

# AFA WATCHBIRD

Journal of the American Federation of Aviculture

## Red Siskin

Michael Fidler  
Jonathan Fink  
Gary Fitt

VOLUME XLVI • 2019



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## ON THE COVER

Red Siskin  
(*Spinus cucullatus*)

### Mission and Purpose of the AFA

The mission and purpose of AFA is to promote the advancement of aviculture through educational programs that enable better husbandry, management, and living conditions for exotic birds; promote avian research and conservation of exotic birds; keep our members aware of legislative issues that affect aviculture and aviculturists and keep legislators aware of the need for fair and equitable regulations.

The goal of AFA is to ensure long-term, self-sustaining populations of exotic birds both in captivity and in the wild.

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# AFA WATCHBIRD

Journal of the American Federation of Aviculture



Official publication of the American Federation of Aviculture Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)3 educational organization

Volume XLVI • 2019

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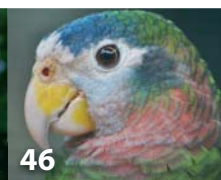
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# A Message from the President

By Jamie Whittaker



Spring is here and there are eggs, babies and feathers everywhere! What a wonderful life we live when we are able to have birds in our lives. Your bird may be your best buddy, always within arm's reach and happy to sit with you. Maybe your birds have mates, and you can watch them as they prepare their nest and hatch their babies, or any other way that you live in harmony with your birds. Having birds in your life is a wonderful blessing.

I know that if I study birds from early morning until the end of the day for the rest of my life, there will still be volumes of information left to learn.

I hope that you will join us in Orlando in August to help us **"Build a Future for Aviculture"** in the shadow of the Magic Kingdom.

We all benefit when we join together and share our knowledge. Our birds are the ultimate winners when we are able to discuss our successes and our failures and find a better way for the future.

Happy Spring!

Jamie Whittaker





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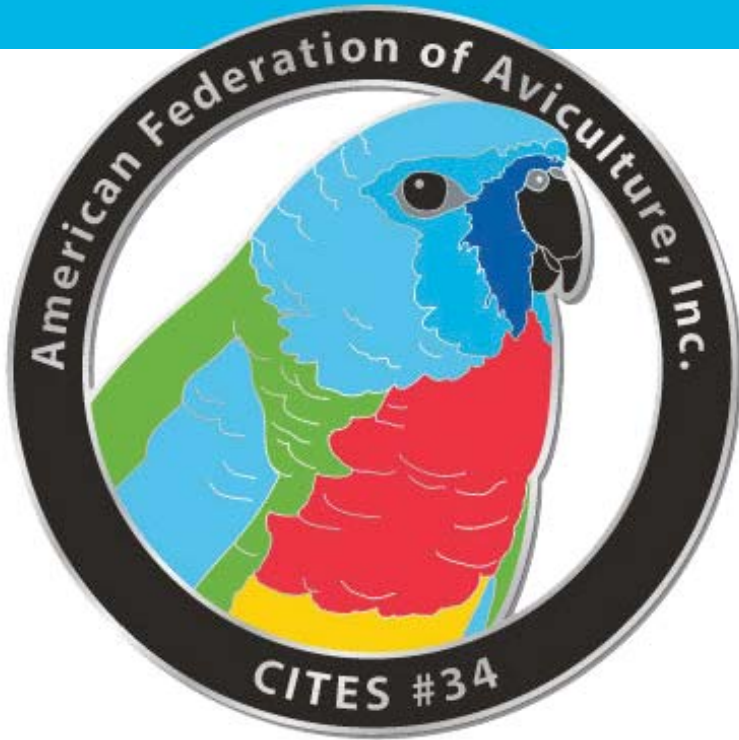
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## CITES

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| 2. Mascarene Parrot                                     | 13. Gang-gang Cockatoo          | 25. Blue-eyed Cockatoo                    |
| 3. Palm Cockatoo  | 14. Red-capped Parrot           | 26. Plum-headed Parakeet                  |
| 4. Green-winged Macaw/<br>Great Bill Parrot/Toco Toucan | 15. Blue-headed Pionus          | 27. Rose-breasted Cockatoo                |
| 5. Spix's Macaw   | 16. Violaceous Touraco          | 28. Black-headed Caique                   |
| 6. Crimson-bellied Conure                               | 17. Lady Gouldian Finches       | 29. Blue and Gold Macaw                   |
| 7. Moluccan Cockatoo                                    | 18. Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot | 30. Sun Conure                            |
| 8. African Grey   | 19. C-Edward's Fig Parrot       | 31. Blue-fronted Amazon                   |
| 9. Pair of Eclectus Parrots                             | 20. I-Paradise Tanager          | 32. Lovebirds                             |
| 10. Hawk-headed Parrot                                  | 21. T-Cock-of-the-Rock          | 33. Green-winged Macaw                    |
| 11. Major Mitchell's Cockatoo                           | 22. E-Hooded Parrot             | <b>34. Scarlet-chested Parakeet - NEW</b> |
|   | 23. S-Black-bearded Barbet      |   |

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# CITES and the AFA and YOU

By Rick Jordan

**CITES**, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, began as a signatory treaty between member nations in 1973 and entered into force on July 1, 1975. The main purpose of the treaty, now called convention, is to monitor, through permits, any international trade in animal and plant species that are facing a threat of extinction in the wild. States or economic integration organizations which agree to be bound by CITES are known as Parties. From the initial 21 signatory members (including the US), the number of Parties has grown to 183 and includes 182 states and the European Union.

The AFA became involved in monitoring the decisions (Resolutions) made at the CITES conventions and committees in the 1980s. Al McNabney was AFA's first CITES Committee Chairman and he attended meetings and developed a presence for AFA on an international level. Most of the work or initial drafting of rules governing avian species takes place at the CITES Animals Committee meeting, not at the main meeting of the Parties called the "Conference of the Parties" or CoP. Animals and plants committees meet every two years and allow non-governmental organizations with an interest in conservation to attend and provide input on certain proposals. Once the Animals Committee puts forward their final decision or recommendation about listing a species, or defining a term under the treaty, the actual vote takes place at the CoP, where all member nations attend and vote.

The resolutions made under CITES are international in scope. The Parties develop the three lists of protection called the "appendices". Appendix I is the most endangered; Appendix II is a list of species that may become endangered if they are traded without close monitoring and permitting, and Appendix III lists species that any given member country can list as a mechanism where CITES can help monitor trade in their indigenous fauna or flora that enters into international trade. Permits are required for any international trade in Appendix I or II listed species, whereas, a "certificate of origin" is required for species listed on Appendix III.

With reference to parrots, the United States has taken a bolder step toward protection and enacted their own internal law called the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 (WBCA). Any CITES listed species of parrot, (and a few other avian genera as well), are prohibited import from other countries under this internal law with few exceptions. Note that all

parrot species are now listed under CITES with the exception of the budgerigar, cockatiel, rose-ringed parakeet, and one species of lovebird. So basically, the passing of the WBCA has resulted in a virtual ban on importation of any parrot species listed on any Appendices to the CITES convention.

The CoP meetings are held every two or three years. AFA attendance to the CoP meetings or the CITES Animals Committee meetings can be expensive and a system of fund raising to help offset these costs was developed; sales of the AFA CITES pin series. Each year the AFA CITES committee chooses a species which is then depicted on the annual lapel pin. The profits from sales of the pins are used for conservation projects and/or CITES meeting participation.

The decisions made at CITES meetings are important to aviculturists and other animal keepers in the United States. Definitions decided upon at CITES are often used in our own domestic legislation. Definitions of key terms such as bred in captivity, captive born, captive hatched, commercial transaction, non-commercial transaction, and more, may have a detrimental effect on internal trade as well as any export on an international basis. For example, under CITES, a bird is not "bred in captivity" until it is a second-generation offspring hatched from two parents that were both hatched in this country as well. It is important for the AFA to be present at CITES meetings where definitions about captive specimens are to be discussed or decided.

Support your AFA CITES Committee today by buying an AFA Cites pin. Visit the AFA store to view the many different AFA CITES pins available. They make great gifts too.





# Loro Parque Foundation's Work Succeeds in Saving 9 Species of Parrots from Extinction

Press Release

*These species were critically endangered and thanks to the effort of the Foundation, they have changed their endangered category, thus avoiding their disappearance.*



**Puerto de la Cruz, May 9, 2018:** Thanks to its conservation efforts, the Loro Parque Foundation has managed to save a total of 9 parrot species from total extinction. Since its creation in 1994, the Loro Parque Foundation has supported conservation projects for endangered species with an economic contribution of more than \$18,000,000. The change of

threat category in many of these 9 species is a worldwide environmental conservation success that makes this non-profit organisation the most effective in this area internationally.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 'Red List' groups the different species into different categories of threat: of minor concern, almost threatened,



vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered, extinct in the wild and extinct. The psittacids - the parrots - are one of the most threatened groups of birds on the planet. Thanks to the efforts of the Foundation, 9 species have been saved from imminent extinction.

Below is a list of the species with specific information on each of the projects and their results.



### **Yellow-eared Parrot, Colombia**

*Agnorhynchus icterotis*

In 1998, there were only 82 Yellow-eared Parrots in Colombia. Over the years, thanks to the technical and financial support of the Loro Parque Foundation, with a contribution of more than \$1,500,000

dollars, its population is currently around 4,000. Thus, its category has changed from 'critically endangered' to 'endangered'.

This bird is directly linked to a local palm tree from which the leaves were extracted for religious and cultural celebrations. And the link between the two species is so close that if the palm tree disappears, the Yellow-eared Parrot becomes extinct. The use of artificial nests, several repopulation and local awareness actions with the indigenous population and their authorities were carried out with such success that, today, this species of parrot can be seen in flocks. Through the local organisation 'ProAves', measures have been implemented that have enabled local people to become directly involved and protect their unique natural asset.



### **Lear's Macaw, Brazil**

*Anodorhynchus leari*

The Lear's Macaw, a native of north-eastern Brazil, has historically been the victim of hunting, looting, habitat destruction and pressures of various kinds in an area where conditions are extreme. In 1994, the census was less than

200 individuals, but today there are 1,300 individuals, moving them from the 'critically endangered' category up

to 'endangered'. Loro Parque Foundation has supported different actions for the recovery of this species with more than \$460,000.

Among the most relevant of the actions is that of compensating the region's maize farmers, who blamed the damage to their crops on this species. Once the actual damage has been demonstrated, the creation of a fund generated from different institutions allows growers to receive payment of the corresponding amounts with the commitment not to kill the macaws to avoid the occasional reduction in their production.

