

Why?

by Frederick Wickert



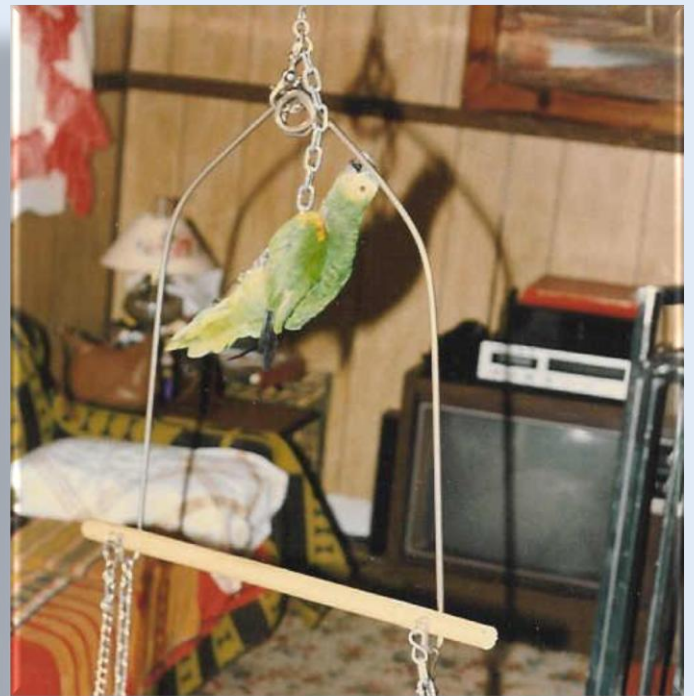
Barbara at the top of the swing



*Barbara on the swing. Sammy in left foreground.
Sammy is a double yellow headed Amazon.*



Barbara eating with a spoon



Barbara at play on the swing

I recently forwarded a story to a friend. The story was about a horse that had accidentally walked into a swimming pool. My friend replied that she has a hard time reading animal stories over human stories. She wondered, why?

Having pondered the question, I think I have the answer. There are those among us who are animal lovers. We just naturally care a great deal more about animals than many others do. When there is a tragedy concerning animals, it tears at us inside. On the other hand, when we see an animal doing something really cute or sweet, it turns our hearts to mush.

I can not help feeling sorry for those who have never had the opportunity to love, and to be loved by an animal or a bird. It is such a precious and priceless experience. When it happens, it is not something one will ever forget. Even battle hardened soldiers in combat will go out of their way to save and protect a helpless animal in their midst. They are the ones who have known an animal, and they know the innocence and love of an animal. They understand how special, and how helpless they are.

What, for example, can be any more endearing than a kitten playing, or even sleeping in a silly or a cute looking pose? What can be more soft or cuddly than a puppy? Is there anything on this earth more loyal or faithful than a dog? Is there any one or any thing more forgiving than a dog? You will have to look far and wide to find anything more beautiful than a spotted fawn or the sun glistening on a colt in the pasture.

With humans, it is rare that an example such as these can be found once past the toddler stage. Little children bring about the same kind of responses as animals do, but beyond that, as soon as they get past the toddler stage, they no longer evoke those same kinds of feeling.

Humans possess hands, feet and intellect that give them a tremendous advantage over animals. It provides them with the means to avoid getting into serious trouble, unknowingly. The same traits are tools that enable them to get themselves out of danger and to treat wounds received.

Animals are far more helpless. They are not endowed with those tools we humans are and it makes their predicament, when they do get into trouble, a far more heart rending experience for those of us who love and care for the animals.

There is something about animals, and I include birds in this, that can reach right out and pluck real hard on your heart strings. My previous home had a long kitchen with a room off the end of it. The wide open archway going in to that room was a perfect place for a swing for my birds to play on. I fashioned such a swing and hung it from the archway, and some of our birds were given turns playing on the swing.

One of the birds that used the swing was a yellow wing blue front Amazon. Her name was Barbara. She liked to climb up the sides of the swing and hang on the chain it was suspended from, at the apex of the swing. When you walked over to it, it put her at eye level with you.

One day I was making a pot of coffee at the kitchen counter. Barbara was sitting at the top of the swing and she asked, "What are you doing?" I responded and told her I was making a pot of coffee. She said, "Come here." Then she repeated it. I just smiled but continued with what I was doing.

Barbara raised her voice a little and in a demanding tone said, "Get over here. Now!" I was greatly amused that she would talk like that.

I went over to her and spoke to her. I said, "I'm here Barbara, what do you want?" Barbara looked me straight in the eye and said, "I love you." At that point the greatest feeling of warmth and love washed over me that you could possibly imagine. Barbara was a very intelligent bird, and had learned a considerable vocabulary. She was able to tell me in plain english. Most birds and animals are unable to do it in the way Barbara did, but they do it in their own way all the time.

For those of us who are animal lovers, I think that is the answer to the question my friend asked. The question, "Why?"