

# AFA Members Attend International Parrot Convention VII

By Janice D. Boyd, Ph.D.

The first International Parrot Convention was held by Loro Parque on the island of Tenerife, Canary Islands, in 1986, and every four years since then. Many AFA members have attended at least once.

The seventh convention took place Sept. 22–25, 2010, and this year AFA was one of the organizations with a display booth.

Mark Sargent and I set up a table to display a limited number of items found in the AFA store (those darn baggage fees!), including a selection of *Watchbird* magazines and copies of Dr. Benny Gallaway's "History of AFA," which he presented at the convention in St. Petersburg, Fla.

As you can see from the accompanying pictures, attendees from all over the world flocked to our table to see who and what we had to share. A number of them purchased items, including CITES pins, ties, metal tins and *Watchbird* copies.

The International Parrot Conventions are by far the largest parrot conventions held anywhere in the world.

This year, more than 650 people attended, and this was a down year! The convention program always offers an international slate of speakers, and this time was no exception. Simultaneous translations into English, German, French and Spanish made it possible for all attendees to follow the presentations.

Topics this year were typical of the other two times I've attended. The presentations included parrot breeding and husbandry at Loro Parque and in the U.S., Spain, Russia and Mexico; nutrition studies; veterinary interventions for breeding problems; parrot behavior; and conservation programs supported by



Above, attendees take a coffee break between talks on the grounds of the Taoro Convention Center. Siam Water Park, below, had an eclectic flavor with a Thai "Lost City," a monkey head sculpture and a 20-foot Toco Toucan among the water park facilities.



Loro Parque Fundación in French Polynesia (Lories), Costa Rica (Great Green/ Buffon's Macaws), Bolivia (Blue-throated Macaws) and Brazil (Spix's Macaws). LPF Director Dr. David Waugh gave an overview of Loro Parque Fundación's programs over the years, focusing on the most recent.

LPF has spent more than \$10 million on parrot conservation programs since 1997. Because the commercial operation of the bird park (Loro Parque) pays expenses for the grant-making nonprofit

foundation (LPF), the foundation can proudly claim that donations and other income is spent 100 percent on conservation programs.

Many people attend bird conventions as a vacation, and the International Parrot Conventions serve this function in a wonderful, if somewhat pricey, fashion.

The Hotel Botánico hosts the convention. It is a world-renowned five-star hotel. The rooms are comfortable and decorated with reproductions of Eric Peake's parrot paintings. There are



Some parrots, such as these Golden Conures, or Queen of Bavaria Conures (*Guaruba guarouba*), were kept and bred in communal aviaries.

extensive spa facilities and fitness programs, pool and pool-side bar, a very good breakfast buffet and three different themed restaurants.

The convention was opened with a short speech by Mr. Wolfgang Kiessling, founder of Loro Parque and owner of the Hotel Botánico. Afterward at the welcoming cocktail party, champagne, wine and soft drinks flowed freely and the appetizers were sufficient for a meal.

During the three days of talks, coffee, tea, soft drinks, snacks and sandwiches were served at the breaks on the grounds of the Taoro Convention Center.

This year, a scientific poster session was held, displaying parrot conservation projects.

Dr. Don Brightsmith and I had a poster detailing the macaw satellite telemetry tracking work we have been doing in Peru.

After a few hours of free time for visiting Loro Parque or taking in the sights of Puerto de la Cruz, dinner and entertainment were provided at different venues in the area.

One evening that stood out in my mind this time was the second night when buses took attendees to the Siam Water Park developed by Christoph Kiessling, son of Wolfgang Kiessling.

In keeping with the oriental theme of Loro Parque and the Hotel Botánico, the Siam Water Park had swimming pools, slides, a wave pool and other fixtures of

a water park surrounded by Thai-style buildings. A 20-foot statue of a Toco Toucan was perched next to the Thai “Lost City.”

Frequent AFA speaker Jafet Veléz from the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Project experienced his second childhood and almost had to be dragged out of the wave pool onto the artificial beach when it was time for the open-air barbecue! The barbecue included all the chicken, pork, beef, flame-roasted vegetables, wine, soft drinks and any dessert you could desire.

When it became dark enough, we were treated to an extensive fireworks show over the wave pool, accompanied by music.

I hope Mr. Kiessling was pleased with



Above left are Mark Sargent and the author at the AFA table at the International Parrot Convention VII in Tenerife, Canary Islands,

Spain, in late September 2010. Above right, attendees at the convention examine items on the AFA table.

his son's program that evening; we certainly were!

Each time I have attended, one of the highlights of the convention in my mind has been a visit to the Loro Parque Fundación breeding facility, La Vera.

