

TIME TO RENEW 'THE HYACINTH FUND'

It's three years since we launched "The Hyacinth Fund" with the aim of furthering research into the blue macaws. With the funds raised we were able to support much of the innovative work of Charlie Munn and Carlos Yamashita in the Pantanal of Brazil. The value of providing artificial nest boxes was demonstrated by them, and this has led to further activity of this kind, both in Brazil and elsewhere in parrot habitats.

Some of the Hyacinth Fund was used to start up work on behalf of Lear's Macaw, and that particular account is now empty. (As reported in 'PsittaScene', however, our 'Palm for a Parrot' Lear's Macaw campaign has found support from many individuals and institutions, notably The People's Trust for Endangered Species.)

The Trust would like to press ahead with new population studies of the Hyacinth Macaw, and in addition would like to raise funds to help the on-going work of a young Brazilian field biologist, Neiva Guedes. Neiva has now finished her thesis on the reproductive behaviour of the Hyacinth Macaw, but intends to continue her field work if funding can be found.

So please may I appeal to the generosity of our members to help refill 'The Hyacinth Fund'? There is much more that needs to be done to try to ensure that these wonderful birds continue to exist in the wild.

There are three ways to help: first, you could buy one of our Pantanal Hyacinth T-shirts for £13.50 or \$20 including postage; second, you could order our Hyacinth limited edition print 'The noblest of them all' for the special price of £40 or \$60 inc. postage, or you could simply make a donation specifically to 'The Hyacinth Fund'.

There follows a summary of Neiva Guedes' thesis.

REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY OF HYACINTH MACAWS

(*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*)

In the Pantanal - MS, Brazil.

By Neiva Maria Robaldo Guedes

Advisor: Prof. Alvaro Fernando de Almeida

Summary:

It is impossible to know the size and original distribution of the population of *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*, but it is known that it was an abundant species at the beginning of the century. Nowadays it is threatened by extinction throughout its habitat and the latest estimates report the existence of about 3,000 individuals in nature.

This work was conducted from January 1991 to

March 1993 in 11 ranches of about 250,000 ha in the Nhecolandia region of the Pantanal. Its main aims were: 1) to locate, measure and mark nests of hyacinth macaws; 2) to study some aspects of the reproductive biology; 3) to understand the habitat selection for feeding and nesting; 4) to look for management alternatives for the conservation of the species.

Of the 94 nests identified 95% were found in only one tree species, "manduvi" (*Sterculia striata*), which has a soft heart and is, thus, prone to the formation of hollows. Hyacinth macaws apparently do not select nests with standardized characteristics, such as shape and size of hollows. However they prefer open sites on the edge of mountain ridges or copses.

In nature Hyacinth macaws lay asynchronously 1 to 3 eggs, 2 on the average. Egg incubation is done by the female which stays in the nest most of the time and is fed by the male. The incubation period varies from 28 to 30 days and the rate of hatching is 90%. The chicks are born weighing, on the average, 31.6g and measuring 82.7mm long. However, they grow and increase weight rapidly. They stay in the nest for about 107 days and when they fledge they are still being fed by the parents. There is a predation of 40% of the eggs, but the rate of survival of the chicks varies from 75% to 83%. The reproductive success during the two years was 1.25 chicks per pair.

Hyacinth macaws proved to be one of the most specialized birds in their feeding habits. Foraging is based on nuts from two palm species: "bocaiuva" (*Acrocomia totai*) and "acuri" (*Scheelea phalerata*). During most of the year foraging is dependent on acuri which is highly abundant (density of 183.4 acuri/ha in some areas) and produces fruit throughout the year.

The pairs of Hyacinth macaws showed high conspicuousness, sedentariness and a certain degree of fidelity to the nesting sites. Non-reproductive individuals showed a high degree of socialization and flock formation, both in the foraging sites and in the roosts, the latter apparently functioning as veritable "information exchange centers".

The availability of hollows big enough for the size of macaws is low and, furthermore, there is competition with other species for the existing nests. This factor, in addition to the destruction of potential nests by deforestation or burning, may be limiting the increase of the population in the Pantanal area. For this reason some proposals concerning the management of nests have been made, in addition to others that may contribute to the conservation of the species in nature.

Attend the Event of the Year! IAS Convention, January 13-16, 1994 West Palm Beach, Florida.

Our 1st annual convention was a tremendous success! Participants, speakers and vendors thoroughly enjoyed sharing experiences and knowledge. The camaraderie at our Vegas Nite auction contributed to our raising and distributing nineteen thousand dollars to Avian Research and Conservation.

Confirmed international speakers include:

Mrs. Rosemary Low, Gran Canaria, Spain.

Mr. John Stoodley, U.K.

Dr. Carlos Yamashita, Brazil

Speakers from the USA include:

Dr. U.S. Seal - Captive Breeding Specialist Group

Mrs. Joanne Abramson - Raintree Macaws

Dr. Keven Flammer - North Carolina State U.

