

Squawk 'n Talk

Volume 5, Issue 9

December 2005

Presidential Perch

Just a reminder... elections for the upcoming term will take place at the December 18th meeting, at 2:00 PM, before the Holiday Party. Please make an effort to attend the meeting & join in the festivities following. Debby Martin & Niki Shaffer have a lot of surprises as well as lots of fun & games planned for the party. It is sure to be a good time. You can win prizes in the games as well as attendance prizes. We will have plenty of good food to eat. Please join us and bring your favorite dish to share.

You can look forward to a great 2006! We have many surprises in store and lots of interesting things to share. To start the New Year off right, we will be showing the film & documentary, "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" in its entirety at the January meeting. Everyone is invited and there is no charge to see this wonderful film. Just bring a friend as well as a snack to share.

Time to throw another log on the fire! Boy is it cold out there! Try to stay warm and dry. See everyone on the 18th!

Phyllis

The "Wild" Parrots Of Northern Holland

Editor's Note: Well, the web really is world-wide. I received an email from Roelant Jonker, an avian researcher in the Netherlands. He and his associate Grace Innemee manage the AraProject.nl website. They have spent years gathering information about a group of Scarlet Macaws living free in the northern Netherlands. Note the choice of words, "living free" and the "Wild" in the title. The term they prefer is free-ranging. Their mission statement:

Objectives of AraProject.nl:

- Enjoying free-ranging parrots
- Investigate potential uses of free-ranging parrots for conservation
- Educating the public on the plight of parrots

20 years ago I first heard about Macaws flying freely in my home country of the Netherlands. I was watching a television show presented by famous Dutch comedian and nature show host Ivo de Wijs. He talked about a 17th century estate in the west of The Netherlands that was recently bought by the national forest service. He pictured the audience a romantic view on the history of the estate with many tropical plants that, like magic, got a foothold in its 17th century landscape. This magic also extended to the birdlife because at the end of the show there were a few glimpses of Macaws sitting high up a tree. I could not believe my eyes. Still a kid then I wanted to jump on a train to find them. But I had forgotten the name of the estate and for a long time I never heard of these Macaws again.

In the years after that my love of parrots progressed as an aviculturist and after high school I went to study biology in Leiden. As any biology student can confirm, every class has one or two of the odd birder types. These slightly detached characters are easily recognisable by the binoculars they seem to carry around everywhere and by the fact that they can whistle every known birdsong by heart without feeling the slightest bit embarrassed. They keep each other informed on the species they have spotted through special websites and email-groups and this is how I came to know the whereabouts of the Macaws again. Surprisingly, almost twenty years after I first learned about them, they were still alive and well, flying on an estate in the Netherlands province of Noord-Holland, reportedly sometimes even flying right into city centres.

I decided to go and look for them. In summer I like to ride my bike through the Dutch countryside and the estate is not that far from Leiden, where I live. How hard could it be to find these animals? They are not called Scarlet Macaws for nothing: brilliantly red birds, up to 80 cm in length, and if captive birds were anything to go by I should be able to hear them coming miles away.

I thought wrong. The first couple of times I went there I did not get to see the birds. Even when I brought with me one of my experienced birder friends they still eluded us. One week later though I got lucky. After talking to the people of the Dutch national forest service I got to know what part of the estate they frequented and that's where I found them. Or rather they found me. Hearing some squabbling overhead I looked up to see the Macaws fly right over me. Stunned, surprised and delighted I watched them flying over a meadow. They landed high up a beach tree just out of sight. Quickly I ran towards the tree but I could not find them again. None of the many visitors to the estate had seen them fly, although they were in plain sight. That would be the last I got to see of them for over 2 years. Later that year I went abroad to do my master thesis on the yellow-eared parrot (Ognorhynchus icterotis) in Colombia and after that I was very busy graduating. I visited the estate several times when I got the time to go cycling but the Macaws never reappeared.

