

# Psitta Scene



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# Psitta Scene

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With the start of each new year I often find myself reflecting on the passage of time and the impact of individuals and events on shaping the future. This year, I am reminded of the well-known quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead who said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Over the past two and a half years it has been my privilege and pleasure to meet many committed citizens who care deeply about parrots. Through my work to coordinate our websites, campaigns, marketing and fund-raising efforts, I am often amazed by the unique individuals I encounter, and especially by their dedication to parrot conservation and welfare. The last several months in particular have been quite exceptional due to the overwhelming response to the launch of our FlyFree campaign to end the trade in wild-caught birds and return parrots to the wild.

We extend sincere gratitude (page 8) to the hundreds of contributors from more than a dozen countries whose commitment to the FlyFree program allows us to expand upon these important efforts on behalf of birds. This support directly enables our efforts to crack down on wildlife traffickers, and to rescue, rehabilitate and release parrots caught in the trade.

The urgency for this work could not be greater. As I write we have just been notified of another massive confiscation of 1000 Grey Parrots in Cameroon, the largest single seizure ever recorded in this small country. Emergency funds have been immediately dispatched to assist with their care, an act made possible by this remarkable level of support. These birds join several hundred that were confiscated a few months ago.

Thank you for being part of this group of thoughtful and committed supporters. We wish you the best for the coming year.

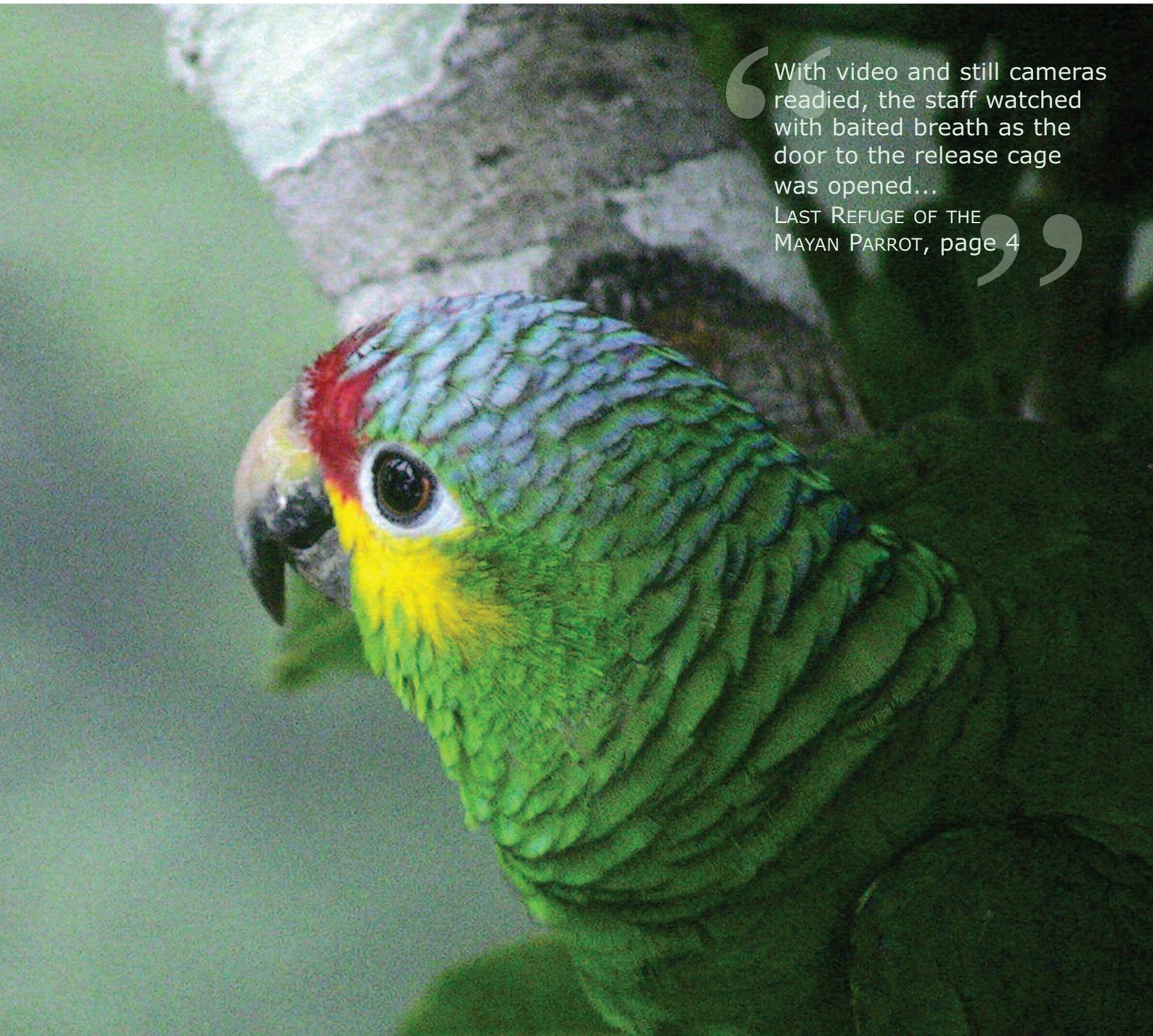
Best regards,

Steve Milpacher  
Director of Business Development

## on our covers

**FRONT** This young Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) appears to say "Yeah, what do you want?" as biologists find her and her flock helping themselves to exotic fruits in a neighborhood plot. As natural habitat is degraded by goats, the birds come into town, especially in dry periods, to feed in irrigated gardens (see page 9). © Sam Williams

**BACK** Two new Blue-throated Macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*) represent a hopeful future for this critically endangered species from Bolivia, thanks in part to a key World Parrot Trust project and key partnerships in South America and abroad. Travel into the field for a glimpse of what it takes to save the world's rarest macaw (see page 16). © Igor Berkunsky



“With video and still cameras readied, the staff watched with baited breath as the door to the release cage was opened...  
LAST REFUGE OF THE MAYAN PARROT, page 4”

Photo: © Alejandro Morales

# Last Refuge of the Mayan Parrot

By Colum Muccio

Looking across the treetops of the jungle surrounding me, I could see no sign of man: no powerlines, no wafts of smoke, no rooftops, and perhaps most incredibly, no cell phone towers (yes, yes, it's true!) I was standing in one of the few places in Central America where this is possible; one of the last relatively healthy chunks of tropical forest in the Americas.

**I WAS STANDING ON A FIRE-WATCH PLATFORM** built in the crown of a Ramon tree on top of a hill in the Rio Azul-Mirador National Park, in the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in northern Guatemala. In the distance to the west, I could see the irregular outline of the Mirador ruins, a still-unexcavated site that is said to house the largest pyramid by volume in the world. (OK, one sign of man...) The pristine forest stretched across rolling hills to the north, west and south. To the east, the hills dropped down into wetlands

that stretched to the Belizean border. To me, this seemed like the perfect spot to release some parrots.

Coincidentally, that was exactly what we were doing! I was participating in the release of 80 parrots confiscated from smugglers in the MBR. These parrots were on the tail end of a two-year rehabilitation process carried out at the ARCAS Wildlife Rescue Center in Flores, Petén (the northernmost department in Guatemala).

ARCAS is the Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association, a Guatemalan NGO that has worked in the rescue, rehabilitation and conservation of wildlife throughout the country since 1989. The ARCAS Rescue Center is one of the most advanced of its kind in the world, receiving 400-600 confiscated wild animals of over 40 species per year. I am the administrative director of ARCAS, and although I have participated in several small releases, this was the first time I was participating in such a large one and one in such a remote location.



**AND RIO AZUL IS REMOTE.** First we spent 10 hours riding monster trucks through the jungle, starting from the Mayan ruins of Tikal, and heading north through the hunting village of Uaxactun. Along the 55 kilometers (35 mi) from Uaxactun to the El Cedro Station of Rio Azul the only human beings we saw were xate collectors living in temporary thatch huts set up next to the only available water for kilometers, a muddy "aguada". Xate is one of the principal rainforest products of the Mayan forest - a small, attractive palm that because it remains green and fresh-looking after it is cut, is used in floral arrangements around the world.

I could see my chiropractor shaking his head as we bounced down the road (I'm being generous in calling it a road) and through enormous puddles filled with a clayey limestone mud so slippery that locals call it soap. Our vehicles were jacked-up Toyota pick-up trucks with 18 inch wide tires and winches, packed to the gills with equipment, supplies, park rangers and parrots. The roads are just by a hair wide enough for a Toyota; if you have an American pick-up you're out of luck.



The day-long journey to a remote release site is the end of a 2 year rehabilitation process that began for most of these birds when they were confiscated after being poached from their nests as chicks.

Photos: © Colum Muccio

As we bounced and slid down the road to Rio Azul, I kept my eye on the parrots in the pick-up ahead of us. They were hanging on for dear life and squawking away madly, but they were in good shape. They had already endured a rigorous, two-year rescue and rehabilitation process that would make a Survivor competitor faint. For most of the parrots, their odyssey began when poachers snatched them as chicks from their nests (possibly from a nest close to Rio Azul). Poachers in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve monitor parrot nests, and when the eggs hatch, they remove the chicks. Unlike adults, chicks are docile and easy to handle and become imprinted on humans, potentially making them better pets. The chicks are then drugged with Valium to keep them quiet, crammed into cardboard boxes, truck tires, empty batteries or other smuggling containers, and loaded on buses destined for Guatemala City, Belize or Mexico. En route, the buses are occasionally stopped at roadblocks manned by the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) and/or the Guatemalan “green police” (DIPRONA) where the chicks are discovered and confiscated. Typically, the owners of the parrots, fearing arrest, say nothing. In the rare case that a passenger does admit ownership of the birds, he or she is arrested. This poses a problem for CONAP and ARCAS as according to Spanish law, the birds are considered physical evidence and cannot be released until the trial has come to a conclusion, something that typically takes years.

**ONCE THE BIRDS ARE CONFISCATED**, they are transported to the ARCAS Rescue Center and entered into quarantine where they spend from 3 months to one year growing their full adult

Free at last! This Red-fronted Parrot (*Amazona autumnalis*) tentatively ventures beyond the release cage. Built on-site of PVC tubing and chicken wire, the cage is strong but light weight.



plumage. If their feathers have been cut, they must be plucked and given vitamin supplements to stimulate re-growth. After quarantine, the birds are moved into mixed species pre-rehabilitation flight cages where they begin to build up their flight muscles and learn to socialize. The last 3 months are spent in a large final rehabilitation flight cage which is physically removed from the main installations of the Rescue Center where the birds continue the socialization process and learn to avoid predators. Throughout the rehabilitation process, the birds are fed prepared foods, as well as wild foods collected by ARCAS staff in the surrounding forests. Prior to release, the parrots are screened for parasites, Newcastle's disease and bird flu to insure they don't infect wild birds.

The attrition rate in rehabilitation can be high, but this is necessary to ensure that released parrots are fit enough to survive in the wild. Of the 124 parrots that originally graduated from quarantine, only 80 remained to be released in Rio Azul. Many parrots never built up the wing strength necessary to fly well or simply insisted on remaining on the ground. Others were injured in flight or attacked by their classmates. These birds were returned to the pre-rehabilitation cage and either given a second chance in a later release, or transferred to an alternative destination such as a zoo or educational facility. Unfortunately, we also lost many parrots to a margay that made regular nightly visits to the final rehabilitation cage and attacked birds that perched on the sides of the cage rather than in the center of the cage. This cat was trapped and relocated to the Yaxha National Park.

Despite these trials and tribulations, and despite being bounced around in the bed of a pick-up truck for 10 hours, as we unloaded the parrots at the Rio Azul camp, they looked fit and ready to fly, and seemed to be enjoying their last catered meal. Of the 80 parrots, 5 were Mealy Parrots (*Amazona farinosa*), 7 were White-crowned (*Pionus senilis*), 15 were White-fronted (*Amazona albifrons*), 52 were Red-fronted (*Amazona autumnalis*) and 1 Yucatan Parrot (*Amazona xantolora*).

