

# Legally Removing Beauty from the Earth How You Can Help to Stop the Global Demand for Parrots as Pets

By Gail Koelln, Co-Director, One Earth  
Conservation



*Photos by One Earth Conservation*

Working with Conservation International and other local partners on One Earth Conservation's newest parrot conservation effort, Rev. Dr. LoraKim Joyner, explains, "Surinam is a place where it is still legal to remove beauty from the earth, but we are working on it!"

Suriname is one of only two countries in South America where it is still legal to trap and remove parrots from the wild. What many people don't realize is that, whether birds are legally trapped or are captive bred for the pet trade, the global demand from people who want to keep parrots as pets is what drives illegal trapping activity around the world. The trapping of wild parrots and other wild animals always harms and causes suffering, and often death. It also contributes to the degradation of the environment in which wild parrots are born because trees are cut down to take parrots. In addition, parrots are seed dispersers, and without them, both flora and fauna in ecosystems would be less diverse. Many wild parrot species are now endangered and could become extinct in the wild if the tide doesn't turn.

People, too, are harmed because of the demand for parrots. Those who climb trees to trap parrots are often injured, and when they fall, can suffer catastrophic injuries and even death. Those who live where parrots are also lose their cultural and spiritual ties to parrots as the number of birds diminish. Studies have shown that a higher diversity of birds in an area leads to increased mental health and satisfaction. With fewer parrots in the forest, we all are impoverished, especially as we need them for ecosystem health and our own health and well-being.

What can you as individuals do to help? Simply do not support the trade in parrots; do not purchase a bird. If you have a pet parrot already, please do NOT release him or her, but take good care of these long-lived birds. If you don't currently have a captive parrot, but really want one, you can help by adopting (rather than buying) a parrot from one of the many parrot sanctuaries around the country, like Foster Parrots, that are overflowing with abandoned, abused, or neglected birds. Before considering adoption, be sure you know how demanding it is to keep and care for highly intelligent and assertive parrots who can live for decades. Even parrots bred in captivity are ultimately wild animals, unlike dogs, cats, and farm animals.

In the meantime, OEC continues our work in Suriname and other countries in the Americas to protect endangered parrots in the wild and to urge people everywhere to stop supporting the pet parrot trade. Since the demand for parrots is harming so many, you can also help wild parrots directly by spreading the word on social media and elsewhere that parrot well-being is the same as human well-being. Of course, OEC would make excellent use of any donation you can give towards our work helping people and parrots in the Americas.

