Wildlife Conservation Society
Bronx Zoo
Ornithology Department

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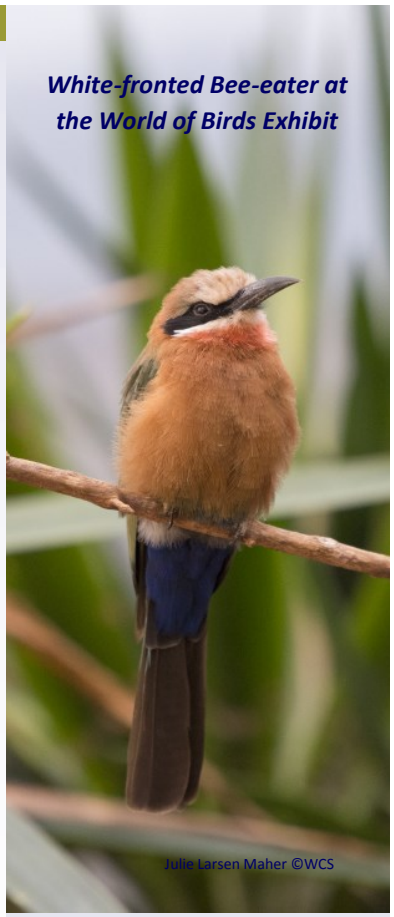
Neornithes News



White-fronted Bee-eater at the World of Birds Exhibit

Curator's Notes

Submitted by: David A. Oehler, WCS-Bronx Zoo

As part of our Objectives, Goals, Strategies, and Measures (OGSM) for the Ornithology Department, we have identified the importance of sharing knowledge, but what exactly does this mean? We share knowledge through a variety of ways, such as informal training and mentoring of staff, formal training that clearly outlines industry standards, and offering information to colleagues and the public through presentations and interpretive programs. The 2018 OGSM highlights some of these activities, while we continue to promote others outside of that documented plan.

As we move into the 2018 season, we are excited to be focusing on the various ways that we can have a positive effect on the staff and public. The Ornithology Staff will finalize a comprehensive Aviculture Training course and present this to the staff in the Herpetology Department since we have begun to house birds in the Reptile House. We have completed our intra-departmental orientation packet and now will concentrate on capturing information on the husbandry protocols in the form of an expanded collection plan that include our standard operating procedures. Our staff is working to document detailed avian husbandry protocols and we will share this information, particularly on high priority species, with our colleagues in published manuscripts, presentations, or by sharing the files with individuals throughout the zoo community. Presentations at special events here at the Bronx Zoo and also off grounds at meeting with groups like the local Audubon Society chapters is a wonderful way to share information face to face with conservation-minded people. The future is even more energizing as we work to update the interpretive graphics in the Aquatic Bird House to highlight the conservation of aquatic habitats and the birds that depend on these areas. We are also working with fifth-grade students in Brooklyn to produce a book that features the African Grey Parrot conservation program in the Congo. Combined, these projects will use the resources of the Ornithology Department to allow the staff and our visitors to learn about the Zoo and our need to conserve wildlife.

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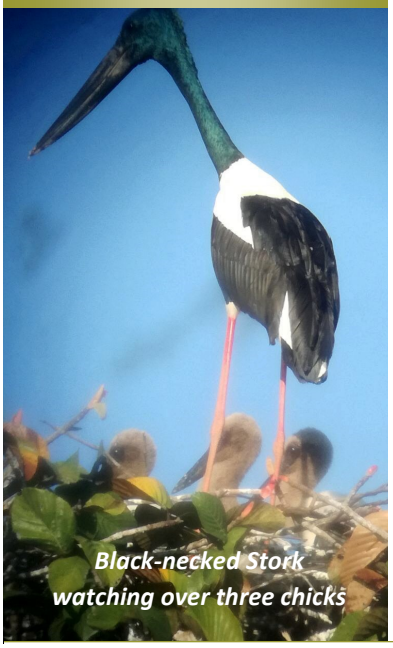


Black-necked Stork watching over three chicks

Three Rare Black-Necked Storks Hatch in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary

Submitted by: Mengey Eng, WCS-Asia

After five weeks of active nest protection by community members, three Black-necked Stork chicks have hatched in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS) in the Northern Plains of Cambodia, giving hope to the future conservation of this rare species in the country.

The Black-necked Stork, *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, is a very rare bird species in Asia and is listed on the IUCN Red List as Near Threatened. An estimated 15,000 to 35,000 individuals exist globally, with the vast majority of them in Australia. Less than 10 pairs are known to exist in Cambodia, the only country in Southeast Asia where the bird is regularly recorded.

