

SUITE NOTES



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Mon.–Sat. 9:30–6:00,
Sun. Noon–5:00



AAV MEMBER

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Bringing Home Baby— Parrots and Babies *Can* Live Together!

By *Brenda Weegman, CVT*

I have been a parrot caregiver for 12 years. Currently, I am “owned” by 2 African Grey parrots, 2 Budgies and a Cockatiel. When my husband and I decided to add a human baby to our flock, we had some concerns about how this would change the dynamics in our household. Thankfully, even though we had not always planned on having a baby, we had already taken steps that would make this change much less stressful.

- **Multiple birds**—Having multiple parrots made the transition of bringing a baby into the home less of a big deal on the birds. They were already used of sharing our attention and had each other as entertainment when my husband and I were busy with the baby.
- **Flight**—While this may not work in every household, I appreciate the fact that our parrots are flighted. Being flighted has given our birds a great sense of independence. They have not come to rely on me or my husband to move them from place to place (especially when I’m stuck in the recliner with a sleeping baby). It also gives the parrots a quick escape now that Hana is crawling and beginning to stand.
- **Playstands**—We have playstands in every room of the house so the birds can be with us and watch what we’re doing without physically being on us. This practice was started long before the baby came along. We set up food and water dishes on the playstands each evening. This has allows me to clean the bird cages in the evening so I don’t have to do that chore in the morning while I’m busy getting baby ready. Playstands also give the parrots a place of their own when the rest of the room is bombarded with baby gear/toys.

Another plus- keeps parrot beaks out of reach of baby’s hands!

- **Adaptability**—Everyone in the house, including the birds, needed to be able to adapt to a new schedule. I normally did everything in the morning (changing papers, fresh food and water, fruits and veggies, etc.) Once the baby came, I had to spread out my chores throughout the day and prepare things for the following day in the evening. There were some days the birds didn’t get their fresh fruits and veggies, other days the cage papers didn’t get changed, but somehow we all survived. (OK, so there are still days like that).
- **Baby sounds CD**—The first time I played the CD, the birds stopped to listen for a moment and that was it. The CD didn’t really phase them after that. Clark, our male African Grey, has come to enjoy the sounds of the real baby Hana squealing and squeals right back at her. I also had my nephews and niece come over to play quite a few times before Hana’s arrival. They took a bit longer for the birds to get used to, as up until that point the birds didn’t have any experience with children.
- **Props**—One prop I used to get the birds ready for our new arrival was an old doll I had as child. While I was pregnant, I would carry the doll around in my arms or in the baby sling as I went about doing my usual chores or while I played the baby sounds CD. While this was not my original intent, doing so gave me practice doing things one-handed. My main concern was potential biting behavior especially in regard to our female African Grey, Sophie. She was our first parrot and for a few

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Avian Suites Updates *We're excited to announce that Brenda Weegman has been promoted to Assistant Manager! We're also celebrating Kitt Pierson's 5th year at Avian Suites.*

Note from Patti:

In 1969, I made my first trip to Denver, Colorado. I experienced a feeling of really being “home” and my heart has always been there in spite of living all but 2 years here in Minnesota! This year is a year of many exciting changes in my life—my husband retired (25 years as an air traffic controller) and my only child, Andrea, graduates from high school (gulp!). My husband has shared my love of Colorado and we are starting a new phase in our life that involves that lovely state. I have been offered a position with the Gabriel Foundation as Director of Avian Welfare beginning in July. I am excited about this job and the challenges of relocation. I'm a little scared, and sad too.

Saying goodbye has never been easy for me. I could not have considered this move had I not had the most phenomenal team of people to take over

Avian Suites! **Brenda Weegman**, CVT will be moving into the position of Manager. **Karen Anderson**, CAS will be moving into the position of Owner! All of your favorite bird care people— **Kitt**, **Traecy**, **Julie**, **Steph**, and **Cathy** are staying on. Avian Suites has been not only a passion but a real ministry for me and I have absolutely been honored to have been part of the team that cares for you and your feathered family members. I will still be part of the Minnesota avian community as my roots are here and so is my extended family! So, while I won't be here on a daily basis, I will still be caring about my special friends (human and feathered!) from afar and keeping up with how things are going. I hope you will join me in embracing these changes and know that the standard of care that you have come to expect from all of us at Avian Suites will not change at all!

Fun in Florida!! Highlights of the NAVC

By Patti Christie, CVT

In January, I was able to attend my first North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, FL. This multi-species veterinary conference had over 14,000 attendees! My husband, **Tom**, had flown out to Denver to drive 22 parrots from **The Gabriel Foundation**, along with a couple staff members down to Orlando to participate in an avian handling and behavior workshop. This 4 day trip in a 32 foot RV was an education in itself! I flew down to meet everyone there and was able to assist **Dr. Brian Speers** (a board certified avian vet from California) and **Julie Murad** (Founder and President of The Gabriel Foundation) with this workshop. The handling workshop was on the first day of the conference so I was able to attend many classes the other 4 days.

