



BEAK TO TAIL

Issue 69

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FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR PART I

by Eric Kern

INTRODUCTION

Feather destructive behavior (as opposed to normal preening, when birds groom their feathers and skin free from dirt or foreign particles and correct any feather distortions) is excessive and obsessive self grooming that can include one or all of the following abnormalities: barbering or chewing feathers; picking or plucking them out; and, in severe cases, self-mutilation.

In a severe case of plucking, the bird can be completely naked from the head down. Indicators of feather picking include the presence of healthy head feathers, feather loss where you can see the skin, and/or shortened or mutilated feathers in body areas accessible to a bird's beak (including the wing skin fold, inner thighs, and breast).

Even more worrisome than feather picking, though, is the associated self-mutilation. Essentially, self-mutilation involves a bird biting, pecking or chewing on its own flesh, often in the breast area. Unfortunately, as the area of mutilation becomes lacerated, nerve and tissue damage can result, causing increased discomfort, so the bird chews on itself even more. Although the breast area is the most commonly seen area affected by self-mutilation, some birds have been known to consume one or more of their own toes.

BASIC INFORMATION

Many veterinarians estimate that 50 percent or more of the pet birds they see engage in some type of over-preening or feather destructive behavior (FDB). "Feather loss is one of the most complex and frustrating problems avian veterinarians see on a frequent basis," said Jeffrey Jenkins, DVM, DAVBP-Avian, an avian veterinarian in Southern California. He sees between 15 and 20 birds a day and never goes a day without seeing at least two new cases of feather picking.

PET BIRD SPECIES THAT EXHIBIT FEATHER DAMAGING BEHAVIOR:

Any bird can become a feather plucker, but cockatoos,

cockatiels, Quaker parrots and *Brotogeris* parakeets, Eclectus parrots, African grey parrots, lovebirds, and parrotlets seem particularly predisposed to this behavior. All of these are species that live in large flocks in the wild. It's not unusual in Australia, for instance, to see a flock of 500 to 1,000 cockatoos hanging out together in the trees.

"The flock species use their social environment as part of their mental health, and they do everything together. If one of them gets separated from the rest of the flock, the bird becomes fearful," explained Larry Nemetz, DVM, an exotics-only veterinarian in Southern California. In our homes, a cockatoo that feels isolated from its human "flock" will become anxious as well, and this can lead to feather picking or other behavior problems.

In contrast, a nomadic bird, such as any of the Amazon parrot species, *Pionus* parrots, or large macaws, usually aren't bothered as much when they're alone. In the rainforests of Central and South America, these birds usually fly in groups of just two to four birds. As pets, nomadic species seem to be less likely to pick their feathers. "It doesn't mean it's impossible for them to do it, but it's uncommon," Nemetz said. For every one Amazon parrot he sees that feather picks, he sees 25 cockatoos that do.

TYPES OF FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

Barbering: This is when the bird chews on the ends of the feathers. Some birds will chew the feathers off a little bit at a time, never completely removing the feather. It might affect just the barbules or the shaft itself. In its most severe stage, the feather would be shortened to just a little piece of shaft coming out of the skin.

Plucking: Feather plucking is when the bird completely removes the feather by pulling it out at the base of the shaft. Repeated feather plucking over a period of time can cause permanent follicle damage, thus preventing these feathers from ever returning.

(Continued on page 10)

Letter from the Director

Dear PEAC Members,

It has been a very busy spring and early summer for PEAC. We had an extremely successful America's Family Pet Expo at the end of April. I want to take this time to thank all the volunteers (April, Adonis, Dory, Barb, Judy, Melanie, Teri, Rene, Suzette, Jeanine, Russ, and Jeff) who took the time out of their weekends and helped man the booth. By the conclusion of the event, over 105 people had written down their contact information along with a question they had regarding parrots, from A to Z. At the Expo, Buddy the Congo African grey met the gentleman who ended up adopting him a few weeks later. Though this is the most expensive event that PEAC participates in, the amount of traffic and outreach we are able to do is undeniably worth every penny we invest on attending.

I was invited to speak on May 2nd at the monthly meeting of the North County Aviculturists. The title of my talk was "No Vacancy - - The Plight of the Pet Parrot." The abstract was that captive parrots are now facing an epidemic of overpopulation and homelessness. There are not enough homes - - especially good homes - - for every bird. The response to my lecture was overwhelmingly positive, with great discussions afterward. Many of the members of this organization breed pet parrots, from little budgies to macaws and cockatoos. Even these individuals seem to understand that things need to change, as way too many beautiful and intelligent parrots are being surrendered to organizations such as PEAC, and are actually turning these rescues into sanctuaries, as it is difficult to find enough homes for them all.

We have had five adoptions and three relocations since the last newsletter, which is just amazing. PEAC now offers the required seminars for adoption and the volunteer orientation on a one-on-one basis, which has had two good outcomes.

(cont on page 11)

WHAT WE ARE

Parrot Education & Adoption Center is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to educating its members and current and potential bird owners about the proper care of pet birds. Unwanted or found parrots are accepted at PEAC and in turn are adopted to qualified applicants.

Sharing current information and correcting misconceptions about parrots are the major aims of PEAC. Our goal is to keep abreast of the latest developments in the world of aviculture and share them with you, our members.

