



Parrot Welfare Forum

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What do you
mean by
WELFARE??

AZA DEFINITION

ANIMAL WELFARE REFERS TO AN ANIMAL'S COLLECTIVE PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND EMOTIONAL STATES OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, AND IS MEASURED ON A CONTINUUM FROM GOOD TO POOR.

Explanation: an animal typically experiences good welfare when healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to develop and express species-typical relationships, behaviors, and cognitive abilities, and not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, or distress. Because physical, mental, and emotional states may be dependent on one another and can vary from day to day, it is important to consider these states in combination with one another over time to provide an assessment of an animal's overall welfare status.

“Welfare” can be a loaded term – here is the AZA definition.

So when we talk about welfare...

Welfare is:

- ▶ Inclusive of physical, mental and emotional states
- ▶ Specific to the individual
- ▶ Measurable on a continuum
- ▶ Measureable over time

Welfare is NOT:

- ▶ Animal Rights
- ▶ The same for every individual of a species
- ▶ Something animals have or they don't
- ▶ A snapshot in time

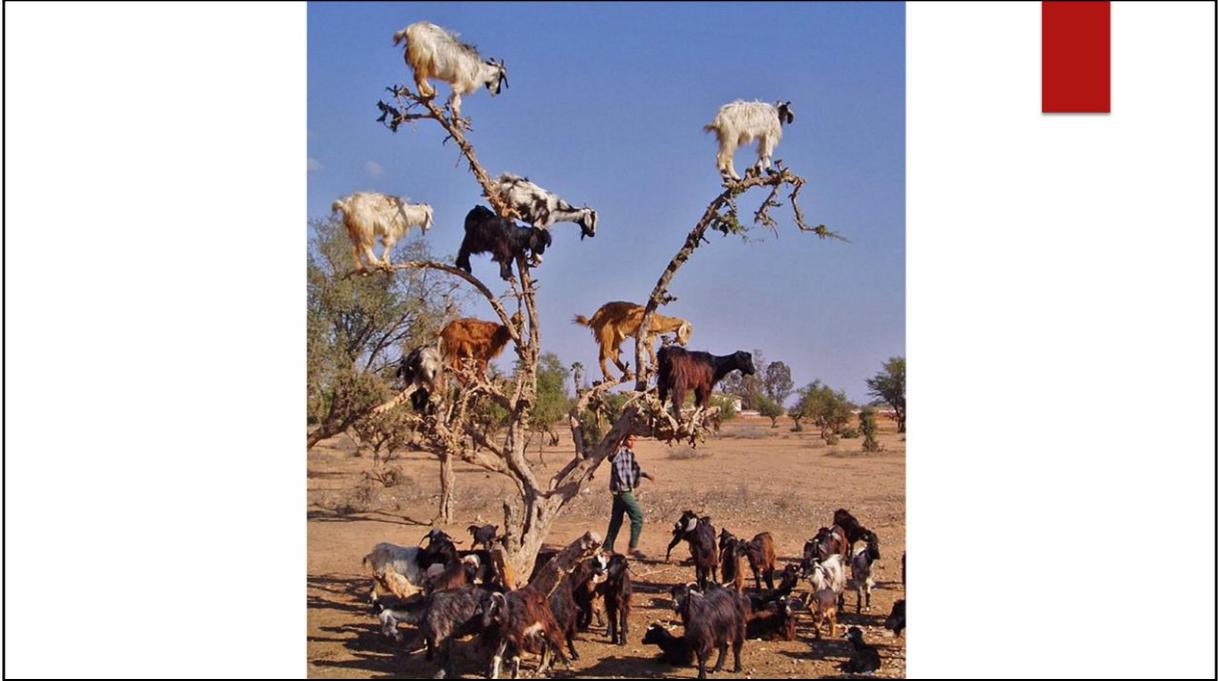
Parrot TAG RCP Guideline

- ▶ The TAG does not support the practice of irreversibly restricting normal flight any species of psittaciforme for any reason other than due to veterinary matters such as injury or disease.
- ▶ All but a few species of parrots are social creatures. The TAG encourages all institutions to investigate the natural history of its parrot species and make every effort possible to house them in appropriate social groupings – pairs, family groups, flocks, etc. These situations may promote positive behaviors such as allopreening, foraging, food sharing, and play. Housing birds alone for medical issues or due to aggressive tendencies may be necessary in certain instances.
- ▶ In addition to providing for appropriate social interaction, the TAG would like all AZA facilities to evaluate the practice of exhibiting parrots on perching structures or 'parrot islands'. It has been a common practice to present many species (macaws, cockatoos, etc) by clipping primary feathers and confining them to a few branches. Although it may allow the general public an unobstructed view of the animals, it is not common to display other avian species in this manner. Instead, we would like to promote the beauty of parrots in flight when possible.

These are the guidelines outlined in the Regional Collection Plan



Almost all parrots are highly social creatures- even forming bonds outside their species and flocking in larger multi-taxa groups. If this is what parrots look like in the wild...



Why are these highly social and vibrant species often flight-restricted to a perch, tree or stick?

