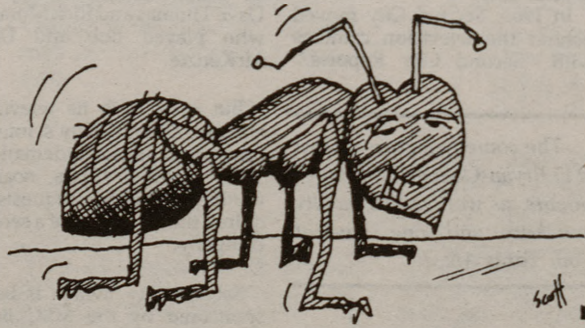


A glimpse of A&M's wild life



Bird has run of building

by Lisa Pedersen
Battalion reporter

If you've ever been on the third floor of Heldenfels, you may have been startled by a swoosh and a whirr of wings. Have no fear — it's not an escaped biology project.

It's only Toppo, a cockatiel given a year ago to the biology department by a student who needed a home for the bird.

Toppo lives in a mailbox converted for her use, but she spends most of her time flying in and out of labs and classrooms.

"She started out living in a small cage until she got used to being around people," says Dr. Judith Edmiston, a visiting assistant professor in biology, "and now she loves the attention."

Toppo visits most of the labs

on the third floor of Heldenfels.

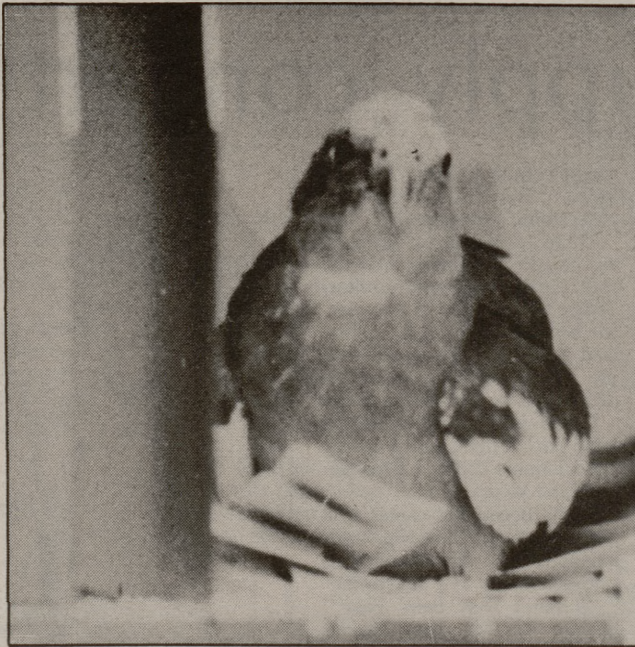
"We have all the animals go down to the labs because the freshman students react favorably to personable things that they can see," Edmiston says.

Toppo's personable behavior includes having some favorite foods and favorite people. Edmiston says Toppo loves chile con queso, ritz crackers, and peanut butter.

"Dr. Patterson (a biology professor) is definitely one of Toppo's favorites," she says. "She grooms his beard and flies to him when she hears his voice."

A sign on the third floor warns people "please do not grab the bird."

"We had to put up the signs because people kept thinking she had gotten loose and wanted to return her," she says. "And Toppo didn't like that."



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