

Blue-bellied Roller

Coracias cyanogaster



Class: *Aves*

Order: *Caraciiformes*

Family: *Coraciidae*

Characteristics: Small bird with relatively large head, powerful head, wings and beak, weak feet and legs, and three anterior toes. Keen eyesight can spot termite hatch or locust swarm from a distance. Cream colored head and chest, pale blue belly and dark blue or dark green wings. Azure-blue, slightly forked tail. Ave wt: 5 oz. Ave Length 11 in. Not sexually dimorphic.

Behavior: Arboreal, diurnal, migratory, territorial. Lives in groups of two to four, spending time mostly feeding, flying, chasing, and calling. Hunts solo for ground-bound prey from trees, fences, lampposts or buildings beside open areas. May batter meat before swallowing. Roosts in groups up to twelve. Irritable and aggressive to express hostility without resorting to fighting which might damage its powerful beak. Uses a complex system of postures and movements such as ruffling of neck feathers, staring, or pecking to communicate social information. Uses brilliant plumage, rolling dives and shrill calls to scare intruders and potential predators.

Reproduction: Sometimes monogamous, sometimes polygynandrous (promiscuous). Males and females roll back and forth in the sky, tumbling to the ground while calling loudly and raucously to attract a mate. Breeds April to July laying two or three eggs per season which males and females incubate 18-20 days. Will attack any bird that approaches the nest. Both parents feed nestlings for 30 days after hatching and 20 days after fledging which is at about 4 weeks.

Diet:

Wild: Large invertebrates such as beetles, grasshoppers, winged ants, termites and colubrid snakes. Also oil-palm fruits.

Zoo: Scratch Grain, Water Fowl Pellet

Conservation: Not currently in any danger of extinction. Well adapted to living in regions dominated by agriculture. Play a key role in pest control for farmers in these areas by eating insects which may otherwise feed on crops.

FYI:

Adults are large and powerful enough to escape most predators. Eggs nestling and fledglings are vulnerable to rodents, snakes, hawks and carnivorous mammals.

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Range & Habitat:

Western and Central Africa: Senegal to Sudan in savanna, tree plantations, forest edges, recently burned land, and forests near marshes.



Lifespan:

Unknown. European rollers live up to 10 yrs in captivity.

Special Adaptations:

Long, strong wings to compensate for weak feet and legs that cause difficulty in walking or hopping.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

