



THE CAPITAL FLYER

The Monthly Newsletter of the National Capital Bird Club

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

January 2009

January 4, 2009

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This month's meeting we will view a video, "Parrots: Look Who's Talking", and have a business meeting. We hope to get ideas from members and attendees for the next year's events. Hope to see you there!

I apologize for getting the newsletter out so late for this month. For some reason I thought that I had an extra week with it being the holidays.

BCV 2009 Convention

The BCV 2009 convention will be on April 3,4,5, 2009 at Virginia Beach. The donation for this convention will be selected by the NCBC and must be decided on by the middle of January so the other clubs will have the time to act on it. They will be raffling off an Eric Peake original painting.

Renew Your NCBC Membership

NCBC 2008 memberships expire at the end of the calendar year. The club is now accepting memberships for 2009. The dues will remain at \$20/year for a single membership and \$25/year for a family membership. Show your support of the club and renew your membership early. The membership form is on page 5.

Do Not Bring Birds to Meeting

The McLean Government Center has advised John Davey that live animals brought to the meetings will result in the club losing their reservation at the site and being barred from meeting there. No birds can be brought to the meetings until further notice.

Next Meeting

January 4, 2009
(3:30 - 5:30pm)

Location:
**McLean Government
Center**

Love at Last Bite By John Davey

So, what DO you do with a Quaker that's a "problem bird?"

I think that I have thought about that issue at one time or other – usually while reading an entry of the Quaker Parakeet Discussion List or perusing the latest copy of Bird talk magazine or listening to people at the National Capital Bird Club discuss their pets.

The issue of how to take care of problem birds was always something that I had heard about or had read about. I have owned birds for years and years, and besides Old Teddy Bird's plucking and a couple of knock-down, drag-out fights between different birds, I had never had any major problems with my birds. I sort of looked down my nose and/or felt sorry for the owner that said that they had a real problem with a bird.

I knew that it was simple to own and care for any bird. All you had to do was to read a number of books and articles on bird keeping and follow the directions, and be a self-assured, intelligent, loving bird owner and everything else would be all right. Piece of cake!

Then I got Frodo Bird. I had been warned. Mattie Sue Athan had sent Frodo to me with the stern prior warning that he was a handful. I have to admit that I was flattered (and a little challenged) by her offer. She had told me that this little fly-away, rescued Quaker could talk like a Magpie and let nothing get in his way when he wanted to do something, but that he was – even for a Quaker – very headstrong and willful.

Mattie Sue had told me that I would have to work hard with Frodo to keep him occupied and to break a rather annoying biting habit that he had. Both flattered and challenged, I took on Frodo with my eyes wide open. (I had read all of the books and articles. I knew what I was doing. I was a self-assured, intelligent, loving bird owner, and

everything else would be all right.)

Frodo arrived – via airfreight from Oklahoma – and he was everything that Mattie Sue had promised he would be: He was smart. He was funny. He was full of applesauce and vinegar. He could talk – nonstop – and use his words in context. He was a Quaker Parakeet to the nines!

But – just as Mattie Sue had foretold – Frodo also had a nasty biting habit. Now I have to admit something right here: I have always kept the "smaller" psittacines as pets. I like some of the larger breeds of parrots. I think they are beautiful and make great pets. The main reason for my always having a smaller parrot is the respect that I have for all parrot beaks and the damage that those beaks can do. My reasoning has always been that smaller birds have smaller beaks that can only do smaller damage.

Well ... be that as it may ... Frodo was (and still is) a biter. And I mean a WICKED biter. Frodo draws blood with almost all of his bites. (I have three healing wounds on my hands – right now.) I'm inclined to believe that biting was the reason that Frodo was let loose somewhere in Oklahoma and eventually found his way to Mattie Sue. I think that someone, somewhere taught Frodo all sorts of lovely words and phrases, but that they either mistreated him (that's really hard to believe) or mis-trained him (easier to believe) or gave his biting the wrong reinforcement (probably easiest to believe) – say by laughing at a biting incident – until the biting became more and more severe and more ingrained into the bird's behavior - until it became second nature for the animal.

After a while, (This is still just my guess.) the little bird's biting became so intolerable that the owners decided that they could no longer handle the Quaker, and they set him free. That's certainly not the right thing to do, but I could see

people doing that. The lost little bird made his way to a boy in a playground and to Mattie Sue and finally to me.

