EPPA Gazette

Newsletter of the Edmonton Pet Parrot Association April-June 2006

In This Issue:

Above: This is Lucy, the Green-cheek Conure. She belongs to Megan G and family.

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Meetings:

Meetings are the last Wednesday of every month except December, June, & July.

Above: Skylar, the medium Sulphur-crested Cockatoo at the Parrots of the World show. He belongs to Nancy N and Don W.

Club News

March's Meeting: At March's meeting, we watched a video on parrot behavior, and the parrot of the month was Shilo the Timneh African grey, with an appearance by Dukie the Alexandrine parakeet. Shilo & Dukie belong to Al and Donna H.

Left: Shilo, the Timneh African Grey.

Below: Mason, the Gold-capped Conure.

April's Meeting: At April's meeting, we had a guest presentation by Ruth from Pink Solution (cleaning product) about bird safe cleaning. The parrots of the month were two baby Greenwing Macaws, bred by Louise and David W.

May's Meeting: At May's meeting, we had a presentation from Jason, a representative from Hagen, and the parrot of the month was Mason, the Gold-capped Conure, who belongs to Pete S. Several toys, a Caique statue, and lots of food samples were donated by Hagen, which will be used for future raffles.

Thank you to Donna & Al, Louise and David, & Pete for bringing their parrots to meetings, Carol for arranging presentations, Ed & Lori D, and Nancy for bringing snacks and Jason & Ruth for their guest presentations!

Muttart Show: We had our annual "Parrots of the World" show on May 28th, and it went very well! I would like to offer a big Thank You! to everyone who helped out and brought their parrots. We had a lot of parrots, representing a huge variety of species from parrotlets to macaws.

We focused on education this year, as Pete S. received several donated large cardboard display boards from Staples for members to make educational displays with. We had about nine or ten displays made. They were great and added a lot to our show. Thank you to everyone who helped out with this!

We made about $500 from a silent auction and a photo booth. I would like to acknowledge the following businesses and individuals for donating items to the silent auction:

PJ's Pets: Several locations: 3803 Calgary Trail; Londonderry Mall; Kingsway Garden Mall; West Edmonton Mall. Donations – Several concrete perches, plus free parrot wing and nail trims.

Baker's Feed and Seed: 9784-51 Ave. Donation: Large bags of RoudyBush parrot food.

Hagen:http://www.hagen.com/hari/welcome.html Donation: Hawk-head parrot statue, several issues of Parrot Life magazine and bird food samples to hand out.

Parrotdise Perch: http://www.parrotdiseperch.com/parrot/index.php Donation: Parrot cookbook (about making food for your parrot).

Cross Stitch by Shacal – Parrot Cross-Stitch. This item was hand-made. Anyone interested in a customized cross-stitch can contact Shandra at (780) 475-6723.

Nancy N. and Don W. – EPPA members. Cockatoo paintings and several toys.

Janie R – EPPA member. Homemade glass spoon and saucer.

Edmonton Parrot Rescue: Sleeping bag.

Mary-Ellen G. & Family: EPPA members. Large parrot cage.

G & E Pharmacy (7326 82 Avenue NW) also donated $75.00 to the club.

Thanks again to everyone who contributed to making this a great show!

Welcome to New Members:

We have had several new members join the club this year. I would like to welcome them to the club!

Michell and Kahn F.
Richard K.
Kenna W.
Brian and Irene G.
Anne and George K.
Richard P.
Jeff & Dana & Family
Jody G.
Sue T.
Jeff P & Heather M.

Above: Baby Greenwing Macaws, at 2.5 months old. They were parrots of the month in April, when they were four months old. **Below left:** Smudge the Indian ringneck parakeet, who belongs to Megan G. and family.

June Picnic: Instead of a meeting, we have a picnic at the start of June. This year it will be at Petra's place (1760 - 49 A Street NW) on June 11th. We will also be presenting the Fisher award at the club, which is given to the member (non executive) who has contributed to the club the most in the past year.

July and August: We do not have a meeting during July and our August meeting will be on Wednesday, August 30th at the Muttart Conservatory. The parrot of the month and activity will be announced on the website later on.

Website: Don't forget to check out our website at http://eppa.ca To have your parrot's picture put up on the website, please Email a copy to Louise. If you also have any other suggestions for the club, or book/video recommendations for the library, do not hesitate to contact anyone on the executive!

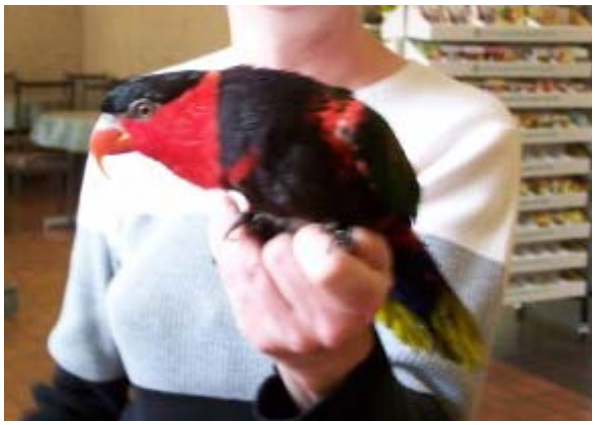
Photographs: Muttart Show

(Note: more can be found in the "Events Section of our website at http://eppa.ca)

Švrćica the African Red-belly Parrot. He belongs to Marijana B.

Ara (Blue and Gold Macaw) and Cricket (Greenwing Macaw). They belong to Alex and Gloria M.

