

This will help you along on what some general care is on keeping a pet bird, this not only applies to Pionus but to all parrot species. Give your pet bird the best you have to offer. Your relationship with your pet bird should be meant to last a life time but often people tire of a bird and the bird has to learn to love all over again with someone different, sad but true. If you feel you can't commit yourself to a pet birds messy nature then a bird is not for you, your house will not stay as clean it did before you had one. They are worse than a kid, they do not ever clean up after themselves!

**Parrot Ownership** Many people marvel at the idea on owning a parrot. It sounds like a neat and fun idea to own a parrot, especially ones that talk; this is what attracts people to parrots. Some will just jump right in without doing any research on knowing the need or care that goes into parrot keeping. Many people step inside of a pet store and then on a split decision, they will buy a parrot with no thought of what is actually involved; this is not a smart choice as the parrot could be at risk as the new owner may be lacking much needed knowledge for keeping a companion bird. Parrots can be so much fun and entertaining and loved so much like a family member, but they also have a side to them that people can not put up with. Some of this information may sound negative but it is the truth and people don't really seem to understand before they buy a parrot. Three things people do not have an understanding about parrots, they bite, scream and are messy. If you can understand and put up with those three things then you should have a good relationship with your parrot. Parrots bite or scream for certain reasons and if you don't know why or understand them then you will have a hard time getting along with your bird. If my birds get nippy with me, there is a reason. I usually leave them alone and come back to them later and then they are fine. Parrots can be moody just like you or I can be at times. A parrot's scream is a way of communicating usually to their own kind but they do it too because they are happy or perhaps they are nervous or something has scared them, but you can learn what their different behaviors are. A lot of problems can be solved just by learning and understanding your parrot. Keep in mind that having even a pet bird still has its wild instincts within them; you can't ever take that out of them. An example of that is the way they scream or yell at certain times of the day, this is a wild behavior that you can not really control. Suppressing certain wild instincts can lead to behavior problems.

Remember that a parrot lives much longer than a dog or cat will so your bird is a much longer commitment. So many parrots are given up as people just can not tolerate the upkeep of a bird any longer. Birds are definitely more upkeep than dog and cats. With the busy lives that people maintain now a days makes it even harder to keep up with the needs of a bird. The one key factor is not enough attention towards the bird. Birds need and require a certain amount of attention and love each day, without it they don't thrive as well. I truly believe this is why birds are given up so much now a days as no one even has time for themselves let alone even a bird. Our society is not like it use to be, people can't slow down even for a minute.

There seems to be a large amount of unwanted birds, because no one wants to take on and keep up with the challenges of a bird therefore making a lot of unwanted birds in today's society. This will continue to happen as people want them but only for awhile then the bird gets sold or given up to someone else or to another bird adoption or rescue program. Sorry to say - but honestly - parrot breeders can not be blamed for the parrots that are unwanted, but in time it will hurt us parrot breeders, if we keep breeding the

birds and there are less and less people that are demanding them, then that will eventually slow down our breeding programs. The over population of birds still don't come anywhere close to the dog and cat over population and never will. The amount of unwanted birds has nothing to do with parrot breeders, as breeders are here to supply the demand. A person who buys a parrot and then decides they no longer want it for whatever reason is why there are too many unwanted birds. I was very offended by one person who tried to blame breeders for too many unwanted birds and that we should not breed birds anymore. If breeders stopped breeding birds then many species could vanish. One reason for giving up a pet is aggressive behavior due to what I hear people describe it as too much hormonal aggression, well I must tell you that's the way birds are. This is one reason why people can't cope with their birds; they just don't understand how parrots really are. This not only applies to Pionus but with all other parrot species as well. Some parrots are not as aggressive as others. Most parrots are acquired as babies so as the bird ages it changes and as it becomes sexually mature it may start showing aggressive behavior. Like I describe at the end of the very first paragraph of this page, the behavior revolves around a parrots instincts. Learning parrot behavior and understanding it will give a better relationship between you and your parrot. Don't think it's the bird that has the problem and not you as you will not change their instinct from within.

So what am I trying to say in the above information? I want people to be sure to do all their research homework of keeping pet birds before making the final decision of owning one. As a Pionus Breeder it is my intent to sell you one of my babies or even if you buy someone else's baby or adult bird but buy with the great knowledge of the upkeep and needs of owning a parrot. I would rather lose a sale of a bird then to see it fall into the wrong hands of an owner who may not know anything about birds. I don't believe you need to know everything there is to know about birds totally but there is much vital info that is needed to obtain and maintain a bird's healthy life style. Educate yourself well before taking on the responsibility of a parrot. I know and understand that keeping a parrot is not for everyone and some people try living with a parrot and then not like it after a while for many reasons. Many people can not put up with the mess that parrots make, they drop their food a lot and most do not eat over their food bowls. They will fling food from their beak by shaking their head and they wipe their beak on the rim of the food bowl or on perches or on the cage bars. The walls will get splattered with food particles. Parrots are messy by nature, so you must be able to tolerate this or you will not do well with owning a parrot of any type. Parrots will poop where ever they are sitting unless they are well potty trained. Yes, you can have a **Potty Trained Parrot!** (pg. 8,9)

A person, who buys a parrot and then no longer wants to put up with it, is a person who gives in quite easily. This is why it is important to know what you are getting yourself into before owning one. Parrots that are noisy is one thing that gets on a persons nerve quickly and the first thing they want to do is get rid of the bird. You must be able to know how to handle your bird so you both will get along fine. Remember, parrots do not choose to go to pet shops on their own to be sold. You wanted the bird in the first place, the bird did not ask you to buy him and take him home. I get quite frustrated hearing about people who give up quickly and get rid of their bird too easily. People who live in close situations to other people must understand and realize that most all parrots that are noisy, you will have problems with other people complaining which are the ones that do not have parrots.

A bird's sounds of **screaming** (pg. 9, 10, 11) and yelling will carry a long distance away and other neighbors will hear it screaming from down the street. You should not have this problem with the Pionus Species at all, but occasionally there is a Pionus that is out of the ordinary and does get too vocal.

