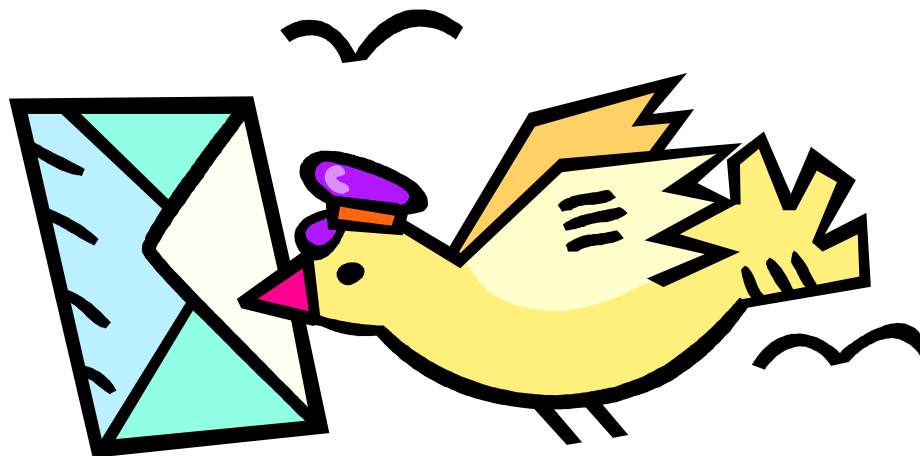


JULY OAS NEWSLETTER



BRING YOUR BIRDS

**OUR TOPIC WILL BE
OLD WORLD PARROTS**

NEXT MEETING: JULY 26, 2009 The OAS meeting begins with a social time and set up time at **1:30 pm, the fourth Sunday of each month.** The **business portion of the meeting begins at 2p.m..** Our meetings are held in the Hardesty South Regional Library which is located off memorial behind the car dealership at 8316 East 93rd Street

The Oklahoma Avicultural Society is a proud member of the American Federation of Aviculture

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Club Objectives

- A. To promote quality of birds along sound avicultural lines.
- B. To monitor legislative activity that might threaten, endanger, or otherwise affect the Avicultural community.
- C. To obtain and distribute information by educational speakers, exhibits, and general fellowship necessary to complement the keeping, raising and breeding of caged birds.
- D. To support and assist other organizations with similar goals or interests, whether state, national or international.

Submissions

All members of OAS may submit materials or ideas for this newsletter. Volunteers, writers, reporters and people with editorial ideas are encouraged to participate. Original material or reprinted articles will be accepted, but must have copyrighted release or permission to reprint, including author or contact person, with submission. All submissions must be received by the editor by the 10th of the month of publication.

Submit Newsletter Information To:

Alena Jo Gleason, Editor – djglee@totalcsi.com Phone: 918-275-4605

Mail to: Oklahoma Avicultural Society

P.O. Box 580155, Tulsa, OK 74158-0155

All ad rates are per issue and payable in advance. Ads must be copy ready on white stock, and turned in to the editor by the 10th of the month.

	Centerfold (7-1/2 x 10) - \$30/month		
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Membership Dues includes newsletter subscription. (Prorated for New Only)

Individual - \$20.00/year * Student - \$15.00 * Couple - \$30.00/year * Lifetime - \$250

Meetings begin at 1:30 p.m. on the **FOURTH** Sunday of every month (except December and at times in May) at the Hardesty South Regional Library, 8316 East 93rd Street, Tulsa. Any meeting changes will be published in the newsletter and online on the Forum pages.

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DON'T MISS THE MONTH'S OAS MEETING.

JULY PROGRAM:

OLD WORLD PARROT PARTY/Show and Tell

Bring your favorite Old World Parrot, stories, and munchies, and be prepared to share laughs with other club members. With luck you can expect to meet some interesting Grey parrot, ringneck, lovebird, or Poicephalus (Senegal/Meyer's/Jardine's) subspecies and get to know other club members and their birds better. If you have books, videos, or other items of interest featuring Old World Parrots to share, bring them.

Door Prize: New Second Edition of Barron's African Grey Parrot Handbook by Mattie Sue Athan.

Old World species and their owners expected: Dr. Carol Best, Mattie Sue Athan, Bryan and Elizabeth Williams, Karen & David O', Paul, Sonnabend, Carolyn & Keith Spilman, and YOU

But don't feel left out If you don't have an Old World Parrot -- bring your favorite pet bird, regardless of type and be ready to party!



Minutes from the Secretary Bird

JUNE 2009 OAS GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

President Carol Spilman called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. on June 28, 2009 at the Hardesty Library. Officers present were President/Carol Spilman, Secretary/AFA Rep Debbie Davis; Robert Morgan/Treasurer; 1st VP/Jo Gleason; 2nd VP/ Mattie Sue Athan; and AFA Rep/Joy Jahn.

