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A Vacation for Nicky (above-Nicky “pouting”) Nicky needs a temporary retreat. Can you help? Please see page 6.

Feathered Friends

The Newsletter for Parrot Lovers

I Pick You!

-By Gena Everhart

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Isn't it nice to be “chosen” by someone? Doesn't it make you feel great for someone to say “You're my very favorite person in the whole world!”? Don't we all wish for unconditional love?

If you answered with a resounding yes to all of these questions, then you know what it feels like to be chosen by a companion parrot as The One and Only. I have heard other parrot owners tell me that they didn't choose their bird – their bird chose them. Sometimes, after only one visit to a pet store or breeder where the bird made it unmistakably clear to their potential owners – to make room for a birdcage and all the other paraphernalia because they were going home with them! Some of these birds have literally reached through the cage bars to grab a foot or beak full of clothing or hair to get our attention!! Some act like little monkeys, swinging crazily around and acting goofy, some talk to us, some even protect us. The list of ways to drive the point home that “Hey You! You're THE ONE”, goes on and on.

I have had two such occurrences. The first time, with a black headed caique that clearly enjoyed my company (the feeling was mutual) and the second time, with a yellow naped amazon that has decided that I am definitely the girl for him (also mutual). The first was sold to another owner and the second will shortly become a member of my “flock”.

When you are subjected to the pressure of this affectionate creature's decision to become yours, it is both sweet and sour. You must make a decision whether or not to make this bird a part of your family. There are all types of considera-

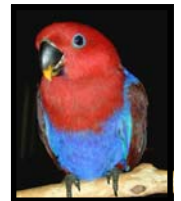
tions. Is there room for them? Does your lifestyle allow a bird in the family? If you have other birds – can you care for another? Etc., etc, etc. Yet, you relish the strong bond you have with this being and enjoy it immensely.

Ultimately, you must make a decision. Sometimes, the decision is made for you as in my case with the caique. I'm sure he went to an excellent home and is well cared for – yet I still think about him often. Sometimes, you simply come to the conclusion that it

would not be right for the bird to come home with you because you know you can't care for them properly. This type of decision is sad for you, however, I applaud your ability to make the right decision for the bird and for you as well.

Happily, sometimes the decision to buy the bird is made and the story “begins” for the two of you rather than ends at the pet store or breeder. When this is the case, these are usually the special relationships that form between owner and bird where they fit the description of soul mates and you both bask in the bliss of each other for many years to come.

I know they many of you have this type of relationship with their companion parrots. Aren't you glad he/she picked you?



Birds make it very clear when they “pick you” as their prospective owners. They leave no doubts about their intentions.

Special points of interest:

- Don't forget to look for past issues of this newsletter on the Birdie Boutique website.
- The next Feathered Friends group meeting for companion parrot lovers hosted by The Birdie Boutique, will be held in October. An announcement of the date and time will be placed in the shop. Please look for it and join us for lots of fun!
- See the back page for valuable new coupons.

Parrot Questions and Answers



Dr. Greg Burkett Diplomate ABVP Avian can be contacted with your questions at ask-thevet@birdieboutique.com

One of our readers that owns canaries advised us of her canary getting it's neck caught in a "V" joint in a branch perch. The bird nearly exhausted itself trying to get free.

Q: Are there any specific perch types that should be avoided for use in my bird's cage?

A: Yes. Different sized birds (and different species) have specific needs for perch types. You should always avoid any wood perches that may have been treated with pesticides such as branches from trees in your yard. If you do use perches from trees that have not been treated with chemicals, be certain to scrub them first prior to placement in the cage. Also, beware of branches that have a "V" type joint as some birds can get their heads caught in these. If your perches have "V" or "Y" type joints, be sure they are roomy enough at the joint that the bird can move around on these freely. One of our readers that owns canaries advised us of her canary getting it's neck caught in such a joint. The bird nearly exhausted itself trying to get free. Rope perches are always good too. These are soft on the feet but easy to grip. Avoid slippery perches for awkward babies and birds that have well trimmed claws. Most importantly, try a perch type and observe your bird to find out if they can grip it well and enjoy using it.

Q: Yesterday, I arrived home to find that my african grey had not only broken a blood feather but had also lost about 5-6 wing feathers (not the outer flight feathers but the ones that are right after those on the wings). All except one looked normal at the shaft area and ready to come out and they were clearly all the same type feathers, all about the same size. I clean the cages every day so I know she lost these all in the same day. Isn't that a little weird to lose all of them in the same day? Is it more likely that she perhaps fell or was startled and lost them that way including the blood feather? Of course, my first concern was blood loss when I discovered the blood feather but it seemed to be minimal. I found some blood spots on the cage bars but that was about it. I towed her and examined her wings carefully. I think I found where she broke the feather but since it looked like it was OK, I left the shaft. Did I do the right thing?

A: The feathers you describe are called the secondary flight feathers. I hear of this happening occasionally; there is no species predilection. A

-By Dr. Greg Burkett Diplomate ABVP Avian-

fall or being startled is most likely the most common cause. There usually is no follicle damage especially if the lost feathers were near the molting stage. If not, then follicle damage could occur. If something frightens the bird, physiological stress can cause feathers to be released more easily. It is theorized to be an escape mechanism. It sounds like there was minimal blood loss. Interestingly, due to the small volume of blood, birds have physiological mechanisms to withstand relatively large volumes of blood loss. It is very interesting science. From my experience it is best to leave a blood feather and clot the broken tip with a styptic powder (Canopy Scientific makes the best.) and apply pressure. Prevent excessive stress on the bird to keep blood pressure to a minimum. If clotting does not occur, the shaft of the feather may have to be pulled or you may need to see an avian veterinarian.

ANNOUNCING:
The opening of Dr. Greg Burkett's Pet Bird Veterinary Clinic

**Located at The Birdie Boutique
3039 University Drive
Durham, NC 27707**

**Please call:
919-490-3001 for appointments**



Specialty practice offering Board Certified expertise in Avian Health Maintenance, Medicine and Surgery, Well Bird Exams and Check ups, Vaccinations, Grooming, Behavior Counseling, DNA sexing, and more.

**Dr. Greg Burkett Diplomate
ABVP Avian**



A Healthy Bird is

a Happy Bird!

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow—When It's Time to Say Goodbye

-by Gena Everhart



It is not unusual to see classified ads for companion parrots due to divorce, injury, relocation or death or illness of their owners.

Consider including your parrot in your legal will to designate a caretaker after you're gone.

It's funny the way things happen that touch our lives and heighten our awareness. Recently, since I'm known in my workplace as the "bird lady", I was asked if I wanted to add any companion parrots to my growing collection of pets. It seems that a person that had quite a collection of parrots due to acquiring them as pets by rescue was now having to find new homes for them due to a serious injury. She had been involved in a serious automobile accident and had broken her back. The injury was to require surgery and further recuperation time. Though she very much hated having to part with her beloved parrots, she has had to say some tough goodbyes to them as she managed to find loving owners that were willing to take them in. She and her husband were simply unable to continue to manage the birds successfully after her injury.

It is not unusual to see classified advertisements for companion parrots at reduced prices or even free to a good home due to such reasons as divorce, injury, aged owners, relocation, death or illness. These are all unfortunate occurrences and, though we hope we will never have to face these circumstances, happen all too often. Even something as simple as having to devote time to caring for an elderly relative can interrupt the time required by our birds in order that they can remain happy and healthy. Before they purchase a companion parrot, well informed owners should know that parrots require a certain amount of interaction each day and need to be with their human "flock". They are unlike cats and dogs as pets. That is why we all should make the effort to inform potential owners as much as possible about the requirements of these highly intelligent pets so that they can remain well adjusted, healthy pets for many years.

