



2009 SWVBC Bird Fair – June 20, 2009
Sexual Behavior in Bird Behavior
New Member Dues Expiration Date

Summer 2009

A Welcome to New and Prospective Members

For those of you who have recently joined the Southwest Virginia Bird Club, we offer you a hearty welcome and look forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings.

For those of you who have not yet joined our happy group, we hope you will decide that we have something to offer you and we know that you would be a wonderful asset to our club.

This issue of the quarterly SWVBC Newsletter contains information about our upcoming 15th Annual Bird Fair, Sexual Behavior in Bird Behavior and, of course, our Club Notes.



The picture on our cover this quarter is the first place winner in the Small Birds are Fun category of the 2008 Bird Fair picture contest. Tracy Thompson's parrotlets are "Waiting for Mom."



Summer 2009

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SWVBC Board of Directors for 2009

Sue Brewer, Chairperson	366-1193
Melody Blankenship, Vice Chair	344-0313
Pat Rodes, Secretary	563-0824
Edie Manuel, Treasurer	992-2948
Membership, Evelyn Krippendorf	982-8499
Angelika Miner, BCV Representative	965-3057
Wanda Crowder, Hospitality	774-8233
Lois MacDonald, Member at Large	342-0699
Peter Rodes, Member at Large	563-0824

Website: www.swvbc.org

SWVBC 15th Annual Bird Fair



15th Annual Bird Fair

Saturday June 20, 2009
9:00 am - 4:00 pm
St. Elias Banquet Hall
4730 Cove Rd.
NW, Roanoke VA.

Parrot Accessories
Free Seminars
Refreshments
Parrot Toys
Raffles

Educational Exhibits
Canaries & Finches
Photo Contest
Door Prizes
Parrot Food
Parrots

*Join us for our Annual Fun(D)-Raiser
with plenty of Toys, Cages,
Birds, & Educational Seminars!!!*

Admission \$4.00
Children under 12 FREE!

Proceeds go to the SWVBC mission to educate about parrots.
Southwest Virginia Bird Club is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization.

PRINCIPAL SPONSOR:
Kashner's Cakes decorated with Great Speeches Mince!

for more information, call Sue (540) 366-1193
or visit www.swvbc.org



Yes, it is time once again for our annual Bird Fair and we have lots in store for our visitors. We will be in the same location as last year, St. Elias Catholic Church. We have kept the admission price low – \$4.00 for adults, children under 12 free; look for 50¢ off coupons in the Roanoke Times newspaper the week before the fair and on all of our posters around town.

This year the fair raffle has three great prizes (only 200 tickets will be sold):
Hewlett Packard Mini Laptop Computer
Blackberry Pearl Cell Phone
Crosscut Shredder

Call Sue Brewer at 366-1193 to purchase a raffle ticket for \$5.00.

Proceeds from the SWVBC Bird Fair are donated to reputable bird rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation organizations.

Workshops are included in the ticket price; here is the schedule:

- Kevin Blalock, Phoenix Landing
11:00 a.m. – *Getting to Know Phoenix Landing*
- Kashmir Csaky (macaw breeder, aviculturist, certified behaviorist)
1:00 p.m. – *Feather Destructive Behavior*
- Kevin Blalock, Phoenix Landing
2:00 p.m. – *Getting to Know Phoenix Landing*
- Kashmir Csaky (macaw breeder, aviculturist, certified behaviorist)
3:00 p.m. – *Avoiding the Bite*

Below is a list of some of the vendors that will be at the fair. You will see beautiful birds, the newest in bird gadgets and toys, and find lots of ideas for your birds.

