

# Squawk 'n Talk

May 2020



**Unfortunately our May meeting has been cancelled due to stay at home orders in St. Louis County.**

## Chirps from the President's Perch

Unfortunately due to COVID-19 we are cancelling the May Gateway Parrot Club meeting. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to develop globally we will continue to comply with the government requirements and recommendations as our priority is keeping our families and membership healthy. Please continue to follow the guidelines, such as, wearing face masks, social distancing, hand washing, and the use of hand sanitizers, etc. to stay healthy.

The speaker scheduled for June is Dr. Michelle Whitehead, DVM (Avian & Exotics Medicine BluePearl Pet Hospital). Dr. Whitehead will be presenting "Avian Diagnostic Imaging – Understanding the benefits and risks associated with x-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans and scopes".

As we near the date of the meeting we will announce if the meeting will be held or canceled based on the COVID-19 numbers and the government recommendations at the time.

During our February meeting the Gateway Parrot Club accepted nominations for organizations to receive our annual grants. We certainly look forward to getting together again and at the next meeting current paid members will vote for a total of three organizations to receive a grant from us.

As a reminder, below are the individual organization summaries and a website link for you to learn more about the nominated organizations.

The Gabriel Foundation  
Iowa Parrot Rescue  
The Parrot Posse  
Quaker Parakeet Society (QPS)  
South Central Ill Bird Rescue  
St. Louis Avian Rescue (STAR)  
Wild Bird Rehabilitation (WBR)  
World Bird Sanctuary (WBS)

Please let us know your suggestions for potential speakers and topics of interest for our Monthly Speakers. The primary mission of the Gateway Parrot Club is education.

We hope to see you at our next meeting on Sunday, June 14, at 1:00. The meeting will be confirmed at a later date.

Please stay well and take care.

Renee Davis  
May 2020

## **Grant Nominees:**

**The Gabriel Foundation** – The Gabriel Foundation® is a 501(c)(3) avicultural and veterinary affiliated parrot welfare organization licensed by the state of Colorado, promoting educational outreach, conservation, rescue, rehabilitation, adoption, and sanctuary pertaining to the needs of parrots everywhere. The Foundation's purpose is to serve as a research and educational model to the public-at-large, the veterinary medical community, the pet industry, humane animal welfare organizations and the avicultural community. The Foundation educates the public about the importance of providing appropriately for the welfare of parrots in captivity and the need to preserve the world's parrots in their wild habitats.

<https://thegabrielfoundation.org/about/> (lookup or copy/paste into your browser)

**Iowa Parrot Rescue** – Iowa Parrot Rescue is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by Mike and Abi Hutchison. They have attended bird fairs to educate and inform and build support for the rescue. They have built a loyal family of volunteers and donors. By the end of 2018 that number was over 1,000. They cannot care for every needy bird, but act as mentors to help build local rescue that are well placed to care for local needs. They continue to build connections in the rescue community and to create a sturdy web of support.

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

**The Parrot Posse** - the Parrot Posse is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose supporters help thousands of parrots in need across the United States every year. The Parrot Posse itself is neither a shelter nor a rescue. Instead, they help save parrots by helping rescues and sanctuaries on a regular basis, and by providing nationwide emergency support during natural disasters and law enforcement seizures. They are all volunteers, with no salaries, and virtually no overhead expenses. In the past few years, they have raised over \$400,000, mostly \$10 and \$20 at a time, and donated over a half million dollars of food, toys, nuts, perches, cages, and other supplies to parrot welfare groups. They have proven that by working together, they can make far more of a difference than when they work alone.

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

**Quaker Parakeet Society (QPS)** - Quaker Parakeet Society is doing a "Georgia Fletcher Scholarship Fund" that will be awarded to a veterinarian student at the University of Illinois who is interested in avian veterinary medicine. Applicants can write an essay about their interest and the QPS board will decide who will receive it. QPS is giving \$1,000. If QPS receives a grant from GPC, we would specify that it go to this fund. QPS strives to provide factual, detailed information on Quakers as companion parrots through education, encourages legalization of Quakers in states where they are currently banned, and strives to prevent further restriction of ownership, promotes protection and preservation of Quaker natural habitats, helps find homes for Quakers in need of a new home, and supports and encourages veterinary and aviculture research of all avian species. [www.quakerparakeetsociety.org](http://www.quakerparakeetsociety.org)

**South Central Illinois Bird Rescue** - South Central Illinois Bird Rescue is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that rescues exotic birds, whether abandoned, neglected,

abused, or left without an owner (whether by financial situations, illness, or death). They are located in South Central Illinois, and willing to travel to nearby states to rescue birds in need.

They provide food, housing, vet care, behavior modification and most of all, LOVE for the birds at no cost to the owner. Their Mission is to rescue and rehabilitate exotic birds, provide them with medical and emotional care, and find their forever homes.

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

**St. Louis Avian Rescue (STAR)** - STAR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to assist companion birds in need of homes and to educate the community regarding bird care and health. They have volunteers who foster a variety of bird species with the eventual goal of the placement of these birds in forever homes.

