

FANTASTIC BIRDS AND HOW TO PET THEM



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I know your story, bro.

Your dog does not listen to you. Your cat drinks your share of chocolate milk and jumps out of your window. Your pet-human-soul-mate does not love you anymore and you really need to practice your jokes on someone.

Fear not, I have just the solution for you: birds – the videos of which you ignore to watch some round-eyed cats slipping down slides instead.

If you want to know how to be the ultimate companion of birds, read ahead.

WHAT ARE THE CHOICES?

The first step is to recognise what level of commitment you are ready for.

Are you ready to be a mother that cleans a bird cage three times a day? Or do you want to be the laidback aunt who watches from afar but never gets their hands on the feather? Once you have figured that out, you need to decide whether you want a talking bird or one that nods. If you ever go to a pet store, you will often find yourself smitten by a tiny little green parrot's boisterous "Amar naam Mithu!" Next thing you know, the little green parrot is sitting in a cage on one side of your window sill for the next 100 years and screaming the same sentence over and over again. The pigeon, on the other hand, is a pretty chill bird. It does not talk all that much, gives you the chance to befriend your neighbour, and is the least glamorous of them all. But c'mon, everyone has a pigeon these days; don't you want your Instafeed to look exotic?

Then there are finches – finger-sized feather plucking orange beaked finches that bring all the roadside sparrows to the yard for chit-chat. There are budgies, a little suicidal but given the right environment, they can be pretty charming too.

So you get my point. Before deciding on which bird you should get, take a giant whiteboard and make a list of the birds you find visually attractive. Note down the expenses, calculate the amount of food, poop and mood swings, required hours of interaction and special qualities of each bird and then, make the decision that is going to change your life. It's almost like planned parenthood; only this time, your baby can fly.

MAKING THEM YOURS

Once you're done getting that bird, and taking one too many pictures of it, it will be time for you to get on with the real thing and actually make the bird like you. Look, this might be hard for you to take in but I want no secrets between you and me. The thing is, birds might never like you (I'm sorry if you just spent a fortune on that cockatiel). They are a very unpredictable species, to be honest. Things will either be very "We Are Never Getting Back Together", or very "You Belong with Me". There is no in between. So, whether you serenade your parakeet with that voice of yours, or give them egg shells to eat, they might just never be yours. Or worse, they might want your attention 24/7.

The case with pigeons is worse. Pigeons can only be each other's, and never yours. They will go and fondle your neighbour's flock of pigeons but never for once call you Momma.

But above all, the most awful situation will be if your bird does not laugh at your jokes. Trust me when I say it feels 1/10 when that happens.



AYE MATE

Remember how our aunt got us a lovebird on our 6th birthday? Remember how we found out the bird was dead a week later and how that traumatised us for life so much that we could not make friends anymore? I'm pretty sure this happened to all of us; couldn't have been just me, could it? Whether this sounds like you or not, don't make the same mistake again. Get another bird for your bird, preferably of the opposite gender, because most pet birds hate being alone and can die from heartbreak without actually getting their hearts broken in the first place.

OMG EGGS

I never thought I would say this but whatever they say in the Biology books are true. Birds lay eggs. They just do and there's nothing you can do about that. They lay eggs in the morning, and eggs at night, and eggs every hour, making you wonder if you're doing it right. A lot of pet birds like parrots and cockatiels lay eggs without mating. So, if you woke up one day to see your pet laying an egg even if it doesn't have a mate, you're not the only one. Female birds only need males to fertilise an egg, not to lay them. #GirlPower

OMG DINOSAURS OUT OF EGGS

Look, I didn't want to be the one to break it to you but birds are dinosaurs. So when that all-skin-and-no-feather baby comes out of that egg and looks like a dinosaur, it's only normal that they do so. And as a grandparent, you should love and accept them just the way they are.

You might be absolutely blown away by how these little baby birds come out of parents who are very little themselves. The finches lay eggs almost the size of a finger nail. And to see a real bird coming out of those tiny eggs in a few weeks, no matter how much they resemble a dinosaur, is actually a great feeling. So, go on, have yourself that "OMG I AM THE GRANDMA OF A DINOSAUR" moment.

EWV POOP

If you knew that Lana Del Rey is the window to a person's soul, you would also know that poop is the window to a pet bird's health. The texture, the colour, the smell – everything will tell you how your little baby bird is doing. So, to be a good bird parent, you need to be in touch with your bird's poop all the time. A budgie or a finch may excrete 40-50 times a day and that is quite a lot of poop to clean up, maybe even more than the poop that's going on in your personal life. Cleaning poop is not too hard, but if you don't know the art of rubbing and scraping – bro, you're in trouble.

Also, if you choose to keep bird poop unclean for a long time, it might even give you a lung disease and you might die.

ARE CHICKENS BIRDS?

Chickens might look like the last meal you had but they are birds too. And what's better, you can raise them as pets as well. Raising chickens is not something you would do just for fun; it's a way of life. From one chicken comes another chicken, and eggs comes from both of those chickens. Petting a chicken is like collecting action figures – you just can't have enough of them. Your chickens will multiply at a rate directly proportional to your failures in life. And if that does not make them fall into the category of birds for you, I don't know what does.

HOLDING ONTO SANITY

Bird petting has a way of turning you into a paranoid freak. Welcoming a tiny little baby bird in a cage is not just a giant responsibility, but also a wonderful experience of caring for something else other than yourself. You will almost go crazy checking on the birds every two hours and



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making sure they haven't been eaten by Godzilla once you have put the cage in a location where there's lots of light and air. You will set up your alarm at 6 AM to feed your little parrot because otherwise it will go wild and start saying "Amar naam Mithu" a hundred times in a minute. You will find yourself running to grocery stores after school to get your tiny monsters their treats. Their cages and nests will soon be neater than your room. You will sing to them, and tell them your deepest secrets without them giving a \$#! about you. And when you find that you have started

telling your friends about how egg shells are a great source of calcium for your little Angus or Bilkis or Shahrukh, you will know that you have lost a little bit of yourself in them.

One day, you will walk in on your birds cuddling and feel sorry for yourself. But days later, when the baby of your baby pops from an egg, you will be the happiest person on earth.

In conclusion, birds are fantastic creatures that can fly, poop, eat, repeat. If this sounds like you, go catch 'em all.

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