

SOUTH SOUND EXOTIC BIRD SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume XXIV, Issue 5

October 2009

P.O. Box 15014, Tumwater, WA 98511-5014
<http://ssebs.org>

(The newsletter is now published every other month)

Friday, October 9, 2009

**Program
Avian First Aid**

Accidents and illnesses occur suddenly. And it seems to be the rule that these will inevitably occur at 6:30 PM, on a holiday, or on the weekend (usually the 3-day variety). And as some of us have discovered, our access to emergency avian veterinary care during non-business hours may be severely limited, if available at all.

Dr. Greg Bennett has graciously agreed to present a program on emergency and first aid for birds.

He has a great deal of experience, not only with parrots, but also raptors.

Saving this date might ultimately save your parrot.

Sunday, December 13 (Sunday)

**Holiday Party
Dirty Dave's, 1-3PM**

Our holiday party will be at Dirty Dave's in Olympia. We will have a "Pirate" Gift exchange – to participate, please bring a wrapped gift (suggested maximum cost is \$10). Also bring your appetite !!

Friday, February 12, 2010

Program:

"What the Heck is My Parrot Doing?"

Behavior is a component of an endless reciprocal interaction among an individual's genetics, behavioral history and environment. Behavior is nothing if not complex. When it comes to the complex behavior of our companion parrots, we definitely have our hands full. With the potential for screaming, screeching, calling and shrieking . . . feather plucking, picking, shredding and clipping . . . and who can forget to mention biting, nipping and clawing, reducing problem behavior seems especially complicated.

If we hope to improve our ability to understand and positively influence our parrot's behavior, we need an approach that provides an organized, trust building as opposed to trust destroying, process that simplifies the seeming complexity that threatens to obscure our view.

Enter a Ph.D in psychology named Susan Friedman at Utah State University. Her interest in parrots and other species of non-humans led her to look into her field of study for answers to how to understand specific behaviors in them. When we can clarify the related components of different types of behavior, the path to creative, positive solutions and teaching plans becomes more clear. The approach she has brought to the parrot world is known as ABC Analysis. Our speaker this month, a student of Dr. Friedman, will show us how the ABC Analysis tool can be used to positively impact our relationships with our birds

ANTING

In the behavior called anting, birds use ants that contain chemicals such as formic acid that can act as an insecticide, miticide, fungicide, or bactericide. These chemicals also possibly supplement the bird's own preen oil. Over 250 species of bird have been known to ant.

Anting is a behavior which can be observed in either a passive or active form. In active anting, a bird will pick up ants in its beak. The bodies of the ants are then crushed to release their formic acid, and the bird rubs this "balm" over the skin, through its tail and wing feathers, and occasionally on its back or other body parts. Birds have also been seen holding the ants against their skin, allowing the ants to bite particular locations on their bodies. This sort of grooming activity is carried out through a series of twisting, turning, and extreme contortions. It's been suggested that birds use the formic acid in the ants as a sort of grooming ritual to remove or thwart off uninvited parasites such as lice or mites. Dr. Stephen W. Kress, a research biologist with the National Audubon Society, says he believes birds use anting behavior to stop pain and itching from new feathers as they grow in. This may involve interesting techniques and antics. Starlings, babblers, tanagers, blue jays ant actively by picking up ants with their beaks and rubbing them over their feathers.

Passive anters may simply lie over ant hills. Other birds dust themselves with soil from ant hills, a behavior also considered by some as an equivalent to anting. When birds stand or lay very still on an ant hill or mound, they allow the ants to swarm in and out of their feathers, biting the skin. Perhaps the birds feel being bit is the lesser of two evils, since the chemical formic acid may be being used as a natural form of chemical defense in repelling infestation by ecoparasites. Eurasian Jay, crows and waxbills ant passively.

Anting also may act as way of reducing feather parasites such as mites or in controlling fungi or bacteria, but there has been no convincing support for any of the theories. The choice of ants used indicates that the chemicals that they release may be in some way important. Millipedes, which are sometimes used, are also known to release powerful defensive chemicals.

Another suggested function that has been observed in Blue Jays is that discharging the ants' acid onto their feathers makes the ants edible for consumption. Blue Jays have been found to show anting behaviour only if the ants had full acid sacs. If the acid sacs were experimentally removed, Blue Jays would not ant them. It has also been suggested that anting may be related to feather moulting, but this correlation may also be attributed to greater activity of ants in summer.

