

## REPORT OF CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES OF MARTINIQUE IN 1998

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The office of government and the Association for the Preservation of Birds began several new activities in 1997-1998.

The Regional Natural Park financed the following research in 1997:

- Inventory of *Ramphocinclus brachyurus* in the Caravelle reserve in 1998
- Research on the presence or absence of *Ramphocinclus brachyurus* in areas of this reserve (actually a study by the Association d'Ornithologie de la Martinique (AOMA))
- Inventory and study of birds population present on the Natural Reserve of Sainte Anne Islands.

Reconditioning of the Wildlife and Hunting Reserve of "Piton des Carbet" National Forest Office (1880 ha, 15 April 1998) was begun.

The Regional Council has collaborated with Marcel Bon Saint Côme in the production of a video on the birds of Natural Reserve of Sainte Anne Islands.

The AOMA, a new association, has collaborated with the Regional Natural Park in different research projects.

The Association Carouge (Etude et Recherche pour la Préservation et Promotion de la Faune et de la Flore) has collaborated in developing an environmental education plan and in research into the possible disappearance of the Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*).

Beatriz Conde has collaborated with various official offices in the emergency care of injured birds. She is attempting to get an official agreement from the Wildlife Health Center Union, so her efforts can be officially recognized.

### REPORT FROM DOMINICA

#### BREEDING BIOLOGY AND NESTING HABITS OF THE RED-NECKED OR JACO (*AMAZONA ARAUSIACA*) AND IMPERIAL OR SISSEROU (*A. IMPERIALIS*) PARROTS OF DOMINICA

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##### INTRODUCTION

The Forestry and Wildlife Division has been carrying out research on the Red-necked (*Amazona arausiaca*) and Imperial (*A. imperialis*) parrots, using its own resources, since 1994. Before 1994 funding was provided by Birdlife International.

Research includes nest-site monitoring, nest searches, study of inter- and intra-specific interactions, feeding habits, nestling development, and fledging and post-fledging activities. Environmental education is also an important component of the project.

##### PARROT MONITORING AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The parrot monitoring and research programme continued in 1995-1996, with observations made at three active Jaco (Red-necked Parrot) nests in the Syndicate area. In 1997, five active nests were discovered at Syndicate (3 nests), Morne Rchette (1 nest), and Carholm (1 nest). The May 1997 fledging of one of the Jaco chicks at Syndicate was captured on video tape for the first time. Four of five Jaco nests that were monitored during 1997 were discovered during the nesting season. For the 1998 nesting season, only three active Jaco nests were discovered at Syndicate (1 nest) and Carholm (2 nests). Data were also collected from these nests as well as at other monitored nests. A total of 25 Jaco El Pitirre 11(2)

fledglings were produced at nests monitored from 1995 to 1998. No active Sisserou (Imperial Parrot) nest has been discovered since 1994.

At the end of the 1997-1998 parrot breeding season, nine Jaco nests had been found in the Syndicate-Morne Diablotin area, two at Carholm, and one at Morne Plaisance. To date, only two Sisserou nests have been discovered, both in the Morne Diablotin area.

Also, during the early months of the 1998 parrot breeding season, Dr. Paul Reillo from the Palm Beach Zoo of Florida assisted the Division's parrot research activities with the use of a video-probe. Several visits were conducted to some of the known active and non-active parrot nest sites in the Syndicate-Diablotin, Morne Plaisance, and Carholm parrot areas. With the use of this equipment, Dr. Reillo and parrot research field staff were able to observe inside of the nest cavities, determine the stages of two active Jaco nests, and identify the problems affecting some of the non-active nests. Artificial nest boxes were also checked, and it was confirmed that they are not being used by the parrots.

##### WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Conservation Partnership Cooperative programme was developed in 1996 between the Palm Beach Zoo of

Florida and the Forestry and Wildlife Division. Under this programme, 10 artificial nest boxes were installed in parrot habitat within the rain forest at Syndicate-Morne Diablotin and two at Morne Plaisance in 1997. A time-lapse video camera and recorder were also installed to assist with monitoring activities at one of the Jaco nest sites at Syndicate. A single-cab 4-wheel drive vehicle was also received under the programme, and will be used for parrot research, as well as other activities of the Division.