As responsible bird owners, we should all think about what will happen to our long-lived companions should we encounter unfortunate circumstances that will no longer permit us to care for our birds properly.

Here are some steps that you can take:

-Think about a member of your family or a friend that you think would be a likely candidate for bird ownership. Approach that person and tell them that you are trying to assure proper care for your birds when you can no longer care for them and ask if they are interested in taking on bird ownership. Be honest about the responsibilities of parrot owners. Most often, this will be someone that has shown a liking for the bird or birds already and for whom your birds have likewise shown endearment. Try to get a commitment from them to take your bird if you should die or become unable to care for them.

-Set aside a small savings account and designate it as a "care fund" for your bird. This should help to ease any financial burden to a prospective family member/ caretaker if they will agree to take on responsibility for the bird.

-Include your bird in your legal will after discussing prospective responsibility with a potential owner.

-Discuss your concerns for continued care for your bird with your spouse or closest family member. Tell them exactly what to do or who to contact if they are unwilling or unable to care for the bird(s) after you are gone.

-If you must part with your birds due to reasons that may not be permanent, consider other temporary measures that may suffice until your situation changes. For example: if you cannot care for your bird because you are caring for an ill relative, perhaps you should consider paying someone, perhaps a young adult, a small sum temporary measures that may suffice until your situation changes. For example: if you cannot care for your bird because you are caring for an ill relative, perhaps you

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Goodies like cakes and candies as well as chips and salty snack foods should not be given to your bird habitually. Think of it this way—as humans, we know that salt, fats and sugars are bad for us. Birds are much smaller than humans—these things are even more harmful to them.

This issue's low cost alternative feature article: Cost Cutting Measures for Feeding Your Birds

-by Gena Everhart

By their very nature, parrots are wasteful with food. In the wild, this has a purpose. They drop seeds and the seeds then grow more food – with more seeds. However, in the caged bird environments of our homes, dropped seeds and pellets do little to grow a new forest from carpeting! How can we cut the waste? Try these cost cutting ideas.

-Scheduled feedings. Feed at specific times of the day when you know your bird is hungry (like in the morning and evening) then remove the food from the cage. This not only cuts down on wasted food, it encourages your bird to spend his hours between feedings exploring toys and climbing about. In certain species that tend to become sedentary, it helps to prevent “perch potato” birds.

-Use covered type feeding dishes. This helps to prevent spillage of food. It also protects food from droppings and debris. Some birds do not like to place their heads into covered dishes. It makes them feel vulnerable to predators because their view is obstructed. If your bird dislikes covered feeders and you must use open feeding bowls, proper dish placement is important. Don't place these dishes right underneath a perch where your bird likes to sit. This is a recipe for disaster as the bird's dropping will surely end up in the food and water and unhealthy bacteria will grow.

-Don't overfill feeding dishes. Put only enough in the dish for this feeding (whether a free feeding day or a scheduled feeding). This helps to assure that the food your bird eats is fresh food and he eats all the way to the bottom of the feeding dish instead of eating the top layer only. When they eat only the top layer of food – you end up throwing out the rest at the bottom.

-Feed small portions of fruits and vegetables daily and remove from cage after just a few hours. Be certain to cut these into bite sizes, otherwise your bird will take a bite from a large piece then allow the rest to drop to the bottom of the cage or onto the floor. Use dinnertime as an opportunity to prepare and feed small portions of cut veggies and fruits. Leave only for a few hours then remove as you don't want to allow the food to spoil. Decaying fruits will also attract pests such as fruitflies and gnats.

-If time is an issue – chop a veggie mix yourself and freeze it. Thaw it by allowing the veggies to sit in

some warm water for a few minutes, then drain and feed. Just make sure the veggies have reached room temp before feeding. Vegetables that freeze well are: asparagus, broccoli, carrot, potato, cooked dried beans and corn. There are many others. Just experiment by freezing small portions at a time. You can buy frozen mixed vegetables at your grocer's but it's cheaper to cut a little extra when you're cooking and freeze the portions. Small portions will also cut down on freezer burn. By the way, vegetables give much more vitamin power than fruits.

