

Flappers

A monthly publication of the Flapping Feathers Parrot Club
Volume 8 Issue 2 February 2017



The Flapping Feathers Parrot Club



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Editor's Message

I don't know yet if I will be able to make it to the March 25th Connecticut Parrot Society Featherfest, but I'm hoping to. Check out the flyer on [page 27](#).

I was recently given a nice gift that I personally cannot use, so I'll bring it to our next meeting for a door prize. Most members will find it useful. It will definitely pay to come to this meeting to try to win this prize. There is never a charge for our door prize drawings. I'll give more info in the meeting announcement that I always send 2 days before meetings.

Another [bird walk](#) is this Saturday, March 11th, at the Brooklyn Bridge starting at 9 am.

There is a [Nurture Nature Retreat and Wild Walk](#) on March 18th in Queens, NY starting at 9 am.

An update from [Poisoned Pets](#) about Evanger's Dog and Cat Food (they sell Ferret food also) having poison in their dog food.

Some upcoming events that I already know about that are worth listing here. As I mentioned in our last newsletter, I had to cut back on listing Upcoming Events due to time constraints: [Smoky Mountain Cage Bird Society Bird Show](#), [Long Island Pet Expo](#), [Hernando Exotic Bird Club 19th Annual Bird Mart](#), [Connecticut Parrot Society 10th Annual Featherfest](#), [Peninsula Caged Bird Society Spring Bird Festival](#), [Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club Expo](#), [Wmass Bird Expo 2017](#).

Some recent interesting links:

[HARI Educational Videos](#)

[10 Newly Recognized Species](#)

[Incredible New Species Discovered in 2016](#)

[Cheeky keas caught dragging cones into the road so people in cars will stop to feed them](#)

[10 birds that were saved from extinction](#)

[The world's rarest songbirds](#)

[Trailer from the Macaw Project](#)

[These Rescue Ducks Never Stop Moving](#)

[Falcons on a Plane](#)

[Best Pictures from Around Australia](#)

[116th Christmas Bird Count U.S. High Counts](#)

[Watch a Bird Trick Meerkats Out of Their Food](#)

Happy St. Patrick's Day,
Shelly Orloff

Executive Director and Newsletter Editor
Flapping Feathers Parrot Club of NJ
sheldono@sprynet.com or editor@flappingfeathers.org
201-791-0245 ∞



March Meeting

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

7:30 pm

[Land and Sea Diner and Restaurant](#)

20-12 Fair Lawn Avenue

Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

201-794-7240

Repeating stuff follows for the regular meetings that we have at the diner:

Everybody receiving this newsletter, and even those who do not receive it, are welcome to attend any or all of our meetings. I usually send out an email a few days before each meeting as a reminder to everybody I know in this area whose email address I have. If you happen to read this newsletter and you did not get a reminder message, it probably means I do not have your email address; please [email it to me](#) if you wish to be notified.

If you wish to check the menu before coming to a meeting, [click this link](#) and then click the Menu button. You will then need to click the lightly colored menu pages, one page at a time. Or [click here](#) to see the entire menu as one scanned pdf document.

Please let me know 1 or 2 days before each meeting if you are coming or if you think you may come, so that we can arrange for the correct number of tables to be set up. You can also come without notice, but it's a little better if we know ahead of time. Contact Shelly at sheldono@sprynet.com or 201-791-0245 to let me know if you wish.

So far our waitresses have been giving us separate checks, which is very convenient. Hopefully this will continue. But even if they don't, each of you will just pay for what you order; the bill will not be equally split. So if you just have a cup of coffee, you will not have to pay \$10 for it.

Hope to see you at the meeting,
Shelly ∞



Flapping Feathers Parrot Club

Web address: www.flappingfeathers.org

[Visit our Facebook Page](#)

Email: flappingfeathers@flappingfeathers.org or info@flappingfeathers.org

Phone: 201-791-0245

Location: Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

[Instructions for viewing and printing the newsletter](#)

[View the cover movie](#)

February Birdie Birthdays



Greenwing Macaw Cheyenne

Birthday: February 22

Age: 17 years

Parent: Linda Austin



Please submit pictures of your bird(s) the month before their birthday(s) for inclusion on our Birdie Birthday page.

Email to Shelly at sheldono@sprynet.com.



Out and About with Pookie

by Steve Plafchan

VP and Editor

Rainbow Feathers Bird Club and Rescue

www.rfbirdclub.com

February 2017

Reprinted with permission from the author

Hello everyone. Here it is, February once again and once again, it seems all humans are very infatuated with the weather predictions of an overweight buck-toothed ground rat. There is no doubt that all of my feathered fans know exactly what I am referring to but for my companion human followers I will be happy to expound on my statement to clarify. Yes, I am referring to Punxsutawney Phil Sowerby from Gobblers Knob, Pennsylvania who is known as the prognosticator of prognosticator's. Every February 2nd humans observe one of the strangest rituals I have ever seen. They amass in large numbers in the middle of the night, singing, dancing and drinking at the base of a rotted tree stump awaiting the moment that the sun rises. When the sun rises above the horizon, they grasp poor Phil about the waist, raise him over their heads and announce if there will be an early spring or six more weeks of winter. Well, I truly do not want to be the harbinger of bad news but poor Phil has absolutely no idea what the weather will be. Thirty minutes prior to this moment Phil was sound asleep and hibernating in his burrow under the stump. It is no wonder he predicts six more weeks of winter. Imagine; he has been rudely awakened and yanked

from his comfortable burrow in the freezing cold with lights and cameras going off. Geeze! You don't have to be a Rhodes scholar to know what he'll say; if it were me, I'd tell you winter was going to last six more months. Ergo we here at Bird Droppings have checked the satellite images and calculated the jet stream data and have arrived at the consensus that Spring will begin at 3:45 AM on March 20.

There are going to be some minor staffing changes here at Bird Droppings; first, occasionally there will be guest writers for this column from other members of the feathered staff. Second, we are opening a new department that has the unique duty of sampling, testing and writing reviews on toys and other bird related items. The new department head of this division is going to be Ricky, an Umbrella Cockatoo. Ricky is especially qualified for this position because of his ability to destroy pretty much everything and escape from anything. He will be testing the unfounded theories of indestructible acrylic toys, escape proof cages, cage locks on food and access doors, play stands and other things companion humans do to attempt controlling our activities. Here is a brief word from Rickey.



AAWAK! AAWAK! AAWAK!
AAWAK! HI, MY NAME IS RICKY. I WANT EVERYONE TO KNOW I AM PROUD TO BE JOINING AND WILL DO MY BEST TO BE HONEST AND FAIR AT ALL TIMES!

SCREAMS and CHAOS
RICKY

Chirps and Squawks
Pookie ∞



A Word From Me...

Cleaning 101

by Flapping Feathers member Elise Negrin

February 2017

I hate cleaning. I'm serious! I really mean it. I hate to clean and it's a daily effort to figure out how to avoid it. On the other hand, I like a clean home more than I hate cleaning. Because I was born under the astrological sign of Gemini, the twins, I suffer from double vision, hence two opposing views. Early on in my life I realized this dilemma and struggled to find a way to meet in the middle. Like many of us, we've had one or some of us have had many... birds that is. We all know birds can be quite messy and the smaller species to be messiest. None compares to a cockatoo or a parrot that tosses his stuff outside the cage bars. For the past few years I have only had 2 birds but right now am host to 5. Developing a system is number one in mess management. My system is to feed fresh foods first, then pellet/seed mixes about one to two hours later. Tray in hand, I gather old dishes, water first. To the sink I go while the chatter is ongoing in the bird room. I wash all the water dishes, stack them on the tray and fill the pitcher with water. I assemble their dishes with fresh food mixes, placing them on the tray. Each cage delivery comes with sweet talk, a skritch on the head and assessment of their cage. After I have put these dishes in, I turn to my work station [the picture of my work

station is a cat stand never used by cats]. I line up pellet/seed dishes (they are cleaned first) and fill them. I take a break after this to get coffee and watch to see if they are eating the fresh food. Always serve the most important food when they are hungriest.

