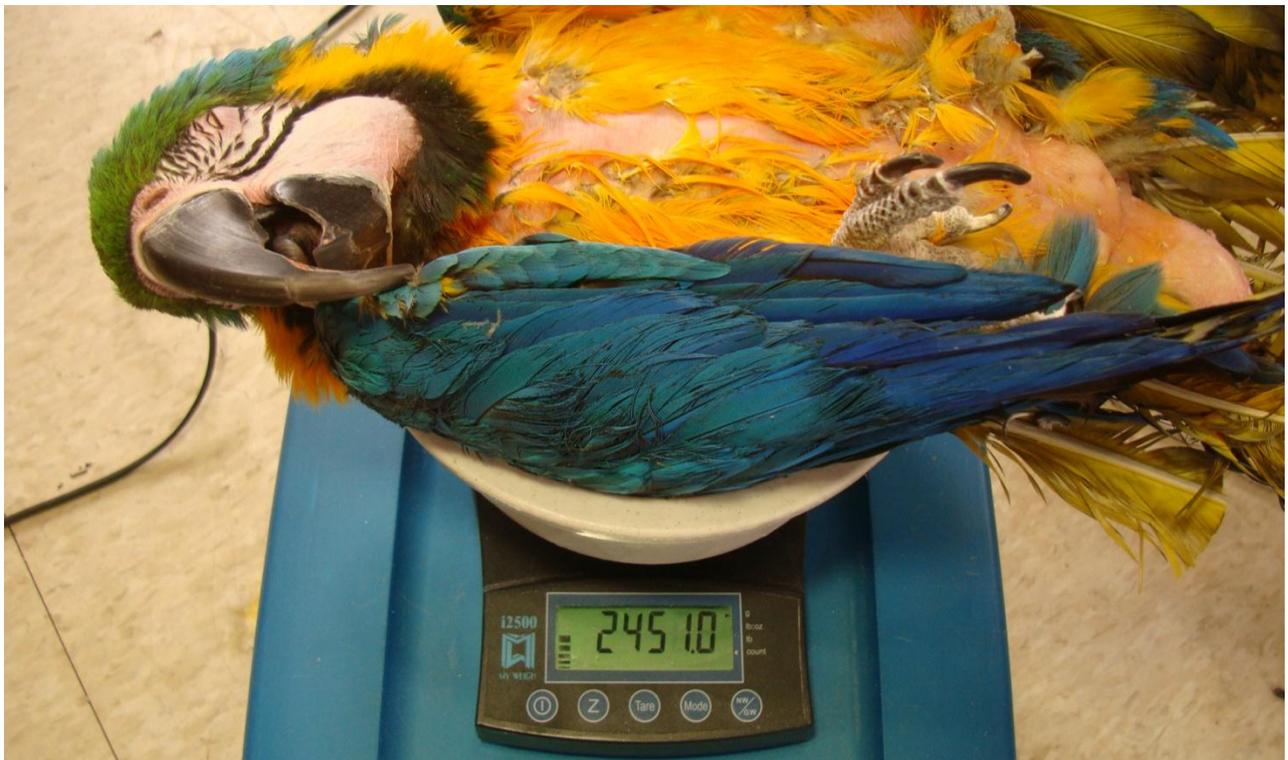


NORMAL WEIGHT OF PET BIRDS

Meet "Big Jake". He's a Blue and Gold macaw that used to live near Moundsville, WV. In 40 years of avian practice, Jake holds the record for being the heaviest psittacine bird I've ever seen. The normal range for a Blue and Gold macaw is 940-1148g. Jake's heaviest weight was 2451g! He was not only big, but also fat! I have yet to examine another macaw that weighs more than 2000g. I challenge anyone to find one that weighs more than Jake!



This is Jake being weighed during a routine examination in 2013. He is sedated with inhalation anesthesia. This was his highest weight. His owner passed away in 2016 and Jake ended up in a Bird Rescue in Ohio. They put him on a rigorous diet and he lost over 1000g. He was ultimately adopted out in 2018 and I have lost track of him since then.

