

**HOW TO STOP YOUR PARROT FROM SCREAMING – CD #1**  
**Chet Womach with Kim Bear**  
**01/05/05**

Chet – welcome everybody. My name is Chet Womach and I have with me on the line here, Kim Bear, who is a parrot behavior specialist. We are going to be talking today about how to stop your parrot from screaming. Kim, why don't you give us little introduction about yourself, some of your qualifications, and we can get started.

Kim –I'd like to thank everybody, and welcome. I am Kim Bear, a parrot behavior consultant in Crestview, Florida. I will be discussing some of the common causes of excessive screaming, and hopefully you'll get some insight as to how to prevent the problem and maybe some things you can do to solve the problem if you already have one. Let me first say that this presentation isn't really meant to take the place of one-on-one assistance from a parrot behavior professional or from your vet. This information should help give you an idea what might be causing the problem, and some things you can do to work to improve the situation. However, if your parrot already has a serious problem, you may need more help than what we can offer here. Don't hesitate to seek out a consultant, such as myself or someone in your area. As part of the presentation, as Chet mentioned, I'll answer screaming-related questions, but remember, I may only be able to offer very general advice in this format. We'll be giving information about how you can schedule a consult with me if you need one.

Chet – Yes, that's a good point because...and the reason she brings that up is because some of you have dealt with parrots that have been abused or abandoned and others haven't and there's just so many different variables that come into place that it really is impossible to try to get them all. But we will certainly get a good chunk and then point you in right direction if you need extra special help.

Kim – I will tell you bit about myself. I have a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, a Master's in Health Education, and half a Master's Degree in Psychology, which I may or may not finish depending on how things go. I've been working as parrot consultant for a little over ten years, and also used to breed and hand feed a lot of species of parrots, so I have experience with different types of parrots at various stages in their development, everything from tiny babies to the actual adult breeder birds. I've done some publishing and public speaking over the years, and some of it was under my maiden name, which was Kim Wiggins [sp?], so some of you may have run into information about me before under a different name. The folks at BirdTricks.com and I have been working together for several months now trying to help people have a better understanding of their parrots and helping them develop happier relationships with their parrots. Now that's a bit of my background, so I guess we're ready to dive in to the topic at hand. Noise issues are one of the more common problems that I've encountered over the years. Why is it that so many parrots develop noise-related problems? Well, the first thing to consider is how does a parrot get into excessive screaming in the first place. Most behavior problems in parrots don't just pop up over night even though it may seem that way to us. You can beat yourself over the head trying to figure out why it's happening and still only be partly right because often there's not just one cause. It's a combination of factors that make your parrot what he is now. Just as we develop and change over time, and our personalities and behaviors are molded from

combinations of heredity, learning and experience, your parrot does so as well. There are several things that are going to have an influence over a parrot's behavior. I'm going to break them down into five fairly distinct aspects. One, his genetic, two his earliest experiences at the breeders or hand feeders, and realize the second aspect may continue on through the weaning process. Then you have three, which is any post-weaning experiences, which may continue at the breeders, the hand feeders or the pet store, if the bird isn't placed in his new home right after he's weaned. Fourth [UNCLEAR]...

Chet – Kim, I'd like to interject just a little bit. Is this, just to clarify, talking about like traumatic experiences?

Kim – No, this is just how parrots learn and some of the things that may teach them bad habits.

Chet – Okay. I guess you're going to get into that anyway.

Kim – Yes, not necessarily trauma, sometimes there is a trauma, but not necessarily.

Chet – Okay.

Kim – So four is made up of the experiences that take place during the first few months, once he's in his new home. And then five are the things that he experiences once he's been there for a while. Now, number five can go on indefinitely since parrots are always learning, and if the bird ends up going to another home at some point in his life, he's getting even more chances to learn, so you could have a six, a seven, or whatever, depending on how many situations this bird ends up being in.

Chet – Yes, probably a lot of callers are in that situation.

Kim – Then you might not know what the heck has happened in the past.

Chet – Right.

Kim – Understanding what's happening with either of these points can provide clues as to why your parrot does or doesn't develop a screaming problem. But unfortunately, you don't always know what went on before you got your bird. If you're a second or third or worse, fourth, fifth, sixth owner, you may really have no idea what prior experiences have shaped your parrot.

Chet – And that's what our, Linus, our Umbrella Cockatoo that our customers will recognize on our video. He was, so you guys know, a screamer; screamed an hour to 45 minutes at a time, multiple times a day, and he was a fourth generation owner. So believe me when I say I've been there and I know what you guys are going through.

Kim – I think anybody that has more than one bird at one time has gotten a second-hand bird. I want to go over these influences a little bit in detail so you understand what's coming into play.

Chet – Okay.

Kim – Let's first look at the earliest influence on a parrot's behavior—his genetic background. Now this is the combination of traits he inherited from his parents, his grandparents, and so on. Unlike dogs, cats, and a lot of the other animals that we have as pets, parrots haven't been selectively bred for certain traits, other than the possible, the different color mutations that you see in Parakeets and Cockatiels. Eventually, selecting for temperament and behavior traits will probably happen with some species, but at this point, many breeders just put two birds together and hope for the best. The parrot in your living room is still very much linked to the wild parrots out in the jungle. His behavior is guided strongly by the instincts he'd need to survive in the wild, not so much by what he would need to get along in your house. Some behaviors, like excessive noisiness, get a parrot bounced from home to home and they possibly wind up in the hands of a breeder as a last resort. The sad fact is that a lot of parrots in breeding situations were former pets that had behavior problems, so there's this possibility that they're passing on their tendencies to future offspring. On the breeder aspect, until there's more emphasis on controlling which parrots breed and the breeders are looking more and more for the traits that people find desirable in a pet, we may have to put up with things we don't find as appealing.

Chet – Right.

Kim – And it's pretty much a fact of parrot life that parrots aren't very quiet animals to being with. If a quiet pet is a necessity, getting a parrot may not be the right thing for the person to do in the first place.