The Northern Plains of Cambodia consists of KPWS, Prey Preah Roka Wildlife Sanctuary and Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary. The Bird Nest Protection Programme in the Northern Plains of Cambodia is a payment structure designed to combat the threat of egg and chick collection. Under the scheme, local people living in two protected areas are offered conditional payments if they successfully locate, monitor and protect nests until the birds fledge.

"Local people living in the two protected areas are offered conditional payments if they successfully locate, monitor and protect nests…"

Maleo Tracking

The conservation management population of Maleo at the WCS-Bronx Zoo successfully completed a trial to ensure that backpack mounted GPS units would be safe for these birds, *in-situ*. Two maleo were selected from separate enclosures at the Bronx Zoo to conduct trials of GPS backpack deployments on 30 August 2017 and the birds accepted these tracking units well. Our evaluation of the GPS-Backpack attachment method shows that these units may be used in a safe manner for tracking maleo. In conjunction with the WCS-Indonesia office and based on this initial study, various tracking equipment has been sent to Sulawesi to aid in the mapping of habitat that is utilized by these endangered birds and to provide protection to those delineated forest regions.

Saving the Maleo

Submitted by: Riza Aryani, WCS-Indonesia

An adult Maleo pairs caught by the camera trap at a new maleo corridor in the Bogani Landscape

Maleo, *Macrocephalon maleo*, one of Asia's most iconic birds, continues to face threats from overexploitation and habitat loss. The unique bird that uses volcanic and solar-heated sand to incubate its eggs can only be found in Sulawesi. Sadly, half of the Maleo nesting grounds in Sulawesi have been abandoned. WCS-Indonesia Program has been working to protect the Maleo nesting grounds in North Sulawesi, one of which is located in Binerean Cape. The nesting ground in Binerean cape represents the few remaining beach nesting grounds for Maleo located outside of protected areas.

In 2016, a series of camera traps were established in the Bogani-Binerean landscape, which covers forest area connecting the Maleo nesting ground on the beach and the Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, the largest national park in Sulawesi. This yielded very useful insights into the range of species in the forest. The result, along with results from various field surveys conducted by WCS was presented to the local government in 2017. Since then, the local government in Bolaang Mongondow Selatan district has been taking an active role in designating the area as Wildlife Refuge. Recognizing the importance of the area for biodiversity, the local government also invited WCS to help develop ecotourism strategy for the area. In addition to working with the local government, WCS-IP has been working closely with a local organization, CELEBICA, in securing the Maleo corridor and supporting various community engagement activities. As part of its work on Maleo conservation, particularly in the Bogani-Binerean landscape, WCS-IP is currently establishing a research station in Binerean Cape. Through this research station, it is hoped that WCS-IP could continue to improve its conservation efforts for the Maleo and other important species in Sulawesi.

One of the Dunlin captured (and later released) as part of the technical component of the workshop program. Photograph © Jonathan Slaght, WCS

Russian Far East Shorebird Workshop

Submitted by: Jonathan Slaght & Rebecca Bentzen, WCS-Russia & North America

In October 2017, the WCS Arctic Beringia and Russia Programs collaborated to run a three-day shorebird workshop held at the WCS Sikhote-Alin Research Center in Ternei, Russia. The purpose of this meeting was to share ideas, practice advanced avian tracking and data analysis skills, and to identify pressing trans-border conservation needs that can be addressed via collaborative action across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. This workshop was supported by the Trust for Mutual Understanding as a component of wider interests in training at the Sikhote-Alin Research Center.

The meeting attracted 21 specialists working across the Russian Far East and Alaska, and included participants from the Russian Academy of Sciences, Far Eastern Federal University, Moscow State University, one federal-level protected area, WCS Russia and Arctic Beringia Programs, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

We discussed several international initiatives (i.e., East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, Arctic Council's Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative) that seek to elevate conservation action from the country level to the international flyway level, and solicited thoughts for future collaborations that adhere to these frameworks. Several multilateral projects were proposed in the discussion that followed, including one that is now moving forward with WCS participation on Nordmann's greenshank, a practically unstudied species, and the second-most endangered shorebird of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (after the Spoon-billed sandpiper).

The timing of this workshop overlapped with the peak autumn migration of Dunlin, a species that has been the focus of collaboration between a number of the Russian scientists present, WCS Arctic Beringia, and USFWS. Consequently, the final day of the workshop focused on Dunlin capture and the nuances of shorebird-specific transmitter attachments. All participants were able to practice first on stuffed animals, then on live Dunlin, before the (non-functional) transmitters were removed and the Dunlin released to continue their journey south.

The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative

The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI) is a project designed to improve the status and secure the long-term sustainability of declining Arctic breeding migratory bird populations. After an assessment of the biodiversity of the Arctic regions, it was determined that many Arctic migratory species faced pressures from overharvesting and habitat degradation once they migrated south, particularly along the East Asian flyway. To address these issues, on a global scale, conservation organizations from the Americas, African-Eurasian, East Asian-Australasian and Circumpolar regions are working together to reduce stressors on migratory species, range-wide. For more details, please read the accompanying article from Jonathan Slaght and Rebecca Bentzen (left).

