

Greyhaven

EXOTIC BIRD SANCTUARY

Mailing Address:
Box # 441- 800, 15355 – 24th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 2H9
(604) 878-7212



ESSENTIAL BIRD BASICS

Compiled by Nancy Brady

***** IMPORTANT NOTE*****

Greyhaven is providing this information as an "informational guide" only. If you have any concerns about a bird's health always contact an Avian Veterinarian; do not rely solely on the information provided in this booklet.

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10 Things You Need to Know Before Adopting a Bird

1. Birds are not domesticated animals. Domestic animals are animals that have been bred for hundreds of years to live in the care of humans and are distinct from their wild ancestors. Birds commonly kept as pets are no different than their wild relatives- they are the native species of other countries.
2. Chlamydiosis (psittacosis) and avian tuberculosis can be transmitted through the air from birds to humans. These diseases can cause significant illness, especially for people with compromised immune systems. Birds also continually shed "feather dust" - particles of feathers, which may aggravate asthma in some people. Many homes with pet birds have HEPA-type air filters in rooms with birds to control allergies from bird dander.
3. Parrots, including lovebirds, parakeets, and cockatiels, are noisy and messy, and can be destructive. Vocalizing (squawking, chirping, talking) is an important part of any parrot's social communication. Birds eat continually throughout the day, dropping and discarding bits of food everywhere. Birds are instinctively programmed to chew and shred wood, whether it is a perch, toy, picture frame, or furniture. Birds will also chew electrical cords, paper, and curtains.
4. All parrots have long life spans. Depending on species, they may live 20 to 50 years or more. Caring for a bird is often a life-long responsibility.
5. Parrots are extremely social animals, and have been compared to human toddlers in the needs of their emotional and social lives but, unlike children, they never grow up.



6. Birds are active and inquisitive and must be provided with ample room to move about and play. An indoor or sheltered outdoor aviary or a flight safe room (windows covered, no cats/dogs, no ceiling fans, etc.) that will allow the bird(s) to fly is good for exercise. Birds with clipped wings can get exercise by climbing, swinging, and flapping, if provided with ample space, toys, and climbing structures.
7. All birds need a varied diet, not just seeds or pellets, but grains, beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables too.
8. Light exposure and sleep are very important to birds. Birds need at least 4 hours exposure to UVA and UVB rays from sunlight or full-spectrum lighting to provide them with vitamin D, which promotes vitamin A absorption, critical for upper respiratory health. Birds must have a minimum of 12 hours of sleep each night.
9. Birds are very sensitive to air quality. Unlike humans, a bird replaces nearly all the air in its lungs with each breath. Because no residual air is left in the lungs during the ventilation cycle of birds, they transfer more oxygen and more pollutants during each breath. Birds should never be exposed to tobacco smoke, chemical fumes (hairspray, cleaners, air fresheners, etc.), or Teflon coated materials. Exposure to some toxic inhalants can cause immediate death; chronic exposure to other toxic can lead to premature death.
10. Birds need veterinary care from an avian veterinarian that specializes in birds. Proper vet care for birds can be expensive. Your vet will probably recommend a complete examination and diagnostic tests when you first acquire your bird; in addition, she/he will probably recommend annual well-bird examinations. Smaller birds require the same vet care and regular examinations

This text was prepared by Monica Engebretson, Grassroots Coordinator, Animal Protection Institute. Please copy, distribute and utilize this document in its entirety for the benefit of all companion birds in your care.

Welcome Home

Congratulations on your new family addition!

This booklet has been compiled with the contributions of many bird owners, their years of experience, trials and tribulations and my own research as a bird owner.

It is a guide to help you and your new addition adjust to your new lives together and hopefully provide a good foundation of information to assist you both. If you already are a bird owner this booklet may provide some new tips or tricks. Try some of the suggestions, use the information with care and an open mind and have some fun!



World Parrot Birds as Your New Family Member?

Kristi Flemming Behaviour Consultant~ Good Friday Avian Behaviour Services

Question:

With the closure of the WPR in Coombs, BC, birds returning to previous owners and/or available for adoption, what could be the three most critical issues we as caregivers will face in reintroducing them from a free flight, limited human imprinted environment back into cages and our homes?

Answer:

With the closure of the WPR in BC, hundreds of parrots in need, and with most other sanctuaries being filled to over-capacity (a sad statement on the reality that many new parrot owners are unprepared for the significant commitment these amazing animals require), adoption into homes may be the only viable option. These birds will face multiple challenges from a significant change in lifestyle as they transition from a feathered flock to a human one.

Fear is the first and foremost issue. What do they fear? How do we prevent triggering that fear? To the trained eye, parrots exhibit their emotions very clearly through body language. Flying away or attacking are usually the "end-stage" responses to fear, but more subtle signs, such as eye pinning, feathers raising, or leaning away often precede these more obvious signs. These signals should be used to "map" a parrot's sense of the "safe-zone" - a starting point for desensitizing parrots to new items and people. The cage should always be a safe-zone, and have areas of the cage covered, where birds can hide from other birds/people. This empowers the parrot to make the kind of avoidance choices available to them in the wild. Respecting fear and empowering choice will shape a bird's "first impressions" of their new home.

Prior to the new bird coming home, the family should discuss setting boundaries. What can/can't they do to make them acceptable members of the home? Discuss together what behaviours you want the birds to perform, and what potential behaviours are unacceptable. These lists will vary from home to home, but should be rooted in realistic goals. When thinking about unacceptable behaviours, try to focus on what acceptable replacement behaviours can be taught instead. These goals can then be tackled using positive reinforcement training.

Finally, setting long-term training goals for proper socialization and the development of foundation skills can be implemented. All parrots need to engage in certain "foundation" behaviours to be successful. Bathing, exercise, sleep patterns, toy play, foraging, and socializing with the "flock" are all foundation skills. Stepping up, stepping down, stepping onto a hand-held perch and target training are also important skills, and using positive reinforcement, will help with the training of the foundation skills.

A Parrot's Bill of Rights

By Stewart A. Metz, M.D., Indonesian Parrot Project (Reprinted by permission)

Get to know about parrots before you bring me home

I am not a domesticated pet like a dog or cat. I still have the spirit of the jungle in me. I have special needs which you may find it hard to fill. Please don't learn these too late for my well-being. And please don't acquire one of my cousins' wild from the jungle—it will jeopardize his survival and well-being, and that won't be a party for you either!

Give me the largest home possible

I am used to flying through rainforests or savannas. I have given up this great gift for your pleasure. At the very least, give me enough room to flap my wings and exercise. And, I need toys for my amusement and wood to chew. Otherwise, I might confuse your home with the forest and its trees.

Give me a nutritious diet

I need a wide variety of fresh and nutritious foods, even if they take time to prepare. I cannot survive on seeds alone and be healthy. Take time to learn what my needs and preferences are.

Let me have a social life

I am a gregarious flock animal, but I am not one of you. I need lots of socialization to learn how to interact with you as well as my siblings. I also need to have adequate quality time with you every day—no matter what your schedule or other needs are. I am a living, feeling creature. Above all, I need to be able to have complete trust in you and count on your predictability in looking after me—every day.

Let me be clean

I may like to drop food or even throw it, but I need meticulous cleanliness to be healthy. My skin itches without frequent showers, the barbs of my feathers won't seal if they become oily and, worst of all, I may become ill if my food or water is not always sanitary.

I need my own doctor

You may not understand my physiology and therefore you may not recognize it early on when I get sick. And, it may be too late when you do, because I hide my illnesses. (Remember what I said about my being an animal of the jungle, where there are lots of predators.) And I need an avian vet—a specialist. (No HMOs for me please.) If you can't afford one, perhaps you shouldn't have taken me home.

Please don't punish me

Just as I don't always understand your peculiarities, you may not understand mine. I don't TRY to get into trouble—remember, a house is not the jungle. If I do screw up, don't yell at me and never hit me. I have sensitive ears and I may never trust you again if you strike me. Hands are sometimes scary things to us. (Why in the world would you not be zygodactylous like us?) Even more importantly, we don't learn by punishment. We are gentle creatures who only strike back to protect ourselves; we learn through patience and love.

Speak my language

I know you get upset with me when I knock over my water bowl, throw food, scream, or pluck my feathers. I don't do these things to annoy you. I am probably trying to tell you something (perhaps that I am hurting, lonely, or sad). Learn to speak MY (body) language. Remember that I, alone of all creatures on this planet, learn to speak yours!

See me as an individual

I am a unique and feeling being. No two of us are alike. Please don't be disappointed in me if I don't talk like you wanted or can't do the tricks that your friend's parrot can do. But if you pay close attention to me (and I always empathize with you, whether you know), I will show you a unique being who will give you so much more than talking and playing. Give me a chance to show you who I am; I think you'll find the effort worth it. And remember, I am not an ornament. I do not enhance ANY living room decor. And I am not a status symbol—if you use me as such, I might nip at your up-turned nose!

Share your love with me

Above all, please remember that you are my Special Person. I put all my trust and faith in you. We parrots are used to being monogamous. (No bar-hopping for us!) So please don't go away for long periods or give me away—that would be a sadness from which I may never recover. If that seems to be asking a lot, remember, you could have learned about my needs before bringing me home. Even having a baby or taking a new job isn't a fair reason—you made a commitment to me FIRST. And if you think that you must leave me because you might die, provide for me forever after you leave. I may live to a ripe old age, but I can't provide for myself. Remember I'm in a small cage amongst people who are not of my blood.

Your rights

You have lots of rights, but I can only assure one. and that is, if you treat me the way I described above, I will reward you with unwavering love, humor, knowledge, beauty, dedication, and a sense of wonder and awe you haven't felt since you were a child. When you took me home, you became my Flock Leader, indeed, my entire universe—for life. I would hang the moon and stars for you if I could. We are one in Heart and Soul.

The First Few Days

Once you and your bird are home, he or she may immediately make himself at home or they may be a little stressed. The following should help you both through the transition period.

If you have other birds it is suggested that you quarantine your new family member for at least 45 days. In other words, take care that your new bird does not come in close contact with your other birds. This will help safeguard the health of the birds and also gives you time to examine the new member for any symptoms of illness. This time also allows the bird time to adjust to the new environment, get used to all the new noises and activity.

Please see the section [*New Additions & Other Pets*](#) for further information.

Try to keep noise and excitement to a minimum around the bird for the first few days to help them get used to you and your family. Some birds adjust to new surroundings quickly while others need to be monitored carefully to ensure they don't get too stressed.

It is normal for a bird to not eat or drink as much as normal the first few hours but watch this does not continue. It is helpful to cover the cage on three sides and the top with a sheet to reduce the bird's stress and help stay calm. You can gradually remove the sheet for short periods of time until you see that the bird feels more comfortable in his new surroundings.



Cage and Environment

Size

A cage is your bird's emotional haven and is there for its security. With cages there is generally one rule: the bigger the better. Your new family member should be housed in a cage large enough so the bird can stretch its wings out fully without touching the bars of the cage or hanging toys in all directions.

The bar spacing is important; the spaces should not be wide enough for a bird to stick his head through or serious injuries can occur. Ideally there should be both horizontal and vertical bars. This helps birds to climb (not applicable to finches, canaries etc) and provides much needed exercise. Square or rectangular cages are usually easier to clean and safer for the pet. **Round cages are never recommended.**

Cages with a bottom tray and protective grate are safer (bird cannot walk in droppings, food) and easier to keep clean. Line the tray with paper to make clean up easier. Do not use colored paper brown paper bags, paper towels and black and white newsprint works well and must be changed daily. Do not use kitty litter, ground corncob or crushed walnut shells to line the tray. These materials can hold bacteria or grow mold and can be fatal if ingested. Also these materials do not allow you to view your birds' droppings.

Place the cage in an area where the bird will have an opportunity for social inter-action with the family (after quarantine). Birds are flock animals and need social interaction. Do not place the cage in an out-of-the-way area away from the main family activities such as the laundry room or spare bedroom. It is best to avoid the kitchen or the bathroom; cooking odors, sinks full of water, open toilets and hot stoves are all dangers to be avoided.



The cage should be located in a well-lit area with one side against a wall, away from windows and doors that open and out of the reach of other pets. Since birds are prey in the wild they have a strong natural sense of vulnerability. Care should be taken to make sure it is not situated where the bird can become overheated (hot sun or heat vents) or chilled (drafts). Don't forget about ceiling fans; even the slowest fan can cause severe damage to an unsuspecting flying bird.

Lighting

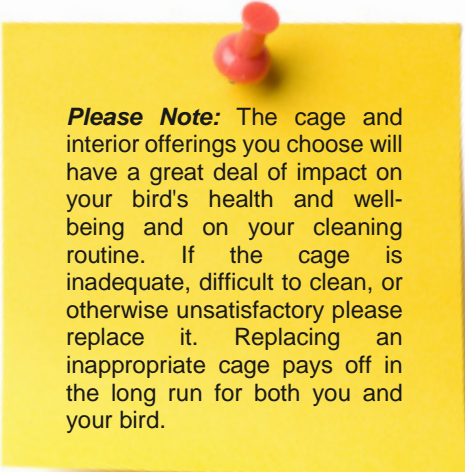
Birds should not be kept in dim lit areas. Full-spectrum lighting is recommended as this helps birds utilize the calcium and vitamin D in their diets and helps keep feathers in top condition. During warm weather you can take your bird outside in a cage for short periods of sunlight but never leave the bird alone even for a minute and ensure it can move out of the sun to a shaded area inside the cage.

Cage Set-up

Perches

Birds stand on their feet 24/7. They need the right perches to keep their feet healthy. It is suggested that various types of perches be available for your bird to stand on including natural wood perches and cotton rope perches. Please see the section [Toxic & Non-Toxic Plants, Trees, Substances](#) for further information. **Do not use sandpaper perch covers.** These can sand the skin right off the bird's feet and is also harmful if ingested.

Make sure the diameter of any perch is appropriate for the size of the bird. Toes should wrap around 2/3 to 3/4 of the perch. One perch for toes to wrap around and one to rest feet flat is excellent.

A yellow rectangular sticky note is pinned to the page with a red pushpin. The note contains a "Please Note" section with text regarding cage and offering choices.

Please Note: The cage and interior offerings you choose will have a great deal of impact on your bird's health and well-being and on your cleaning routine. If the cage is inadequate, difficult to clean, or otherwise unsatisfactory please replace it. Replacing an inappropriate cage pays off in the long run for both you and your bird.

Wash and thoroughly dry any perch before placing in the cage. Situate perches so that food cannot be soiled by bird droppings and the bird can easily reach the dishes. Try varying the heights of the perches to encourage your bird to climb around the cage, if they are parrot species. Finches and canaries like to fly so place perches wide and across from each other to encourage flying.

Many birds prefer to sleep toward the top and rear of the cage. Be sure the highest perch is the most comfortable. This is where you can put a cotton rope perch. This is inviting to the bird and offers a comfortable and secure resting spot. Some birds prefer a top corner for sleeping and resting - just place a perch on an angle across the sides with enough room to turn around. If placing a blanket or sheet over the cage for night time, try to use one similar in colour to the bird; this helps with the sense of safety and security.

Cleaning

Grates and perches should be well cleaned regularly and preferably disinfected. Care should be taken when chemically cleaning and disinfecting to make sure that the chemicals used are non-toxic. Plain old vinegar and water is safe and effective. Another good disinfectant that is non-toxic to birds is a product called Quatsyl usually available through your vet. Use as directed and rinse well.

Other essentials

Another important part of your cage furniture is actually a diet item - a mineral block. Be sure to allow space for this important supplement when you set up. The shelter uses Manu blocks.

A low sided dish of water for bathing is also recommended although this addition depends on whether you provide baths out of the cage – i.e. showering with your bird or misting the bird with a water spray bottle. Consider cage size again if you plan on adding a bathing dish. Please see the section [Baths](#) for further information.

Toys are also required for most parrot species. These highly intelligent animals require more stimulation than most pets to prevent boredom, feather destruction etc. We recommend destructible wooden or wood-like chew toys and/or non-destructible toys made of acrylic, all appropriate to your birds size. Having extra toys to rotate and move around the cage is also pleasing to your bird. We also advise that you try a foraging station. This will help keep your bird busy during the day while simulating natural behavioral patterns. Please see the section [Toys](#) and [The Importance of Foraging](#) for further information.

