

Foraging: A Necessary Habit

In the wild, birds spend their time primarily on 4 different activities. Social interaction, feather maintenance, sleeping, and foraging. Foraging is often times the most overlooked exercise. When keeping birds as pets it is of the utmost importance to fulfill all their primal impulses.

Wild birds spend the majority of their time foraging for food. What exactly does that entail? It means their foods are often wrapped, hidden, covered or trapped within a natural puzzle resulting in most of their waking hours working to get food. In a household cage with food readily provided, pet birds are left with an abundance of time which would otherwise been spent foraging. In a domesticated state birds also have less opportunity for social interaction, which means there is only really one activity left to spend time on - feather maintenance. Too much feather maintenance is one of the leading causes of feather picking, (left) an unsightly and oftentimes behavioral issue that can sometimes be avoided altogether by providing different varieties of foraging exercises.



How does a bird owner prevent this unfortunate practice? Socialization is of course important and will take away from the bitter boredom, but as an owner there is a need to do more. Piñatas, puzzle boxes, bird kabobs, shiny, frilly, colorful toys can recreate the natural practices of a wild bird. These often tacky toys are an essential to any bird keeper. It is important to note *destructible* toys are what we are after. A good bird toy



is short lived, torn up within a matter of days, and then replaced. A good bird owner will rotate shredding toys daily. If one toy is kept inside the cage it will become unused and lead to boredom. Avoid this by regularly replacing toys in the bird's cage. The fresh daily tearable toys will prevent complacency, leading to a more fulfilling bird life. A bored bird can lead to aggressive and sometimes even neurotic behaviors. Not only that, but if the toy is not changed frequently, it will be less likely to accept any kind of change to the cage in the future. The stimuli of tearing, ripping, chewing and pecking is one the healthiest activities to provide a bird

companion. This cannot be understated. Birds are more intelligent than most other pets and their foraging “tools” should be replaced, rotated, and increased in difficulty to meet the ever demanding intelligence and attention needs. Foraging challenges your bird by forcing them to actively work towards their food instead of having it just put down in the cage. Empty hours of the day will now be filled with feverish physical exercise utilizing beak and feet to discover the hidden troves of foods and treats dispersed throughout the cage.

The bird toys Wilmette Pet Center sells recreates the birds natural problem-solving skills which, along with your love and attention, is a quintessential element to any responsible bird owner's toolkit. Stop by and see what we have to help keep your bird healthy and entertained.