PEAC was founded in 1996 by Bonnie Kenk, who served as the Executive Director for our first 12 years.

CONTACT US

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**PEAC
Policies and Procedures**

1. PEAC does not purchase birds, even to remove them from bad situations.
2. PEAC will accept birds donated to our organization.
3. PEAC does not breed birds or place any birds into breeding situations.
4. PEAC does not adopt birds to children.
5. Potential adopters of small birds are required to attend our "Avian Basic Care" seminar.
6. Potential adopters of medium to large birds are required to attend at least the following three seminars: "Avian Basic Care," "Parrot Personalities," and "Behavioral Problems."
7. Potential adopters will receive a copy of our adoption application after attending the required seminars.
8. All potential adopters will receive a home visit performed by one of our volunteers before being approved for adoption.
9. Approved adoption applications will be placed on a waiting list if a bird is not currently in our system that would be a good match for the approved adopter.
10. Only one parrot acquisition/adoption per home or PEAC membership is allowed in an 18-month time period.
11. Adopters are required to pay an adoption fee and reimburse PEAC for veterinary fees the bird may have incurred.
12. Adopted birds are to remain in the home and be treated as a member of the family.
13. Adopted birds may not be sold, given away, bred, or used for any type of monetary purposes.
14. After attending the mandatory seminars, those wishing to adopt a first-time large bird, such as an Amazon, African Grey, Cockatoo, or Macaw, will be required to spend hands-on time with the species of their choice under supervision of one of our volunteers before being approved.
15. As a general rule, we will not place a Cockatoo, Macaw, or other noisy bird in an apartment or condominium.
16. PEAC will not adopt birds as companions to other birds.
17. PEAC does not place birds into aviary situations.
18. Birds must remain in a 100% smoke-free environment.

Available for Adoption in San Diego/Southern California

Call 619 287-8200 or email adoption@peac.org to find out more about any of these birds!

African Greys

WATCH FOR BENTLEY'S PIC IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!

"Bentley," 13-yr-old m. Timneh. Bentley is a new arrival to PEAC. He has entered the Parrot Positive program that is a joint effort between Caitec, PEAC, and Rebecca O'Connor. Rebecca is a respected animal trainer who specializes in parrots. She has done extensive work with African greys, and we look forward to frequent updates on Bentley's progress in the program. Stay tuned for more info on this really great bird.

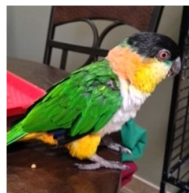


"Morris," 37-yr-old m. Congo. Morris came to us when his elderly owner could no longer care for him. Due to a seed-only diet and a stressful environment, he developed feather destructive behavior and barbered a large portion of his plumage. He is

now on medication and an appropriate diet, and has begun growing his feathers back and playing with foraging toys. Morris is a very gentle and calm African grey who wants to share his life with a human companion who understands the intricacies of his species.

Caique

"Bailey," 22-yr-old f. black-headed. Bailey was relinquished by her only owner, who is elderly and no longer able to care for her. She loves interaction with people, but needs boundaries, as she was permitted free run of her former home. She is adjusting well, and will make some lucky person a splendid companion.



Cockatoos

"Sugar," 15-yr-old m. citron-crested. Sugar loves to be the center of attention and join in flock/family activities. He came from a home that was not prepared to handle the personality of a 'too' and thus he developed some behaviors which we have been working on with positive reinforcement. He's in gorgeous feather, in spite of an initial sub-optimal diet. Sugar speaks appropriately and is adapting well to life with his new flock. He would be best suited to a household of women.



Congratulation to the following birds,
 who have found their forever homes:
 Barb, Big Foot, Buddy, Frosty,
 Jordie, and Lolita.



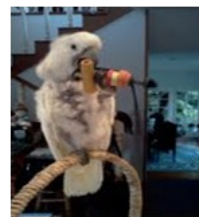
"Frances," m. Moluccan. Frances entered PEAC in June of 2012 when his owner surrendered him for what we were told was a screaming problem. On receiving Frances he was not handle-able and had a lot of phobic behaviors. He has now improved greatly. His screaming is mainly now

only fear driven and for tattling on his foster's other cockatoo. He's no longer phobic, he now chews on toys, and he is eating a better diet and starting to explore his surroundings. He is working on stepping up, but is still nervous when left alone. Frances may be best suited to a home with another bird. He will require someone who has a great deal of cockatoo experience, and with some more work, he is going to be a wonderful companion parrot.



"Rosie Bubbles," f. Moluccan. Rosie came to us in 2012 from a hoarding situation. With surgery followed by a handmade specially-fitted apparatus to prevent self-mutilation, she has made phenomenal progress. Her surgical wound has healed completely, and because of the apparatus and her change in environment, she has completely

stopped her feather picking and self-mutilation. At present, she is still in need of the handmade "bibby," but each day she is making great strides in her healing.



"Tootsie," 13-year-old f. umbrella. Tootsie came to us in April of this year. The couple that had Tootsie for her entire 13 years moved across country, and found themselves living in a RV trailer in San Diego. Tootsie was not able to adjust to her new environment,

as her living quarters were a very small carrier. Due to the stress she was under, she pulled the majority of her feathers from her chest and legs.

