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Dear Toolady.com Family,

In ***My Human, My Slave***, the avian authors, Echo and Dust Bunny, introduced you to their methods of training the perfect human slave. This is a totally new way of approaching the relationship between Avians and Humans. With the success of the book orders, it appears to be a method long overdue.

Previously, all training books have been written from the human viewpoint. We thought it was time for the humans to learn what the birds think and for humans to have a source of constantly improving information and resources. This concept we created, is a series of books, like this one, on bird-related subjects, written by the birds themselves, that will make learning about bird behavior and care more fun.

In ***My Human, My Slave***, you met Echo and Dust Bunny, and then in ***Guide to Birdie First-Aid***, you were introduced to Asia. In ***Guide to Birdie Biting*** you met Killian, then Dust Bunny gave you her views on feather plucking in ***Guide to Feather Plucking***. In this book, the fourth in the informational series being written by my flock, you meet Siobhan and hear her views on ***Bringing Home Baby***.

As more flock members are added (Through our **Echo's Haven Bird Rescue**) new birds will be able to write about their particular specialties.

In this, our second year, Toolady.com has stepped up our efforts to bring you all of the information you will ever need for your bird's continued health. We have nineteen experts, FREE web sites for birds, articles, chat boards and other things too numerous to name. We are here to make the effort to ensure that ALL captive birds live with humans that are well trained in avian subjects and that the humans ALWAYS have a place to go to have questions answered quickly.

Please keep this book readily accessible. While this topic may not be life threatening, it is important to the happiness of your home.
Thank you from the flock.

Echo, Asia, Maya, Rosie, Dust Bunny, Lint, Killian, Siobhan and Toolady (aka Elizabeth Aaron and Gail Martin)

To go to **MY HUMAN, MY SLAVE**

<http://www.toolady.com/books/MyHumanMySlave/index.htm>

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Presents:

Bringing Home Baby

By:

Siobhan Pionus



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction.....	3
The Perfect Match	4
Breeders Vs The Pet Shop.....	10
Dr. Goodfeather	12
Cages, Perches and Toys, Oh My!	14
Health and Nutrition.....	17
Birdie Behavior or (Teaching Baby to Play Well With Others).....	29
Conclusion.....	32

Introduction

Hi! By now everybirdie knows what these books are about, at least in general. You have all gotten to hear from my flockmates their views on training a good slave, birdie first-aid, biting and feather plucking. Finally it's my turn to talk. What I would like to discuss is how slaves should go about making the decision to bring home a parrot master. Since I am without a doubt the baby in this flock, I have taken it upon myself to explain this very important facet of the master/slave relationship. Here I find that I need to apologize to all of the birdies out there. I know that in the past these books have been written for you, the birdie masters. Unfortunately, in this book, I find that I need to write for the slaves out there, since a lot of the things that need to be done to prepare a home for a birdie master are done before he/she ever gets there. I apologize profusely for rejecting tradition in this matter and assure you that future books will return to the established pattern.

OK, humans, this book is for you for a change. The first thing I will address in this book is how to decide what kind of parrot master is for you. After that we will discuss where you should go to get the being who will rule you for the rest of your life.

The next thing I will cover is what kinds of preparations you will have to make, before bringing baby home. It's not as simple as it seems you know.

Of course, I will also go in depth into what you should do once you have your baby home. What to feed him/her and why, what kinds of things are toxic, how much attention to pay him/her and what kinds of toys to buy and why.

I will also teach you what type of behavior is normal for your new family member and how to teach your new master how to get along in the home environment. Hopefully when you finish reading this book, you will be a well-prepared human slave.

The Perfect Match

There are easily dozens of different types of birdie masters out there. To make sure that your future as a slave has as little chaos in it as possible, it is very important that you find the type of birdie that is perfect for you. This is a **huge** commitment you are getting ready to make, easily as great as getting married or having children.¹ You will want to make sure that you are going to be able to give the parrot master you choose all of the attention he/she wants and needs. With some help from the rest of my flock I have compiled a list of the different types of birdies out there, the general species characteristics, their typical personalities and the amounts of care necessary to have them in your home. Hopefully, after you have read this list you will have a better understanding of what kind of birdie you are looking for.

✂ Hyacinth Macaw- This is the largest of the macaws. They are definitely the "gentle giants" of the macaw family. Hyacinths are a beautiful deep blue color, with a yellow patch around their eyes. They are curious, gentle, intelligent, sensitive and as mischievous as any small human child and like small children they require lots of attention, especially when young. Because they are very scarce, hyacinths really belong in a loving home, with someone who has lots of birdie experience and can hopefully provide a birdie mate for him/her. Hyacinths are expensive to acquire and expensive to maintain. Anyone bringing a Hyacinth Macaw into their home as a parrot master had better have enough money to not only pay for the birdie, but also to pay for furniture repairs and the large stainless steel reinforced cage that will be needed. Hyacinths need a bunch of space.²

¹ Actually, probably a greater commitment. After all, humans get divorced all of the time, and your children only live with you for eighteen to twenty-one years. The larger breeds of Macaws can live for more than eighty years.

² It's been brought to my attention that our mama wants to get a hyacinth macaw. I don't know where we are going to put him or her, but as long as I still get lots of attention, I guess I don't mind **too** much.

✂ Scarlet Macaw- Scarlet macaws are very pretty, with their bright feathers of red yellow, blue and a little bit of green, our mama's human daughter has often said that they look like snow cone birds. We have two of those in our flock, Echo and her mate Asia, and they are **big**.³ Though Scarlet Macaws have a reputation as nippy birds, this is not always necessarily true. Echo is probably one of the best-behaved birdies in our flock when around humans. However, scarlets are really not very fond of children. Scarlet Macaws are very vocal and learn human language very quickly, making it easy for them to communicate their needs to their slaves. Since scarlets really like to have a lot of space to spread their wings and love to scream "good morning" and "good night", it is not recommended that a human living in an apartment bring home this particular type of birdie master.



✂ Greenwing Macaw- Greenwings are one of the largest of the macaw species, following closely on the tail of Hyacinths. They are similar in coloration to Scarlet Macaws, being of a slightly subdued, deeper hue, with predominantly green and blue wings. Greenwings generally have a very gentle personality, though they can become very possessive of their human slaves⁴ and do go through the "terrible twos" like most of the macaw family. Greenwing macaws require a family with a bunch of love to give and a bunch of patience.

✂ Blue and Gold Macaw- Considered the clowns of the macaw family, Blue and Golds seem to be the most popular type of larger macaw. Most humans/slaves fall in love with the rich blues, greens and golds of the birds' feathers. Like most macaws, they like a lot of

³ I have to admit that they scare me; they look like they could swallow me in one gulp.

