



## SEARCH AND RETRIEVE PROTOCOL FOR BIRDS 911ParrotAlert

### BIRD LOST/FOUND/RETRIEVING PROTOCOL For 911ParrotAlert Contributors: Carol Kessler and Ray Varella

Okay. Your bird is out. Stay calm, focused, and positive. Your bird is depending on you to find her/him.

#### INITIAL SEARCH: NOW UNTIL DARK:

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE IF TIME PERMITS, put these in a backpack:

- \* Pack food - snacks, and plenty of water for YOU
  - \* Pack fully charged cell phone
  - \* Pack food and water for your bird and have a carrier handy
  - \* Pack blank paper, tape, Sharpie pen or other felt pen, staple gun (if you have this)
  - \* Bring a whistle if you have one, especially if your bird responds to it.
  - \* A megaphone can also be very useful, they can be rented or purchased, lots of boat owners have them. Check with your friends.
- Anything you can do to conserve your voice will help.

#### NEXT: GET OUTSIDE AND SEARCH:

- \* Search ON FOOT or on a BICYCLE in concentric circles from the point where you saw your bird fly off (IF you saw your bird fly off). Keep the direction of flight in mind. Companion birds usually stay close within a mile or two, unless having been spooked or chased off by wild birds or weather carries them off.



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- \* If your bird is flighted and a skilled flyer and is recall trained and you have an established contact call with him or her, GOOD. Call repeatedly and listen very intently. Allow time for your bird to respond. The most vocal time for birds is early morning hours (think sunrise) and later in the day into sunset. These are crucial time to be out searching and calling for your bird. Even if you hear no response to your calls, your bird may be very close by watching you and feeling more secure with your presence close and therefore may be silent. He/she may become more vocal when you walk further away. Pay attention to everything.
- \* Look in EVERY BUSH, EVERY TREE, every nook and cranny of structures in the area. Look on the ground, in bushes, on branches of trees high and low, as many birds are found in low-lying areas, too.
- \* Birds who are unskilled fliers tend to fly forward and up. That's all they know how to do. Birds with trimmed flight feathers have less navigational abilities and are more at the mercy of weather and environment.
- \* Search areas repeatedly, moving in tight circles, gradually moving outward. Think of a spiral, or a reverse spiral. Your bird is most likely within 1/2 -2 mile or closer, probably much closer.
- \* Pay attention to local wild bird behavior. If there is an unfamiliar bird in their midst they may be extremely vocal and try to get the bird to move along. It helps to know how your native birds behave (for ex. jays, magpies, crows, ravens will all make a commotion over an unfamiliar bird). Pay attention to ALL bird vocalizations. Consider every sound.
- \* Consider the terrain and the immediate environment: Are there tall buildings around or how densely populated is the area with buildings in general? Sound waves need open space to travel effectively. If you stand on one side of a block wall, a person on the other side would likely not hear you. Find the tallest nearby structure in the area and try to get as high as is safely possible and broadcast your voice. A Bullhorn/megaphone or a construction cone used as a megaphone all



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help voices travel further. It's possible your bird is still in the immediate area and just hasn't heard your voice. Birds need to learn the skill of flying over buildings, hills and canyons to locate us by our voices.

\* Get as many neighbors and neighborhood kids involved in looking for your bird as possible. Ask the **POSTAL CARRIER** to keep a lookout and ask neighbors, as well. Give **EVERYONE** your telephone number.

\* Talk to Gardeners, HOA maintenance workers, if applicable, ice cream truck drivers, phone repair/cable installers, highway workers, trash collectors and any other municipal workers who are out in the area. They all have coworkers who cover the area as well.

\* Ask people to describe to you what they saw or what they heard. It's easy to get misled and find yourself searching in the wrong area. (Do not ask leading questions.)

\* If you have a flock mate (another bird) and it is **SAFE** to do so, consider bringing him/her in a secure carrier to help call out to your lost bird.

