

Loro Parque, Tenerife

Parrot Conservation

In the annual Board Meeting, the meeting of the scientific advisory committee of the Loro Parque Fundación (LPF), it was decided this year to support parrot conservation projects world-wide with a record sum of 840,000 euros as a budget for the year 2009.

For this reason the Loro Parque Fundación has for years been a leading organization worldwide regarding parrot conservation projects and the support of endangered species. Numerous examples where the funding of conservation projects has resulted in the recovery of wild populations validate the LPF policies and encourage the staff to continue the chosen path with determination.

This is how, for example, the populations of *Ognorhynchus icterotis*, *Anodorhynchus leari* and *Cacatua haematurus* have recovered, which can be attributed to the support by LPF of determined measures. However, currently there are numerous focuses in parrot protection world-wide, and therefore the scientific advisors of LPF made it their duty to help primarily where the funds are needed most urgently to avoid the extinction of any parrot species.

In the course of the two-day meeting the President of the LPF, Mr. Wolfgang Kiessling, inaugurated and handed-over officially the new breeding centre for the Spix's Macaws. The



Inauguration of the new LPF breeding centre for Spix Macaws. A few of the committee members are, from left, Dr. Nigel Collar, Povl Jorgensen, Roland Wirth, Brigitte Kiessling, LPF President Wolfgang Kiessling, Susanna Leitinger, and Dr. Matthias Reinschmidt.

new centre will offer the possibility to breed Spix's Macaws on a bigger scale, although at present only six birds are held by the LPF and the centre has eight large aviaries all with broad interconnections that can be opened depending upon need. Thus, all the aviaries can be connected to create a complete flight area, or all separated to permit the accommodation of up to eight breeding pairs.

The areas between the aviaries are planted, so that the vegetation creates a natural protected environment for the macaws. Thus a trend-setting enclosure has been created according to the latest knowledge, as a matter of course including all necessary safety precautions, such as cameras

and a manned guardhouse.

The LPF was represented at the beginning of November in the large federal exhibition of the VZE (Federation for Breeding and Preservation) in Chemnitz, Germany with Dr. Matthias Reinschmidt and Inge Feier providing information. The attendance at the stand was enormous. In three presentations the Loro Parque curator presented the work of the LPF in the wild and in the breeding centre in Tenerife.

The LPF positively seeks direct contact with breeders, because in the long-term the zoos alone cannot receive and breed the variety of parrot species in captivity. Here a close cooperation between the breeders and the zoological parks is necessary. This is

recognized by the LPF and it has found in the VZE a federation which likewise pursues these goals and places conservation breeding programmes at the centre of its work.

At present the annual stock control is in full swing at the LPF. Once a year at the end of the breeding season each bird is removed from its aviary. The veterinary surgeons of the Loro Parque take a blood sample, for all the usual virus tests which are carried out in Loro Parque's own laboratory, and make a cloacal swab report about the bacterial profile of the bird. In addition, a description is made of the physical condition, such as body weight, plumage condition, and evaluation of condition of nourishment.

All these data together result in an informative picture of the bird. Because these data are collected every year for all the parrots, one can also document developments over the years. The entire stick control takes nearly five months, between August and December, because nearly 4,000 parrots must be examined. Nevertheless, the effort is worthwhile because the annual check of each bird is absolutely necessary to assure the high standard in the health care of the population, and can be recommended without hesitation to private breeders and owners of parrots.

New Species Arrive

An intensive preparation over several years, undertaken mainly by our biologist Rafael Zamora, was required for the



A blood sample is taken from *Ara glaucogularis* at the stock control.

latest happy events in Loro Parque. Three new parrot species for the Loro Parque Foundation (LPF) collection arrived from Mexico. Two of them are acquired for the first time ever by a European zoo and are therefore significant importations. Thus, a small group of

each of the Maroon-fronted Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta terrisi*), Gustav's Parakeet (*Brotogeris cyanoptera gustavi*), and White-headed Parrot (*Pionus seniloides*) were imported. In all cases the specimens concerned are offspring from successful reproduction in a

breeding centre in Mexico.

The LPF is very proud that this importation, which absorbed an enormous amount of time in preparation, has finally worked out. All the birds endured the long transportation very well, and were first put into quarantine, where they have to spend at least 40 days and successfully pass all the stipulated health checks in the quarantine protocol before they become integrated into the collection. This will not be before January 2009.

