

WORLD PARROT TRUST

# HAPPY HEALTHY PARROT GUIDE



A REFERENCE FOR BEGINNERS



# Chapter One

## So, You Want to Get a Parrot!



# Are You Ready for a Parrot?

Unlike cats or dogs, parrots have unique requirements that need to be addressed. If you haven't had any previous parrot experience, then some of these considerations might be easy to miss.

Start by asking yourself the following questions to determine if you're ready, willing and able to provide a parrot with the long and happy life it deserves.

1. Am I willing to devote the time and attention required for the proper care of a parrot?
2. Do I have the funds, physical space, and resources to provide for a parrot's needs?
3. Do I fully understand all that is involved in caring for parrots?
4. Realizing that parrots are very different from cats and dogs, am I willing to learn about parrot behaviour as best I can?
5. Do I have a family or companion animals? How will this impact them and the parrot?
6. If the parrot is noisy, how will this affect my family or nearby residents?
7. Will the parrot receive the veterinary care it requires? Is there an avian (parrot) vet nearby?
8. Is my house parrot-safe? Am I willing to make it so?
9. Will the parrot be outside or in? For the area I live in, which is safer? Will my parrot be flighted, or will it have its wings clipped?
10. If something should happen to me, will my parrot be looked after? Am I willing to make arrangements in the event that my parrot should outlive me?

There are over 400 species of parrots.

