

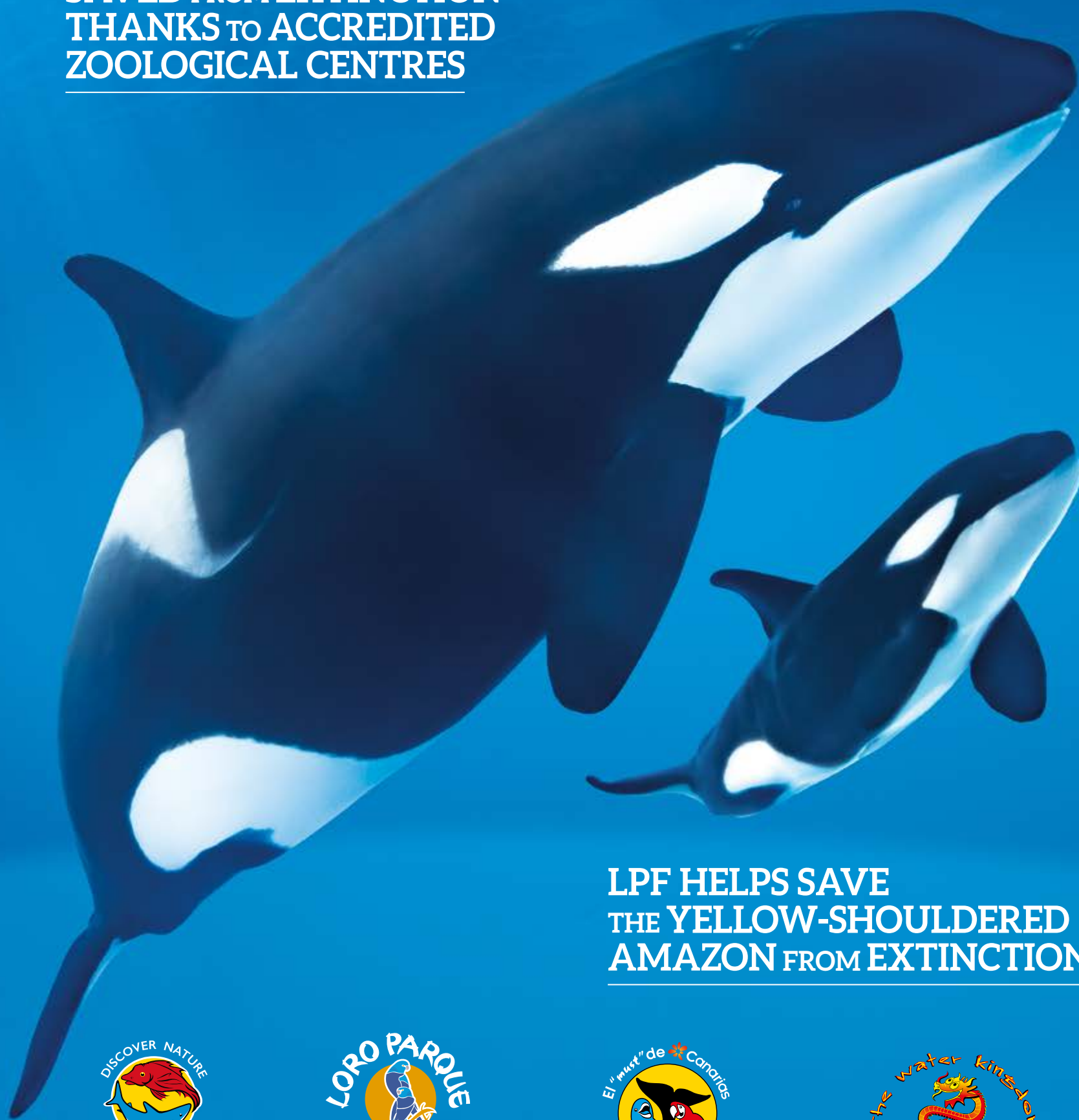
# Canopsitta

The Loro Parque Fundación newsletter

**EXCITING BIRTH OF AN  
ORCA CALF IN THE CANARY ISLANDS**

**2025**  
# 128

**SAVED FROM EXTINCTION  
THANKS TO ACCREDITED  
ZOOLOGICAL CENTRES**



**LPF HELPS SAVE  
THE YELLOW-SHOULDERED  
AMAZON FROM EXTINCTION**





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Morgan and her calf Teno. Photo: LPF

## EDITORIAL OFFICE:

Loro Parque Fundación. Avda. Loro Parque s/n,  
38400 Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, Islas Canarias, Spain  
Tel.: +34 922 373 841 (ext.: 281)  
E-mail: [lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org](mailto:lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org)

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Christoph Kiessling  
Javier Almunia  
Rafael Zamora Padrón

## PRINTING:

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Dear Friends,

*We are pleased to share that this year has been particularly meaningful in terms of important births. Since the Dutch government entrusted us in 2011 with Morgan, a hearing-impaired orca deemed beyond help, we have cared for her with the utmost dedication. The recent birth of her calf, Teno, who is nursing naturally, gives us a profound sense of fulfilment and validation for our work. Thanks to exceptional veterinary care and the unwavering efforts of her caretakers, this magnificent marine mammal continues to thrive and complete her life cycle successfully.*

