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# Beaks and Feathers

NEWSLETTER 3RD QUARTER 2011 OCTOBER 1, 2011

## This Quarter's Adoptions

Florida Parrot Rescue has already begun this year with a huge number of adoptions, 141 as of September 30th! With close to 170 birds in rescue at this time (the most we have EVER had!), we need to keep up this momentum and continue to spread the word to our families, friends, co-workers and anyone else you can think of. Keep in mind we always need new fosters as well. We have approximately 20 birds on the waiting list needing to come into rescue at the moment. Remember that our foster/adoption application is available on our website ([www.floridaparrotrescue.com](http://www.floridaparrotrescue.com)) and can be e-mailed after completion to [flparrotrescue@aol.com](mailto:flparrotrescue@aol.com). We begin processing applications as soon as we receive them electronically. Requirements for adoption or foster are as follows: all dogs and cats owned must be up to date on vaccinations, dogs must be on heartworm prevention, all birds owned must have been seen by a vet within the past year with a minimum of an exam and gram stain (not just wing and nail trims). If the vet reference passes, there will be a home interview by an FPR member. Please e-mail if you have any questions!

The following birds were adopted in July, August and September of 2011: Amani (Red Lored Amazon); Beepers (Indian Ringneck); Blanca (cockatiel); Blake (Umbrella Cockatoo); Bruno (Parrotlet); Cleo (Blue & Gold Macaw); Clyde (Blue Front

Amazon); Cody (Cockatiel); Dolly Pearl (Goffins cockatoo); Eanie, Meanie, Mighty, Moe and Joe (Parakeet flock); Fiona (Blue & Gold Macaw); Gina (Moluccan Cockatoo); Gracie (Parakeet); Gator (Umbrella Cockatoo); Josh, Janie & Joe (trio of doves); Lolo (cockatiel); Lucy (Umbrella Cockatoo); Mango (Sun Conure); Max (Eclectus); Maxine (African Grey); Memo (Sun Conure); Neal (Greenwing Macaw); Nitro (Eclectus); Olive (Lovebird); Oro (Gold capped conure); Paley (Citron Cockatoo); Pinky (Moustache Parakeet); Pywacket (Sulfur Crested Cockatoo); Sam (African Grey); Sara (Blue & Gold Macaw); Scully (Miligold Macaw); Squeakers (African Grey); Sophie (Yellow Nape Amazon); Sugar (Umbrella Cockatoo); Taco (Scarlet macaw); Tigger (Parakeet); Tripod and Precious (Pair of parakeets); Zachary (Blue Front Amazon).



Gracie  
Parakeet



Squeakers  
African Grey



Taco  
Scarlet Macaw



Josh, Janice and Joe  
Trio of Doves



Gina  
Umbrella  
Cockatoo



Cleo  
Blue & Gold Macaw



Amani  
Red Lored  
Amazon

# Letter From The Director



**Jennifer Underwood James—Co-founder, Director and President of Florida Parrot Rescue, Inc.**



Karen Atwood



Jen VanCuren



Nicole and Jake Bennett



Cora Cashman



Brenda Dunn



Lorry Burgr



Chris Burgr



Gladys Fonesca



Clairese Austin



Colleen Laurent

Dear friends and supporters,

This world can be a very cold, lonely place for an animal. There are way too many animals out there who either have no home, or who are in poor living situations. We hear stories on the news of animal abuse on a nearly daily basis.

While there is a huge need for animal shelters, shelter living is no way of life for an animal. Plus, there are many shelters that will not even take birds! This is why we strive to have birds in foster homes that can provide a secure, loving environment until they are moved to their forever homes.

Florida Parrot Rescue offers a safe haven, nourishing food and medical care for birds who are waiting on adoption. We are so very fortunate to have friends and supporters like you.

Of course our ultimate goal is to find each bird a wonderful forever home. Not every bird finds a home easily. There are MANY times a bird stays in a foster home for well over a year. During these difficult economic times we are finding that the adoptions are decreasing.

We currently have a waiting list of about 8-10 weeks for birds waiting to come in, so it does not seem to be slowing down! Any donations you provide will help for shelter, quality food and veterinary care while they wait for their forever homes.

On behalf of the animals, thank you for your friendship and support!

Yours,

Jennifer U. James

## Volunteers of the Month

### JULY

For the month of July, our co-volunteers of the month are the FPR group who responded to the Sebring Neglect case on July 4 at the request of Jeff McClain (PAPR); they are Jennifer VanCuren, Nicole and Jake Bennett and Karen Atwood. Thank you for dropping your holiday plans at the last minute to save these birds and thank you for holding it together in the face of a horrific scene. You are all true parrot lovers!

### AUGUST

For the month of August, our co-volunteers of the month are the FPR group who responded to the Orlando "35" hoarding case: Brenda Dunn, Cora Cashman, Lorry & Chris Burgr, Gladys Fonesca, Tracy Chandler and Clairese Austin. And thank you to everyone who stepped up to volunteer to foster these birds and to the ones who drove across the state to pick them up! We know it was a difficult case and you all prevailed despite the mental and physical adversity in order to help these birds in need!

### SEPTEMBER

Our September volunteer of the month is Colleen Laurent. Thank you Colleen for our new beautiful adoption website and for designing our wonderful new retail website where we will be selling avian products to the public to help raise money for the rescue in the future. It would have been impossible without your tireless work and dedication!

## An Introduction to Positive Reinforcement Training and its Benefits

By Barbara Heidenreich  
[www.GoodBirdInc.com](http://www.GoodBirdInc.com)

Macaws on bicycles, cockatoos raising flags, conures snatching dollar notes from audience members. These are images that often come to mind when the word “training” is mentioned in conjunction with parrots. While it is true that training is responsible for those resulting entertaining tricks, this short list of behaviors is a gross understatement of the endless potential training with positive reinforcement affords avian species in our care.

