

Now Presenting The Veldhoven Parrot Park

By Pierre de Chabannes, Photography by Josef Lindholm III



“One of Europe’s biggest parrot collections.”

“A truly amazing bird park with many rare species on display.”

These compliments would suggest that the place is really well known and that it would have a solid international reputation like Bird-park Walsrode. But the Veldhoven Parrot Park, also known as NOP, is not in that league. Even in the European bird-lovers community, this place is not often mentioned and mostly known by parrot breeders who, unfortunately, rarely share

their knowledge with non specialists.

The park itself is named Papegaaijen-park Veldhoven and the nickname NOP is in fact derived from the name of the Dutch Foundation for the Refuge and Care of Parrots which runs the place. The foundation itself was created in 1987 by a former parrot-dealer named Tonnie Van Meegeen who realized that most parrots he sold were returned back to him

because the owners could not care properly for them. The idea of creating a parrot refuge soon turned into reality, which put an end to his career as a parrot dealer and seller. With the growing popularity of his association, he soon needed more space to build aviaries and tropical greenhouses to keep more and more birds donated to him each week.

In 1992, a 19.75-acre forested field

located close to Eindhoven airport was acquired and the park opened to the public in 1993. As more birds of different kinds kept arriving as surplus from other parks or confiscated animals by the Dutch customs, the park kept getting bigger and, thanks to the generosity of private donors and sponsors, a tropical hall and several big aviaries were built between 1995 and 2005. Today, the NOP is the world's biggest parrot sanctuary and houses one of the biggest bird collections in Europe. The purpose of this park is not to breed or exhibit species, but to keep working as a parrot sanctuary and care center. A hospital entirely devoted to parrots has been built in 2000, thanks to a German sponsor and more facilities are added each year. The NOP currently works with the World Parrot Trust, based in Paradise Park (England) for parrot conservation in the wild but also establishing parrots breeding programs in captivity and giving tutorials on how to properly take care and keep these feathered jewels.

From 1993, the parrot park has been opened to public and all the admission fees (10 euros these days) are used for animal care and feeding. Only volunteers are working at the park and nobody, even the owner, is being paid for their duties. It is to be stressed that this park is not a breeding center but European laws are very strict on keeping animals belonging to Appendix I of CITES. In that case, no matter the park's goals and policy, breeding must be encouraged and attempted which has led to great successes with Hyacinth Macaws and several hornbill species, the most recent achievements being recorded with the Sulawesi Red-knobbed Hornbills (*Aceros cassidix*) and the extremely rarely bred Rufous Hornbills (*Buceros hydrocorax*), this last species being kept backstage.

I was first introduced to this unique bird park by a parrot breeder friend who took me there and offered me a guided tour of the facilities in April 2006. I had already visited many nice bird collections



An interior aviary lookout and feeding platform

such as Birdpark Walsrode, Berlin Zoo and Jurong Bird Park but I must admit I was blown away. No information about the place had ever reached me since I started to get interested in zoos and birds and I couldn't imagine that this park could house such an incredible collection, particularly concerning tropical American birds!

The purpose of this article is to make you discover the NOP as I was lucky to visit it more than five times in five consecutive years. I would recommend spending two full days in the park in order to see most rarities showcased in the different

exhibits, especially in the tropical hall named Tropi-joy, where most species are not labeled.

Our visit starts with the first rows of aviaries, entirely dedicated to medium- to big-sized parrot species. Here, the focus is not about the landscaping of exhibits but more about functionality, hygiene and easiness for all daily care-tasks. Some perches and wooden structures are provided but no vegetation has been added. First on show are several pairs of amazons, each shown in one small aviary. We can find Mealy Amazons (*Amazona farinosa farinosa*), Vinaceous Amazons



At top is one of the Baudin's Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*). Above is one of the very rare Marajo Yellow-fronted Amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala xantholaema*).

