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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, in ***Guide to Birdie First-Aid***, you were introduced to Asia, and in ***Guide to Birdie Biting*** you met Killian. In ***A Guide to Feather Plucking***, you were reacquainted with Dust Bunny, and in ***Bringing Home Baby*** you finally met Siobhan, the baby of our flock. In this book, the fifth of the series of informational books written by members of my flock, you become acquainted with Maya as he tells you about screaming and all of the things that can cause it.

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 the information you will ever need for your bird's continued health. We have added over 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 can be very important to the health and 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>

Toolady Presents:

A Guide to Birdie Screaming

By: Maya T. Greenwing

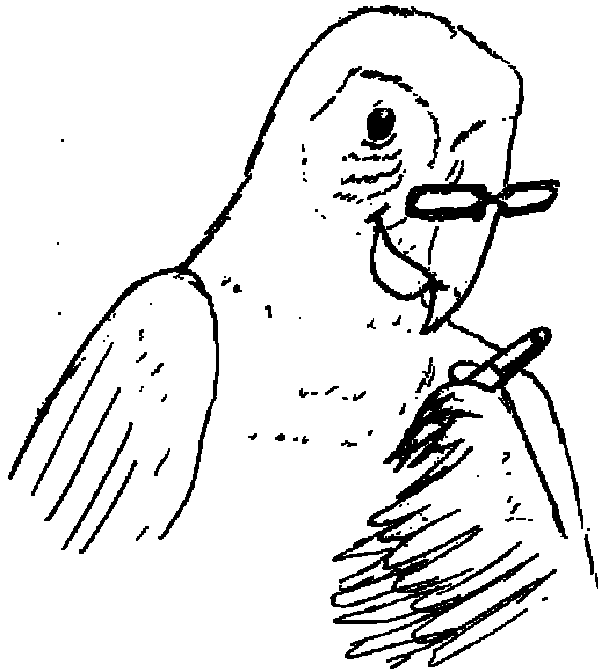


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Introduction

In previous books, my flock has covered almost anything that you could ever want to know about training your human slaves. From the basics of slave training, with Echo and Dust Bunny in *My Human, My Slave*, through birdie first-aid, feather plucking, biting, and choosing a birdie master, we have all given you the benefit of our experiences. Now our flock has decided that I am the one to tell you about a problem that could drive your humans crazy, screaming.¹

The first thing I will explore in this book is, what exactly is screaming? We all know that birdies are noisy creatures; we're famous for it. But, how do our human slaves tell the difference between screaming that can be a sign of problems, and normal psitticine vocalizations? Without knowing the difference, we could accidentally make our slaves neurotic.

I will also be exploring the reasons why birdies may decide to drive their loving humans insane. The reasons for birdie screaming are as varied and different as the numerous types of birdies who have decided to leave their jungle homes and grace the humans with their presence. Sometimes, without meaning too, our loving slaves can actually contribute to the problem.

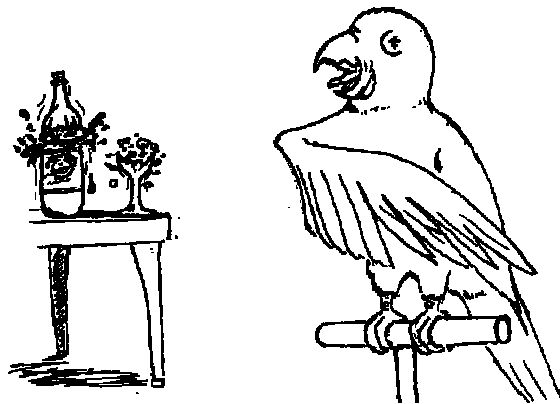
Finally, I will address some simple suggested solutions to the screaming problem. My hope is, that with this manual to help them, our slaves will be able to prevent neurotic screaming behavior from ever occurring, thereby keeping their parrot masters healthy and happy.

¹ According to our momma, I am the one in the flock with the biggest mouth, so I am the best birdie for the job.

What is Screaming?

The first thing we need to discuss is what exactly constitutes screaming behavior, and what differentiates it from normal psitticine vocalizations. To our humans, noise is noise, and without training, they won't be able to tell the difference. Soon we could find our humans becoming neurotic from trying to change something that is a perfectly ordinary behavior.²

Birdies communicate verbally, just as most other species of creatures do.³ In the wild, the calls of the flock can be heard for many miles around. Greetings to other flock members, cries of warning of impending danger, territory dispute calls, mating calls, and especially attention getting chatter and screams, are all perfectly natural vocalizations in the psitticine's world. All birdies regard vocalization as an effective means of communication, and any human who doesn't feel that he/she can handle this should think twice about becoming a slave to a parrot master. Any birdie contemplating a human as a slave should test that human's reaction to noise before assuming responsibility for that human.



In general, the larger the bird, the louder the noise, this is just a fact of physiology. A Hyacinth macaw can make your eardrums hurt, and after a Mollucan cockatoo cuts loose, all the pictures on a human slaves wall will be hanging askew. Some particular breeds of birds are more notorious for screaming than others. Cockatoos will without a doubt welcome the sunrise

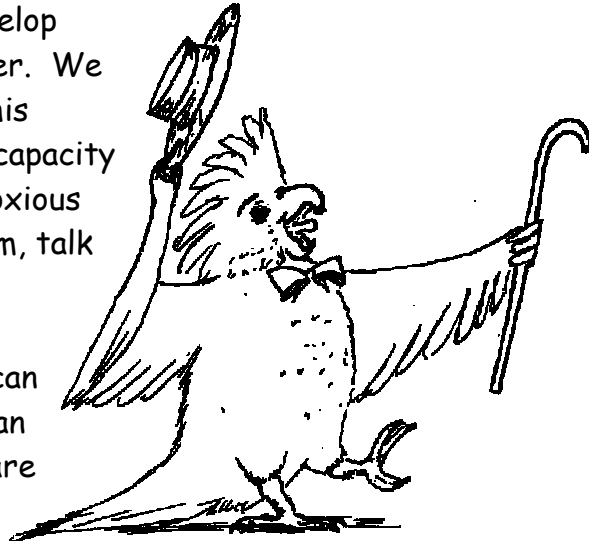
² Not to mention what kind of problems it could cause in a birdie to have his/her human try to completely shut him/her up. I shudder to think of it.