If you are one who likes to be away most week ends or goes on long vacation trips, then you may have a problem trying to find proper care takers for your bird. Most birds can do alright if left for one or two days with proper amount of food and water set up in the cage and proper toys provided as well. But if you are always gone you might have your bird feeling very neglected. Think about it for a moment - you're usually gone all week to your job through out the day and are only home at night, then comes the week end and its Friday now you load up the car or truck and zoom you're off and running and not back until Sunday late afternoon or evening. It doesn't give your bird much time to see you or be with you, so think about he/she must feel pretty lonely. If this happens week after week you won't probably be giving your bird the much needed love and companionship it desires. If your bird is just a single bird all by its self in the cage, you can see where he may feel like he has no companionship. If you have two birds in the same cage, it is better for the two of them as they do give each other company. If you have two single birds each in separate cages and can see one another that does give some company towards each other but still not the same as two together in the same cage. Better yet, they want you to be there for them. Before buying a bird really think about how much you will be there for them. Even dogs and cats can feel the same way when their owners are gone away from the house too much. Birds like to go places to once they get use to the idea, but it often limits the places that you may be able to go to. Birds can be a burden when trying to travel with them. Certainly do not leave them in a lock up car if it is warm out side. As you know cars get very hot inside quite quickly and it is not good on the bird or any animal or person as we all know too well. There are many precautions that you must take when traveling with a bird.

Please do not get offended by the way I talk as it is the truth of what goes on between people with parrots. Owning a parrot can be very rewarding and pleasurable experience. Now, below is some more information, I don't go into great detail of each category but it gives some understanding of what is good knowledge on some basic aspects of keeping and caring for companion birds.

### **Attention**

All birds in general thrive on attention, some more than others. The attention that a Pionus or any other parrot wants will depend on his individual personality as with any other parrot; they all seek out different types of affection. It's up to you to love your bird; as a rule your bird will look to you as their mate. You are their person that they look up to; with out you they can't thrive. Parrots can not keep care of themselves; it's you who brings them the food, the water and the love! What kind of attention or love do parrots seek? Parrots love to be with you, sit on your hand or shoulder; this means a lot to them. They often like to have their heads scratched while on you and some like to be petted. Parrots like to go around the house with you or sometimes even outside but be sure they are clipped if you take them outdoors. They want to spend time with you in whatever you are doing, they are curious and like to participate in the activities that they see you do, although they can be a nuisance while trying to do something and many times they get in the way. Smaller birds are more easily taken about than some larger birds as the larger birds tend to not hold on to you as well as smaller ones do. Parrots do not like to be in their cage all the time, even if you can't hold them a lot they want to be out to play

and this is an important role of activity for them. How much time is needed for direct attention? It can vary from bird to bird some only want 10-15 minutes of your time may be once or twice a day, while others are not happy unless they are on you almost all the time. You and your bird will learn a routine of time together and it usually works out as long as you don't totally ignore your bird.

### **Toys for Fun**

Be sure to offer your parrot toys to play within the cage and for when they are out of the cage. Toys offer entertainment and stimulation and is a vital necessity to a happy playful bird. A Bird's nature is to chew on things and to prevent them from chewing up your house offer them toys, although if given the opportunity they will still chew on your nice wood molding and such! Birds always want to have something that they are not suppose to have, just like a child. What if your bird does not like toys? Have them available anyway. They may still play with them a little when you're not around. Some birds will chew up toys quickly while others may just bat them around and not do actual chewing. You should have selection of different toys and offer part of them and then maybe rotate them every 1 or 2 months so they do not get bored with the same toys. Go to our [Toy Safety Page](#) (pg. 11, 12, 13) to read some info.

### **Exercise**

Birds need to have exercise just like you do. That is why it is important to let them play outside of the cage as much as possible. Having the play gyms that have numerous levels of branches or ladders help to exercise the bird. Adding ropes on areas to help them to climb give them better strength as well. Toys give exercise too, so be sure to have them on your bird's play area. Remember, the higher the bird is and if the bird should fall - the harder the fall will be so take that into consideration when having play areas above 5 feet. Some birds that have too many flight feathers clipped will make the fall harder when they hit the floor or the bottom of their play gym. If you have a simple play gym that has a feeding area, place the feed or water bowls in an area where they have to climb up or down to go to the dish creating exercise for them otherwise if they don't have to move while on a perch to eat or drink they just sit there and become a perch potato!

### **Lighting**

Birds love light, they are happy with a well lit area. Dark areas of the house may make them feel sad. They need some sun shine but not too much. If they are in a situation where they can never get to sit in the sun for a bit then have one of the Fluorescent Fixtures with Full Spectrum available for plants and animals, not the type that put off heat. The kind that is a substitute for the sun. You can buy them in hardware stores and other places.

Go to [Avitec.com](#) they have these sort of Full Spectrum Lights and also infrared heating elements among other things.

### **Temperature**

Just like you, birds like to be comfortable. If extremely hot birds will lift their wings away from their body and they pant with the mouth opened. You can mist them with water to cool them down. Try keeping them comfortable.

### **Food**

Pionus love to eat. They usually love fruits, veggies, beans, seed, pellets. There are a few items that are toxic to birds. Look on our [Nutrition](#) page for that info (pg. 14, 15) A bird only eats what they are use to, if they are not accustom to eating fruits or vegetables, it's because they were not introduced to it or kept up with it, requiring a taste for such foods

are started at an early age. That is why it is important that a breeder who raises the baby introduces them to fresh foods early on when it first learns to start eating. If the bird is not kept up on these foods and they get accustomed to eating mostly seed or pellets then it may be hard to get the bird to acquire the love of fruits and veggies and it can sometimes be a hard task to get them back to eating these things. Your bird should have a variety of things not just one thing, it needs to be a well balanced diet, just as it is important for humans. If fed a proper diet, additional vitamins are not usually necessary. Water too, plays an important part as it does for every living being. Change water at least once a day. You will find with Pionus' they love to drink water as they are eating, therefore making a mess of the water, you may need to change it two or three times a day. Remove food (fresh) after it has been in the cage about three hours or so. Seed or pellets should always be available in the cage as they snack on it often. You can feed your bird most anything that is actually healthy for you with a few exceptions which are listed on our nutrition page. Stay away from the junk foods, birds can turn into junk food junkies just like people can; it really is bad for them. Most birds love potato chips but with all the chemicals on chips it not a good idea to give them to your bird.

