

APRIL 2013

Volume 1 Issue 6

WINGED THINGS

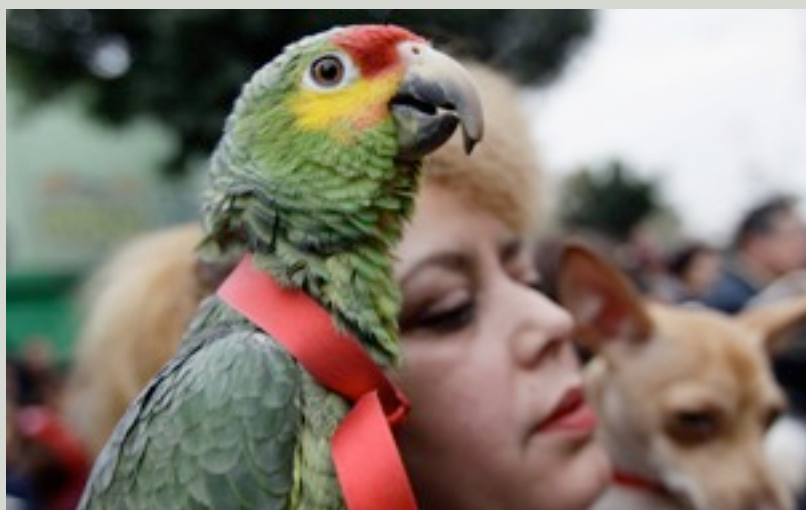
For New Mexico - and Everywhere Else!

About Our
Companion Birds

with
Gleanings from all
sources about birds
indoors and out and
other winged things

It is important that you
understand the RULES-
There are only TWO:

1. If you like this, pass it on.
2. If you want to get it again, and this is your first issue-email me with "subscribe" in the subject line (IF YOU'VE ALREADY DONE THIS, NO NEED TO DO IT AGAIN)



Ilan Greenburg on the Avian-Human
Bond

Plus

EB Cravens

Susanne Cochran

Sid Price

Dorothy Schwarz

Laney Rickman

Barbara Heidenreich

Frank Indiviglio



Central New Mexico's Favorite
The Western Burrowing Owl
Did you know how little they were?

See Page 3 for Owl Hoots!

Articles to Make You Think

In This Issue

1 Owl Hoots - News For New Mexico	3
2 From MY Messy Desk.....	4
3 Corrections. and Notices.....	5
4 World Parrot Trust: Grey Parrots Go Home.....	6
4 Ilan Greenburg: Not Just a Pretty Boy; the Avian-Human Bond.....	8
5 EB Cravens:.Some Birds In Our Care Do Not Prosper.....	17
8 Susanne Cochran: ESA Urgent Information.....	19
9 Sid Price on Behavior: Positive Good! Negative Bad.....	23
10 Frank Indiviglio: Good News For African Grey Parrots.....	25
11 Karen Wingrove and Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Bird Biology	27
12 Dorothy Schwarz,: Steve Hartman's Circus Diet.....	30
13 Laney Rickman: Los Macheteros - Saving the Blues-Faux Feathers....	34
14 Barbara Heidenreich: Use Foraging for Good Behavior.....	36
15 Birds, Bees, and more threatened by Pesticide Use: ABC.....	38
16 Parrot Lovers' Cruise.....	40
17 Top Off Your Crop! Interesting Things to See.....	42

Winged Things is Now Archived!

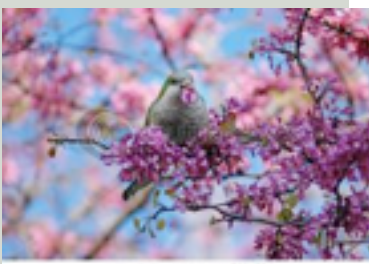
To find any issue of Winged Things, go to
avalonaviary.com/wingedthings/yrmonwingedthings.pdf

So, the first issue (November 2012) is found at
avalonaviary.com/wingedthings/12novwingedthings.pdf

You might also visit avalonaviary.com and see Susanne's site, too!

THANK YOU, SUSANNE COCHRAN !

My fruit trees are
blooming. Pray for no
wind





Owl Hoots: Information for New Mexico



Guess who ELSE is Coming to Dinner!

Sid Price has RSVP'd, along with Pete Shannon and Darlene Parker

Wednesday, April 24

Meet between 6:30 and 7:00 pm at

THE RANGE in Bernalillo

We'll talk, have supper (dutch), and Pete Shannon will give an informal presentation on Parrots and the Albuquerque Zoo's conservation efforts, Sid Price will talk briefly about the Ethics of Bird Training and the latest from the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators, and Darlene Parker of Santa Fe's Feathered Friends will be on hand to talk about baby Parrots.

It's an opportunity to learn more about the resources that New Mexico has.

Come for good food and good company

The New Mexico Bird Club meets the Second Tuesday of the Month. See nmbirdclub.org for information

2013 Spring Pet Bird Mart

April 20-21, 2013

Sat: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Sun: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Ramada Inn

10300 Hotel Avenue NE

Interstate 40 at exit 165

Albuquerque

\$4/Adults \$3/Seniors Children free

High Desert Bird Club Meets the First Wednesday of the month. See highdesertbirdclub.org for information on location and programs.



Sunday, April 28

A Day In Paradise

Community Outreach at

Paradise Hills Community Center Park

HDHC will have an information booth

From My Messy Desk – Karen, a bird owner

This month has just come in like the proverbial lion. I hate the darned New Mexico wind, and my fruit trees have had all of their (too early) blossoms stripped off and blown into west Texas. No fruit this year. Damn.

There's a storm brewing on the legislative front and I hope that all of you take the time to read the information that Susanne Cochran has compiled on the proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act. If these changes go through, none of the endangered (in their home range) large macaws will be able to be transferred across state lines inside the US without hard-to-obtain federal permits. It really makes no sense until you understand that the impetus for a lot of this legislation comes from 'animal rights' groups that wish to eliminate all breeding of psittacines inside the US.

But it also means that no rescues that accept money for placement of their parrots can transfer these birds to new homes across state lines. That effectively stops The Gabriel Foundation from shipping a large macaw to a new home in Pennsylvania or the Macaw and Cockatoo Rescue of New Mexico from placing a macaw in a new home in Colorado.

And if you think about it, it means the effective extinction of these birds inside of the US. Very quickly, the demand will be met in the state where the breeder resides. No demand, and nest boxes will come down and breeders will retire their stock. These birds are long lived, but eventually there will be no more.

This is the start of a slippery slope. The genetic heritage of these birds is extremely important now and will be more important in the future as their wild brothers' and sisters' numbers dwindle. Avian medical science is just now beginning to learn about semen collection, and artificial insemination – but if the bearers of this diverse genetic material are gone.... then what?

And next – What Cites List birds are next on the ESA List? What birds will good breeders be forced to stop breeding? There are birds endangered everywhere – all genera are affected. Will you be able to obtain a baby grey? A conure? An eclectus hen? How about the poicephalus? What bird will be next?

IF you care, and you should – even if you don't breed – even if you don't want a big macaw – You may want a bird someday that you can't buy because, gee whiz, it's on the Endangered Species Act list and nobody can ship it to you because there's no breeder in the state where you live...

Read Susanne's document.

Write to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Write to the Secretary of the Interior

Write to your congresspeople.

DO SOMETHING

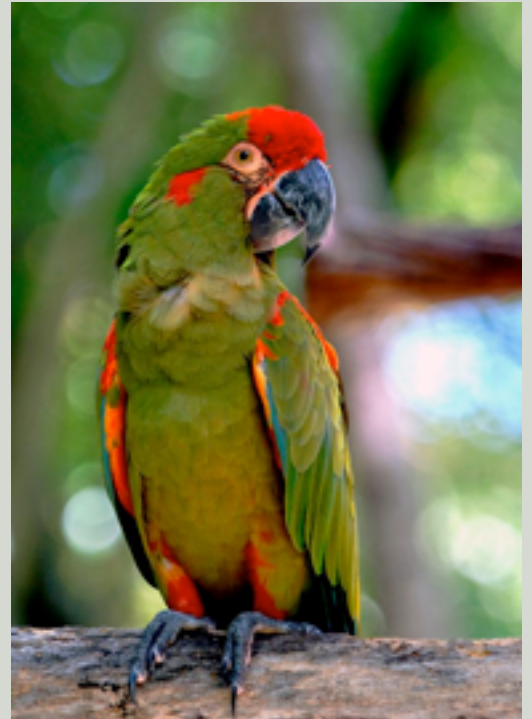


ERRATA - CORRECTIONS - NOTICES

See this bird over here on the right? Last month I said it was a thick-billed parrot. I took the picture from a site that said all of the pictures there were of thick billed parrots, but I was informed that I had chosen the only picture that wasn't a thick-billed parrot!! Oh,

well. So, here's a real thick-billed parrot to the left.

Message in this: Trust nothing...



The **Thick-billed Parrot**, *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha* is an [endangered](#), medium-sized, up to 38 cm long, bright green [parrot](#) with a large black bill and a red forecrown, shoulder and thighs. It is found in [Mexico](#), and its former range extended marginally into the [United States](#).

The links are to Wikipedia articles - pick up some knowledge by browsing the sites.

OK - So here's the question of the month. **WHAT IS THE BIRD AT THE TOP?** This should be easy....

Let me know. If you're right, I'll send you a photo (8x10) of a parrot of your choice.

Come on, guys - TRY! Only two people tried last month, and the winner was Dr. Donald Brightsmith of the Schubot Center who correctly identified the mystery birds as: (top) mature and immature **Harpy Eagles** and (bottom) the **Ornate Hawk Eagle** - One VERY large bird, and one not so large....

Dr. Brightsmith chose pictures of the birds he works with : Scarlet Macaw, Green-winged, Blue and Gold, blue-headed pionus, Blue headed macaw, white bellied Caique and Orange Cheeked Parrot. I also found a very cool card of a man in a business suit with a feather for a head.... Serendipitously silly.