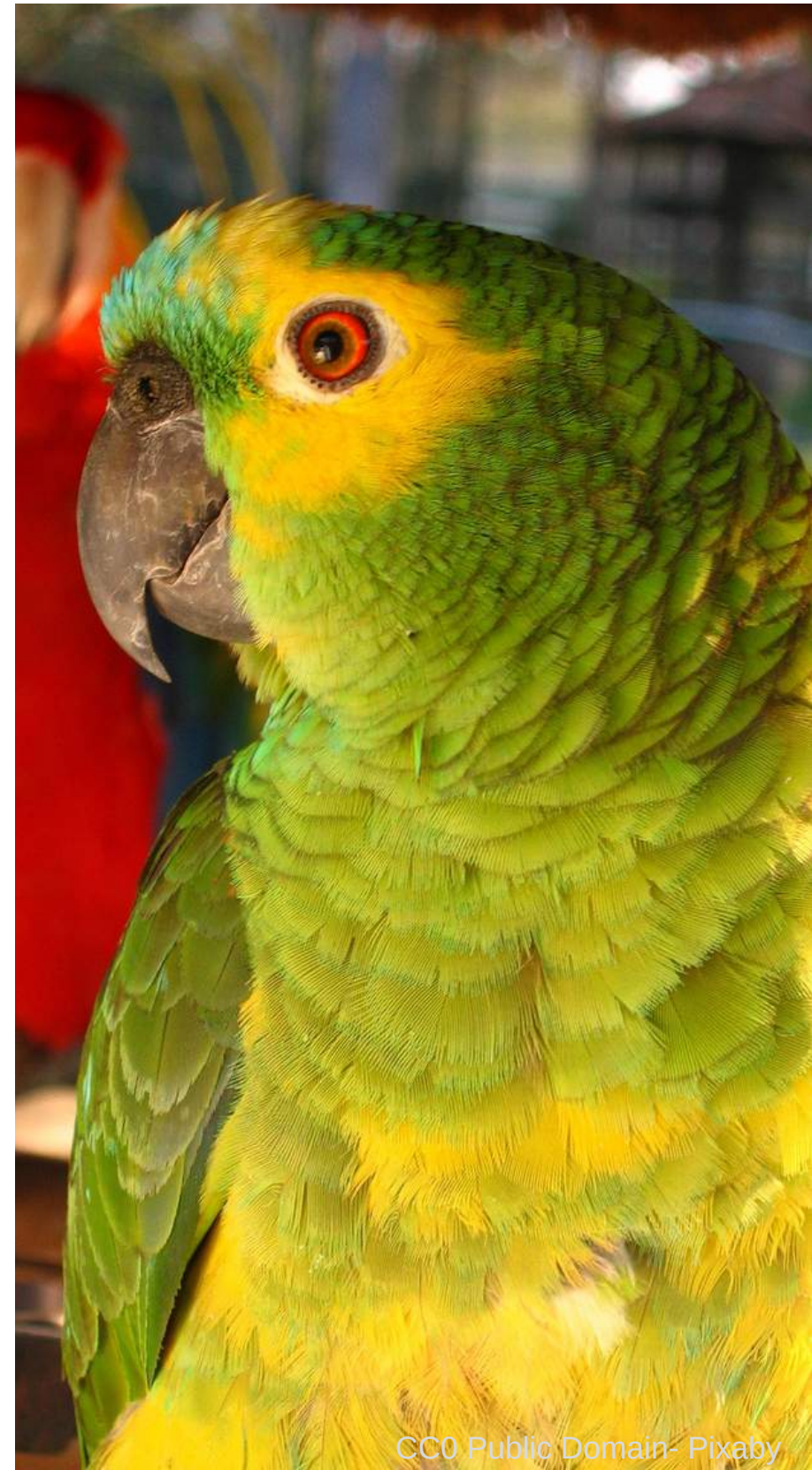


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**Which one  
is right for  
YOU?**



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# Parrot Groups

There are many groups of parrots, each with their own physical characteristics, behaviours and dietary needs.

## ***Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, South Pacific and Asia:***

- Lories and Lorikeets
- Cockatoos
- *Eclectus* parrots
- *Aprosmictus* and *Alisterus* parrots
- *Psittacula* parakeets
- Various other species

## ***Australia and New Zealand:***

- Cockatoos and corellas
- Black cockatoos
- Rosellas
- Australian grass, other parakeets
- Budgerigars
- Cockatiels
- Various New Zealand species

## ***Neotropics:***

- Macaws
- Amazons
- Conures
- Parrotlets
- *Brotogeris* and other parakeets
- *Pionites* parrots
- *Pionus* parrots

## ***Africa:***

- Grey and Timneh parrots
- *Poicephalus* parrots
- Lovebirds
- Vasa parrots

This is quite the extensive list! However, many of these species are not seen in captivity, nor are suitable for companionship.

The type of care required will vary from species to species, bird to bird. For information on how to care for the 220-plus species that have been recorded as companion birds, check out the **Parrot Encyclopedia** section on the World Parrot Trust website.

Inviting a parrot to join your family is a big decision. Familiarize yourself with various types of parrots by joining a bird club to meet others who already share their lives with parrots, and talk to experts such as avian veterinarians and parrot behaviourists.

# Chapter Two

## Tips for a Happy Healthy Parrot



# Physical Requirements & Psychological Needs

While each species is unique, there are some common physical requirements and psychological needs that must be addressed for all companion parrots.

## Airspace

Wild parrots have free reign of the treetops and skies. Companion parrots also need room to move, exercise and stretch their wings, in addition to a place to keep their perches, toys, food, and water.