White-bellied Caique, who belongs to Carol M.



Echo, the Black-capped Lory, who belongs to Petra K.

Left: Belle, the Umbrella Cockatoo, who belongs to Alice B.

Ripley, the Red-lored Amazon, who belongs to Jessie and Quentin.

An Introduction to the Lineolated Parakeet

By: Jessie Zgurski

(Note: This is an article I wrote for the magazine "*Companion Parrot Quarterly*"

http://www.companionparrot.com)

Why I Chose Lineolated Parakeets

The lineolated parakeet, *Bolborhynchus lineola,* is a small parrot species that is native to Central and South America, and is the species that introduced me to the joys of parrot keeping. I've always been an animal lover, and have lived with a variety of animals throughout my life, including dogs, reptiles, fish, cats, rodents, and ferrets. However, until a couple years ago, I had never owned a bird, or even had much experience with them. I had started to read a bit about parrots, and found them absolutely fascinating, as I had no idea that they were so intelligent and complex. I began to consider getting a parrot, but not wanting to acquire an animal that I could not properly care for, I bought a few parrot books, and joined a parrot club to be sure that I really wanted to commit myself to parrot-ownership. When I finally decided it was time for me to add a parrot to my family, I began to look for a gentle, small parrot, and finally decided upon the lineolated parakeet ("linnie"). I chose a linnie as my first bird because I read that they are generally quiet, non-aggressive, and playful. Perfect! I needed a quiet bird because I lived in a duplex, and I wanted a gentle bird because I found birds with large beaks somewhat intimidating (although this is no longer the case). I soon obtained my little bird, a cobalt-colored female I named Garnet, from a local breeder, and I adopted a second green linnie, Emerald, a year later from a pet store. These little birds are similar in size to many other popular miniature parrots such as peach-face lovebirds and budgies. However, they are not nearly as common as these species, and I'm not too sure why this is, as linnies can make wonderful pets for a bird lover. This article is intended to introduce the reader to these loveable little parrots.

Physical Description

Personally, I think linnies are very attractive, cute little birds. They are small parrots and average about 16 centimeters (six inches) in length. This makes then only slightly longer than a lovebird. Wild linnies are a pretty emerald green with black-tipped feathers on the upper body and wings, which give them a "barred" appearance. They also have a bluish tinge on the forehead, and although they are referred to as "parakeets", they actually have very short, fan-like tails. The term "parakeet" is usually reserved for small or medium birds with long tails. Adult linnies have very striking dark-brown eyes, pink legs and horn-coloured bills. Senior birds often have a small patch of yellow feathers on the forehead, and juvenile birds are a lighter green and have a more extensive bluish tinge on the head than the adults. Like the majority of parrot species, the males and females look alike and are quite difficult to tell apart by eye. The females, on average, tend to be slightly smaller than the males and they also have narrower black margins on the rump, lesser wing coverts, and the tail. However, this is not always the case, so many owners and breeders choose to have their birds DNA-sexed

As is the case with many of the small parrots, several color mutations have appeared in captive linnies and aviculturalists have perpetuated these. The most common of these is the blue series of mutations, which include sky-blue (turquoise), cobalt, and mauve (slate). There are also dark green and olive green linnies that are darker than the wild-type ones. Lutino (yellow) and cremino (cream-coloured) linnies are also available. Other colors, such as gold and silver, have been bred in Europe, and there are also cinnamon and pied linnies, but these are currently quite rare.

Linnies in the Wild

There are two subspecies of lineolated parakeet. The first is *Bolborhynchus lineola lineola*, which occurs from southern Mexico to western Panama. The second is *Bolborhynchus lineola tigrinus*, which is also called the barred parakeet. The barred parakeet is a darker green and has thicker black markings on its wings than the lineolated parakeet. The barred parakeet occurs in northwest South America in northwest Venezuela and the Andes of Colombia and Peru.

These little parrots tend to prefer living in the canopies of dense, montane rainforests and cloud forests. They breed at elevations of 1500 meters or higher and, like most parrots, prefer to raise their chicks in a hollow tree trunk or limb. In the winter after the breeding season, linnies often descend to lowland forests. During this season, many will forage in partly cleared areas, cultivated areas and savannahs.

Wild linnies tend to occur in small flocks of up to 20 individuals, although flocks of up to 100 have been seen. Beyond the information I've presented here, which is taken from *Parrots of the World*, by Joseph M. Forshaw, very little is known about the habits of these little parrots in the wild. Since they are small, like to live high in forest canopies, and are very well camouflaged in their surroundings, they are very difficult to observe in nature. Additionally, they are not nearly as noisy as other parrots, which makes them difficult to spot. They are most often seen while in flight, because they often chirp while they fly, which may attract a birdwatcher's attention.

Wonderful Companions!

Garnet and Emerald have been excellent additions to my family, which also includes a six-year old maroon bellied conure named Lucy and a red-lored Amazon named Ripley. Garnet and Emerald are rather quiet birds, although this is not to say that they are completely silent. Each morning, they chirp when they feel it's time for me to get up, or when the other birds vocalize. Garnet often produces a cute twittering noise while climbing on her ropes and play gym. Since linnies do not produce a high-volume call, they are excellent apartment birds. I actually find Garnet and Emerald's chirping and singing to be quite pleasant. To me, they sound more like songbirds such as canaries than parrots.