⁴ Rosie is very possessive of our mama/slave, and does not like mama's mate or daughter getting near her.

space to spread their wings and so need large cages. Blue and Golds have gentle personalities, can live with just about any kind of human/slave and actually can get along very well in households with small children.⁵

✂ Military Macaw- This is a medium to large macaw that is all over green with a little bit of red on the forehead and face. These macaws tend to be overlooked by humans searching for birdie masters, which is a shame since their jaunty, mischievous personalities make them fantastic companions. Like most of the larger macaws, military macaws really don't get along well with children and have been known to mistake small, annoying children for rodents.

✂ Severe, Yellow Collared, Hahn's Noble, Illiger's, Blue Headed and Red-bellied Macaws- These are all mini macaws. These guys make great masters. They are less noisy than the larger macaws, have a great deal of patience and are good in homes with small children. These macaws belong in homes with an excess of love and affection, and deserve gentle slaves who will spend time with them.

✂ Buffon and Caninde (Blue throat) Macaws- These guys would make excellent masters, but because of their rarity, should really only go to homes where they will be provided with a birdie mate.

✂ Mollucan Cockatoo⁶- This salmon pink birdie is one of the largest of the cockatoo family. Mollucans have a piercing shriek that could wake the dead⁷, indeed this is the main reason they change slaves so frequently. (The second is the Mollucan's distressing tendency to train through biting.) Any human wanting a Mollucan as a master should live far away from other people, and should have lots of time and affection to spare.

⁵ As long as they aren't the noisy type of children who like to stick their fingers in your face.

⁶ Note from Lint; Humans with severe allergies will want to think twice before getting any type of cockatoo since we produce *lots* of feather dust.

⁷ Before I became part of the flock, my momma had a Mollucan named Devon; he had such a loud scream that he gave everybirdie in the house a nervous tic.

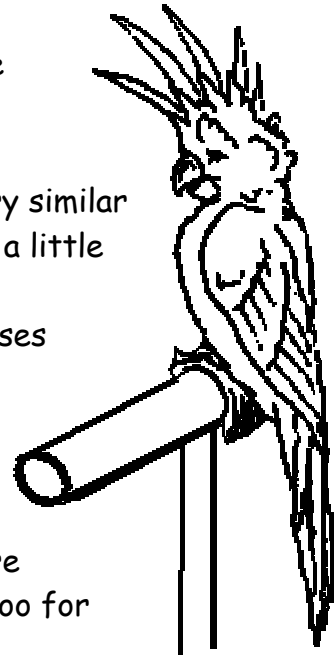
☞ Umbrella Cockatoo- These birdies are very similar to Mollucans in personality, just not nearly as loud. Umbrella 'Toos seek lots of attention and are extremely loving birdies. These 'toos are nicknamed "Velcro Birds" because of their tendency to use affection and kisses prodigiously in training their slaves, and the fact that once they find a human they like, they stick like glue. Due to their affectionate natures, Umbrella Cockatoos are definitely good masters for people who want companionship, and their company can even be considered "soothing"⁸

☞ Sulfur-Crested Cockatoo- These guys are very similar to other 'toos in personality, though they are a little less active and are more aloof than Umbrella Cockatoos. Sulfurs don't use cuddling and kisses nearly as much in their training of slaves.

☞ Goffins Cockatoo- A small cockatoo, closer in size to an Amazon. Definitely the clown of the cockatoo family. These adorable birds are wonderful talkers. This is the perfect cockatoo for apartment dwelling humans

☞ Bare-Eyed Cockatoo- For some reason, this small birdie with blue rings around his/her eyes, is considered the least attractive of the cockatoos. However, these 'toos have all of the best qualities of a Goffins combined with a fantastic talking ability, and make **wonderful** masters.

☞ Cockatiels- Unlike their larger cousins the cockatoos, these tiniest members of the 'too family do not really enjoy a lot of cuddling with their slaves, but do enjoy being in the center of things. 'Tiels are wonderful masters for humans who aren't able to spend a lot of time at home and who will respect their independent natures.



⁸ Note from Dustbunny: Before Lint and I moved outside to our aviary, our slave/human/mama liked nothing better than to curl up on the couch with us after a hard day. She said that cuddling with us always makes her feel better.

- ✂ Black Palm and Gang Gang Cockatoos- While these Cockatoos would make fantastic masters, due to their rarity they really should only go to homes where they will have birdie mates
- ✂ African Grey Parrot- Due to their great talking ability⁹ and high intelligence, greys are in great demand as masters. Because African Greys tend to be wary of new people, things and places, they have earned a reputation of being one-slave birdies. This is not true, however, because they are nervous, high-strung birdies, they need a slave who will make the commitment to give them all of the attention they need. African Greys come in two varieties, Congo African Greys (CAG's), and Timneh African Greys (TAG's). Both types of Greys make wonderful masters, with the main difference being that TAG's are slightly smaller, and get along much better with small children.
- ✂ Amazon Parrots- These birdies are a mass of contradictions, one day being standoffish and the next hanging from their perches by their toenails and clowning around to make their slaves laugh. No two amazons have the same personality. There are numerous adjectives used to describe these birdies, curious, bored, unpredictable, gentle, and rowdy being only a few. The only adjective none of this flock has heard used to describe them is quiet. Due to their tendency to scream and their heavy use of biting as a training tool, the best human slave for an Amazon parrot would be a deaf, masochistic person with absolutely no desire to be dominant in the relationship.
- ✂ Conures- These generally small parrots come in a rainbow variety of colors. They are playful, intelligent, loving and extremely sweet natured. Conures love spending time with their humans, and their only true downside is their extremely grating voices.
- ✂ Pionus Parrots- This is the type of birdie I obviously know the most about. We are generally sweet adorable birdies and make gentle patient masters. We are reputed to be very quiet birdies, but like

⁹ They are exceeded in this ability only by Budgies.

all parrots can be very vocal when wanting attention.¹⁰ We need frequent baths due to a tendency to smell faintly musky. We prefer slaves that are organized and maintain a routine.

☞ Caiques- These small birdies are absolutely fantastic, with beautiful colors, acute intelligence, and a **very** playful outlook on life. These masters are always in motion, and constantly need things to keep them busy. They do require a little more attention as babies due to a tendency to be little troublemakers, but they make wonderful masters. With one of these babies in the house, you humans don't have to worry about leftovers; caiques will eat anything once, and have even been referred to as "avian trash cans".

☞ Poicephalus Parrot- This African parrot is a good master for just about any human to have. Poicephalus parrots have a very calm personality, speak well and almost never scream. They are intelligent and use a bunch off affection and positive reinforcement in their training of human slaves.

☞ Pacific (Celestial) Parrotlets- If you only have limited space, due to their 5 inch size, these lively little parrots are an ideal choice to introduce you to the joys of having a parrot master. Parrotlets are very quiet little birds and make wonderful companions. They are very much like Amazons in temperament, as they are comical, like to show off, and love to be with you. A Parrotlet makes an ideal master for everyone.

☞ Budgerigar (Budgie)- Budgies are almost always mistaken for parakeets. Budgies are rather small, come in many colors, and almost look like cartoon birds. They are little acrobats and have an amazing talent for mimicry, being able to imitate specific human voices at will. These cute little birdies are good masters for both

¹⁰ Killian is an exception to this rule, I don't think he ever shuts up, and even I am tired of his screams of **birdie**, **birdie** and **weasel**.

