An Introduction to Parrots for Elementary School Students

Presented by

Bluebird Learning

Where learning comes alive!

Program Overview

Introduction

Today, children rarely have the opportunity to directly experience exotic animals. Not only can this limit their ability to develop a full understanding of these creatures, but it can also impact their depth of appreciation for the importance of conservation. To help address this, I have designed the *Introduction to Parrots* program which provides elementary school students with the chance to directly observe and learn about these birds. The program consists of grade-specific workshops (ranging from 45-60 minutes in length) that are delivered in a highly interactive format supplemented with a variety of learning aids. Each workshop has been developed to reinforce key concepts from the Ontario elementary school science curriculum in ways that are both interesting and fun.

Facilitator Background

My interest in conservation, combined with my broad background in education and direct experience in working with animals motivated me to author and deliver this program. I have owned parrots for over 10 years and have previous experience as both an equestrian coach and dog trainer. I am committed to continually expanding my knowledge and understanding of parrots, and do so by attending conferences and courses, as well as regularly reading articles and research papers written by experts from around the globe. In addition, I am an active member of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators, as well as a member of the Avicultural Advancement Council of Canada, World Parrot Trust and the Budgerigar and Foreign Bird Society.

Before establishing Bluebird Learning, I was a Vice-President responsible for leading employee development throughout the 1,100 branches of one of Canada's largest banks. An accomplished speaker and facilitator, my corporate credentials also include Canadian, U.S. and international awards for learning. At the present time, in addition to running *Introduction to Parrots* workshops, I am studying at the University of Liverpool via distance learning to earn an MBA degree.

During each *Introduction to Parrots* workshop, I am assisted by my "parrot ambassadors". Dusty is a 9-year old female Moluccan Cockatoo, Jazz is a 7-year old female Hyacinth Macaw, and Shorty is a 1-year old male White-Bellied Caique. All of these birds are my pets. Each one was born in Canada and hand-reared, and all are extremely well socialized.

Preparing for the Workshops

In order to ensure the best possible experience for the students, teachers are asked to follow the guidelines listed below:

- Please plan on inviting one class per workshop (maximum 35 students) in order that the sessions can remain highly interactive and every student has the opportunity to participate.
- All of the birds are extremely comfortable in large group settings. Nevertheless, to ensure the safety and comfort of all, the students will be asked not to touch the visiting parrots at any time.
- Teachers may want to consider excusing from the program any students with severe allergies to feathers and/or nuts. Alternatively, nuts can be completely excluded from the workshops by noting this requirement at the time of booking.
- Please make arrangements for the presentations to be delivered in one location throughout the day, (e.g. the library, gym, etc.) and have the classes go there for the sessions. This helps the parrots relax and reduces set-up time.

- The room setup for each workshop should include:
  - Two large, project-sized tables and a chair. One table is for the birds (who will sit on table-top perches), and the other is for a display of parrot-related items (including feathers, food samples, bones, eggs, etc.)
  - A flipchart, chalkboard or whiteboard.
  - A TV and DVD player
  - Seating for students on the floor (by sitting on the floor, the students have a better view of the birds and teaching materials).
- **It is very important that there are no other birds/eggs/nests/feathers present in the room in which the workshops will be held.** This is to help ensure the health and safety of the visiting parrots.

Program Content

Each grade-specific workshop is outlined on the pages that follow. If you would like me to address different topics or modify any aspects of the program, I would be pleased to customize the workshops at no additional cost. Just let me know about any specific requirements at the time of booking. My goal is to deliver an educational experience that will help your students learn about parrots in a positive and enjoyable way.

I look forward to the opportunity of working with you and your students.

Debbie Johnston
debbie.johnston@bluebirdlearning.com
www.bluebirdlearning.com
(416) 751-1610

Introduction to Parrots – Kindergarten Workshop Overview

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Discovering Parrots

Workshop Length: 45 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Identify the different parts of a parrot's body (i.e. beak, eyes, nostrils, ears, wings, tail, feathers, feet).
- Explain the purpose of each of these body parts.
- Describe basic parrot behaviours, including where they live and what they eat.

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Identify and ask questions about some needs of parrots, and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary in describing investigations, explorations and observations (e.g. beak, feathers, wings).

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Describe basic differences between parrots and humans.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the two live parrots and provided with a very brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
  - Where parrots live:
    - After looking at photos of parrot habitats, we will discuss what it might be like to live there (e.g. warm temperatures, lots of sunshine, many different types of animals, plenty of food and water).
  - The parts of a parrot's body:
    - We will play a game of "I Spy" to identify the different parts of a parrot's body and understand their purpose (e.g. "I spy something curved on the outside of the parrot's mouth that helps it eat its food.") As we talk about each part, we will identify whether people have a similar or different feature (e.g. a parrot has a beak but a person has lips).
    - The students will be given the opportunity to handle different types of feathers as we talk about the function of each.
  - Basic parrot behaviours:
    - The students will examine different foods that parrots like to eat, and we will discuss whether people also like to eat these foods.
    - The students will learn about parrot eggs and nests using a variety of visual aids, including several different types of real eggs.
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials, as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.

