

POPULAR LORIES AND LORIKEETS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Lories and Lorikeets are brightly colored parrots from Australia and the South Pacific. For a long time they were not terribly popular in the United States, but that is now changing. Although their plumage is exceptionally beautiful these birds typically eat nectar, fruit and pollen. They are physiologically different from other popular parrots and their tongues are uniquely designed with tiny papillae that effectively gather the pollen and nectar. This highly specialized diet produces droppings that are runny and, if the bird is hanging on the side of a cage, can be propelled many feet! The lory diet in captivity is different from the diet of other psittacines as well, and can be a bit more expensive and labor intensive. Additionally, lories are incredibly active and energetic, much more so than other parrots. As a result, they were difficult to maintain in the home and sometimes challenging in an aviary. In the last few years the trend of avoiding lories has changed significantly. While there are many reasons for this change, three factors seem obvious.

The first reason for the increase in popularity is the creation of commercial diets created specifically for the nutritional needs of lories. These diets simplify the feeding process and provide a balance of vita-

mins, minerals, and nutrients that, along with a variety of fresh foods, take some of the challenge out of feeding lories. Previously, those who kept lories had to rely on a variety of homemade powders and nectar formulas while not knowing if the birds were receiving any nutrition, let alone a balanced diet.

The second reason for the increased appeal of lories is the widespread availability of walk-through aviaries featuring lories. These interactive exhibits are popping up at zoos and theme parks all over the United States. For a small fee, a visitor can purchase a cup of nectar to feed the birds. Once in the aviary, colorful lories swoop down and alight on any available human surface. This provides not only a bit of interaction with some very interesting birds, but also a closer look at some of the most gorgeous birds in the world. Now, it seems almost everyone knows what a lory is and many have continued to find them fascinating.

The other significant factor that has helped lories gain popularity and recognition is the Internet. Widespread access to the Internet has caused the once impossible-to-find information on keeping lories to now be right at one's fingertips. There are numerous websites detailing the different species, appropri-



Above:
Green-naped Lorikeet



Cardinal Lory Pair

ate diets, health concerns, and just about everything else one needs to know about these birds. Numerous web sites, chat groups, and mailing lists facilitate the exchange of information. If one is able to separate the reliable information from the preferred advice of wannabe experts, the information is abundant and usually free. No longer is the art of keeping lorries such a hit or miss ordeal.

While the lory family is made up of ten separate genera and fifty-three species, not all are available in the United States. There is, however, a great variety of species for any lory connoisseur to select from.

Some of the most commonly seen and kept lorries in the United States are those in the appropriately named Rainbow group, *Trichoglossus haematomus*. The term "Rainbow" is a generic one and it refers to roughly twenty-three different birds. They are small and colorful lorries that have adapted well to captivity and whose price does not put them out of reach for those watching their bird-buying budget. Of the various Rainbow lorries, eight exist in the United States and three appear fairly often in aviculture. The nominate species, the Green-naped Lory, *T. h. haematomus*, is by far the most commonly seen lory in this group. It is a small lory, about ten inches long and weighing 130 to 140 grams. Its body is green and the forehead, crown and lores are blue, shaft streaked with green. The back of its head is purple; the breast is red, with the feathers clearly edged in dark blue. The collar is greenish yellow. The Green-naped lory is native to New Guinea and it is still quite plentiful there.

Another popular and commonly seen member of this family is the Swainson's or Blue-mountain Lory, *T. h. moluccanus*. Its head is dark blue to violet, shaft streaked with a lighter blue. The abdomen is dark blue

and the breast is orange and does not have the dark tipped feathers seen on the Green-naped Lory. The collar is yellow-green. Several color mutations have been documented but they are extremely rare. The Swainson's Lory is native to Australia and is often seen around parks and back yard bird feeders.

The Edward's Lory, *T. h. capistratus*, has become more common and possibly has the nicest temperament of the entire Rainbow group. The body is green. The head is green; the forehead, crown, and chin are blue, shaft streaked with a darker blue. The breast is yellow with a bit of orange edging, the abdomen is dark green and the collar is a greenish yellow. This bird is native to the lowlands of Timor. In general, the Edward's Lory seems to be less nippy and aggressive than the Green-naped Lory when mature, making it rather desirable as a pet.

