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Breeding success with Hyacinthine macaws in the new species conservation centre "Ornis"

The breeding and rearing of young birds of the Hyacinthine macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) species, threatened in the wild, is demanding and difficult. Zurich Zoo has succeeded in breeding youngsters successfully in recent months in the Ornis, the new species conservation centre. The objective is to contribute as a conservation measure in the creation of a reserve population in Europe.

The Ornis (derived from the ancient Greek word for bird) has three units. The two smaller ones have existed for a while, the largest Ornis 1 has been in use since the beginning of the year. It provides places for a number of threatened animal species. The three independent areas have provided the zoo with the possibility to create areas with differing climatic conditions. The conditions are thereby ideal for species, which have very specific requirements for breeding.

In the course of the last months 30 breeding pairs of hyacinthine macaws have been located in Ornis 1 so that Zurich Zoo has the largest population worldwide in human care. The zoo takes a great responsibility for their protection.

Only animal keepers with special training have access to Ornis 1 in order not to disturb the parrots in the breeding and the rearing of young birds. As the hyacinthine macaws react strongly above all to any changes in the breeding period, the day in the rearing station is very strictly controlled and Ornis is not open to visitors. In addition to the regulated access to the enclosure the staff wear special clothing. The birds have grown accustomed to this in the meantime and associate it with the keepers. From 7 to 9 in the morning the birds are fed and cleaning undertaken. The birds have peace and are undisturbed between 9 in the morning and one in the afternoon. They are fed again in the afternoon. The more structured the course of the day the better it is for the birds. This provides them with security and is a condition for successful breeding.

Thanks to the perfect breeding conditions Zurich Zoo has succeeded after just a few months in achieving egg-laying and hatching. At the present time no young birds are flying yet. There are six young birds in the nests and two eggs are being incubated. The young birds are making an important contribution to the conservation of the threatened hyacinthine macaws in the European Conservation Programme (EEP).

While the breeding is taking place in the background because of strict regulating, the young birds will in the future be visible to and experienced by all zoo visitors when they are located in the Pantanal aviary, the proposed new living space, which is in the development plan for 2050. They will fly around in flocks and find the right partner for continuing breeding within the flock.

(Source: Zurich Zoo)