



Leading DIY chain and the horror of the wild bird trade

From Rainforest to Retail



© EIA

Photo - Currey / EIA

A Special Animal Aid Report published January 2002

Introduction

Focus, a leading DIY chain with more than 400 UK stores, moved into the pet trade around five years ago and over 70 branches now sell animals through their Petworld departments. Among the species it sells is a range of exotic birds. The company, previously known as Focus Do It All, has claimed that these are all bred in captivity.

Animal Aid, whose campaigning throughout much of 2000 forced Focus to drop the sale of reptiles, has now conducted an undercover investigation into the company's bird sales. In the view of our bird expert – a former chief investigator for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) – over three-quarters of the birds on sale at Focus are wild-caught and many of those species are threatened in the wild.

In addition, the livestock manager and a second employee of Safari Select - Focus's sole supplier of birds - both told Animal Aid undercover investigators that the DIY chain sells birds who are not captive bred. Animal Aid does not allege that Focus knows that wild caught birds are being sold in its stores.

Allegations Denied

In 1992, Safari Select - which says it now supplies FDIA with approximately £60,000 worth of birds and cages each month - was the subject of a Roger Cook television investigation. On the programme, Safari's owner, Phil Dobinson, denied the allegations that he had numerous criminal convictions and that he had misrepresented as captive bred, birds who had, in fact, been wild caught in the Indonesian jungle. Dobinson refused to enter into a detailed discussion on camera.

Advice from Focus's sales personnel regarding the source of birds on sale remains confused. Some staff told Animal Aid's undercover 'customer' that all birds are captive-bred, while others said that some are captured in the wild. Others seemed uncertain – even confused – as to the origin of the birds on sale. This is despite the proud claim that the company 'invests a great deal in terms of training...' and that 'only competent livestock staff are employed.'

In a recent discussion with an Animal Aid representative posing as a customer, Phil Dobinson had less than flattering things to say about Focus staff.



Amazon parrots in crates for export, Argentina 1991 - photo EIA

'...all you've got to understand is that their staff are basically, 90% of their staff are stupid. They don't know very much about birds or animals. 90%. Not all of them but a lot of them.'

Bird Products

The treatment of wild birds captured for the pet trade is invariably crude and brutal, as is the 'warehousing' of these bird 'products' prior to the punishing air or overland journey to the country of import. An authoritative 1992 investigation conducted by the Environmental Investigation Agency, and supported by the RSPCA and the RSPB, indicated that up to three birds die for every one that reaches a pet shop (1).

Background

In February 2000, Animal Aid launched a campaign against Focus to oppose its move into the pet trade. Animal Aid's concern was that the company's emphasis on glossy consumerism and large volume sales was bound to encourage impulse buys which, in turn, could lead to welfare problems for the animals. The move by Focus into the pet trade – through the establishment of Petworld departments within existing outlets - will have caused additional pressure for UK animal shelters. These shelters were already struggling to cope with a year-round influx of unwanted animals.

As well as operating the Focus and Great Mills DIY stores, the company also now owns Wickes. The group is the second largest DIY business in the UK and has an annual turnover of £1.6

After a nine-month, high profile campaign by Animal Aid, reptiles and spiders were withdrawn from sale. The company admitted:

... 'despite our careful safeguards, some reptiles are being abandoned and brought to sanctuaries because their owners are unable to manage them. We have therefore taken the decision to stop selling reptiles and would like to take this opportunity to urge all other animal retailers to follow suit.' Focus Do It All – Press release

Exotic Bird Sales

Animal Aid has now turned its attention to the company's sale of exotic birds. The following claim is made in official Focus correspondence:

"Every Petworld Store across the country is supplied by one reputable breeder.

All caged birds for sale in Petworld Departments from this supplier are captive bred."



Netted sparrows in northern Senegal - photo Davies / EIA

billion. Back in 1996, Focus purchased Petworld to 'set itself apart from other DIY retailers'. The company claimed to place an emphasis on encouraging 'responsible pet ownership'.

Diverse Menagerie

Focus was looking to increase its market share by turning DIY shopping into a 'leisure experience' for all the family. Its new range comprised a diverse menagerie, including reptiles, spiders, exotic birds, cold water and tropical fish and small mammals such as rabbits, chinchillas, and hamsters. A wide range of pet food, cages, bedding, toys and books were also sold in the Petworld departments.

