



The Official **NEWS**Letter of Foster Parrots & The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary

Your Screaming, Biting, Phobic Parrot & The Myth of the Hand Fed Baby Bird

By Karen Windsor



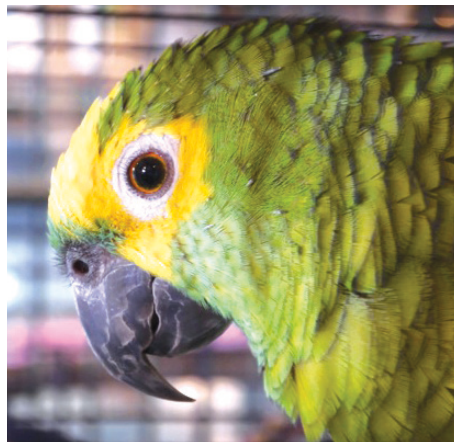
Jack the caique is a plucker, a biter and a screamer. He's not a bad bird. He simply lacks the social and psychological tools he needs to navigate the complexities of an unnatural world.

And he's not alone. Much to the distress of heartbroken guardians everywhere, self-plucking amongst parrots in captivity is common. Whether it's habitual, indiscriminate aggression or periodic, unpredictable biting, millions of pet birds attempt to control the humans in their lives with their beaks. And while screaming is more likely to land a parrot in a basement or garage than result in a positive outcome, millions of birds try to express their discontent through frequent, inappropriate and intolerable vocalizations. Behaviors like these are why parrots lose their homes. They are the reasons why humans, filled with remorse over having failed as guardians, seek to rehome their birds or surrender them to rescue organizations. Like many parrots, however, Jack's behavioral issues are likely not rooted in the shortcomings of his last two or three homes, but rather, in the formative neonatal weeks he spent with his breeder.

The fact that parental deprivation has a negative impact on baby parrots bred for the commercial market has been well documented. The 2005 study, "The Influence of the Breeding Method on the Behavior of Adult African Grey Parrots" (Schmid, Doherr, Steiger) determined that hand-raised chicks were notably more aggressive as adults than parent-raised babies, and chicks pulled from their mothers earlier than 5 weeks developed more chronic, stereotypic (stress coping) behaviors than chicks who remained under the care of their natural parents for extended periods of time.

Research conducted out of UC Davis, California (Meehan, Garner and Mench, 2002) established that young Amazons kept isolated from conspecifics - similar to how baby birds are isolated and displayed in pet stores - screamed more, were more prone to stereotypies, and demonstrated increased fear-based aggression toward unfamiliar handlers. Young Amazons housed in pairs were more inquisitive, more playful and less fearful.

Research by Dr. Gay Bradshaw (et al) has established that, just like in human babies and in other species of higher intelligence,



disruption in the infant-parent relationship in the lives of parrots during this very sensitive period in their psychosocial development has a measurable, physical impact on the brain, disrupting neuroendocrinal patterning that can have a permanent effect on behavior as parrots mature.

(cont'd on p. 2)



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**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT
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See pages 7 & 8 for details

'Tis the season for year-end giving! The Year-End Mini-Match is a beautiful way to show your love for the birds & support the important work we do year round!
All donations made in December will be matched up to \$2500! See pages 7 & 8 for details

Your Screaming, Biting, Phobic Parrot & The Myth of the Hand Fed Baby Bird (cont'd from the cover)

An on-line ad from one Maine based breeding facility states, "We only sell unweaned babies to qualified wholesale [establishments] that have demonstrated they know how to handfeed." That statement gives an impression of ethics and responsibility. The reality is that this breeder's babies are separated from their mothers either as eggs or within days or weeks of hatching, are packed into boxes and shipped to various retailers or brokers across the country who demonstrate hand-feeding proficiency. In the absence of a nurturing, protective, maternal anchor, baby parrots like this, in their most helpless state, are adrift, connected to nothing.

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence that parental deprivation is psychologically traumatizing to mammals and birds, the standard of the handfed baby parrot persists. "Baby birds are pulled from their parents and we, in essence, become their new moms," boasts a parrot breeding establishment based in Massachusetts. The implication is that human-imprinting to the greatest possible extent is going to produce a superior avian companion. The end result, however, is an animal who is fundamentally confused as to what species he is, and is likely to develop a variety of behaviors that will challenge his ability to ultimately succeed as a companion animal. Sooner or later, these parrots will find themselves in transition, struggling to cope with new social situations their physical brains may not be equipped to navigate.

