

**Conservation**



**Aviary**



**Aviculture**



**Health**

# parrot

**LIFE**

Vol.1, №1



# CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Here's a listing of shows, seminars, conferences and various events in the bird's world, all over the world. Please let us know about your club's, park's and zoo's activities.

## In Canada:

### • *The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Parrot Symposium (West)*

Victoria, BC, Canada  
May 21 and 22, 2005

**Speakers will be announced on the website soon.**

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

## In the USA:

### • *Parrot Festival 2005 Six<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Educational Conference*

Hosted by the National Parrot Rescue & Preservation Conference  
January 28, 29, & 30, 2005, The Airport Marriott,  
George Bush International Airport, Houston, TX

**Speakers include:** Dr. Natalie Antinoff, Nancy Burke, Pam Clark, Dr. Susan Friedman, Diane Grindol, Gudrun Maybaum, Dr. David Phalen, Matt Schmit and Nancy Speed.

[www.parrotfestival.org](http://www.parrotfestival.org) or call 713-557-BIRD

### • *PEAC Conference*

November 12, 13 and 14, 2004  
Marina Village Conference Center  
San Diego, California

**Speakers include:** Diana Halloway, Russ Shade, Carla Smith Freed, Fern Van Sant, Liz Wilson, and more to be announced.

Parrot Education & Adoption Center,  
P.O. Box 600423, San Diego, Ca 92160-0423  
Phone/fax: 619-287-8200

[www.peac.org](http://www.peac.org)

[parroted@peac.org](mailto:parroted@peac.org)

## World:

### • *VI International Parrot Convention Tenerife 2006*

Hosted by Loro Parque Fundación and Loro Parque will take place in Tenerife, 27th-30th September, 2006. [www.loroparque.com](http://www.loroparque.com)

Volume 1, Number 1



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# Editorial Note:

Avid parrot enthusiast and the novice companion parrot apprentice alike will gain insight on these wonderful yet complex exotic creatures.

After months of incubation and nurturing, the first issue of Parrot Life is finally taking flight. The next few months and subsequent issues will be our fledgling period. Communication and interaction of the flock will be essential to the success of our magazine so we will rely on the guidance from our readers, collaborators, fellow aviculturists and parrot enthusiasts around the world to help us progress towards maturity.

For those who have chosen to be guardians to these wonderful feathered creatures, we will thrive to provide you with the most accurate and updated facts & recommendations on responsible parrot care and husbandry. Parrot Life will dedicate quality reports, reviews & valuable chronicles on topics such as psittacine behaviour, nutrition, health, safe idealistic cage and environment requirements, trends & advancements in aviculture and endangered parrot species restoration programs.

In the embryonic stages of development, we realized the need to create a truly interactive magazine. We've included detachable charts "My Parrot Profile" and resourceful materials such as the Trouble Shooting Infertility, Work Sheet for the aviculturist. Bird Flash, Plume of a Feather, Birds on a Wire, Parrot Trivia and other regular columns will require participation from our readers.

We will strive to remain truthful to the ideals we aspire to, promote all parrot life, whether it be in captivity or in its natural habitat. Our incessant efforts to raise awareness for the plight of parrots will be featured throughout our magazine. Emphasis will be

made on the essential collaboration needed to interlink aviculture, conservation, field research, avian medicine, behaviourists, ornithologists as well as the companion parrot owners. We hope to bridge the communication gap between parrot lovers and conservation fundamentalists. All must become integral advocates to this plight.

I also believe it is essential to promote responsible environmental attitudes. Captive breeding efforts are futile without the parallel success to protect natural habitat for future reintroduction and survival of these wild species. Sustainable harvesting, ecotourism, education & global awareness are also fundamental. Although Canada has decreased significantly the incidence of wild caught birds in the pet market, there are some who are still tempted by this trade.

We will without doubt unveil controversial debates and issues, although we vow to remain equitable. We hope Parrot Life will create a forum to discuss current issues regarding CITES, future laws and recommendations such as the MAP (model aviculture program).

We hope you will enjoy reading this first issue and look forward to receiving the next one at the beginning of the new year. Save it for future reference, share it throughout your bird community and feel free to express your thoughts and concerns, by contacting us either by mail or via email.

Our unwavering determination to promote awareness for the preservation, and conservation of wild and captive parrot species will echo throughout our pages, for their plight is inherent.

Josee Bermingham  
Editor

*You can find Josee's Biography on page 6.*



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# ***Evolution of Aviculture***

## **AFA, San Francisco, California, August 2004**

I was privileged to attend this year's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary AFA (American Federation of Aviculture) conference early August 2004. I will try to summarize the highlights of the presentations that I had the chance to attend. Unfortunately 2-3 speakers were presenting simultaneously in the different conference rooms & due to the extremely interesting content of each presentation, choosing which to attend was often a dilemma.

### **Susie Kasielke, the curator of birds at the Los Angeles Zoo**

focused on problems the aviculturist might encounter in the incubation process and some of the solutions to resolve these problems. She shared her extensive experience, and emphasized the essentials required to properly monitor the developmental stages of incubation. Egg weight loss must be monitored and managed, a quality scale, several incubators are preferable and reliable thermometers and hydrometers. Partial parental care should also be considered when possible. We must distinguish between fertility and hatchability! New advancements now use radiographic images to assess development during incubation. There is a decrease in the percentage of embryonic mortality in the middle stages of incubation with new advancements in aviculture, whereas 70 % of eggs used to die during this phase which was attributed to poor nutrition, and infection !

### **On the wild side conservation efforts and field studies**

were presented by several renowned biologists such as Dr. Brightsmith who has since 1999 been the director of research of the Tambopata Macaw Project at the Tambopata Research Center in Peru. Extensive research is now being conducted to study the seasonal patterns of the clay licks used in Peru by various species such as the macaws, amazons and pionus species. These species instinctively rely on geophagy (eating of clay) at variable times of the day, through seasonal patterns. Analysis of the clay (at various locations where the birds mostly compete in comparison to where the clay is ignored) is now revealing surprising data. Evidence that the mineral contents, once thought to be sought out for, is not adequately present in the clay to justify all the hard work needed to fly onto the clay lick and compete for their share. Absorption of dietary toxins in the wild and the instinctive need for a natural detoxifier is a more plausible reason. Definitely the CEC (amount of + charge) found in the clay needed to neutralize and bind to the toxins is present at variable levels, but a more significant analysis has shown that the levels of salt (sodium) are found in greater proportion where the clay is most fought for. Despite these complicated analysis, observations and deductions, they have still to understand why and what coincides with the seasonal pattern, nesting and fledgling season, and where the birds disappear to off season.

### **Brian Speer DVM, one the most well known avian veterinarians in California**

spoke on the evolution and advancements in avian veterinary medicine. We traveled to the past when budgies were first kept as companions in the 1600's, to Robert Stroud- The bird man of Alcatraz, who was the first to publish the Digest of Diseases of Birds, from his jail cell! Despite it's somewhat voodoo techniques, his observations were good and led to the specialization of veterinarians in the avian patient. The AAV (Association of Avian Veterinarians) was founded only in 1980, and despite this short time, remarkable advancements have been made. Brian Speer also presented a talk on corrective surgical techniques for beak deformities. These new relatively non-invasive surgical techniques can correct malocclusions and prognathism in chicks and adults alike, despite their degree of severity. Early detection of beak deformities by constantly monitoring the chicks in our nurseries is recommended.

### **Greg Matuzak, a conservation biologist**

shared the obstacles and success of the field research program he designed & implemented for the Scarlet Macaw Project in Curu, Costa Rica. The first release in 1999, followed by continuous monitoring of active nests, supplemental feeding program, and research for the availability of wild food sources has consumed the team for the past 5 years. "The supplemental feeding program has been instrumental in allowing researchers to monitor the established flock in Curu". They are now awaiting the release of the second group of macaws, from the captive breeding center Amigos de Los Aves Program. Emphasis was made on the collaboration of aviculture, wildlife and conservation to develop important conservation tools together for the endangered species restoration programs.







# Conference Review

## Jafet Valez, from the Fish and Wildlife Service

presented the Puerto-Rican Amazon Project. The passion demonstrated for this project by the speaker was clearly evident and an empty room soon became the hottest venue for an early morning presentation. The species recovery project started with 13 birds in 1975. 99% of forests were destroyed on this Caribbean island due to deforestation for sugar cane plantations and devastation by hurricanes. These also damaged the existing nest cavity, and now require constant cavity enhancement from the field research team. The Caribbean National Forest is not the optimal habitat for the survival of the species but it was its last and only refuge. In 1986 a first release of 3 individuals was made. In 1989, 47 individuals were counted before the devastating hurricane Hugo hit the island. The population suffered horrific losses, 23 birds surviving. 40 birds were since introduced. In 2004, the captive breeding program has increased its success by 400%. 16 chicks were raised. The project believes relocation of the species to a more benign site is critical to their survival. A new location on the other end of the island which has been reforested, is now protected and would provide a safer sanctuary. Their present location is constantly threatened by future hurricanes, predators such as red tail hawks and mongoose. The project is hoping to build a new field station and release flights in the new location by the year 2006 for the anticipated release of 18 additional birds.

## Branson Ritchie DVM

without doubt remained faithful to his research expertise and passion by presenting the advancements in viral disease testing. An emphasis was made on the danger of submitting samples to labs that are using non-specificity PCR/DNA assays. Lori samples submitted to a lab for PBD could result in a wrong prognosis if the lab is not using the proper assays with 2nd primers. PDD (proventricular dilatation disease and proventricular dilatation syndrome) are different and without the histopathologic (microscopic changes in affected birds) confirmation that there was indeed a presence of lymphoplasmacytic ganglioneuritis, the suspected viral infection can not be confirmed. The presence of a lymphoplasmic enteritis or ingluvitis only is not a confirmation for PDD. Euthanasia is contraindicated for birds suspected of PDD provided they are not suffering from the disease, isolated, closely monitored & cared for. The hope of developing a future vaccine relies on these birds and the continued financial support from the avian community.

## Parrot behaviorists were onto new theories

### Mattie Sue Athan

did an overview of "How the Companion Parrot behavior modification has changed with the evolution of aviculture" The biggest change has been the wild caught vs the captive bred companion. Now behaviorists have to teach people how to teach parrots to be parrots! She stated out so truthfully that companion parrots may want to change mates with humans as well, so the guilt trip has to stop! Independent self rewarding behaviors fail to be taught or develop, and this failure of independence is the most common behavioral reason for birds losing their homes.

## Sally Blanchard

demystified the common myths of companion parrots. Emphasis was placed on the realization that must be made that most companions are in constant hormonal overload! Through improved husbandry techniques and education, we now provide optimal nutritional, environmental (light & humidity) and physical contact. As most captive bred birds are pet in a stimulating way, all these factors increase the risk of aggression and hormonal reactions.

## The leading veterinarians also included Susan Clubb DVM

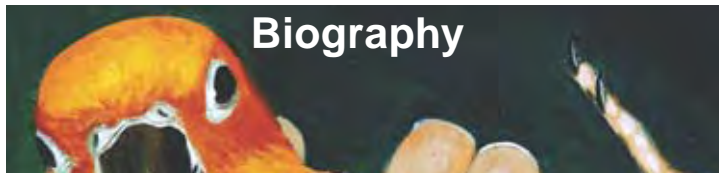
who studied feather damaging behavior in parrots and conducted a recent study at the renowned Loro Parque. Feather plucking is a simplistic term often misused for up to 6 different feather damaging behaviors. Plucking, biting, chewing, stripping, barbering and self mutilation are all feather damaging reactions! Her preliminary findings are extremely interesting... Under diagnosed feather damaging bacteria and fungal problems which have been identified as well as allergic reaction, inflammatory skin disease & oxidative stress are often the underlying cause of feather damaging behaviors! This presentation revolutionized past theories where sexual frustration and boredom were primarily to blame.

## Patricia Whitman the animal care manager, propagation Center of the San Diego Zoo,

presented a behind the scenes view of the state of the art incubation, hand-rearing and breeding facility. They promote foster parenting and supplemental feeding (hand fed chicks with parental brooding). Emphasis that sanitation such as hand washing and UV sterilizers for the nursery room, adequate humidity when chicks hatch and record keeping are essential to a successful breeding program.

## END POINT

The educational content of each presentation is overwhelming to summarize in a simplistic way. Attending conferences and continuing education seminars is essential for the advancement of the avicultural community and the companion avian guardian. I will continue this revue in the next issue.... And highlight **Howard Voren**, a well known aviculturist and author, **Bonnie Kenk** - The wild Parrots of Southern California, **Mark Bittner** who has written a book that chronicles his observations of and interactions with the wild parrots of Telegraph Hill in San Francisco as well as many others. We will have the honored pleasure of presenting **Mark Bittner** at this years Canadian Parrot Conference in Hamilton, Ontario, October 30-31st 2004. For the 1st Quebec Parrot Conference Nov 6-7th 2004, **Mattie Sue Athan** will be our honored guest.



## Biography

Josee Bermingham

20 years ago, I was a young redheaded parrot enthusiast, who had the opportunity to work for a respectable exotic animal pet centre. I soon developed a passion for parrots that would lead me to embark on a wild adventure. I enrolled in an animal health technician program that would then lead me to work in the renowned exotic animal clinic for Corina Lupu DVM. I continued my education in ecology at the university level, travelled to the Amazon basin for a survival camp and was then invited to participate in a field research population estimate of African green monkeys in the eastern Caribbean. Several weeks spent atop mango trees in tropical volcanic ravines proved unsuccessful in my ability to enumerate these primates. Desperation, and a sense of failure, was overcome by the excitement of capturing on film and identifying numerous bird species in this pristine environment. Echoing through the tropical mist, I heard of the parrot conservation projects directed by Paul Butler. I knew then that my calling was for birds. I returned home determined to carve out my path, which would hopefully lead me one day to participate and contribute to the Pride of the Caribbean Parrots.

As a young apprentice, so much needed to be learned in so little time. My unquenchable desire to learn and contribute to research led me to work for the Hagen Avicultural Research Institute for many years. I attended numerous conventions that undoubtedly contributed to my continuing education. I had the privilege of exploring the complexities of avian nutrition, nursery management, advancements in the science of aviculture, and assisting renowned veterinarians such as Michael Taylor, pursuing research in endoscopic techniques and viral diseases. This extraordinary platform allowed me to collaborate in field research, as a tree climber for the Yellow Napped Amazon Project in Guatemala. I then understood the complexities of this perilous endeavour. The poaching and deforestation witnessed at a time when international efforts were being directed towards limiting trade was most disconcerting. My mentor and friend LoraKim Joyner DVM, enlightened my quest to promote the plight of parrots, raise awareness and promote responsible parrot ownership.

To raise global conservation awareness, SOS Earth, Air and Sea was founded to educate children about their responsibility to preserve and respect the earth and all living species. For the avian community I continued to provide emergency first aid classes, avicultural seminars and consultations to local breeders. Several months ago, the idea of launching a Canadian Parrot magazine was proposed—this is a unique opportunity to weave the intricate and fascinating aspects of Parrot Life.

# READER'S STORIES

## Plume of a feather

Grab that plume and  
write your bird story in  
1000 words or less,  
add a picture  
and voila!



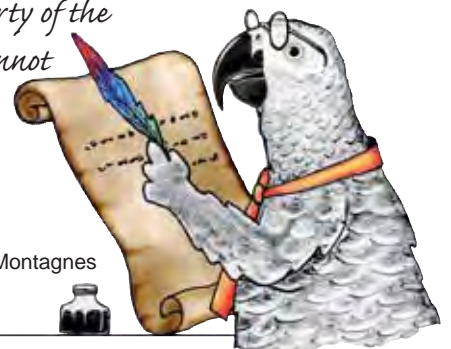
**You could win a  
2005 Parrot Calendar.**

*For the next issue we are looking for stories from people who have adopted an older bird that was not in an abused or bad situation. You should have been living with that bird as a companion for a minimum of 5 years. The size of your bird is of no concern to us; it could be a budgie or conure, as well as a macaw. The twist is we would like a fun and happy story in which you did not save a poor bird. Because we know that all adoption's stories are not melodramatic ones, some are quite light and fun. Think your story is a winner? Grab your plume, send it and see in the next issue if you were the chosen one.*

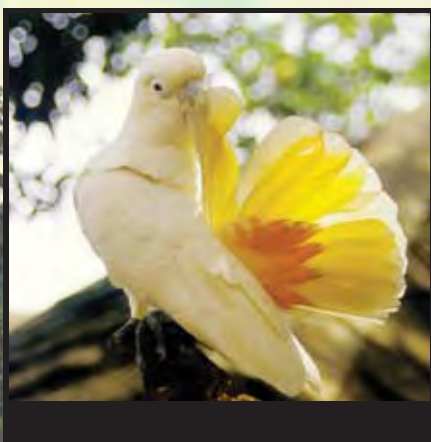
*(If you would like to submit your story, send it to Parrot Life's editorial office. All stories and photos submitted to Parrot Life Magazine automatically become the property of the publisher and cannot be returned.)*

parrotlife@pubnix.net

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*Hidden in the  
Canary Islands,  
the Loro Park  
Foundation has  
created a paradise for  
parrots, and for  
parrot lovers.*

Their main focuses are:

- Parrot Park
- Breeding
- Continued Education
- Conservation

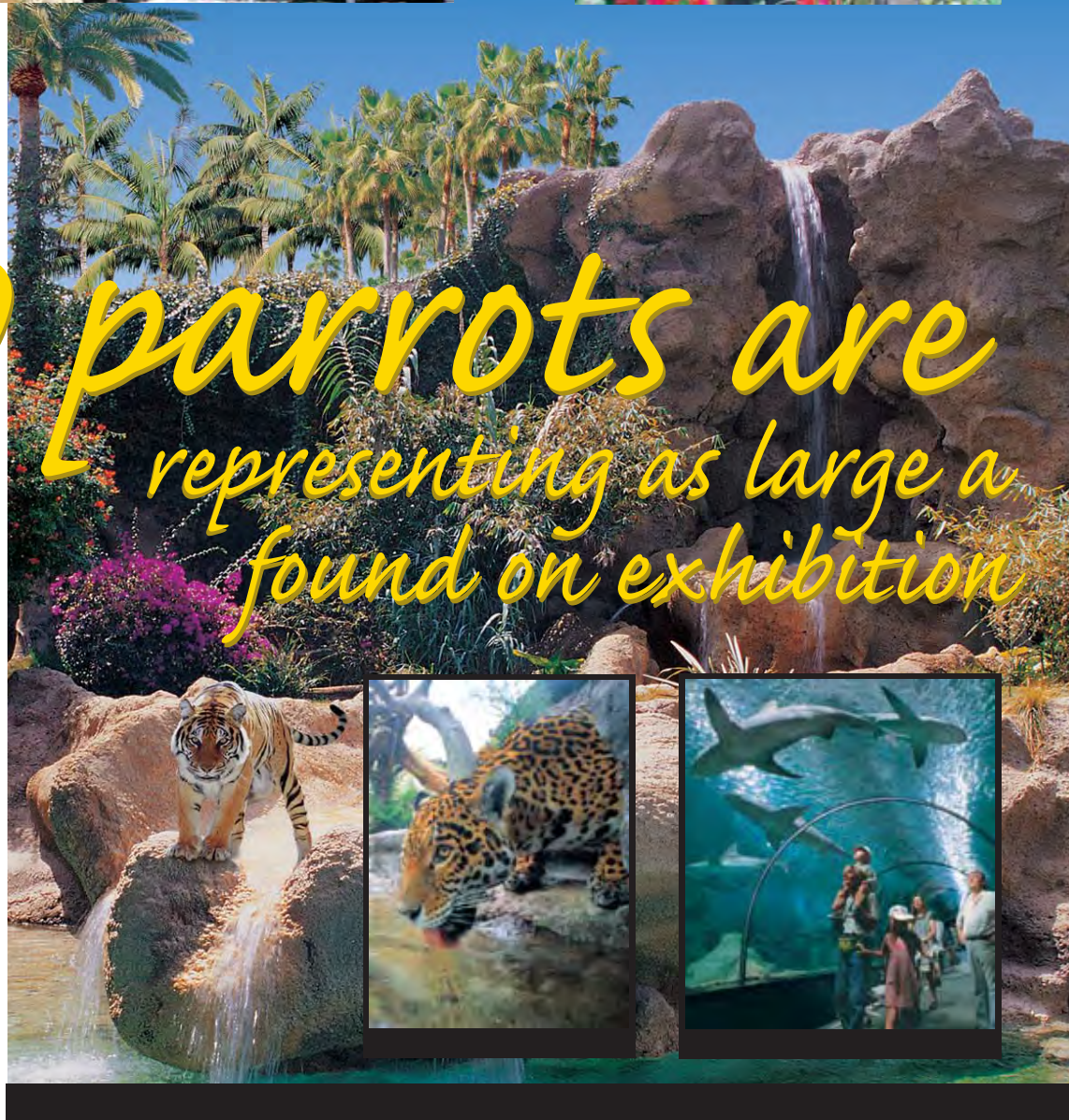




*In 1972, Wolfgang Kiessling opened Loro Parque, a parrot park of only 1.3 hectares (3.1 acres), in the hamlet of Puerto de la Cruz on the north coast of Tenerife, the largest of the Canary Islands of Spain*

**800 parrots are representing as large a found on exhibition**

*The location of Loro Parque was well chosen in space and in time because, as tourism has thrived on Tenerife during the past three decades, so has Loro Parque been able to expand to an area of 13.5 ha (33 acres) and develop into not just the world's premier parrot park, but also a world class zoological park in all its attributes. Furthermore, the combination of sub-tropical latitude (28°N) and ameliorating effect of a cold current in the surrounding Atlantic Ocean, creates near-perfect climatic conditions for maintaining and breeding parrots. When the Spanish first reached the islands, they dubbed them the "fortunate islands", especially because of the wonderful climate. This feature, together with the first rate installations established by Loro Parque and the Loro Parque Fundación, have created a paradise for parrots, and for parrot lovers.*



Nowadays, as many as 1.5 million visitors a year come to Loro Parque to see its parrots and other attractions. Passing through the elegant Thai architecture of the entrance, visitors enter a botanical and zoological paradise. Luxuriant vegetation abounds, cocooning the visitor for the several hours of his or her visit and creating multiple microclimates for the benefit of the animals. For those who want to see parrots, there is no chance that they will miss them. Some 800 parrots are exhibited in the park, representing as large a diversity of forms as can be found on exhibition anywhere in the world. In Loro Parque they form the fabric of the park, being spread throughout almost the entire area and capturing the attention of the visitors as only parrots know how in addition to the other animal

attractions. The philosophy behind the exhibition of such a variety of parrots has remained constant throughout the life of Loro Parque. It is that people, by being amazed at their myriad colours, their endearing antics and their great variety, cannot only feel that they have had a great day out at the park, but also that they can better know and respect these charismatic birds. Willingness to support conservation efforts follows on from knowledge and respect, and this has been an ever-increasing outcome which is the central role of the Loro Parque Fundación. But more on that later. Let us get the full flavour of Loro Parque by looking at what other attractions dwell amidst the greenery. The first encounter is likely to be with the park's bachelor group of gorillas, five huge silver-





*exhibited in the park,  
diversity of forms as can be  
anywhere in the world.*



One of the newest complexes is the penguinarium, the largest hi-tech climate-controlled exhibition to be found anywhere!

backs living remarkably harmoniously. These animals form part of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) for the species and, when there is a need for a new male to assume the leadership of a group of females and youngsters in another participating zoo, Loro Parque is on stand-by to supply the lucky male. Not far away is a close relative, the chimpanzee family, originally formed from some animals which were confiscated by the relevant government authorities in Tenerife after having been used for beach photography with tourists. With the correct care at Loro Parque, these animals are completely integrated into a well-balanced group, where breeding has taken place. The tigers are another attraction

where Loro Parque showed its social responsibility by accepting into its superior care animals which had been confiscated from lamentable conditions. The other species of large cat to be found in the park is the jaguar, with both normal pelage and in the black phase.

