

Hey, cut out that squawking, I'm talking to you!

By KRISTI L. GUSTAFSON
Staff writer

Animal lovers know that when their pets need them, they'll do whatever they have to do, wherever that may lead.

Take Nancy Stewart, whose beloved Eclectus parrot Elmo took to squawking incessantly and pulling out his feathers last spring. It had gotten to the point where the bird was as white as the inside of a cushion. Stewart had concluded that Elmo just plain didn't like her husband, Bill, since it got worse when he was in the room.

Bill wasn't crazy about the bird's squawking, either. Like "fingernails on a blackboard," was how he described it.

Nancy Stewart knew that if she couldn't figure this out, she might have to get rid of

Elmo.

She took him to the vet more than once, trying a few suggestions, like putting the bird near the window. No new feathers, more squawking.

So when Stewart saw the brochure for "Talk to Your Animals," David Louis' pet consulting practice in Averill Park, she was ready to try anything.

Even animal telepathy.

At \$75 an hour.

"I was a little bit skeptical at first," says Stewart. "It was the unseen. The unknown. I didn't think someone could actually communicate with an animal."

Fast forward from March, when Louis began working with Elmo. The parrot has now grown back his vibrant green feathers. Coincidence? Only a humble parrot and the "interspecies telepathic communi-

cator" who treats him know for sure.

For what it's worth, though, Elmo's squawking continues when Bill is in the room. But they're working on that.

Seems once you start talking to an animal, it can be hard to get it to shut up.

Here's the scene: At a recent session, Louis closes his eyes and turns his head toward Elmo, who's perched on his shoulder.

"He's sending me pictures," says Louis, who's channeling the bird. Only the pictures aren't pretty. "I can see he's distressed and craves attention."

Three hourlong sessions after they started (along with the addition of a lamp near his cage), and Elmo was looking more himself. Louis says the feather pulling was just bird-speak for, "I'm not

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SHHHH. These two are talking. Animal communication specialist David Louis of Talk to Your Animals in Averill Park has been helping work through some of Eclectus parrot Elmo's issues.

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getting enough light. Please help me."

Louis is well aware that his work will always have its skeptics. But he says his proof is writ in regrown feathers, as well as in the large, unruly dogs he gets to stop jumping on visitors and attacking household cats. Though he's been trained in the practice, he says, you have to have "the gift" to learn.

"Some people think it's a little strange or different and say 'let people learn to communicate with each other and let animals be animals,'" Louis says. "I understand if they don't believe it at first, but once people see my work, and see the change in their pets, they become believers."

One vet's view

Veterinarian Robert Sofarelli, who practices with the Saratoga Veterinarian Hospital in Saratoga Springs, says animal owners may feel better if an animal communicator is able to treat whatever ails their pet. But he'll stick with a more scientific approach, thank you.

"If you could talk to animals, you'd be a veterinarian," Sofarelli says. "If I could speak to my clients, I would do one heck of a job."

Carol Bessette who works with Whiskers, a no-kill animal shelter in Albany, is a believer. Last year, Bessette took in one of the shelter's leukemia-stricken cats, Gwen, who wasn't eating and moped around. Bessette took a picture of Gwen,



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NANCY STEWART thought she might have to give up her pet bird until she consulted with David Louis.

and her bed, to Louis. After going off on his own with the items, Louis came up with just the thing to calm Gwen's stomach and make the dying cat more comfortable.

It was Pepcid AC.

"I never would have thought of Pepcid," says Bessette. "If it wasn't for (David) we would have lost her a lot sooner."

So on Louis' recommendation, Bill Stewart has started spending a little time with Elmo each evening. Like a child who doesn't behave until he gets his way, the extra attention has quieted the bird down.

"Dave's work has been amazing," Nancy Stewart says. "Without him, I don't know if we could have kept Elmo as our pet."

▶ Kristi Gustafson can be reached at 454-5494 or kgustafson@timesunion.com.