



ALASKA BIRD NEWS

October 2011

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

Is it Really True????

Thing's that people are always asked
when you own a parrot.

1. **Is it true that when you get a parrot you have to give up cooking with non-stick pans?** The answer is yes... unless you like to gamble with the lives of your feathered friends. Over and over again you read horror stories of birds passing (quickly) when someone has over-heated a non-stick pan. It's the PTFE (Polytetrafluoroethylene) coating that kills them. Fumes from overheated pans are acutely toxic to birds.
2. **Is it true that parrots are noisy and messy?** Yes. Healthy parrots are both noisy and messy. And of course the "noise level" drastically changes between species— some are louder than others, but they are ALL loud. And yep! Sometimes, (okay, always) you can't shut them up on command, so make sure you know what you're getting into! As far as messy? Uhhh... yeah. You got THAT right!
3. **Is it true that parrots talk?** No, not all parrots talk. While all parrots have the physical capacity for learning human speech, it's not something every bird does. Even among those species most known for talking ability (like the African Grey), not every member of that species learns human speech. And there are some birds that people don't think of as having a large vocabulary (like the Parakeet) that can actually be quite verbose. We caution you not to pick a parrot based on whether they talk or not. Pick a parrot you like because of their personality.
4. **Is it true that they need THAT large of a cage?** Yes. We took these little guys from the wild and put them into cages in our living rooms. They deserve to be able to stretch their wings and turn around without hitting their toys or other perches. They deserve that! Would YOU like to live inside a "house" as small as a pantry?
5. **Is it true that they live a long time?** Yes. Be-

fore you decide that a parrot is what you want, picture your life 30 years ahead and see if you can still see that parrot in your life. Whether it be having children or a career that might take you away from them, they will be around that long. Even Cockatiels are now living upwards of 20-30 years! The bigger guys can live up to eighty years!



6. **Is it true that "clipping their wings" hurts them?** No, absolutely not. And in some cases it can save their lives. And to clarify, the phrase "clipping their wings" means only trimming their flight feathers. We are not mutilating a parrot's actual wings. If you are unsure on how to properly trim their flight feathers, have an avian vet help! The biggest reason someone trims flight feathers is so that when they fly, they are not able to get the height and speed they can normally have, which enables them to be rescued if they escape. Clipping flight feathers is also a way to control birds that might be in training for behavioral problems, so consult your vet.
7. **Is it true that you should take your parrot to an avian vet annually?** It is true that your parrot's health can depend on your vet seeing your parrot annually. They are recording CBC's and statistics about your parrot that will help them diagnose and help them in the

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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 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).

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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

🌟 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

Bird of the Month

Meet “Sunny”



Editors note: This article is a re-print from Squawk Talk, the newsletter for The Florida West Coast Avian Society Inc. A non-profit organization bird club and parrot and exotic bird rescue. www.fwcas.org. Lynda Lewis is the wife of Alaska Bird Club member Herb Lewis.

A Sunny Day

By Lynda Lewis

This is a story on how birds touch our lives. I am sure many of you will recognize who I am writing about. Due to the economic troubles in Florida a man decided he would search for jobs in Alaska. So he left behind his family and birds so he could find a job to support them all and off he went to the great white north. He arrived in Alaska at the end of April. It was cold, dark and wet. He was depressed, sad to leave behind all he loved and be in this place that was so foreign and cold. The local bird club took him under their wing and made him feel welcome. He found a good job, but something was still missing. He still felt lost and alone. He fostered cockatiels and budgies for the club and it helped him somewhat but he did not fill that hole in his heart completely. He still felt that lingering sadness.

