

PARROT FESTIVAL 2006

By Brenda Adams



Parrot Festival 2006 took place in January in Houston, Texas and was an overwhelming success, with attendance exceeding all previous years. This was the 7th annual conference hosted by the National Parrot Rescue & Preservation Foundation (an AFA Specialty Organization) as their primary fundraising and educational event. Parrot Festival 2006 was attended by several hundred aviculturists from all over the United States and from other countries. The bird enthusiasts included pet bird owners, breeders, veterinarians, technicians, zookeepers, shelter workers, bird store owners and others involved in the avian industry. The lectures and discussion forum were certified by the Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners for a total of 17 hours of Continuing Education Credit for attendees that need these credits in their field.

Wearing their complimentary ZuPreem lanyards, attendees started the weekend at the Safe Toy Making demonstration presented by Platinum Toys Works, followed by the Getting to Know Your NPRPF orientation. The Amazona Society's own Diana Holloway was the special guest moderator for The Healthy Parrot Q&A discussion forum, which featured a top notch panel of avian veterinarians, technicians and parrot behaviorists. Avian medicine updates and techniques were covered in individual lectures by Dr. Natalie Antinoff, Dr. David Phalen and Dr. Branson Ritchie, while behavior, health and nutrition topics were covered by Dr. Scott Echols, Dr. Susan Orosz and Dr. Fern Van Sant. Other lectures presented by EB Cravens, Linda Morrow and Liz Wilson covered methods of building a trusting relationship with companion parrots including clicker training and positive reinforcement techniques as well as learning to have a better understanding of parrots in general.

Mark Bittner gave an inspiring lecture based on his experiences with a flock of now famous feral parrots in San Francisco.

Fun & games were also on the weekend agenda, and everyone at Parrot Festival was treated to a tasty pasta buffet at the annual Party in Parrot-dise sponsored by Bird Talk Magazine. The very outnumbered Men of Parrot Festival donned hula skirts again this year, this time dancing for dollars and raising over \$200 to support NPRPF. The ladies got into the spirit of the party and competed for best dressed in Tropical and Parrot Wear categories. There was dancing, contests and plenty of door prizes to go around. Prizes were provided by Lafeber Company, ParrotDise Perch, and ZuPreem.

The Parrot Festival banquet sold out for the first time and was an evening of fundraising and getting to know your fellow bird enthusiast. Outstanding volunteers were honored with The George Award, Naomi Zemont entertained the crowd with a song from her CD that benefits The Bird Endowment, and tribute was paid, via Marvin Gaye's "The Ecology", to dedicated conservationist Jan Roger van Oosten who passed away last year. The Silent and Live auctions offered beautiful parrot themed artwork, antiques and novelties as well as cages and toys, and raised much needed funds for NPRPF. All banquet guests received party favors provided by Poly Perch and Treats & Tweets.

Parrot Festival continued its tradition of festive parrot decorations everywhere you looked, a variety of vendors around every corner, and the 200+ draw Texas-sized raffle. Volunteers were provided by 2LuvBirds Flock, Alamo Exhibition Bird Club, NPRPF and Triangle Bird Club, while many attendees also pitched in where needed. Each attendee received a large tote bag over-stuffed with assorted parrot foods, toys, supplies and literature all donated by NPRPF's generous supporters. Vendors sold a variety of parrot-phernalia including antiques, batik art & wear, embroidery, jewelry, carved gemstone parrots, T-shirts, bags, and gifts. Bird publications were also available, as well as every type of bird foods, toys, cages and perches on the market. Many bird food representatives, bird clubs and avian charities were also there to exhibit. Attendees were encouraged to participate in the annual Treasure Chest Game, where they must collect stamps on their Treasure Map from every vendor in order to have a chance to win the Treasure Chest Grand Prize - a chest full of great items donated by each vendor. Eleven semi-finalists also went home with a parrot themed gift that they selected from a well stocked gift table.

Make plans to join the fun next year at Parrot Festival 2007, January 26 - 28, in Houston, Texas. Bird enthusiasts will have a chance to win a Parrot Festival 2007 Registration donated by NPRPF at the 2006 AFA convention, The Beauty of Birds, August 2-5 in Dallas, Texas. ■

Captions

Top: Parrot Festival speaker Linda Morrow demonstrates clicker training with Ruby the Green-winged Macaw. Photo by Jill Bell

Bottom: Part of the Healthy Parrot Q & A discussion panel which includes past and present Parrot Festival speakers (l-r) Mark Bittner, Mattie Sue Athan, Dr. Mark Peckham and Linda Morrow. Photo by Jill Bell



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