What is creative foraging?

Creative foraging is providing the opportunity to search for and acquire food. A pet parrot’s cage is its environment and its territory. When something new is introduced into this environment, a bird, being naturally inquisitive, is inclined to explore the newly introduced item and discover that it contains food. The hunt is on, and the bird will begin learning to forage.

What is a Creative Foraging System?

A fully integrated group of feeding devices, which, when used together, make food foraging a feeding protocol. The system is designed to replace the practice of making food easily accessible. Conventional feeding practices of feeding a parrot from open dishes only encourage laziness, whereas forage feeding requires that the bird exerts considerable effort to procure food.
What are the Individual Components of the Creative Foraging System? The system is made up of two different types of devices. All foraging components are easy to use, economical, and work well together.

1) Destructible chipboard foraging boxes with honeycomb inserts:

FORAGING BOX: The boxes and honeycomb inserts of the Foraging Box are made from USDA-approved chipboard, an eco-friendly, biodegradable material. All boxes are free of glue and/or any toxins that might be harmful to your pet bird. The box is heavy enough to maintain its configuration, but it must be torn apart in order to gain access to the contents. The bird chews or tears into the box to find food. After discovering the food source, it continues chewing or tearing through the honeycomb layers to continue accessing additional food. The box is housed in an impact-resistant, clear polycarbonate holding device. The box holders are available either in a vertical or in a horizontal configuration. A mounting bracket attaches the holding device to any cage with 3/8-inch to 1-1/4-inch bar spacing. Once the mounting bracket is installed, simply unsnap the box holder, and remove and replace the used box with a refill.

TREAT BOX: The hexagonal, hanging Treat Box is made of the same materials and it also incorporates a honeycomb insert. Small and large treat boxes are available in single units with a free package of fruit treat or as multi-packs, which you fill with your choice of foods. Many people find that the treat box is an easy way to introduce a pet bird to the concept of working for food. Do not be surprised if your bird’s first reaction is to destroy the box. Parrots learn to forage by observing the behavior of their parents and/or other members of their flock. To our pet birds, we serve these roles. Be patient. Tear a bit of the chipboard away so that your parrot can identify the box as a food source.
What does Creative Foraging Achieve?
The Creative Foraging System provides your parrot with the opportunity to feed naturally by foraging for food. It thus will become involved in behaviors and physical activities similar to birds observed in the wild. Having a pet bird obtain food entirely by foraging is a revolutionary concept that offers numerous benefits to both the bird and its human companion. Field trials indicate that parrots fed from traditional dishes spend between 15 to 27 minutes per day feeding, whereas, birds that have made a complete transition to foraging for their food must dedicate 4 to 6 hours per day to feeding activities. Creative Foraging System is the only pet bird feeding regimen on the market that provides environmental enrichment, continuous stimulation, and vigorous physical exercise.

Increase foraging opportunities by using multiple foraging devices installed in different locations. Position devices so that some are more difficult than others to access, and change locations frequently. The feeding devices may be filled with your choice of food products, such as extruded pellets, dried fruit, shelled nuts, sliced vegetables, seeds, and other treats. Starter Kits are available in two different sizes, and include a number of free refill boxes. The goal is to make the bird work for its food.
No. Lg. 663
No. Sm. 662

Large Starter Kit contains:
One large vertical polycarbonate box holder and 10 multi compartment foraging boxes. The box will hold approximately 1 cup of most extruded or pelleted diets.

Small Starter Kit contains:
One small vertical polycarbonate box holder and 10 multi compartment foraging boxes. The box will hold approximately ½ cup of most extruded or pelleted diets.
Refill Boxes
No. Lg. 661
No. Sm. 660
Boxes may be filled with your choice of food item, Pellets, Treats, Nuts or Fresh Cut Fruit & Veggies.
Foraging Treat Boxes
No. Sm. 730
No. Lg. 731
Hexagon chipboard foraging box is filled with your choice of food. The honeycomb insert prevents the food from falling out. The bird must work through each individual compartment to continue finding additional food items. Each package contains 5 boxes.
2) Interactive and refillable foraging devices: The second group of products, refillable foraging devices, currently includes seven independent, hanging or bolt-on polycarbonate foraging devices that provide a variety of food-acquisition challenges. Polycarbonate is a crystal clear, high-impact material that will not break if dropped and will withstand the demands of most parrot beaks. Several products include leather strips that the bird can grab with one foot, stabilizing the device so it can obtain the food items.

Each of these foraging devices provides varying levels of difficulty that require the parrot to exercise different physical and intellectual skills. The common design advantage of these devices is that the bird is able to see the food but must solve different mechanical challenges in order to procure the food. Most devices have food access openings; these openings have polished edges to prevent injury while the bird is removing food items.

When filling these foraging devices, it is important to select food items of appropriate size that will not readily drop through the openings.
Entry-Level Foraging Devices for Birds Learning to Forage.

No. 611

FORAGING SPHERE: This is an entry-level device for parrots that have limited or no foraging experience. A 6-inch stainless-steel skewer rod or kabob passes through a 3-inch clear, hanging sphere with open slots in the bottom half. The bell on the bottom of the sphere will attract the attention of a novice forager, which may be drawn to it as a toy.

