

## **YELLOW-EARED PARROT – OGNORHYNCHUS ICTEROTIS – CONURE A JOUES D'OR**

**BIOMETRICS:** Length: 42-46 cm; Weight: 285 gr



**DESCRIPTION:** Yellow-eared Parrot is an endangered species, endemic to Colombia. It is also known as Palm Parrot, because it is closely associated to Wax Palm – *Ceroxylon andicum*.

Yellow-eared Parrot is a yellow and green parrot. Upperparts are yellow-green and underparts are mainly pale yellow. Long, narrow tail is pointed, and undertail feathers are dull red.

On the head, forehead, cheeks and ear patches are yellow. Crown, nape, throat and neck sides are green. Thick, heavy bill is blackish. Eyes are black, with bluish-grey bare skin eye-ring. Legs and feet are greyish.

Both adults are similar.

Juvenile is duller. It has brown eyes, and shorter tail than

adults.

**VOICE:** Yellow-eared Parrot utters goose-like calls, when in flight or perched “raanh-raanh”. All members of a flock may utter this call, in order to produce loud, far-carrying, musical babble.

**HABITAT:** Yellow-eared Parrot lives in montane forests and partially deforested areas, from 1200 to 3400 metres of elevation, where Wax Palms are growing up. Wax Palm is Colombia's national tree.

**RANGE:** Yellow-eared Parrot lives mainly in the Central Andes of Colombia and Northern Ecuador.

**BEHAVIOUR:** Yellow-eared Parrot feeds mainly Wax Palm fruits in upper stages of canopy. It feeds from dawn to mid-afternoon, in the surrounding forest close to the roost areas where they are numerous at night in palm thickets. They sleep in pairs, side-by-side, and unpaired birds sleep in different places in 2 to 5 palm trees.

Yellow-eared Parrot seems to be resident, but it may perform seasonal and irregular movements, according to food resources. They travel in flocks.

These parrots are noisy and highly gregarious, often seen in flocks of about 20 birds. But they can also be seen singly or in pairs.

Yellow-eared Parrot nests in hole in palm tree, and it uses the same nest during its whole life. It also returns to its nest after human attack, but that unfortunately makes easier its capture.

**FLIGHT:** Yellow-eared Parrot has strong, direct flight. This species flies high, swooping down for alighting in tree tops.

**REPRODUCTION:** Yellow-eared Parrot breeds from March to May in Colombia and from July to October in Ecuador.

They nest in colonies, in holes in Wax Palms, at up to 25 to 30 metres of elevation. These colonies nest near non-breeding birds' roost. Pairs mate for life.

Female lays 3 to 4 eggs. Yellow-eared Parrot is often helped by a third adult for parental duties. It is a brood-helper. It helps parents fro feeding and caring for chicks. This species may produce two broods per year.

**DIET:** Yellow-eared Parrot feeds on fruit, bark, flowers and shoots of various trees, but their favourite is the Wax Palm.

**PROTECTION / THREATS / STATUS:** Yellow-eared Parrot is a critically endangered species. Dramatic declines are due to hunting and habitat loss. Closely associated to the Wax Palm for feeding, nesting and roosting, this parrot is threatened by deforestation for farming and cattle ranching. Over the past century, about 80% of woodlands disappeared in Colombian Andes.

Wax Palm is itself in danger of extinction, with few areas where it is still growing up. It is prohibited to cut down Wax Palm since 1986, but their seeds are eaten by cattle.

Poaching, trade and hunting are among the most important threats for parrots.

Efforts for helping this species are in process, with installations of artificial nest-boxes.

Foundation ProAves, associated with Loro Parque Foundation, American Bird Conservancy and International Conure Association, create in 2003 this Artificial nest-boxes program, because natural cavities are not sufficient for Yellow-eared Parrot populations.

Parrots adopted these artificial cavities, protected against predators and humans, allowing some hope for future.

**Photograph by Fundación ProAves [www.proaves.org](http://www.proaves.org)**

**Text by Nicole Bouglouan**

Sources:

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