Note from Killian: Don't let Siobhan fool you, she's got a big mouth too.

humans who live in apartments and for small children, and due to their vocal abilities, make wonderful companions.

✂ Quaker Parakeets- Quakers can be rather stubborn and aggressive, and really should go to a home with a calm, easygoing slave. They are small noisy parrots, but are also curious and very affectionate.

✂ Parakeets (Golden-Winged, Grey-Cheeked, Canary-Winged)- These tiny parrots have a great fondness for hiding in their slave, and are sweet, cuddly little birdies. They make fantastic masters for all types of human slaves.

✂ Eclectus- Attractive, technicolor birdies that are famous for their minimal chewing and generally quiet manner. Eclectus parrots are among the most exceptional of all psitticines. With their bold brilliant colors and unique feather texture, these beautiful birdies are distinctive in their extreme sexual dimorphism. Males are predominantly green, and the hens are predominantly red with purple "vests". Eclectus parrots vocabularies are often extensive, with a speaking ability second only to the African Grey, and their vocal quality is quite human. The male eclectus parrots make excellent masters, even in households with small children, while the females in some cases can become somewhat aggressive.

Breeders Vs The Pet Shop

This leads me to next important topic, where are you going to get your baby? On the surface, you humans may not think that this makes a large difference; you can't know how wrong you are. Where you get your birdie master from can determine all sorts of things about his/her health, temperament and personality; not to mention how much you spend.

When you, the potential slave, go to a breeder to purchase your birdie master, you are getting to see birds of that particular species in an environment that will be much closer to the one you will have at home. At a

breeder's you are able to see the environment that your baby comes from. You are able to meet all of the breeding birdies and see your baby grow almost from day one. This gets your baby birdie master accustomed to you early and allows you to monitor his/her progress in a way that would almost never be possible in a pet shop. You can purchase babies from a breeder while they are still being handfed, or are already completely weaned. (Weaned babies are just a little bit more expensive)¹¹ When you acquire your birdie master from a reputable breeder, that breeder will inform you of any problems you may have with your baby, they will tell you how to care for your birdie master and if local, can usually give you the name of a reputable avian vet. I know that this is an over generalization, but it seems to me breeders care more; your birdie master isn't just another number to them.¹² Also, and this is **very** important if you are going to have enough money to buy your master toys, perches, a cage and pellets; breeders on the average are approximately \$300 to \$500 cheaper to buy birdies from than the pet store.

Going to a pet store to purchase your birdie master is a little like playing Russian roulette. There is every chance that you will find a good, clean store, that treats the birdies well, and has actually taken the time to care for and socialize them; unfortunately there is also a huge chance that you are going to encounter a dirty store, that keeps it's birdies in cramped cages, and only tells you that the birdies are handfed and socialized in an effort to get you to purchase one. This is not to say that all pet stores are terrible horrible places that never treat their animals well, because that isn't true. There are a number of stores, especially those specializing in Avians, which are wonderful. The staff members of these stores do take the time to play with and care for their babies and indeed treat them almost as well as we birdie masters deserve to be treated. If you can't find a breeder nearby, then by all means try a pet store. Just be aware that your selection will be limited, you will have to take the clerk's word for where the baby



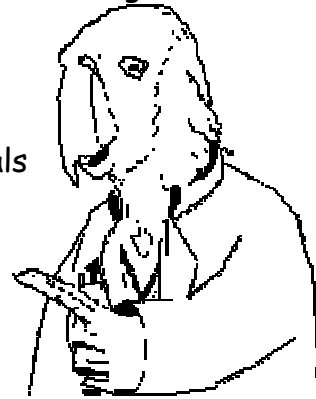
¹¹ Unless you are already experienced at hand feeding, I seriously recommend spending the extra for a weaned baby; it's too easy to aspirate a baby if you don't know what you are doing.

¹² My momma/slave got me from a breeder, and that breeder lady would **not** send me by airplane until the weather had cooled down enough that I wouldn't be frying sitting on the runway.

came from and you are going to pay more money. No matter how well a pet shop may treat it's psitticines, there is always the bottom line to worry about.

Dr. Goodfeather

It is very important that you do the research and find a good avian veterinarian **before** you bring home your baby master. Once you get your baby, you are going to immediately want to get him/her checked out for all of the major psitticine diseases, especially if you already have animals or another birdie master. The symptoms of most diseases are easily overlooked by the layperson, and could quickly contaminate any pets, other masters or even children.¹³ This is also a good time to have your baby DNA sexed if he/she hasn't been already¹⁴, and to get his/ her wings clipped for the first time.¹⁵



This is a good time for me to point out some of the symptoms of sickness to you. Not only will this be useful to you while you are shopping for that "perfect" master, but will also assist you in keeping your master healthy once you have him/her. The following is a brief list of things to look for. I recommend that you download my flockmate Asia's book on First-Aid for a more detailed list of bird diseases and symptoms of bad health.

✂ Our usual elegant appearance is deteriorated, i.e. ratty feathers.

✂ Cloudy eyes, eye discharge or swelling around our eyes.

✂ Blocked nostrils, nasal discharge or excessive sneezing. Unlike most human children, birdies don't really tend to have runny noses.¹⁶ These could all be signs of a respiratory infection.



¹³ Yep, that's right, a couple of our diseases are contagious for humans too. Not as badly, but they will give you the sniffles, and can cause respiratory problems.

¹⁴ This can only be done above a certain age.

¹⁵ Have the vet show you how to do this, our mama does our wings and believe me, with a flock of eight, it save a **bunch** of money!

- ⌘ Labored breathing, open mouthed, wheezing or "wet" breathing.
- ⌘ Tail "bobbing" with each breath
- ⌘ Weight gain or loss. Any change in eating habits. (Reduced or increased eating) Anorexia, or decreased food intake, is a serious concern for us.
- ⌘ Reduced or increased drinking
- ⌘ Drooping wing(s)
- ⌘ Weakness, lethargy and excessive sleeping are all signs suggestive of a severe sickness. If you see these symptoms in a birdie you are planning to buy, **don't**, not until the birdie has been thoroughly checked out by an avian veterinarian.¹⁷
- ⌘ Lumps, bumps, swellings, bulges on the body, lameness or swollen joints.
- ⌘ Weakness
- ⌘ Redness or visible irritation
- ⌘ Not perching, sitting on the bottom of the cage, loss of balance or falling off of the perch. This can be a sign of a neurological disorder.
- ⌘ Wet or bubbly droppings, diarrhea, change in color or frequency of droppings
- ⌘ Staining of the feathers around the vent
- ⌘ Sore feet

¹⁶ *Note from Killian: It is normal for us to sneeze occasionally.*

¹⁷ If this behavior occurs in a birdie master that you already have, take him/her to the vet **immediately**.

