Why Your Bird Deserves Intellectual Stimulation

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

your bird is no birdbrain

In addition to the basic needs of your bird, including food, water, shelter, sleep, and social interaction, keeping your feathered friend intellectually stimulated is also a necessity. Especially since research continues to suggest that birds think, remember, and may even show emotion.

- **Birds are resourceful** – Similar to humans, both wild and caged birds use tools. Wild birds often lay walnuts in the roadway so passing cars will crack them open. Pet cockatoos have been seen clipping small sticks of wood and using them to scratch various body parts. Watch your bird to see how he uses his toys, ropes, or chew sticks in new, intelligent ways.
- **Birds use human language** – At one time, parrots were thought to only mimic speech. But many research birds have developed large vocabularies, can correctly identify different objects, recognize quantities, distinguish colors and shapes, and understand the difference between concepts such as big and small, same and different, and over and under. Amazingly, some birds can even string individual words together to create meaningful phrases.
- **Birds have exceptional memories** – In the wild, some species of birds can often retrieve over 90% of the thousands of nuts they collect and bury across hundreds of square miles. It is believed these birds have developed a specialized portion of their brain to accomplish this task.
- **Birds may display emotions** – According to scientists, birds have the right equipment for emotion. Like mammals and humans, birds also have a specialized portion of the brain, known as the limbic system, which is used to drive emotional behavior. Currently, research is

GERARD IS AN AFRICAN GREY PARROT we've known for many years. Though his owner, Kathy, has an abundance of stories that hint at Gerard's intelligence, our favorite is

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being performed to determine if birds are aware of their own emotions and how this awareness may impact a bird's behavior. Of course, bird owners have long felt they can tell whether their birds are happy or sad, fearful or content.

- **Birds enjoy intelligent play** – Frolicking in a bird bath may, or may not, be simple instinct. But have you ever watched your bird drop objects into his water dish and then study the splash? Or has he turned somersaults, climbed a rope using only his beak, or emptied his treat dispenser, only to then meticulously refill it, treat by treat? Clearly, birds do many things just for the fun of it. With the right interactive toy, your bird will invest hours in play to satisfy his curiosity and possibly earn intellectual reward. Research continues to prove what most bird owners already know – birds are smart companions. Don't miss an opportunity to open new doors for your pet by keeping him intellectually stimulated and involved in your life.

one we see firsthand during every visit. Without fail, as we enter the room, Gerard flips upside down on his perch, eyes us quizzically and says, "Doctor." Though humorous, there may be more to Gerard's proclamations. In fact, African Grey Parrots are believed to have the intelligence and emotional make-up of a 3- to 4-year-old child. Many researchers are also finding that birds can solve problems by insight and learn by example, as well as distinguish colors, shapes, objects, and, in Gerard's case, people. However, how much conscious thought is taking place, versus instinctive behavior, is the subject of ongoing studies.

We Recommend

Teach Box and Bank Bird Toy lets your bird fit variously sized acrylic coins into specific slots.

Rings of Fortune engages and rewards your bird's problem-solving skills.

Treat Cage with Toys is a stainless steel puzzle cage filled with wooden shapes.

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