

Many breeders have become so alarmed at the number of parrots that are brought back to them by the buyers that they have stopped breeding parrots.

Parrot behaviour consultants are constantly being asked to find new homes for birds whose owners cannot deal with the problems that have arisen.

GOT YOU THINKING?

The above is only a “bird’s eye view” of the pitfalls of parrot keeping. For more details and personal stories, please consult one or more of the websites listed below. And try to get some first-hand experience: visit a parrot sanctuary and ask yourself why so many birds have been voluntarily given up by their previous owners; do some volunteer work at a sanctuary yourself and get to know the birds and what is involved in their care; talk to (previous) parrot owners and, if possible, caretakers in bird parks, zoos, or sanctuaries. If you are then convinced that a parrot is after all not for you, you have most probably made a wise decision. Please continue to enjoy these magnificent birds in the bird park or zoo, and in nature films.

STILLWANT A PARROT?

Should you decide after all your research that you are one of those exceptional people who would enjoy being owned by a parrot and could give that parrot the life s/he deserves, please consider fostering or adopting one of the many thousands of parrots looking for a good home (see websites for adoption centres). Fostering (giving a temporary home) to a parrot while it is waiting for permanent adoption is another good way to see if parrot keeping is for you before making a permanent commitment. In addition to the many other advantages of adopting (including getting to know a bird before you bring him/her home; having the back-up of the centre if problems arise; getting an older bird with a stable personality who is also less likely to outlive you), bringing home a parrot from a shelter is one step in redressing the injustice that has been done to these incomparable birds.

The parrots thank you for your careful consideration.

WEBSITES

UK Parrot Rescue & Sanctuary

www.nlpr.org.uk

US Rescue—Adoption—General

www.avianwelfare.org

www.forthebirds.us

www.fosterparrots.org

www.mytoos.com

PET PARROT ALERT

Pet parrots in peril!

**WOULD YOU WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE
FOR TURNING THIS...**



...INTO THIS?



**If you are thinking of getting a pet parrot,
PLEASE, THINK AGAIN!!**

Parrots are funny, beautiful, and intelligent. But they are also noisy, destructive, messy, demanding, time-consuming, and expensive to buy and to maintain.

It is unfortunately only too true that bringing a parrot into a home more often than not means misery for the parrot as well as for the people. If you think you would like to have one in your home, you need to be aware of many important facts.

To begin with, **parrots are NOT domesticated animals**. Even though some species can now be bred in captivity, this is only a relatively recent development and parrots still have all the genes and, therefore, all the instincts and needs of their wild grandparents. It is very difficult to meet or substitute for these needs in captivity. More often than not, this means that sooner or later, usually within five years, owners are forced to realize that both their lives and the life of the parrot are so unsatisfactory that the parrot is given up. Some of the factors contributing to this decision are discussed in this leaflet.

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Photographs courtesy of Marc Johnson at Foster Parrots ~
www.fosterparrots.com
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www.nlpr.org.uk

that is “normal” for a parrot can be very unsettling for a human.

A STABLE HOME LIFE?

The average parrot will probably have **5 to 7 owners** in his/her lifetime because they are so difficult to keep that they are continually being passed on to new owners.

Depending on the species, a parrot who has received excellent care can live to be 30, 50, even 100 years old. So if you are one of the very special “parrot people” who can provide everything needed to keep yourself and your parrot happy, **your parrot will most likely outlive you**. Then you are faced with the problem of what will happen to your pet. It is NOT easy to find another good home.

Parrot refuges and adoption centres are so full that many are not accepting any more birds, leaving owners who can no longer care for their birds any other option than to return them to the marketplace where anything can happen to them. Some people have even consulted with veterinarians about having their bird put to sleep if the person dies first.

PARROT PROFESSIONALS QUESTION KEEPING PET PARROTS

Viral diseases are becoming more of a problem. Often these diseases are fatal, but do not show up immediately, resulting



later in expensive veterinary care and much misery for bird and owner. Perfectly healthy seeming birds can also be carriers. As a result of this and all the other problems that they see in their practices, **many avian veterinarians are beginning to question whether it**

is possible at all to keep parrots in captivity in a way that is not harmful to their mental and/or physical health.

