

# AMADOR BIRD TRACKS

Monthly Newsletter of the Amador Bird Club June, 2018

The Amador Bird Club is a group of people who share an interest in birds and is open to all.



"home of the rare Amadoran Combo Parrot"



Dates of bird club meetings this year:

- June 8
- July 13
- August 10
- September 14\*
- October 12
- November 9
- December 14 (Xmas party)

\* Semi-Annual Raffle

\*Friday-the-13<sup>th</sup>: drive carefully!

## President's Message

Hi All,

What is up with this weather ? One day 95, the next 75, so glad I am still not breeding my birds as the poor critters would be so confused as to whether it is spring, summer, or fall. As mentioned in last months message we have no speaker/program for this month so again I may have to dig into the depths and try to find a tape or DVD.

Last months presentation from John was very informative and educational and of course, the pizza was also good. Thanks to Sherri for always organizing and picking the pizzas up for us.

We will be starting the volunteer list for the county fair so give it some consideration as to how many hours you wish to volunteer for promoting OUR club. Also we will need actual birds for our display. Stay cool, stay warm.

—Blue

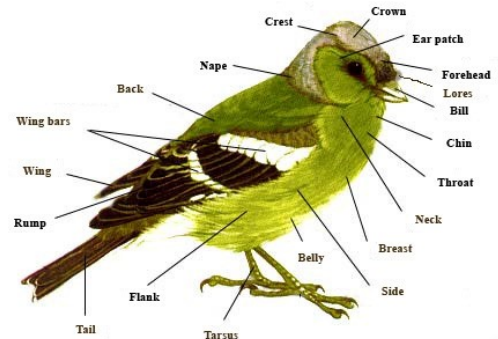
The Amador Bird Club meeting will be held on:

**Friday, June 8th, 2018 at 7:30 PM**

**Place:** Administration Building, Amador County Fairgrounds, Plymouth

**Activity:** Fair booth volunteers & DVD or tape!

**Refreshments:** Persons with last names beginning with **A-M**



## Officers for 2018 - 2019

- |              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| President    | Blue Wrigley            |
| Treasurer    | Cathy Hooper            |
| Secretary    | Kim Schmutzler-Agee     |
| Newsletter   | Todd Sargent/Terry Ryan |
| Webmaster    | Kim Schmutzler-Agee     |
| Photographer | Kim Schmutzler-Agee     |

Thank you  
**John**  
For your  
Presentation  
Last  
Month!

# Parrot Toy Safety

## by Don Scott / The Chloe Sanctuary

Www.chloesanctuary.org

Toys are necessary for the mental health of your parrot. Without toys, a parrot or cockatoo will suffer extreme boredom which can manifest as aggression, self-mutilation or reclusive behavior. Toys are not optional. They are mandatory enrichment items that help an intelligent creature survive in our world. That said, it is important to note that they can also be a deadly hazard to their health in captivity. In the wild, parrots are known to exhibit behavior that is strikingly similar to children playing with toys. They have a whole wild world of natural toys in the jungles and forests with which to play.



They have parents, siblings and flock members to show them the safe way to enjoy their freedom; large parrots and cockatoos have a five year juvenile dependency period in which they learn how to live. In our world, they are taken from their parents before they hatch, raised in incubators, handled by human breeders and then sold (often to novice caretakers that have no idea what they are bringing home). These captive intelligent creatures are like autistic children in many ways. They do not know safe from unsafe unless we can teach them. It is up to us to teach them how to play safe, watch them to make sure that they do, and choose toys carefully to both enrich their lives and ensure that they remain un-harmed.

Choosing toys using good judgment is one key to safety. Another key is vigilance. To be relatively safe a toy must be nontoxic, free of entanglements, and must not have easily ingestible small parts. As the director of a parrot and cockatoo sanctuary, I have seen many toys that appeared safe turned into death traps by a creative bird. Fortunately, keeping a vigilant eye on our flock has kept us from having deaths related to these “safe” toys. One such toy was a hanging wooden basket. This basket had nickel-plated chain so there was no danger of zinc poisoning. The chain attached to two sides of the wooden basket and came to a point with a small pear link to attach to the bars of the cage. One of our birds broke the pear clip and the basket fell. The basket wrapped around the umbrella cockatoo’s neck. He panicked. Running with the basket he twisted his neck from side to side and managed to wrap his neck with the chain; he could have choked to death. He had to be subdued with a towel and then carefully extricated from the toy. Because I was there and vigilant Snoball was not injured. I no longer have hanging toys of this type in the play areas.

Buying toys for your beloved companion birds is no easy task. There are many things to consider. I will go over the dangers in detail but do not let this make you paranoid. The issues that I will discuss are real and important. Nevertheless, you will need to make the best decision that you can based on available choices. This helps to limit the dangers arising from playing with toys; keeping an eye on them during play protects against unseen danger. Just do the best that you can; that is all that anyone can do. I make most of the toys for our birds myself both to cut costs and to insure their safety. I buy the wood, cut it into shapes, drill it, color it and string it on nickel-plated chain using split metal rings at the top and bottom. Next, I attach string and put beads and plastic shapes on. Sometimes I put colorful cloth ribbons or other adornments. A few of my toys have been misused by the birds, too. I just do the best I can. Again, safety is a combination of both caution in purchasing toys and keeping an eye on playtime.

