

# THE CAPITAL FLYER

The Monthly Newsletter of the  
National Capital Bird Club  
4615 Harvard Road  
College Park, MD 20740-3752  
carol.rees@usa.com

<http://www.ncbc-dc.org>

April 2002

## “Focus on Pionus in April”

The Pionus Parrot, native to Central and South America, consists of eight species. Of these the Blue-Headed Pionus, Dusky Pionus, Maximilian’s or Scaly Headed Pionus, Bronze-winged Pionus, and White-capped Pionus are commonly available in American aviculture. The Coral-bill Pionus is available but not well established in aviculture, while the Plum-crowned Pionus is rare in American aviculture, and Massena’s or White-headed Pionus is rare even in its native habitat.

Pionus make ideal apartment pets since they are not especially noisy, don’t chew excessively, and are a medium sized bird (approximately 10 to 11” in length). They are a good pet for families with children and maintain their good disposition even in breeding situations.

Although not noted for their talking ability, they are capable of a decent vocabulary but have a gravelly sounding voice. They can be talented whistlers. Their life span is estimated to be between 15 and 40 years with their biggest health concern obesity.

Mark Sargent, a breeder of Pionus parrots, will speak at the NCBC meeting in April. For those who are not familiar with this enchanting member of the parrot family, this is a great opportunity to get some firsthand information and also find out whether this breed is for you. He will be happy to answer questions and will inform attendees on the characteristics and temperament of this delightful bird and what they can expect if a Pionus takes up residence with them.



*Above Blue-headed Pionus*

## Pionus Web Site Links

Avian Web  
Pionus Parrots Research Foundation  
Pionus Parrot Information Site  
Pionus Chat  
Pionus Breeder’s Association  
Article from Winged Wisdom  
Pet Bird Page Pionus Descriptions  
Pionus Email Group at Yahoo  
Handfeeding Pionus Parrots

<http://www.avianweb.com/pionus.htm>  
<http://www.fatparrots.org/>  
<http://slbrown3.home.mindspring.com/pionus.html>  
<http://chats.upatsix.com/chats.php?board=pionus>  
<http://www.pionusbreedersassociation.com/>  
<http://www.birdsnways.com/wisdom/ww33eii.htm>  
<http://www.petbirdpage.com/wcpionus.htm>  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pionus/>  
<http://www.tampa-online.com/topofthecrest/articles.html>

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## FUTURE MEETINGS

- April 7
  - May 5
  - June 2
  - July 14 \*
  - August 4
  - September 8 \*
  - October 6
  - November 10 \*
  - December 8 \*, \*\*
- \* Note date change  
\*\* Different Location

## “Giardia... Recognize the Problem, Part 1” By Debbie Arbogast

Giardia is an internal parasite that birds can get and one that we believe every bird owner should be aware of. Some birds show symptoms; others do not. Some of the current misperceptions in the avian community are that Giardia is just a featherpicker's problem, is just a water problem, it is just a little bird problem, and is just a problem in certain parts of the country.

In our dealings in acquiring our own birds, and in talking with people all around the country and worldwide, and through testing birds through our mail-in Giardia clinic, we have found that Giardia is indeed a problem, a serious problem, and one that needs careful consideration and adequate testing and treatment.

We are writing a series of articles on the subject for NCBC for inclusion in the next few newsletters. We would first like to tell the stories of the three birds that inspired us to undertake the “Giardia Challenge” and run a mail-in testing clinic, the first of which is included here.

Anyone who was the “Conure” email list a few years ago knows the story of Amadan. For those of you who aren't familiar, this is a story that every bird owner should read, and why the Giardia problem should be taken very seriously. The story below is copied from our website ([www.birdsafe.com](http://www.birdsafe.com)) on the Health Page.

