



WORLD
PARROT
TRUST

ABOUT WPT

As an international leader in parrot conservation and welfare efforts, the World Parrot Trust has aided more than 66 species in 42 countries, returning thousands of parrots to the wild and protecting millions more from the threat of extinction.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

New study highlights need for action to protect Grey parrots

November 23rd 2017 – (LONDON): *Hayle, United Kingdom* – New research from the World Parrot Trust has underlined the importance of the recent move by the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to end international trade in wild African Grey Parrots, and highlights the need for a coordinated action to ensure the new rules are effectively implemented. Ways to tackle trafficking will be discussed at a major wildlife trade meeting in Geneva this week.

The most comprehensive analysis of the trade in African Grey Parrots to date, the study of CITES reported data revealed that between 1978 and 2014, more than 1.2 million African Grey Parrots were legally traded with the number taken from the wild much higher. Dramatic shifts were seen in which populations were targeted, with the forests of West Africa, where populations have collapsed, being replaced by the Congo Basin as the main source of parrots in the trade.

"The international trade in Grey Parrots is complex and has been surprisingly dynamic," said Dr. Rowan Martin, Director of the World Parrot Trust's Africa Conservation Programme and a Research Associate of the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town, who authored the study. "It's impossible to single out one factor that has driven the shifting trade, but declining numbers in the wild, trade restrictions - and the lack of them - and global macro-economic changes have all played a role."

The study highlights how efforts to protect wild populations in some areas have been undermined by the ease with which Grey Parrots could be laundered through neighbouring countries, as well as how export quotas could be exceeded and permits falsified. The CITES decision last year to bring an end to the legal trade in wild Greys eliminated these avenues, but enforcement agencies, airlines and pet owners must remain diligent to the ongoing threat of illegal trafficking.

Cristiana Senni, a specialist in the illegal parrot trade with the World Parrot Trust added, "We have been closely monitoring illegal trade for several years and while there are encouraging signs since the CITES ban last year, we are still seeing a worrying number of wild Grey Parrots being trafficked. The Democratic Republic of Congo, where the largest remaining populations are found, is a particularly important source, with most shipments destined for countries in the Middle East and Asia. It's vital that countries work together to stop the trade before Africa's forests fall silent."

Last year African Grey and the closely related Timneh Parrots were uplisted to *Endangered*, the second highest level of threat on the Red List of Globally Threatened Species produced by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The study is published as part of a special issue on parrot ecology and conservation in the ornithological journal *Emu* and can be accessed at the following link <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01584197.2017.1369854?journalCode=temu20>



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Notes for Editors

Note 1. “Grey areas: temporal and geographical dynamics of international trade of Grey and Timneh Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus* and *P. timneh*) under CITES” appears in the journal *Emu* [here](#).

Note 2. High-resolution photos to accompany this release are available [here](#).

Note 3. The Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology is a South African biological research and conservation institute based at the University of Cape Town.

Note 4. Grey Parrots are one of the most popular pet birds, valued for their problem-solving abilities and capacity to mimic sounds. One of the most famous Grey Parrots was Alex, who could reportedly identify 50 different objects and recognise quantities up to six. Once widespread in the forests of tropical Africa, Grey Parrot populations have collapsed as a result of heavy trapping for the pet trade. A recent study in Ghana published in the *Journal Ibis* (Annorbah *et al.* 2016. *Ibis*. 58(1): 82-91) found populations had declined between 90 and 99% in the last two decades. Another paper on trade in central DRC reports a recent surge in trapping as trappers move into the area following declines elsewhere (Hart *et al.* 2016. *Oryx*. 50(1): 16).

Note 5. The World Parrot Trust seeks to bring together global wildlife conservation and welfare organisations to carry out effective programs to save parrots. Our work is based in science and first hand experience in the field, and in decades of companion parrot care practice. For more information visit www.parrots.org.

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