

The Tropics

Exotic
Bird Refuge

BIRDS ARE WILD, NOT TAME!
SEPTEMBER 7, 2008

Having conceived and operated The Tropics for 19 years, we (The Bradfords) have come to learn that these "pet" birds are NOT, after all pets, they are WILD ANIMALS. As the SUNAMI hit Indonesia, birds warned the rest of the animals of the inclement event that was about to happen.

Many pet bird owners wonder, worry and grieve over their birds' behaviors such as feather plucking, feather fraying, sometimes mutilating their flesh, also their screaming and destructive behaviors. The owners are confused because they have been convinced that they have darling, snuggly pets, and treat them like kings and queens, as they should be in captivity. But what is lacking in the information put out to the public in magazines, books, and the Internet about "pet" birds, is, and I repeat, that they are NOT pets at all.

Plucking being the biggest problem with captive "pet" birds has, in the past, been treated as a "behavioral" problem, and self-proclaimed bird "behaviorists" are oftentimes called in for help. Also, almost NONE pluck due to illness of any kind. The MAIN reason they pluck is that they are STILL WILD and CANNOT act upon their natural instincts. Their natural instincts are responsible for biting, screaming, and wood chewing; which is everything they do ALL the time in the wild. They also have no choice of what, when, and where to eat, bathe, find a mate, and procreate.

In the wild, biting and screaming is used to scare a mate/flock away from imminent danger, and chewing is their favorite pastime. But the worst thing of all is the taking away of their freedom to fly. All of us humans, at one time or another have dreamed of flying free from Earth's gravity and soar "FREE." So do our "pet" birds. In captivity, as soon as they are old enough to fledge, their wings are clipped, and clipped, and clipped all through their lives. They have no way of escaping what they perceive as danger, and if you happen to be close enough when they perceive danger (which we have no way of knowing what they would perceive as danger in captivity), YOU are going to be the one to get bitten. It's their way of warning their mate (in captivity it is their human owner) to fly away from the danger. Because we can't fly away the bite sinks into our tissues.

So, when you combine all of these factors together, not to mention the household environment which might include a new husband/wife, a baby, and dogs/cats which are natural predators of birds, it's no wonder we have phobic birds that people are scrambling at an alarming rate to find a better place for.

Sadly, more and more refuges are closing down because of lack of money and help. The answer in some situations becomes euthanasia and my only comment to that is that hopefully, the bird has gone on to a better place to be FREE. There is only ONE solution to the problem and that is to stop immediately the breeding of birds in captivity and going to auctions to buy birds that have been illegally smuggled in, in order to have new breeding stock.

National Geographic and the ASPCA estimate that in the US alone, there are over 60 MILLION parrots, 3rd to dogs and cats. If another bird were never hatched in captivity, we would have enough birds to go around for the next 3 generations. The costs involved in breeding, feeding, giving health care, etc., to captive birds could be funneled into a deeper encouragement to help birds in the wild and to help save those little offspring that would otherwise die in the nest without human intervention.

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This issue is very close to my heart, as we have, over the years, had over 1,000 birds come through here. We built aviaries, a dome, and could continue to do so, but there's no end in sight. And, most people do not have an heir for their "pet" bird to go to if anything happens to them.

Therefore, I implore you to read this, take it with a grain of salt, think hard about it, and let's try and come up with a way to stop the numbers of birds, abuse, and lack of homes for these birds.

Mary & John Bradford