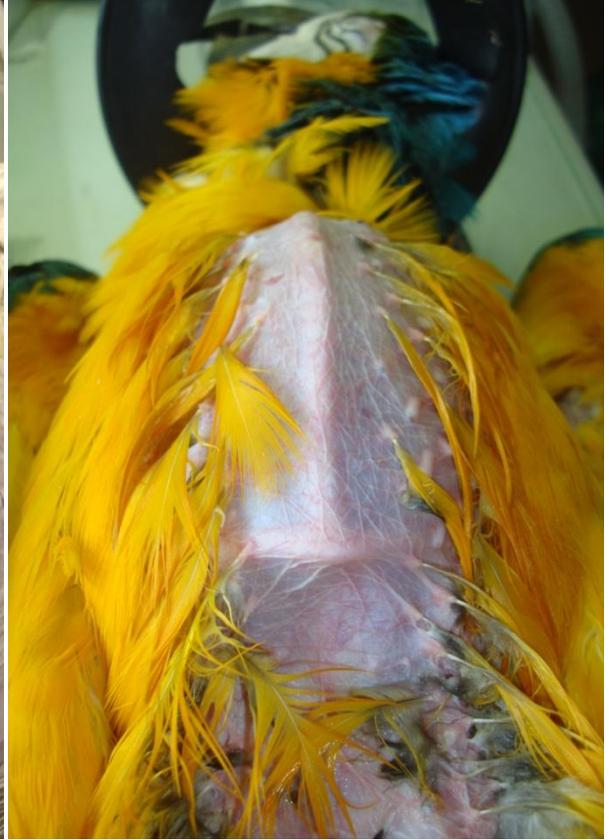
Pet bird owners are always interested in knowing how much their bird weighs, and if this is normal. Clients also like to be able to track their bird's weight over time, to see if they're gaining weight, losing any, or staying about the same.

Every pet bird is weighed during each visit. Birds are weighed in grams. Since each bird is usually already anesthetized, it's easy to get a weight by gently laying them in a bowel that sits on a gram scale. Each bird's weight is then recorded with one of the following descriptions; normal, or if it's on the skinny side; lean, thin, or emaciated. If it's on the heavy side; husky, slightly overweight, fat, or very fat.

