

# Conure

## Care Guide for New Owners

Parrot

Conure

Native to the Americas

Vocal and Expressive

### Quick Facts at a Glance

<b>Common Species</b>	Green-cheeked, Sun, Jenday, Nanday, Blue-crowned, and many others
<b>Lifespan</b>	15 to 30 years depending on species
<b>Adult Size</b>	10 to 15 inches depending on species; 2 to 5 oz
<b>Activity Cycle</b>	Diurnal; active during the day
<b>Temperament</b>	Playful, affectionate, bold; known for personality and energy
<b>Cage Minimum</b>	24x24x36 inches (L x W x H); 1/4 to 1/2 inch bar spacing
<b>Social Needs</b>	Highly social; requires significant daily interaction
<b>Diet</b>	50% high-quality pellets, 50% fresh chop; seed-only diets cause serious harm
<b>Noise Level</b>	Moderate to high; some species (Sun, Jenday) are very loud
<b>Legal Status</b>	Legal in Wisconsin; verify local ordinances; see note on Nanday conures

### Conures Are Parrots

Conures are a diverse group of parrots within the order Psittaciformes, belonging primarily to the genera *Pyrrhura*, *Aratinga*, and several others. The word conure is a common name that encompasses dozens of distinct species ranging from the small, quieter green-cheeked conure to the large, extremely loud sun conure. Understanding which species you are considering is important because care needs, noise levels, and personality traits vary considerably across the group.

What all conures share is the cognitive complexity and social depth of parrots. They are active, curious, emotionally expressive birds who form strong bonds with their people, require consistent mental stimulation, and do not do well with neglect or boredom. They are also almost universally vocal animals, and noise level is something every prospective conure owner must honestly evaluate for their living situation.

### **Noise Is a Real Consideration With Conures**

Sun conures, Jenday conures, and blue-crowned conures are among the loudest parrots per unit of body size in captivity. Their contact calls can reach 120 decibels. If you live in an apartment, have noise-sensitive neighbors, or are simply not prepared for a very loud bird, a sun or Jenday conure may not be the right species. Green-cheeked conures are generally quieter. Research the specific species you are considering before adopting.

## **A Note on Nanday Conures and Wisconsin Law**

### **Check Current Legal Status for Nanday Conures**

Nanday conures (*Aratinga nenday*) have established feral populations in parts of the United States and are regulated under invasive species rules in some jurisdictions. While they are not currently listed under Wisconsin DNR Chapter NR 40 the way Quaker parrots are, regulations can change. If you are considering a Nanday conure specifically, verify current Wisconsin DNR regulations at [dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov) before adopting.

## Household Dangers for Birds

Birds have an extraordinarily efficient respiratory system with continuous one-way airflow through air sacs connected to the lungs. This makes them far more sensitive to airborne toxins than mammals. Many everyday household items that humans barely register are genuinely life-threatening to a bird. Every person who brings a bird into their home must understand these dangers before that bird arrives.

### Non-Stick Cookware and PTFE (Teflon)

#### The Number One Household Killer of Pet Birds

Cookware, bakeware, and appliances coated with polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), sold under brand names including Teflon, release invisible, odorless toxic fumes when overheated. These fumes cause acute respiratory failure in birds within minutes and are almost always fatal. A bird can be dead in under 15 minutes with no warning whatsoever. Non-stick cookware must not be used in any home with a bird. This includes non-stick pots, pans, waffle irons, air fryers, some drip pans and oven liners, and some ironing board covers. Check every appliance and piece of cookware before bringing a bird home and replace anything with a PTFE coating.

