

# Squawk 'n Talk

Volume 6, Issue 1

January 2006

## Presidential Perch

"HAPPY NEW YEAR" to all! I sincerely hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday. We had a great time at the Holiday Party in December. Many thanks to Debby Martin & Niki Shaffer for the fun & games as well as great prizes, they provided. I would also like to thank everyone who brought food. It was absolutely scrumptious as usual.

Elections have taken place and I want to congratulate everyone who was elected. We have a wonderful slate of officers and board members so we can look forward to another successful year. Once again, we are beginning to plan for our August fair. We welcome any suggestions and new ideas. Please, give us your input.

Just a reminder... It is MOVIE TIME. We will be showing the film documentary, "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" starring Mark Bittner at the next meeting on January 15th at 2:00 PM following the general meeting. There is NO CHARGE to see this wonderful & entertaining film so please come and bring your family or friends. We will have snacks as well as popcorn but feel free to bring your favorite snack as well. The tape will be in our library after this meeting for anyone to check out. For any new members who may not be aware, we have a very extensive library. Feel free to take a look and check out any books or tapes you would like to see. If there is a particular book or tape you are looking for, ask Christine Kinkade or Larry Martin if we have it in our collection.

Trey, our editor, is always seeking articles for the newsletter. If you are so inclined, please write an article and Trey will publish it. You can also let Trey know if you think an article written by someone else would be of interest to other club members. Trey will

contact the author for permission to reprint the article. We will also publish your own personal "birdy recipes" if you would like to share them. Trey can be reached by emailing or calling him. His contact info is in the newsletter.

Time to put the birds to bed! See you at the next meeting.

Phyllis

## Tidbits

Trey Shaffer

The biggest news, club-wise, is the election. Elections were held at the December 18, 2005 meeting.

The following Officers were elected to a two year term, beginning January 1, 2006

- General Secretary - Dorene Olson
- Treasurer - Dave Kinkade
- Membership Secretary - Nancy Marron

The following Board Members were elected to a two year term, beginning January 1, 2006

- Carole Grommet
- Christine Kinkade
- Larry Martin

Other activities included eating, gifts and games. Thanks to Debby Martin and Niki Shaffer for putting together the activities. We had holiday and bird-related word games and bird-Jeopardy. We also made Cheerio-peanut butter-seed treats.

Here is a sample of a Mozart word-scramble...

**AEEGLNS**

**ACNOTU**

Unscramble these two bird species and check your answers on page 14.

Trey Shaffer

It's that time again... Actually, it is *past* that time. We've been a slack about reminding you. As of now, almost everyone's membership has expired. But look on the bright side, we're still sending your newsletter.

But seriously folks... Send us your \$20. For those receiving the printed version of the newsletter, you should have noticed a membership application on the inside of the cover. The form is pre-filled with the information we have as your current contact information. If you're a traditional pen and paper, stick a stamp, postal mail type; tear the cover off update the new fields and mail it to our new Membership Secretary, Nancy Marron. (Don't forget the \$20.)

For those of you living in the twenty first century, we have other alternatives. You can renew your membership on our website. Right on our homepage, you should notice a marquee or "crawler" across the top of the page that links to an application and the opportunity to pay your dues.

Please pay particular attention to supplying your email address and preferences. We now have an automated email process to send announcements and information to members. This should help our communications quite a bit. So please be sure to supply your email address and tell us what information you want to receive, and in what format.

Without being to "techie," please supply your email preferences. The email format can be HTML or Plain Text. If you're not sure, select HTML. Plain Text is outdated and used by very few people today. Choose your attachment type, either PDF or RTF. This is less critical. I usually generate attachments, if any, in both formats. Select PDF if you're unsure.

Finally, tell us if you want to receive the printed newsletter by U.S. Postal mail. This option is only available to members. We can save a little paper, and postage, by not mailing printed newsletters, so let us know if you are satisfied with the electronic format...

**A note on payment** – While the web-based payment is convenient, it does cost the club a service charge for each transaction. So, if you don't mind investing that \$.39 and a paper check, it will save the Club about 75 cents.

