

PSITTAScene

Magazine of the WORLD PARROT TRUST



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ABOUT THE WPT

Capture for the live-bird trade, habitat loss and other factors put wild parrots at risk. One in three parrot species are currently threatened in the wild.

As an international leader in parrot conservation and welfare, the World Parrot Trust works with researchers, in-country organisations, communities and governments to encourage effective solutions that save parrots.

Since 1989 the WPT has grown to become a global force that moves quickly to address urgent issues and support long-term projects. Over that time WPT has led or aided conservation and welfare projects in 43 countries for more than 70 species of parrot.

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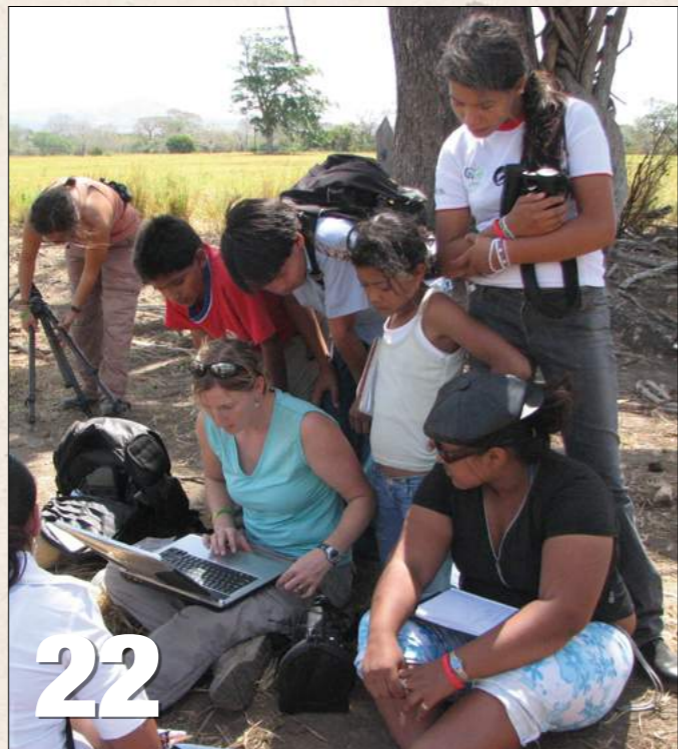
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ON THE COVER

Photo © Jake Osborne via Flickr (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A solitary Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptilus*) treeds lightly through the forest on Anchor Island near New Zealand. New GPS technology will help researchers to better track and understand the lives of these secretive birds.

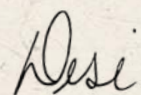
See **The New Zealand Parrot Trust: Supporting conservation of the rarest parrots in the South Pacific, Page 9.**



A message from... the Editor

Depending on where you are in the world autumn or spring is fast approaching, marking the transition to another phase of this record-breaking and often heartbreaking year. We at the Trust are navigating successfully through the turmoil, and we hope you are, too. We can't tell you how grateful we are to have your continued support and good wishes. They really help us all to do the work that we need to do for parrots across the globe.

So with our thanks we'd like to share some of the updates that spur us on to work harder and sustain our hope for a better world for parrots. Read on about our partners' dedicated efforts in Costa Rica, Nigeria, New Zealand and Central America helping macaws, Greys, and the island parrots that never fail to amaze. And we bring news of an amazingly generous supporter whose legacy will support parrot conservation for years to come.



With warmest wishes, enjoy-
Desi Milpacher,
WPT Publications Editor



Chattering Lory © Rich Carey/zim

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR PARROTS

What will be *your* legacy?

For information about including WPT in your planned giving opportunities, visit www.parrots.org/legacy, or contact the branch nearest you (see page 27).



Article and Photos © Ara Manzanillo

TO SAVE WILD GREAT GREENS

Ara Manzanillo's successful mission to save Great Green Macaws employs three key components that have proven critical to the macaws' recovery.

The World Parrot Trust was saddened to hear of the loss of long-time supporter Joy Gardner of Guernsey in late 2019. Joy joined the WPT near its inception and was a devoted member through many years. She left WPT a generous gift in her estate, for which we are deeply grateful. Joy was born and raised in the United Kingdom and went to live on Guernsey in 1972 at a house and garden in St. Saviours. Her Amazon parrots Joey and George, and cockatoo Tuan, came with her. Her surroundings were idyllic and filled with the wildlife she loved, particularly birds, with which she shared a deep affinity.



In Memory of Joy Gardner

Parrots held a special fascination for her; she was passionate about the treatment of birds caught for trade. Joy took a keen interest in photography, joining a photographic club and honing her artistic skills until she eventually rose through the ranks to achieve great success at competitions. Another passion was for travel to some of the wildest places on Earth, such as the Galapagos Islands, Africa and the Arctic circle. We will be forever thankful to Joy for her commitment to conservation, and her gift that will help protect parrots and the places they live now and into the future.

In 2010, the Association Ara Project (*Asociación El Proyecto Ara*) – currently known as *Ara Manzanillo* – initiated the Endangered Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambiguus*) reintroduction project in a national wildlife refuge in Costa Rica's South Caribbean region. This was the first documented effort to reintroduce these magnificent birds into their natural habitat and ten years later we are excited to share some of our

experiences and successes. The principal objective of the project is to establish a self-sustainable population of this emblematic macaw, once common in this region and highly valued in the local indigenous Bribri cosmivision*. Because of the project's success and dedication to macaw conservation, the organisation was recently declared "of public interest" in Costa Rica by Executive Order. This important designation also grants some economic benefits, such as tax privileges

and governmental support. The restoration of *Ara ambiguus* is being achieved through three complimentary programs:

1. Macaw Release Program (MRP)
2. Assisted Reproduction Program (ARP)
3. Community Outreach Program

*In reference to Meso-American peoples: a particular way of viewing the world or of understanding the universe.

For details of the project's initial stages, see Perfect 10 (Great Green Macaw), *PsittaScene* Issue 23.3, Aug. 2011.

RESPONSE TO LOCAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Ara Manzanillo is using its innovative spirit to help mitigate economic impacts of COVID-19 at the local level. The project invests half its budget towards community outreach. Given the socioeconomic effects on the public health emergency in the region, a new outreach approach is

required. Thus, the "Food for Nature" initiative is born, donating food to protect an endangered species. Through strategic alliances with a national food distributor and local organic producers, an effective distribution program has been set in place for vulnerable local communities where

Ara Manzanillo has been working. Agricultural products are gathered and transported to be locally commercialized and packages of basic food staples are also distributed, while at the same time the participants involved receive macaw conservation and education

resources. Having well-established relationships with key actors and broad-based sectors throughout the region and the country enables Ara Manzanillo to coordinate and combine skills of team partners for a self-sustainable synergy, hopefully for the long-term post pandemic.

