

## BIRD TALK Writer's Guidelines

### Guidelines for article submissions to BIRD TALK magazine

Updated: April 15, 2010 5 p.m. PST

Thank you for your interest in BIRD TALK magazine. The following editorial requirements and suggestions will help you in preparing your submissions.

#### BIRD TALK's FOCUS

BIRD TALK is directed to the general population of parrot, canary, finch and dove owners and written for the adult audience. We suggest that you read past issues of the magazine to acquaint yourself with the types of material we use.

We publish informative articles on the care of birds; photo essays on historical and current events dealing with birds; how-to articles; and human-interest stories. Sidebars to accompany articles are a plus. We do not publish fiction, or stories in which a bird speaks as if it were human. We rarely run stories concerning native wild birds. We use a species article in each issue, but these are assigned to experts in the species or to experienced writers who are familiar with our species profile requirements. Most medical articles are assigned to veterinarians.

The ideal manuscript is an 800- to 2,000-word article accompanied by high-quality color slides, digital images or professional illustrations. BIRD TALK follows Associated Press (AP) editorial style. We especially encourage well-written, thoroughly researched articles in the following areas: health, nutrition, care (general tips and how-to articles), grooming and training. Humor, if well done, is also acceptable. Tributes to birds that have died or to beloved family pets are discouraged as we have an abundance of this type of material.

#### SUBMITTING QUERIES

BIRD TALK does not accept unsolicited manuscripts; we work from a query basis only. Please send a query letter detailing the story or article idea. Please do not call with queries; we can't judge writing ability over the phone. Due to the volume of queries we receive, a response may take eight to 10 weeks. Multiple queries will not be considered. We cannot respond to queries that are not accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes (faxed queries and those sent by email cannot be answered). If we request to view your manuscript on speculation, please submit it on disk (Microsoft Word, text only) along with a clean hard copy that is typewritten, double-spaced and has wide margins. For authors without personal computer word processing capabilities, high quality typewritten pages (suitable for scanning) are acceptable. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited materials.

Please send queries to: BIRD TALK Queries  
P.O. Box 6050  
Mission Viejo, CA 92690 or BIRD TALK Queries  
3 Burroughs  
Irvine, CA 92618

#### PAYMENT FOR ARTICLES

Our usual rate of payment is \$100 to \$200 for short features (1,000 words or less) and \$300 to \$400 for longer features (1,500 to 2,500 words), including accompanying high-quality photographs. Payment is made in the latter part of the cover month in which the article appears (e.g., if your piece was published in the November issue, you would be paid in the latter part of November.) We buy First North American Serial Rights on exclusive basis; the non-exclusive right to use the article in electronic media; and the nonexclusive right to use the article, as well as your name, image and biographical data, in advertising and promotion. We are entitled to make use of the article for the duration of the copyright and throughout the world.

#### RESPONSIBILITY

We cannot assume responsibility for material submitted, but we assure you that reasonable care will be taken in the handling of your work.

Please include an appropriately sized (and stamped), self-addressed envelope with each submission. Otherwise we cannot return your materials.

1. Do not get your information from the Internet. You can use web sites to locate people in order to get information;

however, information on the Internet cannot be verified as to the origin and content.

2. When writing an article, try to interview more than one source. Quotes help keep a story from being boring and lend credibility.

3. Tone: BIRD TALK wants one of two approaches to an article:

- A. Authoritative and informal
- B. Journalistic and informal

Informal does not mean casual. Informal means a friendly tone with words our readers commonly use, no slang or profanity.

Do not use a judgmental tone. A judgmental tone is when the writer is telling the reader that the writer's way is the only correct way and implies that the reader is a child and not an adult participant. Don't use words like you should, you must.

For example:

WRONG: You should feed your bird every day.

RIGHT: Feed your bird every day.

Authoritative means that you are the authority and are telling the reader the best way to do something from your expertise. Do not use a judgmental tone when using this approach. Our readers should never be treated as children.

A journalistic approach means that the writer is a detached, impartial giver of information. The story is balanced, it shows all sides of the issue and does not make any judgments. Readers respond well to this type of approach. It allows them to make up their own minds based upon all the facts.

4. All writers must provide a reference list for any book, magazine or web site that was used in the course of putting together an article or column. A web site would only be used as a reference if the writer got a phone number or address for someone off of it. It then should still be included.

5. No words in an article or column should be in any way similar to what was found in a reference material; even paraphrasing is unacceptable. The place the bird has come from or a physical description of the bird should have a reference cited unless the information comes from the writer's personal experience and knowledge.

6. Writers should edit all articles prior to submission. Extraneous words should removed.

Examples:

- A. You should
- B. It is important to
- C. In order
- D. In summary
- E. As I previously mentioned

7. Don't misuse since and because. Since is time.

8. Don't repeat information. Don't sum up at the end of the story.

9. The writer should end the story or column with the one point he or she wants the reader to remember about the article. Ending on a nice quote is good if there were interviews in the article.

10. The lead sentence should be captivating and draw the reader into the article. Any news articles must have the most current and important information in the first two sentences. Never begin a news item with something that has already happened, but the current consequence of what has happened.