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We're Not Alone! Understanding the New Parrots Conservation Alliance - Working Together for Parrots Across the US and Beyond By Sarah Lemarie



"Parrots in the wild are in grave danger, and they need our best efforts immediately.... The Parrot Conservation Alliance will not only help sanctuaries and rescues collaborate as they address the root causes of the overwhelming crisis of unwanted non-releasable parrots (former pets), and provide needed sanctuary, but also enable these organizations as never before to come together to support key conservation efforts for wild parrots." - Patty Finch, Parrot Conservation Alliance Coordinator and former Executive Director of Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries

In 2019, Mickaboo's CEO Michelle Yesney was invited to an event in Nashville around late October. The event was the first gathering of a new Parrots Conservation Alliance (PCA), with support from the American Bird Conservancy.

Michelle accepted, and brought Mickaboo's new COO Sarah Lemarié, both paying their own way.

Both the agenda and the attendees were a little hard to fathom at first, however as the event took shape and the date drew near, we learned that Mickaboo was truly honored to be

involved. For the inaugural event, only sanctuaries accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries had been invited; these were allowed to nominate other rescues and sanctuaries. Only an organization nominated by at least two of those parties would be invited in the second round. With an event limit of 40 people, we were very lucky indeed to be included. Around 27 organizations were included, covering British Columbia to New Jersey across North America, plus two conservation and rescue programs in Guatemala and Belize.

During two days, speakers from a cross section of these organizations presented their learnings and experiences working in rescue and conservation. It was staggering and inspiring to see so many experienced avian welfare and rescue professionals gathered together, and many new and wonderful connections were made, from our nearby Avian Welfare Coalition friends (Sacramento) to new contacts at Northeast Avian Rescue (NEAR) in New York.

It is hard to distill so much information down into one newsletter article - I cannot truly convey just how much information sharing took place. We left with a USB drive which not only contained the presentations shared that weekend but also a wealth of additional resources that the organizing member had pulled together for us all to share and leverage. A significant amount of this has been uploaded to Mickaboo's wiki space for our own team members to peruse.

Sarah has promised to do a presentation about the event, to help share and disseminate some of the information and the contacts that were made.

Following two long days of presentations, breakouts and workshops (one of which Mickaboo hosted, on handling large rescue situations), and a group dinner, Michelle and Sarah opted to stay an extra day for a tour of a new Nashville sanctuary location created by the Exotic Avian Sanctuary of Tennessee (EAST), run by Kim Hannah.

This third day was a chance to not only visit EAST's new facility, but to attend some final workshops and one final round of networking and contact building. Finally we set off back to California.

While the time at this conference flew by, there were a number of highlights and takeaways that have really stuck with us, some of which we may have mentioned at our 2019 holiday party. These include:

- Some inspirational ideas around fundraising, shared by Carole Baskin of the Big Cat Rescue, Florida (yes, of Tiger King fame)
- Astonishing findings from conservation efforts conducted by research in Guyana on the Sun Parakeet (what a Sun Conure is actually called by conservationists!)
- The moment of realization that try as we might every day in Mickaboo with all of our efforts, we cannot "rescue our way out of this situation". The rescue birds will keep coming thick and fast unless we can address the roots of the problem.
- Meeting some of the well-known names in avian rescue that we know and love, such as Janet Trumbule of The Oasis Sanctuary, Dr. Lori Lindner from the Association for Parrot C.A.R.E., Ginger Duplisee of Ginger's Parrot Rescue, and Karen Windsor from Foster Parrots.



This photo was taken at the start of the conference, featuring all the attendees and speakers. The event included forty amazing individuals, all respected and established members of the avian rescue and sanctuary community across North America – and beyond.

What next for the Alliance?

Almost as soon as we returned home, we were called to action to collaborate on filing comments jointly with the Avian Welfare Coalition against a [permit application filed](#) with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to import 4,000 African Grey parrots from South Africa, under the Wild Bird Conservation Act. The comments were due by December and within a month almost every organization the PCA had signed a joint letter deftly refuting all claims and arguments made by the breeders' consortium. Many other organizations also responded to the permit application to voice their concerns, and we hope that this helped to ensure no permits will be granted. A total of 693 comments were received, the vast majority of which were critical of the application.

Not long after, Mickaboo was asked to help with a challenging rescue initiative in Southern California. An organization known as Wildlife Waystation had been [closed](#) by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife after years of difficulties, and all the animals had to be rehomed - including over 35 special-needs large parrots, ranging from Amazons to Cockatoos and Macaws.

While Mickaboo certainly could not take in so many large birds in one go, we were able to assist with taking in three of them. Michelle worked for weeks to coordinate the placement of many, many, more, leveraging our newfound PCA contacts.

Looking Forward

Since the inaugural October 2019 meeting, PCA members have begun a regular cycle of online sessions to remain connected and identify ways we can continue to collaborate. These include working on inter-state transportation efforts for larger birds or groups of birds, working on standardizing some level of data we collect about rescue activity, and also sharing resources on how to encourage bird owners to arrange for bequeathments and provisions in the event their birds need care in the future once they are gone.

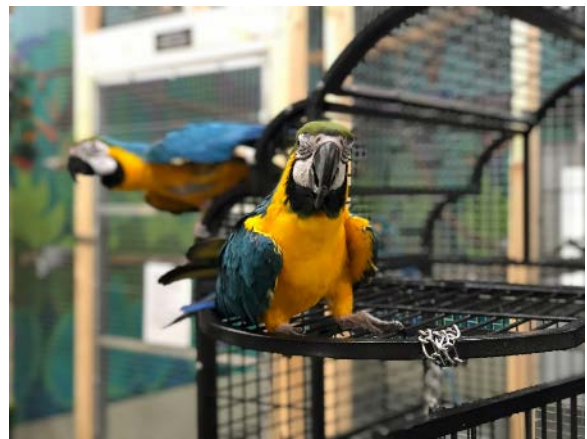
Closer to home, Mickaboo has begun a conversation with the World Parrot Trust, to explore how we can partner with them at some level to support conservation efforts and do our part to tackle the survival and welfare of parrots in the wild - where they should be!

The PCA is still a very young organization, but with a strong and experienced cohort of founding members. We are grateful to be included and look forward to continuing to collaborate with the many amazing and inspirational members to which we are now connected.

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Following the conference, many attendees stayed to visit EAST's facility



Inside EAST



Patty Finch, main organizer of the PCA, and Matt Smith of Project Perry, discuss all things rescue