



ALASKA BIRD NEWS

April 2012

Lin Westgard, Editor

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Available on-line at www.alaskabirdclub.org
 Dedicated to all the current and future parrot owners of Alaska

Are you smarter than your parrot? Are you finding it challenging trying to find hiding spots for their food that they can't find?

Be rest assured your efforts are worth it. Parrots are actually happier foraging for food during their day. In the wild, parrots are often challenged to find food so they spend a good amount of time searching and gathering food. It's part of their natural instinct. So imagine the caged parrot, who gets his food and water in the same dishes every day. We've just taken away the need to forage and now they can become bored.

So let's make their day busy and make them work for that food! Always watch your parrot play so you will know if they tend to eat certain items (for example paper or plastic) and stay clear of items they tend to eat and not destroy. I come from a world of cockatoos, so make sure you check your own bird to see if what I use is applicable.

The easiest way to make them interested in foraging I have discovered it to "find" the food for them and have them watch me find the stuff. I have used the following items to "hide" treats: coin wrappers, corn husks (used for making tamales), little pill holders, plastic film canisters, I use cardboard boxes, brown lunch bags and I even hide food inside bell peppers and hang them on a skewer. I've even hung a kid sized pair of coveralls and filled all the pockets one time. Be creative and teach them how to think. It's gratifying to see them

anxious to get into their cages to see what they can find. I do this before work so they don't miss me too much when I'm gone during the day. Do this gradual until your parrot knows he is supposed to find food. Don't all of a sud-

Will Work for Food



Elliot the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo is surprised to find a treat AND a toy inside this box once he chewed his way through it.

den hide it. He may not know where to look until he's taught. Have fun with this and let the bird club know your funny stories for the next newsletter! - Lin Westgard

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:

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You can e-mail the Alaska Bird Club at:
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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. 1st 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

🌟 Diamond 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

From the President's Perch

2012 Bird Club President Amber O'Neill



Happy April, bird nerds! As your new president, I thank you for being part of the Alaska Bird Club and I remind those of you who have not yet re-upped to please renew your membership. And if you are reading this and you are not a member, please join our flock

This brings up a timely topic: our roles as members in our club. With the economy down, donations and memberships all over are down. Some organizations have had to streamline significantly to stay within budget. The Alaska Bird Club board has been working on keeping our costs down in the face of this economic downturn. We regularly re-visit our costs and work to responsibly manage the club's assets.

One way to give to the club, even if you aren't flush with cash: volunteerism. We have a number of areas in which you can help us:

ADOPT-A-BIRD: Primarily, we need help with the Adopt-A-Bird, a clearing-house program which matches birds that need homes with homes that need birds. Ideally, I'd like to have someone in Anchorage and someone in the Valley helping with this. The Adopt-A-Bird chairperson keeps a database of potential adopters and relinquished birds. Under normal circumstances, the relinquishing owner is given names of people who want the species he or she wants to re-home, and is then responsible for screening applicants and choosing the bird's new home. We not only need a committee chairperson but we also need volunteers in that committee to act as primary contacts for each bird, advocating for both sides through the process and paperwork. It can be emotionally taxing at times, but it is ultimately very rewarding.

TREASURER: I am very grateful to Lin Westgard for stepping into this role as acting treasurer, but Lin is only helping temporarily until we find a permanent treasurer. Update! Jennifer Slaughter stepped up to the plate and volunteered for this position. Thank you Jen!

LOST & FOUND/RESCUE: The committee I have been most involved in is Lost & Found/Rescue. I help catch pet birds that have flown away, help find the owners of stray birds or foster/adoptive homes when they're unclaimed, and try to educate people whenever possible on how to avoid an escape. Alaska is an inhospitable place for our companion birds, way too cold in the winter, with predatory birds (and cats, and dogs) in the summer, and our birds are not equipped to find food and water if they find themselves outside of their captive environments. The activity of this committee is sporadic and often last-minute, and it probably has the highest entertainment factor, what with tree-climbing and trying to catch the little buggers when they're having a good time evading us!

It's also good to have people who are willing to provide general help, from setting up and tearing down events to representing the club (manning booths, or being available to give guidance to novices who may have the same kind of bird you do, exchange bird-sitting services, etc.).

Finally, my profound gratitude goes to everyone on the board, to those who are already volunteering, to our members for being part of the club, and to the generous souls who have donated financially. You all keep That Alaska Bird Club afloat. Thank you



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

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FACEBOOK

"LIKE" us on Facebook! The Alaska Bird Club has a Facebook page. It's a great way to share timely info, helpful tips, cute stories, pictures, and videos, and happenings that are of interest to the companion bird community. You must have a Facebook account to participate. If you are, simply search for "The Alaska Bird Club," click over from the button on our website at www.alaskabirdclub.org.