One other consideration for parrot species is a space outside of the cage for playtime or just for a change of scene. A climbing tree, species specific play gym or your own “invented” safe play area can help prevent boredom. Look for products with secure footing for your bird that is easy to clean. Try a pesticide free limb from a nontoxic tree secured in a well-weighted Christmas tree stand! Avoid products with nails or staples.

Food dishes

There are a number of feeding dishes available in a wide variety of styles. Stainless steel is easy to clean and won't break down over time. Some cages come equipped with dishes; ensure these are of appropriate size for the size of your bird. It is best to provide a dish for pellets, soft fresh food, a treat dish and another for water. Place bowls where your bird can reach them but avoid placing them where they can get soiled by droppings.

Food dishes should be kept clean. If you won't eat out of the dish, the bird shouldn't either.


Water dish or water bottle



*Hint:
Keep a few extra's on hand for changing. While one set is being washed another can be placed in the cage right away.*

The water source for your bird can be a place for fungal and bacterial growth. Many birds dunk their food before eating it, turning it into birdie soup. A water bottle is excellent if you have a bird that likes to make a mess of its water.

However, water bottles can grow bacteria faster than dishes if not cleaned regularly and properly. Plastic tends to develop bacteria faster than glass as it is a porous surface. Please be sure monitor your bird when first introducing a water bottle and to make sure the bird does not become dehydrated.



*Hint:
To save time on cleaning cage crates, try placing paper over the bottom grate. Only use this method if your bird is not a shredder or hormonal. Paper shredding can encourage the behaviour. At cleaning time, just lift off the soiled top layer and dispose of it.*

Here are my suggestions on how to introduce a water bottle to your bird:

1 - Install bottle and with your bird in the cage show your bird the tip and where the water comes out - touch it so they know it is safe (there is a stainless steel ball the birds pushes up with its tongue to get the water).

2 - Mark the bottle level. If you see your bird drinking from the bottle, then remove the water from the bowl. If you do not see your bird drinking from the bottle, then check your mark on the level - once this is going down, remove the water from the bowl.

3 - In rare cases, you will need to remove the water from the bowl and only put in a couple of times a day (just to make sure your bird is getting water in the event the bird will not use the water bottle - in 8 years I have never heard of a bird refusing to drink from a bottle).

If you won't drink the water, your bird shouldn't either. Modern pellet diets are very drying to a bird; they need lots of clean water to properly digest them.



Diet

Humans need a variety of foods for a fully balanced diet. Birds do too. To feed a bird a diet of only seed is like feeding yourself only one kind of food all the time.

Every species of parrot has different dietary needs. Do as much research as you can to better understand the needs of your bird and talk to your avian vet. Generally, a balanced diet includes high-quality pellets, fresh fruit and vegetables and fresh clean water every day. Some birds require an added mineral source (i.e. Manu block), some seeds and nuts as well as species-specific amounts of protein (more protein and calcium for egg-layers) need to be considered.

Some kinds of birds have very unique diets. Lories are nectar-eating and are known to be prone to iron storage disease so the high-iron foods intake must be low. Fig parrots need to have figs. Mynahs and other soft bills have specialized diets often requiring insects. We recommend lots of research, ask questions and plenty of trying are required to ensure your birds health is maintained. **Be aware of poisonous foods and plants.** Please see the section [Dangers, Hazards and Toxins](#) for further information.

When first bringing your bird home, we suggest you maintain the same diet that your bird had previously. Slowly make changes by offering pellets, vegetables, fruit and organic seed. If your avian veterinarian suggests that the diet be modified, do so under their direction over a period of weeks or months. Until your bird recognizes the new food as "food," it can lose too much weight which can cause further health issues. Care needs to be taken that the bird has sufficient dropping's which indicate that it is eating enough.

Pellet Diets

There are a wide variety of pellet diets on the market. Two brands we recommend are Roudybush or Harrisons, both available through reputable pet supply stores or your avian vet. You may have to try several over long periods of time before you find the one that is right for your bird. Pellets should be placed in a clean bowl by the perch the bird uses the most and be available all the time. Many experts suggest the diet contain about 75% pellets or more. Pellets are a complete balanced source of nutrition.

10 Tips to tempt Your Bird to Eat Pellets

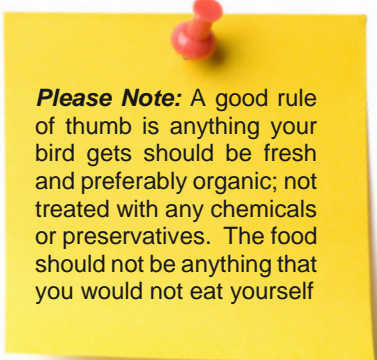
1. Many bird food companies offer free samples. Try several different brands of pellets, rather than settling on just one. Your bird may find a favourite right away.
2. Combine cooked pasta, a favourite strained baby food (like carrots or applesauce), and stir in a few pellets.
3. Pulverize some pellets before adding them to a soft food, so that your bird can become accustomed to their taste.
4. Push a pellet into a soft, cooked pinto or kidney bean.
5. Push a pellet into a small ball of soft, low fat mozzarella cheese, sweet potato, cooked carrot or whole wheat bread.
6. Use one of the doctored foods from suggestions 4 and 5 to fill a small raw or cooked pasta shell.
7. Daily, mix pellets into your bird's regular diet. It will be more likely to eat foods if they are familiar.
8. Spend time with your bird while it eats. Your presence will be enjoyed, as will any foods it eats while you are there. Praise your bird when it picks up a pellet or eats one.
9. Make a tiny sandwich of whole wheat bread and peanut butter. Insert a pellet or two before offering it to your bird.
10. Eat a couple of pellets, and behave as though you really enjoy them. The entertainment factor alone is worth it, especially if you invite friends or family to join you.

Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables need to be washed thoroughly. Many fruits do not offer adequate nutrition; some are mainly sugar and water; i.e. apples or grapes. The same nutritional facts that apply to humans, apply to birds, dark coloured flesh of vegetables or fruit are generally the most nutritious; try squash, carrots, broccoli, yams or sweet potatoes, various cooked beans or spinach. Try fresh frozen vegetables, cooked then cooled before serving. Try adding fruit or veggie pieces clipped on a cage bar or hung on a bird specific skewer. Variety and fun is the spice of life. Chop it up, mix it up or clip it up.

Seeds and Nuts

Seeds and nuts can be served but are considered treats and should not be the main source of food or nutrition. Both of these tend to be high in fat and low in nutrition. An all seed diet is NOT healthy for your bird for its long term health! Bird also tends to choose only what it likes and leaves the rest for the trash, therefore only getting some nutrients. It's best to consult your avian veterinarian about what portions are suitable for a good balanced diet.

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Please Note: A good rule of thumb is anything your bird gets should be fresh and preferably organic; not treated with any chemicals or preservatives. The food should not be anything that you would not eat yourself

Carbohydrates and Proteins

Parrots usually like pasta and or beans. There are commercial pasta/bean mixes available that are healthy and generally accepted by pet birds. Plain healthy cereals or healthy rice can be added to your veggie mix in small proportions. As with human diets, moderation is the key.

Vitamins and Supplements

If a bird is on a good pellet-based diet these are seldom needed. Extra calcium may be important for African Grey's and laying hens. **If you have any concerns in this area, please discuss it with an Avian Veterinarian, before adding vitamins or supplements to your bird's diet.**

Toxic Foods and Fumes

Most of what we eat can be safely eaten in small quantities by your bird but please use common sense. Fatty and salty foods are not good for either of you! Keep your bird away from avocado, coffee, chocolate, alcohol, microwave popcorn, fruit seeds or pits. A bird has **very** delicate lungs. **PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE** around the bird! Many common houseplants or products are toxic to birds. Please see the section below for further information.

Grit

Parrots chew their food therefore they do not need grit in their diets. Ask your vet for further information regarding your bird's needs.

A Sampling of Simple Healthy Recipes

Birdie Cornbread

Mix the cornbread mix as directed on the package. Add an extra egg (egg shells also) and 1 c. frozen mixed vegetables. Bake as directed on package. Cool. Cut into serving size pieces. Freeze in small freezer bags until needed. Defrost and serve.

Parrot Muffins / Bread

- 2 cups Whole Wheat Flour
- 2 cups Corn Meal Flour
- 3 or 4 eggs with shells blended into small pieces
- 1 tablespoon Baking Powder
- 1 large cooked & peeled & mashed dark orange sweet potato
- 1 whole banana mashed
- 1/2 cup cooked beans mashed
- (try a variety i.e. kidney, garbanzo, pinto etc)
 - 2-3 cups fresh veggies &/or fruit chopped (broccoli, peas, beans, berries, cranberries, peppers, carrots and carrot tops, yam – look what is in the fridge)
- 1/2 cup of chopped nuts (walnuts, sunflower etc.)

Optional:

1. 2 jars of baby food (organic vegetable or fruit) – this helps keep the recipe moist
2. Pellets – Harrison or Roudybush or other
3. Other ingredients your bird likes

Mix all ingredients using a large bowl and a stiff spoon. Cook in low sided baking pans greased with an organic oil. Bake at 325 for 30-40 minutes – monitor the bread as it can burn easily. Can be cut into your bird's favorite size and freeze

Parrot-dise Healthy Mix

- ½ - 1 cup cooked whole grains - i.e. quinoa, amaranth, brown rice, spelt, wheat, oats, rye, etc. Only whole grains - no white rice or pearled barley
- 1 medium sweet potato or yam, cooked and mashed (can be micro waved or boiled or baked)
- 1 cup thawed frozen or fresh peas
- 1 zucchini, raw, chopped or grated
- ½ cup broccoli, stem and florets, raw, chopped
- 1 carrot, raw, chopped or grated
- ½ apple, chopped or grated
- 6-10 raw almonds, chopped fine (about 2 Tbsp)
- 1-2 Tbsp pumpkin seeds, chopped fine
- Abba Green or Harrison's Mash

Combine:

The mashed yam with the grains, coating the grains with yam. Add remaining ingredients. Add any of the other ingredients listed below, but use no more than 2 cups of added ingredients. Only add 1 of the protein options (beans, tofu, egg, sprouts) - this mixture should be mostly veggies. Using a food processor the chopping saves time. Mix well. If it seems too moist, sprinkle in Abba green or Harrison's Mash until consistency of thick cooked porridge. Use within 3 days or freeze. This can be frozen in ice cube trays or pat mixture onto a cookie sheet, cutting into appropriate sizes for your birds before freezing. After freezing, place in freezer containers or freezer bag for storage.

Suggestions:

Keep a jar of mixed, quick cooking grains (i.e. bulgur, wheat, quinoa, amaranth, or lentils) and cook a few tablespoons in the microwave at a time. Raw vegetables are more nutritious than cooked, so use raw if you can. Organic fruits and vegetables are preferred – especially when buying items possibly high in pesticide residues i.e. grapes, leafy greens.

Options (just about endless):

Consider the size of your bird and chop or grate or peel accordingly cooked squashes (butternut, hubbard, winter etc.), parsley or other dark greens like kale, spinach, beet greens, chard, carrot tops. Lettuces, like romaine don't hold up well due to their water content but can be offered fresh. Try fresh coconut (most store-bought pre-packaged contains sugar and/or sulfites so don't use it), cooked cranberries, mango, blueberries, grapes (red or black grapes with seeds are the most nutritious), papaya (they can have these seeds too!), melon, (orange ones are more nutritious, seeds are o.k.), kiwi, fresh figs, cooked beans (lentils, soybeans, kidney or garbanzo, black beans, etc). Canned beans have salt and other additives that aren't good for birds, tofu, hardboiled or scrambled egg with shells, sesame or flax seeds.



Health

General

Observe your bird, learn its habits and what is "normal" for your bird. If your bird acts listless, has feathers fluffed for long periods of time, sits at the bottom of the cage, has nostril discharge or has irregular droppings get to a vet immediately! The following guidelines will help keep your bird healthy.

Dangers, Hazards and Toxins

A Word to The Wise: "Non-toxic" does not mean "not poisonous". Children's toys are nontoxic, but we do not offer them a spoonful of Crayons when they have been good. If your bird has an odd, ravenous fascination with one of your plants, keep that plant out of your bird's reach.

Teflon is Deadly!

Birds can die within minutes of a Teflon pan overheating. At normal temperatures it is safe, but when it gets overheated it emits a poisonous gas that we can't smell. Some home heating appliances have Teflon or other coatings on the wires to prevent corrosion before sale. These MUST be "broken in" before being used around the birds. Using the "self-clean" function on a self-cleaning oven around a bird can be deadly. Heavy cooking fumes and burnt foods are also potentially dangerous.

Cleaning Chemicals

Use mild soaps and detergents. Keep birds elsewhere when cleaning carpets, painting or using strong cleaners. Don't use aerosols or chemicals such as Febreze, air fresheners, hair sprays, or perfumes near or around your bird.

Creams

Never apply anything oily or greasy to your bird's feathers. Oil mats the feathers and causes the bird to chill due to losing the proper insulating effects of the feathers.

Chewing on

Do not let your bird chew on paint, drapery weights, solder, foil, stained glass, fishing sinkers, coins, galvanized metal, zippers, or any other items containing toxic lead and/or zinc.

Mites

Don't use "mite protectors". They have been scientifically proven to be carcinogenic (cancer promoting). Mites are actually quite rare in pet birds anyways.

Water

Watch out for open containers of water, sinks, tubs, toilets. Birds like water but can't swim.

Power

Keep your bird away from fans, heaters, anything with an electrical cords.

Bug spray is designed to kill

Keep it away from your bird.

Scented candles and room fresheners

These can be very dangerous. Do not use them anywhere around your birds.

Other pets

Other household pets may seem to get along with the bird but cats and dogs eat birds naturally in the wild and their instincts may take over. They **MUST BE SUPERVISED** when near one another. **DO NOT PUT TWO BIRDS TOGETHER IN ONE CAGE** unless you have seen them play together well for a very long time, and **ESPECIALLY** don't do it if the cage belongs to a bird that feels it is "my cage." **Never put a smaller bird with a larger bird.** Birds will pick on one another and will fight with one another. They are very territorial and their play together **MUST** be carefully supervised. There are many horror stories of one bird killing another or chewing off another's beak – both true! While the size of the bird is definitely an issue, do not assume that because a bird is small it cannot harm a bigger bird.

Disease

We were all worried during the bird flu outbreak in 2003/04. It doesn't hurt to stay informed of basic hygiene routines. Good record keeping and cleanliness habits can save a lot of heartache! Go to your avian vet if you have any concerns. Don't wear the same shoes into your house if you have visited a zoo, a poultry farm, or the Greyhaven sanctuary; change your clothes and wash your hands. It helps to use an unscented gel hand disinfectant that is alcohol based & evaporates quickly. Don't let your birds lick it. When quarantining birds, watch where the air flows especially if you have other birds. Never put wild birds together with domestic birds.





ARROT
RESOURCE
CENTRE



Toxic & Non-Toxic Plants, Trees, Substances

This is a general information guide; we assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any other inconsistencies. If in doubt – avoid and consult your avian veterinarian.