- Sassicat Aviary
Medium sized toys, glass decorations
African Red-bellied parrots, African brown-headed parrots
- Joseph Burks
Nest boxes and birds
- Steven Francis
Cages
- Evelyn Adams and Traci Thompson
Cockatiels, English budgies, lovebirds, parrotlets, Quakers, Bourkes, scarlett chested birds
- Lynne Hash
Small birds
- LJO Leather Toys
Toys, toy parts, perches
- Wood and Feathers
Play gyms, toys, cages (possible)
- Gayle Rakestraw
Budgies, parrotlets, Indian ring necks
- Melissa Banks
Quakers, parrotlets
- Robbie Garriety
Prints, notecards, magnets, decorated stemware, mirrors
- Diana Britton
Canary breeding supplies, meds, cages
- Joseph Brigand
Canaries, English budgies, American budgies
- Lucky Parrot
Toys, pieces for toy making, perches, and lots more
- Playful Parrot
Food, carrying cases, toys, perches, cages, gifts

The Basics of Sexual Behavior in Companion Parrots

By Sally Blanchard

If your parrot is showing sexual behavior when he or she is with you, does this mean he really wants to settle down and raise babies with you? Of course, the answer is NO — whether your bird is a male or a female. He or she is reacting to strong biological urges towards his or her perceived mate — you. Since companion parrots bond strongly to their human friends, sexual behaviors are often directed towards them in the absence of a more suitable mate (another parrot!). Many parrots raised with *Nurturing Guidance* do not form sexual bonds with their favorite caregiver. Just because parrots are exhibiting sexual behaviors does not mean they need to be placed in a breeding situation. Nor does it mean that your parrot wants to raise a family. It only means that he or she is exhibiting natural behavior in an unnatural situation — your living room. Some domestically raised parrots wouldn't know what to do with a parrot mate. However, it is important that we discourage our parrots from forming a sexual bond with us. Both of you will be happier just being good friends. Understanding more about the factors that influence your parrot's sexual behavior as he or she matures will help you provide the guidance he or she needs to be content as a well-nurtured lifelong *celibate* companion.

No matter what you do, that delightful, sweet, innocent baby parrot is going to mature into an adult parrot and he or she will most likely have normal biological urges to reproduce. Considering the fact that many people have kept single parrots as contented companions for years, it is obvious that good care and a nurturing environment can override much of the “need to breed.” In fact some companion parrots show little, if any, sexual behavior or inclination to breed as they mature.

The key to having a lifelong well-behaved parrot is to establish guidelines and set rules from the very beginning. Although much of a parrot's behavior is instinctive, an equal amount of it is also learned. The more intelligent animals are, the more their behaviors are influenced by teaching and example. Parrots, even domestically-raised babies, have no idea how to adapt to life as a human companion. They do not come out of the egg being good pets — we have to teach and guide them with *Nurturing Guidance*. We need to be their surrogate parents or flock leaders. Parrots who have this type of guidance are less likely to have serious problems when they reach maturity — or start being influenced by their hormones. By giving companion parrots clear messages to guide their behaviors, we can actually override some of the natural behavior that creates problems for them as pets. Using the “UP” and “DOWN” command every time you pick up or put your parrot down, is one of the best ways to give parrots a clear message about what you expect from them. It also creates consistency in the behavior of the people in the parrot's life.

Everyone who will be involved in the parrot's life needs to spend time with him and develop their own individual bond. Playing *warm potato* patterns the parrot to go from person to person. This means that everyone sits down together and slowly passes the bird from one person to another with each person providing the bird with something special whether it is teaching a behavior, giving a treat, or just giving a welcome head skritch. A family spending consistent time with the parrot together as a group and separately throughout his life will help prevent him from becoming a “one-person bird.” If everyone handles the parrot comfortably, follows and sets consistent rules and provides guidance, the bird is less likely to form a strong sexual bond with one person and exhibit sexual aggression towards others. A “neutral room” away from the cage and other family members, where the parrot is not used to being (and therefore does not have a

territorial agenda) is a good place for each individual to spend a period of time each day developing his own special relationship with the parrot.

Just as young children may “play house” long before they are sexually mature, young parrots may begin to “court” their owners long before they have the hormones to back it up. Just because a parrot exhibits sexual behavior does not mean it is mature enough to breed. Sexual immaturity comes quite some time before sexual maturity. One of the first behaviors that may eventually evolve into sexual behavior is regurgitation. It is natural for parrots to feed each other and the fact that your parrot wants to feed you simply means that he has a special bond with you. A sign that our parrots love us! Ah, parrot love — what a compliment!?

