

## REPORT OF THE PARROT WORKING GROUP

ROSEMARIE GNAM<sup>1</sup> AND SAM WILLIAMS<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Scientific Authority, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Room 110, Arlington, VA 22203; e-mail: ilothian@msn.com;* <sup>2</sup>*University of Sheffield, England; e-mail: sam@conservationbonaire.org*

### INDIVIDUALS PRESENT

Rosemarie Gnam and Sam Williams (Co-chairs of the Working Group); Fernando Simal (Bonaire); Stewart Mailer and Christine Rose-Smith (Cayman Islands); Lourdes Mugica and Niles Navarro (Cuba); Bertrand Jno Baptist and Stephen Durand (Dominica); Jorge Brocca and Simon Guerrero (Dominican Republic); Leo Douglas and Susan Koenig (Jamaica); Joe Wunderle (Puerto Rico); Alleyne Regis (St. Lucia); Lystra Culzac-Wilson (St. Vincent and the Grenadines); Lester Doodnath, John Edwards, and Angela Ramsey (Trinidad and Tobago); and Karen Lavelle (USA).

### CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Rosemarie Gnam asked participants to introduce themselves and briefly state the top priorities for parrot conservation for their respective countries. She noted that this would inform and provide the direction for the Working Group's recommendations to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) meeting.

#### BONAIRE (SAM WILLIAMS)

1. Habitat degradation affects nest site availability.
2. Seasonal migration of parrots to feed in irrigated gardens produces conflict. This conflict is mostly with fruit trees in residential gardens and less with large-scale agriculture.
3. Poaching, rats, and disease are other important causes for concern.

#### CAYMAN ISLANDS (STEWART MAILER)

1. There is serious and ongoing conflict with farmers. The Department of Agriculture sells the shotguns to the farmers that are used to kill the parrots. Furthermore the politicians are not willing to prosecute the farmers who are involved.
2. Poaching is an important issue due to the strong culture of keeping parrots as pets. The Royal Palms (*Roystonea regia*) are cut down to get the chicks. A television campaign is proposed for public education in order to discourage people from

keeping parrots as pets.

3. Implementation of the existing conservation plan is much needed.
4. The Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) is an invasive on the island.

#### CUBA (ROSEMARIE GNAM)

1. Habitat is relatively well protected but suitable parrot nesting sites remain limited.
2. Public education is needed especially in relation to the pet trade.
3. There is conflict with citrus farmers (grapefruits and oranges) on the Isle of Pines.

#### DOMINICA (STEPHEN DURAND)

1. Parrot crop depredation is a serious and priority issue. One of the two endemic species, the Red-necked Parrot (*Amazona arausiaca*), commonly damages citrus fruit. He noted that detailed study and resolution of the issue was high priority not only for parrots but also for all wildlife that cause crop damage on the island.
2. A legislative review was needed of the unauthorized importation of psittacines and to control the exportation of the two endemic species. The fines need to be reviewed and include some other provisions that might better handle this problem. Stephen noted that parrot buyers from Europe were attempting to acquire parrots on Dominica. He noted that some of these individuals presented themselves as members of parrot conservation organizations in their efforts to obtain parrots.
3. A population survey is needed to determine the distributions of the two species.

#### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (JORGE BROCCA)

1. A campaign to sensitize members of the judiciary to the laws regarding wildlife conservation is needed. Currently poaching is common and the legislation prohibiting it is ignored.
2. Research is required to determine the ages of the individuals in the nation's parrot population. Currently the population appears not to be increasing due to the impact of poaching. The planned re-

search will include house-to-house surveys to determine how many parrots are kept as pets on the island.

3. Parrots and parakeets are caught and/or killed because of crop depredation, making this an important issue. Susan Koenig: The Olive-throated Parakeet (*Aratinga nana*) from Jamaica has made it to the Dominican Republic. Jorge noted that there is an idea to promote the use of the Olive-throated Parakeet as a pet to reduce its numbers and prevent it from becoming an invasive.

#### JAMAICA (SUSAN KOENIG)

1. Protection of forest habitat in the Cockpit Country due to the threat of bauxite mining.

2. Threat of non-native psittacines and the disease risk that they potentially produce.

Susan noted that parrot poaching was apparently minimal. Similarly she noted that parrot crop frugivory was restricted predominantly to small farms on the periphery of parrot forest habitat.

#### PUERTO RICO (JOE WUNDERLE)

1. There is a real need for public education. Puerto Rico is where the Eastern Caribbean was 40 years ago. Joe noted that the successful programs of the eastern Caribbean need to be replicated not only in those territories, but also in places such as Puerto Rico. Education can be a valuable strategy to mitigate poaching and parrot-agriculture conflict before these become an important issue for the island.

2. Disease, naturally introduced or otherwise, needs to be monitored and taken seriously. Currently Puerto Rican Parrots (*Amazona vittata*) are being inoculated for West Nile Virus.

3. Habitat protection: more habitat should be purchased from private landowners in the Magotes area of the island to expand the protected areas.

#### ST. LUCIA (ALLEYNE REGIS)

1. Conflict between the island's parrots and agriculture is an important issue. He noted that public perception of the parrots could potentially be eroded by the complaints of farmers on local radio talk-shows if the discussion of the issue is not adequately framed and contextualized in the media by conservation practitioners.

2. The Forestry Department requires assistance in data entry for data collected since the 1980s.

3. A comprehensive public awareness campaign is required that will sensitize the public to the developments in parrot conservation, including the issue of conflict with the farmers. This is necessary to

assist in any change in perceptions that might arise from the current state of conflict between parrots and agriculture.

Alleyne noted that St. Vincent had a similar issue regarding parrot-agriculture conflict.

#### ST. VINCENT (LYSTRA CULZAC-WILSON)

1. No attempt has been made to implement the national conservation plan. 2. There is a lack of capacity and focus on conservation biology issues.

3. The proposed cross-country road is a serious concern for its potential to produce habitat loss.

#### TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (LESTER DOODNATH)

1. Poaching pressure on the Yellow-crowned Parrot (*Amazon ochrocephala*) is a serious issue because the species is a good talker.

2. Related to the issue of poaching and the pet trade is the issue of avian disease which requires study.

3. There is a lack of basic data on many species of psittacines.

4. Angela Ramsey noted that conflict between farmers and the Orange-winged Parrot (*Amazona amazonica*) was an important concern.

#### SUMMARY

Based on this discussion of the priorities for each island state, Rosemarie Gnam and Sam Williams noted that the top priorities emerging were (1) Habitat loss, (2) issues related to compliance and enforcement, and (3) conflict between psittacines and agriculture.

Educational campaigns were proposed to help address the illegal killing and capture of parrots and also to aid law enforcement officers in better understanding and appreciating the acts and laws related to wildlife and habitat conservation. It was further noted that where there had been successful education campaigns and psittacine populations have recovered, parrot-agriculture conflict has emerged. Because there were no management strategies for these emerging conflicts, Rosemarie Gnam suggested that conflict between psittacines and agriculture could be a potential focus for the next biennial meeting of the Society, possibly by way of a workshop. Enrique Bucher, who has focused on similar conflicts in South America, was suggested as a potential presenter or contributor. Additionally, a training session to assist parrot practitioners to better manage the human dimensions of parrot-agriculture conflict was proposed. Assistance with education campaigns to reduce capture of parrots to

keep as pets or for the pet trade (e.g., funding for materials, sharing of the most effective strategies from case studies in Central America) would be also be valuable. Sam William canvassed the attendants for the best method of inter-group networking and it was agreed that using a list-serve would be most effective.

PSITTACINE-AGRICULTURE CONFLICT  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Leo Douglas remarked that experts working on Caribbean islands with extant psittacines were asked to participate in an online survey about Caribbean psittacines and crop loss/damage. Up to the time of the Working Group meeting, at least one

parrot research and conservation expert from each island or country had responded except for Haiti. Following the CEPF priorities discussion, it was noted that conflict between psittacines and agriculture was primarily occurring on the smaller Caribbean islands. Of the responses received to date, more than half of the territories identified conflict between psittacines and agriculture as an important conservation concern for their country or territory. Joe Wunderle recommended that the survey be expanded not only to include the insular Caribbean but also Central and South America. Sam Williams suggested that the World Parrot Trust might be able to assist in the wider distribution among Latin American countries.