

Squawk 'n Talk

Volume 10, Issue 5

May 2010

Greetings from the Presidential Perch!

May came and went in a hurry. In just over a week June will be here. While you are thinking of hikes, picnics, and BBQs, don't forget that the Bird Fair is just three months away!

Our Bird Fair is progressing along very well. All booth and table spaces have been practically filled! As before, the Saturday buffet dinner will be upstairs next to the Seminar Room. Once the speakers' schedule is set we can begin making up the Fair flyers, programs, and updating the website concerning the Fair.

As I mentioned before, the GPC will be hosting two cockatiel shows (one regional and one regular), a parrot show, and a finch show. The two cockatiel shows are scheduled for Saturday and the parrot and finch shows are scheduled for Sunday. Sandy Warren is our Show Committee Chairperson and Carole Grommet will be her assistant. You can find out more about entering your bird(s) in the shows at our meetings. Also, look for more information about entering birds in our bird shows in upcoming newsletters.

I hope everyone enjoyed our guest speaker for April, Michael Macek. He spoke about the Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Institute and its work around the world. In his presentation, Michael spoke about the Humboldt Penguins in Peru and Chile and of the Horned Guan in Mexico and Guatemala. You can find out more about these topics on the St. Louis Zoo's website:

<http://www.stlzoo.org/wildcareinstitute>.

As always, visitors are welcomed. Bring a friend, as well as your birds!

See you at the meetings! Dave

Tidbits

It seems like a quiet month for news.

Earth Day at Jefferson Middle School – We made our annual appearance. Thanks to Phyllis Cotton, Donna Mount and the Marks for attending and bringing their feathered family. I hear Donna recorded a video and is planning to post it on YouTube.

Should you show your bird? – Interesting question. With the four shows we have scheduled at the August Fair, there is an opportunity for everyone. Obviously, if you consider the Cockatiel or Finch Shows, you should have a Cockatiel or Finch. The Parrot show, however, has classes for just about all the parrot species we are familiar with. (I keep wanting to call them breeds. Too many dogs in my background.) So think about it. All you really need is a bird, and a cage. The Parrot show is sponsored, or affiliated, with the North American Parrot Society. I will have more detailed information on the website soon. All the shows will have two divisions, Advanced and Novice. I'm guessing most of our members would compete in the Novice division. We will NOT require show boxes for entries. Your bird can be in an appropriate sized, regular, cage. The cage should have a single perch and be large enough for the bird to turn around without touching the top, bottom or sides. No toys, decorations, food dishes, etc. Just water. If the cage has a flat, solid bottom (no grate over a tray) the bottom of the cage should be covered with seed or something similar.

By the way, in the Education Program for this month's meeting, Cheryl Rowland will be talking about conformation standards for the birds.

Fair Speakers – We have another article this month from Jean Pattison. As an editor, I love her because she has articles ready to go. So we have a big preview of Jean and her "African" world; finding out about the several African parrots and information about breeding. We will also have Michelle Karras back this year. Michelle has been very popular in her earlier visits. I will see if Michelle has an article or two for us, but in the meantime, have included some of her "Ask Judy" comments from The Polite Parrot website.

WBS Emergency

Trey Shaffer

Just prior to our last meeting, the World Bird Sanctuary put out an emergency call for help. They needed money to keep the Veterinary Hospital operating. The link below is an article about this in the Suburban Journals.

<http://suburbanjournals.stltoday.com/articles/2010/04/13/south/news/0414sc-worldbird0.txt>

In response, the Board counted the money in the piggy bank and authorized a special donation of \$1,000.

The story has a happy ending. The appeal for funds was successful, bringing in “almost \$75,000.” The hospital has been renamed, after the lead donor, the Kathryn G. Favre Foundation, and has funds in reserve for future operation. Here is a link to another article on the outcome.

<http://suburbanjournals.stltoday.com/articles/2010/05/04/jefferson/news/0505jc-worldbirds0.txt>

Ask Judy

Michelle Karras

Hi Judy,

I have an African Grey female about 4 years old and I am at a loss on feeding. I keep African Grey food in her cage all the time although she usually throws it. I used to feed her fruits & veggies in the am and in the pm but it seems like she just throws it. One day she likes something, the next day she doesn't. I just don't know what and how often to feed her. Also, she doesn't talk very much. What am I doing wrong?

Sincerely, Kim H.

