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August 22, 2002

## **"Missing" South American Parrot Rediscovered After 90 years, Photographed For the First Time**



Fuertes's Parrot - *Hapalopsittaca fuertesi*  
Photo Jorge Velasquez ©2002 Fundacion ProAves Colombia

This July 28, researchers with ProAves Colombia, supported by American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and the World Parrot Trust (WPT), photographed one of the world's rarest parrots in the high Andes of Colombia confirming the survival of this long lost species. Colombian ornithologists Jorge Velasquez and Alonso Quevedo found a flock of 14 Fuertes's Parrots in a remote area of the central Andes close to Los Nevados National Park.

Ninety one years ago, in August 1911, two bird collectors from the American Museum of Natural History in New York - Leo Miller and Arthur Allen - visited the same volcano as Jorge and Alonso to explore its birdlife. They spent several months in the desolate high Andean wilderness, and discovered a "distinct and interesting" parrot that was previously unknown to science. The birds were described the following year and named *Hapalopsittaca fuertesi*, or Fuertes's Parrot, also called the 'Multicolored Parrot' by local farmers.

Between the original discovery and this July, the continued existence of this intriguing species has remained a mystery with no confirmed sightings of the bird. Last year, ProAves Colombia, a Colombian bird conservation group, decided to mount a determined search for the species to see whether it could be located and protected. The group was supported by Dr. Paul Salaman, an expert in Colombian ornithology from the British Museum of Natural History, and received initial funding from American Bird Conservancy and the World Parrot Trust. The project, which also studied another rare Andean parrot, the Rusty-faced Parrot, has subsequently attracted additional support from Fundación Natura, Conservation International, The British Natural History Museum, and Instituto de Ciencias Naturales - Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and recently won the Gold Award at this year's prestigious British Petroleum International Conservation Awards.



Fuertes's Parrot - *Hapalopsittaca fuertesi*  
Photo Jorge Velasquez ©2002 Fundacion ProAves Columbia

To date, just 14 Fuertes's Parrots, including 3 juveniles, have been discovered, surviving in just a few dozen hectares of forest. The critical requirements of the species appear to be tall mature trees, where they feed on berries amongst the epiphyte-laden canopy branches and find vital nesting cavities. Jorge Velasquez has stated "my team's task has only just begun, as we must commence the vital job of protecting the species with great urgency." Now the researchers know the specific habitat preferences and diet of the parrot, it is hoped that they can locate and protect other surviving flocks in the region.

"From our experience with the critically endangered Yellow-eared Parrot, another species restricted to the Colombian Andes, we know that conservation efforts for these rare birds can succeed. We now need to gain the support of as many people as possible to help fund and implement a comprehensive conservation effort" said Mike Parr, Vice President for Program Development at American Bird Conservancy, and author of *Parrots: A Guide to Parrots of the World*.

"The re-discovery of the long-lost Fuertes's Parrot is a great achievement for ornithologists and conservationists in Colombia, and underscores the fact that so many parrots linger on the brink of extinction. ProAves' accomplishment will inspire desperately needed conservation work in the Andes, promoting the recovery of this parrot and many other species unique to the region," said James Gilardi, Ph.D., Director of the World Parrot Trust.

For further information, photographs, or to express interest to help, please contact:

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