

## Aviaries Unaffected By Zoo Cuts

**Parrot exhibits are relatively unaffected by funding cuts.**

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For zoos, closing down exhibitions is the last resort to dealing with financial cutbacks.

Though few industries have managed to escape the financial blow of the current worldwide recession, aviaries in national zoos and other living museums featuring parrots are thriving, relatively unscathed by the crisis.

While many of the nation's zoos have faced government funding slashes, the effects rarely trickle down to the parrot exhibits, said Ken Reininger, general curator of birds at the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro, NC.

"The economic factor is not a factor at all, as bird and reptile collections in zoos are a relatively minor part of budget concerns," he said. "These are relatively inexpensive parts of a zoo collection to maintain."

When zoos and aviaries lose government funding and other sources of income, cuts first occur in the areas where extra funding isn't a necessity. They might scale back on plans to construct new facilities, postpone plans to purchase major equipment or look at more ways to reduce energy costs before resorting to cutting in other areas, Reininger said.

At the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., the zoo's reaction to any cuts in funding is the same. The parrots featured on exhibit, which include the Eclectus parrot, are not feeling any effects of the recession. Federal funding to the zoo remains consistent, and no matter the cost of the parrots' needs, public affairs spokesperson Sarah Taylor said the costs are always covered.

"We take away from other areas and other programs that aren't associated with the animal welfare," Taylor said. "The care of our animals is always No. 1."

Because the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Penn., is privately funded through individual donations rather than government funding, media relations manager Laura Ellis said the parrot exhibits are also unharmed by the economic crisis.

"If we make changes, it has to do with marketing or advertising," Ellis said. "It's not going to affect the birds in any way."

While parrot collections currently remain recession-proof, national zoos and aviaries can't be sure that things will stay that way for long.

Closing down exhibitions and having to move parrot collections to other facilities is a last resort to deal with financial cutbacks. So far, aviaries haven't had to consider closing exhibits, though it certainly could be a potential solution if the recession persists, Reininger said.

"It's not unless you have to start cutting staff do you start to see if you can maintain animals in your collection," Reininger said. "There's not a lot of that going on yet in the accredited zoo community, although in a year or two, I suspect there will. We haven't gotten to that point yet."