



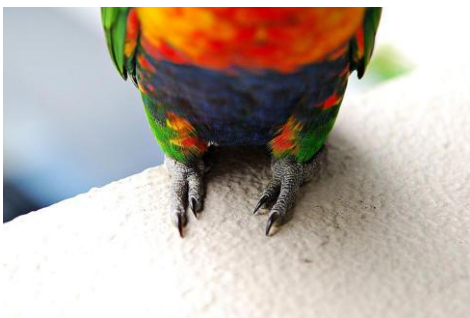
Grooming for Grooming

Bird grooming is a routine practice for any responsible bird owner. Grooming is typically broken into 3 specific areas on a bird: the beak, the nails, and the wings.

An evenly trimmed bird's beak is absolute for healthy pet keeping. If a bird's beak grows too long or unevenly, eating and preening turns from simple daily activity into a hazardous task. Bird's beaks normally wear down evenly, however if an owner suspects their pet's beak is too long or potentially harmful they should immediately take it to a veterinarian for examination. Regularly providing calcium blocks, cuttlebones (right), lava stone, and chewable perches is a simple and effective method of ensuring a bird maintains a healthy beak.



Monthly nail trims is of the highest recommendation. Overgrown nails will make perching difficult for a bird as well as increase the chance of catching a nail on carpet or sweaters. Additionally long and pointy nails can make owners hesitant to handle their bird. A good rule of thumb is that the nails are too long if the toe is elevated off the ground when the feet are placed on a flat surface. Even

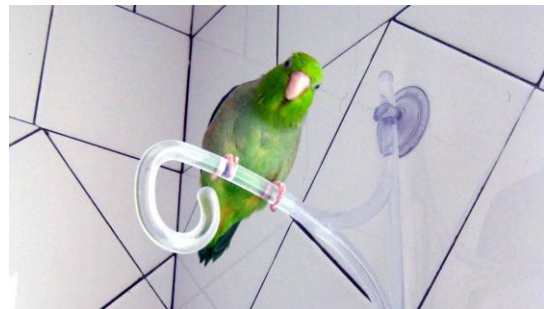


short nails may need to be blunted to remove sharp points. Various sized manicure perches will aid in the reduction of pointy nails. Avoid sandpaper perches which can cause food ailments such as blistering. Bird nail trimming can be done at home, choose the right nail

trimmers depending on the bird's size. Having a supply of styptic powder on hand will be helpful in case a nail is clipped too close and bleeds. With the bird restrained, trim the tip off the nail. More can always be removed, so start with small amounts with each clip. This entire process is a two person job, one holding the bird in the correct position and the other clipping. If that sounds too strenuous or confusing as a bird owner, Wilmette Pet Center can teach you exactly how to clip, or will provide this service for a small non-taxed fee, no appointment needed.

One topic not initially mentioned is one that literally covers your entire bird; Showers, baths and misting. Most pet birds require getting wet or taking baths to maintain normal preening behavior (Straightening and cleaning of a bird's own feathers). Some birds prefer to be misted while others like bathing. A

squirt bottle can be set on mist and aimed up and over the bird so the water falls onto the bird like a misty rain. For birds that like bathing, a dish with an inch of water in it can be placed in the bottom of the cage. Remove it after the birds have bathed. For birds that prefer showers, place a perch in the shower and supervise them. Keep constant track of the temperature of the water, so the bird does not become too cold or possibly



burned if the water temperature suddenly changes. Some birds like daily wet-downs while others do fine on a weekly basis, but it is important to note, during molting phase bathing should be frequent to ensure a healthy molt. Take your bird's lead in the matter. If the bird is not feeling well, skip the bath or misting until he is feeling better to avoid chilling or stressing him. It almost seems contrary to common sense to get a bird wet. So, why is bathing healthy for a bird? It has to do with the distribution of the birds natural preening oils. A dusty residual is taken from the birds preening gland and spread throughout the birds feathers during bath time which gives it that soft and silky look. This process keeps their feathers clean and free of dirt. However without routine showers

they would normally receive from the rain, the oils build up and eventually turn your bird into an unsightly oil slicked pet.

Finally, wing clipping. This topic can be the most controversial among avian enthusiasts, however here at WPC we believe clipping wings is necessary for all social birds that are allowed out of the cage. Birds such as canaries and other finches that stay in the cage should never have their wings clipped. Birds have been known to fly into windows, into pots of boiling water or other food, into ceiling fans, etc. We need to take the responsibility to protect them and this responsibility



includes clipping wings. Watch a veterinarian or bird groomer trim the wings the first time. A proper trim allows the bird to exercise its muscles and to coast to a landing if needed. It should prevent the bird from attaining additional altitude. Clipping wings is not without risk. If done incorrectly the bird will not have control of his flight and could injure himself. In addition, if a blood feather is accidentally cut, first aid procedures would need to be used to properly remove it and stop the bleeding. If you take your pet to WPC for regular grooming, inquire about wing trims which are included in the same low fee as nail trims.