Some of the highlights for me were **Dr. Kevin Flammer's** class on avian anatomy and physiology. It was an excellent program and I found it to be one of the best I had attended on the subject. Dr. Flammer presented a class on issues and syndromes in some of the commonly owned parrots by species and also a class on therapeutics and supportive care. **Dr. Michael Murray** did several interesting classes on procedures

in avian practices, diagnostic challenges and feather destructive behaviors. The multi-day program gave me the opportunity to hear many of the well known avian practitioners such as **Dr. Angela Lennox** (IN), **Dr. Lynne Siebert** (WA), **Dr. Karen Rosenthal** (PA), **Dr. Michael Jones** (TN) and the ever popular **Dr. Brian Speers**. A variety of classes covering medical and behavioral issues were available.

Because there were so many different “tracks” of instruction, I was able to attend classes on shelter medicine issues, hoarding syndromes and practice (business) management too. There was so much excellent information presented and I am still reviewing the proceedings books trying to disseminate all that I heard and learned!

Throughout the 5 days we were down there, we cared for the Gabriel Foundation birds. My husband surprised me by being quite helpful with cleaning, feeding and handling all these birds! The “bird room” at the hotel ended up being a very popular place for attendees to come and hang out. It was a phenomenal conference and I am hoping to be able to attend again next year!



2007 National Parrot Festival in Houston

By Karen Anderson, CAS

In January, I traveled once again to Houston, TX for the 7th annual **National Parrot Rescue and Preservation Foundation** (NPRPF) festival. The activities and seminar began on Friday the 26th and ran through Sunday the 28th. This was the third NPRPF conference I have been able to attend. This year's focus was on conservation of parrots in the wild, but also included discussions by several noted experts on pet bird behavior.

Speakers this year included **A. Bennett Hennessey**, Executive Director of the Bolivian Bird Conservation Project, who talked about conservation of the Blue Throated and Red Fronted macaws; **Dr. Donald Brightsmith**, who discussed conservation of Peruvian parrots; **Dr. James Gilardi**, Director of the World Parrot Trust, who brought us up to date on the international trade in wild birds and the current ban on importation of birds by the European Union; **Harry and Phoebe Linden** from the Santa Barbara Bird Farm, who respectively talked about the wild parrots of Santa Barbara, and the development of a well-socialized companion parrot; **Dr. Patricia Macwhirter**, one of only 5 registered specialists in bird medicine in Australia, who spoke about the evolution of birds from dinosaurs; **Dick Schroeder**,

noted longtime lorie breeder and aviculturist; **Mark Stafford**, founder and president of Parrots International who talked about conserving parrots in various areas in South American rainforests; **Bonnie Zimmerman**, Associate Director of Project BirdWatch, who gave a presentation on the parrots of Indonesia; **Dr. Natalie Antinoff** who discussed zoonotic diseases; and **Sally Blanchard** whose topic was Sex and the Single Parrot.

Jill Bell, president of NPRPF, gave a very good demonstration on how to sprout seeds for our parrots. As many of you are aware there is considerable controversy around how much and how often to feed various types of foods to our birds. We are simply presenting this as information. Any owner of any companion bird should be educated on the pros and cons of sprouting as it applies to his/her own bird(s).

As always, there was a terrific variety of vendors of bird foods, toys, etc. and this year I went to the festival with a small suitcase for my clothes and a HUGE suitcase for the stuff I brought back – and I STILL had to have some of it shipped!!

And as always I had a great time and learned a lot more about bird behavior, habitat, husbandry and species.

Avian Suites Staff

Patti Christie,
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Karen Anderson,
CAS

Steph Beard, CVT

Molly Gillespie,
Bird care

Kitt Pierson, CVT

Julie Schmidt,
CAS

**Traecy
Waldschmidt**

Brenda Weegman,
CVT



Check our
website for
updates and
upcoming
events!

SAVE THE DATE!

4th ANNUAL AVIAN BEHAVIOR CONFERENCE

Saturday, October 6, 2007

U of M Conference Center, St. Paul, MN

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Bringing Home Baby *continued from page 1*

months after we adopted Clark, I suffered a few good chomps from her. The time Sophie seemed most likely to bite was when I would offer my hand for her to step up while I was holding Clark in the other hand. Thankfully, I didn't suffer the same consequences while holding the baby doll, but it did give both of us a chance to get comfortable with this new experience.

We also started setting up the baby gear well in advance. This allowed us to put up one thing at a time and give our parrots a chance to slowly adjust to the new transitions.

• **Plan**—Having a plan was the best thing I ever did. Even though Hana came a month before we expected her, I had people “on-call” ready to come in and take care of our birds until my husband was able to bring them up to Avian Suites. Of course, having a place to bring the birds was wonderful as well! Hana was born premature, which added almost two weeks to our hospital stay. This gave us a chance to get settled into the home before bringing the birds home.

We felt we had prepared quite well for the arrival of our baby. We can see there were some things we had not anticipated and we had to reorganize a bit after Hana came home. We find that is just the reality of being parents though! Thankfully the birds gave us some insight into the need for flexibility, adaptability and patience which are necessary characteristics for living with parrots and people!