The region in which they live, the Caatinga, (which means White Forest in the indigenous South American Tupi language, as in times of extreme drought the trees lose all their leaves and the ends of their branches become whitish) is very unique because, despite reaching high temperatures and extreme dryness, it harbours a great endemic biodiversity. At the same time, the recovery of this species assists the conservation of this area, which is very wide and difficult to cover.

The Loro Parque Foundation also participates in an 'ex situ' programme. In 2006, the Brazilian Government sent two pairs, which had been seized from illegal trafficking for reproduction, and the first breeding result was achieved after six months. Today, 32 of them have been born in Tenerife and 9 have returned to their country of origin, all of them forming part of the safety net of the species in controlled environments.



### **Blue-throated Macaw, Bolivia**

*Ara glaucogularis*

Endemic to the vast plains of the Beni River, the Blue-throated Macaw, a true jewel of nature, did not exceed 50 specimens in the 1990s. Although still critically endangered, the populations that have been observed in the vast

territory where they live now exceed 250 specimens. A large investment from 1995 to the present, of more than \$1,500,000 dollars has made local populations aware of the danger to this species, which for years was exploited for the use of its feathers in traditional indigenous headdresses.

The development of artificial feathers and workshops to learn how to make headdresses with the substitutes, has allowed thousands of macaws, of different species to benefit.

Fieldwork in conjunction with interested locals and their scientific institutions is making progress for this species which, given the uniqueness of its habitat and behaviour, requires a continuous effort over time.



### Red-tailed Cockatoo, The Philippines

*Cacatua haematuropygia*

The Red- Vented Cockatoo project in the Philippines is one of the star projects supported by the Loro Parque Foundation. Thanks to the important efforts of the local NGO 'Katala Foundation', the various populations'

growth has been dizzying: from 22 in the 1990s to over 1,200 today, including the recent release to the wild of 7 specimens which were taken at an early age and later recovered from illegal trafficking.

One of its most illustrious protagonists, Indira Widman, recently received the Withley Awards for Nature and Conservation for her great work with this species, which, as its habitat is the islands, makes recovery and control very complex.

One of the most ingenious strategies developed has been to train prisoners in the local prison and former traffickers who plunder nests as 'guardians of the wild'. They are now guards in areas where they themselves previously poached and now recognise the importance of the decimation of the populations.



### Red-tailed Amazon, Brazil

*Amazona brasiliensis*

The Brazilian Red-tailed Amazon Parrot is an endangered species of the Atlantic rainforest, mainly from the states of Sao Paulo and Paraná (with very few individuals in the north of the state of Santa Catarina), in the

southeast of Brazil. For more than a decade, the Loro Parque Foundation has supported activities for the conservation of the wild population of this species, and the efforts made have proved a resounding success.

In the 1980s, the total population of the Red-tailed Amazon was probably around 2,500, yet it is now estimated that there are more than 9,000 individuals, and the threat category of the species has been reduced from 'endangered' to 'vulnerable'. The majority of the population - about 70% - is located in Paraná, where reproduction occurs on low-lying, forested islands along the coast. The forest is susceptible to disturbance, particularly due to the development of tourism and the felling of the tree species that this parrot prefers for nesting.

Consequently, Loro Parque Foundation has supported the environmental group 'Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental' (SPVS) to monitor and protect its breeding areas, given that it is vital to involve the local population in order to preserve the trees on which the species depends, and it is encouraging to see how, in the short term, the use of artificial nests as an auxiliary system has given very good results and has had a direct impact on the increase in the numbers of the species.



### Echo Parakeet, Mauritius

*Psittacula eques*

The Echo Parakeet is the last surviving native species of the genus that once inhabited all the western islands of the Indian Ocean. They were common but began to decline both in numbers and geographical distribution in the mid-

1800s. In 1986, a population of only 8 to 12 individuals was estimated with just three females of an age to reproduce.

The decline was a consequence of the massive destruction and degradation of habitat, resulting in a shortage of native food-supplying trees and the large endemic trees needed to nest.

The recovery effort for this species was conducted through the 'Mauritius Wildlife Foundation', with which the Loro Parque Foundation actively collaborated to help meet its primary objective:- to establish a viable population of the Echo Parakeet in the wild. The programme made an important contribution to population growth, which reached 188 in 2003. In addition, successful releases of captive-bred parakeets were made, and a reinforcement of breeding between wild and captive-bred parakeets - one of the most relevant pieces of data was the reproduction of a captive-bred female mated with a wild male giving hope and viability to her species.



Twelve of these Mauritian parakeets, released during the breeding season on the island, survived in the native forests. As a result of all these efforts, continued over time, the growth of the species on the island continues to be exponential, with a census that today exceeds 500 specimens.



### Blue-headed Macaw, Peru

*Primolius couloni*

Peru, Brazil and Bolivia are home to the rare Blue-headed Macaw, although its localised populations are never very abundant. However, the global population is growing in numbers and its category of threat has also changed

from 'endangered' to 'vulnerable'.

The Loro Parque Foundation has funded field research for this species, developing field maps that describe the locations of the species that may temporarily be more or less abundant. Knowing the actual censuses of this species is the basis for its conservation, and its change in threat category does not completely ensure its disappearance in specific areas.



### Horned Parakeet, New Caledonia

*Eunymphicus cornutus*

In New Caledonia, a parakeet with a head adorned with elegant feathers has suffered for years from invasive species in its habitat, such as rats, which attack its eggs and chicks. Monitoring their territories throughout the

breeding season, and identifying breeding strategies and habitat conditions for the species, have allowed it to thrive in recent years, moving them from 'endangered' to 'vulnerable'.

To be able to identify the type of landscape in which they move, and to know their daily behaviour, as well as the problems they face, involves a great deal of research and technical work which, in this case, has given very good results.



### Black-cheeked lovebird, Zambia

*Agapornis nigrigenis*

Since 1997, the Loro Parque Foundation has collaborated with the Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation in South Africa researching into the populations of the Black-cheeked lovebird, a small parrot whose

populations in south-western Zambia were little known.

Interestingly, this was one of the last parrots discovered in Africa (1906), and the populations that existed under human care in Europe were greatly reduced after the two world wars, which affected the import of specific grains into Europe and could influence future demands for catches.

Learning about its habitat, its biology in general, and interacting with local populations so that they can understand the importance of preserving it and how to do so has been crucial for the recovery of this species that is now, once again, abundant in the environment. The Loro Parque Foundation continues to support the research of this species in the field in order to have updated censuses.





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## The American Federation of Aviculture

44th Annual Educational Conference

August 16-18, 2018 | San Antonio, Texas

# 44th Annual Educational Conference and Avian Expo Recap

By Concetta Ferragamo

Photos By Karen Anderson

Our 44th annual conference was nothing shy of impressive! While the conference days are scheduled to run Thursday through Saturday the festivities really kick off on Wednesday and end after the off-site tour on Sunday. All attendees should keep that in mind when they book their reservations for the upcoming conferences. As always, we had a plethora of topics covered during the twenty-eight talks and meetings.

At the AFA annual conferences, you will find yourself immersed in avicultural professionalism. The committee approved speakers cover topics pertaining to conservation, legislative awareness, natural disasters, rescues, sanctuaries, breeders, scientists, teachers, engineers, business owners, manufacturers, exhibitors, behavior consultants, veterinarians and vet techs and more. In acknowledgement of the amazing presentations and on behalf of the AFA membership, I would like to formally thank this year's speakers for volunteering their time, research and passion for aviculture: Patricia Anderson, PhD, Gen Anderson, Josee Birmingham, Shelia Blanchette, Janice Boyd, PhD, Charles Britt, MS, Jason Crean, EdD, Madeline Franco, Bennett Hennessey, Rick Jordan, Simon Kiaez, Kate Lane, Mindy Patterson & Sandy Lender, Adrienne Mock, Quinton Bryan, Mark Schack, Robin Shewokis, Daniel Sigmon, David Skidmore, Tyler Thomas, Ricardo Valentin, Babriela Vigo Trauco & Mark Moore, Nancy Wilson, Constance Woodman, Bonnie Zimmermann and Susanne Cochran.

Our Key Note Speaker, Rick Jordan, delivered a compelling presentation titled, "Watch What You Say" Positive Reinforcements for Aviculture. Rick's presentation was eye opening as he explained the realities of aviculture. Rick's presentation and most of the other talks can be viewed through the AFA Facebook posts. The talks that had live streaming are still available to view.

One presentation offered participants, both in person and those viewing from the Facebook live streaming connection, an invitation to participate. Constance Woodman, through Texas A&M University, is conducting

## Flocking Together for Aviculture







an intelligence study. The presentation was titled, Digital Enrichment for Caged Bird Health: There's an App for That. If you are interested in being part of this study, please contact the AFA office for more details.

Several national clubs and organizations hold meetings during the conference. These meetings are always popular with attendees because it is often the only opportunity members have to meet face to face. This year the clubs and organizations included: Avian Raw Whole Food Nutrition, International Cockatiel Association, American Cockatiel Society, Quaker Parakeet Society and the Lory League. The conference is also one of only two times during the year when the AFA Board meets in person. The board meeting begins on Tuesday prior to the opening of conference and adjourns on Sunday after the conference. AFA members are encouraged to attend the board meeting. Everyone's feedback and input matters a great deal to the sitting Board of Directors and Committee Chairs.

In case you were not able to join us this year, we've commemorated some of the highlights in pictures. Make your plans now to join us for the 45th AFA Educational Conference and Avian Expo, August 8 through 10, 2019, where we'll be "Building a Future for Aviculture" at the B Resort and Spa (a Disney Resort) in Orlando, Florida.







## Featured Speakers

*Gen Anderson* Nido Adoptivo: Supporting Blue-throated macaw conservation past, present and future.

*Karen Anderson* Do You Hear What I Say?

*Dr. Patricia Anderson* The Empowered Quaker Parakeet: Creating a Better Human-Avian Bond

*Shelia Blanchette* Can foster programs assist with companion bird's behavior?

*Dr. Greg Burkett* Prosthetics

*Dr. Susan Clubb* What's your diagnosis?

*Brian Coyle, PhD* Red Siskin Initiative: Strengthening Conservation through Aviculture

*Dr. Jason Crean* Avian Raw Whole Food Preparation

*Jennifer Cunha* Advancing Communication with Parrots Using Consent and Vocabulary Training

*Laurella Desborough* Keynote address: Aviculture: Past, Present and Future

*Laurella Desborough* AVICULTURE: Where Do We Go From Here?

*Concetta Ferragamo* Stepping Outside the Box: Understanding how to prevent negative consequences helps address behaviors through forms of play.

*Madeleine Franco* DOES YOUR BIRD THINK YOU'RE HIS MATE? UH, OH!

