

## Big news from Qatar April 2018

Today we remember the passing of the late Sheikh Saoud bin Mohammed bin Ali Al Thani who left us prematurely in November 2014, as we make this announcement.

Al Wabra has been actively working with other organizations in conservation projects since its inception some 20 years ago. But our flagship species and project has to be the Spix's macaw. Much controversy arose with the arrival of 2 large collections on the Qatari shores (starting in 2002), but Al Wabra and Sheikh Saoud proved all their critics wrong by placing these Spix's in state of the art facilities, with specialists from around the world. His dedication to the project and saving the species brought new life to the waning program of old. The amazing research opportunities that have been afforded to this species is remarkable and unheard of in other species conservation projects. All thanks to the private generosity of Sheikh Saoud and his family. Over the last few years the Spix's program has moved in leaps and bounds bringing us to the brink of making history and seeing these birds back in the wild again. With our Spix's macaw program partners including the likes of the Brazil government (and their partners in Brazil), Parrots International, Parrots Reproduction Consulting, and Cornell Universities Genomics Core Lab in Qatar, we have come so far.

One partner that has stepped up time and time again to help us reach our goals, is the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots (ACTP). We have an excellent working relationship with this organization, and again they have come to the party to help us secure this species for the final stages to the release. After the death of Sheikh Saoud there were many concerns, and we are happy to say that his Heirs with Sheikh Hamad and Sheikha Sara and the helm, to their credit kept Sheikh Saoud's dream alive. Now they will push on with decisions in the program and their land in Brazil for the next stage of this project.

Al Wabra's owners have grave concerns with the current and prolonged blockade on Qatar by its unscrupulous neighbors, with threats that bring this region into serious political turmoil. Although the Leader of Qatar has done a fantastic job to shield his country from these threats, our owners are no longer willing to keep such an important collection of animals here, due to the time issues to get them out if it escalates. In short Al Wabra is sending all its important species out of Qatar, the Spix's and Lear's macaws have arrived at ACTP in Germany, where they are being housed in state of the art facilities, while the new facilities are built on our land in Brazil. As soon as the facilities are finished (expected before the end of 2018), plans will be put in place to very quickly move a large number of the birds to the Brazil facility. Sheikh Hamad and Sheikha Sara, are convinced that this is the right thing to do, and feel by

securing these birds they are able to secure their fathers dream and legacy. All the equipment related to the birds will follow them so as not to waste it, and also decrease additional costs in buying new equipment, costs that could be spent on other necessary and useful aspects of the project. Al Wabra will be retaining ownership of the birds and thus still playing an active decision making role in the project to safeguard their Sheikh Saoud's legacy. Dr Cromwell Purchase and his Blue Macaw Assistant Donovan De Boer will be following the birds and joining the ACTP team in Germany.

We would like to thank ACTP for their help in making this happen, as the costs of expanding their facilities with specially setup quarantine areas and new veterinary hospital to ensure the sectional quarantining of their facilities to best protect from any outbreaks, and section specific staff is huge and their investment in this, has shown us how dedicated they are to conservation. The German, Brazil and Qatar governments and CITES departments have worked together very well to make this happen, and we thank them all for their support and efforts. It was a mammoth tasking putting all the transfers together for 120 Spix's macaws, but we are happy to say it was a successful move with no injuries or losses. We would like to thank all our supporters for their years of support, and we look forward to sharing more successes with you.