- ⌘ Seizures or unconsciousness
- ⌘ Flaky or crusty skin, excessive scratching
- ⌘ An overgrown beak or nails
- ⌘ Bleeding
- ⌘ Protrusions from the vent
- ⌘ Prolonged molt or baldness

Cages, Perches and Toys, Oh My!

Now, before you bring home your parrot master, you are going to need a cage to put him or her in. Buying the correct type of cage is very important. You don't want to buy a cage that is too small for the birdie you have chosen, but you also don't want a cage that is too large, allowing the birdie to get his/her head or feet stuck. Ask questions, lots of questions, about what size cage is right for your bird. A lot will depend on what kind of birdie you want to purchase. The larger birds; such as hyacinths, Greenwings, scarlets, blue and golds and even Mollucans, require large reinforced cages that will allow them to spread their wings and play, even the smaller cockatoos require some flapping room. The smaller birdies; such as budgies, cockatiels, parakeets, parrotlets, and pionus need slightly smaller cages with less space in between the bars to prevent us getting a foot or our



heads stuck.¹⁸ You will need to provide a place in the cage for food and water and also will want to place a few perches in the cage convenient to the food and drink.

There are dozens of different perches out there, when you purchase a perch for your birdie master, you want to make sure that you buy one that is the correct size for that particular type of birdie. Personally I recommend a wooden perch that stretches completely across the cage, and a

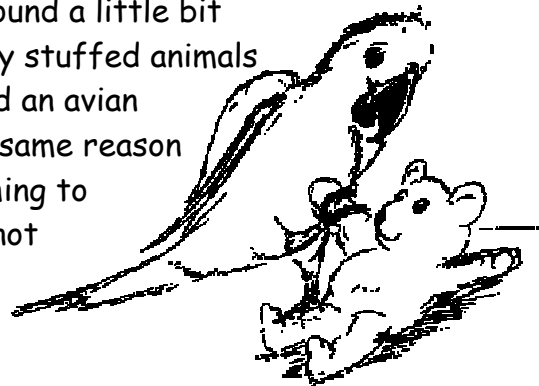
¹⁸ Not only is this embarrassing, it's very dangerous.

cement perch for your master to wear his/her claws down on.¹⁹ Of course if you have more than one birdie to a cage, that cage will need to be larger and will have to contain a few perches to head off any squabbling.²⁰

Last in these preparations for baby, come the toys. Ask any birdie, we live for toys. Next to food, toys are our favorite things in the world, and it's very important to have lots of them. Once again the type of toys you buy for your birdie master will depend a lot on what type of birdie he/she is. There are a lot of toys out there tailored to each breed of birdie, so all you need to do is find the kind of toys that are right for **your** master. Whatever kinds of toys you buy for your new birdie master, it is very important that you at least buy some. We psitticines can get bored very easily and have short attention spans, so we need variety in our lives.

Here is a list of different types of toys that you might want to provide for your new parrot master to play with:

✂ Stuffed toys- Now, this might sound a little bit strange to you. After all, you buy stuffed animals for your human babies, why would an avian baby want one? Sort of for the same reason actually, for comfort and something to snuggle up against at night. I'm not talking about a giant stuffed bear that out masses the birdie, but a small stuffed toy.²¹



✂ Leather- A braided or knotted leather cord will give your baby something to climb and to chew on. Some birdies also like to hang upside-down off of them and flap their wings. The important thing is that you make sure that the leather hasn't been treated with any chemicals or dyes. You don't want to make your baby sick trying to entertain him/her.

¹⁹ This saves money, and trips to the vet to have toenails trimmed.

²⁰ I share my cage with Killian; he is meanie sometimes and doesn't like to let me have a perch to myself.

²¹ Killian and I both have little stuffed bears in our cage, when we aren't snuggling with them; they are **lots** of fun to attack.

✂ Wooden Blocks- No seriously! Various wooden shapes hung from a chain or heavy rope provide a great toy for any birdie. You can buy these toys already made, or if you are feeling particularly ambitious, you can buy the toy parts from a number of different suppliers and put them together yourself. All you really need are pieces of untreated wood cut into different shapes and sizes, dyed with vegetable dyes and with a hole drilled in them to put a rope, piece of leather or sturdy chain through. You will use slightly smaller toys for the smaller birds and the big toys for the birdies whose beaks would make short work of small blocks of wood.²²

✂ Food toys- There are a number of toys that combine food with toys. These range from something as simple as pieces of fruit suspended from the top of the cage by a metal bar stuck through them, to a metal cage with the fruit inside of it. This can also be something as uncomplicated as pieces of millet woven through the bars of the cage to occupy your baby's attention and keep him/her from getting bored.

✂ Play-gyms- I think that most birdies love these things. A play-gym is a place outside of your birdie's cage/home that has multi level perches, ropes, toys, ladders etc. for him/her to play with/on. Usually a play-gym is a separate freestanding object, but for smaller birdies with flat top cages, a play-gym can also sit on top of a cage. There are usually places for food and water dishes on a play-gym as well.

✂ Others- Swings, boingie toys²³, plastic chains and balls, anything can be a toy if it's brightly colored, non-toxic and durable.

²² If you have Greenwing or any larger macaw, make sure you use heavy rope or chain to suspend the toys. Maya has managed to bite through metal dog chain before with just one snap and you want the toy to last past the first engagement don't you?

²³ A rope toy that is reinforced with wire and curled into a spiral shape. When a birdie steps onto it, it bounces up and down gently, giving the master a ride.

Health and Nutrition

Okay, you've chosen your master, you picked him/her up and gotten home, introduced the baby to the family and put him/her in the cage with a bunch of toys. You know that you are going to have to take your birdie master to the vet, and you know that birdies need lots of fresh foods and water, but what exactly are you supposed to feed him/her? In this section I will tell you what you want to feed your birdie, as well as what to keep him/her away from.

First and foremost I must point out that we birdies are creatures of habit. If you feed your master breakfast everyday at 8 am for the first week you have him/her, be sure that he/she is going to expect breakfast at that same time everyday for the rest of both of your lives.

As with all other creatures, birds need a proper balance of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. Different species of birds often require different foods.

Of course you should be careful of what you feed your birdie; nutrition is the most commonly neglected element of the master, slave relationship. Too often you humans just assume that you are feeding your master a proper diet, when in fact you aren't. It is a common source of many of our health problems. It is very important that you continually strive to improve your master's diet. This is going involve reading and then carefully interpreting and integrating all of the information. It will also require a certain degree of common sense. Most importantly, make sure that you discuss your birdie's diet with your veterinarian!

In the wild, we birdies tend to eat a variety of seeds, nuts, fruits, vegetables, blossoms, and possibly leaf buds gathered from the tops of trees. Many of us are also known to raid farmers' fields and to cause tremendous amounts of damage to their crops. But parrots are very vulnerable to calcium and vitamin A deficiencies as well as obesity. We have to try to always maintain a well balanced diet.

