



PHOTO BY BOB BRONSON

Buddy and Alyce Russell
of Andersen's Pet Shop

Feathered Friends

Birds do make charming pets. They can be friendship for the lonely or entertainment to a busy household. Not only are birds lovely to look at but they can be comical, loving and endearing. Some are natural gymnasts while others sing beautiful songs. Many birds can be trained to talk, enjoy being handled and warm your heart with their antics.

Choosing the "right" bird for your household will save you from disappointment and the bird from disaster. Before you buy plan wisely and educate yourself.

First time buyers often make the mistake of buying a "pretty bird". Not learning what that bird's general personality traits are or his basic needs can spell trouble. Balancing your needs and the bird's equals a fulfilling relationship.

TIME

Start with how much time you have to spend with the pet. Some birds are content to stay in their cage while others require a great deal of interaction and play time. Any new addition to the family gets a great deal of initial attention but as time passes so can the interest. Many of the birds in the parrot family do not adapt well to lack of attention and can become noisy and troublesome when ignored.

What type of diet does the bird require? Seed alone is no longer an acceptable diet for any bird but does the bird require your cooking his food or chopping his fruits and vegetables? Many birds can share your diet (provided it is healthful) and eating together can be quite fun! This takes time.

How about cleaning of the cage and/ or playpens. A bird housed in a cage is far less time consuming to clean than a parrot

who requires toys, ladders and play pens to be happy.

Will you need to train this bird? This can require not only time with the bird but the reading of books and articles and spending time with knowledgeable sales people. Training a bird is most rewarding and makes for a close friendship with your feathered friend.

ACTIVITY

Inquire as to how active is the bird? Is he a gymnast? Does he require being handled and allowed to roam? Are you looking for a bird to cuddle or an active explorer? Maybe just a bird to sit and look pretty! They are all different.

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FAMILY

What is your household like? Do you have a large noisy family? Some birds, like the parrots, will scream along with the noise and even strive to be the loudest, while others may be terrorized by the commotion. Noisy birds do not do well in apartments where they can bother neighbors.

Not all birds do well with children and not all children do well with birds. Act accordingly!

SIZE

A large beak, usually accompanied by a large body, can be intimidating. Smaller birds are usually easier to handle for first time buyers.

Keep in mind that a large bird needs more cage space and more space for that cage. Birds are happiest when they have ample space to move around in.

MONEY

How much do you have to spend? Keep in mind that more expensive birds can add up to more expenses not only initially but upkeep as well.

Spend the money initially to insure the bird has what is necessary to give him a happy life.

CONCLUSION

Always start with a healthy bird, again from a reputable pet store or breeder. Ask questions about the specific bird you are interested in and make your interests and living situations known. Buy books for reference and general care of the bird you are buying. Find a vet, before an emergency who is specifically trained in birds. If you are purchasing an exotic - take the bird for an exam to insure his health.

Do not buy on impulse! Take your time, get educated and be responsible.

Commit your time and love to your pet and as always you'll get back more than you give.

Next issue: Cockatiels As Pets.

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