



## Media Backgrounder

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*Saffron Finch. Photo: Steve Shaluta*



# NATIONAL AVIARY

## About the National Aviary

The National Aviary is America's bird zoo. Located on Pittsburgh's historic North Side, the National Aviary's diverse collection comprises more than 600 birds from around the world, many of them threatened or endangered in the wild. The National Aviary's large walk-through exhibits create an experience unlike any other – an intimate interaction between visitors and free-flying birds, including opportunities to hand-feed and meet many species rarely found in zoos anywhere else in the world.



In 2010, the National Aviary completed a \$18.5 million expansion that included construction of the **Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone Theater**. This new space allows for the presentation of live, free-flight bird shows enhanced by professionally produced lighting, video, music and sets. **SkyDeck**, opening spring 2011, will give guests the incredible experience of seeing Lanner falcons and other birds of prey catching food on the wing.



The National Aviary is a fully accessible, stroller-friendly facility, designed to bring every visitor face to face with wildlife. It's a place to become immersed in the music of songbirds, marvel at the nobility of eagles and condors, and be amazed at the antics of penguins, parrots, pelicans and more.

*Bald eagle looks out over the audience during Wings!, the National Aviary's free-flight bird show in the new FliteZone Theater.*

New exhibits include **Grasslands**, a space inhabited by finches, doves, plovers, killdeer and other species in a walk-through space; and **Penguin Point**, created exclusively for the Aviary's colony of African penguins. Penguin Point provides 360-degree views of the penguins as they swim, dive and sun, and its kid-friendly design features ViewTubes and windows that give even the smallest toddlers the opportunity to see these remarkable birds up close.



Daily activities such as public feedings, trainer talks, Little Peepers preschool program, and Meet a Patient, as well as special programs such as Trainer for a Day, Raptor Experience and Flamingo Encounter serve to teach, inspire and delight adults and children of all ages.



*Rainbow lorikeets  
-more-*

# The Collection

Visitors will encounter birds of all colors, shapes and personalities, including many that are threatened and/or critically endangered in the wild. These include

- African penguin
- Micronesian kingfisher
- Golden conures
- Andean condor
- Guam rail
- Blue-crowned laughing thrush
- Bali mynah
- Keel-billed toucan
- Rhinoceros hornbill

*Critically endangered Bali Mynah*

Among the National Aviary's collection found in zoos anywhere in the world.

*Scarlet-headed blackbird*

- Paradise tanagers
- White-tailed trogon
- Scarlet-headed blackbird
- Steller's sea eagles
- Blue-winged mountain tanager
- Pearl-spotted owl



are a number of bird species rarely  
These include

*Rhinoceros hornbill*

And while all the birds at the National Aviary are beautiful, there are some that seem to connect with humans in a special way. Among the most popular residents are:



- African grey parrot
- Eurasian eagle owl
- Bald eagle
- American flamingo
- Rainbow lorikeet
- Blue-bellied roller
- Blue-crowned motmot
- Fairy bluebird
- Spectacled owl (*left*)
- Victoria crowned pigeon
- Hadada ibis



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# History of the National Aviary

In the late nineteenth century, Pittsburgh's first plant conservatory was established on the Aviary site. It was destroyed by a natural gas explosion in the late 1920s but was rebuilt by the City of Pittsburgh and reopened in 1952 with the addition of birds to the indoor gardens. The Aviary was one of the first zoos to present its collection in free-flight rooms and natural exhibits with over 25,000 sq. feet of space.

*Andean condor*

*Blue-crowned motmot*



In the 1980s, the Aviary began evolving its focus toward wildlife conservation by beginning the captive breeding of rare and endangered birds. When municipal budgetary cuts threatened to close the institution in 1991, a group of concerned citizens formed Save the Aviary, Inc., a private, nonprofit corporation. The Aviary was privatized in 1992 and a year later, by declaration of the U.S. Congress, the Pittsburgh Aviary was designated honorary national status and renamed the National Aviary in Pittsburgh.

As an environmental organization composed of educators, conservationists and researchers, the Aviary's goals are many. The Aviary aims to provide high quality educational programming for varied audiences; provide the highest quality family recreational experience that a zoological institution can offer; save endangered species by preserving natural habitats; continue endangered bird breeding programs and conduct meaningful avian research; engender a sincere appreciation of nature and a respect for natural law; and instill a conservation ethic that teaches our immense responsibility as stewards of the planet.

*Kids with runner ducks*



In 2010, the National Aviary completed a major expansion and renovation project that included the addition of the Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone

Theater for indoor free-flight bird shows, as well as a new façade and entrance, café, classrooms, and rooftop SkyDeck for bird-of-prey lure-flying demonstrations.



With yearly attendance of more than 110,000 visitors, a state-of-the-art bird hospital conducting leading-edge avian care, and internationally recognized conservation and field-research programs, the National Aviary has grown from simply presenting its collection in attractive settings to realizing its responsibility to celebrate, protect and preserve birds for the perpetuation of the web of life.

*Flamingo Connection*

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