Observers have mentioned many items used as replacements when ants weren't available -- ashes from campfires or grills, strong smelling items or those with high acid content, raw onions, oranges, lemons and grapefruit peels, millipedes, lime, plant materials which may have anti-pathogenic and defensive action against parasitic activity, wasps, beetles, coffee, moth balls, picnic items such as pickles, mustard, vinegar, beer, and cigarette butts. Jan Mahnken states in *The Backyard Bird-Lovers Guide*: "Blue Jays have been photographed using still burning cigarette butts." Cigarette butts have analgesic properties.

It has been suggested that plucking behavior might be parrots' exaggerated way of adjusting to their lack of ants for use in a natural grooming behavior. And that they respond in an extreme manner of plucking as their way to adjust to the lack of available biting ants, which would otherwise be used for pest control in the wild. Some parrots -- often they are already plucked -- have been observed furiously taking mouthfuls of pellets, splintered wood, fruit peels, and other items, and frantically doing what appeared to be trying to "plant" these items in their skin. While they hold the pellets, fruit rinds, or tiny wood splinters to their skin, they rub in a way which suggests they might have used "anting" behavior in her natural habitat. Sometimes parrots do so with their eyes closed and appear to be in almost a trance-like ecstasy. They act a lot like we would if we had a bad case of poison ivy and relieved the itching by using an analgesic lotion or aloe vera gel.

The postures taken by a bird during "anting" -- if that is in fact what they are doing -- can be quite comical. Birds may make a lot of quick jerky movements between the source of the item being used and the final location being "treated" at the time. Parrots have been observed using almost jabbing strokes and getting frustrated when the items don't stay where they are placed. This is in contrast to wild ants that would take a firm hold where they are placed.

It is possible that "anting" behavior is a bird's way of trying to tell us something that they have a medical condition, or that they need "natural" remedies in addition to the diets we provide. It may be a futile way for a bird to deal with toxins in his or her system from medications or other impurities. Maybe someday we'll have the answers concerning the possible reasons for anting behavior in birds, and the possible anti-parasitic, or even mind altering euphoric effects, formic acid may have on them.

Resources: Wikipedia, "Anting" and Amy Patria, Winged Wisdom (1999).

+++++

BUMBLEFOOT

"Bumblefoot" is a common term for inflammation or infection of the weight-bearing surface of the foot. "Bumblefoot" is a form of pododermatitis (foot inflammation). It is most common in budgies, cockatiels, galahs and ducks, although it can be seen in any bird.

Initially there may simply be a loss of the normal scale on the feet, and the skin may be red and thin. As the condition worsens, ulcers may form on the pads of the feet. The condition becomes very serious when the foot is swollen and there are plugs of necrotic (dead) tissue on the weight bearing foot surface. In the worst cases the bone of the foot becomes infected, the foot becomes swollen and the foot's digits cannot move. These birds are severely lame and often very difficult to repair.

Causes include hard plastic or dowelling perches and sandpaper wrapped around perches. Diets of poor nutritional value and high energy will lead to obese birds with vitamin A deficiency. If perches are unclean, bacteria will build up and can move onto the foot as the foot has lost its protective scales. Any disease that affects birds can make your bird susceptible to "bumblefoot" because the bird will use its energy to fight the disease.

In the early stages of "bumblefoot," the best treatment is simply to soften the perches with bandages or strips of cloth wrapped around the perches. At the same time, improve the diet by including, among other changes, more dark green vegetables for Vitamin A. For ducks, put down Astroturf or grassed areas and make sure they have a clean deep wading pool.

Antibiotics may be needed as well as anti-inflammatories and antibiotics applied topically on the feet. If the "bumblefoot" is in the very severe category, a ball bandage may need to be adhered to the feet with regular changes. In these severe cases it may be necessary to send samples of the foot infection to the laboratory to find out the type of infection the bird has. Blood samples may also be taken to check for other problems. Severe cases of "bumblefoot" might take weeks or months to improve.

Your avian veterinarian should always check the base of the feet at a bird's annual health check, and the caretaker should be checking all feet at home at least every two weeks as well

Resource: <http://forums.budgiebreeders.asn.au/lofiversion/index.php/t5915.html>

Dr McDonald is scheduled to be in the Olympia area on Monday, November 16, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.
Call Pegg at 360/584-6497 for more information.