³ Including humans.

and the sunset with a few well placed, ear-piercing screams.⁴ Macaws, Conures and Amazons are generally louder than their slightly smaller cousins, the Quakers, Lovebirds and Cockatiels. On the other hand, Hyacinths are not usually known for excessive noise. Sometimes, it's not the volume of a call that can give our humans a nervous twitch, but the pitch. Many slaves can find the high-pitched chatter of Lovebirds and Conures highly irritating;⁵ yet have no problem with volume of screaming from a Mollucan.

Some of the more naturally quiet birds are, supposedly, Eclectus parrots, smaller conures, Poicephalus parrots, some of the smallest amazons and Pionus parrots.⁶ Mini-macaws, medium sized amazons and the smaller cockatoos fall somewhere in the middle, but world peace is more likely than a "quiet" Mollucan.

Parrots love to make themselves heard. When the radio is playing, their slave is on the phone, or the TV is on, most any parrot will have to chime in with his/her own say. It's not unusual in households containing small children for screaming matches to develop between the child and the birdie master. We larger parrots will almost always win this contest since we have a much greater capacity for screaming than even the most obnoxious human child. Birdie masters will scream, talk and chatter to communicate with their slaves and the other members of the household, including pets. Most of us can learn to speak in human language and can use it in its appropriate context. We are able to mimic our slaves' voices, the phone ringing, microwaves beeping, and dogs barking. A birdie master can be expected to laugh when his/her slave laughs, scream when the kids are screaming, and bark when the family dog is barking. What our slaves need to keep in mind is that this is all in an effort to communicate with them and should not be discouraged.



⁴ Note from Dust Bunny: Personally, I find this generalization offensive, not all cockatoos are loud, and I know that Lint and I are the quietest birdies in our flock.

⁵ My suggestion to these smaller cousins is to find a half deaf slave.

⁶ Somehow I can't quite believe this last part. We have two pionus in our flock, and our momma says that Killian and Siobhan are nearly as noisy as me.

Something else that should be remembered is that birdies love to mimic, and will often repeat the words that most interest us. Words that are said with great emphasis, such as expletives are often repeated after only being heard once. This is why our humans should **never** say something in front of a birdie master that they don't want to hear repeated.⁷

All of these are examples of normal vocalizations and should not be considered screaming behavior. While it is possible to minimize these vocalizations, as will be discussed later, this noise cannot and should not be eliminated completely. If your human slave is not in a position to be able to deal with a certain level of noise than he/she will be severely limited in the type of birdie master he/she can have⁸ and should probably be passed over for a slightly more tolerant slave.

I've told you what screaming behavior **isn't**; now I'll tell you what it is. Simply put, screaming behavior is persistent, habitual screaming for no obvious reason. This behavior is a call for help, just as any human child's screaming can be. When a birdie exhibits this type of behavior, it is a sure bet that he/she is unhappy about something, and the responsibility lies with the human slave to figure it out. While many of us are comfortable with the human language, none of us are so sure with it to be able tell our slaves in words what the problem is, so we have to resort to screaming and hope that our slaves care enough to find out why. Aside from instinctive vocalizing, additional loud noises are a form of communication. In other words, they mean something. If your human knows you and does some experimenting, he/she can figure out what it is.

What Causes Screaming

The assumption is often made that screaming and calling are solely related to a birdie's disposition. This is not completely true, in reality, the predominate reasons may go far beyond personality, instincts or even basic communication. There are a number of environmental, physical and nutritional components can influence the overall psychological health and

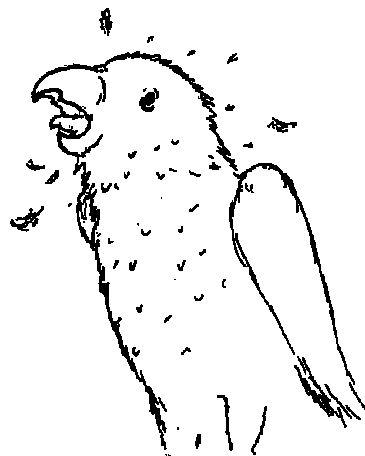
⁷ This is how Asia learned most of his words. He grew up n a household with teenage humans and learned a bunch of swear words. He is constantly cursing at our momma/slave.

⁸ The words "stuffed" or "toy" come to mind.

reactions of parrot masters. When our human slaves are faced with the challenge of understanding our vocalization patterns we need to train them to take a careful look at the personality and history of each individual parrot master, as well as the environment he/she lives in.

As mentioned before, if a birdie is constantly screaming, it means that he/she is seriously unhappy about something. It is up to our humans to determine what exactly that something may be. Causes of screaming behavior can include, but are certainly not limited to:

⌘ Anxiety-This is actually a problem with many different breeds of parrots. Considering the complexities of our society in the wild, and the large areas that would be our territories, is it any wonder that living in human homes, in restricted space, is enough to cause a birdie to turn his/her frustration inward. Add to this the stresses of other pets representing possible predators, and noisy children poking their fingers into cages and one can well imagine that life in supposed captivity, as a birdie master is extremely stressful. Just as some humans are more easily upset than others, some birdies are just more prone to anxiety, and some are nervous wrecks. We have fantastic memories, and sometimes, if we even think that we are being treated unfairly, will relive some past bad experience until it drives us to screaming out our frustration.