Parrots Under Threat of Extinction

Psittaciformes (parrots and cockatoos) are among the most endangered birds, with 31% of Neotropical species under threat of extinction. The drivers of this situation appear to be manifold and mainly of anthropogenic origin. However, this assessment is based on the last extensive consultation about the conservation situation of parrots carried out in the 1990s. We need to continue these monitoring efforts to help save these birds into the future.

Parrots more Threatened than Previously Reported

Submitted by: Igor Berkunsky, Alejandro Balbiano & Juan Masello

During the 25th International Ornithological Congress (August 2010) in Campos do Jordão, Brazil, the Working Group Psittaciformes (WGP) of the International Ornithologists' Union (http://psittaciformes.internationalornithology.org) was formed, comprising specialists in parrot research and conservation. The group includes >200 specialists from all over the world. One of the first objectives of this group was to update and increase our knowledge of the threats affecting parrots. A regional approach was adopted to evaluate threats facing Psittaciformes and a review of the conservation status of large Afrotropical parrots was completed first. From 2012 onwards, the specialists group concentrated its efforts on a study evaluating current threats faced by Neotropical parrots following a population-based approach. The Neotropical region is one of the eight biogeographic realms and includes the tropical terrestrial ecoregions of the Americas and the entire South American temperate zone.

Given the rapid development of anthropogenic threats, updated data on the threats affecting Neotropical parrots are urgently needed to strategize conservation actions. Using a population approach, the Working Group Psittaciformes addressed this need through a wide-ranging consultation involving 101 biologists and wildlife managers from 76 government agencies and non-governmental conservation organizations. We gathered up-to-date information on threats affecting 192 populations of 96 Neotropical parrot species (63% of Neotropical species) across 21 countries.

An extremely worrying result of the study shows that at least 38% of the studied populations are currently in decline. However, this figure may be an underestimate as many populations were affected by on average 10 different threats per population. The main threats to Neotropical parrot populations in the wild were related to human activities. Agriculture threatened 72% of populations, followed by the capture of parrots for the pet trade, which affected 68% of populations. Logging and Human Intrusions and Disturbance, each of them affected >55% of the studied populations. All these results, suggest a much higher degree of risk than previously thought.

The results of our study show that the capture of wild parrots for the local pet trade is currently the threat most closely associated with decreasing population trends, and capture for the international trade was also closely associated with declining populations. Capture for international trade has been one of the main threats to parrots for decades, with millions of individuals captured in the Neotropics and imported to the United States, Europe, and Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. Intensive poaching led to the endangerment and local extinction of many parrots and was likely the main cause of the Spix's Macaw's extinction in the wild. Even now, heavy trade of the African Grey Parrot has played a major role in its virtual elimination from Ghana and other regions in Africa. Some progress has been made towards reducing international trade, as the passage of the U.S. Wild Bird Conservation Act (1992) and the permanent ban on wild-bird trade by the European Union (2007) have reduced the traffic into these huge markets. However, ten years after the EU ban, South America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East continue to play major and increasing roles in the legal and illegal trade of wild parrots. Some progress has also been made as some countries have enacted new legislation to protect wild parrots including (e.g., Mexico, Nicaragua). However, thriving domestic parrot trade has been reported for Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, and Peru, with additional reports of continued poaching in several other countries.

Overcrowded flocks of Turquoise Fronted Parrots are captured for the pet trade

Photograph by: Darío Podestá, Igor Berkunsky and World Parrot Trust

The study suggests that the global conservation situation for parrots may be even worse than previously evaluated and that the need for conservation actions is urgent. It also suggests that priority should be given to conservation actions aimed at reducing the capture of wild parrots for the pet trade, mainly domestic use but also international trade, as well as the conservation of parrot populations located at agricultural frontiers.

Birds & Coffee

Submitted by Willy Maldonado Chambi, WCS-Perú

The Bahuaja Sonene National Park, located in the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, is recognized internationally not only for its high biological diversity but also for some of the best coffee in the world.

Farmers who grow specialty coffees in forest-friendly agroforestry systems could also consider bird watching tourism as a complementary activity for increased livelihoods.

To explore these possibilities, and as part of the conservation strategies being implemented in the Madidi Tambopata Landscape in Perú, WCS carried out an evaluation in August 2016 to characterize the local avifauna and possible routes of observation for potential tourism opportunities. The evaluated route begins on the platforms of Cuyocuyo in the Puna ecoregion of the High Andes and extends to the forests of the Bolivian Yungas on the outskirts of the Bahuaja Sonene National Park.

