

Bird Rescue Organizations Adapt to High Costs - Page Two

Rising costs and more birds in need have caused bird rescue organizations to reassess finances to stay afloat.

By Rachael Brugger

“What I do notice is that people tend to not want to adopt a special-needs bird, where the vet costs would be higher,” Schulz said. “So that hurts us. We have quite a few birds with physical and health issues.”

She said a year ago, more people would have been willing to take in a high-cost bird.

Staying Afloat

A year is all it's taken for the economy to take its toll on struggling rescues, but some have so far managed to weather the tug at their finances. Brad Baldwin, president of Quad Cities Parrot Society in Clinton, Iowa, attributes this to his strong base of volunteers.

Without a central facility, the Midwest rescue organization relies on its club members to take care of birds in need. Annual club membership fees and fundraisers help pay for bird vet bills, but the fostering members must pitch in for food and toys.

“We've been able to do really well because most of our members are willing to foster and then a lot of times end up adopting,” Baldwin said.

Although he expects costs to rise in the future, he said that the club has not had to spend much additional money on care items for the birds. It has a standing relationship with local vets and a pet store that gives its members a 10-percent discount, which he said has helped them considerably.

Charlotte Fox, office manager of the Oasis Sanctuary in Cascabel, Ariz., also said the consideration of its supporters has kept its rescue afloat. Being a true sanctuary, which doesn't adopt out birds, it must make enough money to buy food and supplies and to maintain its facility.

“Like all of them, we are struggling, and there's no denying that. But we are holding our head above water,” Fox said. “we've discovered as long as we keep our name in front of people to remind them.”

She said the Oasis Sanctuary sends out a quarterly newsletter and fundraising letters to keep supporters interested in its cause.

“It costs money to do but, at the same time, you don't get money unless you spend money,” she said.

The sanctuary has done well, having been able to continue employing a staff of eight full-time members and taking in more birds this year than they have in the past. Although it saw little drop in its monetary donations, with the rising costs of supplies and fuel, it has had to cut back on special projects.

“Our goal is to build free-flight aviaries for all the different species,” Fox said. In the past four years, the sanctuary has built aviaries for small birds, African grey parrots and macaws, and wants to continue with this sort of expansion. “When money is tight, we have to slow down these big projects.”

Getting Creative

In a time where money has been tight, bird rescues have had to fall back on their creative juices to keep business running. Letters asking for donations and usual adoption fees and fundraisers prove futile unless other sources of income are garnered.

Bird Lovers Only Rescue tuned into the web generation by setting up a donation button on the popular viral video website YouTube. The rescue's famous resident, Snowball the cockatoo, has attracted media attention and fans can watch his videos online as well as make a contribution to the facility that fosters him. YouTube supports 501c3 nonprofits by allowing them the use of this function.

MAARS also took advantage of its 501c3 status by tapping into corporate generosity. It receives a donation of Nutriberries bird food from Lafeber, which donates food to nonprofit organizations. It also receives “blemished” toys from Petsmart,

which it works with on an adoption program. Corporate pet stores have been willing givers, as most of the organizations have noticed.

Bird rescues hope to take in enough monetary and supply donations to remain operational. However, if they do not receive enough support from outside sources, they will have to induce financial gains in other ways.

“Its getting to the point where we may end up having to raise the adoption fees on the birds, and I don’t like doing that,” Schulz from Bird Lovers Only Rescue said.