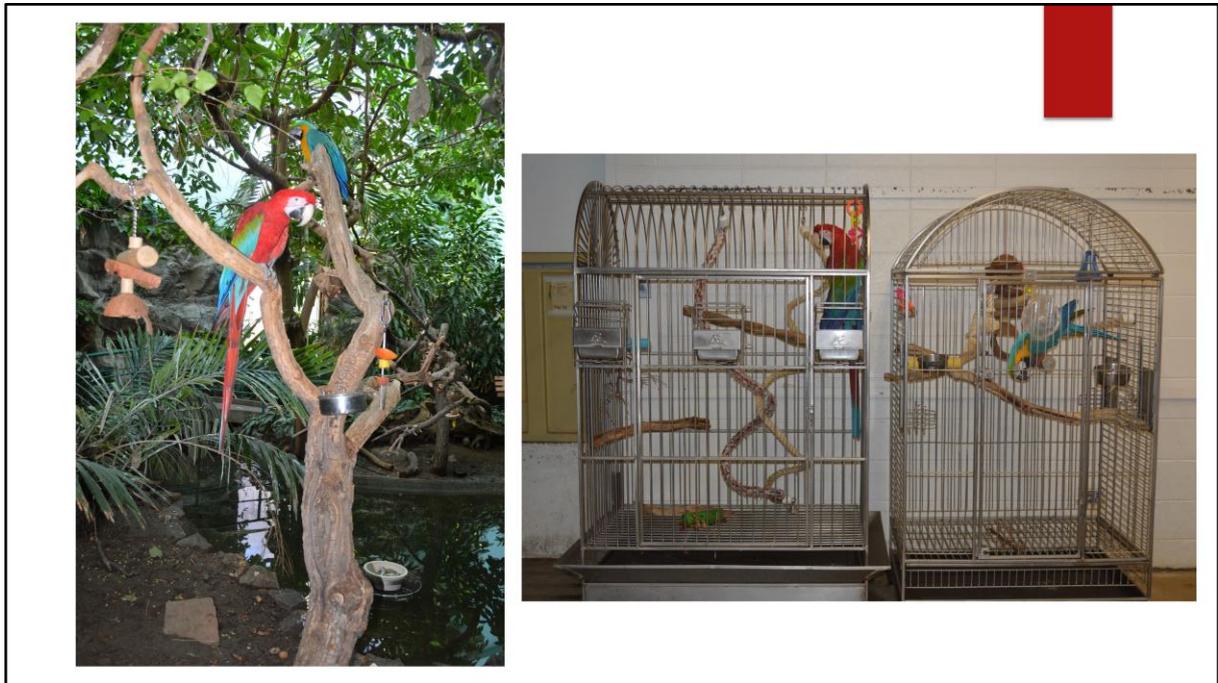
Ground Rules for Discussion

- ▶ Respectful Discourse
- ▶ Judgement-free
- ▶ Focus on individual animal needs
- ▶ Focus on possibilities for improvement
- ▶ The animal is most important
- ▶ **OUR GOAL: Return to your institution thinking about your own parrots and what you can do to assess their individual welfare**

There can be a lot of strong feelings about these issues, but our main goal is for everyone to return to their institution to consider the welfare of the parrots in their collections.



Some avian taxa in our care have been exhibited in a similar manner for decades. Specifically the practice of exhibiting parrots in open displays - 'parrot islands' or 'parrots on a perch' to some - has been a common theme in many facilities. There are two separate issues at hand when discussing this subject. 1. Is this the best way to exhibit parrots in our collections, and how can this discussion guide our collection planning. And 2. What is best for the welfare of the individuals we currently have in our collections, from our exhibit parrots to our ambassador animals? What can be done to improve individual welfare?



Case Study: a pair of exhibit macaws at Denver Zoo – these birds were acquired from the Rainforest Café when it closed and historically their routine had been to be housed in separate cages at night and be on display during the day. Current practice is to transfer the birds to a perch in the indoor Rainforest exhibit for the day, and transfer them back to their individual cages for the night. These birds were never known to fly and their wings were kept clipped for many years, but in the past year we have ceased clipping them. The birds still choose to remain on their perch with the exception of accidental fly-offs that occasionally occur, more in one bird than the other. This case study opened up a discussion with the entire audience of the workshop:

- Concerns about injuries caused by flying when they don't know how to do it in a controlled way. Yes, but they could also be injured by falling off the perch with a clipped wing. In this case the bird that flies off more has softer landings.
- LA Zoo World of Birds show. Birds that did not learn how to fly as a juvenile, do not seem capable of ever learning. Can birds like this learn to fly?
- Some parrots are perfect how they are in a given situation. Assess welfare of each individual.
- “Legacy birds” currently on islands. What to do? Give them larger spaces, attempt to socialize with other legacy birds. Could some institutions take on legacy birds to make space for flighted birds in other zoos?
- Case study of golden conure learned to fly at 14 years of age after introduction with a flock. He clambered around for a long time trying to follow them and eventually flew.
- Question: why are they in separate cages at night? Answer: because that's how they did it at the previous institution and so we continued. Could this be re-evaluated?
- Foraging tree during the day, roosting tree cavity at night.
- Pick right species for the right environment, take history of individual and species into account
- Alternative to “Legacy birds” for Directors? Free-flight birds in shows or within interactive aviaries
- Human factor cannot be ignored. Keepers may be resistant to change in the way birds are managed. Be flexible.



What kind of emotion does this kind of display elicit compared to “parrots on a stick”?



These kinds of displays can be truly spectacular and capture the full beauty of parrots and their natural behavioral repertoire

Our Goal

- ▶ **Return to your institution thinking about your own parrots and what you can do to assess their individual welfare**

So again, this is our goal – assess the individual welfare of your current collection birds, and consider this discussion in collection planning for the future.