One of the most common questions we get from parrots concerned with their health, is "What should my slave be feeding me?" So to try to help all of you poor slaves out, I have out together a list of things that you could

feed your master. The most nutrition of course, lies in combining all of these types of food.

✂ **Seeds-** Seeds are available everywhere, store well and are very convenient to feed. Although parrots do eat seeds, we tend to naturally consume a far greater variety of seed types in the wild as different plants come into season. An all seed diet tends to be high in fat and provides an imbalance source of nutrients that will lead to ill health and potentially shorten our life expectancies. Peanuts and sunflower seeds are often chosen preferentially²⁴ and are particularly high in fat as well as exceptionally deficient in calcium and vitamin A. It really is preferred that your master should eat a more nutritious and balanced diet. Seeds, if used at all, should never make up more than 10 to 15% of his/her diet.

✂ **Formulated or Pelleted Diets-** Pellets, crumble and hand-feeding mashes have been developed to meet all of your birdie's nutritional needs. Different formulations are available for different life stages and for the management of certain diseases. Those babies that were hand fed are the easiest to start on pelleted diets. According to specialists, pellets are the ideal diet therefore I encourage you to slowly train your master to eat pellets.

✂ **How do I convert my birdie to a pelleted diet?** -Taking a seed-a-holic and placing him/her onto a formulated diet is not always easy. Being a new item in your birdie's cage, pellets are not likely to be identified immediately as food; they certainly don't look like food. Slowly wean your master off of seeds over a period of weeks while making sure to have pellets constantly available in the cage in a separate dish. It may take days, weeks or months to modify a psitticines diet, don't give up, and NEVER withdraw seeds from your master entirely without first being certain that he/she is eating the formulated foods plus some fruits and vegetables.

✂ **Fruits and Vegetables** -Generally, any wholesome, nutritious food that you and your family can eat, your master can eat. Fruits, vegetables and greens should account for approximately 20 - 25% of a birdie's diet. But,

²⁴ I know that Killian and I love them!

pale vegetables, with a high water composition (i.e. Iceberg or Head lettuce, celery) offer very little nutritional value.

All fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly to remove all chemicals and be cut into manageable sized pieces. It is not necessary that you take the skin off the fruits and vegetables, but they should be offered in a separate dish.

We all tend to all be rather picky birdies, but take heart humans, a large enough variety will definitely tempt us to eat. Listed below are a few of the types of fruits and vegetables healthy for us to eat.

✧ Apples- Killian loves apples, honestly so do I.

✧ Asparagus- This is a neat vegetable; it looks a lot like baby palm trees or grass spears.²⁵

✧ Banana- Echo and Asia love 'nanas. Actually I think all of us do. They are yummy and lots of fun to mash up and make a mess with.

✧ Beans (cooked)²⁶ such as:

- ◇ Chick peas;
- ◇ Kidney
- ◇ Lentils
- ◇ Lima
- ◇ Mung
- ◇ Navy
- ◇ Soy

✧ Beets- These are also very yummy

✧ Blueberry- These can dye your tongue purple, but they are just perfect for a little birdie like me to hold in a claw and nibble on.

✧ Broccoli- This is an acquired taste, I like broccoli, but I have lots of birdie friends who think it's disgusting.

✧ Brussel sprouts

²⁵ Momma's human daughter thinks that is where it got it's name.

²⁶ You don't need to season them, just cook them to kill any germs and make them smushy.

☞ Babbage

☞ Cantaloupe- This is **very** yummy

☞ Carrot tops

☞ Carrots

☞ Cherries

☞ Chinese vegetables, i.e. bok choy

☞ Coconut

☞ Corn- You have to make sure the corn is cooked a little first before feeding it to your birdie master, just to kill any bacteria. Most birdies like corn, I think it's Maya's favorite, because momma says he grabs it first whenever she feeds it to us.

☞ Cranberries

☞ Dandelion leaves

☞ Endive

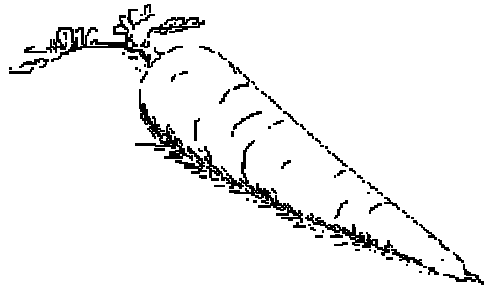
☞ Grapes- The bigger birdies like these because they are easy to grab in their claws. I like them too, but I always drop them.

☞ Grapefruit

☞ Kiwi

☞ Melons

☞ Mango- This is very yummy, and **very** messy, make sure you put down a bunch of paper before you feed this to your birdie



☞ Orange

☞ Papaya

☞ Parsnip

☞ Pear

☞ Peas - Peas are good, they are another veggie that's easy to eat for us small birdies.

☞ Peppers (red, green & hot)- Birdies really like these most of the time. Most of us like to eat them and then give you humans kisses, you all make such funny faces

☞ Pineapple

☞ Plum

☞ Pomegranate

☞ Potato

☞ Pumpkin

☞ Raspberry

☞ Rice (brown)

☞ Romaine lettuce

☞ Spinach

☞ Sprouted seeds

☞ Squash

✧ Strawberry

✧ Sweet potato- These are really good smashed up.

✧ Zucchini

✧ **What about people food?** -As long as you follow the general rules of nutrition discussed above and your common sense you can certainly feed you birdie people food. Some birdies enjoy a small amount of lean meat, cheese or egg occasionally. Echo likes chicken and most of us love spaghetti noodles Dairy products should be consumed in strict moderation, though yogurt can be used to replace certain enzymes in a birdies diet

✧ **Water**-You should make sure to keep fresh, clean water available to your parrot master twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

✧ **Will my master have any different needs throughout his/her life?** - Birds that are extremely young, stressed, injured, laying eggs or raising young usually do have certain special requirements. You should consult an avian veterinarian in these situations.

✧ **Do I need to use a vitamin-mineral mixture?** -If you're feeding your master a great diet, do you need to provide extra vitamins, minerals or amino acids? One opinion suggests that a bird eating 75 - 80% of its diet in the form of pelleted or formulated food may not need supplements. There is so much written about supplementation that it's hard to know where to start. The powdered supplements are often regarded as the more stable ones. Apply these products directly onto moist food. Do not place in drinking water, as the vitamins will quickly degrade, and bacterial growth will be encouraged. Placing these powders on seeds or dried foods is of little value since it will ultimately end up on the bottom of the food dish. Specific vitamins or minerals can be more important at various times during your parrot's life (e.g. egg laying - requires calcium supplementation). Any competent veterinarian can help you assess your birdie's health, and his/her particular needs.

Just as there are literally hundreds of things that are **good** for your master to eat, there are a lot of things that are extremely bad for him/her to ingest. The following is a short list of some of those things:

✂ **Plants and Foods Toxic to Pets** -If you have any of these plants or foods in your home, you need not dispose of them--just make sure that you keep them away from your parrot master.

