



# ALASKA BIRD NEWS

## November 2011

Lin Westgard, Editor

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Available on-line at [www.alaskabirdclub.org](http://www.alaskabirdclub.org)  
Dedicated to all the current and future parrot owners of Alaska

## Holiday Safety “Protect Thy Parrot”

Many of us love our parrots ‘to death’, but during the holidays, it’s quite possible to do. Follow these rules in your everyday parrot ownership and you can keep your parrot safe. The holidays are extremely scary for parrots and their owners, but with practice it can be safe and fun. There are a lot of toxins and hazards this time of year that even the most experienced parrot owners forget, so let’s review them. The Alaska Bird Club encourages you to always do your own research and study on the toxins and hazards as there are far too many to list in a simple newsletter. But here are the basics to get you started.

1. **Tell your holiday visitors that “petting” and “feeding” your parrot is extremely dangerous** to both them and to the parrot and should ONLY be done in your presence. Keeping your parrot in their cages when visitors are present keeps them safe. Simply don’t take chances and you can be stress free from having to worry if Uncle John accidentally opened the back door while your parrot was out. If they appear to be nervous, move them to a less trafficked room such as a back bedroom or something less noisy.
2. **No cooking with non-stick pots and pans.** Never do it and remember to watch irons as well that might have the non-stick coating.
3. **Fumes! Burning scented candles** or using ANY kind of air ‘fresheners’ that plug into the wall has been known to irritate parrots delicate respiratory systems. This includes products that you spray onto your carpet or furniture to reduce ‘smells’ or odors. Also toxic are self-cleaning oven fumes, Fabreeze and cigarettes. To make bird safe potpourri, try a simmering pot with cinnamon sticks, cloves, mints and other natural stuff. Add lemon and/or orange slices too!
4. **No chocolate, fatty foods and sudden dietary**

*(Continued on page 3)*



# CLUB INFORMATION

The Alaska Bird Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit incorporated in the State of Alaska. It meets the first Tuesday of every month at Serendipity Adult Day Services in Anchorage at 7:00pm. Location: 3550 East 20th Ave (off of Northern Lights Blvd & Nichols St).

The mailing address is:

**THE ALASKA BIRD CLUB**  
**P.O. BOX 101825**  
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**Adopt-a-Bird Chair Person: Open**

**Hospitality Chair Person: Open**

**Membership Chair Person: Open**



*You can e-mail the Alaska Bird Club at:*  
***akbirdclub@yahoo.com***

*Or visit our website:*  
***Www.alaskabirdclub.org***

We welcome any comments, articles or any ideas for the club or the newsletter. Current issues and extra copies of previous editions of The Alaska Bird News are available at the monthly meetings.

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The following locations have copies of our newsletter if you need extra. We have also noted the clinics that have avian vets by the 🌟

## ANCHORAGE:

Alaska Mill & Feed  
 1501 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.  
 276-6016

Alaska Pet-ography  
 9130 Elim St.  
 868-1680

Chester Valley Veterinary  
 1571 Muldoon Rd.  
 333-6591

🌟 College Village  
 Animal Clinic  
 Dr's Basler & Nicholson  
 2036 E. Northern Lights  
 274-5623

🌟 Dimond Animal Hosp  
 Dr. Doty  
 562-8384 (24 hour)

🌟 Hillside Pet Clinic  
 Dr. Bluestone  
 2101 Abbott Rd. #1  
 344-7913

Petco  
 8621 Old Seward Hwy

Pet Emergency  
 2320 E. Dowling Rd.  
 274-5636

🌟 The Pet Stop  
 Dr. Riley Wilson  
 1921 W. Dimond Blvd.  
 522-1006

The Pet Zoo  
 901 E. Dimond Blvd.