The Maroon-fronted Parrot is one of the endangered parrot species of Mexico, whose wild population is less than a thousand birds, and for which necessarily a genetic reserve has to be build up in captivity. Compared to the related Thick-billed Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) (38

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Maroon-fronted Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta terrisi*).

cm), the terrisi are a bit bigger (42cm), with the forehead coloured maroon. It was only in 1947 that this parrot species was described (by Moore), first as a subspecies of the Thick-billed Parrot. Today the consensus among most taxonomists is that it is a separate species.

Until now Gustav's Parakeets have not been known in Europe at all. They are distinguish in their colouring clearly from their nominate form, the Cobalt-winged Parakeet (*Brotogeris cyanopectus*) by the yellow bend and edge of the wing, which is reminiscent of the pattern of the Yellow-winged Amazon (*Amazona aestiva xanthopteryx*). With this first importation of yet another interesting form, the number of *Brotogeris* species and subspecies

kept by LPF increases to ten.

The White-headed Parrot has always been one of the rarities in European bird-keeping. Nowadays just a few birds are held in Europe, and it seems to be unlikely to be able to build up a breeding population which is able to maintain itself. For this reason the importation of birds bred in Mexico is an important step to refresh blood for the long term conservation in captivity of this interesting parrot species. With the White-headed Parrots there are now eight different *Pionus* held by LPF. The LPF will try to build up a self-sustaining breeding population of each of the three new parrot species.

At the end of november the Spix Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) male (studbook

number 44, property of the Government of Brazil) was brought back from the ACTP, Berlin. He was transferred at the beginning of 2007 to the ACTP to reproduce with another female. However, the pairing with the LPF female was demonstrated as genetically more favorable, and therefore a re-exchange was agreed. By order of the Institute Chico Mendes of Biodiversity Conservation (Government of Brazil), the Curator of LPF Dr. Matthias Reinschmidt travelled to Berlin to receive the Spix Macaw male. After a six-week quarantine period, at the beginning of 2009 the bird will be put together with his previous female and it is expected that the successful breeding (four chicks between 2004 and 2007) can

be continued.

At present the majority of our parrot species are not in breeding conditions, but there are always a few that produce some young in the winter. This winter the very small lorikeet species like the Plum-faced Lorikeet (*Oreopsittacus arfaki*) and the Red-fronted Lorikeet (*Charmosyna rubronotata*) have some chicks in the nest which they are rearing by themselves.

A group of 21 clients of the Höchstadt Savings Bank came to visit Loro Parque in Tenerife. On this occasion the guide and marketing director of the Savings Bank, Christiane Laaser, handed over a cheque for 500 € to the Loro Parque Fundación to support the Spix's Macaw Conservation Programm. The city of Höchstadt is in a cultural sense very much associated with the name Spix, because the naturalist and discoverer of the Spix Macaws, Baptist Ritter von Spix, was born there and is the most famous son of the city. Even its own museum, the Spix Museum, is dedicated to him.

A donor campaign for the benefit of the LPF was privately initiated by the pool attendant Matthias Heinrich from Achern. During the open-air swimming pool season he set-up a small information kiosk about the work of the LPF and the conservation of parrots. Aided by a Red-tailed Amazon (*Amazona autumnalis*) he collected in his donation box 130 € for endangered parrots. The LPF thanks him very much for such a worthwhile activity in the name of endangered parrots, and is grateful for all other donations received.

*Dr. Matthias Reinschmidt, Curator,
Loro Parque, Tenerife*

Preparations Begin for Parrot Congress at Tenerife

The preparations for the VII International Parrot Congress at Tenerife have begun. To ensure an early planning for all those who are interested, the specific dates can be announced now. On the 22nd of September 2010 all participants will be



Canary-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*).

welcomed with a cocktail in the Hotel Botanico, Puerto de la Cruz. The 23rd, 24th and 25th of September 2010 will be the days of congress, which will end with a big Gala Dinner. The staff of Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación will again prepare various surprises to lead to success the event, which takes place only every four years. The Congress is targeted at a broad audience, from parrot-lovers and parrot breeders to veterinarians and field biologists, all of them in some form involved with parrots.

