

Newly Discovered Parakeet May Soon Face Extinction

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During June 1985 an expedition organized under the auspices of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia and the Museo de Ciencias Naturales in Quito, Ecuador ventured into the cloud forest of Pinas, Prov. El Oro on the western slopes of the Andes in southwestern Ecuador. Their mission was to confirm the 1980 sightings of R.S. Ridgley, P. Greenfield and R.A. Rowlett of a parakeet, genus *Pyrrhura*, differing in coloration from other known members of the genus.

During that three week expedition, 12 specimens were collected confirming the presence of a new species, the El Oro Parakeet (*Pyrrhura orcesi*). In August of 1986, another field party returned to Ecuador to investigate the geographical distribution of the species. Travelling 100 km north of the original site where the parakeet was discovered, four additional specimens were obtained and the species' distribution and ecology further defined.

The known range of the newly discovered parakeet was determined to be no more than 100 km in length and between 5 and 10 km in width. Inhabiting a narrow band of humid, upper tropical zone forest, between

600 and 1100 m, its forest home is rapidly being altered by human activity. At the El Oro sight, for example, it was noted that between 10 and 15 large trees were being cut daily. As

gaps in the forest are created, the land is burned and livestock brought in to graze upon the sprouting grasses.

Although the El Oro Parakeet was relatively numerous and appeared to be thriving in the patchy forest now found at both localities, significant further disturbance and fragmentation of the forest may eliminate vital nesting and feeding sites. If this newly described parakeet is to survive, additional field research is needed and its forest home must be protected. At present the funds do not exist to mount such an effort. The time is now to implement such an effort as little hope will exist after the cloud forest that it inhabits is altered for agriculture.

For additional information on the El Oro Parakeet, write the AFA business office for a free copy of "*Pyrrhura orcesi*, a New Parakeet from Southwestern Ecuador, with Systematic Notes on the *P. Melanura* Complex" by Robert Ridgley and Mark Robbins. ●

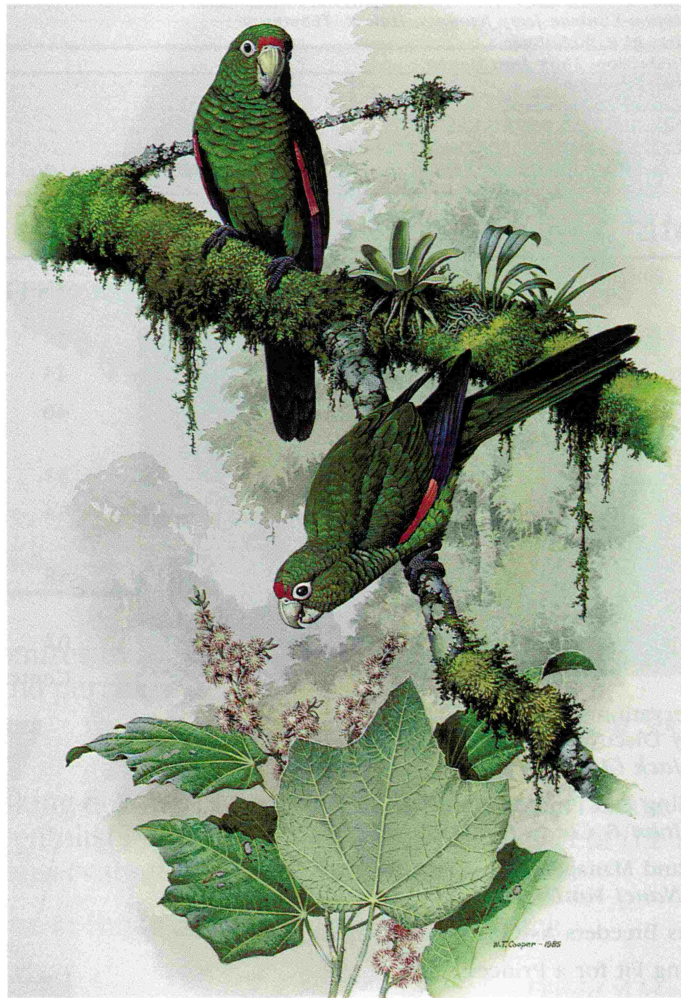


Photo compliments of Skip Glen of a painting by W.T. Cooper.

Superficially resembling the geographically distant R. rhodocephala, the species differs strikingly in its smaller size, having a red forecrown, green ear coverts, red alula and median coverts, and much more green in the tail.

Photo by Mark Robbins, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia-Vireo.



A Pyrrhura parakeet most similar to P. melanura. Readily distinguished from all forms of that species by its obsolete scaling on the breast and sides of the neck, its red frontal band, and its much greener crown.

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