TRADE REVIEW

SOUTH AFRICA'S TRADE IN AFRICAN GREY PARROTS

Teresa A Mulliken

A TRAFFIC EAST/SOUTHERN AFRICA REPORT

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FOREWORD

South Africa has long been perceived as a major player in the international wild bird trade and, there have been allegations that the country serves as a base for smuggling operations involving native and protected species. Concerned with ongoing rumours of illegal trade, and recognising that little actual research on South Africa's bird trade had been conducted, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa initiated a comprehensive study in mid-1993. Research was completed in early 1994, with the results of TRAFFIC's bird trade study to be made available in 1995.

During its examination of the larger trade, TRAFFIC paid particular attention to those bird species imported to South Africa in the greatest numbers. African Grey Parrots, popular as cage-birds in Europe, North America and Asia as well as South Africa, topped the list. This report documents the scale of South Africa's trade in African Grey Parrots, analyses existing trade controls, captive breeding and domestic market dynamics, and provides recommendations on means to more effectively control the trade in the future.

Recognising that government institutions and policy are currently undergoing profound transitions in South Africa, some of the information contained in this report may have changed since the research was conducted. In particular, it needs to be noted at the outset that South Africa comprised four provinces and 10 so-called homelands, four of which were regarded by the South African Government as independent, when this study commenced. Since then, the Republic of South Africa has been reshaped and now comprises nine regions, each with its own conservation authority. Consequently, readers need to bear in mind that any reference to the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and/or Transvaal provinces in this report refers to the geographical and political entities that existed in 1993. Regardless of the recent changes, it is hoped that the findings of this study will serve as a useful tool to inform and guide the government, conservationists, bird breeders and others who have an interest in ensuring that South Africa is a positive force for the conservation of African Grey Parrots and other wildlife species in trade.

Teresa A. Mulliken

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

* African Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* are one of the most popular parrots in the international bird trade. Native to western and central Africa, the species is comprised of two subspecies, the 'Maroon-tailed' or 'Timneh' African Grey *P. e. timneh* and the larger and more widespread 'Red-tailed' African Grey *P. e. erithacus*.

* International trade in African Grey Parrots is controlled under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which South Africa has been a Party since 1975. Data compiled from annual reports provided by CITES Parties shows that over the last 15 years, more than 500,000 African Grey Parrots have been documented in international trade. This figure approaches the rough estimate of the species' current total wild population — 600,000 birds — provided by Lambert *et al.* (unpubl.).

* The African Grey Parrot was identified under the CITES 'Significant Trade' project as a heavily-traded species for which additional information was necessary in order to assess the impact of the trade on wild populations. CITES annual report data show that from 1981 through 1989 approximately 440,000 African Grey Parrots were traded internationally, with South Africa the net importer of approximately 17,000 (4%) (Inskipp *et al.*, 1988; Inskipp and Corrigan, 1992). The present study reveals that the majority of those parrots reported as imported into South Africa during this time were exported from countries where African Grey Parrots are uncommon or where export bans were in effect.

* This trade study was prompted by the findings of the CITES Significant Trade project and TRAFFIC's own research, the latter of which indicated that African Grey Parrots were imported into South Africa in greater numbers than any other CITES-listed bird species. Research for this study focused on reviewing provincial legislation and trade controls, analysing CITES annual report and South African trade data, and interviewing government personnel, conservationists, aviculturists and bird traders in South Africa.

* Each of South Africa's four provincial conservation authorities are authorised to issue CITES permits and to oversee the wildlife trade in their region, and to act in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. Specific provincial trade controls and procedures are not uniform, however, and co-ordination between provincial authorities is ineffective.

* Transvaal and Natal provinces serve as the major entry and exit points for most birds traded to or from South Africa, and therefore trade controls and procedures in these provinces were examined in detail. Inadequacies identified with respect to current trade controls include:

    * import permits in Natal may be issued on the basis of copies of CITES export permits rather than originals;

    * unused permits are not returned to provincial authorities;

    * information provided by prospective South African exporters concerning captive-bred stock is generally accepted at face value; and

* bird shipments are not routinely inspected by provincial wildlife authorities either immediately upon arrival or prior to export, nor, in the case of Natal, during quarantine.

* South Africa's CITES annual reports are based on information contained on CITES permits issued by the four provincial governments rather than reflecting the actual number of birds imported or exported. The accuracy of some of South Africa's CITES annual reports is called into question by the absence of some permits issued from annual report documents, and by previous erroneous declarations of the origins of birds exported from South Africa.

* Trade data analysed for this study indicate that South African permits for the import of approximately 20,000 African Grey Parrots were issued during the 1980s and for the import of over 23,000 of these parrots from 1990 to 1993. The increase in imports in recent years appears to be linked to the imposition of import restrictions in some major consuming markets, particularly Europe, and the refusal of certain airlines to carry shipments of wild-caught birds.

* The reported origin of African Grey Parrots imported into South Africa shifted from one exporting country to the next during the past 13 years. Much of the reported trade involved birds of questionable origin, for example:

* from 1982 to 1987, provincial import permits were issued for the import of over 10,000 African Grey Parrots from Togo, a country where the species is reported to occur in very small numbers;

* from 1987 to 1990, 10,700 African Grey Parrots were reported as imported from Ghana in spite of a domestic export ban instituted in that country in 1986;

* from 1990 to 1993, Guinea was reported as the source of over 8,000 African Grey Parrots imported into South Africa, although a 1991 estimate placed the country's total population at 5,000 to 10,000 birds (Dandliker, 1993b); and

* from 1987 to 1992, almost 6,000 African Grey Parrots were reported as imported from Côte d'Ivoire. The following year, the CITES Secretariat requested that further imports be refused due to indications that African Grey Parrots were being smuggled into this country for subsequent re-export.

* Illegal shipments of African Grey Parrots have been seized at or turned away from some South African ports of entry in recent years, including 85 birds from Zaire in February 1992, and 140 birds from Zaire in November 1993, both cases at Jan Smuts Airport, and 10 birds at Lanseria Airport, also in 1993.

* South Africa's domestic pet trade appears to have absorbed several thousand African Grey Parrots annually. Advertised prices have fluctuated in recent years, ranging from R900 – 3,500 (US$300 – 1,167) per pair, with captive-bred birds generally being more expensive than wild-caught ones.

* South Africa has not consistently been a major exporter of African Grey Parrots to international markets. Available trade data show two peak export periods: permits for

the export of over 2,400 birds were issued during the two-year period 1985 to 1986, and for the export of approximately 700 African Grey Parrots in 1993. Most of the birds were declared to have been captive-bred, although it is likely that many of these birds, particularly those exported in the 1980s, were wild-caught.

* Captive breeding of African Grey Parrots is increasing in South Africa, although total annual production during the early 1990s was believed to be in the low 100s. Aviculturists are not required by law to keep breeding records or to band or otherwise mark captive-bred nestlings. Government inspections of private aviaries are rare, with the result that it is difficult to document captive breeding successes.

* Import restrictions on the trade in African Grey Parrots in Europe and on wild-caught CITES-listed birds in general in the United States may provide incentives for exporters seeking access to these markets to mis-declare wild-caught birds as captive-bred specimens. Available trade data do not provide concrete evidence of 'laundering' of African Grey Parrots from South Africa to these or other markets, although mis-reporting of trade in captive-bred specimens was identified. Future exports of captive-bred birds need to be carefully monitored to ensure the integrity of the trade.

* South Africa's permit-issuing procedures and trade controls should be reviewed and strengthened in order to address a number of outstanding problems. While it is unreasonable to expect an immediate transformation, progressive action should be initiated. Primary recommendations include:

  * the development of an integrated permit and information management system, linking all national and provincial CITES authorities;

  * the physical inspection of all shipments of African Grey Parrots immediately upon arrival or prior to export; and

  * increased monitoring and regulation of captive-breeding operations for African Grey Parrots.

INTRODUCTION

African Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* are perhaps the best known of all parrot species, epitomising what many people imagine when they think of a pet parrot: a large showy bird that 'talks'. African Grey Parrots have been traded as cage-birds for centuries, and continue to be trapped in large numbers — tens of thousands of birds per year — to supply the pet trade.

As the name implies, African Grey Parrots are native to a wide swath of west and central Africa, ranging from Guinea Bissau south to northern Angola and east as far as western Kenya and Tanzania. Although they are most commonly associated with lowland forest, African Grey Parrots are also found in coastal forests, mangroves, savannah woodlands and open country (Forshaw and Cooper, 1989).

There are two recognised subspecies of African Grey Parrot. Frequently referred to as 'Maroon-tailed' or 'Timneh' African Greys, the subspecies *P. e. timneh* is found in southern Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and western Côte d'Ivoire (Forshaw and Cooper, 1989). This subspecies is smaller than the 'Red-tailed' African Grey *P. e. erithacus*, which is more widespread and numerous, and is also considered to make a more attractive and intelligent pet. Red-tailed African Greys are therefore more valuable and more common in trade. Unfortunately, available data often do not indicate which subspecies are in trade, making it impossible to quantify separate trade levels for either Red-tailed or Maroon-tailed African Greys.

A very rough estimate of wild African Grey Parrot populations was recently provided by Lambert *et al.* (unpubl.), who placed the total population at approximately 600,000 birds. Despite the large numbers of birds thought to remain in the wild, trade data indicate that African Grey Parrots have paid heavily for their popularity. Over 500,000 African Grey Parrots have been traded internationally in the last 15 years, a number approaching the recent population estimate. This figure does not take into account those birds retained in domestic markets or those dying prior to export and, as a result, the number removed from the wild is certainly higher. Although the species' status in the wild was not identified as threatened, Lambert *et al.* (unpubl.) concluded that numbers were declining and that trapping for trade was the primary threat to the species.

Concern that the international trade in wildlife might drive some species to extinction if not properly controlled prompted 80 countries to come together in 1973 to draft the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES entered into effect in 1975, with South Africa joining as a Party that same year. Parrot species were first covered under the treaty in 1981, following adoption of a proposal by the United Kingdom (on behalf of Belize) that all but a few species be listed in CITES Appendix II. As a result, most parrots, including African Grey Parrots, were subsequently required to be traded according to the rules of the Convention[1].

