

Playtime With Amazon Parrots

Learn about playtime with this bird species

By John Geary

Double yellow-headed Amazon Courtesy Paula Haines, Arizona

When it comes to toys, Amazons cannot be pigeonholed. While many take great pleasure in turning wood blocks into toothpicks, some prefer more intellectually oriented toys. Every bird needs to be assessed individually, as play preferences can vary widely even within the same species.

“They do tend to like very active, big, bright toys,” said Diana Holloway, president of the Amazona Society. “They like rope perches and swings, and wood toys are very important, as they need to chew.”

Robin Fiorese, of Surrey, B.C., related that Gomez, her double-yellowheaded Amazon is very good at entertaining himself. “He loves to climb, hang upside down and swing,” she said. “He also really likes playing with rattles.” Other birds may play better with humans than alone.

In terms of living space, Amazons must be able to open, stretch and flap their wings comfortably within their cages. A cage should be at least two times the size of the bird’s full wingspan to allow this.

While Amazons have a reputation for being vocal, there are always exceptions to the rule. There are no guarantees your bird will be a good talker — or be quiet, for that matter. “Orange wings are not supposed to talk, but Bailey speaks about 400 words,” shared Anna Teets, a Calgary bird enthusiast and president of the Alberta city’s parrot club.

Some Amazons may be more prone to sing or whistle than talk. “Macho, my double-yellowheaded Amazon, loves to whistle the theme for the ‘Andy Griffith Show,’” said New Yorker Ben Li-Gon.

Erika Nanartowicz, another New Yorker, said that although her 3-year-old blue front, Lola, does not have a large vocabulary yet, she communicates in other ways. “She reacts to what’s going on around her, and to what I say,” Nanartowicz explained. “I can tell she understands what’s going on, but she can’t really respond in our way, although she did learn to say, ‘What’s that?’ when I put something new in her food dish.”

Amazons’ life span is another important consideration, as they can live to be 70 years old. There is a good chance your bird may outlive you, so you need to make plans to secure a good home for your feathered friend once you are gone. Living with Amazons presents many challenges. But if you can measure up to the challenges, you stand to reap rich rewards.

“They are not for everybody, but people who have Amazons absolutely adore them,” said Holloway. “They are filled with the joy of life.”