🌟 VCA Alaska Pet Care  
 Dr. Frederickson  
 3900 Lake Otis Pkwy  
 562-PETS (7387)

VCA Alpine Animal Hospital  
 12531 Old Seward Hwy  
 345-1515

VCA E. Anch Animal Clinic  
 2639 Boniface Pkwy  
 337-1561

## EAGLE RIVER:

🌟 Ravenwood Veterinary  
 Clinic  
 Dr. Cuthbert  
 11525 Old Glenn Hwy  
 694-9665

The Pet Zoo  
 12046 Business Blvd.  
 622-2966

## WASILLA:

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic  
 Mi 7.4 Palmer- Wasilla Hwy  
 (907) 376-6016

The Pet Zoo  
 1481 E. Parks Hwy  
 357-7335

## PALMER

Far Country Animal Hospital  
 2701 N. Liahona Dr.  
 Palmer  
 (907) 746-7297

North Star Animal Hospital  
 840 S. Cobb St.  
 (907) 746-7387

Palmer Veterinary Clinic  
 Mi 39 Glenn Why  
 (907) 745-3219

The Pet Zoo  
 10201 E. Palmer-Wasilla Hwy  
 746-0056

## FAIRBANKS:

Mt. McKinley Animal Hospital  
 800 College Rd.  
 Fairbanks, AK 99701

**changes during this time.** Parrots need protection from foods that can make them sick, whether it be a sudden toxin poisoning or something that can eventually affect the kidneys or livers. Treats can be fun - limit them both in size and quantity. Some people use a rule of thumb that the treat should be no bigger than the size of their eye and no more than three a day. If you are not sure how much to treat your parrot to people foods, ask your avian vet! It can vary by species and diet is very important. If you are new to parrot ownership, there are some very good lists out there on the internet that can be printed out and put on your refrigerator that contains the good versus bad foods. Key toxic foods that should be avoided at all times are avocado, chocolate, caffeine and alcohol.

5. **Those beautiful Poinsettia's are best in non-pet homes.**

These plants contain a milky substance in the stems that can be irritating to parrots, cats and dogs. Other holiday plants bad for birds are Christmas Cactus, Holly berries and Mistletoe berries. There are lists on the internet that get very detailed about which house plants are bad or not.

6. **When Christmas comes around, think parrot safety as well.** Watch tinsel, staples, scissors and those dang silica gel packs that come with everything. Designate a family member or yourself that can be the "parrot patrol" during gifting to pick up anything that they might see that can harm a parrot.

7. **Be prepared. If they get hurt or you need to take them to the vet.** Have a hospital carrier ready with clean bedding in it, a water container and make ready to get it warm. A lot of people have a clean spare heating pad so they can put the carrier onto that to help heat the bottom of the car-



When a visitor left the front door open, this cockatiel thought he'd fly to freedom. Luckily a glass screen door stopped him. He "doesn't normally fly into the foyer", so this was an unusual flight pattern for him according to the owner. Birds can become discombobulated by holiday visitors so be extra careful and keep them safe.

rier. Have their food and water packed near the container and padding for the carrier if you have to limit their movement. And in a panic, can you *remember* your vets name and number? It's best to write it on your carrier.

8. **Please do not give birds as pets at Christmas;** in

fact no animal is considered a good gift to give for many reasons. Make it a family thing after the holidays. Everyone in the family should want the pet and agree to all help in the care of them.

9. **Don't squish the bird!**

When there is a floor filled with holiday wrappings and bows and ribbons, it's very common for pet parrots to crawl into little cubby holes and pockets. It's way too easy to inadvertently stop on your pet, so keeping them caged up when gift exchanging is going on is a safety idea that can keep them safe. Visitors are not as diligent as you are when sitting down on sofas or beds. If your parrot likes to burrow into comfy areas, this can be disaster and your company will feel horrible if they sit on your parrot.

10. **Boxes are fun, but don't let them be "nesting" sites.**

Giving your parrot boxes to play in is a great idea, but you have to be careful that you don't trigger hormonal behavior. Let them shred the box and then clean it up. Or better yet, take the bottom out of the box so they can't get cubby holed and think it's a nest. Another thing you can do is to give them the toy while you can supervise them and incorporate the box into your playtime with them and that way you don't leave it in their cage for them to obsess about it.

