



MACAW TAILS

THE MACAW SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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February fledglings & fabulous feathers

SHANNAN COURTENAY & GABRIELA VIGO TRAUCO

February and March have already rolled past and the chicks around the Tambopata Research centre are looking very healthy. The translocated chicks that had a bit of a rocky start are all doing very well and thankfully, there have been no more deaths.

By mid-February most of the chicks were between 50 and 60 days old. At this age, they are still being fed by their parents many times both day and night, but are left alone in the nest for longer and longer periods as they grow. They are very close to reaching their maximum weight at around 60 days, which interestingly, is sometimes greater than the weight of their parents.

Their feet have reached their full size by age 35 days and their wings are growing very quickly, mainly due to the growth of their flight feathers. Although their beak continues growing after they fledge from the nest, it is also around this age that the lower mandibula starts to change from a wider spoon-like shape to become a standard macaw beak. By this stage, they have really developed little personalities, curious by nature

and very cheeky. Siblings in the nest will often while away the day preening and playing with each other, waiting for their parents to return to feed them. They grab each others tails, play with feathers that have fallen onto the substrate and huddle together when they sleep as if they are cuddling.



One of our volunteers, Lauren shares a moment with Pancho and his sibling when they are 75 and 79 days old. Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.

The Macaw Society

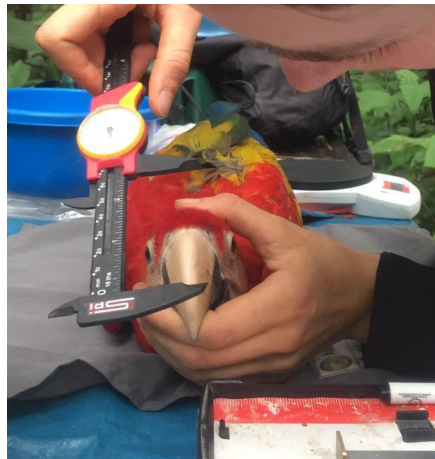
This year *The Macaw Society* has been able to continue developing techniques which could dramatically increase the recovery of Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) populations throughout their natural range in South and Central America. In Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and Nicaragua, wild populations have declined severely due to a combination of habitat loss and illegal wildlife trade and are now mostly restricted to protected areas. Wild populations in Surinam and Colombia are the most affected in South America. We will be sharing our valuable research with other research and conservation groups in Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica to help ensure these intelligent and charismatic birds remain in the wild for future generations.

Distribution map of the Scarlet Macaw



Map showing the current distribution of Scarlet Macaws throughout their natural range in South and Central America. Once joined, you can see that the populations between the two regions are now completely separate due to localised extinctions (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Neotropical Birds).

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(Left) One of the 2018 season chicks' tail being measured with a ruler. (Middle) One of our volunteers measuring the chick beak (Right) A close up of a macaw chick tarsus being measured. Photo credits Liz Villanueva Paipay, Maria Belen Aguirre and TMP.

From about 70 days until their fledging date they will drop in weight to around 850 grams. At this stage, the parents will only visit the nest once or twice a day to feed them which seems to encourage them to fledge. This is also the age they start to climb up to the nest entrance to get a view of the great big wide world outside.

After many attempts at climbing the walls inside the nest, the chick will finally make it to the nest entrance. From this point on, the chick is often seen with its head in the nest entrance, curiously watching the world go by. It must be a lot more interesting than looking at the inside of a wooden box! As the days go by it gains more confidence and eventually perches at the entrance. When one of the parents return home, it's quite funny to see the chick and the parent arguing over who gets to look out of the nest.



The chick in "Molinero" nest tries to push its parent from the nest entrance to get a better look. The parent arrived, fed both chicks and was getting ready for the end of the day. The chick was not ready for it though..."Mom, let me watch just a little bit longer". Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.

