

MEET KAGISO - THE BLACK-CHEEKED LOVEBIRD

Hello kids, my name is Kagiso. I am a black-cheeked Lovebird and I want to tell you some facts about me and my family.



Name	Black-cheeked Lovebird (<i>Agapornis nigrigenis</i>)
Habitat	open woodlands and warm, humid, wooded river valleys and floodplain forests.
Diet	grass seeds and seeds of other plants
Age	In human care up to 15 years
Breeding behaviour	Build their nests in tree hollows, lay 4-6 eggs, chicks hatch 24 days, chicks fledge after 5-6 weeks
Threats	poaching, illegal pet trade, habitat loss



Black-cheeked Lovebirds have a very small distribution area on the borders of Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

However, it is assumed that they are already extinct in Zimbabwe.





Me and my close relatives belong to the genus of lovebirds. We are nine different species with a green plumage. The main difference between us are our differently coloured heads and beaks. Below you can have a look at some of my family.



Black-winged Lovebird

Black-winged Lovebird (*Agapornis taranta*)

- the largest species of lovebirds
- green plumage, underside of the wings is black, red forehead, red beak
- inhabits the Ethiopian highlands in northeast Africa
- nesting sites are trunk or branch holes in trees, holes in walls and possibly weaver bird nests
- not very often kept as a pet



Fischer's Lovebird (*Agapornis fischeri*)

- red beak, white eye ring, green plumage, orange-red forehead and yellow to olive back of head
- male and female birds look the same
- inhabiting dry savannah in Tanzania (native habitat)
- introduced populations in Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda
- caught a lot for the pet trade
- 1987, most traded wild bird in the world



Fischer's Lovebird



Yellow-collared Lovebird (*Agapornis personatus*)

- red beak, white eye ring, green plumage, head is black-brown, chest and neck are yellow
- inhabits savannahs & bushland in Tanzania
- introduced populations in Kenya and Burundi
- wide distribution and total population not known
- 29.000 caught for pet trade between 1981 -2018
- no more exports for pet trade since 2003



Yellow-collared Lovebird

Rosy-faced Lovebird



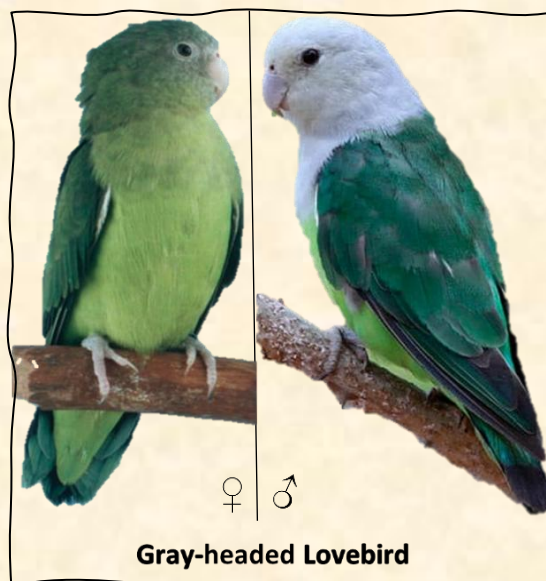
Rosy-faced Lovebird (*Agapornis roseicollis*)

- green plumage, rump and upper tail feathers blue, pink head and breast, horn-coloured beak
- inhabits savannahs in Namibia and South Angola
- carries nesting material in its feathers
- female bird hatches eggs and male feeds her
- famous pet
- breeds in a wide variety of colours



Gray-headed Lovebird (*Agapornis canus*)

- wings dark green, belly feathers light green, beak horn-coloured, head and breast grey
- female birds without grey head (sexual dimorphism)
- only lovebird not living in the African mainland
- inhabits forest edges & tree savannahs in Madagascar
- introduced populations Comoros, Mayotte and the Seychelles island of Mahé
- considered a pest, because they like to eat rice that has been laid out to dry



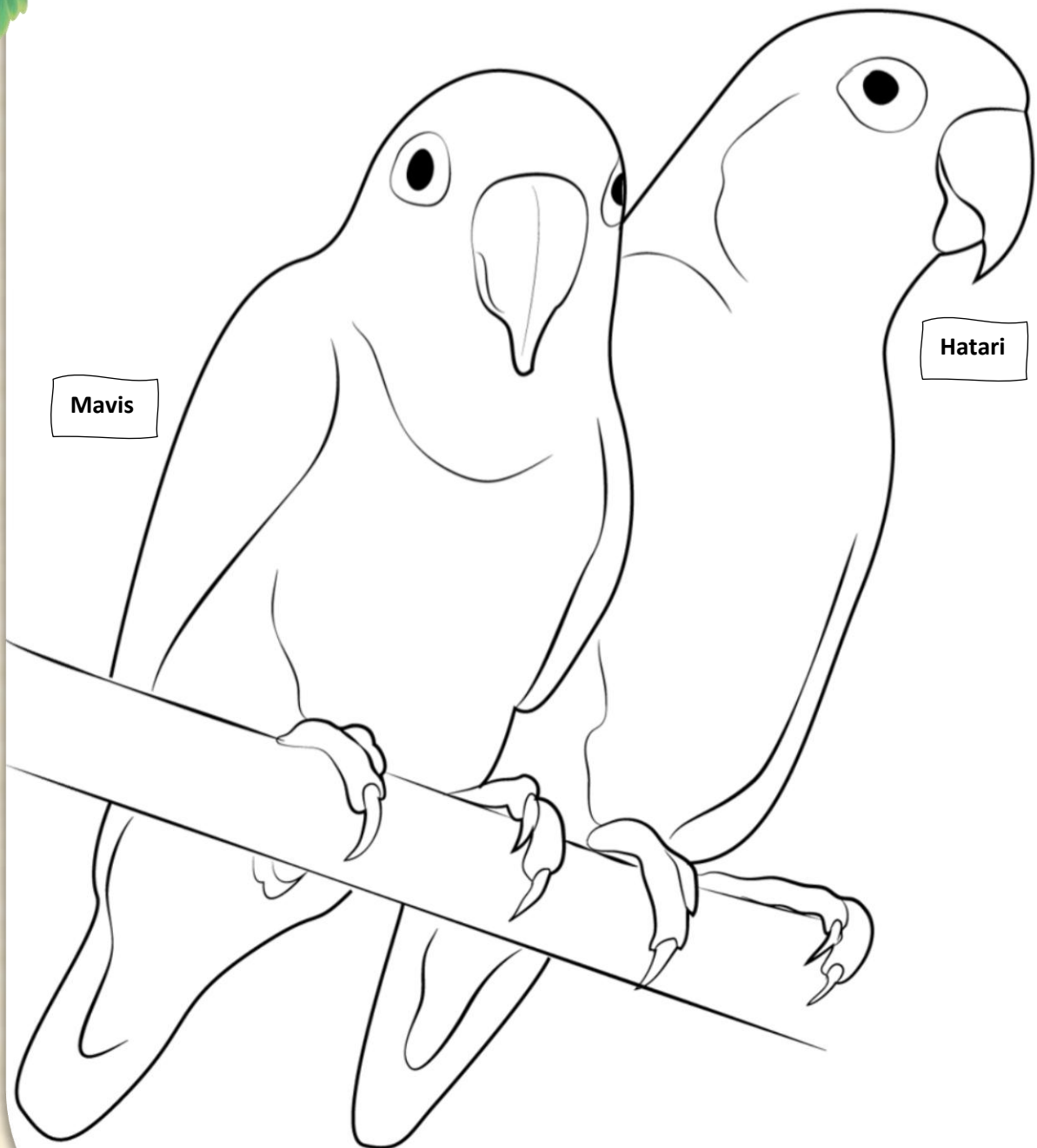
Gray-headed Lovebird





Now you know my relatives. Here is a picture of my cousins Hatari and Mavis. Hatari is a Fischer's Lovebird and Mavis is a Yellow-collared Lovebird.

Try to colour them both with the right colours.





Now you know some of my relatives. We're a very loud and crazy bunch and there's always party around us.

Kagiso, I've heard that you always stay with your partner. Is that true?

Yes, that is right. That's why humans call us "lovebirds." We often stay together with our partner for life. During the breeding season pairs may seek privacy and prefer to keep to ourselves. However, outside the breeding season, we do not want to miss our friends, and we form large flocks.



Task: Which picture shows the Black-cheeked Lovebird during the breeding season? Mark the correct picture.



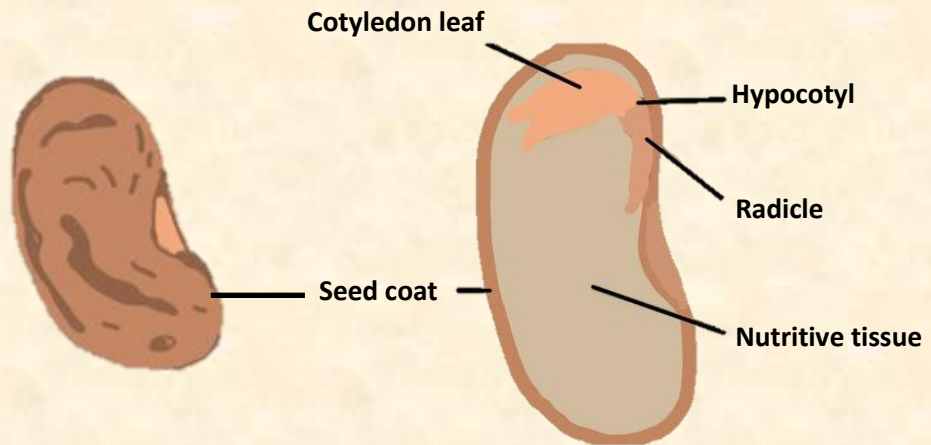
Lovebirds have different behaviours to show their partner that they like him. The female birds let the male feed her. They also clean each other's feathers. Of course, they also often sit close together and cuddle.





Mostly we eat the seeds of grasses and herbs. This may sound monotonous for humans, but seeds are so diverse and have everything you need to become a big Black- cheeked Lovebird

Bean seed



An important component of the seed is the nutritive tissue. It contains carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins and minerals such as phosphorus, potassium and magnesium. Not all seeds are equally good for a Black-cheeked Lovebird. Seeds that are particularly high in fat should not be eaten too much. This is for example sunflower seeds.

Task: Here you can see different types of seeds. Do you know the plants they come from? Try to connect the seeds with the right plant and complete the name of the plants.



___ K

M ___ L ___

___ N ___ L O ___ R

___ S



WORLD PARROT DAY - May 31st

Black - cheeked Lovebirds are very popular pets. In the last century many of my family were poached and sold as pets. This is one of the main reasons why there are less than 10,000 of us left in Africa today.



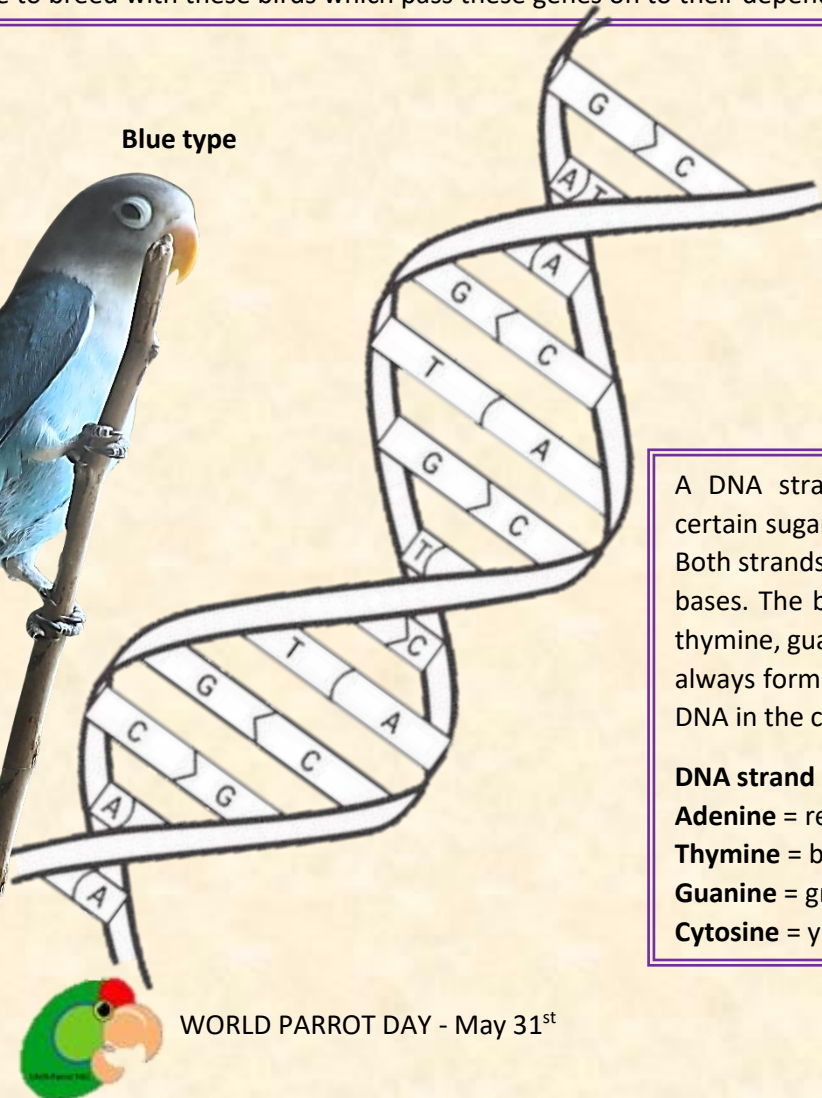
Unfortunately, that's true. But we humans have learned from this and have started to protect them. Approximately 35% of their habitat lies within Kafue National Park and surrounding Game Management Areas. Only around 30 birds are known to have been smuggled out of Africa since 1981. We have started breeding Black-cheeked Lovebirds so that we can keep them as pets. This means that no more animals must be poached.

The breeding of Black-cheeked Lovebirds has led to different colours, especially different shades of blue. These colours are found on the genes of the Black-cheeked Lovebirds. This means that they are coded in their genetic material, the DNA. The different colours can occur through mutations. In the wild, differently coloured birds are easier to catch and are more often eaten by predatory birds. Humans find these new colours rare or beautiful and continue to breed with these birds which pass these genes on to their dependents.

Wild type



Blue type



A DNA strand consists of a certain sugar and phosphorus. Both strands are connected by bases. The bases adenine and thymine, guanine and cytosine always form a pair. Colour the DNA in the correct colours.

- DNA strand** = brown
- Adenine** = red
- Thymine** = blue
- Guanine** = green
- Cytosine** = yellow



If you want to keep a Black-cheeked Lovebird at home, you must fulfil the keeping requirements. Depending on the country you live in, these guidelines may vary.

However, there are a few things you should always be aware of.



Insider Facts

- ❖ Always keep the minimum of a pair and never alone. Mirrors are not sufficient to simulate as a partner.
- ❖ Don't use perches made of plastic. The birds need plenty of space and natural branches in different thicknesses to strengthen their leg muscles. They also clean and sharpen their beaks on the wood.
- ❖ No sunflower seeds, they contain too much fat for the birds, but varied seeds from grasses, millets and herbs.
- ❖ Feed less fruit and more vegetables. There is too much sugar in fruit, and it is unhealthy for the birds.
- ❖ Don't feed snacks or crackers for humans or other animals as they contain too much sugar or salt and are unhealthy.
- ❖ Only provide nesting boxes if you want to breed and if you are sure you can ensure good animal welfare to the offspring.

Have a look at the two pictures of the Rosy-faced Lovebirds below. There are some things in their cages that are not good for them. How many mistakes can you find? Put a circle around them.





Parrots are very intelligent and curious. If you keep Black-cheeked Lovebirds as pets, you should always offer them new challenges. This is the so-called behavioural enrichment.

I have two ideas which you can make for us. You can also use them for other parrots species.



Cone-chain

- **Materials:** cones (pine, spruce etc.), cotton or leather ribbons, sunflower seeds, dried berries, different nuts, cordless drill or gimlet



- make a hole in the bottom of the cones
- tie the leather ribbon in the cone
→ take two or three different cones together= more diversification for the parrots



- you can fill the gaps in the cones with berries, nuts and seeds
- you can also use cones with their own seeds inside. The Black-cheeked Lovebirds will love them!

Don't forget!

Do not use too many sunflower seeds

Show your enrichment to your friends on  & .

#WorldParrotDay #Lovebirds

Example how it could look like

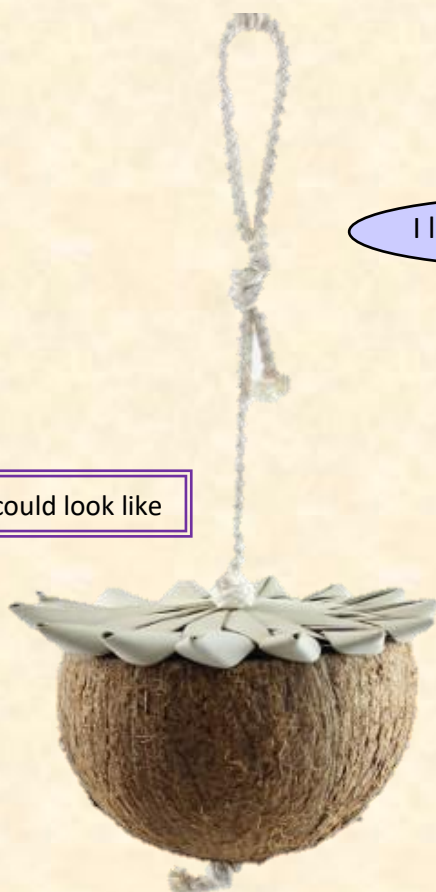


WORLD PARROT DAY - May 31st

Coconut cup

- **Materials:** coconut cup, cotton or leather ribbons, different material to cover the cup (for example, cardboard for budgies and lovebirds; balsawood for amazon parrots and macaws), cordless drill, scissors, pencil
 - make a hole in the bottom of the coconut cup
 - put the ribbon through the hole and tie a knot to fix the ribbon
 - put the open side of the cup on the cardboard and draw the outline of the cup
 - draw a star in the circle and cut it out
 - the star should be small enough that the bird can look inside the cup.
But if the star is too small, it would be too easy for the parrots to get the food inside the cup.
 - put a hole in the middle of the star and put the ribbon through the hole
- you can fill the coconut cup with some dried fruits, seeds and dry grass, sawdust or paper snippets
- the bird has to raise the cover or destroy it to get the treats inside

Example how it could look like



Look, something new to destroy.

I love the treats inside.

Toys!



WORLD PARROT DAY - May 31st



As you can see, it's not easy to keep us as pets and you must pay attention to a lot of things.

That's why I've made you a checklist of things you should think about if you want to have ~~one~~ two of my conspecifics at home.

Checklist



- An indoor aviary with the minimum dimensions:
 - Length: 97 cm
 - Width: 64 cm
 - Height: 166 cm
- at least two birds
- Perches made of natural perches
- Climbing equipment made of bast, sisal or other natural material
- Enrichment
- Fresh branches to nibble on
- Bird sand
- Quality bird food
 - Grain mix
 - Vegetables
- free flight almost every day

Wow, that really is a lot. I must be sure I have enough time and materials to be able to keep lovebirds at home.





Phew, it's very warm here, what's going on?



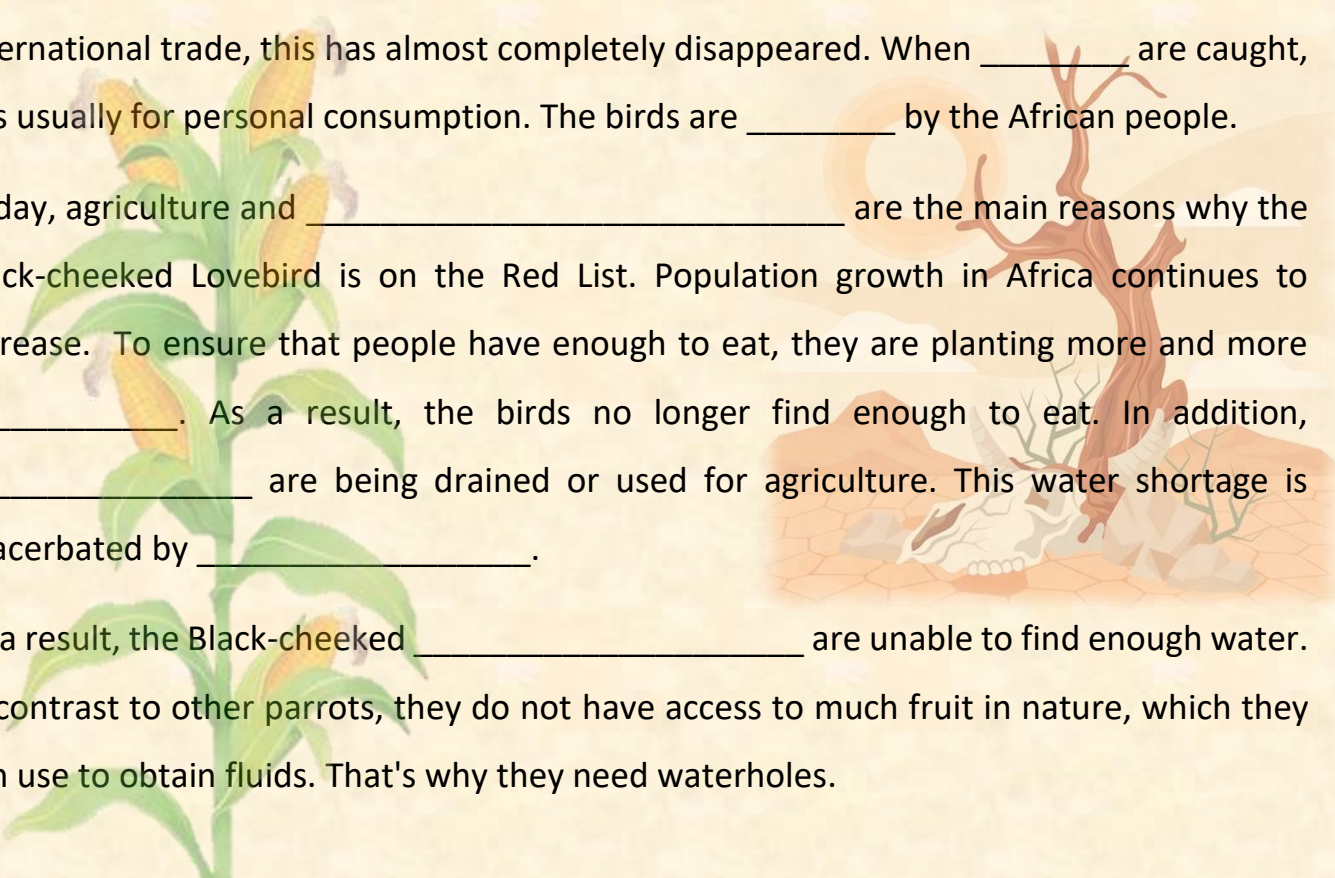
The heat is caused by climate change. But that's not the only reason why the IUCN considers you to be "Vulnerable", Kagiso.

