

CONSERVING THE RED-VENTED COCKATOO

By Rosemary Low

The Philippine or Red-vented Cockatoo is now among the 20 or so most critically endangered parrots throughout the world. Once widespread throughout the islands of the Philippines, not until two or three years ago was it realised that this diminutive cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) had suffered a massive population decline as a result of deforestation and trapping. (Between the 1930s and the 1980s, 80% of the forests there were destroyed, and the destruction continues). Now it is

known to survive only on the island of Palawan.

This cockatoo is poorly represented in aviculture; it has never been common and mortality among recently imported birds was high. There are very few breeding pairs in existence. The first step towards preserving this species in aviculture was taken this year with the formation of an EEP (European breeding programme). Everyone who keeps this species, even only a single bird, is urged to contact the coordinator of the EEP,

Marc Boussekey, Espace Zoologique, St Martin-La-Plaine, 42800 Rive-de-Gier, France. It is vitally important that the location is recorded of as many birds as possible.

This breeding effort has been linked with a conservation programme for this species in the wild. To this end, an agreement between Espace Zoologique and the government of the Philippines was signed recently. The zoo funded and produced a poster in English and in two Philippine languages for distribution throughout the

islands. It emphasises that the cockatoo must be protected. Prints of the poster artwork, beautifully depicting a small flock in the wild, are now available in a limited edition of 200. The price is 100FF each (about £12.50 plus postage and packing) payable to Association Zoologique at the above address. All profits from its sale will go directly to the conservation of the Red-vented Cockatoo.

Comment by Michael Reynolds

This initiative by Espace Zoologique and Marc Boussekey, their Scientific Advisor, is to be applauded. It creates a framework within which the Philippine Government, can work with interested bodies and individuals in its own country, and with conservation minded groups worldwide, to seek the survival of this important species of cockatoo. The agreement documents were prepared with the help of William Oliver, Chairman of the IUCN Specialist Group. The ICMA (International Conservation Management Agreement) states that it is intended '...to establish a formal protocol for the cooperative management of captive individuals of this taxon' and that '...it is intended to meet the best interests of that captive population...and to promote and assist efforts to enhance understanding of its biology, its management needs both in the wild and in captivity, and the ultimate survival prospects of both wild and captive populations.' The agreement also specifies that 'No specimens of this taxon, whether wild-caught or captive bred, may be sold or otherwise used in commercial transaction.' For most zoological institutions this requirement will not be a problem, since non-commercial movement of CITES Appendix 1 animals within cooperative breeding programmes has become the norm. For private aviculturists who will certainly have purchased their Red-vented Cockatoos, it is more of a challenge. Perhaps some will be ready to acknowledge that critically endangered species should be dealt with in cooperation with other holders, and should not have commercial value. Hopefully, successful production and sale of Appendix 2 species will support an investment of funds, time and expertise in Appendix 1 parrot species which urgently need help if they are to survive. A final observation: this initiative demonstrates that no single organisation holds a monopoly in bird conservation, and that there is plenty of scope for institutions, societies and individuals to identify and pursue worthwhile projects.

