

Toco Toucan

by
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The Toco toucan, *Ramphastos toco*, is found throughout eastern South America. This species lives in the canopy layer of the tropical rainforests from the Guianas through Brazil to northern Argentina.

Ramphastos toco is the largest member of its family, which comprises 37 species. It is 25 inches long. Males and females are alike in color. The most outstanding feature of this species

of bird is its bill, which is enormous and brightly colored. The bill may be up to 7 ½ inches long. The huge golden yellow bill looks heavy, but it contains many air pockets. Both parents share the duties of nesting. It typically lays 2-4 pure white eggs. The eggs hatch after 16 to 20 days. When the young hatch, they are naked and blind. The development of the young is very slow. The eyes open at 3 weeks and the bill does not reach full size and coloring until several months later. The bird lives in small communities equivalent to several families. *Ramphastos toco* eats fruit, nuts, insects, and lizards, and other small prey.

Ramphastos toco is bought and sold at high prices. The average pet store sells a single bird of this species for approximately three hundred dollars. Kellogg uses this bird to advertise their products. Although the toucan is not an endangered species, it is at risk. This species of bird is captured from the forest and shipped to other countries to be sold in pet stores. Not only is the rainforest reduced, but many of the birds die in transit. These needless deaths are causing the populations to decline slightly. The unnecessary deaths can be prevented if people around the world stopped buying them. Without the demand there would be no need to remove these birds from the wild.



Facts:

1. The toucan is a noisy animal.
2. It lives in the rainforest.
3. It eats small insects and lizards.
4. The bill is not heavy.
5. It has 2-4 pure white eggs.
6. Males and females look alike.
7. The babies are born naked.
8. Its bill is brightly colored.
9. It's 25 inches long.
10. It is the largest of all the toucans.