Chet – But there definitely is a difference between a noisy parrot and then a parrot that's going to...

Kim – Oh yes.

Chet - ...drive you absolutely batty.

Kim – Right. But you wouldn't believe how some people really do expect the bird to be almost silent. Obviously some species are noisier than others, and of course, among individuals there's going to be differences. There are quiet Cockatoos out there, but I wouldn't normally list that as part the general Cockatoo personality. The bottom line is, when a person is choosing their parrot, one of the things they need to consider, if noise is an issue, is which species are more likely to be noisy and which ones aren't. Unfortunately too many people don't put as much thought into this as they probably should. You have to do your homework. If someone contacts me because their Macaw sounds off throughout the day and they just don't want to put up with any of it, I would probably just have to ask them, "Well, what did you expect when you bought a Macaw? I'm not trying to be rude about it, but honestly, if you have a Macaw, you're probably going to have some noise." The value of that pre-purchase research can't be underestimated.

Chet – Could you maybe give people a little bit of an idea, because I'm sure some people are on the call, or will be hearing this in the future, that are looking to possibly get a bird—I know plenty of my customers are—and maybe a little advice on some of the worst and the...maybe not all of them, but some of the worst ones to stay away from as far as screaming.

Kim – Cockatoos, as you just heard, Conures, the larger Conures especially, some Macaws, Amazons, Quakers, Lorries—it's actually easier to list the parrots that are quieter.

Chet – Okay, why don't we do that then.

Kim – African Grays, usually. Actually, most of your African species—the [Myers], all of the [plesethlists], the [Myers], the red-bellied parrot, the [Senegals]. Unfortunately, these are not the flashy, pretty parrots compared to some of the South American fellows. [UNCLEAR], that's the South American that tends to be little quieter. Cockatiels, of course, while they may not be real, real quiet, they just typically don't get the volume that the...usually the bigger the parrot, the bigger the mouth. I mean that, you know, I mean I've got four, and right now they've just decided that they're all going to talk to me [UNCLEAR].

Chet – So we have a little singing in the background.

Kim – Well, it's normally time for me to kind of let them have their bedtime, but I'm in the living room, so I'll shut their light off [UNCLEAR]...

Chet – Okay, we'll...let's...that gives people a little bit of an idea...

Kim – Yes, it's...and again, individuals vary. But if you already have your parrot, at least, you need to recognize that you're dealing with an animal that has a tendency to be noisy in the first place. You have to have realistic expectation about just how quiet you can expect a bird to be.

Chet – Right.

Kim –By the way, I do realize that many people end up with parrots they weren't able to plan for, like if you inherited one, and you may be faced with the type of bird that you didn't choose for yourself, but you still want to try anyway, and there isn't nothing wrong with that, and there's usually the hope, so I don't want those people out there to feel that they have to get rid of their birds just because it's not something that they picked. So we have the fact that we don't have a lot of control over parrot genetics at this point and parrots are fairly noisy pets to begin with. Let's look at the second major thing that has an early impact on a parrot's future behavior. This is his early upbringing at the breeder's or hand feeder's place. This begins a lot earlier than people realize. A parrot's eyes don't even have to be open for him to start learning. He hears sounds, he senses movement, and figures out pretty early on that if he's hungry, he can cry and someone will come along to feed him. Now this vocal behavior is what nature intended; it's normal and it's expected. You wouldn't expect there to be any noise issues at this stage unless proper care isn't being given. Allowing a baby to cry and cry if he's hungry is an example of poor husbandry, not an example of the baby having a noise problem. Once the baby's eyes open, there's this whole new world for him to look at and the learning is taking place constantly, although a good breeder or hand feeder is aware of this and is already starting the bird's education and socialization, because this person knows that early experiences are really important. The baby's getting age-appropriate toys and activities, he's given opportunities to explore and experience different situations, maybe different people. As he gets older, he learns that people don't just provide

food; they provide security, companionship and fun. Vocal behavior at this point is used mainly to signal hunger or some other discomfort, but it's also heard during play, and at this point, it's not a problem, it's just the normal noises that a baby parrot makes. But the caretaker, the breeder, hand feeder, whatever, may notice that some babies are more vocal than others. One may play quietly with a toy while another may babble at it quite a bit. If a person really wants to get a quieter individual, he might ask the breeder, "Well, of these babies, which one's a little calmer, which one's a little quieter," realizing, of course, they might change as they get older, but even when their quite little, you will tend to see these little personality differences. Now, as the baby gets older, he may become more vocal just for the sake of hearing himself, especially sounding off in the mornings and evenings. We noticed that a lot of our baby parrots would just sit and babble and whistle, even if nothing was really happening. It's just a sign of a happy, healthy parrot. At this stage, you want to reinforce this mostly pleasant behavior by talking back to the baby, laughing, singing and whatnot, to let the bird know it's okay to be making this type of noise.

Chet – What shouldn't people do at this stage?

Kim – If the bird is just sounding off...like my Cockatoo, right now, she wants me to leave the room, because it's dark and she thinks I need to be in bed.

Chet – She wants to go to bed.

Kim – I can't really go over to her and yell at her. What I could do is go give her to my husband. People don't generally want to yell back at the bird. You don't want to throw things at them. You never want to hit them. You really don't want to do anything that's going to make them feel that...this is the normal baby parrot behavior I'm talking about now. They really shouldn't be punished for this kind of noise because an active, healthy parrot generally should be making noise at certain parts of, certain stages throughout the day. Again, if you're keeping your parrot up late like I am mine, you're just going to have to expect that.

Chet – And that was one of the questions, and I don't know if that caller's on the line, I didn't save the names, but the question came across something to the effect of when the bird will scream until somebody turns off the light. That is just a thing, I mean, in my experience anyways, it's just been, with our Cockatoo, because he would do that, he screamed because he wanted to go to bed...