*In the marine realm, the six years of the CANBIO project have heightened our awareness of the impact of climate change on the primary ecosystem surrounding our islands. This joint investment with the Canary Islands Government, carried out in collaboration with both Canary Island universities, is yielding crucial scientific data that will help protect our biodiversity.*

*Through the research we conduct at Loro Parque Fundación, in collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Centre for Macaronesia, we aim to support the conservation of lesser-known animal species that are critically endangered in our archipelago.*

*It is important to acknowledge that not everything has been a success in a world where wars persist. The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza continue to have devastating consequences for humans and all living beings in those regions. In such circumstances, the protection of animals and their habitats inevitably falls by the wayside. We believe it is essential not to lose sight of the collateral damage these conflicts inflict on biodiversity.*

*Still, life finds a way even in the most complex situations. The golden lion tamarin of Brazil—once critically endangered—was reintroduced into the wild thanks to zoological centres. Today, two babies of this species have been born at Loro Parque, within a species safety programme. This joyful event is joined by the birth of three ring-tailed lemurs, a species threatened in Madagascar. At Poema del Mar, the extraordinary breeding of a large number of weedy sea dragons marks another vital success for animal care and underscores the crucial role zoological institutions play in conservation.*

*It is always a good time to express our deepest gratitude to all our collaborators, supporters, and nature lovers for their steadfast commitment to our mission of improving animal welfare and protecting endangered species.*

## WE CARE

Christoph Kiessling  
President of Loro Parque Fundación



# LPF stands out at the International Orca Symposium



International researchers and speakers Fernando Rosa and Jonás Lüke shared their advanced knowledge during the 5th International Orca Symposium. Photo: LPF

Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación took part in the International Orca Symposium, an event that had not been held in over 20 years. The World Orca Congress brings together more than **170 experts from around the globe to explore and**

**question the welfare and protection of this iconic species.**

The Tenerife-based organizations positioned themselves as key players, thanks to their significant contributions to research and conservation. During the

symposium, they presented the results of years of scientific work, both in natural habitats and within the zoo's facilities.

**Christoph Kiessling, President of Loro Parque Fundación, shared the nearly two**

**decades of experience and research that Loro Parque and the foundation have conducted with orcas.**

A prominent example is the foundation's research on orca populations in the Strait of Gibraltar. Loro Parque also regularly hosts international universities to study the behaviour of orcas living in its Animal Embassy. To date, this collaboration has resulted in 12 published scientific papers specifically on orcas, and 25 more on other cetacean species.

Dr. Javier Almunia, Director of Loro Parque Fundación, also participated in the Congress, presenting on the adaptation of the **Dolphin-WET** tool to assess the welfare of orcas under human care. **Originally developed for bottlenose dolphins, this tool includes 49 indicators covering nutrition, environment, health, behaviour, and mental state.** Almunia emphasized the importance of systematic assessments to ensure reliable data and to improve care through continuous, evidence-based monitoring.

**Researchers from the University of La Laguna (ULL), including Dr. Fernando Rosa, presented an innovative study conducted with Loro Parque's orcas.**

The project, titled "Real-Time Detection and Discrimination of Orca Vocalizations Using Artificial Intelligence", demonstrates how orca calls can be detected and analysed in real time through AI. This breakthrough allows for more effective monitoring and, consequently, improved animal welfare.

The Institute of Animal Health at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (IUSA-ULPGC) also shared important advances in the pathological study of orcas, based on research involving those living under human care at Loro Parque. ■



Symposium organizer Renaud de Stephanis with Tarifa's Mayor José Antonio Santos; First Deputy Mayor Jorge Benítez; Second Deputy Mayor Ignacio Trujillo; and members of the Loro Parque Fundación Education Department. Photo: LPF



# Saved from Extinction Thanks to Accredited Zoological Centres

Two golden lion tamarin babies have been born at Loro Parque – Animal Embassy. This species is listed as endangered and declining in the wild, according to the IUCN Red List.

This birth marks a significant milestone in the protection of this iconic endangered species and strengthens the commitment of Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación to biodiversity and breeding programs under human care.

Born in early March, the young tamarins have already begun to briefly separate from their parents, who watch over them attentively to protect them from any danger. These individuals arrived at Loro Parque's Animal Embassy only a few months ago to support the species' breeding program, benefiting from the favourable Canarian climate and Loro Parque's proven expertise with the species.

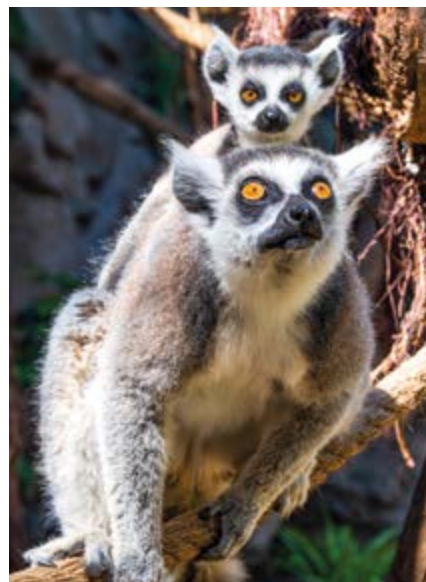
These births are part of a **coordinated breeding program**

**involving various zoological institutions and conservation organizations.** The goal is to ensure the genetic diversity of the golden lion tamarin and support future reintroduction projects into its natural habitat.

