

The Bird School

More Clicker Training

Ann M. Castro

Including:
How to do
Medical
Training



Volume II

for Parrots and Other Birds

AdIA



*Photo: Heike Möller
Purzel trustingly allows his wing
to be treated by Heike.*

The Bird School

More Clicker Training for
Parrots and Other Birds

Volume II

The Bird School
More Clicker Training
for Parrots and Other Birds
Volume II

Ann M. Castro

AdIA Papageienhilfe gGmbH

262 color photographs made with normal birds by normal people. These are not show birds, but birds trained by the users of my forum.

The Bird School. More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds
by Ann Castro
AdLA Papageienhilfe gGmbH

Find us on the web at: www.thebirdschool.com

Copyright © 2012 - 2018 by Ann Castro
ISBN-13 for epub edition: 978-3-939770-59-6
ISBN-13 for print edition: 978-3-939770-57-2

Layout: Ann M. Castro
Photo work: Ann M. Castro, Thilo Hagen, Heike Möller
Front cover photo: Kerstin Neusel
Editing: Lisa Dean

Notice of Rights

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. For information on getting permission for reprints and excerpts, contact ann@annsworld.de

Notice of Liability

All effort has been made to ensure that all information in this text is accurate, up-to-date and easily understandable. As knowledge is expanded continuously, readers must verify for themselves whether any statement may have been made obsolete by newer findings. The author, publisher and any persons representing or working for the aforementioned cannot be held responsible for unforeseen consequences of the use or misuse of this information.

Thank you

When I asked for help with the photos of this book members of my forum rushed to help. In just days they had started to train their birds according to the lessons I had provided to them with my manuscript. I am still in awe how much you guys accomplished in such a short time span.

My heartfelt thanks go to:

- ✎ Jens Bitterlich, Kai Schäfer and Stoyan Yankov with Heidi and Otto
- ✎ Sven Friesicke
- ✎ Thilo Hagen and Ralf Müller with Romeo, Julia, Caesar and Cleo
- ✎ Kirsten and Jürgen Helfer with Bienie, Carlchen, Jule and Krümel
- ✎ Barbara Klappert with Kucki
- ✎ Silke Klingenberg and Tobias Senkel with Artemis, Flips and Rocky
- ✎ Heike Möller with Purzel and Knuffel
- ✎ Kerstin Neusel with Fin and Nic
- ✎ Sigrid and Ron Rhodes with Snoopy and Tweety
- ✎ Steffi and Andy Roth with Igor and Silvana
- ✎ Christina Rützel and Martin Geörg with Luke
- ✎ Lena Schenk, Vera and Patrick Llorente with Pepe, Fino, Sherry, Lucio, Luna, Emma and the chicken gang
- ✎ Christine Schlick with Theo and Tristan
- ✎ Daniela Stöcker and Andreas Hennenlotter with Whitchel and Flips

Table of Content

1. Preamble	9
2. Introduction	13
3. Learning the name.....	15
4. To your Spot	23
5. Stay	39
6. Into the Cage	49
7. Into the Carrier	69
8. Drinking from the syringe	87
9. Shake Hands.....	95
10. Filing the toenails	103
11. Wave	123
12. Retrieve.....	137
13. Lost-Find	153
14. Playing Catch.....	163
15. Big Eagle	179

16. The head grip.....	187
17. The well game	199
18. The end	207
Appendix	209
✦ Our Stars	211
✦ Who is AdlA Papageienhilfe gGmbH	223



*Photo: Lena Schenk
Luna has easily learned to eat from a spoon.*

1.

Preamble

Enthusiastic bird owners often ask me what else they could practice with their feathered companions after reading *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, Volume I.

Other owners require exercises that simplify day-to-day living with their parrots. It appears that some parrots are rarely let out of their cages, as the owners are concerned about not being able to get them back inside. Often parrots are not brought to the required avian veterinary appointments because owners are unable to get the birds into their carriers or are worried that the stress of capture and transport will harm their birds. Even the simplest grooming is not done by the owners themselves, as they do not know how to do it. Thus, living together, which ought to be enjoyable for both parties, becomes a chore rather than a pleasure. This should not and need not be the case. Therefore, I have decided it is high time to write a second volume regarding training; a book in which the exercises in the first volume are expanded upon and with exercises that are not only fun, but also useful. This book will help you and your birds playfully learn exercises that are important for day-to-day living while deepening your relationship at the same time.

I hope and wish that with the aid of this book the joint lives of you and your birds will become even better and more beautiful.