Training is simply teaching. When we train an animal with positive reinforcement we give it information on what it can do to earn desired outcomes. What behaviors we choose to teach are limitless. In addition to training birds for entertainment, we can use this form of communication to address behavior problems, to manage birds on exhibit, to teach birds to cooperate in their own medical care and/or to allow us to facilitate captive breeding practices.

### Training is Science Based

Although training birds in general is not a new concept to avian enthusiasts, understanding the science behind training is just recently gaining momentum. The science behind training is called behavior analysis. This science focuses on how organisms learn. And truly we are all students of this science on a daily basis whether we are conscious of our application of its principles or not. Current trends in animal training choose to focus on using elements of this science that focus on kind and gentle strategies to create desired behavior and reduce undesired behavior. This includes avoiding the use of positive punishment and negative reinforcement. In its place, trainers learn the art and skill of applying positive reinforcement to gain cooperation. (See *definition of terms in side bar*)

#### Side bar

*Positive Reinforcement:* The presentation of a stimulus following a behavior that serves to maintain or increase the frequency of the behavior. Another name for positive reinforcement is reward training. Positive reinforcers tend to be valued or pleasant stimuli. To get positive reinforcers, learners often enthusiastically exceed the minimum effort necessary to gain them. Recommended!

*Negative Reinforcement:* The removal of a stimulus following a behavior that serves to maintain or increase the frequency of the behavior. Another name for negative reinforcement is escape/avoidance training. Negative reinforcers tend to be aversive or unpleasant stimuli. To avoid negative reinforcers, learners often only work to the level necessary to avoid them. Not recommended!

*Punishment:* The presentation of an aversive stimulus, or removal of a positive reinforcer, that serves to *decrease or suppress* the frequency of the behavior. The use of punishment tends to produce detrimental side effects such as counter aggression, escape behavior, apathy and fear. Also, punishment doesn't teach the learner what to do to earn positive reinforcement. Not Recommended!

One of the benefits of viewing behavior and learning from a scientific approach is that we can avoid the pitfalls of relying on anecdotal information and/or anthropomorphic interpretations of behavior. In addition as a recognized science, the information belongs to everyone. No single individual has ownership of the methods or principles. They are available for each and everyone one of us to learn and apply. By understanding the science we are able to remove misconceptions and erroneous interpretations of behavior. The science also teaches us that even innate behaviors are modifiable. And most importantly we learn to create and modify behavior with kinder and gentler methods. This allows reduction in stress, trust building bonds with caretakers, the avoidance of learned aggressive behaviors and the many other drawbacks often associated when aversive strategies are used to influence behavior.

### The Potential of Positive Reinforcement Training

In many ways the parrot community is still in its infancy as it identifies the potential formalized training programs have to vastly improve avian care and management practices. Positive reinforcement training has long been a part of the management and care of species such as captive whales and dolphins. Dog training has made tremendous changes in the last ten years towards focusing on positive reinforcement training. While this highly effective and far kinder method of influencing animal behavior is ready and waiting to be exploited to its fullest in the avian community, a movement of positive reinforcement training devotees has been working hard to spread the word to parrot enthusiasts around the world.

What these supporters have learned is that positive reinforcement training dispels many common misconceptions that currently exist about parrots. No longer do they believe that getting bit by their parrot is inevitable, no longer do they worry if their bird is perched higher than chest level, no longer do they assume their parrot will misbehave with strangers, and so on. They have learned that by applying positive reinforcement training strategies, they can teach their bird to eagerly present almost any behavior they can imagine. Positive reinforcement trainers commonly teach their birds to voluntarily present the following practical and useful behaviors.

*Step up onto the hand; Step up onto the hand of other people; Enter a kennel or other travel container; Play in a towel; Step onto a scale; Go back into the cage; Stay on desired play stands or cages; Interact without aggressive behavior with other birds*

Positive reinforcement trainers often also train behaviors that may seem focused on entertainment. However they also serve a very real function of building trust and enriching their birds lives. These include the following

*Touching a target; Wave with a foot; Wave with a wing; Stretch wings out; Nod “yes”; Shake head “no”; Turn around; Retrieve an object; Talk on cue*

Many of these seemingly impractical behaviors are also easily shaped into medical behaviors such allowing nail trims or clipping feathers without restraint. Some zoological facilities have trained parrots to allow the following medical behaviors without restraint (*Video of which can be seen at Parrot Behavior and Training Workshops presented by the author*)

*All over tactile exam; Cloacal sampling; Choanal sampling; Ultrasound; Radiograph ; Cloacal temperature reading; Nebulization; Masking for anesthesia; Blood draws*

In addition to providing the tools to train novel behaviors, understanding the principles of behavior analysis gives parrot enthusiasts the foundation needed to address behavior problems. Behavior problems such as biting, screaming, bonding to one person, fear of leaving the cage and feather destructive behavior are many times the result of a parrot learning what to do to create an environment that works for the bird. Unfortunately humans often inadvertently reinforce or create the undesired behavioral response the parrot is presenting. By understanding the function of the behavior and identifying the antecedents and consequences that serve to maintain the behavior, owners can proceed to develop strategies based on applied behavior analysis principles to address problem behavior.

### **Learning How to Train**

Surprising to most, training with positive reinforcement is relatively simple. As with any skill it can be practiced. The more it is practiced, typically the better one becomes at its application. Many behaviors can be trained in one or two twenty minute training sessions. The following are a few terms that are helpful to know prior to delving further into the nuances of training with positive reinforcement.