*Amadan, the Sun Conure, was intended as a gift for my mother - either a homecoming from the hospital or a birthday present. She didn't live long enough to see him, and so he became my distraction from sorrow. He was true to his names.... he brought “sun” into my life and was indeed a clown (Amadan means clown in Celtic).*

*Wanting to be a good Conure companion for my little eight-months-old fid, I joined a Conure list online*

*(Kathy Johnson's Conure List which is now on OneList), read every email, asked questions, bought the recommended books, and read the books. I made birdie bread, bought a better cage, looked for the latest toy, and learned to be an informed Poop Inspector. I shared with the List each joy that comes with having one's first fid - the first trick learned, the first show of affection, the first word learned, etc. I also shared the apprehensions of a new owner - the first broken blood feather, the nail and wing trimming, a proper diet, etc. As the days passed, I rapidly learned to love my new companion.*

*Then I noticed several things which caused a new apprehension; Amadan was not like the other little fids in the emails I was reading daily. At first I discounted some of the reported fid activities as being Proud Momma bragging, but soon I decided that Amadan was indeed different. His patterns of behavior just didn't match those of other fids. He would play - but only for short periods and always followed by periods of rest. He would try a new activity but if it took much energy, he wouldn't repeat it very often - if at all. I asked the List and following their advice, I bought a good digital scale. Amadan weighed 94 grams. The List and I were concerned!*

*I made an appointment with an avian vet. Amadan was pronounced healthy...and at the low end of normal weight. Relieved, I turned to the List for suggestions on adding weight to one's fid. Time passed - and Amadan stayed the same weight and displayed the same behaviors. I made another appointment with another avian vet - one even more highly recommended than the first. Amadan was pronounced a fine, healthy little fid.... and maybe I should just accept that he is a “lean bird”. I took my little fid home again.*

*Then I weighed Amadan one morning*

*and he was 93 grams. When he dropped to 92 grams, I went to a third vet. After yet another careful exam, Amadan was pronounced fine; this time I listened to my instincts and insisted “something's wrong!!!!” The vet listened. He decided to do one more simple test....and Amadan was diagnosed with giardia. We started a round of antibiotic, and I reported to the List. I was assured that this was a common infection and the antibiotic (commonly prescribed) would have Amadan fine in no time. I added peanut butter to the birdie bread and gave sun flower seeds liberally. Amadan's weight increased to 93, 94, 95 grams...and I reported each increase to the List with delight. Then the antibiotics were finished. Within a week Amadan began to slowly lose the weight again. I returned to the vet.*

*Okay.... not to worry. Sometimes a second dose was needed. I added cranberries to Amadan's diet... and extra egg to the birdie bread...and dosed him faithfully with his antibiotic. The weight slowly increased. When he hit 96 grams, the List and I celebrated!*

*Then his antibiotics were gone....and the weight loss began again. I scheduled another trip to the vet.*

*Dr. D and I discussed the situation and he suggested that we anesthize Amadan and x-ray him to see if something else was going on. The anesthetic was the one the List had agreed on another case was safe, so I agreed. Four minutes later Dr. D. returned to the exam room with Amadan in his hand - his little head dangling limply. Amadan had gone to sleep under the anesthetic and just stopped breathing. Through my shock and horror I agreed to an autopsy; I wanted to know what was wrong with my little fid!*

*continued on page 5...*

## “Full Spectrum Lighting” By Carol Rees

Light, the right type of light, is vitally important to your bird's health. Sunlight or natural light, which produces a broad range of optical radiation, is important to your bird's diet, reproduction cycle, and overall emotional health. Currently most pet birds receive no or very small amounts of sunlight light since UV light is effectively blocked by glass and plastic and most pet birds reside most of their lives inside behind glass and plastic windows. Therefore, in order to ensure that your bird receives the full spectrum of the light present in sunlight, artificial bulbs and lamps can be purchased and used on a regular basis.

Light affects your birds' diet in two different ways. First, when a bird is exposed to the ultraviolet (UV) component of sunlight, the vitamin D<sub>3</sub> in the bird's system that was obtained from ingesting fresh red and orange vegetables and fruits is converted to the essential Vitamin D. Vitamin D is necessary for the absorption of calcium into the system.