Kim – And I address that later about how the importance...putting the bird to bed probably more early than you like to go to bed, but if you're going to be up and you're forcing the bird to be up, you may have to put up with some noise. So yes, I definitely get into that. In general, though, this normal baby babbling, whistling, whatever it is they do, that's normal, and it should be fairly acceptable.

Chet – So callers know, what you're hearing in the background with her Cockatoo, is nowhere near what you would call bad screaming.

Kim – Oh, nothing. It's an annoying noise, but she can be a lot worse.

Chet – Just so you guys know it's like 100 times worse when they start [UNCLEAR].

Kim – I think it could literally split your eardrums. But if your bird sounds off, if the young bird is sounding off in a way that's too much, the odds are it's because something's frightened him, or he's really wound up for some other reason. Remember, it can also be a sign that something's not right physically, although, usually sick birds get very quiet. If there are any stresses in this bird's life, no matter what those stresses are, excessive noise may be one clue that something's not right. I do want to mention how important the weaning process is for a baby parrot. It's a really crucial time and it's a point at which a lot of the bird's personality is being formed.

Chet – Could you maybe tell people what weaning is? Probably most of them know, but...

Kim – When the baby parrot moves from being handfed to feeding himself from a bowl or the food that you put in the cage for him. Different parrots wean at different times depending on the species, and even among individual birds, there could be quite a difference. Generally, the bigger the parrot, the longer they need to be handfed before they're weaned. Cats and dogs go through the same thing. I refer to this quite a bit, and it's just the transition from being completely dependent on a person giving it its food versus now he eats from his own bowl. But a lot of behavior problems can be traced back to poor experiences during weaning. While a lot of these problems can be dealt with successfully, sometimes it's difficult. It's important to understand that weaning isn't just a matter of one day he needs to be handfed and the next day he doesn't. It's not just about the food. It's also a matter of security and independence...

Chet – Good point.

Kim – ...which means the baby is confident and trusting of his environment and the people around him. He's able to do certain things for himself without feeling stress, like he plays with his toys and you don't have to be right there. He not only can find his food in his bowl, but he can play with his toys; he's observing what's going on around him and is generally comfortable in his situation without having to be constantly reassured by people. He also is continuing to learn his boundaries, the things he can and can't do in the home, like learning how not to grab too hard on to someone's finger or learning that he can't go wherever he wants to. A weaning parrot should have a certain amount of boldness, curiosity, but he's going to need that guidance so he doesn't get in trouble.

Chet – Just like any kid or...

Kim – Exactly. And vocalizations may increase as the bird learns to use his voice to express displeasure or other emotions. He may start getting a little sassier and just more vocal overall, and he's also aware of how people use their voices and is getting more and more responsive to what's going on around him. If he's in a busy, noisy, hectic environment, he may respond by being noisier. He's taking in information all the time and reacting accordingly, so hopefully he's in an environment that fosters good manners at this time and later in life. And this is one reason to be really picky about where you get your parrot, because the breeder or hand feeder's environment makes a huge difference. The habits he develops now could be with him for life.

Chet – I want to jump in here. I don't know how long a topic it is when picking a breeder for your bird, but...

Kim – I could do a whole thing on that.

Chet – A whole thing. Well, maybe just a couple of quick points that people could maybe just understand.

Kim – Interview—pretend you're interviewing a nanny for your child. Don't use price as the final deciding factor. Visit their facility. If it doesn't smell good, don't...I mean, look and listen and smell. You want a clean facility, but you also want to get a sense that these people are nurturing and that they enjoy raising parrots, because the people that are in it just for the money, the people that...even the bird mill, so to speak, there are some large scale breeding facilities that do a really good job because they pay people extra, they pay people to go out there and play with the babies. Whereas, there are some facilities that treat...it's just like an assembly line—the bird opens it's mouth, they stuff the food down the baby and they move on to the next one, and there's no thought or consideration; it's just about the money. You hear about the home-based breeders, like what we did, we just had a few, we had like a dozen pair of larger parrots, and then we would hand feed, and we only had a few babies for sale at any given time. These kinds of people are a little harder to find, but it's usually worth the effort, it's worth the drive, and maybe even worth a little bit extra money. You can get a good bird in a pet store, too, but again, you have a lot less control over where that bird came from; you can't research it as well. But it's...this brings up the point I need to mention that in most situations, a parrot is better off finishing his weaning before he goes to his new home. Too many folks have done some serious damage to their parrots because they wanted to finish the hand feeding, and they ended up making a bunch of mistakes in the weaning process. It's a total myth that in order for your parrot to bond to you, you have to finish the hand feeding. Weaning a baby parrot really should be left to someone who knows what they're doing. Some species are more difficult than others, for Cockatoo's especially. If you feel that you need to get that baby out of the breeder's environment because he'd be better off with you than with the breeder, then either find an experienced hand feeder to place the bird with, or better yet, don't support that breeder, then you choose to financially support a bad breeder, you're not really...

Chet – You're helping the thing out here.

Kim – Yes. So I'll repeat—buying an unweaned parrot not a good idea for most people. I know people did it, and they're probably going, "Welllll." But if you had to do it all over again...once your bird weaned, once a bird is weaned, he most often is going to go right to his new home, but sometimes that's not going to happen right away. We need to mention this possible third level of experience opportunity, there's a possibility that this bird is in limbo. He's not yet someone's pet, but he obviously still needs to be cared for by someone and his education needs to be continued since his mind is still very moldable at this point. So much can go wrong here it's overwhelming if you think about all the different things that can go on. The best-case scenario is that he remains with a caring breeder or hand feeder or goes to a good pet store where he's handled and played with and his socialization and training continues. Basically, he's treated like that person's own pet

