

PARAKEETS™

Celebrating The World's Favorite Parakeet

3 | Editor's Note: King Of The World

My budgie, Kistler, ruled over me and my two cockatiels even though she was smaller than all of us. A bright blue and white, she would catch your eye immediately upon entering the room. She loved to do acrobatics on her swing, often doing somersaults so many times in a row I would lose count. And I loved it when she fought with her toys. She would make that sound that only budgies make and would charge whichever toy had displeased her with the passion of Don Quixote charging his windmills. She was a happy, spunky, wonderful pet, and I still miss her. She was bigger than life.

Why do budgie owners love their pets so much? For one thing, budgies can entertain you for hours. These energetic little clowns are always on the go. They come in so many different colors, it is hard to choose which is the most beautiful. And with training, some budgies will talk. I guarantee you will never forget the first time you hear a budgie's little voice.

With their big personality and small size, budgies have become the most popular and widely kept pet bird in the world. That's why we created this beautiful, fact-filled magazine solely about budgies for the budgie owner. Because a budgie is more than just a pretty bird — it's king of the world. —Melissa L. Kauffman

4 | Bringing Home Budgie

Prepare your home and yourself for the feathered years ahead

By Penny J. Corbett

The best food, care and intentions cannot make an old bird younger or a weak bird stronger. When you are ready to purchase your budgie, visit only sources that you trust and that are willing and able to offer guidance when needed. A bargain is not a bargain if you end up with a pet that is not healthy.

The right source will help you select the right baby. If the seller has tame chicks, he or she most likely will know the birds' individual personalities. Budgie dispositions range from sweet to mischievous to sensitive or stubborn. Baby budgies are as individual as people, and each potential owner will have a different ideal personality. Look for a good-quality budgie from a knowledgeable supplier with a good reputation.

Setting Up House

Budgies require more care than simply cleaning the cage and adding food and water. With the addition of a budgie to the household comes the responsibility for the care and well-being of a pet. Although budgies are intelligent birds, they cannot clean and disinfect their cages or prepare their own dinners. You must provide a clean cage, nourishing food and a safe environment.

14 | Budgie Q&A

Quick answers for common questions

By Sally Blanchard

Budgies might be small in stature, but that doesn't mean less complex in terms of understanding their many behaviors.

Q: I recently adopted a new budgie and I fell in love immediately. I'm very excited because he's finally getting on my finger. For the past couple of days he's been acting very unusual. He moves his head/neck rapidly back and forth and opens his beak up wide. He almost acts like something is stuck in his throat.

Often, during this behavior, he has a loud screaming/singing sound that I've never heard before. He hasn't been fluffed up or acting tired, but he does seem to be shaking a little bit while this behavior is going on or in between the actions. He's eating fine and he doesn't do this action all day, but here and there. He also rubs his beak on his wooden perches. I don't know if that is related to the other behaviors, although I read that it could be a common mating behavior? Could he have mites or something like that?

A: Budgies are the smaller members of the parrot family and share many similar behaviors with the big birds. Your

description sounds a lot like typical courtship behavior. The fact that your budgie will now step on your hand means that he has established a stronger bond with you than before. This certainly can create some of the behaviors that you mention.

20 | Why Does My Budgie Do That?!

Budgies display some baffling behaviors — and some are as natural as, well, the birds and the bees.

By Elizabeth Anderson

If you're a first-time bird owner and just brought home your new budgie, you might wonder what sort of behavior your new bird might demonstrate and what falls under "normal." As with people, "normal" behavior can vary, of course.

"This depends on the age of the budgie, whether the bird was hand-raised or parent-raised and its experiences with humans so far in its life," said Ohio's Chrys Meatyard, who has raised budgies for 18 years and is a bird expert at www.allexperts.com. "Untamed young budgies will be flighty, scared of humans, unfriendly and may be nippy." Tame, young budgies seem to maintain their levels of energy and friendliness with humans, Meatyard added. (If your budgie is not tame, see Page 76 for taming and training tips.)

"The first two weeks at home is the most stressful time," said Greg Burkett, DVM, Dip. ABVP. "The first couple of days, your bird may not eat. This is dangerous and you need to watch him closely during this time. If he does not eat by Day 2, you need to contact your avian veterinarian."

As your budgie adjusts to new people and surroundings, you'll see some additional changes. If tame, your budgie may become more active, more vocal and more interested in its surroundings and people. "After a month or so of being in the new home, a budgie will begin to feel comfortable and may go through a biting phase that usually lasts only a week or two," said Burkett, who is an adjunct professor for the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine and owns a avian specialty practice in Durham, N.C.

