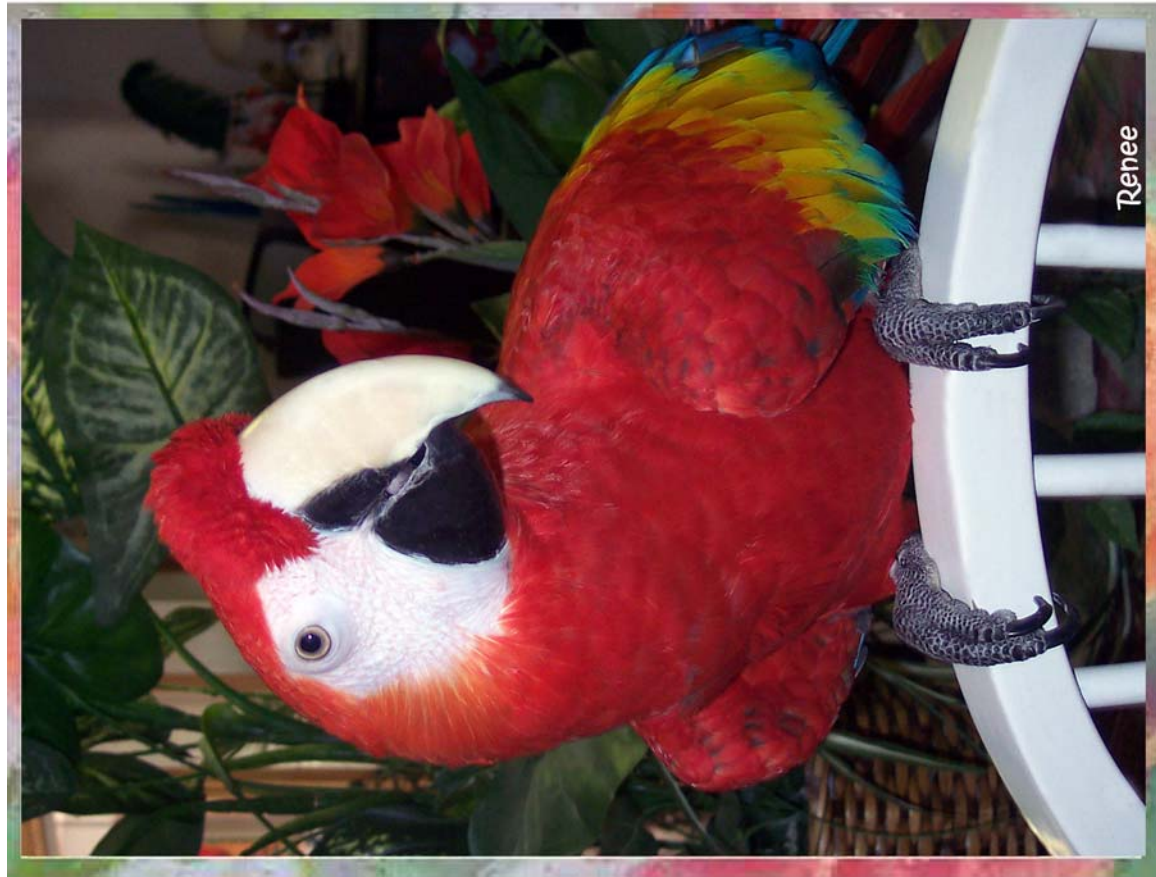


THE REAL MACAW

PARROT CLUB

June 2008



Renee

The Real Macaw Parrot Club
7-32 Richard Street
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410



The Real Macaw Parrot Club meets the second Thursday of each month.

Place: VFW Hall - No. 6699
6 Winslow Place
Paramus, NJ 07652

Time: 7:15 PM Social Time
8:00 PM Meeting Starts

All birds are welcome with club members only.
Visitors must join on their 2nd visit.

Incident Weather

Call one of the Board members on day of meeting or check the web site for cancellation notice.

Membership

Membership dues are \$45.00 per year for one family at the same address. Outside NJ and NY, it is \$25.

For membership information:
Call Art Zimmermann 201-489-1879

See our website for an application:
www.realmacaw.com/pages/app.html

RULES OF ORDER

1. BIRDS AT MEETINGS: Only club members are allowed to bring birds. Birds brought to the meetings should have clipped wings or should remain in their cage or carrier. Do not bring your bird if you have it for less than a month and it has not been vet-checked, or if your bird may have been exposed to a sick bird.
Disclaimer: Applies to all birds and their owners.

The Real Macaw Parrot Club is not responsible or liable for you, your bird, or anything that happens to you or your bird.

2. NO ANIMALS OTHER THAN HEALTHY EXOTIC BIRDS (except for guide dogs or programmed entertainment) are allowed. This is for the safety of the birds that share our meetings. Only members may bring birds.

3. NO SMOKING in the meeting room.

4. QUIET must be maintained during meetings. There is ample social time before and after meetings for talking.

5. CHILDREN must be seated with their parents during the meeting. Children who run freely are a distraction, and may also be responsible for a startled bird injuring itself.