until he gets a new home. He's probably away from the very young babies and is with other young parrots and maybe even some older parrots. When we raised and sold parrots, we had some of them literally for years because it took us that long to find them a good home. Until then, these birds were our pets and we treated them just as well as the bird that we had bought for ourselves. Unfortunately, not all young parrots are going to be so lucky, so on the other end of the spectrum, you have the situation where the bird gets moved to like a display area and it's pretty much ignored except when someone might want to buy him, and then he gets to come out. He could stay this way for a really long time, and if this situation is not good, he's not learning what he needs to learn, and he's possibly learning things that aren't good at all. This situation is probably one of the more stressful times for a young parrot, this waiting to be a pet phase, or limbo. If people out there have purchased a parrot that was in this limbo state and you suspect it wasn't a very nurturing environment, now you may have an idea as to why your bird isn't behaving as well as you'd hoped. Screaming for attention, or screaming just out of frustration and stress, often starts in this limbo period. At one point, the bird was used to the interaction that he had with people when he was being hand fed, and now that he's weaned, he's become little more than an ornament on a showroom floor, wondering, "Hey, why isn't anyone paying attention to me." He may not have had many toys or he may have had just the same toys all the time and he's gotten bored with them.

Chet – So is it kind of at this point where, ever since he's been out of the egg, the only things he really had to communicate with is his voice and so he just starts to express that more and more?

Kim – It's just this sudden...when they're being hand fed and cared for, even if they're not played with a whole lot, they're at least getting people interaction. And then when they go into this limbo state where they're not yet in someone's home, but you're looking at maybe a large scale breeder or somebody that just moves their for sale birds kind of out and all they do is just toss some food in there, they were getting this attention and now they're not. They're not getting a lot of their other needs met, too, and that's one reason that a parrot might start screaming is because lots of his need might be not being met. The parrot may not get out much, and he may not have a lot of opportunities for play, so he's not getting enough exercise or mental stimulation. Parrots are meant to busy and active and on the move and when they can't be, it affects their personalities. They may learn to scream just out of his frustration. It's very stressful for a parrot to live this way. And one way that parrots show stress is to scream. Other behavior problems can be rooted in this limbo issue also, so another reason to be careful where you get your bird in the first place. Now once a bird does get to his new home, and hopefully that's soon after he was weaned, so let's discuss things in the context as if that was the case. This is another time for lots of new experiences and skills that are probably going to stick with him for a long time. And this is what's often called the "honeymoon period," where everything seems so great and the parrot practically can do no wrong, but in reality, this is when you need to set those rules from the beginning, no exceptions. The worst thing that can happen is because the baby is new, he's so cute, he's so perfect...

Chet – You cuddle with him for hours.

Kim – Yeah, he gets away with murder; you're afraid to do any scolding because you want him to like you. You let him wander around the house wherever he wants to go. You carry him

around all the time because he's so cuddly and he wants to be with you. And by the way, this is a major cause of Velcro Cockatoo Syndrome. Put him wherever...you let him put whatever he wants to in his mouth because he hasn't yet learned to use his beak for destructive purposes. So what harm can that do? And then you do try to step in and set a rule, you get squawked at. So you back off because you don't want him to be mad at you. And last but not least, you come running the minute he opens his mouth because you don't want him to be afraid or lonely or you just want to see what he's up to. In a sense, the household, at first, revolves around all of his needs, which of course, suits him just fine, and life would be great if things went on this way forever. Here's the problem—the honeymoon doesn't last forever. If you devoted all this time to your parrot when he was new, and you pull back on it at some point, as you're probably going the end up doing, there's going to be a reaction. Imagine what that reaction often is? Hollering. Because that hollering often gets the best results. If you don't set any rules or limits on behaviors when he's little, mostly because his behavior's pretty good when he's little, but then you step in later with the rules, there's going to be a reaction. Again, hollering is a reaction that seems to work well for parrots. They learn really early on what the power, what power their voices have. Now you can see how people might end up with a parrot that's prone to excessive screaming early on in the relationship. But don't forget that learning is always happening. As the parrot becomes enmeshed in the family, and after the newness has worn off, and the reality of parrot keeping sets in, the owner can look more toward long-term and ask, "What are we continuing to teach this parrot? Does something need to change? And if so, what might that be? And what might we be doing that needs work?" I think it's really important to look at your own behavior and that of other members in the household because often it's not just the parrot's behavior that needs adjusting. Remember, he's just responding to his environment the only way he knows best. This, of course, is influenced by the fact that he is a parrot after all, as well as what he's been taught over the months, or possibly the years.

Chet – I'd like to chime in. I think that you guys will notice a lot of similarities, my course, when it talks about biting as with screaming. What she's talking about here, I think, is basically, we're responsible, being the owners, for whether our parrots develop a screaming problem or not, because we will accidentally reward the bird for doing bad things. When he screams, we run for attention, so we end up rewarding the bird with attention when he screams. If you continue to give a bird what he wants when he does something bad, or that you think is bad, he will continue to do it more because it gets him what he wants.

Kim – He'll just, he's just learned...if that's why...if it is actually just screaming for attention.

Chet – Right.

Kim – Maybe there have been all these opportunities your parrot has had to learn how to scream to get what he wants. In many of the situations I've dealt with, this is what's happened. But there are other things that can contribute to screaming as well, so you can't always just assume it's because the bird is "spoiled." Think about reasons that parrots are so vocal in the first place. It's their main mode of communication. They use their voices in the wild, and in our homes, to let the world around them know what's going on, and if there's a problem, that's the main way they're going to let you know. If you have a screamer, it's really important that you look at bird's overall situation and try to see what is he telling you. We've already looked at the possibility that

the bird uses screaming to signal that he wants attention or that he's bored. The other possible contributions can be that some other of his needs aren't being met. Let's consider then what I found to be a being contribution to overall crabbiness and naughtiness, and in general, the cantankerous attitudes that some parrots can develop. And remember, screaming may be a way to express this. It may be something that a person's never thought of before as being a problem and that is, how much sleep does your parrot get and what is the quality of that sleep.

Chet – So huge.

Kim – Yes. Parrots are pretty much genetically ingrained to be dawn to dusk animals. They want to get up when the sun comes up and they want to wind down when the sun goes down.

