



# GREAT CURASSOW

Galliformes  
Family: Cracidae  
Genus: *Crax*  
Species: *rubra*



**Range:** Southern Mexico to Western Ecuador

**Habitat:** Tropical and sub-tropical forests

**Niche:** Arboreal, omnivorous, diurnal

**Wild diet:** Seeds, fruits and invertebrates

**Zoo diet:** Seeds and fruits

**Life Span:** (Wild)  
(Captivity)

**Sexual dimorphism:** M is black with yellow knob on upper mandible, F is rust-colored and somewhat smaller

**Location in SF Zoo:** South American Tropical Rainforest and Aviary

---

## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

---

The plumage of the female is rust to yellowish whereas the male is black with white ventral areas. Female has black and white banded markings on head while the male is predominantly black with a shaggy semi-erect crest with forward curling feathers. The male also has a yellow knob on its upper mandible. Overall their bodies are slender with long broad, flat tails, which are slightly longer than their wings. Wings are short and rounded. The feet have well developed hind toes "pigeon footed" that allows them to walk easily along tree limbs.

Curassow have large muscular gizzard but also two ceca for hindgut fermentation.

**Weight:** 10 - 10.6 lbs

**Length:** 37 inches

**Wingspan:** 15.7 inches

---

## STATUS & CONSERVATION

---

The rapid destruction of tropical forest is the greatest threat to this species. They are hunted for food and sport since their inability to fly fast makes them an easy target. Listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List with decreasing population numbers.

---

## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

---

They utter one or two booming or whistling notes. Their voice is amplified by means of an extended windpipe (trachea). A system of air chambers in the neck also serves to amplify the voice, which is loud and raucous. This is necessary to maintain contact in denser parts of the forest. When feeding on the ground, the Curassows do not appear to scratch the ground as other members of this family do. They are able to consume nuts and tough seeds by swallowing stones to aid in digestion. Although they are poor flyers, they are adapted to an arboreal life by being able to run along branches high in the canopy. When crossing a clearing they are able to glide from the tops of trees for more than 100 meters.

---

## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

---

During courtship, the male makes a hollow sounding call. The small nests of sticks, vines and leaves are found in trees sometimes as much as 100 feet off the ground. Females tend the chicks that are able to leave the nest several hours after hatching. These young are the only gallinaceous birds that are feed directly by their parents

Incubation: 22 - 34 days	Sexual Maturity:
# of eggs: 2 white round and pitted	Fledging: several days

---

## MISCELLANEOUS

---

**Sources:** (49 - 53)

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Birds of the World © 2005 page 109

Princeton Encyclopedia of Birds © 2009, Princeton University Press

IUCN Red List: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22678521/92776389>

Updated 11/95, 4/09, 3/20