))

THOUGHTS ON THE CAUSES OF FEATHER ISSUES

Feather issues include plucking, retained feather sheaths, hemorrhages within pulp cavities, the absence of feather dust / oil, curling, short, or stunted feathers, and changes in coloration. Diagnosing the cause of feather issues requires observation and keen insight. Situations frequently need to be adjusted in order to alleviate stress causing factor(s) as soon as possible. Start a parrot journal and note when feather and other issues arise. Some thoughts on feather issues that have been put forth are as follows:

Clinical signs such as feather chewing, feather plucking and possibly foot chewing are thought to indicate pruritus. However, systemic disease and behavioral problems are thought to be more common causes than allergic disease.

A bird may have become anxious with a change in weather. Increases in humidity and heat will also facilitate feather loss and the molting process.

Times when a person is home or absent may have changed, or a new animal or a new piece of furniture may have been acquired. A bird might be uncomfortable with something placed near or in their cage – e.g., a new color bowl, a new perch. Most birds are frightened of things until they have seen them for a time. If your bird is nervous, place the new toy on a floor or table beside the cage, or hang it on a hook on the wall beside the cage where your bird can't reach it. Make certain the toy is lower than where the bird hangs out so that he or she is "dominant" over the object. Touch it frequently, place it in your lap, fiddle around with it, and hang it back up. Don't place the toy in the cage until your bird is familiar with the object. It may take time for your bird to get used to new things. B vitamins might help with stress.

Learn what is in your bird's food and figure out what has been eaten or bitten into. A change in feather color from green to yellow is usually caused by a loss of structural blue color, which may be associated with essential amino acid deficiencies. Feather color may change blue to black, or green to gray to black, if a bird is sick or malnourished. Color change is associated with altered keratin structure in the spongy layers that prevent normal light scattering. Melanin granules in the middle of the feather, if present, will absorb all wave lengths of light and give the visual effect of black. Achromatosis (the normal color of feathers change to another color) is caused by a variety of nutritional deficiencies in different species. During growth choline, riboflavin, lysine are deficient. Example: cockatiels will grow yellow or white feathers instead of gray feathers. Timneh & African Grey's will have red feathers where they should have gray feathers

Feather picking may be initiated by dry, flaky and pruritic (itchy) skin, which in turn can be caused by nutritional deficiencies. Common deficiencies in this regard are vitamin A, sulfur-containing amino acid, arginine, niacin, pantothenic acid, biotin, folic acid, and salt. Deficiencies of minerals such as calcium, zinc, selenium, manganese & magnesium may be associated with brittle frayed feathers and dermatitis. Pantothenic acid deficiency causes the formation of ragged feathers. Deficiencies of carotenoids may develop muted feathers or skin colors. Black along the tips of the feathers may resolve with a change in diet (e.g., an all- seed to a better diet) or a correction of chronic active hepatitis (i.e., a liver problem).

If copper intake is too high, levels of vitamin C and zinc will drop. Copper deficiency can interfere with melanin production and cause dark colored feathers to become lighter. Arginine deficiency may cause wing feathers to

curl. Consumption of hard water may upset zinc levels, so if your water is hard, you might consider substituting reverse osmosis water.

Feathers that are malformed, broken, bent, dirty, stained, or unusually colored should be considered abnormal. Possible causes include: organopathy (any disease affecting one organ of the body), toxins, malnutrition, bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites (blood or intestinal), boredom, anxiety, lack of sleep, psychosis, sexual frustration, hormonal, or molting abnormalities.

Hyperthyroidism causes black, brown and yellow feathers to become red, longer and more pointed. The feather veins will have a fringed or lacy appearance.

Normal feather chemical composition is 91% protein, 1.3% fat, and 7.9% water. Many experts recommend feeding feather supplements when a bird is molting, reasoning that a bird needs to replace any minerals and proteins and amino acids that are deficient in the food. Dietary requirements increase during molting or feather growth, such as the need for certain vitamins such as Vitamin A or its beta carotene precursor. These are particularly important for birds with yellow or red plumage coloration, as these colors are directly produced from this source. Thyroxine is considered to be important in the initiation of a molt. Molting is usually gradual and feathers should be lost and replaced in an orderly fashion.

Enzymes or hydrochloric acid insufficiency leads to yeast overgrowth in the intestines, which can lead to plucking. Deficiencies in the B vitamins riboflavin have been associated with abnormal pigmentation of cockatiels. Other issues may include: Giardia (an internal parasite), bacterial infections, improper wing clipping, residual feather stumps below the surface of the skin that need to be surgically removed.

Sulphur dioxide, a chemical preservative used in dried fruits to enhance color, can cause allergies, itching, skin irritation, feather shredding or picking. Make sure your mixes have naturally dried fruits.