✂ Alcohol (all beverages, ethanol, methanol, isopropyl) Well, this seems to be common sense to me, and after all, you don't usually see a parrot with a martini

✂ Almonds- As I mentioned in Asia's book, this refers to the fruit around the almond, not the nut itself

✂ Amaryllis bulb

✂ Anthurium

✂ Autumn crocus (*Colchicum Autumnale*)*

✂ Avocado (leaves, seeds, stem, skin)- This being poisonous is fairly common knowledge.

✂ Azalea (entire rhododendron family)- I'm not sure why you would want to feed your birdie master an azalea... but don't.

✂ Begonia

✂ Bird of Paradise

✂ Bittersweet

✂ Bleeding heart- Honestly I don't think you would want to feed anyone something called "bleeding heart", it sounds disgusting.

- ✂ Boxwood
- ✂ Bracken fern
- ✂ Buckeye
- ✂ Buttercup (Ranunculus)
- ✂ Caffeine-Basically all this means is that no matter how much your master may want it, you really shouldn't let him/her have any of your coffee or tea.
- ✂ Caladium
- ✂ Calla lily
- ✂ Castor bean- Heck, you wouldn't want to eat castor beans, don't expect your birdie master to.
- ✂ Chinese sacred or heavenly bamboo- This is only for the Chinese stuffed panda bears to eat, not birdies.
- ✂ Chocolate-This one I truly regret, all of the humans in this household seem to love chocolate and I would love to know what the fuss is all about.
- ✂ Choke cherry, unripe berries
- ✂ Chrysanthemum (a natural source of pyrethrins)
- ✂ Clematis
- ✂ Crocus bulb
- ✂ Delphinium
- ✂ Larkspur

- ✧ Dumb cane (Dieffenbachia)
- ✧ Elderberry, unripe berries
- ✧ English ivy (All Hedera species of ivy)
- ✧ Fig (Ficus)- This is just the wood; you can feed your parrot master figs and even fig newtons.²⁷
- ✧ Foxglove- (Digitalis) This is a holistic heart medication and is deadly to any creature in excess. Birdies can't have any.
- ✧ Hyacinth bulbs
- ✧ Hydrangea
- ✧ Holly berries
- ✧ Lily (bulbs of most species)
- ✧ Lily-of-the-valley
- ✧ Marijuana or hemp (Cannabis)- That's right, **NO** wacky weed for your new birdie master.
- ✧ Milkweed
- ✧ Mistletoe berries
- ✧ Morning glory
- ✧ Mountain laurel
- ✧ Narcissus,
- ✧ Oak (remove bark for use as a bird perch)

²⁷ Fig Newtons are yummy!

☞ Oleander

☞ Onions- Something about the alkali in this one makes our tummies feel bad.

☞ Peaches- Probably for the same reason as almonds, residual cyanide.

☞ Pencil cactus/plant (Euphorbia sp.)

☞ Philodendron (all species)

☞ Poinsettia (many hybrids, avoid them all)

☞ Potato (leaves & stem)- we can eat the actual potato though, it's actually very good for us, a lot of birdies like potatoes mashed.

☞ Rhubarb leaves

☞ Rosary Pea (Arbus sp.) (Can be fatal if chewed)

☞ Scheffelera (umbrella plant)

☞ Shamrock (Oxalis sp.)

☞ Spurge (Euphorbia sp.)

☞ Yew

Birdies are naturally extremely mischievous and we will get into many different predicaments. Before you bring home a birdie master, it is crucial that you "birdie proof" your house. Your home represents the only true environment your birdie master will know. Unfortunately there are numerous dangers within these surroundings. .

☞ **Temperature and Humidity** - Changes in temperature ranging from 10 - 20°F (2 - 5°C) are usually tolerated very well by a healthy birdie. Sick

birdies will of course need a more consistently warm temperature. Humidity in the range of 40 - 50% is ideal for most birdies; it reminds us of the jungles we used to call home. However, it is always better to have too much humidity than to have the environment be too dry. If your master decides to bathe in the hot sun for a long period of time make sure that he/she **always** has access to shade in the event he/she should become over heated.

- ✂ **Drafts** -You should always try to avoid allowing your birdie master to encounter drafts such as those created around windows, outside walls, radiators and air vents.

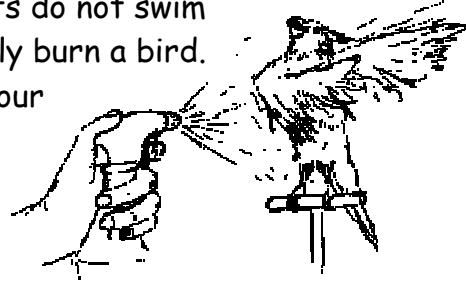
- ✂ **Air Pollution**-Birdies have very efficient respiratory systems and are all very sensitive to pollutants in the air. Birdies are exceptionally susceptible to second-hand smoke. Cigarettes, cigars and pipes should never be used around a birdie master. Cooking fumes, gases such as carbon monoxide, volatile cleaning products, paints, varnishes, fireplace fumes and dirty household air ducts may cause respiratory problems.

- ✂ **Paints, Varnishes, etc.** -Generally, if it can be smelled, it unsafe for birds. Make sure that you ventilate the environment well after use of any of these products before letting your birdie master return to the area. You can contact the company that produces the product for specific recommendations. All fumes are dangerous to psitticines: smoke-filled air, insecticide spray, deodorizers, fumes from fresh paint, wood preservatives and shellac, gas, and overheated Teflon. Over-heated Teflon-coated cooking appliances release a toxin that does not seem to affect humans but will cause death to a bird within 24 hours.

- ✂ **Kitchens**-Generally speaking, it is unwise to allow your master to venture into the kitchen, as there are too many potential hazards. Teflon as described above is a priority concern. Hot stove elements, open pots of hot soups or sauces and even a sink full of water all make a veritable obstacle course of hazards. All cleaning products such as household cleansers and disinfectants, oven cleaners, lead bleach, and drain cleaners can represent possible disaster

✂ **Bathrooms**-Open toilet bowls and full sinks or bathtubs are all possible perils to a parrot master. As a rule, parrots do not swim well and excessively hot water may severely burn a bird.

If you need to you're your birdie a bath, your best bet is either take him/her into the shower with you, or invest in a mister and mist your master frequently.

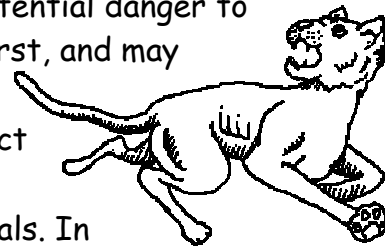


²⁸There are often dangerous cleaning products in a bathroom as well. Various drugs, Tylenol, cough medicine, etc., that humans keep around the house represent potential dangers to avian health. Make sure that you keep these products locked up and away from your birdie master.

✂ **Miscellaneous Household Products**-Laundry supplies such as detergents and fabric softeners, insecticides, rodent poison, suntan lotion, your slaves' children's crayons, any cosmetics, acetone, antifreeze, mercury from broken thermometers and rust are all hazards to a birdies health, try to keep your master away from them.