*Vern Gildhouse* Quaker Parrot Genetics/ Understanding Feather Colors as the Eye Sees Them



## The Wonderful World of Quakers!

**Bob Nelson** AFA Oregon State Coordinator

Since my first experiences with the charming and delightful Quaker Parakeet started in 1971, wild and wonderful things have happened in advancing husbandry practices, and the discovery and development of new color mutations. It is very exciting to have been a part of that over the years.

It is particularly exciting, I feel, to have the Quaker as





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UPCOMING CONFERENCE IN ORLANDO

*Debbie Goodrich* “What do Whales Have In Common with Parrots? The Animal Rights Advocacy.”

*Taylor Haines* Parrot Sustainability Program: Using genomics to create sustainable populations for conservation and aviculture

*Steven James* “Saving Wild Macaws & Parrots, one Feather at a time with Feathers for Native Americans”

*Hilla Niemann* We better behave! How our behavior influences the behavior of our pet birds.

*Rainer Niemann* Going green - enrichment with plants.

*Jean Pattison* Saving the Wild African Greys

*Jack Pine* Efficiently evacuating animals in times of emergency

*Mark Schack* Lighting for Birds

*Robin Shewokis* Foraging for Fitness

*Daniel Sigmon* In the Cage is Out of the Box: Bird Keeping as Conservation.

*Susan van den Broek and Rob Milko* What You Don't Know Can Hurt You (Part 2)

*Jafet Velez-Valentin* María, Mario and Mary; Resilience, love, death and an assassin at El Yunque National Forest

*Bonnie Zimmermann* Indonesian Parrot Project Documentary

*Miel and Naomi Niemann* The Kidz Program, Junior Avian Workshop

## Official Conference Tees and Polos Available



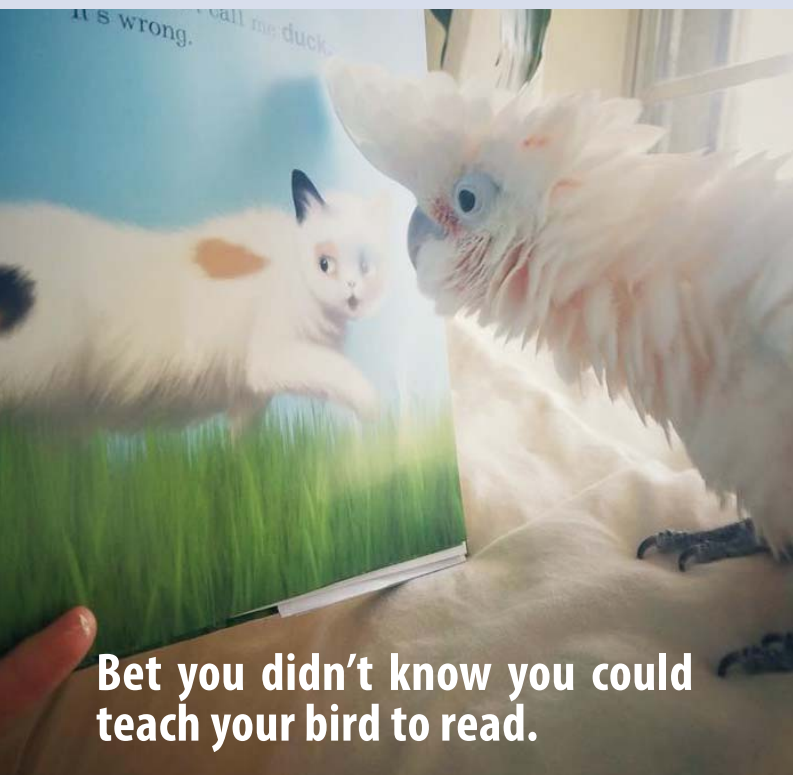
our featured bird at the 2019 AFA Conference in Orlando, and I'm personally looking forward to being able to see the free flying flocks while there. Even though it is a cross country trip for me, I feel it will be worth the extra effort involved.



I hope these pictures will give those who aren't familiar with what has happened over the years a bit of insight



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UPCOMING CONFERENCE IN ORLANDO



**Bet you didn't know you could teach your bird to read.**

**M**Meet Ellie, the goffin's cockatoo, and Jennifer Cunha. Jennifer is an attorney who formerly taught inner-city children how to read. In 2016, she began using those skills to teach her cockatoos phonics and reading skills. The results are amazing to say the least and Ellie seems to love her learning sessions. Even skeptics can't help but be impressed.



Jennifer will be discussing trust-building through allowing a bird to choose a behavior—and experience positive reinforcement—as a training mechanism. She will be demonstrating techniques for teaching parrots yes/no communication, simple vocabulary development, and the basis for phonics training.

Jennifer has been conducting research with University of Miami and her work, in conjunction with Dr. Susan Clubb, is undergoing peer-review at a scholarly journal. She has also been published in IAABC Journal and BirdTalk.



into the progress. In the 1980's the only color mutation available in this species was the Blue! From the pictures, you can see how far we have advanced from the original "wild type" Green and Greyfaced birds.... AND there are more to come that have not yet been photographed and "presented" to others!! Perhaps in Orlando!! Do join us and see!





## 2019 Conference Artist Bio



**T**ina Kotliarchuk lives in Chicago and is a mother, animal lover and lifelong bird owner. She has been painting animals since she was a child and impresses everyone with her realistic depictions. Tina's creates beautiful art on multiple mediums, including canvas, glass, leather, wood and more and has worked as a muralist and decorative painter for over 20 years.



Tina was responsible for creating the new Quaker Parakeet Society logo and AFA is delighted to help QPS celebrate its 20th anniversary this year by commissioning Tina to create the artwork for the 45th Annual Educational Conference.



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# Avicultural Contributions to a Conservation Strategy for the Red Siskin:

## DECODING THE HUSBANDRY OF A THREATENED BIRD

By Michael Fidler, *Save the Gouldian Fund*  
Jonathan Fink, *Portland State University*\*  
Gary Fitt, *CSIRO and Queensland Finch Society*



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### Introduction

Most global conservation efforts seek to protect biologically diverse habitats. While not targeted at individual species, this strategy directly benefits threatened wildlife by preserving the environments in which they thrive. A complementary approach focuses on animals that are charismatic or otherwise emblematic of the locations in which they are found. The idea here is that the plight of popular species can draw attention to the needs of their environment.

This second tactic is being used by programs that aim to restore two beautiful, endangered birds: the Gouldian Finch of northern Australia, and the Red Siskin, found in Venezuela and Guyana in northern South America. Originally depleted by unregulated wildlife trade driven by private breeders in Europe and America, the larger threat today is habitat loss.

The destructive impact of trafficking has historically damaged relationships between two groups that should share the goal of saving wildlife—aviculturists and conservationists. However, recognition is now emerging that these two

communities have much to gain by aligning. Breeders want to know more about how their birds eat, compete, court, and reproduce in the wild, in order to improve their success in rearing them. Conservation scientists and policy experts plotting strategies for reintroducing birds to restored habitats need practical information about avian husbandry, data that best comes from people who spend hours each day observing and working with the species in question.

A pair of international programs are now actively collaborating with both aviculturists and conservationists to bring these two birds back from the brink of extinction. For the past decade, the *Save the Gouldian Fund (STGF)* has tracked populations of these rainbow-hued Australian finches in the Kimberley region, gathering census data, observing behavior, and growing the birds' numbers in the wild through the construction and deployment of thousands of carefully-designed nest boxes. Much of their success has come from directly translating the lessons learned by breeders in their aviaries, effectively shifting the raising of Gouldians from an art to a science. The greatly increased numbers of Gouldians in



captivity worldwide has removed the market for wild-caught birds, essentially ending trapping. While conservationists are now directing their attention to the larger question of habitat destruction from human-caused fires and the conversion of pastoral lands to cultivation (Tidemann, 1996), aviculturists are asking how their Gouldian experience can be applied to the protection of other species. It is this latter goal that motivates our paper.

Red Siskin protection is today being led by the *Red Siskin Initiative (RSI)*, a program developed by scientists at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), Conservation Biology Institute, and National Zoo, along with collaborators in South America, in academia, in government, and in private aviculture in Australia, North America, and Europe (Arvelo et al, 2017). The two documented wild populations of the Red Siskin, in northern Venezuela and southern Guyana, face different environmental challenges, but both are subject to ongoing trafficking and habitat loss. The largest threat is the high price these birds can still fetch in the global marketplace—up to 500USD per pair.

One aim of this paper is to lay out a plan that can simplify the breeding of Red Siskins, so that the numbers of captive-raised birds can be dramatically increased, reducing and possibly eliminating the market for wild-caught stock, and thus helping to stabilize their wild populations. The conservation value of captive breeding of birds is a subject of considerable debate (e.g., Collar and Butchart, 2014), but there appears to be a growing consensus that it can be helpful in some cases (e.g., Harris et al, 2015).

Following the experience of participants in the *Save the Gouldian Fund*, we seek to “decode” the secrets of breeding siskins, deriving a three-step recipe that aviculturists can follow to assure success. This process will depend on careful observations in aviaries and in the field, and the exchange of best-practice ideas among a network of bird breeders, ornithologists and conservation scientists worldwide.

By identifying lessons learned from both the *STGF* and *RSI*, we also hope to stimulate analogous efforts with other endangered species of animals and plants, expanding the cadre of people willing to fight for the protection of nature not only because it is good for the environment but because they see it as being in their own self-interest.

## Step 1: Define the threat

In decoding the Gouldian Finch, the critically-important first step was to identify the specific threat to wild populations in order to guide recovery efforts. Prior to the *STGF* research,

several explanations were put forward, all of which turned out to be incorrect. A similar assessment is now starting for the Red Siskin.

## Threats to Gouldians

In the early 1990s, some research suggested that Gouldians were being decimated by air-sac mites, an often-fatal condition that can plague aviaries. But careful measurement of wild-caught birds showed that the influence of this pest was relatively minor.

A second explanation was that illegal trapping for the bird trade was still occurring. But the Gouldian is a free breeder, and wild-type birds have limited dollar value in aviculture. There is little incentive for domestic aviculturists to seek trapped birds. Moreover, avian import and export has effectively been stopped by Australian regulatory authorities with trapping of Gouldians banned in 1982 and trapping of all finches in Australia banned in 1987.

A third and more comprehensive suggestion was that declines in the Gouldian Finch since the 1960s was due to linked effects of a dramatically changed fire regime and excessive grazing pressure across Australia's northern savannah woodlands where Gouldians used to thrive. Evidence shows that over much of the Kimberley region of Western Australia and the “Top End” of the Northern Territory, fire has transitioned from a benign mosaic patch burning regime to an extreme pattern of extensive, repeated, and intense fires late in the dry season.

