

PsittaScene



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A sad fate for Argentina's Amazons
Red-fronted Macaws

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Cover Picture By © 2005 World Parrot Trust

Our cover shows an amazon parrot trapped in a mist net. The photographs were taken by WPT supported field researchers who are studying the legal, and supposedly sustainable, trade in parrots from Argentina. In the past, we have not printed photographs of wild birds in distress, but we feel it is important for those concerned about parrots, their conservation and welfare, to be aware that this is the reality for millions of birds a year. The Trust is working to put an end to these practices, and now more than ever, we feel that the European Union, which consumes over 90% of the world's wild-caught birds, must take action to end this cruel and destructive trade.

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Off to Europe?

A sad fate for Argentina's Amazons

By JAMIE GILARDI



As our members are well aware, we've generally avoided the use of graphic pictures of birds in trade - whether being trapped, shipped, or in especially gruesome cases, pictures of birds dead on arrival. In the context of the web pages and our video, "Where the Wild Greys Are," we feel the use of such images is indeed an essential part of the story and we've included them in what we hope is an appropriate manner. We are also acutely aware of the fact that our members are nearly all ardent supporters of a ban on this trade, so we are by no means drawing attention to the issue because we feel that you need convincing in any way. Rather, our aim here is to first thank you for all the ways in which our members have supported this effort over the years, second to review how we've used some of this support, and finally to explain in a bit of detail, just how little things like the TradeBands can have big consequences to our efforts to end this trade once and for all.

In recent months, we have sold many thousands of TradeBands to WPT members, through Paradise Park, and through a growing number of organisations and individuals who are enthused about this fun and effective way to help wild birds. We thank you very much for your help and support, and if you haven't yet had a chance, please "Get Banded" today by picking up a pack for you and your friends. We've also found the bands are popular items in pet stores, veterinary clinics, and bird clubs.

Are the TradeBands really working for the birds? We're thrilled to reply with an emphatic, **yes indeed!** In the last few months, we've been able to make rapid and effective use of these TradeBand funds by

supporting work in Argentina, which has documented the current trapping practices, which target Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva*). This is essential work for several reasons.

First of all, this trapping of amazons is the only harvest of a wild bird anywhere which claims to be sustainable. We're quite certain it is not, incidentally, and have been working (with your help at key times!) to let appropriate officials in the EU and USA know just how unsustainable this harvest is in practice.

Second, this work is sanctioned and overseen by the Argentine government, so they should be following their stated practices. However, our research indicates that these practices are frequently violated.



Blue-fronts recently trapped in the citrus groves of northern Argentina. By law, these birds should be at least 80% juveniles, the birds awaiting export this year were nearly 100% adults.

Photo: © 2005 World Parrot Trust



First, previously trapped birds are tied to a long stick and this stick is then attached high in a fruit tree with additional fruit and nooses to capture the free flying birds. Once the birds have been captured in the nooses they are unable to protect themselves against natural predators and some may be attacked by Hawks and other birds of prey.

Two obvious violations are the use of mist-nets to trap birds which is not approved by the management plan and the fact that most of the free-flying birds captured and sent off for export were adult birds (the legal limit is a maximum of 20% adults).

Third, right now, these birds nearly all go to the EU market. And for the last five years, the Argentine government has been urging the USA to open up its market. We therefore feel that clear documentation of

the practices of the trappers and traders is especially important in providing both sides of the Atlantic with current, accurate, and independent information.

So, you may well ask, "can buying some fun little wrist bands actually help save parrots?" We think it can, we can see that it is already doing so, and we look forward to finding new and creative ways to apply these funds toward ending the legal trade in wild birds.



Although the trappers are meant to target Blue-fronted Amazons, which are legally classified as 'pests' of the citrus groves, other non-target parrots like this Scaly-headed Parrot (Pionus maximiliani) are frequently caught as well.



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Once removed from the trees and nooses they are packed tightly in cages and transported to large cities for export. During transport they must rapidly convert to a non-natural diet and they are frequently exposed to and die from the infectious diseases fostered by such crowded conditions.

Somehow it just doesn't seem right when stunningly-colourful birds erupt out of a dry and dusty peanut field high in the foothills of Bolivia's Andes. Most of us think of parrots - and perhaps macaws in particular - as birds that belong in lush rainforest canopies draped with bromeliads and juicy tropical fruits. On my second trip to visit these birds last January, the Red-fronts still seemed unexpected and somewhat out of place here, but their bold and agile way with this rugged, windy, and picturesque landscape suggested otherwise. Just how well the macaws are faring in this unique corner of the world, where virtually their entire foraging habitat has been converted to agricultural land, inspires us to look deeper into the Red-front and the threats to its survival.

For decades, the parrot conservation community has attended more closely to better known species which are threatened with extinction - the Spix's (*Cyanopsitta spixii*), Hyacinths (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), Lear's (*An. leari*), Blue-throats (*Ara glaucogularis*), and Great Greens (*A. ambigua*) - with a sense of hope that the Red-fronts (*A. rubrogenys*) were maintaining reasonable numbers in the thousands. After reviewing what was known and assumed about the species in the wild, we grew concerned that the Red-fronts may in fact be in need of more protection and support than they'd been receiving. With generous contributions from highly-accomplished wildlife photographer (and sometimes cardiologist) Bill King and a group of committed conservationists running a free flying bird show at Pittsburgh's

National Aviary, we launched the first survey of the breeding populations of this bird in the wild. Following his months of trudging through the flooded Beni on the path of the Blue-throated Macaw, Toa Kyle took to these steep dry valleys on the eastern slope of the Andes in search of all known, reported, and rumoured Red-front nesting areas. He reports here on the results of this survey.

As with other threatened birds, we're forever hopeful that more birds will turn up, new breeding areas like the Lear's Serra Branca cliffs, or new strongholds for a species like some of the new populations of Golden Conures (*Guaruba guarouba*) that Toa reported on in the last *PsittaScene*. Until such welcome discoveries are made however, it seems prudent to conclude that the known populations of Red-fronts comprise virtually all of the wild population, and to act accordingly. Building on the published work of other researchers and consulting with many of the people with current knowledge of this species, Toa's findings paint a rather grim picture for this macaw of the mountains. Nearly all the threats which have been mentioned in the past - habitat loss, poaching from nests, trapping of adults, and shooting - are all apparently important and on-going threats to the survival of this species. Over the next few years, our plan is to foster protection for the remaining known populations and to develop a multi-faceted recovery effort to understand and resolve the most damaging threats to these birds.

Jamie Gilardi

Mountain Macaws

An expedition to survey the breeding cliffs of Bolivia's Red-fronts

By TOA KYLE

Pacha Mama hasn't failed to disappoint today. '*Pacha Mama*' translates as Mother Nature in the hybrid Quechua-Spanish spoken in the dry inter Andean valleys of Central Bolivia, or *los valles* as they're referred to locally. It's been a good day in the field. Not only did I find Red-fronted Macaw nests in the surrounding cliff faces, I also got to see pairs of Red-fronts put on a spectacular flying display. At one point in the afternoon I found myself in the mouth of a small canyon perched between two large, blood red sandstone outcrops. The structure of the canyon effectively created a wind tunnel by channelling strong gales through it. I watched in awe as several macaws faced the oncoming wind headfirst with effortless skill, hanging like kites over the canyon. At times they shot rapidly upwards, caught in a strong gust of wind, only to twist and dive downwards to resume their almost static hovering position above the canyon mouth. The narrow, pointed wings of Red-fronts are ideally suited to the windy conditions found in these desert-like valleys. I get the

impression they are flying not to actually go somewhere but rather for the joy of flight itself.

