

EPPA Gazette

Newsletter of the Edmonton Pet Parrot Association Aug-Sept 05

In This Issue:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Club News | 2 |
| Caiques | 3 |
| Parrots in the News | 5 |
| “Do it yourself” Cement perches | 6 |
| Wild Bird Food | 7 |
| Bathing your Parrot | 8 |
| Parrot Websites | 9 |
| Member Classifieds | 10 |



Contacts:

Louise (President):
louise.walden@shaw.ca
Petra (Vice President): pkh@telus.net
Linda (Communications Director):
safehaven@shaw.ca
Jessie (Secretary): jzgurski@ualberta.ca
Quentin (Newsletter):
faiqm@telusplanet.net
David (Website Chair):
david.walden@shaw.ca

Website:

<http://www.eppa.ca>

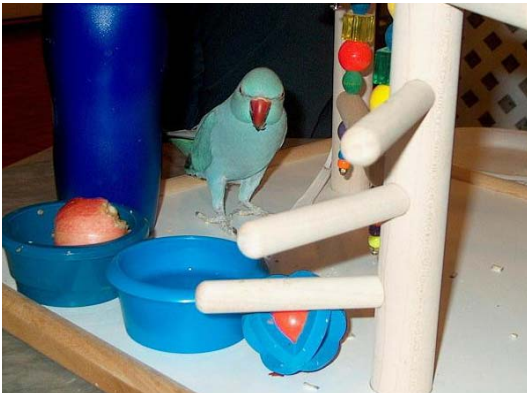
Meetings:

Last Wed. of the month at the Muttart
Conservatory, except Dec, June & July.

Club News: Past and Current Events

August's Meeting: At August's meeting, we watched a video on parrot behavior. The parrot of the month was Jasper, a blue Indian ringneck parrot. He is in the photo below. Thanks to Deb B. for bringing Jasper. If you missed the meeting, but would like to borrow the video to watch on your own, please come to the next meeting, and we can lend a copy to you.

September's Meeting: At September's meeting, Jessie will give a presentation on environmental enrichment for parrots. The parrot of the month will be Emma, Linda and Vic L.'s quaker parrot. The meeting will be on September 28th at the Muttart Conservatory.



Ellerslie Harvest Tea: Each fall, Ellerslie Gifts and Greenhouse hosts a tea, where various local clubs are invited to come set up information tables. The EPPA participated this year. Thanks to Alice B., Nancy N., Don W., Janie R., Louise & David W., Jessie Z., and Quentin F. for bringing their parrots. The parrots attracted a lot of attention and many people stopped to ask questions about them.

Upcoming Bird Shows: The EPPA will also have information tables at the 46th National Cage Bird Show (a national event hosted by the Northern Alberta Cage Bird Society) on October 15th and 16th, and at the Northlands bird show (international event, hosted by the Edmonton Avicultural Society) on November 4th, 5th and 6th. We need volunteers to help out and to bring parrots to both of these events. If you can help out, please let Louise know.

Volunteers Needed: We are currently looking for a treasurer and for someone to help with phoning members to let them know about upcoming events. Additionally, we always need people willing to give presentations at meetings. If you are interested in researching a particular aspect of parrot care and are willing to give a presentation, it would be very much appreciated! If you would like to help, please let Louise know.

Annual Fees are Due: Club fees are due each August/September. If you have not paid yet, you can do so at the next meeting, or you can contact Jessie. Also let Jessie know if you need a membership card.

Welcome to New Members:

Mike P., Kelly P., Linda P., Gloria & Alex M., and Carol, Larry & Kai V.

Welcome to the club!

Cover Parrots: Tiki, the Indian ringneck parrot, who belongs to Carol, Larry and Kai Villneff, and Madge the black-capped conure who belongs to Kelly P.

Species Profile: White-bellied and Black-Headed Caiques

Caiques (pronounced ki-eek) are medium, colorful parrots that are native to the rainforests of northern South America.