SAFE BRANCHES	SAFE FOLIAGE/PLANTS	HOUSEHOLD TOXINS	TOXIC PLANTS
<p>The following materials are not safe if toxic chemicals of any sort have been sprayed on them. Before installing them in any cage, scrub all branches with a non-toxic disinfectant (such as diluted chlorine bleach), then rinse and dry well. Or heat in the oven.</p> <p>ASH CITRUS (ANY) CRAB APPLE DOGWOOD ELM EUCALYPTUS FIR (BALSAM, DOUGLAS, WHITE) GUAVA MADRONA MAGNOLIA MANZANITA NUT (EXCEPT CHESTNUT & OAK) PAPAYA PINE PRUNE RIBBONWOOD SASSAFRAS SPRUCE (BLACK, NORWAY, RED, WHITE) THURLOW VINE MAPLE WHITE POPLAR WILLOWS: (GOAT, PUSSY & WEEPING)</p>	<p>ACACIA AFRICAN VIOLET ALOE AMERICAN BITTERSWEET AUTUMN OLIVE BABY'S TEARS BAMBOO BARBERRY BEECH (AMERICAN, EUROPEAN) BEGONIA BLADDERNUT BLUEBERRY BOSTON FERN BOUGAINVILLEA CHICKWEED CHRISTMAS CACTUS CISSUS (KANGAROO VINE) COLEUS COMFREY CORALBERRY CORN PLANT COTONEASTER FIREHORN CRABAPPLE DANDELION DOGWOOD DONKEY TAIL DRACAENA VARIETIES ELDERBERRY (COMMON, EUROPEAN, RED) FERNS: (BIRD'S NEST, BOSTON, MAIDENHAIR) FIGS: (CREEPING, RUBBER, FIDDLE LEAF, LAUREL LEAF) GARDENIA GRAPE IVY HEN AND CHICKENS HERBS (OREGANO, ROSEMARY, THYME, PARSLEY) HUCKLEBERRY IMPATIENS JADE PLANT KALANCHOE MAGNOLIA MARIGOLDS MONKEY PLANT MOTHER-IN-LAW NASTURTIUM NATAL PLUM NORFOLK ISLAND PINE ORCHIDS PALMS: (ARECA, DATE, FAN, LADY, PARLOUR, HOWEIA, KENTIA, PHOWNIX, SAGO)</p>	<p>AEROSOL PROPELLANT AIR FRESHNERS/SPRAYS ALCOHOLIC DRINKS AMMONIA ANTIFREEZE ANT SYRUP or PASTE ARSENIC ASBESTOS AUTO PRODUCTS BATHROOM CLEANERS BLEACH BORIC ACID CAMPHOPHENIQUE CARBON DIOXIDE/MONOXIDE CARPET CLEANERS CARPET FRESHENERS CHARCOAL FLUIDS CHLORDANE CHLORINE CIGARETTE SMOKE CLINITEST TABLETS COPPER/BRASS CLEANER CORN & WART REMOVER DEODORANTS DETERGENTS DIAZINON DISINFECTANTS DRAIN CLEANERS EPOXY GLUE FELT TIP MARKERS FLEA PRODUCTS FLOOR CLEANERS/POLISH FORMALDEHYDE FURNITURE POLISH GARDEN SPRAYS GASOLINE GUN CLEANERS HAIR DYES & SPRAYS HERBICIDES INSECTICIDES IODINE KEROSENE KEYS (LEAD BASED) LIGHTER FLUID LYE MATCHES (MATCH TIPS) MELALEUCA OIL MODEL CEMENT MOTHBALLS MURIATIC ACID MUSHROOMS NAILPOLISH/REMOVER NAPHTHA PRODUCTS NITROGEN DIOXIDE</p>	<p>ARUM LILY AMARYLLIS ARALIA ARROWHEAD VINE AUTUMN CROCUS AUSTRALIAN FLAMETREE AUSTRALIAN UMBRELLA TREE AVOCADO AZALEA BALSAM PEAR BANE BERRY BEANS: (CASTOR, HORSE, FAVA, BROAD, GLORY, SCARLET RUNNER, MESCAL, NAVY, PREGATORY BIRD OF PARADISE BISHOP'S WEED BLACK LAUREL BLACK LOCUST BLEEDING HEART OR DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES BLOODROOT BLUEBONNET BLUEGREEN ALGAE BOXWOOD BRACKEN FERN BUCKTHORN BULB FLOWERS: (AMARYLLIS, DAFFODIL, NARCISSUS, HYACINTH & IRIS) BURDOCK BUTTERCUP CACAO CAMEL BUSH CASTOR BEAN CALADIUM CANA LILY (CALLA LILY) CARDINAL FLOWER CHALICE (TRUMPET VINE) CHERRY TREE CHINA BERRY TREE CHRISTMAS CANDLE CLEMATIS (VIRGINIA BOWER) CLIVIA COCKLEBUR COFFEE (SENNA) COFFEE BEAN (RATTLEBUSH, RATTLE BOX & COFFEEWEED CORAL PLANT CORIANDER CORNCOCKLE COYOTILLO COWSLIP CUTLEAF PHILODENDRON</p>

SAFE FOLIAGE/PLANTS	HOUSEHOLD TOXINS	TOXIC PLANTS	TOXIC PLANTS
PEPPEROMIA PETUNIA PITTOSPORUM POTHOS PRAYER PLANT PURPLE PASSION PYRACENTHA RASPBERRY ROSE RUBBER PLANT SCHEFFLERA SENSITIVE PLANT SNAKE PLANT SNOWBERRY SPIDER PLANT SWEDISH IVY THISTLE VELVET NETTLE VIBUMUM WANDERINGJEW WAX PLANT WHITE CLOVER WHITE POPLAR YUCCA ZEBRA PLANT ZINNIA	OVEN CLEANER OVERHEATED NON-STICK COOKWARE PAINT & THINNER PERFUME PERMANENTS (HAIR) PESTICIDES PHOTO SOLUTIONS PINE OIL PROPANE RX DRUGS RODENTICIDES RUBBING ALCOHOL SCENTED CANDLES SHAVING LOTION SHELLAC SHOE POLISH SMOKE (ALL) SNAIL BAIT SPOT REMOVERS SPRAY STARCH STRYCHNINE SULFURIC ACID SUPER GLUE SUNTAN LOTIONS/OILS SURGICAL ACRYLICS TEA TREE OIL TEFLON TURPENTINE WAX WEED KILLERS WINDOW CLEANERS WOOD PRESERVATIVES	DAFFODIL DAPHNE DATURASTRAMONIUM (ANGEL'S TRUMPET) DEADLY AMANITA DEATH CAMUS DELPHINIUM DEVIL'S IVY DIEFFENBACHIA (DUMB CANE) EGGPLANT ELDERBERRY ELEPHANT EAR (TARO) ENGLISH IVY ERGOT EUCALYPTUS (DRIED, DYED OR TREATED IN FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS) EUONYMUS (SPINDLE TREE) EUPHORBIA CACTUS FALSE HELLEBORE FLAME TREE FELT PLANT (MATERNITY, AIR & PANDA PLANTS) FIG (WEEPING) FIRE THORN FLAMINGO FLOWER FOUR O'CLOCK FOXGLOVE GLOTTIDIUM GOLDEN CHAIN GRASS: (JOHNSON, SORGHUM, SUDAN & BROOM CORN) GROUND CHERRY HEATHS: (KALMIA, LEUCOTHO, PEIRES, RHODODENDRON, MTN. LAUREL, BLACK LAUREL, ANDROMEDA & AZALEA) HELIOTROPE HEMLOCK: (POISON & WATER) HENBANE HOLLY HONEYSUCKLE HORSE CHESTNUT HORSE TAIL HOYA HYACINTH HYDRANGEA IRIS IVY: (ENGLISH & OTHERS) JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT JASMINE (JESSAMINE) JERUSALEM CHERRY JIMSONWEED UNIPER KY. COFFEE TREE LANTANA (RED SAGE) LARKSPUR LILY OF THE VALLEY LILY, ARUM LOBELIA LOCOWEED (MILK VETCH) LOCUSTS, BLACK/HONEY LORDS & LADIES (CUCKOOPINT) LUPINE MALANGA MARIJUANA (HEMP) MAYAPPLE (MANDRAKE)	MEXICAN BREADFRUIT MEXICAN POPPY MILKWEED, COTTON BUSH MISTLETOE MOCK ORANGE MONKSHOOD MOONSEED MORNING GLORY MTN. LAUREL MUSHROOMS, AMANITA MYRTLE NARCISSUS NETTLES NIGHTSHADES: (DEADLY, BLACK, GARDEN, WOODY, BITTERSWEET, EGGPLANT, JERUSALEM CHERRY) OAK OLEANDER ONION OXALIS PEACE LILY PERIWINKLE PHILODENDRONS (SPLIT LEAF, SWISS CHEESE, HEART-LEAF) PIGWEED POINCIANA POINSETTIA POISON IVY POISON HEMLOCK POISON OAK: (WESTERN & EASTERN) POKEWEED POTATO SHOOTS POTHOS PRIVET PYRACANTHA RAIN TREE RANUNCULUS, BUTTERCUP RAPE RATTLEBOX, CROTALARIA RED MAPLE RED SAGE (LANTANA) RHUBARB LEAVES RHODODENDRONS ROSARY PEA SEEDS SAND BOX TREE SKUNK CABBAGE SORREL (DOCK) SNOW DROP SNOW ON THE MOUNTAIN SPURGES: (PENCIL TREE, SNOW-ON-MTN, CANDELABRA CROWN OF THORNS) STAR OF BETHLEHEM SWEET PEA SWISS CHEESE PLANT (MONSTERA) TANSY RAGWORT TOBACCO UMBRELLA PLANT VETCH: HAIRY/COMMON VIRGINIA CREEPER WATTLE WEEPING FIG WHITE CEDAR, CHINA BERRY WISTERIA YEWS YELLOW JASMINE

Bacterial Alert – “The Kiss of Death”

This article originally appeared in the Your Parrot Place Newsletter 04-01-2001. By Marilu Anderson, Bird Nutrition and Behavior Consultant

Our companion parrots LOVE our mouths – to kiss us, eat from our mouths, feed us, clean our teeth (they’re all budding dental hygienists!) We love them in return – and want to kiss them back, share our food, nuzzle, and bond. Unfortunately, the human mouth is a breeding ground for many nasty pathogens harmful to birds, especially bacteria, like E. Coli. I constantly remind people NOT to let their birdies come in contact with their saliva, yet it keeps happening.

I know how hard it is to resist a cute little beaker and exploring tongue on our face and lips, yet the consequences can be deadly. I’ve known people who routinely fed their unweaned baby parrots from their own mouths, or who pre-chewed nuts for their birds, or regularly let their buddy clean every single tooth in the evening as they sit and watch TV together. It seems innocuous enough – most of us don’t worry about catching anything from our birds and, in fact, there are very few diseases that WE can get from THEM.

But the danger we don’t think of is from US infecting THEM!! We humans have very different digestive systems and immune systems from our parrots, so many of the common bacteria in our mouths and bodies that don’t make us sick can be devastating to our birds. In fact, there’s not many places on earth nastier than the human mouth!! (Just ask a doctor about the seriousness of a human bite!) Last year, some friends of mine lost one of their beloved Quakers, and spent many months nursing the other one back to health, due to an E. Coli infection from human saliva.

Just recently, another friend discovered that her African Grey has a bacterial infection from – you guessed it! – SALIVA!! Fortunately, it’s mild, but he has to undergo a 10 day course of antibiotics nonetheless. So, please, please, PLEASE – resist the temptation to “swap spit” with your birdie – we can share our love in much safer ways that don’t put our loved ones at risk of illness, or even death!!

The Scoop about Poop

Your birds dropping are an important indicator of health. It is so important that we have included an article written by Chiara Petro that covers many important aspects...

Parrot Poopology 101

Parrots are flock animals, and as such, they hide their illnesses from the rest of the flock, until they no longer have the energy to hide them. They are the absolute masters at this, far better at hiding illness than any known mammal. It takes a lot of energy on their part to hide the signs of illness and much more energy to fight off whatever that illness is. By knowing your parrot well and the signs of illness, both subtle and obvious, you may just save the life of your parrot.

The one most significant sign of health or illness is your parrot's droppings. The one thing to remember with droppings is they will normally be inconsistent when healthy, when ill they will be consistently abnormal. Why are they inconsistent when healthy? Under ideal situations, the parrot is eating a varied diet of vegetables, fruits, legumes, pellets and some seed or nuts (if any at all).

What are the specific parts of parrots' droppings? There are three components to the droppings:

1. Feces: solid, tubular shaped, color varies dependent on diet
2. Urates: pasty white to cream color, irregularly shaped around the feces
3. Urine: clear liquid portion, no odor when healthy

If your parrot is eating seeds only, the fecal part of their droppings will be a bright green. If your parrot is eating pellets only, the fecal part will take on either the color of the pellet and if not colored, will be a brownish color. I can't tell you how many times one of my birds picked out just one color of their pellets which resulted in abnormally colored droppings and sent me flying to the veterinarian's office, especially the red colored pellets.

Other variations in your parrots' stool are diarrhea and polyuria. Diarrhea is not as common in parrots as polyuria. The difference between these two are: diarrhea produces soft unformed feces where polyuria produces extremely watery droppings but the feces remain normal in shape color and consistency. If, per chance your parrot exhibits diarrhea, please note that that is a symptom of disease. Polyuria is attributed to several causes: virus infection, stress, kidney disease, tumors, poisoning and food allergies to name a few.

Some common occurrences of an increased ratio of urine to feces would be stress and diet. Under unusual stress, the amount of urine to feces will increase. This is not unusual; it is a direct relation to the parrot's "fight or flight" reflex. When frightened, a parrot will evacuate all contents in its cloacal in preparation of flight. If your parrot has just eaten large amounts of fruits or vegetables, you will also note an increased amount of urine excreted. One last



scenario is hand fed babies. Hand-feeding formula has high water content and therefore, the ratio of urine to feces will be increased.

There's more to droppings than this. Color and texture can tell you even more about your parrot. The color of the feces tells you what your parrot has been eating, but it is also an indicator of disease. I'm sure we are all aware of blood in the droppings. However, blood present may not be red, but a tar-like color. Blood in the droppings may also be present in a hen ready to lay eggs. Blood doesn't necessarily have to be in the stools, but may be on the surface of the stools.

Other color variations in the fecal portion are pea green or chartreuse meaning the parrot has liver damage. A white or clay colored dropping with a popcorn-like appearance indicates digestive problems that may be attributed to the pancreas. Research is continuing on this particular type of dropping. Lumpy stools are an indication of incomplete digestion. Again, there are several different causes, including parasitic infections, ventriculus or proventriculus infections, or pancreatic problems. Passing of whole seeds is an indication of giardiasis, or hypermotile intestine (similar to spastic colon in humans). Macaws that pass whole seeds should be taken to the vet immediately as this may be an indication of macaw wasting syndrome.

There are variations in the urine and urate portions that an owner should pay attention to. Bloody urine can be an indication of lead poisoning or kidney disease. I'd like to note here, that this is also present in a bird with psittacosis. However, psittacosis is just one disease that causes liver damage. Green and/or yellow colored urine or urates is attributed to liver disease, although there are reports that a diet with high amounts of vitamin A may cause changes in the color of the urates.

As you can see, I haven't even touched on all the possibilities, but there is much to learn from our parrots' droppings. Check droppings daily, it is easiest to view them from paper towels or newspaper. Never use corncob bedding or other types of bedding material. For one thing, you can't properly view your parrot's droppings, and for another, these types of bedding material are good breeding grounds for bacteria and fungi. If you know what your parrots' droppings look like when it is healthy, you will be able to avoid major health problems. All of the indications I wrote above do require trips to your veterinarian.

Bibliography

The Parrot in Health and Illness by Bonnie Munro Doane

Avian Medicine: Principles and Application by Ritchie, Harrison & Harrison

When to call an Avian Veterinarian

Visit your avian vet once per year.

The following are guidelines for when an avian veterinarian should be called:

Birds that should be seen immediately:

- Cat or dog or other pet induced injury
- Broken blood feather
- Bleeding of any sort
- Seizures
- Lying on the bottom of the cage
- Labored breathing
- Head Trauma
- Fracture
- Open wound
- Ingestion of foreign body

Birds that should be seen very soon, call avian vet for advise on when:

- Abundant coughing or sneezing
- Eye, nasal or vent discharge
- Acute feather picking causing skin irritation or mutilation
- Watery droppings not due to recent food (i.e. fruit for breakfast can cause some watery droppings)
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme feather loss
- Fluffed appearance but bird is not just resting
- Newly acquired baby bird examination
- Postmortem examination (death)
- Vomiting (regurgitation can be an affectionate feeding response and not from illness)
- Frequent egg laying

Birds that may be seen at the owner's convenience:

- Annual physical examination
- Blood collection for DNA sexing or disease screening
- Chronic feather picking
- Micro chipping
- Base-line blood panel
- Wing, beak, nail trim

Sleep

Ensure your bird gets at least 10-12 hours of sleep every night. Covering the cage is not essential but may be necessary to make certain there enough hours of darkness and quiet rest time. Less than 10 or 12 hours of sleep can make your bird grumpy and irritable.

