

## **The Amazing Amazons**

**My birds are not performing birds that live with me. They are birds that live with me and also perform. When we lived in Alaska, my children were grown, my family was in the "Lower 48" and my husband had a demanding job. My "Green Boys" became my best friends. I would have them and love them even if they all decided never to perform again.**

**The Amazing Amazons are made up of four performing birds and one understudy. The performers are: Pepper, a wild-captured adult male Blue Front, T.J. (Tequila Joe) a wild-captured adult male Yellow Nape, Maggie (Magnum) a wild-captured adult male Yellow Nape and Kodiak a domestic adult male Blue Front. The understudy is Sidney (El Cid) a wild-captured adult male Yellow Nape. They range in ages from 11 years to over 20.**

**Pepper is the main performer and knows about 50 tricks. He can do most of the tricks that the others perform but allowing him to do all his and then the other birds do all their tricks would make a long, boring performance. The birds do a 45-minute performance.**

**The Amazing Amazons roller skate, ride skateboards, golf, bowl, play basketball, get groceries, make a meal, set the table, show number concepts and shapes, talk on command, rollover, go down a slide, do a fashion show, plus much more. After the performance there is a brief question and answer period.**

**After performing, the birds are held by the audience. As many as 250 people have held the birds after a single performance. Their audience consists of the very young, the very old, and the handicapped. The birds must get used to wheelchairs, walkers, and other equipment when performing for hospitals and nursing homes. They also perform for many organizations and groups like churches, service organizations and children's groups such as girl scouts, boy scouts, etc.**

**The birds are not trained every day and seldom need a refresher between performances. All of the birds look forward to training sessions. They love to do the tricks they perform. When they tire or a trick, it is pulled from the performance and substituted with another one. This way the birds always enjoy working.**

**The birds are given a food reward for performing. I tell the audience the birds are professionals and only work for pay (seeds). Since Amazons often have a weight problem their food reward is a half or a third shelled sunflower seed. They don't get sunflower seeds in their regular diet so they are anxious to get them.**

**The birds only perform in our immediate area, as I do not feel it is fair to them to have to spend hours in a travel carrier. Traveling and performing are stressful. If the bird has any illness, it cannot perform well. The audience does not enjoy an ill bird stumbling through its tricks. The bird must be well fed and healthy. Likewise,**

**audiences do not want to see anything that even remotely looks like abuse. I agree. No performance is worth a bird's pain.**

**Every morning I hold the birds, checking them physically and mentally to see if they are up to performing or training. I do not believe in forcing birds to participate in entertaining people. Sometimes I have only two birds that I will work during a day. It all depends on what birds are up to working.**

**I watch and check each bird carefully for stress during a performance. I want the birds to enjoy what they are doing. My birds have favorite tricks, and when they see the props for those tricks, they literally dance with excitement on the table so they can perform them. You cannot teach this excitement for performing. So they will always want to perform, I do not allow them to do more than three performances a week. Like people, even gifted birds can suffer from burnout.**

**The Amazing Amazons always perform free. I believe my ability to train birds is a gift from God and we should not only tithe money but also our talents. Sharing this gift with others has been very rewarding**

**For me, money is not the important part of having my birds perform. To see the eyes of a deaf child light up because he has felt the vibrations of Pepper talking while he held him is a special moment. A person signed what the birds said at this performance for the deaf. Another instance was hearing a child who seldom spoke become so excited that his words fell almost nonstop as he watched the Amazons talk and perform. Then there are the eyes of the elderly as they tell me about their pets and how their animals loved them just as my parrots love me.**

**The other day I walked to the mailbox and pulled out a fat envelope. It was filled with crude drawings of parrots and painstakingly printed messages of thank yous and love to the Amazing Amazons. I chuckled at one message that read: "Pepper, please visit me at my house. You can meet my hamster." I felt warm all over and believe I am truly the richest person alive.**

**Joanie Doss  
The Amazing Amazons**

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