### **Cages**

Don't always assume that the cage in which you saw your bird in the pet shop is the right size. Because birds are displayed on open perches in many shops, the cages may be used only for feeding or rest periods, and may not be suitable as long-term housing. Choose the largest cage you can afford and accommodate in your home. A great size for a Pionus is 24"X24" X 30". Bar spacing on any cage should be sufficient to prevent toe and limb trapping, but not so wide that birds can stick their heads through them. Check cages with curved or domed tops to be sure that bars do not converge at the center. Welds should be smooth, with no rough edges to injure your birds or your hands when you're cleaning the cage. No Dump Feeders that are already built into the making of the cage are the best, one that has at least three areas for bowl placement. You can slide your proper sized bowl in to place and never have to worry about the bird dumping out the water or food. I absolutely will not buy a cage if it does not have this feature built into the cage.

Placing cage in a safe area of the house is important, if near a window be sure the sun is not constantly on the cage as it could get too hot on your bird and would be over heated. Keep cages away from cold drafts and kitchens are not always a good idea as there are many hazards within the kitchen area. Look for a cage that is easy to clean, with pull out trays. A cage with horizontal bars, Play area on top is essential for out of the cage play time. Parrots also think they do not belong in a cage at all! They sure seem to learn this quite early in life, even when I have baby birds still in the tub they always want out of it.

### **Perches**

The diameter of a perch for whatever size parrot you may have should be big enough so the front toes and the back toes do not come together and touch when perched. An ideal size for Pionus would be 5/8" to 3/4" diameter. Offer natural wood branches if available, they all don't have to be natural branches. Offer different textures of perches as well. Perches that are smaller at one end and larger going towards the other end are ideal too as this gives your bird an area on the perch where they maybe best comfortable.

### **Routine Cleaning**

Routine clean up after a parrot is not the bright side of keeping a feathered companion. Most people dread it after a short time and this is in part to why people end up getting rid of their pet bird. It's to be said that daily clean up is needed, but hard to do as so many of us are very busy. If you keep up on it regularly by washing the cage, whether it be taking it out side to scrub it or just wiping it down, it should be disinfected periodically.

Keep up on the sweeping or vacuuming, sweep up large stuff before you vacuum, large hard things such as nut shells are not good on vacuum belts and certain parts of the vacuum. Wash food and water bowls daily if you can or at least every other day.

### **Bath Time**

There are many ways to give your bird a bath. Bath time is the part of grooming that can be enjoyable for both you and your birds. It plays an important part in keeping your Pionus healthy by promoting preening and controlling dry, flaky skin. Pionus' love baths, a lot of them go in to acrobatic motions, turning this way and that way, they don't want to miss a spot. When they are drenched, soaking wet they look pathetic, but when they dry they are back to looking beautiful!

Larger birds may like to join you in the shower. If you have shower doors, some birds just like to sit on top especially if they are the type that like to be in there with you but they don't want to get wet because they think they are being tortured by getting wet (This is my Blue & Gold Macaws out look on a shower!). You can purchase shower mounted type perches with suction cups, there are some that mount caddy corner, others that mount straight. Place them where they will get the mist or over spray of the shower. Always take precaution on being sure the water is not too hot or too cold.

You can provide a shallow bowl for your bird's bathing pleasure. There are several bathing bowls available from bird product manufacturers.

Another form of bathing is by using a clean, unused spray bottle or plant mister filled with lukewarm water on your bird. Some birds prefer this light shower. Make sure that the water is at room temperature--not too hot or too cold. Do not spray directly in the face, spray upward and let the mist fall on to your bird.

Make sure that your bird bathes during the warmer daylight hours and that it is not exposed to drafts or cool air. Do not bathe your bird if it seems ill. The bathing can become a great time for you and your bird, and it will enhance its health and appearance!

### **Choosing a Veterinarian**

Have a well "Qualified Avian Veterinarian" already picked out that you can go to if needed. Annual check ups are good for your pet bird so you know that your bird is in good health. Just because the avian vet is closer in mileage to you doesn't mean that's the one you have to use. I have two avian vets much closer to me but I use an avian vet that is further away from me and is much broader in the avian field than the others are. Some avian vets are not as knowledgeable as others so you will have to find out how they are if you want the best of the best. Some avian vets only do certain things where other are more extensive. Pick one that you feel comfortable with.

### **Wing and Nail Clipping**

Routine maintenance on wings and nails is a vital step in bird care. See our page on [Wings & Nails](#). (pg. 15, 16, 17)

## **Preparing for emergencies**

First Aid Kit you can put together yourself and keep readily available

You must always know what to do when it comes to avian emergencies. Prepare a first aid kit for your pet bird. Some items to include are: a cauterizing agent (such as Kwik-Stop, cornstarch or flour), scissors, gauze, hemostats, needle-nosed pliers, a small hospital cage (an aquarium or brooder), a heating pad, a towel, extra bird food and bottled water.

If your bird should fall and break the tip of the nail or the tip of the beak it may start bleeding, if this happen apply styptic powder (kwik-stop, cornstarch or flour) to the tip of the bleeding area and apply pressure. Repeat if it keeps bleeding.

Broken blood feathers may stop bleeding if left un-touched, but sometimes as soon as they bumped, the bleeding commences. A styptic powder can be used first to see if the bleeding stops, it depends on how it's broken and most times it may need to be pulled out.

## **How to pull out a broken blood feather**

This requires two people to do this procedure - one person to hold the bird and the wing and the other person to pull out the broken blood feather with Needle Nosed Pliers. Sometimes tail feathers break too and it would be the same procedure. Many times a bird breaks a blood feather and when this happens bleeding may not stop. You may have to quickly pull it out with the pliers. To do this you will gently grasp the feather at the base of the shaft (calamus) where it grows in at closest to the body and using steady pressure, and quickly pull the feather straight out in the direction it is growing. A new blood feather will soon grow back in, replacing the broken one.

Go here to read about [Feather](#) info (pg. 17, 18, 19). NOTE: A styptic powder should always be kept on hand and should be kept in certain location so you are never confused as to where it is. I have kept my powder on my kitchen window sill and it has not been moved in the last 17 years. Place it where it is easiest and readily available to you in case of an emergency.

## **If you have cats or dogs**

If you do have other animals be sure to always watch that the dog or cat can't hurt the bird, it is a cats instinct to go after birds. It may appear that the cat would not harm the bird but if out of your sight the cat could very well pounce on the bird and either hurt the bird or kill it; birds can be fragile in many ways. The same goes for dogs.

If your birds flight feathers are clipped it can not get out of harms way.

