

Teaching Bathing Skills

Many companion parrot species originate from tropical environments with high humidity in which they bathe often. Even parrots from arid environments enjoy and benefit from bathing. Bathing stimulates preening and is essential for normal feather health. In fact, inadequate bathing and low humidity have often been linked to feather picking.

Bird Bathing Methods

The method selected will vary with the species and the individual:

- Spray bottles are an easy way to provide showers or mist
- Some parrots like to bathe in their water bowls.
- Many small birds will bathe in a shallow dish.
- Species like lorries & caiques enjoy to be truly drenched and may take their showers at a sink.
- Most parrots enjoy showering with their owner, and shower perches and stands are commercially available. Securely attach the perch to prevent falling. (Pet birds may also be placed on a T-stand in the bathroom during showering to expose them to much needed humidity).
- Some birds enjoy being placed outdoors within their cage to experience natural rainfall when the weather allows. (Note: Maintain close supervision while your bird is outdoors).
- Finally, some birds enjoy “leaf bathing”. Place large, soaking wet, leafy greens in a shallow bowl or on the top of the cage.

Tips for Encouraging your Parrot to Bathe or Shower

DO

...introduce spraying “indirectly” by gently misting to the side of or above your bird.

...introduce spraying with water in a neutral area, away from the cage and cage territory.

...make sure your bird can easily climb out of its bath.

---bathe or shower your bird frequently (daily is ideal, strive for at least 3 or 4 times weekly)

...apply only clean, fresh water to feathers.

DON'T

...punish a parrot by spraying him with water.

Afterwards

- Allow your bird to dry naturally whenever possible.
- Gentle towel drying or carefully blow drying may also be performed. When towel drying, slowly approach from the front and pat the bird dry. Blow drying may excessively dry delicate bird skin. Never hold the dryer close to your pet, and continually monitor air temperature on your wrist or arm.

References

Blanchard S. Teaching bathing skills. Companion Parrot Handbook. PBIC, Inc.; Alameda, CA., 1999. Pp. 108-110.

Lightfoot T, Nacewicz CL. Psittacine behavior. In: Bays TB, Lightfoot T, Mayer J (eds). Exotic Pet Behavior. Saunders; St. Louis, Missouri, 2006. Pp.65-66.