population that may be connected to other islands in the Jaltepeque Estuary. Observations noted the use of six tree species by the parrots, including cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), saman (*Samanea saman*) and guamúchil (*Pithecellobium dulce*), both flowering plants in the pea family, beach almond

(*Terminalia catappa*) and guava (*Psidium guajava*). A key finding was the confirmation of roosts within the mangroves, where a small group of three pairs was identified sleeping in an area measuring approximately 25 to 50 metres.

Locating and protecting important nests

The monitoring project for the Yellow-naped Amazon on Tasajera Island sought to deepen our understanding of the species' breeding biology while addressing significant threats from poaching. This initiative involved collaboration with community members to identify potential nesting sites, particularly in mature red mangrove trees (*Rhizophora mangle*).

With the help of an ex-poacher and a skilled tree climber, and navigating by water channels and climbing over mangrove roots, the team successfully marked and assessed 25 potential nest cavities, confirming six as active nests in eight exploration zones. The presence of these active nests suggested a potentially stable population; however, because we could not verify traces of human presence in the area we realised that poaching was beginning in the area, which raised urgent concerns about the birds' survival. To mitigate these risks, we installed surveillance cameras at the identified nesting sites. This proactive measure

aimed to deter theft and collect valuable data on the parrots' nesting behaviour and chick development. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, monitoring in 2024 carried out between FUNZEL and the World Parrot Trust found that out of six confirmed nests, five were poached and one was abandoned by the parents following the visit of a poacher to the area.

Parrots and cashew crops

Human-animal conflicts worldwide often involve subsistence and cash crop farming. Wild animals, many of them birds, take crops because they lack food or habitat to support their existence.

Cashew cultivation is a vital economic activity on Tasajera Island and for years, community members have viewed the Yellow-naped Amazon as a pest. To address these concerns, we conducted an evaluation of the species' impact on cashew crops in collaboration with Paso Pacifico and the University of El Salvador in 2022.

The assessment revealed that damage caused by the parrots does not exceed 25% of total production, meaning that it does not result in significant economic losses for local farmers. This finding has been instrumental in dispelling the idea that parrots pose a major threat to crops,



fostering a more conservation-minded approach within the community.

Community collaboration and challenges

Parrot conservation can achieve its best results when local people are involved. The needs of parrots and people can be met so that both benefit.

The local community was an integral part of the Yellow-naped Amazon project, with residents participating in both monitoring phases and providing valuable information through interviews. Tasajera Island inhabitants, mostly fishermen, have lived surrounded by mangroves and wildlife for generations and while many recognise the importance of the Yellow-naped Amazon there are still challenges in effectively protecting the species.


Illegal nest poaching remains one of the greatest threats to these parrots. While most residents disagree with these practices, some continue to capture and sell the chicks as pets. Surveys indicate that despite a general awareness

of the need to conserve the species, there is still a pressing need for enhanced environmental education, more stringent protective measures, and the promotion of alternative economic activities.

The future of this emblematic species

The success of the monitoring project has laid a solid foundation for future conservation efforts on Tasajera Island. Key recommendations include the need to establish more observation points and improve technological tools, such as camera traps, to monitor nests and prevent raiding. Also encouraged is the creation of a group of community guides to support monitoring and conservation actions, as well as the development of bird-watching tours in the mangrove as an alternative economic activity for local people.

In addition, early environmental awareness in schools in the communities of Tasajera Island and La Colorada, a nearby community where Yellow-naped Amazons are also seen, will be crucial to ensure the coexistence of the parrots and local farmers. Modernising cashew production can also become an opportunity to harmoniously integrate conservation and economic development. Communities could be encouraged to process cashew crops and sell them directly, branding their products with a wildlife protection message to highlight their commitment to conservation and increase their economic gains for the benefit of all.

Our Yellow-naped Amazon research on Tasajera Island has proven to be a significant step forward in the efforts to preserve this critically endangered species. Community participation, along with collaboration from international organisations, is key to ensuring its long-term survival. Much remains to be done, but with the information gathered and rigorous protective measures recommended, there is hope that parrots will continue to fly over Tasajera Island's mangroves for many years to come. 

Top: An active nest shows three eggs.

Middle: The team travels by boat through the mangroves.

