

# A Nose to Beak Experience

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Presented by



Left are Green-naped lorikeets. Below left is the Perfect lorikeet.

Right are Swainson's lorikeets and bottom are Black-winged lories.



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In July of 2005, after months of discussion, design, training and construction, two different species are going to meet at the Louisville Zoo in a brand new 1.6 million dollar exhibit. Both species will arrive in groups, be highly social and extremely curious about the other. They'll interact and develop bonds that will help one of these species take better care of the other in the future. The protector species is us.

The other species is the colorful, playful, tropical lorikeets, also known as "lories."

Lorikeets are beautiful social birds that come in a variety of colors and sizes, from the small, predominantly green Perfect lorikeets to the rainbow colored Swainson's lorikeets to the large Red lories. Lorikeets tend to live in the canopy of dense rainforests or at the edge of wooded areas near open savannahs or even in mountainous regions. They exist on a diet of nectar, pollen, fruits and flowers.

Lories are truly a joy to watch. They are also great mimics, even though they're usually mimicking other lories.

But most of all, they are not overly wary of people and once trust has been established, they are quick to land on keepers and visitors alike, usually looking for a treat. It's a wonderful experience the first time a lorikeet lands on your shoulder. The surprise quickly leads to a renewed sense of respect and awe for these beautiful and inquisitive birds.

When you visit Lorikeet Landing at Rainbow Springs, you will be taken into the specially-designed aviary by a keeper

who will introduce you to the world of lorikeets and answer questions. Once inside, you will feel as though you have been transported to Australia complete with waterfalls, windmills and water tower, not to mention, lots of lorikeets.

One of the things that makes Lorikeet Landing so special is that there are two different groups of lorikeets which will fly in and out of the exhibit. The first group will be replaced periodically by the second. This



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rotation system (the first of its kind) will keep the birds focused and inquisitive.

Behind the scenes, Animal Training Supervisor Jane Anne Franklin and the bird department staff led by curator Gary Michael, have been preparing and training the lorikeets for their debut for quite some time. The birds are separated into two groups, male and female. The daily routines of the keepers focus on maintaining a strong interaction with the birds to get them used to being in close proximity to humans. They provide food and make sure that the birds have enough water for drinking and bathing themselves. Keeper Shannon Alexander's favorite activity with the birds is providing the trays of water for the birds to bathe in. "They swoop down, drop onto their backs and then splash water over their torso with their legs straight in the air. Then, just as quickly, they hop up and fly away. It just puts a smile on your face."

Creating this exhibit has itself been a race against time. Since the December 16, 2004 groundbreaking Zoo staff and Whittenburg Construction have worked to keep production on schedule despite weather problems and weekly complications. And they have succeeded. "I can't say enough positive things about them," says Assistant Zoo Director Mark Zoeller.

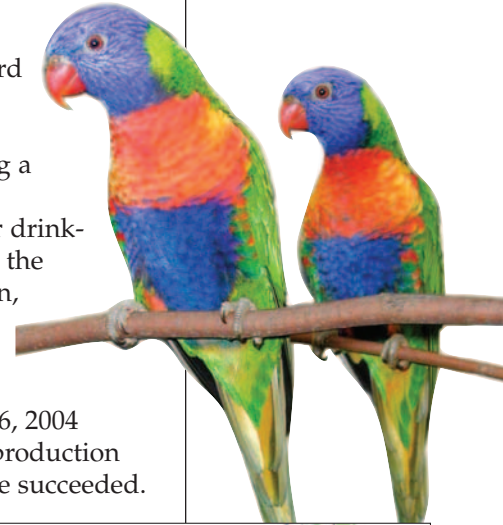
The Zoo's head of construction, Charlie Edwards is most happy with the flexibility of the exhibit. "By looking at other zoos and working closely with the bird department, we were able to create this brand new rotation system concept and take it to the architects. The architects were able to take the concepts to the next step with detailed designs and then it was up to Whittenburg Construction to take it off the page and onto the Zoo grounds. But you have to work in that order. And while it takes a little more time, it's certainly worth it in the end. For us and the lorikeets."

Guests to Lorikeet Landing can purchase small containers of nectar to offer as treats to the birds. The lorikeets might land on your shoulder or hand, sometimes even eating the nectar as they swing upside down from your arm. This kind of contact with humans — parents, children, grandparents or any nature lover is how the bond between our species is established and how all of us can be inspired to care for wildlife.

If you're someone who would rather watch from a distance, the exhibit offers an area outside of the aviary where you can enjoy all the sites and sounds from a comfortable vantage point in a landing-free zone.

At the exit of the exhibit is a large Water Tower and an area for guests to wash their hands. Just as the lorikeets must keep themselves clean, it's equally important for guests to use these hand-washing stations following an interaction with the birds. In addition to the lorikeets, there are other Australian animals on display in the area including emus and a wallaroo.

Next year, the Zoo hopes to keep Lorikeet Landing evolving by adding even more species from the Outback.



Architect's drawing of Lorikeet Landing.



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