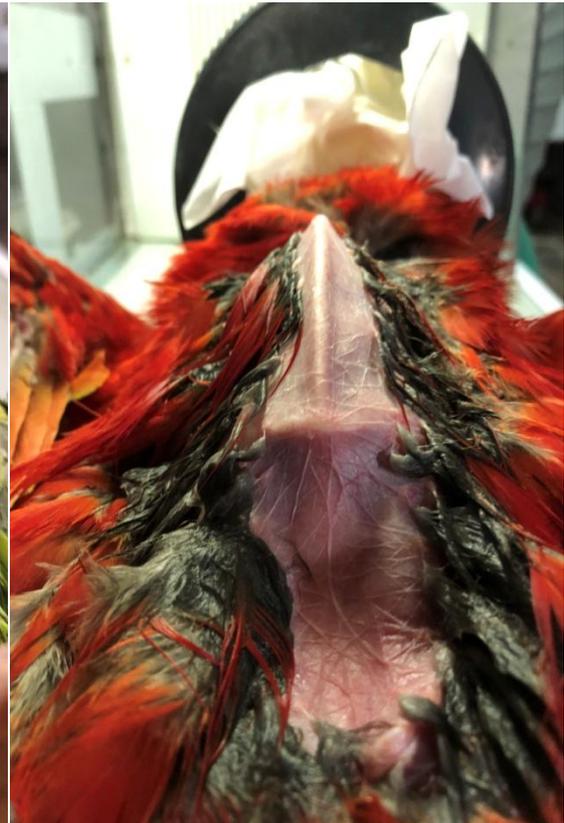
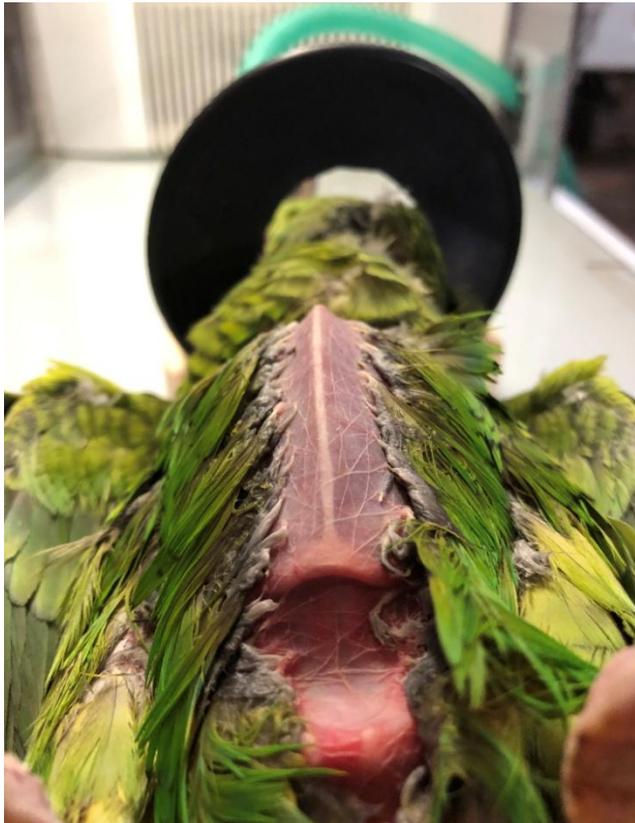
This assessment is not based on any specific formula, but rather on my own clinical impression. It is related to the amount of breast muscle present, how prominent the keel bone is, and how much subcutaneous fat is over the chest and abdominal region. Pictured below are some examples of these weight descriptions. All of these birds were sedated with gas. Seventy percent rubbing alcohol has been applied to the ventral body feathers, so they can be wet down and spread, revealing the underlying thin skin over the breast and abdomen. All parrots are normally bald down the midline.

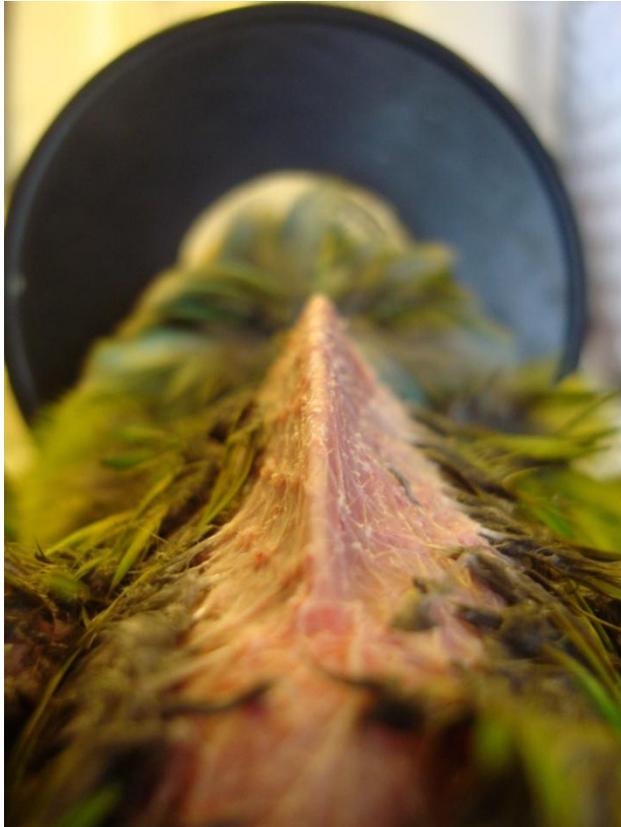


Normal weight: The full extent of the keel (white line) can be seen under the skin. The keel is an extension of the breastbone, or sternum. The breast muscle is maroon-colored and gently arcs over the keel. The abdomen is sunken (concave) and the thin abdominal musculature is visualized. No fat is present.