One of the newest complexes is the penguinarium, the largest to be found anywhere and a hi-tech climate-controlled exhibition which duplicates to a high degree the natural environment of these birds. In the polar exhibit co-exist three species, the King, Gentoo and Rock-hopper Penguins which the visitors can see on their snow-covered rocks, or under the water

swimming at amazing speed. Just opposite is a group of Atlantic Puffins, northern counterparts of the penguins, and in the most recent section is a colony of threatened Humboldt Penguins, another EEP species, which enjoy the higher temperatures associated with their native coastline of the Atacama Desert.

Another "must-see" is the aquarium, with its shark tunnel and a stunning variety of salt and freshwater exhibits from the tropics to temperate zones. Other aquatic exhibits of note are those of the American Alligators and of the thousands of Koi Carp in a lily-covered lake by the park entrance,



which they share with the equally showy Lesser Flamingos. The larger Chilean Flamingos, Crowned and Demoiselle Cranes adorn grassy spaces in other parts of the park, and the visitor will come across oddities such as Rhinoceros Iguanas from the Cayman Islands and Giant Galapagos Tortoises.

However, in the popularity stakes, what surely must be mentioned are the shows, with Bottle-nosed Dolphins, Californian Sea lions and parrots. The dolphins and the sea-lions each have their own open-air stadium, where shows are presented several times a day. The visitors flock to these presentations to see the spectacular demonstrations of the natural skills and intelligence which these animals possess. Each stadium has its behind-the-scenes management pools, and the animals never need to do a show if they don't want to. On the contrary, sometimes it is difficult to stop them from wanting to join in! As its name implies, the Loro Show is where the parrots perform and demonstrate that they are the "primates of the bird world"! As with the dolphins and sea lions, this carefully selected group of parrots has its own team of dedicated trainers who develop a unique bond with the animals. The Loro Show takes place inside a very large building of Moorish style, dubbed the "Parrot Palace", where the flying macaws wow the visitors with their colours and grace. The other place which wows the visitors is the Baby Station, where people can watch our experienced handlers hand feeding parrots of all ages from day one. The prevailing philosophy is to leave the parent parrots to rear their own young but, in such a large collection, inevitably things will sometimes go wrong and we have to intervene to hand raise the young birds. This we do with a lot of TLC, and people love to see how we do it.

The parrots of the Loro Show and all other parrots on exhibition in the park are owned by the Loro Parque Fundación (LPF). When this was created in 1994, Loro Parque donated its entire parrot collection to the LPF, which now loans back a proportion for public exhibition. At the same time, Loro Parque donated a 3 ha (7.2 acres) former banana plantation, at 200 m (660 feet) elevation and a few kilometres south of Loro Parque, for the creation of the LPF breeding centre, and also paid for the entire construction of what is now one of the world's parrot wonders. This centre is not open to the general public, but can be visited by members of the LPF.

The parrot collection of the LPF currently stands at about 3,500 birds of 349 species and subspecies, and the breeding centre contains

more than 1,000 aviaries which are equally divided between two units which are different in character.

One is covered with a translucent light blue mesh, creating conditions more suitable for parrots from more open natural habitats, and the other is covered with dense black mesh for the species normally found in closed forests. Each mesh also has an important function to exclude wild birds which might transport diseases. Furthermore, any parrot which might escape from its aviary is contained within the mesh and can be re-captured. Over the past years the vegetation in the breeding centre has matured and now creates almost a sense of natural habitat surrounding the aviaries. Many of the trees and other plants in the centre bear edible fruits, such as papayas, oranges and guavas, which can be included in the diets of the parrots.

## Breeding

The breeding centre forms a very important part of the overall activities of the LPF, which was created with the following mission:



**"to conserve parrots and their habitats, through education, applied research, responsible breeding programmes, and community-based conservation activities that use parrots as ambassadors for nature"**



**Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii*, a species now extinct in the wild**

The responsible breeding programmes contribute to conservation in several ways. Firstly, because the LPF usually maintains several pairs of each taxonomic form, the parrot collection is a substantial genetic reserve or "bank" for the future.

Secondly, the collection contains some species of highly threatened status in the wild, and these species are maintained and bred in cooperative programmes to maintain viable "safety-net" populations, which might be suitable for future re-introduction. These programmes can be directly with governments, as is the case with Brazil and the guacamaya *spixii-pareja* Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii*, a species now extinct in the wild and only possible to recover by captive breeding and release. A difficult species to breed, this year the LPF has successfully reared a youngster. The programmes can also be with the regional zoo community, in our case with the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, and the LPF participates in 29 European Endangered Species Programmes (EEPs), and European and International Studbooks. The LPF is the international studbook keeper and EEP coordinator for the Blue-Throated macaw *Ara glaucogularis*, a species with possibly no more than 50 wild birds left in its native Bolivia, and EEP coordinator for the Red-Browed Amazon *Amazona rhodocorytha*. It is also the studbook keeper for the Red and Blue Lory *Eos histrio*, the Mount Apo Lorikeet *Trichoglossus johnstoniae* and the Red-spectacled Amazon *A. pretrei*.

Thirdly, the LPF sells the young bred each year of commoner species, as many as 1,300 in 2003, with two conservation outcomes. The first is that the LPF supplies captive bred birds to the market, thus under-cutting and diminishing the trade in wild-caught parrots. The other is that it dedicates 100% of the income to its conservation projects, which are spread around the globe.

In fact, because all of the LPF administration costs are covered by its principal supporter, Loro



**LPF Breeding Centre**





**Armonía is working with land-owners to persuade them to adopt land management practices less damaging to macaw**

Parque, any other income from any source can be directed in its entirety to the conservation and welfare projects. Unsurprisingly, donors appreciate this fact, as well as knowing that the LPF is a registered non-profit organisation. Referring again to the LPF mission, the parrot collection forms an unrivalled research resource, and there is an ongoing programme of investigation in various fields, in collaboration with universities from many countries, and giving the opportunity for students to gain parrot research and management experience. To mention just some subjects, there is strong emphasis on diets and nutrition research, the objective being to constantly improve the nutritional plane, welfare and breeding of parrots not just in the LPF collection, but for all captive parrots. There are studies investigating the causes of feather-plucking, and examining growth rates in parent-reared and hand-reared young. Disease and health investigations include Proventricular Dilatation Disease, Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease and Polyoma virus.

## Education

The other use of the collection is for education, and the LPF runs the entire Loro Parque education service, creating all the materials and organising the school groups which visit the park in their many thousands each year. Furthermore, to raise awareness and disseminate information, the LPF runs specialist parrot workshops (in various languages), and every four years organizes and hosts in Tenerife the International Parrot Convention, the next one of which will be 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006.



**Blue-throated macaw *Ara glaucogularis***



**The Yellow-eared Parrot has a special relationship to the wax palm *Ceroxylon* for feeding and nesting, and dramatically declined due to the loss of this habitat.**

## Conservation

This account cannot be complete without mentioning what the LPF does for the conservation of parrots in the wild. Since its inception the LPF has had a portfolio of projects to conserve threatened species of parrots and their wild habitats, through working with governments, NGOs and local communities, to implement protection and restoration measures, research programmes, and awareness and education initiatives.

**To date the LPF has, with almost 3 million euros, financed and implemented 37 projects covering 17 parrot-rich countries and benefiting 58 parrot species. Currently it has 15 active field projects, which it finances with an average of 400,000 euros per year.**

Perhaps the best-known, but still most challenging of these is for the recovery of the Spix's Macaw. Although recovery now must entirely be from captive birds, during the 10 years until it finally disappeared in December 2000, the LPF supported field work on the last wild male and his mate, a female Illiger's Macaw *Propyrrhura maracana*. This produced a great deal of biological information which can be applied to the controlled release of captive birds in the future. Also during the same decade the field team undertook habitat protection and restoration measures, and worked closely with the local community to develop a strong sense of pride in this little blue macaw, such that future efforts can build on this investment already made.

The plight of the Blue-throated Macaw has already been mentioned and, since 1993, the LPF has been collaborating with the Bolivian NGO Armonía to bring about its natural recovery. This species is confined to the seasonally inundated grasslands of Beni, north-east Bolivia, where it requires tree and palm-covered islands for nesting and food. This habitat is on private cattle-ranches, and Armonía is working with



land-owners to persuade them to adopt land management practices less damaging to macaw habitat.

Armonía also mounts education campaigns, and in other ways it is trying to tackle the continuing hard-to-detect poaching of chicks from nests.



In 2003, LPF and Armonía produced the official Species Recovery Plan for the Blue-throated Macaw. Another South American project, this time in Colombia, is for the critically endangered





Yellow-eared parrot *Ognorhynchus icterotis* which, however, might be taken off the critical list of the project continues to enjoy such high success. The Yellow-eared Parrot has a special relationship to the wax palm *Ceroxylon* for feeding and nesting, and dramatically declined due to the loss of this habitat.

However, the field activities by Fundación ProAves, LPF's collaborator in Colombia, have raised the population from 81 in 1999 to more than 600 now. On the other side of the world there are other LPF projects to mention. One is for the conservation of the Phu Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary, working together with the Thai Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, and with oversight from the Thai Royal Palace.

This is a more general bio-diversity and community awareness project, which intends to minimize the impact on the sanctuary of the people who live in the many villages which surround its border. To be sure, there are interesting parrots to conserve in the sanctuary, such as Finsch's Parakeet *Psittacula finschii*, not to mention tigers, elephants and other large beasts.

Another Asian project with LPF involvement is the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program, which is attempting to recover the wild population of *Cacatua haematuropygia* from an all time low due to deforestation and illegal trade. Centred on Palawan, the remaining stronghold for this species, the project has been successful in enlisting local people to guard the known nests in various localities, and as a result the population seems to be edging-up locally.



**Thai Royal Palace involvement.**

*Loro Parque and the Loro Parque Fundación will continue with their quest to conserve parrots in the wild, provide the best possible welfare in captivity, and to make a visit to a parrot park in Puerto de la Cruz the most memorable experience ever. Please join us!*

By: David Waugh  
Director, Loro Parque Fundación

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# yes Size Matters



IN THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WE WILL BE HIGHLIGHTING VARIOUS TOPICS SUCH AS PROPER CAGE SET-UPS INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FLIGHT CONSTRUCTIONS, VARIOUS CAGE & PRODUCT MANUFACTURES, INTRODUCING NEW MODELS & MATERIALS, BASICALLY KEEPING YOU WIRED TO THE INDUSTRY AND HUSBANDRY RECOMMENDATIONS.

Some of the fundamental considerations for your bird's cage are listed as follows. Consult with your pet centre, avian consultant or breeder for additional recommendations.

■ Providing the proper environment for your companion or breeding birds is vital in maintaining both physical and mental health.

■ Your bird's cage should be his refuge, a place of comfort, security and discovery.

■ Cage size matters!! At the very least, Your bird must be able to spread his wings completely, without having the tail feathers rub against the bottom. This of course is the minimal size required for its sleeping cage. For a bird that will exercise out of its cage regularly, have an additional day cage or activity play gym. Ideally, birds should be able to exercise flight, from within their cage or outside their cage. In breeding situations, flight at least from one perch to the other is extremely important for the health of the flock. If space is a restricting factor within your home, consider building an outdoor aviary.

■ Cage design should simplify maintenance. A cage on wheels can be moved into the shower, garage or balcony to be hosed down. Does the cage fit through the door? Does the cage disassemble easily to clean cracks and corners? Seed catchers to minimize waste on floor and surroundings as well as acrylic panels are now becoming a trend in cage design. Most cages offer removable trays and cage bottom grill to facilitate cleaning.

■ Cage materials should be lead, zinc and copper safe, and non-toxic resistant paint, with no sharp edges, broken wire or rust. Purchase a cage from a reputable manufacturer.

■ The cage must be built strong for hook bill species. Secure doors and feeder latches, as well as resistant bowls to minimize waste!

■ Wire spacing must be considered for safety. A horizontal bar wire panel is essential to allow hook bills to climb up to perches.

■ The size, dimensions, materials, texture, diameter variations and number of perches are extremely important. These are often neglected and underrated, but are critical consideration! (refer to Petra Burgmann's veterinarian article on bumble foot page 46) !

■ Location of the cage within your home should be evaluated. Things to avoid are temperature extremes, harsh lighting, drafts, dampness, loud constant and stressful noises, and unsupervised pets or children in the vicinity. Ideally the cage should not be in a smoking environment, your bedroom, a carpeted room or secluded from family interactions. Many opt for the sleeping cage in a quiet room and one activity cage in the family living quarters. Always try to position the cage in a corner. Your bird needs the security and privacy these two walls will offer.

■ Cage height is a debatable issue as is everything in the bird world, but many behaviorists recommend keeping the cage equal to or lower than your eye level.

■ Install a T.V. or radio in your bird room to offer distraction while you are away. Note: An overwhelming level of noise could create a stressful environment.

■ Toys are an essential component to your bird's environment. Introduce new and rotate old toys to offer continuous mental and physical stimulation. Refer to page 43, "Every Birdie's a Critic" for the wonderful and informative DVD by Michelle Karras.

■ A transporting cage, and secondary boarding or vacation cage should be acquired. These can also be adapted for use in an emergency situation or evacuation.

■ Consider purchasing a cage that can be disassembled or fit into your car so it can be easily transported.

■ Should you consider to acquire a mate in the future for your companion, re-evaluate the cage size and the possibility of fixing a nest to cage. Some cages have an incorporated door in an upper panel for this purpose.

■ A pile of recycled newspaper is ideal for your cage bottom. It is inexpensive and can be changed daily and quickly by removing the top layer, as waste accumulates.

■ Compost your birds waste (seeds, pellets, fruits, veggies and nuts, chewed up branches, soiled substrate). This will make for a great fertilizer to grow sunflowers in the spring!



## WIRED ON CAGES



# Avian Nutrition:

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## TRENDS AND PHILOSOPHIES

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*By: Mark Hagen, M.Ag. Director of Research, Rolf C. Hagen, Inc*

Optimum nutrition can be achieved with many different diets. However it is not easy and understanding some basic principles of the pros and cons of each food item as it relates to vitamins, minerals, proteins, fat is important when trying to make up a mixture of foods. Wild animals and birds are shown by their parents the right combination of sometimes very limited types of foods to meet their requirements for flight, growth, reproduction and living! These wild food items have been selected through thousands of years of evolution. In captivity they are under different conditions and eating different foods and we expect them to select the best combination immediately. But it is not necessarily better to feed what birds eat in the wild to those in captivity. Many plants in the wild contain secondary plant compounds or are very low in many essential nutrients. For instance the feeding of clay type neutralizing mineral supplements as found in the cliff deposits of Peru is not necessary to a captive Macaw eating foods grown for human consumption. Some Breeders have a romantic notion that captive diets which are complicated, labor intensive, using expensive ingredients are the most nutritious. Yet it is possible to feed easy to prepare, cost efficient diets which do not compromise proper levels of essential nutrients. Rather than explain each essential nutrient such as vitamins, minerals etc. and what their role is in the physiology of birds, I would rather discuss how to get these nutrients into birds at optimum intake levels. Seeds were commonly the main staple food fed to pet birds and parrots. Some birds even breed on them. However optimum nutrition was rarely achieved and birds did not lay complete clutches, or live as long as they might have.

The trend in America is to feed more legumes, pasta and formulated diets to Parrots and to significantly if not totally eliminate oil seeds from their diets. At least twelve different companies now sell formulated processed diets and my estimate is that at least half the breeding Parrots are being fed such commercial formulas rather than seed mixtures. Seeds can work well when properly supplemented and when fed at low levels forcing the bird to eat his veggies and other supplemented foods. Fruits and most vegetables make a good carrier for a water soluble vitamin/mineral supple-

ment to add to a seed based diet. They do not contribute much themselves as they mainly contain high levels of water, some fiber, a few vitamins and some minerals in the case of dark leafy types. I personally do not like them because of sanitation, the work and cost involved in preparing them and cleaning up the wasted mess often left behind after birds have picked through them.

The most dramatic nutrient problem with seed based diets is not their deficiencies, which can be met with supplements, but their excesses of fat which can not be removed prior to feeding. Fat levels in the

*The caloric  
density of a diet  
is important  
because this is  
what determines  
how much  
food the bird will  
ultimately eat.*

three most commonly eaten seed kernels are so high that these seeds are referred to as "oilseeds". Although safflower is a smaller and less palatable seed than sunflower, its fat content is, in fact, higher than sunflower. Birds may not like the bitter taste of safflower and tend to eat a larger variety of seeds when eating a diet based on it. High fat intake results in small compact stool and low water intake since water is a by-product of fat metabolism. Formulated diets produce much larger stool, especially lower fat pelleted diets where birds also drink more. The correct balance of calories in the total diet versus the needs of energy and growth by the bird is an important topic. Colder environments, larger cages, free flight cages and breeding activity, does require more energy. But the sedentary life

of most cage birds together with the constant availability of food inevitably leads to over eating. This along with the consumption of oilseeds, nuts and other high fat foods limits the eating of other more nutritious foods, which includes formulated diets. Certain higher fat levels should not be considered totally bad. Even eight to twelve percent fat in a formulated diet, is still one fifth the levels found in oilseeds. Sprouting seeds can reduce the fat levels and add some vitamins. The problem with sprouting is the risk of fungal contamination such as candida and the space and time needed to prepare the sprouts. The caloric density of a diet is important because this is what determines how much food the bird will ultimately eat. Thus the energy level influences how much vitamins, minerals and protein the bird will receive on a daily basis from the ingested food.

More pelleted food needs to be eaten by birds to maintain their weight, in fact almost twice as much as high calorie seed kernels. Fat has more than twice the energy value per gram than protein or carbohydrates and this accounts for the energy differences. The cost of feeding a bird is not based on the price per kilogram of food but the price per kilo-calorie of digestible energy. Extruded foods are able to incorporate more efficient fat levels into the texture of the "kibble". Higher digestibility and slightly higher energy values are the trends in producing a very economical diet with excellent health maintenance. Pellets are made by adding a little steam and a lot of pressure to the ground up dry "mash" and squeezing it out of a large steel die. This process is more commonly used by farmers to produce low cost chicken and pig feed. Extrusion processing uses higher moisture cooking and is more commonly used for human and pet foods. Much higher cooking temperatures are achieved although only for a very short period, but long enough to kill most pathogenic bacteria (which may be in some raw ingredients), gelatinize starches thus increasing digestibility and incorporating a larger variety of ingredients into the cooked matrix of the resulting kibble. There is no doubt that most extruded foods are more palatable than the same formula pelleted. Also pellets have a tendency to produce a fine powder when the bird bites into them leading to wastage.



Extruded kibble tends to break into still edible pieces rather than explode into a powder. The quality of protein, that is its amino acid balance and digestibility, is as important as the total level of protein in a diet. The larger the number of different grains, legumes (beans), nuts and other protein sources the better the balance of amino acids will be. So besides the obvious palatability advantages of this mixture of ingredients, benefits to protein quality also occur. The different amino acid profiles of these various protein sources complement each other, resulting in a premium protein of high biological value. Research at UC Davis found the amino acid lysine requirement of cockatiels to be 0.8% and a total protein requirement of 20% on the dry matter basis of the diet. This is very similar to the Broiler poultry requirements, which we could then use as a starting point for estimating parrot growth requirements. When comparing these estimates for amino acids to the levels found in oilseeds it appears that all three are low in lysine and methionine/cystine. Feather protein contains a higher level of cystine and thus during maximum feather growth in a nestling or molting in an adult, the relative requirement for cystine increases. Parrots on a oil seed based diet develop poor feather structure and this may explain it. Supplementing seed diets with lysine and methionine which birds can convert to cystine greatly helps in beautiful featheration. This example points out the importance of supplementing higher levels of the truly limiting (deficient) nutrients to a diet rather than adding a little of each essential nutrient known, many of which may already be at sufficient levels in a seed/vege/fruit diet. Many people look

upon formulated diets as being monotonous and state "how could my bird live on one food alone". Yet some formulated diets contain a larger variety of ingredients and protein sources than what some birds end up eating out of an oil seed based diet. Some concern has been expressed over birds receiving too much protein and thus stressing nitrogen excretion organs (a by-product of protein metabolism). Remembering the total amount of protein consumed by the bird is dependent on the energy density of the food, we must therefore divide protein by the calories to get a meaningful comparison of various diets. This area of optimum protein to energy levels still needs a lot of research. It may be possible and better to feed relatively lower protein levels during much of the year. The availability of higher protein foods probably stimulates wild birds to breed, but because we may be feeding diets with too high a base level, adding more nuts or switching to higher protein processed food does not achieve the same level of stimulation as in the wild. Such careful changes to nutrient levels can really only be achieved with properly formulated diets where the bird has little chance to select out a different level. As mentioned, the high calorie nature of oil seeds limits their consumption and thus lowers the amount of amino acids available for growth of new feathers, muscles, etc. So, although oilseed kernels have a higher concentration (%) of protein, birds do not receive enough protein, which further explains the poor feather growth in birds eating oilseed based diets. And conversely, birds may be processing too much protein on pellet type diets as a by-product of having to consume more of these diets to meet their energy needs.