NEW BUSINESS: Carol welcomed the attendees and identified new guests. Due to Mary Hill (Publicity and Bird Fair Coordinator) being unable to attend the club meeting, Karen O'Brien provided the attendees with an updated bird fair report. Karen informed the attendees Mary has sent out the vendor packets.

Carol mentioned the OAS needs to make a decision concerning placing an ad under a particular division(s) with the National Caged Bird Society. Debbie made a motion for the OAS to sponsor two divisions with the National Caged Bird Society – Parrot and Canaries. The motion was seconded and approved – none opposed.

Carol discussed with the attendees the need to decide which charitable organizations the OAS will donate to. AFA has two Avian Research Grants Programs. Project Abbotti – Indonesian Parrot Project. Four of the five cockatoo species listed on the highest category of protection by CITES are found in Indonesia.

The Red-fronted Macaw Project, Asociacion Armonia, Bolivia. The survival of the Red-fronted Macaw in the wild is threatened by three main factors: illegal capture for the pet trade, habitat loss and conflict with farmers.

Robert also suggested the OAS contribute funds (\$100-\$200) to a rescue organization Amigos de Las Aves in Costa Rica. This organization is trying to repopulate and educate people on the preservation of the Scarlet Macaw. Robert also suggested the club adopt one or two birds for one year. Kim Strong is the person orchestrating the Scarlet Macaw Preservation in Costa Rica, and her organization is hatchedtoflyfee.org. Mattie Sue made a motion to adopt two parrots at Amigos De Las Aves. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed. Debbie made a motion to request Kim Strong be a future guest speaker. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed. Joy made a motion to have the OAS allocate funds to the two AFA Avian Research Grants Program listed above. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed. Robert made a motion to approve the amount of funds to the following organizations: \$200.00 to Amigos de Las Aves; \$500.00 to Project Abbotti – Indonesian Parrot Project; \$500.00 to The Red-fronted Macaw Project. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed.

Robert informed the attendees the OAS has to vacate the storage unit no later than July 22, 2009. The club will have to make arrangements to find another location. Robert stated he is going to continue to check on other storage unit locations. Mattie Sue made a motion to further discuss the storage location issue at the Board Meeting. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed.

OLD BUSINESS: Robert gave the Treasurer's Report, and provided the attendees with a copy of the Treasurer's Report. Karen O'Brien made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed.

Carol made a motion to adjourn the business part of the meeting. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed.

Mattie Sue provided the attendees with an outstanding video movie on the *Pyrrhura Conures* (the quiet conure). These generally greenish conures include the very common [Green-cheeked Conure](#), as well as the maroon-bellied conure, pearly conure, black-capped conure, painted conure, crimson-bellied conure, and a number of other species. They are usually smaller, duller-colored, and much quieter than the *Aratinga* conures. *Pyrrhura* species are growing in popularity as pet birds, primarily due to their quiet nature, their friendly, affectionate, and intelligent personalities, and the increasing number of color mutations being developed in several of these species. Lifespan is 20–25 years.

Thank you Mattie Sue for providing this informative video presentation.

Respectfully submitted by Debbie Davis, Secretary

JULY 2009 OAS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

On July 7, 2009 at 7:00 P.M., President Carol Spilman called the meeting to order at the Hardesty Library. Officers present were President/Carol Spilman, Secretary/AFA Rep Debbie Davis; 1st VP/Jo Gleason; Treasurer/Robert Morgan, Board Member/Lori Naiman; Board Member/Tina Cook; Publicity Rep/Mary Hill; AFA Rep/Joy Jahn and OAS Member/Karen O'Brien.

NEW BUSINESS: Robert Morgan/Treasurer gave an oral updated Treasurer's report due to his computer being inoperative. Robert informed the Board members that OAS donated a total amount of \$1000.00 to AFA Avian Research Grants Programs. Project Abbotti – Indonesian Parrot Project and The Red-fronted Macaw Project, Asociacion Armonia, Bolivia. OAS also donated \$200.00 to Amigos de Las Aves located at Costa Rica.

Robert informed the Board members the current OAS Storage Unit will no longer be able available, and the club will have to vacate the premise NLT July 22, 2009. Robert stated he found another storage unit not far from the current one located on Mingo between 61 and 71st streets. Robert stressed the importance of making a decision to relocate to the new storage unit at this location due to the units selling quickly. Lori made a motion to accept the new storage location. Motion seconded and approved – none opposed.

