

Dodge The Bite!

A lunge is never just a lunge

By Sally Blanchard

A parrot's beak is a multi-purpose tool, and most of its uses are not based on aggression. However, biting is an all-too-common method of communication that a parrot resorts to, mostly when people are unaware of the bird's needs and behavioral cues.

The most unpredictable biting is the lunge bite. Some lunging behavior is innocent game playing and, even if the bird uses its beak, the lunge is not based on aggression. This game playing is particularly true of macaws.

What makes the lunge-and-bite different than just being bitten? It is certainly more of a surprise, and there seems to be more intent with aggressive lunging than there is when a bird just bites because it is trying to communicate that it is uncomfortable.

Why The Lunge?

I believe that a great deal of aggressive lunge biting has an instinctive defense component and is not simply a behavioral choice on the part of the bird. Because it is usually a complete surprise to the person, the lunge is almost impossible not to react to — and a dramatic response provides a dramatic reward to the lunging parrot. The worst response is anger or returned aggression. In most cases, an aggressive reaction creates more aggression from the parrot.

****For the full article, pick up the July issue of BIRD TALK****

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