

The Grand Cayman Amazon Parrot

by Tony Silva
North Riverside, Illinois

Between cloud formations one could see a stretch of land in the distance. With passing minutes it became clearer and finally one could see palm trees. We then made our descent on Grand Cayman, an island 37 km. (23 mi.) long that lies some 280 km. (190 mi.) south of Cuba and northwest of Jamaica. This tropical island is besieged annually by plane loads of Americans intent on scuba diving in crystal clear Caribbean waters, soaking up the sun, or just plain relaxing. In my case, it was none of these that lured me but the endemic parrot, a subspecies of the Cuban Amazon.

The only thought I had while going through customs or hiring a car was observing the Cayman Amazon *Amazona leucocephala caymanensis* in the wild.

First on our agenda was a visit to Savanna, to the east of Georgetown, the capitol. It was here that Rosemary Low and Bob Grantham had observed parrots several years ago. Here we met Lindberg Eden, a resident with knowledge of *caymanensis*. Rosemary had suggested that I contact Lindberg for he would be able to suggest where the parrots were foraging.

It was about five in the afternoon and the sun was still bright, but even with the recommendations from Eden, the parrots were elusive. After an hour of traveling about, we returned to Georgetown to secure a hotel and dispose of the impedimenta. My indefatigable search resumed shortly

thereafter.

Grand Cayman is flat, with considerable stands of mangrove in the interior, the habitat of the parrot. It was on slightly swampy ground, on the northern part of the island, that I had my first close meeting with this extremely endangered amazon in the wild. Two were perched in a royal palm (*Roystonea* spp.), feeding on the tips of the unopened central leaf. The two would have gone undetected had it not been for their call. Although we sighted more parrots that day, it was at North Sound Estate that we had our greatest success.

The Cayman Amazon can be described briefly as green, each feather edged in grey, most prominently on the head. The forehead is white, often contaminated in pink or yellow. Cheeks and throat are rose-red, ear coverts are dark grey, and the abdomen has maroon. Breast and rump are tinged with turquoise, a diagnostic feature that can be used to separate it from the Cuban (*A. l. leucocephala*) and Isle of Pines (*A. l. palmarum*) subspecies.

Back to parrots in the wild. Early one morning we observed two *caymanensis* foraging quietly. They permitted a very close approach, suggesting that they were not persecuted for food. In complete contrast, the St. Lucia Amazon (*Amazona versicolor*) is very shy and elusive, and was formerly persecuted. Two other birds on Grand Cayman, *Columbidae* (the white-

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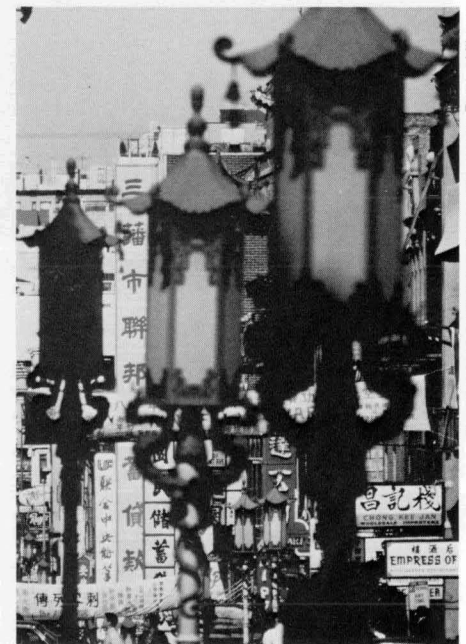
Some of the most celebrated speakers in the world will bring us words of wisdom on flora and fauna. Many new faces — first timers!

There will be tours of San Francisco, the city's zoo, bird tours, and a special tour of the wine country. We are working on a "special" to Hawaii, and if you have time, take the 12 day Loveboat Cruise to Alaska!

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The next Watchbird will carry more detailed information and all A.F.A. members will soon receive a packet in the mail. In the meantime one can contact: Jim Coffman, convention chairman, 1575 Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010.

Make it a family vacation. San Francisco is a fantastic city of countless sites to see and things to do! Public attendance is invited and encouraged.



