

Squawk 'n Talk

Volume 7, Issue 9

October 2007

Greetings from the Presidential Perch!

Now that autumn is here, natural daylight will be getting less and less every day. Parrots seem to be aware of this, regardless of how much artificial light they get during the day and evening. The change in daylight hours will sometimes trigger different behavior in parrots - some good, some not so good. Some parrots exhibit nesting or breeding behaviors. Others can become a little nippy at times, whereas before they were more snuggly and affectionate. Some may want to be left alone more. They may chew their toys up more. Whatever the change, two things are required of you - patience and a lot of toys for your bird(s) to chew up! Hopefully, any change will just be a temporary change and all will be back to normal in a month or two.

I hope everyone enjoyed the presentation at the World Bird Sanctuary (WBS) for the September meeting and education program. You will also want to attend their Open House on Sat. & Sun., Oct. 20 & 21 (10am-4pm). WBS has again invited the GPC to set up a table at their Open House. We will have GPC members there on Saturday for the table and possibly for the first two hours on Sunday (Sunday is in conflict with our meeting at 2pm). Whether you plan to attend WBS on Saturday for the day or a couple of hours Sunday morning, I will be looking forward to seeing you at our meeting at 2pm, Sunday, at the Kirkwood Community Center.

Don't forget that the nominations and elections for GPC Officers and Board members are in Nov. and Dec. respectfully. Also, don't forget to set your clocks back one hour on Nov 4.

See you at the Meeting. ---- Dave

Tidbits

Trey Shaffer

September Meeting at WBS – Our regular September meeting was held at the World Bird Sanctuary. It was a beautiful afternoon. We browsed the grounds for a while, checking out the magnificent birds on display. Then we were treated to a special educational presentation about the rainforest.

As Dave mentioned, the WBS open house is this weekend. Check it out... For our rainforest presentation, we were in their amphitheater, next to a large building, for lack of a better term, the gift shop, though it had a lot of exhibits and an outdoor display area adjacent with several raptors. Anyway, I have been to WBS several times and had never seen this area, so there is plenty to see, even if you've been there before.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, GPC members voted to support WBS with a donation from our 2006 All American Hookbill Fair proceeds. We presented the check to WBS at the September meeting. With the funds, we have adopted or sponsored several birds, so when you visit WBS, you can see tangible results of our efforts... Look forward to next month's newsletter; Carole Grommet has promised us an article about our newly adopted "children."

Upcoming Elections – Our annual election cycle starts with the November meeting and nominations. Elections will be held at the December meeting. Each year we elect half the Board of Directors, (3) and roughly half the Officers (either 2 or 3) for two year terms. So start thinking about who should manage the Club's business for the next two years. Any member in good standing, (dues paid) is eligible for any post, if they attend four meetings after the preceding nomination meeting, including the current, November, nominating meeting. So, if you've been to two meetings since last November, and you attend this month and next, you will be eligible...

This year we will elect the following three Officers, elected in 2005.

- **General Secretary** – currently Dorene Olson
- **Membership Secretary** – currently Jennifer Cira
- **Treasurer** – currently Nancy Marron

Three Board of Directors seats will be elected. These seats are currently held by:

- Christine Kinkade
- Carole Grommet
- Niki Shaffer

Besides the officially elected offices, we will be discussing functional committees to help organize our efforts in several areas including Fair promotion and operations, educational program management and public event organization. So, step up and help the Club. The Mission Statement is what we work for, and we can use your help.

Birds for Vets – Veterans, not veterinarians. This is information from a Reuters news article by Jill Serjeant. I didn't get reprint permission, so I'll just tell you what I remembered from the article... The Los Angeles Veterans affairs facility has started an official program using rescued parrots to help rehabilitate traumatized vets. Benefits go both ways. The humans and birds provide mutual healing.

While on a field trip to a parrot sanctuary, a staff psychologist noticed a positive response by the veterans to the birds. In Los Angeles, the Serenity Park Sanctuary is now home to 14 parrots cared for by veterans.

I don't know if they do anything like this at Jefferson Barracks, but I think I know where we could find some birds if they did...