(*Amazona vinacea*), Green-cheeked Amazons (*Amazona viridigenalis*), Lilacine Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis lilacina*), Blue-cheeked Amazons (*Amazona dufresniana*), Cuban Amazons (*Amazona leucocephala leucocephala*), Red-lore Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis autumnalis*), the very rare Yellow-bellied Amazons (*Amazona xanthops*), Yellow-shouldered Amazons (*Amazona barbadensis barbadensis*), the rare

Hispaniolan Amazons (*Amazona ventralis*), Honduras Yellow-naped Amazons (*Amazona auropalliata parvipes*), Red-backed Amazons (*Amazona festiva festiva*), Bodinus Red-backed Amazons (*Amazona festiva bodini*), Lilac-crowned Amazons (*Amazona finschii finschii*), Salvin's Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis salvini*), the very rare Marajo Yellow-fronted Amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala xantholaema*) which can be recognized

from other subspecies by its yellow area on head covering also cheeks and surrounding the eyes, and common Yellow-naped Amazons (*Amazona auropalliata auropalliata*). A huge aviary filled with branches, ropes and perches is occupied by a pair of Scarlet Macaws (*Ara macao*) and one Green-winged Macaw (*Ara chloropterus*). Next on line are some cockatoos, namely Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita galerita*), White Cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*) and Salmon-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*) which are housed separately in smaller exhibits. A pair of Prevost's squirrels (*Callosciurus prevosti*) has been brought to the park in a very small metal cage and is staying there, in poor conditions.

By the side of the parrot hospital, there is a grassy enclosure, called Lorre-Acker, filled with branches and an assortment of tree trunks. In this exhibit are kept about thirty parrots, mostly cockatoos, eclectus and amazons which cannot fly and sometimes are sick, stressed or simply too old to be kept with other birds. Of course, most specimens shown there are not in good physical condition but at least, they have a secure place where to spend their last days. Surrounding this facility are medium-sized aviaries with, again, a few perches provided. Here are kept the biggest parrots species of the park, and some of the rarest, including three pairs of Hyacinth Macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), two pairs of Green-winged Macaws (*Ara chloropterus*), a pair of Scarlet Macaws (*Ara macao*), a pair of the critically endangered Blue-throated Macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*), a pair of Buffon's Macaws (*Ara ambigua*), a pair of Mexican Military Macaws (*Ara militaris mexicana*) and two pairs of Blue and Yellow Macaws (*Ara ararauna*). A pair of Baudin's Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*), endangered in the wild and extremely rarely seen in captivity, was kept in this area until 2008.

Two newly built and quite huge aviaries are featuring a group of African

White-backed Vultures (*Gyps africanus*) and South-American King Vultures (*Sarcoramphus papa*) living with a pair of Red-legged Seriemas (*Cariama cristata*) and some Bush Thick-knees (*Burhinus grallarius*) which are both quite common in European bird collections. Two other aviaries located a few meters away are showcasing two breeding pairs of Asian Hornbills, namely the Sulawesi Red-knobbed Hornbill (*Aceros cassidix*) and the Javan Rhinoceros Hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros silvestris*). A pair of African Wattled Cranes (*Bugeranus carunculatus*), arrived at the park in 2007, live in a small enclosure nearby.

Many small octagonal aviaries are built all around the forested area of the park. In each one are shown a few parrot species, the most interesting of which being a pair of Orange-bellied Senegal Parrot (*Poicephalus senegalus versteri*), the Masai Jardine's Parrot (*Poicephalus gularis massaicus*), some African Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) and more cockatoos

and amazons.

Next on line are five big aviaries, at least 8 meters tall and almost 50 meters long, where many dozens parrots are kept, all together, sometimes with pheasants, in very nice conditions, with lots of perches, places to hide and wooden structures to play with. Here, we find mostly amazons, macaws, cockatoos and other medium-to big-sized parrots, each species being shown in big groups which sometimes results in producing hybrids when breeding is recorded for this bird, which is not a priority for the park. Among amazons, we find one Yellow-bellied Amazon (*Amazona xanthops*), a huge group of Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva aestiva*) and Yellow-winged Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva xanthopteryx*) separated between the five aviaries, a big flock of Yellow-fronted Amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala ochrocephala*), some Yellow-naped Amazons (*Amazona auropalliata auropalliata*), some Orange-winged Amazons (*Amazona amazonica*),

a big group of Yellow-headed Amazons (*Amazona oratrix oratrix*), one Guatemalan Mealy Amazon (*Amazona farinosa guatemalae*), several Red-lored Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis autumnalis*), a pair of Yellow-shouldered Amazons (*Amazona barbadensis barbadensis*) and one very rare Belize Yellow-headed Amazon (*Amazona oratrix belizensis*).

