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Dear Toolady.com Family,

In ***My Human, My Slave***, the avian authors, Echo and Dust Bunny, introduced you to their methods of training the perfect human slave. This is a totally new way of approaching the relationship between Avians and Humans. With the success of the book orders, it appears to be a method long overdue.

Previously, all training books have been written from the human viewpoint. We thought it was time for the humans to learn what the birds think and for humans to have a source of constantly improving information and resources. This concept we created, is a series of books, like this one, on bird-related subjects, written by the birds themselves, that will make learning about bird behavior and care more fun.

In ***My Human, My Slave***, you met Echo and Dust Bunny, and then in ***Guide to Birdie First-Aid***, you were introduced to Asia. In this book, the second of the series of informational books written by members of my flock, you meet Killian as he tells you all of the reasons birds may bite, and suggests ways for you to avoid being bitten as well as ways to teaching birds not to bite.

As more flock members are added (Through our ***Echo's Haven Bird Rescue***) new birds will be able to write about their particular specialties.

In this, our second year, Toolady.com has stepped up our efforts to bring you all the information you will ever need for your bird's continued health. We have added over eleven new experts, FREE web sites for birds, articles, chat boards and other things too numerous to name. We are here to make the effort to ensure that ALL captive birds live with humans that are well trained in avian subjects and that the humans ALWAYS have a place to go to have questions answered quickly.

Please keep this book readily accessible. While this topic may not be life threatening, it is important to the happiness of your home.
Thank you from the flock.

Echo, Asia, Maya, Rosie, Dust Bunny, Lint, Killian, Siobhan and Toolady (aka Elizabeth Aaron and Gail Martin)

To go to **MY HUMAN, MY SLAVE**

<http://www.toolady.com/books/MyHumanMySlave/index.htm>

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Presents:

A Guide To Birdie Biting

By:

Killian Pionus

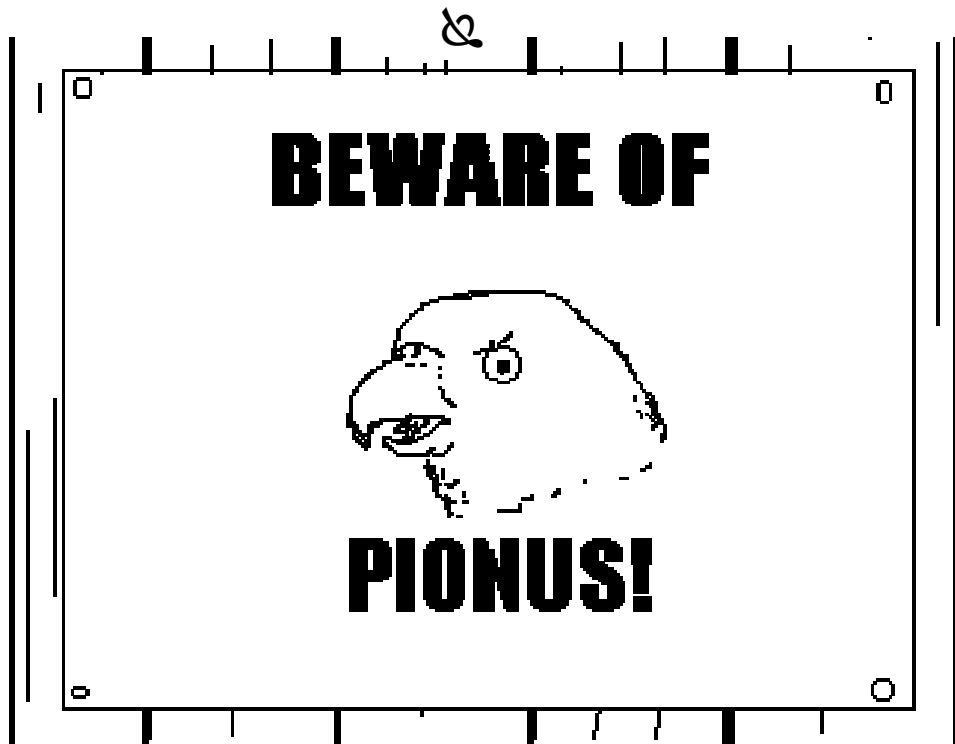


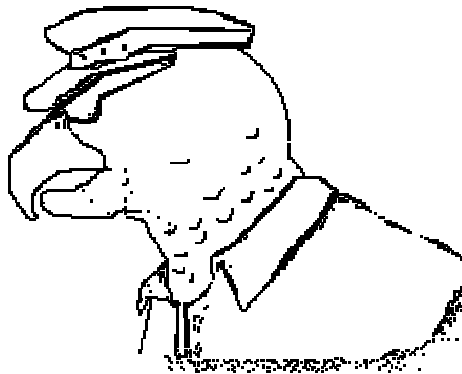
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Introduction

To follow my friend Asia's excellent start, I would like to discuss another topic, that due to the considerations of time and human patience, may not have gotten the coverage it deserved within the pages of "My Human, My Slave", written by Echo Bird, Dustbunny 'Too, and Elizabeth Aaron (Toolady). That topic, of course, would be biting. Our human slaves seem to live in fear of one of us biting them, and, having seen what Maya's beak can do to a metal dog chain, who can blame them?

The rest of the flock insists that I should be the one to write this book on biting because, according to our mama/slave, I specialize in nipping people. Due to this supposed behavior perceived by my flockmates, it falls to me to explain the numerous reasons why we birdies may bite. Contrary to our slaves' popular beliefs, a large majority of the time we aren't biting because we are mean, vicious, or enjoy inflicting pain. Birdies are not generally into S&M.



Note from Siobhan: "Don't listen to him, Killian is a meanie and I think that he bites me just because he thinks it's fun!"