11. **Last but not least, give them the gift of care.**

Look at your parrot. Does he need bathed? Are his nails too long? Sometimes a well-bird check with your avian vet is rewarding to both parrot and owner. It can save a life. It's a gift that keeps on giving.

## Check out the Alaska Bird Club's Website!

Find out about our latest Lost and Found Birds, our birds that are available in our Adopt-A-Bird program and other various articles and videos. Advertise your un-wanted cages via newsletter and website! See what's up and coming and stay in touch!

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

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wmichaelstanton@gmail.com  
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## Website of the Month

The Oasis Sanctuary - Arizona

[www.the-oasis.org](http://www.the-oasis.org)

One of the greatest sanctuaries around is looking for a new staff member. Candidates will be provided a moderate salary, housing and utilities, and, after the try-out period, their group medical plan.

This is the hardest work you will ever love!!!

## Parrot Behavior Consultations

Need help with any of the following?

Aggression  
Excessive screaming  
Inappropriate vocalizations  
Feather Destructive Behaviors  
Diet  
Environmental Enrichment

Contact Karen Webster  
to schedule your consultation today:  
929-BIRD (2473) or [akpeac@gmail.com](mailto:akpeac@gmail.com).

## Comfy Clawth Blankets for Birds

See [www.comfyclawth.com](http://www.comfyclawth.com) for Alaskan made bird blankets that can be used to train your parrot to be toweled in a safe and comfy environment.

[birdieblankets@comfyclawth.com](mailto:birdieblankets@comfyclawth.com)

## P E A C

(Parrot Education & Adoption Center)

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

929-BIRD

HOLIDAYS FOR BIRDS!!!

December 18th, 2011

11:00am-2:00pm

VCA Alaska Pet Care, 3900 Lake Otis Pkwy

[akpeac@gmail.com](mailto:akpeac@gmail.com)

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### REMINDERS from our Flock Leader Michael Stanton:

1. We need a bird of the month for our next meeting and newsletter.
2. We are having a holiday potluck next December meeting. We provide the turkey and trimmings, **you bring the pot luck sides**.
3. It has been a privilege serving as your club president. It has always been about the birds—our goal is to rehabilitate people, and train birds. See ya next month.  
- Michael Stanton

# PRESIDENT'S PERCH

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By Michael Stanton, President 2011, The Alaska Bird Club

November 10, 2011

## **HAWKS AND OWLS**



**MERLE STEWART & SHORT EARED OWL**

Merle Stewart, Director of Education, brought two of the Alaska Wildbird Rehabilitation Center's birds to our October meeting. If you weren't here, your missed a great presentation.

A large female hawk was displayed and we sat in awe for a good hour or more as she stressed the important place birds of prey have in our Alaska environment. The AWRC's mission is similar to TABC's: To inform and educate the public.

The little short-eared owl captured the members' hearts as just about the cutest and wanted to cuddle raptor they had ever seen. Ms. Stewart travels around Alaska demonstrating the crucial roles these very special birds have in nature. The short eared owl is coming close to endangered species in its wide ranging habitat, particularly in certain areas of Canada. It doesn't winter over in cold climes, preferring to migrate to warmer locations. Thanks, Merle for a special night.

## **UMBIES GO TO SCHOOL**

My two female umbrella cockatoos and I did a trick and dance routine for two 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Airport Heights Elementary School on Sptember 12<sup>th</sup>. The combined classes of Leslie Mayer and Lacey Whitmer learned that Honey Bear and Sydney Anne were anything but "bird brains".

The kids were amazed at Sydney's repertoire of tricks and they joined Honey Bear in a few choruses of "Louie, Louie" as we clapped our hands as she strutted and head-bobbed across her perch. Snowball, watch out!!! You have serious competition.