Next is paper. After they eat their fresh food, or about an hour, I drag the garbage can along, remove the leftovers and change paper. I find plain old newspaper is easiest, using the pages that fit best [newspaper ink is soy and not harmful]. Most of them get paper on top of the grates; only one does not. I always have a wet washcloth in hand for wiping up poop spots. Placing their seed/pellets dry mix is done. Then I leave them alone [with their dry mix] as most of the time, they eat and its naptime, where they get very quiet. My happy time for sure! All this takes about 45 minutes from start to finish, minus the lag time while they are eating their fresh food. While paper changing, I look at each cage to make sure there are no frayed or bad toy issues. I have found my system works because I do not have to do much else the rest of the day. I do play with each one throughout the day and talk to them.

Now you have it. Create a system that works for you. For



me, all the birds are in the same room, which makes a gigantic difference. If you are running around your house room to room, rethink how your home functions. Use a tray for servicing the food and water. Instead of filling individual water dishes, bring the clean water bowls to a workstation near the cages and fill from a pitcher. Less mess means less time having to clean.

After all this is done, I assess the floor for mess. I use newspaper around the cage areas so if I must pick it up, I do it while changing the paper inside the cage. I can now vacuum or sweep, replace the paper and start all over tomorrow. It's a labor of love, I say. I'd much rather clean a cage than walk a dog. Some of us do both. If you are struggling with your birds' mess, take a pen and paper, write down what you currently do and how you do it. Then decide how you can change your system [or create it if you do not have one]. As for me, I

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Maureen's Musings - February - Happy Valentine's Day

by Maureen Halsted

Member of the Budgerigar & Foreign Bird Society and Flapping Feathers

www.bfbsbirdclub.com

February 2017

Reprinted with permission from the February 2017 Budgerigar & Foreign Bird Society newsletter

Here we are in February. The last of the four most dreaded months in the human's world. Winter winding down, hopefully.

The Weather forecasters, (supposedly, they are humans who have insight into what kind of weather humans might expect), said last Autumn that we would be having something called "An Old Fashioned Winter".

The Clan and I are still attempting to figure out what all the fuss is about, in regards to the weather, and now they further confuse the issue with sayings like "An Old Fashioned Winter!" I mean is there a "New Fashioned Winter"? We are aware humans are very attuned to fashion when it pertains to clothes and other 'fads'. Really not certain where *weather* fashion fits into that equation.

What we *do* know is when Mom leaves the window in the furnace room open while she is throwing in something called 'wood', the air entering from the outside is *COLD!!*

Ah well, Spring is fast approaching, (we all hope), and then we will no longer have to listen to the humans complaining about the cold and snow, etc., etc.

February is also known as "Heart Month". Mom says the heart is what keeps humans alive, as it pumps blood through their bodies. Hmmm. Interesting.

Around mid month, (the 14th to be exact), that pudgy, featherless guy called Cupid, is known to flutter around, shooting arrows at people. Now he really is a weird sort of a bird. Looks human, (sort of), but unlike humans he has wings (sort of). Having wings, one would think he was a bird, however he is featherless. If it were only one or two of them like that, we could think they were 'pluckers', but they are *all* like that! How can that be? A new featherless breed of bird? Or is he a half bird, half human? *AWK!* What a scary thought!!!

Mom says he is a 'Cherub'. Now according to Wikipedia, (yes, we have given up on the old dic-



tionary, can't find it these days, anyways), a cherub is an angel child. However, this cupid bird shoots *arrows* at people! And he aims for their heart, that does not sound very angelic to us.

Hey, wait a minute... the Clan and I have blood, so that must mean we also have a heart... *Feather Busters!* That means we could become a victim of this cupid bird! He could have one of us in his sight as we speak!!! *AWK, AWK!!!*

I hear footsteps approaching. Oh no! It might be him!! No place to hide. What to do. What to *DO!!* Oh wait a minute, he doesn't walk, he flutters about

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Cockatales - Member Spotlight!

by Dave Kearsley

President, Durham Avicultural Society of Ontario

www.birdclub.ca

February 2017

Reprinted with permission from the author from the February 2017 Durham Avicultural Society newsletter

This month I am going to dedicate this report to a member who was on the DAS executive committee for many years, Dietrich Wunderlich and his wife April. They looked after the rings and the membership, and they specialized in canaries, chiefly Mahoganies and Glosters. He raised a lot of young birds, and showed them at the local club shows.

When I went to visit Dieter, he gave out advice quite freely, not afraid to share his knowledge. His birds were in an outside flight during the warmer times, but held in an indoor heated aviary in the fall and winter.

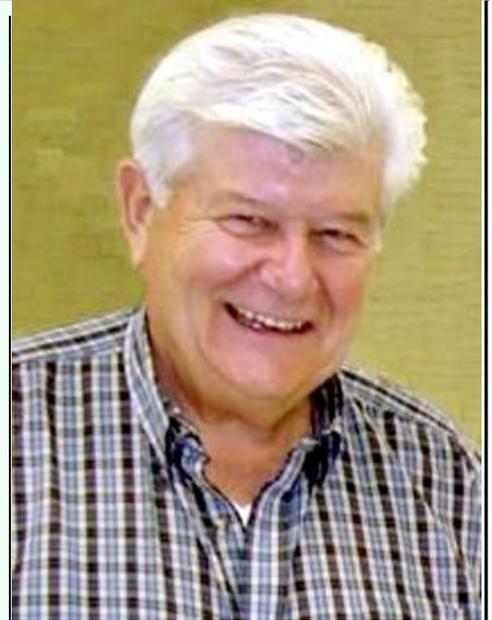
Dieter believed in conditioning, not just with food and diet, but lighting too. The lighting was increased gradually, and this would bring the canaries into breeding condition.

In the fall of 2015, I went to see him, with the purpose of obtaining some breeding stock. He selected a pair of Mahoganies and a pair of Glosters for me, than refused to let me pay him. Those birds gave me a total of 18 youngsters.

Dieter passed away in December, survived by his wife April, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Unfortu-

nately, I had to move last October, so my flock of birds had to be sold and rehomed. But when circumstances permit, I do plan to get them going again, and with Dieter's counselling still ringing in my ear, I hope to once again have singing birds at hand again. Among the things he taught me were:

1. Have patience.
2. Listen to what the experienced, successful breeders tell you.
3. Keep the cages and bird room clean.
4. Research the birds you would like to keep before you buy them. Concentrate on one or two types at the most.
5. Don't sell them off for a song. If you worked hard to raise them, don't be afraid to ask a good price for them.
6. Always feed them the best quality food available and make sure it's fresh always. Beware of mice infestation.
7. Never crowd the birds. If stressed they will fight among themselves and will not breed.
8. Above all, enjoy the birds. And try not to have too many. (Now that's a hard one for some



to remember, I've gone through that one myself.)

9. Finally... have patience.

Thank you Dieter, and RIP. See you at the meeting. ∞





Peach Faced Lovebirds in the Wild

by Michael Sazhin, "The Parrot Wizard"

www.trainedparrot.com

February 23, 2017

Reprinted with permission from the author

Lovebirds are very popular parrots as pets because of their small size and large personality. If you are wondering what Peach Faced Lovebirds are really like and does a Peach Faced Lovebird make a good pet, then knowing a bit about what they are like in the wild may help answer your question. It was really exciting to get to see where their pet qualities come from during my trip to Namibia where I got to see Peach Faced Lovebirds in the wild.

Peach Faced, also known as Rosy Faced, Lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) are native to the southwest corner of Africa. Their habitat is woodland savanna bordering on semi-desert. It is a harsh dry climate where these birds come from. They have it pretty tough. These lovebirds go on various kinds of trees and on the ground. However, palm trees seem to be their favorite. They mainly stay in pairs and groups made up of pair units.