28 | The 10 Ps Of Teaching Your Budgie To Talk

Follow these easy steps and turn your budgie into a top talker

By Stephanie Logue

"Pretty bird," I coaxed, for what seemed like the thousandth time. Day after day, I repeated those words. I was sure the people in the apartment above me thought I was losing it. But when my young budgie started to gibber that phrase a few weeks later, I was convinced my efforts were all worthwhile.

Anyone who has owned a talking bird knows how much fun it is to have a pet say the words you teach. I have owned three species of hookbills and, although they were all good talkers, the budgies learned the fastest and talked the most. My first budgie, Buddy, sadly lived only two years — but in that short time he amassed a 225-word vocabulary.

All budgies have the ability to talk, but getting them to speak and maintain an extensive vocabulary depends on how much time and effort you are willing to give. Many factors contribute to successfully teaching birds to talk. Based on these factors, I have created 10 steps. Each step begins with the letter "P" to help you remember the important points that, hopefully, will have your budgie talking in no time.

Purchasing

Know a bit about your bird's background, its exact age (we celebrate birthdays, of course!) and whether it is male or female (most breeders can distinguish males from females at a very young age). Although I am aware of females that talk well, males are more known for their talking ability.

In my experience, it is easier to teach a very young bird to talk. Our first budgie was only 6 weeks old when we got him, and he spoke his first words within a month.

36 | Lose The Fat

Good nutrition is the foundation of your bird's health

By Nikki Moustaki

How many times have you heard someone say, "You are what you eat"? Indeed, it's an old saying, but in this health-conscious era, it's one that still holds meaning. While good nutrition is an important adage for humans to heed, it is perhaps even more important for budgies. With birds, every meal is significant and should be as balanced and as healthy as possible.

The Basics: Seed & Pellets

Larry Nemetz, DVM, owner of the avian-only Bird Clinic in California, suggests starting your budgie with a good-quality seed, which consists of millet and hemp, as well as some canary and smaller seeds. "Small amounts of millet spray are good, too," he said. Nemetz cautioned against putting a newly purchased budgie on a strict pelleted diet, because most budgies generally are not weaned onto a pellet-based diet. "If you think the bird is eating and it's not, the bird can starve to death. Pellets are fine as part of a budgie's diet, and I treat pellets no differently than another food. As long as they have their seed, and they have been checked to make sure they're healthy before you try to switch them, switching to pellets is okay," said Nemetz.

44 | How Do You Groom A Budgie?

Learn what you should do with your bird's nails, wing feathers and beak
By Layne David Dicker

How do you groom a budgie?

The same way you groom a macaw, only with much smaller scissors.

Okay, so maybe that's not the most complete answer in the world, but, hey, if you want a specific answer, ask a specific question!

Fine. How's this: Should my budgie's flight feathers be trimmed?

This depends on whether the bird is a companion pet or an aviary bird. If your budgie is not tame and you don't intend to tame it, then its flight feathers should not be trimmed. The bird should be kept in a spacious aviary and should have other birds to keep it company. Birds kept in this situation are, for obvious reasons, called aviary birds.

If the bird will be taken out of the cage and handled, then its flight feathers must be trimmed. There is no middle ground on this issue. What follows are answers to some common questions related to budgies and grooming.

52 | The Wild Ones

Witness how your bird's Australian cousins really live
By Joseph M. Forshaw

The fast-flying nomads ranging widely across the vast, arid interior of Australia bear little resemblance to the household pets that are so popular throughout the world. On closer examination, you can see what enables these small parrots to thrive in a harsh environment have ensured successful domestication.

Budgerigars are native to mainland Australia, where they frequent a variety of scrublands, lightly timbered grasslands and open woodlands in arid or semiarid regions. At times they travel to farmlands or even the outskirts of towns with higher rainfall. Experiments show that in captivity they can survive for long periods without water, but in the wild they seldom venture far from water.

We are so familiar with the color variety of domesticated budgerigars that the color similarities of a wild flock has an element of surprise. It can be startling to see hundreds or thousands of budgerigars of the same green color. Also, the green is different — a brilliant, almost luminous tone quite unlike the color of a "normal green" budgie from the show bench.

62 | Health Or Consequences

Learn what common medical concerns affect budgies
By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, Dip ABVP — Avian Practice

The budgie is the best known of all parrots and has found its way to virtually every country in the world. This fascinating little parrot has well-deserved popularity thanks to its small size and big personality. As budgies owners, we must provide the best care possible to help our small feathered companions thrive in our homes. Here are some common conditions found in budgies and tips for keeping your bird on a healthy track.

