



# American Federation of Aviculture Inc. Conservation News

Issue #5, Spring 2025

## Harrison's Bird Foods joins with the AFA to Provide Conservation funding.

For almost fifty years the American Federation of Aviculture Inc. (AFA) has provided small grants to projects and programs aimed at the conservation of birds. Grants from the AFA have benefited many species including: Puerto Rican parrots, Socorro Island doves, Lear's macaws, Spix's macaws, Red-fronted macaws, Blue-throated macaws, Golden conures, Red Siskins, Hyacinth macaws, Scarlet macaws, Blue-fronted amazons, Yellow-fronted Amazons, Bali Mynahs, Thick-billed parrots, and more.

**Thanks to a generous grant from Harrison's Bird Foods, the AFA has extended its conservation grants program thru the end of 2025.**

Project biologists are encouraged to contact the AFA if they have a need for funding portions of their research dealing with the conservation of an avian species. Information and applications can be found on the AFA website: [www.AFAbirds.org](http://www.AFAbirds.org).

**Right:** AFA CFO Janice Lang receives Conservation Fund donation from Harrison's Bird Food.



## The AFA Continues its Support of the Scarlet Macaw Project in Southern Mexico

### History and Importance of the Scarlet Macaw Program in Southern Mexico

By Diego Noriega

Estación Chajul (Chajul Station) is Natura Mexicana's main operative base in the Lacandona, and naturally, where the Scarlet Macaw Conservation and Recovery Program began back in 2005. The Lacandona is an area of rainforest that stretched from Chiapas, Mexico into Guatemala. At first, a few rescued chicks would be reared in the station's cellar using cardboard boxes and lightbulbs for heat sources. As the program evolved, sometime around the year 2012, we turned a tiny spare room into the Chajul's maternity lab. Later it was equipped with our first brooder and incubator, veterinary supplies, and heating pads. At that time, we also started taking data on chick development and improved our management protocols; this was made possible through the assistance of students to help with the management chores (2016). By this time, we were handling over a dozen chicks each season.

## Scarlet Macaw Project (Con't)

At about that same time, Natura Mexicana purchased a 72-hectare piece of land on the Lacantun riverbank inside Quiringuicharo and began building a two-story house that later became the estación Lacanjá (named after the Lacanjá river nearby). The community of Quiringuicharo has always been a very important area for the macaw project as, historically, it has a very high density of active Scarlet macaw nests. For this reason, the team visited this area frequently during each breeding season to monitor nests and rescue chicks from illegal traffickers to bring them back to Chajul. In fact, most of our rescues each year came from, and still come from, Quiringuicharo. However, logistical difficulties were created since Quiringuicharo is quite a distance from the Chajul station (1+ hour drive), and the fact that any rescue taking place on any given day would negate the possibility of checking further nests where small chicks had to be transported back to Chajul. Saving any rescued chick always took precedence. It was decided that the solution would be to build a maternity lab in Estación Lacanjá and use it as another base for the project.



***Lacantun River***



***Biologists record growth data on Scarlet macaw chick***

A much larger, better equipped and specifically designed facility was built as a maternity laboratory in Lacanjá with plans to simultaneously manage and release rescued birds from both sites. However, one night back in April 2022 (if I recall correctly), a team of thieves broke into Chajul's maternity and stole all the chicks that were yet to fledge. After the incident, in which we lost 8 individuals, the team decided to move the whole operation to Lacanjá, which incidentally is staffed 24/7 (Chajul is not). After training a team of locals on management and rearing techniques we started the 2023 season by using only the Lacanja facility. Since then, we have had no similar incidents.



***Left: Incubators & brooders were purchased by the AFA for the Chajul Station***

***Right: The station is located inside the local rainforest***





The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. (AFA) is a not for profit organization dedicated to all aspects of aviculture.

The AFA has provided funds through our grants programs to benefit wild-bird conservation and the study of their biology since the mid 1970s.

Visit us on the web at: [www.AFABIRDS.org](http://www.AFABIRDS.org)

Scarlet macaw update (Con't)

The 2023 season was exceptional for the project. We managed to rescue and rear 33 fledglings from over 10 different nests. Unfortunately, later the same year during the rainy season we lost 6 important nesting trees to unusually high winds. Also, shortly after and in a short period of time, three of the project team members left. This resulted in a less productive 2024 season where we only rescued 9 Scarlet chicks from local nests.

As of now I am leading the project, working along with another fellow biologist (Jorge) and a staff of 3 locals. We are getting ready as the 2025 season is about to get started.