**AFTER TRANSPORTING THE PARROTS** to the El Cedro station at Rio Azul, ARCAS and CONAP staff scouted the nearby jungle for potential release sites, finally settling on the fire-watch platform in the Ramon tree. Although it seemed a simple and obvious decision to make use of an already-existing platform, this decision was actually the end product of nearly 15 years of experimentation and research on the part of ARCAS regarding suitable release sites throughout the Maya Biosphere Reserve. We have conducted releases in five different sites in the Reserve, each of which has been analyzed in terms of availability of food, water and suitable nesting trees. But the overriding criteria, and the criteria that has made Rio Azul increasingly attractive in recent years, is the lack of nearby human settlements. Birds, especially, are highly mobile, and they can easily fly 20-40 kilometers (12-24 mi) per day in search of food and water. However, rehabilitated birds have been exposed to humans, and their best chance of survival is if they are released in an area where they won't be tempted to go begging for food at the nearest thatched roof, and where they can most easily bond with wild birds that can teach

Stairway to heaven! Finally, the release cage is hauled up to the fire-tower platform in the last hurdle on these parrot's long journey to freedom.



Photo: © Alejandro Morales



Photo: © Colum Muccio



them how to be parrots again. The southern and western edges of the RBM are being threatened by land squatters and the spread of the agricultural frontier, but the Rio Azul-Mirador area is still relatively untouched and uninhabited.

**ON THE RELEASE DAY**, the parrots were transported to the fire watch platform, transferred from the transport cages to the 2m<sup>2</sup> (6.5 ft<sup>2</sup>) release cage and lifted up to the platform. With video and still cameras readied, the staff watched with baited breath as the door of the release cage was opened. However, the parrots had obviously not read the script. Instead of flying out in one great flock into the surrounding forest, they sat there, looking blandly at the open door, perching and grooming themselves. Most of them didn't even seem to notice that the door had been opened. Swallowing our disappointment, the ARCAS staff kept the cameras rolling and finally, after perhaps 10 minutes, some of the parrots started strolling leisurely over to the edge of the cage, and then one-by-one, began flying to nearby branches. Once there were a few parrots outside of the cage, those remaining inside seemed to be comforted, and more and more flew out of the release cage. Nevertheless, even after three hours when we broke for lunch, 15 or more parrots still remained in the cage.

Over the next 12 days, ARCAS staff members monitored the progress of the newly-released parrots. Overall, they seemed to adapt well to the wild, with good flight skills, and were observed to be feeding, flying in flocks and forming pairs. On

the second day of the release, a dead *Autumnalis* was found and on the seventh day, a *Farinosa* was found dead. Neither bird had obvious signs of cause of death.

**THE METHODOLOGY USED** in this release is based on ARCAS's 20 years of experience releasing wildlife in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, and adheres as closely as possible given budget restraints to IUCN guidelines. Guatemalan wildlife is considered government "property" and any transfer or release must first be approved by CONAP.

Wildlife rehabilitation and release is expensive, difficult and controversial. Each stage of the process, each transfer of animals from one cage to another, and each medical screening is difficult and messy. Numerous unforeseen problems arise, such as the marauding margay. Wildlife rehabilitation - like medicine - is more of an art than a science and ARCAS is in a constant learning mode dealing with the myriad of problems that arise. It is a difficult process for the animals as well. As mentioned, there is significant attrition, which just compounds the incredible wastefulness of the illegal pet trade. Nevertheless, returning to the Ramon tree platform several days after the release and seeing several small flocks of "our" parrots flying over the tree tops, it all seemed worthwhile. I could imagine that the parrots were enjoying the pristine Mayan forest surrounding us as much as I was, and it strengthened my resolve to contribute to the conservation of this last refuge of the Mayan Parrot.



Watching this parrot find water was a relief since the confiscated birds had been drinking water from bowls their whole lives.



Photo: © Alejandro Morales

ありがとう  
Thank You  
Merci

FlyFree



www.parrots.org/flyfree

Gracias

Danka

OBRIGADO

Grazie

Thanks

Since its launch less than 2 months ago, the outpouring of support for the World Parrot Trust FlyFree campaign has been remarkable. Over 250 donors from more than a dozen countries worldwide have shown their compassion and commitment to ending the trade in wild-caught birds.

Because of this support, we have approved new funding to: **PROVIDE** immediate aid for the rehabilitation and release of confiscated African Grey Parrots in Cameroon; **HOST** a workshop on releasing Grey parrots to the wild in Kenya; **CONDUCT** a tracking study of 98 Blue-fronted Amazons to be released in March in the country of Brazil; **CRACK DOWN** on wildlife traffickers in Indonesia; and, **SUPPORT** the release of dozens of conures by a rescue group in Mazatlan, Mexico.

Please accept our heart-felt thanks – and know that you are already making a difference. To support this campaign contact our offices or visit [www.parrots.org/flyfree](http://www.parrots.org/flyfree).

### LIST OF DONORS (as of 2 February, 2010)

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Photo: © Rhian Evans

# Progress!

## Parrot Conservation on Bonaire

By Dr. Sam Williams PhD

Yellow-shouldered Amazons (*Amazona barbadensis*) on Bonaire experience all of the classic threats facing wild parrot populations. Habitat loss and degradation reduce foraging and nesting opportunities, inbreeding increases hatching failures, introduced predators eat chicks, and one third of chicks that do reach fledging age may be poached for the local pet trade. Despite these (and other) threats we believe the Bonaire population has a bright future and in many ways is an outstanding example for parrot conservation.

Over the past four years Rowan Martin and I have studied this Caribbean island population with the exception of 2009 when we were both writing up our respective PhD theses and were unable to return to the field. Luckily, Rhian Evans, our field assistant in 2008, gave up her job once again to return to Bonaire and keep the project alive.

The project's fieldwork focus is the parrot's breeding biology and the ecological factors that affect it. We have found 64 different nests in a variety of trees and

cliffs, but in any given year only about half of these have been active. Monitoring involves counting the number of eggs that were laid, the number of eggs that survived through to the end of incubation, the number of chicks that hatched from those eggs and then, two months later, the number of chicks that fledge. In 2008, Rowan, Rhian and I provided nest-monitoring training to the National Parks Authority STINAPA, and we were glad that in 2009 we continued the nest monitoring work together with STINAPA.



Photo: © Marlene Robinson

LEFT Biologists weigh and measure chicks to ensure sufficient growth rates. Environmental conditions at nests are also being monitored, in part to determine factors contributing to poor hatchability. A broad range of conditions are found throughout Bonaire's Amazon nests.

