



[info@aeacarizona.com](mailto:info@aeacarizona.com)

Address:  
1911 South Lindsay Road  
Mesa, AZ 85204

Phone: (480)706-8478  
Fax: (480)393-3915  
After Hours Emergency Paging  
System  
*(pages answered every night until  
10 pm!)*

## AVIAN NUTRITION AND FORAGING

For most birds, pellets should make up the bulk or "main course" of the diet. These pelleted diets can be supplemented with healthy table foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, rice, and beans. Foods to avoid include: chocolate, sugary, salty or greasy foods, alcoholic and caffeinated beverages, avocados, and onions. A small portion of the diet may include seeds and nuts, usually reserved for special treats and training aids.

If your bird is currently on a seed diet we advise changing them to a pelleted diet gradually. Offer pellets every day in your bird's main food dish. You may offer seeds every other day in a separate dish. Remember that the larger quantity you feed your bird, the less variety they will actually eat. For example, if you offer your cockatiel a handful of mixed seeds, several pieces of assorted fruits and some mixed vegetables, and your bird's favorite food is sunflower seeds, they will pick out all of the sunflower seeds from the seed mixture leaving little to no room left for the healthier options available. On the other hand, if you offer your cockatiel 1 sunflower seed, an almond piece, and a diced green bean, they are far more likely to ingest a wider variety, and a healthier meal. Remember, one tablespoon of seed per 100 grams of body weight is more than enough for your feathered friend.

Enrichment involves providing an environment that allows your bird to express its natural behaviors in a captive or caged condition. Natural behaviors generally include social interaction, foraging and feather care. Foraging often includes flying from place to place for the gathering of food. As more is learned about ways to provide foraging opportunities, changes will emerge in how companion birds are fed in captivity. Puerto Rican Amazon parrots spend approximately 4 to 6 hours per day foraging and routinely travel several miles between sites. In contrast, companion birds in human homes spend approximately 30 to 72 minutes per day eating a pelleted diet without traveling or manipulating food items and not attempting to balance their own diets. These highly social and intelligent birds need a job to do each day because in the wild they are foraging.

Linking foraging foods with objects enhances the birds' captive behaviors and brain stimulation. To satisfy their natural foraging behavioral repertoire, birds in home environments need to learn to forage in their cages to acquire food. Studies indicate that linking a food item with an object or toy that allows the expression of their natural behaviors results in more successful use of that toy. In contrast, the frequency of use of toys not linked to a food item often diminishes over time as the bird loses interest. Therefore, it is important to provide daily enrichment opportunities that involve chewing and manipulating a food item. One technique to use at home is to wrap a food item that your bird likes to eat in a small kitchen cup. Show the bird the cup and the food item in a dramatic manner and then wrap it in front of it. Then hand it to the bird.

What to expect from a cockatoo is different than what to expect from an Amazon. Cockatoos are adept at and enjoy unscrewing large wing nuts and taking things apart. They often like plastic ropes with plastic beads tied into them to take apart. They are the engineers of the psittacine world. Amazons and macaws just chew their way through things instead. African greys like color and sound. Conures like to chew, particularly on paper and are interested in textures. The type of foraging toy and its size therefore need to suit the species. This process helps strengthen the human-companion bird bond and helps to maintain a good relationship.

For a variety of do-it-yourself foraging ideas for all birds visit <http://foragingforparrots.com>