

Squawk 'n Talk

Volume 6, Issue 2

February 2006

Greetings from the Presidential Perch!

We are hard at work planning the August fair as well as numerous other events in which we are participating. Please keep your eyes on our upcoming schedule to stay up to speed on these events. As always we welcome your participation and new ideas.

I am also training to walk a 13.1 mile marathon to benefit victims or potential victims of stroke. My life is extremely busy at this time. If you or anyone you know has been affected by stroke, please consider sponsoring me and my sister in this endeavor. Information can be found at: <http://www.StrokeAssociation.org>. All donations are greatly needed as well as appreciated! Donations are tax deductible as well.

Please join the GPC at the next meeting for fun, education and good food on Sunday, February 19th at 2:00 PM at the Humane Society on Macklind Avenue. The meetings are held in the Training Center which is behind the Veterinary Clinic on the Wise Ave. side of the bldg.

Hope to see you there!

Phyllis

Tidbits

Trey Shaffer

Please note, the calendar for our meetings this year is near the back of the newsletter. A small correction... Last month I listed the annual Fair date incorrectly. The Fair this year will be the weekend of August 26 – 27. It's good to know someone is reading this and keeping me straight.

Congratulations Mandy! Please welcome Mandy Baumgartner as a new member of our Board of Directors. Long-time member Pat Seiler has work conflicts with our third Sunday meeting schedule and has, reluctantly, passed the torch for this term. We want to thank Pat, and we are not forgetting Bernie, for their efforts; and we look forward to their continued participation as their schedules permit. Find Mandy's smiling face, probably with a Cockatiel on her shoulder, at the next meeting and congratulate her. Mandy will serve the remainder of Pat's term, which runs through the end of this year.

Reminder – there is a bylaws change in process. Details appear later in this issue. Notice is appearing twice, since the January newsletter came out after the meeting last month.

Thanks to Debby Martin... For several reasons, since she, and Larry, are active in several ways, but particularly for her prolific contributions to the newsletter. Last month's issue was "mostly" Debby, and this is nearly an All-Debby issue. Yes, thank you Mozart and Ginger. Now let's see if any of those other birds out there can dip a feather in the ink and come up with an article...

We have some interesting meetings coming up. February, Dorene will talk to us about cage setups. Then in both March and April, Dr. Jonathan Reyman will be our guest talking first about the Feather Distribution Project and then about Bird Myths of South American Indians. Jonathan has spoken to us previously about the Feather Distribution Project, but it has been a while. So if you are not familiar with the Feather Distribution Project, come and find out. I'm sure you will find it fascinating and look at the feathers that fall on the bottom of your cages in a whole new light. The South American Myths topic is a new one. When Jonathan asked which topic we would prefer, we couldn't decide, and he was gracious enough to come twice. He lives in Springfield, Illinois where he is associated with the Illinois State Museum.

With a slight tie-in to birds and the Feather Distribution Project, Niki Shaffer is completing her art degree at the University of Missouri, St. Louis and will have an exhibition of her work at The UMSL Galaxy, 1227 Washington, St. Louis, on Saturdays, from February 25, through March 25, from 2:00 – 8:00 PM, with a reception Friday evening, March 3, from 6:00 – 9:00 PM. Some of her work incorporates themes from the Feather Distribution Project, are made from feathers, or feature Quakers and Macaws.

Here is an interesting note, received by email, from one of the Club's original members...

My name is Sherry Richardson and I was just looking at the St. Louis paper when I saw the article on pet bird rescue. What a surprise to find out the old club that I was with some 20 years ago is still going and doing soooooo well.

I was part of the original group that formed that club so many years ago. I'm pleased to see that it has continued on the course of helping to educate the public on exotic birds, and bird care.

I no longer live in St. Louis, or have my beloved birds; (another story) but what you are doing is so very important. Please keep up the good work and God Bless you all.

Sherry (Paul) -Richardson

Rolla, Mo.

THAT'S A LOVEBIRD??

