

## Tony Juniper launches Spix's Macaw book at 5th International Parrot Convention

World-renowned parrot expert, and discoverer in 1990 of the last remaining wild Spix's macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* in Brazil, Tony Juniper chose the 5th International Parrot Convention, hosted by the Loro Parque Fundación in Tenerife, Spain, to launch his new book *Spix's Macaw – The Race to Save the World's Rarest Bird*.

Held between the 18th and 21st September 2002, the Convention attracted 850 delegates to hear Tony Juniper, an eloquent writer and speaker, deliver a panoramic speech which reflected the passion and erudition of his book. This is a book not to be missed by anybody who loves parrots and all those who care about the environment and conservation. Within its pages, Tony meticulously details the travails of this species, and the Herculean efforts required for its recovery and restoration to the wild state; something that can now only be achieved by effective repatriation of birds in captivity, of which there are little more than 60.

Declared Extinct in the Wild in December 2000, the single male Spix's macaw was found by Tony and Carlos Yamashita in their Birdlife International (formerly the ICBP) -sponsored expedition a decade earlier. This macaw is a habitat specialist, being adapted to exist in gallery woodland, especially with caraiba (*Tabebuia caraiba*) trees found alongside the seasonal creeks in the dry caatinga of north-east Brazil. This habitat has suffered catastrophic reduction through large-

scale clearance for land-conversion, and sustained over-grazing by livestock. Only about 30 km<sup>2</sup> of the gallery woodland remain in three fragments. On top of this pressure, the final descent to extinction of this species was due to intensive trapping pressure for illegal internal and international trade.

### Loro Parque Fundación funding prepares the ground for reintroduction

In 1990 the Permanent Committee for the Recovery of the Spix's Macaw (CPRAA) was established, overseen by the Brazilian Government Institute for Environment and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA), and with the Loro Parque Fundación as a founder member. During ten years until the disappearance of the last wild bird, the CPRAA sustained multidisciplinary field and captive conservation programmes. The Birdlife International discovery expedition cost approximately US\$8,000, of which 40% was contributed by the World Parrot Trust, and since that event the Loro Parque Fundación, as principal donor, has invested US\$590,200 into the key activities of the field programme, as well as being a participant in the captive breeding programme. Over the same period to date the captive population has grown from 11 to more than 60 birds. Although this species can now only be restored by reintroduction of birds from captivity, the field programme has resulted in the creation of much improved conditions for this to be successful. In particular

the programme has developed strong participation by the local community of Curaçá, not just in protecting the wild male, but also in habitat protection and restoration, and improving patterns of livestock grazing. Although a female Spix's macaw released in 1995 to join the male subsequently disappeared, the later reintroduction of a group of *P. maracana* to the area as a pilot attempt was successful. During the same period, various innovative techniques for nest manipulation met with similar success. Thus, the cumulative total of activities has prepared the ground for the eventual recovery of this species to the wild state. The usefulness of the CPRAA has now run its course, and future conservation actions will take place under a different structure, but with the Loro Parque Fundación continuing to provide funding, and avicultural, veterinary and biological expertise.

Tony Juniper is the Policy and Campaigns Director of Friends of the Earth, UK, and also author of "Parrots: A Guide to the Parrots of the World". His new book on the Spix's macaw is ISBN 1-84115-650-7.

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