Some birds have a slightly prominent keel bone. I call these "normal" as well.





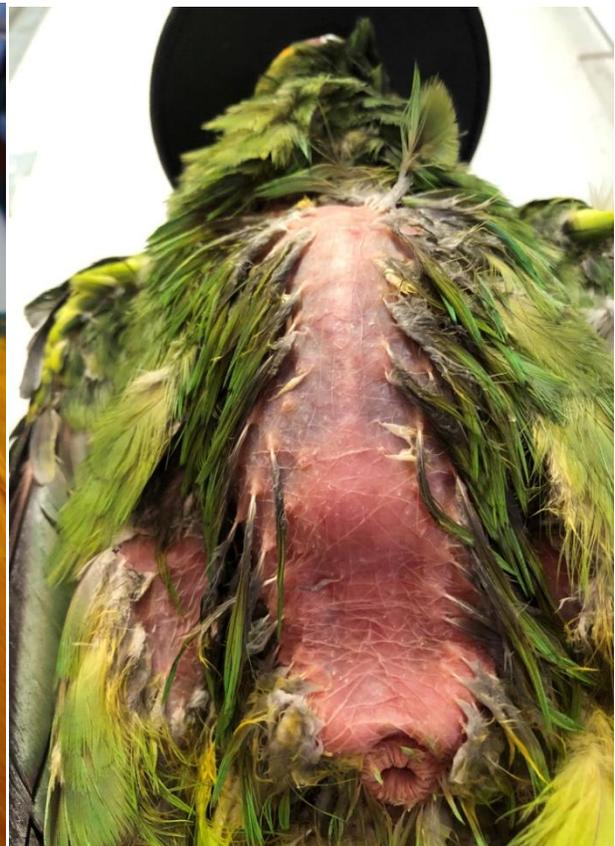
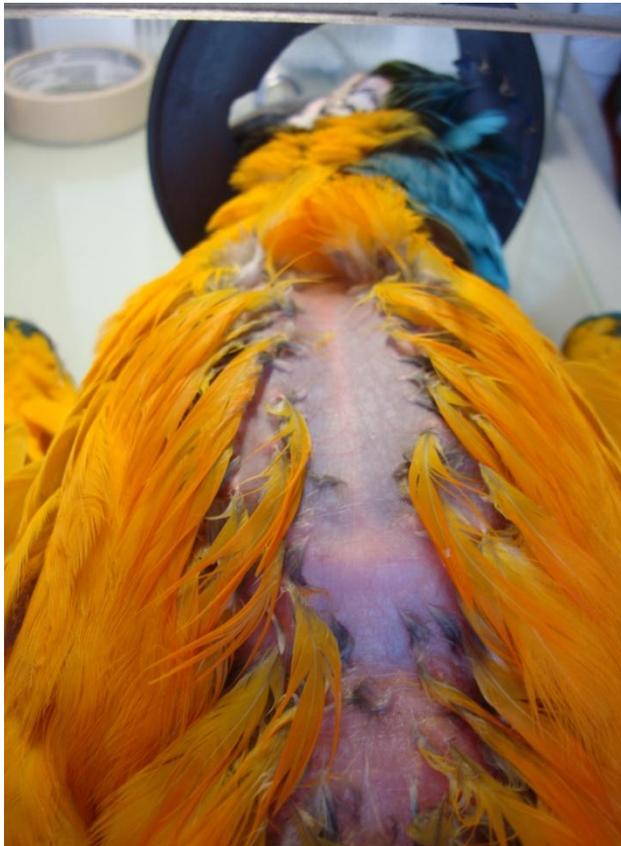
Examples of weight descriptions:

Lean (upper left, previous page):
The keel bone is prominent.

Thin (upper right, previous page):
The keel bone is more prominent.
Breast muscle begins to atrophy.

Emaciated (left): The keel bone is very prominent. I call this a 'razor keel'. Severe breast muscle atrophy.

