



Emerald Starling

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Sturnidae
Genus: *Lamprotornis*
Species: *iris*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The emerald starling is found in wooded and open savannas in West Africa. It usually stays in the tops of the trees, but avoids forests.
- **Exhibit Location:** Diversity of Birds

Characteristics

- Length: 7-7 ½ inches
- The emerald starling has green iridescent feathers on its chest and wings and purple markings on its belly and around the eyes.
- Immature birds are brown with some green.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** less than 14 years; **In Captivity** 14 years

Behaviors

- This species usually lives in flocks of 15-20 birds. They occasionally gather into larger groups.
- The bird uses its strong beak to probe for insects and seeds in the soil and vegetation.
- The emerald starling will sometimes use dead branches in a tree for perching.
- These birds use calls for pre-flight, alarms for incoming dangers, and contacting one another.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** insects

Reproduction

- Nests are usually built in tree stumps or hollows. They are made of a pad of green leaves.
- Both the male and female cooperate in building the nest and feeding the hatchlings.
- Usually 2-4 eggs are laid. They are blue in color and have reddish-brown patches. Incubation is from 13-15 days.
- Females have a brood pouch on their stomach where there are no feathers. This allows the bird to transfer body heat to the eggs.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** insects, fruit, seeds
- **At the Zoo:** grain, fruit mix, seeds, insects

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** Not listed; **CITES Appendix:** Not listed
- Humans have caught these birds to keep them as pets.
- These animals are also traded internationally. The effect of this is not known at this time.
- The habitat is being destroyed which may eventually cause concern for the future.
- Predators: humans, raptors, snakes during nesting periods

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- The emerald starlings at RGZ have either been acquired from a private aviary or were hatched here since 1995.
- The emerald starling has special muscles that allow it to open its beak to probe the soil for insects.

Sources:

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http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/pictures/Lamprotornis_iris.html