Bottom: An arduous traverse of mangrove forest to gather data.



New Research: Cultural Change in Declining Populations of Yellow-naped Amazons

The Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*) is a medium-sized, all-green parrot save for a bright yellow flash across the back of its head and neck and red shoulder accents. It lives in dry forest from coastal southern Mexico to the south of Costa Rica. At a population of about 2,600 individuals, it is a critically endangered species that has been subjected to human expansion and severe exploitation for trade.


Over decades, the Yellow-naped Amazon has been the focus of much research to examine its wild status and ecology. Teams led by Dr. Tim Wright and Dr. Christine Dahlin of New Mexico State University and the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, respectively, have conducted much of this research, along with some novel work: uncovering sophisticated vocal learning and communication in parrots. The goal of these studies has been to describe the communication abilities of the Yellow-naped Amazon and examine how different vocalisations in their repertoire vary over different regions.

Now, researchers Dahlin, Wright, Grace Smith-Vidaurre, PhD, and Molly Genes, MS have published “Widespread cultural change in declining populations of Amazon parrots”, a capstone of over two decades of study in Yellow-naped Amazon vocal dialects. The first efforts uncovered relatively stable vocal dialects (North, South and Nicaragua) in Costa Rica between

1994 and 2005 and evidence of changes in call types in the same area from 2005 to 2016. The timing was significant: during the second decade of research, Yellow-naped Amazons suffered a severe decline in their wild population as a result of persistent heavy trapping and habitat loss.

The results were certainly telling - they suggested that cultural traditions like dialects may change in response to changes in population and environment. Where once calls from the north were separate from vocalisations in the south, during the second decade more mixing of these dialects had occurred. In addition, the team found that there were new calls emerging that had not been detected before.

Past research in bats, whales and dolphins, songbirds and humans have shown that vocal dialects play an important part in maintaining close social groups from region to region. So too with parrots. Data from other studies revealed that learned behaviours can be lost or changed when populations have declined. Some of these losses have had severe consequences on individual and population health. Knowing this, it becomes even more important that parrot populations, particularly those under threat, remain stable over time.

Long-term studies such as these are key in understanding how or if animal culture and social cohesion can endure when populations are under siege from unrelenting human disturbance. Parrots worldwide remain at serious risk and need every bit of scientific and hands-on help we can give them. 



Reference source:
C. R. Dahlin, G. Smith-Vidaurre, M. K. Genes, T. F. Wright, Widespread cultural change in declining populations of Amazon parrots. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*. 291 (2024), doi:10.1098/rspb.2024.0659



JOURNEY TO THE KIWA CENTRE:

Healing, trust, and second chances

by Melodie Krieger,
WPT Communications Director

Does parrot farming protect wild species?

New study by WPT researchers reviews the evidence

by Rowan Martin PhD, WPT Africa Regional Director and Bird Trade Director

Trapping of parrots for pets has had a huge impact on numbers in the wild, even driving some populations to extinction. Yet the keeping of parrots is hugely popular and is increasing in some parts of the world where human populations and disposable incomes are increasing.

The rise of social media is another factor at play, driving interest in the keeping of exotic wildlife and making parrot-keeping increasingly accessible.

Tackling this trade and its impacts on wild parrots is a huge challenge. Policy makers in a number of countries have been very relaxed about the growth of large industrial-style parrot farms. The idea that producing parrots in captivity can offset demand for parrots in the wild, while also generating profits, is an understandably appealing win-win. However, the expansion of parrot farming also brings risks, providing opportunities for laundering wild parrots, driving demand for wild parrots as breeding stock and normalising and promoting the keeping of parrots, stimulating a latent demand.

Concerned about the growth in parrot farming, and regulators in a number of countries moving to relax laws around the breeding of

threatened parrots, researchers from the World Parrot Trust and World Animal Protection teamed up to take a deep dive into the effectiveness of commercial captive-breeding of parrots as a strategy to reduce pressure on wild populations. The results of this painstaking research, led by WPT's Alisa Davies, were published in the leading journal Conservation Biology.

Our study critically reviewed the evidence to better understand the impacts of parrot farming for some of the world's most threatened and traded species. Looking at published studies, reports and other online sources, we assessed the information available for evaluating five key assumptions that underpin arguments that parrot farming benefits populations in the wild. We found major gaps and identified numerous red flags, particularly regarding complex interactions between trade in different species and the risks of inadvertently facilitating and encouraging illegal and unsustainable trade in wild parrots.