Debby Martin

The other day, Mozart and I were in the bird shop -- bird and people watching. Mozart was carefully comparing his feathers to everyone else's and basking in the knowledge he was superior (no false modesty problem here!). Then we saw it: small, green with a dark head. WAY too small to be an Amazon, Conure or Pionus. How the feathers shimmered and was he a lovey-dovey! I asked the lady what kind of bird that was and she said, "A lovebird!" Mozart and I wondered where was its bright peach face? But, later, Mozart saw the Bird Talk articles from Sept 2004 and May 2005 – and discovered that there are many kinds of lovebirds, so many hues – even blue. (And yes Mozart I love grey best!!) The articles had some helpful hints.

They are very lively, intelligent and loyal and can be very sweet, depending on how they are handled. Try to get a recently-weaned, hand-fed baby and plan to spend at least *one hour* per day interacting with your bird for the first year. If you want the bird to bond with you, it's better to only have one – with two they are more likely to bond with each other and while they'll still interact with you, it won't be the same relationship. Because they can become overly bonded with a person, make sure every person in the household handles the bird every day. The article mentioned the Fischer's lovebird doesn't seem to be as protective of its owner as some of the others.

If you do introduce a second bird, the article had some tips. Keep the birds separate for three to six months and work one on one with the new bird to build a relationship. Then introduce them in a neutral place and monitor carefully. If they're going to share a cage, it's best to have a brand new cage to reduce any territoriality. If they have to share the first bird's cage, change out all the toys and perches with new ones, arranged differently and move the cage to a different part of the house. It's a good idea to have the birds sexed because while two males can get along just fine, that's not the case with females. When they get broody, they can do very severe damage to each other. It's also recommended that cockatiels and other species not interact with lovebirds since lovebirds are more aggressive and can injure the more passive cockatiel (Mozart is sure he would come out on top!)

"Respect my territory and we'll get along just fine," seems to be the lovebird motto! Females especially can be nippy when feeling broody and near their cage. Stick training is a good way to get them out of the cage without a nip. They can also be territorial about their owner. But the owners quoted in the article all emphasized spending consistent one on one time reduced the amount of nips. Move them away from the cage and they become calmer and loving – many were real cuddle bunnies. Keeping the wings trimmed reduces nippiness. They want to be right in the middle of all the family activity. Lovebirds frequently love their baths, getting right under the running water or playing in deeper water that would scare Mozart. Because they are so full of energy and intelligence, it's a challenge to keep them occupied and out of mischief. They can master a toy in two shakes and love to shred and chew things like tongue depressors, bamboo leaves and paper. They love to ring bells and swing on swings. Watching them play with their zest for life and assertive personality is one of the reasons the owners adore their birds. If you want to know more about Lovebirds go to www.africanlovebirdsociety.com

Life With A Special Cockatiel

Mandy Baumgartner

I recently adopted a little albino cockatiel from rescue. Her name is Tieltje (a Dutch word for little tiel) and she is very special. Tieltje has a condition called splay leg, which causes her legs stick out slightly. Splay leg usually develops when the chick is young, and early intervention can sometimes correct it. Tieltje's feet are also deformed. Normally parrot feet consists four toes, two pointing forward and two facing back (called zygodactyl), Tieltje's toes curl together in a loose fist. As a result of these conditions, Tieltje waddles when she moves around and she cannot perch very well.

Because of her disability, Tieltje uses her beak even more to help steady herself. When holding her care must be taken to make sure she is secure or she'll let you know with her beak – though the pressure is usually very gentle.

Tieltje isn't able to step up, like other birds, but we are starting to work on her walking onto my hand. Instead of offering a finger, I offer my flat palms and say step up and then gently scoop her up with both hands. With pairing the scoop and the words, I hope that she can learn to anticipate being picked up.

Tieltje came into rescue when her breeder surrendered her. He called her Bump because of her deformities. He thought she didn't do anything – was he wrong! Tieltje has quickly become a treasured companion and loves to be a part of everything. A cuddlier bird would be hard to find, and she will flutter down from her play gyms to seek me out. After meeting her, it is easy to tell why I'm smitten with her. It is sometimes hard for me to remember that there is anything different about her. But she is different and I've gotten a crash course on living with a special needs bird.

A Special House

Tieltje lives in a long and low cage about 30" x 18" x 18." Her perches are kept low for her to easily climb up from the floor and for security from falls. She does have some ability to perch, but her gripping power is limited. Perches are all chosen for best gripping potential and include wide rope, latex and some natural bark branches. I have found that wider perches are easier for her to use.