There are two species of caique, both of which are very striking, handsome birds. Black-headed caiques (*Pionites melanocephala*) have green wings, a white chest, orange (or yellow) legs, cheeks and thighs, a yellow face (with a bit of green under the eyes), blue-violet primary feathers, and a black cap on the head that extends over the eyes. They have dark-colored beaks and legs. White-bellied caiques look very similar, but their legs can be yellow or green, they don't have the black cap and their beaks are horn colored. Baby white-bellied caiques sometimes have some black feathers on the top of their heads. Caiques are about 23 cm. long, and have short, square tails. Most weigh between 120-150 grams. Males and females look identical, and a DNA test is necessary to sex a caique.

Black-headed caiques occur north of the Amazon river in Brazil, southeast Colombia, northeast Peru, eastern Ecuador, southern Venezuela, Surinam, French Guiana, and Guyana. White-bellied caiques occur south of the Amazon river in Brazil, eastern Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The two species occasionally hybridize in Brazil where the Amazon river that separates their ranges is narrower and the birds can fly across it. Some biologists think the two species

should be considered as variants (or subspecies) of the same species. Caiques are not considered to be endangered in the wild.

Both species live mainly in dense rainforests, usually near a water source. They are sometimes seen in savannahs. They tend to forage in the forest canopy, where they eat a variety of fruits, buds, and seeds. Wild caiques occur in small flocks, or in pairs during the breeding season. They nest in holes in tall trees.

Caiques can be great pets for people looking for a very acrobatic, smart, mischievous bird. Caiques are among the most playful of parrots. Many of them love to hop across surfaces (a very odd trait for a parrot), and like many rainforest birds, they love water and often try to bathe in their water dishes. Many love to snuggle with soft things, like toy animals, or even people's hair. Caiques generally have very bold, outgoing personalities, but this means that they can be a bit stubborn and territorial at times. Some caiques are aggressive around other parrots, so a caique should be well supervised around other parrots.

Caiques need very large cages for their size because they are so active. A wide variety of toys and plenty of supervised out of cage time are also a must to prevent a caique from becoming bored and frustrated. These parrots can be rather high-maintenance pets.

Caiques are not known for their talking ability, but many caiques do learn a few words, and some become decent talkers.

Parrots in the News

Many can learn to imitate whistles, beeps and noises. They are also excellent at learning tricks, especially if they are rewarded with treats and attention. Caiques are generally not excessively loud, but they do have a rather high-pitched voice.

Caiques have an average lifespan of about thirty years. They have no special dietary needs beyond those of a normal parrot. A diet of pellets supplemented with vegetables, fruits, grains, seeds, and a protein source will work well. Most caiques have voracious appetites, but their high activity level usually prevents them from becoming obese.



Above: white-bellied and black-headed caiques. Illustration by William T. Cooper, from *Parrots of the World* by Joseph M. Forshaw.

Further Reading: *Caiques*, by Rosemary Low. 86 pages, available from www.parrotdisperch.com

Research on Eclectus Parrots:
Heinsohn, R., Legge, S., and Endler, J. A. 2005. Extreme Reversed Sexual Dichromatism in a Bird Without Sex Reversal. *Science*: 309: 617-619.

Eclectus parrots (*Eclectus roratus*) are unlike the vast majority of other parrots because they are dramatically sexually dimorphic. The males are bright green while the females are red and purple. In most other parrots, males and females either look identical or are only slightly different. The male and female Eclectus parrots are so different that they were originally thought to be different species.

A research group lead by Dr Rob Heinsohn from the Australian National University studied a group of the parrots from the Cape York peninsula in northern Australia. They found that the females spent most of their time guarding their nesting area. Eclectus parrots, like most parrots, lay eggs and raise their young in hollow spots high in trees. Where Eclectus live, there is a high amount of competition for nest sights, because there is only about one useful nest site for every square kilometer of forest. The female Eclectus parrots must spend a lot of time guarding their nest sights from other parrots, even when it is not breeding season. They will fight with other parrots to protect the nest. The male Eclectus parrots spend most of their time foraging, and they will regurgitate food to the female back at the nest.

The research team used spectrometry to examine the colors of the parrots and how conspicuous they look to other birds

against canopy leaves and tree trunks. Male Eclectus parrots reflect ultraviolet light, which other parrots can see but predators cannot. Because the males are green, they blend in well with the canopy while they are foraging, and do not stand out to predators. While they are at the nest, they stand out to other parrots, and that serves as a signal that the nest is occupied. Females spend little time foraging, and do not need to be as well camouflaged against the rainforest canopy as the males do. Additionally, they can hide in the nest hole if they detect a raptor or other predator.