It behooves visitors to San Francisco's Chinatown to lift their eyes from the store windows from time to time. At the upper level, the quarter is a montage of dragon-entwined lanterns, arched eaves, filigreed balconies and calligraphy neons.

San Francisco Visitors Bureau photo by Bruce Klieve



A male Cayman Island Amazon parrot. Note how each green feather is edged in dark grey.



Habitat of the Cayman Amazon at North Sound on Grand Cayman Island.

crowned pigeon *Columba leucocephala* and white-winged dove *Zenaida asiatica*), are far more numerous and consequently easier to bag. Certainly their flesh would be more palatable than that of parrots. The two *caymanensis* were so free of fear that attempts to startle them were ignored altogether. I threw stones at a tree several times, but they looked askance as if to suggest that it was futile.

The day of my departure was an auspicious one, for I left with the

memory of a pair of parrots defending their territory from an intruding pair. Again, they had paid no attention to my presence, being consumed in the fracas.

Cayman Amazons have been studied extensively by Ramon Noegel who estimates the population at perhaps 200 or less. While this figure may be correct, it is entirely possible for this number to be over or under optimistic since there are impenetrable areas on the island and the parrots are highly mobile. An accurate census would

entail the use of walkie-talkies and many individuals to keep track of each bird as it moves about. An assessment would certainly not be facile.

A. l. caymanensis has become an endangered species because its habitat is disappearing. In a paper presented at the International Council for Bird Preservation's 1980 Parrot Working Group Meeting, Noegel gives an insight into the causal factor:

"This subspecies is making its last stand in the central and eastern part of the island. This area has, until recently, remained free from development and thus afforded this Amazon a safe refuge. Now, much of it is being cleared for agricultural purposes."

In my opinion, encroachment is the primary factor in this bird's decline. Consequently, the establishment of vital areas as reserves would be propitious.

The birds are also actively sought for the local trade and captives are kept under poor conditions, both of which must be stopped immediately. Eventually they die and are replaced by others which meet the same fate. In my opinion action such as that taken on St. Lucia is called for: all parrots currently in captivity should be registered and their sale or trade contingent upon approval from authorities. If death occurs, the body must be turned over to the same governing body. Violation would result in a very stiff fine.

Cayman Amazons are being bred by Ramon Noegel, Tom Nichols, both in the U.S., and it is listed as one of the species bred during 1983 in the U.K. by John and Pat Stoodley. Proper management could eventually result in its being established in aviaries. In my opinion, highly competent aviculturists should be permitted to take pairs from the island for the establishment of additional colonies. These would be permitted to leave only under the strictest of measures and would ideally originate from the pet population. Alternately, a captive breeding scheme could be implemented on the island, deriving the foundation stock from the same source. Progeny could, in turn, be placed with aviculturists. Alas, none of these measures or those listed in the previous paragraph will be acted upon.

While boarding the plane at Owens Roberts Airport, I looked back and wondered how long will *caymanensis* survive. The lack of formal protection of it and its refuge may ultimately mean that future generations will know of *caymanensis* only as aviary birds. ●

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ATTENTION BREEDERS: s/s pairs of CONGO AFRICAN GREYS, good breeders, an excellent investment, \$550. THE PET RANCH, 3015 Pioneer Way, Jamul, CA 92035. Call (619) 698-5878.

HAND FED COCKATOOS: We have domestic Umbrellas, Moluccans, Tritons, Medium sulfur crests and Rose breasted babies available. We also have a fine selection of other birds. **THE PET RANCH**, 3015 Pioneer Way, Jamul, CA 92035. Call (619) 698-5878.

SELL OR TRADE GOULDANS: white breasted \$225 pr., splits \$120 pr., normals \$90 pr. Taking orders for '85 hatch. Color photos \$1 each. White breasted lutino Gouldians \$1,500 pr., splits \$750 pr. Blue backed Gouldians \$750 pr., splits \$325 pr. Exotic birds and animals available. Send SASE: Royal Crown Aviaries, 2393 N. Blythe, Fresno, CA 93711. Call (209) 275-2128 after 6p.m. CA. time.

