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by Sheldon Dingle  
Norco, California

## The Pet Bird Handbook

Mankind has a penchant for pets and it is more than just an atavistic urge. It is *real*. Human beings like animals. The aboriginal Indian of the Amazon is just as fond of his pet as the serious, sophisticated stockbroker is. And both of them are equally liable to ignorantly abuse their respective beast.

For many of us, birds satisfy the pet need rather better than other sorts of animals. Some people, my wife for one, are able to develop a wonderful rapport with birds. She is very fond of and skillful with cockatoos and parrots and can communicate with them on a one-to-one basis. She has empathy.

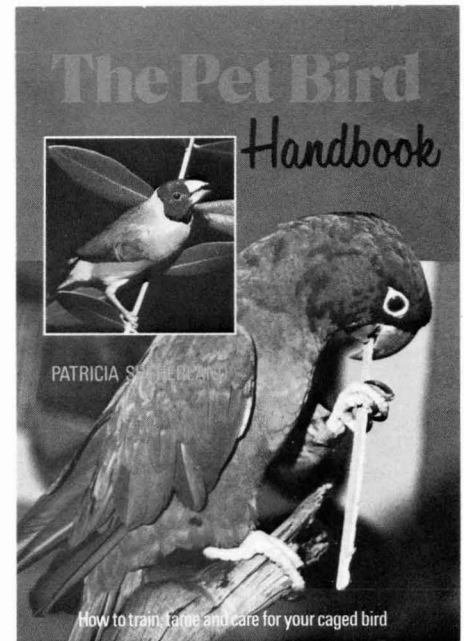
But some people don't have empathy. They just don't understand. How many times have you been to someone's home and seen a pet bird that was utterly forlorn; a macaw squeezed into a cage and humped up on a perch; a terrified canary on the cage floor with a huge cat draped over the cage grinning evilly; a beautiful lory starving to death amidst dime-store seed?

These unfortunate things do occur. If you haven't noticed such unenlightened abuses perhaps you are new to the bird fancy. Or perhaps you *have* noticed but haven't known how to tell your friend. In either event, salvation is at hand.

It comes in the form of a new book: *The Pet Bird Handbook* by Patricia Sutherland, published by Arco Publishing Inc., New York, New York. This volume is hardbound, contains 149 pages and many photos, including some color plates, and sells for \$13.95 retail. It deals with all aspects of the pet bird. It will reinforce many things you know to be true

and will introduce you to new ideas. This book is salvation, indeed, not for you, gentle reader, but for the tens of millions of pet birds in this country.

I think what I like best about *The Pet Bird Handbook* is its organization. The first chapter is called "Choosing the Right Bird for You" and Ms. Sutherland comes right out and says to consider the matter carefully — perhaps you don't really want a bird after all. But if you do, you may continue the chapter to learn about the various types and species of birds generally available on the pet market. Choosing the *right* bird for *you* is probably the single most important factor pertaining to pet birds. If you get the right bird the relationship between you and your pet will grow and flourish with broad horizons opening up. The wrong bird will cause you endless grief and frustration, to the expense of both of you and the bird. Choosing the right bird is precisely where a pet bird book should begin.



Chapter two deals with bird behavior and does much to help the reader look upon pet birds as living creatures endowed by nature with certain characteristics that won't change just because a bird now lives in the parlour. This understanding of the bird's natural behavior is, perhaps, the key to providing a happy environment for any pet bird.

Now that you have chosen the right bird and have a pretty good understanding of its behavior, it is time to get dinner. "Feeding" is the third chapter and it goes into plenty enough detail to insure that you can provide proper provender for your



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pet. After "Feeding" comes "General Hygiene," and "Housing and Play Areas." Each of these chapters is full of excellent advice, personal experiences, and handy what-to-do tips.

The remaining third of this outstanding book is devoted to establishing a routine and directing your attention to actually taming and training your bird.

Ms. Sutherland's ideas on taming and training are a natural extension of her philosophy as expressed in the first part of the volume. She says, "Before you attempt to tame your bird be reasonably certain that you understand bird behavior, that you are in control of your pet's environment — especially the play area — and that your chosen freedom hour (where the bird is outside its cage) is optimal in terms of your pet's habits and your schedule. I hope you will have learned as much as possible about your bird's species through research in other bird books. If you have accomplished these objectives, your taming efforts will succeed much more quickly." The author then goes on to give many concepts, tips and detailed techniques for bringing a bird into a really tame and affectionate state.

Over the years I have made numerous attempts to tame certain birds. The fact that I don't have a pet bird in my home bespeaks my failure. I really believe that had I digested *The Pet Handbook* prior to my taming attempts I would have been more successful.

You who have any interest at all in pet birds should read Ms. Sutherland's book. I am wholly in accord with her basic philosophy. She displays obvious affection, respect, and reverence for birds. She recognizes that they are natural creatures and have certain in-built propensities and limitations. She proposes guiding a bird into its full potential rather than jamming your expectations down its gullet. She speaks of "bird sense" which is just common sense as applied to birds — an ingredient so often absent. She says, "In general, a healthy bird will look healthy and a sick bird will look sick." She then goes on to an excellent section on minor problems and simple remedies.

*The Pet Handbook* is the best book I've read on the subject. All pet bird owners, especially beginners, will profit by reading it. Bird breeders and dealers, too, will learn much and be more able to give sound advice when selling a bird. It is a book espousing the very best attitudes and techniques and it should be on your shelf. ●