

Great Green Macaw Volunteer Field Biologist Year-round, 3 months minimum

Macaw populations have declined significantly over the past decades. The main causes are illegal poaching for the pet trade and the loss of mature forest habitat, which macaws rely on for feeding and nesting. MRN's vision is to see a future with thriving parrot populations in healthy, connected forests, across their former ranges. This field program is of crucial importance for understanding the populations trends in the wild to help assess conservation action needed.

Purpose:

The role of the Volunteer Field Biologist is to help our Field Team Leader and our Program Manager to monitor Costa Rica's wild macaws. This includes extensive fieldwork to locate, monitor, track and support breeding pairs and their offspring in order to collect data and improve rates of successful reproduction. During the non-breeding season, it involves monitoring known roosts and finding new roosts. This will take place in the rainforests of Sarapiquí, focusing on the wild and endangered Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambiguus*).

The field biologist might also contribute to population counts, mapping projects, reintroductions and other additional research throughout their stay depending on the time of year. Successful applicants will receive orientation training and will have the support of specialists where necessary, however much of the work will be carried out independently, thus a high level of self-reliance and motivation is required. In addition to fieldwork, the field biologist is expected to help out in other areas of the organization as the need arises.

Field Biologist's duties:

The work of the field biologist will vary throughout the year. The below overview shows examples of what the work may be like:

Breeding Season (December-May):

- Locating active nest sites through assessment of historical data, personal observations, tracking bird movements, conversation with locals, and the development of new leads.
- Monitoring nesting activity and keeping detailed notes of observations. This will require waiting for long periods of time (normally 3 hours) in remote locations without getting distracted.
- Collecting nest data and biological samples. This is usually done through single rope access climbing technique.
- Intensive monitoring of active nests.
- Data entry
- Reacting to emergencies such as downed fledglings or injured adults.

Non-Breeding Season (June-November):

- Locating roost sites for the annual count by talking with locals and ground-truthing reports (a good level of Spanish is needed).
- Helping to conduct the annual roost count.
- Conducting general site maintenance and project development tasks. These may be assigned depending on our current needs and the skills and abilities of volunteers.
- Conducting nest maintenance and nest box building and installation.
- Build relationships with local landowners to ensure good relationship and communicate for emergencies like rescues.
- Data entry
- Work on our native plant nursery.

Duties per month:

Sarapiquí – Great Green Macaws	
Macaw behavior	Field biologist duties
<p>January - March Early breeding season - the birds will be establishing their nests, laying, incubating and brooding their chicks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locating nest sites through assessment of historical data, personal observations, tracking bird movements, conversation with locals, and the development of new leads • Monitoring nesting activity and keeping detailed notes of observations. This will require waiting for long periods of time in remote locations without getting distracted

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting nest data and biological samples. This is usually done through single rope access climbing technique
April - June Late breeding season - the birds will be feeding up their young and fledging them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive monitoring of active nests • Reacting to emergencies such as downed fledglings or injured adults • Getting early breeding season nest data
July - September Early non-breeding season - the birds will be moving away from their breeding areas and will form larger social flocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locating roost sites for the annual count by talking with locals and ground-truthing reports (a good level of Spanish is needed) • Helping to conduct the annual roost count
October - December Late non-breeding season - the large flocks will begin to break up as breeding pairs look for nest sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting general site maintenance and project development tasks. These may be assigned depending on our current needs and the skills and abilities of volunteers • Conducting nest maintenance and nest box building and installation
All year round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to the development of the breeding management strategy in order to increase the productivity of the birds • Taking advantage of opportunities and learning broader conservation skills that can then be applied throughout the organization • Driving with care and confidence on roads where standards of driving can be low • Driving off-road (car & motorbike) on incredibly difficult terrain • Communicating (in Spanish) with landowners

Hours of work:

The field biologist is expected to work at least 5 days a week, following a flexible time schedule that is guided by the behavior of the birds. For example, this might be from 4am (sometimes earlier) until 6pm, with a mid-day break ranging from 1-3 hours (depending on the tasks). Breaks generally take place in the field. Additional time off per month can be accrued based on length of stay and can be used when planned in advance with your manager.