Grey Parrots Go Home

Confiscated parrots return to Uganda in first-of-its-kind project

Ngamba Island, UGANDA. March 10, 2013 –

Thirty-two African Grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) confiscated in Bulgaria in 2010 were successfully transferred to Uganda for rehabilitation and release on Ngamba Island, successfully ending a three year odyssey that started with their capture in the wild, the export to Lebanon, and then to Bulgaria where they were confiscated upon arrival as they were being illegally imported.

In past years, thousands of confiscated African Grey parrots have been successfully released in Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo and Uganda, but the return of African Grey parrots confiscated outside of Africa to one of their range countries for rehabilitation and release is the first project of its kind.

This groundbreaking initiative resulted from an effective enforcement operation in Bulgaria and was made possible by the joint efforts of the Sofia Zoo, the Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria, the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC), the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary, the Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria, and the World Parrot Trust.

The parrots have been thoroughly screened for diseases while at the Sofia Zoo and will be brought to Ngamba Island for a further quarantine and rehabilitation period before their release.

This species, the most emblematic of all African birds, has been one of the most heavily traded of all parrots worldwide. This has resulted in dramatic declines and local extinctions in most of its historical range. Uganda has been on the forefront of the conservation of African Grey parrots by banning their capture and trade, performing seizures of illegal shipments and releasing confiscated birds.

The World Parrot Trust, an international organization working for the conservation and welfare of parrots, provided financial and organizational support for this effort. Like dozens of similar initiatives supported by the World Parrot Trust through their Fly Free program, this project deters future trafficking in this species, and at the same time restores this endangered parrot to its historic range.



Three of the confiscated parrots at the Sophia Zoo, Bulgaria, before their departure. Stefan Avrimov, Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

The WPT is proud to aid the return of these parrots to Africa and is very grateful to all the partner organizations and institutions for their impressive embrace of this ground breaking initiative, and hope that more countries will follow this model when dealing with endangered confiscated parrots.

Thanks to Qatar Airlines Cargo for their outstanding efforts to safely transport the parrots and for their generous financial assistance.

Update: A couple of weeks later the closely monitored birds are doing well, eating new foods, and will be getting more exercise to get in better shape to be gradually (soft) released to the wild.

More information on WPT's work with Grey and Timneh parrots

http://www.parrots.org/index.php/ourwork/home/african_grey_parrot/

Article: Take Part online

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2013/03/19/african-grey-parrot>

Currently, greys are listed on CITES Appendix II, which means that the wild caught trade is restricted because the population cannot sustain heavy losses. Wild caught greys are such a hot commodity because they are about half the price of a captive bred bird, which can fetch around \$1,300. Breeders play a large role in the wild caught trade to keep their costs down.

"There is a misconception that African Greys are really common because they are kept as pets everywhere," explained Cristiana Senni, Trade Specialist at World Parrot Trust, one of the organizations that worked to help return the parrots to the wild. "But the wild population is nothing like what it used to be. They are "locally extinct in many West and Central African countries where they used to be ubiquitous.

Currently, greys are listed on CITES Appendix II, which means that the wild caught trade is restricted because the population cannot sustain heavy losses. Wild caught greys are such a hot commodity because they are about half the price of a captive bred bird, which can fetch around \$1,300. Breeders play a large role in the wild caught trade to keep their costs down.

What would it mean if greys were placed on the Endangered Species List in the US?



This article is from the wonderful online magazine called AEON. Google it – good reading and like Winged Things, it's free!

A woman holds her parrot as it receives blessings from a priest, Mexico. *Photo by Henry Romero/Reuters*

Not just a pretty boy

Intelligent, devoted, alien – parrots are unlike any other pet. But what does the complex human-avian bond say about us?

by [Ilan Greenberg](#)

Ilan Greenberg is a journalist and on the faculty of the Globalization and International Affairs Program at Bard College, in New York.

When Louise Irving first met her husband Gordon, in South Africa in the mid-1970s, she came between him and an intense love affair that was passionate, fierce and all-consuming. The situation seemed hopeless. Any free love notion of an open relationship was intolerable. Her man was taken. ‘I knew Winston loved my husband so much,’ Louise recalled. ‘But he was very unhappy about me. Winston would mimic my voice when they were together in the bath. I had to watch myself. I couldn’t go near Gordon.’ Worse still, Winston was capable of violence, and it was quite likely, she realised, that he wanted her dead.

But Louise had no ordinary rival in love. Winston was an African Grey Parrot, and Gordon was his sole life partner. His attachment was hardly surprising. Parrots spend their lives nurturing a single, intensely monogamous relationship — and, if they are made to live without other parrots, they will forge that singular relationship with a person. Their natural average lifespan — 50 or 60, sometimes even 70 years — is spent obsessively demanding another parrot’s devoted attention, nuzzling and purring, but also screeching and scratching and biting each other. In the wild, they flock with others, but always fly wingtip-to-wingtip with their chosen mate.

Eventually, despite Winston's protests, Louise and Gordon had sons. Luckily, Winston took to their boys. 'He showed his love,' remembered Louise. Indeed, Winston liked other people, too, not just Gordon. He enjoyed teasing guests they had round for dinner — he could even sense when a joke was being told and could mimic a human laugh just as someone said the punchline. At other times, the family had to wait to hear their telephone's fifth ring before answering because Winston made a habit of tricking them by belting out four precisely imitated phone rings. Winston was beloved by everyone, including Louise, but Louise was someone Winston was never going to accept. 'I knew my place,' she said. 'My husband regurgitated his food to feed him. He lived on my husband's shoulder, went everywhere with him. I came into the bird's life and he was very unhappy about it. Every time I walked by, he tried to bite me.'

A parrot's imprinting with a human surrogate follows a predictable script: utter fidelity expressed through its natural mating behaviour. Unlike dogs, which parted from their grey wolf ancestors about 30,000 years ago, and house cats, whose domesticated origins are murkier and perhaps even



more ancient, a pet parrot, no matter where it is born or how tenderly hand-raised, is a wild animal. A sustained historical encounter with people has profoundly shaped canine and feline behaviour and physique. But apart from introducing a few new colour schemes through mutation, human interaction with parrots hasn't changed so much as a beak or a foraging technique. A human-weaned parrot — 'psittaciformes' is the parrot's scientific nomenclature — is tame, but its behavioural repertoire is still wild, a true descendant of the dinosaurs. Thanks to our selective breeding, dogs and cats not only have infantilised behaviour but also

neotenised faces — the big baby eyes and cute snub noses that stimulate our nurturing impulses and flood our brains with feel-good oxytocin hormones. Parrots have none of that.

'If you are going to be loved by a bird, you are going to have blood spill from your face'

All birds occupy a non-mammalian 'otherness' that, except for two scrawny legs, makes them seem alien and, at times, as Alfred Hitchcock knew and exploited, even threatening. They can't entirely repel our powerful urge toward anthropomorphism, but they resist many of the other hallmarks of rewarding pet ownership. They don't curl up on your lap or spring in the air for your ball, or sleep contently at your feet, or catch mice. How we choose to keep them, moreover, is curiouser still.

Perched in tiny cages, often with their wings clipped, they are denied their very bird-ness: that is, the awesome power of soaring flight that is their most salient characteristic.

And yet many people forge a profound bond with birds, and love their winged animals with a fiercely felt reciprocity. This is especially true of parrots. Talk to dedicated parrot owners, especially owners of the bigger parrots, and they will tell you that their avian relationship has changed their lives. ‘I like birds for their flights and non-flights,’ wrote the Polish poet Wisława Szymborska. ‘For their diving into waters and clouds. For their bones filled with air.’ There is, undeniably, something paradoxical about our love affair with birds.

For most people, thinking about the feathered vertebrate animal class *Aves* begins with a chicken and ends with a bowl of hot soup. But the human desire for bird companionship is deep and sustained. In many countries, they are the third most popular pet, after dogs and cats. Companion birds number about one million in the UK, according to the Society for Companion Animal Studies. In Germany, about two million households keep birds. And in the US, the indoor bird population probably numbers close to 17 million.



It's somewhat surprising then that there has been little in the way of scientific inquiry into what fuels people's devotion to their parrots and what they get out of these relationships. But this is changing, and its intensity certainly hasn't gone entirely unnoticed. In the 1960s, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss observed the ardour and depth of feeling between humans and birds, and hypothesised that birds are more likely to be given human names than domestic dogs or other pets. This, as it happens, turns out not to be true. A 2007 study published in *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* went to the trouble of getting to the bottom of it, and found instead that pets kept at home and outside of cages (such as dogs and cats) were much more likely to be given human names.

Another study, published in 2006 in the journal *Anthrozoös*, found that people who prefer birds (and horses) have a higher level of empathy than owners of other pets. Researchers at the University of California in the 1990s found that bird owners are more polite, expressive, and caring than other pet owners. Other recent surveys — see Anderson's 2003 paper 'A Bird in the House'

— have concurred, finding bird owners to be everything from contented and courteous to unpretentious and, in the majority, communally minded and altruistic. Research has also found that bird-companionship to be a deterrent to suicide, and many parrot owners make formal provisions in their wills for posthumous care.

‘You have this magnanimous animal that loves you, that lives for you, and you stick it in a cage and deprive it of every natural behavior

Maybe, we could conclude that opposites attract. For, among the admirable qualities of the parrot in this inter-species *ménage à deux*, politeness and courteousness generally do not feature. Roy Toft, the owner of a travel business in San Diego that caters to wildlife photographers, and a professional bird trainer and breeder since the 1980s, had to have plastic surgery thanks to, ‘a Macaw that loved me but bit my lips off because he didn’t like the person who walked up to me’. I asked him if it was the bird’s fault. ‘No,’ he told me. ‘This is natural behaviour. They bite the ones they love. If you are going to be loved by a bird, you are going to have blood spill from your face. Bird owners don’t tell you that part.’

