



Note the wild-eyed stare of this burnout victim. The author often wonders why she didn't just stick to raising a glass and skip the pigeons.

## Burnout — You've Got It When...

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*Gasp, wheeze, wilt, crack up, collapse*—these are just five of the synonyms Roget's Thesaurus lists to describe burnout. Now, to most people, burnout is commonly associated with a pressure job or a rotten marriage. But to the bird person burnout is an entirely different thing.

Burnout is predictable. People who love birds rarely wake up one morning with the decision to liquidate their entire stock. No, it usually takes weeks, even months, of hassling with lousy parents, sickly offspring, and a plague or two. It may even be fueled by poor production from your favorite breeders, or the not-too-subtle suggestion from neighbors that feathers aren't in fashion this season. Whatever the reason, or reasons, frustration replaces enthusiasm and enjoyment gives way to grudging tolerance. That's burnout. And when you have it, all you want to do is throw in the perch scraper and call it a day.

The first thing most burnout victims do is scan their phone list of "bird friends" for someone who might relieve them of every feather in their aviary(ies).

Most of us know a dealer or two who likes birds but likes green stuff more. He's easy to spot as he has a steady turnover of birds in his home or shop. One week he's mad about cockatiels, the next he's tiel-less and heavy to double yellow-headed Amazons. Maybe (at least you can hope) this will be the week he's crazy about your particular variety.

Well, it's really that easy. The person with burnout can liquidate all of his headaches and go back to playing golf, watching soaps, or taking a fitness class. But there's a price that must be paid for this brand new "freedom."

True, if you are one of those people who invested your emotions into your hobby, you may find yourself feeling relief—temporarily. You may actually sleep nights without dreaming of losing your best pigeon in the 600 mile race. You won't live in fear that your rare cockatoo may desert its nest when the paper boy comes to collect. But you'll never find anything quite so rewarding as the beauty of the mating ritual, the determination of nest-building pairs, the

excitement of watching an egg pip or the music of hungry babies clamoring for their very first meal.

On the other hand, you'll be able to take a vacation without asking Uncle Dan to bird watch. And you'll not be stuck (as I was) with carrying three squeakers (young pigeons) aboard Air Cal for a five day holiday. *Holiday?* You'll finally be able to clean out your bookshelves, donating those cumbersome bird books to the library (who in turn will probably sell each priceless volume for a quarter a piece at their annual fundraiser). You won't have a hole chewed in your new shirt by a pet conure nor have to invent excuses for the third place ribbons you took at the bird show. Think how much simpler life will be. And how much duller!