Despite its endangered status, until recently a systematic breeding survey for the species was lacking. Previous studies conducted during the 1980's and 1990's estimated the wild Red-fronted (*Ara rubrogenys*) population to be between 2,000-5,000 individuals. Hard work was done, but there remained large gaps in our knowledge of Red-fronts' ecology. It was still unknown what proportion of the population was breeding during a given year, an important criteria to understand when working for the species' recovery. With this in mind, I set out from Santa Cruz by motorcycle in early January 2004 with the intention of covering as much ground as possible in the region encompassing the three main river valleys where Red-fronts are found; the Rio Mizque, Rio Grande and Rio Pilcomayo. The goal of the study was simple. Locate and document as many Red-fronted Macaw



Photo: © 2005 World Parrot Trust

For whatever reason, some Red-fronts are incredibly tame allowing observers to watch them from close range.

nests as possible over a three-month period. I was also interested in better understanding where the current population stood as well as determining to what extent nest poaching was occurring. Along the way I also became aware of the living conditions of the people who shared their environs with Red-fronts and more importantly their attitudes towards the macaws and parrots in general.

An average day in the field involved rolling into a village along the river and striking up



Although poaching of macaws from the cliffs is a primary concern for this project, these aren't the only targets. Even smaller parrots are also collected from tree cavities in a manner which destroys the tree for future use.

a conversation with locals by showing them a picture of Red-fronts. If macaws were in the area, I'd hire a guide in the afternoon to show me some potential nesting cliffs. I'd wait at these cliffs until dusk noting, whenever possible, which cavities were entered and the number of macaws in the area. Early the next morning I'd return to the same cliff site to confirm which cavities were likely active nests. In some cases pairs of Red-fronts would enter holes in the afternoon but not return to these holes the next morning. These birds were likely non-breeding pairs that were simply "playing house" or possibly maintaining traditional nesting sites for future breeding seasons.

Watching Red-fronted Macaw nesting cliffs provided opportunities to see other parrots nesting on the same rock faces, such as Mitred Conures (*Aratinga mitredi*), Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva*) and Cliff Parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus luchi*). The latter species, like Red-fronts, are endemic to these dry valleys. They're closely related to Monk Parakeets and are unique among parrots for the large, twig nests they construct on cliff faces. On one memorable occasion I hiked up to a remote location at 2,700m (8,300 ft) and set up an observation point across from a large, sheer cliff that looked promising in terms of Red-front nests. Things began to get cold and windy as the afternoon progressed. I climbed into a sleeping bag and gazed up at the sky. It felt as if I was lying on the roof of the world. An hour before dusk I opened a can of tuna to throw down with

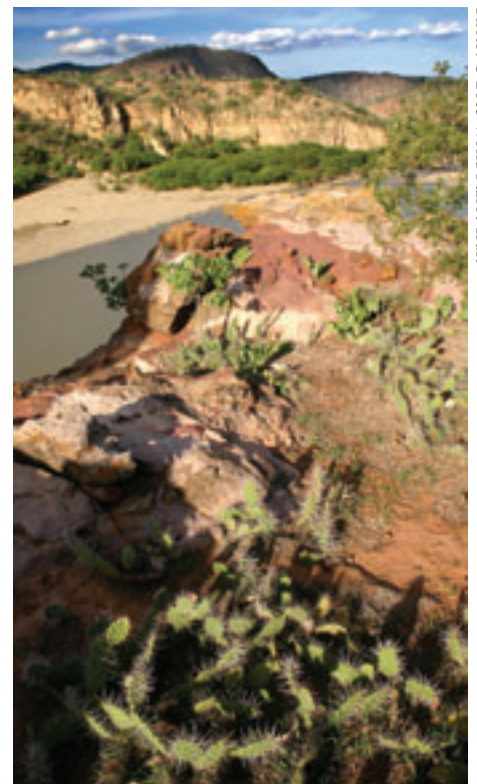


Highly social Cliff Parakeets - close relatives of the Monk Parakeet - are often found nesting in the same cliff with the Red-fronted Macaws.

some crackers, one of my staples when camping out. To my amazement, three Andean Condors (*Vultur gryphus*) descended from at least 500m above, slowly spiralling downwards to my level. The scent of the tuna had no doubt attracted them. One by one they swooped past me several times, so close I could hear the wind rush over their gigantic 3m wing span. I'd never seen anything so large, so majestic in flight, like I'd imagined pterodactyls in my childhood. There were numerous other occasions when I had the pleasure of watching condors at Red-fronted Macaw nesting cliffs. The sheer, 50-200m tall cliff faces favoured by Red-fronts for their nests also provided ideal perches for the condors. Their arrival would often cause the macaws to flush from the cliff wall, the parrots mistaking the scavengers for Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles (*Geranoaëtos melanoleucus*), a reported predator of both adult and nestling Red-fronts.

The largest concentration of Red-fronted Macaw nests I encountered during the study was ironically found closest to human settlements. The communities of Perereta and San Carlos face one another on opposite sides of the Rio Mizque in the department of Cochabamba. Less than 400m from the nearest mud-thatched house is the first of the two 'mother cliffs'. I coined this term for the cliffs because of the 21 potential nests shared between them. This number represents almost one-third of the total nests I found for the 2004 survey. The presence of so many macaws this close to humans was at first perplexing. During my visit a landslide had closed off one of the main highways connecting Santa Cruz

to Cochabamba. Traffic was thus rerouted along a road that ran parallel a mere 30m from the nesting cliffs. An endless procession of freight trucks hurtled by, raising large dust clouds that wafted over Red-fronts guarding their nest entrances. The birds seemed unperturbed by all the human activity around them. In fact the only time I saw them alarmed was due to a



Although the home of the Red-fronts is a dry landscape heavily grazed by goats, the plant and animal diversity remains remarkable: cacti are especially varied and abundant.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) that suddenly appeared, taking a few unsuccessful dives at some fleeing nesting pairs. Given the presence of Peregrines, the fastest flying birds in the world, it should come as no surprise that Red-fronts are such strong fliers. In the past only those macaws skilled at flying would successfully avoid predation by falcons and thus subsequently pass on this gift for flight (via their genes) to future generations.

In many ways the situation at Perereta and San Carlos is a microcosm for the plight of Red-fronts throughout most of their range. Faced with a shrinking natural habitat (lost to agriculture, firewood collection and overgrazing by goats and cattle), parrots in these valleys have turned to raiding corn and peanut crops. All of the people I spoke with in these communities regarded the macaws as pests and referred to them as *chocleiros* (corn-eaters) instead of *Qaqa loros* (rock parrots, one of their common names in *los valles*). It's understandable why locals feel this way. The majority are subsistence farmers, thus what the parrots eat, their families will not. Stories of crop-raiding macaws being shot are not uncommon.

Talk of endemism and extinction are new concepts to convey to these people, as are outsiders preaching parrot conservation. At practically every community I visited, locals asked if I was looking for Red-fronts to trap. They all shared similar stories of strangers arriving in trucks within the past 10 years to 'harvest' parrots. Their description of the trapping method was identical as well. Large nets are placed on the ground using either peanuts or corn as

bait. Poachers wait concealed until the greatest number of birds are on the ground before they close the nets. I didn't come across any trappers in the breeding season as they're apparently active in the dry season when chicks have fledged and Red-fronts form large nomadic flocks that roam over the valleys in search of scarce natural food items or crops to raid. Flocking behaviour is common among birds confronted with limited, sparsely distributed resources. Unfortunately for Red-fronted Macaws it's a behaviour that enables poachers to take large numbers of birds (50-100 were commonly quoted figures) out of the wild in a single day. The trapper's strategy is logical. Why bother with the danger of raiding cliff nests when you can catch greater numbers of birds post-fledged?