The study has attracted media attention, particularly in South Africa, the world's leading producer of captive-bred parrots for the global market. It has been featured in articles in national newspapers and WPT staff have been interviewed on radio about the study's findings. Official data shows

that since 2020, South Africa has exported over a million captive bred parrots, more than 70% of global trade in parrots, during this period.

The study is underpinning WPT's work in several countries that are considering relaxing laws on the commercial farming of rare and threatened parrot species. WPT is working with policy-makers to make sure they are making informed and evidence-based decisions in the best interests of protecting wild parrots and ensuring high welfare standards.


The full paper is available on The Society for Conservation Biology website: <https://t.ly/s7xSV>

Read more about the study at the following sites:

The Green Guardian
<https://t.ly/IAbB9>

Daily Maverick
<https://t.ly/LWMK5>

The Conversation
<https://t.ly/TPrd2>

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Since its formation 35 years ago, the WPT has promoted the concept of responsible aviculture. Read more about WPT's position on the keeping and breeding of parrots on our website at www.parrots.org. 



“I’m not crying, you’re crying,” I smiled to myself as I casually wiped my leaking eyes for the third or fourth time since boarding the plane. Thankfully no one was witness to my tears, a salty cocktail of joy and sadness.

I was returning to Canada from the UK after the best trip ever, where I had the opportunity to finally meet many of my World Parrot Trust colleagues in real life, both at the Kiwa Centre, and Paradise Park in Cornwall. Now, with nothing but hours of solitary time to sit and process my adventure, I suddenly found myself overcome with emotion for all those special birds who call the Kiwa Centre home.

I first started working with the WPT around 2017 – about the same time that nearly 200 parrots were rescued from a derelict old barn in the UK. (You may recall their story from the Autumn 2018 issue of PsittaScene.) One of my assignments was to create a video about the incredible rescue effort and creation of the Kiwa Centre, which would become a permanent address for many of those neglected birds.

I was given access to hundreds of photos and videos of the barn where the parrots were found, the dedicated team of vets, volunteers and parrot experts who conducted the amazing rescue, and the birds' delivery to their new home in the English countryside.

While the tale ultimately has a happy ending, at the time, each new file I clicked hammered home a horrific decades-long backstory of squalor and neglect. Surrounded by rats and faeces, with no natural sunlight, proper nutrition or enrichment – how could anyone not suffer for more than a moment in those conditions, let alone a lifetime? I scrolled through images of gnarled feet and twisted beaks caused by standing in one place with nothing to chew. Bald parrots. Blind parrots. Parrots battling on the brink. What a heart-wrenching journey for these beautiful, intelligent creatures who were born to fly free.

In the years since, I've followed along with their story from afar. A number of macaws were sent to become ambassadors at various UK zoos. Other rehabilitated birds are due to make their way back to the wild. And for those who remain at the Centre, it's been with great excitement when earlier this year we finally launched our Symbolic Adoptions Program, which gives caring individuals the opportunity to adopt one of these lovely, rescued birds.

As we've been building out the program, I've had a chance to learn about all the adoptees' unique personalities. And now finally with the chance to visit the Centre, I was able to witness their sweet traits in person.

Of course there's our ambassador Queen Kiwa, who kickstarted this whole endeavour. When her former caregiver Joe Davenport went to visit her at her previous home (to whom he had entrusted her care when he had to move out of the country), he was appalled by what he saw and contacted the WPT and Paradise Park to help. And so, the Kiwa Centre was born. Then there's blind but bold Simon, a charismatic character who loves to stick out his tongue for a treat. Shy girl Bonito is slowly growing more confident, thanks to a feathered companion who stays by her side.

I was also grateful to have WPT companions by my side when, with a pocket full of nuts, I entered the Kiwa aviaries for the first time. I don't have any experience with large parrots and found myself nervously ducking as they all flocked in to be fed. But like Bonito, I too grew in comfort and confidence as these beautiful big birds showed me there's nothing to fear. The parrots at Kiwa trained me to trust as they gently received the offerings from my fingertips in their strong, healthy beaks.