✂ **Oil or Grease**-Whether hot or cold, oil and feathers do not mix. Do not use oil or grease based medicines on your birdie for any reason. Oils will mat down feathers, decrease their insulation qualities and make him/her very susceptible to chills that may lead to other health problems. Examples of products to avoid include Vaseline, mineral oil, oil-based ointments or salves (including some sold in pet stores), cooking oils, cod liver oil and certainly any type of motor oil.

✂ **Other Pets**-Cats, dogs and ferrets can be a potential danger to you. These animals in most cases were there first, and may resent your new master taking all of your attention, they all have a natural hunting instinct and he/she may become the victim. Never let your birdie remain unattended with these animals. In general, mostly smaller birds are at risk but why should any of us take chances?



²⁸ Most birdies love baths and will dance and flap their wings, and try to rub the water into their head feathers.

- ✂ **Mirrors and Windows** -Young birdies initially have problems mastering the concept of glass or mirrors. To us, there is nothing solid there. We cannot perceive any barriers. Put up curtains, sheers or some object in front of these surfaces to provide some objectivity for your birdie.
- ✂ **Fish Bowls**-Any open container of water should be considered a danger zone. If your master should accidentally fly into it, he/she could drown.
- ✂ **Noise Pollution**- This almost seems like a silly hazard to me. We birdies generally seem to enjoy a certain amount of commotion and certainly tend to become vocal and playfully excited by vacuuming, the sound of an electric razor or the normal activities of our slaves around the house. All of us are guilty of occasionally adding to some of that noise around the house. However, excessively loud noise from televisions, stereos, construction or even appliances such as vacuum cleaners or food processors does seem to cause undue stress to some birdies. Remember that your birdie master is a permanent guest in your home and cannot freely escape these sounds. Try to limit exposure to noise to your master's normal waking hours.

Birdie Behavior or (Teaching Baby to Play Well With Others)

Typical Behavior

Before I start telling you what you should do to teach your master to "play well with others", I feel I should give you an idea of what type of behavior is normal for birdies. First of all, baby birdies use their beaks a lot, all birdies do. It's what we use to climb things, and to feel things out. It is normal for your baby birdie to "beak" your fingers²⁹ a little. If he/she grasps a little bit too hard, firmly tell him/her no. Do not say ouch and yank your finger away, this will just convince your master that you are playing a new game, and will encourage a continuation of the behavior.

²⁹ Gently grasp in his/her beak.

Most psitticines are fairly vocal, so you can expect a little noise in the mornings and in the evenings as your master greets the new day and says good-night to the sun. As previously discussed, different breeds of birdies do this to varying extents, but it should never be all of the time, if it is there is something wrong.³⁰

Your baby is going to obviously need attention, but you must be very careful. Because birdies are such creatures of habit, you have to make sure to not pay more attention to your master in the beginning than you will be able to consistently maintain throughout his/her life. If you spend 3 hours a night with your birdie every night for the first three months of his/her life with you, you need to continue doing so. If all of a sudden, due to work or family pressures, you are only able to spend 30 minutes a night with your master, you are going to wind up with a neurotic birdie, one who will wonder what he/she did to cause you to stop paying attention. This in turn could lead to serious behavior problems.

Behavior Training

While we parrots would obviously rather be the ones doing the training, occasionally it is necessary for you humans to get involved in the training of young birdies that have never had a human slave before. A young birdie is not quite sure what behaviors are acceptable in human homes, and which ones will wind up getting him/her birdie jail time or worse, sent to train a new slave. While attempting this training, you need to pay very close attention to your master's body language, otherwise you will not know if you are getting through to him/her. The following is a list of steps that should be followed in teaching your master what is expected of him/her.

✂ Learn how to properly pick your parrot up in a towel. This might seem silly, but believe me it can be very important. Have your avian vet show you how to do it. A lot of humans seem to be afraid of hurting the birdie when they do this. Take it from me, it is safe, and probably the easiest way to pick up a birdie who doesn't know how to step up yet.³¹

³⁰ One of the flock will be writing a book on screaming in the future.

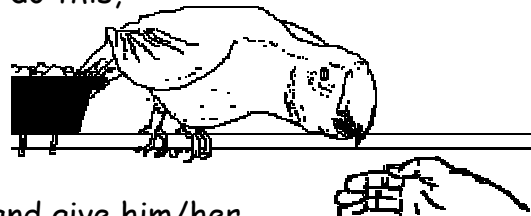
³¹ It's also a good emergency restraint if a birdie hurts him/herself.

✂ Get your birdie to come out of his/her cage. This isn't always as easy as it sounds. Oftentimes, in a new home, the cage becomes a safe haven for a birdie and he/she is not going to want to leave it. If your new master will come out of the cage voluntarily on your hand, great, you are a step ahead of normal slaves, if not, pick him/her up with the towel and remove from the cage. If your new master is also an escape artist, it might be necessary to temporarily remove the perches and toys that are in the cage, before attempting this. Eventually your master will come out voluntarily.³² Once you have put the towel into the cage to bring the birdie out, you have to follow through, if you don't you are giving the message that you are easily manipulated.

✂ Put the birdie on a T-perch. Once again, easier said than done. You are going to have to gently put your master down onto the T-perch. If he/she jumps off, you must pick him/her back up and place your master back on the perch. Once you have gotten your master to sit quietly on the perch, back away and come closer again. Do this a few times to get the birdie used to you approaching.

✂ Practice petting the birdie. Believe me, once your master gets used to you, this shouldn't be too difficult. After all scratches and petting feels **good** and we aren't dumb creatures. If you are willing to give scratches for free, great! If your parrot master does try to bite you, don't jerk your hand away, if you do this will give the impression that all the birdie has to do to avoid unwanted actions is try to bite you. Your birdie's biting really should be reserved for training you. Make sure you reach to touch your birdie with slow movements; quick, jerky movements can be perceived as threatening and will make your task harder.

✂ Teach your master how to "step up". To do this, move your hand in a slow firm motion towards the perch with it a little above the perch's height³³, and give the command "step up". Once your master has stepped up onto your arm/hand give him/her



³² Just a quick note, this is usually more traumatic for the human than it is for the birdie. If you, the human, can stay calm, you will make it easier on both you and your master.

³³ Birdies like to literally step "up", not "down"

praise and then ask him/her to return to the perch.³⁴

☞ Practice petting while holding your master. You are now getting to one of the most enjoyable facets of birdie behavior training. By now your master has become rather used to you, and will probably be encouraging your caresses.

☞ Last but not least, teach your birdie master to step up off of the T-perch to be returned to his/her cage. Once you get to the cage, don't just let him/jump off of your arm, but make him/her wait to be told to "step down".