Since coming to PEAC and getting an appropriate cage, Tootsie has begun to grow a large amount of down, and we hope she will begin to regrow some of her feathers, as well. She is gentle and loves to cuddle and be around her people. She does tend to call when she is missing her human companions, and we are working on redirecting this behavior to a more constructive one. Tootsie does know a few words such as "hello" and "I love you." She is a fast learner and just wants to be in a forever home that will love her and care for her the way she deserves.

Available for Adoption in San Diego/Southern California

Call 619 287-8200 or email adoption@peac.org to find out more about any of these birds!

Amazons



with a great temperament. He will make a great companion for someone who has time to work with him to keep his mind stimulated and to include him in their lives.



He is a wonderful, playful companion parrot who is looking for a forever home.



She has a beautiful, melodic voice, speaks clearly, and like many Amazons, loves to laugh along with you.



He is learning to step up and has a bit of an over-vocalization issue that his foster volunteer is working on redirecting to a more positive behavior.

Conure

He is learning to step up and has a bit of an over-vocalization issue that his foster volunteer is working on redirecting to a more positive behavior.

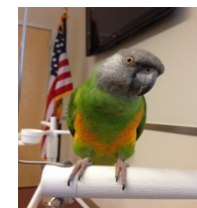
Pionus



enjoys hanging out with his foster family and their flock of parrots. He is not much of a toy-player yet, but is being worked with to get him to open up his personality a bit more.

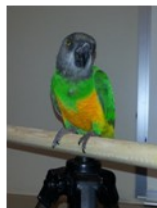
“Kiwi,” 11-yr-old f. Maximilian’s. Kiwi was relinquished when his first and only owner had to move his entire family back East and felt it wasn’t fair for Kiwi to live in a travel trailer for an undetermined amount of time. Kiwi is a fun, beautiful, feathered bird who feels like velvet when you touch his feathers. Kiwi makes lots of chirping noises, but for the most part is a quiet bird who

Poicephalus



says a few words and likes to do all kinds of whistles, clicks, and other vocalizations. She interacts well with most people in her life and steps up well. She loves a good head-and-neck-rub. She is relatively quiet, and could live in an apartment or condo.

“Kito,” f. Senegal. Kito was surrendered to PEAC when her owner no longer had enough time for her. Now on a balanced diet, Kito is in beautiful feather. She is an extremely sweet and fun bird who enjoys dancing to music and hanging out with her human flock. She



He steps up easily and has a wonderful voice and makes many different whistles and sounds.

“Sammi,” m. Senegal. Sammi came to PEAC after he escaped his cage and was found in someone’s backyard 10 months later. He was taken to the vet and was found to be in excellent health after all that time! The former owner no longer could take Sammi back, so he was placed with a PEAC volunteer. He steps up easily and has a wonderful voice and makes many different whistles and sounds.



She enjoys a variety of fresh foods. Poco is an extremely friendly and very outgoing bird who enjoys men and women equally, loves to hang out in her cage or with her caretaker, and also likes to explore all of her surroundings. Poco is fun-loving, and likes to whistle and makes some very cute sounds. She will make someone a wonderful companion.

“Poco,” 15-yr-old f. Meyers. Poco is an adorable 15-year-old female Meyers parrot who came to PEAC the first week of June 2014, after her owners felt they no longer could give her the amount of attention she required. Poco is very affectionate and curious, with no behavioral issues.



**PEAC SAN DIEGO PRESENTS OUR
TOY-MAKING WORKSHOP**

Saturday, 6/28/14; 1:00 pm-4:00 pm

Check-in 12:30 pm

**Department of Animal Services
5480 Gaines St., San Diego, CA 92110**

PEAC members: \$30/person, registration by 6/24/14; \$35 at the door

Non-members: \$35/person, registration by 6/24/14; \$40 at the door

This hands-on workshop includes instruction on identifying various parrot play styles, instructions to make a variety of bird toys, ideas for toy-making materials, and much more. Each participant can expect to complete at least two parrot toys. Cost of workshop includes all needed materials.

Yes, I want to register for the Toy-Making Workshop!

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Check all that apply: Type/s of Bird I'm Making Toys for: _____

Workshop (PEAC members): [] \$30.00/person

Workshop (non-members): [] \$35.00/person

Late registration (after 6/24/14) [] \$35.00/person (PEAC members)

Late registration (after 6/24/14) [] \$40.00/person (non-members)

I'd like to donate an additional \$_____ and be recognized as a sponsor of this event.

Total Amount: \$_____

Payment method: (check one)

Check enclosed for \$_____ Credit Card amount \$_____

Visa MasterCard AmEx Discover

Card #: _____ CVV#: _____ Exp. Date: ____/____

Signature: _____

PayPal at ParrotEd@peac.org

Mail to PEAC, P.O. Box 600423, San Diego, CA or fax to [909\) 563-8418](tel:909-563-8418) or email membership@peac.org.

PEAC thanks the following Avian Board-certified veterinarians, who have generously agreed to provide discounts on veterinary care for our program birds:

Dr. Jeffrey Jenkins, San Diego 619.260.1412

Dr. Brian Loudis, Encinitas 760.634.2022

Dr. Todd Cecil, La Mesa 619.462.4800


Jeffery R. Jenkins, DVM
Diplomate
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www.pescsandiego.com exotics@pescsandiego.com



We welcome our new volunteers, Anthoni Bartronie
and Kyle Reyen!

