

Breeding the Bodin's Amazon

(*Amazona festiva bodini*)

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The Bodin's Amazon (*Amazona festiva bodini*) is relatively new to American aviculturists. Few specimens were available prior to 1986 when 294 were imported from Guyana. In 1987 and 1988, an additional 46 were brought in and few have arrived since then. Mortality was approximately 18% during quarantine and apparently continued after quarantine with numerous breeders reporting deaths of recently acquired stock. As a result, the number of Bodin's in the United States probably does not exceed 250 birds. The Festive Amazon (*Amazona festiva festiva*) is even more uncommon in aviculture as it has never been commercially imported.^{1, 2}

The status of the Bodin's Amazon in the wild is difficult to ascertain due to an apparent lack of data. Studies from the 1960s and 1970s do not distinguish between the Bodin's and the nominate species, the Festive Amazon. They suggest the Festive Amazon was common throughout its range at that time. The range of the Bodin's Amazon includes eastern Venezuela and northwestern Guyana while the range of the Festive Amazon includes northwestern Brazil, southeastern Colombia, northeastern Peru and eastern Ecuador. Recent anecdotal sightings still report both species as common within their ranges.^{3, 4, 5}

The Bodin's Amazon is a medium sized Amazon approximately 36 centimeters in length and weighing from 391 to 574 grams (n = 13). It and the Festive Amazon are distinguished from all other Amazons by a patch of crimson feathers on the back. This patch of feathers is only visible in flight. They also do not have the red or orange wing speculum feathers typical of most of the larger mainland Amazons. The Bodin's and Festive Amazons are distinguished from each other by the amount and positioning of the red and blue on the face. The Bodin's Amazon has a broad band of maroon across its forehead and blue cheeks while the Festive Amazon has

a narrow band of maroon and green cheeks. The Festive Amazon also has blue behind its eyes, under its chin and on its primary coverts. Both make devoted pets and are apparently good talkers.

The Bodin's Amazon was first described by Dr. Otto Finsch in 1873 who named the parrot *Chrysotis bodini* in honor of Dr. Karl August Heinrich Bodinus. Dr. Bodinus (c. 1814 - 1884) was a German physician as well as a bird breeder and collector. He was also the director of the Koln Zoological Gardens and the Berlin Zoo during his lifetime. *Chrysotis* was the prior name for the genus *Amazona*.⁶

We acquired nine Bodin's and one Festive Amazon in the summer of 1987. Eight of the Bodin's were received directly from Miami quarantine stations while one was a long-term captive, estimated to be 12 years old. The Festive was also a long-term captive known to be at least 20 years old.

All of the eight recent imports had medical problems upon arrival. Most tested positive for psittacosis as well as feather lice, tapeworms and gram negative pharyngitis/enteritis (mostly *Klebsiella* sp.). The Bodin's were treated with doxycycline to control the psittacosis. Two required inordinately high doses and longer than normal treatment periods to effect a cure. Ivermectin was used to treat the feather lice successfully and praziquantel was used with moderate success to treat the tapeworms. One Amazon was also afflicted with kyphosis (curvature of the spine) and bilateral arthritis of the hocks. It died approximately one year later. Three additional Amazons from the original group also died, one to liver failure (likely secondary to the psittacosis infection) one to acute hepatitis of unknown cause and one to trauma (courtesy of a marauding male Double Yellow-headed Amazon).

Most of the imported Bodin's appeared to be young as they had



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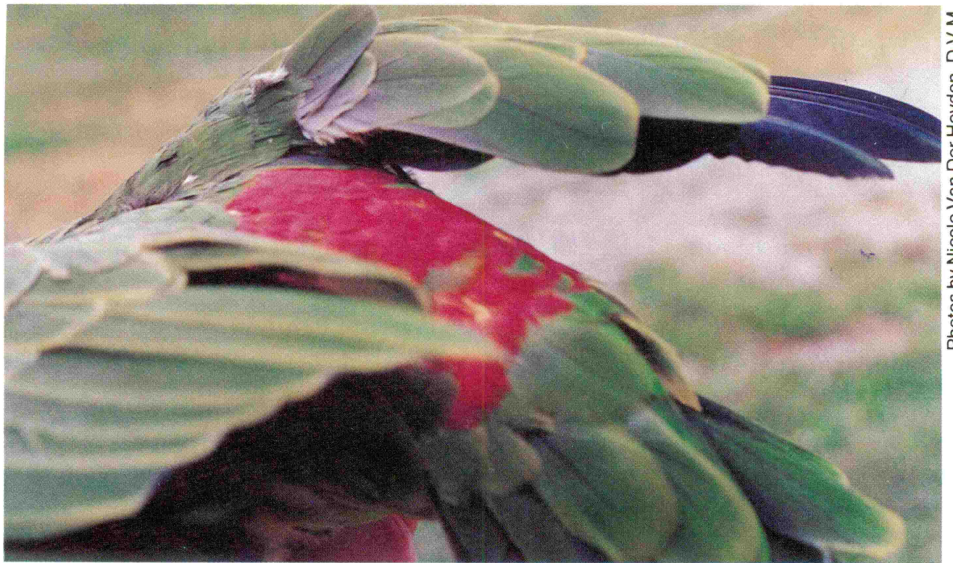


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very little red on their backs. The six remaining Amazons contained three pairs, two pairs of recently imported Bodin's and one hybrid pair consisting of the two long-term captives. In 1990, an additional pair of Bodin's was acquired that had been imported in 1986. This pair appeared incompatible and was repaired successfully with one of the imported pairs.

