

Macaws

Everything You Need To Know About Macaws



The Amazing and Majestic Macaw



The Complete Guide

By

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What in the World is a Macaw?

Simply put, a Macaw is a bird. More specifically, it is called a New World Parrot, but most people don't really consider the Macaw to be a parrot, because in the grand scheme of things, when it comes to true parrots, only six types of Macaws fit into that classification.

In the wild, Macaws are found in several different places, including Mexico, South America, the Caribbean, and Central America. Macaws are found in both rain forests and wooded areas.

Those who don't really look hard enough see the Macaw as 'just another parrot.' Like parrots, the Macaw has a long and colorful tail. They come in a variety of colors. They talk. They squawk. They do many things that parrots do. But if you look closely, you will see that the facial pattern is different, as is the beak.

Macaws also come in different sizes. Some are small; some are 'average' sized, while others grow to be quite large. In fact, among true parrots, the Hyacinth Macaw is actually the largest in size.

Overall, seventeen different parrots are actually Macaws. Most types of Macaws have no hair around their beak, which is one of the features that set them apart from other parrots. Macaws in the wild are on the endangered species list.

Macaws are extremely social, and highly intelligent. Unlike many other bird species, these magnificent creatures actually form a bond with the humans in their lives. That bond becomes so strong that the Macaw may even view the human as his or her mate.

For this reason, Macaws are called 'companion' birds, and if you don't intend to keep the Macaw for life, simply do not get one. You need to realize, right away, that Macaws can live as long as one hundred years, or more. This is, however, rare, and most Macaws live somewhere between fifty and sixty five years. That's still a very long time – and a very long commitment.

If you are looking for a pet that will offer you lifelong companionship, love, and loyalty, the Macaw may be just what you are looking for. Just make sure that you have the time to devote to your pet. Without your time, attention, and love, your Macaw won't live a very happy – or healthy – life, and he can make your life absolutely miserable as well.

Read on to learn more about these majestic birds...

Different Types of Macaws

As mentioned earlier, there are many different types of Macaws...seventeen to be exact, and this doesn't count the hybrids. The seventeen Macaws are divided into six groups, as follows:

- The Anodorhynchus group includes the Glaucous Macaw, Hyacinth Macaw, and Lear's Macaw.
- The Cyanopsitta group includes the Little Blue Macaw (Spix's Macaw).
- The Ara group includes the Blue and Gold Macaw, the Blue Throated Macaw, the Military Macaw, the Great Green Macaw (Buffon's Macaw), the Scarlet Macaw (Aracanga), the Green Winged Macaw, the Red Fronted Macaw, and the Chestnut Fronted Macaw (Severe Macaw).

This group also includes many Macaws that are now extinct, which include the Dominican Green and Yellow Macaw, the Jamaican Green and Yellow Macaw, the Jamaican Red Macaw, the Lesser Antillean Macaw, the Cuban Red Macaw, and the Saint Croix Macaw.

- The Orthopsittaca group includes the Red Bellied Macaw
- The Primolius group includes the Blue Headed Macaw, the Blue Winged Macaw (Illiger's Macaw), and the Golden Collared Macaw.
- The Diopsittaca group includes the Red Shouldered Macaw (Hahn's Macaw).

Those Macaws that are kept as companion pets come from the Anodorhynchus group and the Ara group. They include the Blue and Yellow Macaw, the Blue and Gold Macaw, the Scarlet Macaw, the Red and Yellow Macaw, the Green Wing Macaw, the Maroon Macaw, the Red and Green Macaw, the Red and Blue Macaw, the Military Macaw, the Red Fronted Macaw, the Red Crown Macaw (also known as the Crowned Macaw), and the Hyacinth Macaw.

A hybrid Macaw is simply a cross between two different types of Macaws. This, of course, results in varying colors. What breeders have found is that when a hybrid is bred, if it is a male, it looks more like its mother, and if it is a female, it looks more like its father. The two most popular hybrid Macaws are called Harlequins and Catalina's. Most breeders don't like hybrids, because they feel that this brings the true Macaw closer to extinction.

Macaws in the Wild

As stated, most Macaws are now on the endangered species list. This breed of bird is quickly disappearing in the wild, which may be why it is so important that good people like you continue to make homes for these beautiful, loving creatures. To date, there are six species of Macaws that have already become extinct.

One species, the Little Blue Macaw (Spix's Macaw) is extinct in the wild, but not in captivity. It is also feared that the Glaucous Macaw has become extinct in the wild, but this is not certain yet. There have, however, only been two sightings of the Glaucous in the 20th century.

