



SPIX MACAW

The Spix Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) is the only member of the genus *Cyanopsitta*. It is currently extinct in the wild, but has been conserved through several breeding programmes. It had a very restricted Brazilian habitat, and only occurred in areas where the Paraguayan Trumpet-tree (*Tabebuia aurea*) grows, as it relied on this for nesting sites.

The species is named after the German naturalist Johann Baptist von Spix (1781–1826), and is a soft blue-grey bird with a long tail and wings. It has a pale greyish-blue head and pale blue underparts. Its upperparts, wings and tail are a deeper, brighter blue.

The decline of the species is attributed to hunting, destruction of its habitat, and the introduction of the “killer (Africanized) bee”, which competes for hollow nesting sites and kills breeding birds at the nest. A single male, paired with a female Blue-winged Macaw (*Primolius maracana*), was discovered in 1990. A captive female Spix Macaw was released at the site in 1995, but disappeared after six or seven weeks. This last known wild male died in October of 2000. Therefore, the species probably became extinct in the wild when this last known bird died.



Blue-winged or Illiger's Macaw

There is a captive population of about 70 individuals, most of which were bred in captivity. Of these only nine are found in zoo breeding programmes; some are in Loro Parque, Tenerife, Spain; and the others at the São Paulo Zoo, Brazil. The aim of these breeding programmes is to eventually reintroduce the species to the wild.

By far the largest number of Spix, 75% of the entire population, belong to Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Al Thani in Doha, Qatar, at his privately run Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation Centre. This park has its own breeding programme and has produced a number of young so far, seven in 2006; and 2007 saw thirty-two eggs laid and a large proportion of those successfully raised.

Ryan Watson, who many of you will remember from his days at the Adelaide Zoo and the talks he gave to our Society, is now the Blue Macaw Co-ordinator at the Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation Centre; and is heavily involved in the reproduction of this rare species.