

Sharing your life with companion parrots is a serious responsibility which takes a great deal of time and dedication. One of many challenges faced is to provide your bird with an enriched environment which includes but is not limited to being safe, stimulating and entertaining too. Bird toys are an important tool in helping meet these challenges.



## WOOD

Chewing is a natural instinct and essential to bird's mental and physical well-being. If you provide only "indestructible" toys (i.e., acrylics, bullet proof, stainless steel) they will often find other, more expensive ways to satisfy their chewing needs (i.e., molding, furniture). Consequently, wood is the perfect choice for your toy making projects!

It is important to know what woods are safe for your bird. Both soft and hardwoods are commonly used in toys.

### SAFE WOODS: (not a complete list)

Acacia, Alder, Almond, Apple, Arbutus, Ash, Aspen, Bamboo, Beech, Birch, Bottle Brush, Citrus, Cork Oak, Cottonwood, Crabapple, Dogwood, Elm, Eucalyptus, Fig Species, Fir, Fruitless Mulberry, Ginkgo, Grape Vines, Grape Palm, Guava, Hackberry, Hawthorn, Hazelnut, Hibiscus, Hickory, Horse Apple (Bois d'arc), Ironwood, Larch, Lilac, Liquidamber, Madrona, Magnolia, Manzanita, Maple, Mediterranean Laurel, Mesquite (remove thorns), Mimosa, Mulberry, Norfolk Island Pine, Nut (except Chestnut & Oak), Palm, Papaya, Pear, Pecan, Pine, Poplar, Ribbonwood, Rose, Sassafras, Spruce, Sweet Gum, Sycamore, Thurlow, Tree fern, Umbrella tree, Vine Maple, Walnut (NOT Black Walnut), Willow (Goat, Pussy & Weeping).



### UNSAFE WOODS: (not a complete list)

Cedar, Hemlock, Plywood, Redwood, Sumac and NEVER use pressure treated wood (it is treated with arsenic)!

The internet is a fabulous resource for researching safe woods, plants or just about anything. If you have a question, you should be able to find specifics on the web. To the best of my knowledge, there is no ONE resource to give you a listing of what is or is not safe for birds.

### FORAGING & NATURAL MATERIALS

When using natural branches or pine cones make sure they have not been exposed to insecticides. Avoid collecting branches from areas near highways or where there is a greater likelihood of the plant life absorbing toxic emissions from cars. You can clean branches with a non-toxic disinfectant (4 to 1 diluted bleach solution), rinse and dry thoroughly (smaller items can be placed in warm oven 250° for 30-60 minutes).



## COLOR

Birds are able to distinguish color so we believe that color adds visual interest and hopefully will encourage their interest. Busy Beaks, like many par-

rot toy manufacturers, uses food coloring to dye their toys. Never use fruit juices, Kool Aid™ or Jello™ since fruit sugars can provide a perfect medium for bacterial growth. We don't add flavoring to wood ... why encourage "eating" something that's not meant to be edible? Also, do not buy toys that have been stained or varnished to add color. If you are interested in a toy with painted parts (i.e., ABC blocks) make sure that only non-toxic, child safe paints were used.

## LEATHER

Leather is a great material for birds to safely play with and chew on. Most birds especially like to spend hours untying knots made in leather strips.

Only vegetable tanned leather should be used on bird toys. DO NOT buy toys with dyed leather or leather tanned with chemicals toxic to birds (i.e., chromium, formaldehyde). This also means ... do NOT recycle belts, handbags, wallets, shoes, etc. to your birds toy box.

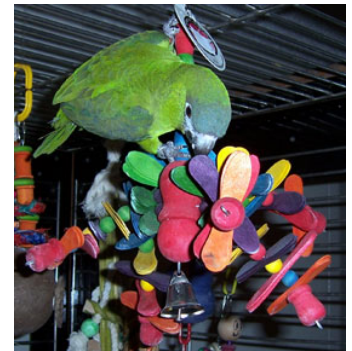


## ROPE

Several kinds of rope are used in bird toys. Only 100% natural fiber ropes such as abaca, cotton, hemp (jute), or sisal should be used in bird toys. Nylon blend ropes can result in serious injury and cuts due to the strength of the strands if the birds get caught in it. (Ropes can be safe as long as they are maintained properly and the bird's beak and nails are kept trimmed.)

