

The World Parrot Trust

by Rosemary Low, Editor, World Parrot Trust, Canary Islands, Tenerife, Spain

Conservation organisations and environment-related charities began to emerge as a strong force in the decade of the '80s. Now we are in the '90s and the impact that they can make on conservation issues is widely felt throughout the world, but especially in the tropics where many issues are a matter of great urgency. If an area of rainforest is not saved this year, ten, twenty or thirty species could be irrevocably lost to extinction next year. Unfortunately, this is a scenario which is repeating itself in countless areas of the globe.

Throughout the world, bird populations act like an environmental barometer, often giving an early warning to the fact that man is damaging the environment to an unacceptable degree, and that some action must be taken to reverse the damage, whether it is due to pollution, destruction of habitat or hunting and harvesting of wildlife. Gone are the days when protection of the environment was seen as an activity for groups with an interest in saving a certain species of bird or animal. Now it is recognised that it is the survival of the human race which is also at stake. And with this recognition also comes the awareness that every one of us has a voice which can be heard and which *can* influence environmental issues.

This is especially the case now that individuals can channel their interest and enthusiasm through one of the many conservation organisations. Some of these are broadly based, such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund) and Friends of the Earth, while others concentrate on issues concerning particular groups of animals. One of these is the World Parrot Trust. Formed as recently as October 1989, it has a list of sound achievements in this short space of time, which given its necessarily limited starting budget, could make some of the long established conservation organisations re-examine some of their own policies. For example, the WPT does not believe in hoarding income.

Recognising the urgency in revers-



ing the critical state of so many members of the parrot family, it set to work from the start to be effective – quickly. With a membership now approaching 2000 worldwide, and with no help from the private sector and industry, it has raised and expended £140,000 (\$250,000) in its first 24 months. Much of the administrative costs, including office space, computers, literature, etc.

have, to date, been paid for by Paradise Park, Cornwall, U.K. where the Trust is based. Michael Reynolds was the founder of this progressive organisation. Like many others, he knew there was a desperate need for a worldwide trust devoted *exclusively* to parrots, to their conservation in the wild and to their welfare in captivity. The task ahead seemed enormous, daunting – which was, perhaps, why no one else had attempted it. But a start had to be made somewhere and somehow – and with the support of a very small number of people he launched the trust.

Within a matter of days, the World Parrot Trust had 200 members and many letters from those who were pleased to give their financial support, modest although this was in most cases. In fact, the original membership fee has proved to be too

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low to cover the cost of printing and posting the quarterly newsletter *PsittaScene*, thus it has had to rise in 1992 to £15 for UK and European members and £25 airmail or £18 surface mail for overseas. (Overseas members are encouraged to pay in £ Sterling by Credit card to avoid heavy bank charges.)

It has been my pleasure to edit *PsittaScene* and to receive a very encouraging response from those who are interested in conservation and the more serious aspects of aviculture. There is a greatly increasing interest among aviculturists regarding the threatened and endangered status of many of the species with which they are familiar, and what is being attempted to save some of the most imperiled species. As an example, the May 1991 issue covered the following topics: the reintroduction of captive-bred, non-imprinted Military Macaws in western Guatemala where the species is now extinct, a warning regarding Indonesian Cockatoos in aviculture, the steps which have been taken to conserve the Orange-bellied Parrot (Australia's most vulnerable parrot species) and the presentation of the bus known as the Jacquot Express on the island of St. Lucia in the Caribbean.

"Jacquot Express" was one of the eight projects supported by the Trust during its first 24 months. Working jointly with RARE, a Philadelphia based Conservation organisation, the Trust spent £14,000 on the purchase and conversion of this conservation bus. It is being used to promote the conservation of the St. Lucia Parrot and the remaining rainforest of St. Lucia. It has been fitted with interactive displays which illustrate some of the environmental problems of the island. Decorated with forest motifs and squawking like a parrot, it instantly attracts attention wherever it travels around the island. The exhibits will be changed periodically after several complete tours of the island.

These days it is accepted that education of the local people is perhaps the most effective conservation measure which can be taken. What more entertaining way than a bus with the destination "Conservation"?

WPT has made a substantial contribution towards the survival of the Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*) from Mauritius. With only 12 to 15 birds surviving, it is believed that no parrot species has fewer individuals extant. The Trust has, to date, contributed £20,000 towards captive breeding and other conservation measures. Much of this was raised by appealing to the public watching falconry displays at Paradise Park in Cornwall, also through the generosity of one particular member, and invaluable support from the Parrot Society. Of this sum, £12,000 was spent on a four-wheel drive vehicle, which was desperately needed for those studying the Echo Parakeet in the wild.

The World Parrot Trust launched a special fund to raise money for field research on the Hyacinthine Macaw. It offered limited edition prints and an extremely attractive T-shirt featuring this species. If you are an admirer of this magnificent macaw, please purchase one or both — knowing that a substantial part of your payment will go directly towards research which, hopefully, will secure the future of this, the largest of all parrots, in the Pantanal region of Brazil. To date, \$12,000 has gone to this project, with further sums earmarked for the future, if the money can be raised.

The World Parrot Trust has received the approval of the Brazilian

government for its help, together with an invitation to help the rest of Brazil's endangered psittacines. If you have ever looked at a Hyacinthine Macaw in wonder and admiration, and your day has been colored by the encounter, you now have the chance to give something back — to make your contribution to the conservation of one of the most magnificent birds in the world. Stop Press: I hear that WPT is about to relaunch "The Hyacinth Fund" with a target of raising £20,000 to aid the survival of all the blue macaws: Hyacinth, Spix, Lear's, Glaucous. Please try to help this important fund.

WPT is also committed to assisting the survival of an endangered population of the spectacular Red-tailed Black (Banksian) Cockatoo in Victoria, Australia. It has pledged £2,000 a year for the next four years.

These are just four of the projects which the Trust has supported to date. It could do much more with a larger membership, or with more donations! Now I would like to appeal to *all* readers to support the Trust in some way, no matter how modest. If you are not already a member, please join, or send a donation. If you are a member, you know what the trust is achieving so please try to enlist another member and to promote the WPT whenever you have the opportunity.

There is so much to do. As yet major wildlife conservation organisations have assisted very few parrot species because so many species of birds and animals are now threatened worldwide. Because it focuses exclusively on parrots, the World Parrot Trust is in a good position to assess, in association with leading authorities throughout the world, what can be done to assist the plight of those most urgently needing help. There are many dedicated and experienced people who can provide the expertise — but conservation is not cheap. It has its price! And as every one of us, or our children, can expect to benefit from the conservation of ecosystems or even single species, we should all be prepared to contribute a little towards that price.

If you would like to join the trust or learn more about its work, please write to World Parrot Trust, 20 Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall, TR27 4HY, United Kingdom.

For further information ring Judith Venning, the Administrator, 0736 753365. ●

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