-Occasionally, I like to give my birds dry, unsweetened cereals that are low in salt content. I buy the store brands or sale boxes of Cheerios, Kix, Shredded Wheat and Grape Nuts. The birds don't know you paid less.

-For the times when you MUST empty out uneaten food from the seed and pellet bowls, don't forget the wild birds! Keep a tin can near the cage that you can simply empty dry foods into and periodically fill your bird feeders or scatter the food outside. You'll have the healthiest birds on the block!



Covered crocks such as these can really cut down on the mess.....AND the waste!



Photo by: Jason Everhart 2002

Ally loves her Cheerios! She doesn't mind if I buy them on sale.

Occasionally, I like to give my birds dry, unsweetened cereals that are low in salt content. Store brands or sale boxes are fine. The birds don't know you paid less!

The Beauty of the African Grey

-by Gena Everhart



To the uninitiated, the grey parrot must look like about the ugliest bird in the hookbill family. Something akin to a vulture – with their bare face skin and gray feathers. The beauty of the grey is not readily apparent until you begin to look at the more subtle features of the bird. The light shading on the ends of the contour feathers giving each feather outline a highlighted appearance. (Try this exercise to appreciate the beauty of those feathers – try to draw just one feather, shading and highlighting with your pencil to capture all of the features you see.) The light gray feathers of the bird’s underside that have a contrasting dark center shaft. The wonderful light color of the iris sharply contrasted by the expressive pupil and dark eyeliner. The prominent chest muscles clearly separated in the center at the breastbone. And let us not forget those playfully colored tail feathers – bright red for Congos and usually a maroon color for Timnehs. These tail feathers are almost like an

amusing afterthought when they shake them to and fro. All of these features are appreciated for their beauty. But of them, I believe the most telling feature of a grey’s beauty is the expressive eyes. Look closely at the slightly elliptical shape and the way the upper lid dips toward the back of the eye. Even the lines in the skin of the eyelids are expressive. It is also the eyes of the grey parrot that hint at their intelligence. There is just something about the look in those eyes that says “I am a superior species. I can talk. I can fly. I can climb. I can figure out complicated puzzles and so much more. So there – top that!” I have a friend who swears that she cannot talk ‘baby talk’ to her grey. She says she feels perfectly comfortable using it with all of her other birds but she says that when she looks into the intelligent eyes of her grey, she senses way too much ancient wisdom to use it with him.

Those that live with a grey know their intellect. Even their play meth-

ods are calculated. My grey can take a small plastic toy ball with a bell inside, hold it in one foot and open the bell inside of the ball with her beak through a tiny opening in the casing. She understands that she must first access the bell at the bottom of the ball since gravity dictates that it will be at that location. Then, once she has pinned the bell to the ball casing, she flips the whole thing right side up and completes the job of spreading the bell casing apart. (I have to be certain I only use bells that do not have anything inside so that she won’t swallow anything.) Only she knows why this is challenging and fun. It’s truly an amazing thing to observe. On top of that, the entire time she performs this task, she is taking in everything going on in the room around her. Other grey owners have shared even more complicated tasks that their greys perform all the time.

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I believe the most telling feature of a grey’s beauty is the expressive eyes.

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

should consider paying someone, perhaps a young adult, a small sum to come and interact with the bird and take care of cage cleaning and feeding chores for awhile. This would certainly be a better solution for the bird and it would still allow you the comfort your pet brings just by being near. Also, you are teaching a young person responsible pet ownership and fostering a potential future bird owner.

-Stay in touch with the breeder or pet store where you purchased your bird and with your avian veterinarian. Talk with them about your desire for the bird to remain in a good home. Alert them if you really feel you must place the bird with a new owner. They may know just the person that would fit the bill.