6. Vendors must set up and remove all sale tables.

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THE NATIONAL ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER

800-548-2423

ALTERNATE
900-680-0000

Contributors to the newsletter needed each month.

Articles may be reprinted, provided that the author and The Real Macaw Parrot Club are credited. All submissions become the property of The Real Macaw Parrot Club. See "Disclaimer" on this page. Mail, email or hand type-written submissions to the Editor at meetings. Please be sure that you have obtained permission in writing before submitting articles for reprinting.

Call Shelly at 201-791-0245
Email - sheldono@sprynet.com

BIRD PERMITS

If you own a parrot, you must, by NJ law, obtain a permit to legally keep the bird. For more information, write or call:

Dept. of Environmental Protection
NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife
Office of Permit Management
CN400
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400
609-292-9591

DISCLAIMER

The Editor of The Real Macaw Parrot Club reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted for publication, and in the event of an error, assumes no responsibility. Opinions and experiences expressed in this publication are those of the individuals who submitted them and are not necessarily those of The Real Macaw Parrot Club. Advertisements are accepted in good faith, however, The Real Macaw Parrot Club does not necessarily endorse them and accepts no responsibility.

Newsletter Ad rates

Business Card Ad - 3 1/2 x 2

*3 mo. \$15
*6 mo. \$25
*1 yr. \$40

Quarter Page - 4 3/4 x 3 1/2

*3 mo. \$30
*6 mo. \$55
*1 yr. \$100

Half Page - 7 x 4 1/2

*3 mo. \$50
*6 mo. \$95
*1 yr. \$150

Full Page

*3 mo. \$100
*6 mo. \$150
*1 yr. \$200

*Payment must be received before ad is published

The Real Macaw Parrot Club

An All Species Educational Club



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June Meeting

Thursday, June 12, 2008
 VFW Hall
 6 Winslow Place
 Paramus, NJ 07652
 7:15 PM - Social Time
 8:00 PM - Meeting Starts

June Speaker

Our June speaker is unconfirmed at press time.

If you have web access, you can always check our Current Speaker web page for last minute speaker updates at:

www.realmacaw.com/cs.html

Future Meetings

July 10, 2008
 August 14, 2008
 September 11, 2008
 October 9, 2008

Please mark these dates on your calendar today. Speakers are subject to change.

Presidential Message



Hello, I want to thank everyone who came to the last meeting and joined in the discussion about bird physiology. I did not expect that discussion to last so

long that we did not get to sharing with each other the different things that we feed and do with our birds. I would like to have that round table discussion this month. The Board tried to arrange a speaker for this month, but we were not able to get anyone.

I hope to see you at the meeting.

Art



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June Meeting



At press time we have not booked a speaker for our June meeting. We will probably have a round table discussion. Everybody on our RealMacaw and ParrotGroup mailing lists will be notified as soon as we know what our plans will be. You can also check our current speaker web page at:

www.realmacaw.com/cs.html



The Real Macaw General Membership Meeting #236 Minutes May 8, 2008

The 236th meeting of The Real Macaw Parrot Club was called to order by President Art Zimmermann.

The Financial Report was read.

Old business – Linda Austin was not getting the newsletter by mail. No copies were available at the meeting. In the future printed copies will be available at meetings. Art Zimmermann's printer is out of order. Emailed Bunny Leonard to mail, but no response. Jan will mail a copy to Linda.

Talked about redoing the club membership information cards and where to place them for advertising: municipal billboards, libraries, supermarkets. Put an ad in newspapers. Dorothy Andrusko will enlarge a card to 8 1/2 x 11 inch size with a pocket for the cards to see what it would look like.

Handed out packs of membership information cards of 25 each for distribution. Members are to report where they were placed at the next meeting.

Be on the lookout for a lost cockatiel with clipped wings.

Request for speakers was put out to club members for new speaker ideas.

Another former member rejoined – Diana Nicholson.

Discussed the idea of a popular speaker for the October 2008 meeting. LIPS meeting is the third Wednesday of the month. If we change our meeting to the third Tuesday of the month the speaker may be able to speak at both clubs. We can try it once to see how it works out. President Art will speak with Susan Chamberlain, LIPS President.

The TV event was brought up. At least 5 members need to commit to it. It will be discussed further.

Art brought in science literature about birds.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Andrusko

Real Macaw Parrot Club Executive Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Discussed mailing of the newsletter. The members who are printing it for snail mail should email Shelly to say that they have printed and mailed it to the members who do not have a computer or access to one.

President Art's printer is not working so he is unable to print newsletters. He will email Bunny Leonard to do the mailing.

Three members who have email cannot get the emailed newsletter. Shelly will put the newsletters on the website and give these 3 members a password for access. The password will change yearly.

All members have access to the April electronic newsletter except for 7 plus 1 added this month equals 8 members without electronic access..

We are going to increase newsletter exchanges with other clubs to possibly share articles among newsletters.

Shelly brought up lowering the price of yearly membership dues. Cannot be considered at this time.