A severe lack of sleep can cause a bird to become ill.

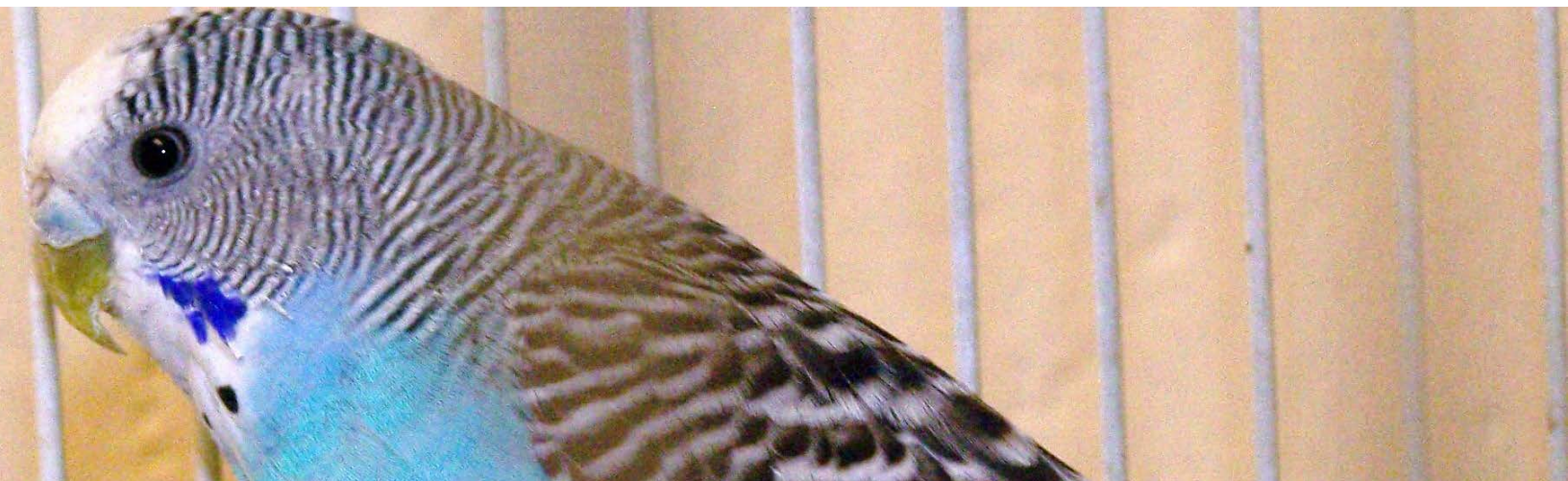
Sleeping cages can also be used. These are usually smaller cages or kennels that allow enough room for the bird to turn around in and are equipped with a comfortable perch, then placed in a quiet dark room for sleep. Some birds eat, play and stay in a roomy cage during the day and are moved to a suitably sized carrier for bedtime.

There are a few benefits to this; the bird is guaranteed undisturbed sleep without the noise of the evening including company, television etc. Also a smaller portable carrier can make for a quick escape should any emergency occur during the night. Please see the section [Out in a Hurry](#) for further information.

Exercise

Birds need regular exercise. Different species will have different needs. Exercise can come in a variety of forms and are usually species specific; supervised freedom out of the cage and walking around the floor (not for small birds), a play-gym with various levels of activity, a hanging wired rope (commonly known as a boing), swings made for parrots, stationary wing flapping and lots of climbing are a few suggestions.

Please also see the sections on [Toys](#) and [The Importance of Foraging](#) for further information.



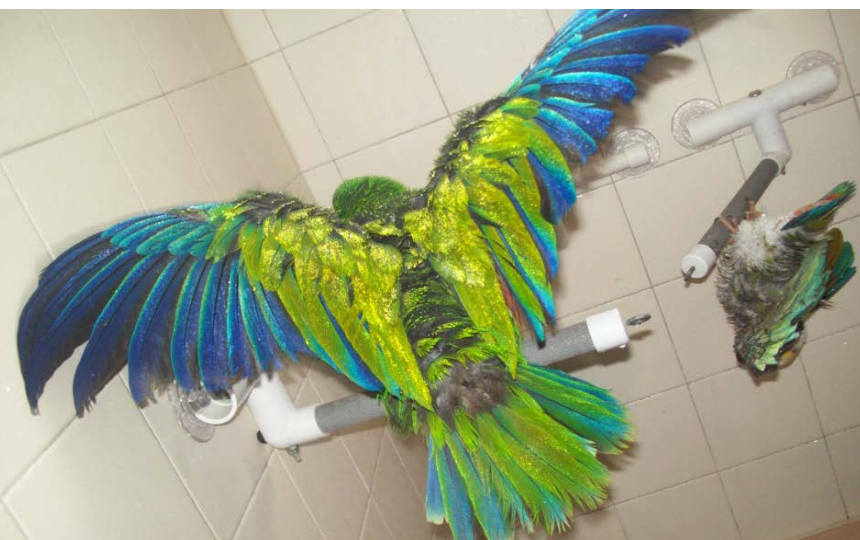
Baths

Bathing is important and birds require frequent baths to maintain good feather and skin condition. Bathing promotes healthy preening, keeps feathers clean and flexible and helps prevent dry skin. There are a number of bathing options for your bird. Provide a weighted pan of shallow water, take the bird into the shower or mist with a fine spray of warm water in a plant mister (not directly into the face but let the mist fall from above). If your bird does not seem to enjoy one type of bathing, try another. Be enthusiastic when your bird makes progress and making it a fun event will help your bird learn to enjoy a bath. NEVER use water as a punishment.

Wings and Nails

We recommend your bird's wings be clipped or trimmed. Trimmed flight feathers can tend to help the bird be more cooperative but more importantly this practice reduces the risk of escape or injury. Clipping wings is not painful and is simply adjusting the length of the flight feathers – like us getting a haircut. This should always be done by **someone with much experience** and practice. **Ask your avian vet.** New flight feathers will replace the trimmed feathers and the bird will be able to fly again after the next molt unless you have the bird trimmed again. Care must be taken not to clip a newly formed blood feather. Again, **ask your avian vet** for an appointment to have this done. Do not attempt to modify or change the clip by yourself. Clipping too severely can cause the bird to drop hard to the floor and it can injure itself. Make sure you have both wings clipped, never just one. Having only one wing clipped is dangerous to the bird and causes him to become off-balanced.

If a bird has always been fully flighted it should not be clipped until an appropriate action plan has been formulated between you and an Avian Veterinarian to determine what is best for the bird. The veterinarian may also suggest having the bird's nails trimmed during its checkup. Long nails can get caught in perches and toys and cause injuries.



Toys

Parrots are very intelligent and require much stimulation to stay mentally healthy. Remember in the wild these animals would spend hours foraging for food and searching for water or a sleeping roost. They need toys to occupy their day. Toys to play with, fight with, destroy and chew. If your bird appears to be frightened by a new toy do not leave it in the cage right away. Instead, place it near the cage for a while, to give your bird time to get used to it, gradually moving it closer until you can place it in the cage.

Many toys or toy parts can be dangerous, particularly if you have a very active bird. You must get to know your bird to ensure the toys they like are safe for them. For example, rope toys can fray and wrap around toes or necks. Nylon or plastic rope does not break and cause severe injuries to a bird that might get caught on these. Check toys daily for frayed ends (can be cut short again) or chewed parts have become sharp. Be very careful that the links or connectors can't trap toes or beaks. Chain links should be the welded type. Ensure if using C-clips to hang toys that they do not become sharpened by a busy beak and cause an injury.

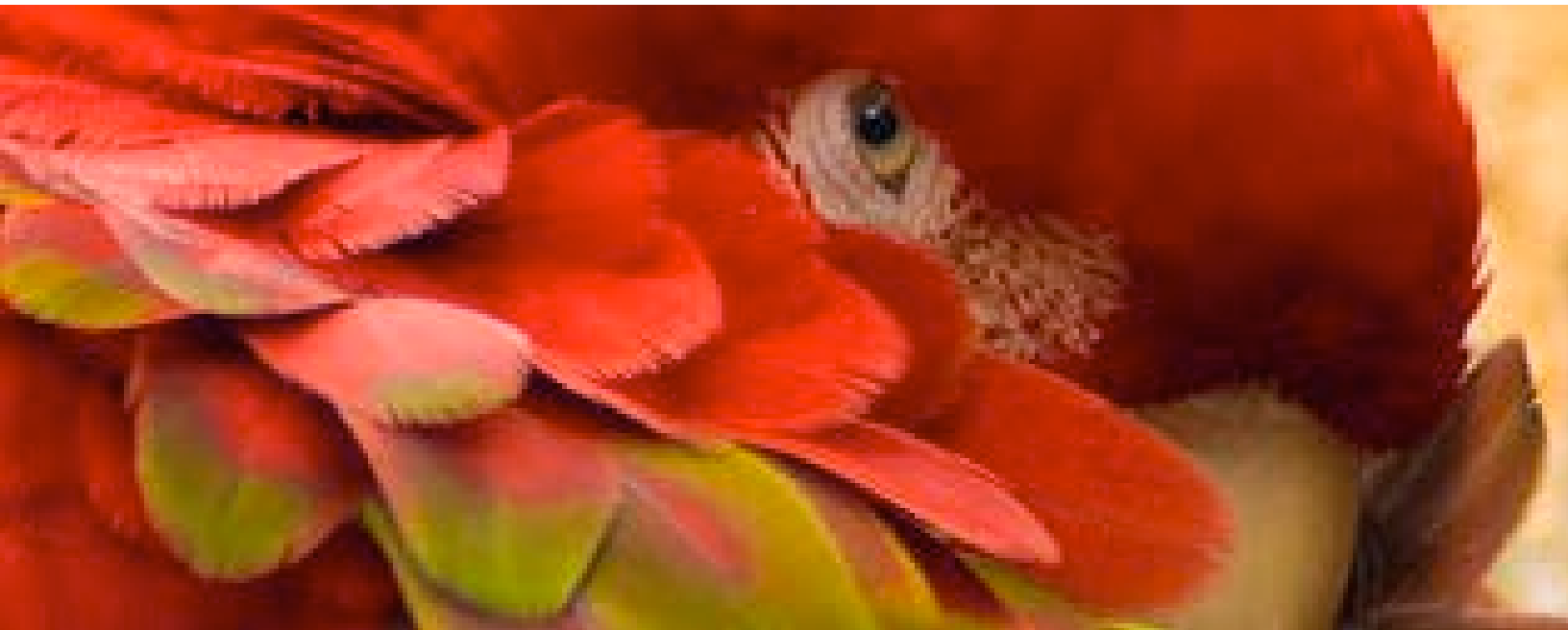
No need to be too enthusiastic about toys if your bird is not used to having them. Begin with a few as too many may be overwhelming for the bird. Only buy species appropriate toys. Small birds like small, lightweight toys and mirrors. Larger birds like to manipulate toys with their beak, tongue and feet. Birds will chew their toys so choose items made from nontoxic wood or hardened plastic. Don't feel you have to spend a lot of money on toys either. Many unpainted household items make excellent inexpensive toys. Birds need to have chew toys to exercise and trim their beaks. Here are few you might try:

- empty toilet paper rolls are great for play and chewing, cut in half then sliced down the middle
- brown lunch bags twisted
- brown lunch bags filled with nuts and hung from the cage like a piñata
- small wooden spoons (available at a dollar store) drill a hole and hang on a piece of bird-safe leather
- mini bagels suspended from the cage
- small paperback books for shredding with colored covers removed
- nuts in the shell with holes drilled and suspended
- wooden spools
- popsicle sticks
- plastic water bottle caps
- old-fashioned clothespins (without the metal connector)

More ideas from Shauna Roberts

A whiffle ball stuffed with cornhusks, plastic straws that have a couple of Q-Tips pushed inside, a shoelace with beads, cinnamon sticks, a white thick cotton sock stuffed like a piñata with some of the above items, a hanging cage-puzzle treat-holder with some of the above items, a grapevine wreath with some of the above items and maybe some nuts too, and a telephone book cut into 1/3 chunks; (drill hole in the corner; hang in cage) are just a few more ideas.

The most important thing to keep in mind is your bird's play preferences and how to safely meet those needs.



Hanging Toys

Is your bird a chewer? A preener? A puzzle solver? A couple of toys hanging from his ceiling would be fun and will get him exercising and climbing to get there!

On The Wall Toys

You can attach a child's abacus, a fancy busy box, a musical toy or any bird store bought items your bird likes. Or simply hang a rope across his back wall with fun safe and silly items clipped to it.

Example: a roll of adding machine tape, pure unbleached roll of toilet paper, knots of sisal rope, shoestring w/beads, unvarnished grapevine with nuts and other goodies tucked into it

Toy Box

Just about anything can be a toy box! A clean dry baby wipe container, a simple shoebox, a store bought container from the bird store, an unpainted raw wicker type basket of appropriate size...load up the toys!

Outside Cage

Will your bird be allowed out to play on his cage? Maybe add a bird-appropriate shepherd's hook on the outside of his cage and add his favorite hanging toy. You have just extended his play area.

Toy Rotation

Toys are what occupy the bird throughout the majority of the day while the owners are away at work. It is a good idea to rotate the toys in the cage, having only a few in the cage at a time. Rotating the toys every several days will help keep the bird interested and not bored with the toys. A bored bird is at risk for behavioural and health problems. Finding toys that are favorites will entail trial and error. Try a wide variety as long as they are safe. Remember destroyed toys means happy and occupied birds.

Teaching Your Bird to Play

Play is far from a frivolous activity. It is necessary for good physical and mental health of parrots. Many parrots never learned how to play, leading to unhealthy over-dependent birds who may scream or whine to get their owners attention. To help teach your bird that toys are fun, try these...As you walk by your bird's cage, stop and focus on the toy, ignoring your bird. Poke at it, laughing while you do so. Play with it raucously; walk away while ignoring the bird. Or try playing with a toy in front of your bird while ignoring him. Pass the toy back and forth with another person, while ooh-ing and ah-ing over the toy, laugh and smile with each, still ignoring the bird. The more you show interest in a toy without including your bird, the more the bird will want to participate. When your bird touches a toy, reward it lavishly with smiles and praise. Mmmmm ... After introducing your bird to toys, when will there be time to nap?

Always be extremely careful when introducing your birds to new toys. Please review <http://www.birdsafe.com/toys.htm> for more in depth information.



The Importance of Foraging

by Cheryl Rose (<http://www.holisticbirds.com>)

The avian community has come to understand that foraging is an extremely important behaviour for birds particularly for parrots. There is much to learn about this subject and we will only briefly touch on it here. Ask a director for more information and upcoming articles.

Parrots exhibit four main behaviours: socializing, grooming, sleeping and foraging. Two thirds of their day is spent foraging for food. The parrot in captivity has his food served to him in bowls and doesn't need to spend time foraging...or does he? We wonder why our parrots pick their feathers or have behavioural problems? Perhaps they are bored? If we take away the three of their four natural behaviours or limit them, they can still groom or preen. This could lead to over-preening or feather picking. Perhaps we need to evaluate our parrot's quality of life in captivity and see what we can do to meet more of their natural behaviours. Perhaps we can help reduce over-preening or feather picking. A flock of wild Pionus parrots was observed in Mindo, Ecuador. Below is a chart of their daily routine:

Dawn to 10:00 A.M.	Foraging for food
10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.	Resting, napping, preening, socializing
2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.	Foraging for food
6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.	Roosting, sleeping

As we can see, parrots spend the greater part of their waking hours foraging for food and eating. We can enhance their lives and stimulate their minds by giving them some of the challenges that they have in the wild. Also note that wild parrots sleep for about 12 hours a day. Let's offer some ideas to our parrots to stimulate foraging and create an environment that encourages and develops motor skills and curiosity. In the wild, birds need to be inquisitive in order to find certain foods. We can increase this natural curiosity by hiding food in different places, but don't immediately start hiding their food. They might not find it right away. Remember their foraging skills haven't been used or are rusty and we need to encourage that curiosity. You may need to show your parrot several times at first where the food is or that by tearing open a folded Dixie cup there will be a treat inside which will be a positive reinforcement for foraging.