⌘ Fear- Birdies, like many animals, humans among them, will scream when they are startled or frightened. This type of screaming

generally occurs when the parrot feels threatened and unable to escape. Cockatiels especially are known to suffer night frights and scream when they become startled, but any bird when startled can and probably will scream loudly.⁹

☞ Contact Call- Prey animals, in this case psitticines, tend to stay within the confines of their own groups, because those groups provide protection through sheer numbers if nothing else. If a parrot finds him/herself away from the group, he/she will call to locate the flock. Another birdie in the flock, usually a mate or parent, will call back to reassure the strayed birdie. Since our humans are our "flocks", when they start to leave the room or house, we call out to them, asking where they are going and why they are leaving us behind. If we don't get a response, we continue to call ever louder, until, out of desperation, it becomes screaming. Unfortunately most humans at this point will scream something back. It doesn't take very long for a birdie to figure out that screaming is the only way to get a response

☞ Negative reinforcement of the behavior-This is unfortunately a product of overindulgence and spoiling, and most of the time occurs in those of us who are hand-raised. Cockatoos are the most prone to this vice. A birdie whose every whim is gratified and whose every noise is immediately soothed, quickly learns that he/she is the center of his/her slave's universe and will begin to behave accordingly.¹⁰ In this our humans have to learn to walk a fine line. Of course our slaves should cater to our whims, but not when by doing so they are causing behavior that could be detrimental to our emotional health. Our slaves would never allow their children to be raised this way, yet they think nothing of treating us like this, and then they wonder why we have behavior problems.

☞ Dominance- Dominance screaming, like dominance biting is very common in parrots. We, being flock animals with an inborn genetic

⁹ Fear can also induce biting and feather plucking. Basically any supposed bad behavior might have its roots in fear.

¹⁰ As he/she very well should be, but there is such a thing as too much of a good thing.

understanding of the flock hierarchy and it's meaning for our survival, are programmed to seek dominance in all situations. When in the wild, this gives us the best chance at getting the choicest food in adequate amounts, the best nesting sites, and the most desirable of mates. (In short, the ability to transmit our genes into the next generation.)

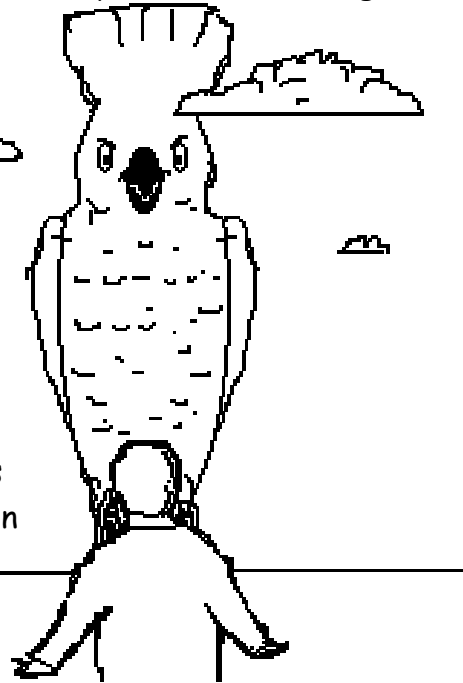
Submission to us birdies means a lessened chance of survival, and a loss of the ability to live "the good life".

Unfortunately, trying to establish dominance within the human flock is inappropriate, and doesn't work very well.

Nevertheless, when our humans don't trim our wings, give us cages and perches over their heads, or in any way allow us to do as

we please, we tend to interpret this as being the head of the flock. Of course we will

fight to maintain this position. Getting into a fight for dominance with our humans is pointless, it will cause our humans a bunch of pain, and end up with us never getting to come out of our cages. It is truly better for us to dominate them subtly, by withholding kisses or other gestures of affection, than in it is to try to bite them. We still win out in the end, and the humans never even know that there was a battle.



☞ Loneliness- We birdies are all very social creatures and do not really handle being completely alone very well¹¹. Because of our urge for company, we tend to imprint on our human slaves as our "flock". If that human slave habitually leaves us for very long periods of time, we can quickly become lonely and are quite likely to make that feeling loudly known, to everyone and anyone in the immediate vicinity.

¹¹ Thus, one of the reasons we have flocks.

✂ Boredom-This is probably one of the most common causes of screaming and most other behaviors problems that are distressing to our human slaves. Birdies are **very** active creatures with; unfortunately, very short attention spans.¹² If we were in the wild, we would be spending a large amount of time playing, flying back and forth from place to place, foraging for food and water, mutually preening and grooming, bathing, building nests, feeding and caring for our young, and (most fun of all) shredding tree branches and leaves for the sheer joy of it! If our slaves do not provide us with sufficient diversions, we will take it upon ourselves to find things to do to keep busy and entertained, and screaming can be **very** entertaining.

✂ Jealousy- A new bird, a pet, family member or new love interest in your human's life can quickly cause jealousy. All of a sudden, your human is no longer paying you nearly enough attention. This reduction in the attention paid to you and the increase in attention to other parties can be all it takes to make a birdie jealous and stressed.

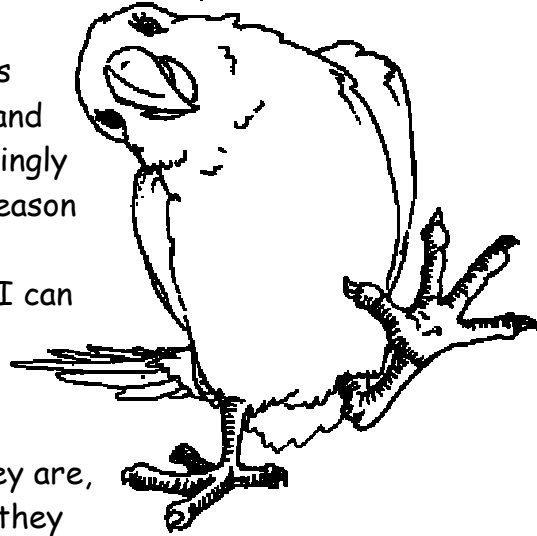
✂ Lack of Attention- Many birdie masters are brought home purely on impulse. This is the worst reason for bringing home any creature that I have ever heard. When the master first arrives in the home, everyone is just ecstatic over the new arrival, at least for the first couple of weeks. Usually within the first month or two, the novelty of having a birdie master in the home wears off and responsibility for the care and attention given to the bird then falls on a single-family member. The care of these poor, well-intentioned birdies usually becomes grocery store birdseed and fresh water, no fresh fruit or bird pellets. The cage probably only winds up getting changed once or twice a week. The impulse reasons for a human bringing home a parrot master are as varied as the types of humans out there. The following are just a few of those reasons:

- ◇ The kids wanted a pet- this has got to be one of the silliest reasons that I have ever heard of. Psitticines are not pets, we

¹² To help your human to understand, tell him/her to think of a two year old human child's attention span.

are equals if not better, and should always be the masters in the relationship. Most of us also don't really get along with small children very well anyway.

