

LUCKY PARROT SANCTUARY

Fall 2006

An all volunteer humane organization

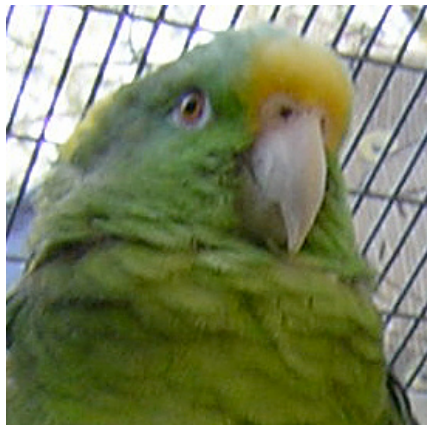


ONE PARROT AT A TIME: LUCKY PARROT SANCTUARY

Choosing a parrot as your pet is not just a lifetime commitment -- it's a commitment that could last well past *your* lifetime.

With a lifespan of up to 80 years in captivity, the average parrot is hardly your average pet. As indicated throughout this newsletter, a parrot can not only outlive (or outlast) its human companions, it can do so several times during its life, resulting in orphaned birds with nowhere to go.

Enter sanctuaries like the Lucky Parrot Parrot Sanctuary in Naples, Florida. The sanctuary's motto is "One Parrot at a Time."



A SECOND CHANCE

"In many cases, peoples' lives change, they marry, divorce, have children, grow old, or become ill. No thought is given to what happens to their companion parrots," says Ethel Buchbinder, President of the Lucky Parrot Sanctuary.

"The average length of time that a parrot spends with a family is between five and eight years," reveals Buchbinder. "Considering that some of the larger parrots can live upwards of 80 years, over time, parrots can live in many homes. Some parrots become resentful of being bounced from home to home and they misbehave. Before long, no alternative exists but to kill perfectly healthy parrots because there is no loving and/or understanding home, or shelter to take them in. We as a civilized society must assure that these magnificent creatures have a suitable place to live out their lives. Homelessness should not equate to death."



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-- *Ethel Buchbinder*

LUCKY PARROT SANCTUARY – THE BEGINNING

Buchbinder's involvement with parrots began years ago, when she started to think about bringing home a parrot to share her New York City apartment. Hoping to adopt a pair of older parrots, she answered an advertisement and came to the rescue of Elderly JoJo (a partially



blind and arthritic Yellow Nape Amazon) and Woodstock (a White-Eyed Conure). After being saved from filthy cages filled with droppings and roaches, JoJo and Woodstock became the first fortunate residents of the Lucky Parrot Sanctuary in New York City.

“We found a niche because no one at the time—and too few now—are rescuing parrots. We joined a local bird club to learn more about caring for parrots, and pretty soon people just started to call us, asking us to take in their unwanted parrots.”

Over the years, Buchbinder adopted many parrots. Keeping them caged seemed cruel, so platforms, ropes and perches were constructed to provide a more appropriate environment for the birds. Realizing that captive parrots needed more space and freedom than they could provide in New York, a search began for a location in Florida where the parrots could be as free as possible in captivity.

LUCKY PARROT SANCTUARY – TODAY

After 10 years of planning, Lucky Parrot Sanctuary now operates on a four-acre site in Naples, Florida. The sanctuary currently cares for 18 Amazon parrots, 5 large Macaws, 2 Conures, and 6 African Grey parrots—a total of 31 birds. These birds otherwise would have had their lives cut short. All of these birds live and thrive outdoors in a warm, sub-tropical climate and are spread among several aviaries to ensure compatibility within each flock. Buchbinder explains that although they didn’t intend to specialize or remain small, they learned that it is better to care for fewer parrots properly than to take in every homeless parrot and risk upsetting an existing flock.

“Parrots are as intelligent as chimpanzees and dolphins, but they cannot speak for themselves. If you see a parrot being mistreated, speak up for the parrot! If you have a parrot as a pet, consider building your parrot an aviary or create a bird-proof room.”

