Breeding the Bodin’s Amazon

(Amazona festiva bodini)

by Nicole VanDerHeyden, D.V.M.
Wabash Aviary
Indianapolis, Indiana

The Bodin’s Amazon (Amazona festiva bodini) is relatively new to American aviculturists. Few specimens were available prior to 1986 when 294 were imported from Guyana. In 1987 and 1988, an additional 46 were brought in and few have arrived since then. Mortality was approximately 18% during quarantine and apparently continued after quarantine with numerous breeders reporting deaths of recently acquired stock. As a result, the number of Bodin’s in the United States probably does not exceed 250 birds. The Festive Amazon (Amazona festiva) is even more uncommon in aviculture as it has never been commercially imported.  

1,2

The status of the Bodin’s Amazon in the wild is difficult to ascertain due to an apparent lack of data. Studies from the 1960s and 1970s do not distinguish between the Bodin’s and the nominate species, the Festive Amazon. They suggest the Festive Amazon was common throughout its range at that time. The range of the Bodin’s Amazon includes eastern Venezuela and northwestern Guyana while the range of the Festive Amazon includes northwestern Brazil, southeastern Colombia, northeastern Peru and eastern Ecuador. Recent anecdotal sightings still report both species as common within their ranges. 3,4,5

The Bodin’s Amazon is a medium sized Amazon approximately 36 centimeters in length and weighing from 391 to 574 grams (n = 13). It and the Festive Amazon are distinguished from all other Amazons by a patch of crimson feathers on the back. This patch of feathers is only visible in flight. They also do not have the red or orange wing speculum feathers typical of most of the larger mainland Amazons. The Bodin’s and Festive Amazons are distinguished from each other by the amount and positioning of the red and blue on the face. The Bodin’s Amazon has a broad band of maroon across its forehead and blue cheeks while the Festive Amazon has a narrow band of maroon and green checks. The Festive Amazon also has blue behind its eyes, under its chin and on its primary coverts. Both make devoted pets and are apparently good talkers.

The Bodin’s Amazon was first described by Dr. Otto Finsch in 1873 who named the parrot Chrysotis bodini in honor of Dr. Karl August Heinrich Bodinus. Dr. Bodinus (c. 1814 - 1884) was a German physician as well as a bird breeder and collector. He was also the director of the Koln Zoological Gardens and the Berlin Zoo during his lifetime. Chrysotis was the prior name for the genus Amazona.6

We acquired nine Bodin’s and one Festive Amazon in the summer of 1987. Eight of the Bodin’s were received directly from Miami quarantine stations while one was a long-term captive, estimated to be 12 years old. The Festive was also a long-term captive known to be at least 20 years old.

All of the eight recent imports had medical problems upon arrival. Most tested positive for psittacosis as well as feather lice, tapeworms and gram negative pharyngitis/enteritis (mostly Klebsiella sp.). The Bodin’s were treated with doxycycline to control the psittacosis. Two required inordinately high doses and longer than normal treatment periods to effect a cure. Ivermectin was used to treat the feather lice successfully and praziquantel was used with moderate success to treat the tapeworms. One Amazon was also afflicted with kyphosis (curvature of the spine) and bilateral arthritis of the hocks. It died approximately one year later. Three additional Amazons from the original group also died, one to liver failure (likely secondary to the psittacosis infection) one to acute hepatitis of unknown cause and one to trauma (courtesy of a marauding male Double Yellow-headed Amazon).

Most of the imported Bodin’s appeared to be young as they had
very little red on their backs. The six remaining Amazons contained three pairs, two pairs of recently imported Bodin's and one hybrid pair consisting of the two long-term captives. In 1990, an additional pair of Bodin's was acquired that had been imported in 1986. This pair appeared incompatible and was repaired successfully with one of the imported pairs.

The pairs were set up in 3' x 3' x 4' 1" square welded wire cages suspended three feet above the ground. The pairs were set up indoors side by side with solid metal dividers between each pair. The pairs could observe pairs of other species across the 4-foot aisle but not each other. Fluorescent lights were suspended

The adult Bodin's and Festive Amazons are distinguished from all other Amazons by a patch of crimson feathers on the back.

The Bodin's Amazon is a subspecies of the more common Festive Amazon. Both need to be worked with by American aviculturists.

Immature Bodin's Amazons do not have the red back as the adults.

This photo shows different growth stages of the Bodin's Amazon. The pink stage shows them at two to three weeks.

The feathering stage is at five to six weeks.
The HAGEN AVICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (HARI) located in Rigaud, Québec was established in 1985 to study the captive breeding and maintenance of companion birds. At present, the breeding colony houses 150 pairs of 40 various parrot species.

The birds are housed in separate, double door rooms incorporating the latest techniques in environmental control:

- Insulated walls and ceilings are totally waterproofed with PVC plastic sheeting.
- Sloped poly-urethane concrete floors are drained to an environmentally secure in-house septic system.
- Down draft ventilation is connected to a high tech air-to-air heat exchanger and multiple fan system which provides fresh warm air.
- 400 watt sodium and fluorescent lights with timers provide photoperiodic manipulation.
- Green House misting system provides continuous humidity control and a rain-like effect which the birds love.
- Large eight and ten foot suspended flights and gravity feeders provide privacy and minimal human disturbance.

Research fields include disease control, pair bonding, nutrition and the influence of temperature, humidity and light cycles on breeding. Progress has been rapid in the area of feeding research at HARI.

Hagen's new VME seed line (Vitamin and Mineral Enriched) incorporates the most effective supplementation for smaller bird species. HARI research determined that vitamin and mineral enrichment of dehulled seed kernels was more effective than other industry methods, such as coloring the outside hull or simply mixing seeds with poultry type pellets, which are often rejected by the birds.

PRIME, a unique vitamin/mineral and limiting amino acid supplement which includes beneficial bacteria and digestive enzymes, was also developed by HARI. The formula is designed for birds on a soft food or seed diet, ensuring that all essential nutrients are made available in the diet.

The TROPICAN line of formulated, fruit flavored extruded foods for parrots is the direct result of intensive nutrition research at HARI. The TROPICAN line includes both a High Performance formula for breeding birds, moulting or periods of stress and the Life-Time formula for normal maintenance conditions. Both PRIME and TROPICAN have been fed to HARI's own colony of birds since 1985 with excellent results. Hari has raised many of the larger parrots and is presently supplying pet stores with tame babies.

Mark Hagen is Research Director at HARI. He has a Master of Agriculture from the University of Guelph and specializes in Psittacine Aviculture. His continued Research includes Nutrition, Incubation and other Psittacine Aviculture research projects.
Bird Pet and Supplies Retailers —

did you know that one of the most prestigious bird publications, The Watchbird is available for resale in your store?

Call or write for information:
American Federation of Aviculture
P.O. Box 56218
Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218
(602) 484-0931

References
9. Personal Communication, Grenville Roles, Tracy Aviary, Salt Lake City, Utah, 8/91.

Editor's note: If any person knows of a successful breeding of the Bodin's Amazon prior to the dates stated in this article, please inform Dale R. Thompson, Chairman, Avy Awards Committee, through the AFA Home Office in Phoenix, Arizona.

Editor's Note: Any persons knowing of a successful breeding of the Bodin's Amazon prior to the dates stated in this article, please notify Dale R. Thompson, Avy Awards Committee, through the AFA Home Office.