Confused Advice

However, concerns were brought to us by an ornithologist, who claimed that certain bird species sold by the company were not captive-bred in large enough numbers to supply their stores.

An Animal Aid undercover team found that advice from the Focus shop floor regarding the status of its birds was confused and contradictory and so Animal Aid set out to discover the true origin of the birds sold by Focus.

Which Species? What Price?

During checks on stores in September 2001 we found that Focus stock larger parrots (eg. Amazons and African Greys priced £799) in some of their stores, as well as smaller parrot species (eg. parakeets and conures priced £59.99 - £99.99). Small 'caged' birds (eg.

lovebirds, cockateils, budgerigars and canaries priced £14.99 - £29.99) seem to be a staple in all Petworld departments, as are finches (eg. mannikins, waxbills etc priced £6.99 - £7.99) and quail (priced £8.99). Once purchased, finches and quail are usually kept in outside aviaries.

In early March 2001, we commissioned Peter Robinson, consultant ornithologist and former Head of Investigations at the RSPB, to visit a random sample of Focus Do It All stores.

Species identified at one or more stores were as follows:

Category A - wild-caught

Common Name	Scientific Name	FOCUS Name	Place of Origin
Yellow-fronted canary	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	Green-singing finch	Africa
Black-rumped waxbill	<i>Estrilda troglodytes</i>	Red ears	Africa
Orange-cheeked waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	Orange-cheeks	Africa
Bronze mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	Bronze-wing	Africa
Magpie mannikin	<i>Lonchura fringilloides</i>	Mannikins	Africa
Black-and-white mannikin	<i>Lonchura bicolor</i>	Mannikins, or Bronze-wings	Africa
Zebra waxbill	<i>Amandava subflava</i>	Zebra finches	Africa
Spotted munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	Spice finches	India, SE Asia & Indonesia
Monk parakeet	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	Parakeet	South America
Blue-crowned conure	<i>Aratinga acuticaudata</i>	Conures	South America
Brown-throated conure	<i>Aratinga pertinax</i>	Conures	South America
Maroon-bellied conures	<i>Pyrrhura frontalis</i>	Conures	South America
Red-eared conure	<i>Pyrrhura hoematotis</i>	Conures	South America

Category B - either wild caught or captive-bred

Common Name	Scientific Name	FOCUS Name	Place of Origin
Cockatiel	<i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>	Cockatiels	Australia
Budgerigar	<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	Budgies	Australia
Peach-faced lovebird	<i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>	Peach-faced lovebirds	SW Africa
Fischer's lovebird	<i>Agapornis fischeri</i>	Fisher's lovebirds	Central Africa
Yellow-collared lovebird	<i>Agapornis personatus</i>	Masked lovebirds	East Africa
Yellow-crowned Amazon	<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>	No name	South America
Zebra finches	<i>Poephila guttata</i>	Zebra finch	Australia

Category C - probably (but not necessarily) bred in captivity

Common Name	FOCUS Name
Hybrid or unusually-coloured lovebirds	Safari lovebirds
Chinese-painted quail	
'Italian Quail' Coternix	

Table 1



Wild caught birds in dealer's premises in Georgetown - photo Currey / EIA

Species found, in the view of our bird consultant, were divisible into three categories, namely;

A - those who will have been trapped from the wild in their countries of origin,

B - those who were either wild-caught or captive-bred, and

C - those who were probably (but not necessarily) bred in captivity in Britain or elsewhere.

With regards to all of the species in category A, there is no culture of breeding these commercially in Britain, Europe or elsewhere and no commercial point in doing so as long as there is a free flow of trapped birds, as currently exists.

Some species are treated in category B, as possibly captive-bred on the basis that they are known to reproduce regularly in captivity, eg. budgerigar, or zebra finch. However, the fact that some individuals have bred in captivity cannot be taken as evidence that all such birds encountered in the stores originate from captive stock.

Peter Robinson said that he had no doubt that, of the 21 full species (ie. not sub-species) encountered at six stores, 13 came from the wild, a further seven possibly came from the wild, leaving just one species as probably captive-bred (see Table 1.)

There were 441 birds seen in total at the six stores:

342, or 77.5% were – in the view of our bird expert - wild-caught

92, or 20.8% may have been wild caught or captive-bred

7, or 1.5% were very probably captive-bred.

Table 2

Profits in Exotics

Focus works hard to promote the sale of its live birds and gives ample emphasis to its family-values sales strategy – for instance, in the illustrated content of its give-away advisory leaflets.