**The newborns have shown optimal development, clinging to their mother's fur** and exhibiting typical behaviour for their early life stages. With its golden coat and distinctive mane, the golden lion tamarin is a symbol of the fight against deforestation and the illegal wildlife trade.

The birth of these small primates brings hope for the survival of the species and serves as a reminder of the vital role accredited zoological centres play in conservation.

**This small primate remains under threat in its native Brazilian habitat, facing habitat**



The ring-tailed lemurs, a threatened species, welcomed three babies at Loro Parque Animal Embassy. Photo: LPF



Close-up of the two newborn golden lion tamarins at Loro Parque – Animal Embassy. Photo: LPF

**loss, disease, and illegal trade. Its rarity and striking golden appearance make it a target for theft and smuggling.**

Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación remain firmly committed to protecting biodiversity and animal welfare worldwide. Through their ex-situ and in-situ projects, they stand out as international leaders in the defense and conservation of wildlife. ■

# Music in Honor of the Red-tailed Amazon

The red-tailed amazon (*Amazona brasiliensis*) is one of twelve parrot species that have been saved from extinction thanks to the long-standing support of Loro Parque Fundación over the years.

More than \$875,000 have been invested to protect this iconic Brazilian parrot and the ecosystem it calls home.

In collaboration with the local organization SPVS, the species continues to be monitored, while conservation efforts are also being expanded to support the vineaceous amazon (*Amazona vinacea*) in the broader region where both species coexist.

**The successful recovery of the red-tailed amazon has been remarkable.** Although monitoring must continue, **its population is now well out of the critical danger zone.**

**This conservation project has served as a source of inspiration for local communities.** In fact, during Brazil's Parrot Week—celebrated annually at the end of April—a **music video was released featuring a song dedicated to this species.** The track

accompanies visuals of the project's work, adding a melodic tribute to a successful conservation story. ■

You can watch and listen via the following link: *A Moda do Papagaio-de-cara-roxa*:



Video



Scenes from the recording of the red-tailed amazon's music video in Brazil. Photo: SPVS / LPF

# LPF Helps Save the Yellow-shouldered Amazon from Extinction

The Yellow-shouldered Amazon (*Amazona barbadensis*), is one of twelve species that have been rescued from extinction with the support of Loro Parque Fundación. Today, it serves as a symbol of conservation education and island biodiversity in Venezuela on a global scale.

This species is the only one in its genus adapted to arid environments. Currently listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the parrot inhabits desert-like vegetation, favouring dry scrublands dominated by cacti and low, thorny shrubs or trees. It nests in cavities found in trees, cacti, or cliffs. The average clutch consists of 3 to 4 eggs per nest, and most chicks survive to hatching.

The Yellow-shouldered Amazon is found in only four small areas along Venezuela's coast and on the islands of Margarita, La Blanquilla, and Bonaire. The only protected population is on the Macanao Peninsula of Margarita Island, where, in 1989, only around 650 individuals remained.

For over two decades, Loro Parque Fundación has partnered with the Venezuelan conservation organization Provita to implement multiple actions for the species' protection. Thanks to these joint efforts—and crucially, the support of local communities—the wild population has now grown to over 3,000 individuals.

Each year from March to August, the parrots nest and raise their chicks in Macanao. Sadly, this is also when poachers and wildlife traffickers raid nests to supply the illegal pet trade. To counter this threat to the Regional Bird of Nueva Esparta State, a dedicated team of conservationists works

annually to protect nests in this key breeding area.

**Surveillance is a demanding and dangerous 24-hour task,** carried out by local youth organized under the EcoGuardianes Cooperative and coordinated by Provita.

This vital protection effort is supported by the Municipal Police of the Macanao Peninsula, the National Guard Command of Boca del Río, the Macanao Peninsula City Council, and the Ministry of People's Power for the Environment of Nueva Esparta State, among other institutions.

Since it was once recorded that up to 95% of nests could be looted, environmental education has become an essential part of the strategy. Local schools have been engaged to raise awareness about the parrot and its vital importance to Margarita Island's natural heritage.

Ongoing efforts with the EcoGuardianes and consistent community outreach have helped foster greater respect for wildlife and the preservation of habitats. Today, flocks of parrots can once again be seen flying freely in their natural environment.

**In parallel with the field conservation work,**



Yellow-shouldered Amazon chick born at Loro Parque Fundación. Photo: LPF

**Loro Parque Fundación has been successfully breeding this species under human care for the past thirty years.** More than

300 individuals have been born at the breeding centre, offering an effective countermeasure to the illegal parrot trade.

The availability of birds bred under human care—raised in controlled environments with

full health guarantees and legal documentation—has enabled the creation of a healthy population in Europe. Managed by accredited institutions, this has proven to be a powerful tool against illegal bird trafficking. At the same time, the experience gained in ex-situ conservation has provided critical knowledge for rescue, rehabilitation, and breeding efforts in Venezuela whenever needed. ■



Video



+ info



Artificial nest boxes have proven highly beneficial for the species. Photo: Provita/LPF



# Commitment to Animal Welfare at the European Parliament



Cybell Kiessling, Director of Administration at Loro Parque Group, alongside Ricardo Fernández de la Puente, Director of Institutional Relations, and Wolfgang Rades, Conservation Officer of Loro Parque Fundación in Germany, participated in the roundtable at the European Parliament. Photo: LPF

This event brought together experts in tourism and animal welfare, as well as members of the European Commission and Parliament, in a joint effort to address the need for a more sustainable tourism sector that incorporates high standards of animal welfare.