Duration of position:

The position runs year-round, and we require a three-month minimum, though preference is given to those who can stay for at least six months. Upon arrival to site, training is provided along with help to better understand the landscape of the work. Later during the program, the volunteer will be applying their acquired knowledge and conducting fieldwork more independently.

Background:

The successful applicant:

- Will be able to demonstrate a commitment to, and wants to pursue a career in science-based wildlife conservation
- Has animal handling experience
- Has fieldwork experience
- Has an independent work attitude and is a self-starter.
- Is comfortable being away from family and friends for long periods of time
- Enjoys being outside and is not put out by extreme weather and temperatures
- Is happy to live communally in isolated and rustic accommodation, with limited electricity and no internet.
- Is experienced and confident in their self-reliance skills.
- Dedicated to learning and perfecting work-related skills in a month.

Essential skills/qualifications:

- Full, manual transmission driver's license
- Basic level of spoken Spanish
- A high level of physical fitness – carrying heavy gear into the forest, followed by climbing 30 meters, multiple times per day should be expected.
- Driving with care and confidence on roads where standards of driving can be low

- Driving off-road on incredibly difficult terrain

Desirable experience:

- A degree at BSc. level or above in a biological science or other relevant field
- Motorbike qualification such as a CBT, or overseas equivalent if not from the UK in order to drive a 125cc bike. Must be a license issued specifically for a motorbike.
- Rock or tree climbing for either work or recreation. Knowledge of single rope access technique is beneficial.
- Off-road driving (car & motorbike), particularly through deep mud and water-saturated terrain. If no experience in this area, you must be willing to learn onsite.
- Wildlife handling, particularly large birds.
- First aid training. Up to date qualification is beneficial.
- High level of self-reliance such as previous fieldwork in developing countries, gold level Duke of Edinburg (UK), army cadets/OTC, Eagle Scouts, etc.

Essential personal qualities:

- Dependable and responsible
- Hard working, with early starts and late ends to the working day not being a problem
- Motivated and positive with a desire to contribute
- A passion for wildlife and nature conservation
- Flexible, friendly, patient and optimistic
- A sense of humor is helpful

Benefits:

- Great opportunity to experience Central America, off the beaten track and away from the tourist traps.
- A chance to put all the theoretical knowledge gained throughout your studies to work by getting your hands dirty with real wildlife conservation fieldwork.
- An unparalleled sense of satisfaction from supporting a non-profit wildlife conservation organization. You will become part of a team that aims to create a sustainable situation for an animal that is currently in great danger of extinction.
- Real, hands-on, in-situ conservation experience and the satisfaction that comes with working closely with an endangered species.
- Increased understanding and appreciation of different values and lifestyles.
- Increased skills in creative problem-solving and time management.
- Opportunities to work, and network, with avian and wildlife conservation specialists.
- Learn and improve skills such as rope climbing techniques, bird ringing, map reading, data collection and using GIS software.
- Taking advantage of opportunities and learning broader conservation skills that can then be applied throughout the organization.
- A recognition certificate may be provided if placement is completed successfully.

Anticipated costs:

All international and national travel costs to get to the site are your responsibility. Volunteers buy and prepare all their own food and we recommend you budget for at least \$40 per week, or more if you like luxuries. On-site accommodation and utilities are provided at a cost reflective of length of time volunteering with us:

3-5 months: \$150/month

>6 months: Free

Comprehensive insurance cover for the entire stay is a must, and it should be arranged and paid for by the applicant. If staying for more than 90 days, doing a visa renewal trip is also the applicant's own responsibility. The most cost-effective option is going to Nicaragua via bus for a long weekend.