



For The Love of Birds

finds people for birds, not
birds for people.

Why Adopt and Not Buy?

- There are many captive parrots who are in need of loving and nurturing homes.
- You'll be aiding a helpless creature who is homeless through no fault of his or her own.
- You'll be helping to reduce the number of unwanted, neglected and abused birds.

Why Adopt? (cont'd)

- You will provide a safe and nurturing home for birds who are being neglected and kept in garages and basements, or worse.
- You will help to stop the selling of birds through pet shops and breeders who sell birds for profit with no regard for their welfare and the expectations of the care giver.

The Adoption Process

- Complete Application and take Quiz
- References contacted
- Telephone Interview
- For The Love of Birds recommends a bird species and personality that matches your lifestyle, requirements and bird experience
- Two or more visits with bird at foster home
- Adopt and take bird home



For The Love of Birds

Adoption Fees

(see our website for more info)

- Budgies: \$45
- Cockatiels: \$75
- Conures : \$175
- Senegal: \$210
- Lory: \$230
- Amazons: \$310
- Eclectus, small Macaws & Small Cockatoos: \$310
- Large Cockatoos: \$410
- Large Macaw: \$460

Why you should NOT get a parrot

- They're high maintenance and often very demanding of attention
- They're loud, they bite, and they scream
- They are very particular about who they like and don't like. Their allegiance can change.
- They'll destroy your house — your furniture, cabinets, carpeting, woodwork, books, remotes, etc.
- They're expensive to care for properly



NUTRITION



- In the wild, most parrots eat very low-fat, low-protein diets, and are extremely well adapted to such diets. They also spend most of the day foraging for food. For this reason, we recommend the following diet:

Good Foods

- Vegetables, especially ones high in Vitamin A, such as broccoli, red chard, kale, carrots, peppers, sweet potatoes, squash and spinach. Many birds like to eat corn on the cob (although lesser nutritional content).
- Fruits such as berries, melons, apples, oranges, bananas, mangoes, pears and grapes.



More Good Foods



- Quinoa, brown rice, spelt, flaxseeds, barley and whole wheat pasta.
- Beans such as pinto, garbanzo, adzuki and sprouted beans.
- Clean, filtered water — change it at least twice a day; if it's too dirty for you to drink, change it.
- Periodic treats such as almonds, walnuts, other nuts and seeds.
- A little cheese or yogurt occasionally.

Good Dry Food

- High quality pellets (preferably organic pellets with no artificial colors or flavors. (ie. Harrisons)
- Pellets should be available in the bowl all day. If during the day he or she has eaten all you've put out, add more pellets.

Foods to Avoid

- Parrots are junk food junkies. The worse it is for them, the better they seem to like it. We recommend that you do NOT feed your bird the following:



