

The relationship that became normal

The eventual relationship between the parrot and the cat can look deceptively simple when viewed only from its endpoint: two animals sharing a household, eating together, occupying elevated spaces, and apparently responding to one another's signals.

It was nothing like that at the beginning.

The parrot had already been part of the household for many years before the cat arrived. She therefore entered the cat's world not as a newly introduced animal, but as an **already-established member of the environment**.

The cat, meanwhile, arrived at approximately seven months old and was semi-feral. For the first month she hid literally underneath the bed. For four weeks she remained there while fresh food and water were placed on the kitchen floor every day. There was no forced socialisation. The cat was allowed to establish safety and trust at her own pace.

She was subsequently confined to the house for a further period, then introduced to the outside world on a lead because she had not yet been neutered. She eventually escaped, became pregnant, returned, and was confined again. She subsequently had her kittens, which were re-homed individually at the appropriate time.

Thus the cat's relationship with the household was itself **developmental**. She was not simply placed into an established domestic environment and expected to conform to it. She gradually learned the environment, its boundaries, its routines, and the behaviour of the other beings within it.

And one of those beings was the parrot.

The cat remained a cat. She remained semi-feral and retained her predatory repertoire. She hunted and brought live prey home, including birds. Nothing about the eventual relationship required the elimination of that behaviour.

Likewise, the parrot remained a parrot.

The relationship therefore wasn't based on the cat being trained to regard the parrot as universally equivalent to a non-prey object. Instead, **context became meaningful**. The household acquired its own behavioural rules.

Most importantly, it took approximately **a year** before the two animals accepted eating together as an ordinary part of household life.

That year matters.

The eventual photographs of them sharing elevated feeding space are therefore not evidence of a simple imposed behavioural arrangement. They are evidence of the **endpoint of a prolonged process of habituation, trust, boundary formation and mutual prediction**.

Eventually:

Parrot eating here + cat eating here + human present = normal.

Once that configuration had been repeated sufficiently often, it ceased to require active negotiation. It became part of the household's ordinary reality.

Neither animal had to stop being itself.

The cat remained a hunter.

The parrot remained an alert, socially responsive bird.

The human remained the person who established and maintained the environmental conditions under which those two behavioural systems could coexist.

And over time, the animals developed a relationship within that environment.

That relationship eventually extended beyond mere tolerance. In at least one observed territorial incident, the **parrot detected an unfamiliar cat first and raised the alarm; the resident cat then responded to the parrot's alarm**. The information flow therefore ran from bird to cat, rather than simply from cat to bird. The parrot was not merely an animal being tolerated by a predator: she had become a source of environmental information relevant to the cat.

The resulting system is consequently much more accurately described as an **emergent inter-species social environment** than as a domesticated predator being prevented from attacking prey.

The history matters because the final state conceals the process that produced it.

A photograph can show:

cat + parrot + shared food + shared space.

It cannot, by itself, show the four weeks of the cat hiding under the bed, the gradual establishment of trust, the controlled expansion of territory, the pregnancy and subsequent confinement, the eventual return to ordinary freedom, or the approximately year-long process by which eating together became unremarkable.

Those events are what make the final behaviour intelligible.

The animals did not become something other than what they were.

They learned that what they were could coexist.

And perhaps that is the most important distinction of all.

The parrot's freedom was not the absence of a cage.

The cat's freedom was not simply being allowed outside.

The meaningful change was that both animals acquired **agency within a stable environment they understood**.

The cage could therefore become a place the parrot voluntarily entered rather than a place she was forced to remain.

The household could become territory rather than confinement.

And eventually, “we eat together” could become so ordinary that neither animal needed to think about it.

That is the relationship that the final photographs only hint at.