For hand-raised birds who have never had to forage or work for food, some give up fairly easily when things don't come as easily as they've become accustomed to, so working with these birds to help them discover the reward can be discouraging for their bird-parents when the birds don't pick up right away. Encourage foraging inside and outside of the cage. Some ideas are: foraging trees, multiple food stations or hiding.

Foraging trees

Place a large branch from a tree in a Christmas tree stand and tuck various foods in and on the branches. You may already have a play gym type stand that you can do this with. Be creative. Make the food somewhat obvious so that they know it is there but have to look. Vary the location of the foods each day to encourage them to look around. They know that there will be food on that tree just where is it?

Multiple Food Stations

Start out by having several bowls of food in the cage at various levels and places. In each dish, put just a little bit of different food. This will stimulate them to begin looking around in other areas for their food. Once used to the different feeding stations, you might want to place a loose piece of paper or cardboard on top to "hide" the food from view. Give the parrot a few days to get used to the idea of not "seeing" the food. Then cover the bowls in a manner that makes it more difficult to get into - where the parrot needs to tear the paper to get to the food. He now knows that there "could" be food in that bowl but gives him more of a challenge to get to it.

Hiding

Hide food in toys and offer more puzzle type toys

- Put an almond or nut in a small paper cup and let the parrot retrieve it by tearing up the cup.
- Twist some pellets in corn husks and place between the bars of the cage.
- Buy some foraging type toys that tempt the parrot to unscrew or open the toy to get to the food - wooden or cardboard tubes stuffed with food and/or seeds.
- Hide some nuts in a bowl of wooden beads or small wooden chunks. The parrot will rummage through the wood and find the nut. You might want to let the parrot see you hide the nut the first couple of times.
- Place food on the sides of the cage bars; e.g., carrots with the tops on are good. Not only can they tear up and munch on the carrot but the tops can also be torn up and possibly ingested. Skewers are also good.
- Use your imagination. Think of other ways to make forage and play fun.

And remember, our companion parrots may have a more difficult time taking their own initiative so keep trying - they may need to be encouraged to try again and again until they get it.

References: Shade, Russ; Pionus Parrots: Wild Birds & Captive Pets A Strategy in Coexistence, Parrot Festival 2003, Houston, Texas Echols, Scott D.V.M.; Diet & Dietary Behaviour in Psittacines, The Importance of Foraging in Parrots, Parrot Festival 2003, Houston, Texas© Pickin' Parrots 2003

Behaviour

Body Language

Birds use their tails, wings, eyes, posture, beaks and vocalizations to display body language that may mean contentment, excitement, greetings, anger, distress, illness, territorial defense or for attracting attention from you or a mate.

Eyes

Unlike humans, birds are able to control their irises, enlarging and shrinking their pupils rapidly. This display is called "flashing" or "pinning". Birds may do this when they are excited, greatly interested in something, or when angry, frightened or being aggressive. Eye pinning should be taken into context with the bird's immediate environment and body posture to get an accurate reading.

Vocalizations

In the wild, birds use various vocalizations to warn others of danger, attract mates, protect their territory, and maintain social contacts. Most birds are highly vocal and many times may be trying to communicate with you.

Singing, Talking, and Whistling

Vocalizations are often signs of a happy, healthy, content bird. Some birds love an audience and sing, talk, and whistle the most when others are around. Other birds will remain quiet when a stranger is present.

Chattering

Chattering can be very soft or very loud. Soft chatter can be a sign of contentment or can be the practice of a bird learning to talk. Loud chatter can be an attention-getter, reminding you that he is there. In the wild, birds often chatter in the evening before going to sleep to connect with other flock members.

Purring

Not the same as a cat's purr, a bird's purr is more like a soft growl that can be a sign of contentment or a sign of annoyance. When purring, the bird's environment and other body language should be taken into consideration to determine what the bird is expressing.

Tongue-Clicking

By clicking the tongue against the beak, your bird may be entertaining herself or asking to be petted or picked up.

Growling

Not heard in all pet birds, growling is usually an aggressive vocalization or used as a warning. If your bird is growling, examine the environment and remove anything that may be bothering her. Growling birds should not be handled as they usually do not want to be touched.

Wings

Wings are not always meant for flying; they often are used to communicate.

Wing Flapping

Wing flapping, or flying in place, is used as exercise, getting your attention, or just displaying happiness. Birds may often simply lift their wings as a means to stretch or to cool themselves.

Wing Flipping

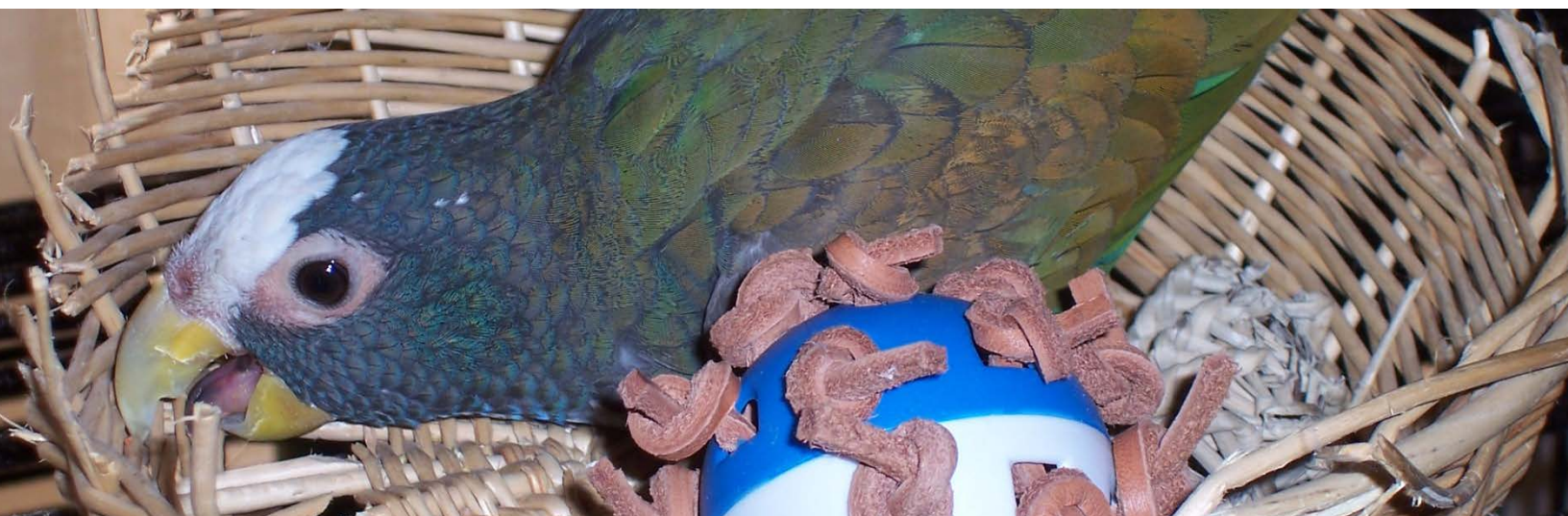
Wing flipping can mean many different things such as being angry or in pain. Flipping can also be used to fluff the feathers or get the feathers to lay just right. Wing flipping accompanied by hunching of the shoulders and head bobbing is attention-getting and often means that a bird wants to be fed.

Wing Drooping

Young birds must learn how to fold and tuck in their wings and often let their wings droop before learning this. However, in older birds, wing drooping may indicate illness. If the bird has just physically exerted herself or has recently bathed, she may let her wings droop out of exhaustion or to let the feathers dry.

Tail

A bird's tail feathers, like other pets' tails, are also used to communicate.



Wagging

A bird wagging her tail feathers may be telling you that she is glad you returned, similar to a dog. Tail wagging can also be a precursor to defecating. This is often helpful if you are trying to housetrain your bird.

Flipping

Tail flipping is a general sign of happiness and can be seen when she is happy to see you, plays with her favorite toy or gets a treat.

Bobbing

Tail bobbing accompanied by rapid breathing that follows strenuous exercise is your bird's way of catching her breath. If, however, your bird is bobbing her tail feathers and breathing hard without activity, she may be showing signs of respiratory distress or infection. If this occurs, see your veterinarian.

Fanning

Fanning the tail feathers often accompanies other behaviours in a show of aggression or anger. Spreading out the tail feathers is a show that displays the bird's strength and vitality.

Legs and Feet

The legs and feet are not used as much as other body parts to communicate but some of the most interesting behaviours come from them.

Foot Tapping

Some birds, especially cockatoos, will tap their feet as a sign of dominance over their territory. This usually only happens when they feel their territory is threatened.



Weak Legs

Some birds that are not "ready" to stand or perch for themselves display the sudden onset of "weak legs." This most often occurs when you have been handling them and must put them back in their cage; it is their way of resisting. Simply hold and pet the bird a while longer and, when she feels she has been given adequate attention, her legs will suddenly become strong enough to perch. Some birds become very good at this behaviour and make it routine.

Hanging Upside Down

Some birds consider hanging upside down a natural part of their behaviour. When doing this, they are happy and content with their environment.

Beak

The beak is used for several functions from grooming to cracking nuts and seeds. It can be used as a weapon or to build a nest. There are also many ways a bird uses her beak to tell you things.

Grinding

Beak grinding is often a sign of contentment in birds and is heard most often as the bird falls asleep. It is characterized by the side-to-side sliding of one beak over the other. It is believed by some experts that birds grind their beaks to keep them in their best condition.

Clicking

Clicking of the beak, or the back and forth sliding of one beak tip over the other, can mean several things. If she clicks once and pins her eyes but is otherwise unthreatening, she is greeting you or acknowledging something. If she clicks several times in a series, she is giving a warning and should not be handled. Beak clicking is seen most often in cockatiels and cockatoos.

Wiping

It is common to see a bird wiping her beak after eating. Often, the bird will wipe her beak on a perch, the cage floor, or the cage sides to get it clean. Some birds use beak wiping as a way to mark their territory. This behaviour may be seen in birds when introduced to others or kept in areas in which other birds are near.

Chewing

Most birds enjoy chewing and do it for many reasons including to condition their beaks and to entertain themselves. A variety of chew toys should be provided to keep your bird stimulated and interested and to keep him from chewing, and possibly ingesting, inappropriate things.

Regurgitating

Regurgitation is the expulsion of contents from the mouth, esophagus, or crop. If your bird pins her eyes, bobs her head and stretches out her neck, then regurgitates her dinner, she is showing you a great deal of affection. Birds feed their young by regurgitating food and breeding pairs often do this for each other as a part of bonding.

Mouthing

One way birds play is to grab each other's beaks and wrestle. They will often use their beaks to joust at one another during play.

Postures

Body posture is important in determining what your bird is telling you. Some postures have specific meanings; below are a few of the common bird postures. If the bird has a relaxed body and her head and body are at attention, she is happy and content. If her head and body are at attention but her body is rigid and her feathers are flared, she is letting you know she owns that territory. When a bird is crouching with her head tipped downward toward you with feathers fluffed around the head, she is asking to be petted or scratched. If she is crouching with her head down with a relaxed body and raised wings, she is trying to attract attention, either from you or from a potential mate.

If a bird is crouching with her head down, eyes pinning, flared tail feathers, ruffled feathers, and a rigid body, she is giving a warning and won't hesitate to bite if provoked, even in the most minor way. If this stance is accompanied by an urgent walk toward you, it is best to get out of the way until she has time to cool off.

Birds use their body and body parts to convey messages to others. These messages are sometimes very obvious and almost any animal could interpret their meaning. Others are subtle and need someone experienced to interpret them. Many species have their own body languages, however many body languages cross species borders. Communicating with your bird by observing and interpreting her body language will make your relationship much easier and satisfying for you both.

Thrashing

Cockatiels are usually the species mostly prone to night frights or thrashing about but other species have this problem as well. A good way to get past this is a nightlight next to the cage. If the bird is found thrashing you must first calm the bird down and then check if first aid is needed.

For more information please see:

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?cls=15&cat=1795&articleid=3334>

Feeling like you don't do enough? Get creative!

By Karen Windsor~ Courtesy of Foster Parrots

Foster Parrots' position on parrots as pets has been well established nationally, and while we will continue to unwaveringly advocate for parrots as wild animals, the fact is that millions of parrots live in American homes and many millions more will be born into captivity in the years to come. A large percentage of captive birds, unfortunately, live discontented lives in uninspired accommodations that are very often instrumental in fueling incompatibility issues between parrots and their people. If we are going to keep birds, it is important that we put the effort into keeping them well, and learn to provide a sustainable and creative degree of quality care that will result in harmonious mutual relationships and parrots that are as well-adjusted and happy as possible in their captive situation.

Because I work in Rescue and field dozens of calls each week from people wanting to surrender their birds, I am continually reminded that these wild animals, sooner or later and in general, tend not to succeed as captive creatures domestically. I often refer to this crisis as "parrots failing as pets". More accurately, since we are the ones that have imposed captivity on parrots, it could be said that we are failing as guardians. The top two reasons why parrots are surrendered to rescues are guilt on behalf of the humans forced to confine these highly social and intelligent flighted creatures, and aggression on the part of confined and frustrated parrots. It cannot be argued that the parrots are here and we must therefore provide for them. But if a person's decision to buy or adopt a parrot were based on the quality of the environment they were realistically able or willing to provide, there would be many fewer guilty people walking around in need of unloading irate parrots. And if parrot guardians were to channel their guilt productively and creatively, they might use that guilt as an impetus to make the improvements necessary to help them keep their birds.

Territoriality and the Creative Cage Environment

There is no cage big enough. If one buys the biggest macaw-sized cage on the market it is still a woefully inadequate environment for an animal born to inherit the skies. But while we can agree that there is no cage big enough, can birds like their cages? Of course they can. Territorial by nature, birds take possession of their cages. But where some cages are homes, havens and safety zones, others are prisons. Sometimes an open door is all it takes to make the difference. And while we can all acknowledge the complex and extraordinary intelligence of parrots, it is important that we creatively apply our own intelligence in order to provide environments that are stimulating, engaging and natural in their appeal to the wild animals we live with.

In order to protect them from harm, and sometimes to protect others from harm, most captive parrots must be confined in one way or another and for varying periods of time. Consequently, cage or enclosure interiors are of paramount importance. Varieties of perches must be provided for climbing and roosting, and foot conditioning should be addressed through a variety of perch

materials. Natural branches with both rough and smooth bark are ideal for interior landscaping. Cloth, sisal and hemp ropes can be enjoyed as perches, swings or simulated vines. There should be plenty of wooden toys for chewing, but these need not be store bought. While the colors of retail toys are nice, the price tags can often be hefty for an item that will potentially be reduced to splinters in a matter of days – or even hours. Blocks of untreated pine can be drilled and strung on ropes in order to provide affordable chew toys. One of the most intriguing diversions one can provide for their parrot is a cardboard box. Better yet – a box inside a box inside a box. This offers a bird the opportunity to engage in the innately compelling activity of excavating a nesting hole. If one is fortunate enough to come across a hollow log, this is the ultimate parrot accommodation item. Knotted balls of shoe-lace strings provide parrots with chew toys that are curiously like feather sheaths. Rolls of calculator tape are happily shredded and unraveled. Quaker parrots are industrious nest builders! Provide them with handfuls of twigs that can be woven through bars and grates. Cockatoos love puzzles. Let them dismantle toys made of nuts, bolts and screws. Contrary to the impression traditionally offered by the pet trade, parrots are not easy to care for companions. They are arguably amongst the most difficult and require observational skills, a lively imagination and an overall extended investment of mental energy to understand and interpret a parrot's natural inclinations, and to provide activities and distractions that will keep that parrot engaged.