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Membership Renewal !!!

It's that time again - The Alaska Bird Club memberships run Jan 1st to Dec 31st. It's the way to connect and to network with other people like you... slaves to the feathered friends. And we need you, it's as simple as that! See www.alaskabirdclub.org for form.

Our expenses each month are pretty high. We have a storage unit that houses cages for use in an emergency. We have deployed many cages over the years and this space is necessary. So, if you are interested in helping out, here are some ways that you can help: 1. Donate some stamps; the newsletter gets mailed out to 20 clinics across the state 2. Donate envelopes (9x11) 3. Donate towards our storage fee that houses our cages and supplies. Contact the bird club at (907) 868-9070 if you want to help with any of these things or call Amber 351-2762.

As a non-profit organization, we rely on your support. Thank You!!

The Association of Avian Veterinarians

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Expanding the Circle of Care: How Vets and Adoption Organizations Can Partner to Improve Parrots' Lives

By: Jenny Drummey

As an avian vet, your face time with clients and patients is limited. An office visit is primarily spent addressing health concerns (whether acute or chronic), evaluating patients' symptoms, and ensuring that the proper tests are run. Sometimes, clients need more information about how to live successfully with their challenging and intelligent companions, but you do not have the time to educate them. Clients may also ask your office to help find a home for their bird. Even worse, a client may let your office know that they'll be selling or giving the bird away soon. This new owner may also be ill-informed, and the cycle of poor care continues. Birds suffer. What can vets do?

Adoption organizations are one solution, and a great resource for vets and caregivers alike.

What is a Parrot Adoption Organization?

Adoption organizations place birds who are well loved and well cared for in homes that are prepared to meet their needs. Foster homes with informed caregivers get birds ready for adoption. Adoption coordinators work with families so that a good match can be found. These organizations may require a completed application, class attendance and a home visit before the parrot goes to its new home.

A successful placement is usually based on the individual bird, and not the species. These organizations can steer potential owners clear of birds that won't work for their families – whether it's the apartment dweller looking for a cockatoo, or the parents of a three year old who want an African grey that their child can snuggle.

Most importantly, a responsible adoption organization offers ongoing educational support to families, and continued learning opportunities for the community, by holding classes and communicating directly with foster and adopting families.

Frank Rutowski, DVM, of Animal Care Hospital of Matthews, Matthews, NC (<http://www.achom.biz>), says, "Hundreds of birds have been placed in new homes as a result of the work of these groups, and more importantly, these birds' lives have been incredibly enriched both mentally and physically. Diets have been corrected, behavioral problems addressed, illnesses treated and environments enriched. I have seen these birds thrive once they were on a nutritionally sound diet and living in a stimulating and challenging environment."

The care does not end there. Reputable adoption organizations have a process in place to track the progress of parrots in adopting homes, and to rehome birds when necessary. Most parrots will need multiple homes throughout their lives, for the same reason that parrots are relinquished in the first place.

Why Parrots are Relinquished

Most parrots who come to adoption organizations were not "rescues," a term that implies abuse and neglect, but instead were relinquished by responsible caregivers, looking for a new home for their parrot with people who understand how to care for it. As difficult as it is to give up a beloved companion, relinquishers who seek out adoption organizations, rather than selling the bird or giving it away, are acting in the birds' best interest, and should always be commended.

Parrot care is time consuming, and it is for this reason that many birds are relinquished. Caretakers realize that the clean-up, socialization, feeding and enrichment items that are necessary to keep a bird healthy are too demanding for their schedules. Often, life changes such as divorce, job loss, the birth of a child, or the care of an elderly relative make meeting a parrot's complex needs too difficult.

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Long lifespan is another reason birds are relinquished. Many birds outlive their owner's ability to care for them.

Any parrot, no matter where it comes from, can learn behaviors such as biting and screaming that owners do not have the time or expertise to correct.

How Vets and Adoption Organizations can Work Together

Offering Classes and Information

Allowing the use of a room or area in your office where adoption organizations can hold classes is important, as is distributing materials about proper parrot care that these groups produce.

Dr. Rutowski says, "The most critical part of this whole picture, and a part that the groups I work with do extremely well, is to provide education to the community and to prospective adopters, so that proper care of these birds will continue once the birds are in their new homes. I feel as if these birds are hatching out of their shells into a new and better life, and I am extremely proud to play a small role in that process."

Spreading the Word

When clients mention expanding their flock, let them know of the adoption option. Many people are unaware that birds need new homes just as dogs and cats do, and that the problem of homeless parrots is continuing to grow.

If a client seeks a new home for their bird, let that client know about adoption organizations. These groups may be able to help the owner correct behavior problems, allowing the bird to keep its home, or can place the parrot with a family that's prepared to care for it.

