

Dear Editor,

March 10 is Parrot Crisis Awareness Day.

Despite anti-poaching laws and global frameworks, they continue to be trafficked to meet the demands of the global pet trade. 29% of all parrot species on the planet are threatened, endangered, or critically endangered (IUCN Red List). 58% of all parrot species are in decline. In many areas, the poaching rate is 100%—no chicks escape the wildlife trade. Up to 90% of trapped birds die after capture.

However, we can help them. The first thing we must do is stop buying and selling them. When a parrot is purchased from a store or a breeder, their "value" puts wild parrots at risk—market demand travels from store to countries of origin quickly.

Ironically, despite such devastation, parrots remain one of the most frequently abandoned of all companion animals in the U.S. Their wild nature—aggression, destructiveness, loud and frequent vocalizations—are too much for most guardians.

Standard pet industry practices, such as hand-rearing (i.e., parental deprivation) further complicate factors, as they actually undermine a parrot's ability to mature into a psychologically healthy, well-adjusted adult, and increases the likelihood of a bird's failure as a "pet."

Even the most loving parrot guardians can find themselves unable to care for a longtime pet in the event of declining health, financial struggle, or other circumstances. It's not surprising that sanctuaries across the globe are at capacity, unable to address daily requests for surrender—while more birds flood the market every day. Many parrot species can live up to 80 years.

This is the Parrot Crisis. Everywhere, these wild animals are suffering. With each passing day, more parrots are stolen from the wild. More are brought into the world as a commodity by breeders. More are failed by humans. All because of the human desire cage them.

Parrots have evolved over millions of years to thrive in the wild—soaring over treetops and calling to flock-mates miles away. Feather-plucking and self-mutilation—hallmarks of any lonely or bored parrot—only occur in captivity. We have sentenced these wild animals to life behind bars and the consequences are predictable.

The time has come for us to stop pretending that parrots should be pets. With the exception of science-based captive breeding programs in countries of origin, designed for the eventual release of animals into native habitats, there is no such thing as ethical parrot breeding. Cages and the demands of human lives are incompatible with the needs of wild animals.

If you want to protect parrots, never buy, breed, or sell one. Adopt, don't shop. Donate to conservation efforts. Support local legislation that bans the sale of parrots in stores. Volunteer at your local parrot rescue or sanctuary.

To learn more about the parrot crisis, visit www.parrotalliance.org.

Sincerely,

The International Alliance for the Protection of Parrots