



Life with Walter, our African Grey Parrot

by Randi Dauler, Aviary Member

Twenty-one years ago my husband, Van, and I adopted a six month old Congo African Grey Parrot. Other pet birds were available for sale but we were intrigued by the fact that African Greys are considered quite intelligent, have excellent talking ability and communicate verbally by associating words with situations. In the years since, Walter has become a wonderful, talkative, loving and well-socialized pet. We have learned to read his body language, anticipate his needs and wants and give him the nurturing companionship he requires.

African Greys are flock animals that require the companionship of others to satisfy an innate need for socialization. Van and I have taken pet ownership very seriously and have incorporated Walter into our life in many ways. His cage is in my home office/family room and he has perches in our dining room and bedroom. His favorite place is on my shoulder where he quietly and patiently sits while I do things around the house. In the summer he loves to be with us (in his travel cage) under an umbrella by the pool.

Sharing my home with a pet bird has impacted my life and worldview:

- I have become much more sensitive to the needs of living creatures which have limited means of communicating with humans.
- I have become more of an environmentalist and understand the relationships between different species of animals and plants.
- I have a greater appreciation of the global politics of bird conservation, such as the need to prevent the elimination of habitats serving migratory birds and to preserve genetically diverse bird populations.
- My husband and I regularly make charitable contributions to support the programs of the National Aviary.
- I have served on the Board of the Aviary and continue to communicate the Aviary's mission to a broad audience.

Walter has certainly influenced us in many ways. This little bundle of joy makes us happy, binds our family unit together and has broadened our appreciation of the world around us.

bird books ***The Sibley Guide to Birds***

The National Audubon Society; A Chanticleer Press Edition, 2000. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York
written and illustrated by **David Allen Sibley**, reviewed by **Mark Bremer**, Lead Aviculturist

In 1934, Roger Tory Peterson redefined the way people look at the natural world by producing his "field-trip friendly" *Field Guide to the Birds*. For the first time, a portable book combining fine painted plates and species natural history was available to the masses. Today, Peterson's contemporary, David Allen Sibley, continues the Peterson concept with a touch of his own ingenuity. *The Sibley Guide to the Birds* is certainly my pick for one of the most outstanding identification guides for the birds of North America. Sibley's guide packs in 810 native and non-native species of avian fauna that are found on the continent. Nature enthusiasts from the professional ornithologist to the beginner birdwatcher will find this book a must-have acquisition.

This book is geared specifically for aiding the identification of birds in the field. The guide opens with an impressively thorough 22-page introduction, exploring interesting topics like aberrant plumages, plumage wear and fading, and molt cycles. Sibley also includes detailed coverage of passerine, shorebird, waterfowl and gull topography.

The beauty of Sibley's guide is in its organization and its novel approach to the bird families. Sibley efficiently includes every plumage and every subspecies, at rest and in flight. To minimize page flipping, Sibley places similarly looking species side-by-side. His introductory pages for each family or group of related bird families provide a pictorial preface for the species found in those groups allowing for a quick comparison. I found these pages quite convenient when preparing for diverse, similar, and symmetrical groups, such as waterfowl, warblers, and sparrows. In conclusion, no other book compares to the wealth of information this guide provides. We invite you to see how this book can significantly improve your identification skills.