Many lineolated parakeets do learn to speak a few words or phrases, and they often learn to do so at a very young age. I've heard that male linnies are more likely to learn to speak than the females, but females are often capable mimicking various sounds as well. Garnet does not speak at all, but she has learned to imitate a kissy-noise that Lucy can also make. She also imitates Lucy's loud calls, but she does this in a much quieter tone. I also keep a trio of degus (small brown rodents related to the chinchilla) in the same room where Garnet's cage is located, and I swear she has learned to copy the warbling noises and beeps that the degus make. Emerald doesn't speak or mimic anything yet.

Linnies can make great family birds. Many will have a favorite human, but if handled by a number of people, most will be friendly with all family members and won't become "one-person birds." Linnies kept in pairs can even remain tame with humans if they are handled daily. Their calm, gentle nature

makes them appropriate for families with children, if the children know to handle the bird gently and are supervised while doing so.

Linnies (generally speaking!) tend to be peaceful, non-aggressive birds. Plenty of gentle handling of a young bird helps ensure that it will become a friendly, good-tempered adult. For the most part linnies are such pacifists that they can often be kept in large, mixed aviaries with other small, non-aggressive finch or parrot species such as society finches or Bourke's parakeets. Karin Banerd, in an online article, reports that her linnies cohabit easily with finches, Australian grass parakeets, and canaries. Linnies can of course also be kept in a large colony with other linnies. They should never be kept in an aviary with species that tend to be aggressive towards other birds, such as parrotlets or lovebirds. When keeping them in a home with other larger parrot species, it is important to be sure that the other birds do not "bully" the linnie. So far, my linnies coexist well with Lucy and Ripley, but since Lucy and Ripley are territorial at times, I never leave them out together unsupervised, and I have provided each species with their own, separate play area. The two linnies get along very well with each other.

Caring for a Linnie

Most captive linnies live to be about 10-15 years of age with proper diet and care. Not much is known about the diet of wild lineolated parakeets, but like most parrots, they eat a variety of seeds, fruit, nuts, leaf buds, and blossoms. In captivity, linnies generally thrive on a varied diet as their wild cousins do. Garnet and Emerald eat high-quality pellets that I supplement with a variety of vegetables, fruits, grains (such as brown rice), cooked scrambled eggs, millet, and a seed mix. For the most part, linnies tend not to be picky birds, especially if they are weaned onto a varied diet. However, Garnet does have a few odd little quirks when it comes to food. I could not get her to eat red peppers or broccoli until I clipped them onto the side of her cage. She eats them happily when presented that way. I also convinced Garnet that the brown rice, bean and veggie mixture I make for the birds is good food by letting her see Lucy, who I got before Emerald, eat it. When Garnet saw Lucy eat the food, she decided to try it too. Since parrots are flock animals who often eat together in a group, it's often possible to convince them to try a new food by either eating it in front of them yourself or letting them see another bird eat it.

Linnies (like any bird) tend to appreciate having a large cage, or better yet, an aviary. These little birds often love to climb, so they need plenty of room in their cages for toys they can climb on. A cage needs to be large enough to house a few different types of toys, a few perches made from different materials, three dishes (one for pellets, one for soft food and one for water) and not appear crowded and still give the bird(s) plenty of room to move around in. However, the size of the gaps between the bars on the cage must be taken into consideration when choosing a cage, since these little parrots can easily get their heads stuck between widely-spaced cage bars. If this happens, the bird may panic and break its neck. Be sure the bars on the cage are close enough together (less than half of an inch) to prevent the linnie from getting its head stuck. Linnies are generally non-destructive in their cages or aviaries, although Garnet did once chew a small hole in a wall, and she loves to peel the bark off of clean elm branches.

If you end up with a cage that has the guillotine-style doors that slide up and down, be sure to seal them shut somehow. Garnet lost a toe when one of those slammed on her foot. My husband, Quentin, came home one day and found Garnet huddled on top of her cage looking quite unhappy, missing one of her back toes. She was in her cage when we left the house that morning, and all the cage doors were still shut. We found some blood at the bottom of one of the guillotine doors, and her missing toe was on the bottom of the cage. It seems Garnet was clever enough to figure out how to open that door, and it likely slammed on her toe on her way out. Poor Garnet! We rushed her to a veterinarian who cauterized her toe and supplied us with some antibiotics to give her so her toe would not become infected. Please check your cages to be sure there's no way your bird could be hurt in a similar way.

Companion linnies appreciate the opportunity to spend some time out of their cages daily, but since they are so small, they are prone to accidents, such as being hit by a door, or being stepped on. Always be aware of where your linnie is when he or she is outside the cage. Garnet and Emerald have a play gym outside their cage, and above it is a large "boing" that Garnet loves, and several ropes for them to climb on. A boing is a rope with wire inside that allows it to form a spiral. Garnet loves to climb to the top of her ropes and flap her wings like mad to make the rope swing. Her rope toys are not in her cage, since she will chew on them, and linnies can easily get their toes stuck in toys containing loose threads. Most linnies also love having a cloth tent to sleep in, and Garnet heads right for hers at bedtime each night. I check it frequently for loose threads she could get her toes caught in, and so far I have never found any. Some parrots may see a sleeping hut as a nesting area, and will therefore lays eggs in it or guard it. So far, this has not been a problem with Garnet.

Being rainforest birds, most linnies seem to enjoy showers or baths. Garnet and Emerald far prefer showers and will not enter a bird bath. I shower them with a spray bottle, and they love this! Both of them will hang upside-down and spread out their wings so their whole bodies gets wet.