Perucho and Aroha, the two oldest chicks of this breeding season and our first two translocations, both fledged in February at age 85 days and 87 days, respectively. A couple of our volunteers were lucky enough to see Perucho fledge from the nest. Roshan Tailor writes about the experience below:

"It was Day 85 for our oldest chick, and when we arrived at the nest, we could see that there was an individual peeping out the entrance hole but couldn't tell if it was an adult or a chick. We set the ropes up, and I began climbing, and about halfway up the tree, an adult alarm called, and flew off, followed by the bird at the entrance hole. Then when I got to the nest and saw just one chick, I called down to ask if both were present the day before, which they were, and we realised that we had witnessed the fledging of our first chick this season - Perucho, on the 8th February 2018. It was wonderful to witness the first flight of this chick into the great Amazon!"

Two days after Aroha fledged, Pancho, the translocated chick from Franz nest followed suit, fledging at just 82 days old. His sibling followed eight days later and then the next day, Mario our fourth translocated chick took the leap of faith into the jungle.

By the end of February then, four translocated chicks and one 'original' chick from Franz had all fledged. We were still climbing most of the other 14 active nests every day to check on the chicks that remained, hoping the month of March would bring more success for these incredible birds.

March brings more joy at the lodge

March is usually when the majority of chicks fledge from their nests and this year was no different. It was during this month that we said goodbye to most of the remaining 21 chicks monitored around the Tambopata Research Centre.

On March 2, Cerveza fledged at day 81, followed by Luigi four days later when he was 85 days old. To everyone's relief, both Walker and Little Foot fledged from their nests on March 7 this year. If you remember from our first newsletter, Walker was only 19 grams when he hatched. He was named Walker after the Walking Dead because no one thought he would survive through the night. Little Foot also had complications because of his wounded foot and we were worried about the infection. However, both of them survived to fledging age with Walker leaving the nest at 91 days and Little Foot when he was ten days younger, at 81 days.

The last translocated chick to leave the nest was little Gas, who was just 690 grams the day he fledged on March 23, three days after his adopted sibling, Tigres I. The story of Gas is a particularly nice one. He was lucky to be alive in the first place because both the chicks in his original nest, Gavilan, both died in January. If Gas had stayed there he would no doubt be dead as well.

Once translocated, he was slow to pick up his begging response and we had to help him along with supplemental feedings. Although he remained small in size he had a big personality. He was very gentle and even as he got older and his

beak got bigger, he remained that way. Usually, as the chicks grow they get more feisty and start to bite - hard! But not Gas. In fact, just days before he fledged, I saw him climb onto a volunteers head and start gently nibbling on her ear as he made his way up. Quite the comparison to some others in the neighbourhood!

Throughout the rest of March, the chicks slowly left their nests and the hard work wound down. By the end of the month, twenty-one chicks had fledged in total. This includes ten translocated chicks, seven other Scarlet Macaw chicks and four Red-and-Green chicks. We are still monitoring two Red-and-Green Macaw nests. Ayahuasca Alto, which has one chick in it, Vaginito, with two chicks, as well as our last Scarlet Macaw nest, Max, which has two chicks. Based on the average fledging dates, these chicks should fledge in the first week of April.

Eleven chicks have been translocated this season and all eleven were accepted by the new nesting couple. Although T-Rex died of assumed predation along with his adopted sibling, the other ten chicks have now fledged successfully. That means that if we hadn't attempted these translocations only eleven chicks would have fledged so far instead of the twenty-one chicks that have. That's almost double the number of chicks that survived until fledging this season! A very happy ending to a fantastic season that wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of an exceptional team, all of our supporters and of course you! Thank you so much.



Thanks to all of you, Gas, his adopted brother Tigres and the other 20 Scarlet Macaw chicks that we monitored around the Tambopata Research Centre survived until fledging. Photo credit: Liz Villanueva Paipay.

The last chicks of madame 'Ceiba'

GABRIELA VIGO TRAUCO

Every time a river in the lowlands of the Amazon Basin rises, tons and tons of riverbank is eroded away and washed down river; taking trees and vegetation with it. This is very common, just part of the Amazon forest dynamics. Over the years, at least eight huge old macaw nest trees have been washed away through this natural process. Some of these nest trees were washed away when they were active and macaws lost their eggs or chicks. This past breeding season the river has been getting closer and closer to Ceiba, a kapok tree where we hung an artificial macaw nest. Throughout the season we were becoming very concerned that the tree would fall in the river before the chicks fledged.

