

# Amazon Parrot

## Care Guide for New Owners

Parrot

Amazon

Native to the Americas

Hormonal Seasons

### Quick Facts at a Glance

<b>Common Species</b>	Yellow-naped, Blue-fronted, Yellow-headed, Double yellow-headed, Lilac-crowned, and others
<b>Lifespan</b>	40 to 70 years with proper care; some individuals reach 80+
<b>Adult Size</b>	10 to 15 inches depending on species; 8 to 20 oz
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Diurnal; active during the day
<b>Temperament</b>	Bold, opinionated, intelligent, loud, and capable of deep bonds with people
<b>Cage Minimum</b>	32x36x48 inches (L x W x H); 1 to 1.5 inch bar spacing
<b>Diet</b>	50% high-quality pellets, 50% fresh chop; seed-only diets cause serious harm
<b>Noise Level</b>	High; Amazon parrots are among the loudest commonly kept parrots
<b>Hormonal Season</b>	Annual hormonal periods cause significant behavioral changes; requires awareness
<b>Legal Status</b>	Legal in Wisconsin; verify local ordinances; some species may have CITES restrictions

### Amazon Parrots Are Parrots

Amazon parrots belong to the genus *Amazona* within the order Psittaciformes, making them true parrots. Dozens of Amazon species exist, ranging across Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. They are large, powerful, vocal, and opinionated birds who have been kept in human homes for centuries and feature prominently in literature, history, and art as the archetypal parrot.

Amazons are genuinely challenging birds to live with well. They are loud, they have strong personalities, they go through dramatic annual hormonal periods that can temporarily turn a sweet bird aggressive, and they live for 40 to 70 years or more. An Amazon adopted in adulthood today may outlive multiple generations of the family that takes it in. This lifespan consideration alone places Amazon ownership in a category of commitment that deserves very serious thought.

### **Noise Is a Defining Feature of Amazon Life**

Amazon parrots are among the loudest commonly kept parrot species. They have large voices, strong opinions, and no hesitation about expressing both. Morning and evening are particularly vocal periods. If noise is a constraint in your living situation, please research the Amazon species you are considering very carefully and honestly before adopting.

## **CITES and Legal Considerations**

Amazon parrots are legal to own in Wisconsin at the state level. Many Amazon species are listed under CITES Appendix I or II, which regulates international trade. Captive-bred birds within the United States are not subject to CITES import restrictions, but documentation of captive-bred status matters. Always request and verify documentation when adopting any Amazon parrot. Wild-caught Amazons should not be entering the pet trade and any bird without provenance documentation should be approached with caution.

As always, verify local city and county ordinances in Wisconsin before adopting, as local restrictions can apply even where state law permits ownership.

## Household Dangers for Birds

Birds have an extraordinarily efficient respiratory system with continuous one-way airflow through air sacs connected to the lungs. This makes them far more sensitive to airborne toxins than mammals. Many everyday household items that humans barely register are genuinely life-threatening to a bird. Every person who brings a bird into their home must understand these dangers before that bird arrives.

### Non-Stick Cookware and PTFE (Teflon)

#### The Number One Household Killer of Pet Birds

Cookware, bakeware, and appliances coated with polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), sold under brand names including Teflon, release invisible, odorless toxic fumes when overheated. These fumes cause acute respiratory failure in birds within minutes and are almost always fatal. A bird can be dead in under 15 minutes with no warning whatsoever. Non-stick cookware must not be used in any home with a bird. This includes non-stick pots, pans, waffle irons, air fryers, some drip pans and oven liners, and some ironing board covers. Check every appliance and piece of cookware before bringing a bird home and replace anything with a PTFE coating.

### Other Airborne Toxins

- Candles, incense, and wax melts: Scented candles, incense, wax warmers, and essential oil diffusers release volatile compounds that cause respiratory irritation and damage in birds. Never use these in a room where a bird spends time.
- Aerosol sprays: Hairspray, air fresheners, spray cleaners, perfume, and spray paint all pose serious respiratory risks. Ventilate thoroughly and keep birds away from any room where aerosols are used.
- Scented plug-in air fresheners: These release compounds continuously and should not be used anywhere near a bird.
- Smoke of any kind: Cigarette, cigar, wood smoke, vaping aerosol, and marijuana smoke are all harmful to bird respiratory tracts. Never smoke near or in the same room as a bird.
- Overheated cooking oils and burning food: Even without PTFE, combustion products from burned food can irritate birds. Ensure good kitchen ventilation when cooking.
- Fresh paint, varnish, adhesives, and treated wood: Off-gassing from new materials can be harmful. Allow full curing and thorough ventilation before the bird returns to any treated area.
- Household cleaning products: Bleach, ammonia-based cleaners, and many commercial sprays are toxic to birds. Use bird-safe alternatives for anything near the cage and rinse all surfaces thoroughly.