Currently, Chajul's maternity is non-operational, although estación Chajul remains the home ground of a group of 100+ adult macaws that have been released there, including 10 stray fledglings released in Laguna del Tigre, Guatemala by WCS in 2023. Estación Chajul remains Natura's main operative base in the region functioning 365 days a year. Going forward to the coming 2025 breeding season, any rescued bird, independent of the geographical location of their nesting tree is to be taken to Lacanjá to be reared by its staff inside its maternity facilities. The Scarlet Macaw Conservation and Recovery Program has no source of funding at the moment. We hope to find some assistance due to a recent collaboration with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. They have produced and released a short film describing the project and its achievement and an article online published by Nat Geo.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/scarlet-macaws-mexico-poaching-conservation>

### **AFA and Harrison's Bird Foods turn on the lights at Scarlet Macaw conservation facility**

For the past six years, the American Federation of Aviculture Inc. has been assisting the Scarlet macaw conservation project located in Chajul, (pronounced Cha-hool) Mexico. This project is part of Natura Mexicana's conservation efforts to save Mexico's last remaining rainforest.

Chajul station is a biologist's "sleeping quarters" when they are doing field work in the very southern part of Mexico. University students from all over the World have stayed here while studying species endemic to the local rainforest. The station is located on the south side of the Lacantun river and is difficult to locate or get to, even with an invite. The closest airport is about a 10-hour car ride away, and once you reach the river, you must travel several kilometers by boat to get there. The station is modern in many senses but has no company-supplied electricity. The entire compound relies on solar energy to run the water, lights, equipment, and kitchen appliances.



# Lights On (Con't)

This station has been in existence since the 1970s and has hosted biologists, conservationists, and staff members responsible for returning several hundred scarlet macaws back into their local habitat. Over the years, poaching of nests in the area had resulted in an 80% reduction in the population of the species in the nearby ecosystem. Dedicated members of the staff have developed a system where they take young chicks from the nest (at an age younger than the poachers are willing to take them) and raising them to liberty at the station. Chicks are fed and socialized here in such a way as to have them wean and fly off with other adult birds previously raised at the station. Their successes have been phenomenal; AFA and others have recognized the value of this program and are trying to assist in any way possible.

Recently Harrison's Bird Foods has joined with the AFA to provide grants or equipment needed by struggling projects such as the one at Chajul. Because of local pressures by people associated with Mexico's drug trade, a new location has been set-up as a nursery, so the process of raise-and-release can continue for the birds in the general area. This nursery was recently struck with problems in their solar generator and battery system. The AFA, along with Harrison's Bird Foods, stepped in and bought a new solar inverter and battery system to run the brooding equipment in the new satellite nursery.

As members of the AFA, and as customers of Harrison's Bird Foods, you are the reason we can assist this program. Your continued support will result in many triumphs for the wild birds that are struggling to remain in their natural habitats. Please donate to the AFA Conservation Committee at [www.AFAbirds.org](http://www.AFAbirds.org)

**Below:** Rescued chicks at the station during the 2023 breeding season



**Above:** At present juveniles that form part of the "Lacanjá Hub" have formed a cohesive and social group finding safety in numbers.

# The AFA Buys Nest Boxes for the Blue-fronted Amazon in Brazil

## Who We Are

The Blue-fronted parrot project was founded in 1997 by researcher and environmentalist, Dra Glauca Seixas, linked to the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Fundação Neotrópica do Brasil.

Its creation was motivated by this being the most trafficked species in Brazil. Despite being popular among Brazilians, it was completely unknown to science. The objective of the project is the conservation of the Blue-fronted parrot (*Amazona aestiva*) in nature and the fight against trafficking of the species.

In one location in Brazil, (State of Mato Grosso do Sul), around 12,500 Blue-fronted parrot chicks were seized by inspectors in the last 30 years. However, we know that this number does not represent but about 5% of the chicks poached from the natural nests. Poaching always includes cruelty, death, and destruction of natural nests.

The project operates in the central-western part of Brazil, including the Pantanal, Cerrado, and Atlantic forest ecoregions, in addition to carrying out educational actions to combat trafficking throughout Brazil.



## BLUE-FRONTED PARROT PROJECT – BRAZIL

### ARTIFICIAL NEST PROGRAM

The objective is to help Blue-fronted parrots reproduce in the wild, in areas where traffickers have destroyed natural nests. The ARTIFICIAL NEST PROGRAM has been carried out by the Blue-fronted parrot project since 2019, in the region where natural nests were destroyed due to trafficking in chicks and alteration of the natural environment.

In a “do-it-yourself style”, we created a specific nest model for Blue-fronted parrots based on our studies of their natural nests. The nests are made by our team and carefully installed in safe places for them. The good news is that pairs of Blue-fronted parrots have taken to the nests and are occupying them soon after they are installed and producing offspring that contribute to natural populations.

The Blue-fronted Parrot Project team chooses the best trees to place the nests and gives the pairs another chance at reproduction. Many eggs, nestlings and juveniles are the results of this Blue-fronted parrot conservation strategy.

