



by Kathy Butterfield

Training Your Mynah Bird to Talk

One of the questions I hear most is "How can I teach my mynah bird to talk?" That is my reason for writing this article. I cannot promise that your bird will talk, I can only offer suggestions. The following information is based solely on experiences I have had with my own mynah birds.

Some mynahs develop a larger vocabulary than others. I believe it all depends on the character of the bird, the living environment, and the care and attention the bird is given.

Talking to your bird with expression in your voice can make a big difference. Saying the words and phrases with expression and fun tones will get the birds attention. I have said to my bird, Howard, "Whatcha doing?" in a higher tone — the same tone you would use to call a kitten or puppy to come to you, for example. After I said this to him a few times for a couple of days, Howard began repeating it in the same tone. It is funny. Now he says it in a normal tone and sometimes in the tone I taught him.

When my husband heard him the first time in that funny tone of voice, he asked me "What are you doing to my bird?" Howard and Holly (our mynahs) both will talk like a cartoon character and also in a normal voice. People ask me who they sound like. Sometimes me — other times, who knows, Tweety Bird? Well OK, I'll admit it, a couple times a week I turn the television on to morning cartoons or the children's educational shows such as Sesame Street, etc. There are a lot of repetitive words and sounds on

those shows. And different tone levels too. Has this helped my birds? I can't prove it, but it seems so.

We also have a tutoring device that repeats my own voice, which I play a couple of times a week, except when I forget to turn it on. I set it to play for five minutes every half hour. This continues for eight hours while we are at work. I occasionally change the message that I want it to say. Sometimes I put on words and phrases that they already know just for a review. It's good for them to listen and it breaks up the monotony of having silence the whole day when the birds are alone. It keeps them company at the very least.

Don't expect a recording device to do all the work for you in training your bird to talk. It rarely works that way if that is all the training your bird gets.

If your bird will stay perched on your hand outside of the cage, this is a good time for a private lesson. But whether your bird is inside or outside of his cage during a lesson — talk to your bird, repeat the word or phrase you want him to learn. He needs time between your repetitions to think about what he is hearing and to have a chance to repeat if he chooses. Continue the lesson for about 15 to 20 minutes. Do this a couple of times a day. Early morning and early evening are good times. I don't feel it is good to whistle to your bird. I think it encourages them to whistle instead of talk.

The personal bond you create with your birds from the beginning is a major factor. They need to feel comfortable and secure. There is a better

chance that you will have a good talker by purchasing a domestic hand raised mynah bird. If possible, I suggest one that is still being handfed and take over the duty of hand feeding.

We purchased Howard at four weeks old. Then a year later, we purchased Holly at four weeks old also. Mynahs are so sweet and cuddly at that age. They like to be cuddled under your chin. Holly still loves it. Howard will let me but prefers to be free to roam. Holly will let us hold her anytime and comes to us on her own. Howard is just the opposite. Different personalities, but both are excellent talkers. We give them both a lot of attention.

You should hear your baby mynah's first "hello" at around three or four months old. It may not sound clear at first but will become more clear as he gets used to talking. Begin saying "hello" as soon as you get your bird home. This helps get him started at trying to make the sounds. Some mynahs have began talking as early as two months old.

If you purchase a mynah bird that is a few months old, there is still a good chance for him to be a good talker but you have to be willing to put in the time and effort. Our first mynah was a few months old when we purchased her from a pet store. We didn't know much about her background except that she had a previous owner. She could already say two things - "hello" and "pretty bird" — but she continued to learn new words and phrases throughout her whole life.

I have come to the conclusion that

It is important to interact directly with your mynah bird to encourage it to talk.



Photo by Kathy Butterfield



IN SEARCH OF CANARIES...

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Frills

Frills

There are three main varieties of frills — Parisian, Dutch, and Italian. The first two we will deal with in this article. The Italian is practically non-existent in our area, thus our lack of information on it.

Dutch Frill

The Dutch Frill undoubtedly originated from the old Dutch canary bred in Holland, France, and Belgium which was very much in evidence in the 1700s. At that time a good specimen measured eight inches in length. Currently, though, they are breaking this type down into so many names and variations that it is becoming almost impossible to know what they are talking about. Now the Dutch Frill, as a rule, is smaller than the Parisian Frill and is much less densely feathered. Its feathering is lightly frilled, is regular and symmetrical. It has a small head and clearly visible neck without any curled feathers. In the rear there is an absence of heavy feathering and the rump and the vent are smoothly covered. It has long stilty legs, normally feathered.

mynah birds will talk only when *they* choose to. I think it is just luck when you find one that will talk on cue. I feel the activity in the home has a lot to do with the amount of talking our birds do. Our birds love our dog, Scruffy. They watch him all the time and they tattle on him too. They let us know when he is being rowdy and also when he needs to go outside. Mynahs are very intelligent and will associate actions with phrases and

Parisian Frill

On the other hand, the Parisian Frill is robust in appearance and is vigorous in action with plenty of bounce and vitality. It is a slim bird, with a profusion of feathering all over its body. The bird stands upright on long supple legs. The feathering can be irregular, either tightly frilled or in long plumes. However, in a good show specimen, the mantle extends well down the back towards the rump and the jobot must be double-sided — the frills must come from each side of the breast to form a feathery ruffle. On the head, the feathers may curl or roll upwards. The neck carries a general collar of frilled feathers. A final interesting characteristic are the toenails — they grow with a pronounced twist sort of like a corkscrew.

Small Frills

Also, there has come into focus a variety of small Frills. The normal standard for a Frill is that the bird should be as large as possible, (7¾ to 8¼ inches for a Parisian Frill and 6½ to 6¾ for a Dutch). People are bastardizing the breed by cross breeding in a willy-nilly manner and have created a bird with many strange examples of the breeders supposed art. However, we are speaking of the Frill as it should be and this means a large bird.

The neck is straight and the head held high — but the same shape as the Belgian Fancy. The body has a somewhat curved appearance as the tail is usually hanging down instead of out and this gives the appearance of a half round bird. Parisian Frill, Dutch Frill, Northern Frill, Southern Frill — all mean the same bird and it takes a judge of quality to determine the difference.

sounds. Whenever anyone is heading for the door either one of our birds will say "You wanna go out?" They will also say it when they hear the jingling of car keys.

I hope this article has provided some help and encouragement to those who were seeking it so that you are able to enjoy your little black feathered entertainment centers to the max. They are a joy and worth the effort you put into the care of them. ➤

Curly Feathers

Obviously there must be a feather difference because of the name and this is true. The feathers of the long breast curl in and the feathers of the mantle curl also. Many of the wing feathers are curled and this gives the appearance of the old fashioned wind blown bob that women used to wear.

Summary

These birds are again Old World Varieties and as such command our respect. They are beautiful singers and are real personality birds. They talk a lot during the day and sing a great deal and are very active in spite of their peculiar appearance. Once again, we are speaking of a bird that is almost endangered. For many years we did not see any of them, but a few faithful breeders kept the breed going and now more of us are into breeding this delightful bird. The judging is changing on these birds and now it is assumed that the wings should not cross. Before they were to cross slightly, but now they say "no" so watch for this in your birds. The head should be in proportion and without a crest — though the back of the head can be slightly hooded. The legs should be long and supple without the stiff appearance.

These birds should not be color fed but you will find in some a bit of orange. This comes from the Italians who have introduced this into the birds. Too many of the judges are not aware of this quality in the Italian birds and it makes quite a problem at a show when one of these judges is presiding. We are hopeful of making it well enough known that all of the judges will be aware of this quality. This is common in Canada as they seem to be doing more in breeding Frills than the Americans.

Those of you who read this I hope will discuss this in your clubs and see what can be done to instill the adventure of exciting birds in people who are stuck with the hum drum variety of the ordinary canary. Live excitingly and raise some of these delightful canaries and let us strive to bring these varieties — Rollers, Frills, and Belgians — back from the brink of extinction. ➤