

Squawk 'n Talk

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July 2010

Greetings from the Presidential Perch!

I hope everyone is enjoying the summer and had a safe Independence Day weekend.

I would like to thank Lisa Rose for doing a Clicker Training at our last meeting. I hope everyone enjoyed it and gained some knowledge and information from it.

At our July meeting, we will have a toy making party for our Educational Program. Toy parts will be provided by Dawn Breer. Although she will not be at the party, Lisa Rose and Carole Grommet have agreed to help out with the toy making. The toys made will be used in our bird fair in August.

Speaking of the bird fair - by the time you read this, it will only be a little more than six weeks before the fair. I hope everyone is getting excited about it. It will be a lot of work, but if everyone pitches in by volunteering some of their time, it will not only make it easier, but also a lot of fun. If you haven't been contacted by Janet Marks to volunteer during the fair, please see her at the July meeting. Our bird fair couldn't happen without the help of volunteers like you.

We will have more fair flyers at the July meeting. Please take some to distribute to your friends & relatives, as well as to businesses, community bulletin boards, and pet shops. If you can't make it to the July meeting or need more flyers, you can download it from our website, www.gatewayparrotclub.org/Fair/Flyer.pdf

The July meeting will be the last meeting before the fair, so be sure to attend.

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

See you at the meetings! Dave

Tidbits

July Meeting – Toy Making – As we do each year around this time, we will make toys to be used at the Fair as items for the auction tables. Dawn Breer, Sweet Peas, will again provide the materials and we will all provide our imagination to fabricate toys.

Donations Needed – Continuing on the theme of items for auctions. We need all kinds of items, not necessarily “bird” items for our auctions. As you may recall, we have two types of auctions. Raffle-type auctions have a bundle of items and visitors purchase tickets, place them in a jar for each item, and win the item when their ticket is drawn randomly from the jar. Then we have our Silent Auctions, where visitors bid, on paper, for items. So, look around, if you have something you think would make a good raffle item, please let Nancy Marron know. If you are a business, consider donating some of your product/service. On that theme, check with your employer and see if they would be interested in donating. Or, if you are in a local business, ask them if they would be interested in donating. We have letters, from the Club, available for potential donors. So, let’s put some feet on the street and fill up our auction tables...

Volunteer – We need your help at the Fair. Months of planning go into the Fair, but it takes some warm bodies to make it all run smoothly. As you should know by now we’re talking about August 28-29. Janet Marks is coordinating the volunteer schedule, so please contact her at (636) 441-0255. It’s not hard work, but it is important. So figure out when you can spend a few hours, and plan on joining us for dinner Saturday evening.

Show Your Bird – Don’t forget, we will have four bird shows at the Fair. Saturday is Cockatiel day, with two separate shows. One is a Regional show with double points for winners. Sunday will have a Finch show and a Parrot show. The parrot show will have classes for all species of parrots, so everyone has a chance to enter. Each show will have both Novice and Advanced divisions, so if you have never participated in a show, don’t worry. Novice division is for you. All you need is a bird, and a cage. Check out the details on our website at:

www.gatewayparrotclub.org/Fair/Exhibitors/BirdShowsGPC2010.htm

An Overview of Bird Showing

Phil Ryan

I am not sure when the first bird show was held, but I do know that the National Cage Bird Show has been held here in the US for more than sixty years. My Guess is that the first “Bird shows” were held in Europe more than 200 years ago and probably started with Canaries.

At that time, shows were primarily local and were judged by local “experts” who knew what the birds should look like and what they should sound like. I am sure the spirit of competition was intense. The exhibitor whose bird was selected as “best in show” could command premium prices for babies from that bird the following spring. I was judging a show with a Canary judge several years ago and she told me that the year before she noticed a hotel security guard watching her judge. She thought it was a little unusual that he had such an interest and only later found out that he was her body guard because there had been a threat on the canary judge at the show the year before that.