I did come across a few remote communities where trapping was unknown, all of which were found along rugged stretches of the Rio Grande and Rio Pilcomayo. One of these locales provided some unforgettable experiences, the first of which was actually getting there! I needed to weave my motorcycle through 10kms of large boulders scattered along a dry river bed to reach the village, but the destination was worth it. The landscape had a surreal feel to it. Large jagged peaks rose up suddenly from the swiftly moving, muddy-brown Rio Grande. There were groves of enormous date palms at the settlement, so out of place at this high elevation. Apparently the first Spanish colonists introduced the palms centuries ago. My host, Gido, had lived all of his 64 years here and wasn't short on stories. My favourite account involved Che Guevara

riding by on a mule during his doomed uprising against the Bolivian government in 1966-1967. Gido was terrified to speak to "El Che" because of radio reports that had labelled him as being extremely dangerous. Instead he retreated into his house and watched the famous revolutionary saunter downstream. I later read in Guevara's "Bolivian Diaries" that on several occasions his band of guerrillas were so famished they resorted to eating "parrots which were descending to the river to drink in great numbers". Recognizing this as Red-fronted Macaw behaviour I shuddered at the thought of one of socialism's favourite sons barbecuing my study subjects.

I saw over 40 Red-fronts flying upstream from Gido's house at dusk my first day there, so I set off early the next morning in search of nests. The terrain along the Rio Grande was so steep it took me six hours to walk a mere 4kms. At times I needed to inch along cliff faces waist-deep in the river until higher footing became available. For my efforts I found only one macaw nest. Whether the other birds were nesting further upstream or simply non-breeding individuals was unknown. What was clear was that I simply could not continue upstream, the landscape was too hostile. On my way back to Gido's I made the foolish decision to explore another route. After 2 hours of climbing I arrived at a high point that sharply dropped off 200m below, a dead end. Rather than do the smart thing and return to where I'd started, I decided to descend down to the river and head back from there. I devised a method in which I first lowered my backpack below with a rope then climbed down

Photos: © 2005 World Parrot Trust



The Red-fronted Macaws and other parrots in these valleys are especially fond of corn, and some fields can be heavily impacted by repeated visits by hungry parrots. Understandably, this habit makes them especially unpopular with the local farmers and their families which depend on these crops throughout the year.

unencumbered by my gear. Things went well until I got to about 15m above the river. With my pack already below at river level I briefly lost my footing, causing some rocks to dislodge, one of which landed squarely on my pack, knocking it into the river. Luckily my thermarest was full of holes, leaving it always semi-inflated, thus my pack floated. It also had the 'fortune' of falling into a slower moving sidearm of the main river. So there I was, spread-eagled on this cliff watching my life as I knew it drift downstream below. Everything was in there; money, binoculars, precious field notes. Faced with losing all this to *Pacha Mama*, I did the only thing possible to catch my gear before it entered the Rio Grande proper. I let go. In a flash I bounced off some gravel once and fell into the water below. Leaping to my feet I rushed to land and outran my pack, diving back into the river to retrieve it. Miraculously I came out of the fall with only a couple of scrapes and a bruised ego. Note to self, "Go back the way you came".

The results from the 2004 breeding survey carry numerous implications for future conservation efforts. Of the approximately 400 Red-fronts I saw, only 20% appeared to be breeding, which on the surface is a rather low number. This figure is also of interest because it is similar to an estimate made by WPT researchers for endangered Lear's Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*) in Bahia, Brazil. Like Red-fronts, Lear's Macaw is a large neotropical parrot with a restricted range in a dry, scrubby habitat. It too has suffered greatly from the mass trappings and shooting of adults. The estimate for the Red-front breeding population needs to be complimented with information on nestling mortality and the number of chicks entering the population each year. Future research efforts by WPT hope to address these important parameters.

The majority of nesting attempts (two-thirds) were found in the Rio Mizque region. I found substantial numbers of macaws in the Rio Grande and Rio Pilcomayo drainages but did not find corresponding numbers of nests. It is possible these were non-breeding birds, or it reflects a bias against access. Large stretches of these latter river drainages are difficult to visit due to their rugged nature and a lack of roads. These areas are of particular interest not only because of the unknown numbers of Red-fronts found there but also for their potential as future reserves. Sadly, at present there are no decent protected areas in these unique Andean valleys. Toro Toro National Park in the department of Potosi technically contains some areas in *los valles* but these are best described as being "goat ravaged". There is an interest in the Bolivian government's environmental protection



Photo: © 2005 World Parrot Trust

Our visit in January of 2005 coincided with the very beginning of the year's breeding season for the Red-fronts, and many family groups included young birds like the one on the lowest perch here. Although we frequently saw them begging from their parents, they were generally ignored.




Red-fronts, people and their agriculture are tightly linked in the foothills of the Andes. Here peanuts on the left and corn on the right - enjoyed by both people and parrots - are cultivated just below the cliff holding more Red-fronted Macaw nests than any other cliff in the world.

agency in creating reserves in *los valles* but survey work is still lacking. Not only will potential reserves afford much needed protection to Red-fronts, they will also

conserve many other unique fauna and flora. I was particularly impressed by the cactus diversity during the course of the survey. Bolivia is second in the world for number of

cactus species (200+, of which 70% are endemic) after Mexico (750-800 species).

Having travelled in the range of Red-fronts, I can better appreciate the difficulties in determining how many birds actually remain. New pockets of macaws will no doubt be discovered in future surveys, but in the meantime a proactive stance must be taken, one, which assumes the worst-case scenario regarding the current population. Immediate actions must be taken, such as stopping illegal trapping in the dry season and also changing the socioeconomic conditions of people that live alongside macaws. Admittedly these obstacles will not be easily erased given the current state of affairs in Bolivia. Most of 2005 has been marked by political unrest that has further crippled the economy of South America's poorest nation. Separatist movements are gaining strength in richer departments, such as Santa Cruz and Tarija. Nonetheless these challenges are not insurmountable and should be approached as such to prevent Red-fronted Macaw numbers reaching dangerously low levels. *Pacha Mama* can't do it alone. 

What to do about the flu

By JAMIE GILARDI

There are a lot of confusing and frightening reports floating around about avian flu or bird flu, and some are more reliable and useful than others. As people who are around captive and sometimes wild birds, and as people generally concerned about various aspects of bird-human relations, we thought it might be useful to discuss the current state of affairs, what our members and readers might want to be concerned about, how you might want to manage any birds in your care, and how you might provide guidance to your friends and families on this important and rapidly emerging issue.

Perhaps most importantly, the outbreaks of avian flu in Asia are a potentially very serious issue for everyone in the world, so while we do not want to alarm anyone unnecessarily, we do think it is important for the public to be well and clearly informed on a few of the key details. Ideally, having good information will help us all plan accordingly, reduce unnecessary fears, and at the same time, prompt the kinds of preparatory actions we need to take at appropriate times.

One could well write books on the influenza virus and it's relation to humans, livestock, and wild animals, as well as the histories of the major outbreaks in the past, and indeed people do. In this context and at this time in the current outbreak in Asia, we can say that there are two distinct stages of the outbreak, which are important to understand. I'll briefly review these two phases, then discuss the range of reasonable precautions one might consider as the disease continues to evolve and spread over the next months and years.

The first phase is when the flu virus is found in birds and may be passed from bird-to-humans through some kind of direct contact. The exact mode of transmission is not well defined, as the contacts are not made under experimental conditions. But clearly physical proximity to the birds and their faeces as well as handling or eating poultry meat for human or animal consumption are the primary means of contracting the disease. The strain of flu that is circulating now in Asia (H5N1) is extremely lethal to humans, with 50-70% of infected individuals not surviving the infection. So, in this phase, one must have direct contact with infected birds. There are a few cases where people appear to have contracted this strain of avian flu from family members, but these are very rare and certainly not the norm.

The second phase of the outbreak - the "pandemic" - has not yet happened, but flu experts around the world talk more about when it will happen rather than whether it will happen. In this phase, the flu virus

mutates slightly through various processes and the virus becomes transmissible from human-to-human. Because the immune systems of most humans around the world are entirely naive to this strain of flu, they have essentially no resistance to the virus. Because it is a flu virus, it is capable of rapid spread through the same means that flu is typically transmitted among humans. The last serious avian flu pandemic of this kind took place in 1918 and eventually killed many tens of millions of people around the world. If the current H5N1 outbreak were to mutate and become pandemic, experts predict a wide range of outcomes, some better and some worse than what happened some 90 years ago. Bare in mind this was before the aeroplane, largely before the automobile, but on the positive side, it was also before antiviral and antibiotic drugs were available.

