

Asian Fairy Bluebird



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Irenidae
Genus: *Irena*
Species: *puella*



Photo courtesy of Tony Wisneski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The Asian fairy bluebird can be found in altitudes up to approximately 5900 feet in southern Asia and Malaysia. They prefer dense forests, the forest crown, and forest edge areas in wilderness where they are not disturbed by human development.
- **Exhibit Location:** Diversity of Birds

Characteristics

- Length: about 10 inches
- Asian fairy bluebirds have all black legs, feet, and bills. They have bright red eyes with black pupils. These birds have a large head, a short neck and a heavy body. However, they do have very small feet that are out of proportion to the rest of their body.
- Male coloration: a brilliant blue crown, back, wing coverlets, and rump, with an almost hourglass-like shape to the body's blue parts, while the rest of the feathers are black.
- Female coloration: entirely a shade of soft blue, with the primary feathers on the wings a slightly darker blue to a dull black color.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 10-12 years; **In Captivity** 15 years

Behaviors

- Asian fairy bluebirds live in pairs or small groups of 6-8 birds, sometimes with other bird species, keeping to the evergreen lowland forest.
- They have a very loud contact call and have a song consisting of a loud, melodious series of whistling notes.
- These birds are not typically migratory, but they do travel around locally depending on the seasonal abundance of fruit, especially fruiting fig trees where they can be found feeding in large groups.
- During the very hot parts of the day, these birds typically form flocks and gather to bathe in forest streams. The flock formation keeps them safe from predators. This "many eyes theory," while bathing in a vulnerable location, implies that the more eyes to keep watch, the safer they may be.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** spiked fruit, insects

Reproduction

- During the breeding season, flocks of Asian fairy bluebirds disband to form pairs and then make their nests deep in the jungle. As a result, little is known about their breeding behavior.
- Nests have an open cup-like shape, and are made of long twigs and young roots, with green moss and leaves as a top layer. The nests are placed about 20 feet up, in a densely covered tree, typically in the fork of 2 or more branches, thus making them hard to find.
- Only the female builds the nest, but both parents feed the young.
- Normally 2 eggs are laid and are incubated for about 13 days. The young fledge (are able to fly) at about 12 days. Despite the early fledge time however, they are not independent until they are about 42 days old.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** fruit (especially figs), nectar, insects
- **At the Zoo:** fruit mix, whole fruit, paradise pellets (protein source), insects

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** LC (Least Concern); **CITES Appendix:** not listed
- Wild habitats in the dense forests of Asia are currently being threatened by deforestation and human development.
- Predators: humans, birds of prey, reptiles

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Unlike most forest birds, fairy bluebirds breed in the middle of the densest and most humid areas of the forest.
- The green moss in their nests helps to camouflage the nest and the young. It blends in with the dense cover of the surrounding trees.
- These birds successfully nest and reproduce in captive aviaries.

Sources:

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