

The Lory Collection at the San Diego Zoo

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[Editorial Note: In the last issue of *Watchbird*, the text of this article was inadvertently scrambled and a photo had an incorrect caption. Our sincere apologies to the author and the San Diego Zoo. This version is correct. S.L.D.]

Introduction

Historically lorries have been an outstanding feature of the avian collection at the San Diego Zoo. Beginning in 1925 with Swainson's Lorikeets, as many as 28 different species were exhibited at one time during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During this period the lorries were housed in a group of 35 enclosures known as Benchley Plaza. For the lory enthusiast, this provided the opportunity to view the obvious differences between such genera as *Eos*, *Lorius*, and *Chalcopsitta*, as well as compare the subtleties between subspecies of *Trichoglossus* and *Eos*. Unfortunately, it was not uncommon to exhibit singles or same sex individuals of any particular species; therefore, breeding and maintaining a self-sustaining population was rarely possible.

In the late 1980s a new emphasis emerged in the zoo community – conservation and the need to establish self-sustaining captive populations. With a limited number of enclosures, this new emphasis had its effect on the lory collection. The number of different species and subspecies has decreased to allow for more pairs of some of the critical species to be worked with. However, the lory collection still remains impressive with species that include: Tahitian, Cardinal, Solitary, and Red-flanked Lorries.

Species

Tahitian Lory

The Tahitian lory, *Vini peruviana*, was first received in 1978 as a result of a confiscation. The current captive population is limited to the San Diego Zoo and Loro Parque. Because of its rarity in captive collections, this lory is often thought to be equally rare in the wild. However, it appears to be rather common in its indigenous habitat of the Cook, Society, and westernmost part of the Tuamotu Islands of French Polynesia. Even though 61 chicks have been hatched at the San Diego Zoo, it has been difficult to establish the desired self-sustaining numbers of this *Vini*. Salmonella, sarcocystis, a variety of bacterial infections and incompatibility have all been challenges.

Blue-crowned Lory

The Blue-crowned Lory, *Vini australis*, from Samoa, Tonga, and the Lau Archipelago, first came into the collection in late 1971. As a result of a combined effort with the Assiniboine Zoo in Canada, we again acquired this species in 1991. As of June 1997, a total of 54 chicks had hatched. Seven were from the original 1971 pair, hatching between 1973 and 1979. Thirty-eight were from the two pairs received in 1991 and the remaining nine from second generation offspring. In February of 1997, six more birds were added to our stock from captive-reared birds from the Assiniboine Zoo.

Solitary Lory

The Solitary Lory, *Phigys solitarius*, from the Fiji islands, is the sole representative of this unique genus. San Diego first exhibited this species in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was not until March 1991 that the Zoological Society again acquired a shipment of 10 Solitary Lorries which turned out to be seven males and three females. Since the birds were acquired in conjunction with the Assiniboine Zoo, three males and one female were sent to them for breeding. Presently five pairs have been set up with a total of 23 offspring. Recently a wild-caught male was returned from Assiniboine to provide genetic diversity.

Cardinal Lory

Certainly one of the most beautiful of the lory family is the Cardinal Lory, *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*. This species is from the Solomon Islands and is said to be numerous throughout natural range, however it has never been common in captivity in the United States or Europe. It has been bred in Europe and South Africa, but to our knowledge it has not been bred in the U.S. The pair exhibited at the San Diego Zoo was received in 1991 when a small number of these birds were imported into the United States. Even though they have been given a number of different enclosures, the birds have not yet bred.

Red-collared Lorikeet

The Red-collared Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus haematodus rubritorquis*, of northern Australia, is certainly one of the most striking of the rainbow group. It was once listed as the most common lory species held in European aviculture, but recent reports indicate that it is now found in only a few collections. It has never been common in the United States. Twenty eight were produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s but were not kept in the collection. In 1988 two pairs were received from the Melbourne Zoo in Australia. Unfortunately, the two females died soon after arrival and it was not until 1995 that we obtained a captive-reared female from Walsrode Bird Park in Germany. Since that pairing, seven young have been produced with offspring returned to Walsrode.

