



The Official **NEEWS**Letter of Foster Parrots & The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary

Taking Captivity to Heart: Captive Parrots and Cardiovascular Disease

By Karen Windsor



Jacoue, FP's 20 year old African Grey

Jacoue's life at the sanctuary was a whirlwind of daily activity. Self-confident with a certain air of superiority, she was the queen of the kitchen, spending her days flying, exploring, excavating, helping to make the daily bird salad and posing for the camera. She had a preference for men and was dismissive of many human females. She could pack a nasty bite if someone overstepped their bounds. To say she was a favorite at the sanctuary despite her sassiness would be an understatement. Just about every staff member and volunteer at the NEEWS had a relationship on some level with this dynamic bird, though it was always on her terms.

One late afternoon Jacoue didn't seem quite well. Within hours, before we could get her to our vet, she was gone. There were no prior symptoms. There had been no slow decline or any hints that anything was wrong. Her necropsy revealed that her life was taken by a massive cardiovascular event. Evidence of severe atherosclerosis was widespread and chronic. Jacoue was only 20 years old.



Jacoue, supervising daily salad production

Almost all of the birds at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary live in aviaries, and none enjoy their space more than our Quaker colony. Their interior aviary measures 20'x15' and is complemented by a corresponding, 4-season outdoor

cont'd on page 2

March



Match

Your donation will be matched up to

\$20k!

See pages 11 & 12 for details



Please consider supporting Foster Parrots in March. All donations up to \$20,000 will be matched! Thank you!



Quakers in their aviary with ample room to fly

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aviary. These chatty little birds fly like darts and use all of their space. They build elaborate stick nests and enjoy grazing in freshly laid Timothy hay. Seed was eliminated from the Quaker diet many years ago. They dine on fresh bird salads and pellets exclusively. Still, when we lose them, necropsies reveal evidence of heart disease and atherosclerosis.

Cardiovascular disease is disturbingly common in captive parrots. It had long been thought that this was an issue belonging to older psittacines, but the veterinary community is seeing heart disease and atherosclerosis more and more often even in young parrots. Factors like congenital defects sometimes come into play, but just like with humans, sedentary parrots whose diets are high in fat and unusable calories are at risk for cardiovascular disease. The birds at the NEEWS have more space to navigate than most captive parrots, and their nutrient-rich diets are precisely customized to minimize fat and deliver high levels of nutrition. But the food we offer cannot replicate the diets intended by nature. And flying 20 feet cannot compare to flying 20 miles.

Biologically ill-equipped for lives in cages, birds are uniquely engineered for flight. Their hearts are larger than human hearts, relatively speaking, and strategically positioned air sacs under their skin function like bellows to move air into and out of the lungs so that oxygen rich blood can be delivered to every muscle, organ, and cell in their bodies with maximum impact. Their bones are hollow, their eyes are large, and their feathers, beautiful and

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virtually weightless, offer superior insulation, water-proofing and aerodynamic capacity. Birds are designed to be flying machines. When we remove the one defining activity that was clearly nature's evolutionary objective, the unavoidable outcome is a systematic breakdown.

Few parrot guardians are able to accommodate the level of flight activity required by birds to maintain optimal cardiovascular

health, especially in larger species like cockatoos and macaws, but there are physical and dietary strategies that can help.

Exercise & Flight Opportunities

We have frequently been dismayed to hear avian professionals advocate routine and indiscriminate wing-clipping "for the safety of the bird". There are some safety situations that do indeed justify a wing-clip, but if flight can be safely supported, flying activity benefits both the physical and psychological health of captive parrots. Flying is a learned skill. Captive parrots who are encouraged to hone this skill can become expert navigators of interior spaces.

Even modest exercise is better than none at all. Encourage non-flighted parrots to walk around the house, explore and forage for food, climb and play. Promote flapping exercise or encourage your bird's ability to take short flights of just a few feet. Be careful not to stress overweight, older and typically sedentary birds by observing breathing and your bird's comfort level. Go slow and

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Jacoue enjoying the fruits of her labor

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build up gradually as your parrot becomes more acclimated to increased activity.

