

Yellow Eared Parrot:

ENDANGERED



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Photo:
freewallpaper.com

Yellow Eared Parrot: Endangered



Photo:
jupiterbirding.blogspot.com

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Yellow eared parrots nest in the wax palms of cloud forests nearly 10,000 feet above sea level. They mate for life.

Ecuador used to boast a large number of wax palms, and yellow eared parrots were plentiful.

There has not been a sighting of a yellow eared parrot in Ecuador since the mid 1990s. For a time in the late '90s, they were thought to be extinct.

In 1999 a census of yellow eared parrots discovered that 81 individuals existed in a small area of neighboring Colombia.

The yellow eared parrot (*Ognorhynchus icterotis*) lives on the slopes of the Western Andes.

It is larger than average parrot at 17 inches

long. They mate for life. Wax palm fruits are the main part of their diet.

The birds were found to be disappearing along with their only habitat, the wax palm tree, which is also endangered.

Since that time, conservation efforts have taken root among the general population. Wax palms are better protected and recovery efforts have had good success.

In January of 2013, an estimated 1,408 individual yellow eared parrots were counted. By the time you read this it is likely that 1,500 or

more will be estimated. Although it is still a relatively small number, this is excellent progress.

With foreign conservation support largely achieved, the next steps taken by neighboring communities will determine the future of this beautiful bird.

So far, there have been few setbacks. 🐾

There were only 81 yellow eared parrots in a 1999 census. Today there are an estimated 1,408 individuals.