The remaining five species, including the Rosenberg's or Biak Lory (*T. h. rosenbergii*), Blue-headed or Pale-headed Lory (*T. h. caeruleiceps*), and the Weber's Lory (*T. h. weberi*) appear less frequently in this country. The Weber's is the only lory of the rainbow group that is not as brilliantly colored. It is mainly green and yellow. The slightly smaller Mitchell's Lory, *T. h. mitchellii*, has almost completely disappeared from aviculture in the United States and all that remains here now is a fragile population.

Additionally, the wild population in its native home on the islands of Bali and Lombok appears to have diminished significantly and the remaining population is in peril. Forsten's Lorries (*T. h. forsteni*) were imported into the U.S. periodically in the past but have become harder to find in



Swainson's Lorikeet

recent years. Its status in the wild is believed to be declining as well. There may be a few specimens of some of the other Rainbow subspecies still in the

United States, but they are almost unheard of and, with no apparent viable population, they are rarely seen.

While not part of the group known as “Rainbow Lorries,” two other members of the genus *Trichoglossus* have become quite popular in American aviculture. They are the Goldie’s Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus goldiei*, and the Iris Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus iris*. Both are small, colorful birds that breed readily and adapt well to life as a pet or in the aviary. The Goldie’s Lorikeet will remind you of a watermelon with its green streaked body, red forehead



Violet-naped Lory pair

and crown, and purple face. It is about seven inches long and weighs between 50 and 80 grams. It is native to the mountains of New Guinea, where it is still rather common. These diminutive birds make delightful companions and are considered by many to be a good lory for a beginner. They are the complete lory spirit in a small package but they are not known to be exceptionally good talkers. Not only do they make wonderful pets, but they also do well in mixed species aviaries that have no other lorries. They do not destroy the plants as badly as some of the larger lorries, and they live well with many types of softbills.

The Iris Lorikeet is from Timor and is vulnerable there, as the habit is rapidly disappearing. Iris Lorikeets are small, about eight inches long. They have red crowns, a band of purple behind their eyes, yellow scalloping on their breast, and green bodies. Iris Lorries have a more varied diet than other lorries. Often they are fed a seed mix suitable for small hookbills along with fruit and nectar. They are one of the few lorries known to aviculture that do well with some seeds in their diet. Iris Lorries are appearing more

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often as companion birds. They are not terribly noisy and have charming dispositions, which makes them well-suited for life with humans.

Steadily disappearing from aviculture in the United States is the Scaly-breasted Lory, *Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus*. It is a small, bright green bird with yellow scalloping on its breast and bright orange under the wings. It comes from Australia and is about nine inches long, weighing about 75 grams. It has a rather melodious voice, if any lory voice can be considered melodious. They are commonly kept in Australia, where several natural mutations have occurred. Although it is an easy bird to keep and breed, it lacks the popularity of its flashier cousins and has become harder to find in North America.

Lories in the genus *Eos* are quite popular in aviculture. The most common representatives of this



Red Lory Babies

genus are the Red Lory, *Eos bornea*, and the Blue-streaked Lory, *Eos reticulata*. The most commonly seen Red Lorries, *E. b. moluccanus*, are bright red birds with some blue on their sides. The wings are red with some dark blue or black, the area around the vent and under the tail is bright blue and their feet are dark.

They are about eleven inches long and weigh 160 to 180 grams. The Buru Red, *E. b. cyanonothus*, is slightly smaller in size and the red coloring is darker, almost maroon in some cases. Red Lorries are enormously popular in part because of their color and availability. They breed well in captivity and have adapted well to life with humans.

Blue-streaked Lorries, *Eos reticulata*, are native to the Tanibar Islands of Indonesia where their population has been declining and their future is shaky at best. These lorries are about the same size and shape as the Red Lorry, but are easily distinguished by the bright blue on their necks and ears. They also have blue streaks across their backs. Like the Red Lorries, they are friendly and gregarious birds. Easy to breed, they have become one of the mainstays in the pet lorry market. For a lorry, they can often talk fairly well.