Supporting Cardiovascular Health Through Nutrition

Commercial, seed-based diets are disastrous for psittacine health. While granivores (parakeets, cockatiels, finches, etc.) can tolerate seed in their diets, fresh greens and produce should be offered daily. For larger parrot species, seed products like millet, safflower and sunflower seeds would not normally be present in the diets of these species in the wild. Diets for captive parrots should be rooted in fresh produce with an emphasis on items that can support cardiovascular health.

Vitamin A - Vast numbers of parrots in captivity suffer from varying levels of vitamin A deficiency, and this is significant as vitamin A benefits vision, healthy immune systems and supports cell growth necessary for optimal heart lung, kidney and other organ functions. Sources include dark leafy greens, broccoli, orange and yellow vegetables like peppers, carrots and sweet potatoes, and fruits like mangoes and cantaloupe.

Dark Leafy Greens - Not only are leafy greens a good source of vitamin A, but they are rich in Vitamin K, which protects the arteries, offering a high level of nitrates that help improve arterial function and support the cells that line the blood vessels. Reach for kale, collards, dandelion greens, broccoli rabe and mustard greens.



A few of the ingredients we use daily to create a healthy, fresh "bird salad" for our residents

*Please note: kale and other leafy greens should be organic to avoid pesticide contamination. Some greens like spinach and beet greens interfere with calcium absorption so should be passed over for other choices.

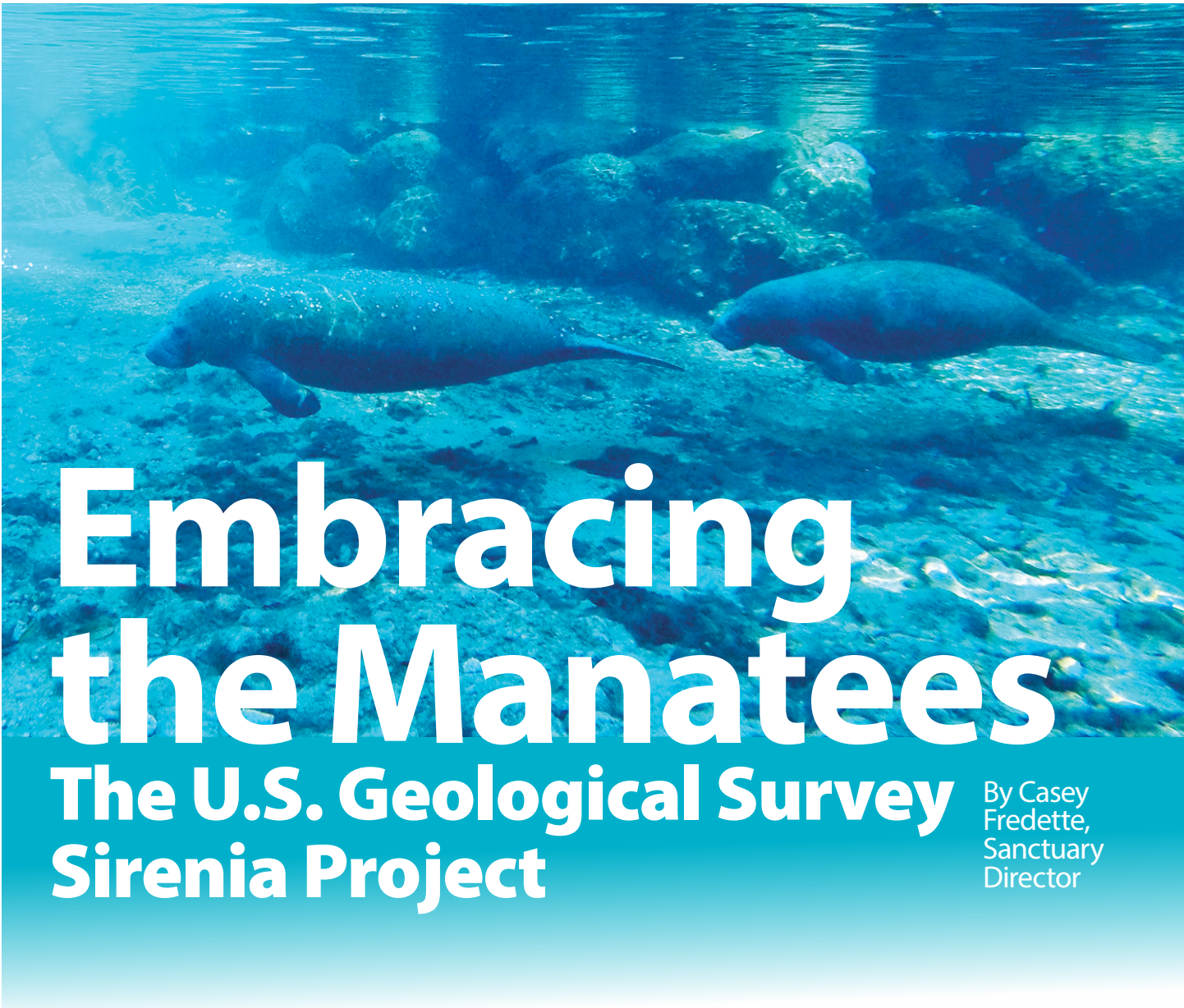
Berries! – Berries like blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, acai berries and cranberries are antioxidant powerhouses and protect against oxidative stress and inflammation. They help lower bad LDL cholesterol in the blood.