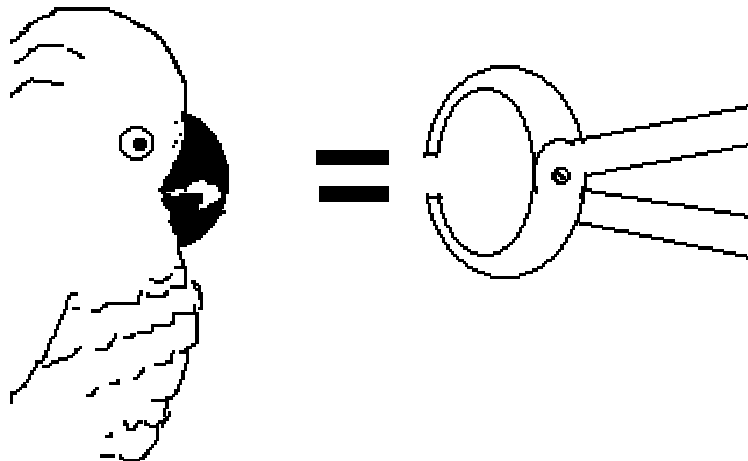
Like our human slaves, we birdies are creatures not only of verbal communication, but also of body language. We use our beaks to explore our surroundings and our environments. We use our beaks to express how we are feeling and what we want. Some of the larger birdies also use their beaks as

a sort of third foot to climb things, to hold nuts and toys, to grasp, or to “step up”.

Birdies bite for a number of reasons, and though many of us are skilled at human speech, none of us are skilled enough to explain to our humans exactly why we are doing it. What I would like to do in this booklet is discuss the reasons why otherwise very sweet birdie masters sometimes bite their human slaves. I will also discuss some of the body language that can signal that a bite is forthcoming, and I will offer some suggestions on preventing biting that will hopefully make your life with your slave much easier.

Anatomy of a Bird's Beak

Before I get started explaining the reasons why we bite, I would like to give a brief anatomy of a birdie's beak. Our beaks are made of keratin, just like a human's fingernails. Our beaks have two basic parts, the upper mandible and the lower mandible. The mandibles are hinged to our skulls giving the upper and lower mandibles separate vertical movement. Our beaks grow continuously, so we need a constant source of chewing to wear down our beaks and keep them in good condition. We can produce a lot of pressure when pressing our upper and lower mandibles together, so cracking nuts is as easy as pie. As I mentioned earlier, in the larger birdies, the beak is strong enough to bite through a metal doggie chain, and in one instance that I have heard of, an upset Hyacinth hen actually broke a man's radius. (This is one of the two long bones in the forearm.)



Reasons We Birdies Bite

There are many reasons why we birdies might bite our human slaves. All parrots bite occasionally, some more than others. Even a birdie master who has been with his/her slave since hatching will occasionally find a reason to bite. Unfortunately, our humans seem to view being bitten as a betrayal on the master's part, and not as the natural event that it is.

In the cumulative experience of our flock, as well as that of the other birdies we've spoken with, there are nine main reasons why a birdie might bite his/her slave. These reasons are:

- ☒ Fear
- ☒ Protective Instinct
- ☒ Hormones
- ☒ Over Grooming or Too Much Attention
- ☒ Frustration or Boredom
- ☒ Displacement
- ☒ Dominance
- ☒ Youth
- ☒ Pathophysiological

Within the following section I will discuss each of these causes in depth, along with some general signs for your slave to look for, and ways for your slave to possibly prevent being bitten. I will also touch briefly on how some of a birdies reasons for biting actually roughly parallel similar behavior in human children.

Fear

Fear, or defense, biting is found in almost all species of creatures, why should we be any different? The reason for this type of behavior should be very obvious. If a birdie finds him/herself in a situation that can be perceived as threatening, and escape is not an option, then he/she will stand and fight. To the poor frightened master, this seems to be a fight for

his/her very survival. It's not hard to see why this kind of biting is so frequently found. While we are of course much smarter than our human slaves, they are much larger and let's face it size really does matter. Without meaning to, any of our humans could inflict a lot of damage on the parrot master, a fact that has to frequently be on the minds of some of our smaller cousins such as Budgies, Lorikeets, and Cockatiels. Below I discuss a few facets of fear caused biting.

- ⊗ Territoriality
- ⊗ Strangers
- ⊗ Environment
- ⊗ Unexpected Noise or Movement
- ⊗ Abuse

Territoriality

There are a number of things that can make a parrot feel threatened or nervous. One of the worst things is having our territory invaded. Many of us get very territorial around our cages. After all, a lot of us spend most of our time in our cages, and they tend to become our own private places. I know that this is the main time that I try to bite my human, when she is trying to take me off of the top of my cage, or if she walks too close by and startles me. (Siobhan only runs away and makes the mama chase her around the top of her cage.) If we train our humans to always approach us gently when we are in our cages, and not try to make direct eye contact, we will find that we won't wind up biting them nearly so often.



Birdies tend to be **very** possessive of their cages. Because we spend so much time in them, they become our castles so to speak. If we perceive a threat to our territory, i.e. a person too close, or a new person walking nearby, we will bite to protect our home.

