

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The Thick-billed Parrot



Photo: Mark Watson

A PARROT IN PERIL

The Thick-billed Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) historically occurred in the southwestern United States, but is now restricted to the Sierra Madre Occidental in Mexico. This striking bird likely disappeared from the U.S. due to shooting and habitat loss. A reintroduction effort to southeastern Arizona in the 1980s and 1990s was terminated. The parrot continues to decline in Mexico due to habitat destruction and the pet trade. Scientists estimate that only 2,000-2,800 adult parrots remain in the wild, some of which are within just 60 miles of the U.S./Mexico border.

RESCUING THE PARROT

Recovery of the Thick-billed Parrot requires international cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico. Both countries must work together for the protection of the mature pine forests this parrot needs to survive as well as to enforce prohibitions on the pet trade. Logging, cattle grazing, and drug-growing are all threats to the parrot's habitat in Mexico.

KNOW YOUR PARROT

- **Emerald Beauty:** the Parrot measures about 15-16 inches long and is a striking emerald green, with scarlet markings on its head and the bend of its wing and lower leg, and yellow skin ringing its eyes.
- **Long-lived:** Thick-billed Parrots can live to be more than 30 years old in captivity.
- **Outgoing:** this bird is intelligent, social, and prefers to travel in flocks. Its loud calls sound like human laughter.
- **Last of Its Kind:** the Thick-billed Parrot is the only parrot in existence that is native to the U.S. The only other parrot native to the country was the Carolina Parakeet, which went extinct 70 years ago. In Mexico, the Thick-billed Parrot historically shared its habitat with the now possibly extinct Imperial Woodpecker.

A TERRIBLE TRADE

Many thousands of parrots (including macaws and other parrot species) are illegally captured each year in Mexico. The majority die before they ever reach market, due to horrific transport conditions and lack of care.