1. The proposal excluded two species, Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* and Cockatiels *Nymphicus hollandicus*, and was amended to exclude a third species, Ring-necked parakeets *Psittacula krameri*. These species are captive-bred in the hundreds of thousands, and therefore CITES trade controls were deemed unnecessary. Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* were included in CITES Appendix III at the request of Ghana, with the result that CITES or equivalent documentation must accompany shipments of the species in international trade. A number of parrot species that have been identified as being threatened with extinction by trade are included in CITES Appendix I; international trade of Appendix I species for commercial purposes is banned under CITES.

The international trade in African Grey Parrots came under scrutiny in the mid-1980s, when a review in the trade in CITES-listed animal species (known as the CITES 'Significant Trade' project) drew attention to the large numbers of African Grey Parrots in international trade, and noted that many of the birds exported were reported as originating from countries where the species was uncommon or where trade was known to be banned. The authors of the significant trade report recommended that the trade be examined in more detail in order to establish its effect on wild African Grey Parrot populations (Inskipp *et al.*, 1988). A later review of the trade reached similar conclusions, recommending that field surveys be undertaken in several range states and additional trade controls be implemented in a number of countries (Inskipp and Corrigan, 1992).

CITES annual report data analysed by Inskipp *et al.* (1988) and Inskipp and Corrigan (1992) show the international trade of approximately 440,000 African Grey Parrots from 1981 through 1989. South Africa was a net importer of nearly 17,000 African Grey Parrots during this time, or approximately 4% of the total reported trade. Many of the birds imported into South Africa were exported from Togo, not known to harbour large African Grey Parrot populations, and Ghana, which banned all exports in 1986. More recent information indicates that South Africa's share of the African Grey Parrot market may have increased due to import restrictions implemented in other consumer countries, and to the refusal by some airline companies to carry wild-caught birds.

This report provides a detailed review of the South African trade in African Grey Parrots, examining this country's past history of African Grey Parrot imports and the potential role that South Africa may play in the larger international trade in future.

METHODOLOGY

Research undertaken for this study consisted of three main components: review of provincial legislation and trade controls; compilation and analysis of trade data; and interviews. While this study primarily focused on South Africa's international trade in African Grey Parrots, some information on the domestic market was also collected.

1. Legislative analysis

There is no national legislation to control the trade in wild birds and other wildlife in South Africa. Instead, conservation-related trade controls are promulgated and implemented at the provincial level. Research for this report focused on the legislation and trade control procedures in place in the Transvaal and Natal, as these two provinces are known to be the major entry and exit points for most birds in trade to and from South Africa. Trade controls in Cape Province and the Orange Free State were also reviewed but are not discussed in detail in this report as few birds are actually imported through these provinces.

2. Interviews

More than 75 individuals from government and the private sector were interviewed during TRAFFIC's study of South Africa's bird trade, with all interviews conducted in an overt manner. As some of the information obtained was of a sensitive nature, individual sources have not been referenced in this report.

3. Data analysis

Several types of data were analysed in detail for this study: CITES annual report data maintained by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) covering all CITES annual reports submitted to the CITES Secretariat from 1980 to 1992; South African CITES annual reports as compiled by the Department of Environment Affairs from 1982 to 1993; provincial CITES import and export permit information from 1992 to 1993; import permit data compiled by Transvaal Nature Conservation (TNC) for the years 1987 to 1991; and sales information contained in *Avizandum*, a South African avicultural magazine, over the last several years.

CITES annual report data and South Africa's CITES annual reports

CITES Parties are required to produce annual reports documenting all their imports and exports of CITES-listed wildlife, including African Grey Parrots, which occur within each calendar year. The most comprehensive and detailed data on South Africa's trade in African Grey Parrots are contained in these CITES annual reports, both those produced by South Africa and those produced by other countries trading with South Africa. Annual reports are submitted to the CITES Secretariat, the administrative body for the treaty, and then forwarded to WCMC, which serves as the repository for annual report information. WCMC incorporates information contained in CITES annual reports into a computerised database. Analysis of the resulting CITES annual report data is useful for assessing compliance with the Convention and identifying species such as African Grey Parrots for which existing trade levels might pose a threat.

Parties are not required to identify the subspecies of wildlife in trade unless that subspecies is specifically identified in the CITES Appendices. CITES annual report data maintained by WCMC do identify birds as *P. e. timneh* when trade is reported to that level, but do not record trade in the nominate subspecies.

There are a number of constraints that limit the ability of trade figures compiled from CITES annual report data to describe the trade with complete accuracy. Countries that are not a Party to CITES do not submit annual reports, and countries that are Parties sometimes fail to submit them, South Africa being a welcomed exception. As a result, trade to or from some countries may go unrecorded for several years, or entirely. Furthermore, CITES annual reports for many countries document the information contained on CITES permits issued by government personnel rather than the composition of the actual shipments entering trade. This is true for exports from South Africa, for example. Finally, CITES permits, which have a validity of up to six months, may be issued during one calendar year but not used until the next. Trade reporting may follow this same pattern, with the result that exports reported by one country in a given year may not turn up as imports until the following year. This can have the effect of inflating reported trade volumes, as some shipments may be counted twice (once in one year, and once in the next) in trade data.

South Africa's CITES annual reports are compiled by the Department of Environment Affairs, which takes its information from a summary of permits issued submitted by the four provincial governments. In the case of Natal, where import permits are issued in advance of a shipment's import or export, reported trade reflects permits issued rather than permits used. Transvaal import permits are issued only after birds have arrived in the province and therefore are likely to better reflect the number of birds in individual shipments; as in Natal, however, export permits are recorded in annual reports regardless of whether or not they were used by the exporters to whom they were issued. Because inspection of wild bird shipments at the time of export or import is extremely limited in South Africa and most of its trading partners, there are few records with which to compare what has actually been imported or exported with the information provided on permits.

Finally, as would be expected, there is no quantitative information regarding the number of birds successfully 'smuggled' into or out of South Africa or other countries — the numbers can only be guessed at. Some CITES Parties regularly record seizures of illegally imported wildlife in their CITES annual reports. South Africa does not, however, with the result that the number of birds intercepted by South African authorities remains unknown.

The limitations on the accuracy of CITES annual report data described above prevent researchers from determining the exact number of African Grey Parrots in international trade. Nevertheless, these data do provide a very useful indication of the scale of the trade and the main countries involved.

Provincial permit data

Each of South Africa's four provincial wildlife conservation departments operates its own wildlife permit and record-keeping system. Permit information provided by the provincial offices for the years 1992 and 1993 was compiled by TRAFFIC and analysed during this study, as were provincial permit data compiled by TNC for the years 1987 through 1991. For the reasons noted above, in some cases, provincial CITES permit data

may not accurately reflect actual trade volumes, particularly where exports are concerned.

Analysis of trade volumes

Data from the sources listed above were accepted at face value during this analysis. However, in cases where discrepancies were noted, the 'benefit of the doubt' was given to the largest reported trade figure. As an example, if South Africa's CITES annual report showed the import of 100 African Grey Parrots from Guinea in 1990, while Guinea's CITES annual report showed the export of 150 African Grey Parrots to South Africa during the same year, and TNC's permit data showed that permits were issued for the import of 200 African Grey Parrots from Guinea, then the largest figure, 200 in this case, would have been accepted as the minimum import figure from Guinea for 1990. Two exceptions have been made to this general rule:

The first concerns the import of 1,000 birds from Togo in 1983, identified as 'Psittaciformes' in South Africa's CITES annual report for that year. Because all other bird imports from Togo were reported to have been African Grey Parrots, these birds are regarded as having been African Grey Parrots as well.

The second concerns a shipment of 1,500 birds in 1987 which was reported as imported from Togo in South Africa's CITES annual report, but identified as imported from Ghana in provincial permit data. As the export permit number provided in South Africa's annual report is similar to those of other export permits so referenced for declared imports from Ghana in 1987 and 1988, Ghana has been accepted as the country of export for these birds.

SOUTH AFRICAN CONTROLS ON THE TRADE IN AFRICAN GREY PARROTS

South Africa lacks any native African Grey Parrot populations, and therefore any birds held in captivity or offered for sale in the country must either have been captive-bred locally or imported from elsewhere. The vast majority of South Africa's African Grey Parrot trade involves imported birds and is subject to CITES trade controls, as well as to South Africa's national and provincial legislation and the domestic laws of exporting countries.

South Africa was one of the first countries to join CITES, becoming a Party in 1975. The Convention requires all Parties to adhere to a system of trade controls designed to protect wildlife species from over-exploitation for international trade. Before authorising the export of indigenous African Grey Parrots or other Appendix II species, exporting countries are required to make a determination that the trade will not be detrimental to the species' survival in the wild. All international shipments must be accompanied by valid CITES export permits issued by a designated government authority of the exporting country. Similar documentation is required in the event that wildlife is traded through intermediate countries (imported and then re-exported).

In keeping with CITES, the South African Government is required to ensure that all African Grey Parrots imported into the country are accompanied by valid CITES export permits. Exports and re-exports of African Grey Parrots from South Africa are similarly required to be accompanied by CITES export permits issued by a competent South African authority. Responsibility for wildlife conservation and trade is largely delegated to the

provinces, with the result that controls on the import, export and possession of African Grey Parrots are independently promulgated and implemented by the nature conservation bodies of Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal provinces.

Virtually all legally-traded African Grey Parrots and other wild birds are imported and exported via Transvaal and Natal provinces, with international trade in CITES-listed birds to and from the Cape and Orange Free State limited to a few hundred birds per year. The provincial legislation of both the Transvaal and Natal requires that provincial import permits be issued for all imports of CITES-listed bird species. For Appendix II species like African Grey Parrots, this requirement actually exceeds the permitting requirements established under CITES.

South Africa's CITES annual reports indicate that, prior to 1990, the vast majority of African Grey Parrots imported into South Africa were imported on the basis of Transvaal import permits. Transvaal also appears to have been the primary province issuing permits to export African Grey Parrots to other countries. During 1990 and 1991, however, the import trade for this species appears to have shifted almost entirely to Natal. One of South Africa's largest importers moved from the Transvaal to Natal around this time, which might provide one explanation for the shift in trade. Both Transvaal and Natal issued import permits for shipments of African Grey Parrots during 1992 and 1993.

