

# Psitta



# Scene

*The World Parrot Trust*

Vol. 9 No. 1 February 1997

## Speaking out for Aviculture

by Michael Reynolds

Inserted in this issue of *PsittaScene* you will find a copy of 'A Manifesto for Aviculture'. This is a statement on behalf of aviculture, and it has been sent to a wide range of organisations. These include: all 140 CITES Management Authorities (these are the national bodies responsible for regulating trade in endangered species), many conservation foundations, zoos, avicultural societies, bird protection groups, and general and specialist media.

### A PROCLAMATION

The Manifesto is a kind of proclamation on behalf of our hobby, and it has a number of purposes. Above all, it aims to provide a more balanced and favourable view of aviculture, the image of which has suffered at the hands of Tony Silva and other transgressors. The Manifesto sets out to make the point that bird-keeping, in all its forms, is a natural human activity. It goes on to try to describe the fascination of aviculture, the way in which it has developed in recent years, and how a minority of greedy people have damaged the reputation of the majority. This leads on to the concept of 'responsible aviculture', and the proposal that those who accept and practise this concept should not be burdened with 'further restrictions'.

The Manifesto closes with a number of suggestions to 'the authorities' concerning the need for

more thorough and efficient use of CITES, a request that aviculturists be given due credit for the way in which successful captive breeding has reduced the demand for wild-caught birds, and a request for adequate consultation with avicultural organisations.

It closes with the following 'Summary':-

**Aviculture is an ancient and natural human pastime which gives pleasure to millions of people.**

**This fulfilling hobby has been compromised by the actions of a small minority.**

**Attitudes in aviculture are**

**changing, will lead to the correction of past errors, and the further development of 'responsible aviculture'.**

**Authorities should recognise the legitimate aspirations of legitimate aviculturists, and should work with them to arrive at mutually acceptable regulations.**

So far so good, although it is too much to hope that everyone in our complex world of the parrots will agree with everything we have said. Apart from making a statement to the authorities, and to the general public, when we published this Manifesto we were, of course, also

addressing aviculturists themselves.

Once again, we are putting forward the concept of 'responsible aviculture'. We are not sure where this term originated, but in our *PsittaScene* Vol. 3 No. 1, in February 1991, we suggested it was time for:

### 'A NEW ERA IN PARROT AVICULTURE'

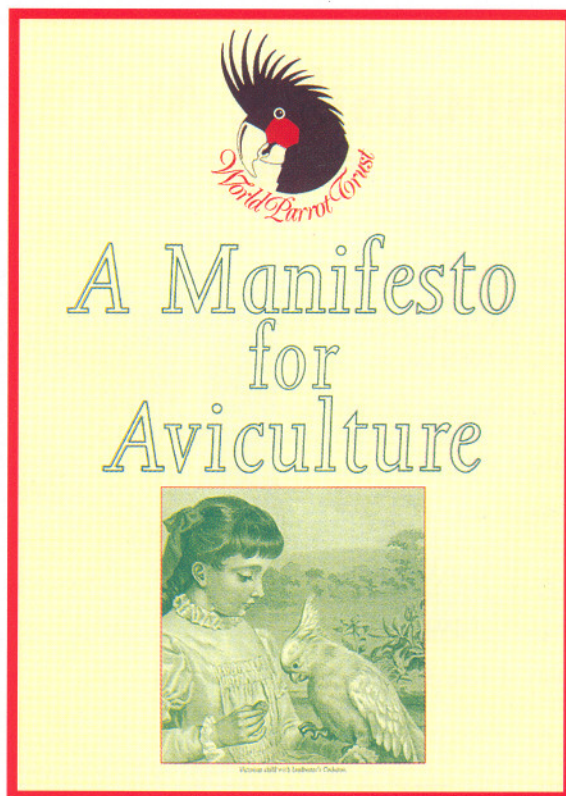
What we proposed was '...a commitment to a new ERA: Enlightened, Responsible Aviculture. The idea of this rather heavy-handed slogan is to remind us that there is more to keeping and breeding parrots than money, prestige, or recreational pleasure.

It is an immense privilege to have these birds in our care, and we should never forget it. One way of acknowledging this privilege is to show practical concern for the survival of the parrots in the wild, and that means contributing cash to support the work being done in the field. *The World Parrot Trust* is doing this with your subscriptions, and other donations and receipts, but we are only scratching the surface of the task.

Other enlightened and responsible activities would include keeping proper records, being prepared to place birds with other responsible aviculturists on breeding loan, recording appropriate birds with studbook holders, striving to improve standards of bird-keeping in general and hygiene in particular, sharing information and giving birds more space. The welfare of individual pet birds needs attention, and we must be alert to the quality of life we are providing for all our parrots'.

It doesn't matter one bit whether or

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“psittacine

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

*If we can save the parrots, we may yet save ourselves* © WPT



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

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



We recently found a copy of this interesting book 'The Grey Parrot' by W.T. Greene, published in 1893. The author's observations are very much in line with our experiences with these birds today, but the book is full of accurate and entertaining quotes which we will attempt to include in a future *PsittaScene*. Also fascinating are the advertisements by importers such as William Cross of Liverpool. This item is included here to reinforce our point that aviculture is indeed an established human pastime, and not a lot has changed in 103 years!

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not WPT originated 'responsible aviculture'. What is important is that the concept seems to have been accepted by very many leading figures. At the IAS convention in January, Dr. Kevin Flammer said in reply to a question: '...if you are practising responsible aviculture you will quarantine every new arrival at your facility'. So it seems that 'responsible

aviculture' has become a useful phrase describing an approved and recognised goal. This being so, it seems timely to attempt a fresh definition as shown below:-

If any reader would like to comment on this definition of 'responsible aviculture', or suggest alternatives or amendments, please write to us. We don't think we have all the answers, but bear in mind

that in everything we do, the birds come first.

Returning to the 'Manifesto for Aviculture', we will report in future editions of *PsittaScene* any reactions we may receive. No doubt we have missed a number of organisations or publications, so please let us know and we will mail copies as required.

# Responsible Aviculture

**A commitment to this concept requires:-**



- 1. Care about the origin of birds.** Wild-caught parrots are no longer acceptable, smuggled parrots even less so. Aviary bred birds are readily available, either imprinted to be pet birds, or non-imprinted for avicultural breeding purposes.
- 2. Adequate housing.** Our birds deserve well-designed, state-of-the-art aviaries and cages, with the emphasis on SPACE.
- 3. Veterinary support.** In most developed avicultural countries today, the help of an avian vet is likely to be available. To try to keep exotic birds without that professional advice is bound to be a false economy, as well as plain irresponsible.
- 4. Quality of Life.** Our birds need SPACE, environmental enrichment within that space, and for aviary birds, the opportunity to socialise and breed. 'Factory farming' of parrots in tiny cages cannot be condoned. In the view of *The World Parrot Trust* the automatic wing-clipping of pet parrots needs to be reconsidered. What is a bird if it cannot fly?

**5. Commitment to Conservation.** If we keep parrots in captivity, we have unquestionably contributed to their decline in the wild. On their part, the parrots have given us our companions, our hobby, and a billion dollar business. For all these reasons we must **PUT SOMETHING BACK TO HELP THE PARROTS IN THE WILD.** *The World Parrot Trust* has many projects needing financial support.

**6. Commitment to Welfare.** Untold millions of parrots have been trapped and taken from the wild over the past twenty years, and many of these, completely unsuitable as pets, have come to grief. Psittacine aviculture has a clear responsibility to take care of these casualties, and must support the many initiatives now being taken world-wide to rescue and rehabilitate sick and unwanted parrots.

# Kakapo Update

by Don Merton

## Report To mid-January 1997

Fifty kakapo are known to survive - nineteen females and thirty one males. Apart from three hatched on the island, all have been relocated since 1975 to off-shore islands in order to protect them from introduced mammalian predators - no natural population is known to remain. Twenty six birds (16 males and 10 females) are on Codfish Island; two males on an island off southern Stewart Island; eight (4 males and 4 females) on Maud Island; and fourteen (9 males and 5 females) are on Little Barrier Island.

**No adult mortality is known to have occurred during the last three years.**

Four birds were moved from Little Barrier Island (LBI) during the 1996 winter. "Arab" and "Barnard" (presumed mates of "Heather" and "Wendy", who produced infertile clutches in 1995) have traditionally hogged the much-prized Summit track and bowl systems (t&bs) on Little Barrier, systems usually visited by the females in a breeding year. They were exiled to an island off southern Stewart Island to sit out the breeding season, contemplating their suspected infertility. Though Arab and Barnard have not been confirmed as infertile, the Kakapo

Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee concurred with the Kakapo Management Group decision to remove them for this season. The birds' fertility will be assessed over the next two booming seasons, after which a decision will be made on how best to use them.

"Flossie" and "Richard Henry" were shifted from LBI to Maud Island since they had proved to be unmanageable on the much larger and more rugged Little Barrier.