Cockatoos are also numerous with a whole flock of the highly endangered Abbott's Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea abbotti*) which are bigger than other Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoos subspecies and also lack the yellow area on ear-coverts, Common Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea sulphurea*), the rare Timor Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea parvula*), New Guinea Greater Sulphur-crested or Triton Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita triton*), Bare-eyed Cockatoos (*Cacatua sanguinea*) and Goffin's Cockatoos (*Cacatua goffinii*). Other parrots species shown in these huge aviaries

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Cranes enclosure

are Blue and Yellow Macaws (*Ara ararauna*), Green-winged Macaws (*Ara chloropterus*), Illiger's Macaws (*Propyrrhura maracana*), one Blue-headed Macaw (*Propyrrhura couloni*), Military Macaws (*Ara militaris*), Long-billed Conures (*Enicognathus leptorhynchus*) and Red Lorries (*Eos bornea*).

In the biggest of all five aviaries, we can also find one male Japanese Green Pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*), a pair of White-eared Pheasants (*Crossoptilon crossoptilon drounyi*) and two Grey-crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum regulorum*). A group of Silver Pheasants (*Lophura nycthemera*) and a pair of Razor-billed Curassows (*Mitu tuberosum*) are housed in the last two aviaries of that area.

In the middle of that place, there is the first walk-in exhibit of our visit which houses many conures and smaller parrots species, along with a few other birds, in a nicely landscaped habitat with many perches, a grassy area and much wood provided in which some parrots even nest. To start with conures, we find Blue-crowned Conures (*Aratinga acuticaudata acuticaudata*), Scarlet-fronted Conures

(*Aratinga wagleri frontata*), the increasingly rare Mitred Conures (*Aratinga mitrata*), Red-masked Conures (*Aratinga erythrogaena*), the rarely seen White-eyed Conures (*Aratinga leucophthalmus*), Orange-fronted Conures (*Aratinga canicularis*), Jandaya Conures (*Aratinga jandaya*), Black-capped Conures (*Nandayus nenday*), a group of Patagonian Conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) and some Black-capped Conures (*Pyrrhura rupicola*). We can also find a few Rainbow Lorries (*Trichoglossus haematodus haematodus*) and the rare Weber Lory (*Trichoglossus haematodus weberi*), sometimes treated as a separate species.

Australian and Asian parakeets are also well represented with the Siamese Alexandrine Parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria siamensis*), some Ring-necked Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri manillensis*), one Port Lincoln Ring-necked Parakeet (*Barnardius zonarius semitorquatus*), one Mallee Ring-necked Parakeet (*Barnardius barnardi macgillivrayi*), one rarely seen Green Rosella (*Platycercus caledonicus*), a group of Crimson Rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*), the Yellow Rosella (*Platycercus flaveolus*), a few Pale-

headed Rosellas (*Platycercus adscitus palliceus*) and a big group of Eastern Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius ceciliae*). To finish with parrots, this installation also exhibits a pair of the rare Illiger's Macaw (*Propyrrhura maracana*). Cohabiting with all these small parrots species are a pair of Common Mynahs (*Acridotheres tristis*), a small group of Ring-necked Pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*), a pair of Californian Quails (*Callipepla californica*), a small group of Ypecaha Rails (*Aramides ypecaha*), one Chilean Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis cayennensis*) and a Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*). Until 2008, we could also find a pair of Mikado Pheasants (*Syrnaticus mikado*) in this aviary which is about 50 meters long, 6 meters high and up to 11 meters wide!