Nuts – Whole, healthy, human-grade nuts like walnuts and almonds are high caloric foods but have significant health benefits. They are high in fiber and monounsaturated fats that reduce bad LDL cholesterol and increase levels of good HDL cholesterol, which helps reduce plaque build-up in the arteries. Measured rations of healthy nuts provide nutritional benefits and can be instrumental in transitioning parrots from seed-based diets.

Cooked Beans and Legumes

These also help to decrease harmful LDL cholesterol, lower blood pressure and help reduce inflammation.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids – These are essential for supporting heart health! They reduce triglycerides and fatty plaque accumulation in the arteries. They decrease blood clotting, increase good HDL cholesterol, reduce inflammation and help lower blood pressure. Omega-3 fatty acids are most commonly derived from fish and fish oils, which are sometimes not well accepted by parrots, but alternatives can be found in varieties of seeds that are actually good for your birds! Milled flaxseed, hemp seed and chia seed are all excellent sources of Omega-3s and can be sprinkled on nuts, mixed into cereals or added to salads. Olive oil is also a great source of Omega-3s! 🌀



Embracing the Manatees

The U.S. Geological Survey Sirenia Project

By Casey
Fredette,
Sanctuary
Director

Foster Parrots and the New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary has made a commitment to the conservation of species-at-risk. This commitment drives each member of the Foster Parrots organization, from our board of directors to our staff, volunteers, and supporters. We live our lives working for the betterment of the natural world and its creatures. The negative impact of human interaction on species across the globe is a story of shortsighted action coupled with an unfounded belief that the natural world is

an endless reservoir, forever able to bounce back. Sadly, it seems that history has taught too few, too little, and the devastation inflicted on the animal kingdom has only increased with time. While it seems an impossible feat to stem the tide of destruction, Foster Parrots has an unwavering drive to fight for those creatures so mercilessly driven to the brink of extinction.

Since childhood, the survival of species negatively impacted by the actions of man has driven my career and life. The West

Indian Manatee is the animal most singularly responsible for opening my heart and mind to the suffering of animals. Since being introduced to the species in 5th grade, these gentle giants were integral in influencing the whole sum path of my life. The awe that these amazing sea cows inspired in me was matched only by my growing concern as I came to understand the dangerous position humans had placed them in. My course was set early — to fight for animals against the harm my own kind was inflicting on them. Throughout my career

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and life, I have had the privilege to work with many endangered and at-risk species: whales, sea turtles, birds, and mammals. I consider my opportunity as Foster Parrots' Sanctuary Director to be a continuation of my childhood goals — fighting for species that have been imperiled by our actions. On my path here I have been able to accomplish the most important goal of my life; working with manatees directly.

