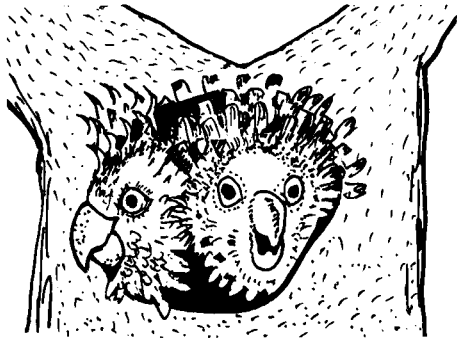


The Natural Choice



by Eb Cravens
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Ten Most Common Pet Bird Accidents

(and how we may avoid them)

In this age of birds as popular pets a commonly asked question is "How long does this particular species live?" "Perhaps years," we will answer, "if you provide him with proper nutrition, exercise and watch out for deadly accident possibilities in his life."

Truly, domestic pet birds live in a world fraught with danger. The more imprinted and trusting the babies we raise, the less "wild savvy" they retain to warn and protect them from life threatening situations. Here then are our 10 most frequent accidents based upon nine years experience and thousands of pet bird encounters.

1. Dogs, Cats and Predators

Outside and inside the house dogs can be instant bird killers. A neighbor's dog came into the yard. The porch screen door was ajar, and the baby Sun Conure was exploring on the floor. Oops! A free-flying Lesser Sulphur Crested Cockatoo swooped low over a neighbor's fence for the hundredth time and was plucked from the air by a new German Shepherd. Oops! Dogs are quick biters and therefore more dangerous than cats which may quickly harm small fluttering

pets, but will engage in longer pitched battles with a squawking, clawing, biting parrot that rolls onto its back for self defense. Beware of any dog nearby when you have your parrot on the shoulder. Remember that parrots living in a home with a trained, friendly dog are less able to distinguish dangerous dogs. "Bad doggie" (ggrowlll) is one of the first words I teach my baby psittacines. Often smaller nervous dogs such as dach-

sunds or cocker spaniels are more dangerous than the larger labradors, shepherds or dobermanns. Malamutes and canines with inbred wildness are difficult to train around birds. These are only guidelines, of course, not fast rules. Puppies and kittens brought up around birds are quite trainable.

One of the most common results of a bird/cat confrontation is a claw or tooth wound inflicted upon the avian pet. Cats are known for these painful,



Sunshine Bird Supplies For Healthy Pets, Try Us Today.

NEDERLANDS VITA SEED™

- Premium Seed Diets
- Complete with Vitamins, Minerals and Amino Acids
- Fruits, Veggies, Pellets and Biscuits included
- Excellent results
- Birds eat 100% - No waste

All our Bird Foods are manufactured fresh the same day your order is received. Our special mixers and cleaners gently remove all foreign dust and material.



HEALTHY TREATS SONG FOOD VITA™

11 Exciting Conditioning Seeds; Niger, Sesame, Flax, Poppy, Anise, Lettuce Seed, Hemp, Panicum, Caraway, Canary Seed and Oats.



REAL FRUIT & VEGGIE MIXES (Small or Large)

The best on the market
We add no fillers.

PROTEEN 25™

High Protein Conditioning and Nestling Food.

PROTEEN 25™ COLOR

For Red Factor Birds.

FOR MITE & LICE CONTROL BIOLOGICAL BIRD CAGE SPRAY™

Only natural pyrethrins used.



SCENIC EXTRUDED BIRD FOOD

Crunchy morsels, nutritionally complete.

3 Flavors: CORN - RED APPLE - CHEESE

3 Sizes: JUNGLE™ Large
PARADISE™ Med.
TROPICAL™ BITS Small

We can ship from 2# to 1000# -Just call us

SAVE-IT™

DON'T BE CAUGHT WITHOUT IT!!!

