



If you've already got a barbeque planned for Memorial Day, don't hang up your broom handle just yet: Games are held on Stickball Boulevard every Sunday morning April through September. For more information check out www.stickball.com.

LITTLE GREEN INVADERS IN BROOKLYN

Brooklyn

Little green creatures have invaded Brooklyn. They gather in groups of fifty or sixty, building elaborate colonies, with landing strips and lookout posts. They have a sophisticated communications system that seems almost human. They laugh. They argue. They dispatch warnings. And sometimes, they appear to be conspiring.

But don't go opening an X-File or calling the paranormal experts. These invaders aren't here to take over.

They are monk parrots, also known as Quaker parrots. They have a green robe of feathers, which makes them monk-like, and a ruffled gray chest, for that dash of Quaker style. They are native to Argentina. The story varies as to how they found their way to Brooklyn, but the long-standing theory is that they were being shipped to JFK Airport around 1968 when the crate broke apart. A man named Vinny may or may not have been involved, but if you like your kneecaps, you'll leave it at that.

You may think of parrots as delicate, tropical birds that couldn't survive the winter in New York, but these tough guys came from the mountains of Argentina, so they're used to the cold and actually thrive here year-round.

You'll find them on the athletic field of Brooklyn College—they've built condo-style nests up in the stadium lights—or in nearby trees and fire escapes. They huddle in groups of two or three to stay warm in the winter. Another major colony has set up shop in the huge Gothic-style entrance gate to Green-Wood Cemetery. You might even find them mixing it up with the local pigeons at dinnertime.



New York City and Long Island



Photo by Steve Baldwin, BrooklynParrots.com



A rumble in Brooklyn.

Make no mistake, though, these Brooklyn birds take crap from no one. At the first sign of a predator, their charming banter turns to an “Eeeee! Ack! Ack! Ack!” sound that the *Washington Post* once described as like “metal scraping metal.” They’re super-smart and extremely strong, so they’ll go after that predator, a little winged army zigzagging through the sky. You don’t mess with a bird from Brooklyn.

“They’re gutsy little creatures,” says Steve Baldwin, who runs a Web site devoted to the parrots, called www.BrooklynParrots.com. To watch them go up against a predator, it’s “like a game of chicken between a motorcycle and a tractor trailer,” Baldwin says.

To learn more about the parrots, check out Steve’s Web site, which includes photos, videos, and even a song he wrote for them, “Ballad of the Brooklyn Parrots.” Or, join him on a “Wild Brooklyn Parrot Safari,” held on the first Saturday of each month.