Strangers

New people are very scary to us birdies. We are comfortable with our people and we trust them, but we don't know or trust anybody new very easily. A lot of wild-caught masters are afraid of hands, and have to slowly teach themselves to accept touching, petting and care from their slaves. Some of us also tend to strongly bond with our slaves and regard new people as a threat to that relationship. Due to this tendency, some humans may regard us as "one person" birds; this is just not true. We have to be slowly acclimated to new people, but with time we can come to



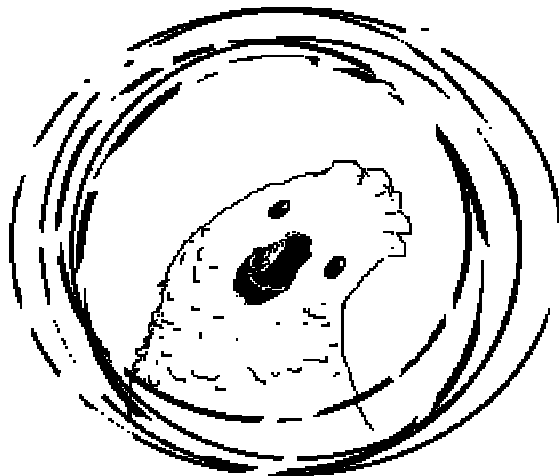
trust them, and after all, the more people we let hold us, the more petting and wing scratches we get. One slave has actually come up with a wonderful game to help a birdie get used to lots of people, this game is called "Pass the Bird". What is involved is this; all of the humans sit on the floor in a circle, each of them is then trained in the correct way to hold, pet and speak to a birdie. Then the birdie master is passed from slave to slave. Each of the slaves, before being graced with the parrot's presence, speaks softly in a soothing pleasant voice to the birdie, telling him/her how pretty and wonderful he/she is, then the human asks the master to "step up". Once actually holding the birdie, the human will pet, reassure, and praise the birdie master. Playing this game with your human should, over time, help you to get used to being around new people. This game also has the added benefit of training lots of humans to be good slaves at the same time. (Think of it as sort of an obedience school for humans.)

Note from Echo: "I have never really had a large problem with new people, but that is because my mama/slave constantly had me with her around lots of people. My flockmate Rosie is truly what people might call a mama's bird, striking out at anybody new."

Environment

Any serious changes in our environment can also make us very nervous birdies. If the temperature gets too hot, too cold, or really changes in any way, it can put us on edge. Unfamiliar objects or sounds are also a source of fear to us. Sometimes our human slaves unintentionally try to force us to approach new things, unfortunately this can result in our slaves getting bitten. We need to make it perfectly clear to our slaves that while we are not adverse to new things, and indeed in the case of new toys we welcome them, we need to be introduced to new items gradually, preferably by deciding to explore them on our own.

A lot of parrots react badly when their humans have been drinking. The intake of alcohol tends to alter a slave's actions, manner and voice. This tends to give the birdie master a sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity. This can cause the birdie to feel threatened and to bite. Really, slaves should be trained to stay away from us when they have been drinking. (Anyway, who out there really wants to smell booze breath?)

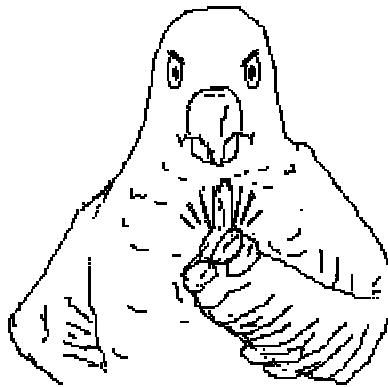


Unexpected Noise or Movement

Unexpected noises or sudden movements, while not truly fear inspiring, are certainly startling to any of us and can be cause for biting our slaves. To me this plainly shows that the "earthquake" or "wobble" method of gently shaking their arms or our perches that some humans use is going to backfire most of the time. Humans do this to dissuade us from biting, and can actually cause that very thing instead. Unfortunately this also has the added effect of possibly causing us to distrust our slaves, leading to us biting them more frequently. It can turn into a nasty spiral.

Abuse

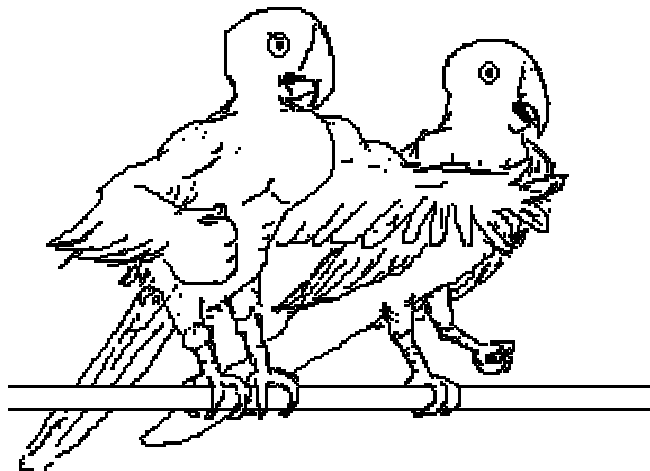
Abuse is an extreme source of fear caused biting. Abuse can be defined as anything that does physical or emotional harm to you, the birdie master. This can be dropping you suddenly to the floor, hitting you, or even shaking you too hard. Honestly though, if this is your reason for biting your slave, more power to you. We are not toys or punching bags, and just as our slaves don't like us taking our problems out on them, we don't need them taking their problems out on us. If your human abuses you, bite him/her hard, draw blood if you can, and hope for better luck in your next home, because obviously this particular human is untrainable.



The best way for our slaves to avoid being bitten by us due to fear, is to try and avoid those situations and objects that cause any type of adverse reaction in us. Unless it is for medical treatment, we should not be pinned down or made to feel trapped in any way. Our humans should be taught to always approach us carefully, and with the respect they hopefully give to each other. They should also work with us in trying to learn that not all perceived threats are truly menaces.

Protective Instinct

Another common reason that birdies bite their slaves is the protective instinct we all have towards our mates. A lot of us are not lucky enough to have birdie mates in our homes, so we start to regard our humans as those mates. In the wild, when danger threatens, we will bite our mates to try and drive them away from the trouble. Unfortunately for our slaves' skins, we tend to perceive unfamiliar people, new members of the flock, and any of their new pets as posing threats to their safety and react accordingly. Unless given time to adjust to what we feel to be a dangerous situation, we will bite our slaves to chase them away from the danger. We may also try to bite the person or animal that is creating the threat as well.