**Cue:** A signal that tells the animal what to do. Many trainers use verbal and/or hand cues.

**Bridge or bridging stimulus:** A signal or marker that indicates when an animal has done something correct. It bridges the gap in time between when the animal did something correct and when it will receive positive reinforcement. Some examples of bridges are clickers, whistles, the word “good” or a touch.

**Shaping a behavior with approximations:** Once a desired behavior is identified, it is possible to look at that behavior as a series of small steps. The first step must be learned before moving on to the next step. Eventually all the steps when joined together lead up to the final desired behavior. Approximations are used quite often to train behaviors. This strategy can be used to train a bird to step up onto the hand, go onto a scale, step onto strangers, enter a kennel, wave and much more.

Training with approximations is like a dance between the trainer and the bird. The bird may take a few steps or approximations forward, but if the bird is hesitant to move forward more, the trainers may choose to accept a step that had been mastered previously. The training may remain at this step for a few repetitions as the bird gains confidence before a more challenging step is attempted again. There is a constant shifting and adjusting to meet the capabilities of the bird, but eventually more steps are taken forward then backward and the bird learns what the trainer is trying to teach. It is an intricate dance and one that makes training such an interesting activity. It challenges a trainer’s skills. Very rarely does training become boring. Each species, each individual, each behavior brings a new set of criteria to the table.

Using the terms described above and positive reinforcement as a training strategy we can explore the process of training a behavior. The first step is to identify a behavior to train. When training by shaping with approximations, it is helpful to describe in writing what each step might be. This can help a trainer visualize the process. In addition it is important to identify a cue for the behavior, a bridge and the type of positive reinforcement preferred by the training subject.

At first the bird will not understand the cue. Therefore the first step is to try to create the situation in which the bird will perform a small part of the behavior. For example to teach a bird to step up on the hand for positive reinforcement, sunflower seeds may be used to lure the bird towards the hand. If the bird takes a step towards the hand, the bird is “bridged” (the bridge signal is given) and offered a seed. While the bird is making the step towards the hand, a cue can be offered, such as the verbal cue “step up”. This associates the cue with the action of moving towards the hand. Over time the bird will make the connection that the verbal cue “step up” means to go to the hand. Eventually the goal is to phase out showing the sunflower seeds to encourage the performance of the behavior and only offer the cue.

When training a new behavior the sequence is as follows:

1. Presentation of cue by the trainer
2. Bird performs behavior or approximation towards desired behavior
3. Bridge is given by the trainer for correct performance of behavior or approximation
4. Positive reinforcer is offered by the trainer

This process repeats itself as each approximation is added, until the final goal behavior is achieved.

Once a bird has gone through the approximations and clearly understands that the cue means to perform a particular behavior, the use of the bridge can be phased out for that behavior. The bridge is a good tool to help clearly communicate what is desired. However, once the behavior is learned it is not necessary. If the bird has problems with the behavior or is learning a new behavior, the bridge can always be reintroduced.

Although the bridge can eventually be removed, it is not recommended to phase out the positive reinforcer. Over time the bird will lose its motivation to perform the behavior. Reinforcement increases the likelihood the bird will perform a behavior; aversive or no consequences can decrease that likelihood.

### Training a Retrieve

Learning new behaviors is mentally and physically stimulating for companion parrots. It is no secret that parrots are some of the most intelligent animals on earth. Having the opportunity to exercise their brain power is highly enriching. The following example describes the approximations one can take to teach a simple retrieve. It is also a great exercise for new trainers to use to practice applying the principles of training.

1. Set the bird on a small perch (approximately one foot long). This will limit where the bird might choose to go.
2. Offer from your hand a small toy, such as a plastic bead, or other small but heavy object. Usually birds will pick it up with their beaks out of curiosity. If the bird will not pick it up, try hiding a piece of food behind the bead so the bird must touch the bead with its beak. In this training scenario, the presentation of the bead may act as a visual cue, but you can also use a verbal cue such as "pick it up". (Later this will be useful if you want the bird to retrieve other objects.) Bridge and reinforce when the bird touches the bead with its beak. Continue shaping touching the bead until the bird picks it up.
3. Hold a small bowl under the bird's beak. Eventually the bird will tire of the bead and drop it. Catch the bead in the bowl. Give the bridging stimulus you have chosen when the bead hits the bowl bottom. This can be clicking a clicker one time, or saying the word "good". Decide the type of bridging stimulus you will use before you begin the session. After the bridging stimulus is given, offer the bird a positive reinforcer. The positive reinforcer can be a sunflower seed or other food treat. Other types of positive reinforcers can be offered such as head scratches or attention. Just be sure the bird finds these things positively reinforcing.
4. Repeat this process several times.
5. After several repetitions, move the bowl over to the side slightly. The bird will probably not drop the bead in the bowl. If this happens, do not bridge or reinforce. Offer the bead again. Allow the bird to miss and not get reinforced one or two times.
6. Then go back to trying to catch the bead in the bowl. Bridge and reinforce.
7. Try moving the bowl to the side again. If the bird gets the bead in the bowl offer a larger or more desired reinforcer. If he misses, go back to step 3 and work up to step 5 again. Keep repeating this process until the bird understands the bead must go into the bowl in order to get the reinforcer.
8. Once the bird gets the concept of the bead going into the bowl, start moving the bowl a little farther away. You will find you may have to go through steps 3-7 again. But eventually, you will be able to hold the bead on one end of the perch and the bowl on the other. Once this concept is understood by the bird, you can try switching the object to something else. When you do this, go back to holding the bowl under the bird's beak and catching the object. Gradually approximate the bowl farther away. This should go quickly this time. Once the concept is well understood, try placing the bird and bowl on another surface such as a table. Again, you may need to repeat steps 3-7 to get on track. But eventually the bird will learn to generalize and perform the behavior in different environments and with different objects.

