

## President's Message

### *Upcoming Dates:*

#### *Monthly Meeting:*

7:00 pm November 13<sup>th</sup>  
Salt Lake County  
Complex (North Bldg),  
2001 S State St in Salt  
Lake City

Free and open to the  
public. Come meet  
other parrot  
enthusiasts and check  
out our raffle table!

#### *Board Meeting:*

6:15 pm November 13<sup>th</sup>  
before the regular  
meeting

#### *Adoptions:*

Max, Red-lored  
Amazon

#### *New Foster Birds:*

Itty Bit, Greenwing  
Macaw

Dear All;

Our regular meeting will be this coming Saturday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, at 7 pm at the County Complex. Our meeting will be our basic parrot care presentation for new parronts and foster parents, presented by Chris Roybal. For obvious reasons, we haven't had one of these for a long time, and we are very grateful to Chris for agreeing to do one. If you are wanting to be a foster family, or you have a new bird of your own, this will be a very important meeting for you to attend.

In addition, we will be having a board meeting at 6:15 pm before the regular meeting. This board meeting is also of great importance to all club members. We need to figure out how the club is to go forward during Covid and the other challenges facing us. Our attendance is way down due to Covid and other issues for many months. We can't exist as a club if people don't attend. We don't know what to do. So we are going to discuss options on November 13<sup>th</sup>. For those of you who think the club matters, the board meeting of November 13<sup>th</sup> is of paramount importance, and we hope you will attend.

Chase Kimball, President.

## Tips For Staying Sane In A Multiple-bird Household

### By Madeleine Franco

For so many of us who now have multiple birds, life didn't start out that way. Hobbyist bird-keeping often grows like Topsy, and before you know it, you have 10, 20, even 30 birds. At some point, as you find yourself spending almost all your waking hours tending to your birds—or worrying about why you're not tending to them as well as you think you should—you might step back and say to yourself, “How did this happen, and what can I do about it?”

#### Space . . . The Final Frontier

Obviously a dedicated bird room is something most can only dream about, but keep in mind that many a spare bedroom is easily converted into a bird room. And, given a choice, a spare bedroom with an attached bathroom—or in proximity to a bathroom, and providing a convenient water source—is ideal. If possible, house all your birds on the same floor, which reduces the time and motion necessary to care for them. Additionally, a first-floor location allows better access to the outdoors for serious cage cleaning and works with gravity, rather than against it, to confine flung pellets and seed hulls to one floor only.

If the housing arrangements for your birds look like something straight out of the Twilight Zone, with a cage here, a cage there, and a cage just about everywhere, you'll likely want to consider the condo approach, replacing single cages with double- or triple-stacking cages. While it can cost thousands to do this all in one step, start putting aside a certain amount of money toward new housing. If you do the math, you will soon learn that by eliminating even two additional 2' x 3' cages, you will have cut down your housing footprint by no less than 12 square feet. When purchasing double- and triple-stackers, buy something that is sturdy, but keep in mind that you don't need one capable of holding up to a gorilla. A flimsy cage won't last, but one that is too heavy may prove discouraging whenever you must clean or move it.

Stacking cage choices now include doubles as well as triples, and some modular designs that can be combined almost indefinitely. One double-stacking design has a compartment suitable for a macaw or similar long-tailed bird in the bottom bunk and a large parrot such as a cockatoo in the top bunk. While some birds seem to be

quite comfortable in top bunks (large Amazons and cockatoos and those in the parakeet family), some—particularly ground-feeding birds such as some of the smaller cockatoos and grays—may be amazingly well-suited to life in a bottom bunk, where they can have a roof over their heads and feel more sheltered and secure. Remember to give bottom-bunk birds and all birds sufficient time out of their cages for daily exercise and socializing.

### What's Underfoot?

Eliminate carpet, choosing instead tile or linoleum, in the room that houses your birds, being certain that all seams and edges are properly affixed to the floor. Though you will still have to sweep once or twice daily, depending on how fastidious you may care to be, a more easily cleaned surface will make your life much easier, and a cleaner bird room will boost the sanitation of the environment—and probably your self-esteem—almost instantly. If you must place your birds' cages in a carpeted area, a large vinyl office mat will go a long way toward streamlining maintenance.

Surprisingly, almost shockingly, many people remove the grids from their birds' cages to make the cages “easier” to clean. Resist this temptation. The purpose of a grid is to keep your bird elevated above harmful materials, including discarded food and fecal matter. Grids are kept clean relatively easily by wiping daily or several times weekly. Think of the condition of the grid as a barometric indication of when the cage should be cleaned. While not eliminating grids, you may want to reconsider the substrate you use in the tray. Newspaper is an all-time favorite probably due to its low cost; however, many other materials, including wood shavings and untreated wood pellets, available in bulk at most tack and feed stores, may prove more practical. These substrates are more absorbent and may be scooped and replenished daily similar to the way one scoops and replenishes kitty litter.

### I'll Drink To That!

Clean water is an absolute must for your birds, the rule of thumb being that if you wouldn't drink what's in your birds' dishes, you shouldn't expect them to drink it. If you're conscientious about your birds' water and you have birds who dip and dunk their food and otherwise show little respect for the life-giving liquid, you

have probably grown tired of changing their water several times daily. There's a relatively easy solution to this: Bottle-train your birds, and now is not too soon. Bottle-training can be done in as little as a day. Again, do the math. If you have 10 birds and you are changing their water three times daily—which is not unusual in an effort to keep it clean, especially during the summer months—by bottle-training your birds, you will gain approximately 30 minutes of precious time daily. Were it not even for the time saved, the bonus in sanitation and the improved health of your birds would make the switch well worth it.

Various bottle configurations are commercially available—everything from small plastic bottles suitable for canaries and budgies to quart-sized Lixit™ water bottles with stainless steel findings, and bird-watering kits that enable recycling of Snapple™ and similar soft drink and soda bottles.

The other efficient and somewhat amusing part of this is that once your bird is trained to get his drinking water from a bottle, he will know that whenever you put a dish of water in his cage, it's bath time!

#### More Of The Same

Have duplicates of as many of your birds' accessories as you can—dishes, perches, bottles, toys. The reason is obvious. When one is being cleaned, there's another to take its place. And, just how often should a bird's dish be cleaned? Again, if you wouldn't eat out of that dish, don't expect your bird to do the same. In my own aviary, whenever a bird has defecated in his dish, whenever that which should be dry has become wet, or whenever things don't look quite right, it's time to wash the dishes. Keep in mind that many bird toys wash beautifully in the dishwasher, and rope perches and boings may be put in the clothes washer. To sanitize toys and accessories, add a small amount of liquid bleach to the wash cycle.

#### Location, Location, Location!

For every bird compartment, it is reasonable to allow approximately 15 minutes per week for maintenance other than feeding and watering (cleaning, checking locks, toys, etc.). To boost efficiency, when outfitting cages, place similar accessories in like locations to help streamline your care-taking and cleaning

procedures. By placing dishes containing pellets or seeds in the same relative position as all other dishes containing pellets, you reduce the time and motion required to replenish food. Similarly, aligning water bottles will permit an assembly-line approach to dismounting, cleaning, refilling and remounting bottles. Depending on the size of your flock, you may want to invest in a rolling cart or restaurant dish tub for collecting and transporting dishes and bottles to the nearest dishwasher.

If you have a dog and birds in bottom bunks with dishes on the doors, remember not to put the pellets in the dish on the door, where they will most often be consumed by the family canine if the cage is left open. This incident, of course, would require washing of the dish and replenishment of the food intended for the bird. Use the door location for seeds, which dogs don't like quite as well.

### Cleanliness Is Next To Godliness

Establish a flexible cleaning routine, recognizing that not everything can or must be done in one day. Remembering that perfect is often the enemy of good, if you can't do it all, do at least some. For example, maybe on one day you sanitize all the water bottles. Dishwashers work wonders here! And, then perhaps on the next day, change all the substrate and clean the grates. Then the following day you can wipe down the sides of the cages. By taking incremental steps and chipping away at the total chore, you prevent yourself from being discouraged and overwhelmed.

Grates and trays can be almost effortlessly cleaned by immersing them in a solution of Murphy's™ Oil Soap—a non-toxic vegetable-based soap—and water. Use approximately 1 ½ cups of liquid soap to a bath-tub sized container of water. Warm water works best; allow a slightly longer soaking time if you use cold water. For a small investment in a baby pool, you can perform this dirty work outside, though it's not really work at all. Soak the grates for 10 – 15 minutes and do something else while they soak. At most they will need a quick wipe, but the need to scrub is virtually eliminated. Remove the cage parts from the solution, rinse with a shower wand or outdoor hose, and the job is done. Additionally the oil soap leaves a slight oily residue that makes cleaning even more of a snap the next time. Oil soap will change your life . . . buy it by the gallon. It's also good for use on perches, playstands, countertops, and almost any horizontal surface in the bird room, though it's not recommend for cleaning tile or linoleum floors, as it can

leave things rather slick underfoot.

For spring and fall cleaning, you will likely want to take cages outdoors and give them a really thorough cleaning and power wash. As a prewash, try using oil soap in a spray hose attachment, spraying it on about 10 minutes before power washing. You'll be delighted with the results.

### Whistle While You Work

Keeping in mind that your birds can often enjoy your indirect attention almost as much as they enjoy direct interaction, make work time play time by allowing your birds some time out of their cages while you are performing your maintenance routines. Take short breaks to sing, dance or engage in whatever silliness suits your own and your birds' fancy. Time out of their cages as a group adds to your birds' socialization and their ability to function as a cohesive flock. For fairly obvious reasons, group activities such as foraging, cage-hopping and bathing that are most enjoyable for you and your birds if they are scheduled prior to your cleaning the bird room, not afterwards.