Parrots are also **very messy**. They not only throw around everything they have explored and rejected, including food, but they **shed feathers and dust** at an amazing rate.

It is said that parrots have the **intelligence of a child of 5 years old, and the personality of a child of 2**. That means that they know what they want, and they are determined enough and intelligent enough and stubborn enough to figure out whatever is necessary to get it. And to keep doing whatever that is until they succeed. A parrot can outlast a person at almost anything!!

With all this in mind, it is necessary to **parrot-proof your home** in order to make the house safe for the parrot and the parrot safe for the house. Many adjustments are necessary. For example: Remove poisonous house-plants; protect valuable furniture; do not use aerosol sprays, incense, deodorizers or non-stick cookware or ironing boards because any of these can release fumes that may be fatal for parrots. All windows and doors must be screened. Windows and mirrors must be covered when the bird is out to prevent crashing into them. Electric wires must be hidden or protected. And so on and so on.



UH-OH! TROUBLE!

When a parrot's many needs are not adequately met in captivity, the parrot responds with behaviours that are inappropriate for either the parrot and/or the owners: screaming, biting, aggression, destruction of household goods, self-plucking and even self-mutilation.

In one poll of members of a parrot club, 97% of the owners reported having "mild to severe" problems with their birds. Even "well-

behaved" parrots can be difficult for their owners. **Behaviour**

INTELLIGENCE

In the animal kingdom, four groups have been identified with intelligence that can be compared with that of humans: the crow family, dolphins, the great apes, and parrots. This means, among other things, that these animals have not only physical requirements for their maintenance, but also mental and social requirements. Of these four groups, only parrots are kept in huge numbers in captivity and can be acquired without any prior knowledge of what is involved in their proper care. **If you wouldn't put a dolphin in your bathtub or a gorilla in the playroom, please think carefully before you decide to put a parrot in a cage.**

SOCIAL ANIMALS WITH PERSONALITY

Parrots are very social animals and **live in the wild in large groups**. Within those groups they choose a **mate who is a constant companion**, 24 hours a day, all the year round, not just in the breeding season. Most parrots remain monogamous for life. In captivity, the parrot owner will have to take the place of all these social relationships, which is VERY time-consuming.





Parrots, like people, have **distinct personalities** and they make decisive personal choices. A person may buy a parrot only to find that the parrot wants nothing to do with him/her, but is interested exclusively in another member of the household, who may not want to be the “designated parrot friend/partner”.

Parrots become sexually mature at about 5 or 6 years of age, depending on the species. At this time their **personalities may change radically**, including the sudden appearance of aggression and screaming. Such changes can be either permanent or reappear annually only during the breeding season, making them unmanageable for months out of every year.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Parrot lungs need a much **higher humidity** than is found in the average home. 70% of pet parrots have respiratory problems resulting from an environment that is too dry. A parrot’s entire anatomy, physiology and psychology are

evolved for **flying**. Denying a parrot the ability to fly by wing-clipping or caging has irrevocable negative effects on personality and health. At the very least, to be truly healthy, a parrot needs to live in an aviary that is large enough to permit flight, and that has both outdoor and indoor areas.

Parrots need a **varied diet**. A diet of only seeds is inadequate. Even the modern pellet formulas are not sufficient to be used as the exclusive food. Parrots need fruits, nuts, vegetables, and a wide variety of seeds, grains, proteins and minerals.

In addition, parrots need exposure to **unfiltered sunlight** every day.



NATURAL PARROT BEHAVIOUR

Parrots wake up and go to bed with lots of “**calling**”, which can reach **decibel levels** that are audible not only at home but at many of the neighbouring homes. Parrots naturally **chew on anything** that crosses their paths. Including wall-paper, furniture, buttons, clothes, books, houseplants, electric wires, you name it. They are not “deliberately misbehaving”, but just doing what comes naturally.