As I reflected on the experience, I think that's what triggered the tears. The kind of trauma these birds have suffered can last a lifetime, but at the Kiwa Centre, the recovery is real.

I knew the story. I saw the photos. But meeting those little survivors in person touched my heart in ways I didn't expect. The only trouble now is deciding which adoptees I want to choose for my family's Christmas gifts this year. I mean, after this unforgettable experience, how can I not share their stories with everyone I know? I hope someday more people will have the opportunity to meet these birds, too. 📍

Check out the new Kiwa Centre website: www.thekiwacentre.com



Top, left: (l to r) Megan Haines, WPT Digital Outreach Coordinator, Charlotte Foxhall, Kiwa Centre Director and author Melodie Krieger.

Top, right: (l to r) Clara Corbett, Parrot Keeper and Engagement Specialist; Holly Peters, Keeper Placement from Sealife Birmingham; Joymer Beatriz, Keeper for the day from WPT-Puerto Rico and Holly Jones, Parrot Keeper and Engagement Specialist.

Middle row - left: Scarlet Macaws Simon & Garfunkel **centre:** Queen Kiwa the Blue-and-yellow Macaw **right:** Phillo the Scarlet Macaw.

Bottom: Other resident macaws that call the Kiwa Centre home.

A splash of red and dark blue is vivid against the green canopy. These bright colours belong to a medium-sized and energetic parrot, one with narrow, falcon-like wings and a pointed tail. It is a beautiful bird, one that has long charmed humans.

That allure has led to its near-demise in the wild.



Red-and-blue Lory © Bili Gede, IDEP Media

Conservation on the Frontlines: Protecting the Red-and-blue Lory on the Talaud Islands

Article and Photos by Angela D'Alessio, WPT Indonesia Coordinator

The Red-and-blue Lory (*Eos histrio*) has been threatened since the 1980s. Once abundant across the Talaud Islands in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, this species has been relentlessly traded for the illegal market.

It all started in 1986, when thousands were captured to fulfil an order of 1,300 birds to house at a new Indonesian theme park as the ideal species to display to celebrate the country's cultural and natural heritage. This event marked the beginning of decades of exploitation.

Since then, the population has been decimated and today these parrots can only be found on Karakelang, the largest of the 20 Talaud islands. The Talaud Archipelago is the last group of Indonesian islands before the Philippines, making it a key location in the illegal trade routes where trade continues via small fishing boats, which are often undetectable by radar.

This year, we officially began our work on the ground on Talaud. We had known about the illegal trade in Red-and-blue Lories for

some time, having supported our partner Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Centre with confiscated parrots and assisting them with the release of a flock in 2013. Since the species survives only on Karakelang, we know all confiscated birds originate there. As part of our hands-on conservation approach, we regularly travel the same 16-hour boat route traffickers use, from Manado to Beo on Karakelang, experiencing firsthand the stressful conditions these birds face, often crammed into plastic bottles to be sold on the illegal market.

The journey to Karakelang Island starts on a crowded, medium-sized passenger boat, the only regular connection between Manado and the remote Talaud Islands. The conditions are far from ideal: cramped bunks, cockroach infestations, limited toilets and no washing facilities, so we rely on wet wipes. The 16-hour trip can be rough, often affecting passengers with seasickness. We are constantly alert, scanning for signs of birds hidden in containers. We intentionally travel this route, not only to better understand the harsh conditions the birds endure but also to gather information

about the people involved in the illegal trade. Every trip is an opportunity to observe, talk to passengers and grasp the full extent of the challenges we're up against. Experiencing these conditions firsthand deepens our understanding of what these birds go through and strengthens our commitment to the conservation efforts needed to protect them.



Travelling by passenger boat



Left: Before entering village areas, the team meets with the village head to explain the team's intentions and ask for permission to work in the area.

Right: Angela and Fahmi meeting with Michael, local field coordinator from Pusat Informasi Sampiri, about locating the birds on Karakelang.

On the island, the remoteness and economic challenges faced by the local communities emphasise the need for conservation efforts that also support sustainable livelihoods. Protecting the Red-and-blue Lory can't happen in isolation from the people who live alongside them. By integrating our direct conservation efforts for the Red-and-blue Lory with community support initiatives such as education, sustainable farming and eco-tourism opportunities, we ensure that both the species and the livelihoods of the Talaud's local communities are protected. In this way we can focus on the parrots and address the needs of the people who also depend on the island's natural resources, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive conservation strategy.