Linnie Personality

Properly socialized linnies are generally very sweet, inquisitive, non-aggressive birds, although the odd one may become a bit nippy at maturity. However, Garnet has still never bitten me hard, and Emerald is very gentle. Linnies also tend to be a bit less bold and feisty than some other small parrot species like parrotlets and lovebirds. Garnet was a touch shy when I got her, and always prefers to walk away from people she's afraid of than bite them. She would always flee from me when I tried to hold her when I first got her, and she was also quite afraid to leave her cage. I really didn't want her to live in a cage her whole life, so I went to work to help her get over her fears. For the first week, I sat and read where she could see me, so she would get used to my presence. I have since convinced her that it is safe for her to stand on my hand by rewarding her with a bit of millet whenever she approached me. She was also served her favorite foods outside of her cage, so she came to realize that being outside of her secure cage isn't so bad.

I acquired Lucy a few months after I got Garnet, and her addition to the family seemed to benefit Garnet. Lucy is absolutely fearless, and Garnet came out of her shell quite a bit after seeing Lucy interact positively with me and play outside of her cage. I think she learned that it is safe to be

out of her cage by watching the Lucy enjoy time out of her cage. I suspect she learned it was safe to stand on my hand by watching Lucy as well. Young birds often learn a lot from watching their flock mates. Emerald is still shy as well, but he enjoys coming out of his cage if Garnet is with him.

I should also point out that Garnet and Emerald are somewhat atypical for linnies, being as shy as they are, because most are quite outgoing and easy to tame. The two other juvenile sky-blue linnies I met at Garnet's breeders were both very outgoing, as are most linnies. It was quite interesting to see the variation in the personalities of the different birds in the clutch. The babies were placed in a large cage in the breeder's living room where they would get used to things like dogs, the television, and other normal household things. They were also played with each day, so I think Garnet is just naturally shy.

Linnie Behavior

Linnies have quite a few quirky habits that set them apart from many other parrot species. The way linnies walk across horizontal perches is unusual and is often described as "primate-like." They walk with their feet facing inward, and will place one foot in front of the other to move along, instead of moving without crossing the feet over like other parrots. While walking, they tend to retain the ducked posture they often take while perching. Garnet and Emerald, like many other linnies, love to spend time hanging upside down. Linnies also adopt a very unusual posture when they sleep: they keep their feathers fluffed up, and their heads down, and they raise their tails upward. Linnies also have very expressive little tails: they fan them in and out when excited, startled or annoyed. Unlike parrotlets and most cockatiels, they use their feet to hold or manipulate objects. Matthew Vriends, in *The Parrotlet Handbook*, notes that they will spend time on the ground looking for seeds, and insects. This is fine for aviary birds, but be cautious about letting a pet linnie on the floor, as they are easily lost and/or injured.

An Overlooked Species in Aviculture

Interestingly, despite their sweet, gentle nature, linnies are not terribly popular yet, although I predict that they will become better known in the future. Currently, they are mentioned in only a few parrot books (such as the *Parrotlet Handbook*, by Matthew Vriends), but there several websites out there devoted to these parrots. I have found my linnies to be very enjoyable companions and I appreciate their sweet, gentle natures. I'm not sure I could have asked for nicer birds. If you love small birds and are looking for a quiet, and gentle, yet playful and loyal companion, a lineolated parakeet may just be for you.

References

Banerd, K. 2002. *The Lineolated Parakeet – A Real Charmer*. Online at http://www.lineo1.bravepages.com/testimony-karinbanerd.htm

Forshaw, J. M., and W. T. Cooper (illustrator). 1978. *Parrots of the World*. Lansdowne Editions, Melbourne, Australia.

Vriends, M. M. 1999. *The Parrotlet HandBook*. Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Hauppauge, New York, USA.

Note: Good websites on these parakeets can be found at:
http://www.katharinasittiche.de/en/

http://www.lineolated-parakeet.bravepages.com/

http://www.parrotchronicles.com/mayjune2003/lineolated.htm

http://www.compusmart.ab.ca/kbush/pletparakeetmain.htm

Ed. Note: I belong to the World Parrot Trust and in this month's "Psittascene," (their quarterly newsletter) there was a note from Dr. Susan Friedman that she encourages people to reprint her articles on parrot behavior. Here is one, taken from http://www.thegabrielfoundation.org/HTML/friedman.htm

Straight Talk about Parrot Behavior*

By: S.G. Friedman, Ph.D, Dept. of Psychology, Utah State University

Originally Presented at the StopPDD Conference, Nov 2004

Have you ever heard the expression, "It's like herdin' cats"? That describes some of the best days working on our internet list, Parrot Behavior Analysis Solutions (PBAS; www.yahoogroups.com). PBAS is not a chat group; it's a special interest work group dedicated to applying the scientific principles of behavior to living and learning with companion parrots. In light of the many preconceived and deeply-rooted notions about parrot behavior, not to mention behavior in general, maintaining this scientific focus is sometimes just like herdin' cats! Still, there isn't another crowd with whom I'd rather spend my Saturdays.

You may be thinking, "A science of behavior? Gee, isn't anything left to common sense anymore?" Unfortunately, the subject of companion parrot behavior has been left to so-called common sense too long and it has proven to be far more common then sensible. Common sense is often little more than a social record of folk wisdom, clichés and homilies about behavior. Common sense maintains the status quo so we continue to do what we know best rather than seeking out the best we can do. Our widespread acceptance of common sense information about parrot behavior has produced too many experts with too little expertise. As a result, caregivers are often trying desperately to follow completely conflicting advice -- sometimes found in the same book or magazine, or even in the very same article. Many of the problems people experience with parrots in their homes are either caused, or exacerbated, by this lack of basic scientific knowledge about learning and behavior.

