



Saving the Blues™ in Bolivia: El Beni-Factor & Nido Adoptivo™

Concerned people in the United States now have a far more accessible opportunity to assume an important role in the conservation efforts for the critically endangered Blue-throated Macaws in Bolivia.

To help in Saving the Blues™ in Bolivia, Bird Endowment's exclusive new El Beni-Factor Nido Adoptivo™ program provides participants the opportunity of a regular IRS deduction for donating to the U.S. 501(c)(3) non-profit (mostly unavailable when made directly to foreign organizations), while avoiding government scrutiny associated with supporting foreign organizations.

Nido Adoptivo™, a nest box adoption program, was developed in a cooperative effort between Bird Endowment, recognized for its efforts in captive breeding conservation of the Blue-throated Macaw and Armonia / Loro Parque Fundacion Blue-throated Macaw Conservation Program, the primary recovery agent for the wild macaws in Bolivia.

Each participant in the Nido Adoptivo™ program will be honored as a "Beni-Factor". Additionally, this year's donors (\$250 for each Nido Adoptivo™) will be honored in future years as Founders of the annual program.

Armonia and Loro Parque Fundacion were the driving force behind completion of the Blue-throated Macaw Species Recovery Plan. As part of that Species Recovery Plan's priority actions, 20 wooden nest boxes were placed in the Loreto area for the 2005/6 breeding season.

The loss of suitable tree nesting cavities appeared to be a limiting factor for the populations of hole nesting birds in lowland Bolivian savannahs, particularly the Blue-throated Macaw in the Beni Department, A. Bennett Hennessey, executive director of Asociacion Armonia, told the Bird Endowment's Laney Rickman. He suspects years of grass burning, cattle foraging, past cavity destruction by poachers and human hardwood

usage are responsible for the severely limited number of ideal nest cavities in the range.

The boxes were an immediate success, with various species of macaws (and some ducks) possessing the boxes right away. Of the 20 boxes, one was hijacked by wasps and 18 were used by birds; 13 by Blue-and-yellow Macaws, *Ara ararauna*, three by White-eyed Parakeets, *Aratinga leucophthalmus*, one by Chestnut-fronted Macaws, *A. severus* (later expelled by Blue-and-yellow Macaws), and one by Blue-throated Macaws, which laid two eggs. However, the Blue-throated Macaw nest was unsuccessful, possibly because of predation by Toco Toucans, *Ramphastos toco*, and the box was later used by Blue-and-yellow Macaws.

On four occasions there was nest site competition between the Blue-throated Macaw and the Blue-and-yellow Macaw (the Blue-and-yellow Macaw always won the site).

"This high response demonstrates that adequate nest cavities are in short supply," says Hennessey.

"What we previously thought, that the Motacu palm is the favorite nesting site of the macaw, now we believe is more of a last resort. The usage of the boxes appears to indicate that appropriate nesting cavities for the Blue-throated Macaw is a limiting factor in its reproduction and that the augmentation of better nesting cavities can improve the reproduction of the wild population," says David Waugh, the Environment Director at Loro Parque Fundacion and, along with Hennessey, a program supervisor of the joint Blue-throated effort in Bolivia.

"If in every ten boxes we can help one pair of Blue-throated Macaws breed, then we have made a substantial improvement to the population and the macaws future," says Hennessey.

The results of the experiment clearly show nest competition in Beni to be extremely high. There is a risk that the provision of nest boxes will favor the more aggressive species over the Blue-throated Macaws. In response, boxes in the Beni-Factor Nido Adoptivo™ program will be designed to favor the Blue-throated Macaws and deter or exclude competitor species.

Principal objective of Nido Adoptivo™

The Nido Adoptivo™ objective is to increase the annual reproductive output of the Blue-throated Macaw wild population by installing nest boxes across their range. Bird Endowment and its El Beni-Factors™ will exclusively implement this program in cooperation with Armonia.

What it means to be a Beni-Factor™

Bird Endowment's goal is to fund as many new nestboxes for 2007 as possible, with a minimum goal of 20. Additional boxes are needed and the program is not limited to only the minimum goal. In the unique program, each Beni-Factor's donation of \$250 will fund:

- Initial construction and installation of one



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supplemental nest box. (The donor can choose two initials to personalize the sponsored nest box. The Beni-Factor will receive general GPS coordinates of the nest box location and will be able to use Google™ satellite to locate its approximate geographical / topographical location via the internet.)

- One year of weekly monitoring for data collection at each nest by a field biologist in the Blue-throated Macaw project who will inspect contents and record usage and inter-species interactions.

- Two site-specific reports from Armonia to each El Beni-Factor™. The reports comprise an initial one and a breeding year end report.

El Beni-Factors™ are acknowledged on Bird Endowment's Nido Adoptivo™ web page <http://www.birdendowment.org/inBolivia/nidoAdoptivo.shtml> and will receive a framed Bird Endowment participation certificate.

The Wild Blue-throated Macaw in Bolivia

A new Armonia director and a growing effort in 2005 has realized some important gains in several areas of the Armonía/Loro Parque Fundacion (LPF) Blue-

throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) Conservation Program in Bolivia — including an observed population increase of at least 100.

“As of January 2007, the critically endangered Blue-throated Macaw still numbers fewer than 250 individuals in the Beni Department (State) of Bolivia, where its population has declined over the years largely because of habitat alteration/disturbance and trapping,” says Armonia’s Hennessey.

The Armonia / Loro Parque Fundacion cooperative program began in 1995, according to Waugh at LPF. Today, it has three components:

- 1). Field Research based around population monitoring, surveying potential sites, and reviewing distributional limits and possible expansions.

- 2). An Education Component working with both urban and rural populations utilizing educational workshops.

- 3). Research and experimentation into factors that could increase the Blue-throated population. This includes considering the availability of suitable nesting sites and the competition over them. It is in this area that Bird Endowment has entered into an agreement to assist The Armonia / Loro Parque Fundacion program through funding from the United States.

El Beni-Factor™
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has become a benefactor of
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With her critical, year-round support, she provides weekly nest inspections by a field biologist during the breeding season. Her remote, adopted nesting site (which Name has designated as nest "N. C.") is located in the El Beni Department (State) of Bolivia, the only range of the critically endangered Blue-throated macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*).

The Nido Adoptivo™
project is part of the Armonia/Loro Parque Fundación Blue-throated Macaw Conservation Program in Bolivia. This project was designed by Bolivian NGO Asociación Armonia and Bird Endowment to improve the nesting success of Paraba Barba Azul (or Blue Beard macaw) as it is called in Bolivia.

Nido Adoptivo provides additional sites for all cavity-nesting birds in the Blue-throated macaw's range, thereby reducing nest-site competition. Nido Adoptivo is unique in providing GPS coordinates of the donor's personally named nest site as well as funding weekly visits by Field Biologists, who provide personalized seasonal reports on breeding activity at each El Beni-Factor donor's designated nest.

Bird Endowment's conservation efforts include Parent Rearing of Blue-throated macaws at The Blues Conservatory™ breeding facility in the United States.

Photo by Mauricio Herrera

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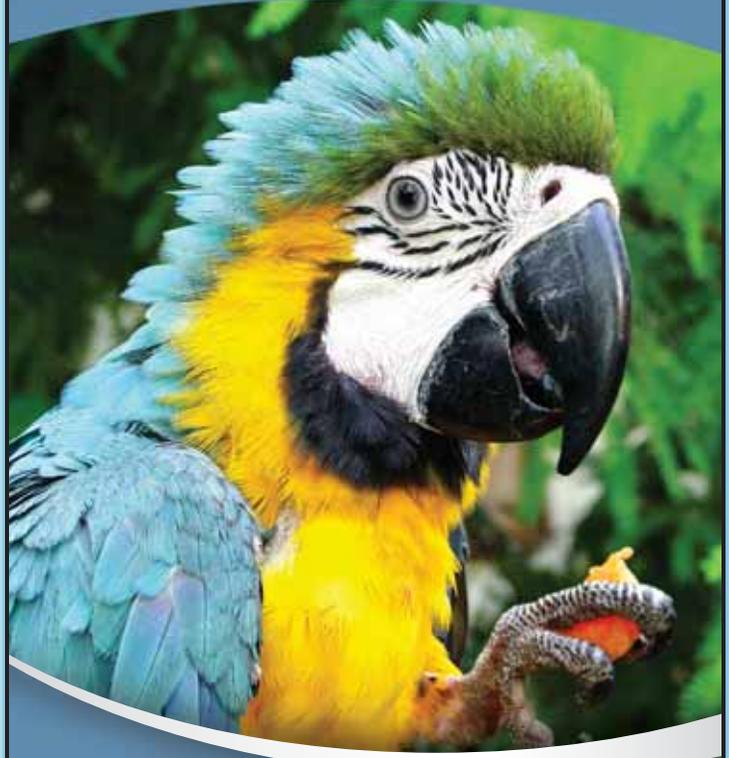
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