# VOLUNTEERS PAST AND FUTURE

Debby Martin

Our 2005 volunteers!!! What a wonderful group – it isn't possible to thank you enough. Now 2006 is here and we're looking at the year ahead. Would you be willing to help with a project or committee or take on organizing an activity? Here are some areas where volunteers are *a/ways* needed. Please think about them and sign up at the next meeting or give Debby Martin a call at (314) 968-0949.

## **LIBRARY**

- Review a book and note findings for Squawk N Talk
- Set up Library Table and lay out books at the meetings
- Assist members to check out and return items

## **MEETING HOST/HOESSTESS**

- Greet members and visitors and ensure everybody has a name tag and visitors have a special name tag.
- Introduce visitor to members and make sure nobody stands alone – help create a warm and friendly atmosphere.
- Interview new members and help write a little article welcoming them to the club for Squawk N Talk.

## **SQUAWK N TALK**

Write articles for Squawk N Talk – Tips you've discovered experiences you've had with your birds, etc.

## **EDUCATION AND PROGRAM**

- Identify programs or speakers and advise Dorene the Program Chairperson. Offer to assist her in contacting speakers or any other help she needs
- Identify community events where the Parrot Club could have a booth or presence and advise Dorene, the Community Outreach Chairperson. Help arrange for booth setup and staffing.

## **HOSPITALITY**

- Bring refreshments to meetings

- Set up the refreshment table and clean up after meetings
- Coordinate the Club Christmas Party including games

**THE FAIR (This is just a partial list)**

- Set up and Take Down the Fair
- Publicity; TV, Newspapers, Posting flyers
- Registration Table
- Raffle Table – Sell Tickets and solicit bird related items
- Silent Auction- Solicit larger donations from corporations and individuals
- Membership Table – Sign up new members
- Seminar / Workshop Table – Sell Tickets and coordinate seminars
- Audio Visual – Set up equipment for speakers and announcements
- Make Telephone Calls
- Refreshments for Vendors – Set up coffee and snacks
- Buffet – Arrange catering, setup room, serve food
- Create and put up signs for outside and inside tables and doors
- Recruit and coordinate volunteers
- Make name tags for volunteers

Stop PDD



The Club donated \$1,000 to Dr. Branson Ritchie and the University of Georgia to support research into PDD, Proventricular Dilation Disease, a deadly wasting syndrome afflicting domestic, exotic and wild birds worldwide.

If you are reading this online, click the AHN logo above to link to more information. The Avian Health Network, AHN, is a grass roots, volunteer-run organization dedicated to supporting avian research into diseases such as PDD. AHN's StopPDD campaign focuses on: promoting public awareness of the deadly disease, and raising funds to help support PDD research conducted by the Emerging Diseases Research Group (EDRG) at the University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine, where Dr. Ritchie is a faculty member.

## THE GENTLE HAND

Debby Martin

In October the World Bird Sanctuary had an Open House. We toured the bird hospital – it was fascinating. A little owl had just been brought in that morning with a broken wing. The vet put a splint on the wing until surgery could be performed later and put the little guy in a hospital cage. When I saw him, he had skittered behind his little padded perch and was leaning against it hiding his eyes – what he couldn't see wasn't there! The vet knew the owl was hurting and afraid and was so sympathetic and kind, but having broken my own arm I know setting a bone hurts. But not everything has to hurt or be scary. BirdTalk, in its February issue, had an article by Liz Wilson on using Non-aggressive Handling techniques to reduce your bird's stress. Apparently it's common in some vet practices and pet stores to use aggressive toweling techniques – sometimes called the "Harpy Eagle Catch". It's a capture technique where you swoop down on the parrot and grab with a towel from behind. It was originally designed to capture wild birds quickly with no injury.

