

# Military Macaw Nests in Trees:

## IF NOT HIGH, THEN DEEP

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Photos by Katherine Renton/LPF

Throughout its geographical distribution the threatened Military Macaw (*Ara militaris*) is normally associated with using relatively inaccessible cliffs for nesting. However, on the coast of Jalisco in Mexico, a population of the subspecies *mexicanus* nests in trees, which brings about different ecological constraints. The Loro Parque Fundación supported Dr. Katherine Renton, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and her team to study the population, with the objective to help its conservation. The researchers have recently reported the results of their studies on the nest-selection of these macaws.\*

The first point they make is that these Military macaws are like other large-bodied secondary cavity-nesters, being constrained to use cavities of sufficient size to permit access, while also selecting characteristics to reduce predation. The researchers located tree-cavity nests of Military Macaws in tropical dry semi-deciduous forest; and for each nest they determined cavity characteristics, and compared the structure of nest-trees with nearest-neighbour trees. They also established transects in each of deciduous, semi-deciduous, and oak forest to determine tree cavity availability over an area of 6 ha. Military Macaw nest-sites occurred most frequently in cavities of live parota (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) trees. The nest-trees had significantly larger diameter and branching height than the four nearest neighbour trees, indicating that the macaws selected tall, emergent trees as nest-sites.

Cavities used as nest-sites by the Military Macaws were also in significantly larger trees, at a greater height, and had larger entrance