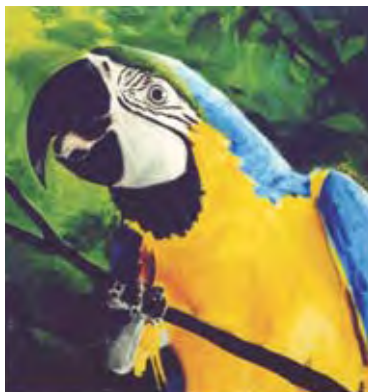
• Please look to our next issue for the conclusion of Mark's report

ORIGINAL PAINTINGS BY:

## Franciscus van Boxel

Frank has been painting and drawing his whole life. After studying graphic design and fine art in college in the mid eighties he worked in the printing industry for 17 years. Within the past couple of years he began focusing on painting portraits of parrots and other companion animals. Frank strives to capture the essence of each of his subjects. The portraits are painted in acrylic on canvas using photos as references. Frank's work can be found in collections in Canada, the United States and Europe. He currently shares his life with a peachfaced lovebird, an Indian ringneck parakeet, a timneh African grey, and a blue and gold macaw.

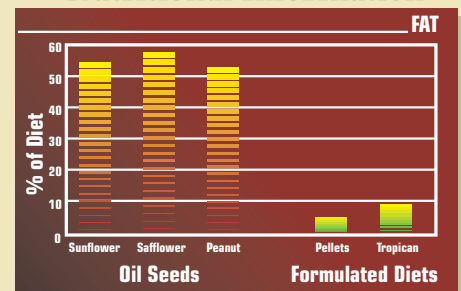
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1st of a Series



### Nutritional Information



The most dramatic nutrient problem with seed based diets is not a deficiency but an excess of fat. Fat levels in the three most commonly eaten seed kernels are so high that these seeds are referred to as "oilseeds". Although safflower is a smaller and less palatable seed than sunflower, its fat content is, in fact, higher than sunflower. Birds may not like the bitter taste of safflower and tend to eat a larger variety of seeds when eating a diet based on it. High fat intake results in small compact stool and low water intake since water is a by-product of fat metabolism. Formulated diets produce much larger stool, especially lower fat pelleted diets where birds also drink more. **Tropicana** has the correct balance of fat, not too low but still one fifth the level found in oilseeds.

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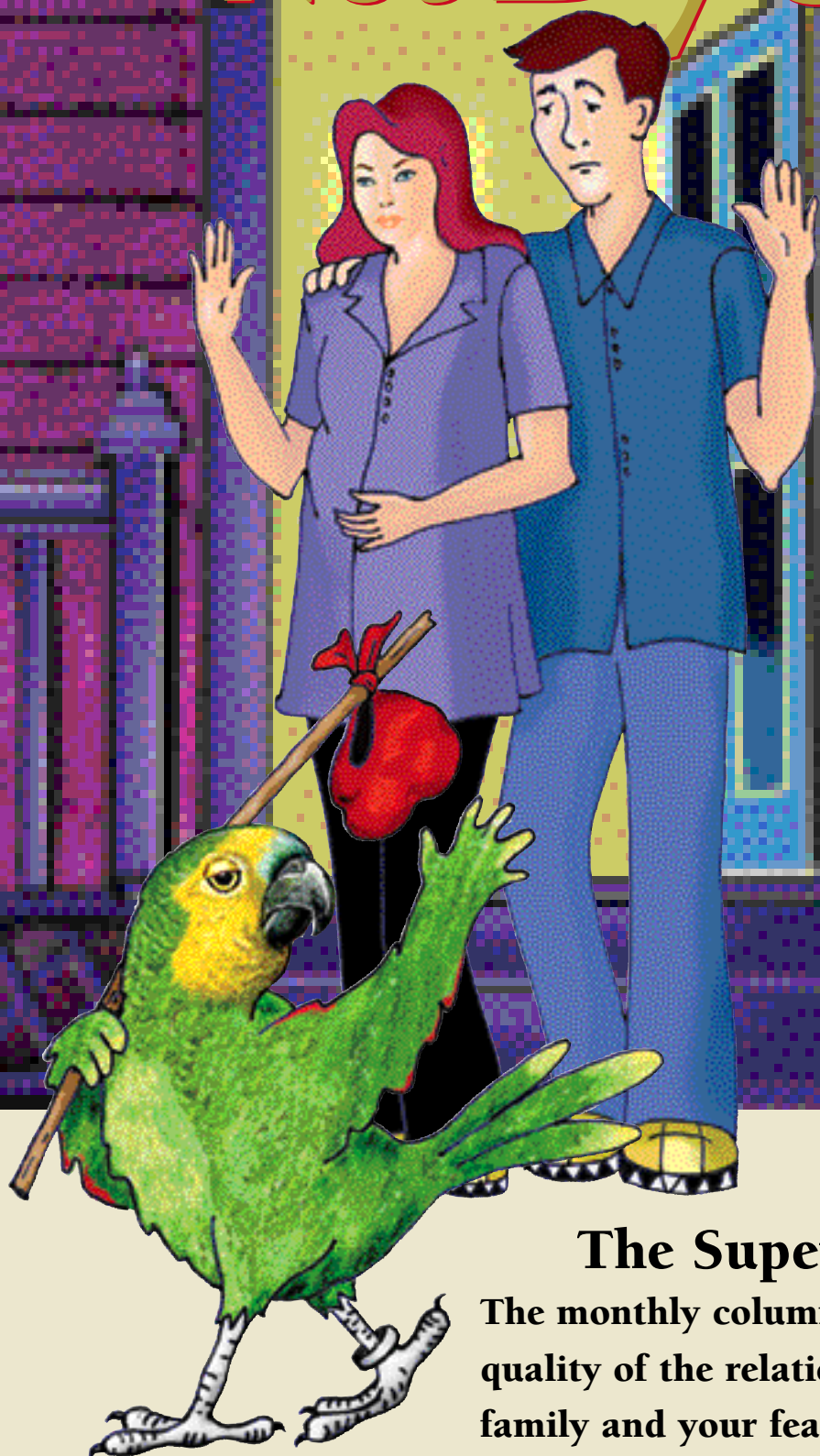


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# Bringing Home Baby,

# Not Bye- Bye Birdie!



This being the debut issue of Parrot Life, I would like to tell you a bit about myself. I will spare you the long drawn out version that begins with a crotchety old macaw and continues into a mixed collection of unclipped companion parrots, and try to give you the short, albeit, less exciting version!

I have been working with birds and bird people since 1989 in the Southern Ontario area. I started out with wild caught parrots before the availability and popularity of domestically bred, hand-raised babies took off. For several years I specialized in training people, and "taming", (I hate that word!) parrots, previously owned as well as those just out of quarantine.

I am proud that I was able to achieve my goals of giving many of these scared, misunderstood animals a quality of life they may not have known, and teaching countless people to cherish and respect these unique and loving creatures.

Soon after captive bred babies became available, I worked exclusively on raising well socialized parrots and helping people overcome behavior difficulties or adjustment challenges with their birds. Although the prices were sky high and wild parrots were cheap, I made it my mission to educate anyone willing to listen, (and some who weren't) on responsible

## The Superior Parrot

**The monthly column dedicated to improving the quality of the relationships between you, your family and your feathered companions!**

**By Janna Goodyear-Price**



parrot ownership and the need to support captive breeding programs by purchasing only birds bred in Canada for pets. It is for this reason that I have worked in the pet industry all these years. There seems to me that there is no better arena to introduce and teach people than in this environment.

Over the years I have had great opportunities to learn from veterinarians, breeders, nutritionists, behaviorists and companion parrot owners. Like you I have often needed help in understanding the needs of my flock. After all, those who think they know it all probably know very little, and definitely know less than our parrots! For the past several years I have worked as a private behavior consultant using my belief that it is us humans that need to be trained to live with parrots and that with proper guidance, reasonable expectations as well as love and respect everyone can have a Superior Parrot!

This month I will address the challenges that you may face when bringing your first "human" baby into the home without making your parrots find a new one!

## ***I can't tell you how many times I have been asked to find a new home for a bird.***

I can't tell you the amount of times I have been asked to find a new home for a bird when a couple realizes they are expecting. I ask; what were you expecting when you acquired a parrot? You knew they were long lived and demanding right? You knew they made lots of noise and a little mess right? What makes your human baby any different? Why the stress about your parrot when a human is a lot more trouble?! I realize that in certain extreme circumstances it may be necessary to find a new home for your bird when a child enters the picture, but why give up before trying? Of course this could be used as an excuse to get rid of a misunderstood bird. If that is the case then go ahead and find your bird a loving home and forget about putting a price on him. Your birds were your family before now, and they can remain with you and yes, all of you can live together in harmony, if not in peace.

I write this with great authority; after all I did manage to keep a semblance of sanity when I brought my own daughter into the world. A world which consisted of 2 amazons, 2 conures, a hawkhead, and an African red belly! Not to mention a husband, but that's another story! I never once considered giving up my feathered children before Alanna was born, but soon after, I was a paranoid wreck worrying every waking moment about psittacosis, dander, noise, and of course the day when a bird would attack my child and cause permanent disfigurement! Where would I find the time to have a shower, never mind clean six bird cages? How could I possibly spend enough quality one on one time with each bird when all I seemed to be doing was feeding a squalling infant? How could I be a good mother to anyone or anything?

Time to calm down! RELAX! The baby's gonna cry, (and get sick) whether or not you have parrots, and the parrots are NOT going to be happier usurped from their home. People manage to have a new child when they have dogs, cats, a job or other children. You and your parrots will manage too!

### ***Here's how:***

1. If you haven't already, (shame on you!) have a full veterinary check up done. This new life will be stressful for your bird too so make sure that they are strong and healthy before the alien arrival. Get your birds screened for psittacosis and treated now. Please don't panic, just ask your vet!

2. If you only have one bird, consider getting another. I have a saying, "birds are like potato chips, you can't just have one!" You will be less guilt ridden about the lack of face time your bird receives from you if he has somebirdy else to communicate with when you are busy. Remember that birds are a flock animal and introduce a feathered member now. (More on that in another issue)

3. If your bird is lacking in manners you'd better get on move now and start teaching simple commands and establishing routines. The best way to insure that you will always be able to control your bird (especially one in overload mode) is to "perch train". By teaching you bird to promptly step up onto a hand held perch when asked you will avoid countless power struggles and bites.

4. Talk to mothers of more than one child and ask them to help you. I don't mean physically but by mentoring you about all your new paranoias and psychoses. You will get through this and trust me you will regret giving up your birds for a relatively short lived period of panic. It really is okay for your birds to be unhappy for a bit. They too will adjust a lot easier to the new arrival than they will a new home.

5. Now would be a great time to start inviting over the neighborhood teens to interview or train for future baby sitting jobs! They can get to know Junior under your watchful eye, while you spend time with your bird.

6. Do not be afraid to expose your children to the antics and noise of your bird. It is better for your baby (and therefore, you) to learn to fall asleep and stay that way with a little noise than nothing but dead quiet. I used a power baby swing plopped right between my 2 amazons' cages for nap time. The birds got used to the baby; they learned not to feel threatened. They also learned to cry to get my attention. Try to include your bird in the daily activities with the baby. Get a mobile play stand so you can move the bird around with you. A lot of behavior problems I see in these situations are due to the parrot feeling left out, or due to people giving their bird too much unsupervised time out of the cage on their own.

7. As with ALL family pets, you must never leave your bird and child alone together. Teach your children from an early age not to use the cage as a walker or climber. I believe no family is complete without a pet to help teach responsibility, respect, boundaries, and even loss. Accidents will happen and there may come a day that your child may get bitten. Chances are really good though that unless you are not supervising or careless about reading your bird's mood, no serious harm will occur and a valuable lesson will be learned. Remember that this could be the case with a dog or cat as well. We have all heard fatal horror stories about a family pet gone bad. It is highly unlikely that your bird will cause anyone's death. If you are concerned about an unclipped bird, give him a slight trim to temporarily take some of the wind out of his sails.

8. Expect this adjustment to take time. I would not consider poor behavior a problem until you have given a consistent effort for several months. If you and your bird do not adjust well to this new lifestyle please call in a behavior consultant for an in-home assessment. There may be underlying issues surrounding your bird's behavior that have little to do with the baby. Another experienced person can help you determine how to handle severe problems and preserve your relationship. Another set of eyes can often see things more clearly. We sometimes have a tendency to become complacent and overlook what others see as obvious.

It is my hope that all parrot parents only give up their birds in extreme circumstances but remember; if you do not want to make this effort or if after consistently trying you can no longer give your birds the understanding and love that once was theirs alone, it is probably better that you do find them a better place. Almost everyone who gives up their bird during the stressful adjustment time of a newly arrived baby regrets it terribly eventually, only to get another bird when the children are a few years older.

We have a much larger responsibility than pet ownership at stake here, those of us lucky enough to share their hearts and homes with parrots may be ultimately responsible for the survival of the species.

Now go look into those dilating eyes of your feathered child and do the best that you can for him, always.

**Please help make this column a success by sending me your questions or ideas. I will answer one or two questions a month in the column. Contact me at [birdstheword@rogers.com](mailto:birdstheword@rogers.com), or through Parrot Life: [parrotlife@pubnix.net](mailto:parrotlife@pubnix.net)**

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# Test your macaw I.Q.:

QUIZ



FUN FEATHERED FACTS

## 1- Macaws originally come from:

- A) Almost everywhere in the world south of the equatorial tropic
- B) Central America and South America
- C) South of Europe, they were imported in Central and South America by the first Spanish missionaries
- D) Indonesia
- E) from the pet stores

## 2- Macaws are endangered animals and some species have already disappeared:

- A) False, they have all been protected for many years now and live in protected reserves. They have been able to reproduce sufficiently so their populations are quite large now. So far no species have disappeared.
- B) True, although there are reserves and groups protecting them, their habitat is disappearing every day. At least 2 species are already extinct in the wild.
- C) False, macaws have such a strong instinct for survival that in the last few years they have begun to lay clutches twice the normal size, so their numbers are continually increasing in the wild.
- D) False, there are always a lot of macaw babies in breeder's facilities and pet stores, therefore they must not be threatened.

## 3- The Latin word for macaw is:

- A) Ararauna
- B) Agapornis
- C) Ara
- D) Aratinga

## 4- Macaws have a life expectancy of:

- A) Over a hundred years
- B) Between 40 to 60 years
- C) Between 80 to 90 years
- D) Between 15 to 25 years
- E) B and D

## 5- The large macaws have enough strength in their beak to:

- A) Barely crack an almond
- B) Cut an iron rod of 3 cm diameter
- C) Break a human wrist
- D) Almost no strength at all, it's just that their beak is really sharp and it serves as a scissor.

## 6- Macaws have specific nutritional needs so their diet should be composed of:

- A) 75% to 85% of a good commercial pellet without artificial colorants. The remaining 15% to 25% should be nuts like almonds, walnut or Brazilian nuts and a bit of a good mixture of seeds once or twice a week. You can add to that fresh food so your macaw (but mostly you) feels like he is part of the gang when it's meal time.
- B) Although pellets are what they should eat, you should alternate the brand of pellets you use, that way he will have the best from every brand.
- C) 50% of a good seeds mix on which you add a vitamin supplement and 50% of fresh food like; a mix of cooked beans, a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, meats, eggs, pastas and cereals. To make sure your bird gets all the nutrients he needs you should add spiruline, wheat germ oil and so on.
- D) Only seeds and fruits because after all, this is what they would be eating in the wild.

## 7- All macaws species have the same nutritional needs:

- A) True
- B) False, some have very specific needs like the Hyacinth, red-bellied and blue & gold Macaw
- C) False, all the species with red feathers (red-bellied, scarlet and green-winged) need more beta-carotene in their diet in order to keep their color.



## Analyze your results:

Minus 100 to 0: You should probably not get yourself involved in living with a macaw or any other bird for that matter! Maybe a cactus would be enough trouble for you although you do have to water it a few times a year...

Between 0 and 70: Read more, attend conferences and keep on buying our magazine you still need to learn a lot (about macaws at least).

Between 70 and 140: You do know quite a bit about macaws, but maybe you didn't get the hundred points in question 17... But don't worry this is an ethical question so it doesn't impoverish your intelligence!

Between 140 and 240 points: Congratulations! You are a whiz, a crack on macaw knowledge. You either have or had one, or you badly want one and you have done your research very well. Plus you probably got the ethical questions right (of course you were being judged on my ethics' standards!).

Please let me know your score and I'll let you know in the next issue how well or poorly you all did on this one. Meanwhile continue to learn from all possible resources and keep your sense of humor. I know I will be sharpening my claws for the next quizzes... (Quiz Answers on pg 53)

Sylvie Aubin



**8- Macaws are gorgeous birds but they always scream and their scream is loud enough to make your hair fall out of your head!**

- A) Totally true
- B) Totally false
- C) True: for the males only, they are more vocal because they have to be in the wild since they're the ones protecting the nest.
- D) True: their screams are quite loud!
- E) False, they do not scream that often when properly raised and kept. Some individuals even do well in an apartment setting. This is not to say that large macaws are suitable for everyone in an apartment setting.

**9- I would like to have a macaw but there are 5 of us at home and I heard that they have only one "master" and don't tolerate others:**

- A) True
- B) True: only for the females who will choose the most dominant human in the household like they would choose a dominant male macaw in the wild because they need to be protected when they are brooding.
- C) False, like any other parrots or pet for that matter they might have their favorite ones but they should be taught to respect everyone in the household.
- D) True: unless you buy a baby and get everyone in your household to participate in hand feeding and weaning the baby.

**10-Macaws, despite the size of their beak, are not big wood chewers:**

- A) True: because in the wild they nest in the clay lick cavities so they are not programmed to chew wood.
- B) False: macaws in the wild nest in tree cavities, which they have chew marked and remodeled with their beaks. They also eat and feed the bark to their chicks ...so they are programmed to chew wood.
- C) True only for companion macaws because they understand that wood toys are expensive and that they should try and make them last as long as possible.
- D) True only for macaws who have been hand fed they will never get the need to chew wood because it has not been taught by their parents.

**11-A Macaws'ability to talk is very limited:**

- A) False: most macaws, either males or females, learn between 5 and 30 words like most parrot species.
- B) False: males can learn a few words but females almost never learn to speak.
- C) True: because they have only one vocal cord, unlike most parrot species, therefore only very few of them manage to say a word or two.
- D) Completely false, as proved by Moliere in The 102 Dalmatians, what a great talker!



**Do you really know me**

**12-A very good trick to deal with an aggressive macaw who wants to bite is the reverse ice cream cone. This is a technique where you very quickly grab the bird by his tail closely to the rump, then you hold him in midair so he can't bite you:**

- A) False: this is a very good way to break your bird's trust in you & could well end with all of his tail feathers in your hand.
- B) True: this is a wonderful way to teach your bird who is in charge, and it is what macaw parents do with their youngsters.
- C) True: it helps the bird to circulate better in his head so he will better understand when you reason with him after!
- D) An amazing technique that you should also try with your cats and dogs...

**13-Macaws are beautiful but they are not really intelligent:**

- A) True: everyone in the parrot business knows that only the mythic African grey is intelligent and this is why he is dressed in such a drab color as grey.
- B) True: as with humans, when some one is really beautiful they usually are dumb as a tin can.
- C) False: even though they are one of the most beautiful creatures on earth they are also very intelligent. Yes it is possible to be cute and bright!!
- D) True: all birds are not intelligent, they only act with instinct.

**14-In order to have a happy macaw you should provide him with:**

- A) A well balanced diet
- B) Adequate lighting
- C) 10 to 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night.
- D) Something to keep his beak and mind busy.
- E) Lots of love and attention doubled with respect and patience
- F) All of the above

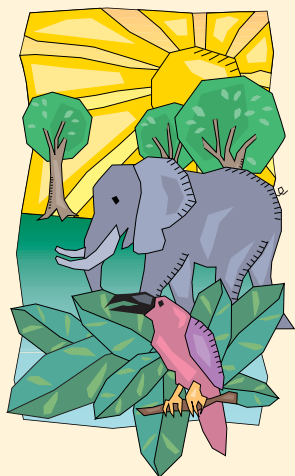
**15-If you teach your macaw to wear a harness and you go do some shopping at your local stores, or if you go on terraces in your neighborhood (naturally not on your shoulder but on your arm !) this will happen:**

- A) You will be the star of your neighborhood.
- B) Your macaw will become very anxious and nervous and he will begin to have problems.
- C) If you live in a cosmopolitan neighborhood your bird will get addicted to espressos and sangria & he will learn to say hello in 12 different languages!
- D) Your local merchants will banish you from their establishments since you will make their customers run away because people usually don't like to see a macaw up close.
- E) Your local merchants will love the attention that you bring them with your well behaved gorgeous bird.
- F) A, C, E

**16-A hybrid macaw is:**

- A) A macaw that walks as well on a city concrete sidewalk as on a rocky road in the country.





# IVORY NUT

A Nutty Idea to help parrots & elephant alike!

Wonder how helping to protect elephants in Africa will directly help to preserve the

parrot's natural habitat in South America?

Well, yes it is a nutty idea... that could work!

The hardest ivory is obtained from elephants inhabiting the western part of Africa. Most commercial ivory comes from the African elephant, *Loxodonta africana*. 90% of the tusks that enter the marketplace have been taken illegally by poachers. Approx. the same % of people who wear ivory bracelets still don't associate ivory with dead elephants.

All over the world tropical rainforests are being destroyed at a phenomenal rate. This is the primary threat to parrot species survival.

Several years ago in South America, a marketing program called the Tagua Initiative, provided an

alternative income to clearing the rain forest, by harvesting the fruit of the South American ivory nut palm, *Phytelephas macrocarpa*. This ivory nut is a substitute for ivory that can be carved and stained to stimulate mellow old ivory. What we must remember are these key words. Sustainable harvesting of the Tagua trees and international marketing and awareness campaign could help preserve parrot habitat. The people and government must be educated to the relationship between the trade in ivory and the plight of the elephant. Increasing demand for ivory nut would provide an alternative income to deforestation and protect species of the rainforest and decrease the demand for ivory!