Then one day he received a phone call from the club. They had a little brown-throated conure needing a foster home. Her original owner had a baby and did not want her anymore. Her name was Sunny and she was a two year old girl. The people who adopted her found they could not bond with her and she was biting them. The little conure obviously felt lost and alone also. She missed her first mom so bad. So the man who had a brownthroated conure in Florida said he would love to foster her. Maybe a conure would help. So on a rainy, cold August day they brought this little conure to him. From the minute they met they knew they were in love. Both recognizing the need and loss in one another. She snuggled in his hands and he held her close. Every day he would come home from work and spend hours with his little bird. She was a very good bird for the man and would lay on her back in his hands just soaking up the love. The man's loneliness lessened and the hold in his heart did not feel so deep and empty anymore.

Even though winters loom long, cold and dark, every day is a Sunny day for Sunny and her man. Don't breed, don't buy, adopt. Bring a little sunshine to a needy pet birds life and let them bring sunshine to yours!

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!

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Website of the Month

www.thecozynestbox.com

This is where fresh-from-the-tree palm nuts, and the other all-natural treats we offer, come into play.

Parrot Behavior Consultations

Need help with any of the following?

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Inappropriate vocalizations
Feather Destructive Behaviors
Diet
Environmental Enrichment

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to schedule your consultation today:
929-BIRD (2473) or akpeac@gmail.com.

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P E A C
(Parrot Education & Adoption Center)
www.akpeac.org
929-BIRD

TBD - watch their website for updates!

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Bird Club Announcement!!!

Holiday Potluck!

Tuesday December 6th, 2011

7:00pm to 9:00pm

TABC will provide the turkey, mashed potatoes and stuffing. The rest is potluck, so please bring a side dish, dessert or bread.

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

By Michael Stanton, President 2011, The Alaska Bird Club



The annual Chili Cook-off raised \$110 for the Alaska Bird Club. To make the judging fair, the pots of chili competitors were numbered. The winners competed for Lowes gift cards of \$50 1st place--Julie Lampley, a new comer, \$30 2d place—Carrie Wallan, and 3rd place, Jen Slaughter. All had a good time! Our fundraisers help fund our various committees like the Adopt-A-Bird program, the Lost/Found-Rescue committee and the membership meetings.

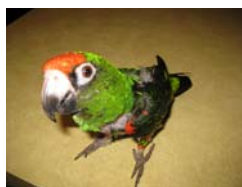


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event they get sick or hurt. We can't stress enough that this is so very important!

- 8. Is it true parrots need so many toys and quality time out of their cage?** The answer is yes, yes! And YES! Always make sure they have both physical and mental stimulation. Parrots are such social creatures. They enjoy seeing you, your family and being part of that. They depend on you keeping them safe and allowing them time to explore new things safely and in your company. They need stimulation and safe toys and time out of the cage. If you think you're going to juggle two jobs, a new baby and move to an apartment, then please do not consider a parrot. If you haven't got the time, then don't get the parrot.
- 9. Is it true that it's easy to feed parrots?** Not true! Nutrition is very important to the mental and physical well being of a parrot. Without proper nutrition they can become ill and it can contribute to behavioral problems. What your parrot eats is dictated by the type species that you own. Not all parrots need the same things. To put it in a nutshell (no pun intended), parrots need a good mix of pellets, some seed, fresh veggie's and some fruits. It's so important to understand the needs of your *kind* of parrot.
- 10. Is it true that parrots are good pets?** True and False. Parrots are for special people, who live a lifestyle that is conducive to parrot ownership. It's a world that is only understood by other bird people. With the right environment, parrots can be the most awesome companion pet that anyone will ever know. Some people "get it". So when you hear a bird person interrupting the night out with friends with the statement "I have to go home and feed the birds and then put them to bed", you'll know they get it. They are the children that will never grow up that will rely on you for their care. They are a pet that is highly intelligent that will amuse you with their fun antics and their tenacity for life. Take care of them and they will take care of you.

This article is dedicated to five very special parrots who have all had a second chance in life thanks to the Alaska Bird Club and Parrot Education and Adoption Center. Without organizations like these, parrots often perish.