So, why are these beautiful birds becoming extinct in the wild? It isn't because people are bringing them in as pets. It simply doesn't work that way. They are becoming extinct because they are dying out, largely due to illegal trapping and the destruction of forests and rain forests.

It is true that illegally trapped Macaws enter the bird market. However, the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna regulates the International trade of all Macaws. Today, if a Scarlet is captured in the wild, it may not be sold.

For other species of Macaws, one must obtain permits, and must not exceed export quotas. Thankfully, while this hasn't solved the problem entirely, it has helped the situation ease just a bit – but not enough to remove the species from the endangered species list.

Macaws in the wild tend to live longer than the Macaws that are kept in captivity. It seems that there is no absolute knowledge as to the exact number of years that wild Macaws live, but experts believe that they can live for as long as 150 years in the wild.

While most Macaw owners will have their pets wings clipped, so that they are unable to fly for long or high distances, and in an effort to reduce or prevent feather plucking, wild Macaws are known as very strong fliers.

In the wild, Macaws live on seeds, fruit, and nuts. Some experts believe that they also feed on insects. The wild Macaw doesn't have too many predators – largely due to their size and their keen instincts and senses. They tend to make their nests in holes, and prefer natural holes in cliffs, and holes in trees. For the most part, the wild Macaws nest is in more danger than the actual bird, because their

nests are often destroyed by other animals, which would be predators, but didn't find the Macaw at home...because he was smart enough not to be there.

Acquiring a Macaw

Acquiring a Macaw isn't usually very hard. The hard part is making sure that you are getting your Macaw from a responsible breeder, and to ensure that by getting your Macaw that you are not contributing to the illegal trade that goes on, which does, in fact, endanger wild Macaws.

Do not purchase your Macaw from a pet store, if you can avoid it. In many cases, these birds have not been well cared for. Furthermore, you don't know how they obtained the Macaw. Birds purchased from pet stores have higher instances of bird disease, and they usually cost more.

Your best bet is always to acquire the Macaw from a private breeder or aviary. Another good option is to purchase your Macaw from a private individual (legally), or to adopt one from a human society or rescue organization.

Finding a breeder isn't that difficult. You can get recommendations from friends, bird clubs, and even your veterinarian. You can also search for a local breeder using online resources, such as the numerous sites that list birds for sale. You can also find a breeder through various bird related organizations.

A good breeder will operate a closed aviary. They will have their birds tested for disease and genetic problems, and they will always quarantine new birds. A good breeder will also practice responsible breeding habits, and keep a clean aviary.

If you are getting a Macaw from a private individual or a rescue center, use caution. These birds have already been trained, and have grown close to someone else. They may have also been mistreated. Get to know the bird that you plan to adopt before you actually go through with it, if possible.

Finally, be prepared to pay the cost. The cost of Macaws depends on numerous factors, but you can expect to pay anywhere from \$600 upwards of \$10,000 for a Macaw. Again, it depends on numerous factors, and you just have to check with the breeders in your area for a definitive price.

Before you begin your search, make absolutely sure that it is legal for you to own a Macaw in your area. It is legal in most areas of the United States, but some cities or townships do have laws against it, because Macaws can be extremely noisy when they want to be.

No matter where you acquire your Macaw, the important thing to realize is that if you really want one, you will find one – and if you take your time with the process, you will find the right one for you...your new, lifelong companion.

Housing a Macaw

Before you bring your Macaw home, you need to build or purchase the largest cage that you can afford, in terms of money and space. These birds need lots of room – even if you have a smaller Macaw.

Ideally, inside of the cage, the Macaw will be able to fully spread his or her wings, without touching any part of the cage while doing so. Therefore, when you purchase a cage, realize that the largest wing span of any Macaw – the Hyacinth – measures about 3.5 feet.

The cage should have at least two perches – and preferably more. The bird should be able to easily move from one perch to another, without the cage itself getting in the way. Purchase a cage that allows you to reposition the perches as you see fit.

The cage – whether purchased or homemade – absolutely must be made of durable materials. The Macaw has a very strong beak. It is strong enough to easily crack the hardest shelled nuts. It is strong enough to snap bones with very little effort. Consider this when you purchase or make a cage, and also realize that Macaws enjoy chewing.

Remember that Macaws are quite intelligent, and they are known as superior escape artists when it comes to opening the cage door. Your cage must have a lock on the door – which your Macaw cannot figure out. Look for cages that have escape-proof latches on them, or purchase such latches separately and install them...and then realize that this may not even prevent him from figuring it out.

Ideally, you will have your cage attached to a flight cage. Essentially, this means that your Macaw has two large rooms to call his own. The flight cage is fairly bare, and the purpose of it is to allow your Macaw some flying room, in the safety of his cage. Flight cages typically have a perch at one end.

