

Squawk 'n Talk

July 2017

**GATEWAY PARROT CLUB
TOY MAKING PARTY!**

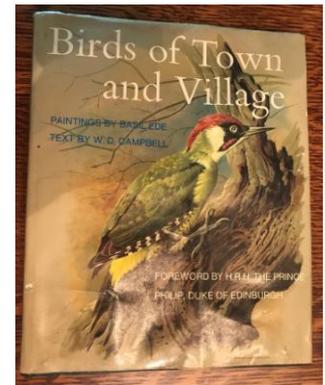
**SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2017
VARIETTES BIRD STORE, VALLEY
PARK, MO
2:00 P.M.**

**THE BIRD TOYS WE MAKE WILL BE USED FOR OUR
RAFFLE TABLES AT THE UPCOMING GPC ALL-
AMERICAN HOOBILL BIRD FAIR ON AUGUST 26TH.
WE WILL HAVE TOY KITS THAT WILL NEED TO BE
ASSEMBLED FOR SMALL, MEDIUM, AND LARGE
BIRDS. WE APPRECIATE YOU COMING TO HELP
WITH THIS PROJECT. SEE YOU ON THE 16TH!**



Fair Update (Dick Grommet):

When you attend the fair on August 26, be sure to check out the raffle and silent auction tables. Below are pictures of some of the things that have been donated. The cage picture is one of three cages that have been donated and they are all in good condition. There is also a large play stand. There will be lots of things for your birds (toys, food, toy parts, etc.) and many items that are non-bird related.



Stop by the concession stand for lunch or snack. Christine and Dave Kincade are planning to serve hot dogs, chili dogs, brats, nachos with cheese, popcorn, chips, soda, and water for a reasonable price.

We can't forget the vendors and speakers! They are what make our fair a success. We appreciate all who participate. Speakers this year will be Dr. Kersting (Bird Medicine and Surgery), Jeff Meshach (World Bird Sanctuary), and Lisa Rose (Bird Behaviorist and owner of Parrot's Treasure). This year we are introducing "Meet the Parrots", a place to go to learn about different species.

Individuals may not bring their personal birds into the fair unless they are participating in a special exhibit.

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 2:00 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 Renee Davis, 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. Thank you for joining and helping support the parrot community in St. Louis.

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.

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

Chef Christine will be preparing stromboli sandwiches, apple and cabbage slaw, pasta salad, bean salad, and cream pies for dessert. Please feel free to bring food for our buffet (appetizers, salads, side dishes, desserts, etc.) It doesn't have to be home made.

Membership Report (Renee Davis):

Welcome new members:

Sharon Wilkins
Laura and Ryan Vinyard

GPC June Meeting Attendees:

Georgia Fletcher
Dick Grommet
David Kincade

Steve Johnson
Aubrey Kiener
Nancy Marron

Cathy Timma
Renee Davis
 Bryan Gilchrist
Carole Grommet
Heidi Hellmuth
Christine Kincade
Rick Ruderer
Tracy Schwarztrauber
Barbara Agathen
Paul Agathen
Jim Berk
Cindy Burquin
Dixie Danzeisen
Ginny Feikert
Dan Fogarty
Brian Goetz
Jenni Goetz
Esther Hermann

Edwin Massie
Julie Morgan
 Sandy Newcomb
Katie O'Neal
Lisa Rose
Christy Sigwerth
Perry Sigwerth
Casey Uhlmeyer
Terri Uhlmeyer
Gerry Van Der Heide
Deborah Van Der Heide
Laura Vinyard
Ryan Vinyard
Sandy Warren
Sharon Wilkins
Shannon Anderson
Daniel Cone
Linda Hayes



Association of
Avian Veterinarians
Advancing & Promoting Avian Medicine and Stewardship

May 2017 AAV Bird Club News Release

Importance of Parrot Socialization

By: Kenneth R. Welle, DVM, Dipl ABVP (Avian), University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine, Urbana, IL Excerpted from "Extreme Enrichment for the Modern Macaw," ExoticsCon 2016 Conference Proceedings, AAV Session #137

Parrots are obligately social animals.^{1,2} While it is common to remark about birds being “spoiled” because they demand constant attention, it is unnatural for most parrots to be alone. The only time most parrots are ever alone in the wild is when they are incubating eggs. At other times, they would be with their parents, offspring, clutch mates, juvenile flock, adult flock, or their mate. Being alone is completely unnatural.

It is not just “loneliness” that results from this isolation. Flocking is primarily a protective mechanism to reduce the pressures of predation. Being within a group allows for multiple sentinels looking for signs of danger. A group of birds can “mob” a predator and chase it away. Even thinking less altruistically, a bird in a group of 10 birds has a 10% chance of being the target of a predator while an individual bird has 100% chance. Just as most people feel more vulnerable when alone, parrots will also feel stressed and vulnerable when kept alone.