Second, light affects how your bird eats. Diurnal birds, which forage for food during the day, have two natural times for their trips to feeding areas: a

hour after sunrise and again at around 5pm each day. To encourage your bird to eat a good diet, offer them food at these times.

Birds' reproductive cycles are tied to the amount of sunlight (photoperiod) they receive in a 24-hour period. The longer photoperiods occur naturally during the spring and summer period, when more food is available for chicks. Hormones are released when the sunlight increases stimulating the hen to produce eggs when food availability will be the greatest for the chicks.

Since it is important during mating and breeding that the bird has good quality feathers, molting typically occurs before the reproduction. Again light is important in affecting the nervous system to release chemicals in the body to signal the bird to molt.

Full-spectrum lights are bulbs and lamps that imitate natural sunlight by producing a broad range of optical radiation. They have a color balance similar to that of natural noontime sunlight and a high color temperature of between 5000 and 6,000K. Most are targeted toward reptiles but there are some products on the market specifically

designed for pet birds.

Make sure not to overexpose your bird to unsafe levels of UV light, which can have the same harmful effects in birds as they do in humans. Reptile or high-output devices should never be used except under the direction of a qualified avian vet.

Since UV light doesn't travel far from its artificial source, it must be placed relatively close to the bird in order to be effective. Avoid having the lamp right on top of the bird.

The tubes have a life span for emitting useful amounts of UV and should be replaced every year or two or if you observe them flickering.

Some companies that market full-spectrum lights for pet birds are listed below.

Ott-Lite <http://www.ott-lite.com/>

Avi-Tech Exotic Birds  
[www.avitec.com](http://www.avitec.com)

Verilux Healthy Lighting  
[www.healthylight.com](http://www.healthylight.com)

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## “Excessive Egg Laying” By Carol Rees

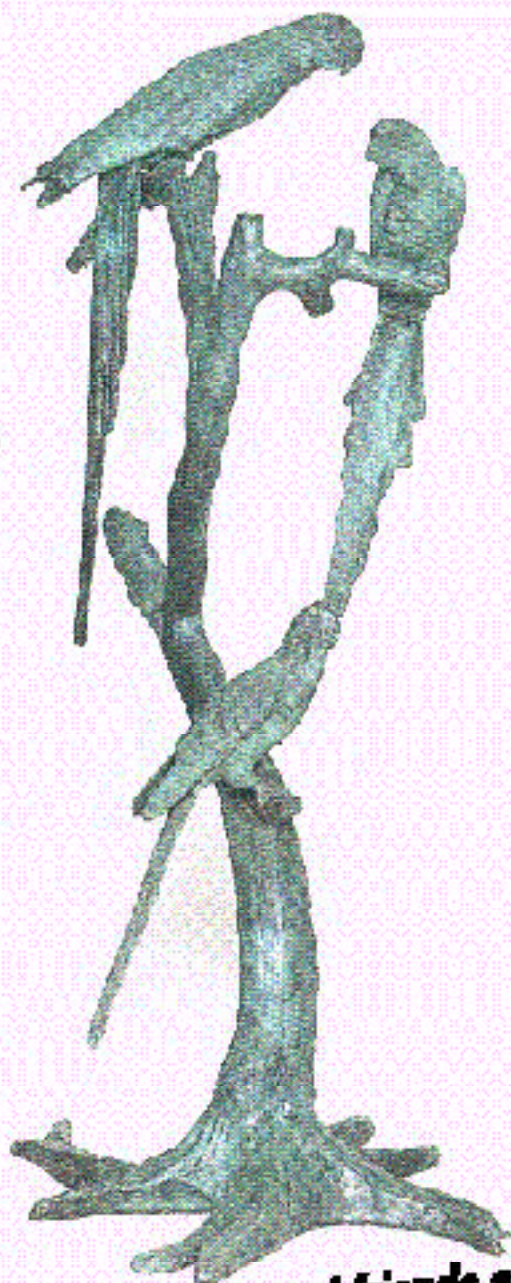
For birds that are indeterminate layers, excessive egg laying can be a life threatening condition. Besides depleting the body of nutrients, the hen can become egg-bound or the egg can crack inside her due to a thin shell from depleted calcium from repeated laying. Some birds such as lovebirds or cockatiels seem to be prone to excessive egg laying.