## **Non-Stick Cookware Pans**

Non Stick cookware is toxic to birds if pan is over heated beyond 500 degrees causing a toxin into the air and this can kill your bird instantly. This would be a pan that was left on the heat with no food in the pan. Your bird does not have to be even that close to the kitchen area to have this happen. If you are unsure about remembering if you turned the heat off or not, then it is best that you not use these types of pans while you have birds. Also when cooking be sure to cover pans with lids especially if you have birds that can fly, it does happen where someone's bird flies into an open pan of boiling water or sauce or whatever is in the pan. This can greatly burn the bird and cause problems. Please be careful when cooking in the kitchen and if needed put your bird in the cage while you cook if you find he is in the way. It is better to be safe than sorry!

## Other Hazards

Toilets - leaving the lid opened can be a fatal mistake, especially with birds that can fly. It's best to make a habit of closing the lid down each time whether you have birds that fly or not. If you take the bird into the bathroom with you for a shower be sure the toilet lid is down so the bird can not fall in while you're in the shower.

## Sinks or Tubs

That have sitting water in them can be a hazard as well, a kitchen sink or a tub that have suds or bubbles appears to be a solid surface to a bird and they will try to walk on it, only leaving them to fall in and drown. Don't leave sinks or tubs unattended with flying birds or birds that can jump in from a near by place. Also pans or large bowls sitting in a sink to soak with water may be not a good idea, if it's too deep the bird could fall in and may not be able to get out and could drown. These are things that I am very aware of with my pet birds. I do not keep anything sitting with water in it because I have a little Love Bird that flies around. The dogs water bowls are not filled too full either so incase he should land in it he can't drown in it.

## Wood Stoves

For heating your house can be a hazard if hot, if a bird lands on a hot surface, immediately swipe the bird off. Do not try to pick the bird up as that takes more time getting the bird off the hot surface. There are tons of dangerous things that a bird can get into, just be aware of most situations and do the best that you can do with each.

## Potty Training

### **POOP**



What is a Potty Trained Parrot? A parrot that will go poop upon command or one that tells you that he has to go poo-poo!

How do you potty train a parrot? Sometimes it can be somewhat easy and some learn fairly quick and other parrots may take quite a bit of training and some may never get the idea of what potty training is.

### **HAPPENS**

Basically, teaching your bird to go potty upon command is a repeated cycle. Birds go poop every few minutes. So each time you think its time for your bird to poop, you will take him to his cage, t-stand, or a place where you want him to poop at. As you sit the bird down you will say go poo-poo or whatever word you want to use. While he sits there you wait until he goes poop, once he does you can say good boy or girl or use the bird's name, praise him and pick him up. And then do this over and over each time your bird has to go poop until the bird gets the idea of what you are doing. My one bird, Kuka a Blue & Gold Macaw has learned that if she goes poo-poo that I will pick her up. She tells me that she went poop so come over and pick me up is how she thinks! She also tells me when she is on me "go poo-poo, go poo-poo", so I take her to her t-stand and she goes poop and then she expects to get back on me. Parrots do go poop every few minutes but they can be taught to hold it and wait, Kuka can go as long as an hour before having to go. Also when we go bye-bye in the car and if I'm holding her, we will make a quick pit stop along side of the road where it is safe at and she will go poop when I hold her out the door, she says "go poo-poo" and she goes! Rarely does she ever poop on me or on the floor. If we are outside walking around she will tell me she has to go poop and I hold her out on my arm or hand and she will go. She has this mastered quite well and I am proud of her!

Felix, the Maximilian says "go poo-poo", but does not seem to go upon command. Cockatiels and many parrot species can learn to be potty trained. Most of the time it can be a long road ahead of you on teaching your bird to go poop when you want it to. Reward the bird with a lot of praise after they have gone poop during your training sessions and you will find that they kind of thrive on the attention and it seems to make them learn faster and especially if they think you are going to hold them longer. If you are persistent with the training, you can probably succeed with the task and it can be a well earned effort. GOOD LUCK!



### Screaming

I get emails from time to time asking about Screaming Pionus. Some say that their Pionus screams a lot to the point that it can drive their owner insane. They don't know what to do or how to get their bird to stop screaming.

It is not real often that people who have Pionus have this problem. I don't have this problem at all. I keep 3 pet Pionus, White Cap, Maximilian, Blue Head and I can say that none of them have any sort of a screaming behavior. My breeders don't scream either but what the breeders do is they have their morning and afternoon sessions of what comes natural to them but I still don't classify it as a screaming problem because they do it only for a short while and then stop.

The screaming that some of you may be experiencing can extend from many reasons as to why they do this even though the Pionus is fairly easy going and does not demand a lot of attention, you will find that there are some that are not happy for many reasons. Pionus like many other parrot species may have many things that bother them for some reason. It can be how you have placed them in your home, maybe they don't like something that sits near the cage. Some birds don't like a change in the location of where their cage sits. Certain people can annoy them for no apparent reason, it can be the way you talk to the bird or how you react to when they do scream. Birds actually thrive on your reaction when they scream. It can promote them to scream more because it will bring them attention. Putting the bird in the cage because it's screaming is not punishment to the bird as they have no understanding as to what is really happening. I firmly believe that putting a bird in its cage because you think it was bad, does not do anything for the bird to teach it a lesson to be learned. Parrots don't have reasoning skills, meaning if you behave you can come out of your cage, and the bird does not put two and two together and abide by the rules. A bird that bites does not learn a lesson of being thrown in the cage just because he bit you. About the only thing the cage does is, it gives time out or gives a break in between two situations. What is mostly does is let you cool down after all your bird sees it as no harm done! The bird does get a thrill out of seeing you get upset or mad and believe me birds do get excited over you getting upset or screaming and yelling at them. I am one who knows too well that it is very hard to keep your cool when a bird bites the heck out of your finger but if you want to gain anything with them, coming unglued is not a thing to be doing in front of them.

- The bird you own, are you its first owner or second or third?
- You must first try to find out why your bird is screaming. If the bird already came to you with the screaming problem then it may be hard to find out why the bird does it. It is a possibility that you can change their excessive screaming pattern after having the bird, but will take a lot of work and patients to work around what might be causing the bird to scream excessively.