## DID YOU KNOW?

Since 1981, wild elephant populations have decrease by half, 300 are killed daily. Some are killed by angry farmers that have their crops destroyed by these large stomping animals. Others are killed by game hunters, but most are killed by poachers for their ivory tusks.



# The Cadillac

IF THERE IS EVER A QUESTION OF WHO THE CADILLAC OF TALKING PARROTS IS, I WILL GLADLY ASSIST IN NARROWING IT DOWN. MOST BIRD ENTHUSIASTS BY DEFAULT INSTANTLY PRESUME THE SUPERIOR TALKER IS THE AFRICAN GREY, I BEG TO DIFFER!

## of Talking Parrots

Most bird enthusiasts by default instantly presume the superior talker is the African Grey, due to all the recognition and exposure they receive from Dr. Irene Pepperberg and her assistant "Alex the Grey". On the contrary, it is a family of birds from the Americas, their rival competition, the Amazons.

One of the 8 subspecies of the *ochrocephala* group of amazons is the Yellow-naped Amazon. This amazon parrot in captivity is globally recognized and not mistaken by their latin name; *Amazona ochrocephala auropalliata*. To break this definition down in more detail or english; *Amazona* means amazon, *auropalliata*; "*auro*" or "*ouro*" means gold, "*pallia*" means over coat, cloak or cape so when translated it is the golden-caped one from the Amazon. It has its natural range from northwest coast of Costa Rica stretching north through Central America to southern Mexico. Their length is 38cm or 15". *A.o.auropalliata* does not intermingle with any other subspecies of the *Ochrocephala* group. This is one major factor of the criteria that should be considered when nominating a race to their own independent species name. *Amazona auropalliata*, will soon officially be their new latin name if it is not already and some taxonomists are currently referring to.



Their general description is stated all in the name; they are all green and have a 5cm x 5cm patch of yellow on the back of the neck or nape. Also, under the wings and in the tail feathers, there are broad bands of red used to display during courtship and intimidating predators. Now, there is still another subspecies of ochrocephala that is a Yellow-nape but come from eastern Honduras and the northeastern part of Nicaragua. This has the same common name and is slowly being recognized better as the Parvipes Yellow-nape and lends its latin name *Amazona ochrocephala parvipes*. This amazon has yellow on its forehead, nape and the beak is horn coloured, not the typical black tones. They are very seldom seen in captivity and unusually

"What else can  
I say about  
Yellow-napes,  
I luv'em!"

dramatically from the past 10 years in the wild populations down by 68%. These numbers make anyone speechless and there is no doubt that this decision should have been nominated long ago.

These gold-caped ambassadors of the amazons are internationally notorious for their great speaking ability. The Yellow-nape is known to ultimately be one of the best speaking psittacines in the entire parrot family. They have a huge vocabulary if exercised frequently and consistently, they can sing, boy especially opera they can sing, whistle and talking is simply of second nature to them. Although their clarity in mimicking ability is not as transparent as the Grey, they are much more colourful and have a greater outgoing personality.

I purchased my first large pet parrot which was about 12 years ago, yes it was a yellow-nape and I named him Alex about 1-2 years before I knew Irene Pepperberg's assistant Alex even existed. Alex became my best friend for the following 6 years. He accompanied me everywhere; the malls, the beach, fast food restaurants, family and friend gatherings. Although his personality is not like a regular Yellow-nape with flamboyant speaking ability and personality, he truly knew how to draw a crowd. Up until 6 years ago when my collection began to escalate and he was more and more exposed to other parrots, I think he realized he was a bird. Due to this, I had less time to spend with him & he inadvertently converted to a bird's way of life.

Yellow-naped Amazons make fantastic pets and like every species, they do have their drawbacks. Male Yellow-napes like double-yellow headed amazons and Blue-fronted Amazons do normally hit hormonal roller coasters when maturity arrives. When these birds are introduced into a typical male/female couple ownership situation, the bird

may bond to one of the two. The sex of the bird and the sex of the owners have no influence on this. Male birds have bonded to male owners and female birds to female owners many times in the past and present. When these incidences occur, it will typically cause conflict with the family for the other partner cannot be around their mate due to the bird's aggressiveness. In a couple of experiences with companions in the past, my pet Alex has attacked two of them. Amazons show no mercy when they want to send a message across.

They are also quite the acrobats and self entertain very easily. Providing environmental enrichment or entertainment and chewing materials for them are essential in filling their days with activity and excitement. There are not

rare. I will continue to seek these specimens to work with one day!

In their native soil, Yellow-napes normally feed on mango fruit, before it ripens. They prefer the mango's seed over the mango's flesh and when satisfied will discard it. They then will open the seeds with their strong beaks and once they eat the morsels of the seed they will dispose of it by dropping it and move on to the next. This behaviour I like to call the "Friar Tuck Syndrome". This simply rehashes my memory from the Robin Hood cartoon when I was in grade school, Friar Tuck takes one bite of each piece of food and tosses it over his shoulder! Their favored species include the following: the seeds from the Guanacaste Tree, the *Albizia adinocephala*, also oak acorns which is proba-

bly easier access to us in North America, *Hymenaea courbaril* seeds, and mango seeds.

Up until 2002 at the last CITES convention in Santiago, Chile, the Yellow-naped Amazon and the Yellow-headed Amazon; *A.ochrocephala oratrix* parrot (in total 5 of the 8 subspecies of Ochrocephala) has been transferred from Appendix 11 now to Appendix 1 of the CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species) convention. What does this mean? This means these two species are threatened by deforestation and habitat loss from their range and also succumbing to the pet trade. The 2002 proposal stated that the number one decline in their numbers was due to ransacking nests in the wild for domestic and international trade. Their numbers have declined





many parrot owners that wish to come home to unhappy birds! Yellow-napes typically go through toys within regular intervals, they are pretty rambunctious and love to interact with their owners.

Approximately 10 years ago, there was one known Yellow-nape that held a record for longest lived in captivity, it reached the age of 74 years and resided in Alaska. I have a theory that perhaps the cold climate toughened up the individual and made the immune system more brazen, strong and tough towards certain stimulus, elements and bugs.

They are not regularly bred in Canada and when so, do not last long on the market at all, they also rarely reach the pet stores. On average, for every 10 pairs set up for breeding, one pair may reproduce. They are not prolifically reliable but are somewhat consistent once they begin. When breeding Yellow-napes, it is not hard to read their signs, you will see that they require lots of space to defend their territory. If they cannot claim their own, they will continue to be distracted by their neighbours and have less time to focus on what is going on in their own enclosure. This could be the key factor between having higher percentages in their reproduction. Ideally, a 2.5 – 3m flight would best suit their ability to secure territory, to provide privacy to court and breed. There has been much controversy involved with male hormones filling the air and throwing off neighbouring pairs. When keeping pairs too close together one should provide ample space to avoid this theory, again if it holds any water.

Some people feel comfortable diving right into a large parrot for their first time avian pet but others like to work their way up to a moderate sized bird. I strongly suggest, it is in everyone's best interest to research what bird suits their lifestyle before making a lifetime decision. Nobody likes to have to part with a bird based on lack of knowledge. I am by no means an expert on parrot behaviour but have had my shared due knowledge in situations and enjoy sharing and offering my experiences to others.

What else can I say about Yellow-napes, I lov'em!

*By: Dave Longo*



LORAKIM JOYNER, D.V.M.

Evaluating a chick's health, a few days before fledging in Guatemala.



Insert: One or two day old chicks

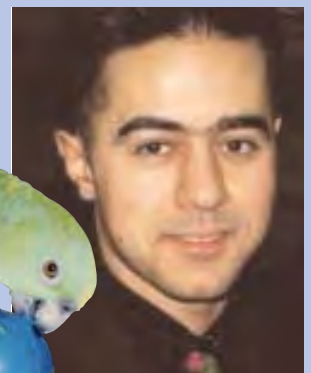
Main shot: ...after a few weeks; pin feathers are starting to emerge.

**Dave Longo now resides in Meaford, Ontario where Longo's Aviaries operates.** This is the home of John Muir, world renowned conservationist. Dave has been keeping and breeding birds since he was 6 years old and the collection keeps growing. He studied Ornithology, Herpetology and Zoology and other related topics at the University of Guelph. Outside of birds, Dave has kept and bred more than 40 species of reptiles and hundreds of fish species. Dave has been on the executive

board of the Parrot Association of Canada (P.A.C.) and affiliated with CAZA (Canadian Association of Zoos & Aquariums) for several years and is a member of several of other global avicultural organizations and conservation projects.

"When one pulls at a thread, it is attached to the whole world."

John Muir





# CONSERVATION

UPDATE:



## THE DOMINICA PARROT Program

With financial assistance from the RSCF, Canadian World Parrot Trust, Loro Parque Fundación, Amazona Society UK and several U.S. zoological societies and philanthropic foundations, the parrot aviary at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau has been overhauled, enhanced and renamed the Parrot Conservation and Research Centre (PCRC), becoming a self-contained parrot incubation, rearing and genera research laboratory.

Presently one pair of Sisserous, three pairs of Jacos, and three additional male jacos live at the PCRC. In addition to functioning as a stand-alone facility for incubation, rearing, veterinary care, and emergency housing (in the events of hurricanes), the

PCRC has become the headquarters for field programs.

The new Visitors centre at The Morne Diablotin National Park is due to open in early 2004. It will serve as a focal point for educational materials, as well as the entrance to the Syndicate nature Trail- a one mile, flat route through mature forest that offers excellent views of habitat and parrots. The centre includes two downstairs apartments to support the parrot team during research periods, and provide the Forestry Division with a full-time presence in the park. Dominica formally declared the new Morne Diablotin National Park, encompassing over 9,000 acres of pristine rainforest on January 21, 2000.

The parrot's secretive natures and Dominica's difficult terrain have impeded systematic research into the parrots' ecologies.

Dominica's endemic Amazon parrots, the Sisserou and Jaco (Amazona imperialis and A. *arausiaca*, respectively) are cultural as well as functional flagship for Dominica's unique oceanic rainforest ecosystem and its

vast biological inventory.

The ultimate objectives of the Dominica initiative are to better understand the distribution, abundance, demographics, reproduction of both parrot species, further to integrate

**The Dominica parrot program has become a template for real-time, ecosystem-level conservation efforts across the Lesser Antilles.**

Parallel strategies for the St-Vincent and St-Lucia are underway and an O E C S - s t y l e , regional conservation umbrella is foreseen as the ultimate program structure to protect all of the endemic Amazons of the eastern Caribbean. Photo of the field biologists



these findings, along with reproductive enhancement techniques, into a long-term, in "situ" conservation commitment. Conservation education and environmental awareness are key, social elements in the Dominican community. Saving nature can also translate into an attractive marketing strategy on the Nature Island. Organic produce, eco-friendly agriculture and sustainable, low-impact land uses all support healthy ecosystem management and conservation.

The Forest Division has effectively leveraged the parrot program into a broad-scale environmental awareness campaign. The Jaco and Sisserou are flagship species for the rainforest protection, and are beautiful Dominican icons and emblems. The Sisserou graces the Dominican flag, the parrots adorn the Coat of Arms and most official references to Dominica. Local pride in endemic wildlife adds personal identity to the conservation cause-every citizen and visitor can help protect Dominica's parrots and the ecosystems surrounding them.

Dominicans, the parrot team, and ornithologists everywhere should cheer for Amazona imperialis and A. *arausiaca*, as these magnificent parrot ambassadors expand across the blanket of forest that defines Dominica, the Nature Island of the Caribbean. Text and photos provided by the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation-Eastern Caribbean <http://www.rarespecies.org/fl-d-carib.htm>

Permission to print this article by Paul.R.Reillo,Ph.D

*We apologize for the quality of the images as high resolution files could not be forwarded to us in time due to the hurricane.*



Visitor's centre at Morne Diablotin National Park

### Hurricane update

Dear Parrot Life,

Thanks for writing. Indeed, our facility here was devastated by Frances, and now we are bracing for a direct hit by Jeanne in the next 36 hours. My time is very short here, so please have a look at the RSCF website to get an idea of the level of destruction-- over \$100,000 total, and it will take at least 6 months to recover. I have provided a detailed narrative to accompany the pictures.

The eastern Caribbean has been largely spared this hurricane season--nothing on Dominica, and St. Vincent was only clipped, with minimal interior forest damage. Ironically, we are in much more dire straits here compared to the field sites we love so dearly.

Wish us luck with Jeanne, as I fear the facility here cannot take another direct hit. I hope to connect with you sometime soon, hopefully when times are better for all of us.

Regards,  
Paul

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# ~ IN THE NEWS ~

## SAVE CRYSTAL GARDENS CONSERVATION CENTRE

### BC Provincial Capital closed the Crystal Gardens

This centre is an educational, cultural, conservation resource, and is a public asset.

The PCC made this decision with  
NO PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2004, the BC Provincial Capital Commission announced that they had made the decision to close the Crystal Gardens Conservation Centre.

#### Petition:

"To the British Columbia Provincial Capital Commission and the Provincial Government of British Columbia:

I/we the undersigned believe the Crystal Garden Conservation Centre should be saved and preserved as a conservation and educational resource for the benefit of

British Columbians, Canadians, International visitors, Conservation and other concerned organizations.

#### Therefore,

I/we are asking the British Columbia Provincial Capital Commission and the Provincial Government of British Columbia to reverse its decision to close the Crystal Gardens Conservation Centre; to establish a process to seek public input on ways to improve the Crystal Garden Conservation Centre; and to establish a plan for the long-term viability of the centre."

Web-site: <http://www.savecrystalgardens.com>

### THE CENTRE'S ROLE IN CANADIAN CONSERVATION:

On June 11<sup>th</sup> 1992 Canada became one of the first countries to sign the Convention on Biological Diversity, the document that came out of the Earth Summit meeting in Rio. The point of the convention is to ensure that each country establishes mechanisms to conserve species and wild habitat within their borders, and for the developed world to assist less affluent nations in fulfilling their role. Ironically, the parts of the world with the highest level of biodiversity, i.e. rich in numbers of species, are in general least able to establish adequate conservation initiative. So what does this have to do with the Crystal Garden?

Crystal Garden Conservation Center has endeavored to fulfill its role as a conservation center with global obligations. It participates in both regional and global cooperative breeding programs for endangered species. Captive facilities are not just breeders and protectors of endangered species, but they have become a significant source of funding for conservation in the wild. Although Crystal Garden has not had the advantage of charitable status, as many related facilities have, it has still been a source of financial support, supplied by donations from visitors, for conservation work in Brazil. The garden has had a proactive educa-

tion program for some time and it has been used as an educational resource by students at all levels.

It has been argued by some that the facility has no relevance to British Columbia in general and to Vancouver Island in particular. This cannot be further from the truth. Much of Southwest BC, including the island, is temperate rainforest, a rare habitat type in the Northern Hemisphere. Many of the issues that affect temperate rainforest conservation are mirrored in areas of tropical rainforest. The Crystal Garden shows us some of the fragile wonders from the tropics and there are direct comparisons that can be drawn between the two types of habitat and what is required to conserve them.

As the human population becomes more and more urbanized, it is crucial that city and town dwellers have the opportunity to be exposed to wildlife, albeit in a captive environment. As the largest percentage of voting population, they need to have an understanding of the level of threat much of our planet's wildlife is under and that something can be done about it.

-Douglas M Richardson, Mountain View Conservation and Breeding center, Langley, BC.

**SHOULDN'T THE PCC  
PICK ON SOMEONE  
THEIR OWN SIZE?**







# ***Hand taming and training***

## **A simple guide to making friends with your new budgie!**

***First, the easiest way to hand train your new pet is to start with a baby budgie.***

Baby budgies have black button eyes, with no pupil or iris easily distinguished. They sometimes have a black tip on their beak, and often have dark stripes on their head feathers. The cere (the fleshy bit right on the top of their beak) will be soft and smooth. Budgies are ready to leave their parents at approximately 7 – 8 weeks old. Any budgie under 16 weeks of age is a baby and will be a good candidate for finger training and teaching to talk. Ask that his flight feathers be trimmed so he can't fly off and hurt himself while you are getting to know each other.

Many people request a male budgie – incorrectly thinking that only male budgies can learn to speak. Females can talk too! Mature males and females have different coloured ceres, males have bright blue ceres, females can have pink or beige or even very pale blue ceres. You cannot accurately tell the gender of a budgie by looking at its cere until it is approximately 20 to 24 weeks old. A bird that age may be much harder to hand tame and it will take longer for a bird that age to bond with its new family.

Start by taking your new pet home and setting it up in its cage. Babies need to feel comfortable in their surroundings. Let it settle in for a day or two. You can sit quietly by its cage and talk to it, offer it bits of spray millet, and just observe its behaviour. Your budgie should be eating, drinking and exploring its cage and investigating his toys before you start to work with it.

Once your budgie has settled in, you can begin hand training! There are many ways to do this. One that works for many people is as follows:

- Pick a quiet time of day, one where you will not be interrupted or rushed for at

least 30 minutes. Calm yourself down, get a small hand towel, and approach your budgie cage while speaking softly. You are going to open the cage door and place the hand towel over the budgie. You are using the towel to gently restrain the bird as you remove him from the cage. Hands should be for playing and cuddling, not chasing your little bird around the cage. He will associate the towel with being grabbed, not your hand. He won't have a clue as to what you are doing and will flutter around. Just scoop him up, holding him gently – birds have hollow bones – you don't want to crush or hurt him! Take him to a small, confined space away from his cage. It seems silly, but getting into the bath tub works really well. Put a towel/cushion down so you are comfortable, put the plug in so your bird doesn't slip down the drain, and pull the shower curtain closed. With his wings clipped, your bird will not be able to fly up and away from you.

***Happy budgie body  
language includes an all over  
feather fluff, happy tail wag,  
sitting up straight & tall,  
chirping.***

You now have two choices – you can begin finger training right away, or you can use a perch to start your training. Budgies may nip at your fingers out of fear, if you are at all nervous about being bitten, use a small wooden perch to train him. Put the perch/your finger under his feet, and release him from the towel. He will flutter off – not knowing what you want him to do yet. Just drop the towel over him again, pick him up again and put him back on the perch/finger. You may have to repeat this six or seven times before he gets the idea that you want him to stay on the perch. Speak softly while you are working with him. Once he is sitting on the perch without taking off, praise him! Using a high pitched voice, tell him what a clever bird

he is. He will not understand your words, but will understand that you are happy with him. Once he gets the idea, you will know! Happy budgie body language includes an all over feather fluff, happy tail wag, and sitting up straight and tall and chirping.

You are now ready to begin the "step up" training. With the budgie sitting on one perch/finger, gently push another perch or finger into his tummy, right on top of his feet while saying "step up". He may flutter off, but if you persist he will eventually lift one foot onto the new perch. Continue making this laddering up motion three or four times until he is stepping onto the new perch when it is offered. Remember to keep talking to him and praising him. Again, you will know when he has gotten the idea because he will puff up and look very proud of himself! Consistency is the key! Always use the same verbal command (step up) and the same physical clue (finger/perch in the same place each time).

Once you have had a few step ups in a row, take a minute to give your pet a head rub/cuddle. Tell him what a great bird he is and then take him back to his cage for a rest and a treat. He has a lot to think about now!

You should repeat the training sessions two or three times per day. The goal is to reach the point where you can open the cage, put your finger in and ask your budgie to step up onto your finger. He should not hesitate to do so, because "out of the cage time" will be play and cuddle time. Most young budgies only take a week or so to finger train. Do not just leave the cage door open for him to come and go as he pleases! A budgie that can decide for himself when he will come in and out is harder to train, and if he wanders on the floor looking for you he may get stepped on or lost.

Once he is gladly stepping onto your finger, you can continue to teach him new tricks! Budgies will gladly lay in your hand for chin rubs (play "dead bird"), explore your pockets (be a "pocket parrot"), and ride on your shoulder (just like a "pirate parrot").

Continued on page 54





*"Canada's Original Super Store For Your Pet!"*

## We Give Our Baby Birds The Very Best Start!

When you purchase a bird from Super Pet, you can be confident that your bird has received the very best care and an abundance of love during its stay with us.

- Super Pet strives to purchase the best quality birds from responsible Canadian breeders.
- Our babies are raised in our nurseries by specially trained staff. Every effort is made to reduce stress and encourage proper physical and emotional development.
- You will always find our birds housed appropriately in the best quality cages. No expense is spared in providing toys and optimal nutrition.
- Our staff are committed to providing our customers with the knowledge, tools and support to ensure that your relationship with your new companion is a long and rewarding one.

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PULL OUT & KEEP

# my PARROT Profile

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Species : \_\_\_\_\_ ( Latin name) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Band #: \_\_\_\_\_ opened/closed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Specific physical characteristic for ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Microchip #: \_\_\_\_\_ chip manufacturer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Captive bred ( ) Breeder: \_\_\_\_\_ neonate diet fed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Imported: ( ) country of origin \_\_\_\_\_ wild caught: yes( ) no( ) unknown ( )  
 Age: \_\_\_\_\_ hatch date: \_\_\_\_\_ unknown ( )  
 Sex: male ( ) female ( ) unknown ( )  
 Sexing method: sexual dimorphism ( ) DNA ( ) surgical sexing ( )  
 History (source, previous owners, quarantine, parent ID...)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Average weight: \_\_\_\_\_g/lb (register weight records on reverse side)

Tested for: Polyoma virus( ) Pacheco's virus ( ) Psittacose chlamydia( ) PBFD ( )  
 Samples taken from please circle ( feathers, blood nail or vein, droppings, environmental swab)  
 Samples submitted by and to which Lab: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Vaccination: Polyoma ( ) Pacheco's ( ) register all records on reverse side and conserve all documents

Diet provided specify as much detail as possible (quantity eaten, brands, frequency offered)

formulated diet: _____	% _____
Grain: _____	% _____
fruits/veggies: _____	% _____
Supplements (Vitamin's/Calcium) _____	% _____
Other : _____	% _____

Water source & quality: \_\_\_\_\_ Qty drank daily: \_\_\_\_\_ml

Does your parrot have a cage mate Yes ( ) No ( ) if yes, since when Date \_\_/\_\_/\_\_  
 Are they reproductively active Yes ( ) No ( )  
 Are there other birds in your household Yes ( ) No ( ) if yes, specify ( # & species)  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Primary cage dimensions: length:\_\_\_\_ width:\_\_\_\_ height:\_\_\_\_  
 Cage manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other cage or activity center / playgym: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Types of perches please circle: plastic/wooden/concrete/natural branches  
 Natural branches provided-specify type of wood \_\_\_\_\_  
 pesticide free: yes ( ) unknown ( )  
 Are the perches of varied dimensions: yes( ) no ( )



## THE WONDER OF IT ALL

Located near Montreal, Quebec, HARI is an advanced establishment built in 1985 to promote the welfare of companion birds. Under the direction of Psittacine Aviculturist, Mark Hagen, the constant study of the captive breeding and maintenance of these birds has lead to tremendous developments in bird husbandry, nutrition &

disease control. One of the major areas of research carried out at HARI is concerned with nutrition. Extensive trials have revealed that Tropicana has a greater nutrient density and digestibility than other products on the market, which result in better plumage, weight balance, lower consumption, greater metabolic water production and therefore lower water intake, lower urination, pleasant smelling feces and excellent palatability.