The Board members discussed the importance of Mary Hill's position as the Publicity Rep and Bird Fair Coordinator with the OAS. Currently the OAS Publicity Rep/Bird Fair Coordinator positions are "nonvoting." Tina made a motion to change the Publicity Rep/Bird Fair Coordinator positions to reflect "voting" positions instead of a "non voting" position. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed. The Board also agreed the By-Laws need to be updated to reflect this new change.

OLD BUSINESS: The Board members discussed the "Tabled Motion" by Mattie Sue Athan at the June Board Meeting requesting the OAS have an essay contest written by children based on the care of a Senegal Parrot. Mattie Sue would review all essays and the winner will receive her Senegal Parrot "Baby." Although her offer is generous, the OAS board members agreed this request is inappropriate. A motion was made to decline the "Tabled Motion." Motion seconded and approved – none opposed.

The Board Members discussed Mattie Sue Athan's motion request at the June OAS General Meeting to have the OAS generate a voucher of \$20.00 to \$30.00 a year be sent to club members. Club members could use this money when they take their avian companion to the vet. The Board members discussed this motion and declined Mattie Sue's request. The Board agreed this money needs to be donated to research organizations. Tina made a motion to decline Mattie Sue's motion for a voucher request. Motion was seconded and approved – none opposed.

Mary discussed the upcoming OAS Bird Fair this September. Mary stated the press releases have been sent out. Mary also stated she continually has problems with American Classified, and she no longer wants to utilize them to advertise the Bird Fairs etc. Tina made a motion to not renew with the American Classified. Motion seconded and approved – none opposed.

Carol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 P.M. Motion seconded and approved – none opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Debbie Davis, Secretary

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OLD WORLD PARROTS

Parrots from Africa and Asia were, of course, the first to be historically documented, as Alexander the Great is said to have returned from his travels with the large, long-tailed parrot now bearing his name. Indeed, Psittacula, the ring-necked parrot or parakeet (so called for its long tail,) is the most widely distributed species, ranging from Africa east even into Pacific islands. Possibly a result of longer habitation by humans, this hemisphere bears fewer species and lesser populations of parrots than the New World and Pacific ranges. Most Old World species also inhabit areas with greater numbers of non-human predators, possibly contributing to the well-developed fight-or-flight response so prominent in the behavior of Poicephalus, especially.

African Greys

For centuries, the African grey parrot has been known for extreme intelligence, its ability to acquire human speech, and use words and sounds with association to their meaning. Treasured for its shining, intelligent eyes; pastel grey scallops; and, often, bright red tail; the grey parrot breeds readily and is usually available anywhere parrots are kept as companions.

The larger subspecies called simply the "African grey," Congo, or red-tailed grey differs little from the smaller Timneh African grey parrots except in appearance. Greater size and color variation exist among the red-tailed birds which may be light silver or almost black depending upon point of origin, as the birds become gradually darker and smaller in ranges to the west of Africa. While they are not considered a separate subspecies, the smallest and darkest of the red-tailed greys is sometimes called the Cameroon or Ghana African grey, indicating its source. The red tail's beak is solid black; while the usually-smaller Timnehs can be easily differentiated by its horn-colored maxilla.

Like other intelligent (K-strategist) species – humans, chimpanzees, elephants, and whales – greys reproduce selectively and require years to reach intellectual and behavioral maturity rather days, weeks, or months as do other (r-strategist) animals. Likewise talking skills develop a little more slowly than some other parrots. Juveniles of both subspecies can be identified by their black eyes which fade to silver or yellow as the bird matures.

Both subspecies possess equal talking abilities, with some individuals exhibiting exceptional mimicking and communication skills. As with other parrots, greys achieve human speech without vocal cords. Sounds are produced when the bird forces air across the top of the trachea, a process resembling forced air across the top of a bottle. Sound variations are produced when the bird changes the shape of the trachea. This requires practice. A juvenile grey can be observed quietly, muttering or "whispering" until it's confident enough to loudly produce sounds. While a particular youngster might learn a few words before it is weaned, the average grey acquires its first word at about 11-14 months. This might be at about 11-14 months of age, or it might be 11-14 months in a particular home. In my own experience, Timnehs appear to talk earlier than Congos and may be more inclined to do so in front of strangers.

The African grey must be protected from learning unpleasant human sounds such as squeals, squeak, screeches, burps, belches and worse. It must be sheltered from learning profanity, for this bird will probably outlive most early human companions and will say in its next home what it heard in the first. Greys must be protected from learning screaming from other parrots and barking from dogs. While they are entirely capable of and often willing to make some very obnoxious, attention-demanding sounds, they simply do not achieve the volume of their larger New World and Pacific Species cousins. An African grey parrot can drive the humans in the home crazy with annoying sounds, but those sounds are seldom loud enough to bother neighbors next door or down the block.