Unlike many other animals, most birds, including the Macaw, do not require any 'bedding' materials in their cages. However, your Macaw may enjoy some potential nesting materials added to the cage. Just be sure that nothing that you are adding is potentially dangerous for the Macaw. Most people line the bottom of the cage with newspaper for better absorption and easier cleaning. However, your cage should also have a floor that allows droppings to fall down to a pan underneath, which can be removed from the cage.

Finally, when it comes to cages, again, make sure that you get the biggest cage that you can afford. There is no such thing as a cage that is too large, and the more space that you're Macaw has to call his very own, the happier he will be.

Feeding a Macaw

When you consider what you will feed your Macaw, it is important to remember what Macaws actually eat in the wild. Remember that Macaws, despite how long they have been kept as pets, are still not considered 'domesticated' by the standard definition of the word, and because of how long they live, even captive birds have ancestors that were in the wild just one, two, or three generations ago.

With this in mind, wild Macaws feed on seeds, nuts and fruits, and some believe insects as well. Captive birds, however, survive nicely on just seeds, nuts and fruits. The important thing is that the foods that they eat be full of oils, and high in calories. Macaws have a great deal of energy, and burn off the calories very quickly.

When you start shopping for food for your Macaw, you will see a wide variety of commercially prepared, formulated pellets. These formulated diets can be good for your Macaw, because they provide all of the nutrients and vitamins that your bird needs. At the same time, however, these pellets generally do not contain phytonutrients, which are found in seeds, grains, vegetables, and fruits, and are important to your Macaws health.

Also realize that just as you would become extremely bored if you ate the same thing day in and day out, your Macaw would also appreciate a bit of variety, which isn't offered by the pellets.

What this means is that you should feed your Macaw pellets, but you should also give him a good mix of dried fruits and fresh fruits, nuts, and of course, seeds. Raw vegetables will also be appreciated, such as carrots, cucumbers, zucchini, and leafy greens. Fresh fruits that your Macaw will enjoy include plums, pears, grapes, oranges, apples, cherries, mangos, bananas, all types of berries, and papayas.

Of all of the fruits and vegetables that are available, your Macaw can happily eat any of them. However, you must never allow your Macaw to eat avocados. These are toxic for him. To address the need for 'meat,' which wild Macaws get from insects, you can safely feed your Macaw legumes and cooked chicken. As you can see, you don't have to shop for your Macaws food at the pet store...you shop for it at the grocery store, when you are buying food for you and your family.

All foods can be placed in a food dish, which is connected to the cage. This way, at least, the food starts out 'clean.' Macaws are rather messy eaters, and you will find bits of fruit slung from one end of the cage to the other fairly often. Of course, you should make sure that your Macaw has a water bottle, and that it is always full of fresh water. Even if the water bottle is not empty, pour out the old water, and fill it with fresh water each day.

Furnishing the Macaws Home

Exercise is very important for your Macaw, and the level of exercise that he routinely gets depends on numerous factors, including how much time he spends in and out of his cage.

For the most part, he will get plenty of exercise outside of the cage, but of course, our lives are not suited to having a large bird flying around the house continually...no matter how much we love them.

Therefore, your Macaw will also spend a great deal of time inside of his cage, which must be adequately furnished for his well-being and happiness, without cluttering the place up in a way that prevents him from stretching his wings.

First, the Macaw will use the cage itself as an exercise tool. He will climb all along the edges and even hang like a bat from the top of the cage. But, of course, he needs more to hold his interest than just the cage.

Chewing, as mentioned, is an important activity for Macaws. You must provide him with many chewing opportunities. Include a few branches from fruit trees in the cage. Not only will this give him nutritional benefits, but he will satisfy his need to chew with them as well. They will, of course, need to be replaced fairly often.

Visit online pet shops to locate toys designed for larger birds. Toys that are designed for birds like canaries won't last long at all, and it can get expensive to replace those toys. Aside from chewing toys, Macaws will appreciate additional climbing opportunities, such as hanging chains, bird ladders, ropes, and of course, swings designed for larger birds.

Wooden toys are preferred, but make sure that they are constructed of non-toxic woods. Noisy toys are also well loved by Macaws. They like anything that has a bell on it, and yes, like most other birds, they do enjoy looking at themselves in the mirror – so make sure that you provide one.

You need a birdbath in the cage. Your Macaw will enjoy grooming himself, and they love to splash in the water. You can find birdbath's designed for cages in most pet stores, and from online sources.

Finally, rearrange things often for your Macaw, just to keep it interesting. A good time to do this is when you clean out the cage. Many owners also keep several different 'sets' of bird toys, putting just one set of toys in the cage at a time, and then rotating the sets each time they clean out the cage. This also keeps life interesting for your Macaw.

Your Macaw's Health

The good news is that if you take good care of your Macaw, you won't find him ill very often, if ever. The bad news is that even if he becomes ill, you may not realize it, no matter how much time you spend with him.

There are, however, certain signs of illness that you should be aware of. You may notice that your Macaw has a sudden change in his moods. You may notice that his appetite has dropped off, that his wings droop, and that his body sags. He may seem listless, or uninterested in things he is normally interested in.

You may notice bulges and a ruffled plumage. His eyes may be swollen, watery, or closed. He may have a dirty vent, and you may notice that he isn't breathing 'quite right.' You may also notice a change in his feces.

If any of these things come to your attention, you should contact your veterinarian right away. Also, make sure that you've chosen a veterinarian who specializes in aviary care. You can find a veterinarian in your area that specializes in birds through your breeder, or through the organization listed on the last page of this report that deals with aviary veterinarians.

One common illness among Macaws is Psittacosis, which is also known as Parrot Fever or Chlamydiosis. This isn't a condition that just affects your Macaw, it also affects you. This is a bacterial disease, and luckily, there are only about 50 cases reported in the United States each year, which makes it a bit rare for humans. You catch this disease by inhaling dried feces from infected birds.

Most cases of Psittacosis among Macaws occur because the birds are not kept clean, or their cages are not kept clean. If your bird has Psittacosis, it may appear that he has nothing more than a bad cold. He will also appear to be tired often, and he will have diarrhea. Psittacosis can be diagnosed and treated by your veterinarian, if it is caught in its earlier stages.

If you become ill with a cold that won't seem to go away, let your doctor know that you have a Macaw...or a bird, in case he doesn't know what a Macaw is...so that he can perform the right diagnostic tests to rule out or confirm Psittacosis.

The Macaw Wasting Disease, formally known as Proventricular Dilation Disease, is fatal, and can affect a bird of any age. This disease is caused by a virus, and common symptoms include regurgitation of food, weight loss, poor break down of seeds in the digestive system, lack of coordination, and ultimately, death.

Note, however, that these same symptoms may signify something altogether different, and non-fatal. Do not assume that your Macaw is doomed. Take him to the veterinarian for diagnostic testing.

Your Macaw is also subject to numerous other viral and bacterial infections, as well as fungal infections. He may go through a period of feather picking, which can cause infections, and is usually due to boredom, lack of grooming, sexual frustration, or a diet that is not nutritionally satisfying.

Young Macaws may chew their tail or flight feathers, which is a habit that they usually outgrow, but one which causes appearance problems (and little else) in the interim.

Some Macaws actually have allergies. Some have malformed beaks. Kidney disease is not out of the question. If you aren't careful, they can also suffer from poisoning, such as toxicity or heavy metal poisoning. Lipomas and Papillomas are also possible.

The best way to keep your Macaw healthy and happy is to first give him lots of love and attention, followed by a healthy diet and lots of opportunity for exercise. Take him for regular veterinarian exams, keep his cage clean, and make sure that it is situated in a place where it won't become too hot or too cold, and where there are no drafts.

Macaws like tropical weather, but you probably won't want it that hot in your home. Therefore, cage him in a room that you can keep about 86 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid placing the cage near a window, as this does play a role in fluctuating temperatures – especially when the sun is blazing through glass, or frosting up due to cold outdoor temperatures.

When it come to food for your Macaw, make sure that you are not feeding him any fruits or vegetables that have rotted, and that you wash all fruits and vegetables well. If you feed him meats, such as chicken, make sure that the meat is thoroughly cooked.

Remember that he is going to chew on anything that he comes into contact with, including everything in the cage. Make sure that nothing consists of materials that may be toxic to your Macaw.

Also, use care when it comes to purchasing items for your bird from a pet store. If you buy supplies from a pet store that has Psittacosis or Beak and Feather Disease, both of which are airborne, the supplies that you purchase from that

store are also infected, and you bring that bacteria home to your Macaw. Unfortunately, they aren't going to advertise the outbreak. Your best bet is to purchase online, from suppliers that are not also housing birds, in most cases.

Finally, your Macaw should have annual checkups with the veterinarian, and most veterinarians recommend a checkup every six months, just to be on the safe side.

Grooming Your Macaw

For the most part, you don't have to provide much grooming for your Macaw. You simply have to provide him with the proper tools. The most important tool that he needs is a bird bath, where he will happily take baths...or showers...when he needs to, as well as when he doesn't need to.