Another way this protective instinct manifests is when in the presence of our birdie mates. Birdies will bite when in the presence of our mates. Just as we try to protect our humans from the dangers around them, we try to protect our birdie mates from the dangers that we perceive to

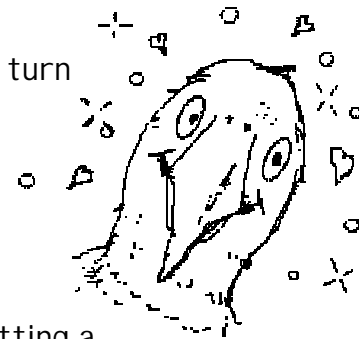
them from our humans. This does not mean that we feel our humans are not trustworthy; this is just a response that is hardwired into us from birth.

It is really best for us to train our slaves early on to try to avoid these situations. If that isn't possible, then we certainly need to teach them to give us ample time to adjust to the new person, flock member, pet, or object. Given enough time to adjust, hopefully the new situation will no longer seem so threatening, and therefore there will be no need to protect our "mate".

Hormones

Hormone changes can trigger aggressiveness and biting in a birdie master in a big way. These hormone changes start to occur when we begin to go through our version of adolescence. (Some humans call this our terrible twos, as if it were some disease.) As in our human slaves, this new rush of hormones, that until now have been dormant, can cause a birdie to display tenseness, moodiness and an irritability which may lead to biting and other rather negative behaviors, especially if the human slave persists in disturbing the birdie master. I have it on good authority that these hormonal changes have a similar effect on human adolescents, so you would think that our slaves would be more tolerant, especially since at least we don't wreck the family car.

Quite a few slaves complain that when we masters reach sexual maturity, all of a sudden we turn unpredictably aggressive, and that they suffer unprovoked bites on their faces. The solution to this problem is so simple that it seems silly to even mention it. All that needs to be done is to train our slaves not to let us near their faces. It should be made very obvious to our slaves that putting a bird that close to their faces can foolhardy, dangerous, and not at all good for the master/slave relationship. Of course this does mean that the birdie master's days of being carried on his/her slave's shoulder are over, but there are other ways for the birdie to be with his/her slave without running the risk of biting and getting put in birdie jail.



Another time these hormone changes are rather prevalent in us is during breeding season. These changes afflict both sexes of birdies, not just the hens, an arrangement that humans don't quite seem to grasp. No matter how approachable, playful or touchable we birdies (Pets or breeders) may be normally, during breeding season all bets are off. This especially holds true for a broody hen. No matter how sweet a hen is normally, if she is sitting on a nest full of eggs, it's best for everyone involved to just leave her alone.



Any human slaves disturbing one of our girls at this time, is likely to loose body parts. The moodiness caused by hormonal changes at these times, also has a parallel in our human slaves, or at least the women, called PMS. Human women go through this every month and probably wish they could bite someone too.

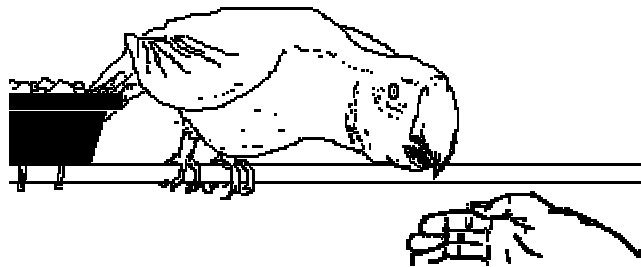
The best way for our slaves to avoid being bitten as these times is a rather simple one. Again, the main thing that seems to be required here is for your slave to learn all of the signs of moodiness and the wish to be alone, and to respect those wishes.

Over Grooming or Too Much Attention

Almost all of us birdies enjoy being petted or stroked. In the wild, mates, siblings, and flockmates all do this for us. It is a way of enhancing socialization and the pair bonding in birdies getting ready to breed. In the slightly less wild world of the parrot/master, human/slave relationship, our humans fulfill a great part of this need in us. However, prolonged periods of grooming or attention can make a birdie very restless. We are very active

creatures, and sitting still for a very long period of time quickly becomes irritating.

Once again, this is a matter of teaching our slaves the signs of not wanting to be petted anymore. Wiggling to get away, snapping the head around towards the human's hand, or just moving away are all signs that a birdie master has had enough for now. I have been told that our cousins, the Blue and Gold Macaws, have a particular intolerance for prolonged petting sessions. I have yet to discover whether this is a specific skin sensitivity in Blue and Golds, or since these birdies are usually very boisterous and active, just intolerance for prolonged periods of inactivity. Whatever the reason, it seems that with these large cousins, a little bit of affection from their slaves goes a very long way.



Another thing that seems to get more slaves bitten by their birdie masters, is trying to play with us when we are otherwise occupied. We are all a fun loving bunch, but if we are already occupied with something, we don't want our humans bothering us with silly games. When we want to play. We are well able to let our humans know. Too often our slaves attempt to approach us to play when we are taking a nap, eating, or are just involved in doing our own thing. They can't seem to read the signs of the "touch me not's" in our body language, and therefore tend to get themselves bitten.

If we can just train them to recognize the signs that say, "I am busy right now, get back to me later", we will save the humans a lot of pain, and us a lot of time spent in our cages.



When we dilate and contract our eyes, we may be expressing any number of things, excitement, pleasure or aggression. Slaves who don't know what this sign means, in their masters, could be in for a serious bite.