The Association of Avian Veterinarians

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Avian Rescue and Sanctuary Organizations: An Introduction

Sharman Hoppes, DVM, Dipl ABVP (Avian)

Abstract: Parrots are increasingly popular pets, with beauty, intelligence, and the capacity to mimic speech. Owners often obtain parrots not realizing how messy, loud, and destructive they can be. This has led many owners to relinquish their birds. Parrot rescue organizations and sanctuaries are on the rise to accommodate this problem. This article discusses the reasons for parrot relinquishment and the pros and cons of the rescue and sanctuary industry.

Parrots have become increasingly popular pets and are third in popularity behind dogs and cats. They are incredible creatures: intelligent, beautiful, with the capacity to mimic our speech. They are long-lived, with many having the potential to live 40–60 years.

People often obtain birds believing they are low-maintenance pets because they live in cages. They then discover that parrots are messy, loud, and often develop behavioral issues in captivity. This leads to parrots being rehomed or placed in rescue or sanctuary organizations. Because so many parrots are being given up, rescue and sanctuary organizations for parrots are on the rise.

Parrots are in need of rescue for many reasons. They are long-lived, loud, messy, and destructive. They are also a non-domesticated species. The selective breeding programs used in aviculture have been mostly interested in color mutations, not pet quality. In fact, for many years, the parrots who did not acclimate well to being a pet—the screamers, feather pickers, and biters—were the ones most likely to be given up to breeding facilities.

Parrots are flock animals. In the wild they spend their days interacting with other birds, building a nest, raising chicks, and foraging. The captive-bred parrot has the same innate desires as a wild bird. They are not routinely spayed or neutered so their reproductive drive is present. Many are imprinted on humans and form inappropriate relationships with their owners. They may become aggressive, begin biting, or start feather picking as a result. They are also noisy, with wild birds vocalizing loudly when flying and perching. In our homes, this same communication can be deafening. People want parrots to sit and play quietly in their cages, and when they don't, their owners become frustrated, often leading to the birds living in multiple homes and, potentially, being placed with a rescue or sanctuary organization.

Sanctuaries provide permanent home for animals that do not fit into the traditional pet setting. In 2008, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service adopted the Captive Wildlife Safety Act's (CWSA) definition for sanctuaries. They developed 4 criteria for accreditation:

- The sanctuary must be approved by the United States Internal Revenue Service as a corporation that is exempt from taxation under 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- No commercial trade of prohibited species is allowed, including offspring, parts, or products of the prohibited

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species.

- No propagation of prohibited species is allowed.
- No direct contact between the public and prohibited species is allowed.

Rescue organizations refer to those facilities that are involved in saving an animal's life or preventing abuse or injury. These organizations rescue animals (parrots) in many settings. Often the bird is in a potentially dangerous, hurtful, or neglectful environment. Many organizations provide both rescue and sanctuary, depending on the parrot and its history and needs. Unfortunately, as with all organizations, there are those with strict guidelines providing good management and those that do not.

The parrot rescue and sanctuary industry is continuously growing and many of these organizations are truly inspiring. They have guidelines for care, have become tax-exempt, and work closely with avian veterinarians. Other organizations will take any bird in without appropriate resources, have limited to no guidelines in place, and provide no veterinary care, which often results in parrots having to be "rescued again" from these facilities.

Unfortunately there are no state or federal guidelines available for the care of parrots in a rescue or sanctuary organization. Some organizations have adopted the model aviary plan (MAP) guidelines, others have become members of the Global Federation of Sanctuaries, while others have developed their own; yet many work without specific guidelines. There has been a growing consensus that specific guidelines are needed.

An introduction to parrot rescue and sanctuary organizations would not be complete without a discussion on hoarding. Animal hoarders are individuals who believe they are rescuing and saving animals. They typically have a large number of animals including dogs, cats, birds, horses, or a combination thereof. They are unable to provide even the minimal standards of care, including nutrition, shelter, and veterinary care. Neglect often leads to filthy conditions, and sick, dying, or dead animals. Hoarders are in denial of their inability to provide care, often arguing that their animals are well-cared for when starving and dead animals are in plain view. Many experts now believe that psychiatric problems may lead to animal hoarding, which has been linked to dementia, addictive behaviors, attachment disorders, and/or obsessive compulsive disorders.⁸ As the number of avian rescue and sanctuary organizations grows, so does the likelihood of collecting and hoarding.

