



PURPOSE: To join together people who share a common interest in keeping cage birds in captivity. To educate members and the general public in the best care, keeping maintenance and breeding of cage birds. To support bird conservation.

Due to printing issues, this month's newsletter did not get submitted electronically for posting to the web.

Here, you will find new information from the May newsletter. For standard membership forms, advertisements, 2009 Bird Mart/Show dates and contact information, please see the June newsletter.

May Meeting: May 26, 2009
Speaker: Anthony Ross

President's Message - Pat Surniak

We had a wonderful time at the Lyon's Ranch. Good food, good friends and a great time was had by all. Most of us were jealous of the beautiful setting and a beautiful home. The Lyons said that they will be happy to have us next year.

Treasurer's Report - Linda Karnstedt

Ending Balance as of 3/31/2009	\$7,523.41
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April Income

Membership	\$272.00
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April Expense

Postage, PO Box, Speaker fee	\$452.00
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Minutes of the Board - April 21, 2009

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Attendance: Pat S., George L., Linda K., Bonnie S., Donna S., Mary G., Cheryl C. Guest: Waldie S., David B.
Minutes read and approved.

President's Report: We will be going to the Lyon's Ranch. This is a club members only event.

Raffle: Raffle donations will be accepted until 7:15pm. Anything brought after that time, the club will hold and raffle at another meeting.

New Business: Discussion on changing the wording of our club purpose. To purchase 700 forever stamps.

ATTENTION: We are starting a new program called "Homeward Bound"

On occasion, the club receives notice that a bird is losing his or her home due to circumstances beyond the owner's control. With this comes a plea for help. A home is needed! If you have been thinking about taking in a breed specific rescue or re-homed bird, now is the time to get on our list! If your breed becomes available, you will be contacted and considered.

Pat Surniak will be keeping this database. If you would like to be added to the database, please call her at 707-526-5505 or send her an email at patties-dolls@yahoo.com.

OUR PROGRAM THIS MONTH...

Speaker: Anthony Ross

Anthony Ross will be speaking on his rare softbills and hookbills. Anthony is a wealth of untapped knowledge for the club.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2009

May 26th	Speaker: Anthony Ross
June 23rd	Pride Night
July - TBD	Safari West
August 15-16	Apple Fair
August 25th	Toy Party
September 22nd	Speaker: Bonnie Zimmerman
October 11th	Bird Mart

Birdkeeping Naturally
EB Cravens
April '09

“Okay, So Which Parrot Is the Messiest?”

April and I are currently coping with two 15-week Fuscicollis Cape Parrots who are fledging and weaning in our tiny three-room cottage. The ‘kids’, Princess and Peter are all over the place, from the bright branch-filled garden window in the kitchen to their baskets and hanging rope perches on the deck.

At this life stage they seem to alternate between eating, napping, flying around squealing crazily, and chewing anything organic in sight. Flowers, beet stems, lime boughs, wood sticks, radish seed pods, along with beans and sprouts, corn on the cob and slabs of fresh papaya, citrus and pomegranate are all part of their fare. It’s really gratifying to see them so curious, learning new things at a rapid clip.

The exasperating side of the situation is we keepers constantly have to be cleaning up after the little ruffians. I have towels spread out everywhere, newspaper and plastic trays beneath their baskets, paper towels where they sleep at night. I declare, some mornings I will shake and wipe everything down, rearrange it neatly, and in thirty minutes or less we have another pile of chewed greenery, spit out corn, wiped off apple mush, dropped playthings, and of course poop! The canister vacuum has become my new favorite friend...

For some reason the cape parrots I have known and raised take a sinister delight in picking things up and dropping them to the floor, the ground, or wherever. Hens and cocks alike give that familiar twisted-neck, one-eye-pointed-downward stare at the object they have just released from beak or claw. Plop. Rattle. Bounce. I seem to spend a lot of time picking up stuff with these intelligent parrots. Add to that the detail that we do not clip our fuscicollis since this species has a strong flight response and a tremendous need for exercise, and we now have two fledglings plus April’s house pet (always in separate rooms, by the way!) carrying things around and depositing them on the oddest of floor locations. If it is a piece of fruit or a softened pellet they transmit, it usually ends with a thorough beak wiping on the surface upon which they have landed. And just this morning, Princess landed on the bathroom counter, picked up April’s large hairbrush, and tried to fly off with it, succeeding in getting just about to the bathtub before the brush’s weight began to drag her down and she was forced to drop it with a crash. “What are you doing now, peapod?”

Anyway, I digress. The gist of this column is that so many pet psittacines have tendencies to create major messes in their cages, in the home, on people, wherever. And in ranking the worst offenders, capes are, in my opinion at least tied for the top spot.

