The male Momotus momota measures between 38 and 44 cm in length and weighs from 77 to 148 g; the female is somewhat smaller. In plumage, the sexes are identical. The crown is black, bordered with a wide band of turquoise-blue which also covers the forehead. There is a black eye mask. The upper part of the neck is rufous, the back is green. The under parts are greenish. The tail is quite long with a bare-shafted racket tip. The back and upper tail feathers vary in shade from olive to parrot green. The wings are a bright green with bluish green primaries. The eyes are a dull red, the short legs and feet are gray. The heavy, broad bill is black.

They are found in Central and South American countries. The blue-crowned motmot ranges from north-east Mexico to north-west Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, from Trinidad to northern Argentina.They reside in many kinds of environments including tropical evergreen and deciduous forests, flooded and riverine gallery forests, montane and elfin forests, secondary vegetation and even, shady gardens and coffee plantations. They can be found at heights of 1,300 m.

The blue-crowned motmot is largely insectivorous. Beetles appear to be the main food source particularly. Other insects are cicadas, stick insects, spiders, and larvae of various kinds. It also consumes frogs, earthworms, snails, small snakes, and mice. Fruit is often plucked from the trees to be consumed as well.