This bathing is important. Not only does he enjoy it, but it helps to keep him clean – of course – and it also helps to keep his skin and feathers in good condition. However, depending on the size of your cage, you may need to give your Macaw a good shower from time to time, using a hand held sprayer with lukewarm water. A good monthly shower is usually enough.

Next, you need to keep his wings trimmed. Flight feathers do grow back. The ten feathers closest to the wing tip are called the primary feathers. These should be short enough to prevent long flights, but long enough to allow the Macaw to gently glide for short flights around the room. Ask your veterinarian or an aviary groomer to show you how to clip the wings of your Macaw if you are unsure.

Your Macaws beak may or may not need trimming. Trimming of the beak is usually only necessary if it grows too much, or becomes deformed because of growth. For the most part, your Macaw will take care of this himself, with constant chewing. Provide him with lava and/or mineral blocks for this.

You may need to trim your Macaws nails, but this is something else that he can tend to with the right tools. Purchase a couple of concrete perches, and his nails should stay an acceptable length.

Even though your Macaw does most of his grooming himself, with the right tools, it is important to give him that shower once a month. This gives you the opportunity to really look him over good, and to feel his entire body. Through this, you will easily be able to see any potential health problems that may be on the horizon. Feel for lumps and bumps, and of course take a closer look at his skin while he is wet.

Part of grooming your Macaw is cleaning his cage on a regular basis. This is something that he will participate in, if you consider making a huge mess,

creating the need for cleaning as participation. Naturally, you will clean the food dish and water bottle each day.

Each week, however, you need to empty the cage, clean all accessories, and take the cage out and hose it down well. If your Macaw isn't overly messy, you can clean the toys and accessories weekly, and hose the cage down every two weeks. You can use disinfectant, but make sure that it is thoroughly rinsed away!

Your Macaw's Behavior

Macaws have a great deal of energy, and excellent personalities. They are very loving, playful, funny, and curious. They want your attention, and will happily give you all of their attention, and there is a good reason for this.

In the wild, Macaws mate for life. The Macaw and his mate usually become part of a flock of other Macaws, and this flock forms a small family, so to speak. Because, in most cases, captive Macaws do not have a mate or a flock, they see their human friends as a mate (don't worry – the bird isn't going to try to mate with you). Just as he would give his mate and flock all of his attention in the wild, that attention is now given to you.

A Macaw that was born in captivity, and hand reared is usually quite gentle. Although his beak could easily snap your fingers right off, this is something he would never do. Macaws should begin being socialized, with many different people, when he is very young. This way, he is open to other people seeing him, and possibly handling him, throughout his life – as opposed to only being open to interaction with his owner, whom he loves dearly and trusts.

Experts also advise introducing young Macaws to numerous different situations. This might include riding in the car (in his cage of course), visiting the vet, seeing other people, being held by other people, being groomed, and being trimmed. You don't want a nervous bird. You want a Macaw that is sure of him self, sure of you, and comfortable in many different settings and situations.

Macaws get along famously with children, and other pets. However, interaction with children should be supervised. The Macaw may accidentally hurt the child, but the chances are better that the child may accidentally hurt the bird, which would cause the bird to hurt the child – on purpose. Macaws generally don't do well with tiny pets, such as hamsters...it seldom turns out well for the hamster.

If your Macaw starts demonstrating poor behavior, such as extreme squawking, biting, feather plucking, and a bad attitude in general, you can bet that there is a cause for it. There are no reported instances of naturally grouchy Macaws. Behavior problems could occur because the bird is bored. He may not be getting the right foods in his diet. He may not be getting enough attention. He may be too

cold, or too hot. Someone that the bird has come into contact with may have mistreated him. His environment may not be ideal.

Try to figure out the cause of his distress, correct the problem, and the bad behavior will typically cease. If you can't find anything that may be causing his distress, he may be ill, and a trip to the veterinarian is in order.

Your Macaw's Communication Methods

Macaws are very loud birds – when they want to be. They not only make incredible squawking and screeching noises, but they can also talk. Unfortunately, they cannot express themselves through words.

Instead, they use mimicry. They repeat words and phrases that they have heard and learned. They cannot tell you – in words – that they don't like the food, or that they don't feel well. They can, however, express themselves very well through a series of sounds.

Shrieking, screaming, and calling are typical sounds that you will hear from your Macaw. The sounds may be horrible and nerve wracking, but sometimes they are quite pleasant, and even musical.

Often, when the Macaw is making those horrible sounds that you hate to hear, it is because they would like some attention. They may also be 'complaining' about something that is amiss in their environment.

There is a story about a pet shop that was robbed, with a Macaw 'saving the day.' The burglars broke the window to get inside, and this upset the Macaw. It was this particular bird's habit to start calling out the name of his previous owner whenever he was upset, which is what he started doing. The burglars, not realizing that it was a bird doing all that calling and screaming, ran away.

