

Lear's Macaw: some good news

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For readers who have been following the story of the tragic deaths by electrocution of Lear's Macaws (*Parrots*, April and May 2022 issues), I offer another update.

Just a reminder: the wind farms, power lines and other structures necessary to deliver renewable energy are killing some of the most critically endangered birds on the planet. Large birds are especially at risk and not only due to collisions with power lines. Parrots, because of their often playful nature, are greatly at risk of electrocution. This occurs when they simultaneously touch two-phase conductors or one conductor and a grounded device on a pole.

Lear's Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*), found only in a small area of north-eastern Brazil, had climbed back from the brink of extinction due to the excellent work of several organisations to reduce the threats to its survival. The recent deaths by electrocution are shocking because they are preventable.

Kilma Manso, representing the conservation organization ECO, that she works tirelessly for, has updated me on recent developments. On April 20 she reported another electrocution in Euclides da Cunha. She said: "I am desperate about it. I am sending you more photos and you can realise how tough it was for me to see all of them and select some pictures to send you. It was impossible not to think about the suffering of these birds and the drastic consequences for the conservation of the species."

On May 9 Kilma sent me more news. She was due to attend a meeting on May 13 with the power company COELBA (the energy distributor in the region) and with Dr. Luciana Khoury of the Bahia State Public Ministry. She is the Public Attorney in charge of the Region of Raso da Catarina's environmental problems who had ordered the power company to change the type of insulators it was using on the electrical poles. They would discuss the need of a monitoring team for supervising what COELBA's workers would be doing in the field, as well as

identifying new priority areas to make more modifications to the electrical poles structures to prevent more deaths of Lear's Macaws.

Finally, there is more positive news from the State Attorney's office. It has been made mandatory for COELBA to do the following:

- to make their transmission lines as safe as it is possible to prevent bird impact
- to provide the construction and the maintenance of a facility to grow licuri palm seedlings, including the cost of maintenance in the field for five years. (The licuri palm is the main food source of the Lear's Macaw.)
- COELBA must provide total annual support for the Corn Replacement Project for five years. This must include the acquisition of 1,500 sixty kg sacks of corn and all the cost of vehicles, lodging, truck maintenance and personnel. (This project is the one that pays farmers compensation in corn for the crop losses caused by the macaws.)

There was also news about the other serious threat: the windfarm that the company Voltalia was proposing to build in the macaw's breeding area.

Kilma told me: "Even if everything was already built (wind turbines, electrical transmission net, electrical substation, etc.), not a single propeller could be activated before the Operation Licence was issued. The pressure on the Bahia State Environmental Agency (INEMA) to prevent the granting of the licence is getting even stronger."

Surely common sense must prevail and this Endangered (IUCN) macaw which has suffered much loss of habitat and has only two main breeding colonies, must be protected from this potentially disastrous development.