Richard Henry has settled in his former home-range (he was on Maud from 1973 to 1982) and has continued to accept supplementary foods. His tarsus diameter has continued to increase very slowly throughout the 22 years since his removal from Fiordland and he has yet again outgrown his special-issue, male-kakapo leg band. If in fact this is typical then tarsus diameter may serve as an index of age in kakapo!

The objective in transferring Flossie to Maud was to bring her into the management programme - to enable her to be more closely monitored and to be supplementary-fed. Within a month of her arrival she had learned to lift the lid of her food hopper and to eat the various foods on offer.

Also on Maud Island, five-year-old "Hoki" (the only captive kakapo



Above: Female Kakapo "Hoki" at three months old.

Photograph: Gideon Climo

and **only female to hatch and survive since 1981**), has been encouraged to leave her pen in order to socialise with the seven free-living kakapo on Maud - and to mate when she is ready. She has a stoat-proof, modified cat flap door to facilitate her comings and goings, as well as an artificial roost/nest chamber. So far, she has explored some hundreds of metres beyond her pen - including the garden around Brian and Debbie Patton's house, and to within 100m of Comalco Lodge. She now feeds from her feeding station within her pen most nights but generally roosts outside by day. Her activities and well-being are of course being closely monitored.

## LOGGERS

With the upgrade and increased number of loggers we can now manage nests from an earlier stage. If a female is logged at a track and bowl system, her precise location will be fixed daily by triangulation; if she has not moved for a specified number of days she will be checked visually to determine whether or not she has a nest.

Loggers will also reduce the effort required for monitoring males during the booming season through provision of data about which males are visiting track and bowl systems.

## A SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH SEASON

The summer season is only just under way, but we have already finished a successful research season, thanks to the generous sponsorship of Comalco New Zealand Limited - a sponsorship

which is to continue for the next six years! Significant progress is already being made towards achieving the goals outlined in the Kakapo Recovery Plan, and with this continued sponsorship, we look forward to even greater results.

Sampling programme: During their normal transmitter change (mainly during July - August), 45 kakapo were caught and a blood sample and cloacal and choanal swabs taken from each. There were three main objectives for this sampling programme:

## GENETIC ANALYSIS

We want to know the degree of relatedness of all our birds and to be able to identify individuals from moulted feathers. In collaboration with Drs David Lambert and Bruce Robertson of Massey University's Department of Ecology a DNA programme has been set up.

## HEALTH NORMS

We aim to establish biological norms in kakapo through determination of normal levels of various blood components, as well as micro-organisms and parasites. Swabs, blood and faecal samples from all birds have been analysed. Kakapo were found to be remarkably free from pathogens. A paper will be prepared by late March for publication and for distribution to veterinarians associated with the kakapo programme.

During sampling we found that Fuschia (a female on Maud Island) had a low-grade bacterial infection. We treated her with doxycycline (an antibiotic used previously on



Above: Female Kakapo "Heather" eating from a feeder on Little Barrier Island.

Photograph: Brett McKay

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kakapo); another sample taken three weeks later showed that she had recovered. Ken (a male on Codfish Island) was also found to have a low-grade infection caused by a partially healed wing injury dating from 1995, but as he is not currently taking supplementary foods we have been unable to treat him so effectively.

#### ENERGY EXPENDITURE

The technique known as "doubly-labelled water" was used to measure energy expenditure in a sample of twenty kakapo from all three islands. Professor David Bryant of Stirling University (Scotland) is analysing the results, which should be available early in the new year. Preliminary results indicate that non-breeding kakapo have an exceptionally low field energy expenditure.

#### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH:

Kakapo sperm: Daryl Eason is developing means for collecting and assessing kakapo sperm.

With the anticipated intense booming season this year we hope to at least master sperm collection techniques.

#### DIET AND NUTRITION:

Faeces are being collected on a regular basis from specific females, which are also being tracked at night to see what and where they are eating. The aim of this exercise is to spot any change in diet that might be associated with - and perhaps trigger - breeding.

We have also negotiated the return from the United States of faecal

material collected by a Cornell University researcher on Stewart Island during the 1981 breeding season (that is, from the last successful breeding season - of the last natural kakapo population!) Identification of plant material from this unique sample of droppings would seem to offer the only means we now have of determining the natural diet fed to kakapo chicks.

Hormone therapy: Last year, Massey University and AgResearch scientists instigated research aimed at inducing breeding in birds - initially using mallards - by administering gonadotrophin releasing hormone. We are following this research closely since inducing non-productive females to breed, and inducing those that already do to breed more often are key programme goals.

#### SCENT AND HEARING

Julie Hagelin (University of New Mexico, USA) has been investigating scent discrimination, using field trials on Maud Island and autopsy of museum specimens. It had appeared that kakapo had little or no sense of smell, but a trial involving Richard Henry (the last Fiordland bird) and Hoki (the only captive kakapo) showed that they could find foods using what we assume to be their sense of smell. Examination of museum material showed that the species olfactory lobes are unexpectedly large. Also, the large size of kakapo ear apertures suggest that they have acute, perhaps directional, hearing - an attribute likely to be enhanced by the birds' owl-like facial discs.

#### PLANT PHENOLOGY

Dr Bill Lee (Landcare Research) is designing a more effective plant phenology monitoring programme for us. We have for some years been monitoring rimu fruiting levels on Codfish Island. A heavy crop of rimu fruit is developing at present and should be available to the birds from late March/early April this year. In 1992 - the last time that rimu there fruited heavily - kakapo breeding failed when the crop spoiled just prior to ripening. Although a significant amount of fruit has fallen in recent months, the crop that remains is a heavy one.

Many kakapo transmitter mortality switches have failed in recent months, requiring unscheduled replacement - and disturbance to birds.

#### BREEDING:

Kakapo appear to breed naturally at about five-yearly intervals, in synchrony with the heavy fruiting (masting) of certain native plants. No breeding occurred on any of the islands during the 1996 season. However, booming has now begun on both Little Barrier and Codfish Islands - so hopes of breeding occurring in 1997 are high'.

**Little Barrier:** By mid-January 1997 seven t&bs were being tended and at least four males were booming. The male Ox appears to have taken over the prime summit t&bs (previously occupied by Barnard) and Dobbie to have occupied the Woodpile system (formerly occupied by Arab).

**Maud:** The activity noted at t&bs in October and November seems to

have tapered off, though on one occasion in late December a male was heard booming.

**Codfish:** At least ten t&bs were active and nine males were booming by mid-January, and several females had indulged in "walkabouts" beyond their home-ranges - behaviour believed to be linked to courtship and breeding.

Alison Ballance of the Natural History Unit, TVNZ is at present remotely monitoring and filming the nightly activity of the male Lionel at his t&bs. As during last booming season

Alison is hopeful of seeing and filming for the first time mating and associated behaviour. According to Alison, Lionel's booming and visual displays are more intense this year than last.

#### INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY:

**Rats:** Because kiore rats are present on two of the three kakapo islands and are a major cause of chick mortality it is essential we are able to quickly and safely control them near nests. Field trials we carried out on LBI during 1996 indicate that these rats just love white chocolate, preferring it to natural foods available during Autumn. Also, that they are most reluctant to enter the traditional (enclosed) poison-bait stations we have used previously. By incorporating white chocolate into a toxic bait and redesigning our bait stations we have increased many-fold the "bait take" by rats, as well as virtually eliminating the risks to kakapo and other non-target animals. Hopefully, the heavy loss of kakapo chicks to rats will now be a thing of the past!

#### DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Special heat pads have been developed to maintain incubation / brooding temperatures in nests, should the female not return. This gives a buffer of several hours. Standard Operating Procedures for disaster management of nests have been developed, covering reporting, communications, decisions, equipment operation, and safety.

**FOOTNOTE:** Our trustee and veterinary consultant Andrew Greenwood will be visiting NZ this April to help with this programme.

#### STOP PRESS!

As we went to press we received the wonderful news from Don Merton that a nest has been found on Codfish Island! So far, four females have mated. In the next issue we will bring you the latest developments.



Above: Gideon Climo and Paul Jensen demonstrate the two-way door used by Hoki.

Photograph: Don Merton

# See Them Fly Down Under! by Michael Reynolds

For anyone interested in the parrots, Australia is a land rich with delights. It is home to about 55 parrot species, or one sixth of the total number of parrots that have established niches in our tumultuous natural world. Fig Parrots, Night Parrots, Ground Parrots, lorikeets, parakeets, budgerigars, cockatoos. So much variety, beauty and excitement, so much to study, so much to protect.

## BLACK COCKATOO PROJECT

For most of the 25 years I have been under the parrot spell, I have been too busy (and too broke) to visit Australia, the 'land of parrots'. I finally got there in 1994, when invited to speak at the National Avicultural Convention in Melbourne. I was then able to visit the area in the south of Victoria where the *World Parrot Trust* was funding a project to monitor, study and protect a threatened population of a sub-species of the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. This population is estimated to total between 500 and 1000 birds. Our funding over a four year period encouraged additional funding from the states of Victoria and South Australia, and this work is continuing today. The problem here is that we need to be sure that (a) no birds are being stolen, and (b) that sufficient breeding is being achieved to ensure satisfactory 'recruitment' to sustain the population. Due to the very long lifespan of cockatoos, it would be easy to believe that the sub-species was secure, only to find - when it was too late - that a dramatic crash in the population had occurred since for many years not enough young birds had been joining the flocks. Since the known nests are being protected, fledglings are identified with micro-chips, and local farmers and wildlife conservation staff are on the alert, there is reason to believe that these special Red-tailed Black Cockatoos will continue to thrive.