Screeching and screaming is natural for the Macaw. Again, he may not do it unless something is amiss, or unless there is a behavior problem, which also indicates that something isn't right in his world, but even if he just makes noise to please himself, this is something that you cannot train him not to do.

You can, however, make some noise of your own when you get tired of hearing it. When your Macaw is having a nice screeching session, make a loud, unexpected noise of your own, and he will most likely stop. This doesn't, however, mean that he won't start again shortly, and continue until he is tired of doing it.

The best way to stop it, of course, is just to give him attention. He may just be bored. Give him attention, and give him something to do and this will typically stop the screeching or screaming fit.

Training, which includes training a Macaw to talk, is covered later. For now, understand that Macaws mimic you. Like a small child, if they hear it enough, they learn it, and if they learn it, they repeat it – usually at the most inappropriate, embarrassing time possible.

Just as you cannot train a Macaw not to make the noises that are natural to him (screaming and screeching), you cannot convince him not to say certain things in front of your Pastor, or anyone else for that matter. The golden rule: be careful of what you say in front of the Macaw.

You may be able to instruct a child if they have learned something that they shouldn't have learned, such as a dirty word. You can explain to them that this is bad language, and not to be used. If they use it again, there may be repercussions, such as a time out, which may deter further use of the bad word.

That doesn't work out well with Macaws. You see, Macaws thrive on attention. If they say a bad word (learned from you), and you 'scold' them (which does absolutely no good), this is attention to them...negative though it may be. This only encourages them to repeat the word, in an effort to get even more attention.

Therefore, the best thing to do, when a Macaw says a word that you would rather they didn't, is to completely ignore the Macaw when he says it. Any attention you are giving him should instantly stop. If you do this each and every time he says the word, he will associate that word with you taking your attention elsewhere, and he will avoid using it...of course, this won't stop him from using the word again, if someone is giving him attention that he doesn't happen to want.

Just as Macaws can mimic the human voice, they can also mimic sounds. They can make whistling sounds, door bell sounds, and even sounds that resemble a ringing telephone. When they make these sounds, it is typically because they like the sounds, but they may also be trying to get your attention.

Of course, there are also Macaws who never speak a word. It isn't because they can't...it is simply because they choose not to. They may be terrific squawkers and screamers, however, and of course, there are also Macaws who do not screech and scream often, or even loudly.

What it comes down to is that the sounds that your Macaw makes, whether they are natural sounds, mimicked sounds, or mimicked words, vary from one Macaw to the next. Each Macaw has his own likes and dislikes, and of course, his own, unique personality.

It is important that you take the time necessary to learn what different sounds mean in relation to your bird and what is going on around him. When he makes a noise that you have never heard before, take a look to see what is going on. Do this numerous times, each time he makes the same noise, and you will eventually begin to see a 'pattern.'

This gives you insight into how your bird is trying to communicate with you, and before you know it, you and your Macaw will be able to understand each other perfectly.

Training Your Macaw

Macaws are highly intelligent, and very easy to train. You can train your Macaw to say words, make particular sounds, and of course to do tricks. You may even convince him to obey certain commands, such as 'come.'

There are two factors to training a Macaw. The first is trust. If he doesn't trust you, you can't train him. You generally cannot start training him, with any good results, if you've only had him for a few days – or even a few weeks. He needs to get adjusted, and this means becoming comfortable in his new cage, or settling in so to speak, getting used to the sound of your voice, and of course developing a high level of trust with you.

Until this happens, you shouldn't even be trying to handle the bird. Therefore, you might think of the first part of training your Macaw as 'taming' your Macaw. If your Macaw is really young, however, you can probably handle him right away, without any problems. This does not mean, however, that you can start training him.

You should also note, in the 'taming' and 'handling' of your Macaw that Macaws do not have a fear of human beings. Being scared of people doesn't come naturally to them. This doesn't mean, however, that they won't bite you. They can also do significant damage with their talons (nails).

If you are considering handling your Macaw before he is ready for handling, by restraining him, you should think again. This deters or delays his trust in you, and he is pretty strong. If he gets loose, he may come after you. Instead of restraining him, handle him with good leather gloves that come at least halfway up your arms.

The second factor in training a Macaw is repetition. Once you've earned your Macaws trust, and you can easily handle him, you are ready to start training him. Along with repetition you must also be consistent. Training should ideally take place at the same time, each and every day.

The first thing that you must train the Macaw to do is to take a treat right out of your hand, when you offer it to him. At first, he may ignore it, or try to grab it. Note

that there is a difference between grabbing (stealing) and taking that which is offered. You need to recognize the difference.