Then, March 2005, I told my new girlfriend, Grace, I once saw wild Macaws flying in the Netherlands. A parrot lover like me she insisted that we go and look for them again. I suggested we go in the winter months when the trees were still barren. In Colombia I learned that whole flocks of parrots could disappear in a canopy.

March 2005 was the coldest in many years. My birder friend Wouter Teunissen, Grace and I went to the estate that was covered with snow. You could not imagine a more alien environment for wild Macaws. We were about to give up our quest when at the end of the day, at dusk, we heard the harsh calls that could only have been produced by flying Macaws. Running in the direction of the calls, we finally found them sitting high up in a pine tree. They were still trying to disappear in the canopy! After a while they flew off again vanishing in the woods. Happy for finally getting to see them but disappointed to have lost them again we went into the forest to try and find them. Of course it had to be my birder friend Wouter that first located them. This time they stayed put. Only flying a short distance toward a hollow branch in an old oak tree where they would spend the night. Close to the spot where they first found me. Knowing their whereabouts, Grace and I decided to get to know the birds better.

Despite our busy lives we went to the estate as often as we could, the old oak with the hollow branch at the centre of our search. Disappointingly they never reappeared there. We would criss-cross the estate many times an evening or afternoon seeing only glimpses of them if at all.

We started asking around to learn more about the history of the Macaws. We were told that the first pair of Macaws originated from a nearby farm. Thirty years later the elderly widow that lives there apparently still fed the descendants of these Macaws on a daily basis. We started to include the farm in our circle through the estate. The Macaws always turned up at dusk to spend the night in the trees at the opposite side of the road from the farm, but we never saw the widow.

Days started to lengthen in spring and trees started to produce foliage. We desperately needed to get more information on the parrots' daily movements because when those canopies were completely full there was little chance of seeing anything more than an occasional glimpse of the Macaws.

Then, one afternoon, we stumbled upon the birds inspecting a hollow tree. Could this be true? Were they contemplating breeding? We heard fantastic stories of the Macaws fledging five chicks five years earlier. But we did not dare dream of seeing these Macaws flying around with offspring in a couple of months.

I have seen happy parrot families flying in the wild in Colombia. It is really touching to see a pair of parrots fly in perfect synchrony with the youngsters following suit in a little less organised manner, continuously calling to one another, almost human. I can not think of a more caring image in nature.

We visited the beach tree regularly from then on. But again they never reappeared there. We really started to get worried when the parrots no longer came in to roost at the farm. But our worries soon turned to delight when we finally discovered the tree the Macaws had decided upon to be their nest.

The parrots chose a very counter intuitive place to nest; next to a busy road in front of two houses. Right next to the nest tree there is a path which people frequently use for an afternoon stroll or to walk their dog. Literally hundreds of people pass the tree on a daily basis. Being such rare and expensive birds we feared the birds could get stolen if the wrong people got to know the nesting place of the Macaws. Amazingly though, almost no one ever noticed the birds. Many times we had to point them out to people that came to talk to us and ask what we were photographing.

Photographing the birds became an obsession for [us](#). Newly graduated biologist and para-veterinarians do not earn a great deal of money. But no expense was spared to get the best pictures of the Macaws. We could now find them routinely at the nest and with the help of the pictures we started to recognise the individuals of the pair. The one with the [bald spot](#) on his neck behaved typically like a male as he guarded the nest when the female was busy inside. We called him [Nape](#). We noticed that the female was missing [two claws](#) at one foot. We called her [Toos](#). Toos was more elusive to us. She stayed inside the nest most of the time departing into the woods immediately whenever she got bored with decorating the baby room and fancied to stretch her wings.

At the same time we discovered the nest tree we also witnessed them [mating](#) many times. When we returned there a couple of days later the female only appeared infrequently and returned to the nest very quickly. She was clearly breeding. We set the date of the first egg at around the 1st of May. Scarlet Macaws breed around 23 days. The big wait had begun.

We undertook several attempts to inspect the nest. All failed miserably. First we borrowed a ladder from the people that live in the houses across the road from the nest. It was too short; which did give us some peace of mind as the birds or chicks could not be stolen with a simple domestic ladder.