## SECOND VISIT

What brought me to Australia in October 1996 was a new and extremely appropriate subject for *World Parrot Trust* funding. We had heard from Joe Forshaw (author of 'Parrots of the World', and a member of our WPT panel of project reviewers) that a three year study of the Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus* was being



Looking for Palm Cockatoos in the Iron Range National Park, Queensland. L to R: Audrey Reynolds, Daryn Storch, Joe Forshaw, Stephen Garnett, Don Bruning, Mick and Clare Blackman, Lesaie Felderhof with Will.

Photo M. Reynolds

planned, and that participation by the *World Parrot Trust* would be welcome. Since the Palm Cockatoo is the symbol of the trust, this was an opportunity not to be missed. Other factors included the coincidental fact that we were in the process of launching *World Parrot Trust Australia*, and that we could seek funding within Australia for an Australian parrot species. We reported this project in our August 1996 issue of *PsittaScene*, for readers who may want to check the details of the proposal.

## PALM COCKATOO

The Australian population of the Palm Cockatoo is concentrated in the Cape York area in the top right hand expanse of Queensland. This is 'tropical Australia' with much rainforest remaining despite the inroads of sugar cane and other agricultural activity. The further North you go, the more unspoiled it is. My wife, Audrey, and I were invited to join Joe Forshaw and Donald Bruning, Chairman of Ornithology at New York Zoological Society, to visit the Iron Range National Park, where the three year study will take place.

This entailed taking an interesting flight in a small aircraft. We took off from Cairns, but after an hour's flight the pilot didn't like the look of a flashing red light on his dashboard, and took us back to the airport. We tried again the next day, and arrived without incident at the airstrip near an aboriginal settlement at Lockhart River. I

should mention here that the *World Parrot Trust* paid for this local flight for Joe Forshaw, my wife and myself, but did not pay any other expenses throughout our trip. Some people like to know these things.

At Lockwood River we were met by Stephen Garnett, one of Australia's leading field biologists, and taken to the ranger station from which the vast area of the Iron Range National Park is administered. Stephen is currently engaged in research into the Glossy Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami* on Kangaroo Island near Adelaide, but he will hopefully be able to take on supervision of the planned three year research into the Palm Cockatoo. We also met Daryn Storch, who works for the Queensland Dept. of Environment, and has carried out valuable preliminary studies of the Palm Cockatoos over the past two years, resulting in the discovery of 30 nest sites. Also there to see the cockatoos and discuss the project were Lesaie Felderhof of the Queensland Dept. of Environment, and Mick and Clare Blackman. Mick is the ranger in charge of the entire Iron Range National Park.

## PARROT SIGHTINGS

Over the next two days our group travelled widely around the unsurfaced but good roads in the park, and managed to see some interesting parrots. The first sighting was a pair of Double-eyed (or Marshall's) Fig Parrots *Opopsitta diophthalma marshalli* at their nest.

We were able to watch these in a leisurely manner, and very fascinating it was. At another location, where local knowledge suggested we should see Eclectus parrots, we were rewarded by a superb trio of these birds, swaying to and fro in a tall eucalypt blown by the very welcome breeze. Again, we were able to take our time in absorbing this wonderful sight, as the birds were not moving around to feed, but seemed to be merely and literally, hanging out together. Joe Forshaw pointed out that the Australian Eclectus has a longer tail than other subspecies.

The main objective, however, was to see the Palm Cockatoo, and success with this was mixed. My wife happened to be sitting quietly in a vehicle when a Palm flew into a tree only a few yards from her, and gave her an exciting personal show. He preened himself, muttered, chortled and screamed a bit as Palm Cockatoos will, and eventually flew off. I had a thrilling but brief sighting of a bird flying across the road in front of me. Joe and Don saw a pair fly in to a previously unknown nest site, and spend time displaying around the nest entrance. I arrived just as they flew away. In our travels we found an additional three nest sites, and were able to inspect and photograph a nest cavity in the only low nesting tree currently known.

While travelling with Mick Blackman we met up with some gold prospectors, who represent a threat to the national park, since

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## See them fly down under! Continued from page 5

licences for gold extraction are still issued. On the credit side, it is thought that close supervision of the park prevents the removal of chicks or eggs, and we were told that the aboriginal community think it very bad luck to kill a black cocky.

### THE NEW PROJECT

That evening we held a meeting to discuss details of the proposed three year research programme, which includes comparative studies to be carried out in New Guinea, where the Wildlife Conservation Society/NYZS has an established base at Crater Mountain. It has to be said that the financial contribution of the World Parrot Trust is the smallest of the participants, but it is, none the less, much appreciated by our associates in Australia. We are committed to providing A\$10,000 a year for three years, and if any member would like to contribute towards that, we would be very pleased to have some help.

Too soon we were at the airstrip, and on our way back to Cairns, with a few vivid images of wild parrots burned into our memories. Also not to be forgotten was the warmth and kindness of everyone we met. Daryn Storch's wife sent food for us all, and Lesie Felderhof's six month old son Will charmed everyone with his calm and cheerful nature. It has to be said that for someone like myself, with very little field experience, it was daunting to be in the field with people like Joe Forshaw, Don Bruning and Stephen Garnett. I found it best to keep my mouth shut and nod knowingly from time to time.



Audrey Reynolds and Heidi Hellingman meet Rainbow Lorikeets at Currumbin Sanctuary

### PORT DOUGLAS AND KAKADU

After arriving at Cairns, Audrey and I spent a few days at Port Douglas, an hour's drive North of Cairns. This is a small resort town which manages to be simultaneously flashy and laid-back. Many sophisticated resort hotel complexes, but also a high street full of real shops, pubs, restaurants and people. Shortly after we were there it was visited by President Clinton and about a thousand security and media people. From Port Douglas it is easy to visit the Daintree rainforest, and the Great Barrier Reef.

Having got to Australia for only the second time, and having a month to spare, we made the most of the opportunity by visiting Darwin so we could see something of the Kakadu National Park. As we drove to our hotel in Darwin the rain crashed down, and people were dancing in the streets. It seems this is standard practice when 'the wet' begins. The next day it was dry again, and we set off to drive about a thousand miles around the park, where we saw a few parties of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, some Rainbow Lorikeets, but not much else. It was good, however, to see so much protected space with so few people.

### ON TO CURRUMBIN

Our next move was to fly to Brisbane, hire a car, and drive to Surfer's Paradise. This is a remarkable coastal resort town like a mini-Manhattan, full of high-rise hotels and tourist amusements. Our reason for going there was to visit the nearby Currumbin Sanctuary,



Daryn Storch checks a Palm Cockatoo nest.

Photo: M. Reynolds

run by the Queensland National Trust. Currumbin is famous for its twice daily feeding of free-flying Rainbow (or Swainson's) Lorikeets, and we wanted to experience this event, which has been widely imitated (but in no way equalled) in zoos and bird parks world-wide. We were there in good time, and at the exact advertised hour the Rainbows came zooming in, their shrill calls almost deafening as they landed on dishes of nectar held by the visitors. Even if you know what charm the parrots can dispense, this display of greed and vivacity is almost shocking. If you've never before had a close encounter with a dynamic horde of hungry and fearless Rainbows, the experience has to be a formative one, hopefully encouraging a spirit of understanding about the need to preserve such natural delights. The faces of the children were especially rewarding, and I have to believe that the Rainbows of Currumbin are working for the survival of all the parrots, and for that matter, all of nature.

We were given a tour of Currumbin by Heidi Hellingman (see picture), who spent a few weeks with us at Paradise Park last year, and was on the staff at the Sanctuary. Heidi had been with Currumbin for eight years, specialising in hand-rearing and rescuing Australian birds and mammals. We learnt a lot from her, and were surprised to hear that she was about to move to Melbourne Zoo to work with giraffe and elephants. We also met the Deputy Director of the Sanctuary, Dr. Des Spittall, who told us about the breeding programmes they pursue,

such as one for the Double-eyed Fig Parrot, which is intended to lead on to working with the Marshall's Fig Parrot we had seen in the Iron Range National Park. There is also the best and most educational show we have seen anywhere, featuring a wide range of Australian birds and mammals, some of which we didn't know existed. Once again, the children benefited most. All in all, this is a place not to be missed by anyone visiting Australia.

From Currumbin we followed an inland route, most of which ran through the 'Great Dividing Range'. This brought us into a variety of landscapes, and it was pleasing to see a great deal of forest left between the agricultural areas. When I mentioned this to Australian friends later on, they looked a bit glum and said 'Look further West - there's nothing left out there.'

