

COCKATIELS™

Meet the cockatiel, your next best friend

3 | Editor's Note: The Tao Of 'Tiel

This magazine is filled with the latest information on how to keep and care for your pet cockatiel. I would like to take a moment to talk not about what you can do for your cockatiel, but what your cockatiel can do for you.

I've lived with my two cockatiels for around 15 years. They have done so much for me in that time. I have two males, so I haven't received the sweet affection and companionship that a typical female cockatiel would have to offer — but rather the affection a king would bestow to one of his subjects. My cockatiels rule their domain, and they know it.

4 | Homeward Bound

From perches to toys, what you need to turn cockatiel's cage into a home.
By Elizabeth Anderson

When you first moved into your new home, you knew you'd need furniture and some home entertainment. And you probably came up with a cleaning schedule to keep things tidy.

Your cockatiel has the same needs. Granted, your cockatiel doesn't need a living room set and cable TV, but there are things your new friend absolutely does need to stay entertained, healthy and safe.

Defining The Cage

The first decision to make, of course, is to decide what type of cage to get for your bird. In effect, you are your bird's real estate agent, and your bird depends on you to make a decision in its best interest. Your "commission" is knowing that you are providing a great environment for your cockatiel because it will likely spend many hours at a time in its cage.

You have many choices when it comes to cages — from size to material to accessibility. Some will prove to be a better home for a cockatiel than others.

12 | Why Does My 'Tiel ...

Is your cockatiel normal? Find out here!
By Sally Blanchard

Cockatiels might be small in stature but that doesn't mean less complex in terms of understanding their many behaviors. In fact, cockatiels display some of the most complex of all pet parrot behaviors.

20 | Frisky Business

Know the common signs of mating behavior and what to do about it.
By Anastasia Thrift

Choosing the ideal 'tiel can seem tough, but knowing what to expect from your male, female or any multiple birds will make it easier. Expert opinion splits on whether adopting a male or female makes much of a difference. This comes as good news, in some respects, because juveniles won't give away their identity easily.

"Unless the bird is DNA-sexed or surgically sexed, one cannot tell the sex of an immature cockatiel," said Dr. Larry Nemetz, owner of the B.I.R.D. Clinic in Southern California. "One can guess based on behavior, but I have found in my experience over 20 years that even said 'experts' are wrong more than they are right."

Some physical attributes begin to characterize males and females after 8 or 9 months of age.

28 | Are You Talking To Me?
Get your cockatiel to vocalize.
By Sue Anderson

Whenever I tell someone that I have a bird, the first question I am asked is “Does it talk?” Of course, they are really asking if the bird speaks in a language that people have taught it and if it can understand what it says.

Cockatiels, at least the males, can talk. While their vocabulary might be smaller than a budgie’s and their clarity less than that of an African grey, male ’tiels can speak English — but not all of them do.

What about females? I don’t know of any female cockatiels that talk. I have heard rumors from other people about talking females, but actually tracking one down has been elusive.

34 | Food, Water & Beyond
Answers to common and no-so-common nutrition questions.
By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, Dip. ABVP – Avian Pactice

Q: Can I share my food with my cockatiel?

A: Many ’tiels really enjoy sharing mealtime with their human stewards. This shared time can also help encourage picky birds to sample new, healthy foods. It is kind of like the “king’s taster” theory. If your cockatiel sees you eating a new or suspicious food item without dire consequences, then just maybe it will be OK for it to nibble the same tidbit of food.

However, we do not always choose healthy items to share with our birds, so it is better to be prepared and have good food items available to share at mealtime.

42 | The Scoop On Cereal
Is your favorite breakfast cereal safe for your cockatiel?
By Susan Chamberlain

Sharing meals with your pet bird is one of the pleasures of the avian lifestyle. Many companion birds even enjoy a special place at the table, especially at breakfast time. And one breakfast item in particular is loved by humans and birds alike — cereal.

44 | Let’s Play!
Play makes a cockatiel happy, healthy and wise.
By Mattie Sue Athan

Note: The word “play” is referenced here to mean engaging in activities that are rewarding simply for the joy of doing them. However, appropriate play behaviors are significant in the life of a pet cockatiel. In addition to reinforcing the individual’s sense of well-being, play behaviors fill the days with activities that neither create nor reinforce unwanted consequences.

Cockatiels have adjusted amazingly well to indoor life. Given good nutrition, adequate light, space and perches, cockatiels typically find innovative ways to entertain themselves. Naturally, well-accommodated ’tiels are busier and appear happier.

In a flock situation, presuming the birds are fed in the early morning, observing a healthy non-breeding flock of 30 or 40 cockatiels midday, we would see birds engaged in numerous diverse activities, including napping. The flock is sheltered from life-threatening challenges encountered by wild flocks — food is provided in a bowl, so there’s no need to forage. There will be much singing, swinging, bopping, preening and romancing. These play behaviors develop naturally when accommodated.

52 | His Health Is In Your Hands
Knowledge is power when it comes to your cockatiel’s health.
By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, Dip. ABVP – Avian Pactice

I remember meeting and examining my first cockatiel when I was still in vet school. At that time, in the late 1970s, cockatiels were still somewhat of a novelty, not nearly as common as they are today. During this time, the budgerigar (“parakeet”) was by far the most popular pet psittacine, and I had a cute green budgie named Mensa myself. I had never

seen a cockatiel, other than in photographs, so I was dazzled by the gray bird with the expressive crest and bright yellow and orange blotches on his face that a senior vet student brought in for a class demonstration. It wasn't long before I sought out a breeder and put a deposit down on a lutino cockatiel for myself.

The cockatiel is a lot of bird in a very small package. For the novice and experienced bird owner alike, the cockatiel (scientific name: *Nymphicus hollandicus*), is a great addition to any household. They are not very pricey and, with all the different color mutations available, most everyone is likely to find one that tickles their fancy.