Shelly is not emailing the current newsletter to 50 former members to remind them of the club meeting date this time. Last time only one person responded.

Suggestions for future speakers will be handled by all four Board members. It will be announced that club members can also suggest speakers.

The Member Views section of the newsletter should not be one or two sentences. It should be an article.

Art called Bird Talk Magazine to cancel our ad. He is still receiving monthly invoices. He gets the run-around when calling to follow up on closing the ad. If more invoices are received, Art will send a letter that the club will take further action.

It was decided to give out the Real Macaw membership information cards to advertise again. This will be discussed at our regular meeting.

(Continued on page 6)

Financial Report

Starting balance -	\$2153.95
Expenses	
Rent	- 65.00
Income	
Membership	+ 45.00
Donation	+ 25.00
Closing Balance	\$2158.95



Wow. That Bird Sure Can Scream!

By Barbara Heidenreich

www.GoodBirdInc.com

"Screaming. Somebody reinforced the heck out of that behavior." I said to myself. Misty, a double yellow headed Amazon parrot, lived with me for only a few weeks. She was there so that I could put some of her vocal behaviors on cue. However it quickly became apparent she had a few other behaviors that needed to be addressed first. Before her stay with me she resided with Jill Bell for six years. Prior to that time her history is pretty fuzzy. She is estimated to be 19 years old. This meant screaming could have been reinforced for at least 13 years. It must have been, because it was STRONG. Misty was relentless. I'd leave the room; she'd scream and scream and scream.

She had been a good reminder of what companion parrot owners experience when faced with a very annoying and challenging problem. It can be very frustrating. Oddly enough, when I walk into someone else's home and hear screaming birds I am usually not effected. But when a bird is screaming specifically, in what feels like a demanding way, to get my attention, it strikes a nerve. How does one find the patience to be a good trainer in those situations? It is not easy, but definitely necessary.

My mantra with Misty was "I am solving the problem. Getting angry or letting that knot in my gut sway my strategy will not give me the desired results. I am confident what I am

doing will work. It has worked before with other birds I have trained. Hang in there!"

And it is true, my blue fronted Amazon parrot Tarah also learned to scream for attention. Completely through my own ignorance I reinforced screaming. I acquired Tarah, as many people do, when he was offered to me for free. At the time I was working in a veterinary hospital. One of my co-workers also worked part time in a pet store. Someone had walked in off of the street and sold her the bird for \$100. Was the bird stolen, smuggled or desperately unwanted? I don't know. My co-worker found she was overwhelmed with too many animals in her home and

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 5)

Discussed having a popular speaker for the October meeting. Angela will research speakers for the next Board meeting.

The Board will take the lead on greeting new members. Will announce at the Club meeting that members should also greet new people and make them feel welcome.

Member Rose Agrusti said we cannot have an expo without a gaming license. What does a gaming license entitle us to? We will do homework before we make decisions.

Vice President Angela Cupo will bring refreshments monthly. She will be paid by the club. A donation jar will be put out again.

Ask additional vendors to advertise since our newsletter is now on email and size is no longer a restriction.

Bylaws were passed out to the Board and need to be redone at a future meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Andrusko
Secretary

"ON THE WINGS OF THE GREAT WHITE BIRD"

Hi, It's Big Bob here. This month I thought I would share once more the love I have in my flock. I have mentioned her before, gorgeous Athena, Queen of the Black Palms, at least here in our flock. She is very aloof, is very bonded to our human, but honestly, since the first day I saw that lovely girl, my heart started racing and I knew I was captured by her beauty and elegance.

I try so hard to get her attention, calling to her as often as I can, but she refuses to respond no matter how hard I try. Her beautiful black feathers look like velvet, her beak is unusual, not like the rest of the cockatoo's, but special. Her facial patches flush bright red when she gets nervous, excited, and her crest feathers are thin and lovely when raised. Her tongue, which by the way I have seen close up is black all around the tip, then the rest is a pinkish red, but not deep red as many think. She is so marvelous to look at, when I see her I am like a LITTLE BOY AGAIN ALL GOO-GOO EYED AND MUSHY.

She looks at me like she could care, even though the rest of the flock understands I am the KING here, it does not impress her at all. I try to make her jealous with our scarlet macaw, Angela, who lovessss me, but that doesn't work either. I am truly at my wits end, what's a really nice guy like myself to do with a girl that just has no interest in me, and I adore her. I could just sit and watch her for hours, and she isn't impressed at all. I wish she would just talk to me and get to know me, I am a real lovable guy, if she would just notice I am alive.

The bottom line is that it saddens me to think she

will never really be mine, but sometimes we have to take the rejection and move on. I guess this is one of those times. My darling Athena, you will always be number one in my book, and maybe someday you will get to know me better and see all the wonderful qualities I have and change your mind. I will wait for that day, but until then just know you have a piece of my heart just for you.

A guy can dream, can't he ?

