

— ALERT —

Recent and Serious Bird Thefts in Southern Florida

submitted by Miami Parrot Club

FACTS:

1. Over \$300,000 worth of birds stolen in the last year in south Florida, including Miami, Florida Keys and Fort Lauderdale.
2. Birds stolen range from crippled parakeets to baby hyacinths.
3. Most robberies seem to occur from the 20th to the end of each month.
4. Dogs don't seem to be a deterrent, nor someone being home at the time of the robbery.

Sometimes thieves return a second time to get what they missed the first time.

Birds kept on a patio or outside the home are at greater risk.

5. Sue Boyd, president of the Miami Parrot Club, was robbed twice. They broke in through the back sliding glass door the first time, after going through a yard with numerous dogs. They returned two days later and took the remainder of her birds. These birds included a Rose-breasted cockatoo, two blind eclectus, lovebirds, parakeets, cockatiels, umbrella cockatoo and a blue and gold macaw. The blind eclectus were later recovered by paying a "ransom" of \$600.

One man had \$8,000 worth of cockatiels stolen. Another woman had 40 pairs of cockatiels taken. Thieves drove a truck through her gate while she was away and took the birds.

The Metro Zoo in Miami had an eclectus taken.

Warren Werner had a greenwing macaw stolen from his home and this bird turned up in a pet shop. Warren tried to take his bird and the owner of the pet shop called police. He ended up buying his own bird back.

Sometime during the night of March 30, 1990, a truck pulled onto private property in Jupiter, Florida and stole five pet birds from an outdoor aviary. A blue and gold macaw, a pair of Moluccan cockatoos set up for breeding last May, and two female lesser sulphur crested cockatoos were taken suddenly away from their home of many years. One of the lesser sulphur crested cockatoos has a bare chest. Please contact Terry or Charles Lastella, (407) 746-5225 or Det. Laura Murphy of the Martin County Sheriff's Dept., (407) 597-2101. A reward is being offered. Many people believe the birds may be shipped up north and sold on the black market.

6. The birds are turning up in pet shops but the proof of ownership is difficult. They also are turning up at flea markets and even being sold on the side of the road.
7. **One suspect is a blond man who has a German accent.** He will enter a pet shop with his wife and, while she distracts the owner, he roams around the shop and after they leave, conures or baby macaws are missing.
8. Miami Parrot Club had their Sweetheart Bird Festival last February and we suspect there were people there trying to get information as to breeders' phone numbers and addresses. There were lots of business cards available. It is not advisable to put your address on business cards.
9. Anyone putting ads in the newspapers runs the risk of being robbed. We are advising them to not give out their addresses. First, tell a caller you are on long distance and try to get their number to call them back. Then scrutinize the caller to be sure they are legitimate. If they won't give a number, you should be suspicious of them. Never give out your address to casual callers.

10. The Miami Parrot Club has organized a "bird crime watch" and is working with the police, the F.B.I. and Florida Fish and Game to try to stop the thefts and retrieve stolen birds.
11. We are getting TV coverage on "crime stoppers" and the Miami Herald is picking up articles on bird thefts.
12. Police recommend that every bird owner have a picture of their bird in case they are stolen. Also, that they take pictures of the beak and feet of the bird, especially a side view of the beak. The feet are like our fingerprints, no two are alike. Another idea is to take videos of your bird doing tricks or anything unusual and unique to that bird. If a detective should need a picture when he investigates, it should be readily available by the owner. The real answer is to have every bird injected with a transponder which is 100% sure of identification. Dr. Thomas Goldsmith, Miami, has injected tiny transponder chips the size of a grain of rice into the chest muscle of quite a few birds in the south Florida area.
13. It is believed that most of the robberies are drug-related. This is a fast way to get money for drugs.
14. One of the things the club is doing is keeping an up-to-date list of robberies, including date, case number, and faxing it weekly to the police for their records. The Miami Parrot Club is working with several detectives and they accumulate the information and advise the other precincts.
Flyers are put in veterinarians' offices, feed stores, pet shops and also give to security guards at warehouses, and anywhere bird people do business. The flyers ask that all robberies be reported to police or the club keeping the records. Identifying marks on the birds are also important, although this information is not given out to pet shops, only veterinarians. It is good to have a phone number that cannot be traced to an individual who has birds and is willing to take the information.
15. Police departments are not aware of the various species of birds and the Miami Parrot Club has provided them with pictures for identification. Postcards and old calendars provide excellent photos, thanks to Gail J. Worth. Also, slide shows are a great way of educating the police. The actual value of the birds is not known to the police. This makes a difference to them.
16. The committee is planning a "confiscated bird" program. Someone has to take care of recovered birds until ownership can be established. They should be quarantined from other birds for a time.
17. Bird clubs wishing any other information can contact the Miami Parrot Club, Inc., P.O. Box 560942, Miami, FL 33156. Attn: Bird Crime Watch.
18. In time, we hope to make this a nationwide network so that the bird clubs and police can work together. This will be especially helpful in retrieving birds that have been taken out of state for re-sale.
19. Lists of stolen birds should be in order of species as well as the owner's list with information. This is helpful if, e.g., an umbrella cockatoo is found, the species list can be read and, if there is an identifying mark on the bird, it can quickly be recognized. Then the list can be cross-referenced to find the owner's phone number. ●

On page 52 of Vol. XVII, No. 2, April/May '90, the first three paragraphs in the second column were inserted by mistake. They belong at the end of the Cockatoo Society profile on page 53 of the same issue.

