



# notes on nesting of the Yellow-lored (Yucatan) Parrot

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Of the species of psittacines inhabiting Mexico and northern Central America, the Yellow-lored parrot (*Amazona xantholora*) is one species seldom encountered in American aviaries. Found from the eastern Yucatan of Mexico into Belize the parrot is most abundant in the pinneridge areas. Additional reference is made to its presence in Honduras although nothing has been published for a great many years on its status in that country. The Yellow-lored is remarkably similar to the White-fronted Amazon (*Amazona albifrons*). Although the species do overlap in range, the White-fronted is also found north along the western portions of Mexico. I have observed the White-fronted and the Yellow-lored both together and the former in western Mexico and found them to be different in terms of coloration and behavior. Some authors place both in the same species category despite the evidence that they inhabit certain areas together and no record is available of interbreeding. Certainly, more research is needed in this area of taxonomy.

Unlike *A. albifrons*, the Yellow-lored is not generally found in dense forest, but prefers open pinelands and areas of second-

Photo by Jack C. Eitniear



The adult Yellow-lored Amazons were never aggressive. When I checked on the growth of their young, they simply waited for my departure.

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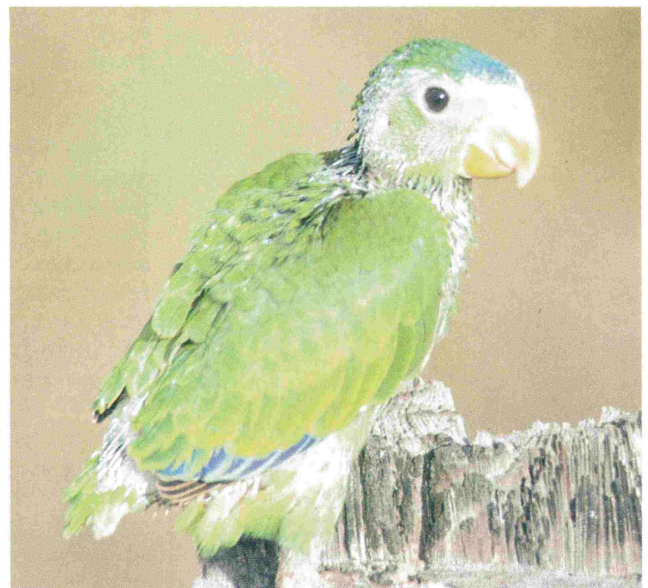
When first removed from the cavity, the young were covered with unsheathed feathers.

dary growth. although I have observed both Amazons feeding together along the forest edge, the Yellow-lored soon retires to the more open areas. It is frequently observed in the middle of the pine-ridge atop some tall pine or shrub. Awaiting the setting sun, the parrot soon drops from its treetop and flies, only feet above the ground, out of sight screeching in typical Amazon fashion.

During a recent field research project in Central America I had the opportunity to observe the nesting of a pair that were raising their young in a burnt pine trunk. Although I am generally against the robbing of nests for local pets (most spend their lives in small dented cages on a diet of bread and water) it was because of such activities that I was able to locate the nest of the Yellow-lored Amazon. There appears to be a local hierarchy of desired parrots for pets with the Yellow-crowned, *Amazona ochrocephala*, leading the list and the Yellow-lored at the bottom along with the

various conures. Asking a local parrot catcher if he knew the location of any parrot nests (knowing that he would give me the location of "unsaleable" parrots) he responded that a pair of "Whiskers", the local name for the Yellow-lored because of the darkened coloration of the ear coverts, was nesting in a nearby pine stump. After locating the pine, it was only a short climb to the top of the 12 foot trunk. Once at the top, the entrance to the nest was discovered running from the broken top through the core of the tree. Certainly if it rained much, the young would perish. it was a good thing that the parents only nested in the dry season. Reaching in, I found three young chicks and an unbroken unfertile egg. Carefully, I lowered one of the chicks down to the ground and obtained a photograph.

Having frequently read about the dangerous nature of nesting adult Amazons, I was always sensitive to the possibility of being attacked from any direction at any



Several weeks later only the rectrices and nape were yet unfeathered.

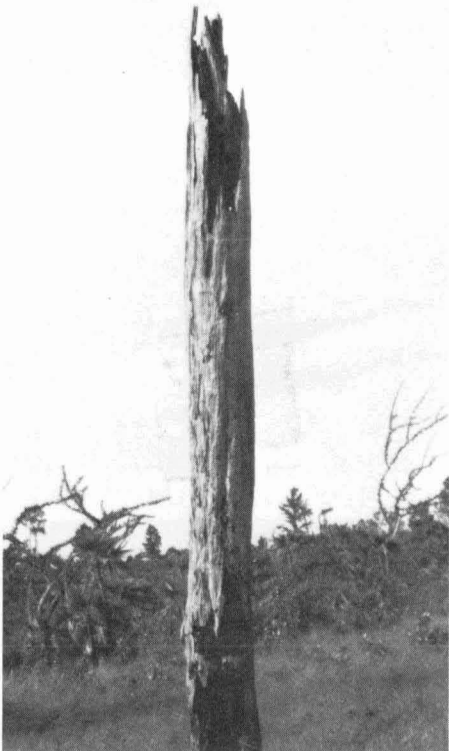
Photos by Jack C. Eitmeier



time. It, in fact, never occurred.

Several weeks later I returned to the cavity to check on the progress that the three chicks were making. After removing one of the birds for another photograph, I noticed that the chicks' general feelings toward my presence had changed. Having imprinted on their parents, they were not the inquisitive, helpless chicks of weeks past, but rather scrappy little birds who were obviously not interested in having their picture taken for WATCHBIRD magazine. After placing the chick back in its cavity, I chanced to glance atop a nearby large shrub and spotted the adult parrots. Upon waiting in my truck for some time I saw the adults return to the cavity, my intrusion only history.

The future survival of any species is enhanced if a captive population is present in the event that its numbers in the wild are greatly reduced. Although not the complete answer to saving endangered and rare avian species, captive propagation certainly can assist the conservationists with their efforts and has become a common denominator in most comprehensive conservation strategies. Think of the greatly improved situation the California Condor would be in if it were as common and as frequently bred in zoological parks as its relative the Andean Condor. If you chance upon a pair of Yellow-lored Parrots, why not make an attempt to breed them. You will be taking the first step that will assure their presence on our planet for generations to come. ●



The parrot's nest site was entered from the top right. They then climbed down into the stump.

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