A toy has not been made that a parrot or cockatoo cannot use in an unexpected way. Cecelia, an umbrella cockatoo, takes dowels and matches toys with drilled holes to them. She inserts the toy into one end and then uses them much like a magic wand. In a way they are magic. Anytime Cecelia holds a toy, the other birds run away. Cecelia becomes quite aggressive when she holds a toy, especially one of her own creation. I filmed her once picking up a toy boat by its long wooden handle from the floor. I did not realize at the time that she intended to use it against Murri, our Congo African Grey parrot. Murri had threatened her when she was at the top of the cage and she had climbed down right after this for the boat. She ascended the cage with it and confronted Murri.



Murri continued to make vocal threats (actually saying, “Come on! Come on!”) while raising the feathers on the back of her neck, bending down and clicking her tongue. Cecelia started swinging the boat back and forth in front of Murri. I thought that this was cute. All of a sudden she angled the boat right at Murri. Bang! Murri jumped back. Cecelia pushed forward. Murri began to climb down the door of the cage and Cecelia beat her with the boat on the way down. Cecelia was using a toy as a weapon! Now who would have guessed that a cockatoo could think that far in advance and use a toy boat as a tool? Only Murri’s pride seemed to be hurt. If there had been any chance of injury I would have dropped the camera but it was obvious that Cecelia only wanted to stand at the top of the cage. Never underestimate these intelligent creatures. It is all on a video on our website.

Let’s take on the three major categories of toy safety. The first requirement is that the toy be nontoxic. One question to ask is, “Where was the toy made?” Since most of the toys available now come from China it is often difficult to know if they are nontoxic. Most of us have heard horror stories concerning the products coming from China. The label may assure us that the toy is made of safe natural materials but can we be sure?

There is no way to be one hundred percent certain that a toy is nontoxic but we do have a few tools that we can use. Checking out the brand name online is one good way to see if anyone has had problems relating to that manufacturer. Use the search feature of your web browser (Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer, etc.) to see what you can find out. Good search techniques are actually simple. Think of the keywords you will use to search in their order of importance. One example of a set of good key-words is: “parrot treasures”, toy, safety, (brand name, what the item is, and the issue at hand). I used quotation marks to tell the search engine that “parrot treasures” is a single search term: the manufacturer’s name. If you find that there are many complaints about the company then you have an answer. No complaints at least is a step in the right direction. If you find loud praise in many places then you can relax a little.

Besides the origin of the prod-uct and the company back-ground, we need to decide if we trust the material from which the toy was made. Should we get natural untreated wood or will dyes be safe? Paints are to be avoided but some dyes are rated as safe for parrots, such as VitaCrittter. Even so-called natural wood may have been treated and often there is no way to be sure on an imported product. Natural wood may also harbor mold or bacteria. If you dye your own wood with VitaCrittter then you can use isopropyl alcohol as the base for the VitaCrittter dye and that will kill the mold and bacteria in the wood; it will also clean up any mouse or rat feces from the lumberyard. The alcohol evaporates quickly and the dyed wood is safe in 24 to 48 hours. Some woods are unsafe for birds such as Cherry wood. If you are making your own toys be sure to check the safety of the wood that you are using. A list of woods and their safety can be found here.

### Minutes 5/11/2018

Meeting was called to order at 7:30

It was a quick meeting, to get to pizza night and John York’s presentation. Seventeen people were in attendance. More than enough pizzas for the evening.

For those who might remember her Debbie Hensen has passed away. A few memories and mentions.

John ‘s slideshow presentation had to do with the selection and breeding of birds and how the survival of the fittest, adaptation and natural selection determines those species that survive. From turkeys to Birds of Paradise all maintain their selective process to guarantee the future of their genes.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim

Some materials have a bad reputation. PVC (Polyvinyl chloride) and Vinyl toys (a form of PVC) have toxic chemicals that may leach into your bird's beak or through their pores in their feet. Yet, as far as I can tell, none of the long-time caretakers that I know has seen any evidence that vinyl causes toxicity in parrots; this potential for danger has not been known for long). The Wikipedia lists lead and other toxic metals as potentially leaching from vinyl. One Avian veterinarian advised me that he had never seen a problem arising from metal toxicity that had not been due to ingesting a piece of metal directly. Specifically, he was talking about feather destructive behavior that arises from such toxicity but this applies to other health issues as well. I watch our birds carefully when they are playing with plastic toys and look for signs that they may be ingesting pieces of them. If I have any doubts then I remove the toy from the play area.

Our next category is "free of entanglements." Anything that frays might potentially be a hazard either from ingestion (small parts) or from entanglements. A frayed toy or perch might entrap the bird's foot. If the bird panics then severe injury may occur. This is also true of materials such as towels, sheets, and furniture with material attached. I have seen both happen. Chloe chewed through the back of a chair (probably over a week or so of furtive chewing) and then wrapped the material around her neck. It looked as if she had a snake attached to her neck!

