

Where Your Parrot Should Live

By Sharon St. Joan

Choosing what area of your house your parrot will live in is an important decision for both you and your parrot. Your parrot will need a minimum of two to three hours each day outside his cage. Even if this time is spent in your presence, you need to ensure that your bird is in a safe environment.

What places and circumstances are safe for my parrot?

Every situation is different, so you'll need to establish your own plan of where your parrot will live in your home, where his cage will be, where he will play, which rooms he will (or will not) have access to. Here are a few things to consider:

- If you spend time each day reading, working or watching television in a particular room, say a den or office, this room may naturally lend itself to being the main room where you and your parrot spend time together.
- If you have children, or many visitors, you'll need to take extra precautions. Perhaps your parrot can stay in a quieter room or an area of your house that can be closed off to visitors, but where you still spend several hours every day.
- If you have several parrots, a good option may be to have a parrot room, especially set up for the birds. A screened door will help them to still be part of the family. If you can sit in the room with them, that's even better. You'll need to monitor their relationships with each other, making sure that no one bird is frightened, intimidated, bullied or injured by one of the other birds.



What places and circumstances should I avoid?

There are a number of situations that aren't safe for your parrot:

- Your parrot should not have access to any room that leads directly outside.
- A kitchen is not recommended as a good place for your parrot because cooking fumes can be toxic. There are also many other dangers there – such as pitchers of water, pans on the stove, and cleaning supplies.
- Many parrots, perhaps most parrots, need a room with a controlled temperature and no drafts. Drafts may be detrimental to the health of your bird and may lead to illness. Be aware of subtle drafts, which you may not notice at first, near doorways, stairways, hallways, and windows. It's also good to avoid drafts from air conditioning and the kind of heating which alternately blows hot air and then cold air.

- Screened open windows may be okay if the temperature is mild. They are *not* safe, however, if your parrot perches right next to the screen. They are safe only if neither your parrot, nor any outside animals or people, have access to the screen.
- Do not use ceiling fans (or any electric fans) anywhere in your house, since your parrot can easily be injured by them.
- Be aware of the possibility of theft and take appropriate precautions. Make sure your house is protected, and, in addition, do not place your bird's cage near a window by a public sidewalk.
- Avoid placing your parrot in a very busy area of your home, such as near a doorway. However, it's just as important not to isolate your parrot in a back room. You should allow her to be part of the family, to be with people.
- It's not a good idea to allow small children or visitors unsupervised contact with your parrot. Any person of any age who relates to your parrot needs to be either a family member or someone whom you trust and whom you have trained to properly interact with your bird. This is essential both for the safety of the person and for the safety of the bird.
- Cats and birds should never be left alone together. I don't recommend having both cats and birds in the same household. Dogs and birds may share the same house, but they should not be left alone together.
- Unless you have safety-proofed a room of your house where your parrot can be let loose, your parrot should never be left unsupervised outside of his cage. There are too many potential dangers in any house.

Should I take my parrot outside?

In general, it is not safe to take your bird outside. But, you can safely provide some nice outside time for your parrot if you have an outside aviary and transport your bird there in a travel carrier – or if you have an enclosed deck or porch where you can supervise your bird during good weather.

If your parrot's wings are kept carefully clipped, and you have a walled-in backyard without too many overhanging trees, it may be safe to have your bird out in the backyard with you. But, be aware that having your parrot's wings clipped often does not prevent flight. With a little gust of wind, she can be up in a tree.

It can be risky and dangerous to take your bird on outings – in the car, to the grocery store, on errands. With a fright from a dog or a passerby, she can land on the ground and find herself in danger.

A parrot is not a dog: They do not come when called and, once they have escaped, their instincts will most likely lead them to the top of a tree. Their chances of survival and return to you are very slim.

Can parrots ever live outside?

One option for housing parrots is a large outdoor flight aviary to house several parrots. If your climate is warm enough to allow this, it may be the ideal life for your birds since indoor living (even at best) deprives birds of most of the natural elements they enjoy in the wild, including flying. But, this option takes careful planning. These websites may be helpful:

www.shynefoundation.org

www.naturalbird.com

www.backyardaviary.com

What else do I need to know to keep my parrot happy?

In choosing the right places for your bird to be, you'll want to balance two basic factors: your bird's safety and the essential companionship that every parrot requires. Parrots are flock birds. Your family is your bird's flock, and you, or another family member, are his mate. Being alone is unnatural for him, and can be a cause of stress and anxiety. If you are gone for part of the day, be sure to provide entertainment for your bird in the form of a radio, a TV, other parrots, or other family members. Of course, all parrots need a variety of safe toys to play with.

Make sure everyone in your household is familiar with, and is following, the same basic rules related to where your parrot is, or is not, allowed to be. You can go a long way toward keeping your bird both safe and happy by providing him with a secure routine, and plenty of love and attention.

Sharon St. Joan established Feathered Friends at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and has cared for birds and wildlife for over 15 years. She now devotes her time to writing about birds and wildlife-related issues.