Tieltje utilizes ladders quite well and has one leading to her latex perch and a wire platform where she spends a lot of time. Self-adhering bandage from the first aid section of stores (also called Vet

Wrap; available from veterinarians and pet suppliers) can also be used to wrap around perches to make them more secure.

Tieltje uses the floor of her cage to get around. She waddles around on the grate, which is covered with a thick layer of newspaper and changed often. She has begun to play with toys, which are lowered with the use of chain so that she can better reach them. Her favorite toys are things she can shred such as balsa wood and ice cream cones that are strung on skewers for her. She shreds these with amazing speed and tenacity.

A Place to Play

Tieltje has specially modified play gyms as well. They all have lots of ground room for her to waddle about on with some low perches as well. I have made her a variety of PVC pipe and dowel play stands with ladders for her to climb on. The dowel and pipe lengths are wrapped with bandage to make gripping easier.

Special needs birds find themselves homeless quite often. Providing a home for one of these special animals can enrich your life in many ways. Tieltje's condition really hasn't required anything extraordinary or demanded more time from me. She has given far more than she has taken. If you have room in your life and heart, I encourage you to consider adopting a special bird. You will learn and love a lot.



Resources for Living with Special Needs Birds

Print Articles:

Companion Parrot Quarterly Issue # 64 Summer 2004 – Special Modifications for Special Birds (see also website of same name below)

Email Group:

Special Needs Pet Birds Yahoo Group –To join this list, email Birdsong123@aol.com or rkeith@rockford.com

Websites:

Special-Abled Birds – Great website with lots of stories and pictures.

www.geocities.com/brdsong123/Special_Abled_Birds.html

Cuddles the handicapped cockatiel

www.avianweb.com/Cuddles.htm

Special Modifications for Special Birds

www.geocities.com/brdsong123/special_abled2.html

Imperfect, Perfectly Loveable

www.parrotchronicles.com/marchapril2004/disabled.htm

Psychological & Physical Disabilities: Cause and Effect

tropics.parrotrefuge.com/problem.html

Handicapped and Special Need Birds

www.geocities.com/Heartland/Hills/5771/needy.html

Special Needs Birds – Many stories of many species

www.holisticbirds.com/HBN01/octnov/pages/specialneeds1.htm

Phoenix – Rising from the Ashes

Debby Martin

Mozart and Ginger were helping me sort the mail; bills 1 beak scallop, circulars 2 beak scallops and letters 3 beak scallops!!! Ginger found the magazine from Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and the article about a year old Amazon parrot and his wonderful story. Raised in pet shop in Nebraska he bit everybody and was actually going to be put down, when Best Friends heard about him and offered him a forever home in their aviary. A kindly airline hostess donated her fre-

quent flyer miles so he could fly from Nebraska to Utah. He immediately settled in and proved he was really a lovable goofball who just wanted to have fun. At the pet store, he discovered the marvelous game of “gotcha”. Bite and watch the people hop, scream and dance – best game ever! Best Friends began working with him immediately to stop biting. That means avoid reacting. They reward him with treats and praise when he dips his head for a scratch or does other positive behaviors. They ignore the nips, pretend it didn’t hurt at all, put him back in his aviary and snub him for a few minutes. Gradually he’s learning nipping gets no reaction and good behaviors get lots of great treats and attention. He’s a changed bird. To honor that change, he has a new name “Phoenix” – risen from the ashes to a whole new life!

Member Profile Leslie Elpers

What do you do for a living?

I am the President of Ability Network. We are a statewide agency specializing in early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. We have over 140 pediatric specialists such as speech therapists, physical therapists, developmental therapists, etc. who provide these services throughout Missouri. I previously taught for 17 years in a one-room school in rural Missouri for children with severe disabilities and have been a behavior specialist for individuals with very severe behavior concerns who also have severe/profound cognitive disabilities.

Where are you from? Are you a St. Louis native?

I am originally from St. Louis, but moved to Cape Girardeau while I was attending undergraduate and graduate school. I then lived in Ste. Genevieve where my husband is an attorney, but we recently bought a condo in St. Louis. I live in St. Louis most of the time.

