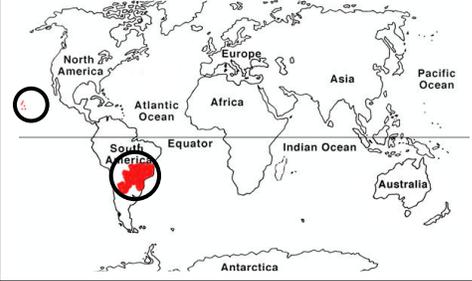


Yellow-billed Cardinal

Native Range Map



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Emberizidae
Genus: *Paroaria*
Species: *capitata*



Photo courtesy of Chris Tucci

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Yellow-billed cardinals are found in southern Brazil, Paraguay, and northern Argentina. They inhabit shrubbery in humid areas such as marshes, flooded grasslands, shorelines of lakes and rivers, and edges of forests and woodlands. They have also been introduced to the Hawaiian Islands.
- **Exhibit Location:** Diversity of Birds

Characteristics

- Length: 6.5 inches
- The bill is a pinkish-yellow, while the eyes are orange. Their legs are brownish-pink.
- The feathers of the head are bright red, and there is a bib of black feathers at the neck. Most of the back is covered with dark feathers and the under parts are white that extend to the collar.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 2-3 years; **In Captivity:** 12 years

Behaviors

- The yellow-billed cardinal is often seen in pairs or small groups. During the non-breeding season, they may gather in straggling flocks of hundreds, a large number of which are immature (not of breeding age).
- They often fly low over water, perching frequently on dead branches that protrude from the water.
- A great deal of the bird's time is also spent on the ground pecking for seeds to eat.
- They usually will not stray more than 20 miles from their territory.
- Their call is a single, squeaky note very similar to the red-crested cardinal, only softer.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** live insects, natural fibers (for nesting), whole pieces of fruit

Reproduction

- Yellow-billed cardinals begin their mating season in October.
- The nest is deep and cup-shaped, and is made of small branches, twigs, grasses, and horsehair.
- The eggs are mostly white and usually only 2 are laid at a time. The incubation period is 13-14 days and the young fledge (covered with feathers and fit to fly) within 10-12 days of hatching.
- In captivity, they nest several times a year. Little is known about their breeding habits in the wild.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** seeds, fruits, flowers, insects
- **At the Zoo:** fruit mix, seeds, insects

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** least concern (LC); **CITES:** Appendix II
- The yellow-billed cardinal is often captured for the pet trade due to being an aesthetically pleasing bird and lives well under captive conditions. This excessive capture for commercial gain has had a negative impact on the species. In order to curtail the capture of these birds, stricter regulations need to be put into effect and enforced.
- Predators: hawks, snakes

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- In 1873, the yellow-billed cardinal was first brought to Europe to the Zoological Garden of London.
- The yellow-billed cardinal is very common on Hawaii's big island and can often be spotted on birding trips.
- Juveniles take 1-2 years to get the red head.

Sources:

- Garden City, (n.d.). Yellow-billed cardinal. Retrieved Mar. 22, 2006, from Lee Richardson Zoo Web site: http://www.garden-city.org/zoo/animalinfo/Birds/yellow-billed_cardinal.htm.
- TrekNature, (2005). Yellow billed cardinal. Retrieved Nov. 29, 2005, from TrekNature Web site: <http://www.treknature.com/workshops/1048/>.