

FlyFree: Inspiring Actions to Save Parrots



Nearly one third of the world's parrot species – almost 100 in total - are threatened by capture for the pet market, hunting, and habitat destruction. The trade in wild-caught birds is the leading cause of this decline and result in the deaths of thousands of birds each year.

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE the World Parrot Trust (WPT) has led international efforts to end this unsustainable practice by persuading regional and international lawmakers to enact legislation to end the trade. In 2007 the WPT spearheaded a coalition that succeeded in persuading the European Union to ban the import of all wild-caught birds. That effort had the backing of tens of thousands of supporters through letters and signed petitions, detailed scientific reports, and a broad coalition built with 230 like-minded organisations. This one act eliminated over 90% of the legal trade in wild-caught birds – sparing an estimated sixteen million wild birds to date.

With the EU trade ban in place, the WPT pioneered FlyFree in 2009: a regionally focused, direct-action programme to rescue, rehabilitate and release wild-caught birds.

To date over 4,800 parrots have been rescued through this groundbreaking programme.

Active projects are underway in India, Nepal, Kenya, Cameroon, South Africa, Uganda, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Bonaire, Ecuador, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Indonesia and with several others now under consideration.



THROUGH FLYFREE, the WPT provides essential technical, financial, and logistical assistance to an increasing number of frontline partners, and inspires government leaders, rescue groups, and concerned citizens to take action to save parrots. The programme is effective, efficient, and delivers timely support to regions where resources are scarce and relevant knowledge is often limited. WPT's support is focused on:



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I. Caring for the birds: Confiscated birds are frequently stressed, debilitated, and in very poor health from their capture by poachers and traffickers. Providing immediate and longer-term support for food and veterinary care, as well as disease screening and similar preparations to aid the survival of individual birds, ensures their successful release back to the wild.

II. Building capacity: Assisting in the development and expansion of rehabilitation housing and support structures to ensure the best environment for the birds increases the carrying capacity of the facilities. Lack of proper infrastructure is a key factor in limiting the number of birds that can be rescued, and their likelihood of survival soon after confiscation.

III. Creating permanent change: Supporting education and awareness efforts directly tied to release events which provide outstanding opportunities to garner public attention and foster deep connections between the birds and individuals in the community.

Collaboration with these partners allows the WPT to focus on a results-oriented approach using the most efficient means possible to reach the largest number of birds in many regions throughout the world:

- AFRICA -

Demand for the African Greys (*Psittacus erithacus*) has encouraged legal and illegal harvests to continue at unsustainable rates with thousands of individuals being exported from a few African countries to buyers in SE Asia and the Middle East. This unrelenting persecution has driven massive declines in population numbers for this once common species. Because of this continued threat, it will remain a focal species for the Trust's efforts in Africa for the foreseeable future.

Cameroon: In each of the last 4 years the WPT has provided emergency support to the Limbe Wildlife Center to assist in their efforts to care for 3,490 birds confiscated from 7 illegal shipments. WPT resources have provided husbandry guidance, technical assistance, capacity building resources and support for overall bird care. Over 2,000 of the birds have been successfully rehabilitated and returned to the wild, with approximately 500 individuals remaining in rehabilitation. Confiscations will no doubt continue to occur in the future.

Uganda: In early 2011 the WPT was also called upon to assist the Uganda Wildlife Education Center (UWEC) in helping 265 Grey parrots confiscated at the country's border. Proper husbandry and technical guidance were provided by the Trust as well as funding for facilities, food and medical attention. Of the original group, 204 of the surviving birds were successfully rehabilitated and later released to protected forest areas in July of this year, with support ongoing for several dozen birds not yet fully recovered.

Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Africa: In previous years the WPT has provided support for rescue and release efforts, has co-sponsored meetings with key stakeholder groups responsible for the management of wildlife and trade, has assisted with the training of personnel, and has garnered massive media support to further awareness of issues related to trade. Future efforts in Africa will continue in these locations.

- ASIA & PACIFIC -

India: WPT has supported the efforts of the Visakha Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (VSPCA) in Andhra Pradesh. VSPCA and two other private rescue groups are working towards the rehabilitation and release of wild parakeets (predominantly *Psittacula* sp.) that are caught as adults or poached as chicks for the pet trade and use by street vending fortunetellers. New confiscations are received on an ongoing basis and often include dozens of birds.

Indonesia: For several years the World Parrot Trust has collaborated with ProFauna Indonesia, and more recently the Indonesian Parrot Project (IPP) and Konservasi Kakatua Indonesia (KKI). These efforts have helped to persuade the Indonesian government to pass legislation to ban the legal export of wild-caught birds; to study and document trade occurring in the region of Western Papua and deliver the data to governing officials; and, to further conservation programmes for the critically endangered Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*) and the Mitchell's Lorikeet (*Tricoglossus haematodus mitchelli*).