BELOW The first recorded nest of five eggs was monitored anxiously in 2009. To the delight of the field crew and despite generally poor hatchability, all five chicks hatched. From there they still have a tough road and recent use of cameras may provide insight into some of the causes of mortality after hatching.

## Hatchability and nest environmental conditions

Rhian and the parrot team found breeding activity in 28 nests and these pairs laid a total of 94 eggs. For the first time a nest of five eggs was found. Only 82 eggs were still intact at the end of incubation, nearly a month later. Chicks hatched from 64 eggs (68%). Eggs may not survive through incubation because they may be predated by introduced rats and (possibly) cats. We also believe infanticide occurs whereby other parrot pairs competing for the same nest site smash eggs. Between 2006 and 2008 we found that only 77% of the eggs surviving at the end of incubation hatch. This measure is defined as "Hatchability". Compared to other birds, which on average hatch 92% of their viable eggs, this is a low proportion and a conservation concern.

Low hatchability may indicate that a population is experiencing inbreeding depression. During severe droughts Bonaire's parrot population has experienced bottlenecks, where numbers have fallen to around two hundred individuals. These reductions in population size may have resulted in inbreeding. We have had limited success at collecting blood samples from breeding pairs. We will have more time to pursue this in the future in the hope that we will be able to collect sufficient samples for genetics analysis.

Environmental conditions at different nests may be another possible explanation for poor hatchability. Parrots on Bonaire use a wide range of nest shapes and sizes and these features may influence the temperature of incubated eggs and consequently, embryo survival. To explore this question we used data loggers, small electronic recorders that measure temperature and humidity at regular intervals. Data-loggers were placed in nests where they did not disturb the incubating female parrot. They provided a great opportunity to explore nest conditions for a few

days. Our observations revealed that there were remarkably different temperature ranges in different cavities. This pilot study has shown that it is possible to explore this line of enquiry and that there are noteworthy differences between nests. We'll certainly be looking into nest conditions further in 2010.

## Many chicks make happy field biologists, but then...

Around the beginning of June there are chicks hatching in nests all across the island. It is the high point of the season especially in 2009 when all five of the eggs in that bumper nest hatched. Weighing and measuring loads of tiny helpless chicks is just brilliant. The sad reality however is that it can only go downhill from there. We lose chicks for a variety of reasons and it can be very difficult to confirm the cause of mortality. We have used cameras with some

success and this year, new equipment allowed us to record activity in and around the nest for extended periods. This was really useful and as a result we confirmed chick losses due to cat predation, something we might look to manage in the future.

Towards the end of the nestling period if the chicks have somehow avoided predators and look ready to fledge they face one further problem. Although protected by law since the 1950s the poaching of wild parrot chicks continues. There were 38 chicks still in nests towards the end of the season but unfortunately 10 were poached and only 28 fledged. Even then the young birds are not safe. In 2008 a ringed bird we actually saw fledge from a nest turned up in captivity with its rings still on. In 2009 Rhian took care of "Monty", an un-weaned chick that had been knocked from a tree with a pole.



Photo: © Jon Dunn

**RIGHT** This six week old chick tolerates limited handling while weights and measurements are taken. Chicks are also banded with unique colour bands so that individual birds can be monitored in the field after fledging. Individual markings allow for much greater understanding of flock dynamics and biology.

**BELOW** In a country-wide effort to curtail the capture of this rare parrot as a household pet, a registration campaign began in 2002. Illegal pet birds are now being confiscated and rehabilitated. These birds are being held in an aviary and will hopefully be released in the near future.



Photo: © Marlene Robinson

## Yellow-shouldered Amazon *Amazona barbadensis*

### Law enforcement and future releases

In 2002 there was a registration and ringing campaign after which any pet parrot without a ring could be confiscated and the owner prosecuted. Thankfully, in 2009 our on-island partners Salba Nos Lora (Save Our Parrot) and STINAPA worked with the various police authorities to bring about an enforcement campaign. Nine illegal pets were presented in a brief amnesty then a further nine birds were confiscated. The people holding these parrots now face a fine of 1000 Guilders (£330/\$550). Salba Nos Lora has worked hard to raise awareness of the parrots protected status and it seems that only a few “bad eggs” continue to poach or demand parrot chicks. As with any law, enforcement is critically important if there is to be compliance. Failure to do so is a classic problem and the reason many wildlife laws have no impact. We must congratulate the people on Bonaire who have made this enforcement happen, and make sure other countries are aware of this action.

The relinquished and confiscated birds, along with Monty and six others that have turned up since 2002, are currently being held in an aviary at the Ministry for Agriculture. This is obviously far from ideal and we are looking to release these birds in early 2010. Even if a full release is not possible and the birds are kept at liberty, there would be a number of benefits for education, tourism and even research, not to mention the benefit for those particular parrots. Hopefully the next time I write it will be about a successful release program.

Finally we would like to thank all the groups and individuals that have supported the project in 2009, in particular: World Parrot Trust, STINAPA Bonaire, Phoenix Landing Foundation, Louise Prowse, Amazona Society USA, Amazona Society UK, Solway Parrot and Foreign Bird Club and Salba Nos Lora. 



Photo: © Sam Williams

**POPULATION/THREATS:** All existing populations (est. 2,500-10,000) are threatened by habitat destruction or illegal poaching or a combination. In some areas they are persecuted for destroying crops.

**HABITAT:** Restricted to dry habitats with cacti, thorny bush and trees; sometimes feeds in cultivated areas and in backyard fruit trees (see cover).

**RANGE:** Restricted to small coastal area in Venezuela and the islands of Blanquilla, Margarita and Bonaire. Introduced to Curacao, Netherlands Antilles.



The World Parrot Trust proudly supported Sam Williams and Rowan Martin's PhD work as well as genetics work reported in *PsittaScene* 21.3 (August 2009).

>> Read Sam's blog on [www.parrots.org](http://www.parrots.org) for further information, photos, charts and figures.

# Flown the Coop?

## When a Flighted Parrot Escapes

Article and Photos

by Barbara Heidenreich



My Blue-fronted Amazon parrot, Tarah, does not have clipped wings. However, like many birds that were clipped during the fledging process, he has never quite learned the kind of flight skills that might earn him the title of a "flyer". I often said "He has his flight feathers, but he doesn't fly." One day I learned, the hard way, that this wasn't exactly true.