Females are very conspicuous against canopy leaves and are moderately conspicuous against tree trunks. Until they are confined to the nest during egg incubation, females will call and display outside of their nest hole to let other parrots know that the nest is taken. Their bright red and purple coloring helps them stand out very well and this serves as a signal to other parrots that the nest hole is taken.



Above: male and female Eclectus. Illustration by William T. Cooper, from *Parrots of the World* by Joseph M. Forshaw.

Budgie Finds Way Home After Chirping His Own Name.

Chirotan, the yellow budgie, became lost from his owner in Japan. He was found and turned over to a local kindergarten class, who intended on adopting him as a classroom pet. However, after Chirotan chirped his name and home address, the class realized he was a lost pet and tracked down his owner, an 84 year old woman who was very happy to have him back.

<http://www.nbc5.com/irresistible/5008333/detail.html?z=dp&dpswid=1260382&dppid=65193>

Wild Parrot Populations on the Increase in Great Britain

There are thousands of wild parrots living in Great Britain, most of which are likely escaped pets or aviary birds that were imported from other countries. Their populations have been increasing lately, because of a series of mild winters and warm summers. Most of these parrots are Indian ringnecks (*Psittacula krameri*), which occur naturally in India and several surrounding countries. One large colony of ringnecks in Surrey, England, has about 7 000 individuals. The ringneck population in Britain is estimated to reach 100 000 by the end of the decade.

There are also feral colonies of about 20 other parrot species in Great Britain as well. So far, there is no evidence that they are out-competing other native species, but some naturalists are concerned that could become a problem.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1773012,00.html>

Recipes: Perches & Wild Bird Feed.

Homemade Cement Perches

Submitted by Linda L.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- ! PVC pipe (Home Depot usually sells these); the best are 3/4" inside diameter, but slightly larger for would also be fine
- ! Duct or Masking tape
- ! One 2" screw PER perch (use the type with threads on both ends)
- ! Two washers per perch (must be wider than the outside diameter of the PVC pipe and the appropriate size for your cage wire)
- ! One wing nut per perch (make sure its the appropriate size for the lag screw)
- ! One bag all purpose sand
- ! One bag cement
- ! One tin can or something to hold the molds in

Now comes the fun part: Cut the PVC pipe to whatever length perches you want. If you are making more than one, cut them all at once. Use power tools to make this easier.

Now cut each piece of PVC pipe down the center, making a seam. This is not an easy task, but the cut does not need to be straight. Use wire cutters, scissors, garden shears and/or a dremel to make these cuts.

Take the duct or masking tape and tape up the bottom and the seam of each piece of PVC pipe, so that when you add the cement mixture, it will not leak out. Stand all of your ready to fill PVC molds in a can, open end up (I usually have a piece of 2 x 4 with holes pre-drilled to hold the molds).

Mix 3 parts sand to 1 part cement and add enough water to make it kind of smooth and easy to pour. Mix well, and add more water as needed. Pour the mixture into the PVC molds (a little overflow is better than not filling completely, because some of the water in the mixture will rise to the top).

Place a washer, followed by a wing nut, onto a lag screw, and place it into the center of the cement mixture. The washer will keep the screw from falling into the cement. Do not worry about any dribbles down the side of the molds, because this is mostly water.

Let the cement set for several days (the longer the better). If you become over anxious, your perches will fall apart when you take them out of the mold. I learned this the hard way. Once the cement has set, remove the tape and spread the PVC pipe. Take a pair of pliers and pull the perch out of the mold by grabbing onto the screw, or in most cases you can push the perch through the mold once loosened.

When out, the perch will be smooth on the surface. I roughen them up by lightly sanding them. If you do not have sand paper, you can use a file, or an emery board. Attach the perch to the inside of the cage, with one washer up

against the cement. Then attach the other washer on the outside through the cage bars and secure it with the wing nut.

