

Psitta Scene



News about parrot conservation,
aviculture and welfare from
The World Parrot Trust

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THE PARROT PORTFOLIO A report on the first five years of the World Parrot Trust

By Michael Reynolds

Any new enterprise sets out in a spirit of faith and hope. When that new enterprise is a charity, with limited funds and without paid staff, this is particularly so. To pile on the agony, when the fledgling charity intends to work in the highly contentious fields of parrot conservation, aviculture and welfare, it could safely be predicted that the founders would regret their initiative.

It has not turned out that way. The founders - Andrew Greenwood, David Woolcock, Rosemary Low, Audrey and Michael Reynolds - have seen their creation blossom into an international organisation which has achieved a great deal. Half a million pounds (about \$800000) has been raised and spent to help the survival of parrot species in the wild: to be exact, twenty-five CITES Appendix One species in eighteen countries. The support and development of responsible psittacine aviculture has also been an objective, together with the difficult task of trying to improve relations between aviculture and the conservation community.

This newsletter 'PsittaScene' - the 21st quarterly issue - is read by over 6000 individuals and organisations interested in parrot conservation and aviculture. The editorship of Rosemary Low has been an important factor in the successful expansion of the World Parrot Trust's membership and influence. Rosemary's total and selfless commitment to the wellbeing of parrots is beyond question, and is demonstrated

once again by her generosity in donating half her royalties from her new book 'Endangered Parrots' to this Trust (see page 11).

It is a remarkable fact that the Trust has only one part time paid member of staff. This is Judith Venning, our UK administrator, who also coordinates the voluntary work of our branches, ancillary trusts and support groups in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, South Africa, Switzerland and the USA. Our sincere thanks are due to all those who have so generously given their time and expertise to the Trust. From time to time the Trust pays for professional work on its projects, but I think it would be extraordinarily difficult to find any other wildlife conservation body which is as cost-effective as The World Parrot Trust.

Paradise Park, in Cornwall, UK, where the Trust was founded and is based, provides substantial free facilities including office space, computers and other equipment, telephone service, mail costs, transport, and much donated staff time. Paradise Park also gave £11000 (\$18000) to start the Trust off, and Martin Ballam and David Woolcock have raised £72000 (\$117000) in donations from visitors at their eagle flying demonstrations. The World Parrot Trust greatly appreciates the volunteer spirit that motivates its membership and especially its many active supporters, and intends to continue its programme in that manner so far as it is practical. The complexity and volume of its work is growing rapidly, however, and the time will come when it will need a paid Director.

In this issue of 'PsittaScene' is included a copy of 'The Parrot Portfolio', which gives a brief

review of our projects during our first five years. Also enclosed is a leaflet designed to promote sales of our shirts and prints, and to encourage the enrolment of new members. I would like to appeal personally to every member and every reader to use these print items to spread the word about what we have achieved, together, in five rewarding years. If you can make good use of more copies, just let us know. If you have any comments or advice on how we might approach the next phase of our development, please write in.

I am only too aware that when I write about the plight of the parrots I sound like an unwelcome 'conscience' repeating well-known facts, and in any case I know I am speaking to the converted in the pages of this newsletter. Let us all aim to win new members and new financial support for the Trust by inviting our friends in aviculture

and the world of conservation to join our exciting adventure, our crusade to preserve these wonderful birds which have so much to contribute to our recognition and enjoyment of all the wonders of the natural world.



Moluccan Cockatoo - one of the endangered species in our 'Parrot Portfolio'

Photo: Bonnie Jay.

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



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It will of course consider
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contributor on their merits.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

By Rosemary Low

ROSEMARY LOW took advantage of the presence of speakers on conservation topics at the convention to ask two of them to answer various questions relating to their work.

DON MERTON is world famous for the major role he played in saving what was then the world's most critically endangered bird, the Chatham Island Black Robin *Petroica traversi*, which was reduced to a single breeding pair. Now there are more than 150. For many years he has headed the team working to save one of the most critically endangered of all parrots, the Kakapo *Strigops habroptilus*. He was awarded the Queen's Service medal for services to conservation, and in October 1994 the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)(UK) granted him its medal for his "international contribution to species survival".

ROLAND SEITRE is a photojournalist who travels the world, particularly the tropics, in search of conservation stories which will appeal to the public. He is extremely knowledgeable about a wide range of life forms, after graduating as a vet, managing a breeding station and working in the field as a zoologist.

ROSEMARY LOW: How would you describe the work you do?

Don Merton: Attempting to address one of the most fundamental problems of our time, "the global species crisis": the crucial challenge of averting extinction and facilitating recovery in unique life forms. Where man is responsible, either directly or

indirectly for causing their demise, surely he has a moral obligation to at least attempt a remedy! It is untenable that a life-form should, as a consequence of our actions - or our indifference - slide to extinction during our life time (a mere second in geological time). We must do all we can to avert this for, once gone, such treasures can never be restored.

Roland Seitre: My work is public relations between wildlife zoologists and the public: I am a freelance photojournalist.

RL: You have had an interest in natural history since childhood? Was this stimulated by a particular happening?

DM: It was a natural interest - or should I say obsession? - stimulated by two factors. My grandmother kept a Canary when I was only four or five years old. She allowed me to care for it and later to foster Goldfinch nestlings to it! Secondly, I was brought up in a rural setting and kept and bred birds of various kinds, ie, I was strongly influenced by observation of wild birds and by aviculture!

RS: I would track my interest to early imprinting in childhood. A family friend, with whom I spent a lot of time as a baby, had a flat full of wild animals.

DM: Mainly birds - but in all things natural. This soon became focused on birds native to my country (New Zealand), and soon after that to those facing endangerment and extinction. This all happened by the age of 12 years, at which point I was determined to devote my life

to conservation management of endangered species. Fortunately, I was able to do this through employment with the New Zealand Wildlife Service and, more recently, the New Zealand Department of Conservation. My career began in the late 1950's and is still going strong! At that time endangered species conservation was hardly known and support for it was almost zero. Working effectively in this field was therefore extremely difficult and, through necessity, almost subversive.

RS: I am not interested in birds exclusively. My first interest was in mammals but, birds being easier to see, I went birding. My father was a pilot and I benefited from cheap airfares, of which I took great advantage. That is why I went to look for wildlife in Africa or South America before Europe and even France. I basically know nothing about where to see rare birds in my own country.

RL: What is your particular interest today?

DM: Management of critically endangered birds. This is often through devising and applying close-order management techniques to free-living individuals and/or through habitat restoration. Such programmes often require a captive component. In fact most methods I have used have been adaptations of classic avicultural techniques applied to free-living individuals or populations.

RS: My main interest is in birds and mammals, occasionally reptiles or



Don & Margaret Merton on Maud Island, New Zealand.

Photo: Rosemary Low

invertebrates. Earlier I would go where my goal led me but now I must be able to finance my assignments with pictures or features so I have to target "marketable" (I hate the word!) species. I really enjoy having an "unattractive" species published: that is where the challenge resides. Recently it was a feature on comparative evolution of macaques (monkeys). That scares any publisher - but it was published in Figaro because it was genuinely interesting. I have chosen to write about aspects of conservation which I feel are interesting. Although freelancing is a difficult way of making a living, I enjoy my freedom and being able to choose my stories. The downfall is that a lot are never published.

RL: You have travelled widely throughout tropical countries. What do you see as the main threat to the survival of parrots in the wild?

DM: Habitat destruction, degradation and fragmentation. On isolated oceanic islands, predation by introduced carnivores is often the major threat. And in specific situations, the pet trade has had a devastating effect on wild populations and species.

RS: If we are talking planet-wise, it is nothing new to say deforestation. If we focus a little, other aspects appear: on islands, habitat changes caused by man, introduced vegetation, mammals and birds acting as competitors or, worse, as predators. That is true for small islands (Polynesia, of course) and for large ones such as Australia. Trade, legal as in Indonesia, and illegal (everywhere) has taken its toll of parrots - more than in other groups of birds. Man is responsible. Everywhere, people like to keep birds. But those who have money (Westerners) have contributed more than their share to this problem.

RL: Do you believe that captive breeding has a role to play in saving endangered parrots?

DM: Yes, it can be a very valuable and important tool, provided that the goals are clearly identified beforehand and that all involved work together in achieving them. Too often this has not been so - and aviculture has been little more than a commercially driven consumer, rather than a producer of diminishing species!

RS: Certainly, but usually where aviculturists are concerned, more is said than done. Of course it would be good if people understood the needs, goals and techniques before using this as a neat justification for their hobby. You have to breed pure sub-species of species, you have to move birds around to other breeders to mix bloodlines and you must not produce tame birds.

It is hard work and you have to be open-minded. Basically this is in contradiction with being a collector where you always want to have more. But the skills and the people are there and the old mentality is changing, so things should get organised.

RL: If you had a very large sum of money to spend on one particular conservation project which one would it be and how would you spend it?

DM: I would spend it on education of young people in an appreciation of natural/biological values. Without an appreciation of and commitment to biological conservation by the next generation, virtually all of our good work could be in vain! Protected areas, national parks, protective legislation, etc, that are today critical to the survival of the majority of the more sensitive plant and animal species, as well as to the natural systems they comprise, could be undone with little more than the stroke of a pen if future generations do not appreciate and value them. If my answer should relate to a specific conservation project, then I would use the money to eradicate Pacific rats from Codfish and Little Barrier Islands, in order to permit Kakapo to breed effectively on those islands which are their final refuge.

RS: After our Polynesian birds survey, we thought it would be good to establish an island sanctuary in the Marquesas for the Ultramarine Lory and all other endemics. Mohotani is ship rat-free but cats and sheep need urgent eradication. To do that you need an unspeakable amount of money or the goodwill of armed forces or local politicians. At the time, nothing could be done with the politicians...

RL: You are an excellent photographer. Is there any one species or photograph which has provided a particular challenge or produced photographs of which you are particularly proud?

DM: Certainly; the Kakapo is particularly difficult to photograph in the wild since it is very rare, nocturnal, inhabits very dense cover and is extremely difficult to see. In 1981, I had the good luck to obtain a photograph of a female feeding its nestling. This was the first (and last) nest ever observed closely (from a hide) and the first (and only) time a female and chick had been seen together and photographed. The female fed the chick only once or twice in 24 hours - always at night! The photo was taken at 1 am. I had set up the camera nine hours earlier and could only guess what was going on at the nest by the sounds since in the excitement of the female's arrival at the nest my night-vision scope had fogged up entirely!

RS: I am a zoologist who takes decent pictures: I do not have the technical skills of an excellent photographer. Yours is a difficult question. When I first "bagged" the Ultramarine Lory in 1980 the pictures were appalling but I was very happy! Lear's Macaw was also very challenging but the late Professor Helmut Sick had given us directions and guidances so it proved reasonably easy. It is more the situation and the contact you have with the bird that is of importance. Getting a shot of Hyacinthine Macaws that you persuaded to land in a nearby tree by mimicking their call as they passed by does not show in the picture! But each time I see that slide it means a lot to me. I can get great pictures in captivity but they have no special meaning to me.

RL: What role has your wife played in supporting your work?

DM: Margaret's role has been pivotal. Without her (at times super-human level of) support, tolerance and personal sacrifice at my absences from home (on field expeditions) for six to eight months each year for the past 30 years or more, I would not have been able to have been involved to the level I have been, or to have achieved success. In order to be effective in species recovery I believe that it is essential to develop an intimate understanding - an empathy with the animal with which one is working. This can only be gained by the devotion of considerable time to observation - by literally living with one's subject for long periods. Margaret's support and encouragement made this possible for me.

