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Opening Date Set For Metrozoo's Wings of Asia

Wings of Asia, the Miami Metrozoo's most spectacular exhibit and perhaps the most innovative aviary in the world, opens to the public Friday, December 28. Rare Southeast Asian birds are being introduced into the free-flight aviary daily in preparation for the grand opening. Wings of Asia is sponsored by the Zoological Society of Florida.

Approximately 300 exotic birds will make up the Wings of Asia population, living amid tropical trees, shrubs and ground covers that recreate the forests and marshes of Asia. The most unique facet of this 1-1/2 acre exhibit is the duplication of natural conditions and environments, inducing the birds to behave as they would in the wild. According to Metrozoo's Curator of Birds, Ron Johnson, "Seeing birds in a natural environment is the most exciting and rewarding way to view them. The experience is totally different from traditional methods of viewing birds in a zoo — zoo visitors actually enter into the birds' environment and become part of the exhibit."

Some of the birds will be immediately apparent. Other smaller, more reclusive species will take some searching out. A number of benches are being installed throughout the aviary so visitors can relax and bird watch. Zoo officials recommend binoculars or field glasses as the best method for viewing the rare birds. The 70 or so species in the aviary will include such exotics as birds of paradise, sacred ibis, orange-bellied leafbirds, rhinoceros hornbills, fairy bluebirds and hanging parrots.

Johnson collected some of the rare species in an expedition to Papua, New Guinea earlier this year, funded by the Zoological Society of Florida and in conjunction with the New York Zoological Society, the San Diego Zoo, the Los Angeles Zoo and the Dallas Zoo. The unusual plants in the aviary are as valuable as the birds, with over 100

species making up the landscaping. Exotic fruit plants, including such oddities as the ice-cream cone tree, passion fruit vines and the chocolate pudding tree, have been strategically placed to elicit natural feeding behavior among the birds. The overall value of the aviary, including hard construction, the bird collection and the landscaping, is close to \$1 million.

One of the most unusual aspects of Wings of Asia is the presence of entire flocks of birds, which fly as a group throughout the aviary's expanse. Other birds selected for placement in the aviary were chosen for three other specific criteria: for their size (such as the wading birds), for their vividness of color and for their musical songs. As part of Metrozoo's original master plan, Wings of Asia has been years in the making, progressing from 1-1/2 acres of barren ground to a lush, vibrant environment full of sights and sounds.

A winding pedestrian walkway throughout the aviary takes the public over a hanging bridge, up to an observation deck, past rushing waterfalls and under a canopy of trees. Wings of Asia can also be viewed from the Zoofari monorail, which goes through the center of the exhibit. Original watercolor paintings, created by the Metrozoo Design Team, make up the identification signs for the birds.

The addition of Wings of Asia is an important step in the development of the new Miami Metrozoo, open since December 1981. Said Bob Yokel, director of Metrozoo, "Until now, the Miami Metrozoo has been noted for its large mammal exhibits. Now, with the opening of Wings of Asia, we can introduce the public to the spectacular world of birds. We will follow this with at least two additional bird exhibits that will open during 1985." A total of 225 acres has now been developed at the cageless, modern Metrozoo. ●

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We Want Your Opinion

SHOULD CONGRESS OUTLAW THE SALE OF WILD BIRDS?

The Audubon Society, ASPCA, Animal Welfare League and Humane Society are supporting legislation to restrict commercial sales of birds to those bred and raised in captivity. The facts cited in support of such legislation are:

- Large numbers of wild bird deaths in shipments to the U.S. (200,000 birds died in transit and in quarantine in 1982 — over 25% of all legal shipments).
- Sharp declines in the populations of Macaws and other bright-plumed species in Central America.
- Destruction of poultry flocks by Exotic Newcastle's Disease spread by escaped birds.
- Destruction of natural bird habitats by native hunters to get at nests.

If you are a bird breeder, dealer, hobbyist — or just a concerned citizen, — you have a unique opportunity to shape the proposed new law so it will be responsive to your legitimate concerns, while still achieving its conservationist objectives. Please take a few minutes to express your opinion on the following questions and then tear out this page and send it to B.I.R.D.S. — the citizens' organizing committee which is helping to coordinate the wild bird legislative drive.

OPINION SURVEY

1. Do you favor conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs?
 Yes
 No
 No opinion
2. Do you favor encouraging captive breeding programs by restricting the importation and sale of wild birds?
 Yes
 No
 No opinion
3. Do you favor any of the following specific exclusions from a general ban on the future sale of wild birds?
 Sales to zoos
 Breeding stock
 Bona fide private sales
 Other:
4. Do you favor Congressional legislation to ban the sale of wild birds, subject to the above exclusions?
 Yes
 No
 No opinion

Please indicate your relationship with the pet industry:

Breeder: Dealer: Hobbyist: Other: _____

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