

## Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Questions Answered

Have a question about your pet macaw? Check the [BirdChannel.com](http://BirdChannel.com) pet macaw parrot FAQ for answers!

By *BirdChannel.com* Editors

Red-fronted macaw courtesy of David Demlong

### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #1

What kind of macaw parrot do I have?

The 17 species of macaw parrots range in size from 40-inch-tall hyacinth macaw to the 12-inch-tall red-shouldered macaw. Along with the hyacinth macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), the larger ones include the blue-and-gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*), blue-throated macaw (*A. glaucogularis*), scarlet macaw (*A. macao*), green-winged macaw (*A. chloroptera*), military macaw (*A. militaris*), the red-fronted macaw (*A. rubrogenys*) and great green macaw, also known as the Buffon's macaw (*A. ambiguous*).

Smaller macaws make up the group known as mini-macaws, and include the severe macaw (*A. severus*), yellow-collared macaw (*Primolius auricollis*), Hahn's macaw (*Diopsittaca nobilis*), Illiger's macaw (*P. maracana*), noble macaw (*D. nobilis cumanensis*) and red-bellied macaw (*Orthopsittaca manilata*).

### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #2

What should my macaw parrot eat?

Larger parrots, such as macaws, require more protein in their diet. Pet macaws should have a diet that contains large amount of foods rich in beta carotene, the precursor to Vitamin A. These foods include sweet potatoes, carrots, peppers, kale and any other orange or dark green leafy vegetables. In the wild, macaw parrots forage for seeds and nuts in trees. Their active lifestyle in the wild accounts for the high-calorie food need, so fewer nuts are needed in the home. You can still feed a few nuts in-shell for a treat or foraging activity.

Hahn's macaw courtesy Ashleigh & Sam Bradley, Canada

Military macaw courtesy Emily Schwingler, Minnesota

### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #3

What kind of cage should I get for my macaw parrot?

As with any pet parrot, buy the biggest pet bird cage possible that you can accommodate and afford for your macaw. Macaw parrots, as the largest parrot species, have certain pet bird cage specifications. Start with the minimum of 2 1/2 feet wide by 4 feet deep by 5 feet tall. Bigger pet bird cages will allow for more exercise and, consequently, a healthier macaw. Big macaw parrot beaks mean tough material is necessary to prevent pet bird cage destruction or break-outs.

### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #4

Is my macaw parrot male or female?

Only testing can say for certain whether your pet macaw parrot is a male or female. You can choose DNA testing — using a few feathers, the shell of the egg from which your bird hatched, or a drop of blood — or you may opt for surgical sexing. This can identify gender as well as any sexual defects, but it is a more invasive process than DNA sexing. Speak to your avian veterinarian before moving forward with either procedure.

Severe macaw courtesy Hans Fehres

Blue-and-gold macaw

#### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #5

Do macaw parrots talk?

Yes, many macaw parrots mimic human speech. Some macaw parrots, like the blue-and-gold macaw, are known to learn phrases more easily than others. All macaws, however, will want to vocalize by mimicking whistles and household noises or by speaking words. Try simple training tricks to get your pet macaw talking. Start with the food in your pet macaw's cage and teach it the difference between banana, apple and orange or between seed and nut. When you greet your macaw parrot say "Hello" and say "Goodbye" when you leave. Connecting phrases to familiar items or actions will help your macaw learn faster.

#### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #6

What's the best way to train my macaw parrot?

Macaw parrots are intelligent birds that can learn behaviors and tricks. Experts recommend watching your pet macaw parrot and noticing what motions and behaviors it exhibits on its own. Work with these movements and incorporate them into tricks by introducing cues and offering rewards. For example, a macaw parrot that often lifts its foot would be a good candidate to learn the wave or shaking hands, and one that likes to bob its head up and down could be encouraged to "Nod Yes." When you see your pet parrot do this, say, "Nod your head yes," and hand it a treat or offer a head scratch. Eventually, the simple cue "Nod Yes" can prompt the macaw to move its head up and down to get the reward. Mastering these simple tricks can lead the way to more complex ones.

Yellow-collared macaw by Cioli and Hunnicutt/Bowtie Studio/Courtesy Amy Baggs, California

Scarlet macaw courtesy Steve Little, Canada

#### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #7

What should I get my pet macaw parrot to keep it happy?

As larger parrots, macaws enjoy using their large beaks to manipulate and shred. Wood toys help these pet birds keep their beaks in good shape. Climbing ropes and hammocks offer lots of fun — so do stainless-steel puzzle toys and foraging toys. For the pet bird cage, get macaw-appropriate perches. Thick, durable woods are necessary for any macaw perch to have an extended life. Big beaks and feet like to chew and climb, so offer multiple perches — including one especially for manipulating and shredding. Of course the best enrichment is lots of playtime with owners.

#### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #8

Can macaw parrots contract certain diseases?

Macaws can contract a few common diseases in particular. Aspergillosis is a fungal infection caused by molds. It often results from poor hygiene in the cage or food storage. Macaws infected with this will have labored breathing and some rasping. Psittacosis is also prevalent. This comes from an infection of Chlamydia, and infected birds don't always display symptoms.

Buffon's macaw by Cioli and Hunnicutt/Bowtie Studio/Courtesy Amy Baggs, California

Green-winged macaw by Karen Avery, New Jersey

#### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #9

How can I tell if my pet macaw is sick?

Keep an eye on your pet macaw parrot to detect any differences in behavior or habits. If changes happen, without cause, closely watch your bird and take it to your avian veterinarian. A sick macaw might also have poor feathering and slouching posture. Make sure your bird's eyes and nares are clear and unswollen.

#### Top 10 Pet Macaw Parrot Question #10

What behavioral problems can macaw parrots have?

Many experts say that pet macaw parrots are more even-tempered than other parrot species. Some attribute it to the macaw's size, saying they won't overreact to little things the way smaller species will. Behavior problems can arise, however, if macaw parrots receive insufficient attention. Give macaws ample interaction and out-of-cage time to avoid feather destructive behavior and excessive screaming. Offer wood toys to chew so your macaw doesn't chew

inappropriate items in your house (or at least deflect it from!). If your pet macaw parrot begins to exhibit unwanted aggression, try retraining it with neutral room techniques.

[Hyacinth macaw](#)

[Budgie FAQ](#)

[Conure FAQ](#)

[Cockatiel FAQ](#)

[African Grey FAQ](#)

[Cockatoo FAQ](#)