

this apparent (or real?) disparity in numbers between the sexes. One explanation that must immediately be scotched is that because the hens are red, and therefore more brilliantly-colored (to us), they are more easily caught by predators. It is observed that a red parrot sitting just inside a canopy of leaves, in bright sunlight, is perfectly well-camouflaged; for, in the broken shadows of disrupted light coming from the green leaves, red becomes a dark shadow and inconspicuous. Hen eclectuses, like the red lorries, the red king-parakeets and red shining-parrots are seemingly this color because it is cryptic. For they are not red poppies in a field of growing wheat but a dark shadow in a tree full of shadows. If it happens that more hen Eclectus are killed by predators than males then the selective pressures to have cryptic plumage is higher. Therefore their redness is the consequence of a positive selection for this hue. Were they green, like the males, then even more would be killed. Perhaps they are killed inside the nesting hole. It appears that the "original" color of Eclectus is red and that selection has colored the male green."

Lastly, the beak color of the eclectus parrot is bright orange and black, the same as can be found in the lory group.

Taxonomy

In reading many books of an older vintage, I see where taxonomists have changed the genus name of the eclectus parrot from *Lorius* to *Eclectus*. Why did they originally give the eclectus the genus name of *Lorius* which should have been given to a group of lorries.

Not surprising, taxonomists *did* give the genus *Lorius* to a group of lorries sometime in the middle of the 1900s. This group of lorries including the Chattering and Black-capped Lorries and all of the large lorries I have mentioned at the beginning of this article. These large lorries originally were given the genus name of *Domicellus*.

In my opinion, they should have left the eclectus parrot in the genus *Lorius* and added the other large lorries to it. They are all similar in size and color (especially if the eclectus was "originally" red in both sexes), behavior and in their dietary needs. Would the taxonomists have called the eclectus the Red and Green Lory? or as I often fantasize, should it have been called the Grand Lory? For it is indeed the grandest

lory of them all. Why, they now call it the Grand Eclectus!

Although I will probably never change anyone's thinking, I will always enjoy keeping and reproducing this

Grand Lory. For when it clings to the side of its cage or stands on a perch, it will turn its head in an inquisitive manner giving me an all-knowing look and I truly know it is a Lory! ➔

This beautiful watercolor by Susie Christian depicts a pair of eclectus parrots in the center, a Black-capped Lory on top and a Chattering Lory at the bottom. The similarity of size, color, shape and color of the beaks, among other things, have convinced Dale Thompson and others that these species all belong in the same genus.

"Loryeclectus" — Kissin' Cousins!!

by Susie Christian
Morro Bay, California

Since my only roommates consist of nine Eclectus, and a plain ol' garden variety, Red Lory, I do have an opinion that they are *very* related.

First of all, the most obvious is the feather quality. Eclectus have hair-like feathers covering their heads and neck, and as I look at my lory, she also has soft, fine "hair-feathers." The general body shape and head structure of both parrots is also very close in my opinion. The lory's beak is so close in color to the male Eclectus; plus, shape-wise, it looks like an elongated Eclectus beak.

My lory is allowed the run of the house 24 hours, so I am able to watch her climb all over the Eclectus cage, and interact with them. Her favorite playmate is a male Biaki Eclectus, who is extremely animated and playful. The Biaki subspecies is on the small end of the Eclectus group, about the size of a Solomon Eclectus. They are never still for a minute. Inquisitive and charged with energy, the Biakis have an electric tension that equals and sometimes surpasses that of my lory. These pint sized Eclectus hang upside down from their perches, and are constantly into everything. Animation should be their middle name! I also find my Red-sided Eclectus is more active than the Vosmaeri Eclectus (which is one of the largest of the Eclectus). It seems that the larger they are, the more laid back they become.

One of the lory's favorite positions is

laying on her back, not surprising for a lory. I also have two Eclectus hens that are very comfortable on their backs. They do sea otter imitations of "riding the waves" in Morro Bay, quite comfortably in public, even with groups of people watching them.

I feel that the talking abilities are about the same in lorries and Eclectus. My lory says all the same words as does the Eclectus. Yes, the Eclectus do have a more slender tongue than other species of parrots and I've noticed that they use their tongues in a more probing motion, which is so much like the lorries.

As for food selection, both groups of birds (Eclectus and lorries) will pick out berries, grapes, pomegranates or any nectar-type of fruit as their first choice from the food dish. Both groups will throw out the boring stuff, only to investigate much later.

I have noticed that neither group really want to use a foot to hold their food. They will pick food up with their beaks but will place it back in the food dish rather than hold it in one of their feet.

Whether readers will agree with me or not, I sincerely feel that somewhere back in time (who knows how far), that both lorries and Eclectus were much more similar in appearance and that they evolved over the years to look as they appear today. They used to be brothers and sisters; nowadays it is probably more like first cousins. ➔



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