

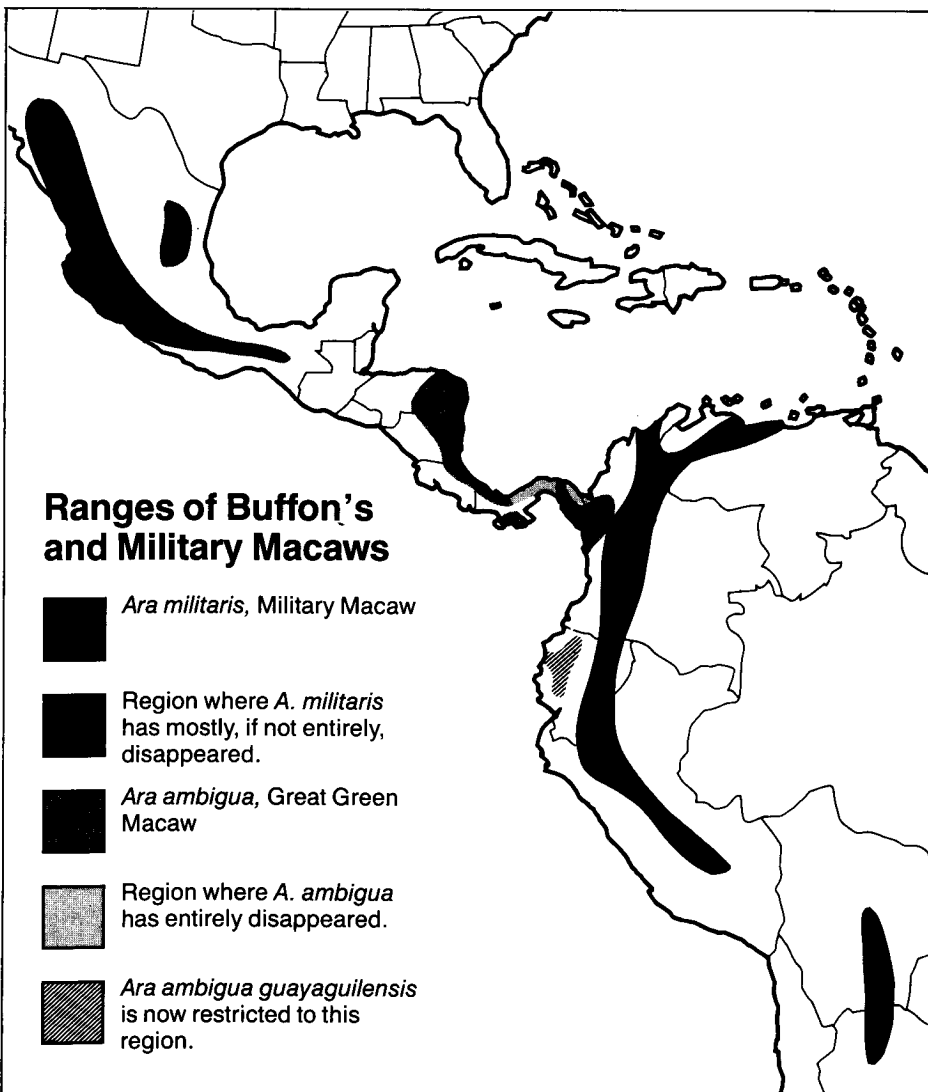
# Recognize . . . Don't Hybridize

by Joanne Abramson  
Fort Bragg, California

In the last decade, aviculture has increasingly taken a strong role in conservation. The need to maintain self-sustaining captive populations of pure species cannot be over emphasized. For genetically sound captive breeding to occur, there needs to be a significant population of genetically pure parent stock and careful pairing of the chicks. As this article shows, hybrids create a particularly difficult concern because they have physical traits from both parents. Several Buffon's mated with Militaries are known to exist. In the wild, macaws do not hybridize. In captivity, they are entirely dependent on our choice for a mate. Although macaws will interbreed, when given the option they will choose their own species. Long term pairs can and will accept new mates. They are truly beautiful creatures that are not improved by our meddling. We are all aware of habitat destruction caused by man and nature. Yet, by hybridizing, we destroy their unique genetic material. Hybridizing has no place in responsible aviculture.

Please complete the questionnaire (among the center insert sheets) so we know what the current status is of true Buffon's Macaws. If you need a mate for your Buffon's or have an extra one that needs a home or mate, let us know what you are looking for and we will try to get potential mates together. Contact: Buffon's, c/o P.O. Box 620707, Woodside, California 94062.