-- *Ethel Buchbinder*

Today Lucky Parrot offers permanent sanctuary for hard-to-place older parrots and those who no longer make good pets. The sanctuary does not breed, buy, sell, or broker parrots, and they do not process adoptions (although they can suggest potential adoption sources). Lucky Parrot is a 501(c)3, nonprofit humane organization staffed by volunteers. 100% of all donations are used for the benefit of the parrots. The organization has been accredited by both The American Sanctuary Association (ASA) and The Association of Sanctuaries (TAOS).



ONE PARROT'S PAINFUL JOURNEY

KD is a 50-something Double Yellow-Headed Amazon parrot, now living at Lucky Parrot Sanctuary.

“We heard that KD lived with a man and his wife. The wife hated KD because she was jealous of the man’s affection for the parrot. She poked sticks and rattled KD’s cage. If KD screamed, she took him out of the cage, put him in the sink, and soaked him with water. This abuse went on for 20 years.”

After leaving this family, KD was placed in several other homes, including other abusive situations. KD was finally saved by a rescue organization in Illinois. “KD was treated by several veterinarians and was put on many medications to treat his depression, but the drugs didn’t work.”

Eventually, KD made his way to Naples. “When he first arrived, KD was a mess, with permanent damage from self-mutilation. He attacked us, he attacked his toys, he attacked his food, and he attacked himself. We placed him in an aviary with a few other needy parrots, and over the course of a year he became a member of a flock. He has calmed down and, to our surprise, trusts us enough to take an occasional hand-held treat. Clearly, KD needed to be a member of a flock of parrots.”

LUCKY PARROT SANCTUARY - FUTURE PLANS

Lucky Parrot is working on long term plans now, having completed arrangements for short term financial and sanctuary operations. They are considering merging with another organization or identifying a qualified person to permanently run the sanctuary. They do not plan to create a huge sanctuary, as they have seen too many other organizations unable to physically or financially care for a large number of animals. Lucky Parrot plans to provide the best life possible for the birds in their care.

VOLUNTEERING AT THE SANCTUARY

Lucky Parrot Sanctuary’s birds are fully-flighted and not in cages, and they can attack and bite inexperienced caregivers or people they don’t like. Because insurance is expensive and the birds behavior can be unpredictable, hands-on volunteering by outsiders is not feasible. However, volunteers can donate their labor and expertise for special tasks such as installing water systems to help clean and cool the parrots, building aviaries, and performing similar one-time tasks.

The sanctuary welcomes your tax-deductible donations, either by mail or online. Because the facility is strictly a labor of love, 100% of your donations will directly benefit the parrots.

RETHINKING PARROTS AS PETS

Buchbinder says, “One way individuals can help is to become educated on the plight of parrots in captivity. Don’t buy! Don’t breed! Most people view parrots in cages at pet stores and think it is all right to keep a parrot all day in a small cage. But it’s not. Parrots are as



intelligent as chimpanzees and dolphins, but they cannot speak for themselves. If you see a parrot being mistreated, speak up for the parrot! If you have a parrot as a pet, consider building your parrot an aviary or create a bird-proof room.”

Another organization, The Avian Welfare Commission, offers cautionary advice about adopting parrots: “Whether captured in the wild or born in captivity, parrots are not domesticated animals like cats and dogs. They are still wild animals. Their natural curiosity, sensitivity, intellect, playfulness, and ability to form bonds with humans can tempt people to keep them in captivity. Unfortunately, the traits that make parrots so intriguing are the same ones that make them extremely difficult to live with as companion animals. Many parrots find themselves displaced as their natural behaviors and needs clash with human expectations.”

Moreover, a report published in *New Scientist* magazine suggests that the continued trade in parrots as pets places species at risk in the wild, as both legal and illegal trading cause serious damage to indigenous populations (Norris, Scott, “Sick As A Parrot,” *New Scientist*, Vol. 170, Issue 2294, June 9, 2001).

Buchbinder offers a final piece of advice, “We generally believe that society keeps criminals in cages (jail cells). Parrots are not criminals. People would not think of keeping a robin or a blue jay in a cage in their living room, why then parrots?”

Contact Information

Lucky Parrot Sanctuary
PO Box 110334
Naples, FL 34108-0106

Phone: 239-348-1991

Email: luckyparrot@swfla.rr.com

Website: www.luckyparrot.org

Resources

Bird Adoption: www.birdadoption.org

The Avian Welfare Commission: www.avianwelfare.org