

me, they are the ideal bird and companion. As I look at their incredible beauty and feel their presence, I am put in touch with how I felt as a teenager in love for the first time—awe

struck, dazzled, weak in the knees, and filled with admiration. I am truly blessed to have Eclectus Parrots and privileged to be trusted to care for these awesome creatures. ➤



Eclectus make wonderful pets and can become very trusting and playful.

Life With Beamer

by Darlene M. Vigil, Santa Fe, NM

Life with “Beamer” has been quite an adventure, to say the least. Beamer is my male Red-sided Eclectus Parrot who has been my friend and constant companion for the last 12 years.

Beamer came into my life in 1984 as a three week old baby. I remember the first time I saw him and thought I had been sent the wrong bird—this little ugly duckling with gray fluff and a mean bite. Every time I went in to look at him, he would be startled and strike out like a cobra. It didn’t matter how gentle my approach was. Feeding became difficult also. I learned early on that these are not the easiest parrots to handfeed. I called the breeder and tried to get some handfeeding tips over the phone but without much success. I was told that Eclectus didn’t have much of a feeding response like most parrots had, but to be patient and do

my best. Well, it took about two weeks before my best finally emerged and I actually got the hang of it. I have been successfully handfeeding Eclectus Parrots ever since.

It took almost as long to name my newly feathered friend. I had recently purchased a lime-green 1972 BMW 2002 which I was enjoying immensely, and when my baby bird started showing his beautiful new green feathers, I couldn’t help but name him after my new automobile. And so Beamer it was. It fit quite well.

Beamer became my constant companion. He had full run of the house, though we watched carefully if he was on the floor. His daily routine began by coming to the bed to snuggle with me, then it was off to the shower. He would become quite irritated if I accidentally forgot to bring him into the

shower, and would remind me by walking down the hallway and tapping on the bathroom door. He also has incredible “bladder control.” Sometimes he would sleep with me all night and hold his feces until morning when I set him on his perch beside my bed.

Riding in the car and going grocery shopping tends to bring out his large vocabulary. “Hi Beamerrrrr,” “Oouchie,” “red or green?” (referring to chile peppers), “Merry Christmas,” and “I can talk, can you fly?” are some of his favorites. He loves attention from strangers and seldom hesitates to go to anyone who offers an arm or finger, unless he prefers not to and then he gently pushes the finger away. If, by chance, Beamer prefers not to get up on one’s hand, he will patiently push the hand away with his beak, again and again, until he gets his point across. He does not bite.

In 1985, I opened Feathered Friends of Santa Fe, an exotic bird shop in Santa Fe, New Mexico devoted to only handfed psittacines and small cage birds. Beamer went to work with me almost every day. He got constant attention from customers and became quite a celebrity. Tourists visiting Santa Fe often come in just to renew their acquaintance with him. Beamer has also been in a few movies and has accompanied me many a time to a grade school, or a rest home for the elderly to give a short educational talk on pet birds and bird keeping. Beamer never fails to talk—much to the delight of young and old.

Because he commuted to work with me every day, Beamer saw me handfeed many species of baby parrots every day. To this day, his favorite activity is to play nanny and to try to regurgitate to the babies he’s near. The shop became his home away from home.

Beamer especially loves outdoor activities, camping, hiking, etc. I once took him to visit a friend who lives across the Rio Grande and as we were crossing via the cable chair that leisurely takes one across the river, Beamer decided to go for a swim. He flew down into the flowing river. As I sat there totally horrified and unable to move, my friend, Anna, had already jumped



Beamer, a male Red-sided Eclectus is a remarkable companion and entertainer. He has full run of his owner's house and goes everywhere with her in the car.

in after him. All I could see was my green-feathered friend floating down river with his head high above the water. Luckily, my friend was faster than the flow of the river and successfully rescued him. I couldn't believe what I'd just witnessed. Due to his floating with his head and wings above the water, only the feathers on his underside were wet. It could have been disastrous had Beamer not gone with the flow. Ha ha!!

At night, Beamer eats dinner with me and likes just about everything I eat—fruits, vegetables, grains, fish, chicken, pasta, pizza, rice, beans, etc. He gets about 80% people food and the rest seeds, soaked grains and pellets. He prefers to eat at the kitchen table but is, of course, banished to his cage when I have guests. Beamer considers anyone's plate fair game.

When Beamer was two years old, I decided to purchase a mature female Red-sided Eclectus for later breeding. They absolutely did not get along. They were together

about 11 months. Twice we had to suture bite wounds on his chest from her constant abuse. Needless to say, the relationship ended in divorce. I then realized that one cannot always put two intelligent birds together (male and female) and expect them to get along, much less breed. We found her a good home and Beamer went back to being my pet. I honestly think he was happiest so.

Now let's talk about Beamer's libido, when he reach sexual maturity at about age five. Wow! Socks came next. He began to find sexual satisfaction on pillows, socks, clothing on the floor or anything else that had a nice, soft cushion effect to it. If you dared go near him at this particular moment, you would get a very defensive growl. He was constantly trying to find something he could "dally" on. This behavior continued for a few years.

After taking Beamer to the shop with me for nine years, I decided to once again purchase a Red-sided female. At this time Beamer was

constantly copulating with almost everything in sight. Well, not *everything*, but almost. This time I did a lot of research, talked to breeders and avian experts, and decided to get a baby female even though Beamer was now almost 10 years old. When Dutchess, the four-week-old hen arrived, Beamer was fascinated and watched every feeding. He even tried to feed her himself.

But for the birds to develop their friendship, however, was not so simple. They were allowed in and on the top of the same cage from the time she weaned. I also took them both to the bird shop on a daily basis. After her baby trust in him turned to maturity at the age of one year, Dutchess would sometimes peck at Beamer and bully him in dominating ways, although the abuse never became physical. She ruled the food dish. I truly contemplated (once again) separating the two and finding Dutchess a new home. But a former employee, now a breeder, parrot behavioralist, and friend, advised me to give the birds time and space. Needless to say, the female was just exercising her normal dominant characteristics.

Our beautiful new addition, Dutchess, is now three and a half years old. She is beautiful and they are inseparable. On the first of January this year, we built them a nest box and placed it in their favorite corner in our den. He constantly feeds her and she is climbing in the box and shredding the pieces of pine we put inside. We now plan to relocate their box to their permanent cage in the greenhouse and hope for the best. It may not be simple because Beamer, like a lot of human-imprinted male psittacine pets, has a lot to learn. He is still "dallying" with socks and pillows. We hope he will soon outgrow this habit. I am in no hurry to have them breed, however, and know that this is all part of their bonding process.

So, as you can see, "life with Beamer" has turned into life with Dutchess, Beamer and me. I can simply say that I shall always value and cherish my feathered friend where ever life's adventures take us.

As a long-term pet parrot, I can offer no better bird than a Red-sided Eclectus. 🐦

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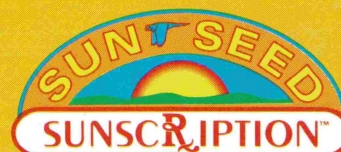
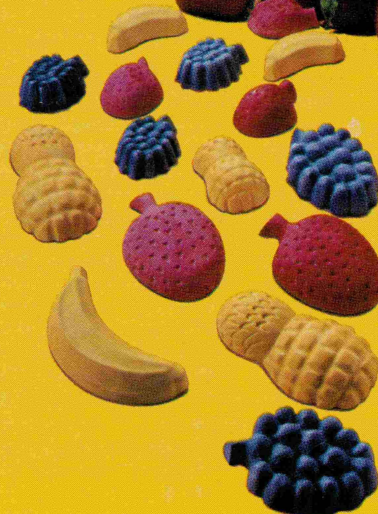
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