### Physical Dangers

- Ceiling fans: Always turn off ceiling fans before allowing a bird out of its cage. A bird in flight and a moving ceiling fan is a fatal combination.

- Exposed electrical cords: Birds chew. A bird that bites through a live wire can be electrocuted. Cover or hide all cords in any space where your bird has free flight time.
- Open water: Toilet bowls, full sinks, buckets, and aquariums can trap and drown a bird. Keep these covered or doors closed during free flight.
- Cats and dogs: Even a playful swipe from a cat can deliver fatal Pasteurella bacteria into a bird's bloodstream through a scratch. Never allow unsupervised contact between a bird and any cat or dog.
- Windows and mirrors: Birds cannot distinguish glass from open space. Mark large windows or cover them during free flight to prevent collision injuries.
- Hot surfaces: Birds can land on hot stove burners during free flight. Never allow birds in the kitchen while cooking.
- Small gaps and tight spaces: Birds explore and can get stuck behind appliances or inside small openings where they can injure themselves or cannot be reached.

## Housing and Cage Setup

Amazon parrots need large, sturdy cages. The minimum is 32 inches wide by 36 inches deep by 48 inches tall with bar spacing of 1 to 1.5 inches. Amazon beaks are powerful and the cage must be constructed of heavy-gauge wire that cannot be bent or dismantled. Stainless steel cages are the gold standard for large parrots for their durability, ease of cleaning, and complete safety from zinc and lead exposure. Powder-coated steel is also acceptable if the finish is intact and non-toxic.

Place the cage where the family spends time so the bird feels part of the social group. Amazons left in isolated rooms develop behavioral problems. At the same time, place the cage against a wall rather than in the center of the room, giving the bird a sense of security and a vantage point.

## Hormonal Seasons

### **This Is One of the Most Important Things to Understand About Amazon Parrots**

Amazon parrots experience strong annual hormonal periods, typically in spring. During this time, even a normally sweet, well-socialized Amazon can become unpredictably aggressive, territorial, and dangerous. Behaviors include pinning eyes (pupils rapidly dilating and contracting), fanning the tail, fluffing feathers aggressively, and lunging or biting. During hormonal season, interactions need to be managed carefully. Respect the bird's signals, reduce handling if aggression is present, avoid nesting triggers entirely, and understand that this period is temporary. It passes. It is not a permanent personality change.

## Perches: Variety Is Essential

Perch quality and variety have a direct impact on foot health. A bird stands on its perches every moment it is in the cage. Providing only one type or diameter of perch causes constant pressure on the same points of the foot, which leads to bumblefoot, a painful and difficult-to-treat bacterial infection of the foot pads.

- **Natural wood branches:** The best option. Irregular shapes and diameters constantly shift foot position and exercise different muscles. Use untreated wood from bird-safe species such as apple, willow, manzanita, and dragonwood.
- **Rope perches:** Soft, comfortable, and good for variety. Inspect regularly for fraying, as loose fibers can wrap around toes and cause tourniquet injuries. Replace when significant fraying appears.
- **Calcium or mineral perches:** Provide texture and help keep the beak slightly worn. Fine as one option among several.
- **Nail file or pedicure perches:** Acceptable as one perch among multiple options to help maintain nail length. Should never be the only or primary perch, as prolonged contact with an abrasive surface

damages foot pads.

- Dowel perches: Limit to no more than one per cage. Uniform smooth dowels provide no variation in diameter or texture and promote foot problems when used exclusively.

### **Place Perches Thoughtfully**

Position perches at different heights throughout the cage. The highest perch is where most birds prefer to sleep, so make it comfortable and secure. Never position perches directly over food or water dishes where droppings contaminate them. Ensure all perches are stable and do not wobble.

## **Toys and Enrichment**

Amazons are intelligent and need significant enrichment to stay mentally healthy. They enjoy foraging puzzles, shreddable toys, foot toys, large wooden blocks to chew, swings, and any enrichment that challenges them to problem-solve. Rotate toys regularly. Many Amazons enjoy music, television, and interactive play with their people. Out-of-cage time in a safe, supervised environment is important for their physical and psychological health.

## **Diet and Nutrition**

Diet is one of the areas where parrot care most commonly falls short of what these birds actually need. An all-seed diet is the single most common nutritional mistake made by parrot owners across all species.

### **Why Seed-Only Diets Are Harmful**

Seeds are high in fat and carbohydrates and deficient in many essential vitamins and minerals, particularly Vitamin A and calcium. A parrot eating only seeds is essentially eating nutritionally incomplete food at every single meal. Vitamin A deficiency causes respiratory problems, immune suppression, and organ damage over time. The high fat content leads to obesity and fatty liver disease, both of which are extremely common in seed-fed parrots and both of which shorten lifespan significantly. Seeds are fine as an occasional treat or a component of a varied diet, but they should never be the foundation.

### **Recommended Diet**

Boggy's Buddies recommends 50 percent high-quality pellets and 50 percent fresh chop daily. Harrison's Bird Foods is our top pellet recommendation, followed by TOPS Parrot Food and Goldenfeast. We do not recommend ZuPreem, which contains artificial colors and is not nutritionally balanced to the standard of the above options. Amazon parrots are prone to obesity, so monitoring food intake and avoiding high-fat foods is especially important.

Amazon parrots are highly prone to obesity, which leads to fatty liver disease and a shortened lifespan. Monitor body weight and condition regularly. An Amazon who is offered unlimited high-fat foods will eat them enthusiastically and to their detriment.

#### Safe Fresh Foods

- Dark leafy greens: collard greens, kale, dandelion greens
- Bell peppers (excellent Vitamin A source)
- Broccoli, carrots, courgette, sweet potato
- Fresh herbs: basil, cilantro, parsley
- Small amounts of mango, papaya, or pomegranate (no fruit seeds)

#### Never Feed These

- Avocado (toxic)
- Onions and garlic (toxic)
- Chocolate (toxic)
- Fruit seeds and pits
- Alcohol
- High-fat, high-sodium human food
- Excessive fatty seeds (promotes obesity)

#### Fresh Water

Fresh water must be available at all times. Change it daily and clean the dish or bottle thoroughly every few days. Many parrots enjoy a shallow bath dish or misting, which supports feather condition and provides enrichment.

#### Never Pet a Parrot Below the Neck

Petting a parrot on its back, wings, belly, or vent area mimics the behavior of a mate and triggers hormonal responses. This applies to all parrot species. Chronic hormonal stimulation through full-body petting leads to behavioral problems, aggression, and in females, chronic egg-laying with serious associated health risks. Pet only on the head, cheeks, and around the beak. Never pet under the wings, along the back, or near the tail.

#### No Nesting Items in the Cage

Do not place nest boxes, cuddle tents, snuggle sacks, or any enclosed fabric items in your bird's cage. When a bird is surrounded on all sides in a tight, cozy space, it registers this as a nest. This triggers powerful hormonal responses in both males and females: egg-laying behavior in females (which can lead to egg binding, a life-threatening emergency) and territorial aggression and frustration in both sexes. A hormonally stimulated parrot is an unhappy, difficult parrot. Comfortable perches at height are all a bird needs for sleeping and resting.

#### Wing Clipping: Our Position

Boggy's Buddies does not recommend wing clipping as a routine practice. Flight is a fundamental natural behavior, and fully flighted birds are physically healthier, more confident, and more

behaviorally balanced. Flight provides exercise that clipped birds cannot replicate, and birds who learn to fly develop better coordination and emotional resilience.

We recognize that clipping is not the wrong choice in every situation, and we support it in specific circumstances.

### **Situations Where We Support Clipping**

- An adult bird who has been clipped for most of its life and is unlikely to learn to fly safely. For these birds, being suddenly fully flighted without the skills to manage it poses a real injury risk from crashes and falls.
- A hormonal bird who is dive-bombing other birds, animals, or people. Clipping temporarily limits the ability to initiate attacks and can be a safety management tool during a hormonal period.
- Transport, veterinary visits, or other situations where uncontrolled flight poses an escape or injury risk.

