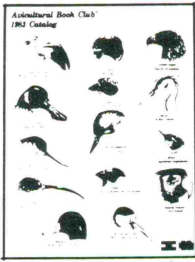


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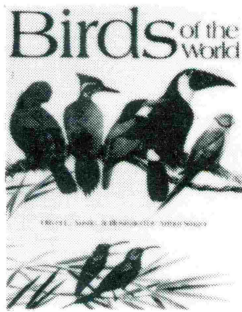
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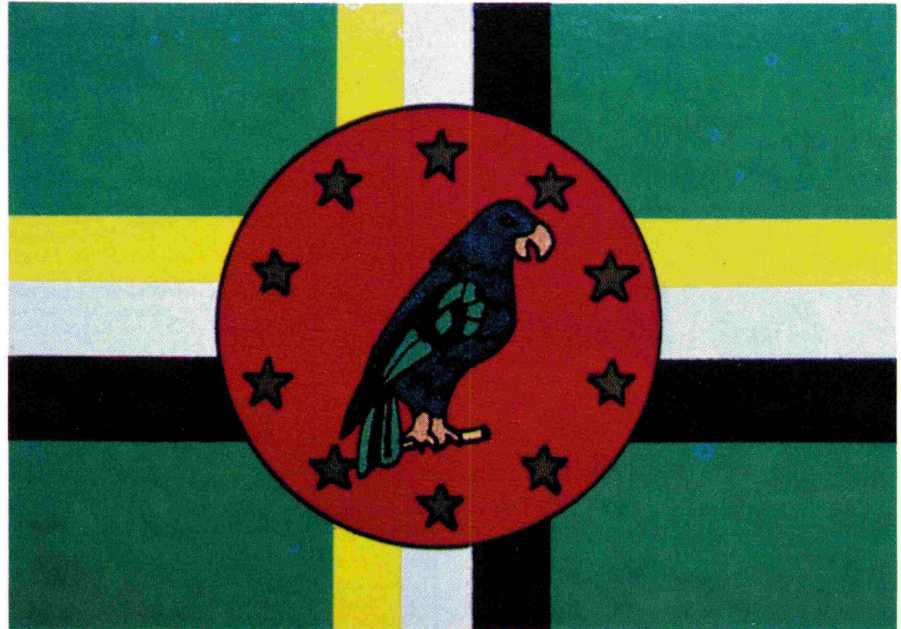
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the parrot . . . a national bird

By Tom Marshall
Great Falls, Virginia



Many countries have chosen birds to represent their nationhood. For example, the United States, over the objections of Ben Franklin, who preferred the turkey, chose the majestic bald eagle as its national emblem, while our neighbor to the south portrays yet another eagle, indigenous to Mexico, on its national flag.

In the course of centuries, Europe has produced some unusual interpretations of the eagle—with crowns, double heads, or even bodies of human beings partially incorporated. In a number of Latin American countries, the condor, a huge bird quite appropriately substitutes for the eagle.

Other distinctive birds have also been chosen, particularly among nations of the British Commonwealth. These birds flank state seals, adorn presidential flags, and comprise royal crests. Examples include the emu of Australia, humming birds of Trinidad and Tobago, the crested crane of Uganda, the flamingo of the Bahamas, and many other unique avian species. A silhouette of a bird of paradise figures prominently in the flag of Papua-New Guinea, where a number of species of this brilliantly plumed bird

lives. Many birds have been so honored, but until recently no parrots.

On November 3, 1978 Great Britain gave independence to one of her island possessions of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean—Dominica.

This island is the home of two threatened Amazon parrots, the red-necked Amazon (*A. arausiaca*) and perhaps the emperor of all parrots, the imperial Amazon (*A. imperialis*).

Few have ever seen the imperial Amazon, a magnificent eighteen to twenty inch bird with mainly maroon, purple and green hues, which resides on the higher slopes of the mountain Morne Diablotin. The inaccessibility of its haunts has aided the imperial Amazon to a considerable degree, although in 1977 the population estimates for the imperial Amazon was only 150 individuals. As true with all monarchs, it is vulnerable in these modern times. The lumber industry is perhaps its greatest threat, but the people and government of Dominica have emblazoned this noble bird on their national banner for all the world to see, elevating a parrot to the status of a national bird—worthy of respect and protection. ●