

ILLIGER'S or Blue-Winged Macaw: Ara maracana

The Illiger's is one of the mini macaws. At 17 inches it is less than half the total length of the Hyacinth. Ornithologists, people who study birds, separate birds in the macaw family into "mini" (lesser) or the large macaws. Large macaws include such species as the Hyacinth, Blue & Gold, Green winged, and Scarlet. Smaller macaws ranging from the 28 inch Military down to the smallest, the 12 inch Noble macaw, are classified as "minis".

Illiger's macaws are another one of the numerous species of parrots found deep in the Brazilian rainforest. They look much like the other closely related minis but the clearly marked scarlet red band found on the otherwise deep blue/green of the crown are positive field marks. The broad area of red plumage on the lower abdomen is another clue to identification. In case you did not know the term "field marks" are used to help make it easy to tell what kind of bird you are looking at in the wild. A trained observer will look for specific markings that are easily seen but yet are unique to a given species. This makes positive identification much easier.

Illiger's can be found in captivity but if you find one in the wild consider yourself very fortunate. This species is yet another example of what habitat disturbance and loss does. Illiger's numbers are rapidly declining, so much so the species may well be headed towards extinction.