Exposition to natural sunlight: yes ( ) no ( ) Full spectrum lighting: yes( ) no ( )  
 Number hours of undisturbed sleep per night:\_\_\_\_\_ number or hour or daytime nap :\_\_\_\_\_  
 Is the cage covered for the night: yes ( ) no ( )  
 Does your parrot get showered, mist or bathed: yes( ) no ( ) frequency:\_\_\_\_\_  
 Access outside of cage unsupervised: yes ( ) no ( )  
 Do you use hazardous detergents/appliances/ products in your home: yes ( ) no ( )  
 Potentially toxic plant species in your home: yes( ) no ( ) unknown ( )  
 Are your family or parrot sitters familiar with potentially toxic & hazardous materials:  
 yes ( ) no ( )

**Medical history: check the following if your parrot has previously encountered  
 & required medical attention for:**

- ☐ Respiratory problems:
- ☐ Allergic reactions :
- ☐ Cloacal papillomas :
- ☐ Egg binding or related peritonitis :
- ☐ Fractures :
- ☐ Bumble foot /toe amputation..:
- ☐ Parasitic infection :
- ☐ Bacterial infections :
- ☐ Intoxication :
- ☐ Feather plucking :
- ☐ Skin disorder :
- ☐ Ear infection :
- ☐ Eye infection :
- ☐ Fungal infection :
- ☐ Trauma:
- ☐ Other:

Which avian veterinarian clinic have you consulted: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tel: #( ) \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_. Yearly visits: Yes ( ) no ( ) frequency \_\_\_\_\_

**Behavior & Character traits**

Biting: yes ( ) no ( ) frequency : rarely, occasional, frequently, mostly, with who  
 & under which circumstance \_\_\_\_\_

Screaming: degree and frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

Talking abilities: yes( ) No ( ) number of words\_\_\_\_\_; vocabulary: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) understood: \_\_\_\_\_

Toilette trained: yes( ) no ( ) specify where \_\_\_\_\_

Does he have an outdoor flight cage or do you bring your cage outdoors? Yes ( ) no ( )

Do you use a harness yes ( ) no ( )

Are flight feathers trimmed : Frequency and degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Does he perform tricks Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Behavior around children: \_\_\_\_\_

In promoting responsible parrot guardianship, we will attempt to provide you with various charts and forms that you can use and save. This profile form can help you, help your bird, by providing valuable information to your veterinarian, bird sitter or future adoption family.

Should your pet require hospitalization or boarding, provide a copy of this form to the clinic or bird sitters. The answers to these questions could be valuable when consulting for medical and behavioural concerns. The complex nature of these birds should not be limited to these questions. We encourage you to add as much information as possible to your parrot's profile form. Conserve this information along with the birth certificate, feathers, photos, vaccination certificate and health related documents...

The research recommends the High Performance diet for breeding and hand feeding newly hatched birds and the Life Time formula suitable for pet parrots under maintenance conditions.

HARI has fed more then 350 pairs, of over 58 different species of parrot on this extruded granular diet, and Mark Hagen notes that regular health checks have revealed no signs of feather stress bars, kidney disorders,

weak bones or any other problems usually associated with nutrition.

To share their experiences HARI constantly publishes technical papers on research such as disease control, pair bonding, nutrition and the influence of temperature, humidity and light cycles on breeding. All these papers are available to pet stores, breeders and veterinarians on request.





# TROPICAN™

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Tropicana food developed by HARI (Hagen Avicultural Research Institute) has been successfully feeding thousand of birds since 1985. Tropicana is a complete life-cycle diet to meet the nutritional requirements of birds. Tropicana is a scientifically designed blend of 8 grains and nuts, contains natural rosemary extract with no preservatives or artificial sweeteners. Tropicana is fortified with vitamins, minerals, amino acids and requires no additional vitamin supplement. All bags are safely CO<sub>2</sub> flushed to prevent bug infestation and to prevent premature oxidation of nutrients and flavor.



For more information on  
**HARI** Parrot Breeding and nutrition  
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- B) A macaw that produces the same amount of droppings by the hour when fed on a pellet diet as feed on a seed diet
- C) A macaw bred from 2 different species of macaws. Like the baby of a scarlet macaw and a blue & gold is called a Catalina.
- D) A terrible abomination like street cats, bastard dogs or a mule.



## 17-I would love to get a large macaw but I read somewhere on the internet that it was not a good idea as a first bird. Is this true?

- A) True: large macaws are really difficult to understand and to educate, more so than the small macaws. A sound choice if you don't already have birds is with a small easy and uncomplicated bird: like a cockatiel, everybody knows that they're ideal for beginners. Than you can move on to the middle league with a medium-size bird a bit more complicated and difficult. Species like conures, quakers & ringnecks, etc. are all medium-size, medium-problem birds. When you really get the hang of it you move on to the big league: the large macaws!
- B) True: because if you don't already have birds, your hands are too soft to survive the biting of a beak this size! You need to work on your hands a bit before with smaller bird bites.
- C) True: a large macaw and a cage the right size cost a lot of money. So if you don't like living with a bird you lose too much. Better to lose less with a small bird and a small cage.
- D) False: If your heart is set on a large macaw and you've taken great care to learn about them. If you would enjoy living forever with a being incredibly beautiful and charming, intelligent and mischievous, sweet and comical, adorable and annoying, a clown and a softie than a large macaw might just be the perfect first bird for you and maybe the perfect first and only bird. Why not?!...

## Quiz Answers

### Answer 1:

A-0 points, you don't know a lot about most species if you think that all parrots live anywhere where it's warm. You also get 0 in geography if you think it's warm everywhere south of the Equator.

B- 2 points, it's an easy question and a minimum to know about one's bird!

C- Subtract 2 points!

D- 0 points, you are in the wrong part of the world!

E-Minus 5 points; you probably think that milk comes from the milk manufacturer.

### Answer Q. 2:

A- 2 points, at least you've read a bit about conservation. They do have some reserves but these are not sufficient.

B- Very well done! Give yourself a pat on the shoulder and 10 points! You've done your research, as everyone who lives with birds should. So far the Glaucous and Cuban macaw is extinct, & the last remaining wild Spix macaw is suspected to have died.

C- 0 points, Good try but unfortunately that's not how it works.

D- Minus 5 points, Plenty of handfed baby parrots are not the same as parrots born in the wild.

### Answer Q. 3:

A- 2 points, you were just mixed up with the complete name of the blue & gold macaw which is Ara Ararauna

B- 0: Very off base! An Agapornis is a lovebird

C- 3 points only! That was too easy.

D- 1 point because you're at least on the same continent this time... Aratinga are a very big group of the conure family.

### Answer Q. 4:

A- 0 point, you still believe in old wives tales

B- 3 points, that is how long they should live in theory

C- 1 point, it does happen sometimes, but it's quite exceptional

D- 2 points, sadly a lot of them only live that short period.

E- 5 points, you know both the theory and the facts of life.

### Answer Q. 5:

A- 0 points.

B- Subtract 5 points: you're exaggerating.

C- 3 points, right on!

D- Subtract 3 points, you are in great danger of getting bitten.

### Answer Q. 6:

A- Big bonus for you! You don't suffer from the B.H.M.S. (Bird Hobbyist Martyr Syndrome). You got it a long time ago that if a good dog owner should feed his dog the best formulated dry dog food on the market your bird deserve the same. You don't need to slave in the kitchen in order to be a good bird owner... You get a big 25 points.

B- 3 points, the intentions are good... But you better stick with 1 or 2 good brands and mix them together instead of switching between 12 different brands.

C- I give you 1 point because you are victim of peer pressure and are suffering from the B.H.M.S. But don't worry it is a curable condition.

D- Minus 5 points for you. You live with the illusion that your bird lives in the wild. Guess what? He is not. He is living in your house. Therefore you CANNOT reproduce the nature he would have lived in. And honestly, peanuts, pumpkins and sunflowers don't grow high up in the canopy of the Amazonian rainforest...

### Answer Q. 7:

A- 0 points, but don't worry, not a lot of people know about it.

B- Wow! Good catch. Give yourself 10 biggies. Hyacinth need lots of palm nuts and red-bellied are greatly prone to obesity and hypovitaminosis. As for the blue & gold macaw, they tend to develop hypervitaminosis with Vit D3! So much more is still a mystery.

C- Good try. But, no... 1 point for the try.

### Answer Q 8:

A- 0 points

B- 2 points, you have part of the answer.

C- 1 point, it is a good theory but a false one

D- 3 points, you heard them? You had the chance to meet well behaved macaws and have noticed that they are not screaming that often

### Answer Q 9:

A- 1 point. Only because it's good that you are thinking of the others who live in your household. Good for them and good for your future bird.

B- It could be right, it sounds right to me but it's not so 0 points.

C- 5 points. You are getting the hang of it! Good education is the key.

D- I feel generous so I am giving you 1 point because it is true that a baby looks less menacing than an adult, therefore humans are more willing to give him a try without fear. But it's not the right answer.

### Answer Q 10:

A- 3 points, you have seen documentaries on macaws and clay licks, but they eat the clay they don't usually nest in the cavities.

B- 5 points, field research has allowed us to understand their need for wood. They can destroy that wonderful wood toy in a snap (literally).

C- Minus 10 points, do you still believe in the tooth fairy?

D- 1 point, at least you gave a bit of thinking to this one. It is true that certain handfed individuals loose certain, otherwise, natural behaviors. But it is not common.

### Answer Q 11:

A- 3 points, you are right!

B- 1 point, it could be true in certain species but not for the macaws.

C- 0 points, birds don't have vocal cords.

D- 1 point for the "false" part. Minus 3 for the rest of your answer. I have 2 words for you: Computerized animation.

### Answer Q 12:

A-10 points, you are a very sensible person who understands birds. You also know about bird





# CANADIAN AVIARY



## Exotic Bird Zoo & Refuge Icare (Icarus)

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Michelle Aubin

The team at Parrot Life escaped from the office and spent a wonderful day visiting this unique Canadian bird park, a short distance away from Montreal. Michelle Aubin and her husband Réal Poulin guided our tour and shared their adventure in acquiring and transforming this bird park into a bird sanctuary and zoo. Bird enthusiasts locally and abroad should plan

this visit in their itinerary when visiting the east coast. Parrot Life interviewed Michelle to offer you a taste of this exotic bird zoo, hidden in the maple groves of Roxton Pond.

**Parrot Life:** Michelle, What is the Zoo et Refuge Icare (Icarus)?

**Michelle Aubin:**

The Zoo is known as 'Zoo et Refuge D'oiseaux Exotiques Icare' or 'Exotic Bird Zoo and Refuge Icare (Icarus)'. We are a non-profit organisation dedicated to displaying and providing education about birds to our visitors. The zoo is mainly dedicated to parrots. We feel it is necessary to inform people about the realities of owning a parrot as well as the many differences between the species.



**P.L.:**

What can we expect to see upon our visit ?

**M.A.**

Our visitors journey through the exterior park, to encounter hundreds of various species of birds. To highlight some of our



exhibits, a mixed species colony flight was built into an atrium with cascading water features. Australian parakeets & other small psittacine species, finches, canaries, touracos and lorries thrive in this miniature ecosystem. Visitors marvel at the active



nest sites that can be observed. Our canaries build their nests well camouflaged by the foliage but so close to the flights wall that the chicks can be seen within the nests.

The garden path then leads to the individual flights of caiques, conures, pionus, Australian parakeets, lorries and softbills. Our fowls are also exhibited outdoors in large mixed and paired flights. A descent to our pond will introduce you to our young pair of black swans and a clear view of our koi collection. Back onto the garden path will lead you to the larger parrot species and mixed colony flights. Our nursery and boutique can then be visited in our indoor facility. We keep our incubator room, winter housing, hospital & quarantine closed to all visitors.

**P.L.:** Although we refer to your aviaries as a zoo, because it is open for public visits during the summer months, you also operate a breeding facility and refuge centre year round.

**M.A.** Yes we have also become a refuge or sanctuary for unwanted birds. If a bird is brought to us, it will have a place here for the remainder of its life. Breeding is an integral part of the zoo, as is the refuge and the





education that we can provide to visitors and fellow aviculturists. Raising well-adjusted parrots for pet owners and sharing our genetic pool with other breeding centres is essential.

**P.L.:** *The Zoo D'oiseaux Exotiques houses an unusually large variety of species.*

**M.A.** Excluding babies, we own approximately 1,200 birds. Of this number about 75% are psittacines, 20% are mostly fruits eaters and finches and the last 5% are fowl. We own over 100 different species with many sub-species and mutations. We are also a family, (somewhat of a mixed colony ourselves!) my husband and I, my daughter and sister, our 8 Afghan Hounds, and horses.

**P.L.:** *When did you acquire the zoo and what inspired you to embark on this adventure?*

**M.A.** It all started 10 years ago with one parrot, a blue and gold macaw. She was 4 yrs old and I promised her owner that she wouldn't spend the rest of her life alone. She was a gem. She was potty trained, could fly on command, knew tricks and talked but she only spoke English. For the next few months, I taught her French and she taught me parrot.

Coming home on a cold November night, I found a black masked lovebird on my porch. It was equipped with a note stating, that the friend of a cousin, of the niece, of a neighbour 3 streets across, knew that I loved birds, they could see the cage through my window. They hoped that I would take good care of their unwanted bird!

Within the next few years I opened my home to many refugees and mates that I sought out to try to make their lives more fulfilled. Soon we had a small breeding colony, that had outgrown our house. We moved the breeding pairs into our office, where I had a 5,000 sq ft of total luxury, 3 independent zones of controlled temperature and humidity. That's when I retired; taking care of all my parrots was more than a full time job. Eventually, we needed additional help because our breeding pairs produced more babies.

We soon outgrew our office! We started long negotiations with the city of Montreal, who refused to give us a permit for another 5,000 sq ft. At this point, we started to search for a farm. Never had I considered owning a zoo!



We found this place for sale that had all the necessary permits to operate a bird park. We acquired the property and moved in during October, 2000, after the previous owners sold most of their birds. We spent the next six months renovating before we could move in our own birds.

**P.L.:** *We have seen a remarkable transformation over the years. Which improvements were made and what are we to expect in the near future?*

**M.A.** The first year was devoted to the elementary needs, a functional kitchen,



dishwashers & sinks on every floor, a nursery and small hospital. Living in the country with lots of birds, there was also a need for generators, after all, no electricity, no hot water and no heat! The second thing we needed was a new heating and air conditioning system, including a main and back-up system. We couldn't take any chances with our harsh winters and hot summers. Our third project was redoing the plumbing and electricity.

The second year, we bought the maple grove surrounding our property. We bought these extra acres to insure that we would have enough land for all of our future projects. That year, we dug a pond, perhaps we were already thinking of acquiring waterfowl.

We spent the four past winters renovating

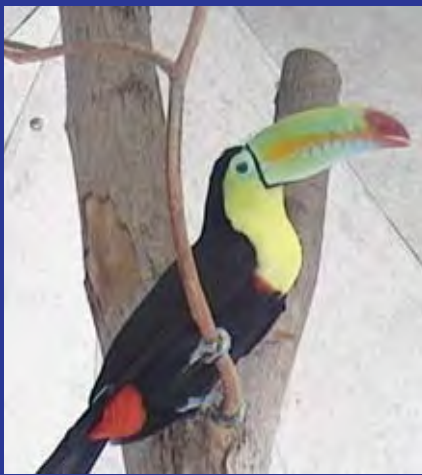
We soon  
outgrew  
our office!

the inside. We built more suitable flights for our mixed collection, made new nest boxes, feeding stations and watering systems. The purchase of new incubators and brooders became essential, as well as laboratory equipment. We raise various species in our nursery and thrive to providing the best neonatal care for our chicks.

**P.L.:** *We experience harsh winters in these parts of Canada, what precautions have to be taken for winter housing.*

**M.A.** We've had the privilege to visit various breeding installations & zoos in the US and Europe and have integrated many aspects of their construction designs and husbandry techniques, although none of them could really help us in breeding and maintaining such a mixed collection, as their climate is so different. It is not the same thing when you have to move inside for 8 months. We have to artificially provide and control the desired temperature, humidity and lighting. To minimise the stress onto our colony we have to strategically evaluate each individual species and pairs to provide them optimal environmental conditions. The noise level in our indoor facility can also be a disturbing factor for our breeding pairs and intimidating for the quieter species. Inside,





Ramphastos sulfuratus, Keel billed toucan

Their octagonal flight is gigantic with all perches radiating from a central pole.

even cleaning can be a puzzle. What shall you do when your macaws have eggs, but their flight needs to be cleaned? What is better: risking to loose your eggs for cleanliness sake or being a little 'messy' and not disturbing the brooding pair? It is not always a clean cut choice. Back up heating & generators, insulation & ample reserves of perches (natural branches) and feed is essential to any breeding operation in northern climates.

Our incubators and brooders for neonates are not kept in the aviary. They are kept in my house, as they have to be monitored very closely: Incubator babies needs constant care even at midnight at -30°C. We do try to do as little as possible of incubator hatched babies, but we can't completely avoid it. At certain period of the year, it is hard to ignore that there is quite a few baby parrots in our house! My husband is thinking about building a new wing to our house to put the nursery and a small laboratory because our equipment is growing bigger every year, and also a small bedroom... We do at the moment use the house located on our Maple Grove, when we need a room for an employee, consultant or visiting friends. Even if it is only a few minutes walk from the aviary, it is not something that you like to do during a winter night.

**P.L:** You have over the past years restructured and undertaken the construction of larger flights and outdoor aviaries in particular a new toucan flight.

**M.A.** At the end of our first zoo season, my husband bought me a pair of young keelbill

Toucans. These fantastic birds justified a trip to California. At the Emerald Forest Bird Gardens, directed by Jerry Jennings, we learnt first hand about toucan husbandry. The next spring was spent building an outdoor flight that would be worthy of them.



Because of their unique needs, special housing was required. The conception of this flight had to take into account many factors such as adequate wire gage, exercise space, minimal interference during feeding and cleaning, safety from predators and a winter resistant structure.

Their octagonal flight is gigantic with all perches radiating from a central pole. Due to the way the flight is built they cannot perch close to the wiring. This prevents them from accepting food from visitors. This precaution is driven by the fact that seeds could cause death. The flight also contains a closed shelter where they can eat and sleep. Toucans love to bathe so we installed a big bath. Unfortunately they often drink in the bath and bathe in the water bowl! We are now in the process of building new flights enclosed in greenhouses where people will walk through and interact with the parrots. There will also be a lory flight where the birds can be fed. These will be completed and landscaped by the summer of 2005. We intend to rebuild all flights in the course of the next 2 years. We want to incorporate heated shelters into these new flights. These shelters would solve our worries over uncertain temperature in early June and allow us to open earlier and close later in the year. We are not rebuilding only for better temperature and commodities, we also have a desire to create a more aesthetically pleasing park. We realize that in our climate a beautifully planted aviary is an impossibility, as trees and shrubs don't grow fast enough to outlive an active parrot, but with a lot of planning and imagination, we think that we can create an interesting surrounding.

**P.L:** Considering the variety of species that you care for, the knowledge necessary to provide for their care must be overwhelming. I understand that you and other keepers thrive for continuing education by attending conferences, visiting other breeding centres, consulting books, magazines and the Internet.

**M.A.** Yes, our staff continues to acquire knowledge through all possible resources. We have all developed affinities for various species. We have also learnt innovative first





aid techniques and can assist in emergencies when the winter roads prevent visits to the avian clinic. A daily monitoring and annual health exam allows us to evaluate the health of our birds and maintain proper records for future reference. We now perform our own egg necropsies, gram stains & basic diagnostic tests. Continuing education through books, magazines, avian web sites and attending conferences is essential to maintain such a diverse colony.

**P.L:** *You audaciously mixed large parrot species, placed at your refuge, in large colony flights. You mentioned that this was to recreate what you had observed on a visit to a renowned refuge centre in Holland.*

**M.A.** In June, 2001, my husband decided that there was a need for a refuge and so we started to open our doors to 'refugees'. During the first year, we received over a hundred birds. They were all quarantined and tested for the 4 major diseases (the fearful P's). It got very demanding and expensive. After several negative encounters with members of the human species,



and an interesting conversation with the Gabriel Foundation we decided to change our policy. Birds now have to come with their cages and money to pay for medical tests. Of course, we've found birds abandoned on our doorstep, but these are exceptions. Like every rule, it is sometimes bent, as it was for a moluccan cockatoo who came from a veterinary clinic where we paid the bill so it wouldn't be euthanized. Last autumn we visited the famous Veldhoven refuge. They were very generous of their time and shared their experience with 'building' mixed flights. It helped us to create larger mixed colonies.

**P.L :** *You now exhibit part of your Lori collection at the Granby Zoo. What installations are required to house such a large colony?*

**M.A.** Two years ago, we went into a joint partnership with the Granby Zoo for a Lory flight. They designed and constructed a closed aviary exhibit to house our 60 Lories. We provide the employees needed to care for the birds, educate and answer any question asked by the visitors. The flight is open to the public from June to September. Adults and children alike appreciate this exceptional experience. They are marvelled by their beauty and amused by their comical nature. They can interact with the lories by offering them small cups of nectar. We do not allow the birds to be handled to minimise stress and prevent anyone from getting bitten. We already had a large collection of lories. Housing and feeding them was tedious but not as great a challenge as at the exhibit. We were aware that many zoos had experienced problems in flights like these so we decided to try a new approach to counter the aggressive behaviour often observed during feeding. We provide a dry formulated diet at various feeding stations high in the aviary and feed the birds their varied diet in the morning and evenings before and after the exhibit is open.

