

Yellow-shouldered Amazon

Amazona barbadensis Northern South America

Yellow-shouldered Amazons are beautiful, small, rather trim amazon parrots. The body color is bright green and the face is variably colored with blue, yellow and white. They are somewhat similar in appearance to blue-fronted amazons but are distinguished by size (yellow-shoulders are smaller) and facial coloration. Yellow-shoulders have yellow on the face and crown with pale coloration on the fore head and white eye rings. Extensive patches of yellow tipped in red adorn the shoulders and the wing speculum is red. Primary and secondary flight feathers are green with blue tips. Tail feathers green with yellowish green tips. The beak is horn colored.

Range is limited to northern Venezuela and off shore islands.

They inhabit dry areas living in cacti, low thorny bushes and trees. Nest in tree cavities or limestone cliffs. They eat succulent fruits, seed pods, cactus tops and fruits.

Length is 11 to 13 inches. Weight is 250-350 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks. Males also tend to be slightly more colorful. Eyes of juveniles are brown while eyes of adults are orange-yellow. Juveniles are a darker green with more prominent barring and have less extensive facial coloring.

Yellow-shouldered 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-shouldered amazons seldom available as pets. They have moderate to poor speaking ability. They are intelligent, and inquisitive and very assertive. Males in general are much more common than females and have a tendency to become very aggressive. Juveniles are generally

tame and handlable for a short time. They are uncommon in captivity at this time and are seldom available for pets. They are active by nature and are not so prone to obesity as other Amazons.

Activities – Yellow-shouldered 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.

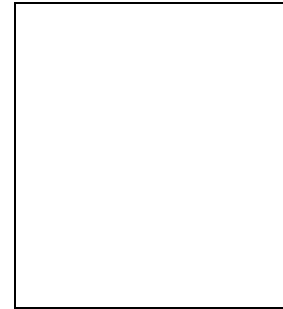
Dietary needs - Amazons should be fed a formulated (pelleted or extruded diet) as a basis for good nutrition. Kaytee Exact is an excellent staple diet for amazons. The diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Feed approximately 1/3 cup of Kaytee Exact and 1/3 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-shouldered Amazons should be offered seeds or nuts by hand as treats for bonding. 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-shouldered Amazons are relatively light bodied and require removal of more flight feathers than most amazons.

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-shouldered amazons are monomorphic (sexes are not visually distinct). Surgical sexing or DNA sexing must be used to confirm sex of breeders. Males are much more common than females. Due to their limited status in captivity and in the wild, females should be used for breeding.



Housing - Yellow-shouldered amazons are very active and should be provided the largest cage that space and budget allows. 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-shouldered Amazons are relatively difficult to breed in captivity. In North America Yellow-shouldered 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. Breeding males become very aggressive toward the keeper, often attempting to bite the keeper while feeding.

Nest Box - Grandfather style wooden boxes can be used. Size should be approximately 10” x 10” x 28”.

Incubation period is approximately 24-26 days. Chicks will usually fledge at approximately 10 to 12 weeks of age. Yellow-shouldered 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 Yellow-shoulders are often aggressive toward their mates especially in response to keepers visits. 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.

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

Common diseases and disorders

- Feather-picking
- Psittacosis
- Poor eating habits
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Mate aggression
- Toxicity, ingestion of metals
-

Conservation Status – Vulnerable- Yellow-shouldered Amazons are listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Their populations were probably never extensive and their range is limited. They are very vulnerable to habitat destruction. Yellow-shouldered amazons are relatively uncommon in the United States and unlikely to be available for use as pets.