



Young handfed Amazons love to have their heads scratched.

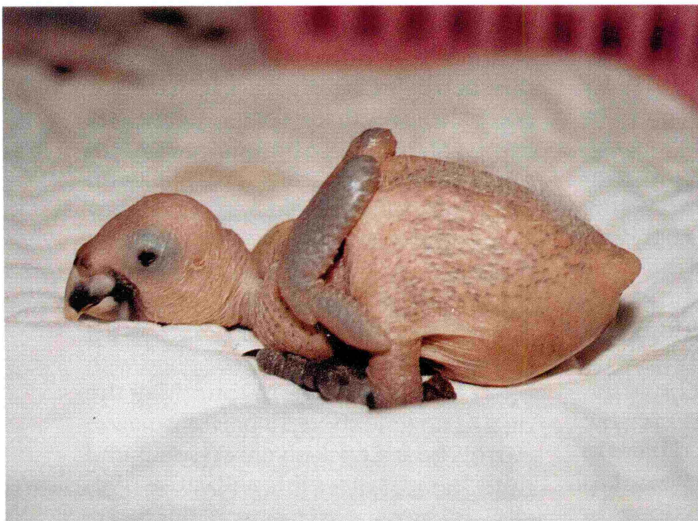
Domestic Orange-winged Amazons

by
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Orange-winged Amazons *Amazona amazonica* are not being bred in many aviaries. Little seemed to be known about their personality traits so in 1991 when I was blessed with four offspring, I decided to track these babies for three years to see how they would turn out.

The babies were spoon fed monkey chow formula and weaned at 12 weeks. The most startling difference between their wild caught parents were the iridescent green of their feathers compared to the dusty green of the parents. Both parents and offspring are given wheat grass powder, are under vita-lites and bathed daily.

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This 17 day old Orange-winged Amazon shows the healthy look of plump wings and legs.



These three weaned Orange-winged Amazons at 12 weeks are very inquisitive about their surroundings. They were handreared by the author.

The babies were D.N.A. sexed as three females and one male. Two females were put into second generation breeding programs with tame wild caught males, the other two were sold as pets.

Each owner has kept an accurate journal for me and the results have been quite interesting. The offspring without exception have proven to be gentle birds. When provoked they will cry and scream, but have never bitten anyone including young children. The pairs set up for breeding have bonded but are still friendly to their human families although they could not be considered pets. Nest boxes will be put up in April as there is mutual feeding and attempts at copulation.

The two offspring kept as pets are adored by their families. They have proven to be good talkers and mimics. One pet had the neighbors rush over by yelling for help and then laughed saying "I'm a Brat" leaving everyone in stitches. The other pet calls to her owner's five year old child every morning "Dustin! Get your book bag!"

It appears that the babies have about a twenty word vocabulary and although their talking ability can't rival that of the *Aochrocephala*, the gentleness of these birds is a consideration when looking for a family pet. The only complaint that has caused problems is mimicry. They appear to imitate everything including the microwave. One baby picked up the cry of the family cockatiel. You can imagine that sound from an Amazon! The cockatiel was placed in another home but Elliot is still letting loose with those screams.

I hope this information will interest Aviculturists in breeding this delightful little Amazon. They appear to make a very stable pet for families with children.



"Aviculturally Speaking"

"The qualities required of an aviculturist working with large parrots include super-human solicitude; extreme vigilance in watching over eggs; tirelessness in spoon-feeding babies every few hours; a heart hardened to the inevitable death of many fledglings; and plenty of good luck. It also helps to have money..."

Jane and Michael Stern

Common Breeding Problems in Amazon Parrots

by Rick Jordan
Kutztown, Pennsylvania

Members of the genus *Amazona* are not among the easiest parrots to breed in a captive situation. This is not to imply that Amazon parrots are not bred in captivity as this is far from the truth. Each year, many, many Amazons are bred in captivity in the United States. However, for every pair that produces live young, there are two or three other pairs that have not.

Successful husbandry practices are being recorded as well as a list of "common causes" associated with non-productive pairs. These observations will be discussed in this article but are not meant to be taken as the "rule of thumb" or the only way to breed a pair of Amazon parrots. Due to the nature and intelligence of these birds, many have adapted to their new set-ups and surroundings and have begun to produce young. There is no reason to change a pair's set-up if chicks are being produced.

Many Amazons that are currently available as breeder stock are either older wild caught birds that were imported prior to the "Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992" or captive bred young produced right here in America. Both wild caught and captive bred birds are capable of breeding although the breeding biology for these two groups has some distinct differences. Older wild caught birds may or may not be of the proper age to breed when purchased. The exact age required for wild birds to breed is not precisely known as there has been very little field research done on parrots.

When dealing with captive bred subjects, the "average" breeding age of most medium sized Amazons is about four years. Larger species, such as the *ochrocephala* group, usually will not breed

until approximately six years of age. There is also little data of the maximum breeding age of this genus of parrots. Captive Amazons, upward of thirty years of age, have laid eggs. This is encouraging and could indicate a very long reproductive lifetime in captivity as well as in the wild.

In addition to age, there are other more controllable problems that can contribute to non-productivity. Birds that are overweight, overly aggressive, nutritionally deficient, improperly housed, or improperly socialized may not breed. Most of these situations can be corrected or controlled by the aviculturist and frequently these non-productive pairs will begin to breed.

Weight Problems

Fat breeder stock is one of the most commonly occurring problems when dealing with Amazon parrots. This is due, in part, to the fact that captive Amazon parrots relish the flavor of very fatty foods. Many of the higher fat content seeds and nuts that are fed in captivity are not available to the wild Amazon. If they were, wild production would probably double.

In captivity there is no harm in feeding these foods as long as the birds can get plenty of exercise and are supplied with other healthier foods to round out the diet. At no time should a pair of Amazon parrots be fed exclusively on seeds and nuts. In most cases this will cause obesity, laziness, and non-productivity. Once again, diet plays an important role in the production of young in captive parrots.

There is a defined breeding season for Amazons in the wild and, in most cases, in captivity. Once defined, the avicultur-