Two scarlet macaws at BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo engage in what bird curator Sam Moran calls 'a pair-bonding behavior' where they mimic feeding each other. The birds are part of a new zoo exhibit.

Palette for the eyes
BREC zoo's new Parrot Paradise
exhibits riot of multicolored birds

By MICHELLE MILLHOLLON

The zoo’s latest exhibit took wing Saturday with the unveiling of a display featuring exotic birds of every color of the rainbow.
The 30 brilliantly colored birds housed in Parrot Paradise hail from South America, Central America, Indonesia and Australia.
"You’re definitely not going to find these colors in a box of 64 crayons," said BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo Director Phil Frost.
The exhibit has been in the works for awhile.

Kim Bergeron of Gonzales said she tried to steal peeks at the display while it was under construction, but it was cordoned off. On Saturday, she said she was thrilled to finally get an unhindered look.
"My favorite is the multicolored," she said, pointing at a scarlet macaw, which is mostly red in color with yellow and blue wings.

Donna Baratti, in town from California for a family reunion, stopped by the exhibit with her 4-year-old daughter, Jasmine.
Baratti said she enjoyed looking at the birds’ different characteristics.
The exhibit features a variety of macaws as well as cockatoos and cockatiels.
Several of the birds are rare. The red-fronted macaw is an endangered species because of its shrinking habitat.
Palm cockatoos, featured in the exhibit, also are becoming scarce. They’re not often seen in zoos because they’re difficult to raise.

Sam Moran, curator of birds at the zoo, hand-raised one of the red-fronted macaws. But he said exotic birds aren’t well suited as pets.
"What I would like is for people to enjoy parrots as birds rather than buy them for pets," Moran said.

Morgan said the zoo has tried to provide the birds with ample, large enclosures.
The zoo is open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
Admission is $3 for adults and $1 for children ages 2 to 12.

BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo curator Sam Moran, at the entrance to the newly opened Parrot Paradise, said, ‘What I would like is for people to enjoy parrots as birds rather than buy them for pets.’