Photos and text on pages 36 and 37 describe the differences between the Buffon's and Military Macaw and highlight how difficult it is to identify some of the hybrids.



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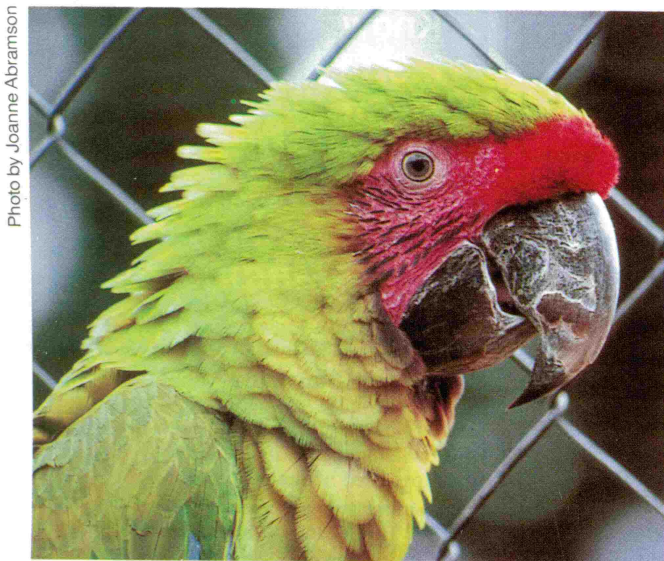
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## Buffon's (or Great Green) Macaw (*Ara ambigua*)



Mature Buffon's Macaw



Note the narrow, pale grey eye ring of the Buffon's.

# Comparison Between Buffon's and Military Macaws

### HEAD:

**Buffon's:** Massive head and beak comparable to the Greenwing or Hyacinth. Large, pink facial skin patch flushes easily to red when excited.

**Military:** Smaller head comparable to a Scarlet, or Blue and Gold. Small, pink facial patch flushes to red when excited.

### EYE COLORATION:

**Buffon's:** (Mature) dark charcoal grey with a thin outer pale grey eye ring.

**Military:** (Mature) Greenish ring closest to the pupil, with an outer gold eye ring.

### BODY:

**Buffon's:** Large, barrel-shaped body, unique to the macaw family, 85 cm (34") in length. Weights range from 1264 to 1587 grams. Overall body coloration is bright lime green. Polytypic, the Ecuadorian race *guayaquilensis* having a smaller bill and greener underwing.

**Military:** Elongated type common in the macaw family, 70 cm (28") in length. Weights range from 862 to 1074 grams. Overall coloration is olive green. Polytypic, with the Mexican race *mexicana* being slightly larger, and the Bolivian race *boliviana* having a reddish-brown throat patch.

### TAIL:

**Buffon's:** From quill to tip it is red orange, orange, greenish-yellow with a bright turquoise tip. The length and width are larger in proportion with the bird.

**Military:** The tail is reddish-brown with a medium blue tip, shorter and less wide than those of the Buffon's.

### DISTRIBUTION:

**Buffon's:** Found in a relatively small area of southern Central America (see map) with an isolated population in southwest Ecuador. Prefers remote, humid lowland and foothill forests. Occurs locally along the Caribbean coast.\*

**Military:** Occurs in Mexico and South America, notably absent from Central America (see map). Favors foothills and subtropical mountain slopes. Ranges in humid or moderate rainfall regions as well as drier areas. Prefers canyons and other precipitous areas to roost and nest.\*

### SOCIAL HABITS:

**Buffon's:** A solitary macaw, seen mostly in pairs or small groups of up to four birds. Infrequently have been seen in groups of up to ten birds.\*

**Military:** Highly gregarious birds which roost and feed in large flocks. They have been observed in flight in groups of 100 to 300 birds.\*

### NESTS:

**Buffon's:** Undescribed, believed to be in tree hollows. Eggs are very large, white and roundish. Matures in four to five years.

**Military:** Prefers inaccessible canyon cliff sites. Eggs are white and elliptical shaped. Matures in three years.

### STATUS:

**Buffon's:** Declining throughout most of its former range due to substantial deforestation. Extirpated over large areas in Panama and elsewhere that forest destruction has occurred.\*

**Military:** Threatened in some parts of its range, notably Mexico due to trapping and Bolivia where their population is isolated and small. Overall population appears stable at this time.\*

### CAPTIVE BREEDING:

**Buffon's:** Few were imported prior to their listing as Appendix I. An unknown number of breeding pairs exist in captivity. Serious captive propagation is required to ensure their survival.

