

Blue-Crowned Motmot

Momotus momota

Anatomy

Similar to all members of the motmot genus, the blue-crowned motmot has a large head with down curved, short, broad beaks, which are serrated along the upper edge. Their tarsi are unique in that they are particularly short with a middle toe almost completely fused to the inner toe and only one rear toe. Most of the species of motmots have tail feathers that distinguish them from other birds. The center tail feathers, which twitch like the pendulum of a clock when the motmot is perched, have bare spines at the tip. This makes them easily recognizable. The plumage of the blue-crowned motmot is shades of green and blue. They have red eyes, a turquoise crown and black face. Motmot eggs are round and white. They incubate for three weeks. They make a sound that is a double hoot with a resonance similar to that of an owl.

Habitat

Motmots are found in Mexico, Central America, and the majority of South America in rainforests, second-growth forests, forest edges, shady gardens, and shaded coffee farms. Motmots dig their nests in the shape of tunnels 5–14 feet long and 4 inches in diameter with a nesting chamber at the end, which is 10 by 14 inches in length. Both males and females begin excavating during August to October, which is the rainy season when the soil is soft. They leave the nest area until breeding season the following March or April. Both males and females share parental responsibility. Motmots choose to live near water, not only for consumption, but also for bathing.



Diet

Motmots eat fruit, small reptiles, and insects such as crickets, mealworms, waxworms and earthworms.

Threats

Due to their ability to live in many different forest types ranging from rainforests to shaded coffee farms, the blue-crowned motmot is not on the endangered list. However, as shaded coffee farms and forests are destroyed, the survival of this beautiful bird is threatened.

Sources:

- Jukofsky, Diane. *Encyclopedia of Rainforests*. Connecticut: Oryx Press, 2002.
- Coraciiformes Taxon Advisory Group:
<http://www.coraciiformestag.com/Motmot/history.htm>
- Cornell University, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology:
<http://www.eeb.cornell.edu/winkler/botw/momotidae.html>