RS: I am glad you finally asked this question! My wife, Julia, does not support my work: we share everything. For more than ten years we have shared all our experiences. We slowed down on travelling together after our daughter and son were born in 1991 and 1993 but will go again as a family, starting in Australia later this year. Children also enjoy wildlife. In 1993 Ariane was 16 months old when we travelled to Amazonia and Venezuela. We spent a week at a reintroduction centre in Manaus among monkeys and macaws. When we got back to town, Ariane saw a poster of a macaw. She was not speaking at the time but she joyfully pointed to the bird and said "ARRRAAA!"

RL: I am indebted to Don and to Roland for this fascinating insight into their work. I hope members enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed preparing it.



Roland & Julia Seitre

Photo: Rosemary Low

INTERNATIONAL LORO PARQUE PARROT CONVENTION

The Convention - as I saw it

By Rosemary Low

The convergence on Tenerife of more than 700 people from 36 countries, from the often separated worlds of aviculture and conservation, will benefit the parrots for many years to come. Breeders were exposed, for the first time, in many instances, to a barrage of facts and figures about the plight of parrots in the wild. And workers in the sphere of conservation, in the field and decision-makers, were able to learn how improved husbandry and advances in avian medicine, have resulted in more efficient avicultural techniques.

Participants filled the large lecture hall from 8am to 2pm daily. Yes, despite the early start (and late nights), the thirst for knowledge was sustained and nearly all those attending took full advantage of that offered by the speakers. Never, at a convention anywhere, have I met people from so many different countries; there was a truly international feel to the meeting. Everyone made new friends and contacts, renewed old friendships and left thoroughly

satisfied with three packed days.

We all have different opinions and areas of interest but as one who is involved with aviculture and conservation, one aspect impressed me more than any other. I left the meeting with more hope in my heart regarding the future of threatened parrots than at any other time since the emergence of the massive scale of the problems they face. What impressed me so much was this: those actively working in the field are involving the local people to a degree previously unknown. Only by educating them - and especially their children - to the importance of protecting parrots (especially from nest robbers) will there be any future at all for many species.

We heard Dr Ann Brice from the USA describe how she has enlisted the help of people in Guatemala to protect the Yellow-naped Amazon and other parrots. Formerly they were nest "predators"; now instead of being paid by dealers for the young illegally taken from nests, they protect these same nests when they contain eggs and chicks. For each youngster that fledges they are given the "going rate" plus 10%. In the hope that one day they will be able to breed from birds already in captivity (including confiscated birds), the most able

helpers are given a pair of conures and shown how to care for them. These birds are the source of much pride.

Others helping in conservation projects also stressed the importance of involving the local people, including those working in eco-tourism. They are fiercely guarding the local birdlife which, only three or four years before were items for the table or for trade! Charles Munn, involved with macaw research and eco-tourism in Peru, showed part of the widely acclaimed film "Spirits of the Forest", featuring the macaws at the Tambopata clay lick in Peru. The flight of dozens of macaws, as they approached and left the clay lick (accompanied by music which made this a moving experience) has already been shown on television in the USA. Such coverage can only gain more supporters for the WPT and others working for the future of parrots in the wild.

That was the serious side of the convention. For many, the social events were also memorable. They were superbly organised with excellent meals (proving the wisdom of limiting numbers to 700). Each succeeding International Parrot Convention gets better and better! How many of those who

attended the dinner for participants outside the Casino Taoro, will ever forget the supreme sacrifice made by the convention's chairman Jan van Oosten? He gave away his hair in the name of conservation! An American lady paid \$1000 for the privilege of cutting off his pony-tail, in order to donate the sum to the Loro Parque Foundation!

During the three days of the meeting, it was good to see that the WPT stand was a hive of activity, with T-shirts selling very fast indeed. Our thanks to Mr Kiessling for allowing the Trust to participate in this way, and to him and his wonderful team of organisers who made this convention such an outstanding event.

Comments on the Convention

By Gail Worth

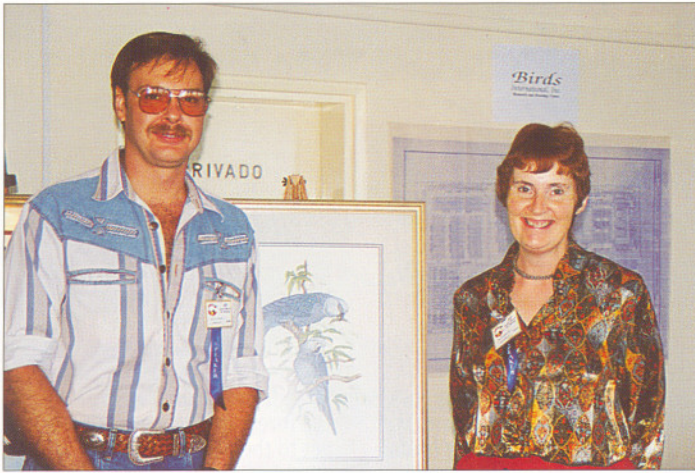
With 723 participants from forty-three nations representing four continents, the gathering for the Third International Parrot Convention hosted at Loro Parque by Wolfgang Kiessling in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain was a diverse group of people with an avid interest in parrots. Noted aviculturists, ornithologists, veterinarians, conservationists, and researchers from around the globe gathered at the beautiful Semiramis Hotel in Puerto de la Cruz to speak to the assemblage on many topics relating to parrots.

The opening speech on September 14th by Rosemary Low set the tone for the four day conference. She spoke of the many advances made in parrot aviculture and conservation since the first International Parrot Convention was held in Tenerife just eight years ago. Not only do we have a clearer idea of what parrot species are threatened or endangered in their native habitats, now we have three organisations formed since 1989 that work exclusively for the conservation of parrots. These organisations are the World Parrot Trust based in England, Fonds Für bedrohte Papageien based in Germany, and the Fundación Loro Parque based in Tenerife, Spain. Recent emphasis on captive



Plenty of help, and lots of action on the WPT stand.

Photo: Rosemary Low



Rick Jordan & Rosemary Low at the Convention

propagation of parrots as opposed to continued removal from the wild is a cause of optimism. She ended the speech with the upbeat viewpoint that parrot conservation will continue to thrive with continued advances in aviculture, avian veterinary medicine, and field research projects.

With sumptuous banquets and entertainment nightly, it was a bit difficult at times to rise early enough to hear the eight AM speakers but the topics were so compelling that the lecture hall was full every morning! The next three days featured over twenty speakers with topics ranging from avicultural management, research projects and studies of parrots in the wild, veterinary perspectives, conservation and rescue projects, and the importance of aviculture to conservation projects for parrots. Knowledge of nutrition, including the study of Yellow-Naped Amazons in Guatemala by Ann Brice, Ph.D., the Kakapo Parrot Recovery Program in New Zealand, lead by Don Merton, and the Macaw Project at Tambopata, Peru lead by Charles Munn, Ph.D., It is exciting indeed to think that aviculture and ornithological studies can share mutually beneficial information towards the goal of conserving parrots both in captivity and in their native habitats!

Free access to the remarkable Loro Parque was an added benefit to the attendees of the Conference. This lovely park covers an area of 125,000 square metres housing approximately three hundred species and subspecies of rare and beautiful parrots in over one thousand aviaries. Over eleven million people have visited the park which also contains a unique aquarium exhibit, a dolphinarium, some primates, some large cats, and a number of reptiles and small mammals, including bats. This is a wonderful educational opportunity for visitors to the lovely island of Tenerife and affords an opportunity for the general public to appreciate the beauty of parrots and hopefully learn something

about the importance of protecting them. Many rare and endangered species reside at the Parque including the extremely endangered Spix Macaw. A reintroduction effort, partly funded by the Fundacion Loro Parque, is underway to introduce a captive-held Spix Macaw into the wild to hopefully join with the last remaining wild specimen in Curaçao, Brazil. This is planned to occur in late 1994 and the world parrot community will be holding its collective breath awaiting the outcome of this historic occasion.

The week was climaxed with yet another banquet at the Semiramis Hotel where the speakers were recognised for their contributions to the event. The Speaker Award, which had been voted upon by all attendees, was awarded to Charles Munn, Ph. D., who is the Senior Conservation Biologist of the Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, New York, USA. He is working on the macaw Project in Tambopata, Peru which is studying nutrition, behaviour, nesting, and other aspects of the daily life of the macaws in this region. Attendees were impressed with his talk, "Conserving parrots in the world through locally-owned ecotourism initiatives". His slides and video were quite wonderful and I think we all would love to visit this project.

In summary, a great time was had by all and a huge vote of thanks must be given to Wolfgang Kiessling and his marvellous staff and organising committee who put tremendous effort into assuring that the conference went smoothly. It was truly well organised and tremendous fun as well as being informative. Many friendships were forged and others renewed and people from forty-three countries will take this good-will, knowledge, and optimism back to their countries to share with their countrymen for the benefit of parrots throughout the world! May there be many more International Parrot Conventions in the future!

Comments on the Convention

By Ralf Reinhardt

In October 1994, the time was again ripe:

As announced everywhere in the press, the "International Parrot Experts" again met on Tenerife after four years to talk shop.

For me it was the first and possibly last time.

I ask myself whether it would not be more effective if I or even all the participants donated the conference fees to parrot protection projects. With approx. 750 participants this year and a conference fee of DM 350, -, this would make over DM 250,000, - (£100,000/\$150,000) available for protection projects.

Half of the participants were German-speaking and many were there for the third time: "... the first conference was super, the second not bad, the third h'm" was the general opinion.

Why?

No criticism could be made of Mr Kiessling's successful organisation.

The impressive Loro Parque alone was an experience in itself.

At the first conference many practical tips were given for owners and breeders. At the second conference the protection of parrots was one of several important topics. This time the participants were overwhelmed with graphs and statistics (one notable exception being the instructive lecture given by Dr M.E. Krautwald-Junghanns, University of Giessen).

Whom does it serve if experts talk shop with experts about parrot protection and constantly look, among other things, at statistics and graphs? The worldwide protection of parrots is benefited only if experts pass on their knowledge to interested persons and convince them of the necessity of protection.

It was only the excellent lecture given by Charles Munn that was a powerful reminder that the protection of parrots costs money, a great deal of money. How disappointing, therefore, that Mr Kiessling himself had to buy most of the paintings auctioned in favour of various protection projects, although sufficient "well-to-do" parrot owners and breeders were present.

No, I do not regret having been present at the conference. It gave me an opportunity to exchange views with other practitioners on

topics such as the keeping of parrots, breeding and diseases.

Discussions with the World Parrot Trust also confirmed that we could make a small contribution at the "Papageienstation ARCHE NOAH" in Germany.

To sum up, I hope that more and more persons of like mind will take an active role as ambassadors and undertake educational work in accordance with the motto "Parrots need people's protection". If this conference has contributed to more new ambassadors being found for the protection of parrots, this conference will have been worthwhile.

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Convention Proceedings

The papers read at the Third International Parrot Convention have been published in book form and are available in English, German and Spanish.

Of especial interest to aviculturists will be such papers as care and breeding of Hyacinthine Macaws by Gloria Allen, medical management of Macaws by Susan Clubb, breeding Keas by Robert Peters, managing a mixed psittacine collection by Kathleen Szabo, and whether hand-reared parrots are suitable as breeding birds or as pets by Rick Jordan. An excellent paper was that by Gail Worth who discussed disease management in the psittacine nursery.

In the conservation category was a co-authored paper on globally threatened parrots, endangered parrots of the French Pacific by Roland Seitre, how ecotourism is contributing to conservation in Peru by Charles Munn, Don Merton on saving the Kakapo and threats facing parrots in the wild by Rosemary Low.

Dr H Schifter described parrot specimens in the bird collection in the Museum of Natural History in Vienna and Roger Wilkinson and Koen Brouwer gave information on the European breeding programmes for endangered parrots.

Copies of the Proceedings can be obtained from Loro Parque, Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, Canary Islands, fax 34 22 37 38 41. The price is £25 including postage.