That's it!!! It sounds like a lot of work, but it really is very simple and the hardest part is cutting the seams and waiting for the cement to cure.

This recipe was passed along to a friend who made some modifications of her own as follows.

- Used a conduit pipe (a bit thinner wall than regular PVC pipe) and split it down the 2 sides to make two pieces.
- Used a length of all-thread and put it right through the middle. The all-thread acts as a rebar and gives the cement something to cling to all the way through. It is also threaded, so you can use the ends as your bolt.
- Tapped the cement down every time a spoonful of it was put into the pipe.

When you want to remove it, remove the tape and put the knife in the seam to separate it from the cement. Yes, this way you can rescue your conduit. Be inventive, the last ones I did I modified for specific purposes. And, when all else fails, you can go out and buy one.

Editor's Note: When trying to choose a diameter of pipe to use, keep in mind that a good rule of thumb to use when selecting perches is that the bird's feet should wrap about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around the perch. The rough surface of cement can help keep a parrot's toenails trim. Generally, a parrot should be given a variety of perches with made of different materials, and with different diameters. This way they can climb between the perches and their feet won't get sore.

Wild Bird Feeder

Submitted by **Linda L.**

This is a good little project if you have children as I make it with my grandchildren.

Winter Bird Feeder

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup ground suet or peanut butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup bird seed

In a large bowl, combine the cornmeal, suet or peanut butter, sugar and flour. Stir in the water.

Microwave this on high power (100%) for 3 to 5 minutes or until the mixture is very thick. Stir in the bird seed. Cool.

Press into a pie pan or mold (a gelatin mold, milk carton, plastic container, etc). Put in the refrigerator to cool and harden.

Unmold and place outside.



Above: Ripley, the red-lore Amazon, who belongs to Jessie Z. and Quentin F.

Parrot Care: Showering your Parrot

The Importance of Being Bathed

by Bill Kiesselbach, Avian Enthusiast
E-mail: bill@incentiveman.com

Sweetum Baaaaaaath!/? Sweetum is my 4 year old African Grey male and he always says what he wants. His needs are identical to those of all birds, whether they are in our care, or not. In the middle of winter with snow on the ground and the ponds frozen I observe cardinals, jays and finches taking their regular bath in the creek behind our house. They do that because they NEED it and they have a choice. Our parrots do not have a choice. They have a drinking dish or a water bottle, hardly a place to take a bath. Some bird care givers relate that their birds hate to bathe and consequently they give up trying. The bird's continued aversion to water shows how poorly he/she has been taught. Bathing with birds, as with our very own kids often does not come naturally--as with human children, we must always be the benevolent teachers.

Taking a bath is physiologically and psychologically important for our birds, as vital to their emotional and physical health as their "daily bread," their socializing sessions with us, their 10 hour uninterrupted sleep time and their selection of toys in a clean cage. Bathing cleans the dander or feather dust, moisturizes the skin and just makes them "feel good." Dirt, as with humans is an invitation to skin problems, disease and misery. Taking a bath is a must and it is our responsibility to provide opportunity and means.

While they all need to bathe, the frequency and intensity may vary and be based on individual preferences, ambient humidity in the house as well as species' requirements. We know that Eclectus parrots, for instance, due to the construction of their feathers need to be bathed more often than other parrots. Eclectus are known for their love of bathing and have been observed under lawn sprinklers, in bathtubs and trying to get into their drinking dishes. They should be soaked to the skin. Cockatoos, which produce copious amounts of dander, must be bathed frequently and intensely--most of them love the experience. The cardinal rule: everyone needs to bathe--at least twice a week!

It seems that many birds must learn to take a bath and although some display a reaction to certain sounds like vacuum cleaners, which often triggers an instinctive bathing behavior reflex--the actual bath is another matter altogether. I have a male Eclectus rescue who goes absolutely nuts when he hears the vacuum cleaner but if I grab the spray bottle he wants nothing to do with it. While there may be other reasons for it from his "previous" life, the appearance of the bottle is very stressful to him. Inca, my blue headed Pionus absolutely loves the Vaporetto but he hates the bottle! I suggest that we always respect the preferences of our birds--there is usually an easy way, its up to us to find it.