Task: Try to fill in the gaps in the text and find out why Black-cheeked Lovebirds are threatened.

In the 1920s to 1960s, the main _____ for the disappearance of the Black-cheeked Lovebirds was _____ for the animal trade. Due to the ban on international trade, this has almost completely disappeared. When _____ are caught, it is usually for personal consumption. The birds are _____ by the African people.

Today, agriculture and _____ are the main reasons why the Black-cheeked Lovebird is on the Red List. Population growth in Africa continues to increase. To ensure that people have enough to eat, they are planting more and more _____. As a result, the birds no longer find enough to eat. In addition, _____ are being drained or used for agriculture. This water shortage is exacerbated by _____.

As a result, the Black-cheeked _____ are unable to find enough water. In contrast to other parrots, they do not have access to much fruit in nature, which they can use to obtain fluids. That's why they need waterholes.





reason, birds, crops, waterholes, droughts, Lovebirds, eaten, climate change

I know an organisation, "BirdLife International", which is committed to the protection of you Black-cheeked Lovebirds.



There are different Conservation and Research Actions Proposed by "Bird Life International".

1. An important and initial task is regular monitoring. This involves counting how many Black-cheeked Lovebirds are on certain locations, such as waterholes. This gives us an overview of how the population is developing and whether it is continuing to decline.
2. Maintain and create water resources with minimal disturbance. The aim is to create sufficient waterholes that also carry water in times of drought. To achieve this, sustainable agriculture must be in place at the same time. Millet species such as sorghum that tolerate drought and do not require so much water should be cultivated. The burning of land to create farmland must stop, as this also destroys many grass seeds, which are important food source for lovebirds.
3. Many people in Africa do not go to school. So, they do not know modern farming methods to save water, for example. Because of that, continuing a programme of environmental education involving school-visits and meetings with farming communities are important to change the running system.



Task: Decide whether the statement is true or false. Can you find the correct solution?

- 1.a) **Monitoring is important to find out how much Black-cheeked Lovebirds are eating.** K
- 1.b) **Monitoring is important to find out whether the population continues to decline.** Z
- 2.a) **To save water, the fields must be cultivated more sustainably.** O
- 2.b) **To save water, it is important to grow more maize.** I
- 3.a) **Environmental education is important so that farmers learn to drive.** B
- 3.b) **Environmental education is important so that farmers know how to save water.** O



Previous pages solution: _____

I was drawn by **Alyssa Rice**. You can follow my mum on [Instagram](#).



World Parrot Day 2025 –

“Be social, stick together – be more (love)parrot!”



WORLD PARROT DAY - May 31st