During the roundtable, representatives from Global Humane Society—such as Kashyap Choksi, Senior Vice President of Operations, and Thomas M. Edling, Chief Veterinarian and Animal Ethics Specialist—presented the NGO's ecotourism project. This initiative focuses on ensuring the humane treatment of animals while promoting sustainable practices worldwide.

Among the highlighted efforts was the “No Animals Were Harmed” certification programme for the film industry, which sets standards for animal welfare on set. Additional initiatives were also presented in the areas of conservation, agriculture,

tourism, animal rescue, and the protection of working animals.

**The impact of these efforts has been significant: in the past year alone, over one billion farm animals were protected, more than 85,000 animals were rescued and rehabilitated, and 500,000 animals in zoos and aquariums around the world were safeguarded.**

The day concluded with an afternoon screening of the Global Humane Society's documentary *Escape from Extinction: Rewilding*. The film highlights the importance of rescuing and reintroducing endangered species into their natural habitats, as part of a global approach to wildlife conservation. The roundtable at the European Parliament reflects



Matt Brady, Director of the documentary *Escape from Extinction*, pictured with Cybell Kiessling, Wolfgang Rades, and Thomas Edling, Chief Veterinarian and Head of Animal Ethics at Global Humane. Photo: LPF

growing momentum to embed animal welfare into tourism and environmental policy across Europe.

The presence of the Loro Parque Group and Loro Parque Fundación—as leaders in sustainable tourism, animal

welfare, and conservation—helped reinforce a critical platform for these issues. Their participation underscores the importance of experienced professionals and scientifically grounded approaches in shaping effective, responsible policy. ■

# LPF Conservation in South Africa

## Saving the Vulnerable Cape Parrot from Extinction

Loro Parque Fundación has long demonstrated a deep commitment to the conservation of the Cape parrot (*Poicephalus robustus robustus*), one of the world's most endangered parrot species—and the most threatened parrot on the entire African continent.

**With fewer than 2,000 individuals remaining in the wild, this striking golden-green parrot is not only known for its beauty and intelligence but is also the only parrot species endemic to South Africa.** Its uniqueness makes it a true emblem of the natural heritage of the region. For this reason, LPF has provided strong support to the Cape Parrot Project, an initiative dedicated to protecting this species and the indigenous forests that make up its natural habitat.

The Cape parrot faces an uncertain future due to severe habitat degradation. Since the 19th century, the yellowwood forests—its primary habitat—have been heavily exploited by the timber industry. It is estimated that more than 60% of these forests have been destroyed, leaving the parrots with limited resources for nesting and feeding. **The loss of mature trees and natural nesting cavities has been particularly devastating for their reproduction.**

These forests now make up less than 1% of South Africa's territory, and conserving these remnant forest patches is vital for the species' survival.

These birds rely on



Three Cape parrots foraging in the wild. Photo: LPF

cavities in old trees for nesting, and their powerful beaks are perfectly adapted to crack open tough fruits—particularly the nutrient-rich seeds of the yellowwood. Without these trees, their survival in the wild is at serious risk.

The Cape Parrot Project focuses on restoring native forest habitat while actively involving local communities. Through educational programmes and community-run nurseries, young people and families are encouraged to participate in reforestation efforts. These initiatives help build awareness and a strong sense of stewardship toward these unique ecosystems—because conserving this forest means conserving the species itself. Currently, Cape parrots are found in small, isolated patches of forest in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal. Their future depends entirely on habitat restoration and on collaboration between science, conservation, and community engagement.

Loro Parque Fundación reaffirms its long-term commitment to this iconic species and its environment. Protecting the Cape parrot means more than saving a bird in danger—it also means preserving an essential ecosystem and strengthening the connection between biodiversity and the people who live alongside it. Through partnerships, education, and direct action,

we are working to ensure that future generations will still hear the call of the Cape parrot echoing through the ancient yellowwood forests (*Podocarpus*) of South Africa.

**At Loro Parque Fundación, this exceptionally rare species is also kept and bred under human care.** Understanding its biology is crucial, as its montane habitat makes it extremely difficult to observe in the wild. **Its behaviour in the wild remains largely undocumented.** ■



Researchers analyzing the elusive Cape parrot's diet. Photo: LPF





## First Electrocardiogram of a Pregnant Orca: A Milestone in Marine Research



Morgan the orca during the ECG procedure. Photo: LPF

In a groundbreaking achievement for marine science, a team of researchers has successfully recorded the electrocardiogram (ECG) of an orca during the final weeks of pregnancy. This unprecedented study, conducted at Loro Parque, captured the ECG of Morgan, one of the park's most iconic orcas. The breakthrough, made in collaboration with France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), marks the first time scientists have been able to study cardiovascular adaptations in a cetacean during late-stage pregnancy.

**Led by Dr. Angelo Torrente, the research team focused on analyzing the cardiovascular changes in pregnant orcas. Using a non-invasive experimental system, the team gathered unique data on Morgan's heart health at an advanced stage of gestation.** These findings offer invaluable insight into the metabolic and energy-related challenges faced by orcas during pregnancy. In particular, researchers aim to determine whether the diving adaptations that allow orcas to voluntarily slow their heart rate are also present in the fetus in utero. "Being able to study the heart of a pregnant orca is a highly

significant advancement for marine science," explained Dr. Torrente.