Common sense tends to be inconsistent as a source of knowledge because, by definition, it is not grounded in scientific methods that aim for congruence of facts and theories. The scientific method is not a single set of rules; rather it is defined by three general principles, all of them essential to our quest to understand, predict and influence parrot behavior for successful companionship in our home. First, science employs methods of systematic observation of *measurable* phenomena. The current understanding of parrot behavior is plagued with vaguely defined labels and immeasurable concepts called hypothetical constructs, discussed further below. Second, science aims to produce publicly verifiable knowledge through *replication and peer review*. In the realm of parrot behavior, an "anything goes" attitude often prevails characterized by such statements as "Only you know what's best for your parrot." Too often disagreements about best practices are dismissed as merely political. This trivializes the urgent need for dialogue, education, and dissemination of replicable approaches. Third, science seeks explanations that are *testable*. Many of the assertions that characterize conventional wisdom about parrot behavior cannot be quantified and therefore cannot be tested. For example, do birds of a feather flock together or do opposites attract? Do we spare the rod and spoil the [parrot] or do we treat our parrots as we wish to be treated?

Recently, with parrot training curricula popping up like mushrooms on the internet, bad advice is just plain out of control. These ads are slick and the sellers convincing:

"TIRED OF THOSE PERNICIOUS PARROT PROBLEMS? For just $759.99 ($59.99 if you buy now) you too can learn to don a leather glove, drag your

struggling parrot out of its cage, and hold on to its feet until it learns to love you! Bandages are included so you can wear your scars proudly like the real experts!"

After all, common sense tells us that to know parrots is to be bitten by them. No? We need to snap out of it. Unfortunately science has a hard time competing with hype, and this is especially true with behavior science. As parrot caregivers we need to be critical thinkers skilled at evaluating knowledge claims and expert opinion; we need to resist the appeal of explanatory fictions, razzamatazz promises and feigned fixes; and we need to learn the basic principles of learning and behavior without the oversimplification that dilutes accuracy. Given the rapid rise in the sale and subsequent relinquishment of thousands of companion parrots yearly, it is clear we have no more time to lose.

Below are 5 common fallacies about behavior science and parrot behavior that we routinely discuss on the PBAS list as new people join us. In addressing these fallacies we provide people with straight talk about behavior. Our goal is to inspire parrot caregivers to look further and learn more about behavior science and living and learning with parrots. A reading list is provided at the end of this presentation to get you on your way. It's really not a very steep climb. It's just that for most of us, it's braving new terrain. But, that's what makes it exciting!

1. Behavior science doesn't apply to the *real* world.

Many people think that behavior science is solely a laboratory science or that the principles of behavior first discovered in laboratories only apply to rats and pigeons. On the contrary, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the real world branch of experimental behavior analysis and over the last 60 years it has achieved a wide sphere of influence where all sorts of behavior solutions are needed. Below is a partial list of fields in which ABA has been highly effective.

- education
- clinical psychology
- autism
- self-injurious behavior
- developmental disabilities
- infant assessment
- gerontology
- organizational performance management
- training and instructional design
- behavioral safety
- the experimental analysis of behavior (basic research)
- brain injuries
- human operant research
- animal and pet training
- verbal behavior
- behavior pharmacology, drug self-administration and drug discrimination
- behavior toxicology
- behavioral medicine
- computer modeling of behavior and artificially intelligent agents
- decision support systems
- human factors and user interface design

The relevance of behavior science to improving the lives of humans and other animals is no longer reasonably questioned. To learn more about it, see www.behavior.org. At this site there is a comprehensive tutorial, an excellent glossary, and a treasure trove of interesting articles.

2. You can't modify hardwired behaviors.

The old model that pits nature against nurture is now being replaced with a new understanding best characterized as nature via nurture. In other words, nature and nurture are inextricably entwined. This new view is largely the result of recent findings that learning, defined as *behavior change due to experience*, involves gene activation. In reciprocal fashion, experience activates genes, which produces proteins that change the neural circuits in the brain and alter the way in which an individual behaves. At every step of the way, the environment is involved.

Innate behavior is automatic, it is behavior performed without prior experience. Innate behaviors include simple reflexes (e.g. eye blink) and flexible action patterns (e.g. bathing) common to all members of a species. There are also genetic lines within each species that increase the occurrence of very general behavioral tendencies (e.g. shyness). Still, none of these forms of innate behavior are unaffected by experience. For example, the first time someone unexpectedly drops a heavy book most of us automatically startle but by the fourth or fifth time the book is dropped, neither we, nor our parrots, bat an eye. This process is known as habituation.

Too often, people evoke the hardwired explanation as an excuse for their own lack of knowledge about behavior and lack of teaching skills. They draw sweeping conclusions about all parrots based solely on personal experience with a very limited number of birds, for example, amazons are innately afraid of the color red; cockatoos innately scream at dawn and dusk; and severe macaws are innately aggressive. Of course the implication of the supposed innateness of these behaviors is that there is something inside the bird's brain that can't be changed. The critical thinker asks, "If these behaviors are hardwired why is it that all companion amazons, cockatoos and severe macaws do not behave this way?" and, "In what way does the environment account for these observations and maintain these behaviors?"

