



Rusty-faced Parrot adult. Photo: Fundación ProAves



Rusty-faced Parrot chicks. Photo: Fundación ProAves

# Record Breeding Year for Rusty-faced Parrots IN COLOMBIA

Dr. David Waugh  
Director, Loro Parque Fundación

Native to Colombia and Venezuela, the Rusty-faced Parrot (*Hapalopsittaca amazonina*) is categorized in the IUCN Red List as ‘Vulnerable’, primarily due to the small size of its population and the loss and fragmentation of its natural habitat caused by the expansion of the agricultural frontier in the Andean forest.

We have a historical record of the Rusty-faced Parrots (*Hapalopsittaca amazonina*): 6 active nests with up to 3 chicks

between March and June. In late March the first occupation was recorded, and the first chicks were recorded in early June. In May, the count of 79 individuals was performed in the usual monitoring site in the Colibrí del Sol Bird Reserve. They never had numbered that amount before.

After three successful years with the occupation of 4 nests between 2012 and 2013, and after maintenance work in 2014, we doubled this figure with 6 occupied nests.

The maintenance tasks include changes in the shape of the nests and location sites of these places, trying to find the right height. Changes were performed in the size and shape of the cavities that allow entry to the nest, and annual maintenance, where the sawdust inside is replaced at the end of the breeding season so that new couples find them suitable.

For their protection, in 2005, ProAves created the Colibrí del Sol Bird Reserve, with the support of American Bird Conservancy.

The reserve is located on the western flank of the Western Cordillera in the geographic system Páramo de Frontino, in the municipality of Urao, Antioquia. It was created to conserve the habitat of the

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Rusty-faced Parrot eggs. Photo: Fundación ProAves

Dusky Starfrontlet (*Coligena orina*) and other endemic birds in the Páramo del Sol area. It consists of an area of 1,806 acres of forest and high Andean paramo, between 2,400 and 3,750 m.

This reproductive success is thanks to the initial support provided in 2008, by The Zoological Society For The Conservation Of Species And Populations (ZGAP) that allowed the preliminary study of the natural history of the species in Colombia and project continuity provided by Loro Parque Fundación and American Bird Conservancy.

The populations of Rusty-faced Parrots (*Hapalopsittaca amazonina*) have increased in recent years. This can be evidenced in the records of the monthly monitoring performed in Colibri del Sol Bird Reserve, reaching a historical record in May 2014, where a count of 79 individuals was performed in the usual monitoring site. Never before have they numbered that amount.

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A pair of Grey-breasted Parakeets preening.

# Scientists Discover Another Population of South America's Most Threatened Parakeet

Dr. David Waugh  
Director, Loro Parque Fundación

The Grey-breasted Parakeet (*Pyrrhura griseipectus*), classified in the IUCN Red List as “Critically Endangered” is arguably South America’s most threatened parakeet, with possibly less than 200 still surviving in the wild. Until the latest discovery, only two populations of this species were known, from the Serra do Baturité and Quixadá, both in Ceará state, north-east Brazil.

The two existing sites became known after exhaustive searches by a field team of the Brazilian NGO, Aquasis, supported by the Loro Parque Fundación, Chester Zoo and the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP). Therefore, it is all the more remarkable that a third population, of only five birds, has recently been discovered by a team of young scientists employed by Aquasis. The team was granted a Conservation Leadership Programme Future Conservationist Award in 2012 by BirdLife International, which permitted several research expeditions to try to find new population and improve knowledge about the parakeet’s geographical distribution.

The Grey-breasted Parakeet is adapted to live in forest, nesting and roosting inside tree holes. Curiously, the five individuals of the newly-discovered population were found in a nest located in a small cavity on top of a rocky mountain, with dry scrub-forest called caatinga well below the site of discovery. Previous to the original searches by Aquasis, 15 populations at separated locations had been recorded, but habitat destruction and trafficking for the pet trade caused the inexorable decline of the species.

These threats still exist, but now there is much less risk that the Grey-breasted Parakeet will go extinct due to the conservation efforts of Aquasis, since 2007 supported by the Loro Parque Fundación and its partners. These efforts have included direct species and habitat conservation, especially working with



The Grey-breasted Parakeet team of Aquasis.

private landowners, and installing nest-boxes for successful reproduction because of the shortage of natural nesting cavities. Aquasis also undertakes environmental education with the local communities.

All these activities will continue, and the discovery of the third population gives new hope that this species can be nurtured back to a safe situation.

Photos: Aquasis/LPF



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