Trade controls in the Transvaal

Responsibility for controlling the wildlife trade in the Transvaal is accorded to Transvaal Nature Conservation (TNC), the conservation authority within the Transvaal Provincial Administration.

Import controls:

Prospective importers of African Grey Parrots are required to provide TNC with an import permit application and a copy of the CITES export permit which is to accompany the shipment intended for import. Following review and approval of this documentation, importers are provided with an 'approval in principle' document authorising the import of the birds specified on the export permit. An actual import permit is issued after the shipment has arrived in South Africa, and the birds have been inspected by TNC enforcement staff or their equivalent in the Cape or Natal provinces. Export permits accompanying imported shipments are cancelled at that time.

TNC staff rarely inspect birds immediately upon their arrival, with inspection generally taking place at some point during the 30-day quarantine period required by the Department of Agriculture (DOA). Most shipments are quarantined in the DOA facility located near Jan Smuts Airport. Quarantine staff report that unless shipments are accompanied by appropriate documentation, including CITES permits, they are refused entry and immediately re-exported.

At the time that this study was undertaken, TNC personnel had no means of knowing whether birds for which an 'approval in principle' document had been issued were actually imported through and quarantined in Natal. Natal DOA quarantine staff appear to have been unaware that TNC required import permits, rather than 'approvals in principle', for TNC-approved imports, and that shipments were not routinely inspected by Natal conservation authorities. As a result, it is possible that some bird shipments

could have been imported via Natal on the basis of 'approvals in principle', without being inspected or TNC import permits ever being issued and, therefore, without being accounted for in TNC import records or South Africa's CITES annual reports.

Export controls:

CITES permits for the export of wild birds are issued by TNC staff based on information provided by the prospective exporter. The exporters' premises are rarely inspected, and claims that birds have been captive-bred are generally accepted at face value. There is no inspection of bird shipments prior to their export from South Africa. As a result, it would theoretically be feasible for birds to be exported without being accompanied by appropriate documentation. Finally, there are no mechanisms in place to determine whether or not export permits that have been issued have in fact been used.

Possession controls:

There are no controls related to the possession of African Grey Parrots or most other exotic bird species in the Transvaal.

Trade controls in Natal

Responsibility for controlling the wildlife trade in Natal is accorded to the Natal Parks Board (NPB).

Import controls:

Unlike Transvaal authorities, NPB staff issue import permits at the time import applications are approved. As a result, import permits are issued based on an examination of a copy of the CITES export documents, rather than the original documents themselves. NPB inspection of imported bird shipments during quarantine is infrequent, and NPB staff almost never inspect birds immediately upon arrival. Customs authorities have stated that they occasionally endorse CITES documents but this is not an established routine and some permits remain uncancelled.

However, DOA quarantine staff in Durban have stated that NPB CITES permits are always cancelled to prevent reuse. DOA staff also noted that export permits, of the country-of-origin, are not always seen and some may remain unendorsed. Consequently, it appears that importers may, exceptionally, retain valid export permits which could be reused.

Export controls:

The procedure for acquiring export permits in Natal is essentially the same as described above for the Transvaal. The control of exports is enhanced somewhat, however, as NPB authorities have secured the agreement of South African Airways staff, who handle most live cargo exiting Durban's Louis Botha Airport, to require that NPB export permits accompany all shipments to be exported from the province. As in the Transvaal, there is no requirement that unused permits are returned to the issuing authority.

Possession controls:

There are no controls related to the possession of African Grey Parrots or most other exotic bird species in Natal.

Co-ordination between provincial permit authorities

There have been several initiatives undertaken to facilitate better co-ordination between nature conservation authorities in each of the four provinces in order to prevent unauthorised imports of African Grey Parrots and other CITES-listed birds. All four provincial governments recently agreed that importers must obtain provincial import permits from the authorities in the province in which birds are to be quarantined, regardless of their final destination. Importers seeking to move birds to a second province following quarantine are further required to obtain inter-provincial permits authorising this trade. However, it needs to be noted that trade across inter-regional boundaries is not monitored, and therefore inter-provincial permit requirements can be readily ignored without risk of detection or penalty. Furthermore, due to a lack of agreement between the nine new regions, this policy is unlikely to be implemented in the near future.

IMPORTS OF AFRICAN GREY PARROTS INTO SOUTH AFRICA

African Grey Parrots are one of the most popular pet parrots in the world and, not surprisingly, are imported into South Africa in far larger numbers than any other CITES-listed parrot species. CITES data show that over 43,000 birds were imported into South Africa from 1981 to 1993 (Table 1), compared with 10,900 specimens of the second most commonly imported species, Blue-fronted Amazon *Amazona aestiva*. Based on CITES annual report data and the countries of origin reported for those African Grey Parrots in trade, virtually all birds imported into South Africa were taken from the wild rather than captive-bred.

Table 1: Total South African imports of African Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* recorded in CITES annual report and South African provincial permit data (1981-1993).

Year	*P. erithacus* (subspecies unknown)	*P. e. erithacus*	*P. e. timneh*	Total
1981	6	0	0	6
1982	803	0	0	803
1983	1,081[1]	0	0	1,081
1984	3,393	0	0	3,393
1985	3,262	0	0	3,262
1986	1,224	0	0	1,224
1987	4,357	0	0	4,357
1988	3,957	0	80	4,037
1989	1,466	0	100	1,566
1990	209	3,122	2,280	5,611
1991	864	300	1,555	2,719
1992	2,755	381	5,235	8,371
1993	993	2,696	3,013	6,702
Total	**24,370**	**6,499**	**12,263**	**43,132**

[1] South Africa's 1983 CITES Annual Report listed the import of 1,000 'Psittaciformes' from Togo. These psittacines were likely to have been African Grey Parrots and are treated as such in this report.

Sources: CITES annual report data compiled by WCMC and TRAFFIC; South African CITES annual reports; Transvaal permit data compiled by TNC (1987-1991); South African provincial import permits (1992-1993).

From 1981, the year that all but two parrot species were listed in the CITES Appendices, through 1993, African Grey Parrots accounted for approximately 20% of all CITES-listed birds reported to have been imported into South Africa. Annual import volumes remained below 1,000 birds until 1983, then fluctuated in the low to mid-thousands before rising to over 8,000 birds in 1992. Annual imports averaged approximately 4,000 birds per year during the 10-year period 1984 through 1993.

As is shown in Table 2, the reported origin of birds imported into South Africa shifted from one African exporting country to the next, presumably in response to various factors including the availability of stocks (both in countries of origin and re-export), the imposition of trade sanctions against South Africa, export bans and import controls in South Africa and other consumer countries. Thousands of African Grey Parrots appear to have been imported into South Africa from countries that either had banned exports or are believed to have had smaller African Grey Parrot populations than would have been necessary to support reported trade levels. It would appear that both the export controls in place in countries of origin and re-export as well as South Africa's own import controls were insufficient to detect or deter many instances of questionable trade.

The following country profiles examine in detail South Africa's imports of African Grey Parrots from the primary suppliers of this species to South African markets.

Togo

CITES annual report data show that Togo was the first major exporter of African Grey Parrots to South Africa subsequent to this species' listing in CITES Appendix II in 1981, and the second largest supplier of these parrots to South African markets during the period 1981 through 1993. South Africa's CITES annual reports show that over 10,000 birds were imported into South Africa from Togo between 1982 and 1987, after which time imports from Togo ceased altogether (Table 2).

The import of so many African Grey Parrots from Togo is surprising given that this species is not believed to occur in Togo in any significant number (Dandliker, 1993a). Instead, it is strongly suspected that African Grey Parrots exported from Togo, a CITES Party since 1979, were first smuggled into Togo from Ghana (and, to a lesser extent, from Nigeria) and then laundered into trade (Dandliker, 1993a). If this account is correct, it seems likely that many if not all of the African Grey Parrots imported into South Africa from Togo had their true origins in Ghana.

It appears that South African CITES authorities accepted African Grey Parrot shipments from Togo without questioning the status of the species in that country. This also seems to be true for authorities in several other importing countries. CITES annual report data show that the United States was the largest importer of African Grey Parrots exported from Togo, and that birds were also exported to Europe. The European Union banned imports of African Grey Parrots from Togo in 1988 (Dandliker, 1993a), and South Africa is reported to have 'followed suit' (P. Mundy, *in litt.* 2 February 1990). This would explain the cessation of South Africa's reported imports of African Grey Parrots from Togo from 1988 onward. By contrast, according to CITES annual report data, Togolese exports of African Grey Parrots to the United States continued until 1992. Further trade from Togo appears far less likely, as, according to Kundaeli (1993, in Dandliker, 1993a), Togolese authorities agreed to stop issuing export permits for African Grey Parrots following a 1991/92 examination of the trade in African Grey Parrots sponsored by the CITES Secretariat.

Although Togo's CITES annual reports showed the export of African Grey Parrots to the United States and Europe, they did not show any exports to South Africa. Assuming those African Grey Parrots reported as imported from Togo by South Africa were in addition to those reported as traded from Togo to other CITES Parties, from 1984 to 1987, Togo exported a total of over 27,000 African Grey Parrots, 40% of which were shipped to South Africa.

Without examination of the export documents themselves, the *modus operandi* used for the export of African Grey Parrots from Togo to South Africa remains an open question. To quote Dandliker (1993a), who undertook a study of the African Grey Parrot trade in Ghana and neighbouring countries: "what kind of CITES permits did these grey parrots have?" A comparison of Togo's export permit numbers (provided in their 1984 CITES Annual Report, but not subsequent reports) with Togolese export permit numbers reported in South Africa's CITES annual reports did not provide any answers. Togo's export permit numbers during 1984 were three digits in length and appear to have been issued in sequence, whereas the Togolese export permit numbers recorded by South African authorities varied unusually in length and sequence.