\* If you have an ipod or smart phone and have your bird's vocalizations recorded, sometimes broadcasting those recordings can elicit bird responses. There are websites where you can download bird species-specific vocalizations and then play them. Search [your bird species] and "vocalizations."

\* Do you have an Avian Veterinarian or local bird store? If so, **ALERT THEM ASAP.**

**IS YOUR BIRD BANDED AND/OR MICROCHIPPED?** If yes to either or both fantastic! Please keep that information **CONFIDENTIAL.**



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### ADDITIONAL HELPFUL TOOLS and CONSIDERATIONS:

\* If possible, bring your bird's enclosure outside in a safe, secure place and put lots of food and water inside with the door open. Birds who are more flight-skilled have been known to make their way back home and land on their enclosure. If bringing your bird's main enclosure outdoors is impossible, you can

also bring play stands outside and/or smaller carriers with food and water available.

**REASONS BIRDS FLY OFF:** they get spooked, disoriented, don't realize they can fly as well as they can and inadvertently keep going and don't know how to stop: they may have lack of skill in stopping, slowing down, turning, landing, flying downward, negotiating obstacles, etc.

### IF IT IS NOW DARK AND YOUR BIRD IS STILL OUT:

Take a breath. Remain calm. Your bird will roost and sit tight where he/she is for the night. Now you can do these things if you haven't already done them:

### MAKE AND PRINT FLIERS

The following link has templates for different types of birds.

<http://www.goodbirdinc.com/help-lostbirdflyers.html>

Be sure to DELETE the sample photo and ADD YOUR BIRD'S photo.

In the text, include YOUR NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, DATE and LOCATION your bird went missing, and was LAST SEEN.

Consider offering a REWARD. Sometimes offering \$\$\$ can be a high value motivator for people to help.



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You can also customize your own flier.

CONTACT ALL lost and found websites in your area including the following, JOIN them, and POST your flier:

[www.911parrotalert.com](http://www.911parrotalert.com)

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

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

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

<http://mickaboo.org/lostandfound.html>

<http://www.petfinder.com/>

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

- \* ANY and ALL local lost and found organizations.
- \* Contact your local newspaper, radio stations and Television stations and post in their FACEBOOK groups and pages, the local POLICE and SHERIFF.
- \* Post on you're your own Social Media Pages like FACEBOOK, TWITTER, and INSTAGRAM and NEXTDOOR, REDDIT, as well as your local neighborhood's Social Media Websites and Pages.

Instructions for posting on Craigslist:

Go to local craigslist → locate your city → on the COMMUNITY section, post missing bird in TWO PLACES:

1. PETS and 2. LOST AND FOUND. INCLUDE a picture of YOUR missing bird, YOUR NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, DATE and LOCATION your bird went missing.



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### ADDITIONAL PLACES TO CONTACT:

\* If you have internet access: get online and search for all local shelters, Animal Control, veterinarians, pet stores, service organizations (Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Boy/Girl Scouts, Shriners Club, Soroptimist Club to name a few), businesses, schools, churches, gas stations, the local Sheriff and Police Dept (FILE A POLICE REPORT → if someone has found your bird and is uncooperative, you MUST have a police report filed for the police to be able to act!), Grocery Stores, Convenience Stores (7Eleven, Drugs Stores), Laundromats, Parks and Recreation, Golf Courses... in your area. Ask them to post your flier and keep eyes and ears peeled. Many will have email addresses and will gladly receive your flier to print out and post. Sending flier via FAX is another option.

Make a list of places you have contacted and write down their telephone number/email address for easy reference so you can follow up with phone calls/emails if necessary.

### SEARCH BAG: BEFORE YOU GO TO BED:

Get a BACKPACK ready for the next morning's search and include:

- \* FOOD and WATER for you and for your bird
- \* Fliers, tape, staple gun, Sharpie felt pen, a whistle (if your bird responds to one.
- \* A Megaphone or bullhorn if you have access to one
- \* An ipod, smart phone or recorder with speaker to broadcast your bird's vocalizations if possible.