'...we are not just a DIY operation anymore, we are a family orientated store catering for families' needs.'

FOCUS in correspondence 29/2/00

The sale of animals is, therefore, a marketing exercise - part of a strategy aimed at attracting a family clientele to the store and also inviting return business.

By developing the demand for exotic birds, the company is involved in a process leading to large numbers being exploited in their countries of origin. In short, if people in developed countries did not buy live birds, there would be no incentive to trap them at source.

Useful Profit

Dave Taylor, livestock manager of Safari Select, Focus's sole supplier of birds, confirmed our view of the retail chain as a company which is seeking to 'get somebody on impulse' to make a bird purchase.

While the sale of the animals themselves produce a useful profit, the income from associated products is equally important, as are the return journeys where various other DIY products may be purchased.

'The food, the accessories and the product. That's where your money is. All of it. If you sell a hand-reared African Grey, you'll make £150. You'll make £150 on the cage, make another £50 on toys, blah, blah, blah.' Phil Dobinson - bird supplier to Focus.

Safari Select

'Focus Do It All is committed to developing partnerships with suppliers who share common principles of animal welfare. We believe it is imperative that all those involved in the supply of animals to Petworld adopt the same standards.'

FOCUS formal company statement 14/10/99

The sole supplier of birds to Focus is Safari Select, based in Sundridge, Kent. A detailed investigation of this company was undertaken in the early '90s by the Roger Cook television programme. Safari Select, now described on its own website as 'the UK's largest tropical bird specialist', have been regular stallholders at bird fairs (that are, in fact, illegal under the 1951 Pet Animals Act) around the country. Animal Aid attended such fairs and, posing as potential clients, arranged to visit the premises of Safari Select and talked to their staff. There, we met first with livestock manager, Dave Taylor, and at a subsequent meeting, with the owner, Phil Dobinson.

Roger Cook Investigation

In the 1992 Roger Cook documentary, Dobinson was described as a dealer 'whose money fuels the trade that drives the trappers ever deeper into the jungle'.



Phil Dobinson, owner of Safari Select.

At that time, according to the programme, Dobinson had no less than 13 criminal convictions for selling birds without correct paperwork, and for cruelty to birds. The Cook investigation claimed to have found evidence

that endangered birds sold by Safari Select were not captive-bred, as indicated in the company's sales receipt of a Roger Cook undercover reporter who did a test purchase of a bird.

Phil Dobinson, when interviewed by Roger Cook, denied all the allegations put to him. He said he



Dave Taylor, livestock manager Safari Select - at Stafford Bird Show, Spring 2001

did not have 13 criminal convictions for selling birds without correct paperwork or for cruelty to birds. He also denied falsely representing wild-caught birds as captive bred (1).

Extract from interview with livestock manager of Safari Select

We made arrangements to meet Phil Dobinson at his premises in Kent on 1st April 2001. During this visit, Animal Aid investigators posed as prospective clients setting up in business as traders in live birds and potential wholesale customers of Safari Select. Dobinson was not available - it was explained that he had flown to Germany at short notice as officials there had detained a consignment of endangered cockatoos. Animal Aid, instead, spoke to Dave Taylor, Safari's Livestock Manager. He confirmed that his company supplies birds to Focus and when advised of Focus's claim that

its birds were captive-bred, his response was:

'No they're not. They're not captive-bred, they're not captive-bred. How they market them out is their decision but at the end of the day they're (inaudible) themselves idiots.'

Extract from interview with Phil Dobinson

On 9 August 2001, Animal Aid revisited the premises of Safari Select - but this time to speak to Phil Dobinson. He boasted that Focus's business was worth £60,000 a month to Safari Select.

Later in the conversation.....

Animal Aid bird expert, Peter Robinson: 'While we're on this subject of public perception: one of the problems we've got is we're competing with Do It All, Petworld whatever. They're taking off you things like bronze wing mannikins, orange... Okay, right but we all know that nobody breeds orange cheek waxbills in captivity, bronze wing mannikins whatever. They are telling the public these are bred in captivity and the public is obviously going for that. Is there a policy in relation to that? Do we tell lies like that or what? I know it's a difficult question but....'



