

Snowball The Dancing Cockatoo

You've seen Snowball rock out, now get to know the dancing cockatoo.

By Crystal Apilado

Interviewed By Bird Talk Magazine June 2008

You learned about the research Snowball the cockatoo is involved in in the August 2009 issue of BIRD TALK. Learn more about Snowball and watch his research video [here](#).

It began with an uploaded video on YouTube.com, and it exploded into a world-wide phenomenon. Snowball, an 11-year-old medium sulphur-crested Eleanora cockatoo, has made appearances on the "Late Show With David Letterman," "Animal Planet," "BBC International" and has had video crews come out from Japan to film his dancing antics.

The Dance

Irena Schulz, founder and president of Bird Lovers Only Rescue Service, Inc, said that when Snowball was relinquished to her in August 2007 due to aggression issues, the gentleman who brought him left a CD and told them to play a specific track. And as soon as Snowball heard the Backstreet Boys' tune "Everybody," he began to dance.

BT: Does he prefer a specific genre or band?

Schulz: We have discovered that he likes a beat. It's a four beat, even rhythm. Most of the tunes that have that beat are the rock tunes, and he prefers the '80's music.

BT: Does he sing too?

Schulz: He does make noise along with some of the songs. He sounds as if he's trying to sing along. He's a better dancer.

BT: How often does he dance?

Schulz: It seems that whenever he's in the mood and he likes a particular song, he'll dance. I bought a CD player for him, and I'll put in different discs. I observe to see what he likes. There are times I walk by and he's dancing, and I'll make note of that particular tune.

BT: Does he have any signature dance moves?

Schulz: He loves to kick his feet way up in the air. And he head bangs. He head bangs to the beat. He looks like a punk rocker.

BT: How many videos does he have up now?

Schulz: We have four out on YouTube.com. We have a couple of songs we found that he enjoys. We let him get used to the song. The first time he hears it, he's not as fond of it. The second or third time, he gets used to it.

BT: Has fame changed Snowball?

Schulz: I would like to think that a bird would not know, but we have had people travel from all over the country to see Snowball. When they come in, it's like he knows that they're coming out to see him. He is such a ham. He starts dancing and puts on a show. He does a hello with a wave, and he charms everyone. He has become a diva. He's about to start asking for rhinestone perches.

BT: Does he have any advice to other birds on how to become a dance star?

Schulz: "Watch me."

BT: Does Snowball have any special bird friends at the rescue?

Schulz: He likes the other cockatoos. Angel, a moluccan cockatoo, and Snowball are like buddies. They have dance competitions. Angel does not want to be undone. They go (dance) back and forth.

BT: Does Snowball have any quirky habits?

Schulz: Other than his hamminess, he does his poses. He loves to pose. He puts his crest up, his foot up and poses for the picture.

BT: What is life like with Snowball?

Schulz: It's a hoot. He has been a godsend to us. Not just in the way of humor, but in the way of donations. It has helped out the rescue to accumulate funds to build an addition to house more birds. We have a waiting list [of birds in need of housing].

BT: Do you have any funny stories?

Schulz: He interacts with the other birds. He likes to put on a show. If there's not a group of people watching him, it will be the birds. He dances for the birds.

Joy Through Dance

People from across the country have contacted Schulz to express the joy and laughter Snowball's dance videos have brought them. One example she shared was a woman who had contacted her to say that Snowball's video had helped her to laugh after the death of her husband several months earlier. "She called to ask me to give Snowball a kiss from her because she hadn't laughed so hard in years, and that Snowball's dancing was the therapy that she needed," Schulz shared.

That is only one story out of hundreds that Schulz has received since Snowball's first dance video launched last year. "In a world of horrible news, Snowball is a ray of sunshine that brings laughter and joy to those who need a release from everyday life." Schulz said.