Enjoy reading and training!

Ann.



Photo: Kirsten Helfer/Jürgen Helfer
Parrots that are allowed to be parent raised in consideration of animal welfare requirements ...



Photo: Kirsten Helfer/Jürgen Helfer
... become super tame and have a far lower tendency to behavioral issues than hand raised birds.

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



*Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
Flip loves to cuddle into Silke's Hand – a beautiful proof of trust.*

Ann M. Castro



2. Introduction

In my introductory book about clicker training you and your birds have learned how clicker training works.

With the help of various basic exercises, you have mastered the different training tools and methods and now feel well acquainted with them. In this book we take training together to the next level. We will use your previously acquired skills to learn new exercises that are focused on making the daily interactions with your birds easier. After you have worked through the exercises in this book, you should be able to easily deal with all day-to-day problems that may come up while keeping parrots. This includes grooming as well as emergency and medical care.

We will start with behaviors that are simply useful when your birds have mastered them, such as responding to you calling their names or going into their cages or onto their perches and staying there. Then we will practice exercises that are fun but have a more serious underlying purpose. These exercises include: retrieving, searching for objects, and playing catch to ensure that your birds get into and stay in mental and physical top shape.

You and your birds will also learn exercises for grooming, medical examination, and treatment requirements. These exercises include going into the carrier, drinking from a syringe, grooming toe nails, bandaging a foot, lifting the wing, allowing you to inspect the wing

closely, and holding your bird with the three fingered head grip.

Most of the exercises in this book required that you have read and worked through *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, Volume I. If you have not done so already, I urge you to do this before starting with the exercises in this book. Chances are high that you would not understand the instructions given for the exercises in this book and the whole process would be frustrating for you and your birds.

Having said this, it does not matter which of the exercises in this book you would like to begin with. Simply start with the behavior for which you have the greatest need or desire.

Please remember that you and your birds should enjoy all training, regardless of how serious the underlying reason for your training may be. Proceed slowly and sensitively according to each bird's learning speed. Honor his efforts generously. This ensures that your student will be keen and happy to participate in your training efforts.

3. Learning the Name

Increasing numbers of parrot owners practice species appropriate keeping with at least a pair of parrots, often even small flocks. This gives rise to the issue of wanting to address only one of their birds at a time.

Imagine for example that all of your birds are playing quietly and nicely and only one of them has decided to chew on an electric cord. Ideally, you should be able to use the “leave it” command, as learned in *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, Volume I, for just that one bird. It would be a shame – not to mention unfair – to use it on all your birds. They would all be interrupted, even though they were behaving well.

It would be vastly preferable if you could single out and address just the individual concerned. If you said, “Scarlett, leave it!” then only Scarlett should react to the command and interrupt her activity. To make this possible, we must teach our birds their names and also to react to them. Then we can use them for individualized commands.

Training goal

Your parrot reacts to his name and gives you his undivided attention.

Training method

Shaping

Training set-up

Your bird should be happily occupied with something he is allowed to do. You do not want to have to interrupt him. Instead, you want to be able to wait calmly, until he pauses in his activity on his own accord.

Procedure

Step 1. Capturing the behavior

Observe your bird while he is otherwise occupied. Wait until he pauses and moves his attention even the slightest bit towards you. This could be as simple as him lifting his head a little or even turning it the tiniest bit in your direction. Click and treat him.

Then, ignore him again, allowing him to continue doing whatever he wants to do. Wait and observe. If he moves in any way towards you again, click and treat him. Keep repeating this, until the frequency of him interrupting what he is doing has clearly increased.



Photo: Sigrid Rhodes/Ron Rhodes

Step 1. Capturing the behavior: Snoopy enjoys interacting with her mate. But the slightest move towards Sigrid, her owner, is clicked and treated ...

Step 2. Shaping the behavior

Next, you delay the click a little bit. Due to extinction behavior, as explained in *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, Volume I, the bird will now more clearly interrupt his prior activity. Click and treat

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds

him. Going forward, you only reward the amplified interruption of his activity, until it is shown reliably. Then, you again postpone the click a little bit, to make the behavior even more pronounced. In this way you continue, until your bird fully looks at you or even turns his body towards you. Remember to click and treat each little improvement. When he finally shows the behavior you want, you not only click and treat him, but also give him a jackpot. Practice this, until your bird reliably looks at you.



