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*Blue-headed macaws are smuggled into the European pet trade.*  
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## Parrot Smuggling Still a Global Problem

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Each year, thousands of parrots are taken from the wild to be sold as pets in the Americas, Asia, and Europe. CITES Parties, including range states and consumer countries, now have the opportunity to give the highest level of international protection from trade (listing in Appendix I of the Convention) to four parrot species: the yellow-headed Amazon parrot (*Amazona oratrix*), yellow-naped Amazon parrot (*Amazona auropalliata*), blue-headed macaw (*Ara couloni*), and the Cape parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*).

Though the United States has prohibited imports of wild parrots since 1992 under the U.S. Wild Bird Conservation Act, illegal imports continue over the U.S.-Mexico border. Because of their ability to mimic human speech, the yellow-headed Amazon and the yellow-naped Amazon are commonly smuggled species. An Appendix I listing will further enhance U.S. enforcement efforts. Federal sentencing guidelines allow penalties to be increased dramatically when species listed in Appendix I (rather than Appendix II) are traded illegally.



*The yellow-naped parrot is over-exploited for global trade.*  
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The yellow-headed Amazon parrot, native to Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, has suffered the greatest decline of any bird in the Americas—over 90% since the 1970s with the majority of the decline (68%) in the last ten years. The yellow-naped Amazon, which is native to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua is the parrot species most commonly smuggled into the U.S. Trade is having a devastating effect on wild populations. In one field study of the species in Guatemala, 100% of the chicks were taken from their nests for the illegal trade. Nicaragua continues to export 600 birds each year legally. Nicaraguan researchers estimate that up to four times as many are captured in the wild each year to compensate for mortalities and to supply internal markets. Listing in Appendix I effectively would ban this international trade.

Other parrot species being proposed for listing in Appendix I at the meeting include the blue-headed macaw and the Cape parrot. Little is known of the rare blue-headed macaw in the wild and few individuals exist in captivity. The species has a very restricted distribution in Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil. Demand for this species, especially in Europe, is increasing. For example, at least 50 birds were smuggled to the Czech Republic in the 1990s.

The Cape parrot is a small parrot native to South Africa. It is estimated that less than 400 individuals remain in the wild. Researchers are taking great efforts to protect the remaining

birds, but the species is in demand from "specialty collectors" because of its rarity. An Appendix I listing will help South Africa in its efforts by enacting an international ban on trade. CITES Parties should act without delay to protect each of these species from the pressures of international commercial trade. Without decisive action each of these birds could suffer irreparably from over-exploitation.