



Twenty Years of Saving Parrots

A World Parrot Trust Retrospective

The World Parrot Trust was founded in 1989 with a vision to help save wild parrots from extinction and to ensure that captive parrots live long, healthy and happy lives.

Over the years we have made great strides in parrot conservation, welfare, research and trade - ideas rarely broached by animal charities twenty years ago. We have now supported dozens of species of parrots in the wild, and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of birds in captivity around the world. Our work has also spared millions more wild parrots from the cruelty of the wild bird trade.

As the Trust has grown in size and scope over the past twenty years, we have consistently put the needs of the birds first. This concept was a founding vision and has continued to be a guiding force.

Please enjoy this brief retrospective highlighting some key projects from the past twenty years. We hope you'll join us in working to save parrots in the next twenty years and beyond.

Conservation

Hope Restored for Echoes: 1991-present

By the 1980s the worldwide population of the Echo Parakeet had been reduced to 12 birds or less. The World Parrot Trust took this seemingly un-saveable species as our 1st major project. With the financial backing of the Trust and others, Dr. Carl Jones and his team on Mauritius have since raised the population to about 330 individuals. In 2007 the species was down-listed from “Critically Endangered” to “Endangered” – an astounding feat and a first for any species of parrot.



Photo: © Dennis Hansen

The Parrot Action Plan: 2000-2004

The enormous task of crafting a Parrot Action Plan fell to some of the most accomplished minds in the parrot world. Underwritten, orchestrated and published by WPT and IUCN in 2000, this publication profiles the world's rarest parrots, identifies the issues facing their survival, and provides recommendations for their conservation. The plan has guided researchers and conservation managers in designing suitable strategies to save parrots globally.

Rarest Wild Macaw: 2001-present

The wild population of Blue-throated Macaws may number less than 200 birds with fewer than 10 pairs known to breed each year. This key WPT project began in 2001 and over the years has resulted in improved nest sites and chick survival. Each year we have fielded a team to carry this project forward. We continue to study every aspect of the macaws' lives and refine techniques such as actively protecting nest sites from poachers and predators and designing and installing artificial nest-boxes to encourage breeding. We have also been working with the Natural Encounters Conservation Fund to develop captive breeding efforts to help rebuild the wild macaw population.



Photo: © Brent Barrett

Thick-billed Parrot: 2002-present

WPT has supported Monterrey Tech University's translocations, radio tracking, conservation planning, and nest-box construction for the endangered Thick-billed Parrot for many years. This important work has shed light on the problems facing this beleaguered species of the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains in Mexico, and has helped focus current and future efforts to save it from extinction.

Too many to count: 1989-present

Since its inception in 1989, the Trust has also supported vital conservation and research programs aiding: **Conures:** Patagonian, Golden-plumed, White-necked, Yellow-eared, and Cuban; **Macaws:** Red-fronted, Lear's, Hyacinth, Great Green, Spix's, Scarlet, and Blue-winged; **Amazons:** Mealy, Black-billed, Lilac-crowned, Yellow-billed, Yellow-headed, Yellow-naped, Green-cheeked, Mealy, Cuban, Red-spectacled, Red-necked, Red-tailed, Imperial, St. Lucia and St. Vincent; **Lorikeets:** Kuhl's, and Ultramarine; Red-vented; **Cockatoos:** Red-tailed Black, Goffin's, Citron-crested and Moluccan; **Other parrots:** The flightless Kakapo, Black-cheeked Lovebird, Yellow-faced, Cape, Red-faced, Meyer's, Grey and Seychelles Black Parrot.

Research

The Vibrant Palm Cockatoo: 1996-2000

The rare and flamboyant Palm Cockatoo is found in Queensland and New Guinea. WPT funded research by Steve Murphy to assess population, diet preferences, reproduction and man-made threats facing this species. Ground-breaking studies with all-day nest watches and in-nest, infra-red video surveillance revealed the Palm Cockatoo to be a highly specialized feeder with a low breeding frequency, compared to other parrots in the same area.

