

Macaws face possible extinction

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A U.S. bird expert says one of the world's most colorful birds -- the macaw, the largest member of the parrot family -- is in danger of becoming extinct.

The number of macaws has been declining during recent decades and Don Brightsmith at Texas A&M University's Schubot Exotic Bird Center is studying ways to make sure macaws will not become just photographs in a book one day.

Brightsmith says there are 17 species of macaws, and of those, one is extinct, another has become extinct in the wild and seven other species are endangered.

There are several reasons for their declining numbers. The birds are highly prized by the pet trade industry and they are losing their native habitat due to construction and other factors. Also, some South American natives kill them either for food or for their bright feathers.

But little is known about macaws, except that they are highly intelligent creatures and can live up to 50 years.

Macaws can also be affectionate birds.

"It's believed they are very sensitive to human emotions," he added. "The more we learn about these birds, the better our chances to save them."

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