Finches on sale at a Focus store

Dobinson: 'It is a difficult question. The thing is....all you've got to understand is that their staff are basically, 90% of their staff are stupid. They don't know very much about birds or animals. 90%.. Not all of them but a lot of them. They're a superstore like Sainsburys. Or even going to their pay desk to ask what colour shall I paint my house. The guys in there don't know, they'll sell you a can of paint but don't know anything about it. So if their policy is that they sell captive-bred birds, then that's what they sell. That's what they sell, that's what they sell.'

He then went on to suggest several ways of dealing with awkward queries:

'Captive-bred, just say it. You don't breed them yourself, you buy them from people in this country. Don't go into it ...

'Or you can say to them, they are wild-caught finches and you sit there and explain for three quarters of an hour to someone who really doesn't care or understand, who just wants to jump up and down and play up in the shop...

'...just say well look sir if you don't think they're captive bred, don't buy them. He'll know himself

- just like you know. Otherwise, 90% of the people are going to be people off the street and they're not going to know...

'You just don't deal with it. All you say is, as far as we know they can't be, but we need to speak to our supplier cos' our supplier told us that they weren't, so give us your number we're worried about that... and that kills the problem. Go back to him and say oh unfortunately you were right we didn't realise our supplier... most of the stuff he supplies but he didn't inform us that

those African finches were actually wild-caught...

'Otherwise, if you say we only stock English-bred, then first of all your selection of stock will be halved straight away. Your sales will be halved straight away. You'll only be able to stock java sparrows, bengalese and

zebras..... a few Australian finches, so that's killed half your finches.'

Extract from conversation with Safari Select employee, Stan Wiggins

On December 1, 2001, our investigator visited the National Cage & Aviary Birds Exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham and spoke to Stan Wiggins, a member of Safari Select's staff, on the company's stand. Safari Select manager, Angela Corps, was also present for some of the conversation.

Our investigator stated that Focus staff had advised him that their finches were wild-caught.

Wiggins: 'They are from the wild...'

and later....

Wiggins: 'Some are wild-caught, we do get English-bred ones as well, which they get as well.'

Wiggins went on to criticise the level of expertise of some Focus sales staff, giving two examples of birds sold to the public who turned out not to be the species they were sold as. This problem of misidentification had previously been picked up by the ornithologist Peter Robinson. On March 5 and 6 - at Animal Aid's behest - Robinson visited six Focus stores selling birds. In three of the six, in response to his questioning, sales staff 'incorrectly named the small parrot species in their charge'.

Wild Bird Trade

Imported, wild-caught birds are typically cheaper to purchase than their captive-bred counterparts. Depending on the species, customers may be charged a price up to several hundred per cent more than the trappers received.

People who buy birds as pets invariably cannot distinguish between wild-caught animals and those bred in captivity. They will be unaware that, through their purchase, they will have contributed to a trade that involves cruelty and high mortality. The wild bird trade also threatens the survival of many species.

Properly monitoring and regulating the wild bird trade would cost more to enforce than it would generate in revenue. Therefore, regulations and laws designed to control the trade are poorly enforced in both exporting and importing countries. Bird dealers know this and rely on lack of enforcement to bend and break the rules.

The illegal trade often uses the legal trade as its cover. Many of the most common methods of smuggling endangered birds depend on a legal trade being in place.

Capture, confinement and transportation

Trapping methods vary from country to country and between species. Small birds are often trapped in bulk, whereas larger species may be trapped individually. Much cruelty is involved in bird trapping, partly in the knowledge that any animal who dies can be quickly replaced. Most methods are indiscriminate, and untargeted species are regularly caught. Heavy mortality occurs between capture and export, with estimates as high as 50% (1).

Wild-caught finches mostly originate from India and Africa and are either trapped in flight, using nets, or in baited trap-cages. In unskilled hands, the use of nets may result in high casualties. In some cases, non-target species have been caught or birds have been left for hours or even days struggling in the nets, sometimes dying of dehydration. Some bird trappers set up more nets than they can visit every two or

three hours, which can result in more losses due to physical injury or predation (2).

Birds Ensnared

Less discriminatory and more hazardous to trapped individuals is 'bird-lime', an adhesive

substance applied to bushes or trees to ensnare any bird species. Unlike nets or trap cages, birds caught using bird-lime lose many feathers and the sticky substance finds its way onto much of the bird's remaining plumage.



Bird carcasses from Senegal. Air transport cages seized in Belgium - photo by Arnhem/KBVBV, courtesy of EIA

Trapping usually takes place in remote rural areas and is carried out by native people wishing to supplement their income (3). This means that trapping sites are often located well away even from access to main roads, so that extended travel is involved in transporting them to international airports.

