

Squawk 'n Talk

Volume 6, Issue 5

June 2006

Greetings from the Presidential Perch!

Just a reminder that the next meeting is June 11th, which is the second Sunday of the month. Don't miss out on our toy making party that day! It will be great fun making toys for the raffle table at the August fair.

Please contact Debby Martin, if you haven't already, to volunteer at the August fair. We also need desserts as well as vegan or vegetarian dishes for the hospitality dinner, catered this year by Kenrick's Catering & BBQ.

I will not be at the next meeting. I will be in Kona, Hawaii walking a Half Marathon to benefit stroke survivors and potential stroke victims. This is what I have been training for since January. My sister & I are on the same team, walking on behalf of those who cannot do so due to a stroke. However, we have three team members who are stroke survivors, walking the miles along side of us! It was because of their strength and determination we kept going. If they can do it, so can we! I would like to personally thank everyone who supported us in our efforts. Your kindness and generosity is truly appreciated.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the July meeting, the final meeting before the fair.

Mahalo!

Phyllis

Tidbits

Trey Shaffer

First, the meeting this month is a week early. We didn't want to compete with Father's Day, so we will meet June 11, the second Sunday. Regular time and place.

The meeting will be dedicated to assembling toys for the raffle tables at the August Fair. There will be plenty of food, socializing and unstructured bird talk to go with the toys...

Jonathan Reyman sent an interesting cartoon, suggesting inclusion in the newsletter. I haven't secured permission for it, yet, so I'll describe it. It is by Jonny Hawkins, a well known cartoonist, particularly for calendars. The picture is of a man with feathers apparently growing on his head, talking to a person behind a desk, below a sign that reads, "Baldness Cure - \$49.95." The text at the bottom reads, "Sure, it's not hair -but if you have feathers on your head, you're not bald, right?"

American Idol may be over, but you can still be on TV! Join us, and support the Club and the Fair. Mark August 22 on your calendar and plan to be at Channel 5, first thing that Tuesday morning.

This month we feature articles by two national parrot people, Barbara Heidenreich and Michelle Karras. They will be our featured speakers at the All American Hookbill Fair and Seminar, this August. They will present on both Saturday and Sunday, so plan on coming both days. For these sessions we will charge a nominal fee of \$5. Tickets will be available at the door, or from the website.

On a related note, expenses for the Fair, the cost of presenting the Fair has increased significantly. Last year the Club absorbed the increased fees. The effect was that we had less money to support our mission through donation to various avian programs. This year vendors will help offset increased expenses with higher booth fees, and we hope to offset some seminar expenses with low ticket prices. So first of all, come to the Fair; second, contact Debby Martin and volunteer to help with Fair operations; third, support our; and last, but not least, attend lots of seminars...

Calling All Vets

Trey Shaffer

As a Club, we try to stay neutral relative to association with veterinarians. We do encourage everyone to find and USE a qualified veterinarian on a regular basis. As a resource to the public, we list veterinarians, primarily from the St. Louis area, on our website. That information may have become “stale.”

After Dorene’s presentation on first aid at our May meeting, there was much interest in the potential for “off hours” emergency care; finding it and being prepared for it. We would like to update our listings of avian veterinary services.

If you are, or work for, a veterinarian with an avian practice, please forward information about the practice. Please include information about the principals in avian practice, location, facilities, specialties, and any other information you feel important. In particular, based on last month’s meeting, please include information about emergency services/contact information.

Please send information to: Newsletter@GatewayParrotClub.org

If you are a bird owner/caretaker, please send a note indicating who cares for your bird(s) and any relevant information.

We hope to get information from all area veterinarians. This information will be maintained on our website, and perhaps summarized in a future newsletter. Any listing will treat all providers in a common format and only present information of a factual/verifiable nature.

Barbara Heidenreich

Barbara will be a featured speaker at our Fair in August. We look forward to her appearance. In this issue, and next month’s we have articles that will give you a “taste” of her approach.

The following information is from Barbara’s bio...

