

Bird Safety Corner

Car Safety, Part 2

Now that you've learned why your precious parrot shouldn't be loose in the car while you drive, let's learn the best ways to safely restrain her.

Carriers

The best carriers are sturdy so they don't collapse easily in case of an accident. Wire cages are generally too flimsy for safe transport. There are a variety of safe carriers available. Unlike cage recommendations at home, you should get the **smallest carrier** which comfortably houses your bird since in case of rapid deceleration, your bird could get tossed about inside the carrier.



The cage should have either **no perch or a low perch** so your bird doesn't fall off easily while you're careening around corners (which you would never do, of course...). The carrier should have a sturdy handle through which a seat belt can be attached. One carrier, the Click N Go Car Seat Carrier, even snaps into a base, which is belted in. If you have to stop suddenly, an unrestrained carrier

will fly through the air, injuring your bird, so the **carrier should always be belted in**.

Standard kennel carriers are readily available, inexpensive, and airplane-approved. The seatbelt can go through the top handle. Aluminum travel cages are lightweight, but sturdy, and can sometimes be completely knocked down, if need be. Acrylic carriers come in all kinds of sizes and shapes, including macaw size. Some carriers will have built in feed cups and others allow cups to be clipped on. A few of the more common carrier designs are shown in this article, but there are many more. You can get some idea of the variety of carriers here:



www.perchfactory.com/bird_travel_carriers/travel_bird_carriers_plastic.htm



If you choose a clear carrier, keep in mind that your bird may feel vulnerable while you drive, especially if it sees hawks flying overhead. You should consider bringing along a **blanket or cloth** to drape over the top of the carrier to block both the view and the sun so your bird doesn't become overheated.

The carrier should always be **belted into the back seat**, as with a child's car seat. If the carrier is in the front seat, it could potentially be squashed by an airbag. The second row or back seat of a vehicle is also the safest place to be in case of an accident. All carriers should be **labeled with your contact information**. Covering the label with clear packing tape will help preserve it. If the carrier is dedicated to one bird, put the bird's species and name on the carrier in case you get separated.



We'll finish with two more car safety tips for traveling with birds. First, **do not use air fresheners** when traveling with birds. They are soaked with essential oils and are toxic to birds. Second, **NEVER leave your birds unattended in the car!** In addition to the usual warnings about animals overheating in cars, it only takes a

moment for someone to break into the car and steal your bird. A pretty bird sitting in a car is a sitting duck. Even if you cover the carrier, your bird may scream out, alerting a potential thief, so either someone should stay in the car or the bird should come with you.

Amy Hopkins, [The Parrot Club](#), © 2013. All rights reserved