Purple-capped Lory

The Purple-capped Lory, *Lorius domicellus*, from the Indonesian islands of Ceram and Amboina, has always been an uncommon species in captivity. It was first displayed at San Diego in 1928 with chicks hatching three times. Unfortunately, none have lived beyond two days.

Black-winged Lory

Even though the Black-winged Lory, *Eos cyanogenia*, from the western section of New Guinea known as Irian Jaya, was imported into the U.S. in large numbers in the 1970s and 1980s, it has become uncommon in

U.S. collections. This species was first acquired by the San Diego Zoo in 1969. However, all 38 offspring produced have been from one pair which was set up in 1988.

Goldie's Lorikeet

large numbers of Goldie's Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus goldiei*, from central New Guinea, were first imported into the U.S. in the mid 1980s, and are now one of the most well established lories in aviculture. The San Diego Zoo maintains four pairs to use as foster parents for some of the other small lories and fig parrots. Eggs are incubated and chicks reared until just prior to opening their eyes at which time they are pulled for hand rearing to eliminate the possibility of the fostered chicks imprinting on the Goldie's. This strategy has worked with Tahitian, Blue-crowned, and Solitary Lories and for Double-eyed and Edwards's Fig Parrots.

Musschenbroek's Lorikeet

The Musschenbroek's Lorikeet, *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*, is a small, unique species from the highlands of Papua New Guinea. This is one of the few species that requires seed in their diet along with nectar and fruit. In

the late 1980s a few birds were imported into the U.S. and Europe, but have never been well established. Although this species has been in the collection three times beginning in 1965, chicks were not hatched until 1991.

Red-flanked Lory

The Red-flanked Lory, *Charmosyna placensis*, of the Moluccas, Kai, Aru islands, and southern New Guinea, has done well in captivity. In the wild, this species will often nest in large epiphytes, so we provide large staghorn ferns, *Platycerium* sp., which the pairs readily excavate. This species is dimorphic, although fledgling males have only a very slight amount of red in the lores.

Black-capped Lory

One of the most popular species to be held in captivity is the Black-capped Lory, *Lorius lory*. This species ranges throughout New Guinea and is divided into seven subspecies. These subspecies are commonly confused and, because of this, hybrids are common. In a recent article in *Lory International*, Jos Huber and Trevor Buckell give a detailed description of the seven subspecies. They can be

divided into two main groups, the first one consists of birds with blue-black underwings: *jobiensis*, *salvadorii*, *viridicrissalis*, and *cynuchen*; and the other group has red underwings: *lory*, *somu*, and *erythrothorax*. All seven subspecies have the characteristic yellow underwing stripe which is not an identifying characteristic. Historically, the Black-capped was held in the San Diego Zoo as early as 1939. In 1989, a pair of the Gilveen Black-capped lory, *Lorius lory erythrothorax*, were brought back with birds obtained through a Society expedition in Papua New Guinea. From those birds we produced 14 offspring

Mount Goliath Lorikeet

The Mount Goliath Lorikeet, *Charmosyna papou goliathina*, from New Guinea has often been mistakenly called the Stella's Lorikeet. The Mount Goliath, *Charmosyna papou goliathina*, differs from *Charmosyna papou stellae* in having yellow rather than orange-yellow tips to the long central tail feathers and the long upper tail coverts are green, rather than red. Although, this species was imported in large numbers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the current U.S. captive population may be as low as a few dozen pair.

Summary

The lory collection at the San Diego Zoo has changed through the years. From the "postage stamp" collection so popular in the 1960s and 1970s to the present day emphasis on self-sustaining populations through breeding programs, the collection remains significant for those interested in this unique family of the parrot world.

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Photo courtesy of San Diego Zoo



Tabitian Lory, *Vini peruviana*