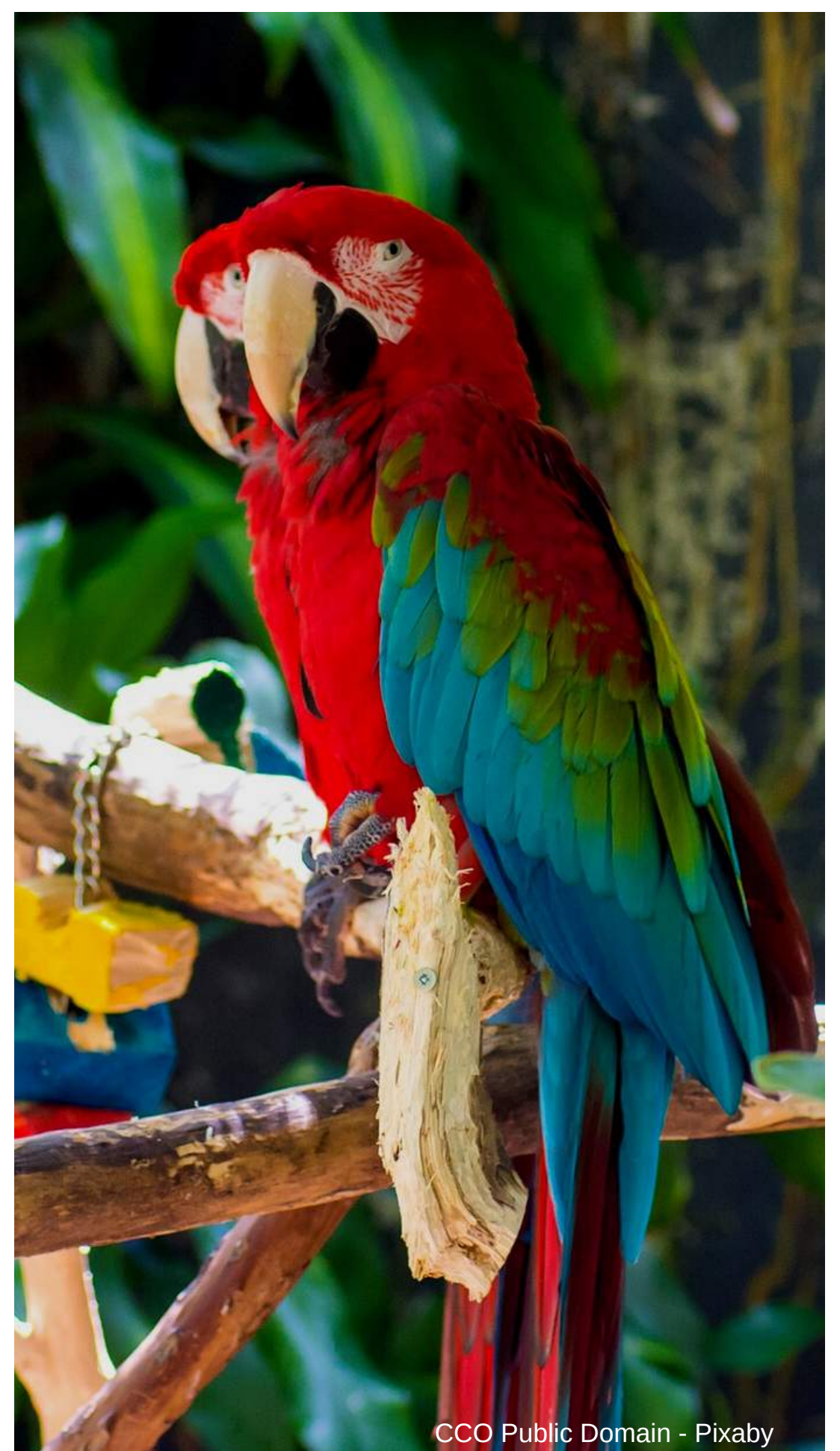
It is important to provide your parrot with plenty of air space, such as an extra-large aviary or safe room to fly around in. Remember, the larger the bird, the more space it will require.

## Branches & Toys

Parrots are highly intelligent and active animals. In the wild, their days are spent travelling to and from feeding areas to forage and, during the breeding season, engaging in courtship displays and mating. A companion parrot will have the urge to do these things, but will not be able to.

It is up to you to provide your parrot with an outlet to expend this energy through environmental enrichment or playing with toys. Visual or auditory stimuli can be provided with complex toys. Giving your parrot fresh bird-safe branches once or twice a week will also help keep its beak and claws busy.

Find ideas on implementing enrichment into your parrot's life in the **Reference Library** of the WPT website.





## Socializing

Parrots are, almost without exception, social animals. Introducing a parrot companion for a solitary bird is an option for those with enough space and resources to do so. This should be done carefully, for the safety of both birds.

Regular socialization with you and your family members is also crucial for a parrot's sense of well-being. Parrots can demand a lot of attention. Feed them, talk to them, play with them, and most importantly, love them.

## Diet

Without a proper diet, a companion parrot is prone to disease and nutrient deficiency. Each parrot species requires a different balance and variety of seeds, pellets, fruits, and veggies. Speak to a veterinarian who specializes in parrot care for advice on diets and supplements.