Recently I participated in my seventh manatee health assessment in Crystal River, Florida. Through the joint efforts of so many, we were able to capture wild manatees, some pushing past 1,500 pounds, safely from the river and collect samples, data, and information that will be used for scientific study. The data collected will be key in continuing the fight against extinction. The information collected during the assessments will help give scientists a stronger understanding of how the population at large is doing, and what threats they are still fighting.

Each year as temperatures drop, manatees feasting in the Gulf of Mexico make their way into areas like Crystal River by the hundreds. Manatees, unable to make it to a warm water refuge, face the risk of cold stress; a potentially fatal issue. Taking shelter in the natural warm springs found in the coastal areas, the marine mammals can ride out the cold spells in springs that offer consistent warm temperatures. The surrounding freshwater vegetation that have been successfully reintroduced



FP Sanctuary Director Casey Fredette (left side of boat) assists in the USGS Sirenia Project manatee assessment program. Photos on pages 4& 5 by Casey Fredette.

give them a nearly perfect winter hideaway. Several decades' worth of conservation efforts has led to

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a modern-day population boom. While this is good news, the long-term wellbeing of the species is still a concern. **The USGS (U.S. Geological Survey) Sirenia Project** leads a team assembled from federal and state agencies,

universities, non-profit, and other domestic and international groups. Our combined efforts resulted, most recently, in seven successful manatee assessments. I once again had the honor to assist in the safe capture and transport of these giants from the river, to the boat, to the veterinary beach. Once on the veterinary beach, teams work swiftly and quietly to acquire crucial information from the animals; taking weights, noting markings, and recording and sampling vital information as quickly and carefully as possible. The whole effort comes to a majestic ending as each manatee is individually returned to the water where they started.

This experience leaves a permanent mark in my memory every time. The apathy and arrogance of humans have left too many species destroyed or facing annihilation; alone none of us can stem this tide of destruction, but together we can work to help save these wonders of nature. 🌀

Spotlight on Conservation: Guyana

One Earth Conservation



A One Earth Conservation-Foster Parrots Partnership

The Parakeet Rangers of Guyana

By Dr. LoraKim Joyner, Co-Founder, One Earth Conservation

We finished 7 days of surveying the endangered sun parakeet in the Karasabai Village at the end of 2019. I had joined up with the parakeet rangers of this region to determine how many sun parakeets there actually were. A full survey had never been undertaken before, and for good reason. To cover the entire area means a lot of hiking, hammock camping, and getting around by boats, ATVs (All Terrain Vehicles), bikes, motorcycles, and trucks.

This amazing group of rangers was up for it, and though spread thin over a large area, we learned a lot more about this species than we knew before: where they roost (in communal or family cavities), where they nest, and where they forage. We were grateful to realize that there were more of them than the 200 we had thought previously existed, and that there were juveniles accompanying the adults, meaning that the work of these rangers and this village is bearing fruit, or rather, parakeets. Their efforts over the last years to stop poaching were having a positive impact, though the project has just really begun.

To celebrate the week's hard work, we had a gathering where they wrote a song about their work, and performed it.



*We are the peaceful Rangers
From the Pakaraimas
Protecting our parrots
Flying all around*

*Educating our people
About conservation
Not to trap any parrots
We have that right*

*Stop burning up the mountains
Stop burning up the trees
Stop polluting the rivers
That belong to you*

*Stop trapping all the parrots
Stop trapping parakeets
Stop trapping all the macaws
That belong to you*

They described themselves not just as rangers, but as **peaceful rangers**. The work of conservation is a work of peace. Though it feels



like war at times due to the overwhelming challenges and frequent threats and actualities of violence, we must live and breathe peace in all we do, for there is

no ultimate liberation unless we change the dominating culture where others are systematically oppressed and societal and environmental violence is heaped upon them.

