

Have you ever walked into a pet store only to sadly encounter a lonely parrot? You might feel inclined to “save” this parrot, but doing so would only contribute to a rapidly growing crisis – the parrot crisis, a multi-faceted threat to humans and parrots alike. Whether in the wild, in pet stores, in human homes, or in rescues and sanctuaries, these animals need your help. To end this crisis, we must stop selling, buying, and breeding these wild animals.

The picture is bleak. Despite an estimated 3-5 million baby birds bred in the U.S. per year, captive parrots are one of the most frequently abandoned of all companion animals. A parrot's wild nature and natural inclination for loud and frequent vocalizations, aggression, flying, mating, and destruction of property are too much for most guardians.

Therefore, millions of captive parrots languish in human homes ill-equipped to provide for the needs of wild animals. Even the most well-meaning, loving parrot guardians often find themselves unable to care for these animals over their 20-80-year lifespan in the event of these guardians' declining health, financial struggle, stress, or other life circumstances.

Meanwhile, the demand for parrots as pets trickles down to where parrots fly free. In the wild, parrots are one of the most threatened animals in the world—largely due to the pet trade and habitat loss. 29% of all parrot species are endangered or threatened. 58% are in decline. Despite well-meaning international legislation and other efforts, smugglers and traffickers regularly find ways to circumvent laws meant to protect wildlife.

In many areas, the poaching rate is 100% — no chicks escape the illegal wildlife trade. 90% of trapped birds die after capture, with survivors being torn from their families and usually doomed to a life of clipped or broken wings, inadequate caging, poor nutrition, and social isolation. It is estimated that for every bird smuggled across a border, up to 90% die within the first year from the time of capture to ultimate arrival at the end-consumer.

There are human costs to this crisis as well – the illegal wildlife trade renders some human communities bereft of opportunity, safety, and health. Indigenous peoples who live near wild parrots are losing their cultural and spiritual relationships with these birds. These people are furthermore often marginalized and live in poverty, resorting to climbing trees to trap parrots at the risk of injury or death, all for a meager amount of money that pales in comparison to the amount hoarded by middlemen and international buyers and sellers.

There is also an ecological cost that we cannot ignore. In the face of global climate and biodiversity crises, parrots are key to protecting biodiversity from collapse. They are critical to seed dispersal, pollination, and other ecosystem functions in various biomes and climate zones across the world. Parrots remain an essential stalwart in our fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. As long as humans desire to cage parrots, they will in danger in the wild.

The International Alliance for the Protection of Parrots (IAPP) represents an international group of avian rescues, sanctuaries, conservation organizations, veterinarians, parrot guardians, and activists who understand the time has come to address the existential crises facing both wild and captive parrots around the world. Visit www.parrotalliance.org to learn more or join us. Because no cage is big enough.