### Conclusion

The good news about training is that it is not that hard to do. Understanding a few simple concepts can get parrot enthusiasts started on a path of discovery. Not only can training with positive reinforcement provide entertaining diversions, but it can also create well behaved parrots, reduce stress, avoid aggressive responses, and create an eager and enthusiastic participant. Most importantly it fosters the human animal bond that draws us to these fascinating creatures.

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*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](http://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 a past president of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators ([www.IAATE.org](http://www.IAATE.org)) and served on the Board of Directors from 1997-2009. Her expertise has been utilized by the US Dept. of Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife Service and numerous international professional organizations.*

*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. In her career she has trained animals, trained staff, and/or presented shows at facilities around the world.*

# FPR RETAIL SALES TO SUPPORT THE RESCUE



You can order avian products through FPR on the website at [floridaparrotrescue.com](http://floridaparrotrescue.com)

Florida Parrot Rescue is very excited to announce that we have recently made the decision to obtain a re-sale license in order to offer our fosters, volunteers and adopters, avian products for their birds at reasonable and competitive prices while giving them the chance to continue to support the rescue by purchasing products they already need. The products included will be Harrisons, Zupreem, Roudybush, Scenic, Lafebers, A&E Cages, Kings Cages and multiple other popular avian needs including toys, playstands and treats. We plan to eventually launch a website where anyone can purchase these items. At this time

though, we will be using a catalog listing all of the available items while that website is being built. For now, we can only accept e-mail orders and payment by paypal only. Until we are able to find a dependable distributor willing to work with a rescue, we will sometimes not have requested items listed in the catalog in stock, so please just keep that in mind when ordering, we will let you know what products you request are in stock and which are not before you place your order and pay. For the website, we will slowly roll out each line when we can, just remember that FPR is an all volunteer run organization, and this retail website will also

be run by volunteers, most of whom work full time and have families to care for in addition to their FPR volunteer responsibilities. So please be patient with us while we try to figure out how this new website and these perspective sales will best benefit the rescue and the birds we care for as well as you! If you would like a copy of the catalog, you can find it on the adoption website. Please e-mail if you have any questions. Thank you all for your support!

## THE VET CHIRPS IN!

Now it is time to discuss some of those great tips about nutrition and diet and how to feed your new bird that you will be fostering. If the bird comes on a good diet, do not change it! If you need help identifying the pellet brand, bring some to the first physical exam. This is not the bottom line on how birds should be fed; rather, this is an introduction to what needs to be done for these birds as they enter a new home and environment. Even if the bird has been on a crummy diet, do not change it initially—allow the bird to get comfortable in the new home first. This allows you, as the foster, to evaluate how much the bird eats and defecates in a day. This is critical information to help convert the bird's diet later on.

Please include in your daily schedule changing the cage paper DAILY for the first month or so. You must evaluate droppings for the three components: urine (water intake), urates, and feces (food intake) in order to determine how well each bird is eating and drinking. One or two days with scant feces from a bird in decent condition may be OK in the adjustment period—any more than that may require veterinary intervention and gavage feedings in hospital. Veterinary intervention should come sooner if emaciated or ill.

Everyone should purchase plain cheerios, corn flakes, and plain shredded wheat as these help when converting. No bird foods should ever be purchased from bulk bins in stores—I have personally seen cases of toxicity from contaminants that had been added to the food in bins. Please purchase in the original packaging only. If you foster the smaller parrots, you will need two separate mixes. The first should be a high quality seed mix—no wild bird food is acceptable for caged pet birds. The second mix should consist of at least three different brands of natural color pellets the size of seed, so parakeet or cockatiel size is perfect. If you foster the larger birds, you need three mixes: the previous two plus a third mix of no less than three brands of natural colored pellets in a larger size. If you want to have a fourth mix, then colored pellets fall in here (all of you colored zupreem lovers!). But remember, no colored pellets for Eclectus, please!

After you know the bird has settled in enough to eat the diet it came with well (3-7 days) and you are comfortable with the normal amount of food and droppings every day, then you can begin the conversion. To convert all size birds: In the evening, empty the bowl and place a small amount of the small pellets in. The next morning, add a little more of the small pellets. Later in the morning (10-ish) add approximately ½ of the daily seed amount to the pellet mix. Around 4 p.m., add the remainder of the seed for the day. At bedtime, start the process all over again. Start offering thawed-out mixed frozen vegetables in a separate small dish, toss a little bit of cereal on the side, too. If you have parakeets, shred some greens and lettuce, sprinkle with water and offer on a plate on the bottom of the cage daily.

After about two weeks, you should notice that the bird has begun to eat some of the small pellets. If this is a small bird, you can continue to offer half pellets and half seed together every morning except the Quaker parrot—they need no seed at all, just like the larger birds. If this is a large bird, you can begin adding a few larger pellets as soon as you are aware that they are eating the small pellets. The goal with all larger birds is a primary pelleted diet. Next newsletter I will cover some of the longer term feeding goals, tricks & treats!

Keep up the excellent work Team FPR!

Terri Readdy, DVM



**Dr. Readdy is a veterinarian at Country Chase Veterinary Clinic in Tampa where she treats all of the birds that come into FPR in the Tampa Bay area.**

# Healthy Food Choices for your Parrot:

## Birdie Breakfast Burrito by: Linda Moesch



- You will need:
- Tortillas
  - Eggs
  - Broccoli
  - Peas
  - Diced red & green peppers
  - Cooked barley
  - Sprouts (mung, adzuki, or lentil)
  - Diced papaya, diced apple and corn
  - Hot sauce (optional)



Chop the broccoli very small and then dice the red and green peppers. Steam the broccoli, peas and diced red and green peppers. Dice up the papaya and apples and put into a separate bowl with the corn. Scramble the eggs. Heat the tortilla in a pan. Lay the tortilla flat on a plate and start layering. Start with scrambled eggs, broccoli, corn, peas, and red and green peppers. Add cooked barley and sprouts. Top with diced papaya, apple and corn. Fold the tortillas together or roll up tight, add hot sauce if you choose. Slice out portions and enjoy!