Table 3 provides a more detailed examination of the permit numbers recorded by South African authorities for shipments of African Grey Parrots imported from Togo. Permit numbers varied between five and eight digits, and, with the exception of a shipment imported in 1982, one in 1983 and two in 1984, all numbers began with the sequence '23281'. In the majority of cases this was followed by either two or three additional numbers. Although a pattern emerges, it is not one that would be expected if the trade had been conducted with export permits issued in sequence. There were seven instances of reported permit numbers containing a variation on the sequence '23281119', and four with a variation in the sequence '2328120'. Permit number 23281, used in 1984 and 1987, and 232811, used in 1984 and 1986, are fragments of longer permit numbers that were also used from 1982 to 1987. And finally, permits with the same permit number would appear to have been used twice both in 1986 (23281190) and in 1987 (2328119), the latter permit number differing from the former only by the absence of the final zero.

It appears that there were several shipments of African Grey Parrots imported from Togo that were not recorded in South Africa's CITES annual reports. Five Togo permit numbers cited in conjunction with African Grey Parrot shipments re-exported from South Africa were not among those reported for imports of this species into South Africa (Table 4). Several of these permits may have corresponded to three shipments recorded in South Africa's 1985 CITES Annual Report for which Togo export permit numbers were not provided. However, it would seem that other shipments may have been imported that were not recorded in South African import data.

A detailed examination of the actual Togo export documents might provide a clearer picture of the circumstances surrounding South Africa's imports of African Grey Parrots reported as originating in Togo. However, given that Togo is not known to have significant African Grey Parrot populations, that Dandliker (1993a) found evidence of parrots being smuggled from Ghana to Togo for re-export, and that Togolese authorities did not report exporting any African Grey Parrots to South Africa, this trade clearly involved at minimum highly inaccurate reporting of trade in CITES-listed species, and very likely further CITES infractions.

Table 2: Reported countries of export for South African imports of African Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* recorded in CITES annual report and South African provincial permit data (1981-1993).

Country of export	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	Total
Belgium[1]	0	0	0	10	0	60	0	131	1	80	0	0	0	282
Benin[2]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	300	0	300
Brazil[1]	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60
Cameroon[3]	0	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,095	2,295
Central African Republic[3]	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Congo[3]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	13
Côte d'Ivoire[4]	0	0	0	0	0	0	200	250	750	700	1,555	2,500	0	5,955
Federal Republic of Germany[1]	4	0	73	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	78
France[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
German Democratic Republic[1]	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Ghana[3]	0	400	0	400	200	0	2,100	3,600	800	4,200	0	0	0	11,700
Guinea[4]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	600	800	4,535	3,013	8,998
Italy[1]	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kenya[3]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Malawi[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Namibia[1]	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Netherlands[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6	0	0	1	9
Portugal[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Switzerland[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Tanzania[3]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	40
Togo[2]	0	200	1,000	2,970	3,000	1,100	2,050	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,320
United Kingdom[1]	2	2	0	0	4	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	19
United States[1]	0	0	0	0	52	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	55
Zaire[3]	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	10	22	308	1,031	1,591	2,965
Zambia[1]	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4
Zimbabwe[1]	0	0	7	10	3	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	27
Total	**6**	**803**	**1,081**	**3,393**	**3,262**	**1,224**	**4,357**	**4,037**	**1,566**	**5,611**	**2,719**	**8,371**	**6,702**	**43,132**

[1] Not a range country for *Psittacus erithacus*.
[2] Species is not known to occur in large numbers.
[3] Range country for *P. e. erithacus*.
[4] Range country for *P. e. erithacus* and *P. e. timneh*.

Sources: CITES annual report data compiled by WCMC and TRAFFIC; South African CITES annual reports; South African provincial import permits (1992-1993); Transvaal permit data compiled by TNC (1987-1991); Dandliker (1993a); Inskipp and Corrigan (1992).

Table 3: Permit numbers reported for South African imports of African Grey Parrots from Togo.

Year	Togo Permit Number	South African Permit Number	Number of Parrots
1982	23260	?	200
1983[1]	2328115	?	200
	23281-19[2]	?	400
	2328120[3]	?	200
	2328714	?	200
1984	23281	4492	200
	232811	1334	100
	2328166	1339	400
	2328178	1329	120
	2328181	1330	250
	2328192	0130	250
	23281007	0105	400
	23281103	1351	200
	23281104	1350	200
	24281105	1341	400
	23281110	1358	250
	3323192	0473	200
1985	m(76) 40232811192	1378	400
	232811203	1520	400
	23281122	1371	300
	23281160	1384	400
	23281163	1507	250
	23281170	1394	300
	23281174	1399	200
	?	1381	250
	?	1501	300
	?	1510	200
1986	232811	1874	160
	23281186	1875	240
	232811902	1549	400
	232811902	1553	300
1987	23281	1588	250
	23281132	1582	400
	2328119[2]/232812013	1417	500
	2328119[2]	1598	200
	232811942	1589	300
	232812023	2998	400

[1] Species was recorded as 'Psittaciformes'.
[2] Permits exhibiting a variation in the sequence '119'.
[3] Permits exhibiting a variation in the sequence '120'.

Source: South African CITES annual reports.

Table 4: Togo export permit numbers recorded in conjunction with African Grey Parrot re-exports from South Africa, but not recorded in conjunction with imports from Togo.

Year	Togo Permit Number	Number of Parrots Re-exported
1986	23281118	308
	232811761	375
1987	23281199	3
	232811761	8
1990	23281184	1
1991	2328114	1

[1] Permit used to justify re-exports 1986 and 1987.

Source: South African CITES annual reports.

Ghana

South Africa first reported the import of large numbers of African Grey Parrots from Ghana during 1987, the last year that birds were imported into South Africa from Togo (Table 2). South African imports from Ghana continued until 1990, peaking at 4,200 birds during that year. Overall, a total of 9,800 African Grey Parrots were reported as imported from Ghana. However, it seems likely that even more birds were exported to South Africa from Ghana than is shown in South Africa's CITES annual reports: in 1987, a shipment of 1,500 birds reported in South Africa's annual report as originating from Togo was recorded in permit data compiled by TNC staff as originating from Ghana. Moreover, the permit number reported for the shipment was similar to those reported for other shipments from Ghana during that year (Table 5). As a result, imports from Ghana during 1987 are believed to have numbered 2,100 African Grey Parrots and total imports to have numbered 11,700, as indicated in Table 2 and Table 5. Reported imports during 1990 included 1,400 *P. e. timneh*, this subspecies being considered extremely rare in Ghana if occurring at all (Dandliker, 1993a).

Ghana is known to have sizeable wild populations of African Grey Parrots, with this species allowed in trade from Ghana periodically prior to July 1986, at which time the government banned all further trapping and export. No licences for parrot exports have been granted since the ban (Dandliker, 1993a), and only one commercial export of African Grey Parrots has been reported in Ghana's CITES annual reports: 621 birds to the United Kingdom in 1989 (Dandliker, 1993a) reports that the export ban was lifted temporarily in 1990). In stark contrast, Ghana was the reported source of nearly 10,000 African Grey Parrots imported by South Africa from 1987 through 1990. Singapore and the United States also reported the import of several hundred African Grey Parrots from Ghana during 1987 and 1988.

The fact that the Government of Ghana had banned all exports in 1986 suggests that, other than the export of pet parrots and a single commercial shipment exported in 1989, all birds imported from Ghana from 1987 onwards entered trade illegally. Suspecting that native African Grey Parrots were being smuggled into Togo and being re-exported falsely declared as having originated in that country, in 1989 the Government of Ghana requested the CITES Secretariat to undertake a survey of the African Grey Parrot trade in Ghana, Guinea and Togo (J. Kundaeli, 1994). The Governments of Guinea and Togo also requested that a survey be undertaken (Kundaeli, 1993). Surveys in Guinea were undertaken in late 1991, and in Ghana during late 1991 and early 1992. The survey in Togo was cancelled for security reasons (Kundaeli, 1993).

The results of the Ghana survey (Dandliker, 1993a) indicated that thousands of birds were being smuggled from that country and then re-exported from other countries (e.g. Togo and Côte d'Ivoire), and showed the continued import by CITES Parties of birds declared as having been exported from Ghana. CITES annual report data point to South Africa as the primary destination for African Grey Parrots reported as exported from Ghana. In fact, Ghana was the largest supplier of African Grey Parrots to South African markets during the period under examination. If what are likely to have been re-exports of Ghanaian parrots smuggled into Togo and possibly Côte d'Ivoire are taken into account, it appears that Ghana may have been the actual country of origin for over half of all African Grey Parrots imported into South Africa.

As with imports from Togo, the most obvious question regards the form and validity of the documentation that accompanied African Grey Parrot shipments imported into South Africa from Ghana. Examination of Ghana export permit numbers reported in South Africa's CITES annual reports revealed a situation similar to that of Togo (Table 5). Reported export permit numbers are not in numeric sequence, and several permit numbers appear more than once. For example, permit number 003111 was used in 1983 for the import of 400 'Psittaciformes' (not shown in Table 5), and in 1984 for the import of 400 African Grey Parrots; permit number 009014 was used in 1987 and 1988 (permit number 109014 was also used during 1988, this being the only permit number recorded that began with '1'); and permit number 009009 was reported to have been used in conjunction with two separate import permits in 1989.

Table 5: Permit numbers reported for South African imports of African Grey Parrots from Ghana.

Year	Ghana Permit Number	South African Permit Number	Number of Parrots	Subspecies
1982	000047	?	400	Unspecified
1984	003111	1331	400	Unspecified
1985	007769	1369	150	Unspecified
	0351	1516	50	Unspecified
1987	007557	1412	200	Unspecified
	009014	1439	200	Unspecified
	?	1440	200	Unspecified
	009015	1448	1,500[1]	Unspecified
1988	009014	1488 T	300	Unspecified
	109014	1611 T	300	Unspecified
	009005	1614 T	3,000	Unspecified
1989	009009	1707 T	400	Unspecified
	009009	1718 T	400	Unspecified
1990	009010	20/1990 N	2,500	*P. e. erithacus*
	009010	20/1990 N	1,000	*P. e. timneh*
	009000	42/1990 N	300	*P. e. erithacus*
	009000	42/1990 N	400	*P. e. timneh*

[1] Reported in TNC permit data, but Togo was identified as the source in South Africa's 1987 CITES Annual Report.