Husky (lower left and right): The keel bone is still visible but becoming "hazy" because of a thin layer of SQ fat over the breast. Abdomen is still sunken, but thin layer of fat is present





Slightly overweight (left):

Flattened, fat mounds are evident over the upper breast and thoracic inlet, as well as the abdomen, which is not so sunken anymore. Breast muscle and keel bone still visible in mid-section of chest.

Fat (lower left and right): Large amounts of SQ fat all over the body. The keel bone cannot be seen. The abdomen is no longer sunken in. No fatty tumors are evident.





Very fat: Large amounts of SQ fat all over the body. The Amazon on the left has three protruding fat mounds that can now be labeled as lipomas...fatty tumors. The macaw on the right is Big Jake. He is also fat all over with multiple lipomas. You can see a one inch, round, fatty tumor, on the lower left breast area, and a huge one, three inches long, protruding ventrally from the tail base. This was surgically removed.

After examining thousands of birds over the past 12 years, I've accumulated enough data to be able to state with a fair degree of accuracy what is a **NORMAL** weight. Starting in 2008, all my records have been computerized so it was easy to compile this information. I have seen over 150 different parrot species during this time. In this article, I am presenting "normal weight" data on the 70 most common psittacine species that I've seen as pets. The minimum requirement is that I have seen each bird type for at least 150 visits in which I categorized its weight as being normal.

Clients are also interested in knowing what birds are most commonly kept as pets. I can't answer this exactly because many pet birds never see a veterinarian. This is especially true of small birds like budgies, lovebirds, canaries and finches. A number of pet owners argue that it's just too expensive to take their small bird to the vet for routine procedures...and there is some validity to this. As a result, the types of birds that tend to be seen by veterinarians are the larger, more expensive ones.

Based on my data, without question, the three most commonly seen large species of parrots are African Greys, Blue and Gold Macaws, and Umbrella Cockatoos. Cockatiels, Quaker Parakeets, and Green-Cheeked Conures are the most common small varieties.

Listed below are the 15 most common parrot species that I've seen in my practice (that presented as pet birds) and the total number of bird visits during the past 12 years. Some birds obviously have been seen more than once and every visit adds to the total number.

TYPE OF BIRD	# of VISITS
African Grey	14952
Blue and Gold Macaw	10031
Cockatiel	5287
Umbrella Cockatoo	5166
Eclectus Parrot	3896
Green-Winged Macaw	3508
Blue-Fronted Amazon	3439
Quaker Parakeet	3214
Timneh Grey	3184
Green-Cheeked Conure	3056
Sun Conure	2882
Moluccan Cockatoo	2354
Goffin Cockatoo	2622
Yellow-Naped Amazon	2338
Double-Yellow- Headed Amazon	2310

Determining the normal weight of a bird type is not an exact science. While I can come up with a specific number, there are many other variables to consider. For example, some individuals are normally large, others are petite. Sometimes there's a weight difference based on sex or age. There are regional size differences and subspecies' size variation for some birds. One of these bird types listed (Eclectus parrots) includes all the different species. So the average (mean) weight presented here is not set in stone. Regardless, I still consider the number presented as accurate, especially when it includes a weight range of 10% on either side of the mean. So, for example, if the mean weight of a Green-Cheeked Conure is 66g, then the normal weight range would be 60 - 72g.

The mean is the sum total (in grams) of all the visits divided by the total number of visits.

For interest, I have also included the highest recorded weight for each species of bird. This number was derived from the "fat or very fat" classification. Casual observation of this number will also reveal that certain types of birds are more prone to obesity than others. Macaws, Amazons, and Conures (New World parrots) tend to get overweight if kept on a high fat, high carbohydrate diet while other kinds of birds do not. Examples of the later include African parrots (Old World) and most white cockatoos. Exercise restrictions can also influence weight gain. Wing clipping of pet birds leads to a more sedentary life. This is especially true if the bird is never allowed out of its cage.

I have grouped the 70 most common species of psittacine birds seen as to family, genera, location, or miscellaneous. Birds are also listed in order of what is most commonly seen.

Parrots do hybridize and this is especially true of macaws. Right or wrong, a number of private aviculturists promote this type of breeding. I did include some of these because there are so many of them out there.