Fire is a natural part of the northern Australian landscapes and mosaic patch burning, which features a diversity of fire timing (late wet season, early- to mid- dry season) and scale, has been practiced by indigenous Australians over thousands of years. This traditional burning provided a variety of landscapes with a diversity of grasses and other vegetation. It has, in the past few decades, been replaced by a human-induced regime of repeated (almost annual), extensive (thousands of square kilometers) and intense (hot and devastating) late dry-season fires, which dramatically modify grass species composition. These new conditions tend to remove some late dry-season grasses that are critical to Gouldians. By destroying old trees with suitable nest hollows and slowing the recruitment of young trees, these intense, newer fire conditions also reduce the availability of nesting sites. Gouldians are the only obligate hole-nesting finch, and they are very particular about the kinds of hollows they will occupy.

*STGF* research focused on habitat utilization, population estimates, annual cycles of grass feeding preferences,

nutritional requirements for breeding, interspecific interactions and overall reproductive success. These studies showed that in many suitable habitats there was a real shortage of nesting hollows and considerable competition for those available. While attempts to moderate the fire regime over large areas was beyond the capacity of *STGF*, it became clear that a more practical response at a smaller scale was to provision the environment with artificial nest boxes. Field research by the *STGF* team showed that wild Gouldians would not accept the simple nest boxes used in aviaries and required a specific style of entrance tunnel (a hollow eucalyptus log of a certain diameter) linked to a darkened nest receptacle. Once these were prepared and presented, the Gouldians readily accepted and used them. Thousands of artificial nest boxes have now been installed in suitable breeding habitat in the eastern Kimberley.

This systematic evaluation showed that while moderated fire regimes over large areas are needed, the key practical conservation action for restoring Gouldian numbers in the wild was to construct and install the right kind of nest boxes. A second requirement is to ensure that aviary-bred stocks of Gouldians remain plentiful to prevent an illegal market for wild-caught birds from re-emerging. Breeding success of Gouldians in aviculture has been high for some decades through focused work of specialist breeders around the world. *STGF* captive breeding research has provided further tips and highly effective feed supplements to help guarantee strong and viable captive populations.

### Threats to Red Siskins

The Red Siskin situation has both similarities to, and differences from, that of Gouldians. Although siskins have been kept as pets for at least several hundred years, trapping and export skyrocketed in the early 1900s when European and U.S. bird fanciers learned how to crossbreed them to produce red-factor canaries (Coats and Phelps, 1985). Historical records are

incomplete, but it appears that prior to this uptick in trade, Red Siskins were common across eastern Colombia, northern Venezuela, and the island of Trinidad. It is unclear if the range of a sizable flock (1-3,000 birds) discovered in 2003 in southern Guyana by NMNH and University of Kansas researchers was originally contiguous with the more widespread birds to the west, or if they spread east more recently, either on their own or as pets (Robbins et al, 2003). *RSI* is combining modern genomic techniques with surveys of old records and museum specimens to better ascertain what the populations were across the range in the past.

Regulations are now in place in Venezuela and Guyana banning siskin exports for the pet trade but enforcement is lax. As Venezuela's economy and social structure has continued to collapse, pressure to capture and sell birds has increased. In Guyana, the birds are found in relatively unpopulated areas, so while there are few officials to prevent trapping, there are also few people to carry it out. Nonetheless, reports of illegal trafficking have recently increased.

Legal import into the U.S. and Europe has now largely stopped. So why aren't the populations in the wild going up? One possibility is that they are in fact increasing, but it has not been well documented. Another is that there is ongoing trade somewhere else. Anecdotal reports and surveys of Internet transmissions suggest that sales continue in Asia and Russia. There are also bird markets throughout South America where siskins can still be purchased. Supporting efforts by government agencies and NGOs to quantify this threat should be a priority for aviculturists. A key goal is answering the questions "Where are Red Siskins being sold?", "Who is buying them?" and "For what purpose?"

Not all threats come from trade. Just as more intense fires have reduced nest hole availability in Western Australia, land-use changes across northern South America (including those due to more and hotter fires) have been problematic for Red





Siskins. These include the encroachment of urbanization on dry tropical forests in Venezuela, and conversion of natural forests to cultivated monoculture throughout the region. Several other threats have been identified by *RSI*, including competition with other species that are spreading into siskin territory, and hybridization with other species in the wild.

Based on this assessment, the threat that can be most readily addressed by aviculturists is the high price of illegal birds in the global marketplace. By making captive breeding more successful, aviculturists in each country can greatly increase the number of siskins available in their home market, bringing down the price, eventually eliminating demand for wild-caught birds. Setting up programs to breed birds in their native countries that can later be reintroduced once their environments have stabilized is another way aviculturists can help the Red Siskin. Enlisting peer pressure through campaigns such as “Support Conservation, Not Crime” can help raise awareness among bird breeders of the damage to nature that their hobby can cause. Finally, collaborating with field biologists who observe siskins in the wild can contribute to increased captive breeding success.

## Step 2: Make breeding Red Siskins easier

We are currently working to replicate the *STGF*’s “cookbook” approach to increasing the numbers of Gouldian Finches, systematically determining what works and what doesn’t in the raising of Red Siskins. While there is a widely-held view

that there are many different paths to avicultural success, using careful record-keeping, statistics, and information exchange shows that, in fact, some methods are better than others.

Based on the *STGF* experience, we know that there are three categories of requirements that need to be understood in order to “decode” the Red Siskin and assure an increase in their numbers: (1) nutrition, (2) housing and (3) breeding. In each case, we need to conduct trials in aviaries and promote discussions among aviculturists to determine what practices work best, how they can be made most efficient, and how they can be best communicated to the largest number of breeders. The avicultural goal is reproductive success, while the conservation goal is the recovery of bird populations in their native habitat by environmental protection. An ancillary aim is the restructuring of economic incentives so local people are encouraged to take actions that protect wild birds and are dissuaded from supporting illegal trade and habitat destruction.

### Nutritional strategy

The practice of aviculture combines replicating those conditions birds need in the wild with efficiencies and compromises that make husbandry more economical and practical. While not all aspects of life in the wild are beneficial to raising finches in captivity (e.g., we don’t need to introduce predators or diseases found in nature), understanding what they eat is a critical prerequisite.



One of *STGF*'s key strategies was to get detailed nutritional analyses of the contents of crops from birds caught in the wild. To be most useful, this would need to be done for Red Siskins in each major population group (at a minimum, one collection in Venezuela and one in Guyana). Furthermore, sampling and analysis should be done at different times during the birds' life cycle (immature, mature during breeding season, mature during non-breeding season) and in different seasons when varied food supplies are available. The number of samples would need to be large enough to give confidence that all of the required information is being captured.

Once the samples have undergone traditional nutritional analyses, we would know what balance needs to be recreated. A substitute formulation could then be developed that exactly matches the birds' dietary needs at all times during the year and throughout their life cycle. This artificial mixture should appeal to birds taken from the wild but won't necessarily be readily eaten by domestically-bred birds raised on a different diet. For wild-caught birds, "cafeteria experiments" can be carried out, during which a variety of foods (different seeds, insects, vegetables, and fruits) are presented and the birds' choices are recorded. However, our experience shows that domestic-bred siskins are likely to prefer what they were raised on, whether or not this provides the best nutritional value.

A less invasive approach would be to carefully watch birds in the wild to see what foods they consume. However, this would require extremely high temporal and spatial resolution observations in order to pinpoint what the birds were actually consuming in a given location. The chances that this method could provide as detailed dietary information as crop analysis are much lower. However, any combination of the two tactics would be an improvement over our current state of ignorance about Red Siskin nutritional needs.

One other diagnostic step is to have a veterinarian examine cross sections of Red Siskin intestines to see if they have villi; these physiological features are associated in wild birds with diets rich in herb/oil seed mixtures and can help guide the development of an appropriate diet. Ideally such tests will be carried out on wild birds, as domestication may alter the structure and functioning of the birds' digestive systems.

### Habitat needs

A second category to consider, after diet, relates to a given species' physical environment in captivity. This aspect of "decoding" requires careful attention to the following questions. Do the birds do best in a mixed community, a single-species colony, or as individual pairs? How much living space does each pair require? How large a flight do they need access to? Where do they prefer to get their food—from the ground, from an elevated tray, in the open, or hidden by vegetation? Do they tend to eat and drink within a flock or in solitude? What is their tolerance for variations in temperature, sunlight, humidity, and noise? What kinds of vegetation are they attracted to? Do they need natural or simulated rainfall?

Answers to these and related questions can come from a combination of field observations and monitoring of birds in captivity. The *RSI* needs to organize a campaign to scientifically evaluate each of these variables. Defining and providing the proper housing conditions is essential for assuring the successful breeding of Red Siskins and other endangered birds in aviculture.

### Breeding requirements

The third extensive set of factors that must be mapped out is the birds' reproductive requirements. Here the questions, both environmental and behavioral, include: How can aviculturists recognize pairs that don't get along and conversely, promote compatibility? What is the minimum size cage in which they will reproduce and successfully rear young? What is the best age range for breeding, both for the health of the parents and the offspring? How can the siskins be brought to optimum breeding condition, with maximum fecundity and fertility? What environmental



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behaviors, least influenced by man-made surroundings. A coordinated communication program that apportions these questions to different aviculturists can assure that the large set of issues gets answered in the timeliest manner.

### Step 3: Reduce the threat to Red Siskins in the wild

As just discussed, Step 2 (making Red Siskin breeding easier) is most readily addressed by aviculture. Step 3 (reducing threats to birds in the wild) begins with actions taken by government agencies and non-government organizations to develop economic and political incentives that reduce illegal trafficking and habitat destruction. However, two other types of campaigns can also benefit greatly from the engagement of aviculturists: (1) decreasing the price of Red Siskins in the market by increasing their South American populations; and (2) expanding bird-friendly economic opportunities for local communities.

Generally speaking, conservation organizations, particularly global non-government organizations (NGOs) like The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, and Wildlife Conservation Society, have more resources available than the avicultural community for lobbying governments to take action to protect wild birds and their habitats, and to raise philanthropic funds. Here is where alliances can have direct benefit, because bird breeders who are members of conservation organizations can exert influence to prioritize campaigns to protect species like Gouldians and Red Siskins. Avicultural organizations like the American Federation of Aviculture can also play a helpful role. For conservation and bird-breeding NGOs, adding individuals from the other group to their membership can both expand and diversify their political bases. In a few cases, it can also provide access to new potential donors.