Sources: South African CITES annual reports; Transvaal permit data compiled by TNC (1987-1991).

Dandliker (1993a) found evidence of illegal trade from Ghana despite that country's export ban. He noted that the Government had not issued export licences, and that export permits for a total of fewer than 1,000 birds had been issued since 1986, the year the export ban was imposed. Further, the Government of Ghana had queried imports from Ghana reported by European Union countries and the USA for which there were no corresponding records of export permits having been issued (Kundaeli, 1994).

Without examining the export permits themselves, it is impossible to assess in greater detail the means by which South Africa's trade in African Grey Parrots from Ghana continued for several years following the latter country's export ban. South African provincial permit and law enforcement staff may have been unaware that exports were

banned and therefore accepted shipments from Ghana with little or no question. Document fraud may have played a role in the trade: in 1988, 2,000 African Grey Parrots, accompanied by forged CITES export permits, were intercepted at the Kotoka International Airport in Accra en route to the United States (Anon., 1988). Permit staff may also have been unaware that valid CITES export permits from Ghana were required to be stamped with a uniquely-numbered CITES Security Stamp, and therefore may not have been able to recognise forged documents.

Guinea

Guinea, the third largest reported exporter of African Grey Parrots to South Africa, supplied nearly 9,000 birds from 1988 to 1993 (Table 2). Trade was first reported in 1988 and remained below 1,000 birds per year until 1992, when 4,535 birds were reported as exported from Guinea to South Africa. Guinea was the main supplier of African Grey Parrots to South Africa in 1993, with over 3,000 birds imported according to South Africa's 1993 CITES Annual Report.

Guinea's high-volume trade in African Grey Parrots was examined by the CITES Animals Committee in the context of the CITES 'Significant Trade' project. A 1991 CITES survey estimated Guinea's total population of this species at between 5,000 and 10,000 parrots (Dandliker, 1993b). By comparison, South Africa alone imported close to 9,000 African Grey Parrots from Guinea between 1990 and 1993.

The Animals Committee expressed concern that the trade was not properly controlled and could be threatening Guinea's wild African Grey Parrot population. In accordance with a 1992 CITES Resolution addressing concerns regarding unsustainable trade in wild-caught animals (Resolution Conf. 8.9, Kyoto, 1992), the Animals Committee recommended that the Government of Guinea establish an annual export quota for African Grey Parrots. The CITES Secretariat communicated this recommendation to Guinea CITES authorities, but no response was received from the Government within the 90 days accorded under the resolution. As a result, in March 1993 the CITES Standing Committee called upon all CITES Parties to suspend imports of African Grey Parrots from Guinea (CITES Notification No. 737, 20 April, 1993). The official CITES Notification on this decision was not issued until 20 April, however, and, may not have reached some Parties until weeks later. Consequently, traders would have had ample time to obtain and use CITES export permits before the ban took effect. Furthermore, because CITES Notifications are not required to be implemented retroactively, any permits issued by Guinea before 20 April 1993 were considered valid until their expiry date, generally six months after the date of issue.

It appears that traders in Guinea were in fact able to obtain export permits during the time between the date that the decision was taken to request that further imports be banned, and the date that this decision took effect. South African provincial permit data show a flurry of imports from Guinea during and shortly following this period. Over 2,000 of the 3,000 African Grey Parrots reportedly received from Guinea in 1993 were covered by South African import documents issued in May and June of that year. Furthermore, Guinea officials apparently issued at least one export permit for African Grey Parrots following the April 20 request from the CITES Secretariat for an import

ban. Based on a Guinea export permit dated 27 July 1993, NPB permit staff issued an import permit for 300 'Maroon-tailed' African Grey Parrots in August 1993. This permit and the related CITES Notification were brought to the attention of NPB staff by TRAFFIC, and no subsequent import permits for African Grey Parrots from Guinea were issued by that authority.

Almost exactly a year after the first Notification on Guinea's trade in African Grey Parrots, the CITES Secretariat issued a second notice advising that Guinea had established an annual export quota of 450 birds (CITES Notification No. 797, 21 April 1994). Guinea's CITES Management Authority sought approval to allow the export of an additional 5,101 African Grey Parrots held in stock by traders as of 31 December 1993. Noting the probability that part of the stock had been imported into Guinea illegally, the CITES Secretariat reminded the Parties that the Convention requires that specimens to be re-exported must have been imported legally.

Based on the information provided by the Secretariat, it seems likely that some of the birds previously imported into South Africa from Guinea were originally imported into Guinea illegally. This would almost certainly be true of the 300 *P. e. erithacus* reported as imported during 1991, as this subspecies does not occur in Guinea, but is reported to have been illegally imported into Guinea from Côte d'Ivoire for subsequent re-export (Dandliker, 1993b).

Unlike Ghana and Togo, Guinea did report the export of African Grey Parrots to South Africa, with the total number reported as exported from 1988 to 1992 closely matching the import figures reported by South Africa (Table 6). However, while annual trade volumes roughly correlate, the numbers of birds in individual shipments do not. Furthermore, the majority of the Guinea export permit numbers associated with individual shipments in 1992 do not correspond with permit numbers provided in South Africa's CITES annual report for that year (the only one for which South Africa reported permit numbers for imports from Guinea).

There are several possible explanations for such discrepancies. Some of the Guinea export permits issued may not have been used at all, or may not have been used until 1993 (permits may be valid for up to six months). In fact, South Africa's 1993 CITES Annual Report shows that this was the case for two permits recorded in Guinea's 1992 CITES Annual Report, covering a total of 1,100 African Grey Parrots exported to South Africa. This would have reduced the total number of African Grey Parrots covered by 1992 Guinea export permits to South Africa to a maximum of 3,435 during that year. This figure stands in contrast to the 4,200 birds reported by South Africa as imported from Guinea during 1992, a difference that would not appear able to be accounted for by the use of 1991 Guinea export permits during 1992.

Inaccurate reporting of permits issued and/or permit numbers used by South African and/or Guinean authorities may account for the discrepancies in reported trade. Such reporting errors are not uncommon in CITES annual report data, and demonstrate the need for more accurate preparation of CITES annual reports. Further examination of these discrepancies is called for, however, to reduce the occurrence of inaccurate reporting in the future, and to confirm the validity of those documents accompanying African Grey Parrot shipments to South Africa.

Table 6: Comparison of Reported Trade of African Grey Parrots from Guinea to South Africa (1988-1992).

Year	Exports Reported by Guinea		Imports Reported by South Africa	
	Guinea Permit Number	Number of Parrots	Guinea Permit Number	Number of Parrots
1988	??	–	??	50
Subtotal	??	–		50
1990	307	200	??	200
	330	400		–
			??	300
Subtotal		600		500
1991	107	100	??	100
	178	250		
			??	700
Subtotal		350		800
1992	011	300		
	029	250	0-29	250
	182	400		
	186	200		
	187	500	187/24/9/92	500
	199	100		
	230	300		
	232	200		
	235	400	??	400[1]
	265	800		
	266	300		
	267	185		
	268	300		
			??	600
			DNE-00-21401/92	300
			0-87	500
			0-92	500
			127/DNFC/28/7/92	500
			161/DNFC/4/92	200
			168	450
Subtotal		4535		4200
Total		**5485**		**5550**

[1] Not recorded in South Africa's 1992 CITES Annual Report.

Sources: CITES annual reports of Guinea and South Africa; South African provincial import permits (1992).

Côte d'Ivoire

Like Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire is both a range country for African Grey Parrots and an important supplier of this species to South Africa. South Africa's CITES annual reports show the import of 5,855 African Grey Parrots from Côte d'Ivoire, of which 2,205 were

declared as *P. e. timneh* and 300 as *P.e.erithacus*, with the remainder identified only as *P. erithacus*. The import of a further 200 African Grey Parrots were recorded in TNC permit data but not in CITES annual reports, of which 100 were reported as *P. e. timneh* and 100 as *P. erithacus*. Imports were first recorded in 1987, remaining below 1,000 birds per year until 1991 and then peaking at 2,500 birds in 1992, the last year for which imports from Côte d'Ivoire were reported (Table 2). Côte d'Ivoire was not a Party to CITES during the period under examination, and therefore export data from that country are not available for comparison.

The increase in exports from Côte d'Ivoire has been linked to an increase in smuggling and the relocation of Ghanaian parrot trappers and traders to Côte d'Ivoire subsequent to Ghana's export ban (Dandliker, 1993a). In 1990, CITES Parties were informed by the CITES Secretariat of several cases of illegal trade involving African Grey Parrots from Côte d'Ivoire. At that time the Parties were requested to compare export permits issued by Côte d'Ivoire against a sample document provided by the Secretariat, as well as to confirm the validity of all permits with the Secretariat (CITES Notification No. 590, 31 July 1990). In April 1992, the CITES Secretariat recommended to Côte d'Ivoire that African Grey Parrot exports be suspended and that a population survey be conducted. These recommendations were apparently not followed, and the Secretariat subsequently received evidence that the majority of *P. e. erithacus* exported from Côte d'Ivoire had been smuggled into that country from countries such as Ghana. Based on this information, in May 1993 the Secretariat called on all CITES Parties to refuse further imports of African Grey Parrots from Côte d'Ivoire (CITES Notification No. 746, 7 May 1993). No South African imports from Côte d'Ivoire were recorded in 1993, which may indicate implementation of this recommendation.

Zaire

Zaire has only recently become a substantial supplier of African Grey Parrots to South Africa, with reported trade volumes first exceeding 1,000 birds in 1992 (Table 2). The relatively low volume of imports prior to this time probably reflects Zaire's ban on exports of this species from 1986 until 1990. Exports from Zaire were allowed on an experimental basis in 1991 (Kundaeli, 1994), when an export quota of 10,000 birds was established (CITES Notification No. 647, 28 August 1991). Exports were apparently suspended once again in late 1992. The actual status of Zaire's trade controls at this time was unclear, however, resulting in frustration and confusion on the part of permit authorities and traders alike.

