

Member Profile:

Rene

The Hello Kid

by Melody Blankenship



photo credit: Melody Blankenship

It all began with a little green and yellow parrot leaning out of his cage door and saying, in the sweetest of little voices, "Hello."

In October 1999, my mother had been staying for a while with my husband and me for her final months. Lung cancer had ravaged her body but not her spirit; she was still able to enjoy the antics of her pied cockatiel, Cheeky. When she died on October 30, Cheeky was chirping a little less merrily but soon became attached to my husband and was a great help in reconciling our loss.

Christmas time came again, as it does every year, even when someone you love has gone. I trotted off to the local pet store to find a special Christmas toy for Cheeky, not aware that my life would change again so soon. As I walked down the crowded aisles of plastic, metal, rubber, and straw toys, I heard a little voice say, "Hello." I looked around for the child who had spoken to me but I was alone in the aisle. I turned back to examining the toys when I heard it again, "Hello", stronger and more insistent this time. I looked down to the end of the aisle and there he was, a baby Double Yellow Headed Amazon in a very big cage. Only five months old and he was already a charmer. When I walked up to him, he said, "I love you" and took a strand of my hair to preen. I was lost! He had me at "Hello."

I wasn't a member of the SWVBC at that time; in fact I knew very little about birds. But, I broke every rule our club preaches to those who want to buy their first bird. Rule 1: Research different kinds of birds to find one that will suit your lifestyle and accommodations – tightly regulated household? Casual apartment living? Not me. I didn't know that Amazons are rarely recommended for first-time bird owners as these birds are independent, aggressive, and great manipulators. Rule 2: Do not buy birds from pet shops; seek out local bird breeders with good reputations in order to get a healthy, emotionally stable bird. Hah! I didn't think twice about pulling out my checkbook and buying Rene and his cage. I named him after my mother whose name was Irene but who was called Rene by family and friends. It is now more than eleven years later and both Rene and I have

survived his "learn as you go" upbringing. More than a few severely bitten fingers, wrecked furniture, and bouts of depression (me, not him) have come and gone and come again as we learn how to live together. Don't get me wrong - it sounds like an awful time but it wasn't overall. I had to settle Rene into our household and teach him to behave properly - or so I thought. What really has been happening, and is still going on, is Rene teaching me to respect and obey parrot law while I teach him what will get him the rewards he wants.

Rene has taught me to watch him carefully for his warning signs of danger. For an Amazon, the danger warning signs are raised feathers on the top of his head, pupil flashing by expanding and contracting very quickly, and fully flared tail feathers. When I see these three signs, I know not to try to pick Rene up or even get too close to him because these are signs that he is in a foul mood, either mad or frustrated, and I should just back away. I have taught Rene that when I say "step up" he is to step on my hand or the stick and he will get a treat – either a food reward or a neck scratch or even just a sweet "good boy." This teaching is a two-way street and we continue to learn so much about each other.

Rene is an amazing Amazon. He, of course, says "Hello" and in very many intonations. But he also sings little snatches of songs, such as "itty bitty spider." He has learned he can get more food at our dinner table by being cute and using a small fork and spoon. You should see him slurp spaghetti off a baby fork and eat mashed potatoes with a spoon. Rene has imitated my laugh so much and so well that my family can hardly tell which of us is laughing. He also knows the subtle signs I give off when I am unhappy or unsettled. I don't know what these signs are; I just know that Rene can be very compassionate when I am sad or not feeling well. He will come near me and croon a little melodic phrase softly under his breath and wait from me to croon back to him. These are very tender moments.

Rene is still young and I am getting older much faster than he is. I hope that I have him with me the rest of my life. Otherwise, my life will not be complete. He is my "Hello" kid.



photo credit: Melody Blankenship

"I didn't know that Amazons are rarely recommended for first-time bird owners..."

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photo credit: Melody Blankenship



Board of Directors

Sue Brewer, Chairperson	366-1193
Melody Blankenship, VC/Programs	344-0313
Evelyn Krippendorf, VC/Membership	982-8499
Wanda Crowder, Secretary	774-8233
Edie Manuel, Treasurer	992-2948
Diane Ruble, Hospitality	
Members-at-Large: Kay Fielder, Pat Rodes, Michelle Rose	



Financial Report

February

Beginning Balance	\$2,586.86
Checks	- \$75.00
(To Roanoke Civic Center for SWVBC Space, Pet Expo)	
Ending Balance	\$2,511.86

March

Beginning Balance	\$2,511.86
Checks	- \$325.00
(Erie Insurance, Liability & USPS Club PO BOX)	
Ending Balance	\$2,186.86

April

Beginning Balance	\$2,111.86
Checks	- \$75.00
(Cash for change at SWBCV club table at Pet Expo)	
Ending Balance	\$2,036.86

Southwest Virginia Bird Club

Club Notes & News

SWVBC Dues are Due!

All SWVBC memberships expire in the month of June each year. That means you need to renew your membership this month. Dues remain the same as last year - \$15 for an individual membership and \$20 for a family membership.

Please use the member application form that you will find in this newsletter to renew for the 2011-2012 SWVBC year. Print out the form, complete it (remember to update all information including your email address) and mail it, with your check, to the address shown at the bottom of the form. OR, you can renew your membership at this year's Bird Fair which will be on June 25 at St. Elias Church in Roanoke.

We value your membership and we know that you do, too. And we encourage everyone to attend at least some of the meetings during the year. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find the programs for the remaining meetings in 2011. We hope you find them of interest to you. If you have suggestions for programs, please email them to melody.blankenship@gmail.com.



It's Photo Contest Time Again! Deadline: June 20, 2011

Yes, it is once more time to strut you birds' stuff by submitting their photos for the Annual Bird Fair Photo Contest. If you haven't already started taking pictures, now is the time to put it in high gear. One of the favorite stops for those attending the Bird Fair is at the Photo Contest area where they can vote for their favorites.

As in past years, there are four categories for judging:

Big Birds are Beautiful
For birds larger than a conure (Greys, Amazons, Cockatoos, etc)

Small Birds are Beautiful
For birds conure-sized or smaller (Parrotlets, Cockatiels, Quakers, etc)

Big Birds have Fun
Pictures that show your big bird having fun

Small Birds have Fun
Pictures that show your small bird having fun.

The deadline for submitting photos for the contest is June 20, 2011 and here are the rules:

- Only paid up club members can submit photos.
- Photos must be digital; we can no longer accept photo paper prints.*
- Photos must be emailed to melody.blankenship@gmail.com before the deadline.
- No photos can be accepted for the contest on the day of the fair.

**For the best results, photos taken from cell phones or with a digital zoom on a digital camera should not be sent in as the resolution will be too low to properly enlarge the photo for display.*

So, get those photos ready and email them before June 20 to melody.blankenship@gmail.com so that your bird can win, pretty ribbon and be a star at the Bird Fair.



SWVBC Summer and Fall 2011 Program Schedule

June 25, 2011
Annual Bird Fair

July 10, 2011
Annual Bird Club Picnic

August
No meeting

September 13, 2011
What Not to Do:
Mistakes we make and learn from

October 11, 2011
Show and Tell:
Let's talk and show off our birds

November 8, 2010
Bird Safety:
Dangers identified and conquered

What's Next?:
Where will my bird go when I die?

December – Date to be announced
Annual Holiday Pot Luck & Gift Exchange



photo credit: Traci Thompson



Monthly Meetings Recap

March's Meeting

In March we learned about Love Birds! Diane Brubaker educated us about diet, socialization, behaviors and other Lovie specifics. Her Black-Faced Love Bird, Alice joined us for the evening as well. Thank you Diane



April's Meeting

In April, Melody Blankenship was good enough to put together a talk on traveling with our parrots. She provided a well researched and organized handout to share with the membership. Some of the highlighted points from the handout included:

- *Never take your pet bird outside without it being inside a carrier, travel cage or attached to an avian harness.*
- *If you travel to another state, confirm that there are no quarantines in effect and that your species of parrot is legal there. Quaker parakeets, for example, are illegal to own in California, New Jersey and several other states.*
- *Never leave your bird in your car alone for any length of time!*

Before flying take note of the following in regards to the airline and international pet policies:

- *Does the airline allow you to take your bird in the cabin with you?*
- *Does the airline have any special pet health requirements?*
- *What are the airline's specifications and requirements for pet carriers?*

Help your parrot like its travel carrier:

- *Leave the carrier around for a few days or weeks so your parrot can get used to it and see that it doesn't pose a threat.*
- *Put some tempting toys or treats in the carrier where your parrot can see them and investigate; for example, most birds can't resist a sprig of millet.*
- *Avoid dangling toys to prevent your bird from getting knocked around when the carrier is in motion.*

The full hand out, including references to the material, can be obtained upon request to Melody.



Monthly Meetings Recap - continued

May's Meeting

Dr. Stewart was the guest speaker at our May meeting and educated us on bird personal care as he entertained us with funny stories from his practice. The topics covered were wing trimming, nail trimming, beak trimming and bathing. We always enjoy Dr. Stewart's visits and are very fortunate to have someone in our area with his avian health care skills.



Rare, Red-Vented Cockatoo

SWVBC Names "Member Of The Year" also at our May meeting, Evelyn Krippendorf was awarded a plaque to acknowledge her as our "Member of The Year For 2010". Since joining our club and then the Board, Evelyn has contributed greatly with her ideas, enthusiasm and creativity. Very often, she has contributed to the costs of advertising and items for the Bird Fair. There have been many times that she has shared information in her position as a lawyer. Many thanks Evelyn!!



SWVBC Outreach

Outreach Flies to Virginia Tech

Brewersbirds took it's annual flight to Ann Duddington's class at Tech on Thursday, March 24. Her popular Life Science class had 125 students, all very interested and entertained by the birds. Judging from their questions and enthusiasm, there may have been some budding avian vets in the room. Rene Blankenship (Melody's Amazon) added lots of fun with his 25 versions of hello! As information was given about each species, the bird was handed off to one of the many anxious hands wanting to hold it. Recruiting interest in young

SWVBC Outreach - continued

adults is very important at this time, many current bird owners, breeders and hand feeders are reaching their sixties. Informing younger folks assures the avian pet industry a future.



SWVBC Helps With Confiscated Birds

In a recent case of confiscation (the owner died) about 40 birds ended up being housed at the Regional Center For Animal Control and Protection. Dr. Paul Stewart, DVM was called on to check out the birds and make recommendations for their adoption and care.

SWVBC members were able to help out with some badly needed cages, lots of advice and some homemade food. We also served as a clearing house, to some extent for information regarding availability and the adoption process. Our club friend, Kashmir Csaky, was nice enough to offer the new owners a free behavioral consultation!

During this time, SWVBC was approached to help animal control officers with information regarding avian species. In particular, they are anxious to know more about what "neglect and abuse" looks like with birds. A seminar will be set up during the summer to achieve this goal.



Pet Ex 2011

The Roanoke Civic Center was the place to be on Friday and Saturday, May 6, 7 for the first annual Pet Ex. Every type of pet, turtle to horse, was on hand including SWVBC card-carrying member birds. Even as the llamas walked by our booth, our birds happily interacted with interested attendees. We met lots of folks, handed out 100 fliers advertising the Bird Fair. Kay Fielder did a great in organizing us for the event.

We even met and acquired a few new club members; we are glad to welcome Debbie Smith and Sandy Singleton to the club.

Debbie has had parrots since 1993 and currently has 1 Amazon, 2 Cockatoos, 3 Conures, 1 Quaker, 4 Cockatiels, 1 Alexandrine and 1 Yellow Collard Macaw. She is launching a bird toy business (toys, perches, stands etc.) from her home.

Sandy is a vet tech, and she adopted one of the approximately 30 SPCA parrots (Moluccan cockatoo) turned over to them when their owner died.

SWVBC looks forward to seeing them at meetings and learning more about their feathered companions.



17th Annual Bird Fair

St. Elias Banquet Hall
4730 Cove Rd. NW
Roanoke VA.

Admission \$4.00, Children under 12 FREE!



Saturday
June 25, 2011
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Guest Speakers:

Kashmir Csaky,
Dr. Paul Stewart DVM,
& Kevin Blaylock
of Phoenix Landing

Proceeds go to the SWVBC mission to educate about parrot care. Southwest Virginia Bird Club is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization. for more information: call Sue (540) 366-1193 or visit www.swvbc.org



~Feathered Funnies~

A man went to an auction where a parrot was being sold.

He bid on the beautiful bird, \$50, \$100, \$200....he kept getting outbid.

He finally won the parrot at \$1,500.

When he went up to the cashier, he said, "Gosh, I am spending a lot of money on this parrot; I sure hope he talks!"

The cashier said, "Who do think was bidding against you?"



photo credit: Holly Tarquinio





My Safe Bird Store

Dedicated to the Health and Safety of Companion Birds and Parrots

All products are stored in and shipped from a totally BIRD-FREE environment

Club members enter promo code SWVBC2011 for 10% off your entire order.

www.mysafebirdstore.com



Diane with Quaker friend at the Pet Expo



Avian and Exotic Pet Clinic of Roanoke

Dr. Paul Stewart
 3959 Electric Road, Suite 155
 Roanoke, VA 24018
 (540) 989-4464

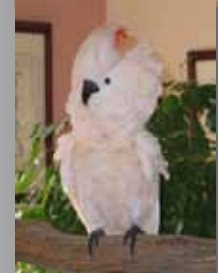
Experienced Veterinary Care for Unique Pets

Including Birds, Reptiles, Ferrets, Rabbits, Mini Mammals and More

Our Services:

- Therapeutic and Preventative Medicine
- Radio-Surgery, Radiology, Ultrasound, Endoscopy, Lab Services
- Emergency Service, Hospitalization
- Grooming

Emergency After-Hours Service Available



Meeting Information

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 Tuesday of each month from 7:00pm - 8:30pm 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 application with payment, to join SWVBC and again each subsequent year to renew. All memberships expire on June 30 of each year. You will not receive a reminder of your dues expiration; just put a note on your calendar for June that it is time to renew. OR, renew at next year's Bird Fair!

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, 2011; The submission deadline is **August 20, 2011**

Please send ads, articles, pictures, etc. to:

Holly Tarquinio

Holly7766@yahoo.com

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

Southwest Virginia Bird Club

P.O. Box 7243 Roanoke, VA 24019

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, unless otherwise directed. 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 Melody Blankenship at 344-0313 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
- The Indonesian Parrot Project.



Photo Credit: Melody Blankenship, Rene Double Yellow Head Amazon



Membership Information

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 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, 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 love-bird 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 “baby sitting” 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.



A Note from the Membership Committee

Dues are renewable each year by the end of June. Please renew your membership by completing the application form found at the end of the 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 ekrippendorf@gmail.com 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.



Southwest Virginia Bird Club

Membership Application

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
All club memberships expire on June 30 each year.

SWVBC Parrot Gazette

All Parrots Great and Small