- Some birds that move from home to home will sometimes develop this screaming behavior. You have no idea how the bird was treated by its previous owner or what within the other home may have aggravated the bird, may be there was small kids teasing the bird. May be enough attention was not given to the bird.
- When birds get nervous they sometimes develop a screaming pattern. A Pionus may freeze before squawking or screaming if they are scared.
- Some birds will scream to get you to come over to pick them up. They learn quickly that you will be there if they start screaming. It is their way to communicate to you that they want you there and as you have guessed, it works! Birds can manipulate you very well without you realizing it.
- Sometimes when a bird is jealous this can cause them to scream. Bringing a new bird into the family can create your bird its new screaming habit. May be your bird has picked it up from another bird that has the screaming problem.
- You must also be able to figure out on what kind of scream it is that your bird is doing. What time of the day is it when your bird screams? There are 2-3 times a day when a bird either squawks, screams or yells from natural instincts and you can't prevent that from happening if they insist on doing it.
- Your tolerance & patience is probably the key to help them to stop screaming. Yelling back impatiently at your bird may make them scream more. Getting up set at the bird usually makes it worse. Reflect back on situations as what may have changed in and around your bird's situation. There can be numerous things that up set a bird that may be unknown to you but will be for you to figure them out. If a person sold you the bird that is screaming almost right after you got him probably already had that screaming problem and that might be why they sold the bird to you but as usual they fail to tell the new buyer about the screaming problem.
- Some say excessive screaming can be from some sort of medical problem, this I'm not sure of. You would have to ask your vet if this is true or not. Screaming can be induced from a physiological problem.

Birds in general will choose you or a family member to be its "mate" or "companion". They can indeed feel inferior when you are socializing with others. Did you notice when you get on the telephone many times your bird may start screaming or vocalizing loudly? Some of my birds sure do. It is done as you are giving your attention elsewhere. I hear some say their bird starts screaming when someone likes a friend or who ever comes to visit. This can happen as your bird does not want you socializing with others, remember you are its mate and they do get jealous.

None of my pet Pionus' scream like I said earlier, but here is some info about my Blue & Gold Macaw, Kuka and Orange Wing Amazon, Tater. I have had Kuka ever since she was 2 weeks old and now she is 11 years old. She is very jealous of when I give my time to others. It was not quite so bad when she was younger but now it is. One of our recent additions was a 15 month old Scarlet Macaw named Starla. Kuka is really jealous when I give time to Starla and to the other birds. Kuka will also just sit there when I am in plain sight of her and yell Mama. She will also start bellowing out the screams until I go and pick her up. I don't always go over to her to pick her up just because she screams. She has learned that she does get more attention when she screams. Going to your bird every time will reinforce their screaming pattern more. Kuka has other ways to get my attention as she will start counting or quacking like a duck and I will respond back to her and this is fun for her but that is when she is in that particular mood to do it. If she gets in a screaming mood then I try to get her to do fun things like her counting her numbers from 1 to 5 or making the sounds that she likes to do. Usually it helps and she will do

that for a while but sometimes when she wants to be desperately be on me and I don't pick up on it, then she will scream until I get her on me. It's something she really desires. Even though I'm her Mama she still classifies me as her mate or companion. She loves to try to feed me; this is a mate behavior because she loves me. I know why Kuka screams, it's to get me to pick her up. She will also do it if something startles her. Overall she's a great bird.

My other bird Tater, almost 2 years old and being an Amazon he screams often as this is a real trait with the Amazons. When it's that time of day there is no shutting him up easily. If I pick him up he will settle it down a bit but when he does yelling at the particular times he is such a happy go lucky bird and he has a fun ole time while in that mode. He does not do actual screaming just to be screaming. There is no other reason he does it other than his natural instinct calls. The three Pionus' that are around Kuka & Tater do some vocalizing along with them at times, but Tater's vocalizations are far more ear piercing than the three Pionus' put together. All in all my Pionus do not get very loud or noisy.

It is almost impossible for me to help someone with the screaming problem of a bird as I can't see your life style or situation of how things are. It can be a real puzzle trying to figure out the reasons behind excessive screaming or yelling. You must take a long hard look at your situation and go back in time before your bird had this problem and see what may have changed or what new things have taken place since the bird started the excessive behavior. Keep in mind that it is normal and natural for a certain amount of screaming or loud vocalization to take place. If you try to suppress it too much that might lead to other problems.

Birds need to have toys as it helps to keep them busy, it stimulates them and its fun and they love to chew. You always need to keep in mind Toy Safety for your feathered companion. The list provided below almost makes playing with toys seem like such a hazard and you may ask yourself 'why would I want to give my bird toys if there are many things to consider in keeping them out of harms way'? As a bird owner some of these things may never cross your mind that it could happen to a bird, but it does. The bird some how manages when you least expect it, can get caught or get hurt on a toy that you would never thought to be a danger. Be alert and aware of the dangers and look a head at the possible hazards that may follow after a bird has chew on a certain toy for a while, you may be able to prevent something from happening to your bird.

### **Toy Safety**

**Some Good Reasons why Birds should always be Supervised when playing with toys. Take every measure of precaution when it comes to toy safety; don't underestimate a bird's chewing capabilities.**

1. Always be sure items are bird safe and is recommended for birds. Check toys regularly for hazards.
2. I can not emphasize enough to you about the safety of ropes. Keep ropes short, if ropes get untied you either need to re knot the rope or cut the excess off. Stringy ropes are great for birds getting caught in. The safest cotton rope is the Supreme Cotton Rope™. With rope toys watch for excessive fraying if the length is too long, cut or re-tie knots in rope. A bird can get a foot or body entanglement in the rope and may not be able to free its self with out you're help.
3. Watch for all things that have been chewed on that the bird somehow can not get

