

American Bird Conservancy and World Parrot Trust Team Up For Parrots

The World Parrot Trust (WPT) and American Bird Conservancy (ABC) have teamed up to raise funds for on-the-ground conservation programs for parrots in the Americas, and you can help by sending a contribution.

ABC's Small Grants Program has, over the years, supported dozens of projects relating to the conservation of parrots, but given the critical situation now facing some of the most threatened, ABC teamed up with WPT and launched a special program to address their conservation needs last year.

One of the main conservation problems in the tropics is that of increasing human exploitation. Much of this is being carried out by peasant communities trying to make a living through slash and burn and subsistence farming. Few such communities can afford the luxury of treating parrots as anything other than a commodity to be sold, or as food.

The most successful conservation efforts have focused on parrots as unique symbols of local pride, on developing birding tourism, establishing well-managed reserves and parks, intensive captive-breeding efforts, and on the control of poaching for the illegal wildlife trade. The joint ABC/WPT program was established to support these efforts.

Last summer, a call for proposals accompanied by a list of priority species was circulated, and a number of extremely high-quality project proposals were received. Thanks to a generous gift from the Barbara Delano Foundation, ABC and WPT were able to support 13 projects in 10 countries this year.

One exciting early result was the confirmation of a breeding population of Yellow-eared Parrots at a site in the Colombian Andes: The Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund recently provided a major grant to enhance conservation action at three of the project sites, and the Kaytee Avian Foundation and World Parks Endowment are also con-

tributing significantly. ABC and WPT extend a heartfelt thanks on behalf of the threatened parrots of the Americas to these generous supporters.

If you would like to make a donation, contact:

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ABC and the World Parrot Trust continue to work together to conserve the parrots of the Americas, and ABC also runs the Conservation Counterparts program previously reported in *Watchbird* which links North American groups with Latin American and Caribbean projects, some of which also help parrots. Here, Mike Parr, Co-author with Tony Juniper of the book *Parrots* takes a look at some of the current conservation priorities for parrots in the Americas.

Parrot Conservation Priorities in the Americas

One hundred and forty-four parrot species occur in the western Hemisphere, and close to one-third of these are on the threatened list. Among the many conservation priorities, a few habitats and groups of species stand out as being of special importance.

Some of the most endangered species occur in the Atlantic coastal forests of Brazil. These forests occupy one of the most densely populated areas in the world, and have been reduced to a tiny proportion of their original extent. Red-tailed, and Red-browed Amazons, and Golden-tailed Parrotlets are among the species of most concern here. The Red-spectacled and Vinaceous Amazons which occur further to the south and west of the main coastal forest zone are also extremely vulnerable to further habitat loss. The few protected areas in the region must be maintained to safeguard these, and many other threatened residents such as the Golden Lion-Tamarin.

Another South American habitat that has been extensively altered is the mid-montane forest belt of the Colombian Andes. The area provides the best prospect for conserving remaining populations of the endangered Yellow-eared, Fuerte's, Red-faced, and Rusty-faced Parrots. A beneficial byproduct will be the protection of large stands of Colombia's national tree, the wax palm, another endangered species.

In northwest Mexico, the Thick-billed Parrot is in serious jeopardy because forests across most of its range are logged every 12 years, not allowing the trees to mature sufficiently to form nest cavities for the birds. A series of alliances between conservation groups and indigenous communities may now be the best hope for the species.

The blue macaws of Brazil have suffered too, primarily through poaching for the wildlife trade. Spix's is now down to one wild bird, Lear's to less than a hundred, and Hyacinth to a few thousand. Strict wardening and increased vigilance amongst international wildlife trade enforcement officials will be essential to protect these birds from further losses.

Throughout the Caribbean, island-dwelling parrots have also been hit hard by habitat loss. Although these birds may be adapted to survive natural hurricane damage, human development has reduced the amount of habitat to a point where a series of massive storms could seriously threaten species such as the Black-billed and Yellow-billed Amazons of Jamaica, and the Hispaniolan Conure.

Efforts to increase parrot habitat in agricultural areas, and to lessen conflicts with farmers may hold the key to improving the prospects for some island species such as the Imperial and Red-necked Amazons of Dominica, though.

Again, to make a donation or for more information please contact:

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Tell him you got his name from the
AFA Watchbird. 