FIELDWORK FOR THE ECHO PARAKEET

By Line Wadum

In January 1994 I returned from a 5 month stay in a fieldcamp in the mountains on Mauritius. I worked as a volunteer with management for the endangered Echo Parakeets, and I also studied the Parakeets, to help increase our knowledge of them. The 5 months were full of experience. They taught me how demanding fieldwork is and also how important it is to help with saving endangered birds.

It all started for me last year in April. Michael Iversen and I were visiting WPT-England. We were there to meet Michael Reynolds and to discuss our work in the Danish branch of the World Parrot Trust. I study biology and am about to finish my studies. I was searching for a subject for my

thesis, and was very interested in working with endangered species. Michael Reynolds investigated the possibilities, and a few months later I had the opportunity to go to Mauritius to work with Carl Jones and his team, for the Echo Parakeet.

I arrived on Mauritius in September, and came to the camp for fieldworkers for both the Echo Parakeet and the endangered Pink Pigeon. The fieldcamp is situated in the last part of native forest, where the Echo lives. The forest today is only approximately 50km², and is on the south west side of Mauritius. It's called Maccabé Forest. We were 5 fieldworkers, two of us who worked for the Echos; the other 3 worked with the

Pink Pigeons. My partner was Dr. Tim Lovegrove, who has been funded by WPT to work in the parakeets nesting season. The season is approximately September to January. Many things had to be done in this season. We had to try to locate nesting birds, to put rat poison out in known nest areas, set rat traps and put supplemental feeding out. We were also going to search for birds in all areas. I was going to study the parakeets' nesting behaviour, their habitat use and the feeding ecology of the birds.

The first time we spent to get to know the forest areas, and to locate the Echo Parakeets. To get around we could use a Landrover or a motorbike, or walk. There are rough roads in the mountains, but in the areas where the parakeets live, it is often necessary to get around on foot.

The first sights and sounds of the Echos were a big experience, because they are one of the rarest parrots of the world. There they were, flying over my head, calling and sometimes perching not far away. We started to localise pairs and the areas they tend to use. There are 5 known pairs of the Echos and these have been followed through the years. The knowledge of the existing pairs and the areas they usually spend time in, made it easier for us to search.

It was important for us to find as many nests as possible. There are many factors that threaten the Echos and one of them is predators which destroy their nests. Rats and monkeys have been introduced to Mauritius, and they take both eggs and chicks from the nests. So while we searched for nesting birds, we also made precautions in and around nestholes which have been used by the Echo Parakeets in previous years. We made rat poison stations out of drainpipes, and we placed the tubes in grids around the known nest sites.

The parakeets have also been short of nestholes, so we checked the nestholes and removed nest material if other bird species were using the hole. In October, Tim discovered the first nest. The Echo pair had chosen an old tree, with a very suitable hole, the Tambalacoque tree, also known as the Dodo tree. It's a very rare tree, and they only exist in the Maccabé Forest. It's rumoured that the Dodo tree can only germinate if

the Dodo has been eating the tough seed. Therefore the tree lost it's germinator when the Dodo disappeared. The nest was situated 11 meters off the ground on a straight tree trunk, way down in the forest on the mountainside. To get to the nest we had to use climbing gear, and it took time to get to the nest, because the tree was so enormous. The Echos had one egg. We monitored the nest almost every day, to be sure everything was going well.

It's possible to get quite close to the Echo Parakeets and this makes it really interesting to study them. They never seem to be disturbed even though we were right under their nest tree. We also put rat poison in the area, and to make an efficient knockdown of rats, we set rat traps up every night. We caught many rats and it shows that the rat population is very dense in the area. The rats are a big threat not only to the Echos, but to many other endangered bird species on Mauritius.

The egg hatched, and there was a new little Echo. But one day, the chick had disappeared from the nest. It could have been taken by a rat or a monkey. The female was flying back and forth to the nest. She spent a few hours in the nest, then she came out and flew around for an hour, and then went back in. It seemed like it took time for her to realise that the chick had disappeared. This was a sad discovery, because there are so few nests. At that time we had in total, located 3 nests, and they could well be the only ones made by Echos in that nesting season. The two other nests had respectively 2 and 3 eggs. We monitored the nests everyday. One of the Echo pairs has been studied before on nest. They seem very used to people. One day when Tim was checking a nest while the female was out, she was perching only 2 meters away, watching us, and just flew in to the nest cavity as Tim climbed down the nest tree. We also put rat poison and rat traps around these nests.

I studied the parakeets to learn about their behaviour and to compare the activity around and in the three nests. The nest with three eggs got two chicks and the third egg never hatched. The two chicks were just starting to get feathers, and as a second sad discovery they were suddenly found dead one day. This was caused by a larvae of king wasp,



The Echo Parakeet in the wild.

Photo: Line Wadum



Line with one of the aviary bred young Echos.

who had killed the chicks in the nest. The third nest with the two eggs also failed. This was under a heavy storm, where a heavy cyclone passed by Mauritius. The female left the nest, and the eggs got cold. There was no chance for us to rescue the eggs, even though Tim took both eggs and kept them as warm as possible under his T-shirt, while he drove through the mountains to the aviaries. Here they were kept in incubators, but didn't hatch. The eggs must have been cold for too long.

So even though we took many precautions for the Echo nests, they can fail. In a large population this wouldn't be a disaster, but it felt like a disaster to lose these nests, because there are so few of them. There is nothing to do but to continue the same work during the coming nesting seasons, and hope that other Echo Parakeets had nests this year with fledglings, that we haven't found.

I spent much time in monitoring different forest areas on the Maccabé Ridge and the vicinity. These studies were made to find out which areas are important for the Echos. I monitored the same areas both mornings and evening during the 5 months I was on Mauritius. I saw how frequently the parakeets came to the areas and what they were doing in them. The Maccabé Ridge used to be visited frequently by Echos in September. This has been seen in other studies. In the nesting season there was very little activity. But instead, much activity was found in the vicinity of Maccabé ridge. This was especially in the area, that had been weeded. All introduced plants have been removed. This is done because introduced plants are inhibiting and killing the native trees, which grow much slower.

The Echo Parakeets are very dependent on the fruit, leaves and flowers of the native trees. They

have been lacking in food because of the lack of native trees. This is due to the big deforestations that have taken place on Mauritius since Man came to the island and because exotic tree species and plants have been introduced. The Echos used these weeded plots, and I often saw them feeding in the native trees. I have seen them feed most on leaves and fruits of the Bois de Lait, the milk tree.

Because we saw the Echo Parakeets use the plots, it shows that they are important and can be a way to help the Echos to have enough food. The areas have to be weeded through the year, because seeds of the exotic trees, the "weed", will keep sprouting in the plots for a long time. As an experiment we kept putting rat poison out in a weeded plot that was used by an Echo Parakeet pair and an extra male. They didn't nest this year, but they came to feed every day. As we layed rat poison out, we often found dead rats killed by the poison and through the months less rat poison was taken, because the rat density got smaller. We found lots of fruits untouched on the ground in the weeded and rat poisoned area. Whereas we always found piles of eaten fruits eaten by rats in the forests where no poison had been laid, and often at dusk we saw the rats climbing in the trees, eating fruits.

So the experiment showed that another way to help the Echo Parakeets to have more food, is to keep putting rat poison in the seeded areas, and keep the rats away in that way. You can never keep them totally away because new rats will invade the area when the other rats disappear. But it will keep the number of them very low.

Since the Echo Parakeets had been in lack of food, food has been set out for them. We laid supplemental food, which was fruits and vegetables on special

designed feeding platforms, which were rat proof. This was done in the same plot where the pair and the extra male used to come. Nothing of the supplemental food was taken during the breeding season, even though it was taken during the winter months (April-September). So this might indicate that the Echos are lacking more in food during winter than the summer time, at least in this area. Instead I saw the Echos feeding every day and often for long periods in native trees in this area.

One of the most impressive things was when the Echo Parakeets in the aviaries started nesting. These Echo Parakeets were taken as eggs from wild Parakeets. They hatched and grew up in the aviaries. There are in total three Echo Parakeets in the aviaries. Two of the Echo Parakeets paired up, and this was the first time it had ever happened. I went and studied the parakeets a day every week. This was to follow their behaviour during the nesting period and to compare them with the wild nesting birds. The day could feel very long when I was sitting there watching the birds and recording

young and maybe too young for nesting yet. The male wasn't good at feeding the female and she often chased him to get food, and when he didn't escape from her, he stole the food she was eating. This meant that the female was out very often for short periods to eat. But even though the birds didn't breed perfectly this year it may be the start of the breeding in captivity.

If we can start to increase the wild Echo population with released birds that are bred in captivity this will be a big help. Recent success with the before endangered Mauritius Kestrel and the Pink Pigeon shows that this work is important and gains success. But there is still much to do with the work for the Echos in captivity and for the wild birds. We need to make the forests more suitable homes for the Echo Parakeets.

The chick in captivity was 1 month old when I left Mauritius, and I hope it's still doing well. I am now back home and working on all the data I collected and am writing up my thesis. Michael Iversen and I are going on with the Danish Branch of World Parrot Trust, and



Line off to work in the Maccabé Forrest. In the background is the vehicle supplied jointly by the WPT and the Parrot Society in 1991.

everything they did. But it was also really exciting, just waiting and waiting to see if the eggs would hatch and just all the time hoping that everything would be fine.

The female laid two eggs and both hatched. But shortly after, the first hatched chick unfortunately died. The chicks weren't fed enough by the Echos, so therefore the second was put under a nesting Ring-necked Parakeet. The Echo chick grew up in the Ring-necked nestbox and fledged from there.

So at least I can know that one Echo parakeet was raised successfully during my fascinating visit to Mauritius.

The reason why the Echo Parakeet pair didn't breed well might be that they both were very

we will do what we can to help the Echo Parakeets. I hope we can participate in the on going success with management for the Echo Parakeets. There is much to do, but slowly we see the success and we can all help - if we want to.

I would like to thank Michael Reynolds for giving me contacts for my tour, to Carl Jones for letting me come and be a part of this year's team on Mauritius, to Tim Lovegrove who was an excellent partner, and of course to the rest of the "Mwaf" - Team on Mauritius, which made my stay very pleasant.

MACAWS PROJECT AT TAMBOPATA

By Hilary French



One of the Tambopata lodges.

Our boat's landing point was indicated by a single tree rising above the rainforest canopy, and its mass of luxuriant vegetation. It was 1st December, and I had arrived at Tambopata Research Centre, home of Proyecto guacamayos, or macaw's project, in the Madre de Dios department of S.E. Peru. My journey had taken me by air from Lima, the capital of Peru, to Cuzco, and then onward to Puerto Maldonado, for a seven hour trip by boat to reach my final destination. The centre's traditional Indian-style raised platform was to be my home for the next six and a half weeks.

Situated close to the Bolivian border, Tambopata Research Centre is located within the boundaries of the 3.7 million acre Tambopata - Candamo Reserved Zone, created in 1990 to protect this part of S.W. Amazonia, and its extraordinary diversity of life. The centre is directed by Eduardo Nycander von Massenbach who, along with his partners, Kurt Holle and Alvarro del Campo, aim to combine macaw research and ecotourism. Rainforest Expeditions, their tour company, brings tourists to the massive clay 'lick', a 500 metre stretch of reddish cliff on the river Tambopata, where a spectacular gathering of macaws and parrots takes place in the mornings to feed on the mineral-rich clay.

My main objective in visiting Tambopata was to gain some experience of working in the field. Since my visit coincided with the November - April macaw breeding season, work was focused upon researching various aspects of the breeding biology and behaviour of the three large species of macaw, red and green *Ara chloroptera*, scarlet *Ara macao*, and blue and

yellow *Ara ararauna*, of which there are still healthy populations at Tambopata. Tree-climbing enabled natural nest holes and specially constructed nestboxes to be monitored for nesting activity, and where appropriate, allowed for the removal of eggs for artificial incubation, and second or third-hatched nestlings for hand-rearing (those which would not be expected to survive if left with the parents).