Chet – And anything less just...

Kim – It's different for them. It's really not what they were meant to do. It translates into them wanting to actually sleep about 10-12 hours, more or less, depending on the season. But what's the normal daylight, day/night cycle in most homes? People may get up at 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning to go to work, but yet, they stay up till 10:00 or 11:00 at night with the lights and the television and whatnot, and if the parrot's in the same room, even if he's covered, he's probably not asleep. He's waiting for things to get quiet so he can settle down.

Chet – Like your Cockatoo.

Kim – Yes. Normally we'd be sitting here watching TV...and I'm just doing something different, I guess maybe...she's being good now, so I don't want to jinx anything. Your parrot, in general, is waiting for things to be quiet so he can settle down, which is probably what the bird's been wanting to do since he finished his dinner—full belly, time to go to sleep. If a person's job keeps them away from home during the day, which unfortunately, that's el primo parrot activity time, by the way, you probably end up spending most of your parrot-to-person interaction times in the evenings, and you may notice your parrot's a bit testier than he is on the weekends when you can interact with him throughout the day. He may be more prone to these verbal outbursts and just being more short tempered in general, and this is probably because he's tired. Think about yourself, how do you tend to behave when you want to go to bed but can't. If this went on, don't you think you might develop a screaming problem of your own? If you think that your bird is lacking this dark, uninterrupted quality sleep, and that might be what's making your parrot more frazzled than he ought to be, I recommend getting a separate sleeping cage in a room that's away from the evening activity and set a bed time for the parrot of about 8:00pm or so, assuming your household's waking up at 6:00 or 7:00 in morning. If you can't provide a separate cage or room, at least get the darkest cover you can find and keep your parrot's sleeping area as dark and quiet as possible. Maybe you could buy another TV for your bedroom and watch TV in there at night. That actually might be cheaper than getting another cage, especially if you have more than one parrot, or you don't have an infinite supply of extra rooms to devote to your parrot's bedroom.

Chet –I'll tell you what I've done, and tell me if this is exactly right or not, but it's certainly cheaper than buying a new TV and certainly cheaper than buying a new cage. Linus, our Umbrella, this is one of first things we did. He was obviously not getting enough sleep and it

makes a huge difference when we started giving it to him, but we didn't have a separate cage, but he was a bird that liked showers and we always had a shower perch. What he got is what she's talking about was a separate sleeping room, but it was in the shower.

Kim – Yes, that's fine.

Chet – You've got to be careful here, because you've got to make sure that you've never punished him in this area, right?

Kim – Well, yes, this is not, this extra room, this is like literally a bedroom, and if you're having a party and you don't want your bird out in the middle of all that activity, you can put the bird in that room, if you just need the bird to be out of your hair for whatever. But it's not punishment. Realistically, sometimes people do need to get the bird out of the room for whatever reason, like what if you're painting your living room wall. So this extra cage should be a pleasant...it doesn't have to be big, just big enough for the bird to be in and move around and put a cup of water in there; then they'll have to have food. It's just mainly for him to just sleep. Most parrots will just be happy to do this, and they're not feeling like they're missing out on something, because odds are, they'd probably rather be quiet and asleep when everybody's in the living room at 10:00 at night. I recommend that people at least try it for a few weeks and see if they notice any difference at all.

Chet – Another side benefit that I noticed with that is I didn't find that my parrot, our Umbrella Cockatoo, would wake up until, I mean, it would have to be well into the day; it would have to be after 12 hours for him to wake up on his own. The dandy little thing about it, because normally they'll wake up when they see the sun, which for some of you guys, you're getting up, the sun's coming up, whatever, 5:00-6:00am, and the bird starts screaming; that was some of your questions, is how can I get my bird to shut up in the morning. Well, this is what I did that got him to be quiet, is he's still sleeping because he's in a dark room that he loves to sleep in, so he doesn't even see the sun rise.

Kim – And he doesn't know that it's daytime. That's a good point. I'm a very late sleeper. I am fortunate I work in the afternoons and evenings. My husband gets up and leaves and I sleep till, I can sleep all day if I could, but I've just gotten so used to the babbling and the whistling and the hooting that I sleep right through it. I have other parrots that amuse each other, so it's not like they're so dependent on me to get up and do things for them. I have four of them and they're looking at stuff. If it was just one parrot and he was relying on me for amusement, I probably would have to get out of bed. Of course, you could always get out of bed, go get the parrot, put it in the bedroom with you and go back to sleep. Not only is sleep an important issue, but also quality exercise and opportunities for mental stimulation.

Chet – And what are those?

Kim – A parrot is really designed to be an active animal, not necessarily always on the move, except maybe for Lorries, but at least willing and able to tussle around off and on throughout the day and get some activity. Most of us don't have free flighted parrots. We don't let our parrots just fly around the house, so we have to allow for other ways for the bird to get his pent up

energy out. Toys and activities like trick training can fill the roles nicely here. Unfortunately, not all parrots were taught to play with toys when they were little and they may even be afraid of them. This goes back to that learning stuff at the breeder's house. If this didn't happen then, it needs to happen later. It's never too late to try to teach a parrot how to play. It may take a while, but most parrots will benefit from the effort, and they'll usually appreciate it, and you'll usually see an improvement in their overall demeanor if they have something to do. If they have that healthy, appropriate outlet for their energy, they may not have to release it solely with their voices.

Chet – I do want to chime in here, and I want to preface this by saying I don't want to make this a pitch in any way; I'll just say this real short. We do have a product that is a how to fly course; it's a video. If you want to check out the details, the website for that is [BirdTricks.com/how-to-fly](http://BirdTricks.com/how-to-fly). I have trained both our Cockatiel and our Macaw and our Umbrella Cockatoo to fly indoors; it's not an outdoor thing. There are things you've got to be careful with and my course talks about it, on how to avoid hitting windows and things like that. That's one thing I do regularly, is I free flight inside our birds as a way—and they love—to get exercise, and you can train them to fly through hoops and all sorts of things that can be fun for both.