Parrots turned up frequently, and we soon stopped saying 'Look, Galahs!'. Eastern Rosellas flew up at the side of the road, and I spent some time videoing a mystery parakeet that turned out to be a Redrump! Never mind, when seen in the wild they look bigger, more colourful, and frankly, more at ease with themselves. Distances between towns are considerable, and it was a few days before we went towards the coast again, North of Sydney, where we visited Joe Forshaw in hopes of seeing the Glossy Black Cockatoos that practically live on his property. Needless to say, with my luck in seeing parrots, they weren't there on the day we went looking for them. We did, however, see beautiful King Parrots taking seed from the feeders on Joe's verandah.

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We also experienced what Joe described wryly as 'a triumph of Australian technology', a stainless steel tea-bag squeezer. How can you fail to appreciate the skill and wit of a nation that could devise such a vital piece of equipment?

### THE SYDNEY AREA

Next we went on to the Hunter Valley, which manages to combine parrots with producing superb Australian wine and food. This part of our trip was no hardship at all. After that, on to the Blue Mountains, to the west of Sydney. This again is a prime tourism area, very well set up to create enjoyable opportunities to see huge protected areas of forest. Finally, in to Sydney, and out again to go twenty miles north to beautiful Pittwater, to meet up with our long-time friends Philip and Trilby Bond. (They do B&B at their charming parrot-infested house on Scotland Island - Call (61) 299795958, or write to Ferryman's Cottage, Scotland Island, Pittwater, NSW 2105). We then spent five days in a comfortable catamaran, cruising along Pittwater and into the Hawkesbury River, stopping off for timmies, ice, and terrific meals at waterside restaurants. It was the kind of trip you don't forget in a hurry, but the high point came on our first evening while we were anchored in a small cove beside the Kuringai National Park. I heard some strange, creaky sounds, and then saw no less than eleven Glossy Black Cockatoos circling around the forest, looking for the right spot to roost for the night. This took a while, and so we all were treated to one of the most fulfilling experiences imaginable, and one that only Australia can provide. Finally, we were able to visit the aviaries of Peter Chapman, a much renowned and respected aviculturist. Peter has succeeded in breeding quite a few Glossy Black Cockatoos *Calyptrorhynchus lathami*, and the opportunity to see these endearing birds in close-up was a highlight of our Australian visit. Also most interesting was his colony breeding aviary, housing eight pairs of Eclectus parrots, which had a choice from at least a dozen nest logs. Five pairs are actually breeding successfully, but it is necessary to remove chicks when close to fledging, because the parents may fail to feed them, and the other pairs may attack the chicks. With these and other species, Peter is able to provide invaluable insights on behaviour to

scientists working with parrots in the field. As are many other experienced and talented aviculturists around the world, it must be noted.

Enough about our trip, and please forgive me if this rather informal and rambling report is a bit like having to see your neighbour's holiday snaps. There are a few reasons why I wanted to describe our visit in some detail.

First of all, I assume that at least 95% of the readers of *PsittaScene* will not have been to Australia, and I want to urge anyone who can make a visit, to do just that.

The reasons for going parrot-watching in Australia are many, and include:

1. More species of parrot than any other country.
2. They are comparatively easy to see.
3. Expert guidance is readily available.
4. Good roads in most areas.
5. No security problems.
6. No language difficulties for the majority of WPT members.
7. Plenty of general tourism advice and literature.
8. Australians are friendly and welcoming.

We have discussed with Joe Forshaw the possibility of arranging WPT sponsored tours, to be planned and escorted by Joe himself. Such tours would be for a maximum of ten people, would probably last for ten days, and would be based on using private aircraft. It would not

be cheap, probably coming in at around A\$6000 (£3000 or US\$4800). The earliest practical date would be April 1998. As it happens I already have four bookings for this tour from a US member, but would like to hear from any others who would like to be kept informed. Just write to me at our UK address.

### SEE THEM IN THE WILD

My second reason for writing at length about our parrot-watching experiences is that I fervently believe that anyone who keeps parrots in aviaries, however large, should see them in the wild. As it happens, the very first wild parrot I saw was nothing less than a St. Vincent Amazon Parrot. This was in 1978, and we had visited St. Vincent because the government had sent a pair of their parrots to us at Paradise Park in 1974. At that time the easy forest trail in the Buccament Valley did not exist, and we were fortunate to be taken into the forest by the well-known guide Nicky Nicholls, who asked us to sit patiently in a small clearing. After a while the forest came alive with loud, reverberating clanging and bell-like sounds, as a pair of St. Vincents conducted their courtship above and around us. It was a breathtaking occasion, with sights and sounds we had never experienced with our captive birds at Paradise Park, UK. Although I later saw other parrots in the wild in the Caribbean, Mexico, New

Zealand and Brazil, that first encounter has always stayed fresh in my mind.

Indeed, it undoubtedly contributed to the decision to launch *The World Parrot Trust* in 1989. As most people know by now, the trust places itself firmly alongside the birds themselves, giving their conservation and welfare priority over our human concerns. The 'Manifesto for Aviculture', launched with this issue of *PsittaScene*, makes this clear, while at the same time it seeks to ask authorities and regulators to recognise that 'responsible aviculture' should be given a break.

### BENEFITS TO AVICULTURE

If you've never seen parrots in the wild, but manage to do so, and have the insight and imagination any good aviculturist should possess, I am sure the following benefits will result:

1. You will gain information about where your captive birds came from, and how their wild relatives manage to make a living in a constantly changing and high risk natural situation.

2. As you see parrots flying high overhead, clearly intent on a long journey to feed or roost or migrate, you will see that however much aviary space you are able to provide, it will never be enough. But don't let that stop you building enormous aviaries.

3. If you are fortunate to see them close to, feeding on an extraordinarily wide range of items, you may well learn a lot about the best diet for captive birds (not too many pellets out there).

4. When you see parrots hanging upside down for no reason other than sheer *joie de vivre*, or chewing on a branch, or bathing in water or dust, or assembling at a clay lick for social and dietary reasons, you will learn that 'environmental enrichment' is not just a smart phrase invented by zoologists - it is absolutely essential to the physical and mental well-being of all captive animals.

5. From the above inputs, you will have a wonderful time, and more importantly, your aviary birds will benefit from your expanded knowledge and sensitivity to their needs.

So that is why this article is headed 'See them fly down under'. If you can't get to Australia, go anywhere where you can see parrots in the wild. I believe it could be a revelation, even to the best of aviculturists.



Female Glossy Black Cockatoo at Peter Chapman's aviaries, enjoying Casuarina nut.  
Photo. M. Reynolds

# THE CAROLINA MEDAL

*For outstanding achievement*



The World Parrot Trust is introducing a special award in support of the conservation and well-being of the parrot family. It will be a simple bronze medal which will be awarded for outstanding achievement in parrot conservation through:-

- (a) Research and Management (b) Education  
(c) Avicultural Endeavours (d) Welfare Practices

Carolina Medals may be awarded to individuals, a group or team, or an organisation. An international panel of judges will review all nominations on an annual basis, but the medal will only be awarded when the judges consider their criteria have been fully met.

We are grateful to William T. Cooper for permission to use his painting of the Carolina Parakeet from "Parrots of the World", and to David Johnston for designing the medal.

*Our thanks to Joseph M. Forshaw for permission to print the following extract from 'Parrots of the World'.*

"The complete story behind the disappearance of these parrots will never be known because documentation of their decline was sketchy. There seems little doubt that man and his effects on the environment were responsible, but the factors directly involved remain something of a mystery. Persistent persecution and destruction of habitat are widely accepted as having been the direct causes of the extirpation of the parrots.

However, McKinley (1966) says that it is almost too easy to say that they were such pests of fruit and grain crops that they were relentlessly exterminated. I agree that there were probably more subtle primary causes involved, and the species may have been a naturally declining one, but the importance of persecution as a secondary pressure on the species should not be under-rated. The decline of these birds was quite perceptible, for as early as 1831 Audubon wrote:

*"Our Parakeets are very rapidly diminishing in number; and in some districts, where twenty-five years ago they were plentiful, scarcely any are now to be seen . . . I should think that along the Mississippi there is not now half the number that existed fifteen years ago".*

When their extreme rarity became evident and Florida was proving to be the last stronghold, collectors and trappers eagerly sought out the remaining flocks - as is so

often the case when something becomes rare the demand increases dramatically and the final sprint to extinction is accelerated!

