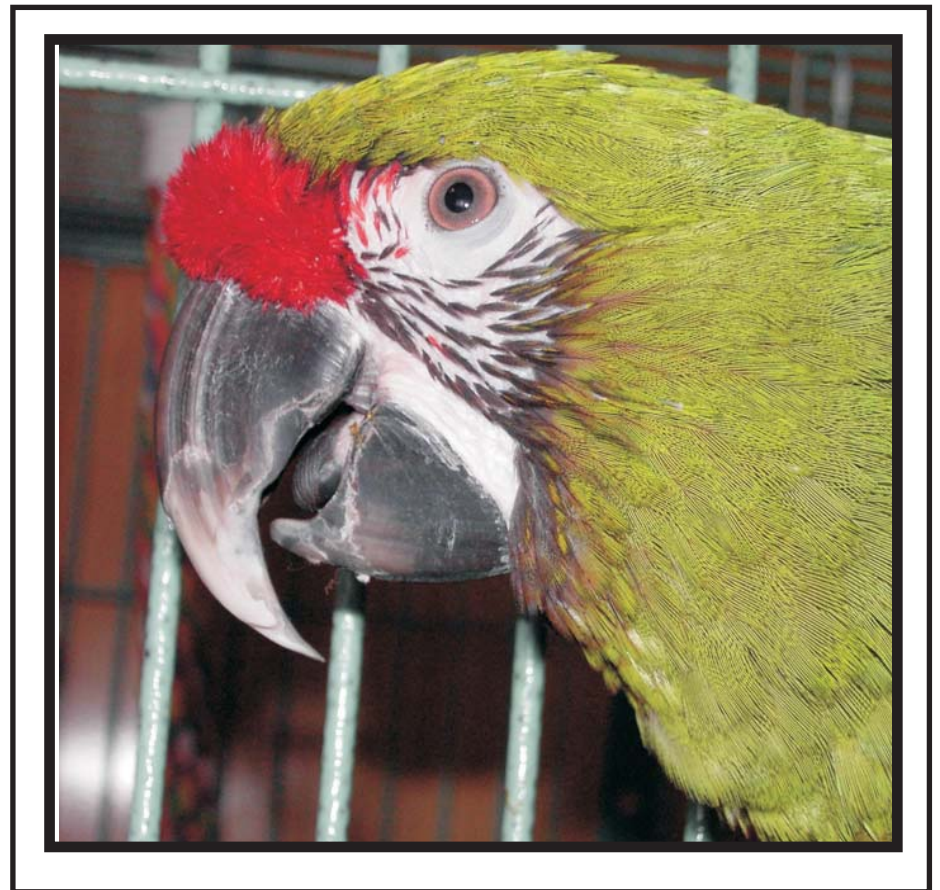




Macaw



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Macaw

When the word “parrot” is mentioned, most people think of the macaw with their long tail feathers, large wings and that typical bare patch of skin around their eyes and bill. However, macaws come in a wide range of sizes and a variety of colours and they make interesting pets.

Origin

Macaws are native to Central and South America. Nature has lavished a rainbow of colours on these birds including green with red, blue with accents of yellow, blue and gold, scarlet with yellow and blue and scarlet with blue and green. They range in size from the smallest at 13 inches in length to the largest at 40 inches in length. The smaller macaws (known as mini macaws) do not normally have the bright colours as their larger cousins, but their personality matches. These birds have an average lifespan of 20 years for the smallest macaws to 50 years PLUS for the larger macaws. It is difficult to visually distinguish the sexes of these birds.

General Personality

These parrots make superb pets as they are extremely intelligent, entertaining and may learn to talk. However, they may not make the perfect “first choice” for a pet bird. The larger macaws in particular should be considered an experienced birdkeeper's bird and one look at their powerful beaks should remind you of their awesome biting capabilities. Macaws are very demanding, loud and raucous, but all of this adds up to personality plus! The mini macaws have much of the same personality as the larger ones without the loud voice.

Food

Their primary food source should be a quality parrot pellet which is available at pet stores. This should be offered daily along with clean water, fruits, vegetables and occasionally a mix of seeds. Sunflower seeds are high in fat and should be offered only as a treat. Grit or gravel is not necessary for most caged birds.

Housing

These parrots need a strong, spacious cage to allow for their long tail feathers and large wingspan and remember to protect all woodwork from their powerful bills. Chewing and shredding are a natural part of a macaw's behaviour so be prepared to replace your perches regularly. Natural tree branches that vary in thickness make good perches inside the cage. Toys are also an important part of a bird's life as they provide entertainment while inside their cage. Make sure you give your bird a variety of safe toys suited for its size. Clean droppings from the cage bottom and perches daily.

Health Care

Wing trimming is essential for your bird's safety. The loss of a pet bird flying out an open door is devastating. Nail trimming is also necessary for proper grip on perches and a comfortable grip on arms and fingers. Most macaws love to bathe whether it is in a dish of warm water, spritzed with a pump sprayer or in the shower with its owner. Parrots should have a bath or shower at least weekly.

THE PARROT CLUB OF MANITOBA meets the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm at St. Alban's Anglican Church, basement level, 486 Rathgar (off Osborne). Check community announcements or contact the club in case of changes. Several members of the Parrot Club of Manitoba have macaws as pets and would be able to tell you how these birds are in the home environment.

Winnipeg veterinarians with an interest in avian medicine are:

Dr. Heather McDonald of Centennial Animal Hospital
Dr. Nancy McQuade of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Carolyn Eickhorn of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Birte Klug of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Andrew Davidson of Corydon Animal Hospital
Dr. C. Skavinsky of Anderson Animal Hospital
Dr. Lisa Sawka of Charleswood Veterinary Clinic