There are over 11 million exotic birds kept as pets in the United States and over 4 million US households with pet birds. Many of these birds belong to the baby boomer generation. These individuals are becoming elderly, will be retiring, and may develop age-related health issues, resulting in the need for their pet birds to be rehomed at some point in their life. Many of these birds will end up in a rescue or sanctuary setting.

In 2003, The Gabriel Foundation and PETsMART charities co-funded the National Parrot Relinquishment Research Project. Parrot relinquishment from a variety of parrot-related communities, including aviculturists, bird clubs, shelters, zoos, retailers, and veterinarians was evaluated.

There were 779 respondents, including pet store owners, welfare and rescue organizations, individual bird owners, breeders and veterinarians. A total of 5391 birds were relinquished.

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Of the relinquished birds, 2631 (49%) were accepted by rescue and sanctuary organizations, 823 (15%) were accepted by individuals, 693 (13%) were accepted by Humane Societies, 360 (7%) were accepted by bird clubs, 269 (5%) were accepted by veterinarians, 197 (4%) were accepted into foster homes, 154 (3%) were accepted by avian behaviorists, 136 (3%) were taken in by pet stores, and 128 (2%) were cared for by breeders. With almost half of the relinquished birds being taken in by rescue and sanctuary organizations, it is clear that there is a need for these organizations.

When discussing the status of unwanted parrots with individuals who work in rescue and sanctuary settings, they admit to getting daily calls from people wanting to give their birds up. One of the goals of rescue and sanctuary organizations is to educate people on the needs of birds, preferably prior to purchase, but also to council owners considering relinquishing their birds in hopes of keeping that bird in its home. If there is no recourse and a parrot ends up in a rescue or sanctuary setting, we want it to be a setting that follows ethical and humane guidelines in its care. We want our companion parrots to avoid the sad fate of many companion dogs and cats, with millions of animals euthanized yearly.

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HALLOWEEN SURVIVAL TIPS FOR PARROT HOUSEHOLDS

By Michael Stanton

A little pre-holiday preparation can help reduce your birds' stress levels:

1. Put a time limit on giving out goodies to trick or treaters. If your birds go to sleep at a certain time, then decide when to turn off the porch lights.
2. Unless your birds like people running around at night in strange clothing and making weird noises with ringing doorbells, move them to a place that is quiet.
3. Pull down shades or draw curtains closed if your bird cages look out to your front door.
4. Beware of open doors and flighted birds. A spooked loose bird is difficult to find in the dark and cold outdoors.
5. If there are children in your household wearing Halloween costumes don't let them freak out your birds by "BOO!"-ing them.
6. Don't give them candy. Trying to get a bird to sleep with a sugar high is bad enough with Trick or Treaters in the neighborhood. Remember that chocolate is toxic!!
7. When in doubt, try to imagine how you might react to all this Halloween stuff if you were your parrot. You might think it's great fun, or..... you might be frightened out of your mind.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

If you have a companion parrot or an unusual bird you are proud of and would like to show it off at our November member meeting, please let your Alaska Bird Club know: You may contact TABC by email, telephone or call Michael, Amber or Lin. Have another parrot owner you know? Bring'em to a meeting (the owner, not the parrot.... We love your parrots, but our meetings can only do one bird at a time and it's by pre-authorization only).

NOVEMBER MEETING AGENDA

Making a hand held T-Stick can be a handy training gadget and retrieval tool. We will show you how to make them out of different sized dowels and small diameter PVC pipe. Or even how to adapt any T-stick into a training stand. We hope to have a mystery guest speaker also for your enjoyment. See ya' there. Toy making too! Come join us!