Kim – You have to have a well-trained bird to do that, otherwise, you end up with a total brat. Your birds probably step up, when you ask them to.

Chet – Yes, they do.

Kim – And they don't fly away from you. It is a good idea, but a lot of people just, the household hazards, first of all, you have to be very diligent and bird-proof the area. But yes, for a parrot to be able to fly, and assuming that they're very responsive to their owner and you don't get into this literally chasing the bird all over the house. Obviously, that is the most natural form of exercise for them. To be honest, all four of our parrots are flighted, but only one of them really knows it. We just don't leave the window open, or the door open, because you never know who might decide, "Ooo, I can fly." When you have a parrot that's engaging in a playful behavior, realize that play times for a lot of parrots does mean being noisy, but this is normal and it really should be encouraged. If a person begrudges their parrot the noise that he makes while playing, that person may need to rethink his expectations. Because like I said before, parrots aren't usually the quietest of pets. I want to recap a little bit; some common things that can contribute to excessive noise problems include, obviously, the possibility that some of the parrot's needs aren't being met and he's reacting to the stress and frustration that this is causing. Some of those needs include things like needing more play and activity, more sleep, or just more overall structure in daily life. And of course there are other things, too, like poor diet, environmental problems like a cage that's too small, or a room that's too busy, or maybe even too isolated—you've got the two extremes.

Chet – Basically anything causing stress.

Kim – Yes, and parrots can develop screaming problems because they're reacting to stress in the home that may not have anything to do with them, like people arguing all the time.

Chet – Fighting spouses.

Kim – Yes, and a death in the family that's causing...all kinds of just un-parrot related stress that they're picking up on. Each situation's different, and again, there's not likely just one cause.

That's why, when it comes to screaming problems, I think getting with a behavior consultant is a good idea. This person can also help the people deal with the stress it's causing the family, because the more stressed out and out of control the person feels, the more this is going to affect the bird, and then the bird gets more stressed, which stresses the person out, and so on and so on; and you see how that works. This really was just the tip of the iceberg. I mentioned what might possibly be causing the problem, and within that, people might see some idea for prevention and maybe even some solutions. Maybe we can address some more specific issues I guess, at this point, if have some specific questions that people wanted to present.

Chet – Let me just go through the list here, and I think we covered just some of these main ones. Many, many people said that, "My parrot screams whenever I leave the room and he only stops when I come back or when I go to pick him up," and basically half my questions were that, where the bird is basically screaming for attention. And we talked about how to prevent that from raising it, but okay, now, we have a bird who is screaming and we already passed that stage, and now he's five years old or something.

Kim – Right. It generally stems from a parrot who's looking pretty much 100% to people for his enjoyment. Often, you don't see that in parrots that have other parrots in the home or other things to look at, even a fish tank or something, but if that parrot is looking to the person to be the only source of entertainment for them, and too, also, if a parrot, in general, is just insecure. A lot of rescue birds are this way. They've come from situations in which they did not have a very good life. They learn to trust particular people but they're still very, very insecure. So the minute the person leaves the room, it's like, "Oh my god, where did they go?" And so some people have success in doing this little contact called, "It's okay, I'll be right back," this kind of little back and forth that you might be able to change it from the screaming and hollering to whistling and talking. Parrots who talk in general tend to have less problems with screaming, although not always. You might be able to substitute, instead of the bird screaming at you, maybe teach it to whistle and you end up whistling the whole time you're out of the room. That might not be the best thing in the world, but that is usually a big systemic problem, and that's the kind of problem where I have to almost always talk to the person and find out, "Well, tell me more about this bird's background. Tell me what time of the day is it maybe he does this more at certain times of the day. Does the bird play with toys, and if so, why not? If he doesn't, have you tried to get him to play with toys?"

Chet – I'll say something about toys there, too, is if...and maybe people know this and maybe they don't, but if you have a toy in your bird's cage and he never plays with it, you need a new toy.

Kim – Probably, yes. That one is either unacceptable in some way, he's gotten bored with it—it somehow is not doing it for him.

Chet – Yes, and you usually can't get much more than a month out of a toy, maybe two months, in my experience, and the bird gets bored with it, so you have to rotate those things.

Kim – I've told people that quality is better than quantity, and I've seen people that, "Well, my bird has all these toys," and you look at the cage and there's 20 toys in there and you can hardly see the bird. I would rather, if you have 20 toys, have three toys in there at any given time and rotate them, not daily, necessarily, but some birds need that stimulation. Some birds, they get bored really quickly. Other birds will play with the same toys forever. You have to learn what your bird's tendencies are, and yes, you can have 20 toys, but maybe only put a few in there at a time, that way the bird isn't...they can almost be overwhelmed by having too many things around them. It would be better to just have a few really cool things and change them around a lot because then they're always new.

Chet – I also want to say something else, too, and this isn't on toys anymore, but I was at a fair somewhere, and it was in Spokane where I live now, and there was Mollucan Cockatoo that was sitting at this guy who's performing with his parrots, and we just got to talking to him since we're into birds, and he said that his Mollucan used to scream just like during shows and it was brutal. This is a little bit different, but instead of screaming for attention, he completely ignored every scream ever did, but he watched the bird very carefully and every the time the bird would fluff up and ruffle his feathers; he would come over and pay attention to it. And he was able to...I haven't done this...but he was able to train his bird to ruffle his feathers to get attention, which is...

Kim – Yes, a nice, quiet thing to get attention instead of screaming.

Chet – Yes. And the thing with that, you guys, it can be adopted really quickly with a clicker or just a cue good, just like any of the trick training things that you've seen on my videos. You just wait for the bird to shake his feathers, just while doing nothing, just while your cooking dinner or something, click as soon as you see it, walk over there and give him a seed. It won't take long, especially if you've already trained your bird to wave or shake his head no or just a couple of tricks to he understands what it works for.

