

## Naturally Out of Control

Category: Companion Parrot Behavior

Author: Kathy LaFollett | Companion Parrot Advocate™

I've 8 parrots, fully flighted in one house free to roam and do their thing. Four of our flock are cockatiels. I refer to them as the horde for a clearer description of their impact. Stella and Winston are bonded and sweet. They are my little shoulder riders. A year and some ago they had a family. I just allowed them to be parents, and didn't interfere. Neither did I put demands on the babies. I watched their nature and instincts play out with full intent of welcoming our new family members into our flock permanently. As the babies started fledging I thought I would take advantage of the scenario and see what would be the emotional choice of a parrot if I included them in full flock festivities but never taught them step up, nor mandated any interaction. Feral kids if you will. Crazy teens running amok.

I let our little hippies learn all the trade secrets of living in our home through mom and dad. They blended with ease and with fearlessness. They followed mom and dad down to our dinner plates at night. They learned how to forage out of all the other food bowls in the house. They learned how to negotiate with the macaws, Kirby and Felix. They were assimilated into the very heartbeat of our main flock with ease and joy and no stress at all. I think, if I had interceded with my demands or instruction things would have been far more confusing and stressful. Stella and Winston are great teachers and parents. Our horde put themselves to bed every night at 7:30pm on the nose.

Louie and Benny were independent and found the humans of the flock irrelevant outside of the dinner plates. Where Stella and Winston went, the kids followed. All day long. Mom and dad would land on me and preen me and I would pet them, but the kids would just watch. For over a year they just watched. I never attempted any physical move toward them either. I always talked to them using their name though.

And then one day without notice Louie landed on my shoulder with a little thump and chirped into my ear and pulled my hair. Just like that. Benny followed on my other shoulder. Stella and Winston showed up and there was cockatiel arguing in my ears and cockatiels hanging on my shirt flapping with demands and shouts. So I stopped typing and put one hand up to each shoulder and waited to see who would concede. It was Benny on my left and Louie on my right. They stepped up! And I didn't get one more word typed that day.

I can scratch Louie and Benny now. They step up on request and hitch a ride. They steal my food, jump on my hand, land on my head and hide in my hair. Louie and Benny now do all that Stella and Winston do, and a little more. And now we are defining our own relationships based on that foundation.

I write this larticle because I've been reading many posts online lately about "getting" parrots to "do" things. Suggestions about food limiting, and all sorts of ideas get posted as answers and then I read later the questioning parent is struggling even more and their bird is no better, if not worse (from all the changes without transition or reason most likely). And then I think of my hippie cockatiels.

Every parrot is unique, and every situation different. If health is the issue, please get to a vet if possible. But when it's personality things, sometimes, relying on your relationship with your bird, slowing down and considering things as a whole and in part and letting our birds figure things out on their own can yield some amazing results and answers. Sometimes a parrot will go through a phase and it can actually be okay to let that phase work itself out. Human nature, we just love to control everything. Not everything is broken, sometimes it's just naturally out of our control.

***Together we can give every parrot everywhere, a happy home!***

FlockCall.com | Facebook.com/flockcall | facebook.com/felixlafollett

copyright 2015 Kathy LaFollett | all rights reserved