For companion birds, new non-aggressive techniques have been developed. Instead of a predatory grab from behind, try talking gently to the parrot and wrap from the front. Or bring your bird close to your chest and then gently bring the towel up and over his head from behind. Ah, Mozart interjects here he prefers this method! Since Mozart has been a baby, we've played "Peek-a-Boo" with the towel each day and now I can lay the towel completely over him with no problem. He sits on his perch with me in front. I cover my head with the towel and croon, "Where's Mama" (hoping nobody hears me). Pulling the towel off my head I shout dramatically "Peek-a-Boo." Then I repeat

only covering Mozart and asking “Where is Mozart?” Mozart loves this game and directs me as his transcriber to encourage everybody to try it! Our next challenge is to introduce Ginger, our new little rescue, to Mr. Towel.

Try finding a groomer who uses a gentle toweling technique. But if your groomer is truly frightened of being bitten and insists on using a more aggressive technique, teach your bird to be toweled by you. You can then gently wrap him up and hand the bundle to the groomer. This will reduce the stress for your precious companion.

## Saving for the Fair Mozart’s Challenge

Debby Martin

Overall, the feedback on our annual All American Hookbill Fair was very positive. But the raffle table of small items generated a lot of negative comment. People said they came for bird-related items and had little interest in most of the things we had on the table. As a result, we sold very few tickets. Mozart would like to present a challenge to the flock. Please consider helping the Club acquire better items for the table by one of two ways:

- Set aside an amount each month and give it to the Fair Committee in July to purchase bird toys and related items
- Purchase one bird related item each month and give them to the Fair Committee.

Mozart points out it’s more efficient to donate dollars, since toys can be bought in bulk at a discount. Please consider doing this – it would be such a help.

**Note:** Thanks for this suggestion. The Board is facilitating the purchase of toy components for the manufacture of toys. Please let us know if you could help us by assembling them... Of course monetary donations are appreciated.

## Germs, Germs, Everywhere

Debby Martin

In November, Dorene Olson presented a very interesting program on Avian Flu and First Aid. Mozart sat on my chest, transfixed by the thought of this dreadful disease on one hand and on the other, the sheer bliss of my sure fire neck scratching technique. Ginger sat, as always, like the perfect self-confident lady she is.

Later while supervising my filing, Mozart discovered an article in Dec '03 Bird Talk about common steps you can take to help keep your bird safe and he thought these were very helpful tips;

- Have any new bird examined by an avian vet. This is very important if you have other birds at home.
- Quarantine any new birds for a minimum of 30 days. This includes making sure its food dishes are kept separate.
- Keep the cage clean, wiping down perches and ladders with vinegar or other avian-safe disinfectant. Change the paper in the tray daily.
- Use paper, not shavings or other filler in the tray. Anything but paper, encourages the growth of bacteria.
- Make sure food and water dishes are clean and water is changed several times day.
- Do not leave wet or perishable foods in the bird's dish for more than several hours.
- There is a risk taking your bird to places. If it is coming in contact with other people, make absolutely sure they disinfect their hands before handling your bird. Remember viruses can be present on the clothing of someone who has handled a diseased bird. If you board your bird, make sure they require proof of a recent veterinary examination for the birds in their care – if they don't you may be exposing your bird to diseases carried by the other birds.
- Shower and change clothes before tending to your own birds if you go to bird marts, bird club meetings, pet stores, county fairs or other public places where birds are present.
- Do not give wet kisses to your bird or allow it to take a bite of food you've been eating.

- Practice good sanitation at home – wash and disinfect your hands before you handle the bird or its equipment.
- Finally, don't be overly paranoid about germs, infectious diseases are not common for the well cared-for pet bird.

## The Chomp Machine

Debby Martin

My "Good Bird" magazine came yesterday – Mozart and Ginger were so excited with the "Positive Reinforcement" idea of working together. There was the wonderful picture of a beautiful Macaw with its eyes closed in sweet contentment, its head nestled against the man's chest. But the beak – I've never quite gotten past my fear of being bitten with that large beak. Mozart pointed out HE never bites and neither does Ginger and he reminded me of the "Bird Times" article that had some tips on avoiding being bitten.