To fill the sphere, hold it in one hand and turn the rod counterclockwise, remove the top half, fill it with the food of your choice, and twist the rod back into place. Extruded pellets, dehydrated or fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, shelled nuts, and millet spray all are excellent fill items. You also might pass the stainless-steel kabob through a piece of fresh fruit or vegetable prior to reassembling to make a tempting lure.
No. 719

THREE-DRAWER STACK: This device hangs in the cage and consists of three 2-inch, pull-out drawers located on three different sides. Parrots must open the drawer(s) to access the food or treats. Each drawer has a positive stop to prevent it from falling out or being easily removed by the bird. This device becomes most interesting when you add favorite treats, such as pine nuts or grapes, in different drawers and allow the bird to make choices based on being able to see the contents. Another idea is to hide a treat, such as a nut or a piece of dried fruit, in shredded paper and stuff it into the drawer.
No. 733 & 614 Refill
Hide & Seek
This devise is filled with shredable foot toys, the parrots will remove these as they see fit. Increase interest by adding a few treats such as nutriberrries, popcorn, dehydrated fruit or nuts.
Intermediate Foraging Devices

No. 613
FORAGING WHEEL: The wheel is a favorite of highly active parrots, especially Amazons, Caiques, Cockatoos, and Macaws, and very bright parrots, such as African Greys. In fact, this foraging device seems to be enthusiastically enjoyed by most parrots.

To turn the cover plate and expose the food items within each chamber, the bird must turn the knob. The setup process only takes a few minutes, but your parrot will be engaged for several hours. To release the wheel from the bracket to fill it, pull down the latch on the bottom of the bracket, raise the cover plate, and unhook it at the top. The wheel is then free. Unscrew the cover plate, fill the chambers, put the cover plate back on, hook the wheel on the top, and fold down. To secure the wheel to the bracket, press inward on the bottom latch, and it will snap closed. To encourage a bird to keep working the wheel, fill each chamber with a different food item.
No: 720
THREE-DOOR SLIDE: This is a hanging device with three sliding doors, all located on different sides. Each door has two openings so that the bird can partially access bits of food without opening the door. The doors have a positive stop to prevent them from falling out or being easily removed by the bird.

Successful foraging of food items requires patience, perseverance, and athleticism. The parrot must sit on a perch, hold the tube stationary, and slide the door open. As the parrot has a full view of the contents, the bird and can select various food items according to preference. Compartments can be filled with fresh fruit or veggies, dried fruit, various nuts, Lafeber’s Nutri-Berries, and other favorite treats.
No. 722

SPINNING CAROUSEL: This highly interactive device provides hours of entertainment for parrots and their human companions. The carousel bracket mounts to the side of the cage. The device is a 6-inch cross, which houses four 2-inch square boxes. The lid on each box opens differently, and the entire device spins freely on the bracket. The parrot spins the device around until the box containing its preference is appropriately positioned, then must hold it from spinning away and has to figure out how to open the lid. This device is best used with familiar treats such as Lafeber’s Avi-Cakes and Nutri-Berries, dried nuts, or seeds. Try hiding a colored chew block or vine ball in shredded paper as an alternative to food rewards.
Advanced Foraging Devices
No. 612
FORAGING CAPSULE: This feeding device is for clever, experienced foragers. Grey Parrots, Amazons, Cockatoos, and Macaws will quickly learn to pull down the leather strapping to release food into the lower chamber where it can be retrieved. The bird must stand on one leg and hold the device steady with its other foot, before it can nibble away at the exposed food item. For filling the device, there is an opening at the top of the cylinder. You may use any dry food, but extruded pellets are one of the best choices.
No. 721
TWO-DRAWER / TWO-DOOR STACK: This device is made up of four 2-inch square cubes that are stacked on top of each other. Two of these cubes have slide-out doors, and two have pull-out drawers, and each cube opens from a different side. You can easily reposition the cubes and/or the openings to continue stimulating your pet bird’s interest. The parrot must stand on one foot, hold the device steady with the other foot and open the door or drawer with its beak to collect the food items.

The Two-Drawer/Two-Door Stack device requires good balance and coordination. The bird must have enough experience and self-confidence to know that determination and hard work will result in a reward. Fill the compartments with a combination of favorite familiar food items mixed with something new. Due to the effort required, the bird should be rewarded with something it enjoys, and, because of that effort, it will be more receptive to something new.
Healthy Activity
It is important to occupy your pet bird’s time with healthy interaction within its environment. By allowing it to become a self-sufficient forager, your bird will learn to budget enough time to satisfy its appetite, which, in turn, will increase as it burns more calories to obtain food. Birds that spend time foraging have less time for abnormal, undesirable behavior, such as feather picking, excessive screeching, and so on.

Food foraging is universally recommended by avian veterinarians and behavioral scientists as it keeps a bird healthily occupied. We know that parrots are extremely intelligent, curious and very athletic. Do not become discouraged if it takes your bird some time to learn how to use these devices effectively. Remember that you are presenting intellectual and physical challenges that your bird was not exposed to while sitting next to a food dish. Your goal should be to make a complete transition from open dish feeding to foraging for food.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Be absolutely certain that your pet bird is eating its normal daily ration before you completely eliminate food bowls from its environment.

To learn more about foraging please visit www.creativeforagingsystems.com
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