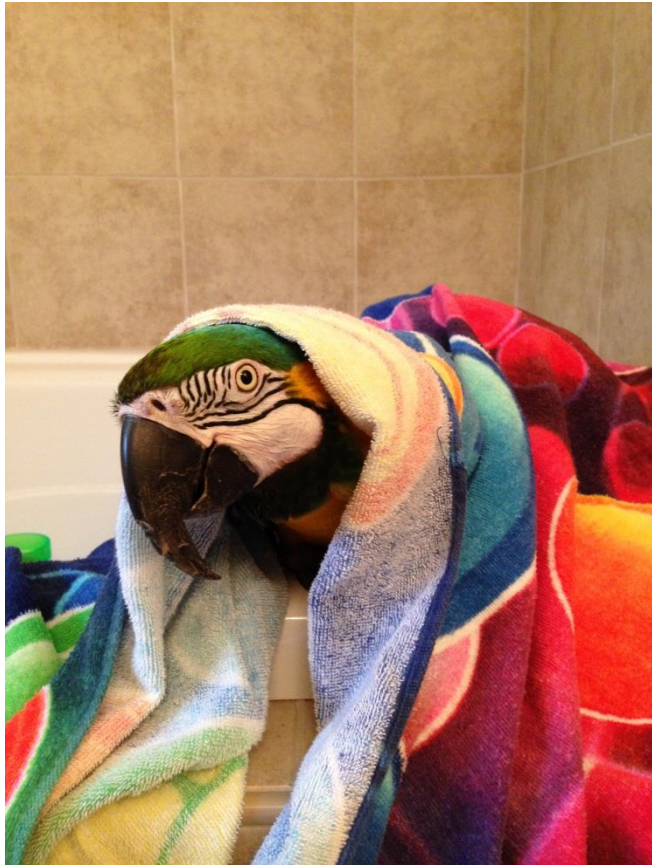
Foods to Avoid

- Animal fats, excessive animal protein, and fried foods
- Commercial seed mixes (fattening and contain bacteria and rodent feces); a few sunflower, pumpkin and safflower seeds occasionally are okay.
- Microwaved popcorn (contains really nasty chemicals)
- Salty foods (birds can't metabolize salts)
- Onions
- Carbonated beverages
- Grit
- Caffeine, Avocado, Chocolate and Alcohol should never be given

More Foods to Avoid

- Nonorganic strawberries and grapes (often contain unhealthy amounts of pesticides). These are probably the worst offenders and should be avoided
- Other thin-skinned, nonorganic fruits and vegetables (peaches, blueberries, raspberries, celery, jalapeños, apples, lettuce, greens, bell peppers, nectarines). If you do use any such fruits or veggies, rinse them thoroughly and use a fruit/Veggie wash.

CAGES



- An aviary (a cage big enough for your bird to fly in) is ideal. But if you can't have one . . .

Cage Size

- BIGGER IS ALMOST ALWAYS BETTER. Get a bigger cage for your bird than you think he needs. At the absolute minimum, a bird needs a cage large enough so that he can fully spread his wings without touching the sides of the cage, and at least twice that size is better.



Bar Spacing



- Your bird's head should *not* be able to fit between the bars of the cage. If it can, you could easily end up with a strangled bird.

Materials



- Stainless steel and powder-coated (that is, baked-on coating) cast iron and steel cages are best. Galvanized steel should be avoided, because birds can and do succumb to zinc poisoning.

Doors



- There should be at least a 1/4" gap on all sides between the door and frame of a bird's cage. Tight-fitting doors are a recipe for severed toes and feet.

Cage Shape



- Avoid round cages. Cages with flat tops or dome tops are the best. You can hang toys from flat tops, and some birds (especially Amazons) enjoy hanging upside down from flat tops.

Bad Cages

- Bad cages are often round, with the bars converging at the top, taller than they are wide, and made of uncoated wrought iron, or are painted (not powder coated) wrought iron.
- They make the birds feel insecure and they can trap head, feet and wings in between bars.



Placement

- Parrots are social animals and like to be where the action is. The living room or den is generally a good place for a cage. Do NOT put a bird's cage in a bedroom, garage or other isolated place.



More on Placement

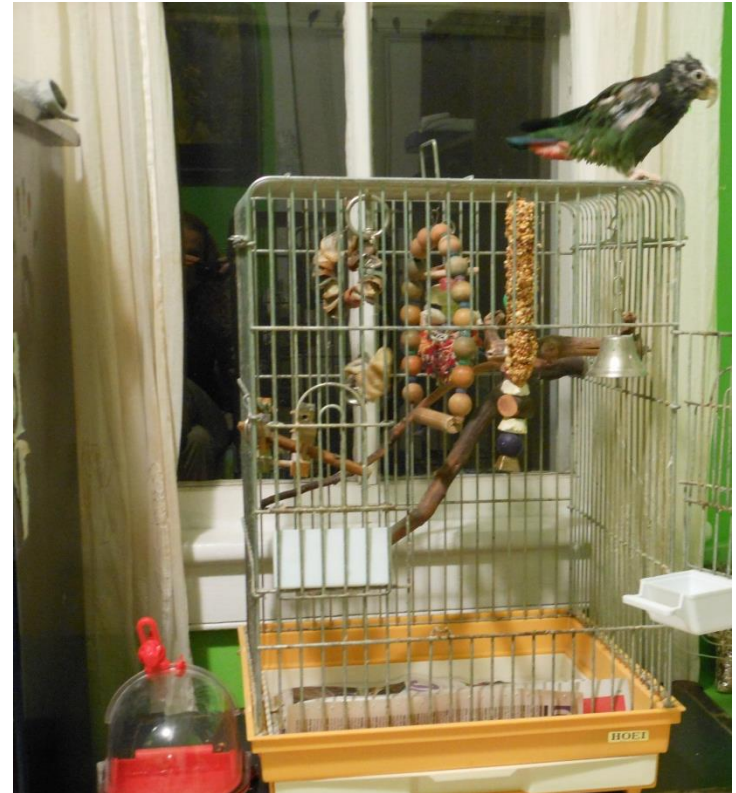
- Never place a bird's cage in the middle of a room. That's a recipe for an anxious, nervous bird. Place cages against walls, preferably in well-lit areas. Avoid drafty places, such as under a vent. And if you place your bird's cage in front of a sunny window, make sure that part of the cage is in shade.