How important was persecution as a cause of extinction? What is obvious is that parrots were shot and because of their gregarious habits it was possible to destroy large numbers with little effort. An account by Audubon is probably somewhat overdramatic, but it does give us a picture of what was happening; in 1831 he wrote:

*"The Parrot does not satisfy himself with Cockle-burs, but eats or destroys almost every kind of fruit indiscriminately, and on this account is always an unwelcome visitor to the planter, the farmer or the gardener. The stacks of grain put up in the field are resorted to by flocks of these birds, which frequently cover them so entirely, that they present to the eye the same effect as if a brilliantly coloured carpet had been thrown over them. As on the stalks of Corn, they alight on the Apple-trees of our orchards, or the Pear-trees in the gardens, in great numbers; and, as if through mere mischief, pluck off the fruits, open them up to the core, drop the apple or pear, and pluck another, passing from branch to branch, until the trees which were before so promising, are left completely stripped.*

*Do not imagine, reader, that all these outrages are borne without severe retaliation on the part of the planters. So far from this, the Parakeets are destroyed in great*

*numbers, for whilst busily engaged in plucking off the fruits or tearing the grain from the stacks, the husbandman approaches them with perfect ease, and commits great slaughter among them. All the survivors rise, shriek, fly round about for a few minutes, and again alight on the very place of most imminent danger. The gun is kept at work; eight or ten, or even twenty, are killed at every discharge, The living birds still return to the stack to be shot at, until so few remain alive, that the farmer does not consider it worth his while to spend more of his ammunition. I have seen several hundreds destroyed in this manner in the course of a few hours, and have procured a basketful of these birds at a few shots, in order to make choice of good specimens for drawing the figures by which this species is represented in the plate now under your consideration"*

When common the parrots were seen in large flocks, sometimes containing two or three hundred birds, but as they became rare the sizes of the flocks diminished and eventually only small parties, pairs, and occasionally single birds were sighted. "

*For full details of the Carolina Parakeet, including description, distribution, nesting etc., please see PARROTS OF THE WORLD, Third (Revised) Edition, by Joseph M. Forshaw, illustrated by William T. Cooper. Lansdowne Editions, Sydney, Australia, 1989*

# IN A MEDAL

## nt in parrot conservation

### WHY THE 'CAROLINA' MEDAL?

The reason for the choice of name is that the Carolina Parakeet *Conuropsis carolinensis* is the last species of parrot known to have become extinct. The final captive specimen died at the Cincinnati Zoo on 21st February 1918, and the last reliable sighting in the wild was in 1920.

The extirpation of this species, the only parrot native to the United States, was an unparalleled disaster, and it seems appropriate to use its extinction as a grim reminder of how easy it would be to 'lose' other parrot species today.



### THE CAROLINA MEDAL

is intended to be a constant reminder of the fragile status of one third of all parrot species in the wild, and the welfare needs of millions of captive birds worldwide.

The World Parrot Trust invites nominations for consideration in 1997. Individuals or organisations are invited to write for nomination forms to the address below.

Completed nominations are required by July 1st 1997. Any awards will be announced in the November 1997 issue of *PsittaScene*.

Write for nomination forms to :

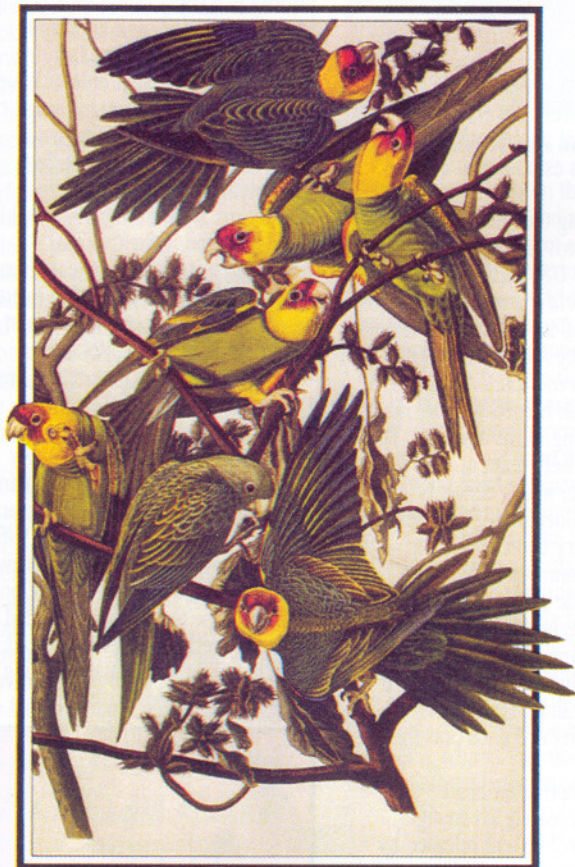
The Trustees, World Parrot Trust, Glanmor House,  
Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY, United Kingdom.

Tel: 01736.753365. Fax: 01736.756438.

Email: 101375,762@Compuserve.com

Please address any queries to Judith Venning, Administrator.

'The Carolina Medal' © World Parrot Trust 1997.



Carolina Parakeets by Audubon

# Echo Parakeet season 1996 - Progress!

by Andrew Greenwood MA, Vet MB, MI Biol, MRCVS

The 1996 breeding season has seen spectacular progress with the Echo parakeet on Mauritius particularly due to the funding of additional field and aviary staff. The number of known wild pairs has increased considerably allowing even better monitoring, and the number of captive chicks is now sufficient, all being well, for the establishment of a captive breeding population and a trial release this spring. Unfortunately, the high productivity of nestlings by the wild birds was not matched by their ability to rear them.

## INTENSIVE RESCUE EFFORTS

Intensive rescue efforts allowed most of these chicks to be saved, but only at the cost of taking them into captivity. The total Echo population, therefore, has to be seen as two jointly-managed groups, partly wild and partly captive, with flow established between them.

There are now 13 known wild pairs (or breeding groups as most have extra males associated with them). This is an increase from 7 in 1995/6 and between 3 and 5 of these are probably newly recruited pairs which were not previously present. One pair is non-laying so far and one nest cavity has now seen continuously recorded use for 6 years, although perhaps not by the same individual birds. So 12 pairs

laid this year, from five of which the first clutch was harvested (14 eggs in total). Some of these were from nests where second clutches could be expected, and others from nests likely to fail. Two of the harvested pairs recycled successfully. 100% fertility was recorded throughout and 34 eggs were produced in total.

## POOR PARENTAL CARE

From the 20 eggs left in the wild, 18 chicks hatched, of which 4 died. 10 were rescued and 4 were left to fledge naturally in two nests. Chicks were rescued when daily monitoring showed that they were failing to gain weight, or when the nest was attacked by predators. The reasons for poor parental care this year are unclear, as weights recorded for wild adult females were the highest ever seen. It is possible that the unusually dry weather led to a failure of food supply at the last minute, or that there was substantial social disturbance from the extra male birds.

Of the 14 eggs taken into captivity, 13 hatched and then 10 additional chicks were rescued, giving aviary staff 23 wild origin chicks, plus two reared from the captive breeding pair. Five of these chicks failed, two dying whilst very small and one from injuries inflicted by mynahs in



Andrew Greenwood and Rachel Shorten examine Echo Parakeets in the forest.

Photo: Sam Williams

the nest. Of the 3 captive pairs already established, two are laying so far, but only one has produced chicks (now for the second year). The second pair successfully reared a ringneck chick fostered to them, having previously reared but plucked an Echo chick.

## 24 CHICKS SURVIVE

The overall total for 1996, so far, is now 24 chicks surviving; by far the most successful year ever seen. The total joint wild/captive population is estimated at about 85 to 90 birds.

New funding this year, over and above that provided by the *World Parrot Trust UK*, included \$6000 from the *World Parrot Trust USA*, which funded a vital additional field worker, Vicky Jones and \$4000 from the *International Aviculturists' Society* which helped support Janet Webb working in the aviaries. This brought the field team up to 5 for the first time, which certainly allowed the location of new nests, and the aviary team to 4. Late failure of a number of nests released some of the field team to help in the aviaries, particularly when finishing off the new aviary complex, which is just completed and which can house up to 12 breeding pairs of Echos plus their offspring.

If all the captive birds are successfully reared, six to eight fledglings will be soft released by Kathryn Murray at the forest camp site, modelled on her successful surrogate release of captive bred ringnecks last year. This will leave about 30 birds in the aviary

population which is considered sufficient for the supporting breeding programme.

## GENETIC TESTING

Genetic representation in the overall population seems quite good and the genetics of the Echo are being given priority in a study of the three Mauritian species (parakeet, pink pigeon and kestrel) at the Institute of Zoology. Disease problems have been very slight. Our monitoring now suggests that psittacine beak and feather disease is absent, but that polyomavirus and psittacine herpesvirus are endemic in the wild population and in the captive ringnecks, but with no indication as yet that either virus is causing overt disease. Treatment of substrates in the wild nests has been totally effective this year in preventing nest fly attack and fungal infections.

Whilst the Echo still continues to be highly vulnerable, considerably more optimism seems justified than we could have hoped for three years ago. Successful release of the 1996 year's young birds will allow a new phase of the programme to develop, with the hope that these habituated birds may serve to induce the wild birds to use supplementary feeding points and even nestboxes.



