



CRESTED OROPENDOLA

PASSERIFORMES

Family: Icteridae

Genus: *Psarocolius*

Species: *decumanus*



Range: Costa Rica, South America east of the Andes, from Panama and N.W. Colombia south to N. Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago.

Habitat: lowland forest edges and clearings, grasslands, savannas, and marshes.

Niche: omnivorous, arboreal, diurnal

Wild diet: large insects, fruit, some nectar, and seeds.

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild)
(Captivity)

Sexual dimorphism: Female is smaller, lighter, duller and crestless

Location in SF Zoo: South American Tropical Rainforest and Aviary

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The Crested Oropendola is easily recognized by its striking yellow tail. Both male and female birds look alike and are largely black with slight gloss and chestnut abdomens and blue eyes with a long, conical, whitish bill. The males have a few long, thin feathers that form a narrow crest on their head, which is sometimes difficult to see. The plumage of the Crested Oropendola has a musky smell due to the oil from the preen gland.

Weight: M 1 lb 11 oz F 1 lb 6 oz
Body Length: M 17 - 20 in F 13 in
Wingspan:

STATUS & CONSERVATION

The Crested Oropendola is not globally threatened. It is common in much of its range but scarcer in the southern part of its range. It is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, although populations are scattered and its tropical habitat is diminishing due to human encroachment. This species is able to tolerate partial deforestation more than other Oropendola species.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

The distinctive songs of the male include a liquid vibrato *CreeeEEEoooooooooooo*. Both sexes have a loud *clack* call they use in alarm.

Oropendolas are gregarious and live in large flocks of up to 100 birds. During breeding season, the flock divides into smaller colonies of 1 to 4 males and 15 to 30 females, but the colonies remain close together for protection. Outside the breeding season, this species is quite mobile, with some seasonal movements.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

The Oropendola gets its name from the male's mating behavior. Each colony has a dominant male, which mates with most of the females following an elaborate bowing display. There may be 15-30 females and only 3-4 males. Most colonies are fewer than ten nests. The courtship display involves the male bowing over on a branch while shaking its bright yellow tail in the air, fanning its wings and vocalizing.

Oropendolas make one of the most unusual and unique nests in the bird world; it is shaped like a long teardrop. The nest is woven by the females of grasses and palm frond fibers and can be three to six feet long. Despite its large size, the nest is suspended by only a few strands of grass or frond fibers, which hang from a branch high in an isolated tree. They are colonial breeders so there will be many nests covering the branches of the tree.

The eggs are blotched blue-grey in color. The female incubates the eggs while the male protects the nest from predators.

Incubation: 15 – 19 days	Sexual Maturity:
# of Young: 2	Fledging: 24 – 36 days

MISCELLANEOUS

The Crested Oropendola is of the Family Icteridae, the New World Blackbirds. Other names for the Crested Oropendola are Yellow-Tailed Cornbird, Weaver Bird or Suriname Crested Oropendola. This bird belongs to the family *Icteridae*, which means "jaundiced ones" in both Greek (*ikteros*) and Latin (*ictericus*). This is because yellow feathers are found somewhere on the body of every species in the family.

Sources:

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The Handbook of the Birds of the World Vol XVI © 1996, Lynx Edicions, p.684-745, 754

http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=679756

http://www.lazoo.org/animals/birds/oropendola_crested/index.html