Grey parrots are typically cautious and quiet with strangers or in unfamiliar surroundings. Even a good-talking individual might take a little time – usually a few days or weeks – to begin vocalizing in a new home.

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As generations of greys are further and further from the wild, this is expected to change, as grey parrots bred for stolid disposition and talking ability appear obviously more interactive in all ways.

The grey's reputation for intelligence might also be linked to the bird's reputation as most "opinionated" bird; for even if a particular grey does not talk, it will be exceptionally capable of communicating its preferences. Grey parrots are infamous behavioral martinets and gender chauvinists with a reputation for enforcing many environmental, dietary, and interactive preferences.

Extreme intelligence and sensitive temperament can combine to produce a surprising diversity of both wanted and unwanted behaviors in companion greys. "Creative," neurotic-seeming, behaviors can appear suddenly, especially during the Developmental period. In my three decades plus experience as a behavior consultant, cases involving African greys usually comprise more than half my regular on-going case load.

Expect to treat a baby grey almost exactly as you would treat a child in the home with this exception: never punish the bird, especially with hitting, squirting, or dropping. Even "the evil eye" and "time-outs" can be too frightening for a sensitive grey parrot.

Clumsy and heavy-bodied, juveniles may be sensitive to falling incidents during the period in which personality develops. A newly-weaned grey placed immediately into a spacious "adult" cage with slick, large diameter perches, can easily develop fearfulness rather than coordination, confidence, and independence. Likewise, juvenile greys with sharp toenails and easily-gripped perches develop more experimental and exploratory natures.

While tendencies toward aggression are expected, normal, and somewhat desirable; developing extreme and redundant fearfulness must be addressed immediately, for these can contribute to unwelcome stress reactions such as feather shredding.

During the first three to six months in the home, a handfed baby grey should be curious and eager to please. This is the juvenile developmental period sometimes called "the honeymoon period". It is the period during which confidence gradually turns from approval seeking to independence and the instinct to dominate. It is an especially good time to avoid corporal punishment, for like human children, the African grey parrot has memory and is perfectly capable of holding a grudge. The bird must be patterned to appropriate behaviors by practice, reward, and repetition

Precious Poicephalus

Poicephalus are every bit as enjoyable as their showier relatives, the greys, cockatoos, Amazons, and Macaws. These short-tailed African parrots are usually more behaviorally dependable than cockatoos, quieter than most Amazons, and more easily housed and accommodated than large macaws. Pois can be an excellent choice for anyone intimidated by larger birds. They are well-suited as a "first" bird and usually complicated and interesting enough to retain a place when larger birds are added.

Poicephalus easily develop independence, especially independent play. They enjoy swings and other acrobatic toys, foot toys, foraging toys, and may become avid collectors, storing any loose objects in food or water bowls.

Of the ten species, seven can be found as companion parrots in North America. The smaller five Poi species – Senegals (*P. senegalus*), Meyers (*P. meyeri*), Brown-heads (*P. cryptoxanthus*), Red-Bellies (*P. rufiventris*), and Jardines (*P. gulielmi*) – are acrobatic little clowns which might lay on their backs and chew their toe nails. They are famous escape artists, breaking out of (or into) even the most "bird-proof" enclosures. They love exploring drawers and snuggling into small spaces where they risk being crushed or suffocated.

Like several other genera, they are easily reinforced with laughter. The favorite human must carefully avoid giggling at unacceptable behavior – no matter how cute it is the first time it appears – for these birds can quickly learn to nip, then curse or squeal in imitation of human pain, followed by mimicking the exact laughter that reinforced the behavior.

Poicephalus have a reputation for developing heightened reactions, behaviors that can be expressed as either fearfulness or fearlessness, as many Pois go through both nippy and shy or cautious stages before becoming fully independent. Although they are sometimes totally fearless in the face of grossly larger creatures, they are also often terrified of the most mundane, non-threatening inanimate objects such as rolled wrapping paper, balloons, or unfamiliar headgear.

The well-developed fight-or-flight response can result in fearfulness as a prominent part of a companion Poi's personality. Early patterning, sensitive and consistent handling, positive reinforcement, and planned environmental manipulations can be used to establish controlled, conscious behaviors rather than uncontrolled instinctual responses. Modern,

domestic raised *Poicephalus* parrots – especially red-bellies (*P. rufiventris*) – are notably more stolid than the first few clutches raised from newly arrived wild-caught parents only a few decades ago.

Behind the red-tailed grey, the Senegal (*P. senegalus*) is the African parrot most commonly bred in captivity. These brightly-colored clowns are known for acrobatics, mischievousness, passion, and panic. They are, perhaps, the most intense in both color and disposition in this occasionally intense family.

