

Monthly newsletter from the Gateway Parrot Club! [View this email in your browser](#)

# Squawk 'n Talk

## Greetings from the Presidential Perch!

Our sincere thanks to Jeff Meshach, Director of World Bird Sanctuary for his great presentation titled "Feather Condition: Keeping the Perfect Feather, Feather Perfect" at our January meeting. Jeff brought wonderful photos of some of the raptors treated at WBS and a great deal of information about them. We all know a great deal about our parrots and now we know a bit more about Raptors.

At our next meeting, February 21st, the staff from Varietees will provide us with examples of size appropriate toys for a variety of birds. I'm looking forward to seeing the selection and type of toys they will present to us.

Please feel free to bring along some of your bird's favorite toys to share with us all.

As some of you know, four of us have just returned from Parrot Festival in Houston. Parrot Festival is a three day educational seminar held in Houston the last weekend each January. It is put on by N.P.R.P.F. (National Parrot Rescue and Preservation Foundation), a group of dedicated individuals who have established a Not For Profit organization that fosters, rehomes and if needed, provides sanctuary for parrots in need. They have built a facility for housing and maintaining the parrots in their care. They have also established a wonderful working relationship with the Avian Clinic at Texas A&M

Parrot Festival is their annual fund raiser, but has also become known as "The Home of Parrot Lovers". Many of us look forward to being there every year as we always learn many new things and we also look forward to renewing friendships with a large group of individuals from all over the country. You might want to mark the last weekend in January on your calendar for next year. I have attended Parrot Festival since the very first one that was held in a tent in 1998.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at our Meeting. Bring your families and bird friends and join us at 2:00 on Sunday February 21st at Varietees. All are welcome.

Georgia

### Toys, Toys, and More Toys!

We have another exciting program scheduled for this month's parrot club meeting! Have you wondered what a good toy for your Cockatiel would be.....or your Amazon.....or your Macaw, Conure, Grey, etc? If you are interested, come to the meeting because Varietees will be showing toys that certain species of parrots enjoy (some tend to be primarily wood chewers, others like shreddable toys, some like to bang on bells, some foraging, etc.).

We would like for you to bring your bird's favorite toy to show.

It will be a great program and we will all come away with new ideas to keep our birds happy.

### DID YOU KNOW.....?

Interesting Facts About Parrots and Other Birds

By Lisa McManus

Parrots are psittacines (sit-a-seens) which is a taxonomic (scientific classification) term.

The taxonomic ranks are domain, kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. The "order" is Psittaciformes, which is divided in three "families": Psittacidae (parrots, including lorises), Cacatuidae (cockatoos), and Nestoridae (3 New Zealand parrots: the Kea, Kaka and Kakapo). There are approximately 372 species in 86 genera (plural for genus, a group of species). For example, the family Psittacidae is in the order Psittaciformes and the class Aves, and the species Patagonian is in the genus Conure.

Most parrots are monomorphic (both sexes look the same) but some are sexually dimorphic, such as the male and female eclectus.

The smallest parrots, averaging 3" long and weighing 65 grams, are the Pygmy Parrots native to New Guinea and belong to the genus Micropsitta.

The largest parrots, averaging 40" long and weighing 3.5 pounds, are the Hyacinth Macaws native to central and eastern South America and belong to the genus Andorhynchus.

Parrots have zygodactyl feet, which is two toes forward and two toes back and helps in grasping and moving around on branches.

The other four toe arrangements are anisodactyl (three toes in front, one behind), pamprodactyl (all four toes in front), syndactyl (two front toes partly joined or webbed), and heterodactyl (similar to zygodactyls, but the inner toe is reversed and is found only in trogons).

Birds stand on the tips of their toes - the backward bending joint halfway down the leg is the ankle joint.

A bird's beak is extremely sensitive to touch. Birds that probe in the ground for food have extra sensory organs at the beak tip.

As early as 400 b.c., a Greek author wrote of owning a pet parrot, an African Grey that could speak words in both Indian and Greek

Almost all parrots lay white eggs and their babies are altricial (helpless). Precocial young are mobile and relatively mature at the time of hatching.

Parrot incubation time ranges from 17 to 35 days, and fledging from 18 to 70 days.

The largest wingspan for a parrot is just over 3 ½ feet for the Hyacinth Macaw.

Parrots hold their food in one of their feet to eat and are both left and right 'handed'.

Most parrots build nests in holes in trees, in termite mounds, rock cavities or tunnels in the ground; only a few build stick nests.

Macaws and Cockatoos can fly up to 500 miles a day searching for food.

Some parrots vocalizations can be heard up to a mile away.

Birds have a third eyelid, called the nictitating membrane, which is transparent and used to clean and moisten the eye.

A bird's temperature ranges between 104-108 degrees and is regulated through feather insulation, shivering and water evaporating.

Birds are oviparous, which means they lay a shelled egg and incubate externally.

Birds that are 'determinate' layers will lay only a certain number of eggs. 'Indeterminate' layers will continue to lay eggs if their eggs are taken.

In 1996 there were 40 million pet birds living in 5.9 million homes in the United States.

The oldest parrot fossils of the 'ancient parrots' are 50 million years old; most parrot fossils were excavated in Europe and most of the complete skeletons were found in England and Germany. Parrot fossils of 'modern parrots' – same bone structure and appearance as the ones found in our homes – are approximately 23 million years old.

Hookbill is a term used for parrots that use the beak to climb and the beak has a very strong crushing power.

Softbill is a misleading, non-scientific term and is often misused as many softbills do not have a soft bill. Softbill refers to the soft food diet with six categories: carnivorous (meat-eating), insectivorous (insects and invertebrates), omnivorous (meat and plant), frugivorous (fruit), nectarivorous (flower nectar), and folivorous (leaves, petals, plant material). Very few birds are entirely folivorous, but usually combine with one of the other diets.

Some African Greys will bite their toenails by running them through their beaks when nervous.

Some parrots will ruffle their chest feathers when nervous; they are not necessarily cold.

Cockatiels tend to shake their head while listening and learning.

Most parrots will yawn when you rub both sides of the head by the 'jaw'.

Most human viruses are not contagious to our pet birds, including colds and the flu.

Did you know that?

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