In the last Congress in 2006, 900 participants from 44 different nations all over the world were registered. Because of this, all lectures are translated simultaneously into German, English, French and Spanish. Shortly the coordinators of the different countries will be provided with all the necessary information and materials to be able to receive the registrations. For the first time there will exist a direct possibility to register online. Please visit www.loroparque-fundacion.org to find this possibility in due course.

Slowly the breeding season is starting.



Veterinarian Kristin Oberhäuser with a 7-week-old Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo.

Many lorries have already laid their eggs and are currently brooding them. Two very special parrot chicks are growing up in the Baby Station, and additionally with their own parents. At the Baby Station a young Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptrorhynchus funereus funereus*) is being raised by hand right now. This is the second chick

after the first chick hatched in the late summer of last year, also still in the baby station. As soon as the chick reaches independence it will be socialised with its older sibling to get it used to its own kind. Currently with its own parents, a young Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) is developing well. This is the first time after a couple of years that a chick of this species is being raised by its parents at Loro Parque.

The remarkable aspect is that both adults were raised by hand. While the male already is already 12 years old, the female was raised by hand in 2004 by the Curator. She was the very first hand-raised Palm Cockatoo.. Now, almost five years later the female is giving thanks in the most splendid way imaginable by raising her chick herself. Now the youngster is seven weeks old and the first black feathers are growing. Palm Cockatoos belongs to the kind of parrot species whose development



Three Keas in the Baby Station of Loro Parque

it takes the longest. This breeding success is once again evidence that hand raised parrots definitely are able to raise their chicks independently.

Keas (*Nestor notabilis*) also belong to the early breeders, normally starting to breed in December and during the month of January the first chicks hatch. We removed the first clutch of eggs from our breeding pair, which has been successful over the years, to incubate the eggs artificially, and now three healthy chicks are developing in the Baby Station. Now the pair is sitting on a second clutch, which we are leaving with the parents for natural rearing of the chicks.

A second pair, who laid the first time this

year, has three fertile eggs and a third pair is very keen on visiting the nesting box, and we are expecting the first eggs very soon.

10 Years of Effort, 10 Times as Many Philippine Cockatoos

As we approached, at the end of 2008, the tenth anniversary of the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Programme (PCCP), we could all celebrate the fact that the efforts have resulted in a tenfold increase in the population of wild Philippine Cockatoos (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) on Rasa Island, the main stronghold in Palawan and the Philippines for this critically endangered species. Those responsible for this success, Peter and Indira Widmann, Sabine Schoppe and the rest of the PCCP team, have recently reported to us that the population on Rasa Island has reached the number of 2005, increased from only 22 in 1998. Rasa Island, with an area of 8.3 km² has the highest natural density found anywhere of the Philippine Cockatoo.

The PCCP is run by the Philippine-based Katala Foundation, supported by the LPF, Chester Zoo, CEPA - Conservation

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Narra—Philippine Cockatoo capital of the world.

des Espèces et des Populations Animales (including ZooParc de Beauval) and ZGAP (Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations). The Philippine Cockatoo is restricted to low-land forest areas and mangroves in the Philippines. Formerly, it could be found all over the archipelago, but in the last few decades of the last century a rapid decline set in which brought the species to the brink of extinction. Of the various factors involved, habitat destruction and poaching were, and still are the most important factors threatening the Philippine Cockatoo. Thus, the aim of the PCCP is the conservation and restoration of the most viable subpopulations of this species and its habitats, with the involvement of all key stakeholders. A current objective is to achieve a down-listing of the species in the “Red List” from ‘Critical’ to ‘Endangered’ within the next six years.

The key to the success of the PCCP is its empowerment of local people to fully participate in decisions and actions that help the cockatoos. Thus, its strategy includes the community-based management of

local resources (within the framework of Philippine law, capacity-building for local decision-makers to ensure sustainability of the conservation efforts, and an ecosystem conservation method with the Philippine Cockatoo as flagship species. An important part of the success has been the recruitment of local people, especially previous nest-poachers, and with a

modest inducement, to become wardens to protect the cockatoos and habitats. As the connection between local income and presence of the cockatoos has become clearer, more people have been encouraged to become wardens, and at an early stage the PCCP encouraged the formation of Local Protected Area Management Committees, in some cases with the Municipal Mayor as presiding officer. The situation in Rasa Island, where this model of conservation for the Philippine Cockatoo started, is now so improved that the island has recently been declared as one of the top 13 bird-watching sites in the Philippines by the Department of Tourism.