After trapping, birds are transferred into bags, baskets, small boxes or crates, in which they are moved to the trapper's home (4). They can then spend days or weeks being passed between dealers.

Birds are reported to spend up to eight months at the holding premises of exporters (5). Studies of conditions at holding grounds have found overcrowding, the absence of food and water and natural or artificial light (6). Birds have displayed signs of feather-plucking, dirty plumage, wounds and exhaustion (7).

Fewer commercial airlines now carry live birds and, increasingly, they travel as freight. This is possibly because there are now more freight-only airlines. European bird dealers have been known to combine in the hire of freight aircraft for the international movement of large numbers of live birds.



Amazon parrot - dying from being over fed - photo Currey/ EIA

Disease Problems

During each stage, disease can spread from animal to animal via shared food, water, litter and other routes (8). Potential infections include psittacosis (affects mainly parrots and humans), salmonellosis, tuberculosis and pseudotuberculosis. Disease susceptibility in birds can be increased through excessive heat or, cold, trauma and overcrowding (9).

Previously, all UK live bird imports were subject to a 35-day quarantine period. But the removal of EU trade barriers meant that live birds shipped to Britain from EU countries are mainly admitted without the need for quarantine - having already been quarantined within the EU. As from 1st November 2001, there is a 'harmonised' quarantine period throughout the EU member states of 30 days. How well this will be implemented is not yet known.

Welfare in the pet trade

According to studies carried out in the last ten years, most birds trapped for the pet trade never survive to reach pet shops (1). There is also evidence that birds continue to die from disease for months after leaving quarantine (2).

The appalling conditions and cruelty en route to the consumer have been well documented, but



Amazon parrots being force-fed a mixture of maize and water in Argentina - photo Currey/ EIA

the long-term behavioural and physical problems that caged wild caught birds suffer have been less publicised. In the wild, foraging and preening occupy up to 90% of a parrot's daily activities (3), whereas in captivity, food is provided in a single dish and feeding requires minimal effort, skill and time (4).

Isolated Existence

In the wild, many social bird species, such as parrots, travel and feed in a flock. The flock brings to a single parrot many other things besides feelings of safety and security. It provides opportunity for frequent social interaction and learning skills. In captivity, these birds frequently have no contact with members of their own species. Depending on the species, the isolated existence can last for decades. Research quoted by the Environmental Investigation Agency in 1991 claims that wild birds have significantly shortened life spans in captivity (5).

One authority, writing in the *Veterinary Record*, states that, 'Non-domesticated species make very unsuitable pets...Keeping such animals in ordinary households may cause discomfort, distress and cruelty. Malnutrition commonly occurs due to ignorance of dietary requirements and larger animals often suffer from lack of exercise.' (6).

Greg Glendell of the Pet Parrot Consultancy, commented on what he believes to be the misleading illustrations in the Focus leaflet, 'Dr Petworthy's Guide to Parrots'. Notes Glendell:

Cover illustration.

This depicts an African grey parrot in a cage which, judging by the bar-spacing and the known size of the bird within, is about 20 inches square by 26 inches high. An African grey has a wingspan of 28 inches. This cage is so small that if such a bird were kept in this cage the owner could be prosecuted under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 or the Protection of Animals Act 1911. If a bird of this size were offered for sale in such a cage, via a licensed pet shop, the licensee can be prosecuted under the Pet Animals Act 1951-83 and the licence to sell livestock withdrawn. In addition to this cage being so small as to induce unnecessary suffering, it contains only one perch and no toys or environmental stimulation for the bird at all. It is precisely the kind of cage a parrot should never be housed in.

Second illustration.

This depicts an Amazon parrot on a person's shoulder. Readers would infer that to allow a bird to do this is acceptable. Birds should never be allowed to spend time on anyone's shoulder, especially a bird as large as an Amazon parrot. These birds can inflict serious facial wounds,

which may require hospital treatment to be stitched up. It is grossly irresponsible to depict a parrot in this manner. Birds with frequent access to the shoulder will also become aggressive and will experience difficulty in adapting to the captive environment'.

The nutritional advice contained in Focus's 'Dr Petworthy's Guide to Parrots' has also been challenged by Greg Glendell who calls for the leaflet to be withdrawn immediately.