HANDFED DOMESTIC RAISED greater Alexanders, lutino ringnecks, African greys, yellow crowned Amazons, eclectus (grand), sun conures. Call Kathleen, (305) 252-0082.

WANTED — MACAW AND PARROT FEATHERS — CASH FOR FEATHERS dropped by your birds when they molt. Macaw tail feathers 25¢ to \$10 each. We are prepared to buy in any quantity. More information and detailed price list on request. Kevin Schneider, 14292 Jennings Vista Way, Lakeside, CA 92040. Phone (619) 561-6303.

BUTTON QUAIL: silver and normal chicks \$3.00 each. Adults: normals \$10 a pair, silvers \$15 a pair. Doves and finches. Debbie Mills, Rt. 4, Box 1108, Los Lunas, NM 87031. Call (505) 865-0331.

BLUE RINGNECKS '84/'85 hatch, lutino ringnecks '84/'85 hatch. Crimson wing, rock pebbliers, Alexandrine. Breeding stock and young for sale. Critters Corner, San Jose, CA. Call (408) 578-4414, ask for Jim.

"MANAGER'S GUIDE OF AVIAN DISEASES", An easy to understand manual for quick detection, prevention and treatments. Vitamin and mineral deficiency illnesses. Microbiology identifications and illustrations. Laboratory equipment catalog and much more. Direct to you from BI-VAC International Research Foundation laboratory. Send \$9.95 to BI-VAC INTERNATIONAL, P.O. Box 442, Loxahatchee, FL 33470.

HAND-FED, African grey, W/C Pionus, B/H Pionus, Goffin cockatoo, African ringnecks, lutino, albino. **WANTED**, female black headed caique. J.A. Brown, (503) 364-3403 after 6 p.m., Oregon.

EMPEROR GEESE, singles, pairs — '82 and '85 hatch. S/s Congo pair. English budgies, lutino, albino. **WANTED**, female black headed caique. J.A. Brown, (503) 364-3403 after 6 p.m., Oregon.

HAND FED BABIES — canary winged parakeets, mitred & dusky conures, hybrids, and others. Dusky, Goldie's & blue-streaked lories. Jay, (805) 257-3595, Val Verde, CA.

MAKE BIRD CAGES, playpens, nest boxes, swings, carriers, breeding cages, and many more. 30 complete bird related plans for \$5.95. W. Patterson, 38602 Malby Ave., Palmdale, CA 93550.

GREEN CINNAMON COCKATIELS \$200 a pair. Shipping minimum two pairs. Helen Forsythe, 1325 Loma Vista Dr., Napa Valley, CA 94558. Call (707) 226-8671.

MOLUCCAN COCKATOO CHICKS handfed from day 1, very sweet. Available, weaned or in pin feathers. Will consider trade for red-fronted and hyacinth macaws. Jeffries Aviaries, P.O. Box 2061, Saginaw, MO 64864. Call (417) 781-9230.

CUTTLEBONE — pure and natural. New, lower prices! 6-13" and cleaned, 5 lb. at \$3.90 per lb. (\$19.50), or 10 lbs. at \$3 per lb. (\$30). **SCHROEDER & ATKINSON**, 644 South Isis, Inglewood, CA 90301. Phone (213) 776-6486. All orders pre-paid and shipped freight collect.

SUPER TAME, HANDFED BABIES: Blue & gold, and Military macaws. Congo grey, Blue headed Pionus and Meyer's parrots. Moustache, Derbyan and Ringneck (blue, split-blue, lutino & normal) parakeets. Half-moon conures, white-masked and varieties of Peach faced lovebirds (some handfed). Al or Char, (602) 973-2852, Phoenix, AZ.

WE SPECIALIZE IN BIRDS. Have other pets and supplies, carry Leach seed. Special price on 300 pounds or more. We buy birds and small animals, also take birds on consignment. Open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. No shipping. S & A Pets, 15880 East Amar Rd., City of Industry, (818) 369-3943.