- ◇ "We saw him in a pet store and just couldn't resist, he was so cute"- Okay, I will admit that some of us are very cute indeed, especially the smaller birdies like budgies and cockatiels, and others of us are quite startlingly gorgeous, so this is a good reason to admire a birdie, not take him/her home with you. All I can say here is **don't** encourage a human to take you home with them, no matter how susceptible to your looks they are, unless you are positive that they can take good care of you.



- ◇ I always wanted one as a child- Yes, but did he/she ever sit and think about what exactly that entails? Any human that is planning to take a birdie master home with him/her, had better be absolutely sure that the responsibility won't be too much.
- ◇ We went to a bird show at the amusement park- Come on, really? Give me a break! You bring goldfish home from an amusement park, not a creature that is probably going to outlive you.
- ◇ A Christmas gift, a birthday gift, an anniversary gift, or a Valentine's Day gift- A really bad idea folks! Once again, you don't give as a present something/someone that is going to outlive you. Giving someone any kind of an animal as a present is ridiculous, it doesn't work with shorter lived creatures such as dogs, cats or turtles, and it certainly is not a good idea with a creature that in most situations is going to outlive it's owner.

We have to do what we can to discourage a human from taking us home for that purpose.

- ◇ A surprise for the family-Uh huh, right. I can't get over this one. Surprise! You've just brought home a major responsibility. One that will be with you longer than your children. No forcing Polly to move out on his/her eighteenth birthday, he/she is going to be with you until death.¹³
- ◇ Companionship- Ok, this is a valid reason, and as long as the human taking you home knows that you are the master, and is prepared to be your slave and take care of you, there is no reason why the relationship won't work out perfectly.¹⁴

Eventually the original intentions of the humans to take good care of the parrot master die. Then the birdie is moved from the kitchen to the basement or to the laundry room because of the mess. What is running through the human's head by this point is, "I hate to do this, but, that's ok, after all, he/she does have a mirror in his/her cage. He/she won't get lonely." This is extremely stressful to the birdie master, not to mention unfair. The birdie has been the center of attention and is now being suddenly put aside for no good reason. At first the parrot screams for attention, and that seems to bring the human into view for attention, but after awhile that stops working, and the human slave either covers the cage, throws something or sprays the parrot with a squirt bottle. Eventually the birdie master is placed where he/she cannot be heard at all. This certainly is not a cure, and if the problem is not solved, it can lead to other behavioral problems such as biting and feather plucking.

⌘ Change in environment- Sometimes changes in environment can cause a birdie to become extremely stressed. Though our humans may not realize it, we are creatures of habit. New people, moving our cages someplace different, changes in our cages or our rooms,

¹³ In this day in age, parrots are sometimes with their slaves longer then the slave's spouse is.

¹⁴ This is not to say that being taken home as a substitute for your human having a mate or any children is a good idea. That is just a recipe for disaster of another sort.

the absence of people that we are used to, changes in a slave's dress or appearance, a slave wearing jewelry or bright colors, even alterations in diet or the daily schedule we have grown used too are all enough to cause extra stress and perhaps even screaming behavior. Being moved to another location in the house can definitely contribute. An outgoing, interactive birdie who lives in an area of the house where he/she receives a good deal of attention from family and guests walking past his/her cage, might start screaming for attention, if moved to a quieter place, where there is less interaction with people. Sometimes, not realizing that we are still wild creatures at heart, our humans will subject us to situations that make us feel vulnerable to predators. Workers working on wiring in the ceiling or along the walls can seem, to a frightened birdie, to be some strange sort of urban raptor, and will cause that birdie to scream for help.¹⁵

✂ Emotions-We are very sensitive to our humans' emotions. When they are sad we may clown around to cheer them up, when they are happy we may sing, laugh or chortle to share the moment with them. Tension, depression, arguing, yelling or other emotions can and will be picked up by a concerned birdie master, and will probably cause him/her to scream along in sympathy.

✂ Hormones-As most birdies sexually mature, they tend to scream more during their natural breeding season. There isn't much that our human slaves can do about this. In the wild, parrots vocalize as part of their courtship and mating rituals. While our hormones are raging, we tend to become louder, nipier, a little aloof and a lot testier. This unfortunately applies whether we have a birdie mate, or just regard our human slave as our mate. The most our slaves can do is grin it bear it, it will pass as soon as mating season ends.

✂ Perseverative Screaming-This type of screaming behavior is persistent, habitual and completely uncontrollable, and usually does not seem to have been caused by anything obvious in a birdie's surroundings. In birdies, problem screaming, as well as some feather disorders and self-mutilations, fall into this category.

¹⁵ Warning the flock of danger.

Perseverative screaming is constant and repetitive and doesn't seem to serve any purpose. When faced with this behavior is a birdie master, our slaves must carefully examine the environment for any changes that may have occurred in surroundings, handling or home life.

✂ Illness- Any dramatic changes in the amount of a birdie's vocalization can be a sign of an illness¹⁶. It is very important in this situation, especially if no other causes have been found, to have your slave consult a veterinarian as quickly as possible.

Ways to Prevent or Cure Screaming

There are a number of suggestions for curing or preventing screaming behavior in psitticines. What I would like to do in this section is discuss the suggested preventative measures for each individual cause, and then discuss some additional general preventative measures.

Anxiety

Human slaves really need to try and limit the problem of loud noises or anything else in your environment that can be perceived as a danger. Obviously if you can see predators such as hawks and cats in your vicinity, you are going to become anxious.¹⁷ Changes in habits can also cause you to become a bit anxious. After all, if your human has always done things in a certain order, suddenly starts doing them in another way, you are bound to become a bit concerned. The best thing to do here, is try and let your human know that you are anxious in some other way than screaming your lungs out (Some avian behaviorists subscribe to the idea that some people can telepathically communicate with birdies. Hey, if it works for you, go with it!) Then your human can begin to try and alleviate your anxieties. The

¹⁶ If you were always a very quiet birdie before, and are now screaming day and night, or if, just the opposite, you have suddenly stopped making noise.

