

50 Things a Companion Parrot Owner Should Know About Parrots

by Desi Milpacher

1. A companion parrot needs proper nutrition – do the research before buying the parrot – a good place to start: <https://www.parrots.org/encyclopedia>
2. A companion bird needs fresh water every day
3. Parrots need to be able to get clean – have a bath
4. A parrot needs mental stimulation – things to do – every day
5. A parrot needs to be kept safe – indoors and out
6. Birds need companions – other birds, or you
7. The care of some species of parrots is more challenging than others – see about cockatoos, macaws, lorries and lorikeets at <https://www.parrots.org/encyclopedia>
8. A parrot needs space – keep him in a large enclosure or flight
9. Parrots chew. Some plants are safe for them to chew, some are not – see the WPT Common Household Poisons article: <https://www.parrots.org/reference-library/common-household-poisons1>
10. A companion parrot should be purchased/adopted from a rescue, or a reputable breeder
11. Wild parrots do not make good pets – don't purchase a bird whose origin is unknown
12. Trapping for the wild bird trade and habitat loss are the greatest threats to wild parrots
13. Trapping techniques that are used to catch wild parrots are inhumane
14. Birds caught and transported often die before reaching their destination
15. Wild caught birds can introduce disease into captive populations
16. Wild populations are reduced through trapping, genetic variety and breeding birds are lost, and nest sites are destroyed
17. The continued trapping of species that are known to survive only a few months in captivity (for example, the long-tailed parakeet) results in higher losses of birds
18. Whatever a human child can get into trouble with in the house, a parrot also can, and faster. And it can fly
19. Parrots live a long time in some cases. Make plans for their care after you're gone
20. Always have a plan for your parrot in case of emergency (including fire, earthquake)
21. Always keep your parrot's area (cage, aviary, perch) clean. This will help prevent the spread of disease
22. Monitor daily the health of your companion bird – check for changes in behaviour, appetite, and appearance
23. Have on hand a way to catch an escaped parrot (nets, people to help)
24. Keep a list of phone numbers close at hand (vet, friends who can help, family who can take the bird) for whatever emergency happens
25. Basic training (ie teaching step up/down, or getting the bird to enter a carrier) can help with many other activities (example: going to the vet!)

If adopting a parrot for the first time, ask yourself:

26. Am I willing to devote the time required for the proper care of a parrot?
27. Do I have the physical space to devote to a parrot?
28. Do I fully understand what is involved in caring for parrots, particularly parrots in captivity?
29. Realizing that parrots are very different from cats or dogs, am I willing to learn about parrot behaviour as best I can?
30. Do I have a family? Children? How will this impact them? The parrot?
31. If I have health issues am I physically able to look after a parrot?
32. If the parrot is noisy, how will this impact my family? Nearby residents?
33. Will the parrot be comfortable with different family members?
34. Will the parrot get the attention it requires?
35. Will the parrot receive the veterinary care it requires? Is there an avian (parrot) vet nearby?
36. Will I always try to do what's best for the parrot?

50 Things a Companion Parrot Owner Should Know About Parrots

37. Is my house parrot-safe? Am I willing to make it so?
38. Will the parrot be outside or in? For the area I live, which is safer?
39. Will my parrot be flighted, or will it have its wings clipped?
40. Buy or adopt healthy (vet-checked) birds
41. Is pet insurance an option?

If you find yourself having trouble making ends meet and you have a companion parrot:

42. **We all need to eat.** See if you can make a deal for your dry food with your local pet store - if you buy bulk they may provide a discount. You can then freeze it – most extruded pellet foods can be stored in this manner for up to a year
43. **They need something to do.** Toys needn't be expensive, either. A lot of fun can be generated using bird-safe, inexpensive items from around the home. And some pet toy suppliers will sell parts in bulk as well
44. **They need a place to call home.** If you have more than one bird you may house them in a separate building altogether. Providing lighting and heat can be expensive – and can be partially solved by installing solar panels and skylights. These are initially a bit costly, but pay for themselves over the long run and are greener
45. **They need something fresh to eat.** Growing your own fruit and vegetables (organically of course), buying locally or getting clean, older produce from larger grocers (so long as you use them immediately) is less costly and greener. And it's better for your birds
46. **Home, part 2.** Keeping your aviary at a slightly cooler temperature (around 16-17C; acclimatize them to this of course) if they are not breeding will help lower costs
47. **Out on a limb.** Use bird-safe (unsprayed, non-poisonous) wood for perches and browse found around your own property (no poaching of park trees now!)
48. **Ye olde barter system.** If you know of other parrot owners who excel at certain parrot related activities, you could employ a barter-and-exchange system (say, you grow the organic veggies in exchange for some toys or pet sitting). This can only be done if all parties involved (birds, people and other pets alike) are completely healthy, to reduce the risk of transmitting disease
49. **Home, part 3.** If you can manage it, try building your aviary into a hill so that heating and cooling costs can be further reduced
50. **Last but not least: Love, love, love your companion birds!**

Sources:

Article “**Beginner’s Guide to Parrot Keeping**”, D. Milpacher, World Parrot Trust <http://www.parrots.org/>

Article “**Don’t Buy Wild Caught Parrots**”, World Parrot Trust <http://www.parrots.org/>

Article “**Keeping Up Care for Pets in Financially Troubled Times**”, D. Milpacher, World Parrot Trust <http://www.parrots.org/>