The second approach for protecting birds in their native habitats is to provide economic incentives for local community members. For certain charismatic species, like macaws in South America or hummingbirds in the SW United States, birdwatchers (including aviculturists) will spend large amounts of money to see them in the wild. There are numerous examples of former wildlife trappers who have become successful tour guides (e.g., M. Tweti, 2009). The ornithological tour business can be quite lucrative. Organizing tours that allow birdwatchers to see Red Siskins and other bird species in Guyana could be participated in and promoted by avicultural societies.

The Red Siskin Initiative has been developing another type of program that can benefit both the birds and people. Siskins have been shown to thrive in coffee and cacao plantations

factors, including diet, daylight regimen (seasonality), and temperature, trigger the reproductive cycle? What is the nature of the birds' courtship behavior, and what are the habitat conditions needed for it to take place? Where do they build nests in aviaries and with what materials—up high or down low; in the open or hidden by plants, other objects, or topography; with leaves, sticks, feathers, dirt, droppings? Will they use nest boxes, and if so, what type(s)? How do we recognize adults that are bad at parenting, indicated by their abandoning or killing of nestlings, and how can this be prevented or corrected? Should surrogates like Bengalese finches be used for rearing? After fledging, should juveniles be separated from their parents, or kept with adults in order to learn mating behavior, songs, and so on? Should the sexes be kept apart or together during the non-breeding season?

In answering all of these questions, working with birds more recently taken into captivity is preferable to those long domesticated, in order to determine the most natural



that are cultivated by traditional methods, which preserve the canopy and grow crops in the resulting shade. “Bird-friendly” coffee and chocolate from Venezuela are being marketed in the U.S. This approach has significant potential for building local support.

A more direct way in which aviculture can help the local economy in South American communities is through captive breeding programs to reduce the demand for wild-caught birds. Villagers taught methods to successfully raise Red Siskins would need help constructing aviaries, building nest boxes, and obtaining seed, all of which could employ local people.

## Conclusion

We have outlined a three-part program through which aviculturists can help conservation efforts to restore wild populations of the endangered Red Siskin of South America. Modeled after the Save the Gouldian Fund in Australia and building on the work of the Red Siskin Initiative led by the Smithsonian Institution, our approach would (1) start by identifying threats in the wild, then (2) use careful record-keeping and coordination to optimize siskin breeding methods, and (3) build community support in their native habitats by providing direct economic benefits. The STGF and RSI are examples of new types of alliances that bring together groups traditionally labeled as “consumers” of wildlife and “protectors” of wildlife in order to meet the common goal of restoring wild populations of endangered species by reducing demand for wild-caught individuals and providing economic incentives for local people to protect their natural resources.

*Red Siskin photos courtesy of Cheryl Mares*

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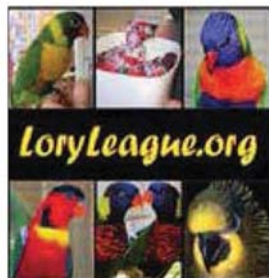
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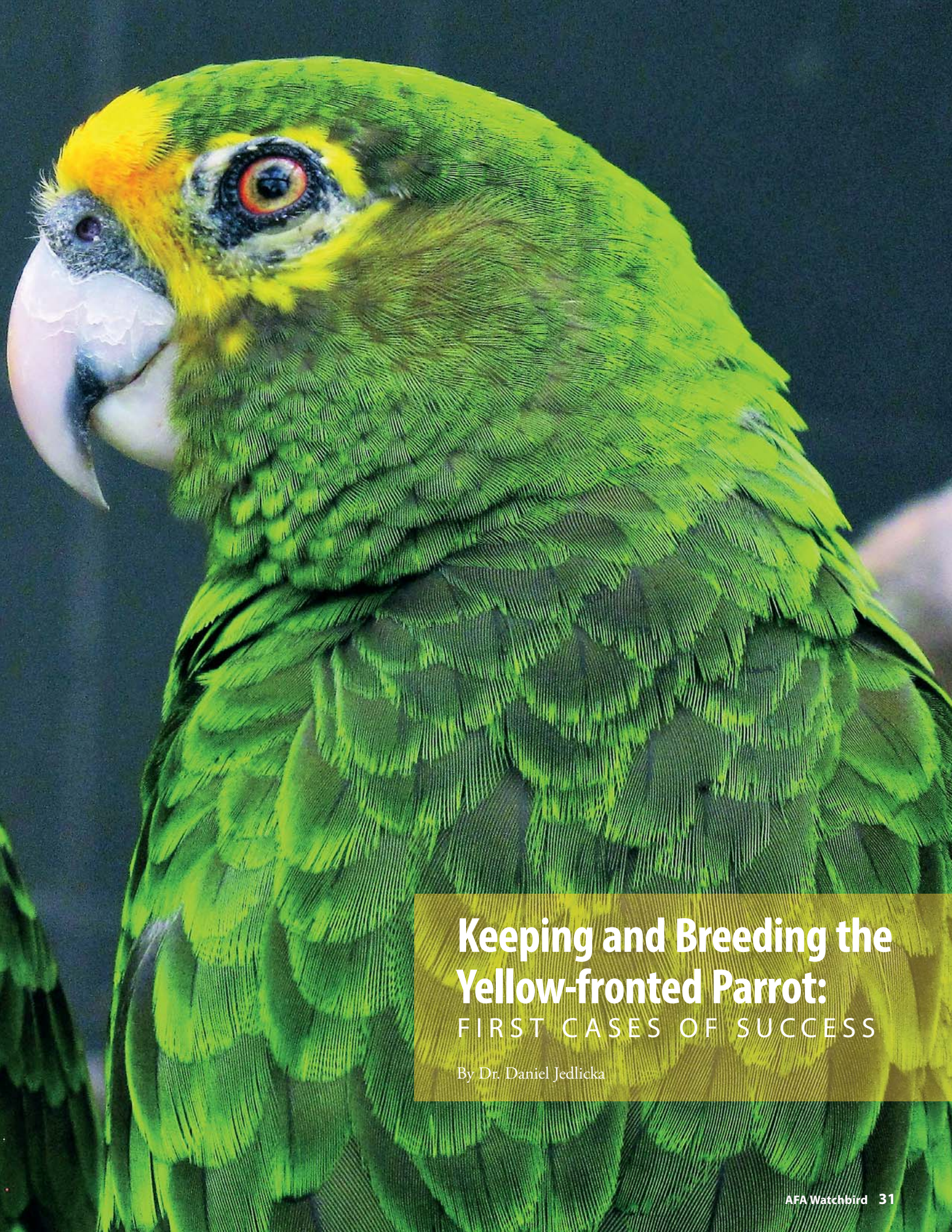
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# Keeping and Breeding the Yellow-fronted Parrot:

## FIRST CASES OF SUCCESS

By Dr. Daniel Jedlicka



The Yellow-fronted parrot is endemic in the Ethiopian Highlands and Lowlands in central and northern Ethiopia, which includes the Simien Mountains, part of which has been designated the Simien Mountains National Park. Its summit, Ras Dashan (4550 m), is the highest peak in Ethiopia.

This breed of parrot is found in lowland areas above 300 meters and up to 3200 meters in its preferred mountainous regions, living in acacia, ficus, hagenia, podocarpus, juniperus and introduced eucalyptus forests. When seen it is usually in couples or small groups. It was described in two subspecies - *P. f. flavifrons* and *P. f. auranticeps*, but nowadays it is considered as a monotypic species.

Thanks to distance and difficult accessibility of its natural habitat and the frequent tribal and cross border clashes in the region, the species is not presently threatened. But it cannot escape problems with its habitat being destroyed by deforestation, mainly by the local populations' need for fire wood.

Until recently, very little information was available about this bird in either printed publications or on the internet. The first and only photo I saw of a Yellow-fronted parrot was in the early 2000's and was of a stuffed bird exhibited at the Addis Ababa museum.

The Yellow-fronted parrot is a middle-sized parrot of about 28 cm and weighing between 120 and 205 grams. The basic colours are two shades of green - the wings and back in darker green, and the lower parts of the body in lighter green, with - as the name suggests - the front and the upper part of the head a shining yellow colour. Its colouration is the most pronounced in the genus *Poicephalus*, as shown in the photographs.

In its habitat, it feeds on different seeds, nuts and fruits, and it is sometimes spotted in the maize and the local cereal teff fields. It also searches for insects such as ant colonies in the broadened bases of acacia thorns.

Mainly in the early morning and in the evening, when it is most active and searching for food, a sharp high whistle is heard. During hot days it keeps quiet and unnoticed in the vegetation and at dusk it hides from potential predators in the densest parts of the high crowns of trees.

The care and keeping of these parrots is scarcely mentioned in any available literature, and I have found no published documentation about breeding this bird.



Male



Female

I have been keeping Yellow-fronted parrots since 2010. I keep the birds together in an aviary measuring 10 x 3 meters and 2 meters high. In the breeding period and during winter, every couple has the use of a closed nesting shed measuring 2 x 1 meters and 2 meters high, where food and fresh water is served, with access to a nesting box. The shelters are heated during winter, with the temperature not dropping below 5 degrees Celsius (41°F).

For food, the birds are served a mixture of grains, with nuts, fresh fruits and vegetables with vitamins and minerals, mainly calcium additives. Occasionally they are given fresh branches which they love to bite.





Parental Couple



Harmonious Juveniles

The birds are most active in the morning at dawn and in the evening. During this time, they clean and feed themselves, fly within the aviary, communicate noisily and make symbolic clashes. Only rarely do they make use of a bath in a bowl, but in case of rain they love to soak completely. The couples spend their days sitting and resting side by side on the perch. During the night they sleep with their heads laid down on their backs between their wings. In the mutual aviary, young birds also have an opportunity to find a partner.

I have successfully bred these parrots since 2012, with four unrelated parent couples.

Here, I will describe repeated breeding of the first couple and mention my later experience with artificial egg incubation and hand-raising of young chicks.

In November 2011, I observed the first signs of courtship in one couple - the birds pressed to each other on their perch, mutually going through their feathers, nodding on each other and sometimes running from side to side in quick steps and fluttering their partially spread wings. Later, they were feeding each other. They then began to visit the nesting box, the male first, later on the female, and began to spend more and more time together inside.

The wooden nesting boxes are vertically oriented with a base measuring 25 x 30 cm and 60 cm high, with an entry hole 9 cm in diameter. There is a side door for checking, and possibly manipulating the eggs and chicks. In the bottom there are wood shavings, and also some softwood pieces, which the birds can chew and possibly throw out the surplus. To enable a smooth entry to the bottom of the box, I inserted a stronger hardwood branch obliquely inside.

