

How You Can Help Save Dominica's Parrots

an appeal by Rosemary Low
Loro Parque, Tenerife, Spain

Many bird breeders and avicultural societies have been generous enough to make donations to the Dominican Parrot Project sponsored by ICBP (International Council for Bird Preservation). Since I started to raise funds for this project in August 1986 they and, more recently, zoos in the UK, also Loro Parque in Tenerife, have provided virtually all the funds for this urgent conservation programme.

The current situation regarding the parrots of Dominica is, therefore, of interest to many. For those who have not read of the plight of Dominica's parrots let me briefly outline the situation. Dominica is a mountainous rainforest-covered island in the Caribbean which measures about 29 by 16 miles (46 x 25 km). Only in the last 30 years has widespread forest clearance occurred, mainly for agriculture.

It is remarkable that there are two Amazon parrots endemic to the island, that is, found nowhere else in the world: the magnificent imperial (*Amazona imperialis*), the largest Amazon in existence, and the red-necked (*Amazona arausiaca*). Both species are now concentrated on the north-western slopes of Morne Diablotin in the north of the island.

Their numbers have declined catastrophically over the past 15 years or so. In 1972 the populations were estimated as 350 to 450 for the red-necked parrot and 150 to 200 for the imperial. The current estimate is 200 for the former and only 60 for the latter.

Formerly, their numbers were reduced by hunting. Fortunately, a ban on hunting since 1976 and strenuous efforts to heighten public awareness concerning the conservation of Dominica's parrots has almost eliminated this problem.

Hurricane Allen and especially Hurricane David in 1979 caused terrible damage to Dominica's forests and greatly reduced the populations of both parrots. But today the threat to the survival of both species stems from destruction of their habitat. Anyone fortunate enough to have visited Dominica will know that is an island of extreme beauty with the best rainforests in the Caribbean. It might appear that there is plenty of habitat

for parrots but, alas, this is not the case.

Forest destruction on a large scale is a very recent phenomenon and is accelerating at an alarming rate mainly due to the building of feeder roads. It is occurring in the centre of distribution of both parrots, that is, the Upper Piccard Valley and adjacent estates of Dyer and Syndicate.

Peter Evans, the British ornithologist who has been studying both species in relation to land use since 1978, made a report to ICBP in March of this year in which he stated:

"The purchase of land in the region of Dyer and Syndicate should be a very high priority. But there should also be facilities to integrate the multiple use of land, both for agro-forestry and for wildlife tourism/conservation education. Those needs could be met by establishing an education centre cum base for research, with prime rainforest habitat acquired adjacent to this. Here nature trails and observation platforms could be constructed, along with visual displays, to draw attention to the general importance of rainforests, the wealth of wildlife they hold, and the effects of forest destruction."

Earlier this year, Wolfgang Kiessling, owner of Loro Parque, made a substantial donation to the land purchase scheme for which funds were urgently needed. In March I received a letter from Dr. Michael Rands, Programme Director of ICBP, with the following news:

"We have now, thanks largely to your efforts, secured sufficient funding to begin negotiations for the purchase of 13 acres. Peter Evans is currently in Dominica discussing this with the land owners, tenants and Forestry Department. Ultimately, it will almost certainly be necessary to acquire about 300 acres, which we estimate will cost us \$65,450 if we are to ensure a secure future for the parrots' core area."

Now I would appeal to all of you who care about the continued existence of Dominica's parrots to contribute to the land purchase scheme. Perhaps you could set aside a little from the sale of young birds, organise a fund-raising day for the local cage bird or parrot society, organise a sponsored event or, as I have done, donate books to be raffled at club meetings or buy posters to sell to birdkeepers and give the income to ICBP. It is amazing what can be achieved when many aviculturists get together. In one evening at the first international Parrot Convention in Tenerife in 1986, \$24,000 was raised. I will never forget the exhilarating feel-

ing of seeing the money in five or six currencies come pouring in!

On a much smaller scale, almost everyone can find a way to raise a little money for conservation. Birds have given you so much pleasure, now please find a way to repay a small part of that debt. Please send your donation to ICBP, Dominican Parrot Land Purchase, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

Detailed information on this project can be found in ICBP's Study Report No. 27: *The Conservation Status of Imperial and Red-necked Parrots on Dominica* by P.G.H. Evans, March 1988. ●



Cockatoo Data Needed by August 31, 1988

Richard Schubot, proprietor of Avicultural Breeding & Research Center in Loxahatchee, Florida and the founder and original funder of the Schubot Exotic Bird Health Center at Texas A&M University, is highly interested in cockatoos. He is currently gathering data for a book on cockatoos which is to be published prior to the International Ornithological Congress meeting in New Zealand in 1990.

Schubot needs information from American cockatoo breeders on aviary habits, feeding, husbandry techniques, success rate, number of eggs per clutch, number of clutches per year, number of pairs one has and have bred, and any other pertinent facts.

