

# Advances for the Blue-throated Macaw

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ARMONÍA

Blue-throated Macaw breeding in nest-box.

The Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) is a critically endangered species found in the savannas of Beni, north-east Bolivia. Since 1995 the LPF has supported Armonía of Bolivia in its actions for the recovery of this species, in particular to avoid any illegal trafficking of birds and to reduce the loss and deterioration of its preferred habitat. Part of the Armonía/LPF Blue-throated Macaw conservation programme has been a wide search of the enormous savannas to find more birds. More have been found and, as reported in Cyanopsitta N°87, there was a recent unprecedented

find of a flock of 70 birds on one farm, raising the total wild population to as many as 350.

Now come important news from Armonía that it has managed to purchase the farm where this concentration of Blue-throated Macaws lives. This 4,254-hectare ranch is located in Yacuma Province to the northwest of the city of Trinidad, the capital of Beni.

The ranch represents a typical example of the habitat for this species, with seasonally inundated savannas and dispersed higher areas free of water which form islands of palms and other trees. The purchase of the ranch was made possible by donations from the American Bird Conservancy and World Land Trust. This important step now provides the first protected area for this species, and the Armonía/LPF Blue-throated Macaw programme can begin habitat protection measures that have not been possible to achieve until now because of a lack of land owner permission. Among others, these can include habitat restoration studies, experimentation with natural and artificial nest designs, and the exploration of long-term sustainability through ecotourism.

The project installed 57 nest-boxes during the 2007–2008 season, 51 in the southern area and 6 in the north, some sponsored by The Bird Endowment. The nests in the northern area were only explored by Blue-and-Yellow Macaws *Ara ararauna*, but in the south four nests were occupied by Blue-throated Macaws, 24 by Blue-and-Yellow Macaws, and by other animal species (Table 1). Two of the Blue-throated Macaw nests were successful, one producing one chick and the other with three, all fledging in March.

From January to mid-May the principal markets in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz were monitored for parrots in the pet trade. No Blue-throated macaws were seen, but a total of 5,714 parrots of 19 different species were recorded, including three individuals of the Bolivian endemic and threatened species, the Red-fronted Macaw (*Ara rubrogenys*). Of all parrots recorded, 86% were of five species, the Yellow-chevroned Parakeet (*Brotogeris chiriri*)—26%, Blue-fronted Amazon (*Amazona aestiva*)—22%, Green-cheeked Parakeet (*Pyrhura molinae*)—17%, Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)—11% and Blue-winged Parrotlet (*Forpus xanthopterygius*)—10%. With regard to Blue-throated Macaw protection, these statistics indicate that vigilance still has great importance.

The other important advance has been the signing of a formal

agreement between the LPF, Armonía, the Zoo Fauna Sudamericana (ZFS—zoological park of the Municipality of Santa Cruz), the Noel Kempff Mercado Natural History Museum (also located in Santa Cruz and affiliated to the Autonomous University Gabriel Rene Moreno). The agreement formalises the initiation of a managed cooperative breeding programme in Bolivia, as part of the international conservation effort for the Blue-throated Macaw, with the participation of the LPF as international studbook keeper, supporting the programme with expertise and funding.

Table 1. Occupancy of nest-boxes, 2007–08 Season

Species	Common Name	No. Occupied
<i>Ara ararauna</i>	Blue-and-Yellow Macaw	24
<i>Aratinga leucophthalmus</i>	White-eyed Parakeet	6
<i>Polistes spp.</i>	Wasp	5
<i>Ara glaucogularis</i>	Blue-throated Macaw	4
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Honey Bee	4
<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	Black-bellied Whistling Duck	3
<i>Machetornis rixosus</i>	Cattle Tyrant	1
<i>Cairina moschata</i>	Muscovy Duck	1
Empty		11
Total nest-boxes		59

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