



A WORLD FIRST IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION Trust secures the release of captive Goffin's Cockatoos on Tanimbar, Indonesia.

The World Parrot Trust has recently received news that 319 Goffin's Cockatoos *Cacatua goffini* have been released back into the forest near Saumlaki, Tanimbar, Indonesia.

These birds had been in captivity for up to a year, and would have been sold on the international parrot market but for their being declared an endangered species by CITES during 1992. This made it illegal for them to be traded outside Indonesia, and as a result over 500 birds were simply held in cages on Tanimbar.

When the World Parrot Trust heard of their plight, they raised funds to help care for the endangered cockatoos and seek their release back into the wild. Scientific tests taken from the birds indicated that they were not carrying any disease or parasite that might be a threat to birds in the wild. Funds were sent to Tanimbar to pay for feeding the birds, but despite this some of them died.

Finally, on March 7th the Goffin's Cockatoos were released into the forest under the supervision of the local Indonesian authorities. The World Parrot Trust has received photographs of this event (see page 2), together with an official certificate confirming the release.

The World Parrot Trust is very pleased with this outcome, which

it believes to be a world first in practical wildlife conservation. In any case we would like to hear of any other occasions when a large number of birds in the hands of traders have been released back

into the wild, with official approval. The Trust would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for its wisdom and compassion in authorising this release. Thanks are also due to

'The Cook Report' TV programme which first discovered the birds' predicament, and to the Benelux branch of The World Parrot Trust which raised much of the funds required.



“psittacine
(sit à sîn) Belonging
or allied to the
parrots; parrot-like”



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The World Parrot Trust does not necessarily endorse any views or statements made by contributors to *PsittaScene*.

It will of course consider articles or letters from any contributor on their merits.

The Trust hopes that the residents of the islands where Goffin's Cockatoo lives will in future regard this endangered bird as not worth catching, due to its CITES status preventing trade. The Trust is urgently preparing educational material to help achieve this objective.

When we first reported the plight of these captive cockatoos in our August 1992 issue of *PsittaScene*, we had only modest hopes of achieving the release of the birds. In the event, there are a number of unsatisfactory aspects. First, the birds were not marked in any way, so there is no prospect of monitoring their survival and dispersal from the release site. Second, no observations were made immediately after the release, when the ability of the birds to fend for themselves after a year in captivity could usefully have been studied. Third we hear from Saumlaki that once again this year Goffin's Cockatoos are being captured, so the message has apparently not yet got through to the local people that these birds are not worth catching, as there is no longer an international outlet for them.

Better news has just reached The World Parrot Trust from Birdlife International (the new name for ICBP - International Council for Bird Preservation). As reported previously in *PsittaScene*, we are part-funding a new Status Assessment of Goffin's Cockatoo and the Blue-streaked Lory on Tanimbar. The project staff have just completed three months of field work, and a letter just in from Paul Jepson, their Indonesia Programme Coordinator, reports as follows:-

"I am pleased to report that ICBP project officers Yusuf Cahyadin and Nick Brickle have returned to the Bogor programme office after successfully completing three months of field work in Tanimbar. They completed all the components of the survey plan which included two cross island transects and an evaluation of the impact of

C. goffini on village maize harvests, and have returned with extensive data sets which will be analyzed during the course of the next month. Both species were observed frequently on the forest transects and large numbers of *goffini* were observed in the agricultural areas. Yusuf and Nick were the first biologists to transect across the island and visit the west coast. They found a near pristine environment, people still hunting with bows and arrows and villages preparing for war! I believe this will be seen as a land mark survey and that there will be widespread interest in the results. I would like to thank WPT for supporting this

project and I will look forward to sending you the final report in due course."

We will keep our members informed on future developments on Tanimbar. What is certain is that the Trust will think very carefully before it allows itself to get involved in a similar situation in the future. From the parrot welfare point of view it was rewarding to have 319 cockatoos removed from miserable conditions and returned to the wild, but it has to be conceded that insufficient science was applied to the release.



Captive Goffin's Cockatoos, held in cages on a farm near Saumlaki, Tanimbar, Indonesia. Over 500 were kept there for one year.



Goffin's Cockatoos being released into the forest. The release was made under the supervision of the local Indonesian authorities.



The freed Goffin's Cockatoos begin to fly to freedom.



The Goffin's Cockatoos pick up food from the forest floor.

THE WORLD PARROT TRUST BENELUX PARROT SYMPOSIUM

By Michael Reynolds

A highly successful Parrot Symposium was organised and run by our energetic and dedicated Benelux Chapter. No less than 260 delegates attended, from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, to hear a distinguished programme of speakers.

All areas of the parrot world were well represented: Charles Munn spoke about his conservation work with the large macaws; Harry Sissen gave insights into his successful breeding of the macaws and other parrots; G. v. Eijken and R. Lorentsen gave their impressions of Australian parrots, while W. Hetherington spoke of the control of Australian international wildlife trade; T. de Meulenaer gave an update on European CITES regulations; L.E.M. de Boer spoke on European captive breeding programmes; and Gerry Dorrestein gave a paper on recent developments in parrot healthcare.

It is an indication of the stature of our Benelux Chapter that we were offered the use of the outstanding facilities at Antwerp Zoo. The famous marble hall is a most elegant venue and all the technical and other arrangements were first class. Our sincere thanks are due to the Director Dr. F.J. Damen, and to the Curator of Birds Dr. R. Van Bockstaele who gave a guided tour of the zoo.

A high point in the day's events was the presentation of a cheque for Bfr 20000 (£4000) towards the World Parrot Trust's 'Palm for a

Parrot' project. As readers will know, this aims to help the survival of Lear's Macaw *Ara leari* by protecting existing Licuri palms - their essential food - and establishing new plantations. Our Benelux committee and members have worked tirelessly to raise this impressive amount, and our thanks are due to Ruud Vonk, chairman of the symposium committee, and everyone who helped in the organisation and fund-raising. The attention to detail was positively awesome, and included specially made World Parrot Trust flags flying outside the zoo, a press conference that led to the 'Palm for a Parrot' story appearing in many newspapers and specialist magazines, Lear's Macaw costumes for the two cheque presenters, displays and salescounters in the lobby of the zoo, and superb bronze 'parrot oscar' sculptures for all the speakers. If this was the visible part on the day, imagine the work and enthusiasm that went on beforehand. I was very proud to be associated with this event and the team who created it: if the parrots had friends like these in every country, the world of the parrots would be a much better place.

To complete the story so far, read the item in which we provide a progress report on our work for Lear's Macaw.

Further fund raising achievements in Benelux

Dear Dr Munn

The two fourth grades of the Antwerp International School have been studying the Lears Ara and have been raising money for them. We have done jobs at home and have earned 200BF each for a small palm which we gave to our mothers on Mothers Day. The two fourth grades have raised over 11,000 BF and are encouraging the younger grades to follow our example. The money will be sent to you for buying Licuri palms and for buying fencing to protect the Licuri palms from cattle, sheep and goats. We hope that the money will help the parrots. Lots of luck with the parrots.

Sincerely

The Antwerp International School

Reply from the World Parrot Trust

To Mr. Robert Schaecher, Headmaster and also to Mr. Brian Schiller, Mr. Rene de Mol, Mrs. Kathleen Morrell, Ms. Ruth Bradley, Miss Katherine Zischka, and all the pupils at Antwerp International School.