MACAW RELEASE PROGRAM (MRP)

During the first few years 45 captive-raised Great Green Macaws, ranging in age from 18 months to 12 years, were transported to a tropical rainforest aviary and slowly released successfully into a coastal forest habitat. We have confirmed five deaths after the releases, while more than 30 others have been positively identified visiting the release station.

Currently, MRP activities include receiving and rehabilitating confiscated macaws from illegal captivity for release, providing supplemental feeding to some of the now free-flying macaws, rescuing macaws in danger, and monitoring the birds' health and behavior.

The long-term goal of Ara Manzanillo is for the newly reintroduced flock to connect with the closest remaining wild populations of Great Greens located in the northern regions of Costa Rica and Panama.



Top: Wild macaws wing around the forest in tandem. Bottom left: Wild fruits are consumed with gusto. Bottom middle and right: Macaws gather at an artificial nest.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION PROGRAM (ARP)

To facilitate the released macaws' breeding, we have crafted 20 nests and installed them 25-35 meters high in carefully selected native trees apt for wild Great Green Macaws. During the six to eight-month breeding season, the nests are monitored from the ground and by climbing the trees to inspect inside. After overcoming initial challenges, the results of this program have been very encouraging. Between 2016 and 2019 more than 30 chicks have fledged and are now flying free, and in 2020, 13 more chicks are growing strong.

The ARP nest support is the most intensive and multi-faceted aspect of the project. We are constantly utilizing the knowledge we gain each season to improve and adapt our nest box design and positioning to better meet the species' needs. This season's data will be an invaluable addition to what researchers know about the reproductive biology of the Great Green Macaw. For the first time, with nine 2020 chicks successfully fledged, there are more hatched in the wild than captive-bred birds released. Achieving this objective represents a landmark in securing the future survival of the Great Green Macaw in the South Caribbean, one we intend to continue expanding upon for years to come.

In order to promote other projects to assist free-flying Great Greens to breed successfully, Ara Manzanillo published the Manual de Construcción de Nidos para la Lapa Verde in Spanish for use in macaw projects throughout Latin America, which can be downloaded at <https://aramanzanillo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Manual-de-Construccion-de-nidos-para-la-Lapa-Verde.pdf>. (An updated English language version of the manual is in progress.)



Top: Great Green chicks await their parents in a nest barrel. Bottom: Duaro Mayorga skillfully dangles to check an artificial nest.



Sara E. Remmes, Bird Conservation Biologist

Creating and monitoring nest boxes for the Great Green Macaws is an exhausting and rewarding experience. In all of my fieldwork, I have never had to create a nesting cavity for a species that was in any way comparable to the size of a 55-gallon drum. There are so many details necessary to ensure the safety of the chicks and the success of their fledging. As someone that adores avian physiology, the fact that the breeding pair must chew on wood with their bills to stimulate the reproductive hormones necessary for successful breeding is fascinating.

Every step of the process feels experimental with a project as novel as this. There is so much left to learn with this species, and it doesn't take much time spent at Ara Manzanillo to realize how crucial every individual of this population is. Each bolt or piece of wood tediously screwed into the nest box makes a difference. We also hope to acquire nest monitoring cameras to assist with the growing ARP reproduction. With a species as threatened as the Great Green Macaw, they deserve all the help they can get.



Duaro Mayorga, Station Manager

I am a local *Bribri* indigenous man and Nature has been my of life as my name "Duaro" means "Protector God of Animals" in my native culture. Our territory *Keköldi* is located along the path of the Trans-American hawk migrations and as I began assisting US professional birdwatchers and biologists perform monitoring counts it quickly became my passion. Working at Ara Manzanillo, especially in the Assisted Reproduction Program (ARP), is the realization of that passion. The best way to learn about an animal is to closely observe its reproduction process. Great Greens are incredibly smart birds and to build and install nests for them and monitor every stage of their breeding process is a very revealing and satisfying experience.

The ARP has come a long way since we began five years ago. By researching nests for other macaw species, we experimented with different designs, materials and installation locations. The first year we had our first chick survive from the seven nests we set up. We named him *Pewe*, the parrot's call that announced the coming of *Iriria*, Mother Nature in *Bribri* cosmovision. *Pewe* is now almost five years old and has been observed inspecting the nests, so maybe next season he will find a mate and have the first second generation clutch, closing the circle. *Pewe* will have been born and will be breeding at Ara Manzanillo ARP.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

The long-term survival of Great Green Macaws, like that of other species, depends upon people understanding their biological and societal value. One of the most effective ways to promote this is through inspiring youth, who then share this knowledge with their families and community into the future.

In 2012 the project initiated some workshops in several nearby schools. Our energy was principally focused on the release program and monitoring the well-being of the newly free-flying birds, so educational activities were sporadic. However, we soon realized that the enthusiastic responses of the local communities to the birds would become vital to the long-term success of the project.

By 2015 we had released 45 Great Green Macaws that dispersed into a much wider territory. Birds flew to areas where Ara Manzanillo wasn't known, increasing the risk of inappropriate and harmful behavior towards them. (See *Adventures of Baloo, PsittaScene, Autumn 2014.*) Fortunately, with support from the Costa Rican government and private donors we hired local staff and expanded the outreach program into a wider geographical area.



Local youngsters enthusiastically display their macaw artwork at an outreach workshop.



To promote support for the conservation of these magnificent birds, an Ara Manzanillo volunteer published a fun children's book titled *Pewe*, available on Amazon at: <https://www.amazon.com/Pewe-Pay-Way-Miss-Buffie-Biddle/dp/198613248X>.



Tirza Morales, Outreach Coordinator

I've been working with ARA Manzanillo promoting Great Green Macaw conservation in local communities for over five years. It's been a challenging and inspiring experience. Organizing activities in remote areas is a demanding task. To reach some of the villages I have to travel two hours by car, then one hour by river canoe at times up white-water and then another half hour on foot, many times under torrential rains. Presentations need to be adapted to the specific audience on site; sometimes there are children of all ages, sometimes elders, and sometimes young men striving to become eco-tourism Nature guides. All hardships vanish when I see how the children enjoy learning about such a beautiful bird, when the elders see the pictures of the Great Greens and remember how sacred and emblematic these macaws are in their cosmology, and how the young men relate to the conservation of wildlife and the rainforest habitat.

I truly get inspired and motivated by the outreach program when I see the rewarding impacts of the program. We have reached thousands of school children with outstanding results; one young girl was so profoundly inspired that she created a presentation about the Great Green Macaw that won the annual science fair competition for the Caribbean region of Costa Rica. At the Annual Conservation Education Fair, school groups that I have worked with, on their own initiative, created Great Green Macaw conservation drama plays and murals. The Talamanca Regional Technical high school ecotourism course now places senior students for two-month internships at Ara Manzanillo. I really know I've been doing a good job because anywhere I go in South Caribbean of Costa Rica, everyone says, "here comes the macaw lady!"