Barbara Heidenreich has been a professional in the field of animal training since 1990. She owns and operates a company, Good Bird, Inc., (www.goodbirdinc.com) that provides behavior and training products to the companion parrot community. These

products include Good Bird magazine, books, videos, consulting services and behavior and training workshops. She is the author of “Good Bird! A Guide to Solving Behavior Problems in Companion Parrots” by Avian Publications and also “The Parrot Problem Solver. Finding Solutions to Aggressive Behavior” by TFH Publications. She is the president of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (www.IAATE.org).

Barbara’s experience also includes consulting on animal behavior and training in zoos and other animal related facilities. Her specialty is free flight bird training. She has been a part of the development and production of more than 15 different free flight education programs. Barbara continues to provide consulting services to zoos, nature centers and other animal facilities through her other company, Animal Training and Consulting Services (www.ATandCS.com). In her career she has trained animals, staff, and/or presented shows at facilities around the world.

Domination - Who’s the Boss?

Barbara Heidenreich

Does your bird need to know you are the boss? This is methodology that has been around for quite a while. Humans apply this to humans all the time as well as to other animal species. There is a notion that the animal has attempted to deceive or get away with something; and by dominating him, we can put the animal in its place. What has probably happened is that whatever the animal has done wrong, probably had some positively reinforcing value to it. Chewing on the clock was fun for the bird! It wasn’t a nasty trick he played on you. In fact it probably had nothing to do with you at all.

Dominating an animal also assumes that the animal has an understanding of authority or some type of hierarchy (*see Height Dominance*). This is probably not the case with parrots. So why does “dominating” an animal seem to work at times? What usually happens in this situation is that the human will either punish or use negative reinforcement to get desired behavior. In many cases the person is able to get compliance from the bird. This is because negative reinforcement does work. (Punishment can as well, if timed appropriately) However in a nutshell, it teaches the bird to do as the person says or else something bad will happen. Again, although the person may get behavior, the main drawback

is that the bird has learned to associate negative experiences with the person. Thad Lacinak (VP Corporate Curator of Animal Training for the Sea World and Busch Gardens Parks) made a very important statement during a presentation on aggression. He said "Your job is not to get animals to do things for you, but to get them to like you". I found this to be one of the most important pieces of training advice around. Imagine trying to use domination as a means to train animals that can seriously hurt you such as killer whales, and tigers and elephants. This is not to say such methods have not been used with large animals in animal training history, but in many circumstances that training style has lead to tragic encounters when an animal has had enough. Good trainers focus on positive methods. Give your bird the respect you might give a killer whale!

Height and Dominance

Height Dominance is a fairly new concept that has been introduced into the companion parrot culture. The idea is that if a parrot is perched higher than the head of another individual (bird or human) the parrot experiences a dominant role in the relationship. There are a few factors at work that may have lead to this theory. One factor is that humans can relate to dominance and respect for a dominant or authoritative figure. Humans also many times are raised with the notion that humans are dominant to animals and should control animals. Finally it is not uncommon for a parrot to appear to be more confident and comfortable when perched high as opposed to sitting on the ground. This ties into a parrot's strategy for survival. Sitting high allows a bird a good opportunity to keep an eye out for predators and also allows a bird to attain lift easily for flight. Being low on the ground makes a bird an easy target. Therefore there is some innate characteristic in many parrot species that suggests being elevated is good survival strategy. A confident and comfortable elevated bird may be less likely to obey a "command" to come down. But then again, why should the bird want to come down? Its biology says being higher is safer. This may lead to the interpretation that the bird's disobedience is about it feeling dominant or in control of the companion parrot owner.

However if one looks at the behavior from a training perspective, there are many positive reasons for the bird to want to remain perched high and less value in sitting low. From the birds perspective it probably has very little to do with dominance. It is simply more positively reinforcing to remain high, than to move lower. Therefore rather than trying to force the bird to obey and return to

the companion parrot owner, focus on training the bird to return for positive reinforcement.

In addition to an analysis of the theories, my personal experience free flying birds in shows for 15 years has also taught me that the mechanisms at work are simple reinforcement values. It is not uncommon for parrots to occasionally wander off course in a show and end up sitting high in a tree. Climbing a tree to retrieve a bird usually is not an option. Therefore training birds to fly to trainers for positive reinforcement is the reasonable choice. Can you imagine trying to "command" a parrot to fly from a 50 ft tree? Trying to use force and dominance to retrieve a free flighted bird is nearly impossible. And if dominance or attempted force is used, the bird will have learned to stay farther away in the future. However a bird can easily learn to return to the hand for positive reinforcement. It works over and over again. One of the incredible benefits of working with animals that have the choice to go wherever they want is that trainers must learn the art of applying good training strategy based on positive reinforcement in order to obtain behavior. The animal can leave if they do not like any part of the experience. The next time your bird sits on the curtain rod and doesn't want to leave, pull out the peanuts and show your bird being with you is better than the curtain rod!

