

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
FOSTER PARROTS, LTD. &
The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary



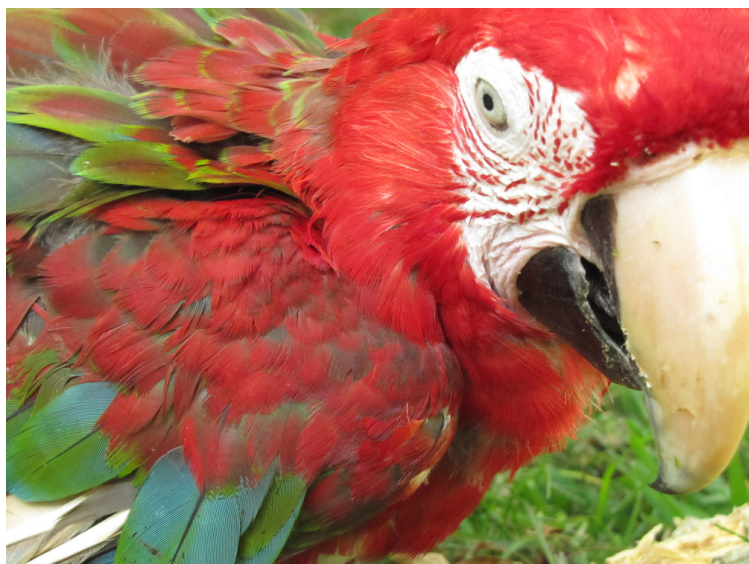
In Memory

We are always in awe of older, wild caught parrots who have lost and suffered so much at the hands of humans, and yet find a way to deal with their new reality and even, sometimes, to accept the love of the species to whom they have lost everything... and sometimes even find a way to return the love.

Our March Newsletter cover story, heralding our annual March Matching Fund Drive, would normally be a joyful and inspiring call-to-action. But Lola is at the front of so many of our minds, and it would be impossible not to honor the enormous spirit of this macaw who became the face of Foster Parrots, and whose journey came to symbolize the tragedy and the hope and extraordinary resilience of all parrots who languish in captivity in the forgotten corners of the world – and then find their way back to their place in the sun.

Many of you know Lola's story. For those who do not, we welcome you to read, and we ask you to remember that there are uncountable numbers of birds out there who have all but given up hope, but whose lives could be transformed if just one person were to reach out, believing that each bird's experience on earth is unique and precious and meaningful.

Letting Go of Lola



The video I watch of Lola was recorded just two years ago in our backyard: The one-eyed macaw with no tail and perpetually messy feathers is perched on a homemade T-stand, dancing from foot to foot and bobbing rhythmically. He is calling to our two other macaws inside the house, and his voice is enormous, conveying his excitement - maybe even joy - in this most unlikely suburban setting. For every period of time when Lola would succumb to the old injury in his head and to the seizures that would grip and paralyze him repeatedly for days and weeks on end, there would be these wonderful months of recovery when Lola was free of the physical pain and was, in every sense, a normal happy macaw - with a little mean streak.

Lola was brought to Foster Parrots in 2002, arriving in terrible physical condition with evidence of old injuries denoting a tragic history. He had no tail. He was alarmingly thin. His toes were bent from old breaks and he was missing an eye. A bald indentation at the top of his head evidenced a significant skull injury. The nature of his injuries suggested a possible dog

attack but we really had no way of knowing what the events in Lola's life might have been beyond those preceding his recent rescue. He had been kept in a dog crate in a basement, we were told, for quite a few years. A friend of that family felt sorry for the old macaw in the box and offered to take the bird. He was told, "When the bird starts screaming I just send the kids down to kick the crate. That usually shuts him up." The man had hoped to help Lola, but he did not know how to deal with the macaw's massive, repeated seizures. He called a female friend of his to ask for guidance, and it was she who brought Lola to Foster Parrots.

I became Lola's primary caregiver, and for the next 13 years he and I were bound together in cycles of suffering and recovery, neither of which were ever more profound than the other. We were bound together by tender times when I would hold him through seizures and when he would accept the love - but only for as long as it took him to recover and regain his dignity and resolve. And we were bound together by days and weeks and months when Lola was well and would dance or engage me in lengthy nonsensical conversations. Or taunt me, almost as if he actually had joy in his life. And hope. We both did always cling to hope. We hoped that the lightning bolts in his head would not return. We hoped that there would be many days in the sun in the backyard when he could pierce the quiet of a summer afternoon with his enormous voice... and we would hope beyond hope that the call would be returned. We hoped he would find a macaw friend who would stay. We hoped that somehow he would grow a tail. But he never did grow a tail. And the lightning in his head always would return, making an old bird weaker with each passing year.