The kids learned that pet birds can come from bad situations and still become good companions. Later, we watched a short clip from "Parrots in the Land of Oz". Lots of good questions were asked and answered.

Finally, when it was time to go, Honey Bear said, "Bye, Bye!" and we packed up for the return to Palmer and more mundane things.

### **Lacey Whitmer, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher with new students**



# The Association of Avian Veterinarians

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PDD in a Nutshell

PART I of II

Susan L. Clubb, DVM, dip ABVP (Avian)

Proventricular dilatation disease (PDD) is one of the most feared, and probably least understood infectious disease that we face as aviculturists. This fatal inflammatory disease affecting primarily psittacine birds, was first recognized in the 1970's in imported macaws (*Ara* sp.) in Europe and North America, but has since been reported in Australia, the Middle East, South America and South Africa. PDD has been reported in over 70 psittacine species as well as canaries (*Serinus canaria*), Greenfinches (*Carduelis chloris*), Long Wattled Umbrella birds (*Cephalopterus penduliger*), Roseate Spoonbills, (*Ajaja ajaja*), Canada geese, (*Branta canadensis*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Bearded Barbet (*Lybius dubius*) and toucans (*Ramphastos* species). Interestingly, it has not been reported in the budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), which may be resistant to the disease.

PDD appears to spread slowly within aviaries. Crowded indoor aviaries as well as nurseries appear to be at the highest risk. Most cases occur in adults but birds as young as 5 weeks may be affected. Males and females appear to be equally susceptible. PDD has not been reported to date in free-ranging parrots. PDD is considered the main threat to captive populations of Spix's macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*), a species now extinct in the wild.

## Etiology

The recent discovery of a novel Bornavirus, Avian Bornavirus, solved a long standing mystery in the avicultural and veterinary community. Despite 30 years of attempts to identify the causative agent it was not identified using standard viral isolation techniques. The application of advanced molecular tools, such as panviral DNA microarrays and high throughput sequencing, were used to reveal the agent in tissues of PDD-positive birds. In 2008 Kistler et al. and Honkavuori et al. independently reported on the recovery of a novel Bornavirus from birds with PDD from the US and Israel. Since that time eight additional studies have reported detecting ABV in PDD-positive birds from four continents. Based on 16 ABV isolates, 5 distinct genotypes were initially identified and since that time additional genotypes have been identified. It is not clear yet whether these genotypes will behave differently as far as producing clinical disease.

PDD has been successfully reproduced in cockatiels (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) inoculated with brain homogenate containing ABV4, and the presence of an ABV4, was demonstrated in various organs of the inoculees. PDD has also been reproduced in cockatiels and Patagonian conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) using cultured ABV, fulfilling Koch's postulates.

Bornaviruses have several unique characteristics that help to explain why they were so difficult to find using standard virology techniques. Bornaviruses replicate in the host-cell nucleus rather than in its cytoplasm and when cultured in cell cultures they do not produce cytoplasmic effects, meaning they can grow in cell culture but are often overlooked because they don't damage the cells. Being an RNA virus, they tend to be destroyed rapidly in feces because of RNA-ases, enzymes that break down RNA, which are found in the feces. These facts explain why ABV was missed for many years when virologists would attempt to isolate them.

Prior to the discovery of ABV, the single known species within this family was the Borna disease virus (BDV) of mammals. Borna disease is an encephalitic disease of horses, sheep and occasionally other domesticated mammals. The disease was first described in the early 19th century in Southeast Germany, and has since remained endemic in that area. Many additional species, including the chicken (*Gallus gallus*) are susceptible to BDV infection under

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experimental conditions, with the outcome ranging from severe encephalomyelitis to persistent asymptomatic infection. There is only one report on the recovery of partial BDV RNA sequences from wild avian species. Some researchers suggested an autoimmune rather than a viral etiology for PDD. The pathology seen with BDV is the result of invasion of lymphocytes and plasma cells into ganglia rather than the virus inflicting direct cellular damage, so in many aspects the disease is similar to an auto-immune disease. BDV is an enveloped spherical medium-sized virus, most virions being in the range of 70-130nm. There are 6 major genes, including a nucleoprotein (N), a non structural protein (P10), a regulatory phosphoprotein (P), a matrix protein (M), a membrane-bound glycoprotein (G), and a RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (L). This is important to us because these proteins can be used for diagnostic purposes or potentially to produce vaccines.

ABV has been recovered from at least 28 psittacine species and a canary (*Serinus canaria*) with typical PDD pathology. Asymptomatic infections and longterm virus shedding have also been identified, and likely play an important role in the epidemiology of PDD. Using antibody stains to detect viral particles in tissue, ABV has been demonstrated in both the nucleus and cytoplasm of nervous tissue as well as heart, liver, kidney, adrenal and intestinal cells. The route of transmission of ABV is believed to be fecal-oral. While it is clear that ABV can cause PDD is clear we cannot rule out the possibility that another, unknown virus might also be able to cause a similar disease syndrome.

#### Pathology

Necropsy findings in a bird with "classic PDD" include emaciation, muscle wasting, and dilation of the proventriculus and ventriculus. The lack of these findings do not exclude PDD. Some birds have disease limited to the central nervous system, while in others death may be caused heart failure by affecting the cardiac conduction fibers, by severe seizure disorders, or by abnormalities in the adrenal gland which cannot be recognized without histopathology.

Microscopic lesions can be found in the gastrointestinal tract, central, peripheral and autonomic nervous systems, heart, and adrenal glands, ganglia of visceral organs as well as the eye and skin. The classic microscopic lesion is lymphoplasmacytic ganglioneuritis, which simply means invasion of the ganglia of nerves by lymphocytes and plasma cells, immune cells of the bird. This invasion of cells disrupts cellular function of the ganglia, which in turn results in poor function of organs innervated by these nerves. This organ failure causes the clinical signs. The application of immunohistochemistry will also be a useful tool to demonstrate ABV in tissues on post mortem exam. With this test, anti-bodies against ABV are combined with a fluorescing agent and when this material is applied to tissue the presence of ABV in tissues can be visually confirmed.

#### Clinical signs

In the classic form of PDD, birds show gastrointestinal signs including weight loss or wasting, vomiting or regurgitation, and the presence of undigested food, particularly seed in their feces. Weight loss may not be recognized because of feather coverage and passing of undigested food is not obvious if birds are on a pelleted diet. In the CNS form birds show instability, poor coordination, falling off the perch (especially at night), seizures, abnormal head movements or blindness. Signs may be limited to one side resembling a stroke with only one limb being affected. Initially these signs may be subtle such as a young bird that weans slowly, is clumsy or has a dull attitude. Birds may show both GI and neurological signs, and most birds will have both GI as well as CNS lesions at necropsy, regardless of the clinical form observed.

The incubation period appears to be extremely variable. Experimentally a minimum of 11 days to approximately a month has been reported while the maximum incubation period is probably years. We also know that birds can have crop biopsy lesions consistent with PDD, and test positive for ABV while appearing clinically normal.

Hematology and clinical chemistry changes include anemia, low blood protein and albumin which are typical in birds with chronic disease. Some have elevated white blood cell counts, especially in the early stages of the disease. Some blood enzymes especially those of muscle or nerve origin (LDH-lactate dehydrogenase, CPK-creatine kinase, and AST-aspartate amino-transferase) may be elevated. Other diseases that may mimic PDD include heavy metal toxicosis, avian tuberculosis, foreign body ingestion, avian gastric yeast (megabacteria) infection or some parasitic infestations. Changes in normal GI flora such as increases in gram-negative bacteria, *Clostridium* sp., and/or *Candida*, may be associated with slowed intestinal transit time.



# How to give your bird oral antibiotics

by Garry J. Wallan

Our feathered friends sometimes become afflicted by bacterial critters. Often, the best way to treat their illness is to give the bird antibiotics via the mouth. Here are some pointers to help you with this interesting and vital task.