Frodo and I had a short honeymoon, where there wasn't any biting – but that didn't last long. Frodo bit. He bit hard, and he drew blood. This was a very unusual trait for a Quaker. I think all Quaker owners have experienced some bout of biting over their relationship with their bird. I really think that gentle nips are one of the ways that the birds interact with one another. But hard, determined, purposeful biting (I was trying to find a way around using the word "vicious.") is another story. That's the result of mistreatment or bad training and ingrown habits.

I've already said that I consider myself to be an "educated" parrot owner. I've read the books and the articles. After a couple of biting bouts with Frodo I went back to all of the books and articles and read them all over again. Then I went to work.

I tried "pushing in" to a bite. That's where instead of the natural reaction of pulling away from the pain of the bird biting, you instead push in to the bird's body, throwing the biter backwards and off balance. The bird quickly associates the discomfort of being pushed backwards and off balance with the act of biting, and the bird decides to stop biting. It's a nice trick and a good training tool. I've seen it work and it makes logical sense to me. It didn't work with Frodo. He just dug in deeper with his beak and held on for dear life.

I tried the "elevator drop" and the "earthquake wobble." Those are two moves where the owner quickly drops his/her arm a couple of inches or wobbles the arm (like an earthquake) when the bird bites, the bird again associates the discomfort of the quick drop or the quick

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Love at Last Bite *continued from page 2*

wobble with the act of biting. Hopefully, that dissuades the bird from biting. Neither move seemed to work with Frodo, and more often than not, I would have a bird hanging from my bitten hand – holding on with his beak.

I tried distracting Frodo with food – offering a treat whenever he indicated that he intended to bite. I used shelled sunflower seeds and tried to keep some in my free hand whenever I would tell Frodo to “Step Up!” That also did not work well, because Frodo never gave a signal of when he intended to bite.

I guess that’s the real frustration of Frodo’s biting habit. I never know when or why Frodo is going to bite. He’s a fast little dickens, too. I wouldn’t mind having Frodo as a back-up in a knife fight. I’ve had Frodo for years, now, and he shows no intention of letting up on the biting habit. It does get wearisome.

So, all joking aside ... What do you do with a biting parrot? What do you do with a bird that escapes, evades, or

ignores all of the tried and true training techniques? I don’t intend to take the easy way out and let the poor bird fly free again. I just can’t do that. The easiest and the most natural thing to do is to ignore the creature. Leave him in his cage; keep it clean; give him food and water; and let the world spin on.

I have to admit – that approach is easy to do, and an owner has to fight hard to avoid those inclinations. Why go out of your way to get bitten? But we have to remember that these birds are gregarious creatures, and a life in solitary confinement is no life at all for them.

So we are faced with a much bigger problem. What do we do? I guess the first step is that YOU DON’T GIVE UP! It’s the old Winston Churchill advice: “Never, ever, ever surrender!” Keep trying. Maybe the NEXT time, that old “Push In” maneuver will work. Maybe NEXT time, he’ll take the treat, rather than bite your hand.

The second step is to (hopefully)

realize that you ARE smarter than the bird. Try to study and figure out why he bites and what triggers the bite. (I haven’t been too successful with this step – yet.)

The third step is to figure out ways to work around the bites and to make it harder for him to bite. Frodo now steps up onto a washcloth covering my hand. It’s the only way that the two of us can agree on him getting out of his cage. He still bites the heck out of the washcloth, but normally he can’t find a way through to my skin. It’s not the best way for the two of us to interact, but right now, it’s the only way.

I haven’t given up, and Frodo certainly shows no intention of giving up. Maybe this is the best relationship that the two of us will ever have. I hope not, but maybe I’ve become just a little more accepting of Frodo and his proclivities. Stay tuned.

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NCBC Club Meeting Minutes - 12/07/2008 By John Davey & Wendy Ernst

The December meeting of the National Capital Bird Club (NCBC) was given over to fun and festivities and lots of good food. Club member Jeanne Nathanson again generously donated the use of her home for the Holiday Party. Club members enjoyed ham, turkey, and a wide selection of side dishes and salads, along with plenty of liquid refreshments and desserts. Jeanne’s home was decorated for the Holidays, and the guests enjoyed visiting with Jeanne’s flock of birds. Everyone had a great time, and the Club wants to thank Jeanne for offering her home and to thank everyone for the food and good spirits that they brought.

