

Loro Parque Fundación repatri- ates four more Spix's Macaws to Brazil

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In April of 2013, four more Spix's Macaws (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) were transferred from the specialized breeding centre of Loro Parque Fundación in Tenerife, Spain to their native country of Brazil, in a repatriation that contributes to the recovery of this iconic parrot species. Officials from the competent Brazilian Government agency, the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), accompanied the specimens in their journey to Brazil, and all four specimens have subsequently passed successfully through quarantine, and are now accommodated in the facilities of NEST, another centre authorized to keep this species. Spix's Macaws transferred from the Loro Parque Fundación include specimens that were bred in its breeding centre, and all of the specimens are owned by the Government of Brazil, which oversees the official recovery programme. The Loro Parque Fundación returned the ownership of all its Spix's Macaws to Brazil in 1997, and is the only organization outside of Brazil to have done so.

As with previous transfers, this latest repatriation is very significant because the Spix's Macaw is almost certainly extinct in the wild, and can only be recovered by captive breeding and subsequent release of macaws to the wild. The managed captive population within the official programme numbers 79 individuals, which is a very small population with which to work for its recovery. Endemic to the region of the very dry north of Bahia State, the original wild population occupied specialized habitat limited to the basin of the São Francisco river, which is now greatly reduced in area. The wild Spix's Macaw population, never thought to be large, declined due to habitat loss and then the removal of birds for trade. The last wild specimen, a male paired with a female Blue-winged Macaw (*Primolius*



maracana), disappeared in the year 2000.

The Loro Parque Fundación and Loro Parque have been instrumental in the efforts to save the Spix's Macaw ever since the first meeting organized for this purpose in Tenerife in 1987. The next key meeting took place in 1989 in Lausanne, Switzerland at the time of the 7th Conference of the Parties to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), and in addition to Loro Parque had representatives from IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources), TRAFFIC South America, the CITES Secretariat and various national CITES authorities. This meeting resulted in the formation of the Permanent Committee for the Recovery of the Spix's Macaw (CPRAA). Presiding over the CPRAA, in 1990 the Brazilian Government agreed to accept as legal, and not to try to confiscate, specimens that holders would agree to manage under the conditions of the official recovery programme (via the CPRRA), which completely excluded commercial trade. Despite other holders wavering in their commitment to these conditions over the years, the Loro Parque Fundación has always maintained its obligation and contributed fully to the recovery programme.

This commitment included, from 1990 in partnership with IBAMA, its expertise and financial resources dedicated to protecting the last wild male Spix's Macaw and its ultimate remnants of habitat. These many recovery activities, including the release of a female Spix's Macaw (which subsequently disappeared) and a pilot release of a group of Blue-winged Macaws, were possible with more than US\$ 700,000 contributed by the Loro Parque Fundación. Also during all of these years, the Loro Parque Fundación has been supporting the costs of maintaining and breeding Spix's Macaws in Tenerife, in a specialized, isolated centre which it constructed uniquely for this species to provide complete physical and biological security for the macaws.

The commitment of the Loro Parque Fundación to the continuing survival of the Spix's Macaw is accompanied by its dedication to protect many other species of threatened parrots around the world. This includes another highly threatened endemic macaw of Brazil, the Lear's Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*), in partnership with ICMBio. Since its inception the Loro Parque Fundación has financed 96 projects with more than US\$13,750,000, and continues to support 35 projects in 2013 with over US\$1,150,000.