Although this year with Covid-19 we are adapting to the new outreach challenges, the program now reaches into areas where the growing population of Great Green Macaws have been sighted, both in the coastal communities and higher inland indigenous territories. Yearly, more than 700 children participate in our school workshops and over 200 children visit the Ara Manzanillo release station to learn firsthand and observe the macaws flying free at close range. Promoting the conservation of this extraordinary and captivating bird is a direct investment in securing the future of diverse threatened wildlife in the Talamanca rainforest region.



THE NEW ZEALAND PARROT TRUST:

Supporting conservation of the rarest parrots in the South Pacific

The South Pacific region includes numerous archipelagos and island nations that hold a vast diversity of parrots that live in habitats from the sub-Antarctic to the sub-tropics. Some of these parrot species are among the most endangered worldwide, largely due to the high vulnerability of island birds to introduced predators and competitors.

Because many of the parrot species in the South Pacific share similar threats, management actions that can assist the recovery of a given species on an island can be fine-tuned to assist another species on a different island. While there is ongoing sharing of expertise between nations in the South Pacific, sometimes it can be difficult to find seed funding for projects. Thus, the idea to form the New Zealand Parrot Trust (NZPT), with a focus on parrots of the South Pacific, started to grow.

NZPT was founded by a group of individuals with a common interest in conserving parrots: Joe and Shelley Davenport, Steve Milpacher, Luis Ortiz-Catedral and James Gilardi. An affiliate of the World Parrot Trust and formally established in 2018, NZPT aims to "promote New Zealand developed parrot conservation strategies and assist with advancing the implementation of those strategies to other threatened parrot species in the South Pacific region."

In its first year, NZPT has supported three ongoing flagship conservation projects focusing on the Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptila*), Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) and Tasman Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus cookii*). These projects were identified as priorities to kick-start the New Zealand Parrot Trust and in coming years the scope and geographic range of projects will be expanded.

NZPT PROGRAM FOCUS:

Understanding the Movements of Kākāpō

Department of Conservation

Kākāpō are remarkable parrots; being nocturnal, flightless and lek-breeding they represent a truly unique species. They are intensely managed and as their numbers increase, more information is needed about their habitat requirements to release them in the right numbers to offshore managed areas.

The New Zealand Parrot Trust assisted the NZ Department of Conservation with the purchase of GPS units to register geographic and movement data of a number of Kākāpō. With the information gathered, it will be possible to fine-tune researchers' understanding of the habitat requirements of males, females and juveniles, to better plan future releases.



KĀKĀPŌ (*Strigops habroptila*)

IUCN/CITES listing:
Critically Endangered / Appendix I

Wild Population:
209 (August 2020)

Range:
Anchor, Little Barrier and Codfish Islands, New Zealand

History and Threats:
The Kākāpō was once seen throughout most of the North, South and Stewart Islands of New Zealand. Its population severely declined and by 1976 had been reduced to 18 male birds in Fiordland. In 1977, a rapidly diminishing population of about 150 birds was discovered on Stewart Island. Intensive conservation efforts have brought numbers back up to over 200. Current threats to its population include low reproductive/fertility rate, introduced predators and disease.

Ecology and Behaviour:
The Kākāpō is a nocturnal ground dweller of forest substrate and low scrubland from sea level to 1,200m (3,938 ft). It feeds on leaf buds, roots, fruits, fern leaves, mosses, fungi and seeds. Wild birds are also supplemented with dried rimu fruits, green walnuts, pine conelets and a concentrated commercial pellet.

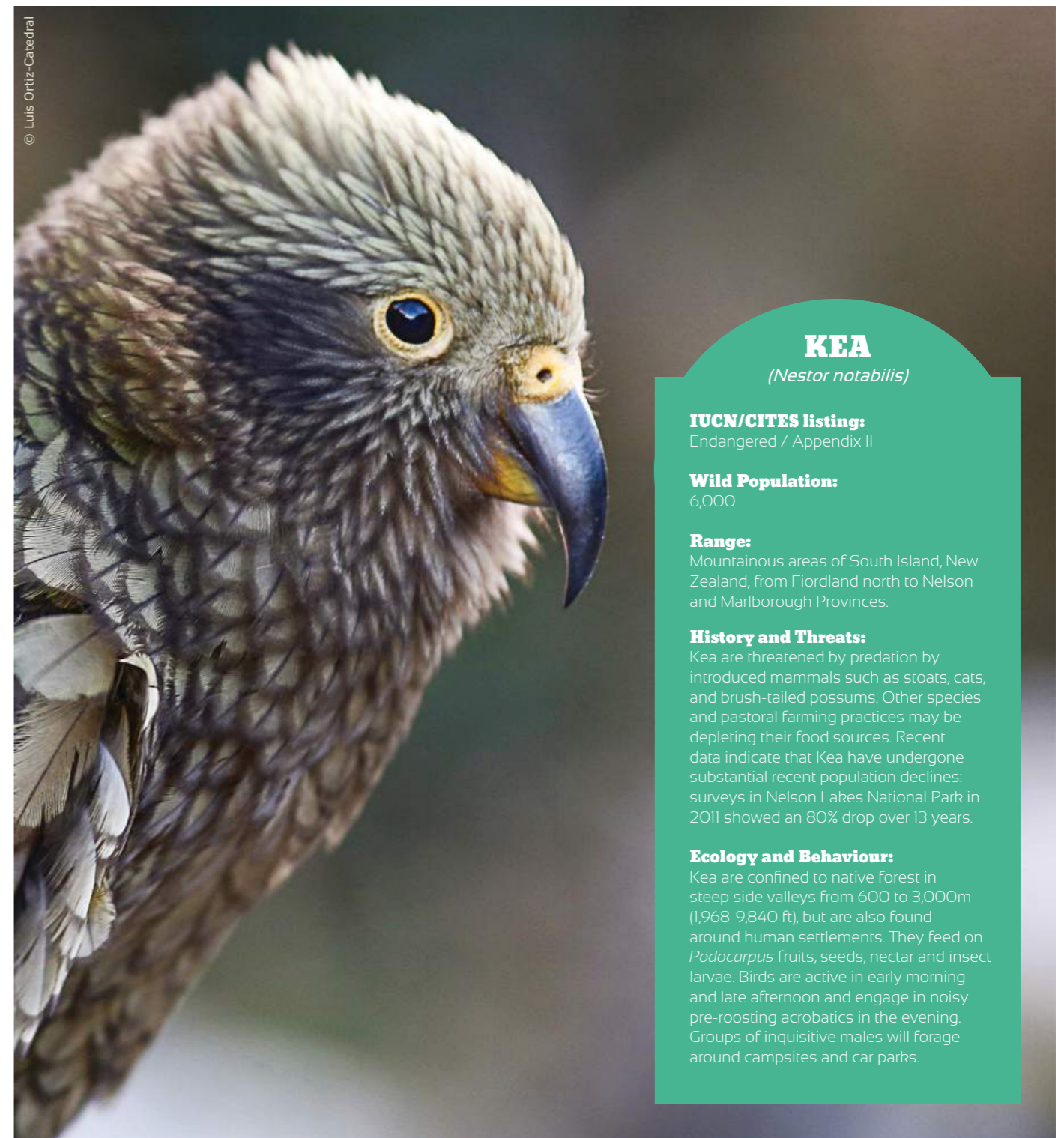
NZPT PROGRAM FOCUS:

Rapid Detection of Lead in Wild Kea

Kea Conservation Trust

Kea are amongst the most intelligent and inquisitive birds in the world. Unfortunately, their exploratory behaviour puts them at risk of ingesting lead and other metals from human structures, sometimes with lethal consequences.

Rapid diagnosis of lead ingestion is crucial to provide treatment and rehabilitate affected Kea. The New Zealand Parrot Trust provided support to purchase lead detection kits to test over 100 wild Kea. With analyses underway, affected Kea will soon be rehabilitated into the wild.



KEA (*Nestor notabilis*)

IUCN/CITES listing:
Endangered / Appendix II

Wild Population:
6,000

Range:
Mountainous areas of South Island, New Zealand, from Fiordland north to Nelson and Marlborough Provinces.

History and Threats:
Kea are threatened by predation by introduced mammals such as stoats, cats, and brush-tailed possums. Other species and pastoral farming practices may be depleting their food sources. Recent data indicate that Kea have undergone substantial recent population declines: surveys in Nelson Lakes National Park in 2011 showed an 80% drop over 13 years.

Ecology and Behaviour:
Kea are confined to native forest in steep side valleys from 600 to 3,000m (1,968-9,840 ft), but are also found around human settlements. They feed on *Podocarpus* fruits, seeds, nectar and insect larvae. Birds are active in early morning and late afternoon and engage in noisy pre-roosting acrobatics in the evening. Groups of inquisitive males will forage around campsites and car parks.

Conservation of Tasman Parakeets on Norfolk Island

Massey University

The Tasman or Norfolk Island Parakeet is a close relative of the New Zealand Kakariki, a popular cage bird around the world. The world's only population of Tasman Parakeets is restricted to an intensely managed forest remnant on Norfolk Island. The New Zealand Parrot Trust has supported ongoing research on the habitat use and nest productivity of the species to assist staff from the Norfolk Island National Park in

developing a translocation strategy to a predator-free site for this species. The NZPT's backing helps project staff map the location of active nests and target restoration and invasive species control required. Staff from the Norfolk Island National Park have worked relentlessly to protect Tasman parakeets from introduced predators and as a result, the population is now stable and planning can begin for releases to new areas.



TASMAN PARAKEET

(*Cyanoramphus cookii*)

IUCN/CITES listing:

Near Threatened / Appendix I
(as a subspecies of *Cyanoramphus. novaezelandiae*)

Wild population:

350-400

Range:

Norfolk Island (Australia)

History and Threats:

The Tasman Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus cookii* or *C. novaezelandiae cookii* according to some authorities) is endemic to Norfolk Island. Once found over the entire island, it is now scattered in remnant forest patches in Norfolk Island National Park. By 1994 the population of approximately 190 pairs had dwindled to only four breeding females and about 30 males. After a round of concentrated actions the population grew to nearly 300 birds, but declined, increased and then declined again. Threats have included past clearance of forests, non-native plant invasion, loss of nest sites to other birds and honey bees, nest failures from invasive predators, and breeding issues.

Ecology and Behaviour:

Confined to the Norfolk Island National Park and adjacent forested areas and orchards, taking a variety of fruits, shoots, blossoms and shrub seeds. They also feed on introduced olives (*Olea africana*).



Grey Parrots are highly gregarious, gathering in flocks to feed and roost. © Rowan Martin

New research paves way for protection of Grey Parrots in West Africa's Lower Guinean forests

Originally published in the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Newsletter, August 2020

The lives of Grey Parrots have long entwined with those of people. These unique birds are popular as pets around the world and have special significance in many African cultures. However, Greys are now facing population collapse, driven by capture for the pet trade and habitat loss.

Fortunately, new research conducted by WPT and partners has highlighted opportunities to boost conservation efforts for these iconic birds and their forest habitat.

African Grey Parrots are instantly recognisable. Their subtly scalloped grey feathers are electrified by a striking crimson tail and their hooked bill, shaped to efficiently crack seeds, is unmistakably 'parrot'. Grey Parrots are highly gregarious and take several years to reach maturity - characteristics which in combination make them vulnerable to overexploitation.

According to official CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) figures, over 1.2 million wild live Greys have entered international trade over the last four decades.

In 2016, they were categorised as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

"African Grey Parrots were once widespread in the lower Guinean Forests of West Africa, including many sites in Nigeria, and had cultural as well as economic significance for many of the communities," explains Ifeanyi Ezenwa, field programme manager for the World Parrot Trust and lecturer at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Today, Grey populations are fragmented but their status in many sites, including several Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), is poorly known.

“It’s not just trade that is a threat, but the expansion of agriculture into the species’ last strongholds.”

“The sight of large roosting flocks is now sadly a rare occurrence,” says Ezenwa. “We knew that trapping has driven declines, but we didn’t have an understanding of which sites are most important, the trade routes involved or what is really driving trapping for the trade.” Such information, however, is vital for developing locally-appropriate actions to safeguard remaining wild populations.

Since 2018 a project coordinated by the World Parrot Trust with multiple local partners has conducted field surveys in over 20 sites in southern Nigeria. The sites include several recognised KBAs and National Parks, as well as areas outside of formally protected areas and some commercial plantations. Transect surveys to generate direct data on abundance have been used alongside interviews with local communities to understand perceptions of population trends and the socio-economic dimensions of trapping and trade.

This approach was carefully designed to engage communities in a conversation about the future of African Grey Parrots and to establish a network of community champions. By partnering with the Nigerian Bird Atlas project and the



Feathers and other body parts are used for belief-based use in some areas. © Rowan Martin

AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, it has also been possible to generate additional records to build a complete picture of the species’ status across the country. The project’s preliminary findings paint a mixed picture of the African Grey Parrot’s situation. Many communities have reported notable declines in recent years as well as ongoing trapping activity, often by itinerant trappers, sometimes from neighbouring countries. However, there are several sites where populations seem to be resilient and trapping no longer occurs, in some

instances following sensitisation efforts by conservation groups. More importantly, multiple opportunities have been identified to support communities to protect key resources including nesting and roosting sites.

