

Before You Travel

Prepare your bird, before you take flight

By Melissa Kauffman

1. Get your suitcase out and place it where your pet birds can see it. You can even pack in front of them, explaining to them that you will be leaving soon. The unusual action and your tone can convey to them that something not in their typical daily routine will occur.
2. If your birds will be boarded or staying at someone else's home, get out their travel carrier and put it near their cage a day or two beforehand. Put some treats inside the cage/carrier and let them explore it and get used to it.
3. Prepare an emergency contact list that has the name of your avian veterinarian, his or her phone number and directions to the clinic, include after hours emergency information. Also put any medical conditions and medications that your bird needs currently, plus instructions if necessary.
4. Create a care sheet that includes the bird's name, species, personality quirks, likes and dislikes, feeding, water and house cleaning instructions.
5. To make things easy for you pet sitter, measure out your bird's hard food items (seed/pellets) in little baggies for each day. This makes feeding easier and more accurate for the pet sitter.
6. Groom your bird a few days before you leave. Make sure toenail tips are clipped, wing feathers trimmed and feathers are showered.
7. Right before you leave, use avian behaviorist Chris Davis' finger counting method: Tell your bird(s) that you are leaving (going bye-bye) for this many days and indicate the days by holding up fingers and counting them off. Whether or not you believe your bird understands, after you travel a few times, your bird will recognize this as another indication that you are leaving.