When your Macaw has mastered taking what is offered from your hand, you can move on to additional training. This first step is so important because all other training is dependant on the Macaw taking a treat that is offered to him...in exchange for performing a trick or obeying a command.

The next thing you should train your Macaw to do is to get on your hand or arm, when you offer it. Sometimes, this only takes a few days, and sometimes, it takes several weeks. Typically, it depends on the age of the bird, as well as how tame he already may be.

Training a bird – or any pet – requires patience and persistence. You must always keep in mind that your Macaw is essentially a wild bird, no matter how tame he may seem. You cannot punish a Macaw for not performing a trick. In fact, you can't punish him for anything at all. He wouldn't understand it, it would be ineffective, and the only thing you would accomplish would be the bird coming to mistrust you.

Punishing your Macaw may also result in behavioral problems, which typically, in this case, cannot be rectified. Macaws are not human children, although we typically think of them that way. They work the exact opposite, however. If you spoil a child, and never punish him for doing something wrong, he is 'ruined.'

However, if you punish a Macaw and don't spoil him, he is ruined. You want to avoid punishment, and 'spoil him rotten.' At the same time, however, you don't want to reward him for bad behavior, which, as mentioned earlier, is just a question of not giving him the attention that his bad behavior is trying to get.

Earlier, we mentioned training a Macaw to talk. Not all Macaws talk, and most don't talk very well...even though they can talk. As with any other type of training, the key to teaching your Macaw to say words or phrases is to repeat them to him, over and over again.

When he performs a trick or says a word successfully, give him lots of praise and attention, along with a treat. He will remember this, and he will be encouraged to repeat the action that got the praise, attention, and of course the treat.

Training should start when the Macaw is young. This doesn't mean, however, that an older Macaw can't learn new tricks. Macaws can learn new things – including tricks, words, and phrases – throughout their lives. It just seems that it is easier to train younger birds.

With that said, however, it's harder to train a Macaw that is an adolescent. Just as humans become a bit difficult during their teen years, Macaws also act up a bit during their adolescence. They may tend to get into more trouble during this time,

largely due to their curiosity, and of course not give you the attention that you need them to give you for the purpose of training.

Just as teenagers will push the limits to see how far they can push you, an adolescent Macaw will do the same thing. The key is to not let him push you too far, or you will lose his respect.

Breeding Macaws

If you are considering breeding Macaws, you should note that this isn't at all like breeding puppies or rabbits. Breeding Macaws isn't as easy as breeding many other types of birds or animals.

In fact, just getting started can be quite hard. You see, you cannot accurately determine a Macaws sex visually, although males often have larger heads. Instead, if you plan to breed, you must sex your Macaws through your veterinarian, who will perform an endoscopy to determine the sex. The sex of a Macaw can also be determined through DNA testing, but this may be more expensive than the endoscopy procedure.

Again, in the wild, Macaws choose their mates, and mate for life. When they choose mates, they are just as choosy as people are which is wise, since for Macaws, it really will be for life, and there is no such thing as divorce. Before the birds will mate, they will establish a bond between themselves, and learn to live in harmony with each other.

Most experts and breeders suggest that you should let your Macaw choose his own mate. This would, however, entail having more than two Macaws, or socializing your Macaw with other people's Macaws.

If you can't allow your Macaw to choose his own mate, you may end up with a male and female who won't mate – ever. But at the same time, because the Macaw is in fact a bird, he will generally mate with whatever female is available... unless he has already selected a mate in you. Mate selection typically takes place in the winter time, which is just a couple of months before the season that the Macaws will breed.

Macaws that will be bred should be no younger than four years of age. They can, however, be bred until they are about 35 years of age. You can expect the female to lay two to three eggs each breeding season, for as long as she is bred, or for as long as she is capable of breeding.

You should note that the eggs are not all laid at the same time, or even on the same day. In fact, the trend seems to be that smaller Macaws will lay one egg

every three days, while larger Macaws will lay one egg every two days. Once the eggs are laid, it takes between 26 and 28 days for them to hatch.

During the incubation period, the male and female will both guard the nest and keep the eggs warm. In the wild, the majority of this work tends to fall on the male Macaw. Once the hatchlings are hatched, both the male and female will tend to them, and you do not play a role in their care, other than making sure that there is adequate food available at all times.

While the Macaws will do most of the work...selecting a mate, breeding, laying eggs, and keeping those eggs in good condition until they hatch, there are certain things required of you. First, your Macaws need a nesting box. This box should be at least three to four times bigger than the Macaw, in terms of the length and height of her body.