[Here is a link to the article](#), for those of you reading this electronically. If you are reading a hard copy and would like to find the article online, Google the title, "**Parrots, war vets team up in L.A. healing program**"

Meeting this week – Our October meeting is this weekend, 10/21. On the business side, we should look forward to Nancy's report on the 2007 Fair, from the Trea\$urer's perspective. For our education segment, we will view Yvonne Patterson's video on behavior and training. I haven't seen it, but am looking forward to it. We will be back at our regular meeting place and time; Kirkwood Community Center, 2:00 PM. The Board meeting is at 1:00 PM.

Members are welcome to attend the Board meeting. If you have something you would like to bring to the Board, please do. It is a pretty informal atmosphere. If you have something that will require official response, or may take some time, please let Dave Kinkade know ahead of time so he can manage the agenda.

Reflections of the Fair – Did you go? Did you enjoy? I have some photos from Suzanne Dohack. The newsletter doesn't really lend itself to photography, but I will get them up on the website. If you have more photos, or better yet, a short write-up about some aspect of the Fair, please forward it to me.

Did the menu for the Saturday dinner work? Can you think of how to improve next year's fair? Not to discourage input, we are definitely open for positive and constructive feedback, but we are also looking for more coordinators to help next year. The Fair is a big effort. It takes a lot to pull it off. A little more effort will magnify the outcomes. Better promotion and outreach will multiply the benefits.

Newsletter articles – I have a standing request for content, but the bucket is empty, so please... Send me links to material we can reprint, or better yet, write something. You don't have to be a scholar, author or laureate; just someone with something to share about birds. You may have noticed we have two recipes and two AAV articles this month. I hope you and your bird will eat well and find the clinical viewpoint informative, but let's get some more content for next month...

AAV Article, Foraging

Editors Note: We have had a good bit of discussion about foraging recently. Here is one more view to underscore the value of making our friends work for their food. Once you are sold on the concept, you can get some practical ideas on how to begin by looking at a video in our library on the topic.

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PRACTICAL USE OF FORAGING AS A MEANS OF BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

M. Scott Echols, DVM, ABVP, Avian, Austin, TX

Self-destructive and stereotypical behavior problems are prevalent in captive-bred birds, especially psittacine species. Some of those troublesome are feather and skin picking/destruction. It has been suggested that one out of ten captive parrot species develop self-destructive behavior.

In field studies, it has been estimated that parrot species spend better than 50% of their time foraging for food. Because foraging occupies a significant portion of a bird's daily activity, it is likely to

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have social and behavioral importance. Captive Amazons, monitored by video camera, provided with food within easy reach, spent 3-6 minutes an hour ingesting food. The birds were then observed idle for a large amount of time. This is in contrast to wild parrots that are reported to actively forage for food for up to 4-6 hours a day.

The question becomes; if you remove the ability to perform a natural behavior, how does that affect other behaviors? In simple terms, the behaviors can be divided into three or four categories. These include foraging, socializing, grooming, and sleeping. While sleeping may not be categorized as a behavior, it likely represents an important aspect of a bird's health and may have behavioral implications.

The author is proposing the idea of behavior displacement. When one behavior is altered or abolished, other behaviors become more emphasized. If a bird is denied one or more normal behaviors (foraging, socialization) then the remaining behaviors (grooming/self-preening, sleeping), are emphasized. This is not to say that lack of foraging will lead to overzealous feather grooming, but it may be a risk factor.

In a study with orange-winged Amazons, both physical and foraging enrichments were used on test subjects. The physical enrichments included alternate perching sites, and moveable climbing and swinging objects intended to increase the physical complexity of the cage. Foraging required the birds to chew and sort through, manipulate, and/or open objects to get to food and was intended to provide the parrots with an opportunity to perform some amount of work to retrieve the food. A control group received no enrichments. After three 16-week periods, the control began to receive enrichments and birds from the enriched group were removed from the study. A feather scoring system was developed to evaluate feather damage. The end results after the 48 week test were that the birds used foraging over physical enrichment and that feather scores improved significantly as a result of enrichment. The authors concluded that they strongly recommended all populations of captive parrots be provided with a varied enrichment protocol designed to elicit foraging behaviors and enrichment interaction.

