

# Coalition and Capacity Building in Support of the Conservation of Yellow-Naped Parrots on the South Coast of Guatemala

*Report on the Activities of the Yellow Naped Parrot Working Group (COLORES)*

**Summary:**

The Yellow-Naped Parrot Working Group (COLORES) is a coalition of ONGs, universities, government agencies, ornithologists and birders formed in 2010 to protect this species and its habitat on the Pacific coast of Guatemala. COLORES is motivated by the imminent threat of extinction facing this species in Guatemala as documented by the ground-breaking parrot conservation and research initiated by Dr. LoraKim Joyner in the 1980s. At one roost site located on the Las Ilusiones Farm in Santa Rosa the population has plummeted by 98%, with up to 250 birds roosting there in the early 1990's and only 2 seen there as of February 2013.



In November 2013 LoraKim visited Guatemala and along with COLORES coordinators Fernando Aldana and Colum Muccio organized a series of activities which had the aim of identifying sites along the Guatemalan Pacific coast where parrot point counts can be carried out and which have ecotouristic potential for La Ruta Lora (the Parrot Route), a planned parrot-watching route to support private reserves and other parrot conservation activities in the region. The visit also had the aim of identifying COLORES collaborators in the area and offering training to citizen researchers to support these count efforts.

**TOTAL PARROT COUNT**

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Nuca amarilla - Yellow-naped amazon | 100 |
| Cotorra - White-fronted amazon      | 198 |
| Guayabera - Orange-fronted parakeet | 102 |
| Catalina - Orange-chinned parakeet  | 22  |
| Chocoyo - Pacific parakeet          | 164 |

During this visit, we were pleased to count a total of 100 yellow-naped parrots, of which 6-9 were suspected fledglings from 2013 (less than one year of age), lending hope for the future of this species on the Pacific coast of Guatemala. Fifty-one biologists, park

guards, birders, and parrot lovers were trained in carrying out parrot point counts utilizing methodologies developed by LoraKim and others and used during the 1990's in Guatemala as part of the Proyecto de Loros (Guatemala Psittacine Research Project). These techniques have been improved on in recent counts and include finding optimal points to counts at each site so as to most methodically

estimate the total numbers of unique individuals. These points may occur in more or less straight transect lines dispersed so as to cover incoming and outgoing parrots, and multiple counts are compared during after-count “negotiations” to make sure that parrots are not double-counted. At all sites but Tarrales other psittacine species were also counted, as their populations are also probably at risk due to habitat destruction and suspected rampant poaching. Five areas for monitoring were established: Los Tarrales, El Patrocinio, La Serrania, Takalik Aabaj, and Hawaii. The first three sites are private nature reserves. Takalik Aabaj is an important Maya-Olmec archeological site near Retahuleu. Hawaii is the sea turtle and mangrove conservation program managed by the Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association (ARCAS) near Chiquimulilla, Santa Rosa. Contacts were made with important stakeholders, including private reserve owners, researchers and agribusiness representatives, and presentations were given at the San Carlos and Del Valle universities in Guatemala City.

While the counting of 100 unique individual yellow-naped parrots gives us hope for the future of this species on the Pacific coast of Guatemala, these flocks are certainly only a fraction of those seen by LoraKim and others in the 1990's, and the counts provide only preliminary, superficial data on the overall status of the Guatemalan yellow-naped population. Additional monitoring locations will need to be established and the quality of the data collected at these points will need to be ensured before we can begin to build a population model for the Guatemalan yellow-naped. With the continued destruction of the south coast habitat, which was evident during our trip with kilometers of burning sugar cane fields and African palm trees, much attention will also need to be paid to educate and raise awareness among the Guatemalan public and agribusiness regarding the plight of the yellow-naped.

### General Plan

During the week of November 18-24, 2013, Colum Muccio (Director, ARCAS), LoraKim Joyner (Director One Earth Conservation and Lafeber Conservation), and Fernando Aldana (Ornithologist, bird guide) visited the 4 sites



AM count at Tarrales

mentioned below. The purpose of these visits was training for field monitoring and general information needed for parrot conservation, and to conduct counts to see if each site had parrots present and could be established as a monitoring site for future counts, ecotourism, and protection. These visits culminated in a day of workshops held on November 25, 2013 where LoraKim gave a presentation to the Veterinary School of the San Carlos University with a total attendance of 90 students and researchers. Following this presentation, the Working Group met with an attendance of 14 to review the latest developments and to plan the future of COLORES. Later in the day Fernando, Colum, and LoraKim gave a presentation at the University del Valle with an attendance of 9.

