



KIWA:

The story of a macaw rescue

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How the love for a childhood companion became a mission to save hundreds of macaws.

Fresh off an enlightening and enjoyable working visit to WPT's founder facility at Paradise Park in Cornwall UK, we arrived at an out-of-the-way farm in the rolling English countryside for a visit of a different sort – a follow-up on a project begun a year or so prior.

It was no less than the rescue of over 170 macaws and parrots from a miserable neglect situation, and we were there to see and report about how they'd progressed. How would they have fared, I wondered with a mix of trepidation and excitement.

When you see the indoor/outdoor aviaries housing these birds now compared to where they came from, you'd think a bona fide miracle had happened. There are perches, natural logs and grass outside; indoors more feeding stations are set on easily cleaned sand. There are perches and ropes for less able birds, and heating in their night quarters. Most of all, there is ROOM TO FLY.

Quite different from their previous life, where the birds lived in small cages in a musty, dilapidated building. It was a complete change for a group of birds that had had virtually no hope of an enriching,

or even a reasonable, existence. One year on most are doing well.

It was especially gratifying to see them beginning to use their outdoor enclosures more (*progress is slow and steady after being locked inside for an age*), with some of them now venturing out to smell the fresh air and feel the warmth of the sunshine. Feathers that had been chewed or plucked are returning, plumages are brighter, and voices are stronger. Watching them wheel around the aviaries, fly from perch to perch, bicker amongst themselves and generally behave more like macaws was inspiring, and a relief.





It all began with a visit to a friend from the past. Joe Davenport, a native Brit who now lives in New Zealand, once had a Blue-and-yellow Macaw named Kiwa.

Sadly, after years of companionship, Joe had to surrender her back to the breeding facility where his parents had originally bought her while he set off to begin his adult life. She was never far from his thoughts, and as soon as he could he went back to see her. When he saw the conditions in which she and over

170 other macaws were living he was understandably stunned. He became deeply concerned for their fates, so after his visit he approached the World Parrot Trust to see about helping them.

Joe's resolve to give hope to these macaws set into motion a Herculean effort on the part of about 20 volunteers – Joe himself, eight zookeepers, four veterinarians, two vet technicians, and WPT staff - to catch, examine, treat and change the lives of this unfortunate group of birds. A staggering operation, to be sure.

David Woolcock, Curator at Paradise Park, and a number of veterinary personnel had already seen to the sickest birds. Some of them, after years of overfeeding, and lack of exercise and light, were sadly beyond help. That made getting the others to safety all that more urgent.

Once proper permission was in place, The Kiwa Centre, generously financed by Joe, was built. On the day of the move, everyone who was to be involved arrived at the old breeding barn, a dark, two-storey building that had

definitely seen better days. After being caught, and thanks to an efficient assembly-line set up, the birds were quickly anaesthetised, examined, had blood drawn for tests, were treated for injury/illness, and had nails clipped - as much as could be done given their overall condition.

When everything was completed and the birds had recovered from the sedation, each bird was gently bundled into a travelling box and transported by vans to the new location some miles away. The entire process took 24 hours over

two days and was a full-on effort by everyone.

Now that the birds are in their new quarters, what happens next? Some of the Scarlet Macaws have already been transferred to Dudley Zoo, where they will serve as ambassadors to educate admirers about their wild kin in Honduras, one of the remaining strongholds of these birds. A group of Red-and-green Macaws will be on their way to Argentina, where they will take part in a reintroduction program. Plus, Grey Parrots that were confiscated in Bulgaria a

few years back and are currently living in France will join the group at the Kiwa Centre, and then eventually go back to Africa where they belong. As for the remaining macaws and other parrots, they will live out their lives with proper care, security, good food, and things to play with and do.

And Joe and Kiwa, the main heroes in all of this, can bask in the certainty that they've done everything they can for these marvelous birds. ☐