The birds stay in a more tight area ([a lot like conures](#)) going back and forth between their nesting trees and food sources, as opposed to [Cape Parrots](#) and other *Poicephalus* that make long commutes to food areas. The Peach Faced Lovebirds are quite noisy chirping and calling to each other throughout the day. They definitely aren't shy and they make their presence known.

The boldness of the lovebirds is not just obvious by their calling and colors, they are bossy birds. They go after much larger birds to maintain their nesting and feeding areas. Lovebirds may be one of the smallest kinds of parrots but they act like they don't know this.

The wild behavior of these Peach-Faced Lovebirds should not be surprising to anyone who has seen them in captivity. They are high energy, active, bold, fairly aggressive birds in a small package. When considering lovebirds as pets, don't let their small size trick you into thinking that they are less trouble or require less responsibility. The only way their small size should impact your decision to get one should be that they can reside in a smaller space and that the overall costs are smaller (less food, smaller cage, smaller toys). Otherwise they can be aggressive, tough, noisy, and messy like any bigger parrot. In fact, it might be a surprise that a bird so small could create a presence of a much bigger bird.

In some ways, lovebirds can be more difficult to keep as pets and train than larger parrots. They tend to be more poorly raised. Breeders put less effort into providing individual care and taming as they crank out many small birds. They grow up more quickly so the "baby stage" may already be over by the time you even get to purchase a weaned



baby. Chances are that almost any lovebird you get, young or old, will be quite a wild bird. Not only will it be more wild but it will do this at a high pace. Keeping up with a hyper bird jumping and flying about won't make it easy to have it on you or in your hand.

However, lovebirds are very intelligent. They may well be more intelligent than other small parrots and parakeets like budgies, cockatiels, and even parrotlets. This intelligence does not mean that they will comply with you or cooperate. In fact, if anything, it will mean they are more shy of human contact. Being shy of human contact does not mean they won't have the boldness to attack. Like the



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lovebirds I observed in the wild (you will see in the video below), household lovebirds may try to attack and drive humans away. Not the best recipe for a pet.

The good news is that their intelligence makes lovebirds quite trainable. They are opportunistic and driven. So if you properly set up your home environment, balance their diet, and get involved in their training, they have potential just as any bigger bird to be a great companion. Lovebirds can learn quickly and be taught many tricks. All of the basic cued tricks taught on the TrainedParrot Blog (such as [Target](#), [Turn Around](#), [Wings](#), and [Fetch](#)) can be taught to lovebirds. They can even be [flight recall trained](#). I recommend that lovebird owners read



my book, [The Parrot Wizard's Guide to Well-Behaved Parrots](#) to learn the effective application of training and how to get their lovebird to become a wonderful family pet.

Above is a video of my experience watching Peach Faced Lovebirds in the wild. ∞

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on those ridiculous little wings. *Whew!!* Just about had me a *heart* attack there!

Ahh, the footsteps belong to Mom, who has arrived with a treat we all enjoy: BANANA!!

Gotta fly over to my dish. Meanwhile, remember to look after your heart, and be sure to shield it from any incoming arrows!

Rikki, The Clan and Maureen Halsted

∞



Classifieds

- Grey Parrot Consulting, Lisa A. Bono, ACPBC. Problem Solving, Behavioral Issues, Positive Reinforcement Training. In home and phone consultations available. 609-698-0001. ThePlatinumParrot@verizon.net. 10% off consultation rate to Flapping Feathers members.
- Placing a classified ad is free for members. Contact [Shelly](#) if you wish to place one. ∞



Photo Credits: The [cover](#) pictures (Muggsy the African Grey, Morgan the Blue & Gold Macaw, and CooCoo the Blue-crowned Conure), the [page 2](#) pictures (Molly the Greenwing Macaw and Phinny the African Grey), and the [page 5](#) picture (Cupid the Moluccan Cockatoo) are courtesy of Linda Costello. The [page 3](#) picture (Babe (blue) and Missy the budgies) is courtesy of Carole Campbell. Any picture(s) obtained from Wikipedia is / are licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 License](#). ∞

China to Debut World's First Bird 'Airport'

by Matt Hickman

www.mnn.com

February 22, 2017

Reprinted with permission from Mother Nature Network

Tianjin's wetland sanctuary will serve as a rest stop for peckish migratory birds traveling along one of the world's major flyways.

"Birds" and "airports" are two words that, paired together, don't normally paint the most harmonious picture. That is, unless your idea of harmonious involves ultra-white-knuckle emergency landings in the Hudson River and the large-scale slaughter of geese, gulls and other feathered specimens that are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Birds and aviation just aren't simpatico.

Leave it to China - a nation where everything is larger, longer, taller and [generally more intense](#) - to announce plans to build an airport that's for birds.

Described as the world's first-ever bird airport, the proposed [Lingang Bird Sanctuary](#) in the northern coastal city of Tianjin is, of course, not an actual



An airport where you'll actually want to spend an entire day, Lingang Bird Sanctuary features lake-encircling walking paths, forest trails and cycling routes.

Rendering: McGregor Coxall

airport. Rather, it's a sprawling wetland preserve specifically designed to accommodate hundreds - even thousands - of daily takeoffs and landings by birds traveling along the [East Asian-Australasian Flyway](#). The idea is that over 50 species of migratory waterbirds, some endangered, will stop for an extended spell at the protected sanctuary and feed to their four-chambered hearts' content before continuing on their long journey along the flyway. One of nine major global migratory flyways, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway encompasses 22 different countries including China, Japan, New Zealand, Indonesia, Thailand, Russia and the United States (just Alaska).

Located on a former landfill site, the 61-hectare (150-acre) airport is also open to human travelers. (Half a million visitors are expected annually.) However, in lieu of duty-free shopping and an outpost of Macaroni Grill, the main attraction for non-egg-laying vertebrates at Tianjin's newest airport will be a green-roofed education and research center called the Water Pavilion, a series of raised "observation pods" and an extensive network of scenic walking and cycling paths and trails totaling just over 4 miles.

"The proposed Bird Airport will be a globally significant sanctu-



Lingang Bird Sanctuary is an 'airport' designed with the safety and well-being of migratory waterbirds in mind.

Rendering: McGregor Coxall

ary for endangered migratory bird species, while providing new green lungs for the city of Tianjin," Adrian McGregor of Australian landscape architecture firm McGregor Coxall explained to [Dezeen](#) of the design, which recently won a competition seeking proposals for a "flagship ecological wetland precinct" - an oversized eco-park, essentially. Frequently blanketed in smog so thick that it has [shut down real](#) airports, Tianjin is a city - China's fourth most populous - that would certainly benefit from a new pair of robust green lungs.

Air pollution-mitigation advantages aside, the primary function of the Lingang Bird Sanctuary is, as mentioned by McGregor, to provide a safe space - a "crucial re-fueling and breeding stop" - for the 50 million-some wing travelers moving along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, which McGregor Coxall notes in a press release as being the

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In lieu of terminals, Tianjin's newest airport will feature an education and research center dedicated to the study of migratory waterbirds traveling along a flyway that stretches from New Zealand to Alaska.

Rendering: McGregor Coxall

world's most threatened migratory bird corridor due to habitat loss brought on by unchecked coastal development.

“Along the flyway intertidal habitat for stopovers for migratory birds is disappearing at an alarming rate. Over the last ten years, newly constructed sea walls enclosed one and a half million hectares of intertidal habitat,” he tells Dezeen. “Today about 70 percent of China's coast is now walled. There are not many places for migratory birds left to land, and to find enough food to fatten up for onward migration.”

Buffered by a 49-acre forest geared to protect the wetland sanctuary from encroaching urban development, the avian

airport will include a trio of different habitats - mudflats, a reed zone and a lake-bound island with shallow rapids - each meant to accommodate different bird species. As the proposal notes, McGregor Coxall partnered with ornithologist Avifauna Research to work the “complex interactions of site soils, feed sources, wetland vegetation and water management into the overall design.” Renewable energy will be used to move water through the man-made wetland environment.