NORMAL, PIED, ALBINO, CINNAMON, PEARLY PIED cockatiels. Pied, jade, cherryhead, albino, lutino, blue, peachface, Fischer's, blue masked, black masked lovebirds. Yellow, green red rump parakeets, American, English budgies, Shafttail grass finches and other cage birds. Pheasants, quail, peafowl, partridges, geese, ducks. SASE for prices. No shipping. Pierce's Game Farm, Dept. W, Rt. 5, Princeton, IL 61356. Call (815) 699-2638.

GORGEOUS RED RUMPS, Bourke's parakeets, cockatiels and red-factor canaries bred in my aviaries in Napa, CA. Phone early a.m. (707) 257-2125, 'Margot'.

DOMESTIC RAISED PATAGONIANS, Lilac crowns, Meyers, Galarita galaritas, Scarlet macaws. Also available: Dwarf macaws, Pionus, Conures, Amazons, Lovebirds, Parrolets, Grass keets and Cockatiels. Send SASE for current price list. Westridge Aviaries, 4340 W. Ajo Way, Tucson, Arizona 85746, (602) 883-6094.

HAND RAISED BABIES — blue & gold macaws, sun conures, rosellas, slaty heads, lutino ringnecks, and others. Quality Bird Ranch, Rt. 10, Box 147, Gainesville, FL 32605. Phone (904) 372-0299.

TRUE GREATER SULPHUR crested cockatoos (C. galerita, galerita). Fat, affectionate handfed babies from breeders we brought back from Western Australia in 1975. \$2,500. Hornbeam Farm, northern Ohio, (419) 588-2279.

BABY AFRICAN GREYS — beautiful, intelligent pets. Exceptionally tame and loveable. The finest in domestic raised greys. Hatched in my aviary and lovingly spoon-fed by me from day 1. Will ship. Ann Nothaft, 110 Jamaica Ave., Medford, NY 11763. Call (516) 289-1413.

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DOMESTIC HANDFED CLOSED BANDED BABIES. Cockatoos, Amazons, macaws, Pionus, African greys, caiques, cockatiels (all mutations), and 30 species of conures both Pyrrhuras and Aratingas. Call or write for information: **TUWANA AVIARIES**, Tom Ireland or Bill Maynard, 4724 Collier Road, Lake Worth, FL 33463. Call (305) 967-0346 (always looking for mature South American parrots for breeding!)

HAND-FED BABIES: Amazons, African Greys, Cockatoos, Conures, Eclectus, Lories, Macaws, Pionus, others. Health guaranteed. Call for species and availability. Gail J. Worth, Aves International, 2808 Oregon Court, Unit L8, Torrance, CA 90503, (213) 541-1180.

HAND-FED BABIES — hatched & hand-fed at our home. Blue & gold, Catalina, Scarlet, & Hyacinth macaws, Citron, Goffin, Moluccan & Umbrella cockatoos, Congo African greys & many others. Sea Island Aviaries, 4124 Blue Cross Lane, Johns Island, S.C. 29455. Call (803) 559-9072.

HAND RAISED BABIES: We are now taking reservations for our 1985 domestic babies. We specialize in macaws and parrots: Hyacinth, Blue and gold, Catalina, Green-winged, Red fronted, African grey, Yellow naped, Tucuman, Alexandrine ringneck parakeet. Send SASE for our price list. **SANDY CREEK FARM**, Rt. 2, Box 350-H, Sarasota, FL 34240. Call (813) 322-2006.

ECLECTUS, grand, red-sided, Solomon Island, handfed babies, fabulous size and color. I buy and sell adult eclectus on occasion. Bernie Conner, (707) 526-7111.

DOMESTIC HANDFED PARROTS: Congos, Amazons, Macaws, Asians, Australians, Conures. Breeder pairs or singles available also. Many birds in stock. Waterfowl, Vulturines, Guineas, Ratites, and more. **S.A.S.E. - Exotic Avian Specialties**, Rt 6, Box 387, Corvallis, Oregon 97330. Call (503) 745-5248.

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HATCHED AND HANDFED on our farm - blue & golds \$800, militarys \$600, napes \$650, yellow headed \$600, suns, jendays \$250, Alexandrines \$300, African greys \$700, yellow collared macaws \$300. References. George Lackey, Texas (512) 787-1479.

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