

Helmeted Curassow

Pauxi pauxi

Family: *Cracidae*, Genus: *Pauxi*
Recognized Subspecies: 2
Conservation status: Endangered
Wild Pop. Trend: Decreasing
CITES Appendix III
USFWS: Not Listed

Range: Colombia and Venezuela

Conservation Concern: The Helmeted Curassow is currently listed as Endangered and is estimated to have less than 2,500 mature adults in the wild. However, little information is known about current populations throughout most of the range. Wild populations may be in more of a critical state than is estimated due to increased human interference and habitat destruction. In the wild, these birds spend most of their time perched among the trees but can be found foraging for food in the early morning and late in the afternoon. Their wild diet primarily consists of fallen fruits and tender buds/leaves of native vegetation. These birds will regurgitate the seeds of ingested fruit and play in an important role in seed dispersal.

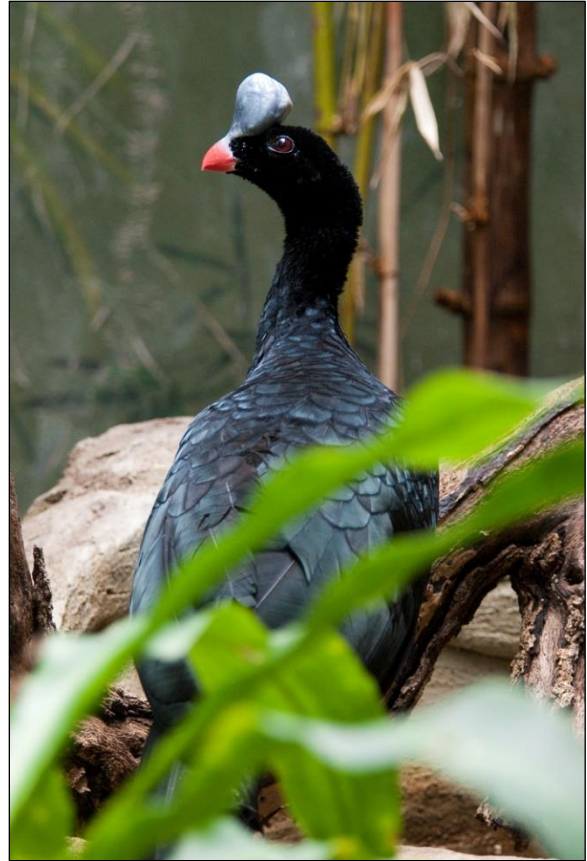


Photo credit: Houston Zoo

Species Account: Helmeted Curassows are large gallinaceous birds that inhabit the slopes of cool, dense cloud forests in portions of Colombia and Venezuela. There are currently two subspecies recognized: *P. p. gilliardi* is native to Sierra de Perijá along the Colombia/Venezuela border; *P. p. pauxi* ranges throughout north-central and western portions of Venezuela into the north-eastern portion of the Colombian Andes.

The AZA population was founded in the early 1970's when three wild caught birds were transferred from Venezuela to the Houston Zoo. Unfortunately, all three proved to be hens, and it was not until 1986 when birds were acquired from the collection of Dr. Jesus Estudillo-Lopez of Mexico City by the Bronx Zoo that the one remaining wild caught hen at Houston was paired. Subsequently eight of the nine founders of this population come from Dr. Estudillo's aviaries.

Several facilities in the private sector house *P. pauxi* related to the AZA population, but exact relations are unknown. Institutions interested in obtaining this species are encouraged to speak to the SSP coordinator about possible placement of birds currently in the AZA captive population.

AZA Role: These large birds are a great addition to any collection. Their large size and unique “helmets” are an unusual site that draws the attention of guests. During the breeding season, males can be heard droning/booming throughout their habitat as part of their courtship display.

Program Goal: Genetic testing is currently underway to determine relatedness within the population. The management of the AZA captive population is focused on determining genetic relatedness, as well as increasing the number of holding facilities. A major debate with this species, and with this genus in general, is the variation in helmet size and shape and how this relates to subspecies status. Differing opinions have been formed, which has affected the potential purity of the AZA managed population. Due to this debate and information that some of the founding birds from Estudillo’s aviaries may have been hybrids with *P. unicornis*, genetic testing needs to be conducted to determine the hybrid status of the AZA managed population.

Education Emphasis

- Seed dispersal
- Cloud forest biome
- Habitat loss
- Hunting pressure



Helmeted Curassow chick

Photo credit Woodland Park Zoo

AZA Connections: The following table is not a guide of what the Helmeted Curassow can be housed with (although many of these are a possibility), but it is instead meant to show the range connections between other AZA recommended program species.

Helmeted Curassow <i>Pauxi pauxi</i> recommended species by other TAGs within species range				
Common name	Scientific name	TAG	Program	Conservation status
Andean Cock-of-the-Rock	<i>Rupicola peruvianus</i>	PACCT TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Purple Honeycreeper	<i>Cyanerpes caeruleus</i>	PACCT TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Red-legged Honeycreeper	<i>Cyanerpes cyaneus</i>	PACCT TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Blue Dacnis	<i>Dacnis cayana</i>	PACCT TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Silver-beaked Tanager	<i>Ramphocelus carbo</i>	PACCT TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Blue-Grey Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>	PACCT TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Saffron Finch	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>	PACCT TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Yellow-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus cela</i>	PACCT TAG	Red SSP	Least Concern
Troupial	<i>Icterus icterus</i>	PACCT TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Crested Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius decumanus</i>	PACCT TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Golden-headed Quetzal	<i>Pharomachrus auriceps</i>	PACCT TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Chestnut-mandibled Toucan	<i>Ramphastos ambiguus</i>	Piciformes TAG	Red SSP	Near Threatened
Blue and yellow Macaw	<i>Ara ararauna</i>	Parrot TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Military Macaw	<i>Ara militaris</i>	Parrot TAG	TAG Monitored	Vulnerable
Red-and-green Macaw	<i>Ara chloroptera</i>	Parrot TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Blue-headed Pionus	<i>Pipnus menstruus</i>	Parrot TAG	TAG Monitored	Least Concern
Boat-billed Heron	<i>Cochlearius cochlearius</i>	Ciconiiformes TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Scarlet Ibis	<i>Eudocimus ruber</i>	Ciconiiformes TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Roseate Spoonbill	<i>Platalea ajaja</i>	Ciconiiformes TAG	Green SSP	Least Concern
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	Charadriiformes TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
Wattled Jacana	<i>Jacana jacana</i>	Charadriiformes TAG	Unmanaged	Least Concern
Double-striped Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus bistriatus</i>	Charadriiformes TAG	Unmanaged	Least Concern
Sunbittern	<i>Eurypyga helias</i>	Gruiformes TAG	Yellow SSP	Least Concern
White-faced Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
Black-bellied Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
Fulvous Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
White-checked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Raft	Least Concern
Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>	Anseriformes TAG	Phase-in	Least Concern

**Disclaimer: this information was collected in 2017. If you have interest in any of these species, contact the perspective TAGs. All range overlap information was determined using the IUCN Red List range maps.

Conservation priority species that share this species range.

- Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*
- Variegated Spider Monkey *Ateles hybridus*
- Andean Bear *Tremarctos ornatus*

If your institution is supporting a field project with one of these species, see if your conservation partner is observing the Helmeted Curassow in their study/field site. If your Zoo displays one of the following species, the addition of an aviary for Helmeted Curassow can illustrate the diversity of this biome at your institution and highlight an endangered bird.



Helmeted Curassow chicks

Photo credit: Houston Zoo