

Life With Sheba

by Kathy Corcoran, Pasadena, CA

I own a three-year-old Eclectus hen named Sheba. I bought her in March, 1995. I was in my vet's office to buy some calcium for my egg-laying Peach-faced Lovebird and Sheba was in the clinic waiting room. I knew I had to have her because for several years I had been in love with Eclectus parrots and wanted one eventually.

Sheba had come from the vet's aviary. Prior to that she was in an aviary in Orange County, California where she was raised with Amazons. I have three other birds: a feisty 10 year old aforementioned green Peach-faced Lovebird named Peaches; a loud, boisterous three-year-old Sun Conure male named Sonny and a year-old Blue Mountain Lory named Blue who I finished hand feeding. Boy, what a job that was! He didn't want his hand feeding formula, he wanted real food.

Sheba is amazing with all her vocalizations. The vet's assistant used to take her home on weekends where she would keep his Amazons "at attention." He would also "fly" her around the clinic waiting room. She had bonded to him when I got her and had learned from him to say "HmMMM" and also to quack like a duck.

I am an accountant by trade and also a professional singer who sings opera and Deutsche lieder. When I practice opera, Sheba tries to sing those high notes (I am a Mezzo) and also lieder. It's very funny. One night I hit a high "B" on the piano and she matched it. She says about 14 words including "hm" or "huh" and when I don't respond she says "haa" loudly and sometimes from the low end of the vocal range to the high end of the



Photo courtesy Kathy Corcoran

Kathy Corcoran with her beloved Sheba the Eclectus.

range.

She also repeats vowel sounds like "e" or "a," "hey," "how," "hi," "mama" and "mommy" which she learned from my cleaning lady and says frequently.

Sometimes it is hard for me to understand what she is saying. Also, she laughs like a crazy woman. She loves the tapes from NatureQuest™ of loons, wolves, coyotes, songbirds, frogs, cats, dolphins and orcas and tries to imitate them all. She imitates whip-poor-wills, ducks, crows, meadowlarks and wild birds such as mockers, starlings, finches, doves and Cockatiel whistles. She also does the wolf whistle and other assorted whistles and composes little ditties.

NatureQuest™ has tapes of classical music, jazz, blues and country music as well as contemporary music and Sheba loves them all.

Sheba growls like a cat and when Sonny starts screaming, she either screams or growls at him. She does a rather irritating "rain forest" yell and tries to imitate Sonny's scream or screams when she hears the nature tapes. I try to stop her by reasoning with her or giving her dirty looks.

My birdroom faces the garden and Sheba likes to watch what's going on and screeches at times. She's also very chatty and sometimes starts her repertoire early in the morning.

I work at home and Sheba likes to watch me work on the computer and play with the objects on my desk until I take them away from her. Also, when I am on the phone, I have to close the door of my office because Sheba will start chattering or screeching.

She loves men not women. She's in love with my neighbor and loves to play with his glasses and hat and has to be pried off of him when he comes over. She flutters her wings and when he blows on her she's in ecstasy. When he comes into the birdroom her eyes dilate. He taught her the "charge" theme. She also loves the men who work for my contractor. They make up to her and whistle at her and she goes on their fingers and loves to be petted.

Sheba also loves the husband of my friend who takes care of my birds when I am away. Last time he took care of her, he would give her her "rub-down" everyday and they would watch TV together.

She's pretty good when clients or friends come over but women she doesn't bother with much. Once she gets used to the person, she'll allow a little bit of petting or will get on their finger, especially if the person is a male.

Some so-called "experts" say that Eclectus Parrots are aloof and do not make good pets. Well, Sheba may not

always want to be petted (unless by a man) and she usually growls when she doesn't like something or if I've given her enough petting, but she's very affectionate. She likes to sit on top of the sofa and watch TV with me and will climb down to my shoulder and snuggle then go back up to the top of the sofa. Obviously, she'd rather be petted by a human male. I Don't know if she'd like a male Eclectus.

She likes to be "flown" around the house and will hang from my finger and lay in the palm of my hand. She likes to be petted on the head and nape and makes cooing noises. She likes to kiss men gently, but she usually likes to bite the lips of women (not too hard though).

Sheba loves to eat! Fish, other seafood and chicken are her favorites—she eats the whole chicken bone. If there were a chicken-eating contest, she would win hands down. She also loves, strawberries, kiwis, corn on the cob, yams, toast, cereal, corn-bread and all kinds of bread, grapes, oranges, melons, Crazy Corn™, Soak N' Cook, pasta, apples and whatever I am eating.

There has been no problem getting her to eat pellets. I feed her my vet's pellets. One person wrote in a bird magazine that her Eclectus was part pig; that describes Sheba exactly.

It's hard to get Sheba's vegetable/fruit bowl away from her especially when her dinner is ready. I usually have to "sweet-talk" her into giving it up and tell her I'm going to replenish it—or I just wrestle it away from her and let her growl.

Sheba is in a Cal-Cage with a play area on top. She likes to be outside the cage most of the time. She hates to go inside when I am out of the house. A couple of times she nearly strangled herself trying to get out of one of the side doors of her cage so I now leave her out all the time.

She's always getting into things. She loves to climb to the top of the blinds in my birdroom and to hangout on the windowsill as well as under the grate of the cage. I keep telling her to stay away from those places. Of course, she always growls at me when I put her back on her playgym. Also, she likes to get on the piano, piano keys or

on the cushion on the piano bench because it is next to her cage. She's very musically inclined! I worry when she starts chewing the wood of the piano so I put her back on the top of her cage. She also likes to prowl around the house and hide under the dining room and living room tables.

Sheba likes to "visit" with the other birds especially when I am cleaning Sonny's cage. He doesn't want her on his cage and she tries to bite him. Also she likes to visit with Peaches and sometimes Peaches tries to bite her. I have to watch her around Blue. Several times she got on top of his cage or near the side of his cage but never hurt him. She's very inquisitive. When I go out I make sure she can't get to his cage. All the birds get along pretty well together.

Sheba's a good influence on Blue. He tries to imitate her whistles of other birds but, so far, he's only gotten the Cockatiel whistle down. Sheba answers his vocalizations.

It's funny watching Sheba at bath-time. I spray her with a spray bottle


and she likes to be sprayed all over and she will spread out her wings so that I can spray under them. She smells like a wet rug after her bath.

I believe that if African Greys are the Cadillacs of parrots, then the Eclectus is most certainly the Rolls Royce.

In December, 1996 a new newsletter called Eclectus Forum was begun. This newsletter is being published by Constance (Connie) Bacon who has been a great supporter of and author on Eclectus.

The purpose of the Eclectus Forum is to provide a forum for the exchange of opinions regarding Eclectus Parrots. This can include all topics but will focus on care, diet and housing. Articles such as "Signs of Sickness" or articles containing information about potential toxins found in the Eclectus Forum may also pertain to other species of parrots so all psittacine aviculturists can benefit from this newsletter. Good breeder and behavioral information on the Eclectus will also be included.

The subscription to Eclectus Forum is \$15. Checks should be made out to Eclectus Forum and mailed to 1516 Clinton St., Marshalltown, Iowa 50158. Articles and short subject submissions may also be sent to the same address. ➔



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