Kim – Yes, tricks build on each other. Once they learn that first one, the other ones come a little easier.

Chet – Right.

Kim – And you're going to end with this bird that's just sitting there dancing all the time, "What's your bird doing!" But that's better than, "Ahhh," because the worst noise in the world is a Mollucan Cockatoo in full throttle.

Chet – Yes, nothing works.

Kim – Or perhaps a Macaw that's afraid of something; that's not a good one either. I don't know if you can hear my Cockatoo, she's sitting here going, "Night night." It's because the TV's not on

and she thinks, "Okay, if the TV's not on then you must be needing to go to bed. Get of here." I'm not saying I have to get off the phone, I just didn't know if you could hear, "Night night"...

Chet – Yes, but just barely.

Kim – ...getting insistent about it. That's the kind of noise that, hey, it's my fault; I am keeping her up. But she does get into this, "Ehhhhhhh," where ohhhh, and that is usually because she wants something and that...eventually I do let her out of her cage, but I wait until she's quiet.

Chet – Right. Never reward that.

Kim – Not while all the "Ehhhhh" is going on. And sometimes if I've had enough, I'll throw up my hands kind of fast, and she'll just see movement in the corner of her eye...I mean, I'm not hitting her, I'm not even in the same room with her...I'm just throwing up my hand and she sees it. These little distraction methods are not harmful. Some people will...you know, like dog trainers will put some pennies in a Coke can and shake it, the dog does something, and they just hear this noise and they're kind of like, "Oh, what was that?" And that just gets them to stop whatever it was they were doing, then you can step in and reinforce something else.

Chet – After they've stopped.

Kim – Yes. So if your bird is screaming and you want to come into the room, because you have to come into the room, you can rattle your can of pennies or toss a pillow down the hall...I mean, don't ever throw anything at the bird, don't squirt the bird, don't yell at the bird, but do something to distract the bird, and usually they'll shut up, and then you can come in.

Chet – Because if you don't do that, they'll consider coming into the room as a reward.

Kim – Right. They don't know your motivation for coming into the room.

Chet – You also mentioned there just briefly, squirting. This was something, too, I had a couple of people who are probably on the call, that they have nice parrots now, but they were curious, because I had mentioned that you shouldn't use spray bottles to squirt your bird in face, and they didn't know that that was a bad thing. Could you explain why that isn't the greatest idea.

Kim – First of all, that's an old trick that people used with dogs and cats. What it does with parrots is teach them to not really like water and it can really be a problem when you go to bathe the parrot. Another thing is it's not getting to the fundamental root as to why is the bird screaming in the first place.

Chet – You're just quick fixing it.

Kim – Yes, you're just kind of throwing a band aid on the situation, and what if the bird really does need something, like his dinner's two hours late. It's just another distractionary method; I just don't think it's a very good one because it carries with it that now the bird is afraid of water, and you go to...god forbid you try to use the same mister bottle to give your bird a bath, you're

going to freak your bird right out. If something else, like drop a book—don't let them see you do it, obviously—but anything to distract the bird long enough to get them to be quiet, but I really don't favor the squirting method...

Chet – Okay.

Kim – It's also kind of mean. Who wants to be squirted in the face with water?

Chet – Moving on here, we're at about 50 minutes, so we're going to try to keep this rolling. A couple of people asked the type of questions that I seem to maybe categorize them as jealousy, like when the wife would talk to her husband, or somebody would talk on the phone in sight of the bird, the bird would throw an absolute screaming fit. What's going on in that situation?

Kim – It's hard to know exactly what's going on in all situations, but I recommend that, if there's somebody in the home that the bird is just really focused on, sometimes that person just has to depart from the bird's view to get certain things done. Again, it really just depends on the bird's overall guidance and structure. If that's the bird's only behavior issue, then okay, the bird has this one little quirk, that if I'm on the phone... But usually there's other stuff going on, too. It's not just the inappropriate screaming; it's this time, so it's probably a bigger overall issue, and maybe the unfavored person can work to develop his or her own relationship with the bird. The phone situation—sometimes it's just a matter of, I've actually heard of people showing the bird the phone, or getting an old dead phone to give to the bird as a toy, which...make sure that there's no little pieces that could...I don't think that's the best idea in the world...

Chet – Scratch that one.

Kim - ...[UNCLEAR] people going, "Well, my bird wants to play with the remote control so I gave him it it's own remote control." Okay. It's not going to know the diff...but sometimes they don't realize that you're not talking to them—you've got this thing, you're walking around with it and you're talking and gesturing with your hands, which I'm doing right now, and they don't realize you're not talking to them, so they're all excited, and sometimes you just have to leave the room. Another thing you can do is play music for them nearby their cage so they can listen to the music and maybe they won't focus so much on what you're doing. Here's a really important point, once you identify the situations that you know are going to set your bird off, you can take steps to either avoid the situation or work around it. When you can anticipate a behavior issue, it makes it a lot easier.

Chet – Very true.

Kim – You know you're going to have to be on the phone and you know the bird's going to throw a fit, throw a handful of almonds in his bowl and hope that that tides him over until you can finish your phone call.

Chet – I was going to...I thought about this, and I haven't talked...just so the callers know, I haven't talked to you about many of these issues at all, so this is kind of just an on-the-fly deal, but when I am trick training a bird, and I have to use a prop—I know this doesn't have anything

this with screaming, yet—but like let's say I'm introducing a basketball hoop to him. Well, you better believe me; my bird didn't like that basketball hoop when I put it on the table next to him. Through clicker training, I would click and reward every time he just looked at it. And then every time he moved his head in that direction, then half a step towards it, and two steps, until it was okay. You could probably do the same thing, even if you picked up your phone, nobody was on it, and you clicked and reward every time he just didn't scream when you touched the phone. And you could probably clicker train that behavior out of your bird using those kinds...