I was astonished to hear this morning from Mrs Morrell of the very large sum you have raised to help our project to save the Lear's Macaw.

All the children must have done a lot of work to earn the money to buy the palms to give to their mothers on Mothers Day. What a very nice and original idea - we must pass it on to other schools for next year. I am immediately sending on your letter to Dr. Charlie Munn. As it happens, he is going to Brazil later this week to begin a month's study of Lear's Macaw, and how to plant new palms for their future food supply. He is taking with him the world's top expert on palms to give advice, and we are also sending a leading British wildlife artist, David Johnston, so he can paint a really authentic picture of Lear's macaw in its natural habitat. David's picture will be available, hopefully before Christmas this year, as a limited edition print. I will make sure your school has a copy of this picture as soon as it is ready. Once again, thanks from all of us at The World Parrot Trust. We are trying to help the survival of all the World's parrots, and it is most inspiring for us to have the support of caring and thoughtful young people.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reynolds, *Hon. Director*



Mike Reynolds meets Han Assink, Chairman of WPT Benelux, Dr. Van Bockstaele, and Dr. F.J. Damen, Director of Antwerp Zoo.



Dr. Charles Munn receives a very large cheque from two Lear's Macaws, (Karin & Koen Sestig)



Better than an 'Oscar'. This beautiful bronze Palm Cockatoo was specially created for WPT Benelux by Frans Vander Ven.

CONSERVING THE RED-VENTED COCKATOO

By Rosemary Low

The Philippine or Red-vented Cockatoo is now among the 20 or so most critically endangered parrots throughout the world. Once widespread throughout the islands of the Philippines, not until two or three years ago was it realised that this diminutive cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) had suffered a massive population decline as a result of deforestation and trapping. (Between the 1930s and the 1980s, 80% of the forests there were destroyed, and the destruction continues). Now it is

known to survive only on the island of Palawan.

This cockatoo is poorly represented in aviculture; it has never been common and mortality among recently imported birds was high. There are very few breeding pairs in existence. The first step towards preserving this species in aviculture was taken this year with the formation of an EEP (European breeding programme). Everyone who keeps this species, even only a single bird, is urged to contact the coordinator of the EEP,

Marc Boussekey, Espace Zoologique, St Martin-La-Plaine, 42800 Rive-de-Gier, France. It is vitally important that the location is recorded of as many birds as possible.

This breeding effort has been linked with a conservation programme for this species in the wild. To this end, an agreement between Espace Zoologique and the government of the Philippines was signed recently. The zoo funded and produced a poster in English and in two Philippine languages for distribution throughout the

islands. It emphasises that the cockatoo must be protected. Prints of the poster artwork, beautifully depicting a small flock in the wild, are now available in a limited edition of 200. The price is 100FF each (about £12.50 plus postage and packing) payable to Association Zoologique at the above address. All profits from its sale will go directly to the conservation of the Red-vented Cockatoo.

Comment by Michael Reynolds

This initiative by Espace Zoologique and Marc Boussekey, their Scientific Advisor, is to be applauded. It creates a framework within which the Philippine Government, can work with interested bodies and individuals in its own country, and with conservation minded groups worldwide, to seek the survival of this important species of cockatoo. The agreement documents were prepared with the help of William Oliver, Chairman of the IUCN Specialist Group. The ICMA (International Conservation Management Agreement) states that it is intended '...to establish a formal protocol for the cooperative management of captive individuals of this taxon' and that '...it is intended to meet the best interests of that captive population...and to promote and assist efforts to enhance understanding of its biology, its management needs both in the wild and in captivity, and the ultimate survival prospects of both wild and captive populations.' The agreement also specifies that 'No specimens of this taxon, whether wild-caught or captive bred, may be sold or otherwise used in commercial transaction.' For most zoological institutions this requirement will not be a problem, since non-commercial movement of CITES Appendix 1 animals within cooperative breeding programmes has become the norm. For private aviculturists who will certainly have purchased their Red-vented Cockatoos, it is more of a challenge. Perhaps some will be ready to acknowledge that critically endangered species should be dealt with in cooperation with other holders, and should not have commercial value. Hopefully, successful production and sale of Appendix 2 species will support an investment of funds, time and expertise in Appendix 1 parrot species which urgently need help if they are to survive. A final observation: this initiative demonstrates that no single organisation holds a monopoly in bird conservation, and that there is plenty of scope for institutions, societies and individuals to identify and pursue worthwhile projects.



A PALM FOR A PARROT

A progress report on our work with Lear's Macaw



As readers of recent issues of PsittaScene will know, the World Parrot Trust is working closely with Dr. Charles A. Munn III in an effort to solve the problems afflicting Lear's Macaw *Ara leari*. The principal threat is that these macaws, reduced to no more than 60 in number, have to fly vast distances every day to find the fruiting Licuri palm trees which provide the bulk of their diet. Charlie Munn made an exploratory visit last autumn to the Cocorobo area in North East Brazil where the macaws live. This was reported in our February 1993 issue. In April, however, we received a disturbing report from Judith Hart MD, whose paper on the conservation of Lear's Macaw we printed in the previous issue of PsittaScene. She wrote:

"Dear Michael,
The following news clipping came from our Houston newspaper. The drought is occurring throughout NE Brazil, including the range of Lear's Macaw. The rains did not come this year, and already in February '93 while I was there the macaws were leaving the area in search of food. The Licuri palms have little fruit, less than I have ever seen. We had reports of four macaws killed in large plantations where the macaws have not been seen in 50 years. (It is becoming obvious that these macaws have been **hunted** to extinction). There is one course of action: send someone to the area to visit the large plantations. Perhaps the owners or managers can be persuaded to forbid hunting of the macaws. Please discuss this with Charles Munn; perhaps he can help or has suggestions on what should be done. I fear this situation is an emergency - we could lose more than half the macaws to hunting. There will be no breeding this year.

Yours, Judith."

An extract from the Houston Herald reads as follows:

'Throughout the nine states of the Brazilian northeast, an area more than twice the size of Texas, 8.5 million people are in the midst of one of the greatest droughts in memory. In the state of Piaui 85 to 100 percent of all crops were destroyed by sun, heat and lack of water in 1992. This year is expected

to be worse, with no rain arriving in the expected months of December, January, February and March. With little or nothing left from last year, the region's subsistence farmers will have to wait at least nine months before they can even think of planting again.' The report goes on to describe the desperation of the people with official reports that they are reduced to eating animals that have died of disease or dehydration. In these grim circumstances it is easy to

understand that a large parrot could provide a meal for a starving family. The only positive news we can give you is that Charlie Munn will be in the Lear's area in early June, together with Brazilian biologists Carlos Yamashita and Ricardo Machado. With them will be a leading expert on palms from the University of Florida, Dr. Alan Merrow, together with a Brazilian palm expert from Bahia. Together they will advise on the growing and transplanting of Licuri palms. We will anticipate having a report

from Charlie and his team in time for our August 1993 issue. In the meantime it seems clear that the plight of Lear's Macaw is even worse than anyone had thought. All the more reason to be grateful to our Benelux Branch and the Antwerp International School for their superb fund-raising achievements, and to The People's Trust for Endangered Species who have indicated their willingness to support our work over the long term.