PARROT EDUCATION & ADOPTION CENTER 2014 SEMINAR SCHEDULE

"People protect what they love. We need to provide the information so that they can love."
- Jean-Michel Cousteau

FOUR NEW SEMINARS!!

We are changing our seminars as new information becomes available in the world of parrot care and behavior, in addition to providing updates to our foster volunteer requirements. So please come - - we'd love to see you and share with you all that's new. And with pre-registration, it's free to members!!!

6/28 Sat	1:00 pm	TOY-BUILDING WORKSHOP! *Cost for this special workshop is \$30*
7/27 Sun	1:00 pm	"No More Room," focusing on the current epidemic of parrots being turned over to adoption organizations and sanctuaries.
8/24 Sun	1:00 pm 2:15 pm	"Living with Cockatoos" "Become a Foster Volunteer," foster volunteer requirements and updates
9/28 Sun	1:00 pm 2:15 pm	"Living with Amazons" "Become a Foster Volunteer," foster volunteer requirements and updates

San Diego seminars are held at the San Diego Department of Animal Services, 5480 Gaines Street, San Diego 92110. Seminar check-in begins at 12:30 pm. First seminar begins at 1:00 pm; second seminar begins at 2:15 pm. When possible, program birds will be present 12:30 to 1:00.

Seminar fees (per person/day):	ADVANCE REGISTERED*	AT THE DOOR
PEAC Members:	FREE!	\$5.00
Non-members:	\$10.00	\$15.00

*Advance registration is due by the Wednesday prior to the seminar; no exceptions.

REGISTER ME!

Sign Me Up in Sunny San Diego for these 2014 Seminars:

DATE	TITLE	# PEOPLE	AMT
			\$
			\$
			\$

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

Credit Card #: _____ (VISA MC AMEX, DISCOVER) Exp. ____/____

Signature (for credit cards) _____ CVV (3 digits on back of card) _____

Make checks payable to PEAC and mail with this form to PEAC, PO Box 600423, San Diego, CA 92160

Or fax credit card payments to 909 563-8418 or email credit card payment or PayPal to parroted@peac.org.

RIVERSIDE SEMINAR LOCATION!

In our constant quest to bring parrot education to you, we are incorporating new seminars into our list of old favorites. Come check them out!

7/19 Sat.	1:00 pm	Nutrition Workshop
8/16 Sat.	1:00 pm	Managing Biting Behavior
9/20 Sat.	1:00 pm	Building a Parrot Play Area (NEW!)

When possible, program birds will be present from 12:30 to 1:00.

Seminar Location:
Animal Friends of the Valleys
Southwest Communities Animal Shelter
33751 Mission Trail, Wildomar, CA

Seminar fees (per person/day):	ADVANCE REGISTERED*	AT THE DOOR
PEAC Members:	FREE!	\$5.00
Non-members:	\$10.00	\$15.00

*Advance registration is due by the Wednesday prior to the seminar; no exceptions.

REGISTER ME!

Sign Me Up in Wild, Wild, Wildomar for these 2014 Seminars:

DATE	TITLE	# PEOPLE	AMT
			\$
			\$
			\$

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

Credit Card #: _____ (VISA MC AMEX, DISCOVER) Exp. ____/____

Signature (for credit cards) _____ CVV (3 digits on back of card) _____

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Or fax credit card payments to 909 563-8418 or email credit card payment or PayPal to parroted@peac.org.

FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

(continued from page 1)

Self-mutilation: In severe cases the bird will self-mutilate soft-tissue areas on its breast, legs, and back, causing sores and bleeding. Tissue damage can be so extensive that the wounds never heal and these open sores become ideal breeding grounds for bacterial infections. On occasion, even after getting the wounds stitched, the bird will open up the stitches to continue hurting himself. In the most tragic cases, birds will self-mutilate until death occurs from bleeding.

CAUSES OF FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

It is being recognized more and more that, in most cases, the initial cause of FDB, especially in hand-fed domestic birds, is physical, with behavior playing a part in its continuation. Physical causes can include disease, traumatic injury, malnutrition, poor physical care, allergies, and/or a substandard environment. Diagnosis of a possible medical cause is the very first step to take.

Your veterinarian should conduct a *complete* physical exam, looking for lumps, injuries, feather cysts, and lipomas or other tumors. Diagnostic tests should, at a minimum, include a CBC (complete blood count); complete blood chemistry panels; and vent, crop and skin swabs. Tests should be run for parasitic, yeast, fungal, and bacterial infections, as well as for psittacosis, psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFD), *Giardia*, and polyoma. Other tests may include radiographs and/or a skin biopsy.

Regardless of whether a physical cause is found, parrots that engage in this aberrant behavior should always undergo a dramatic enrichment of their lives. No medical treatment or dietary or environmental change will ever be successful without it, because even when the medical/physical cause disappears, the habit remains.