Another component of the project involved surveying markets across the country for sales of live parrots and parrot parts for belief-based use. Trade in both aspects was found to be widespread and in many instances, there was a lack of awareness that this practice was harmful to wild populations

and illegal under national laws. “This highlights an opportunity to build awareness among traders and consumers,” says Ezenwa, who also emphasised this point in an article in the journal *Oryx* (*Opportunities to boost protection of the grey parrot in Nigeria, Oryx April 2019, 53.2*). In a number of instances, links to international trade were identified, with parrots often being sourced from Cameroon and exported to other countries in North Africa and the Middle East. “Now we have to build on these findings, to develop meaningful actions to safeguard the species in the Lower Guinean Forests,” says Dr. Rowan Martin, WPT Africa Conservation Programme Director.

“It’s not just trade that is a threat, but the expansion of agriculture into the species’ last strongholds. Nigeria has been a leader in securing vital international protections for African Grey Parrots and is leading again with these initiatives,” he adds.

In addition, a workshop bringing together the multiple partners in the project and stakeholders in Grey Parrot conservation will be held when travel restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic are lifted. Funding for this project is provided by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot), Minnesota Zoo, World Animal Protection and the World Parrot Trust. 

“The sight of large roosting flocks is now sadly a rare occurrence.”



A rare glimpse at a flock of Grey Parrots as they arrive at an evening roost. © Rowan Martin

One-on-one with... Ifeanyi Ezenwa



My name is Ifeanyi Ezenwa. I’m from Nigeria and an indigene of Anambra State. I’m a lecturer in Department of Zoology and Environmental Biology, University of Nigeria Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria. I joined the workforce of the institution in February 2018. The year 2020 counts 3 years I have been involved in the conservation works of the World Parrot Trust.

How did you become interested in parrot conservation?

Often times I take pleasure in challenging situations but to date, parrot conservation has thrilled me most. My fieldwork for parrot conservation began in 2017 after some of my friends - Benneth Obitte and Iroro Tanshi - introduced the idea to me. I was subsequently guided by Dr. Rowan Martin. Ever since then my interest has been waxing stronger considering the common goal we share (in conserving nature) and efforts to give the hope of survival to these invaluable and fascinating avian creatures.

What has your research revealed about the situation for Grey Parrots in Nigeria?

My research has given me insight about the seasonal trends of movement of Grey Parrots across the different landscapes in the Nigeria portion of the Lower Guinean Forests zone. It has identified factors including poor enforcement of enacted laws, poor awareness of the Grey Parrot conservation status, security issues especially at Niger Delta areas, marginalization of some communities within the biodiversity hotspot of the country, and a high rate of deforestation that negatively drives the abundance of the birds.

In addition, my interviews with the wildlife and belief-based item traders revealed that such economic activities contravene the provision of CITES regulation of species in its Appendix I.

What challenges do you/the parrots face in Nigeria, and what are the solutions?

The challenges consist of trapping and of habitat disturbance, which involves deforestation cut across the inland as well as the coastal forests. This has gone unregulated especially at non-protected areas. As with habitat disturbance, activities involving trapping of Grey Parrots were reported active multiple times inland as well as in coastal forest patches.

Solutions to these challenges include:

1. Adopting sustainable forest management practices that balance the needs of environment, wildlife and forest community.
2. Enforcement of enacted national laws in Nigeria guarding against unsustainable exploitation of wildlife.
3. Proper sensitisation of communities living within the Grey Parrot distribution range on the conservation status would help curtail trapping of these birds. Also implementing a grass-roots approach to conservation of wildlife resources is very essential to the communities.
4. Efforts like these will discourage them from unsustainable exploitation of forest resources to meet their basic needs.

What needs to happen next to implement these solutions?

Until the government is sincere about the value placed on wildlife, the conservation of Grey Parrots may be difficult to achieve in Nigeria. To accomplish this would include meeting the needs of those in rural areas together with proper sensitisation on conservation implications of unsustainable human activities, and enforcement of the Endangered Species Act which is in place to guard against the threats to the populations of different threatened species.



Climbing gear is fixed to a tree in preparation for nest checking. © Rowan Martin



Can you tell us an interesting story about your field work?

My days in the field were filled with activities that in some cases extended well into the night, like the day I visited a community called Mkpot. Mkpot is one of my field sites located at the heart of Oban division Cross River national park (CRNP) approximately 30 km away from the border road that leads to Cameroon from Oban town.

I woke on 24/08/2019 super-excited considering my activities for the day, especially my proposed visit to Mkpot. On my team was a CRNP ranger, one local assistant and one volunteer graduate student. Everyone except the local field assistant had not visited Mkpot before. By 6:30am, we were out in the field surveying Grey Parrots and other birds, and the environment where they lived. Interestingly, I had already seen two Red-fronted Parrots (*Poicephalus guillielmi*) that morning. Considering the richness of the frugivorous bird diversity I encountered during the survey, I was extremely happy to move further to Mkpot, which is a less disturbed area. We finished the population and habitat survey by 1:00pm.

Getting to our camping area, we hastily refreshed and packed our field items and at 1:50pm we started the journey to Mkpot with the ranger, one volunteer graduate student and myself. I decided to lay off the local assistant for his lack of interest in the survey activities.

The journey to Mkpot was really the longest distance I had ever covered in the field to date. At the beginning, the path was relatively level and broad but as we got further along, the path narrowed and became difficult to travel. By 6:00pm, we were very optimistic that Mkpot was close by but little did we know that the journey would still take us more than two hours of trekking! We met a number of people on the way and two of them responded positively but their expressions showed us that the destination was not yet close. We also had to cross three wadeable streams which would be very difficult to get through during heavy downpours.

By 8:26pm we could hear human voices and music. Our very exhausted group approached the sound source through the narrow path with the aid of our hand held torches. We had finally made it to Mkpot! We were very relieved to be there. Shortly we were intercepted by some boys bathing by the stream, and we introduced ourselves and asked the way to Mr. Matthew's house. Mr. Matthew is a head teacher of the only school in the community. After we arrived at his house, he provided us with a bunch of bananas which we engulfed hungrily within a short time. Then it was time to head to the paramount chief's house, where his chiefs were summoned. We explained the purpose of our visit, and then we were excused for a while so they could discuss what they required from us. They asked us to pay two thousand Naira for the permit to enter the forest

for the survey. I was also assigned a local guard that night and stayed at the paramount ruler's house. An ideal field activity day.

How has the recent COVID-19 outbreak affected your work?

The COVID-19 outbreak has placed a hold on my field activities. Efforts to organize a workshop that will bring together different stakeholders that would better the conservation of the Grey Parrots are on hold due to restrictions of movement at both local and international levels.

How do you remain optimistic?

The passion I have to study nature (biodiversity in particular) has often kept me optimistic. Also it is of great interest to me to make data available to answer pertinent questions that will zero or otherwise minimize threats to populations of Grey Parrots in Nigeria and the bird's range in general. [1]

WPT would like to thank BirdLife International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Minnesota Zoo and World Animal Protection for supporting this work.



Left and right: Ifeanyi Ezenwa at work. © Rowan Martin





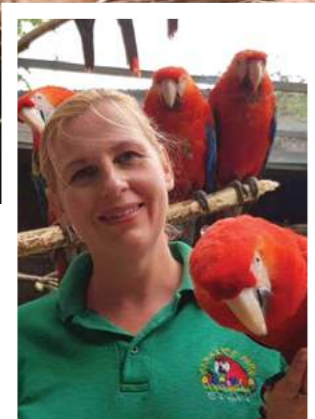
BUDGERIGAR SUPERFLOCK

The sight of thousands of parrots darting and swooping in unison in the sky is mind-bending. These birds are engaging in a phenomenon called a murmuration to socialise, court each other, find food and water and confuse predators looking for a meal. Research at the University of Queensland has cleared up a longtime mystery about this type of flocking behaviour: the reason why they never crash into each other mid-flight is that they always veer right.

Northern Territory, Australia. Photo © Paul Williams, Iron Ammonite Photography

Your Feathered Friends' Feet

Whenever your bird is not flying it will be using its feet. It is therefore crucial to keep them exercised and healthy.



Louise Caddy, Head of Parrots at Paradise Park, UK (home of the World Parrot Trust) gives advice on how to provide the best foot care for your bird.

When looking at the underside of a healthy foot, you should be able to see clearly defined individual pads. The pads should have visible, distinct scales with no hard skin, deep cracks or fissures, and the bird should be able to grip comfortably with all its toes.

Overweight parrots are more prone to foot problems caused by increased pressure on the feet. If your parrot's feet are sore, it will sometimes compensate by using its beak to get itself around the cage.

Foot issues can also be caused by perches that are smooth and of the same diameter that will not exercise your bird's feet and toes. A typical example of this is wooden dowel. Constantly sitting on this type of perch will result in stress on specific areas of the foot, eventually leading to pressure sores.



Bird-safe branches include: pear, apple, beech, aspen, sycamore, hawthorn, oak, ash, poplar, willow, elm, Buddleia or grapevine.

All should be unsprayed, clean of sap, and needle-free. Use grapefruit seed extract (GSE) or vinegar to scrub clean. Heat sterilize in an oven at 250°F for an hour or dry in hot sun (UV rays will help to sterilize).

Photo © Paradise Park



Pressure sores are generally graded from 1 to 5. Grade 1 means the skin on the bottom of the foot is smooth and hardened. Grade 5 is a serious condition where the foot has become swollen and infected, and requires a trip to a veterinarian. This condition can lead to problems with the bird's tendons and ligaments.

Also, it's important to monitor your bird's toenails, as many parrots need regular nail trimming. To check if they are the right length, stand your bird on a flat surface such as a table. When the foot is flat on the table, the tip of the nail should just touch the surface without causing the toe to raise.

Providing the best perches

One of the most important things you can do is to provide the best perches possible. A good quality cage can easily cost several hundred pounds, yet many still come with inadequate perches. There are several different perch types on the market, ranging from plastic to rope. A popular choice are those made with sand and cement that have a 'rough gritty' finish, but they are too abrasive on your bird's feet. Never use plastic or metal perches, as they are too hard and unyielding on your bird's foot pads.

In my experience, nothing beats making your own wooden perches. Not only will they be a fraction of the cost of shop brought perches, but you can also adapt them to fit whatever size cage you have.

Using natural branches reduces repetitive pressure loading on the same area of the foot. This allows the feet and toes to be constantly stretched and worked as would be the case in the wild, reducing the chance of foot problems.

By far the biggest benefit of natural perches is that they will vary in diameter and shape, so your bird's feet will be constantly exercised.

To determine the ideal diameter of a perch that will allow your bird to settle comfortably, you need to look at its feet. As a guide, your bird's foot should only encircle the perch halfway and the toes should not meet. If they do, it indicates the perch is too small,

making the bird feel unstable with a preference to hang off it rather than to sit contentedly on it.

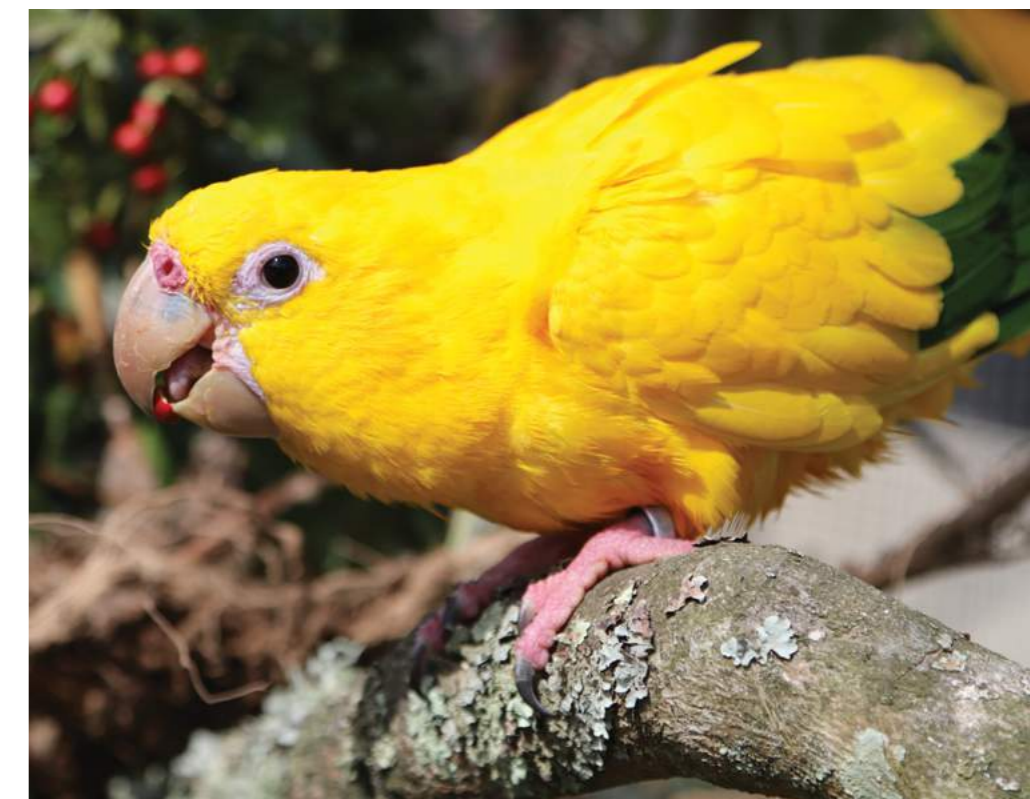
When looking at where to place perches, remember that birds will naturally choose to roost at the highest point, so try to provide one or two at different heights. Also, consider where the feed bowls will go; you do not want your bird sitting overhead and messing in its food and water.

