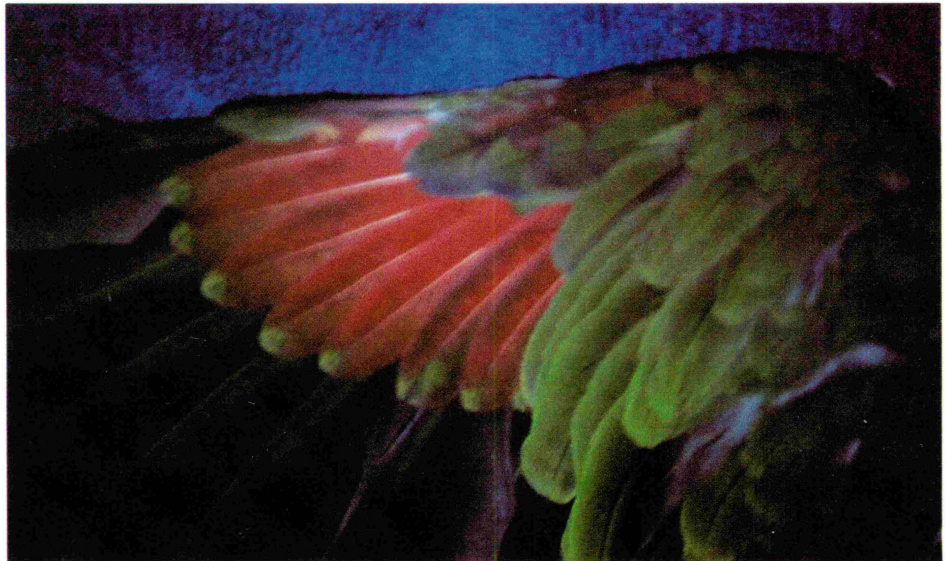
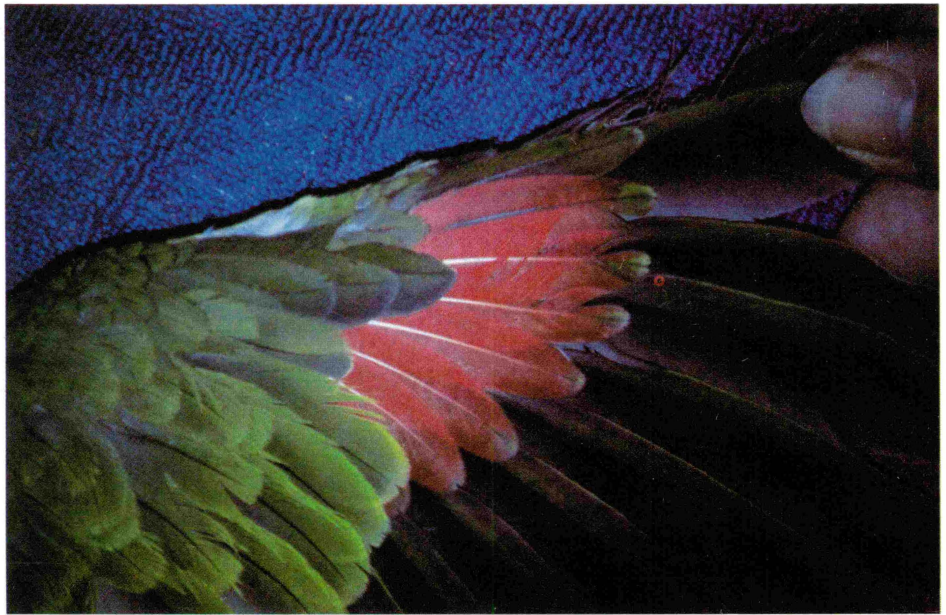


