

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Anseriformes
Scientific Name: *Chauna torquata*

Family: Anhimidae
Common Name: Crested (Southern) Screamer

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male):



Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other Wetlands, marshes, lagoons

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other [Can withstand 32F with good weather, heated barn access \(@40F\), and flowing water.](#)

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other [Access to running water, shade, and barn](#)

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Waterfowl pellets, ample lettuce, and apple chunks. It's believed screamer chicks have higher protein requirements than other waterfowl and they take readily to duckweed and mealworms.

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Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: ~ 15 years Females: ~ 15 years

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: Mean = 12.4 years, though birds have bred >35 years Females: Mean = 12.4 years, though birds have bred >35 years

BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 2-3 years Females: 2-3 years

Courtship Displays: Sexes are alike in appearance. Their duet is the call for which they are aptly named, with one bird taking the high notes and the other the low. Allopreening and walking side by side are also part of the courtship repertoire. Birds are considered monogamous.

Some captive pairs stay true to their austral spring nesting season (Sept/Nov) while the majority typically produce eggs between March-August. Historically there have been outliers that produce multiple clutches seemingly year-round if eggs are infertile, nest attempts fail, or eggs are dummied.

Nest Site Description: Large mass of vegetation and plant debris. Will build in shallow water, or on land close to the water's edge. Use sticks of various sizes, mulch, shrub clippings, grasses, and just about any other plant material offered in captive settings. Both sexes participate in nest building, and there has even been a record of a pair that allowed their young from the previous year to assist.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: Clutch size can be between 2-7 though is typically 3-5. Eggs are large and white or off-white. Mean mass is 160g. Average size is 91mm x 61mm. Laid every 2-3 days until clutch complete.

Incubation Period: Typically 42-46 days with some reports of 40-48 days

Fledgling Period: 8-10 weeks

Parental Care: Both sexes cooperate in chick rearing. Chicks are brooded for the first few days. They spend the majority of their day foraging with the chicks, showing them choice diet items. There have been instances where the male typically incubates during the day, with the female taking over at night.

Chick Development: Chicks are nidifugous and are capable of swimming immediately. They are downy and can range from rusty brown to yellow-gray, becoming grayer with age, and having lighter underparts. Their legs and feet are brownish-orange and their bill is a dark brownish-black. Eyes are dark brown. Their bill, legs, and feet resemble that of adults in shape and proportion to the rest of their body.

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Chicks fledge between 8-10 weeks of age and become fully independent by 12-14 weeks. They will often stay with their parents until the next breeding season, and can typically be held up to a year with their parents in zoological settings. One recorded pair has allowed their offspring from the previous year to assist in nest building and follow along with newly hatched chicks.

Hand-rearing of screamer chicks has proven difficult for most. Lots of walking is needed for proper development along with numerous food item offerings throughout the day. Getting them to begin self-feeding can be a challenge. Duckweed is a favorite protein source for chicks and great at encouraging them to self-feed. Many facilities have reported diarrhea and loose stool prior to chick mortality.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Gregarious in the non-breeding season, forming large flocks upwards of 1,000 individuals. Generally monogamous, this species forms 1.1 pairs that become highly territorial during nesting season (austral spring, Sept/Nov). Unpaired birds and juveniles maintain smaller flocks during this time, with unpaired mature males often testing bonded pairs. Bonded pairs and chicks will often remain together until the next breeding season.

Social Structure in Captivity: Typically housed in 1.1 pairs. Singletons are discouraged due to the social nature of these birds. Recently, same-sex 2.0 pairs have been successfully attempted. This will aid in placement of surplus birds as well as create a more suitable social environment for unpaired males. Chicks can stay with adults until about one year of age before they are typically chased off prior to nesting season. Sometimes adults will allow older offspring to stick around without displacing them, though this seems to be a rare occurrence.

Minimum Group Size: 1.1 is ideal

Maximum Group Size: 2 birds plus offspring

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes

Comments:

Compatible with other waterfowl, flamingos, ibis, spoonbills, herons, gulls, pelicans, passerines, cracids, and small psittacines, to name a few. Housed successfully with hoofstock, capybara, New World monkeys, and cavy. Varied success with anteaters; considered risky.

Optimal Habitat Size: 400 square feet for one pair; larger space needed for additional birds or mixed exhibits.

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Management Challenges: Can be territorial during the breeding season towards keeper staff and enclosure mates, which is why a larger space is required if a pair is kept with other animals. Historically, they have been kept in 1.1 pairs, which can leave birds unpaired if only same-sex surplus birds are available. Same-sex 2.0 pairs have been attempted recently (July 2017) with promising success.

Chicks can have a relatively high mortality rate and losses are common.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please contact Joanna Klass, Woodland Park Zoo, at Joanna.klass@zoo.org for more information.

REFERENCES:

Photo Credit: Robert Qually

AZA Survival Statistics Table. Retrieved October 5, 2017, from <http://www.aza.org/species-survival-statistics>

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