Mozart uses his beak to test the step-up surface. He'll grab my finger gently just to make sure it won't wobble and uses his beak to "mouth" everything just like a toddler. Be aware of this exploratory behavior and don't jerk your hand away. You can inadvertently teach a bird to bite by jerking your hand back when the "beak" approaches and the bird decides that he better grab quicker and harder and it escalates into a bite. Ask your birds to step up only from a stable surface using firm consistent step up commands and DO NOT offer a wobbly or hand or unstable step up surface

Know your bird and watch the body posture he displays before a bite. For instance, many birds lower their neck and head and fluff their feathers just prior to biting. Also look for eye pinning (rapid dilation of the eye pupils). Eye pinning is a sure sign of excitement, which, if ignored, may lead to a bite. Of course others display almost no sign of an impending bite. The Bird Times article mentioned the Eclectus as an example of a species prone not to provide warning signals. I noticed the "Good Bird" magazine has consistently run several pages of bird pictures explaining how to interpret the stance or feather display – I'm going to find that really helpful.

Your bird needs to see you as having a higher status. To reinforce that, the "step up" exercise should be done daily in an area away from the cage. Higher altitude means higher rank, so if you have a nippy bird, don't let it be above your heart level while out of the cage and never let it ride on your shoulder.

If all fails and you do get bitten remember parrots respond to facial expressions, raise your head above the bird's level and say "no" in a normal speaking voice. Put the bird down on a stand and turn your back and ignore him for several minutes – no treats or praise during this time. Then try and pick up again. Whatever you do don't yell or hop around – parrots love drama and this just rewards the bite. Some "parronts" use the "earthquake" technique if their bird tries to bite the hand it's sitting on. They gently move their hand a little, not enough to cause the bird to fall, just enough to get him off balance so he'll concentrate on regaining balance rather than biting you. Of course never strike a bird. You can, with a VERY STERN look, have the bird to "step up" five or six times in succession. Sometimes having a cage "time out" may be a good idea – but be very sure this isn't what the bird wanted in the first place. The bird's temperament determines how you handle this. Some respond to just a stern look, others need the look and verbal "No" and others need a time out.

Another suggestion if you do get bitten is to resist the temptation to pull away. Instead, reverse the action and move towards the bird. It must then release or be pushed off balance. Don't scream or startle – this only reinforces the behavior and it suddenly becomes a great game!

Mozart is nodding his head emphatically at this point. I work long hours and the temptation when I'm home to keep Mozart and Ginger on my shoulders while scuttling around the house doing chores is overwhelming. I fail frequently to see Mozart is getting over stimulated. I could have avoided "beaky" behavior by putting him back in his cage for five or ten minutes to rest. So I think he's "beaking" me to get me to put him "home".

**Trey's note:** This sounds right on to me. I used to have a not-very friendly Yellow Naped Amazon, and it was a hard lesson to learn not to pull away when bitten. It is better to come away with just a bruise rather than a bruise and deeply torn flesh. For those of you who know Q, our current bird, the perfect Macaw, he does use his beak on fingers, and like Debby most people are scared of that beak. Frankly, I would treat a strange Macaw with a lot of respect, since I have watched Q bite through my car keys, but he will never hurt a finger. Just say "ouch," and train them to "be nice," or "be gentle."

## Cold Morning – Warm Cereal

Debby Martin

Mozart and Ginger were certainly feeling the chill. I noticed they were sitting on their manzanita tree pulling their feathers down around their feet and giving me annoyed looks – apparently I had set the thermostat too low. So I upped the temperature and thought the following snack might improve their attitude. It worked – you may want to give it a try.

Make oatmeal using the box directions. Add cinnamon and nutmeg to taste, ¼ cup cut-up strawberries, ¼ cup cut up bananas and ¼ cup cut-up apple. Stir in the fruit while the oatmeal cooks and serve warm. This was a nifty way to start the morning.

## Conservation for Critters

The third annual *Conservation For Critters* is scheduled for Sunday, March 12, 2006 from 10am - 4pm at Kirkwood Community Center. Participants include the St. Louis Herpetological Society, Wildlife Center Of Missouri, Audubon Society, Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic, Wild Canid Survival Center, World Bird Sanctuary, Friends In The Wild and more.

The goal of *Conservation For Critters* is to educate the general public about wildlife and conservation by creating a family-oriented event with numerous exhibits, some live animals, and hands-on activities for children. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children under 10.

