

Illiger's macaw

South America

Ara maracana (or *Propyrrhura maracana*)

Also known as Blue-winged macaw

Illiger's macaws are small green macaws. Illiger's macaws are similar in appearance to severe's macaws but have a small spot of red on the forehead. The naked facial skin is, white and has rows of black feather forming lines. It has a red belly patch. The tail is long and tapered, and is maroon and blue. Mini macaws are lively boisterous birds and require generous living space.

Illiger's macaws have a large range extending from eastern Brazil south of the Amazon, to Paraguay and extending west through the Brazilian Pantanal. It occurs in a variety of forests, forest edge, woodland and savanna habitats. Locally uncommon. They feed on locally available fruits; especially palm nut fruits, seeds, nuts and buds. An isolated population co-exists with Spix's macaws in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

Length 15-16 inches. Weight 250-350 grams.

Life Span – Unknown but probably up to 30-40 years. Age at maturity – 2-3 years. Immature birds have dark eyes, which change over time from black to orange-yellow eye color of adults.

Personality - Young hand-raised macaws are very adaptable and typically easily handled by many people. They must be socialized and exposed to a variety of experiences (veterinary visits, other pets, visitors, wing and nail trims, car rides, etc.) at a young age to avoid fearful behavior. Macaws can make excellent pets, although some have a tendency to become nippy. Macaws can be very loud as well as destructive. While some speak, most macaws have limited ability to mimic.

Illiger's macaws are very inquisitive, mischievous and animated. While they make good pets and aviary subjects but are not readily available.

Activities - Macaws are playful and love to chew. They should always be provided with toys, especially wooden blocks that can be chewed, and branches from non-toxic trees. In order to ensure safety companion macaws

should not be allowed unsupervised freedom in the home as they often encounter toxins or dangerous items. Young macaws should be socialized to many people and exposed to a variety of situations such as new cages, toys, visits to the veterinarian, handling by friends, wing and nail clips, etc. to avoid fear of novel situations.

Dietary needs - All macaws need plenty of energy for good health. Many of their natural foods, especially palm nuts are rich in oils, and calories. Macaws should be fed a formulated (pelleted or extruded diet) as a basis for good nutrition. The diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Feed approximately ¼ cup Kaytee exact. Also offer ¼ cup of fresh fruits and vegetables. Give 1-2 small such as almonds nuts as treats. Small amounts of seed may also be given as treats especially as rewards for good behavior. Vitamin supplements are not needed for birds that are eating a formulated diet.

Illiger's macaws are difficult to hand feed from a very early age. They require a high fat diet and do well with additional protein as well especially at a very young age. Kaytee Exact is a good choice. A small amount of peanut butter or ground sunflower seeds may be added to increase protein and fat levels. Be sure not to add too much as this can slow digestion.

Identification - All companion and breeding birds should be individually identified to assist in recovery if lost and assist in maintenance of medical and genealogical records. Many breeders apply closed legs bands when chicks are young. While they present a slight risk of entrapment closed bands are preferable to no identification, especially for breeding birds. Microchips, which can be implanted into the muscle or under the skin, are a reliable means of identification but require electronic readers to verify identification. Tattoos may be used but often fade or become illegible with time. Footprints may have some application in identification.

Grooming - Routine bathing or showering is vital to maintaining good plumage and skin condition. Birds can be misted and allowed to dry in a warm room or in the sun, or dried with a blow drier. An ideal way to bathe macaws is to put them in a cage outside, sprinkle them with the hose, and allow them to dry in the sun. Macaws are strong fliers. Most of the primary

flight feathers (10 feathers closest to the tip of the wing) should be clipped to prevent flight. Clip only enough so the bird will glide to the floor.

Sexing - Macaw species show no obvious sexual dimorphism (visual difference between the species) therefore endoscopic examination (Surgical sexing) or laboratory sexing techniques are needed for accurate sex determination. Males are usually larger and have larger heads.

Housing - Macaws are very active and should be provided the largest cage that space and budget allows. Must have adequate space to move between 2 perches. Ideally pet macaws can also have a large cage outdoors for bathing and exercise.

Breeding – Illiger’s macaws breed fairly well in captivity. Breeding season is usually in spring and early summer, although some pairs will breed almost year round. Clutch size is usually 2-4 eggs but sometimes more. Incubation period is average 23-25 days. Some additional high fats seeds, like sunflower seed, should be added to the diet during the breeding season to stimulate reproduction. Inexperienced hand feeders should allow the parents to feed for the first few weeks.

Nest Box – Illiger’s macaws like vertical wooden box (approx. 12” x 12” x 24”). Macaws should be provided with plentiful chewing material. Pine shavings make excellent nest box bedding.

Cage size - Macaws should have adequate space to move freely between 2 perches. Example of appropriate suspended cage size for Illiger’s macaws is 3’ x 3’ x 6’. Cages should be suspended 3-4 feet above the ground.

Cages for Illiger’s macaws must be constructed of strong wire, 14 gauge welded wire, 1” x 1” works well for most pairs or ½” x 1” will also work well. Illiger’s macaws are not as loud as large macaws however proximity to neighbors must be considered.

Mate aggression is uncommon in macaws. Pair bonds are strong but not necessarily life long.

Common diseases and disorders

- Proventricular Dilatation Disease (Macaw wasting disease)
- Feather picking
- Chewing flight and tail feathers by juveniles
- Psittacosis (chlamydophila infection)
- Bacterial, viral and fungal infections
- Beak malformations - chicks
- Pancreatitis
- Kidney Disease - gout
- Toxicity, heavy metal poisoning

Many common health problems of macaws can be prevented by good diet, nutrition and routine health care. Routine veterinary examination (annually) can help you to keep your pet in excellent health and enhance your relationship with your bird.

Conservation status – Vulnerable– Illiger’s macaws are listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Fauna and Flora. They have a very large range but wild populations have declined due to large scale habitat destruction. Illiger’s macaws are uncommon in captivity but breed well.