The propensity for facial mutilation aside, parrots have some astonishing and rather more virtuous traits. Like crows, parrots (in particular the African Grey and the endangered Kea of New Zealand) are highly intelligent. Patricia Anderson, an associate professor of anthropology at Western Illinois University who researches the human-avian bond, had a Quaker Parrot named Otis who learnt how to generalise the meaning of the word ‘thank you’. Having been thanked by Anderson, Otis learnt to say ‘thank you’ to Anderson when given gifts he appreciated. Which come to think of it, is pretty polite and courteous.

Serious funding for parrot cognitive research is fairly recent, and its findings have met with pockets of resistance, partly because earlier research centred on less impressive birds such as pigeons. But parrots offer great insights into the parallel evolution of intelligence in

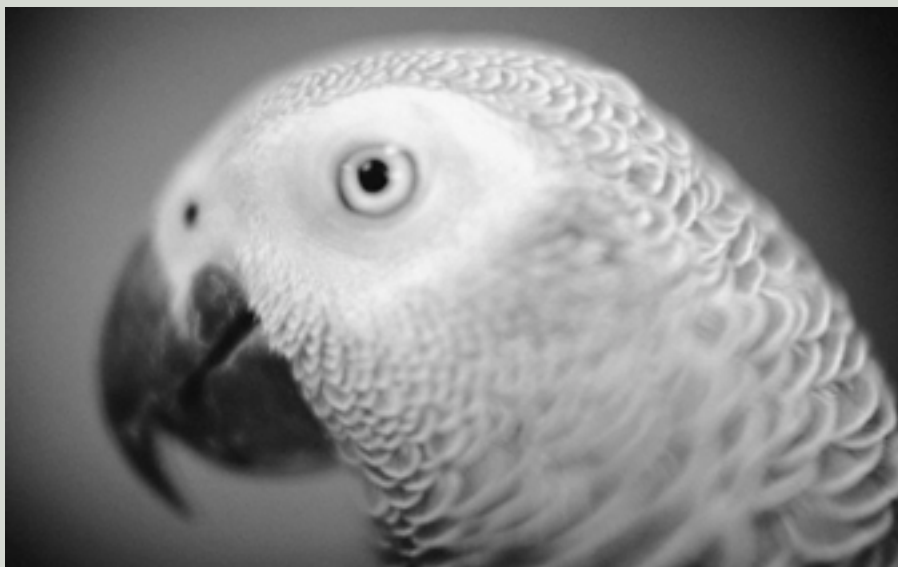


Photo by Henry Horenstein/Corbis

animals and humans, and the impact of ecology and social conditions on higher degrees of intelligence.

The most famous investigation into parrot intelligence was the eye-popping research of Irene Pepperberg, adjunct professor of psychology now at Brandeis University, into the psychology of Alex the African Grey Parrot, a bird described as having the cognition-levels of a dolphin, or the intelligence of a five-year-old child. Alex had an extraordinary ability to communicate and reason using sophisticated human language and a vocabulary of 150 words. He had the ability to understand, in his own way, the very advanced conceptual idea of nothing. ‘Alex has a zero-like concept; it’s not identical to ours but he repeatedly showed us that he understands an absence of quantity,’ wrote Pepperberg in 2005 in an email in the journal *LiveScience*.

Animal intelligence investigators are keenly interested in the tiny circle of creatures that, like humans and some parrots, show an ability to achieve innovative solutions to newly encountered problems. But cognitive prowess in parrots is not the same as human intelligence. The cortical-like portion of the parrot brain little resembles that of a human being. Calling a parrot as smart as a human toddler is in some ways descriptive, but overall it’s misleading: parrots are deeply intelligent on their own terms, in ways that suit their very different ecological and evolutionary story.

The parrot, we might say, is uncanny. Its cleverness is both familiar and ulterior — smart yet radically different. And this might well account for part of the parrot’s unique appeal and charm.



They are bright, feathered enigmas to our minds. We take the measure of a parrot’s intelligence. We encounter an animal that tantalises us and pokes an abiding human twitch to connect to a perceptive, thinking being, and yet we cannot ignore that it is alien to us by nearly 300 million years of separate evolution.

But, more than intelligence, what many parrot owners emphatically testify to, is their pet’s emotional intelligence. Parrots, they insist, can read their moods, and more importantly, try to remedy their bad ones. Like dogs, they can scan the human face for meaning. Furthermore, like people, they are emotionally nuanced and nimble, displaying a panoply of feeling from sullenness to heady elation to

argumentativeness, and they need you to channel it back — be it their joy, playfulness, frustration or pain.

This is the sort of attentiveness and concern we expect from close friendship, family, and romantic intimacy. So what does it mean to have these two-way interactions with a bird? Do people strain their feelings toward their birds through the filter of an avian psyche, or is it the bird that learns a more human emotional palette?

A wild animal, however much besotted by love and marinated in intelligence, is unknowable

Social scientists have long argued that a standard or rigid definition of a beneficial relationship, or of what constitutes a family, isn't universal, and need not be. Contemporary culture tends to dress intense inter-species relationships in a wardrobe of psychological dysfunction. But such a blanket dismissal falls short. It is a tendentious cultural tick, if not a bit of a psychoanalytic mania. Parrots and their owners — the very engaged ones anyway — negotiate a significant relationship predicated on a complex tangle of power, need, affection and responsibility.

It does, however, raise uncomfortable questions about the emotional exploitation of a deeply intelligent species. We generally disapprove of keeping as pets the other animals we recognise as super-smart — primates or dolphins — and plenty of people would argue they should not be in captivity at all. 'There are some wonderful bird owners, but in the typical human-bird relationship you have to ask what is really going on,' Toft told me. The veteran bird trainer casts an astringent gaze on the human-avian connection. 'You have this magnanimous animal that puts you on a pedestal, that loves you, that lives for you, that is as intelligent as a child, and you stick it in a cage and deprive it of every natural behaviour. What you get — if you look closely at it — is a really screwed-up relationship.'



Intelligence aside, it is worth remembering that birds are fragile and sensitive creatures. Toft recounts a catalogue of cautionary tales involving parrots. After university, he took a job as a bird trainer at the San Diego Wild Animal Park, which had a popular bird show containing 24 species of raptors and many dozens of talking and singing parrots. Toft gave a parrot failing to thrive at the park to his

mother. It was also during this time that he rescued a Yellow-naped Amazon Parrot, which was given free reign in the house and lived with Toft for 20 years. And back at the animal park, Toft looked after Fred, one of three comedic Cockatoo actors made famous in the 1970s American television series “Baretta”. ‘That bird sure was a bastard, but he sure put on a show and looked good, and cockatoo sales went through the roof,’ Toft told me.

Then in 1990, Fred was stolen from his cage at the park. Toft eventually moved to Hawaii to work in the Honolulu Zoo, where he raised a Scarlet Macaw, a powerful South American parrot with strikingly vivid red, blue and yellow feathers. Another zookeeper took the Scarlet Macaw home one day. She decided to bake cookies in her kitchen oven and forgot to remove some Teflon pans from the oven. The Scarlet Macaw breathed in the chemical fumes and fell dead from its perch.

And there’s more. Toft gave his wife a Lovebird and for two years the relationship between his wife and the bird bloomed. One day, however, they took the bird to the beach for exercise. He liked to glide across the sand. But this day, landing at the water’s edge, the bird instantly succumbed in the surf.

‘it’s a companionship that can be very, very important to people. A canary in a cage seems to make people happy’



‘Birds are not robust animals,’ Toft reflected. ‘There’s a reason we’ve changed dogs and cats genetically; birds are extremely fragile. Trying to keep one alive is very difficult. You never hear the negative stories. People don’t publicise how they don’t like their bird anymore. All you’ll see is your friends giving birds some attention, and the birds will do their song and dance. Even keeping smaller birds, which I think is healthier, or pairs of birds — it’s a fish tank mentality. For the other 23 hours a day, they’re alone. It’s just the bird in a little cage.’

Toft thinks birds are inappropriate pets for most people, but — for all his bad experiences — a great companion for those willing to put in the time, effort and attention, especially for elderly people. It’s a view widely shared by people who have forged transformative relationships with

birds. ‘There’s unconditional positive regard with birds — doesn’t matter what you do, these guys are going to treat you exactly the same,’ said Scott O’Hara, a member of the Anthrozoology Research Group at La Trobe University in Australia. ‘I think it’s a companionship that can be very, very important to people, and brings huge benefits. A canary in the cage seems to make people happy.’

O’Hara’s parrots, however, don’t live in a cage. He allows them to roam his neighbourhood, returning to their cages when they choose. Crucially, he tries to minimise all his interaction with his birds. It’s a kind of parrot hostel approach to bird ownership. O’Hara can allow this because he



lives in temperate Melbourne, but free flight and minimal human contact are in the vanguard of progressive bird stewardship, with institutional advocates such as the World Parrot Trust, a charity working on conservation projects to help the one third of parrot species that are endangered worldwide.

The anthropologist Patricia Anderson in Chicago has thriving parrots, all of whom were rescued from unhappy homes. She has nurtured them using a

rigorous positive reinforcement technique that childhood development psychologists have honed for companion-animal rearing. She would prefer her birds to bond with other parrots rather than with her. ‘The great thing is that there are more and more people doing research and really caring a lot about their birds. My parrots are bonded to a human, to me, and that is sad. They both want to mate with me, which is very inappropriate,’ Anderson told me. ‘That’s also sad.’

If arriving at just the right formula for responsible parrot ownership is vexing, then peeling back the feathers to reveal which emotions lead to a parrot’s bonded devotion to an owner is an equally impossible task. People bring both very little and yet a great deal to a pet parrot’s life, and parrot behaviour is itself a cloudy concoction of hard-wired evolution and individual personality. A wild animal, however much besotted by love and marinated in intelligence, is unknowable.