After a couple of weeks, the first mating of the couple was observed. It usually occurs early in the morning and is their first activity of the day. The male steps on the back of the crouching female and hangs his wings down alongside her

body and slides his tail under hers with vigorous rubbing of his cloaca against the female's. After a short while, he changes the side, from which he slides in his tail. The movements graduate in intensity, as does the male's peculiar grunting sound, which abruptly stops at the end. The tired male feeds the female, he steps down from her, and both birds press against each other, resting and ruffling their feathers in order and repeatedly feeding each other.

In the case of one couple, I observed an opposite role and position during mating. After 4 weeks from the beginning of mating, the female spent most of her time in the nesting box.

On January 3, 2012, I witnessed a change in the behavior and look of the female - she was very silent and shy, also untidy, with ruffled feathers. In the afternoon, I found an egg in the nesting box. Later another two eggs. The eggs



Mating Pair





were 9-9.5 grams in weight and had a diameter 31-32 x 24-25 millimeters. During incubation, the female left the nesting box only for a short while, mostly to empty herself. She was heating the eggs properly, and from time to time, checked their condition and rotated them with her tongue. The male was sitting on the perch most of the time, guarding the entry hole. When he noticed my presence, he whistled a loud warning and was very aggressive, even attacking my hand when I served the food. He entered the box regularly and fed the female. Nonetheless, the birds were copulating occasionally until the beginning of February.

On February 6, a weak peeping sound was heard from the box. The first baby was born! The following day the second chick was born. The third egg was unfortunately unfertilized. After hatching, the babies were 6 grams in weight.

The female was feeding the chicks every half hour day and night from the beginning, with the intervals between feedings being gradually prolonged. The chicks progressed without problems and on the fifteenth day, they began to open their eyes. On day 16, a closed band was placed.

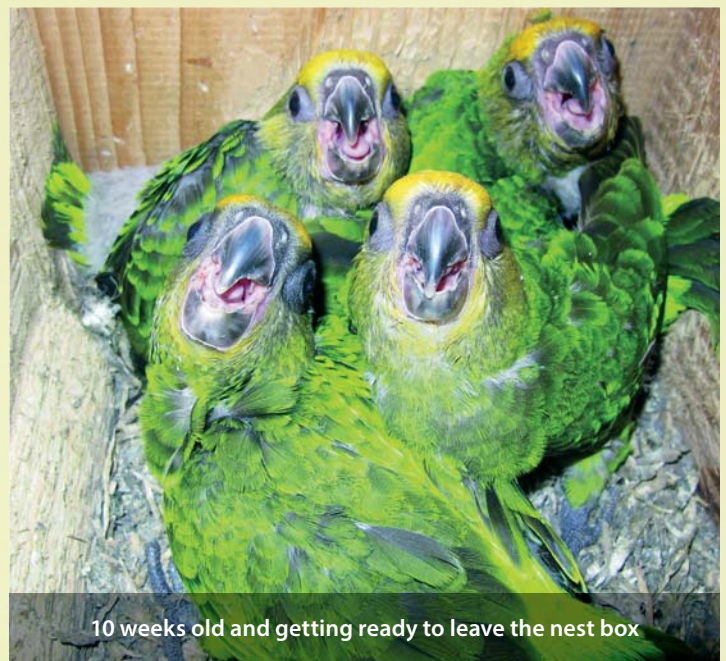
During the first month, the female spent nearly all her time in the box. Later, she began to leave the box for longer periods, returning to check and feed the offspring, and always when she was disturbed. At 8 weeks the young chicks became more active and the flapping of wings and growling inside the box was heard. After another week they began to peer out of the entrance occasionally and soon after left the box for a short periods.

Later, the excursions outside were more frequent and lasted longer. At 11 weeks, the young stayed outside the nesting box and did not return any more. The parents continued feeding them, this time both female and male. Ever more often the young began to take food by themselves, until in week 13, the feeding by the parents stopped for good. Six weeks after leaving the box the young were separated from their parents and placed into the common aviary. They quickly got used to a new environment and integrated with the rest of the birds.

From the second half of June until the end of August 2012, the parent birds were mating again. But this time no eggs were laid. The next mating was first observed on October 16,



Mom in the nestbox with 4 week old



10 weeks old and getting ready to leave the nest box



2012. Between November 24-29, 2012, the female laid 4 new eggs. All were fertilized and between December 25-29, 2012, four chicks were born. The parental care and the young birds' development were without problems again and four healthy chicks left their box at the end of March 2013.

At the time of leaving the box, the face of the young birds has a less pronounced shade of yellow and a less sharp demarcation compared to the adults. Definitive adult coloration occurs at the age of two years.

There is a strong probability of being able to visually tell the sex of the young chicks - the build and especially the head of the male being more robust with a stronger bill compared to the female. Definitive sex determination is done by DNA testing or endoscopy.

### Artificial Incubation and Hand Rearing

In the following years, I was successful in artificially incubating eggs and hand raising the chicks. The eggs were placed in an incubator soon after their brood and kept at a temperature of 37.2 degrees Celsius (99° F.) and a relative humidity of 55 - 60%, with usual regular turning. After the signs of internal pip occurred, the eggs were sited in the bottom of the incubator with slightly lower temperature and relative humidity 65-70%. Within 23 - 27 days of incubation, the external pip occurs and the chick hatches within 28 days of incubation. The hatching is very vigorous with the baby freeing itself from the shell completely in a few minutes after beginning to break through the egg shell.

During the first 12 hours, the faeces from the inner reserve of the newborn chick can be seen. When it stops, the feeding must begin. First, small amounts of not more than one or two drops of a thin formula are given every 30 minutes day and night, with a gradual increase in the quantity and thickness of the formula and increased time lapse. The next feed is never given before the chick completely empties its crop.



2 day old with full crop



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After a week, the feeding intervals are usually 3 hours with 8 hours rest during the night. After a month, the food is given 4 times a day, at 6 weeks, 3 times daily and at 8 weeks, 2 times a day.

From the age of 9 weeks, the chicks are offered a grain mixture with baby biscuits and some chopped fruits and vegetables and they learn to drink from a bowl. At 10 weeks, I only feed them in the morning, with complete fledging during the next 2 to 3 weeks. The young parrots begin to form couples in 3 years, and in 4-5 years they are able to breed. Yellow-fronted parrots are beautiful, peaceful and nice birds. I have not met any serious problems in their breeding and hope that in the future they will be kept and bred more frequently.

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6 week old baby



## Poicephalus Parrots in US Aviculture

By Sheryl Robinson

The Poicephalus genus is comprised of ten distinct species, and some sub-species of parrots. All are native to various regions of Africa, including Sub-Saharan Africa, ranging from Senegal in the west, Ethiopia in the east and South Africa in the south. The species most commonly found in US aviculture are the Senegal parrot (*P. senegalus*), Meyer's parrot (*P. meyeri*), Jardine's parrot (*P. gulielmi*) (sometimes known as the Red-fronted parrot), Red-bellied parrot (*P. rufiventris*), Brown-headed parrot (*P. cryptoxanthus*), and what are commonly referred to as Cape parrots are actually the Brown-necked parrot (*P. fuscicollis*) and a sub-species, the Grey-headed parrot (*P. fuscicollis suahelicus*), sometimes known as un-capes. The only true Cape Parrot (*P. robustus*) has been reclassified as a separate species and is not found in the US pet trade. The remaining three species, the Ruppell's parrot (*P. rueppellii*), Niam-Niam parrot (*P. crassus*) and the Yellow-fronted parrot (*P. flavifrons*) are extremely rare and not kept as pets in this country.

The Poicephalus parrots are medium in size, with stocky bodies, large heads and beaks and short tails. They are not overly noisy. They are not known for their talking ability, but they can mimic sounds and sometimes human speech. Since they are not as noisy as macaws and larger birds, they do make good apartment or condo companions. Several of the species are sexually dimorphic, where the adult males and females can be visibly identified. Some have red and orange coloration, in addition to the grey and green found on all the species. They are playful and make nice feathered companions.





Senegal (*P. senegalus*)



Meyer's (*P. meyeri*)



Jardine's (*P. gulielmi*)



Red-bellied male (*p. rufiventris*)



Brown-headed  
(*P. cryptoxanthus*)

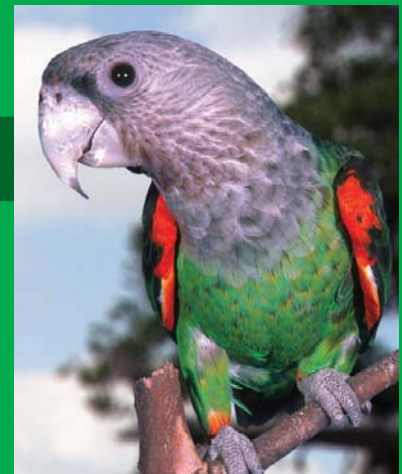


Brown-headed  
(*P. cryptoxanthus*)

Grey-headed juveniles all have orange on the head and the orange disappears on the mature male



Mature Female and Male  
*P. fuscicollis suahelicus*





## A VISIT TO Loro Parque 2018

By Mark Sargent

Every four years I look forward with much anticipation, to the International Parrot Conference, held every four years, in Tenerife, Spain. Why? Because it is like no other parrot conference you will ever experience! What's not to love - the opportunity to see so many diverse parrot species (some so rare that I had only seen them in photos previously); to meet and hear top-rated speakers with current information from all over the world; a first-class convention program and events from start to finish; and, all held on the scenic tropical island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands. This was my 9th Conference at Loro Parque – I haven't missed one since 1986. The XI International Conference on Parrots was held September 24 through 27, 2018 and boasted representatives from 47 countries.

[Loro Parque (Spanish for “parrot park”) is a 33 acre zoo on Tenerife, Spain. It houses the largest parrot collection in the world and has been instrumental in saving many endangered species of parrots from extinction. Other highlights include a dolphin show pool, the world's largest indoor penguin exhibition, as well as several orcas. Ed.]

Attendees at this year's conference, included former Loro Parque professionals, David Waugh, formerly of the Loro Parque Foundation, who is now retired, Inga Feier, who had many years of service to Loro Parque and Matthias Reinschmidt, who is now director of Karlsruher Zoo in Germany. Mr. Reinschmidt hosts several TV programs in Germany about animals and has become quite a celebrity there in addition to being an expert in his field.

Rafael Zamora of Loro Parque Foundation, gave an interesting talk about the parrot projects the Foundation







Janice Boyd, Tony Silva, Unknown, Buddy Waskey, Mark Sargent



Katy Secor, Mark Sargent, David Waugh

is doing worldwide and the positive results of those projects which have increased rare species populations and prevented many critically endangered parrot species from becoming extinct, making the case that parrot populations can be increased by proper conservation and captive breeding efforts.