Vicky Jones, the fieldworker funded by the WPT USA, holding a new batch of Echos  
Photo: Sam Williams

**SPONSOR A  
WILD PAIR OF  
ECHOS.  
SEE LETTERS  
PAGE**

# Threat to the Pantanal

by 'Tracks'

The Pantanal is the world's largest wetland. It is a seasonally inundated depression wholly contained within the Upper Paraguay Basin in central Western Brazil, Eastern Bolivia and North-West Paraguay. The Pantanal of the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil encompasses nearly 140,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

The region is extremely rich in floristic and faunistic diversity due to its privileged location, surrounded by four biomes; the tropical Amazon rainforest, the subhumid savannas of Central Brazil, the Atlantic humid forest and the semi arid scrub forest of the Chaco. It is the last refuge for many of South America's threatened or endangered species.

## RAIN ABSORPTION

The Pantanal is also geographically and hydrologically positioned to attenuate and reduce runoff from the Upper Paraguay Basin. It acts as a sponge absorbing rain and seasonal floods, then releasing the water slowly throughout the year. Fundamental to this process are rocky sills which regulate the water flow out of this wetland, acting as a valve.

This wetland with its extraordinary diversity and abundance of wildlife is a threatened region.

Deforestation, expanding agriculture, illegal hunting and fishing, and pollution of the water with herbicides, pesticides, and by-products of fuel alcohol production and mining, have all caused a progressive deterioration of the natural environment. These threats are placing at risk one of the world's most important ecosystems.

## ADDITIONAL THREAT

But there is now an additional threat. A project that some scientists say will dry out 40% of the Pantanal within 20 years. A project that is expected to have significant hydrological and environmental impacts not just on the Pantanal, but on over 3,400 km along the Paraguay and Parana rivers. This project is known as the Parana-Paraguay Hidrovia project.

This project entails navigational improvement along the existing Parana-Paraguay waterway, to link five countries of South America; Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. The project has been put forward as the backbone of the



Wild Hyacinthine Macaws feeding on palm nuts

Photo: C. Munn

Mercosur agreement in the hope of developing regional and national economies. The project consists of extensive river engineering works, including channel straightening, dredging, blasting of rocky sills, and other structural interventions to render 3,442 km of the river navigable for ocean going vessels all the year-round. Improvements will be carried out from the downstream point at Nueva Palmira, Uruguay to the upstream point at Caceres, Brazil, near the headwaters of the Upper Paraguay river.

The proposed navigational improvements are likely to have a substantial impact on the flood regime of the Upper Paraguay river. The blasting of rocky sills as a means of deepening the navigation channel is seen as the most significant planned intervention.

## STUDIES NEARING COMPLETION

Engineering and environmental studies are due to be completed, which have been funded mainly by the Inter America Development

Bank and by the United Nations Development Programme.

Hidrovia is the source of significant concerns among indigenous peoples, environmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and research institutions and universities. The uniqueness of the Pantanal ecosystem is widely recognised and the need for its preservation on both intrinsic and economic grounds.

## Editor's Note:

We would appeal to ALL readers to protest about this project development, not least because damage to the Pantanal would be detrimental to Hyacinth Macaw and other parrot populations. Please write to the following three governmental organisations:-

*Comite Intergubernamental de la Hidrovia*, Jesus G. Gonzales, Secretaria Ejecutiva del C.I.H., Construcciones Portuarias y Vias Navegables, Av, Espana 2221-4 piso, 1107 Buenos Aires - Argentina.

*United Nations Development Programme*, Emma Torres, Chief of the Regional Programme Division at the Bureau for Latin America & the Caribbean (Co-ordinator for the Hidrovia Project), One United Nations Plaza (Room 2286), New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

*Inter-American Development Bank*, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, Paul Dulin, Regional Environmental Consultant, Ing. Normando R. Birolo - Sector Specialist, Esmeralda 130 - Piso 20, 1035 - Buenos Aires - Argentina.

Please use the following letter as a guide:-

Dear xxx,

As a member of the *World Parrot Trust* and someone who is deeply concerned about conservation and the environment, I was horrified to learn that such an important ecosystem as the Pantanal is threatened by the proposed Hidrovia project. The rich and diverse flora and fauna and the endangered species which occur there must be protected from this project which will further degrade the world's largest and most important wetland. It will cause a further decline in, for example, numbers of the Hyacinthine Macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), now classified as an endangered species. Already this species is bringing in income from ecotourism to the region. The potential income from tourism there is enormous. The uniqueness of this region is recognised worldwide. I would urge everyone concerned to reconsider the wisdom of this project. The Pantanal must be preserved for future generations on both intrinsic and economic grounds.

# Another Great IAS Convention

by Michael Reynolds



The International Aviculturists Society (IAS) has now completed its fifth annual convention, this time in Fort Myers, Florida, from 15 to 19 January 1997. Once again it achieved a very satisfactory mix of avicultural, research, and conservation topics in its program. Entertainment ideas included a dinner cruise on a paddle steamer, and the hilarious 'Vegas Night' when delegates gamble with 'funny money' that miraculously is transformed into real money to aid IAS research and conservation initiatives. Visits to avicultural establishments were arranged, and specialist societies held evening meetings. On the last day a 'Companion Bird Behavioral Workshop' was held, and this was very well attended and successful, with many local residents joining in and learning much that would help their individual birds.

## LECTURES

The four day program included the following talks.

'Parrotlets in Aviculture', Sandee Molenda.  
'Proper Breeding Methods: a Behaviorist's Perspective', Layne Dicker.  
'Biopsy Techniques', Michael Taylor DVM.  
'The ABC's of INFLIGHT AVIARIES', John Goss.  
'Emerging Organisms of Significance to Aviculture', Susan Clubb DVM  
'Prevention of Avian Polyomavirus Infections through Vaccination', Branson Ritchie DVM, Ph.D.  
'Aviculture Techniques used at

ABRC', Trent Swigert.

'Intestinal Hepatic Cavities: An Endoscopic Perspective', Michael Taylor DVM  
'Everything you wanted to know about Adult diets but were afraid to ask', Randall Brue Ph.D, Susan Glubb DVM, Mark Hagen MA, Greg Harrison DVM.

'The Veterinarian's Role in Nursery Management', Mathew Bond DVM.

'Avian Lumps and Bumps', and 'Incubation and Pediatrics', April Romagnano Ph.D. 'So you want to be a breeder', Gloria Allen.

'Early Memory in the developing parrot', Phoebe Linden.

'Aviary Management', Terry Clyne.  
'Case Presentations (Stump the Aviculturists)', Keven Flammer DVM.

'Field Studies of Hyacinth Macaws in NE Brazil', Heather Bowles.

'Tropical Rainforest Coalition', Fern van Sant DVM.

'First Breeding of Great Green Macaws In Costa Rica', Mathew Bond DVM

'The importance of Water Purity for Aviculturists', Susan Clubb DVM  
'Psittacine Incubation', Trent Swigert.

'Humor', Layne Dicker.

'Zinc and Parrots: more than you ever wanted to know', Fern van Sant DVM.

'Sexual behavior in Companion Parrots', Sally Blanchard.

'Hyacinthine Macaws: their care and captive breeding today', Gloria Allen.

'The Large Softbills', Richard Muerich.

'Proventricular Dilatation Disease', Branson Ritchie DVM, Ph.D.

A remarkable assembly of expert advice for aviculturists, with reports on progress in solving avian disease problems, and news on many conservation initiatives.

## CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS

Difficult to take all this away in your head, so it is fortunate that the '1997 Convention Proceedings' are comprehensive. These can be ordered from IAS at a cost of \$30 or £20, plus \$5.00 (£3) for postage to the US, and \$15.00 (£10) for postage to the rest of the world.

This is a bargain, since the volume and quality of information will undoubtedly give parrot breeders advice and ideas that will result in more chicks on the perch. Conservationists will also find much to interest them. News on progress with avian disease problems is included, and it is a relief to hear from Dr. Branson Ritchie that a virus has been identified that causes PDD (or 'Macaw Wasting Disease'), and a vaccine will come along eventually. This is a very expensive process, and it is worth noting that IAS has been in the forefront of fundraising for this vital solution. *World Parrot Trust* has also contributed.

Copies of the 1995 and 1996 Proceedings are still available at a cost of \$30 for each year's proceedings book.

## NEXT YEAR

Readers may be interested to know that next year's convention will be held in Southern Florida, which would open up a considerable number of exciting opportunities for extra-curricular avicultural activities. The date may be in early February, a time which falls into the lowest cost bracket for international air fares, and should help IAS negotiators to achieve very favourable hotel rates. Nothing is yet finalised for 1998, but we will keep you informed in *PsittaScene*. Remember that this is a well organised event that is pre-eminent in the United States, and increasingly recognised internationally.

## FLORIDA

I would suggest that anyone interested in escaping from frozen Europe to sunny parrot-rich Florida next February should write asking

to be kept informed, to: **Luanne Porter, IAS, PO Box 2232, LaBelle, Florida 33975, USA.** Or fax to (USA) 941.675.8824. This is also the address for ordering copies of the proceedings.

The International Aviculturists Society was formed in 1990 by a dedicated group of aviculturists from around the world striving to protect, preserve, and enhance the keeping and breeding of all exotic birds through Educational Programs, Cooperative Breeding Programs, and the funding of Avian Research and Avian Conservation Programs.