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

**Wild Bird Rehabilitation (WBR)** - The Wild Bird Rehabilitation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide care for injured, ill, and orphaned native wild songbirds and to release them back into their natural habitat. WBR cares for more than 1800 birds annually representing over 100 native bird species. [www.wildbirdrehab.org](http://www.wildbirdrehab.org)

**World Bird Sanctuary (WBS)** - WBS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that preserves, protects, and inspires to safeguard bird species as part of the global community for future generations. Their mission is accomplished through education, captive breeding, field studies, and rehabilitation.

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



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**  
Gateway Parrot Club 2020 Meeting Dates

February 16  
~~March 15~~ CANCELLED  
~~April 19~~ CANCELLED  
~~May 17~~ CANCELLED  
June 14  
July 19  
August TBD  
September 20  
October 18  
November 15  
December 13

Gateway Parrot Club typically meets on the third Sunday of each month, with the exception of June and December when we will be meeting on the second Sunday. In August, our monthly meeting will be replaced by an event at Tower Grove Park.

**Below are photos reminding us of how much fun we have at our meetings and events. We hope to see all of you again soon!**







**HO  
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HOLD  
THE  
DATE**

*December 8*  
GPC 2019 Holiday Party

 [WWW.GATEWAYPARROTCLUB.ORG](http://WWW.GATEWAYPARROTCLUB.ORG)



**Thanks  
again to  
Chef  
Christine!**



**Thanks to  
all who  
brought  
food for  
our holiday  
meal**

**PIC•COLLAGE**



**2019  
Version  
of Elf  
on  
the Shelf**

**PIC•COLLAGE**





## General Meeting Information

Come and enjoy the fun and bring a bird (as long as it is clipped). It's so enjoyable seeing all the different species of parrots and talking to other parrot owners.

You don't have to be a member to attend, but we would love to have you join. Meeting starts at 1:00 and it will be a full afternoon of meeting, socializing, eating, program, and raffle. For members who have not renewed their membership or who would like to join, please see Beth Poll, our membership chair person. She will be at the meeting to sign you up. An annual membership fee of \$20.00 includes your family (two voting members) and brings you our monthly newsletter by email, helps us to provide special speakers, and enables us to provide grants to other not for profit organizations. You can also join online or via snail mail if you prefer ([gatewayparrotclub.org](http://gatewayparrotclub.org)). Thank you for joining and helping support the parrot community. Members who have not paid their dues by January 31 will no longer be in good standing and will not be able to vote on club matters. We meet at Varietees Bird Store, 60 Meramec Valley Plaza, Valley Park, MO.

Varietees will be open in the afternoon so you can purchase bird food, supplies, toys, cages, play stands, etc. before and after the meeting.

We do have a raffle most months so if you would like to donate item(s), they are always welcome. They do not have to be bird related. We sell raffle tickets for \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00.

Did you know that the Gateway Parrot Club has a Facebook group page? If you would like to join this group, search for "Gateway Parrot Club" in Facebook and request membership. We have over 800 group members!

Also check out our website: [gatewayparrotclub.org](http://gatewayparrotclub.org)

## Why Talking or Singing to Your New Parrot is a Bad Idea

by Hillary Hankey

If you have ever brought a new parrot home and asked the social media hive mind how to get your nervous new friend used to you, chances are good that someone has told you to pull up a chair and calmly talk, sing, or read a book to your parrot. I'm here to tell you that far from being a trust-building activity, it can actually make your parrot more afraid of you.

There is a golden rule in animal training, and it's not do unto others as you would like done unto you. If you think about it, if some stranger pulled his chair up to your kitchen window and started singing to introduce himself to the family, I'm guessing you'd call the cops. I know I would. The golden rule in animal training is treat others as they would like to be treated. How do you know how an animal wants to be treated? The truth is you don't, and boy is it a slippery slope, that one! But response blocking, which is what the above described method of talking, singing, and basically forcing your presence upon the animal, doesn't actively build trust. It teaches the parrot that nothing it does will get you to go away, so give up. Just like your creep outside the kitchen. So let's start with some choices, because choice looks at how many degrees of freedom an animal has when it is interacting with you, and thus control, and control is a good thing. Control builds trust.

The chair method, as it is often referred to, or sitting next to your parrot and talking, reading a book, or singing, is what is called one-way communication. This is to say that we ignore the unspoken communication of body language that the parrot shows us by not reacting if he shows signs of discomfort: moving away, clinging to the other end of the cage, slicked down feathers, refusing to eat near us, displaced preening or slamming toys, and other forms of anxiety. By not reacting to this form of nonverbal communication, we are simply having a one-sided conversation, forcing our goals upon the other party, teaching them that their "words" are ineffective, and in effect, preventing us from having the bond that each of us is capable of. This manner of interfacing with our environment is so ingrained in our cultural paradigm that we don't even realize that we are, in fact, using some form of force or coercion in order to get the individual to perform the behavior that we desire.