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Sexual Maturity and Your Parrot What to Expect



Michelle Karras
The Polite Parrot

There are so many different species of parrots' all of which will go through sexual maturity a bit differently. Some parrots' will go through this stage without any issues at all and others may experience many different levels of problems.

So what exactly is sexual maturity?

Sexual maturity is a time in a parrot's life when they start to mature to breeding; each parrot will differ as to what age this surge of hormones begins. Smaller parrots' will of course reach breeding

age sooner than the larger parrots'. When this surge of hormones begins your parrot does not understand what is going on with their bodies they just know that they are feeling out of sorts, new feelings are occurring within their bodies that they do not understand. Therefore it is up to us to understand that they are beginning to mature into adult birds and much like young teens they have hormones raging, mood swings, and depression. Unlike a young teen they do not have the capability to express their feelings through speech so they do so through their behavior toward us such as biting, screaming, feather destruction, phobia, and mutilation. When you are aware that sexual maturity is starting there are many steps that may be taken to help you through these difficult months or years. Having proper boundaries set within the home prior to this stage of their lives will help you soar through this time. Unfortunately many times we forget this is coming and all of a sudden our sweet little bundle of feathers is a screaming, biting, maniac and we are at a loss of what to do. Know that there is a lot you can do, if you just think like a bird, or for those of you that have older children think back and remember how your child acted through puberty and anticipate and redirect the problems you are experiencing.

Ways to work with your parrot during maturity:

- Establish good boundaries within the household prior to sexual maturity
- Have a strong step-up command
- Have a large cage filled with lots of toys for chewing and for camouflage
- Meet your parrot's exercise needs as they would be more active during this stage in their life, so more exercise is needed than in the past
- Cut back on sugar such as fruit and pasta's
- Give them more sleep to calm their breeding desire
- Feed a healthy diet
- Have, at the very least, three foraging toys within the cage
- Allow them more privacy
- Allow a sexual outlet for them that they can use in private while you are away from the home such as a bird safe stuffed animal or whiffle ball
- If they have not learned to step-up onto a Booda rope teach this for hands off handling. This way you may still handle them and exercise them without being bitten, once your parrot is calm then have them step onto your hand.

- Keep your face away from your parrot during this time, preferably always. I know it is hard and even I am guilty of playing kissy face with my parrots.
- Watch and understand their body language.

These are just a few general suggestions as each parrot faces this time in their lives differently and it is up to us as their caretakers to know what to expect from them and teach them what to expect from us.

Understanding your parrot's body language:

- Tail shakes: HAPPY, HAPPY, HAPPY
- Eyes wide: Relaxed and sleepy, good time for petting and attention
- Wings slightly out, body low and crouching: Begging for attention or about to fly
- Crest partially up or head turned slightly: Curious
- Wings dropped, head down: snuggle me
- Both feet down slightly puffed, pupils large: Good time to pet me
- One foot up: Sleepy
- Tail flare: Threatened and/or excited
- Eyes pinned: Threatened and/or excited
- Wings raised, head feathers raised: Showing dominance or excitement
- Foot stomping: My territory, stay away
- Head down, eyes pinned: Come hither giving you a feeling of false security, you will be bitten
- Crest fully up: Excited or threatened
- Tail flared, wings flared, eyes pinned: you will be bitten
- Both feet down, feathers tight to body: nervous or threatened
- Growling: Afraid
- Screaming: Excited or calling for you
- Screaming with crest up, wings out, and head moving fast: Do Not Handle
- Body low, head low, eyes pinned: You will be bitten
- Body puffed especially at back of neck, head low, and body low: You will be bitten
- Body slightly puffed tail pumping and excessive yawning: Call your vet

These are just some examples of the body language you will see with your parrot during their lifetime.

