

Grey Update...

...For the full story
see *PsittaScene*
February 2008
and parrots.org →
current projects →
African Grey...



Photo: © Limbe Wildlife Centre

In the waning months of 2007 an epic began for the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA) and for the staff of the Limbe Wildlife Centre (LWC) in Cameroon, Africa. LAGA's investigation activities led to the seizure of over 1,200 African Grey parrots in 2 illegal shipments bound for pet markets abroad. The birds went to Limbe for triage. Hundreds have been released and around 300 remain while their feathers grow before release.

Ofir Drori, the founder and director of LAGA, said "The Grey Parrots case proved to be one of the most interesting in terms of high level corruption and complicity. One top dealer is behind bars and most of the parrots are already free. The Minister said he decided to release the parrots as an act of commitment towards fighting wildlife crime, and symbolically released a few of them with the governor of Limbe and two Ambassadors (above). This is the first time such quantity was seized and not recycled back into the trade benefiting illegal dealers. We hope this release will set a precedent not only in Cameroon."

Of the 1,200 birds originally seized, over 700 were released almost immediately. Unfortunately, approximately 200 birds were dead on arrival or died from illness or injury. The remaining 300 birds had severe feather damage, which required intense care. The World Parrot Trust provided immediate financial help to build aviaries and buy food, then sent Dr. Gino Conzo, an Italian veterinarian to Limbe to advise the staff and help treat the birds. Gino was accompanied by Mario D'Angelo for the daunting task. With assistance from the Limbe staff, Gino and Mario examined each bird and removed all the damaged feathers to speed the growth of new feathers and eventual release.

In a recent update Felix Lankester reported:

Once the damaged feathers were removed the birds began recuperating in flight cages. In early February they completed treatment for Chlamydia. The treatment had been very successful with the daily death rate dropping to zero. Even the birds that had been extremely sick recovered well enough to be placed back into the flight cages with the rest of the flock.

Everything seemed to be moving forward nicely until late March when three birds died in two days. After discussions with Dr. Conzo, we concluded that the parrots could be beginning another wave of Chlamydia. It is extremely difficult to rid a flock of the infective organism, as the birds can be asymptomatic carriers. In order to prevent another epidemic we started another round of treatment and will monitor the situation very carefully. We hope we caught the outbreak early and in doing so will reduce the number of casualties. However if a number of birds do become sick their feather recovery rate, and eventual release may be delayed beyond May 2008.



Photo: © Gino Conzo

The Limbe Wildlife Centre would like to thank the WPT for the logistical assistance and critical financial help, without which we certainly would not have been able to do so much for the African Greys.