



FROM MATT'S PERCH

By Matthew Russel

There are large numbers of people out there who believe keeping birds in cages is a barbaric practice and I would have to agree with them 100%. First up I need to elaborate on what I mean by a cage. I'm not talking about an aviary, I'm talking about a cage similar to the one Tweety Bird lives in. I see an aviary as a resort, with the birds waited on hand and foot by diligent staff, with plenty of room to move and a number of potential mates to interact with. I liken a cage to sitting in a take-away store, surrounded with glass walls, in the middle of a freeway with massive trucks cruising past uncomfortably close.

Now let's think about the life of a so-called companion bird. What I mean by a companion bird is a hand-raised one, one that's been incubated or taken from its parents at a young age and crop-fed until it is old enough to be shipped off to the local pet shop to make a small profit at the cost of the bird's wellbeing.

Most companion bird species are social animals, normally found in large flocks where they spend every moment of their lives surrounded by their own kind. It's their numbers that make them feel comfortable and safe. Then such a bird is taken and raised as a person (imprinted) like many companion birds are, put in a pretty looking cage that looks nice in the corner of a room, maybe the lounge or a kid's bedroom, and the poor confused animal is given about an hour of attention a day. After it has been given "enough" attention it just sits there on its own all day while the family are at school or work. The only thing to entertain it is the call of wild birds that it can hear but never see. Imagine sitting in the middle of the ocean in a lovely looking rowboat, you can hear the rescue choppers but you can't see them, and all of your signals fall on deaf ears because you're on a different wave length.

But you may say its OK because I put "Polly" out on the veranda while I'm at work, and she can talk to her friends in the wild. But would you like to spend eight hours a day sitting on a veranda, no mater how many strange looking people that don't speak the same language as you are walking past, and not even be able to go for a little jog to warm up. After all it can get very cold and lonely out their on your own surrounded by strangers.

Please let me know your thoughts on this matter. You can e-mail me at: tara_matt@hotmail.com.

Cheers,

Matt