

Lear's Macaw Making a Comeback

Bird species on brink of extinction is growing in numbers

By Crystal Apilado

Posted: Friday, July 27, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

[Click image to enlarge](#)

The Lear's macaw is found only in the state of Bahia in northeastern Brazil,
Photo By Mark L Stafford ©2003/Courtesy American Bird Conservancy

The Lear's macaw is now more than 750 birds thanks to the protection of the parrot species' primary breeding area in Brazil.

In June 2007, Fundação Biodiversitas staff at the Canudos Biological Station in Brazil, a reserve supported by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), undertook the count of the Lear's macaw population. Only 70 surviving individuals were left in the wild in 1987. The count has slowly grown over years, with 455 in 2003 and about 600 in the count last month.

"This is a remarkable success story – a species on the brink of extinction is now rebounding because its nesting grounds were protected," said Michael J. Parr, vice president of ABC and co-author of *A Guide to Parrots of the World*.

The Lear's macaw is found only in the state of Bahia in northeastern Brazil. It nests on the sandstone cliffs and feeds primarily on licuri palm nuts. The bird species is currently threatened by hunting and illegal pet trade.

The protection of this vital site for the Lear's macaw is a huge step toward the preservation of the species, said Eduardo Figueiredo, coordinator of the Biodiversitas Lear's Macaw Conservation Program. "The growing population confirms how essential it is to protect an endangered species' habitat," he said.

Biodiversitas has protected the Lear's macaw colony in Bahia for 18 years. The conservation group is now implementing protective measures for the reserve and aims to secure additional dry forest areas that are vital feeding grounds for the bird species. The group is also working to educate local people on understanding the area's ecosystem.