The birds of interest are sulphur-crested (*C. galerita*), bare-eyed (*C.s. sanguinea*), slender-billed (*C.t. tenuirostris*), Leadbeater's (*C.l. leadbeateri*), rose-breasted (*E.r. roseicapillus*), palm cockatoos, and the various black cockatoos, red-tailed, white-tailed, yellow-tailed, glossy and gang-gang.

Please do everything humanly possible to get these data to Schubot by the end of August '88. Due to a grievous error on my part, this notice is one issue late and I'm currently on Schubot's hit list. If you delay, I, Sheldon Dingle, your humble servant, will transfer from the Endangered list to the ranks of the Extinct. ●

LORIES

NEW DRY FORMULA DIET

Without a doubt Lories & Lorikeets are among the most intelligent birds in the world, with colors that can only be matched by a rainbow. Their inquisitive behavior and comical antics will bring you hours of pleasure just watching them.

Even for the beginning breeder, Lories & Lorikeets are a good choice, because most Lories settle in and begin to nest and raise young sooner than most parrots, an added bonus is that most Lories will breed year round.

If you purchase a hand fed baby Lorie, you cannot find a more devoted and loveable pet. Some Lories have the ability to talk with a vocabulary to match any of the so called good talkers of the parrot world.

SO WHY DON'T MORE BIRD LOVERS OWN LORIES AND LORIKEETS????

Until recently many considered Lories difficult to keep because of their specialized diet of nectar only, which most people believed was necessary to keep and maintain these beautiful birds, the resulting messy liquid droppings, because of their nectar diet, plus the fact that the nectar had to be changed daily have made Lories and Lorikeets unpopular.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN DISCOURAGED FROM OWNING OR KEEPING LORIES BECAUSE OF THESE POPULAR BELIEFS—READ ON!!!

Studies have shown that in the wild a Lories natural diet consists of pollen, leaf buds, fruit and flowers. A Lories diet is 80% to 90% dry and *IS NOT MADE UP OF NECTAR ONLY*. Collecting pollen is what their specialized tongues were designed to do. Note this paragraph on Lories in Joseph M. Forshaws "Parrots of the World" the aviculturists bible; "Authors have nearly always referred to the brush-tipped tongue as adaptation for extracting nectar. However, from their work with the Purple — crowned Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta Porphyrocephala*) Churchill and Christensen (1970) point out that the tongue in Lories is an organ for harvesting pollen and pressing it into a form suitable for swallowing, and is not primarily for gathering nectar. Nectar is collected when it flows, but it is not a substitute for pollen, which birds continue to harvest as their source of nitrogen. At the time the birds ingest nectar they accumulate subcutaneous fat. Nectar does not reach the stomach but is held in the crop, which enlarges to accommodate it,... Joseph M. Forshaw, "Parrots of the World" (T.F.H. Publications Inc. 1977) page 43.

Since the early 1980's a few aviculturists who specialize in breeding and raising Lories and Lorikeets have been working on and developing a dry formula diet, since this is closer to Lories natural diet. The benefits of a dry formula diet are two—fold.

1. By using a dry formula diet the keeping of Lories is simplified. You can free feed them in the same way as you would give seed to a parrot. You can leave the dry formula out for several days without fear of it spoiling, as you would worry with a nectar only diet. Also, by using a dry formula diet the droppings of the bird become more firm and cause considerably less mess than a bird on a nectar only diet.

2. The second benefit is to the Lorie breeder. This dry formula diet is closer to a Lories natural diet, and contains the nutrients they need and look for, and it is in a powder form, similar to what they would get in nature. Because of this Lories will breed more readily. Breeders who use this dry formula diet have doubled their production of babies, from the same birds who were originally on a nectar only diet.

THIS DRY FORMULA DIET IS NOW AVAILABLE TO YOU.

"LORIES LUNCHEON DRY FORMULA"

LORIES LUNCHEON DRY FORMULA is manufactured in the United States.

*LORIES LUNCHEON is priced considerably lower than the nectar diets now available.

*KEEPING LORIES AND LORIKEETS IS NOW SIMPLE FOR ANYONE.

*USING LORIES LUNCHEON DRY FORMULA SAVES YOU TIME IN FEEDING AS WELL AS CLEANING.

*LORIES LUNCHEON is designed with the health and well being of your birds in mind.

*LORIES LUNCHEON CONTAINS ALL NATURAL INGREDIENTS.

*Changing your birds over to LORIES LUNCHEON DRY FORMULA is simple. Also available is LORIES LUNCHEON NECTAR to be used as a supplement for Lories and Lorikeets that are feeding young. This LORIES LUNCHEON NECTAR is also a nutritious diet for Hummingbirds, Honeycreepers or other birds which require a nectar diet.

For more information call or write;

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