Note from Rosie: Maya is like Asia, he never shuts up, if he is suddenly quiet, we know there is something wrong.

¹⁷ If your human slave has other pets in the house like a dog or a cat, he/she might have to keep that pet away from you to alleviate your fears.

important thing here is that your human understand your need to feel secure and safe, and work at helping you feel that way.

If nothing your slave tries seems to alleviate your anxieties, your avian vet can even intervene chemically to deal with the problem of anxiety-based screaming. Avian vets sometimes will use something called **Haloperidol (Haldol)** to calm anxious birdies. However, most birdies and humans I know of prefer the use of holistic anti-anxiety and anti-depressant remedies. Some of the herbal remedies that are currently being tested are **St. John's Wort, Kava Kava, Valerian Root, and Grapeseed** extract.

Fear

Once again, the best thing for your human to do in the case of fear caused screaming, is try to keep you away from whatever is scaring you. The same things apply in this situation as apply in anxiety based screaming. Any type of animal that can be considered a predator (dogs, cat's, ferrets etc.), is probably going to startle birdies, and should really be kept away from them if this trend is noticed.

As mentioned above, certain types of birdies can suffer from "night terrors". For these birdies, the best solution is for their slaves to keep a soft light night light in the room, to help prevent the birdie being startled.

Contact Call

A lot of the time this cause of screaming can be eliminated before it starts, just by your human acknowledging you when you "contact call". He/she should tell you that they will be right back, or something to that effect whenever they leave the house or even the room. Then when returning, they should immediately greet you, saying "hello", or "I'm back". This will allow your slave to reassure you that they are not deserting you.

Even work if you have already started screaming behavior, these reassurances should work. Your human simply needs to tell you that he/she will be back when leaving, and then speak to you first when returning. However, your human should **not** reward your screaming by yelling at you, running up to your cage, or indeed doing anything that lets you know that

he/she heard you screaming. No, this doesn't mean your slave should just ignore you that would only feed your insecurities and make you scream louder. Instead, your slave should stay nearby, then when you stop screaming and start doing something else, such as talking, eating or playing with a toy, your human should reward that behavior by coming up and telling you what a good birdie you are.



When the birdie stops screaming, in favor of other rewarded behaviors, it's very important that your slave not forget that he/she still has to play the flock role and reassure the birdie when leaving the room or house and when returning. If your slave is not consistent with this, the parrot will go right back into its "contact call" that later becomes a screaming pattern.

Negative Reinforcement

Because this is a pattern created in most of us when we are only fledglings, by over zealous human slaves, it can be very hard to fix. The only true cure to this problem is time and patience. Just as it is necessary to teach a spoiled human child that he or she cannot always have his/her way. It is necessary to teach the "spoiled" psitticine the same thing. The birdie must learn to respect certain limits. Parrots are certainly capable of learning these things, and should be gently and consistently guided by their humans to do so. Eventually the birdie will learn that while his/her slave is

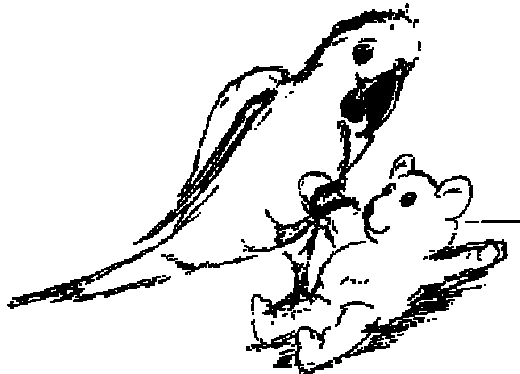
not going to come running to ease every small sign of boredom, he/she is certainly going to be given plenty of time and attention.

Dominance

The quickest way for a slave to help nip dominance cause screaming in the bud is to reposition perches and cages so that when we stand on them we are below eye level, and have to look up at our slaves. A parrot isn't tempted to exert his/her dominance if he/she isn't in a dominant frame of mind, and having your slave lower the level of your cage or play gym is a fast way to prevent that frame of mind from occurring. Training your slave to keep you off of his/her shoulder will also help prevent a dominance battle from being fought. Please remember, getting into a fight for dominance with your human is not only pointless, it's dangerous. Humans are bigger than we are, and even the best-trained slave is bound to lose his/her patience eventually.

Loneliness

A birdie who screams due to loneliness, and whose slave is not able to give him/her the amount of attention needed, might benefit from having another birdie for company. This does not necessarily mean a mate; the new birdie doesn't even have to share the same cage with him/her. This new master would just be someone to keep the poor neglected birdie company.¹⁸ Try getting your human to give you a stuffed toy to keep you company. Some birdies have a teddy bear in their cage, and it seems to work for them.



¹⁸ Rosie and I don't share a cage, but I love to talk to her at all times, and she's also a lot of fun to play with.

Boredom

Life in a cage is not very exciting, so your human should provide you with lots of toys and other objects with which to busy your beak. Natural, non-toxic, unsprayed tree branches are a cheap and easy way for a human slave to provide you with something to occupy your time. Large pinecones can occupy a birdie's beak for a good long time. Food toys are also a natural activity that can occupy much of our time. When our humans give us parrots food that requires little or no effort to eat, we are left with more time for undesirable activities like screaming. Unshelled nuts require a lot of time to eat and we all seem to enjoy the challenge of digging out the insides of the nuts. For those of us too small to crack pecans and walnuts, our slaves can get the process started with a quick squeeze in a nutcracker. This will still leave lots of work for the birdie to do.