There are currently only three treatments: spaying (which is done only in life threatening cases due to the risks of the surgery, hormone treatments (which are expensive and of varying

degrees of effectiveness), and light reduction. Light affects birds' reproductive cycles and ovulation can often be halted by reducing the lighted day length by half an hour.

I have one lovebird that has an excessive egg laying problem. I have tried the hormones but have found that reducing the amount of light slightly each day is more effective plus it doesn't cost anything.

# NOVA EXOTIC & PET BIRD FAIR



**PET BIRD ENTHUSIAST  
MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**Date: Sat. 6 April 2002**

**Time: 10am - 4pm**

**Place: Comfort Inn  
6560 Loisdale Court  
Springfield Virginia**

**Close to the Springfield mall, just off Interstate 95.  
Take exit 169A left at first light & left at second light,  
or exit 169B right at first light & right at second light.**

***Feathered friends and all that goes with them.***

***Door prizes & raffle table***

***with a HQ cage, in a size that will accommodate your bird, up to a \$599.00 value,  
and a LARGE MACAW book \$180.00 value***

**Admission \$3.00, under 12 @ \$1.00  
for more info. contact Andy (703) 490-8820**

## The Lusty Month of April By John Davey

It's Spring! At last! It's that most special time of year. The days are getting noticeably longer, the weather is getting noticeably milder, and the mature parrots are getting noticeably hornier (if I can use that phrase in present polite company). You know what I'm talking about. All of a sudden, that sweet, lovable, cuddly young parrot has turned into cross between a Velociraptor and a buzz saw. (If you don't know what I'm talking about – you will – believe me – you will!)

That loveable little ball of feathers and down – that sweet little chick that used to snuggle on your shoulder and nibble on your ear – has suddenly become a flashing, pin point-eyed menace – all beak and hisses. The cage that has always been easily accessible for an owner's quick reach-in and head-scratch is now a "no-hands land" that will be defended inch by painful inch by a confused and angry bird.

For the Washington, D.C area, we have had a reasonably mild winter. (If you don't think so, just check with anyone in the Boston area – when they dig themselves out.) Spring is coming on like Gangbusters in the National Capital Area. Any cynics can just check the watery eyes and wet sneezes from every passerby on the street. Better yet – just check any parked car for the yellow-green haze of pollen that is

starting to coat them. And besides all the pollen and all the beautiful flowers, all of this lovely warm, wet weather and all this extra daylight has seemed to work a spell of romance and need and desire on our companion parrots.

And many of our parrots – poor darlings – really don't understand what's going on – any more than their hurt and confused humans. (Come to think of it – all of this confusion really does sound like being in love, doesn't it?) They (the parrots) have needs and urges and breeding imperatives that are new and unusual for them, and many times they have no way to resolve those needs.

So what's a parrot going to do? And more to the point, what's an owner to do?

The "How To..." parrot books tell us to restrict the hours of daylight that our pet birds receive in a 24-hour period. Yeah. Sure. That's a great idea. Especially when your (my) parrots occupy a dormer window on the west side of the house during the Late Fall – Winter – Early Spring months of the year. I certainly wish my workplace got that much sunshine! Putting a cover over the cage isn't much help – I would need to put their cage in a box to cut down on the amount of light the birds receive.