Thank You,
Michelle Karras
Avian Behavior Consultant
www.thepoliteparrot.com

Toy Making Party June 11th—Mark Your Calendar!

Carole Grommet

Dawn Breer, owner of Sweet Peas, will be at our June meeting to help us make toys for the August fair raffle. She will give us hints on making toys our birds will love, tell us where to shop for toy parts, and help us make a bunch of toys. You will go home with all kinds of ideas for toys you can make for your birds.

Dawn will have her complete line of toys with her for you to purchase. This would be a great opportunity to purchase a toy and donate to the club for the raffle.

A special thank you is extended to Pam and Bob McConnell who donated two items for our raffle. They donated a flight suit for a large bird (with leash) and a book entitled "Elsewhere in the Land of Parrots," by Jim Paul.

If you would like to donate items for the raffle, bring them to the June or July meetings or contact Carole Grommet at (636) 529-0026. So far we have parrot jewelry, parrot statues, and toys for small, medium, and large birds. Non-parrot related items are also welcome.

Welcome Feathered Customer

Debby Martin

Mozart and Ginger have been consulting on a possible trip to Kansas City this summer. They're concerned as Alpha Bird seems to be slowing down and not always able to make that drive in one Friday evening, necessitating an overnight stop. They are most

upset to find out that some hotels/motels do not allow any customers who are feathered! Well!

Bird Talk, in 2004, listed a web site that provided information on pet friendly motels/hotels. Beta Bird just double checked and the site is still active. It is www.petfriendly-hotels.com.

My Sign

Debbie Martin

Mozart has been following the horoscope posted by the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](http://www.royalsocietyfortheconservationofbirds.org) in Great Britain since he noticed Beta Bird sometimes checks her Virgo sign. He thought you might like to know what the sign is for June hatch days.

The Eagle! Any hatchling born under this sign will be well respected with excellent visionary qualities. Does this mean "cunning and able to plan sneak attacks on woodwork and toes? They will be able to fix an opponent with a powerful stare, rising above trivial problems. Any of your flock fit this profile?

www.rspb.org.uk/birds/whatbirdareyou.asp

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
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	Eco-Tour of Peru, Dorene Olson Nominations for offices
December 17	Elections – Holiday party

Hookbill Fair Dinner

Plan on joining the vendors, volunteers and board members for dinner Saturday evening, August 26. Even if you don't come for dinner, please provide a dessert for the event...

Here is a sneak peek at the likely menu...

Hickory Smoked Pork Steaks

Hickory Smoked Chicken

Molasses Baked Beans (Vegetarian)

Tri-colored Spiral Noodle Pasta Salad

Roasted Whole Kernel Corn w/peppers

Hearty Dinner Rolls & Butter

Assorted Items for Vegetarians & Vegans

Desserts & Appetizers

Beverages

"Let me Up There!!!"

Debbie Martin

Mozart views the world as his – put here by the Creator for Mozart's pleasure and dominance. Ginger just smiles her secret smile and preens – she knows who it was created for. Alpha and Beta Bird are really rather new at birds and have allowed things that while not a big problem with cockatiels, could be a major problem with a bigger bird.

After "stepping up", the 1st place they head is to that comfortable movable perch – the shoulder. Allowing a young bird on your shoulder may be a problem now, but in several years when sexual maturity arrives it may get aggressive and then problems will arise. Remember if your bird is "shouldered" it should be your idea – don't let him just run up there. He should politely step off your shoulder on to your hand when you request it. Remember how close it is to your

face – a great deal of damage can occur in a short time. You can't see the bird's body language when it's on your shoulder – warnings of a bite may be missed. In addition, if the bird startles and fears it's falling it may grab the nearest thing – your ear.

So what is the alternative? Try and have multiple perches around the house; a basket, a t-stand, a flowerpot filled with sand and a branch stuck into it – give it try!

DETECTIVE BIRD

Debbie Martin

Mozart and Ginger and Beta Bird are avid mystery story listeners – specially the 1930s Golden Age of mystery writers and more modern ones with animals helping to solve the crime. Beta Bird reads and they listen. Bird Talk just mentioned a new writer, Linda F. Kennedy, whose main character has a parrot (black-headed caique) who helps solve the crime. We can hardly wait to read about it – about time our clever fids got special billing.