For more information call Karen Lucy at (636) 461-2818 or e-mail [LucyReptilesRUs@aol.com](mailto:LucyReptilesRUs@aol.com).

## Bylaws Change

Trey Shaffer

We recently noticed an oversight in our bylaws. As you may recall, we adopted new bylaws in June. The current issue is how to fill a Board Member's position if that member is unable to complete their term. There is no language in the current bylaws to address this situation.

Past practice, and the previous bylaws, provided the President appoint a replacement for the duration of the Board Member's term. Therefore the following is proposed as an addition to the current bylaws.

***In the event a Board Member is unable to complete their term in office, the President shall appoint a replacement to complete the regular term of the Board Member.***

This language would be inserted in the bylaws as section 5.2.5. In keeping with the process to update the bylaws, the proposed change has been sent to the General Secretary, and is included in the newsletter. The change will be proposed for acceptance to the membership at the February meeting.

## IRRESISTIBLE ACCORDING TO MOZART

Debby Martin

Mozart admits he didn't do this research himself – the biologists at the university of California at Irvine did. Did you know that a Crest can be irresistible to the ladies? Mozart knew that all along of course, but was glad to see it confirmed. The biologists found that male zebra finches readily allow the indignity of having a white feather glued to their head – guess why! It makes the irresistible to the female zebra finches! Course, Mozart is having no luck with Ginger our new cockatiel flock member. (Course while Mozart's not looking I'll confess his crest isn't as spectacular as Ginger's so maybe she feels he's just not up to snuff ! Poor Mozart).

## What Do You Know? Reporters Needed

Debby Martin

Mozart and Ginger directed me to make a plea for 2006. As their dutiful scribe I type the following. Squawk N Talk needs reporters! We need articles (long or short) by either "parronts" or club parrots sharing their expertise or just experiences. What could I write about – you may ask? Here are some ideas from Mozart and Ginger.

Do you have an insight about your flock experiences that might be helpful to a new club member? What do you wish someone had told you when you first got your bird?

Has your parrot learned a new trick? How did you teach the trick?

Has he learned a new "good" behavior or stopped an inappropriate one. Please share how that happened, it would be SO helpful!

Have you experience with a specific kind of parrot and can share what it's like to be in their flock –good and bad point please.

Have you introduced different kinds of parrots into your flock – what kinds of birds worked together and which did not!

Did your bird do something incredibly smart, funny, bad, or pitiful? Share it with us – we'll learn from your experience.

If you can help, please email your article to Trey Shaffer at [Newsletter@GatewayParrotClub.org](mailto:Newsletter@GatewayParrotClub.org). If you don't have a computer, mail them to Debby Martin, 1384 N Berry Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122. I'll type them and email them to Trey. Thanks for all your help!!!

## TIEL THERAPY

Debby Martin

With the holidays behind us and Dr. Mozart has noticed the stress of 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 you 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).

Word Mix Answers from page 2:

Senegal

Toucan

## 2006 Meeting Schedule

Here is the year ahead, as it is shaping up. Mark the dates. More information will come later on topics for each meeting.

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Topic</b>   |
|--------------|--|
| February 19  | Creative cage setup and location                         |
| March 19     | The Feather Distribution Project - Jonathan Reyman       |
| April 19     | TBA  |
| May 21       | Dr. Kersting - First Aid and more...                     |
| June 11      | Toy making party. Note, this is the <i>Second</i> Sunday |
| July 16      | TBA  |
| August 20    | Annual Fair  |
| September 17 | TBA  |
| October 15   | Dr. Van Horn – AAV conference update, Bird flu           |
| November 19  | TBA – Nominations for offices                            |
| December 17  | Elections – Holiday party                                |

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## 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.

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## Contact Information

## Officers

We welcome your comments and suggestions...

|                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 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     | Nancy Marron   | (314) 984-9524 |

## Board Members

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Christine Kinkade | (636) 343-8097 |
| Carole Grommet    | (636) 529-0026 |
| Mandy Baumgartner | (314) 842-4191 |
| 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 |