Most of the work associated with monitoring nesting activity is based around a 25km trail system cut through forest near the research centre. Here I visited fourteen different active nest sites at regular intervals during the course of my stay. Of these, three are natural nestholes, and eleven are nestboxes, the majority of which are hung in Shihuahuaco trees *Dipterix alata*, and Azucar huayo *Hymenaea sp.* at a height of 30 - 40 metres. Whilst scarlet macaws readily use the artificial nest sites, for some reason, the red and greens do not.

Macaw nesting activity is also being monitored at two other locations. The first is a small palm swamp *Mauritea flexuosa*, where there is a significant concentration of blue and yellow macaws. Teams of four or five people can check natural nestholes for eggs and chicks quickly and safely, although the conditions for climbing the palms can be difficult. A second location includes natural nestholes of scarlet, and red and green macaws on banks of riverine secondary growth, at sites along the river Tambopata. On two occasions during my stay, trips were made both up and downstream to visit these sites. However, without protective clothing, the presence of hair-

cutter bees made nest inspection either very difficult, or else, in some cases, impossible.

All nest sites on the trail system have nylon lines held permanently in place over a branch close to the nesthole or nestbox. These are set up initially by using a slingshot to 'shoot' a weighted line over the most suitable branch. Both ends extend to ground level, and whilst one is securely fastened, the other is used to hoist climbing ropes into position. Trees are then easily ascended with a climbing harness and safety helmet. The macaws are accustomed to the activity associated with tree climbing, and after vacating the nest, usually sit on a nearby branch waiting to return, whilst eggs or chicks are examined.

Monitoring of nesting activity on the trail system involves checking nestholes and nestboxes every 2 - 3 days. Eggs are marked as laid for identification and, in some cases where predation is a

problem, are removed for artificial incubation, and replaced by dummy eggs. This allows the return of eggs or chicks at a later date should conditions become more favourable. Where nestlings are present, their progress is checked and, if necessary, parasites can be removed, or medication given. The survival rate is now increased as smaller second or third hatched nestlings, which normally die, are removed for hand-rearing. Parental activity is then focused upon rearing a single chick.

Whilst I was at Tambopata, two scarlet nestlings from different sites were removed for hand-rearing, leaving behind in each case one sibling. It is standard procedure for any nestlings taken from the wild to be quarantined for a short period. We made follow-up visits to both of these scarlet nest sites to monitor progress of the remaining nestlings. They were thriving.



At the top of these palms you can just see macaw nest holes.

By January, we were hand-rearing ten macaws of various ages (eight scarlet, and two blue and yellow). An area of the Centre's raised platform covered by mosquito netting serves as the 'laboratory' or rearing unit, and houses an assortment of items including an incubator, brooder boxes, and cages for older, well-feathered chicks. In addition, a vital assemblage of batteries charged daily by a generator provides enough power for the incubator, and a hatcher/brooder.

Very simple equipment is used as the generator provides only a limited power source, and alternative methods have proved quite adequate. Styrofoam boxes lined with newspaper and cedar shavings are used to contain the nestlings, and are maintained initially at a temperature of 32°C by the provision of hot water bottles. Older chicks are provided with heat as necessary. At night, all brooder boxes and cages are covered by mosquito netting as additional protection against insect bites.

A nutritionally-balanced powdered formula manufactured in Lima is used for feeding, and

this season John Heath's hand-rearing diet is also being sampled. Newly hatched chicks are fed every hour, with the interval between feeds gradually increased with age. To facilitate the process of adaptation to living in the wild, as with the macaws hand-reared in 1992/93, so too with this season's young, the feeding of formula, or other nutritionally-balanced food items will continue for as long as is necessary.

The 1993/94 season is 'experimental' in that it is the first time that an artificial incubator has been used to hatch eggs removed from the wild. This has meant that at those nest sites where predation is a problem, eggs can be removed and incubated artificially. At one particular scarlet nest site, where all the eggs from a first clutch had disappeared, we removed a second clutch of three eggs, replacing them with dummy eggs. It was later possible to return one egg to this pair of macaws to hatch. At the time of my departure, eight macaws had already hatched from eggs incubated artificially, with more due.

At the moment the future for macaws at Tambopata looks good,



Hand-reared in the forest.

with an ongoing research programme developing management techniques which could be used for more vulnerable populations of macaw in the future. In addition, ecotourism provides increasingly valuable tools in macaw conservation besides boosting the local economy.

Hilary French, Bird Staff, JWPT.

Rainforest Expeditions,
Gateon 120, San Borja, Lima 41,
Peru. Phone/Fax: (5114) 389325

The macaw project is in need of some beekeeping equipment - protective clothing that can be used when checking nest sites, particularly those along the river Tambopata, where haircutter bees are a major problem. If anyone can help, please contact the project through the World Parrot Trust.

BOOK REVIEW

ENDANGERED PARROTS By Rosemary Low
A short highly prejudiced book review by Michael Reynolds

Nobody could expect me to review this book dispassionately, when, as described on page 1 of this issue, the author has donated half her royalties from the book to The World Parrot Trust. Having dealt with that, I am free to say that this is very important book which belongs on the shelves of anyone who is concerned with the conservation of the parrots.

'Endangered Parrots' is comprehensive, covering every endangered species of parrot in the world: I believe it is unique in this. The style is crisp, packed with information, immensely readable and authoritative. Open this book at any page and you'll be fascinated; read this paragraph about the Kakapo and you'll

understand why it's a miracle that 46 still exist: 'Meanwhile the slaughter of Kakapo was reaching unprecedented proportions. During the gold rush of the 1860s and 1870s the diggers reputedly lived on Kakapo, and ate the meat until they were tired of it. Wild cats, dogs and rats introduced by Europeans also feasted well on the defenceless parrot. Exploring parties make Kakapo the principal item of their diet and, later, when cruising tourists visited New Zealand from other continents, they shot and ate Kakapo which they found to be 'as good eating as a barnyard fowl'.

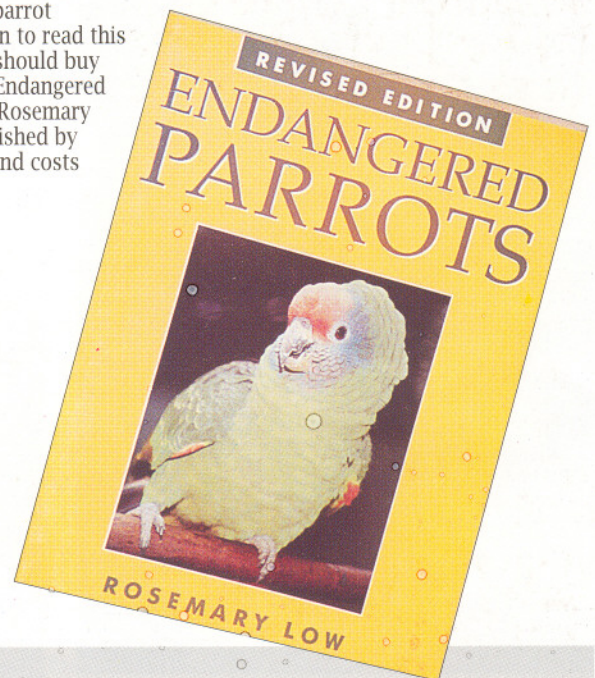
Apart from giving such alarming historical information followed by up-to-the-minute

reports on the current status of each endangered species, Rosemary covers the broad issues affecting parrot conservation. There are chapters on deforestation, the extra vulnerability of island populations, the role of aviculture in conservation, captive breeding, reintroductions, and much more.

I would respectfully suggest that anyone with sufficient interest in parrot conservation to read this newsletter should buy this book. 'Endangered Parrots' by Rosemary Low is published by Blandford and costs £18.99.

The World Parrot Trust will mail it to anyone worldwide for £21 or \$34, inc. postage etc. Just send your order, with cheque or credit card details to:
Judith Venning, WPT, Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall, TR27 4HY, UK.
Fax: (UK) 736. 756438.

A SINCERE CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR ANY PARROT PERSON!



FIJIAN PARROT INTERLUDE

By Rosemary Low

Fiji is an exciting country for the parrot enthusiast, partly because of the beauty of the endemic species and because they are so little known in aviculture. Only a few birds have been exported because commercial trade has never been permitted. To become familiar with some of Fiji's Parrots you must go either to San Diego Zoo, in California or to Fiji. With the exception of the exquisite little Solitary Lory *Phigys solitarius*, they are not easy to see in the wild.

En route to New Zealand last year I spent four days on Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu. In any island group, an ornithologist may find the largest island the least rewarding because it is the most settled and the most disturbed. Four days gives one little more than the flavour of a place, nevertheless on Viti Levu it was long enough to encounter what is surely Fiji's most colourful bird - the Solitary or Collared Lory.

No picture can do it justice. Lories are known for their wonderful colours - but it is difficult to describe the intensity and contrasts of this species - particularly the unique cape of shawl of vivid green which seems to stand away from the rest of the plumage. It resembles a miniature

Black-capped Lory of the red-breasted race *Lorius lory erythrothorax* in coloration - but not in personality.

To me it appears to be a *Vini* Lory, the genus which contains the tiny exquisite and colourful gems which are so little known. It is larger, it is true, but otherwise differs little. When I observed it in the wild, I had just come from Aitutaki, from four days of intensive study of *Vini peruviana*. Its behaviour seemed identical to that of its smaller cousin.

On Fiji, there are other very interesting birds to divert one's attention, thus in such a short stay, I did not come to know this species well. What I did see was enchanting. On two mornings the Collared presented a picture I can never forget - a brilliant red and green Lory feeding in a flowering scarlet hibiscus bush! A scene painted by an imaginative artist? No! A scene from real life!

They moved through the leaves so rapidly. Every now and then a little head appeared and the bright plumage was exposed for a second. The flash of my camera, only 2m distant, left them unperturbed. One stopped and surveyed me (I was hiding in foliage), unconcerned.

In all respects their behaviour

was reminiscent of the Tahiti Blue Lory. They, too, spent much time in the tops of coconut palms, descending lower to search for blossoms, pollen, nectar, insects and apparently, also for fruit. They seem very much at home in the vicinity of man and gardens. As with *peruviana*, we usually saw between two and four birds. They are widespread, vocal and very easy to locate.

The same is not true of Fiji's largest parrot, the Yellow-breasted Musk *Prosopeia personata*. We saw a single specimen at the Kula Bird Park at Korotogo on the Coral Coast. The owner of the park, Australian Steve Perrin, told us that during his five years in Fiji he had seen only three - flying across the main road on the way to Suva. He inferred that our chances of seeing this species in the wild were virtually nil. This was very disappointing news.

Nevertheless, we decided to devote the two remaining full days in Fiji to searching for this handsome black-masked green and yellow parrot. On the first day we set off into the centre of the island. I was unprepared for the severity of the deforestation. Range after range of mountain slopes were almost totally devoid of trees,

except in the gullies. We drove without stopping for more than two hours without seeing more than a few remnant patches of forest. Birds were not abundant except the inevitable introduced Common Mynahs *Acridotheres tristis* and Jungle Mynahs *A. fuscus* in the region of human habitation. In one rural area where there was a large Indian population, we even saw introduced Avadavats *Amandava amandava*.

We were amazed at the friendliness of the Fijian people outside of the towns. It seems the average tourist goes no further than the beach and the main roads. Everywhere we were greeted with cries of "Bula!" (Welcome!) and huge genuine smiles. (I began to sympathise with the Queen - endless waving becomes tiring!)

