

## AFRICAN GREY PARROT (*Psittacus erithacus*)



**PROPOSAL:** CoP17 Prop. 19 Gabon et al. Transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I of *Psittacus erithacus* in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16), Annex 1.

### IFAW RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT

#### Biology and Distribution

African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) were historically found in large numbers in western and central Africa in moist, lowland, tropical forests. Now their population has been greatly reduced due to capture for the live pet trade, habitat destruction and fragmentation. It has been estimated that their population has decreased between 50-90% in some range states and they are locally extinct in others.

African greys are highly intelligent, social birds of the family Psittacidae. They are known for roosting and congregating in large groups in search of fruit, nuts and seeds. African greys can live up to 15.5 years, however, they have a low reproductive rate. They generally lay 3-5 eggs per year in the cavities of large trees but their annual breeding success is only 1-2 fledglings. Further, these breeding and social behaviors make African grey parrot chicks easy targets for traders to snatch from their nests and sell for the pet trade.

African greys are highly prized as pets due to their extraordinary capacity for acoustic learning and retention. They are an extremely vocal parrot

species and their ability to learn and mimic human language has made them a target for traders.

#### Protection Status

In 1981, CITES Parties listed the African grey parrot on Appendix II due to the potential impact of trade on its population at that time. The species has been the subject of multiple reviews of significant trade, the most recent being 2014. A CITES Significant Trade Review of African grey parrots in 2006 highlighted that the trade originating in three of the top eight exporters of CITES-listed birds to Singapore -- Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic -- was of possible or urgent concern because of unsustainable export levels. The review of Significant Trade showed that exports from 1994 to 2003 represented a harvest of potentially up to 21% of the wild population annually.

#### Consequences of Trade

The African grey parrot is considered the third most internationally-traded, wild-harvested bird species, with their populations in decline in at least 14 out of 18 range countries. Trade-associated declines are due to over-harvesting arising from the use





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of poorly-founded quotas; poor management and regulation of trade, including exceeded quotas, fraudulent permit use, false reporting of code C, stolen permits, photocopied permits, reused permits due to limited capacity and resources of authorities; high pre-export mortality from poor handling; and a large illegal trade due to weak enforcement.

Limited to no regulations of trade in African grey parrots has resulted in a dramatic decrease in the population. Additionally, top importing countries and regions such as the USA, EU and the Middle East have driven demand for African greys as household pets. Based on legal trade data, it is estimated that over 1.3 million African greys were exported from range states between 1975 and 2013. However, due to deplorable transit conditions, parrot mortality rates average 40-60%, making

the true estimate of captured African greys 2.1-3.2 million during this period.

IFAW maintains that inadequate restrictions on trade over the past 40 years have left African grey parrot populations exposed to overexploitation. Coupled with habitat loss, this species is losing ground throughout its entire range and will continue to do so as long international trade for African greys exists.

#### IFAW Recommendations

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IFAW urges Parties to support any additional protections for African grey parrots and thus:

**SUPPORTS** the proposal from Gabon *et al* to transfer African grey parrots from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES.