

Cape Parrot Newsletter

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Photo by: Darren van Eyssen



Photo by: Sascha Dueker

UKZN Cape Parrot 2021 Count

The UKZN student volunteers missed out on the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day (CPBBBD) in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year students were able to count at the usual site in Ingeli and Empasheni forest patches with the appropriate safety protocols being followed. The weather was good for parrot counting but the total count was lower than usual. The plantation had changed drastically at the Empasheni side as the pine trees in the area adjacent to the indigenous forest patch had been cut and cleared.

There were some delays getting to site on Sunday morning, and before the counters could get into position at the top of the Empasheni hill, a large group of parrots could be heard flying off for the morning. It was surprising as the sun had not yet come up and it was too dark to see where they were in the sky let alone count how many.

Once the teams set up along the hill, and the sun came out, a few volunteers got a great view of a Cape Parrot pair basking. They sat in clear view for a long while so we managed to get some great pictures of them. Almost all of the 20 or so volunteers saw parrots so overall it was a good trip. It was nice to get out into the field again and we look forward to the 25th year of the Cape Parrot count in 2022.



Photo by: Colleen Downs

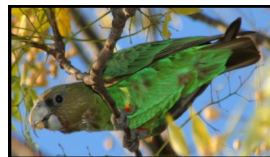
UKZN student volunteers for Cape Parrot Big Birding Day 2021

Recent Relevant Parrot Papers

A New Threat: Online Markets

A paper was published in November 2021 in Conservation Biology by Davies et al. titled “Identifying opportunities for expert-mediated triangulation in monitoring wildlife trade on social media”. The study addressed the shortcomings of using automated detection systems and the current moderation practices to properly identify and bring to light online wildlife trade practices, using West African bird trade as a case study. The authors found that most of the advertising for these birds was not explicit with proper taxa names many times not stated, or even the term “for sale”, in the posts. This makes it harder to find and monitor these activities which allows the illegal trading to continue. To address this issue they suggest integrating expert-mediated triangulation, using multiple types of information from not only what is in the posts but also for example geographical information, together with the current automated detection and moderation practices to expose potential illegal trade on these platforms.

Article abstract available here: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13858>



The Parrot Trade in Singapore

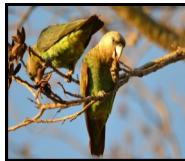
“Understanding Singapore's dynamic parrot trade ecosystem” by Jain et al. was published by Cambridge University Press in August 2021. The paper gives feedback to a survey done exploring the parrot trade not by the numbers but instead to understand the attitudes and opinions of the consumers as part of the trade “ecosystem”. Various parrot interest groups such as: pet parrot owners, hobbyist group members, breeders, and others in the trade were questioned about their motivations for owning parrots and their opinions on sustainable trade. They also interviewed some informants to understand the current trade dynamics and reviewed online hobbyist groups. They found that members of the hobbyist groups were more likely to acquire more parrots. Pet owners were concerned about illegal trade and preferred to get captive bred birds even if they would have to wait longer to get the bird. The different approach of this study has uncovered some of the more complex social aspects around the parrot trade and has also highlighted the important role hobbyist groups play in improving sustainable trade.

Full article available here: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605320001246>

Introduced and Naturalized Parrots Around the World

A review paper published in *Diversity* in August 2021 by Calzada Preston and Pruett-Jones titled “The Number and Distribution of Introduced and Naturalized Parrots” looked to estimate the total number of parrot species that have been introduced and have established breeding populations in non-native areas. The pet trade brings in parrot species to non-native areas and they escape captivity or are released sometimes resulting in these established populations. The authors found 166 parrot species introduced in 120 countries with 60 naturalised populations. The United States and its territories had the most with 28 different parrot species. Parrots are generally adaptable and can establish well in non-native areas. This can create conflict and negatively impact ecosystems. The Rose-ring Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) and the Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) were found to be the most widespread species and the most successful out of all parrot species.

Full article available here: <https://doi.org/10.3390/d13090412>



Synthesis of Actions to Tackle Illegal Parrot Trade

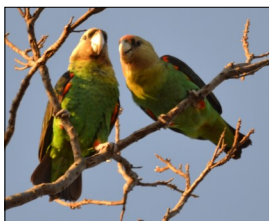
Another review paper published in *Diversity* in April 2021 by Sánchez-Mercado et al. titled “A Literature Synthesis of Actions to Tackle Illegal Parrot Trade” reviewed research on illegal parrot trade globally to understand what actions have been taken and identify which aspects need more research. They analysed the supply, which focuses on the action of reducing harvesting, and the demand, of which the action is about creating consumer behavior change. The transitional side has actions such as legislation, control of zoonosis, invasion control, identifying network actors (i.e. the traders and the markets), and aiding physical detections (i.e. identification of illegal species). They found that overall research has increased over recent years with The Americas and Australasian parrot genera over represented compared with the total. The Americas also had the highest diversity of research across the trade chain, with most of the research coming from Brazil. Research on behavior change is currently growing but a better understanding of the supply dynamics in local markets is lacking, as well as knowledge about the actors and their interactions. Further understanding is needed about actions around protecting areas, livelihood incentives, and legal substitutes as these are under-explored with parrots.

Full article available here: <https://doi.org/10.3390/d13050191>

Cape Parrot Big Birding Day 2021

The annual Cape Parrot Big Birding Day was in its 24th year and held over the weekend of 8th and 9th May 2021. Over the years generally less than 1600 maximum Cape Parrots have been counted in the wild. This year ~163 volunteers were posted at least 70 localities. A new locality was included in this year's count, i.e. Wolkberg in Limpopo Province. This will help us to get a better sense of the northern population so thank you to John Davis for coordinating in this area. The maximum number of Cape Parrots for 2021 counted was 716 in the southern Amathole region (there is a possibility of double counting here because of movement to pecan trees), 645 in the central region (187 in the former Transkei, 458 in KwaZulu-Natal) and 116 from the northern subpopulation in the Limpopo Province. The total count was 1477 Cape Parrots in the wild. With the weather being poor because of a cold front which brought in rain, and still being in COVID-19 restrictions which limited some volunteers, this is most likely an underestimate. There continues to be a decline in numbers of Cape Parrots in some areas of their distribution range, notably in the Boston, Dargle, Balgowan and Karkloof areas in KwaZulu-Natal. As always the continued monitoring of the species can and has informed conservation plans so much appreciation goes to the volunteers for continuing to participate.

**The next Cape Parrot Big Birding Day will be on
7 and 8th May 2022**



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