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The Elusive Caninde

by

Scott D. Riviere, Susan L. Clubb, D.V.M.
and Kevin J. Clubb
Miami, Florida

It would seem a macaw must be rare when, until recent years, it was known only from four museum specimens. This rarity may stem from a limited range in an isolated area of Bolivia, and also from confusion with a similar species. Taxonomy is in dispute over the caninde macaw, *Ara caninde*, which has recently been referred to as the blue throated macaw, *Ara glaucogularis*. This bird was thought to be a variety of an immature of the blue and gold macaw, *Ara ararauna*, thus the Portuguese name "caninde" meaning blue and gold macaw was applied. This bird is now considered to be a distinct species with the proposed name *Ara glaucogularis*. Its distinguishing characteristics are the blue throat, rather than the black throat of the blue and gold, and a protruding beak that is longer and narrower. The body color is more aqua than blue and the caninde is a slightly smaller bird. The bare facial area of the caninde is less extensive than that of the blue and gold, with broader blue facial feather lines crossing the cheeks. The blue and gold has black feather lines crossing the cheeks.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE CANINDE

Information on the caninde's range and natural history is lacking in ornithological literature. An interview, however, with a Bolivian resident familiar with the trapping and export of macaws, provided basic information pertaining to range and habits of the caninde. Confirmation by an ornithologist would, no doubt, provide for a more complete understanding of the bird.

The range was described as being a strip approximately 60 by 200 miles in the Department (state) of El Beni in Northern Bolivia. He doubts the existence of these birds in Argentina, Paraguay or Brazil.

El Beni is a large state about the size of Kansas. It is sparsely populated.



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Although 70% of the land of Bolivia is tropical lowland, only 20% of the population of six million inhabit these lands. The region is tropical with average temperatures of 23°-27°C and an average annual rainfall of 60 to 80 inches. The topography is mostly a flat plain at an altitude of 500 to 1,000 ft. It is drained by several large rivers which are tributaries of the Amazon. These rivers are banked by jungle strips five to ten miles wide, which comprise the birds' habitat. Beyond that are miles of pampas which are used for cattle ranching. Roads are uncommon in the region and access is primarily by boat and airplane, contributing to the seclusion of these birds for many years. The range extends between the cities of Reyes and San Nicolas. Blue and gold macaws occupy the entire range and green winged macaws, *Ara chloroptera*, are also found in the eastern section. Some of the highest concentrations of caninides are found in the regions near San Nicolas and Santa Rosa. Breeding occurs, as with blue and golds, generally in December and January, during the rainy season.

Flocking has not been observed with caninides, as with blue and golds, and the two species cannot be distinguished in flight or at a distance due to similarity in appearance. These factors make true population estimates impossible. However, by comparison of numbers of caninides trapped to that of blue and golds, the caninde population is estimated to be as high as 5,000 to 7,000. In capturing macaws, a caller bird is commonly used to lure free-flying birds into trees where snares have been placed. It appears that caninides were not captured previous to 1979 because their range was unknown and only blue and gold callers were used to which the caninde would not respond. The disproportionate number of male birds entering the U.S. has been attributed to the use of a female caninde caller bird. When the caller bird was changed in late 1983 more



A good pair of caninde macaws. They are the parents of the first chick hatched in captivity.

female birds became available.

The first caninde was exported to Europe in 1976. After 1979 they became available with more frequency, and between 1979 and 1984 approxi-

mately 175 were shipped to the United States and Europe. In April of 1984 they were placed on Appendix 1 of CITES (Congress on International Trade in Endangered Species) which prohibited

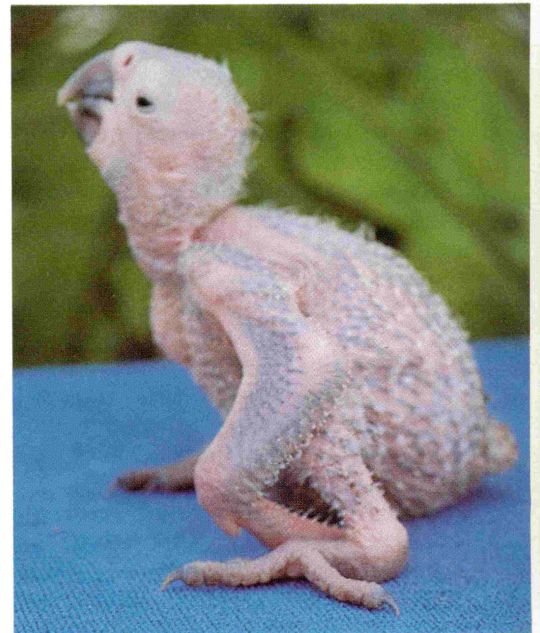
further trade in the species. They were also given protection in Bolivia in 1984. The greatest protection afforded this species, however, lies in its isolation and elusiveness.

A CAPTIVE BREEDING OF THE CANINDE MACAW

Five pairs of wild caught canindes, imported from Bolivia, were sent to the Last Chance Breeding Farm in Miami in 1981. What appeared to be the best pair was retained and the others were sold. The pair were together for three years prior to breeding and were thought to be young adults at the time of acquisition. Canindes are nervous and shy and this pair has remained so.

The birds are housed in a chain link

Photos by Susan Clubb



Baby caninde macaw, the first captive bred.

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The young caninde all feathered out.

outdoor flight measuring 6 feet tall, 7 feet wide and 7 feet long, with an earthen floor. The flight is in an aviary complex with a center walkway. Half of the flight adjoining the walkway is roofed with sheet metal. The other half is open allowing the birds access to rain and sunlight. The roof is cooled in very hot weather by sprinklers. The nest box was suspended horizontally from the ceiling in the protected portion of the flight. The walls adjoining the hallway and between the flights are partially solid, but the birds can see other pairs of birds and workers through the unobstructed parts of the chain link fencing. The nest box is 18 by 18 inches by 48 inches long, constructed of 5/8 inch plywood and wire lined. Two by two inch strips of pine wood were placed around the door and fastened inside the box for chewing material. This pair, perhaps due to their nervous disposition, will reduce wood to pulp quickly. The hen chewed large holes in the wooden sides of the box prior to laying. Four inches of pine shavings with 5% Seven dust added was used for nest material.

The first egg was laid from the perch on April 22, 1984 and was found broken on the floor. Two eggs were subsequently laid in the box on April 24th and 26th. The latter were infertile, so were pulled to induce the laying of a second clutch. A clutch of two eggs was laid in the box on June 10th and 12th. These eggs were fertile and were removed from the nest on June 19th as one was cracked. The crack was repaired with fingernail polish and the egg was placed in an incubator. The second egg was fostered under a scarlet macaw, *Ara macao*, hen which was already setting on two of her own eggs. The cracked egg hatched two days early but the chick died shortly afterward with a retained yolk sac. Contamination at the site of the crack may have caused its death.

Based upon blood vessel development observed while candling, the unmarked caninde egg incubated by the scarlet macaw hen appeared to be intermediate in age between her two eggs. The caninde egg was the same size as the scarlet eggs. As expected, the first scarlet hatched on July 9th, the caninde on July 10th and the second scarlet on July 11th. All three chicks were pulled at five days of age and were hand-raised to increase their chances of survival. The chicks were virtually indistinguishable at this age. They were placed in a brooder at 94°F until pin feathers emerged and were then

removed to a warm room (78-86°F). The growth rate of the caninde was more rapid than that of the scarlets. Her pin feathers appeared sooner and her eyes opened three to four days earlier than the oldest scarlet. The chicks were raised on a formula consisting of cooked Purina Monkey Chow to which was added peanut butter, creamed corn, oatmeal with apple-sauce and banana. The chicks were fed by syringe four times daily until removed from the brooder at which time they were cut to three feedings per day.

The adult birds were fed a staple feed mixture containing sunflower seed, peanuts, corn, Purina Monkey Chow, Zeigler Brothers parrot pellets and Purina high protein dog kibble. During the breeding season they were supplemented with a soft food mixture containing whole wheat bread, fresh vegetables and fruits in season such as apples, oranges, bananas, beets, squash, turnips, carrots, and spinach. Powdered calcium, vitamins and minerals, and boiled eggs were added to the soft food. Fresh corn on the cob is also offered daily to birds on eggs and those with chicks. While most of the psittacines at Last Chance Farm eagerly consume the softfood mixture it is poorly accepted by the canindes.

Chicks of other macaw species were in the nursery at the time the caninde was being raised which allowed comparison with scarlets, blue and golds and red fronted macaws, *Ara rubrogenys*. Her temperament was not as amiable as that of a blue and gold or scarlet chick and she remained standoffish and shy, like the red fronted. The caninde was surgically sexed prior to weaning and found to be a hen. She was weaned onto a diet of Monkey Chow, peanuts and corn on the cob and was eating on her own toward the end of September 1984.

Dual protection by CITES and the Bolivian government make it unlikely that any more canindes will be exported legally, consequently captive breeding is necessary to maintain the species in aviculture. The Last Chance Farm staff is confident that this is just the beginning of breeding successes worldwide that will preserve and establish this rare and beautiful macaw.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS LAST CHANCE FARM STAFF

Bern. M. Levine, DVM, owner, Last Chance Farm; Kevin Clubb, Scott Riviere and Fred Cubbedge, aviculturists; Diane Cramm, animal health technician; Susan L. Clubb, DVM, veterinary care. ●

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