



# Amazing Animals Fact sheets

## Exotic Parrots

Parrots are characterized by their curved beak shape and for having four toes on each foot - two facing the front and two facing the back. This gives them the dexterity that they are well known for and often utilize their feet to hold food items. Parrots are found world wide, although most are distributed throughout the warmer parts of the world, including India, South-east Asia and West Africa. The majority of the species live in Australasia, South America and Central America. Parrots are also emotionally and intellectually advanced and most species are said to have the intelligence of at least a two year old child. For this reason they are typically not good pets and require specific care and constant stimuli to ensure they remain healthy in mind and body.



### Scarlet Macaw

The Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) is probably the most well known of the macaw species. With its bright red plumage with blue and yellow wings this particular bird really stands out amongst a crowd. Scarlet Macaws are also highly intelligent birds with the learning capability of 5 to 7 year old child. For this reason alone, macaws do not generally make good pets. Combine this with a life expectancy of almost 70 years and you are looking at a lifetime of looking after the equivalent of a 5 year old child. Unfortunately this belief of macaws making good pets is what has led this species to decline throughout its entire

range.

### Diet

Fruits, berries and nuts make up the diet of the Scarlet Macaw which they forage for through the jungles of central and south America. An unusual part of the macaw's diet is actually clay. This may sound bizarre, but it is essential to their survival. In the wild, Scarlet Macaws gather together with several other species of parrots and be part of very large flocks. This in turn means that they need a lot of food to feed upon. Hence, due to competition between birds, the macaws are sometimes forced to eat fruits which are not quite ripe. Also, many of the fruits and berries that they devour can, and do contain chemicals and toxins that can be very harmful to the birds. The macaws, over generations have learnt that by actually eating clay, they are effectively helping their systems to remove these potentially fatal chemicals by binding them up and neutralizing them for removal.

## Australia Zoo Scarlet Macaw profiles



### Cuddles

Cuddles joined the 'Wandering Wildlife' team in January 2009. She was donated to us at eight-years-old, with her friend Bubbles. Cuddles can be a bit shy at times, but once you have earned her trust she is happy to sit on your arm and have a great old chat. Her favourite treat is walnuts and in her spare time she enjoys climbing through her tree branches and finding pieces of fruit that her keepers hide for her.

### Endangered Species!

Very low numbers are left in the wild. Exotic Parrots are at risk of extinction within the next ten years.

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