The pairs were set up in 3' x 3' x 4' 1" square welded wire cages suspended three feet above the ground. The pairs were set up indoors side by side with solid metal dividers between each pair. The pairs could observe pairs of other species across the 4-foot aisle but not each other. Fluorescent lights were suspended



Photos by Nicole Van Der Heyden, D.V.M.

The adult Bodin's and Festive Amazons are distinguished from all other Amazons by a patch of crimson feathers on the back.



The Bodin's Amazon is a subspecies of the more common Festive Amazon. Both need to be worked with by American aviculturists.



Immature Bodin's Amazons do not have the red back as the adults.



This photo shows different growth stages of the Bodin's Amazon. The pink stage shows them at two to three weeks.



The feathering stage is at five to six weeks.



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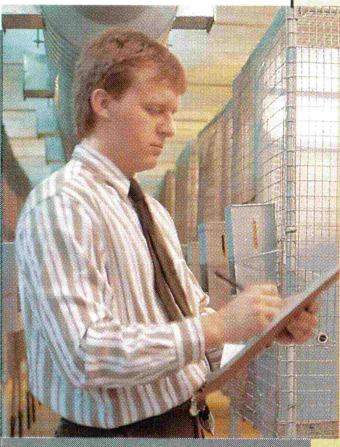
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Mark Hagen is Research Director at HARI. He has a Master of Agriculture from the University of Guelph and specializes in Psittacine Aviculture. His continued Research includes Nutrition, Incubation and other Psittacine Aviculture research projects.



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18 inches above the cages. Perches consisted of 1" to 2" rough sawn oak planks. Each cage contained a variety of toys including bells, chains and acrylic forms. Branches, cardboard tubes, corn cobs and 2 x 4's were also provided. Pairs were hand-sprayed with water twice weekly. Lighting was controlled by timers and varied from nine hours per day in the winter to 16 hours per day in the late spring and summer. Nestboxes measured 12"W x 16"H and 18"L and were made of 1/2" plywood. Pine chips and shavings were used as bedding. Nestboxes were put up in March and taken down in September.

A pelleted diet (Purina Meat Builder) was available free choice via a 4' hopper attached to the cage. A variety of fruits, vegetables, rice, beans and corn were fed daily in the spring and summer and less often in the fall and winter. Seeds were rarely offered. Water bottles were changed and disinfected twice weekly.

The Festive Amazon was first bred in the U.S. by Busch Gardens, Florida in 1980. They received the AFA first breeding award in 1982 for their success. Their pair is kept in a suspended 3' x 4' x 6' cage with a 16" x

16" x 23" nestbox. One chick was produced each year in 1980, 1981 and 1985. Infertility has been a problem with their pair as the hen continues to lay but no more chicks have been raised. There are no reports in the literature of any breeding successes with the Bodin's Amazon.^{7,8}

The Festive x Bodin's pair laid in June of 1989 and 1990. Three eggs were laid each time of which one the first year and two the second year were fertile. Two were artificially incubated and one naturally incubated, however, all failed to hatch, dying around day 20. No cause of death could be determined. The pair did not double clutch.

The remaining Bodin's pairs did not produce until 1991 when two pairs went to nest. The birds were likely five to six years old at that time. At least one other collection, Tracy Aviary in Salt Lake City, also produced eggs in 1991 from pairs imported at the same time as these. The Bodin's were extremely shy and no breeding behavior was observed other than an obnoxious braying-like call in the morning and evening accompanied by pupil constriction, tail flaring and wings held away from the body. This behavior occurred year round and was not specific during the breeding season. Male aggression during the breeding season did not occur although the hens were defensive of their nests.⁹

The first egg from pair one was noted on May 7th. Additional eggs were observed on May 9th and 12th suggesting three day intervals between eggs. All three were fertile. Eggs were pulled for artificial incubation on May 22nd. A Lyons Electric Turn-X7 incubator was maintained at 99.6° F with hourly, side-to-side turning. The eggs hatched unassisted on June 2nd, 4th and 7th. The incubation period was, therefore, 26 days, earlier than expected. Egg weights on May 22nd were 19.9, 20.0 and 18.9 gms. Chick weights on day 1 were 17.0, 16.9 and 16.6 gms respectively. The pair laid three additional eggs starting June 16th, however, all were clear.

The first egg from pair two was noted on May 26th. Four additional eggs were laid, the last on June 10th, again at three day intervals. Eggs were pulled for artificial incubation on June 13th however all were clear. No further eggs were laid.

The chicks were covered with sparse white down and nearly bald

heads. A small amount of black was present on the sides of the upper beak and most of the lower beak. Nails were black. The chicks made a "chuck chuck" food beg cry, quite different from the machine-gun like clatter of most Amazon chicks. The chicks were reared on Hill's Science Diet Canine Maintenance, ground and mixed at a one to two ratio with tap water. The chicks weaned in late August. The chicks looked identical to the adults except for the maroon on their foreheads being darker and the lack of the crimson back feathers.

Hopefully most of the Bodin's Amazons imported in 1986 and 1987 are now reaching breeding age and will begin producing. If so, there should be sufficient numbers of unrelated birds to establish this species in captivity. The situation for the Festive Amazon is more precarious as there are fewer birds in captivity and apparently little breeding is occurring. Most of the available stock is older birds and some are still being kept as pets. It is imperative that we begin working on this species now before it is too late.

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Editor's note: If any person knows of a successful breeding of the Bodin's Amazon prior to the above article, please inform Dale R. Thompson, Chairman, Auy Awards Committee, through the AFA Home Office in Phoenix, Arizona. ●

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