But one thing is clear. Our relationships with animals are central to our development as a species, as research in the emerging fields of anthrozoology and animal studies affirms. Intense, personal relationships with other animals seem to be connected to the human need for narrative, for creating stories that make sense of our existence, experiences, and environment. By becoming a bonded pair with a bird, a person feels able to infiltrate the consciousness of a separate being, fulfilling what feels like an important quest — for humans if not for the birds.

‘The bird becomes so much a part of you, you don’t even think about it as something separate from who you are,’ recounted Louise about her ‘rival’ Winston, the African Grey so fiercely bonded with her husband Gordon. The ending, as with all great love stories, was bound to be tragic. In 1994, Louise and her family relocated from South Africa to California. Importing exotic birds such as an African Grey Parrot into the United States required a period of quarantine, which of course meant separation from Gordon. Winston survived the long trip to California but not the mandated period of isolation.

‘I think,’ Louise speculated, ‘he died of a broken heart.’

Published on 5 February 2013



One of Chris Shank's free flying cockatoos

Some Birds In Our Care Do Not Prosper

Back in the late 1980s, I was privileged to own one of the first female White Bellied Caique pets born and raised on the west coast. We were doing species comparisons at the time amongst dozens of pet parrots in the free flight bird room of Feathered Friends of Santa Fe. I received baby Zia from an expert aviculturist in Northern California—the first chick he had ever bred. She was a little doll, let me tell you and appreciably different than all the black headed caiques we had kept.

A year or so later, I approached the same breeder about obtaining some more of his caique fledglings to bring to our shop, but received a surprising reply. “I no longer have any caiques,” he stated. “They were not prospering at my facility and I passed them on to a better climate.”

Not prospering! That was the first time I ever heard such a description of certain psittacines someone owns. At the time, I thought the phrase unusual—but have over the decades come to realize it was an extremely unselfish and far-sighted view, at the same time pragmatic and compassionate.

I was reading an online discussion about an owner of a pet Oranged Winged Amazon Parrot that was flying at her, attacking and biting painfully. She had tried most every means of reestablishing a loving relationship with the parrot but nothing was working. Her online question was answered by a behavior expert in much the same way many personality problems are responded to: use positive reinforcement training in a neutral setting

emphasizing rewards and targeted goals to get the bird to behave in an affirmative way.

After reading again all of the ways the owner had tried to solve this dilemma over the past months, I wrote a short comment to the online article editor:

“It seemed to me the owner had tried all the retraining and counseling ideas. I have had and known of parrots, especially Neotropicals, that become absolutely angry with owners and sometimes no amount of retraining is going to change that. I have birds in my care that detest me because I am a favorite of their mate’s, or ones that detested April or all women or men. One current amazon down in Kona on the Big Island is being given up now because it attacks the owners after being a good bird for a long time. They have tried for two years to change that. Sometimes the most kindhearted thing a person can do is give up a parrot that is distinctly not happy in its present home life. There is certainly no shame in that--certainly when the bird will be going to a better place with a better chance of bonding with a new human or family.”



You know, psittacines are highly intelligent creatures. And for most of them a close emotional bond is a necessity, as normal as sleeping and waking. In a home pet situation, it may take something as seemingly insignificant as another bird being handled and befriended, or a new puppy, human infant, not to mention boyfriend or girlfriend coming into the environment, to change that psittacine's loyalties. Smart as they are, parrots can sense when they are no longer the exclusive number one object of an owner's attentions!

One common situation is when the primary caregiver goes on vacation for two or three weeks and leaves his or her pet bird with another experienced and affectionate keeper. The true owner returns home and finds a hookbill that has firmly attached itself to the "babysitter," since it had no idea the circumstances were only temporary. This has happened to me with certain beloved amazons, and it took real attention and some time before I was able to win back the former allegiance. Yet still there is that eerie feeling that I had broken some sort of trust with my parrot and that it no longer quite viewed me the same.

In the cases where amazons, macaws, conures or greys have totally changed their mindset during such an interval of absence, sometimes months later the owner is still not accepted back as the primary "bonded companion." We then have a state of affairs with an unhappy, unfriendly pet parrot, and a frustrated, uncomprehending human. Not prospering...

I admire aviculturists who have breeding pairs of parrots that are not doing well at their facility, so they pass the

birds on to a happier situation. Decades ago I was attempting to breed one of my favorite pet species, the Timneh African Grey. After two years of no success and nervous, out-of-sorts birds, I came to the conclusion that my timnehs were unhappy around all the commotion and noise of a large amazon/conure flock. I sent them to a friend in California who maintained a peaceful

African parrot facility where they were much happier.

Another time I helped to re-home some Princess of Wales

Parakeets, a distinct dry clime psittacine, moving them from a region with wet and rainy weather to a better area. That is the kind of responsible choice that makes for happier birds and satisfied keepers. In this day and age, with many parrots growing elderly without real gladness in their lives and some species on the brink of total loss in captivity, prospering is a sound criteria for making a decision about what is best for all involved.

Mahalo, EB



Urgent: From Susanne Cochran

Endangered Species Act Threatens Parrots in the USA

A serious threat is looming that in the short term could affect our ability to have Scarlet, Blue Throated, Hyacinth, Great Green and Military Macaws in our homes as companions or small breeders. In the long term this threat could impact just about every species of parrot. Examine the evidence below. I do not go off half-cocked, I researched this for several weeks and I could not be more concerned. This is why I am sharing this broadly. If it concerns you, speak up and be heard. **We only have until April 22nd** when the feedback closes for these species.

Putting non-native parrot species on the Endangered Species Act will threaten their continued existence in the United States. Speak up now or it will be too late.

Situation

Right now Friends of Animals and WildEarth Guardians are hijacking the ESA, administered by the Fish & Wildlife Service, to put 5 species of macaws (Scarlet, Hyacinth, Great Green, Military and Blue Throated) on the Endangered Species Act list. In the introduction to petition to the Fish and Wildlife Service to add 14 parrot species, Friends of Animals states that their goal is to end the captive bird trade in the United States. These species are recovering in most of their wild ranges due to a combination of effective international laws that protect them and steadily improving conservation programs in their countries of origin.

1. If a species is added to the Endangered Species Act, without a special rule being put in place, interstate commerce is not allowed except between approved conservation breeders with Captive-Bred Wildlife permits.

a. These species, which are doing well in aviculture, will no longer be bred in the numbers they are now since they will not be able to be sold as pets, which is the majority of the market for private aviculture. Aviculture is keeping the gene pool alive and vibrant. Breeders may no longer find it practical to continue breeding these magnificent birds and may eventually abandon their efforts. The birds will be left unproductive, be destroyed or be put into sanctuary. How does this help conserve species?

b. If you have a pet of one of these species, in most states you will be allowed to keep your bird if you can prove that you acquired your bird prior to it being listed (keep all your documentation!) If you have to take your bird to a veterinarian in another state you might be considered to be doing interstate commerce with that species. It may become impossible for rescues to place birds out of state. In some states (including



Illinois, Virginia and Rhode Island) the Endangered Species Act is adopted immediately within the state as well, and there is no grandfathering. It will be illegal for you to keep your bird if it is one of the above species without a permit, which may not be possible for pet owners to get.

c. Commercial aviculturists and their customers contribute significantly to effective conservation efforts, provide visibility for conservation programs and participate in eco-tourism based on their personal experiences of species.

2. If the demand for these species in the international pet trade is not met by commercial aviculture, the demand for smuggled birds will increase, thus increasing poaching. How does any of this help conserve species in their native countries? Putting them on the ESA does nothing to fund conservation in their native countries. Incidentally, these species are, for the most part, recovering nicely in their countries of origin and their inclusion often hinges on their lack of recovery in a single small area.



3. A long list of additional species, including more macaws, cockatoos and other kinds of parrots are next up for review.... If your bird isn't on the list yet, it may be only a matter of time.

Actions You Can Take NOW

We must all speak out now! As the old quote goes: "...those who won't stand together will all hang separately...."

1. Email, call or snail mail your elected representatives in Congress about your concern; let them know this is an important issue to you. Votes drive these people! You want them to be willing to discuss it, and to start a committee to investigate the use of the Endangered Species Act with foreign species, especially parrots which are bred in the USA successfully. Outcomes we want:

- a. Stop the placement of the existing proposed species, or else apply the special rule allowing interstate commerce to continue for all of them, pending congressional review.
- b. Create a committee to review the ESA with regard to parrots to:
 - i. List all parrot species approved with the special rule that allows continued interstate commerce, regardless of whether it is considered endangered or threatened.
 - ii. De-list previously-listed parrot species to stimulate aviculture to produce more of them.

iii. Repeal the part of the Endangered Species Act that refers to Foreign Species

iv. I have a sample letter you can fine tune and personalize. Follow this link to find contact info for your representatives and senators: <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>

2. Respond to the request for input on the currently-open Fish & Wildlife ruling. This is only for Militaries, Hyacinths and Great Green Macaws, but SO WHAT? Speak up! You can even use your sample letter in this response; let's bombard everyone concerned with our feedback. You have until April 22 to post. To post a comment, go to this link, and click the COMMENT NOW button:

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=FWS-R9-ES-2012-0013-0072>

3. Participate in the petition I have made to Fish & Wildlife: Please join this campaign: http://www.change.org/petitions/fish-wildlife-service-stop-putting-parrots-on-the-us-endangered-species-act-3?share_id=OpsgrblwPS&utm_campaign=mailto_link&utm_medium=email&utm_source=share_petition

4. Write letters or send questions of your own to Janine Van Norman who is Chief of the Branch of Foreign Species, a unit of the Endangered Species Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Arlington, Virginia at 703 358 2171; fax: 703 358 1735; e-mail: Janine_VanNorman@FWS.gov

5. Join PIJAC (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council) at www.pijac.org . The small individual membership fee of \$25 goes to support our pet industry lobbyists in Washington. They are aware of these legislative efforts (both HR 996 and the ESA) and are working on them, although these efforts are not currently reflected on their website.

6. Write to PIJAC and express your concern so they will get focused on this issue. There is a sample letter the President of PIJAC, Mike Canning, below under sample letters. His email address: mcanning@pijac.org



7. Others to write:

a. President Obama since he has said he wants good science to go into governmental decisions, and how is it good science to discount the effectiveness of commercial aviculture in keeping gene pools alive and helping to preserve threatened and endangered species of parrot already in captivity?

b. Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior exsec@ios.doi.gov

c. The Fish and Wildlife Service general email, directed to Dan Ashe, Director of Fish and Wildlife Service: dan_ashe@fws.gov

8. Other pending threats: HR 996, which says the only kinds of birds you can legally have are “common canaries”, ducks, chickens and geese. We must be vigilant and speak up about each and every one of these that affects our rights to keep and propagate the animals we love. And we need to effective conservation efforts in their countries of origin.

Reference Documents – Check it out for yourself

[Background Fact Document](#)

[Hijacking the Endangered Species Act](#)

[First Petition from Animal Rights Group to Put 14 Species](#)

[of Parrots on the Endangered Species Act](#)

[Summary of the Endangered Species Act](#)

[What Happens to ESA Listed Species?](#)

[Existing Legal Protection for Parrots](#)

[How Does ESA Listing Help Foreign Species \(or NOT\)?](#)

[Fish & Wildlife Service Responses to Questions \(A Letter from Fish & Wildlife Service\)](#)



Sample Letters

Sample letter from owner of Hyacinth, Great Green (Buffons), Blue Throated, Military or Scarlet Macaw to your representatives and senators in congress

[Word Format](#)

[.pdf Format](#)

Sample letter from owner of other parrot species to your representatives and senators in congress

[Word Format](#)

[.pdf Format](#)

Sample letter to PIJAC

[Word Format](#)

[.pdf Format](#)

Susanne Cochran

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Behavior Science and Ethics

Sid Price

Seeing discussions of training in online groups is excellent, not only because it means that it raises the profile of training but also because it gives me an opportunity to understand better what my writings may bring to the community. What piqued my interest a while ago was a discussion about trainers who use science and trust building.

My personal approach to training is to place trust and relationship building ahead of everything else in my trainer's toolbox. There are methods that can be employed that will override the lack of trust an animal may have in the trainer; their use however depends upon the ethical position of the trainer.

I noted one comment in the thread I was that said:

"There is no morality or ethics attached to Operant Conditioning."

Now I think I understand what the writer was saying but that sentence kind of upset me a little, it tweaked on an important subject, the ethics of trainers and how they affect the choices those trainers make. What I believe the writer was saying was that the science itself does not imply or apply any ethical or moral judgment, which is in general a truism. When we use the scientific term "punishment" it is simply describing a consequence of a behavior that is likely to reduce the presentation or frequency of that behavior in the future. As far as the science is concerned there is no judgment about the consequence. However, when we come to the application of the science we certainly do find ourselves needing to make ethical, even moral judgments in our choice of strategy.



This is especially true when it comes to the use of weight or food management in the training process. Motivation is a balance and one can certainly tilt the balance in favor of an animal performing a requested behavior by reducing its weight through food withholding. The ethical question is whether it is the right thing to do before all other factors, including better trust/relationship building, have been exhausted. In my opinion it is not.

Also, the subject of the discussion missed a huge and important point. Even the strategies that are thought of as “bad” or inappropriate are using that same science. The use of aversives and punishers is also included in the science. Therefore even the trainer who towels a bird to “break” it, a horrible strategy that hopefully is now way behind us, is using the science (flooding). One simply can not claim that a trainer who uses Operant Conditioning and Applied Behavior Analysis is doing it the right way. It is the ethical choice of strategy made by that trainer that should define them.

One more point pops into my mind too. I keep reading people who say “we train only with positive reinforcement” like it somehow validates their strategy. Let us not forget about the ethical choices before we place these folks on a pedestal. For example, think about someone who makes this claim who uses weight management as their primary strategy, they have not built a strong trusting relationship they have simply built a food dependence. They can claim to use positive reinforcement, that’s what they are doing, reward correct behavior with something that increases the likelihood of the behavior being repeated. However, consider this; what if that same bird was capable of performing to the same level without a reduction in their diet and therefore their weight and that this level was achieved by the trainer taking the time to build trust, confidence, and a good relationship with the bird. By gradually presenting new environments to the bird so that its confidence grew. Which of these trainers would you think is the better trainer?

So, next time you meet someone who calls themselves a “Positive Reinforcement” trainer be skeptical, learn more about the whole training strategy, learn about their training ethics.

Finally don’t forget that if you have a question about what you read either here or in the referenced article send email to me at trainingblog@avianambassadors.com.

Future articles will concentrate on using these concepts to prepare your bird for living with humans.

Sid Price is the owner and founder of Avian Ambassadors based in Tijeras, New Mexico. In addition to presenting Avian Ambassadors’ Flights of Education programs, Sid is a frequent invited speaker at conferences and meetings around the country on the ethical application of behavior science to bird training.

Sid is the chairman of the International Avian Trainers Certification Board (IATCB), a past-president of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (IAATE) and served on the board of directors of IAATE from 2003 – 2013.

www.AvianAmbassadors.com
www.BehaviorAndTraining.com
www.iatcb.org

Good News for African Gray Parrots - A Conservation Milestone

Hello, Frank Indiviglio here.

Despite clear evidence that African Gray Parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*) are declining in the 23 countries to which they are native, conservation horror stories continue to mount. Recently, for example, [750 parrots died on board an airplane in South Africa](#), and the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo [returned 500+ wild-caught birds to smugglers](#). So it was a pleasure to read that Uganda has recently taken a giant step forward in parrot conservation. For the first time ever, African Gray Parrots seized in Europe have been returned to the wild. The historic 3-year effort also illustrated an unprecedented degree of cooperation between governments, zoos, airlines and conservation organizations.



Can 32 Birds Make a Difference?

Conservationists estimate that at least ¼ of the adult population of wild African Gray Parrots are trapped each year. The return of 32 birds to the wild in Uganda may, therefore, seem to be insignificant. However, I believe that the operation's value goes well beyond the number of birds that were rescued.

For too long, wildlife criminals have operated with near impunity once they managed to get parrots and other African wildlife out of the continent. Cooperation with unscrupulous officials in Africa and abroad, and the inability of under-funded law enforcement agencies to compete, have kept convictions low and penalties inconsequential. Uganda's dogged determination to see justice done has recently broken new ground, and has hopefully set a standard for neighboring countries to follow.

A Conservation "First"

The parrots in question were illegally trapped in Uganda in 2010. They were routed through Lebanon and were eventually seized in Bulgaria. Uganda has a history of releasing confiscated wildlife, but no African country has ever been able to locate, seize and return to the wild parrots that have been shipped to another continent. The costs are prohibitive,

and expertise in the laws of several countries, and in international law, is essential. In addition, a core group of people must be in place long term, as even where there is no question that the birds were illegally removed from the wild, the process usually takes several years (over 3, in this instance).

In this case, everything came together in a way that has not been seen in the past. Financial assistance was provided by Qatar Airlines and the World Parrot Trust, and the government of Bulgaria cooperated with that of Uganda throughout. The Sofia Zoo held the parrots for a time and screened them for diseases before the release was approved. The parrots were re-habituated to the wild at the Ngamba Chimpanzee Sanctuary and then released on Ngamba Island.

Continuing Threats to African Gray and Other Parrots

Despite the fact that wild-caught adult parrots make notoriously poor pets, demand remains high. In addition, numerous chicks are collected, often by felling nest-bearing trees. Nesting hollows are a scarce commodity in parrot habitats, and their destruction seriously impedes the breeding success of the resident parrot population. Other African Psittacines, including the Red-Fronted Parrot (*Poicephalus gulielmi*, please see photo), also remain at risk despite local and international protections. In recent years, Uganda has confiscated many parrots destined for European markets; 204 African Grays were released to the wild in 2011.



We also call them Jardine's parrots!

You can read more about African Gray Parrot conservation and natural history in the articles linked above and below. Unfortunately, bad news is still the norm, and many people here in the USA are unaware of the scope of the problem (as wild-caught parrots have long been illegal to import or own)...please post any information you may come across below.

Please check out my posts on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Each day, I highlight breaking research, conservation news and interesting stories concerning just about every type of animal imaginable. I look forward to hearing about your interests and experiences as well, and will use them in articles when possible.

Thanks, until next time,

Frank Indiviglio

Further Reading

[African Gray Parrot Natural History](#)

[African Gray Parrot Declines](#)

BIRD BIOLOGY - FROM THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY BOOK*

I need to make it very clear that the information in this column comes directly from the book indicated below. I edit the information, but for the most part it is directly taken from the pages of this neat book. When you join the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, you will have access to all manner of information and an opportunity to take on-line courses to expand your knowledge of the wonderful beings we share our lives with. Join. Learn. It's fun.

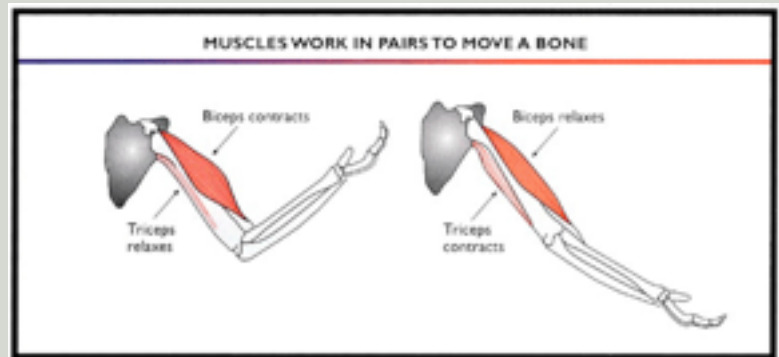
I think this will be more interesting for a lot of you once we get past all of the basic system knowledge and get into the “**how things work**” part, like how an egg is made and how poop is formed. I hope.

The **Muscular System** of birds is much like ours - there are three types of muscle - distinguished by their function, shape and microscopic structure: skeletal, smooth and cardiac.

Skeletal Muscles move the bones and are what we call the “meat” of the animal, whether it be red as in steak, white as in chicken breast, or any intermediate color. Because these muscles are under conscious control, skeletal muscles are often called **voluntary muscles**.

Skeletal muscle cells are long and can contract and if they are stained in the lab, alternating

dark and light striations are visible under the microscope.. These long, cylindrical cells are bound together as muscle fibers that can shorten when stimulated by a nerve impulse. Once a muscle fiber contracts it must be forcibly stretched to regain its “resting” length. In other words, muscles cannot “push” - they



can only “pull”.

You're getting a human illustration because I couldn't find the simple illustration for an avian muscle. If you'll look at the illustration, you'll see that our biceps contracts to raise our arm and our triceps contracts to lower our arm. The opposite muscle relaxes when the “working” muscle is contracting. Birds' muscles work in exactly the same way to raise and lower wings - and legs.

When muscles contract they produce heat. They literally are the furnaces of the body and the heat they produce is distributed through the blood moving in the circulatory system.

JOIN THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

“WE USE SCIENCE TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD, TO FIND NEW WAYS TO MAKE CONSERVATION WORK AND TO INVOLVE PEOPLE WHO SHARE OUR PASSION.”

[HTTP://WWW.BIRDS.CORNELL.EDU/PAGE.ASPX?PID=1609](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/page.aspx?pid=1609)

The Handbook of Avian Biology
Published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology
in Association with
Princeton University Press
2nd Edition

S.Podulka, R.W.Rohrbaugh, Jr., and
R.Bonney, Editors
Copyright 2004

Shivering is uncoordinated muscle contraction and can generate heat. To keep keep heat from escaping, birds may fluff their feathers, trapping in a layer of insulating air.

Each skeletal muscle consists of several hundred to several thousand muscle fibers bound together by connective tissue called **fascia**. These bundles of fibers have two sites of attachment to the skeleton; one is called the **origin**, the other is the **insertion**. Usually a muscle bridges one or more joints, producing movement at the joint when it contracts. By convention, the end of the muscle whose point of attachment moves least during contraction is designated as the origin. The connecting fascia may be in the form of a tendon, which in birds may ossify, or in the form of shiny, broad sheets called **aponeuroses**. Every muscle is innervated and kept alive by these nerves. If the nerve to a muscle is cut, the muscle will eventually shrivel and **atrophy** (die) unless new nerve fibers grow into it, a process that usually takes several weeks.

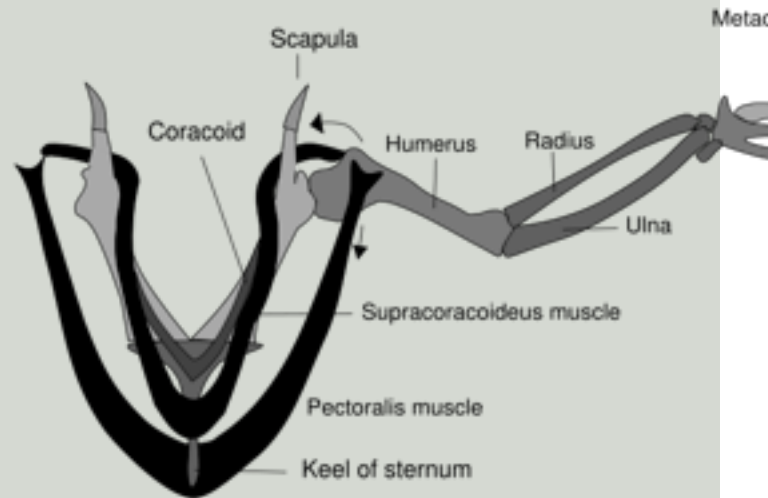
(I guess this is the point where I tell you to get out a RAW chicken and look at it carefully while you're cutting it up for supper.)

Skeletal muscle are often given names that indicate their function, location, shape or derivation. Most anatomical terms were first created to describe human anatomy, then uncritically applied to birds at a later date. Thus, many inappropriate names for birds muscles have had to be changes to more properly reflect their evolutionary origin and avian function.

Skeletal muscle that move the wings and limbs act antagonistically so that when one contracts, the other relaxes in a continuous fashion, producing a smooth, rather than jerky movement. When we raise a cup to our lips, we bend (flex - or close) the elbow joint by contracting the biceps muscle that crosses the

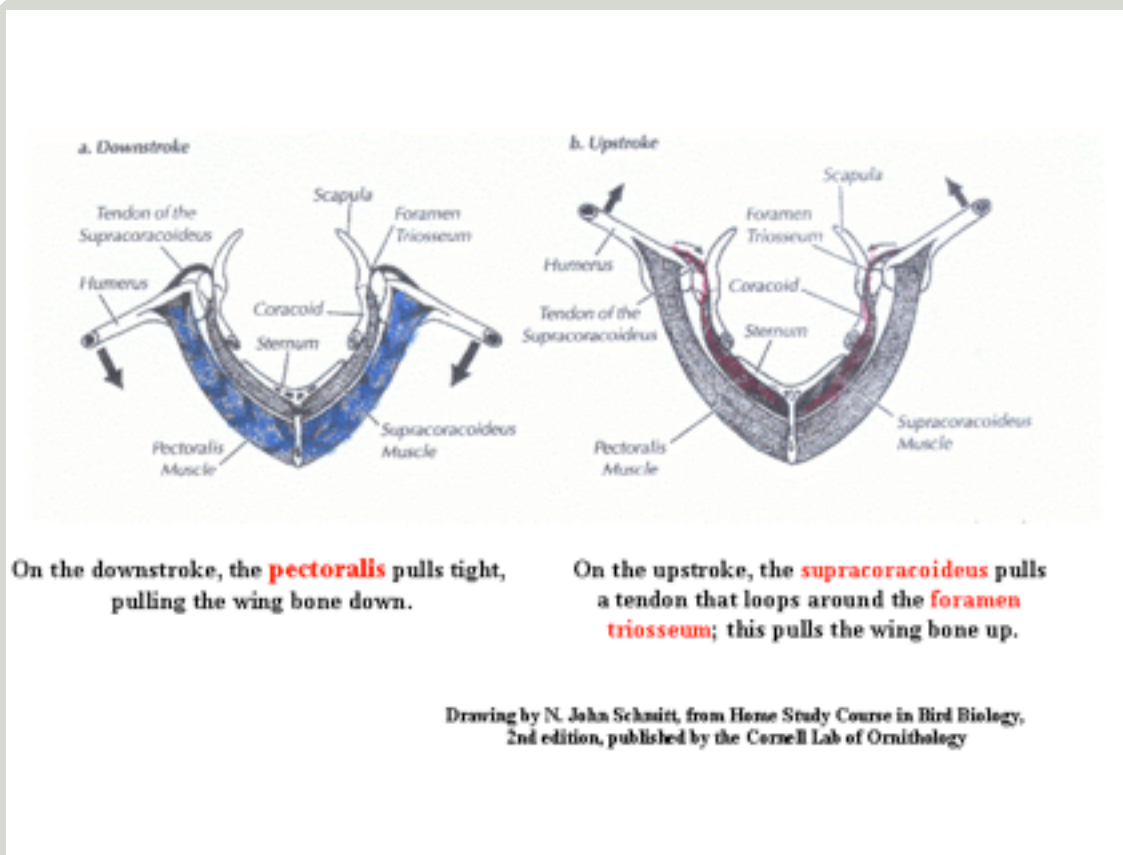
inner (or flexor) surface of the elbow. In the process, the antagonistic triceps muscle - which crosses the outer, or extensor surface of the elbow joint - gradually relaxes, allowing the arm's extension to be continuous and smooth. The reverse is true when we set down the cup.

The large breast muscle of birds, the



pectoralis and **supracoracoideus**, are good examples of antagonistic muscles. Although they lie in similar positions on the keel of the sternum, they have different actions. This is because the tendon of the supracoracoideus passes through the foramen triosseum ("foramen" means "hole"), an opening in the shoulder insertion, forming a pulley system that redirects the force of the supracoracoideus. The pectoralis attaches to the ventral (front) surface of the humerus (top wing bone) and draws it up and the wing downward. The tendon of the supracoracoideus passes through the foramen triosseum and inserts on the dorsal (back) surface of the humerus so it can raise (elevate) the wing. Thus the two primary opposing muscles for flight, the pectoralis for the downstroke and the supercoracoideus for the upstroke, both originate on the sternum, one on top of the other.

Even in chickens and turkeys, not known for their flying prowess, the pectoral muscles



direct chemical control from substances circulating in the blood. Smooth muscle is also found in the respiratory and urogenital systems - and in all systems and organs that are concerned with vital life processes and over which the bird has little or no control. Smooth muscle occurs in the skin for the movement of feathers in birds, and for the movement of hair in humans - sometimes causing

account for about one fifth of the bird's weight. Because of the pulley function of the foramen triosseum, the large flight-powering muscles can be carried entirely below the supporting wings during flight - a considerably more stable weight configuration than if the wing elevator muscles were situated on the back, above the wings. Because it takes the most force to lift (and thrust) from the wing's downstroke, the pectoralis muscle is the largest muscle in flying birds.

Smooth Muscle, also known as involuntary muscle because it is not controlled consciously, is composed of spindle-shaped cells with a centrally located nucleus and no evident pattern of striation along the cell. Smooth muscles are found in the walls of hollow organs such as the stomach and blood vessels larger than capillaries. Smooth muscle cells are especially characteristic of the vessels of the arterial system, but are also found in the venous system. Smooth muscle are innervated by separate, non-voluntary (autonomic) portion of the nervous system and also are under

"goose bumps."