### What's For Supper?

For those whose personal schedules render it difficult to feed a flock at the crack of dawn, my own flock is living proof that birds are flexible enough to have their feeding schedule adjusted. Because I live in the western United States and my work schedule is based on Eastern time, I now feed my birds in the late afternoon (soft foods and vegetables) and/or evening (seed and pellet replenishment). The last thing I do immediately prior to turning in for the night is check that all birds have adequate fresh water supply and that their dishes are banked with food so that they will have a few epicurean delights waiting for them upon awakening in the morning.

Not only have I been able to adjust their feeding time, but I must also admit to having switched my birds' weekday playtime to early or mid-evening—concurrent with my feeding and watering chores—and after my own (human) dinner chores are complete. In this way, I can enjoy my birds' playtime almost as much as they do. While this technique contradicts those who might profess that birds need 10–12 hours of uninterrupted sleep, I have concluded that—as the seed-winner in the



equation—my own ability to undertake early and oftentimes hectic workday mornings is well worth any perceived risk to my birds, who have become more accustomed to sleeping late in a room that has room-darkener shades.

### Don't Shop Till You Drop

Write yourself a free pass for additional time in your schedule by purchasing many of your birds' needs online. While delivery charges are a factor, ordering in bulk helps blunt the transportation costs. Some suppliers, in fact, cap their transportation charges, so the more you order, the less it costs on a percentage basis. To prevent a "toyless" panic, always have extra toys on hand, either handmade or commercially acquired. Learn how to make simple toys out of everyday items, in the event of a toy "emergency." If you have a favorite retail store out of town that sells unique toys you and your flock just can't live without, keep in mind that many retailers will ship goods. All you have to do is ask.

### Individualized Grooming

Keep birds' nails reasonably well groomed by providing at least one right-sized concrete or textured perch in each bird's cage in a location that ensures he will use it regularly, perhaps adjacent to a treat dish on the door. At first pass, it may seem more efficient to groom all your birds on the same day. However, in my own experience, each bird is best groomed when you notice he needs it. For one thing, not all birds have the same regrowth rates, and the quality of the group grooming session seems to decline as the birds farther down the line, who may not particularly like to be groomed, catch on to what's in store. Remember to reward each bird after a grooming session.

Generally, a pet bird's talons are too long when their length prevents the bird from touching his toe-tips to a flat surface. Beak length or shape is a problem when it interferes with the bird's ability to eat and/or grasp. The beak, which contains numerous sensitive nerves and blood vessels, should be trimmed only by someone specifically skilled in beak-trimming. For those who choose to trim their birds' feathers, a bird's feathers should be trimmed when he has enough wing to permit him to gain altitude rather than just break a fall. For those who take their birds outdoors, a more aggressive wing clip may be indicated, as lighter summer air, thermals and wind gusts can go a long way toward increasing the aerodynamics of

a startled bird, or one lacking in “street smarts.”

### Spa Day, An All-Time Favorite

If you have bottle trained your birds, it should be relatively easy to schedule a group spa day. Traditionally, the spa day in my own aviary has been Sunday, perhaps because it’s such a great and fun way to spend the day while others watch sports.

Though I mist my birds regularly, especially in the summertime, Spa Day, a rather messy undertaking, consists primarily of placing large water dishes, most at least the size of large dog dishes, atop every cage and opening all the cage doors. Then I open all the cage doors and allow all birds time out of their cages. Most often, they head directly for that water dish and bathe themselves by immersion. Some get so soaked that it’s laughable. Following their baths, they generally sit, preen, and socialize on top of their own, or someone else’s cage, and a good time is had by all. Handfed snacks (warm, soaked monkey biscuits are a favorite for this purpose) add to the all-day event. At day’s end, a small treat, usually a peanut, an almond or a piece of apple, placed conspicuously in a treat dish helps lure even the most resistant bird back into his cage. I can’t think of a more pleasant way to while away a Sunday than by reading or frittering in the bird room, while my birds enjoy their special day and we all recharge our batteries for the week ahead.

While many of these techniques may seem like nothing more than common sense—and I’m sure that largely they are just that—it is surprising how many of us bird owners forget that what first attracted us to our hobby was our love of birds and the lifelong opportunity to learn more about them, as well as the allure of developing a relationship that transcends the species. By streamlining the custodial obligations associated with bird-keeping and consciously orchestrating opportunities to have more fun and genuine learning experiences with our avian charges, we will become part of an energizing renewal to help ensure our own health and that of our birds, as well as the future of hobbyist aviculture for years to come.

I hope these “helpful hints” are but a start of a rewarding quest for how to work smarter, not harder, toward enjoyment of your own “incurable affliction.”



*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, LLC ([www.premiumpinecones.net](http://www.premiumpinecones.net)), specializing in remedies, toys and diversions for parrots that pluck but would like to kick the habit.*



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