Maybe they love the stories because they are so curious and sometimes that curiosity can get them in trouble. Mozart loves to explore and has never met an electrical cord he didn't like. Ginger is very cautious about new things, but Mozart leaps right in where angels would fear to tread. New toys – let me at 'em! It's up to Beta Bird to screen new toys to make sure there won't be a problem.

Are hardware parts safe and won't ensnare beak or claws. Have they frayed any of their toys – out they come. Neither bird can remove the clappers from their bells but if they did I would remove them. We always play with new toys together first to make sure they're not afraid and they understand it's a toy. I know it sounds silly, but sometimes they don't know how to play with something. Finally, we try and keep their claws trimmed so they don't get tangled in chains or ropes. This is kind of hard because Mozart's grow to needle sharp overnight! If you encounter a problem with a toy let the pet store know, tell other bird owners and the manufacturer. Conversely if it was a great toy, let people know. Remember positive reinforcement works with the human flock too.

When introducing a new toy, it may take several weeks before Mozart or Ginger actually plays with it. My hand made soda straw-balsa wood toy took a long time but they now shred them with great abandon. This is just soda straws still in their wrapper folded over tied in a bunch along with strips of balsa wood. Takes one minute to make and provides hours of enjoyment for a small bird like cockatiels Ginger and Mozart.

My Feet Hurt

Debby Martin

Mozart and Ginger were arguing over who should get to sit on the Manzanita Tree platform (Ginger won of course) and that made Beta Bird wonder if different birds like and need different perches. Mozart found a Bird Talk article published last year that gives some suggestions from readers about preferred perches. It might give your birdy an idea of a different perch.

The secret seems to be the number three. Three perches in different areas and heights within the cage helps encourage exercise, alleviate boredom and help prevent foot problems. Budgies favor swings and rope perches that provide great exercise. Doves perches are ok but only as an extra perch. Cockatiels love platforms and both cockatiels and Lovebirds enjoy natural branches, rope perches and boings. Cockatoos need very tough materials like hard wood, manzanita and sisal rope. Conures enjoy platforms, manzanita and soft wood to grip and chew. Quakers will chew a lot and need a firm, long lasting perch so be sure and keep manzanita and polymer available. Large macaws need multiple perches including some for manipulating and shredding. Of course they also need thick durable perches like ribbonwood. Parrotlets need cloth or rope perches and small natural wood branches and being so active they love boings. African Greys need lumber that gives traction and square corners they love to chew. Eclectus are fond of soft wood and cholla and rope covered spiral perches.

But how do you know if the perch is the right size? Bird Talk interviewed Dr. Larry Nemetz an avian only vet from California who feels the bird's foot should wrap 65% to 75% around a perch for optimal comfort. Mozart insists ladders also are essential - Ginger snorts and says they are superfluous.

May Attendance

Debbie Andersen
Mandy Baumgartner
Cindy Burquin
Amy Cann
Phyllis Cotton
Suzanne Dohack
Janet Draper
Doris Funston
Carole Grommet
Rich Grommet
Dick Horowitz
Denise Hurt
Ray Hurt
Heidi Keifer
Dottie King

Joe Lawler
Nancy Marron
Debby Martin
Larry Martin
Sherry Miles
Donna Mount
Joe Mullaney
Dorene Olson
Nancy Powell
Chloe Rolfe
Crystal Rolfe
Niki Shaffer
Trey Shaffer
Karen Tripplett
Lance Tripplett

New Fundraising Opportunity

At the May meeting, Phyllis brought up a new fund raising opportunity. Baseball, brats and beer... I never gave any thought to the people working the concession stands at Busch Stadium. I assumed they were stadium or Sportservice employees. Well, it appears most of them are members of non-profit organizations helping raise funds for their groups.

The earning potential is significant. To participate, we must provide a minimum of ten people for at least four events. Participants must also attend a training session prior to the event. Having more people improves the "take," since the group will likely get a bigger booth.

This is not a trivial effort. We need support from a lot of members. We will also need coordinators for contacting and scheduling, so step up! Call Janet Draper and let her know if you can help in the coordinator role. More details should follow our next meeting...

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
Niki Shaffer	(314) 432-4890

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