**POSITIVE VISUALIZATIONS OF YOUR BIRD BEING SAFE, CALM, AND HEALTHY, IS A MUST.**

\* Try to get good night's sleep, eat, drink, stay hydrated, make sure cell phone is fully charged.



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\* **SET ALARM** to a **TIME BEFORE SUNRISE**. **YOU WANT TO BE OUT SEARCHING JUST BEFORE SUNRISE**. Birds are very vocal during sunrise and late in the day.

\* **POSITIVE VISUALIZATIONS**.

The first 0-48 hours are critical in searching for your bird. Many birds are found within 3 or 4 days.

### **WHEN YOU FIND YOUR BIRD: RETRIEVING:**

If it's getting dark and your bird is in a safe, secure place, it will most likely be okay to let him/her roost there for the night. You do not want your bird taking flight at dusk. Stay with your bird, keeping eyes on your bird until it's very dark. You can either sleep there, if safe, or go home, getting a good night's sleep with positive visualizations, and returning **BEFORE** the sun rises.

**IF LIGHT** and you find your bird, **KEEP EYES ON YOUR BIRD AT ALL TIMES**.

\* **STAY CALM** and talk calmly to your bird. Move **CALMLY** to your bird so as to **KEEP HIM/HER CALM**, as well.

\* If your bird is **UP** in a tree or on a structure:

Your bird may very well fly to you. Try to entice your bird with food. If he/she takes flight, your bird may circle around a few times and land on a lower spot.

He/she may make short flights to a lower spot each time to try to get him/herself lower to you. He/she may even try climbing down from a higher point to meet you on a branch. Try to get yourself as high as is safely possible. Sometimes it may be possible to climb a tree to get to your bird, or bend some branches to entice your bird to step onto your hand, or if perch trained, to step onto a perch.



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- \* If your bird is VERY high up in a tree, be patient. It will likely be a waiting game until your bird decides to move. Just please be patient. If possible, bring an enclosure or play stand with food and water that your bird could land on. Position it such that there is a glide path, a number of feet away from where he/she is perched. (Think runway for an airplane rather than a helicopter.)
- \* Patience, diligence and being smart, calm and focused is essential in retrieving companion birds. Stay out there with your bird for as long as you possibility can, from sunrise until dark.
- \* If your bird is skittish or you are trying to retrieve a bird who does not know you:  
Set up a feeding station with the bird's enclosure or carrier where your bird presently is or was last positively sighted. Set the enclosure/carrier as high as is physically and safely possible. Put a little food and water on top of the enclosure/carrier and lots more food and water inside the enclosure/carrier toward the back. Obtain fishing line (it's strong, plentiful and opaque in color) and tie one end to the door of the enclosure/carrier, and the other end, several feet away, being held by a person. Allow your bird to get to the enclosure and move inside for the additional food. When safely inside, calmly and swiftly pull on the fishing line to close the door.
- \* **CAUTION:** Unless there is an extreme emergency of a severe weather event, fire, or other time critical urgency, please **DO NOT** call a tree trimmer or some such service due to spooking your bird and risk losing him/her again. Resist the urge to spray them with water or to throw things in an effort to get them to move. An inexperienced bird has enough difficulty negotiating the obstacles outdoors. If you startle them into flying they could fly further away than they would if they were to move of their own accord.
- \* When you keep eyes on your bird you **WILL** have the **BEST** chance of getting her/him back.



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- \* All birds come down eventually and it is critical for YOU or someone to be there when they do.
- \* Keep in mind that after a bird has been out for a couple of days their caloric and fluid reserves will be depleted. They will naturally conserve their energy and may not respond as loudly or as often as they did on the first couple of days out.
- \* There have been extreme cases where a bird has been very high up in a tree for 5 days and nights and hasn't moved. In these rare cases it could become necessary to consider drastic options such as bringing in a tree climber to climb up to the bird. This decision would still risk startling a bird into flying off and you having to begin searching all over again, so we only mention this as an absolute last resort.

