

Beginning... thoughts to consider

by Tony Silva, North Riverside, Illinois

Early one morning I received a call from a woman in New York seeking advice. She was looking for a pet bird and was recommended a blue and gold macaw, *Ara ararauna*. My leading question was, "Do you have any children, and what are their ages?" She said she had very young children. Next I asked about her experience with parrots, the reply being that it was restricted to a small bird. For the next fifteen minutes she received considerable advice from me, ending with, "Before buying, give great consideration to the idea."

Why did I make such a statement? Let me explain. Blue and gold macaws are generally mild tempered when compared to scarlet macaws, *Ara macao*, a species that is sometimes unpredictable, biting without any forewarning. However, a blue and gold can, if sufficiently teased, give a nasty nip, perhaps breaking the finger of a small child.

Under most circumstances the youngster would not be permitted to tease the bird — but there is always a

possibility. Take the premise that the bird's tail is pulled. It screams or produces a sound which the child finds amusing. The process recurs and the bird bites as it has every right to do.

Secondly, the lady had no previous experience with the larger parrots. It often happens that at first the bird receives considerable attention but with time the novelty wanes. Feces, seed, and noise get on one's nerves and the bird becomes a bother to be around. Eventually the animal is discarded or becomes so neglected that it begins to mutilate its feathers.

The situation here may seem exaggerated to some — but it happens every day. Many times I have had calls from individuals seeking to sell their pet just because they were unaware of what proper ownership entailed.

An informed and wise consumer would have asked for various opinions and done some research before purchasing, such as the woman who called. Price and provisions would be the first consideration given; the amount for a large bird can run to considerable sums

of money.

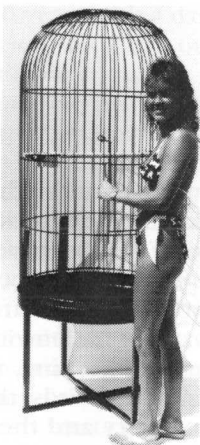
Diet, housing, noise, temperament, talking ability (if this is important) and any idiosyncrasies should be known in advance. I willingly take many hours from my busy schedule to talk to would-be parrot owners, and I know that other breeders throughout the country would be equally willing. One should communicate with a number of sources; from the answers one can form an idea of what the potential drawbacks and favorable points of each species are. Clearly, one cannot accept such information as the definitive word, for there are always exceptions.

One should not restrict the investigation to one's local area, but should contact specialist societies and breeders in other parts of the country. There are a number of books and publications that can provide additional information.

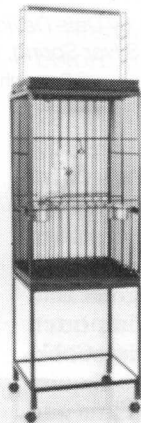
Procuring a parrot for a pet should not be done rashly. The bird may be long-lived, and under proper care would reside in the family for many years, perhaps decades. Unless one is dedicated to seeing that the bird will be properly attended to, the idea of buying it should be dropped. They are not cheap to maintain, and if not properly cared for, should not be procured. ●

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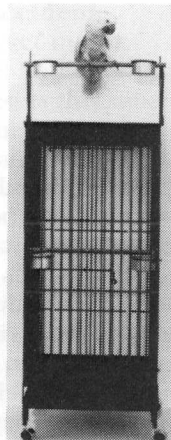
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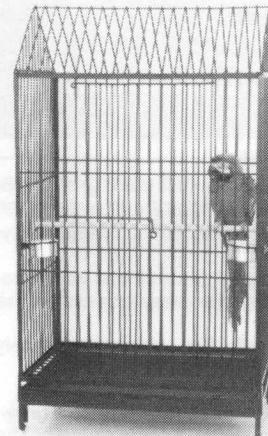
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