

This is the first banded pair that has attempted to reproduce in an artificial nest. Both individuals fledged from Nido Adoptivo™ nest boxes years ago. The pair was monitored during the 2013-14 breeding year. Unfortunately they did not lay eggs, but hopefully next time they will succeed.





# Saving the Blues™

IN BOLIVIA

Since inception the Nido Adoptivo™ project has had an outsized impact on the wild population of Blue-throated Macaws in their endemic range in El Beni, Bolivia. Documented fledgings from the next box supplementation strategy have added 46 Blue-throated Macaw chicks since 2007.



2 BTM chicks fledged from Nido Adoptivo CZ in 2013

The impact depends on which population estimate is used. Bird Endowment accepts a population count of c. 300 BTMs in 2007. That means that since the start Nido Adoptivo™ has provided about 15 percent of population growth through supplemental nest boxes. However, if you were to accept (as does BirdLife International) that there are now fewer than 115 individuals in the wild, then the 46 chicks documented in the nest boxes represent 40 percent of the BirdLife citation today.

The most recent breeding season for confirmed results is 2013-14. Seven Blue-throated Macaw chicks fledged from three nest boxes and did not need—in any instance—supplemental feedings. A fourth nest box was occupied by Blue-throated Macaws but the outcome was disappointing.

The supplemental nest box project was initiated in 2007 by Bird Endowment in collaboration with the Armonía/Loro Parque Fundación Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) Conservation Program.

“This is really working,” says Bennett Hennessey, executive director of Armonía. “I mean that seriously, we are having a really strong impact in the conservation of the Blue-throated Macaw in the Loreto (Marban Province) area. We are reporting (in 2014) groups of Blue-throated Macaws in the area regaining their flocking winter behavior.”

Perhaps the most important thing, Hennessey says, is “the boxes are now being used by Blue-throated Macaws that have fledged from nest boxes. Which also means there will be a

better acceptance of the birds to new boxes in the future. In a few more years if all continues as it is, we will save the species from any extinction threat.”

This validates the Nido Adoptivo™ concept for empowering in-the-wild-conservation for domestic aviculturists and bird lovers. Each donor-participant is honored as an El Beni-Factor™ for a year and listed in the archives forever. <http://www.birdendowment.org/inBolivia/nidoAdoptivo.shtml>

One of the principal factors affecting the population size of the Blue Beard Macaw (as it is called locally) is the lack of available nest sites and competition with the more common and abundant Blue-and-yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) that shares the same ecological niche. The Nido Adoptivo™ objective is to increase the annual reproductive output of the Blue-throated Macaw wild population by utilizing nest boxes attached to trees.

The Bolivian nonprofit Armonía provides certain services to Nido Adoptivo™ for each \$250 donation from Bird Endowment. These include construction and placement of an ‘Adopted Nest’ box with donor initials on it, GPS coordinates, regular monitoring by field biologists, and maintaining site records to provide a final summary of nest box activity. (This legalese makes the donation to the 501(c)(3) Bird Endowment tax-deductible with IRS in the United States).



Costs of the nest boxes themselves are only a small part of the project. The all-volunteer nonprofit Bird Endowment collects no fees (and in fact, pays for the certificates and mailing among other domestic expenses). Most of the expenses in Bolivia are incurred in the field work.

Gustavo Sanchez, general coordinator of the Blue-throated Macaw Conservation Program, reported that during the past



Nest boxes are trekked in by horseback.



On the way to band BTM chicks in 2014 Nido Adoptivo™ nest box

(2013-14) season 27 nests boxes were placed on cattle ranches in the southern area of distribution around Loreto. These are: Villa Lupita, La Esperancita, Las Trancas, Santa Rosa Justiniano, Getafe, La Asunta and Cantina. Of them, 22 were occupied by some species of bird while five showed no activity. Four were occupied by the Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*) but unfortunately only three were successful; 10 were occupied by the Blue-and-yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*), seven by Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), and one by Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*).

The American Federation of Aviculture donated 30 stainless steel leg bands to Bird Endowment for its Nido Adoptivo™ project in Bolivia. Some were used on Blue-throated Macaw chicks this year. Following are highlights:



Close view of AFA stainless steel leg band on BTM chick in 2014 Nido Adoptivo™

Nest box BH, sponsored by Brenton Head: Blue-throated Macaw laid 3 eggs, all hatched and fledged successfully. Two chicks were banded with #11-AFA-511 and #11-AFA-512.

Nest box RO, sponsored by Roger O'Connell: Blue-throated Macaw laid 3 eggs, all hatched but only 2 chicks fledged, 1 chick died because the Totaf Palm fell with the nest box caused by wind and rain. Only one chick was banded with #11 AFA-513

Nest box JB, sponsored by Janice Boyd: Blue-throated Macaw laid 2 eggs, both hatched and fledged successfully. Two chicks were banded with #11-AFA-514 and #11-AFA-515.

Nest box NW, sponsored by NorthWest Exotic Bird Society: Blue-throated Macaw laid 2 eggs, but unfortunately they were broken. Apparently caused by Blue-and-yellow Macaw.

The 2013-14 breeding season saw experimentation with ever smaller nest entry holes, trying to find that ideal size in order to have more boxes occupied by Blue-throated and fewer by Blue-and-yellow Macaws. Most of the older nest boxes have been renovated to that end. Obviously, some have yet to be modified. Twenty new nest boxes in the Barba Azul Nature Reserve.



Another BTM chick being banded in 2014 Nido Adoptivo™



BTM chick lowered in bucket from 2014 Nido Adoptivo™ nest box in order to apply AFA leg band



Armonia field workers put AFA leg band on BTM chick in 2014 Nido Adoptivo™