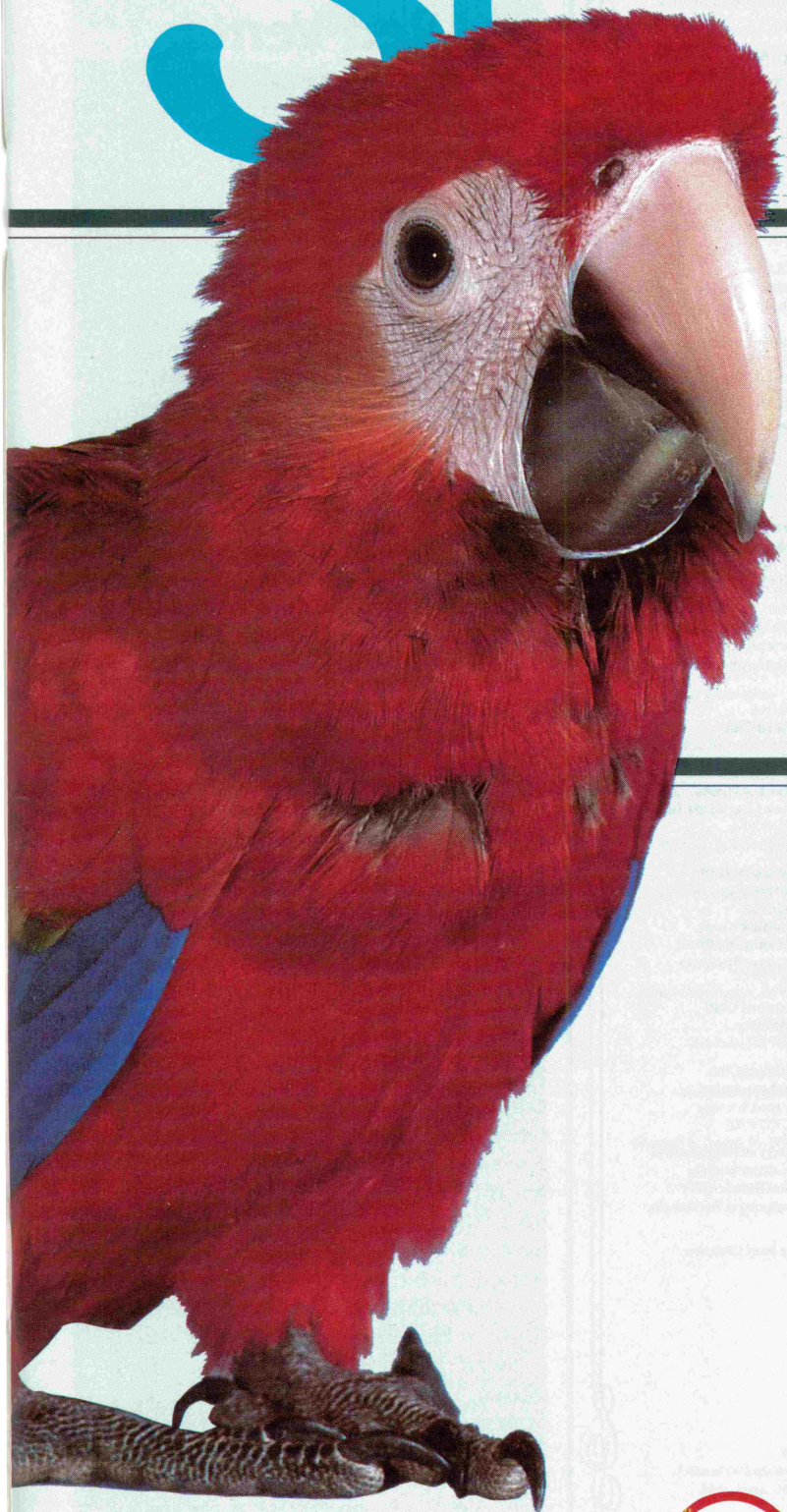
Vacillation is common with burnout victims. You may find yourself unable to decide what to do. For birdkeeping, you will find, is a lot like being caught between the proverbial "rock and a hard place." The important thing to remember is that everyone has been there! Even the most talented breeders you know have experienced this universal disease. Most will admit they've had their share of setbacks. Some may have taken a leave of absence with little thought of returning to the "bird world." But they did return, didn't they? And that's because they learned to apply a few principles of logic. They accepted the fact that burnout was and is a natural stage in this and probably all "living" hobbies. They toughened themselves to the failures and frequently reviewed their sparkling successes. If necessary they actually made a complete turnabout in the organization side of their enterprise. For example, if cage cleaning demanded too large a slice of life, they developed more suitable layouts for their bird rooms. If they found a waning interest in a particular breed, they located another more enthusiastic hobbyist to take over that variety rather than continuing on half-heartedly. In other words, they made the necessary adjustments to keep their interest alive and their hobby fun. Let's face it, when the fun is gone but the responsibility remains, you don't have an avocation, you have a job!

So you've been there. You've known *gasp, wheeze, wilt, crack up* and *collapse*, but you'll bounce back, as long as you realize this is all part of the initiation into one of the most wonderful pastimes man has ever known. It's only burnout. It isn't fatal. With a little faith, hope and humor you'll not only survive, you'll overcome! ●



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