At each of the 4 count sites, the agenda was more or less as follows:

**First day:**

2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Presentation on conservation with training.

3:30 – 4:15 p.m. Determination of point count locations and assignments and walk out to point counts.

4:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Parrot count

5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Walk back to central location and revise (negotiations) data to determine count of unique individuals.

**Second day:**

5:30 a.m. – 7:30 a.m. Parrot count

7:30 – 8:30 a.m. Revise data to determine count of unique individuals

8:30 – 10:00 a.m. Goodbyes, group pictures, give out bracelets, and then leave to next location.

## **Los Tarrales**

**Date:** November 18 – 19, 2013

**Participants in training:** 20 (including presenters)

Los Tarrales is an eco-coffee farm that has set aside a large part of its land to conservation and has developed into a prime birdwatching destination in Guatemala.

**Evening count plan and general results:** Carried out the same 4 counts as during LoraKim's last visit, and added count #5 in a field and then as rain quit in evening Dani went to another pasture for count #6. Only yellow-naped amazons were counted at Tarrales.



Workshop at Tarrales

Evening count results: (It rained from about 4:30 p.m. to 5:15 p.m).

| <b>Point</b>  | <b>Unique Individuals</b> | <b>Individuals per point</b> | <b>Spent night</b> |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| #1            | 4                         |                              |                    |
| #2            | 12                        |                              |                    |
| #3            | 4                         |                              |                    |
| #4            | 9 (one group of 5)        |                              | 2                  |
| #5            | 6                         |                              |                    |
| #6            | 2                         |                              |                    |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>37</b>                 |                              | <b>4</b>           |

One family of 5, two individuals flying, the rest were seen in pairs

Morning count results:

| <b>Point</b>  | <b>Unique Individuals</b> | <b>Individuals per point</b> | <b>Spent night</b> |
|---------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| #1            | 14                        | 14                           |                    |
| #2            | 8                         | 14                           |                    |
| #3            | 3                         | 11                           |                    |
| #4            | 14                        | 14                           |                    |
| #5            | 2                         | 9                            |                    |
| #6            | 9                         | 20                           |                    |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>50</b>                 | <b>82</b>                    |                    |

One group of 7 at point #4 flew as a family of 5 and a forward leaning pair. A picture showed one of the birds in the group of 5 to not have a yellow nape. There was a group of 4, and two groups of individuals. Everyone else was in pairs. Point #6 saw parrots feeding on the ground. We did not count other species.



Tarrales: A group of five yellow napes, including three probable fledgings from the year before.

## El Patrocinio

**Date:** November 19 – 20, 2013

**Number attending training:** Three guides – Erwin Alvarado, Paulino Chubac Monterrosa, Wilmer Alvarado

El Patrocinio is an eco-coffee farm that has set aside a large part of its land to conservation and is developing into a prime birdwatching and ecotouristic destination in the Retaulehue area of Guatemala.

**Evening count plan and general results:** Chose 3 points. #1 is Tower (which due to rain and lack of peripheral vision was moved to restaurant during evening count, and also started there the next day), #2 is cemetery. #3 is bosque.

**Evening count results:** We were rained out so didn't sum up few parrots seen.

Morning count results:

| Points        | Unique Individuals                  | Individuals per point  | Spent night |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| <u>#1</u>     | 6 (32 Cot <sup>1</sup> )            | 6 (40 Cot)             |             |
| <u>#2</u>     | 10 (15 Cot, 29 Choco <sup>2</sup> ) | 10 (19 Cot)            |             |
| <u>#3</u>     | 2 (12 Cot)                          | 6 (12 Cot)             |             |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>18 YN</b><br>59 Cot              | <b>22 YN</b><br>71 Cot |             |

All YN in pairs.



