

Media Release

For immediate release



Call for ban in the trade of the world's most intelligent birds – World Parrot Trust urges Governments to end trafficking of wild African Grey Parrots.

For Immediate release –

25 July 2012 – (London)

The World Parrot Trust, the leading organization campaigning for the protection and welfare of wild and captive parrots (note 1), has called on the world's wildlife trade body (CITES, note 2) to suspend the trade in endangered parrots from two African countries.

The trade suspension would apply to African Grey Parrots being exported from Cameroon and Congo. Both countries have failed to implement CITES directives for the species by permitting exports far in excess of specified quotas (note 3).

The Trust's call is backed with a petition signed by over 36,000 people from 130 countries.

Grey Parrots are the most proficient talking birds on Earth and are credited by researchers with the mental abilities of human toddlers. The birds' intelligence makes them popular as pets and this demand fuels a thriving trade in wild-caught birds. This pressure has led to rapid declines in the wild, causing them to be listed as Globally Threatened Species (note 4).

For much of the past two decades, African Grey Parrots have been among the most heavily traded of all listed species of birds and mammals. Over a half million of these birds have entered international trade legally over the past two decades alone (note 5).

Tony Juniper, leading conservationist and World Parrot Trust Ambassador, said that it is high time the international community acted to prevent further decline in wild Grey Parrot populations.

"It is vital that these marvelous and intelligent birds gain the protection they need. Government representatives meeting in Geneva this week need to take up this issue with the urgency it demands and end this unsustainable trade."

The Trust's executive director, Jamie Gilardi added, "There is no excuse for inaction. CITES' primary purpose is to protect wildlife from unsustainable trade. By any measure, the Grey Parrot trade is absolutely unsustainable. The situation is urgent and steps need to be taken this week to save these remarkable birds."

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Notes for editors

Note 1. The World Parrot Trust is a dynamic wildlife charity dedicated to protecting parrots, the most endangered group of birds on earth. As an international leader in science-based, results-oriented parrot conservation and welfare efforts, the Trust has aided over 50 parrot species in 30 countries since 1989, and recently led a successful campaign to end the importation of millions of wild birds into the EU.

Note 2. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meets this week in Geneva and will decide whether to suspend trade in thousands of African Grey Parrots from Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Note 3. In the DR Congo, annual export quotas have been exceeded virtually every year. From 2005-2010, they exported an average of over 3,100 individuals in excess of their CITES approved quota. In Cameroon from 2000-2005, exports averaged over 3,700 birds in excess of their export quota. The World Parrot Trust is therefore urging the CITES Secretariat to recommend suspending all trade in these birds from Congo and Cameroon.

Note 4. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) recently reviewed the status of the African Grey Parrot and found these birds to be extinct in large portions of its former range and showing dramatic declines nearly everywhere the species still occurs. The review recognized two species of Grey Parrot and categorized both as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN's Red List. Additional information available [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

Note 5. While CITES has been reviewing the trade in Grey Parrots over the past eight years, an additional 180,000 individuals have been taken from the wild.

Background on African Grey Parrots and the bird trade

- Grey Parrot trade is driven by **pet bird demand** mostly from the Middle East and Asia
- Prior to an **import ban** in 2007, the EU was the largest importer of Grey Parrots ([ref](#))
- Capture for the pet trade has driven Grey Parrots to **extinction** or near extinction in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau
- Grey Parrots are known to be among the most **gifted "talkers"** of the bird world with unparalleled mimicry skills ([ref](#))
- In experimental settings, Greys have demonstrated ability to understand and use basic **human language** ([ref](#))

CITES **Petition Text** and signatures:

<http://www.parrots.org/flyfree/cites-petition.html>

Photos: high resolution photographs of wild grey parrots:

<http://www.parrots.org/flyfree/pressphotos-greys.html>

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