A December 1992 CITES Notification noted that the Management Authority of Zaire had announced that it had suspended issuance of export permits for all species of wild fauna; as a result, the CITES Secretariat invited all Parties not to accept export permits from Zaire (CITES Notification No. 713, 21 December 1992). In March 1993, the CITES Secretariat notified the Parties that a book of Zairean export permits had disappeared, and advised Parties to remain vigilant regarding the acceptance of any export permits from Zaire (CITES Notification No. 727, 1 March 1993). No mention was made of the previous suspension on trade, which presumably remained in effect. Several South African traders, however, were in possession of what they claimed to be valid Zairean export permits for African Grey Parrots, and requested that corresponding import permits be issued by provincial permit authorities. Provincial authorities sought further advice from the CITES Secretariat, who in turn sought clarification from Zaire. The Zairean Government responded that permits issued prior to the date of the suspension of

trade should be considered valid. This position was communicated by the CITES Secretariat to South African Government, and subsequently import permits for several shipments of African Grey Parrots were issued by provincial authorities in May and June 1993. Zaire then informed the Secretariat by letter that it had lifted the suspension of export permits retroactive to January 1993 (CITES Notification No. 762, 31 August 1993).

The path was therefore clear for resumed trade from Zaire, and several additional shipments of African Grey Parrots were imported from this country in 1993. Imports totalled approximately 1,600 birds in all, fewer than were imported from Cameroon and Guinea during the same year. This may reflect what one importer referred to as the relatively low value of birds from Zaire. He commented that African Grey Parrots from Zaire were smaller in size than birds from Cameroon, had been poorly cared for and often had clipped wings. As other sources of this species (both legal and illegal), have declined, however, Zaire seems likely to become one of the main exporters of African Grey Parrots in the near term: the Government established an annual export quota of 10,000 African Grey Parrots for 1994, and there are no indications at this writing that this quota will be reduced for 1995.

Cameroon

South African imports of African Grey Parrots from Cameroon were first reported in 1993, when 2,095 birds were imported (Table 2). Concerned that Cameroon had not responded to a CITES Animals Committee recommendation on their trade in African Grey Parrots, in November 1993, the Standing Committee called upon all Parties to suspend imports of the species from this range state (CITES Notification No. 775, 23 November 1993). This call for a trade ban mirrored that issued for Guinea in accordance with CITES Resolution Conf. 8.9.

The trade ban was lifted five months later, when Cameroon announced an export quota of 12,000 African Grey Parrots for 1994 (of which 5,500 were stocks held within Cameroon), and agreed to adhere to specific recommendations made by the CITES Animals Committee (CITES Notification No. 800, 21 April 1994). An export quota of 7,000 birds was established for 1995 (T. DeMeulenaer, pers. comm.). Like Zaire, Cameroon seems likely to be a major exporter of African Grey Parrots to South African and other markets.

ILLEGAL EXPORTS OF AFRICAN GREY PARROTS TO SOUTH AFRICA

It should be clear from information provided in the preceding section that thousands of African Grey Parrots, many originating in Ghana, were exported to South Africa in contravention of CITES trade controls during the 1980s and early 1990s. Further information available suggests that, as well as this documented trade, there have been a number of attempts to smuggle African Grey Parrots into South Africa outside of the normal permitting process.

Conservation and law enforcement personnel point to the lack of Customs controls at several small international airports located in the vicinity of Johannesburg and Pretoria, expressing concern that planes landing at these airports may be used to bring birds into the country illegally. The discovery of a suspected illegal shipment of 10 African Grey

Parrots at Lanseria Airport in 1993 by the South African Police's Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU) lends some credibility to these concerns.

African Grey Parrots have also been intercepted without proper documentation at Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg. In February 1992, 85 African Grey Parrots exported from Zaire were seized upon arrival at Jan Smuts by ESPU personnel. No conviction was obtained in the ensuing court case, and the birds were re-exported to Zaire. A second shipment of 140 African Grey Parrots from Zaire consigned to a Natal importer arrived without proper export permits in November 1993. Several other shipments arriving at Jan Smuts Airport in 1993 without documentation were also reportedly refused entry and immediately re-exported.

Smaller numbers of African Grey Parrots (as well as other African parrots) have been seized from ocean-going vessels making their way along the coast to South Africa from various West African ports. This trade appears to be opportunistic, for example, foreign sailors trying to earn extra money, rather than an organised effort to channel African Grey Parrots into the South African market. However, the possibility that ocean transport may be used to bring commercial shipments to South African shores cannot be ruled out.

EXPORTS OF AFRICAN GREY PARROTS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has not historically been a major exporter of African Grey Parrots to foreign markets. CITES annual report data show a sharp peak in reported exports in the mid-1980s, and a more gradual increase in exports during the 1990s (Table 7).

A total of 2,428 African Grey Parrots were reported to have been exported from South Africa during 1985 and 1986, of which 2,013 (83%) were reported to have been captive-bred. Of these captive-bred birds, 1,707 were reported to have originated in Togo, and all but 3 of the remainder to have originated in South Africa. Ninety-five per cent of all African Grey Parrots exported during these two years — a total of 2,295 birds — were exported to the United States; US CITES annual reports showed the import of only 1,445 birds from South Africa during this period, however. Of these, just 719 were declared as captive-bred. Possible explanations for these discrepancies include that some of the export permits issued by South African authorities were not used; that US imports of African Grey Parrots from South Africa were mis- or under-reported; and/or that some of the permits were used to ship the birds to a country other than the United States.

As captive-breeding of African Grey Parrots was not well-established in South Africa or in Togo in the mid-1980s, it seems likely that most of the exported birds declared as captive-bred were actually wild-caught parrots. This may well represent simply a case of inaccurate trade reporting in South Africa's CITES annual reports. In fact, from 1984 through 1986, the vast majority of live birds exported from South Africa were identified as captive-bred specimens in South Africa's CITES annual reports (with most of the remainder declared as personal effects). While the most obvious explanation is that a general clerical error was committed at the time these reports were compiled, it would appear that at least some of the South African export permits from which the reports were prepared similarly identified the specimens in trade as captive-bred stock. CITES annual report data show, for example, that at least two shipments of 'captive-bred'

Table 7: Exports of African Grey Parrots from South Africa (1982-1993).

Country of import	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	Total
Austria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Belgium	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Botswana	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	4	9
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Canada	0	1	0	0	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	14
Chile	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cyprus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
France	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4
Federal Republic of Germany	0	0	1	8	7	4	2	6	2	2	38	138	208
Ghana	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Greece	0	0	0	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	11
Hong Kong	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	25	27
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Iceland	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Israel	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	4
Italy	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	2	10
Lebanon	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Mauritius	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	20
Mozambique	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Namibia	0	0	0	3	37	16	7	6	4	1	39	52	165
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	3	0	103	110
Niger	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Norway	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	13	20
Reunion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Singapore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	130	130
Spain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
Swaziland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Sweden	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Switzerland	4	0	0	0	11	1	6	0	0	12	35	16	85
Thailand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
United Arab Emirates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
United Kingdom	5	2	5	6	19	10	8	5	7	34	11	17	129
United States	2	30	5	1,036	1,259	6	4	205	10	6	8	15	2,586
Zimbabwe	0	0	4	5	13	7	8	1	3	0	13	25	79
Total	11	33	16	1,059	1,369	55	40	230	32	68	177	571	3,661
Total declared as captive-bred	**4**	**0**	**10**	**658**	**1,355**	**11**	**14**	**10**	**7**	**36**	**125**	**294**	**2,524**

Sources: CITES annual report data compiled by WCMC and TRAFFIC; South Africa's CITES annual reports; Provincial CITES permits (1992-1993).

African Grey Parrots originating in Togo were imported into the United States from South Africa — one of 50 birds in 1985 and one of 120 birds in 1986 — and that these shipments were apparently accepted as declared.

Exports of African Grey Parrots declined to just 55 birds in 1987, of which 11 were reported as having been bred in captivity. Reported exports remained below 100 birds per year in 1988, 1990 and 1991. In 1989, however, the United States reported the import of 205 African Grey Parrots from South Africa (origin Côte d'Ivoire), in contrast to South African data showing that just 10 birds were exported to the United States during the entire period from 1988 through 1990. It is possible that this trade was mis-recorded in US CITES annual report data. However, it is important to note that US CITES annual reports are prepared from import declarations made at the time shipments enter the country, and therefore this could not have been a case of reporting of permits being issued but not used. Further, as previously noted, there are few actual controls on the export of African Grey Parrots or other birds from South Africa. Although provincial regulations require that export permits be acquired before exporting CITES-listed species such as African Grey Parrots, few mechanisms are in place at airports or other ports of exit to ensure that such permits have always been obtained. Consequently, the potential for shipments of African Grey Parrots to be traded from South Africa without appropriate documentation remains a possibility.

Reported African Grey Parrot exports increased considerably in the early 1990s, rising from 32 birds in 1990 to 571 birds in 1993, according to South Africa's CITES annual reports. Of the birds reported as exported during the latter year, 294 — or 51% of the total — were declared as having been captive-bred in South Africa. The reported trade in captive-bred birds was over double that for the previous year, and eight times that of 1991. A further 169 African Grey Parrots exported in 1993 were declared as originating in South Africa. These were presumably either captive-bred or else mis-recorded in trade, as South Africa has no native African Grey Parrots. Taken together, it would appear that 463 African Grey Parrots either captive-bred in or otherwise 'originating from' South Africa were exported in 1993, compared to just 161 birds meeting these same criteria the previous year.

Additional information available from South African CITES permits and the annual reports of other CITES Parties indicate that even more birds declared as captive-bred may have been exported from South Africa than shown in South Africa's 1993 CITES Annual Report. TNC issued three export permits for captive-bred African Grey Parrots in 1993 that are not included in the annual report. Of the 160 additional birds for which export approval appears to have been issued, 60 were bound for Portugal, 40 for Belgium and 60 for the Netherlands. Portugal's 1993 CITES Annual Report shows that 60 captive-bred African Grey Parrots were imported from South Africa in 1993, with the South African permit number recorded matching that of the permit issued by TNC. The same was not true in the case of Belgium, whose CITES authorities did not report the import of any African Grey Parrots from South Africa in 1993. The Dutch 1993 CITES Annual Report was not available as of this writing.