The Violet-naped or Violet-necked Lorry, *Eos squamata*, is somewhat less common in the United States than the Red or the Blue-streaked Lorry. It is slightly smaller than the Red or Blue-streaked Lorry at about ten inches in length. Like others in this genus, it has reasonably good talking ability and is viewed as a good companion bird.

The genus *Lorius* contains a number of very popular lorries. Among them are the Chattering Lorry, *Lorius garrulus*, the Yellow-backed Lorry, *L. g. flavopalaitus*, which is a subspecies of the Chattering Lorry, and the Black-capped Lorry, *Lorius lory*. All birds in the *Lorius* genus are red birds with green wings. They are stocky and their tails are broad. Most of them are about eleven inches long and weigh about 200 grams. The Yellow-backed Lorry is different from the nominate species in the obvious patch of yellow on its mantle. Chattering Lorries lack the black cap that is seen in

other *Lorius* species. They are active birds and many have been known to be accomplished talkers. They are well-established in American aviculture. They are known for interacting well with humans and their outgoing personality makes them desirable as pets. They are forest dwelling birds of Indonesia. These birds still maintain a large wild population, but it is on the decline because of their popularity as pets. According to BirdLife International, the Chattering Lorry is the

most popularly exported bird in Eastern Indonesia. They are popular in the United States and are one of the most commonly kept pet lorries in Europe.

The Black-capped Lorry, *Lorius lory*, is another popular bird. Similar in size to the Chattering Lorry, it has a black cap and varying amounts of blue on its breast or abdomen depending on the subspecies. These flashy birds are known to be great companions and seem to adapt to and breed well in captivity. There are three subspecies of this bird commonly available in the United

States, the nominate species, *Lorius lory lory*, *L. lory salvadorii*, and *L. lory erythrothorax*. Black-capped Lorries have bright red bodies, a black cap, and blue on the mantle and neck that extends down to the abdomen. The extent of the blue markings on the breast and abdomen varies with each subspecies. The ankles are bright blue. The wings are green and feathers under the wings have a patch of yellow which shows clearly when the bird flies. Their beaks are orange and their legs are black.

While not readily available yet as a pet, the Yellow-bibbed Lorry, *Lorius chlorocercus*, is rapidly becoming a favorite among lorry breeders. Until it was imported into the United States in 1998 through a cooperative breeding program, only a few specimens



Yellow-streaked Lorry

of this beautiful bird existed. It has readily adapted to captive life and has bred prolifically. Those who have had the chance to work with this bird have found that it breeds readily in captivity and makes a delightful companion. Because of the success in breeding this lory in the United States, the Yellow-bibbed Lory is on its way to becoming an avicultural mainstay.

In a genus all by itself is the Dusky Lory, *Pseudeos fuscata*. Dusky Lorries are native to New Guinea, commonly found all over, from forests in higher elevations to lowland savannahs. This “dressed-for-Halloween” bird comes in two color phases, yellow and orange. The beak and eyes are orange. The body is generally dark brown with orange or yellow on the head, throat, and abdomen. Dusky Lorries are one of the most popular pet lorries, and they make playful and talkative companions. They are about ten inches long and weigh about 150 to 160 grams. This makes them the perfect size for a companion. Their chirps and squawks can be quite loud and high-pitched and they can be quite aggressive and stubborn. When discussing their personality, Dusky Lorries have at times been referred to as the “Lories Squared” or the “Extreme Lory”. Traits, behaviors, and antics that are typically ascribed to lorries seem to be taken to the extreme with Dusky lorries. They are intense little birds. They have adapted well to captivity and breed prolifically. They are common in aviaries throughout the United States.

Lories in the genus *Chalcopsitta* include the Black, Cardinal, Duyvenbode’s, and Yellow-streaked. Members of this genus are larger than most other lorries, about twelve inches long and weighing in the neighborhood of 200 to 250 grams. They have long, rounded tails and are native to the lowlands of New Guinea and some nearby islands. For the moment, they appear to be well-established in their native habitat. The most distinctive trait of this group is the bare skin surrounding the lower mandible. Their beaks are black, except for the Cardinal whose beak is only partially black, and they do not possess the same brightly-colored plumage of some of the more commonly seen lorries. Their subtle coloring only makes them more beautiful. For anyone who is thinking about getting started with lorries, the *Chalcopsitta* family will provide a richly rewarding avian experience. They are reputed to be some of the cuddliest lorries. Even breeder birds that were hand reared often retain their sweet disposition. Some of the wild caught birds of this genus have also been known to develop a good relationship with their human keepers. As a whole, this group of lorries seems to be the most gentle and best-

natured of the lorries. They are not the least bit shy. Their voices can be rather loud and high pitched, especially if they are excited.

One of the most overlooked lorries has been the Black Lory, *Chalcopsitta atra*. Black Lorries are commonly found in Irian Jaya, Western New Guinea. This bird is without a doubt one of the most delightful lorries anyone could have. On first glance one might think it’s just a black crow only with a hooked bill, but closer examination reveals this is an incorrect assessment. While the bird is primarily black in color, there is a purple sheen to the feathers. Another look reveals subtle shades of yellow and red. Black lorries are about 12 inches long and weigh in the neighborhood of 250 grams. While they are as noisy as any other parrot, they can be gentle and affectionate. While Blacks are not noted for being accomplished talkers and mimics, some can be very entertaining with their talking abilities and outgoing nature. They have become relatively common in aviculture in the United States.

The Cardinal Lory, *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*, is the most common lory in the Solomon Islands. It is a beautiful bird with plumage that, unusual for a lory, is primarily a solid, rich, dark red. Their beaks are orange with black at the base. These lorries existed in very small numbers in the United States until 1999, when an additional forty-nine birds were imported, adding to the population. Cardinal Lorries are every bit as interesting as the others in the genus; however, because they are less common in captivity, only a few are finding their way into the pet market. Those who have had the opportunity to work with and keep these birds are quite enchanted with their personality and intelligence. Their gregarious nature makes them well-suited as companions. Hopefully, once the captive populations become better established, more people will have the opportunity to keep these delightful lorries.

The Duyvenbode’s or Brown Lory, *Chalcopsitta duyvenbodei*, is another dramatically marked bird. Duyvenbode’s are native to northern parts of New Guinea. The plumage is generally dark brown, highlighted with bright yellow on the thighs, forehead, around the beak and under the wings. Their beaks are also black. As pets, these birds have been described as sweet and devoted and tend to like most humans. They make excellent companion birds. They are typical lorries, so do not be surprised at the high-pitched shriek that is their voice. Duyvenbode’s Lorries are well-established in aviculture in the United States.

Yellow-streaked Lorries, *Chalcopsitta scintillata*, have gained recognition as wonderful pets. They are

native to southern New Guinea in Irian Jaya. These birds are the only members of the genus *Chalcopsitta* that have green plumage. Their wings and bodies are various shades of green, with red foreheads, thighs and breast, while the back of the head and neck are streaked with bright yellow shafts. Their beaks are dark and their voices are quite harsh and high pitched. They are slightly smaller than the black lorries. Owners of these lorries describe them as generally sweet, very loving and good-natured, but owners also indicate that they often tend to be one-person birds. While these birds are often messy and loud, owners feel they are worth the extra trouble because they are such loving pets. Yellow-streaked Lorries breed easily in captivity, but they do tend to be a bit aggressive towards other birds and are not well-suited to multi-species lorry aviaries or flock situations.

More popular in aviaries than in pet homes is the Stella's Lorikeet, *Charmosyna papou goliathina*. This bird is most remarkable with its very long tail feathers. The length of its body is about seven inches and the tail feathers can add additional nine or ten inches to its total length. This bird comes in two color phases, red and melanistic. The red phase is dark on the back of its head, has green wings and the tail is green with yellow at the end. Its face, breast, and abdomen are red. In the melanistic phase the red on the head and breast are replaced with black or almost black coloring. It is one of the few lorry species that is sexually dimorphic (there is a distinct difference in appearance between males and females of this species). While most members of the genus *Charmosyna* are quite delicate, the Stella's Lorikeet is the one member that seems to be hardy enough to endure colder temperatures and the melanistic birds actually do not do very well in very warm climates. The Stella's Lorikeet is exceptionally elegant in its appearance, but is not known for its pet quality. In spite of the reputation of being unsuited to life as a pet, this bird is well-established in aviculture and has on occasion made a charming and quiet companion.