Again, we are now in the first phase of this particular outbreak and the known areas of infection are currently contained to central and southeastern Asia. In recent weeks and



Photo: Dr Ilaria Capua



Although some relatively mild strains are ever present in many waterfowl populations around the world, recent trends indicate that when the virus is able to infect chickens, it can then mutate rapidly into a much more lethal form, both to birds and sometimes to people. Disease can spread rapidly in the cramped conditions of a battery egg farm.

months it appears that either the virus is beginning to spread rapidly or it spread earlier in the year and it is only now being discovered in new and far flung areas. There are confirmed reports of H5N1 in wild birds in south-central Russia, China, and most recently Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The issue of concern here is that H5N1 appears to now be carried by several species of wild ducks and geese. These and other waterfowl are staging now just prior to migrations, which will take them to south Asia, Europe, and Africa. Although we all certainly hope the virus does not make it to Europe in 2005, it is likely that it will arrive in the coming weeks or months.

Assuming that it is prudent to take reasonable precautions now, the following options might be worth considering for anyone in Europe who is in close proximity to wild or captive birds. Please bear in mind that everyone is in a unique situation and will need to make personal decisions on what, if any, actions are appropriate to their needs. First, step up your efforts to protect your birds from disease exposure, also known as your 'biosecurity' measures. These might involve longer quarantines and additional disease testing for new birds coming into your flock. Think twice about moving your birds to another location. Provide disinfectant foot-baths for yourself and all visitors to your facilities or consider closing your aviaries to outsiders for the foreseeable future. Increase protection for your birds minimizing or preventing exposure to wild birds (fine mesh around aviaries, etc.). Have your birds tested for flu (check with your vet, this should only require a faecal sample). Second, although it is always advisable to keep good medical records on your birds, when disease outbreaks are imminent, additional details such as a list of visitors to your house/aviary, listed precautions taken such as those mentioned above, can be very important. It may be best for you to wear specific clothes when working in your aviaries, and showering before returning to the remainder of your home or before going out, and vice versa.

Authorities in different countries will react

differently to the presence of flu in captive and wild birds in your area. In some instances, being able to provide clear and detailed records of all your biosecurity activities has proven helpful in convincing authorities that you are doing everything possible and that a home quarantine may be the best option for your birds.

Living with bird flu: guidelines for the general public

Based upon current trends and seasonal bird migrations, H5N1 avian influenza or "bird flu" will soon arrive in eastern and possibly central Europe. As the virus is not yet known to be contagious from human-to-human, direct contact with infected birds appears to be the primary means of contracting the virus. If you know beforehand that you will come in close contact with birds, their feathers or faeces, wear a disposable paper mask during exposure and immediately shower afterwards and launder exposed clothing. Ideally, use a mask that fits snugly over the nose and mouth. Masks that are rated N95 or better are available through <http://www.seton.co.uk>, <http://www.decoratingdirect.co.uk/Protection/Respirators/> or ask your vet or doctor for a local source for such masks.

To help encourage responsible and preventative actions by the general public once the flu arrives in Europe, we suggest the following steps to minimize the risk of contracting avian flu. These guidelines are meant to be useful in the context of prevention: anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms - fever, cough, sore throat, aching muscles, etc. - should seek medical assistance immediately.

Precautions around wild birds

1 Avoid direct contact and feeding of all wild birds. This includes the use of bird feeders and the feeding of ducks or pigeons in city parks or town squares. If

you choose to feed wild birds, take the precautions described below in item 8 when handling food and water containers, which may come in contact with the birds, their feathers, or their faeces.

- 2 Exercise caution in public places frequented by gulls, pigeons and sparrows, avoiding concentrations of birds and areas where they feed and sleep.
- 3 Avoid bathing and swimming in lakes, rivers, and coastal areas with high concentrations of waterbirds: ducks, geese and gulls in particular.
- 4 Avoid visiting farms or households with poultry, particularly if the birds are housed outside. If you must visit, take the preventative measures described below.
- 5 Avoid direct interactions such as hunting, handling and eating of wild birds, particularly waterfowl.
- 6 If you find a dead bird or one that appears to be sick, do not approach it or touch it.

Poultry and other birds as food

- 7 If you choose to eat turkey, duck, or chicken meat, be sure that it is well cooked prior to eating. Commercially produced eggs should already be disinfected prior to shipment, but take extra precautions after handling and cook thoroughly before eating. If you acquire eggs directly from chickens, from a neighbour, or from free-range sources, take the same precautions you would if handling the birds themselves.
- 8 If you choose to slaughter birds for food, wear protective rubber gloves and glasses, a waterproof apron, and a disposable mask, which fits closely over your nose and mouth (ideally rated N95 or better).
- 9 If preparing poultry or other bird meat for the table, wear gloves and a mask during preparation, and after preparation thoroughly wash and disinfect all knives, containers, cutting surfaces which may have had contact with any uncooked bird meat.

Captive birds in and around the home

- 10 If you have captive birds, bring them inside or otherwise completely isolate them from all wild birds and other captive birds. In addition, have your captive birds tested for avian flu through your local veterinarian and keep detailed records of testing procedures and results.



Rescuing the parrots of the Mayan Forest

By COLUM MUCCIO, ARCAS, Guatemala

On June 12 agents of the Guatemalan green police, SEPRONA, seized a shipment of 70 parrot chicks being sold in a market in Guatemala City. Three people were arrested and charged with wildlife trafficking. The chicks - mostly White-fronted Amazons (*Amazona albifrons*) but also several Red-fronted (*A. autumnalis*) and White-crowned Parrot (*Pionus senilis*) - were being sold for between US\$5 and US\$12 each. They were transferred to the ARCAS Rescue Center in the northern Mayan Biosphere Reserve (MBR) region of the country and are currently undergoing rehabilitation, and are due to be released in early 2006.

The Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association (ARCAS) receives between 200 and 600 animals per year as a result of seizures from traffickers. Seventy percent of these animals are parrots; mainly those mentioned above, as well as Mealy Amazons (*A. farinosa*). These parrots go through a lengthy rehabilitation process where, if traffickers have cut their feathers, they must be plucked and grow back and they must develop their full flight feathers. They are given vitamin supplements to encourage quick feather growth. The parrots are then released in flocks into flight cages where they build up their flight muscles and at the same time are fed wild foods gathered by ARCAS staff so that they learn what they should eat when they are released into the wild. After thorough health checks and in coordination with ARCAS's government counterpart, the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), the parrots are released into the rainforests of the MBR.

Unfortunately, however, many parrots may not be released. Principal among these are the Scarlet Macaws (*Ara macao*) whose habitat has been reduced so severely and whose price on the black market is so high that they would most surely be immediately

recaptured when released. The Scarlet Macaws are also one of the most highly endangered species in the MBR with a total wild population in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala thought to be lower than 600!

In July 2003, SEPRONA officer Hyron



Still, unfortunately, a fairly common sight in Guatemala: a street vendor selling parrot chicks.



Scarlet Macaw pair in a captive breeding programme.



Photo: Nuestro Diario

Peñante (above, centre) was shot by poachers as he confiscated two recently-hatched Scarlet Macaw chicks in the Laguna del Tigre Park. Based on his heroic efforts, ARCAS nominated him for the Disney Conservation Hero Award. Luckily, Officer Peñante survived his wounds and on September 24, 2004 in an awareness-raising ceremony in Guatemala City was presented with his \$1,000 award. The confiscated chicks have been introduced into ARCAS's Scarlet Macaw breeding program which is being supported by the Columbus and Cincinnati Zoos and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Chicks and juvenile birds from this program will be used to re-inforce the last remaining populations of Scarlet Macaws in the MBR.