## Upcoming Events and Volunteer Opportunities

*Veg Fest 10/15 in Tampa from 10-6 at the Co-tanchobee Fort Brooke Park at 601 Old Water Street.*

*Bird Show in Largo 10/16 from 9-4 at the Minnreg Building at 6340 126th Ave N.*

*Everything Birds at Oldsmar Flea Market, Sunday 10/15-16 from 10-4, receive free wing & nail trims for your birds for a donation to FPR all weekend long.*

*Adoption event at Petco in Tampa Sunday 10/23 at the Carrolwood location 13127 N.. Dale Mabry Highway from 10-4*

*Fall Adoption Expo at the Tampa Fairgrounds Saturday 11/5 from 10-4 at 4800 Highway 301 North*

*Bird Show in Sarasota 11/13 from 9-4 at the Sahib Shriners Building at 600 N. Beneva Road.*

*Everything Birds at Oldsmar Flea Market, Sunday 11/19-20 from 10-4, receive free wing & nail trims for your birds for a donation to FPR all weekend long.*

*Bird Show in Largo 12/4 from 9-4 at the Minnreg Building at 6340 126th Ave N.*

*Adoption event at Petco in Tampa Saturday 12/10 at the Carrolwood location 13127 N.. Dale Mabry Highway 10-4.*

*Everything Birds at Oldsmar Flea Market, Sunday 12/17-18 from 10-4, receive free wing & nail trims for your birds for a donation to FPR all weekend long.*



**A big THANKYOU to Nicole & Jake Bennett for donating NUMEROUS items for the bird show raffles and other events as well as Julie Brame for her raffle donations and to Nanette Szumski for giving FPR free tables at those events & encouraging vendors to donate to the raffles! We still need items for the upcoming bird shows for raffle, so please let us know if you can help! Also a HUGE thank you goes to Petco for their food donations for our foster homes!**

**Thank you Zupreem for your donation!**

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# JULY 4: INDEPENDENCE DAY FOR 27 BIRDS

On July 3rd, FPR received a phone call from the President of Parrots as Pets Rescue, based in Orlando, Jeff McClain. Jeff requested FPR's help in a neglect situation in Sebring where 27 birds had been found alive with many dead. Since PAPER is a new and fairly small rescue that does not have the capabilities and reach that FPR has, we agreed to help. Jeff McClain along with 4 FPR volunteers, Karen Atwood (West Coast VP & South FL Foster Coordinator), Jennifer VanCuren (East coast VP) and Nicole and Jake Bennett (FPR fosters) set out to the location in Sebring the next day on the morning of July 4. By the time the team arrived, the new caretakers of the property had pulled the live birds out of the shed where they were found and given them food and water. The team walked back to the shed to see the conditions the birds had been found in (the shed was being rented out to another party by the property owner).

The "shed" where the birds were found was a 12' x 12' wood framed structure encased in chicken wire that had been covered from top to bottom with 2 layers of tarps and the door was padlocked. Inside was a room of horrors. When the caretakers had found the birds, the cages were stacked floor to ceiling and wall to wall. The temperatures inside of the shed reached up to 115 degrees. There was little food and what food was present was old and moldy. What would have been water in the bowls at one time was now gelatinous. Most cages had dead birds in them that had not been removed when additional live birds were put into the same cages, with no perches and nowhere to stand except on top of the dead birds. Nest boxes had dead babies inside and many skeletons were covered with layers of cobwebs. Ants, roaches and spiders were everywhere. There were skeletons and skulls on the ground outside and inside of the shed. It was obvious that the live birds that were pulled out had not been there long, perhaps they were a new batch that were brought in after the last batch had died, as carcasses were all at varying levels of decay from stripped skeletons to freshly dead, and nothing could have survived in those conditions for more than a few days.

The police were immediately called and arrived shortly thereafter to interview the property owner, the new caretakers and the FPR/PAPER team. Animal control for Highlands County was also called. The animal control officer felt that the county did not have the facilities to house these birds and stated that the two rescues should take them, at which point the police told the team to go ahead and



start processing the birds. The police then called their crime scene unit and cordoned off the shed area and the investigator began to take pictures.

The team got busy retrieving each bird out of the cages one at a time, examining them for any immediate injuries and clipping wings (as the team was outside with only the use of a partially enclosed horse trailer for examinations). Each bird was then placed in a pre-labeled carrier for transport. Once the team was ready to leave (the exams took over 2 hours) the investigator had already found close to 25 full skeletons of dead birds, but there was probably more. PAPER took in 17 of the birds, 15 quakers, a severe macaw and a double yellow head amazon. FPR took the remaining 10 birds, a pair of green cheek conures, a gold capped conure, an African grey and 6 amazons.

The 10 birds that FPR took in were in surprisingly good condition. Four of the amazons, the two green cheeks and the African grey have since been sent to a sanctuary that FPR partners with to live out their lives in as natural a setting as possible (Florida Exotic Bird Sanctuary in Wesley Chapel), in flight cages and aviaries as they were wild caught untame birds, and it was deemed they would not be happy in companion homes. The remaining birds have since been cleared for adoption by FPR veterinarians (we have several across the state) and have been placed up for adoption on the Florida Parrot Rescue website ([www.floridaparrotrescue.com](http://www.floridaparrotrescue.com)) and on [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com). One of the birds, an Amazon named Amani, has already been adopted as has Oro the gold capped conure, into loving and caring forever homes! One of the quakers that PAPER took in needed surgery, which was successful, and all of those birds have since been placed up for adoption through their website. Several have since been adopted out to their forever homes.