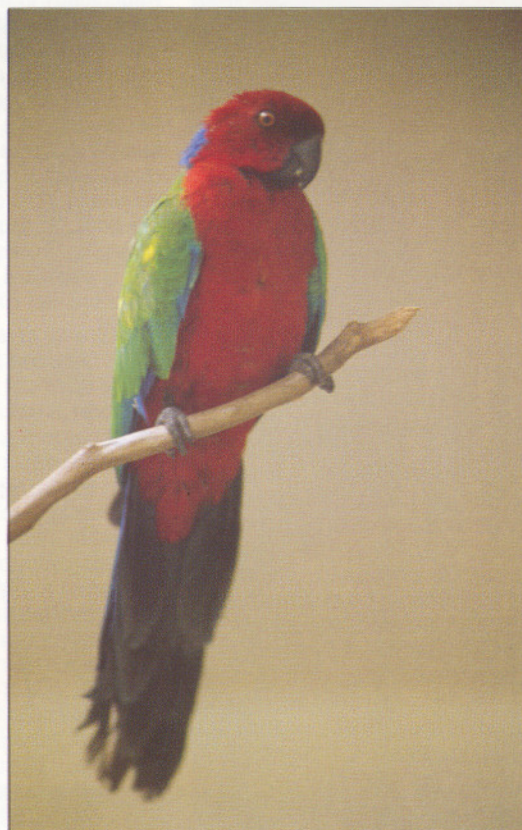
We stopped to talk to one family about the recent floods - signs of which were still very much in evidence. We showed them a picture of a Musk Parrot - but they had no knowledge of it. This did not surprise me at all for I had seen no habitat which looked suitable for a large parrot.

Next day we headed in the opposite direction, towards Suva on the south-east coast. A locally published book suggested that Colo-i-Suva (meaning outside Suva) was a good place to see this species. On the way we saw some areas of forest which looked promising. We went to the forest reserve at Colo-i-Suva and immediately located a good source of information. The forest ranger who had worked there for 20 years told us that he regularly sees one or two Musk Parrots fly over, rarely up to five or six. We set off on a forest walk which took us three hours. The path took us over mountain streams, often on slippery soap stone and sometimes with steep drops below us. We needed to concentrate on the next step! The undergrowth was a tangle of tree ferns, small palms and pale pink orchids. Birds were few - the occasional Grey-backed Zosterops *Zosterops lateralis flaviceps*, Polynesian Triller *Lalage maculosa* and a soft grey Barking Pigeon *Ducula latrans*.

Again I thought this is no longer Parrot habitat! In the 1950's the forest was selectively logged and replanted with mahogany. Large trees were few. I was beginning to doubt the book which told me: "... a common species and in no danger of extinction." It continued of the Musk Parrot: "Although not



Yellow-breasted Musk Parrot (*Prosopeia personata*) at San Diego Zoo.



Red Shining Parrot (*Prosopeia tabuensis splendens*).

restricted to mature forest, fairly large tracts of such habitat are required for breeding." Precisely! The worrying suspicion had already occurred to me that it might appear common in the few forested areas - but was it breeding? Bearing in mind that the species occurs on no other island, that Viti Levu measures only 146 x 106km, has suffered extremely serious deforestation and has a human population of more than half a million, the species must be threatened, if not endangered. A recent suggested population size of 5,000 may be a gross exaggeration.

Of course it is presumptuous to make such statements on the strength of a three-day stay there, but hours spent poring over literature concerning endangered Parrots from many countries have made me very aware of one fact. The lack of large trees for nesting has caused the decline of many species. In some cases, this may not be realised for years, because of the long lifespan of the larger parrots.

I was reflecting on this fact on the two hour drive back to our hotel. I was also keeping a watch in the unlikely event of a Musk Parrot flying across the road. Suddenly one did just that! We almost screeched to a halt and turned round as quickly as we could. The Musk was now perched in a large tree not far distant from the road. We photographed its silhouette and watched as it made a very loud, harsh grating and far-reaching call. This call was

answered by another bird flying in the distance. One has only to hear the call once and to see it in flight, for it to be unmistakable on future sightings. The slow, flapping flight is punctuated by glides; the long tail is very conspicuous.

After a few minutes the Musk Parrot flew off. This species is said to be very sensitive to the presence of humans, screeching in alarm when disturbed. The pair remained in the vicinity for at least half an hour - in the far distance - so we reluctantly went on our way, after a very exciting few minutes.

There is another parrot found on Viti Levu - and three other islands - which we knew we had no chance of seeing - the tiny Red-throated Lorikeet *Charmosyna amabilis*. It occurs in mountain forest, usually above 500m. Because of its small size and nomadic habits it is rarely seen and very little is known about it.

As we did not visit any other islands, the only Red Shining Parrots *Prosopiea tabuensis* which we saw were at the Kula Bird Park. It exhibits the scarlet *splendens* from Kandava and Ono and the maroon *taviunensis* from Taveuni and Qamea. This species is also known as the Red-breasted Musk Parrot although, unlike the Yellow-breasted, it lacks the sweet, musky smell.

As part of a conservation programme for threatened South Pacific species, *tabuensis* is kept in the breeding station of the Brehm-Fonds on Tongatapu, the main island of Tonga. There they have



Taveuni Shining Parrot (*Prosopiea tabuensis taviunensis*) at Kula Bird Park on Viti Levu

bred in a colony aviary. At one time four females were incubating, two in the same nest! (The incubation period is about 23 days and young spend eight to ten weeks in the nest.)

In some aspects of their behaviour (at least in captivity), these birds remind me of Eclectus Parrots. This is also true of the chicks which, apart from the shape of the beak, bear a strong resemblance to Eclectus chicks from the ages of about three to five weeks. Much remains to be learned about the *Prosopiea* as avicultural subjects, especially the Yellow-breasted Musk which has seldom been seen outside Fiji.

Currently San Diego Zoo has a pair, the female of which had laid in 1992. I was captivated by these striking parrots when I saw them there. Let us hope that 1994 will be the year of the first breeding success in aviculture. However, with, I believe, only one pair outside the South Pacific, there seems little hope of the species becoming established in captivity.

To my knowledge, no steps have been taken to conserve it on Viti Levu. I fear that a sudden crash in the population will one day become evident. Unless Viti Levu's forests are better preserved, the island will lose one of its most beautiful inhabitants.

PARROT STUDBOOK COORDINATORS

R = U.K. Regional Studbook
I = International Studbook
E = European Studbook

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

PALM COCKATOO
(*Probosciger aterrimus*) *E*
Dr. Roger Wilkinson, Chester Zoo,
Upton-by-Chester, Cheshire.
CH2 1LH United Kingdom

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

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

MOLUCCAN COCKATOO (*Cacatua moluccensis*) *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.

CUBAN AMAZON (*Amazona leucocephala*)

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 U.K.

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

For other Lory Studbooks
please contact:-
Trevor Buckell 0980 622573

REPORT ON THE CAPE PARROT PROJECT

By Olaf Wirminghaus, Natal University, South Africa.

Introduction

The nominate race of the Cape parrot *Poicephalus r. robustus* is endemic to South Africa. It breeds only in montane mixed *Podocarpus* forests above 1,000m, while the subspecies *P. r. suahelicus*, which occurs north and east of the Transvaal Drakensberg Mountains, occurs primarily in lowland woodlands. Morphological and colour differences also exist and the taxonomic status of these subspecies is currently being investigated.

Cape parrot populations are declining in South Africa, mainly due to illegal collecting for the avicultural trade (both past and present), habitat degradation and loss of nest sites. They are classed as Vulnerable in the South African Red Data Book for Birds, and very little is known of their breeding habits and foraging behaviour in the wild. This information is essential for a viable conservation plan for Cape parrots.

Aims

1. To determine the distribution, abundance and status of Cape parrots.
2. To determine the diet of Cape parrots and the state of their food

resources in the study areas and to identify plant species which are relied upon during breeding or seasons of low food availability.

3. If possible, to determine the nesting requirements and nesting success of Cape parrots in their natural habitat.
4. To design a predictive model to help conservationists gauge parrot habitat suitability and carrying capacity in forests where introductions are being considered.
5. To determine areas where Cape parrots face greatest survival threats.

1994 Project Progress

Field data collection is in its second year and is proceeding well. The study sites being used, both in southern Natal, South Africa are: 1. Hlabeni Forest (410 ha) which is one of a complex of forest patches between Creighton and Bulwer, and 2. Ngele Forest (752 ha) also one of a complex of forests between Harding and Kokstad. All these mistbelt forest fragments (typical Cape Parrot habitat) are surrounded by a mosaic of farmland, agro-forestry and natural grassland. Most of these forests are conserved and their future seems secure. However, some small-scale illegal logging and hunting persists, though is difficult to control due to their

fragmented and scattered nature.

With the arrival of funds from Sasol and the SANF, the Project was able to employ a part-time assistant, Craig Symes, a 2nd year student majoring in Zoology and Botany. The new funding also allowed for the purchase of a second spotting scope, and with Craig's help, data collection has increased remarkably. This has increased the quality of all aspects of data collection significantly, particularly with feeding observations and opportunistic counts of parrot numbers. Other data such as times of activity, social behaviour, age and sex ratios of flocks, etc., are also collected whenever possible. Interactions with other species, mainly Rameron Pigeons *Columba arquatrix* whose movements and foraging behaviour closely matches those of the parrots, and raptors, are also noted.

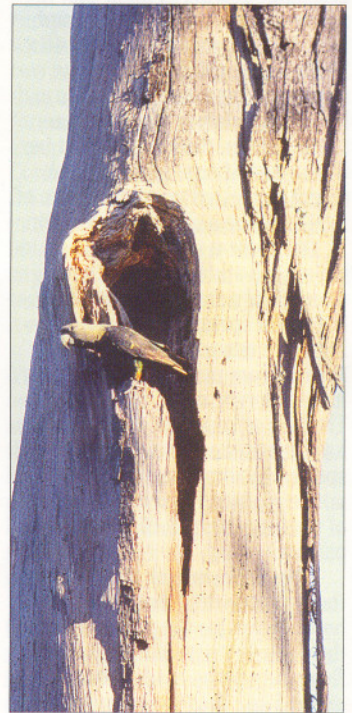
Leaf litter collections with the aid of litterfall traps have been made monthly since the end of December 1993, to help determine the quantity of fruit in the forest canopy, and seems to be working well. This has been supplemented with visual assessments of the fruiting condition of marked individual yellowwood trees *Podocarpus* spp. only.

Important finds

Recent findings include the importance of the yellowwoods to Cape parrots. These trees are long-lived, and often the tallest trees in the forest and therefore most frequently used as display perches. *Podocarpus falcatus* and to a lesser extent *P. latifolius* and *P. henkelli* are also a vital food source and almost exclusively utilised when in fruit. This is possibly due to the volume of fruit produced, and the length of time they remain in fruit. Furthermore, *Podocarpus falcatus* bears fruit from mid to late summer, and is thus an important (if not exclusive) food source during the breeding season and for newly fledged parrots. Dead specimens of *P. falcatus* remain standing for a number of years, and natural cavities in these are the preferred nesting sites of Cape parrots. In a report to the Natal Parks Board, it has been recommended that a special effort be made to protect these trees in all areas of the mistbelt.

Plans for this season

With the approach of the next breeding season (Aug. - Dec.), the help of local bird clubs will be



Spot the bird - Wild male Cape parrot at nest in dead Yellow wood tree.

enlisted in finding further nest sites. Much basic information is still required on Cape Parrot breeding, particularly in the wild. Aviculturalists who have Cape Parrots (any subspecies) could help greatly by submitting their captive breeding records (clutch sizes, growth curves, timing of colour changes, etc.) to the Project. Any information will be appreciated.

As has been found in several other parrot studies, there may be a strong possibility that Cape Parrots are limited by the lack of suitable nest sites. The number of pairs breeding last season was low, and nest boxes may help to improve the situation. This breeding season 20 boxes will be put up in each of the study forests.

With the help of Quintin Kermeen at AVM in California, we have hit on a seemingly parrot-proof radio-collar which I look forward to testing on Cape Parrots in the wild before the end of the year. Cape Parrots, being the nut and kernel-feeding specialists that they are, have bills which are disproportionately large for birds their size. The first test-collar was destroyed in less than 24 hours, and cases of missing digits have been reported.



