
BIRDS

TWITTER, A TAME BALTIMORE ORIOLE

Andrew and Ben Settler, Box 129, Lucky Lake, SK S0L 1Z0

If you ever drop in to our farmhouse, 3 miles northwest of Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan, you'll see a little bird in a cage at the end of the hall. You may ask, "Where did you buy that?" Many people are surprised when we tell them that it is a wild bird rescued after its nest had been disturbed by cats. The cats killed one young bird, but we managed to save two and bring them into the house. Mom cautioned us that wild birds have little chance of surviving in captivity, but she agreed to help us. We tried feeding them insects and provided a dish of water, but one died overnight. Next day we started feeding the remaining bird little pieces of hamburger on a toothpick. That was the solution. It would stretch up when we held a piece

over its head, then swallow it whole. Eventually, when the bird started eating by itself, we moved it into a cage.

"Twitter" is now a brilliant male, three years old, black-backed with and orange breast. He eats celery and ordinary soft-billed bird food (we weaned him off hamburger after about two months). He moults every spring but the feathers grow back after about three weeks. Because he was put in a cage, he didn't learn to fly, although he can flutter about a foot and a half off the floor. He loves to leave his cage to roam around and will perch on our fingers without hesitation. He shows no fear whatsoever and will peck your finger hard enough to draw blood if you bother him too much.

Twitter loves to hear water running and chirps merrily whenever clothes are being washed. We have taught him a few songs, including a wolf-whistle and Woody Woodpecker's song, the one he sings most. Sometimes he sings along when we're playing a CD; he seems to prefer classical over heavy metal, but he isn't too fussy. He is fond of bathing, his bird bath being a plastic cube with an opening into the cage. He will splash and shake for as long as five minutes at a time.

It's been great having the little guy around, and we can only hope he'll be with us for a long time yet.



Andrew Settler, with Twitter

Ben Settler