

The Illegal Parrot Trade in Mexico: A Comprehensive Assessment



Is U.S. Demand Driving Mexican Parrots to Extinction?



Orange Fronted Parakeet
Photo courtesy of Michael Retter

- Of the top 10 parrot species that are being smuggled into the United States, five are endangered, two are threatened and one is under special protection in Mexico. The table represents only 1 percent to 3 percent of the total number of birds that smugglers successfully carry across the Mexico-U.S. border.
- According to parrot trappers, U.S. demand for some species is the main reason they are still being trapped in Mexico, like the endangered yellow naped parrot.
- An estimated 65,000 to 78,500 parrots are captured each year in Mexico despite the fact that no parrot trapping has been authorized by wildlife official since 2003. *NOTE – At the time of publication of this report, Mexico again authorized limited trapping of certain parrot species.
- Approximately 75 percent of captured parrots die before reaching the consumer, which translates to roughly 50,000 to 60,500 annually.
- Roughly 4 percent to 14 percent of the annual illegal capture is smuggled into the United States.
- Of the smuggled birds that do survive, many of them are sick, injured, dying or severely traumatized. None of these birds have proper legal documentation and are sold without the required health examination and quarantine to identify potential disease risks.
- Smuggling of the orange fronted parakeet, white fronted parrot, yellow checked parrot, lilac crowned parrot and red crowned parrot is increasing despite the overall decrease in parrots smuggled into the United States.

Top 10 (of 22) Mexican parrot species seized in the United States, 1992-2005

Species	Status (in Mexico)	Total Seized	Percentage
Yellow headed parrot	Endangered	546	34.00
Orange fronted parakeet	Special protection	486	30.28
Lilac crowned parrot	Threatened	173	10.77
Red lored parrot	Unclassified	110	6.85
White fronted parrot	Unclassified	100	6.23
Red crowned parrot	Endangered	59	3.67
Yellow naped parrot	Endangered	37	2.30
Thick billed parrot	Endangered	26	1.61
Military macaw	Endangered	16	0.99
Green parakeet	Threatened	13	0.80

Source: USFWS LEMIS reports, 1992-2005