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The Senegal parrot's head is gray, topping a mostly green body with a breast and belly ranging in color from lime-yellow to deep orange. The body markings form a shallow or deep "V" pierced by a green point running down the breast bone.

Senegal hens seem notably shyer than most cocks. However, aggressive hens are not uncommon nor are shy cocks. As with many other species, gender differences are often less noticeable than similarities. The safest, most dependable way to identify sex is with DNA sexing.

Pois share a reputation with African greys as the "quietest" (read here, "least loud") of the larger parrots. Their talking ability often outpaces their reputations as modest talkers, with occasional individuals developing large vocabularies. Although these birds speak in adorable little "doll-like" voices and are well known to lack the volume of most other parrots, the intensity of a Senegal's "whistle/alarm" call can cause pain to some sensitive (especially male) human ears. Indeed, many companion Senegals obviously enjoy making annoying attention-demanding whistles and beeps (the phone, the microwave, the alarm clock).

Senegals may transition through a nippy phase and may also a fearful phase before reaching emotional independence at about two years of age. These birds may not form a strong bond with a permanent favorite human until after both nippy and fearful stages pass.

The Meyer's Parrot (*P. meyeri*) has a reputation for docility, although they are probably not as uniform in behavior from bird-to-bird as the cockatiel. Mostly taupe brown or warm grey tinged with yellow at the crown, thighs, bend of wing, and under wing coverts, they can also be strikingly beautiful as belly, rump and under parts may range from vivid bluish green to almost pure blue. The beak is gray. The adult's eyes are bright red-orange; juveniles have brown eyes.

The brown-head, (*P. cryptoxanthus*), has a grayish brown head and a mostly green body with bright yellow under the wings. The upper mandible is gray; the lower mandible is pale beige. The adult bird's eyes are yellow, but not always bright yellow. The juvenile's eyes are brown; the change to yellow is sometimes subtle. This bird looks a little like a Meyer's parrot without the yellow or turquoise and also shares its disposition. Both are said to be more exploratory and more experimental than the Senegal parrot. Where Senegals have a tendency to favor person, Meyer's and brown-heads may more easily maintain balanced interactions between multiple individuals. They're more interested and willing to meet new people and explore new things. They're less likely to stay on or in the cage when unsupervised.

Both the brown-head and Meyer's moods are said to be more constant, usually showing less extremity in either aggression or shyness than the

Senegal, Jardine's, or red-belly. Either can be an excellent choice for homes with sensitive, trainable children.

Neither the Meyer's nor the brown head is known for exceptional talking ability, although they will pick up a few words and quite a few other sounds. With the Jardine's and red-bellies, they share a notable predisposition for whistling rather than talking. These birds make almost exclusively pleasant sounds.

Although they remain rare as companions, the Jardine's parrot (*Poicephalus gulielmi*) has enjoyed a steady rise in popularity along with a reputation for intelligence and congenial temperament. These birds are said to be capable of large vocabularies and of gray-parrot-like accuracy in mimicry. Jardine's are gifted whistlers and share the Senegal's reputation for a fascination with annoying sounds.

Famous for motionless calm, the Jardine's play has been described as lorie-like or caique-like. The Jardine's mood can turn in an instant from absolutely still (except perhaps a subtly pinpointing iris) to tumbling rowdiness.

Jardine's are enthusiastic bathers, easily learning to enjoy human-provided mist showers. Although the "real," human shower is usually too forceful and scary for any *Poicephalus*, including the Jardine's, almost any Poi might enjoy sitting on a high perch or shower rod and being misted with a water bottle as humans shower.

Jardine's enjoy a reputation as most stolid of temperament, being reportedly less inclined to the fight-or-flight response than some of its cousins, notably the red belly parrot. However, the Jardine's parrot can learn to bite with enthusiasm. They can be stubborn and extremely focused.

Most Pois, but especially, Jardine's are said to go through a "teething" or nipping stage (during the first year in the home) during which the beak on skin activity has

sometimes been described as mild "beaking" and sometimes to "excruciatingly painful". However, even one bird that was called a "monster" during its nippy phase ultimately learned more productive "love sponge" behavior.

Senegals, Jardine's, and red-bellies are given mixed reviews regarding their suitability for children. Some children do extremely well with them, some do not. It might be best to separate bird and children if either are going through difficult transitions.

The red-bellied parrot (*P. rufiventris*) possesses brownish gray upper with green lower parts and a wash of blue over the rump. They are sexually dimorphic, with cocks having a deep orange breast, abdomen, and underwing coverts. Hens have a delightful tinge of iridescent red highlights over green in these parts. The beak is completely black. Cocks have a wash of orange on the cheeks. The adult bird's eyes are bright red-orange; the juvenile's eyes are brown. Some juvenile red-bellies resemble hens, the majority resemble cocks, while some juveniles have dimorphic colors in their fledging feathers.