Charlie Munn meets 'Bluebeard', a Hyacinth Macaw from Birdworld at Farnham. This amiable bird stood in at a press conference for his cousins the Lear's Macaws.

THE WORLD OF PARROTS

How does it look today?
It depends on your point of view. Here are reports from some imaginary correspondents.

1. The Aviculturist

Everything seems to be moving along pretty well, with a mass of information becoming available on keeping and breeding parrots. Just about everybody seems to be writing books on the subject, and most aviculturists I know are becoming more successful. The problem is going to be to find purchasers for all the young birds we're now producing. Nevertheless, keeping and breeding parrots is still a great hobby, and one which can more than pay for itself.

2. The Man in the Street

Parrots? They're a laugh, eh. That John Cleese and his parrot sketch: 'This is an ex-parrot, it has gorn to meet its maker' and all that. Dead funny, parrots are. My auntie Flo had a talking Norwegian Blue, until it got sick as a parrot.

3. The Veterinarian

In my profession there are still a great number of vets who don't know much about birds. This is more so in Europe than in the United States, but in virtually all parts of the developed world birdkeeping is expanding rapidly. This must be because birds are on the whole cheaper and easier to keep than other animal companions such as dogs or cats. So it's up to vets everywhere to catch on to this new responsibility, and new opportunity.

4. Pet Owner

Our Polly has been in the family for twenty years, and I've had him for five years. He comes out on top of his cage most evenings and just flaps his wings. I don't think he can actually fly any more. He talks quite a bit and fools the dog by whistling for him. I don't think he has a very good time, but we can't let him go as we wouldn't know where he ended up. I see the World Parrot Trust calculates there are around fifty million pet parrots in the whole world. Incredible, isn't it?

5. Zoo Director

Parrots have always been good exhibits. The public like them because they're noisy and colourful, and usually quite active. Zoos have not tended to be successful in breeding them, probably because the average zoo keeper works 9 to 5, while a dedicated breeder has to commit himself for twenty four hours a day. Many zoos and bird gardens are doing better in breeding now, but raids by bird

thieves are a real problem, and the presence of the public doesn't help.

6. Major Parrot Collector

I've invested millions in this enterprise, and I expect it to pay off. Don't ask how I acquired all the rare species I have, and don't expect me to waste my time cooperating in other people's half-baked conservation projects. If a species goes extinct in the wild that simply increases the value of the birds I have. It's a 'no lose' situation. Have a cigar.

7. Bird Trapper

Everyone in our village is just struggling to stay alive and feed their children. We have nothing, and the government does nothing to help us. There's been a drought for several years and our crops are very small. It makes us crazy when the parrots come in and eat our corn. We catch them when we can, and a man in the next village gives us a little money for them. There aren't as many parrots as there used to be.

8. Bird Dealer

It's a scandal, the way the airlines have been blackmailed into stopping shipments of wild-caught birds. We weren't doing any harm, just making a living and helping people in the exporting countries make a living too. The Ministry figures show that only around 14% of the birds we handle die in transit or in quarantine. The future looks bleak - you have to charter your own aircraft and that means a huge shipment with likely heavy losses. I expect we'll have to settle for transporting aviary bred birds

from one place to another. Basically, the game's up.

9. Field Biologist

The loss of parrot habitats continues at an alarming pace. Forestry, encroachment by human populations, mining and oil exploration are taking their toll. All we can really do is record the destruction, although there is progress in some countries where parks and reserves are being created. The few attempts at reintroducing parrots into the wild have had little success. I have little faith in captive breeding, which is unlikely to produce birds capable of reintroduction. In my view, parrot aviculture is nothing to do with conservation, it's all about making money.

10. Parrot

What did we ever do to deserve this? For millions of years we flew free, evolved into hundreds of ingenious and beautiful designs to fit in with nature's plan, took our chances in a thousand wild places and succeeded despite every adversity. Then, in just a few recent moments of recorded time, we became the most sought after, most valuable birds in the world. We are traded like rare jewels, we are smuggled and even stolen. But we are not inanimate objects, we are living creatures with special needs. Above all we are birds and we need to fly. Those of us which are still free, please leave us free. For those many of us in captivity, I must ask for us to be treated with compassion and respect.



Parrot in captivity: A rare Blue-eyed Cockatoo demonstrating his preference for a rope perch.



Parrots in the wild: Hyacinth Macaws at a typical roost.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP

The Lory Group is probably the first specialist group of its kind created to promote a certain group of species (the Loriinae) through regular meetings and encouraging a greater exchange of information and experiences. Anyone interested in these species of parrots can attend the meetings. Private individuals, both beginner and more experienced keepers, bird garden and zoo staff, scientists, all meet and discuss a variety of aspects of lory husbandry and breeding. The Lory Group has no formal organisation or officers, and the organisation of the meetings or attendance at shows, is all done voluntarily. The official roles of the Parrot Society, International Loriinae Society, World Parrot Trust and other organisations adequately cater for the needs of all Psittaculturists. Specialist groups have a role to play in coordinating the activities of keepers of these species if they operate in close association with these societies. The creation of new societies should be avoided since they fragment aviculture, confuse issues and demand additional subscriptions.

The Lory Group promotes links between members of the Parrot Society and the International Loriinae Society, catering for the specialised needs. It also creates a forum for the improvement of the captive breeding of lorries by enabling like-minded individuals to meet and exchange information, ask for advice and exchange or sell birds. The International Lory Journal features regular reports on the Lory Group and publishes articles on all aspects of the lorries, lorikeets, hanging parrots and fig parrots.

A major function of the Lory Group is the coordination of the Loriinae studbooks. Trevor Buckell is the studbook coordinator and is responsible for the studbook scheme in the United Kingdom. There are now over thirty-five species included in the project. The system, based on that of the ILS in America, is very simple. Keepers of a species of lory or lorikeet obtain a studbook form for that species from the studbook administrator (see below). The keeper simply lists each bird on the form. Details of sex, identification, age, origins and parentage are included on the form. Participants return the form to the studbook keeper for that species who registers the information on the studbook. Every year the information is updated and used to compile a register that is issued to all those who have participated with the studbook. Information about

owners, location or other confidential information is NOT included on the register, which guarantees confidentiality for all those who participate. However, the studbook keeper can enable participants to exchange birds or make up breeding pairs if this is requested by participants.

The obvious benefits include the ability to identify and pair odd birds or 'pairs' of the same sex, the tracing of families and therefore avoidance of pairing closely related birds which could jeopardise the survival of some species in captivity, and monitoring the progress and breeding success of captive populations, enabling these populations to be safeguarded.

Studbooks include birds from both private collections and those housed in zoos and bird gardens. The United Kingdom studbook scheme is now acting as a model for the European studbooks that are now being initiated. Many studbooks are being created by other groups for birds including Amazons and Pionus parrots. These activities must be applauded and it is hoped that this will be a trend in the future since there are obvious benefits for most species held in captivity that can no longer be supplemented with wild caught birds.

The Lory Group also has a regular newsletter that includes a sales and wants list. This again enables the exchange and pairing of birds to improve the numbers of breeding successes. Information packs and the forms for the studbooks are available from Simon Joshua. Please write to: Simon Joshua, C/O PSL, Po Box 221, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 2AS or telephone (0734) 316546 [facsimile (0734) 753676].



