

Clipping . . . a Different Perspective

by Liz Andreoli
Garden Grove, California

Photos by Tom Andreoli, Garden Grove, California



Stoc is going through his second wing clipping training session since an addition to the family caused him to lose his manners. After the training, of course, he will regain and keep his flight feathers.

Would you break your two-year-old child's legs just to keep him from getting lost in a park, or falling into a swimming pool? Of course not. He needs to use those legs for total body health; to grow and learn about his world. Those legs pump vital oxygen to all parts of his body and without their use he could experience a multitude of health problems such as poor circulation, weakened muscles (including the heart), obesity, etc.

Yet we preach constantly about clipping the wings of our bird friends simply because it's easy. Yeah, it's easy. We don't have to use our heads to remember the bird is out. We don't have to keep the screens on the doors and windows, we don't have to hold the bird while someone else goes out the door. We can leave the sink full of water, we can cook while he is out, and on and on.

There are a million-and-one things to remember for our bird's safety. How come we manage to do it with our two-year-olds? We put locks on the household poison cupboards; we use barriers

to block the stairs and pool area; we hold onto our child in the park; and so forth.

I have a hard time understanding. We claim to love our birds and couldn't bear their loss. If that love is so strong why doesn't it put a paternal instinct in us?

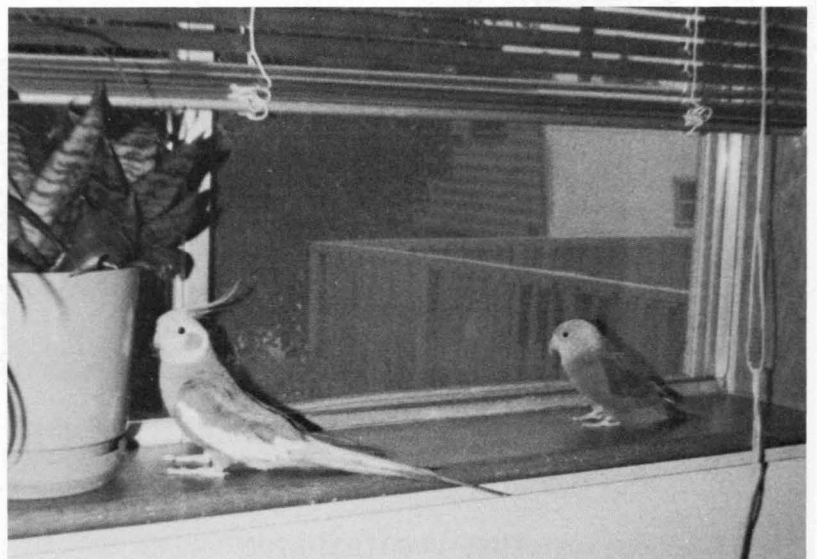
My first little pet bird brought an instinct in me so strong I thought I would go bananas. I had these horrible nightmares that my little friend some way or somehow escaped into the wild-blue yonder. I would wake up sweating, shaking, and sick to my stomach. I got so protective I hassled my poor husband with, "Don't leave the door open," "Remember to drain the sink," "Get that poison out of here," and mentioned every other way I might possibly lose my little darling. I decided to list these possibilities, paste the list on the refrigerator door, and go over and over them until they became second nature to me. I drilled my husband; found a good home for our beautiful cat; and guess what? It worked!

Today I only clip wings to tame and train my birds, usually until the first moult, but sometimes it takes a second clipping for a bird to learn his boundaries. I find that birds are very intelligent, and with a little patience and time we can work wonders with them.

While my pet birds are young and

their wings are clipped I teach them windows (and mirrors) number-one priority. Take the bird to the window sill, set him down, and talk to him: "This is the window" (tap on it), "You cannot get through it" (tap again). The bird usually tries to get out, but if this simple procedure is done a couple of times a week until his flight feathers regrow I find the task is accomplished. After he begins to experience his new-found mobility any startling noise may cause a crash into a window, but the lack of strength and coordination at this time will do no more than stun, and triumphantly store a learning experience. I must add that it is very important he get access to windows *while* he is gaining his strength, and not after his flight is perfected. Please be aware that a crash into a window at full speed can kill a bird. I was given a plumhead parakeet a while back that had suffered a concussion from such a crash. As a result she became so neurotic she decided to pluck herself clean (except for her head and a few odd feathers) until the day she died.

On the other hand, once windows and mirrors are mastered I have found that even if a window or glass door is left accidentally open the bird still thinks he will hit a barrier and avoids it. Please don't chance this purposely though. This is also a time of "great" testing for a young bird. Not only is he testing a new-found ability, but also what this extraordinary ability means in relationship to you. Many times I'm sure I've heard my little adolescent reason, "If you tell me 'no' (on this thing I want to do) can I get far and high enough away from you (if I do it anyway) so I



These pet birds were trained to know about windows while their wings were clipped. After training, however, and their flight feathers grow in they are allowed to fly freely about the house as birds.

don't have to face being confined for my disobedience? In some cases you will be tested over and over and over. Be patient and consistent on how you respond, that little fluff of feathers has large eyes that watch your subtle body language intently. If you move to a new home some birds have to be retaught where windows are rather than what they are. This could be due to the fact that they become disoriented and confused in unfamiliar surroundings.

Next teach him about the water left accidentally in the sink. Fill the sink with warm water about the height your bird would need, standing on his tiptoes, to keep his head out of the water. Float some of his favorite greens on top of the water, stand back and watch. Maybe your bird already has an instinct for this one. If he jumps in give him several seconds to realize he's gotten himself into big trouble. Take him out, and in a stern voice tell him it definitely wasn't a good idea to do that; wipe him and keep him warm until he dries. Repeat this one until he ignores those delicious greens floating around in the water.