'Much of the information here is totally inaccurate. A parrot's diet should certainly be varied, but it should be low in fat (and consequently high in carbohydrate and with a reasonable amount of protein). A daily intake of around 80% carbohydrate and 12% protein and 8% fat is a good guide. A standard seed-based diet would result in around 50% to 60% fat being given. This would cause most parrots to become chronically sick (vitamin and mineral deficiencies) within a few months'.

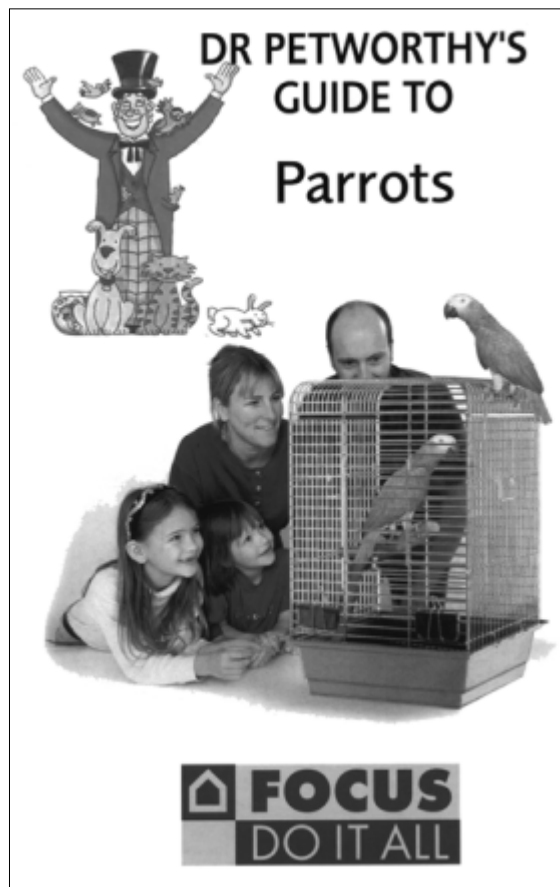
In fact, 90% of birds presented to the Laboratory of Exotic Animal Services at the Royal School of Veterinary Studies in the UK are reported to suffer clinical signs of hypovitaminosis attributable to an unsuitable all-seed diet (7).

The threat to species

We have all become aware of and increasingly concerned about the environmental issues which threaten our world: global warming,

ozone depletion, pollution of air water and land, dwindling resources, habitat destruction, and deforestation. As a responsible national retailer we recognise that the products and resources we provide and use contribute to these environmental pressures. We appreciate the long term consequences of ignoring these pressures and understand that it is essential to introduce measures which will reduce their impact.'

FOCUS DO IT ALL website: <http://www.focus-doitall.co.uk/about/environment.htm>



CITES and the Bird Trade

Cruelty and suffering are inevitable features of the wild-caught bird trade, but the trade is also responsible for driving species towards extinction. The main causes of bird declines and extinction are generally accepted as habitat loss and capture of individuals for world trade. The U.N. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) aims to control the trade in listed (endangered and near endangered) species and monitor trade in less vulnerable species (to know when they too become endangered).

CITES came into force in the UK on 1st July 1975 and is now managed by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It has three levels of control:

Appendix I includes all species threatened with extinction, and bans trade for commercial purposes in these species.

Appendix II is for threatened species but allows commercial trading under strict monitoring, if the exporting country is satisfied that any trade is not detrimental to the future survival of that species.

Appendix III allows countries to list their populations of any given species so that they can monitor international trade in them.

Table 3 shows CITES listed birds who were imported into the EU in 1999. They are the same species as are sold in Focus stores. Although many of the species listed under Appendix II are not in any immediate danger of extinction, continued trafficking could affect their survival as a species.



Stafford Bird Fair, Spring 2001

● In 1999, CITES recorded a total European import tally of 1,669,807 individuals of 465 species. However, it is important to bear in mind that this list does not include all live bird imports because the majority of imports are not regulated and documented under CITES.

Most wild-caught birds now arrive in Britain indirectly via EU countries. Most birds are imported into Germany and the Low Countries, from where it is a simple step to move them by van into Britain through the ports or the Channel Tunnel. Birds imported into the UK via Europe will not show up in any British statistics.