3. Birds have a natural drive to dominate their owners.

In psychology, terms like dominant, aggressive, and shy are a mix of vague, ambiguous labels and hypothetical constructs. A hypothetical construct is an inferred mental process used to explain the underlying cause of behavior. By definition constructs are not tangible entities and are best understood as place holders for a time when science reveals more about the way in which our internal and external environments interact with the body's physiological systems to produce behavior. People say parrots bite because they have an innate need to dominate us; however we know that the environment is involved in all facets of what we do. In fact, the *only* evidence that a dominance drive is the underlying mental process that explains biting is the observable behavior itself. There is no direct measure of dominance drive because it doesn't exist as an entity – it's an idea. Something that doesn't have a tangible form can't cause behavior. To think so is simply unscientific thinking.

From a behavior-change perspective, the most relevant cause of present behavior is past consequences. Here are some examples of how we can use that fact to better understand, predict and change behavior:

Antecedent: Grace offers her hand to Peri;
Behavior: Peri steps up;
Consequence: Grace puts Peri in his cage.

Antecedent: Grace's offers her hand to Peri;
Behavior: Peri bites Grace;
Consequence: Grace leaves Peri on top of his cage.

Can you predict Peri's future behavior from the first analysis? Is he likely to step up more or less in the future, given the consequence Grace provides? How about the second example: Is Peri more or less likely to bite, given the consequence Grace provides? Which explanation for behavior is more useful for changing Peri's biting, a dominant mind or past consequences?

A final point: People who use vague labels and hypothetical constructs to describe parrots are producing a Tower of Babel out there. (This is also true about labeling children but this is an article about parrots.) We think we know what people mean when they use them but chances are we don't have a clue. To test this theory, I asked the students in one of my parrot behavior classes to list three behaviors a parrot would display if it was labeled an easily "agitated" parrot. As predicted, they submitted twenty different behaviors (bites, paces, screams, etc.) but the really telling piece of data is that

only 9 of the twenty behaviors appeared on more than one person's list!

To the extent that we remove ourselves from describing observable, measurable behaviors, we reduce our ability to understand, predict and change behavior. So, next time you hear someone describe what their parrot *is* or *has*, ask `em what their parrot *DOES*.

4. Parrots are like 3-5 year old children.

To investigate animals' cognitive ability, Irene Pepperberg studied the learning behavior of Alex, an African grey parrot. Of course one of the uniquely intriguing characteristics of parrots for this type of research is that many parrots talk. Over 20 years of intensive training, representing tens of thousands of instructional hours, Alex learned to discriminate 50 object labels; 5 shapes; 7 colors; 4 materials; quantities up to 6, and the concepts same/different and bigger/smaller. For people who thought these skills could only be mastered by humans, or at best great apes, it is a stunning demonstration of animal learning. As described by Pepperberg, "It is incredibly fascinating to have creatures so evolutionarily separate from humans performing simple forms of the same types of complex cognitive tasks as do young children." (see http://www.edge.org/documents/archive/edge126.html).

Even for those of us who hail ourselves as having suspected as much all along, the scientific control of this demonstration allowed us to replace our own fallible common sense with facts. However, these data also bring to light another important issue for companion parrot caregivers that strikes at the heart of our greatest dilemma: Can we meet parrots' behavioral needs in our living rooms? On the one hand, the comparison to children makes a striking point: Parrots are not like potted plants that thrive on only water, sunshine and rich soil. They are not décor to accent the subtle hues of our throw pillows. They are intelligent thinking, emoting, and doing creatures that are built to behave not to be still.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to suspect that other species of animals can learn similarly stunning discriminations given the same intensive learning opportunity. In fact, I can't even imagine what a human would learn over 20 years of individualized daily instruction. Thus, the real message transcends the comparison of parrots to children. It is not an issue of so-called intellectual capacity, lest we replace one kind of speciesism for another. By this I mean, don't *all* animals in our care deserve to live stimulating lives, rich with variation, activity, and problems to solve? Or is this standard of living for only those species that learn simple forms of the same types of complex cognitive tasks performed by young children?

There is another consideration, as well. In what way does the frequently exaggerated interpretation that parrots are like 3-5 year old children actually hurt parrots? How many parrots are relinquished because they didn't meet people's expectations as feather kids, (e.g., did not follow directions or displayed aggression to strangers)? For your information, below is a partial list of behaviors characteristic of most 3-5 year old children. The list includes just cognitive oriented tasks. There are scores of other behaviors not on this list from the social and physical skill domains.

- can place objects in a line from largest to smallest
- can recognize some letters if taught
- may be able to print own name
- recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs
- understands the concepts of "tallest, biggest, same, more, on, in, under, and above
- counts 1-7 objects out loud - but not always in the right order
- understands the order of daily routines
- speaks in fairly complex sentences, e.g. "The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."

- asks a lot of questions, including ones on birth and death
- enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words
- adapts language to listener's level of understanding
- learns name, address and phone number
- if taught asks and answers who, what, when, why, and where questions
- continues one activity for 10-15 minutes
- names 6-8 colors and 3 shapes
- follows 2 unrelated directions
- has basic understanding of concepts related to number, size, weight, colors, textures, distance, position, and time;
- understands immediate passage of time as in what happened yesterday, but does not understand calendar time;
- has long attention span and finishes activities;
- understands and remembers own accomplishments;
- adds "ed" to words ("I goed to the door and put-ed the cat outdoors and "He hurt-ed me.").