"WCS Perú fully believes that supporting coffee production will boost local development and therefore help conserve wildlife…"

249 bird species were observed over the course of the evaluation, of which 59 depend on coffee trees for food and shelter, ten are of particular interest to bird-watchers, such as the globally threatened Hooded Tinamou, *Nothocercus nigrocapillus* and Grey Tinamou, *Tinamus tao,* and the Andean Condor, *Vultur gryphus* and Green-capped Tanager, *Tangara meyerdeschauenseei* that are threatened according to Peruvian law. Eight of the species are distributed in three bird endemic areas (EBA's) defined by BirdLife International.

Birds of special interest to bird watchers

Scientific name	Common name
Lophornis delattrei	Rufous-Crested Coquette
Micromonacha lanceolata	Lanceolated Monklet
Eubucco versicolor	Versicolored Barbet
Thamnophilus palliatus	Chestnut-Backed Antshrike
Herpsilochmus sp. nov.	Inambari-Tambopata Antwren
Synallaxis scutata	Ochre-Cheeked Spinetail
Hemitriccus spodiops	Yungas Tody-Tyrant
Rupicola peruvianus	Andean Cock-of-the-Rock
Tangara meyerdeschauenseei	Green-Capped Tanager
Atlapetes melanolaemus	Black-Faced Brushfinch

Based on these results, WCS will work with the Bahuaja Sonene National Park headquarters, local municipalities, and coffee growers to evaluate the conditions necessary to promote birdwatching tourism as part of broader strategies to ensure the conservation of biological diversity in the area. WCS Perú fully believes that supporting coffee production will boost local development and therefore help conserve wildlife, which is always our main objective.

The Green-capped Tanager has a small range, estimated to be about 380km^2 and the conservation status is high.

Seasonal Movements of Breeding Snow Owls

Submitted by: Frank Doyle, Jean-Francois Therrien, Donald Reid (WCS-Canada), Gilles Gauthier & Charles Krebs

We discovered that Snowy Owls, *Bubo scandiacus*, stay in the north, not on the tundra, but in the mountainous regions of the boreal forest zone of Alaska and northern Yukon. This is the first telemetry study of Snowy Owls showing that they winter mainly in boreal forest latitudes. They chose particularly open, un-forested habitats, such as subalpine taiga shrublands and extensive wetlands, with lots of openings. Over most of the boreal forest biome, these relatively open habitats are uncommon. In winter, relatively few people live in these mountainous boreal regions, which included Denali National Park and the Yukon River Flats. Although we were not able to visit the wintering areas when the birds were there, we did get information from biologists and other people working in these regions and suspect that these Snowy Owls were moving in search of a high abundance of snowshoe hares and ptarmigan. There is still much to be learned about how the Owls get through this season.

"This is the first telemetry study of Snowy Owls showing that they winter mainly in boreal forest latitudes."

Overall, the telemetered Snowy Owls in the western Canadian Arctic showed similar nomadic patterns to those in the eastern Canadian Arctic. In the spring they settled and apparently nested not back on Herschel Island, but as far afield as northern Banks Island, Nunavut, and the Canning River delta in Alaska. And in winter, they visited the landscapes they had chosen the year before but did not settle. Instead, they moved on to other regions.

Satellite telemetry has proven a powerful tool in tracking bird movements. This study has provided additional evidence in support of our picture of the Snowy Owl as a nomad, capitalizing on the periodic superabundance of prey that Arctic tundra can provide. It has also turned our attention more to the northwest boreal mountains as wintering habitat. Perhaps the stories and experiences of indigenous peoples, such as the Gwich'in, can complement the high tech approach used in this research and shed more light on how the Owls survive the winters.

Snowy Owls

The Arctic-nesting Snowy Owl is well known for its long seasonal movements, appearing in winter on farmlands and cleared areas from the temperate Pacific coast, across the prairies to the eastern seaboard, well south of the boreal forest. Recent studies have also highlighted how eastern Arctic nesting Snowy Owls frequently winter near open water habitats in the Arctic ice pack, and rarely nest in the same region in consecutive years. In a new study, these authors were keen to find out whether Snowy Owls nesting in the western Canadian Arctic follow similar nomadic patterns of seasonal life, and wherein particular they wintered. Four adult females were instrumented with satellite tags while on nests on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk, Yukon.

Two White-winged Ducks are rescued after being found weak and unable to fly.

Two Globally Endangered White-winged Ducks Rescued in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary

Submitted by: Mengey Eng, WCS-Asia

Two White-winged Ducks, *Asarcornis scutulata*, were rescued from Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS) after they were found exhausted and unable to fly. The conservationists from the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and WCS have sent these two ducks to the Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB) in Siem Reap Province for care and rehabilitation until they have fully recovered and are able to survive in the wild.