Sexual behavior in birds has several external influences including light, temperature, humidity, and food sources. In the wild, hormones stimulate birds to breed just prior to the time when food for babies will be most plentiful. Food is more available during and after a rainy season so humidity can play a part in stimulating parrots sexually. Companion parrots are also naturally stimulated by such factors, and sexual behavior in a mature parrot often starts at about the time the days start to get longer. However, artificial lighting, temperature and climate control in our homes creates stimuli for breeding that may be confusing to both our parrots and us.

There is a way that I have seen a lot of people pet their parrots. I call it the *full body stroke*. The hand starts at the head and slowly moves down to the end of the tail. In this process, the person puts pressure on the parrot’s back and if you watch carefully, the thumb often travels right across the vent. People have no idea they are “having sex” with their parrots, but believe me, the parrots know. Without realizing it, people may actually be increasing both a sexual bond and the sexual behavior of their parrots with physical affection or play that is misunderstood by the parrot as sexual foreplay. During the times that hormones are exerting a strong influence on our feathered companions, interactions, some of which would normally be perfectly fine and should cause no problem, may cause sexual arousal and serious confusion in our pets. During these periods, if a parrot is exhibiting sexual behavior, it is best to avoid petting under the wings, pulling on the tail, encompassing the body, putting pressure on the back or rump area, touching the area near the vent, and beak wrestling.

The combination of sexually mature parrots, breeding season, and shoulders can mean BIG trouble! Parrots relate to our faces. The shoulder situation is like this: the two of you are sitting together on a “moving tree branch.” The parrot perceives you as his mate, and an “intruder” (your wife, husband, a kid, or even the dog) threatens the territory you are sharing (your body!). It is natural for parrots to strut and puff to defend the nesting territory. When you don’t help, you become part of the problem rather than part of the solution. You get bitten, probably because your *mate* is trying to drive you away. He can’t defend both you and the territory and wants you to come back later when everything is safe.

Many parrots masturbate — some frequently. This will come as no surprise to those who have lived with parrots for some time. After a fairly involved courtship and often-frenzied ritual “foreplay,” parrot pairs consummate their sexual union by positioning their vents together. Many sexually mature companion parrots derive pleasure by rubbing their vents against almost anything including, but not limited to; their toys, perches, and cage parts. Ignore it. People also receive this type of attention from their parrots. When this behavior becomes this personal, I advise my clients to return the parrot to his cage or play gym without making a fuss. This form of sexual behavior in companion parrots is a displacement substitute for natural biological behaviors and should not be punished. It should essentially be ignored and neither encouraged nor discouraged.

During the breeding “season,” parrots can be visually stimulated by the presence of a nest cavity or something that resembles one, such as a box, paper bag, cupboard, bookcase, or other

dark container with an opening. I know of one Scarlet Macaw who laid eggs when a carpet was rolled up next to her cage during home redecorating. The macaw saw the dark circle created by the rolled carpet as the entrance to a nest cavity. Another client came home to find her Amazon had escaped and was happily sitting on a “nest” of shredded books on the top shelf of a bookcase next to the cage. Paper shredding and increased wood chewing in a mature bird can be signs of nesting behavior, but can also be encouraged as a normal activity when the parrot is not exhibiting other sexual behaviors.

What does a sexually aroused parrot look/act like? It depends somewhat on the species and gender but *intense* is the first word that comes to my mind. In some parrots, increased territorial aggression is one sign of sexual behavior. Head bobbing to bring up food, eye pinning, panting, wing fluttering with the wings held low (almost like training wheels), wings flicking up and down, repetitive beak nipping that is not usually as hard as biting, horizontal body position, and feet moving up and down as if they are doing a little dance are the most obvious signs of sexual arousal. Watch for these changes in your parrot’s body language to know if your behavior is sexually stimulating her or him.

Why is it such a problem to have your parrot bond to you sexually? Parrots who are sexually bonded to their owners may remain continuously stimulated — in *hormonal overload*. There is no way for the parrots to dissipate this kind of energy and the continual release of hormones and neuro-transmitters may be a cause for both behavioral and physical problems such as excessive aggression and feather destructive problems. A parrot who is constantly flooded with the hormones of sexual stimulation can also develop internal organ problems.