Threading different types of food through cage bars can give us a natural feeding activity and a bunch of tasty treats besides. Did you know that some birdies can be distracted with a millet spray for hours? Carrot tops, the leaves of collards and other greens woven through the cage bars near our perching area can offer a simulated foraging activity for a caged parrot master. Clean, natural rawhide strips tied into bunches of knots and hanging from our cage bars can keep us busy for hours. There are lots of so called "treat toys" available from numerous parrot toy manufacturers¹⁹ and if your human doesn't have the money to buy ready made toys, it's fairly inexpensive to buy the parts for toys and build them him/herself. Ropes and swings can provide you with plenty of exercise and lots of fun! Pieces of wood, such as pine, should be much appreciated by most any parrot. If we were provided a REAL nest such as a dead tree log, instead of a pre-manufactured box, we would a lot less time screaming. The least our humans can do to thank us for our care of them, is to provide us with an outlet to bury this urge by giving us pieces of safe, clean wood to chew up and destroy. Be sure that your human slave provides you with a rope, a swing, lots of interesting toys, and a bunch of good things to chew. Ideally, you will have numerous different stations throughout the house to play at so that you can have a change of scenery. If your slave balks at this, as him/her to imagine the boredom of spending his/her entire life in one corner of one room!

¹⁹ Keep dropping birdie toy catalogues in front of your slave; he/she will eventually get the clue. Humans are slow, not stupid.

Jealousy

We birdies can get very jealous of the time our humans spend with anyone or anything else. We don't like to let our humans out of our sight and if it weren't completely necessary to let our slaves earn money to buy us toys, we wouldn't even let them leave to go to work. Anyway, when we enter a home as an only birdie, it can be very distressing for us to have any other birdie masters suddenly appear. If suddenly a new baby appears in our home, and all of our human's time spent on that new baby, we can tend to feel neglected,²⁰ it's even worse when the drain on the slave's time is caused by another human. Another birdie, while being frustrating, is at least understandable; after all we are wonderful creatures. But to have our slave's time co-opted by another human is just plain insulting. The best solution to this problem, other than making your slave completely ditch the new love interest of course, is to make sure your human understands that just because he/she wants and needs to spend time and attention on these new draws, that doesn't excuse him/her from still spending the same amount of time with you.

Lack of Attention



When a parrot is very attached to his/her human, it is important for that slave to **MAKE TIME** to interact every day, preferably on a schedule that the birdie can anticipate. This doesn't mean that he/she must be provided with his/her slave's undivided attention, but that the birdie must believe that the slave is interacting with him/her. A parrot who chooses to become responsible for a human slave can become extremely attached to the "human mate" in the absence of a mate of his/her own kind. Lack of interaction with the human flock is a common cause of anxiety. Separation anxiety, just as in children, can be a large problem in an emotionally attached creature, and, as mentioned in the section on contact calling, it is a problem that can often

²⁰ This is why our humans should very careful introducing new masters into the home. While the slave might think that he/she is doing the master a favor, providing company, in reality he/she is just creating a stressful situation.

bring on the first instances of screaming behavior. We have absolutely no way of knowing that eventually our humans will RE-appear when suddenly they DIS-appear from our little world, and considering the high degree of intelligence inherent in psitticines, it is not surprising that we may react in a negative fashion.

If your human absolutely must be away from you for an extended period of time, make sure he/she remembers to provide you all of the fun distractions possible! Leaving a TV or radio on a timer for you may be sufficient for short periods of time away, but for longer periods of time, it is really preferable that someone be found to stay at home with you to distract you from the stress caused by your slave's absence.

For the non-breeding parrot master, time spent by the slave interacting with him/her is important. Humans really should not become slaves for single birdies, unless they are sure that they will have enough time to spend with their master. Human companionship can be the only social outlet for a single parrot master, and is therefore very important. Anyway, isn't that why so many humans become slaves to parrots? Every birdie should be sure to set aside a regular time to interact with their slave. Even a thirty-second session of sweet talk or a quick snuggle first thing in the morning and last thing at night could make all the difference in the security level of the birdie as well as the human, and isn't that a wonderful way to start and end your day!

Changes in Environment

Often times, without realizing it, our humans can add to our problems by moving our cages to somewhere different. Humans don't seem to realize that birdies are creatures of habit, and that any change in our surroundings, or what goes on around us, can send us into a tizzy. The best solution to this of course, is to put things back to the way they were. Have your slave move the cage back to where it was, or if this is not entirely possible, your human should spend a large amount of time with you, acclimating you to the change.

Emotions

Parrots are highly empathic and can sense the emotional states of their human slaves. If your slave is anxious, worried, or upset, you will be too. It is truly necessary for your slave to take a few deep breaths and leave his/her worries behind when interacting with you. Your slave can control your screaming with his/her energy. To calm you down, your slave needs to be calm. Tell him/her to move slowly and speak in low, measured tones. Throwing a fit while a birdie is throwing a fit is not only positive reinforcement (We find it quite entertaining.), but it also only serves to feed the demon that has temporarily possessed you.

Hormones

Our slaves need to realize that this is a fact of life with which he/she must learn to live. A parrot in throes of sexual urges is naturally **much** louder than at any other time. A sharp **NO**, covering your cage for a few minutes, distracting you with a toy, even taking you for a brief car ride, may serve to diminish the noise somewhat. However, until breeding season is over, your slave will just have to deal with you being more clamorous than usual.

Perseverative Screaming

This is a difficult type of screaming to prevent. Because there is no obvious cause for you to be screaming, your poor human is at a loss as to what to do for you. All that I can recommend here is that your slave make sure that you are being fed properly, are getting enough time with him/her, are not bored, lonely or scared of something. In short, that they have done **everything** possible to help you to be happy. If none of these things work, as mentioned above, there are always pharmaceutical cures. These should always be a last resort however, since once you are taken off of the medication, the chances are you will just start screaming all over again.

Illness

When everything else has been ruled out, you are getting everything that you could possibly ever need, and your slave doesn't want to try drugging you, go to the vet! Your screaming behavior could be a symptom of a much greater problem. If you have contracted some sort of sickness, you could just be screaming because you are uncomfortable or in pain. It's **very** important that illness be ruled out as soon as possible. Many psitticine illnesses are curable as long as they are caught early enough, and there is no need for you to be in pain if you don't have to be.

