

Executive Summary - Parrots: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan

Of the approximately 330 known parrot species, 95 are listed in this Action Plan. Approximately half of these occur in the Western Hemisphere and half in the Eastern Hemisphere. The majority are found in tropical regions. The proportion of extant parrot species that are threatened (28%) is one of the highest for any major family of birds. Yet the number of parrot species that have been given careful field study to determine the best means of conservation remains low. Comprehensive conservation strategies are not yet possible for many species because not enough information is available to allow rigorous identification of causes of endangerment with confidence. Because of this relative dearth of information, Chapters 1 and 2 of this Action Plan place substantial emphasis on conservation research methods and strategies applicable to parrots in general.

Parrots face a great variety of threats, ranging from the impacts of introduced predators and competitors to habitat destruction and shooting for food. For nearly 78 species of this Action Plan, habitat destruction and fragmentation are the principal causes of endangerment. Perhaps more than any other bird group, parrots also face the considerable extra pressures of the bird trade. In this Action Plan, 36 species are threatened primarily by insufficiently controlled and unsustainable harvest from the wild. Much of this harvest is fuelled by local demand, although international trade (both legal and illegal) plays a significant role for some species. Between 1990 and 1994 nearly two million parrots were traded on the world market (TRAFFIC 1999). International trade also poses additional threats of establishment of feral parrot populations in non-native countries and the global spread of exotic avian diseases. Dealing with the problems posed by the bird trade involves addressing complex internal and external regulation dilemmas within the affected countries.

Chapters 3 through 7 concern the threatened parrots of the world. For convenience, the world is split into four regions:

- Australia, New Zealand, and the south-west Pacific,
- Asia, including continental Asia, Indonesia, and the Philippines,
- Africa, and
- The Neotropics (Americas)

Each regional account outlines broad issues that affect the parrots of the region and then discusses potential conservation solutions. In the first three regions, there are also outlines of specific projects that address the most threatened species and some other regional priorities. For the Neotropical region, the majority of priority projects are included in the "actions" section of each species account. The regional accounts are followed by individual species accounts for all threatened species. They include information on current status, distribution, threats and actions necessary to ensure continued survival.

General recommendations and conclusions include:

- An urgent need to obtain reliable information on causes of endangerment for many species that have not yet been carefully studied. Effective conservation strategies should be solidly based on reliable science.
- All solutions to the conservation problems of parrots present tradeoffs and each particular solution must be tailored to the species' individual requirements and limitations.
- Parrots often offer special potential to serve as flagship species for the protection of crucial ecosystems.
- Parrots also offer great potential for the development of environmental education and ecotourism programmes.
- The detrimental effects of bird trade pose major threats to parrots. Developing effective solutions to these threats represents an especially high priority.
- Substantial biological, social, political and economic difficulties pose major hurdles for achieving sustainable harvest of wild parrot populations. No demonstrable successful harvesting projects with free-flying parrots have been established to date.

This plan is designed to aid managers and researchers entrusted with the conservation of parrot species to understand both how best to evaluate the threats faced by individual species and how best to design appropriate conservation strategies to counter the threats involved. It is intended as much to be an evaluation of conservation techniques as to be a set of specific recommendations for individual species.