The lories return to our zoo during the winter. To house another 60 lories, we had to remodel a major part of our third floor winter installations again. This colony is housed in a large flight on a different floor than our breeding pairs. This was essential to

promote breeding and prevent disease transmission into our breeding colony, despite all the testing that we routinely subject our birds to. To minimise the cleaning and feeding labour, my husband created a new type of lory feeding dish! It consists of 15 ft long white PVC pipes sliced in half and connected to a sewer system. You open the water to eliminate all leftovers, scrub the dish and run the water again. One pipe is used for a formulated diet, one for fruits, one for nectar and the biggest for water. It makes it easy to disinfect and very fast to clean and feed. These long feeding stations also prevent the dominating birds from taking control.

We are now in our fourth season with the zoo. Every year brings new species of birds, new requirements, greater challenges certainly some deception but definitely lots of joy.



**ZOO**  
et SANCTUAIRE  
D'OISEAUX EXOTIQUES  
ICARE

## Come and Visit us

We are located 60 minutes from the Champlain Bridge or L.-Hypolite Lafontaine tunnel.

**From Champlain Bridge:** autoroute 10 towards Sherbrooke, exit 68 Granby. Route 139 North. We are located 18 km past the Granby zoo on route 139.

**From L.-Hypolite Lafontaine:** autoroute 20 towards Québec, exit 148 Acton Vale, route 116 to Acton Vale, in Acton Vale at the light, take route 139 towards Granby. We are located on route 139, past the village of Roxton Falls.

[www.bbgranby-bromont.com](http://www.bbgranby-bromont.com) for Bed & Breakfast information in the region



# parrot LIFE

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Parrot Jungle



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The Parrot Association of Canada

## The New & Improved - Model Aviculture Program (MAP)

Box 212 Anola, MB. R0E 0A0

One way for breeders to set themselves apart from the crowd and to foster professional recognition for aviculture is to become accredited through the Model Aviculture Program, which is administered by the Parrot Association of Canada. This shows professionalism and leadership by the breeder and assists the public in deciding which breeder to deal with.

PAC was established in 1994. In the same year PAC elected a committee that created detailed guidelines for a Model Aviculture Program (MAP) based on veterinary aviary inspection. MAP guidelines have been developed specific to the Canadian environment following the original MAP guidelines in the United States.

The MAP accreditation process has recently undergone significant revision. The revised accreditation process is fully documented on The Parrot Association of Canada's web site: [www.parrotscanada.org](http://www.parrotscanada.org)

A new MAP information brochure and information package request form is available in both official languages.

### Goals of the Canadian Model Aviculture Program

- Standardized aviary care for parrots
- Promotion of healthy domestic bred parrots
- Elimination of the importation of wild caught parrots for the pet trade
- Increased public awareness of aviculture
- Framework for improvements in avicultural husbandry
- Self administered regulations for aviculturists
- MAP accredited aviaries show leadership and a united stance
- Official recognition by governmental agencies
- Respectability for aviculture through MAP veterinary inspections
- Genetic conservation through cooperative breeding programs with government endorsement

### MAP Guidelines Summary

While aviculturists house many different species of birds, PAC's focus is on parrots. PAC (through MAP) wishes to improve parrot husbandry in the breeder environment as well as bird care in the pet industry and the home environment.

### The following areas of concern are addressed:

- The use of quarantine to protect not only the existing collection, but also any newcomers to the collection through proper isolation, servicing, sanitation and testing.
- The well being of your flock through proper vermin control, housing, sanitation and handling procedures.
- A humane environment through proper temperatures, humidity, air quality and lighting.
- Good health of the flock through proper diet, food storage, food and water placement and cleaning procedures.
- All aspects of paediatrics including sanitation, prevention of disease transmission, thermal support, proper use and handling of hand feeding formulas, growth records of the young, identification of the young, and education to new owners/customers in regards to husbandry, health and other aspects of care for their new bird.
- All aspects of record keeping, from quarantine, disease testing, babies to selling chicks or adult birds.



# AVICULTURE

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## CANADIAN BREEDER

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### Bill Stienstra – A Bird Breeder Above the Rest



No one had any inkling of what was to come when lightning struck a tree at Squally Point near the south end of Okanagan Lake in August 2003.

Musical sounds issue from the long, large buildings on the Stienstra property – a woodsy, secluded ten-acre plot hidden in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. The whistles and squeaks are only occasionally broken by a passing car, so sheltered is their home. It sounds somewhat like a tropical rainforest so striking are the calls.

On any given day you'll find the Stienstras hard at work with

their birds, their life. It consumes their nearly every waking moment. It's an exhausting effort, but they wouldn't have it any other way. It's the way they've always done things.

Bill's love of birds began at an early age, when he was growing up in Holland. His father Tom raised canaries, and Bill as a young lad was hooked. As an adult in Canada Bill worked at construction for many years. When wife Shelagh entered

the scene and the couple had their son Tom, Bill's love of birds was reawakened. They began to successfully breed canaries and then moved on to budgies and cockatiels. In time, they acquired African parrots and Amazons, which is what they have now. Eventually their aviaries grew larger, and with this, their status as reputable breeders grew as well. The Stienstra babies captivate people across Canada.



Bill has built all of his own aviaries over the years. His buildings are functional and convenient wood frame structures. They are all lined with tin, which eases cleaning procedures and seals the buildings from within. The Stienstras prefer hanging cages, so that debris and droppings can fall underneath to be cleared away. Hanging the cages from the ceiling also enables the birds to feel safe. The African Greys have access to the outside via flights from spring to fall; the other species for now are indoors but will have flights in the future. In winter, all buildings are heated by electricity, wood or oil, and backup generators are on hand to deal with any power outages.

The Stienstra flock raises its own babies. They have nearly all proven to be good parents, thanks to the secure atmosphere they have been given to breed. Any pairs that have had difficulty have their eggs fostered by others. When there are no pairs available to foster the eggs are incubated. This happens very rarely; so successful are the parrots in raising their own. After a time the babies are pulled and handfed by Shelagh, to be readied for their trips to reputable, well run pet stores. All of the Stienstra babies are destined for the pet market; occasionally Bill will keep some back to increase his flock size.

Proper nutrition is an important consideration here. Bill's flock is fed a high-quality, nutritionally complete extruded pellet (TROPICAN) and a vegetable, fruit and pea/bean mix every other day to provide enrichment. During the breeding season this is increased to every day. His wife, Shelagh, prepares all of the birds' soft food then Bill takes an hour or so to feed. African Greys are prone to calcium deficiency, and this eventuality is resolved by supplying the parrots with a calcium supplement (Calcivet), particularly when breeding. Most of the flock receives chewable toys for behavioural



**The Stienstra flock raises its own babies. They have nearly all proven to be good parents, thanks to the secure atmosphere they have been given to breed**



**Bill's flock is fed a high-quality, nutritionally complete extruded pellet (TROPICAN) and a vegetable, fruit and pea/bean mix every other day to provide enrichment.**

## FEATHERS ON A WIRE

### Preening my feathers:

You have any comments, suggestions or questions on what you just read in our magazine, please let us know by any means.

### What ruffles my feathers:

Any pet peeves? Please let us know about whatever is bugging you in the bird world. Whether it concerns, products, prejudice, misconceptions or environmental issues we want to know. Express yourself with respect and we'll print it; space permitting.

[parrotlife@pubnix.net](mailto:parrotlife@pubnix.net)





# Bill Stienstra: Continued

## CANADIAN BREEDER



The Stienstra flock raises its own babies. They have nearly all proven to be good parents, thanks to the secure atmosphere they have been given to breed

enrichment (pine cones, large branches) however the African Greys are happiest without any new or strange objects in their vicinity.

The Stienstras run a closed aviary; that is, he and Shelagh are the only ones in and out of the bird areas, with a strict traffic pattern that minimizes any risk to the babies. There are changes of clothing for the morning chores, and as a rule, Bill keeps to the adult birds and Shelagh handles the babies. Any new arrivals are strictly quarantined, and the appropriate blood work is done (thoroughly). They run a tight ship, and it shows in the quality of their birds. This attention to detail and persistence served the Stienstras well when, in 2003, they faced the biggest challenge in their careers as bird breeders.

### PLANNING FOR DISASTERS

No one had any inkling of what was to come when lightning struck a tree at Squally Point near the south end of Okanagan Lake in August 2003. Within days a roaring blaze had advanced north in Okanagan Mountain Park, engulfing the entire area and sending some residents of Kelowna, a city with a population of approximately 100,000, running for safety on a series of evacuation orders. The Stienstra's own order came relatively quickly, and with it a unique problem: moving the birds. While others were moving personal effects and pets, Bill, Shelagh, their son Tom and Bill's brothers Andy and Harry, were struggling to build the crates for, catch and secure the safety of all the breeder flock. It was vitally important to save every bird if possible, however, because of the evacuations they lost approximately 30 fertile eggs.

In spite of the  
hurriedness of the  
evacuation, Bill and  
Shelagh managed to  
rescue all of their birds  
and whisk them away  
to a safe location.

A set of greenhouses owned by Rod and Brenda Williamson were generously set-aside as shelter for some of the birds, while others went to stay with Scott and Sharla Baillie in Vernon. And this evacuation didn't just happen once. It happened twice.

Now Bill advises people with birds to be prepared beforehand: line up people

who you can depend on in an emergency, build carriers to be stored and used in emergency situations to evacuate birds out, pair by pair, store business and other important papers in easy to carry boxes that can be quickly moved, and have a place for the birds to be kept, secure and safe. If you have these in place, any emergent situations should be easier to deal with.

In spite of the obstacles, and because of years of hard work, Bill has built and refined his aviaries so that everything is efficient and streamlined: it is a source of pride. The Stienstras feel that their greatest accomplishment has been a series of small ones – those designed to keep their birds as happy and healthy as possible. According to his wife, Bill has always had the ability to think of everything from small (filing off rough edges of wire to protect the birds and strict traffic patterns) to large (planning and designing large aviary buildings for maximum efficiency). It is the attention to detail and careful management of his birds that has made Bill Stienstra an innovator in the parrot-breeding world. And Bill figures he won't retire any time soon – caring for birds is in his blood.

*By: Desi Milpacher*



Desi Milpacher & Bill Stienstra,  
British Columbia

Photography supplied by: Desi Milpacher & Bill Stienstra.

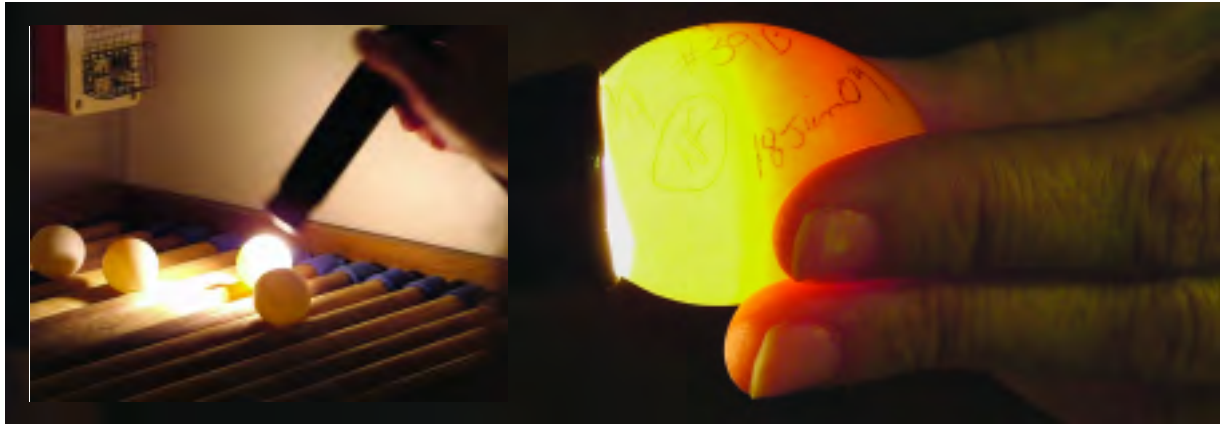
**Desi Milpacher** is an aviculturist with a small flock in the Okanagan valley. She has a diploma in Animal Health Technology from the University College of the Cariboo and has seven years experience raising parrots.



# The Brooder:

## TROUBLE SHOOTING INFERTILITY

We have compiled a brief outline of factors related to husbandry, medical, physical or behavioural implications that can be easily assessed when troubleshooting infertility.



☐ Proper assessment of the egg development: are the eggs really clear or could they have DIS (dead in shell) in the first days of incubation? A necropsy should be done on every egg that fails to hatch, even if the egg appears clear when it is candled.

☐ Is the pair properly sexed? Gender is the most common cause of reproductive failure. Has a complete physical exam been done on the pair prior to the breeding season, to eliminate debilitating health conditions? Cloacal papillomas & other localized infections surrounding the cloaca could inhibit the pair to properly copulate. Obesity: consider dieting overweight birds.

☐ Do you offer a varied and balanced diet?

☐ Nutritional deficiencies: diet should be carefully analysed and deficiencies should be corrected such as hypovitaminosis ADE, low calcium levels and low caloric intake.

☐ Is the drinking water provided always fresh?

☐ Have the nails been trimmed too short? Is bumble foot, feet deformities or toe amputations preventing the pair to maintain a stable position during copulation?

☐ Are the perches adequate? Are they not too slippery, unstable or malpositioned?

☐ Do you provide fresh branches to encourage mating behaviour and nest construction? Refer to a toxic plant list to provide safe tree species and non-pesticide treated branches.

☐ Can you identify certain disturbances surrounding your aviary that could be disrupting their mating behaviour & activity? Disturbances induced by humans, other birds, vermin and other animal species?

☐ Do your enclosures provide a safe, stress free environment? Is there ample space to allow exercise and territorial behaviour?

☐ Are the nest dimensions, materials & substrate used adequate for this species?

☐ Is the nest stable or can vibrations be observed when the pair is moving in it?

☐ Does the nest box entrance to the cavity allow sufficient privacy, and security? Can the pair chew the entrance and mark their cavity?

☐ Do you routinely inspect the nests? Sporadic and invasive inspections are not recommended, especially when done exclusively during the breeding season.

☐ Egg candling: proper candling equipment and handling technique should allow you to evaluate fertility and monitor developmental stages with minimal manipulation. Eggs should not be manipulated at the

early stages of development.

☐ Is the lighting (natural and artificial) provided adequate?

☐ Are indoor installations equipped with a timer to insure desired light cycle? Lengthen photoperiods promote LH secretion (the primary reproductive hormone)

☐ Do you gradually alter the climate (temperature, humidity and lighting) to stimulate the breeding activity?

☐ Excessive environmental temperature and humidity can decrease reproductive activity (temperature exceeding 27°C = thermal stress).

☐ Has the microclimate of the nest been evaluated or recorded? Metal nests can contribute to excessive temperature within the nest, rendering it inhospitable for the pair & perilous for the eggs.

☐ Can a video monitoring system be installed? This could give you additional insight as to their actual reproductive activities, behaviour & aviary disturbances.

If the reproductive activity fails to be successful following a thorough evaluation of the pair, consider repairing the birds. Consult your avian veterinarian for the possibility of performing an endoscopic evaluation of the male and female reproductive tract.

*By: Josee Berminghøj*

Further articles in the coming issues will address factors affecting reproductive success individually. We recommend that you save this chart, and use it as a work sheet when evaluating each breeding pair. Evaluating each pair individually is recommended, versus trying to assess the colony as a whole.

## THE AQUA BROODER

This system has been successfully used at the Hagen Avicultural Research Institute (HARI) for many years. In order to provide the ideal environment for the hatching process and neonatal care, a system using wet-bulb heating was assembled using articles already available and manufactured for the pet market.

In order to achieve the desired humidity and temperature, a towel is placed over the unit and can be adjusted to maintain the temperature & humidity desired. This unit also provides greater chances of success when forced to intervene and assist the hatching process. When the developmental stage of the egg reaches draw down and the egg starts the pipping process, transfer to this unit is ideal. If left in the incubator along with other eggs, the turning mechanism can not be stopped, nor can you risk opening the incubator frequently to closely monitor the hatching process; temperature and humidity fluctuation could endanger the viability or development of the other eggs. Have an aqua brooder installed and operating at all times so that you are ready for the neglected parent raised chick, unexpected hatching or assist hatching intervention.

We are now trying to establish the best recommendations as far as the heaters required to maintain the desired temperatures within the unit. We'll give you an update in the following issue.

In order to maintain the desired temperature the chicks are placed in the floating 2.5 gal. aquarium inside of a smaller container. It is essential to monitor the tempera-



ture within the floating aquarium in order to have the accurate reading of the chicks' environment.

This dual-purpose unit also serves as an ideal nursery for neonates. The environment provides the humidity required to maintain proper hydration of neonates, essential to ensure digestive motility and absorption.

Having a heat source generated by heated water provides the humidity necessary for the hatching process. Artificially incubated eggs are removed from the incubator after the first sign of pipping is observed and the rest of the hatching process takes place in this unit.



This new EXOTERRA terrarium is an innovative product that is now being tested at HARI.

### *Some advantages already noted are:*

- This unit offers superior humidity directly surrounding the chicks. The removable glass door on the front panel of the terrarium allows the humidity generated by the heated water below to have direct contact

with the chicks environment.

- Another advantage is that the blanket no longer needs to be removed to have access to the chick. It used to be difficult to monitor and maintain the perfect temperature when the blanket would get moved every time we had to monitor or feed the chick. The positioning of the blanket plays a crucial role in maintaining the perfect environment.
- The size of this unit easily accommodates 2 chicks at once.
- We are now trying to establish the best recommendations as far as the heaters required to maintain the desired temperatures within the unit. We'll give you an update in the following issue.

### Required materials:

- 10 gal. aquarium
- 2.5 or 5 gal aquarium
- Thermal Compact completely submersible aquarium heater
- 1/4 cup of Safety salt
- Thermometer
- Hydrometer
- Towel
- Rigid plastic container
- Screen top ( terrarium)

Benoit Guilbault ( facility manager) & Isabelle Huot ( nursery management) Hagen Avicultural Research Institute (HARI)

### Precautions

- Monitor the water level to prevent the floating aquarium within from tipping over. The water level should be barely an inch above the water heater.
- A cup of Safety Salt added to the water will prevent bacteria from growing in this unit, although we recommend the unit be dismantled every week, disinfected and dried in the sunlight to rid any bacterial formations none the less. HARI is presently testing the use of natural liquid bleach in highly

diluted concentrations and Oxyfresh for a more effective bacterial growth inhibitor.

- The size of the interior floating aquarium will depend on the size and species kept in this unit. When the hatchling is a few days old, we place a small towel or stuffed animal in the aquarium so that he can lean up against or snuggle up to it. Make sure the inside aquarium is not too restraining. Replace with the 5 gal. aquarium to allow the chick to be kept in this unit longer.

- The aquarium water heater

should not be exposed to the air. Read instructions carefully. Always maintain a minimum of water over the installed heater. Water will quickly evaporate!

- Maintaining a stable temperature and humidity will be easier to achieve if the unit is placed in a small nursery room, where minimal heat fluctuations are present. Do not place under an air vent. Set up the unit in advance and take a day or 2 to monitor and record the temperature and humidity at different times throughout the day.

- Keep records of temp.&

humidity, fluctuations, growth charts, and general observations for further reference.

- Refer to manuals such as Rick Jordan's Parrot Incubation Procedures for recommended temperature and humidity within the brooders.

Gradually decrease and adjust the ambient temp, as the chick ages. This unit can house neonates for the first 10 days depending on the species. Beware of extreme temperatures, which will cause panting and hyperthermia in the chicks.



# Everybirdie's a *critic!*

We watch, listen, read, tried, taste anything new and old on the bird market!

*Then we critique and praise.*

## A DVD on Toys!

**The Importance of Toys,**  
DVD by behaviorist  
Michelle Karras.

**Boy did we see toys!** This is a DVD to help people understand the importance to stimulate their bird's intelligence and natural curiosity with toys. You will not learn to teach your bird advanced tricks but you will learn to understand him better. Everyone can benefit from watching this; whether they have been living with birds for many years or are just starting.

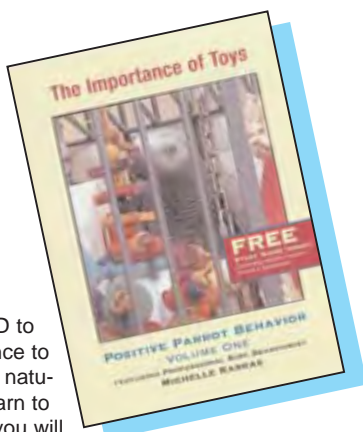
**Let's start with the praises:** Very well presented in shorts episodes. It never gets boring, the image quality and sound are fine. Michelle Karras has a firm grasp on what she is teaching and is very articulate. It is easy to understand her techniques and theories, evocative examples are given to illustrate them. She gives nice ideas on very amusing toys that will cost you next to nothing. You will also learn the importance for birds to feel safe, how to achieve that with simple and logical steps. Basics but primordial commands for your birds are clearly demonstrated and will greatly help anyone. We felt that Ms Karras clearly showed a great respect and genuinely care for birds.

**As for our critics...**We think that too much toys in a cage can make it very hard to evaluate their safety condition and cleanliness. In addition we would be afraid if something should scare the parrot, he would start to flap his wings and get caught in toys, injuring a wing or feather. Although Ms Karras warns us to watch the toys, toes, wings and nails of the bird to reduce the risk of injuries, we feel that the risks are too important for someone who's not at home all day long. It might be o.k. if you can be close enough to your bird and to check on him regularly or hear him if he is in trouble. But maybe we are just a bunch of first class worriers... There is one thing though on which we all agreed; don't give anything with cellophane to your bird it could be dangerous should he swallow a piece of it. This is something that anyone who's selling birds as companion should watch to learn about the different groups of toys; did you know there are 5?