- Contains Vitamins & Antibiotics
- Promotes Breeding
- Prevents Nest Mortality & Stress
- Excellent to treat infectious diseases
- Two year shelf life (foil pack)
- Box of 10 x 10 grams envelopes \$9.50

GOURMET SAFFLOWER DIETS SAFFLOWER GOLD™

Seeds, Grains, Pellets, Biscuits, Nuts, Fruits and Veggies

AUSTRALIAN™

Seeds, Grains, Pellets and Amino Acids

FOR DIGESTION MINER-A-GRIT

With Calcium, Phosphorus and Trace Elements.

COLOR CARE (to get show results) BETA-THIN RED™ NACHO RED™



**NATURAL PRO-COLOR
RED** Color enhancer with Carofill and Carotene

PRO-GROW™ Pelletized Diet

15% Small & Large
19% Small & Large
Feed as a total diet or mix with regular seed

IMPORTED OC VITAMINS & MEDICATIONS

(Pure and Concentrated)

- ALASERINE - 3 Antibiotics in pelletized form
- MYCOLICINE - Broad Spectrum Antibiotic
- OCEDIAR - Diarrhea corrective
- OCEFITOL - Vitamins D, E, B3, B5, B12 and vegetable oil

And others to choose from for all your bird health needs



Sunshine Bird Supplies

Call or fax for free catalogue
Phone: (305) 593-2666
Fax: (305) 591-9567
ASK YOUR NEAREST PET SHOP
FOR OUR PRODUCTS

festering scratches. Even a medium sized parrot may become sick overnight from such a wound; proper veterinarian attention immediately can save your bird's life. Remember, such scratches may not be visible at first glance. Get medical aid.

Other predators include raptors (African Grays plucked from the patio perch!), racoons (opened the pet's cage and entered!), mongoose, owls, feral cats and snakes (entered the nursery and attacked a baby conure in the feeding tub!).

If you have a parrot who spends time outside in the yard, he will be safer and more secure on a secluded perch or tree with natural foliage to hide in. Parrots are very insecure with full open sky above them — even inside a cage. Pick a leafy bough and place it on top of the cage for camouflage or hang the cage in a tree. Remember, placing birds in an outdoor setting is marvelous for their health and well being *only* if you watch them closely or train them to watch themselves. Our rule of thumb is one year of training and experience before any unsupervised "tree time." Still it is risky! This is advanced bird-keeping...

2. Flying Away — Lost

There are two types of lost bird situations: birds kept in doors who escape and disappear; and birds taken outdoors who "bolt" or wander off and disappear. As often as we receive calls about this; it seems neither mishap is 100 percent preventable in today's aviculture. Our choice, therefore, is to prepare our pets as much as possible for this eventuality. We teach them correct landing and flying skills before their first wing clip. It is amazing how many times an avian pet will fly off in a beeline away from home simply because that is the only flight he knows. He has no skill to hover or fly slowly, no skill to turn sharply; no practice to keep from gaining altitude; no braking skills; no landing skills. Keeping a parrot without these teachings when he is young and in the house is an invitation to lose him if he ever escapes.

Our second lesson is to place the pet's cage outside at an early age so he can familiarize himself with our home environment — sights like the panorama and horizon, sounds, lighting, colors, wind patterns, etc. Such

sensory input awakens the "wild bird" instinct in a young pet. We immediately notice an increased attentiveness, observation and caution in our fledglings — an awareness of greenery, clouds, insects, wild birds, traffic noise which is indispensable to their total well being. Many times a pet with cage experience in the back yard will escape the house only to be found in a familiar spot in the yard. One of our five-month old Cape Parrot babies picked the lock on its cage one day and disappeared. We found it calmly sitting in the back yard on "his" picnic table. Remember that pets who see environments from only one viewpoint will not necessarily recognize a familiar tree, cage or clothesline from another angle. Place your Cockatiel cage in six or eight spots around the yard to give her a full spectrum of "knowing" the area.

3. Stepping On Bird, Slamming Door

A vast number of our pet birds are raised feeling safe roaming about the floor of their home. Folks who have this kind of situation in their home had better learn to tread lightly! Too many times will a pet psittacine creep up behind a set of human heels seeking attention or treats. One wrong step is all it takes. Guests in the home are even more dangerous. We cage our parrots when there is a gathering of friends in their accustomed floor space. It also helps to have an oriental "shoes off in the house" policy; unshod feet are more sensitive and less dangerous to feathered pedestrians. Slowmoving, clumsy and severely clipped birds are vulnerable because they cannot move as quickly to avoid a heavy footfall.