If all goes as planned, construction on McGregor Coxall's ambitious landfill-turned-bird sanctuary design will commence later this year with a completion date slated for 2018.

When finished and officially open to both weary feathered travelers and those who admire them, the airport will serve as a pilot project in China's highly touted [Sponge City](#) initiative. Through various green infrastructure projects, the government-funded scheme sets out to reimagine China's rapidly growing cities as giant, super-absorbent sponges capable of soaking up water to significantly reduce the risk of catastrophic urban flooding events.



A birder's paradise, Tianjin's new wetland sanctuary will also help to scrub the city's notoriously polluted air and prevent major urban flooding events.

Rendering: McGregor Coxall

Calling the rate of flooding in Chinese cities a “national scandal,” Kongjian Yu, dean of Peking University's College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, explained to [CityLab](#) in 2015 that “a sponge city is one that can hold, clean, and drain water in a natural way using an ecological approach.”

He adds: “... in modern China, we have destroyed those natural systems of ponds, rivers, and wetlands, and replaced them with dams, levees, and tunnels, and now we are suffering from floods.”

[Matt Hickman](#)

([@mattyhick](#)) writes about design, architecture and the intersection between the natural world and the built environment. ∞

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feel so much better when the cages are clean, because when you let it go too long, you have a mountain of poop to scrub and delaying or ignoring it only makes it worse. Off I go to contemplate tomorrow morn-

ing... cat litter boxes, bird cages and oh yes, let the dog out.

Side Note: I mention mixing various pets in this article. I do not recommend mixing them; we have gates and the dog/dogs and cats are not permitted in the bird room without supervi-

sion at best. If I am lying down on the sofa in the bird room (aka family room), the little dog is with me. No wandering animals and the cages are closed at those times. Be careful because it only takes a second for an accident to happen. ∞

Watching Birds Near Your Home is Good for Your Mental Health

by Dr. Daniel Cox

www.exeter.ac.uk

February 24, 2017

Reprinted with permission from University of Exeter

People living in neighbourhoods with more birds, shrubs and trees are less likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and stress, according to research by academics at the University of Exeter, the British Trust for Ornithology and the University of Queensland.

The study, involving hundreds of people, found benefits for mental health of being able to see birds, shrubs and trees around the home, whether people lived in urban or more leafy suburban neighbourhoods.

The study, which surveyed mental health in over 270 people from different ages, incomes and ethnicities, also found that those who spent less time out of doors than usual in the previous week were more likely to report they were anxious or depressed.

After conducting extensive surveys of the number of birds in the morning and afternoon in Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton, the study found that lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress were associated with the number of birds people could see in the afternoon. The academics studied afternoon bird numbers -

which tend to be lower than birds generally seen in the morning – because they are more in keeping with the number of birds that people are likely to see in their neighbourhood on a daily basis.

In the study, common types of birds including blackbirds, robins, blue tits and crows were seen. But the study did not find a relationship between the species of birds and mental health, but rather the number of birds they could see from their windows, in the garden or in their neighbourhood.

Previous studies have found that the ability of most people to identify different species is low (e.g. Dallimer et al, 2012), suggesting that for most people it is interacting with birds, not just specific birds, that provides well-being.

University of Exeter research fellow [Dr. Daniel Cox](#), who led the study, said: "This study starts to unpick the role that some key components of nature play for our mental well-being".

Birds around the home, and nature in general, show great promise in preventative health care, making cities healthier, happier places to live".



Being able to see birds, shrubs and trees around the home benefits mental health.

The positive association between birds, shrubs and trees and better mental health applied, even after controlling for variation in neighbourhood deprivation, household income, age and a wide range of other socio-demographic factors.

Recent research by Dr. Cox and Professor Kevin Gaston, who are based at the [Environmental Sustainability Institute](#) at the Penryn Campus at the University of Exeter, found that watching birds makes people feel relaxed and connected to nature (Cox and Gaston, 2016).

[The research](#) is published in the journal *Bioscience* and was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council as conducted as part of the Fragments, Functions, Flows and Ecosystem Services project.

∞

The Endangered Species Act is Under Attack. But How Much Trouble is it in?

by Brian Palmer

www.audubon.org

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Politicians are asking for major changes to the law - and even an outright repeal. Here's how the ESA could take a hit and everything that's at stake.

Forty-four years ago, the most important wildlife-conservation law in American history passed the U.S. Senate with a vote of [92 to 0](#). "Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed," President Richard Nixon said after ratifying the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

But in the decades since, the ESA has come under attack. Industries have labeled it as radical and abusive. Congress has [introduced multiple bills](#) to weaken it. Flare-ups between states and federal agencies have led to [years-long litigation](#) over its scope. The assault has escalated to the point that now 14 attorney generals [are asking](#) the Trump administration to revise the law. Meanwhile, long-time ESA-nemesis Rep. Bob Bishop [R-UT] [is threatening](#) to repeal it.

An outright repeal, of course, would be extremely challenging. Even if every Republican senator voted to scrap the law, they would need to sway eight

Democrats to overcome [a filibuster](#). Given that the ESA is still popular among the masses - a 2015 survey shows that [90 percent](#) of Americans support it to some degree - that isn't likely.

Still, there are several other tactics opponents could take to undermine the act. One probable, time-tested approach is [tinkering with the act's protections](#): for example, repealing the provision that allows citizens to file lawsuits against the government or other private persons for failing to list or protect a species, or [granting Congress a veto](#) on expensive projects, such as the [\\$190 million](#) spent in 2014 to save the steelhead trout.

Tangling up individual species protections is another possibility. If passed, [H.R.717](#), a new bill introduced to Congress by Rep. Pete Olson [R-TX], would remove the 12-month deadline for making listing decisions, allowing officials to let petitions fester for years. It would also give the Interior or Commerce Departments the power to reject a listing because of economic fallout. The Greater Sage-Grouse has been a major target for anti-ESA legislation, too. Two identical bills in the [House](#) and [Senate](#) are propos-



Oil and gas motives pushed the Lesser Prairie-Chicken off the endangered species list last summer. There could be more of where that came from in upcoming months.

Photo: [Noppadol Paothong](#)

ing that states take over federally managed grouse lands, while also blocking the bird from landing on the endangered species list until 2027.

Of all the options, starving the ESA of funding might be the most straightforward way to hurt it. Federal spending on endangered species declined by nearly \$90 million between [2012](#) and [2014](#), and Congress could demand further cuts. The overall budget can't be filibustered, and supporters of the ESA likely won't expend much political capital trying to stop small-scale changes.

"Support for the act is broad but not very deep," says Patrick Parenteau, a professor and former director of the Vermont Law School's Environmental Center. "It's hard to find a

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champion with clout.” So far, Rep. Raul Grijalva [D-AZ] has been one of the few politicians who has stood up for the act.

The most important ESA provision - and the one that seems to most perturb Bishop - is the broad prohibition of “take.” This includes a long list of actions that could lead to the death or harassment of a protected species. Making too much noise, if the racket interrupts breeding, is one extreme example. Bishop and his peers argue that the bulk of these infractions are trivial, criticizing the built-in fines and jail time as a “[penalty-based](#)” approach to conservation.

Yet the law is more constructive and profound than critics give it credit for. The conservation work done through the ESA is collaborative, and prosecutions of landowners are “[extremely rare](#).” The take policies coax landowners to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on a recovery plan. Once a species’ numbers rebound and it’s taken off the list, business can go back to usual.

These are the types of alliances that helped bring the Whooping Crane back from the brink. The federal government spends [more than \\$6 million](#) each year trying to protect the endangered bird and its habitat. A permitting process limits heavy construction projects during the cranes’ migratory seasons; on popular stopover sites, water and other natural features are preserved to boost the birds’ survival rates. The government

also pays certain landowners to make major changes to their properties, and issues [lucrative grants](#) for projects that improve habitats along migration routes. It’s a cooperative, negotiated, and well-compensated system - not the jackbooted scenario that Bishop wants to portray. And it’s effective: The Whooping Crane population went from [57 in 1971](#), to nearly 600 individuals today.