Tell us about your own personal birds

I have one bird, JoJo, who is a peach-face lovebird. I adopted him from someone in Ste. Genevieve County. He had previously been a feather picker and had lived in several homes. I’ve had him for about 3 years and he has never plucked any feathers. He is very well adjusted and happy! He travels with me when I go to Ste. Genevieve. He doesn’t mind the ride and likes to hear his bells and other toys

“clang” when I’m going down the highway. He has a smaller cage for the weekend trips, and I put it in the passenger seat. I also occasionally foster birds.

What other pets do you have?

In Ste. Genevieve we have one cat, Mollie. She is a senior cat...very lazy and sleeps about 23 hours a day! She is afraid of JoJo and doesn’t want to be bothered with him. We did have dog that we named Sparkie. Sparkie was a beagle mix...fat with short legs. He was previously abused and abandoned and had a bullet lodged in him. We had Sparkie for 17 wonderful years!

How did you first become involved with GPC?

When I first moved back to St. Louis, I saw an article about Perfectly Precious Pets and began fostering birds. Then I went to my first bird fair and that’s where I learned about Gateway Parrot Club.

What are your main concerns in aviculture today?

Birds are not domesticated animals like dogs. Because they must live in cages and not their natural environments, they can become very difficult. There are too many unwanted birds in captivity. We must work towards legislation that governs the breeding and sale of birds.

What would be your advice to someone looking for a bird?

Be sure you have a lot of time to spend with your bird. They will become part of the family!

We have had some terrific speakers this past year sharing stories and slides of their travels abroad to see birds in their native habitat - have you ever gone on any of these educational trips?

Many of our vacations have centered around birds. I love going to seabird sanctuaries and have been to many during our travels. Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge in Sanibel Island is awesome. I have also been to the rain forests in Costa Rica and traveled to Nova Scotia.

Besides birds, what hobbies or interests do you have?

I am a Broadway musical enthusiast and have a huge Playbill collection. I also love to travel and have been to over a dozen countries.

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.

The Mozart Fair Challenge How Are you Doing?

Mozart wishes to remind the club flock about his challenge for the Hookbill Fair Raffle Table! Based on attendees' comments we want to have bird related items for the table. Please consider helping the Club acquire bird toys and treats for the table by one of two ways;

1. Set aside a pledge amount each month and then in by July 1st give it to the Fair Committee to purchase bird toys and other related items;
2. Purchase one bird related item each month and give it to the Fair Committee.

You can bring your donation to the Club Meeting. Mozart already has his ready for the February meeting!! Carole Grommet has offered to store the items until the Fair. You can contact her at (636) 529-0026. You can contact the club treasurer Dave Kinkade about sending a monetary donation (636) 343-8097.

VOLUNTEERS

Don't forget the Club needs volunteers. At each meeting in 2006 we will have a table for volunteer signup. Please take a minute and look at the opportunities to help with a project or committee. If you miss signup at the meeting, call Debby Martin at (314) 968-0949. We need help with the following areas:

- Library
- Meeting Host/Hostess
- Squawk N Talk articles
- Education and Program
- Hospitality
- And of course... the Fair!

SINGING PALS

Debby Martin

An interesting tidbit Mozart found in Bird Talk! Did you know that some birds form a chorus to sing? Plain-tailed wrens in Ecuador join in groups of up to seven singing in chorus – often continuously for up to two minutes at a time. Scientists think the sing-alongs discourage predators! Mozart wishes to point out they can't hold a candle to his solo rendition of Pop Goes the Weasel!

"I'm SOOOO in LOVE"

Debby Martin, Christine Kinkade & Carole Grommet

Valentine's Day is here. I told Mozart the other day that in the Middle Ages people believed birds found their life's mate on February 14th. Yeah, Yeah he squawked and returned to arranging paper shreds in his drawer. Mozart has bonded with me and one of the things I didn't understand was the necessity of avoiding a "mate bond" with Mozart. Actually as he's my 1st bird, I didn't know he was falling madly in love with me. He has even tried to regurgitate and share his pellets with me. Carole admits that when her cockatiel Andy shared his pellets she called Dr. Kersting in a panic. The vet tech chuckled and explained that regurgitation is common and Andy was just trying to feed her because he was in love with her. It's important to discourage these "amorous" activities as they can lead to behavioral problems that include aggressive behaviors, excessive screaming etc. And then of course there is the occasional guest who is perturbed. Carole, Christine and Bird Talk have some tips to help avoid your bird viewing you as a potential mate. These are especially important during breeding season (with Mozart that seems to be 24/7/12).

