

## The Joys Of Being A Pet Bird Owner

**Although owning a pet bird can sometimes be a challenge, the happiness birds bring make it worthwhile.**

*By Terri Jones*

It's a Sunday morning — 7 AM. You had a fun time the night before and got in a little late. OK, a lot late. All you want to do is sleep in, snuggled under your covers. But you are a pet bird owner, and sleeping much past daybreak is a luxury you seldom get to enjoy.

Having a pet bird in your life is one contradiction after another. Why do we subject ourselves to scattered seeds, tossed pellets, projected poop, flying feathers and a coating of dander on everything? Why do intelligent human beings keep an animal that screams so loud it can be heard a mile away and sometimes bites the hand that feeds it?

Because there is little in the world to compare with having your pet cockatoo snuggled under your chin, just loving the fact that you are loving it. What could be more entertaining than sitting in your living room, listening to your African grey sing the theme song from every kid show on PBS? When your Amazon parrot calls, "Come here," and then whispers "I love you," how do you just not melt?

### Do You Have Time For A Pet Bird?

How you introduce your pet bird into your lifestyle is often critical to how well-adjusted your bird becomes in your home. Mattie Sue Athan, a renowned parrot behavior consultant and author, educates parrot owners on the importance of allowing their pet bird the opportunity to develop independence. "Most people can tolerate, even appreciate, a bird that doesn't interact with humans, but it's almost impossible to live happily with a parrot that doesn't develop independent play."

Well-spent time with your bird and teaching it to play with toys helps each bird develop the ability to play independently. No person can spend all day with his or her pet bird; nearly every parrot will have to spend some time alone inside its cage.

Playing and interacting with your parrot is an important part of the human-avian bonding process. Interacting with your pet bird does not have to mean handling it. Talking to your bird as you pass its cage, saying "Hi," singing snippets of a song or reciting a poem are all ways to interact with your pet bird.

### A Mentor Is A Pet Bird's Owner's Best Friend

While you should rely on your avian veterinarian for medical information and advice, a dedicated pet bird owner makes it a point to become well educated about his or her bird. Joining a bird club brings a person into contact with other bird owners and enthusiasts who meet regularly, not only to socialize but also to share information and experience about their birds.

A subscription to a reliable avian periodical is another way to keep current on information. Noted bird behaviorists, veterinarians, bird breeders, hobbyists and naturalists are only a few of the experts who share their avian knowledge in monthly magazines. These publications are also an excellent resource to find bird clubs, marts and other events.

Owning a pet bird is a serious, long-term commitment that should not be made lightly. A person must consider beyond the talking ability or beauty of a bird's plumage to the habits of the species, noise level, the expense and the time commitment the bird will require.