Think Outside the Cage: Practical Ways to Safely Exercise Your Bird

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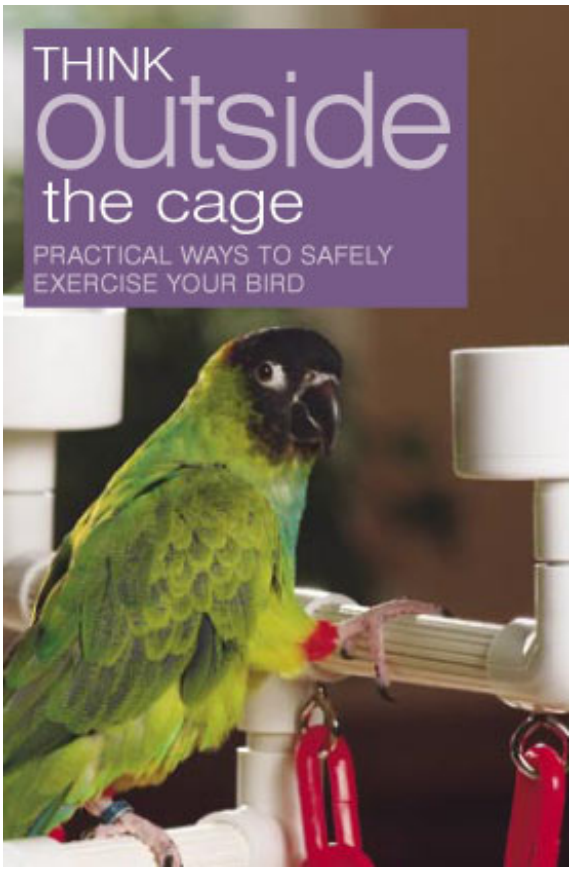

Most bird owners dream of creating a large activity aviary for their feathered friend. They aspire to dedicate an entire room to fashion a jungle of natural wood perches, exotic rope swings, and comfortable nests, all mingled amongst a bevy of bird toys. Within this forest of fun their bird could flit between branches, climb and chew, and even forage for scattered and hidden treats. As in the wild, play, exercise, and instinct would combine to prevent bird boredom and promote happiness and health.

But practicality, not to mention cost, often keeps this well-intended dream from becoming a reality. However, with a little creativity – inspired by your bird's curiosity and resourcefulness – you can easily create an inexpensive, safe bird playground without relinquishing your living room.

bring the inside out

Your bird's time outside the cage is just as important as the time he spends inside his home. However, where most cage interiors are accessorized with a variety of often-rotated swings, perches, ladders, and toys, most areas outside of the cage are void of such playthings. Too often, time outside of the cage is solely thought of as a bird's vacation from his life inside the cage. But birds carry their curiosity and playfulness with them wherever they go. And their time outside of the cage should be used to expand and enhance their life and health through encouraged exercise, play, and interaction.

Almost any swing, ladder, or toy can be brought outside the cage to foster play. Ladders can be hung on cage sides to promote climbing and the aerobic exercise they encourage. This is especially useful in larger cages where the bars are vertically orientated and more difficult to climb. Mirrors, activity toys, and perches can also be mounted on the exterior of your bird's cage. Not only will they entice exploration, but they also offer your bird a safe haven for rest during fun play. Just be sure to remove any exterior-mounted toy and its interior-located mounting hardware once playtime is over to prevent injury.

temporary transformations

Having a dedicated aviary for your bird doesn't have to be a dream. In fact, any bird-proofed room within your home is already a sanctuary for your bird. Now you just have to spice it up with fun. But doing so doesn't mean you need to lose the room's original function. Instead, try these simple temporary transformations of space to encourage exercise. Best of all, since none are permanent, you can continually change the accessories to keep it fresh and exciting for your bird.

- Hang a sisal rope perch, wooden activity center, hanging play toy, or climbing chain in the room near his cage or play area. To keep your bird safe, suspend all perches at chest level.
- Tie cotton or sisal rope snugly between two chairs to create a tightrope.

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To add to the fun, suspend a toy or two from the rope to combine chewing, preening, and climbing fun into one toy.

- Include a playstand to encourage play. Most playstands feature toy hooks from which you can suspend your bird's favorite toys. Also, stand a Treat Puzzler or scatter suitable foot toys on the playstand base to increase the fun.
- Hide a Bird Kong, any number of the build-your-own bird toy components, or a variety of treats throughout the room for your bird to find.

engaged interactions

No matter how you encourage activity and exercise, the most beneficial aspect of your bird's time outside the cage remains his opportunity to interact with you. For some birds this includes playing fetch with a paper ball. Other birds like to find cholla chunks stuffed full of tasty treats you've hidden around the room. Still others enjoy being trained with educational toys such as the Teach Box & Bank, Colored Cubes, or Rings Game. The important thing is to keep each interaction spirited, focused, and memorable. Doing so will ensure your bird remains active, engaged, and happy.

WE RECOMMEND

Cable Comfy Perch
helps relieve cage stress, boredom and related feather picking.

Educational Toys
encourage learning while exercising beaks and bodies.

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