If the program’s funds are slashed, however, such progress could easily be halted - if not reversed. “We’ve invested so much in saving the species - to lose even 10 to 15 individuals a year would be devastating,” says Steve Holmer, vice president of policy at the American Bird Conservancy.

Species on the margins of the law could be in jeopardy as well. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken, one of the ESA’s most debated-over birds, is one example. The quirky, foot-long fowl used to [forage across the southern Great Plains](#). But lately, conversion of prairie to farmland and fossil-fuel production [have limited](#) the species’ 32,000 remaining members to small, fragmented areas in five states.

There’s little dispute over what the birds need: Large connected swaths of [native grasslands](#) allow different populations to mix and breed, buoying prairie-chicken survival overall. Rather, the disagreement lies in who’s responsible for developing and enforcing a recovery plan. The federal government, the states, oil and farm interests, and conservation groups are locked in a 21-year battle over the

bird’s conservation status. The species was listed as threatened in 2014, then [delisted by a judge](#) who called the ruling “arbitrary and capricious” - a victory for the oil and gas groups that sued USFWS. The agency is currently reviewing the listing again, with a decision expected by this summer.

Regardless of the verdict, the mere existence of the ESA is crucial to the prairie-chicken. Private landowners - who hold 95 percent of the bird’s native range - are [teaming with states up on large-scale projects](#) to keep it out of harm’s way. The reason? They know that if they fail, the federal government will swoop in. Without that fear driving them, the pressure to save the bird would disappear.

In its relatively short and contentious lifetime, the ESA has helped dozens of species dodge extinction. In fact, it has a 99 percent success rate in keeping wildlife from going extinct; of the 100 or so bird species, many are [on-track for eventual delisting](#). But the act is only as strong and effective as we allow it to be. Whether it’s by one well-aimed blow or a thousand tiny cuts, any dismantling of the ESA could reverse decades of hard-earned success, and deprive future species from the protections they need to survive.

[Endangered Species Act in Trouble](#)

Ask your members of Congress to oppose efforts to weaken the Endangered Species Act.

[Take Action](#)

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What Is a Geriatric Parrot?

by [Susan Orosz](#),

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www.lafeber.com

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The term geriatric relates to old age, but do we really know when a parrot is old? That is a very difficult question as the answer depends in part on the life expectancy of that species of parrot. Unfortunately, we have limited information on that.

It's only been about 20 years that we have known the age of hand-reared parrots. We've had data on the life expectancy of parrots in the wild, and for many years, assumed that life with us would make them live longer. But that seems to have been very wrong. It appears that nutrition, exercise and genetics all play into the life span of our parrots. It is better to define geriatric birds as those for which medical conditions associated with aging begin. In other words, if they show physiological signs characteristic of aging, then they are geriatric.

Parrots Age "Slowly"

We know that birds as a group enjoy remarkably slow aging rates and long life spans for their size. Dr. Ottinger reported that, "The remarkably slow aging that characterizes many members of the class Aves relative to similar-sized, non-flying mammals appears, at least in part, to be correlated with an evolutionary history of low adult mortality rates. Even small (<100g) songbirds, like

barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) often survive in the wild up to 5 years or more; captive zebra finches (15-20g) routinely live over 8 years." She also stated that, "The long life spans and slow aging rates of birds are even more remarkable when considered in light of their high gram-specific rates of energy expenditure."

"The oxidative damage hypothesis, currently a central theory in biogerontology, posits that reactive oxygen species (ROS) generated during normal oxidative metabolism are responsible for many of the molecular changes underlying aging-related physiological declines." So, despite their high-energy expenditure, they don't age at the rate you might expect or show the anticipated physiological declines.

Interestingly, Dr. Ottinger provided research evidence that "Avian defenses against oxidative damage may include a complex array of mechanisms, including antioxidant enzymes and structural defenses, such as lower levels of saturated fatty acids in cell or mitochondrial membranes. Birds may also have superior forms of protection against – and repair of – damage to DNA and other cellular components by pro-oxidant molecules.



Photo: Joe Ravi

Even more intriguing, however, is the possibility that bird mitochondria employ specialized alterations of the mitochondria "machinery" itself, including adaptive proton leak that may result in the production of fewer ROS in the first place. That means that there would be less damage to internal membranes, thereby allowing birds to live longer than mammals of comparable size.

Age-Related Ailments in Birds

The maximum recorded longevities (MRLs) of wild birds average 1.7 times greater than MRLs of captive mammals, and captive birds on the whole outlive captive mammals by a factor of three. While birds in the wild

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live much longer than mammals of similar size, birds in the wild do die from diseases associated with old age. Avian diseases of aging are generally similar to those seen in mammals, and include atherosclerosis, neoplasms including cancers, senile ocular cataracts, biochemical alterations in collagen and other connective tissues, and reproductive changes, including neoplasms, malignancies, and endocrinological deficiencies.

According to Zoo/Exotic Pathology Service, which looked back over years of data on older birds, budgerigars and lovebirds were considered older at 6; cockatiels at 12; and larger parrots including Amazons, macaws and cockatoos at 30. In our practice at Bird and Exotic Pet Wellness Center, we are observing these changes at the age of 20!

Cardiac disease has been historically underdiagnosed in pet birds. Atherosclerosis is reported most often in Amazon parrots, particularly in blue-fronted Amazon parrots, African grey parrots, and macaws, according to Drs. Reavill and Dorrestein. Commonly these lesions cause increased arterial resistance that affects the heart. Early changes in the heart include hypertrophy of the left ventricle followed by left ventricular dilation, dilation of the left atria, right heart dilation, and right heart failure. Right heart failure can lead to congestion, atrophy, and, subsequently, cirrhosis of the liver.

Many birds die because of a decreased blood supply to the brain as a result of severe

narrowing of the carotid arteries. There may be a history of the bird going through periods of a loss of awareness of their surroundings in the days or weeks before their death. We commonly see parrots that have fallen off their perches and appear dazed for a short period of time, have seizures or changes in mentation. When looking at changes in the skin, the most commonly reported problem is dermatitis followed by skin tumors. Cataracts are common in birds as they age as well.

The lesions of hepatic fibrosis, bile duct reduplication, and aggregates of granulocytic extramedullary hematopoiesis are the typical findings in chronic liver disease in birds. Amazon parrots, cockatiels, macaws, and budgerigars seem to be more commonly recognized with chronic liver disease. Grossly, the affected livers are variably shrunken, pale, and fibrotic. The capsule is often thickened and the edges of the liver are rounded.

Degenerative lesions of the joints are more common in older psittacine birds. Causes include previous trauma or infection, or metabolic conditions, such as gout. Degenerative changes of muscle wasting and joint stiffness were reported in a group of aging macaws and were most prominent in birds over 40 years of age. Joint stiffness was characterized by a limitation in the range of motion of the joints, particularly the hock (intertarsal) joints. There were also twisting deformities that developed at the carpi, causing the primary flight feathers to twist laterally. New studies show that the bone

degenerates when birds do not fly.

Ovarian tumors are the most common problem with the reproductive tract in parrots and in males there can be senescence of testes. Concerning the respiratory system, chronic interstitial fibrosis is reported in geriatric parrots and results in exercise intolerance. Pathologic examination revealed loss of functional lung tissue, pulmonary interstitial fibrosis, and right heart failure. Hematology revealed an elevated packed cell volume as a result of an increase in erythrocyte size and an increased hemoglobin. These are tests that can be run by your avian veterinarian.

Captive birds are blessed with adaptations that in theory allow them to live up to 3 times their comparably sized mammalian counterparts, but eventually it seems old age can lead them to the same panoply of geriatric diseases, including atherosclerosis, neoplasms, cataracts, connective tissue problems, reproductive changes, kidney failure, and cardiac disease. Like mammals, they can suffer from reduced mentation, dermatitis, skin tumors, liver disease, degenerative joint disease, ovarian tumors, and breathing difficulties.