All birds are weighed in grams. 454g = 1 pound 28.4g = 1 oz

Type of Bird	#Visits	MEAN WEIGHT	Range 20%	Highest Weight
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AFRICAN PARROTS

African Grey	14952	452	407 - 497	673
Timneh Grey	3184	306	275 - 337	404
Senegal	1577	141	127 - 155	233
Peach-Faced Lovebird	1006	50	45 - 55	87
Red-Bellied	400	133	120 - 146	287
Meyer's	377	112	101 - 123	184
Jardine	293	212	191 - 233	319
Cape	230	315	283 - 347	398

MACAWS (* Hybrid)

Blue and Gold	10031	1044	940 - 1148	2451
Green-Winged	3508	1184	1066 - 1302	1957
Scarlet	1582	1087	978 - 1196	1820
Military	1001	923	831 - 1015	1395
Harlequin*	757	1145	1030 - 1260	1797
Catalina*	706	1109	998 - 1220	1911
Hyacinth	502	1323	1191 - 1455	1797
Red-Fronted	368	501	450 - 550	638
Camelot*	278	1032	929 - 1135	1829
Ruby*	262	1101	991 - 1211	1605
Canidae	168	830	747 - 913	1245
Miligold*	150	1053	948 - 1158	1560

MINI-MACAWS

Severe	1180	403	363 - 443	623
Hahn's	987	153	138 - 168	267
Yellow-Collared	386	245	220 - 270	337

Type of Bird	#Visits	MEAN WEIGHT	Range 20%	Highest Weight
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COCKATOOS

Umbrella	5166	557	500 - 613	1058
Moluccan	2354	831	748 - 914	1218
Goffin	2622	272	246 - 300	488
Rose-Breasted	884	345	310 - 380	645
Med Sulfur-Crested	830	487	438 - 536	803
Citron	628	417	375 - 459	731
Lesser Sulfur-Crested	515	341	307 - 375	575
Triton	270	647	582 - 712	1102
Bare-eyed	194	344	310 - 378	534

AMAZON PARROTS

Blue-Fronted	3439	429	386 - 472	867
Yellow-Naped	2338	550	495 - 605	923
Double Yellow- Head	2310	495	445 - 545	843
Orange-Winged	1110	406	365 - 447	800
Red-Lored	911	425	382 - 468	870
Lilac-Crowned	497	305	275 - 335	440
Red-Headed	482	347	312 - 382	620
Yellow-Crowned	465	451	406 - 496	808
Mealy	242	700	630 - 770	1085
White-Fronted	238	229	206 - 252	459
Panama	184	445	400 - 490	586

PIONUS PARROTS

Blue-Headed	391	238	214 - 262	336
White-Capped	351	209	188 - 230	273
Maximillion	155	238	214 - 262	328

Type of Bird	#Visits	MEAN WEIGHT	Range 20%	Highest Weight
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CONURES

Green-Cheek	3056	66	60 - 72	117
Sun	2882	107	96 - 118	138
Blue-Crowned	833	177	159 - 195	327
Nanday	670	138	124 - 152	215
Jenday	480	118	106 - 130	157
Cherry-Headed	299	174	157 - 191	276
Patagonian	194	228	205 - 251	354
Mitred	166	237	213 - 261	344
Gold-Capped	154	126	113 - 139	256
Golden	151	248	199 - 299	342

MISCELLANEOUS BIRDS

Cockatiel	5287	91	82 - 100	178
Eclectus	3896	421	379 - 463	922
Green Quaker	2730	113	102 - 124	177
Ringneck	1026	123	111 - 135	171
White-Bellied Caique	832	164	148 - 180	209
Budgie	830	36	32 - 40	88
Black-Headed Caique	728	159	143 - 175	234
Blue Quaker	484	98	88 - 108	139
Parrotlet	424	28	25 - 31	43
Alexandrine	284	215	193 - 237	325
Moustached	275	122	110 - 134	168
Lineolated	169	48	43 53	69