## First dosage:

1. Retrieve the bird from the cage.
2. Set the bird on a table and hold its head by carefully grasping the neck where it joins the lower jaw, or mandible.
3. With your other hand, grasp the medicine syringe and place the tip into the left side of the bird's mouth.
4. Depress the plunger and squirt the medicine toward the back of the bird's throat.
5. Wipe excess medicine from the bird's beak
6. Place the bird back in the cage.
7. Watch for signs of stress.

## Subsequent dosages:

1. Attempt to retrieve the bird from the cage.
2. Apply bandages to the wounds on your hands and arms.
3. Retrieve the bird from its new hiding place under the coffee table.
4. Carefully immobilize the bird's head to prevent further tissue damage to your body.
5. Attempt to make the bird release its "Vulcan Death Grip" from your hand.
6. Apply more bandages and numbing ointment to the new wounds on your hands and arms.
7. Attempt to immobilize the bird in a bath towel.
8. Chase the screaming bird down the hallway and into the bathroom.
9. Throw the towel over the bird and pick up the writhing, squirming, screaming package.



10. Watch in amazement as the bird "morphs," swapping the position of head and tail in a feat normally forbidden by the laws of physics.
11. Hold the bird snugly in its terrycloth prison.
12. Grasp the syringe. Attempt to control your fear and trembling. Place the tip of the syringe into the left side of the bird's mouth.
13. Ignore the sound of crushed and mutilated plastic. Depress the plunger and squirt the medicine toward the back of the bird's throat.
14. Wipe excess medicine out of your eyes and off the wall.
15. Release the bird and squirt the contents of the syringe in the general vicinity of its face. Some medicine may actually go into the mouth. The rest will be absorbed by osmosis.
16. Shoo the bird back to the cage. Do not attempt to make physical contact with the bird unless cosmetic surgery is something you like.
17. Spend the rest of the day attempting to regain the bird's affection with forbidden snacks and elaborate new toys.

**ADOPTION APPLICATION**  
**The Alaska Bird Club, Adopt-A-Bird Program**

The Adopt-A-Bird Program is available to everyone who meets the criteria identified in the Adopt-a-Bird Program's Policy and Procedure. The committee will share your contact information (name, e-mail address and phone number) with people relinquishing the type bird you list below when one becomes available. **Please be VERY specific in the types of birds you would consider adopting.** Send your questions to [akbirdclub@yahoo.com](mailto:akbirdclub@yahoo.com) or call us at (907) 868-9070.

**Please submit this application to the committee by one of the following methods:**

E-mail: [akbirdclub@yahoo.com](mailto:akbirdclub@yahoo.com)  
Mail: The Alaska Bird Club, P.O. Box 101825, Anchorage, AK 99510-1825.  
Fax: (907) 257-9971  
By Hand: Bring to our membership meeting; first Tuesday of every month at 3550 E. 20<sup>th</sup> Ave., Anchorage 7:00PM

*Any family/household/individual who has previously relinquished 3 or more birds to the Adopt-A-Bird program will not be eligible to adopt through the Adopt-A-Bird Program.*

**LIST THE SPECIFIC TYPES OF PARROTS IN WHICH YOU ARE INTERESTED:**

Adoption Fees: Extra Small- \$10.00, Small- \$35.00, Medium- \$50.00, Large- \$100.00, Extra Large- \$150.00, Extremely Rare- \$200.00

Are you 18 Years old or older? [ ] Yes [ ] No

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell- \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s): Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work- \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best time to contact you? \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred method of contacting you would be via: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself knowledgeable on bird care? [ ] Yes [ ] No Is this your first bird? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Species of birds you now own: \_\_\_\_\_ How many total? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your avian vet? \_\_\_\_\_ How often do you vet check? \_\_\_\_\_

Diet your bird(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in a companion pet or a breeder bird? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you consider adopting a bird with behavioral or health issues? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are you aware of the type commitment a companion parrot takes? [ ] Yes [ ] No

