

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



UN BANS INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WILD AFRICAN GREY PARROTS

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, 2 October 2016 - African Grey parrots were granted much-needed protection from the wildlife trade by the delegates at the Conference of the Parties to CITES 17 (CoP17), which voted to end all commercial trade in wild African Grey Parrots. The proposal was submitted by Gabon, and co-sponsored by Angola, Nigeria, Guinea, Togo, Senegal, Chad, the United States and the European Union. During the debate many other African states spoke up in support of the proposal.

“This is a very important decision and a critical step towards securing the future for these fantastic birds,” said Dr. Rowan Martin, Director of the World Parrot Trust’s Africa Programme. “In parts of Africa, wild populations have suffered dramatic declines and this action was urgently needed to stop Africa’s forests falling silent.”

African Grey parrots are one of the most sought after and highly traded species in the world. Since 1975 more than 1.3 million of these parrots have been reported in international trade. Once widespread over most of Africa, recent field data from multiple range states confirm widespread population collapses in wild Grey Parrots. Local extinctions have also occurred. There have been substantial irregularities in trade and exports have frequently exceeded recommended quotas. Given the overwhelming evidence of the dangers to these parrots, many African countries and regional and international NGOs have sought to encourage global bodies such as CITES to provide the maximum protection required for African Grey parrots to survive in the wild.

Tony Juniper, leading environmentalist and World Parrot Trust ambassador, stated, “This decision is very good news for one of the world's most charismatic and beautiful parrots. A barbaric and unnecessary trade has been behind the precipitous decline that has been documented during recent years, and I’m certain this ban will lead to a more positive outlook.”

A milestone decision has been reached for the conservation of these birds, but much more has yet to be accomplished to ensure the species’ preservation, including boosting enforcement and compliance in range states and importing countries and the development of in-situ conservation projects.

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Notes for Editors

Note 1. High-resolution photos to accompany this release are available [here](#).

Note 2. The original Proposal to transfer Grey Parrots to CITES Appendix I can be downloaded from the CITES website [here](#).

Note 3. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Proposal can be downloaded [here](#).

Note 4. A high-resolution infographic outlining the issues can be downloaded [here](#).

Note 5. The proposal was co-sponsored by Gabon, Angola, Chad, Guinea, Nigeria, Togo and Senegal, the EU and USA. In addition, during the proposal's preparation Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Niger and Rwanda all stated support for the proposal.

Note 6. About Grey Parrots: 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. A recent study 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 7. About the World Parrot Trust (WPT): WPT 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. Learn more at: www.parrots.org

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