Captive female Cape Parrot.

THREE MONTHS AT PARADISE PARK By Rosa Elena Zegarra

Last June I arrived at Paradise Park, Hayle, UK to get practical experience in parrot's husbandry techniques to apply them later on in the wild. It is very different to work with animals in the wild. Of course they are free. But zoos too are important.

I think most people here will not have the opportunity to see exotic wildlife (many endangered species) in its original countries, especially if the animals come from places so far away from England like Africa, Asia or South America, where I come from too. I would like to be wrong. In this way, if it were not for zoos, maybe people just won't know. So they allow more people to understand and worry about wildlife and conservation problems at their source (often related to serious socio-economic problems, mainly in developing countries). Hopefully after a visit to the zoo, somebody will try to learn a little bit more, and eventually, if we are lucky, to help.

But the animals are not free at the zoo. Yes. Just this is what makes a keeper's work so special.

The keeper's work is very hard. Everybody says "Yes. It is". I said the same before I visited. But it has been in this three months that I have spent at Paradise Park when I truly realised how difficult it is.

Being a keeper you work with living animals which depend on you at every moment of their captive lives - every moment - there is no choice. You have to feed them, look after them, and you must try to make their lives nice and comfortable as much as possible. Never mind if you are tired or bored. Animals can't take holidays or just go out for a walk (or fly) and then come back to their cages. Their life's quality depends always on you, if you are a keeper.

"Make sure she gets a banana, she loves it", "She's different, likes you to whistle very quietly" or "It's their first swim" (a proud "daddy" at the penguin pond). Such simple phrases but very nice to remember because they remind me of the close relationship between keepers and animals. Of course it is not easy. In the beginning you make mistakes which will teach you for



Rosa Elena with an aviary Bred Blue-throated Macaw. Soon she will be studying these birds in the wild.

next time and sometimes the price is quite high and painful.

You have to work at it. It is necessary to have curiosity, memory, common sense and lots of patience. Lots. But that is not all. Sometimes, despite your best wishes, it won't work out.

I remember once we spent all afternoon putting rope in the big parrot aviary and making parrot proof knots (reinforced with wire) everywhere. We had to cope with many things. Kea's curiosity mainly. Keas are very nose (beaky, I would say). They try to put their beaks inside pockets, shoes, T-shirts, ears ... A visitor from Mauritius, Liam was helping us. He was delighted, the parrots too. They knew he was new and were very busy interviewing him all the time, stealing his things, chewing his clothes and even chewing him sometimes. Later, when the Keas became bored with people, they explored the ladders we had taken into the aviary. They climbed step by step to the top, flew down and started climbing again.

We had a lot of fun. The next morning we saw the knots had not been parrot proof enough and I guess suitable ones have not been discovered yet.

Anyone who has been with parrots will agree about this: like people, each one has its own personality. They are curious, noisy, disinterested, friendly, too friendly, quiet, lovely, jealous, awful and mad, just like people. They also have their own tastes.

Sometimes they will like you, sometimes, not whatever you do to be "nice". But it is not a matter for worry. If you are a little bit lucky you will not have problems in the "parrots" section at Paradise Park, and, if you do, you can work on the "soft bills" section where the birds won't just bite they will kick too!

Working with parrots at Paradise Park gave me a lot of satisfaction: to see nervous chicks flying for the first time and watching how they improve their crash-landing as they grow, or to retrieve your key-ring after maybe waiting for ages for that angel-faced parrot who stole it, or hear the chick you helped to hand rear call to you from its aviary, or just collect a very nice feather.

I want to thank everyone who made my trip to England possible and to thank in a very special way everybody who made my time here so nice.

Comments from David Woolcock, Curator, Paradise Park.

"Rosa Elena made very good friends with everyone whom she met. She is a hard worker and exhibited a real feeling for the birds. She was bubbling over with enthusiasm which affected everyone that she worked with. Her English improved considerably during her visit and we hope she will be able to stay in touch and visit us again one day".



Another visitor to Paradise Park - Regis Liam Sheung Yuen from Mauritius. He stayed for a week after completing a training course at Jersey's International Training School.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP



AUSTRALIA

Return of the Paradise Parrot?

Christopher Kiernan reports in the September 1993 edition of *Wingspan*, the newsletter of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, of sighting this supposedly extinct parrot.

Although not stating numbers, he refers to five Paradise parrots, *Psephotous pulcherrimus*, being seen on a regular basis between late February and mid-April 1990, just before his visit. It would appear the parrots were seen early morning and late afternoon every day during an eight week period, flying in to a homestead garden in company with Pale-headed Rosellas *Platycercus adscitus* and feeding on native grasses growing around the house in central Queensland.

Allowing approach to within two metres, enabled the observer to provide graphic detail, describing the colours as matching those illustrated in *Australian Parrots* by Forshaw & Cooper.

John Buchan

* * *

Parrot Watching In Australia

A parrot expedition planned in Western & Southern Australia for September 1995

Organiser and tour leader: Peter H Them, Denmark

Ornithological guide in Australia: Joseph M Forshaw

Those interested should contact, by letter or fax - marked "Parrot Watching in Australia": Peter H Them, "PARROT DATA", Emmerich Alle 4, 2791 Dragør, DK-Danemark

Phone +45 32 53 40 81 fax +45 97 41 28 27

CARIBBEAN

Trouble on St. Lucia

We recently received the following fax from Paul Butler of RARE Centre:-

'In the early hours of September 10th, tropical Storm 'Debbie' passed directly over St Lucia and in four hours it dumped ten inches of rain, compounding problems caused by waterlogged soils from the heavy rains of the preceding week. The resulting damage was catastrophic, more so than Hurricane 'Allen' which

devastated the island in 1980.

Five people died, more than 200 were injured and hundreds remain homeless. Numerous landslides blocked roads, damaged bridges and caused disruptions in water and electric services. An estimated 30-40% of the island's bananas suffered total loss and provisional estimates of damage exceed US\$80M. The storm also wiped out our rain forest trail - such is life in Paradise!

I called Paul to ask what it would take to repair the forest trail, and was alarmed to hear that it might cost US\$80-100,000. We don't have that kind of money, and in any case it isn't the kind of task which would have priority for our limited funds. Nevertheless, we do have some pledges of funds for this work, which, when added to funds from RARE, would allow the reinstatement of a key part of the trail in time for the important tourist season just coming up. I mention this in the hope that readers may wish to offer further donations to help repair this very important trail.

MR

FRANCE

The damaging effects of the «Arrêté de Guyana» among French parrot breeders

by Jacqueline and Gabriel Prin

The «Arrêté de Guyana» (Guiana Order), dated 15th May 1986, is a purely French legislative text. It concerns only French Guiana (small territory of South America), particularly famous for the space launching of Ariane. The origin of this order is laudable: to stop the traffic between Guiana and France. Both countries having the same nationality, smuggling was easier, and birds could be sent on to other countries from France. So the French Government decided that the Guiana species henceforth would have the same status as the French species (goldfinch, tits), in order to ensure an absolute protection in metropolitan France (legislation being more flexible in Guiana ...).

Stopping the wild catchings of Guiana's fauna is a very good thing. But what do become the «possibly living parrots in Guiana» that have been trapped before 1986 and the captive-bred young

then? Let us take the example of the Orange-winged Parrot *Amazona amazonica*. It is freely sold in several European countries. Most of them are captured birds of South American origin. But as this species may live in Guiana, it is totally protected in France. As such, it can be - except a ministerial dispensation - neither moved, nor given, nor exchanged, whether it is alive or dead.

What do become the owners of these birds?

To have a whole idea, Guiana has 26 species of psittacine:

- Blue and yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*)
- Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*)
- Red and Green Macaw (*Ara chloroptera*)
- Chestnut-fronted Macaw (*Ara severa*)
- Red-bellied macaw (*Ara manilata*)
- Red-shouldered macaw (*Ara nobilis*)
- White-eyed Conure (*Aratinga leucopthalmus*)
- St Thomas Conure (*Aratinga pertinax*)
- Sun Conure (*Aratinga solstitialis*)
- Painted Conure (*Pyrrhura picta*)
- Green-rumped Parrotlet (*Forpus passerinus*)
- Sclater's Parrotlet (*Forpus sclateri*)
- Canary-winged Parakeet (*Brotogeris versicolorus*)
- Golden-winged Parakeet (*Brotogeris chrysopterus*)
- Lilac-tailed Parrotlet (*Touit batavica*)
- Sapphire-rumped Parrotlet (*Touit purpurata*)
- Black-headed Caique (*Pionites melanocephala*)
- Caica Parrot (*Pionopsitta caica*)
- Short-tailed Parrot (*Graydidascalus brachyurus*)
- Blue-headed Parrot (*Pionus menstruus*)
- Dusky Parrot (*Pionus fuscus*)
- Blue-cheeked Amazon Parrot (*Amazona dufresniana*)
- Yellow-headed Amazon Parrot (*Amazona ochrocephala*)
- Orange-winged Amazon Parrot (*Amazona amazonica*)
- Mealy Amazon Parrot (*Amazona farinosa*)
- Hawk-headed Parrot (*Deroyptus accipitrinus*)

The «Arrêté de Guyane» does not recognise breeding. The young born in captivity have therefore

the same statutes than captured birds. Two solutions occur for the owners of breeding pairs of Guiana species:

1) Either they sell them fraudulently to ordinary persons, leading to the loss of an important genetic inheritance - especially for endangered species -, or they sell them under a false identity (for example: Blue-fronted Amazon instead of Orange-winged Amazon), leading to the possibility of breeding hybrids;

2) Or they prevent at any price to have descendants: they remove the nest, they break the eggs or they kill the young! It can seem incredible, but that is the reality, especially for the large species such as macaws. These large birds can not be indefinitely kept. Transfer can only be done for those who have what is called in France a «certificat de capacité» (Ability certificate!!!) - a purely French document - and that is at present limited to a few breeders. We witness "protection" aberrations. This Order is a very serious brake against the breeding of rare or endangered species.

To make worse the situation, our Ministry does not want to make the difference between species and sub-species. The most striking example is the Yellow-headed Amazon *Amazona ochrocephala*. Only the nominal race has been observed in Guiana; the 8 sub-species have a different distribution. But the owners of Double Yellow-headed Amazon *Amazona . oratrix*, for example, have the same problems as if this sub-specie would live in Guiana. That is one example among many.

Parrots breeders (Macaws and Amazons) are not numerous in France. This Guiana Order is a brake for their breeding, and in fact it favours another way of smuggling. In every case, it is an important loss of genetic inheritance. So, where is the PROTECTION?

NETHERLANDS

On Schiphol Airport, a Belgian man and wife have been arrested for smuggling seven parrots *Lorius lory lory* from Indonesia. They drugged the birds with aspirin and stowed them into plastic lemonade bottles. At arrival in Amsterdam, 3 of the parrots proved to be dead.

NEW ZEALAND

We wish to advise all interested aviculturalists of a forthcoming international conference to take place from Friday 3 March to Monday 6 March 1995 at the Airport Plaza Hotel which is located adjacent to the Christchurch International Airport.

Speakers Include
Rick Jordan (USA)
Bob Philpott (Perth)
Peter Odekerken (Queensland)
Russell Kingston (Queensland)
N Z Dept. of Conservation
Dawn Stewart (NZ)
Elizabeth Lee (NZ)
Peter Stockdale (NZ)
Don Thomas (NZ)
Ted Kirk (NZ)
and others yet to be confirmed.

Conference fee of (NZ) \$230.00 (reducible to (NZ) \$210.00 if paid before 15 December 1994) includes all meals except breakfast each morning and the Gala Evening.