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With the widespread use of modern hand feeding techniques, the red-belly's popularity has skyrocketed, as wild-caught pairs have adjusted to captivity and produced calmer, bolder, and more interactive offspring. Hen red-bellies, especially, enjoy a loud, vocal following of loyal fans, however, Jean Pattison, and other experienced aviculturists report little difference between male and female red-bellies as companions.

Poicephalus – especially red-bellies and shyer individuals of any subspecies – are reported to appreciate the advantages of a hide box. This might be simply a towel over one end of the cage; it might be one of those little fabric tents; or it might mean cage placement behind a plant.

Red-bellies and Jardine's share a reputation as best talkers of the Poicephalus family.

Uncommon as companions at this writing, the golden-headed Cape (*P. robustis*) and brownish-grey headed "uncape" (*P. fuscicollis*) parrots are the largest of the Poicephalus parrots. Although they are only 250 to 400 grams, they can seem as large as an African grey parrot. The more-common fuscicollis head is tinged sometimes with silver, sometimes with red. A wash of red over the neck gives the bird its common name, the brown-necked parrot. Hens are slightly brighter with a well defined area of poppy on the forehead. Cocks may have some less defined poppy on the forehead. Both adult and juvenile eyes are dark brown.

In captivity, these birds share much behavior with their smaller Poicephalus cousins, but because of their size, shape, and unique gate may seem more "goofy" than "acrobatic." They love playing upside down, both hanging and swinging and on their backs in owner's hands and on the floor. Both Capes and Uns are sometimes fascinated by their feet. They are crazy for nuts, may be prone to caution, and enjoy hiding behind a bird-safe plant where they can see but not be seen. These larger Pois can be very loud, but dependable of disposition, with individuals rarely forming problematic bonds.

Agapornis: the Lovebirds

Three of species of Lovebirds (*Agapornis*) – the smallest of the short-tailed African parrots – have long been bred in captivity both in Europe and in the United States, developing numerous color mutations. However, their role and suitability as human companions has been less thoroughly studied. Unlike an aviary pair, a companion lovebird bonds to humans rather than to its own kind. In many respects this arrangement works out very well, because the relationship between two lovebirds can turn hostile in a blink. In fact, even their common name, "lovebird," could be called an oxymoron – a word that contradicts its own true meaning.

The development of strong bonding behaviors in lovebirds is often accompanied by the development of aggression, abandonment anxiety, breeding stress, and other difficult behavioral issues. In pairs these tiny parrots seem to exaggerate their larger cousins' behavior. They are exceptionally territorial and able to inflict painful damage to both human and avian skin. Especially, lovebirds seem to become easily fixated on an individual, object, or location and to defend such with excessive devotion. This tendency to extreme bonding can also work to the disadvantage of a pair, for bonding or attempts to bond is sometimes accompanied by "spousal" abuse.

The difference between a solitary companion lovebird and a breeding pair can be striking. Keeping pairs and facilitating their reproduction – aviculture – is a bona fide hobby. Keeping a single lovebird is more like a love affair between human and bird, for no other parrot seems to bond as strongly – to a person, a toy, a location, a toaster, hair dryer, a stapler, or any other shiny object – as *Agapornis*.

There's a huge difference between breeding lovebirds and companion lovebirds. Their socialization is different. Their behavior is different. Companion lovebirds cannot be expected to retain any companionability if another lovebird is introduced. They must be kept individually. A human-bonded lovebird can turn murderous if a lovebird intruder enters the scene.

Genetics, too, as well as environment and socialization are significant in the development of companion or avicultural lovebird behavior. Aviculturists specialize in producing birds for particular genetic goals: some lovebirds are produced for color, some (companion) lovebirds are produced for genetic predisposition to good disposition. The former lovebirds are parent raised; the latter are usually handfed by humans.

Many breeders believe that companion lovebirds are best removed from parents before their eyes open. Sensitive handfeeding is a must. Ideally, babies are kept singly both during handfeeding and after weaning. When purchasing a baby lovebird and waiting for it to wean, resist the temptation to ask that weaning be hurried along. As with larger parrots, careful, bird-paced weaning is more likely to produce a bird that stays tame. Healthy, well handled lovebirds usually wean between six and ten weeks old. Birds requiring longer to wean appear to have a better chance of remaining tame as adults. Handfed lovebirds probably have the best chance to remain tame if they go to their new homes within a month after weaning.