Tony Silva is an American aviculturist and ornithologist as well as a former curator of birds at Loro Parque (1989-1992). Tony Silva's talk on Psittaculture focused on aviculture techniques and protocols for captive breeding parrots that included everything from simple ways to save damaged eggs, incubation techniques, common ways to avoid disease among neonates, safe egg removal from breeding birds' nestboxes (by using, of all things, a household egg whisk)! His talk was very engaging and progressive as well as positive, and encouraging. He concluded his talk by positing that Psittaculture is definitely not dead, but in fact is growing. Tony also debuted his new, voluminous book "Psittaculture" copies of which were selling briskly, (despite the fact that their weight would cause us all to have overweight baggage on our return flights home)! Tony was personally signing individual copies. There was a large delegation of attendees from India, who bought 30 copies. I'm sure the mark up on that book will be extensive in India, considering the amount of weight 30 copies would cost to check as excess baggage!

Attendees from the U.S. were Janice Boyd, Mark Sargent, Buddy Waskey, Katy Secor, Richard from PA, Jenna Duarte, Melanie Allen of HARI, and Paul Colo from San Diego Zoo, to name a few. Others from North America were Mark Hagen and Josee

Birmingham from HARI, Dave Longo and others from Canada. In all, there were representatives from 47 countries including many European countries, as well as India, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Singapore.

The Conference Center distributed head sets to attendees, so that lecturers could be understood by all thanks to the use of translation. The talks began at 8:30am and concluded at 2:00pm punctuated by two coffee breaks where attendees could have light refreshments and have an opportunity to connect, network and make acquaintances with parrot aficionados from all over the globe.

When the daily sessions ended, many took advantage of the free afternoon time to visit Loro Parque. One of the most popular exhibits was a very spacious walk thru vertical aviary populated with free flying parrots from lories to Palm Cockatoos. Also, Mr. Keissling took the opportunity during the conference to unveil the newest exhibit at the Parque for Pigmy Hippos.



Female Eclectus aka the Sneaker Stalker in the Walk Thru Aviary





Other highlights of the conference included dinner at the historic colonial town of La Orotava in Tenerife, which consisted of open-air dining with the backdrop of many historic Spanish buildings. In addition to sumptuous local Canarian meals, we were treated to traditional Canarian folk songs and dancing that included the participation of many who were in attendance.

The following evening, attendees were bussed to Santa Cruz, on the eastern end of Tenerife, for dinner and a night of entertainment at the very architecturally “over the top” modern Cultural Arts Center. Rosemary Low received the prestigious Gorilla Award for 2017 at this wonderful evening. [This is the 15th year that Loro Parque has awarded the “Premio Gorila” to recognize environmental responsibility and promotion of sustainable use of resources. Ed.] After the awards dinner, the evening entertainment consisted of live performances of three very talented tenors whose repertoire imitated the performances of the famous Pavarotti and the three tenors. Some in the group were personally serenaded by these performers who got us all engaged in singing along.

The most popular highlight of the conference is the tour of the Loro Parque Foundation’s Breeding Center at La Vera. This is the holy grail of parrot breeding facilities where many rare species are bred, such as Lear’s Macaws, Red-tailed Amazons, Blue-throated Macaws, Blue-headed Macaws and other rare parrots. Many are being bred communally in spacious breeding aviaries. Definitely a “must” on any psittaculturalist’s agenda. Everyone laments when the tour is over that they could have spent many more hours there, just taking in the rare species.



Maximilian Pionus pair



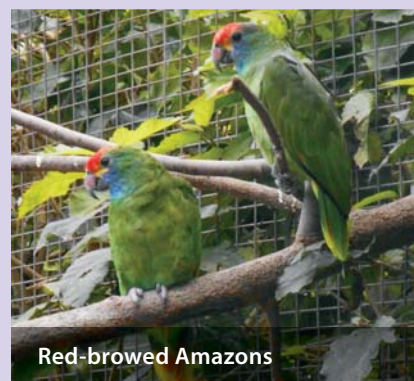
Mark with Rosemary Low



Purple-bellied Parrot



Bronze-wing Pionus pair



Red-browed Amazons



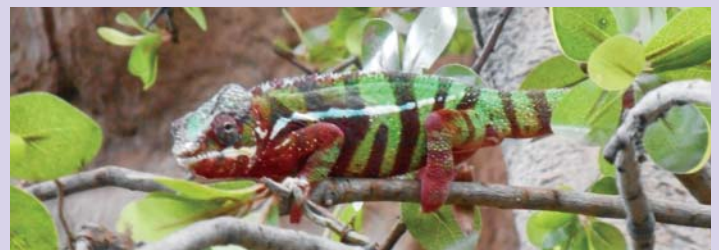


The conference culminates on the evening of the final day with a wonderful open-air banquet on the grounds of the beautiful five-star rated Hotel Botanico. Wolfgang Keissling, owner of Loro Parque, concludes the conference with his closing remarks highlighting the future of the Loro Parque Foundation and its commitment to the future of parrots both in captivity and the wild. Mr. Keissling's son, Christoph, announced the awards for best conference speakers based on votes by the attendees. First place winner was American, Tony Silva. Tony gave a very uplifting talk on how Psittaculture is growing the role that private aviculturists have played and are continuing to play in saving and producing many parrot species that have become benchmarks for others trying to propagate and save parrots. Second place was Rafael Zamora, from Loro Parque Foundation, who gave a very positive talk on the foundations work to save endangered parrots

The day after the official conference end, attendees were invited to take an excursion to the neighboring Island, Gran Canaria, for an exclusive tour of Loro Parque's newest

exhibit "Poema del Mar" (Poem of the Sea) which is an awe-inspiring new aquarium focusing on the conservation of ocean life. We boarded a very large ferry for the one and a half hour cruise from Tenerife to Gran Canaria. The ferry had all the modern conveniences, including a bistro that served everything from light snacks and beverages to sandwiches and luncheon selections. The cruise offered spectacular views of the islands, especially when departing and entering ports. However, yours truly caught up on his much-needed sleep during the majority of the trip in the comfortable reclining seats on board, which made the crossings seem like mere minutes!

Christoph Keissling met us at the aquarium and personally gave us a unique tour. The aquarium has only been open for eight months and the trees and other plantings in the large open area conservatory are still just starting to grow. The exhibits include fish, crocodiles, lizards, hermit crabs and even a rescue area for sea turtles to recover. The aquarium tells the story of why the ocean is important and how it affects all of life on earth. Conference attendees were





treated to lunch in the aquarium's beautiful restaurant that boasts fine cuisine surrounded by amazing contemporary sea artwork.

One of my most enjoyable experiences was being able to re-connect with so many parrot enthusiasts that I have met from around the world at this conference over the years. It is very gratifying to know so many people share the same interest in parrots and are continually engaged, fascinated and care deeply about parrots and their future.

In all, the conference was a marvelous experience like no other. Anyone who has attended one of the International Parrot Conferences at Loro Parque will tell you it's definitely a "kid in the candy shop" event that can't be described by mere words.

If you missed the conference this year, mark your calendars for four years from now in September 2022 to experience this incredible event first-hand. I know I'm already making my plans and hope you will too so you can join me there. If my descriptions of this event haven't yet convinced you to visit, here are some pictures of the highlights that may do the trick!





# The collection at Loro Parque gives new meaning to the word rare. Can you identify any of these very rare parrots?

Some of the rarest of the rare captured by Mark Sargent on his trip to Loro Parque. Answers are on the next page.





# Identification of Loro Parque Rare Residents

**1. The Kea** (*Nestor notabilis*) is a large parrot at 19" long and weighing between 1.8 lbs. and 2.2 lbs. It is unusual in that it is the only true alpine parrot. Found in alpine and forested regions of the South Island of New Zealand, they are considered one of the most intelligent bird species. They have been observed both preparing and using tools and will work together to achieve objectives. The kea is both playful and curious as well as being attracted to humans and has been known to entertain onlookers by chewing on shoes, camera straps and vehicles! The kea was voted the New Zealand bird of the year in 2017. The kea is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

**2. The Purple-bellied Parrot** (*Triciana malachitacea*) is native to the humid Atlantic Forest of southeastern Brazil. It is a monotypic genus which refers to a case where a genus has only a single species. They are not related to, nor resemble any other species of parrot. The male is identifiable by the purple/blue patch in the center of the abdomen while the female is all green. The birds are considered difficult to maintain in captivity. This parrot is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

**3. The Red-browed amazon** (*Amazona rhodocorytha*) is found in tropical forests in eastern Brazil. Originally considered a subspecies of the Blue-cheeked amazon, today it is regarded as a separate species. This parrot is listed on Appendix I of CITES.

**4. Yellow-faced parrot** (*Alipiopsitta xanthops*) is yet another example of monotypic genus. Formerly known as the Yellow-faced amazon, this bird was classified in the genus Amazona for many years. This parrot is found in central and eastern Brazil and is only about 11" in length with a stocky body and short tail. There is no sexual dimorphism. The Yellow-faced parrot is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

**5. Pesquet's parrot** (*Psitttrichas fulgidas*) is a monotypic genus and is also known as the Vulturine Parrot because of its resemblance to a vulture. This parrot is about 18" long and weighs between 21 and 28 ounces and is found only on the island of New Guinea where its diet consists mostly of figs. Pesquet's parrot is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

**6. The Red-tailed parrot** (*Amazona brasiliensis*) lives in the coastal forests, woodlands and mangroves in southeast Brazil. Weighing slightly less than a pound and about 14" long, this amazon gets its name from the broad red band on its tail. These amazons are vital to seed dispersal in that during migration between the mainland and coastal islands, they disperse seeds via their droppings thus helping to create and maintain biodiversity. The Red-tailed parrot is listed as Appendix 1 under Cites.



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# NEW PROPOSED FEDERAL RULE IS **Big Win for Recovery of Golden conures**

By Christina Martin



Thanks to a lawsuit filed by the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) this month issued a proposed rule to remove outdated and counterproductive regulations that hurt golden conure conservation efforts by creating unnecessary red tape for U.S. bird breeders.<sup>1</sup>

The federal government classified the golden conure (also known as the golden parakeet or Queen of Bavaria) as endangered in the mid-1970s. At one time, experts estimated there were only 1,000 to 2,500 golden conures left in the wild. Today, experts estimate there are between 10,000 and 20,000.

