

## A Lesson on Medication and Senior Birds

**Liz Wilson shares an experience with her senior blue-and-gold macaw**

*By Liz Wilson, CVT, CPBC*

If you read my article on aging parrots (What To Expect From Your Senior Bird, BIRD TALK September 2006), you might remember that my blue-and-gold macaw, Sam, is quite old. My avian veterinarian, Liza Clark, DVM diagnosed Sam as having arthritis in her feet, and she prescribed a painkiller called Metacam™ (Boehringer & Ingelheim). Due to a hectic travel schedule, I did not administer the meds right away because careful observation of Sam had convinced me she showed no signs of discomfort.

A break in travel, however, allowed me to begin medicating her, and the change in Sam's behavior was astonishing. It is as if she drank from the Fountain of Youth and magically dropped 10 or 15 years. She was playing, flying and talking much more. What a difference!

I learned an important lesson about how incredibly stoic parrots can be, and I wanted to share this in case others are in a similar situation with their senior birds. In Sam's case, meticulous observation (even from an experienced veterinary technician like myself) was insufficient, and I am dismayed that Sam suffered needless discomfort. So take it from me, if your avian veterinarian suggests pain medications for a senior bird, try it out for a couple of weeks before assuming they are not necessary.