In this article I can't go into all the ways we can teach our birds to protect themselves from danger. I would not, however, try any lessons to do with fire: it's too dangerous! Simply put him back in the safety of his cage when you are cooking. There are also other times when it becomes too dangerous for a bird to be loose. When we have a house full of company, for example, and we can't keep track of who has "Tweety," or when that outside door is going to swing open again. Loud noises, fast movement, and strangers make most birds a nervous wreck. The protection of their cage will keep their anxiety and yours to a minimum. For a bird that talks, just in case, it wouldn't hurt to teach him his address, phone number, or your full name.

We all learn by experience. By controlled experience we can do wonders with our cherished feathered friends without hindering and compromising the beauty of what attracted us to them in the first place: FLIGHT!

Maybe it's me. I have to deal with a physical handicap every day of my life. It's not something to be taken lightly, and I can't imagine purposely debilitating any creature indefinitely and without just cause.

I'm sure there are others like me out there. Let's hear your ideas on the subject. Do we want birds or do we want rodents? To clip or not; it's your choice. ●

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Race For The Space Needle

by Rona Parrot
Seattle, Washington

Birdhearts! Just when you thought this old hen had finally been plucked and fricassed, she's rocketed back into your life to bring you the real gossip — yes, the *real* gossip about the *real* Birdhearts and *expose*, darlings, *expose* the best kept secret in Aviculture: The AFA Seattle Con-

vention! Rona is relieved.

I'm sure all you Birdhearts were just delighted with that New Orleans gig, but really, darlings, the hot, steamy south in August is simply not kind to Rona's hair! I just *loved* the historical charm of that darling French Quarter, but let's face it wing-watchers, Rona *was* slightly put off by those cute little rats tripping over the roaches and palmetto bugs trying to cross Bourbon Street at midnight.

But never fear, darlings! We are headed to the sparkling Great Northwest and the Emerald City! The Westin Hotel has promised Rona *brehtaking* views — their words, Birdhearts — of snow-capped mountains, Puget Sound, lakes and the city of Seattle. No soggy heat this year, darlings, and a convention that will have Bird Talk Magazine taking notes once again from the people who made all those other magazines possible: The AFA Who's Who in Aviculture. Just who that will be, Rona's spys are digging into even as you read this. Rona's team had to become computer literate to break the code but, Yes! The Secret List of convention speakers will be published here first!

What a relief, Birdhearts, that the show season has finally come to an end! The Birdhearts out there have gone absolutely crazy this year with all those prissy little fluffs standing around in wooden boxes. For weeks, darlings, for weeks! They're all starting to look like Dutch Frills hanging onto the side with one foot and having a fit of heavy breathing! Can you imagine, darlings, over 2,100 birds showed at the Chicago Kaytee show alone! The judges were so weary that **Lindsay Clack** gave a blue ribbon to a hamster that he thought was a Norwich!

But bird shows are one place to meet the Stars of Birdom. And there are more luminaries this year than ever before. Yes, the luminaries of the bird world are still around, darlings. Moving in mysterious ways, they are still popping up all over the country. Did you see **Jim Coffman**, darlings, actually showing *baby* pictures this year? Really, Birdhearts, you ask him what time he has and he shows you those silly white ringneck parakeets! Rona is envious. And that cute little man, **Ray Johnson!** He judged more bird shows this year than Rona has birds! I was particularly impressed with his shuttle tech-

nique the weekend of the National when he managed to judge the National Show in St. Louis and the C.O.M. U.S.A. Show in Miami on the same day! Rona has it that he took lessons from **Al Decoteau** who somehow has managed to chair every meeting of every specialty society and every committee at every bird event in the United States this fall! The whole thing must have been organized by that **Toy Lewis** in Florida who makes things happen that would baffle a MacIntosh computer. Rona thinks that those cockatiel people should hire Toy for a week. They are *so* confused, Birdhearts! American? National? No wonder **Nancy Reed** turned into a finch person! It was either that or the slick new Finch Society T-shirts or the fact that **Bill Parlee** is writing the first literate specialty society magazine in the country.

But then, maybe Rona is confused. After all, love bird king-pin **Lee Horton** came out of hiding and discussed the hand rearing of umbrella cockatoos while judging agapornis in Chicago; **Dick Menche** installed a revolving door on his island off Ft. Meyers — rock pebbles out, asian parakeets in; **Bill Wilson** traded those "no-challenge" blue and golds for red faced love birds; **Dick Baer** never leaves Columbus anymore since he cut down on love birds and spends his life feeding double yellow heads; **Jerry Jennings** seems to have forgotten what a grassfinch looks like but can tell you more than you want to know about Ramphastos tucanus; **Dallas Johnson** put the zebras on the back burner while he beats the bushes for rare parrotlets in Peru; and **Cliff Witt** finally came out of hiding to judge a few bird shows but even Rona can't find out what birds are messing up his house these days. Rona wishes that sweet **Bill Maynard** all the best in his new job in St. Augustine and wants to alert all you Birdhearts in New York State that **Tom Ireland** will be close-banding more birds than ever this year back in Lake Worth.

All these *changes*, darlings! It must be something in the air. Rona is going to Seattle to take a deep breath from on top of that famous Space Needle. In the meantime, keep those cards and letters coming in and just remember, Birdhearts, what's a gossip column without a little gossip? Watch this space. ●

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