"After receiving information from two local villagers, our team traveled to collect the ducks and hand them over to the ACCB team for care and rehabilitation," said Rours Vann, Wildlife Research Team Leader in KPWS for WCS and MoE.

"Ensuring local communities have awareness of conservation issues is vital to encourage them to report wildlife information to protected area authorities. If they do not understand the importance of wildlife conservation, they might have eaten or sold these ducks," he added.

The Northern Plains of Cambodia is home to many globally threatened bird species. These include Critically Endangered Giant Ibis, White-shouldered Ibis, and three species of vulture, globally Endangered White-winged Duck, and many other important wildlife. WCS is working in collaboration with the MoE to conserve the Northern Plains' forests and wildlife through a variety of conservation interventions. The Bird Nest Protection Programme is a payments scheme designed to combat the threat of egg and chick collection. Under the scheme, local people living in Kulen Promtep and Chhep Wildlife Sanctuaries in the Northern Plains of Cambodia are offered conditional payments if they successfully locate, monitor and protect nests until fledging.

White-winged Duck

The White-winged Duck is listed on IUCN's Red List as Globally Endangered, primarily because its global population is in decline due to habitat loss, disturbance along riverine habitat and illegal poaching. The global population of this enigmatic duck species is estimated to be between 250 and 1,000 individuals, while little is currently known about the numbers present in Cambodia.

It mostly resides in dense tropical evergreen forest and is known to prefer inaccessible swampy areas formed by numerous rivers, streams, etc. The duck is generally found in pairs or in small parties of four to six, though parties of more than 10 are also recorded. It loves shade and spends most of the day in secluded jungle pools, occasionally perching on the trees during the day.

The severe decline in the duck's population is largely attributed to the destruction, degradation and disturbance of riverine habitats including loss of riparian forest corridors. The resultant small, fragmented populations are vulnerable to extinction due to loss of genetic variability, disturbance, hunting and collection of eggs and chicks for food or pets. More local threats to the bird include inappropriate forest management, and pollution.

Green Honeycreepers call the World of Birds, "Home"

We have acquired two pairs of Green Honeycreepers, *Chlorophanes spiza*, to help us interpret the rainforests of Central and South America in the World of Birds Exhibit. The beautiful and colorful tanagers are found in the canopy of the forests from southern Mexico to Brazil. These honeycreepers forage in pairs and often with other species of birds in and around trees that produce the fruits and flowers that they feed upon.

Male Green Honeycreeper

The Green Honeycreeper is fairly common throughout its range. There is not a great deal of information that we know about this bird's natural history and our hope is to learn more about this species as we move forward with their care.

More Andean Cock-of-the-Rock Arrive!

Submitted by: David Oehler, WCS-Bronx Zoo

The Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, *Rupicola peruvianus*, is a polygamous species where the males gather in communal leks along forest ravines. These leks, consist of two to four males that display to each other in a common arena, while the females look on. Usually, in the morning, the males flap their wings, bob their head and bow to one another while producing loud calls and clapping their beaks. Female decide which male has the best display and then shows her decision by pecking at the neck of that particular male. After mating, the female leaves the lek and the male returns to the arena to begin his display in the hope of attracting yet another female.

To make sure that the Cock-of-the-Rock lek that we establish in the World of Birds Exhibit provides enough inspiration for our males to display and then result in females nesting and choosing a suitable mate, we have pursued different strategies. We are placing models of male Cock-of-the-Rocks in the display, during the breeding season, to simulate incoming males. The models not only look like the males as they would display in the arena, but they are equipped with MP3 players that produce the loud calls of these breeding males.

To enhance the likelihood that our group of birds will have the females nest and produce eggs, which

Male Andean Cock of the Rock at the World of Birds Exhibit

Julie Larsen Maher ©WCS

means that the males will need to deliver vigorous courtship displays, we have acquired additional Andean Cock-of-the-Rock to add to our display. So far this has proven successful as we monitor the group's behavior and witness daily courtship displays, that have caught the attention of the new females.

Make sure that you take the opportunity to stop by and go through the upper level of the World of Birds Exhibit to see these spectacular birds in action…come early to see the best performances.