Accommodation is available at the Conference Centre at (NZ) \$135.00 per room - single/double/twin share. If this is not suitable there are a number of excellent modestly priced motels nearby.

Any further enquiries should be directed to:-

Barry Caldwell

Conference Secretary
9 Edward Street, Prebbleton 8153,
CANTERBURY, N.Z. Telephone (03)
349-9248 Fax (03) 324-2786

PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINE COCKATOO: THE ULTIMATE CHANCE?

by Marc Boussekey
From February 26th to March 19th, I went back to the Philippines in order to carry on the "Red-Vented Cockatoo programme", a now very endangered species. The purpose was both information and conservation concerned. The information part was successful since I could hand out 3000 extra Cockatoo posters. It was not the same with the conservation aspect: the very fast degradation of the natural habitat - evidently the result of the uncontrolled progression of the human population - and the visible helplessness of the Philippine authorities facing great tasks are the two major reasons. We found again some young Red-Vented Cockatoos for sale at the Carty Mar market in Manila: 9 on February 27th (sold between US 100 and 500 \$, a very expensive price if we consider the local cost of living), 5 other birds on March 19th (the commercial turn-over is very fast!).

Corn fields are extensive at Palawan and were informed that the Cockatoos were regularly

feeding on the ripe seeds. In fact, local people told us they had seen about 10 birds last November but afterwards no more.

Pr Blas TABARANZA agreed the proposed site was unsuitable for a year long study (muddy mangrove area uneasy to reach and to walk through) and the proposal unrealistic (no more stable and regular population of Cockatoos). So, I requested him to find another study site, suitable for long term observation. Dinagat or Siargao Islands could be convenient if it is not too late ... I insisted he writes down as soon as possible the final report of the survey he made in 92: this document he promised to Roland WIRTH who was the instigator of the project, is needed urgently if we want to use the data before they are outdated since the ecological situation on Mindanao is getting worse and worse quickly.

We spent two days in the Mount Kitanglad National Park, one of the remaining forested areas on Mindanao. Cockatoos have never been in this high altitude area (2500 m). We were really surprised to discover some activities normally prohibited in a natural reserve: logging (the forest ground is littered of rotting out trunks) and board making, rotan harvesting and butterfly catching! There is no guard and the National Park bounds seem to be permanently put back by new migrants fields ...

IN CEBU CITY ON CEBU ISLAND (March 10th)

It is a pity the Cockatoo has disappeared from Cebu Island because we would have a remarkable partner there, Perla MAGSALAY, the Philippine Wetland and Wildlife Conservation Foundation executive director. Her hospitality, her enthusiasm and her dynamism have made memorable the day we spent in Cebu City. We offered some posters and we discussed the kind of cooperation we could have with PWCF and how to reorganise the local zoo. We visited Pr JUMALON's butterfly sanctuary as well.

A month after I was back, Perla MAGSALAY wrote they discovered a small Cockatoo population at Cogtong on the very near Bohol Island and proposed to include it in our conservation programme: their proposal will be sent soon.

I came back to France convinced that the Philippine Cockatoo would become very quickly on the verge of extinction. The species population is already getting old since nearly all the young are caught when in the nest for the local trade. The control of the traffic is not really efficient and seizing the birds arises the problem of where to place them: Rescue Centers lack finance and competence. some random

releases on Palawan have been made but without being looked after: almost all the released birds died shortly after. And the natural habitat is reducing because of the human population increase, demanding for more cultivated areas.

Is it a hopeless situation? It is true that we cannot act on most of the aspects (they are off our responsibility) but we can nevertheless try to slow down this evolution: in addition to inform and educate "in situ", we must help not only financially but technically as well Philippine people involved at a governmental level or in the field if they have serious conservation projects.

That is the purpose of the programme we have initiated: it is a modest, hard and long-termed work. Just a word to conclude: the choice of the Philippine Cockatoo is obviously symbolical. the challenge goes beyond the strict objective of the conservation of this species ...

RED-VENTED COCKATOO *Cacatua haematuropygia* EEP (European Endangered Species Program)

ANNUAL REPORT 1993

59 birds from 6 European countries (Denemark, England, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain) were registered on the EEP in 1993: 33 are owned by 11 private breeders and 26 are held by 5 zoos.

33 cockatoos are wild born and 26 captive bred. Only 5 of the 17 adult pairs in the EEP are breeding and produced 7 hatchlings in 1993. 6 adult males are kept alone: several are known to be female-killers. Some successful private breeders are reluctant to participate in the EEP.

A first studbook will be published in 1994.

SWITZERLAND

Kakadu United was founded early this year by my friend Jeannette Koene and myself. We both keep cockatoos and through this we had a lot of common things to talk about. With all our questions and answers, we thought maybe others might feel the same. We started to look for people who were interested in forming an "Information Network". To our amazement, we got responses from all over the world. Despite the name Kakadu United (Kakadu is the German word for Cockatoo) we have members with all kinds of parrots.

Now, after the release of our third issue of Kakadu United, we see the network expanding further. Our aim was and still is, to bring information to the people who need it. Many veterinarians and breeders have given us advice and articles about problems in parrot keeping. Some stories of readers have shown how many problems can sometimes be encountered buying birds without enough knowledge.

We do not have a membership fee, but ask a (still not cost-covering) price for our magazine which is published every two months. The language of our brochure is German and English, whereby articles are published in their original version first and translated at a later stage. This enables us to bring information across the "language barrier" more directly.

We try to support Bird-related projects with donations from members and sponsors. One of our "Pet Projects" is collecting donations for the BPF-D-Project of Dr Gary Cross and his team in Australia.

We welcome all interested people to write to us. For our information Brochure, write to Kakadu United, Postfach, 4002 Basel, Switzerland, or fax: 0041-61-332 09 75.

Beatrice Seitz, Editor of Kakadu United, September 1995

ADDENDUM

In the last issue (Vol. 6 No. 3) of PsittaScene a report from Paulo Martuscelli and Dr David Waugh about the Red-tailed Amazon *Amazona brasiliensis* were published. The authors have missed to mention that the project has been sponsored by the German 'Fonds für Bedrohte Papageien' (Funds for Threatened Parrots), as well as the Nature Conservancy.

Since 1987 the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Population to which the 'Fonds für Bedrohte Papageien' belongs has sponsored the successful studies about the Red-tailed Amazon from Pedro Scherer Neto in the wild.

The poster which Dr. David Waugh has pictured was financed by Zoo Dresden and transported to Brazil free by British Airways Assisting Nature Conservation.

Armin Brockner
(Fonds für bedrohte Papageien)

PARAGUAY PLANS GO AHEAD

Veteran members of the World Parrot Trust may recall that I was able to visit Paraguay in 1992, with the help of British Airways Assisting Nature Conservation. Here is an extract from that report in 'PsittaScene' February 1993:-

REPORT ON VISIT TO PARAGUAY - OCT. 1992

by Michael Reynolds

I was invited, on behalf of The World Parrot Trust, to visit Asuncion by HM Ambassador to Paraguay, Mr Michael Dibben, who had visited Paradise Park-headquarters of the World Parrot Trust - last August.

The purpose of my visit was twofold: first to pursue the idea of developing a 'conservation bus' similar to the ones we have supplied to the Caribbean, and second, to advise on the future of some Hyacinth Macaws *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* currently held at Asuncion Zoo.

The Ambassador kindly arranged a reception at which I had the opportunity to address an audience of ministers, conservationists and business people on the subject of the World Parrot Trust, and in particular the possibility of joint action to put a 'Paraguay Wildlife Express' on the road. I am pleased to be able to report that much interest was shown, and there is a good possibility of a cooperative effort between a leading Paraguayan conservation foundation and a British bank. The basic plan is for them to locally purchase, restore and paint a secondhand bus, while the World Parrot Trust supplies much of the exhibit material, and general advice based on our experience in the Caribbean.

The question of the ten Hyacinth Macaws at Asuncion Zoo is more difficult. There is no doubt that the conditions under which they are kept are quite unsatisfactory. They live in small iron-roofed pens with no opportunity to rain-bathe, their diet seems inadequate, and they have no breeding facilities. The perches are either iron pipes or bamboo, whereas all parrots should have fresh branches to chew. One pair reportedly laid eggs on the ground and tried to incubate them; even then, no nest box was provided. They have been there for some years, and their numbers have dwindled from 16 to 10. "



This aviary could be converted to house the Hyacinth Macaws

Following that visit we have kept in touch with the Ambassador, and we are delighted to report that the Trust can now go ahead on all fronts. Funds have been provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, first, to fund the purchase of the bus in Asuncion, and second to fund the following activities by The World Parrot Trust:-

1. A visit by Andrew Greenwood MRCVS (scheduled for end of November 1994) to examine and assess the group of Hyacinth Macaws at Asuncion Zoo, and advise on their rehousing and future care. The eight remaining birds are thought to be seven males and one female, but it will be as well for Dr Greenwood to confirm this.

In addition, Dr. Greenwood will, as stated in our proposal to the FCO: 'Investigate the structure and policies of the zoo, the welfare of the animals, the skills and potential of the staff, the availability of veterinary and laboratory back-up, and subsequently provide a full report and continuing advice to the zoo management.'

2. The provision of all the exhibits for the 'Paraguay Eco Express'. These are currently being designed by the same team who put together the three Caribbean 'Parrot Buses'. Once again, the aim is to use parrots and other flagship species to educate local people on the need to preserve habitats. (As always, credit must be given to Paul Butler and RARE Centre, who conceived the idea of these buses and secured the major part of the funding for the Caribbean buses). Early in 1995 David Woolcock and Nick Reynolds of WPT will take the exhibits, fit them in the Paraguay bus, and make it ready for the road.

3. While in Asuncion they will,

subject to agreement with the zoo management, set out to rehouse the group of Hyacinth Macaws. From my previous visit, I believe it may be practical to 'rewire' an existing large flight aviary, about 80 feet long, and make a much more congenial aviary for these birds. Part of it could be sectioned off to make a breeding flight.

4. The Trust is also preparing a substantial educational exhibit for Asuncion Zoo; this will feature Hyacinth Macaws, but will also cover a wide range of the interesting wildlife of Paraguay.

Naturally, we are very pleased to have brought our plans almost to fruition, and it is a valuable endorsement of our work that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has seen fit to fund our efforts for the parrots, first in St Vincent, and now in Paraguay.

Michael Reynolds



A BIG THANK YOU

To the 'Italian Delegation' at the Tenerife Convention who collected \$300 to reward Ms. Farrow who provided the Italian translations at the Loro Parque Convention. And an even bigger 'thank you' to Ms. Farrow for her generosity in donating the entire sum to the World Parrot Trust.

The World Parrot Trust contributed towards a field study of the Red-spectacled Parrot *Amazona pretrei*. We have recently received a full report from BirdLife International - this is an extract.

The Red-spectacled Parrot *Amazona pretrei* is considered to be one of the most threatened species of bird of South America. It is now almost entirely restricted to forested areas in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Brazil, where it is listed as a protected species under federal law. It is thought to have undergone a precipitous decline over the last 50 years and various calls have been made for action to save the species. Unfortunately the lack of detailed information on the species' status, distribution, ecology and the threats facing it have prevented the design and implementation of conservation measures.

This report presents a summary of the results of a 2-year study of the ecology and conservation of *Amazona pretrei* in southern Brazil, including a brief analysis of the threats facing the species and outline actions necessary to protect it, funded by BirdLife International, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Museu de Ciências e Tecnologia at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Rio Grande do Sul (PUC) the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (FAPERGS), and World Parrot Trust.

The main breeding areas of *A. pretrei* are in the south-east and north-central regions of RS. In winter the majority of the parrots occur in the north-east in areas where *Araucaria angustifolia* is most common. Some *A. pretrei* also appear to over winter in south-east Santa Catarina (SC) and very small numbers may also breed here. Recent counts at roosting sites put the estimate of the wild population at 7,500-8,500 birds.

