

Applied psittacine ethology: caring for pretty Polly

Zoe Demery
PhD, CPsychol, CABC, CCAB



Zoe holds a doctorate in parrot learning and cognition from the University of Birmingham. She has since published papers and lectured in the field of exotic pet behaviour. Zoe moved into clinical behaviour practice in 2012, helping dozens of birds and their caregivers worldwide better understand each other. She currently works at Second Nature Behaviour and mentors others training to become behaviourists. She is so far the only independently accredited clinical parrot behaviourist (CCAB) in the UK. Zoe is also certified by IAABC as a parrot behaviour consultant and a proud committee member of FAB Clinicians.

This presentation will explore the unique challenges and rewards of understanding and managing captive parrot behaviour. Beginning with an outline of natural parrot behaviour, Zoe will identify fundamental deviations that may emerge in captivity due to environmental stressors or inadequate care, focussing on stress indicators and signs of psychological distress. The impact of these stressors on aspects such as appetite, social interaction, and vocalisations will be considered. This talk will emphasise veterinary professionals' vital role in identifying and addressing these concerns for greater parrot welfare. Moreover, Zoe will recommend behaviour modification strategies that veterinary teams can suggest to parrot owners, such as simple changes to the environment, greater awareness of body language and targeted reward-based training. The goal is to improve the veterinary team's comprehension of parrot behaviour and their capacity to maintain the mental wellness of these intelligent creatures. This will result in not only happy parrot patients but also happy caregivers!