"Introduction to Parrots" Grade 1 Workshop Overview

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Characteristics and Needs of Parrots

Workshop Length: 45 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Describe the physical characteristics of parrots.
- Describe basic ways in which parrots use their environment to meet their needs (e.g. where they live, what they eat).

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Identify and ask basic questions about parrots and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary in describing investigations, explorations and observations.

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Describe key differences between the basic body parts of parrots and those of humans.
- Compare the basic diets of parrots with those of humans.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the parrots and provided with a very brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
  - Physical characteristics of parrots:
    - We will discuss the basic physical characteristics of parrots (beak, nostrils, eyes, ears, body, wings, tail, feet) by building a large puzzle at the front of the room. As each piece is added to the puzzle, we will look at the live parrots and decide whether people have similar or different features.
    - To demonstrate the remarkable strength of a parrot's beak, the students will see a piece of steel that one of the visiting birds has bent. They will then be allowed to try to bend it themselves, so that they can better understand the strength of the bird's beak.
    - The students will be given the opportunity to handle different types of feathers as we talk about the function of each.
  - Basic needs:
    - After looking at photos of various parrot habitats, we will discuss what parrots need in order to survive, and the ways in which these needs are met within their habitats.
    - We will examine the foods that parrots eat and compare them to the foods that humans eat.
    - The students will learn about parrot eggs and nests using a variety of visual aids, including several different types of real eggs.
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials, as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.

"Introduction to Parrots" Workshop Overview for Grades 2 and 3

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Simple Classification and Growth

Workshop Length: 45 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Identify the traits that differentiate birds from other types of animals.
- Describe where parrots live in the wild.
- Describe the stages of a parrot's growth.

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Identify and ask questions about characteristics and growth of parrots, and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary in describing their investigations, explorations and observations (e.g. mammals, reptiles, egg, egg tooth, molt).

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Compare parrot nests with those of commonly-seen Canadian birds.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the parrots and provided with a very brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
  - The classification of parrots (and birds in general):
    - By playing a game called "What Am I?", the students will identify the traits that differentiate birds from reptiles, fish, insects, mammals and amphibians.
    - Using the live birds, we will discover what makes parrots different from other types of birds.
    - The students will examine the three basic types of feathers and discuss their functions, and then they will watch a brief video of wild parrots in flight.
  - How and where parrots live:
    - Using a map and photos, we will identify where parrots can be found in the wild
    - We will discuss where parrots make their nests and then move on to talk about the stages that parrots move through as they grow. As a part of the "growth stages" discussion, we will identify what remains constant (e.g. number of legs and wings) and what changes (e.g. weight, feathers, egg tooth, the foods they eat). The students will have the opportunity to see several different types of real eggs.
    - By examining both photos and actual foods, we will determine what parrots like to eat and compare their diets in the wild and in captivity.
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials, as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.

"Introduction to Parrots" Grade 4 Workshop Overview

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Parrots and their Habitats

Workshop Length: 60 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Describe the habitats and communities in which parrots live.
- Identify and describe the ways in which parrots rely upon their habitats.
- Classify parrots according to their role in the food chain (i.e. consumers), and identify them as herbivores, carnivores or omnivores.

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Identify and formulate questions about ways in which parrots rely on their habitats and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary, including correct scientific terminology, in describing their investigations, explorations and observations (e.g. habitat, community, food chain).

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Describe ways in which humans can affect the natural world.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the parrots and provided with a brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
  - Parrot habitats:
    - Using a map, we will identify places where wild parrots live. We will discuss the habitats found in these locations and describe some of the communities that live within them.
    - We will identify how parrots rely on their habitats for their basic needs (i.e. shelter, air, space, water and food).
  - Parrots and the food chain:
    - We will examine what parrots eat, and the students will decide whether parrots are herbivores, carnivores or omnivores.
    - Through discussion, we will identify the trophic level of parrots within the food chain.
  - Adaptations:
    - We will begin by examining some basic physical adaptations of parrots (i.e. beaks, eyes, ears, feet and feathers). Students will have the opportunity to handle different types of feathers and study their structure directly using a magnifying glass.
    - We will then discuss several examples of behavioural adaptations (e.g. flocking, choice of nest sites, vocalizations).
  - How humans impact parrots:
    - We will identify ways in which humans can affect the habitats of parrots and how conservation efforts help to protect these areas.
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials, as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.

"Introduction to Parrots" Grade 5 Workshop Overview

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Parrot Nutrition and Physiology

Workshop Length: 60 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Describe the basic physical structure of a parrot, including the skeleton and digestive system.
- Describe the diets of different species of parrots.