Dr. Hannis L. Stoddard - AVID

Randal Bure, Ph.D - Kaytee Products

Mrs. Katherine Muser - Everglades Aviaries

Miami Parrot Jungle Staff

Dr. Susan Clubb - Parrot Jungle

Mr. Michael Masie - Pretty Bird

Mr. Marc Valentine - Avian Genetics

Mr. John Goss - Inflight Aviaries

Dr. Branson Ritchie - University of Georgia

Dr. Amy Worrell - Rolling Oak Aviaries

For registration contact:

Luanne Porter on (USA) 901.872.7612.

For hotel rooms contact: Palm Beach Airport Hilton Reservations (407) 684-9400 ext. 3040. Room rate \$60.00 a night plus tax. Donors and vendors, please contact Phyllis Martin, 10101-A Tucker Jones Rd, Riverview, FL33569, (813) 677-8904.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Members write

Brehm Fund South Seas Expedition

Dear Ms Low

In "PsittaScene" 4/4 (1992) you requested new information on the "World Parrot Trust league table of endangered parrots". I was surprised to find no Pacific island species in this list, although at least 4 species have populations of less than 2000 individuals.

- Uvea Horned Parakeet (*Eunymphicus cornutus uveaensis*), about 200 in the wild and 30 in captivity.

- Ultramarine Lorikeet (*Vini ultramarina*), 800 to 1000 in the wild.

- Henderson Island Lorikeet (*Vini stephensi*), 500 to 1000 in the wild.

- Scarlet-breasted Lorikeet (*Vini kuhlii*), 1500 to 2000 in the wild, 1 in captivity.

You also included subspecies in this list. The Norfolk Island Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae cookii*) has only about 40 individuals, about half of which are in captivity. The Forbes' Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus auriceps forbesi*) from the Chatham Islands numbers about 350 individuals. The Parrot Action Plan, soon to be published by BirdLife International (formerly ICBP), provides details about the status of all parrot species, and many subspecies. The "League table of endangered parrots" would, based on this document, have to be completely revised.

Sincerely Yours

Dr Dieter R. Rinke (Project Director)

Dr. Rinke is quite correct, and when the parrot Action Plan is available we may print a revised 'League Table'. Ed.

8651 Britannia Court
Dallas, TX 75243
USA

Dear Ms. Low,

Congratulations on the beautiful, color issue of Psittascene! I always enjoy reading all the wonderful things the World Parrot Trust is doing on behalf of these gorgeous creatures, and now to be able to see them in their glorious colors is even better. I really admire your organization because you are actually out there in the field, doing things to benefit parrots, not just talking and asking for contributions. That makes me

much more willing to make contributions! Please find enclosed \$20 to go towards Dr. Neto's study of the Red-tailed Amazon. I thought my dusky Pionus was the most beautiful bird I'd ever seen, but your photo of the Red-tailed Amazon took my breath away. I know this is a small sum, but hopefully I can add to it. Please keep us informed on this beautiful bird. Thank you again for your hard work and lovely magazine.

Candy Tooley

CREWE
Cheshire

Dear Sir

I have recently been researching the history of the Oakfield Zoological Garden, near Crewe, which existed in the late 1920s/early 1930s under the ownership of a Dr Willie English. Although his speciality were marmosets and tamarins (he bred Golden Lion tamarin four times in 1931/32) he also had a significant collection of parrots, including "five varieties of macaws", and *Amazona aestiva/festiva/ochrocephala/autumnalis/diadema/ventralis* and *barbadensis*, along with Dusky Parrot, cockatoos, lorries etc. A number of photographs taken there have come to light, and I enclose copies of those which feature parrots.

Picture 1: Hyacinth Macaw, and budgerigar.

Picture 2: From left to right, Hyacinth Macaw? Greater Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo? Ara macao? And on the right, could this be Lear's Macaw? It seems very like the Lear's shown in Rutgers' Handbook of Foreign Birds (Blandford, 1965) especially in the shape of the yellow patch by the beak; also the relatively small patch around the eye. One gentleman who has seen the photograph (and who has kept a number of macaws himself) suggested Glaucous Macaw - but I'm not entirely sure why! Your comments on any of the above would be very much appreciated, as I am in the process of writing a book on Oakfield's history, and wouldn't want to get the psittacine facts wrong.

Yours sincerely

Gwyn Griffiths

P.S. We think Hayle's parrot collection is superb!



Editor's note:

Much fascinating correspondence reaches our office these days, but this is particularly intriguing. The shot of the budgerigar on the back of the Hyacinth Macaw has a lot of charm. Clearly they are friends, but does a pair bond exist? If so, who feeds who, and how? Can any reader report any similar current relationships between disproportionate psittacine soulmates? If so, how about a picture for 'PsittaScene'?

The shot of the four assorted parrots raises a few questions. Mr. Griffiths speculates that No. 3 is a Scarlet

Macaw, but we think it is a Blue and Gold Macaw, due to the facial lines and the dark bill. But bird number 4 is apparently a Lear's Macaw, although it is possible it could be a Glaucous; it certainly seems small in relation to the Hyacinth Macaw on the left. However, why is the Blue and Gold macaw so small? It seems about the size of the Lear's but "Parrots of the World" by Forshaw and Cooper gives the following lengths for these birds: Hyacinth 100cm, Blue and Gold 86cm, Lear's 75cm, Glaucous 72cm. If anyone has any answers to these questions, please write.