There are a number of ways to initiate them into the art of bathing. I take mine into the shower with me. I have a couple of shower perches on the wall with

suction cups--the kind that swing out. Even when they were babies, I put them on the perch out of the reach of the water, exposed them to the humidity and light mist and just let them watch me while I bathed my "wings." At best it was an introduction and at worst it gave us time to interact. Eventually I would just take them off the perch and hold them under the shower low down at bath tub floor level so they won't get hurt should they fall off. None of my birds likes the spray bottle and runs when they see one. It has always fascinated me how docile they get under the shower. When I get a rescue, usually a bird I have never seen before and who might be anxious, the shower works for all of them. I have never been bitten in the shower and everybody always gets satisfyingly wet. So for me the shower works best. Sweetum now just loves to join me in the shower. He babbles and whistles and stares and we have long conversations. After a while his eyes begin to close and he takes a nap!

One can also fill the sink with about an inch of water and initiate them that way--or, if the bird is not too large, use a shallow bowl and fill that with about an inch of water... and for some the old spray bottle works quite well--as long as they don't get sprayed in the face but rather like rain--from above.

There are lots of ways to teach our parrots to take a bath--as long as we remember that in all cases we need patience and tenderness. Some will take to bathing like "ducks to water," others need special consideration. It is up to us to figure out what works best for them.

IMPORTANT: as a general rule we should always use only fresh water--it

may be warm or cold. There is one exception: when giving a feather picker a bath, aloe may be added. Aloe helps with itching skin and its taste inhibits the picking. We should also avoid letting them go "nighty-night" while still wet--especially if their environment is at human temperature levels. In their "home" which in almost all cases is quite warm and humid and where it frequently rains in the evening and at night, being wet when it gets dark is pretty much the rule and no big deal--but it is a lot warmer there.

So, please, give them frequent baths, your feathered companions will thank you for it.

*This article is from www.yourparrotplace.com Articles can be reprinted for non-commercial use.

Parrot Website:

<http://www.worldparrottrust.org/>

-The world parrot trust. This is a charity that funds research on endangered wild parrots.



PARROTDISE PERCH
YOUR best source For Toys
supplies and more ...

**Catalogue
Now
Available !**

1 - 888 - 243 - 2194
www.parrotdiseperch.com

Member Classifieds and Photographs

Parrots

"Sweetie Tweeties" has a number of pint-sized parrots looking for homes. At this time there is a good variety of lovebirds; bluemask, slate whitefaces, creminos, lutinos, blue series American cinnamons. We have a couple a baby budgies weaned this summer and ready to go. Hatched are four parrotlets (one spoken for). Sitting on eggs are Orangeface lovies and cockatiels. Working the nestboxes are Indian ringnecks, lineolated parakeets and conures; maroonbelly and pearly. For more information call Deb Brown at 973-3267. I also have a few parakeet flight cages for sale. Visit www.aparrot4u.com . Click on the fischer lovebird to view!

For Sale:

One green quaker \$375.00 DNA
One blue quaker \$800.00 DNA
Both have been handfed and socialized.
Call Linda at 486-3868 or email me at safehaven@shaw.ca



Above: This is Madge, the black-capped conure. She belongs to Kelly P.

Parrot Sitting

Bird Boarding

- Quality Care, lots of attention.
- Home environment
- Fresh Foods served daily
- 20 years of bird experience.
- Reasonable Rates

Your birds' holiday as good as yours
Call Kari for info 453-3809 or
Email woodflock@shaw.ca

BIRDSITTER AVAILABLE

When you go on holidays let your birdsitter go on holidays as well. Birdsitter located in the west end of Edmonton. You supply the main supplement of seed/granules/pellets as well as cage if a bigger cage is needed. Smaller cages available here. We supply the fruits and vegetables as well as homemade baking. Lots of out time at SAFEHAVEN.

Call Linda at 486-3868 or email me at safehaven@shaw.ca

Newsletter Submissions: If you have an article, photo, website URL, classified ad or any other bit of bird-related information for the next newsletter, please let Quentin (faiqm@telusplanet.net) know. Thanks to Linda L., Kelly P., and Larry V. for submitting recipes and photographs for this newsletter.