- Michael Stanton

A Reason To Take Your Bird to the Vet

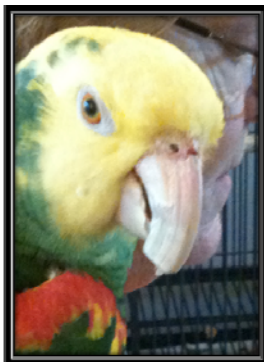
By Michael Stanton

We take ourselves to the doctor. We take our car to the dealer for periodic maintenance. We water the lawn, our gardens and our flowers. But I am appalled that many companion parrot owners never take their companion parrots to a veterinarian. I do not understand why they feel a vet appointment is unnecessary. We invest in taking care of our bodies, we invest in keeping our cars running, and of course we want green lawns, abundant vegetables and fruits, and lots of blooming flowers during the growing season.

All of the above are an investment in time, value and our labor—and some might say: Love. Yet some parrot owners will never invest in a bird's health and well being. There seems to be a mind-set which never considers that parrots can suffer physical ailments or illnesses. One wonders if parrots endure some psychological process of feeling neglected or unloved due to an owner not truly caring for the parrot's inability to heal itself. Sadly, I encounter this predicament on a fairly routine basis. Many parrot owners have never taken their bird to a vet. The common response I get is, "My parrot never looked sick," or, worse, "Hey! It's just a dumb bird." When I hear these responses, I wonder if any of those folks knew there were affordable options. Certainly co-opting love of parrots doesn't have to co-opt a few dollars out of the wallet.

Caring and loving a parrot entails a certain level of knowledge and responsibility. I have a female Umbrella cockatoo who turned 16 years last September; we've had her for the last twelve years. We received her from an abusive and neglectful owner who simply wanted to get rid of her. No charge for the bird. Our out of pocket expenses for her vet bills has exceeded to date, \$6,000.00. That's no misprint—SIX THOUSAND DOLLARS—no Birdy Blue Cross, folks. So where is all this going? I think a picture is worth a thousand words. Not quite two years ago I received a call to do a consult for an owner of an Amazon. Basically the bird sat on its cage all day and the owner spent very little time with the bird after coming home from work. I remarked that you need to spend a minimum of an hour a day socializing, playing and caring for your parrot. I got the bird to step up and down, and come out and go in the cage when commanded. The owner was reminded how important this was for owner and parrot. Two weeks ago the owner contacted me and confessed feelings of guilt at being unable to provide the time and attention this bird desired. The owner knew of our reputation through references and wanted to give up this parrot so it would have a good home. We accepted.

The owner told me the bird had never been to a vet in its sixteen years of existence. Her nails were elongated and sharp as a fish hook. Her feet were curled and could not make full contact with a flat surface or good perch on a decent perch. She could not properly preen her feathers or chomp down on unshelled nuts—the right side of her upper mandible had overgrown downward about 3/8 of an inch. She could not groom her toenails or feet properly. She is a beautiful in every other respect, but only half-loved until the day she arrived to live a better life in our household. The next day we took her to the vet. The doctor invited other staff techs to see our bird's condition, as many of them had not seen this beak condition before.



Heidi got her nails trimmed—the doc said her feet were showing some symptoms of arthritis and might be tender for a little while as the tendons and joints extended in range of motion. A Dremel rotary stone evened the excess beak keratin so she regain better function allowing her to preen and grasp. Here is her picture.

The last item was the blood lab sample. It came back showing a low white cell count, but otherwise in good shape. As I write this she is enjoying something new. A little piece of apple, some banana, a green bean with a ladle of love and care for a fantastic bird. "Hey! Don't lick my nose, Heidi. It tickles!" Don't wait until it's too late. Go take your bird to the vet. It is a small investment with big returns.

More *Alaska Style* from David Jensen Photography

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



Photo by David Jensen



The Alaska Bird Club
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Place
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