



## WORLD PARROT TRUST

*Interview:*

### Meredith Toy, Youth Parrot Advocate

Meredith Toy is a dedicated young person who loves parrots. Often in childhood, an interest begins and then wanes, and another takes its place. But with Meredith, one fascination has stuck: parrots! Since 2008 when her family acquired a Grey Parrot, Nelson, she has gone to work increasing her knowledge about the parrots of the world, putting that wisdom to good use educating her peers and raising money for parrot conservation. WPT and *Flock Talk* decided to chat with this determined middle-schooler.

#### *How did you become interested in parrots?*

I became so interested in parrots after I got my African Grey, Nelson. I was reading through the 2008 Parrots magazine when I saw the “Save the Greys” fundraiser. I thought it would be a cool presentation to do for my grade 7 class last year.

#### *What makes parrots so fascinating?*

I think parrots are very fascinating. They are one of the only species which can mimic, they are very beautiful and are extremely smart. For example, my Grey Nelson will knock on his door and say “let me out!” when he wants to come out of his “house.”

#### *What is your favourite parrot and why?*

My favourite parrot would have to be the Green-winged Macaw; the Green-winged Macaw is the second largest only to the Hyacinth. They have magnificent colours and a very powerful beak.

#### *Why do you think parrots need to be saved?*

I think parrots need to be saved because they are very amazing creatures and it was proven that in around 50 years African Greys will be gone for good. Parrots are very special to my family.



*Meredith with her African Grey, Nelson*

#### *You’ve told us about your African Grey, do you have any other parrots? If so, what are they?*

I have two parrots, Nelson and Janner. Janner is a Blue-fronted Amazon. He is a rescue, my parents found him on Kijiji [classified ad] in April of 2012. When we first got him he was in bad shape; he was basically neglected and left in a basement. His toys were hand made out of wood and nails, his feet were badly blistered and he was plucking. He is quite cage aggressive but once he is out of the cage he is a very friendly, loving bird.

#### *Are any of your friends interested in parrots? Since your in-class presentation and fundraiser, have you done other things to raise money for conservation programs?*

I have done a few other things for this fundraiser. I tried to do the presentation this year as well, but my teachers this year said that I was not allowed to do it with my birds. But my little sister and some of her friends are doing it for me. They decided to sell little pipe cleaner animals, for 50 cents each. They have made over \$60 in a week, and are still selling!

*Continued...*



***What gave you the idea to use your African Grey Parrot (Nelson) as part of your classroom fundraiser to save parrots?***

My friends who came to my house saw Nelson and saw how smart he was. We used him in a video for social class and my classmates were very impressed so it seemed the obvious thing to do. And I was interested in doing a fundraiser to raise people's awareness.



*Nelson and Janner*

***Since you gave your talk, do you find you have more of your friends and classmates asking you about parrots?***

There were 25 students in my class last year who met and held Nelson. Since my talk I feel that I have raised awareness in my school by bringing in an actual live parrot; Nelson kept my class well entertained. Since the talk my teacher has rescued a cockatoo, I hope the talk raised awareness and interest in others, too.

***Obviously you know that caring for parrots in our homes can be a lot of fun, but a lot of work as well! Do you have any advice to give to anyone thinking about getting a parrot?***

If anyone is looking to house a parrot, I would tell them to do lots of research. All birds are different just like people; they need time and patience. My mum always thinks of a parrot like a 3-year-old child who needs constant mothering. But it is very, very rewarding. I would also tell people that birds can live as long as humans and it is a lifelong commitment. A parrot is for life, not just for Christmas!



***Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with our readers?***

For anyone reading this article I would like to say that I feel strongly about conserving the parrots in the wild. Nelson and I will continue to do our best to educate people about these wonderful, smart, fascinating creatures. I hope that the following generations will be able to see parrots in their natural environment and they haven't been hunted to extinction. I would also say that if you are considering homing a parrot please do your homework and check out the breeders too and even better consider rehoming a bird in need. I am sad to think that the average parrot gets rehomed so many times in their life, no wonder there are so many out there who need a loving forever home.

***Thank you again for your dedication, Meredith. You are a true inspiration to us all!***