

Amazona amazonica (Orange-winged Parrot)

Family: Psittacidae (Parrots and Macaws)

Order: Psittaciformes (Parrots, Macaws and Cockatoos)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Orange-winged Parrot, *Amazona amazonica*.

[<https://theparrotuniversity.com/bathing-and-showering-pet-parrots>, downloaded 9 November 2014]

TRAITS. The orange-winged parrot is medium sized, with a length totalling 31-33cm from the top of their heads to the ends of their tail. They weigh between 300-470g, with very little sexual dimorphism, in some cases males may be a little larger than females. Their feathers are mostly varying shades of green along their body and they have a distinct yellow patch on the top of their heads, yellow colouration of the cheeks and a blue region around the forehead (WAZA, 2010). The parrot gets its name from the bright orange feathers of the wing. The wing also has blue and black feathers. Their tails are comprised of a green tip with mostly green feathers with orange on the underside. Their beaks are horn coloured and become grey at the tip. They have grey legs with four sharp claws (Brough, 2006).

ECOLOGY. The orange-winged parrot is commonly found in most of northern and central South America and in the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. They inhabit terrestrial habitats, their main habitats are the forested areas of these regions they inhabit, specifically found in the lowlands, gallery forests and mangroves, swampy forests and savannahs with scattered trees, and also drier woodlands (Bouglouan, 2000). They mainly feed on all types of fruits, nuts, seeds, blossoms, leaf buds and berries. Sometimes considered a pest because they are known to forage in cultivated areas on oranges, mangoes and cocoa.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. A very social species, always found in pair or in large groups. They are never solitary and even when kept as pets are very social and enjoy interaction with their owners (Agenus and Millmam, 1997). In the wild they are seen in pairs or flocks during the day, at night they congregate to sleep in communal roosts, outside of breeding season. These parrots are so dependent on social interaction it has been suggested that isolation from members of their species can lead to various abnormalities in behaviour, as seen in captive parrots, such as stereotypy, excessive fearfulness, feather plucking and aggression (Meehan et al., 2003).

ACTIVITY. These parrots are strictly diurnal and they fly back to their nest to roost just before sunset. They emerge early in the morning around 30 minutes after sunrise and fly to feeding sites in pairs or flocks. Usually seen flying in pairs with rapid shallow wing beats (Fig. 2). The orange-winged parrot can be seen flying high in the air from roost to feeding area. Individuals with young can be seen returning to their nest during the day to check on their young. When not feeding they chew on wood or bark to maintain the condition of their bill, which is the main tool used for climbing and feeding. Their bill can also be used to crack hard seeds and nuts with aid of their muscular tongue. They spend most of their time perched on branches in the tree canopy.

FORAGING BEHAVIOUR. The orange-winged parrot feeds solely during the day, and are usually seen feeding early in the morning or late in the afternoon. They are herbivorous and feed primarily on all types of fruits, nuts, seeds, blossoms, leaf buds and berries. They can be seen foraging around plantations, forest edge and even in urban areas. Usually a noisy bird, they are quiet while foraging and the only noises present are those from the sound of the movement of leaves.

COMMUNICATION. Being very social the orange-winged parrot is also very fond of communicating. They are very noisy animals and produce loud harsh screeches, trills, screams, bubbles, squawks and whistles. During flight they are known to make loud high pitch calls repetitively of “kee-wil..kee-wik”. These parrots have excellent speech capabilities when kept as pets.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR. The breeding season of these parrots vary according to their location. They reach sexual maturity around 4 or 5 years of age. The orange-winged parrot builds its nest in holes high in trees (Fig. 3). At the time of breeding they separate from roost and nest in solitary locations with their mate. These parrots are monogamous and usually maintain a single partner throughout their lives. The female lays between 2-5 white eggs per mating season. The eggs are incubated for about 21 days solely by the females (Lanterann, 1986). The males remain close to the nest during the day, but roost at the communal roost at night. After hatching the young birds are fed by both the male and female.

JUVENILE BEHAVIOUR. After 21 days of incubation eggs hatch and the young parrots emerge. At this point they are completely grey and do not have any feathers (Fig. 4). The hatchlings are incapable of surviving on their own and must be cared for by their parents who must feed them. They develop slowly and take about two months before they fledge, even after fledging they return to the nest with their mothers until they are mature enough to join the rest of the population in the roost. The young birds are incapable of producing the loud calls that their parents can produce and must develop the ability over time and through interactions with their peers. At around 4 months to a year juvenile parrots are known to undergo “bluffing”, where they become quite aggressive due to hormonal changes occurring in their body in anticipation of sexual maturity (Khalhagen, 2003).

ANTIPREDATOR BEHAVIOUR. They are usually capable of deflecting predators but can become prey to larger birds. However, it is quite rare for them to be captured. They perch high in trees (Fig. 5) and their green colouring provides significant camouflage making them difficult to detect. As previously stated the orange-winged parrot is silent while foraging, this is to aid in not drawing the attention of any potential predators, since they are at a disadvantage while foraging, as they are not well camouflaged or perched high on branches.

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Author: Ranessa Austin

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Fig. 2. Orange-winged parrots in flight.

[<http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-orange-winged-parrot.html>, accessed 13 November 2014]



Fig. 3. Orange-winged parrot nesting in a hole in a tree.

[<http://www.parrots.org/>, accessed 11 November 2014]



Fig. 4. Two hatchlings interacting with each other.

[<http://www.ccaviary.com/nursery.htm>, downloaded 14 November 14 2014]



Fig. 5. Orange-winged parrot resting in the tree canopy.

[<http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-orange-winged-parrot.html>, downloaded 14 November 14 2014]