Dear Kim,

You are not doing anything wrong. Parrots' in the wild throw their food to replenish their food supply so even in captivity they will continue this instinct. As for liking one food one day and one food the

next, this is also very normal. You said you feed an African Grey mix? Is this a seed mix or a pellet diet? If it is a seed diet you need to change over to a good pellet mix without seeds. Seeds should be given in ration, I make my own parrots' work for seed in foraging toys which are now very readily available on the market. It is important to make your Grey forage for favored foods so that you are keeping her stimulated and promoting a natural behavior. As for her talking ability, just give it some more time and I know from experience she will talk much more than she is already. My Grey's had a fair vocabulary at the age of four, now they are up between seven and ten years of age (I have five) and they all talk non-stop, along with all the other noises in the household. You may try to read to her at night, reinforce words that sound like something to you and then praise her to help her talk more. Give her time she will talk. If you have another person in the home it also helps to use Dr. Pepperberg's rival technique. I would continue to offer your Grey different foods or you can do a mash of several different veggies and freeze them. You may also mix this with some seed just to entice your Grey to dig through the veggie mix. I like to use birdie bread, you use Jiffy Cornbread mix and throw in a bunch of veggies, and or fruits and put it into small cupcake tins and cook. They freeze nicely and there is little waste. I hope that this has been somewhat helpful for you and please feel free to let me know how she is doing. One last thing if your parrot is throwing the food they are also eating the food. Playing with and throwing the food is a sign of interest in the food.

Dallas & Stella

Janet Draper

Many of you may remember me asking about a home for two Eclectus parrots. Dallas and Stella were the only surviving members of a flock that had an outbreak of PDD. All of the other birds died from this disease. The owner of these birds was killed in a car accident. His mother took them in and cared for them for 5 years. Another one of her sons was killed on Halloween night a year ago. He was the policeman who was shot in the head in University City, along the Delmar Loop. Then her husband took a devastating fall and eventually died. She was forced to sell her home and did not have room for these 2 birds. She contacted us for help. We were unable to find a local home for them. However we found a lady in Florida who is

working with PDD birds. Her name is Mary Jo Meyer. She agreed to take them. So Raija and I decided to drive them to Florida.

At first, both birds were very frightened. Dallas settled down quickly. But Stella proved to be more nervous. Dallas stayed between us and Stella – as though to protect her. I couldn't help but become fond of these two.

After we left them with Mary Jo, I have spoken to her several times. She tells me that she was concerned at first because they seemed so nervous. She made a point to stay close enough so she could observe them. After a while, Dallas went over to a feeding station with other birds. Stella remained by herself. Dallas ate and then even fed Stella. He obviously loves her very much.

Mary Jo was the founder of a parrot rescue in Florida. It was besieged with problems and eventually had to close its doors. The final blow was an outbreak of PDD (Proventricular Dilatation Disease). Mary Jo has continued to work to help birds stricken with PDD. She is doing this with her own money and resources.

Mary Jo is very qualified to care for these birds. She is a vet tech and works with Dr. Susan Clubb. Dr. Clubb is supervising their medical care. For those of you who haven't heard of Dr. Clubb, she has been very active in many areas of avian medicine – and particularly PDD.

Mary Jo has built several large outdoor aviaries on 10 acres of land. I personally toured her operation. The birds are well cared for. Looking at these birds, it was hard to imagine that they were sick – and many of them are dying. Mary Jo believes that they benefit from living outdoors. Of course that isn't possible here in our environment, at least not year round.

Whether the researchers will find a cure for this cruel disease or not is not known right now. Many researchers are working toward this goal. I know that many people are hoping for this. But for now at least, there are many victims of this disease who are caught in a terrible position. I learned this first hand when I tried to find a local home for Dallas and Stella. Everyone is terrified of this disease, and rightfully so. But this experience made me aware of the plight of these victims. Many victims are being cared for by the humans who love them. But some of them have lost their human caretakers. These poor birds have very few options.

Mary Jo (and I'm sure there are others) is in the process of establishing a sanctuary for PDD victims. I personally intend to stay in contact with her and do whatever I can to help support her work. I feel that I owe this much to the animals that have been so important in my life.

The animals in Mary Jo's care are happy and well cared for. But they are still sick and many of them are dying. But no matter how long they have to live, they obviously have a life worth living. It is very uplifting to see this work being done for these unfortunate victims of PDD.

Senegal Parrot Overview Breeding to Pet

Jean Pattison

The Senegal, *Poicephalus senegalus*, belongs to a small group of parrots from Africa known as *Poicephalus*. Phonetically it is pronounced poy-seff-ah-luss, which means variably colored head.

Prior to the enactment of the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992, thousands of Senegal parrots were imported into the U.S. for the pet trade. Unfortunately none of the wild caught birds in the *Poicephalus* family tamed down well enough to be a good companion pet so they were labeled as flighty and biters. Thankfully many of the smaller birds, such as the Senegal, were purchased by aviculturists, set up for breeding and produced well in captivity. A big factor in raising these nine-inch parrots was their ability to become comfortable with their own kind in captivity. The temperament of the captive-raised Senegals doesn't compare to their wild-caught relatives. Hand-fed Senegal parrots make wonderful companion pets as they are inquisitive, learn to perform tricks readily and pick up mimicking words and sounds quickly.

Chicks raised years ago from newly imported birds were flighty and unpredictable, due to the nervous nature of the parents while in the nest. Many aviculturists from the late 70s and early 80s were disappointed with the temperament of the chicks and often took chicks from the parents before their eyes opened, or incubated the eggs, or finally sold their pairs. With determination, many aviculturists held on to their breeding stock and learned that Senegals did much better when they were allowed to choose their own mates. These birds, with time, settled in and became very secure in their environment producing chicks on a regular basis. Senegal parrots are outstanding parents, taking excellent care of their chicks. A clutch of babies from a pair ten years ago would be unrecognizable as a clutch from the same pair today, due to the different temperaments.

One is lucky to find a Senegal chick anywhere near Christmas time due to their seasonal breeding. Senegals usually start laying eggs in November and go through May, laying two clutches. Where breeders are located indoors, there may be a few pair who lay at odd times of the year.

When hand-feeding Senegal chicks there are a few things worth noting regarding their behavior. Senegal chicks are not strong beggars if they are fed well and are satisfied. Consequently it is very easy for a Senegal to lose its feeding response and become quite passive about being fed. This can be quite frustrating to the hand-feeder if there are a number of babies in the nursery. To avoid or overcome this problem one can allow the chicks to go a bit longer between a few feedings, and insure the temperature of the food is quite warm when feeding. Many aviculturists, myself included, feed with the formula temperature at 110 degrees. A word of caution, be sure to thoroughly mix the formula to rid it of hot spots, and test it with a thermometer. If you do not have a thermometer then taste test the food yourself to insure it is not too hot. It seems African species like their foods hot, and the nursery temperature slightly cooler than most other species.

Senegals often regurgitate some of their formula. If the amount is small, do not be alarmed. If during a feeding session, small amounts are fed while stopping to play or while refilling the syringe, then the bird may regurgitate during the whole feeding process. This, of course, should be avoided. It is often better to feed them their formula as quickly as possible to keep this behavior from becoming a habit. A bit of the formula brought up at the end of the feeding session is normal for some. If the problem persists or is objectionable, one may switch brands of formula, and the problem often ceases.

After pulling the chicks from the nest for hand feeding, one may notice a very alarming red stain ring around the chicks' droppings. This may happen for several days and then stops. Many aviculturists have had their veterinarian run tests to find what causes this red staining among the droppings and to date there has been no reported cause.

The stages of behavioral development in babies can be quite marked. A Senegal usually goes through oblivion, fearfulness, curiosity, aggression, friendliness, and just prior to weaning, apprehension and curiosity once again. Once the chicks are weaned they become very confident and social. Senegals may have a sibling aggression problem and if one is not aware of this, it can be over looked entirely. At certain times of development a chick may become shyer or a bit more reserved, even to the extreme behavior of flipping over on it's back with fear. This can be from the clutch-mates picking on an individual

chick. Separating a chick, that seems just a little off from the others, for a few days will almost always turn the behavior around.

If wing clipping can be avoided until after the chick is weaned, the chick weans easier. It also helps prevent insecurity in a juvenile Senegal. Of course, in a shop situation this may be impossible with people in and out of doors all day. When clipping any of the African parrots it should be noted they are very heavy bodied and "drop like a rock" when rendered flightless. I recommend only removing the first five primary feathers from the outer tip of the wing inward. As the chick becomes stronger one or two more feathers may be removed. This wing clip is not advisable for the customer who takes their bird outside while not in a cage or carrier.

As pets the Senegal can be a real heart stealer. They adore their caretaker, and they expect the same adoration in return. You need never worry about getting a "friend or companion" for your Senegal. They prefer their owner above any other, and can sometimes be quite resentful of the buddy. A second bird in a Senegal household should always be purchased for the caretaker, not the resident Senegal. If the Senegal is a first bird, and another bird is acquired later on, a wise practice is to always play and interact with the Senegal first. This eliminates the Senegal's notion of alienated affection.

When a Senegal is demonstrating a bad behavior, such as chewing a button off of a shirt, rather than responding with a negative action a favorite chew toy should be offered. Bad behaviors are much more readily corrected by changing the subject, than by negative reinforcement. African parrots take any negative reaction to heart, and can hold a grudge forever.

Senegals need daily interaction with their owners to keep them from becoming cage bound. They can easily become devoted to just one person. It is important to have every member of the family interact with the Senegal to discourage this type of behavior if one is looking for a family bird.

Where caging is concerned, it is often said that bigger is better. This is not always the case with the Senegal. The Senegals wild ancestors are nervous birds by nature and the security of a smaller cage is sometimes better for their domestic offspring. A cage measuring 24" high, 18" wide and 18" deep will adequately house a Senegal. If a caretaker fills a cage to the brim with toys and swings (a Senegal's favorite), then obviously a larger cage is warranted. A variety of toys are essential in keep this energetic little parrot entertained, and changing them often helps to keep their interest.

It is wise to teach a Senegal to use a water bottle as well as a bowl. It is advisable to use both so clean water is available at all times. Domestic *Poicephalus* seem to have a propensity to dunking their pellets and making soup. Senegals love to bathe and this activity should be encouraged by providing a shallow bowl of water. When using a water bottle be careful the Senegal doesn't learn how to stuff food up the tube to get it wet. There have been occasional deaths due to the bottle being stopped up because of this practice especially when this was the only source of water.

Feeding a Senegal is relatively easy. They do not have any major dietary problems. Base diets of pellets are preferred. The best pellet caretakers can feed is the one their Senegal will eat, and one that is readily available in their area. Along with pellets a few seeds as treats are recommended, along with a bit of table food high in beta-carotene (the precursor to vitamin A). These foods consist of dark yellow vegetables such as sweet potato and carrots, and dark green leafy vegetables.

Senegals are wonderful birds for apartment dwellers due to their size and quiet behavior. They can learn to say a few phrases, which they take delight in repeating to their owners. Some have been known to have huge vocabularies.

Book Picks of the Month

Christine Kinkade

Here are the library picks for this month. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have a book request, and I will bring the book to the next GPC meeting. A complete listing of books and videos can be found on the GPC website (www.GatewayParrotClub.org).

Parrot Behavior & Training-Part 2 by Barbara Heidenreich

This DVD, "Training Your Parrot for the Veterinary Exam," shows how to train your bird to step up onto new people, enter and exit a carrier, allow restraint in a towel, tactile exam, nail and feather trimming, and more.

Captive Foraging (DVD) by M. Scott Echols

"The Next Best Thing to Being Free." This DVD will help you to understand the natural instinct of all animals to forage,

how to redirect this energy in a captive bird to prevent unwanted behaviors, how to build a foraging tree for a bird in a home, and how to create foraging toys to keep your birds occupied and happy.

Complete Introduction to Finches by Jurgen Nicolai

Easy to read and loaded with practical easy-to-apply advice, this highly colorful book covers every topic of importance to anyone – especially a beginner – interested in keeping finches. Illustrated with full-color photos and drawings. (96 pages).

Parrots and Related Birds by Henry Bates & Robert Busenbark

An informative book about the health, care, keeping, housing, and feeding of parrots. Also includes information on taming, talking, and the diseases of parrots. Types of parrots featured include lories, cockatoos, macaws, conures, parakeets, lovebirds, and parrotlets. Several B&W photos and some color photos. (543 pages).

Training Your Parrot by Kevin Murphy

This book is for people who want to make sure that their parrot becomes truly a pet and companion instead of just an avian boarder in the home. This book contains exactly the type of sensible, practical, experience-proved advice that all parrot owners can put to good use. Several full-color photos. (189 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 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!

Happy reading! - Christine

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.

2010 Schedule

Here is the year ahead. Mark the dates.

May 23 (Fourth Sunday)

June 13 (Second Sunday)

July 18 – Toy making

August – No regular meeting, Bird Fair

September 12 (Second Sunday)

October 17

November 21

December 12 (Second Sunday)

Contact Information

We welcome your comments and suggestions...

Officers

President	Dave Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Vice President	Phyllis Cotton	(314) 537-6175
Secretary	John O'Grady	(636) 384-6656
Treasurer	Nancy Marron	(314) 984-9524
Membership	Niki Shaffer	(314) 853-5323

Board Members

Jim Berk	(636) 586-1445
Janet Marks	(636) 441-0255
Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Penny O'Grady	(636) 384-6657
Pat Seiler	(636) 462-4732
Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317

Committees

Education	Cheryl Rowland	(636) 577-1240
Hospitality	Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Librarian	Christine Kinkade	(636) 343-8097
Ways & Means	Penny O'Grady Pat Seiler	(636) 384-6657 (636) 462-4732
Website Newsletter Public Outreach	Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317
Bird Shows	Sandy Warren	(618) 945-3608