Cardiac Muscle is a specialized type of smooth muscle that forms the bulk of the heart. The muscle fibers are arranged in a fused network and have cross-striations but centrally located nuclei.

Cardiac muscle has an **innate rhythmicity** - the ability to contract without being stimulated by nerves. Actually, the heart of an embryo begins to beat rhythmically before any nerves have grown to reach it. The nerves that do reach the heart are part of the autonomic nervous system but they do not start the contractions of the heart. Instead, they regulate and modify the rate of the beat.

That's all, folks



Steve Hartman's Circus Diet

from Dorothy Schwarz

What's the best diet for parrots? There's no proven scientific answer. Pellets? Seeds? Homemade? Maybe as many interesting combinations as species of parrot? Amongst a plethora of choice— consider the Circus Diet. Its originator, Steve Hartman says, "those parrots lucky enough to have experienced this cavalcade of flavours, textures and colours describe it as 'more exciting than going to the circus'." Steve Hartman is well known in USA as breeder over 4000 birds in 20 years and lecturer has shared his expertise on his website www.parrotuniversity.com. (In UK he is better known as designer of the Aviator harness.) Steve considers that most pet parrots are overweight. Their too high body mass index comes from eating too many high fat foods like sunflower seeds, snacking all day long, and being unable to fly and exercise. The circus diet is fed as a main meal in the morning. The treat element which comprises 20% of the diet is fed during the day. This is a useful practice for owners who are training their birds.

Let me tell you what foods make up the diet, how to prepare and feed it.

Components

- 20% Parrot pellets.
- 20% Sprouted Sunflower, Millet and Other Seeds.
- 20% Crock pot mix of Beans, Rice, and Corn
- 20% Fruits and Vegetables.
- 20% Treats.



Parrot Pellets

For pellets use any brand you prefer. All well known brands are basically the same with only minor differences. Choose a well known brand and you can't go wrong.

Sprouted Sunflower, Millet and Other Seeds

Sprouting turns a seed into a high quality growing vegetable containing fat as an energy source which continues growing as long as it is moist and at least room temperature. All seeds benefit from sprouting. The quality of the seeds you use can be determined by the percentage that sprouts. You should expect at least 90% to sprout within 3–5 days. How many you sprout

depends on how large a batch of diet you are preparing. The sprouts comprise 20% of the total. After sprouting and rinsing, microwave the seeds just long enough to steam the moisture on the outside of the seeds, quickly killing any bacteria or fungus that may have grown during the sprouting process.

Crock-pot Mix

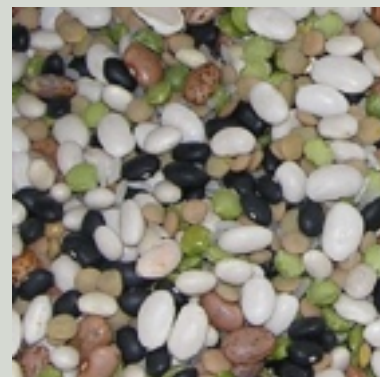
Hartman Aviary's mix contains equal amounts of the following dry ingredients:

navy beans, great northern beans, black beans, red beans, green split peas, lentils, adzuki beans, brown rice, dry whole corn (purchase from pet or wild bird feed stores).



All ingredients may be substituted with similar items. (My pet birds are particularly fond of chick peas). Soak the beans overnight, rinse well, then cook by your favourite method until they are soft but not squishy.

(Editor's Note: I also add grains to this mix - such as quinoa - for its high protein - or oat groats, millet and kamut. These are available at Natural Foods and other bulk suppliers. Cook these separately. Legumes and grains create a complete protein)



Fruits and Vegetables

All of these items need to be diced into pea-size pieces. A mix of **about** 25% fruit and 75% vegetables works well. Each time you make a batch choose different seasonal items so that over time, your birds will be exposed to a variety of texture and flavour. Vegetables like potatoes or yams need to be pre-cooked, but most can be fed raw. Hard vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower and carrots can spend a few seconds in the microwave to destroy residual bacteria. Keep in mind that if you are making a bulk amount, items like lettuce and citrus won't hold up to freezing. Lettuce wilts and citrus turns to juice. The change makes the final mix less firm but won't hurt the nutrients.

Treats

Parrots love to hold pieces of food in their foot and eat. Items comprising the main Circus Diet are deliberately kept pea-sized for the reasons given below, so large pieces of low calorie items like apple slices and popcorn can be used as treats and provide for this need. Keep in mind that treats are one component of the complete diet. While nutritious, nuts are also very high in fat. Other treats like popcorn and apples are mostly water or air. (One reason why I like the diet is that with only 20% allocated for treats, I can't overindulge my pets' love of cookies, almonds, pizza and other high fat/calorie items.)

Ingredients are pea-sized

The easiest way to do this is to pulse by batches in a food processor.

All items are diced into small pieces no larger than a pea. Reasons for this are:

- Many parrots are picky eaters. Small particles mixed together have residue from all the other pieces on them, making it impossible for a bird to avoid any food so their brain is quickly programmed to eat all of the items. Once a birds' subconscious and conscious brain is programmed to eat a large variety of foods, it's much easier to change their diet.
- Even large macaws consume very little food each day, so small pieces make it easier to provide a well balanced and interesting meal.
- If birds are sharing dishes, it's harder for the more aggressive bird to grab all of the tastier items.
- Most birds drop significant amounts of large pieces, there is less waste with small pieces.

How the Diet is Fed:

Steve Hartman advises feeding the main meal two hours after your birds' wake up time. At least half of the *correct portion size* will be consumed in about 15 minutes, with the remainder being consumed later in the day. The rest of the diet is fed in the form of treats that are fed sporadically throughout the day and always in the evening about an hour before bedtime.



<u>Species of birds</u>	<u>Circus Diet</u>	<u>Treats</u>
Small	18 grams	4 grams
Medium	32 grams	7 grams
Large	90 grams	20 grams

(These are estimates - there's a wide range in weights for "medium" birds. Evaluate your birds' eating habits and adjust accordingly.)

Portion size is crucial for captive birds. Never offer more than 10% more food than the bird will eat. Remove the very small uneaten portion the next morning before offering more food. Portion size will vary for each species, each individual, seasonal moulting, and breeding cycles.

Combining Ingredients

Plan ahead: three days for sprouts and two days for beans so all ingredients are ready when you cut the fruit and vegetables. Mix the beans and seeds together first, and add the fruit last so the softer items are more likely to stay intact. If the diet is to be fed right away, add the pellets. If the food will be frozen add the pellets just before feeding.

The entire mix should be wet enough to stick together but dry enough for the individual pieces to be picked apart.

Bottom line

Steve writes: 'Most of the 360 species of parrots can eat the same pellet. The circus diet has so many ingredients that we are able to feed every one of our 100 species the same basic diet. We vary the diet with the treat component. For instance, hyacinth macaws get more high fat nuts while amazons and Lories get low fat fruit treats.'

-My own Experience

With a small mixed collection of 25 birds indoors and in aviaries, I've found the circus diet a brilliant time saver *once* I'd got my non-mathematical brain to calculate better. Overweight has not been a problem with my birds but wastefulness has. Using the pea sized ingredient has worked and made my spoilt fussy eaters try items like broccoli they normally toss away. Another advantage is ease of delivery. If you're away it's much easier to tell your helper how to feed.

I now make about 9 monthly batches of the diet and the birds relish it. I don't make it up in the summer because of so much fresh free wild and cultivated food in my garden and field. Steve suggests using the diet as foraging and hiding it wherever the birds go. A practice I'd highly recommend for all birds all the time. The parakeets treat today was chickweed and I had the pleasant sight of Lesgren foraging for some in a basket hung in the aviary. Dorothy.

Almost all healthy human foods are also healthy for parrots. You can supplement your parrots' diet with the same items you are eating. Just keep portion size in mind.

All items can be swapped for similar ones. Steve aims to have at *least* 30 items in each batch.

Fresh food varies according to season. You can make the diet weekly or monthly and freeze in suitable-sized portions. A varied diet will improve mental and physical health, and teach your bird to accept and relish many foods.

At Hartman Aviary the general rule of thumb is, if it's a good healthy food for a human then a *proportionate* amount is good for a parrot. The Circus Diet promotes good eating habits in pet birds. Birds that have well developed palates are healthier, and more adaptable to diet changes throughout their lives.



Resources www.theparrotuniversity.com

Saving the Blues – Los Macheteros

from Laney Rickman

<http://www.birdendowment.org>

Funding **Nido Adoptivo™** is more than just putting up nest boxes. It facilitates environmental education and promotes conservation among the local people as well.

Cultural factors must be considered.

Los Macheteros is the oldest and most respected dance by the indigenous people of the Department of Beni. It is performed on all religious holidays. A huge fan-shaped headdress is worn which is intricately made from Macaw tail feathers. It was estimated that 10% of the feathers on the headdress were from Blue-throated Macaws. These critically endangered birds were hunted for their feathers for this use. The Blue-throated Macaw Conservation program, headed by Armonía, initiated workshops in the region to teach indigenous people how to make artificial feathers. This project was a huge success -- it provides economic alternatives which improve their quality of life, and eventually replaces the use of natural feathers with artificial feathers which benefits BTM conservation.



Trained indigenous group in San Ignacio de Moxos.



They are selling the **Machetero Kit** which contains everything you need in order to do it yourself.



Mauricio Herrera models a Machetero Kit headdress. This effort was his brilliant idea.

Help Us Save the Blues
Donate at
birdendowment.org

Thanks - from the Blues



From GOOD BIRD and

Barbara Heidenreich

Use Foraging to Get Good Behavior

Foraging is often looked at as a fun way to provide enrichment for your parrot. I am all about parrots having fun, but I am also very interested in teaching my parrots to be well behaved. Believe it or not, foraging activities can also be used to help influence your parrot's behavior for the better. Here are four situations in which foraging activities can be used to help create desired behavior and prevent undesired behavior.