Table 3

Imports of Cites Listed Wild Birds - European Community 1999

Species	Appendix	Total	Receiving Country	Number
African grey parrot (<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>)	II	33,341	Austria Belgium Germany Denmark Spain Finland France UK Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal Sweden	10 5520 1015 6 6216 1 3797 2142 797 25 9410 4392 9
Fischer's lovebird (<i>Agapornis fischeri</i>)	II	63,867	Belgium Germany Spain France UK Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	800 302 26810 1142 3 3777 3305 14718 13010
Peach-faced lovebird (<i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>)	II	71,588	Belgium Germany Spain France UK Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	1102 5 40684 1261 10 3541 2214 3285 19486
Yellow-collared lovebird (<i>Agapornis personatus</i>)	II	33,720	Belgium Germany Spain France UK Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	400 101 14426 1062 1 2459 1116 1322 12833
Yellow-fronted Amazon (<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>)	II	1,326	Austria Belgium Germany Spain France UK Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	1 32 46 401 2 55 54 3 514 218
Blue-crowned conure (<i>Aratinga acuticaudata</i>)	II	3,247	Germany Spain UK Portugal Sweden	155 2838 200 53 1
Brown-throated conure (<i>Aratinga pertinax</i>)	II	1,071	Belgium Germany Spain Greece Netherlands Portugal	68 1 607 61 257 77

A Special Animal Aid Report

Species	Appendix	Total	Receiving Country	Number
Maroon-bellied conure (<i>Pyrrura frontalis</i>)	II	60	Spain UK Greece Netherlands	30 2 8 20
Monk parakeet (<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>)	II	10,028	Germany Spain UK Portugal	26 8600 302 1100
Green singing finch (<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>)	III	197,230	Belgium Germany Spain France Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	53630 13860 27675 9415 900 32883 34643 24224
Zebra waxbill (<i>Amandava subflava</i>)	III	54,211	Belgium Germany Spain France Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	16464 6052 6950 3600 700 6550 7545 6350
Orange-cheeked waxbill (<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>)	III	81,308	Belgium Germany Spain France Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	24296 5750 12300 5700 300 12850 5812 14300
Black-rumped waxbill (<i>Estrilda troglodytes</i>)	III	94,774	Belgium Germany Spain France Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	27984 3300 18000 6350 400 13100 4200 21440
Black & white mannikin (<i>Lonchura bicolor</i>)	III	13,779	Belgium Germany Spain Greece Italy Netherlands Portugal	4320 1000 975 300 260 1974 4950
Bronze-winged mannikin (<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>)	III	18,845	Belgium Germany Spain France Italy Netherlands Portugal	2844 1150 2900 1800 2750 460 6950
Magpie mannikin (<i>Lonchura fringilloides</i>)	III	7,295	Belgium Germany Spain Italy Netherlands Portugal	1919 200 860 130 1236 2950

Conclusion

Focus has established itself as a major UK dealer in exotic wild animals. However, the public, their customers and many of their staff, are clearly unaware of the whole story about the origin of some of the birds sold by the company. Focus may say that any sale of birds caught in the wild, if proved, would be an unwitting lapse from the stated company policy. That may be correct. However, the failure to identify the problem demonstrates naivety and plain ignorance of a degree that should automatically disqualify it from playing any part in the exotic pet trade.

If, on the other hand, Focus continues to sell animals that it is persuaded by the evidence are wild-caught, then it will struggle to justify its activities. Tremendous work carried out by the Environmental Investigation Agency and other groups in recent years means that there has been a great deal of publicity about the cruelty and corruption involved in the wild bird trade.

Britain does not allow an international pet trade in our native wild birds and yet our local DIY stores are selling bird species originating in other countries! These 'exotics' deserve exactly the same protection as do British species. How would we feel if populations of our own native birds were being exploited to boost the pet trade in other countries?

Animal Aid will continue its campaign against Focus until they cease the sale of ALL their animals. We will ask the public to boycott Focus, Great Mills and Wickes stores and make it known to the company why they have taken their custom elsewhere. For the foreseeable future, Focus will come under increasing pressure to stick to paint not pets.

**Written and Researched by Elaine Toland.
Additional key research by Peter Robinson,
Consultant Ornithologist.**

References

Introduction

1. EIA (1992) *Flight to Extinction – Wild-caught Bird Trade*, Environmental Investigation Agency London.

Safari Select

1. Roger Cook (1992) *Pity Polly* – Documentary programme for Central Independent Television plc

Wild Bird Trade

1. EIA (1992) *Flight to Extinction – Wild-caught Bird Trade*, Environmental Investigation Agency London.
2. Bathia Z, Morton K, Peters H (1992) *Aspects of the Tanzanian Wild Bird Trade with Special Reference to Fischer's Lovebird Agapornis Fischeri*. RSPB

EIA (1992) *Flight to Extinction – Wild-caught Bird Trade*, Environmental Investigation Agency London.
3. Brookland J, Hora C and Carter N (1985) *Injury, Damage to Health and Cruel Treatment*. EIA Report.