Different species have different life spans, but geriatric parrots are those that are showing physiological signs characteristic of aging. It is up to us to provide the best care in terms of nutrition, habitat, social interaction, and exercise to ward off the afflictions of advanced age.

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Keeping Your Parrot Safe by Observing the Five Freedoms

by Dot Schwarz

www.northernparrots.com

January 17, 2017

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What's your priority as a Parrot carer? For most of us it's not will they talk, love us, be colourful or breed valuable babies – it is to keep them safe.

Opinions on the best way to do this are not unanimous; they evolve and change with passing fads and fashions but also, more importantly, with the increase of scientific knowledge of these fascinating, enigmatic creatures that share our lives.

Captive Parrots must live within a wide range of environments. Going from a single pet bird in a cage; a couple or a flock of indoor Parrots to an outdoor flock in an aviary which might be mixed or in a breeding situation. And at the extreme end of the range of optional lifestyles, one or more free flying birds.

However, considerations of good husbandry apply equally to all captive bred birds. Captive birds should enjoy the five freedoms which are enshrined in the Animal Welfare Act of 2006. They apply to all domesticated animals as well as birds and poultry. They are: freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom to express normal inherent behaviour; freedom from pain, injury, disease and environmental impoverishment; freedom from discomfort and freedom from fear and distress.

Let's examine some of these issues:

Food

The first freedom - from hunger and thirst - sounds comparatively easy but... (pun coming) it's a hard nut to crack. This means *you* must decide whether the bulk of food will be pellets with veggies, fruit, nuts, and treats added as rewards when training.

Perhaps you'll provide a seed mixture with the additions mentioned above or make up a mash with additions.

Assuming that anyone reading this blog is (as I am) a customer at Northern Parrots, the bewildering choice of what is enticingly presented can lead to - if not sleepless nights - then plenty of anxiety.

Do I keep to the tried and tested seed mixture (Grandpa used for the Budgies) or do I try one of these attractively marketed pellets (the vet recommends)? I cannot presume to tell you what is best for your bird(s).

Recently, my increasing preference has been to grow sprouts which then make up 30% of the diet. They are a living food. They have always been a bother to grow until I bought an electric sprouter.

Now it takes only a few minutes every few days to empty, clean and refill with previously soaked seeds and legumes, switch on and in 48/72 hours I have a bowl of sprouts in the fridge for us and the birds. Since our birds eat better than myself and my husband Wal, I have no com-



punction in sharing their food. Their sprouts are human quality as are their nuts; their birdy bread is made from human-grade ingredients.

It's useful to invest in a [scale](#) and weigh the pet birds weekly. Artha and Casper (the Greys') weight has remained within a range of plus or minus ten grams for 12 years. Benni, the two-year old Macaw, has kept the same weight for 18 months.

It's fun to be creative with birdy bread. I use different toppings like pumpkin, sesame, poppy or chia seeds. Note that not everyone would accept or use this recipe because of eggs and skim milk.

My birds have a lot of exercise so I occasionally add grated cheese as a topping. Some people claim that Parrots cannot digest lactose. My Belgian friend, Bart von Hoenigan, used yoghurt to entice his free flying Greys back to his arm.

Recipe for Savoury Birdy Bread

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I use Organic flour and mix different ones: whole wheat / spelt / rye / kaput, etc.

450 gm flour.

Pinch of salt.

2/3 large organic eggs with shell (If share with the Parrots, leave off the egg shell).

2 tablespoons honey.

2 teaspoons baking soda.

500 ml skim milk with 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar (or lemon juice) added to curdle the milk.

450/ 500 Gms of chopped or grated mixed vegetables. Organic if possible: sweet corn kernels, kale, carrots, chard, grated sweet potato, any cooked beans like chickpeas, kidney, etc.

Sometimes I grate some beetroot; sometimes I add unsweetened apple puree. Expert opinion disagrees on garlic. My Cockatoo relished it.

Nuts (optional). I would not use nuts unless the birds have plenty of exercise.

Mix dry ingredients together.

Beat the egg into the soured milk and add to the dry ingredients. Beat well.

Turn into 2 x 25 cm pan and even the top.

Bake at 180 C degrees for 35-40 minutes.

Serve in small portions. Freeze or refrigerate the rest of the loaves.

If you want to experiment with foods, the only things to avoid are the known poisonous or harmful substances; yew, Datura, laburnham, foxglove, growing outside; inside, avocado, alcohol, tea, coffee, chocolate, fried food, salty food and pizza.

Can you swear that your bird never tastes crisps, pizza, coffee, etc.? I won't answer the question myself.

Cage, Environment and Toys

'Express normal inherent behaviour' and remain safe. That means a suitable [cage](#) and a suitable environment for it. I like Rosemary Low's advice - if you don't want a pet that flies - buy a hamster.

I'd include the opinion that if you don't want a large cage cluttering up the sitting room, buy a stuffed Parrot. A cage cannot be too large for a Parrot. Though a word of warning - two cautionary examples - a friend's Umbrella Cockatoo thrust his foot out between the bars and was injured getting it back.

My hand fed fledgling Rock Pebbler, Little Flo, stuck his little wing out of the cage and Casper bit it, breaking his wing. (It mended and he flew in the end.) Cage bars often are sometimes too widely spaced apart.



After Flo's accident, I taped netting to the bars when the cage was housing a fledgling bird whose wing could easily stick out.

I have long been advocating homemade willow wreaths adorned with flowers. For 15 years past my birds have loved them and they have made acceptable presents. Until a recent tragedy.

I gave one to a friend, his large, clever Parrot somehow untwisted the wire hoop round which the willow fronds were threaded, got a leg trapped and died. I am now remaking the willow wreaths with the hoop made of willow with no wire involved. Toys and flowers can be tied on with soft string.

There is a dilemma here. Empty cage = boredom, screaming and plucking. Well-stocked cage (may) provide opportunities for injury.

Prudence and regular inspections have become second nature to us. Only buy [toys](#) from a known source and if making your own take care with nails, sharp edges, noxious substances. Birds can and do get zinc and lead poisoning and both these incipient tragedies are avoidable.

Freedom from discomfort

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To me that means we will curtail some of our desires in favour of the birds' welfare. No cigarette smoke in the house. No use of perfumed candles. No air fresheners. Minimize the use of chemicals – everyone will feel better for it.

[F10 disinfectant](#) – expensive but harmless to birds, vinegar, baking soda, lemon juice, harmless to birds and not expensive, all provide acceptable substitutes. Make a careful choice of which cleaning products you use. An oven cleaner that makes *you* cough will give off fumes too strong for a bird's lungs. The fumes from Teflon coated pans if the pan's burning can cause death to Parrots. If in doubt *don't do it* is as good a maxim as any.

Discomfort? Here you will find a lot of different points of view. Do you kiss and cuddle the psittacine in your life?

Cockatoos crave their caregiver's attention yet as so many have discovered, an over bonded



Cockatoo is neither happy in herself, nor does she spread happiness around her when she bites any threat to her human beloved or screams endlessly for his attention.

If a young bird is brought up with a birdy friend the problems of over attachment may never surface. Anne Castro in Germany keeps a rescue establishment of many different species. She never keeps a lone bird but always provides a companion of the same or similar species. She provides no nesting areas and avoids the problems of breeding behaviour through careful management.

But every opinion concerning bird behaviour can be countered with an opposite illustration. My beloved Benni, the Blue and Gold Macaw, has been free flying since March 2014.

His younger brother Kovu who lives in Watford with Ryan Wyatt and family, flies daily with a female Amazon. I brought in Mino, a young Blue and Gold, to be Benni's flying buddy. After 3 months Benni had still not accepted Mino, who is now happily rehomed with Natalie Spencer. I am trying again with Mina, a young Military Macaw and hope to record her progress.

