

Commemorative Coin Remembers Alex

The Alex Foundations releases 250 collector's coins in tribute to the Alex the African grey parrot.

By Rachael Brugger

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Courtesy Karla Acanthostega Zimonja

Alex the African grey parrot was a pioneering parrot in avian cognitive behavior (1976 to 2007).

Alex the African grey parrot and Dr. Irene Pepperberg will long be remembered as the parrot-human duo that contributed miles to the advancement of avian intelligence research. In the wake of the one-year anniversary of Alex's death, the Alex Foundation has released a collector's coin memorializing Alex and commemorating his work.

The non-monetary brass coin, designed by Jaimi Torok, the foundation's webmaster, embodies the essence of Alex's life. Etched into the silver plating on the front is a headshot of Alex, with a black beak and his signature red feather as the only added color. Torok said a memorial pin she created in September 2007, the month of Alex's death, inspired the image. The back of the coin reads, "You be good... I love you... See you Tomorrow," as suggested by Pepperberg to remember Alex's last words.

Courtesy JM Torok/The Alex Foundation

Front of commemorative coin with Alex's face and signature red feather.

Courtesy JM Torok/The Alex Foundation

Back of commemorative coin with Alex's last words to Dr. Irene Pepperberg.

Two-hundred-fifty coins about the size of a U.S. silver dollar are for sale on the "Alex Memorial Items" page of the Alex Foundation website until supplies run out.

"We already sold some low-numbered coins at an eBay Auction," said Arlene Levin-Rowe, the foundation's lab manager. "The response to them was overwhelming."

Each coin costs \$35 and patrons can purchase a presentation box and velvet bag for an additional \$10. All the proceeds will be used to further Pepperberg's research and the Alex Foundation, Levin-Rowe said.

There is the possibility of creating another coin for next year's memorial anniversary, Torok said. Other memorial items for sale on the Alex Foundation website include a sterling pendant, an Alex T-shirt and a last words necklace.