Seventeen other species of birds and two mammals also enjoy the comfort of our nests, generating benefits for all of nature. Support from the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) enabled the manufacture and installation of 11 nests for Blue-fronted amazon parrots.

# Blue-fronted Amazon (Con't)

## HOW DO WE HELP THE SPECIES AND FOR HOW LONG

The Blue-fronted Parrot Project/Fundação Neotrópica do Brasil is reference NGO for conservation of the blue-fronted parrot in Brazil, since 1997. We carry out species conservation actions and offer our scientific knowledge to other institutions that work with fauna management in Brazil. All of our actions are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Action Plans (PAN), coordinated and reinforced by the Ministry of the Environment (MMA) and the United Nations (ONU).



Much of the knowledge generated by the project has been used, since 2014, by the Brazil Ministry of the Environment (MMA) and, since 2019, by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). They reclassified the species' status as "Almost Threatened – NT", due to the increase in the main threats to the species, such as egg and chick trafficking and habitat loss, demonstrated in our studies. More than 100,000 children, young people and adults, from approximately 200 educational institutions in more than 20 municipalities in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, have participated directly in the conservation education actions of our project in recent years. For example, a municipality, with the highest rates of parrot trafficking, decided to adopt the Blue-fronted Parrot as the local symbol bird, after recognizing the efforts of our project. In this way everyone can continue to enjoy the beauty and well-being generated by seeing and hearing these friendly parrots flying through the skies.

Ph. D. GLÁUCIA H. F. SEIXAS

Creator and Coordinator

**Support from the American Federation of Aviculture Inc in 2024 resulted in eleven new nesting boxes to be utilized by the project.**



[www.AFABIRDS.org](http://www.AFABIRDS.org)

The AFA supports the efforts of the Bird Endowment and their nest box program. This project is a prime example of how captive-breeders and conservation organizations can come together to form an alliance for the betterment of endangered species. The Bird Endowment works hard to educate pet owners, breeders, and bird enthusiasts to get them involved with the conservation of the Blue-throated macaw in Bolivia.



The **Nido Adoptivo™** annual funding campaign for the nest box project was originated and developed in 2007 by Bird Endowment's founder Laney Rickman in partnership with the Bolivian NGO **Asociación Armonía** to support the Blue-throated Macaw Conservation Program in the El Beni state of Bolivia, which is the endemic birds' natural range. This effort follows the "Saving the Blue-throated Macaw *Ara glaucogularis*: A Species Recovery Plan," developed by Asociación Armonía and Loro Parque Fundación.

Each **US\$300 donation** to sponsor a nest box for a year covers the costs of materials to build and monitor the nest boxes and fieldwork to locate and establish appropriate nesting areas where wild breeding pairs would accept artificial nest boxes.

The Blue-throated Macaw is Critically Endangered, with an estimated 420 - 480 adult birds in the wild. Nido Adoptivo™'s objective is to increase the annual reproductive output of the Blue-throated Macaw wild population through a strategy utilizing nest boxes attached to trees.

Since the program's inception, an incredible **145 Blue-throated Macaws have fledged from the nest boxes** on the Laney Rickman Reserve. For the first time, in 2017, a second-generation chick was raised by parents who both had fledged from these nest boxes. In 2021, 9 breeding birds were confirmed to be ringed individuals, having fledged from these nest boxes in previous years and returning to breed, demonstrating the success of this program and the promise of future population growth.

The impact of this program is truly significant: approximately 25% of the current wild population has fledged from these nest boxes, and the number each year continues to rise. Remarkably, it took 16 years to reach the milestone: the first 100 fledges. At the current pace, the 200th chick could fledge by 2027—just six years later. This accelerating progress offers great hope for the future of this critically endangered species.



Thank you to Bennett Hennessey, Asociacion Civil Armonia and the Bird Endowment for allowing us to use these photos and information

Artificial nesting box in Bolivia

**In this Issue:**



Education  
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Legislation  
Welfare

**Join the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.  
and help us to help *in situ* conservation projects  
across the World.**

**[WWW.AFABIRDS.org](http://WWW.AFABIRDS.org)**

**Support Conservation through Membership and the AFA Conservation Fund**

The American Federation of Aviculture Inc. was established in 1974 as an education/legislative awareness organization for those that keep captive birds. Since its inception, the organization has expanded its mission to include the conservation of birds in the wild and has been able to provide assistance to many *in situ* projects working with wild birds across the globe. Membership in the AFA, and donations from both members and the public enable the AFA to continue its mission. Please consider joining us today! To join go to

**[www.AFAbirds.org](http://www.AFAbirds.org)**



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*The Conservation News is a publication of the conservation committee of the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. You can help to assure future publications of this newsletter by donating to the AFA conservation committee today. All donations are tax deductible. Make a donation at [www.AFABIRDS.org](http://www.AFABIRDS.org) or send us a check to: AFA, PO BOX 91717, Austin, TX 78709.*