

# Foraging: Why This Natural Behavior Is So Vital

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Searching for and finding food, or foraging, consumes most of a parrot's waking hours in the wild. With our companion birds, we place a bowl of food in the cage, thinking that if it is nutritionally complete, it is all our bird needs. We may not realize how awfully boring this is. It eliminates our bird's personal role in "finding" her food, a role so crucial that eliminating it may be one of the reasons so many birds resort to destructive behaviors – they're simply bored and unchallenged.

Birds have a natural instinct for using their wits to find food, and a testament to this is that they will often abandon a dish full of food in order to work out a single nut from a [foraging toy](#) or puzzle. Foraging doesn't just fill their bellies, it occupies their minds. It gives them the kind of mental challenge they are not only intellectually suited for, but absolutely require for good mental health.



It is easy to give your bird foraging opportunities. Keep the [pellets](#) or her regular diet available in her bowl, but present her treats in a challenging way – hide them. Use items you don't offer in her regular diet, such as [nuts](#), [dried fruit pieces](#), or chunks of [commercially available treats](#). They are especially prized by your bird when she has to use her wits to fish them out of toys or treat puzzlers, or dig them out of the cavities of cholla or wood beads. Foraging gives your bird a sense of satisfaction she cannot get from any other activity.

You'll be pleasantly surprised at the kinds of problem-solving abilities your bird displays as she tries to get at the treats, giving you a new appreciation of her "bird brain."