

GOOD BIRD-KEEPING PRACTICES

The Shower Bath

- In the wild, parrots are often exposed to the fine, warm spray of daily tropical rains, and these act to encourage preening, reduce feather dust and keeps the plumage in good condition.
 - In captivity, however, this process is lacking, and should therefore be compensated for. This can be achieved by showering your parrot with lukewarm water from a plant mister twice a week. (Be sure the plant mister never had insecticides in it!) At first the parrot may well be frightened, but with time it will undoubtedly begin to appreciate and welcome the shower bath.
- NB: - A bird should never be soaked to the skin; the moisture should only reach the outer feathers.

Routine Cleaning Chores

- Food dishes should be emptied every day, rinsed under hot water without soap or detergent, dried, and filled again.
- A slotted spoon can be used to remove droppings and leftover bits of food from the sand in the bottom of the cage. Replenish sand as necessary.
- Perches and branches should also be cleaned if soiled. Scrape with a knife and then rub with a damp cloth.
- The floor around the cage should be cleaned daily.
- Once a week, both the sand drawer and the bottom pan of the cage should be washed in hot water and dried.
- Finally, every three to four weeks, the entire cage, the climbing tree, the cage stand, and everything else the parrot uses should be disinfected. Disinfectants should be chosen with care.

A Good Night's Rest

- It is important to bear in mind that the majority of parrots come from equatorial regions. As such, the nearly constant length of days and nights there allows the birds to search for food nearly twelve hours a day. They need this long forage period to thrive, and in captivity they should not spend too much time in the dark during the winter. Therefore, use a nonglaring light near the cage to lengthen the short winter days.

NB: - If you are unable to switch on the light reliably, a timer or combination dimmer/timer should be installed.

Wing Clipping

Wing clipping is not recommended, especially in young birds, as this may lead to severe psychological problems and feather disorders. Harnesses and corrective training should be used as an alternative to wing clipping.

REFERENCES

- Annette Wolter (1987) Buying and Housing a Parrot, Keeping and Caring for an African Grey Parrot, Diet, Disease and How to Keep Your Parrot Healthy. In: *African Grey Parrots – A Complete Pet Owner's Manual*. Barron's Educational Series, Inc., New York p 13-40
- Michael Stanford (2002) Cage and Aviary Birds. In: *Manual of Exotic Pets*. Ed A. Meredith and S. Redrobe. BSAVA, Gloucester p 157-167