A male Cock of the Rock and a model of an additional male that helps create an artificial lek at the World of Birds Exhibit

Julie Larsen Maher ©WCS

Jungle World, a Refuge from the Winter

On these cold winter days, it is always great to spend a little time in the warmth of the indoor exhibits at the Bronx Zoo. Jungle World is one of those areas and it is also an exhibit where you can discover the fascinating diversity of birds and their assorted behaviors. After your first encounter with spectacular species, such as the Malayan Tapir, Gharial, and Painted Storks, take a bit more time to explore and observe. Watch the storks as they interact, pairing off together this spring, and begin to construct their nests. After our breeding group of Long-tailed Finches produces more than thirty offspring, we are transferring approximately two dozen of those juveniles to Jungle World to provide more movement and sound throughout the display. For the fourth year in a row, the Victoria Crowned Pigeons have built a substantial nest and, if you look closely, can see a new squab growing quickly under the parent's care. Always active and moving through the trees, the Grosbeak Starlings stay together in a tight flock and they are nesting and rearing chicks in the nest cavities higher along the wooden beams of the habitat. Enjoy the tropical habitat of Jungle World and don't forget to do a bit of birdwatching along the way.

Long-tailed Finch

"Watch the storks as they interact, pairing off together this spring, and begin to construct their nests."

Yes, "Bird Brain" is now a Compliment

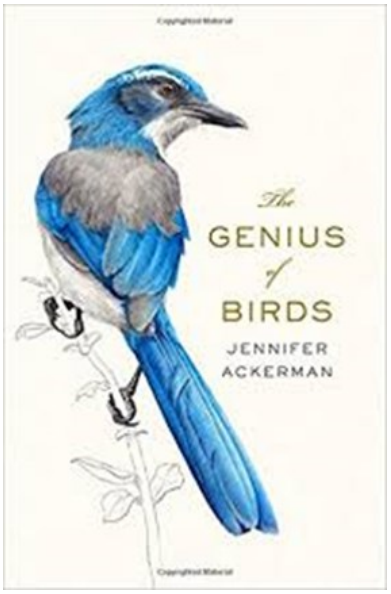
A book review: The Genius of Birds, by Jennifer Ackerman

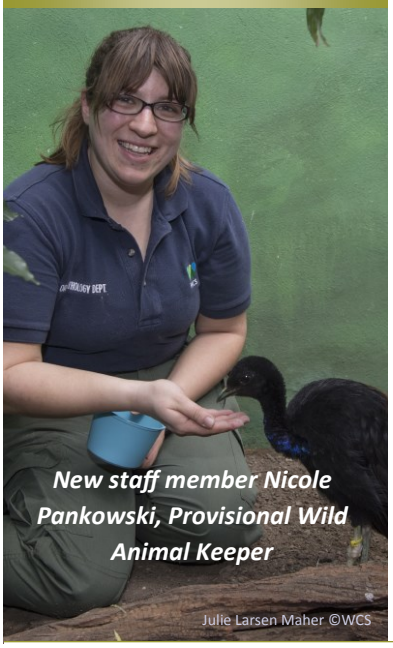
Submitted by: Christine Sheppard, WCS-Bronx Zoo (retired)

Back when I first studied birds (yes, long ago), the thinking was that bird brains didn't look mammalian, much less human, and so they couldn't share the attribute of intelligence. It was believed that demands of flight had caused birds to minimize weight, including brains and that bird brains were largely hard-wired. Nobody, after a few months in the Bird Department, could question the intelligence, ingenuity, and flexibility of birds (well, many birds) but it has taken a while for the rest of the world to catch up.

Jennifer Ackerman does an excellent job, summarizing an enormous amount of work on avian intelligence in an accessible way in her book, "*The Genius of Birds"*. When I first picked up the book, I thought – 'OK, this will be about clever crows' – and there definitely are clever crows – including one, Loki, although not mentioned by name, who resided at the Bronx Zoo for a couple of years. And the New Caledonian crows that punch hooked tools out of pandanus leaves (!!). But there is a lot more.

Vocal learning, it seems, is found exclusively in humans and some birds – not even the other apes – and, despite eons of evolution apart, is controlled by the same group of genes. Great Tits not only have personalities, the population of a thousand or so near Oxford University had a complex social network and birds forage in flocks determined by their personalities. Male Eurasian Jays, after watching their mates eat, may intuit their preferences and offer them foods the mates prefer, even if different from their own preference. The last chapter, Sparrowville, looks at invasive species – the more successful ones have larger brains – and especially looks at the House Sparrow and how the population of this adaptable species can possibly be declining.





New staff member Nicole Pankowski, Provisional Wild Animal Keeper

Staff News

Submitted by: Ken Huth, WCS-Bronx Zoo

The Ornithology Department had some recent staffing changes and we would like to congratulate those involved.

One Senior Wild Animal Keeper is unfortunately absent due to an injury and Lisa Walker has been promoted to Provisional Senior Wild Animal Keeper at the World of Birds Exhibit to fill this vacancy. Provisional Wild Animal Keeper Alonzo Johnson has also been promoted to a full time position in the Special Animal Exhibits Department. Good Luck Alonzo! He will be missed.