This issue's contributor, **Barbara Heidenreich**, has been a professional in the field of animal training since 1990. She owns and operates Good Bird, Inc., ([www.goodbirdinc.com](http://www.goodbirdinc.com)) and Animal Training and Consulting Services. Barbara provides behavior and training products and services to the companion parrot community including Good Bird magazine, behavior and training workshops as well as books and videos. Many of her titles are available through WPT ([www.parrots.org](http://www.parrots.org)).

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On a visit to my parents I brought Tarah in his cage to my old bedroom. I opened the cage door to allow him some much needed free time. Before I knew it, he bolted off his cage, through the bedroom door, took a right and made his way down the hall. He then banked left and flew through the living room. At that very moment my father was just opening the sliding glass door to step out onto the deck. Guess who went through the door too? The deck was on the second floor, so my bird had two stories of lift to assist him on his grand flight down the fairway of the golf course behind the house. Thank goodness he was a green flying brick. He ran out of gas and slowly descended to the soft green grass before a tree offered its branches as refuge. Juiced by adrenalin, my feet barely touched the ground as I ran after my bird.

I have always been very careful about the choices I make having a flighted bird in the house. But I was very surprised by the amazing flight my bird made on that day. Sometimes birds that we think will never fly do just that. Sometimes birds that have flight feathers trimmed surprise us when feathers return. Sometimes experienced flyers get frightened or find themselves in unfamiliar territory. Whatever the situation, there are some strategies that can be very useful in recovering a bird that has flown the coop. The following information is provided to prepare you for that day when your bird may find itself airborne and heading in the wrong direction. These strategies apply if your bird has no flight skills or is a world class flying athlete.





### Your bird is flying away

- Call to your bird loudly as he is flying – it may help him find his way back to you.
- As your bird is flying, do not take your eyes off of him. Note the last place you saw him, the level of his flight, how tired he looked. He may have landed in that area.
- Grab your cell phone! Radio or phone contact can be very helpful for a group of people searching for your bird.

### Searching for your bird

- If you have a group of people, spread out and circle the area you last saw your bird.
- If you cannot locate him, call to him. He may call back. Say words or sounds he knows or mimics. Most parrots are located by their screams.
- If he has another bird he likes, put that bird in a cage and bring it to the area. Walk away from the bird in the cage. It might encourage the bird

in the cage to scream. This may inspire the lost bird to scream. Keep talking to a minimum so you can listen for the scream.

- Look carefully in a limited area (within 1 mile) in the early stages of your search. Parrots usually do not go far unless blown by the wind, chased by a bird of prey or extremely frightened.
- Keep in mind your parrot may see you before you see him. When this happens, parrots are sometimes very quiet. This may be because the parrot is more comfortable now that you are present.
- Despite some parrots bright colors, they can be very difficult to see in trees. Look for movement buried in the trees as opposed to your whole bird perched prominently in the open.



(L to R) Training your bird to step onto a dowel can help if he needs to be recovered from a high perch. A harness requires training but will allow you to bring your bird outside to learn landmarks in the neighborhood. Crate-training your parrot can prove beneficial if he ever gets lost.



Be careful not to ask your bird to fly from a great height or a steep angle. Try to position yourself to allow short flights or climbs to lower places.

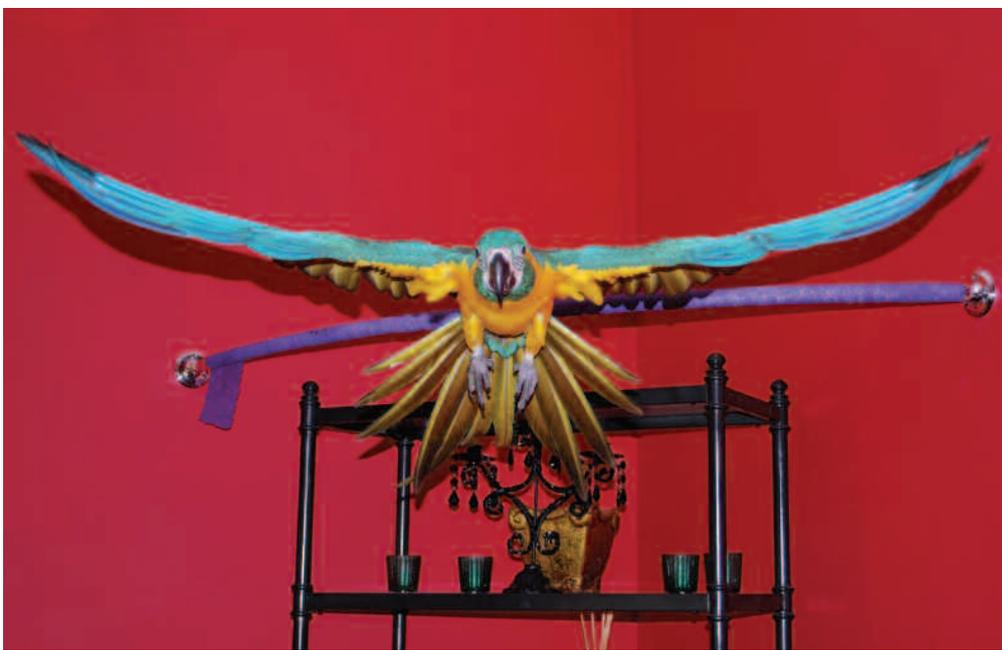
### Your bird is located, but out of reach