- caught or hurt on it.
4. Make sure if your bird wears leg band, that the leg band can not get caught on some part of the toy.
  5. Never give your bird Styrofoam of any kind to chew on as a toy; it can kill them if ingested. Many things can kill a bird if object are ingested, but Styrofoam is a definite no-no.
  6. If given paper towel or toilet paper rolls to a bird, watch carefully especially with small birds such as Love Birds or Budgies as they have been known to get stuck in them if the tube should stand up on end and die due to suffocation if not known that they were in the paper roll. Cut the length of the roll so that it is short so they can keep their footing when playing with the tube.
  7. Hanging toys should be hung so that it can't come off with the weight of the bird if it's hanging from the toy.
  8. Most birds do not eat wood pieces but still watch them carefully to make sure what it is they do with the pieces.
  9. Preferably do not use wire to secure toys to the cage, many times birds get the wire loose enough then get the leg band caught in it and can't get away. Remember, if a bird can't get its foot or leg loose, they panic and will chew their foot off to free themselves.
  10. Always put yourself in the position of 'What if I was a bird, what would be a hazard to myself?' There are many times that you will put something in position and think it is safe, but only later to find out that it's not safe at all.
  11. If a toy looks like it may not be safe then remove it and replace it with another one, or perhaps some of the pieces on it can be used towards another toy that you can make.
  12. Don't flavor wood pieces when making toys; it is not a good idea. Birds may want to eat it if it tastes good to them.
  13. 'Zinc' plated quick links may not be good for your bird, but as a general rule birds don't mess with the link being that it is at the top of the toy or at the top of the cage. Stainless Steel links are non toxic. I personally do not worry about it, in all my years of using Zinc Plated Quick Links, I've never had a problem. Use 'Stainless Steel plated' or 'Nickel' plated as an alternative is you are not comfortable using zinc plated items. Zinc is considered to be toxic to birds.
  14. Split key rings that are used to hang the toy are dangerous, if the bird splits apart the ring they can get their tongue or toe caught between where it splits. Split key rings should not be used on any bird toys. Wooden Clothes pins that have the wire spring on them are dangerous, too. For an clothes pin alternative use the wooden peg type. Certain fabrics that fray easily, the strands will entangle the bird.

15. When looping ropes, wire or anything else that requires a loop, make it small enough so the bird can not get its head stuck in the loop and hang its self.
16. Screws - a bird can get its leg band caught on the head of the screw and may not be able to free its self; this is common in an aviary. Perches and such things that are screwed together as the bird chews on the wood exposing the screw shaft, it can be a hazard as it can poke or jab them or they can fall or fly into it. Replace the wood when this happens or remove the exposed screw.
17. A bird should be given the appropriate size toy for the size of the bird species that it is. Don't give a Cockatiel an Amazon size toy. If it's too big they may get hurt on it or they may not even play with it. Please use common sense when it comes to birds and their toys.
18. When closing 'S' hooks or 'O' rings on a toy be sure that they are closed very tightly, this will prevent leg bands or the leg from getting caught in the opening. You should always do a periodic check on any type of hardware or other toy parts that contain openings. For large birds if the gauge of the ring is not heavy enough the large birds can open the rings.
19. This item should NOT be bought for [bird toy](#) item.
20. Take a look at the safe [Supreme Cotton Rope](#) that we use in our toys and sell.
21. This is the only type of [Paulie Rope](#) you should use when making your bird toys, or buying toys. If it's not the 'Odyssey Paulie Rope', you should not use any other poly ropes that you may find in hardware stores or markets, **they are not bird safe**. Stay out of the Hardware stores when it comes to ropes, none of those stores carry the type of ropes you need to make bird toys with. I also do not approve of the Sisal Ropes, I find them to have very entangling fibers and would not recommend them at all. The same goes for twines of any type, do not use any twines. The 'Supreme Cotton Rope' and the 'Odyssey Paulie Rope' are manufactured for the same company; they have set out to have one of the safest ropes when it comes to bird safety. It is true they are the best by far; it is safety that we want for our birds! I have tested the 'Odyssey Paulie Rope' and the 'Supreme Cotton Rope' with our small and large birds and they like it and it does what it is meant to do when it is torn apart, these are two great items that have proven the ultimate safety to me. They are two superior products and I would highly recommend them to any one to use in bird toy making, you can also purchase these two items on our site.
22. Plastics should not be brittle type plastics that you give to birds as they can shatter. You have to be able to the difference between, hard, soft, brittle plastics. We do not sell any types of brittle type plastic items.
23. **Remember, safety comes from being monitored; nothing in this world is one hundred percent safe.**



## Health & Diet

A parrot's diet consists of many things that they eat, many people think they eat only seeds and that's not the case at all. They require a well balanced diet just like us. I've listed below what to give your feathered friends; don't be shy when it comes to vegetables & fruit. If your parrot doesn't seem to like them, keep offering them for at least a month or so. Eventually they may start munching on the veggies or fruit. Some parrots may take an interest to eating if they think you like it, eat food items in front of your bird and it will often promote them on trying it. Make it look like it is so yummy that they can't resist on trying it, sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't. Don't let your parrot get stuck on liking just one or two favorite things, the more you can get them to like the better off they will be health wise.

A varied diet largely made up of live foods will give you the healthiest bird. By live foods I mean vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Dead foods are foods that don't spoil quickly (i.e. packaged seeds & nuts). Some parrots may require more nuts in their diet where other parrots may not need them in the diet as much. Some nuts are more fattening to certain birds and not to other birds.

**Vegetables:** Carrots (cooked slightly for better assimilation of beta carotene), string beans, corn, squash, peas, broccoli, zucchini, snow peas, sunflower sprouts, pea shoots, sprouted seeds and beans (excellent for protein) are all favorites. If your bird is reluctant to try these things, try sprouting their seed mix. It will be familiar to them and seeds are much healthier when sprouting (lower in fat, higher in amino acids for instance).

**Fruits:** High in sugar, don't substitute fruit for vegetables. Vegetables always should make up the largest portion of the diet. Fruits do not really need to make up a significant part of the diet. Grapes are relished by most parrots. I wash my strawberries and other fruit in just clear running water and have never had a problem. Most parrots like strawberries. Blue Berries are good and provide the much needed antioxidants. Apples are loved by most birds, wash well give them with or without the skin. Oranges are great too, although I notice some of my birds are not that crazy about oranges. Most any fruit is good for them, if they like it and will eat it then they will get a wide variety. Parrots tend to have their favorite food items just like people do.

**Grains:** You can sprout many grains at home. Millet and quinoa are two nice grains to sprout. Also, cooked brown rice and cooked quinoa are relished by many parrots. Quinoa is a South American grain so parrots from this region probably ate it in the wild. Any food you can duplicate from their natural environment is an excellent choice. You can also purchase a Soak and Cook bean mixture made for birds and they love it. Grains do not need to be a large portion of the diet. Pellets would fall into the category of grains as pellet consist most of corn.

**Seeds:** Get a good, fresh seed mix. If you aren't sure it's good and fresh, try sprouting it. If the seeds don't sprout in a few days, the seeds are dead. They have no nutritional value. Give either a daily supply of seeds or a couple times a week, but never so much that the birds ignore their pellets, veggies or fruit. Let you bird have access to seeds or pellets at all times because they don't spoil and can be left in the cage all day. There are many brand name seeds on the market. Find a type

that has no sunflower or very little in the mix. Sunflower seeds are very fattening to parrots. Give a seed mix to your parrots maybe 2-3 times a week, they seem to always prefer it over pellets and other things, they tend to pick out their favorite items in the seed mix which are sometimes not the more nutritional part in the mix. They may leave behind the better and more nutritionally part behind and you may be dumping it out, you can not make them eat what they leave behind unless that all there is and some parrots will starve to death before they will eat something that they don't like. This can vary from bird to bird, what one bird will eat the other may not.

**Pellets:** There are many pellet types on the market. **I personally use Roudybush Pellets.** To name a couple of others there are Kaytee plain, Exact Rainbow pellets, Zupreem, Harrison's brands. There are other brands on the market besides these ones that I mentioned. Birds should still have other things in their diet besides pellets. Birds that are not use to eating pellets have to be converted on to them and at first may not like them but keep on offering them as you give them less and less of whatever else you have been giving them.

**Food Preparation:** Use the same precautions you use for your human family members. *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria*, and other food-borne pathogens can and do affect parrots. Wash fruit or veggies well and use a clean area to prepare fruit or veggies. If I think food items are spoiled then I don't offer it to my parrots, if it doesn't look appealing to me then I feel its not good enough for my birds, although many times a bird would probably it it any way but I would not want my bird to get sick.

**People Food:** Pasta, whole wheat breads, bits of very well cooked chicken, and various other "people foods" are fine as long as they are not the majority of the diet. Don't feed the bird food from your mouth and don't bite off a piece for them. There's too much bacteria in your mouth and you can make your bird sick. Make sure chicken is very well cooked and don't leave any food like this in the cage for more than an hour. My parrots love chicken and steak and a little bit is okay, just make sure it is cooked well.

Keep away from packaged foods like canned foods, prepackaged boxed dinner meals as they often retain too many chemicals and salts and such items that are not good for a parrot and they are not actually that healthy for you either.

**Avocado is Toxic** to many parrots, particularly African species. To avoid confusion, **don't feed it to any of your birds.**

Don't even try to see if your bird can tolerate eating it, as the bird could get sick or can result in death. Its one thing I've never attempted to give to my birds and never will.

**Chocolate is also toxic** to them, they like chocolate but it is not wise to give them any.

**Junk Food:** Parrots seem to love junk food but is bad for them, Many parrots cannot excrete large amounts of salt efficiently, so the potato chips and french fries are not a good idea. Same thing for table foods you've added salt to. A tiny crumb from a muffins, cookie, or other fatty baked goods once in awhile might be okay, but don't get your parrot use to these treats. You want to encourage them to eat the best foods. Sugar in general is not good for parrots as it can cause hyperactivity.

Any food or drink containing theobromine is forbidden. Chocolate, cocoa, coffee, and tea contain theobromine, which can cause over excitability, cardiopathy, and death. Absolutely positively do NOT give your bird wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverages. Their livers cannot handle it. It is not funny to see a bird drunk and anyone who thinks it is should find their birds a more appropriate home. Birds have died from too much alcohol.

## Wing And Nail Clipping

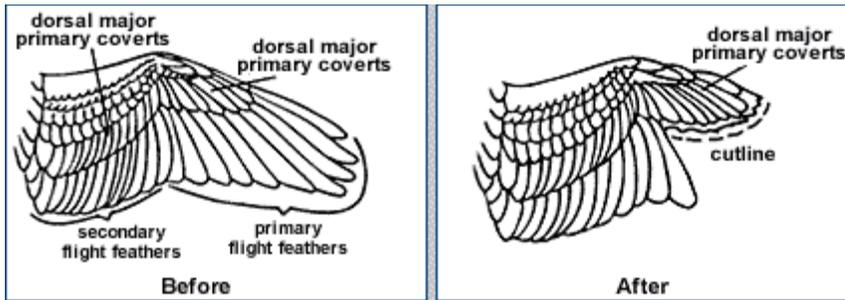
See photos shown below.

Many parrot owners think that their parrot loves them and they would not fly away, but that's not true at all. When birds fly out the door or window they get excited and their adrenalin gets them going, they have no idea once they are high above you flying around, their perspective view point is totally different from what they are use to seeing from the ground up, therefore not knowing their way back to you. Generally speaking your parrot will not fly a long distance from you soon after you loose sight of them. They will usually be in a small radius from you. If it has been several hours or days it is possible that they may slowly venture further away. For the most part they seem to remain not far from the area that they left from. I had two different birds get away from me before and it turned out they were only a block or two away. You can immediately let others know around you that your bird is on the loose and may be it will help to find your bird. It's a real empty feeling when you see your bird fly away from you, you have no control in calling the bird back to you as they will not listen to you. A bird will sometimes get in the tree and he sees you and hears you but they just take of flying again. After all this is their moment of feeling free.

Before you on take on this procedure of Wing clipping or Nail Trimming, be sure you know how to do it. If uncertain have a Veterinarian instruct you on how the procedure is done. It must be done in a timely matter in order not to over stress the bird. If you are not sure that you can do it, then take your bird to a Vet or a well known place that does wing & nail clipping.

Most birds stress out over the fact of having the wings clipped or the nails trimmed. Most of the birds I have they put up a fight on having it done. Some even recognize the scissors or nail clippers and soon as they see the scissors they put up their guard. It is not always an easily done task. It is for the bird's safety as pets that they stayed clipped so that they don't fly away, so many people loose their pet bird due to them flying away out an open window or door. There are many pros and cons of having wings clipped, but for the most part it's safer for the bird's sake. You use your own judgment.

- Larger parrots typically require fewer feathers to be clipped.
- Smaller birds have greater lift and need more feathers clipped.
- Primary coverts, secondary feathers and secondary coverts are not clipped.
- Clip primary feathers on BOTH wings.
- Clip both wings to give bird proper balance. Do not clip just one side.
- Restrain head, both feet and the opposite wing.
- Be careful NOT to restrict chest.
- Hold wing at base.
- Clip first 4 to 7 primaries at the base of the shaft, below feathered area.
- Do not clip feathers with blood shaft (blood feather).
- Shown is a drawn diagram, showing before and after on which feathers to clip.
- **My Experience is to clip about four flight feathers from each side and then do a test flight in the house; you want the bird to have a nice downward glide without dropping hard to the floor. If the bird can still fly or gain lift then take another feather from each side until you get the desired downward glide. Please do not clip only one side of flight feathers, it is dangerous causing the bird to be unstable.**



Shown in real photos below; is the left wing of an Orange Wing Amazon. Showing a blue cut line in the photo on right, this is where you cut. Photo on left is showing what wing would like before cutting. Cut about 4-7 feathers from the most outer wing edge in towards the center. You can stop just at the last feather of where the pretty colored feathers start. Watch for any new blood feathers growing in. It is vital that you do not cut into a blood feather. Being careful not to cut into the upper row of feathers which are called the dorsal major primary coverts.