A Golden Opportunity: 1998-present

The Golden Conure is threatened by poaching for the pet trade and habitat loss in eastern Brazil. Since 1998 the WPT has supported 3 different biologists – Carlos Yamashita, Toa Kyle and Thiago Orsi – in their research on this stunning and uniquely social species. Their body of work has included mapping nest sites, observing and documenting group behaviour, and analysing blood samples to determine the degree of relatedness among members of small flocks and has greatly aided our understanding of the species' social biology. The Trust has raised over \$100,000 (US) for Golden Conure research and conservation by establishing the Golden Conure Survival Fund, the brainchild of WPT-USA Administrator Glenn Reynolds.

The Caribbean's Gem: 2004-present

The Yellow-shouldered Amazon survives with small groups on four Caribbean islands and small populations on the mainland of Venezuela. We recently funded a genetics study by Adriana Rodriguez-Ferraro to determine the relatedness among these isolated populations. We have also supported biologists Sam Williams and Rowan Martin in their Ph.D. studies which have focussed on the reproductive biology of this little-known Amazon on the island of Bonaire where it is threatened by intense poaching and drought pressures. As part of an awareness program we supplied “Happy Healthy Parrot” brochures in



Photo: © Luiz Claudio Marigo



Photo: © parrotwatch.org

Dutch to island residents and helped procure rings (bands) to facilitate a government run amnesty program to monitor the island's captive parrots.

Searching... 1989-present

WPT has also supported searches for populations of reportedly extinct species. Sadly, a 1998 survey by Dr. Charles Munn found the Glaucous Macaw to be extinct in the wild, and extensive searching for the Red-throated and New Caledonian Lorikeet turned up no new sightings. Through these searches we gained new insight into how a parrot species may become extinct and how to prevent further loss. Most recently, we have supported biologist Toa Kyle in studying the elusive Blue-headed Macaw in the remote rainforests of Peru.

Advocacy

Power to the people (and parrots)!

In Mexico, the Trust partnered with Defenders of Wildlife to launch an educational programme featuring posters and comic books depicting endangered parrots in an effort to halt the local bird trade. In Costa Rica we are supporting an awareness program in schools to teach children the value of parrots in their community and to stop the local trade there.

On May 31st, 2004 we organized World Parrot Day in London. This day of quiet demonstrations, banners and the antics of Superparrot (aka Nick Reynolds, of Paradise Park) culminated in a march from Trafalgar Square to Downing Street where we handed over a petition with 33,000 signatures calling for a ban on the importation of wild caught birds into the European Union. Eventually the petition's signatures reached 40,000, and it played an integral part in the ban that followed. Ultimately over 230 non-governmental organizations and thousands of individuals joined the fight – a feat of international cooperation that has now spared millions of birds annually.

Sustainability

Encouraging local people: 2000-present

Another World Parrot Trust hallmark is our use and support of innovative means to protect parrots and aid people who share their environments. Trapping parrots is sometimes a means of supporting a meagre income. Unfortunately it is almost always unsustainable and when the wildlife disappears from a certain area, both people and ecosystem suffer.



In Guyana where local people trap and sell parrots into the pet trade they also carve elegant parrot sculptures out of locally produced natural balata, or latex rubber. WPT is helping to support a sustainable industry by selling these detailed figurines. Doing so helps replace the income trappers and their families formerly derived from harvesting wild parrots.



The Trust has recently embraced a similar project in Peru to help indigenous people protect their parrots and their forests. In partnership with a local organization, Peru Verde, WPT supports the creation of Arpilleras (appliquéd fabric wall hangings) made by over 100 indigenous artisans. The hangings, marketed and sold by WPT to the international parrot community, depict life in the rainforest for both man and animal. The concept is simple, yet effective: Peru Verde buys crafts from the community's artists and the community protects their local parrot clay licks while learning, and passing on, the importance of these areas to macaw conservation.

Education

Creating awareness...

