

Alaska Bird News

The Alaska Bird Club



Volume 26, Number 11

No Bought or Bred Birds

by
David Edgren

Inside this issue:

I think some folks here know that my wife Heather and I share our home with three parrots. Each was rehomed with us for reasons I needn't go into in this post; "Peaches" is a 21 year old male Goffin's Cockatoo, "Sonny" is a nine year old male Severe Macaw, and "Bella" is a ten year old female White-cap Pionus. Each will probably outlive me (I'm 63 in two weeks) given their expected lifespan.

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Some of our friends have companion parrots of their own. One or two are



parrot breeders or pet shop owners. For those folks, if they see this, I'll give a trigger warning for the things I'm about to say. I don't mean to rub anyone the wrong way, but I've come to feel pretty strongly about the whole issue of trying to keep exotic wild animals, and especially long-lived ones, with you in your home. That all said, I have one word of advice for anyone considering it. Don't.

I'll keep this to parrots, but the same would go for alligators, musk oxen and all other wild animals. They are not "pets," in the sense that a dog or a cat is a pet. Parrots are not domesticated, and never will be. They should be left alone in their natural environment, and that environment should be strongly protected against the encroachment of humankind. Keeping a parrot, however much habituated to your physical presence, in a cage inside your house is akin to a prisoner being housed in a jail for a life sentence. And that's what a companion parrot has, in effect, been placed under- a life sen-

[Check out the Alaska Bird Club's Website!](#)

Find out about our latest *Lost and Found* birds, our *Adopt-A-Bird* program and other articles and videos. See what's up and coming and stay in touch at www.alaskabirdclub.org

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Club Information

The Alaska Bird Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit incorporated in the State of Alaska.

It meets at 7:00PM on the first Tuesday of every month at Serendipity Adult Day Services in Anchorage. Location: 3550 East 20th Ave (off of Northern Lights Blvd & Nichols St).

The mailing address is:

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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.

Dedicated to all the current and future bird owners in Alaska.

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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 Avenue
(907) 276-6016

Alaska Pet-ography

9130 Elim Street
(907) 868-1680

Chester Valley Veterinary

1571 Muldoon Road
(907) 333-6591

College Village Animal Clinic ✓

Dr's Basler & Nicholson
2036 E. Northern Lights Boulevard
(907) 274-5623

Diamond Animal Hospital ✓

Dr. Doty 24-Hour
(907) 562-8384

Hillside Pet Clinic ✓

Dr. Bluestone
Dr. Fredrickson
2011 Abbott Road, Suite B
(907) 344-7913

Petco

8621 Old Seward Highway
(907) 365-550
3090 Mountain View Drive
(907) 277-3826

Pet Emergency Treatment Center

2320 E. Dowling Road
(907) 274-5636

The Pet Stop ✓

Dr. Riley Wilson
1921 W. Dimond Boulevard
(907) 522-1006

The Pet Zoo

901 E. Dimond Boulevard
(907) 3442966

VCA Alaska Pet Care

3900 Lake Otis Parkway
(907) 562-PETS (7387)

VCA Alpine Animal Hospital

12531 Old Seward Highway
(907) 345-1515

VCA E. Anch Animal Clinic

2639 Boniface Parkway
(907) 337-1561

EAGLE RIVER

Ravenwood Veterinary Clinic ✓

Dr. Hass
16743 Coronado Road
(907) 694-9665

The Pet Zoo

12046 Business Boulevard
(907) 622-2966

WASILLA

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic

Mi 7.4 Palmer-Wasilla Highway
(907) 376-6016

The Pet Zoo

1481 E. Parks Highway
(907) 357-7335

PALMER

Far Country Animal Hospital

2701 N. Liahona Drive
(907) 746-7297

North Star Animal Hospital

840 S. Cobb Street
(907) 746-7387

Palmer Veterinary Clinic

Mi 39 Glenn Highway
(907) 745-3219

The Pet Zoo

10201 E. Palmer-Wasilla Highway
(907) 746-0056

FAIRBANKS

Mt. McKinley Animal Hospital

800 College Road
(907) 452-6104

President's Perch by Garry Wallan

At various times over the years at club meetings and conferences, I have presented information about Emergency Preparedness Planning in regards to our parrots. People tend to focus on the Big Scary Things, like earthquakes, storms, zombies, and alien invasion. Often overlooked are the events at the other end of the scale; personal situations which only affect only our own flock and family, not the neighborhood, city, or country.

Recently, I faced such an issue caused by my hip surgery. I had the benefit of knowing months beforehand that my mobility and general ability to care for my parrots would be impacted, so I had the luxury of time to plan ahead. My wife has her own mobility issues, and is shorter than I, which on the surface sounds like a pointless observation, but was an important consideration because of the location of



No Bought or Bred Birds, cont'd

tence in your care.