SOME DISEASE-RELATED CAUSES OF FEATHER PLUCKING:

- Endocrine diseases such as low thyroid levels or progesterone or testosterone imbalances
- Virus-related disorders such as PBFD, PDD, French molt, Psittacine pox, canary pox, polyoma
- Bacterial-related disorders such as bacterial sinusitis, *Chlamydia*, feather folliculitis, (Please take into consideration that plucking can not only be a result of folliculitis, but can cause it as well. Also, self-mutilation can lead to secondary bacterial infections, which cause more self-mutilation, setting up a cycle very hard to break.)
- Fungal diseases (for example, yeast)
- Internal organ diseases, for example, fatty liver (Internal tumors or kidney disease may cause birds to pluck the diseased area.)
- Food allergies, especially to seeds
- Poor nutrition
- Pruritis: "itchy bird," caused by the following:
 - Internal parasites, such as roundworms and tapeworms
 - Giardia* infections (can trigger severe skin irritation)
 - Bacterial, viral, or fungal infections of the skin and feathers
 - Yeast infections
 - Staphylococcus aureus* infections
 - Intestinal, respiratory, or crop infection (can cause whole-body pruritis because of a hypersensitivity reaction)
 - Inhaled allergens
 - Contact allergens
 - Ingested allergens
 - Dry, flaky skin or thickened reddened skin dermatitis, folliculitis
 - Improper wing clipping, where the cut shafts poke the bird's back
 - External parasites such as feather mites (very rarely a cause)

ENDOCRINE DISEASES

Hypothyroidism (low thyroid function)

Low thyroid function is a fairly rare occurrence.

(Continued on next page)

FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

(continued)

Signs of hypothyroidism include thickened dry skin, persistent bacterial and fungal infections, excessive feather loss during molt or a delayed/repressed molt, obesity, and poor feather quality in combination with feather picking. It is a condition difficult to document in birds, as the T4 test to confirm hypothyroidism has not been especially sensitive and it requires a TSH stimulation test in addition to the T4 and baseline thyroid level tests. Presumptive diagnosis is possible based on symptoms and response to thyroxine, but it may be overdiagnosed clinically; and as thyroid medication is toxic in high doses, tests are needed on a regular basis to ensure the replacement levels of oral thyroid supplements are adequate, and for cardiac disease and other hypothyroidism-related conditions.

Another cautionary note about thyroid testing is that thyroid function may be different in birds than in mammals. Birds have seasonally wide fluctuations in thyroid levels and some species' (especially Amazon's) levels seem to decrease during breeding periods, and then increase after the breeding season, ushering in the molt.

Progesterone or testosterone imbalance

Progesterone or testosterone imbalance is usually corrected by spaying/neutering birds or by hormonal injections, although New York Birds (newyorkbirds.net) recommends decreasing the environmental triggers for reproductive behavior, namely, keeping the bird on a strict natural daylight schedule, removing perceived nesting areas, feeding a diet of lower protein and vitamin E (some recommend dry food only during the cold weather months), and minimizing, as much as possible, masturbation by the bird and petting that might result in sexual arousal. (Down the back and under the wings are areas of high sexual arousal for most parrots.)

Typically, birds do not breed based on a monthly rhythm; instead they breed because a variety of stimuli are present. The importance of the specific stimuli vary depending on the species but can include a nesting site, increased availability of food, weight gain, appropriate temperature, an increase or decrease in daylight hours, and ascendancy in the flock. Many of our birds, instead of cycling in and out of breeding condition, are constantly in breeding condition due to the fact that owners do not strive to reproduce the birds' natural life cycles.

(Continued page 14)

Director's Letter (continued)

The first is that we can present new seminars on subjects that are of interest to the membership instead of every two or three months having to present the required seminars over again. It also has allowed a more personal way to evaluate whether the applicant is a good match for the bird they wish to adopt. The second positive that this change has offered is that it allows people who are interested in adoption to proceed at a more realistic speed to become qualified and hopefully approved for adoption. This is not a race through the protocols PEAC has always had in place for adoptions; it just give one the means to take the required seminars without having to wait one to two months until they become available.

Three Amazon parrots from the foster program exhibited behaviors that made them too difficult to place in a new home, and they were transferred to Best Friends, a no-kill sanctuary located in Utah. We have developed a good relationship with this organization and are very pleased to have them as an alternative, should we end up with a parrot that is not a good match for a pet lifestyle but deserves a safe and healthy environment in which to live out its life.

(Continued on page 14)

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT:



Avian Behavior International



Diamond Avian



Rebecca O'Connor/CAITEC
/Project Parrot Positive



Petco Foundation



Thank you to the following people
who have so generously donated to the birds of PEAC:

Gale Chan and Steve Scott
Mike & Julie Comella
Kelly Flynn
Kathy Fraga
Beverly Kirkegaard
Philip Jenkins
Chloe Rogers

Judith Lazar
Jim & Karen Hodson
Debra Kolen
Ann Palik
Virginia Van Dyke
Jean Rockwell
Linda Stuart

» » URGENT NOTICE—TOY-MAKING WORKSHOP

If you plan to attend the toy-making workshop, please let us know as soon as possible. We need an accurate head count to ensure that we have ample materials for all.

The workshop is on Saturday, 6/28, and not the following day, as previously noted.

Also, if you have already signed up, please send a confirmation email to Eric at membership@peac.org. We have had some inconsistencies with our website while it has been under construction, and we want to make sure we haven't missed your registration!

DIRECTOR'S LETTER (continued)

With the adoptions being completed and those foster birds now residing in their new forever homes and sanctuary, we have opened up some spaces for new foster birds. We have taken in seven new fosters, which leaves only two birds on the waiting list.