The take-home message is that parrots are not kids and kids are not parrots. As eloquently stated by Marion Breland Bailey, "Every animal is the smartest for the ecological niche in which it lives - if it were not, it would not be there." Few of us take the time to learn about parrots' unique characteristics which are often very different than humans and vital to understanding, predicting and influencing their behavior. Parrots hear, see, digest and even breathe differently than we do. And of course, kids can't fly. In what ways do we fail to meet parrots' needs because we tend to admire them most when they reflect to us our own image?

5. Punishment doesn't work with parrots because they don't understand cause and effect.

I have to admit to scratching my head upon first reading this particular fallacy in light of parrots' obvious learning abilities. It is really a double fallacy as both clauses are demonstrably incorrect. Punishment does work with parrots, as it does with all species of learners; and, parrots do understand cause and effect as measured by the behaviors they display. *There are many compelling reasons not to use punishment to reduce parrots' problem behaviors but their lack of understanding the relationship between cause and effect is not one of them.*

Perhaps this confusion stems from a misunderstanding of the most fundamental principle of behavior, called the Law of Effect. This law has its distant roots in observations made by Aristotle but it was first scientifically described by the scientist E.L. Thorndike at the turn of the century. Since that time, the Law of Effect has been demonstrated with hundreds of different species of animals. Simply, this law states that *behavior is a function of its consequences*. In other words, the frequency of a response is changed by the consequences that follow that response. We apply the Law of Effect with two basic procedures – reinforcement and punishment. Reinforcement increases the frequency of behavior and punishment decreases the frequency of behavior.

These are scientific terms with precise meaning. Although people often think of reinforcers as rewards, that can be misleading. Rewards generally refer to prizes, trophies and accolades but many reinforcers don't fit that image. For example, if you shout at a bird every time it screams and the screaming continues because of your shouting, shouting is a reinforcer for that bird. Punishment can be an equally confusing term. People often use it to mean retribution, retaliation and revenge. In applied behavior analysis, if a behavioral decrease is not observed, the consequence is not a punisher for that particular bird. As you can see, the matter of which consequences function as reinforcers or punishers is highly individual. The proof is strictly in the future rate of the bird's behavior. If your bird continues to behave in a particular way, it is being reinforced regardless of your intentions.

Two of the most important characteristics of effectively delivered consequences are 1) contingency, i.e., the dependency or relationship between the behavior and the consequence, and 2) contiguity, i.e., the closeness or timing with which the consequence follows the behavior. When a consequence is delivered inconsistently, it is hard for the learner to associate the two events. If the consequence is delivered too far in time after the behavior, this lack of immediacy decreases the effectiveness of the consequence as well. Perhaps it is inconsistent delivery and poor contiguity that accounts for the fallacy that punishment doesn't work with parrots. Parrots clearly understand cause and effect as they navigate hundreds of behavioral choices daily based on experience from which they predict outcomes. Parrots go to food bowls because doing so causes the effect of access to food; parrots step onto human hands because doing so causes the effect of being removed from their cages; and parrots scream because doing so causes the effect of favorite people appearing.

There are scientific reasons why punishment is the least preferred behavior-change strategy and should be used as rarely as possible. More than 40 years of study have shown that frequent punishment increases the probability of four side effects detrimental to the quality of life of all animals. These side effects include aggression, apathy, generalized fear, and escape/avoidance behaviors. Unfortunately, these side effects are commonly seen among captive parrots. This should lead us to wonder if this is the fallout associated with inadvertent punishment living among humans, from the parrot's point of view.

Fortunately, there are positive reinforcement alternatives to punishment. Positive reinforcement is the process of increasing behavior by delivering a consequence that tends to be something the bird behaves to get. By positively reinforcing a desirable alternative behavior *at the same time* as ignoring an undesirable behavior we increase what we want to see more and decrease what we want to see less. This procedure, called differential reinforcement of alternative behavior (DRA), is different than ignoring alone as it has a powerful positive reinforcement component. In this way we replace problem behavior rather than only eliminate it, thereby ensuring higher rates of positive reinforcement in our parrots' lives.

A less positive, more intrusive strategy (and therefore less desirable than differential reinforcement) to reduce problem behavior is a mild punishment (behavior decreasing) procedure called Time Out from Positive Reinforcement (T.O.). With T.O. the consequence is the temporary removal of the bird from reinforcing activities for just a half a minute so. The bird is then returned to the scene of the "crime" to do it right. No emotional behavior on the part of the teacher is necessary. The T.O. procedure will do the work for you. As with all procedures, T.O. must be implemented with impeccable consistently and immediacy. These strategies are discussed in more detail in several of the books on the attached reading list.

Conclusion

Improving your skills as critical consumers of behavior information and as parrot teachers, trainers and caregivers is a lot like getting in shape: You have to get out of your comfort zone, stretch to meet your objectives, and commit to change. It's hard work replacing common sense with scientific knowledge. Many people have told me that these are not realistic goals for someone named Average J. Bird-Owner. However, having taught several hundred students the basics of behavior science applied to companion parrots, I have yet to meet a single person with this name. I have met a lot of other people whose curiosity, intelligence and devotion to improving the lives of parrots is far from average.

It is hard to resist jumping from facts to stories, i.e., our personal interpretations of the facts. Many of us have a tendency to fall in love with our own explanations too quickly.

