

## Wasatch Avian Education Society

[www.wasatchavian.com](http://www.wasatchavian.com)

April 2015



## WAES Newsletter



### April Meeting

**Saturday April 11, 2015 @  
7:00PM**

**Salt Lake County  
Complex 2001 S. State  
Street Room N1100 (North  
Building) Salt Lake City,  
UT 84190**

Our meetings are free and open to the public. Come and enjoy our presentations, conversations with other parrot enthusiasts, snacks, and a donations table to benefit our birds in foster care.

### Message from Our Secretary

Happy April everybody, and I hope everyone had a good Easter. One thing I always love about April is how everything is made new. But of course, we also need to remember that we have many things that we have to hold onto, to ensure there will be a future for those things. That's one of the reasons why I am going to love our next meeting.

I am excited to know that Evan Buechley will be joining us at our next meeting. When it comes to preserving the future, Evan is one of those individuals who's leading the pack. For the past eight years, Evan has been working diligently on research and conservation of our feathered friends the vultures. He will be sharing his research of the causes and consequences of vulture declines, and what impact this has ecologically, especially with the work he has done with the endangered Egyptian vulture in the Middle East.

I hope to see everyone there and as usual, I always encourage everyone to bring new people to the meetings, and share our love with our feathered friends.

Heidi Shelton-Grimes



# Amazon Parrots & Spring Hormones

By Dorine McKinnon

<http://www.birdchannel.com/media/bird-magazines/bird-talk/2010-march/bird-talk-spring-hormones.aspx.pdf>

## You & Your Amazon Parrot Can Make it Through Spring Hormones with These Tips

Every spring, our pet Amazon parrots begin to experience an increased hormonal rush brought on by their breeding cycle. Quite suddenly our pet bird becomes restless; wanting something, but throwing it down when it's given to him. His normal body language flashes only a moments warning before he lunges to bite those within reach of his bird cage or who approach his favored person.

Hormones can change your Amazon's parrot drastically, so work with your parrot until spring ends. In the wild, an Amazon parrot's aggressive protection of territory grants a breeding pair ample space and food for successfully raising young. In our homes, it translates into an Amazon trying to drive his human stand-in for a mate away from anyone he considers a competitor. He has no other way of telling his loved one to get out of the way and let him do his job.

Unfortunately, few people understand what he's trying to do, and virtually no one appreciates it. Instead, they conclude that their once-playful, happy parrot has gone mad.

This is also the time of year when owners make embarrassing explanations to the naïve who innocently ask why the parrot is rubbing his posterior all over his perches or regurgitating on his toy. Then, adding to the turmoil is a noticeable increase in screaming jags to the annoyance of anyone in residence and frequently their neighbors as well.

All of these behaviors are based on the breeding cycle, and by the same token, are the reason why so many male Amazons lose their happy homes each summer, as bewildered owners try to understand why their well-behaved pet bird has morphed into a biting machine.

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Once we begin to understand what the breeding season does to our little feathered Don Juan, we can predict and make adjustments to prevent instinctual misbehavior and desensitize our hormonally challenged little boy.

Here are some tips to help you and your Amazon make it through the spring without hurt feelings or bandages.

### 1) Address Hormonal Changes First and Foremost.

Owners must address the changes that bring about that rush of hormones. Spring rains produce an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables. The days lengthen and the sun moves closer to the earth, increasing the intensity of sunlight. In the wild, these factors create the perfect environment for feeding hungry chicks.

Unfortunately, our companion parrots are equally affected, and their hormonal misbehavior can create huge problems for them and their families.

Adjusting the length of daylight by replicating the longer winter nights is the first step for prevention. Your Amazon's bedtime should mimic the dusk of winter. A cage cover that blocks out light will suffice as long as the bird can get quiet, uninterrupted sleep. If there is a television or radio playing nearby, consider setting up a sleep cage. A spare room, walk-in closet or even an extra bathroom can be pressed into service as your feathered buddy's sleeping quarters.

The goal is to allow your bird approximately 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness, which imitates a winter night. If you must break the time up to work

around your schedule, it will still be better than doing nothing.

Most parrot owners provide abundant fresh produce year round, but at this time of year, you should cut back on fresh foods and increase the dried or freeze-dried veggies, fruits and formulated diets. Millet spray can be used to distract a screaming Amazon and get him focused on picking every one of those little seeds for 15 or so minutes of peace and quiet.

Hormonal misbehavior can still arise despite your best efforts at preventing it; however, with a few relatively simple techniques to distract, avoid and refocus your hormonally charged bird, you and your family can weather the seasonal surge intact.

### 2) Avoid Being Bitten

Setting yourself up for a bite should be avoided at all costs because a spring-time bite is often more severe. Every time you are bitten, the behavior is being reinforced, leading to another bite.

Any bird that has demonstrated a willingness to bite should receive an annual wing feather trim before spring arrives each year. This curtails his ability to aggressively chase anyone around the room. A wing feather trim helps halt his rampage.

Before you try to pick up your parrot with your bare hand, pay attention to your bird's body language. Are his pupils dilating and contracting repeatedly? Are his tail feathers completely fanned out and his wings held away from his body but not fully opened? Are the tiny feathers over his nostrils and near his beak standing straight up? These all indicate that he is far too excited to step up onto your hand

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without risking a bite. Instead, use a stick, net, basket, small crate or cage to pick him up or to transport him.

Your stick should be a minimum of 3 feet in length with at least one dogleg or right angle in it, similar to the shape of a hockey stick. Hold the shaft so that your parrot steps onto the section horizontal to the floor. Should he begin climbing toward your hand, rotate the stick that so he has to focus on the movement of the stick instead of his original intention. Alternatively, his end of the stick can be raised higher than yours, which should stop him from coming toward you because parrots instinctively climb up, not down.

There are some Amazons that simply won't accept stick training. They'll bite the stick, push it away or run from it. Forcing the issue won't do either of you any good. Instead, change tactics by trying to get him to step onto something else. I've used a large basket with a handle that has been wrapped with cotton rope, a wicker clothesbasket or even a net with the webbing replaced by a pillowcase.

If you're going to use a net, patiently work to get your bird to step onto the edge closest to him while the net is held horizontally. You can then rotate his side downward to prevent movement toward you should he try to rush at your hand. This is be the same action you would take to get him into the net. Then once the opposite side is above his head, give him a little goose from behind and he should slide down into the bottom, riding like a little green tripod at the bottom of the pillowcase.

With patience, you can teach your Amazon to climb on the net or to even climb into the bag when moving him from

one place to another. Because you're not wrapping him in the net, and he can't see through the pillowcase, he might not mind it as much as he would a regular net.

If he is just being moved to his sleep cage, you might try the stick or a rolled up towel to encourage your Amazon to move from one to the other.

Another problem area is when your Amazon tries to take your finger instead of his treat. Solving this problem is as easy as teaching him to take his treat from a fork or spoon. Most Amazons learn this readily if you smear a little peanut butter onto a spoon before handing it to him. Spearing some green beans, salad, fruit, a chunk of cooked meat or anything he can have from your plate (before you begin eating), will teach your Amazon fork manners. As your little genius sees you eating the same thing from your fork, he will learn how to hold and eat from it.

### 3) Mind The Bird Cage

Because you might have to keep your hormone-crazy Amazon parrot inside his cage until his levels of aggression subside, he should have the largest size cage that you can possibly accommodate for him.

It's pretty common for any bird to not appreciate any attempt at cage cleaning while he or she occupies the cage, but a hormonally charged parrot takes special offense to a hand or arm reaching into his cage. Keeping an eye on him while trying to scrape droppings from the grate isn't the easiest task in the world either. For the sake of your sanity, wipe down the cage and change the cage liner before you move your bird from his sleep cage to his main cage each morning. Most parrot owners provide abundant fresh produce

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year round, but at this time of year, you should cut back on fresh foods and increase the dried or freeze-dried veggies, fruits and formulated diets. Millet spray can be used to distract a screaming Amazon and get him focused on picking every one of those little seeds for 15 or so minutes of peace and quiet.

Rearranging toys, perches or even hanging a skewer loaded with fresh vegetables or fruit in the cage while your bird occupies it is another unwelcome intrusion. A better way is to include these with your daily wipe down before you return your bird to his cage.

Those with multiple Amazons in the same home will need the patience of a saint when spring fever comes calling. All will become hormonal simultaneously, their attention focused exclusively on finding a mate and imitating a breeding pair, even if the birds are of the same sex. You might get a little relief by placing blankets or sheets between their cages so that they can't see each other. I've also found that playing classical music helps calm even the most hormonally charged Amazon, especially Beethoven or Manneheim Steamroller.

#### 4) Build On What You've Learned

Once the days of summer have come and gone and your bird returns to his normal loving self — and you have some experience at what works with your bird — it's a good time to begin positive changes that will build your Amazon's relationships with other family members. Every member of the family should begin interacting in some unique way every day with your Amazon. Each individual should provide something that no one else does. The same person who provides breakfast

should not give dinner. There are showers to give, toenails to file and weigh-ins to record, just to name a few things your Amazon parrot can learn to do with others.

Take turns teaching your Amazon words. They are quite capable of associating certain words with individual items, colors and phrases. Use the same term for each activity that you identify for your Amazon, such as "Time for breakfast" or "Time to go night-night." This way, your bird learns what the phrase means and to use it appropriately. My little feather duster tells me when it's bedtime, reminding me to turn out the light and shut the door. She has learned the routine that was repeated so many times and now coaxes anyone who happens to stand in for me in putting her to bed.

Remember those hormonal screams? Let's start replacing those with a cute, little song or jingle that are easier on the ears. Once your bird has learned the first one, begin a new one — even the cutest rendition of "Jingle Bells" gets old after the millionth time — and before you know it, it's going to be time to start all over again.

Female Amazon Parrots While we're discussing spring hormones, we also need to include a few unpleasant realities you should be aware of if your Amazon is female. You don't get off scot-free with the fairer sex.

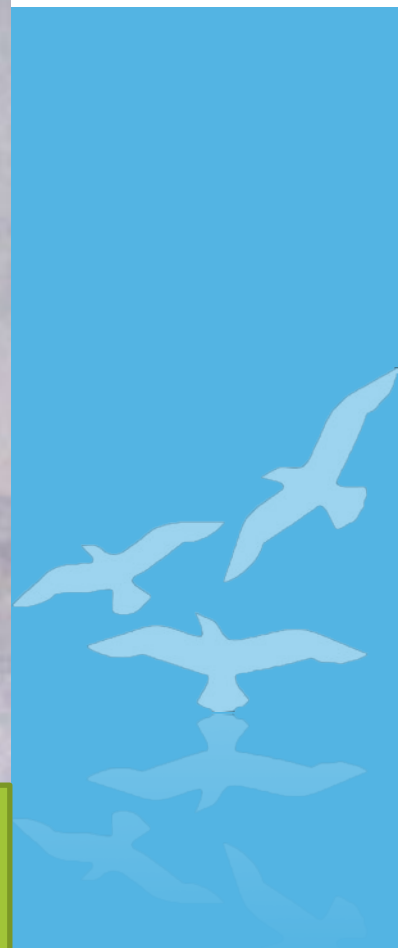
When little Juliet gets spring fever, she will begin hunting for any dark corner in which to make her nest. The all-encompassing desire to chew will leave telltale rounded corners on your woodwork; veneer peeled from your furniture and a new pattern of puncture holes on your leather sofa. She can customize your home faster than the most expensive power tool, so move her cage

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well away from anything you hold dear. You can keep little miss buzz saw occupied with wooden toys or by weaving Shredders or folded newspaper into the bars of her cage.

Next will come the very smelly droppings that indicate that she is broody. The first dropping of the day is an especially large, odorous one, which is normal for her springtime condition. Amazon hens will not eliminate in their nest; instead they hold it until they come out to eat or drink and throughout the night.

Egg laying is not uncommon during the breeding season, even without a male Amazon parrot being present. Let her sit on her eggs until she loses interest in doing so. You can put several sections of newspaper down on top of the grate to pad them and to give her a solid surface to use. She might only sit at night, or night and day, but if you take away her eggs prematurely she will usually lay a replacement clutch. Laying eggs saps her body of minerals and can lead to health issues. It is a good idea to supplement her diet with minerals and vitamins during this nesting cycle.





# WAES Rescue Report

## Billy Yellow-Naped Amazon

Billy is 44 years old and a very nice bird. She is missing part of one wing and probably has arthritis. All vet tests normal, comes with cage and toys.

- Sassy SC2 was adopted by her loving foster family. Congratulations, Ginny!
- Tazha M2 and Zeka M2 are "adoption pending" with their foster families.
- We are looking for a foster home for Abby, blue-fronted amazon. Abby (DNA female) is 8 years old, a good talker, gets along with other birds and dogs. She enjoys playing with foot toys, egg crates, and can open locks. She enjoys baths and sitting outside, or looking out the window. She is hormonal and can be aggressive.

# Support WAES Every Time You Shop!

Amazon.com and Smith's Food Stores will donate a portion of your purchases to the charity of your choice. We hope your choice is Wasatch Avian Education Society.

When you shop Amazon.com, please use this special link: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/87-0520315>

When you shop Smith's, scan your Fresh Values Card, which has been linked to WAES.

1. Go to: [www.smithscommunityrewards.com](http://www.smithscommunityrewards.com)
2. Sign into your online account, or create an account
3. Designate Wasatch Avian (#57174) as your nonprofit organization, and save to your account.

Thank you for your participation!



March 2015

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Welcome Spring!