At the Foster Parrots sanctuary where most of the parrots are free flighted, we witness the phenomenon of birds trying to put themselves into cages all the time. Cages that have been vacated due to adoptions and cages that are left open when their residents are enjoying supervised time out become coveted territory or intriguing domains to explore for cageless birds. Parrots can like their cages. But they know they don't belong in them. As many times as we've witnessed happy birds putting themselves into cages, we've witnessed frustrated, hostile birds settle down and become significantly less aggressive when they've been freed from consistent confinement or, more importantly, when they've been given the freedom of choice.

Atticus is a Yellow-naped Amazon, approximately 15 years old, who has been a Foster Parrots resident for 5 years. A decidedly solitary bird, Atticus lived for a time in a large floor to ceiling cage in the upper barn region of our sanctuary. He wasn't an aggressive fellow by any means and really did not require caging.

He simply liked his cage. His door was always open. However, when we took in a pair of wild and potentially dangerous Amazons that did require confinement, it became necessary to evict Atticus from his large cage. He was absolutely mortified. He spent the next several weeks trying to figure out how to get back into the cage. We tried to assuage his despair by offering him a very attractive, mid-sized, dome-topped cage placed in a premium spot in front of the largest window, but he didn't want that cage. He wanted a very large cage that would allow him to perch high up inside the cage. Finally we dragged a monstrosity of a cage into the upper barn for Atticus. Eight feet high and nearly 5 feet deep and wide, it sits squarely in the middle of the floor and Atticus is delighted. His door is always open and he cruises the barn at will. But mostly he sits contentedly, triumphantly in his giant cage.



On the other hand, consider the story of JoJo, a Moluccan cockatoo who was rescued by Foster Parrots from an appointment with euthanasia. Having been confiscated from drug lords, warehoused for several years, then passed through a couple of homes before landing at the Foster Parrots sanctuary, this was an understandably traumatized and fearful bird. Too insecure to venture out and into a world he could not trust, JoJo was cage-bound. We established his large cage in a prominent area of the sanctuary where two Umbrella cockatoos and another Moluccan lived freely, and where there was frequent pedestrian traffic as staff and volunteers passed by or stopped to chat and play with birds. We never closed JoJo's door.

People would stop and talk to him and reach in to pet him. He was able to observe the relationships between people and other birds from his safe place without feeling either isolated or threatened. He was provided with ample hanging toys to play with, chew on – or hide behind. He was always welcome to join the activity of the room, and in his own time he began to venture out – just a little, at first. He would stick a head out the door, then a head and a half a body. In time he could perch for longer and longer periods on top of his open door. He would be liberally praised whenever he was interactive. Soon he began to swing upside down and to display himself playfully. When he would exercise his massive voice, it was done not to solicit attention, but for the joy of hearing the power of his own voice. And no one ever yelled at him for it. A year after his arrival JoJo would finally leave his cage altogether and perform for us by marching comically around the room or hopping about like a bunny. Preferring women, he found he could trust a few choice people and could be found snuggling in a lap every now and then. He also found comfort and community with his fellow cockatoos. The key to orchestrating JoJo's environment and drawing him out was to situate him in the most active room in the facility where interaction with people and other cockatoos would strengthen his social skills, yet he always had the option to retreat. Before too long JoJo would invariably seek out the haven that was his cage. But it was always his choice, and this power helped build his confidence.

Most of us may lack the financial resources to construct elaborate outdoor aviaries, but that should not impede us from using what we do have to create indoor environments that can vastly improve a bird's quality of life by allowing us to open the cage door. Spare rooms or largely neglected sun porches can be converted into dedicated bird space. Inexpensive wood-framed screened doors can be installed to keep bird rooms safe without completely cutting them off from the rest of the home. Even a corner of a frequently used family room can be transformed to fulfill the needs of one's parrot. At Foster Parrots most birds live freely on "hanging frames", natural wooden branches that are joined together in interesting configurations and suspended from the ceiling. Food and water cups and a wide array of toys are attached. Sometimes these frames are suspended directly above a bird's cage, providing a whole new dimension to the living arrangement and an opportunity for the birds to climb and gain height. Sometimes the frames are hung to act as "cages without bars". While we generally discourage wing-clipping, some people do find it necessary to clip wings for safety reasons. Birds with clipped wings are unable to leave their frames, but enjoy a more natural arrangement of living up high on branches. Interestingly, many of our flighted parrots become possessive of their frames and generally do not voluntarily leave what they perceive to be their territory.



Social Behavior and Routine

It is the highly social nature of parrots that makes them attractive as companions. They are capable of transferring essential bonding behavior to people, which, in a captive situation, is an arrangement preferable to social isolation. And although we love our parrots and hope to do everything in our power to make them happy, sadly, we are not birds. We are humans and our primary bonds are with other humans and our lives are full of responsibilities and diversions that constantly tear us away from our parrots.

Parrots don't understand this behavior at all. The fact that we habitually walk out the door each day and leave them alone boggles the parrot mind as we force them into a situation, once again, so contrary to their nature: one of solitude.

As inadequate as we may be as companions to our parrots, they are superior in their ability to adapt to us as companions. We have found that the fine art of establishing a routine that your bird can depend on goes a long way in helping to create a mutually compatible relationship. Parrots are creatures of habit.

They need/expect every day to be just like the day before and the day before. By establishing a dependable routine for our birds, we minimize the stress and confusion of a haphazard world. The result, very often, is a parrot that feels less compelled to assert control over its guardian through excessive vocalization, and a parrot more at ease with its world.

Get your parrot up and out of bed (cage/bird room) every morning at the same time. The breakfast ritual of preparing food, cleaning a cage and loving a parrot should be the same every morning, and your bird should know he can depend on this special breakfast ritual. Presumably, you must go off to work or run the errands of the day. Your parrot should know that next comes several hours of having to entertain himself within his confines. Playing a radio during this time or keeping one's parrot in front of a large window where he can observe wild birds feeding and interacting can become an essential event in a parrot's day. When you come home from work, it's bird time. Take your bird out. Sit with him. Talk to him and love him. Play with him and make a big deal over what a wonderful and talented bird he is. He should be able to anticipate and count on this special one-on-one time every day. Direct interaction time can be followed by several hours of having your bird out with you and the family, but not necessarily attached to your body. Have a play stand or hanging frame in the areas of the house where you spend greater periods of time or in rooms that tends to be central to overall family activity. A parrot needs to have a sense of involvement in the flock dynamics. At dinner time after the cooking has been completed, parrots should be welcomed into the kitchen and involved in the dinner ritual. Parrots are social eaters. They are apt to eat better and accept healthier foods when those are the foods being shared by the family flock. They take greater enjoyment in eating out of your hand than out of a lonely dish. When the day has drawn to an end, it should be "bed time for birds" at the same time every night. Keeping in mind that parrots require 10 to 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, we recommend that a parrot's sleep area be located away from the area of general family activity, in a room that can be made quiet, dark and peaceful. Your parrot's natural inclination is to tuck himself away to "roost" each evening, so a



“sleeping cage” quickly establishes itself as an expected and desirable finish to a parrot’s long day.

Knowing precisely what to expect from us and knowing the behavior that is expected of them gives a parrot just as much a feeling of control over its life as its ability to decide whether it wants to be inside the cage or out. Old aviculture used to dictate asserting dominance and control over one’s parrot through such measures as wing clipping, consistent caging and keeping them perched at a height lower than one’s head. But parrots are not dogs and they do not respond to subjugation. Their wild and instinctual nature must be acknowledged, accommodated and respected. Make a cage a compelling and engaging environment by providing boxes, chew toys, rope vines. Then open the cage door. Let your bird out. Give him an aviary or bird-proof a room and let him fly. Install hanging frames made of natural branches way above your head and let him be up high. Feeling guilty because you’re at work all day and your bird is home alone? Birds belong in flocks. Have more than one bird. Two or more birds are not twice as much work as one bird. They’re half as much work.

We force our parrots to live in our world, and then we don’t understand why they scream, beg, become aggressive, become phobic, feather pluck, self-mutilate... Sometimes it is necessary to force ourselves to live in their world before we can understand how to address the issues of parrot guardianship creatively and help ease their experience with us.

Knowing that, overall, people tend to fail miserably as companions to parrots, we do not advocate parrots as pets. However, we are highly motivated to help people understand the needs of their birds and to improve the quality of care they are able to deliver. We want people to keep their birds. Because here at the sanctuary we are short on space.

Additional notes from Karen:

Although cardboard boxes make an excellent and inexpensive way to entertain a companion parrot it should be noted that in some cases a box can induce some female parrots to go through a breeding cycle that may be dangerous to their health. Also, boxes of any kind should NOT be offered to any male/female pairs as it will most probably encourage mating and egg laying. If a mated pair of parrots insists on creating a nest site and laying eggs we offer a nest box to limit the number of eggs laid and to allow the parrots to go through their breeding cycle normally. We then switch the eggs with wooden eggs (or golf balls) purchased at a crafts store to prevent accidental reproduction. Most parrots will naturally abandon their eggs after 30 to 40 days should they prove unproductive.

Not only does the addition of music or nature sounds add to the quality of life but we take this enrichment one step further by putting the music on timers so that the mornings and early evenings mimic the natural rhythms of a parrot's life in the wild. Lights are also put on timers to mimic a natural 12 hour day and to give these prey animals a natural rhythm to their lives, something that is the foundation of a parrot's mental well-being.

Discipline

Birds are not like dogs or cats nor do they feel guilt or have a conscience. The below article from www.birdsnways.com is written by Rebecca Sweat a freelance writer living in the Chicago area.

Perhaps the worst discipline mistake you could ever make is to hit your bird. "A bird hit for punishment learns to fear hands because, to it, the hands attacked for no reason. The bird doesn't know you flicked your finger on its beak because it bit you," Karras says. If you slap your bird, it will associate that punishment with you and may refuse to sit on your hand. Throwing items at your birds cage, covering its cage for excessive periods, taking away toys and treats and yelling out of anger are other punishments that are not only inhumane, but do not teach what behaviours are and are not acceptable. What about squirting your bird with water as a correction? Most avian behaviourists believe that water sprays should be reserved for recreation and pleasure. You will confuse your bird if one day you use the spray as a punishment and the next day the water is a reward.

Rather than improve a situation, inappropriate discipline creates new problems. Your bird may become stressed or nervous, and rather than relax or be happy to see you when you come home, it may cower in the corner of its cage. The bird will become confused about what is expected of it, the anxiety level in your home will increase and the relationship between you and your bird will suffer. No bird owner should have to put up with biting, destructive chewing, excessive screaming or other undesirable behaviours. Yet you don't have to make your bird feel lousy to teach it a lesson. When you use an appropriate correction method, both you and your bird come away winners.

Here are some suggestions:

Have a Verbal Command

Much of your bird's negative behaviour can be stopped and eventually changed with the help of a verbal command such as "Don't," "No chew," or "Stop it." Say your words in a calm but firm tone of voice. Don't yell or scream your words; if you do, you may only be teaching your bird to scream back — which may be what you're trying to discipline the bird for in the first place.

Use Distractions

When your bird does something unacceptable and you catch it in the act, you can often stop the behaviour by "interrupting" it. For example, if your bird starts to bite down on your furniture, clap your hands, sound a bicycle horn, stomp your feet on the floor or slap a ruler or rolled newspaper against a book or table. The distraction should be brief and sudden, just enough to startle the bird and make it stop the action. Don't make the noise so intense that it scares the bird and makes it fall off its perch.

If your bird is biting you while on your hand, move your wrist slightly to create an "earthquake" motion to distract the bird and disrupt the behaviour. "A minor earthquake to dissuade a biting bird should be just that, minor, to the extent that it discourages the behaviour. It should not reflect the degree to which the owner is annoyed by the behaviour," Muscarella says. You shouldn't give your bird an "earthquake" because you are upset with it, nor should you try to scare the daylights out of your bird.

Give Your Bird a Time-Out

Another useful correction is to break contact with the bird with a time-out. Suppose you catch your parrot chewing on your picture frame. Firmly tell it, "No chew." If your bird obeys you, praise it. If the bird continues to chew the furniture, tell it, "time-out," and without further comment lead it to a solitary location. Don't use the cage for the time-out; if you do, you are making the cage a place of punishment and you want the bird's cage to be something positive. Leave your bird alone for 5 to 10 minutes. To end the time-out, release the bird by telling it "Okay," and then go back to life as normal. "Your bird will learn that if it does certain behaviours, the result is time away from the flock, which no bird wants," Karras says.

Make Your Corrections Timely

In order for a correction to work, it must be applied at the very instant your bird begins to misbehave. For example, a biting bird needs to be interrupted as its beak is starting to open, just as it goes to chew something. "Even if you are just a few seconds late in your correction your bird may not understand," Karras says. If you wait too long, the bird will not understand what behaviour you are correcting. Sometimes just waiting a couple of seconds can be too late. In moments a bird can go from nibbling on your lampshade to happily chattering to itself — and you certainly don't want to discourage that.

Provide an Alternative Behaviour

Don't rely on punishment alone to try to solve a behaviour problem. "Not only do we need to tell our birds what we do not want them to do, we need to follow with what we do want," Wilson says. For example, if you catch your parrot chewing on your banister, remove your parrot from that situation and take it over to one of its wood or rope toys on its T-stand. When it chews on that instead, tell it, "Good bird." Provide your bird with an alternative behaviour that is acceptable to the both of you.

Be Consistent

Every member of your household must agree on the rules for the bird and consistently follow through on them. "Imagine how confusing it is to a bird if one member of the family yells at it for incessant screaming, another gives it a favorite treat to shut it up, and yet another covers its cage

and ignores it for the entire afternoon," Muscarella says. "A bird in this situation will be confused, have no clear idea of what is good or bad behaviour and will never really understand why or for what behaviour it is being rewarded or disciplined." Your bird will be most content if the rules stay the same from day to day and from person to person.

Be Fair

Make sure you are meeting your bird's needs before you discipline it. Give your bird regular time outside of its cage, either on a T-stand or play gym, and at least an hour of one-on-one time with you a day. "If you provide for your bird's needs in terms of an enriched and interesting environment and you take time out to play with it and exercise it, you will probably have a better companion and less need to correct it than one just put it in its cage by itself all day with nothing to do," Karras says.

Keep in mind that what you may think is a behaviour problem, such as chewing and screaming, may in fact be a completely natural thing for your bird to do. "It helps to allow your bird a set time each day where it is okay to make a lot of noise," Karras says. "My own cockatoo likes to be loud sometime between 4 and 7 pm every day. We turn on his favorite music, and he can scream and dance. He gets it out of his system, so to speak, and I don't have a problem with screaming the rest of the day."

Provide your bird with a variety of toys that are okay to chew. You can even improvise with items around the house. Small pieces of corrugated cardboard, for example, makes a great chewable for small hook bills; such as cockatiels, budgies and lovebirds.

Focus on the Positive

Pay attention to your bird when it behaves well, not just when it is bad. "If the only time you interact with your parrot is when you're yelling at it and saying 'No! No! No!' then it's going to do those behaviours because that's the only time it gets attention, and negative attention is better than no attention," Wilson says.

"One of the biggest problems with positive reinforcement is that we often don't use it often enough," Muscarella adds. "We, ourselves, are very conditioned to respond to a negative behaviour; it is annoying and gets our attention and an immediate response. It takes much more effort on our part to notice our parrot's good behaviours and reward it."

If for example, you've been talking on the telephone for an hour and your parrot has been quiet the entire time, when you get off the phone, tell your bird, "Oh, you were such good bird! Thank you for letting me talk on the phone." A head scratch, a hug, a verbal reward such as "good bird" or a few moments of undivided attention can all convey a great deal to a parrot.

Muscarella suggests that for every time you reprimand your bird with negative reinforcement, you should praise it at least 10 times with positive reinforcement — for stepping on your hand with the "up" command, for eating a healthy food item, for entertaining itself quietly on its play gym, for

sitting nicely on your knee, for doing a beautiful whistle or for saying a desirable phrase. "The challenge is for us as owners to condition ourselves to be more astute to what our birds are doing. Then we can praise them for all the good things they do and not to simply respond in a knee-jerk way to their negative or undesirable acts," Muscarella says.