When training your human to pet and stroke you, make sure they learn not to rub your feathers the wrong way. Humans don't seem to realize that this bothers us just as much as it would bother a cat. Especially make sure your human knows to be careful grooming you when you are in molt, taking special care around new pinfeathers. These, as we all know, are tremendously sensitive and can hurt if handled the wrong way. There is also always the danger of breaking a pinfeather and causing it to bleed, this can make your human panic, so it is best to teach them to avoid the situation in the first place. A lot of birdies also tend to become very cranky during a molt. After all, molting is a physical drain on our bodies, and being stuck by a bunch of prickly new emerging feathers is remarkably uncomfortable under the best of circumstances. (Siobhan seems to be experiencing this crankiness right now as her blue head feathers finally start to come in.) The best way to try and explain this sensation to your slave is with a lot of time and a pincushion full of sewing needles, unfortunately humans are so dense that any other more subtle demonstration would be lost on them. Truly, the words "gently" and "briefly" should be your slave's rule when trying to pet you while you are molting.

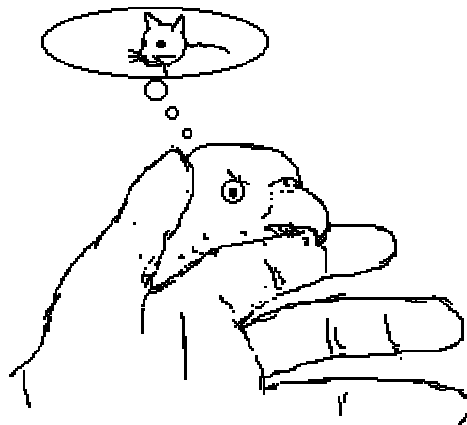
Frustration or Boredom

On the opposite end of the spectrum from wanting to be left alone, is the wish for company. Many parrots resort to biting through boredom or a wish for any kind of attention, much like a human child getting into trouble

so that his/her mother will pay attention. As a matter of fact many children resort to the same tactic, that of biting, to get that attention. However, you can't really use the same punishment, as while biting the human child back may get the point across to him/her, biting the birdie back will just make it seem like a game. Many birdies get left in their cages all day while their slaves are at work and unless there is a birdie mate sharing the space, this can become almost a form of torture for creatures such as us who are bred for the freedom of the skies. When these poor birds' slaves let them out at night they take their frustration out on their slaves by biting them. Some humans liken our attention spans to that of small human children. While I admit this might very well be true, I would think the solution to that would be obvious, variety! One way for slaves to prevent this boredom is to provide lots of different types of toys in the birdies cage for the parrot to play with. Making sure that your slave gives you lots of attention and time out of your cage when he/she is home will also go a long way towards preventing this type of biting. Try to make it worth your slave's while to take you out your cage. Reward him/her for this behavior by cuddling or playing games.

Displacement

This type of biting is common in all animals, not just birdies. This is actually misdirected aggression. This happens when we get upset, but the person or thing that aggravated us is inaccessible or no longer present, we then attack the nearest human or animal. This will happen particularly if a person that we particularly dislike enters the room but can't be reached to be bitten. In this situation the slave holding you, or the family pet closest to you, will be the one to feel your beak.

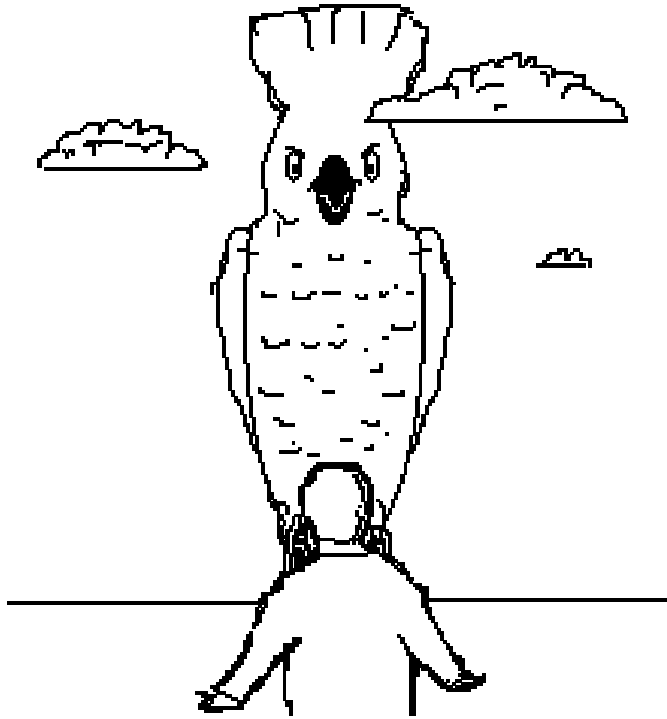


Once again, the answer to this problem is prevention. If your slave knows that a disliked person will soon be entering the room, putting you into your cage or on your perch will keep you from biting them. Certainly removing you from his/her shoulder and placing you on an arm instead will also help. A suggestion that may work to distract some birdies is having the slave drop his/her arm a few inches suddenly when the disliked individual enters the room, then talking to you in various tones of voice to keep your attention focused away from that person until you are placed on your perch. The main thing here is for your slave to be attentive to who may be entering the room, and ready to apply preventive measures immediately if necessary. Your slave must make sure to take steps to prevent this behavior of biting when something or some else has upset you, or else it will become firmly entrenched and you will begin biting your favorite people in an unprovoked manner.

Dominance

Dominance biting is very common in parrots. We, being flock animals with an inborn genetic of the flock hierarchy and it's meaning for our survival, are programmed to seek dominance in all situations. When in the wild, this gives us the best chance at getting the choicest food in adequate amounts, the best nesting sites, and the most desirable of mates. (In short, the ability to transmit our genes into the next generation.) Submission to us birdies means a lessened chance of survival, and a loss of the ability to live "the good life". Unfortunately, trying to establish dominance within the human flock is inappropriate, and doesn't work very well. Nevertheless, when our humans don't trim our wings, give us cages and perches over their heads, or in any way allow us to do as we please, we tend to interpret this as being the head of the flock. Of course we will fight to maintain this position.

