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Passionate about parrots: Elliott Paul Toyne braved scabies and tear gas in pursuit of a rare parakeet in Ecuador



Picture by Steve Parker

Watching the birdie

THE environment is like a business and you've really got to sell it," says Elliott Paul Toyne, who knows more than most about marketing green issues. With a snappy name, an endorsement from the Expedition Advisory Centre and a touch of entrepreneurial wit, he raised enough to take a four-strong team to Ecuador in search of several near-extinct species of parrot.

The Parrots in Peril Expedition was part of his campaign to publicise the many species of parrots threatened with extinction. A sponsored bird-watch raised £750 towards the three-month trip, and, says Elliott, "showed initiative which proved to sponsors that we weren't just asking for money".

He approached any companies which had a connection with parrots, and his persistence and imagination paid off. "There is a lot of

competition for this money and you've got to think of something quite unique. One of my sponsors was a travel agents, owned by a man named Parrot, whose symbol was a parrot. That was my tie-in."

Raising the money was only half the battle and the trip had a few trials of its own. The planned destination proved impossible to get to, the entire team had a nasty encounter with scabies, and the hotel room was tear-gassed during rioting.

It all ended in success, however, when they discovered and studied the rare white-necked parakeet. There are less than 1000 left in the world. The campaign continues and Elliott's latest money-making venture is well under way. "Bright and arty" Parrots in Peril T-shirts are on sale now, with proceeds going to another expedition planned for 1993. To get one, or just to make a donation, ring 081 994 2020.—MP