Hand in hand with parrots allowed to roam the house is the danger of having a door closed on them. Automatic and spring doors, bathroom doors, automobile doors all may be abruptly shut on an unsuspecting bird. We've even known flying pets who became shut in a door when their owner was leaving a room and the bird took off to follow. Our parrots habitually love to perch on tops of doors in favorite rooms; so we must be aware of both floor level and ceiling level hazards.

4. Entanglement

With the new generation of "rope

toys" growing in popularity, the need for caution here is stronger than ever. Parrots love to chew, fray and burrow in ropes, twine, old socks, fabric and fibers. I truly support the makers of fine rope chewing toys for the health and preening habits they encourage in domestic pet birds. It is up to the pet owner, however, to be aware that aged and severely frayed rope and cloth playthings are serious threats to our pet birds. Monitor carefully, trimming overlong or tangled thread pockets on your bird's playthings. It only takes one sharp toenail becoming entangled in a binding thread to start a twisting motion which can entrap your bird's leg, neck and torso in the fabric. Wash with fabric softener when necessary; comb and clip. Our parrots normally sleep in cardboard nestboxes with cloth liners. We use pillow cases, t-shirts and linen liners to avoid nasty frays — especially amongst the chewing species such as conures, quakers, poicephalus, etc. Remember any thread nesting material for canaries, finches, lovebirds and the like must be short lengths to avoid endangering these nestbuilders.

5. Rolling Onto Pet During Sleep

It takes a truly light sleeper to share a bed with a pet bird. It is absolutely essential that a bird be protected against crawling in closely near their owner and being suffocated. I have slept with certain baby or ill psittacines over the years, but I am a light sleeper with one ear open for rats or predators in the aviary. These pets are always kept in a sleeping box up above my pillow or on a night table with a large bath towel over the box to prevent their escape. There is just as much joy having your pet bird nearby your bed in a cage when you wake up, without the very real danger of a sorrowful mishap. Even persons who snuggle with their pets for an afternoon siesta must be aware that a drowsy owner lying with an avian companion presents a threat to the bird.

6. Drowning

Another accident common to the smaller pet birds is drowning. Any standing water in a home from the bathroom toilet to the bird's own water bowl may present danger. Dishwater left in the kitchen sink is an attraction which offers serious conse-

quences for a parakeet, cockatiel, lovebird, pocket parrot or similar small pet. Remember any steep-sided vessel with water deeper than the bird's legs may signify a drowning situation. Soaking wet birds are heavy, helpless and prone to exhaustion and catching cold. Many cases report larger psittacines flapping into an ocean, river or swimming pool only to be saved by a fortunate owner. Feathers and water don't mix well!