Scientific advances impossible to achieve in the wild:

Access to a pregnant orca in a controlled environment was key to this success. Javier Almunia, Director of Loro Parque Fundación, emphasized the importance of this research: "This discovery is a clear example of how caring for cetaceans in specialised facilities allows for scientific breakthroughs that would be impossible to achieve in the wild." He added: "Recording an ECG in a pregnant orca provides unprecedented data on metabolism and the additional nutritional demands needed to successfully carry a pregnancy to term—information that is vital for conserving wild orca populations, particularly in times of food scarcity."

The collaboration between Loro Parque and CNRS underscores the vital role of applied science in animal welfare and conservation. "Research like this not only helps us better understand these animals," said Dr. Torrente, "but can also lay the groundwork for future conservation strategies and the management of wild populations."

With this pioneering study, Loro Parque reaffirms its position as a leader in marine research and cetacean welfare, providing a powerful model that could make a meaningful impact on the conservation of threatened species.



Dr. Angelo Torrente, researcher from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the Spanish CSIC, coordinating with technicians from Loro Parque Animal Embassy to collect the data. Photo: LPF

# Exciting Birth of an Orca Calf in the Canary Islands

Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación Reaffirm Their Commitment to Marine Conservation



The newborn calf nursing naturally from its mother—one of the most delicate and crucial early moments. Photo: LP

**Morgan, a rescued orca, has given birth to a healthy calf in a natural, complication-free delivery—a milestone moment for marine conservation at Loro Parque.**

Loro Parque - Animal Embassy is thrilled to announce the birth of a new orca calf, the offspring of Morgan, one of the park's most emblematic residents. Morgan was rescued in 2011 after being found stranded and in critical condition in the Netherlands. Her arrival at Loro Parque saved her life and marked the beginning of a remarkable recovery journey.

The birth took place during the early hours of Monday, March 31st, under the close supervision of specialised staff to ensure the safety and well-being of both mother and calf. Both are in excellent health, and Morgan is displaying strong maternal instincts—nurturing and caring for her newborn with great attentiveness.

The Loro Parque team is fully aware of the challenges that can arise after any animal birth. For this reason, the calf is being closely monitored, especially during its crucial first months of life. Orca calves are born with immature immune systems and rely entirely on the antibodies passed through their mother's milk. In the wild, cetacean calf mortality rates can reach up to 50%.

Everyone at Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación is deeply moved by this birth. The veterinary team has spent months preparing and providing comprehensive care to ensure a safe delivery. **Every birth at the park is significant, but this one is particularly meaningful, as it involves a rescued orca that arrived unable to hear—a condition that added a unique challenge to her care.**

The team of caretakers, veterinarians, and scientists will continue working with dedication to

ensure that the newborn calf has a safe home and thrives alongside the rest of the group.

Morgan, the calf's mother, has become a symbol of conservation success and advanced animal care. After her rescue, Loro Parque's technical team worked intensively to help her recover and integrate into the park's orca community. With the help of external scientists, it was discovered that she was deaf—a revelation that required innovative solutions. In response, the trainers developed a pioneering system of communication based on visual signals, enabling Morgan to interact effectively with her caregivers.

**"Morgan's arrival at our facilities saved her life. She joined the group of orcas we already cared for, and now there is a beautiful calf swimming alongside her. We've given life and fulfilment to an animal that had no chance**

**of survival in the wild," said Wolfgang Kiessling, President of Loro Parque.**

This birth reinforces Loro Parque's dedication to marine life conservation, scientific research, and education. Accredited zoological institutions like Loro Parque play a critical role in protecting species and raising awareness about the need to preserve ocean ecosystems.

Morgan escaped certain death—and now, in the company of her peers, she celebrates life as the proud mother of a new calf.

Over 7,000 online participants chose the name TENO for the orca baby. The name pays tribute to the Teno massif, a striking and ecologically valuable natural area in northwestern Tenerife. ■



