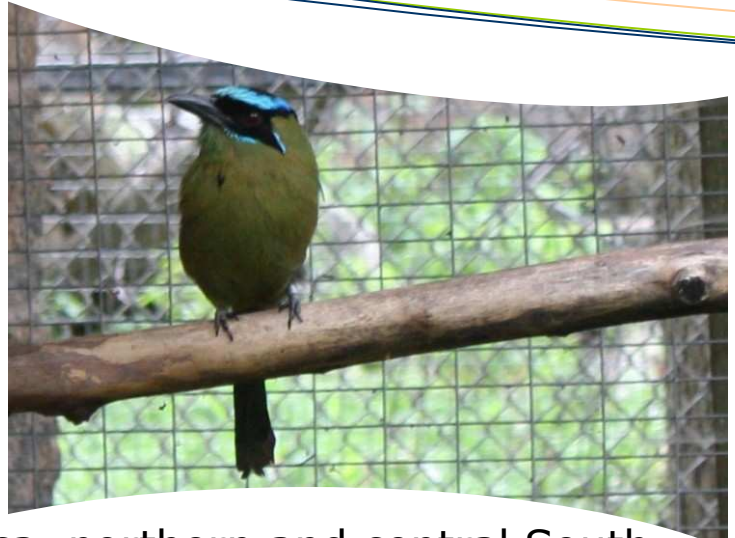


Blue Crowned Motmot

Momotus momota

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Aves
Order Momotidae
Family Momotus



Native to: Mexico, Central America, northern and central South America, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Status: Least Concern

Blue-crowned motmots are not threatened. Because of their ability to live in a wide geographical range and in many different forest types, and to tolerate intrusion by humans, blue-crowned motmots are easily found. However, when forests are destroyed, their survival may become threatened. People have successfully bred blue-crowned motmots in captivity.

Appearance & Lifespan

Blue-crowned motmots have a large head with a down curved, short, broad beak, which is serrated along the upper edge. The tail is very long with bare spines at the tip. The upperparts are green, shading to blue on the lower tail, and the under-parts are green. They have bluish black crowns that are bordered with violet and turquoise, and have a black eye mask with turquoise above and below. Their legs are particularly short. The feet have a middle toe that is almost completely fused to the inner toe, but not to the rear toe. The Blue-crowned Motmot is 38–48 cm long and weighs about 145 g. Their call is a low owl-like sound.

The lifespan of the Blue-crowned Motmot is approximately 20 years in captivity. The lifespan in the wild is unknown due to insufficient data.



Behavior & Reproduction

Blue-crowned Motmots are active during twilight at both dawn and dusk, but most active during the early morning light. They capture prey by sitting quietly on wires, fence posts, or tree branches looking for prey. When they see prey, they suddenly fly toward the prospective meal, taking it while it flies or while its on the ground. Before swallowing its prey, they hit it repeatedly against the ground or branches to kill or stun it. Fruits are often plucked from trees while the birds hover in the air.

Pairs of blue-crowned motmots, who are believed to mate for life, dig holes during the rainy months from August to October when the soil is soft. The tunnel holes are 5 to 14 feet long and about 4 inches in diameter. The nest cavity usually measures 10 inches high, 10 inches in width, and 14 inches in length. They are normally dug into the sides of cliffs or in the ground, but they will sometimes use rock crevices.

After a courtship ritual involving the carrying of leaves by the male to the female, mating begins. The female lays 3-4 small white eggs. One adult incubates the eggs from early afternoon to dawn, and then the partner takes its place. Incubation lasts about twenty-one days. Motmots stop covering their young at night when they are a week old. Young resemble adults in coloration just without the long racket-like tail feathers.

Ecology & Habitat

Blue-crowned motmots have the widest distribution of any motmots. They are found from northeastern Mexico to northern Argentina. Blue-crowned motmots occupy a variety of habitats, including tropical evergreen and deciduous forests, coastal forests, mountainous forests, and secondary vegetation. They live on the edges of rainforest, secondary growth forests, and plantations. They range to altitudes up to 4,300 feet but prefer living near water for drinking.

Blue-crowned motmots eats insects and other invertebrates, including earthworms, centipedes, and snails. They sometimes eat mice and small reptiles and amphibians, and occasionally some fruits.

At the zoo the Motmot eats a parrot mix consisting of pellets and dried fruit as well as a variety of fruits, vegetables, seeds, and nuts.

Did You Know?

1. The tail often twitches like the pendulum of a clock when the motmot is disturbed.
2. These birds often sit still, and in their dense forest habitat can be difficult to see.
3. They are known to dust bathe, but bathing in water has not been observed in the wild.