In sum, keeping your parrot's feet healthy is easily done with frequent introductions of new, natural perches and browse for exercising, and frequent exams and care of toenails - actions that will help to make your bird happier and fitter overall. 📺



This image shows flattening and beginning to wear on the centre of the foot but shows a complete wear of scales on the base of the toes.

Photo © Paradise Park



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Christine Renee Dahlin, PhD is an associate professor in the department of biology at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

Loved...

TO EXTINCTION? TO EXTINCTION? TO EXTINCTION?

On studying wild parrots a biologist discovers that their beauty puts them at risk of extinction.

By Christine R. Dahlin, PhD

I DID NOT SET OUT TO ENGAGE IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION.

I DID NOT SET OUT TO BATTLE SCORPIONS OR GET DETAINED BY THE NICARAGUAN MILITARY.

I began my PhD program intending to discover how wild parrots, known for their stunning mimicry abilities in captivity, communicate to one another in the wild. Studying these parrots opened my eyes to the threats they face however, and I realized that as a scientist I had gathered knowledge that could help people see them as more than just pretty pets in a cage.

In 2008, I traveled to Costa Rica to study the Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata*), a vibrant, midsized green parrot with a brilliant splash the color of sunshine on its neck. This parrot ranges from Mexico to northwestern Costa Rica and inhabits dry tropical forest and swampy mangroves.

I had been fascinated by research on the vocal behaviour of these birds. They had dialects. Much like human languages, their entire vocal repertoire would shift at boundaries of their range. Mated pairs sang together in duets on their territories. Researchers didn't know why or how.

I was intent on expanding our knowledge of how this parrot communicated in such a complex fashion. As a graduate student at the Wright Lab at New Mexico State University, I settled into fieldwork relocating historic roost sites in Costa Rica that pairs had been using since our professor, Tim Wright, began studying the birds in the 1990s.



Left: These chicks were confiscated from poachers in 2017 in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. Photo © D. Felipe Chavarria, of the Área de Conservación Guanacaste



Right: The large hole in this coyol palm was caused by a poacher's blade. Coyols are a preferred tree for Yellow-naped Amazons to nest in, but the soft wood is easy for poachers to access. Photo © Christine Dahlin

POACHED FOR PETS

Yellow-naped Amazons form long-term pair bonds, and they nest in large, mature trees or dead palms on dry forestland and cattle ranchland. Since they depart early in the morning to forage, my days consisted of observing the bird's behaviour and recording their calls very early in the morning and in late afternoon, with time in between spent on data analysis — or napping.

The vast majority of nests that my lab mates and I found and attempted to study failed to produce offspring. It was clear why. As I fell in love with these parrots, I quickly learned that I had some strong rivals: people who wished to have them as pets. Most of the nest failures we noted occurred because chicks were stolen by poachers for the pet trade. Many were stolen so young that their likelihood of survival was dismal.

Like many parrots, Yellow-naped Amazons make attractive pets. They have long lifespans — as long as 66 years, with a median of over 19 years in captivity (Young *et al.* 2011). Their social, engaging demeanor wins people over. Their vocal imitation abilities astound them.

When I began observing the effects of poaching on Yellow-naped Amazons, I had no real sense of how stable the population was. I had no knowledge of basic reproductive biology. I had no idea as to what conservation measures we should take. Fortunately, our lab had a successful collaboration with Róger Blanco, the coordinator of investigation at the Área de Conservación Guanacaste.

With his help, we developed our first conservation effort — an education program begun with funding assistance by the World Parrot Trust. Over three years, my lab mate Alejandro Salinas-Melgoza and I brought the program to four local elementary schools. (Developing the education program, painting murals and completing field seasons simultaneously is a great way to learn time management skills!)

The program incorporated various components. Guanacaste staffers taught about parrot conservation and biology. Students could “adopt” nests. Field trips took them out to see parrots in the wild. An art component incorporated murals or music. Today, the education component by Guanacaste staffers still continues.

BACK TO BASICS

Key to any conservation plan is a basic knowledge of a species' biology, though, and that was where our group of biologists was struggling. Our lab's primary research focus had always been the parrot's fascinating linguistic abilities, not its population biology. Careful digging through old research notebooks, as well as some new work, filled in key gaps (Dahlin *et al.* 2018).

Some aspects of parrot biology are promising, we found. When it comes to where they breed, Yellow-naped Amazons are somewhat flexible. Cavity nesters, they most often choose dead palm trees known as *coyols*, which readily form large, dry cavities. They heavily use five tree species, but they have been recorded in 21 different ones. As a result, when we look at habitat availability, as long as a sufficient number of mature trees are left on the landscape, Yellow-naped Amazons are unlikely to face cavity limitations.

My study revealed a high nest failure rate. Between 1999 and 2008, 89% of nests failed, with 68% of failures attributable to poaching.

FIGURE 1.

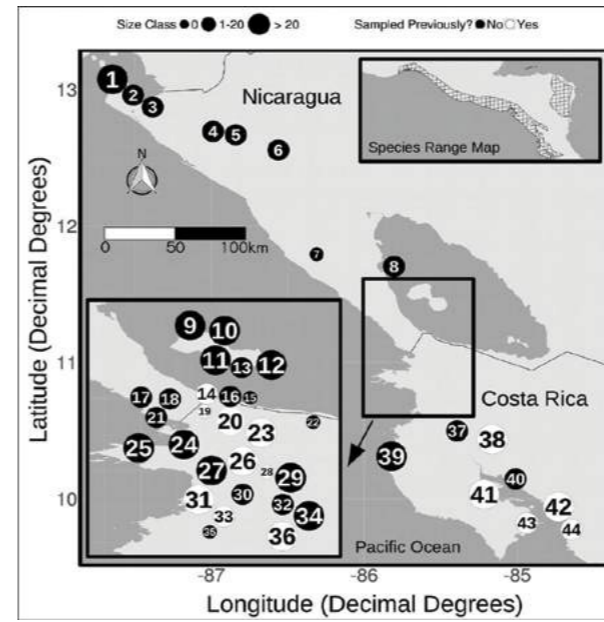


FIGURE 2.