Till next time,
Big Bob and his human, Angela Cupo, 1st Vice President, Real Macaw Parrot Club



Announcements

- The Club would like to thank Dorothy Andrusko for making a \$25 donation to the club in memory of Bob Cupo, Angela's brother.
- We would like to thank June Baloutine for alerting us on ParrotGroup of the opening of a new parrot supply store in Hawthorne, NJ.
- The Club is happy to welcome back former member Diana Nicholson.

^d So, You Want To Build a Birdhouse...

(Earlier attempts at a backyard habitat)

By Real Macaw member Donna Sleight

Many years ago, when we moved into our first home, we were lucky enough to find a house with a huge backyard at the edge of the woods. I instantly loved the land, even though it was a weed-ridden, neglected yard, overwhelmed by twisted roots and the undergrowth of rampant, twining vines and blatant seedpods. But, I had the best intentions of transforming this neglected mess into a wonderland for birds, butterflies, flowers, and other wildlife (I might share my pond story in a later issue).

I started with the flowers. My first effort at using a wheelbarrow, which I quickly learned was only important for carrying dirt from one place to another so you could move it right back again when changing your mind, was thwarted when I decided to take a short cut and threw a huge bag of dirt into the 'barrow from the second story deck. "Bramp" is the only sound I can come up with that describes the noise made when the dirt collapsed the 'barrow...so much for the garden.

So, I turned my attention to the birds, and decided that a birdhouse was in order. After some research, I found out that you really shouldn't buy those brightly colored, swinging birdy houses so popular in the catalogues. Most birds don't like



swinging birdy houses, so your birdhouse should be built on a pole with a baffle underneath (to keep out snakes and squirrels), or nailed to a tree. Okay, I could do that. Also, I learned that it's best to build a rustic house, keeping it as natural as possible. But, if you must paint it, be sure not to use a lead-based paint and do not paint it a bright color – even if you do adore purple (like me)! This only makes it more visible to predators. And never paint the inside of the house, as baby birds sometimes like to chew the wood. You should always make sure that the size of the entrance hole is no larger than the size of the bird that you want nesting there. This helps to keep the birds safe from larger predators. Who knew? Okay, I could do that too.

My thoughts then turned to the type of wood to use. I read that redwoods should be avoided, as they contain high levels of volatile oils that are known toxins. Box Elder, Crepe Myrtle, Chinese Tallow, Hemlock, Sumac and fruit trees (apricot, cherry, peach, plum and nectarine) all contain cyanogenic glycosides, which are known to release cyanide. Cherry wood, Alder, Chinese Magnolia, Cedar, and Laurel all have toxic sap stored under the bark. When my eyes finished glazing over, I gave up, went to the local Home Depot and bought some pieces of untreated pine...which worked just fine.

After finishing my birdhouse, I climbed up the twisted branches

of an ancient apple tree, and in a shower of bark, and a badly skinned knee, I firmly attached the thing.

Next, I thought about nesting materials. After a little more research, I managed to collect a jumble of items that included: pieces of my dog's fur (no, I didn't cut it off), pine needles, lint from my dryer (ugh), small twigs, short pieces of yarn and some cotton strips. I threw these all together into a plastic onion bag and attached that to the tree, as well. The birds could just choose what they wanted to use and pull it right through the holes.

Knowing that I now had the best bird-friendly habitat, I waited patiently for my first tenant – and I waited – and I waited. I visited the birdhouse every day, always finding it empty. But one morning, on one of my trips around the yard, I came upon a nest built in a bramble of overgrown lilac bushes. Thinking it must be old and abandoned, I crept closer and gazed into the nest just to be sure. To my surprise, I saw eggs! And there, on a branch above the nest, a Red Cardinal suddenly and very vocally let me know that she was not too thrilled with my presence.

With a smile on my face, I quietly slipped away. It wasn't the house that I had built, but I finally had my first family of birds. I couldn't believe though, after all the work and research I did, that they would prefer their nest over mine!



"Using Your Bird's Water to Deliver Nutrients, Curatives"

April just finished reading another article about the benefits of apple cider vinegar for humans and psittacines. The next day, we placed three of our birds on a treatment of such vinegar in their water every day for two weeks. One of them is a chronic feather plucker, another is a seasonal feather shaver, and the third is an underweight rescue cockatiel with all round neglected health.

The cider vinegar is both an immune system builder, a source of some vitamins and minerals, and will help treat any stray bacteria or fungus in our parrots' systems.

This is hardly the first time we have used our pet and breeder psittacines' water bowls to administer avicultural aids. Regularly every few months or so our flock receives holistic worming solution, anti-viral medicine, digestive tonic or simply healthy liquid additives like soluble calcium, magnesium, trace mineral supplement in their daily fresh water supply.

At certain times and for special needs birds we have added green wheatgrass juice, herbal teas, fresh carrot or beet juice, apple, coconut, pomegranate, or citrus juice to water dishes. All have certain specific benefits and are well accepted by our hook-bills.

Of course there are some essential do's and don'ts with using additives in the water to enhance your parrot's overall wellbeing. Firstly, you must keep spotlessly clean water dishes, preferably of stainless steel or porcelain—plastic does not react as well to water with extra substance. It must be something about the

chemical composition or permeability of plastics that causes slime and mold to proliferate more easily.