Photo: Sigrid Rhodes/Ron Rhodes

Step 2. Shaping the behavior: ... until she fully looks at Sigrid ... and gives Sigrid her complete attention. Meanwhile, Tweety, her mate, obviously couldn't care less.

Step 3. Adding the name

Once your bird reliably looks at you, it is time to add his name. This is done the same way you learned to add a command to an exercise in *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, volume I. In a way, your bird's name now functions as a command to pay attention to the person who is calling the bird's name.

Like you did when adding commands to exercises, you start by saying your bird's name at the exact moment in which he looks at you. This prevents you from diluting the command by saying it too early, before you can be sure that the bird will actually look at you. Practice this thoroughly. Remember to click and treat your bird, too.

Once this is well established, you can slowly start saying the name a little bit earlier. Practice this a few times, then say the name sooner and sooner until you are saying his name just before he begins to look at you. At that point, your bird will have learned to look at you when you say his name.

Step 4. Transfer exercises

Practice with your bird in all kinds of different situations. You should also gradually increase the level of distraction, such as a radio playing or other people and animals being in the same room. Make sure you do not primarily use his name in negative situations, such as “Charly, leave it.”

Instead, practice his name in positive situations, such as “Charly, would you like a treat?” The goal is for your bird to have a positive reaction when he hears his name and to look at you with happy anticipation.

Step 5. Combining the name with other commands

After your bird has learned to look at you reliably when you call his name, you may start to combine his name with other commands, such as “Charly, come.”

To avoid confusion for your birds, it is important that you know exactly what you want your birds to learn. Do you want them to react only to a command if prefaced by their names? In that case, the individual bird will not react to a command spoken without his name. Or, should he react to both? In that case his name prefacing the actual command functions like a special attention getter.

Both versions have advantages and disadvantages. In flock keeping it is practical to have the whole group react to a command rather than having to repeat it with each bird’s name. On the other hand, it can be a real nuisance if you call and they all react.

You need to decide what you want and then be consistent in your rewards. If you only want your birds to react to commands prefaced by their names, then going forward you may only reinforce those. Otherwise, you will really confuse your birds.

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich
Otto is very busy ...*



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich
... turns slightly towards Jens ...*



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich
... gives him his full attention ...*



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich
... and is rewarded*

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



*Photo: Steffi Roth/Andy Roth
Steffi's Igor listens to his name, too.*

Ann M. Castro



4. To your Spot

The “to your spot” command is one of my favorite exercises.

It is just so useful in so many different situations. When training with several birds at the same time, you can use the “to your spot” command in combination with the “stay” command to prevent your birds from interfering with one another’s training sessions.

Of course you can also use the command to separate squabbling birds. Utilizing the “to your spot” command, you can also establish desired perching locations which are suitable and safe for your birds. Another use is to manage your birds when you are entertaining visitors who are not comfortable around them. In that case you can send your birds to their perches or playgrounds instead of letting them bother your guests.

The “to your spot” command is an advanced version of the “down” command learned in *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, Volume I. The “down” command refers to any location you want your bird to step down to. The “to your spot” command addresses just one particular location that has been defined by you as your bird’s “spot” that you want your bird to go to. This is comparable to sending your dog into his basket. This has the advantage of being able to send your birds across the room to their perches, instead of having to place them there yourself. Of course you may also teach your birds several variations of the “to your spot” command. This way you could direct them to go to various locations around your home. Keep in mind, though, that each location will need a different identifying name, such as playstand, shower, etc.



*Photo: Lena Schenk
Sherry, Fino and Pepe enjoy staying in such an interesting location.*

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



Photo: Sigrd Rhodes/Ron Rhodes

When training with several birds, it is extremely useful if each of them knows their spot and waits for their turn. You can see here Snoopy waiting politely for her turn while Tweety tweaks the target stick ...



Photo: Sigrd Rhodes/Ron Rhodes

...and vice versa.

Of course, “their spot” should be a location that is highly attractive for the bird. You want them to go there willingly and to be able to spend time there without being bored and leaving the location because of it. “His spot” should be your bird’s favorite location, because there are always interesting toys, surprises and treats waiting there for him. If your birds get along well, you can use the same location, such as a large playstand, as “their spot” for all of them. If you have birds that do not get along, you will need different locations as “their spot”.

Training goal

Upon the “to your spot” command your parrot relocates to his designated “spot”.

Training method

Shaping and target stick

Training set-up

You need a location in which your bird feels comfortable and where he enjoys sitting. It needs to be a location in which he has no problem whatsoever spending time. I would suggest outfitting the location with all that your bird may need to spend some time there, such as food, water, interesting toys, and maybe a treat bowl for training purposes.