Then we connected a webcam to several pieces of PVC piping. This actually worked but we stored the images the wrong way. The one image we did manage to recover only showed a blurry spot that could be anything. We got so excited about that, that we forgot to bring the PVC piping from the train on our way home.

Next time we came it was clear there where no youngsters. The blurry spot that the camera had shown us was the remains of an undeveloped egg that was now lying at the base of the tree. The birds were on edge and very territorial, only barely accepting us at the tree; they once flew recklessly close over Grace. Despite the evident failure of the first nest the birds stayed in the vicinity of the nest tree. The pair was also seen mating again.

The birds started breeding a second time. We hoped for the best but feared the worst. There have been no reliable reports of Macaws breeding in the area since 1994. The pair is closely related, maybe 3rd generation of inbreeding and therefore may only be partially fertile, if at all. They look like devoted parents though and we already made plans to offer them fertilized eggs if they would attempt to breed again next year.

At around the time the second clutch was due to hatch the people we knew living across the road from the Macaws went on holiday to France and we were asked to baby-sit their cats and rooster; a great opportunity for us to further study the Macaws. We again inspected the nest. This time with assistance of a camera from filmmaker [Ivonne Wierink](#), who was making a documentary on us and the Macaws that week.

We never expected anything but to our delight the camera registered [one tiny little Macaw chick and an egg](#) that looked like it could hatch any moment. We could not be more overjoyed.

These Scarlet Macaws are of the [Central American subspecies *Ara macao cyanoptera*](#) recognisable by the lack of green on the yellow wing parts. This subspecies is very rare in nature but has good representation in aviculture. If this population of Scarlets is to grow they can help foster new populations of Scarlet Macaws in their countries of origin. Until that day, we keep enjoying these marvels of nature and practicing our photo skills on them.

Tidbits

Trey Shaffer

Election time! Our annual elections will be held at the December meeting. Nominations for Officers and Board Members were made at the November meeting. As you may recall, we elect half our Board each year. Similarly, we elect either two or three of our five Officers each year. All terms are two years. The nominations are listed below. Dorene and Dave will run unopposed to retain their offices. However, there is a hotly contested run for Membership Secretary. As for Board Members, the positions currently held by Christine, Nancy and Larry are up for election. They all accepted nominations to serve again, and Carole Grommet, retiring Membership Secretary, is nominated for a Board position. This means we will select three of the four Board nominees.

As a review, all members will have one vote, maximum of two voters per household, for each Officer position. Each person voting will have three votes for Board Members, and may use only one vote for a single person.

Office

General Secretary
 Treasurer
 Membership Secretary

Nominee(s)

Dorene Olson
 Dave Kinkade
 Mandy Baungartner
 Nancy Marron
 Niki Shaffer
 Carole Grommet
 Christine Kinkade
 Nancy Marron
 Larry Martin

Board Members (Select 3)**Website? What website?**

The previous article speaks to the reach of our website and the way the World Wide Web has made the planet much smaller and more accessible in the digital age. BUT, what if you are not “on the web?”

You may have noticed our website being unavailable. This is unfortunate, but hopefully rectified soon. Our website has become a popular destination on the web. Many of our members rely on the site for information and newsletters. Until recently, if you Googled “Parrot Club” we would have been the third or fourth ranked link. We are no longer listed, but hopefully that will correct itself after the site returns to its old address.