I think that this reason for a birdie's biting is very similar to a stage of human youth called "being a teenager", while teenager's don't generally bite, they are in affect, still challenging for dominance. This is what a parrot is doing when he/she bites her human, challenging to see who is going to be the true leader of the flock.



Our humans need to reposition perches and cages so that when we stand on them we are below eye level, and have to look up at our slaves. Terrible as it sounds, our wings need to be clipped, if we know that we can't fly away from our slaves, we will be more likely to want to co-operate with them.

One of the main reasons young children are so at risk of being bitten by a birdie master is that no matter how low our humans place our perches or cages, we are still above a child's head. This of course reinforces the feeling of dominance. We must make sure to never be left alone and unsupervised with small children.

Getting into a fight for dominance with our humans is pointless, it will cause our humans a bunch of pain, and end up with us never getting to come out of our cages. It is truly better for us to dominate them subtly, by withholding kisses or other gestures of affection, than in it is to try to bite them. We still win out in the end, and the humans never even know that there was a battle.

Note from Asia: "These rules don't apply quite the same way to those of us who live in outdoor aviaries. While of course we should still realize that a dominance battle with our human is pointless, we have a

certain amount of leeway. We are able to keep our wings untrimmed, and our flights usually allow us to be above our slaves' heads."

Youth

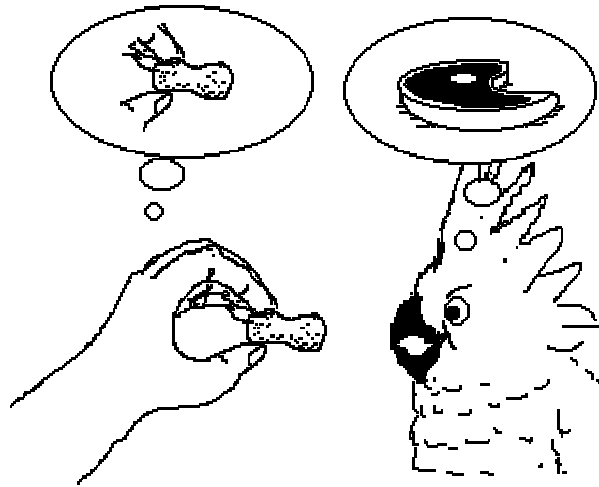
Most of our hatchlings go through the stage of exploring their surroundings with their mouths. They are unable to tell the difference between inanimate objects and a human's tender skin, and are unaware of the strength they possess in their beaks. Many of our slaves find this behavior, mock biting, cute and do nothing to discourage it. Little do they realize that the time will come that this behavior will lead to a very painful bite. Most slaves feel shocked or betrayed when this occurs, finding it hard to believe that "their" bird has bitten them, not realizing that they themselves have contributed to this behavior by never helping the birdie learn not to bite. At this point the young master has no reason to think that biting is not permissible, and trying to help him/her learn otherwise is going to be nearly impossible. By this time the behavior is so firmly entrenched that it will require a consistent effort on the part of both the human and the birdie to change. Much better for our slaves to provide an interesting toy, block of wood or piece of fruit to chew on instead of their fingers, and



head this behavior off at the pass. By consistently refusing to let the young birdie bite, humans will find that this behavior will eventually diminish.

Another reason young birdies bite, especially hand fed birdies that are newly weaned, is that they associate hands and fingers with being fed. Often these birdies will seize a slave's fingers and shake them vigorously, just as he/she did with the spoon or syringe when they were being hand fed. While this is certainly normal behavior for this stage of our lives, our slaves need to be taught to consistently discourage it, for all of the reasons previously discussed. If the human can be taught to catch this behavior before it starts and substitute a piece of fruit, a nut, or some spray millet instead, this should serve as a suitable distraction for the young birdie. The object once again, is to stop a bad habit from forming. It is very important

that behavior be anticipated and the distraction provided beforehand, so that the young birdie master not associate biting with getting a treat.



Pathophysiological

Pathophysiological biting has its roots in physical illnesses. A number of the illnesses discussed by Asia in his first-aid book can cause a birdie to bite, not necessarily from the disease itself but from the irritation and exhaustion caused by it. Truly, who could blame the birdie who did bite due to this reason?

Now although my flockmates and I are unaware of any studies that document organic brain damage in parrots, your human might want to consider this in the very rare case of intractable biting behavior. Organic brain damage and epilepsy are very well documented in both dogs and cats. In some instances, both these conditions can generate unprovoked biting.

Note from Maya: "Personally, I don't think we are anything like dogs or cats, but in the case of otherwise unexplainable biting, this should be considered as a possible cause."

Although there are probably as many different reasons for biting as there are types of birds, without a doubt they can all be traced to one of these categories. Hopefully this section has given everybirdie some insight into the causes of biting, and will help to train the humans in these reasons.

"Occasionally biting is also an effective training tool, very useful for behavior modification ..." Dustbunny

Signs That You're Going to Bite

What I would like to do here is just give you a simple list of the actions that can signal an impending bite. In my opinion, if we can just teach our slaves what signals to look for in our behavior, we will be able to avert most of the biting incidents so common today. It seems to me that humans have become so unused to reading body language that that can't even read the signs in their own species, forget about ours. So it falls to us to make sure they have memorized this list and know that these actions don't mean that we don't love them anymore, but simply that we are frightened, perceive a threat to them, or just wish to be left alone.

