



TV

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Week of 28 June 2004  
Programme No.911  
Length: 4'05''

## SAVING ECHO PARAKEETS IN MAURITIUS

### VIDEO

NATIONAL PARK/CABIN/BIRD  
(12'')

JASON AT CABIN WALKING IN  
FOREST (10'')

ECHO PARAKEETS (8'')

JASON LOOKING THROUGH  
BINOCULARS/NEST (7'')

NEST/BIRD (10'')

VINYL ON TREE/JASON (15'')

### AUDIO

#### NARRATION

The Black River Gorges National Park in Mauritius is the home of echo parakeets. They're one of the world's rarest parrots, and a native of this island nation in the Indian Ocean near Africa.

Jason Malham is a bird conservationist from New Zealand. He's been here for three years, searching and monitoring the nests of this endangered bird.

Threatened by predators and a dwindling habitat, only eight parakeets were found in the late 1980s, including two females.

The aim of Jason's work is to restore this rare species, and increase its wild population to five hundred.

Since these birds have a low breeding rate, each laying only three to four eggs a season. Jason's job is to ensure that every chick survives.

He puts vinyl around the trees to keep rats from

stealing the eggs. He gives the birds extra food. He rescues the sick or malnourished chicks and brings them to the breeding centre run by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

JASON WITH RYAN/ FEEDING  
CHICK (17")

Ryan Watson, an Australian, is the parrot hand-rearing coordinator. Raising echo parakeet infants requires scrupulous hygiene and careful feeding. For the next few days, Ryan will feed this three-day-old every two hours.

RYAN WATSON ON CAMERA (9")

WATSON:

"The chicks stay here until they are about 45 and 50 days old. At that stage, they are fully-feathered. And then they go up into the forest, into release aviaries."

PARAKEETS/  
RYAN TAKING CHICKS OUT OF  
NEST (16")

NARRATION

In addition to rearing wild chicks, the centre also breeds its own parakeets with eight pairs of birds. Sixteen chicks were hatched this season. The captive breeding programme has been struggling for over two decades.

W/S AVIARY (14")

Initially, the project suffered from a lack of funds and experience meant many of the infant birds did not survive. A major breakthrough came in 1996 when the project received a grant from the UN Development Programme, UNDP.

DUNDOO (3")

Pamela Dundoo from UNDP.

PAMELA DUNDOO ON CAMERA  
(14")

DUNDOO:

"Fifty thousand US dollars may seem like seed money and small money, but for Mauritius it's one million, over one million rupees. The seed funding allows them to develop the techniques and the experience."

VIKASH WITH BIRD (7")

NARRATION

Vikash Tatayah from the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation says the grant marked the beginning of a new stage.

VIKASH TATAYAH ON CAMERA  
(16")

TATAYAH:

"We were able to test our release techniques. We were able in the following year to reintroduce for the first time three echo parakeets into the wild."

JASON OPENING HATCH OF  
RELEASE AVIARY (19")

NARRATION

Since 1997, 73 birds have been released. There are 50 new chicks this season – a combination of those bred in captivity and born wild. Altogether, about 200 parakeets are now flying free in the national park.

Jason loves working here.

JASON ON CAMERA (13")

JASON:

"How's life here? It's great, simple living. It's almost camping, but a little bit more comfortable than camping."

MAKING COFFEE

"We cook on our gas burners. No telephones

here. All the birds around, my most favourite place in Mauritius.”

JASON WITH FRIENDS AT  
PORCH (15”)

NARRATION

The echo parakeet population is expected to reach the goal of 500 in the next three years. It’s an achievement and experience that Jason, Ryan and their colleagues say will always occupy a special place in their hearts.

LOGO (10”)

This report was prepared by Patricia Chan for the United Nations.