A walk-in exhibit has been created in 2005 to house a group of Ring-tailed Lemurs (*Lemur katta*), all surplus males coming from a breeding group belonging to Amersfoort Zoo, along with some Chinese Barking Deer (*Muntiacus reevesi reevesi*). With this exhibit, we now enter the part of the park where big forested enclosures have been created. The first four, built all in a row, have been designed for housing ratites with a breeding group of Emus (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) and three specimens of Bennett's Cassowaries, two of them belonging to the subspecies "Casuarius bennetti papuanus," identifiable with its big white mark on each side of the head, and the last one belonging to subspecies "Casuarius bennetti hecki," which has darker blue head sides and neck. On the other side of the pathway, we find two more enclosures, one keeping Yellow-billed Storks (*Mycteria ibis*) with Saddle-billed Storks (*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*) and the other being occupied by a pair of Red-crowned Cranes (*Grus japonensis*).

These two exhibits are located directly on the banks of a big pond in which the cranes often come to browse for food. Some domestic mutations of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and other anatidae are living on the lake, along with Wild

Coots (*Fulica atra*) and free roaming turtle species. We are now arriving at the far side of the NOP where most crane species are kept in beautiful planted aviaries. It is to be noted that all species kept there have been breeding quite regularly for years and the Parrot Park currently holds the biggest cranes collection in Netherlands. There we find some Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo*), Stanley's Cranes (*Grus paradisea*), White-naped Cranes (*Grus vipio*), Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*), Common Eurasian Cranes (*Grus grus grus*), Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone antigone*) and a pair of Goliath Herons (*Ardea goliath*), which are shown at the park since 2008.

We exit the cranes area and reach a newly built enclosure with a small concrete beach and a pool housing a few Humboldt's Penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*) which arrived at the park in 2008. More waterbirds are shown in grassy enclosures along the main pond and a secondary lake where we can find Great White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*), Chilean Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*), a pair of Maguari Storks (*Ciconia maguari*), some Greater Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*), a breeding group of Eurasian White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) and many duck species such as Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna paradisea*), Cereopsis Goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*) and many more.

Another highlight of the NOP is called the "Spider" aviary. It's basically a big sized exhibit (about 6.5 meters high and 21 meters wide) surrounded by a mesh and topped by a spider-like construction with six steel-legs and a Volkswagen Beetle car as body. This copy of an artifact built somewhere in United States has been donated to the park after serving as an eye-catcher for 'Dynamo Open Air' Rock festival in Eindhoven. Here, we find more macaws, mostly common species but also a pair of Red-fronted Macaws (*Ara rubrogenys*). A giant aviary has been built just behind to house several young American Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus*



leucocephalus alaskaensis) which arrived in the park between 2005 and 2008.

Back to parrots, we're now introduced to a building fitted with two rows of very small aviaries, created mostly to house pairs of parrots which can barely fly because of health or feathers problems, and also old individuals belonging to fragile species. Here are found several pairs of Timor Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea parvula*), a few Citron-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea citrinoristata*), two pairs of Golden or Queen of Bavaria Conures (*Guarouba guarouba*), two pairs of the very rare Blue-backed Parrots (*Tanygnathus sumatranus sumatranus*), a pair of Tucuman Amazons (*Amazona tucumana*), a pair of very seldom seen Roatan Yellow-naped Amazon (*Amazona auropalliata caribae*) recognizable with its all-yellow bill, and a pair of White-fronted Amazons (*Amazona albigrons nana*), among others. On each side of this building, two grassy enclosures each house a pair of White-naped Cranes (*Grus vipio*).

Walking a few meters on the main path leads us to three big-sized parrot aviaries, the first of which housing a big group of Panama Yellow-fronted

Amazons (*Amazona ochrocephala panamensis*) and the others keeping more Green-winged Macaws, Blue and Yellow Macaws and other common parrots such as Blue-fronted Amazons.

We're now entering what has probably become the biggest walk-in aviary ever created for parrots. Opened in 1997, this area covers about 2500 square meters and is full of cut trees, trunks and wooden structures provided for parrots, pheasants and cranes living there all year. Three smaller aviaries, located in the middle of the mesh-covered path are housing Blue-winged Kookaburras (*Dacelo leachii leachii*), a pair of American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius sparverius*) and a group of Grey Mouse-birds (*Colius striatus*).

In the main structure, we find several Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita triton*), two pairs of Bankian Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*), many Blue-fronted Amazons (*Amazona aestiva aestiva*), some Orange-winged Amazons (*Amazona amazonica*), a few Red-lored Amazons (*Amazona autumnalis autumnalis*), Greater (*Coracopsis vasa*) and Lesser Vasa Parrots (*Coracopsis nigra*), a group of Australian King Parrots (*Alisterus scapularis*), a pair of the rarely seen



One of the rarely seen Magna Yellow-headed Amazons (*Amazona oratrix magna*)

Magna Yellow-headed Amazon (*Amazona oratrix magna*) sometimes considered as a color mutation of the nominal subspecies of Yellow-headed Amazon, a pair of Black-crowned Cranes (*Balearica pavonina pavonina*) and a pair of the beautiful Swinhoe's Pheasants (*Lophura swinhoii*). During my last visit, in 2009, this exhibit was being renovated and more rare

species will probably be added by 2010.

We now find the children's zoo and farm, where many goats, rabbits, guinea-pigs, dwarf horses, chickens, domestic ducks and geese, along with Crowned Cranes (*Balearica sp.*), are kept in a grassy field. Just by the side, two small aviaries are housing a big group of love-birds, most of them being Rosy-faced Lovebirds

(*Agapornis roseicollis*) but also some Masked Lovebirds (*Agapornis personatus*) and Fischer's Lovebirds (*Agapornis fischeri*). Two pairs of Red-rumped Parakeets (*Psephotus haematonotus*) along with Bourke's Parakeets (*Neopsephotus bourkii*), Budgerigars (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), Cockatiels (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), Red-fronted Parakeets (*Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae*) and a small group of Eurasian Red-legged Partridges (*Alectoris rufa*) are living in the second exhibit.

Turning left on the path leads us to the pheasantry, composed of medium-sized aviaries with a few bushes, stones and big perches. An overview of animals kept in this zone could be as follows: one male of the rare Lineated Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos lineata*), a pair of Lady Amherst's Pheasants (*Chrysolophus amherstiae*), several mutations of Golden Pheasants (*Chrysolophus pictus*), a pair of Blue-eared Pheasants (*Crossoptilon auritum*), a pair of Himalayan Monals (*Lophophorus impejanus*), a pair of Noble Fireback Pheasants (*Lophura ignita nobilis*), a pair of Silver Pheasants (*Lophura*

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nycthemera), a pair of not so common Yellow-knobbed Curassows (*Crax daubentoni*), a pair of Reeve's Pheasants (*Syrmatius reevesi*), a pair of Elliott's Pheasants (*Syrmaticus eliotti*), a group of European Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) and a group of Crested Pigeons (*Ocyphaps lophotes*).

Next are a huge group of Eclectus Parrots (*Eclectus roratus polychloros*) and African Grey Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus erithacus*) kept in two long aviaries, each with a domestic mutation of Golden Pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*). On the other side of the path is one of the major new constructions done by the NOP in the last years: a monster aviary, more than 15 meters high and several dozen meters long, beautifully landscaped and designed specifically for housing water birds, ibises and egrets. Among them, we find a group of immature Scarlet Ibises (*Eudocimus ruber*), a pair of Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*), a large group of Common Redshanks (*Tringa totanus*), a group of Pied Avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), some Pied Oystercatchers (*Haematopus*

ostralegus), a pair of Black-faced Ibises (*Theristicus melanopis*) and a flock of the Australian White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*), which is very rarely kept in European zoos.

Once having circled around this impressive exhibit, we find a couple of aviaries, built on each side of a small circular building to house, respectively, a group of Keas (*Nestor notabilis*), and a pair of rarely seen Blue-eyed Cockatoos (*Cacatua ophthalmica*), along with Palm Cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*) and Banksian Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*).

Other aviaries, smaller but with better landscaping, are located on the other side of the path which arrives near a small place with a children's playground and a restaurant. In here, we find two pairs of White-necked Ravens (*Corvus albicollis*) which are not common in European zoos, a pair of Gray's Piping Guans (*Pipile cumanensis grayi*) and two pairs of newly arrived Crowned Hornbills (*Tockus alboterminatus*).

On the other side, we find very tall and deep aviaries which are used for housing

some raptors, especially owls, brought to the park during the last ten years. Among them are Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus alaskaensis*), some common Eagle-owls (*Bubo bubo bubo*), a pair of Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*), a pair of Andean Condors (*Vultur gryphus*) and a pair of Great Grey Owls (*Strix nebulosa lapponica*).

Following the main pathway, we reach two more small building fitted with two rows of small aviaries that are used for keeping young, sick or old parrots, mostly amazons, cockatoos, conures and African parrots. Some noticeable species housed there are Red-winged Parrots (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*), a pair of Brown-headed Parrots (*Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*), some Red-bellied Parrots (*Poicephalus rufiventris*), many Galahs (*Eolophus roseicapillus*) and a pair of the rarely seen Western Corella (*Cacatua pastinator*).

New enclosures are regularly built in this area. Some of them are housing domestic animals such as rabbits or guinea pigs, others are used for wild animals, either zoo surplus such as a bachelor group of Meerkats (*Suricatta suricatta*),



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Laurie Baker



One of the three specimens of Bennett's Cassowaries, a member of the subspecies *Casuarus bennetti papuanus*

or confiscated turtles, including endangered species such as African Spurred Tortoise (*Centrochelys sulcata*) or Madagascar Star Tortoise (*Astrochelys radiata*), to name a few.

We are now getting close to the huge tropical house, but before we do, let's have a look on all these small aviaries which have been built on two sides of this impressive building. Here are housed rare parrots, sometimes also hornbills and toucans but priority is given to parrots which cannot live in mixed species groups, either because of their bad temper, or because they're too fragile.

Some of the most conspicuous birds kept here are cockatoos, including two pairs of the rare Western Corellas (*Cacatua pastinator*), one pair of the Bare-eyed Cockatoo (*Cacatua sanguinea*), a few White Cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*), two Salmon-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*), two pairs of Citron-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea citrinocristata*), several Ducorps Cockatoos (*Cacatua ducorpsi*)—which are rarely seen in Europe—and some Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua galerita galerita*).

Smaller parrots from Africa and South America are also housed here, notably two pairs of Hawk Parrots (*Derophtus accipitrinus accipitrinus*), the very rarely seen Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus robustus*), the Brown-necked Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus subhaelicus*) with a much brighter coloration, especially on neck, than the Cape Parrot, a pair of Meyer's Parrots (*Poicephalus meyeri transvaalensis*), a pair of the rare White-

billed Noble Macaws (*Diopsittaca nobilis cumanensis*), a pair of Black-billed Noble Macaws (*Diopsittaca nobilis nobilis*), a pair of Chestnut-fronted Macaws (*Ara severa*) and a pair of the very rare Pileated Parrot (*Pionopsitta pileata*), which is not shown anywhere else in Europe.

A pair of White-headed Hornbills (*Tropicranus albocristatus albocristatus*) was kept in one of these aviaries until 2008 but has now been replaced by a female Trumpeter Hornbill (*Ceratomygma buccinator*) and a female Piping Hornbill (*Bycanistes fistulator sharpii*), identifiable from the other subspecies with her clear bill and white wing patch.

Other aviaries in this section have been used since 2008 to house newly imported toucans species, and particularly the very rare Guianan Toucanet (*Selenidera culik*), which wasn't shown in European bird collections before, also two pairs of Green Araçaris (*Pteroglossus viridis*), one pair of Black-necked Araçaris (*Pteroglossus aracari*), a pair of Swainson's Toucans (*Ramphastos swainsonii*) and a pair of Channel-billed toucans (*Ramphastos vitellinus*).

Time now for us to enter probably the most impressive and the last exhibit of the park: the huge tropical hall (more than 40 meters wide, 50 meters long and 8 meters high) known as Tropi-Joy. This building,

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inaugurated in 2004, allows the visitor to be immersed into a perfect reconstitution of a tropical rainforest where dozens of bird species, some of them very rarely seen in captivity, are free roaming in between big trees, ferns and flowery plants. A playground for children and a restaurant have been installed in the central part of the building which means that the place is often and unfortunately crowded, which doesn't help birdwatchers and photographers. Stairs lead us on a second story from where we can see directly in the canopy of trees planted there. On this observation deck which runs all around the construction, we also find dark aviaries where several hornbills and toucans species, among others, are shown to public and even breed despite having very few space to live in.

With many birds not being labeled, it's almost impossible to give to the reader a precise overview of birds being kept in this huge exhibit. After five visits, I was able to come up with a list that is reasonably comprehensive although certainly not complete.

Starting with the upper story, we can

find a pair of Toco Toucans (*Ramphastos toco*), a pair of Keel-billed Toucans (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*), one Andean Cock-of-the-Rock (*Rupicola peruviana*), which has been recently released in the free-flying part of the exhibit, two pairs of Papuan Hornbills (*Aceros plicatus*) which often breed, a pair of the very rarely kept Writhed Hornbills (*Aceros leucocephalus*), a pair of Javan Rhinoceros Hornbills (*Buceros rhinoceros silvestris*), a pair of Guianan Toucanets (*Selenidera culik*), two pairs of the very rare Curl-crested Araçari (*Pteroglossus beauharnaesii*) which recently bred, one pair of Pale-mandibled Araçaris (*Pteroglossus erythropygius*), a breeding group of highly endangered Bali Starlings (*Leucopsar rothschildi*), a pair of recently arrived and still quite rare Black-spotted Barbet (*Capito niger niger*), a pair of White-crested Touracos (*Tauraco leucolophus*), a pair of Wire-tailed Manakins (*Pipra filicauda*), a group of Opal-rumped Tanagers (*Tangara velia*) and one Yellow-crowned Tanager (*Tachyphonus cristatus*).

A pair of the very rare Choco Toucans (*Ramphastos brevis*) was kept there until

2007. In 2009, many small aviaries were added to display seed-eating birds including many nuns, waxbills and grassfinches but mostly commonly seen species.

A pair of Wreathed Hornbills (*Aceros undulatus*), a pair of Wrinkled Hornbills (*Aceros corrugatus*) and a pair of White-headed Hornbills (*Berenicornis comatus*), the last one being replaced in 2009 by the Writhed Hornbills, are living in three big aviaries, built in the middle of the rainforest hall and visible both from upper and lower floors.

On the ground floor, along with all the trees and free-flight area, we also find a few small aviaries with just a few perches and a nest box, where are kept pairs of Black-headed Caiques (*Pionites melanocephala*), Yellow-thighed Caiques (*Pionites leucogaster xanthomeria*), Rainbow Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus haematodus*) and Desmaret's Fig-Parrots (*Psittaculirostris desmaretii*), and also a pair of the very rarely kept Peruvian Pygmy-owls (*Glaucidium peruanum*).

Among free-flying birds, the most conspicuous are the three species of crowned pigeons, namely the Victoria (*Goura*

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A pair of Writhe Hornbills (*Aceros leucocephalus*)



A highlight of the exhibit of free-flying birds, a Capuchinbird (*Perissocephalus tricolor*)



One of the Roatan Yellow-naped Amazons (*Amazona auropalliata caribae*)

victoria), Sheepmaker's (*Goura sheepmakeri sclateri*) and Blue-crowned Pigeon (*Goura cristata*), the numerous Sun Bitterns (*Eurypyga helias helias*) and the flock of Carmine Bee-eaters (*Merops nubicus*). Near the little ponds, we often find the beautiful Egyptian Plovers (*Pluvianus aegyptius*), which are getting rarer in European bird collections, along with a pair of Wattled Jacanas (*Jacana jacana*).

Cotingas are amazingly well represented in this exhibit with several species, most of them being really rare, if ever shown in other European zoos. The highlight of the collection is probably the Capuchinbird (*Perissocephalus tricolor*), which has been very rarely shown anywhere outside America in captivity and is now only seen in Europe at the NOP with only one individual left. Other rarities in that bird family are the only pair of Wattled Umbrella-birds (*Cephalopterus penduliger*) displayed in Europe today, a pair of Red-throated Fruit-crows (*Querula purpurata*), a pair of Bare-necked Fruit-crows (*Gymnoderus foetidus*), one female Pompadour Cotinga (*Xipholena punicea*) and the Screaming Piha (*Lipaugus vociferans*).

Many more birds are showcased in that hall. Among them, we find Shining Honeycreepers (*Cyanerpes lucidus*), Red-legged Honeycreepers (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*), a group of Luzon Bleeding-heart Doves (*Gallicolumba luzonica*), Nicobar Pigeons (*Caloenas nicobarica nicobarica*), Green Honeycreepers (*Chlorophanes spiza*), Common Hoopoes (*Upupa epops*),

the endangered Omei-Shan Laughing-thrush (*Liocichla omeiensis*), one Hunter's Sunbird (*Nectarinia hunteri*), Rosy Starlings (*Pastor roseus*), Grey Mousebirds (*Colius striatus*), Yellow-hooded Blackbirds (*Agelaius icterocephalus*), one Yellow-headed Manakin (*Pipra erythrocephala*), a pair of Bare-throated Bellbirds (*Procnias nudicollis*), a breeding group of Crested Partridges (*Rollulus rouloul*), Golden Tanagers (*Tangara arthus*), Blue-headed Tanagers (*Tangara cyanicollis*), a rare Red-checked Tanager (*Tangara rufigenys*), one Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*), one specimen of the rare Moustached Laughing-thrush (*Garrulax cineraceus*), one specimen of Elliott's Laughing-thrush (*Garrulax eliotti*), one Southern Yellow Grosbeak (*Pheucticus chrysogaster*), a few Common Trumpeters (*Psophia crepitans*), one rarely seen Village Indigobird (*Vidua chalybeata*), a pair of Spangled Cotingas (*Cotinga cayana*), a small group of Pied Imperial-pigeons (*Ducula bicolor bicolor*), a rare Golden-sided Euphonia (*Euphonia cayennensis*), a Pale-legged Hornero (*Furnarius leucopus*), a few Crested Quail-doves (*Geotrygon versicolor*), one Rainbow Bunting (*Passerina leclancheri*), one rarely seen Yellow-rumped Marshbird (*Pseudoleistes guirahuro*), a pair of Namaqua Doves (*Oena capensis*), a pair of Green Wood-hoopoes (*Phoeniculus purpureus*) and many other small birds.

To finish with this incredible exhibit, it's worth noting that, in 2009, two parrots species were added to the collection

of free-flight birds. We can now find a pair of Hooded Parakeets (*Psephotus dissimilis*) and, most important, a group of endangered Horned Parakeets (*Eunymphicus cornutus*) from New Caledonia. It's the first time in the history of European zoology that Horned Parakeets are shown to public in a free-flight exhibit.

Our visit in this amazing bird park ends with the Tropi-joy extravaganza. I would like to state that at least one day is needed to fully enjoy the NOP and its incredible number of interesting species. Unfortunately, the park is not easily accessible and practically unreachable without a car. The nearest train station is Eindhoven central station from which bikes can be rented (for the most courageous) or taxis hired. The park has many more projects for the year to come and even a yearly visit there can provide with new species and interesting observations.

I would like to thank my Belgian friend Chris Bejstrup and the owners of "Zootrotters.nl" Web site for providing me information on the latest breeding successes and arrivals at the park.

My gratitude goes also to Mr. Florent Pichon, French parrot breeder, who made me discover this park, brought me there and helped me with parrot's identification, especially with amazons and macaws.

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