

# *Brant County SPCA*

## Birds



### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

All birds require a constant supply of fresh water. You can provide this in a heavy stainless steel bowl or a heavy-bottomed crock; the weight will keep the bird from tipping the bowl over. The bird will probably try to bathe in any bowl that's big enough for him to squeeze into; most birds will bathe every day, so they may turn their fresh drinking water into icky bath residue. To avoid this problem, provide extra water in a sipper tube, or in a cup designated to be attached to the wall of the cage. Then give your birds separate bath dishes so they can maintain their daily hygiene routines.

You should try to put the bird somewhere cozy and safe while you clean his cage, but if you can't, try to work slowly and quietly while cleaning. Temperatures of 68 to 75 degrees are ideal. If needed space heaters or heat lamps can be used but beware of falling feathers gathering around space heaters and also make sure that the bulbs in your heating lamps do not have a Teflon-based coating, which can produce fumes that are toxic to birds.

Smaller birds should have enough room in their cages to flutter about comfortably and hop from perch to perch; larger birds must be able to fully stretch out their wings without touching the sides of the cage. Cages for birds with long tails should be tall enough to accommodate the length of the tail.

It is a good idea to provide birds with perches. Perches should be large enough in diameter that a bird's foot should encircle  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the perch's surface; perches of smaller and larger diameters should also be provided so that the bird will get plenty of foot exercise. The number of perches in a cage will depend on cage size - *you should not crowd a bird* - but one perch should allow him access to food. Make sure the perch is secure, and try to place them so that any droppings the bird produces while perching won't fall into food or water supplies.

Birds should be provided with cage toys appropriate to species and size. Because so many of the parrot species are intelligent and gregarious, boredom can be a real problem for birds confined to a cage. Introducing new and different toys to your birds can help make them happier and more relaxed. Although commercial toys for birds are available, you can also improvise with everyday items: cardboard tubes from paper towel rolls, leafy branches, corncobs, pieces of wood strung together on a rope, and hard rubber dog toys are all acceptable bird toys. Just use your imagination, and make sure the objects are safe for the bird.

There are general guidelines that apply, the larger the bird the greater the expenditure in terms of time and money. The larger birds especially, need toys, entertainment, and social interaction with their caregivers. Softbills such as toucans will also require a greater time commitment, because adopters will have to cater to their particular nutritional needs.

## **FINCHES & CANARIES**

Birdlike appetite: A commercially formulated canary/finch feed, apple slices, lettuce leaves and dandelions.

For A Happy Home: A finch should ideally be housed with another finch; less people-friendly than larger birds, finches like the company of other finch friends. Cages should be as large as possible. For a single pair or small group of finches, a good cage size is about 2 feet tall, 3 feet wide, and a foot deep. Single canaries should be housed in caging at least 1 foot tall, 2 feet wide and 1 foot deep.

## **SMALL PARROTS (Parakeets, Cockatiels and Lovebirds)**

Birdlike appetite: Commercial feeds, supplemented with fresh fruit and vegetables.

For a Happy Home: Many of these little fellows can be housed in pairs, provided they get along. Cockatiels vary in color according to their genders; the undersides of a female's tail feathers are yellow with dark barring. Cockatiel cages should be at least 1 ½ feet tall, wide and deep. Parakeet cages should be at least a foot tall, wide and deep. Lovebirds should not be housed with other species, as they are aggressive and may fight.

## **MEDIUM TO LARGE PARROTS (Conures, Amazons, African Grays, Lories)**

Birdlike appetite: Commercial parrot feed, supplemented with fresh fruit and vegetables.

For A Happy Home: Larger parrots should be caged in areas at least 3 feet wide, 3 feet tall, and 2 feet deep; they should always have enough room to spread their wings fully. Larger parrots are more intelligent, and with their greater intelligence comes a greater need for social interaction with caregivers; lack of attention can lead to destructive behaviors and constant vocalization.

Lories and lorikeets are a group with specialized feeding requirements. These birds primarily consume flower nectar, using their specially adapted brush-like tongues. Commercial nectar mixes are available for these birds, but in an emergency a homemade mixture of monkey-chow biscuits, apples, carrots, molasses and water can be processed in a blender to achieve a semi-liquid consistency. Lories should also be offered soft fruits and vegetables. Because of the high moisture content of their diets, Lories produce very loose and messy droppings, and their cages and perches must be cleaned at least daily.

## **COCKATOOS**

Birdlike appetite: Commercial parrot feed, plus supplements of fresh fruit and vegetables.

For A Happy Home: Cockatoo caging should be a 4 feet tall, 3 feet wide and 2 feet deep at a minimum. Cockatoos are natural chewers and can be given pieces of untreated wood to satisfy their gnawing urges. The caging for both cockatoos and macaws should be made of strong mesh; these birds have powerful breaks and are inclined to test them on their surroundings.

## **MACAWS**

Birdlike Appetite: Commercial parrot feed, plus supplements of fresh fruit and vegetables.

For A Happy Home: Small macaws (such as yellow-collared macaws and Severes) can be housed in cages at least 3 feet tall, 2 feet deep, and 2 feet wide. Larger macaws (such as blue and gold, Military, Greenwing, and Hyacinth macaws) need bigger spaces—5 feet tall, 5 feet wide, and at least 3 feet deep. Macaws require lots of attention and can be quite affectionate; they can develop a large vocabulary. As with cockatoos, macaws like to chew, so supply them with pieces of wood to allow them to gnaw away to their hearts' content.

## **TOUCANS and MYNAHS**

Birdlike Appetite: Toucans and mynahs are softbills, and as such, they require a diet of softer foods instead of seeds or pellets. (Preparation of these diets requires more time). Commercial diets for mynahs are available, and should be supplemented with fresh fruit—pears, apples, and grapes are good (keep citrus fruits to a minimum since the acids in them can cause tummy problems), and you can add a good quality dog chow moistened with water or fruit juice. Since fruits are low in protein, these birds need a little protein booster; a weekly snack of mealworms and crickets can be a tasty and protein-filled treat. Some of these fellas have a tendency to store too much iron, so it's important that whatever sources of protein you provide are low in iron.

For A Happy Home: Toucans and mynahs should have wingspan room and enough space to hop from perch to perch; this will mean a cage at least 3 feet tall, 4 feet wide, and 3 feet deep.