Training group at Patrocinio

## Takalik Abaj

Date: November 20 – 21, 2013

Number attending training: 9 (besides presenters)

Evening count plan and general results: Chose 3 points. Point #1 is in sleeping compound, #2 is monument 5, #3 is monument 6/7. It started to rain by 4 p.m. so didn't go out at all.

Takalik Abaj is a major Mayan-Olmec archeological site with a paid staff of 100 persons, and is part of the GuateMagica touristic area, so has potential in the future as a site for the Ruta Los Loros and other ecotourism. We ate dinner with the directors of the Parque, Crista Seibert and Manuel, archeologists



Training group at Takalik Abaj

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<sup>1</sup> Cotorras, White-fronted parrot, *Amazona albifrons*

<sup>2</sup> Chocoyos, Pacific parakeet, *Psittacara holochlora*

and founders of the site, 23 years ago. Crista especially expressed interest in collaborating on rescue work and on possibly establishing a resident population of semi-wild, released yellow napes and/or scarlet macaws.

Evening count results: Rained out.

Morning count results:

| Points        | Unique Individuals | Individuals per point | Spent night |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| <u>#1</u>     | 7                  | 11 (6 Cot)            |             |
| <u>#2</u>     | 8                  | 16 (14 Choco)         |             |
| <u>#3</u>     | 4                  | 6 (8 Choco)           |             |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>19 YN</b>       | <b>33 YN</b>          |             |
|               | 6 Cot              | 6 Cot                 |             |
|               | 22 Choco           | 22 Choco              |             |

Yellow napes - (two singles, and maybe one group of 3 – might have been 2 and 1 flying close together)

## La Serranía

Date: November 21, 2013

Number attending training: 2 participants were from Amigos del Bosque, 3 were of the family Ponce who own the finca.

Evening count plan and general results: Chose 3 points. Point #1 is in front of large Ceiba in front of house, #2 is twin ceibas to east, and #3 is on south side of tree line.

La Serrania is a private farm just west of Coatepeque whose owner, Miguel Angel Ponce is a real parrot lover and can be trusted in the future to collect reliable data and host parrot watchers.

**Evening count results:** It only sprinkled throughout the count so we were able to finish the count.

| Points        | Unique Individuals                          | Individuals per point | Spent night |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|-------------|
| #1            | 5 (2 Broto <sup>3</sup> , 6 Cot, 113 Choco) | 7                     |             |
| #2            | 6 (4 Cot)                                   | 9                     |             |
| #3            | 2   | 2                     |             |
| <u>Total:</u> | 13 YN<br>10 Cot<br>2 Brot<br>113 Choco      | 18 YN                 |             |

Point #1 had a family of 5 confirmed, (3 did not have yellow on their napes), all else in pairs

Morning count results: Did not perform a morning count. We thought they had enough training and also the site did not have many birds.



Mixed flock at Serrania

## ARCAS – El Hawaii

Date: November 24, 2013

Number attending training: Gave a presentation to 15 ARCAS volunteers at the Parque Hawaii. Did not do a training (formal) on how to count with Lucia or Mario, but they came with LoraKim to do a count. Mario participated and got a feel for how to do counts.

Evening count plan and general results: Did not do an evening count.

Evening count results: Did not do an evening count.

Morning count results: Did not do an official point count. Drove around in the back of a pickup truck out near Finca El Salado. Did not see many birds until came across a fly way with birds flying from East to West, paralleling ocean and line of mangle to south. LoraKim has GPS coordinates of this fly way.

102 Guaya<sup>4</sup>

20 Brotogeris

124 Cot

0 Yellow-naped

<sup>3</sup> Catalinas, Orange-chinned parakeets, Brotogeris jugularis

<sup>4</sup> Guayaberas, Orange-fronted parakeets, Eupsittula canicularis

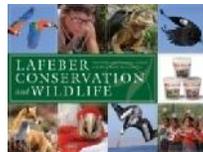


The key to a good count is paperwork. COLORES formed printed for use in the parrot counts.



Heated negotiations following the PM count at Tarrales!!!

*These activities thanks to the generosity of:*



**FOTO CREDITS:** LoraKim Joyner, Lafeber Conservation, Hugo Enrique Toledo, Colum Muccio