Bearing in mind that South Africa's annual reports are compiled from permits issued, which, in the case of export permits, may or may not reflect permits used, total exports of African Grey Parrots from South Africa in 1993 conceivably amounted to 731 birds, of which 454 were declared as captive-bred, and a further 169 were either captive-bred

in South Africa or for which the country of origin was mis-reported in trade. This represents a dramatic increase over previous years, and could reflect the growing ability of South African bird breeders to produce captive-bred African Grey Parrots for export, and/or the emergence of South Africa as a middleman in the trade of wild-caught African Grey Parrots to northern markets.

SOUTH AFRICA'S DOMESTIC TRADE IN AFRICAN GREY PARROTS

There is very little quantitative information regarding the domestic trade and sale of African Grey Parrots in South Africa, where the species appears to be a very popular pet. If export figures recorded in CITES annual report data are accepted as indicative, then the domestic market has absorbed most of those birds imported — several thousand birds per year. African Grey Parrots are widely sold by pet shops, and regularly advertised for sale in the South African avicultural journal *Avizandum*. Advertised prices have ranged anywhere from R900 (US$300) per pair (July 1992) to R3,500 (US$1,167) per pair (December 1993). Variations in price are linked to the subspecies, quality and age of birds in trade, whether the birds were captive-bred or wild-caught and availability. In general, 'Red-tailed African Greys' *P. e. erithacus* sell for higher prices than the smaller and less brightly-coloured 'Maroon-tailed African Greys' *P. e. timneh*. Prices for wild-caught birds may have been depressed by the sharp increase in African Grey Parrot imports in 1992, which some aviculturists believe resulted in an oversupply on the domestic market. One South African law enforcement officer commented that African Grey Parrots had been offered for sale for as little as R250 (US$83) each, including a cage-and-money-back guarantee that the birds would be talking within a year. According to one parrot trader, however, birds being sold for such low prices would most likely have been imported illegally.

Captive-bred African Grey Parrots are generally more expensive than wild-caught birds, reflecting the additional expense of breeding and rearing parrots in captivity, and also the fact that these birds generally make better pets. Wild-caught African Grey Parrots often have dispositions poorly suited to captivity and handling, and may exhibit 'bad habits', such as biting, feather plucking (believed to be a sign of stress or nutrient deficiencies) and 'growling'. Captive-bred birds, especially those that have been hand-fed and are otherwise accustomed to the presence and touch of humans when young, tend to be far more likely to exhibit characteristics sought after by pet owners. On the other hand, it is possible that prices for captive-bred birds in South Africa may be approaching those for the less expensive wild-caught birds: the December 1993/January 1994 issue of *Avizandum* contained an advertisement offering captive-bred *P. e. erithacus* for R1,800 (US$600) each.

Bird breeders and traders expressed mixed views regarding the future of the domestic market for parrots in South Africa. Some believed that the demand for luxury items such as pet parrots would increase as greater segments of South African society have access to disposable incomes. Others cautioned that uncertainty brought about by the political changes in the country may decrease demand for pet birds. There appeared to be uniform agreement, however, that, in the hope of selling captive-bred birds to foreign markets, the breeding of African Grey Parrots and other parrot species would continue to increase in South Africa.

CAPTIVE BREEDING

South Africa hosts a thriving and apparently growing avicultural community, with a number of individuals breeding a variety of parrot and other bird species. Relative to the United States and Europe, land, feed and labour expenses in South Africa are low, and the climate is generally conducive to parrot breeding. Until recently, however, there has been little incentive for South African aviculturists to breed African Grey Parrots in commercial quantities, as inexpensive wild-caught birds were readily available to those who wanted them, both locally and in the other major consumer markets of the world. Several factors appear to be contributing to a marked shift toward captive-bred African Grey Parrots, however, and South Africa's aviculturists seem keen to take advantage of this trend by supplying captive-bred birds to foreign markets.

Although the first successful breeding of African Grey Parrots in South Africa is reported to have taken place in 1951, it was not until recently that aviculturists attempted to breed this species on a commercial scale. Several breeders established relatively large private collections of African Grey Parrots in the last few years, in the hope of producing offspring in commercial quantities. One noted that these efforts are only now coming to fruition, and that both time and commitment are required to breed wild-caught African Grey Parrots. It was reported that wild-caught birds can take several years to settle down before breeding, and that as many as 50% of wild-caught birds may never reproduce successfully. Another breeder, who is also a major supplier of wild-caught birds to the pet and avicultural markets, recently established a breeding collection of African Grey Parrots numbering in the hundreds of pairs, with plans to expand still further. He and others are aware of the relatively high prices that these birds bring on foreign markets and hope to export commercial quantities of captive-bred African Grey Parrots in future. One breeder estimated South Africa's annual production of captive-bred African Grey Parrots in 1992 to be approximately 200 to 300 birds. Some of these birds would undoubtedly have been sold internally, reducing the number available for export. It seems likely that the number of African Grey Parrots produced through captive breeding will increase in the years to come.

As noted above, large numbers of birds declared to have been bred in captivity were exported in the mid-1980s, but this probably reflects a case of mis-reporting of trade in CITES annual reports. Subsequent to that time, reported exports of captive-bred African Grey Parrots remained below 100 birds until 1992, then climbed to nearly 300 birds in 1993, the last year for which comprehensive data for South Africa are available (Table7). As discussed above, export permits issued for the trade of captive-bred African Grey Parrots from South Africa may have covered as many as 600 birds, if those birds declared as originating in South Africa and permits issued but not included in the annual report are taken into account.

The export of several hundred captive-bred African Grey Parrots during 1993 may not appear out of proportion to the number imported — some 40,000 birds since 1981. However, given that the total annual production of captive-bred African Grey Parrots was believed to be in the low 100s in the early 1990s, this figure might surprise some South African aviculturists breeding this species. If estimates of African Grey Parrots bred in captivity in South Africa are correct, it seems possible that a portion of those birds for which export permits were issued may have been wild-caught. There is no way of proving or disproving whether such was the case, however, as aviculturists are not required by law to keep breeding records, and there are few government inspections of private aviaries. Furthermore, aviculturists are not required to permanently mark

captive-bred birds (e.g. by banding nestlings), so that they can be differentiated from wild-caught birds.

DISCUSSION

South Africa is clearly an important market for African Grey Parrots, importing nearly 20,000 of these parrots during the 1980s and over 23,000 during the first four years of the 1990s. Although South Africa's imports represented only 4% of the total international trade in this species from 1981 to 1989, many of those birds imported seem likely to have had illegal origins. According to CITES annual report data, South Africa was the main destination for African Grey Parrots exported from Ghana despite that country's export ban. South Africa was the second most important destination for African Grey Parrots exported from Togo, where the species is not known to occur in significant numbers and where most of the birds exported are believed to have been acquired illegally from neighbouring range states. Imports from Guinea may also have involved a significant number of African Grey Parrots illegally obtained from other countries of origin. Similarly, imports from Côte d'Ivoire seem likely to have involved birds from outside that country.

South Africa's African Grey Parrot imports increased substantially during the 1990s, both in terms of total trade volumes and significance with respect to the world market. Imports averaged nearly 6,000 birds per year during the first four years of the 1990s, approximately double the figure for the last four years of the 1980s. Imports will have fallen off sharply in the United States during the same period, however: a 1993 US ban on imports of most wild-caught CITES-listed birds has closed what was once the largest market for African Grey Parrots. Import restrictions in the European Union seem likely to have reduced imports into this consumer market as well. Although CITES annual report data are not yet available to evaluate recent trade volumes, should current trends continue, South Africa could emerge as one of the world's largest importers of African Grey Parrots. If so, control of the international trade in African Grey Parrots could hinge to a large degree on trade controls and implementation undertaken in South Africa. As shown above, to date these controls have been insufficient to stop the import of birds apparently exported in violation of CITES.

Questions have been raised as to how South Africa, with a relatively small consumer market compared to the United States and Europe, has been able to absorb the large numbers of African Grey Parrots imported over the past few years. It has been speculated that some of these parrots were 'laundered' in South Africa and re-exported to other markets, perhaps mis-declared as captive-bred birds. While this report points out a number of irregularities with respect to South Africa's import trade, available trade data do not indicate that large numbers of captive-bred African Grey Parrots were exported by or imported from South Africa during any period other than the mid-1980s, and again during 1993. With regard to the latter year, it should be noted that import data from CITES Parties are not yet available for a thorough comparative analysis of reported trade in African Grey Parrots or other species.

To understand the backdrop against which these allegations arise, it is necessary to review the market dynamics in major parrot consumer countries. Traders in the United States and Europe, the two largest parrot consumers, had little difficulty obtaining commercial quantities of African Grey Parrots during the 1980s. As a result, there would

appear to have been little reason to route birds through South Africa to these markets, or to falsely declare birds exported from South Africa as having been bred in captivity.

It is probably only a coincidence that South Africa's rapid increase in reported exports of captive-bred birds began in 1984, the same year that the US state of New York, an important market for pet birds, banned the import and sale of all wild-caught birds. US traders eager to sell birds on New York markets may have had a clear incentive to seek out captive-bred African Grey Parrots and other species. As mentioned previously, however, a general clerical problem in the compilation of South Africa's CITES annual reports seems to be a more likely explanation for sudden export of large numbers of 'captive-bred' birds.

Additional restrictions on the trade in African Grey Parrots and wild-caught birds in general came into force during the 1980s and early 1990s. European Union authorities banned imports of African Grey Parrots from a number of range states, including Ghana, during 1986. Imports from Togo were banned in 1988, and subsequently from Côte d'Ivóire in 1990. It was during this latter year that a coalition of North American and European conservation and animal welfare groups launched campaigns to 'ban the bird trade'. One facet of this campaign sought to discourage commercial and government airlines from carrying wild-caught birds; transport of captive-bred birds was not protested, however. The campaign was relatively successful and by mid-1992 approximately 90 airlines, including South African Airways, had stated that they would no longer carry wild-caught birds (P. Knights, *in litt.* 15 October 1992). The trade from Africa to the United States and Europe was particularly affected, although Air Afrique, several charter companies and some other carriers did not support this campaign.

