

# The Conservation Corner

By Janice Boyd, PhD  
AFA Conservation and Research Committee

## The AFA Conservation and Research Grants Program Restarts!

If you recall from an earlier edition of the Conservation Corner, AFA's Avian Research Committee through its Conservation and Research Grants Program provided financial support to 65 avian research projects between the years 1982-1993. This worthy endeavor then remained mostly dormant until this year, when the program was restarted with an agreement with Loro Parque Fundación (LPF) for a joint grant with them in 2006 for an avian conservation project that in some way employed avicultural techniques or contributed to the development of avicultural techniques. Because of Loro Parque's concentration on psittacines, only parrot-related projects were to be considered. Both organizations advertised the joint grant in late summer – early fall of 2005. Unfortunately, aside from putting the announcement on the AFA website, not much was done to advertise our restarting of the program because of the visit of a nasty lady named Katrina. During the period we had planned to advertise and promote our joint grant, yours truly was recovering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina – in fact, one of my last emails before I evacuated was to confirm AFA's agreement to participate in the joint grant program with David Waugh of Loro Parque Fundación and to tell him I would be “indisposed” for a few weeks – as indeed I was!

In spite of my Katrina-related inability to do much publicity for the AFA arm of this grant, we still received 6 proposals, several of which were extremely good. But, sadly, funds were available to support only one. Our Conservation Grants Evaluation Committee ranked the projects, the projects

and rankings were reviewed at the October Board meeting and approved, and our ranking was sent to David Waugh at Loro Parque Fundación. The project approved for a \$5,000 grant (half from each of the organizations) was entitled, “Breeding the Red-browed Amazon *Amazona rhodocorytha* for future in-situ conservation” by Principal Investigator Louri Klemann, Jr, of the Brazilian conservation organization Idéia Ambiental.

A little bit about the Red-browed Amazon (*Amazona rhodocorytha*): it is a fairly large Amazon, primarily Amazon green, with a red crown, blue cheeks, orange on the lores, and a red speculum. It is a highly endangered (CITES Appendix I) native of the humid Brazilian Atlantic Rainforest. Unfortunately, 92% of the Atlantic Rainforest has been destroyed since European colonization, and species of this habitat such as the similar Red-tailed Amazon and the Red-browed Amazon are critically endangered. Nowadays, the species is found in the southeast of Brazil from Bahia, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro states, but seems to be extinct since about 1985 in Alagoas state, where the last forests were cleared in the 1980's. In 1999 the population was estimated to be only about 845 birds. The greatest threats to the species are habitat destruction and poaching. In particular, the species does not seem to be able to adapt to conditions created by even partial deforestation. Fortunately some populations do reside in several protected parks and reserves.

The objective of the Brazilian project is to establish a scientific research breeding center for the Red-browed Amazon at the Curitiba Zoo in Paraná state, Brazil. Breeding facilities will be constructed for seven pairs of birds, to be obtained through IBAMA (Brazilian equivalent of US F&WS) from birds confiscated from poachers that are deemed not suitable for repatriation to the wild. This project complements another field study project on the Red-browed

Amazon being conducted by the same research group ("Investigation into the wild status of the Red-browed amazon *Amazona rhodocorytha* in Espirito Santo State, Brazil") being funded by the German-based Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP). The Curitiba Zoo already has a facility for the endangered Red-tailed Amazon, *A. braziliensis*.

The Red-browed Amazon has not been an easy bird to breed in captivity, but recently Loro Parque Fundación has developed a successful set of procedures for bringing the birds into breeding condition and getting them to lay fertile eggs. Additional research is being pursued to determine what conditions are necessary to have the pairs raise their own young. The work LPF has done is described in the accompanying article by Matthias Reinschmidt and David Waugh of LPF on "Successful Breeding of the Red-browed Amazon (*Amazona rhodocorytha*)." They will be advising Louri Klemann's group on how to properly set up the breeding center.

We often say, "Aviculture is conservation, too." Well, in this joint project AFA and LPF are demonstrating that that statement can indeed be true. I am looking forward to being able to report successes for this project in future years.

You will be hearing more about AFA's Conservation and Research Grants program in the future. We in AFA can make a difference for birds if we work together to make it so. That includes being willing to contribute money towards the grants, and being willing to work on identifying worthwhile projects and evaluating and ranking them. I hope individuals and clubs will respond generously when we again put out a call for support to the AFA Conservation and Research Grants program. ■

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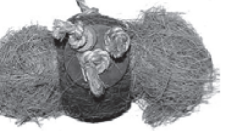


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