It should be deep and wide as well, typically the same depth as the height of the Macaw, with a little head room to spare. There should be a hole that is large enough for the Macaws to get in and out, but not so large that they don't feel protected inside of the box. When you think of nesting boxes, consider the holes that wild Macaws make their nests in.

Because nesting boxes are made of wood, the interior of the box should contain blocks that are meant for chewing. Otherwise, the Macaws may destroy the box. There should be about five or six inches of wood shavings in the box as well.

When you put the nesting box inside of the cage, it should face the exterior of the cage, but allow enough room between the side of the cage and the box for the Macaws to get in and out. If the hole faces inside the cage, the Macaws don't feel that they have enough privacy. If you can arrange it so that the hole faces a wall, this is best. The nesting box also needs to be mounted as high up in the cage as you can get it.

Other than the nesting box, the only other thing that you need to provide is plenty of nutritious foods when the hatchlings are hatched. Obviously, you will continue to feed your adult Macaws what they usually eat, but you should include some extra foods, which include bread soaked in milk, cuttlebones, and corn on the cob. Make sure that you are providing plenty of fresh fruit as well.

When the hatchlings are about ten weeks old, the proud parents will start to wean them. However, this process can last until they are about eight months of age. The hatchlings can be sent to their new homes when they are about eight months of age, but in the wild, they stay with their parents for the first year of life, during which time, the adult Macaws do not breed again.

You should begin socializing your hatchling when they are about ten weeks of age – when weaning begins. Start by touching them, and then handling them and

talking to them. Get them used to the sound of your voice, and human touch. The more they are handled, the better pets they make later on.

While Macaws are highly sought after birds, you might want to make sure that you have homes lined up for your hatchlings before you breed your Macaw, unless you intend to keep them yourself, remembering how long Macaws tend to live.

Macaw Related Organizations

Below, you will find a list of national and international associations, organizations, and societies that relate to the Macaw. These organizations serve to protect these beautiful birds, and their owners, will promoting better breeding practices, and greater public understanding.

Macaw Landing Foundation
<http://www.macawlanding.org/>

American Federation of Aviculture
<http://www.afabirds.org/>

Association of Avian Veterinarians
<http://www.aav.org/>

Aviculture Society of America
<http://www.asabirds.org/>

International Aviculturists Society
<http://www.funnyfarmexotics.com/IAS/>

National Cage Bird Show Club
<http://www.ncbs.org/>

Birds of a Feather Aviculture Society
<http://www.boaf.com/>

The Oasis Sanctuary
<http://www.the-oasis.org>

Unfortunately, as you can see, there aren't enough national or international associations, organizations, or societies that cater to the Macaw. However, you can check with your breeder or other breeders in your area to learn about Macaw specific clubs or organizations that may exist in your area.

As your love for these amazing, fascinating, glorious birds grows, you may even find that you are compelled to organize a national or international association yourself, with the help of others, in an effort to better understand and care for the Macaw, and to promote good breeding practices.



Caring for Your Pet Naturally

More and more dog and cat owners are turning to natural pet care to treat various health conditions as well as promote general well-being in their dogs and cats.

New research shows that high quality natural remedies can be safer and oftentimes more effective solution to many common pet ailments. They can not only prevent and treat dog health problems, but also boost immunity and contribute to a long, healthy life for your pet.

As with many of the prescription medications we take, chemical-based drugs for pets can cause very serious side effects as well as weaken immunity which could lead to more health problems down the road. One prime example of this is the recent recall of one of the most popular heartworm medications, ProHeart 6, by the FDA due to over 5000 reports of uncontrolled bleeding, liver problems, seizures and even deaths in dogs who were taking the medication.

If you would like to learn more about safe, effective [natural pet care supplements](#) for treating a wide variety of health conditions and improve your pet's health just follow the link, or find more information below.

How are natural pet supplements different than conventional pet medications?

The major difference is that most of them do not cause the serious adverse reactions of prescription medications. Side effects from pharmaceutical drugs are a leading cause of illness and death in humans...it only follows that this is the case with medications for pets.

Natural pet care can offer a safe treatment option, but can also get to the root of the problem and prevent reoccurrence, unlike conventional meds that only treat the symptoms of the disorder and nothing else.

Many pets are allergic to popular medications for heartworm, distemper, kennel cough and others. Still other dogs and cats do not respond well to these convention treatments.

All natural pet remedies and natural pet cures can be quite effective in treating many dog and cat health conditions with vitamins, minerals, herbal extracts and other nutrients that offer health benefits.

If you are interested in natural pet supplements for your dog or cat, take a look at PetAlive.com, offering herbal and homeopathic treatments for many common health conditions as well as boosting immunity and general health of your pet.