- Confine scratches to the head and don't pet under the wings, back or tail.
- If he regurgitates or rubs his vent on your hand, put him down, move away and ignore him for a few minutes – he then knows you don't want this behavior.
- Don't encourage your bird to get into a dark area such as under the bed, furniture, in a cabinet or drawer, or under a towel or blanket because the bird associates dark, small places with a nest box and usually makes a bird more aggressive and territorial. (Poor Mozart – he loves his drawer)
- Playing the towel game isn't a good idea during breeding season. (I want Mozart to be used to being toweled so I will only reduce playing this game with Mozart, not stop altogether)
- Redirect your bird by trick training.
- Keep your bird well socialized so he doesn't overbond with one person. Every member of the family should handle the bird each day. Don't forget to play "Pass the Birdie" with willing guests.

Ginger's Beauty Tips

Debby Martin

Ginger our cockatiel (and Mozart's nemesis) has become more and more beautiful as the year has gone by. She pointed out the Bird Talk March 2004 article on grooming tips she thought might prove helpful to other birds who wish a gorgeous image. The article has lots of tips and she'll just share one or two here.

1st step is to get used to the towel. Ginger hates loud patterns or startling colors and recommends a velour-towel as less likely to snag a toenail. Make it an interesting thing – lay it out and scatter a few toys on it (Mozart interjects here to say use almond slivers instead). Leave it close to the cage for a while, play with the toys and towel yourself – you want it to peak your bird's interest. Once your bird is willing to step on the towel go to the next step. Gently raise both ends and encircle your parrot giving *lots* of praise and encouragement. Gently encircle its head or neck in the towel and support the feet and body. Keep talking calmly giving lots of encouragement. Ginger will talk about wing trims in a later article, but everybody has to get used to the towel first.

2nd step is toenail care. When your bird is young and getting used to you, playing should include handling its toes so that becomes part of the games you play. Even with older birds, a gentle tap on its foot will encourage it to raise its foot for you. Then reward that with lots of praise and repeat it daily. Leave the clipper where your bird can see it, play with it and let your bird bite the handle. Trim your own fingernail with it explaining to your bird what you're doing while they observe. When the groomer begins the process, it should be less scary. Some parrots, that do *not* have soft feet, can use a rough textured grooming perch. Ginger dictates these are not suitable for cockatiels as their feet are so delicate and soft they can develop sore spots. Please check with your vet if you're not sure. Place it in the cage where it's handy, but not the preferred perch. Try putting it where you hang the fresh veggies, but not higher up where the bird likes to relax and sleep.

3rd step is daily bath. Ginger proudly announces her major achievement of receiving her bath while sitting on Beta Bird's arm. A bath several times a week has now become routine. She started by sitting in the sink with a spray bottle aimed up away from her and thus a

gentle mist dropped – warm water in the winter, cool water in the summer. Gradually she stopped trying to fly away and began to fluff and shake and preen. Slowly the bottle was changed so that the mist was aimed at her sometimes. She also watched Mozart get his ablutions sitting on Alpha Bird's arm. Then Eureka! When picked up out of the sink she ran down to Beta Bird's hand and sat there looking. With much trepidation Beta Bird held the bottle far away and aimed a gentle mist at her and she began to fluff and preen. It's taken over a year, but she is sooooo beautiful and the dander is much less.

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.

Date	Topic
February 19	Creative cage setup and location
March 19	The Feather Distribution Project - Jonathan Reyman
April 9	South American Bird Myths – Jonathan Reyman <i>Note: This is the SECOND Sunday of April</i>
May 21	Dr. Kersting - First Aid and more...
June 11	Toy making party. <i>Note: This is the SECOND Sunday of June</i>
July 16	TBA
August 26-27	All American Hookbill 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

Attendance

At the January meeting...

David & Christine Kinkade
Nancy Marron
Phyllis Cotton
Suzanne Dohack
Joe Mullaney - Guest
Mandy Baumgartner
Terry Thiemann
Dorene Olson
Crystal Rolfe
Lynn Ricci

Danny Herron
Cathy Dervais
Janet Draper
Sr Barbara Payne
Judy Kandlbinder - Guest
Ron Spitler
Trey Shaffer
Carole Grommet

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

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