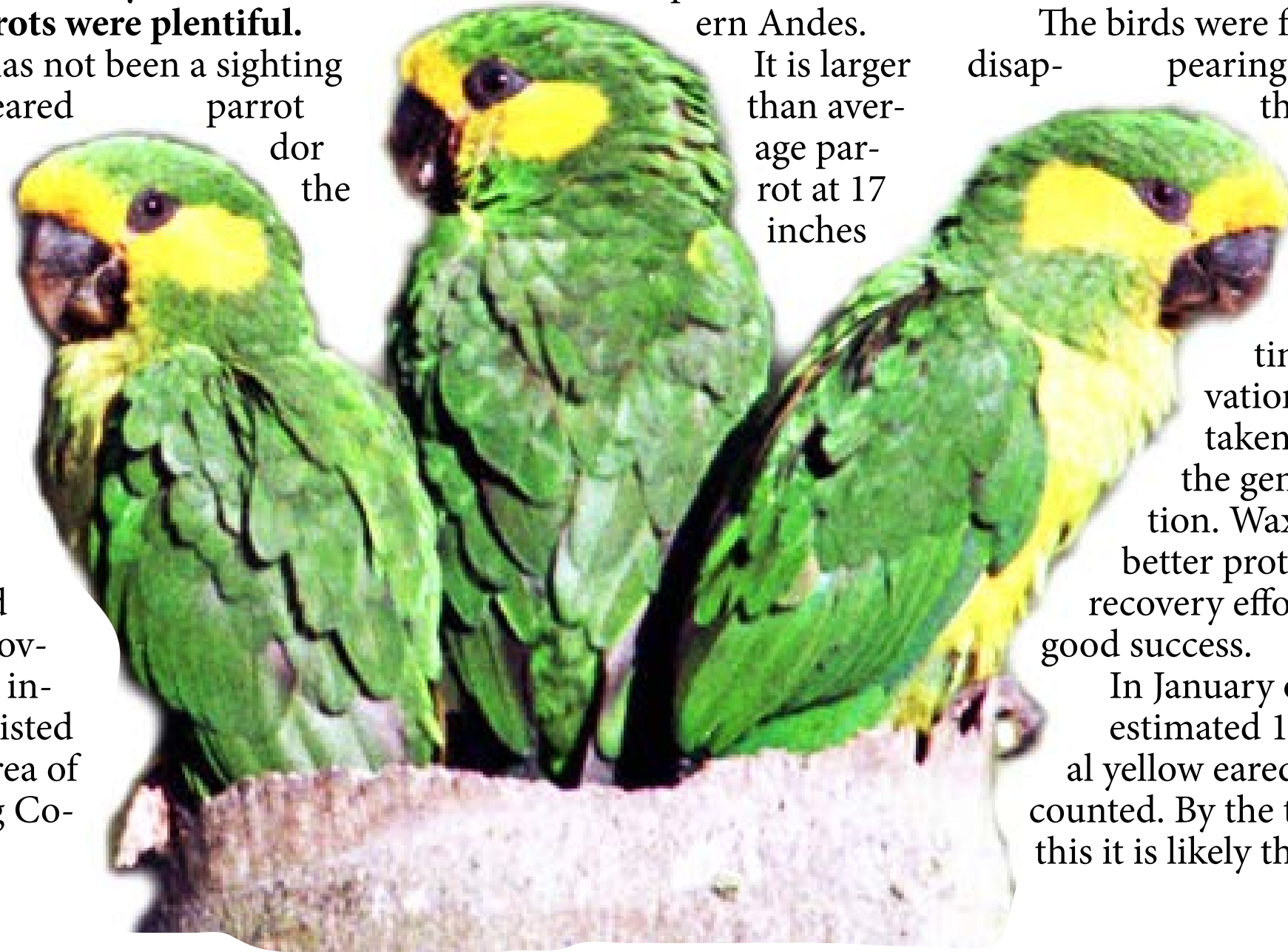


Photo:
brokedownpalette.wordpress.com

Returning wax palms, a rare bird's answered prayer

The Catholic church has nothing against yellow eared parrots and did not realize that the wax palms that were being cut down for use in a one day celebration – Palm Sunday – take 100 years or more to grow back.

Yellow eared parrots live nowhere else. But the wax palm that is their only

home was used to make candles for many years, both prior to the light bulb and then after by economically distressed

local populations. This practice is rare now.

Wax palms were also used in the local Catholic celebrations of Palm Sun-

day, though since the wax palm tree has become endangered, the faithful have at once moved to more common palms for their annual one day devotional.

Additionally, conservation has taken hold with the Columbian populus.

From the point of view of the yellow eared parrot, it is without question an answered prayer. 🐦



Photo:
Wikimedia Commons

The yellow eared parrot’s road from “extinct” to “vulnerable,” a hard-earned success story

The IUCN keeps track of 41,415 endangered species. “Extinct” was the listing category of the yellow eared parrot at one point. “Critically Endangered” is what officials said after that when a few of individuals were spotted at last. The next and current listing, “Endangered” sounds wonderful compared to these other labels. There is now talk of downlisting the bird once again, to “Vulnerable.” This is good news. Mostly.

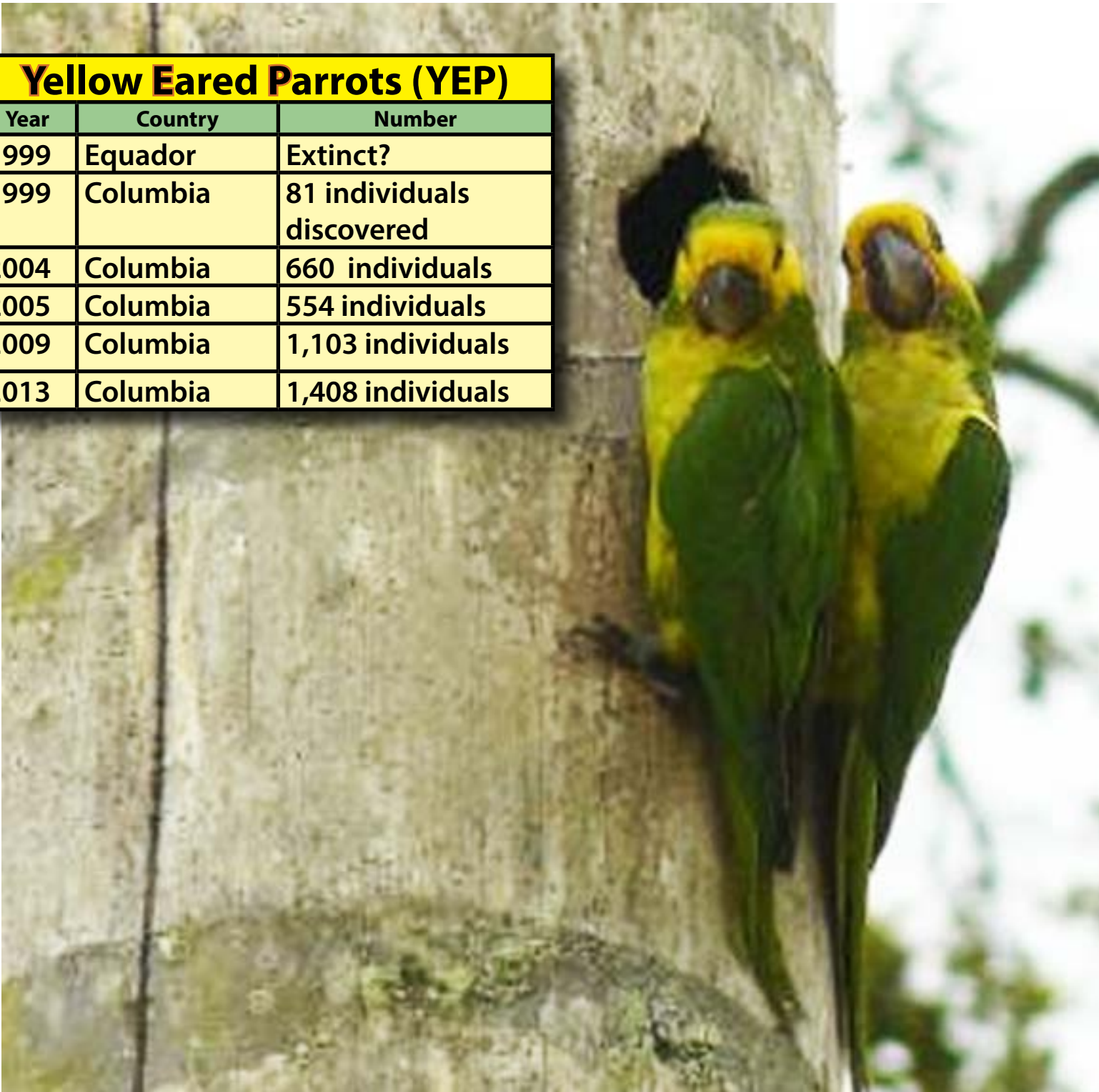
Although efforts overall have met with success, there have been setbacks. In 2005, attempts to reintroduce yellow eared parrots (YEP) to their environment in different locations did not entirely succeed. It is thought that 220 of these beautiful parrots perished that year. With any species, breeding and releasing wild animals back into the wild has mixed results and it is no different with the YEP. So yes, “Vulnerable” really does mean “Vulnerable.”