ARCAS is currently working with CONAP and SEPRONA to develop a comprehensive strategy to control wildlife trafficking in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve and other parts of Guatemala.

For more information or if you'd like to help us save these beautiful animals contact Colum Muccio at ARCAS at (country code 502)2478-4096, 5704-2563 or arcas@intelnet.net.gt



Volunteers struggling to feed chicks from June 12 seizure in the ARCAS/Guatemala City office before the chicks were flown off to Peten.

Photo: Isis Rendón

Photo: Fernando Martínez

'In my opinion...':

We have decided to run regular opinion pieces in *Psittascene*. If you have issues you would like to see discussed here that you think our readers would be interested in, please contact us at uk@worldparrottrust.org with initial suggestions.

Does private aviculture matter to parrot conservation?

By EB CRAVENS

Some years ago it was standard practice for many private aviculturists, commercial breeders, even some organisations to publicly proclaim "aviculture is conservation too." I grew into birdkeeping during this era and I suppose, came to believe that slogan as correct. It is still repeated today.

But, frankly speaking, 20 years later, I would no longer agree that this is necessarily true. Routine aviculture may not be of much benefit to conservation; it could be a detriment; 'tis all in the way it is performed...

Let's look deeper into the rationale here. Parrot breeders keeping threatened or endangered CITES species such as Red-fronted Macaws (*Ara rubrogenys*), Hooded Parakeets (*Psephotus chrysopterygius*), Golden Conures (*Guaruba guarouba*), Yellow-shouldered Amazons (*Amazona barbadensis*), to name just a few, often put forth their successful reproduction of captive-raised chicks as paramount to conserving these species. The more chicks produced, the safer the psittacines are from any looming demise of total extinction on earth. That's conservation, as they see it.

It does not seem to matter or enter such reasoning when most all of these newborn parrots are sold off as pets or future breeding stock. It goes unsaid that few of them bear any close resemblance to a wild subject of the same type. Yes, they may have the capacity to reproduce in their own right when old enough - making more babies which may do the same, theoretically from generation to generation ad infinitum.

But to my way of thinking, this is not true conservation. Numbers alone do not constitute high standards. Conservation means to conserve. It means to preserve and protect and to guarantee safety - in the case of wildlife, this implies a thing in its native state in so much as is possible. What good are thousands of captive-raised Illiger's Macaws (*Ara maracana*) if not a single one of them has either the physical capability or the mental prowess to survive in a free outdoor habitat?

Yes, at the very ground-floor stages of saving a psittacine species from extinction, captive numbers have a real

conservation value. This was true for the Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*), for the Spix Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*), for the Orange-Bellied Parakeet (*Neophema chrysogaster*), for the Blue-throated (*Ara glaucogularis*) and even for the Hyacinth Macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) up until a few years ago.

Numbers provide that "population cushion", that margin for error, so to speak, which allows conservation measures to proceed without fear of losing the last bird in the wild and in captivity - as so naively happened in the Eastern U.S. with the Carolina Parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*) and the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*).

Once rare hookbills are reproduced in goodly numbers in aviculture, then true conservation very fleetly becomes a quest for *quality* not *quantity*.

Bird breeders often proclaim that breeding parrots for the pet market reduces pressure on wild populations so that importing and smuggling are reduced. Having watched

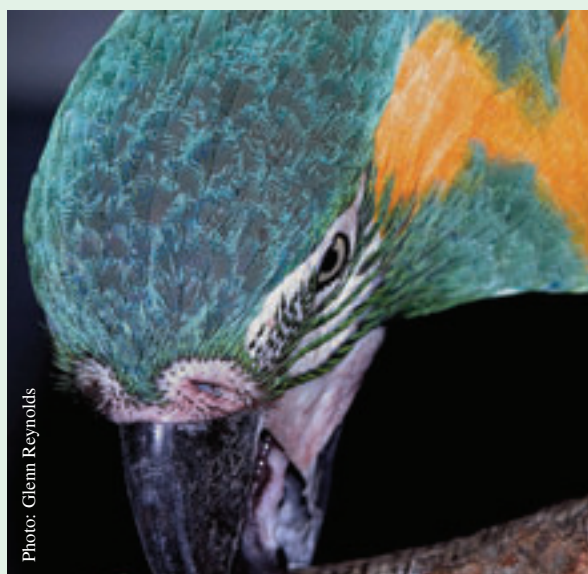


Photo: Glenn Reynolds

Owning a handfed pet that is an endangered species, like this Blue-throated Macaw, implies a certain 'status' to some people



Photo: EB Cravens

How many breeders are trying to raise captive psittacines which could survive in the wild?

what took place with the lovely Sun Conure (*Aratinga solstitialis*) during the 1980s when its prices dropped by more than 95% as availability grew, I once agreed with this premise. No longer. Trapping, importing and smuggling invariably go on and on, regardless of how many saleable chicks aviculture produces. The profit margins on wildlife are just too great, and there always seems to be someone somewhere who will pay for a trapped parrot, no matter how many 'extras' breeders have on the market at any given time. Captive bred chicks may suffice to fill a market in certain western countries where importing is or certainly should be stopped. But the lines of trade are merely inconvenienced for a time, then resume once again to the Middle East or the Orient or other third world nations.

So where has much of private aviculture gone wrong when it comes to conservation? In the standards and goals we have set for the industry and ourselves. Quality not quantity, remember? Each individual chick needs to be evaluated on

its contribution to its species as a whole, not as another number on a bottom line production total. As a hobbyist, I like to judge a psittacine fledgling on its "wild savvy," that is its ability to survive, reproduce and pass on its characteristic traits, should it ever be called upon to do so.

Consider this sometime. Let's say a hurricane blew in and some of your pets or captive-raised breeder parrots were forced into freedom; or should a wildfire cause you to have to instantaneously release all your parrots lest they burn to death. Which ones would have the physical conditioning, the know-how, the wild savvy to survive out there?

Now, you are an aviculturist thinking about conservation...

To be continued next issue



Valuing what's around you

How community support is ensuring the survival of the Scarlet Macaw

By DALE FORBES, Asociación Amigos de las Aves, Costa Rica, www.hatchedtoflyfree.org

In the 1980s, single-species conservation projects abounded with concerned groups fighting to save the rhino, cheetah, tiger, blue whale, and many others. People 'declared war' on poachers and made a lot of impassioned noise. In the '90s, people started to see how the conservation of particular species was contingent on our ability to conserve entire ecosystems. Consequently, charismatic species became flagships for the protection of natural areas. Still conservationists seemed to be losing ground. They began to see people as an unfortunate hindrance to their efforts as local communities poached the very last rhino or hunted down a beautiful tigress (she was eating their children). Recently, however, conservation efforts have begun to see people as the essential foundation for species preservation programmes; but the greatest question for global conservation remains: how can we get people to want to protect that which is around them?

The Scarlet Macaw was once found through 85% of Costa Rica, but capture for the international pet trade and forest destruction has reduced this once numerous bird to only four localities. CITES restrictions have subsequently reduced the capture for international markets, but adults and nestlings continue to be taken for sale within Central America. Parrots are extremely popular pets in Costa Rica with the resplendently coloured Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) being the most prized and expensive of all. Driven by greed, a nest-robbing needs to be able to find an active nest, and needs to have the support (or indifference) of the local community. Only through a community conservation ethic can the greed of a few be marginalised.

In September 2002, seven captive-bred Scarlet Macaws were reintroduced by *Asociación Amigos De Las Aves* in to the Punta Banco area of southern Costa Rica (8° 21 N, 83° 08 W). It had been almost thirty years since macaws were last seen whirling through the canopy of these rainforests. Their return to the area signalled more than just the beginnings of a restoration programme but was equally a sign of a growing conservation consciousness amongst the people of the area.

The beachfront football pitch is at the very heart of the small village of Punta Banco and its 80 residents often collect to socialise around a game of football as the sun dips lazily into the Pacific Ocean. Behind the village, the land disappears into the hills of tropical rainforest and cattle pastures that extend to the unmarked Panamanian border, only 9 km away. Tantamount to the development of



View towards Punta Banco village and the surrounding hills. Note the three macaws in the top left corner.

conservation thinking in the area has been the Tiskita Jungle Lodge, an ecotourism reserve specialising in allowing people to experience the wild rainforests with a modicum of comfort. The economic viability of the lodge provides environmentally sustainable employment to a large number of local villagers and has helped develop the ethos that environmental protection is not only economically beneficial but intrinsically important as well.

Two years ago, we started a project to monitor the released macaws more closely.



Macaw in repose.

Initially, this involved the establishment of a scientific protocol for data collection. We soon realised that keeping track of the movements of the macaws through hilly, forested terrain was incredibly difficult and any macaw could disappear in a matter of minutes simply by rounding the crest of a hill. A six-minute flight for the macaws would take us more than an hour to walk! It was like we needed eyes everywhere in the 15 km² range of the macaws. "Have you seen the macaws today?" became our catch phrase as we visited families and spoke with people everywhere we went. We meticulously recorded sightings by locals and these data went a long way in developing a more complete view of the general ranging patterns of the macaws. Soon we noticed that the residents started to pay more attention to the macaws (noting flock numbers, direction of flight and time of day) because they were frequently asked about sightings. Then the unexpected happened.

The more the people noticed the macaws, the more they appreciated - and admired - them. Soon they started showing them off to friends and visitors and were visibly moved by seeing them. It appears that this appreciation stems not only from the macaws' physical beauty but also that the macaws have some intrinsic value attached to them. To the people, they symbolise beauty and freedom, natural wonders and second chances. Every day, the macaws are seen over Punta Banco and yet still I see kids running out of the school's classroom to catch a glimpse of a screeching macaw as it flies by.

Conservation begins at home. One-off conservation education blitzes can be

Photo: Franck & Christine Dziubak

Photo: Franck & Christine Dziubak



Scarlet Macaw in flight.

useful, presentations based on new ideas and conservation goals can be both interesting and informative, but perceptions do not change in a day. For the perception of an individual to change, one needs to cultivate a development in the consciousness of an entire community (or population). This can only happen with regular interaction and reinforcement of conservation ideas and ideals, most effectively done by living the example. People and communities respond well to conservationists who are both passionate about their work and sensitive to the needs of the people. With this in mind, we live and work with the people of the area, trying never to preach but always willing to 'chat' about ideologies with our new friends. Volunteers and researchers are encouraged to meet and make friends with as many people in the area as possible. We regularly call upon houses to meet the residents and ask/talk about the macaws, knowing that each new friend we make is not only a personal friend but also a friend of the macaws. This network of 'friends of the birds' (Amigos de las Aves in Spanish) has the added benefit of having eyes everywhere watching for those who would harm the animals for their own benefit. It has been obvious that the appreciation of one species results in the deeper caring for nature as a whole. This concept has also worked in the macaws' favour as a result of

the dedication of Tiskita Jungle Lodge and a local sea turtle conservation project. The entire consciousness of the community is evolving toward an appreciation of, and a desire to protect, the natural environment, and people who can see the intrinsic (or extrinsic) benefit of conservation will not hesitate to protect it.

Photo: Katherine Herboorn



Sisters who keep an eye out for the Scarlet Macaws.

The environment needs to have a value placed on it. Many projects have tried to do this by creating a monetary rewards system for communities, but these often lack the financial basis to make a substantial contribution to the income of all the people in the area. In addition, rule enforcement and management by outside agencies ignores the potential for education based on mutual respect, friendships and kindness. We have found that the development of a conservation ethic by 'osmotic friendship education' generates a value system based on the simple presence of species and ecosystems. As one resident said, "I want my children and grandchildren to know these [animals]...and to know them here." This desire for conservation is ensuring the success of conservation efforts in the Punta Banco area. We now have 34 Scarlet Macaws gracing the skies of Punta Banco, ready to brighten the lives of the next generation of Costa Ricans.

Acknowledgements

Asociación Amigos De Las Aves wishes to thank the Costa Rican Environmental Ministry (MINAE), Peter Aspinal, Tiskita Jungle Lodge and the community of Punta Banco for their tireless support. I personally thank Colleen Downs and Louise Warburton for their inspiration and encouragement.



Blue-throated Macaw update

Since we updated you on the Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) activities in *PsittaScene* Vol 17 No 1 February 2005, we're pleased to report several exciting new developments. The Wildlife Conservation Society (Bronx Zoo), which had a growing group of Blue-throats at their breeding facility on St. Catherine's Island off Georgia (USA), kindly donated 15 of their birds to Steve Martin's organisation Natural Encounters Inc. in Florida. You'll recall that our birds are already housed there at Natural Encounters and Steve quickly constructed this impressive purpose-built facility nearby. This second building now houses both a group of 7 younger birds (visible in the middle of this photo), as well as four pairs of breeding adults, each to the outside and visually isolated from one another. Apparently, they're so delighted with the new facility that one of the pairs is already deeply involved with their nest box and may already be on eggs. Meanwhile the WPT is pursuing plans for a release in Bolivia. We're extremely grateful to have such generous and long term support from Steve and his staff at Natural Encounters Inc., and we're very excited that the Blue-throat population here has more than doubled!



Photo: Natural Encounters Inc.



Photo: Natural Encounters Inc.



WPT funds Phd research on Amazon parrots

By DR ANDREW BECKERMAN

Research on the Yellow-shouldered Amazon parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*) is set to increase this autumn as researchers at the University of Sheffield, UK and the World Parrot Trust have joined together to support two PhD students working in Bonaire, an island off the Venezuelan coast. In a scheme supported by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC, UK), studentships in the UK can be



Sam Williams.

supported financially by partnerships with NGO's, charities and businesses (CASE programme). Drs. Andrew Beckerman and Ben Hatchwell at Sheffield, and Dr. Jamie Gilardi at the World Parrot Trust are set to support two PhD students, Sam Williams and Rowan Martin. Sam has a degree in Ecology from the University of Stirling and Rowan a degree in Ecology from the University of East Anglia. Both have substantial experience with a variety of avian based research projects. The two are set to investigate a variety of aspects of Amazon parrot biology including factors limiting nesting success and habitat use, life history patterns, and aspects of breeding and mate choice.



Rowan Martin.

Parrots in Turkey

One person's attempt to make a difference

Text and Photos By SHARON KARAGOZLU

The Istanbul market place was a sweltering place to be in mid-June. The combination of rising heat from the pavement and pollution from cars and passing ships made breathing quite an effort. The marketplace was filled with Turkish people who were going about their daily business. Many pet stores are located in this area and most of them sell many species of parrots. I was curious to see the conditions the birds were kept in so I decided to investigate further. Almost all the animals I saw lacked basic necessities such as food, water, toys, and appropriate bedding materials. The African Greys (*Psittacus erithacus*) I saw lived in small cages that forced them to live in their own filth and were fed only sunflower seeds - hellish conditions compared to the mangrove forests of Africa. When I looked into their eyes I saw confused, broken spirits that looked out of place behind the metal bars of a cage.

Turkey, like the majority of the countries in the European Union, still imports wild-caught parrots for the pet trade. Many Turkish residents are enchanted by the desire to own such an exotic pet and many birds are bought impulsively. Little information exists in Turkish that would even begin to explain the care of such a wild creature. Thus, many parrots end up cage bound, malnourished, and unsocialized due to ignorance.

On my many travels to Turkey, I have contemplated about these issues. How can I help those parrots? I can't buy every one of them and take them back to the rainforests, savannahs, and forests. Oh how I wish that were possible. Instead I have started writing articles and spreading the word about their dire situation. An opportunity of a lifetime presented itself.