The main components of the proposal for the partnership include fund-raising for the purchase of some 1430 acres of private lands that are currently in the Northern Forest Reserve at Syndicate, training for Forestry Division staff, and continuing parrot breeding biology research.

#### DOMINICA PARROT AVIARY

The number of birds at the Parrot Aviary at the Botanical Gardens remained at nine (1 Sisserou and 8 Jacos). Unfortunately, the female Sisserou which was in the care of Forestry Division for the past 14 years died in May 1998. According to an autopsy report from Dr. John Toussaint, Ministry of Agriculture, the bird died as a result of starvation caused by an egg which was lodged in its cloaca. One adult female Red-necked Parrot successfully laid two eggs in one of two boxes provided in Cage #4, but no chicks were produced.

The aviary continues to function also as a tourist attraction, with hundreds of cruise-ship passengers and other visitors coming to have close look at the two endangered species of parrots.

#### PARROT DEPREDAATION ON CITRUS CROPS IN DOMINICA

Since 1993, citrus farmers have increasingly complained about the continuing attacks by Jacos on their crops in the Syndicate, D'leau Gommier, Wet areas, Colihaut Heights, Salisbury Heights, and Carholm areas during the early and

later parts of the year. Depredation is heaviest on citrus orchards bounding tropical high rain forest in those areas.

The Forestry Division continues to investigate, make assessments, and give explanations to affected farmers on parrots feeding on their fruits. The Jaco, however, has been consuming an estimated 10% of the citrus crop in the above-mentioned sites. This is resulting in serious financial loss to farmers at a time when they can least afford the loss, given the situation with the banana industry.

The Division has been actively involved in advising farmers specifically as to the appropriate practices that could be used to reduce their losses (e.g., harvesting earlier). The Forestry Division also proposes a study aimed at identifying the parrot population elements engaged in depredation activities (i.e., whether juvenile or adult birds, whether from the locality), providing an economic analysis of the situation, and proposing guidelines and recommendations to Government for dealing with the conclusion.

#### CONCLUSION

The Division has had more and more difficulty in meeting the costs of the parrot research programme. In particular, provision of equipment (binoculars, rain gear, camping equipment) and payment for the long overtime hours worked have proven to be difficult.

Finally, it is the wish of the Division that the necessary cash inputs can be met which would assist in alleviating the problems associated with this vital research. The Division is also looking forward to producing a 30 minute video documentary on each of the species for use in tourism promotion, environmental education, and revenue generation. It is also hoped that the data collection and results of this programme will include more realistic estimates of population size, impacts of habitat loss, and generation of statistics to facilitate more informed decision making.

### ST. LUCIA REPORT, 1997-1998

DONALD ANTHONY

#### PARROT PROJECT

During the 1997 nesting season, for the first time, we observed non-parental St. Lucia Parrot (*Amazona versicolor*) pairs attacking chicks in two nests. Of those being attacked, one chick from each nest was seen with large wounds, whereas one chick had a broken wing. Both chicks were rescued: one is called "Coco" after the late Chief Forestry Officer Gabriel "Coco" Charles. The other is named "Jerry" after the late Gerald Durrell from Jersey Zoo. One chick left in a nest died, whereas the other fledged. Due to a lack of manpower this year, not much was done on the parrot project, however we know that nine nests were active. One new treetop observation platform is being put up this year.

#### WHIPTAIL PROJECT

An M.Sc. student conducted research for six months on Praslin Island, where we have a translocated population of the St. Lucia whiptail lizard. The population now stands at about 200 individuals from about seven pairs that were released there in 1995.

#### RACER RESEARCH

A one-month search for the St. Lucia racer by two researchers from Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust (JWPT) proved futile. The researchers, however, caught one female two days before their departure. This racer, found only on the tiny off-shore Maria Island, could be the rarest snake in the world.