Kim – Yes, we don't...I don't know if that has ever been a problem, of course, most of my business involves being on the phone, so I guess it's one of the things that all these birds are so used to me being on the phone, but a lot of people do have this problem. I think part of it is, the person is talking, and there's no other person in the room, and the person's animated and moving their hands, and it might just be confusing for the bird. If you can use your clicker method or whatever method to get them used to you being on this thing, or better yet, this could also be an option, stand in front of the bird's cage while you talk on the phone, and then the bird will think you're talking to it and it might shut up.

Chet – Right. With the talking to like a spouse in sight of the bird, for example, my girlfriend right now, if I go to give her like a hug, [Tiko], our blue and gold Macaw, will absolutely throw a fit. What I did is, I realized it was a thing where he doesn't like her and so I had to go back and I had her do some taming techniques that we've talked about on other calls, that we don't need to go into here, but as soon as I had her do these taming techniques with my bird, do some target training, do some, getting clicker training so she could get near his cage and things, he stopped throwing a fit every time I gave her a hug.

Kim – Because she became part of his flock so to speak. And again, screaming might be something that the bird is frightened or is trying to signal you, "Hey, there's a problem. I'm not comfortable," whatever. The more comfortable and adapted to the situation the bird is, the less likely he's going to throw a fit. So by getting your girlfriend to be on the "in" so to speak, that's probably what took care of the problem.

Chet – Right. And isn't it true that in the wild they will nip if they can't get the other person...

Kim – Yes, that's what I've heard, that they'll actually nip at...my response to that is that I personally have not done a lot of observation of birds in the wild; I've done a lot of observation of birds in captivity—multiple birds in a cage or whatever. What I've noticed is, any time a bird gets frightened or somehow stimulated in way or the—fear or whatever—sometimes they just lash out. It might not be a warning like, "Oh, hey, you need to fly away," it could be your parrot's on the shoulder, someone walks in...

Chet – And bite you.

Kim - ...parrot [UNCLEAR] and just bites you because happen to be right there, or squawks in your ear or whatever. I would need this to...I'd like to see more experimental situations to really see what is the motivation; is it really like, "Oooo, get out of here, run away," or is it, "Oh my god, I'm freaking out! What's the first thing I can grab?" But either way is the same result. You

have a bird on your shoulder, someone startles, walks in, you get bitten, and a good reason not to put all birds on the shoulder. If squawking is a problem and they squawk in your ear, that's not very helpful either.

Chet – Right. I have three questions here, and I'm going to answer one of them. One of them, the bird screams violently at vacuums, the color red, those sorts of things. I just want to say, probably, and maybe Kim has some other insight, too, but treat that like my basketball hoop scenario, where you can clicker train that bird to calm down a little bit when you introduce that object to your bird very slowly. What other thoughts do you have on that, really quick?

Kim – When the vacuum cleaner runs, all my parrots want to take a bath. If you want to put a...for some reason, vacuum cleaner equals time to take a shower. My birds have water bottles, and they'll all try to get in their water bottles and it's just really funny. My husband had his feet in a little vibrating footbath thing that was making kind of a noise; my African Grey was going through bath motions even though he was dry. There, I think, are just some appliances that make noise for some reason that excite the parrot. Now, it might not be actually fear. The owner would maybe have to observe the bird and see, is this actual fear. If that's the case, then yes, get the bird used to...like if I walk around with a broom or something, sometimes the birds don't like that, but it might be that you put a pan of water in the bottom of their cage and see what they do. They may actually be going, "Ahhhh," because it's interesting and fun. But any time you suspect a bird is afraid of something, a color or an object, this gradual exposure, like what you're suggesting, it's the preferred method.

Chet – Now, we're coming up here in just a couple of minutes before the hour mark, and then I'm going to open up the line, just so everybody knows, so we can ask some questions. The last two things here before I open up the line is, I had a person give me a question that said that one of their parrots is getting their other parrot, is basically training their other parrots to scream. What might you suggest in that type of situation? I think it was an African Grey that was I think new to the flock and started screaming and now all the others rise up.

Kim – That's typical and it's almost...those parrots are obviously just responding, they're probably not thrilled with the noise. My blue and gold Macaw tells my Cockatoo to shut up all the time. To try to nip the behavior in the bud with the parrots that are screaming, obviously, it's important to address why is the Grey screaming.

Chet – So go after to leader of the pack.

Kim – Try to, yes, and maybe work on that bird's problems, and then the other birds ought to follow suit. Just be real careful to not accidentally reinforce any of it, but find out what it is that's setting off the Grey, because it's normal for the other parrots to respond. Try to introduce speech training to maybe substitute, because I think it's more fun to hear [Bijou] yell, "Shut up." Obviously, he's not happy with the Cockatoo making the noise, but that's more pleasant than hearing him scream back at her. They need to address what's going on with the Grey, and then they can work on the other little guys.

Chet – And then my last question before I'm going to open up the line is, we have a lot of questions where this one specifically was a bunch of Cockatiel owners who when they would turn on the TV the bird would just go nuts. Any thoughts on that?

Kim – I would want to know, first of all, how close to the TV is the bird. Parrots should not be close to a television; they give off these frequencies that we don't sense, but it might be bothersome to the bird.

Chet – What is close?

Kim – I wouldn't put a parrot within four feet of a TV if possible. Further away would be better. It also could be that maybe they want to see the TV. They hear the noise...usually TV has interesting sounds and it could be that they feel that that's competition and they want to try to...loud TV/loud bird. Some birds react with boisterous activity by just being more boisterous. What they might consider doing is putting a little radio or something in the room, or in the area where the birds are, and play soft music while the people are trying to watch television. I don't know that that, again...

Chet – Is the case.

Kim – I would need to talk to the people and really find out what specifically is happening, but it's not uncommon for parrots to view the TV as something to compete with. If you turn the TV up louder, the parrots just yell louder. They may headphones for TV's by the way.

Chet – That's a thought. Okay, well, we're just over the hour mark and I'm going open up to call here, and I'll take some questions.