In collaboration with our local partners, Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Center and Pusat Informasi Sampiri (PIS), we developed a focused strategy to understand the current state and threats to the Red-and-blue Lory, how these issues relate to local communities, and how to address the problem in a tailored way. We started the first phase with a comprehensive population census.

Beginning in September this year, we have been collecting data on the distribution, size, ecology and threats of the remaining Red-and-blue Lory populations. We based our model on Riley's 1999 research, which was a comprehensive study of all birds species found on Karakelang. The last official IUCN Red List assessment was done in 2016. The census covers 17 key locations across Karakelang, and our field team has already noted that the birds are now often found in small, fragmented groups, potentially signalling a significant population decline.

The second phase of the project involves releasing a flock of confiscated Red-and-blue Lories currently under rehabilitation at Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Centre. To support their reproduction in the wild, we're planning to install artificial nests in key areas where the lories are still present. The nests will provide essential sites for both wild and released birds and will also act as a deterrent to poachers.

Education and community involvement have been central to our approach. Awareness programs and permaculture workshops

have been successful in engaging the younger generation and local farmers, encouraging a shift away from harmful practices. Key community figures like Om Zaka, once a hunter of the parrots we now look to protect, have become champions of conservation, showing how old practices can evolve into new partnerships for the future.

During our conversation with Om Zaka, it became clear why he had shifted from trapping Red-and-blue Lory to becoming a protector of the species. Initially driven by the economic gains from trapping and selling the birds, he began to realise the devastating impact his actions had on the species and his own environment. His transformation came through local education efforts and engagement with conservationists. Over time, he saw the long-term benefits of protecting the species for both the environment and the community, inspiring him to use his influence to advocate for their conservation.

Between 2023 and 2024, almost 100 Red-and-blue Lories have been confiscated at harbours in North Sulawesi, which is why a close



collaboration with the authorities is crucial for helping prevent the movement of trapped birds along these known trade routes. We assist by providing valuable information to help intercept the illegal transport of lories and by supporting the rehabilitation and release of confiscated parrots. It is an approach that strengthens law enforcement's ability to stop the illegal trade, while ensuring that rescued birds receive proper care before being reintroduced into the wild.

We aim to balance our approach across all levels, recognising and respecting the capacity of our partners and local communities that are integral to the project's success. Our goal is to foster long-term collaboration and partnerships that empower the local community to eventually take over conservation efforts for Red-and-blue Lories.

As the project matures, and the community grows alongside it, our role will gradually shift from guiding to supporting, ensuring that the conservation of the Red-and-blue Lory is sustainable and led by those who are most invested in its success. ☐



Top, left: Visiting schools to talk about Red-and-blue Lories and their importance in the island's ecosystem.

Top, right: Nest boxes waiting to be installed in protected areas to help the lories successfully breed.

Middle, right: Red-and-blue Lories currently in rehabilitation at Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Centre.

Bottom, right: Attendees at a permaculture workshop held by PIS.



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Trafficked Parrots Returned to DRC

by Rowan Martin Ph.D. WPT Africa Regional and Bird Trade Director

The Democratic Republic of Congo has welcomed back 112 Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) in a landmark moment in the fight to end trafficking of parrots in the region. Grey Parrots, classified as Endangered, have been captured in the wild in enormous numbers to supply the exotic pet trade.

The parrots were part of a group of 309 wild parrots (of which 252 were Greys) seized in Turkey on route to Iraq, Kuwait and Thailand and had been concealed within containers along with Red-fronted Parrots (*Poicephalus gulielmi*), which can still be legally traded under current international agreements.

After being intercepted by Turkish officials, the parrots were transferred to a wildlife park in Turkey. Soon after the confiscation officials from the Turkish and Congolese CITES Management Authorities,

supported by wildlife conservation organisations including the World Parrot Trust, began planning how the parrots could be brought home.