The company hosting our website apparently ceased operation without notice. Unfortunately this same company also registered our domain name and ignored our requests to update registration details. The net result: the site is down, and we are unable to update registration information to point to the new location of the website. With the failure of our host/registrar, responsibility for management of the domain reverts to the “wholesale” domain registrar, Tucows, or OpenSRS. We have completed required forms/processes to regain control of the domain, and Tucows has made some progress in facilitating what needs to be done, but they too have become unresponsive to requests to complete the process. I hope the site is back up by the time the newsletter reaches you by postal mail. In the meantime, the site is available at a temporary address:

<http://S146198840.onlinehome.us>

Whenever this mess is cleared up, the site will return at:

www.GatewayParrotClub.org

Scary Ornaments

Debby Martin

Mozart was perusing his Birdy Chat Room and noticed a timely warning he felt should be passed on, so I as his loyal secretary type and type. We’re a little late for Halloween, but similar problems could arise at Christmas. One of the cockatiel owners was invited to a Halloween Party and after she had put on her black nail polish and witch hat, stopped to pick up her two tiels – who immediately flew away from her in total panic! They were freaked out by the polish and the hat! Even after she removed both, they were very skittish and would not cuddle or let her give head scratches. This lasted for several days. Mozart would like to point out that HE is not scared of hats – even floppy ones, but nail polish of any color is scary and all bracelets – especially ones with dangly stuff should be banned. I guess we have to be careful of how we make changes to our movable perches (hands and arms). Trust once lost is very hard to regain.

A Working Quaker Speaks Up

By Cookie the Quaker as told to Cliff Patterson

My whole life I’ve had to work for a living. I’ve been a good bird, working at around fifty bird fairs a year for the whole fourteen years of my life.

I don’t complain. I’m awakened before the sun is even up, long before a cute little bird like me should have to get up. My buddy, Woody the Hahn’s mini-macaw, and I are loaded into our special carrier and carried out to the van where we are strapped into our special seat.

The trip to the bird fair might be an hour, or it might even be as much as eight hours, but I don’t complain. I just quietly snooze as long as I feel the van moving.

I have to become alert if it stops, though. Whenever Poppa gets out of the van, it’s my job to call to him so he doesn’t get lost and can find his way back. I call VERY loudly!

At the bird fair, everyone works to get ready for the fair. Poppa and his assistant set up the booth, string the lights, and put out all the merchandise. I watch them through the slits in the side of the carrier. If he looks like he's getting tired, it's my job to encourage him. I'll give him a happy chirp, or, if he looks really tired, I'll softly call to him "Poppa! Cookie loves you!" That works every time! I can see him cheer up. I'm such a helpful little birdie, aren't I?

Then, when the fair opens, it's my job to come out and sit on the boing and be cute. That's so that the people walking by will stop and buy something from my poppa.

They stop and ask questions about me, and Poppa will ask folks if they'd like to hold me. I step up on their fingers and reach out and give them a kiss on the lips if they hold me near their faces. Boy, you should see the surprised looks! "She kissed me!!! How cute!"

I have lots of responsibilities. When someone has a wing-clipping question, I have to allow my poppa to pull my wing out and explain how it's done. What I really hate is when someone asks a question about their Quaker biting, and I have to hang on while Poppa demonstrates the birdy earthquake or shouts "NO! No bite!" at me. Why does he have to do that? I never bite him.

I'm also Poppa's official demonstrator. When someone asks "Do you think my bird would like one of those happy huts? I don't know," then Poppa will hold one up. I'll step into it, walk through, stick my head out the other end and sweetly say, "Hello!" It works every time. I sell more happy huts for my poppa that way.

I'm such a good demonstrator, too. I step up on rope Comfy Perches and cholla cactuswood perches and swings and boings. I play with toys that Poppa holds up for me.

But everybirdy has their limits. I finally had to put my foot down when Poppa went too far.

He sells those stupid Flight Suits and little costumes like bird tuxedos and Santa suits. He had the nerve to try to get me to wear one. Can you believe it? Me, Cookie the Quaker, known at bird fairs across the Midwest! Admired by countless folks and ambassador for the Quaker Parakeet Society and official demonstrator for the Baby Bird Farm. As if I'm not cute enough with my beautiful green feathers and long tail.

Poppa grabbed me and started stuffing me into one of those horrible suits. Well, I couldn't believe it! I broke my long standing rule and gave him such a bite!

That didn't stop him. There I was, standing there in that stupid suit! I can't believe that he thought that I would ever let anybody see me like that.