The commercial industry is not welfare minded. It is a system of producing a salable product for profit. Consequently, the psychological impacts of breeding methods on parrots as they mature into adult birds do not typically factor into domestic breeding operations, but socialization does. A breeder's livelihood hinges on his or her ability to meet consumer demand for friendly, affectionate baby birds, and breeders everywhere liberally handle their babies to achieve that level of tameness expected by consumers. "Handfed and tamed babies from our home to yours" are typical ads describing babies for sale. All baby birds, lovingly conditioned by their breeders, are needy and affectionate. It's what happens later on that that will ultimately define their lives.

Scientific research repeatedly corroborates the long-term psychological damage inflicted by current, widely accepted

standards in the breeding industry. Consequently, the negative behaviors we are experiencing in pet parrots oftentimes cannot simply be addressed by strategies like improving enrichment, introducing avian companionship or consulting with professional behaviorists. Re-orienting troubled parrots can take a longer investment of time, a deeper understanding of parrot psychology and a willingness on the part of guardians to accept and work around the unique dispositions of imperfect parrots. The fact that the aforementioned behavioral issues are so widespread suggests that, at the very least, standards in aviculture and in breeding practices need to change. At best, captive breeding of a flighted, wild animal as psychologically dynamic and vulnerable as a parrot should discontinue entirely. 🌀

References:

- Isosexual Pair Housing Improves Welfare of Young Amazon Parrots*
C.L. Meehan, J.P. Garner, J.A. Mench - 2002
- The Influence of the Breeding Method on the Behaviour of Adult African Grey Parrots*
Rachel Schmid, Marcus Georg Doherr, Andreas Steiger - 2005
- Avian Affective Dysregulation: Psychiatric Models and Treatment for Parrots in Captivity*
G.A. Bradshaw, Joseph P. Yenkosky, Eileen McCarthy - 2009

New Aviary Construction Funded by the Albert Schweitzer Animal Welfare Fund

A generous grant from the Albert Schweitzer Animal Welfare Fund late in 2017 enabled us to break ground this past spring on a series of 4 new, outdoor aviaries.

Overlooking the NEEWS Community Garden, these stunning aviaries not only enhance the lives of 26 of our resident birds, but add to the beauty of the garden area! 🌀



More Than Just Friends? Same-Sex Bonding in Parrots

By Karen Windsor



Bonded males JubJub & Burt – Photo by Brian Jones

With their little crests standing proud, male cockatiels, Matthew and Miguel, scurried across the floor to the corner of the aviary they had claimed as their nest. Matthew crouched in the corner as if incubating his egg, and Miguel darted out aggressively, defending his mate and his imaginary offspring from invaders. Whether protecting their nesting spot or claiming shoulder time on familiar human care-givers, Matthew and Miguel are always together. Despite the availability of dozens of potential female partners, their commitment to one another is unshakable.

Crackers and Oliver, two wild-caught, blue & gold macaws, had arrived at the sanctuary separately, several months apart. Both were males. Crackers had settled in nicely and was in the process of pairing up with a lovely female green winged macaw named Molly when Oliver arrived. The moment the two males saw one another they become wildly animated and began to call to one another from across the room. Their attraction could not be contained; Crackers and Oliver needed to be together. Molly was kicked to the curb.

In 2006 at the Tiskita Research Center in Costa Rica, biologist Ilona Twewis-

sen was monitoring the progress of scarlet macaws who were graduates of the breed and release program headed by Chris Castles. It was always inspiring to document captive bred birds living successfully in the wild, and several macaws from the program were

Once considered an anomaly in animals (including human animals!), same-sex bonding is actually quite common in the animal world.

now nesting and reproducing. What Ilona had not anticipated was Freddy and Skye, DNA sexed males, forming an exclusive pair-bond with the hope of raising a baby of their own. The pair were inseparable, and through the years to follow they could be observed going through the motions of preparing and defending a nest despite their inability to produce an egg.

Once considered an anomaly in animals (including human animals!), same-sex bonding is actually quite common in the animal world. Same sex mating has been observed in every species of primate, with bonobos regularly demonstrating the benefits of free love. Mated male black swans will form a threesome with a female, only to drive her from the nest as soon as she produces the coveted eggs! But what kind of evolutionary sense does same-sex bonding make? Biologists Nathan Bailey and Marlene Zuk of UC Riverside have studied same-sex bonding in animals extensively and suggest that this type of mating behavior may serve some very important roles in reproduction. Sometimes imbalances in male to female ratios render same-sex pairing an important reproductive strategy, enabling male or female pairs to successfully raise young despite the absence of an opposite sex partner. Same-sex pairing can fulfill social bonding needs while decreasing competition and aggression within a social group, thereby relieving the pressure of reproductive expectations. Very often, social harmony can be as motivating as procreation.

