

## Eclectus Shows Sexual Behaviors

**A parrot's environment and how it is handled can contribute to the display of sexual behaviors.**

*By Sally Blanchard*

**Q:** I just adopted a male Eclectus that will be 4 years old in this summer. I have only had him for two weeks, and I understand that they come into sexual maturity about this time. He is an awesome little guy and he is very affectionate; maybe too affectionate. Every time I have him with me, he starts getting sexually aroused. I know I should distract him or put him back on his cage, but if I did this I would hardly get to have him with me. Is this just something that happens once or twice a year? I love playing with him but he immediately starts getting aroused and starts regurgitating his food. He is not selective about his affection either; he's that way with anyone who wants to hold him.

**A:** Your statement that your Eclectus responds sexually to anyone who holds him does not surprise me. One advantage of living with an Eclectus is that they usually don't form a strong mate bond with one person. Because of this, an Eclectus is less likely to show aggression toward other people when it is around its primary person.

Sexual behavior in parrots can create some complex problems for the people in their lives. Your Eclectus might have been handled by its previous caregivers in a way that stimulated it in a sexual manner, so this may be, a "normal" behavior for your bird. Another possibility is an increase in the quality of your Eclectus care. While we strive to improve the life of any parrot that comes to us from a previous home, sometime the changes can create some unintended consequences.

In the wild, an increase in light and humidity signals the breeding season. To parrots it means that there will be adequate food for their babies. It is natural that these same conditions will also influence the behavior of our companion parrots. When my double yellow-headed Amazon hen, Pascal, came to live with me when she was 13 years old, she was not used to an optimal environment. I gave her baths, improved her diet, added full-spectrum lighting, put new toys in her new cage and gave her a lot more attention. It reached the point where I couldn't walk in the room without her showing serious sexual behaviors.

I am not suggesting that you cut back on the quality of the care you provide for your Eclectus, but you may need to make some changes at least until it settles down. It might help to cut back on the daily duration of light and cut his showers back to once a week. When you do handle your Eclectus, avoid any petting or stroking that could stimulate it even more. When your parrot is behaving in this manner, avoid making direct eye contact with it for more than a minute or so, as this may contribute to its sexual arousal. If the behavior continues for more than a few weeks, I would certainly recommend that you consult with your avian veterinarian. Sustained sexual behavior and its hormonal overload can create serious health problems. Your veterinarian might be able to help control this behavior with medication.