What happened in Sebring was truly a story of outright neglect and mistreatment. Charges are pending against the owner of the birds, Karen Howard, and we hope that the system follows through and punishes her to the fullest extent of the law. In the meantime, Florida Parrot Rescue could use help with the veterinary bills that resulted from this intake, FPR fully vetted (bloodwork included) each of these 10 birds and the bills were very high. FPR can accept donations through paypal to [flparrotrescue@aol.com](mailto:flparrotrescue@aol.com).

# A HOARDING CASE IN ORLANDO: 35 BIRDS

Florida Parrot Rescue, at any given time for the past year and half, has had approximately 120 birds in rescue spread out in foster homes across the state of Florida. On July 4, FPR took in 10 birds from a neglect situation in just one day, which is a large amount of birds for a rescue that does not have a facility. Little did we know, another, even larger case was lurking around the corner.

Just the very next month, in early August, one of the FPR officers received a phone call from a woman located in Orlando who was losing her home. She stated that she had 35 birds she needed to relinquish to the rescue by August 27th. Wow, we were totally floored! Thirty five birds was going to set a new record for FPR and turned out to be quite the challenge.

Our foster coordinators on the east coast, Cora Cashman and Brenda Dunn, quickly set to work locating space in foster homes for these birds. They and several FPR volunteers went to the home to evaluate the birds and to find out exactly what we were up against. It turned out that the home was completely infested with german cockroaches and fleas and that the birds had been kept on an improper diet. Some birds had injuries and issues that had never been treated and the cockroach issue shed light on a new challenge, we would not be able to take the cages with us, otherwise that infestation would spread to the foster homes, so then we had to try and come up with cages for each bird.

But Brenda and Cora and our wonderful FPR volunteers and fosters prevailed and all birds were placed into foster homes by the date we had been given as our cut off (just 2 weeks later). All of the cages were also taken to a remote property owned by an FPR member where they have been professionally cleaned and treated so that we can use them later, after they have been cleared of any infestation.

Many of these birds were not as lucky as the ones pulled from the Sebring case. One bird had been left in the cage for so long, that the padlock on the cage had no key and the bird had to "broken out." One conure died within 24 hours of coming into rescue due to an untreated tumor. Another, an amazon named Pretty Bird, is in such bad shape with vitamin deficiencies, an oral infection, a growth on the beak that had to be removed, a leg that had previously been broken and never treated and a severe heart murmur, that his prognosis is not good, although FPR will do everything we can to save him. Another bird, a greenwing macaw named Neal, is blind due to lack of veterinary treatment (although he has since been adopted by a veterinarian and his wife). Two cockatoos have also been vetted and sent to FEBS to live out their life in a sanctuary. Another cockatoo, Charlie, a sulfur crested, had the top of his beak ripped off in a fight with another bird and had never been treated, leaving him with a permanent beak deformity. Several of the birds have breathing issues due to the air quality of the home, which was not good, several of our people had a hard time breathing while inside of the owners home and one became physically sick after being in the home.

Unfortunately, this situation was a classic hoarding case. The owner truly seemed to love the birds and saw herself as a rescue, saving these birds from other situations where she felt they were not being cared for properly. She even stated to one of the FPR fosters that she felt that no one could care for the birds as well as she could and that the only reason she was relinquishing them was because she had no choice.

This particular case brings to light situations that we see frequently, where people claim to be rescues and bird owners are so desperate to get rid of their birds, that they will give them to anyone to just be rid of them, not doing their research to find out if the rescue is legitimate or not. And it exasperates the issue

that FPR has finite space within our foster homes and has to keep a waiting list. Sometimes by the time we get to a bird on the waiting list, the owner has already given the bird away and we worry about what happens to these birds. Due to this issue, FPR recommends several things owners should look for when trying to determine if a rescue is legitimate. Firstly, they should be registered with the state as a non-profit (in Florida, you can check [www.sunbiz.org](http://www.sunbiz.org)) and with the IRS as a 501c3 (although there are several legitimate rescues that are not 501c3 who can not afford this cost yet, but they do need to be registered as a non-profit with the state). Then you can check with the wildlife commission in the state to make sure they have their proper licenses and with the department of agriculture to make sure they do not have any complaints against them. Owners should also check with the local animal services in the county in which they are registered to make sure they have no complaints currently or in the past. Lastly, if they are a sanctuary with an actual location, you should visit the facility and look at the cleanliness. Investigate what they are feeding the birds and don't forget to ask them if they vet all of their birds when they come into rescue and thereafter on a regular basis.



Charlie - Sulfur Crested Cockatoo with a permanent beak deformity due to lack of treatment after a fight with another bird



Champ - Moluccan Cockatoo who was missing part of his hind end, most likely due to a genetic deformity.



Neal - a Greenwing macaw who is blind due to lack of veterinary treatment. He has since been adopted into his forever home!



Florida Parrot Rescue plans to purchase land in Hillsborough County and will eventually have an education center and storefront.

“Put the papers on TOP of the bottom grates, it can make clean-up a snap!”



For article on next page: Coco the Goffin has a large cage (Kings corner cage—FPR sells these through the catalog!) where she has plenty of room to flap her wings, a myriad of different types and sizes of perches and lots of bird-safe toys.