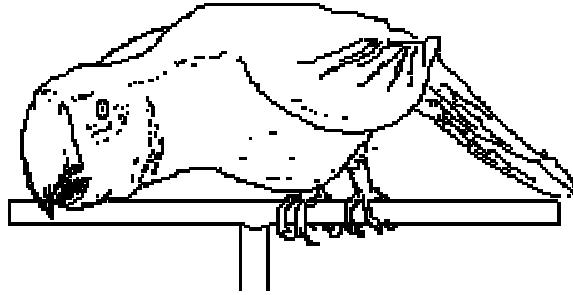


*This is the typical "last ditch" defensive posture of the birdie that is expecting to be killed at any moment. Birdies in this posture are **very** dangerous and should be handled only with a towel, and only if the slave has developed skill and confidence with this technique. After the slave has retrieved a birdie who is this frightened, he/she should be allowed to return to his or her cage, to rest, recover and gain a sense of security.*

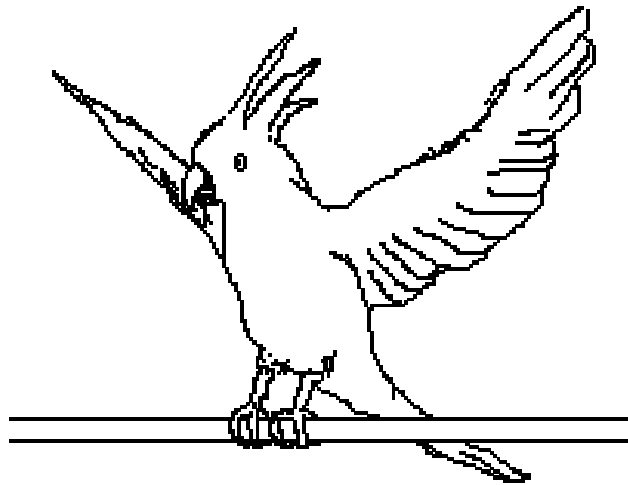
Here are some of the warning signs for your human to be on the look out for. When they see these signs that you are getting prepared to defend yourself, the best thing to do is back off.

🔗 Horizontal stance on the perch

- ☞ Hunched posture on the perch-This is a favorite stance of Rosie's whenever someone besides our mama comes near her cage. Our slave's mate and daughter have learned to try and leave Rosie alone when she acts like this.



- ☞ Flared tail
- ☞ Raised crest-This obviously only applies to those of us who have crests, like the Cockatoos and Cockatiels.
- ☞ Lunging-Yet another of Rosie's favorite moves if anyone new comes near her cage.
- ☞ Wings held far away from the body-Dustbunny used to do this one a lot, she has calmed down tremendously since moving to her outdoor aviary with Lint.



- ☞ Dilating and contracting pupils-Our slave says that this is always the dead give away with me that I am about to bite her. She might be right since I have not actually bitten her in a while
- ☞ Wiggling during petting-Just as with small human children, this is an indication of having had enough attention for now.
- ☞ Snapping your head around into the vicinity of your slave's hand

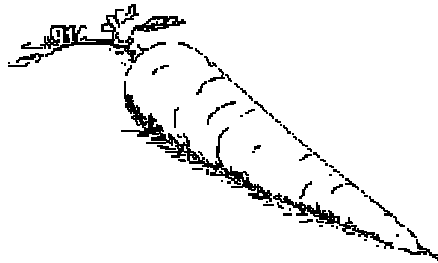
🔗 Moving away

You might want to print this list out and hang it on the refrigerator next to the birdie first-aid kit. When your slave is not quite sure, they can look at this list and see if your behavior matches any of these warning signs. Your human learning what your body language is communicating will lead to a greater understanding of you and your needs. This will help you strengthen the bond and build a trusting relationship between you and your slave.

Prevention

Well, obviously the first step in preventing your slaves from getting bitten is the one I have already mentioned countless times, getting them to pay attention to your body language. They need to learn that if you are displaying any of the signs mentioned above; and they persist in disturbing you, or will not alleviate the situation, they are going to be bitten.

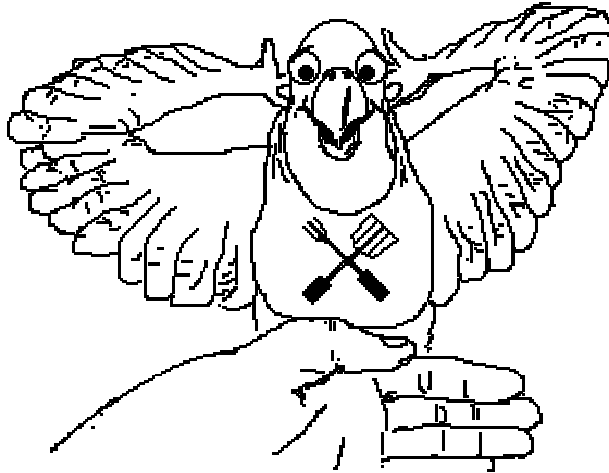
When you try to nibble on your slave's fingers or hands, it's best that his/her offer you an acceptable substitute to chew on and firmly tell you no. (Acceptable substitutes would be a carrot, apple slice, footsie toy, block of



wood, piece of leather etc.) If he/she is unable to distract you from his/her fingers with the toy or food, your slave should gently blow in your face and tell you NO. (Some us get the message quickly, for others it takes a while.)

If this doesn't help to curb your biting within a few weeks, then your slave may want to try "time out" periods. Immediately after you bite him/her, he/she should tell you "No", and put you back in your cage or other designated area of the home, carrier, cage or playstand for "time out". Cruel as it sounds, your slave should completely ignore you for the entire duration of the designated time out period. He/she should not interact with

you at all either visually or verbally. (Covering your cage during the time out period can help you calm down if you are agitated, aggressive or frightened.) Once the time out is over, he/she should begin to interact with you again, giving you praise, head scratches, affection, or a favorite toy, basically rewarding you for good behavior.



If you bite really hard, your slave needs to try to avoid negatively reinforcing the biting by giving you a reaction. Sometimes, your slave shouting OUCH, screaming or yelling can strike you as funny, and you will bite again just to get the same reaction.