Offering Discounted Services

Responsible adoption organizations should be non-profit and 501(c)(3) certified. Funds are limited, and any discount you can offer allows the group to help more birds. The group should put a process in place that makes it easy for your office to verify that patients are under that organization's care.

What's in it For Your Office?

"Working with adoption organizations is a vital part of our avian practice," says Scott J Stahl, DVM DABVP-Avian, of Stahl Exotic Animal Veterinary Services, in Fairfax, VA (www.seavs.com). "All birds deserve the best of veterinary care and we want to be part of the team that helps these birds in need. I feel our involvement also ties us into the avian community and helps our avian practice to grow."

Responsible adoption organization pay for vet services for foster homes, and emphasize the need for annual well-bird checkups to all caregivers. They promote healthy environments to reduce the occurrence of chronic disease, tell owners the signs to look for in a sick bird, refer clients to your practice, and promote the idea that only avian vets are properly trained to treat birds.

"From a business standpoint, we get many referrals from these adoption organizations, so any effort I put forth working with these groups, and any money lost by discounting services, is paid back by new clients generated. To me, though, the personal satisfaction I get by helping these birds to flourish is the best paycheck I can ask for," says Dr. Rutowski.

Consider expanding your circle of care by working with responsible, sustainable adoption organizations in your community. Your clients, and the birds, will truly benefit.



Spring is in the air

**which means we have
HORMONAL PARROTS!
Yikes!!**

In the spring time, especially in Alaska, sunlight increases and our parrots hormones start to run rampant. Raging hormones can mean screaming, biting, feather picking, aggression, cuddling, nesting and other “weird” behaviors. Your parrot can seem just a bit “off”. They need our help.

What can we do? We can do several things.... Cut the lighting in your bird room a bit and let it go more natural. Change your parrots diet a little bit by limiting carbohydrates, starchy foods and sugar foods (yes, this means grapes and corn!) Watch the warm feel-good foods and the WAY you feed them. Spoon feeding a parrot warm wet food replicates how mama birds feed baby birds and this triggers the need to breed even more. Good nutrition is important during this time.

Limit your physical touchy-feely sessions you have with your parrot and most importantly, stay away from “petting” and “stroking” your parrot, especially along it’s back. Do more neck “scratching” find other ways to show affection. If they start to “rub” on you, don’t make a big deal out of it, simply stop it by distracting them onto something more ‘fun’ and interesting. Don’t give them nesting boxes and know the difference between nesting and shredding toys.

Take this time to teach new tricks (like foraging) so your parrot has a distraction. Good long showers can help. Encourage them to preen - not breed.

Last but not least, please be willing to co-exist as peacefully as possible with your parrot during these times. Be patient and understanding and don’t fuel the fire so to speak - understand that this is an instinct of a parrot. They are often as confused by these feelings as we are. Research your species and find out how long your hormonal period is. It varies between species. You can make it!

**What happens to my parrot
if something happens to me?**

Estate Planning.

Just Do it!



Estate Planning - It's a hard subject to think about, but really, it's time to consider taking care of your parrots after you are gone. Here is a hard fact: 501c sanctioned parrot sanctuaries are experiencing wait times like they have never before. The Oasis Sanctuary has a wait list of over 150 birds at this very moment. You don't want your parrots to end up in a non 501c sanctioned sanctuary that might not be around for the long haul. It's one thing to take in parrots; it's another to sustain them. Be careful and do your research! Also, bird clubs across the country are reporting their adoption programs filling up with parrots that need to be re-homed and yet breeders continue to breed. It's a very scary situation. If you don't have relatives that will take your parrots, please don't saddle them with your friends and/or neighbors. Plan for them and make sure they are taken care of. One of the newer trends is to "estate" your birds.... You can now set up a trust that will help ensure a spot in a sanctuary. Contact the sanctuary you like (i.e.: the Gabriel Foundation, the Oasis Sanctuary, Best Friends Sanctuary, etc) and see what you need to do to make sure your parrots have a safe place to go. And do your research. Make sure it's a SAFE and legitimate sanctuary and not just a "home" where someone "rescues" parrots. They should have a board of directors and a vet on staff. Visit them to ensure you will be happy to have your parrot live there!

Once you've contacted a sanctuary or identified someone to take your bird(s), then contact an estate attorney. The Alaska Bird Club had a wonderful attorney come to our meeting a few years ago to give us the scoop. It's not an impossible thing to do (but a bit tricky in the state of Alaska). It's fairly inexpensive too. It's time you seriously think about it. Contact information:

Paul D. Kelly
Law Offices of Kelly and Patterson
(907) 258-6777

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David Jensen has been our volunteer judge for our
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