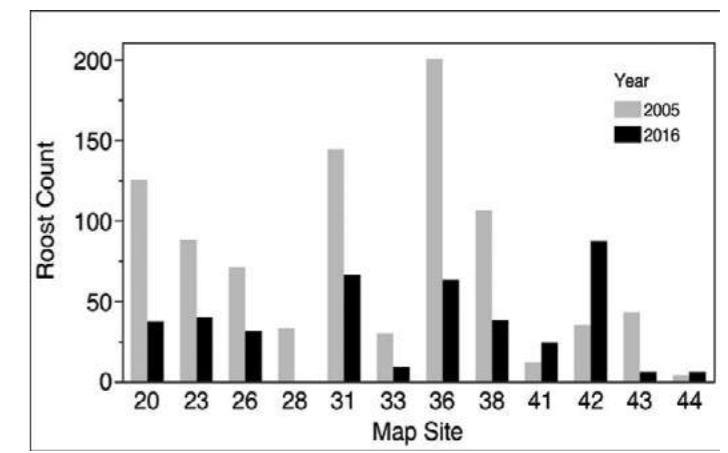


Figure 1: Roost sites surveyed in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The size of each point indicates the general number of birds surveyed.

Figure 2: Comparison of roost sizes in Costa Rica (2005 and 2016) indicates Yellow-naped Amazons have declined by 54% since 2005. Source: Wright *et al.* 2018.

Unfortunately, the dead palms in which the birds prefer to nest are readily poached. Once hacked into by a machete, they are destroyed and unusable for future nesting attempts.

UNDER THREAT

Data on population size of the parrots did not become a priority until 2016, when we realized the populations were under serious threat. Due to good fortune, we had old data on population size that Tim Wright collected beginning in 1994 while surveying parrot dialects across Costa Rica.

In 2016, we partnered with two organizations committed to parrot conservation — the Ara Project (now known as Macaw Recovery Network) and the World Parrot Trust — to conduct a more extensive survey. Collaborations with Nicaraguan biologist Martin Lezama allowed us to expand into Nicaragua and incorporate his previous survey data.

We conducted our own surveys by locating historic roost sites and conducting counts of the birds as they left in the morning or returned in the evening. We also surveyed some new roosts and others that had moved.

In the summer of 2016, we surveyed 25 sites across Costa Rica and 19 sites across Nicaragua — with only a few field mishaps to keep us on our toes. Two biologists from Macaw Recovery Network, two from the Wright Lab and two from my own lab at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, joined forces. [\[i\]](#)

Next issue: *Moths and Machine Guns* — the four biologists meet at Tivives, Costa Rica to begin surveys of wild Yellow-naped populations, but not without landing in some hot water first.



Christine Dahlin plays parrot calls for elementary school students during the first education program in 2006. Students were from Escuela Irigray in Guanacaste Province, Costa Rica. Photo © Christine Dahlin

NEWS

Track a Kākāpō? New Zealand's precious parrot under drone eye

Birdwatching drones have been launching into the skies over New Zealand's smaller islands to help scientists track the IUCN Critically Endangered Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptila*), which now numbers 209 individuals. Because the population is so small efforts to save them have had to be exhaustive, which means that measures such as tagging the birds with radio transmitters have historically been implemented. Scientists from the Department of Conservation then track the birds many kilometres on foot through difficult terrain. The method is extremely labour-intensive and not all birds are found in a timely fashion. Enter wildlife drones: deployed to locate the birds more accurately from the air, these tech marvels were put through their paces earlier this year to test their efficacy in spotting Kākāpō.

Read more:
tinyurl.com/y6mll6me



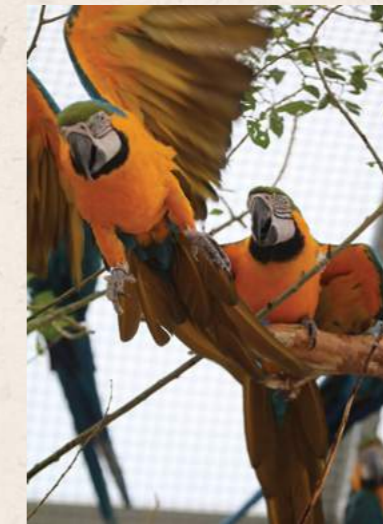
© Jake Osborne via Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Parrots of the Kiwa Centre and the COVID-19 pandemic

The parrots living at the Kiwa Centre in the UK need your help. It can cost upwards of £1,000 per month for food and enrichment supplies to meet the needs of the more than 200 rescued parrots residing there. To help get them through the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created, the Kiwa Centre staff created an Amazon Wish List where people can donate items directly to the birds.

View the wish list on Amazon:
tinyurl.com/kiwalist

Read the story of the Kiwa Centre:
tinyurl.com/kiwacovid



© Georgina Steytler | Wild & Endangered

Revegetation project to plant thousands of seedlings to help black cockatoos

About 12,500 seedlings will be planted in south Western Australia this winter in a bid to help iconic black cockatoos, as a part of BirdLife Australia's Alcoa Community Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project. The initiative aims to restore habitat and disperse information about endangered black cockatoo species. About 20 artificial nest boxes have also been installed in the areas included in the project.

Read more:
tinyurl.com/y5ujnaeb

Tribute to Peter Slater: Ornithologist and Artist Who 'Lived for the Birds'

The WPT was saddened to hear of the passing of Australia native Peter Slater in Brisbane on May 28 at the age of 87. He was a life-long artist, photographer and ornithologist who began photographing and illustrating birds at a young age, eventually winning awards in international exhibitions and producing many essential natural history books and field guides. He spent long hours in the field documenting Australian bird species, including all 55 native parrot species except for Night and Paradise Parrots.

Peter generously provided artwork for the World Parrot Trust's annual Artist Wall Calendar, as well as for FeatherArtWorks.org, a group of artists supporting the work of the WPT. We are grateful for his lifetime of contributions to the world of parrots; he will be sorely missed by the conservation world.



© Dan Ilic

Galah distancing photo wins hearts online; ornithologist says it hints at deeper sentiments

A photo of a flock of Galahs that appeared to be social distancing on power wires has provided inspiration to thousands of people around the world during the pandemic. According to experts at Charles Sturt University there is more to their behaviour than meets the eye. Dr. Melanie Massaro thinks that the birds' "social distancing" behaviour, while apropos for the times in which we live, may be a clue to their relationship status: the birds are at a gathering to check each other out. Of the photo she says, "It's like they are dating, absolutely, it is very noticeable... the flocks are a great way of finding partners."

Read more:
tinyurl.com/y4qrjsfp

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PARROTS IN THE WILD:

Budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*)

These diminutive and acrobatic parakeets are some of the most prolific parrots in the wild, raising up to eight chicks in a single brood. Their large numbers are their strength; the unforgiving places they live can exact a toll on their populations.

Northern Territory, Australia.
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