Stella's Lory

CANADA

The 4th Canadian Parrot Symposium will be held on October 30-31 1993. The venue is the Toronto Airport Hilton Hotel, 5875 Airport Road, Toronto, telephone 416 677 9900 (or toll-free Canada 1-800-268 9275 or toll-free USA 1-800-445 8667). Speakers will include Sally Blanchard, John Doole, Kathleen Harring, Rick Jordan, Jan van Oosten, Peter Mostert and Tony Silva. Full registration will cost \$135 including lunch on both days and banquet on Saturday. Further information can be obtained from Jacquie Blackburn, 108 Meadowvale Road, West Hill, Ontario, Canada M1C 1S1, tel/fax 416 282 5997. The well-organised Canadian Parrot Symposiums deserve the support of all aviculturists in the area. Surplus revenue from this event will be used to assist students at the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph.

GERMANY/ECUADOR

The German Fonds Fur bedrohte Papageien (Fund for Threatened Parrots) is to organise a project with the Corporacion Ornitologica de Ecuador (CECIA) for the Yellow-eared Conure (*Ognorhynchus icterotis*). The project leaders will be Dr Herbert Schlenker and Juan Carlos Matheus. Work will begin in October 1993. This species is one of the least known and most critically endangered of all parrots. Found in Colombia and northern Ecuador, its population is estimated at fewer than 50 individuals in the wild. None are known in captivity. Further information can be obtained from Armin Brockner, Santisstrasse 13, 7996 Meckenbeuren, Germany.

INDIA

A member brought to our attention a recent (and excellent) book 'Travels on my Elephant' by Mark Shand, which includes a surprising and disturbing report of parrots in India.

On page 177 there is a report of an elephant market, which also featured a bird market. It reads: 'A discordant screeching announced the bird market. Hyacinthine blue macaws from South America sat quietly on their perches, their feathers ruffled, swivelling their heads suddenly, blinking their baleful eyes'.

It is difficult to imagine by what route these birds arrived in a remote part of India, but the story

may help to explain what happened to the tens of thousands of Hyacinth Macaws removed from Brazil over the past twenty years. We know there are many thousands in North America and several hundred in Europe, but we must assume that large numbers have been exported to Asia.

PANAMA

Letter from Sue Armitage.

Readers will no doubt remember seeing my advertisement for feathers from Macaw parrots which were to be sent to Panama to help save Macaws in the wild. This was in response to an appeal from Francisco Delgado a citizen of that country.

Several thousands of feathers were sent to me in response to this.

I am now in a position to let readers know what the position is in Panama due to a recent visit there by myself and my husband to see Snr Delgado.

I had been under the impression that these feathers were going to a remote indian tribe in the jungle to be used by witch doctors in some ritual dance.

This I can now tell you is far from the case. The dance is performed in the Herrera province on the Pacific coast of Panama by individuals of Spanish descent generally at religious carnivals in urban areas. The origins of the dance can be traced back to Spain and are possibly even pre-Christian.

The dancers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, the centre of this activity is in Chitre, fourth largest town of Panama and provincial capital of Herrera. They number around seventy and unfortunately seem to be on the increase.

Costume consists of a "boilersuit" made up on red and black 20mm wide strips of cloth in a chevron pattern, an extremely elaborate papier mache mask and of course a headdress consisting of ten to thirty Macaw tail feathers, red being the most highly prized. I estimate it would need at least five hundred hours work to complete one of these outfits. Some are self made, others are made by professionals. Children also participate usually using wing feathers. The tradition is deep rooted and well respected locally and nationally.

I was told there are no Macaws left in Panama except in the Darien province in the East. Those seeking new or replacement feathers have been going on illegal expeditions to Darien in order to get the indians there to obtain feathers by of course killing Macaws.

These are usually kept in a



Panamanian dancers using macaw feathers.

cardboard tube and wiped with paraffin to deter moths. Francisco Delgado has come up with the solution of providing a "bank" of feathers available for hire, against a deposit, to bona fide dancers. Other tactics are an education programme for schoolchildren, use of goose and pheasant feathers and use of artificial substitutes. This hopefully will depress the scarcity value of feathers so deterring professional collectors.

A demonstration of this dancing was laid on for us specially at a private house. Seven dancers were there and a large number of onlookers to enjoy the spectacle and very convivial it was too. We were also able to visit a factory where amongst other things the masks were made by an extremely labour intensive process.

Francisco himself is a professor at San Diego University (Panama) and seems to spend all of his spare time and cash in a crusade to educate the population on the environmental situation in Panama. This he does by a daily radio programme, "expositions" and lectures.

Please keep the feathers coming in. Any species of Macaw feathers will be most acceptable, also any material you think may be useful in Francisco's "expositions" eg:

posters as he has difficulty in obtaining such in Panama. Please send your feathers to me. I will arrange the permits etc, and pass them on to Francisco. Sue Armitage, Ty'r Ywen, Mamhilad, Pontypool, Gwent, South Wales. NP4 8TT U.K Tel/Fax (0495) 785200

THAILAND

Another member writes to us about a large group of parrots being used as part of the decor of the Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok. The photograph shows a small section of them, including Scarlet and Blue and Gold Macaws. Palm Cockatoos and Hyacinth Macaws are also there, making up a total of over 100 birds. In March we wrote to the managing director of this hotel to ask how the birds came to be there, and if they have any plans for putting the endangered species into breeding facilities. No reply so far, which is not a surprise. If any reader wishes to add his or her voice to our enquiries, write to: Managing Director, Ambassador Hotel, SO1 11-13, Sukhumit Road, Bangkok, Thailand.



Parrots at Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok.

One person who is not particularly interested in using any of the conventional methods of sexing the baby birds which he rears is John Heath, who has been mentioned before in 'Psittascene', although he does usually use one of them for birds that are to be sold to someone else. For his own purchases or retentions he is quite happy to use his own method. His father was a dowser and this is the clue to the method he and, it has to be said, a number of other people use, that of divining. Those not familiar with this process will laugh or even scoff, but others are uncertain and John knows of people who quite happily select their birds for future breeding purposes by this method in the same way that he is happy to do.

Being the sort who likes to experiment John has used the process of dangling a needle or often his gold signet ring on the end of a six inch piece of cotton above the eggs as well as over the baby parrots etc. He has found that an infertile egg will show as a female, presumably because it has all the female input, but no male sperm. However, as soon as an egg is laid, if it is a fertile one which contains a cock it will show, but one which shows as a hen will have to wait a few days to see if there is any development of the embryo as it may be infertile.

It is well known that water diviners (or dowzers) can use a large scale map of an area to establish where there is likely to be a good source of underground water supply. With this in mind John has checked photographs of birds to see if they will register under his pendulum. In this way he is able to tell you the sex of any of the birds in the photographs in our editor Rosemary Low's book 'Parrots in Aviculture - A photo Reference Guide'. Unfortunately,

he is unable to do the same with Forshaw's 'Parrots of the World' as the illustrations therein are all William Cooper's paintings from which he gets no reaction.

What is the action which occurs and what causes it? John and others find that the pendulum swings towards him and away from him over a male and in a circle above a female. As to what causes it, he is unable to explain. Is it infallible? John does not claim that it is. In fact, he got the sex of his daughter's baby wrong, but he says that was due to carelessness in picking up the mother instead of the baby and he did get the other two right. Would you like to test his method and help the World Parrot Trust at the same time? You can do so by sending a photograph of a parrot or parrots of known sex together with a donation of £5 to the Trust and John promises to write on the back the sex of the bird(s) and to sign and date the photograph. If you have a favourite bird the sex of which you would like to know, but you do not wish to stress the bird, then again for a donation of £5 with a photograph, John is prepared to give you his opinion. Please remember we are a charity in need of all possible funds and a S.A.E will be very much appreciated.

USA

(Newsletter received from Joanne Abramson of Raintree Macaws.)

The Story of Holly

Around Thanksgiving 1990, a client of mine Linda contacted me to advise me that her Military Macaw "Holly" had been stolen. She was in love with this bird and returned home after going out to dinner to find all her electronic equipment in her home gone plus her pet macaw. There were other

birds in the house and it was apparent from the blanket left in front of the cage that the bird was a last minute choice by the thieves. Linda was horrified. I advised her to notify the police that the bird was closed banded and what the band number said. She found out a few days after the robbery that although all the electronic equipment was covered by her insurance, the bird was not. Though she knew she could never replace such a tame bird as Holly, it was still frustrating to find out that pets are not covered by homeowners insurance unless specifically written into the policy. On April 11, 1993 (Easter Sunday) I received a phone call from a new bird owner named Beth. She had purchased a bird three days before that had a band with RAINTREE on it. She wanted to know more information about the bird as she planned to use this bird in a breeding program. I put the band number of the bird in to the computer and, you guessed it, it was Linda's stolen bird. Both Beth and I were in shock. I remembered Linda's trauma at Holly's theft and Beth realising that this call had become a nightmare. The police were contacted and the bird is in the process of being returned to its owner, two and a half years after her disappearance. All of us wish that Holly could tell us where she has been. There are several lessons to learn from all of this;

- Close band your birds with steel bands. (or use micro-chips etc). They are difficult to remove and, in my experience, have not proven harmful to macaws.
- If your bird is stolen notify the police immediately and let them know the bird is closed banded and what the band numbers are.
- Contact the bird's breeder immediately and let them know the bird was stolen. Do as much publicity as possible to alert other potential bird buyers that the bird is stolen property.
- Consider insuring your birds.
- Never give up hope.

We always want to know the fate of our birds. We certainly love to get pictures and updates from you. In addition let us know the tragic side as well. If the bird has died, tell us how so that others might learn. If it is stolen let us know so that we might help you locate the bird. In the before mentioned case, the buyer was familiar with my aviary name and contacted me for further information. If it had not still been banded we would never had been approached.

There were three victims in this true story. Linda for the original loss, Beth for the loss of money (purchasing a stolen bird does not allow for recourse except in court) and, of course, Holly. We all know how much animals quickly become

part of our lives. Even in the few short weeks that Beth kept Holly the bond had already formed by the time her real owner was found. On the same note, another bird Scarlet Macaw, RAINTREE 090, was stolen a few months ago from another client. Both the bird's owner and mate miss her. If anyone sees a Scarlet Macaw for sale please check the band number and if found, notify the local police and me. Bird theft can happen to anyone. This could have been you. Micro chips have been considered an alternative to closed banding. They can be inserted at any age. The disadvantage is that unless a scanner is available and the buyer knowledgeable about micro chips, you could not tell that the bird had a chip. A band is a visual identification.

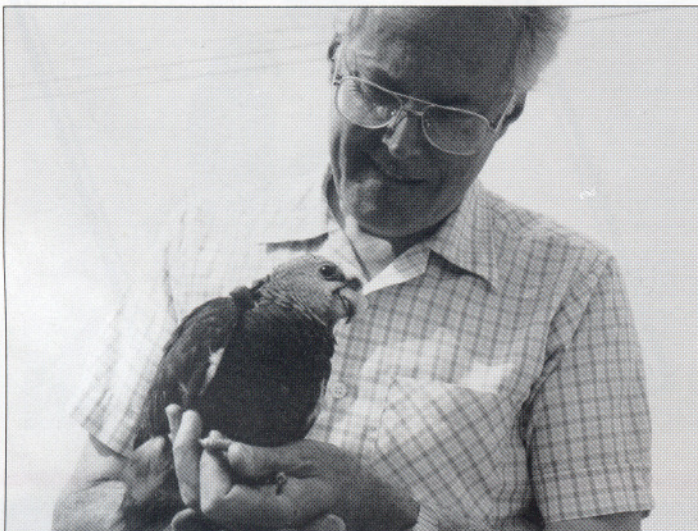
* * *

You might be wondering why you have not heard from me this year until now. Many of you know that I am in the process of writing a book on macaws. The book is titled "The Large Macaws; Their Care, Breeding and Conservation." My co-writer is Brian Speer D.V.M (who is handling the veterinary aspects). I am dealing with the avicultural portion. An incredible number of contributors have shared their wealth of knowledge to bring the latest information on many aspects of macaws from acquisition through breeding. I have been spending my "spare" time working on research, writing and editing of the upcoming book, not on my usual newsletters.

Joanne Abramson



Green-winged macaw.



John Heath with the St. Vincent chick he reared for Paradise Park.

WORLD PARROT TRUST VISITORS TO PARADISE PARK

In recent weeks we have had a number of important visitors at Paradise Park in Cornwall, UK (home of the Trust), to discuss projects and developments. They all seem to be photographed in our Big Parrot Flight, enjoying close encounters with a wide range of friendly psittacines.

First, we have Fitzroy Springer from St. Vincent. He came to spend a week with us after completing a course at Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust. He is seen trying to give a sunflower seed to his fellow St. Vincentian, a young female parrot bred at the park in 1991. From this shot, though, it

looks as if the Blue-throated Macaws will get the seed. Fitzroy is returning to St. Vincent to take charge of the very successful breeding aviaries in the Botanic Gardens.

Next we were visited by Line Wadum and Michael Iversen, who have now taken on the responsibility of setting up a Danish branch of the Trust. They have made an excellent start by recruiting more than 20 new members and raising substantial



Fitzroy Springer.



Line Wadum and Michael Iversen.



Carl Jones and friends.

HYACINTH PAINTING (The noblest of them all) by Nicholas

Interest has been shown by some members in the original painting from which our limited edition prints were produced. We have had bids up to £3000.00 but feel that we can do better than this. So let us have your best bid for this unique painting and help us to swell the funds for conservation of the beautiful Hyacinth Macaw. The painting is a watercolour, measuring 29" x 24" (73cm x 60cm) and was commissioned from "Nicholas" a successful wildlife artist who works mainly in the North of England and holds regular exhibitions in Birmingham each year. The painting is mounted behind glass and attractively framed in dark green

wood. The limited edition print is still available, unmounted only, for £55 or US \$85.00 including postage and packing.



funds. They can be contacted at: Aldeershvilevej 80c, 2880 Bagsvaerd, Denmark. Tel: 44.49.37.08.

Finally, we were visited by Carl Jones, renowned for saving the Mauritius Kestrel and Pink Pigeon, and now working on the Echo Parakeet. Carl is seen here looking justifiably embarrassed as he is

accosted by Paradise Park's 'Superparrot'. In discussion with Carl and John Hartley of JWPT we have arrived at ways in which the World Parrot Trust can further enhance its support for the Echo Parakeet project. More news about this in the next issue of PsittaScene.

New World Parrot Trust Publication - 'PARROT TALK'

The trust has recently produced a new publication called 'Parrot Talk'. It is intended for members of the general public who may have a passing interest in the parrots, rather than the more intense involvement we assume readers of 'PsittaScene' may have. 'Parrot Talk' will be published quarterly, and will mostly be distributed within journals appealing to pet owners and animal lovers, and those with a concern for environmental issues.

The purpose is to gradually extend support for the trust to a wider audience.

If any reader has any ideas about wider use of 'Parrot Talk' please let us know, but bear in mind that the cost of printing and distribution must be justified.

Articles or news of a comparatively light-hearted kind would also be appreciated. Please address them to Judith Venning at the Trust address.

Parrot Talk



Parrots Poached From Paradise Park

Thieves Smash Conservation Plans

Bird burglars have entered Paradise Park, home of the World Parrot Trust, twice in the last six months. Twenty-one parrots worth £25,000 stolen in October have never been recovered. Five especially rare parrots worth £60,000 stolen in January were found.

The thieves were clearly professionals. In October they selected bird species which could be easily sold on the open market. Amazons, Cockatoos and Macaws were torn from their roosting sites and bundled into sacks.

Sad Loss of Susie

One of the stolen parrots was a special loss to Mike Reynolds, owner of Paradise Park and founder of the World Parrot Trust. Susie, an all white Umbrella Cockatoo, was the bird that sparked Mike's interest in parrots over twenty years ago and led him to establish his centre for rare and endangered birds in Hayle, Cornwall. It took years to find a suitable mate for Susie, a rather bossy bird, but she reared 40 chicks.

David Woolcock, Programme Director of the World Parrot Trust, worked closely with the police. Most of the birds were implanted with an electronic device which would positively identify each bird. Armed with



Before the theft, Mike Reynolds with Susie

a coded monitoring tool which would respond to the implants, David assisted police in staking out a pet store suspected of dubious dealings and a warehouse used for bird auctions. Sadly, none of the birds were recovered.

Birds valued at one-quarter million pounds were stolen in the UK during 1992. Rare birds are 'stolen to order' for unscrupulous buyers more interested in their private collections than the longterm survival of the species.

Thieves Strike Again

The thieves struck a second time in mid-January, stealing five birds including a pair of Palm Cockatoos and a pair of

Buffons macaws. One Hyacinth Macaw escaped, but its mate was stolen. The World Parrot Trust conducts field research on the dwindling wild population of Hyacinth Macaws in Brazil, as well as breeding macaws in captivity.

Police were alerted immediately. During routine checks of vehicles in Cambridgeshire, all five birds were discovered in the boot of an Audi. Two men have been released on police bail and a third has been remanded in custody pending trial. Police are still investigating the theft of the first group of birds.



Stolen to order?

Parrot Studbooks - Time for Action!

Since our August 1990 issue we have published a list of Parrot Studbooks, and asked holders of Appendix 1 species to contact the studbook coordinators and register their birds. These lists are a vital element in effective, long term conservation. Most zoos and bird parks cooperate wholeheartedly, most private aviculturists do not. In the Trust's opinion, parrot breeders who do not enter their birds on the appropriate studbooks should not expect to be taken seriously when they claim to be contributing to

parrot conservation. They should also bear in mind that (a) the studbook coordinator may be able to help them pair up birds, and (b) holders' addresses are kept entirely confidential within the studbook system. We now have three categories of studbook: Regional, EEP (European Endangered Species Programme), and International. In the following updated list we have marked these R,E, and I. Please let us have any corrections, or additions of officially recognised studbooks. For any queries on EEP Studbooks, please contact Dr. Koen Brouwer, who acts as conservation coordinator for all members of the Dutch Zoo Federation.

Parrot Studbook Coordinators

BLUE-EYED COCKATOO (*Cacatua ophthalmica*) *R*

PALM COCKATOO (*Probosciger aterrimus*) *R,E*

Dr. Roger Wilkinson, Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Cheshire. CH2 1LH United Kingdom

CITRON-CRESTED COCKATOO (*Cacatua sulphurea citrinocristata*) *R,E*

David Woolcock, Paradise Park Hayle, Cornwall. TR27 4HY United Kingdom

MOLUCCAN COCKATOO (*Cacatua moluccensis*) *R,E*

David Field, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Murrayfield, Edinburgh. EH12 6TS Scotland

RED-VENTED COCKATOO (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) *E*

Marc Boussekey, Espace Zoologique, St. Martin-la-Plaine 42800 Rive de Gier, France.

HYACINTHINE MACAW (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) *E*

Dr. Hubert Lucker, Zoologischer Garten Dresden, Tiergartenstrasse 1 D-8020 Dresden, Germany.

HYACINTHINE MACAW (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) *R*

Colin Bath, Paignton Zoological & Botanical Gardens, Totnes Road, Paignton, Devon.

GOLDEN CONURE (*Aratinga guarouba*) *R*

C/O The Parrot Society 108b Fenlake Road, Bedford. MK42 0EU

GOLDEN CONURE (*Aratinga guarouba*) *I*

Alan Lieberman, San Diego Zoo, PO Box 551, San Diego, California, 9221190551 USA.

LILACINE AMAZON (*Amazona autumnalis lilacina*) *R,E*

Mark Pilgrim, Chester Zoo, Upton by Chester, Cheshire. CH2 1LH United Kingdom

GOFFIN'S COCKATOO (*Cacatua goffini*) *R*

SCARLET MACAW (*Ara macao*) *R*

BUFFON'S MACAW (*Ara ambigua*) *R*

RED-FRONTED MACAW (*Ara rubrogenys*) *R*

David Woolcock, Paradise Park Hayle, Cornwall. TR27 4HY United Kingdom

THICK-BILLED PARROT (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) *R*

David Jeggo, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust Les Augres Manor, Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands.

BLUE-STREAKED LORY (*Eos reticulata*) *R*

C/O The Parrot Society 108b Fenlake Road Bedford. MK42 0EU

For all Amazon Studbooks please contact:
The Amazona Society
C/O Mrs J. B. Perry
Ways Green House, Queensway, Winsford, Cheshire. CW7 1BH

No. 8 IN OUR SERIES

“If I could keep only one pair of parrots...”

By Rosemary Low

This is a very easy question for me to answer. I asked myself this two and a half years ago - and that was the inspiration for this series. Since then the replies from a number of well known people in the world of parrots have been most interesting and varied. It took me less than a second to decide that my answer would be the Pesquet's Parrot (*Psittichas fulgidus*). The reasons are twofold. There are so few pairs in aviculture that every chick-producing pair makes a significant contribution to the future of this species in captivity. Also, quite simply, it is my favourite species.

It is beautiful, highly intelligent (in my estimation) and a challenge to breed. Many people would question the first adjective, as they see the small head of this species as vulturine and unattractive. But its glorious scarlet and black (always my favourite colour scheme)

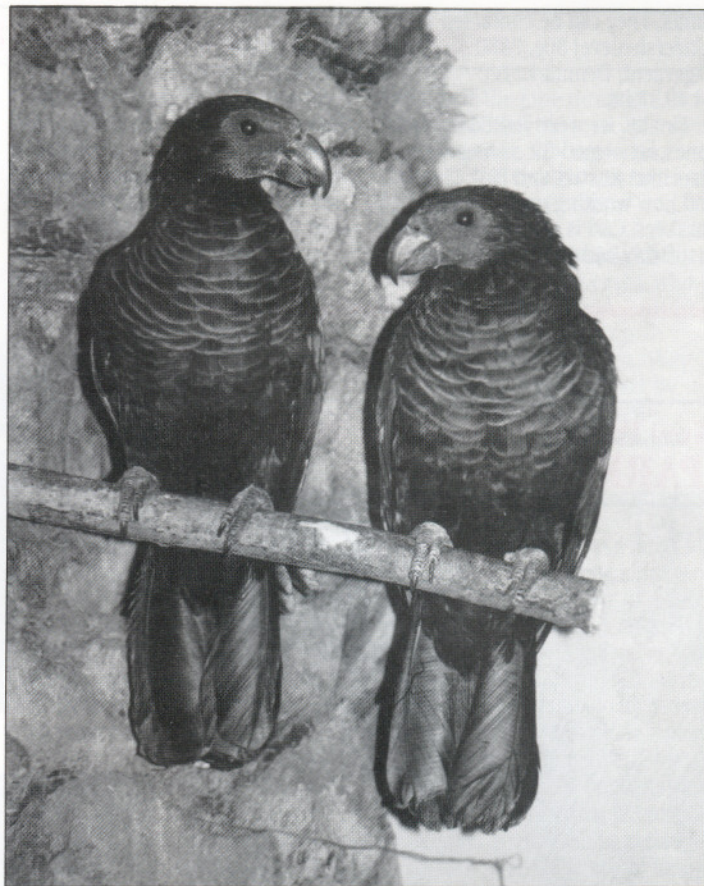


Young female Pesquet's reared from the egg by Rosemary Low.

plumage more than compensates. Just see this bird rain-bathing, when it opens its wings to reveal much of the normally hidden beauty, and you would have to agree!

Who is to say which species are intelligent? And what exactly is intelligence? All I can say is that this species is very inquisitive, adaptable and approachable. Some Pesquet's quickly show friendliness or animosity towards the persons caring for them. The female which I hand-reared at Palmitos Park in 1991 is remarkable in discerning the more sympathetic of the visitors to the breeding centre, that is, those who have a rapport with birds. She allows such people to handle her and is always gentle. They are invariably smitten!

I know of only seven collections which have ever reared this species. I have been extremely fortunate to have worked with, and reared young, from two of those pairs, first at Loro Parque and now at Palmitos Park. I have learned what I believe are the two most important factors in breeding success. One is the provision of a log which the pair can excavate themselves; the task of excavation is, in my opinion, the most important breeding stimulus. In the Canary Islands, palm trunks about 2m high provide ideal nest sites. Secondly, because of the aggressive nature of some males, constant surveillance is essential. A video camera monitors the behaviour of our pair at all times. There is a monitor in front of the table where I spend many hours working. On two occasions this allowed me to intervene when the male launched attacks on the female which would otherwise



Breeding pair of Pesquet's Parrots at Palmitos Park

almost certainly have proved fatal. For much of the year the pair is kept in an aviary which is divided down the middle; it is impossible to keep them together if the female is not ready to breed.

This is one reason why breeding this species is such a challenge. One has to be constantly alert to the moods of male and female. Also, careful attention has to be paid to the diet of this species, which is totally fruit and vegetable-eating.

Hand-rearing Pesquet's chicks is a wonderful experience; the young are so affectionate and lovable. Because of certain problems with our male, we have yet to have a parent-reared youngster. Nevertheless, parent-rearing remains my goal. On a recent visit to Jurong Bird Park in Singapore, I

was delighted to learn that a pair of Pesquet's was rearing two young, then aged 13 and 15 days. I sincerely hope that they are reared. The worldwide captive population will never be large - but it could be important.

This species occurs only in New Guinea, where it is declining due to hunting, and degradation or loss of habitat. It is very difficult to study in the wild. Most of our knowledge of this species comes from captive birds. Looking long-term, it may not be easy to maintain this captive population and the time may come when its survival in the mountain forests of New Guinea is also gravely imperilled. A large, conspicuous and noisy bird, it is highly prized by natives for its plumage. Protecting the wild population is not easy. We must ensure that it survives at least in aviculture....

BOOK REVIEW

LEXICON OF PARROTS PART 4 by Thomas Arndt

In the May 1992 issue of *PsittaScene* we reviewed *Lexicon of Parrots* which is being issued in a number of parts. For those of you who missed that review, a reminder that this ambitious publication aims to

illustrate in colour (photographs - with a few very rare exceptions) every species and sub-species of parrot. This is a unique undertaking and one which has great appeal for many. Personally, I find it extremely

useful to be able to compare photographs of the rarer and little known sub-species. This usefulness is well demonstrated in part 4 which has just been issued. It includes 16 sub-species of the Green-naped Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) and for the lover of little known parrots, four sub-species of the Painted Parrot (*Psittacella picta*). There are also 12 photographs of *Geoffroyus geoffroyus* - the Red-cheeked Parrot, depicting various sub-species and sexed. (Last year Thomas Arndt travelled to Indonesia especially to photograph these birds in the wild). How much more

instructive it is to see photographs of birds in their natural habitat, rather than in a cage. The *Lexicon* is building into perhaps the most fascinating pictorial library of parrots ever assembled. For each species the accompanying text gives information under the headings of Description, Distribution, Habits, Natural diet, Breeding behaviour and Aviculture. The *Lexicon* is available in the UK through *The Parrot Society* (108b Fenlake Road, Bedford, MK42 0EU). It is also available in German from Verlag Arndt und Muller (An der Warnau 33, 3036 Bomlitz, Germany).

THE WORLD PARROT TRUST GALLERY OF ENDANGERED PARROTS

No.1 Red-tailed Amazon (*Amazona brasiliensis*) By Rosemary Low

In the second draft of **Parrots, An Action Plan for their Conservation: 1993-1998**, produced this year by ICBP, 17 species are listed as being critically endangered. The plight of some of these species, such as Spix's Macaw, Imperial and Puerto Rican Amazons and Kakapo are very well known. Many, perhaps most, people will not be familiar with the names of some of the others on the list. The names of others are known but the fact that they are very seriously endangered is not. In the coming issues we will present a series of short items to highlight these birds.

If asked to name the three most endangered species of Amazons (according to the assessment of ICBP specialists) most knowledgeable enthusiasts would immediately say "Puerto Rican, Imperial and..." - then they would pause and probably make a few incorrect suggestions. Most would be surprised to learn that it is the Red-tailed Amazon (*Amazona brasiliensis*) which has the doubtful honour of supplying the answer. With a population currently assessed at in the region of 2,000 this is far more than any other parrot on the critical list. So why is it there? Since this species was first studied, about ten years ago, it has suffered a massive population decline. This century its range has undergone an enormous retraction. From south-eastern Brazil, it now occurs only in the eastern part of the Serra do Mar and its coastal lowlands - in south eastern Sao Paulo, Parana and northern Santa Catarina. In the past it occurred as far south as Rio Grande do Sul, where all suitable habitat has been destroyed. Very little was known about this Amazon until Dr Pedro Scherer Neto, head of division of the Curitiba Natural History Museum, made it the subject of his MSc thesis in 1989. His observations, which commenced in 1982, continue. He informed me that it is very difficult to study. Last November he estimated the population in the state of Parana as 1,000. Another ornithologist working in the state of Sao Paulo believes that there are more than 1,000 there. In Santa Catarina it occurs only on the border of Parana. The breeding season is from September until February. The favoured nesting tree is guanadi (*Callophyllum brasiliensis*), where they nest in holes, usually at a height of 8-10m. At least 52 different plants have been identified as food sources. Some of the Red-tailed Amazons migrate daily to the small islands off the coast. Pedro Scherer Neto informed me that illegal trade is a problem, especially in the state of Sao Paulo. It is known that some of the young have been imported into Europe. (Brazil does not permit the export of any fauna). Locally, young are

taken for pets. This is a very beautiful Amazon, with its subtle pink, mauve and blue head colouration. When it flares its tail, the effect is stunning; the band of carmine red distinguishes it from any other. This is indeed a well-named species. In order to continue his observations, Dr. Neto is planning to build a small shack on an island where it occurs. He is intending to partly finance this himself but has only the equivalent of \$1,000 available. If any member could help contribute to the cost, no matter how small the sum, would they kindly contact the World Parrot Trust, especially if they are

able to remit a sum in US\$. Unfortunately, there are so many endangered species of fauna in south-eastern Brazil, that conservation organisations cannot fund projects to save them all. This century forest destruction has been enormous; now the cities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro stand where once there were wonderful forests, with a high proportion of endemic species. Many of those are lost to man forever. Those who care, must ensure that *Amazona brasiliensis* does not join their numbers.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Members write

The National Council For Aviculture
22 Foxearth Road, Selsdon,
Surrey. CR2 8ED

Dear Mike

On behalf of the National Council for Aviculture, thank you for the generous donation of £250 that the World Parrot Trust has made towards the work of the NCA Bird Theft Register. You will know that the register has been instrumental in recovering several stolen birds, and that it is now generally accepted by most police forces in this country. We have recently supplied the Dutch Branch of INTERPOL with details of all thefts of endangered species, and certain criminal intelligence. Animal stealing has now become big business in Europe, and we hope that with this type of cooperation we may be able to identify patterns that will be of assistance in the fight against these odious crimes. Your kind donation will hopefully encourage some of the UK bird societies to give some much needed financial support to the NCA register.

Yours sincerely David Neville
Administrator NCA

NOTE: Bird thefts continue in the UK. Recent victims include Rode Tropical Bird Garden, Wigan Zoo, and Blean Bird Gardens, Canterbury where 48 parrots were stolen in a very 'professional' manner. Anyone offered birds of doubtful origin should contact David Neville on 081 657 6461. **Ed.**

Dale and Mary Ragain
P.O Box 3510 MS/202, 495 Jave Drive
Sunnyvale, California. 94088-3510
USA

Dear Rosemary Low and The World Parrot Trust

I am writing this letter following a promise I made to "Stacy" a five month old baby macaw. Approximately 2 1/2 months ago, a co-worker purchased a macaw. They went to a breeder and selected a three month old, hand fed, blue and gold baby macaw. They were thrilled with their new baby and took it home to it's nice new, big cage. They called to invite us over to see the new baby, and to make sure that everything looked okay in the new cage the way they had set it up. Our friends said she had not wanted to eat her formula that morning and that she still had food in her crop from the night before. They said she wasn't very active either. We held and petted

her and my husband and I felt that something was wrong. While petting Stacy, I felt a loose pouch between her legs and I had never seen anything like it on any of our macaws. Her crop was full and she did not seem very happy at all. We were very worried about her and insisted they take her to a good avian vet right away, preferably ours. They did take her to an avian vet (not ours) the following day and he kept her overnight. He took x-rays, blood tests and culture, and sent her home the next day with medicine for a yeast infection. Stacy still would not take her formula and was not happy. The doctor said to just give her the medicine and feed her anyway. The following day, when they checked on her in the morning, they found that Stacy was bleeding from her chest. They called the breeder that had sold Stacy to them, who said to bring the baby to them right away. The breeder took one look at Stacy and said it was massive crop burn, due to grossly over heated formula, and didn't know how she was still alive. She told them it looked really bad, but that Stacy had a good look in her eyes. She was alert and bright, but obviously in pain. When the doctor told my co-worker about the need for surgery, she and her husband didn't think they could handle the stress, heartache and financial cost any longer and asked if we would take Stacy for free or they would have to put her down. I called my husband and he said yes, take her. We made an appointment with our own vet. Then we took off to get Stacy. Her appearance was very bad. She was bare on her neck and chest, with a hole where her crop was originally, and an awful, clear, slimy fluid running from the hole in her neck. She smelled very bad, but those wonderful eyes made you want to hug and protect her. We left and went directly to our vet. When we got to our vet, the doctor said that things didn't look good for Stacy but she would like to give her another chance. She said due to the high cost of treatment with only a very small chance of success, she would donate all of her services and medications at no cost if we could handle the intensive care. She sent us home with new formula and new medications. (We would have to inject Stacy twice daily). We were also to continue to feed and water Stacy every hour. I took Stacy to work with me so I could look after her. The people at work were very

supportive and wished Stacy well. I took her in the sun and she loved it. I felt so sorry for her because she was not able to eat by mouth. When we took Stacy back to the doctor, she said that Stacy had a really bad infection along the incision and saw that the hole was much larger now. She told us it was time for more surgery. She cut away all of the dead tissue, removed old food, flushed out the mass of infection and treated it with antibiotics and then restitched the wound. We took Stacy home in an incubator Monday night. It was amazing how well she looked, still bright eyed and eager to be fed. Her stitches looked good and there was no infection. On Thursday, after her last feeding, we gave her the injections, and as we did this her feeding tube came out. We called the doctor at home and she told us to bring her in the next morning. The doctor went to insert the feeding tube again. Twenty minutes later she came out to say "No go". There was extensive tissue damage. The infection had taken too much good tissue. It was time... we had to let her go. My husband, the doctor and myself all hugged. And cried. We left for home broken hearted, empty and angry. We never saw Stacy again.

We give our heartfelt thanks to a very special, highly competent, generous, humanitarian, avian doctor and her team, for all they did to give Stacy every possible chance to live. The damage was too great, but no one could have done more. **'THIS SHOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED'**. This has been a long letter I realise, but I just want people to know the terrible things that Stacy went through and how much this little bird wanted to live. She never gave up. We had to give up for her. My husband and I keep hearing from vets and breeders alike, that this crop burn is a 'common problem'. We feel people have not been warned enough. It should be a standard warning, everywhere that birds are dealt with. PLEASE help stop this unnecessary injury to babies like Stacy, in any way that you can. We thank you so much for reading this letter.

In memory of Stacy,
sincerely Mary Ragain.

This dreadful story illustrates the fact that young hand-reared parrots should not be sold until they are fully weaned. Ed.



Stacy - 5 month old Blue/Gold Macaw with massive crop burn.

PARROTS IN THE WILD



SCARLET MACAW *Ara macao*

This picture was captured in Guatemala by eminent US wildlife photographer Pete Carmichael. The Scarlet Macaw is arguably the most colourful and flamboyant of the large macaws, but to see it in its natural setting is to see it at its best.

We intend to run a series of 'Parrots in the Wild', and if any reader can offer us a high quality shot that might be suitable, please get in touch.