Freddy and Skye remained committed to one another for 8 years until Freddy became obsessed with a very young macaw named Mercury. The offspring of captive raised parents, Mercury was barely past the fledgling stage, and Ilona and Chris had to wonder if Freddy's attraction was sexual or parental! But it was enough to visibly upset Skye, who finally abandoned the relationship in 2014 and eventually paired with a female partner. In fact, same-sex bonds in animals are rarely life-long bonds. Besides humans, only one other species is known to choose a same-sex partner for life: *domestic rams!* Studies have shown that despite an abundance of females, approximately 10% of domestic rams will demonstrate an unshakable, life-long preference for other males. ☺

FP Education & Activities Photo Spotlight



Sanctuary Director, Danika Oriol-Morway's TedX Talk at the Franklin Park Zoo



Hopkinton Boy Scouts learn about parrots and make toys



Artists at the Feral Arts Workshop



Animal Care Manager, Isaiah Duarte leads a self-defense workshop fundraiser



Staff member Dan Tacey teaching beer-making with hops grown at the sanctuary



Enrichment project by students from Nathan Bishop Middle School



Branford Animal Camp kids create a mural

Conservation Spotlights



One Earth Conservation 2018 Parrot Holiday Fundraiser

Join our friends at One Earth Conservation for their 2018 Parrot Holiday Party and Fundraiser featuring the Rev. Dr. LoraKim Joyner, 3 short films, light dinner and drinks! Tickets start at \$100 and sponsorship opportunities are available! For more information and to register on-line visit www.oneearthconservation.org

Arcus Guatemala: Guatemala's Premier Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Center

In October Foster Parrots was honored to host a visit from Colum Muccio, the Development Director for Arcus Guatemala, and to help organize his presentation at Tufts University. Here Colum addressed an audience of students from the Masters in Animals & Public Policy program, sharing details of the incredible work of Arcus and the challenges inherent in providing services for a diversity of birds, mammals and reptiles. Guatemala's premier wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center, Arcus' team of biologists, veterinarians, interns and volunteers save the lives of hundreds

of injured, orphaned and confiscated animals annually.

Arcus' internship and volunteer programs offer a unique opportunity for wildlife field-work experience for veterinary, biology and conservation students! Income from the intern and volunteer programs is an important source of support for the work of Arcus!

To learn more about the work of Arcus and for information about internship and volunteer opportunities, visit: www.arcusguatemala.com

2018 Photos from Macaw Conservation Costa Rica



Macaw Conservation Costa Rica (MCCR) has added 17 new aviaries since the summer of 2017. Educational programming in the community has engaged locals not only in the lives of the birds on the farm, but also in the lives of those that fly free on the Osa Peninsula!

To learn more or to help support our work, visit our beautiful new website at www.macawconservation.org

Foster Parrots Adoption Corner



“Chuck Norris” : White-Bellied Caique

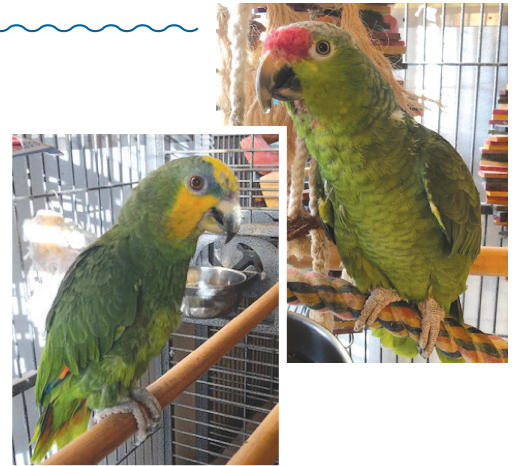
Chuck Norris, better known to us as Chuckie, is a loveable white-bellied caique. She was living with another caique here at the NEEWS, but it turned out that she and her mate both preferred the companionship of people! Chuck has her favorite people, and will be aggressive with those she dislikes. With her favorite people she is extremely affectionate and will roll on her back to have her

belly scratched! She has a loud scream and will let you know when you’ve left her alone too long. She wants to be out of the cage all day, but she gets herself into mischief and does need to be supervised. Super smart and playful, as all caiques are, Chuckie will make a delightful companion for someone who understands this dynamic species and has the time to meet her social expectations.