It was established about 15 years ago by Mr. Kiessling to breed parrots for the park and then was donated to Loro Parque Fundación upon creation of the foundation in 1994.

The facility now houses almost 4,000 individuals, representing 350 parrot species and subspecies. The parrots on display at the bird park, about 800 individuals, are actually owned by LPF and are on loan to the bird park.

All expenses for the breeding facility ("criadero" in Spanish) are paid for by

Loro Parque. Many chicks of the more common species are incubated and raised at the Baby Station in the park under public view.

Dr. Matthias Reinschmidt has been curator of the LPF collection for 10 years. When he started at the facility there were 310 species and now there are 350. Over those 10 years, they have raised more than 12,000 birds of 273 species and subspecies. LPS has built up a self-sustaining population of many rare and endangered parrots.

In his presentation, Dr. Reinschmidt recommended that to establish a self-sustaining collection of a rare species, one should begin with no fewer than five pairs. Once breeding is fairly well established, LPF develops a management plan

to maintain a breeding population of 10 pairs.

With more common species that are well established in aviculture, LPF usually maintains about three breeding pairs because of limited space and resources, and because replacement birds are easier to obtain when needed.

Disposition of offspring depends on the rarity and conservation status of the species. Individuals of common species are sold into the pet and aviculture markets through a limited number of trusted dealers. The income is used to support the work done by Loro Parque Fundación.

The island of Tenerife is heavily populated and the breeding facility is located in what is a surprisingly small area that nevertheless does not seem small when

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The whole facility is covered with shade cloth and all breeding cages are separated by thickly planted vegetation. Communal flights are also thickly planted.

The amount of sunlight received by each species depends upon their natural environmental conditions, with those from thickly forested regions maintained under more shaded conditions.

LPF personnel do not breed all species in exactly the same fashion, but tailor conditions to those that they have found to be most successful for particular species or individuals. Some species are kept in suspended flights, others are kept in long flights that extend all the way to the ground, and other species are kept communally in large, planted aviaries.

Pairs that have not bred well in individual cages are placed in communal breeding aviaries to see if that will stimulate them to breed more successfully. Different types of nest boxes are used, and

some pairs have their nest boxes in smaller “breeding rooms” partially enclosed with wire mesh.

The constant research at La Vera into successful techniques for breeding parrots has led to a number of notable successes. For example, nearly 1,000 macaws of 16 species were bred over the past 10 years, including five young Spix’s Macaws.

The first captive breeding in the world of the Blue-throated Macaw took place in Loro Parque in 1984. Since then, they have bred 250 individuals of the species. Another success has been the production of 100 Blue-headed Macaws.

LPF also maintains one of the Lear’s Macaw Breeding Centers.

In 2006 Dr. Reinschmidt brought two pairs of Lear’s from the Sao Paulo Zoo to special breeding aviaries constructed to simulate the natural cliffs of the Canudos in the Brazilian Caatinga. The pairs immediately settled in and in 2007 the first chicks were hatched.



A young female Spix’s Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) bred by LPF. So far LPF has produced five chicks and has been able to return one Spix’s and one Lear’s back to Brazil.



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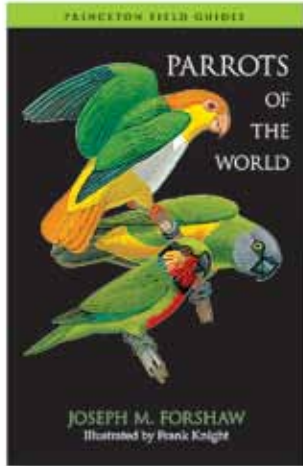
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LPF started with four birds in 2006, and by July 2010, the flock had increased to 22 birds. In March 2010, they were able to return both a young Lear's and a young Spix's to Brazil.

Loro Parque Fundación is the owner of the largest and most diverse parrot collection in the world that has ever existed.

With the support it receives from the commercial facility, Loro Parque, and from the sale of excess young parrots into the breeding and pet market, LPF is able to make a significant contribution toward maintaining parrot species in the wild and in captivity.

It uses four different approaches to save parrots:

- awareness and education,
- research,
- captive management and breeding,
- and conservation field projects.

All these are apparent at the International Parrot conventions.

I hope the legacy of Mr. Wolfgang Kiessling, as well as the International



The whole of the breeding facility "La Vera" is covered with shade cloth and thickly planted to give the birds a sense of privacy. The top-most layer of mesh also serves to confine any escapees.

Parrot conventions, continue for many more years.

I am proud that AFA was able to

participate in this year's convention, and I hope we and our members can partici-



pate again in 2014.

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