

WAES News

Wasatch Avian Education Society



Oscar; Indian Ring Neck
New to Rescue www.wasatchavian.com

WAES CLUB MEETING

April 9, 2016

7:00 pm

Salt Lake County Complex

2001 S. State Street
Room N1100 (NorthBuilding)
Salt Lake City, UT 84190

You are Invited.

Our meetings are free and open to the public. We offer presentations, conversations and comradery with other parrot enthusiasts. Refreshments are provided and a raffle table is a special fundraiser benefit for birds in WAES foster care. Come see what our volunteer flock is all about.



APRIL SPEAKER

Spring Is For The Birds

Appropriate Seasonal Handling

by **Madeleine Franco**

Do you know the best way to handle your birds in Spring, or whenever they may go into season? Aggres-



sion, plucking and other undesirable behaviors can be decreased by appropriate handling and distraction techniques. Some common pet owner behaviors, like inappropriate cuddling and stroking, are not recommended at any time of the year. Learn how to build a better relationship with your bird. As Madeleine says: **THIS TOO SHALL PASS**

Visit Madeleine at:

www.premiumpinecones.net

Read more about this subject; page 2. "Does Your Bird Think You're His Mate?" Also, by Madeleine Franco.

DOES YOUR BIRD THINK YOU'RE HIS MATE? UH, OH!

If your bird thinks you're his mate, resist the temptation to be flattered, as this could encourage or exacerbate feather-destructive behavior. However, he may pluck for other reasons, and the reasons are many. Attention to the following "rules of conduct" could lessen your bird's tendency to pluck or engage in inappropriate sexual behaviors and may also help you avoid a nasty bite.

1. Be sure that your bird gets plenty of rest, particularly during his molt. Molting is a stressful process, with which birds often lose patience. When they are tired, birds are less able to cope, and they may resort to excessive preening.

2. Place your bird's cage in a location that allows him to have at least one safe corner. Help him feel safe in his own home. Logically, preening prepares your bird's feathers for flight. Fear and anxiety can cause him to want to keep himself in a state of constant readiness, and over-preening may result.

3. Recognize that a hand-raised bird may not know what preening is, what it does, or how it is supposed to feel. He does know, however, that growing feathers is an uncomfortable process, and if he plucks out the offending feather, the discomfort goes away, at least temporarily. Try to keep your bird as comfortable as possible during any time during which he is replacing lost feathers.

4. If you clip your bird's wings, be sure that there are no sharp edges protruding into the sensitive skin under his wings. Many a bird has launched as a career plucker following a poorly executed wing clipping.

5. Know that a bird's self-mutilation can be a life-threatening habit. Consult with your veterinarian if your bird takes his feather destructive behavior to the next level and begins mutilating his body.

6. Cover your bird's cage only for sleeping. Do not allow her to spend time in a dark cage for numerous hours other than for sleeping.

7. Bathe your bird often. Do a little research on the

climate and weather patterns of the region to which your bird is indigenous to give yourself a better understanding of how often might be often enough. Keep in mind that some birds consider bathing a form of recreation, and provide frequent opportunities for such birds. If your home has a sodium-based water softening system, try bathing your bird with distilled water. However, distilled water should never be used as your bird's drinking water due to its lack of trace-mineral content.

8. Try to socialize your bird as much as possible, with other birds, if possible, and with other people. A one-person bird is NOT optimal, and while some birds flourish as singles, birds are flock animals by nature. If your pet bird seems lonely and you do decide to get another "bird for your bird," be aware that most often a buddy rather than a mate will fit the bill. Of course, any new bird should be quarantined for at least 30 days, and preferably 45 – 60 days, and birds must be introduced to each other gradually.

9. If your bird is constantly picking at new "blood" feathers, try increasing the protein in his diet.

10. Do not pet your bird in ways that will stimulate him sexually—never pet him under his wings, down his back or tail, or near his vent. Don't hold him close for long periods of time, and resist the temptation to put little birds in your shirt, even though their heads look adorable peering out of your own neck hole. Head scratches are fine, but even these in excess can cause him to misbehave.

11. Do not encourage your pet bird to regurgitate. If he regurgitates for you and you are accepting of that behavior, it could signal your acceptance of your role as his mate. Obviously, you cannot sustain that role, so it is best not to start something you can't finish.