Nepal: Since 2009, the WPT collaborated with Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) to study the wild-caught bird trade there and convene a round table of representatives from various agencies charged with addressing this issue. WPT activities include the development of an education and awareness programme; the creation of a monitoring and reporting system (for birds showing up in the trade); and, the establishment of a system to support organisations charged with rehabilitation and rescue of individual birds.



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- SOUTH AMERICA -

Brazil: Although legal protection for Brazilian fauna has been in place for many years, tens of thousands of birds are captured each year to satisfy the demands of the domestic pet trade. Over the past 3 years WPT has been supporting the rescue and release efforts of several organisations. We have also facilitated meetings with concerned individuals, organisations and government officials working to curtail the trade. These activities include support of SOS Fauna, a nonprofit entity that has received over 1,000 birds (principally Blue-fronted Amazons and Cactus Conures), most poached from wild nests as chicks, and support of ongoing local efforts to enforce wildlife laws.

Elsewhere in Brazil, WPT has been working with the R3 Animal, and other local NGO's on innovative programmes intended to aid in the rehabilitation and release of endangered Vinaceous Amazon parrots (*Amazona vinacea*), the first time this has been attempted in the country. In previous years, support has also been given to Associação Bichos da Mata to rescue and rehabilitate hundreds of parrots, macaws and other birds that have been confiscated by the government.

Ecuador: Fundación Ecológica Rescate Jambeli (FERJ) is working to protect biodiversity and the environment. They have been actively involved in the rescue and release of dozens of parrot species. Collaboration with this group was initiated last year and support was provided for capacity building with new rehabilitation flight cages being completed in late 2011. WPT supports their efforts to release Great Green Macaws (*Ara ambiguus guayaquilensis*), an endangered species in the region; Red-masked Parakeets (*Aratinga erythrogenys*), a species that frequently occurs in trade in the region; and, Lilacine Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis lilacina*).

- CENTRAL AMERICA & CARIBBEAN -

Belize: The Trust has assisted Belize Bird Rescue (BBR) with captive breeding, rehabilitation and release efforts as well as developing a country-wide education programme to discourage pet parrot ownership. Future work will include efforts to re-establish the Yellow-headed Amazon (*Amazona oratrix belizensis*), an endangered species that has suffered a massive population decline since 1974 due to pressures from the pet trade.

Costa Rica: Further south in Costa Rica, WPT is working with the ARA Project, to re-establish the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) and Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambiguus*) to much of their former range. The ARA Project is pioneering an innovative programme that combines rehabilitation, captive-breeding and release efforts. More than 90 Scarlet Macaws have been returned to the wild in the past 7 years, and the release of Great Green Macaws began mid 2011.

Honduras: The WPT is working with several organisations and governmental officials to assist with confiscations and rescue of parrots. A high profile release of 5 Scarlet Macaws garnered countrywide media attention as well as government support. WPT will support further efforts to reduce the trade, providing support for confiscated parrots as well as building capacity and broadening recent educational efforts.

Mexico: Until recently, this country remained the most active in the region in both illegal and legal trade in wild-caught birds. Recent efforts by WPT and its partners successfully convinced the federal government to adopt legislation to ban the import and export of all wild-caught parrots, saving tens of thousands of birds each year. However, in-country trade still occurs. Recent confiscations of illegal shipments have involved hundreds of parrots, like the 377 Orange-fronted Parakeets (*Aratinga canicularis*) confiscated from bird traders in early 2011, and subsequently rescued through FlyFree.

Bonaire: WPT has supported the efforts of Dr. Sam Williams to conserve the Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*) and to curtail in-country trade in the species. In July 2011 the WPT was called upon to assist Dr. Williams and Echo, a Bonairian NGO, with the confiscation of 112 parrot chicks seized from an illegal trader: Yellow-shouldered Amazons and Brown-throated Conures (*Aratinga pertinax xanthogenia*), bound for Curacao to be sold into the pet trade. Round the clock care was provided for the rapidly growing chicks and the first releases of these birds began late in the year.

- LOOKING FORWARD -

FlyFree is a highly effective programme for protecting parrots. It enhances wildlife law enforcement efforts and provides unique opportunities to advance in-country conservation, education and awareness efforts.

It creates measurable change and directly impacts the lives of thousands of birds. But this work has just begun, with each passing month we are alerted to new confiscations, and chances to help parrots in need.

NONE OF THIS WORK would have been possible without the contributions of hundreds of caring individuals, volunteers, organisations, foundations, and sponsors who share a vision for the protection of all parrots. With their continued backing, and the inclusion of new advocates, we'll realise a future where many more parrots can live wild and free. Learn more about FlyFree at: parrots.org/flyfree

