

12 Mistakes People Make With Their Birds

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Even with all the information available to us, we still don't know all there is to know about having birds as pets. It's a continuous discovery and mistakes will be made. If you find yourself making some of the mistakes discussed below, forgive yourself. Do the research, learn what you need to know and change it.

1. Staying in a bad relationship.

The idea of bringing a cute, cuddly baby bird, or a beautiful, older bird that talks into your home, is a temptation that is hard to resist. However, not all of us are able to care for birds in the way they need to be cared for. When reality sets in and you realize living with this bird isn't going to work out as you thought it would, you come face to face with a dilemma.

What do you do now?

First of all, don't beat yourself up. You made a mistake. It happens. Do your research. Better late than never. Determine if you are up to the task. If you realize this isn't going to work out for you, then it certainly won't work out for the bird. Dedicate yourself to finding your bird a new home.

Don't keep the bird just because you feel guilty or because you feel a sense of responsibility. It's like staying in a bad marriage. No one ever benefits. You'll be giving this bird a new opportunity for happiness by finding him a place to thrive.

2. It's "Just A Bird"

When we believe something is "merely" or "only", we tend to treat it with less respect and consideration. "Just" implies a lower level of importance. This perspective towards birds ends up as a rationalization for neglect and abuse. Example: 1. So what if my bird is in her cage most of the time. After all she's just a bird. 2. Care about his feelings? He doesn't have feelings, he's just a bird.

Birds have emotions. They may not be as complex as ours, but they feel fear, grief, love, joy and probably a whole lot more in between. Birds aren't "just". They are wondrous beings with intelligence and feelings. They need to be treated that way and given the best life experience we can give them.

3. Cage too small

I often wonder what some cage manufacturers are thinking when they design cages. Some of them don't seem to know much about birds. Either the main perch and feeding areas are too high creating a lot of wasted space or they make the feeding crocks so large they also take up too much of the interior space. Birds don't eat & drink very much per day and yet the crocks are big enough for a pound of food.

Look for cages that make sense from the bird's point of view. It has to be roomy enough so they can move around,

climb the bars, and have perches and toys at different levels. A cage may look big enough when it's empty, but start putting perches, toys, ladders and swings inside and all of sudden the cage that seemed big enough, now doesn't have room for the bird.

Cage size also depends on the activity level of the bird. If a bird enjoys hanging from a toy and flapping it's wings, this has to be taken in consideration when determining size. When you see minimum cage requirements for your species of bird, go to the next size.

A cage 3 feet wide is more appropriate for a medium size bird like an African Grey than a 2 foot cage and the cage size needs to increase from there for larger birds. Would you feel comfortable with a house the size of your bathroom?

4. Not enough exercise

Birds need to move. They need to climb, swing, hang and flap their wings. Just sitting on a play stand chewing toys is usually not enough. If your bird's wings are clipped you can introduce your bird to the flying game for exercise. When your bird is on your hand gently secure her feet with your thumb, and slowly lower your hand so she moves her wings to maintain balance. At the same time say fly or whatever word you like. She'll learn to associate the word with the flapping of her wings and will soon do it on her own when you say the word. Pretty soon your bird will look forward to her flying or flapping exercise sessions and she'll be happier and healthier as a result.

When I got my African Grey, Cairo, at age four, she didn't know how to fly. So, I taught her. I started out with the flapping game and then spent months running with her through the house while she flapped her wings while tightly clulching my hand. The neighbors thought I was a bit nuts, but Cairo loved it and would yell "fly, fly" as she was happily flapping away. She now knows how to fly and is much more confident.

4. Not Enough Explanation

Birds need to understand what is going on in their environment and we do them a disservice if we don't explain our actions and expectations. Don't worry whether they understand or not. Just try it and they'll surprise you with the results.

All my birds identify noise with the word noise. Instead of freaking out over a loud noise they'll all say noise and not be bothered by it. My CAG is learning to distinguish between noises. Motorcycles made her anxious, but now that she is learning that it is called motorcycle noise she isn't concerned about it as she once was. When she hears a motorcycle she just says noise and doesn't worry about it.

When you go away over night tell your bird how long you're going away for. Example: You're going away for "2 Nite Nites" (substitute whatever word you use at night). Tell them you'll miss them and they'll be fine.

5. Moving too Fast

It's not always easy to remember to slow down when we're around our birds. Sudden movements, especially fast hand movement usually frightens them. If we're under stress, feeling frustrated because we feel we don't have enough time to accomplish what we need to accomplish, we radiate that energy and can instantly raise the anxiety level of our birds. We need to slow down. Keep our hands still instead of waving them in our bird's face. Have someone wave their hands in your face. Do you like it?

6. Not Taking The Time To Observe

One of the greatest pleasures and most important aspects of sharing our lives with birds is watching them. We can learn so much about what they like, what bothers them and what is safe for them by watching them play, interact with other birds and other people. Taking the time to observe can eliminate future problems.

7. Not stimulating their sense of adventure

Birds are naturally curious. They need to be given challenges that stimulate curiosity. Puzzle toys and foraging toys are an important addition to any bird room.

8. Hitting

The fastest way to destroy a bird's trust is by hitting. NEVER hit your bird.

9. A frustrated bird is not happy

Birds do not understand teasing. It's cruel. Also be careful of toys that tend to frustrate rather than entertain your bird. Some puzzle toys can entertain your bird for hours, but if she isn't able to feel any accomplishment or success as a result of her efforts, she can become frustrated. All birds are different so once again, observe.

10. Pushing Your Bird

Pushing your bird to do things he doesn't want to do probably won't accomplish a positive outcome. If your bird isn't in the mood to come out of his cage, or if he doesn't want to step up or come near this new person you've brought to meet him, let him be.

Educate & train your bird to enjoy doing those things that are necessary for a cooperative relationship. Give him good reasons to want to come out of his cage. If instead, you think pressuring is easier and takes less time than educating your bird, don't be surprised when he responds with his beak.

11. Crowding your bird

Birds like space. Putting their cages too close together or putting birds together in small cages can sometimes be a disaster waiting to happen. Allow your bird to have their own personal space and only put them with other birds when you are absolutely sure they are comfortable sharing space with that bird. Continue to watch the situation. They could change their minds.

12. Having too many

Only you can determine how many birds are too many. But, before you fall in love with another bird you can't live without, do a serious, honest appraisal of your present situation. Are you giving the necessary time to the bird or birds you already have? Will you be able to afford the extra expense? Why do you really want another bird?

Short note about the author

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Kai Jordan works with parrots to resolve feather plucking and other emotional issues. This article is an excerpt from "Happy Pet Birds". For more info. visit <http://www.parrot-source.com>

Author: Kai Jordan

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