**Rating: All in all, I give it a 4 star out of 5.**

To order that DVD or one on another subject visit: [www.thepoliteparrot.com](http://www.thepoliteparrot.com)  
**Michelle Karras will be speaking at the Canadian Parrot Symposium in Hamilton on October 30, 31 2004.**

**By: Sylvie Aubin**



## A Story of a personal awakening & an insight to Parrot Life.

**The Novel:** Hardcover, 275-page book  
Publication Date: January 2004 By:  
Harmony Books

This beautifully orchestrated novel captures the essence of a unique and truly privileged experience. It is based on a compilation of the journals kept by Mark Bittner, known as the defacto caretaker of The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. For the last decade, without prior experience or training, Bittner has gained more insight into urban parrots than perhaps any other ornithologist, as the primary observer and care taker of this wild flock of cherry-headed conures. He refers to them as "beautiful little friends", Bittner named the birds after authors, fictional characters he admired, to help keep track of individuals, their mates and offspring (now totaling close to 85 individuals). Thanks to the conures, Bittner has rediscovered an old passion - writing. "This has brought me back to it," he says. "The flock was the turning point for me." Mark's chaste recollections are truthful and unpretentious.

**It is a genuine, heartfelt and liberating novel, a must read for all.**

**Rating: I give it a 5 star out of 5.**

**The Movie:** A documentary film by Judy Irving, also by the same name "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" **A Love Story... With Wings** will soon be shown in movie theaters. The film maker describes it as a celebration of "Urban wildness, Bohemian and Avian".

**Excerpts from the book:**

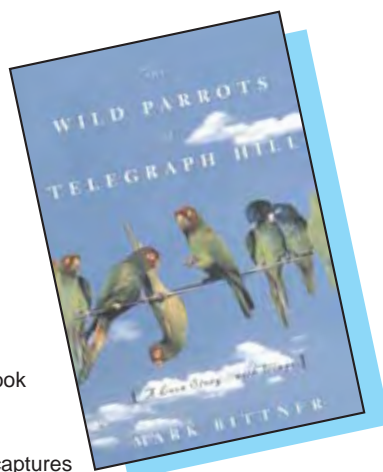
"Sophie-released back into flock following a disease, managed to maintain a position in the flock through sheer feistiness"

"Mingus-his bad leg hung when he flew, was the reason he rejected freedom"

"The first time I saw the flock fly overhead in one group at full strength, the sight and sound thrilled me so much that I broke out into a spontaneous little dance. I always told people that I didn't believe I was responsible for the flocks' growth, but at that moment I felt akin to the Sorcerer's Apprentice"

**Mark Bittner has presented at the Canadian Parrot Convention in Hamilton Oct 30-31<sup>st</sup>, 2004.**

**By: Josee Bermmingham**



[parrotlife@pubnix.net](mailto:parrotlife@pubnix.net)

Anything new on the wild side of your bird's world? Let us know. Our staff will be happy to try, test or taste it...

# HEALTH

## VETERINARIAN CASE REPORT

### Dr. Corina Lupu

is a graduate of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Montreal and is a board certified specialist in the field of avian medicine. Her career, which spans 25 years, began with a 3-month apprenticeship in Chicago with the late Dr. Ted Lafeber Sr. Her appreciation and respect for birds born out of this experience have intensified over the years.

Dr. Lupu owns and operates the Montreal Bird and Exotic Veterinary Hospital, which is devoted exclusively to birds and exotic animals. She also teaches avian medicine at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Montreal and has lectured over the years to various groups, professional and non-professional alike.

Dr. Lupu has developed a special interest in Parrot behaviour and advocates vigorously for responsible parrot ownership.

### A case of nasal infection in a 52-year-old parrot

A 52-year-old Cuban Amazon named Coco was brought to us because she had developed three small "holes" in her upper beak. This was an unusual presentation. The holes were situated just below the right nostril and appeared as though they had been drilled into the horny beak. These 1-2 mm diameter perforations were filled with what appeared to be dried blood. We also found that the right cere, the fleshy area around the nostril, was swollen and red. She scratched this area often, rubbing her face on her perch or using her foot.

The swollen nostril indicated that there was an inflammation in the nasal cavity. We could not explain the holes in the beak.

The rest of her physical examination was normal. She was fed a balanced diet. Blood tests were normal and X-rays as well. The internal nares were cultured and after several tries, a bacterium was isolated. This bacterium is one that thrives in the upper respiratory system, and causes damage by producing a substance, which destroys living tissues.

We knew we were dealing with an infection of the right nasal cavity and a possible fistula (a tunnel burrowed by the bacteria) from the inside of the nasal cavity, through the bony and horny tissues of the beak, to the outside. We treated the bird with a combination of antibiotics administered by injection and locally by flushing the nasal cavity with medicated saline. Over the course of a month, we saw the dark crusts in the holes clear up, the cere return to normal, and the itching stop. All was well, or so we thought. Periodic follow-ups showed that the holes were slowly migrating down the beak as the beak

grew. Eventually they disappeared. However, twelve months after the first incident, new holes appeared, and the cere was again inflamed.

We repeated the identical treatment, as it had been successful the first time, but for a longer duration. We believed we were dealing with a recurrence of the condition, because not ALL the bacteria had been eliminated during the first course of treatment and we thought we might be dealing with a very tenacious or resistant strain. Once more, the treatment was effective, the inflammation subsided, the hole migrated down the beak and all returned to normal for twelve months.

At that time, a third recurrence of the problem made us look deeper into the situation. We no longer believed the treatment to be at fault. Was this birds' immune system weakened by her advanced age? Was there an unchecked source of contamination?

After thorough discussions with the clients, we realized that Coco used a rope perch, to soothe her aging tender feet. This perch had been in the cage all along and Coco had been rubbing her beak on it from the beginning. Furthermore, the condition always appeared in the spring when Coco ate more fruit, wiping the fruit residue from her beak onto to perch. Although the perch was wiped clean regularly, it was never cleaned in depth.

The suspect perch was replaced by a new one, which was henceforth washed in the dishwasher weekly.

The take home lessons of Coco's adventure are twofold. Firstly, debris can accumulate in the most unsuspected areas in even a meticulously clean environment: the perch in this case, under cage bottom pull out trays, at the junction of cage wires, in the hinges of food clips, etc. Bacteria are microscopic and hide in the nooks and crannies of a bird's environment. Most will not survive unless they are surrounded by organic material such as secretions, droppings or food debris. Hence, while disinfecting is important, it is more important



to thoroughly wash away any organic debris with detergent. In the case of a bird suffering from an infection, this becomes doubly important as they he will re-contaminate himself from the environment. Secondly, as our parrot population ages, keep in mind that they will become more susceptible to infection from bacteria and mould found in their environment. While a balanced nutritious diet is always important, at this age it is crucial. Birds that have been improperly fed over the years will likely have a weaker immune system than their well-fed counterparts will. If you are offering fruits and vegetables to accompany their pellet diet, stick to the dark greens, blue, red and orange in colour. They are the most vitamin and anti-oxidant rich. The addition of nutritional supplements may also be of value if the birds are on a largely non-pellet diet.

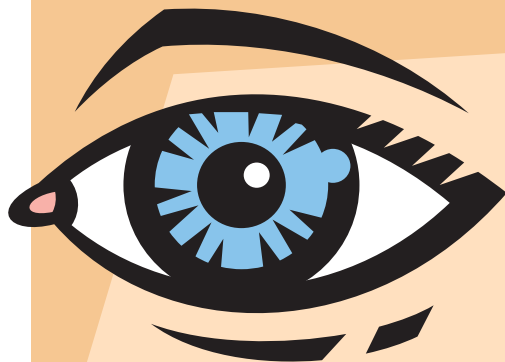
*By: Dr. Corina Lupu*

- **Bacteria are microscopic and hide in the nooks and crannies of a bird's environment.**

- **As our parrot population ages, keep in mind that they will become more susceptible to infection from bacteria and mould found in their environment.**

- **The older the Parrot, the more crucial a balanced nutritious diet becomes!**

*Do you have any questions for our vet? Please email a note to: [parrotlife@pubnix.net](mailto:parrotlife@pubnix.net)*



**For those of us who live in temperate climates, snow and ice are things we have to live with in the winter months. Therefore we also have to live with the dreaded calcium; in the streets, sidewalks and on our balconies and steps. Which mean we have to protect our shoes and boots against its ravage.**

# Parrots Beware!

**But parrots beware : Water proofing compounds and leather treatments are toxic!**

**DON'T:** Apply those products inside your home.

**DON'T:** Let your bird or other pets play with those products or with the objects you applied it to.

**DO:** Go outside to do it, it's also toxic for humans.

**If all that melting snow and slush on your floors is putting you in a frenzy to clean beware of the toxicity of certain cleaning products.**

**DON'T:** Use cleaning products without looking carefully at the labels and list of ingredients.

**DON'T:** Let your pet stay in the room when you are using dangerous or very smelly products.

**DO:** Read carefully all the labels and smell the products yourself.

**DO:** Use environmentally friendly products, it's better for you, your animals and the planet. The green feather chronicles will give you great eco-tips and advices for a safer house for you and your bird companions. We will also promote Eco-solutions and raise consumer awareness to allow our readers to make educated choices

to help protect our environment. The plight of parrots in their natural habitat relies on our ability to protect and preserve their natural sanctuaries

**DO:** Air out the room when you are using cleaning products.

**DO:** Use vinegar to clean out those nasty stains of calcium. It's natural and very safe, and it's inexpensive.

**ALERT:** There is an ongoing controversy about the cleaning product that comes with the Swiffer (a device to clean floors that resemble a vacuum). It is rumoured that some dogs and cats have died of renal failure due to an ingredient in that product; ethylene glycol. However there has been a contradictory release about that information on both the web sites of the ASPCA and the APCC. The ingredients are rather safe when used according to label directions and would not cause liver or kidney damage at product concentration. The list of ingredients is: Water (90-100%), propylene glycol ( and not ethylene glycol) n-propyl ether and isopropyl alcohol (1-4%).

**For more information:**  
[www.apcc.aspc.org](http://www.apcc.aspc.org)



# Bumblefoot:

## CAUSES AND TREATMENTS

Dr. Petra Burgmann, BSc, DVM, Dip. ABVP (Avian Practice) Animal Hospital of High Park, 3194 Dundas St West, Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2A3

Long recognized as a serious disease in raptors, bumblefoot, otherwise known as pododermatitis, also occurs frequently in psittacines. It is common in heavy-bodied birds such as Amazons and Hyacinth macaws, but is also seen in budgerigars and cockatiels.

The severity of this foot condition can vary from a mild thinning and reddening of the plantar surface of the feet, to a severe chronic infection that may involve bone infection (osteomyelitis) and can lead to septicemia and even death due to secondary infections. Although most cases involve the plantar region of the foot, some cases may begin by affecting only one digit, or the lesion may be located on the underside of the hock region, especially in large psittacines such as Amazons or macaws.

The causes of pododermatitis vary. In raptors, the most common causes are punctures to the sole of the foot or digits by the bird's own sharp talons, or bite wounds inflicted by its prey. In psittacines, the causes are most often nutritional or environmental. Nutritional causes include diets low in vitamin A, biotin, calcium, D<sup>3</sup>, or some other nutritional deficiency, or diets high in fat. Environmental causes most often involve the bird's perches. Improper perch size, perches all of the same size causing insufficient foot exercise, sandpaper perches, perches that are otherwise too rough or dirty, or simple inactivity are important causes. Spoiled food

or feces caked to the perches can form a source of infection as bacteria multiply; standing on this source of concentrated contamination can result in infection of even a mild foot abrasion. Harsh cleaning solutions that are not adequately rinsed can cause an initial irritation that can progress. Trauma to the foot from an injury that becomes secondarily infected can also be a cause. Commonly isolated bacteria include *Staphylococcus* sp., *Streptococcus* sp., *Pseudomonas* sp. and rarely, *Candida* sp. fungus or *Mycobacteria* sp. bacteria. Other conditions may be confused with mild bumblefoot cases. These can include urate tophi of articular gout, small localized abscesses, poxvirus lesions, fungal lesions, parasites such as *Knemidokoptes* or filarial nematodes, insect bites, callus formation due to old fractures, frostbite,

burns, trauma, or papillomas or other benign or malignant tumors. Other conditions include proliferations on the feet of canaries due to aging, constricted toe syndrome, constricting fibers wrapped around the toes or legs or too tight leg bands, or self-mutilation syndrome. Contact dermatitis can occur from ergot or contact irritants such as nicotine from contaminated hands of smokers, or hair-spray or other chemicals. The severity of the lesions influences both the treatment and the prognosis, so a review of lesion grading is important. Raptor bumblefoot is usually graded from 1 to 5, but lesions in psittacines, which are often less pronounced when first presented than the lesions seen in raptors, are often graded from 1 to 7.

### (Photo A)

*Most important in understanding the treatment of bumblefoot is to appreciate that even the mildest case should be treated promptly to avoid progression of the lesion, and that the more severe cases may require months of intense therapy in order to heal.*

Grade 1 lesions can often be corrected by simple sound management practices. Proper nutrition should be considered first, not just by investigating the diet provided, but by ensuring that the bird is actually eating the full diet, and not just picking out its favorite foods. Make sure that the diet contains sufficient levels of vitamin A, biotin, calcium and vitamin D<sup>3</sup>, but be careful not to over-supplement. Make sure that the fat content of the diet is not too high; Amazons, Rose-breasted cockatoos, budgerigars and cock-

atiels are especially prone to obesity. Additional foods high in carotenoids such as orange or yellow coloured vegetables, and foods high in vitamin C and vitamin E may be beneficial. If in doubt, consult with your avian veterinarian regarding the best diet for your bird. Environmental causes should be investigated next. Are the diameters of the perches the correct size for the species? Improper perch sizes are to your bird equivalent of wearing the wrong shoes. Too wide a perch diameter stretches the foot out too much; too narrow puts too much pressure on the wrong part of the foot.

**(Photo B)** Variety in perch diameter is essential, and can be provided by using natural branches from non-toxic insecticide-free trees. Sandpaper perches are like walking barefoot on a rough gravel road. The new abrasive perches intended to



### Biography Dr. Petra M. Burgmann

Dr. Burgmann received her Bachelor of Science (1980) and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (1984) degrees from the University of Guelph, and has been practicing exotic pet medicine ever since.

She opened her own exotics practice, the Animal Hospital of High Park, in 1986. In 1993 she was the first Canadian to be board certified by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners in Avian Practice, and she recertified for an additional 11 years in this specialty in 2002.

Dr. Burgmann is the author of "Feeding Your Pet Bird" as well as a contributing author, in avian and exotic pet medicine, to numerous other texts, journals and publications. She has lectured in exotic pet medicine at the University of Guelph, Seneca College, Toronto Academy of Veterinary Medicine, Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, Canadian Parrot Symposium, and many other special interest groups. She has also appeared on Cable 10 Community Broadcasting, CFRB, CBC radio, and CBC television.





## Bumblefoot: LOOK FOR THESE SYMPTOMS

- Grade 1:** Thinning of the plantar surface of the foot with some reddening
- Grade 2:** The thinning of the plantar surface of the foot has progressed to the point where subcutaneous tissue such as tendons can be seen through the skin
- Grade 3:** Ulcers form on the soles of the feet with calluses forming around the edges of the lesions. Some pain and mild lameness are present.
- Grade 4:** A necrotic plug forms in the center of the ulcer, and pain and lameness are present.
- Grade 5:** Cellulitis (swelling and edema) surrounds the area of necrosis, and the foot or digits can be swollen with edema (fluid). Tendons and metatarsal pads can become infected, and pain and severe lameness are present.
- Grade 6:** The digits are swollen and the necrotic flexor tendons on the plantar surface of the foot rupture. Even with treatment, nonfunctioning digits and ankylosis (fusion of joints) will be present.
- Grade 7:** Osteomyelitis (bone infection) occurs and can progress to systemic infection and even death.



non-scented lanolin-based lotion or bovine udder balm should be done every three days.

Any lesions of Grade 3 severity or worse requires veterinary intervention, but their respective treatments will be described here to allow a better understanding of the steps involved in treating this serious condition.

*Grade 3* lesions may be cultured for bacteria if sufficient infected material is present to provide a useful sample. The lesion is cleaned with surgical scrub and a solution often consisting of DMSO, dexamethasone, and antibiotic may be applied. A bandage is applied for one to two weeks to prevent progression, and the bandage is checked or changed every three to five days. All nutritional and environmental changes as previously described are addressed.

*All Grade 4 lesions* are treated by removing the necrotic plug at the center of the lesion and collecting a sample for culture and sensitivity to help choose the right antibiotic. General anesthetic may be required if the bird is in severe pain or is extremely agitated by the treatment. The wound is thoroughly irrigated and disinfected, and a solution often consisting of DMSO, dexamethasone, and antibiotic may be applied. Excessive bleeding is a concern, and is avoided if at all possible. A hydroactive wound dressing is applied to draw out the infection and promote the best possible secondary intention healing, and the foot is bandaged. The bandage should be changed every three days to assess healing. Appropriate systemic antibiotic and pain management medications are administered.

*All lesions of Grade 5 severity or greater* should be radiographed to assess whether bone infection is involved. If not, treatment is similar to Grade 4 lesions, however, injectable systemic antibiotics should be instituted and bandages should be changed every two days. Treatment is usually 6-8 weeks, and full recovery can take 4 to 6 months.



# Ask the Vet



## **Q. What's wrong with my feathers?**

Wapo is my female green wing macaw (*Ara chloroptera*). She is 3 years old and has an unusual feather coloration. During the summer of 2003, when her flight feathers started to emerge, I noticed 2-3 feathers with abnormal coloration. These feathers which should have been blue, emerged with a pink color down the feather shaft. This coloration is still present today and in addition, since these past few months, the feathers on her back, which should also have a blue coloration are multicolored. Yellow is the dominant color, but some feathers have a combination of yellow, red and blue. Wapo has also had feather damaging behaviors and we have consulted with avian clinics and undergone a multitude of diagnostic tests in vain, to identify the problem. The emergence of these new abnormal colored feathers is strangely disturbing to me and I would like to know what factors could be contributing to this condition.

### **I offer her daily**

- a varied diet with an optimum quality formulated diet and seed mix.
- a biological bean, couscous, rice and barley diet.
- a variety of veggies, and fresh fruits.

### **Once a week**

- vitamins are given and varied between Prime, Orlux and Nexton S.
- I treat her with hand feeding TROPICAN formula mixed with banana and sweet potato.
- Calci-vet is added to her drinking water.
- Avian probiotics are sprinkled on her fresh fruits and veggies.

Periodically she is offered a controlled amount of almonds and other nuts as well as table food, cooked egg and boiled chicken bone.

Guylaine Tremblay  
Québec, Canada

**A.** Colour appears in feathers by two mechanisms. They are produced either by pigments deposited into developing feathers (yellows, reds, browns, purples,) or by reflection of certain wavelengths of light by the feather's intricate and delicate infrastructure (blues). If all wavelengths of light are reflected, the feather will be white. If all wavelengths are absorbed, the feather will appear black. Certain colours are produced by a combination of pigment and wavelength reflection (oranges, pinks, greens, for instance).

Therefore, when blue feathers lose their colour, we can conclude that their infrastructure is damaged and that they no longer reflect blue wavelength alone.

This damage can be caused by external factors (excessive preening, rubbing for instance) or can be the result of structural damage during feather growth.

Blackening of the feather's edge or vane is more commonly observed than loss of colour, and has been associated with liver disease or fungal infections.

Loss of feather colour, known as achromatosis, is less frequently observed, and is reported to be primarily caused by nutritional deficiencies. There may be other causes of achromatosis, but these have not yet been demonstrated.

A diet deficient in the amino acid lysine produces achromatosis in poultry. Riboflavin (vitamin B) and choline deficiencies cause achromatosis in cockatiels. The relationship between amino acid and vitamin deficiencies and structural feather damage is indisputable; however, which amino acid(s) and vitamin(s), or combinations thereof, are responsible for structural feather damage in psittacines remains to be determined.

Certain infections or intoxications result in poor digestion, poor absorption of food, which can lead to secondary malnutrition and poor feather quality.

PBFD (Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease virus) has been implicated in feather colour change in African Grey parrots, in particular the appearance of abnormally situated red feathers. There is no actual proof of this at this time, or any demonstrated relationship between PBFD and achromatosis.

When presented with feather achromasia, especially in young birds, dietary deficiencies must be ruled out. Top quality formulated diets must be used. Commercial diets are not all made equal: some use poor quality raw materials; others are improperly formulated. Occasionally poor or prolonged storage can cause the product to deteriorate.

Seed diets are known to be deficient in amino acids and vitamins and birds on these diets must be converted to a balanced diet. Homemade diets are sometimes difficult to balance, especially when the bird has the opportunity to select his favorite foods.

Achromatosis of dietary origin is quickly reversible and normally coloured feathers should appear at the next moult, once the diet is corrected.

Change in feather condition in birds of all ages should always be considered as an advance notice of disease and prompt us to look carefully at the bird's environment, nutrition and physical well-being. Feather problems in birds are often complex to diagnose and difficult to resolve. Much work still needs to be done in this area of avian medicine.

Corina Lupu DVM



## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

By Josee Bermingham

I will be presenting various materials and home remedies in this column that you should have in your avian first aid kit that could be essential for your pet's welfare.

Various emergency situations and health assessment require access to the oral cavity of your birds. For obvious reasons, parrots' mouths are not easily inspected. Their powerful beaks can be dangerous to anyone who dares to open it forcefully, thus it is highly recommended that you become familiar with various materials and techniques to enable you to inspect your parrots mouth safely.

The oral cavity should be inspected in order to detect hypovitaminosis characterized by the lack of choanal papillae in the cranial mandibular cleft. Cuts, obstructions, ulcers, fungal and bacterial infections & burns can also be detected by visually inspecting the oral cavity.

Several years ago, my own mollucan cockatoo suddenly stopped eating. I was away at the cottage, far from any veterinarian clinic, so I immediately did what I could as far as supportive care. He was bright and alert, there was no significant weight loss based on the pectoral muscle mass, although I did not have access to a scale ! His usually brownish – beige droppings were green, of course being fed mainly a formulated diet with no artificial colorants, I knew that was indicative that he was not eating ...I decided to attempt to look into his mouth, and of course Pinochio was always easy to handle and I could inspect every part of his body whenever I wanted to, but now that I absolutely needed to, there was no way that he would co-operate. Luckily I had seen many people try to open birds beaks with dangerous objects, my experience as an animal health technician had also made me fearful of mouth speculums, that can cause damage in certain species. I then remembered a clinic using the nyla bone dog toy as an alternative. These can be found in any pet shops no matter how remote a region you happen to be in ! Luckily I purchased the bone readily and

inspected the mouth of my companion. There was indeed an ulceration, which I soon associated with a burn that had occurred a few days before when Pinochio had slurpt into my hot coffee mug. Luckily I had aloe vera in my personal emergency kit and was able to relieve the pain and encourage the healing process until I was able to consult with my avian veterinarian.

