

UNDERSTANDING PARROT BEHAVIOR BY LOOKING THROUGH THEIR EYES

It is easier to understand parrot behavior if you look at the situation from the parrot's point-of-view. Five important things to consider when looking at parrot behavior are that parrots are flock animals and are preyed upon in the wild, are often sleep deprived and bored in human households and use verbal, as well as, body language to communicate.

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT PARROTS

FLOCK ANIMALS:

- Flock animals live their lives in a group and some in mated pairs within a group. The group survival depends on every member looking out for the group. This means that parrots will often let their human flock know when something is not right in the household. (i.e. fire, intruder, hawk outside, doorbell, etc.)
- Flock animals keep in contact with each other verbally. Your parrot may greet you when you leave. Tell them you are leaving and when you will be back. Greet them right away when you return.
- Flock animals are VERY SOCIAL. They will want to be around the human flock when you are home. Socialize your parrot by introducing them to new people, places and things. Change should be a routine part of their lives.
- Introduce new people to your parrot slowly. Parrots may not accept handling from people they do not know or like. A parrot usually needs time to assess whether or not a stranger is OK. (Unknown things in the wild can kill them, so instinct tells them to be wary, until they determine that they are safe). Learn their body language and you will know when your parrot is comfortable with a person or situation.

PREY ANIMALS:

Animals that are preyed upon are aware of what is going on in their environment. A distracted parrot in the wild might become "dinner" for a hawk or eagle. Parrots in the home environment might see a dog, cat, snake, or even a small child as a predator.

Small children often move fast and “swoop down “ on a parrot like a predator. Parrots often respond by biting. Help children to calm down before approaching a parrot. Small children should be supervised around a parrot.

SLEEP DEPRIVED:

Parrots living in human households often do not get enough sleep. They need to have 10 to 12 hours of sleep in a darkened, quiet room. (Night-lights are OK).

Parrots in the wild must stay wary of predators, even at night. If your parrot is trying to sleep in a bedroom, every time you move your parrot will stir. A TV room or any other room that has human activity will also keep your parrot from getting a good night’s sleep. Try using a bird room or separate “sleep cage” in a quite room. Quality sleep can sometimes solve behavioral problems.

BOREDOM:

Another important issue with companion parrots is that bored birds “create their own entertainment”, like screaming, chewing the wood table or their feathers among other equally unacceptable activities. Give your bird activities to do, including:

- A variety of toys to play with.
- Several play areas (inside the cage, on a “T” stand in one room and on a play gym in another room, for example).
- Time to play with you or just be in the same room with you.
- A wide variety of food items (pellets, seed, vegetables, fruits). Try hiding food inside things like boxes or paper towels or hanging food through bars.
- Teach your parrot tricks.
- Take your parrot on a car trip to visit family.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND BODY LANGUAGE

Parrots communicate both verbally and non-verbally through body language. Often the non-verbal communication or body language is very subtle. Be observant and you can learn to communicate with and you can understand what a parrot is trying to say to you. (i.e. from the parrot’s point-of-view).

SUMMARY

Parrot behavior is complex. Instinctive and learned behaviors are easier to understand when you look at the situation from a parrot’s point-of-view. Ask yourself how the fundamental facts

above are affecting a parrot's behavior in the human environment.

Companion parrots are basically "wild" in their behavior with learned behaviors from the human environment thrown in. Look "through your parrot's eyes" and you will come to understand your parrot's behavior more fully.