"I have to admit to doing this, I think Maya probably does too. Our humans are so funny, and their faces turn such an interesting shade of red." Killian

One Poor Birdie's Story

Echo told me a story about a birdie that came to live with her and the mama/slave before even Dust Bunny was part of the flock. Of all of the stories that I have heard, I think this one best demonstrates why it is best for all concerned that birdie masters learn not to bite their slaves. The story is as follows.

Devon was a Mollucan Cockatoo who started out his life in a happy breeding home. He was a very content handfed birdie. One day

he went home with some people who had never had a birdie before. He was a very young birdie, and had no experience in training humans to be proper slaves. (Keep in mind, there were no good training books like **"My Human, My Slave"** back then.) For the first two or three months everything was fine. He was hugged and loved and cuddled. As he grew up, like all young birdies do, he started using his mouth and tongue to explore the things all around him. All of a sudden, due to his natural desire to explore, his loving human slaves transformed into abusive, tyrannical monsters. Just once, he bit too hard, and they stopped taking him out of his cage, never talked to him, and started giving him only seeds to eat. Eventually, they even stopped cleaning his cage or putting fresh liners in his tray. He was ignored this way for about two and a half years.

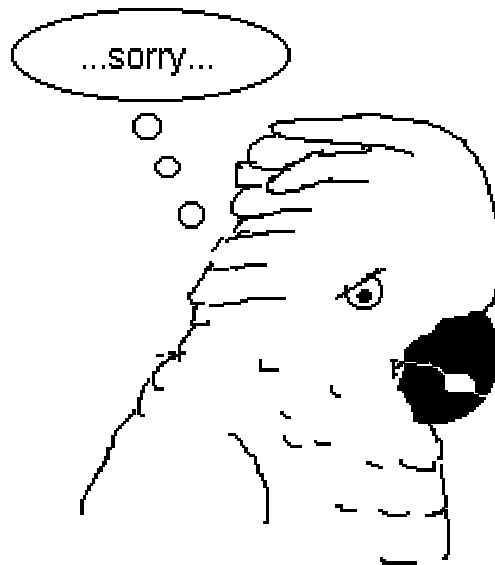
Eventually Devon went to another home (sold just like a slave) where they tried immediately to establish dominance over him. Of course he got angry and started biting, big no-no. He spent another two years in a dark room, covered most of the time, before being sold again.

With all of this shifting from home to home, Devon was never really given much of a chance to learn any training skills and he got progressively sadder and lonelier. He went to quite a few different homes in progression, never staying anywhere more than two years. Finally he wound up in a home where the humans started hitting him. He really started biting then. Strangely enough, he stayed with these awful people for more than five years. Then he spent another three-year stint somewhere else. Eventually he wound up in a broker's store. This man was a con man who lied to make his sales. He would tell the humans anything that he thought they wanted to hear, just to get some money in his grubby hands. This man lied to our mama and told her that Devon was only eighteen months old and a real sweetheart. He also told her that Devon had been abused.

Well, if anybirdie out there knows our mama/slave, you know she is a real sucker for sob stories like this. Immediately she had to have Devon, and she would move heaven and earth until she got him. (What can I say, she's sappy but she's ours and we love her.)

Devon, of course, went home with the mama, and for six weeks everything was fine. Then one morning Devon woke up with a serious case of raging hormones, breeding season had arrived!

*When Mama came to get Devon out of his cage and to feed him breakfast, he leaned down and bit a huge chunk out of her forearm and made her bleed. This surprised both the mama and Devon; neither of them really expected it. Well, mama cleaned up the blood and scolded Devon for the bite, really more sad than angry at him. Within a few days, Devon managed to crush her thumb joint, rip off her fingernail, bite her in the face and even jumped off of his cage to attack her! No one could understand what was making him act that way. He loved the mama, had since he first laid eyes on her and he certainly didn't **want** to hurt her.*



Eventually the biting became too much even for our mama, and the ear piercing screams Devon was giving every few minutes were causing everyone to develop a nervous tic. So after searching diligently for a new home for him, (she loved him after all and wouldn't just send him anywhere.) she found a breeder friend who would take Devon in and provide him with a beautiful birdie mate. While Devon of course loves his birdie mate, the last time he received any kind of

human kisses or cuddles is the day he attacked the mama's face and made it bleed.

This is just one birdie out of the many out there everyday who wind up being bounced from home to home simply because they never learned the behavior that is acceptable within the human flock. Please don't let this happen to you.

Human First-Aid

This section is just a quick advisory on what your human should do if you do manage to bite and cause some damage to something besides his/her pride. Most importantly, remind your human to remain calm. I know, that staying calm is probably the last thing on any slaves mind when having just been pinched by the jaws of death, but it is very necessary to both the human's well being and your own. If your human starts getting upset or exited, this will only exacerbate your behavior. (For those birdies who don't know big words that means make it worse.) If you become over excited, you will be even more likely to strike out at everything around you, and your human is going to get bitten again.

The best thing for your slave to do if you should ever manage to connect with a bite, is to calmly and quietly put you back in your cage, and tell you firmly, NO. He/she should then leave you alone for a predetermined amount of time to hopefully get over whatever caused you to bite in the first place. (While you are calming down your slave can be washing out the wound and assessing the damage done, hopefully your human won't need stitches.)

Your human should never ever just drop you to the floor if you bite him/her. While this may be a natural reaction to your human, it will do more damage to your relationship than may be obvious at first glance. Most importantly, you need to emphasize to your human that while you may have just caused some pain, you did not do it intentionally and unless your human can overcome the fear caused by your beak, you may never regain a normal relationship. Hopefully though, all of you birdies out there have enough cuteness left to overcome any lingering worries your human may have.

Conclusion

I hope that this book helps you and your slave to a better understanding of each other and a slightly less painful relationship. I feel that once your human understands why birdies bite, and what may be done to prevent it, life will be, if not stress free, certainly less stressful for both of you.

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