



LIVING WITH LORIES AS PETS

by Julie Corwin

Many people think the difference between a lory and a lorikeet is size, which is not true. The difference is the shape of the tail. The lorikeets have a tapered tail similar to macaws, conures and parakeets. A lory has more of a rounded tail similar to Amazons, African Greys, and cockatoos.

I fell in love with lories in the late 1970's and my first lory was a Black-Capped lory of the *Lorius lory erythrorhax* subspecies. I had her for many years and she was so tame I could trust her with young children to adults. I took her to many events with me over the years. I was told it was a male, however after traveling and being at an event with me, she became egg bound. I did not know

to watch for this, as I thought it was a male. I was heartbroken when she died, and I was lost without a lory in my life.

Now I live with over a dozen lories that are kept in my house. Tips for keeping lories as pets in the house are at the end of this article. Several of my lories have come to live with me when they needed a new home, their owners could not keep them for various reasons, some were not cared for properly because people thought they could just feed them seed or did not want the mess of having a lory. One was found loose outside and the owner could not be located. People in my area know that lories are a passion for me and the birds will have a good home.



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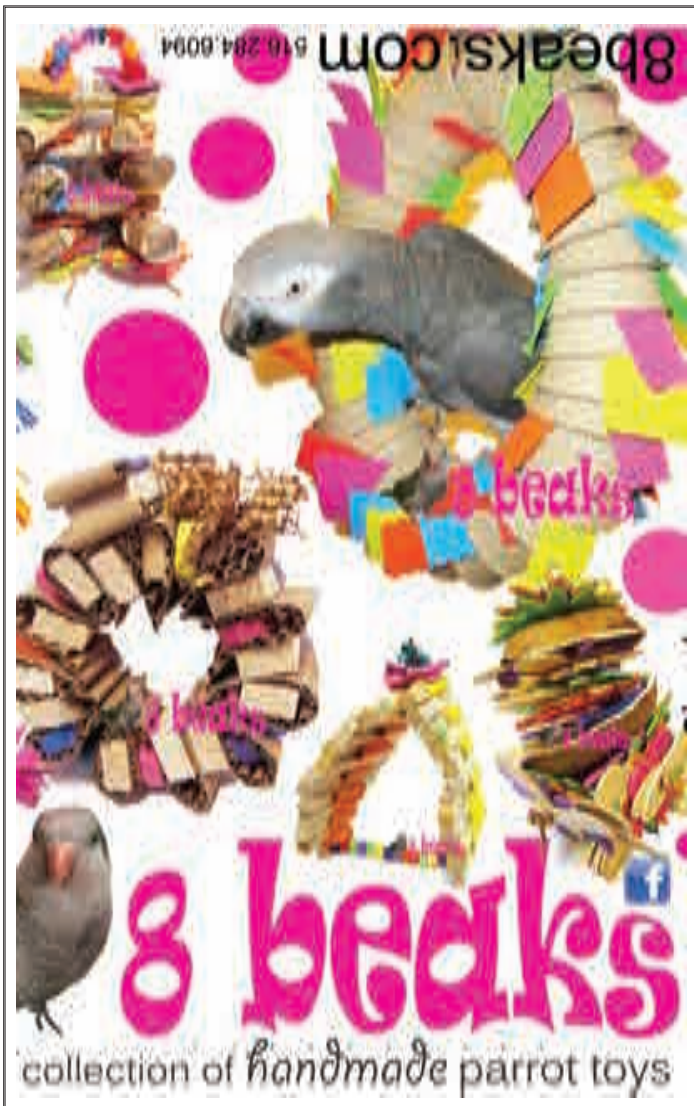
Forsten's Lorikeet/ Photo by Chuck Hawkes