### ONCE YOU HAVE SAFELY RETRIEVED YOUR BIRD:

- \* We strongly advise taking your bird to your Board Certified Avian Veterinarian for precautionary measures, **ESPECIALLY** if your bird has been out for a few days.
- \* Birds that have depleted their caloric and fluid reserves can take several days to restore them. Please offer plenty of water and smaller amounts of food several times throughout the day to replenish caloric and fluid reserves. (Eating a very large amount of food all at once can have negative effects on the crop.)
- \* Be sure to examine your bird very thoroughly for any possible injuries. Even a small scratch from another animal can infect them with bacteria that can become blood borne in a very short period.



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### IF YOU HAVE FOUND/RETRIEVED SOMEONE ELSE'S BIRD:

- \* Please contact all lost and found organizations as listed above, to inquire about lost birds that may match the bird you have found.
- \* Please take bird to a Board Certified Avian Veterinarian for an exam and Microchip scanning. If the bird has a microchip, more than likely the chip information will reveal the owners.
- \* If the bird does not have a microchip and is banded, **KEEP BAND INFO CONFIDENTIAL**. The owners will likely have this band number in their records and they will need to provide this number for proof of “ownership.”
- \* If the bird has no band and is not microchipped, the owners will need to describe behavior details of their bird, vocalizations, any physical markings on their bird, and provide as much additional information on their bird, as possible, including pictures and videos.
- \* If you are unable to care for this bird while owners are being sought, please make arrangements with a Board Certified Avian Veterinarian to find a suitable “foster” caretaker until owners are found. Sometimes local “Rescue” groups can also help locate a suitable “foster” person, as well.

**A word about MICROCHIPPING and the LAW:** At this present writing, birds are considered property. The best way to prove “ownership” in a court of law is when a bird is microchipped. The feasibility of microchipping a bird depends on the size of the bird, aka species. **PLEASE DISCUSS** this option with your Certified Avian Veterinarian regarding this option for the birds in your household. If you

suspect your lost bird has been found and being kept by someone unlawfully, you **MUST** file a police report – whether that be criminal or civil – for any police involvement in retrieving your unlawfully kept bird. If a police officer refuses to



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file a police or incident report on your behalf, talk to the officer's supervisor, and continue up the chain of command until you get that police report filed. You **MUST** be your own advocate, as well as your bird's advocate.

Here is an example of a current law in California:

### California Penal Code Section 485 PC: Misappropriation Of Lost Property

#### 1. Definition and Elements of the Crime

People lose valuable property every day through the fault of no one but themselves. In many cases, the person who finds lost property would consider him or herself very lucky. However, there may be situations in which keeping lost property can amount to a crime. Under California Penal Code Section 485 PC, misappropriation of lost property can be a theft offense which could result in jail or prison sentences for the person who unlawfully keeps property, that does not belong to them.

To prove a defendant is guilty of unlawfully appropriating lost property under California Penal Code Section 485 PC, a prosecutor must be able to establish the following elements:

The defendant found lost property under circumstances that would give him or her knowledge of who the owner of the property is or means to determine the true owner. The defendant appropriated the lost property for his own use or for the use of another person who is not the true owner, **AND** the defendant did not make reasonable efforts to find the original owner or to restore the property to its rightful owner.

A word on **SAFE OUTDOOR TIME** for your birds:

When taking your birds outdoors, we **STRONGLY** recommend your bird being in a safe and secure carrier, safe or secure outdoor aviary or batting cage, or some such safe and secure structure. Some people use harnesses for their birds when going outdoors, although they have their own fallibility due to either birds chewing through them or not being properly secured, or birds being spooked and becoming an object at the end of a long tether, vulnerable to harm. **PLEASE** take precautions with your birds at all times, for a long and happy life.