Sam & Floyd: Paired Amazons

Sam and Floyd are an amazon pair. They have lived together for more than 20 years, and although they do not want to share a cage, they do share a friendship bond and will do best if adopted together. They are both around 30 years old. Sam is a shy orange-winged amazon. He likes to sit on the open door of his cage and mumble to his favorite people. Floyd is a more affectionate red lored amazon who enjoys lots of head rubs! He used to snuggle on the couch with his former family every night. He is still coming out of his shell in our adoption center and hasn’t

wanted to be held, but he does enjoy attention and wants his head pet by the people he is comfortable with. These boys need an adopter who will appreciate them for who they are, has the patience to work on building trust, and who can respect Amazon boundaries. These are not demanding birds! They are a perfect pair for someone who loves to live around parrots but doesn’t need to constantly cuddle.



Kiwii: Sun Conure

Kiwii is a 5 year old sun conure. She desires a lot of attention from her people and will scream if she’s not receiving it. Kiwii was allowed to explore outside of her cage all day in her previous home and would like to find an adopter who is home all day so

she can keep doing so! Kiwii prefers men and will do best if her primary caretaker is male. She gets stressed when there is a lot of noise and will prefer a quiet home.



Interested in Adopting a Parrot?

Welcoming a parrot into one’s family is a challenging but rewarding, life-long commitment. If you think you have the love, time and patience to invest, please visit our website at

www.fosterparrots.com/adoption-rescue to read about our requirements for adoption and to fill out an application. There are so many parrots in need of homes!

Hazard Alert: Commonly Used Cooking Bags Are Toxic to Birds!

We are reprinting this article because cooking bags are frequently used during the holidays. Please spread the word and help prevent needless tragedies!

Susie Simpson had more than 50 parakeets and parrotlets at home and was well aware of the toxic nature of non-stick cookware, but she would never have guessed that cooking bags were also toxic to birds. Last Thanksgiving, Walmart substituted her two turkey breasts with a Jenny-O Cajun Turkey in a bag. Within 30 minutes of the turkey cooking in the oven, Susie’s birds started dying. She



and her family began to grab cages, running them outside to try to save the surviving birds. Altogether, she lost nine precious souls. Following this tragedy, Susie’s family did a search online and discovered that Jenny-O, Reynolds and other cooking bag products are indeed lethally toxic to birds. “I have books on birds and read extensively online before getting my birds,” Susie wrote. “I never saw anything before now that said cooking bags

were toxic. A warning should be on the labels of these products. If my birds died that quickly, I wonder how toxic cooking bags are for all of us.”

Our parrots, of course, are the “canaries in the coal mine” for environmental toxins that are harmful not only to birds, but to other pets, to us and to our children. It’s beyond comprehension that industries and corporations can legally, knowingly sell poisonous and carcinogenic products to consumers, but this is the world we live in today. It is up to each one of us to self-educate and to make choices to keep ourselves, our families and our pets safe. 🌀



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**2018 YEAR
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Please consider including

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in your year-end charitable giving!

**All donations made in December
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Foster Parrots is dedicated to the rescue and protection of parrots everywhere, and to the liberation of all wild animals who yearn to live their lives in freedom and with dignity.

No Cage Is Big Enough!

Working tirelessly throughout the year, we recognize every bird and animal who comes into our care as an individual whose lives have been profoundly impacted by their human experience and by their own unique journey. Every bird and animal matters.

As a leader in the national avian welfare community, we understand it is the quality of our collaborations that ensure the success of our programs and propel



Seiko – Happily adopted in 2018

us forward in our work to bring relief, protection and understanding to the lives of parrots, both in captivity and in the wild. We are a part of a dynamic team of rescue organizations, educators and conservationists who have devoted their



Unadoptable parrots like William are able to live their lives in peace and safety at The NEEWS

lives to the service of birds and animals who struggle to live their natural lives in a complex and seemingly heartless modern world.

Wild scarlet macaws (lapas!) enjoying their freedom at the MCCR compound in Costa Rica



Foster Parrots holds 3 fundraiser events each year: Our **March Matching Fund Drive**, our ever-so-popular **Fall Fundraiser Extravaganza**,

and our **Year-End Mini Match**. We hope you will choose to support at least one of these annual events! The programs of Foster Parrots and the lives of the hundreds of birds and animals who live at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary depend on you!



Please consider making a tax-deductible donation on-line by visiting www.fosterparrots.com

or send a check to:

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Your contribution to Foster Parrots, Ltd. helps provide care for over 400 parrots and animals at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary. It supports our humane education and adoption programs, and it helps to protect the freedom of wild parrots and natural habitat.

Yes! I want to support the work of Foster Parrots, Ltd. with a tax-deductible donation of:

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