One Bird Per Cage

- ***Never*** put a new bird into a cage with your existing bird. He'll feel invaded, and probably angry and threatened. If possible, introduce the new bird's cage to your bird first, so he'll get used to it, before introducing the new bird. (The only exceptions are 'tiels and budgies.)

Bottom Lining

- Use newspaper (at least two sheets thick), and **change the papers daily.**
- Check to see how many sheets are necessary. You don't want the poop to seep through and rust the tray.
- Sleep cages need more sheets than day cages.
- Change all sheets, not just the top ones.



More on Bottom Lining

- Avoid using ground corn cob, walnut shells or other such spongy media on cage bottoms; they hide filth and encourage the growth of deadly bacteria and fungus.



Grates & Poop Trays

- If your bird's cage has a grate, either get rid of it (if you can do so without exposing a large gap) or put newspaper on the grate.
- Most new cages come with poop trays on top of the cage. If you buy a new cage, remove the top poop tray. Most birds hate them and it shades the cage.

Cage Cleaning



- Haul your bird's cage outside and thoroughly scrub it down every few weeks. Sunlight is a great disinfectant, as is bleach.
- Steam cleaning is a good alternative.
- Sponging with warm water, soap (and perhaps a little vinegar) will also work. As will bird specific disinfectants.

Dish Cleaning

- Clean your bird's water and wet food dishes at least daily. Water dishes tend to need cleaning two or three times a day.
- Clean your bird's dry food (pellet) every few days at a minimum.
- Some birds mix their fruits and veggies in with their pellets. If this happens, clean the pellet bowl at the end of the day.

Time Out of Cage

- At a bare minimum, your bird should have at least two to four hours out of his cage every day, and more “out time” is better.
- The less time a bird has out of his cage, the greater his need for new toys and other stimulation.



PERCHES



- All good perches have uneven surfaces. Grapevine perches and mesquite-branch perches are very good, as are perches made from citrus and eucalyptus. Large-diameter rope perches are comfortable, but should be washed and trimmed (of loose strands) often.

More on Perches

- Avoid perfectly round perches—dowel sticks, PVC or ABS pipe, etc. Such perches can give your bird painful foot sores.
- Manzanita perches are slippery and can be a hazard for baby birds or birds with balance problems, but are okay for most birds.
- Avoid sandpaper-covered perches.
- Cement perches are okay only if there are also natural-wood perches in the cage.

Trees

- Birds normally love indoor “trees.” They’re ideal places for your bird to spend his “out” time, and can help to reduce cage territoriality. They can also be of help with cage-bound birds.



HEALTH



- Birds hide illness because they are prey species. If your bird looks sick, he probably is. If you suspect that your bird is ill, take him to an avian vet immediately.
- We recommend that birds be vet checked annually.