I do not know if Lola loved me, but he trusted me. And when, after all these years, he had had enough, I think he trusted me to understand that there was no fight left in him and it was time to set him free.

I held him close as I had done hundreds of other times, feeling his feet grip my hand beneath him. Feeling his warm body and smelling his wonderful Lola smell. But this time we were in our vet's office, and this time would be the last time. I kissed the bald spot on his head and told him over and over again, "I love you, Lola. I love you. It's time to fly. It's finally time to fly." He laid his head against me as his body slowly relaxed, and he let go, drifting peacefully into his sleep. Finally, finally at peace. Finally able to let go of the pain and all the memories of a lifetime that was never what it was supposed to be. Because the truth is that Lola lived a life of loss. He lost his freedom, his forest and his gift of flight. Someone took those things away from him brutally and without feeling or remorse or understanding of the impact of that brutality on the soul of this deeply sensitive, intelligent and sentient person - who happened to be a bird.

For anybody who has ever felt connected by the soul to an animal and then had to let go... it is a surreal event. It does not make sense. The separation seems impossible. The enormous spirit that had been such a force, so real, so eternal... where does it go? I think that when we spend so many years caring intensively for an animal or a child or anyone who we love, the connection is made stronger by the depth of self-sacrifice and by the chains of mutual suffering that forever bind care giver and care taker.



Winter Survival for Wild Birds

By Barbara Moscato



What a winter it's been! Sub-zero night temperatures it makes a person wonder how wild birds have adapted to survive the cold. Doing a bit of research, one will discover some pretty amazing facts about birds and their ability withstand our bitterly cold New England winters.

Communal Roosting- Birds will actually roost communally at night with different species! Collaborative survival using each other's body heat helps birds make it through the cold nights. I put up roosting boxes around my property and line my purple martin house with hay. Also, roosting pockets can be placed in safe, predator proof locations for the cold nights. Blue birds will go back to their nesting box and pile in together at night. I've seen a family of 4 bluebirds use their nesting box to stay warm. If you're really obsessed like me and notice birds roosting in the foundation plantings around your house, you can add a layer of hay for warmth and protection against cold winds. Birds roost in the thick of firs and evergreens, in trunk niches of large pine trees, and under railroad bridges. Building structures that generate heat, such as the eaves of human dwellings, church steeples, bus stations, shopping malls, garden stores, and parking garages also offer safety from the cold and wind.

Hypothermia- Perhaps the most amazing adaptation birds have for dealing with the cold is their ability to lower their body temperatures, heart rate and general body functions. Hypothermia conserves oxygen in the blood and is used primarily while sleeping.

High Fat & High Protein is Essential- Please do remember to provide a high fat, high protein diet for backyard birds. Buy unshelled sunflower seed rather than the in-shell variety. Unshelled seeds are more expensive but worth it; bluebirds and others are not able to crack the shells. Building up enough fat to combat the cold is critical for their survival and can mean the difference between life and death on a cold winter night. The smallest birds, like chickadees and little gray titmice, consume up to 30% of their body weight to keep their fat reserves high enough to withstand cold winter nights. If the budget allows, provide live mealworms which are a good protein source. I've found that freeze dried mealworms will be gratefully accepted. Offer plain suet -sans any seeds or nuts. The name of the game is fat, which is what they need to line their bodies with a protective layer of insulation.

Water A heated bird bath is a great help to the birds. Inexpensive bird bath heaters can be purchased at local farm supply stores. Unbelievably I've seen birds bathing in the warm water even in single digit weather! Water is essential for healthy feathers, and healthy feathers keep birds warm. And if the birds have a warm water source, their bodies do not have to work so hard to regain heat after eating the snow.

Fluffing up- When birds fluff up it creates air space between feathers as well as between feathers and skin, and is like putting on an extra layer of insulation. Also very important is winter preening, which includes waterproofing feathers with body oils so that the inside down feathers stay dry, insulating their small bodies against the cold. These inner feathers provide the insulation between the bird's body and its strong outer feathers, which act like interlocking shingles to create a watertight barrier between the warmth inside and cold outside. Additionally birds produce about 30 percent more feathers in the cold weather than in the summer. Birds are amazing, adaptable creatures. Enjoy them in all seasons and watch their remarkable survival skills.

From Fur to Feathers

By Danika Oriol-Morway

In 2010 a beautiful young British Colombian Grey wolf was surrendered to Mission: Wolf. Only 2 years old, Max was still just an overgrown puppy weighing over 100 pounds and just barely nearing his adolescence. Having lived the first 2 years of his life with a loving human family, he suddenly found himself abandoned at a sanctuary in the wilds of Colorado, and he had no way of understanding why. For months he paced back and forth desperately searching for his human pack. When staff approached him he would growl and charge at the fence. The volunteers at Mission: Wolf tried desperately to help fill his loss, but nothing could be done to help him understand why his family left him. His trust in people was forever shattered. After five years at the sanctuary Max has only recently begun to accept some of the female volunteers as friends.