Lisa Walker has been promoted to Provisional Senior Wild Animal Keeper at the World of Birds Exhibit

"He received a "warm" welcome to New York. His first two weeks with us were during that extended cold snap and were all about ice and snow…"

Summer Interns

Do you know of an energetic individual that would be interested in a summer intern opportunities?

Our summer intern program provides a unique opportunity with hands-on experience assisting in caring for a variety of birds. This is a paid seasonal position with a maximum of 40 hours per week. A typical work schedule is 8:00 am to 4: 30 pm, including weekends and holidays. Typically, half of the workday will include a themed project involving some aspect of avian husbandry practices. This may include compiling data and formatting it for shared viewing. If you are interested in exploring this opportunity please contact Susan Schmid (sschmid@wcs.org).

In addition to the promotions we also have two new provisional keepers starting with us this past December. The Ornithology Department welcomes both Casey Borkenhagen and Nicole Pankowski who started with us as Provisional Wild Animal Keepers on 26 December 2017.

Nicole is a New Yorker by birth and has worked at Staten Island Zoo and El Paso Zoo, but she has also been a volunteer at the New York Aquarium and a seasonal staff member at the Camel Barn, here at the Bronx Zoo. She is assigned to the World of Birds Exhibit.

Casey comes to us from Honolulu Zoo and has also worked with a wildlife rehabilitation center in Houston. He will be training on the World of Birds Exhibit kitchen routine. He received a "warm" welcome to New York. His first two weeks with us were during that extended cold snap and were all about ice and snow on the crane and waterfowl ponds around the park that are under his care. Iced over exhibits is not something he saw much in Hawaii.

Please extend a warm welcome to them as you see them around the Zoo.

Casey Borkenhagen started with us as a Provisional Wild Animal Keepers

Featured Keeper: Brian Tierney, Senior Wild Animal Keeper

We talk to one of our featured staff members: an ongoing series of interviews by Kevin Hils, WCS-Bronx

Brian Tierney volunteers at Teatown Lake Reservation

DESCRIBE YOUR BACKGROUND IN ORNITHOLOGY.

My bird education started with when I was volunteering with Teatown Lake Reservation. Teatown is a nonprofit nature preserve and environmental education center in the Lower Hudson Valley. I spent a year there volunteering before I started working here at the Bronx Zoo. Teatown also has a raptor program where they house a small number of birds of prey that they use for education programming. Besides the raptor program, surprisingly, they do turtle rehab as well! I received my Biology Degree from a small place called Unity College, but they are a well- known environmental college. Some of the college's graduates have appeared on Animal Planet's "North Woods Law" program.

WHEN DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU WANTED TO BE AN ANIMAL KEEPER?

When I started at the Bronx Zoo, I figured that I would work for 1-2 years. I didn't think that would be staying here this long! (Brian started at the zoo in 1999.)

SO, IF YOU DID NOT BECOME AN ANIMAL KEEPER, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

I would have followed what I studied at Unity College, I always wanted to be a wildlife biologist and work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. That was my original plan.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF MY JOB?

Watching the animals that you work with daily, watching these animals that you develop a relationship with, watching them grow up and then they successfully raise other young on their own. Watching our Adjutant Stork parents "Columbus and Diana" foster- rear a chick that belonged to "Fergie and Calvin". That chick named "Clark" is now is 2 years old.

WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THE JOB?

The hardest part for me is having to deal with quality of life issues with an elderly animal or a very sick animal. That's never easy.

WHAT DOES YOUR "NORMAL" DAY LOOK LIKE?

I come to work expecting to take care of my animals for the day, do the feeding, watering, and cleaning while checking out my animals behaviors. Hopefully, nobody gets sick and needs a vet check. After all of that, I can head for home, it's been a good day!

DESCRIBE YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM YOUR JOB.

The Zoo used to do a "Pelican Spring Out" event as the pelicans would get released onto Cope Lake (the large lake behind the CGC building), each year and it was being photographed by several newspapers as a PR event. The last time the Zoo did a "Pelican Spring Out" event was in 2005. As "Buddy" the large white Pacific Pelican was walking along a plank we were holding up for them to use as a ramp, he opened his wings as he leaped into the pond and smacked me in the face. Well, of course, that was the picture that was released by the Daily News the next day. My mom had the picture laminated and it's still up at the house today!

Endangered Bali Mynas hatch at the World of Birds Exhibit

Bali Myna, *Leucopsar rothschildi:* Also known as Rothschild's Mynah, Bali mynah and Jalak Bali – this emblem bird of Bali is on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species – currently listed as Critically-endangered, and is now the second rarest bird in the world. A single chick was successfully reared by the pair of Bali Myna in October and at least one chick is in the nest box having hatched on 14 January 2018. These birds are managed under the Bali Myna SSP and we are placing progeny in various displays at the World of Birds and Jungle World exhibits.