Sharon speaks to Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan about the devastating affects of the pet trade in his country and shows him the trade bands being sold to help promote the campaign.

My husband and I were invited to a dinner in San Francisco that would be attended by the Prime Minister of Turkey Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine. I was unsure if I would be fortunate enough to have opportunity to speak with him but if I did I wanted to be prepared to discuss these issues that disturbed me greatly. So I went to the WPT website and printed out an article to give him that discussed banning the importation of wild-caught birds. Also I stuffed a few trade bands into my purse to give him.

Lucky us, we were sitting right next to the Prime Ministers table and I was able to speak with him on a few occasions. I gave him the article and the trade bands. He immediately put one of the trade bands on his wife! He seemed pleased that I would make an effort to give him these things. I hope that he takes the time to read the article, visit the website and learn more



Baris and Sharon Karagozlu, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine Erdogan meet in San Francisco.

about the devastating impacts of the bird trade in his country. It would be in Turkey's best interest to support a trade ban since they desire entrance into the European Union and have been "passed over" partly due to animal and human rights issues.

There will come a day when no parrot will fear another trapper because the bird trade no longer exists and the demand for wild-caught birds has dried up. Only then will the parrots truly fly free.

If you would like to encourage the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan to ban the importation of wild-caught parrots into Turkey please write to him at:

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan
AK PARTI GENEL MERKEZI
Ceyhun Atif Kansu Cad.
No: 120 Balgat
Ankara, Turkey



Parrots in Turkish markets are sold in the very cages that they are displayed in. Most of these birds will live out their lives in a cage too small to spread out their wings.

Psitta News

Soho Festival

By DOROTHY SCHWARZ

"I want the trade in wild-caught parrots abolished, and I want to call attention to the plight of parrots in the wild and the needs of parrots in captivity," says Kaye de Ville, WPT member and owner of Gracie, 3 year-old Congo African Grey. With these aims in mind she organised a stall as part of the Soho Festival. This annual event took place on July 7th in the grounds of St. Anne's Church in Wardour Street. Kaye was assisted by Lynne Boon and Jennifer Smith who also contributed parrot related items for sale and art work and handed out parrot related literature supplied by WPT. Kaye had invited other WPT members to contribute or join-in via the useful email forum set up by the WPT and WPT UK had written to all members in the London area to inform them of the event. In all £280 was raised for WPT. Kaye also invited members to bring their parrots along. Kaye herself takes Gracie everywhere with her. Unfortunately, due to the high security alert in London that weekend, some owners who had wished to attend did not do so. However five parrots were there with their owners. Vicki Hammond with Marella a 15 year old Blue and Gold Macaw on her shoulder, Sid Khursid brought Coco a 4 year old Maximilian Pionus whom Sid had trained to wear a harness from the age of 8 weeks,



Kaye de Ville with 3 year old Gracie, Congo African Grey.

Artha and Casper, two Congo African Greys aged 5 and 4 belonging to Dot Schwarz. The parrots interacted with children and their parents and accepted the public's admiration with admirable aplomb. These birds are all captive bred, happy and experienced at meeting members of the public.

Newcastle disease confirmed in pheasants

DEFRA, 16th July 2005

UK - An outbreak of Newcastle disease, a notifiable disease affecting poultry, has been confirmed in a number of pheasants intended for shooting in Surrey.

The Health Protection Agency has confirmed that Newcastle Disease does not pose a significant threat to human health.

All the pheasants, which were being bred for shooting, are to be culled as part of a system of strict control measures aimed at swiftly containing any outbreak required under EU law.

The premises are not close to any significant poultry production units. The birds will be killed humanely.

Immediate action is being taken to track the movements of other pheasant consignments which may have come from same original source to eliminate any risk of the disease spreading.

Although Newcastle Disease is infectious to other birds, the potential threat to a major part of the UK egg and poultry industry is minimal as large-scale producers routinely vaccinate their birds against the disease and any vulnerable birds could be vaccinated within a week.

We have suspended issue of export health certificates to non-EU countries where they require freedom from Newcastle Disease.

However, Defra vets are working closely with colleagues in the poultry industry, the NFU, game shooting bodies and others, to ensure any threat to smaller scale keepers and others who may not routinely vaccinate is minimised.

State Veterinary Service are tracing all known contacts connected with the original consignment from France and checking for any clinical symptoms of the disease. No other suspect cases have been identified so far. Restrictions have been imposed upon the farm where the disease has been confirmed which includes movement restrictions and biosecurity measures. In addition, a Declaratory Order has been made declaring an infected area and establishing a surveillance zone of 10 km around the infected premises to impose restriction to prevent the spread of disease.

Chief veterinary officer Debby Reynolds, said:

'All keepers of birds should ensure they maintain high standards of bio security, consider whether they wish to vaccinate, consult their vet advisors and report any suspicion of disease to the State Veterinary Service'.

'I would like to make it clear this is not avian flu'.

Renaissance Artist Puppet Company

By K. ELIZABETH EVANS, Artistic Director, www.renartpuppetco.com

The Renaissance Artist Puppet Company is producing two myths of Latin American origins with bilingual interactive aspects. The production from the Caribbean Islands and the Taino Indian people featured many animals that were native to the islands, but are now extinct. This required a good bit of research, and finding picture references for many of them was difficult. Most, unfortunately, were taxidermy examples. The World Parrot Trust's director, James Gilardi, was very helpful in helping us to determine that the Macaw we were looking for was the Cuban Macaw.



Photo: K. Elizabeth Evans, Artistic Director

Macaw and Ant lament the lack of water in the forest of Chocos.

The production is brightly coloured in it's design and musical score. Both vignettes have been influenced by the folk arts and music of the regions. They highlight some animals, stories and societies that have become lost in existence and the knowledge about them lost over time.

Increased Penalties for Endangered Wildlife Offences in the UK

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2005/050627b.htm>

People convicted of trading in endangered species, their parts and their derivatives will face up to five years in prison under new laws introduced today.

The new laws, which come into effect on 21 July, will bring with them stronger powers for police officers in fighting wildlife crime, including powers of arrest, entry, search and seizure.

Biodiversity Minister Jim Knight, announcing the new penalties at Bristol Zoo today, said:

“Species like the elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, many birds of prey, some varieties of orchid, and many other animals and plants are under threat from the illegal trade.

“The legislation I am introducing today will send a strong message to those people who are plundering the world’s rarest wildlife, that their activities will not be tolerated.

“The five-year maximum penalty is needed by the Courts to ensure they can properly punish the very small number of people who are systematically exploiting our wildlife, in some cases for very significant financial gain.

“As well as being a significant penalty for those who break the law, the possibility of five years in prison will be an important deterrent to potential wildlife criminals.”

A Statutory Instrument laid today amends the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1997, by increasing the penalties for illegally selling, buying, advertising and displaying for commercial purposes (and other related activities) species listed in Annex A of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulation.

The new penalties and police powers will apply in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Parallel provisions are being introduced in Scotland.

At present, Magistrates Courts can imprison people for up to three months; and Crown Courts - two years. These terms are being increased to six months and five years respectively.

Great Green Macaw national conservation strategy signed into Law in Ecuador

By ERIC VON HORSTMAN

The guayaquilensis race of the Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambigua*) which is found in Western Ecuador is listed as critically endangered by the Red Book of The Birds of Ecuador (2002) with an estimated population of 60 to 90 individuals in two now widely separated populations.

In humid lowland forest in Esmeraldas Province in the Choco Bioregion and another population in dry tropical forest in the Cordillera Chongón-Colonche in Guayas Province.



Great Green Macaw feeding on Monkey Pod nuts (Lecythis ampla).

With the support of the Neotropical Bird Club and Zoo des Sables, Fundaciòn Pro-Bosque organized and carried out a workshop held in September, 2003 reuniting investigators from Ecuador and a sister project with *Ara ambigua* in Costa Rica, representatives of local environmental NGO’s and the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Environment to prepare a National Conservation Strategy for the Great Green Macaw in Ecuador.

