

## Jenday Conure Escapes From Home

**Parrot photo contest winner mourns loss of aviary friend.**

*By Rachael Brugger*

Posted: March 11, 2008, 2p.m. EST

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Chomper, a jenday conure, escaped from his suburban Chicago home in mid-January 2008.  
Courtesy Catherine Thistlewaite

Celebrations of a recent photo contest win have been dulled for Bobo, a Congo African grey.

In the wake of taking third place and runner-up positions in the Parrot Photo Contest sponsored by PBS Television's "Nature" series, Bobo's jenday conure friend, Chomper, came up missing. The 10-inch, green and orange parrot, was last seen being targeted by a hawk in the Arlington Heights/Buffalo Grove area of northwest Chicago by owner Catherine Thistlewaite in mid-January.

Chomper, trained for flight, would travel back and forth between the living room window and an outside tree, Thistlewaite said. However, Chomper was not properly trained for outside flight.

"We learned the hard way that if we were going to have her flighted, we should have trained her for outdoor flight," Thistlewaite said. "By not training her well, she was not trained to avoid predators. Therefore we are concerned that she did not handle it well."

Bobo, a typically cheerful bird, has taken the loss quite hard.

"We recently took down Chomper's sleeping cage, and Bobo went over to the cage and looked and stopped. She looked at the space where Chomper used to sit. She would look and look," Thistlewaite said. "You could tell she was a little concerned, and you could watch her expression and body language and you could tell it was sinking in."

In their open aviary, the Congo African grey and the jenday conure formed a tight kinship. Placed together when Bobo was 5 months and Chomper was a year, the two birds would preen each other and make conure calls to one another. [Click image to enlarge](#)

Bobo, noted for his conure poses, won third place in the Parrot Photo Contest sponsored by PBS Television's "Nature."  
Courtesy Catherine Thistlewaite

"Bobo thinks she is a conure," Thistlewaite said. "Now, she will constantly go on their favorite playgym and will call Chomper calls. It is really painful."

Thistlewaite does not know if Chomper was caught by the hawk or able to escape. Parrots often out-manuever hawks and can fly for miles. She and her husband are offering a reward equal to the price of a replacement bird for her return or information on her whereabouts, and a smaller reward for the recovery of her remains.

Chomper has green wings and tail and an orange head and breast. She is 10 inches long and weighs 105 grams. She can be identified by the leg band around her right leg. If found, the Thistlewaites will ask for the color and identification number of the band.

Although Bobo is still dealing with the loss, she has befriended other birds in the aviary, and the Thistlewaites are preparing to enter her in more contests. The "Nature" series contest allowed Bobo to show off her grey feathers and unique conure-like poses, but the Thistlewaites plan to work on taking flight photos.

"I think she will be ok," Thistlewaite said regarding Bobo's loss. "She is a well-adjusted bird and pretty happy."

Watch the video posted to aid in finding Chomper: