

# Parrot Advisory Statement

Before we discuss any kind of adoption arrangements, I'd like to talk about having a large parrot for a pet. Also, I would like to ask why it is that you are interested in a particular species above all of the other parrot types out there. I'm not sure where your knowledge lies, so I will try not to be too elementary as to insult you, but I would like to give you some information to think about.

I do not know your age, marital status, living arrangements, schedule or stability in all of these things, but, all of which are important aspects of having a large parrot as a pet. Parrots are magnificent creatures and are a very demanding, highly specialized pet. They require close to as much care as our own children, and live 20-80 years depending on the species. That in itself is a huge responsibility.

Think of it like this...it's like having a 2-3 year old child for the rest of your life. And almost inevitably, the bird will outlive you, just as your own children will. The difference is that the bird stays at a 3 year old level. It will not grow up and take care of itself like your children will. Some birds are placed in people's wills for new living arrangements when the parrot owner dies, but finding a suitable new owner that is willing and able to take care of the bird in a similar manner as the previous owner did is not so easy. Parrots are creatures of habit, just like humans...and any kind of change can stress them out. Even the presence of so much as a new toy can cause them undue stress when they are unsure what it is or if it will harm them.

The scenario of a bird placed in the owner's will is that of a good, knowledgeable, willing owner. Most owners have the best of intentions, but have no idea what they are getting into. They see these birds on television and think it would be a lot of fun to have a pet that could talk to them and do tricks. The chain pet store the owner buys the bird from doesn't tell them how to properly care for the bird, what is healthy to feed the bird, how long the bird will live, how to train the bird, or to take the bird to an avian vet for an initial check-up. The associates at the store are not properly trained and the store is primarily in it for the money. So the new owner spends all this money to soon find out they got way more than they bargained for. Before long, they try to find another home for their new, no so cool parrot.

On average, by the time a large parrot such as a macaw reaches the age of 12 years old it will have had 8 different homes. How sad is that? Why, you ask, do people get rid of them?

Well, let's see. Parrots can be extremely loud, messy, destructive and nippy. They require a lot of attention. In addition, they require a lot of time out of the cage. They are selfish—as they have a 3 year old mindset, and they can become very jealous. Parrots love to chew and do so instinctively. It is something you cannot stop, but you must be able to provide them an outlet--give them wooden toys, etc. or they will destroy your wood furniture. They will bite, sometimes just a nip...and sometimes drawing blood. It will happen and it's part of owning a parrot. They will squawk, talk, whistle, yell and scream. Some of which are happy noises, some excited, some scared and some mad...but no matter what the emotion--your bird will tell you about it. If you live in an apartment, your neighbors might dislike you--as some parrot screams can be heard more than five miles away. They are innately very messy eaters. They peel and crush and dip everything. They throw what they do not like, or just throw food for attention. They dip food in water as they do not have saliva, so constant water changes are required. They can be quite destructive to a household, they love to shred paper and cardboard, gnaw on wood, pull carpet, gnaw wires, pluck keys off keyboards, tear up blinds--you name it---they will test it or play with it, and if it's fun they will destroy it. You can deter behavior and train them to do many things, but chewing, screaming, biting and being messy are all traits of having a parrot. If you are going to live with a bird, you have to be willing to live with and learn to work with these behaviors as well.

Parrots most often bond with their owners. They do not have a parrot mate, but a human mate. You are their object of affection and favorite toy; they will adore you, if you do so for them. You must try to keep your bird well socialized to help prevent aggression towards other people. If you are married, the bird may bond to you, but not with your spouse...in fact the bird may hate your spouse and try to attack out of jealousy. Often the same problem occurs with children in the household. This is more common when you get the bird as a single person and then you get married or have children. The bird does not cope with change well. It was used to you and only you, now it has to share you with whoever else lives in the house. These scenarios can go on and on. Considering how long the bird lives, it is obvious it will have to endure changes. Moving from house to house, job/schedule changes, people in/out of the house, vacations, and new pets. No matter what comes up-- you must be willing to help your bird accept and acclimate to the changes. If you do not, you will not like the outcome. Screaming fits will commence--frequent biting may occur, purposely throwing food bowls, toys, etc, will happen. Similar to that of a three year old toddler's fit; only a parrot tantrum may last much longer than that of a child, if not addressed right away.

Parrots have very bad separation anxiety. This does not necessarily mean that you are gone all the time, although that might be the case. This anxiety may also be caused by some of the above changes, such as a new child in the household or a new pet. You initially spent all this time with your beloved pet parrot, but now something else draws your attention. The parrot many times will resort to a form of self-mutilation called feather plucking. Many people will say this is from boredom, but often times it begins after the above behavior such as screaming and biting did not work. The bird will just start plucking all of its feathers out--this can be a very serious disorder, and if let go too long, can be very difficult to correct.

Changes in the bird's behavior will also occur when the bird reaches the age of sexual maturity. Your sweet, lovable baby may suddenly turn aggressive. Although if dealt with correctly; these aggressions can be minimized, and should not turn problematic. Maturity ages very depending on the species of parrot, but a large parrot may begin these behaviors as early as 5 years of age and they may continue during certain seasons for years to come. Some birds are worse than others, but all can be dealt with if the owner is willing.

Another problem with having a pet parrot is the expense. Not only are the initial bird, cage and supplies really pricy, but a trip to an avian vet is not very cheap either. It is not something one wants to think about, but with a pet that lives so long, it is more than a possibility that your parrot will get sick. When it does happen, you need a vet specialized in avian medicine. Birds are very different than dogs and cats and can not be treated the same. So before a pet parrot is ever purchased, an avian vet in your area must be found and contacted, so they can check the bird out as soon as you receive it to make sure it is in good health. Beak and nail trims are something else an avian vet should do. Inexperienced owners should never attempt grooming on their own.

Once you are knowledgeable and willing to take on such a responsibility, a pet parrot is one of the most rewarding relationships you will ever have. Parrot owners tend to say that their birds actually own them--and it's true. You fall in love with them and answer to their every whim, and they will make you laugh and cry, but if you love them, they will show you more affection and trust than you could ever imagine.

Please take time to research these wonderful birds on your own, and be honest with yourself whether or not you are prepared for this type of commitment, as it is not the kind of decision that should be taken lightly or rushed into. If you can't commit for the long haul (new relationships, changes, everything) please reconsider your decision.

Best wishes and good luck.

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