We can utilize a number of different forms of control-based programs that allow the parrot and ourselves to engage in a more active manner of relationship building. This will not only accelerate the relationship building process, but it will build with two-way communication from the beginning. This article focuses on

nervous parrots who may or may not be able to interact without biting, aren't stepping up confidently, if at all, and may not even take food from the hand.

### If Your Parrot Takes Food

If you have a parrot that take food from your fingers but you don't have a lot of confidence that she has the skills to step up without biting or showing other undesirable behaviors, then you might have seen some of the work that we did in the beginning with one of our client's birds, Snowball, a five year old male umbrella cockatoo. Snowball came to his new family with very

few skills and would bite the arm hard or lunge at the face when he was uncomfortable. Due to the intensity of his biting and the subtle nature of his warning signs, we worked with him on some hands-off behaviors first to get him comfortable and confident before we moved forward to where he could do some damage if he got frustrated or confused (which was not hard, given his limited understanding of how to be around people). We taught him to target around the cage, which helped us learn the mechanics of feeding him treats. This was particularly valuable as sometimes, Snowball would really grab at the fingertips quickly. We also taught him a very strong stationing behavior on his door perch so that he had a lot of history on it. This helped immensely for step up training when the time came.

Training these behaviors a couple of times a day before meal times gave us the opportunity to get used to Snowball's way around humans. It also showed him, because he was so nervous around new people and in this new environment, that when we showed up, *it was going to be worth his while*. That is, I had something he valued every time he saw me in these early days. Sometimes, we clunky, oafish humans believe that our presence is inherently valuable. The chair method for taming and training parrots relies on this underlying premise: *See? I'm not so bad*. But what we don't understand is that maybe we are! Without adding bonuses, we are really big, and there is a chance our new parrot came to us with experiences that weren't always pleasurable around humans. So you could really be that bad.

### If Your Parrot Won't Take Food From Your Hand

When I first brought yellow bibbed lory Beans home, he had lived in an aviary for a year and was wild as the hills. Instead of putting him smack in the middle of all of the activity in the living room, I put him in a quiet extra room I had. While he wouldn't take food from my hands, he wouldn't ping pong around his cage if I

entered slowly. I did have to feed him a few times a day, after all. Lories are messy and require regular diet changes.

I had arranged a treat bowl so that it was closest to the door that I entered from so that I could enter slowly and low so as not to spook him. I placed some mango in the treat bowl and he would immediately come down and eat. I gradually began approximating my hand closer to the treat bowl as long as he stayed calm and eating. It always had mango in it so that my hand was valuable.

After three training sessions, I had my fingertips at the cage bars, and Beans, while he was eating mango from the treat bowl, reached up and nibbled from my hand. From that session on, he only ate treats from hand.

This method we use with a lot of birds, especially sensitive budgerigars who just don't know how to eat from the hand yet.

### If Your Parrot Won't Let You Near Without Getting Nervous

I love telling this story about a parrotlet training consultation that I got to do with my whole family watching. A friend of my mother's had three parrotlets that she desperately wanted to have a relationship with, and they were terrified of her. They would ricochet around nervously every time she even looked at them, much less changed their papers, their food and water. So when I visited my family one spring, we all schlepped over to her house to watch my session. Because they were so nervous getting anywhere close to the cage, there was no way to even offer food as a treat, much less see if they would eat in front of us. I began a session with negative reinforcement, known as the C.A.T. procedure though I didn't know it at the time!

I started at a distance away from the cage where the birds were calm and I moved forward slowly. When the birds showed the first sign of alert, I stopped. When they calmed back down I stepped away from them, increasing the distance between them and me. The space was the reinforcer for their calm behavior. In just a few minutes I was already at their cage, where they were calm as could be. We proceeded with the rest of the training program using their favorite treat, millet.

After the session on our way home, my brother was incredulous. How did you do that, he asked. And then, and I'll never forget this: "Was that magic?"

Negative reinforcement is something that we have railed on for many years as the ugly stepchild of positive reinforcement. Something we did before we knew better. In fact, when applied under certain circumstances, it can be used with incredible results.

For members of the Avian Behavior Lab, we will post a worksheet and video series of the C.A.T. procedure in the Resources section.

For those of us who are aching to connect with our parrots in a real way, the gauntlet of well-meaning advice can do us dirty if we don't have the resources and foundation to assess the basis for the information we receive. Some suggestions might work well on certain individuals for reasons we don't know, but aren't sound pieces of advice that offer lasting, trust-building methods for effective communication. The best we can do is to keep learning for the sake of the happiness of our feathered and human flock.

C.A.T. stands for Constructional Aversion Treatment and combines negative reinforcement with positive reinforcement for amazing results. Stay tuned for more information soon.

Want more meaty parrot behavior articles, training videos and podcasts straight to your inbox? Hurry up and get on the Avian Behavior Email List at <https://avian-behavior.org/email-list>

Did you know you can try out an Annual Membership, either Basic or Premium for just \$3 for ten days? Get access to our community forum, ALL the courses, and our private Facebook groups. There are HUNDREDS of posts from biting and screaming to enrichment inspo.

Coupon code is TEN for any annual membership at <https://avianbehaviorlab.com/plans-pricing/>