In December 2004, the Ecuadorian Minister of the Environment signed a decree putting into effect the strategy and in January 2005 a working group was formed consisting of representatives of the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Environment, Municipality of Guayaquil, Fundaciòn Pro-Bosque and Fundaciòn Rescate Jambelí.

Fundraising is being carried out to implement the more urgent components of the strategy, focusing on a field census and monitoring program to better determine the macaw population in the wild as well as prepare and implement individualized conservation plans when active nests are located (all to date have been on private land) to protect them against the robbing of chicks for the local pet trade. Future actions will focus on protection of habitat through the creation of new protected areas or conservation agreements negotiated with private land owners on whose land Great Green Macaws are found, habitat restoration and environmental education programs among others. For further information, please contact Eric Von Horstman vonhorst@gu.pro.ec.

Logging blunder clears rare parrot nesting trees

By LIZ MINCHIN, *The Age Newspaper*, Australia, August 6, 2005
www.theage.com.au

Logging has devastated more than half of an endangered native bird's protected nesting colony, because of a bureaucratic bungle by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The blunder was discovered when a botanist alerted the department, triggering an audit that ended the logging.

As few as 150 Superb Parrots (*Polytelis swainsonii*) still breed in Victoria, in a handful of nesting colonies around the Barmah State Forest near Echuca.

A century ago superb parrots could be seen as far south as Plenty, but are now mostly found in NSW, where about 6000 survive.

To stop the birds' numbers dwindling any further, nesting trees are supposed to be protected from logging by buffer zones of at least 100 metres, and their locations are a tightly guarded secret to keep the birds safe from poachers.

But the department's north-east regional director, Kevin Ritchie said staff forgot to check maps before approving a new logging coupe in March 2003.

"The logging operation intruded into the protection zone for superb parrots, because that (protection zone) hadn't been recorded in the Coupe Information System, and the forestry officer who would normally have known to check the maps was away ill," he said.

As a result, from February to June this year loggers felled almost 6000 tonnes of river red gums in about 60 per cent of one of the largest superb parrot nesting colonies in the forest.

In mid-June, when logging was halted because of wet weather, botanical consultant Doug Frood visited the forest.

"I was stunned, because this was one of the best remaining stands of old growth red gums in Barmah and it had been severely impacted," he said.

When a department staff member investigated Mr Frood's complaint on June 29, he realised that the loggers had been allowed deep into a 35-hectare protected zone.

The parrots are due to arrive in the Barmah forest for their annual four-month breeding season within weeks, during which time all human disturbances are banned.

But when *The Age* visited the forest this week, a clean-up of the area appeared to have hardly begun.

At least five large logpiles were scattered

through the woods and the ground was covered with sawn debris, including dried-out tree canopies the size of tennis courts, and 15-metre trees lying next to their stumps.


Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation chairman Lee Joachim was particularly upset by the number of old growth trees left to rot on the ground.

"Most of these have got no timber value at all. They'll be lucky to be used for firewood or woodchips," he said.

Mr Ritchie admitted the area could become a fire hazard if not cleared out before the parrots arrive. He hopes the work will be done this month.

The department is hiring a superb parrot specialist to investigate and will overhaul its logging approvals process.

Logging will soon resume in the area, after the State Government this week closed tenders for another 4000 tonnes of river red gums to be cut in the Barmah State Forest, along with 3000 tonnes from the nearby Gunbower Island State Forest.

That worries some local environmentalists and bird lovers, including Birds Australia's Chris Tzaros: "Superb Parrots are one of most elegant and graceful parrots we'd have in this country ... the more we keep chipping away at the edges of where they can live, the closer they get to extinction." 

In Memory of Romain Bejstrup

We are very sorry to report that Romain Bejstrup, treasurer and vice-president of WPT-Benelux, died at the early age of 63 on the 25th August 2005, after a long illness. His WPT colleague Ruud Vonk, has written this tribute to him.

Romain was for many years an eminent breeder of Goffin's Cockatoos (*Cacatua goffini*), and developed a deep interest in birds and the conservation of those endangered around the world.

This was his reason for joining the board of the World Parrot Trust Benelux branch in 1991. His passion for birds included their breeding, but he had a great interest in problems that birds face around the world, such as habitat destruction, pollution and the bird trade. Romain organised several congresses as a co-organizer for WPT-Benelux, in Belgium and the Netherlands, during the 1990s to draw attention to these.

Because the committee consisted of members from both Belgium and the Netherlands, Romain performed a great role in bringing everyone together. His wit and jovial attitude to life helped to create just the right atmosphere to achieve the best outcome for the parrots.



He worked to expand the WPT membership and influence and, as he was fluent in both French and Dutch, he was able to communicate well with those in Belgium. With his wife Gerda he attended bird club shows on behalf of the WPT, making a lot of friends and contacts. He represented the WPT in 'Koepel', an advisory organization consisting of many pet societies and took part in discussions with the Ministry of

Agriculture. He also had a talent for financial administration, which gave him yet another role.

His dedication to birds around the world included his support of these two projects:

First, the Parrot Action Plan, published by the WPT and IUCN, which rounds up the status and problems facing all the endangered parrots of the world, and second, the amazing and sadly endangered big blue parrot, the Lear's Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*). During the WPT-Benelux congress at Antwerp Zoo in 1993 Romain encouraged special attention for this project, and was able to raise enough funds to allow the WPT to donate over €5,000. He visited, together with my wife and I, the home of the World Parrot Trust at Paradise Park in Cornwall, UK, to deliver a cheque for these funds in person.

During his 15 years with the WPT, Romain's leadership led us through deep valleys and over steep hills. Romain we miss your honest and vital personality!

Ruud Vonk,
Chairman WPT-Benelux,
Trustee WPT

Aims of the Trust

With thousands of members in over 50 countries, our branches work to achieve the stated aims of the World Parrot Trust, which are:



- The survival of parrot species in the wild
- The welfare of captive birds everywhere

Give As You Earn in the UK

Charity Aid Foundation (CAF) operates the largest payroll giving scheme in the UK - Give As You Earn (GAYE). If you work, giving as you earn is arguably the easiest way for you to give to charity. Coming straight from your pay, and before tax, you can choose to have your donations paid into your Charity Account for you to give away whenever and however you please. Each time you are paid, your payroll department just needs to deduct your donation before tax.

A large number of employers also match the donations their employees make.

1. Check if your company is registered with the CAF to offer the scheme.
2. Decide how much you'd like to give each pay day.

It's so easy, and it means your gift can help WPT do more for the survival of parrots in the wild, and for the welfare of captive parrots everywhere.

'The Give As You Earn scheme makes charity giving very easy and I am lucky that my employer supports the scheme and encourages payroll giving. I selected just a handful of charities to which I wish to give regularly and, with my Cockatoo Kiri sitting on my shoulder as I type, it was obvious that parrot conservation had to be one of them. Kiri and I have been together for over 18 years and so this is my contribution back to that world.' Janet Miller, WPT member.

Call the GAYE helpline on 01732 520019 or email giveasyouearn@cafonline.org or write to GAYE, CAF, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA to join. www.allaboutgiving.org

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

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- Joint (Annual) £27 / US\$40 / €40
- Club (Annual) £100 / US\$150 / €150
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Parrots in the Wild



Blue-fronted Amazon

Amazona aestiva

By ©2005 Bowles/Erickson,
www.amazornia.us

Having run a disturbing image of this species on the front cover, we thought it might be provide a welcome bit of relief to see a Blue-fronted Amazon out flying around being a wild parrot. Here is a stunning image shot by Mike Bowles and Loretta Erickson of a wild Blue-front enjoying an Argentine climate in the naturalised population living in Los Angeles, with the bonus of a perch and backdrop of Washingtonia palms, the only palm native to southern California.