

We Are Family!

Bird aficionados flock together in clubs and at shows

By Kim Calvert

The African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," applies to raising pet birds, too. Fortunately, a huge community of avian aficionados is available to help with what may be the most intelligent and emotionally complex pet you will ever know. One of the best places to find information and support — your own village — is through local bird clubs. With hundreds of bird clubs all across the United States and Canada, a local club can be a great way to get connected with other bird people in your area.

"It's a support group, a social club, a community organization and an educational outreach to groups, other organizations and the public at large," said David Howell, president of the 120-member Tri-State Avian Society based in Tallahassee, Fla., where members come from Florida, Alabama and Georgia.

Sharon Wendt, treasurer of The Avicultural Society of Chicagoland, said like most local clubs, TASC has monthly meetings where members can discuss bird-related issues and get feedback from fellow members. "A club gives you a lifeline to other people that might have more experience with birds who are there to help you."

Different Clubs, Different Focuses

Some clubs are species-specific, like the Amazona Society. Its members learn things specific to their species of bird, such as Amazon body language and how to enrich an Amazon's environment. Benefits include a quarterly magazine and access to a members-only area on the Amazona Society website. Members also make plans for ecotours, decide what conservation projects to support and endlessly discuss their passion for Amazons.

There are also mission-specific clubs like PEAC — the Parrot Education and Adoption Center, a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to educating bird owners about the proper care of pet birds. PEAC is based in San Diego and has chapters in Anchorage, Alaska; Cleveland, Ohio; and Pittsburgh, Pa. In addition to presenting educational seminars, PEAC finds homes for unwanted or found parrots. Benefits include discounted fees at PEAC seminars, discounts at bird-related supply companies, a quarterly newsletter, an e-mail list where members can discuss bird issues and the knowledge you're helping to care for the birds in the PEAC adoption program.

Parrot organizations can even be international. One of the largest is the World Parrot Trust (WPT) with thousands of members in 65 countries. Its main focus is on wild parrot conservation. WPT member benefits include a subscription to the WPT quarterly magazine and access to an e-mail list where members can discuss issues with some of the world's top parrot experts.

Bird Shows

Besides clubs and organizations, a multitude of bird shows, expos and fairs are held every year throughout North America. They range from swap-meet-like bird marts to multi-day conventions and exhibitions.

The South Bay Bird Society in Redondo Beach, Calif., holds its annual Birdtique in July. The one-day event is free and provides local bird organizations with booths where they can give demonstrations pass out information and speak to visitors.

Other bird events attract visitors from around the world. The Parrot Festival held in Houston, Texas, is a three-day extravaganza with well-known avian behaviorists and veterinarians. It takes place at the end of January every year and benefits the National Parrot Rescue and Preservation Foundation. It hosts a

Best In Show

In addition to bird conferences, you can attend bird shows, which are more like cat and dog shows.

The National Cage Bird Show, sponsored by Higgins Premium Pet Foods, is one of the largest avian events of the year. The show has been in existence since 1949, and each November, a different club sponsors the show in their city. NCBS



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