Trichoglossus species of lorikeets are commonly referred to as Rainbow lorries. At one time they were popular at zoo exhibits, and many are kept as pets. In my experience the Forsten's lorikeet-make fabulous pets. My female insists on having her head rubbed any time I approach her cage or take her out to play. She is part of my education group, and shows the example of just because she is not perfect, does not mean she is not a great pet. The end of her wing was mutilated by the parents when she hatched. All healed just fine, but she looks as though the one wing had been pinioned. Not all adult birds are good parents, and she is an example of that. She was pulled from the nest when the injury was discovered and she was subsequently handfed. She is in perfect feather otherwise and has the beautiful sheen to her feathers due to the great condition she is in. She loves to play with anything, and everything is considered a toy. The male is quite entertaining as well. He loves to strut and arch his neck in the posturing that is common activity with the males. He loves to bounce on his perches and swing from the toys. He is also a fair talker. He was advertised on Craig's list and was severely plucked, and his feathers were very drab in color. Since he has been with me, his head feathers are starting to get the shine and glow back, and the feathers on his legs and chest are starting to come back in. I think his feathers will be as beautiful as my female once he goes through a full molt. For the time being, their cages are side by side, and both are great pets

The Swainson's lorikeet (also called a Blue Mountain) is also a great talker. Joey is very bonded to me, and loves to ride around the house with me as I do my daily activities. He allows other people to hold him, but will come to where I am every chance he gets. He also likes to play on the floor with toys, or to look out the window from the "Get a Grip" rope playground that hangs by the window. At events he is not as playful as he is here at home, but does well staying on his bungee perch and letting people take pictures of him. He was another lory who came to me in poor feather condition and was found loose outside. Someone obviously spent time with him, as he is super tame and has a large vocabulary.

My Rosenberg's lorikeet is a bit more shy, and does not play with hanging toys as much as the others, but loves to play in the bottom of the cage with what are commonly considered foot toys. Taking a bath in the water dish is her favored hobby. I have to check her water dish often as it will be empty from her bathing. She also loves a bath in the sink and will literally roll over to get wet everywhere. Lories love to have a large shallow dish for bathing. She does not talk as much as the other lorries, but she loves to cuddle up to my chest and watch TV with me in the evening. Her personality is very different from the other Rainbow lorries that live with me.

The newest edition is a Red-collared lorikeet. He was part of a lory exhibit , but paired up with another bird and became too aggressive to keep in the exhibit. I was told he was a male, however no gender testing has been done. He was semi-tame at one time. He is not aggressive toward me, but I have not yet tried to work with him as a pet. Red-collared lorikeets are not as common here, so my future goal is to pair him up for breeding, when





Red-collared Lorikeet/ Photo by Chuck Hawkes

I can find him a suitable mate.

Several lorries at my house are in the Chalcopsitta family. They are popular lorries that love to be the center of attention. They are very people oriented when hand fed as babies, although as they mature they are not good for mixed species enclosures. They tend to be super aggressive towards other birds. Most of them are good talkers, and my Duyvenbode's lorry has a large vocabulary.

The Duyvenbode's is probably the most playful of all of my lorries, and he is an bundle of energy. He plays non-stop with anything that moves or makes a noise. He loves to bounce on his bungee, plays on his swing a lot, hangs upside down from his toys and beats them up as he yells at them. He is the noisiest of my group, but mostly when he is playing. Another of his favorite things to do is to toss and then chase whiffle balls. It is amazing how high up he can throw them and then pounce on them when they land on the bottom of the cage. He loves musical toys or anything that makes noise. People love to watch him play at the events I participate in,

as he is constantly in motion. They are also so differently colored compared to most lorries.

The rich brown feathers with the golden yellow contrast are quite striking. The blue on the rump flashes with brilliance when the light hits it as he is playing. He is super friendly with people, but I have to be very careful that none of the other birds land of his cage or try to join him on the play areas as he will attack immediately. As a youngster he played with the other lorries with

