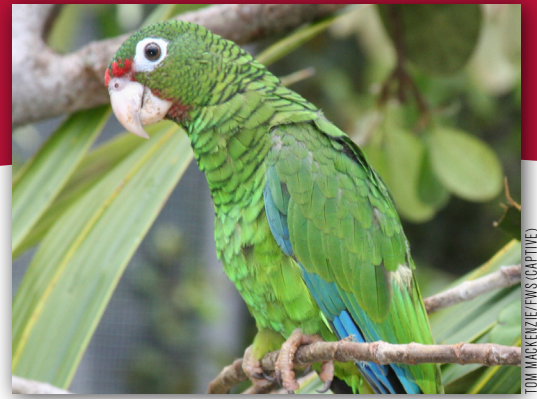


# THE HEAT IS ON

Species feeling the effects of climate change



## Puerto Rican Parrot

*Amazona vittata*

### Region:

Caribbean

### Area affected:

Puerto Rico

### Climatic change:

Severe weather

### Impact:

Mortality, habitat loss

### ABOUT THIS SPECIES

The Puerto Rican parrot is one of the most imperiled birds in the world and one of the first to be federally protected—it was on the original list of U.S. endangered species compiled in 1967. Development, agriculture and logging have claimed most of the large trees these cavity-nesting parrots need for food and shelter. Puerto Rico and surrounding islands likely once supported nearly a million of the parrots, but their numbers declined in response to the clearing of native vegetation in the region that started in the 1600s and accelerated rapidly through the 19th and 20th centuries. Captive breeding efforts saved the parrot from vanishing, but reproduction in the wild has been limited to just a few pairs each year. Today, an estimated 250 parrots survive outside of captivity, divided between the species' last stronghold in El Yunque National Forest in northeastern Puerto Rico and a reintroduced population in Río Abajo Commonwealth Forest in the north central region.

### DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT

In 1989, Hurricane Hugo killed nearly half of the 47 Puerto Rican parrots in the wild at the time, reducing the population to just 23. The status review for the species completed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in August 2017 warned that with a population this small, another strong hurricane “could potentially wipe out the entire current wild population.” The very next month, the island suffered a devastating double blow delivered by two Category 4 storms: Hurricane Irma in early September, followed by Hurricane Maria just two weeks later. **The mortality rate of Puerto Rican parrots rose to 50 percent after Hurricane Maria. In the El Yunque Rainforest on the island, 96 percent of the parrots died in Irma and Maria or from the destruction of food sources and nesting trees.** Fortunately, all the captive parrots survived, but the breeding centers are hesitant to release any more in the wild because storms intensified by warming air and water pose a significant risk to the birds and their forest habitat.

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DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

1130 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-4604

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