What is Your Bird Trying to Tell You?

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The realm of bird body language is vast and includes beak, eye, head, wing, feather, tail, and foot movements; vocalizations; and more – so many that this article concentrates on posture, since this may be the easiest and most important way to determine what your bird is trying to tell you.

Here are a few of the common bird postures with their general meanings:

RELAXED • If the bird has a relaxed body and her head and body are at attention, she is happy and content. NOTE: If her head and body are at attention but her body is rigid and her feathers are flared, she is letting you know she owns that territory.

BOWING • When a bird is crouching with her head tipped downward toward you, and perhaps bobbing her head, she is asking to be petted or scratched.

HEAD DOWN • If she is crouching with her head down with a relaxed body and raised wings, she is trying to attract attention, either from you or from a potential mate. NOTE: If a bird is crouching with her head down, eyes pinning, flared tail feathers, ruffled feathers, and a rigid body weaving from side to side, she is giving a warning and won't hesitate to bite if provoked. Hissing and a raised crest may be additional clues that the bird is in an aggressive state.

LYING ON BACK • Though probably uncommon in the wild, some pet birds will lie on their backs, and may even sleep in that position. When not ill, this posture indicates trust.

Communicating with your bird by observing and interpreting her body language will make your relationship much easier and satisfying for you both. Communication can be easy if you spend time with her, offer an interesting environment (including interactive toys, such as Teach Box and Bank, giving her a play area out of her cage (such as a Playstand), and bonding with grooming/bathing sessions (with items like the Two-Liter Hand Mister).

WE RECOMMEND

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Exo Terra Mister
Spray Bottle for Cage Birds

Teach Box and Bank

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