Signs of Illness

- Sitting on bottom of cage
- Change in activity level
- Being fluffed up for extended period
- Sleeping during day (beyond normal napping)
- Tail bobbing in time with breathing
- Discolored droppings
- Discharge from nares (nostrils) or blocked nares
- Reduced food intake

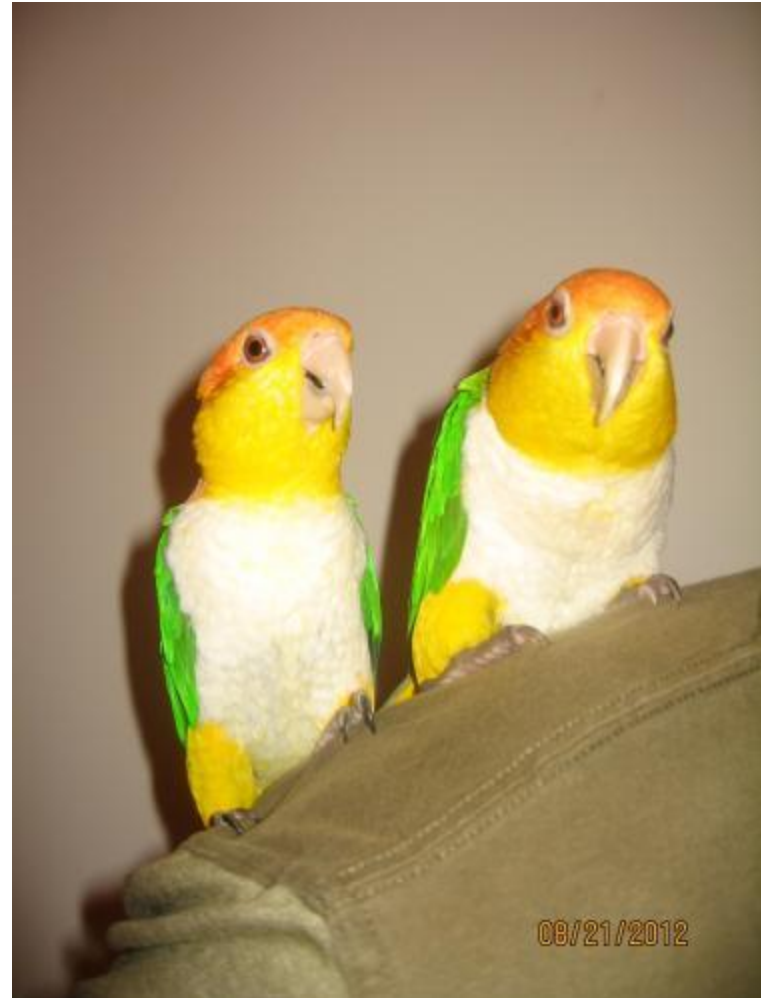
Common Bird Illness

- Psittacosis
- PBFD
- PDD
- Polyoma
- Giardia
- Bacterial (gut) infections
- Respiratory infections



Elementary Poopology

- There are three bird poop components:
- **Feces** (the green tubular component)
- **Urea** (the white liquid matter mixed with the feces)
- **Urine** (the clear liquid mixed with the feces and urea)



Poopology Cont'd

- These three components should be distinct. If your bird's poop is an amorphous mass, take him to the vet.
- Check your bird's poop daily. The appearance varies from bird to bird and is dependent on their diet.
- Blood in a bird's droppings is cause to take the bird directly to the vet. (But be aware of what you're feeding your bird: bright red or orange fruits or veggies—beets, bing cherries, pomegranates, garnet yams, etc.—can cause red or orange poop.)

Still More Poopology

- Bird poop should not stink. If it does, it's evidence of a bacterial infection. In such a case, take your bird to the vet immediately.



Human/Bird Contact



- Do not let your bird eat out of your mouth. Humans' mouths are very septic compared with a bird's, and letting your bird eat out of your mouth is dangerous to your bird.

Showers

- Bird need regular showers to maintain their feather health. We recommend at least once a week. Some birds prefer spray bottle baths, while others prefer going into the shower with you or bathing in their water bowl. If your bird doesn't want to shower so frequently, try to accommodate him, but shower him at least every other week.

Light

- Parrots need a certain amount of UV light. If you can, take your bird outside with you (In a cage) at least 15 minutes a day or, better, provide him with an outdoor aviary. The aviary, of course, should be partially shaded.



