

Deaf 'bird whisperer' forms rare bond with feathered friends

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'Bird whisperer' Razali Bin Mohamad Habidin checks a salmon-crested cockatoo at Jurong Bird Park in Singapore, where he is deputy head avian keeper

Deaf since childhood, Razali Bin Mohamad Habidin has developed a closer bond with the creatures under his care than any other keeper at

Singapore's Jurong Bird Park, where other staff refer to him simply as the "bird whisperer".

Razali, who lost 80 percent of his hearing after falling ill as a baby, started working at the park over two decades ago, and has risen to the position of deputy head avian keeper.

He communicates with the birds through grunts, gestures and body languages and told AFP that he recognises the birds by their "behaviours and personalities".

"All of them are my friends," he added, communicating through a mix of gestures and Malay.

Other staff at the park have dubbed the 48-year-old "the bird whisperer"—after Hollywood film "The Horse Whisperer", starring Robert Redford as a trainer with a gift for understanding horses.

"He has a way of communicating with the birds that very few of us can," said assistant curator Angelin Lim. "Just by a look, he knows whether or not the bird is well."

Communication with his colleagues can be more challenging than with the birds.

Razali leads about a dozen staff and giving them instructions usually involves him making various complex hand gestures, and then reading the lips of his colleagues when they respond.



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His way with the creatures at the [park](#), which is home to more than 5,000 birds from parrots to hornbills, was on display as he brought a snack of palm fruits into an enclosure filled with parrots.

The hyacinth macaws, the world's largest parrots, stopped squawking and watched him curiously before following him.

One of the giant [birds](#) perched on his shoulder, playfully rubbed his finger with its beak—a sign of trust and affection—and ate out of his hand.



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