These are two reasons why scientific thinking is so important. Scientific thinking increases our ability to sort out the wheat from the chaff that collects around the subject of parrot behavior. Perhaps the three most important skills of scientific thinking are 1) stick with behavioral explanations that can be observed and measured; 2) consider alternative explanations for what you observe that are based on the interaction between behavior and the environment; and 3) ask anyone making assertions about parrots, "How do you know that?" Be assured that confident experts are impressed by people who ask this question and they are happy to respond. Adding just these three skills to your parrot caregiving toolbox will greatly improve your ability to provide well for your bird. To acquire more teaching tools, read some of the books suggested below. As you will quickly learn, the fundamental principles of learning and behavior apply to all species of learners. As such, no behavior toolbox is complete without the tools of behavior science.

Alphabetical List of Suggested Readings

1. Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement, by Ken Ramirez (1999).

2. Clicking With Birds: A Beginners Guide to Clicker Training Your Companion Parrot by Linda Morrow (available at http://www.avi-train.com/manual.html).

3. Clicker Training with Birds, by Melinda Johnson.

4. Culture Clash, by Jean Donaldson

5. Do Animals Think?, by Clive D. L. Wynn

6. Don't Shoot the Dog: The New Art of Teaching and Training (revised edition), by Karen Pryor.

7. First Course in Applied Behavior Analysis, by Paul Chance.

8. For the Love of Greys, by Bobbi Brinker (available at www.thegabrielfoundation.org)

9. Good Bird! A Guide to Solving Behavioral Problems in Companion Parrots! by Barbara Heidenreich.

10. How Dogs Learn, by Mary Burch, Ph.D. & Jon S. Bailey, Ph.D.

11. The Power of Positive Parenting A Positive Way to Raise Children, by Glen Latham.

Parrot Websites

Parrot Voices (Submitted by Linda L.)
http://www.junglewalk.com/sound/parrots-sounds.htm

-This site has sound clips of several different parrot species so you can hear what their natural calls sound like.

Rainbow Lorikeet (Submitted by Linda L)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_CLcc7f_6I

-Very cute video of a dancing rainbow lorikeet.

Wild Parrots of Southern California

http://www.amazornia.us/

-This site shows some outstanding photographs of feral flocks of Amazons and conures in southern California.

Land of Vos

http://www.landofvos.com/

-Eclectus parrots

http://mytoos.com

-Cockatoo parrots

Parrot News

New Parrot & Mouse Species found in Philippines

MANILA: A brightly plumaged parrot and a long-tailed forest mouse unique to the Philippines have been discovered in the vanishing rainforest of a tiny tropical island, US-based researchers said.

Camiguin, a volcanic island in the southern Philippines, is a treasure trove for fauna, and already had an endemic species of rodent and frog before the discovery of the rusty brown mouse and the green hanging parrot, known among locals as "Colasisi".

But Camiguin's wildlife was at risk from deforestation, researchers, writing in "Fieldiana: Zoology", a scientific journal published by the Chicago-based Field Museum of Natural History, warned.

"Knowing that at least 54 species of birds and at least 24 species of mammals live on Camiguin and that some of these animals are found nowhere else on earth, makes us realise how important this island is," said Lawrence Heaney, curator of mammals at the Field Museum.

"For these animals to survive, we've got to save the dwindling forests where they live."

A diverse archipelago of more than 7000 islands, the Philippines hosts a wealth of endemic flora and fauna but more than 70 per cent of its original forests have been destroyed.

Camiguin was once almost entirely covered by rain forest but by 2001, only 18 per cent was still forested due to logging, agriculture and human settlement. Half of the island, a popular diving destination, is covered with coconut plantations.

The new species of parrot was known to locals because of its value in the pet trade. The bird's throat and thighs are bright blue and the top of its head and tail are brilliant scarlet-orange.

Males and females have identical plumage, which is quite unusual in this group of parrot, and researchers gave it a new name – *Loriculus camiguinensus* or Camiguin hanging parrot.

Little is known about the new species, spurring interests in the scientific and conversation community to establish the size of its population.

The mouse, discovered high on the steep slopes of one of the island's volcanoes, was new to locals.

The rusty-brown rodent, known as *Apomys camiguinensis*, has large eyes and ears and feeds mostly on insects and seeds.

http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3630811a12,00.html

Member Classifieds

David and Louise (466-7273) have one baby green wing macaw left. He's the cuddliest bird you can imagine. He and his brother can be seen in their various stages of development on www.aparrot4u.com They also have baby quakers and soon will have baby orange-winged amazons.

David and Louise (466-7273) also do bird sitting - long and short-term rates. Along with the bird sitting comes complementary toe and wing clipping. We also provide DNA testing for $25.

Lineolated Parakeet Pair for Sale

Lutino female and green male, young and healthy, bonded and proven. These birds are pets as well. Both possibly split to blue. Asking $350/pair. For more information, call Paula at 462-6550.

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Where your bird goes for a holiday. Homemade food prepared, lots of fruits and veggies. Just a fun time. So if you are going on a holiday please let your bird enjoy itself at Safehaven.

We do have a variety of cages for personal use while you spend your holiday here. We also have a variety of playgyms. Lots of time out. We are just plain folks with a love for birds.

Call Linda at 486-3868 to book your bird's holiday.

· WINGS , FINS & PAWS
Looking after your pets when you can't.
Home visits may be arranged
Phone: 477-1566
Email: agweller@hotmail.com
Daily, weekly, or monthly rates.

Morning Sun Aviaries has for sale soon:
-Baby Blue and Gold Macaw
-Baby Quaker Parakeet.
http://morningsunaviaries.com/

Here are some pictures of the babies: