

# Captive Status of the Green-cheeked Amazon Parrot

Photo by Russell Ferris, II



This family pet (green-cheeked Amazon) belongs to Russell Ferris, II.

by Jack Clinton-Eitnrear  
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 San Antonio, Texas  
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While attending the AFA board meeting in late February of this year I was greeted in the lounge of the Doubletree Hotel in Dallas, Texas by Vicki Fletcher, census registrar for the Amazona Society. In Vicki's hands were ten pounds of loose papers of every size, shape and color. While over fifty contained photographs, most were notes and letters written in longhand from individuals who have green-cheeked Amazon parrots. The responses were due to a cooperative effort between the American Federation of Aviculture and the Amazona Society in collecting data about captive status of the green-cheeked or

Mexican red-headed (red-crowned) Amazon parrot (*Amazona viridigenalis*).

According to Nigel Collar (co-author of "Birds to Watch: the ICBP

World Checklist of Threatened Birds," ICBP Technical Publication No. 8), the parrot is "endemic to a small area in northeastern Mexico and has seriously declined, owing to habitat destruction and trapping." Due to extensive smuggling, the exact number of green-cheeked (red-crowned) Amazons in the United States is unknown. From October 1979 until June 1980, however, 3,279 were imported legally into the U.S. In addition, traffic data indicates that between 1977 and 1980 a total of 7,452 were imported from Mexico. Conservatively, I believe we could state that 10,000 green-cheeked (red-crowned) Amazons have entered the United States, illegally or legally, within the last decade. This is a remarkable number when one considers the small range of the species within Mexico. Even historically the species' range was less than 651 miles (north/south) and 465 miles (east/west). With large numbers in captivity and several feral populations established in southern cities, one would think the species' survival, in captivity at least, is secure. Wrong. Let us look first at the results of the

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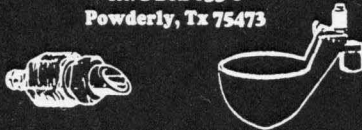
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data collected. I should note that the census information was solicited not only by the AFA and Amazona Society but also by Karyn New, editor of *Bird Talk* magazine, as well as through publication of the census form in the bulletins of the South Eastern Aviculturist Association and the Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors.

### February 12, 1989 Data

Male	Female	Unknown	Total Reared	Total Birds
269	230	326	271	1096
Number wild-caught: 369 (34% of census population)				
Number captive bred: 727 (66% of census population)				
Number of census population in pairs: 368 birds (184 pairs) (45% of adult birds in census)				
Number of responses: 285				

While the census may reflect less than 10% of the green-cheeks in captivity, the preliminary results are encouraging. A computer model needs to be generated, however, in order to determine the number of pairs required (assuming all contribute to future generations) to develop a captive, self-sustaining population. In the meantime, 200 pairs is a realistic goal and an achievable one, given the current level of reproduction. In order to reach this goal, however, additional individuals breeding the species need to be located. Everyone contemplating breeding Amazon parrots is encouraged to work with this species. A future article will detail the breeding of this species in captivity.

Keeping green-cheeked Amazons does not improve their status in captivity unless they are bred and the young close-banded. In addition, aviculturists should attempt to obtain birds of different parentage to maintain genetic diversity. Even if you are not breeding your green-cheek, AFA would like to include it in its census. Data on the captive status of the species will continue to be collected in hopes of documenting the presence of additional birds and breeders. In order to contribute to this effort, write Nancy Neil (126 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007) for a green-cheeked Amazon census form. If you are interested in getting involved in a studbook and captive management plan, indicate such to Nancy and you will be put on the mailing list and forwarded pertinent materials on the development of such. Will conservation historians record that capture for the pet trade

Photo by Nancy Neil



Nancy Neil's two family pets, Misty (top, female) and Sinbad (lower, male) thoroughly enjoy a good, soaking bath.

further accelerated this species' date with extinction or will it document that private aviculturists took it upon themselves, when a large founder stock was available, to manage the species' population in captivity? The time is now. The choice is ours. It's our chance to show that *Aviculture is Conservation Too* . . .

Note: For information you are encouraged to read "Green-cheeked Amazon Update" (*Watchbird* Aug/Sept 1988) and "Status of the Green-Cheeked Amazon in Northeastern Mexico" (*Watchbird* Dec/Jan 1986).●

Photo courtesy of Gary Collard



Gary Collard and pet "Ralph" spend some prime time together watching T.V.