With the newly proposed rule, the federal government has acknowledged that the golden conure's status has improved, and that it should be reclassified as only "threatened." One reason for that improved status is that golden conures are less likely to be trapped in their native Brazil habitat, because breeders of captive populations have depressed incentives for smugglers by providing legal and affordable options for bird collectors.

In other words, private breeders are helping conserve the bird.

Because of the bird's improved status, AFA filed a petition to delist the golden conure in August 2014. AFA also asked that the government alternatively reclassify the species from "endangered" to "threatened," which would remove restrictions on trading captive populations of the bird. Current regulations restrict U.S. breeders' ability to trade their birds, thus making it difficult to maintain a healthy, genetically diverse population. Without the red tape, breeders would have larger, healthier flocks, which would further help conservation efforts.

On April 10, 2015, the FWS issued a tardy acknowledgement that delisting or downlisting and removing these counterproductive regulations might be warranted. That decision triggered a 12-month deadline, which passed two years ago, with no action from the government.

Frustrated by the federal agency's stalling, AFA sought the help of the Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF), a nonprofit, public interest law firm. Last year AFA (with free legal help from PLF) sued the FWS and the Department of the Interior to push them to follow the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and conduct a legally required 12-month finding. We believed this would result in a better outcome for the bird and for breeders. The federal government responded by settling the lawsuit and agreeing to complete the 12-month review by September of this year. On September 5, 2018, the government delivered on its promise.

The government's finding proposes reclassifying the species and removing the counterproductive permit requirements. We will continue to monitor the FWS to make sure it meets its legal requirements going forward. We are optimistic that the government will ultimately act in the best interest of the golden conure and give private breeders the flexibility they need to allow this bird population to flourish.

*Christina Martin is an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation and represented AFA in the lawsuit that resulted in the proposed rule change for the golden conures.*

[Special thanks to Dr. Janice Boyd for her efforts in identifying this species as one that needed to be downlisted and for her well researched and well written petition presented to FWS by AFA. -Ed.]

<sup>1</sup> The FWS, along with the National Marine Fisheries Service, administers the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended. ESA was enacted for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats in which they are found. Decisions on listing or de-listing a species is determined based on its level of endangerment in its native habitat, but the regulations imposed by inclusion on the ESA endangered species list, impact trade and ownership of captive-bred parrots in the US. -Ed.



# Ex-situ & In-situ Conservation AT LORO PARQUE FUNDACIÓN

Rafael Zamora Padrón  
Scientific Director of Loro Parque Fundación

Throughout the year, **500 parrots** of a wide variety of species have been ringed at Loro Parque Fundación. This explosion of life allows our technical team to obtain high-value data. Biologists, veterinarians and caregivers face a variety of challenges in which they have to implement different methods according to the nature of each species, couple or individual. The age, for instance, predetermines their behaviour, but also the environment which surrounds them shows us the route to follow.

The lilac-crowned parrots (*Amazona finschi*) are having a fruitful breeding season. However, this species does not procreate constantly as one might expect. Thus, we are even more pleased to see the chicks growing well. The red-tailed amazon (*Amazona brasiliensis*) does not reproduce constantly either, whose breeding results are often sporadic. This species is considered rather complicate when it comes to reproducing in controlled environment. Our efforts to get them stimulated are being successful, the chicks are hatching from their eggs and some of them are being cared by adoptive parents.

No less important, is the offspring of the Jamaican amazons (*Amazona collaria*). Due to their insular character, they require a specific management by hands of experts who are able to find the key to their needs.

The offspring of cockatoos, lorries and lorikeets are already in the independence phase in which they are feeding themselves. For this purpose and to become stronger, the parents leave their chicks forage food. This is a crucial stage for the young parrots. If the offspring is reared by their parents, the caretaker must keep an eye on them

and separate them from their parents at an appropriate time. When hand reared, the caretakers stand firm and leave the chicks feed by themselves disregarding their



Clockwise from left: Lilac-crowned parrots (*Amazona finschi*) at the Baby Station of Animal Embassy at Loro Parque. Couple of red-tailed amazon in the breeding station of Loro Parque Fundación. Adult Jamaican amazon (*Amazona collaria*) at Loro Parque Fundación. Photos: R. Zamora/LPF





begging. As little kids, they want to get fed with minimum effort, but in order to grow healthy, they need to learn to feed themselves. It is also beneficial for the birds to change the type of food and to become independent in a healthy way.

The good developing progress of the red-bellied macaw offspring (*Orthopsittaca manilatus*) is also worth of mention. The team of our curator, Marcia Weinzettl, is taking advantage of the synchrony between this species and the blue-headed macaw (*Primolius couloni*) since latter one is playing an excellent role as adoptive parents by taking care of the offspring.

At the same time, we collaborate with our in situ conservation team providing them important data of the breeding station. This information is required to protect the species in their natural environment. This is important data, such as when exactly its incubation takes place in order to check its nests in the middle of the jungle. If we inspect them too early, we will jeopardize the number of surviving offspring.

Likewise, the average weights of males, females and chicks of each species are featured in our database that include wide sample ranges, collected over more than 40 years. This information makes it possible to establish comparisons and decide on the correct conservation actions to save the species and their environment. Such as the successful recent release of the 6 military macaws.



**Clockwise from top: Red-bellied macaw chick (*Orthopsittaca manilatus*) raised by blue-headed macaw (*Primolius couloni*). Photo: L. Tomiska/LPF**

**Cockatoo chick rescued in the Philippines (*Cacatua haematuropygia*). Photo: Katala Foundation**

**Growth control in red macaws in Guatemala. Project supported by LPF. Photo: WCS**

**The great green macaws of Guayaquil (*Ara ambiguus guayaquilensis*) born in controlled media and released in Ecuador thanks to the support of Loro Parque Fundación and the work of Fundación Jocotoco. Photo: F. Jocotoco**





32-days-old chick of  
*Ara chloroptera*.  
Photo: R. Zamora/LPF

## Breeding of Macaws AT LORO PARQUE FUNDACIÓN

Rafael Zamora Padrón  
Scientific Director of Loro Parque Fundación

Most species start their breeding season at the beginning of the year. This is the case of the Ara group, which include the macaws that usually start a little later, laying their eggs about June or July. This stage has started this time even earlier. Many couples have begun incubation since April. Species like the red and green macaw (*Ara chloropterus*) already had offspring. Most of the eggs are fertile. In order to help the parents to raise more effectively a minimum of two chicks, we moved some newborns to the hand-rearing station. This option always increases the possibilities of a good development. Especially now, when the team of the curator Marcia Weinzettl is achieving a similar breeding success in hand and parent rearing. Proof of her experience with the handling of American parrots' species is the vigorous specimens and how early they become independent.

The offspring of the blue-throated macaws is also hatching. At the same time, the "Macheteros Dance" is taken place in Beni, Bolivia, where this active species is native to and where the famous "macheteros" are using now headdress of artificial feathers instead of natural ones as in the past.



Young birds of the previous breeding season reared by parents and by hand. Photo: L. Tomiska/LPF

The national NGO "Aves Bolivianas" together with Loro Parque Fundación are leading a major cultural campaign in the native range of the species in Bolivia, sensitizing locals to get engaged in a large scale conservation project of the parrots through traditions. Right now it is the chiefs of the indigenous groups themselves who instruct their disciples in the creation of headdresses with alternative plumages. An initiative that they learned many years ago when Loro Parque Fundación supported awareness-raising actions to protect this endangered macaw.





Nowadays there are contests, where the artificial feathers that save macaws, are the great protagonists thanks to Loro Parque Fundación.

Photo: Aves Bolivianas / LPF

This is a clear example of a successful ex-situ and in-situ conservation combination. The bird reserve in controlling environment guarantees also the continuity of the wild reserve in case of possible hazards in nature. At the same time, a large amount of data related to the species is obtained. On the other hand, conservation, dissemination and education actions are carried out in the home region. The sum of it all, is what saves the species from extinction.

Inside Loro Parque, life arises as well. The huge aviary "Katandra Treetops" is home to a multitude of Australasian parrots. Among them, other species are also in breeding stage. This is the case of the masked lapwing (*Vanellus miles*), which is taking care of their small offspring that runs in all directions followed by its protective parents. The interaction of the loros with this species is certainly interesting since they make a constant and very striking defence of the territory. It is easy to see the masked lapwings unfolding their wings and tail, to keep safe their nest, which is located on the ground, needing camouflage for their offspring to thrive. Visitors can see them now growing vigorously.



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Chick of blue-throated macaw  
(*Ara glaucogularis*)

## Traditions Helping to Save Macaws in Bolivia

Rafael Zamora Padrón  
Scientific Director of Loro Parque Fundación

The Beni festivities have taken place in Trinidad, where headdresses and sombreros feature strongly in the local celebrations.

The presence of Loro Parque Fundación has been decisive, as it stressed the importance of using artificial feathers on these headdresses so as not to harm the local wildlife. Loro Parque Fundación's appearance at all the most important celebrations of the year for the inhabitants of Trinidad, Bolivia, the habitat of the Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*), has been welcomed by the community, and the Illustrious Town-Hall has given strong support to the work through Aves Bolivianas, the local partner, which is enthusiastically putting the project into effect. The new cultural interpretation centre in the town was host to several events, while at the Beniano Fine Arts Institute a huge variety of headdresses were displayed with an educational exhibition informing about the benefits of this project for the Bolivian macaws through which thousands of birds have been saved.



Mauricio Herrera of "Aves Bolivianas" during one of the interviews with the press explaining the work of the Loro Parque Fundación in protecting the blue-throated macaw.



Representation of the machete-makers' festival in the centre of Fine Arts





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## AFA VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

State coordinators are needed for several states. Responsibilities include recruiting new members, representing AFA at fairs/shows, recruiting bird clubs to affiliate, reviewing pending state legislation and regulations as they arise and serving as a link to club delegates in your state.

**Florida Region:** Virgin Islands. Contact Terri Timberlake at [FloridaDirector@afabirds.org](mailto:FloridaDirector@afabirds.org).

**North Central Region:** Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska. Contact Karen Anderson at [NorthCentralDirector@afabirds.org](mailto:NorthCentralDirector@afabirds.org).

**Northern California and Hawaii Region:** Hawaii. Contact Linda Nichelmann at [NCaliforniaDirector@afabirds.org](mailto:NCaliforniaDirector@afabirds.org).

**Northwestern Region:** Alaska and Idaho. Contact Julie Corwin at [NorthWesternDirector@afabirds.org](mailto:NorthWesternDirector@afabirds.org).

**Southeastern Region:** Alabama, Kentucky and Mississippi. Contact April Blazich at [SouthEastDirector@afabirds.org](mailto:SouthEastDirector@afabirds.org).

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