The "How To..." books also recommend plenty of baths and showers

– I guess to keep the birds "cooled off" and somewhat busy preening. (Sounds a lot like the advice the Brothers used to give us in High School.) There must be other ideas / tips / solutions that people have to help pet birds and their owners through this delicate time – but for the life of me – I can't remember any more of that great advice.

I guess the best advice that a person – an owner – can get is to "be understanding." This is a time and a season that's as old as life itself. In six or eight weeks, after the turbulent times of early spring are past, our pet birds will once again return to their old selves – their old personas – when the owner can again figure out with some sense of accuracy – just why their loving pet bit the heck out of their fingers.

Spring mating season is a part of the entire parrot package. We get their beauty and their intelligence and their comedy and their companionship – but at a price. For a few weeks every Spring, they can be real terrors. It really doesn't last that long – just a couple of weeks. And then we are quickly back to the time when we can honestly say, "Sure! Tell her (him) to 'Step Up!' She (he) loves everyone! She (he) won't bite!" And we won't even have to cross our fingers behind our backs. (If we can.)

### "Giardia... Recognize the Problem, Part 1" continued

*The report showed that Amadan had had giardia probably since hatching; it was deeply entrenched and had insidiously weakened him. Dr. D and the List both assured me that only my good care and feeding (all thanks to the List) had kept Amadan alive much longer than otherwise.*

*He died after living with me for one*

*year and four days. Have your fid tested for giardia.*

# CLUB NEWS

## Treasurer's Report March 2002

The Treasurer's Report for March will be published in the May newsletter.

## Membership Report March 2002

Exchange Memberships	17
Single Memberships	38
Family Memberships	19
<b>Total Memberships</b>	<b>74</b>

## National Capital Bird Club Meeting Minutes 3/3/02

The Bird Clubs of Virginia convention was announced again. Tom Marshall will be attending and will set up the NCBC banner and brochures at our table there.

The NOVA Exotic Pet Bird Fair scheduled for Saturday, April 6 in Springfield was announced. It is sponsored by the Andresen family, who are NCBC members.

Since there is currently a surplus of funds in the NCBC account, it was discussed giving some of the money to charitable organizations.

The speaker for the meeting was Roddy Gabel, who is a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. Gabel is also a former president of the NCBC and is Chief of Division Scientific Authority. He talked about the Wild Bird Conservation Act, which was passed in 1992 and the impact of CITES.

For permit questions, you can call 1-800-358-2104 or go to the web site <http://www.fws.gov> and click on permits.

## Assisting Birdsafe.com

How can you help us in our efforts? Currently Birdsafe.com, Inc. is an organization dedicated to spreading the safety and health message for companion birds. We have recently started our store to raise funds to help us in this effort. With enough funds we hope to start or sponsor a sanctuary for the Mid-Atlantic region of the country. Any purchases made at our store will help that dream.

You can help us by getting the word out. The more visitors we have to our site, the more knowledge we spread, the more birds we help. So spread the word, have all your bird-loving friends stop by and take a look and check back regularly.

You can also help us with content. Let us know through emails and surveys what you want to see and read about. We are adding new sections and information as we have time. So let us know!

Joe Arbogast  
Executive Director, [birdsafe.com](http://www.birdsafe.com)

**Be sure to check out their website  
at <http://www.birdsafe.com>**

## Coming Next Month

**Cockatoos  
Bird Magazines  
Avian Charities**

## FOR SALE

**Proven Breeding Pair**

**African Grey Timnehs - \$1000.00**

**12 years old with 5x4x3 foot cage and breeding box**

**Contact Jan Brecht-Clark at 703-866-3944**

# CLUB INFORMATION

**President**

Tammy Ellison ..... 301-946-3511  
 elton.tammy@verizon.net

**Vice President**

Tom Marshall ..... 703-777-3252

**Treasurer**

Wayne Porter ..... 703-751-5717

**Secretary**

Carol Rees ..... 301-277-9846  
 carol.rees@usa.com

**Audit Committee Chair**

OPEN .....