Secondly, one has to be aware of how much water a psittacine actually drinks. Some dry land species like cockatiels, princess parakeets, etc. will partake of only small amounts of water. Other birds drink less on days we feed soaked, raw and sprouted grains and veggies. Our best days of offering drinking water additions are those on which we feed dry extruded foods, seeds, crunchy treats and the like. Most days we do not provide water until an hour or more after our birds have had their food served. This makes the fresh tonic or juice or whichever more enticing and gives the parrots a desire for a long satisfying drink. Another good time to offer holistic medicine, apple cider vinegar or the like is first thing in the morning when birds come down to drink.

Our antibiotic/fungicide/wormer of choice is grapefruit seed extract. It has all these properties to the max, has no side effects even in strong concentrations, and shows a bitter taste which is not a deterrent to even our pickiest parakeet drinkers! Normal length of treatment for its use is ten to fourteen days.

When adding juices to drinking water for their nutritive effects, we like to again offer them in the morning before any food is given, or else give them late after feeding and remove them after a few hours. Some juices last better at room temperature—even diluted—such as guava, pineap-



ple coconut, apple, cranberry; while others like frozen orange or grape tend to ferment quickly. For those birdkeepers who do not have a vegetable juicer, produce like carrot, beet, cucumber can be finely grated in the kitchen and the pulp may be stirred into the drinking water to release vitamins and minerals for the birds.

It is appropriate to remember that vitamins and live enzymes tend to oxidize rapidly in water and thus are less potent after a few hours. That is one reason few veterinarians recommend buying those over-the-counter birdie vitamins that are added to a pet's drinking water. (They also taste very bad to the parrot!) Minerals last much longer in solution.

Medicinal herbs are one of our favorite additives for our parrots' water. From boiled milk thistle for fatty liver syndrome to chamomile and a pinch of valerian for nervous and overpreening parrots, to anise and fennel for gastric and lower digestive health, the world of herbs has so many safe supplements that may aid captive birds. We prefer the whole herbs made into tea, or in the case of roots and

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Upcoming Area Events

- June 8 - Hudson Valley Caged Bird Society Bird Mart - Holiday Inn, Route 9, Fishkill, NY - 9:00 am - 4:00 pm - Bruizer@aol.com - www.hvcbirdsociety.freesevers.com/catalog.html
- June 21 - Garden State Budgerigar Society Show - Prayer and Praise Fellowship Church, 2 Denman Ave., Clark, NJ - 10:30 am - 2:30 pm - 609-466-3535 - pekeprincess2002@yahoo.com
- June 22 - New York Finch & Type Canary Club Feather Show - Averill Blvd Park, Elmont, NY - 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm - 718-967-6899 - barstand@aaahawk.com
- July 19 - Tri-State Budgerigar Society - Knights of Columbus Hall, 83 East Lincoln Ave. Monroe, NJ - 7:00 am - 5:00 pm - 732-583-1591 - chuck83r@aol.com - www.tri-statebudgie.org/shows.html
- July 19 - LIPS South American Parrot Conference - American Legion Post #94, 22 Grove Place, Babylon, NY - 9:00 am - 5:00 pm - 631-957-1100 - info@liparrots.org - www.liparrotsociety.org/SA-ParrotConference.htm



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*We pick up in tri-state area

(Continued from page 9)

seeds, the powdered herb spooned into boiled water and let stand for an infusion. There are also extracts available which can be simply eye-dropped into a water bowl before offering it.

For those aged psittacines that have obvious arthritis or joint tissue pains, the use of powdered glucosamine and MSM (dimethylsulfone for you tongue-twisters!) and the herb devil's claw, can all be added to drinking water to bring moderate relief. Ginger or hawthorn berry tea are

excellent for heart health in very old or weakened parrots. The list is near endless; get yourself a good herb dictionary or go online and search "holistic parrot treatments" and you too, will find much useful information.

It bears mention that we always use filtered water for our parrots and especially for making up water bowl additions. We like to steep herbs in a pyrex glass pan rather than a metal one.

When our outdoor aviary parrots experience a day or two of strong rains, and their water bowls fill up to the brim with fresh

rainwater, I prefer to leave it for them to drink for the next 24 hours. It is so fresh and natural—kind of reminds me of the rain barrel my grandma in Wisconsin used to keep near her house to collect fresh soft water, untreated and without chlorine. Rainwater has dilute amounts of hydrogen peroxide (formed from ozone) in it—one of the reasons our garden plants respond better to rain showers than to tap water.

Have fun, and keep drinkin'!!

With aloha, EB

Classifieds

- For Sale - Small Parrots - Blue Crowned Conure, 7 years old - \$300
Gold Capped Conure, 9 years old - \$200

Call Linda - 201-435-5689

Credits: The front cover, page 3, and back cover pictures are courtesy of Linda Costello.

