

A LITTLE PIECE OF PARADISE IN WELTVOGELPARK WALSRODE

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This year, Weltvogelpark Walsrode in Germany launches a remarkable new attraction, unique in Europe! The park has built a brand new facility for the most extraordinary birds on the planet: Birds-of-paradise!

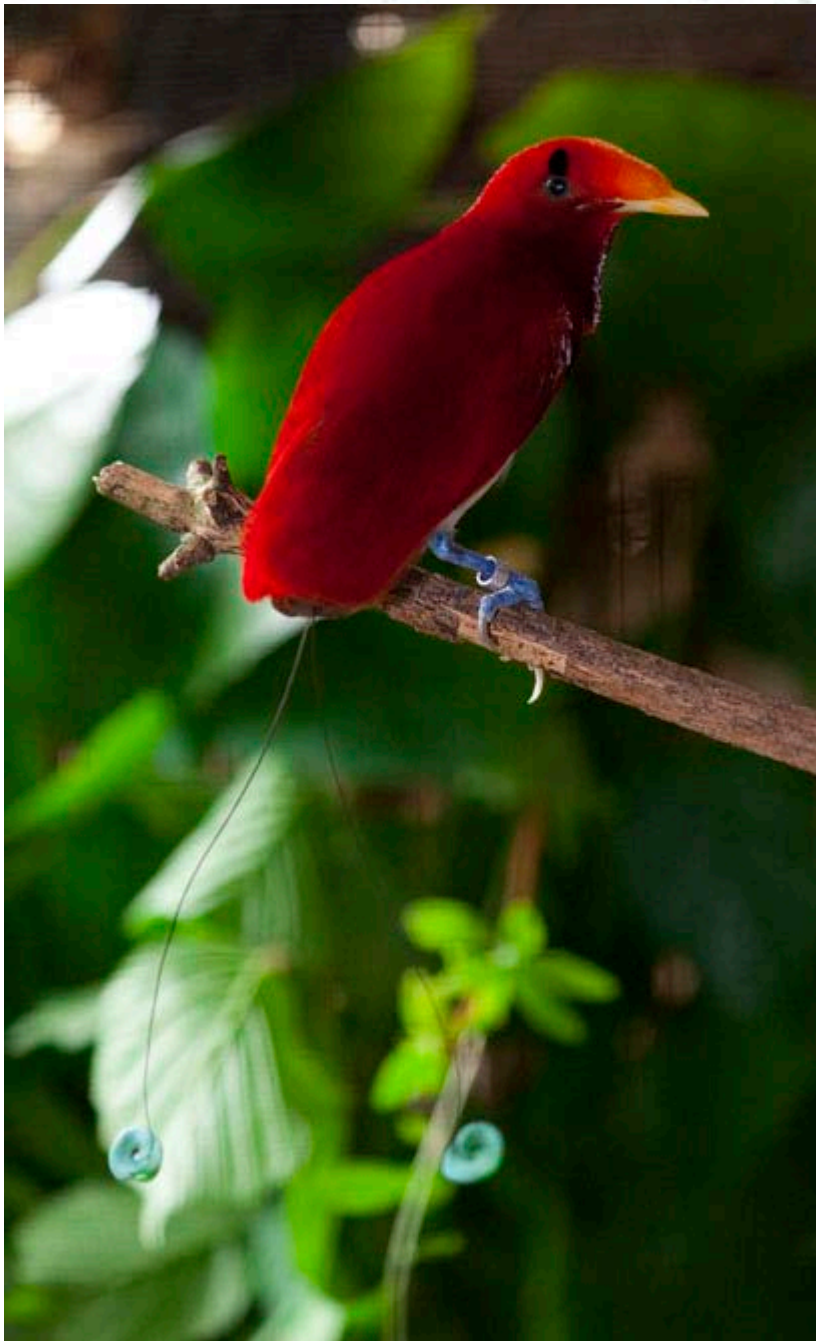
Birds-of-paradise are passerines that are related to crows and jays. They are mainly found on New Guinea and its surrounding islands, where they live in dense rainforest habitat. Birds-of-paradise are particularly famous for the peculiar plumage of the males. All 41 species have very colourful, elongated or elaborate feathers on their tails, wings, beaks or heads. These feathers are used in the elaborate mating rituals, which are a well-known bird-of-paradise trademark! Females typically have a dull brown colour which blends in with their surroundings as a perfect camouflage.

**Right: Greater bird-of-paradise
(*Paradisaea apoda*)**



The exceptional plumes of male birds-of-paradise were often used by societies of New Guinea, as decoration for their dresses and rituals. The plumes were also very popular in Europe, as exotic ornaments for ladies' hats. In the early sixteenth century, specimens of the Greater bird-of-paradise (*Paradisaea apoda*) were brought back to Europe from trading expeditions. The wings and feet on these specimens had been removed by native traders, so they could be used as decorations. This was not known in Europe, and the absence of information gave rise to the many beliefs and myths about birds of paradise. Because the birds had no feet and wings, it was believed that they never landed and were permanently floating through the air, only falling to the ground when deceased. For a brief period, they were even thought to be the mythical phoenix. Local traders told European explorers that the birds were coming from a terrestrial paradise, and called them "birds of god". This resulted in the name "bird-of-paradise". The specific name "*apoda*" from the greater bird-of-paradise means "without feet" and is derived from the feetless condition in which the specimens arrived in Europe.

