

## *Jabiru mycteria* (Jabiru Stork)

Family: Ciconiidae (Storks)

Order: Ciconiiformes (Storks, Herons and Ibises)

Class: Aves (Birds)



**Fig. 1.** Jabiru stork, *Jabiru mycteria*.

[[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabiru#/media/File:Jabiru\\_\(Jabiru\\_mycteria\)\\_2.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabiru#/media/File:Jabiru_(Jabiru_mycteria)_2.JPG), downloaded 1 March 2017]

**TRAITS.** *Jabiru mycteria* is one of the largest flying birds on earth, being the largest in the Americas and one of the three stork species found there. Adult jabiru storks can reach 1.2m tall with a wing span of 2.6m. Their bill is large and black, somewhat upturned, with lengths of up to 30cm (Fig. 1). Males are larger than females, and both sexes can be identified by the band of red skin at the base of the neck. Adult storks possess all-white plumage on the body. The head and neck lacks feathers except for a cluster of grey feathers on the back of the head. The juveniles have white feathers with greyish-brown edges (McKinley, 2006; Borjas, 2004).

**DISTRIBUTION.** *Jabiru mycteria* is native to South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Belize, Colombia, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela (Fig. 2). Jabirus can have also been sighted in Mexico, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, United States and Uruguay (IUCN, 2016).

**HABITAT AND ACTIVITY.** Jabiru storks are diurnal birds and often feed singly or in pairs but can also be found feeding in large groups (Kahl, 1973). They can be found around coastal lagoons, savannas, marshes and also ponds (Belize Zoo, 2017; Pantanal, 2006).

**FOOD AND FEEDING.** The diet of jabiru storks consists of fish, frogs, snakes, snails, insects as well as other invertebrates. Food is obtained by foraging through shallow waters where the bird wades along, probing the water with its bill pointed downwards at an angle of 45° (Fig. 3). They detect prey via contact of the prey with their bill rather than optically. When its prey is found the bill is lifted and closed immediately, then prey is swallowed by a backward flick of the head (Kahl, 1971, 1973).

**POPULATION ECOLOGY.** The estimated population size is around 10,000-25,000 individuals with approximately 6,700-17,000 adults (IUCN, 2016). Their density ranged from 0.05-0.16 /km<sup>2</sup> in the Atlantic coastal wetlands of Nicaragua and in La Mosquita, Honduras, varying due to the resources found in the different habitats (Frederick et al., 1997). The average lifespan of these birds in the wild is 30 years, while in captivity the average is 36 years (McKinley, 2006).

**REPRODUCTION.** *Jabiru mycteria* pairs breed for life. The breeding season is between December and May, with the nest being built in December and January by the male. Their nests are often much deeper than wide, with nests being 1m wide, 1.8m deep and 15-30m above the ground on trees. Young males stationed at a nest wait for a female to approach and then accept or reject her. Wing flapping in already-bonded pairs is seen as a sign of courtship. The females lay between 1-5 eggs per season and the hatchling success is 44%. Both sexes share roles in rearing young, where one parent remains at the nest while the other forages for food or searches for sticks to repair the nest. At 4 weeks old juveniles are left alone for longer (McKinley, 2006; Barnhill et al., 2005). Juveniles develop feathers for flight at approximately 100-115 days after hatching, however before vacating the nest, juvenile jabirus forage in the same area as their parents while still using the nest (Barnhill et al., 2005).

**BEHAVIOUR.** Anti-predator behaviour: *Jabiru mycteria* sometimes show both inter- and intraspecific territoriality at and away from the nest. When startled or in view of an animal approaching the bird appears to condense by compressing its feathers and then standing tall with neck erect, bill pointing forward at the animal. If the animal proceeds to come closer to the bird a loud singular snap or quick consecutive snaps of the bill are made (Fig. 4). Another response to predators that are approaching the nest is that the bird goes prone and makes no noise. This is often enough to be unseen to a predator on the ground (Kahl, 1973).

Communication: Breeding pairs do not display as much as newly-formed pairs. While foraging away from the nest, one of the pair abruptly stands, runs away from their mate while flapping their wings, and then runs back towards them, stopping within 2m, and spreads their wings. This is believed to be a social sign of the bond between the pair. At the nest mates would stand or sit facing each other while snapping their bill about 8-10 times and swaying their heads side to side. The males' bill often passes over the females as they sway (Kahl, 1973).

**APPLIED ECOLOGY.** *Jabiru mycteria* is listed as of Least Concern by the IUCN. This is due to it having a large range as well as there being no evidence of a declining population. Jabiru storks were hunted for their meat and feathers before being protected (IUCN, 2016).

#### REFERENCES

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**Fig. 2.** Geographic distribution of *Jabiru mycteria*.

[<http://maps.iucnredlist.org/map.html?id=22697710>, downloaded 8 March 2017]



**Fig. 3.** Jabiru stork probing the water for prey.

[<http://www.arthurgrosset.com/sabirds/jabiru.html>, downloaded 8 March 2017 ]



**Fig. 4.** Anti-predatory display by the jabiru stork.

[<https://www.pinterest.com/fgorjup/jabiru/>, downloaded 8 March 2017]

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