7. Toxic Chewing — Electrocution

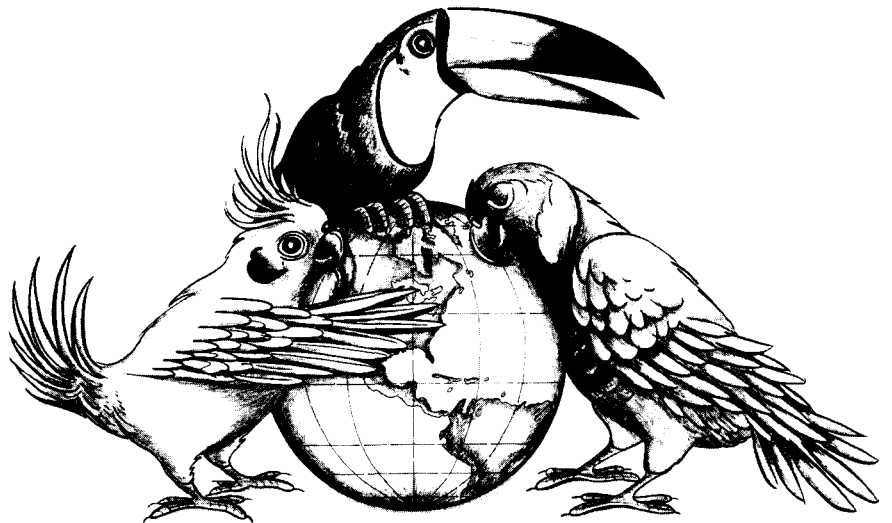
Gnawing hookbills in an unsupervised home are in constant danger from toxic lead, zinc, styrofoam, paint, poisons, plants and electric wires. The easiest way to keep a bird from chewing on household objects is to provide it with a wide variety of interesting natural materials. No painted door threshold offers the variety of chewing that a fresh apple bough can. Be aware of the textures your pet prefers. If she loves shoelaces, don't try to force her to chew on 2 x 4's. We grow potted plants such as geraniums and spider plants so that our birds have safe chewing materials. Avoid fertilizers, unsafe potting soil mixes and plant sprays. Watch out for sudden appearance of gnawing in a normally benign bird during the breeding season. If a pet insists on going to a certain spot to chew woodwork, consider building it a safe, chewable perch at that spot to satisfy its needs. In our experience there is almost no teaching hookbills not to chew on electric cords if they are so inclined. The best remedy is to encase or eliminate open wires, childproof outlets, and keep birds away from rooms where they insist on such behavior. Once again, seek diversions of natural materials. Larger intelligent parrots such as cockatoos are too easily bored to accept the same chewing materials week in, week out. It takes imagination and thought to "outsmart" these pets and keep them from being destructive or in danger.

8. Flying Into Glass Windows

It is quite common for pet birds flying inside to crash into clear glass windows and doors with startling force causing temporary unconsciousness, injury, or death. There are various ways to avoid such an accident with your pet birds. The most obvious are

to keep your birds permanently caged or with clipped wings. Another way to guard against glass mishaps is to train your birds about clear panes when they are young. All our fledglings spend time playing in the window bays of the bird room — we will push their beak and face against the glass to show them what this clear barrier is all about. Most of our windows are kept dirty to increase the likelihood of a flying parrot noticing the glass in advance. Stickers or paste ups can do the same for indoor flyers (and for wild

birds outdoors who often crash into exterior panes!) Perches, plants, hung beads and other landing paraphernalia will increase the safety of your windows more than a bare window sill. In some cases wire mesh or window screens can serve as visible protection for birds who have trouble learning about clear glass. In our experience, small cage birds are more difficult to train about this danger than cautious fledglings such as the larger parrots from Australia, Africa and the Amazon.



THE NATURAL CHOICE

Bed-o'cobs® Corncob Litter

You'll love Bed-o'cobs Litter because it's all natural. It's compostable, too, because it's totally biodegradable! We make Bed-o'cobs Litter from corncobs — an annually renewable resource grown by North American farmers. And it contains no additives.

Birds love Bed-o'cobs because it keeps them walking on a dry surface. Liquids drain through the top layer of litter to be absorbed from the bottom up. Bed-o'cobs' texture feels completely natural to birds, because that's exactly what it is! And it's also the perfect bedding and litter for your small animals and reptiles.

Look for Bed-o'cobs at your favorite pet supply store. Choose between the standard 1/4-inch particle size or the finer-texture 1/8-inch size. You can't miss the brightly colored lorikeet on the package.

And for larger birds, try The Andersons Corn-on-the-Cob™ Pet Treats- a 100% natural snack that doubles as a play toy!




Remember The Andersons for your natural choice in pet products.

The Andersons

P.O. Box 119
Maumee, OH 43537
©Bed-o'cobs is a registered trademark of The Andersons
©1993 The Andersons


BIRDSEED



KESTER'S INC.

P.O. Box 516-WB, Omro, WI 54963

CLEAN QUALITY MIXES
&
CUSTOM MIXES
Available per hundred lbs.

 Cockatiel \$33.00
Lovebird \$29.00
Deluxe Parakeet . . \$29.00
Deluxe Parrot . . . \$36.00

also mixes for Canary and Finch
above prices do not include shipping and handling
Send for our complete list. Many other seed items available and smaller quantities.