*Wing of
juvenile male.*

Breeding the White-fronted Amazon

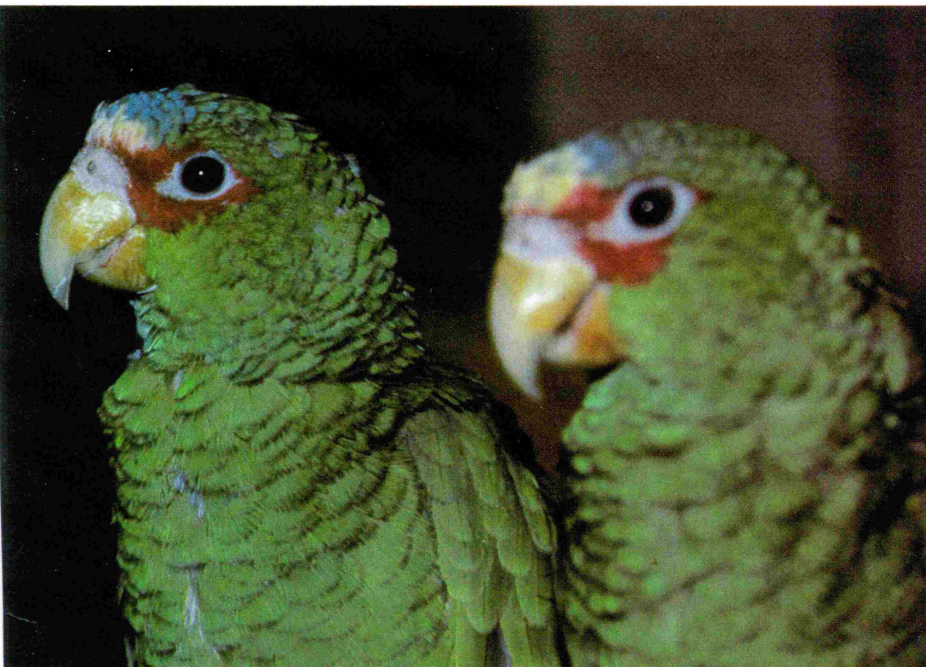
by Celia K. Falzone
Dallas, Texas

The white-fronted, or spectacled, Amazon (*Amazona albifrons*) ranges from Mexico to Costa Rica. It is 26 cm long with the typical green plumage of the genus. The forehead immediately above the beak is red. This red extends to and includes the loreal and periophthalmic regions. The forehead and fore-crown are white (sometimes tinged with yellow) followed by a dull blue crown and occiput. The beak is yellowish horn. The species is sexually dimorphic. The male's alula and primary coverts are red while the female's are green. The males also have a greater amount of white on the forehead, a larger beak, and a larger "spectacled" area.



Wing of juvenile female.

Photos by Celia Falzone, Dallas, Texas



*Juvenile plumage of female
(left) and male (right).*

In September, 1981, I obtained an adult male white-fronted Amazon which had been rescued from negligent owners. His feathers were dull and stained with an unknown substance. One wing was pinioned and he was terrified of people. His general health was good and he did well. His plumage became noticeably brighter with successive moults.

In January, 1983, a one and a half year old female was obtained. She was in excellent condition and fully flighted. This bird was parent-reared and not tame either. She was a calmer bird and tolerated the presence of persons nearby. Two months later, the two birds were introduced in a cage measuring 24

by 42 by 48 inches which was constructed of welded wire (1 by 1 inch mesh). To the outside was fastened a nest box measuring 12 by 12 by 24 inches with an entrance hole four inches in diameter. Three inches of cedar shavings were placed inside the nest box.

The birds were compatible, but no interactions were observed following the introduction. They continued their apparent disinterest, never even perching near each other. It was a surprise when the female showed abdominal swelling on 18 April 1984. This condition persisted until she laid her first egg four days later. She laid a total of five eggs at three- and four-day intervals. Each egg was labeled and returned to the nest. Incubation commenced upon laying of the second egg and nine days later the first egg was candled and determined to be fertile. After this, the nest was disturbed only once daily for a quick check.

With the commencement of nesting, there was a drastic change in the personality of the male. He had always been easily intimidated and afraid. Now he was aggressive, threatening and attacking anyone who approached the cage. This behavior continued after nesting had ceased and the young were removed. The female displayed no drastic behavioral alterations. She was very protective of her eggs and young and would not allow them to be viewed. Nest inspections were made during her brief absences from the nest.

After twenty-nine days of incubation, the first two eggs hatched and the other three proved infertile. The chicks were reared by their parents without incident. Once the chicks fledged, similarities and differences in their plumages were noted. The red of their "spectacles" was restricted to the lores. Both had yellow-tinged foreheads, but one had twice as much and its beak was larger. The alula of this bird was red tipped with green as were its primary coverts. The second chick had a green alula but its primary coverts were, also, red tipped with green. The eyes of both chicks were dark. Other coloration was the same as the adult plumage.

With their first moult, both birds

acquired typical adult plumage. The foreheads of both remained a yellowish white. The red in the lores extended to surround the eyes which were becoming lighter. The first chick was a male and developed a solid red alula and primary coverts. The second chick lost all trace of red in the wings, proving to be a female. Obviously, sexual dimorphism in white-fronted Amazons occurs even in the juvenile plumage. This allows these birds to be visually sexed upon attaining their first feathers.

My Amazons were fed a seed mixture of safflower, parakeet mix, cracked corn, peanuts, and sunflower. The sunflower was given in small quantities and was more of a treat. If more was given they did not eat any other seeds. Oyster shell was mixed with the seeds once a week.

In addition to this, they were given a mash of fruits and vegetables. I prepared this once a week and froze it. Each day I thawed enough for that day. The exact contents of the mash varied slightly, giving it a different flavor. In this mash I combined a variety of cooked beans (kidney, black, white, pinto), lentils, green peas, black-eyed peas, and rice. I also added corn, blueberries, and cranberries. This combination was then frozen. Daily, I added some fresh ingredients including chopped celery, corn, apple, orange, and other fruits and vegetables. To the complete mixture were added vitamin and mineral supplements. The adult birds were slow to accept this mash when it was first introduced but eventually preferred it over the seeds.

The adults were accustomed to this diet well before nesting and they raised their offspring on it. When the young began to eat on their own, they took immediately to the mash. I never had any trouble getting them to eat any items and new items were easily accepted. ●

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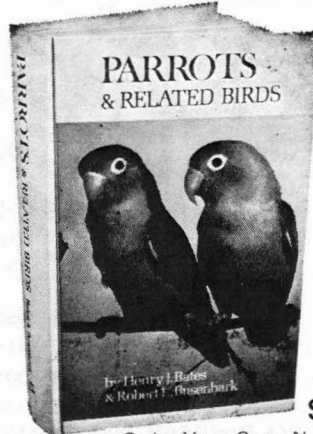
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