



The Red-tailed Amazon Achieves an All-time Record

Dr. David Waugh
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The world needs good-news stories about the environment, and this is certainly one of them. At the end of the 1990's the Red-tailed Amazon (*Amazona brasiliensis*), a species endemic to the coastal Atlantic rainforest of south-east Brazil was under serious pressure. Its wild population had declined to probably less than 2,500 individuals, due to the illegal removal of chicks from nests to sell as pets, to the selective removal of trees favoured for nesting and to more general disturbance from tourism development.

In 1995 the Loro Parque Fundación (LPF) started to support activities to monitor the population and to take the most appropriate action for immediate protection of the nests and habitat. This support has continued unbroken, resulting in 20 years of conservation for the Red-tailed Amazon. The first monitoring was undertaken by the Natural History Museum of Curitiba, in the state of Paraná where most of the population is found, with additional monitoring in the state of São Paulo by the São Paulo State University. On the island of Superagüi, for several years the LPF supported an important project of the Institute for Ecological Research (IPÊ) to eliminate the removal of chicks from nests by creating viable economic alternatives for the people living in the local communities.

Since 2005 the LPF has continued its conservation support in partnership with the Society for Wildlife Research and Environmental Education (SPVS) based in Paraná. Working in the area of Guaraqueçaba, where the most important breeding and roosting islands occur, SPVS monitors the reproduction of this key population, the constant presence of its researchers acting as a deterrent to any possible outsider attempting to rob nests. It not only monitors natural nests, but installs both wooden and PVC nest-boxes with great success for increasing the number of chicks fledging each year.

SPVS also connects with the local communities, by conducting an environment education programme, in partnership with the Department of Education and Culture of Guaraqueçaba, and by organizing technical support for local people to keep native bees and gain income from honey and other bee products. This is part of an agreement that the local people do not cut the favoured nest-trees of the amazons.

Finally, SPVS conducts an annual census of the Red-tailed Amazon in the non-breeding season in Paraná and São Paulo states. Within its limited coastal distribution, the Red-tailed Amazon nests and roosts on the mainly low-lying forested coastal islands. Every day the amazons fly inland from these islands to feed in the forests of the coastal hills, returning every evening. This behaviour enables an accurate census to be made.

A young Red-tailed Amazon which has been measured, leg-banded and is almost ready to fledge. Credit: SPVS.

The wonderful news is that the 2015 census recorded a grand total of 9,176 Red-tailed Amazon, the maximum ever recorded for this species. There were 7,464 individuals recorded in Paraná and 1,712 in São Paulo. Furthermore, in the breeding season immediately previous, a total of 121 Red-tailed Amazon chicks hatched, mostly in artificial nests at the most important site, Rasa Island. In total, 83 active cavities were monitored with laying in 72 of them. 86 chicks successfully fledged.

In 2004, BirdLife International and the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) down-graded the threat status of this species from 'Endangered' to 'Vulnerable'. Although internationally the species is still listed as 'Vulnerable', the Brazilian Ministry of Environment has up-dated the Brazilian Endangered Species List by lowering the category of the Red-tailed Amazon to 'Near threatened'. Given that the aim of the LPF has been to remove the species from the threatened list, the current situation is hugely encouraging.

For its efforts, SPVS won this year's Brazilian National Biodiversity Award, established to recognize the improvement or maintenance of Brazilian biodiversity. The project was chosen out of 888 other projects by institutions throughout Brazil, and the award is greatly deserved.



Above Right: Counters participating in the annual Red-tailed Amazon census. Credit: SPVS.

Below Right: A group of Red-tailed Amazons flying in the early morning to their feeding sites. Credit: Zig Koch/SPVS.

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Vinaceous-breasted parrot eating the seeds of the yellow Ipê tree.



LORO PARQUE FUNDACIÓN PROJECT **Confirms Endangered Status of the Vinaceous-breasted Parrot**

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Photos by Associação Amigos do Meio Ambiente

Found in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, the Vinaceous-breasted parrot (*Amazona vinacea*) is a species of the Atlantic Forest, having a close association with Araucaria forests. Today those are degraded, reduced and fragmented, which is the main cause of the population decline of the parrot. BirdLife International has estimated the upper limit of the total wild population at 2,650 individuals, and places the Vinaceous-breasted parrot in the category of endangered.

The Loro Parque Fundación (LPF) supports various actions for the conservation of this endangered species in Brazil, partnered by the Friends of Environment Association (Associação Amigos do Meio Ambiente—AMA), and in Paraguay by the

BirdLife International partner, Guyra Paraguay. To improve the conservation actions, it is important to monitor the populations, and in 2015 the LPF supported a complete census of the species in its three home countries.

The field teams counted a total of 3,133 Vinaceous-breasted parrots, with 2,857 in Brazil, 143 in north-east Argentina and 133 in eastern Paraguay. The predominantly southern distribution in Brazil was confirmed by the number per state, being 1,552 in Santa Catarina, 976 in Paraná, 282 in Rio Grande do Sul, 65 in São Paulo and a mere two in Minas Gerais. The state of Santa Catarina stands out for sheltering half the world's population of the Vinaceous-breasted parrot, which



Above: Vinaceous-breasted Parrot eating Araucaria pine kernels. Above right: Fragment of Araucaria forest. Right: Flock of Red-spectacled parrots in an Araucaria pine.



in the eastern portion lives during the autumn and winter alongside many thousands of Red-spectacled parrots (*Amazona pretrei*), another species associated with Araucaria forests.

Although the result is positive because it exceeds the official estimate of BirdLife International, it is still a very reduced population and the species is still endangered. The total world population of 3,133 is minimum figure because the field teams estimate that they were able to include 80% of all possible individuals.

The projects will continue their objective to minimize the negative human pressure on its habitats for breeding and feeding, seeking greater protection of the remaining forests. They will engage landowners, to explain the importance of cavities in old trees and showing that the species depends on them for nesting. The lack of criteria for the extraction of forest raw materials and management of livestock is a major problem facing the Vinaceous-breasted parrot today. The lack of sustainable management in the remaining forest fragments leads the landowners to consider native forests as having no role on their properties. As a result the old trees, with cavities in their trunks used by Vinaceous-breasted parrots and several other species for nesting, are cut and used as firewood. Cattle,

goats and horses are given entry to the forest patches, and in a slow but progressive way, grazing combined with trampling prevents the natural regeneration of the forest.

In addition to the work with landowners, presentations will be made in the schools of the main regions of occurrence of the parrot, with the distribution of educational materials such as posters and brochures, especially to make people aware of the problems of taking the young parrots from their nests.

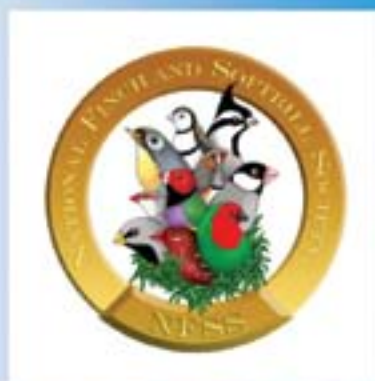
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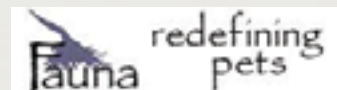
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