Diet-Related Conditions

Budgies consume a primarily seed diet in the wild and seem to thrive on a seed-based diet as pets. However, pellets, sprouted seeds, fresh fruits, vegetables, pasta, whole-wheat bread and other healthy table foods are sound additions to

the budgie diet. A budgie that eats just seeds should have access to a cuttlebone or mineral block, and should receive supplemental vitamins (but not in the drinking water) as directed by your avian veterinarian.

74 | The Budgie Body

Can you identify all the parts of your bird?

Photos by Bonnie Jay and Faith A. Uridel

76 | Guide To Behavior

A happy and tame budgie is just a step away with these helpful behavior tips

By Mattie Sue Athan

Like their larger cousins, budgies are true parrots through and through. Almost any activity, action, or reaction seen in large hookbills are present in these active and intelligent little parrots. Budgies do everything faster than larger parrots. They grow up and age more quickly than a large parrot. In fact, budgies mature so quickly that you must pay attention to behavioral patterning during the time of rapid development (generally around 2 to 6 months old) and to accommodating play behaviors before the bird reaches sexual maturity. Any young parrot can become extremely emotionally dependent — and therefore demanding — although this tendency affects budgies less than larger birds.

Even talking is one of the things budgies do quickly. They are fabulous talkers but are known more for ease of acquiring words and for vocabulary size than for comprehension. A budgie's voice has a chattering quality. It sounds like the bird is speeding everything up. Unless the trainer speaks very slowly and distinctly, the words might be difficult to understand once the budgie adds its natural "budgie accent."

86 | Show Me The Budgie!

Get an insider's view of the world of exhibition budgerigars

By Jim Bertrand/Photos by Jim Marshall

Welcome to the world of exhibition budgerigars. This effort is intended for those who have little or no knowledge of this challenging, yet rewarding, hobby. Many past and current fanciers — I include myself in this group — began with a pet budgie and, from that beginning, discovered a surprisingly new way of looking at budgies.

Top breeders today will mostly agree that developing a line (stud) of winning exhibition budgerigars requires some scientific knowledge — particularly in genetics, health and nutrition— and a breeding program that incorporates detailed record keeping. However, coupled with this, the enthusiast must also develop (or have inherited) an "artistic eye" to recognize form and style when attempting to develop birds that closely represent a standard of perfection through breeding selections, .

A brief history of the development of the modern exhibition budgerigar reveals the extent to which our birds have evolved from the early stages of this hobby:

England can take credit for much of the groundwork in the developmental stages of the bird we see on the show bench today, although various color mutations have surfaced from breeding establishments around the globe. Indeed, this hobby enjoys worldwide interest. Most countries involved in exhibiting budgerigars have national societies that serve as an umbrella organization for local clubs. Among the main objectives of any organization is the active promotion, breeding and showing of our birds. Local clubs hold regional shows that are usually supported by the national society, which, in turn, hosts an annual event relying on support of affiliated regional clubs and members from all areas of the country.

92 | The Many Colors Of Budgies

Discover how so many color mutations developed from a simple green bird

Article & photos by Cyril Laubscher

A mutation is a genetic accident in which a gene or chromosome is altered at conception. The subject of genetics and how colors and varieties are produced in budgerigars is a fascinating subject in its own right. Mendel's "Theory of Inheritance" still forms the basis of genetics in budgerigars. Around 1920, Dr. H. Duncker and C. H. Cremer of Bremen, Germany, applied Mendel's theories to budgerigars, and these laws became universally accepted by the budgie fancy to predict the color characteristics of the offspring from any particular pairing.

Most birdkeepers simply want to breed a variety of interesting and attractive colors. All color mutations and varieties have a genetic background. The following is a simplified version of the inheritance characteristics of different chromosomes. The "mixing" of genes is not straightforward. Genes can either be:

Dominant: The gene of a dominant character may be present as a single or double factor, determination of which is only possible by a trial pairing to a pure normal. The dominant mutation also can be “split” for a recessive mutation or possibly for other mutations as well.

100 | All In The Family
Make your budgie part of the family dynamic
By Sue Anderson

Most people I know who have larger parrots started out with a budgie, usually when they were a child. I did. My first budgie was named Cheep Cheep, and I got him when I was 8 years old. After Cheep Cheep, there was Cuddles. Cuddles was blue and, like many young budgies, was cuddly when he was a baby. I worked with him constantly, and he was very tame and talked a lot.