Different management actions were proposed in order to increase the fledging chances of the Ceiba chicks. At one point the heavy nest box was taken down and put up another tree, but the chick was too young and its macaw parents were not interested in a new nest location at the time. So the wooden box was returned to Ceiba tree along with the chick where its parents continued to raise it. Lots of work for the researchers for no results!

By mid-January, all we could do was monitor Ceiba so that when the river reached tree buttresses we could try to save the chicks before it fell. At this time, Ceiba was the new home for "Little Foot", one of our translocated chicks, so we had even more reason to save the brood. On March 7, the river was rising rapidly again and Liz, our field leader and the rest of the team were ready to evacuate Little Foot before the tree fell into the river. Water had reached the bottom of Ceiba by the end of the afternoon, so Liz ran to the tree to assess the situation.



If you look carefully you can see the nest Little Foot fledged from high up in Ceiba tree. Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.



Little Foot before he was fully feathered. This photo shows how close the river is to Ceiba tree. Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.

When she arrived, Little Foot was at the nest entrance and the Scarlet Macaw nesting male and female (dad and mom) were perched approximately 25 meters away, making short calls. As the rushing water made its way around the bottom of the tree, the chick squawked and suddenly flew off towards the river.

The nesting parents immediately followed him and guided him back to the safety of the jungle. He was 81 days when he fledged. It was also on this day that Walker finally fledged. He was ten days older than Little Foot. Ceiba tree fell in the river on the morning of the next day.

Madame Ceiba, you have served the forest and the Scarlet Macaws very well.

Thank you Ceiba, from all of us who have worked, climbed and rested on your branches.

The untold story of Lupe:

Our 11th translocation

GABRIELA VIGO TRAUCO

In January Little Foot, the chick that had a massive foot infection was translocated from Tapir nest to Ceiba. The translocation process was a great success but it was a bit different to our other translocation cases, for a big reason: Ceiba tree was about to be washed away by the river.






Ceiba macaw parents were extraordinary caregivers but they could do nothing to save both chicks if the tree fell into the river. After lots of thinking and no feasible plans, a solution came to the table when the chicks of Gavilan nest were predated at the end of January.

Gavilan parents kept checking their empty nest one day after their chicks were gone. Both of them were there, going in and out very often. So we decided to place one of the Ceiba chicks in that nest to see if they would be willing to adopt it... and they did! This chick was named "Lupe" and was accepted by both nesting parents. It fledged from Gavilan on March 19 and it was the first chick to ever fledge from this nest.



Meet Lupe, our last translocated chick, who seems to be looking at the scales to check out how much he weighs.
Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.

Table 1: Showing a breakdown of the breeding season as of March 31st 2018 and how many chicks we are monitoring in their nests around TRC.

Macaw Species	Nest Name	# Chicks Hatched	Chicks Died	Chicks Fledged	Nest Type	Tree Species	# chicks translocated	New Nest for translocated chicks
 Scarlet Macaw	Amor	2	1	1	 PVC	<i>Apuleia leiocarpa</i>	0	
	Gavilan	3	2	1		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	1	Tigres
	Pukakuro	2	0	2		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Invisible	1	1	0		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Tigres	1	0	1		<i>Hymenaea courbar</i>	0	
	Pflucker	2	2	0		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Ceiba	2	0	2	 Wooden	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	2	Tapir & Gavilan
	Tapir	2	1	1		<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	2	Gavilan & Ceiba
	Mandy Lu	2	0	2		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	2	Back to Mandy Lu
	Franz	3	0	3		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	2	Franz & Hugo
	Hugo	3	1	2		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	1	Tapir
	Molinero	2	0	2		<i>Spondias mombin</i>	1	Back to Molinero
 Red & Green	Bill	1	1	0	 Natural	<i>Apuleia leiocarpa</i>	0	
	Silver	3	3	0		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Stanford	3	1	2		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Intocable	3	1	2		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Vaginito	3	1			<i>Hymenaea courbar</i>	0	
	Ayahuasco	2	1			<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Rojas	1	1	0		<i>Dipteryx micrantha</i>	0	
	Max	2	0			<i>Erythrina ulei</i>	0	
Summary of Chicks up to 31st March 2018		43 Chicks Hatched	17 Chicks died	21 Chicks Fledged	Breeding Season 2018			

Time to leave the nest...