Conclusion

I hope that this book has helped all of you potential slaves out there to find the perfect master for you. I have tried to give you some basic guidelines in what types of birdies are out there, and what we psitticines require from our slaves. While I will admit that I am off course biased, after all I am a birdie master, I think that the avian-human relationship is a fantastic thing and is certainly worth pursuing. It will take time, but eventually, you and your master will come to a good, rewarding partnership.



³⁴ To do this place your hand behind and a little below the perch, then bring it forward, effectively forcing your master to step back on it.

Index

"beak" 14, 29
 "wet" breathing 13

A

acetone 28
 African Grey Parrot 8
Air Pollution 27
 Alcohol 23
 Almonds 23
 Amaryllis bulb 23
 Amazon Parrots 8
 Anorexia 13
 Anthurium 23
 antifreeze 28
 Apples 19
 Asparagus 19
 Autumn crocus 23
 Avocado 23
 Azalea 23

B

Babbage 20
 Banana 19
 Bare-Eyed Cockatoo 7
 Beans (cooked) 19
 Beets 19
 Begonia 23
 Bird of Paradise 23
 birdie first-aid 3
 biting 3, 6, 8, 31
 Bittersweet 23
 Black Palm 8
 Bleeding heart 23
 Blocked nostrils 12
 blossoms 17
 Blue and Gold Macaw 5
 Blue Headed 6
 Blue throat 6
 Blueberry 19
 body language 30
 Boxwood 24

Bracken fern 24
 breeder 10, 11
 Broccoli 19
 Brussel sprouts 19
 Buckeye 24
 Budgerigar (Budgie)- 9
 Buffon 6
 bumps 13
 Buttercup 24

C

Caffeine 24
 Caiques 9
 Caladium 24
 calcium 17, 18, 22
 Calla lily 24
 Canary-Winged 10
 Caninde *See Blue throat*
 Cantaloupe 20
 carbohydrates 17
 Carrot tops 20
 Carrots 20
 Castor bean- 24
 Cats 28
 Changes in temperature 26
 cheese 22
 Cherries 20
 Chick peas 19
 chicken 22
 Chinese sacred or heavenly bamboo 24
 Chocolate 24
 Choke cherry 24
 Chrysanthemum 24
 Cigarettes 27
 cigars 27
 cleaning products, 27
 Clematis 24
 Cloudy eyes 12
 Cockatiels 7
 Coconut 20
 coffee 24
 Congo African Greys (CAG's) 8

Conures	8
Cooking fumes,	27
Corn	20
cosmetics.....	28
cough medicine,.....	28
Cranberries.....	20
crayons.....	28
Crocus bulb	24
crumble.....	18
curtains.....	29

D

Dandelion leaves	20
Delphinium.....	24
deodorizers.....	27
diarrhea.....	13
Digitalis.....	25
DNA sexed.....	12
dogs.....	28
Drafts	27
drain cleaners.....	27
Dumb cane.....	25

E

Eclectus	10
egg	22
Elderberry	25
Endive.....	20
English ivy	25
ethanol	23
excessive sneezing.....	12
eye discharge.....	12

F

fabric softeners.....	28
fats.....	17
feather plucking.....	0, 3
ferrets.....	28
Fig (Ficus).....	25
Fish Bowls	29
fruits.....	17, 18, 19
fumes from fresh paint	27

G

Gang Gang.....	8
gas.....	27
gases such as carbon monoxide.....	27
glass.....	29
Goffins Cockatoo.....	7
Golden-Winged.....	10
Grapefruit.....	20
Grapes.....	20
grease.....	28
Greenwing Macaw.....	5
Grey-Cheeked.....	10

H

Hahn's Noble.....	6
handfed.....	11
hand-feeding mashes.....	18
Holly berries.....	25
household cleansers and disinfectants.....	27
Humidity.....	26
Hyacinth bulbs.....	25
Hyacinth Macaw.....	4
Hydrangea.....	25

I

Illiger's.....	6
insecticide.....	27
isopropyl.....	23

K

Kidney.....	19
Kiwi.....	20

L

Labored breathing.....	13
lameness.....	13
Larkspur.....	24
lead bleach.....	27
leaf buds.....	17
lean meat.....	22
Leather.....	15

Lentils	19
lethargy	13
Lily	25
Lima	19
Lumps	13

M

Mango	20
Marijuana or hemp (Cannabis)	25
Melons	20
methanol	23
Military Macaw	6
Milkweed	25
minerals	17, 22
mirrors	29
Mistletoe	25
Mollucan Cockatoo	6
Morning glory	25
Mountain laurel	25
multi level perches	16
Mung	19

N

Narcissus	25
nasal discharge	12
Navy	19
neurotic	30
nutrition	17, 18, 22
nuts	17

O

Oak	25
oil	28
Oleander	26
Onions	26
Orange	21
oven cleaners,	27

P

Pacific (Celestial) Parrotlets	9
paints	27
Papaya	21
Parsnip	21

Peaches	26
Peanuts	18
Pear	21
Peas	21
Pellets	18
Pencil cactus/plant	26
people food	22
Peppers	21
pet store	11
petting	31, 32
Philodendron	26
Pineapple	21
Pionus Parrots	8
pipes	27
Play-gyms	16
Plum	21
Poicephalus Parrot	9
Poinsettia	26
pollutants	27
Pomegranate	21
Potato	21
Potato (leaves & stem)	26
proteins	17
psitticine diseases	12
Pumpkin	21

Q

Quaker Parakeets	10
------------------------	----

R

Raspberry	21
ratty feathers	12
Red-bellied	6
reputable avian vet	11
respiratory infection	12
rhododendron	23
Rhubarb leaves	26
Rice (brown)	21
rodent poison	28
Romaine lettuce	21
Rosary Pea	26
rust	28

S

Scarlet Macaw	5
Schefflera	26
screaming.....	30
seeds	17, 18, 21, 22, 23
Seizures.....	14
Severe.....	6
Shamrock	26
shellac	27
shower.....	28
socialize	11
Soy.....	19
spaghetti	22
Spinach	21
Spurge.....	26
Squash.....	21
Strawberry	22
stuffed animals.....	15
Sulfur-Crested Cockatoo.....	7
sunflower seeds.....	18
suntan lotion	28
Sweet potato.....	22
swellings.....	13
Swings	16
swollen joints.....	13

T

Tail "bobbing"	13
tea.....	24
Teflon.....	27
Timneh African Greys (TAG's).....	8
Toxic	23
toxin	27
toys	3, 11, 15, 16, 17, 31

T-perch	31, 32
Tylenol.....	28

U

Umbrella Cockatoo	7
-------------------------	---

V

varnishes.....	27
vegetable dyes	16
vegetables	17, 18, 20
ventilate.....	27
vitamin A.....	17, 18
vitamins.....	17, 22

W

water	14, 16, 17, 19, 22, 27, 28, 29
Weakness	13
weaned	11
Wet or bubbly droppings	13
wheezing	13
wood preservatives	27
Wooden Blocks	16

Y

Yellow Collared	6
Yew.....	26
yogurt.....	22

Z

Zucchini	22
----------------	----