Birds need as much as 8-12 hours of rest each day.

A bird with feather loss should be screened for zinc or lead poisoning. Heavy metal poisoning may result from many things: perching on shower rod or curtain rods (lead, zinc), metal bed posts, swallowing. Birds may have played with or swallowed jewelry, hardware, aluminum foil, or cage paint chips. Some china bowls are coated with zinc (into which someone may have placed water), and sheet rock contains zinc lyme.

Baldness on head, neck or around eyes may be sinus related.

A feather cyst on a bird represents the equivalent of an ingrown hair on a human. Feather cysts are larger in size, of course, since feathers are larger than hairs. The cysts are due to malformation of a developing feather under the skin. They appear as oval or elongated swellings involving a single or several feather follicles. Although they may occur anywhere, they most commonly are found involving the primary feathers of the wings. A feather cyst occurs when a growing feather is unable to protrude through the skin and curls within the follicle. As the feather continues to grow, the mass enlarges and a cheesy material composed of keratin accumulates. Although feather cysts may be seen in all species, the highest incidence is in Blue and Gold Macaws, budgies (budgerigars) and certain breeds of canaries. They can be small yellow masses under the skin or large keratinized masses on the skin. All contain feather material and can be expressed or excised. More appear at subsequent molts. There is a genetic predisposition to their development.

Stress lines -- transverse lines of color defects in the feather vanes -- are thought to be the result of periods of inadequate nutrition during feather growth. Even though a bird may be eating or taking a feather supplement, a bird under stress might not be able to absorb the nutrition.

FOR SALE
PETS AND BREEDERS
GOODHART BIRD FARM
Shelton, WA 98584

360-426-6375

kegdharth@hctc.com

For Sale

One pair of proven Black Cap Conures \$350.00
6 parent raised 1 yr. old
Breeder birds: \$85.00 each
360-978-5164=

FOR SALE

Star Finches \$50/mated pair

Contact Linda James:

360-491-3216

jamesgang@thurston.com

CLUB INFORMATION

- As a general rule, the first half hour of each General Meeting, from 7:00 to 7:30 pm, will be dedicated to socializing. The evening's program will begin at 7:30 pm, and the regular meeting will follow the program.
- For information, call 360/455-0697.
- The SSEBS mailing address is:
South Sound Exotic Bird Society (SSEBS)
P.O. Box 15014
Tumwater, WA 98511-5014
- Please use this address for all club correspondence except for items to be sent to the newsletter editor. Send newsletter correspondence to: Pegg Bauer, 8008 Ellison Loop NW, Olympia, WA 98502

SSEBS Officers Needed

Officers are needed for calendar year 2009.
If you are interested in serving,
please contact Pegg Bauer.
peggb@comcast.net or 360/584-6495.

Join !! SSEBS YahooGroup.

This is not a "chat group" as such (a "chat group" generally means that everybody is on line at the same time, "talking" back and forth by typing messages in real-time.) With a YahooGroup, e-mail messages are posted to the group which then distributes copies of the messages to the subscribers, depending on how they want to receive the message copies.

Go to <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/SSEBS/>. You can join by clicking on the "join this group" button on the home page or by sending an e-mail message to SSEBS-subscribe@yahoo.com. Learn how the group works: <http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/groups/original/members/> is the place to go.

**SUPPORT YOUR CLUB:
COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING**

Each commercial membership includes one business-card sized advertisement in the newsletter. Commercial members may also purchase additional ad space at the following rates:

One half page \$50
Full page \$87.50

Non-members may purchase ad space at the following rates:

Business card size \$40
One-half page \$100
Full page \$175

All ads run for a 12-month period. Send camera-ready artwork or neatly printed ad copy to SSEBS, P.O. Box 15014, Tumwater, WA 98511-5014 (please do not use a little piece of scrap paper). Copy and payment received by the third Thursday of the month will appear in the following month's newsletter. Copy changes during the current period will be considered on a case-by-case basis and additional charges – if any – determined at the time of the request. All ads must be paid in full prior to being published. The SSEBS Board of Directors reserves the right to refuse any advertising it deems inappropriate. Questions? Contact Pegg Bauer, Editor.

2009 Meetings

February 13 August 14

April 10 October 9

June 12 December 13 (Sunday) from 1-3PM

As a Society, SSEBS does not endorse the products or services advertised in its newsletter. SSEBS is not responsible for advertisers' claims or products.