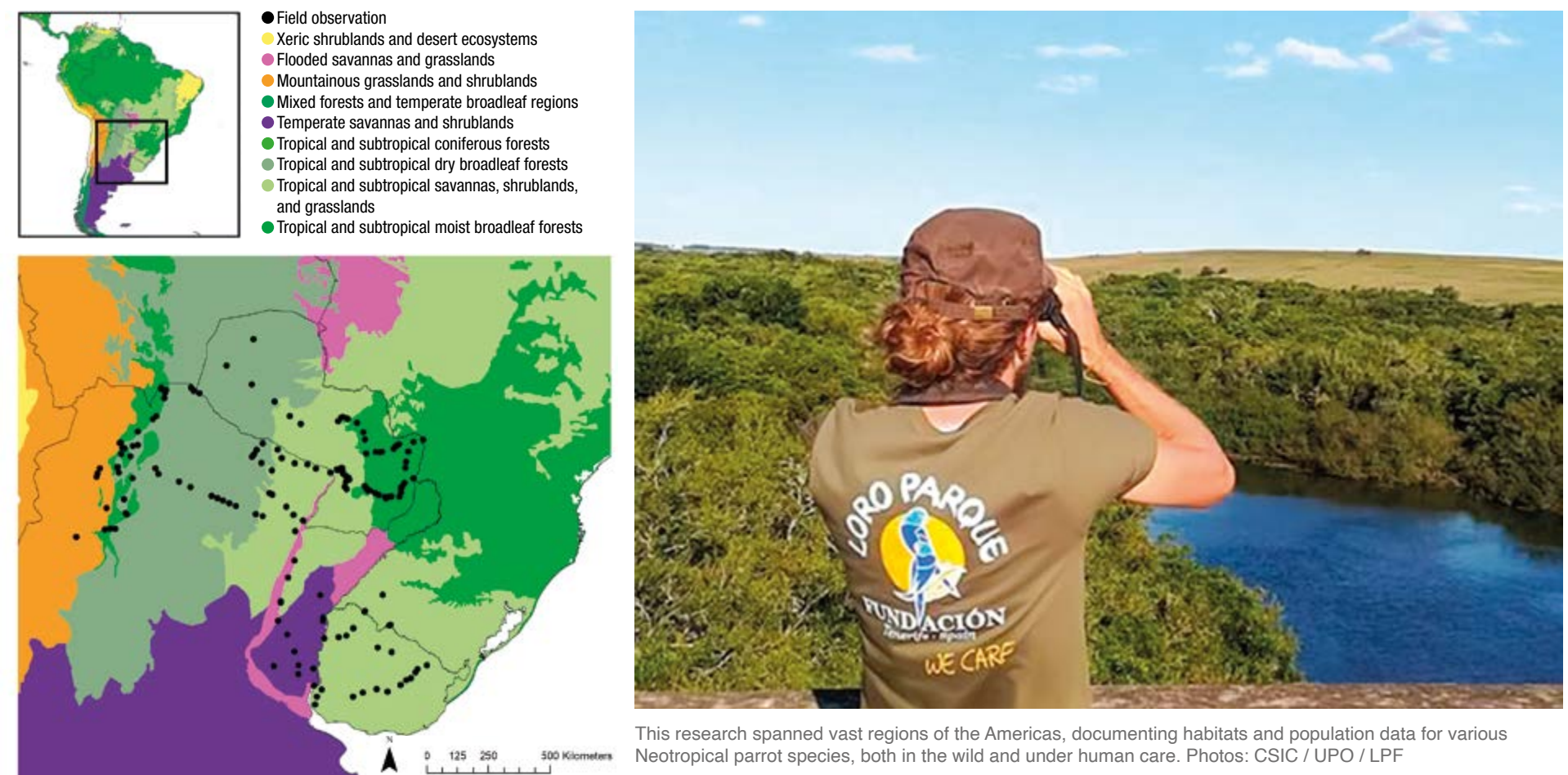
Video



Teno swimming alongside Morgan in our facilities. Photo: LP



# Illegal Parrot Capture: A Major Threat to Endangered Species



A study funded by Loro Parque Fundación reveals that most captured parrots are not destined for international trade but rather end up in rural households—fuelling a cycle of possession and replacement that threatens the survival of many species.

A recent investigation published in Biological Conservation has brought to light a lesser-known reality: **the illegal parrot trade in Bolivia is driven largely by the demand for pets within local communities**—not by domestic or international markets, as has been traditionally assumed.

The study, financed by Loro Parque Fundación, estimates that between 300,000 and 500,000 parrots are captured illegally each year in Bolivia alone. Of these,

only about 12% reach urban black markets. The overwhelming majority remain in rural areas, kept as pets by the very people who capture them.

Researchers from the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), including José Tella and Pedro Romero, developed an **innovative methodology** combining illegal market monitoring with extensive fieldwork in parrot source regions. Through informal interviews in over 150 communities, they were able to estimate the actual destination of the captured birds. The findings are striking: the number of parrots caught and sold for personal use far exceeds the volume traded either legally or illegally. In fact, more parrots are captured in a single year than Bolivia has legally exported since 1979.

**One of the most alarming discoveries is the high turnover rate of pet parrots. Most die, escape, or are sold just months after its capture due to poor care, inadequate diets, or predation by domestic animals.** This cycle encourages continued capture, as owners often replace lost parrots easily—frequently at no financial cost. The ecological impact is severe. Among the 35 species identified in the study, many are listed as threatened or critically endangered by the IUCN. **Mass and sustained capture, even for non-commercial**

**purposes, poses a grave risk to their survival.** One notable example is the red-fronted macaw, endemic to Bolivia, whose wild population is estimated at just 800 to 1,200 individuals. The study documented 60 individuals of this species in urban markets, and 113 more being kept as pets in rural homes. This research highlights the urgent need to address illegal trafficking from a socio-ecological perspective—one that takes into account not only the markets but also the local customs and cultural dynamics driving demand. Through its support of this project, Loro Parque Fundación is actively contributing to the creation of essential scientific knowledge that will help shape realistic and effective conservation strategies. ■



Wild parrots kept by individuals, photographed during fieldwork across Central and South America. Photos: CSIC / UPO / LPF

# LPF Ambassador in Africa



Bärbel Köhler alongside wildlife veterinary and conservation professionals in Kenya. Photo: LPF

Training and diagnostics expert Bärbel Köhler is a dedicated collaborator of Loro Parque Fundación. Her ongoing involvement in the annual training sessions organized by the Foundation for the veterinary students at the University of Giessen (Germany) is a testament to her deep commitment to animal welfare. One of her personal initiatives includes volunteering at primate and wildlife rescue centres across Africa and Indonesia.

Her latest expedition took her to Kenya, where she led a workshop on wildlife health, haematology, and diagnostic techniques.