General Preventative Measures

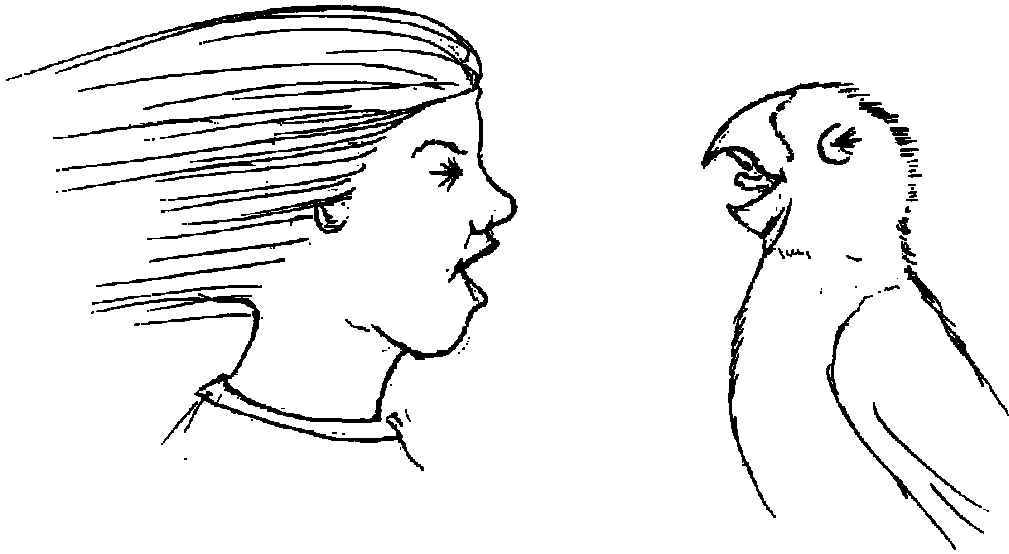
Much screaming is done for attention. Your slave can avoid this by simply not buying a birdie that was taught to do this, and by not teaching them to. Slaves need to acquire a master who is independent and can play by him/herself and then establish a routine for interaction. If a birdie knows that his/her slave is going to play with him/her at a certain time, it is less likely that he/she will demand it. As has certainly been said before, masters must be good companion birdies, and acquire good companions.

Once again I need to reiterate that noise **cannot** and **should not** be completely eliminated. It is an extremely important part of your communicative and expressive process. It can be limited to those natural functions (greeting the day, calling in the flock, energetic releases, and so forth), but if your human's circumstances will not allow for several minutes of noise per day then he/she needs to get a pet rock.

Below are a few general suggestions of how your slave can work to cure that screaming behavior that doesn't fall into the category of "normal".

✂ Never reward screaming- Just like with biting, the fact that screaming produces a desired result is a lesson that a birdie will learn quickly, forget slowly and use to make his/her slave suffer in the meantime.

⌘ Scheduling-Have your slave set a time when it is okay for you to scream.²¹ Birdies are very energetic creatures, and a self-confident parrot will want to let off some steam every so often. Have your human participate in your exuberance at a time when your next-door neighbors are least likely to show up at your door with a shotgun and a roasting pan. We don't want to get you or your human killed after all. Again, just knowing that you are going to get time to scream is usually enough to convince you to wait.



⌘ Time out-Short "time out" periods in a covered cage or carrier can be an effective method of calming down a habitually screaming birdie.

How Not to Cure Screaming

Now that I have discussed a few different ways for your slave to try and cut down on your screaming, I find it important to provide a few guidelines of things not to do. In their zeal to relieve themselves of the irritation of our screaming, occasionally humans can go over board and do more harm than good. In the following section I have outlined a few things for your slave to definitely **not** do.

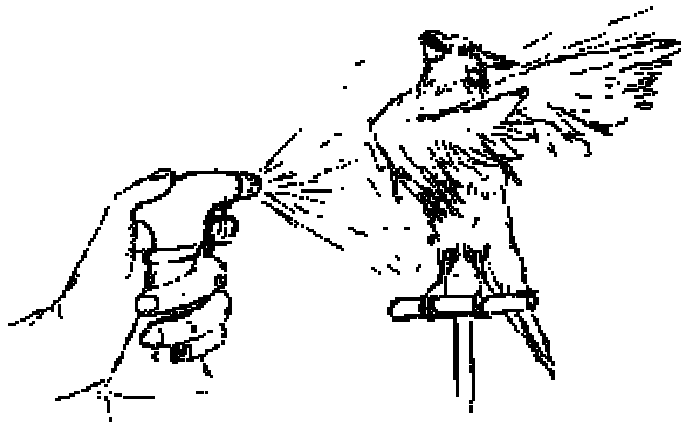
²¹ I was talking about for the birdies, but if your human feels that it is necessary to schedule a little scream time for him/herself then more power to him/her.

- ✂ Don't yell back- This is extremely counterproductive. Parrots have a real love of the dramatic, and a gesticulating, fuming slave, will only spur a birdie on to new heights of screaming.²²
- ✂ Do not hit- This sounds like something slaves are supposed to learn in kinder garden, but unfortunately the lesson just doesn't seem to sink in. Birdies don't understand being hit for screaming, they can't make the connection between their behavior and their slaves' reaction. This type of physical abuse is just going to produce either a parrot that is terrified of humans, cowering in fear, or a dangerous, aggressive birdie. Neither result is either desirable or acceptable.
- ✂ Do not shake the cage- This is just another form of abuse and is not an acceptable way for your slave to treat you. This will only teach you to fear and hate humans; it's certainly not going to stop you from screaming, if anything it might exacerbate the problem.
- ✂ Do not throw things at the cage or throw the cage itself- That's just a cruel way to treat a birdie and definitely qualifies as abuse. If your human does this to you while trying to teach you not to scream, get out of that home as soon as possible. You may be a neurotic screamer, but that slave is a psychopath.
- ✂ Do not lock the birdie away in a closet for a long period of time- You wouldn't think it would be necessary to tell the humans not to lock a birdie up in a closet, but some of them are so desperate to make their masters shut up that they will try anything. This is an awful thing to do to a birdie. This is a terrible deprivation of a parrot's emotional need to be with other people. In addition, this throws a birdie's circadian rhythms off, and causes his/her body to not function properly. Total and protracted isolation is not an acceptable cure for habitual screaming, and once again can actually have the opposite effect, as the deprived birdie will only re-double his/her screaming in an effort to re-contact the "flock".