This year on Rasa Island the wardens monitored 32 nest-trees, six of them new, and 49 fledglings were leg-ringed. With the island population having reached saturation level, the young birds especially are expanding to the nearby mainland of Narra district (of Palawan), where the PCCP is also conducting a year-round intensive campaign to protect them, along with other local partners. The cooperation of local government is impressive, for example the Narra Mayor signing an order requesting all local district leaders and officials to help in monitoring the cockatoos in their respective areas. We look

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forward to at least another tenfold increase before the next 10 years have passed.

*David Waugh,
Loro Parque Fundación*

Conservation of White-necked Parakeets in southern Ecuador

The White-necked Parakeet (*Pyrrhura albipectus*) is a relatively little-known species,

with a small geographical distribution, virtually endemic to southern Ecuador, but recently found also in northern Peru. It inhabits upper tropical forest between 900 and 2,000 m, but mainly between 1000 and 1700m on the south-eastern slopes of the Andes. This species has been observed in partially and severely degraded habitat, but primary forest is

most important for its long-term survival. In this region, deforestation has been extensive at lower elevations within its range, and is gradually encroaching on the higher altitude forest. An illegal trade of White-necked Parakeets within Ecuador is an additional threat, and therefore this species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International (IUCN Red List).

To help conserve this species and its habitat, the Loro Parque Fundación of Tenerife, Spain has been supporting a project of the Ecuadorean NGO Fundación Jocotoco. Biologist Mery Juiña has been leading the conservation activities taking place in the Tapi-chalaca Reserve, which is

located in Zamora-Chinchipe province. The area of this reserve is 3,500 ha, with very irregular topography covering the upper altitudinal range of this parakeet, and the current population in the reserve is small, with a maximum of 19 individuals counted to date. As has been found with other threatened species of *Pyrrhura* in Colombia, and the endangered El Oro Parakeet (*P. orcesi*), also endemic to Ecuador, there appears to be a shortage of natural nesting sites, and that the erection of suitable nest-boxes results in almost immediate occupation by the parakeets. Successful breeding in nest-boxes can increase recruitment to the population during the time

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that other conservation measures are being implemented.

The nest-boxes placed for the *P. albipictus* in the Tapichalaca Reserve in 2008 have attracted the parakeets, but no breeding has yet been recorded. Groups with different numbers of parakeets have been observed roosting in the nest-boxes (three groups of four one each of five and of seven, and four groups of unknown number).

By the beginning of December 2008, the group of five parakeets had accumulated the greatest amount of feathers in the nest and had worked on the interior, similar to the behaviour of *P. orcesi* before the start of egg-laying. Furthermore, sounds coming from the box have been typical sounds of interactions in nests in the breeding season, and therefore the onset of egg-laying is predicted in January. This accords with a earlier record of an adult in post-breeding condition in April, but another previous record is of a dependent juvenile seen in September. Recent work on the Santa Marta Parakeet (*P. viridicata*) in Colombia has shown that species to breed in two seasons each year, and perhaps *P. albipictus* will show the same pattern.

Permanent monitoring of nest-boxes during the breeding season will be necessary because unfortunately, even though these are within a reserve, the probability of thefts of chicks from the boxes still exists. Invasion of nest-boxes by bees constitutes the other main difficulty, and the project is working on a way

to deter bees but still attract White-necked Parakeets.*

Indonesian Parrot Project

Saving the World's Rarest Cockatoo

The world's rarest cockatoo has been rediscovered in Indonesia. The Yellow-crested Abbott's Cockatoo is found in the wild only on a single island (tiny Masakambing Island; 500 ha) in the Masalembu Archipelago. This island is in the remote Java Sea, north of the cities of Surabaya and Bali, and east of southern Sumatra. This archipelago also contains Masalembu Island [2000 ha] and Keramaian Island [300 ha].

Parrots are the most endangered bird family. A number of the parrots threatened with extinction are found only in Indonesia. Four of the five cockatoo species listed on the highest category of protection by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species are found in Indonesia. Of these, the Yellow-crested cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*) are the most imperiled. This species contains four subspecies. Three of these are fairly well studied.