How many hours per day would you have to provide direct care to this bird? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly tell us why you would be a good home for any bird: \_\_\_\_\_

Are all members of your family willing to take part in the care of this bird? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Are any members of your household under the age of 12 years old? [ ] Yes [ ] No

How many other pets are in the home and what kinds? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you available for emergency placement if needed? [ ] Yes [ ] No

(If "Yes," please submit an Emergency Placement Application as well. Home inspection is required)

Have you read and understood the Policies and Procedures for the Alaska Bird Club's Adopt-A-Bird Program? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Do you agree to pay the associated adoption fee (listed above) once you adopt a bird from this program? [ ] Yes [ ] No

The Alaska Bird Club will keep this application on file. It is your responsibility to keep your application current and notify us of any changes to the information on this form. As birds become available for adoption, each application will be reviewed and your name and number will be given to relinquishing owners of the type species of birds you have listed. Please review the Adopt-a-Bird Policy and Procedure as there are limitations to the numbers of birds that a family may adopt through this program. An interview and/or home visit with the Adopt-a-Bird staff or the person relinquishing a bird might be required with some adoptions. The Alaska Bird Club strongly encourages you to vet check and quarantine any new bird coming into your home and that you get a release of ownership from the current bird owner. We would also like you to make this decision seriously as birds need lifetime homes. They have very strong emotional attachments that should be taken into consideration. Moving, Divorce, Children are all things birds can and should endure with you. We also highly recommend that you attend our educational meetings held monthly on the welfare and care of companion parrots. [www.alaskabirdclub.org](http://www.alaskabirdclub.org) The Alaska Bird Club assumes no responsibility for the quality, health or training of any birds placed in this program. In addition, the Alaska Bird Club, its officers and members cannot be held liable for any damage or illness brought about by a bird placed or bought via the referrals submitted to this program.

Rev. AUG-2010

# **NUTS, NUTS & MORE NUTS**

By Michael Stanton

If companion bird owners are going nuts over their birds, it's probable they think you are a little nutty; especially if you aren't giving them an essential nutritional food that affects them psychologically, physiologically and emotionally. In last month's newsletter you read and witnessed what consequences directly impact the well being of your birds. Aside from essential minerals and vitamins nuts provide, they are one of the few things that nature's made into edible toys. Invariably the hard casings of nuts help keep your bird's beak trimmed, yet few companion bird owners may not understand the emotional and psychological aspects of giving birds nuts (and if you have very small birds, the seeds they would forage for in the wild).

When your bird is busy seeking out nuts (and technically nuts are really the fruits of certain trees) it keeps their mind on the mission. To forage for, and seek out, where these tasty nuts are, you hide them in a container so they must look for them. And we all know that a busy bird is a fairly happy and content bird. If a bird has nothing to do, they may act out by screaming, clipping or picking feathers, heaving bits of food and pellets out of the cage—in general being just plain pissed-off.

The emotional bonding occurs when you hand them their very favorite nut (peanuts are a legume—a bean for you bird brains out there—see, “Umbies Go to School”). If it is their very favorite nut, they will literally stand on their heads to take it. This little act builds up your bird's trust account with humans if done on a consistent basis.

Large beaked or small beaked, all birds need something to keep their beaks and bills in good shape. Your imagination is the limiting factor in the use of this common product. From making into toys, creating foraging opportunities, and rewarding your bird for essential and necessary behaviors, the nut is very useful in so many ways. Remember—your bird is thinking, “Sometimes I feel like a nut, sometimes I don't”. So don't Mr. Peanut your bird, go out and get nuts. You'll feel soooo much better!!! And your bird won't go nuts on you.

## More *Alaska Style* from David Jensen Photography

Visit David's website at: [www.alaskaportraits.com](http://www.alaskaportraits.com)

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David Jensen has been our volunteer judge for our  
Photography contest every year at the Alaska Bird Club  
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