### Other Airborne Toxins

- Candles, incense, and wax melts: Scented candles, incense, wax warmers, and essential oil diffusers release volatile compounds that cause respiratory irritation and damage in birds. Never use these in a room where a bird spends time.
- Aerosol sprays: Hairspray, air fresheners, spray cleaners, perfume, and spray paint all pose serious respiratory risks. Ventilate thoroughly and keep birds away from any room where aerosols are used.
- Scented plug-in air fresheners: These release compounds continuously and should not be used anywhere near a bird.
- Smoke of any kind: Cigarette, cigar, wood smoke, vaping aerosol, and marijuana smoke are all harmful to bird respiratory tracts. Never smoke near or in the same room as a bird.
- Overheated cooking oils and burning food: Even without PTFE, combustion products from burned food can irritate birds. Ensure good kitchen ventilation when cooking.
- Fresh paint, varnish, adhesives, and treated wood: Off-gassing from new materials can be harmful. Allow full curing and thorough ventilation before the bird returns to any treated area.
- Household cleaning products: Bleach, ammonia-based cleaners, and many commercial sprays are toxic to birds. Use bird-safe alternatives for anything near the cage and rinse all surfaces thoroughly.

### Physical Dangers

- Ceiling fans: Always turn off ceiling fans before allowing a bird out of its cage. A bird in flight and a moving ceiling fan is a fatal combination.

- Exposed electrical cords: Birds chew. A bird that bites through a live wire can be electrocuted. Cover or hide all cords in any space where your bird has free flight time.
- Open water: Toilet bowls, full sinks, buckets, and aquariums can trap and drown a bird. Keep these covered or doors closed during free flight.
- Cats and dogs: Even a playful swipe from a cat can deliver fatal Pasteurella bacteria into a bird's bloodstream through a scratch. Never allow unsupervised contact between a bird and any cat or dog.
- Windows and mirrors: Birds cannot distinguish glass from open space. Mark large windows or cover them during free flight to prevent collision injuries.
- Hot surfaces: Birds can land on hot stove burners during free flight. Never allow birds in the kitchen while cooking.
- Small gaps and tight spaces: Birds explore and can get stuck behind appliances or inside small openings where they can injure themselves or cannot be reached.

## Housing and Cage Setup

The minimum cage size for a conure is 24 inches wide by 24 inches deep by 36 inches tall, with bar spacing of 1/4 to 1/2 inch. Larger is always better. Conures are active climbers and benefit from a cage with horizontal bars and multiple levels of perches, toys, and foraging opportunities. Avoid round cages. Front-opening cages make daily interaction easier.

## Perches: Variety Is Essential

Perch quality and variety have a direct impact on foot health. A bird stands on its perches every moment it is in the cage. Providing only one type or diameter of perch causes constant pressure on the same points of the foot, which leads to bumblefoot, a painful and difficult-to-treat bacterial infection of the foot pads.

- Natural wood branches: The best option. Irregular shapes and diameters constantly shift foot position and exercise different muscles. Use untreated wood from bird-safe species such as apple, willow, manzanita, and dragonwood.
- Rope perches: Soft, comfortable, and good for variety. Inspect regularly for fraying, as loose fibers can wrap around toes and cause tourniquet injuries. Replace when significant fraying appears.
- Calcium or mineral perches: Provide texture and help keep the beak slightly worn. Fine as one option among several.
- Nail file or pedicure perches: Acceptable as one perch among multiple options to help maintain nail length. Should never be the only or primary perch, as prolonged contact with an abrasive surface damages foot pads.
- Dowel perches: Limit to no more than one per cage. Uniform smooth dowels provide no variation in diameter or texture and promote foot problems when used exclusively.

### Place Perches Thoughtfully

Position perches at different heights throughout the cage. The highest perch is where most birds prefer to sleep, so make it comfortable and secure. Never position perches directly over food or water dishes where droppings contaminate them. Ensure all perches are stable and do not wobble.

## Toys and Enrichment

Conures need significant daily enrichment. They love to climb, chew, wrestle with toys, and play with their people. Provide a variety of shreddable toys, foot toys, swings, foraging puzzles, and hanging items. Rotate toys regularly to maintain novelty. Many conures enjoy being carried in pockets or inside shirts and appreciate close physical proximity to their owners as a form of bonding.