Parrots still need attention during these times, but you may have to relate to your bird less physically until he or she settles down. It is a good idea to train a young bird to step on a stick so, if he becomes a problem during breeding season, you can still maintain control without being bitten. Not all parrots become aggressive during breeding season. Some people have reported that their beloved hens have laid eggs in their laps. Caregivers of well-nurtured parrots may not even notice sexual behavior. Most of all make sure your parrots get lots of exercise so he has a chance to dissipate some of his sexual energy.

Printed with permission from Sally Blanchard. Please visit www.companionparrot.com and www.companionparrotconnection.org.

Bird Clubs of VA Convention '09

Reported by Sue Brewer



This year's BCV Convention was more special than ever – the group established by Dick Ivy celebrated its' 25th Anniversary at the Conference Center in Virginia Beach. The speaker list included Sally Blanchard (behaviorist and author for 30 years), Mark Stafford of Parrots International (SWVBC has donated to them), Dr. Susan Clubb DVM (recently appointed as a consultant to BCV), Dr. Kevin Flammer DVM (teaching staff of UNC), Sandy Molenda (bird trainer) and of course, our own Eric Peake (artist, aviculturist and philanthropist). SWVBC's \$150 donation was added to those of the other Virginia clubs and given to the Association of Avian Vets.

Attending from SWVBC were Edie Manuel, Angelika Miner (she did her usual great job of setting up the big raffle), Judy Wilhelm and yours truly. At the Saturday night banquet, Edie Manuel (member since '99) was presented the Achievement Award from SWVBC. She was nominated by our Board to honor her loyal service as Club Treasurer and enthusiastic Outreach participant.



After the presentation Edie was surprised once more when Eric Peake (our all time favorite internationally known avian artist) came to the podium. He said that he had borrowed the scrapbook that Edie keeps about Kelly, her Quaker that afternoon. We had been begging Eric for four years to paint a Quaker, but he's not a Quaker fan (calls them "green s..t machines") but he spent an hour or so drawing and presented Edie with an "original" that will never be duplicated – a pencil drawn portrait of Kelly. Boy, we were all very pleasantly shocked! All in all, the convention and the banquet were terrific!

Another Surprise By Eric Peake. . .

As we were preparing to leave the convention, Eric and his wife Debbie Peake took us aside and **presented us with almost 50 of his matted prints!** He is allowing SWVBC to take these prints ("Toos, greys, Amazons, conures) to sell at our **Bird Fair this year and next.** We will sell them for \$25; the club profits \$5 on each sold. We were bowled over by this offer and continue to feel honored by his friendship. Eric is pictured here with the original painting of a grey that he donated to BCV for its 25th anniversary celebration. The painting was awarded through a raffle with the proceeds going toward the expenses of the convention.



Club Notes

March 8, 2009

Club member Evelyn Krippendorf was fortunate enough to have spent a week recently in Florida training with Steve Martin, who trains parrots for professional shows. Evelyn spoke on how the training sessions were set up and how much she, and others, learned in just one week. She also showed us some training techniques she learned.

April 19, 2009

Gail Anderson, a certified wildlife rehabilitator, was our guest speaker. Gail spoke particularly about wildlife babies and what we should and should not do if we find what appear to be abandoned babies. State and federal regulations on handling wildlife are varied; so, if in doubt about what you should do, call a certified wildlife rehabilitator.



May 10, 2009

This was our last club meeting before the Bird Fair on June 20, 2009. Most of the meeting was about completing plans and scheduling setup duties for the fair as well as distributing yard signs to advertise the fair.



Am I going to the fair? No, but my family is and they are going to bring back lots of goodies for me.

Upcoming Meetings

Please remember that all meetings are held in Roanoke at the Huntington Court Methodist Church at 3:30 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month unless otherwise noted.

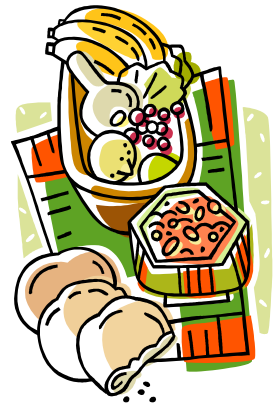
June 2009

There will not be a club meeting in June as we will all be getting ready for the fair on June 20.

