

TOP 10 NOMINATION FORM

2020 Topic: Illegal wildlife (plants and animals) trafficking and unsustainable trade

Species must meet these qualifications:

- Must be native U.S. species or international species with significant U.S. demand
- Must be experiencing substantial decline (do not have to be threatened/endangered listed)
- Must be directly or indirectly impacted
 - Direct: exploited as trophies, pets, medicines, etc.
 - Indirect: impacted by imported exotics or imported disease vectors (e.g., chytrid)

Your Name: Alice Stroud

Organization: Born Free USA

Email: alice@bornfreeusa.org

Phone: +33 7 70 41 26 32

Nominated Species (Common Name & Scientific Name): African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*)

Question 1: Threat to the Species

How is the species and/or its habitat threatened by illegal wildlife trafficking and/or unsustainable trade? Note the extent of the threat and whether it is direct or indirect. Include references to relevant scientific studies. Does the species face any associated political threats?

Since 2 January 2017, African grey parrots have been listed in Appendix I of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Fauna and Flora (CITES) which bans their international commercial trade. They are also listed in the IUCN Red list as “Endangered”.¹ However, the demand from the United States (as well as from Europe and the Middle East) to keep these wild birds as pets continues to threaten African grey parrots’ survival in the wild.

Despite the efforts being made to protect the species, regulate or prohibit the legal trade, and curb the illegal trade from West and Central Africa, illegal collection and smuggling continue and the species is declining. A report published after the listing of the species in CITES Appendix I indicated that “demand for illegally sourced parrots from West and Central Africa continues to exist” and that there had been an “escalation in African grey parrots’ seizures since late 2016” with “seizures involv[ing] approximately 3,000 birds in less than three years between late 2016 to mid-2018, compared to approximately 5,000 birds seized in almost 10 years from 2007 to late 2016.”² In 2018, 12 live African grey parrots were seized in India³ and 11 were seized in

¹ <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22724813/129879439>

² <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/18/doc/E-CoP18-034.pdf>

³ <https://robindesbois.org/en/a-la-trace-n23-le-bulletin-de-la-defaunation/>

Spain.⁴ In 2019, 2 live African grey parrots were seized in Italy⁵⁶, 18 where seized in Cameroon⁷, and 20 where seized in Tunisia (in vehicles coming from Libya).⁸

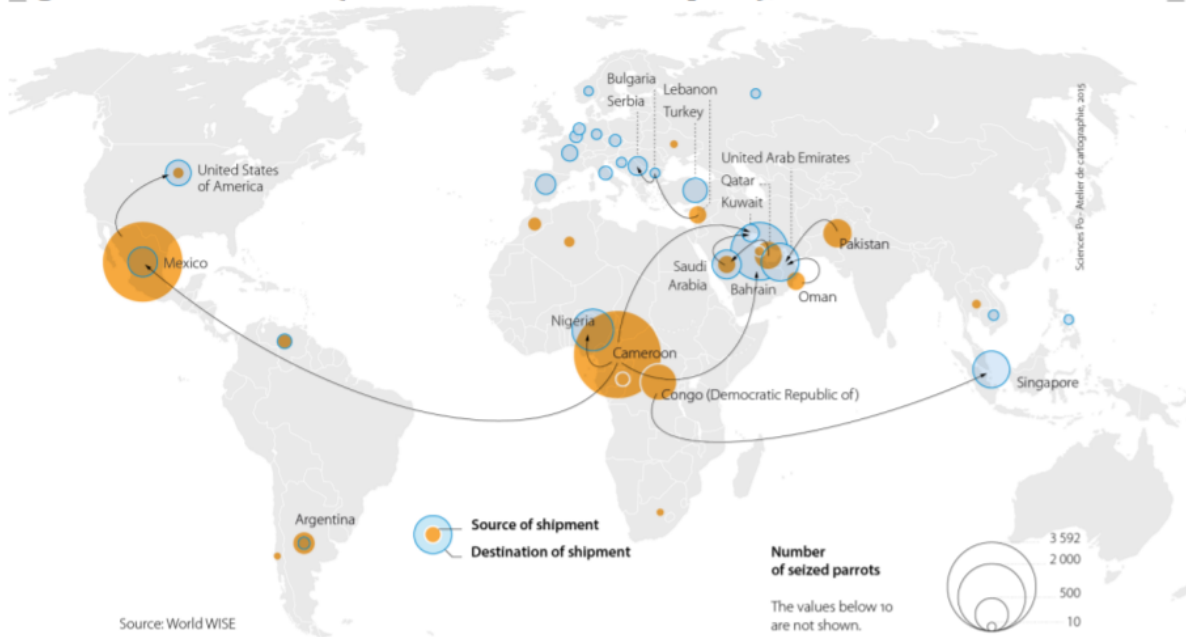
The most significant threats to the species are therefore legal and illegal harvesting of wild birds for domestic and international trade, as well as habitat loss.

In Ghana, the population decreased by at least 90% between 1992 and 2016. During this time, Ghana's CITES-reported exports of African grey parrots amount to 35 individuals, so almost all of this trade was illegal.⁹

While data regarding the exact number of parrots impacted by illegal trade is difficult to obtain, it is strongly presumed that illegal trade is facilitated by social media and internet.

The United States is one of the destination markets for illegal trade as indicated below.

Figure. Seized Parrots (New world and Afro-tropical), 2007 to 2014.



Source: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/wwcr/Parrot.pdf>

⁴ <https://robindesbois.org/en/a-la-trace-n23-le-bulletin-de-la-defaunation/>

⁵ <https://robindesbois.org/en/a-la-trace-n23-le-bulletin-de-la-defaunation/>

⁶ <https://robindesbois.org/en/a-la-trace-n24-le-bulletin-de-la-defaunation/>

⁷ <https://robindesbois.org/en/a-la-trace-n25-le-bulletin-de-la-defaunation/>

⁸ <https://robindesbois.org/en/a-la-trace-n25-le-bulletin-de-la-defaunation/>

⁹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/World_Wildlife_Crime_Report_2016_final.pdf

Question 2: Role of the Species

What is the ecological and/or scientific importance of the species? Note if it is a keystone species and describe its role in its environment. Include references to relevant scientific studies.

African grey parrots span the forest belt of equatorial forest from Ivory Coast through Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon and into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Because of their diet of seeds, nuts, fruits and berries and wide-ranging daily movements, grey parrots likely play a significant role in seed dispersal¹⁰. They act as definitive hosts to both tapeworms and blood parasites.¹¹

Question 3: Message

What is the most important message about this species for decision-makers and the public?

Because of their ability to mimic human speech, African grey parrots are in high demand for the pet trade in the United States, but the trade in these birds is jeopardizing their survival in the wild and presents a significant public health risk.

Despite a ban in international commercial trade, these birds are still heavily trafficked and are often smuggled in crowded cages in deplorable conditions. Stressed and injured animals shed more viruses and are more susceptible to infections. Between 60-90% of parrots captured for trade die from poor handling prior to their being shipped for the international market.¹²

Like other pet birds, grey parrots are potential carriers and/or transmitters of zoonotic diseases and some of them could have an important impact on human health.¹³ Contribute to stopping public health outbreaks and stop the extinction crisis, DO NOT KEEP WILD BIRDS AS PETS.

Final Selections

If my nomination is selected for inclusion in the report, I would like the first draft of the species profile for the report to be written by (choose one):

You (ESC), and then my NGO will edit the profile and approve the final draft.

Me (my NGO). I understand that I (and other participating writers) will need to adhere to ESC's writing guidelines.

Deadline: May 8, 2020

Send to: top10@endangered.org

¹⁰ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/prop/060216/E-CoP17-Prop-19.pdf>

¹¹ http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Psittacus_erithacus/#f24bd35f16068305e983d5a67b1bc755

¹² <https://www.fws.gov/international/cites/cop17/african-grey-parrots.html>

¹³ See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280027966_Disease_Conditions_and_Clinical_Signs_of_Pet_Birds and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3668993/>