

Your Elec

FOUR WEBCAMS/COURTESY BARRY YOUNG

We've all done it — been at our office desk wondering exactly what our birds are doing back home; considered cutting a vacation short because we miss our birds so much; or worried about the sitter not doing everything exactly right because we're sure no one can care for our birds as well as we do.

Thankfully, we now have solutions and options to satisfy our need to keep in touch with our birds. From a simple \$20 webcam to thousand-dollar security systems, more and more people are able to keep an eye on their birds when they're in another room or half a world away.

Most people use webcams to keep watch on their birds or bird sitters. "My husband and I use two webcams to watch our three *Poicephalus* when we are out of town," said Ashley Lynn. "We have a bird sitter who comes to play with them and feed them, but it is a great relief to be able to access the webcams whenever we want extra reassurance that they are OK."

"We are very glad we did it," said Jimmy and Andrea Hunt. "When we go on trips now, we will leave a webcam on just to have a general idea of how the fids are doing. Most people don't realize the cam is on and we can check on them. The cam is how we stopped using one person who was watching the birds. A little sneaky, but sneaky paid off."

Some bird owners like Barry Young just enjoy watching and showing off their birds to the world. "I can check on them, live, from my computer in another part of the house or even from my PDA or phone when I'm out. I also have it set up so that anyone in the world can watch them on the web. The cams are always running." His site can be viewed at www.imabird.com.

Breeders, on the other hand, use webcams and security systems for more than enjoyment. Katy McElroy of Hornbeam Aviaries was one of the first breeders to use cameras in her aviary in the mid-1990s.

McElroy's cameras taught her and other professionals much about the natural behaviors of cockatoo parents in the nest box, how they treat each other, nurture and tend to their young, and the developmental behaviors of the chicks.

"We can keep an eye on the eggs and babies, and watch new parents," she said. "Cockatoos are very sensitive to having their

