

Do Birds Fall In Love?

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A very intriguing question. Those of you that have pet birds know how truly interactive and intelligent they are. They are social animals and have a strong desire for companionship. People who have a bird (or birds) keeping them as ornaments and failing to develop a relationship miss the beauty of the bond that grows. Our pet birds greet us eagerly in the morning, chatter and vocalize incessantly in their communications to us, relate affectionately to family members (sometimes aggressively also) and respond with greater insight than mere 'instinct' would allow. Although birds seem to be highly intelligent are the capable of that heart wrenching emotion - love?

Birds in the wild are truly noble creatures. Many varieties of birds 'mate for life' . We have all seen pairs of birds in our backyards, pairs of waterfowl (ducks, geese) and the obvious relationships that they have. Could this be considered love? If only some people would display these attributes that birds display in their relationships with each other.

But lets turn to pet birds. Are they capable of love? First of all consider the relationship of birds to birds. Those of us that have multiple birds know that they do interact with each other. If they are kept together in a cage their relationship is heightened and they are more 'birds' than 'people'. They will protect each other, engage in acts of affection and when separated may incessantly vocalize until reunited. If one of the birds would pass away or be removed to another home, the remaining bird would go through a definite mourning period.

People are always interested in breeding birds - figuring that they can be bred like dogs. I tell people that birds are 'classy' in that they have to 'fall in love' before they breed. It is not a mere case of placing animals 'in heat' together. The pair of birds have to be placed together and monitored to be sure that they get along. If they get along and decide to breed then they need the proper surroundings to mate/lay eggs and raise the babies. Could this be considered love?

What about birds relating to people? People who have 'hand-raised' birds realize that these birds think they are people rather than birds. With some effort wild-caught or untamed birds can develop a close relationship with people as it is in the nature of birds to be social. Birds can be cuddly, vocalize (actually saying the right things at the right times), may show definite preferences for certain family members, and seem to sense our moods.

The unfortunate situation that some people fall into is that birds are so social that they can show sexual/hormonal activity upon reaching maturity (the age varies according to the type of bird). They may show courtship behavior, become particularly close with one family member and aggressive towards others. There are certain steps in behavioral modification that need to be implemented to calm such activity.

Nonetheless, the human-bird bond is a deep one that elicits feelings of 'love' from both sides. Do I feel that birds can display the emotion of love? Having several birds at home myself and interacting with them, my answer is a heartfelt YES.