We have attended several Petco adoption fairs and are trying to schedule one a month with the more active stores such as the Sports Arena Blvd. location and the Unleashed store on Washington St. in Hillcrest. Again, I would like to thank the volunteers who offer their time to set up, engage the public, and tear down at these events. It is only through an active volunteer base that PEAC will survive.

We are still working on the logistics of a baking-for-your-parrot class. It looks like we are going to be renting a commercial kitchen in North Park if all works out. The class will cover recipes for items from fresh vegetable birdie salad to baked items such as birdie bread and Polly-wanna crackers. Keep your eyes and ears open for when the date is set and be sure to register. (Continued on page 18)

FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR (cont from page 13)

Other conditions such as follicular cysts may lead birds to be constantly in the prophase of breeding and may be associated with mutilation. This seems in some species to lead to feather picking. Other conditions such as follicular cysts may lead birds to be constantly in the prophase of breeding and may be associated with mutilation.

We suspect hormonal involvement when picking coexists with broody-type behavior, with some seasonal picking, when birds pick their leggings, and with certain cases of mutilation. Specific tests that can be helpful include estradiol and androstenedione (University of Tennessee Endocrine Lab). Breeding readiness and follicular cysts can also be suggested by radiographs and confirmed by endoscopy.

Drugs that seem to have been helpful in reducing feather picking associated with reproductive behavior include the following:

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Come visit us on the Web!

"Like" us on Facebook

[Parrot-Education-and-Adoption-Center](#)

Check the updated calendar and interesting articles on our website

www.peac.org

Watch your email for our PEAC Monthly Info Blast

NEWSFLASH - - UPCOMING FOSTER BIRD EVENTS!!

Come see us in San Diego at our outreach fairs:

Petco 1210 W. Morena Blvd. **July 19**, 9:30a to 2:00p

Petco Unleashed 308 Washinton St. **August 9**, 9:00a to 2:00p

Petco 3495 Sports Arena Blvd. **September 13**, 9:00a to 2:00p

- Depo-Provera (medroxyprogesterone acetate) is synthetic progesterone, sometimes used for birth control in humans. This drug is not used much anymore in birds because of its many side effects.
- HCG (human chorionic gonadotropin) is widely used and seems to have little in the way of side effects. Practitioners report variable results with HCG. In my hands, it has been very effective with certain birds. To get a good effect, I seem to need to use HCG on a weekly or biweekly basis.
- Lupron (a synthetic analog of gonadotropin-releasing hormone) works by obliterating blood levels of estrogen or testosterone for weeks to months. This drug is currently in its trial stages and shows some promise for mutilators.

Other drugs which may have some effects on reproductive behavior and which may help feather picking associated with endocrine activity include a zona pellucida (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zona_pellucida) vaccine currently being investigated by Dr. Ritchie, and cyproheptadine (an anti-serotonin drug) which may make some birds less likely to breed because they perceive that there are inadequate food supplies. Further, melatonin, which affects the pineal gland and ultimately the adrenal gland, seems to help many birds. Melatonin may be working by decreasing estrogen or testosterone or it may simply have a calming or sedating effect. Fluoxetine (Prozac), which has prolactin effects, has not been useful in most cases for feather picking. However, in combination with HCG, it has worked to stop chronic egg laying in cockatiels.

VIRUS-RELATED INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD).

Those most susceptible to PBFD are Old World birds. We suspect PBFD when we see abnormal feather development. Often, feather development becomes increasingly abnormal with each molt. These birds usually do not aggressively pick feathers and are usually not pruritic (itchy). Lovebirds may have few or no feather lesions. The PBFD PCR identifies the organism in the blood and is a sensitive and specific test of this disease.

Proventricular Dilation Disease (PDD).

PDD affects all avian species. Signs include weight loss, vomiting, passing whole seed or other undigested food in the droppings, and neurological deficits. Additionally, many birds with PDD pick their feathers. The cause of this is suspected to be either neurological or inadequate absorption of essential nutrients or fatty acids. Currently, a specific test for this disease is being trialed at the University of Georgia. This test looks for the presence of viral DNA in blood and feces, as well as antibody response. While this test is in trial, we continue to screen for this disease with radiographs, crop biopsies, and serial CK isoenzymes.

Polyoma virus

This a very stable virus that can live for up to 6 months in the environment. It is easy to transmit from pet shops, bird marts, bird owners' homes; virtually anywhere birds can be found. The pathogen is considered one of the most significant to cage birds around the world. The highly infectious disease affects most, if not all, parrot species.

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FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR (cont from page 15)

Most birds infected will die within a few days, and no specific treatment is available. Most birds that die from Polyoma are under 100 days old, BUT IT CAN AFFECT A BIRD OF ANY AGE. Polyoma is believed to have an incubation period of approximately two weeks. Polyoma virus affects feathers in juvenile budgerigars but feather abnormalities are rare in the larger psittacines.

FUNGUS-RELATED INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Systemic **aspergillosis** has also been implicated as a cause of feather picking. We suspect aspergillosis in birds with respiratory abnormalities or when a screening complete blood count (CBC) shows a high count and monocytosis, and protein electrophoresis shows abnormal globulin patterns. Aspergillosis can be an elusive disease to definitively diagnose. Specific tests include antigen or antibody levels. Some fungal granulomas can be confirmed by x-ray or endoscopy. Positive antigen or antibody results may indicate exposure, infection, or even an allergic reaction to the organism. Negative test results do not rule out infection, as a negative bird may have an infection with a walled off granuloma or may just not be mounting an immune response. Treatment involves oral itraconazole, intratracheal amphotericin-B, and/or nebulization with chlortrimazole.