Julie Abrams completed the embroidered name badges, which John Davey gave to the owners. Anyone who ordered a badge, and didn’t get it, can pick it up at the meeting from Wendy.

NCBC Yahoo Group

Please join us at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/birdclubinvirginia/>

The purpose of this group is to exchange information and education, and to encourage interest in pet birds, from Canaries to Macaws. This forum is for members of the National Capital Bird Club, as well as all others. There are currently 75 members. Please join, contribute and share! Stay in the know by bookmarking this site and visiting often. Check out the interesting links.

Adoption & Rescue

Phoenix Landing has many birds currently in foster care that need a permanent home. If you are interested in making them part of your family, you can contact phoenixlanding@earthlink.net. For more information visit the Phoenix Landing Website to learn more about adoption - <http://www.phoenixlanding.org/>

The **Wilson Parrot Foundation** has birds that need adoption. If you are interested in volunteering or adopting, you can read more about what is required at http://www.wilsonparrotfoundation.com/volunteer_adopt.htm

Advertisements

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*NCBC Members, bring in your newsletter and receive a free 1 lb of Spray Millet (\$6.69 value) with your \$25 order. In-store orders only. Limit 1 per membership please.



Every Day 11-6 ■ Mon & Thurs 11-8



NCBC Officers and Board Members

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| President | John Davey | 703-281-5293 | jr.davey@verizon.net |
| Vice-President | Kitty Miller | 703-914-1050 | kittibel@hotmail.com |
| Treasurer | Elizabeth Moore | 703-751-5717 | ponypair@hotmail.com |
| Secretary | Wendy Ernst | 301- 439-6375 | wernst40@yahoo.com |
| Audit Committee Chair | John Davey | 703-281-5293 | jr.davey@verizon.net |
| Hospitality Committee Chair | Elizabeth Moore | 703-751-5717 | ponypair@hotmail.com |
| Library Committee Chair | Kitty Miller | 703-914-1050 | kittibel@hotmail.com |
| Newsletter Committee Chair | Carol Rees | 703-528-2730 | carol.rees@usa.com |
| Publicity Committee Chair | Jeanne Nathanson | 301-263-0770 | |
| Ways & Means Committee Chair | Sally O'Dwyer | 703-356-4334 | slodwyer@yahoo.com |
| AFA Delegate #1 | Tom Marshall | 703-777-3252 | tmarshall@cbmove.com |
| AFA Delegate #2 | Open | 703-771-9678 | |
| BCV Delegate #1 | Kitty Miller | 703-914-1050 | kittibel@hotmail.com |
| BCV Delegate #2 | John Davey | 703-281-5293 | jr.davey@verizon.net |
| BCV Delegate #3 | John Long | 703-771-9678 | handyman1046@aol.com |

Club Meetings

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.

Birds

Birds are temporarily suspended from the meetings due to the McLean Government Center regulations stating that no live animals may be brought into their center.

National Capital Bird Club 2009 Membership Application

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State, Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____
 Date of Application: _____

Would you like to be published in the roster? _____

Annual membership entitles you to a newsletter, access to club library, free business card advertisement in the newsletter for bird related businesses, and other club sponsored projects.

Annual Membership Type:

Individual \$20.00

Family \$25.00

(If you are joining after June, your annual dues are one-half the above amounts for the year.)

What types of bird(s) do you have?

Would you be interested in serving on any committees or serving as a speaker?

Please mail to:

NCBC
8901 Kimes St.
Silver Spring, MD 20901-3727

Please make checks payable to NCBC

UPCOMING EVENTS

**January 10, 2009 - by Phoenix Landing
Frank Rutowski, DVM (10am-12noon)**

Grace Presbyterian Church
7434 Bath St
Springfield, VA

<http://www.phoenixlanding.org/events.html>

**January 17, 2009 - by Phoenix Landing
“A Parrot’s Point of View” (10am-12noon)**

Eastern Exotics Veterinary Hospital
4001 Legato Rd
Fairfax, VA

<http://www.phoenixlanding.org/events.html>

*National Capital Bird Club
727 N Danville St
Arlington, VA 22201*



Address Correction Requested