So, I fixed him! I went on strike. I flopped over on my side and made this pitiful sound to let everybody know that Poppa was trying to kill me!

He picked me up and put me on my feet, but each time he did I flopped over again. My cries got louder and louder.

Finally he gave up and took it off of me. Good thing, too, or I would have kept it up all day. I am a very determined little birdy!

After all, there are limits. I will be nice to anyone, give kisses and get petted. I will even demonstrate products, but not those darned Flight Suits! No way!

Cool Toys With Skewers

Mandy Baumgartner

Skewers aren't just for fresh fruit and veggies here are some ideas for stringing up fun for your birds. While the first part is food items, they aren't always just for eating but for shredding fun.

Edible items:

- Pita bread
- Tortillas
- Whole wheat bread
- Whole wheat toast
- Ice cream cones (the yellow cake kind – not the sugar waffle) – these make a doubly good thing as you can make them into a forging vessel. Just put in seed, pellets, treats, etc into them. Be sure to skewer gently.
- Unsalted crackers
- Unsalted plain rice cakes
- Unsalted plain popcorn cakes
- Bits of dried fruit
- Cooked or uncooked pasta shapes
- Cereals

Some non-food items for fun:

- Bird safe paper & cardboard
- Cut up pieces of rope
- Wood bits
- Toy parts
- Cut up Shredders
- Cactus wood pieces
- Small boxes (with goodies in them) (craft and candy supply shops have some interesting ones)
- Little muffin or candy wrappers (a.k.a. cupcake liners)

Skewers make toy-making super easy. They are simple to use & it is easy to do quick toy changes just by stringing on something new. What else can you add to this starting list?

The Best Christmas Present

Debby Martin

Beta Bird faces a real problem this Christmas. What do you get two birds, Mozart and Ginger, who have everything! What could Alpha Bird and Beta Bird do to make a really special Birdy Christmas! BirdTalk 2004 had a great suggestion. Try being more positive with your bird – reinforce good behaviors and stop focusing so much on the problematic ones. Once a day spend a little extra time with them; scratches if their cuddlers; talking to them; telling them their beautiful (remember parrots are vain!); offer a healthy treat; or let them sit with you while to watch a movie. Work on teaching them to sit on a T-Stand and let them go with you from room to room getting dressed in the morning – they'll feel like they've spent more time with you. Mozart has a little basket in the bedroom and sits there watching while I put things away. Watch for positive behaviors – has he sat quietly or played independently for several seconds or minutes – smile, laugh and tell him what a GOOD bird he is. Play it up – they love drama.

Lunch In The Park

A good story for a winter day... and more wild exotics.

Cliff Patterson

It was a warm summer day, so I decided to pick up some food at a fast-food restaurant and enjoy it in the park. I went to a small park across from the police station in Bensenville, the first suburb west of huge O'Hare Airport near Chicago.

I found a bench with a good view of a certain telephone pole, and settled down to enjoy my lunch. It was only moments before the first little grey-green head appeared, peeking at the world from an opening in a huge ball of twigs on top of the telephone pole.

He stepped out onto his front porch and looked around, then spread his wings and soared up into the clear blue sky. It filled me with wonder to see how magnificent he looked, free and happy in the open world.

Soon one, then two birds appeared from different directions, returning to the community nest with morsels of food in their beaks. Of course, it was summertime, so I bet they had little fuzzy chicks in there.

Soon a real traffic pattern developed as birds arrived and departed to all points of the compass. It was like a smaller version of the air traffic at O'Hare Airport, just a couple miles away.

The ball of twigs was about four to five feet in diameter, securely braced where a crosspiece was attached to the pole. There were little dark openings all over it, probably a dozen or so, and each represented the entrance to the home of one pair of birds. Quakers build apartment buildings!

Each opening can be used as a sort of front porch to watch the world. Inside is a large room, kind of like the family room, where the chicks will live while growing to independence. Behind it is a smaller room, the bedroom, where the hen will incubate the eggs.

