

## White-fronted Amazon

*Amazona albifrons* Mexico – Yucatan Peninsula

Also known as Spectacled amazon.

White-fronted amazons are small, stocky, green amazons. They are almost identical to the yellow-lored amazon but have red lores instead of yellow. They have white foreheads, and red rings around the eyes, and red cheeks. Prominent red splashes are found on the carpus (shoulder) of males and is smaller to absent in females. Primary and secondary flight feathers are blue and the tails feathers are green with red at the base.

Range is extensive extending almost the entire pacific slope of Mexico through Central America to Panama. They are also found on the Caribbean slope from Belize to Panama. They inhabit a variety of forests including pine forest, palm groves, upland tropical rainforests, and tropical deciduous forests. They are usually found in pairs or small flocks and nest in tree cavities. They eat pods, fruits, and buds.

Length is 9 to 10 inches. Weight is 250-350 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks. Eyes of juveniles are brown while eyes of adults are yellow. Juveniles resemble females.

White-fronted amazons can probably live up to 50 years judging by life span of similar species. Little is known about their life span in captivity.

**Personality** - White-fronted amazons are intelligent, inquisitive birds with excellent speaking ability. Mature birds, especially males become aggressive. White-fronteds are rare in captivity and are unlikely to be available for pets. They are active by nature and have a tendency toward obesity if closely confined.

**Activities** – White-fronted amazons should always be provided with toys, blocks of wood or branches that they can chew. In order to ensure safety

companion amazons should not be allowed unsupervised freedom in the home as they often encounter toxins or dangerous items. Young amazons should be socialized to many people and exposed to a variety of situations such as new cages, toys, visits to the veterinarian, handling by friends, wing and nail clips, etc. to avoid fear of novel situations. They need to have some space for exercise.

***Dietary needs*** - Amazons should be fed a formulated (pelleted or extruded diet) as a basis for good nutrition. Kaytee Exact is an excellent staple diet for amazons. The diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Feed approximately ¼ cup of Kaytee Exact and 1/4 cup of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Monitor food intake. Overfeeding leads to pickiness, selective feeding and wasteful throwing of food. Because of their tendency to obesity, White-fronted Amazons should be fed no sunflower or safflower seeds or seeds should only be given as treats. Vitamin supplements are not needed for birds that are eating a formulated diet.

Birds, which are fed only seeds, will need vitamin and mineral supplementation to prevent deficiency diseases. Preferably vitamins should be added to soft food rather than putting in the water as this dilutes the vitamins, water soluble vitamins break down rapidly and water with sweetened and vitamins is a good growth medium for bacteria. Vitamin added to the outside of seeds is usually lost when the bird shells the seeds.

***Grooming*** - Routine bathing or showering is vital to maintaining good plumage and skin condition. Birds can be misted and allowed to dry in a warm room or in the sun, or gently dried with a blow drier. Care should be taken not to clip the wing feathers excessively as amazons often fall and injure themselves. Clip only the primary flight feathers and only enough so the bird will glide to the floor. White-fronteds are heavy bodied and care must be taken not to cut too many feathers. Excessive wing clipping can result in injuries from falling.

***Identification*** - All companion and breeding birds should be individually identified to assist in recovery if lost and assist in maintenance of medical and genealogical records. Many breeders apply closed legs bands when

chicks are young. While they present a slight risk of entrapment closed bands are preferable to no identification, especially for breeding birds. Microchips, which can be implanted into the muscle or under the skin, are a reliable means of identification but require electronic readers to verify identification. Tattoos may be used but often fade or become illegible with time. Footprints may have some application in identification.

**Sexing** White-fronted amazons are dimorphic (sexes are visually distinct). Males have a large red patch on the carpus. This patch is small or not present in females. Surgical sexing or DNA sexing should be used confirm sex of breeders as immature resemble females.

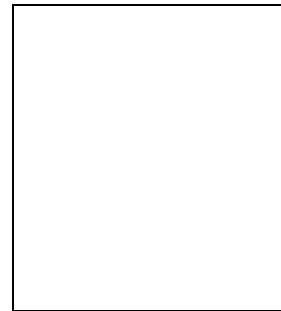
Juveniles resemble females except they have little white on the crown and dark eyes.

**Housing** - White-fronted amazons are very active and should be provided the largest cage that space and budget allows. They should also be supplied with a retreat to guard against insecurity and fear responses. Ideally the cage should provide room for flight. Durable cage construction is not as critical as it is for macaws and cockatoos. Locks or escape proof latches may be necessary on cages. Ideally the bird will have an outdoor cage as well to allow playtime in the fresh-air and sunlight.

**Breeding** – White-fronted amazons are difficult to breed in captivity. In North America White-fronted amazons breed predominantly in the spring and have a limited breeding season typically from February or March to June or July. Clutch size is typically 3 to 4 eggs. One inch by one inch by 14 gauge welded wire, or 1” X ½ “ welded wire is a good choice for cage construction. A suggested size is 4 feet wide by 4 feet tall by 8 feet long suspended 4 feet above the ground or floor.

**Nest Box** - Grandfather style wooden boxes can be used. Size should be approximately 10” x 10” x 18”.

Incubation period is approximately 24-26 days. Chicks will usually fledge at approximately 10 to 12 weeks of age. White-fronted amazons are relatively easy to hand-rear. Most hand rearing formulas can be used successfully. Exact regular hand rearing formula is a good choice.



### ***Aggression***

Male White-fronted amazons may become aggressive toward their mates. Clipping the wings of the male prior to the breeding season may be necessary in aggressive individuals to help the female to escape in case the male becomes aggressive.

White-fronted can be noisy when in breeding condition. When breeding amazons, noise and proximity to neighbors must be considered.

### ***Common diseases and disorders***

- Obesity
- Feather-picking
- Upper-respiratory infections
- Psittacosis (Chlamydiosis)
- Poor eating habits
- Bacterial, viral and fungal infections
- Mate aggression
- Toxicity, ingestion of metals
- Toe necrosis

Conservation Status - White-fronted Amazons are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Their populations are stable but declining due to habitat destruction and capture for export and use for pets locally in other areas. Parts of their range are vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes. White-fronted amazons were imported into the United States in large numbers in the 1970's and 1980's but are not frequently bred.