Bird conservation experts are a bit concerned that the emergency conservation actions and heroic support that built the population of the yellow eared parrot from 81 to 1,408 individuals could wane, and with it the future potential of this beautiful bird. The measures that were undertaken included artificial nests, ten nurseries for reforestation and intense monitoring. The Loro Parque Foundation (Spain), the ProAves Foundation, the American Bird Conservancy and Corantioquia have been very active in these efforts.

Once, the yellow eared parrot was a common bird in South America, with a range spanning many countries. It could be a common sight again, with continued support. 🌿

Photo: proaves.org

Yellow Eared Parrots (YEP)		
Year	Country	Number
1999	Equador	Extinct?
1999	Columbia	81 individuals discovered
2004	Columbia	660 individuals
2005	Columbia	554 individuals
2009	Columbia	1,103 individuals
2013	Columbia	1,408 individuals



A parrot, a palm tree, & a people: Columbia's tourism hopes

Unfortunately (some say) for the stability of their recovery, the yellow eared parrot's successes are occurring in Columbia, a country that is ravaged by drugs and armed conflict.

To some measure this is about more than simply one recovery. Beyond the yellow eared parrot are visions of creating a kind of eco-paradise.

Billions in poten-

tial tourism revenue are at stake, and to some extent, a better future for the general population in Columbia may depend on these kinds of successes.

The wax palm is now the national tree of Colum-

bia.

Today, on the slopes of the Western Andes, the yellow eared parrot

does not care about politics. Like anything living on Earth, it just

wants to live. To survive.

With a little help from people who can make a difference, the yellow eyed parrot and the wax palm *will* survive – and thrive. 🐦

The wax palm is now the national tree of Columbia. Billions in potential tourism revenue are at stake.



Coat of arms of Columbia,
from Wikimedia Commons.

One wonders whether the useful wax palm's near extinction at the hands of humanity inspired the story of “The Lorax” by Dr. Seuss



Photo: Wikipedia.org

Yellow eared parrots live no where else. But the wax palm that is their only home has become rare by virtue of being wonderful. Along with the useful wax in the trunk and the religious use of the leaves, the wax palm also has an outer stem that has been used for building houses. This stem also can be used by poor farmers to build water supply systems. The wax palm fruit has been used as feed for pigs and cattle.

The wax palm, *Ceroxylon quindiuense*, is an extremely slow-growing tree. It can live 100 years and can reach a height of 200 feet. It is the world's tallest palm tree. Strangely, as part of the monocot family the wax palm is in the same family of flowering plants as lilies, orchids, agaves, and grasses.

In “The Lorax” by Dr. Seuss, a similar plant was brought to the edge of extinction because it was so useful everyone cut the trees down for different clever purposes.

They look similar, too. 🐾

In “The Lorax” by Dr. Seuss, a similar plant to the wax palm was brought to the edge of extinction because it was so useful everyone cut the trees down for different clever purposes.

Among gardeners and landscapers, the wax palm is now planted in other parts of the world as an ornamental, and it can survive at sea level in California, Southern Europe, New Zealand and Southern Australia. Only in its natural environment can it tolerate occasional frosts, and then only for brief periods of time.

Resources

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abcbirds.org

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birdlife.org

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wikimedia commons



Photo:
proaves.org