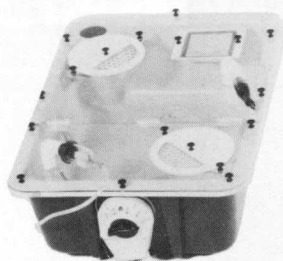




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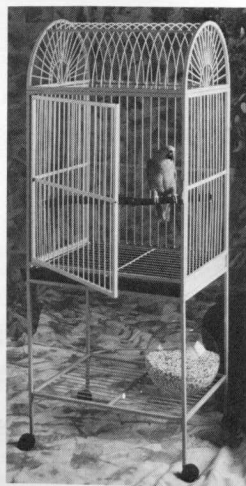
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CONSERVATION

Consortium For SPIX'S MACAW

by Rosemary Low
Curator, Loro Parque, Tenerife, Canary Islands

On August 17 and 18 Loro Parque in Tenerife hosted a very important meeting. The subject was the conservation through captive breeding of a highly endangered parrot, Spix's macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*). The Parque has the largest collection of parrots open to the public in the world, totalling 1300 birds of over 200 species. These include a pair of Spix's macaws.

The country of origin of this parrot is Brazil, where only three are known to survive in the wild. Eleven exist in captivity within Brazil and only ten outside Brazil. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together owners, or representatives of owners, of these birds, also officials of two international conservation organizations. After a day of discussion a document was drawn up setting out recommendations to aid the survival of Spix's macaw through a captive breeding program.

It was agreed that young bred in captivity would not be sold but would be retained by the breeder or loaned to another owner of the species for breeding purposes.

In this striking macaw, whose plumage is entirely blue, male and female are alike externally.

It is obviously important that the gender of all the Spix's macaws in captivity is known so that true pairs can be formed. Wolfgang Kiessling, the owner of Loro Parque, offered to send his veterinarian, Johanna Storm, to Brazil, to sex the birds in captivity there provided that the Brazilian Government recognizes the captive breeding program. There is no vet in Brazil able to undertake this task. Johanna Storm recently sexed the Spix's macaws at Loro Parque and confirmed that they are a male and a female. Young birds on arrival in Tenerife, they are now

approaching breeding age. If they produce young they will make history as this species has never been bred outside Brazil where it has always been a great rarity. In Brazil it has been bred in only one collection — and that occurred nearly two decades ago.

Among the participants at the meeting was Nigel Collar from England, of the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP). (Loro Parque has donated large sums to this organization for the conservation of another endangered parrot.) Also present was Dr. Ulysses Seal from the USA, an authority on the captive management of endangered species with very small captive populations. He represented the Captive Breeding Survival Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Both these organizations will approach the Brazilian Government, as a result of the meeting, to ask for its co-operation. The owners of Spix's macaws will be asked to give their signature of agreement to the document that was drawn up and thus the consortium will be formed which will be essential for the success of the captive breeding program for Spix's macaw.

Dr. Seal stated that he was extremely pleased to have been present at this meeting which he hopes will serve as a model for other meetings where highly endangered species are in the hands of private aviculturists as well as zoos and bird parks. That both groups should work together is extremely important.

Another outcome of the meeting is that a studbook is to be kept for this macaw, that is, details of all the specimens held in captivity should be registered with the keeper of the studbook. Rosemary Low, curator at Loro Parque, has applied to keep the studbook.

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