**Military:** Considering the number of birds imported, statistically few are being bred. More concentrated effort is needed.

\*From Robert S. Ridgely's "The Distribution, Status and Conservation of Neotropical Mainland Parrots," Volume 1, Dec. 1982.

**Military Macaw**  
(*Ara militaris*)



Photo by Joanne Abramson

*Mature Military Macaw*

**Hybrid Buffon's/Military Macaw**



Photo by Bob Hensley

*Mature Buffon's/Military hybrid*

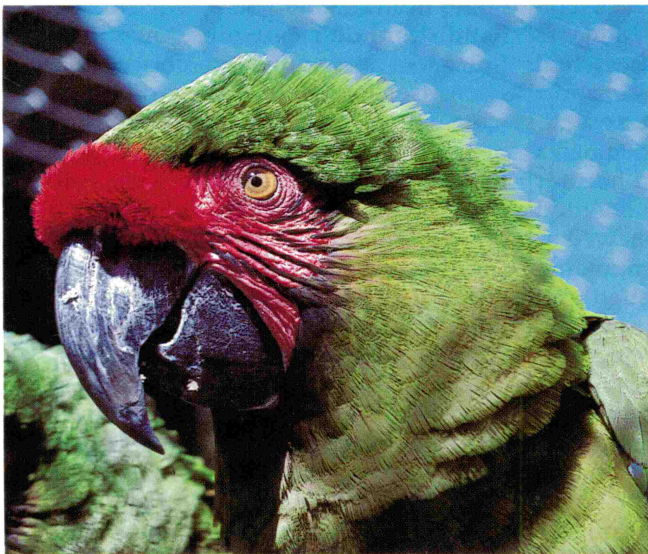


Photo by Joanne Abramson

*Note the gold outer eye ring of the Military.*

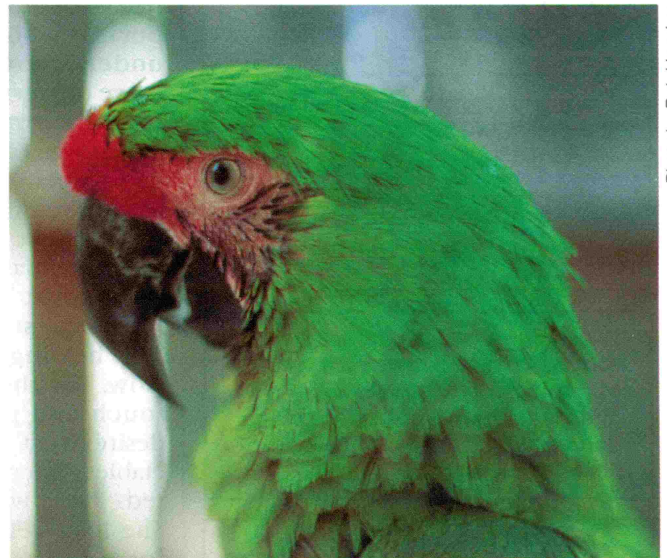


Photo by Bob Hensley

*Comparison of the central tail feathers:  
Top — Military Macaw  
Bottom — Buffon's Macaw*

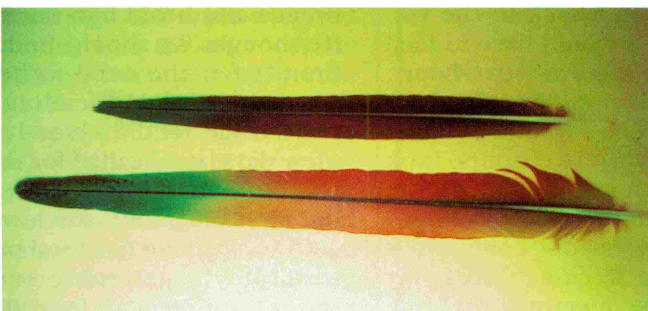


Photo by Joanne Abramson

(The following information is based on one known cross of a Buffon's cock and a Military hen. Variations would be expected to occur in hybridizing.)

**HEAD:** Smaller Military-type head and facial patch.

**EYE COLORATION:** (Mature) same as Military, gold outer ring with greenish ring closest to the pupil. (Immature) would be dark as in all baby macaws and could be confused with the Buffon's.

**BODY:** Broader Buffon's-type breast 65 cm (26") in length. Weight 1247 grams. Overall coloration is Military olive green.

**TAIL:** Buffon's-type coloration, but has darker hues. Width and length are smaller.