

U.S. First Captive Breeding of Three Rare Amazon Parrots

Amazona a. diadema, Amazona a. salvini and Amazona a. lilacina

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One of the rarest Amazons in collections is the daidemed Amazon due to its limited habitat in northwestern Brazil. In my many years (over forty) of keeping and breeding Amazons, the 2.2 adults we have here, and acquired in 1985 and 1986 respectively, are the first I have ever seen. Rosemary Low saw them here in November, 1987 and felt they probably represented the only ones in the United States or Europe. Her position as head curator of the famed Loro Parque in the Canary Islands and her acknowledgement as one of aviculture's foremost writers of responsible books on parrots places her in a position to formulate such a conclusion. Loro Parque has one of the most complete collections of *Amazona* it has been my privilege to ever see (October, 1986). Though having some of the rarest Amazons from Brazil, *diadema* was not included. This caused Rosemary's intense interest in those specimens here and she spent much time observing them.

They are a larger Amazon than one gets the impression of from Forshaw's description. Nor is their behavior in any way related to other *autumnalis*. Their name well fits their sedate and always composed manner as though indulging the viewer to behold their beauty.

Our original pair consisted of long term caged pets from Brazil. In 1986 they deposited one very large, almost round egg which, to our surprise, was fertile. Fearing the parents not being used to nesting would not sit or hatch the egg, it was fostered under another pair of large Amazons. After twenty-seven days of incubation it was observed to be picked and a very lively

chick inside. Two days later it was found dead in the shell, apparently not being strong enough to break out. Other eggs under the foster pair of *ochrocephala* hatched with no problem.

This season of 1987 saw two, again, very large, round eggs and both candled fertile on the 2nd of May. These were left with the parents, hatched and the old parents proved to be two of the finest Amazons by keeping their babies so full their crops were always bulging when the nest box was inspected. Nor was this pair aggressive but rather seemed to be pleased with our admiration of their devotion and care. This again is not the behavior of the average Amazon. I would have to rank this parrot among the most intelligent Amazons, next to the St. Vincent's, we keep.

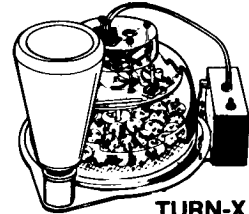
They young were left with the parents until about three weeks of age, being in pin feathers when taken for hand rearing. When weaned, one was placed with an aviculturist who could not live without it and with a promise of a mate for it in the future. Both chicks were feather-follicle sexed as males by Mark Vallentine.

Our other pair consists of younger birds. Both are very tame and show every sign of breeding when old enough. From these four unrelated bloodlines we hope to send out pairs to qualified breeders.

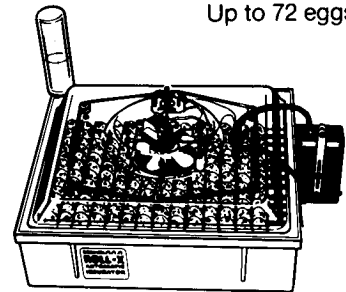
The lilacine Amazon (*A. a. lilacina*), occurring in western Ecuador, has also been rather scarce in collections. A few have managed to trickle out of their limited range. Our two pair were sent to us from a confiscated group of about twelve birds that were brought into

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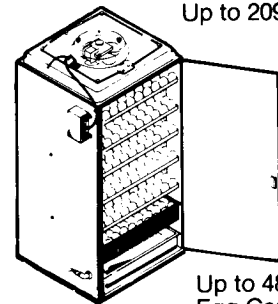
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Adult breeders
A.a. diadema.

Photo by Jeff Guy, Sarasota

Two lilacine subadults
on the left and a
Salvin's Amazon on
the right. All were
captive bred at
Life Fellowship by
Ramon Noegel and
Greg Moss in 1986
and 1987.



An adult pair of *A.a. lilacina*.

England. The British authorities considered us deserving of two sexed pairs for breeding purposes. Unlike *diadema*, the lilacine is quite hyper and though being received as subadults, have never calmed down or shown any confidence in humans approaching their aviaries. Two other tame individuals that I have seen were very desirable pets, being quite dedicated to their respective owners.

This is a very distinct subspecies and one is inclined to wonder why, in light of other similar Amazons being given specific species names, *diadema* and *lilacina* are considered subspecies of *autumnalis* that is known to co-exist with *A.a. salvini* in Honduras and Nicaragua and is replaced by *salvini* in Costa Rica southwards to western Columbia where it overlaps into *lilacina*'s habitat. Contrary to writings, I have never seen intergrades of these subspecies as referred to in *Parrots of the World*. While they have overlapped each other's territory, I have never witnessed crosses but, to the contrary, have seen flocks of each distinct subspecies within the same areas as the others, but remaining very separate and individualized in appearance and behavior. Of the numerous *a. autumnalis* and *a. salvini* we shipped from Nicaragua and Honduras in 1978 and 1979, we did not see one intergrade. Nor have I seen this in my visits to Ecuador and Columbia. If these birds are so closely related, one would and should expect a merging where habitats overlapped. We have not found this so.

At any rate, we captive bred *salvini* and *lilacina* in 1986 and again in 1987. The latter we believe to be a first U.S. breeding and possibly the Salvins also.

Lilacina nested in April. The clutch consisted of three fertile eggs in both years. Two chicks were reared each season. *Salvini* nested early in April depositing three eggs also, but only one was fertile in 1986 and was hand reared being hatched in an incubator. The *Lilacine* pair, being more stable, hatched and reared their three chicks until one was found dead and the remaining two were removed for hand rearing when about two weeks of age. The identical performance was demonstrated in 1987 giving the indication three chicks were too much of a drain on the parents. Although we have an extra pair of each aforementioned subspecies, they have never shown any interest in nesting, though of the same age as the proven pairs. ●

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