Max was bred as a pet and marketed as a 98% wolf 2% dog hybrid. The Canadian breeder who sold Max promised the personality of a dog and the intelligence and beauty of a wolf. Not knowing that there is no way to guarantee such assumptions about genetics and personality, a family purchased Max and welcomed him into their home. As Max grew from a small puppy to a 130-pound wolf, however, his family began to realize that there was no dog in this animal; he was, in every sense of the word, *a wolf*. The family tried nearly every option to work with him. He had his own set of furniture in the house, the best celebrity dog trainers, several vacation homes in the country... Yet nothing could be done to meet his needs. He could not be housetrained, leash trained, or



properly socialized. He destroyed their home, his territorial nature made traveling with him impossible and his aggression toward neighborhood dogs and people put Max and his owners in danger.

Devastated, the family realized that keeping Max was not only dangerous, but also unfair to him and them. They made the hard decision to bring him to Mission: Wolf, hoping to offer him a better life among other wolves with space and freedom in a natural environment. However, Max is imprinted on humans and has been challenged to integrate socially with his own species. Since 2010 Max has been unsuccessfully paired with several wolves. He still lives alone.

Since joining the Foster Parrots community I have been repeatedly asked what brought me from wolves to parrots. At first, I often stumbled over my response trying to articulate why I chose this seemingly monumental shift in species. But what I have come to realize is that I have not changed my species preference or found a new issue to focus on. It's the same issue: wildlife in captivity. I see the tragic connection between the wolves I cared for at Mission: Wolf and the birds I care for now at Foster Parrots. As I walk the hallways of Foster Parrots I see over and over again the faces of beautiful resilient creatures, many of whom share Max's story – or whose stories are far worse.

Just like Foster Parrots, Mission: Wolf is inundated on a daily basis with requests to rescue unwanted wolves or wolf dogs like Max. These animals do not have the option to be adopted out through a shelter system, so their only hope for survival is through placement at a sanctuary. Many of the resident wolves came as failed family pets, but to add insult to injury, others are excess breeding stock for the film industry, or come from zoos or roadside attractions.

It's simple to blame people for being selfish or inhumane when they rob a creature of its freedom. But we must realize that these inappropriate relationships between humans and animals are often not out of the desire to be cruel, but rather out of misplaced love for these animals. Humans are not to be blamed for their love of this wild nature. Wildness and the desire for freedom is a deeply rooted element of the human psyche. We are drawn to other species in appreciation of their unique abilities, beauty, character and their representation of freedom. But here is where we fail: people often think that to love is to own or to have is to understand. It is the perverse idea that the more we appreciate something the closer we must be to it.

To disrupt this illogical loop we need to revolutionize the vocabulary with which we choose to discuss the issues of captivity. It is not simply good versus bad, or love versus hate, but rather an issue of divergent perspectives on what is to value and to love something. How do we get people to love something as it is without the need to make it their own? How can we shift social values and learn to love a wild animal in its proper context, living freely in its natural environment? How can we nurture this appreciation so that it supersedes the need for possession? We need to evolve the discussion of wildlife in captivity in order to evolve to a higher understanding of our own human nature.

Representing the animal most commonly caught between two worlds, Foster Parrots is in a unique position to initiate the discussion of the ethics of wildlife in captivity. As animal welfare advocates, we at Foster Parrots work to shed light on how to evolve the discourse of human-animal relationships in such a way that inspires change through a greater understanding of human nature and appreciation for the wild. It is our responsibility to not just offer sanctuary for the animals we are able to save, but to help bring an end to this tragic story.



Raising Standards of Captive Exotic Bird Care Sheltering Sanctuary Field Conservation

Saturday, March 28, 2015

9:30am – 5:00pm

**Tufts University - Agnes Varis Auditorium
200 Westboro Rd. North Grafton, MA 01536**

\$25 Per Person / Tufts Students Free

**Anthony Pilny, DVM, ABVP (Avian) Center for Avian & Exotic Medicine
Hank Wietsma, DVM, ABVP (Avian) Coventry Animal Hospital / NEEWS
Rev. LoraKim Joyner, DVM – One Earth Conservation & Ministry
Denise Kelly – President, The Avian Welfare Coalition
Michele Parrett – Director of Humane Ed. – Foster Parrots / NEEWS**

**Compelling Educational Sessions, Continental Breakfast,
Vegetarian Lunch, Wine & Hors D'Oeuvres Social**

PRE-REGISTER NOW AT: <http://www.fosterparrots.com/march-28th-conference/>



Founder's Address:

I am sure that everyone who has endured this amazing winter is certainly glad it is March. We all hope the old adage "in like a lion, out like a lamb" holds true this year - although perhaps "in like a *lamb*, out like a lamb" would be preferable after such a grueling winter.