## Diet and Nutrition

Diet is one of the areas where parrot care most commonly falls short of what these birds actually need. An all-seed diet is the single most common nutritional mistake made by parrot owners across all species.

### Why Seed-Only Diets Are Harmful

Seeds are high in fat and carbohydrates and deficient in many essential vitamins and minerals, particularly Vitamin A and calcium. A parrot eating only seeds is essentially eating nutritionally incomplete food at every single meal. Vitamin A deficiency causes respiratory problems, immune suppression, and organ damage over time. The high fat content leads to obesity and fatty liver disease, both of which are extremely common in seed-fed parrots and both of which shorten lifespan significantly. Seeds are fine as an occasional treat or a component of a varied diet, but they should never be the foundation.

### Recommended Diet

Boggy's Buddies recommends 50 percent high-quality pellets and 50 percent fresh chop daily. Harrison's Bird Foods is our top pellet recommendation, followed by TOPS Parrot Food and Goldenfeast. We do not recommend ZuPreem, which contains artificial colors and is not nutritionally balanced to the standard of the recommended options. Choose pellet size appropriate for the species.

#### Safe Fresh Foods

- Dark leafy greens: collard greens, kale, dandelion greens
- Bell peppers (excellent Vitamin A source)
- Broccoli, carrots, courgette, peas, corn
- Fresh herbs: basil, cilantro, parsley
- Small amounts of mango, papaya, blueberry, or apple (no fruit seeds)

#### Never Feed These

- Avocado (toxic)
- Onions and garlic (toxic)
- Chocolate (toxic)
- Fruit seeds and pits
- Alcohol
- High-sodium processed human food
- Mushrooms

### Fresh Water

Fresh water must be available at all times. Change it daily and clean the dish or bottle thoroughly every few days. Many parrots enjoy a shallow bath dish or misting, which supports feather condition and provides enrichment.

### **Never Pet a Parrot Below the Neck**

Petting a parrot on its back, wings, belly, or vent area mimics the behavior of a mate and triggers hormonal responses. This applies to all parrot species. Chronic hormonal stimulation through full-body petting leads to behavioral problems, aggression, and in females, chronic egg-laying with serious associated health risks. Pet only on the head, cheeks, and around the beak. Never pet under the wings, along the back, or near the tail.

### **No Nesting Items in the Cage**

Do not place nest boxes, cuddle tents, snuggle sacks, or any enclosed fabric items in your bird's cage. When a bird is surrounded on all sides in a tight, cozy space, it registers this as a nest. This triggers powerful hormonal responses in both males and females: egg-laying behavior in females (which can lead to egg binding, a life-threatening emergency) and territorial aggression and frustration in both sexes. A hormonally stimulated parrot is an unhappy, difficult parrot. Comfortable perches at height are all a bird needs for sleeping and resting.

## **Wing Clipping: Our Position**

Boggy's Buddies does not recommend wing clipping as a routine practice. Flight is a fundamental natural behavior, and fully flighted birds are physically healthier, more confident, and more behaviorally balanced. Flight provides exercise that clipped birds cannot replicate, and birds who learn to fly develop better coordination and emotional resilience.

We recognize that clipping is not the wrong choice in every situation, and we support it in specific circumstances.

### **Situations Where We Support Clipping**

- An adult bird who has been clipped for most of its life and is unlikely to learn to fly safely. For these birds, being suddenly fully flighted without the skills to manage it poses a real injury risk from crashes and falls.
- A hormonal bird who is dive-bombing other birds, animals, or people. Clipping temporarily limits the ability to initiate attacks and can be a safety management tool during a hormonal period.
- Transport, veterinary visits, or other situations where uncontrolled flight poses an escape or injury risk.

### **If You Clip, Do It Correctly**

Wing clipping should only be done by an avian vet or experienced avian professional. Incorrectly clipped birds cut blood feathers and can fall and injure themselves if left without any ability to glide. A correctly clipped bird should be able to glide slowly to the ground, not drop straight down.