EIA (1991) *The 1991 Investigation into the Wild Bird Trade in Senegal*. Unpublished report to the RSPCA.

Bathia Z, Morton K, Peters H (1992) *Aspects of the Tanzanian Wild Bird Trade with Special Reference to Fischer's Lovebird Agapornis Fischeri*. RSPB.

Steinmetz M, Peutsch M and Bisschopinck (1998) *Untersuchungen zur Transportmortalität beim Import von Vögeln und Reptilien nach Deutschland. Mit einer Studie zu den Prä-Export-Bedingungen in Tanzania*. Bundesamt für Naturschutz, Germany.
4. Carter N (1987) *The Trade in Wildlife Mortality and Transport Conditions*. A second report by Environmental Investigation Agency, London.
5. Schouten K (1995) *The status and trade in Psittacenes, and other birds, from Suriname*. Animal Exporters Association of Suriname, Paramaribo. 79 S.

6. Bathia Z, Morton K, Peters H (1992) *Aspects of the Tanzanian Wild Bird Trade with Special Reference to Fischer's Lovebird Agapornis Fischeri*. RSPB.
7. Nilsson G (1991) *From forest to living room*. In: Nilsson, *The Bird Business*. Animal Welfare Institute, pp.1-34.
Jensen M (1991) *The importance of transport conditions for the mortality in tropical birds imported by air* – Copenhagen (University, PhD thesis).
Knights P (1991) *A Study of the Trade in Wild-caught Birds in Argentina*. EIA.
Knights P (1991) *The Wild Bird Export Trade in Senegal*. Unpublished EIA report.
Steinmetz M, Peutsch M and Bisschopinck (1998) *Untersuchungen zur Transportmortalität beim Import von Voegeln und Reptilien nach Deutschland. Mit einer Studie zu den Prä-Export-Bedingungen in Tanzania*. Bundesamt für Naturschutz, Germany.
Bathia Z, Morton K, Peters H (1992) *Aspects of the Tanzanian Wild Bird Trade with Special Reference to Fischer's Lovebird Agapornis Fischeri*. RSPB.
EIA (1992) *Flight to Extinction – Wild-caught Bird Trade*, Environmental Investigation Agency London.
8. Cheville N F (1979) *Environmental factors affecting the immune response of birds – A review*. Avian Diseases 23: 308-314.
9. Keymer I (1972) Unsuitability of wild animals as pets. The Veterinary Record.
Cheville N F (1979) Environmental factors affecting the immune response of birds – A review. Avian Diseases 23: 308-314.

Welfare in the Pet Trade

1. RSPCA (1991) *Animal Life* – Official journal of the RSPCA.
2. Clubb S (1984) *Multifactorial disease syndrome in African grey parrots (Psittacus erithacus) from Ghana*. In: Proceedings of Association of Avian Veterinarians. Toronto, Canada.
3. Birchall A, (1990) *Who's a clever parrot then?* New Scientist, 125, 38-45.
4. Coulton L E, Waran N K and Young R J (1997) *Effects of foraging enrichment on the behaviour of parrots*. Animal Welfare, 6(4), 357-363.
5. EIA (1991) *The 1991 Investigation into the Wild Bird Trade in Senegal*. Unpublished report to the RSPCA.
6. Keymer I (1972) *Unsuitability of wild animals as pets*. The Veterinary Record.
7. Meredith A (1995) *Welfare of caged birds*. The Veterinary Record. Nov 25th, 571.

Note: All of the above references were taken from Prepared & Shipped by Dr Barbara Maas (2000) - excluding Roger Cook (1992) Pity Polly – Documentary programme for Central Independent Television plc; and RSPCA (1991) Animal Life – Official journal of the RSPCA.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY FOR THE USE OF THEIR PHOTOS.



**Animal Aid exposes and campaigns
peacefully against all animal abuse,
and promotes a cruelty-free lifestyle.**

**Animal Aid, The Old Chapel, Bradford Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1AW.
Tel: (01732) 364546 email: info@animalaid.org.uk website: www.animalaid.org.uk**