And finally –

The last of the five freedoms for domestic animals is freedom from fear and distress. How does that apply to captive Parrots? It does apply to domestic poultry (turkeys, hens, geese, ducks) when reared in unhygienic crowded conditions.

It should not be applicable to pet Parrots unless they are kept in



crowded cages, neglected or given insufficient time out of the cage. Over-caging a bird can lead to psychological problems; the distressed bird can cry for attention or pluck himself or something which for me is almost worse - become fearful to leave the cage.

Breeders can tell you horrible stories of how predators have threatened aviary birds through the mesh. One hawk pulled a Parrot's leg through and killed it in the process. Double wiring can prevent predator attacks but has the drawback of being less attractive to look at in your garden and increasing the overall cost.

Natalie Spencer, who has some of my rescue birds, keeps a flock of guinea fowl free range. She has no fear of predators. If the Guinea's see a hawk, they shriek to high heaven.

Protecting your bird from distress or fear has a delightful spin off; you spend time with her, you talk to her, explain things and have fun together. ∞



Resist the Call of the Cute

by Shaun Hurrell

www.birdlife.org

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What should you do when you see a baby bird on the ground? It is hard to resist the urge to rescue. Often people intervene when in fact most chicks should be left alone. Our Spring Alive project¹⁾ is raising awareness of this issue with children and adults throughout Europe, Central Asia and Africa, with this season's theme of "Don't take chicks with you".

Alone, helpless, small, cold, clumsy and fluffy...

We see a flightless chick on the ground in our garden and many of us go weak at the knees. How did it get here? Where are its parents? Is it orphaned? Has it fallen from a nest? Is it injured? It is cheeping, maybe it is calling for help? We are struck by an overpowering urge: I must rescue it... I must do something...

Stop. Think. Is interfering the best thing to do in this situation? While small actions can, and do, [make a big difference in conservation](#), sometimes our willingness to step in can be detrimental - especially when our judgement is clouded by "the cute factor". We might have the best of intentions, but taking a chick with you can be a *bad* thing, it is messing with nature, and can even make things worse for the chick.

Nature is harsh sometimes. One thing to remember is that young birds naturally face tough odds, with only thirty per cent of songbirds surviving their first year – but this is a natural strategy in which the strongest survive and there is enough resources in the environment for them. And hand-rearing a bird is not easy. You might think it could lead to an amazing story of care, bonding and devotion – and in very rare cases it does – but you could effectively (often illegally) be taking a wild bird as a "pet", and if you eventually re-release it into the wild, the bird has not learned essential survival skills from its parents.

So what should I do? *This is to provide a basic summary, please see the links below for more information and for further questions please ask your local animal rehabilitation organisation.*

First you must identify whether the chick is visibly injured. It might be clumsy, or even unable to walk if it is very young, but that is perfectly natural. In very rare cases, it could be bleeding or has other visible trauma, in which case the best thing to do is call a local wildlife rehabilitator or veterinarian.

Conservation organisations, including BirdLife Partners



Young kestrel.

Photo: Anna Kogut

around the world are often called by people with an injured animal or an "abandoned" chick, but in most cases these are calls which should have gone elsewhere, and take up vital time that conservationists would otherwise be spending on things like protecting a habitat for many species. You don't call a dentist if your child has bit their tongue.

Let's face it, the chick that is found is unlikely to be Critically Endangered; and even if it is a threatened species, and conservationists would love to help, they have different skills.

Know the difference between a "hatchling", "nestling" and a "fledgling". If the bird is uninjured, then it may well be a fledgling, meaning it has naturally left the nest (fledged) and has short adult-like feathers but is still being fed by its parents. It might be sitting on the ground or hopping about,

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but can't quite fly. However, its parents are probably nearby, collecting food or keeping a watchful eye where you cannot see them. Removing a fledgling from the wild reduces its chances of survival.

So it may be best to back away... Your presence might even be stopping the parents from feeding the chick. **If the fledgling is in a dangerous place however**, like in a road or about to be pounced on by a pet cat, as a last resort you can move the chick *a few metres* out of harm's way, but so it is still in hearing distance of parents. Keep cats in the house until fledglings are flying.

If the bird is a hatchling (eyes not yet open) **or nestling** (eyes open, some downy feathers and/or tube-like sheaths), **and it is healthy** (sometimes parents deliberately eject chicks that are ill or dying so they can concentrate on feeding the remaining chicks) then, if you can see an obvious nest that it came from, you should put it back. If not, or if the nest has fallen, you should construct a makeshift nest by hanging a small porous basket filled with dry grass in a tree and placing the chick in there. The parents should then return to care for it. If they don't return within two hours, or cannot quickly construct a makeshift nest, you should call a local expert wildlife rehabilitator and follow their advice.

"If I pick it up, the parents will smell me and abandon

the chick" – for more myths and questions, see below:

- [Helping birds – the RSPB \(BirdLife in the UK\)](#)
- [Baby birds out of the nest – Mass Audubon](#)
- [Orphaned baby birds" – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)
- [Help a baby bird that has fallen out of a nest – WikiHow](#)

A swift response

Things are different for one migratory species featured in the Spring Alive project, however. The Common Swift *Apus apus* needs a high platform from which to take off, so if you see this species on the ground it might not be injured – it may just be stranded. So in this case the best thing to do is [pick it up and simply let it fly out of a high window](#). In this case, a local bird organisation can help you assess the situation. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* chicks also fly straight from the nest, so should never be found on the ground.

In most cases however, people misidentify a fledgling as a nestling in need of support, or will take away a nestling when they could be placed in their original nets, or a makeshift one. It's such a common mistake that the Spring Alive teams across Eurasia and Africa will be spreading these messages to teachers, pupils, children and parents, as well as continuing to teach about bird migration and conservation.

We *know* it is difficult, but you can see that in most cases it is

important that you must resist those cute calls.

For more information please visit www.springalive.net.

Follow Spring Alive on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#)!

About Spring Alive

Spring Alive is an international project organised by BirdLife International, a worldwide organisation for the protection of birds. The campaign is designed to help European, Asian and African children, their families, friends and teachers, to understand, engage with, and take action for birds and nature, and to understand the need for international conservation for migratory species. The core component of Spring Alive is the website www.springalive.net with contributions from participants in 55 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. All citizens, but specifically children and families, are encouraged to observe and record the arrival of 5 migratory bird species each year: White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo and Eurasian Bee-eater.

Funding: The whole project would not be possible without the great support of **The Mitsubishi Corporation Fund for Europe and Africa (MCFEA)**, Spring Alive's main sponsor. The aims of the MCFEA are to encourage the appreciation and conservation of flora and fauna with an emphasis on endangered species.

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Little Birdy Feet

by Carol Hurst, LVT, CVPM, CVJ

February 2017 AAV Bird Club News Release



The Association of Avian Veterinarians

Bird Club News Releases 2017

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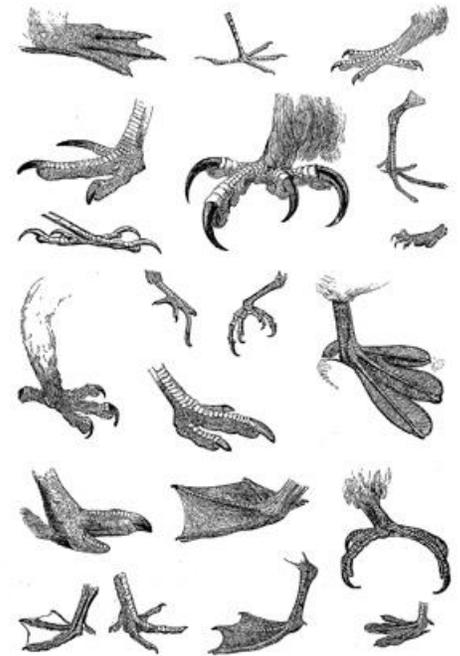
The anatomy of a bird's foot is fascinating. Depending on the species, the foot can serve many purposes from grasping to swimming, climbing or running. A typical bird foot has four toes. Many species have less, but none have more than this. Species such as rheas, cassowaries, emu and many waders such as diving-petrels, auks, some woodpeckers and one passerine species have only three functional toes.¹ Birds that climb, wade, run or use their wings to swim under water also have three toes. The ostrich is the only species that has two toes.