- Once you find your bird, relax (unless the bird is in immediate danger.) It is better to let the bird sit where he is (if he is inaccessible) while you work out a strategy. Do not frantically try to grab the bird, hose or scare him down.
- If the bird has just landed. He will probably not fly again (if at all) for awhile.
- Bring the bird's favorite person and/or favorite bird friend (in a cage) to the area.
- Bring favorite food items, familiar food bowls and the bird's cage if possible.
- Be careful not to ask your bird to fly from a great height or a steep angle. Try to position yourself (or bird buddy, or bird cage) to allow short flights or short climbs to lower places.
- Try to lure your bird to fly or climb to branches/objects that are similar to those upon which he is sitting if possible. A bird may be too frightened to climb onto a distinctly different perch. (For example, the bird might be afraid to climb off of a tree onto a fence.) If you have no other option, expect the process to be slower and be patient with your bird as he builds his confidence. He may also fly again if he touches the new perch and is frightened by it.
- Do not raise unfamiliar objects up to your bird to have him step onto it. More than likely this will only scare your bird to fly farther away. If you have a familiar item, the bird may step onto it. Keep in mind things like ladders, people climbing trees, cherry pickers etc. may also scare your bird. Go extremely slowly if you resort to using these items. Stop any action if your bird looks like he wants to fly away.
- Try to call your bird down when his body language indicates he is ready to try to come down. Do not constantly call.
- Try stepping out of sight on occasion. This will create a level of anxiety in your bird which may cause him to try to come to you once you reappear. Usually birds will scream and or start moving around a lot when they are ready to make an effort to return to you. If you notice this activity, come out from hiding.
- If you hear your bird screaming while you are hiding, he may be ready to fly or is already in the air. Show yourself right away. Most parrots scream when they are flying in this type of situation.
- Birds also often relieve themselves and also scream right before they fly. Be alert for this. You may need to see where your bird flies. Be ready to run if necessary.
- Avoid having a crowd of people around the bird's favorite person. A scared bird may not want to fly into a crowd of strangers. Give the bird's favorite person lots of room.

### The sun is setting and your bird is still out

- Parrots will usually fly again shortly before the sun starts to set. This is probably your last opportunity to get your bird back before he will begin to roost for the night. Take advantage of it. You can try to get the bird "pumped" up by yelling and creating a level of excitement. This may encourage one last flight.
- As the sun starts to set, your bird will start to fluff his feathers and get ready to roost for the night. At this point it is best to just allow him to go to sleep. Keep an eye on him until the sun has set completely. Remember his exact location.
- Before the sun rises the next day, return to that location. Your bird should still be there, unless he was frightened in the night (owls can cause this).
- Usually by 8:30 or 9:00 AM your bird will be ready to fly again or make an attempt to get to you. Repeat the steps described in the section "You have located your bird, but he is out of reach".





Training your parrot to come when called can help you recover him outdoors.

### Your bird has not been seen for 24 hours

- Contact the following people and let them know you are looking for your bird.
  - \* animal control
  - \* SPCA/humane society
  - \* local veterinarians
  - \* local zoos
  - \* local pet shops
  - \* local police
- Place an ad in the classified section of the paper for a “lost” bird. Note: Don’t give out the bird’s band number. If your bird accidentally falls into the wrong hands this could lead to removal of the band.
- Check the classified section of the paper for “found” bird. Answer all ads. People are sometimes unaware of what they have found. A Congo African Grey may be mistaken for the mythical red tailed pigeon by a helpful stranger who is unfamiliar with parrots.
- Post flyers that state “lost bird” in the areas you last saw your bird. You may also wish to offer a reward as incentive for people to call.
- Often times a bird is found within 24 hours of his disappearance. The trick is to find the person who found your bird before you.

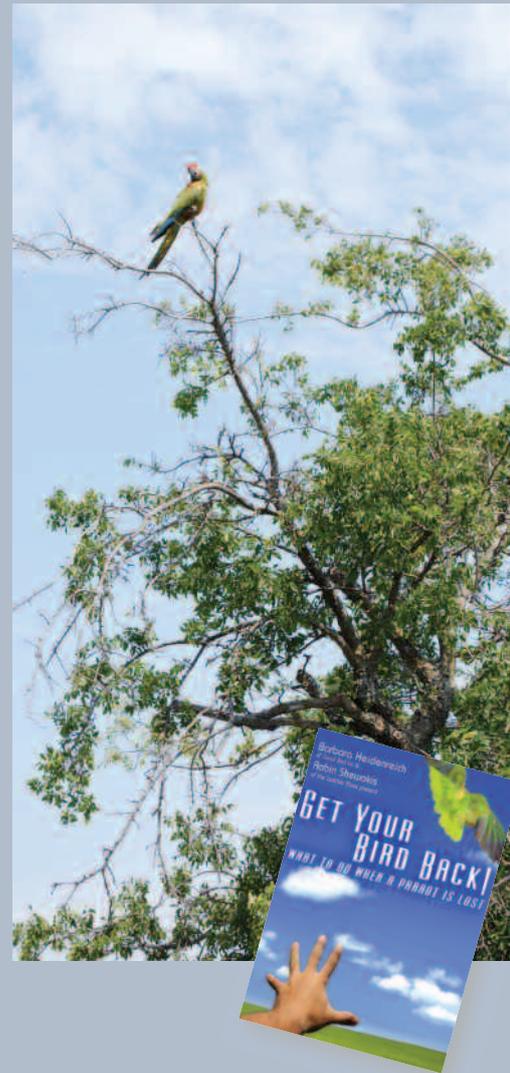
### Do not give up

The key to getting a bird back is perseverance. Do not accept that you will not get the bird back once you have lost sight of him or her. As a professional bird trainer that free flies many types of birds on a regular basis, I can attest that parrots are often the easiest type of bird to locate and recover. Trust me - nothing is more frustrating than searching for the silent, but observant owl who has buried himself in the bushes and has watched you walk by 100 times! Thankfully our parrots often seek out human or bird companionship if and when they have a big flight adventure. 

Don't take your eyes off your bird and make careful note of your last contact.



## Get Your Bird Back! What to do when a parrot is Lost



There are few things more heartbreaking than when a beloved parrot accidentally escapes. Barbara Heidenreich and enrichment specialist Robin Shewokis (*The Leather Elves*) were inspired to make this DVD by the thousands of pleas from parrot owners desperately seeking help to recapture a lost bird. Be prepared. Learn in advance how to prevent the heartache so many have experienced when a parrot is lost.

This DVD features detailed instructions to help you get your lost parrot back. It also contains useful tools such as Lost Bird Flyers for over 50 species, bird calls for over 30 species, notification lists and preparation checklists.

>> Available at:  
[www.goodbirdinc.com](http://www.goodbirdinc.com) and  
[www.theleatherelves.com](http://www.theleatherelves.com)



# Perfect

The Minnesota Zoo's "Elton" meets thousands of visitors every year and helps tell the Blue-throated Macaw's story. The Zoo has partnered with WPT to support the conservation of the wild birds.