Many of the translocated chicks are almost as big as a fully grown adult Scarlet Macaw now. The oldest three, Perucho, Aroha and Pancho have wingspans of almost 1m and their tail feathers are around 25cm. The easiest way to tell a chick this age from an adult is the coloration of its iris. Chicks have dark eyes! Once they fledge from the nest it will be harder to tell them apart because eye color will slowly turn yellow as they become adults. From further distances, we usually determine fledglings and adults from their flight and behaviour.



PERUCHO

HATCHED: 15 NOV 17
FLEDGED: 8 FEB 2018
NEST: MANDY-LU



AROHA

HATCHED: 21 NOV 17
FLEDGED: 16 FEB 2018
NEST: MANDY-LU



PANCHO

HATCHED: 28 NOV 17
FLEDGED: 18 FEB 2018
NEST: FRANZ



WALKER

HATCHED: 6 DEC 17
FLEDGED: 7 MARCH 2018
NEST: FRANZ



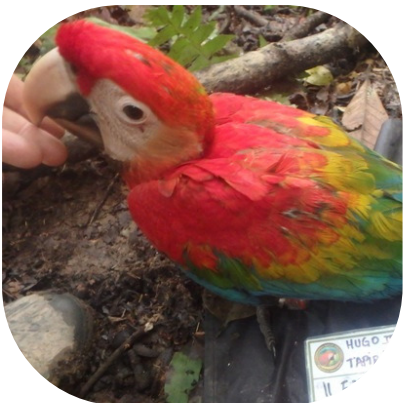
MARIO

HATCHED: 8 DEC 17
FLEDGED: 27 FEB 2018
NEST: MOLINERO



LUIGI

HATCHED: 11 DEC 17
FLEDGED: 6 MARCH 2018
NEST: CEIBA



CERVEZA

HATCHED: 11 DEC 17
FLEDGED: 2 MARCH 2018
NEST: HUGO



GAS

HATCHED: 20 DEC 17
FLEDGED: 23 MARCH 2018
NEST: GAVILAN



LITTLE FOOT

HATCHED: 16 DEC 17
FLEDGED: 7 MARCH 2018
NEST: TAPIR

Meet our veterinarian:

Maria Belen Aguirre

Our veterinarian 'Mabe' has been working with the Tambopata Macaw Project for 6 years now, assessing and caring for the chicks as well as training volunteers on how to handle them.

She has always loved animals and although initially wanted to be an oceanographer, she later decided to become a veterinarian. This happened at age nine when she saw many animals suffering on the streets and wanted to help them all. This compassionate nature is one of the reasons why she is such a talented veterinarian today.

Mabe studied to become a veterinarian at the Universidad Científica Del Sur in Lima, Peru. After graduating, she was employed at a zoo where she worked on a range of birds, mammals and reptiles. Then, before coming to the Tambopata Macaw Project, she worked at an animal rescue centre in Puerto Maldonado that was focused on rehabilitating and releasing spider monkeys.

"I chose her as our field vet before meeting her personally", says Gaby Vigo, the project coordinator. 'A close friend who is an excellent exotic animal trainer had worked with Mabe and strongly recommended her for the position. "She is really good at observing animals", my friend said, which is a plus for a field vet. Then she added, "When Mabe works with animals, she does it with passion, but when she needs to decide about their welfare, she does it with compassion". Fair enough, I thought. Six years later, Mabe's opinion is crucial in the decision-making process when we manipulate macaws and macaw chicks in the wild.'

As our main veterinarian, the days and nights are extremely busy for Mabe. When the translocated chicks are very young they need to be fed every 2 hours which means getting up throughout the night at 12am, 2am, 4am and then starting her official day at 6am. I'm sure that many parents out there would sympathize with her.

The days consist of a mixture of going out in the field with the volunteers to set up the ropes for the climbers, measuring and checking the condition of the chicks, supplement feeding them if necessary, taking blood and feather samples, checking for parasites, banding them, doing necropsies on any dead chicks, sorting samples, assessing blood samples, recording data, writing reports as well as being the unofficial 'people doctor' and doing the myriad of other things that she does!