## Bird Veterinarian

Parrots are animals with special medical needs, so it's important to find an avian veterinarian to keep your companion in good health. Find out where your nearest avian veterinarian is before obtaining your bird.

Schedule regular check-ups and be sure to address any health concerns right away. Birds may try to hide their symptoms – be aware of changes in weight, activity level or behaviour.



# Training

Taking the time to understand parrot behaviour will help both you and your parrot enjoy a happy relationship. Positive reinforcement training is a wonderful way to interact with your parrot, strengthening your communication with basic commands to help keep them safe.



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## Bathing & Self-Care

In the rainforest, parrots love to bathe and preen in the rain. Parrots require regular baths to keep their feathers in good condition. You can provide your companion with some refreshment at home using a simple spray bottle to shower them with warm water twice a week.

## Every Parrot is Unique

Physical requirements and nutritional needs can vary for different parrot species.

To learn about companion parrots on a species by species basis, visit the [\*\*Parrot Encyclopedia\*\*](#) on the WPT website. There you will find species-specific information within each profile including diet, exercise, socialization and more.

# Health & Safety

Having a parrot may be likened to having a toddler who is just beginning to walk with all of the attendant household dangers. Be aware of the following potential safety hazards in your home.

## Cords & Electronics

Parrots are natural chewers and will gnaw on most things if permitted. Keep electronic accessories well away to prevent accidental electrocution.

## Heaters & Appliances

Keep these items safely away from curious beaks. Eliminate the chance of your parrot receiving burns and electrocution by keeping your pet situated away from these dangers.

## Kitchens & Non-Stick Cooking Utensils

It's best not to have your parrot in the kitchen: the dangers are obvious and endless. Teflon® and other non-stick cookware gives off fumes when heated which are toxic to your parrot. Cooking sprays are also harmful to their respiratory tracts. And, of course, the stove is always off-limits.

## Toxic Plants, Flowers & Vegetables

The less these types of plants are in the house, the better. Learn which houseplants and vegetables are known to be toxic to parrots in our [Common Household Poisons Guide](#).



# Coffee, Chocolate & Other Foods

Tasty treats for us can be harmful for our creature companions.

Discover which foods are known to be dangerous to parrots in our [Common Household Poisons Guide](#).

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## Toxic Chemicals & Cleaners

Toxic cleaners and chemicals should always be kept locked up. Some cleaners are also very irritating to a parrot's respiratory tract, so if you must use them in your household, be sure your parrot is kept far enough away from them in a well-ventilated area.

## Washrooms

Washrooms contain many hidden dangers, from products to open water sources. Permit access only under careful and constant supervision.

## Windows & Ceiling Fans

A parrot that is able to fly can pick up enough speed to do itself serious damage should it fly into a window or up into a ceiling fan that is running. While a parrot is out and about, windows should be covered, fans turned off, and drawstrings and cords carefully tucked away.

# A Safe Play & Rest Area

If possible, a parrot should have its own play area set up where it can climb, play, vocalize, and be safe, kept away from all the previously mentioned hazards. And, of course, a parrot should **never** be left out of its enclosure unattended.



# Know the Signs of Illness

Parrots have a natural instinct to hide their illnesses, so sudden weight or behaviour changes are often the only sign that something is amiss. Weighing your bird on a regular basis is one way to monitor its health.

Other signs to watch for include:

- Loss of weight
- Lethargy or less activity
- Lack of appetite
- Excessive or no thirst
- Hunched over, feathers puffed out appearance
- Seated on cage floor
- Change in behaviour at times other than its regular breeding season
- Changes in appearance and consistency of droppings
- Vomiting, regurgitation or diarrhoea
- Sneezing or nasal discharge
- Ataxia (unsteadiness or loss of motor control)

**Contact an avian veterinarian if you notice any of these signs.**

# Additional Resources

When you share your home with a feathered companion, you owe it to them to give them the best possible life.

For more information on diet, nutrition, enrichment, health and other care tips, visit our website's **Reference Library**.

## Become a Member of the World Parrot Trust



Your membership funds important parrot projects and worldwide conservation efforts.

**Join Us Today!**

**[www.parrots.org/join](http://www.parrots.org/join)**