Tip #1 Use foraging to make going back into a cage or enclosure reinforcing:

If your parrot enjoys your company, going back into the cage can be a difficult behavior. Some parrots view spending time with preferred people as highly desirable. To address this, the goal is to make sure fun things happen inside the cage as well as outside. Giving copious amounts of attention inside the cage is usually not realistic. This means we have to offer something else as reinforcement. Foraging toys or activities that are delivered right when your parrot goes back in the cage are a great way to increase the value of going home. This time consuming activity also helps keep your bird focused on foraging instead of wondering where his favorite person went.



Tip#2 Use foraging to teach your parrot to enjoy spending time on a play stand:

Many companion parrot owners want their birds to spend time on play stands. Play stands are often positioned to ensure lots of socialization and enrichment. However play stands can quickly lose their appeal for parrots when everything (view, toys, diet, etc.) stays the same. Providing foraging activities can make a play stand interesting again. The novelty of having to search and extract food items from foraging toys can increase the likelihood your parrot will choose to spend more time on the play stand rather than roaming around the house. Mix up where food is placed and how your bird will access it regularly to keep play stands more engaging.

Tip #3 Use foraging to prevent your parrot from vocalizing for attention:

Many parrots learn to vocalize loudly when a preferred person leaves the room. A great way to prevent this is to engage your bird in other acceptable activities prior to leaving the room. This is a great time to offer foraging toys and activities. When your bird is eagerly foraging, you can slip out of the room and let your bird enjoy searching for his favorite foods.

Tip #4 Use foraging as an alternative to feather damaging behavior:

Feather damaging behavior is a challenge for many parrot owners. If your bird has this problem be sure to visit a veterinarian with experience with this condition to get an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan. In the meantime you can work on redirecting your bird's behavior from feather picking to foraging. If you know there are certain times when your bird is prone to pick, plan on providing foraging activities just before that time. For example some birds seem to pick early in the morning. For these birds, foraging toys can be placed in the cage just as your bird is going to roost for the night. When the sun rises your bird may choose to engage with the foraging activities rather than destroy feathers.

Foraging is more than fun for your parrot. It is a great tool for managing behavior. Get creative with ways you can use foraging to influence your bird's behavior. The end result is a well behaved companion parrot.

Barbara Heidenreich has been a professional animal trainer since 1990. Her company Good Bird Inc (www.GoodBirdInc.com) provides parrot training DVDs, books and workshops. She has been a featured speaker in eighteen countries and has been published in nine languages. Barbara also consults on animal training in zoos.

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[Good Bird Inc](http://www.GoodBirdInc.com)

<http://www.petliferadio.com/wingspg.html>

Join Barbara and Robin Shewokis for
Wings 'n Things on Pet Life Radio!

Boy, there's a lot of information here! Enjoy!



Birds, Bees, and Aquatic Life Threatened by Gross Underestimate of Toxicity of World's Most Widely Used Pesticide

New Report Charges EPA Ignored Staff Warnings, Approved Widespread Use of Dangerous Pesticides

From The American Bird Conservancy

What is killing honeybees is killing more....



Grasshopper Sparrow by Luke Seitz.
The new ABC report shows that a single corn kernel coated with a neonicotinoid can kill a songbird.

(Washington, DC March 19, 2013) As part of a study on impacts from the world's most widely used class of insecticides, nicotine-like chemicals called neonicotinoids, American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has called for a ban on their use as seed treatments and for the suspension of all applications pending an independent review of the products' effects on birds, terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates and other wildlife.

"It is clear that these chemicals have the potential to affect entire food chains. The environmental persistence of the neonicotinoids, their propensity for runoff and for groundwater infiltration, and their cumulative and largely irreversible mode of action in invertebrates raise significant environmental concerns," said Cynthia Palmer, co-author of the report and Pesticides Program Manager for ABC,

one of the nation's leading bird conservation organizations.

ABC commissioned world renowned environmental toxicologist Dr. Pierre Mineau to conduct the research. The 100 page report, [*"The Impact of the Nation's Most Widely Used Insecticide on Birds,"*](#) reviews 200 studies on neonicotinoids including industry research obtained through the US Freedom of Information Act. The report evaluates the toxicological risk to birds and aquatic systems and includes extensive comparisons with the older pesticides that the neonicotinoids have replaced. The assessment concludes that the neonicotinoids are lethal to birds and to the aquatic systems on which they depend.

"A single corn kernel coated with a neonicotinoid can kill a song bird," Palmer said. "Even a tiny grain of wheat or canola treated with the oldest neonicotinoid - called imidacloprid - can fatally poison a bird. And as little as 1/10th of a neonicotinoid-coated corn seed per day during egg-laying season is all that is needed to affect reproduction."

The new report concludes that neonicotinoid contamination levels in both surface and ground water in the United States and around the world are already beyond the threshold found to kill many aquatic invertebrates. Data on surface water contamination from surveys to date, most notable from California and from the Canadian Prairies indicate that concentrations of several of the neonicotinoid insecticides are high enough to be causing impact in aquatic food chains. Data from other jurisdictions such as the Netherlands show even higher levels of contamination.

The report also identifies procedural deficiencies in how the US Environmental Protection Agency assesses aquatic impacts. “EPA risk assessments have greatly underestimated this risk, using scientifically unsound, outdated methodology that has more to do with a game of chance than with a rigorous scientific process,” the report says.

First introduced in the 1990s in response to widespread pest resistance and health concerns linked to older pesticides, the neonicotinoid insecticides quickly became top sellers in global pesticide markets. Now the most widely-used insecticides in the world, it is difficult to find pest control commodities that do not contain one or several of the neonicotinoid insecticides. California alone has registered nearly 300 neonicotinoid products.

EPA scientists have repeatedly documented serious concerns about the persistence, mobility and toxicity of the products, and yet the Agency continues to grant registrations allowing the chemicals to be used for an ever-widening range of crops and non-agricultural uses.

EPA and other regulatory agencies worldwide have underestimated the toxicity of these compounds to birds partly because the risk assessment methods fail to account sufficiently for interspecies variation in toxicity. For example, risk assessments underestimate acute risk by up to 10 fold for bird species beyond mallard ducks and bobwhites, the two usual test species. As for aquatic invertebrates, EPA has underestimated the toxicity of the neonicotinoid imidacloprid by over an order of magnitude because of the Agency’s failure to consider data from the peer-reviewed literature. EPA has grossly underestimated the toxicity of the other neonicotinoids as well, in part due to the Agency’s reliance on their standard test species, *Daphnia magna*, a freshwater flea which happens to be uniquely insensitive to neonicotinoids.

Given that a single neonicotinoid-coated seed can kill a bird, it is also important that seeds marketed for home bird feeders remain free of these chemical treatments. In response to sporadic wild bird seed contamination incidents, ABC has monitored bird seed sold by Walmart, Home Depot, Lowes and Target. To date, ABC’s independent bird seed testing efforts have focused on older products such as the organophosphorous and carbamate pesticides. The neonicotinoids are a candidate for future testing.

The report also charges that there is no readily available biomarker for neonicotinoids.

“It is astonishing that EPA would allow a pesticide to be used in hundreds of products without ever requiring the registrant to develop the tools needed to diagnose poisoned wildlife. It would be relatively simple to create a binding assay for the neural receptor which is affected by this class of insecticides.” the ABC calls on EPA to require that registrants of acutely toxic pesticides develop the tools necessary to diagnose poisoned birds and other wildlife.



Neonicotinoids’ toxicity to bees and other insects has brought them the most attention thus far and has dominated recent concerns of regulatory institutions worldwide. The serious risk to bees should not be understated as one-third of the U.S. diet depends on these insect pollinators. The ABC report makes clear, however, that the potential environmental impacts of neonicotinoids go well beyond bees. The report urges the EPA to expand its registration review of neonicotinoids to include bird, aquatic invertebrates, and other wildlife.

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The Feeder Station

To Top Off Your Crop

What happens if you inadvertently reinforce bad behavior.? What's worse, the guy keeps doing it.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&feature=endscreen&v=NdhIPHEIkss>

Yellow headed Amazons and Nanday Conure flocks during California's mild December days.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjQDtrUO104>

A male and female eclectus spar over a straw. Toby wants to share, but then he gets grumpy.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNAeCm6yNx4&feature=fvwp&NR=1>

A BBC Series on flight: **Earthflight** truly is a bird's-eye view of the world. See YouTube
<http://jdp.co.uk/programmes/earthflight>

The endangered red fronted macaw
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk7XUN9I73g&feature=youtu.be>

Smuggler caught with more than 10% of an entire species....
<http://www.care2.com/causes/smuggler-caught-with-more-than-10-percent-of-an-entire-species.html>

You need to make the acquaintance of Disco the Parakeet. This little Budgie can give ANY African Grey a run for its money!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hENmX8qvlo>

The of Prairie Chickens of Northeastern Colorado are boomin' birds...
<http://wildlife.state.co.us/NewsMedia/Videos/Pages/sandhillchickens.aspx>

Look on the left under "What's New" and scroll down to hear the Studio 360 contest winners. Other neat stuff is on this site, too.
<http://macaulaylibrary.org>

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<http://www.nathanwinograd.com/?cat=9>

Reasons A Parrot Will Bite

- You changed the way you wear your hair, glasses, shirt color, nail color..
- You touched their cage
- You tried to fill the food bowl
- You moved too fast so were obviously a parrot eating monster.
- You looked at them funny
- Taste testing you
- They found a freckle, mole, etc and are trying to steal it.
- You try making them step up with the evil left hand, not the right.
- It's bedtime and that is entirely unacceptable

Honestly, if you own a parrot, it's a matter of when you get bitten. Not if.