Feather Clipping

- We don't clip our birds, but some people, especially new owners, do clip their birds' primary feathers.
- If you do decide to clip your bird, please take him to an avian veterinarian or an experienced avian groomer. Note that primary feathers only should be clipped. Do not clip the "secondary" feathers near to his body. These do not affect his ability to fly, only his ability to *land*.

Still More on Clipping

- If your bird isn't clipped, you need to be extremely vigilant about keeping doors and windows closed. This can be a problem if kids are around. If they are, you might consider clipping your bird's flight (primary) feathers.



Toenail Trimming

- Unless you're very thick skinned, you'll probably want to keep your bird's toenails trimmed. When you do this, keep the following in mind:
- There are blood vessels and nerves in birds' toenails. Clip them too short and you'll hurt your bird and quite possibly cause bleeding.

More on Toenail Trimming

- Trimming toenails too short can also cause a bird to have balance and gripping problems.
- So, trim toenails just short enough to blunt them.
- If you clip and do hit a blood vessel, dip the bleeding toenail in stiptic powder or corn starch.
- Because of these problems, we recommend filing or dremeling toenails rather than clipping. Or bring you bird to an avian vet for toe nail trimming.

Sleep

- Parrots need at least 10 hours sleep per night, with 12 hours being better.
- For proper sleep, the room needs to be dark and quiet. If your bird's cage is in a living area, you may want to use a sleep cage for your bird's sleep time. This can be a small cage in a dark room.



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDS

Cooking & Cookery

- Non-stick Cookery—Non-stick pans, self-cleaning ovens, etc., when heated, emit a chemical which is carcinogenic in humans and which acts as a nerve toxin against birds. Get rid of all “non-stick” items in your home.
- **DO NOT** cook with your bird on your arm or shoulder. **DO NOT** let your bird fly free in the kitchen while you are cooking on the stove or in the oven. Grisly accidents can, and do, happen involving boiling water, grease-filled skillets, etc. Don't let this happen to your bird.

Smoking



- Second-hand smoke is bad for humans. It's even worse for birds, who have more sensitive respiratory systems than we do.
- **If you smoke in the home, you shouldn't get a bird.**
- If you only smoke outdoors, be sure to **wash your hands before handling your bird.**

Other Pets

- **Dogs** - If you have both a bird and a dog, no matter how well behaved, ***never*** leave your bird alone in a room with your dog—not even if you're only stepping out of the room for a moment.
- **Cats**—Cats are generally afraid of large birds, but cat scratches or bites carry deadly infections. If your cat scratches your bird, you must get your bird to a vet immediately

Other Pets Cont'd

- **Reptiles**—Constrictor-type snakes kill birds, and birds are terrified of them. If you have a snake, you should not have a bird.
- Apparently non-threatening reptiles, such as turtles and iguanas, very often carry salmonella bacteria, which can be deadly to birds. If you have any type of reptile, you should not have a bird, or you should keep the reptile in a separate room and be very careful about sanitation.

Other Pets Cont'd



- **Ferrets**—Ferrets are semi-wild, predatory animals, and known bird killers. If you have a ferret, you should not get a bird or keep them in separate areas of your house.

Kids & Teenagers

- Sometimes parrots do not mix well with children and teenagers. A special hazard here, even if your kids are okay with birds, are your children's friends. Do not let your kids' friends have unsupervised contact with your bird.



Other Physical Hazards

- **Exposed Electrical Cords** — Parrots are very curious, have large, powerful, beaks, and love to chew on things. Eliminate exposed electrical cords in areas where your bird can roam.
- **New Carpet** (and other things emitting strong chemical odors). Birds are more sensitive than people, and chemical odors that we find merely unpleasant can sometimes kill a bird. If you get a new carpet, air it out for at least a week before bringing it into the house.

