

I Found A Lost Bird

How to care for a found lost bird.

By Laura Doering

Perhaps you heard a mysterious “Hello? Hello!” or wolf whistle coming from your patio, or you walked out your front door and saw a brightly-colored parrot sitting in a tree. You knew this was a lost pet so you patiently called to the bird until it came down, or you strategically placed an offering of food/water and finally got the bird within reach. Kudos to you for going out of your way to help a creature in need. But suppose you’ve never owned a bird before, or you have a bird, but not an extra cage. You certainly don’t want a found bird on the loose in your home. Here are some tips for keeping a bird in your home for a couple days or so until you find its owner or proper placement.

Place a chair back against a bathroom counter for the bird to perch on. The bird may feel too timid to eat from the ground, so try to offer food near where it is perched.

Photos Courtesy of Laura Doering

Parrots can’t fly straight up like a helicopter, and in a small space such as a bathroom, it will be more difficult for the bird to fly back to its perch spot if it startles and falls to the floor. Give the bird a way to get back up to its perch spot: take a sheet or long-sleeved shirt (one that you won’t mind if it ends up being chewed on), and tie it to the back of the chair or near the side of the sink, leaving it floor length. Create knots in the fabric or twist it until it is taut and hold it tight with shoelaces or fabric strips so the bird can climb back up if need be.

Where To Keep It

There’s a high chance the bird you found can fly (after all, if it had properly trimmed wing feathers, it wouldn’t have flown away). Don’t stress the bird out more by attempting a wing feather trim on it. Instead, house the bird in a small bathroom, but not before you’ve bird-proofed it. Keep the toilet seat down (a bird can drown if falls in the water) and remove any items you don’t want chewed up, especially potentially toxic ones, such as plants, makeup and cleaners. Post a note on the door asking that others in the house use the other bathroom. If you only have one bathroom, ask that everyone open the door very carefully, enter slowly and try not to stress the bird out. Make sure that the door is kept closed.

Perches

Now that you have a location, the next step is to make the bird feel comfortable. Most birds prefer perching up high, as opposed to the ground. If you have a bathroom counter, place a chair back against it for the bird to perch on. The counter top serves as a food station, as pet birds generally prefer to eat near where they perch, especially a bird that finds itself in an unfamiliar environment.

If you don’t have a bathroom counter, you might be able to perch the bird on a pedestal sink, but that depends on the width of the sink’s lip and if it is too slippery for the bird to get a grip. The bird should be able to perch comfortably without having to balance itself. A step stool might be a better option. The bird can perch on the top and there should be room on the top for food and water bowls.

What To Feed

You might already have table food in your fridge or pantry that the bird will eat. Many parrots like cooked pasta (sauce free), cooked rice, both fresh and cooked vegetables (carrot, broccoli, corn, peas, sweet potato, green and red peppers), fruit (apple slices, grapes, banana, strawberry, melon) a spoonful of scrambled egg, almonds, cashews, a few Cheerios or raisins, whole-wheat bread; basically anything that’s healthy for you. Do not offer avocado, onion, chocolate or alcohol, which can be harmful and even fatal to some birds. If the lost bird doesn’t take to any of your food, you might have to make a quick trip to the local pet store for some parrot-specific seed. (You might have no intention of keeping the bird, but this relatively small investment ensures that the bird has at least some nourishment.)

How To Offer Food & Water

You can get away with sprinkling some food across the counter top, but water is a different story. Check your shelf for a shallow dish, or even a saucer should work. If you have other pets, see if you have an extra crock-type bowl (thoroughly wash it before use!). Crock-type bowls are heavier and less likely to tip over, which can help if the bird tries to perch on its edge to eat or drink out of the bowl. Paper or Styrofoam cups, plates and bowls might be chewed up by the bird. Again, the bird might feel too timid to fly to the ground to eat or drink so try to offer food near where it is perched.

Other TipsPlace newspaper below the area where the bird is perching; otherwise you'll have to wipe up bird droppings. Don't assume that the bird will stay where you put it. It might fly onto the windowsill, the curtain rod or above the medicine cabinet. If the bird is bleeding or has obvious physical trauma, is unable to perch or is sitting fluffed up on the ground, contact a veterinarian immediately. (Be aware that birds typically hide signs of illness.) Try to keep the bird's area quiet and not stressful. Don't try to pet the bird if it leans back, flees from your hand, lunges or hisses at you; the bird might bite out of fear.

Found A Lost Pet Bird?Print out our postable "Found Bird" Flyer Contact your local animal shelter and veterinarian offices Post your find on online pet locator websites such as www.petfinder.com and www.911parrotalert.com