Try to keep your negative interactions with your bird to a minimum. "You should be thought of by your bird as someone who provides comfort to it and is interested in giving it what it wants within the rules of the household," Karras says, "not as the source of something that causes pain and discomfort."



Spring is in the air!

Spring can be a particularly difficult time of year for some birds and bird owners. Is your fid (feathered kid) is in a full hormonal rage? Where do you turn? What can you do? There are some things that can help reduce hormonal behaviour.

Try any/all of these...

- remove all paper from the cage
- “Starkly” furnish cage (just basic with perches, dishes, etc.)
- change the position of the cage in the room frequently
- change the position of perches & dishes regularly
- avoid putting the cage in dark corners
- move mate to another cage or even another room
- avoid stroking the lower back and top of tail
- prevent access to dark areas/corners in and out of cage
- increased supervised time out of cage
- distract when hormonal responses appear

Before and After Eggs

Ask your avian vet about Lupron injections which help with hormonal behaviours. These are usually provided in a series of three injections. Be sure to provide lots of calcium as egg production lessens the birds' calcium supply. Calcium comes in the form of Manu blocks, certain foods (i.e.: broccoli), and can be provided in a powder or liquid form from your avian vet. Egg laying can also lead to problems in the hen.

Egg bound hens are a common problem for cage bound birds. It is very important that the hen have as much room as possible to exercise in order for her muscles to be toned for her all-important purpose of laying eggs. Lack of physical exercise and minerals can cause the egg to be “stuck” and unable to smoothly move down the tract. This can increase the hen's chances of suffering an internal infection. *** *As with any health concerns, please seek help from your avian vet immediately.* ***

I don't want any chicks!

Do not remove any laid eggs immediately if the hen is showing an interest in them. If a male has been present, you can still prevent chicks by putting a tiny pinhole in each end of the egg and giving it a good shake. When you place a tiny pin hole in the egg it is best to do so when the bird is not watching. Once a tiny pin hole is placed in the egg(s), place the egg(s) back where you found them until she becomes bored with them. It may be a few days or a few weeks but eventually she will be bored and leave them alone. At this point you can remove them from the cage. Allowing her to keep the eggs will accomplish two things. It will help her to stop laying more to replace the missing ones and it will also allow her to go through her natural nesting instinct. The above guidelines should help you both get through hormonal time periods.

Appropriate Bird Handling

Jacqueline Johnson—Best Friends Animal Society Parrot Garden

Parrot anatomy is nothing like a mammals. They have no external genitalia, so they rely on other means to indicate to each other that they'd like to breed. The way they do this is to touch each other in special places, such as the tail, down the back and under the wings. Birds ovaries and testes are located high in the back, right between their shoulder blades. If you stroke a bird down the back, you are stimulating hormone production. Under the wings is another "no-no" zone. Really, the only safe places to touch your bird so that you don't give them the wrong idea about your intentions, is from the shoulders up and the feet. By being mindful and handling your bird appropriately you can avoid some common parrot/human issues, like mate bonding. If your bird sees you as a mate, they are going to be aggressive to everyone else in the household. Or they will get angry and start biting you because you are not behaving as a mate should. A respectful companion relationship should be the goal.

The biggest No-No of all. Never, never stroke a bird like a cat or dog. It causes hormone production that will leave your bird feeling unhappy and unfulfilled. And we wonder why they scream and bite us. Don't be a tease!

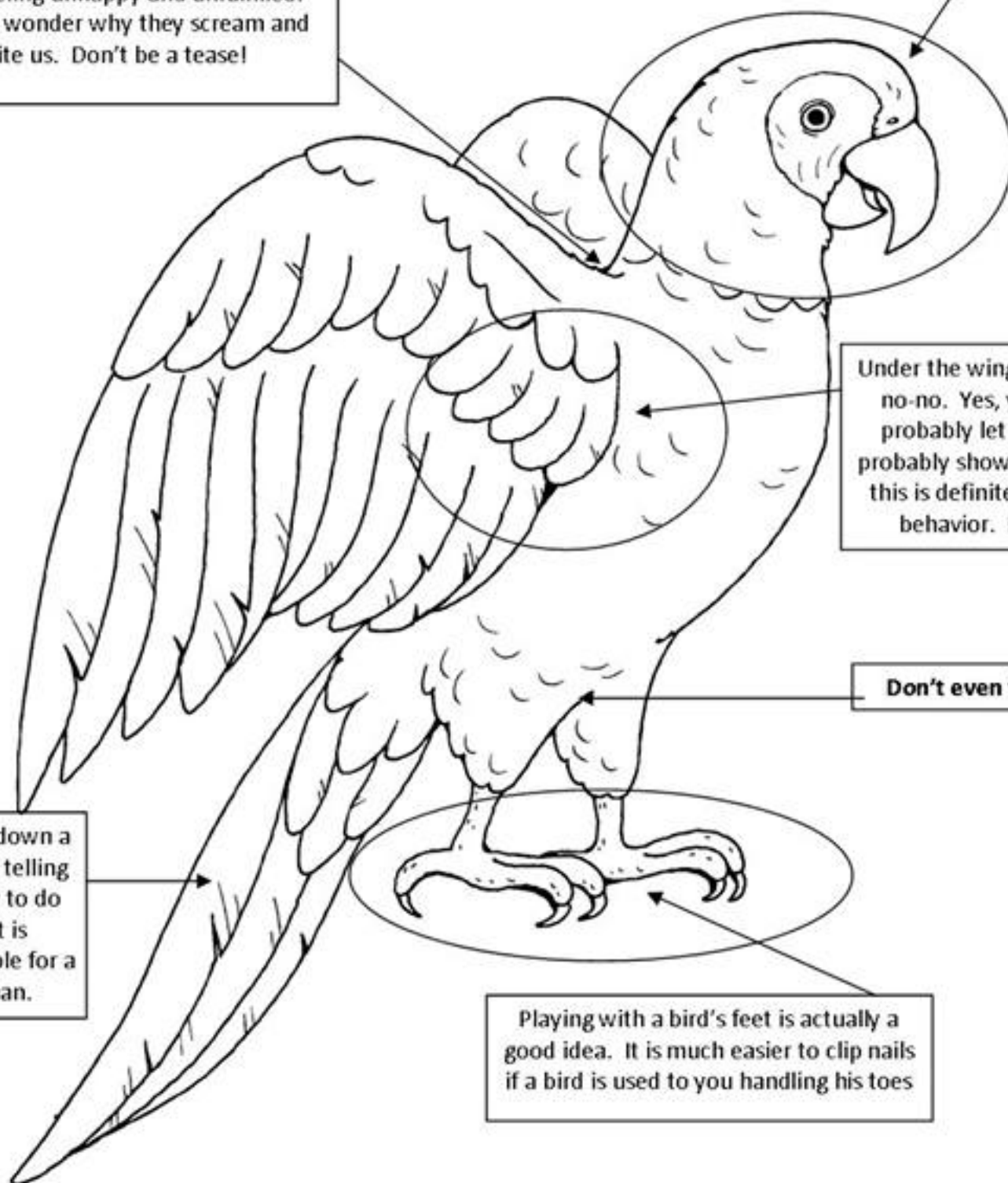
Birds are unable to groom their own heads so touching here is considered a friendly gesture...not a mating behavior.

Under the wings is a really big no-no. Yes, your bird will probably let you, and will probably show he likes it. But this is definitely a courtship behavior. Don't do it!

Don't even think about it!

NO! Never stroke down a bird's tail. You are telling him you are ready to do something that is physically impossible for a bird and a human.

Playing with a bird's feet is actually a good idea. It is much easier to clip nails if a bird is used to you handling his toes



Biting

What Is A Bite?

A parrot's beak functions as its hand for holding on to things, as well as its sense of touch. So when a parrot reaches with its beak, it does not automatically mean the bird plans to hurt you. Birds will bite for several reasons so it is important to observe them and the environment to determine the reason. A bird might bite because it is defending its territory, is fearful or angry or just does not want to do what you are asking of him.

The following is an attempt to explain the various things parrots can do to us with their beaks, and what they might mean:

Action: Touching, Tasting

Result to Human Anatomy: Maybe a tiny bit of redness on the skin, maybe a plucked hair or removed scab.

Parrot's Probable Intent: Parrot is exploring, and no damage is intended, even if it's a little uncomfortable.

Action: Nipping, Pinching

Result to Human Anatomy: Redness, maybe a mark from the beak.

Parrot's Probable Intent: Parrot is exploring, testing or nervous about something and is trying to express that.

Action: Bite

Result to Human Anatomy: Bruise, maybe a small amount of bleeding.

Parrot's Probable Intent: Parrot is frightened by something (like falling) and is grabbing on, or the parrot is upset about something.

Action: Chomp

Result to Human Anatomy: Deep bruise, or deep cut with lots of bleeding and possible swelling.

Parrot's Probable Intent: Parrot is extremely afraid, hormonal or angry.

One Other Note on Biting

Don't make a big scene if your bird bites you. The more "drama" you create, the more the bird will be reinforced to bite again. Yelling, hitting and throwing the bird will not only injure him, it will serve to reinforce the behaviour. Birds LOVE drama rewards and any positive or negative reaction to a bite can lead to further biting. Every human with bird companions can be bitten so if it happens, grit your teeth, stay calm and patient and don't blame yourself or the bird. Use the above guide to try to figure out what caused the bite to help avoid the same situation. Don't hand a nervous bird over to a stranger, or someone who doesn't know how to handle it! A bite may come next

Respecting the Bite

Barbara Heidenreich www.GoodBirdInc.com Copyright 2008 Good Bird Inc. First appeared in Good Bird Magazine. Reprinted with permission.

I am a wuss. I admit it. Oddly enough I think it has worked in my favor when it comes to working with animals. I don't "take the bite" whether it is from a mosquito, a parrot or a lion. In fact I do everything in power to avoid a situation in which I might get bit. With mosquitoes sadly it usually means very little camping for me and when outdoors I am bathed in massive doses of repellent. With zoo animals such as lions, it usually means training through barriers and offering reinforcers via utensils, and avoiding creating aggressive behavior. With parrots.....believe it or not I actually take an approach similar to what I do with lions! Not because I think parrots pose a particular lethal threat to my person, but because I respect a parrot as much as I respect a lion. Let me repeat that "I respect a parrot as much as I respect a lion."

Respect

To understand this better perhaps I should elaborate on what I mean by "respect". I interpret this as showing consideration for what an animal is telling me with its body language. For example if my close proximity to an animal is creating the slightest fear response or hint of aggressive behavior I recognize it and acknowledge it. I then do whatever I can, which may include backing away, to put that animal at ease.

Sometimes humans have an inclination to suggest that whatever activity they are doing is "no big deal" or should not be bothersome to their parrot and forge ahead, regardless of what their bird's body language is saying. There are countless times I have heard someone say "Oh, he doesn't really mind. Go ahead." or "He is just being stubborn. Make him step up." or "It's just a bluff. He isn't really aggressive." Ouch. Those are painful words to a positive reinforcement trainers ears. There is an implication in those statements that I should ignore what the bird's body language is telling me. Even if that body language is saying "No! Stop it. I don't like what you are doing."

Why should a parrot owner care about respecting their bird's body language? Because it is a critical element in successfully addressing biting behavior. I would surmise that most people do not want to get bit by a parrot. I am certainly one who falls into that category. This is when being a wimp works to my advantage. I am not willing to get too close to a bird until it gives me body language that indicates comfort. Certainly this is step one in avoiding a bite. My next goal is usually to associate something of value with my presence. This may mean offering food treats from my hand, a spoon or a bowl. It may also include offering toys or enrichment, head scratches or praise. It all depends on what the parrot shows a preference for. By pairing a preferred item or experience with my presence, hopefully I will gain some value to the parrot. If I am successful I usually start to see a parrot whose body language indicates he is anticipating more "good stuff" coming from me. Woohoo! At this point not only does the parrot seem to be engaged, but I am usually also beginning to feel more confident and trusting of the bird.

The process described above usually happens before a request for the behavior of “step up” is even considered. This is mainly because I am not comfortable placing my hand in front of a bird with whom I have not had the chance to build up some trust. (See the article “Training your New Parrot. Where to Begin?” in [Good Bird Magazine Vol 2 Issue 4](#) for more suggestions on interacting with a parrot for the first time)

Sadly in the companion parrot community I see so many parrots that show fear responses or aggressive behavior towards hands. Because of this when I do bring my hand to a bird for the step up behavior it is done slowly and carefully. All the while I am paying close attention to the bird’s body language and looking for a bird who is at ease before proceeding. All these intricacies help me avoid creating a situation in which a parrot may want to bite.

When Birds Bite

Shoot. I messed up. Either I misread the bird’s body language or I asked for too much, or maybe I simply don’t know what happened just yet. But I got bit. Now what? This is a question that is often posed to me. “What do you do when the bird bites?” If unfortunately a caregiver does get bit, the first immediate response in my opinion is to detach the bird from the person. If the bird is holding on, usually a thumb and forefinger can be placed on the top part of the beak to pry the parrot off of whatever is in their mouth. Other strategies can include redirecting the parrots attention, and simply putting the bird down in the nearest available safe location (perch, cage, couch, table, play stand,

A bite can be very painful and by all means I do not recommend holding steady while a bird chomps away. This is the erroneous idea that by taking the bite the caregiver will teach the bird that biting has no effect. In truth there can be other reinforcers that maintain that behavior over which we have no control. For example grinding away on flesh may provide a stimulating tactile sensation to the bird. The only way to remove that reinforcer is for the bird to not have human flesh in its beak.

Another question often presented to me is “How do you let the parrot know what he did was wrong?” I must admit this question makes me cringe a bit. This is because I see it as a request for approval to use aversives to punish a bird for biting. In reality in most cases aversive punishment would not be the strategy of choice to address biting. The primary goal would have been to avoid creating the situation in which the parrot would be inclined to bite in the first place. This may mean teaching the bird what to do instead of what not to do. It may also mean making antecedent changes to facilitate success for the parrot. There are many pathways that can lead to a non-biting outcome had they been considered. All of which do not involve an unpleasant experience to teach the bird to do something other than bite.

For me if a parrot bites I do nothing than more than make sure the bird is no longer on me. This gives me time to pause and think about what I could have done differently to avoid the situation. It also forces me to make a mental note of what circumstances created the aggressive response. It also gives me time to deal with any emotional fall out I may experience from being bit. Sometimes our feelings are hurt when an animal we love responds with aggressive behavior. If I am to focus

on building trust with a parrot, the last thing I want to do is to react in a manner that the bird would find unpleasant. This means I do not try to punish the parrot by shaking or dropping my hand, yelling “no”, waving a finger in his face, or flicking his beak. All of these would very likely damage my efforts to build a successful relationship with the parrot.

Conclusion

At a recent conference I overheard a conversation in which it was whispered “I bet she never gets bit.” In truth I can’t say it never happens, but it is extremely rare. It is certainly not from a lack of interacting with parrots. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to meet 100’s of new animals each year. However with each animal I am careful to read body language and to do my best to build a relationship based on trust. I take advantage of any positive reinforcers the animal likes and use these to help increase my worth to my training subject. I am happy to report it is not magic, nor does it take any super powers, or “whispering” techniques. Anyone can have a successful bite free relationship with a parrot when they give their parrot the same respect they would give a lion.



Safety

New Additions & Other Pets

Birds can be loving companions and members of the family. The best thing you can do for you and your new family member is to educate yourself.

Cohabiting with other animals requires proper introductions and monitoring of behaviour. Don't ever trust another animal or bird alone with your companion bird. New birds as mates for your companion bird can ruin your relationship with your original companion bird. Please make sure to research and educate yourself before choosing this option.

Quarantine

Quarantining of foster birds and newly adopted birds is important to help prevent transmission of disease to people and other birds living in the home. It also protects a stressed and often times sick foster bird by limiting exposure to organisms to which other pets have developed immunity. This means that the bird should be housed in its own closed room away from all other birds and animals. In modern homes with central heating and air-conditioning it is very difficult to fully close off a room. If feasible the vents can be sealed off to prevent circulation of air in and out of that room; a fan can be used within the room or a screened window may be opened slightly to facilitate air movement. Animals should not be allowed to enter the room. Care should be taken about the clothing worn in and out of the room. It is helpful if separate clothing and footwear is available to be kept inside the room. Hands should be thoroughly washed and all bird dishes should be washed carefully. The bird should remain in that restricted area until the veterinary tests are completed and the bird is proven healthy.