Mabe is highly respected and valued for her knowledge and experience. One of last seasons field leaders, Dylan Whitaker, gives us an insight into how



Mabe, the Tambopata Macaw Projects lead veterinarian holds a Scarlet Macaw chick after she has measured it, checked its body condition and also removed any botflies and mites from its body. Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.

she is viewed by the team:

'When you spend months on end in the jungle during the rainy season. Having good people around you makes all the difference. You couldn't find a better person to have with you than Mabe Aguirre. She has one of the most incredibly positive attitudes and energies of anyone I've ever had the pleasure to work with. When the day calls for a 40-minute hike out to the furthest nest before the sun rises, Mabe is the one who will get up and go with you without complaint. When you finally get there and the mother macaw won't let you get the chicks out of the nest, Mabe will shrug her shoulders and say 'oh well, we'll have better luck tomorrow'.

Mabe's laughter was the centrepiece of almost every meal, and I don't think you could find a single person who wasn't more broken-hearted the day she left at the end of the season.

Before leaving, though, Mabe led us in the care of several chicks who would otherwise have been abandoned by their parents. She spearheaded the efforts to help those chicks grow and fledge, and her dedication and compassion were inspiring to the entire team. If the Tambopata Macaw Project had an all-star team, Mabe would be the captain."



A Spotted Surprise

MADELEINE BERG

It was at that frustrating time of day when you can hear hundreds of macaws gossiping in the trees, but none have yet decided to make the brave leap to the ground. I was halfway through a six-hour shift at the Colpa Colorado, watching for birds eating the clay. This was my eighth day at the project and I had just got to the point where I was feeling pretty comfortable about being on my own on Colpa island.

My thoughts and binoculars were focused on the cliff across the water from me. I could hear a big group squabbling in the bushes, just out of sight, and, as an excuse to stretch my legs, decided to wander down to the tourist viewpoint to see them better. I walked a few metres along the trail when I saw him, a further 30m away on the same path, watching the birds from the tourist viewpoint.

I blinked a few times to check I wasn't just seeing things in the dappled light through the trees, but he wasn't an illusion. He turned to look at me. I remember the feeling of adrenaline rushing down to my toes, along my finger-tips; ready to run. Luckily I knew not to! Jaguars don't generally attack people, but running can trigger their predatory instincts, so it's not a good idea. Instead, I walked quickly back to the blind, as he turned he began to walk back towards me. I didn't know where to go, wanting to hide, but also to see, so I ended up standing stupidly halfway behind the tarp of the blind.

The machete was currently tied to the tarp as a weight, and being honest with myself I wouldn't know how to use it, or whether I'd want to try to use it on a Jaguar... (they're much more endangered than humans, should I let him eat me?). I grabbed my camera instead and hoped for the best. After some very slow seconds, the jaguar appeared on the trail



Coming eye to eye with the king of the jungle, Madeleine manages to snap a quick picture as the huge predator walks only a few metres away. Photo credit Madeleine Berg.



*The jaguar (*Panthera onca*) is the largest cats in the Americas and numbers have declined in much of its range over the past 20 years. Photo credit Liz Villanueva Paipay.*

from behind the trees, about 4 metres from where I stood.

Although he appears dark and blurred in the shaky photo I took, I remember how glowing yellow he was, contrasted with his dark oval spots in tessellating patterns, how his muscles rippled, his enormous head and paws. His face was turned towards me, as he padded past, and we locked eyes.

I wondered how I could make myself look less interesting, as unappetising as possible. though his gaze seemed disinterested, haughty. Then he was gone already, slinking into the bushes. He moved completely silently, and though he was just a few metres from me, I have no idea where went, and I never saw him again.

The timer beeped, and it was time to check the colpa again. A strangely mundane, human sound after such a wild experience. There followed a couple of stressful hours of colpa-watching. Every leaf falling made me jump. It wasn't until I saw a Capybara quietly munching the grass by the Colpa that I calmed down. Surely this chunky rodent, the closest thing to a moving hot-dog in a jaguars eyes, would be the first choice of prey in this situation. I was still glad to see the boat at the end of the day and return to the lodge alive to tell the tale.

We wanted to say

A huge thank you

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