60 | Good Grooming

Know where to groom, what to groom and how to groom.

By Elizabeth Kamaka

Grooming is an important area of health care for your pet cockatiel. It can be as simple as occasionally bathing your bird, or it can include routine nail and wing feather trims. In this article, grooming implies nail trimming and trimming the wing feathers. Both are important not only for a nice appearance but also for your bird's safety.

Nails that are too long can get caught in fabric or toys and tear. Torn nails bleed, or worse — bones can fracture if the bird struggles to free itself from being tangled. Wing feathers that aren't trimmed can allow your bird to fly into trouble, literally. Both procedures can be safely done by you at home — after a qualified veterinarian or bird groomer has shown you how to properly do these procedures.

What You'll Need

Let's start with the necessary equipment. Fingernail clippers give good control while clipping nails. Scissors with a notch (sold as cat nail clippers) are great for trimming wing feathers. Styptic powder (Kwik Stop) is a must. In an emergency cornstarch or flour will work, but a styptic formula controls bleeding best.

68 | Totally 'Tiel

Find out what that hop, whistle and head bob really mean.

By Diane Grindol

Cockatiels do some of the weirdest things. However, cockatiels all across the country and around the world do some of the same weird things. So that would make their weird behavior normal...for a cockatiel. Cockatiel owners need to know what normal is so they can identify abnormal behavior. A change in a cockatiel's behavior or the appearance of an abnormal behavior can signal illness or dissatisfaction with recent changes in the household.

So here are some of the weird, but perfectly normal, behaviors your cockatiel might exhibit:

76 | Body Language 101

A cockatiel's body language is anything but subtle.

Photos by Carolyn A. McKeone

With their long crests, spunky personalities and expressive posturing, cockatiels don't need an extensive vocabulary to let you know exactly what they're thinking. Here are some common cockatiel postures that will help you read your bird.

80 | Cockatiel Anatomy

Learn to identify all the parts of your 'tiel.

Photos by Bonnie Jay & Carolyn A. McKeone

82 | See How They Live

These native Australians flock together for survival

By Joseph Forshaw

Cockatiels are common throughout much of the interior of mainland Australia, where they frequent most types of open, lightly-timbered country, including farmlands and parks or gardens in outback towns. They are attracted especially to river red gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* bordering permanent or seasonal watercourses, for suitable nesting hollows occur in these trees.

In some districts, they have benefited from widespread cultivation of cereal crops, and flocks can be seen foraging in stubble paddocks or picking up spilled grain along roadsides and at railroad sidings.

88 | All In The Family

See why cockatiels make such family-friendly pets.

By Nikki Moustaki

The average American family isn't so "average" anymore — today's family consists of a lot more than Mom, Dad and 2.5 kids. Today's household bustles with various creatures on two and four feet and, in many cases, two-footed family members also boast a body full of feathers. Birds today are very much an important part of the family — they eat dinner at the table with the rest of the gang, are taken outside on family outings and receive presents at holiday time. The cockatiel has enjoyed many years at the top of the popularity charts, and now it's reaping the rewards of family life as one of the more popular family pets. But how did the 'tiel become so admired?

92 | Scaredy Bird

These tips take the fright and flight out of your 'tiel's Top 10 scary experiences.

By Melissa Kauffman

Although some parrots are known for their fearlessness, cockatiels are not included in this group. 'Tiels seem to be well aware that they are the prey and everything else is the predator. Put that together with their incredible flight capacity — no matter the wing feather trim — and you can get a frightened flying bundle of feathers that circles your room until it smashes into a window or mirror. So what's a cockatiel owner to do? Know your bird, know what frightens it, and take steps to diminish or negate that fear. Here is a list compiled from BIRD TALK magazine readers on top things that scare their birds.

96 | 'Tiels & Other Pets

Find out which get along and which to watch out for.

By Laura Doering

Many of us who share our homes with birds also share it with other pets. Or perhaps you are considering welcoming a furred or scaled addition. But how feasible is it to mix a prey animal like a cockatiel with a predatory animal like a cat or dog? Will the feathers fly? Which pets mix best with cockatiels? Here are some tips to help you keep the peace in your home.

100 | The Colorful Side of Cockatiels

Meet the popular, the fancy and the rare.

By Linda S. Rubin

Cockatiel color mutations have been on the rise the past two decades, with aviculturists producing an increasing myriad of color combinations. Whether you are drawn to the bold and flashy appeal of a whiteface dominant silver or to the more subtle attraction of a subdued cinnamon pied, 'tiels today are more colorful than ever.

Normal Grey

The normal grey is the nominate color of the cockatiel in the wild (Note: The cockatiel's designation "normal grey" reflects its European classification, thus the European spelling of "grey.") It is gray throughout the body with white wing bars, orange cheek patches, and dark pigmented eyes, beak and feet.

112 | Clean Living

Make cage cleaning part of your regime.

Photos by Moses Galindo

There's no ifs, ands and buts about it — if you have a bird, add cage cleaning to your list of chores. Cockatiels tend to generate more dust and dander than other parrot species, so keeping the cage clean and tidy, not only helps maintain your bird's good health, it goes along with helping you keep your own house clean.

116 | 5 'Tiel Tested Treats

Treat your cockatiel to one of these nutritious and delicious recipes.

Compiled by Crystal Apilado

Cockatiels need a wide variety of foods to provide them with essential vitamins and nutrients — but that doesn't mean that the food you offer has to be dull. Try this sampling of recipes for fun and delicious treats your bird will love.

120 | Portrait Of A Cockatiel
Reader's celebrate life with 'tiels in this photo celebration.

124 | Cockatiels Resource Directory
Join a cockatiel club today!