

THE GREATER ANTILLEAN MACAWS.

BY AUSTIN H. CLARK.

THE following continental species of Macaws have been erroneously credited to the Greater Antilles by the earlier writers. The mistakes apparently arose from the birds having been brought from the Mosquito Coast (or some other part of Central or South America), by ships trading locally, to Jamaica, and then, after a residence in that island, being reshipped to England or to Europe as natives there. The interior of Jamaica was then much less known than was the interior of Cuba or Haiti; thus species which would have been at once recognized as foreign to those islands passed as resident on Jamaica. Moreover, what appear to have been escaped birds were occasionally killed in the woods (*vide* Browne, Civil and Nat. Hist. Jamaica, p. 472, 1789, under "*The Blue Macaw of Edwards*"), which tended to confirm people in their ideas that the birds were natives, they believing that they were stragglers from their inaccessible mountain homes.

Now Macaws, like Parrots, although birds of powerful flight and spending much time on the wing, seldom pass over any great extent of water. Although larger and stronger than parrots, they appear to be even more attached to the mainland than are they; whereas species of the genus *Amazona* are found on Cozumel, Tres Marias, Tigre and Ruatan (in the Bay of Honduras), Aruba, Curaçao, Margarita, Trinidad, Tobago, and other islands off the northern South American coast (I do not consider in this connection the species peculiar to, and occurring on, the West Indies). Macaws have only been reported from Trinidad, and no specimens appear ever to have been obtained there (*Ara makawuanna* Léotaud, Ois. de l'île de la Trinidad, app. p. 557, 1866; Chappm. Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. VI, p. 66, 1894).¹ It appears, therefore, very unlikely that any continental species could ever have strayed

¹ Count Salvadori (Cat. Birds Brit. Mus. XX, p. 168, 1891) gives Trinidad in the range of *A. hahni*, and mentions an unsexed skin (purchased) from that island. Possibly Léotaud's species was in reality *A. hahni*. Some species of green macaw certainly does occur there.

as far as Jamaica, although it is possible that they occasionally escaped and were killed in an apparently feral state in the woods. I have known of *A. ararauna* and *A. macao* being killed on the island of Barbados, probably having come from ships at anchor in the harbor, and, of course parrots (and in one case I know of *A. macao*) are sometimes shot even in the woods of New England.

Ara ararauna (Linn.).

BLUE AND YELLOW MACAW.

Jamaica, SLOANE, Nat. Hist. Jamaica, II, p. 296, 1725. "VI. *Psittacus maximus cyanocroceus*." — ALBIN, Nat. Hist. Birds, II, p. 16, 1738. "The Maccaw from Jamaica" (part).¹ — BRISSON, Orn. IV, p. 191, 1760. "*Ara jamaicensis cyanocrocea*." — BROWNE, Civil and Nat. Hist. Jamaica, p. 472, 1789 "The Blue Mackaw of Edwards." — LATHAM, Gen. Hist. Birds, II, p. 107, 1822. "The Blue and Yellow Maccaw."²

*Ara macao*³ (Linn.).

RED AND YELLOW MACAW.

Jamaica, ALBIN, *loc. cit.* BRISSON, *loc. cit.* p. 188. "*Ara jamaicensis*."

¹ Albin figures a Red and Blue Macaw (pl. 17) as from Jamaica, saying it is the male of the Blue and Yellow Macaw. It was probably intended to represent *A. macao* (possibly colored from memory) which was commonly considered the male of *A. ararauna*.

² The reference to Latham's 'Index' and 'Synopsis' are contained in this work, and are therefore not given here.

³ The name "*macao*" was given because the bird was supposed to have come from Macao, near Hong Kong. The English word Macaw is said by some to have been derived from it.

***Ara chloroptera* (Souancé).**

RED AND BLUE MACAW.

LATHAM, *loc. cit.* p. 102 "Red and Blue Maccaw," (occurs on "some of the islands [Antilles] also," as well as on the continent).

***Ara severa* (Linn.).**

Jamaica, BRISSON, *loc. cit.*, p. 202. "*Ara brasiliensis erythrochlora*." — LATHAM, *loc. cit.* p. 112. "Brazilian Green Maccaw" (refers to Edwards [Glean.], pl. 229 [1758]).

***Ara militaris* (Linn.).**

MILITARY MACAW.

Gosse (Birds of Jamaica, p. 261, 1847) supposes that this species might have been a native of Jamaica, living in the wilder mountain regions, and remarks that every description he received of the bird agreed with that of *A. militaris*, "the Great Green Macaw of Mexico." I agree with Mr. Cory¹ that "it is not impossible that *Ara militaris* may have occurred in Cuba and Jamaica, but it is improbable. The bird recorded as such was perhaps *A. tricolor* wrongly identified."²

We have thus narrowed down the Greater Antillean Macaws to a single species (*A. tricolor*), which is not known outside of those islands; but which, like all the West Indian parrots (*Amazona*) is peculiarly Antillean.³ This species (or, perhaps, one closely related) appears certainly to have formerly lived on Jamaica. Sloane (Nat. Hist. Jamaica, II, p. 297, 1725) says, under "The Small Maccaw" ("The Great Maccaw," is *A. ararauna*): "They are very common in the woods, and are eaten as Pigeons, but when young are tamed and kept as Parrots."

¹ Birds W. I., p. 178.

² The young of *A. tricolor* appears to have been largely green.

³ I have not given all the references under the species listed above, but only such as seemed most important.

On Cuba this bird survived until very recent years, its last stronghold being the extensive swamps in the southern part of the island.

We find in Brisson (Orn. IV, p. 183, 1760, under "L' Ara Rouge"): "Macaws were formerly very common in Santo Domingo. I see from a letter of M. le Chevalier Deshayes that since the French settlements have been extended to the tops of the mountains, these birds have become less common." He quotes M. de le Borde, Médecin du Roi at Cayenne: "In all these islands (Antilles) the Macaws have become very rare, because the inhabitants destroy them for food. They retire into the less frequented districts, and do not come near the cultivated areas."

Brisson's is the only evidence I can find of any Macaws having lived in the island of Haiti; but the statement appears to be authoritative, and he speaks of the bird even at that time (1760) as rare.

I therefore propose the following as probably the true original status for the genus *Ara* in the West Indies.

Ara tricolor (Bechst.).

CUBAN MACAW.

HABITAT. Jamaica¹ (extinct); Cuba, including Isle of Pines (recently extinct); Haiti¹ (extinct).

Ara guadeloupenis Clark.²

LESSER ANTILLEAN MACAW.

HABITAT. Guadeloupe (extinct); ? Dominica¹ (extinct); Martinique¹ (extinct).

¹ Possibly a closely related species or subspecies.

² Auk, XXII, p. 272, July, 1905.