In the 1850s, England built the Crystal Palace as an exhibition hall for shows ranging from athletic events to motor car racing. A poultry and pigeon show was held there and is the first record I can find of a bird show other than a canary show. Specialty clubs like the Budgie clubs followed. The Budgerigar Society was founded in England in 1925 and held their first show in 1926, at the Crystal Palace. These shows resulted in maintaining and improving the quality of the birds as the breeders strived to win shows, medals and ribbons. I also don’t know when the first shows included parrots and finches. It is my guess that the finches were shown first as “foreign bird,” followed by parrots in the same classification. If you had been to shows fifty years ago or more, you would have seen several divisions of canaries along with a single “foreign bird” division which would have included finches and parrots.

The American Budgerigar Society (ABS) was established in 1941, and that year the society sponsored its first national budgie exhibition. In the years that followed, local budgie clubs affiliated with the ABS were formed in cities around the country, with each local group sponsoring its own shows. (A quote from the www.BirdChannel.com website.)

Following the model of the ABS group, there soon followed specialty clubs such as the American Cockatiel Society, the African Love Bird Society, the International Parrotlet Society and more. Each of these

groups was made up of breeders across the United States and in other countries, which had a common interest in a specific type of parrot. They combined their experience to produce standards for their particular bird of interest, established criteria for qualifying members who wanted to become judges, set up systems for record keeping on the performance of individual birds and provided members with a newsletter for sharing knowledge and disseminating news.

The North American Parrot Society (NAPS) was founded in 1999 by individuals who felt that parrot breeders who had interest in birds not then represented by a specialty club should be able to enjoy exhibiting their birds. Of the more than 320 species of parrots, fewer than 20 had specialty clubs. Naturally, it would not be possible to establish written standards for each of the parrot species. Instead, recognized “experts” were appointed as judges. No one could be expert in all the species (some are not available in captivity), but an attempt was made to qualify people who had exposure to several species and knew what they should look like. This was done for the benefit of exhibitors who could enjoy a friendly yet competitive experience at a show and for the benefit of all members who would have an opportunity to see unusual birds and to see and hear an expert talk about what makes one bird preferable to another.

The benefit of bird shows in general should be the betterment of the species and to maintain a standard such that birds will exhibit characteristics of their species 20 and even 100 years from now with no dilution from hybridization and weakening of characteristics due to inbreeding.

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Phil Ryan is the Vice President of The North American Parrot Society. You can find more information about NAPS on their website.

<http://NorthAmericanParrotSociety.com>



So You Want to Breed Birds?

Jean Pattison

January 1999, for Bird Breeder Online

Decisions to Make

When first thinking about writing this article, I searched back to my beginning, trying to think of the best things I did when I first started, seriously, to breed birds. Of course most normal people don't set out to breed birds, they have a pet, then another is added, and another. You start thinking, "One more bird wouldn't cost any more to feed, or that much extra work." You wake up one morning and find you are breeding birds...much to your surprise. When I approached my husband about acquiring my third pair of breeding birds, he informed me we needed to talk. Thankfully, my husband has more of a practical mind than I do. What we decided was, I could have all the birds "I" could take care of, and that "we" could afford. Due to our other business, my husband's only free time is spent on his motorcycle, and he did not want to be building cages when he could be riding his bike. So, from the very beginning, we were very honest with each other, and ourselves. I planned everything with the intention of "me" being self-sufficient in regard to caring for the birds. More than 15 years later, I know, that is the number one criteria in my situation, for our success. Too many friends/peers in the "business" have inadvertently caused the spouse to become a partner in something they didn't really want to do. The whole "business" of bird breeding is exhausting and stressful enough, without it becoming a stress and resentment in a marriage, too. From the beginning, my husband was very supportive and encouraging, and with time, he has also become very helpful in the maintenance area. But in the end, the birds are my thing, not his.

Specializing in one or two genera or species has tremendous advantages over mixed collections. All caging/housing can be basically the same configuration, which helps to cut down on the work. Food is much the same for all the birds, eliminating making different diets on a daily/weekly basis.

Learning the traits of the species you are working with can be invaluable. When you learn the norm for the species, such as posture, behaviors, breeding season, breeding habits, and illnesses, you can make better decisions regarding overall breeding and aviary management. There are times when you may see a hen fluffed up, and know she is going to lay, rather than becoming ill, or a male may be

standing in a different place when you go to feed, and you know there is a snake in the nest box. You instantly know these things when you know your birds.

Switching partners, to some, may seem like a cruel deed, but there are many times a new mate is exactly what is needed. This is especially true when working with pairs that destroy eggs, abandon nests, and mutilate or kill chicks. This may be even more advantageous with pairs that have not previously displayed this type of behavior, especially when nothing else has changed.

There are many reasons, and just as many arguments, regarding incubating eggs or letting the parents hatch the eggs and feed the chicks for a few weeks. In my case, I vowed never to incubate and feed day one chicks. I have a friend in her 60s who cannot stop now because her birds don't know how to incubate and feed. That was my reason. This is a hard decision because early on there will be eggs or chicks that could have been saved.

This decision has to be made by the breeder, and with knowledge of the species.

In my case, I made the right choice, as all my pairs eventually, did sit their eggs and feed their chicks. Some birds, as we have found, will not feed their chicks, and it is necessary to pull and incubate.

Aviary

The aviary should be planned with the overall security of the birds being the number one priority. Birds must feel safe in order for their best breeding potential to be realized. The aviary must be a safeguarded against intrusions from critters disturbing their nests. Mice, rats, snakes, opossums, raccoons, and hawks can destroy a breeding season, not to mention the potential danger to the breeders themselves.

When designing the aviary, depending on the species, you may need to allow for partitions between pairs to ensure privacy. Partitions can be useful tools in breeding. With some species, you may need to remove the partitions for part of the year to stimulate a bit of aggression between pairs, which can be conducive to fertility once breeding season commences and the partitions are back in place. Partitions can prove to be the deciding factor when you have a pair that is easily intimidated by the presence of another bird of his own kind. Once again, we are addressing the need for security.

Many factors come into play when deciding your aviary, depending on which part of the country you live in. If you build indoor aviaries, you must consider that diseases spread more easily inside than outside.

Cleanup is more labor intensive inside, and ventilation is very important, as well as is lighting. On the upside, you have control over the weather conditions, and are more protected against theft. Disease from wild birds and predation from some of the larger wild animals that may be indigenous to your area, are eliminated.

Outdoor aviaries have disadvantages to consider when in the planning stages. Preventing escape is a priority when designing the cages or aviary, as well as preventing predators from the outside gaining access to your birds. You are much more vulnerable to theft and weather conditions. Of course, the advantages make it worth the effort to build outside aviaries. The ultra violet from the sun is a wonderful sanitizer when it comes to bacteria, virus, fungus, and many of the protozoa. The sun also allows natural vitamin D3 to be utilized, without the worry of overdosing. Natural showers have a tendency to make even the "bath haters" enjoy a good drenching, as well as helping in making cage cleaning much easier.

One of the best things you can have as part of your aviary design is a monitoring system with cameras. I have found this to be an invaluable tool in watching how pairs interact with each other, as well as watching how established pairs interact with their mates. Most units are rather inexpensive, costing about \$300.00 for a monitor, and at least one camera, and sometimes two. Most have sound also, which is a definite advantage. If you can't see all of the cages, you can hear, and sometimes catch birds fighting before it is too late. You can run an extra 30 or more feet of wiring into the aviary and move the camera to any cage for viewing.

Health

I truly believe in and practice, having my veterinarian annually check all my birds.

I have heard many people state, "Why spend the money. When production drops, you have increased infertility, or dead in shell, you know you have a problem then you call in the vet." Preventive medicine is the key here. Once you have any of the above problems, it is too late in your breeding season. If the veterinarian is called in and treatment needs to be done, you may even lose the second half of the season. In addition to illness, there is now disruption amongst the entire aviary due to catching birds and treating them.

Over the years, in discussing disease and breeding with other aviculturists it has been amazing how just a good going over of the birds, and treating for seemingly minor problems has helped many aviculturists realize the breeding potential of their birds. Often times a good breeding pair may start bickering with each other, and we find out one

of them has a low-grade infection. This may be a bird's way of saying, "Not tonight honey, I have a headache." This sort of activity is sometimes found when trying to introduce new birds to each other. Often times it is not incompatibility, but rather one of the birds is ill, and is just "not in the mood."

Disease is of course a major concern to anyone breeding birds. It is important to know which diseases are specific to the birds you house or are planning on breeding. There are many birds that can have some diseases and appear perfectly fine, while other birds can drop dead within days from the same disease. It is important to know what birds can harbor a disease, and which birds are susceptible to exposure and sudden death. All new birds should be tested during quarantine, or prior to receiving them, and then rechecked. There are many ways of safeguarding your birds, and your vet is your best ally in this area.

There is also the concern for diseases indigenous to your area. When breeding Old-World species for example, you need to know they are more prone to sarcocystosis (a protozoan carried by opossums) than are New-World birds. If you live in an area that is overrun with opossums, you may want to only breed New-World birds, which have a greater immunity. In a case such as this, you may be able to build your aviary to guard against diseases that are caused from exposure to other animals such as mosquitoes, flies, opossums, roaches, and mice.

Diet is a major factor with all our birds. Again, knowing the species and working with a good avian Board Certified veterinarian are your best tools for the overall health of your breeders and their offspring. There are many variations on the types of diet one can feed, but I truly believe a good pellet should be used as the base of almost any diet one cares to use.

Business

Record keeping is of prime importance. Over a period of years, your records show which pairs are good parents, which are the best producers, which are the most dependable, which produce chicks with the best temperaments or talking ability, and ultimately which may need to be re-paired. Record keeping is also a tool for keeping the birds' offspring and bloodlines sorted out.

Know all your zoning requirements before you become a bird breeder. In many instances, as mentioned earlier, you are a bird breeder before you realize it. Know state, city and county requirements before you engage in any type of bird breeding. Very often one picky

neighbor can cause you to give up your birds or move to another location.

When investigating ordinances, or zoning, do it twice and keep the names of all the people you talk to, along with any information they may provide. Very often the laws may be subject to varied interpretation. State and local permits or licenses may be required in some areas.

To be successful you need to know your market. If you are raising birds for income purposes, you need to know which birds sell and which do not. Once again, records are invaluable for knowing if you are making a profit, or breeding in the red. Know ahead of time if you will be able to sell your birds locally, or have to ship. If you have to ship, there are many considerations. You will need to be close to an airport with airlines that handle live animals. It is important to know if your babies will be ready to ship when the weather is right for shipping birds, or if you will have to hold them until weather permits. This can cause a lot of extra work and expense to the breeder. There are some species of birds that may require special permits to ship across State lines. Most airlines require a veterinarian's health certificate before shipping.

There are no days off when you breed birds for a living. If there is ever a marriage or a death in the family and you have to go out of town, and it takes 15 people to replace you for a few days, you know you probably have too many birds. As funny as this may sound, it is very true. Be honest with yourself from the beginning and every time you see that one more pair of birds that you just "gotta have." In the business, bird breeders say, "after all is said and done, we make about five cents an hour."

As part of the business, conferences are a must. They more than pay for themselves in the long run. My knowledge is a culmination of the all the books, articles, and magazines I have read, but most of all, it is the knowledge of all the speakers who stood at the podium before me. For this, I will always be grateful.

Many speakers, as well as aviculturists, are there to share what they know, and welcome questions and conversations during social hours and between meetings. In sharing knowledge, everyone learns.

Whether you are breeding birds for a living or for love, in the end, a lotta love is what it takes. Somehow, it seems, we are drawn and connect with these wondrous creatures, and in doing so, we must learn to listen to them with our hearts, and learn to use our own "gut feelings." Once we learn to accept that, so much can be learned and shared by each of us.

You can meet Jean at our Fair in August. You can find her website at: <http://AfricanQueenAviaries.com> or call her at, (836) 686-4532.

Attendance

Here is a list of who attended the last meeting...

Phyllis Cotton
Dave Kinkade
Nancy Marron
John O'Grady
Niki Shaffer
Jim Berk
Christine Kinkade
Janet Marks
Penny O'Grady
Pat Seiler
Trey Shaffer
Dawn Breer
Cindy Burquin
Carol Carter
Christine Carter
Georgia Fletcher
Rhonda King
Al Marks
Sr. Barbara Payne
Lisa Rose
Mary Ann Saville
Bernie Seiler
Pam Walsh

Rhet Spengel

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.

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	(636) 384-6657
	Pat Seiler	(636) 462-4732
Website		
Newsletter	Trey Shaffer	(314) 432-4317
Public Outreach		
Bird Shows	Sandy Warren	(618) 945-3608