However, one (*C. sulphurea abbotti*) has remained largely a mystery until now, but is known to be at great risk. There are no cockatoos in the other two islands in the archipelago, with the bird having been extirpated from Masalembu and not known to have ever populated Keramaian.



Cockatoos feeding on the fruit of the Sukun tree (*Artocarpus communis*)



Yellow-crested Abbott's Cockatoo at nest site

Studies in the 1990's, which remain largely unpublished, found that only 5–10 individuals remained on Masakambing. However, there are essentially no extant data since that time, and intervening extinction was a distinct possibility. Therefore, the Indonesian Parrot Project (IPP; www.indonesian-parrot-project.org), a U.S. all-volunteer, non-profit non-governmental organization working with Konservasi Kakatua Indonesia (KKI; Cockatoo Conservation

Indonesia, its allied NGO) launched an expedition to the Masalembu Archipelago in June and July of 2008.

The field work was led by Dudi Nandika and Dwi Agustina (both from Jakarta, Indonesia and co-founders of KKI) working under the guidance of Dr. Stewart Metz, President and Director of the Indonesian Parrot Project.

Because of the small size of Masakambing, Nandika and Agustina were able to make detailed surveys of the entire

island. Once the skies had been filled with flocks of these cockatoos; now a total of only 10 cockatoos was identified—four males, four females, and two juveniles—making them the most threatened cockatoo in the wild and one of the world's rarest birds.

Like other members of the *C. sulphurea* species, these beautiful birds have a largely white body with a brilliant yellow, forward-curving crest, and slight yellow on their ear covert feathers.

They may be the largest of the four subspecies. The first photographs of these birds in the wild outside of Indonesia were acquired, as was some videotape footage of the birds mating, preening, eating, playing with twigs, examining nest holes, and similar natural behaviors.

Two major threats to the survival of the Masakambing cockatoo were identified. One is their capture for the illegal pet bird trade. It is usually nestlings, rather than adult birds, which are taken. Formerly, they were trapped in large numbers by outside visitors who took them to Bali and Sumbawa Islands. Now, with the marked decline in their numbers, the birds are only sought by government officials, who keep them as pets due to the prestige of owning such a rare bird.

A second risk factor has been the logging of trees which had been suitable to provide food and nest holes for these cockatoos. This area has been planted, especially with coconut palms, with almost total destruction of previously



Dudi Nandika presenting information to government and military officials.

favorable habitat flora such as kapuk trees (*Ceiba pentandra*) and mangrove (*Avicennia apiculata*).

Because of the extreme gravity of the situation, an intensive conservation program was initiated on behalf of these cockatoos. Visits were made to Junior and Senior High Schools to teach students the principles of conservation, increase their awareness of the plight of the birds, and foster pride in their rare and unique bird. T-shirts are being made to reinforce this message.

Laws to protect these birds had been passed but only in the distant "kabupaten" (district) of Madura and these decrees are out of date; there are plans to update these and extend them locally to the islands of the Masalembu Archipelago themselves, where they are more likely to be enacted. Officers from the

armed forces and police locally were taught about the protections already in place nationally and internationally and were encouraged to conserve the birds. Stickers reminding villagers of the plight of their cockatoo will be placed at suitable locations.

Other measures under consideration include: paying the villagers for each cockatoo which is allowed to successfully fledge (leave the nest); hiring local villagers as "wardens" to protect the nests from disturbances; protection of remaining habitat; increasing knowledge about the biology of the bird through ecological research studies; holding town meetings for informational and awareness purposes; and providing artificial nestboxes for breeding. The most aggressive and complex approach might be to initiate a captive breeding program.

For the latter, attempts would be made to locate and breed any *C. sulphurea abbotti* outside the island or in local zoological parks. Their chicks could then be used to repopulate Masakambing (unfortunately, the other two islands are too deforested to consider for this approach).

It is hoped that, in view of the gravity of the situation, international assistance and funding can be found to save this magnificent but rapidly vanishing cockatoo.

For more information, interviews with Dr. Metz, photographs or video please contact Bonnie Zimmermann, Indonesian Parrot Project, (707) 227-5155, (707) 965-2538 or bzimmerbird@gmail.com or Dr. Stewart Metz at (425-830-5295) or parrotdoc@gmail.com.

Bonnie Zimmermann,
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