*We must be the change we wish.
We must be the peace we long for.
We must protect and liberate ourselves and others.
Let us sing. We are the peaceful rangers!* 🌀



For more information or to support this project go to: oneearthconservation.org

To visit Karsabai (the rangers give tours) or learn more go to: facebook.com/keseecolodgekarasabai/?modal=admin_todo_tour



Spotlight on Conservation: Costa Rica

A MCCR-Foster Parrots Partnership

MACAW CONSERVATION COSTA RICA

Construction of Macaw Conservation's new medical clinic is progressing beautifully. This new space will enable the separation of babies and other critical care rescues from general rehabilitation birds, and will accommodate additional brooders and veterinary equipment. Completion of the project is expected by late spring. Also under construction is the Intern Cabin, which will provide modest accommodations for visiting interns and volunteers. These vital development projects are made possible by support from The Wagmore Foundation, The Vincent J. Coates Foundation, Intertwined Conservation, and generous donors like you — thank you! 🌀

For more information or to support this project visit macawconservation.org



Every Wild-Caught African Grey Knows What Hell-on-Earth is Like: Stopping the Breeder Petition to Import 4000 African Greys

By Karen Windsor



In March of 2019, in an effort to establish a **Cooperative Breeding Program (CBP)** between aviculturists in the U.S. and in South Africa, Florida breeders Paul Marolf, Ray O'Neil and Jason Mitchell, submitted an application to **U.S. Fish & Wildlife** to allow the importation 4,000 African grey parrots from South Africa into the United States. The purpose, they claimed, was to revitalize U.S. breeding stock. The CBP would be established in partnership with the **Parrot Breeders Association of South Africa**, and would be overseen by the **Organization of Professional Aviculturists**, an international authority comprised of avicultural experts from both the U.S. and South Africa. The petition was met with enormous opposition from parrot rescue groups and animal welfare groups both here in the U.S. and internationally. Foster Parrots and many associate members of the Parrot Conservation Alliance drafted formal letters of opposition that were submitted to USFWS during the open public comment period. The status of the breeder petition is still pending.

The international trade in African grey parrots has resulted in the unsustainable extraction of an estimated 1.3 million of these birds from the wild over the last 20 years. The species has been virtually wiped out across Africa, with countries like Ghana reporting a loss of between 90 to 99 percent of African greys that were once abundant in Ghana's forests. (Steyn, 2016) In 2016 this species was upgraded to "endangered" on the IUCN Red List, and is now listed as a CITES Appendix I restricted species, meaning that international commercial trade of African greys is now prohibited. Unfortunately, CITES restrictions can be circumvented through special permitting by government offices. It is interesting that commercial breeders, who are largely responsible for the decimation of this species in the wild, are now petitioning USFWS for permits to import 4000 highly endangered African grey parrots from South Africa in order to revitalize the commercial industry that has been complicit in driving this species toward extinction.

On January 20, 2020, the **Randburg SPCA** in South Africa investigated the breeding facility owned by Antonie Meiring, the vice president of the **Parrot Breeders Association of South Africa** and a board member of the **Organization of Professional Aviculturists**. What they discovered was beyond abhorrent — a parasite ridden facility with parrot cages "infested with large rats", and spider webs thick enough in some of the

enclosures to impede flight. Inspector Shiven Bodasing of the Randburg SPCA stated, "The conditions which these animals are forced to endure is nothing short of deplorable. I was shocked to witness over 150 dead parrots on the property. One would expect that the Vice-Chairperson of the Parrot Breeders Association of South Africa would comply with his own Code of Conduct and Code of Practice. This is a crime, the animals were found to be kept under offensive conditions, and we will be dealing with relevant role players, as people must be held accountable for the negligence observed at the premises, no person is above the law, and it is my job to remind perpetrators of that."



If this is the kind of oversight one can expect from the OPA, then parrots in breeding facilities everywhere are in peril. We sure hope USFWS is paying attention, and that this horrific event will help them make the right decision regarding the **Cooperative Breeding Program** and the importation of 4,000 African grey parrots into the U.S. 🌀

Adoption Corner Spotlight

By Rachel DeFronzo, Adoption Coordinator



Erik

This 24-year-old African grey goes by the names Erik, L'Erik, and Lyric. He is a very social bird. Erik will do well in almost any home, but he craves attention and will be happiest somewhere with a human who's home all day. If he's not receiving regular attention and handling, Erik tends to display mating behaviors toward his person out of desperation. He

needs plenty of time out of the cage and direct attention from his people. Erik's noise level is typical of African greys, with lots of beeping and whistling. He is usually very clear with his body language and will let you know when he wants to step up and be touched, and when he plans to bite. He is a smart bird who benefits from foraging toys and lots of shredding material!