For the aviculturist, wood shaving can become obstructed in the esophageal and tracheal openings, when birds are surprised in the nest boxes and respond frantically. I have seen birds with tongue lacerations, that were never diagnosed and died from starvation...chicks can also ingest wood shavings that can be easily removed before they venture into the crop....



*Here are a few objects that can help you inspect your birds mouth safely. Do not attempt to use these techniques if you are not confident that you are able to restrain the bird appropriately.*

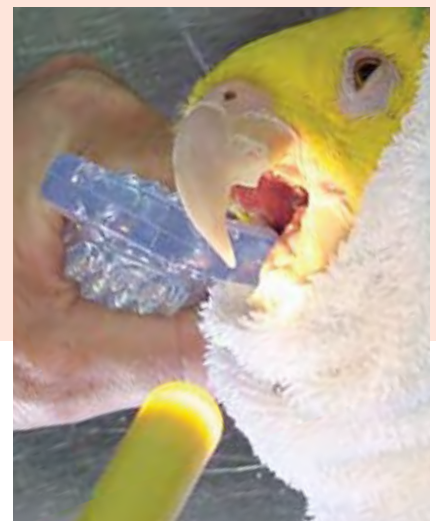
- Avian veterinarians will often use the traditional (A) mouth speculum ( invented by Ted Lafeber). This is a essential tool for the avian clinic when tube feeding adult birds.

- For smaller birds a (B) paper clip can be used. As seen below the clip properly utilized can serve as a dual restraint onto the upper and lower mandible. A small clip can be used



on budgies and parrotlets, the larger size can be used for cockatiels.

- (C)The nyla bone is used as well without trauma to the beak. Using an adequate size, this can be used on conures and larger birds.
- (D) A pen light should also be part of your first aid kit to enable you to see more clearly.



- Two pieces of gauze and or material can be cut in lengths and used separately on the upper and lower mandible. This technique requires the help of another handler.

When attempting to remove a foreign object causing obstruction, never introduce an object into the mouth of the bird that could cause injury, or worst get ingested.



## Fun & Serious web links.

### **[www.thepoliteparrot.com](http://www.thepoliteparrot.com)**

If we trigger your curiosity with our review of Michelle Karras DVD, surf her website.

### **[www.parrotdata.com](http://www.parrotdata.com)**

*(Refer to this section: Birding Trip Reports)*

Watching DVD is nice but feel more adventurous & plan your next trip with this website and go bird sighting. Read the reports made by travellers who have themselves been on birds observation trips. Their reports are quite complete and full of useful information.

### **[www.loroparquefundacion.com](http://www.loroparquefundacion.com)**

Speaking of birds in the wild; Loro Parque has a wonderful website where you can learn about all those very important parrot conservation projects.

### **[www.aav.org](http://www.aav.org)**

*(Association of Avian Veterinarians).*

As for a smaller project; your bird needs to have a veterinarian as much as you need a family doctor. So go find a good avian vet in your area with the help of this website.

## Fun Parrot Facts

### **"Ave Caesar"; who was the first parrot to say those words?**

It was a Great Alexandrine. Cleopatra got that bird as a gift for Caesar and had the bird learn those words to please him. Incidentally it's the oldest official record on parrot's ability to talk. By the way; Great Alexandrines are very good talkers with a sweet voice and clear pronunciation. Plus they are very gentle, calm birds that make fantastic companions.

### **Speaking of Caesar; who brought back good news to Rome about Caesar's defeat of the Gaul?**

A pigeon; their endurance and extraordinary sense of direction made them very useful during wars even the World Wars I and II.

### **How do they go from one place to another without getting lost?**

One of their guides is the sun. A professor Franz Kramer proved with a glass chamber in which he simulated the position of the sun that certain species navigate by the sun. When the sun was placed in the wrong direction the birds also headed in the wrong direction.

### **But how could a pigeon go to Rome fast enough?**

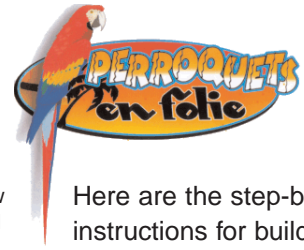
Well, at the incredible speed of 130 KPH (80 MPH). It's a lot faster than by car in the city on a Friday afternoon...

Pigeons, although they are not parrots, make great companions. They are sweet, gentle and faithful companions. Having such a soft beak there are also no risks of getting bitten. When trained, pigeons can fly freely outside and return to your home!

Sylvie Aubin



# DO-IT-YOURSELF



Here is an easy do-it yourself project to build a hanging activity centre for your bird. For homes with limited space this activity centre can be hung directly over your companion's cage. With a little creativity, you can personalize and adapt the swing to promote exercise and develop your parrot's sense of curiosity. This hanging/swinging play gym can be dismantled and rebuilt using fresh branches and new parrot toys as your beaked-feathered friend chews through it. Fresh

branches and new toys can attract curiosity and renew interest. Like any other objects your birds are exposed to remember to regularly inspect them for hazardous deterioration. Should the branches be chewed to expose the screws or render the activity centre unstable then remove it until it can be replaced? Consult potentially toxic plant lists to ensure that the branches you will use are safe for your bird. Pesticide free branches only should be used.

Here are the step-by-step instructions for building your swinging activity centre. This project will require approx 1 hour for the assembly and provide hours of fun for your parrot.

## Tools required

- Drill & mesh
- Scissors
- Saw (hand or electric)
- Measuring tape

## Required materials

- 10 ft rope, preferably nylon for it's non toxic properties (dim. 1/2 inch-1 inch) size selection based on species
- 1 metal ring 1" inches diameter
- 2 Locking C clips
- 2 ft of galvanized metal chain
- 2 ft of 1 inch PVC tube or greater than selected chain size
- 3 pieces of maple tree branches, 2 ft long and diameter adapted to species perch size requirements.
- screws

**Approximate cost of materials:**  
**\$15.00**

\*suggested toys not included



## Step by step...

1. Position the branches in a H configuration using the screws. Make sure the screws are centred and not accessible. Do not leave a gap between the branches (your birds nail could get caught!)
2. Pierce each branch 2 inches from the end. Use the hole size diameter and mesh size required for the rope size you have selected.
3. Cut the nylon rope in 2 equal sections (5 ft each).
4. Insert each rope in the metal ring half the length. Then take each end to pass through one hole at each extremity of the branches. Make a knot at each end.
5. Insert the chain through the plastic pvc tube.
6. Install the 2 locking C clips to each extremities of the chain.
7. Fix one to the metal ring of the play gym. The other will be used to hang the swing to a reliable ceiling anchor.
8. Attach 2 acrylic toys from the metal ring. I recommend using the Living World acrylic toys such as article 81190 for a larger parrot.

And here is the finished hanging swing activity centre!

by: Robert Papineau

## ATTENTION:

This swinging play gym does not allow for water and feeding bowls to be installed, therefore I would recommend that you return your parrot to his cage occasionally to drink and feed. This swinging perch is an ideal setting for a misting bath!

## Remember a few safety tips

- Recently groomed nails can be slippery!
- Supervise your parrot's activities at all times
- Bird proof your home
- Caution! Radical feather trims and complete feather power can both be hazardous if your parrot is not trained for flight and landing
- All construction materials used should be non-toxic

# Liberating Wings

Liberating Wings



POINT OF VIEW

Today I saw winging towards me over the desert landscape on the edge of El Paso, two Red-Crowned Amazons, approximately one thousand miles from their native land. For every two amazons escaped and surviving, I know many hundreds of thousands did not survive the trip after being poached from nest cavities in the wilds of their homeland.

Today I know that here in the U.S. Southwest, if this is an average summer day, two undocumented immigrants will die in the desert landscape, probably well over one thousand miles from their native land. For every two immigrants dying on U.S. soil, I know many millions attempted to make the trip, with no other choice before them, from some pueblo or ciudad wild with the chaos of their homeland.

Both human and bird are beautiful wonders uprooted from their cultural and ecological niches. While no being escapes change and death, I know this level of suffering and dying does not have to be. Poachers' dark patios, quarantine stations of old, pet stores, and breeding facilities have been the graveyards for millions of birds. The ground on which I walk feels like a graveyard for those humans fleeing economic oppression, family abuse, and injustice. Over 300 immigrants will die this year here in the Southwest deserts, and in the El Paso Sector alone approximately 100,000 will be repatriated back to their countries. Repatriation today emerges from the wounds of colonization and unfair global economic practices begun centuries before. Returning people to suffering and hopelessness does not stem the flood of humanity vying for a better life. We also repatriate parrots. Reintroduction, as we call it, today emerges from the wounds of the global pet parrot trade that entrenched parrot poaching in Latin America in the last fifty years. Returning parrots to the wild often seems hopeless and alone does not stem the flood of avian suffering.

The parallels between these two species of immigrants raise interconnecting justice issues involving birds and people. Both species suffer from the forces that produced the multi-special massive migration northward and that devastated the habitats from which they each hearken. Colonization of the New World and the subsequent burgeoning global trade left many native peoples landless, their cultures abruptly interrupted, their populations decimated, and their sustainable agriculture replaced by a new economic system that used entire nations of people for export products. To feed their families and meet the rising costs of goods, food, and health care in their country, adults and children alike are left with little option but to work for low wages under farm and industrial systems. Over and over, the profits of a few trump the flourishing of many. Families, unable to sustain themselves, are torn apart as parents seek work in the cities or in other countries so that they can send the money home. And not only parents. More and more children are attempting the perilous trip to the U.S. from Central and South America, alone – looking for parents, looking for work, looking for hope. Some are successful. Others end up maimed from hopping trains, or brutalized, robbed, or raped by adults along the migratory

path. They have lost their chance to finish their childhood normally within a nourishing and stable family and culture. Young parrots too lose their chance to mature normally within the nourishing complex environment of native habitats and stable flocks.

In the Central American and Caribbean countries in which I have lived and worked, there is a desperateness in the people. Of course people will poach parrots, burn trees, and attempt illegal entry into the US. They have scant other choice. Landowners and agribusinesses, also desperate (for profit), clear large sections of land for intensive monoculture crops for export. Monoculture destroys the land there just as it did here, where our countryside has lost its biodiversity and lost its native parrot species, the Carolina Parakeet. This is the march of ecological disintegration that arises when the hope of the good life is also the destroyer of the good life.

I believe the core of the problem lies in the wounded, fearful human heart in search of interconnection, love, and beauty. While many good people have sacrificed much to protect the varied, rich, and complex life that evolution weaves into a glorious whole, too often we aren't getting at this root issue.

Out of fear, we enforce our national borders, work so hard to control migration, keep working classes powerless here and abroad, protect our giant virtual gated community, and restrict the oppressed in Latin America to a giant virtual cage for our benefit. We also now enforce our national borders to disallow wild caught birds from being sold or transported here. While our captive breeding and agriculture efforts have been tremendous, powerless parrots of Latin America are still kept in cages for human benefit. Our fear and need responses are not always either our most compassionate or healing ones.

I realize that I am simplifying complex issues. Colonization, globalization, and pet parrots have also brought good to humanity, and genuine happiness to some households. But the cost has been high. We can and must do a better job of balancing competing claims. We can liberate the parrots, and the oppressed people of Latin America – and, indeed, ourselves. Complicity in, and denial of, the injustices around the world leads to guilt, shame, brokenness, and depression. It is not easy to witness the suffering of caged life, no matter the species, and to know that somehow even if we don't see ourselves directly contributing to suffering, we are plagued by what we might or should do. By liberating others, we become liberated, and return wholesome joy to our lives.

The return to joy and health lies in reducing and changing our consumer choices, in voting, in political activism aimed locally and abroad, and in sharing, learning and witnessing. Perhaps most importantly, the journey to wholeness lies in listening to, being open to the beauty of, and loving those with whom we share our lives, communities, and habitats. Join with other voices of all species calling to one another from jungle to desert, from city to aldea, and from heart to heart. Let us walk together and share this difficult task, for there is no easy path to freedom. We do this so that our desert walks need not be scarred with death and dying and so that we might always know the thrill of winged, chattering hope, flying above us and leading us toward peace.

Painting By: Franciscus Van Boxel



*Colonization, globalization, and pet parrots have also brought good to humanity, and genuine happiness to some households.*

Rev. LoraKim Joyner, D.V.M.  
Avian Veterinarian Unitarian Universalist Minister  
El Paso, Texas  
Lorakim's biography can be found on the following page





# PARROTS IN HOLLYWOOD:

Are you an old movie aficionado? Are you fond of suspense?

**Q:** In what Alfred Hitchcock movie did we see a companion parrot, and what species was it?

**A:** The movie is "The Birds (1963)" starring Tippi Hedren, Jessica Tandy and Rod Taylor. The parrots were a pair of lovebirds. Somebody asked Alfred Hitchcock; "How did you get the birds to do all that stuff?" He answered; "We paid them well." In fact the birds (the wild birds) were trained by Ray Berwick and were mostly cooperative. Except for the last scene when Tippi Hedren is being attacked by the birds, they had to gently tie the birds to her because they didn't want to stay on her. But rest assured that it was done with respect for the birds since The Humane Society was there for the entire making of the movie.

Here is a bit of a dialogue between the two main characters when they first meet in a pet store:

**Melanie:** "Lovebirds sir?"

**Mitch:** "Yes. I understand there are different varieties. Is that true?"

**Melanie:** "Oh yes there are."

**Mitch:** "Well these are for my sister, for her birthday see, and uh, as she's only going to be eleven, I, I wouldn't want a pair of birds that were too demonstrative."

**Melanie:** "I understand completely."

**Mitch:** "At the same time I wouldn't want them to be too aloof either."

**Melanie:** "No, of course not."

**Mitch:** "Do you happen to have a pair of birds that are just friendly?"

...Wow. Greatly said without saying much.

Those poor lovebirds have had such bad press these last few years. Of course they can be nippy and noisy but what fun they are! They are intelligent, opinionated, stubborn yet comical little parrots. They have an unbreakable spirit & live their life with gusto!

Rev. LoraKim Joyner,  
D.V.M.  
Avian Veterinarian Unitarian  
Universalist Minister  
El Paso, Texas

Birds have always called to LoraKim. Since an early age she always had birds in the home, out in the pigeon coop, or eating at the yard feeder. The justice issues regarding avian flourishing led her to a B.S. in Avian Sciences and then later to a D.V.M. where she specialized in birds. A later Masters in Preventive Veterinary Medicine emphasized avian research. The cry for justice pulled her to working in other countries as a consultant in avian medicine and conservation, with an emphasis on parrot conservation. Her hopes for the birds led her to the Philippines, Panama, Costa Rica, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Guatemala where she lived for several years. Her work with birds has also included working as a Clinical Instructor and Research Assistant Professor at the Nondomestic Avian Clinic at the College of Veterinary Medicine, North Carolina State University. There she later served as the Community Advocate, where she taught ethics and grief management as well as assisted staff, faculty, and clients in dealing with grief and ethical issues. Today she serves as the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Community of El Paso, TX. There she continues her healing work, for her experiences have taught her that the birds cannot flourish if the human heart cannot heal, and the human heart cannot heal without knowing the great depth of avian suffering and beauty. LoraKim can be contacted at [liberatingwingsjuno.com](http://liberatingwingsjuno.com).



## Bumblefoot

continued from Page 45

Initial treatment for Grade 6 lesions is the same as for Grade 5, although the bandages are changed daily. At 3 to 5 days, when the swelling has begun to subside, the foot is prepared for sterile surgery under general anaesthetic. A tourniquet is applied to control the hemorrhage, and the abscess wall is removed as well as any devitalized tendons and ligaments. Post operatively the bandages are changed daily until there is no more drainage, at which point every second or third day bandage changes commence. The appearance of healthy granulation tissue around the edges of the wound may take two to five weeks to appear. Even when the foot wound finally closes, the foot will still be extremely tender for several weeks, and may take months of careful monitoring with soft footing to prevent recurrence. Full recovery can take 6 months, but nonfunctioning digits and ankylosis (fusing of the joints) will be present.

Grade 7 lesions carry a grave prognosis. If a single digit is affected, consider amputation. If the whole foot is affected, treatment may be attempted, but amputation may be considered if only one foot is affected and does not begin to

show signs of healing within a month. If treatment is possible, full recovery can take greater than 6 months, and nonfunctioning digits and ankylosis will be present.

Complementary holistic approaches may also be useful. Although they should not be used as a substitute for proper medical therapy, when used in conjunction with the treatments described above they may help speed the healing process as they support the bird's own immune system. Chinese liquid extract *Astragalus* administered at 1-2 drops in the drinking water per 30 gram body weight, and the Chinese herb *Angelica* have been suggested as immune system boosters, as has aloe vera juice, administered at a rate of 2 drops per 100 g body weight. Homeopathic remedies *Ledum* 6C or *Silicea* 6C are useful in my experience, and others have suggested that the stimulation of acupuncture points ST 36 and 40, SP 6 and 9, Li 11, Ki 1, and bafeng may be useful. Consult with a holistic veterinary practitioner regarding more information on this subject. Although bumblefoot is a serious condition, prompt intervention and thorough treatment can often resolve the condition.

By: Dr. Petra M. Burgmann

physiology.

B-Subtract 5 points, you have a problem with control.

C-Subtract 2 points, you did not mean any harm but common sense must prevail!

D-Subtract 10 points, I would love to see you try that with an aggressive cat...

#### Answer Q 13:

A-0 points, Please get to know a few birds if you really think that!

B-Minus 10 points, and I am not even explaining why.

C-A free bonus, you don't go by stereotypes: 20 points.

D-Subtract 20 points right now. You should not consider getting a macaw if you still believe that.

#### Answer Q 14:

A-2 points, B-2 points, C-2 points, D-2 points, E-you guessed it; 2 points, F-5 points : but that was too easy!

#### Answer Q. 15:

A- Only 1 point, you want to live on the fame of your bird

B-0 points, why should he become anxious and nervous? Birds love interaction, they thrive on it, provided they are gradually introduced to various environments and humans.

C-5 points, your neighborhood sounds fun!

D-0 point, your bird would have to be quite undisciplined.

E-3 points, you have confidence in your bird's charm

F- 10 points, you sound like a fun person for a macaw to live with!

#### Answer Q. 16:

A-1 point, you are probably a cyclist and exercise is important.

B-1 point, your scientific mind is not in the right direction.

C-5 points, It's something that is often confused with a mutation which is the result of selective breeding in the same species to obtain different colorations.

D-Just because I'm vindictive you lose 20 points, my dog is a "bastard" and he is the most wonderful dog in the world. We do have to be selective in emitting judgment like this. Can someone explain to me why, when people talk about bastard dogs they always say that they are the most intelligent, less sick, etc. and a hybrid bird is something to be ashamed of?

#### Answer Q 17:

A- You go down!!! What is that nonsense about a good first bird? It's pretty fine to get a cockatiel as a first bird if you decide that you want 2 birds, then why not begin with the smaller one? But if you are not interested in living with a small bird then for heaven's sake don't buy one! Cockatiels and others small birds are as much a parrot as a large macaw. And to be frank they're getting reaaaaaally tired of people talking about them as beginner birds, easy birds, not real parrots. People are thinking of those birds as disposable birds: when they'll get their big dream bird they'll just give the small one to someone or to a refuge or sell it at a garage sale! I'm telling you, as we speak; small birds all over the world are forming a coalition to override this injustice! Beware they too have seen the movie, "The Birds" you know... You loose a grand 40 points!

B- 0 points, if you think that small beaks prepare you for a bite from a green wing macaw...

C- Minus 10 for you. Although we can deny that our finances have something to say in the choice of a bird, it should not be the primary factor. And the life of a pet has the value that you give him or her not the price you have paid. They are not antiques but living creatures.

D- Ding, ding, ding! You've hit the jackpot! 100 points for you; you can think by yourself, you don't let others idiosyncrasies govern your choices. Plus you have respect for the bird kingdom. Cockatiels and budgies all over the world are saluting you!

**Hope you enjoyed the Quiz...**

**See you next issue!**



## Hand taming and training

Continued from Page 16

Remember – Birds need clean, safe environments to feel healthy and well. Wash and change water bowls twice daily, replace and top up food every day, change cage papers every day, offer your bird a bath/shower several times each week. An unwell bird makes a poor student! Talk to your bird, use an excited happy tone. The closer the bond with you, the more motivated your bird will be to want to learn the language of his new flock leader (that's you!). Baby birds are like all babies, they need lots of time to sleep and eat. Keep your training periods short, up beat and fun for you both.

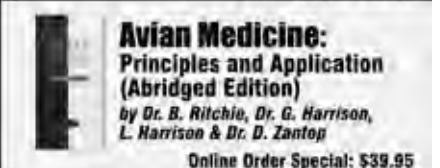
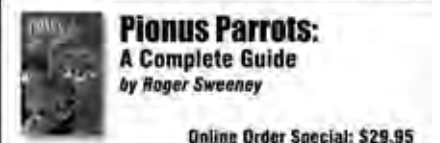
If you have any questions or concerns, be sure to ask one of our bird department specialists for their advice and help. We are always here to help!

*Lisa Mitchell*

## Cool Budgie Facts

- Budgies are originally from Australia.
- They live in huge flocks and will fly hundreds of miles to find food and water in times of drought.
- Wild budgies are all coloured yellow and green with black stripes.
- The first live budgies were imported into England in 1840.They sold for 27 British Pounds, which would be over \$1000.00 today!
- Australia banned the catching and trading of these wild grass parakeets in 1894.
- The word Budgerigar is a corruption of the Australian word "Betcherrigah", meaning "Good to eat bird"!
- The scientific name for budgies is *melopsittacus undulates*-that stands for : Melo-song, Psittacus-Bird, Undulates-with stripes.
- If you "eat like a bird", you eat a lot! Budgies can eat up to 20 % of their body weight every day. A man weighing 185 lbs would have to eat 40 pounds every day to eat the equivalent amount!
- A budgie's heart beats up to 500 times per minute! Your heart beats about 75 times per minute.
- Budgies are little parrots and can learn to do tricks and talk.
- Budgies are the most popular pet bird in the world.

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