Release #3, March, 2006. The Association of Avian Veterinarians welcomes membership from veterinarians with an interest in avian medicine. Annual meetings and a quarterly journal provide a format for the latest in avian medical information. Is your veterinarian a member? Individuals wishing to subscribe to the Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery may write to: AAV - P.O. Box 811720 Boca Raton, FL. 33481.

CLICKER TRAINING: CLIENT-SHAPED POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Alan M. Fudge, DVM, Dipl ABVP (Avian)

Clicker training has long been used by professional animal trainers for performances (marine mammal, circus, bird acts) and by canine obedience, agility, and conformation enthusiasts. Clicker training can help encourage desired behavior, reduce fear and anxiety, and provide emotional and physical outlets for our avian family members.

The process is straightforward - identify or encourage a behavior, mark the behavior (clicker), positively reinforce (treat or other reward), and practice often.

Just about any psittacine species can benefit from this exercise. Other avian species reportedly trained also include doves, chickens, crows, ducks, emus, kookaburras, hawks, vultures, owls, starlings, and penguins.

Avian trainers and behaviorists vary in their approach towards shaping bird behavior. Commonly, captive-reared psittacines are brilliant at training owners to suit their needs, rapidly learning to reinforce "owner" behavior. This pattern of interaction may lead to reinforcement of culturally undesirable behavior patterns. These behavior patterns may contribute to feather/skin damaging behavior, biting, screaming and unwanted egg-laying in the single female. Some people will promote teaching the bird who's the boss; others will try to integrate the parrot into the family flock. While these ideas may have merit, others will argue that these interactions are counter to social interaction by the species in the wild.

Clicker training can provide an aid to teach your bird anything he or she is mentally and physically capable of learning. Clinically, clicker training may help reduce problem behaviors. Operant conditioning happens when an animal performs a behavior and then learns the consequences of its behavior. Consequences could be one of the following: positive reinforcement (goal of clicker training), punishment (often ineffective or worse in birds), or no consequence. Behavior that is not rewarded may fade away by a process called extinction. Reinforced behaviors tend to increase in frequency, intensity, and duration. So this is point of the whole

plan—focus on the positive hopefully with a happier bird and owner. Undesirable behavior, such as biting and screaming can tend to fade away. Young birds should be weaned before clicker training. Older birds can easily be clicker-trained. The exercise can be easily performed by a motivated child.

Plan on starting with only 3–5 minutes a day, working up to 20 minutes if all is going well. Experienced trainers advocate keeping a journal of your training sessions.

This about "paying" your companion after signaling (clicker) at the precise time the desired behavior is performed... Some birds aren't motivated by treats. Other birds don't need the calories (for example an obese budgie). Nonfood treats can include verbal rewards or physical rewards, such as head rubbing.

Basic Training Plan

1. Get the behavior
2. Mark the behavior with a cue
3. Reinforce the behavior
4. Refine the behavior
5. Add a cue

A variety of other "tricks" can be more easily trained and reinforced with clicker training. Problem behaviors, including screaming and biting may be helped. This assumes that the bird owner is equipped and motivated to apply a small investment in time.

Learning and Training References and Resources

www.clickertraining.com Source of clicker training books seminars, and supplies for birds, dogs and other species.

www.naturalencounters.com Bird Trainer Steve Martin's website

www.hsn.com Bob Bailey's chicken-training workshops

Johnson, Melinda, Clicker Training for Birds, Sunshine Books, 2004, Waltham MA (recommended and available from www.clickertraining.com)

Melinda co-hosts a listserve Bird Click (receive an email digest of member discussions) <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Bird-Click/>; downloadable guides.

Morrow, Linda, Clicking with Birds, 2002 (recommended and available from her website: <http://community-2.webtv.net/Lincomacaws/ClickingwithBirds/>). Linda's website has downloadable resource guides in addition to her book for sale.

Linda also maintains a listserve-
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/clickbirds/>

Sources of clickers: dog shows, bird stores, pet stores, including Petco and PetsMart; [ww.clickertraining.com](http://www.clickertraining.com)

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Recipes of the Month

Here's a twofer on recipes this month...

BIRDIE BIRTHDAY CAKE

Susan Carter - ccbirds@bellsouth.net - January 27, 1999

- 1 box Carrot Cake mix
- 1 can Fruit Cocktail (reserve juice)
- 1 can Cut Sweet Potatoes (reserve juice)
- 1/3 scraped cuttlebone
- 1/2 cup Flaked Coconut
- 1/2 cup Raisins

Use the juice from the fruit cocktail and sweet potatoes for the liquid called for in the cake mix. To the liquid, add 4 eggs (box mixes usually need 3, I add the extra one for the protein), mix all liquids into this. Include liquid vitamins if you use them. To the dry mix, add the scraped cuttlebone and dry vitamins. Mix well then add sweet potatoes and mix with mixer again to chop the sweet potatoes into smaller pieces. Stir in the coconut, raisins, and fruit cocktail. Cook in a pound cake pan or a 9 X 13, either one works. Cook till done. While still warm, ice with thin layer of peanut butter and sprinkle with coconut. Can be frozen in slices, saved, and served as needed.

BIRDY POT PIE

Monique Semak

formarisa@hotmail.com - July 28, 1998

- 1 cup mixed veggies (garbanzo beans, green beans, peas, carrots, corn)
- 1 can cream of potato soup
- 1/2 Cup Bisquick Mix
- 1 Cup Milk
- 2 Eggs

Mix veggies and soup and put on greased 9 ½ " pie pan. Preheat oven to 400F. Mix last 3 items w/ fork until firmly beaten, pour on top of veggies. Cook for 20 minutes or until top is golden brown. Let cool.

Recipe from the [Birds n Ways website, www.birdsnways.com](http://www.birdsnways.com)

Book Picks of the Month

Christine Kinkade

Now that October is here and we will be meeting regularly at the Kirkwood Community Center, I will resume the Library Picks once again.

Here are this month's picks:

All About Finches by Ian Harman and Dr. Matthew M. Vriends

A book with general information about keeping finches. Quite a few color pictures. (224 pages).

Lovebirds by Georg Radtke

This book is for the beginner who wants to keep lovebirds. Sections on breeding, care, taming, and how to select a healthy bird. Lots of color pictures. (93 pages).

The ABC's of Cockatiels by Wilfried Loeding

A complete guide to Cockatiel care. Selecting, housing, diet, taming, and diseases of cockatiels. A lot of color pictures. (93 pages).

Tender Loving Care for Pet Birds by T. J. Lafeber

This book looks at bird keeping from a little different perspective. There are chapters on nutrition; Cage and furnishings; socializing; environment; beak, nail, ear, & eye care; and dangers in the home. A few illustrations. (113 pages).

GPC members can check out any of these featured picks at this month's meeting. Please note that some books are quite old and some of the information may be a little outdated. Please keep this in mind when reading the books.

A complete listing of the GPC library is available on the GPC website www.GatewayParrotClub.org. If you wish to check out any of these, or any of our books, please contact me prior to the next GPC meeting by phone (636) 343-8097, or email at Librarian@GatewayParrotClub.org, and I will bring them to the next meeting.

All books checked out should be returned at the following GPC meeting. If that is not possible, please return the books by mail to Christine Kinkade, 2412 Angela Dr., High Ridge, MO. 63049-2848.

Happy reading!

Christine

2007 Meeting Schedule

Dorene Olson is our Education and Program chair. She is looking for our input on suggestions for topics and speakers. Please let Dorene, or any Board member what interests you and what you think will make the meetings more interesting.

Date	Topic
October 21	Yvonne Patterson - Video
November 18	TBA - Nominations for offices
December 16	Elections - Holiday party

Contact Information

We welcome your comments and suggestions...

Our Mission

The Gateway Parrot Club, Inc. is a not for profit organization established in 1988 to:

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.

Officers

President	Dave Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Vice President	Phyllis Cotton	(314) 427-3679
Secretary	Dorene Olson	(314) 956-1310
Treasurer	Nancy Marron	(314) 984-9524
Membership	Jennifer Cira	(636) 527-5889

Board Members

Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Carole Grommet	(636) 529-0026
Mandy Baumgartner	(314) 842-4191
Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317
Janet Draper	(314) 432-3019
Niki Shaffer	(314) 432-4890

Committees

Educa- tion/Outreach	Dorene Olson	(314) 956-1310
Hospitality	Pat Seiler	(636) 462-4732
Librarian	Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Ways & Means	Suzanne Dohack	(636) 734-4527
Website /Newsletter	Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317