AFA IN BRIEF

June 2008

Editor - Carol Lee

The 2008 American Federation of Aviculture Convention theme is the Celebration of Birds. The artwork by Wayne Smyth depicts the African Grey Parrot, *Psittacus erithacus erithacus*. Topics for all the **Speakers** and the **Super 8 Prizes** are located in the drop-down menu on the convention page at www.afabirds.org.

July 29, 2008: Board of Directors meeting--all AFA members welcome to attend

July 30, 2008: House of Delegates meeting and St. Louis Zoo trip

July 31-August 2, 2008: Lectures, Reception and Banquet

August 3, 2008: Board of Directors meeting--all AFA members welcome to attend

The schedule for the specialty club meetings has not been finalized.

Renaissance St. Louis Airport
9801 Natural Bridge Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63134
Hotel Telephone: 314-429-1100
Hotel Fax: 314-429-3625

Convention Hotel Rates:
Single/Double \$99.00
Rate Available July 25-August 5, 2008

Reservations:
Call (800) 468-3571 for reservations. Mention AFA to ensure that you receive the negotiated discounted rates.

Transportation:
Free Airport shuttle available from STL
Self-parking for all registered guests is FREE

Speaker Schedule for American Federation of Aviculture 2008 Convention !

This partial list of speakers will be updated monthly in the AIB and on the AFA website at www.afabirds.org

Keynote Speaker: Walter Frey, Ph.D.

David Waugh, Ph.D.
Bennett Hennessey (sponsored by Bird Endowment)
Josef Lindholm, III
Sharman Hoppes, DVM, Diplomate ABVP-Avian
Ian Tizard, BVMS, Ph.D., ACVM
Ricardo Valentin (sponsored by Amigos de Las Aves USA and Schubot Exotic Bird Health Center)
Jason J. Crean
Linda S. Rubin
Bonnie Zimmerman

Genny Wall
Carol Frischmann (sponsored by International Conure Association)
Jamie Whittaker
Nancy Speed
Jean Pattison
Darrel Styles, DVM, Ph.D.
Walter Frey, Ph.D.
Thomas M. Edling, DVM, MSpVM
Laurie B. Baker
Adrienne W. Mock
Susan W. Farlow
Carolyn Carr
April Blazich
Terri Jones
Madeleine Franco
Wayne Smyth
Mattie Sue Athan
Karen Justice
Mark Romansky

AFA Convention Super 8 Raffle Prizes:

- Bird Bed Quilt donated by Sharon Garsee
- Brinsea Incubator / Octagon 20 ADV EX Incubator
- AICU Brooder donated by Lyon Technologies
- Tanzanite & Diamond Ring donated by Pat Chinnici
- Belize Jungle Jaunt donated by John & Carolyn Carr
- EZ Care Bow Front cage for medium parrots donated by Super Pet
- Palm Desert Getaway donated by Wayne Andrews and Michael Bonacich
- Framed print of Blue & Gold Macaws donated by Gamini and Lisa Ratnavira

For complete description of Prizes and purchase of Raffle Tickets, see: <http://afabirds.org/pdf/08Super8raffle.pdf>

3 Day Raffles and Silent Auction Items - Partial List - Updated Daily !

- Blown glass hummingbird feeders by Parasol
- Toys by Prodigy Pet Supplies
- Toys and calcium perches from The Avian Group
- Macaw mirrors by Bobbo, Inc.
- Roudybush products donated by Roudybush, Inc.
- ZuPreem products donated by Premium Nutritional Products
- Macaw paper sculpture pictures donated by The Bird

(Continued on page 12)

Pictures from the May 2008 Meeting



(Continued from page 11)

Shop

- Jewelry donated by Dawn Lucero of Bird Jewelry by Dawn
- Sexing kits donated by Zoogen
- Toys and playpens by JW Products
- Hand-beaded purse donated by Marion Packer
- Parakeet/Cockatiel cages and toys donated by Penn Plax
- Air purifier donated by Bill & Wanda Elder of Ideal Purifications Systems
- Framed Amazon prints
- 16 glass decorative bird plates handmade by Sharon Garsee, Tiffany Latino and Linda Nichelmann
- Hand-made bird pillows donated by Nancy Speed
- Embroidered bird T-shirts donated by Sharon Garsee
- Seed donated by Goldenfeast Gourmet Pet Foods

2008 Avian Research Grants Program - AFA Helps Avian Research

The Conservation and Research Committee has selected the following four projects for the 2008 Avian Research Grants Program:

1. Slender-billed Conure nesting ecology
2. Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD) research at Texas A&M University
3. Spix's Macaw project
4. Psittacine field research project in conjunction with Loro Parque Fundación

Funding for the Avian Research Grants Program comes 100% from special donations made for that purpose by clubs, affiliated organizations, business members, individual members, and friends of AFA. So please give generously, so we can extend our support to these projects as substantially as possible.

