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# The Family Cracidae

RAZORBILLED CURASSOW  
(*Crax mitu mitu*)

HORNED GUAN  
(*Oreophasis derbianus*)

The family Cracidae includes the chachalacas, guans, and curassows. They tend to remind one of chickens, turkeys, or strange pheasants but they, in fact, stand well apart from all of the other gallinaceous birds. The Cracidae seem to be the most primitive family of gallinaceous birds and are now restricted to the New World tropics and subtropics. Our concern here is with the horned guan (*Oreophasis derbianus*) and the razorbilled curassow, both endangered birds that we should like to see established in aviculture.

The horned guan is, as the photograph shows, a remarkable ill-favored bird. Delacour and Amadon suggest that it probably dates back to shortly after the divergence of curassows and guans and that it retains some features of both but is closer to the guans. It is an aboreal bird that inhabits the mountains of southern Mexico and Guatemala. It is large and tame and only survives in a few of the most remote mountain forests, mainly on the volcanoes of Guatemala. This guan is rarely if ever found in aviaries because it is very difficult to observe much less catch. This is not due to the bird's shyness but to its small population and to the difficult, impassable terrain that it inhabits.

There are two races of the razorbilled curassow, the Amazonian race (*Crax mitu tuberosa*) and the eastern race (*Crax mitu mitu*) found only in eastern Brazil. It is this eastern race that is near extinction. It is a bird of the primal forest, even avoiding the areas of secondary undergrowth. The bare-faced curassow shares some of the razorbill's range and observers have noted a great similarity between the great booming song of the two species. Although the razorbill is endangered in the wild it is probably the most common curassow in captivity. It has been bred in America by Throp, Buteyn, Roer, Ollson and others and by several aviculturists in Europe.

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Razorbilled Curassow, *Crax mitu mitu*



Horned Guan, *Oreophasis derbianus*