By Dave Cruz

This is it. This is our one chance.

It may seem like a pretty dramatic statement, but to me this is the only way to approach the protection and preservation of species that are determined to be "critically endangered".

It is with this sense of urgency that I see the Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) Recovery Team approach their work. Yet while their task is nothing less than saving this rare macaw from extinction, the team takes it on with such positivity and good humor.

The project is already in full swing when I arrive in La Paz, Bolivia. It is November and the field site in the Beni is still quite a journey away. The trip will take us by countless taxi cabs, several buses, three small planes, and one overworked four-wheel drive truck. It will also require the assistance of machetes, hammers, homemade shovels and three horses to pull us out of two mud pits as well as a cast of gracious local people in the small communities along the way.

Igor Berkunsky, the project leader, meets us at the bus station and we prepare to head into the field. The preparations are second nature to Igor. His infectious good nature helps us deal with all the twists, turns and delays that almost always occur when trying to coordinate a project of this scope. A mantra is adopted. "Expect the unexpected" is uttered time and time again as a reminder to stay positive in the most inconvenient situations. That phrase never failed to bring a smile to our faces in the midst of some interesting predicaments.

It may sound odd but the more I think about it, the more parallels I can draw from the way Igor

and his crew approach their work to the way we as educators should approach ours. Every day at The Minnesota Zoo's, KAYTEE World of Birds Show we interact with hundreds or thousands of people who have chosen to spend time with us and the animals we present and care for. On our best days we may inspire some of our guests to make changes in their lives to ensure the protection of nature and wildlife. Maybe we inspire them to go out on their own and learn more about endangered species and the places that support their populations. Maybe we influence the direction of someone's future profession. On our best days we may even feel that drive in ourselves intensify.

This is it. This is our one chance.

It may seem like a pretty dramatic statement but to me, this is really the only way to approach the presentation of our show.

In spite of our differing methods, our goal is really the same as Igor's. When we present our Blue-throated Macaw "Elton" we want to ensure the survival of these birds into the future. We get one opportunity to give visitors a glimpse at the plight of Blue-throated Macaws and to interpret the urgent action needed if these birds are to avoid the fate of the Spix's Macaw. Most of our

BTMA project leader Igor Berkunsky, WPT Director Jamie Gilardi and Minnesota Zoo Zoologist Dave Cruz get a lift from a local parrot-loving airline.



# Partners

Blue-throats are found only in a very restricted area of northern Bolivia. They have responded to direct intervention aimed at helping adult pairs successfully fledge as many chicks as possible.



Photo: © LC Margo

visitors have never heard the story of these macaws and that is the surest way for a species to disappear forever. How can we help save something if we are unaware of its existence?

This is what makes our team and Igor's team perfect partners. We may have different methods but we completely support one another's work. The Minnesota Zoo provides financial assistance for the field work so vital to the Blue-throat's survival. Igor has taken me inside the day-to-day life of Blue-throated Macaws on their terms, in

Field work may seem glamorous and exciting. While there are unprecedented moments, there is also a lot of hard work, resourcefulness and humility required!

the wild. This makes me much better equipped to tell their story. I have been introduced to the intricacies of the daily struggles these birds face. I have been able to lend a hand in the physical practices that ensure that chicks are fledging successfully into their natural environment. I have been able to take those experiences back and share them with zoo staff and visitors. These experiences help us do what we do better and we all have to do better if we are to succeed in staving off what some call the "likely" event of Blue-throated Macaws becoming extinct. Every time someone comes to our show, it is our one chance to reach out and let them know that they too can be a part of what I am sure is going to be a powerfully positive story just off into the future.

It is very rare in life that we get a second chance at anything worthwhile. It is so important that we have learned that lesson with regards to conservation. We have to protect and preserve the Earth's rarest creatures before it is too late. Then we won't have to wonder what could be done if we only had another chance.

On a seemingly never ending journey through Bolivia's most remote areas, conversation turns from conservation strategies to life philosophies, to shared experiences of bad classic television programs we each saw while growing up thousands of miles away from one another. Another fitting mantra is adopted in that spirit. "I love it when a plan comes together" (Remember Mr.T from the A Team?) Invariably we heard these words shortly after we had thwarted some "unexpected" disaster. These are the words that still ring in my ears. Words shared on the long journey through Bolivia with a man who moves in the only way he knows how. Igor moves forward with his plan. It is a plan that is well thought out but a plan that evolves as it needs to. It evolves in response to the changing conditions in the Beni and the changing needs of wild Blue-throated Macaws. Whatever it takes, is what will be done. Count on it. I will not try to speak for Igor but I think he sees that we are right smack dab in the middle of what could very well be "our one chance".



>> See the next issue of *PsittaScene* for Igor Berkunsky's report on the 2009-2010 Blue-throated Macaw breeding season.

# Psitta News



Photo: © Kristan D Godbeer

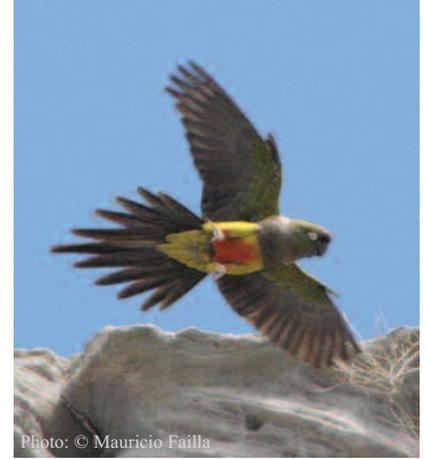


Photo: © Mauricio Failla

## Parrot events

### 2010 Parrot Cruise: Southern Caribbean

November 7 - 14, 2010

Sailing from San Juan, Puerto Rico

Support parrot conservation while you cruise. Raffles, donations, and a portion of the conference fee will aid the World Parrot Trust's parrot conservation work. The 2nd Annual Parrot Lover's Cruise will be a spectacular cruise for parrot enthusiasts. Leave your worries behind and discover some of the bluest waters and best sightseeing in the world. Educate yourself with onboard parrot seminars by renowned bird trainer Steve Martin, Amazon Field Biologist Sam Williams and the World Parrot Trust's Steve Milpacher. And visit exotic ports of call where you may get a chance to see wild parrots!