Educating local people about wild parrots has remained central to our efforts and has taken a wide variety of forms.

In the early 90's we created four Parrot Education buses in Central America. Paul Butler of RARE originally approached us with the idea of an educational bus for the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. It would travel all over the island, visiting schools and other locations, telling the story of the endangered St. Lucia parrot and what could be done to save it. WPT's Paradise Park team, led by David Woolcock and Nick Reynolds, refurbished a bus, fitted it with dynamic educational displays, and shipped it out on a banana boat to the island's forestry department. It was a great success, and resulted in similar buses being provided for the neighbouring islands of Dominica and St. Vincent, and also for use in Paraguay. As a result, Paradise Park and the World Parrot Trust were awarded the "Zoo Conservation Award for Excellence" by BBC Wildlife Magazine.

Enriching lives

Created with behavioural stimulation and education in mind, the DVDs Pollyvision I and II and Where the Greys Are are some of the Trust's most popular items. Featuring remarkable footage of parrots in the wild, the DVDs are as educational and enriching as they are entertaining – to parrots and humans alike.



Educating parrot caregivers

The breadth of our outreach has grown with the times. In 1989, the World Parrot Trust's inaugural year, we launched our quarterly magazine PsittaScene. Now in its 20th year, we haven't missed an issue. PsittaScene goes to WPT members and supporters and is used by parrot researchers and enthusiasts worldwide to stay informed about the latest research, projects and news from the parrot world.

Thousands of copies of our "Healthy Happy Parrot" brochure, a short and snappy guide for new and aspiring parrot owners, have been distributed worldwide.

These outreach efforts have expanded to the Internet where parrot enthusiasts and caregivers learn from our monthly email newsletter, Flock Talk and from WPT's new 7000 page educational website at www.parrots.org. Combined, these electronic and print resources enjoy a readership of more than 250,000 people per year.

Welfare

The Trade Ban

Realized in July 2007, the Wild Bird Trade Ban in Europe was the culmination of six years of effort. The unsustainable harvests, disease risk and high mortality of birds in the trade made this a clear priority for the Trust and kept us focused when it seemed impossible. The ban has now saved approximately four million wild birds annually and has dramatically reduced the risk of avian diseases entering importing countries.

Having realized this goal, we have now shifted our trade work to a country-by-country approach. We are now developing key working relationships with regional organizations in Southeast Asia, Mexico, Africa and South America. By targeting key markets accountable for much of the remaining bird trade, we hope to end this cruel and destructive practice in the few remaining locations where it still occurs.



Singing the Blues

The trade in wild caught Blue-fronted Amazons has had a devastating effect on the species and its ecosystem. Our research has determined that governing practices regarding the collection of these parrots are frequently violated and we have informed officials in the US and the UK that harvest numbers are not sustainable, refuting previous claims. We will continue to support the gathering of clear documentation of the trapping practices to provide importing countries with up-to-date, accurate and independent information.



Photo: © Erickson/Bowles www.amazornia.us

For the Greys

Our Save the Greys Fund started in 2008 to help end the trade in wild caught African parrots, to encourage sustainable alternatives to parrot trapping, to rehabilitate and release confiscated birds, to re-establish wild populations in suitable areas of their former range, and to raise awareness of the plight of African parrots.

In Cameroon, Grey Parrots are a special focus in the illegal trade in wildlife. In 2008, WPT worked with the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA) and Limbe Wildlife Centre to provide emergency assistance for over twelve hundred wild African Greys that were being illegally smuggled out of the country. We supplied urgently needed funds and veterinary help in the first days of the crisis and ongoing help in subsequent weeks of rehabilitation and treatment. In the end more than seven hundred birds were released back into the wild.



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The Future...

With the help of members and supporters throughout the world the World Parrot Trust has consistently accomplished considerate and holistic conservation, education and advocacy on behalf of parrots for over two decades. We have achieved lasting results for the preservation of parrots, people and ecosystems and will continue these efforts as long as we are needed.

