

HOW MUCH DOES A PARROT REALLY COST?

by Jenny Drummey

Parrots are not cheap. Imagine a creature whose total lifetime expense can exceed \$50,000 and you begin to glimpse how much of an investment a parrot really is.

For those who think that getting a parrot for free, or at a greatly reduced price, is a bargain, consider what else you'll have to provide over the bird's lifetime:

- Cage, perhaps more than one
- Perches and bowls
- Toys
- Vet Visits
- Play gyms and trees
- Food
- LOTS of your time (which is worth more than money anyway)

And don't forget the expense of replacing things that birds destroy. Sharon says, "I have 2 bathroom floors that my African Grey has chewed up and I need to replace, I have a huge bedroom set that is solid wood that has been chewed by the macaws, moluccans, and the grey, (bed and dresser both chewed). My kitchen floor has also been chewed. My big bird room has drywall artwork, made by the macaws when they peeled away the outer layer. When we first got the three macaws, we made them a nice swing and toy attachments from the ceiling and would give them their freedom while we were gone. We came home to find all three macaws in the rafters looking down at us through the great hole in the ceiling which they were so proud of."

Destruction aside, even daily upkeep is expensive. Take Wendy, who owns three large birds, who spends \$300.00 a month on fruits and veggies. "What they actually consume is probably \$150," she says. She also spends \$300.00 on toys per month. The annual vet visit can cost over \$750.00.



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"If you can live with these things and can tolerate them and always are willing to listen to everyone including your parrots and learn everyday, your rewards are great and never ending. They have so much to give if we take the time to enjoy. We live with our parrots they don't live with us."

Sharon Andresen

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For miscellaneous monthly expenses, such as repair or replacement of items the birds damage, about \$50.00.

Bob, who has 10 small birds, spends \$60.00 a month on food, and about \$30.00 a month on miscellaneous expenses. And vet bills? "Vet costs vary from as little as \$150 a year to well over \$1000. In the six years I've had birds, I've spent \$3000 at the vet. Oh yeah, and I haven't been away from the apartment for more than 24 hours

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How much do cages cost?

Wendy, our cage guru, provided the following general prices for bird cages.

Large bird cages Cage, stainless, lifetime: \$1,500
Cage, powder-coated, average 5-year life: \$675

Medium bird cages Cage, stainless, lifetime: \$1,200-\$1,300
Cage, powder-coated, longer life: \$500-\$600
Cage, powdercoated, shorter life: \$300-\$400

Small bird cages Cage, stainless, lifetime: \$800
Cage, powdercoated, longer life: \$400-\$500
Cage, powder-coated, shorter life: \$200-\$300

For information about ordering cages through Phoenix Landing at a discount, contact

wendy@phoenixlanding.org

The cost of a parrot (continued)

since August 2000. Definitely part of the commitment. My red rump gets really pissed if he doesn't see me when he's supposed to."

Dawn says: "I just don't keep track of any of my bird expenses, better not to know. I have 3 birds, one grey, a quaker, and a sun conure. My last well-bird vet visit was also \$430ish." For food cost, she says, "I use Harrison's pellets which are expensive, about \$36 a bag, which lasts 6 weeks."

Jenny's flock contains 2 large birds and 3 small birds. She spends about \$150 a month on food, \$50-\$100 a month on toys, and \$30-\$50 monthly on miscellaneous expenses. The annual vet visit for all of these guys is around \$1,000.

Phyllis, who has cockatiels and parakeets, believes that birds don't always have to be expensive. "I found out that I could save oodles on toys when they seemed to prefer homemade things like blocks of soft wood from the craft store and corn husks from the supermarket. I spent a lot on store toys that were rejected over the years, but recently I found that they love these really inexpensive things more than costly toys."

Prices will, of course, vary depending on the number and species of birds you care for. However, keep in mind that if you can't afford the upkeep of the bird, you can't afford the bird, and that all birds deserve the best care you can provide. Before bringing a new bird home, consider the effect it will have on your flock, your own free time, and your wallet.



THE BASICS

This is just my rough estimation of how much a bird might cost over a lifetime. However, it doesn't take into account that the value of money changes as time goes on, so the actual figure of cost over lifetime may be much higher.

Small birds (parakeets, cockatiels)

Life span: 15 years

Cost per year: \$500-600

Cost over lifetime: \$7500-9000

Medium birds (quakers, conures, lories, some Poicephalus)

Life span: 20-30 years

Cost per year: \$1000

Cost over lifetime: \$20,000-30,000

Large birds (Amazons, greys, macaws, cockatoos)

Life span: 50-70+ years

Cost per year: \$1,500 minimum

Cost over lifetime: \$75,000-105,000+



LADY SCARLETT's Story



Ruth Fahrmeier, who is fostering Lady Scarlett, brought her to Dr. Kim Danoff to receive alternative pulse therapy for a fused wing. Ruth says "Within the first five minutes, she removed the buckle from Dr. Danoff's watch and three snaps from her jacket." Look for details about how Lady Scarlett's treatment is progressing in an upcoming issue of the *Phoenix Beakin'*.

