

Top 3 Most Beautiful Pet Birds

Macaws, hawk-headed parrots and Psittacula parrots take home the prize of the most beautiful pet birds.

By Anton Souza

The Colorful Macaws

Macaws are not only one of the most popular pet birds, but they were voted as one of the most beautiful parrots by Bird Talk readers. Macaws' large, expressive eyes and radiant colors that vary by macaw species, from deep blue to crimson red, combine to give them this honor. Their bare face patches are uniquely accented with delicate feather tracts, such as the blue-and-gold macaw's traces of black, or the red feather pattern found on the greenwinged macaw. Even the scarlet macaw, with a facial patch devoid of feathers, strikes a regal pose. It is clear why readers overwhelmingly nominated the macaw as one of the most beautiful pet birds.

Pet bird owner Linda Costello of Ohio shares her home with five macaws. She has taken her macaws to schools, nursing homes, parades and other local events to the delight of onlookers. These beautiful pet birds clearly hold a special place in her heart. "Years ago," said Costello, "there was a pet department in the G.C. Murphy store at the mall. We'd go there to admire the beautiful macaw that belonged to the manager. It was a blue & gold."

Costello began researching and learning about different species of macaws. The green wing became her dream bird. She found a 2½-month-old female green wing and named her Murphy after the store where she met and fell in love with macaws. A year later, Costello bought Morgan, a blue & gold. Murphy and Morgan are now 12 and 11 years old. Costello now has a male blue & gold, named J.J., and two scarlet macaws, Mitzi and Renee.

Josue Santiago, a veterinary nurse in California, has four macaws. "My first experience with a macaw was in 1996, when I met Peru, my blue & gold. She was featherless, had gauged her eyelids out and had a 3-inch wide hole in her breastplate from self-mutilation. I didn't think I could rehabilitate her. Almost 10 years later, she has opened up to me a world beyond the boundaries of apprehension and intelligence; and has introduced me to a life of patience and unconditional love. "Aside from being one of the most exquisite creatures to paint our blue skies, macaws have a genuine magic that attracts even the shrewdest person," Santiago added. "Their charm and innocence, child-like antics color our hearts. That is why I choose to share my life with four of these resplendent animals."

The Beautiful Hawk-headed Parrots

Hawk-headed parrots are unlike any other parrot. The round crest of white-specked, deep tawny feathers on the back of their heads sets them apart, and their crest rises to full display when hawk heads are alarmed or excited. Hawk-headed parrots also possess a remarkable color scheme of pale blue, maroon and green. These beautiful birds are somewhat rare as pets parrots.

Dr. Greg Rich of the West Esplanade Vet Clinic and Bird Hospital in Metairie, Louisiana, has owned both a breeding pair of hawk-headed parrots as well as hand-fed pet hawk heads for 10 years. "These are one of the most strikingly visual beauties of the psittacine family. Over the hundreds of species I have had the pleasure of having close contact with, hawk-headed parrots will turn more heads when they raise their crest than any other psittacine in the general pet trade," said Rich, adding that hawk heads are very inquisitive and need a varied assortment of toys and foraging products to keep them busy.

"The hawk-headed parrot is definitely among the most beautiful pet birds," proclaimed Susan Mendez of California. "When Sassy, my hawk-headed parrot, gets excited, his ruff rises and he is transformed into a magnificent creature! A brilliant crimson-red feathered headdress surrounds his dark brown and oatmeal colored head, with each feather tipped in deep sky blue. The same red and blue covers Sassy's belly. His back and tail feathers are a darker shade of green. It's incredible to see a headdress on a parrot."

Cheryl Title of Ontario, Canada, manages a pet store and has a hawk-headed parrot named Jackie. "I think what makes the hawk-headed parrot so special is its coloring and ability to raise its feathers. The best part of that is the interest it raises in non-parrot people. Jackie always gets curious looks and, when I scratch her and she raises her feathers, the reaction is always of awe. I can see the looks on the faces around me, and I think maybe I've just opened the door for someone to the world of parrots. I had never intended to get a hawk-headed parrot, but Jackie's beauty and personality won me over."

Pretty Psittacula Parrots

Of the 15 species of Psittacula parrots, the most common are the ring-necked, Alexandrine, plum-headed parakeets and the moustached parakeets. The other 11 Psittacula are not commonly found in either the pet market or aviculture circles. The refined signature rings and black markings that adorn the male Psittacula parrots exemplify their classical beauty. Their sublime grace has been documented since ancient Greece in the work of mathematician Archimedes. They make engaging pets and are truly beautiful birds.

Linda Rubin, a panel judge for the Society of Parrot Breeders & Exhibitors (SPBE), explained that the genus Psittacula comprises more than a dozen Afro-Asian parakeets, with numerous subspecies and a plethora of color mutations among the more popular species. "The common denominator among these exquisite beauties" said Linda Rubin, "is their stately elegance and near-perfect feathering when kept under optimum conditions. As a panel judge for the Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors, I often see species such as Indian ringneck, plum-headed, moustached, slaty-headed, Alexandrine and Derbyan parakeets, exhibited on the show bench with impressive results. Because these species have a natural propensity toward perfect feather conditions, we expect them to have immaculate plumage. When a Psittacula species is properly show trained, it stands alert and exudes an air of regal confidence. In near defiance, it challenges the judge with attitude, as if to say, 'pick me, I'm the best!' We have many champion and grand champion Psittacula in SPBE."

Rubin added that when Psittacula are hand-fed or domestically raised, they can make fantastic companions. "These species entertain their owners through their natural charm and antics; and the color mutations in some species, such as the Indian ringneck, is a virtual kaleidoscope of harmonious hues, muted pastels and bright, vivid splashes of color that just keep aviculturists hooked. We never know what new color mutation is next on the horizon."

Tria Connell of California said that her 5-year-old Indian ringneck, Bubu's, beauty comes from her coloring and personality. "She is powder blue with a light baby-blue ring around her neck, and she "wears" bright orange eyeliner everyday, which is a nice complement to her red/orange beak. Her feathers are a beautiful iridescent blue/gray that shines in the sun. "She is super smart and has me well trained," Connell said. "She stands on my foot when she wants to get picked up off the ground and lets me know when it's time for her to have her chin scratched." Connell added that her Indian ringneck is also well behaved, but lets everyone know when she doesn't want attention or admiration for her beauty. "She has a cute little growl, and will take your finger and gently push you away from her."

Kenda VonNieda of Pennsylvania declared her 9 year-old plum-headed parakeet, Mo, as "one of the most beautiful birds. For such a small parrot you are immediately drawn to its vibrant color and personality. The colors on these birds are like a rainbow; they have a little touch of every color. They are the type of bird that you just stop and admire."