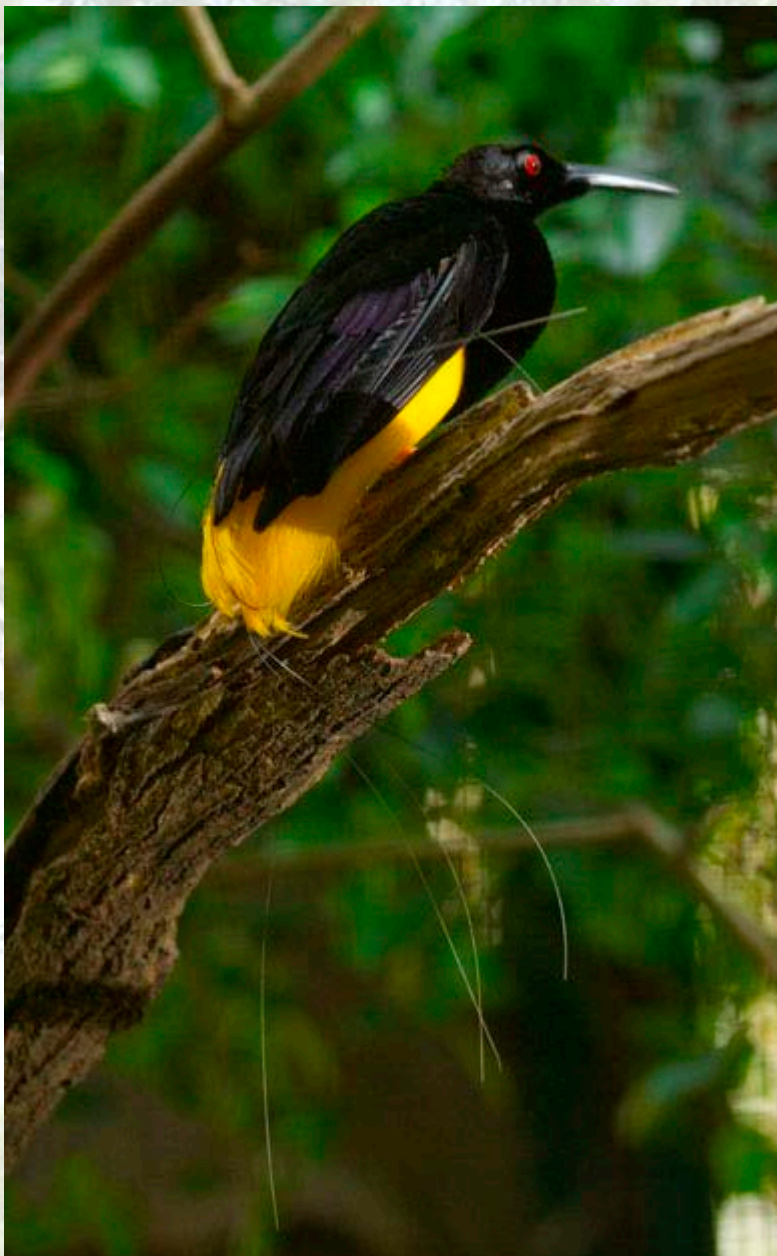
The hunting for plumes reduced some species to an endangered status. At the moment all birds-of-paradise are legally protected and hunting is only permitted to fulfil the ceremonial needs of local tribes. Unfortunately habitat loss due to deforestation is still a major threat for these beautiful birds.



Left and below: King bird-of-paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*).



The first bird-of-paradise arrived in 1991 in Weltvogelpark Walsrode. This was a single male Magnificent riflebird (*Ptiloris magnificus*), and the only individual of this species that has ever been kept in the park. In 1999, five new bird-of-paradise species arrived from Bali, Indonesia: the King bird-of-paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*), the Twelve-wired bird-of-paradise (*Seleucidis melanoleucus*), the Red bird-of-paradise (*Paradisaea rubra*), the Lesser bird-of-paradise (*Paradisaea minor*), and the Greater bird-of-paradise (*Paradisaea apoda*).



**Left: Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise.
Below: Red bird-of-paradise.**



Two years later, the Red birds-of-paradise and the Greater birds-of-paradise already produced offspring! And another year the King birds-of-paradise also reproduced! From that moment on, Weltvogelpark Walsrode

has been breeding different bird-of-paradise species on a regular basis.

Below: King bird-of-paradise 4 days old, 10 days old and 12 days old.



At the moment four bird-of-paradise species are being kept in the park. The King bird-of-paradise and the Red bird-of-paradise are still a part of the collection and they are breeding regularly. The Twelve-wired bird-of-paradise is also still in the park, and is breeding since 2012. A recent addition to the collection is the Raggiana bird-of-paradise (*Paradisaea raggiana*).

Note by the editor: See also our former article on the Twelve-wired bird-of-paradise <http://aviculture-europe.nl/nummers/14E04A05.pdf>

Below: show aviaries with statue.



Weltvogelpark Walsrode has lots of experience with birds-of-paradise, and with the new facility, the park wants to show everyone just how extraordinary birds can be! Visitors can enjoy the peculiar plumage of males of different Bird-of-paradise species in five naturally decorated show aviaries.

There is an interactive education wall, where visitors can learn more about the birds, their habitat, diet and behaviour. The remarkable mating rituals that are so typical for birds-of-paradise are shown on a video screen. To top it all off, there is a giant statue of a bird-of-paradise which creates a nice photo opportunity for all visitors.

**Right:
Interactive wall.**



Right: Inside enclosures.

Behind the scenes, the facility can house no less than 60 birds! Here the birds will be stimulated to mate and produce offspring, in order to secure the Park's population. The birds are all housed separately because of their specific needs. This last part is not open to the visitors, but cameras inside the aviaries show how the birds are behaving and add to the bird-of-paradise experience in Weltvogelpark Walsrode.



Below: Show aviary.



Opening hours

Season 2015: 21 March - 01 November
daily from 10:00 a.m.

www.weltvogelpark.de/en/weltvogelpark

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