

Life With Senior Cockatiels

Cockatiel owners share stories of their experiences living with senior birds.

Senior Bird Story - Each Day With Your Birds Is A Gift
By Margaret Madison, Michigan

Click image to enlarge

Mr. Buttons, a cockatiel

As my birds become older it gets more difficult for them to perch. I like to offer them little perching platforms so they can get a rest from having to grip a perch. You also need to move slowly and steadily when you've got them perched on you, as they can't hold on like the younger parrots can.

My senior birds also prefer an area that is less rowdy than hanging out with the youngsters on playgyms or cage tops. I try to make sure that they get a peaceful place to rest away from the younger birds, as they like to nap more often now.

My oldest cockatiel, Mr. Buttons, passed away recently at age 26. He had the most beautiful song of all my cockatiels and luckily I had the opportunity to record it a few years before he passed away. He would sing to his foot and hold his foot up almost as if he had an invisible miniature microphone in his foot. I had one young male cockatiel pick up that habit, but I don't see him doing it as often as Mr. Buttons used to do it. Mr. Buttons was a very sweet and gentle bird. The only time he was a little cranky was occasionally when you'd ask him to Step up. I knew it was because his feet were a little stiff and painful for him.

My oldest bird now is also a cockatiel and she is going on 20 (hatched in 1989). I adopted Lula Belle about 8 years ago. She was a rescue bird. She loves her fresh healthy foods, and even though she isn't the prettiest cockatiel I have, she almost always has constant squinty eyes (the closest thing you can get to a birdie smile). For the most part she doesn't seek direct human attention, but she is always cooperative when we are moving her from place to place. She has had a younger male cockatiel boyfriend here who is about half her age. A few years ago when that male was raising his first clutch with a younger hen, Lula Belle stepped in to show the new parents what to do. Without Lula Belle, an experienced ex-breeder, I would have had to step in. Thank goodness for Lula Belle. She may have been too old to have any more of her own chicks, but she wasn't too old to be a "nanny bird".

Every day you have with your precious birds, regardless of their age, is a gift and should be treasured. Click image to enlarge

Lady, a cockatiel

Senior Bird Story - An Irreplaceable Member Of The Family
By Hannah Prosch, Minnesota

I adopted Lady from a family who no longer had time for her when she was about 3 years old. Now, 10 years later, she is still young at 13. She is one of my first birds and has taught me so much. There is no other bird like her.

Since Lady has aged and I have added perches to her cage that are easier for her to grip, such as cotton rope perches and pedicure perches. She also has a few powder-coated landings in her cage that she likes to sleep on so it is easier to keep her balance. She seems to enjoy soft, cuddly toys more than she used to, so fleece and cotton toys are important.

Lady's diet hasn't changed much over the years. She still gets her pellets, veggies and cooked meals. She doesn't get much seed anymore because she gains weight easily. Now that she is older, I weigh her more often for health reasons. Since Lady can gain weight rapidly, she needs exercise daily. I have a bird gym set up for her with ladders, swings and toys to promote activity.

Living with Lady now isn't much different than when she was young. She still likes to play and eat, which are her two favorite past times. She does like to cuddle more and she isn't as active as when she was younger, but I think I love her

more now. She is an irreplaceable member of the family and I don't know what I'd do without her.