

REPORT OF THE PARROT WORKING GROUP

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THE SOCIETY for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) Parrot Working Group's (PWG) mission is to support the mission of the society while focusing its activities on parrots. In the 1990s, the endemic parrot species of the Caribbean were successfully used as focal species in RARE Pride Campaigns to heighten public awareness for the conservation of these endangered birds and to build support for the creation of national parks and conservation management plans on several islands, including the Bahamas, Dominica, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. The SCSCB Parrot Working Group was the society's first working group. It grew out of these RARE Pride promotion efforts and assisted its members in the exchange of information on research, education, and management issues throughout the region.

Much of the discussion was focused on the group's future. As the Society has evolved and many other active working groups created, we discussed the purpose and relevance of this working group, including the unique contributions it can make to achieving the SCSCB's strategic goals in general and conserving Caribbean parrots in particular. Many of our members participate in the SCSCB's Caribbean Endemic Bird, Media, Wildlife Art, and other working groups.

New strategic objectives of the Society were reviewed by the chair. The following questions were presented to the group:

1. Which of these goals could be realistically tackled and what program of work is needed to address them on the part of this group?
2. Can parrots be used as a focal point for a wider discussion of issues related to forest conservation and endemism?
3. Is there a role that justifies the group's existence, and if so, how does it relate best to the strategic plan?

Rosemarie Gnam noted that there was an obvious link between the Parrot Working Group and the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival, Threatened Birds, and Media Working Groups, and there is significant room for cooperation among these groups. She noted that she still had the Parrot PowerPoint pres-

entations that were previously submitted by several island working group members to educate the public about parrots and conservation activities from specific islands in the Caribbean region. These could be updated and posted on the society's website.

A suggestion was made that the 'Parrots' and a 'Forest Conservation' working group could be combined. It was noted that Lynn Gape was doing forest resources for teachers, and the Parrot Group could be part of this effort.

The future focus of the group was discussed as to whether we should focus more on research, species recovery, people-parrot conflicts, or other still unidentified interests.

One research need identified was to assess the status of the Hispaniola Parakeet (*Aratinga chloroptera*) and Cuban Parakeet (*A. euops*), and human-wildlife conflicts related to these species.

David Wege noted that the group needed to reach consensus on what the society could do for parrots. He noted that this was a central question to be answered to provide future direction.

It was further discussed that in the Dominican Republic, poaching has been a significant problem. It was suggested that the best mechanism to improve this situation would be educational messages directed at the local level to curb interest in keeping parrots as pets.

Stephen Durand suggested that DVDs and related educational resources for the entire region could be developed. The television media campaign would focus on education at the national level and build on the experience of the RARE educational model. It was proposed that a format be developed for the parrot educational video that could be adjusted for each island—a somewhat generic DVD that could be easily modified for specific national focus.

It was noted that there was an important research need in the Dominican Republic to census how many parrots existed in captivity. It was further suggested that doing training on parrot care might decrease local demand for the birds. This does, however, create conflicts since keeping parrots in captivity is illegal in the first instance. Teaching pet bird care, as opposed to parrot care, was proposed

as a possible mitigation to the concern.

It was pointed out that Jergin Hobb, a contact of group member Eladio Fernandez, owned a high definition video camera and produced videos for sale to corporate sponsors. Jergin is currently collaborating with the Dominican Republic's Ornithological Society, and he could be approached for assistance. Eladio will follow up with him in discussions.

In conclusion, the members present still felt there was a need for the working group to function, particularly in education efforts and by working collaboratively with other SCSCB working groups, such as Media, Threatened Birds, Wildlife Art, and Endemic Birds. Lastly, Rosemarie Gnam requested a co-chair for the group. If you are interested, please contact Rosemarie at ilothian@msn.com. Given Rosemarie's responsibilities as SCSCB Treasurer, a co-chair is needed to move the group forward in addressing the SCSCB's Strategic Plan.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Development of educational materials to help support continued conservation of these species and their habitats, such as forests in the wild. As endan-

gered parrot populations recover and increase in numbers, human-wildlife conflicts can occur, particularly in agriculture areas. One project identified was the production of a DVD.

2. Development of educational materials to help the public take better care of their pet parrots so that they will be healthy and live longer in captivity. This will hopefully decrease the demand of wild parrots as pets and result in captive breeding of parrots for pets. Approach World Parrot Trust (WPT) to see if they are interested in helping with such an effort. WPT has undertaken such educational campaigns in the United States and the European Union. Rosemarie Gnam will contact them.

3. Development of educational materials to help address the illegal trade in parrots in the Caribbean region. One project identified at the past SCSCB meeting in Tobago was to produce a laminated identification card for the parrots found in the region with their legal protections noted, to assist local law enforcement and customs officials in their efforts to address this trade.

4. Find an interested SCSCB member to co-chair the PWG.