Organized by the *Veterinary Initiative for Endangered Wildlife* (VIEW) in collaboration with *Oi Jogi Conservancy*, the event featured Bärbel's insightful contributions on behalf of LPF. It brought together veterinarians and conservation professionals with the shared goal of strengthening diagnostic capacities

and exchanging applied knowledge for the health management of wild species, especially those that are critically endangered—such as elephants, rhinos, lions, giraffes, and zebras.

The workshop included both theoretical and practical sessions on key aspects of clinical evaluation in wildlife. It was structured into specialised modules focusing on haematology, clinical chemistry, blood smear analysis, parasite diagnostics, and cytology. Throughout the sessions, emphasis was placed on the value of integrated diagnostics—where each technique complements the others to provide a clearer picture of an animal's health.

**The "language of blood," parasite detection, and biochemical markers are tools of knowledge that**

**can illuminate the path toward better animal care.**

Bärbel Köhler opened the course with a comprehensive review of haematology fundamentals. Topics included blood composition and function, proper sample collection and storage techniques, and morphological evaluation of blood cells.

Diagnosing both internal and external parasites is essential to achieving animal welfare. **In accredited zoological institutions like Loro Parque, Bärbel has had the opportunity to develop and refine these techniques—expertise she now brings directly to the wild, where it is most urgently needed.**

The participation of our Ambassador represented a valuable opportunity to consolidate knowledge, exchange experience, and strengthen professional networks committed to wildlife health. One of the key takeaways was the urgent need to enhance hands-on training in diagnostic techniques, enabling quicker and more effective responses to disease outbreaks in threatened species.

The workshop also underscored the importance of collaboration between veterinarians, biologists, and conservationists—highlighting the power of interdisciplinary approaches to tackle complex wildlife health challenges.

Wildlife health depends on knowledge, practice, and interdisciplinary cooperation. Expertise developed through work with animals under human care can provide critical advantages when applied to the wild populations that need it most. ■



LPF ambassador delivering practical, hands-on diagnostic training with local wildlife in Africa. Photo: LPF



# Parrots Show Astonishing Imitation Abilities

Scientific evidence confirms parrots can automatically mimic gestures



Dr. Esha Haldar during one of the research sessions. Photo: LPF

In a groundbreaking study led by an international team of researchers from the Max Planck Institute of Biological Intelligence, in collaboration with Loro Parque Fundación and based at Loro Parque's Animal Embassy, scientists have revealed that parrots are capable of involuntarily mimicking non-goal-directed gestures made by their peers.

The species involved—blue-throated macaws, critically endangered parrots native to Bolivia—demonstrated a form of automatic imitation of intransitive actions, such as lifting a foot or spreading wings. These types of actions, with no immediate practical purpose, were previously thought to be uniquely human (e.g., winking, sticking out the tongue).

**This discovery highlights the remarkable motor imitation skills of parrots, beyond their well-known vocal mimicry,** and suggests the possible presence of a mirror neuron system similar to that found in humans.

Such imitation behaviours are fundamental to human cultural evolution. Much of human culture is passed down through the transmission of technical skills—often involving tool use—as well as high-fidelity copying of social gestures that strengthen group bonds.

Previous studies have shown that humans engage in involuntary mimicry, known as automatic imitation. However, until now, evidence of this behaviour

in non-human animals had only been documented for transitive actions (those involving objects), such as grasping—observed in dogs and budgerigars.

Dr. Esha Haldar and colleagues from the Comparative Cognition Research Group, in collaboration with Loro Parque Fundación, set out to test whether blue-throated macaws would automatically imitate intransitive gestures performed by other individuals.



Automatic imitation response: A parrot lifts its foot after observing the demonstrator (background) do the same. Photo: LPF

**The study, published in the prestigious journal iScience, describes how the researchers trained the parrots to perform two specific actions—“lift foot” and “spread wings”—in response to hand signals. The parrots were then observed** interacting in pairs to evaluate whether one individual would spontaneously copy the other's gesture.

“These findings have significant neurobiological implications, as this is the first demonstration of involuntary imitation of intransitive actions in non-human animals,” said Dr. Esha Haldar, lead author of the study. “In humans, this behaviour is linked to mirror neuron circuits, which are activated both when performing an action and when observing another individual perform the same action. While our study doesn't directly prove the existence of mirror neurons in parrots, it strongly suggests their involvement in motor imitation.”

The blue-throated macaw is critically endangered, with an estimated wild population of only 350 mature individuals. Loro Parque Fundación has been supporting its conservation for over two decades, investing more than two million dollars to date. It was also the first accredited zoological institution to successfully breed the species under human care. So far, 470 individuals have been born at LPF facilities, providing valuable opportunities for research and species management.

These new scientific insights could have significant implications for future reintroduction programs. Parrots with strong imitation skills may be better equipped to learn natural behaviours from wild conspecifics and adapt more rapidly to their natural environments. ■



+ info

Haldar, E., Subramanya, P., y Bayern, A.M.P. von (2024). Automatic imitation of intransitive actions in macaws. iScience, 111514.

# Epic Elephant Rescue in South Africa



Field team preparing the helicopter used to reach the threatened elephant herd. Photo: Crew Foundation

Earlier this year, Loro Parque Fundación was informed by Spain's Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO) of an urgent need to rescue a group of elephants in South Africa. A Spanish NGO, Crew Foundation, was working on the ground with a team of experts to address a complex situation threatening the lives of an entire elephant herd.