## CALLING ALL HANDS! IT'S SANCTUARY TIME!

Florida Parrot Rescue has decided that it is time to look for property! With the recent influx of birds and the special neglect and hoarding cases we have had to handle, it is becoming clear that in order to continue to expand and help parrots in distress, that we need a central location. We have begun this search recently, but we need your help! We need donations to purchase supplies to build aviaries and flight cages. We will also need a donated riding lawn mower, pressure washer and a golf cart with a small trailer for upkeep of the future loca-

tion of Florida Parrot Rescue and Sanctuary. We also need strong backs to help us build these structures once we have the supplies. Getting a contractor on board that is willing to help us would also be awesome as we plan to add an education center with a library as well as a store front where we will sell avian products to help support the rescue. We will also need two trailers or manufactured homes that can be used as an office and residence for an FPR caretaker and also for an exam area for when our vet comes out to the property to examine the residents. Re-

member that all donations, including work time, are a tax write off! Of course once all is said and done, we will need volunteers at the property on a regular basis to care for the birds, upkeep the grounds, work the store front and talk to visitors! Please let us know if you can help with any of these points or please feel free to pass our information on to someone you know who may be able to help. It is time for expansion and time to get to work. We hope to see you soon at an FPR sanctuary location soon near you!

## BIRD-SAFE TIPS FOR CLEANING

by: Lorry Burgr

One of most difficult things about having birds is discerning what products are “safe” to be used around them. We all know how sensitive their respiratory systems are and even things as simple as Windex or bleach can be an issue for them. So taking all these things into consideration, I thought I would share some of my favorite and SAFE cleaning products. I am sure you find them easy to use and much cheaper than some of the pricy products sold specifically for birds.

1. Vinegar and Water: 3 parts water to 1 part vinegar—I use a spray bottle and squirt the areas that are soiled. This works great on poop and can be used inside cages, on the floor or even in your kitchen. Since vinegar is an acid, give it some time to do its magic and then wash off.
2. Murphy's Oil Soap: Which can be bought anywhere, is perfectly safe around our birds and a staple in my house. This also works great on the floors.
3. TKO Orange: is a fabulous organic product made out of orange peels that is 100% safe for the birds. It melts away poop and dried food. This product can be bought online and a little goes a long way. It is more expensive than vinegar and water, but much cheaper than products sold to remove poop.
4. Another item I find very handy to have is a steam cleaner. It gets into all the cracks and crevices of the cages that a sponge or scrubby just cannot.

A few other good tips:

1. Try using a shop vac in the bird room. They do not have bags and you will be able to pick up a lot more!
2. Put the papers on TOP of the bottom grates, it can make clean-up a snap.
3. Spray the papers with a mist of water before rolling up for removal. You will find this helps immensely in keeping the dust to a minimum.

# CHOOSING A CAGE FOR YOUR PARROT

By Linda Moesch

Choosing a cage for your bird depends on several factors. While researching the type of parrot that is right for you, your family and your home and work life, you should also consider how much space you have in your home for the size bird cage the species you have chosen will need, and what your pocket book can afford. How much time your bird spends in its cage, the size of your bird, safety of the cage, the accessories that will need to be in the cage and the activity level of your bird are all very important considerations. Choosing the correct cage size is also essential to your birds' physical and emotional health.

The first question to ask yourself is new or used? Unless you know the person who is giving you a used cage and it's in good shape, I would choose new. Bird cages are made with a bird safe, non toxic paint. If you buy a used cage you truly do not know if that cage has been touched up or repainted using the proper paint. Your bird's health and life could depend on that. Also, rust is a consideration as it is a health factor should your bird ingest any. It is best to never buy a cage that has any rust on it.

How much time does your bird spend in its cage? If your bird is out most of the time either on its play-top or on a separate play gym, then you can go with a minimum size requirement (see chart below). If you work or spend a considerable amount of time out of the home, then I would suggest going with a larger cage as your bird will be in it the majority of the day. Always check the bar spacing suggested for your size bird. If the bar spacing is too large, your bird could get its head caught in between the bars or escape. You also don't want a large bird in a cage with smaller bar spacing that it can get its feet or beak caught between. A large bird with a large beak can also break or bend the smaller cage bars. The bar size should be thick enough that they can't break through and small enough that they can grip onto them with their feet.

When choosing a cage, width is usually more important than height and space within the cage is an extremely important factor as birds that do not have enough room can become bored and may exhibit behavioral issues such as screaming, plucking, biting and cage aggression. Make sure your bird can extend its wings out all the way without touching the sides of the cage. If your bird does not have enough room to extend and flap its wings physically, injury can occur or your birds muscles may begin to deteriorate from not receiving adequate exercise. Larger birds, although not as active as most small birds, need a large cage due to their size. In addition, their toys are bigger and

you need enough room for them to play and rest. Some species of smaller birds also need a bigger cage as they are often more active. Extremely active and playful birds such as caiques and lorries, fit this category. They need plenty of space to play and therefore, need a larger cage. Play-top or dome-top cage? Your bird should have a place outside his cage to eat and play. If you decide to get a dome-top cage as opposed to a play-top, you should provide your bird with a play gym away from its cage and preferably in another room. A play gym allows your bird the time it needs to flap, hang upside down, play with its toys, and interact with you and your family. Make sure the perch size is the correct size for your parrot and that there are places to hang toys and to place food, water and treats. I place my flocks play gyms by the windows outside of their bird room not only so they have a different surface on which to play, but also a different view than they see from their cage. Play gyms can be made out of PVC or all types of wood. I personally like the play gyms made with bottlebrush. Bottlebrush allows parrots to chew on the wood but are usually dense enough not to allow easy destruction. If you are going to make your own play gym, make sure that the wood you use is untreated and unpressurized and it is a bird safe wood. Check the internet for bird safe wood and also to get ideas for making your own. Always use stainless steel screws so they don't rust.