Toys are not optional. If the bird is to remain tame, it must fill its hours with appropriate activities, not sit around storing up energy to make everybody nuts. A generous number of diverse, appropriately-sized toys, both destructible and indestructible, provide opportunities to "blow off

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steam" (express energy that might otherwise come out as aggression.) Lovebirds provided with tiny foot toys before weaning are more likely to develop both foot toy play and foot food holding.

The bird must have opportunities to play alone, developing confidence by engaging in self-rewarding behaviors. If a human is the only "toy" a lovebird plays with, expect to see escalating territorialism, bonding-related aggression, and other unwanted behavioral issues. Especially, the lovebird must have something to "beat up," preferably a toy. Often a bell or other noise-generating device, this can become both a surrogate enemy and mate, being the object of the bird's most hostile and most intimate aggressions.

Maintaining tameness in a solitary, handraised lovebird is no different than it is with most other types of solitary handraised parrots. However, taming a lovebird is more difficult, and retaming a lovebird that has been allowed to go wild is very, very difficult.

As with larger parrots, daily practice of the interactive routines maintains cooperation, although step-up practice is unnecessary for the maintenance of confidence, as most lovebirds are bold beyond all understanding. Step-up practice should meticulously include handling with perches, for many devoted, long-time lovebird humans pick up their mature lovebirds with hand-held perches only, not hands.

Prevent the bird from developing chasing behaviors by removing it from the cage to service the cage. That is, whenever feeding, cleaning, or changing accessories, first remove the bird to a chair back or play perch. If a lovebird learns that hands will "jump" or "run away" when they are bitten and chased, it might learn to create drama by chasing other pets and humans. If a lovebird charges, with head feathers ruffled and beak open with obvious intent to bite, it must be distracted from the attack, possibly with a loud "HEY!" clapping, slapping a rolled newspaper on a table, or creating a barrier between the bird and victim. Then some appropriate behavior may be stimulated, possibly step-ups with verbal reminders to "Be a good bird".

As with all parrots, positive reinforcement rather than punishment is the only effective means of ensuring long-term cooperation. While yelling "No", "Don't", or "Stop" can momentarily interrupt an activity or intended action, reminding a bird to "Be a good bird!" more effectively prompts for appropriate behavior that can then be reinforced.

If a lovebird is becoming too territorial at home, try rearranging and moving the cage and play areas. Occasional outings where the bird is handled by sensitive, astute strangers can be used to manipulate bonding behaviors, improve patterning, and lower territorialism.

Trick training is an excellent means for continuing to reinforce cooperative behavior and preventing the development of inappropriate behavior. Any activities that are not annoying to humans, unsafe, or unhealthy for the bird may be reinforced to "fill" the behavioral environment with appropriate behaviors. Bathing, searching for hidden food (foraging), and chewing wood and paper can approximate some of what the bird would be doing in the wild.

Lovebirds love water and have been observed to drink than other small parrots such as parakeets. They like to bathe and "play" in water and often fill the water bowl with trash. Because of their extreme curiosity and activity lovebirds, they are inordinately vulnerable to accidents involving water: drowning in a toilet, half full glass, or undrained tub.

They are fascinated by any tiny space they can crawl into, so they are also privy to accidents involving enclosed spaces such as drawers, dryers, and microwaves. They are especially happy to crawl inside heavy sleeves, and more than one hapless lovebird has been taken home from a party in a coat left in a pile on a bed.

As with many other small companion parrots, adult lovebirds die more often in household accidents, especially those related to flying, than illness. Meticulous, up to

date wing-feather trims are an absolute necessity if a companion lovebird is to live to a ripe old age. A bonded companion lovebird wants nothing more than to be absolutely next to that favorite human. They have a tendency to "follow too closely", making them easy to step on, sit on, roll over on, or slam in a door or drawer. Flighted lovebirds are often struck down by ceiling fans and also suffer danger of escape as well as danger of being fried, flushed, "nuked", or yoga'd.

There is no cavity too small for a lovebird to try to explore, no enemy too large to be challenged. These are definitive behaviors of this incredible little feathered dragon. They are a major part of the mystery and enchantment of the lovebird. Discerning owners of companion lovebirds both correct for and exploit these behaviors daily for happy effect.

Peach Faced lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) are the largest, heartiest and usually the easiest to keep tame. They seem obsessed with puncturing the edges of any paper they can reach, ripping off the edge as a strip, then stuffing it like streamers into their rump feathers. This is a remnant of wild behavior, for like Monk Parakeets (*Myopsittia monachus*), the peach faced love bird is a builder, although their nests are assembled inside cavities rather than free standing.

Brilliantly colored Fisher's lovebird (*Agapornis fischeri*) are differentiated by their white eye-rings and bright red beaks. Fisher's are neither as hearty, nor as large as Peach-faced lovebirds. They have a reputation for being more aggressive, and in companion settings have been known to kill intruding lovebirds, especially peach-face.