# Feathers

*Feathers can make or break the way a bird looks.*

*Without Feathers a bird has lost its beauty nor can it fly or get protection from nature's harmful elements. Here is a very small amount of information for quick reference.*

**Molting** is the normal process by which old, worn feathers are lost and subsequently replaced by new ones. Most birds drop a small number of feathers intermittently

throughout the year and have 1-2 heavy molts each year. Birds do not get bald areas like some may think. It is a very gradual and settle transition period. You may see around the bird's area feathers that have dropped to the floor. Sometimes they sit and preen and may have several of the downy like feathers that are ready to come out and it looks as if they may be plucking but you must not get plucking mixed up with molting.

**Feather Plucking** can be a big problem. Type of birds that are prone to feather plucking is Cockatoos, African Greys and many other species can have this problem. It can be due to something medically wrong with the bird, high level stress related problem, sexual, and dietary, parasites and among many other reasons. If your bird is sitting there from pure boredom that can also bring on plucking. Plucking can also lead to mutilation, where the bird starts pick into the skin and make bleeding sores, this is a very serious situation and must be taken care of in the beginning otherwise it will get out of hand and then becomes a habit to the bird. Breeding birds can pluck their mate; this is normally part of the love and courtship of the pair.

**Preening** is grooming procedure for the bird to clean its feathers and keep them looking good. Birds preen to remove old dry sheaths. There is an oil gland just above the tail area (Pionus do not have this oil gland) and they will rub the head on it to spread the oil onto the other feathers, this helps to water proof the feathers. A bird can spend quite a long period of time to preen all of the feathers or they may do a few at a time. Giving the bird a spray bath will help promote preening. This should be normal hygiene for the bird on a daily basis. Do not use shampoo on a bird as it removes the oils from the feathers. When feathers start look drab a spray bath will help to make the feathers look better.

**Broken Feathers** many times feathers are broken near the base of a blood feather and this can be serious if excess bleeding occurs. Read on above info on how to treat a broken blood feather. If an actual blood feather is broken then there is not an alternative to stop the bleeding except for extracting the broken blood feather. Other feathers that are not a blood feather that breaks can just be cut off at the break or by twisting them off.

**What are blood feathers?** Blood feathers are immature feathers that still have a blood supply to the shaft.

Once a feather reaches maturity, the blood supply degenerates, the pulp dries up and the calamus develops into a hard shaft. On baby birds you will see when feathers start growing in its called 'pin feathers' which are also the same thing as blood feathers and its the only time that the bird has that many blood feathers at one time.

**Flight Feathers** are the main feathers that help to make the bird take flight as well as the tail feathers play an important role in flying. Read on our Wing and Nail Clipping page above for more info. You must remember that after bird's flight feathers are clipped they remain like that until they start molting and growing in new ones. It is gradual and as few grow in, it is possible for the bird to be able to take flight especially smaller lighter weight birds. It can be anywhere from 2 to 4 months for new feathers to start growing back in but is also based on at the time of the clipping as to when the birds time is for molting.



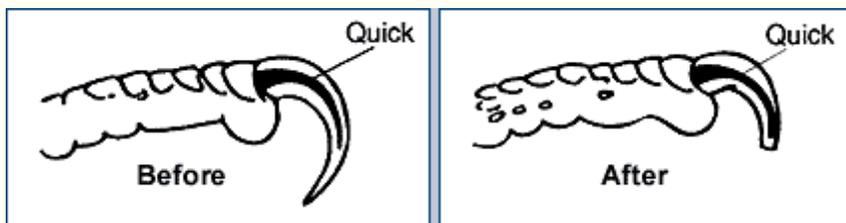
pionusparrot.com

Amazon Feathers

## Nail Clipping

Nails can be trimmed when wings are clipped, or they may be trimmed separately. If your bird gets upset from wings being clipped, then trim nails later after bird has rested. Nail trimming is important so that you won't be scratched by the bird and also proper length is important, if nails get too long it's not good on the bird, they have a harder time perching or walking around, plus they are apt to get nails caught.

- Restrain the same as in a wing trim, except each foot should be held separately.
- Perform short cuts.
- Each nail should be cut individually by holding the toe gently.
- Examine each toe for bleeding after you have released the toe.
- Have a Styptic Powder readily available in case nail should bleed, if it does apply powder to bleeding nail and apply some pressure to nail with powder. If bleeding persists keep applying powder until bleeding stops.



**With a little common knowledge you can succeed well with your pet bird!**

## **Index Pionus Parrot**

### **General Care**

Parrot Ownership .....	1-3
Attention.....	3
Toys, Exercise, Lighting, Temperature, Food .....	4
Cages, Perches, Routine Cleaning .....	5
Bath Time, Choosing a Veterinarian, Wing and Nail Clipping.....	6
Preparing for Emergencies, How to pull broken blood feathers....	7
Having Dogs & Cats, Non-Stick Cookware Pans .....	7
Toilets, sinks, Stoves .....	8
Potty Training .....	8
Screaming .....	8-11
Toy Safety .....	11-13
Health & Diet .....	14-15
Wings Clipping .....	16-17
Feathers .....	17-19
Nail Clipping .....	19

Be sure to visit our websites...

<http://www.pionusparrot.com>

<http://www.readybb.com/pionusparrot>

<http://www.pionusparrot.com/forum>

<http://www.pionusparrot.com/pionusforum>

### **Pionus Parrot**

P.O. Box 293721

Phelan, CA. 92372

This entire document was created in this PDF file on 6/04/06 and was taken from Pionus Parrot's Website and you may use this information for your reference.

Please Note: The Hyperlinks in this document are placed in for those who want to view this online and for those who to read this as a printed version, the info that the links lead to has the information throughout the document.