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Identify and formulate questions about parrot physiology and nutritional needs, and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary, including correct scientific terminology, in describing their investigations, explorations and observations (e.g. vertebrate, keel, crop, proventriculus).

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Compare and contrast basic elements of parrot and human physiology.
- Compare and contrast the nutritional needs of parrots and humans.
- Describe an example of how medical technologies can be applied to both humans and parrots.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the parrots and provided with a brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
    - Parrot physiology:
        - Using the live parrots, a replica skull, an actual complete skeleton, x-rays and drawings as aids, we will examine the basic physical structure of a parrot, including the skeleton and digestive system. As these elements are discussed, we will compare and contrast parrot physiology with that of humans.
        - The students will use magnifying glasses to carefully observe different types of feathers to understand their structures and roles. They will also have the opportunity to better understand how bird bones differ from those of humans by examining cross-sections of real chicken bones using the magnifying glasses.
    - Parrot nutrition:
        - We will examine the diets of parrots, and discuss why the birds require these types of foods.
        - We will compare parrot diets to those of humans, and discuss the effects of poor nutrition on parrots and people.
    - How medical technologies can be adapted to help parrots:
        - Using Dusty (the Moluccan Cockatoo) as an example, the students will see how human medical technologies can be adapted for birds. Dusty was the first bird in Canada to have a beak deformity corrected by wearing "braces". The students will have the opportunity to see photos of Dusty's progress over the course of this very successful procedure, and examine the actual braces she wore.
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.

"Introduction to Parrots" Grade 6 Workshop Overview

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Parrot Classification and Diversity

Workshop Length: 60 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Identify the characteristics that differentiate birds from other vertebrates.
- Describe three traits that differentiate parrots from other types of birds.
- Identify how parrots are classified using scientific terms.
- Explain the functions of the three main types of feathers.

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Identify and formulate questions about classification and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary, including correct scientific terminology, in describing their investigations, explorations and observations (e.g. kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species).

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Describe adaptations that allow different parrot species to survive in the wild.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the parrots and provided with a brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
  - Parrot classification:
    - Through discussion, the students will identify the key characteristics that differentiate birds from mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians.
    - The class will complete a short exercise to identify ways of classifying birds and then discuss the importance of taxonomy.
    - We will identify the three traits that differentiate parrots from other types of birds.
  - Parrot feathers and flight:
    - Since they are the primary feature that differentiates birds from other animals, we will take a close look at feathers. The students will examine the three main types of parrot feathers using magnifying glasses and discuss the functions of each. They will also take a close-up look at bird bones and discuss key adaptations that allow parrots to fly.
  - Parrot adaptations:
    - After briefly examining parrot habitats (through the use of a map and photos), we will discuss some of the ways in which parrots have adapted to these habitats. We will identify why it is valuable for parrots to be able to fly, have strong beaks, have brightly-coloured feathers, and have very loud voices.
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials, as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.

"Introduction to Parrots" Workshop Overview for Grades 7 and 8

Strand: Life Systems

Topic: Parrots and Ecosystems

Workshop Length: 60 Minutes

Specific Expectations Met:

Understanding Basic Concepts

- Describe some of the ecosystems in which parrots live.
- Identify various ways in which parrots rely on their ecosystems.
- Explain the ecological niches held by some species of parrots.

Developing Skills of Inquiry, Design and Communication

- Formulate questions about and identify how parrots live within their ecosystems and explore possible answers to these questions.
- Use appropriate vocabulary, including correct scientific terminology, to describe and discuss ideas (e.g. ecosystem, habitat, community, population).

Relating Science and Technology to the World Outside the School

- Identify and explain economic, environmental and social factors that must be considered when preserving parrot populations.

Workshop Overview:

- The students will be introduced to the parrots and provided with a brief workshop overview.
- Using a highly interactive discussion format, the following topics will be covered:
  - The ecosystems in which parrots live:
    - Using a map and various photos as visual aids, we will discuss the ecosystems in which parrots live. We will describe habitat characteristics and then discuss the diversity of life within the communities that reside there.
  - Ways in which parrots interact with their ecosystems:
    - Supported with visual aids that include photos and food samples, we will discuss where parrots nest and what they eat.
    - We will then discuss the ecological niche that parrots occupy and how the balance might be affected if parrots were absent.
  - Parrot conservation:
    - The students will identify various human-based threats faced by wild parrot populations (e.g. loss of habitat, hunting, capture for the pet trade). We will examine their degree of impact and discuss why they occur.
    - We will discuss various ways of helping to conserve parrot populations and identify some potential economic, environmental and social factors that must be considered when selecting which approaches to implement. To wrap up this part of the workshop, we will watch a brief video that illustrates conservation in action - the hatching of a captive-bred Spix Macaw (the world's rarest parrot).
- We will briefly review and summarize key learning points from the workshop, and then the students will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions they might have.

Note: Teachers will be provided with a variety of post-workshop materials as well as suggestions for additional learning activities.