More information on each project will be posted soon at www.afabirds.org

Schubot Center Announces PDD Breakthrough

Dr. Ian Tizard of Texas A&M's Schubot Exotic Bird Health Center announced on May 19, 2008 that they have made a breakthrough in development of a diagnostic test for Proventricular Dilatation Disease, PDD. Dr. Tizard reports they have developed a serologic test that seems to be absolutely specific for PDD (no false positives), although it is not yet fully sensitive (three false negatives out of about 20 biopsy-confirmed positives). Further work remains to identify exactly what the causative organism is and to improve the test's sensitivity, but these results are still a tremendous Breakthrough in the battle against this horrendous disease. The American Federation of Aviculture is proud to be one of the supporters of this PDD research at Texas A&M through its Avian Research Grants Program, and invites all bird lovers to help the Schubot Center continue this work by donating to AFA's 2008 Avian Research Grants Program. Tax deductible donations may be made online at <http://www.afabirds.org/2008AvianResearchGrants.shtml>

Donations may also be made by check to "AFA Avian Research Grants Program" and mailed to the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.
P.O. Box 91717
Austin, TX 78709-1717

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.

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asked if I would be interested in watching the bird for awhile. (That “while” has turned in 18 years.)

Once in my apartment I was thrilled when Tarah offered a “hello” at the sight of me snacking on a piece of bread. However the enchantment wore off as Tarah began to scream anytime I was out of sight. Unaware of how to stop this undesired behavior, I did as many do, I ran back into the room each time Tarah screamed and told him to “Be quiet.” Did it work to stop the screaming? No, and at the same time I found I very much disliked my attempts at punishing reactions to the undesired behavior. I so enjoy having animals respond positively to my presence and did not want to become an unpleasant experience in my bird’s life in order to stop the screaming behavior.

While in the middle of dealing with this problem, I was introduced to the book “Don’t Shoot the Dog” by Karen Pryor (Also known as the bible of animal trainers). As I read the book, I latched onto two important principles that could help me address the screaming problem. Extinction and differential reinforcement. Extinction is described as the process of discontinuing reinforcing a behavior that has been previously reinforced. In other words part of my strategy should include discontinuing offering reinforcement for screaming. This meant I should no longer run back into the room, or yell at Tarah. The book did not de-

scribe the exact situation I was experiencing with my bird. Rather it described the principles and how to apply them to a variety of examples, human and animal. In reading the words, I made the connection that the concepts could apply to any behavior I no longer wanted to continue. Paired with the principle of extinction was the strategy of differential reinforcement of an alternate behavior. In other words, if screaming would no longer work to get a response from me, what would? For Tarah this turned out to be a whistle. In the middle of a session of screaming and me doing my best to ignore this undesired behavior, Tarah offered a “whistle”. I immediately reinforced this by responding with the word “good”. Tarah replied with a scream. This was because at this point he only had one repetition of whistling being positively reinforced and an entire year of screaming being reinforced. However I remained consistent with my strategies and within two weeks time Tarah learned to whistle instead of scream when he wanted a response from me. 17 years later Tarah whistles when he wants to know where I am, when he desires a toy or treat, when I come home, and when he simply seems to be “happy”. The undesired screaming behavior was extinguished and replaced with a whistling sound.

Misty seemed to throw a kink in our now peaceful, well behaved and relatively quiet household. I “knew” from my past experience that I could

repeat the process I had implemented with Tarah. However this time proved to be a bit more challenging. Because I was working out of the home at the time, it meant no breaks from dealing with the behavior problem. Every time I left the room I was challenged with having to be focused on training this bird. I was finding this to be very demanding. In addition there were times in the day when mentally I was just not prepared to train. Rather than feeling inspired to train and ready to resolve the behavior problem, I found myself dreading having to leave a room and work with Misty. I decided I needed to better set myself up for success. In getting to know Misty, who other than the screaming behavior, I found to be a delight, I learned that in the past she was accustomed to being covered at night. I took advantage of this and decided to leave Misty covered during the time in the morning I needed to shower and prepare breakfast and bird diets in the kitchen. This allowed me time to peacefully attend to necessary tasks in the morning. After this, I found I was less stressed and more prepared to begin a training session with Misty.

Throughout the day I would treat each time I left the room for whatever reason as a learning opportunity for Misty. I practiced my strategy of extinguishing screaming by not responding to it, followed by reinforcing a desired behavior. In Misty’s case the desired behavior was not a specific

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sound. Instead I chose to reinforce silence. My plan was to reinforce small increments of time of silence and gradually increase the duration Misty was silent before I would reinforce her with my presence or attention. If I was in the kitchen I would wait just outside of her view while she screamed. At first if she offered a pause in screaming that seemed the slightest second longer than what she had presented in between screams in the past, I would quickly appear and offer generous amounts of attention. I wanted quiet to receive a greater amount of positive reinforcement than screaming if I could. Overtime I gradually increased the amount of time she remained quiet before I would respond. And it worked!

However this was not without challenges. There were times throughout the day when a training session was not convenient for me when I needed to leave the room. Rather than cover Misty I opted for engaging her in other acceptable activity. For example, I often offered Misty a small cardboard box, a rolled up ball of newspaper, a new toy, or a portion of her diet just prior to leaving the room. This gave Misty another activity to focus on instead of screaming. But it also was not an opportunity for Misty to learn that screaming would not gain my attention and quiet would. It was still important to include training sessions throughout the day. The other activity was meant only to offer a break from training

for me. This may have also lengthened the amount of time it took overall to teach Misty that screaming no longer would work.

