

Yellow-crowned Amazon

Amazona ochrocephala ochrocephala Central and South America

Also known as the yellow fronted amazon

Proposed alternative scientific name *Amazona ochrocephala*.

Yellow-crowned Amazons are one of the most popular and well known of all Amazons. They are relatively large, stocky bright green amazons with a yellow patch on the crown. In the most coveted subspecies the beak is partially horn color with a black tip and orange spots on the sides of the upper beak. Small red splashes are found on the carpus (shoulder). Primary and secondary flight feathers are green with blue tips. Tail feathers green with yellowish green tips. Red patches on outer tail feathers. Yellow crowns have prominent white eye rings.

Occurs from Panama, throughout northern South America----

Inhabiting savannahs, tropical deciduous forests, dense thorn forests, evergreen floodplain forests, gallery woodlands and pine forests. Nest in tree cavities. They eat Pine seeds, new leaves, palm fruits berries, pods, fruits, acorns and buds. Occasionally cause crop destruction, especially corn crops.

Length is 11 to 13 inches. Weight is 400-500 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks. Eyes of juveniles are brown while eyes of adults are orange-yellow. Juveniles have a small yellow patch on the forehead that becomes slightly larger with age.

Yellow-crowned amazons can probably live up to 50-60 years or more. Little is known about their life span in captivity. Breeding age is approximately 3-5 years.

Personality - Yellow-crowned amazons are very popular. They are well known for their talking ability but typically don't speak as well as Yellow-napes or double yellow heads. They are intelligent, inquisitive birds. Mature birds, especially males may become bonded to one person and aggressively protect that person from other people including other family members. They are relatively common in captivity and often available for pets. They are active by nature and have a tendency toward obesity if closely confined.

Activities – Yellow-crowned 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, Yellow-crowned Amazons should be fed little to 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.

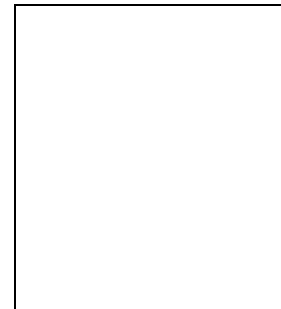
Grooming - Routine bathing or showering is vital to maintaining good plumage and skin condition. Birds can be misted and allowed to dry in a warm room or in the sun, or gently dried with a blow drier. Care should be

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. Yellow-crowned Amazons 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 Yellow-crowned amazons are monomorphic (sexes are not visually distinct). Surgical sexing or DNA sexing must be used to confirm sex of breeders. Males may have red scalloping on the nape that is seldom seen in females.

Housing - Yellow-crowned 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 – Yellow-crowned Amazons are relatively difficult to breed in captivity. In North America Yellow-crowned 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 12" x 12" x 24".

Incubation period is approximately 24-26 days. Chicks will usually fledge at approximately 10 to 12 weeks of age. Yellow-crowned 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 Double yellow-heads are occasionally 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. Males in breeding condition can be very aggressive to keepers.

Double yellow-heads 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
- Psittacosis
- Poor eating habits
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Mate aggression
- Toxicity, ingestion of metals
- Toe necrosis

Conservation Status - Yellow-crowned Amazons are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Wild populations are vulnerable to habitat destruction and capture for export and use for pets locally in other areas. In the past large numbers were traded and used locally for pets. Yellow-crowned amazons are relatively common in the United States and in good demand as pets.