Zeppelin

Zeppelin is a sweet, lovable baby blue and gold macaw. He takes a little time to get comfortable with new people, but once he does he's affectionate and playful. Zeppelin loves to be out of the cage flying around the house. He's happiest when he's on his person's lap or shoulder. He makes lots of chirping noises, but he doesn't typically scream. Zeppelin is still a very young bird

at just one and a half years old. As he matures, he may become more vocal, territorial, and hormonal. Zeppelin will be happy in any home that can provide plenty of love and attention, but his family should be prepared for potential changes as he grows and understand the long-term commitment required to care for a bird that may live 60+ more years.



Charlie

Charlie is a charming 14-year-old Double Yellow-headed Amazon. He was extremely frustrated in his previous home, where he was caged at all times due to his reported aggression and excessive vocalizations. Since coming to Foster Parrots, Charlie has been sociable and sweet. He spends his days happily on top of his cage, and will occasionally take

flight to get a different vantage point somewhere else in the room. He vocalizes with typical Amazon chatter, but has not been particularly noisy. He will step up easily onto a stick and will step up onto a hand when he is very comfortable with someone. It may take time for Charlie to trust his new family and allow handling, but with patience we expect him to warm up.

Interested in Adopting a Parrot?

Welcoming a parrot into one's family is a challenging but rewarding, life-long commitment. If you think you have the love, time and patience to invest, please visit our website at

www.fosterparrots.com/adoption-rescue to read about our requirements for adoption and to fill out an application. There are so many parrots in need!



THIRD ANNUAL

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NEW ENGLAND EXOTIC WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
5K ROAD RACE

**Sneaks
to Beaks 5K**

No cage is big enough...



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www.fosterparrots.com/sneaks-for-beaks-5k

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Saturday, May 16, 2020 at 12 noon
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On-line Registration is just \$37
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Post-Race Party at The Andrea!

Visit the Foster Parrots website to register:
fosterparrots.com/sneaks-for-beaks-5k





It's the Foster Parrots Annual



March Match

Your donation in March will be matched up to

\$20,000!



Each year, Foster Parrots, Ltd. holds 3 fundraiser events in support of the birds and animals at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary.



• **Our March Matching Fund Drive** offers a generous matching pool of \$20,000! This is our biggest and most important fund drive as it helps set the stage for the care of our sanctuary residents and success of our rescue, adoption, education and conservation programs through the year ahead!

• **Our Fall Fundraiser Extravaganza** takes place each September and is an all-day, festival-style event welcoming our supporters for a day of open house tours, a spectacular raffle and silent auction, guest nonprofits, a delectable vegetarian & vegan buffet

dinner, sponsored beer and wine bar, live music and dancing! Keeping ticket prices low, this is our way of giving back to all of our amazing contributors! **SAVE THE DATE for this year's Fall Fundraiser: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2020.**

• **Our Year-End Mini-Match** is quickly growing in its scope and is critical in helping us to close out the gaps in our budget so that we can start the new year strong!



We appreciate your support & hope you will choose to contribute to at least one of these important fundraising events!

Without you, none of our work on behalf of the birds would be possible. Because of you, parrots and other displaced exotics have a voice! Thank you!

 **Donate on-line by visiting: fosterparrots.com It's safe, secure, and so easy!**



**Foster Parrots &
The New England
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All donations made in
March will be matched up to **\$20,000!**

Your contribution to Foster Parrots, Ltd. helps provide care for over 400 parrots and animals at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary. It supports our humane education and adoption programs, and it helps to protect the freedom of wild parrots and natural habitat.

Help us meet our fundraising goal. Every bird counts. Every dollar counts!

Yes! I want to support the work of Foster Parrots, Ltd. with a tax-deductible donation of:

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Address: _____

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