Scented Products

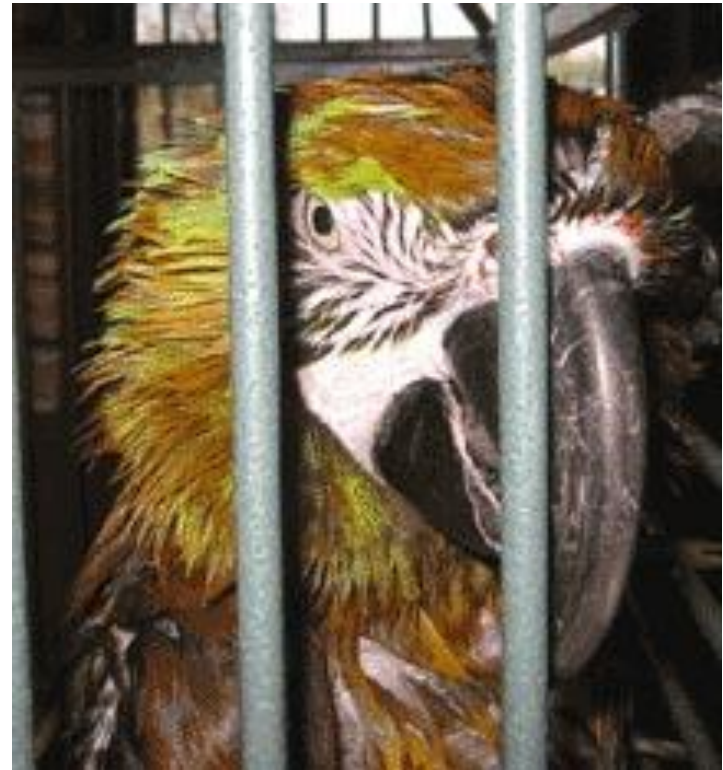
- Birds' respiratory systems are more sensitive than ours are, so also avoid:
- **Incense**
- **Scented candles**
- **Sage “purifying” smudges**
- **Air “fresheners,”** especially the plug-in kind — the odor from these things consists of a chemical stew.

Other Hazards Cont'd

- **Ceiling Fans and Windows** — Ceiling fans are dangerous to flighted birds for obvious reasons. Windows can also be dangerous to flighted birds, because flighted birds sometimes fly into them head first.
- **Open Toilets** — Flighted or semi-flighted birds can drown in toilets, and even if they don't drown they can easily pick up diseases from the inside of a toilet. Keep your toilet's lid fully closed at all times.

BIRD BEHAVIOR

- Parrots have the intelligence of three-to-five-year-old kids and the emotional maturity of two year olds. They get bored easily and need enrichment and foraging opportunities to keep them emotionally and mentally happy. Since you brought them into your home and put them in a cage, it is up to **YOU** to ensure their mental, physical, emotional, health and dietary needs are met. If you are not willing to do so, do not get a bird.



Trust

- The basis of the human-parrot relationship is trust. It's easy to win, harder to keep, and if you lose it — one ill-conceived action can do it — it's very hard to regain.
- The one iron clad rule in dealing with parrots is ***never, ever*** hit, threaten, or scream at a bird. Any of these things will destroy your bird's trust in you and will *encourage* “bad” behavior.

Screaming

- Birds scream for many reasons, and **screaming is normal** at certain times (e.g., when they get up, when you arrive home).
- If you've adopted a bird and he screams incessantly, for no safety or health reason, you should ignore his screams so as not to positively reinforce them. Look to reinforce sounds that you like in its place.



More on Screaming

- A minute or two after a screaming bird has quieted down or makes a sound you like, praise him for being a good quiet bird. Turn your back and walk away if he starts screaming again while you're praising him. This takes patience, but it's the only thing that works.
- Gradually increase the amount of time between when your bird quiets down and when you praise him or her.



Still More on Screaming

- **Never** scream back at a screaming bird. Birds are drama queens and screaming at them encourages their screaming. (Negative attention is better than no attention.)
- If your bird screams at predictable times, you can often preempt it by picking him up, giving him a treat etc., prior to the onset of screaming. However, this is usually unnecessary because such screaming is normally of short duration.

Biting

Birds bite for a number of reasons:

- Fear
- Over Stimulation
- Displacement
Aggression
- Attention/Drama
- Territoriality
- Dominance/Intimidation



More on Biting

- With fear and territorial biting, the cure is simple: stop doing what your bird fears and/or stop invading his space.
- Birds that are bonded with one member of the household will often bite or threaten other people if they get too close. More often, this type of biting manifests itself as displacement biting.