Despite their importance, social skills must be learned. Early socialization starts with parental care. Even before hatching, the parent birds start interacting with a chick. Like mammals, the parents will stimulate defecation and carry the waste out of the nest initially. Parental care is fairly constant and involves feeding, preening, vocalization, and other interactions. This is not readily replicated in incubator hatched and hand raised chicks. Most species will also have clutch mates in the nest with them. This also helps them learn social skills. Once they fledge, there still is a great deal of parental care and teaching. Many parrots also have a crèche system, a flock of juvenile birds that move about together and learn about the environment, feeding, predators, and other important life skills. One of these skills is how to interact with other birds without conflict.

Hand raised birds have somewhat displaced imprinting. While filial imprinting on humans may have some advantages, sexual imprinting on humans has severe behavioral effects. Birds that are sexually imprinted on humans often pair bond with humans and will be aggressive to others, sometimes be aggressive to their perceived mate, or will defend a nest territory. Other birds may become frustrated and engage in self-damaging behaviors such as feather chewing or plucking. In addition, birds that are completely imprinted on humans may exhibit poor socialization with other birds. Many bird owners have multiple birds and one with poor social skills may either attack or be attacked by other birds.

Some studies have shown that parent raised birds that are handled by people while developing have pet qualities exceeding those of hand reared birds.^{3,4} This can be slightly challenging to accomplish, but should be considered. Minimally, having birds raised with clutch mates or other babies will at least allow them to imprint on both humans and birds.

Assuming that a bird has well-developed social skills, the next concern is providing them with social opportunities. While bird owners like to believe they are providing this for their pets, in most cases, the social contact they provide is inadequate. Socializing a parrot is more than a full time job. The ideal solution is that birds be kept in a more normal social grouping. Companion birds can provide 24-hour socialization for each other. As discussed, they must be compatible and they must

have some social skills with other birds. They also should be size and temperament matched. Although it can occasionally work, large birds with small birds can be a dangerous situation. Larger birds can easily tear the beak or a toe off of a smaller one. Likewise, a loud bird may be stressful for a nervous or quiet bird. Introductions are easiest with very young birds, and most birds that grow up together

remain compatible provided that they don't conflict over a mate or resources. If breeding is not desired, the birds should be the same sex.⁵

The obvious benefit of having birds in pairs or groups is that it corrects for some of the limitations of human companionship. Companion birds can be together all of the time, reducing the complete reliance on the owner for companionship and protection. Although this may seem like a negative to some, severe behavioral problems such as nuisance vocalization, stereotypies, or feather damaging behavior may occur when birds rely too much on the owners' presence and attention.

Although there are exceptions, usually, breeding will have some negative effects on the pet characteristics of a parrot during the breeding season. Most breeding pairs will defend the nest territory from all others. This may result in aggressive behavior. If breeding is desired, the pair should be allowed to defend their territory. They should be conditioned to allow nest cavity inspection on a daily basis and should be trained to allow normal care procedures, but should otherwise be left alone.

In most cases, breeding and sexual behaviors are not desired. However many owners inadvertently encourage them constantly. For most wild birds, breeding occurs during a defined, short season. This may be signaled by changing photoperiod, rainy season, availability of certain food items, or simply food surplus. The presence of a mate is also a key stimulus. Pet birds typically are overfed on high calorie diets. This is one stimulus. Many are offered nest boxes, "snuggle" tube perches, or are allowed access to cabinets or other hollow structures that the bird may perceive as a potential nest site. Many owners interact with their bird in ways that are exclusively reserved for the pair bond in parrots. Reproductive instinct is strong in most species, and adding in these potent stimuli is enough to get the process started.

In order to discourage reproductive behaviors, several strategies can be employed. Caloric intake should be carefully controlled. This is especially effective for suppressing egg laying, since most hens will increase food consumption in preparation for egg laying. Foraging can give the bird the impression that food is limited, even if higher amounts of food are present. Physical contact should be somewhat restricted. Alternative activities between bird and the owner should be encouraged. Training, playing, and other active games should replace much of the "cuddle" time. The petting that is done should be brief, used to reinforce good behaviors, and limited to

non-sexual locations of the body. For those species that respond to photoperiod, this should also be regulated. A relatively short and consistent day length is desired.

References

1. Aydinonat D, Penn DJ, Smith S, et al. Social isolation shortens telomeres in African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus erithacus*). *PLoS One*. 2014;9:e93839.
2. Seibert LM. Social behavior of psittacine birds. In: Luescher AU, ed. *Manual of Parrot Behavior*. Ames, IA: Blackwell Publishing Professional;2008;43-48.
3. Aengus WL, Millam JR. Taming parent-reared orange-winged Amazon parrots by neonatal handling. *Zoo Biol*. 1999;18:177-187.
4. Schmid R, Doherr MG, Steiger A. The influence of the breeding method on the behaviour of adult African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*). *Appl Anim Behav Sci*. 2006;98:293-307.
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