-Consider relocation of the bird to a new owner as a last option if all other solutions should fail. If you must relocate the bird, consider allowing the potential owner to come and have contact with the bird in the current environment for a short time before the transfer to the new home if possible.

When it comes time to say goodbye to your beloved parrot, it will be sad for both of you. However, placing the bird with caring owners that will provide a good quality of life for him is in the bird’s best interest and is one of the most important aspects of being a responsible bird owner.



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VISIT US ON THE WEB
WWW.BIRDIEBOUTIQUE.COM



A rare black palm cockatoo.—Jasper

The Beauty of a Grey (continued)

(Continued from page 5)

Grey owners do not choose their bird for bright plumage. They choose them for their personality. They seek the interaction, affection, play and intelligence that we all know greys will readily provide. They are known for their talking ability. It doesn't take long for owners to realize that they must be very careful about watching uncensored cable TV with the bird in the entertainment room! With many greys, you may get only one chance to hear them say something profound. They will decide that right now is the time to say something they have never vocalized before....after which they may never say it again. On the other hand, they will repeat some things over and over and over, driving their humans crazy. My own grey stood up, stretched out her graceful neck and said "Four Score!" followed by an evil laugh one day while we were having our evening meal. She has never repeated the phrase. On the other hand, she loves her name and says "Hey Pepper" in about 20 different tones and voices over and over and over again.

If you are considering a grey parrot, consider this: look beyond the gray appearance of the bird to see the beauty. Be aware that you cannot fully appreciate the beauty of the bird until you have lived with them. Know that this is a bird to be kept by someone willing to devote the time to keeping them interested in their surroundings. They are not a species that is happy to sit in their cage. Consider that you are dealing with a parrot that is perfectly capable of outsmarting you. Take into account that these hookbills are sensitive to new things and people and are easily frightened if enough time is not allowed for them to adjust.

I promise you this, with a grey at your side, you will have a relationship very likely to rival anything you've experienced in the past. You will experience one wild ride together and you will see beauty in the grey that you never realized they had.

The Birdie Boutique, Inc. is owned and operated by Board Certified Avian Veterinarian Dr. Greg Burkett, and Missy Ripple. Dr. Burkett is also a practicing avian veterinarian at The Birdie Boutique. He will answer avian veterinary questions at his email available at ask-thevet@birdieboutique.com.

*The Birdie Boutique, Inc. will host it's next parrot enthusiast group meeting **in late October from 7:15 to 8:30 pm** at The Birdie Boutique. An announcement of the date and time will be posted at The Birdie Boutique. Please look for it and come join the fun! We will share our parrot experiences and learn more about caring for our birds. If you are thinking of acquiring a bird for the first time, this is also a perfect opportunity to learn about birds from those that live with and care for them .*



Can you help Nicky?

Nicky is a loving, beautiful 11 year old male blue front amazon that needs a temporary home for a period of about 2 months. Nicky lives with his owner in Chapel Hill, NC. His owner must be away from home for 2 months to receive treatment and she is very attached to Nicky. She wants to try to place him in good hands while she undergoes treatment then Nicky will return to his home with her. He is well socialized, hand tame, is accustomed to going lots of places with his owner and loves to sing, whistle and talk. His veterinary care is up to date and he is a very healthy boy. Nicky's owner just needs for Nicky to have a little "retreat" while she undergoes her treatment. If you can help Nicky and his owner, please contact Gena Everhart at 919-563-0501 or Dr. Greg Burkett at 919-490-3001 as soon as possible. Thank you.

Volume 3 Specials



Clip and bring in this coupon to receive \$20 off a complete annual exam and work up for your bird at Dr. Burkett's newly opened avian veterinary specialty practice. For appointments call 919-490-3001.



Clip and bring in this coupon to receive a 20% discount on any cage set up.

Expires November 30, 2003