**FINE FEATHERS
& FINS**
Cage Bird & Aquarium
Supplies
114 Miller Road Randle, WA
360 497-2160
mews@finefeathers.us
www.finefeathers.us

FOR SALE

Lineolated parakeet babies:

Green young sexed birds -- males \$125, females \$150
Lutino & blue young birds \$200
Green Lutino successful breeding pair \$400

Canaries, Staffords and Colorbreds

Greens, blues, agates, opals, isabels, reds & red mosaic

Fine Feathers and Fins

114 Miller Road, Randle, WA

360-4997-2160

mews@centurytel.net



DEANNA SHAFAR, D.V.M.

Avian Veterinarian

University Place Veterinary Hospital

6715 Regents Blvd. W.
University Place, WA 98466
Telephone: (253) 565-4040
Fax: (253) 460-1244

Office Hours By Appointment
Monday - Saturday

Do you know someone who is interested in birds? If so, give the editor his or her address, and a complimentary newsletter will be sent. The South Sound Exotic Bird Society is pleased to grant permission, upon written request, to other newsletters to reprint articles and features appearing in our newsletter. However, to preserve the integrity of the original article, we all articles and features must be reprinted in full, giving credit to the original author and date of publication. Individual authors may reserve the rights for reprinting their articles; please contact those authors for permission to reprint.

Necropsies and DNA sexing available:

Rocio Crespo, DVM, MS, DVSc, Dip. ACPV
Associate professor, Department of Veterinary Microbiology
and Pathology
Branch Chief, Avian Health & Food Safety Laboratory-WADDL
Washington State University
2607 West Pioneer
Puyallup, WA 98371

Phone: (253) 445-4536
Fax: (253) 445-4544
E-mail: crespor@wsu.edu

A REMINDER: PLEASE NO BIRDS AT MEETINGS

Our contract with the Olympia Center requires that we follow its rule of no animals or birds at meetings unless it is part of a speaker's presentation. This affects the SSEBS insurance policy.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New _____ Renewal _____ Address/phone change _____
NAME(S) _____
MAILING ADDRESS _____

PHONES: Home: _____
Work (if applicable): _____
Cell: _____

EMAIL ADDRESSES: _____

Referred by: _____

Membership type per year:

Junior (under age 18).....\$ 6 _____
Individual.....\$12 _____

Family.....15 _____
Commercial.....\$25 _____

Dues payable to:

South Sound Exotic Bird Society (or SSEBS)
(Returned checks subject to service charge)

Mail to: SSEBS Membership

P.O. Box 15014
Tumwater, WA 98511-5014

Your avicultural interests (please check all that apply):

___ African Greys ___ Amazons ___ Caiques ___ Canaries ___ Cockatiels ___ Cockatoos ___ Conures
___ Doves ___ Eclectus ___ Finches ___ Lories ___ Lorikeets ___ Lovebirds ___ Macaws
___ Parakeets ___ Pionus ___ Roselias ___ Others:

SSEBS is proud to be associated with:

- NORTHWEST EXOTIC BIRD SOCIETY
P.O. Box 47377, Seattle, WA 98146
<http://NWExoticBirdSociety.org>; Email: Info@NWExoticBirdSociety.org
Meetings on the third Thursday of each month
- THE WASHINGTON BUDGERIGAR SOCIETY
2126 Bedal Lane, Everett, WA 98208-2439
<http://mysite.verizon.net/resom1a2WBS1.htm>; Email: swanson28s@verizon.net
Meetings on the first Sunday of every month.
- THE BIRD LOVERS SOCIAL CLUB
(Renton area)
For information, contact: President Julie Corwin, 206-772-1730
Email: blconnection@hotmail.com
http://www.geocities.com/bird_lovers_club/
Events and Educational Programs only – no meetings

SSEBS Meeting Time/Place

SSEBS meetings are **NORMALLY** (but not always!>) held in Room 103 at the Olympia Center, 222 Columbia St NW, Olympia, WA 98501-8208 on the 2d Friday of each month. This can, however, vary – check your newsletter and the website. From I-5, take the Capitol exit, which comes out onto 14th Street. Follow 14th through the tunnel and turn right at the stoplight after you come out of the tunnel onto Capitol Way. Follow Capital Way to State Street. The Olympia Center is just past this intersection on the left (light-colored 2-story building).

SOUTH SOUND EXOTIC BIRD SOCIETY

Pegg Bauer, Editor
Newsletter address only:
8008 Ellison Loop NW
Olympia, WA 98502