Procedure

Step 1. Determining “his spot”

Your bird should be in immediate proximity to “his spot”. You could simply hold him on your hand right in front of it, like you did when you taught him the “down” command as outlined in *Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds*, Volume I. Your goal is for him to go to “his spot” by himself. You may not use the “down” command for this, as your goal is to be able to use a special command for him to go to “his spot”. Thus, your bird must learn the difference between “down” and “to your spot”, even though initially the procedure is the same. Birds who know the “down” command will usually easily step-down

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds

to a location if held closely in front of it. At the moment your bird steps-down to the location, say “to your spot” in a friendly and upbeat voice. As soon, as he sits on “his spot” you reward him with a click and a generous treat.

Are you surprised that I recommend a generous treat for such an easy exercise? There are two reasons for this. Firstly, it makes him realize that “his spot” is special. Secondly, since the reward is greater, he will start to prefer “his spot” over any other. “His spot” should always be a special location for your bird that he goes to happily and in which he likes to remain.



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 1. Determining the “spot”: Heidi’s spot.*

Step 2. Increasing the distance

You may now gradually increase the distance between your bird and “his spot”. If for some reason it is difficult to make gradual increases in distance, you may also use the target stick to guide your bird. Generally though, it would be best to teach him with shaping as it allows you to freely choose your own location. If you utilize the target stick you

have to remain in proximity of your bird's "spot". This means that you can only practice short distances. Your goal, however, is to be able to send your bird across the room to his spot, such as when you are lying on your sofa or greeting guests.

The target stick will therefore only suffice to practice short distances, until they are reliably learned. Afterwards, to continue with your training and to perfect the exercise also for large distances, you must revert back to shaping as training method.



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov

Step 2. Increasing the distance: The distance to Heidi's spot is increased in mini steps.

Step 3. Transfer exercises

Once the "to your spot" exercise has been reliably learned for a straight distance, you may increase the degree of difficulty with various transfer exercises. You could, for example, position yourself sideways of his spot so that your bird must fly an arch to get there. Or, you could seat yourself on the floor so that your bird has to fly upwards to get to "his spot".

Do not only practice starting from your hands, but also from your shoulder, lap, leg, etc. Once you have thoroughly practiced transfer exercises, you bird should fly on command to his spot regardless of

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 2. Increasing the distance: bigger distance ...



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 2. Increasing the distance: ... Flight



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 2. Increasing the distance: ... preparing for landing ...



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 2. Increasing the distance: ... landing

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov

Step 2. Increasing the distance: Quickly, Heidi has learnt to fly several yards to "her spot".



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov

Step 2. Increasing the distance: Reliably Heidi flies to her spot ...



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 2. Increasing the distance: ... and lands.



Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 3. Transfer exercises: Jens is able to remain seated while sending Heidi to "her spot".

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 3. Transfer exercises: ... flight ...*



*Photo: Jens Bitterlich/Stoyan Yankov
Step 3. Transfer exercises: ... and landing.*

where on you he was sitting before you gave the command. Please do keep in mind to make it super interesting for him to fly to his spot. Do not just send him there to ignore him while you are keeping busy with other things. Always praise him and occasionally give him a treat. This holds for him flying to “his spot”, as well as for staying there. An occasional jackpot will reinforce him even further.

Step 4. Even more transfer exercises

Once your bird has learned to fly reliably from you to “his spot”, you should teach him next to fly from other locations to “his spot”.

As always, start with tiny distances and gradually increase them. In the end, he should be able to fly to his spot even from another room.

When your bird has accomplished that you should add distractions: people talking, radio playing, dogs barking, whatever situations you can think of. When this exercise has been well trained, your bird should be able to reliably fly to his spot even if there is a lot of distraction.



*Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
To your spot: Rocky in perfection: “Where to?”*

More Clicker Training for Parrots and Other Birds



Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
To your spot: Rocky in perfection: "Off we go!"



Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
To your spot: Rocky in perfection: "Almost there!"



Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
To your spot: Rocky in perfection: "Aaaaand landed!"



Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
To your spot: Rocky in perfection: "Was I fabulous or what?"



*Photo: Silke Klingenberg/Tobias Senkel
Artemis being a good bird and flying to his spot.*

End of preview for this book

Would you like to read more?

[Buy now as PDF](#)

Other purchase options: [Amazon](#)
