

legislation. Category 1 is the highest rating possible and indicates that a Party has enacted "legislation that is believed generally to meet the requirements for implementation of CITES."

Furthermore, the CITES Standing Committee has never recommended that other CITES Parties enact sanctions against Argentina for failure to submit annual reports or properly implement the Convention. Argentina has also taken additional steps to demonstrate its commitment to the conservation of blue-fronted amazon parrots. In 1992, in response to concerns regarding the large number of blue-fronted amazons in trade, Argentina instituted a zero export quota. Prior to re-opening the export of blue-fronted amazons, Argentina worked to develop and implement a sustainable-use management plan for the species. Based on this information, we conclude that Argentina is effectively implementing CITES.

*Section 15.32(b)(2) Whether the Country of Export Has Developed a Scientifically Based Management Plan for the Species*

Although the population biology information provided in the application is not exhaustive, we conclude that there is sufficient baseline data provided in the petition to determine that Argentina has developed a scientifically based management plan and has established levels of harvest that will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild.

*Conservation of species and habitat and incentives for conservation:* The management plan provides for the conservation of the species and its habitat. The purpose of the sustainable-use management program, Project Elé, is to increase wild populations of blue-fronted amazons by working with private landowners to protect critical habitat (Chaco and transitional forests) and allow a strictly controlled limited harvest for export. The project currently covers 150,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the Provinces of Chaco, Formosa, Jujuy, and Salta. These Provinces contain the majority of the remaining Chaco and transitional forest habitat and are where the greatest concentration of blue-fronted amazons in Argentina occurs (Moschione and Banchs, 1993). The habitat occurs primarily on privately or communally owned land. The main threat to the species in Argentina is habitat loss. According to Flombaum, et. al. (1997), the most limiting factor for survival of the birds is the lack of nest sites caused by accelerated deforestation. The birds nest only in primary-growth forests, with most nests in white quebracho trees (*Aspidosperma quebracho-*

*blanco*)—a species that is in demand for tannins used for curing leather. Other species, such as quebracho colorado (*Schinopsis quebracho-colorado*), ceiba (*Ceiba insignis*), algarrobo blanco (*Prosopis alba*), and palo santo (*Bulnesia sarmientoi*), which are used by the birds as nesting sites and for food, are commercially valuable for use as fenceposts, telephone poles, and furniture. In addition, large tracts of forest are cleared for cultivation of sugar cane, soybean, cotton, tobacco, and other crops. Because much of the remaining habitat used by the blue-fronted amazon is on private property, participation of property owners in the management program provides a deterrent to destroying parrot habitat for agricultural or development purposes.

We believe that the proposed level of harvest will maintain the species throughout its range at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystem (See *Sustainability, effect on wild population number*). The collection quotas are conservative and based on science (Bucher et al., 1995; Flombaum et al., 1997).

Included with Argentina's application is Decision 425/97, the *Letter of Agreement To Conserve the Blue-fronted Parrot (Amazona aestiva) in Argentina*, issued by the Department of Natural Resources and Sustainable Development. The Decision requires the establishment, using income generated from the program, of government-owned reserves where harvesting of blue-fronted amazons is prohibited. It also authorizes designating wooded areas within large private properties where parrot harvesting is permitted. The program coordinators work closely with provincial officials to determine where the reserves should be established in order to maximize critical habitat protection. Since the program's inception, three reserves have been established: Salta Province (dry transitional forest, established November, 2001, 15,000 ha), Chaco Province (dry chaco forest, established May, 2002 with 17,500 ha), and Jujuy Province (transitional forest, established December, 2002 with 10,000 ha). The reserve in Salta Province now also serves as the nucleus of a larger biosphere reserve. In Reserva Natural Loro Hablador, Chaco Province, funds from the project paid for the construction of a small building which is used as a guardhouse and a dormitory, and to store supplies for researchers and staff. The reserves are managed with funds and staff from the project.

The sustainable-use management plan prohibits the felling of nest trees to

collect nestlings, thereby protecting nest sites. Exportation is only authorized for birds from nests that are marked and numbered and meet the project criteria. The financial benefits to the landowners from the controlled harvest provide the landowners an incentive to protect the nesting habitat on their property. In citrus groves where juvenile birds are collected, the killing of birds as agricultural pests, normally permitted by provincial law, is prohibited. The applicant notes that participating landowners become sensitized and educated regarding conservation of the species and its habitat through the authorization process, inspections, and advice on how to minimize environmental impact in the harvest process. Based on this information, we conclude that Argentina's scientifically based management plan for blue-fronted amazons provides for the conservation of the species and its habitat.

*Implementation and enforcement:* The applicant has provided substantial implementation and enforcement information. Decision 425/97 gives oversight of the project to the Wildlife Office. It provides mechanisms for the administration and enforcement of the program, establishment of reserves, control of illegal trade, and handling and disposition of confiscated birds at the national and provincial levels. Annual decrees also address collection zones, quotas, and export requirements.

Most of the oversight for the project is done by project staff members. Project staff live in the communities or on the properties of collectors during the harvest seasons. They place leg bands on each captured nestling and record biological data, inspect nests, mark each tree from which nestlings are removed, and inspect animal care conditions. All inspection and biological information is maintained in a large database. Staff members also accompany all collectors of juvenile birds to ensure compliance with project policies. The project coordinators identify collection properties and establish collection quotas for each broker so that brokers do not purchase more birds than allotted. In addition, project staff members accompany brokers when birds are purchased from the collectors. Staff members also inspect the parrot housing facilities of collectors and brokers. Frequent inspections by staff members and the perceived importance of the project in communities where the income generated by the collection is shared among community members reduce the incentive to cheat. During a site visit in January 2003, two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Affairs, biologists observed the project