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Guide to Parrot
Touching and Handling

Parrot Users Manual Collection

EXTRACT



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Your Parrot

The idea of adopting a pet is generally to fulfill a need within one's personality. Who wants the hassle of an animal that will require lifetime care (parrots live a long time), that will have needs to be met, for example the cleaning of the bird's living quarters, if the animal does not meet a clearly defined role in someone's life. During a very interesting and stimulating discussion with Quebec ethologist Richard Beaudet, I had to agree when Richard brought forward the idea that humans acquire a pet for reasons that can sometimes seem frivolous, but which are nevertheless quite specific and are generally of a very emotional nature. I had to agree with him as I have never met people who said they wanted to acquire a parrot for practical reasons... and that a parrot can be all one desires except... practical! Here are two of Richard's explanations that caught my attention.

"The animal acts as a mirror, an extension of oneself." R.B. Often indeed our parrot feeds our ego when we see him behaving better or differently than the neighbour's or when the animal seems to evidently prefer us instead of the other people also present in his environment.



Here I must say (*mea culpa*), Richard is right. It is amazing the amount of pride I often discern in parrot enthusiasts conversation.

“Don’t tell me! Your parrot will not let you touch him... I do what I want with mine. You know, my parrot acts almost as my bodyguard, he will not let anyone approach me, he will react whenever people try to pet him, blah blah blah.” And I am not any different! When coming back home at night, following a consultation with a particularly difficult bird, I have often commented happily on how much better behaved my parrots were, me deserving, of course all the credit for their good behaviour. I can also remember some gratifying moments when someone got the cold shoulder when passing close to one of my birds. Just like everyone else, I find it hard to hide my satisfaction, not to sneak in a little smile.

Yes, we get to live vicariously through our animal: he is exceptional - we are exceptional ... So life goes!

“The animal is a prosthesis, one of the best emotional support that exists.” R.B. As you all know, our parrots do not judge us,

*One of the
finest qualities
of a parrot...
knowing how
to be loved!*



they accept us as we are, love and embrace our little peculiarities and our weaknesses: my parrots swear like me, sneeze like me, sing badly like me. Most of them communicate imitating my voice and they are always in sync with my mood. Parrots provide unconditionally this reassuring affection that we love to wallow in when near them. No one should feel embarrassed because of the emotional bond they share with a parrot, and this with good reasons. It has long been shown that pet therapy can perform small miracles with our emotional state and, with a parrot ever present, we are actually in the front row reaping all of the benefits.

In addition to helping us get our life balance back, the animal performs brilliantly the role of social buffer allowing us to connect easily with others. Consider for example the hours of stimulating discussions with a spouse who strongly objects to the installation of some perches in the dining room; or the sudden

interest of the neighbour next door, with whom exchanges in the last ten years had been limited to a courteous hello, but that your parrot's early morning vocalization are now making you enjoy fully. And what to say of the marvellous monthly meetings at the Parrot Club where you meet people who share the same passion and where you finally get to talk at length about the superb exploits of your charming bird and where you know that fellow parrot enthusiasts will fully appreciate the last pictures taken of Coco in the shower, in the garden or enjoying his breakfast... Oh yeah!

Now that we have nicely highlighted some of the reasons that motivate the adoption of a parrot, we must also provide the means for him to fulfill his role. Because, you see, the bird that will join your household will not arrive as a perfect fit to you; he is not a ready-to-wear item. A parrot is somewhat like *haute couture*, you have to shape the fabric, adjust it to you and your lifestyle and remember that you may need to readjust some of the seams over time.



Of course, to become a good designer you will have to get to know this wonderful fabric that is your parrot and accept the innate behaviours that are integral part of his temperament and personality. You will also have to accept that almost all of his acquired behaviours will come from you and that, therefore, you must assume full responsibility for those behaviours, the desirable ones and the others... the less attractive ones. Even if this is not always evident, you are the artist that shapes your bird's attitudes, his actions will reflect what he has learned from you. As a parrot never acts for anything, you will also have to discover the motivations behind your bird's actions... good or bad: these are the driving forces behind the behaviour. You will have to motivate your bird by using the concept of pleasure: parrots do not learn under duress or if a negative consequence can be the result of that learning; parrots need to be stimulated positively in every aspect of their lives, and that includes the training and taming. Socializing a parrot is very much like hand-stitching, every material is used differently and you must be attentive to your companion every step of the way; observing his ability to adapt to new things and to changes, making notes of his emotional responses and, above everything else, remembering to apply this most important concept when doing *haute-couture*:

YOU MUST TAKE THE TIME REQUIRED...