Breeder Inquiries Invited



Can ship U.P.S.

(414) 685-2929
(800) 558-8815
outside Wisconsin

Magnolia Bird Farm



We Buy Birds
•
We Sell Birds

Complete Bird Supplies

8990 Cerritos Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92804
(714) 527-3387
(closed for vacation, first 2 weeks of July)

12200 Magnolia Ave.
Riverside, CA 92503
(909) 278-0878
(closed for vacation, first 2 weeks of August)

OPEN 9 TO 5 DAILY
Closed Sun., Mon. & holidays

9. Bird Killing Bird

Keepers of more than one avian pet relate dozens of tragic encounters between two or more birds. Whenever we decide our pets are compatible enough to coexist without supervision, we assume responsibility for those birds. Perhaps the most common mishap results when owners go out to purchase a companion for a lonesome cockatiel, budgie, finch, etc. The new bird is brought home, plopped into the "lonely" bird's cage and left. Protective of his cage space, the first bird keeps the newcomer away from the food dish resulting in rapid starvation. Pet shops across the U.S. could prevent thousands of useless deaths each year by advising customers to place an extra food and water dish on the bottom of the cage when introducing two prospective avian buddies — at least until the two are observed eating from the same feeder.

The greater the size difference between birds sharing space, the greater the chance of the smaller bird being injured. This is especially true during summer breeding season. Easily excitable parrots such as lorries, large Amazons and cockatoos must be carefully watched if let free amongst other hookbills. Large cockatoos especially may exhibit near carnivorous tendencies when housed near fluttering budgies, canaries or "crying" baby parrots. Lorries, conures and caiques kept in twos or more may show "pack" behavior towards single hookbills of other species. Of course, any crippled or ill bird in a bird room can turn to immediate prey when left unprotected from other "normal" birds. We've seen Alexandrine Parakeets attacked by Amazons, Amazons attacked by Meyer's, plumheads attacked by quakers and nearly anything attacked by lorries. Beware when mixing parrots of dramatically different color or sound. Take special precautions when keeping any avian species in threes, fives, etc. You may not notice the ever-present pecking order until it's too late! Any novice pet owner contemplating buying another bird should consult experienced sources before purchase. Inter-genus behavior is a new and complicated branch of domestic aviculture. The happiest multi-avian homes are kept by owners who did their homework and spent their hobby money wisely

on compatible pets.

10. Your Birds in Someone Else's Care

This category of pet bird accident in effect includes all the others we have discussed. We have found few persons love and care for a feathered friend like the real owner, hence the danger of mishap increases when your pet is left at home or boarded while you are away. Add to the above list of accidents, starvation, inadvertent stress or abuse and you have quite a list of dangers during "birdsitting." Pick and choose carefully the boarding facility or housesitter who looks after your pet. Inquire about their familiarity with bird illness signals, their ability to handle large parrots, and their veterinarian choices (especially on days when vet offices may be closed!) Think not about the cost, but about the care. Leave concise written instructions and back up phone numbers if there are questions. Parrots which "go crazy" cooped up in their cage must be let out; those which cause trouble when freed must be kept locked up if possible. Trust your instincts. If you feel in doubt, consider taking the pet along with you. Savvy adult pet birds adapt well when away with their owners if they have been raised with such experience. Sometimes a pet bird is safer with his owner in a strange place than with a strange person in his own home. It is our hope that in the future local bird clubs will establish clean, safe cooperative boarding programs for their members' birds when owners are out of town or otherwise occupied.

So, it can be seen that domesticated pet birds indeed live a life laced with peril. In order for them to last their full life expectancy it takes good fortune and owners who foresee the dangers in their everyday environments.

In fact, this sharper awareness of hazards which is awakened in us when we keep birds as pets, is perhaps the greatest lesson our winged friends have to teach. The longer we share our homes with them, the more "birdlike" we become — quick to notice change, adept at sensing danger, instantaneous in our warnings and decisive in our reactions. Maybe these same skills we unlearned so long ago are precisely the ones we are re-acquiring through association with our beloved pets. ●