In 'Birds: Their Structure...' the function of the bird foot is broken into three types: grasping, walking/wading and swimming. Bird feet have adapted specifically to accommodate major life functions. For grasping feet, the toes are freely mobile and strong. For walking/wading, the toes are partially or completely webbed, which allows for both swim-

ming and walking on soft surfaces. Likewise, "swimming feet" are completely webbed.

The bird's foot is often the first thing that comes in contact with the environment, whether this be water, soil, plant matter, or prey. Disorders that affect a bird's foot can vary greatly. Bacterial or viral afflictions can cause lesions, abrasions or abscesses associated with the skin on the feet. A common bacterial infection of the footpad that can lead to such abscesses is called Bumblefoot. Other lesions can be caused by leg-band necrosis, malnutrition, nutritional deficiencies, gout, trauma, toxins, external parasites, or self-mutilation.² Birds can also have a variety of abnormalities in the formation of the bones of the legs and feet resulting in deformities that can compromise the integrity of the leg. Causes for these abnormalities can range from vitamin deficiencies or certain types of infection that result in nutritional deficiencies. Calcium specific deficiencies can cause the bones to become brittle or soft which can result in fractures.

For our captive birds, environmental factors can play a big role in foot health. Feet getting trapped by toys or other unsafe cage accessories are common causes of injury. Toxic chemicals such as cleaning solutions that are not suitable to use



around birds can create chemical burns (among other more serious disorders). Improperly placed leg bands (or even properly placed bands that get caught on an item in the cage), can create injury to the bird's foot. Birds that are kept outdoors can be susceptible to injury from insect bites or frostbite (if proper temperature controls aren't observed).

To promote good foot health in our captive birds, high-quality nutrition is the first place to start. Sanitation is also a very important factor. Anything the bird perches on should be frequently cleaned and sanitized since these areas can become contaminated with droppings. Examine any toys or accessories in the cage frequently for disrepair or wear.

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“The Task of Breeding Endangered Psittacines”

Many times over the years, I have had conversations with pet owners and aviculturists who expressed interest in acquiring and possibly breeding endangered parrot species. Their views sound like: “I have always wanted Golden Conures,” “The black Palm Cockatoo is my favorite psittacine, my dream bird,” or “We want to help save the Buffon’s Macaw.”

Certainly, it would be exciting to be involved in the realm of CITES I parrots - they, like many avian species, are so beautiful! Yet, my reply when I am queried about this topic always takes a slightly different reasoning.

Already there are many expert and confident birdkeepers owning and reproducing such rare hookbills. Some of them do an impeccable job of it. Largely, the endangered parrots seem to be well taken care of in captivity - the Hyacinthine, Scarlet, Buffon’s, Illiger’s, BlueThroat Macaws, the Red-cheeked, Tucuman, Cuban, etc. Amazons, the Goffin’s, Moluccans, queens, scarlet chesteds, black cheeks, and so many others. Putting aside the fact that some of these are now being sold more frequently into the pet trade (even with the extra paperwork this might require) most of these birds born in captivity hold out little hope at present of helping repopulate their shrinking and often

dangerous native environments.

The reality is, so *many* of the psittacines in the wilds are seriously threatened, even though they all have not reached ‘endangered’ status; while in captive aviculture, literally dozens more are fading away right before our very eyes!

This is where I counsel newcomers and experienced keepers alike to channel their avicultural energies. If you are the kind of hobbyist who considers higher value and attraction to be in rarity of species, then perhaps it is time to expand your concepts of rarity.

A common sense list of the psittacines which need immediate attention and real gene pool help within U.S. aviculture would include: Citron-crested, Greater Sulfur-crested, and Triton Cockatoos, Gold-capped, Jenday, Patagonian, Red-throated and Brown-throated Conures, White-fronted, Red-ored, and Mealy Amazons, Yellow-collared Macaw, Noble Macaw, Coral-billed, Maximilian’s and Bronze-winged Pionus, Great-billed and Vasa Parrots, Grey Cheeked, Cobalt-winged, Canary-winged, Plum-headed Parakeets, normal Fischer’s Lovebird, plus various other lorikeets, parakeets, rosellas, etc.



This is by far not all of them. It is a very lengthy list. And it seems to be growing as the original founder pairs of wild-trapped and imported psittacines pass away one by one, while the wholesale pet business continues to emphasize a restricted group of high-profile and saleable species.

Would you like to breed endangered species? Consider saving the ones which are vanishing in aviculture. After all, some of these same parrots may be only a hair’s breath away from being classified CITES I as it is. If more precise data were known about census numbers, habitat shrinkage, and other pressures currently bearing on the CITES II hookbills (and political concerns were not a factor),

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then likely some of these birds would be classified with the firmly endangered psittacine groups also.

So, aspiring hobbyists have a chance to “get ahead of the rush” so to speak, by doing their own reading research, trusting their instincts, and committing to a species of parrot still readily available to the general birdkeeping public, but not yet restricted or expensively “glamorous.” It is our view that *every* breeder should have one focus species.

In the case of bird clubs and societies who wish to get actively involved with those species “endangered within aviculture,” the stage is still mostly wide open. Choose a loveable lory, or a rare parakeet, or a “sleeper” parrot like the Gold-capped or Patagonian Conure; even the Derbyan Parakeet or that elusive 100% pure (no splits allowed) normal gray Cockatiel (didn’t you just love ‘em?). Maybe even set some “conservation” funds aside and establish a cooperative effort among club members. Seek out single or unwanted birds of the chosen kind, those showing up occa-

sionally in online classifieds, or buried for years in pet shops or whiling away their years in the back cages of breeding facilities where their mates have died.

Any aviculturists who could move forward with even moderate success in such single species captivity-conservation, might attract national attention for their efforts - not to mention being a primary “go to” source for such psittacines five, six, ten years from now when the birds’ status in the wilds have changed even further!

The Perfect Parrot in Hawaii has for over a decade maintained a conscious program for sustaining the delightful Yellow-fronted (crowned) Amazon species in captivity. We feel privileged to be working with these psittacines, having achieved our fifth generation - even though it has not yet been given endangered status in the wilds. Our feeling is, April and I are working for the future of this species 10, 20, 30 years hence. Who knows what they will need by then?

As committed birdkeepers, our facility works to further the multi-generational status of this parrot in captivity, supports any work that helps it in the wilds, studies and compiles

information about the birds, and keeps an eye out for yellow fronts for sale or in need of adoption wherever they may be found, though obviously, sometimes any expensive pet store single birds may not be acquired.

Do I want to breed endangered species? Yes. But, truthfully speaking, with some of my parrot species, I sometimes think I already am doing so - scientific field research has just not proved it yet.

So, go ahead, select a lovely or favorite parrot and get started with the hobby breeding. I began when one of my six-year-old pets would no longer take “no” for an answer. I still get a thrill when I look out and see her great grandchildren living within the same varied flock.

And whether in the years ahead you become an “expert” with that psittacine or not, whether the species of parrot you dedicate your time and monies to ever makes that “ominously elite” CITES I endangered list or not, I can guarantee you *will* make a difference.

Aloha,
EB

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(Continued from page 24)

Any toys with strings or other loose pieces should be either trimmed or replaced as these can become twisted around toes or ankles, causing constriction injuries. Always

provide protection from the elements and ensure that enclosures/cages are kept not only clean, but also dry. Lastly, inspect your bird’s feet routinely for any abnormalities.

1. Birds: Their Structure and

Function by A.S. King, J. McLelland

2. Manual of Avian Practice by Agnes Rupley, DVM, DABVP-Avian

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