Another challenge in training Misty was that Tarah was in the same room as Misty. Tarah would whistle at times when I left the room. While I wanted to respond to his whistle, I did not want to also then accidentally reinforce Misty's screaming. My strategy had to be to only reinforce Tarah's whistle if Misty was not screaming. If I was focused on the training session, I also found I could position myself so that Tarah could see me, but Misty could not. This allowed me to reinforce Tarah's "good" behavior and wait for Misty to offer silence before responding to her.

Misty's screaming also appeared to stimulate an occasional screaming behavior in Tarah as well. Fortunately because he had a strong reinforcement history for a whistle, I simply waited for him to offer a whistle before I would respond. Tarah quickly returned to offering a whistle and once again extinguished screaming.

Misty also would on occasion scream for my attention while I was in the room. When this occurred, I simply left the room. Again my thought process was to teach her that screaming now created the opposite response. Instead of people coming to her, people go away. It was also important to reinforce her with attention at times for being quiet while I was in the room as well.

Overall training misty to present silence to gain my attention took about 6 weeks to train. Obviously this was longer than it took to change Tarahs behavior. This could have been a result of the strength of the behavior in each bird based on their individual positive reinforcement histories. It could have also been a result of the fewer training sessions applied to Misty during the given amount of time. It could also be a factor of the birds as individual learners. In any case the end result was a bird that successfully learned to present desired behavior for attention as opposed to the undesired behavior of screaming.

I went through the emotional gamut that many companion parrot owners face when addressing screaming problems. However by focusing on good training strategy and allowing myself opportunities to relieve myself of the stress associated with addressing the problem I was able to attain my desired training goal. Screaming for attention is a behavior problem with a solution. Set yourself up for success and invest the time to train the desired behavior. The end result can be a lifetime of good behavior.

Tips to address screaming for attention

- Extinguish screaming.
- Reinforce any other behavior besides screaming.
- Remember the extinction burst is a good sign! The end

might be insight. Change your feeling from frustrated to hopeful when your bird really goes for it.

- If you need to leave the room, but can't focus on training, offer another positively reinforcing activity prior to leaving the room. This may buy you a short window of time to move freely between rooms without screaming behavior. However you will still need to include training sessions at some point.

- Get some earplugs to help you cope with the screaming during the extinction burst.

- Plan to wait in the other room. Prepare in advance a quiet activity you can do when trying to deal with a screaming session.

- Leave the room immediately when your bird screams for your attention.

- Manage your activities to help set yourself up for success. For example keep the lights off or your bird covered for a few extra minutes in the morning until you are prepared to deal with the screaming with good training strategies.

- Get support. If neighbors are having a problem with your screaming parrot, explain to your neighbors that you are working on training your bird not to scream.

- Count seconds in intervals of silence and increase if possible.

- Focus on fixing the problem instead of your frustration.

- Believe you will get there. This strategy does work.

- Keep notes if necessary to determine how and when this behavior maybe getting reinforced. Eliminate any reinforcement of screaming.

Offer even more reinforcement for the desired behavior than the undesired behavior would normally receive in the past.

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To learn more about products and services to help you train your parrot visit

www.GoodBirdInc.com

Barbara 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, and training/behavior workshops. Barbara has provided behavior workshops and/or animal training presentations at the Association of Avian Veterinarians conference, The American Federation of Aviculture conference, The International Parrot Conference at Loro Parque, Parrot Festival, The International Association of Avian

Trainers and Educators conference, American Association of Zoo Keepers conference, Association of Zoos and Aquariums conference, The Parrot Society of Australia conference and many more. She is the past president of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (www.IAATE.org) and has been on the Board of Directors since 1997. Her expertise has been utilized by the US Dept. of Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife Service and numerous international professional organizations. In the past 4 years she has met and trained over 600 parrots at her workshops.

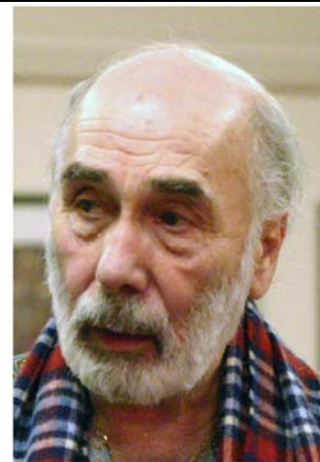
She is the author of "Good Bird! A Guide to Solving Behavior Problems in Companion Parrots" by Avian Publications and also "The Parrot Problem Solver. Finding Solutions to Aggressive Behavior" by TFH Publications. She is also the producer of the Good Bird Parrot Behavior and Training DVD series.

Barbara's experience also includes consulting on animal training in zoos and other animal related facilities. 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, trained staff, and/or presented shows at facilities around the world.



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