July 12, 2009

3:00 p.m to 6:00 p.m

Its summer and time once again for our annual picnic. We hope to see all of our members at the church picnic shelter so that we can celebrate the success of the Bird Fair and talk about what we can do to make it even better next year. We will also be discussing what organizations will be the recipients of our fair proceeds. Bring a dish for your family with enough to share. Drinks will be provided. If you have any pictures that were taken at the fair, please bring them so that we can all see them.



August 9, 2009

To be announced. Check on our webpage at www.swvbc.org regularly for updates.

Bird Fair Picture Contest

Time is running short! Now is the time for you to send your favorite pictures of your bird(s) to be included in the Bird Fair Picture Contest. The contest is open to all club members and is free. Just send your pictures electronically to:

melody.blankenship@tapintohope.org

Or send by US mail to: Melody Blankenship
2311-G Broadway Ave.
Roanoke, VA 24014

There are four categories: Large Beautiful, Small Beautiful, Large Fun, and Small Fun. **The deadline for submission is June 15, 2009.**

Change in Membership Dues Expiration Dates

Since we have changed to an email format for our newsletter, it is more difficult to notify everyone of their dues expiration. Therefore, we are changing to a common yearly expiration date of June 30. Beginning now, those members who renewed their dues between January 2008 and December 2008 have a dues expiration date of June 30, 2009. Please print and complete the application/renewal on the last page of this newsletter and send with your check to the address on the form. For those members who renewed their membership after December 2008 have a dues expiration date of 6/30/2010.

Now that we all have a common expiration month, it will be easier for us to remember to renew our membership. And you can do it at the Fair!

Birds Needing a Home

Check the *Adoptions* area on our website, www.swvbc.org, where you can find birds needing a home or homes needing a bird. Please check this site often for the most up-to-date list of adoption needs.

SWVBC does not take any responsibility in matching new owners; we will only help you make the connection.

Financial Report

January 2009

Statement beginning balance.....	\$2,357.08
Amt. of deposits	0.00
Amt. of withdrawals	37.17
Statement ending balance	\$2,357.08

February 2009

Statement beginning balance.....	\$2,357.08
Amt. deposits.....	0.00
Amt. withdrawals.....	118.01
Transfer to Bank of America (new account).....	\$2,239.07
Statement ending balance	\$0.00

March 2009

Statement beginning balance.....	\$2,239.07
Amt. deposits.....	121.75
Amt. withdrawals.....	361.95
Statement ending balance.....	\$1,998.87

April 2009

Statement beginning balance.....	\$1,998.87
Amt. deposits	247.20
Amt. withdrawals.....	250.00
Statement ending balance.....	\$1,996.07



A Rescued Bird's Prayer

Now that I'm home, bathed, settled and fed,
All nicely tucked in my warm new bed.
I'd like to open my baggage, lest I forget.
There's so much to carry, so much to regret.
Yes, there it is, right on the top,
Let's unpack loneliness, heartache and loss.
And there by my perch hides fear and shame.
As I look on these things I tried hard to leave,
I still have to unpack my baggage called pain.
I loved them, the others, the one's who left me,
but I wasn't good enough, for they didn't want me.
Will you add to my baggage, or help me unpack?
Will you look at my things and take me right back?
Do you have the time to help me unpack?
To put away my baggage, to never repack?
I pray that you do, I'm so tired you see,
but I do come with baggage, will you still want me?

A Note from the Membership Committee

Dues are renewable each year before the end of June. Please renew your membership by printing and completing the application/renewal form found at the end of this newsletter. You may bring the form, with your payment, to the next club meeting or mail to the address on the form.

To change your street or email address, please email melody.blankenship@tapintohope.org with your changes, including your name, current mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number.

Monthly meeting notices and quarterly newsletters are emailed to current members. Email addresses and names will only be used by the club membership and will not be used or shared for any other purpose.



Bird of the Month

Our club is always concerned about the health of your feathered loved ones, which is why we ask members **not** to bring their birds to the meetings. Some of our meetings are species specific and speakers at those meetings will bring one or more birds.

So, if you want your birdie to strut his or her stuff, please contact Sue Brewer at 366-1193 to schedule the both of you for a program. If you can, please send a photograph with a paragraph or two describing your loved one and your program to melody.blankenship@tapintohope.org for inclusion in the next newsletter.