#### **If You Clip, Do It Correctly**

Wing clipping should only be done by an avian vet or experienced avian professional. Incorrectly clipped birds cut blood feathers and can fall and injure themselves if left without any ability to glide. A correctly clipped bird should be able to glide slowly to the ground, not drop straight down.

### **Harness Training and Outdoor Time**

Supervised outdoor time in a harness offers real benefits: natural sunlight provides Vitamin D3 that indoor lighting cannot fully replicate, and new sights, sounds, and smells provide enrichment that indoor life simply cannot match.

For most birds, the Aviator harness is our first recommendation. It is well-designed, adjustable, and available in sizes ranging from very small to large parrot. The right harness is ultimately the one that fits and that your individual bird will accept. Some birds adapt to other designs more readily.

Harness training is a long process. We want to be completely clear about this. For most birds, the process from first introduction to comfortable wear takes weeks to months of slow, patient, positive work. Forcing a harness onto a bird who is not ready causes fear and trauma that makes future training exponentially harder. The process begins with simply letting the bird see the harness, then feel it nearby, then brief contact, then seconds of wear, and so on. Every bird moves at its own pace.

#### **Never Leave a Harnessed Bird Unsupervised Outside**

A harnessed bird outside is still a bird that can be attacked by a hawk, a cat, or a dog. Always supervise directly and never tie the leash to an object and walk away.

## Grooming: Nails, Beak, and Wings

Regular monitoring of nail length, beak condition, and wing feathers is part of routine bird ownership. With appropriate perch variety and foraging opportunities, beak and nail maintenance is often reduced but never eliminated.

### Nail Trims

Overgrown nails curl under the foot and cause pain and difficulty perching. Check nail length regularly. Trims can be performed by an avian vet, an experienced groomer, or a confident owner who has been shown correct technique. Always have styptic powder on hand in case a nail is cut too short and bleeds. Never attempt nail trims on an uncooperative bird alone.

### Beak Maintenance

A healthy beak wears naturally through chewing, foraging, and wiping on perches and mineral blocks. An overgrown, misshapen, or laminating beak requires veterinary assessment. Do not attempt beak trims at home. Beak trims require specialized tools and expertise and a mistake can cause serious injury.

### Wing Trims

See the wing clipping section above. Any clipping should be done by an avian vet or experienced avian professional only.

## Common Health Issues

### Fatty Liver Disease (Hepatic Lipidosis)

Extremely common in seed-fed or obese Amazons. Signs include lethargy, fluffed feathers, weight gain, and changes in droppings. Dietary correction and veterinary care can improve outcomes if caught early. Amazons are uniquely prone to obesity and its consequences.

### Psittacosis

Transmissible to humans. Test new birds from unknown backgrounds.

### Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)

A neurological disease causing chronic regurgitation, weight loss, and neurological symptoms. Requires veterinary management.

### Respiratory Infections

Signs include breathing changes, nasal discharge, and tail-bobbing. Always a veterinary emergency.

**Feather Destructive Behavior**

A signal of stress, illness, boredom, or hormonal imbalance. Always warrants a veterinary assessment first.

**Chlamydiosis (Psittacosis)**

Transmissible to humans. Annual testing is recommended especially in birds with outdoor exposure or unknown histories.

**PTFE Toxicosis**

Non-stick fumes cause rapid respiratory failure. Remove all PTFE-coated items.

## Things Every New Amazon Parrot Owner Should Know

### **This bird may outlive you.**

Amazon parrots regularly live 40 to 70 years or more. Estate planning for your bird, designating a caretaker and providing resources for their ongoing care, is something every Amazon owner should address.

### **Hormonal season is real and annual.**

Plan for it. Understand it. Do not take it personally. Manage it carefully.

### **Noise is not a phase.**

A loud Amazon is expressing itself normally. If you expected a quieter bird, you need to honestly evaluate whether this is the right fit for your living situation.

### **Remove all non-stick cookware.**

PTFE fumes kill birds within minutes. No exceptions.

### **Obesity is a leading health risk.**

Monitor food intake, avoid high-fat foods, and ensure adequate exercise through out-of-cage time.

### **Seeds are a treat, not a diet.**

Transition to pellets and fresh chop.

### **Find an avian vet experienced with large parrots before you need one.**

Identify one in your area now.

### **Questions? We're Here!**

Boggy's Buddies is always happy to answer questions. Reach us at [boggysbuddies@gmail.com](mailto:boggysbuddies@gmail.com) or find us on Facebook and Instagram.