

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Blue-throated Macaw
Ara glaucogularis



Blue-throated Macaw (© Joe Tobias/www.rarebirdyearbook.com)

Background

Blue-throated Macaw is confined to the Beni region of northern Bolivia, where the wild population was discovered in 1992. It utilises palm-groves and forest 'islands' within areas of savanna. The population is believed to have declined rapidly since its discovery, principally as a result of illegal exploitation for the cagebird trade. All known sites occur on private cattle-ranches, where burning and clearing for pasture and tree-felling for fuel have reduced the number of suitable nest trees and inhibited the regeneration of Motacú palm *Attalea phalerata*, a principal food source. Nest-site competition with other macaws, toucans and large woodpeckers is a significant additional threat. Research conducted in 2007 estimated the total population to number 250-300 individuals in three subpopulations.

Actions being implemented

1. **Population surveys** have been carried out, helping to establish a more accurate understanding of the distribution of the species and establishing current population trends.
2. Since 2005, **artificial nest sites** have been provided in the southern and northern parts of the macaws' range. During 2007-2008, these were replaced with nest boxes of better quality and greater durability. Occupied nest-sites (natural and artificial) are monitored in order to better understand the species reproductive ecology.
3. **Monitoring of the cagebird trade** is ongoing and suggests that conservation measures have much reduced the illegal trafficking of this species.
4. Research has been carried out that will support the **acquisition of land** for Blue-throated Macaw conservation, habitat restoration studies and the development of sustainable tourism.

5. A wide-ranging **education campaign**, including talks and workshops in numerous cities, towns, and rural communities, has taken place, involving some 3,000 participants. Awareness has been raised through newspaper and journal articles, television and radio interviews and participation in regional fairs. A region-wide contest was held to promote the use of alternatives to macaw feathers in traditional Beni headdresses.
6. Guidelines for **sustainable tourism** are being developed in collaboration with the Beni Tourism Unit. A video on the macaw and its habitat has been produced to promote sustainable tourism, and it is hoped that an ecotourism lodge will be opened in the near future.



Nest boxes have been provided in parts of the species range to help boost productivity and reduce nest-site competition from other species. (© Asociacion Armonía).

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