One thing that I learned is that you must always check your birds to see if they can move. They are prey animals. When I saw Chloe I was unaware that she was trapped. She stood and looked at me as if nothing was wrong. Following my rule of checking for mobility I walked over to her and removed the small piece of material covering her back. That is when I discovered her predicament. Rarely will a prey animal tell you that something is wrong. One acquaintance of mine failed to follow this rule and assumed that her bird just did not want to come out and play; she thought it was nesting. Sadly, her bird died because it was unable to get food and water. It's leg had been trapped far back in the nest box. I cannot stress enough that prey animals pretend to be fine when they are in these predicaments; this is because a predator will attack a wounded or trapped prey animal. So, when you are buying toys try and think, "Can my bird be trapped or injured by this toy?" Try and imagine how the toy can be torn apart, wrapped around, or twisted. Looking on the Inter-net under "dangerous parrot toys" can help, too!

The last category is "easily ingested small parts." Buy toys of appropriate size. The small parts that make up some toys should not be small enough for your bird to swallow. Keep in mind that their powerful beaks can sometimes turn a larger toy into a smaller one. Don't buy a toy meant for a cockatiel for your macaw. If the toy is recommended for smaller birds then do not buy it for a large one. That is one reason that there is a size recommendation in the first place, safety.

In summary, a toy should be of appropriate size with no ingestible parts, free of toxins and as free as possible of potential entanglements. Since parrots and cockatoos have roughly the intelligence of a five-year-old child and the emotional development of a two-year old, they will outwit us time and time again. We must be as vigilant as a devoted mother for her toddler and that vigilance must be maintained for many years. Many parrots and cockatoos live as long or longer than we do. If you think safety when you make or buy toys and keep an eye on them while they are playing, then you have done your best for your feathered children. Besides, watching them with an open heart can bring awe and wonder back into your life. They are amazing.

If you would like to learn more about making toys for your parrot, one excellent free reference work is The Parrot Enrichment and Activity book (there are two versions) that can be downloaded here. The author gives these to you at no charge. Not only is it safer to make your own toys it also enriches your understanding of just what your bird enjoys doing with toys. When you make them something with your own hands it not only enriches your bird's life it enriches yours, too.



# Upcoming Marts, Shows and Events

- **June 3 2018 Central California Avian Society CCAS Bird Mart Fresno County Fairgrounds Gate #6, off Kings Canyon Ave. Fresno, CA 9am-3pm Admission: \$5, under 12 free. CCAS holds semi-annual bird marts on the first Sunday of June and the first Sunday of November at the Fresno County Fairground.**
- **June 8 Plymouth CA Amador Bird Club monthly meeting 7:30pm**
- **Aug 3-4 Sacramento, CA 12th Annual West Coast Zebra & Society Finch Show**
- **Aug 19 Modesto, CA CCCBC Mini-Bird Mart 12:00-3pm Stanislaus County Ag Center**
- **Aug 26 Roseville, CA Foothill Bird Fanciers Annual Bird mart 9am-3pm Placer County Fairgrounds**
- **Sept 14 Plymouth CA Amador Bird Club Semi-Annual Raffle**
- **Oct 27, Modesto, CA CCCBC 65th Annual Bird Show & Bird Mart**



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Doves..Doves..Doves




**Jackie Fox**  
(530) 677-1035  
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## Bird Placement

If you need to place a bird (find a home for a beloved companion), please consider the ABC as a resource. We have several members that are experienced at finding good homes for birds in need. We also have members that take rescue birds (already homeless birds, and/or birds with special needs). For more information, please contact:  
Sherri Elliot [\(209\) 245-6921](tel:2092456921)  
Terry Ryan [\(209\) 969-9030](tel:2099699030)  
(Amador/Calaveras area)

For information on birds, referrals or the Amador Bird Club, please contact:

Sherri Elliot [\(209\) 245-6921](tel:2092456921) (Amador/Calaveras area)

Jackie Fox [\(530\) 677-1035](tel:5306771035) (northwest area) or

Virginia Blake [\(209\) 981-5016](tel:2099815016) (Amador/Calaveras area)

Email: [amadorbirdclub@volcano.net](mailto:amadorbirdclub@volcano.net)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/AmadorBirdClub>

Website: [www.mycCBC.org/abc](http://www.mycCBC.org/abc)

Amador Bird Club  
 c/o Terry Ryan  
 11425 E Benndorf St.  
 Acampo, CA 95220



## **Amador Bird Club Membership Application**

The Amador Bird Club meets the 2nd Friday of each month, 7:30pm in the  
 Administration Building of the Amador County Fairgrounds!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone# \_\_\_\_\_ Cell# \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family members: \_\_\_\_\_

Birds owned, bird related items made/sold: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you a \_\_\_\_\_ breeder and/or \_\_\_\_\_ hobbyist (please check one or both)  
 Do you want your address printed in the membership directory? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues: Family: \$15.00      Single: \$10.00      Junior: \$7.50      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mailed newsletters free!      Fee for newsletter via US mail: \$5.00      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please make check payable to club secretary:      Total      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Terry Ryan, 11425 E Benndorf St. Acampo, CA 95220