More on Biting

- Displacement biting often occurs when you're holding your bird and someone he dislikes approaches you, or you give attention to a bird that the bird on your arm or shoulder dislikes. The solution is to get away from that person or bird and/or to put your bird down.
- When a bird bites for attention or for drama, the best solution is to ignore the bite as much as possible. Don't make a big deal about it. Again, this takes patience, but it works.

Still More on Biting

- If blatant aggression is involved (that is, dominance biting), give him a short timeout in a place with no social contact or other stimulus. Birds have short attention spans, and anything longer than two or three minutes is pointlessly cruel.
- Do not use a bird's cage or sleep cage for timeouts—this confuses being in his cage or going to bed with punishment.

Avoiding Boredom



- Give your bird a new toy at least once a week. Something as simple as a bell, destructible wood toys or foraging dish can provide hours of enjoyment. Even simpler toys, such as strips of plain cardboard, browse, paper cups or paper towel rolls filled with treats can provide considerable chewing/playing pleasure. Ample time out of cage is also extremely important.

More on Bordeom

- While you're gone, it's a good idea to leave the TV or radio on. Birds like to watch cartoons and games shows, and like most types of music. (Besides entertaining your bird, leaving the radio or TV on is also a useful anti-burglary tactic.)



Birdy Buddies

- Most birds will enjoy having a birdy buddy. Consider getting your bird a companion if he will spend several hours alone each day. They don't necessarily need to be in the same room, just able to call back and forth.
- Many parrots enjoy looking out the window at wild birds.

Feather Picking

- There is often an organic cause for feather picking (diet, yeast or bacterial infection or zinc poisoning being common) in well cared for birds. (But neglected birds will often pick out of boredom.)
- If your bird is picking, the first action is to take him to a good avian vet and have lab tests done.
- Attempting to verbally discourage your bird's picking will actually reinforce it by your attention.
- If a health issue is ruled out and your bird continues to pick, check to see if there were any changes in your bird's environment around the time he started to pick. If there were, undo them.
- Otherwise, provide your bird with many enrichment activities to take up his time and attention.

Sex and the Single Bird

- Your mature bird will likely exhibit seasonal sexual behavior. Female birds will put their heads down, raise their rears, and shudder—they're not having seizures. Male birds will put their vents down and rub on you.



More on Sex

- Some birds exhibit non-seasonal sexual behavior. This is due to their being in a rich environment with abundant food and light and nesting places.
- Keeping your bird on a steady sleep schedule (e.g., 12 hours per day) will help curb both seasonal and non-seasonal sexual behaviour.
- Reducing the richness of a bird's diet (e.g., cutting back on treats and fruit) can also help curb sexual behavior and egg laying.

Still More on Sex

- Changing your bird's environment (e.g., moving the bird's cage) can also discourage sexual behavior and egg laying.
- Do ***not*** allow your bird to have a nest chamber (such as a kitchen cabinet).
- No heavy petting—Do not pet your bird “below the neck.”

WHAT TO DO IF YOU LOSE YOUR BIRD



- Walk around your neighborhood looking for your bird and calling for him. If he has a companion, take the companion with you in a carrier, and encourage the bird in the carrier to call out, too.
- If that fails, go door to door.

If You Lose Your Bird Cont'd



- Put up flyers on phone poles in all directions out to about a mile.
- Put a lost bird ad in the daily paper's classifieds section.
- Check the "Found Animals" section of the classified ads every day.

If You Lose Your Bird Cont'd



- Put an ad in your local paper's online classifieds and on craigslist.org.
- Call you local police station.
- Call pet stores, vets, the humane society, animal control, and WOH.

A Final Word



- Above all, give your bird your time. This is the greatest gift you can give.

Note: This presentation is based on that developed by Tucson Avian Rescue and Adoption Foundation (TARA), an all-volunteer 501 (c) 3 group devoted to the welfare of captive parrots and other exotic birds.