**Hospitality Committee Chair**

Elizabeth Moore ..... 703-751-5717

**Library Committee Chair**

Silvia Tennison ..... 301-474-1883

**Newsletter Committee Chair**

Carol Rees ..... 301-277-9846  
 carol.rees@usa.com

**Publicity Committee Chair**

OPEN .....

**Ways & Means Committee Chair**

OPEN .....

**AFA Delegates**

Tom Marshall ..... 703-777-3252

NCBC is affiliated with the American Federation of Aviculture, Bird Clubs of Virginia, and Bird Clubs of America. NCBC is dedicated to education and aviculture with respect to all types of birds.

Annual **DUES** are payable on January 1 of each year: Individual - \$20; Family - \$25. After June, dues are one-half the above amount. Make checks payable to NCBC and send to: National Capital Bird Club, 4615 Harvard Road, College Park, MD 20740.

Club **MEETINGS** are normally held the first Sunday of each month at 3:30p.m. at the McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean, VA; (703) 356-0551.

**DIRECTIONS TO MEETINGS:**

From Capital Beltway (I-495): Exit onto Rt. 123 EAST (toward McLean). Follow Rt. 123/Dolly Madison through watching for small blue sign that says "police substation." Turn left onto Lewinsville Road. Take immediate right on to Balls Hill Rd.

**BIRDS** are normally welcome at meetings; however, NCBC assumes no responsibility for their safety or welfare.

**REFRESHMENTS:** Please bring a snack to share at the meetings whenever you can. It doesn't need to be fancy or handmade, store-bought is fine.



**DONATE USED MAGAZINES:**

Please donate your old magazines to the Club Librarian when you are finished with them.

**NCBC Advertising Policies**

Advertisements appearing in *The Capital Flyer* are not endorsed by NCBC unless stated otherwise. NCBC assumes no responsibility for advertiser's claims or the quality of their product or service. NCBC reserves the right to refuse any advertisement it considers inappropriate. Advertisements must be prepaid.

**NCBC Editorial Policies**

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Club or its members. Unless otherwise stated, articles appearing in *The Capital Flyer* may be reprinted provided that credit is given to the author and *The Capital Flyer*. To protect other authors, permission must be obtained from the original source. Send articles or newsletter submissions to: Carol Rees, NCBC Editor, 4615 Harvard Road, College Park, MD 20740-3752 or carol.rees@usa.com.

**CLASSIFIED AD RATES:**

<i>Ad Type</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Non-Member</i>
<i>Line Ad</i>	<i>Free</i>	<i>15¢/word - \$ 3 min.</i>
<i>Bus. Card</i>	<i>\$3</i>	<i>\$ 5</i>
<i>¼ page</i>	<i>\$5</i>	<i>\$10</i>
<i>½ page</i>	<i>\$8</i>	<i>\$15</i>

**Your new membership card  
 is stapled here for paid members.**

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 6-7, 2002**  
**Super Pet Expo**  
Info: (866) 787-3773  
www.superpetexpo.org

**April 6, 2002**  
**NOVA Exotic Pet Bird Fair**  
Comfort Inn  
6560 Loisdale Ct  
Springfield, VA (703) 490-8820

**April 14, 2002**  
**Bird Mart**  
Doubletree Hotel at Tysons Corner  
7801 Leesburg Pike  
McLean, VA (703) 893-1340

**May 11, 2002**  
**Peninsula Caged Bird Society Spring Bird Mart**  
Columbian Center  
12742 Nettles Drive  
Newport News, VA (757) 874-4651

**May 18, 2002**  
**Baltimore Bird Fanciers Bird Mart**  
Tall Cedars Hall  
Parkville, VA (410) 628-2051

**June 2, 2002**  
**Bird Mart**  
Tysons Westpark Best Western  
McLean, VA (703) 771-9678

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*College Park, MD 20740-3752*



*Address Correction Requested*

