Behavior Problems May be Linked to Your Bird's Cage

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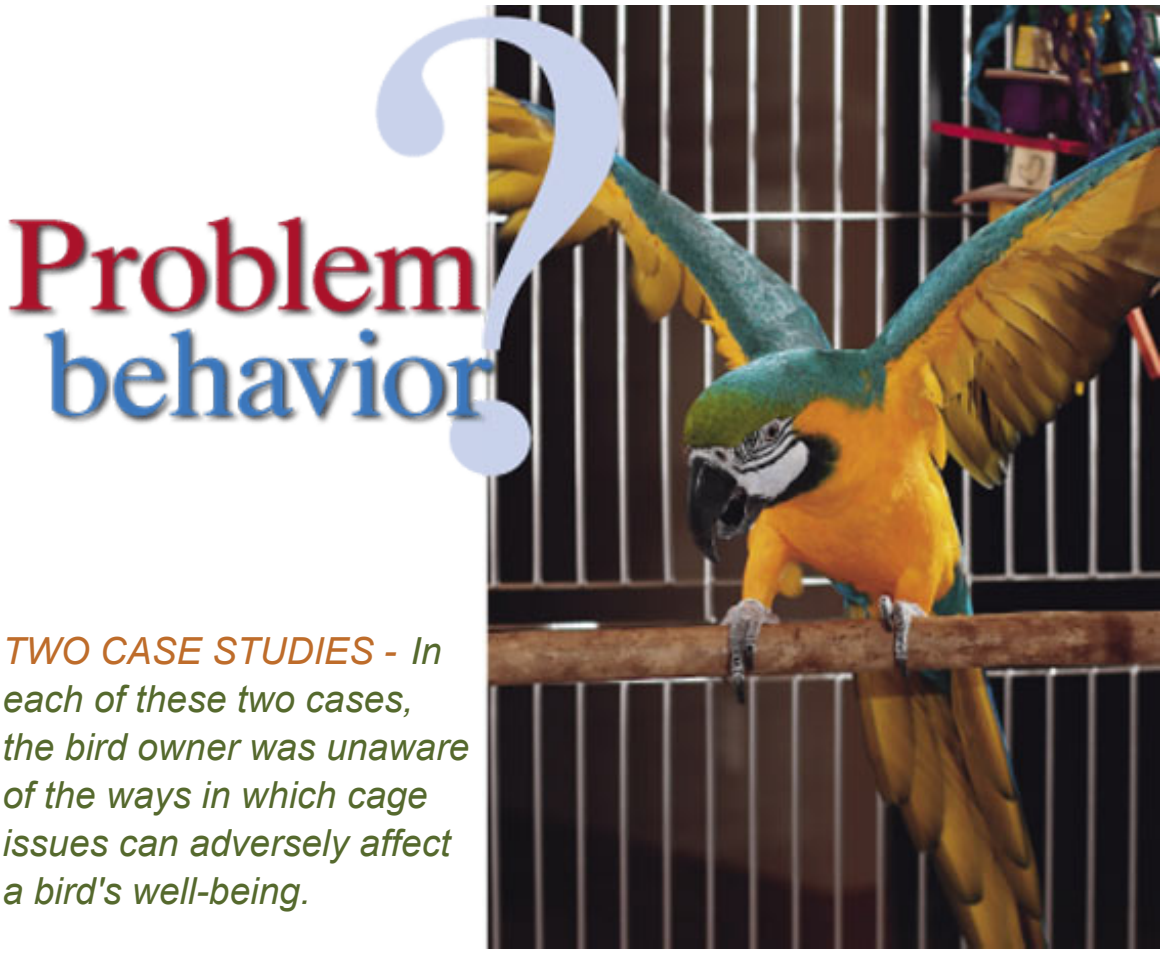

TWO CASE STUDIES - In each of these two cases, the bird owner was unaware of the ways in which cage issues can adversely affect a bird's well-being.

CASE STUDY #1: *NOISY* Payton

NOISY Payton

We got a call from Bridget, the owner of an adult Rose-breasted Cockatoo named Payton. Bridget told us her household was being turned upside down due to Payton's persistent screaming and squawking. At first, she could appease his noisy bouts by offering a treat. After a few months, however, her efforts to minimize this troubling behavior no longer worked.

We assured Bridget that some of the noisy behaviors are normal; they're part of the parrot psyche. We explained that her habit of giving treats or attention to Payton immediately after he began to scream or squawk, however, may actually be making the behavior worse. Payton views the treats as a form of reward, which encourages more of the same behavior.

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To get to the heart of Bridget's problem, we asked several questions about Payton's environment. Particularly, we asked what kind of cage he was housed in, where his cage was located, and what was in the cage.

Understand YOUR Bird's Needs

Payton was being housed in a cage barely large enough for a cockatiel. He surely did not have enough room to climb, extend his wings, or move around without knocking into his toys, perches, or the cage wire, which was likely causing feather damage and subsequent feather plucking. Because of his lack of mobility, he wasn't getting nearly enough exercise or stimulation. It's no wonder he was an unhappy, irritable bird.

Bridget selected a more appropriate cage for Payton immediately. Since his habitat would be growing, we encouraged her to add some different perching surfaces and new toys, which would help make Payton's environment more challenging and stimulating. We also recommended more play time outside the cage, suggesting she set up a playstand in another, bird-safe room and take Payton there to play once a day.

CASE STUDY #2: *SLEEPY* Pika

***SLEEPY* Pika**

Shelly is the owner of Pika, a Scarlet Macaw who had begun to exhibit signs of fatigue, low energy, irritability, and feather pulling. Her veterinarian's diagnosis was sleep deprivation.

Shelly's late-night hours were having a negative impact on Pika's sleep. Shelly often watched television until midnight in the same room Pika's cage was located. She covered the cage at night, kept the television volume low and the lights off, but the television produced just enough noise and light to keep her bird "on the watch" for many hours after Shelly thought she was asleep.

In native tropical locations, these birds experience near 12-hour day/night cycles and are accustomed to receiving 10-12 hours of sleep. In their indoor homes, they must have the same amount of sleep to maintain a healthy immune response against disease, to prevent stress-related behaviors like feather plucking or squawking, and to stay as energetic and good-natured as they should be.

Away From Distractions

Shelly's veterinarian suggested she place a cage cover over Pika's cage and move it into a room that is dark and quiet at night, away from the television, computer games, or other distractions. Since Shelly lived in a small apartment, she did not have a suitable room to move the cage into. It had to stay in the living room, which is where the television was located. She decided to buy a smaller, sleep-only cage for her bedroom, so Pika could be moved there at night.

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CONCLUSION

In both situations, the source of the problems was remedied with changes in the cage size, location, and accessories. However, in the case of Payton, since the problem behaviors he displayed took time to develop, they also would take some time, and training, to turn around.

Our Recommendations

(Irritability and Problem Behaviors - How They May Be Linked to YOUR Bird's Cage)

"Bigger is always better" is our motto with bird cages. The Silverado Dometop Bird Cage comfortably accommodates large birds like Payton and Pika.

Cage Covers darken the cage and reduce distractions to help your bird get the 10-12 hours of sleep he/she needs. Personalize cage cover with your pet's name!

Toys, toys, and more toys! The cage habitat is much more interesting with a mix of stimulating toys. We like shredders, such as String & Burl Bundles.

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