INTERNAL ORGAN OR METABOLIC DISEASES

Kidney disease and liver conditions have been associated with plucking. Internal organ disease of a chronic nature, such as hepatitis or egg yolk peritonitis and abdominal tumors, often manifests itself as self-trauma to the feathers. The cause of this is unknown. Full blood testing will determine whether any of these conditions are present. Some, like fatty liver disease, are diet related and would be taken care of with a good diet (please refer to our Diet Forum for more detailed and species-specific diets).

FOOD ALLERGIES and METAL TOXICITY

Birds, like people, can be allergic to a wide variety of foods, the most common being peanuts; wheat, corn and soy products; eggs; and any artificial or chemical product such as colorings, flavorings and preservatives; but they can also be allergic to strawberries, oranges, and any other number of foods that we would normally consider "safe." It is always recommended that birds eat a completely organic diet (this includes distilled, spring, or purified water for drink and bath) but for presenting symptoms of FDB, it is imperative that all allergens be removed from their diet. Take into consideration that most commercial bird food including pellets, treats, pasta, cereals, etc. contain peanuts and/or wheat products, so they should be eliminated from the bird's diet, and each element slowly and independently re-introduced until it is determined to be safe for the bird.

High zinc or lead levels in the bloodstream have been recognized as causing feather abusive behavior. These metals enter the parrot's digestive tract when the bird mouths certain items. Most of the cases of metal toxicity of which I hear concern cockatoos, who are exceptionally "beaky" birds by nature and are often fascinated by metal objects.

Zinc is present in many forms in the parrot's environment. Many of the fasteners used to hold toys to the cage are galvanized metal, which is coated with zinc. Bells on toys can contain zinc. The powder coating on some of the less expensive cages has been shown to contain zinc. One feather-picking umbrella cockatoo who exhibited very high levels of zinc in his blood had a habit of drinking from the bathroom faucet. While doing so, he would scrape the inside of the fixture with his beak. The most frequently cited sources for lead toxicity include the leading on stained glass windows and other items. This is quite soft and readily yields to the pressure of a curious beak. The small seed beads used to make jewelry often contain lead. Some parrots have increased levels of lead from ingesting the weights that are placed in the bottom hem of draperies.

INHALED AND CONTACT ALLERGENS

Smoke, dander, perfumes, house deodorants, pollen, dust mold, candles (especially the ones with fragrance), any kind of aerosol, soaps, laundry detergents, deodorants, paint, household cleaning products, hair products, litter or nest box material, latex, rubber, some metals, some topical antibiotics, resin, carbon monoxide... the list is endless.

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FEATHER DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR (cont from page 16)

PARROTS' DIETS

Over the last twenty years, dietary suggestions from expert certified avian vets have changed as many times as the seasons. We've been directed to feed our birds everything from all seeds, to table food, to just pellets, to not just pellets, to finally, a blend of all of the above—except for foods containing high fat, high salt, animal protein, lactose, caffeine, chocolate, avocado, high sugar content, or high preservative or artificial coloring content. What are presented here are good, logical choices of healthy foods for your birds. Always keep in mind the use of pesticides when feeding fresh foods, and always think “healthy.” If you ever question whether a food is acceptable for your bird, call an avian vet to confirm the choice.

The issues of diet and health are very controversial in the bird world. We should first think about what your specific species of parrot eats in the wild. This is very important because, contrary to what the bird industry would like you to believe, no two species have the same dietary needs. Then, we have to keep in mind the bird's activity level, whether or not he's molting (shedding his feathers), and whether or not she may be laying eggs (some hens lay infertile eggs for no apparent reason). There are many different items on the market to feed your bird which may be marketed as a “total diet,” but none, I repeat, none, are truly complete.