Loro Parque Fundación immediately contacted veterinarian Xavier Rovira, whose commendable and effective work on behalf of endangered species in both Africa and Spain has earned widespread recognition. Rovira described the critical situation: the elephants were roaming outside the protected perimeter established for them. **“If the elephants remained beyond that boundary, they would inevitably fall victim to poachers,”** he warned—resulting not only in the loss of these animals but also the destruction of their deep ecological knowledge and social structures developed in their native habitat. This would have been a significant ecological tragedy, as the herd in question was stable and well-integrated into the local environment. The operation was carried out in collaboration with the local environmental authority in Zululand, within the Loziba Reserve. It



The complex tagging operation required both aerial and ground support to guide veterinarians to the targeted elephants for sedation and satellite marking. Photo: Crew Foundation

involved the complex task of fitting three large elephants with satellite tracking collars, enabling ongoing monitoring after guiding them—using helicopters—into the southern section of the reserve. This area is a high-security zone primarily designated for rhino protection and offered a safe refuge for the elephants.

**After several months of meticulous preparation—locating the animals,**

**monitoring their movements, and waiting for suitable weather conditions—the field team, in coordination with Loro Parque Fundación, successfully tagged the elephants and redirected them into the secure zone using helicopters.**

This emergency situation required immediate funding and logistical support, which Loro Parque Fundación provided without hesitation—contributing €25,000 to cover the operational costs, including helicopter flights and satellite tracking equipment.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the entire team at Crew Foundation and all collaborators who made this extraordinary rescue possible. ■



# Reforesting Tenerife

Loro Parque's Commitment to Restoring Tenerife's Forests



Loro Parque's "Child Directors" participated enthusiastically in the reforestation efforts. Photo: LPF

**As part of its ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship, Loro Parque Animal Embassy recently took part in a reforestation initiative in Tenerife, in collaboration with the Tenerife Renace project.**

The event combined hands-on conservation work with environmental education.

Participants included members of the "Child Director" educational

program, Cybell Kiessling, Director of Administration at Loro Parque Group, and team members from the Marketing and Education departments of Loro Parque.

The day began with an formative talk led by experts from *Tenerife Renace*, highlighting the importance of reforestation and the preservation of local ecosystems.

Following the session, each participant planted one or two native trees, actively contributing to the restoration of forest areas damaged by the wildfires that occurred in August 2023. ■



For the youngest participants, planting a Canary Island pine carries a symbolic value that goes beyond habitat restoration. Photo: LPF

## Posthumous Tribute

In memory of **Mr. Tobias Fick**, a devoted lover of parrots and nature, who, in his final wishes, requested that donations be made to Loro Parque Fundación in lieu of flowers. His deep affection for these birds led him to visit the park on several occasions, always with a sense of wonder and admiration. His generous gesture lives on as a lasting legacy of respect and love for wildlife.

In memory of **Mr. Wolfgang Seibert**, a passionate advocate for nature, whose dedication to biodiversity conservation continues through a donation made in his name following his passing.

We are deeply honoured every time such trust is placed in our foundation. Loro Parque Fundación guarantees that 100% of all contributions are dedicated to the protection of animals most in need. ■



If you wish to leave a lasting mark on real wildlife conservation and create a legacy for the protection of biodiversity, you can contact us at: [lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org](mailto:lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org)

# New! Wild Voices Animal Embassy Podcast



Don't miss it!

**Loro Parque and Loro Parque Fundación are launching a brand-new platform: a series of video and audio podcasts** that will regularly share insights into animal care, welfare, advanced wildlife management, conservation, education, and science.

Everything surrounding the animal world—**told in a friendly and informative way,**

**so it can be applied to our everyday lives with animals.**

If you want expert knowledge on animal care straight from the source, this is something you can't miss.

**Subscribe to our channels and follow us on Wild Voices Animal Embassy.**

**We'll be waiting for you! ■**



Dr. Javier Almunia shares insights on the realities of marine sanctuaries.



Video

## World Oceans Day 2025



In honour of World Oceans Day, established by the United Nations, and in response to the ongoing threats facing our marine ecosystems, Loro Parque Fundación proudly hosted its annual gala dinner once again at the Poema del Mar Aquarium Conservation Center.

Held on June 5, 2025, this special event aimed to raise support for scientific research projects focused on the preservation and restoration of our natural marine environment.

Guests were welcomed with live music during the reception at the Poema del Mar Aquarium. Throughout the evening, attendees enjoyed exclusive access to a life-sized traveling exhibition of Macaronesian cetaceans and learned about innovative new initiatives dedicated to environmental wellbeing.

This year's proceeds were primarily directed toward an inspiring **conservation project focused on protecting seahorses in the Canary Islands.**

Thanks to the generous support of donors and collaborators, Loro Parque Fundación was able to fully dedicate the funds raised to this vital cause. With over 30 years of experience in biodiversity conservation, the Foundation continues to be a trusted leader in protecting wildlife and their habitats.

**We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us in celebrating the oceans' invaluable importance and for reaffirming their commitment to safeguarding these precious ecosystems for generations to come. ■**

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[lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org](mailto:lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org)

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# Science and Commitment to the Wildlife of the Canary Islands



Discover more about Loro Parque Fundación's dedication to preserving the nature  
of the Canary Islands: [loroparque-fundacion.org](http://loroparque-fundacion.org)