Notable Hatchings

Submitted by: David Oehler, WCS–Bronx Zoo

African Spoonbill, Platalea alba: A successful hatch of an African Spoonbill was confirmed on 18 January 2018 in the Aquatic Bird House. At hatch, the African Spoonbill's bill does not resemble a spoon. It hatches with a short beak, that later develops into its spoon-like shape. It usually resembles a spoon right before it is time to leave its nest.

Band-tailed Pigeon, *Patagioenas fasciata*: The colony of Band-tailed Pigeons continues to produce progeny in the World of Birds Exhibit with four squabs reported to have fledged between September 2017 and December 2018. Watch for these birds in the South America habitat as several pairs may nest close together in a loose colony. In courtship, male flies up and then

glides in a wide circle, giving a call and fluttering wings toward the end of a glide. Once he lands, he will make a cooing call with his chest and neck puffed up, lowering his tail feathers.

Inca Tern, *Larosterna inca*: Rats, cats, and other introduced predators on the islands in Chile where these birds nest have adversely affected nesting and breeding success. Islands are particularly susceptible to the effects of invasive species; for example, free-roaming cats have contributed to the extinction of 33 species on islands. Following years of lobbying by in-country NGOs, the Peruvian government

created the Guano Islands and Capes National Reserve in 2009, protecting Inca Tern as well as sea lion breeding colonies on 28 guano islands and cliffs along the coastline. A total of 21 Inca Terns have hatched and successfully fledged at the Aitken Aviary, adjacent to the Aquatic Bird House during the fall of 2017.

Lesser Bird of Paradise, *Paradisaea minor*: Birds of Paradise of extraordinary birds. The males grow plumage that comes in unusual shapes and brilliant colors. There are 39 species of birds of paradise and most of those species live in New Guinea or islands near New Guinea. They tend to be few in number, elusive and difficult and expensive to find. Fall is the beginning of the bird of paradise breeding season and we have successfully begun that season with the first hatch of the lesser bird of paradise being recorded on 24 October 2017.

Magpie Robin, *Copsychus saularis*: The pair of Magpie Robins, housed at the Jungle World exhibit nested

and reared a chick in September of 2017. The Magpie Robin is found across most of Indian and parts of Southeast Asia. These birds are commonly observed in gardens as well as forests. They are particularly well known for their songs and were once popular as cage birds.

Red Bird of Paradise, *Paradisaea rubra*: The future of the bird of paradise requires protection from hunting of the birds for the plume trade particularly for the black market. Palm oil plantations are destroying thousands of acres of bird of paradise habitat, as is large-scale industrial logging. Oil prospecting and mining are encroaching on New Guinea's wildest forests. Meanwhile, human populations continue to grow. WCS is working with local communities to conserve the needed habitat these birds need to survive. Here at the Bronx Zoo, we have enjoyed a moderate level of success with the bird of paradise program and now are enhancing our husbandry protocols to promote the females to rear their chicks without the staff's assistance. Two chicks hatched on 17 November 2017 and the female was successful in rearing these chicks to fledge.

Grosbeak Starling, *Scissirostrum dubium*: A juvenile Grosbeak Starling was observed in the Jungle World exhibit in September and represents the first progeny from that flock. The Grosbeak Starling is also known as the Scissor-billed Starling, is monotypic in the genus *Scissirostrum*. It is endemic to Sulawesi, Indonesia

Victoria Crowned Pigeon, *Goura victoria*: Victoria Crowned Pigeons are found in the forests of northern New Guinea and are considered near threatened due to habitat loss, poaching for the pet trade and hunting for food and their ornate feathers. A single squab was hatched by the pair of Victoria Crowned Pigeons on 17 December 2017.

A Victoria Crowned Pigeon broods its squab in the Jungle

"A juvenile Grosbeak Starling was observed in the Jungle World exhibit in September and represents the first progeny from that flock."

Violaceous Euphonia, *Euphonia violacea*: The Ornithology Staff successfully hand-reared a Violaceous Euphonia chick that hatched on 21 October 2017 that was not thriving in the nest. In some parts of its range, Violaceous Euphonias are prized as a cage bird, making it vulnerable to trapping.

White-breasted Woodswallow, *Artamus leucorhynchus*: An additional two White-breasted Woodswallows have successfully hatched in the propagation area of the World of Birds facility in December 2017. We are managing three separate breeding groups and will now begin to place this progeny on display.

A Violaceous Euphonia being hand-reared in the nursery

A fledgling White-breasted Woodswallow is examined by the staff

WCS saves wildlife and wild places world-wide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature.

WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on earth. Our goals are to conserve over half of the planet's known biodiversity and some of its most iconic and threatened species, while benefitting the well- being of the people residing in these regions and millions more through the provision of ecosystem services.

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