When Minutes Count - A Disaster Plan

by Sandra Harrison

If it becomes necessary to evacuate, minutes and seconds count!

Emergency / Evacuation List (in alphabetic sequence):

Alcohol: (see Betadine)

Aloe Vera: Soothes burns and cuts and aids healing.

Betadine: For wounds for the birds or ourselves use Betadine. Alcohol and peroxide will also work as a disinfectant, but they sting. Betadine diluted to a tea color with water will work as a disinfectant, is effective against bugs, and is almost non-painful to apply.

Bar Of White Soap: (like Ivory): One vet tech suggested this for a toenail that just wouldn't stop bleeding on one of the birds. Rake the toenail along the edge of the bar of soap so it will "plug" the cannula of the toenail and allow it to clot. For anyone who thinks this is cruel try putting quikstop on your leg (or face) if you cut it shaving. You will do that ONCE.

Carriers: Please see the section [Out in a Hurry](#) for further information.

Case: A fish tackle box, suitcase, plastic box, cooler, picnic hamper, for a storage system.

Cord, Cotton: can be used to suspend a light from a nail or beam keeping both hands free to work on a bird. It can also be used to bind things together. If surfaces are dry, you can tape them. But, tape won't stick to wet surfaces.

Corn Starch: a powder that promotes blood clotting, thereby stopping the flow of blood from a bird's broken nail or a nail that's been trimmed too short.

Cotton Balls:

Disinfectants: Betadine (diluted to tea color strength with water, NOT STRAIGHT), Nolvasan, Oxyfresh Gele, alcohol, peroxide, Lysol Waterless hand cleaner.

Dowels: of various sizes, round toothpicks for splints, and a straight edged safety razor.

Duct Tape: (see Tape)

Exacto Knife: An Exacto Knife can substitute for a scalpel. Be sure to remember extra blades.

Eyedropper



Forceps

Gavage Tubes: for emergency feeding.

Gatorade: (powdered) will do if Ringers is not available. Squirrels and possums are often happy to slurp it, too. Great for rehydrating passerines, psitticines, mammals, etc. A human doctor dilutes it greatly and suggests only using at half strength even for humans.

Gauze

Glass, Magnifying

Glucose: If you are going to give glucose, make sure it is given only orally or intravenous. If given SQ (below the skin) it can cause severe sloughing & infection.

Handcleaner: (waterless): Helps you clean up when water is limited.

Handfeeding Formula: Remember to freshen periodically.

Hot Packs: There's a great thing called Hot Hands. I found them at Wal-mart in the hunting department. They come in several different sizes. Some for hands are a bit larger than a tea bag or two and the size for feet is only a tiny bit bigger, but gets hotter and lasts longer. The larger is about the size of a wallet and lasts 12-24 hours. They have fairly safe stuff in them such as charcoal and salt and sand that when shaken causes a thermal reaction resulting in heat. They can be used while waiting for a heating pad to warm up in an emergency, for spot heat, for transporting babies, or with animals in shock.

Many people have used rice sewn in a bag or sock and heated in the microwave for transporting birds. (Some use this method to make a hot pack to exactly fit her/his neck and report great success.) Fill a hot water bottle with boiling water, wrap it in many thick towels and place in a picnic basket so one can regulate heat by propping open the top as needed. A digital thermometer that has been calibrated ensures best results. The weave in the basket allows good circulation even if it is a tight weave.

Hydrogen Peroxide: (see betadine)

Light, Emergency: A rechargeable flashlight is SUPER! Use a little double-sided tape to attach a magnet to the windowsill to hold it in place to recharge. A regular flashlight with fresh replacement batteries is good. A camping lantern, which uses bottled LP gas, puts out the same as a 150-watt bulb and is good for close work.

Nolvasan Solution: Not good for general sterilizing, especially in nurseries, but great as an antibacterial flush for injuries. It can be used on human wounds too and wounds tend to heal quicker. (Also see betadine)



Pipettes: (FEEDING NEEDLES): If a bird is injured, sometimes just feeding it enough to keep it alive will eventually do the trick.

Pliers: Wire cutters, needle nose pliers and other pliers. In emergency situations a bird may be caught in wire in a crushed or fallen cage. A band can be caught on a wire or a bird can get its wings caught in the wire of the floor of a cage. The easiest, least traumatic thing to do is to cut a square loose first and then snip the bird free.

Popsicle Sticks For Splints: (also see dowels)

Power Inverter: (CONVERTER) for the car. Damark Catalog carries some good ones as do Marine (i.e. Boats) stores. Be careful. Two from Wal-mart burned out because they weren't strong enough to handle a heating pad.

Preparation H: Not only stops itching but bruises will heal faster.

Q-Tips

Quick Stop: a powder that promotes blood clotting, thereby stopping the flow of blood from a bird's broken nail or a nail that's been trimmed too short.

Ringers: is used to save birds in shock and other animals. One avian vet reports they are beginning to think that birds have trouble metabolizing one of the ingredients in Ringers and are using just sterile saline now. Many still go with the Ringers as they have had very good luck with it. However, both sterile saline and sterile water can be used when that is all that is available. Another vet pointed out that a hypoglycemic animal can die because Ringers doesn't have glucose in it and suggested even keeping that on hand, too.

Razor: Straight edged razor (safety kind).

Reinforced Packing Tape: (see Tape)

Saline, Sterile or Contact Lens Saline: for eye injury flushes is very good to have on hand. Necrosis to eyelid or eye tissue is often deadly to birds because of the amount of area in the skull the eye encompasses.

Scalpel: Note if one can't find a scalpel, an Exacto knife and extra blades is an alternative.

Scissors: one sharp pair, one pair of small blunt nose.

Splints: popsicle sticks, dowels, round toothpicks.

Syringes: STERILE: 1 cc or 1/2 cc for injections. Larger syringes such as a 3 cc or a 10 cc to draw up solutions such as saline or Ringers and then switch needles or attach a needle of small gauge to it. Usually a 25 to 28-gauge needle is great, 1/2 inch length.

Tape: Vet Wrap (trademark reg.) Found in most stores in bright shocking colors. It sticks to itself, not the bird, so it is our overall choice of tape.

Tooth Picks: (round kind): Dowels of various sizes for splints. A straight edged razor (safety kind).

Thread: Regular sewing thread. This can be used for many things including tourniquets for small birds.

Tubing: pliable rubber in various sizes can be used for force feeding or for tourniquets.

Tweezers: 2 or 3 different sizes and shapes are suggested.



Traveling

Two cages are recommended. One cage is for traveling (small cage or carrier) and one to call home (large cage). Whether your bird is large or small, it will be more comfortable in a small box or carrier, covered to darken the space and help the bird relax while traveling. Even if you do not take your wing-clipped bird on vacation, you will likely have to travel to see a vet so a traveling sized carrier is worth the cost. Often small or extra small dog kennels work well and can be found at most thrift stores. Be sure to wash, sterile and dry well before using.

Put a soft fabric on the bottom of the carrier to provide the bird with secure footing and stop it from sliding around, even if a perch is available. If using a perch, use one that your bird can grip well – a rope or cholla cactus perch are good choices. Place the carrier on the passenger-side floor or secure with a seat belt so it does not move around too much. **Don't ever put a bird in a car trunk**, exhaust fumes will kill your bird. Do not place a bird on the dashboard while you are driving or have your bird outside of a safe carrier roaming free in the car. Too many unexpected sudden stops have been known to kill a bird up against the windshield.

Out in a hurry

In an emergency, it is important to get to safety quickly with your family and pets. We suggest an emergency bag kept near your exit area with an emergency supply of food and bottled water and maybe a blanket or towel and a few toys and a bird carrier – try a soft-sided duffel bag with outside pockets or small dog/cat kennel or acrylic aquarium with lid for each bird. The carrier should be appropriate for each bird (and beak!). In a hurry you can place your bird in the carrier, and if it fits, into a duffel bag to provide some protection from smoke or fumes. The outside pockets on the duffel bag can have the emergency supplies. If your bird sleeps in a sleeping cage it is a good idea to have a small bag with emergency supplies ready to go. Another suggestion is to use pillow cases in an emergency evacuation, tied up tight at the top. Store a pillow case on or near each bird cage for extra security.



Carriers:

Keep carriers in a safe, convenient location so that one can grab birds and be out of there. In an emergency seconds count! A vet pointed out that one might not be able to fit all of the carriers in a vehicle, if even there were enough carriers for all the birds. He suggested keeping a good supply of pillowcases and long twist ties in the bird room. Quickly stick a bird in each pillow case, twist tie the top and go.

Variations on this theme include using: clean burlap bags, mesh bags or perhaps even re-cycled feed bags - as long as one turns these inside out to wash them, taking care not to use heat to dry them (in the case of those made from fibers).

Additional Resources

Suggested Reading

- The Companion Parrot Handbook, by Sally Blanchard
- The Parrot Problem Solver, by Barbara Heidenreich
- My Parrot, My Friend: An Owner's Guide to Parrot Behaviour, by Bonnie Munro Boane
- Guide to Companion Parrot Behaviour, by Mattie Sue Athan
- My Human, My Slave, by Elizabeth Aaron
- Parrot Toys & Play Areas, by Carol S. D'Arezzo and Lauren Shannon-Nunn
- Birds for Dummies, by Gina Spadafori and Brian L. Speer, DVM
- Cockatiels for Dummies, by Diane Grindol

You've come a long way baby ... Be mindful of old information provided in bird care books or publications that are not current (at least from the 1990's) as they contain outdated information and suggestions on companion bird care. Many aspects of bird care have changed along with modern scientific research, animal health care, species studies, medicines and diet etc.

Links:

- <http://www.greyhaven.bc.ca>

Contact Numbers

Dr. Anne McDonald 1956 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC
V6J 1Z2
Tel: 604-734-5100

Greyhaven Sanctuary **Tel: 604-878-7212**

PLEASE, never assume the cost of the bird equals the value of your companion. Please don't limit their treatment, care or maintenance to how much they cost at the time of adoption. Your bird's medical or behavioural care should reflect the commitment you have made to your new family member.

Bird Sitting Services

These services are not provided by the Greyhaven Exotic Bird Sanctuary but we often have volunteers who do bird-sitting. Please contact a Greyhaven director for more information.



About Greyhaven Exotic Bird Sanctuary

How We Spell Rescue

R ehabilitation –	Physically and psychologically.
E ducation –	Health, nutrition, interaction, community involvement.
S anctuary –	A safe haven for birds at risk.
C ommitment –	To ensure all birds are treated humanely.
U nderstanding –	Compassion to caregivers who can no longer keep their bird.
E nlightenment –	Alleviating the anxieties associated with companion birds.

What is Greyhaven?

Greyhaven Exotic Bird Sanctuary is a registered non-profit society that rescues, rehabilitates and cares for unwanted, injured, orphaned, abused, neglected and abandoned exotic birds. Greyhaven provides sanctuary, rehabilitation, consultations with our avian vet when health care issues arise, and a daily monitored dietary regime consisting of high quality seeds, pellets, vegetables and fruits.

Greyhaven actively promotes avian welfare and awareness in the community through educational seminars and presentations to local schools, colleges, clubs, and other organizations. Our goal is to help people understand the level of devotion and commitment it takes to share one's home with a companion bird.

No member of Greyhaven receives monetary remuneration, including its Board of Directors. Our organization is solely operated by volunteers who generously devote their valuable time to the well-being of the birds that are under the care and protection of Greyhaven. We are strongly committed to the welfare of our birds, and dedicate each and every day to providing the highest level of care.

We rely entirely on donations and fundraising to defray costs. The challenge for Greyhaven is to find the resources to care for the ever-increasing number of birds entering its facility. There are over 100 birds in our care at all times. Due to the large numbers of birds and limited resources, we are forced to turn birds away almost daily. Medical expenses, food, cages, toys and essential equipment are ongoing expenses. Our current facility is inadequate. It is too small to house the number of birds in our care, it has a leaky roof and no quarantine facilities. We desperately need a new facility that can meet the demands of caring for these intelligent creatures.



A Bit of History

Greyhaven Exotic Bird Sanctuary was founded in 1998 by several dedicated individuals who recognized that there was a fundamental need for a safe haven for birds who were abused, neglected, abandoned, orphaned, or their caregiver could no longer look after their bird due to unforeseen circumstances.

Greyhaven's original premises were located on the second floor of Knott's Nursery and comprised of approximately 200 square feet. There was no running water and volunteers had to transport water back and forth for cleaning cages, bottled water was provided to the birds for drinking and bathing. During the winter months a heavy plastic enclosure had to be erected to provide protection from the cold weather and the only heating source were two oil-filled heaters. During the summer months, the volunteers would mist the birds continuously to keep them cool as the temperatures could reach 30c.

The premises were then developed and constructed solely by volunteers and through the generosity of volunteers and a few suppliers, the majority of the building materials were paid out of their own pockets. The premises had encompassed approximately 500 square feet which we have outgrown and we are canvassing all areas in the lower mainland for larger premises or a small parcel of land.

Some Quick Stats

Greyhaven started out with 6 volunteers we now have over 70 and encourage individuals and families to become part of our team.

Approximately 200 members pay membership dues and have a democratic right to vote on major issues affecting the operation and future of Greyhaven.

Greyhaven averages 115 successful adoptions per year, 35 foster homes provide quarantine protocols, and palliative care.

We average 40 birds on site and our numbers can increase dramatically when there are multiple birds placed for adoption. In one phone call, the numbers may increase by 15 birds and quickly fill any vacant space.

Wherever we are needed in the community, our volunteers will bring their birds to educate and entertain groups of all ages.

No one receives monetary remuneration as everyone is a volunteer including the Board of Directors & Coordinators.

Medical costs can easily exceed \$10,000.00 per year; feed costs are high as we do not scrimp on providing the best seed mixes, pellets, treats, and of course, there are miscellaneous expenses which tend to use up any extra funds we have in reserve. We are seeking corporate sponsorships or benefactors to help us with our increasing operating expenses.

Dr. Anne McDonald D.V.M. is an executive board member providing veterinarian care to all our birds and is integral to all medical alerts which are of public concern.

The Cold Dark Room

- The Reason We Volunteer

My memories as I huddle here all day, alone and fearful, are of my home far away.

Those happy days with my clutch mates and nest, that first human who fed us, those are the best.

I was taken from home and a new master brought me here, I was very frightened and alone, and my heart filled with fear.

I was placed in a small cage with very few seeds to eat, No gentle touch or words of love came my way to greet.

What happened to that gentle voice and her loving touch? I need someone, please, to comfort me, and love me very much.

Days tuned into months then years and I am still alone. No prayers for me, no help, no one to hear me when I moan.

I'm shut away in a dirty cage so frightened by every sound. I cannot get out to play and there's not a toy to be found.

I think that I shall very soon fly high across the Bridge. I'm not quite sure just where it is, perhaps just over the ridge.

I wish I could have lived a little before I have to die, but when I make my final flight there is no one here to cry.

I'm very weak this morning but I hear in the house a new sound. Strange voices are heard down the hall and feet moving around.

The door to my room is opened and two humans open my cage. It's a human man and lady and my master is in a rage.

"Take him and go, he's a worthless bird," I heard my master scream. I was sick and scared but as I looked at the lady, I saw on her face, tears stream.

She gently picked me up and held me close against her breast. She kissed my head and whispered, "You're going to have a rest."

The man said I had a new home where I would be loved all day, a home where I would be happy and free and always want to stay.

But first I needed some medicine to get well, as he drove me to the vet. I soon was well and I knew I was loved, now I'm the happiest bird you ever met.

So if you know of a little bird, who is kept in a cold dark room, please do all you can to rescue him and save him from certain doom.

Dedicated to all the little birds in cold, dark rooms. Juanita Hawkins - 2003