The sanctuary held up fine through the winter due, in no small part, to our new Sanctuary Director, Danika Oriole-Morway. Danika's previous experience with Mission:Wolf not only prepared her well for the tasks at hand but gave her a clear and unwavering understanding of the damage caused when the pet trade intrudes into territory that should remain forever wild. Danika's philosophies have been shaped, like ours, by the suffering she has witnessed – not just of one species but of any species of wild animal in captivity, whether it be a wolf, killer whale, dolphin, elephant... or parrot. Pair that with her determination and her will to rise to any task or obstacle and you have the perfect person to take the reigns here at Foster Parrots. The task before us is not only to do whatever we can to assist the individual animals that come our way, but also to try to shape the consciousness of humans to understand that there are just some things we should not meddle

with. Taking flighted animals out of the sky for lives in cages is just as heinous as keeping a tiger in a trailer or a dolphin in an amusement park. Our mission is to represent the interests of the animals and to try to re-shape attitudes and understanding through our humane education initiatives.

On the topic of humane education, we are also proud to have among our new team members, Michele Parrett as our new Humane Education Director. Michele's background could not have prepared her better for her new position here at Foster Parrots: Once the co-owner of a pet store specializing in parrots, her experience with both people and parrots in that former world shaped her views and her expertise, ultimately making her a perfect fit with Foster Parrots. We are proud to have Michele on our team and we look forward to a truly groundbreaking year.

You all have been a part of this effort. Because of you Foster Parrots has grown as a leader in the field of avian rescue and has had the opportunity to reach far beyond our walls to bring wider understanding of captive wildlife issues. As usual, the March Matching Fund Drive comes at a critical moment when Foster Parrots faces the coming year with hopes for new and higher goals in our efforts, while so many new and difficult challenges lay before us. You have always come through for not only for the birds but to put strength behind all of the efforts of Foster Parrots. For this we can never thank you enough.

Marc Johnson
Director of Janitorial Services, Foster Parrots, Ltd.

New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary 2015 Re-Construction & Re-Organization Initiative

In order to better serve the needs of our birds already in sanctuary, Foster Parrots will be limiting intakes of new birds over the 2015 year to extreme high-risk cases as we work to re-organize key areas of our interior facility. Planned construction projects include:

A GERIATRIC WARD – We care for quite a few old souls who are in the autumn of their years. These tend to be peaceful old birds who will benefit from a non-stressful, non-competitive environment where their special needs can be better monitored and supported.

ADOPTION CENTER & LOUNGE – In order to better facilitate adoptions of parrots who dream of having their own human family some day, we are creating a specialized Adoption Lounge where parrots and people can hang out and learn about one another in a quiet and comfortable setting.

NEW MEDICAL EXAM ROOM AND QUARANTINE – Designed for the comfort and happiness of our birds *and* our veterinarian, the new medical room will offer a bright, spacious, well-organized working environment. Additionally, our new quarantine area will offer separation without isolation. With windows all around, new birds will be able to watch what goes on at the sanctuary and feel Included in the action.



Foster Parrots' Annual March Matching Fund Drive!

With over 450 birds and animals receiving care at our sanctuary facility, The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary, and outreach programs that are national and international in their scope, Foster Parrots relies on the support of YOU, our contributors and our partners. Many of you have been with us for nearly 2 decades. For those of you who have joined us more recently, **the Annual Foster Parrots March Matching Fund Drive is one of 3 fund drives we stage each year. It is our biggest and most important fundraising event!**



**Never under estimate the impact of your individual support!
Every single donation, no matter how big or small, is vital to the continuation
Of our work on behalf of parrots and captive wildlife.**

Because you have chosen Foster Parrots as your non-profit partner, you have:

- Constructed a beautiful sanctuary facility In New England that offers peace and safety to over 450 parrots and other displaced animals.
- Saved a forest in Guyana and continue to protect the freedom of parrots in Central and South America, with your most recent conservation project taking shape in Costa Rica under Chris Castles and "Hatched To Fly Free".
- Developed a humane education initiative that brings quality programming into grade schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and community centers throughout the region.
- Nurtured the growth of a new regional parrot adoption network (NEPPCO) that unifies parrot rescue groups, humane shelters, veterinary offices and bird clubs in an effort to broaden the landscape for placement services – *and help more birds.*

Please consider supporting this important Fundraiser!

All donations dated within the month of March will be matched up to \$25,000!

Send checks to:
Foster Parrots, Ltd.
PO Box 650
Rockland, MA 02370

or

Make your donation On-line
thru PayPal or Network For Good
by visiting
www.fosterparrots.com

For all of your faith and support over all these years, we can never thank you enough!