



News from the Birdlink Sanctuary, Inc.

Wings and Things

By Jackie Smith, Board Member

In previous newsletters, we examined the pros and cons of keeping a companion bird's wings clipped. What if your bird has begun to pluck her feathers for one reason or another? What if you are fostering or have adopted a bird that plucks?

Not that long ago, I adopted a Jardine Macaw named Joocey, from Birdlink Sanctuary. I loved her the minute I saw her and she responded to me with astounding courage considering the circumstances from which she came. She had been with the same human companion for many years. He was elderly and died having made no provisions for Joocey. She was passed around from one family member to another, but not one of them knew how to care for a bird, nor were they interested in her. She was neglected, and in her grief (yes, sadly, birds grieve), she began to pluck her feathers. When she was finally surrendered to Birdlink, her chest was completely bare as was the top of her back. When I was blessed with adopting her, she came timid, but hopeful (you can just tell these things :)). I knew it was possible Joocey would not re-feather, but as long as she was happy in the environment I could provide for her, and with the love I felt for her, all would be well.

I began to give feathers quite a bit of thought. Feathers, wing feathers being preferred, were used as pens during the 6th to 19th centuries. Feathers were considered symbolic of communication and thought. Feathers/wings allow flight, but there are birds that have feathers but don't fly; the ostrich and the penguin, for example. They don't suffer with their limitations. As humans, we associate feathers with flight, the ability to soar. However, without feathers, we can soar as high as we can imagine.

Was it necessary for Joocey to fly? She would never be threatened, didn't need to fly in search for food, or to find somewhere safe to sleep. She wasn't confined to her cage, in fact, spent all of her day wandering around inside and out of it.

Her lack of feathers did not inhibit her ability to communicate - she was very capable of making her needs and desires crystal clear with them.



If she had been a fully feathered Jardine, she would have been absolutely beautiful. However, feathered or not, the beauty of her personality was brilliant and far outshined her lack of feathers. She talked, she laughed, she loved to be held, and her dancing was worthy of Dancing With The Stars.

My experience with Joocey further reminded me that beauty comes from within, and unconditional love overlooks all exterior appearances. I will always be grateful for her. Sadly, Joocey passed away earlier this year.

Stop Your Bird from Plucking Feathers

By Melody Milam Potter PhD.

Several parrots at the Sanctuary have come to us having been plucking out many or most of their feathers for many years. Since plucking can damage the root of the feather, prolonged plucking can mean the feathers will never grow back.

Plucking is not the same as moulting. Parrots moult their feathers twice a year, Spring and Fall, and then new feathers come in to replace them. Moulting, however, does not leave patches of bare skin like plucking does. Plucking is abnormal and, if a parrot begins plucking, the specific reason for the bird's behavior should be explored and addressed promptly.

Causes of Plucking

Sexual Maturing. Just like teenagers, parrots experience wild hormone imbalances. And like teenagers, they may not understand their motivations and needs especially if they don't have other birds of their own kind to learn from. This source of plucking requires giving the parrot extra attention and probably help breaking the habit.

Abuse/Neglect. Many individuals who purchase parrots fail to understand that parrots need a lot of attention and



care. The bird may be neglected because of the owner's busy schedule or lack of interest in the bird. The parrot may be removed from the family area because of screeching or other negative habits developed as a result of neglect. Bringing in a companion bird or making the effort to spend more contact time with the bird may help. Spending more time handling and cuddling the bird every day can ease emotional upset and loneliness.

Nutritional Deficiency. Parrots require a diet strong in nutrition. Low levels of protein or, in some cases, fat, may result in the bird eating his feathers for the missing nutrients. A plucking parrot should have a visit to the avian veterinarian and blood tests to determine if diet is the cause. Then the dietary requirements for the specific parrot should be researched and a healthy diet provided.

Cramped Quarters. Since many parrots spend most of their time in a cage, their housing should be large enough for them to spread their wings without touching anything, play with their toys, and move around easily. Within reason, a cage cannot be too big and bigger is generally better.

Boredom. Lack of stimulation causes plucking more frequently than any other reason. A parrot's IQ is comparable to that of a 3-4 year old child. Birds that are left in their cages with no toys or entertainment will pluck out of boredom. Parrots need plenty of toys, pieces of wood to chew, and a radio or TV left on to hold their interest when they are left alone for long periods.

Notes from Wookie Woo:

Hi Bird Lovers,

Our Birdlink humans are creating a YouTube Channel of the ANTICS of me and my exotic bird friends. I know your bird can put on a show, too. Please share your video of your birdie being clever, hysterical, naughty, sassy, or just being a "little toot". Be sure to use the **Creative Commons License** so our humans can take the best clips and mold them into an entertaining movie for raising funds.

Upload your video and send the URL link to videos@birdlink.org

Be sure to subscribe to the Birdlink YouTube Channel: youtube.com/BirdlinkSanctuary

Upset/Broken Routine. Most animals, and parrots especially like and feel secure with a routine. If the routine is abruptly changed because they are moved, they lose a loved one, or there is family crisis, birds can begin plucking out of frustration. Re-establishing the former routine as much as possible and increased cuddling and support for the bird can help.

Mate plucking. Sometimes a mate can become too enthusiastic in their grooming efforts and pluck a bird's head and neck bald. Separation of one bird into another, closely positioned cage can allow the plucked feathers to grow back.

Habit. After an extended time, plucking can become a habit, like nail biting in humans. The bird can continue to



pluck out feathers even if placed in an ideal situation. At this point, the bird may need training or treatment to remedy the behavior. Making a vest for the parrot can help stop the behavior while the feathers grow back on the bird's chest. The vest should be a rectangle that covers the bird's chest down to his vent, with three sets of ties, one around the neck, one under the wings to be tied on his back, and the last between his legs and then tied up around the tail. Cut a V around the vent to prevent excrement buildup. A stiff wide V collar around the bird's neck that prevents plucking may help temporarily, but can also create additional frustration in the bird.

Medical Issues. Fungus and mold in the bird's area can cause infections that irritate skin or lungs. Aspergillus in

the parrot can cause plucking and other types of self-injury, but can be treated effectively with anti-fungal medications. Additionally, the bird's cage should be moved to a drier area or the source of the excess moisture removed.

Other Corrective Treatments

Breaking the habit, once the cause has been corrected, may involve spraying the parrots feathers with a distasteful solution like mustard and water. However, make sure the spray isn't painful for the bird's bare skin. Aloe vera juice mixed half and half with water for spraying the bird can reduce irritation on the skin and help remove dander.

Encourage the bird to take a bath in a bowl of clean water everyday or spray the bird lightly from above the cage to simulate rainfall. Or take the parrot into the shower daily and make it a pleasurable shared experience.

(Sources: petparrot.com and aviancollar.com)



“A plucking parrot should have a visit to the avian veterinarian and blood tests...”

An Adventure Worth Sharing, An interview with Haley Bowles, Birdlink Sanctuary's dedicated intern.

Written by Ramsey Moore.

At Birdlink Sanctuary, all of our volunteers, administrators, and supporters are fond of birds –if you're currently reading this, chances are that you are fond of birds, yourself! As the saying goes, although we come for the birds, we often stay for the fellow bird-lovers and friends who make Birdlink possible.

This past week, I arrived at the Sanctuary for lunch with a small handful of present board-members and volunteers. Sitting at the dining room table was a young woman with an accumulation of curly black hair atop her head – I had met her before at prior events, namely Birdlink's abode at Weatherford's First Monday, yet I still didn't know much at all about Haley Bowles.

At the lunch table, Haley actively participated in group discussion: submitting ideas, commenting, and helping to solve issues pertaining to fundraising and donations. Composed and professional, the young woman seemed to observe situations and, with the help of a young and creative mind, produce solutions and add thoughts to our cumulating 'brainstorm' list. After lunch had passed, and everyone began to go about their lives once more, I sat down with Haley Bowles to find out more about her.

Born and raised in Burleson, Texas, Haley has always been an animal-lover; even now, a plethora of her family members are four legged! No, there are no four-legged Human mutations – just a dachshund/schnauzer mix (Bailey), two ferrets (Zoey and Carlos), another dachshund (Daisy-May), an iguana (Sara), a horse, cats, fish, and even a walking stick named Nope (pronounced: "no-pay"). Considering her contact with animals growing up, it wasn't surprising when I found out that she is in her senior year at Tarleton University in Wildlife Management, and is minoring in Biology, with an emphasis on becoming a certified wildlife biologist.

Sitting alone together (not counting the occasional passing-by's of Lani, Birdlink's notorious Hyacinth Macaw), Haley seemed much more talkative, and showed a more fun-loving side common to others her age; she enjoys "hanging out with friends" (though her age of twenty-one suggests what that might mean), going two-stepping every Thursday, eating free lunch at church on Wednesdays, and is an employee at Natty Flat Smokehouse. The story of how she came to Birdlink is an inter-



Haley feeding a fawn and a baby starling.

esting one; Haley first heard about the Sanctuary from a woman at Weatherford's Farmers' Market, and began to volunteer at Birdlink for about six months, as well as doing a case study on Pepper, a resident African Grey at the Sanctuary. When Haley was tasked by her university to intern at a wildlife organization, it was obvious to her where she wanted to intern: she has been interning at the Sanctuary for five weeks now, and sees no end in sight, as she wishes to continue to volunteer at the Sanctuary even after her interning hours have been completed.

So what's a typical day at Birdlink like for Haley? Instead of following her around for hours with a note pad and camera in hand, I decided it might be more efficient and less time-costly to just ask her to explain. The list seemed to go on forever, and my admiration for Haley's hard work grew as things such as maintenance, trimming beaks & wings, socializing with the birds, and feeding were laid out before me. However, a "day at Birdlink" is never just a "day at Birdlink" – Haley has also been known to chase down and catch alpacas, save the life of a wounded deer, and feed a high-maintenance (but adorable) baby starling. As seen when she was contributing ideas during lunch, Haley helps Birdlink Sanctuary with fund-raising ideas as well, and even makes bird-toys and ornaments to sell for donations at Weatherford's First Monday. The busy college-student posts regularly on Birdlink's Facebook page, and is now writing articles for our monthly newsletter.

So what's in Haley's future? Taken from her personal Facebook page, here's a convenient "bucket list":

1. Visit Australia and scuba-dive the Great Barrier Reef.
2. Hold a baby Orangutan.
3. Graduation from Tarleton.
4. Ride a 'four-wheeler'. (check!)
5. Go mudding. (check!)
6. Go sky-diving.
7. Ride a jetski.

Haley told me that she hopes to come out of her work at Birdlink with enough knowledge that she can find a major-related job just after receiving her Bachelor's Degree; if not, then she plans to get her Master's Degree and work hands-on with birds and mammals, with prominence on handling and being closely-involved with the animals (perhaps a rehabilitator).

As I closed up our casual interview, I was glad to know more about the intern I had scarcely met before; Haley might have been business-like and composed when she needed to be, but I picked up on an underlying personality of independence and strength, and confidence in her own abilities, thoughts, and ideas.

So where can you go to read more about Haley Bowles? In addition to posting on Birdlink's Facebook page, Haley has her own blog and journal about her volunteering and interning practices at Birdlink Sanctuary; it is called "An Adventure Worth Sharing", and she can be found there posting updates on her work and experiences at the Sanctuary.

<http://haleybowles.tumblr.com/>



“...a ‘day at Birdlink’ is never just a ‘day at Birdlink’...”

Notes from our Sanctuary intern, Haley.

by Haley Bowles

A typical day for me as an intern typically involves feeding, watering, and cleaning cages. I am fortunate, though, that every now and again, "birds" of a different type come our way. This time, it wasn't a bird I was feeding but, instead, a baby deer. Henry, as I named the young buck, was found lying in someone's front yard for two days before Jim was called to pick him up.



When we arrived, Jim and I could tell that Henry was on the brink of death. I picked up the little buck and instead of trying to flee, he was limp and almost lifeless. Back at the sanctuary, I worked on getting him re-hydrated. After a few hours, little Henry was not only holding his head up, but was trying to stand and run away. Jean and I took him to another sanctuary that had permits to raise him until release.

In my "free" time at the sanctuary, I like to stay in the aviary with a mixed variety of our friendliest birds: Merlin, a Severe Macaw, Munchie, a Sun Conure, three Amazons, a Moluccan Cockatoo named Buddy, Abby and Spice, two Eclectus parrots, four Goffin Cockatoos, and three African Greys named Pepper, Connor, and Eragon. Al, one of the Goffins, loves to be held close and petted under the wing. Snuggles, another Cockatoo, wants to be perched on me, while Buddy loves to be held near my body, and Red, an Amazon, is happy sitting on my shoulder. I love giving them attention, because they show me how funny they can be. Snuggles is a big talker and he says more new words every time I'm there.

Coming Next Month!

Dr. Melody Potter, a sanctuary Board Member has written a book for individuals adopting birds. *Nurturing Your Secondhand Parrot* provides the new owner the basic tools for keeping a parrot healthy and happy, but goes further to discuss the unique issues and needs of a parrot that has lost his family. The experience of the caretakers at BirdLink make this book an invaluable addition to any bird owners library. The book will be offered either by download or snail mail. Dr. Potter is author and co-author of 5 other books and is in practice as a clinical and forensic psychologist.

Watch the Birdlink site for availability in the next few weeks ~ birdlink.org

Birdlink's Avian Hotel offers qualified birdsitting services.

Birdies staying at the sanctuary's Avian Hotel located in the beautiful Weatherford, Texas, countryside receive superior, qualified, and competent care from our founders, volunteers, and interns while loved ones are away. The Gibsons have rehabilitated and nurtured birds of all kinds for over 25 years. Please contact Jean Gibson at 817-269-0038 for information about our birdsitting services at budget-friendly prices.



Who are We?

Birdlink Sanctuary is a 501(C)(3) Non-Profit Texas Corporation, for rescue birds and animals, with 20+ years of experience in wildlife and companion animal rehabilitation. We are located in Weatherford, Texas. Our five acres of land has become a temporary and permanent sanctuary for all manner of feathered and furry friend in need. We benefit greatly from our volunteers and local community. Come out and see us at one of our many outreach events or visit us online!

birdlink.org

[facebook.com/birdlink](https://www.facebook.com/birdlink)

twitter.com/birdlink

Jean & Jim Gibson

Recent upgrades at Birdlink!



New garden planted by our volunteers!



The new conure flight, full up!