☎ Carol Cipriano +1 570.226.2569

✉ baldmantravel@gmail.com

🌐 www.parrotloverscruise.com

## Thankyou

### 1st Parrot Lover's Cruise

Many thanks to Carol Cipriano whose creativity sparked the 1st Parrot Lover's Cruise last fall and whose skills and enthusiasm made it a great success. Participants reported having an excellent week on the ship, with the speakers and with each other – relaxing and learning with other like-minded parrot enthusiasts. Together they and Carnival Cruise Lines donated \$4,000 for the Trust. Book early for the 2nd cruise, coming up this November (above)!

## Parrot news

### Born free, living free

In September 2008, officials investigated reports of the mysterious deaths of several endangered Cayman Brac Parrots (*Amazona leucocephala hesternae*). Pathology results were consistent with rodenticide poisoning. Two live but very sick juvenile parrots were flown back to Grand Cayman for veterinary treatment and recovered quickly.

These events were closely followed by Hurricane Paloma, which left little available food in the forest, forcing postponement of a prompt release. Therefore these young, inexperienced birds remained in rehab until the forest had recovered adequately.

In July 2009, liberation finally came. The two parrots wasted little time, swiftly making their exit. They flew in opposite directions, and found perches nearby. Then after a couple of squawks, the younger of the two joined its companion, and immediately began feeding on wild fruits. The young parrots have since left the release site to restart their lives in their forest home.

Source: *Flicker* (2009) 4.1 – Kristan D Godbeer

### AI aids Kakapos

In a world first for one of the rarest bird populations, paternity tests have confirmed artificial insemination (AI) produced two Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) chicks from two different females this breeding season. Infertility had been a big problem and this was a significant breakthrough. Six females were artificially inseminated, producing two female chicks. The chicks were two of 33 that successfully hatched during the 2009 breeding season, taking the Kakapo population past the 100 mark for the first time in decades.

Source: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/>

### Protection for El Cóndor

In *PsittaScene* 21.1 (February 2009) we reported on the formation of an Important Bird Area (IBA) at El Cóndor, the home of the famous Patagonian Conure or Burrowing Parrot (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) nesting colony. On 22 December, the representatives of Río Negro, in Patagonia, Argentina, voted unanimously in favour of the Act Proposal creating the Nature Reserve "Estuary of the Río Negro River and nearby areas". The nearby areas include the IBA and Burrowing Parrot colony. The IBA was an important symbolic gesture and this decision indicates that real and long term protection is a very good possibility in the near future.

### Parrots seized near Mazatlan

The seizure of 500 parrots from 2 traffickers in México was the beginning of a nearly year-long effort to prepare the birds for release. The organization CONREHABIT was called upon to take 272, 2-3 week old Orange-fronted Parrots (*Aratinga canicularis*). Over the next 9 months a massive effort was put into place to house, feed and provide medical care for this needy group of youngsters. The toll is high for birds in these circumstances. Still, CONREHABIT saved about 110 birds and began releases in January 2010. The WPT supported this project through our FlyFree campaign – stay tuned for more on this organization and their work in México.

Source: CONREHABIT ([www.conrehabit.org](http://www.conrehabit.org))



## InMemoryof

Jack was a very famous Corella who lived in Australia with his dedicated companion Ida Gallop. Jack appeared on many television shows and was well known and loved by the public and by TV hosts alike. Ida adopted Jack as an orphaned chick and was amazed by his extraordinary intelligence and fun quirky behaviour. Their special relationship was very clear to everyone who met them. In addition to television, the pair made countless visits to retirement homes and community organisations. Jack died recently at age 42, and in his memory Ida sent a donation to the World Parrot Trust.



Photo: © A Hales



Photo: © A Hales

## Parrottrip

### Brazil: A Pantanal Wildlife Safari

May 28th through June 6th / Optional Hyacinth Valley extension through June 12th

JOIN THE WORLD PARROT TRUST AND TROPICAL NATURE on this marvelous adventure to Brazil. The Pantanal is a nature lover's delight with wildlife in abundance. It is one of the largest wetlands in the world and over 700 bird species along with a variety of extraordinary reptiles, fish and mammals, including Black Caiman, Giant Otters, Giant Armadillos and Giant Anteaters. Even the elusive Jaguar can be observed here!

We will visit a unique ecosystem known as "The Hole of the Parrots" to watch and photograph a variety of species including the Green-wing Macaw. We'll spend 2 full days at the Pantanal Wildlife Center, deep in the Pantanal where you can take boat safaris on the rivers; see monkeys, many bird species, capybaras, caiman and otters. Then we'll travel north to Nobres and enjoy the best Blue and Gold Macaw spectacle known in the state of Mato Grosso. And so much more!

You'll travel with the World Parrot Trust's Joanna Eckles along with expert local guides in each region. If you want to extend your time in Brazil continue on with a local guide to Hyacinth Valley and Greenwing Lodge. This area features not only the spectacular large macaws but also the Tufted Capuchin Monkeys which are now famous for their use of heavy hammer rocks to crack hard palm nuts on much larger, sandstone anvils.

To top it off, your participation directly supports the World Parrot Trust with a portion of each booking going directly to our conservation work. The Trust has several new hyacinth nest boxes at Pantanal Wildlife Center and has supported recent disease sampling of both the Hyacinths and Green-wing Macaws.

#### The Pantanal Wildlife Safari:

US\$2482 per person based on double occupancy and 9 participants. **Hyacinth Extension:** \$1355 - \$1983 based on number of participants. Prices include all fees except your international airfare to Sao Paulo, 3 domestic flights (approximately \$450) and optional expenses (drinks, souvenirs etc.)

Space is very limited! For details or to book this trip contact Elizabeth Sanders at Tropical Nature Travel.

✓ [www.parrots.org/parrottrip](http://www.parrots.org/parrottrip)

✓ [liz@tropicalnaturetravel.com](mailto:liz@tropicalnaturetravel.com)

☎ +1 877-888-1770



Photo: © A Hales



Photo: © A Hales

## Online

Main: [parrots.org](http://parrots.org)

### Change your Address:

[parrots.org/addressupdate](http://parrots.org/addressupdate)

Languages: Dutch, Finnish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish

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# Parrots in the Wild