Tied with whom? That would be eclectic in my book. Talk about “gooey” birds. One of the difficulties with eclectic parrots (and there are not very many!) is that they do not always do well on a dry foods diet. They like to be cooked for and sprouted for and fed tons of fruit and veggies and pasta and the like. Give them dry stuff, more likely than not they will just dump it in the water dish trying to show you how they prefer to eat. So we always give our eclectic what they want, and they smush it and scrape it and “goo” it all over their furniture--food bowls and steel mounts and cage wire and wooden perches, ropes and toys and even a play box if they have one. There’s a reason most eclectic smell so nice and fruity. Twenty minutes later you have stickiness—and fouled water. Lots of fine stiff scrub brushes and a hose in the yard spray are needed to clean this stuff off. Not fun, but then eclectic parrots are, in my opinion quite worth it!

Third on my messiest honor roll is the entire family of white cockatoos. Individual citrons, umbrellas, goffins, etc. do not always require constant daily cleanup efforts, and they are not the wet food feeders that eclectic are; yet to keep a cockatoo happy, one need provide an incredible amount of beak-

foot-mind stimulation and that means organic toys, wood, leather, plastic, paper, cloth, branches, logs, flowers, rocks and more in the cage for diversion. That's how we keep our cockatoo pets occupied and happy. It also means there is lots of leftover to be removed and thrown out. Some cockatoos will make literally piles of toothpicks out of the chewables, while others will merely fray and manipulate objects, then get bored with them and move on to something more inspiring. Play baskets or tubs full of foot toys are a must with these white birds. Also, the tendency is for owners to overfeed their cockatoos since for the apparent size of the hookbill, you really have a rather delicate, frugal eater. That means the excess seed or pellets or veggie chunks are usually going to be scraped out of the bowl by a shovel beak action the like of which no other hookbill can accomplish! Out of the cage, across the tile floor and underfoot you will find isolated beans and corn and millet and broccoli tidbits. Time for a king sized sheet to surround these mess makers and their cage! Plus, the white dust which is a bit like living near the ash of a volcano. Stock up on sponges if you want a cockatoo.

Now when most birdkeepers think of messy parrots, they think of lorries and lorikeets. I have kept many species of lory and I have to admit I find most of them quite consistently manageable in the maintenance they require. Yes, they do have a fruit-based and liquid diet and yes they do squirt their droppings somewhat. But this latter is nothing like a toucan or various species of spray-gun softbill. And lory droppings have the advantage that a tiny wad of toilet paper, soft tissue or dishrag will wipe them up spit-spot—unlike the thicker smeary green parrot defecations. When we kept lorries, we kept them in long low cages strewn with fresh grass clippings and leafy boughs and greenery, even light hay in the winter. The lower a cage is, the less mess out in the room; a wide long bottom spreads droppings around and the greenery absorbs most of them and can be let dry for several days to a week before we would change it. All depends on the lory and the cage size. Large queen bed sheets we used on the floor where our birds hung out, even on a wall next to the hanging perches for play. These we laundered as needs be and took up when special guests came to visit. Besides, lorries are easy to potty train. They don't chew things into utter mess, do not fling seeds around, and as long as you anchor fruit so it will not be carried to and fro, the eating station stays quite localized. Being very cold weather hardy, most lorries can have an outdoor play cage for many days of the year and save indoor clutter. Lorries, number four on my list.

No listing of pet parrot untidiness would be complete without mention of large macaws—any large macaws. Certainly the rule that the larger the psittacine the larger the mess applies to many of the Ara species. They eat more food, have strength to chew bigger chunks, shed more feathers, etc. than smaller birds. But I have yet to encounter a macaw that made disorder out of proportion to its size; and often these parrots are conservative, even fastidious eaters and predictably destructive if not in breeding mode. When kept with enough toys and chew material to satisfy them, these parrots will not demand a lot of extra cleaning. That is why I rank them this low.

It should be emphasized that the tiniest birds can sometimes be confoundingly "grubby." That is, the canaries, finches, budgerigars and lovebirds may have you running for the broom and vacuum more times than you ever expected for such little cage critters. They eat small seeds and items, leaving lightweight chaff and powder around their environment, then flap their wings and fly briskly from one spot in a cage to another, leaving gentle little breezes of residue swirling around the floor and settling on furniture and windowsills. Unnerving! My time with a cage of finches lasted about two months before I returned them and decided I preferred mess which was something heavier than air so at least it stays put after being rejected. One friend with a finch aviary in the house used to have seed hulls and powder in every room—watch out for these diminutive mess makers!

Finally those birds that get honorable mention: Pionus parrots which are not the tidiest of eaters; caiques who are masters of the "shake and fling"; derbyans who probably chew things up even in their sleep; and African greys whose ultra-fine and dusty feather shedding can irritate asthmatics and double your vacuum time.

Happy cleaning, EB