Traders sought ways around the refusal of carriers to carry wild-caught birds. Some apparently relied on the fact that airline personnel were ill-equipped to assess whether or not birds had been wild-caught or captive-bred. According to one DOA quarantine official, in some cases shipment documentation shown to airline personnel was altered to indicate that wild-caught birds had been captive-bred. This would not have been difficult given that copies of permits, which could easily be tampered with and then re-photocopied, are generally sufficient documentation for the airlines. It should be borne in mind that this form of 'laundering' would extend only to the transport process, as government officials in importing countries generally require that original CITES permits and other documents be presented upon import.

Another aim of the efforts to 'ban the bird trade' was to encourage prospective bird owners to buy captive-bred rather than wild-caught birds. Publicity campaigns highlighted the negative aspects of the trade in wild-caught birds and sought to educate consumers about the benefits of owning captive-bred parrots. These campaigns seem likely to have increased the demand for captive-bred birds as well as for hand-reared wild-caught birds, the two being distinguishable in name only. In some European countries the demand for captive-bred birds may have outstripped supply, providing an incentive to import birds from South Africa and elsewhere.

Further bans on imports from certain African Grey Parrot range states came about through the CITES Significant Trade process. These trade bans first took effect in early 1993, and affected all CITES Parties. However, these restrictions on the supply of wild-caught African Grey Parrots in trade were counterbalanced almost simultaneously with a decrease in the available markets for these parrots. Implementation of the US *Wild Bird*

Conservation Act in October 1993 resulted in a total US ban on the import of African Grey Parrots. The implementation of this Act perhaps more than any other development provides the strongest incentives for producing and exporting captive-bred African Grey Parrots. However, the US Government has yet to promulgate regulations clarifying the restrictions on the import of captive-bred birds, and therefore this market continues to remain closed to South Africa and other exporters.

There is little doubt that incentives for South African traders to export captive-bred African Grey Parrots have increased significantly in recent years. As a result, South African aviculturists have the opportunity to become a far more important supplier of captive-bred African Grey Parrots to foreign markets. However, the success of what appears to be a growing industry will depend in part on the ability of aviculturists, traders and government officials to demonstrate that breeding and trade is adequately controlled. Actions must be taken to ensure that accusations of wild-caught birds being re-exported to foreign markets falsely labelled as captive-bred birds can be proven to be groundless. In particular, methods should be developed to distinguish captive-bred birds from their wild-caught counterparts. Possibilities include registration and monitoring of breeding facilities seeking to export wild-caught birds, and the permanent marking of captive-bred offspring with seamless leg bands (closed-rings) or transponders (computer microchips). The availability of DNA fingerprinting in South Africa should provide the government with the means to corroborate captive breeding claims in the event of suspicion.

CONCLUSION

South Africa has been and continues to be a significant importer of African Grey Parrots. Unfortunately, many of the birds imported since 1984 — perhaps tens of thousands — appear to have been captured and/or exported from their countries of origin illegally. Although the primary obligation to prevent illegal exports rests with the exporting countries themselves, it goes without saying that importing nations such as South Africa also share a responsibility to ensure that trade is in compliance with CITES.

Increasingly, national and provincial government authorities in South Africa are aware of many of the problems associated with the trade in African Grey Parrots and other CITES-listed species. In this regard, there have been a number of very positive developments that deserve recognition. Increased vigilance on the part of South African provincial permit authorities and action taken to implement CITES trade bans appear to have been effective in reducing sanctioned imports of African Grey Parrots from countries with inadequate trade controls. South African officials increased their rate of confirming export permits with the CITES Secretariat in the early 1990s (Kundaeli, 1994), with a 1994 report of CITES infractions showing that communications with the Secretariat in this regard had resulted in the refusal of import permits on several occasions (Anon., 1994). In some cases, provincial authorities have also initiated the inspection of individual aviaries and promoted the placement of closed rings on the legs of captive-bred birds.

In spite of recent improvements, however, there remains a pressing need to reconsider procedures for the issuance of permits and basic enforcement of import and export trade controls in South Africa. As this study documents, current mechanisms to control trade

into and out of Transvaal and Natal provinces are inadequate. Shipments of African Grey Parrots are rarely inspected by nature conservation staff immediately upon arrival or prior to export. Further, original export permits issued by South Africa's trading partners are neither inspected by NPB personnel at the time import permits are issued nor are they cancelled once the shipment has been received such that they cannot be used again. This situation is apparently alleviated by DOA staff who endorse CITES permits accompanying shipments. With respect to exports, throughout South Africa there are few mechanisms in place to confirm the origin of birds for which export permit applications are received. These problems reflect in part the lack of a national wildlife trade control policy and uniform mechanisms for its implementation.

Although major changes to South Africa's trade controls for African Grey Parrots and other species cannot be expected to take place overnight, there are a number of immediate actions that could be taken to address some of the concerns noted above. Much will depend on the willingness of various government agencies to co-operate in controlling the trade across and within South Africa's borders. Support from the private sector will also be necessary, and support from non-governmental organisations with expertise in wildlife trade issues should be sought.

Government personnel, legitimate traders and aviculturists need to understand that more effective trade controls are in everyone's best interest. By supporting such controls, South Africans would in turn directly support conservation of wild African Grey Parrot populations by helping to impede illegal or unsustainable trapping for trade. Furthermore, by increasing the effectiveness of their own import controls, South Africans will enhance the ability of African Grey Parrot range countries to benefit from the sustainable use of their natural resources. This latter goal is one of the tenets of the South Africa Government's conservation ethic, and deserves no less support with regard to the import of foreign wildlife than it does with regard to the export of native species.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations stem from the findings of this study and other research on South Africa's trade in exotic birds:

Permit Issuance and Management Procedures

* South Africa's national government and provincial conservation authorities should develop a co-ordinated and integrated permitting and information management system for all trade in CITES-listed species, including African Grey Parrots. Such a system should incorporate a means of tracking 'conditional' import approvals as well as import and export permits issued. This would allow permitting staff to keep a running record of the number of African Grey Parrots imported from each country of export (assisting with implementation of export quotas), and to identify those 'conditional' import approvals or permits that are not used.

* Bearing in mind that CITES permit issuance is a decentralised process in South Africa, under penalty of law, permit applicants should be required to specify on provincial permit application forms whether or not they have previously applied for import, export or re-export permits from any other province for the consignment in question and, if

they were refused, to explain the reasons why. Simultaneous submission of applications for the same consignment to more than one provincial authority should be prohibited. Falsification of information on permit application forms should be a prosecutable offence.

* All applications to import African Grey Parrots should indicate the number of birds of each subspecies to be imported.

* Information provided on import permit applications and accompanying documentation should be checked against appropriate scientific and legal references to ensure that the declared country of origin is a range state for the African Grey subspecies to be imported; and that the countries of origin/export/re-export allow the trade in African Grey Parrots.

* All provincial import permits should be clearly marked as 'conditional' pending physical inspection of the birds after they are imported and examination of the accompanying documentation.

* All unused 'conditional' import or re-export/export permits should be required to be returned to provincial permit authorities upon their expiration.

Liaison with the CITES Secretariat

* As the principal link with the CITES Secretariat, the Department of Environment Affairs should ensure that all CITES Notifications and other relevant information concerning implementation of the Convention are communicated to all provincial permit-issuing authorities in a timely fashion.

* For trade stemming from countries for which prior confirmation of the validity of export permits has been requested, provincial authorities should refrain from granting 'conditional' approval or import permits until authorisation is received from the CITES Secretariat.

* Provincial authorities and the Department of Environment Affairs should continue to improve the quality of South Africa's CITES annual reports, and in future to report on actual trade across South Africa's borders rather than on permits issued.

Import and Export Procedures

* Importers should be required to provide provincial conservation authorities with a copy of documentation confirming that they have made reservations to quarantine the birds to be imported, and to advise these authorities of the expected date and time of arrival of imported African Grey Parrot shipments as soon as this is known.

* Imported shipments of African Grey Parrots should be inspected by designated provincial conservation personnel upon or soon after arrival, with special attention paid to the subspecies of birds in trade and any other details that may be contained on the export documentation.

* The actual number of each subspecies of bird imported, including those dead on arrival and dying during quarantine, should be noted and recorded on provincial import permits.
* All African Grey Parrot shipments destined for export and their accompanying documentation should be inspected at the port of exit immediately prior to export. A notation of the actual (as opposed to the permitted) number of birds to be exported should be made on the original CITES export permit.

* In the case of permit violations (e.g. the presence of birds in excess of those permitted for import/export), the entire shipment should be detained and charges brought against the importer/exporter.

Captive Breeding

* Aviculturists breeding African Grey Parrots who intend for captive-bred birds to be exported should be required to maintain breeding records, including information such as the number of birds set up in breeding pairs, the number of fertile eggs laid, chicks hatched and fledglings weaned.

* Aviculturists seeking to export captive-bred African Grey Parrots should be required to adopt a system of closed-ringing (banding) as a means of identifying captive-bred offspring. Closed rings should bear information regarding the identity of the breeder and a unique number or code identifying the individual bird. Ring numbers should be included in the breeding records maintained by aviculturists.

* Provincial nature conservation personnel should periodically inspect the aviaries of aviculturists seeking to export captive-bred African Grey Parrots. Ideally, such inspections should take place during, or shortly following, the breeding season. Inspectors should bear in mind the need to minimise disturbance of the birds to be inspected, and to take whatever precautions are necessary to prevent the accidental spread of avian diseases to the captive bird populations they visit.

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Endangered Wildlife Trust

The TRAFFIC Network is the world's largest wildlife trade monitoring programme with offices covering most parts of the world. TRAFFIC is supported by WWF (World Wide Fund For Nature) and IUCN (the World Conservation Union) to monitor trade in and utilisation of wild plants and animals. TRAFFIC in South Africa is supported by WWF- South Africa, Endangered Wildlife Trust and The Green Trust. It works in close co-operation with the Secretariat of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). As the majority of its funding is provided by WWF, the Network is administered by the WWF Programme Committee on behalf of WWF and IUCN.

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