A major hurdle in the repatriation was overcome when Turkish Airlines, the carrier that had been used to traffic the parrots, agreed to fly the parrots back to Kinshasa free of charge. Turkish Airlines and WPT are members of the United for Wildlife programme under the Royal Foundation of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, which works across the transport sector to tackle wildlife trafficking. The World Parrot Trust liaised with Turkish Airlines following the seizure to discuss the repatriation of the parrots, and is committed to working with United for Wildlife to develop measures that can be taken by airlines to address trafficking of Grey Parrots. Previous investigations by the WPT have revealed how Turkish Airlines is used by parrot traffickers.

On arrival in Kinshasa, the parrots were temporarily housed and taken care of in the Jardin Zoologique in Kinshasa before flying onwards to Kindu in Maniema Province. Dr. Steven Janssen, who recently joined WPT to head up the Mobile Veterinary Unit, travelled to Kinshasa to help care for the parrots, conduct health checks, oversee their onward transport and make preparations for their rehabilitation.

Following their arrival in Kindu the parrots are being cared for at the Dingi Parrot Conservation Centre, part of the Projet de Protection des Perroquets (P3C) implemented by the Lukuru Foundation and founded with WPT support. In October and November Dr. Janssen visited the P3C to deliver training and capacity building in the management and care of parrots being received by the project. New aviaries are being built to accommodate this latest group. Following quarantine, health assessments and the final stages of

their rehabilitation, it is hoped that the majority can be released back into the wild to restore populations in the Lomami National Park.

“This was an incredible team effort by many people and organisations, not least the team working with the Lukuru Foundation, who showed impressive dedication to getting these parrots home throughout. We’re hugely grateful to the ICCN, the Turkish Management Authority, Turkish Airlines, the Jardin Zoologique in Kinshasa and the many other individuals and organisations who all played a role. There were sleepless nights and very long days but seeing these parrots arrive in Kindu and knowing that they will one day soon be flying free again has made it all worth it,” explained Dr. Janssen.

The excitement surrounding the return of the parrots attracted the attention of the media including coverage on national TV and radio.

This repatriation also sends a strong message to people involved in illegal wildlife trade. Speaking to the press, Radar Nshuli of the Institute Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) said, “These parrots may have escaped control at our airports, but they have been stopped in Turkey and now they are back in DRC. We want people to know that when it comes to protected species, no matter where you go, you will be stopped. We will track down all of those who destroy our nature.”

In a press release statement the Director General of the ICCN, Yves Milan Ngangay, confirmed that the accused traffickers had been brought before the courts, which is continuing to investigate the case, and that criminals would face the full rigour of the law. 📺



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Top, left: Wild parrots in crates are loaded on to the plane in Kinshasa for transfer to Kindu.

Top, right: The Minister of Environment from Maniema province (centre) visits the aviary at Kinshasa Zoo.

Middle, right: Dr. Janssen gently handles a bird for examination.

Bottom, right: The Greys settle into a large release aviary.

African Greys fly free in Nigeria!

In a landmark event, a group of 25 IUCN Endangered Grey Parrots have been returned to the wild in Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. The Greys were seized by Nigerian Customs during multiple operations in 2022 and 2023, which involved the rescue of over 130 parrots of various species. A collaboration between multiple government agencies and local and international wildlife NGOs saw the parrots transferred to the Pandrillus Drill Ranch in Calabar where the parrots were rehabilitated, regaining strength and regrowing flight feathers that were cut by traffickers. After this rehabilitation period, they were moved to a purpose-built flight aviary at the Afi Mountain Pandrillus Drill Ranch. The aviary gave the parrots the chance to exercise and rebuild muscles required for sustained flight before being released into the protected forest area.

The release was attended by Dr. Mohammed Kabir who represented the Minister of the Environment. Speaking to the media Dr Kabir explained that the release was “a testament to our commitment to combat wildlife trafficking” and that it was a “crucial step in replenishing the dwindling population of African Grey Parrots, which are sadly one of the most trafficked birds in the world.” Representing the Chief Conservator of



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Self-medication in Tasman Parakeets

In a recent paper published in *Austral Ecology*, Olsen and co-authors describe an interesting behaviour in the critically endangered Tasman Parakeets (*Cyanoramphus cookii*) on Norfolk

the National Park Service, Caroline Olroy highlighted the importance of community collaboration in the protection of Nigeria’s natural heritage. The release took place with the permission of local leaders, including the Paramount Ruler of Boki ‘His Royal Majesty Attah Otu Fredaline Akandu’ and Deputy Chairman Boki Local Government Area ‘Hon. Jonathan Obi.

