

BIRD TALK Editor's Note: Avian Genealogy

My parents recently traveled to Italy, which is something my mom has wanted to do for as long as I can remember. Italy was the final stop in tracing the genealogical roots of her family. A few years ago they went to Ellis Island in New York and found her great-grandparents' names on one of the ship's manifests on display. From there it was off to Italy, where they visited my mom's great-grandparents' town, Silvano D'ora. Close to a 100-year full-circle; it may have taken a while, but my mom finally made it back to a place she could also call "home."

It's fascinating that we have the ability to do this — tracing back our roots with records and manifests (and with science), back hundreds and thousands of years. We can do this for parrots as well — scientists say the first bird Archaeopteryx appeared in the Jurassic Period, the time of the dinosaurs. Jumping ahead a few million years, Alexander the Great first brought parrots — Alexandrine parakeets, to be exact — to Europe from India. Aristotle speaks about parrots in a few of his works, and parrots can be found in artwork from the Renaissance period. In our history, parrots can be found right alongside us.

But what about our pet parrots? Can we trace their genealogy? We know they came from a certain part of the world, but what journey did their ancestors go on before our parrots hatched and came into our lives? Can we do a 150-million-year full-circle journey for our parrots to see the places they could call "home?"

As I looked over the photographs of Italy, my dad told me that I should go off to see the world while I am still young. He seemed to have forgotten I have one major thing working against me: money (and quite possibly, time). But while I'd love to go to Europe, if I had the money and the opportunity, I want to go to all the places my birds came from.

For the BIRD TALK special travel issue, Laura did some traveling herself, heading off to Florida to go behind the scenes of Disney's Wild Animal Kingdom. (Be sure to check out her photos!) We're also giving you helpful tips to plan your trips for you and your bird. And we'll take a look at the wild birds of Africa, Costa Rica and Puerto Rico.

This issue is all about showing you where the home of your avian friends. So pack your bags, get out those binoculars and join us for a full-circle around the parrot world!

— Jessica Pineda, Assistant Editor