

## Hatchlings and Fledglings Everywhere!

There's a baby boom at the National Aviary! This summer the little ones just kept coming, adding their voices to the chorus that fills the Aviary each day and keeping things lively for trainers and visitors alike.

Among the new faces are two baby **Inca terns**, which hatched June 21 and 24 in the Wetlands exhibit. Covered in fuzzy gray down at birth, the birds hatched in a nest hidden along the rock wall at the back of the exhibit.

The chicks, "Trent" and "T.C.," will start fledging in mid- to late-August.

Inca tern young stay near their parents for the first month or so to learn the rules of the Inca tern flock and the environment in which they live. Over the next three years their feathers will go from brown to slate gray and they will slowly acquire the classic Inca tern "moustache" that makes these birds so comical.

Inca terns are native to the coasts of Peru and Chile, where they breed on rocky cliffs. In the wild, Inca terns feed by plunge diving into the ocean for fish. Visitors can witness their aerial maneuvers during daily feedings in the Wetlands.

In the Tropical Forest exhibit, another flock of newcomers is attracting attention.

Two **fire-tufted barbet chicks**, named for the jaunty mohawk of crimson feathers that springs from their beaks, also

hatched early this summer. These brightly colored green birds sport a yellow band around their throat and adults are easy to spot during the daily feedings in the Tropical Forest. Look closely and you'll see that, like parrots and toucans, these

birds have what is called a zygodactyls foot placement, meaning that two toes face forward, and two face backward, on each foot.

Other cute chicks in the Tropical Forest include a golden-breasted starling and a green wood hoopoe.


Recognizable by their slender silhouette and striking metallic feathers, the **golden-breasted starlings** are easily the most glamorous birds in the Tropical Forest. Adult birds sport a showy blue tail and back, green head, blue-violet wings and golden yellow breast. Interestingly, their gorgeous colors do not come from pigments in the feathers; rather, the structure of the feathers refracts the light and gives the appearance of color.

If you visit during feeding time, you may be lucky enough to have one of the adult starlings land on your hand for a wiggly meal worm. The chick, which hatched May 10, will likely be nearby. Duller in color than the adults, the chick will soon shed its juvenile feathers to become as gorgeous as the rest of its fellow starlings.

The **green wood hoopoe** chick hails from a strong family unit. In the wild, wood hoopoes live in family groups through multiple breeding seasons. Older chicks stay on to help raise brothers and sisters, finding and bringing food back to the nest. Eventually, when things get a bit too crowded, offspring move on and find their own territories.

At the National Aviary, the wood hoopoe chick's parents and older siblings are keeping an eye out for the little one and making sure that the chick is not harassed by other birds.

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If you're looking to find the wood hoopoes, follow your ears – the birds are among the loudest in the Tropical Forest exhibit.

In the nearby Lories & Friends exhibit, another set of babies is keeping trainers on their toes.

**Rainbow lorikeets** (affectionately known as "lories") mature from sweet babies to mischievous, demanding juveniles very quickly. Bald at birth, the chicks gradually acquire the jewel-tone feathers of adult birds, with colors ranging from emerald green, orange and midnight blue, to ruby red and lemon yellow. The juveniles can be identified by their beaks, which do not gain the adult red color until maturity.

Like the rest of the flock, young lories are noisy and always curious, especially when visitors come bearing cups of nectar. Rainbow lorikeets are native to the coastal areas of Australia, and in the wild use their sharp, curved beaks to tear at fruit and flowers before using their tongues to get to nectar and pollen.

Be sure to look for all the new arrivals at the Aviary during your next visit!

# Spend a Day as an Aviary Trainer



**Trainer for a Day** is a private, full-day encounter that allows participants the opportunity to work side by side with professional animal programs staff as they feed, train and care for the more than 800 birds that make their home at the National Aviary.

The program, which is open to children, teens and adults, ages 12 and up, is hands-on, with up-close interaction with the birds throughout the day.

