

Common Name: Blue & Gold Macaw

Scientific Name: *Ara ararauna*



IUCN Red list Status: Least Concern
AZA Conservation Program: None

Class: Aves
Order: Psittaciformes
Family: Psittacidae
Genus: *Ara*

Habitat: Their range is within South America. They live in swampy forest, open marshlands and woodlands, rainforest, and other areas with large trees. They do avoid mountainous and coastal regions.

Threats in the Wild: This species has been heavily traded and was listed by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) in 1981. Wild-caught individuals have been recorded in international trade since. Habitat loss also affects wild macaws since their food source is completely dependent on trees.

Physical Characteristics: The Blue and Gold Macaw is a large bird. To go along with their size, they have a massive powerful beak that is hooked to help crack open nuts and other food. These beaks are capable of biting down with 300 pounds of pressure allowing macaws to be one of the very few animals that can break open a Brazil nut. The lower part of the beak is used to file down the shell before cracking it and the tongue moves the food around as the macaw is working on opening it. This beak can also assist the macaws with climbing in addition to their zygodactyl feet. Their blue and yellow feathers help with camouflaging from predators. The blue back blends in with the darker colors below while the yellow underside blends in with the brighter colors of the sky.

Reproduction: Macaws are monogamous, meaning they mate for life. Sexual maturity is reached between 3-6 years. Females will incubate the eggs the entire time, while the male guards the nest and brings back food. Incubation takes about 25 days and after hatched the babies lack feathers and sight. Macaws are known to have low reproductive capacity in the wild. Only 15-25 babies are born each year to a group of 100 breeding pairs. Breeding pairs also do not breed annually.

Longevity: The average lifespan for a macaw is 40-70 years, but can live up to 80 years in captivity.



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Diet: In the wild, macaws will eat a variety of seeds, nuts, berries, fruits, leaves, and bark. A macaw may fly as far as 15 miles a day for a meal since trees bear fruit at various times throughout the year. They have also been observed eating exposed clay on riverbanks to use as a mineral supplement. They eat similar foods in the zoo including nuts, fruits, seeds, and vegetables.

Miscellaneous: Macaws can fly as fast as 35 miles per hour. They are a highly intelligent species and are considered by some biologists are the “flying primate.”

Signs of Stress: Wary animal, will screech loudly if stressed out.

Docent Animal Specifics: Crackers the female was born in 1985 and Gandy the male was born in 1989. They are kept in the Amazonia keeper area.



Fact Sheet – Reptilia – Blue & Gold Macaw
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