Clipping . . . a Different Perspective

by Liz Andreoli
Garden Grove, California

their wings are clipped I teach them windows (and mirrors) number-one priority. Take the bird to the window sill, set him down, and talk to him: "This is the window" (tap on it), "You cannot get through it" (tap again). The bird usually tries to get out, but if this simple procedure is done a couple of times a week until his flight feathers regrow I find the task is accomplished. After he begins to experience his new-found mobility any startling noise may cause a crash into a window, but the lack of strength and coordination at this time will do no more than stun, and triumphantly store a learning experience.

I must add that it is very important he get access to windows while he is gaining his strength, and not after his flight is perfected. Please be aware that a crash into a window at full speed can kill a bird. I was given a plumhead parakeet a while back that had suffered a concussion from such a crash. As a result she became so neurotic she decided to pluck herself clean (except for her head and a few odd feathers) until the day she died.

On the other hand, once windows and mirrors are mastered I have found that even if a window or glass door is left accidentally open the bird still thinks he will hit a barrier and avoids it. Please don’t chance this purposely though. This is also a time of "great" testing for a young bird. at only is he testing a new-found ability, but also what this extraordinary ability means in relationship to you. Many times I’m sure I’ve heard my little adolescent reason, "If you tell me ‘no’ (on this thing I want to do) can I get far and high enough away from you (if I do it anyway) so I..."
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We don’t have to face being confined for
my disobedience? In some cases you
will be tested over and over and over. Be
patient and consistent on how you
respond, that little fluff of feathers has
large eyes that watch your subtle body
language intently. If you move to a new
time some birds have to be retaught
where windows are rather than what
they are. This could be due to the fact
that they become disoriented and con­
fused in unfamiliar surroundings.

Next teach him about the water left
accidentally in the sink. Fill the sink
with warm water about the height your
bird would need, standing on his
tiptoes, to keep his head out of the
water. Float some of his favorite greens
on top of the water, stand back and
watch. Maybe your bird already has an
instinct for this one. If he jumps in give
him several seconds to realize he’s
gotten himself into big trouble. Take him
out, and in a stern voice tell him it
definitely wasn’t a good idea to do that;
wipe him and keep him warm until he
dries. Repeat this one until he ignores
those delicious greens floating around
in the water.

In this article I can’t go into all the
ways we can teach our birds to protect
themselves from danger. I would not,
however, try any lessons to do with fire:
it’s too dangerous! Simply put him back
in the safety of his cage when you are
cooking. There are also other times
when it becomes too dangerous for a
bird to be loose. When we have a house
full of company, for example, and we
can’t keep track of who has “Tweety,”
or when that outside door is going to
swing open again. Loud noises, fast
movement, and strangers make most
birds a nervous wreck. The protection
of their cage will keep their anxiety and
yours to a minimum. For a bird that
talks, just in case, it wouldn’t hurt to
Teach him his address, phone number,
or your full name.

We all learn by experience. By con­
trolled experience we can do wonders
with our cherished feathered friends
without hindering and compromising
the beauty of what attracted us to them
in the first place: FLIGHT!

Maybe it’s me. I have to deal with a
physical handicap every day of my life.
It’s not something to be taken lightly,
and I can’t imagine purposely debili­
tating any creature indefinitely and
without just cause.

I’m sure there are others like me out
there. Let’s hear your ideas on the sub­
ject. Do we want birds or do we want
rodents? To clip or not; it’s your
choice.
Birdhearts! Just when you thought this old hen had finally been plucked and fricassed, she's rocketed back into your life to bring you the real gossip — yes, the real gossip about the real Birdhearts and expose, darlings, expose the best kept secret in Aviculture: The AFA Seattle Convention! Rona is relieved.

I'm sure all you Birdhearts were just delighted with that New Orleans gig, but really, darlings, the hot, steamy south in August is simply not kind to Rona's hair! I just loved the historical charm of that darling French Quarter, but let's face it, Rona was slightly put off by those cute little rats tripping over the roaches and palmetto bugs trying to cross Bourbon Street at midnight.

But never fear, darlings! We are headed to the sparkling Great Northwest and the Emerald City! The Westin Hotel has promised Rona breathtaking views — their words, Birdhearts — of snow-capped mountains, Puget Sound, lakes and the city of Seattle. No soggy heat this year, darlings, and a convention that will have Bird Talk Magazine taking notes once again from the people who made all those other magazines possible: The AFA Who's Who in Aviculture. Just who that will be, Rona's spys are digging into even as you read this. Rona's team had to become computer literate to break the code but, Yes! The Secret List of Convention speakers will be published here first!

What a relief, Birdhearts, that the show season has finally come to an end! The Birdhearts out there have gone absolutely crazy this year with all those prissy little fluffs standing around in wooden boxes. For weeks, darlings, for weeks! They're all starting to look like Dutch Frills hanging onto the side with one foot and having a fit of heavy breathing! Can you imagine, darlings, over 2,100 birds showed at the Chicago Kaytee show alone! The judges were so weary that Lindsay Clack gave a blue ribbon to a hamster that he thought was a Norwich!

But bird shows are one place to meet the Stars of Birdom. And there are more luminaries this year than ever before. Yes, the luminaries of the bird world are still around, darlings. Moving in mysterious ways, they are still popping up all over the country. Did you see Jim Coffman, darlings, actually showing baby pictures this year? Really, Birdhearts, you ask him what time he has and he shows you those silly white ringneck parakeets! Rona is envious. And that cute little man, Ray Johnson! He judged more bird shows this year than Rona has birds! I was particularly impressed with his shuttle technique the weekend of the National when he managed to judge the National Show in St. Louis and the C.O.M. U.S.A. Show in Miami on the same day! Rona has it that he took lessons from Al Decoteau who somehow has managed to chair every meeting of every specialty society and every committee at every bird event in the United States this fall! The whole thing must have been organized by that Toy Lewis in Florida who makes things happen that would baffle a Macintosh computer. Rona thinks that those cockatiel people should hire Toy for a week. They are so confused, Birdhearts! American? National? No wonder Nancy Reed turned into a finch person! It was either that or the slick new Finch Society T-shirts or the fact that Bill Parlee is writing the first literate specialty society magazine in the country.

But then, maybe Rona is confused. After all, love bird king-pin Lee Horton came out of hiding and discussed the hand rearing of umbrella cockatoos while judging agapornis in Chicago; Dick Menche installed a revolving door on his island off Ft. Meyers — rock pebbles out, asian parakeets in; Bill Wilson traded those "no-challenge" blue and golds for red faced love birds; Dick Baer never leaves Columbus anymore since he cut down on love birds and spends his life feeding double yellow heads; Jerry Jennings seems to have forgotten what a grassfinch looks like but can tell you more than you want to know about Ramphastos tucanus; Dallas Johnson put the zebras on the back burner while he beats the bushes for rare parrotlets in Peru; and Cliff Witt finally came out of hiding to judge a few bird shows but even Rona can't find out what birds are messing up his house these days. Rona wishes that sweet Bill Maynard all the best in his new job in St. Augustine and wants to alert all you Birdhearts in New York State that Tom Ireland will be close-band ing more birds than ever this year back in Lake Worth.

All these changes, darlings! It must be something in the air. Rona is going to Seattle to take a deep breath from on top of that famous Space Needle. In the meantime, keep those cards and letters coming in and just remember, Birdhearts, what's a gossip column without a little gossip? Watch this space.
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