The following officers were elected at the 1997 annual meeting of IAS to serve a two-year term; President - Luanne Porter, Vice President - Fern van Sant DVM, Secretary - Jackie Sites, Treasurer - Wilford Pace. Board of directors include Sally Blanchard, Kashmir Csaky, Mark Hagen, Greg Harrison, DVM, Stephen Hartman, Veta Holloway, Diana Holloway, Sallie Klink, Phyllis Martin, Dan McCormic, Sandee Molenda, Charles Munn, Jerry Pace, Richard Porter, Denise Reeve, Mike Reynolds, Greg Rich, DVM, Trent Swigert, Marc Valentine, and Diane Wolfe.

IAS continues to work with the Psittacine Disease Research Group at the University of Georgia, to raise funds for the Proventricular Disease Program. IAS appeals to the entire avicultural community as well as individual companion bird owners to financially support this vital research. Direct donations may be made through IAS. Supporters will receive the 1997 Avian Research Donor Pin of a Citron Crested Cockatoo with a \$25.00 donation.



# INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUND-UP



## SOUTH AFRICA

David and Vera Dennison, publishers of *Avizandum*, are doing much to promote the *World Parrot Trust*. They recruit members and collect subscriptions and publish information about the Trust in their magazine. Last September they publicised the Trust on their stand at the Wildlife Heritage Expo in Durban, in order to inform the public of the plight of the world's parrots. They discovered that many visitors did not know of the existence of any parrots in Africa except the Grey Parrot. Further information on the Trust in South Africa can be obtained from Mr and Mrs Dennison at 79 Niagara Drive, Waterfall, Natal, tel 031 7634054, fax 031 7633811.

## UNITED KINGDOM

**Thieves steal the slender hopes of a dying species. Newspaper report by Paul Wilkinson**

Two of the rarest birds in the world have been stolen from the aviary where experts were trying to save the species.

The pair of Lears Macaws are the only pair in captivity in Europe, and no more than 150 are thought to exist in the wild.

Harry Sissen, owner of the aviary near Northallerton, North Yorkshire, believes that the thieves knew there was a black market for macaws, but did not realise the rarity of the Lears.

Lears Macaws live in the rainforest in northeast Brazil, and are on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species "critical" list. Discovered in 1856, the bird is named after the Victorian artist, limerick writer and explorer Edward Lear, who had a passion for parrots.

Mr. Sissen, 50, has an international reputation for breeding macaws. He was given his pair by the biologist Dr. John Lernould, who had been asked by zoos in France and Switzerland to get them to mate. Nine other birds were taken in the raid last Friday. The thieves bypassed alarm trip-wires, cut through wire mesh and broke through the aviary roof. They were putting birds into sacks when they triggered another alarm, then fled

across fields to a vehicle.

One blue-throated macaw was dumped on a floor in a sack. Mr. Sissen believes its mate might have escaped through the hole in the roof and he has appealed for neighbours to watch out for it. The other missing birds include a rare pair of Australian albino galahs and Blue-throated Canindes.

## CUSTOMS & EXCISE, UK

Have now set up a special database on parrot species to help with identification of imported parrots. The *World Parrot Trust* contributed a large number of slides of rare birds to the programme.

## LONDON CONFERENCE

The fourth Conference of the European Committee of the Association of Avian Veterinarians will be held in London this year. The dates are May 18th - May 23rd and the venue is the Novotel at Hammersmith. Papers offered so far include Cardiomyopathy in a Grey Parrot, Avian Paediatrics and the Veterinarian's role in nursery management, Spinal Aspergillosis in a Moluccan Cockatoo, Papovirus in Neophemas and Wing-clipping in pet birds.

Further information can be obtained from Neil A. Forbes, Clockhouse Veterinary Hospital, Wallbridge, Stroud, Glos. GL5 3JD.

## AUSTRALIA

One of the most important events of 1996, in the field of parrot conservation, was the formation of Birds Australia Parrot Association. Its aims include making plans for parrot research and management in Australasia, in conjunction with other interested groups, and co-ordinating and encouraging scientific projects using amateur and professional skills. Its newsletter, entitled *Eclectus*, is essential reading for anyone with an interest in the parrots of Australasia, or in parrot conservation in general. A taste of thing to come, the first issue, dated September 1996, was absorbing reading. It contained articles on the following species: Kakapo, Ground Parrot, Ouvea Parakeet (all critically endangered), on the Swift Parrot, Varied Lorikeet and the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo.

Len Robinson's very personal

account of his involvement with the Turquoise Parrot *Neophema pulchella* over a period of 30 years made fascinating reading. His enthusiasm is infectious: 'For those of you who love Neophemas like I do, you will understand. Not only is each species colourful in its own way, they are gentle and confiding, yet at times inhabit the wildest of places. They are exquisite!' Len Robinson has perhaps done more than any other person to aid their conservation. He has provided them with approximately 200 nest sites during the past 20 years. Of these, 144 were hollow logs which he purchased and erected. He created additional sites by hollowing out decaying tree stumps.

Lack of nesting sites, due to the destruction of mature trees earlier this century, is one of the most serious problems faced by those parrots in Australia which have less general nesting site requirements. Len Robinson was far in advance of his time when he started this work. His experiences have shown that Turquoise Parakeets (the name in use outside Australia) prefer logs 60cm (2ft) deep, with 9-10cm (4in) internal diameter, placed slightly off the vertical.

*Eclectus* subscription enquiries should be addressed to BAPA Membership, Australian Bird Research Centre, 415 Riverdale Road, Hawthorn East, Victoria 3123, Australia. The cost is A\$18 for those residing in Australia and New Zealand (\$15 for RAOU members) and A\$20 elsewhere.

## FIRST AUSTRIAN PARROT CONSERVATION SOCIETY

In the framework of a diploma study on the status of captive parrots in Austria, Nadja Ziegler, a biology student, was confronted with a number of problems concerning the keeping and breeding of parrots. Psychological abnormalities, such as feather-plucking, stereotypic behaviour, apathy and aggression are widespread, especially when these social birds are kept singly. Breeding facilities often prove to be inadequate, lacking in space, structure and daylight. Ms. Ziegler therefore developed the idea of establishing a so-called "parrot-

service" that provides parrot owners with the opportunity to have their birds associated with others. Meeting with strong interest, the project was expanded in autumn 1995. The "ARGE Papageienschutz" was founded as an interdisciplinary organisation in which veterinarians, biologists, students and interested parrot owners co-operate in improving the keeping and breeding conditions, reducing the imports of wild-caught parrots, mainly through public awareness programmes, supporting conservation projects and motivating breeders to participate in international captive breeding programmes.

In addition, the group plans to set up their own facilities to care for confiscated and unwanted birds. Although Austria has been a member of CITES for fourteen years, there is no official rescue centre for confiscated animals. Due to this, as well as the lack of information, officials often do not confiscate illegally kept or imported birds, occasionally they are left with the importer. Besides, offences against CITES are usually prosecuted in such a way that the business still remains lucrative.

In comparison to Germany and other countries, Austria might play a minor role in the wild bird trade; however, because of its specific geographical location, it has acted as a turntable for the legal and illegal pet trade between eastern and western European countries.

## GERMANY

The 7th International Symposium on the keeping, breeding and conservation of endangered parrots will be held at Bietigheim on April 26th. Speakers include Rosemary Low, on the aims and achievements of the *World Parrot Trust*, Prof. H. Gerlach on embryo development, hand-rearing by Dr. F. Janeczek and a journey in the habitat of the Moluccan Cockatoo by Thomas Mangold. Further information can be obtained from Dr. Peter Wust, tel (49) 7142 52360; fax (49) 7142 56234.

## ADOPT-AN-ECHO

How would you like to have a personal involvement with the world's most successful parrot conservation project? The World Parrot Trust has been given the opportunity to offer 5 adult wild pairs for adoption by members.

Each pair is already named, and all are closely monitored throughout the breeding season. If adopters can find their way to Mauritius, the Echo recovery team will be delighted to show them 'their' wild pair (subject to cooperation from the birds).

The cost of each adoption will be £1000 or \$1500. You will receive a special certificate, and we will undertake to keep you informed about the progress of your birds. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping this magnificent conservation achievement by Carl Jones and his dedicated team in Mauritius.

**Write to WPT for details.**

Dear Ms. Low

### Complexities of Feather Picking

The avian vet, Alan K. Jones, emphasised in his excellent article on the above subject (Parrot Society Magazine Aug. 1995) that "Feather plucking is a disease of captivity - it does not occur (except as a natural physiological behaviour in breeding birds) in wild-living individuals..... Parrots are extremely intelligent creatures, and do need a lot of physical and mental stimulation to satisfy their needs..."

Mr. Jones' article does not differ greatly from Sally Blanchard's in the exploration of possible contributory causes to feather plucking. But unfortunately Ms Blanchard after making it plain that "clipping a bird's wings is totally unnatural" and that too close a wing-clip can be one of the causes, goes on to endorse the practice, if done properly.

To my mind, if we accept a parrot's need for physical exercise (and, observing my 21 month old Grey in non-stop motion around the flat for the first four hours of each day, his energy and the need to expend it leaves me in no doubt) is it not logical to assume that depriving a parrot of its natural exercise of flight might, for many reasons, create problems of a serious nature? If feather plucking is a disease of captivity, might captivity itself be the cause, whether by means of constant confinement in a cage or severe restriction of mobility through wing-clip?

If any of us stop to really imagine what the loss of the power of flight might mean virtually every hour of the day to a bird "born to fly" (as

the WPT booklet so rightly states) the conclusion surely has to be that wing-clipping is a cruelty that most of us would not willingly inflict on another living creature. The same applies to keeping a bird constantly confined to a cage, which is why there may be some argument that wing-clipping is the lesser of two evils.

However, Bob and Liz Johnson wrote in their excellent article 'Habitat Immersion - The New Wave' (*PsittaScene* August 1996) "Clipped wings or confining cages are not the only alternatives to extinction..." My hope echoes theirs - i.e. that some day the practice of confining any bird to a cage for most of the time or of clipping its wings will be morally unthinkable. Our views regarding animals are changing - e.g. few of us nowadays could tolerate the thought of a dog being chained or shackled. And, as the Johnsons point out, zoos have definitely changed their image in keeping with increased public awareness of the needs and feelings of the animals involved.

Parrot behavioural consultants are a relatively recent phenomenon but there is little doubt they are doing a great deal to improve the lot of pet parrots. I have benefited from many valuable tips, but the worrying question for me is that if, with the best of intentions, they advocate wing-clipping, how well do they understand the fundamental nature of a bird? **K. E. Shay, London, W14**

Dear Rosemary,

I was thrilled to receive the copy of your book *Endangered Parrots* which I won in the quiz featured in the August issue of *Psittascene*. I first heard of *The World Parrot Trust* from your book *Macaws, a Complete Guide*. I don't think I will ever be able to afford a pair of macaws - but I enjoyed the book.

As I was visiting the UK last March I made a special trip to Paradise Park and I joined the Trust. I am now doing my bit to let people know about it. I have dedicated a corner of my gift shop to 'Parrot-Phenalia' with all sorts of bird-related gifts and a stand displaying *PsittaScene* and the Parrot Portfolio, plus WPT notepads and cards for sale. My hand-reared baby Cockatiels and Lorikeets are often on display, giving added interest. **Anne Morrison, P O Box 2040, Alice Springs 0871, Australia.**

Dear Rosemary,

I am writing to you because I would like to comment on the article entitled "The complexities of feather picking" by Sally Blanchard that appeared in Vol. 8 No 4. Sally Blanchard certainly touched on a number of factors relevant to feather

picking and requirements of parrots in her article, including appropriate lighting and humidity. However, I did feel that some of the suggestions regarding parrot requirements and habitats may be misleading, as in the statement "Not only is it humid in the equatorial rainforest, the light is also intense" with the assertion that many parrots do not have adequate lighting and a recommendation to daily mist birds plus once a week give them a drenching.

It struck me that many psittacines, including the most popular pets, the budgies and cockatiels, do not come from humid rainforests at all (not to mention that many parrots are found relatively far from the equator). In fact, in the article on the Cape Parrots found in the same issue of *PsittaScene* it is suggested that movements of this parrot may be related to the very limited water availability during the dry months when no rainfall occurs. Zoos have found to their misfortune that many animals that come from dryer climates are more susceptible to some diseases, for example fungal infections, when placed in more humid conditions to which they are not adapted.

Parrots that do live in rainforest locations with intense sunshine may actually have fairly limited exposure to the light if they live within the canopy of the rainforest. For such birds, exposure to very intense light may not be favourable.

The psittacines have managed to fill an amazing array of niches in a diversity of environments; thus I do not think that it is possible to make general recommendations regarding environmental parameters in which distinctive and most probably very important differences occur. I would like to suggest that it is more appropriate for bird owners to try to tailor captive conditions to the conditions and requirements of the particular species (or in some cases even of a particular population) in its natural habitat whenever possible. **Catherine E. King, Rotterdam Zoo**



Above: Feather-picked Yellow-fronted Amazon recently rescued by WPT.

# YOU CAN HELP US...



**Charles A. Munn III Ph.D.**  
 Founder Trustee WPT-USA.  
 Senior research biologist.  
 Wildlife Conservation Society.



**Andrew Greenwood MRCVS**  
 Founder Trustee of  
 WPT-UK and WPT-USA.  
 Zoo and wildlife veterinary  
 consultant.



**Audrey Reynolds**  
 Director, Paradise Park.  
 Founder Trustee of  
 The World Parrot Trust UK.



**Rosemary Low**  
 Author of 'Endangered  
 Parrots' and 20 more parrot  
 books. Editor of  
 PsittaScene.



**Wm. Richard Porter MD**  
 Director of the International  
 Aviculturists Society.  
 Founder Trustee of WPT-  
 USA.



**David Woolcock**  
 Curator, Paradise Park.  
 Founder Trustee of The  
 World Parrot Trust UK.



**Michael Reynolds**  
 Founder of The World  
 Parrot Trust, Hon. Director  
 of WPT-UK, Trustee of  
 WPT-USA.

# ...SAVE THE PARROTS!



Lear's Macaw



Echo Parakeet



Red-tailed Black Cockatoo



St. Vincent Parrot



Red-vented Cockatoo



Red-tailed Amazon



Hyacinth Macaw

## Join us.

Become a member of the World Parrot Trust, receive our *PsittaScene* newsletter, know that you are actively contributing towards our aims.

## Help fund our Projects.

We are currently supporting parrot conservation, education and welfare projects in Africa, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, the Caribbean, Ecuador, Mauritius, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru and the Philippines. Your generosity towards the parrots could help us expand current schemes and start new ones.

FEEL FREE to copy this page and hand it out to potential WPT members. Thanks!



## Aims of the Trust.

The survival of parrot species in the wild, and the welfare of captive birds.

These aims are pursued by:-

- Educating the public on the threats to parrots.
- Opposing trade in wild-caught parrots.
- Preserving and restoring parrot habitat.
- Studying the status of parrot populations.
- Encouraging the production of aviary-bred birds.
- Creating links between aviculture and conservation.
- Promoting high standards in the keeping of parrots.
- Supporting research into veterinary care of parrots.

## YES, I WANT TO HELP SAVE THE PARROTS OF THE WORLD

### 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  
(or equivalent currency payment by  
Access/Visa/Mastercard preferred)
- Plus donation of £/US\$.....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

..... Zip/Postcode .....

Please charge my Access/Visa Acc./No.

Exp. date ..... Amount £/US\$ .....

Signature .....

OR: I enclose cheque payable to the WPT

PLEASE SEND COMPLETED FORM TO  
 'WORLD PARROT TRUST' AT:-  
 UNITED KINGDOM  
 Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY

USA  
 Cynthia Webb, PO Box 341141, Memphis  
 TN 38184

BENELUX  
 Pierre Claassens, Deutersestraat 13,  
 5223 gv, Den Bosch, Netherlands

CANADA  
 Mike Pearson, PO Box 29, Mount Hope,  
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 Peter Sipek, 1 Rossell Pl., Glenfield, NSW 2167.

AFRICA  
 Mike Perrin, Private Bag XO1, Scottsville, Natal, South Africa.

SWITZERLAND  
 Lars Lepperhoff, Sagemattstrasse 31, 3097 Liebefeld.



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

# PARROTS IN THE WILD



## SWAINSON'S OR BLUE MOUNTAIN LORIKEET *Trichoglossus haematodus moluccanus*

Yes, this really is a picture of 'Parrots in the Wild'. Despite the pictorial evidence of the birds feeding on nectar taken from dishes provided for them, they are unquestionably wild parrots. This shot was taken at the Currumbin Sanctuary in Queensland, Australia, during one of their twice-daily feeding sessions. In our article 'See them fly down under' on pages 5 to 7 you can read more about these beautiful and confident birds, and the impact they have on visitors to the Sanctuary.

The following illustration and compact information on this Lorikeet is taken from 'Parrots in Aviculture - a photo reference guide' by Rosemary Low, with photographs by Ron and Val Moat. This is an outstandingly useful reference book for anyone interested in parrots, and it can be ordered from *The World Parrot Trust* for £27.50 (\$50) including postage.

- Length:** 30 cm (12in)  
**Weight:** 130g (4fioz)  
**Immatures:** Plumage duller with more yellow on breast; white cere and skin surrounding eye; beak and iris brown.  
**Origin:** Eastern Australia from Cape York Peninsula south to Tasmania and Kangaroo Island to Eyre Peninsula, South Australia; introduced to Perth area, Western Australia.  
**Status:** Common in northern part of range, less so in south; found in all types of habitat with trees, including parks and gardens.  
**Aviculture:** Well known until Australia banned the export of fauna in 1959; no longer common outside Australia; some strains are inbred.  
**Clutch size:** 2.  
**Incubation:** 23 days.  
**Young in nest:** 8 - 9 weeks; sexually mature before 2 years.