Cuddles joined us for all meals and ate bits and pieces of everything from my plate. He had seed and water in his cage all the time and, with the additional table food, had a pretty balanced diet. This was during the 1950s and early '60s, and not nearly as much was known about the nutritional requirements of birds.

In high school, I took French and decided that Cuddles should learn it, too. His longest phrase was from *Le Petit Prince* (The Little Prince). Cuddles said “Bonjour. Desseins-moi un mouton,” which means “Good day. Draw me a sheep.” Of course, Cuddles got some of the words mixed in with his large vocabulary, so he said things like “ Bonjour, pretty birdie mouton,” “remarkable bonjour,” and every other variation he could think of.

It was my job to take care of Cuddles, and I did it reasonably well — although I’m sure my mother stepped in and did a few feedings and water changes when necessary.

My positive experience with Cuddles is perhaps why I continued to keep budgies as an adult. When my daughter was growing up, we had two budgies that we remember with great fondness: Babe and Freebie. Babe was feisty and totally devoted to us. He followed us all over the house, said a few words and bravely sat on anything we put him on. He had no fear.

102 | Budgies From The Beginning
Here’s a historical look at the development of the world’s most popular pet bird
By Eric Peake

The budgie, also known by many in the United States as the parakeet, is without a doubt the most popular pet in the world. In the United Kingdom alone, there are an estimated 16 million budgies. Since the budgie’s introduction into the western world, it has increasingly become one of our favorite pet companions.

Originating in Australia, the wild budgerigar is a normal light-green bird found in flocks of thousands. The name “budgerigar” originates from the Aboriginal word *betchegara*, which means food. Other names for this bird include shell parakeet (due to the undulated markings on its wings), zebra parakeet (due to the markings on the bird’s head and shoulders) and, more commonly, grass parakeet. This is because of its staple diet of seeding grasses and similar vegetation.

THE FIRST PET BUDGIES

The normal light-green wild budgie was introduced into Europe around 1840 as a pet. It wasn’t until later that they found their way into exhibitions and bird shows. The wild budgie is a small, thin, agile bird. Over the years, fanciers have developed this species into today’s modern exhibition bird, which is larger and much bolder in appearance. When introduced into the United States, the budgie was commonly known as a parakeet and was a pet bird.

In the United Kingdom, the Budgerigar Society, which caters to exhibition budgerigars, was formed in 1925. Later in the United States, a similar society was founded: the American Budgerigar Society. The function of these societies has always been to encourage the breeding and exhibiting of these popular birds.

108 | Let’s Play
Entertain your budgie while keeping it safe
By Susan Chamberlain

Budgies are a gregarious bunch. In nature, they live in colonies, busily chattering among themselves as they flit about their

daily activities. Pet budgies behave similarly, although within much smaller boundaries. When kept in single or multiple pairs, the birds bond to one another and generally thrive within their own social circle. Budgies, unless regularly handled and integrated into family life, tend to prefer other birds to human company. A single budgie, however, will often bond quite closely to its owner. Whether you have one bird or delight in caring for a small flock, you can enrich a budgie's life and stimulate its intelligence with toys, personal attention, a room with a view and a vitalizing environment.

"I don't amuse him. He amuses me!" was the most popular answer I got when I asked budgie owners how they amuse and entertain their birds. Bonnie Boy, a 3-year-old budgie that lives with Dominican nun Sister Mary Margaret in New York, captivates convent residents with his extensive vocabulary and playful antics. Obtained as a hand-raised youngster, Bonnie Boy spends most of his day at liberty, under supervision, in Sister Mary Margaret's spacious room. "Did you say God bless you today?" he asks in a little electronic sounding voice. "Thank you, St. Francis; chatterbox; No kiss for me today; You are precious..." he goes on and on, even mimicking the inflection of his owner's voice.

When Bonnie Boy isn't entertaining visitors, Sister Mary Margaret gives him lots of attention, and even takes him on out-of-town trips to visit relatives. The bird's favorite playthings include a mirrored lantern toy and a plastic St. Francis medal attached to the outside of his cage. He enjoys bath time and is attracted to the mirror on the bottom of his little tub. Bonnie loves to listen to tapes of Celtic music, chirping right along with the melodies. His cage, situated on a wide windowsill, gives him a bird's-eye view of the convent's meadow-like grounds.

116 | Treats Your Budgie Will Love
Change up your budgie's diet with these recipes
Compiled By Crystal Apilado

Do you want to add some healthy flair to your budgie's diet? Offer your bird a delicious treat by trying out some of these recipes.

120 | Budgie Photo Celebration

124 | Budgie Club Directory
Join a Budgie club today!