



Belize Savanna Factsheet D2

Yellow-headed parrot (*Amazona oratrix ssp. belizensis*)

Of the six known *Amazona* parrot species listed for Belize, one stands out as a household name in Belize nationally and across the world. It is the yellow-headed parrot, *Amazona oratrix ssp. belizensis*. This subspecies of yellow-headed parrot occurs in Belize and is genetically unique to other birds of the same species. The same subspecies can also be seen in savannas and broad-leaf forests of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. In Belize you can find them in broad leaf forest, but their favoured habitat seems to be the pine savanna of Belize where they feed on available fruits and nuts.



The main observable difference between subspecies of the yellow-headed parrots is in the amount of yellow in the head as well as the colour of the beak and eye ring. In Belize this bird can be identified by its bright green plumage with a signature yellow crown on the head, white eye ring, red patches on the wings and pale beak.

Sadly, the beauty of these birds and their ability to mimic speech and sounds has made them popular as pets. Despite the fact that it is listed on Appendix 1 of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which makes it illegal to sell or buy wild-collected yellow-headed parrots, trade in the yellow-headed parrot still flourishes. Fledging parrots are stolen from their nests, in the holes of tree trunks and limbs, by poachers who sell the birds for the pet industry. The yellow-headed parrot is gravely endangered from this activity and from the loss of its natural habitat in the pine savanna. Natural populations have been reduced alarmingly by as much as 90%.

References:

- Jones, H. L. 2003. *Birds of Belize*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
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