



*Aristotle demands attention and doesn't mind petting or a good chin/cheek rub.*

accountant and unfortunately we speak that way, and at times I begin to think that way myself, but then I am reminded of why I like her so, as she gently "coos" for me to come over and massage her head and neck through the bars of her cage. This crow reminds me of a German Shepherd that I had once owned that would look so deeply in my eyes with great trust and loyalty – I feel a great feeling of "connectiveness" during our times of interaction.

Once Aristotle's cage door is open, it's up and out, a bit of rapid stationary flapping, and then on to my shoulder to travel wherever the road (or for that matter, wherever my big feet walking over the hardwood floors) takes us.

The thieving tendency of corvids is strong and rather well known, but with age and repetitive reinforcement, Aristotle has evolved from a constant jump down, steal whatever I put down that is light enough for her to carry, and "the chase is on," to only the temporary digression to old habits.

As her third year of life rapidly approaches, I am beginning to see the signs necessitating the acquisition of a male crow. Aristotle's activities now include the ever-increasing "fluffed" head display executed in synchronicity with a whole new

repertoire of sounds, the likes of which I have never heard. I've also begun to notice her increased sessions of "naughty Aristotle," beginning with a fluffy ball of affection then transitioning into a biting agitated Mrs. Hyde. I guess that's the drawback of a "teenager."

I have had fairly good success feeding my crow a staple diet of dog-food (high quality),

mynah pellets, thawed frozen mixed, vegetables, parrot pellets, and cheerios. I supplement the diet with plain tuna, pasta, parrot seed, apples, blueberries, blackberries, and table scrap odds and ends. This fairly well balanced diet is further enhanced by the capture of the occasional fruitfly "on the wing."

The African Pied Crow should not be recommended to just anyone, these birds are a big commitment and at times, can present themselves to be quite determined – "no" is not a known part of their vocabulary. This species, if handled, is about the most committed companion an individual may ever want, but at the same time, may drive an individual to the point of being committed!

Long before acquiring exotic corvids I had much experience with their positive as well as negative attributes, serving as a part-time wildlife rehabilitator for several years prior. My experience allowed me to make a well-informed decision prior to purchase and I feel no regrets.

If you own or are in the process of acquiring an African Pied Crow, I may only hope that your experience is or will be as positive as mine has been and you enjoy many years of "Life with a Pied Crow." ➤

# Traveling by Air With Birds in the Cabin

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Since the horrible tragedies of September 11th, we have all been informed of the extraordinary but much needed changes in security regarding flying. For those of us who have the occasion to fly with our bird, these have certainly been interesting times. We all acknowledge the need for the searches and screenings and as someone who flies frequently, I applaud the extra vigilance.

However, I have found, that unfortunately, many security personnel are unsure how to handle pets that are flying with their owners. I hope to offer some insight and tips on how to make your next flight with your pet as smooth and easy as possible for security personnel, owners, and above all, the bird.

## Booking Your Flight

Before you book your flight, make sure the airline you choose allows pets in the cabin. Not all airlines do and all of them have the restriction of the bird fitting underneath the seat in front of you. Others limit bird size to only Cockatiel or smaller. FAA regulations allow for only two pets in the main cabin so you must make reservations for your bird with your airline. There will be a charge anywhere from \$50-\$100 each way which you will have to pay upon your check-in at the airport. Also, get a health certificate from your veterinarian no earlier than 10 days before your RETURN flight. Not all airlines require a health certificate but that

may not matter if you are dealing with someone who is unaware of the policy. Best to be prepared just in case.

### Preparing Your Bird

Buy an airline-approved under-the-seat carrier. The #100 Cabin Kennel is inexpensive, easy to clean and comes with either a solid or wire top. It can be purchased at most pet supply stores. Get a small cage that comfortably holds your bird and fits inside the carrier. Be sure to include a perch and food and water cups. Do not cover the floor of the cage or you may be required to remove your bird from the cage. Place a small bag of your bird's food and bottle of water inside but make sure there are no scissors, wire cutters or other sharp objects inside. Again, do not line the cage or carrier.

If possible, clip the bird's wings (not possible for people who exhibit birds). This is always good insurance under any conditions but even more so now. The day of the flight, feed and water the bird and then

place it in the cage with food, millet, juicy fruits, and an ice cube in the water cup (it will melt before you get on the plane, believe me).

### What to Expect at the Airport

Get to the airport at least two hours prior to your flight; some places were requiring four hours so check with your airlines. You should confirm your flight before you leave for the airport and make sure to check any connecting flights. Some airlines have reinstated curbside check in for luggage but not all. And, if you are flying with your bird, you will have to check your luggage. The FAA has limited carry-on bags to one plus a "personal" item such as a purse, briefcase, or lap top computer so your bird will count as your carry-on even though you are paying extra.

When you get to the counter, immediately inform them you have a pet, who has a reservation, and that you need to pay his expenses. Present your health certificate and confirmation number for the bird's reservations. Do not be surprised if the person behind the counter is unfamiliar on how to process the bird's "ticket" but remain calm and do not get frustrated. There are a lot of armed law enforcement and military in the airport and you do not want a misunderstanding to develop with anyone. Remain calm and wait patiently – eventually, things will be done and you will be on your way. Make sure you have both receipts – one that is kept for your records and one that should be stapled to your ticket. This proves you have paid for the bird and should be shown to security personnel if asked. It is often asked prior to boarding the plane as well. Also, keep your health certificate handy – sometimes airlines and/or security ask to see it.

When you approach the security screening areas, ask for a hand-search of your bird. Most airports have turned their x-ray machines up to the highest level and this may be harmful to your bird. Inform them you can remove the bird from the carrier for inspection. You will have to hand the carrier to security, walk

through the metal detector (without setting it off) and comply with all other security procedures (turning on laptops, removing cell phones, etc.). Gather your belongings and immediately open the carrier and remove the cage with the bird inside. Hold it so all angles can be seen by security – they may ask that the empty carrier go through x-ray to make sure it does not have a false bottom. Again, this procedure can be difficult because there has been virtually no training among security personnel on how to inspect animals especially birds. Most assume you have a cat or small dog that can easily be removed. Be patient and show whatever papers they request – receipt from the airlines, health certificate, whatever. Do not get angry or act rudely – remain calm and if all else fails, ask to see a supervisor.

Once you have gone through security, you may be asked by airline personnel to see the receipt for the bird and/or the health certificate. This may also be done at subsequent plane changes so make sure they are kept handy.

Things have definitely changed with flying in America and it is much better for all of us. I am sure I am safer flying now than I was six months ago. However, until the security system can be uniform at all airports by trained and skilled people, things are going to be difficult. But it is something that we can be prepared for and adjust to so long as we use a little planning and a lot of understanding.

### Tips for Flying with a Bird

- Make Reservations For Bird
- Get Health Certificate
- Use Cage in Carrier
- No Paper or Substrate on Floor
- Use Airline Approved Carrier
- Arrive Two Hours Before Flight
- Pay for Bird & Obtain Receipt
- Present Receipt & HC When Requested
- Have Bird Hand Inspected
- Remove Bird in Cage for Inspection
- Remain Patient and Calm ➔

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