A bird in its natural habitat will have a variety of shapes and sizes of surfaces to rest on. Choose the correct size perch for your bird as your bird spends its life on these surfaces and they must have the correct size for their comfort; the wrong size can lead to foot problems. Your bird should not be able to wrap its foot around the whole perch but half way around the perch. Place different size perches for your bird in its cage made out of different types of natural bird safe wood. The correct size perch is important to your birds well being as it helps exercise and strengthen their feet and toes and can decrease their chances of developing arthritis later in life. Place a larger perch high in the cage for roosting/sleeping; natural woods such as manzanita or bottlebrush are good choices. PVC or plastic perches are easy to clean but slippery and your bird can fall and be injured, however, sandpaper perches are not recommended for continual use within a cage. You can instead use one cement perch in the cage for them to clean their nails and beak; but use others made out of natural woods. Place your perches in different areas of the cage so they can hop from one to the other as they would if they were in a tree in their natural habitat. Some birds like shelves in addition to perches. Shelves can also be useful if you have a disabled fid. Your goal is to have at least 3 different size perches and 3 different compositions of perches or shelves in the cage. This

will help a bird who is getting older keep his feet in good shape as birds can develop medical issues in respect to their feet, just like people! If you have a larger sized parrot, it is also recommended that you have at least one perch that stretches all the way across the width of the cage. Some owners will even have perches that extend out from the cage so when the cage is left open, the bird will have an extended area in which to explore and interact out of the cage.

Toys are a necessity for your bird to stay stimulated and you should rotate toys every few weeks, but don't overcrowd the cage with toys so your bird can't move around. Hang toys from the top or on the sides; you can even put them on the outside of the cage so they can spend their time pulling on it to try to get it in, but despite your placement of toys, birds should still be able to stretch their wings out without touching anything in at least one or two places in the cage. Toys should have safe hooks on them for the size bird you have. You don't want to put a toy with a small hook on it in a macaw cage as they can break the hook and possibly get it lodged in their beak. I use large stainless hooks and some I tie to the top of the cage with leather. I also use heavy jute, string, bird safe rope or leather to tie toys to the cage. Most birds love toys with bells, but make sure the bell does not have any pieces on it that can be swallowed or areas where toes can get caught. There are tubular bells made of stainless steel or bells surrounded in plastic on the market that are safe. Birds can also get caught in some types of rope and chain so be careful what products you use. Leather is great for making toys, so be creative when making your own toys but always use bird safe material. We will discuss the types of parrot safe toys you can offer your fid and how to make your own toys in another issue of Beaks and Feathers.

Species	Minimum Cage Size	Bar Spacing
Finches	18"x30"x18"	1/4" to 1/2"
Canaries (only up to pairs)	18"x24" x18"	1/4" to 1/2"
Budgies (only up to pairs)	18"x18"x24"	1/2"
Cockatiels (single)	20"x20"x24"	1/2" to 5/8"
Lovebirds & Parrotlets (single)	24"x24"x24"	1/2"
Ringneck Parakeets	24"x24"x36"	1/2" to 5/8"
Conures & Poicephalus	24"x24"x24"	5/8" to 3/4"
Caiques, Pionus & Jardines	24"x24"x36"	5/8" to 3/4"
Amazons, Mini Macaws, African Greys, Goffins & Bare Eye Cockatoos	24"x36"x48"	3/4" to 1"
Large Macaws & Cockatoos	36"x48"x60"	1" to 1.5"



Finding  
Forever  
Homes  
for Our  
Feathered  
Friends!

## FLORIDA PARROT RESCUE, INC

<http://www.floridaparrotrescue.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/FLParrotRescue>

A 501C3 Non-profit, all volunteer run  
organization, serving all of Florida!

Phone: 813-516-1759

**Florida Parrot Rescue is dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of companion parrots. We strive to educate parrot owners on proper handling and care of parrots. Should someone be unable to keep their bird(s) for ANY reason, we want them to know there is a place to turn, and that they are not alone. It is our goal to provide a safe haven for birds that cannot stay with their owners or birds in need, and then to find those birds forever homes with loving and responsible families.**

## Adoptable Birds of the Quarter: CHESTER & JACK

Chester is a splayed leg Quaker Parrot who is laid back and gets around very well. Chester thinks he/she is no different than his buddy Jack! The two are bonded. Chester is the one to protect Jack and their cage. Once Chester is out of the cage he/she is a sweetheart. Chester will lay directly on your chest and rest his beak on your chest while you are petting and talking or sit there nicely looking around. Chester also enjoys sitting in the palm of your hand to hang out. Jack is a curious Quaker. Jack is always wanting to try new things and investigate on his own if within cage reach. Jack is usually the one to try to take away Chester's toy or anything to get a squawk! Jack likes to ride on your shoulder and nuzzle in your hair. Jack and Chester both enjoy sitting on kids fingers and being petted and talked to. Neither birds talk but have their own language when you come into the room to say your hello or goodnight. Chester & Jack are healthy, lively birds that have been converted to a diet of pellets and fresh fruits and vegetables and are now looking for their forever home! Their adoption fee will be half off this quarter, \$50 for the pair or \$100 with their cage!



Chester & Jack—  
Bonded pair of Quaker  
Parrots

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As always, thank you to the veterinary offices that work with FPR for their generous discounts and support: Country Chase Veterinary Clinic in Tampa, Timberlane Animal Hospital in Plant City, East Orlando Animal Hospital, The Exotic Bird Hospital in Jacksonville, the Lake Howell Animal Hospital, Animal Hospital of Pensacola, the Weston Road Animal Hospital, Broward Avian & Exotic Animal Hospital, Blue Pearl Veterinary Specialists and Ark & Bark Animal Clinic in Palm Bay.