The SWVBC proudly supports Phoenix Landing, The Hyacinth Macaw Project of Pantanal, Brazil; Lear's Corn Subsidy; and the Indonesian Parrot Project.

Directions to SWVBC Meeting

- From I-81, exit at the junction with I-581.
- Take the Orange Avenue exit heading east. Turn left at the first traffic light onto Williamson Road.
- The Huntington Court Methodist Church is on the right at 3333 Williamson Road, NE.
- Meetings are normally held in the small building behind the church in the back parking lot.

The Southwest Virginia Bird Club holds its monthly meetings in Roanoke on the **second Sunday of each month at 3:30 p.m.** at the Huntington Court Methodist Church on Williamson Road in Roanoke. As the newsletter is only published quarterly, notices with meeting information will be emailed to all members a week in advance of each meeting. Information is also available on our website at www.swvbc.org.

Annual individual membership dues are \$15.00; the family rate is \$20.00. Please submit a completed [membership/renewal application](#) with payment, to join SWVBC and again in June of each subsequent year to renew.

Members are encouraged to submit articles, stories, pictures, etc. to the editor for publication in upcoming newsletters. **The next newsletter will be emailed on September 1, 2009; the submission deadline is August 15, 2009.** Please send ads, articles, pictures, etc. to Melody Blankenship, 2311-G Broadway, Roanoke, VA, 24014 or email to melody.blankenship@tapintohope.org

Address all other correspondence, dues payments, etc. to:

Southwest Virginia Bird Club
P.O. Box 7243
Roanoke, VA 24019



ALL OF THIS FOR \$15 PER YEAR!

IN SWVBC WE **SHARE** – Whether it’s consoling someone who has just lost a bird or rejoicing with someone who has just added to his or her flock. We also share a lot of fun about feathered antics.



IN SWVBC WE **SOCIALIZE** – Before each meeting we spend a little time “catching up”, having refreshments, sharing and laughing, and sometimes even picking a feather or two off one another! In July we picnic with lots of good food and fun. And in December we gather with holiday decorations to sum up the year, have good food and fun, and exchange gifts in the wildest way possible!!

IN SWVBC WE **LEARN** – We have a program each month that informs each of us. We talk of specific species, first aid, nutrition, diseases, cages, safe toys, etc., etc., etc. We attend state and national conventions/seminars and bring back the best information to share. We read, read and read – *Bird Talk*, *Companion Quarterly* and the latest books. Our relationship with Phoenix Landing and The Hyacinth Macaw Project in Brazil affords us some of the latest information on avian aviculture and rehabilitation. We sponsor nationally known speakers at our Bird Fair and invite the public to come and learn.

IN SWVBC WE **CONNECT** – We secure a “rehabber” to check on a pigeon in a parking lot and catch a lovebird in someone’s backyard in order to return it to its owner. We re-home a brown parrot with one of our members and get a pair of red-rump parakeets to a caring breeder. We facilitate the placing of a cockatoo with The Gabriel Foundation. We secure “babysitting” services when someone needs to travel and retrieve a Quaker that has been relegated to a dark basement. We get information for a panicky pet owner that has a baby that won’t eat even though the expert had to do this by cell phone while on the way out of town. The list goes on.

IN SWVBC WE **TEACH** – We teach each other. We teach second graders as well as the elderly at the Roanoke Methodist Home where a lady talked for the first time in months when she touched a parrot. We teach to television audiences and at veterinary clinics and at pet stores. At every opportunity, we share what we know. Some of us even teach at national conventions and seminars. We design and construct wonderful educational exhibits for our Bird Fair.

IN SWVBC WE CARE.

Southwest Virginia Bird Club

Membership Application/ Renewal Form

Note: All memberships are renewable in June of each year.

Name: _____

Address 1: _____

Address 2: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date of Application: _____

Annual membership entitles you to a newsletter, access to club library, and other club sponsored projects. Annual Membership Category:

Single (\$15)

Family (\$20)

Paid Cash

Paid by Check

New Member

Renewing Member

What type of bird(s) do you have?

Would you be interested in serving on any committees?
(Bird Fair Committee, Membership Committee, etc.)

Please mail to:

Southwest Virginia Bird Club
P.O. Box 7243
Roanoke, VA 24019

Please make checks payable to Southwest Virginia Bird Club