Nectandra and *Ocotea* spp. (canelas), *Cupania vernalis* (Camboatá) and *Sebastiania* spp. (branquilhos), are the most common nest tree species accounting for around 50% of the nest trees. Nest holes are generally low (mean 6.5m from the ground) and range in depth from 25-300cm (mean 77cm). *A. pretrei* has been reported to feed on fruits of a variety of tree species during spring and summer (October - February) but during late autumn and winter

(May-August) concentrates on *Araucaria angustifolia* (the major fruiting tree in the north of the state at this time), moving to the north-east of RS and parts of south-east SC where this tree is most abundant. Eighteen roost sites are known, of which 15 are currently active. The majority of these are located in privately owned plantations of *Eucalyptus* spp. or *Pinus* spp.

Collectors usually remove all the (2-4) young from the nest for the local pet trade, cutting and often destroying the nest in the process. This activity is probably the most serious threat to the population of *A. pretrei* at present, although evidence suggests that large-scale deforestation following colonisation by European immigrants over the last 150 years has been the major cause for its decline.

Protection, management and creation of suitable habitat and protected areas for *A. pretrei*, achieving a reduction in the collection and sale of young *A. pretrei*, through increased law enforcement activities and an education and public awareness campaign, protection of roost sites and continued monitoring of the parrot population are considered the most immediate conservation priorities.

Principal actions needed to protect the species are:

- Increased law enforcement activities and prosecutions against the collectors of birds and especially against the dealers, concentrating in the major breeding areas during the breeding period;
- Increased law-enforcement activities to reduce the continuing destruction and degradation of forest in the species breeding and feeding areas;
- The establishment of a joint police/IBAMA/Secretaria da Agricultura 'Task Force' to coordinate law enforcement activities;
- The establishment of the Podocarpus State Park Ibitirá State Park and the Serra Geral National Park which at present exist only on paper;
- Improvement of existing public protected areas, most importantly Espigão Alto State Park, Aparados da Serra National Park and Carazinho Municipal Park, which are not adequately managed;
- A campaign to encourage the creation of reserves in

municipalities within the range of *A. pretrei*, especially in the most important breeding and feeding areas;

- Agreements with the owners of the currently active roost sites to maintain these sites until the parrots abandon them;
- Establishment of a forum to consider strategies for the disposal of confiscated parrots;
- A campaign to encourage landowners to reforest with native rather than exotic species, particularly preferred food and nest tree species, such as *Araucaria angustifolia* and *Podocarpus lambertii*;
- A conservation education programme targeted against the collectors in most important breeding areas and against those sections of the population who purchase parrots;
- A campaign to seek the adoption of *A. pretrei*, as an emblem for Rio Grande do Sul;
- Additional research on *A. pretrei*, principally on its reproductive success, characteristics of its roosting sites, food and daily and seasonal movements in relation to its food supply;
- A study of the regeneration in forested areas of RS;
- The establishment of a monitoring scheme to determine how the parrot population is changing and to evaluate the success of conservation measures.

ACTION FOR CHRISTMAS

In this issue you will find a colourful sheet which has membership details on one side, and information about our very successful Firefly shirts on the other side. (Did you know that we have now sold over 3000 of them?) Also included is info on the limited edition print of Lear's Macaw by David Johnston. Please try to 'put something back' into the world of parrots by buying some of our excellent merchandise.

By the way, the original painting of Lear's Macaw is available. The first offer of \$10000 will be accepted. Please note that David Johnston is donating the entire receipts for this picture - original and prints - to the Trust.

CHRISTMAS CARD

We have an attractive Christmas card this year (the front illustration pictured below). Send your orders in quickly so that we can ensure they reach you in good time. They are available in packs of ten, postage included, £3.50 U.K. & Europe and £4.50 (\$7) to Overseas. The words in the card say "With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year". Cards can also be supplied on request simply saying "With Best Wishes", making this a greetings card for all occasions. Orders please (credit card payments preferred for outside the U.K.) to: Judith Venning, WPT, Glamor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY, U.K. Fax: (0736) 756438



PARROT WATCHING IN JAMAICA

By Dennis Lofto (Winnipeg, Canada)

After attending the International Aviculturists' Society convention in Miami in January, I had the good fortune to spend a few days in Jamaica. With two friends, I rented a house outside of Montego Bay. It turned out to be a villa on eight acres of land, 1500 ft up on a hillside overlooking Montego Bay harbour.

The first morning we were there we heard conures; this is the Jamaican Conure (*Aratinga nana*), one of the less colourful species. Next morning we were up early and one of the grounds keepers told us that two parrots had a nest nearby. He took us there and showed us what he called a duck-ant nest (probably that of a termite) high in a tree. We started to walk back when we saw the pair of Conures who owned the nest nearby. The pair were copulating right in front of us. As it was about

5.30am on a cloudy day, the photographs we took of this were unfortunately too dark for publication.

On another day we went searching for Amazons. We decided to try a part of the Cockpit Country mentioned in 'Birds of Jamaica'* as an area where both species, the Black-billed (*Amazona agilis*) and the Yellow-billed (*A. collaria*) might be found. Cockpit Country is described therein as a wet limestone forest as follows:

"The forest is layered and may be as high as 15-20m (50-65ft) with occasional examples of West Indian Cedar and Broadleaf reaching 25-35m (80-115ft). There is a layer of shrubs and herbs which included sweetwoods and thatch palms and many vines and bromelads. The forest floor is dark, with many species of fern



Yellow-billed conure - (*Amazona collaria*)



Jamaican Conure - (*Aratinga nana*)

growing between outcrops of broken rock."

We drove along the coast from Montego Bay, heading east towards Falmouth.

Then we left the Caribbean Sea and headed south towards Cockpit Country. It had been raining most of the night and the rough, narrow backroads were, in places, nearly impassable. Good Hope Plantation was an area recommended by the field guide. When we reached it, we were taken on a tour, by foot, of the 2,000 acre plantation.

The terrain was rough, rolling hills with occasional outcroppings of limestone; bush mixed with some open country. As we walked into the bush we could hear loud, raucous squawking, typical of Amazon Parrots. As we approached a grove of trees we could see Amazons in the canopy 40-50ft above. They were Yellow-bills and the flock numbered 50 to 60 birds. We were also able to identify the smaller Black-billed. There were also a few pairs of Jamaican Conures. It appears that they all congregate in the same trees to feed. After a few minutes the entire flock flew off down the valley.

On the plantation ground itself, near the greathouse, we saw single pairs of Yellow-bills and conures flying from tree to tree. Leaving the plantation, on the return journey, we came across a mixed flock of Yellow-bills and Black-bills again. This time we were much closer and the birds were not

obscured by dense canopy. A few seemed to be curious and looked down at us as we photographed them. However, it was a dull, overcast day and it did rain, so the photographs were not so good. As with the earlier flock, we observed a couple of pairs of Conures with the Amazons.

Before we left Jamaica, we visited the Rocklands Feeding Station, near Anchovy, St James County. This is a private establishment where wild Streamer-tailed Hummingbirds, Jamaican Mango Hummingbirds and Black-faced Grassquits (small seed-eating birds) will come and sit on your hand to be fed.

Seeing parrots in the wild was wonderful! However, with all that is going on in the Caribbean as far as ecotourism is concerned, it does not seem that much is being done in Jamaica. I do know that RARE has a butterfly project in the John Crow Mountains but it seems as though the Jamaicans are content to develop tourism along more traditional lines.

On another subject, we recently participated in a motor home trade show at a local convention centre. People were very interested in the parrots which we displayed but were not overly generous with contributions. We raised about \$70 which has been forwarded to the World Parrot Trust.

* Birds of Jamaica by A. Downer and R. Sutton, 1990, Cambridge University Press, page 25.

5 ENDANGERED BIRDS FROM OUR PARROT PORTFOLIO

St Vincent Parrot *Amazona guildingii*

In 1993 the Trust sent the third of its Caribbean 'parrot buses' to St Vincent. It has also funded a report by Andrew Greenwood MRCVS into the breeding programme in the government aviaries on St Vincent, and the improvements and avicultural support which will follow.



Hyacinth Macaw *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*

The World Parrot Trust has funded biological studies of this species by Charles Munn and Carlos Yamashita, and also the provision of supplementary nestboxes.



Further field work is urgently needed.

Echo Parakeet *Psittacula echo*

The World Parrot Trust is in partnership with Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust in a longterm programme to save this parakeet, which is the world's rarest parrot with only about 20 remaining.



Lear's Macaw *Anodorhynchus leari*

This major project is supervised for WPT by leading macaw researcher Dr. Charles A. Munn III, and is centred on the planting of thousands of Licuri palms needed by these macaws. Latest reports suggest that about 100 birds still exist.

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus banksii graptogyne

The Trust has a six year commitment to this programme to help preserve an endangered sub-species of this cockatoo in Victoria and South Australia.



PLEASE GET IN TOUCH IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP THE SURVIVAL OF ANY OF THESE BIRDS.

AIMS OF THE WORLD PARROT TRUST

The objective of the trust is to promote the survival of all parrot species and the welfare of individual birds.

1. By educating the general public on the threat to parrot survival, and seeking their interest, concern and support.
2. By action to protect and preserve the natural habitats of parrots.
3. By gathering and disseminating information on the status of parrot populations in the wild and in captivity.
4. By advocating effective controls on the international trade in wild-caught parrots, and its replacement by captive-bred birds.
5. By encouraging co-operation in the breeding of parrots by aviculturists and zoological institutions and better liaison between the captive breeding community and conservation bodies, with the aim of creating self-sustaining populations of endangered species.
6. By promoting high standards in the keeping of parrots as pets.
7. By encouraging research projects, i.e. the veterinary care of parrots and the preservation of genetic diversity.
8. By any other means that may be appropriate.

Members receive our quarterly newsletter *PsittaScene* with news about parrot conservation, aviculture and welfare.

Please send your completed form to:

UNITED KINGDOM
World Parrot Trust, Glamor House,
Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PO Box 341141, Memphis, Tennessee 38184,
U.S.A.

CANADA
Mr. M Hagen, PO Box 490, Rigaud, Quebec JOP IPO, Canada.

BENELUX
Mrs. J Fiege, Graafseweg 37, 54 51 NA-MILL Netherlands.

FRANCE
M et Mme Prin, 55 Rue de la Fassierte, 45140 Ingre, France.

DENMARK
M Iversen, Alsikemarken 48 2860 Søborg, Denmark.



HELP SAVE THE PARROTS OF THE WORLD

Please join the Trust, or encourage friends to join.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES (please tick)

- UK and Europe (Single) £15
- UK and Europe (Family) £20
- Fellow (Life Member) £250/US\$400
Corporate (Annual)
- All Overseas Airmail £17/US\$25
(payment by Access/Visa preferred)
- Additional donation of £/US\$

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OR: I enclose cheque payable to the WPT.

I heard about the World Parrot Trust from.....

PARROTS IN THE WILD



THE KAKAPO *Strigops habroptilus*

This is Don Merton's unique shot of a Kakapo feeding its chick in a wild nest.

For more information about Don and his work with the Kakapo and other endangered New Zealand birds, see Rosemary Low's article in this newsletter.

The Kakapo is the heaviest parrot in existence, males weighing up to 3.7kg and females up to 2kg. They were formerly found in the mountain ranges of the North and South and on the Stewart islands of New Zealand.

Now their numbers are greatly reduced and they survive only on Little Barrier, Codfish and Maud island.

The decline of the Kakapo may have been caused by predators such as rats and other introduced species as well as the effects of land clearance and hunting. They are particularly vulnerable due to their habit of nesting on the ground, their apparent tameness and their inability to fly. They are mainly solitary.

At breeding time the males will aggressively defend their mate's territory and then after mating, leave the female to bring up her young alone. The males can also emit a strange booming sound which is audible over considerable distances.

We intend to continue this 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.