## Harness Training and Outdoor Time

Supervised outdoor time in a harness offers real benefits: natural sunlight provides Vitamin D3 that indoor lighting cannot fully replicate, and new sights, sounds, and smells provide enrichment that indoor life simply cannot match.

For most birds, the Aviator harness is our first recommendation. It is well-designed, adjustable, and available in sizes ranging from very small to large parrot. The right harness is ultimately the one that fits and that your individual bird will accept. Some birds adapt to other designs more readily.

Harness training is a long process. We want to be completely clear about this. For most birds, the process from first introduction to comfortable wear takes weeks to months of slow, patient, positive work. Forcing a harness onto a bird who is not ready causes fear and trauma that makes future training exponentially harder. The process begins with simply letting the bird see the harness, then feel it nearby, then brief contact, then seconds of wear, and so on. Every bird moves at its own pace.

### **Never Leave a Harnessed Bird Unsupervised Outside**

A harnessed bird outside is still a bird that can be attacked by a hawk, a cat, or a dog. Always supervise directly and never tie the leash to an object and walk away.

## Grooming: Nails, Beak, and Wings

Regular monitoring of nail length, beak condition, and wing feathers is part of routine bird ownership. With appropriate perch variety and foraging opportunities, beak and nail maintenance is often reduced but never eliminated.

### **Nail Trims**

Overgrown nails curl under the foot and cause pain and difficulty perching. Check nail length regularly. Trims can be performed by an avian vet, an experienced groomer, or a confident owner who has been shown correct technique. Always have styptic powder on hand in case a nail is cut too short and bleeds. Never attempt nail trims on an uncooperative bird alone.

### **Beak Maintenance**

A healthy beak wears naturally through chewing, foraging, and wiping on perches and mineral blocks. An overgrown, misshapen, or laminating beak requires veterinary assessment. Do not attempt beak trims at home. Beak trims require specialized tools and expertise and a mistake can cause serious injury.

### **Wing Trims**

See the wing clipping section above. Any clipping should be done by an avian vet or experienced avian professional only.

## Common Health Issues

### **Psittacosis (Chlamydiosis)**

Transmissible to humans. Signs include respiratory distress, changes in droppings, lethargy. Requires veterinary diagnosis and antibiotic treatment. Test new birds from unknown backgrounds.

### **Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)**

A neurological disease caused by avian bornavirus. Signs include chronic regurgitation, weight loss despite eating, and neurological symptoms. No reliable cure. Requires veterinary management.

### **Feather Destructive Behavior**

A signal of stress, illness, boredom, or hormonal imbalance. Always warrants veterinary assessment first.

### **Fatty Liver Disease**

Caused by seed-heavy diets. Correct diet and veterinary care can improve outcomes if caught early.

### **Respiratory Infections**

Audible breathing changes, tail-bobbing, nasal discharge, and lethargy are all signs. Always a veterinary emergency.

### **Egg Binding**

Life-threatening in females. Requires immediate veterinary care. Avoid nesting triggers.

### **PTFE Toxicosis**

Non-stick cookware fumes cause rapid respiratory failure. Remove all PTFE-coated items from the home.

## Things Every New Conure Owner Should Know

### **Research the specific species noise level before adopting.**

The noise difference between a green-cheeked conure and a sun conure is enormous. Know what you are getting into.

### **Remove all non-stick cookware.**

PTFE fumes kill birds within minutes. No exceptions.

### **This is a 15 to 30 year commitment depending on species.**

Plan accordingly.

### **Seeds are a treat, not a diet.**

Transition to pellets and fresh chop.

### **Never put nesting items in the cage.**

They trigger hormonal behavior and chronic egg-laying.

### **Pet only on the head and cheeks.**

Petting below the neck promotes hormonal behavior.

### **Find an avian vet before you need one.**

Identify a vet in your area now, before an emergency.

### **Questions? We're Here!**

Boggy's Buddies is always happy to answer questions. Reach us at [boggysbuddies@gmail.com](mailto:boggysbuddies@gmail.com) or find us on Facebook and Instagram.