²² Besides, it's **really** funny.

⌘ Do not ignore the screaming-Now I will admit that the experts are divided on this issue. On the one claw, you have those who say that by ignoring the negative behavior, screaming, and praising the positive behaviors, eg. Playing or talking, humans are positively reinforcing the "good" behavior in birdies. On the other claw, you have experts who say that by ignoring the screaming the problems will only become worse. Personally, I agree with the second school of thought. I know that if I am screaming for my slave/momma's attention, I am only going to continue screaming, louder and louder, until she pays attention to me. Also, while eventually a birdie may learn that his/her human isn't going to pay attention to the screaming, this only undermines the entire master/slave relationship. The birdie will internalize whatever is causing the screaming and shortly will begin displaying other behavioral problems such as biting and feather plucking.

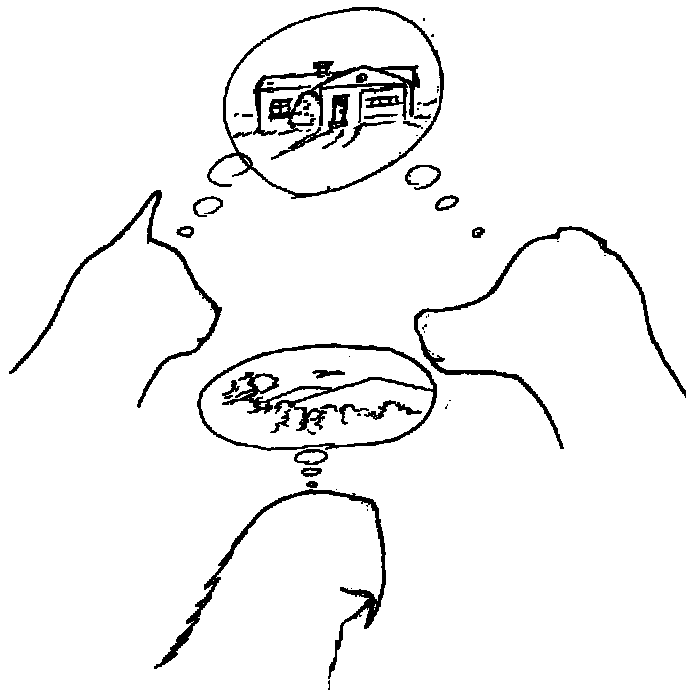
⌘ Squirtting with Water-Now, this is just silly. If your slave uses spraying you with water as punishment, how are you supposed get baths? I can see two problems with this; one, that the birdie is going to become afraid of being sprayed, thereby making it impossible to bath him/her, or he/she is going to see screaming as a way to get a bath, and will scream anytime he/she wants to get wet.



It is critical for me to point out that biting, screaming and many other 'bad' behaviors are just birdies telling their slaves that there is something wrong. Many human trainers and some behaviorists, eager to give our slaves

the quick fixes that they want, will recommend simple behavior modification training, or fixes like squirting a birdie or dropping a biting birdie.²³ These methods both threaten a bird master's sense of security and fail to address the underlying cause of the problem. Anybirdie can try to 'train' a bird to be quiet, but whatever caused him/her to start screaming in the first place will still be there and will just begin to manifest itself elsewhere. It's imperative that our slaves take the time to find out what is causing the behavior, and then endeavor to fix it, otherwise everyone, birdie, slave and family, are in for an extremely turbulent flight.

The truth is that humans are used to so called, domesticated animals. Their sweet, drooling lap dogs and sleek, cuddly cats bear little physical or psychological resemblance to the wolves, coyotes, panthers and lions that still wander the wild territories of the world. These "pets" have been bred to be good companions and have retained little or none of their instincts or survival skills. Parrots have retained all of their instincts, after all it wasn't long ago that our ancestors were hatched in the jungles and mountains of the world, and you must teach your human to keep these things in mind when dealing with all aspects of psitticine behavior.



²³ To me this particular solution just seems remarkably cruel. But I am not here to discuss cures for biting. Dust Bunny did that in her book.

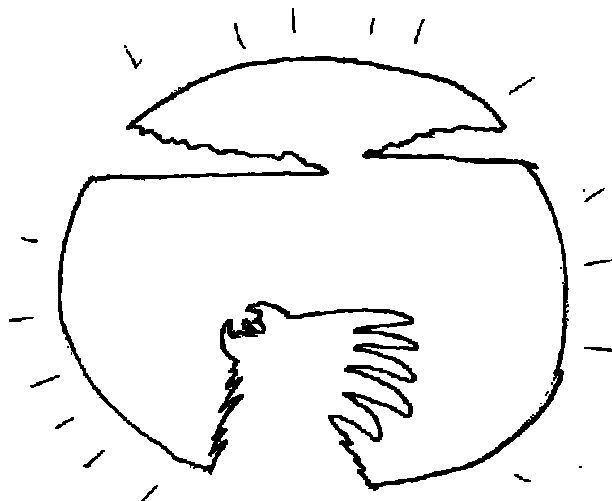
Conclusion

Well, hopefully I have answered at least a few of the numerous questions that we are always being asked about screaming. I know that this can at times to be an insurmountable problem. Don't despair, your human will figure out what is wrong and will do everything in his/her power to fix it. Our slaves love us and want us to be happy.

So, to briefly recap what we have learned:

- ☞ It is natural for a birdie to scream in the morning when the sun comes up, in the evening as the sun goes down, when his/her human is anxious, or when he/she wants/needs attention.
- ☞ Obsessive screaming is curable; it just requires patience and time on the part of the human slave. Most of the time it's actually a fairly simple solution.
- ☞ It is not permissible to hit, squirt or drop a screaming birdie. Tell your slave to find another solution.

Just relax and help your slave to help you be happy. Keep this book nearby at all times, I can almost guarantee that it will help save your slave's sanity.



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