Then I noticed that one of them had alighted on a lower branch of a tree only about ten feet from me, and was eyeing me curiously. I called softly to him but he didn't trust me. Then I realized why he was watching me. He had his eye on my hamburger!

I broke off a small piece of the bun and tossed it to the ground in front of me. Instantly he was off, swooping in and grabbing the

bun in a foot without even stopping! He carried it back to his nest and disappeared inside. Moments later, he was back, landing on the ground only three feet from my shoes. He eyed me hopefully, pacing back and forth. I tossed another piece, and *SNATCH!* he had it and was gone.

His neighbors had noticed what was going on by this time, and soon there were four little Quakers near my feet, nervously watching for a free lunch, eager to be the first to grab it and run. I ate the hamburger patties, but willingly gave up my buns to the little guys who were foraging for their families.

Soon the buns were gone and my lunch hour was over. I left reluctantly, vowing to bring a whole loaf of wheat bread next time. What an exciting lunch I had had!

The Baby Bird Farm, Rockford, IL

cliff@babybirdfarm.com

Calendar of Events

November 20	Regular meeting First Aid – Avian Flu Nominations for office
December 18	Holiday Party Elections for office
January 15	Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill
February 19	Regular meeting

Bylaws Change

The proposed addition to the bylaws, contained in last month's Squawk n' Talk, was accepted at the November 20 General Meeting. The change has been incorporated as Article 5.6. An updated version of the bylaws is available on our website, in both PDF and Word formats.

TIEL THERAPY

Debby Martin

The holidays are upon us and Dr. Mozart has noticed the beginnings of stress for Beta Bird. One of Dr. Mozart Cockatiel's primary responsibilities for Beta Bird is stress relief (or creation depending on the time of day). When Beta Bird is upset or sad or just stressed, Dr. Mozart has his own "Tiel Therapy" which he read about on a Tiel chat room one evening. He and Beta Bird have found it very effective. Enjoy.

- Take one tiel and place on chest.
- Sit quietly. Allow tiel to press himself as close to you as possible.
- Inhale deeply, taking in the calming aroma of tiel.
- With fingertips, stroke tiel gently around the face, cere and neck, allowing tiel to turn his head and position himself for optimal contact.
- If tiel closes his eyes and grinds his beak, close your eyes and listen to the soothing sound. Allow the feeling of trust, peace and contentment to be transferred from tiel to you.
- Become aware you have entered a state of bliss where there is no pain, no sadness no fear.
- Repeat as needed. No limitations.
- Warning: Some danger of MBS – More Bird Syndrome being encouraged

Dr. Mozart would be interested in other Club Bird's approach to helping their caregivers relieve stress (or maybe sharing tips for the less imaginative feathered friends for causing stress).

Mission Statement

Gateway Parrot Club

A not-for-profit organization

Established in 1988

Dedicated to the following goals:

- Bring people together in a friendly atmosphere in the interest of exchanging information on bird care and breeding.
 - Create interest in bird care and responsible breeding through monthly educational programs and annual bird fairs.
 - Reduce neglect, cruelty and abuse of captive birds through education and public outreach.
 - Educate the public, as well as ourselves, on the ever present danger of extinction in the wild.
-

Contact Information

We welcome your questions and suggestions...

Officers

President	Phyllis Cotton	(314) 427-3679
Vice President	Janet Draper	(314) 432-3019
Secretary	Dorene Olson	(314) 956-1310
Treasurer	Dave Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Membership	Carole Grommet	(636) 529-0026

Board Members

Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Nancy Marron	(314) 984-9524
Pat Seiler	(636) 462-4732
Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317
Debby Martin	(314) 968-0949
Larry Martin	(314) 968-0949

Committees

Education/Outreach	Dorene Olson	(314) 569-1310
Hospitality	Pat Seiler	(314) 462-4732
Librarian	Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Ways & Means	Larry Martin	(314) 968-0949
Website /Newsletter	Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317