

Media Release

For immediate release



Globetrotting parrots return to Africa, meet Goodall, go wild

Threatened African Grey Parrots returned to the wild after three-year intercontinental odyssey

Ngamba Island, UGANDA. July 12, 2013 –

Seventeen African Grey Parrots were returned to the wild this week, ending their harrowing three-year journey in the international illegal wildlife trade. Noted conservation leader Dr. Jane Goodall enthusiastically liberated the group into a forested island in Lake Victoria, which is a protected chimpanzee sanctuary. Following their confiscation in 2010 in Bulgaria, repatriation in March of this year, and months of rehabilitation in Uganda, these threatened parrots are now free, marking the first time that parrots confiscated in the EU have been returned to the wild in Africa.

Their road back to freedom began in April of 2010, when Customs authorities in Bulgaria seized the illegal shipment of 108 African Grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) at Sophia Airport in Bulgaria, received from Lebanon and bound for Europe. The cargo was in violation of the EU regulation banning the import of wild-caught birds. The birds had been illegally captured, and were also accompanied by falsified CITES documentation.

Immediately upon confiscation the birds were transferred to the Sofia Zoo to receive urgent medical attention. A short time after their arrival dozens had died and the remaining birds were caught in a legal quandary within the country, their status uncertain.

By the fall of 2011, the Sofia Regional Court of Bulgaria issued a legally binding permanent confiscation of the parrots, and in April 2012 the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water determined that the parrots should be returned to the wild to a country where trapping and trade are not permitted. Authorities in Uganda agreed to receive the birds, and to collaborate on their subsequent rehabilitation and release.

This groundbreaking initiative resulted from an effective enforcement operation in Bulgaria and was made possible by the joint efforts and goals of the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC), the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWCT), which runs the Ngamba Chimpanzee Sanctuary, the Ministry of...

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...Environment and Water of Bulgaria, the Sofia Zoo, and the World Parrot Trust.

“This project demonstrates how confiscating wildlife can contribute to a species’ long-term conservation by returning the animals to areas of their historic range where new populations can be established, and more importantly, protected”, stated Dr. Jamie Gilardi – Executive Director of the World Parrot Trust – the lead agency that coordinated this international collaboration. “It is the first time this type of conservation effort has occurred for any species of parrot.”

International agreements, permitting and background research were rapidly put in place and in March 2013, the surviving 33 African Grey parrots, accompanied by bird veterinarian Gino Conzo, DVM, traveled to Ngamba Island in Uganda to the sanctuary, where they began an extensive rehabilitation program.

On 10 July 2013, Dr. Jane Goodall, world-renowned conservationist and primatologist, released the first group of parrots. She was joined in this effort by Dr. Rowan Martin, a parrot biologist with the World Parrot Trust, along with representatives from the Uganda Wildlife Education Center, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, and the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust (CSWCT) / Ngamba Chimpanzee Sanctuary.



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Dr. Jane Goodall, WPT Biologist Rowan Martin, PhD, and representatives from the Uganda Wildlife Education Center, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, and the Ngamba Chimpanzee Sanctuary, setting free the first group of Grey Parrots.

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"It's a story of how bad illegal trade has become. It's a story of hope and what can be done when people come together. I'm extremely happy to pull this string and give these parrots this opportunity," she said.

The released parrots will continue to be fed and monitored by Ngamba Sanctuary staff, with support from the Uganda Wildlife and Education Centre and the World Parrot Trust. Parrots confiscated in the future may be released on Ngamba Island as well, with the goal of restoring this species to this and adjacent islands in Lake Victoria.



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Release parrots enjoying freedom.

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Press Contacts:

World Parrot Trust

Europe

Cristiana Senni

csenni@parrots.org

Tel: +39 333 2794047

United Kingdom

Rowan Martin, PhD.

rowan.o.martin@gmail.com

North America

James D. Gilardi, PhD.

jamie@parrots.org

Tel: +1 530 756-6340

Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary

Lilly Ajarova, Executive Director

director@ngambaisland.org

Tel: +256 414 320 662

Mobile: +256 772 221 537

Sofia Zoo:

Irina Sahatchieva

irinasahat@yahoo.com

Tel: 0878 640 183

Uganda Wildlife Education Centre

Mr. James Musinguzi, Director

jamesinguzi@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: +256 414322169 256 414322170

Uganda Wildlife Authority

Mr. James Lutalo

Commissioner, Wildlife Conservation

jlutalo@tourism.go.ug

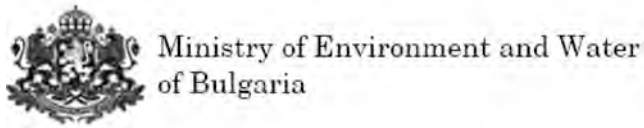
Jane Goodall Institute Uganda

Panta Kasoma, PhD., Executive Director

panta@janegoodallug.org

<http://www.janegoodallug.org/>

Participants:



the Jane Goodall Institute

About the World Parrot Trust:

Founded in 1989, the World Parrot Trust (WPT) works to conserve wild parrots and aid the welfare of captive parrots worldwide. Through conducting field research and direct conservation, advocacy, education, and awareness programs, the WPT has aided 58 species of parrot in 32 countries.

Images / more information:

1. High resolution images available at: <http://www.parrots.org/greypics>
2. Background information, WPT's PsittaScene magazine: <http://bit.ly/12JnKXU>
3. World Parrot Trust website: <http://www.parrots.org>
4. About wild bird trade: <http://www.parrots.org/flyfree/about-the-wild-bird-trade.html>
5. Grey Parrots species information: 2013 Birdlife International:
<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=112657>