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3/13/17

### Someone New at the Marie Osterbuhr Aviary

The Marie Osterbuhr Aviary is home to some of the most talkative residents at the zoo. You might enjoy hearing the Goeldi's monkeys chattering away inside the building or the beautiful laugh of the Kookaburra in the free flight aviary. Amongst all the noise and motion within the aviary, a new resident has quietly made an appearance: the basilisk lizard.

This Central American reptile thrives in tropical rainforests, and the new resident can be found in the indoor climate controlled portion of the aviary all year long. When you visit you might not spot the lizard at first glance. Adult basilisk lizards are bright green and dappled with small blue spots along their body. This bright coloration probably seems easy to spot, but in reality is excellent camouflage for its rainforest habitat. In addition to this ability to blend into its habitat, the basilisk lizard is not as vocal as the other residents of the aviary, providing fewer clues to draw your attention to its hiding spot. It might be a little extra work looking for the basilisk lizard, but it'll be worth it to see an animal that is so different from what we typically find in Kansas.

These beautiful lizards could gain recognition for their looks alone, but they have the unusual ability to run on water which has earned them the nickname the "Jesus lizard". This unique behavior is not some magical property, but a combination of body movement and physics. If spooked by a perceived threat, the basilisk lizard will take off running, pushing up onto its back legs while moving them in a churning motion. This movement will continue as they transfer from the hard rainforest floor onto the water's surface. As their feet hit the water, their splayed hind feet slap the surface, trapping air pockets under them, keeping them afloat instead of sinking. This might be a behavior you're excited to spot on your next visit, but this behavior is saved for avoiding predators, which in the Marie Osterbuhr Aviary the basilisk lizard won't have to worry about. You will still have the opportunity to watch this behavior on the new TV screen installed over the enclosure which will show videos of basilisk lizards walking on water.

The basilisk lizard is built to survive in its rainforest habitat, but like so many habitats across the globe, rainforests are disappearing. Our community might not seem to be impacting rainforests directly through our daily activities, but we can all do our part here at home to contribute to its conservation. By choosing to be conscious consumers, and support eco-friendly organizations with our purchases, we are contributing to conservation efforts. You would be surprised at how much food is, at least in part, connected to the rainforest. If you enjoy coffee, consider looking for the Rainforest Alliance Certified logo, a little green frog, on your coffee container. A coffee brand bearing this mark shows you that the coffee was harvested using environmentally and socially responsible practices. Once you start looking for the Rainforest Alliance Certified mark, you'll be surprised at how many little green frog logos you will spot throughout the store. It doesn't have to be hard to support conservation efforts of exotic habitat; you just have to know what to look for.