## CHAIN

Chain should have welded not open links. Un-welded chain provides sharp surfaces and narrow openings which have been known to cut toes. Make sure the links are a safe size for your bird, if toes get caught in the links the result can be broken toes or legs. Check for stainless steel or nickel plated materials (a quick tip, stainless steel is NON magnetic so you can quickly distinguish stainless from other metals using a common magnet).



## FASTENERS

NEVER use key rings, notebook rings, split rings, spring loaded links, shower hooks, or lanyard clips to connect toys to a play stand or cage. Use appropriately sized quick links (various sizes and shapes are readily available) for your bird.

## ACRYLICS & PLASTICS

Acrylics are used in many toys today and if sized properly to the bird are virtually indestructible. There has been a shift back to wooden toys because although acrylics are durable and attractive, they are also not as fun for the bird who likes to chew. We recommend that a few of your bird's toys be acrylic or a blend of acrylic and wood (refillable is even better), they will be long lasting, and the bright colors used are stimulating to your bird.

## **BELLS**

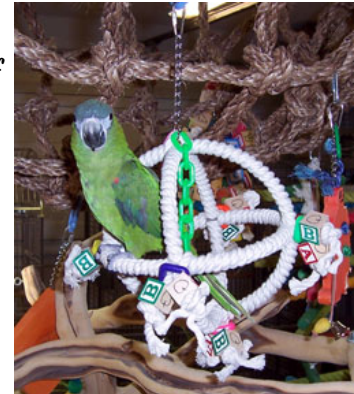
If your bird loves bells but is mechanically inclined, remove the clapper since the potential exists for swallowing/choking. Do not buy toys with jingle bells (toes can become caught and cut in the wide to narrow openings); we recommend tube, cow or liberty bell designs. The size of the bell should be able to withstand the power of the beak.

## **GLUE**

We prefer NOT to use glue, hot glue, adhesives, permanent glue or wax on our toys. If you feel the need to use glue, use only the water solution, white non-toxic glue that is safe for children. There are other safe options but always read labels for content.

## **RINGS & SWINGS**

When choosing toys with rings or large plastic chain links, make sure your bird can get his entire body through the opening.



## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Just because the label says the product is safe doesn't mean that it's OK for YOUR bird. Any toy has the potential to be unsafe if improperly sized to the bird. As with kids, no toy is 100% safe - one of our cockatoos can turn a wooden block into a weapon! And some toys should be placed OUTSIDE the cage where you can supervise (like toys with batteries).



Provide a wide variety and rotate them in and out of the cage or play area. One of my favorite sayings is "Make the most of your real estate" without over crowding them. Add components to a perch (you can buy perches with toys attached too). Variety will help alleviate boredom and keep your bird more alert and curious. Just because a toy is designed to be put inside the cage, doesn't mean you can't attach it to the outside of the cage to expand their real estate!



Foot toys are a great way to introduce baby birds to toys! We are big believers in foot toys. They are some of the safest toys available and are perfect for birds (young and old) to hone their coordination skills (see Busy Beaks article on foot toys).

This is simply a guide. Every bird has their own personality even in the same species and household! So this list is by no means comprehensive. When in doubt ... err on the side of safety and remember, you don't have to be an expert on all birds ... just your own bird!

**Remember, YOU are responsible to check your parrot's environment DAILY to insure ropes are trimmed, links are tightened and items are discarded BEFORE they become a hazard for your parrot!**

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**Your One-Stop Parrot Toy Shop!**

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Busy Beaks' bird toys are veterinarian approved and loved by parrots of every size from literally all over the world. We're proud to offer Art by Ludlo, Bell Plastics (MAK) acrylic bird toys, Birds of Play, Bizzy Birdy Playthings, Books & DVDs (by Barbara Heidenreich, Good Bird), Rosemary Low and Liz Wilson to name just a few), Brainy Bird Toys, Busy Beaks Toys, Cage 'n Queen, Caitec, Feathered Phonics, Fetch-It Pets (Polly Wanna Piñatas), Fun Max Bird Toys (Zoo Max), JUST Fruit and Veggies, Life's Great Products (Poop Off), Lucky Bird Toys (bullet proof), Molly's Bird Toys, Petscape Bagels & Bogglers, Paradise Bird Toys, Planet Pleasures™, Super Bird Creations and Wesco Bird Kabobs.

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