Many other lorry species were at one time common in American aviculture; however, if they were not well suited to becoming pets, the demand for them declined. As a result, many once-common lorries can only rarely, if ever, be found. Some of these birds include the Musk Lorry, *Glossopsitta cnsinna*, Musschenbroek's Lorikeets, *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*, the Red-flanked or Pleasing Lorikeet, *Charmosyna placentas*, the Perfect Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus euteles*, and the Striated Lorikeet, *Charmosyna multistriata*. Many of these species

were popular and easy to breed; however, as the market for them disappeared, so did the desire of aviculturists to keep them.

If you are one of the many people who have decided to explore having a lorry of your own, be sure to do your homework first. There are many places to find and buy lorries. If you are getting a lorry for the first time, it is best to go with a young one who has been hand fed. Check local bird clubs, bird-related magazines, and even Internet classified ads and locate a breeder who has the type of lorry that interests you the most. Once you have located a breeder, check their references. Hopefully, they will provide the names of some satisfied customers; however, consider researching further. Is this breeder knowledgeable? Did someone whose reputation is, in your opinion, above reproach, recommend them? Do they offer a health guarantee? A reputable breeder is usually the best source for healthy, well socialized lorries. Lorries can also be found in pet stores, but they tend to be more expensive and there is often no one to answer questions or give follow-up advice.

Lories can make great pets and they are truly the clowns of the parrot world. They are gregarious, energetic, and even cuddly. They are not always the most accomplished talkers but they do manage a number of words, phrases, and sounds. They are active, aggressive, and quite fearless. These traits are what make them such engaging pets. These traits are also why keeping lorries can be something of an adventure. Because they are very aggressive, they do not play well with other birds, even other lorries. Unless they are set up for breeding, lorries should not be allowed to interact with other members of the flock without close supervision. They are fearless enough to approach even the largest family dog, often with disastrous results for both dog and bird. Their constant activity, aggressiveness, and energetic nature prevent them from always being the best choice for families with young children.

Lories require a diet that is completely different from what other parrots receive. Their gizzard is not muscular enough to grind up seeds and hard food so they must be fed a softer diet made up of fruits, vegetables, and nectar. There are several quality nectar diets formulated specifically for lorries available, so one need not rely on a homemade recipe or use canned nectar from the local market. The nectar, along with a daily variety of fresh fruit and vegetables, will keep a lorry healthy and happy. This type of diet will produce droppings that are runnier than other parrots, but some strategically placed plastic, acrylic, or show-

er curtains can keep the mess at a manageable level.

Because lorries are incredibly active, more so than most other parrots, they utilize their entire cage. The cage they inhabit should be as large as possible, although the height is less important than the length or depth. Lorries set up for breeding will do well in cages that are at least six feet long for the larger lorries and four feet long for the smaller ones. Lorries in the home will adapt to much smaller quarters. Cages in the living spaces of homes tend to be purchased based upon what fits in the available space. This is fine as long as the bird has plenty of room to move around and there are perches placed at different levels. Toys and other enrichment items are also very important for a lory. Because they play everywhere in the cage, including the bottom, they enjoy loose toys and items that they can toss in the air or roll around with. Although lorries do not chew and destroy wood as other parrots do, they enjoy hanging toys that they can chew on. For that matter, they also enjoy hanging from their hanging toys. Swings are another thing that can often delight a lory. In their world, pretty much anything can become a toy so one need not spend a small fortune on their amusement.

While lorries might not be the bird for everyone, those who have become familiar with them find they really are no more difficult to keep and maintain than any other bird. A little imagination can help one figure out the challenge of containing the mess. The availability of good quality commercial diets has taken a lot of the guesswork out of feeding them. Far more information on housing, husbandry, breeding, and the health and medical issues has become available in the last five years than ever before. As a result, more people than ever are enjoying lorries in their lives.

Taxonomy references based on Parrots of the World by Joseph Forshaw, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973 ■

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