

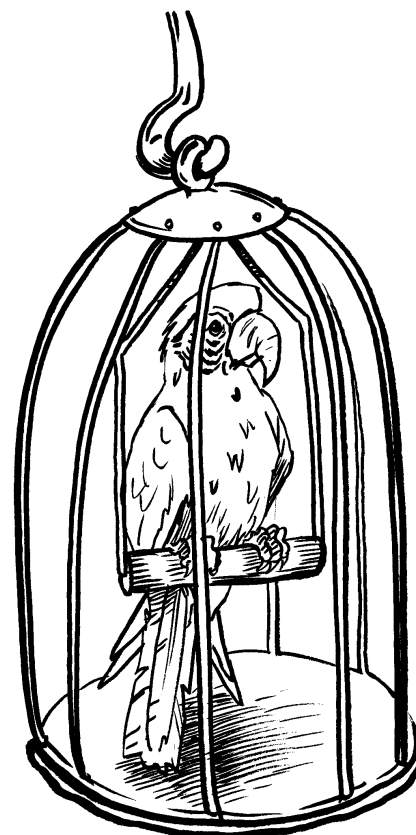
Purpose: This is a picture story to help children understand the welfare of a bird caught in the wild and sold as a pet.

Gabby's story

Large numbers of wild birds are still caught and sold around the world as pets. Gabby's story tells of an African parrot (for example an African grey parrot) which has been trapped in the forest by hunters. The hunters have sold Gabby to an animal trader in the local market who has sent her to England (with some other parrots) to be sold as a pet.

Gabby could live for over sixty years, spending most of her time in a small cage, a far cry from her natural habitat. The picture story in the next four pages is simplified. Illegally caught parrots would actually be packed into boxes and then hidden amongst hundreds of other boxes containing, for example, fruit or manufactured products. Customs officers are unable to check every box so the shipment containing the parrots should pass unnoticed through the airport. Once it has been delivered to its destination, an illegal pet dealer will collect the birds, stating that they were legally bred in this country, in which case they could be sold through a pet shop or the newspapers. Alternatively, the dealer may have private contacts and the birds could then be sold to a private collector.

Gabby's story is not unusual. Thousands of exotic animals (e.g. parrots, finches, tortoises, snakes and lizards) pass illegally through airports around the world. Many of them die during capture, transportation or through lack of care in the recipient's home. Thousands more suffer trauma and shock due to poor conditions and unskilled handling. Customs officers regularly find shipments of dead and dying animals in British airports, indicating that the trade still goes on.



Telling Gabby's story

Let the children tell the story of Gabby's life by describing what they think is happening in the pictures. Ask questions to prompt them as necessary. (Do they think Gabby was happy living in her African forest? How did she feel about being caught? Did the noise of the aircraft frighten her? How did she feel about being put in a cage?)

Explain that Gabby is now going to spend the next 50 years of her life in a cage in someone's house. Her owners may be very kind and let her out to fly around the room, but she can never go outside in case she flies away and gets hurt. Do the children think Gabby will be happy? How could Gabby's life in England be improved? (What about a large outside aviary to fly in?) Do they think someone should take Gabby back to her forest in Africa? (Would it be practical to do so?) How could we help other wild parrots who have not yet been caught?

The children could use the pictures to help them retell Gabby's story in writing.

Finish the activity by letting the children colour in the pictures. Alternatively, you could cut out the six pictures, then stick them onto a separate sheet of paper in the wrong order. Photocopy your new sheets and ask the children to cut out the pictures and paste them onto another sheet in the correct order.

Gabby's story



Gabby's story, continued



Gabby's story, continued