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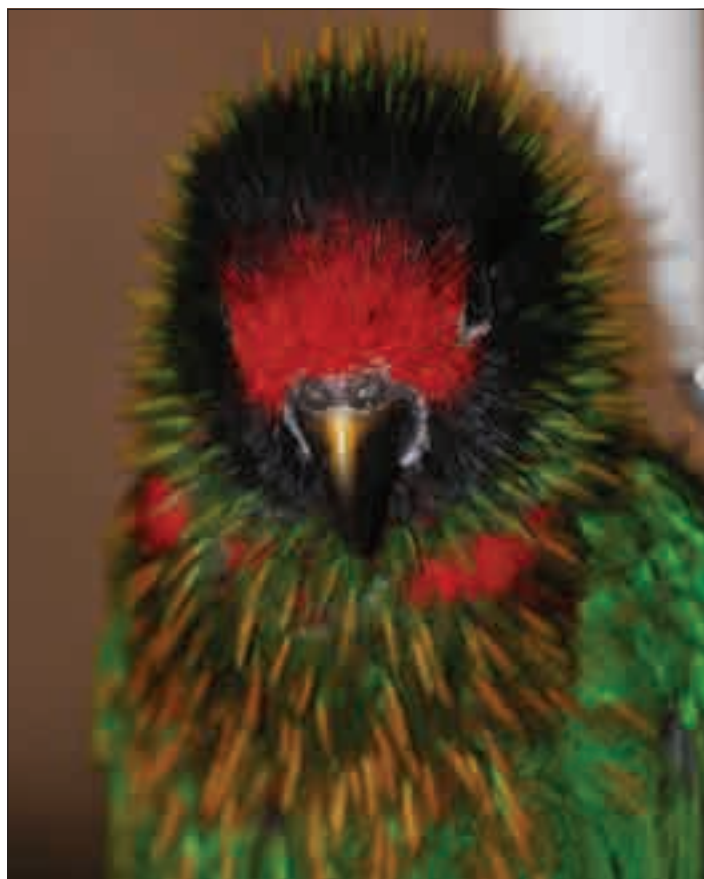
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no problems. He is over three years old now, and has become super aggressive towards other birds.

Yellow-streaked lorries are another member of the *Chalcopsitta* group. Mine is still young at just under two years old, but still very much acts like a baby. At this point she is not aggressive towards other birds, but they are very well known for their aggression towards other birds including their own species. "Streaker" loves to play with hanging toys that are brightly colored. She rubs on them, lies on her back and plays with them with her feet, and hangs upside down and swings from them. She also enjoys foot toys. She collects them and puts them all in a corner, and then throws them so she can chase after them. This game happens several times throughout the day. At night she likes to snuggle with her hanging stuffed animal. She is fairly quiet at this age, and loves all people who will pet her or let her rub on their sleeve or shirt. She almost reminds me of a Caique with her love to rub against things. She does not talk yet that I am aware of, but she does imitate some sounds, the most annoying being the smoke detector which she learned from "Mario", the Yellow-bibbed lory in the cage close to her. The color on her head is getting more vibrant as she gets older, and the Yellow-streaked lory's feathers are also much brighter now, than when she was a baby. Many people think the Yellow-streaked feathers are just pin feathers until they look closer. This is something the Yellow-streaked lory has in common with the Duyvenbode's, even though the streaked feathers are on a different part of the body. I think it will be interesting to watch her personality grow and change as she matures.

My Cardinal lory is very calm compared to the other *Chalcopsitta* species in my home. She likes to play and will toss her foot toys, but is not the bundle of energy like the other two. She loves to hop and skip across the floor to come find me, and will do so at home and at public events. She loves to snuggle next to my neck and play in my hair. She is more of a shoulder bird than the other lorries I have, but she came that way, so I accept that is what makes her happy. She does not talk much and is the most quiet of the group. She lets other people hold her, but always runs to their shoulder and then does not want to step up for strangers. She will hide behind their head where they can't reach her, until I come and take her. She is not aggressive toward people or other birds which is great at public events. The red colors on the Cardinal lory are so different from the other lorries. Many different



Yellow-streaked Lory/ Photo by Chuck Hawkes

subtle changes in the color of the feathers give them a very different appearance than other species.