- **Pelleted diets:** These are similar to rabbit pellets or dog kibble. There are many different brands on the market, many with artificial colors and/or flavors and preservatives that can have a harmful effect on your bird's health. If choosing to feed pellets, choose one that is certified organic, with nothing artificial. These may cost more, but will most likely keep your bird healthy longer. Pellets are designed to try to provide all the nutrients parrots need to stay healthy, but they cannot provide enzymes and natural nutrients that whole foods provide. Many vets recommend pellets, but many bird guardians prefer to prepare fresh foods instead. *(A diet of 100% pellets is not recommended. Lories and lorikeets should never be fed pellets, and parakeets [budgies] and Indian ringnecks, only sparingly. Especially for small birds, pellets should be selected with great care; they should be organic, not be extruded, not be a concentrated pellet, and not contain high sucrose or dyes.)*
- **Fresh foods:** Many people feed fresh and cooked vegetables and fruits to their birds. Parrots are especially sensitive to Vitamin A deficiency, so it's important to feed foods with lots of vitamin A (especially orange-colored foods such as carrots, sweet potatoes, and papayas). Grains and legumes are also wonderful for birds. Plain oatmeal, cooked beans, whole wheat pasta, and grains like quinoa are very healthful. Many healthy human foods are also healthy for birds, but they need to be organic and contain no caffeine, sugar, salt, chocolate, avocado, alcohol, preservatives, or artificial color or flavoring. *(A diet of mostly fresh foods is recommended).*
- **Seeds:** Seeds used to be fed as a total diet, until people realized that most parrots do not eat that many seeds in the wild and the ones they do eat are green seeds which are not available in the States. Seeds do have some nutritional value, but they do not provide total nutrition and they can be fattening, which is why they should not be fed as a total diet. Most birds relish seeds, and if given them often, will refuse to eat anything else. Be sure to purchase a high-quality mix, and take care that this mix does not grow annoying flour moths, which often hatch out of seed mixes. You should not freeze seeds, as it decomposes the oils in them, but you should keep them in the fridge or at least in an air-tight container. It is possible that certain species (ground feeders such as cockatiels, greys, and cockatoos) do well with more seed in their diets than others. Other species, such as Amazons and macaws, may suffer from obesity if allowed too much fat in their diet, and Eclectus should get very little of them, as their natural diet is very low in nutrients and protein. *(Seeds should play a small part in your bird's diet, depending on the species. Lories and lorikeets should never be fed seeds).*
- **Cooked Food:** Many people purchase commercial food mixes made especially for parrots. These mixes are often mixed with water and cooked on the stovetop and cooled, and then served to your bird. You can make extra and freeze this in ice-cube trays for future use. Or, you can be creative and make your own mixes, birdy bread and muffins. Home-cooked recipes (gloop) use organic grains (rice and other grains); baby food (with high vitamin A content such as squash, carrots, etc.); mashed pumpkin and yams; canned, frozen or fresh vegetables, etc. Experiment; there are many foods that you might think your bird won't eat, until you serve them a different way. A good way to feed a food that your bird doesn't like is to puree it and cook it into a mix. Pellets can also be ground up in a food processor and mixed into cooked foods. *(Personally, I swear by gloop.)*

“Feather Destructive Behavior” will conclude in our next issue!

DIRECTOR'S LETTER (cont from page 14)

Lastly, I would like to make two announcements about volunteers who are stepping up to help with the workings of PEAC. Melanie is now the Operations Volunteer and will be handling all things pertaining to memberships as well as other business-related issues. She has not only been working as the new editor of the newsletter but has also been kind enough to edit and proof all PEAC documents so that they are all up to date. Her PEAC email is PEACoperations@gmail.com. Feel free to email her with any questions you may have. The second announcement is that Fiona has agreed to become the Social Media Volunteer and will be managing all things related to our facebook page, website, and new Instagram account. If you have any questions regarding social media, please email her at socialmediaPEAC@gmail.com. Thank you both for all your efforts and for volunteering your time for PEAC - - it is greatly appreciated.

I would like to wish you all a wonderful fun-filled summer with your flock.

Cheers,
Eric Kern

Letter from the Editor

Dear PEAC Members,

This year is Elton John's *Yellow Brick Road* album's 50th year anniversary. In an interview on the *Today* Show, Sir Elton discussed his decades-long spiral into drug and alcohol abuse. He's now been sober for several decades.

It's easy to see how we can spiral down with regard to our birds' bad habits and behavior problems. My own cockatoo is a case in point! After a several-year history of screaming and plucking with her former owner, "treated" with a spray bottle and drugs, she "graduated" with me to behavioral modification attempts with positive reinforcement and changes in diet and sleep habits. And although the plucking is vastly improved, still, the screaming continues. (In fact, I'm ignoring her screaming right now, as I write this!) It would be so easy to scream back, spray water, cover her cage during the day, or any other reaction we see on the list as it spirals down. And I see these problems with other people and their parrots, too. We can attend the seminars and learn how to best deal with diet, social interaction, and behavioral issues, but when we go home, we say, "Well, I know how it's 'supposed to be,' but they don't know my bird! We're the exception. He will only behave for Cheetos. He likes our 'alone' time when we stay up late for our petting fests. She's so precious and she just loves her little pieces of Oreo. They only stop screaming when I put them into their room and close the curtains."

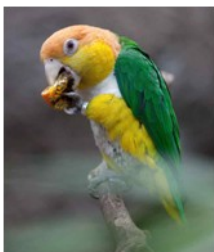
If Elton John can do it, so can we. I'm still working on it, and don't plan to stop, difficult as it may be at times. Let's climb up from the spiral and apply what we learn in the monthly seminars, better attempting to practice what we (learn and) preach. It may be a long, hard road (so goodbye, *Yellow Brick!*), but it's the least we can do for our flock-mates, huh?

Wishing you and yours a happy, healthy summer!

Best,
Melanie Ariessohn

PEAC MEMBERSHIP DISCOUNTS

We are currently updating the vendor page for you.



BEAK TO TAIL
PARROT EDUCATION & ADOPTION CENTER®
P.O. Box 600423
SAN DIEGO, CA 92160-0423



Parrot Education & Adoption Center®

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 29, 2014

Toy-Building Workshop
(San Diego)

July 27, 2014

“No More Room” (New Seminar)
(San Diego)

August 24, 2014

“Living with Cockatoos” (New Seminar)
“Become a Foster Volunteer” (New)
(San Diego)

September 20, 2014

“Building a Parrot Play Area” (New)
(Wildomar)