12. Do not allow your pet bird to play with large boxes or extremely large (log-like) pieces of wood during breeding season. This can cause him to

IN LOVE...

engage in nest-building behavior, which will likely take his hormones to a crescendo. If your bird is particularly fond of corrugated cardboard—and many birds are—try making toys out of corrugated cardboard cut into approximately 3” x 6” pieces and strung on a length of vegetable-tanned leather or cotton rope, with a knot between each of the pieces. This will give his beak the same tactile satisfaction without replicating a nest hollow. Additionally, evidence suggests that round toys (balls of all types, large wooden beads on the cage floor, and walnuts and other round nuts not recognized as food) can stimulate hormonal behaviors among both females and males, and it is best that such toys be withheld as breeding season approaches.

13. Do not allow your bird to engage in any self-pleasuring in your presence, and keep in mind that a bird’s excessive self-pleasuring can result in prolapse, a very uncomfortable and inconvenient condition. Return him to his cage if he persists in behaviors that are unacceptable, and provide distractive activities and toys. Oftentimes, treating him to a bath or shower can help.

14. Your bird’s hormones are triggered by the amount of light he receives. Try to limit the amount of bright light your bird receives to less than 12 hours a day.

15. If your non-breeding female bird lays an egg or several, don’t panic, and don’t pull the eggs. In all likelihood, she will only replace them by laying more, which ultimately can result in a calcium deficiency. Allow her to incubate the eggs until it occurs to her that her efforts are in vain—usually between 20 and 30 days. Her going through that natural cycle will signal her hormones to allow her to return to her normally scheduled life. For an excessive egg-layer, you may want to resort to plastic or ceramic eggs, as a bird typically doesn’t lay more eggs while she is incubating others.

16. Toward survival of their species, all animals and birds are more likely to engage in mating behaviors in times of plenty or excess. Do not overfeed your pet bird, but don’t deny him special treats either. Especially, don’t give him more protein than he needs during the breeding season. Moderation is key.

17. Recognize sexual behaviors such as a sudden onset of wing drooping and panting in your presence for no other apparent reason and while remaining alert and otherwise animated, rubbing and exces-



Oh, Tahoe...I never thought I'd find anyone so tall dark and handsome!

sive submissive or coo-like noises. In most cases, you’re bird probably is not sick. Provide distractions if these behaviors should occur. If such behaviors persist for long periods of time, however--or if the bird is engaging in these behaviors alone in her cage and appears listless or exhausted--consult your vet, as the bird could be suffering from illness or some sort of blockage, including egg binding.

18. Know that loud vocalizations are oftentimes part of the mating/breeding cycle and will just as often subside once a seasonal peak has passed.

19. Many birds can become more aggressive and protective of their own spaces during the breeding season. Learn the body language (flapping wings, pinning eyes, rocking back and forth enthusiastically and with feathers ruffled, to mention a few), so as to avoid a nasty bite, which provides a bird’s last line of defense against unwanted advances. Additionally, many species, including especially cockatoos, are known to engage in physically harmful mate aggression against an uncooperative mate. In the absence of proper “relationship management,” this sort of aggression can sometimes transfer to a uncooperative human “mate.”

20. Treat your bird with humaneness and compassion for his “plight,” and realize that this too shall pass.

Copyright © 2010 Madeleine Franco, all rights reserved. Madeleine Franco is an award-winning business writer/presenter and founding president of the Southern Nevada Parrot Education, Rescue & Rehoming Society (SNPERRS). She is an avicultural hobbyist who tends a flock of approximately 30 non-breeding, highly platonic and interactive pet parrots. Madeleine is the owner/operator of Premium Pine Cones, LTD. (www.premiumpinecones.net), specializing in remedies, toys and diversions for parrots that pluck but would like to kick the habit.

AFA DELEGATES

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WAES Delegate- Position Open

Visit www.afabirds.org to learn more about bird education, conventions, publications from a nationally recognized organization.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

May WAES Meeting
Speaker TBA
May 14-7:00 pm

AFA 42nd Annual Convention
"Conservation Works"

hint; If you are thinking about going-Audrey, Shawna and Madeleine can tell you why you HAVE to go...

THANKS & GRATITUDE

Be involved. Make WAES Worthwhile.

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.
42nd Educational Conference & Avian Expo
Radisson Hartford - Cromwell, CT
Save the Date Aug 4 - 6, 2016
"Conservation Works"
www.AFABirds.org
Convention@AFABirds.org 281 217 0614

Keynote: Laney Rickman
Bird Endowment "Go Blue"

Workshops
30+ presentations
Networking
Shopping
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What's new in aviculture

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