

Birds USA Editor's Note

By Laura Doering

Why did I get a bird?" I find myself saying this from time to time ... like when I just finish cleaning the birds' cages. As soon as I turn to admire my work, Ollie, my nanday conure, dunks his head in his food bowl and scatters the food around — his way of showing his gratitude. Then there's Gracie, my cockatiel (Gracie is a he). He loves nothing better than to fly above the little door overhang and poop on my towel just when we finish shower time. It's moments like these that make me think that perhaps my friend was wiser when choosing her lap dog that never makes a mess, or my neighbors, with their cat that is so low-maintenance, it only expects food in its bowl when it meows at the back door.

So why birds? Honestly, it's because not a day goes by when I am not fascinated and inspired by my flock. I have shared my life with cats, dogs, rabbits, fish and even a pet raccoon my brother brought home from the pet store years ago, yet there is something about birds that draws me in like no other. When I was 6 years old, I distinctly remember walking past the puppies and kitties, straight to the budgies. I was bedazzled not only by their vibrant blue and green colors (back then, there wasn't an assortment of color mutations), but by their antics, as well. They were chattering away in a language all their own, and they were as busy as preschoolers let loose on a playground. I wanted in on their little world.

I love hearing my birds' excited contact calls as soon as my feet hit the wood floor in the morning and their welcome-home calls before I get out of my car. I cherish the fact that a creature the size of my hand has enough trust in me to let me gently groom his pin feathers, and then he returns the favor by giving me a "birdie manicure."

Those of us who share our lives with feathered companions know the excitement when our birds try a new food, and we can't help but laugh when our birds "talk back to us" — even if it's in a language all their own.