If parrots were pets, for all their beauty and attraction, they'd make lousy ones. They bite, usually painfully and sometimes dangerously, they cannot be housebroken (I say this despite the claims of a few people that "their" parrot is housebroken- if so they are almost unique exceptions), they cost a lot of money to feed correctly, they cost a lot more money to receive proper "well bird" veterinary care (if they get sick, they can easily bankrupt you, and they'll likely die anyway), they are messy, they will chew on and destroy your furniture, woodwork and nick-knacks, they will scream at you relentlessly, most often during important phone calls or when you have a headache, they will pluck feathers and self-mutilate. Not all parrots do all these things, but most of them do most of these things.

Our annual budget to feed and care for the three parrots who share our home is probably close to \$2,000, when you annualize the vet visits. A proper cage is \$300-\$400. Because parrots dehydrate very quickly (and will then die shortly afterwards) without adequate fresh water, you can't just simply go away for a couple of days and leave full food and water dishes like you would for a dog or cat. The equivalent of a kennel for a parrot in the area we live in is around \$30 per day for each bird, adding close to \$100 a day to any trip out of the area we want to take. Parrots are by nature social birds. We are part of their flock. A parrot in a home where it is left in a cage all day and not interacted with will invariably develop undesirable behaviors: plucking, biting, screaming- those sorts of things. Or you can take a parrot out and give it your full attention for half the day and it will do those things anyway. And, as I mentioned at the start of this post, parrots are long-lived.



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Thank you to any and all who offered a charitable contribution to The Alaska Bird Club through Pick. Click. Give.

Your thoughtfulness is appreciated!

Birds Available for Adoption See www.petfinder.com for details

Here is a handful of cockatiels that need a new home as the owner is relocating. Relinquishing owner's description:

(Cockatiel 1) Parker is a timid bird, age unknown. She does not like to be held or touched, but I think this could be overcome if someone worked with her one on one. She was once comfortable sitting on my hand and riding on my head as I wandered around the house. I had a house fire, and since then, I just haven't had the time to work with her to get back to our old comfortable relationship.

(Cockatiel 2) Sweeney is a nice bird, age unknown. He is hand friendly and enjoys a good head and neck scratch. Again, since the fire, he is a little leery of new people and may take a little time to warm up to a new owner.

However, he is a darling and makes a great companion.

(Cockatiels 3,4,5) Choy, General, and Pao are just over three years old (born February 1, 2012) and were hand tamed, but since the fire they are unwilling to be held.

The 'tiels don't have to be adopted together, but they are happy sharing one cage. I've had them separated and they seem to prefer being together in a flock."



Birds Available for Adoption, continued...



Notes from foster home: Alfred is super-cute and very charming, but he can be VERY bossy. He does not get along with other birds (should be an only-bird home) and even picks on humans. He needs to go to an experienced bird home for these reasons. He's probably not good for kids.

Now, on to what Alfred's relinquishing owner says about him: "I need to find a home for my feathered friend, Alfred. He's a sassy, talkative Green-Cheek Conure that is very active and loves to dance when he's not being a mischief maker. He is a very friendly

and engaging bird! I love him to death and we are very close but he's developed an unfortunate screeching habit that is driving my roommate crazy and is forcing my hand into finding him a new home.

The Alaska Bird Club has a number of permanent homes. If you can't adopt one or more of these lovely birds.



lovebirds in a foster home situation that need them permanently, please consider fostering



Peaches, the 20 year old Senegal, is looking for her forever family and home. This beautiful little girl is very tame and is used to being out of her cage while her family is home. She gravitates towards men, but is very comfortable around women as well. She randomly laughs at life, and when she is in love she will work her way to that person just to sit and be with them. Peaches was at one time an escapee, so she **MUST** have her wings clipped! She adores rope toys and has enjoyed being the only pet for a long time. She will have her cage, toys, food and treats when she comes.

Pico is a wonderful little sun conure that is presumably very old, as she sleeps a lot for a parrot, and thus prefers a quiet setting. This little girl can get rambunctious, however, when she takes her daily bath. She enjoys a glass pie pan full of warm water and will splash most of it out by the time she is done! Alternatively, she will sit on your shoulder in a cool shower and fluff, preen, and flap her wings to her heart's delight. It is very entertaining to watch!



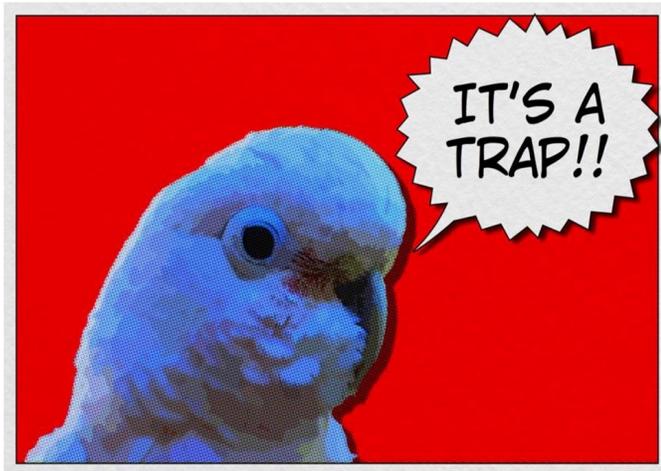
Pico is somewhat of a one-person-bird, as she will tolerate anyone petting or holding her, but is only ever happy when she is with her favorite person. If someone she doesn't like puts their fingers near her "sleep hollow", she may bite, but other than that she is pretty mellow. Her favorite activity is snuggling under blankets with her favorite person, which she will do at any time of day. In the summer, if her wings are trimmed she loves to take walks outside and even sit in little bushes or trees to chew the bark off. She especially loves to sit in such a tree on hot summer days and take a bath in the "rainforest" (a shower created by hose with warm water sprayed lightly over the tree)

No Bought or Bred Birds, cont'd.

years, spending three-quarters of that time (at least-probably more) in a steel cage measuring about eight square feet of space. We do not treat the worst criminals in our society so badly.

I had no clue of any of this before Heather and I wound up with our first parrot. It's just not passed on in her eighties. That parrot will potentially live another twenty or thirty years, spending three-quarters of that time (at least- probably more) in a steel cage measuring about eight square feet of space. We do not treat the worst criminals in our society so badly.

I had no clue of any of this before Heather and I wound up with our first parrot. It's just not



something you think through until you are confronted with it. There's no going back for us now. We love each of our parrots fiercely and will do all we can to make their lives all they can be. But we can never do for them what should be done- never have taken them out of their natural environment (or allowed them to have been bred for sale) in the first place. For Peaches, Sonny and Bella there's no turning back time. They are fated to being part of our flock, and likely someone else's, forever.

But you, if you are currently parrotless, can have things be different. Please don't ever purchase a parrot from a "pet" store. Please don't ever purchase a parrot from a breeder. This is the only way that stores and breeders will ever decide to get out of the parrot business- if there's no money in it. If, after all this, you still must have a parrot for a companion (and don't say I didn't tell you so), please find a parrot to rehome in your home. There are organizations with countless numbers of parrots who need someone like you, informed about the downside and willing to make the commitment anyway, to step up and do what you can in trying to undo what, in my opinion, has been a terrible and cruel mistake- to treat these magnificent birds as household pets.

Adoptable Birds, cont'd



Alaskan Animal Rescue Friends - AARF - has Biggie, this 30-year-old Double Yellow-Headed Amazon up for adoption and we are helping spread the word! He is a good bird, but does not like being handled from his cage. Once he trusts you he will ride around on your shoulder and arm, but if you try to force it he will bite, and he bites like he means business! He has a great vocabulary and is a very social talker. He doesn't do well in quiet environments oddly enough. He was seen by Dr. Wilson at The Pet Stop when we first got him and he said he was healthy and in good shape. Been on a seeded diet but I have been transitioning to pellets and he will take them. He loves people food....especially Pizza!! If he sees pizza he goes nuts, screaming MINE MINE MINE until you give him a bit of crust LOL"

President's Perch, cont'd.

some supplies and cages.

We were able to work out a schedule that fit my wife's abilities, I bought extra pellets, seed, and nuts (to cut down on the need for repeated trips to stores), and even put in a supply of water in the Big Bird area so that my wife did not have to haul water down the stairs every day. Some of the smaller birds were in a multi-level cage arrangement, the higher cages easily reached by myself. These cages were moved to a lower location so that my wife could change food and water dishes without the risk of standing on a step-stool. As an added benefit, our daughter was able to come home from Los Angeles to assist during the first week of my convalescence when I was pretty much drugged to uselessness and in bed most of the time.

Again, we had time to plan and get ready, so our preparations worked out well, but what if I had been injured in an accident, or been affected by a sudden, debilitating illness? Taking care of the birds in our house would have been a much more difficult, and in some cases risky, chore for my wife.

Planning for disaster also needs to include the little things, the "what if I can't take care of my birds next week" kind of considerations, especially if you live alone and are the sole provider of care for your pets.

Write down a plan! Describe when and what you feed your birds (especially if there are special nutritional preparations for certain members of your flock ; list medications being administered; describe where the food and supplies are; and include the name of your veterinarian. If you have family members or friends who can help in an emergency, talk to them ahead of time, just in case. Show them where stuff is. Make your supplies and cages easy to get to. Keep your pet care information in an obvious location, such as a kitchen cupboard, or on a desk. Label it PET CARE INFORMATION or some other eye-catching text.

Do this NOW so that in case of a special event, with months of forewarning or none at all, your birds can be cared for with a minimum of drama and risk.



Adoptable Birds, cont'd



Bert is a beautiful adult male Ring-Necked Dove looking for his forever home! His age is unknown. Bert is accustomed to being free, although he would usually stay in one spot for the most part, occasionally hanging out on top of the heads of humans, just for laughs!

Forever soulful, Bert's coo is soothing, his demeanor extremely gentle, and his looks could easily win him the cover shoot for the next issue of PlayDove magazine.

Bert is currently in foster care but would be an amazing addition to your family!

David Jensen Photography

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David Jensen has been the Alaska Bird Club volunteer judge for several years now.



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UPCOMING MEETING: TUESDAY NOVEMBER 3RD AT
7:00PM

NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 1ST