Speaking at the release, Olroy said, “It is very important to give freedom to these birds, which have been highly trafficked. The National Parks are reforming park protection to ensure that they are not captured in the first place.” WPT’s Nigeria Country Coordinator Ifeanyi Ezenwa added, “This collaboration marks a new chapter in the fight against trafficking of Grey Parrots and the restoration of biodiversity in Nigeria. Our research has shown the devastating impact that illegal capture has had on these birds. We look forward to working together with Nigerian National Park Services, Nigerian Customs, local communities and NGO partners to end this scourge on our country.”

WPT’s Wild Parrot Rescue Coordinator Dr. Steven Janssen travelled to Nigeria to conduct final health checks, advise on the release and conduct trainings on the care and handling of parrots confiscated from wildlife traffickers. The release was only possible due to the coordinated efforts of multiple NGOs, in particular

Island. From 2015 to 2020 parakeets were observed chewing branches of wild pepper trees (*Piper excelsum*) and rubbing the juices, and plant pulp into their feathers for up to 85 seconds. This was accompanied by preening with the birds’ own preen oil and routine plumage grooming. The article includes a link to a video documenting one such event.

This grooming behaviour using extracts is considered a form of self-medication, which has been documented in over 200 passerine bird species but remains comparatively little studied among



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Pandrillus Drill Ranch who provided high-level care for the parrots throughout their rehabilitation, Greenfingers Wildlife Conservation, which supported the parrots in Lagos following their seizure and managed their transportation to Calabar, Nigerian Conservation Foundation, which coordinated the transfer of a group of Grey Parrots seized in Kano, and Focused Conservation whose collaborations with Nigerian Customs led to seizures of parrots and supported their transfer to Calabar. The event was covered on national television, helping to raise awareness around illegal wildlife trade.

Watch the news clip on YouTube:
<http://tiny.cc/m4t3001>

parrots. The rubbing of plant oils or scent sources has been hypothesized as way for animals to deter predators, ectoparasites and other pathogens.

Hopefully future studies could test for the effects of plant extracts on parrot plumage condition. Something that could be experimentally controlled using captive Kakariki (*Cyanoramphus spp.*), close relatives of the Tasman Parakeet.

Read the paper:
<http://tiny.cc/w4t3001>

40 Years of research, conservation and management for the Yellow-shouldered Amazon

A new article in *Frontiers in Conservation Science*, co-authored by experts from the World Parrot Trust (WPT) and international partners, highlights decades of work to protect and restore populations of the Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*). Found in tropical dry forests from Venezuela to the islands of Bonaire, Margarita, La Blanquilla, Aruba, and Curaçao, this near-threatened parrot faces significant threats, including habitat loss, poaching, invasive species, and conflict with farmers.

Since the 1980s, a range of conservation measures such as nest protection, predator control, habitat restoration, and health monitoring have helped boost population numbers on Bonaire and Margarita. The WPT has played a pivotal role in conservation efforts on Bonaire since the early 2000s where data indicate wild populations are recovering and nest poaching has declined.

This past year the species was reintroduced back to Aruba, marking their return after more than 70 years. This landmark project, a collaboration between the Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF), the WPT, Stichting Vogelpark AviFauna and other European zoos, and international orgs is a significant step toward restoring the species across its historical range. Future plans include further translocations and extensive education programs to engage and inspire local communities.



© Tom Murray

What’s next?

In 2021, Provita, with support from the Whitley Fund for Nature and the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), brought together stakeholders from Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Venezuela, and international experts, to collaborate in developing a comprehensive range-wide action plan. The vision is that by 2031, Yellow-shouldered Amazons will have sustainable, thriving populations across their native range.

These achievements underscore the power of international collaboration and decades of dedicated conservation. Together, we are working to halt and reverse the decline of this beautiful species.

Read the full article:
<http://tiny.cc/ggpaper>

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PARROTS IN THE WILD:

Nanday Conure

(Aratinga nenday)

The striking Nanday Conure is found throughout South America and has established feral populations in the USA and Puerto Rico. It is highly social and will congregate in flocks of hundreds of birds to feed and roost.

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