Participants must arrive in the morning, in time to help prepare fish for the hungry African penguins who reside in Penguin Point. Guest trainers don rubber boots before climbing into the exhibit where they hand-feed fish to the penguins. If the birds are cooperative, guest trainers may even have the chance to touch one or two of the penguins, depending on the birds' mood that morning.

**"The penguins and lorikeets were lots of fun! I especially loved helping to train the birds in the rainforest exhibit. We both had a great time!"**

From there, it's back to the Aviary kitchen to prepare food and enrichment for the rest of the Aviary's flock. Each species of bird has special dietary requirements, from fruit, seeds and nuts, to raw meat and fish for the raptors. Full disclosure: this

**If you love animals and have always wondered what it would be like to work as a zookeeper or trainer, the National Aviary has a program designed just for you.**

particular job is not for the squeamish, but neither is the job of a zookeeper!

A gentler experience follows with a trip to the Lories & Friends exhibit, where more than a dozen colorful and inquisitive rainbow lorikeets are waiting for their breakfast of fruit and nectar. Participants help to open the exhibit for the day and assist visitors with feeding nectar to the birds. They also are asked to keep a watchful eye on the raucous lorikeets, which have a tendency to wander up onto the heads and shoulders of guests. Ear nibbling is not an acceptable part of the Aviary experience, so trainers must be quick to remove the birds before they get into mischief.

After the Lories & Friends exhibit closes, guest trainers join Aviary staff for lunch and the opportunity to learn more about bird care and careers in the zoo field.

Following lunch, trainers move on for a feeding in the Wetlands, a large free-flight exhibit inhabited by more than 100 birds, including flamingos, pelicans, Inca terns, spoonbills and, unmistakably, the screaming piha, notable for being the loudest bird on the planet. Esther, the black cormorant, will likely tag along looking for a handout, while other inhabitants swoop and dive at the food cart, looking to steal a treat. A highlight of working in this room is the chance to get close to the American flamingos, which are not shy and have been known to give trainers a bit of a preening. Standing in the midst of these remarkable, graceful birds is an experience sure to be long remembered.

The day concludes with the Aviary's free-flight bird show and late day training

sessions. Participants assist with show set up, and learn basic positive-reinforcement training techniques as used by Aviary staff when working with the birds.

For more information on **Trainer for a Day** or to register, email [education.programs@aviary.org](mailto:education.programs@aviary.org) or call 412-323-7235 ext. 209. Fee for the program is \$225 for Aviary members; \$250 for non-members. Additional \$50 for chaperones accompanying guests age 12-16.



A National Aviary t-shirt, box lunch and a photo of the experience are included in the cost of registration. Trainer for a Day must be booked a minimum of two weeks in advance of visit.



## What Guests Are Saying About "Trainer For A Day"

*"My son loved the program and he has never forgotten about it. He learned to do things that he never thought he could do. The program was an unforgettable challenge for him and an experience we both enjoyed."*

— Barbara

*"I would recommend the program to anyone looking for a career in wildlife management as it gives them a good ground to stand on. I thought it was a great experience to go behind the scenes and learn about the birds."*

— Bobby

*"Being a Trainer for a Day was such a unique, exciting, and exhilarating once-in-a-lifetime experience for me...from the early morning privilege of meeting and feeding Patrick, Stanley, Elvis and their fellow penguins, to having my head groomed by a flamingo, all the way through to being able to participate in the afternoon outdoor show."*

*"Each and every trainer that I was fortunate enough to spend time with was not only attentive, knowledgeable and informative, but was also extremely dedicated to the animals in their care. I believe that the program is an excellent way to raise the public's awareness, to educate them and to bring them into contact with wildlife while maintaining the safety of the aviary's residents. I've recommended the experience to friends, family and coworkers and I sincerely hope that some of them will decide to participate in the program or at the very least, will visit the aviary more often."*

— Julie

*"The Trainer for a Day program really demonstrates how much work is necessary to care for so many birds on a daily basis."*

— Kelsey

