

Showing Your Birds

by Richard Moroz
Saskatoon, Canada

I have been breeding and raising parrot-family birds now for over fourteen years and I have attended two shows: one with, and one without birds. At the first show I was fascinated by the quality of birds; there were super high-quality and some not so good. Most of the birds were very comfortable and were quite used to the show cages and the large assortment of strangers. I was overwhelmed! I was asked or, rather, talked into entering some of my rarer birds so others could see them. I came away with fifteen ribbons, one special award, and a plaque for the best bred bird by owner. I felt proud, but what did the birds feel like? They were upset, disoriented and, basically, in the worst shape they have ever been in since I acquired them.

After careful observation, I realized that there are two types of bird people:

those who love their birds and love to show them off, and those who just love their birds.

I recently read an article enticing people to show their birds, the rarer the better. It said, "One may have the rarest and greatest bird *but* if you don't show it and have judgement passed on it, it is worthless." That statement is as wrong as wrong can be! If anyone is willing to risk the life of a rare or endangered bird for the sake of a ribbon or for the gratification of having the best, then he or she should not be entitled to possess such a rare bird.

I am not condemning bird shows or the showing of birds, but remember that the entry or entries must be used to a show cage and must be used to a great number of people staring and poking at them. My stock, young and old, are not

used to small cages and crowds of people. They are used to being able to fly free — unrestricted and, most times, unobserved. I have never turned anyone away who wanted to view my birds or their young. I have also never done such a great injustice to the birds in my care as I did that fine fall weekend when I captured them, stuck them in small cages, and off to the show I went to see if mine were better than the others.

I am not trying to turn people off to bird shows but please, for the sake of the birds in your care and the life of your birds, follow the rules of common sense and condition them to the stress that the three days of showing will put them through. I may enter birds again but I will *never* enter a rare or endangered bird unless it is used to people and a small cage. I will never enter a bird that is not totally conditioned to the cage and surroundings that it is going to be put through.

Here are a few basic rules that I follow that may be of help to you as well:

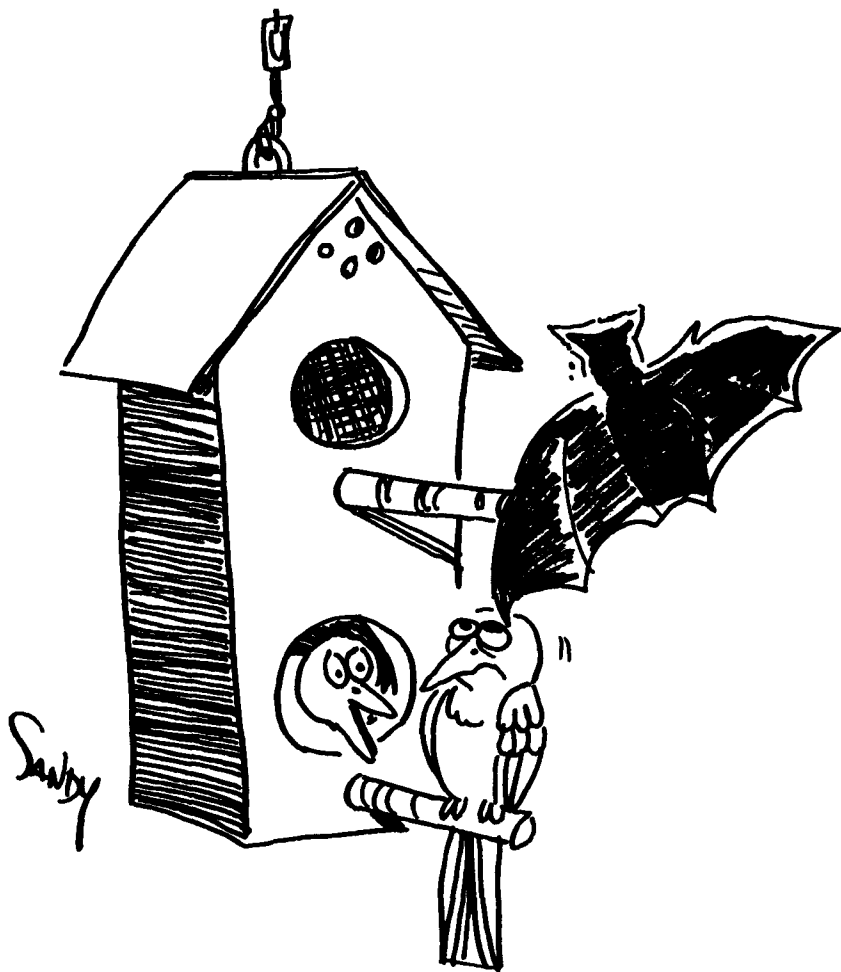
Never enter an older bird that has lived most of its life in a large flight — inside or out. It is too stressful to be stuffed into a small cage.

Never enter a bird that is not in prime condition and in perfect health. It will only get worse.

Enter only young birds that you have selected from this year's breeding. Condition them to people and being handled.

My male twenty-eight was the inspiration that prompted me to write this article. Last year he was entered in a show for two reasons: he was in prime condition and he was a rare bird that people said everyone should have the chance to see. He was netted, put in a small cage separating him from his mate, and packed into the car for a five-hour drive. After driving the distance and unloading him, I saw the fright in his eyes — the confusion and the mistrust that he had for me, the person who had fed, watered and cared for him for years. I had never laid a hand on him and now, in one fell swoop, he was taken from his mate, put in a small cage, and given the ride of his life. He has never really trusted me since, and probably never will. He will never again be entered in a show. Maybe his young will, and then again, maybe not.

Please remember what your bird has to go through and what he must feel. The prize means nothing to him! If you lost your best bird through your own need for self gratification, what have you really gained compared to what you have lost? ●



Cartoon drawing by Sandy Dean, Pensacola, FL.

"It's a quiet place. The guy upstairs works at night."

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