The popular blue masked lovebird is a mutation of the black masked lovebird (*Agapornis personatus*) with a reputation for being both more docile and more fragile than the normal colored bird. Both have a light horn-colored beak and breed well in captivity.

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The Regal Ringnecks.

Another of the birds previously considered "aviary" birds, ringneck parakeets have gradually worked their way indoors. In the last twenty years, we have seen an amazing influx of these elegant birds handfed and introduced to the living room. From the beginning, reports of companion Ringnecks were glowing, with a surprising number of even first generation handfeds learning huge vocabularies. Their voices are clear; they are beautiful, charming, and breed readily in captivity. Although they are not yet exactly common in most parts of the country, with proper management, Ringnecks just might turn out to be one of the most popular companion birds of the next millennium.

Although the rose-ringed species, the most common, have a reputation for easily changeable personalities, we hear more uniform stories about other members of the family. Especially, common these days are stories of Alexandrine Ringnecks, their mostly gentle nature and uniform treatment of humans. This is not a bird that will attack all but the chosen human. While it will exhibit an obvious preference for a particular human, this non-pair bond species easily develops relationships with multiple humans, making it an excellent family bird.

A Ringneck may not be a good choice for someone with little time for interaction, as most Ringnecks must be handled frequently in order to remain trusting of humans. Although Ringnecks do not typically enjoy petting, they often very much enjoy hugging and enthusiastic face-to-face interactions. Most Ringnecks don't like to have anybody or anything touch their long, elegant tails. Indeed, it can make a Ringneck quite skittish for people to be constantly trying to touch its tail. (Unlike macaws who actually seem to like some types of tail play).

With their long graceful tails, smooth, glossy feathers, and delicate markings, Ringnecks can be called the most elegant of parrots. Well, "elegant" is a relative term when applied to a bird, for even these most ornamental of parrots can be goofy, too.

Ringnecks like dancing and "mugging" and communicating with body language rather than with actual physical contact. They will posture and stretch and crane their necks in approximate mimicry of humans playing passive posture games with them.

Ringnecks usually develop neither bonding nor territorial aggression, though they may be "fear nippers" or "annoyance nippers" who apply beak to flesh only with the intention of getting the flesh to go away. Indeed, the Ringneck personality can be cautious to the point of skittishness. Most companion Ringnecks prefer some kind of readily available shelter, whether that accessible "safe place" is a cage with the door open, a little tent or hide box, the favorite person's shoulder, or maybe a plant or huge toy to hide behind. A Ringneck might consistently turn its back or keep a visual barrier between it and a person or situation it dislikes.

Ringnecks are swift and agile flyers, they are especially sensitive to loud sounds like firecrackers, and must have wing feathers trimmed to prevent household accidents. It's a good idea to keep the windows and curtains nearest the Ringneck's cage closed during times when fireworks might be expected. Ringnecks have occasional night frights like cockatiels and benefit from being covered and having a night light.

Ringnecks are visually dimorphic at sexual maturity, usually two to three years. Nancy Newman reports that both sexes make good companions, although I see these birds as sort of resembling eclectus and lovebirds in that females can be expected to be at least as aggressive as males.

Ringnecks can be accomplished talkers developing large, understandable vocabularies. They will more easily talk in public and around strangers than many other types of parrots, especially, the red-tailed African greys.

The Ringneck's long tail makes it necessary to have a larger cage than might otherwise be given to a bird of this weight. The bird must be able to avoid hitting the tail on the side of the cage every time it turns around. Also, a Ringneck should have enough room to comfortably sit on the bottom perch without its tail touching the bottom of the cage.

The Rose-ringed African and Indian ringnecks (*Psittacula krameri krameri* and *P. k. manillensis*) are best known for their bright red beaks and for the ring of red or pink edged in black and pale blue that encircles the mature male's neck. The Rose-ringed species has a reputation for being the most difficult in which to maintain human interactive behaviors.

The Alexandrine ringneck (*Psittacula eupatria*) is a generally considered docile bird with the potential to develop a large vocabulary. While this bird can make very loud noises, this is usually in indication that the bird's need are not being met; Alexandrines are not prone to screaming for the joy of it. They are large for a parakeet and have extremely long tails. They need a large cage; a cage that is at least 24" wide by 24" deep is necessary to comfortably house this bird.

The Plum-headed parakeet (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) is about the size of a cockatiel. The male has a purplish red head while the female and juveniles have a grey/violet head. This bird has a reputation as staying more easily tame than the Rose-ringed parakeets. The Plum-head's voice is pleasant, chattery. This species is not as loud as the larger members of this group.