

# Birds of a Feather Hatch Together at Cincinnati Zoo

## NEW SR'S SEA EAGLE, RAGGIANA BIRD OF PARADISE & SPUR-WINGED LAPWING CHICKS HAVE EMERGED!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CINCINNATI (May 28, 2015)

The population explosion continues at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. A Steller's sea eagle, the Zoo's first Raggiana bird of paradise chick, and three spur-winged lapwings are among the significant hatchings reported in the past two weeks.

Steller's sea eagles are one of the rarest raptors in the world. They are twice the size of and much more aggressive than their close relative, the bald eagle. The Cincinnati Zoo was the only Zoo in the U.S. to breed this species successfully until the Denver Zoo hatched a chick last year. Cincinnati has now bred three pairs & produced 12 chicks in cooperation with the Species Survival Plan (SSP). There are currently 22 Steller's sea eagles in 11 North American institutions.

Chick watch began on April 29 when Aviculture staff noticed the sea eagle parents looking down at their nest more frequently. A chick was first observed on May 3rd and by May 7th it looked to have doubled in size. Their incubation period can last 39 to 45 days and they lay one to three eggs (but only one chick usually survives).

As of 2009, the Steller's sea eagle population was estimated at 5,000 birds worldwide, but that number is dropping. Although legally protected in Russia, Japan, China, and South Korea, other threats to these rare birds include fossil fuel energy developments, wind farms, pollution, habitat loss, hunting, and possibly global warming.

The Cincinnati Zoo hatched its first Raggiana bird of paradise chick on May 2. To date, San Diego, Honolulu, and Miami are the only Zoos in the U.S. to produce Raggiana bird of paradise chicks that lived at least 30 days. The Cincinnati Zoo's chick has almost reached that milestone and keepers are optimistic that it will stay in good health. The chick's 13-year-old father



Steller's sea eagle.

is the most genetically-valuable of his species—meaning his genes are the most needed in Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) collections to keep the population as healthy/genetically diverse as possible.

The Cincinnati Zoo has mimicked the life strategy of these birds in the wild. Males get together and show off in a central tall tree (called a "lek") while the females gather around to view the spectacle and select a mate. They breed and she flies off to build her nest and raise her chick all by herself while the male goes back to dancing!

Birds of paradise chicks often do well as hand-reared youngsters. They eat mostly insects, pinkie mice pieces, and papaya and are extremely intelligent birds that can learn to mimic many noises and sometimes speech. All birds of paradise species are protected in Papua New Guinea from the large-scale hunting that occurred there in the late 1800's and nearly drove several species to extinction. Their feathers and skins were exported by the thousands for fashionable hats. Their biggest concern now—like for so many—is rainforest habitat loss.



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Three spur-winged lapwings also join the Zoo Babies list. Although they are not rare at all in the wild, they are still special to the Cincinnati Zoo and genetically-significant offspring from first-time parents.

Admission to the Cincinnati Zoo is \$18 for adults, \$12 for children (2-12) and children under two are free, parking is an additional fee. Hours are 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Early Entry is available for members and ZAT ticket holders. For more information, please visit [www.cincinnati-zoo.org](http://www.cincinnati-zoo.org).

*The world famous Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden opened to the public 140 years ago! It's been rated the #1 attraction locally and one of the top zoos in the nation by Zagat Survey. It has also been recognized by Child Magazine as one of "The 10 Best Zoos for Kids." Over 1.5 million people visit the Zoo's award-winning exhibits, and more than 500 animal and 3000 plant species annually. The Zoo is an accredited member of the American Zoo & Aquarium Association (AZA) and the American Public Gardens Association (APGA), is internationally known for its success in the protection and propagation of endangered animals and plants, and engages in research and conservation projects worldwide.*

Raggiana bird of paradise.

## AFA Goes to Washington

By Jamie Whittaker

The AFA board of directors, along with some interested AFA members, visited Capitol Hill after the quarterly board meeting in May. Brent Gattis, second vice-president of AFA, spends his days on The Hill lobbying against restrictive legislation. The board met with several members of Congress and advisors to make sure that the concerns of bird owners are heard.

The board also met with the Department of Fish and Wildlife for clarification on the ESA permitting procedure. The AFA submitted a petition, prepared by Dr. Janice Boyd, to the Department of Fish and Wildlife to request that the Golden Conure (*Guaruba guarouba*) be reclassified from endangered to threatened. If that change in status is granted, it would allow greater freedom to buy and sell captive bred Golden Conures in the United States. Currently commercial interstate transactions are only allowed if both parties have a federal permit.

It was the conclusion of the board that the meetings were important and that we should make this an annual event. It is important that our legislators know that the American Federation of Aviculture is the organization that can provide the best scientific information for birds.

The board is looking forward to visiting next May!