The other group of lorries at my house are in the *Lorius* family. This includes three Black-capped lorries. "Cousteau" is approximately twenty years old. He is a *Lorius lory erythrorothax* subspecies. He is a true *Lorius E*, although many of the Black-capped lorries are mixed subspecies. Cousteau is a very quiet calm bird, which may be partly due to his age. He loves to be talked to and will exchange kiss sounds with you but does not like to be handled much. He also loves to whistle back and forth with me, and copies several different whistles. He is not as playful as the younger Black-cappeds, being "Pogo" and "Yo-Yo" who are hybrid *Lorius lory* and *Lorius erythrorothax*. They are father and son who came

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Cardinal Lory / Photo by Chuck Hawkes

to live with me. Pogo earned his name because of the way he hops up and down when he gets excited, or when he is in his travel carrier. Pogo is about 8 years old and is fairly tame, but does not like to be petted or scratched. He will perch on your hand or your arm for short periods of time or to go from place to place. He loves to take toys apart. It is a challenge he enjoys immensely. Yo-Yo is named for his similar trait of hopping up and down, and he calls a name that sounds like Yo-Yo. I guess he learned the hopping trait from watching his father. Yo-Yo is about three years old and very tame. He loves to go places with me and will hop right into a travel carrier but does not want to go back in his cage. He also loves to destroy toys of any kind. His Whiffle ball is his favorite toy, and he loves to dunk it in his water dish and then toss it across the cage.

Also in my home are two Yellow-bibbed lorries of the Lories family. "Mario" is about five years old and very typical of the Yellow-bibbed species. He is very cage territorial, but pretty good pet-wise once he is away from his cage. He is a fantastic talker and has the largest vocabulary of all of my lorries. He also imitates lots of different sounds including running water. The most annoying is the safety beeper of a truck in reverse. He is the acrobat of the group, and people love to watch him play. His swing is his favorite, and he can really get it going fast. He also plays a great game of peek-a-boo.

"Gypsy" is a young female Yellow-bibbed lorry. She loves to whistle and give kisses through the cage. She is very active on the different playgrounds here at home. She has only been to one event with me so far and was very nervous, so she got to hang out in a show cage, where she could watch the people, yet feel safe in the strange environment. Again, typical of a Yellow-bibbed, she is not the best at coming out of her cage on friendly terms, but once she is out she is fine.

Many people think that lorries are too messy to keep in the home as pets, however, I have been doing it for years. A few tips that I have learned over the years may be helpful to others who consider having a pet lory in their home.

First, remove the grate from the cage if possible, and use aspen for bedding in the cage tray. The more liquid droppings from Lorries will clump in the aspen and can be easily scooped out. Also place dishes at the lower section of the cage. I use the perches that have the cup at the end of the perch for their nectar and wet food.

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Yellow-bibbed Lory/ Photo by Chuck Hawkes

This keeps the mess in the cage and the lory is less likely to paint the bars with nectar. Cover the wall behind the cage with something washable. Shower curtains work great. A desk mat under the cage makes clean up easy. My cages are 48" wide, 24" deep and 36" tall. The lories spend most of their time playing toward the top of the cage with toys and swings, and on the multi levels of perches, swings, or bungees. By keeping the food dishes at the lower level of the cage along with foot toys, they use all of the space. Misting the lory and the cage with water is something they love and makes wiping down the cage easier to clean.

One of the reasons that lories are different than other parrots includes their tongue. Brush-tongue parrots, as they are often called, normally eat pollen, nectar, bugs and berries in the wild. Lories have very specialized tongues. Tiny hair-like structures called "papillae" are on each side of the end of the tongue. When a lory feeds on flowers, the papillae fan out, making it easy for them to collect the pollen. Another feature is the shape of the beak. The curved upper beak has a pointed tip. Lories use the tip of their beak to scrape the fruit and enjoy the juice with their specialized tongues. Lories also have a much shorter digestive tract than other parrots and are highly susceptible to iron storage disease; therefore any diet for a lory should be low in iron. The recommended iron level is approximately 80ppm or less. Citrus fruits should not be given to lories, the citric acid will bind with the iron in other foods and can cause problems. In captivity there are many different ways that lories are fed and housed as pets, as well as how they are kept in a breeding situation.

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