

## Birdy Bling Toys

**BIRD TALK** readers and bird club member share more stories about their birds and shiny toys

*By Connie Cho*

Jean Gauthier, Washington

I have two male Congo African greys and two male Eclectus parrots. One of my Eclectus parrots, Donald, and my grey, Sylvain, have the same favorite toy – a toy from Grey Feather Toys called the Skadaddle. It is made with stainless-steel parts and consists of a colored wiffle ball, several plastic pacifiers and four chains with washers at the end. I find many Grey Feather Toys to be bling-oriented, but this is their tried and true favorite because it is mostly chain. The two birds interact with it completely differently. Sylvain, my partially handicapped grey does the famous Congo Tango with his, he hangs upside-down by one foot, grabs the wiffle ball at the top with the other foot and beats the pacifiers, washers and chains with beak jabs so they jangle while he screams at the top of his lungs.

Rae Ashby, Florida

I have an umbrella cockatoo named Snowflake. She likes to tap her toes on her mirror and watch herself sew. She likes to take leather laces and put it through the opening of different toys. She also sews by taking her beak and making a hole in the cotton stripes hanging in her cage pulling them through her small foot toys all while watching herself. I also have a cockatiel I rescued a month ago named Pretty Boy. He likes to use the bottom of his mirror to scratch the top of his head.

Lynne Heim, Connecticut

Treasurer, Connecticut Society, Inc.

My blue-fronted Amazon, Razzle, has a thing for the real bling bling. When he is standing on my left hand, he is mesmerized by my wedding ring. He doesn't really try to bite it, but touches it with his foot and follows the sparkles with his eyes.

Marianne Frattarola, Maryland

I have 3 birds: a white-faced cockatiel, a blue-headed Pionus and a Solomons Islands Eclectus. None of them like shiny toys. They seem unnatural and scary to them. All have bells in their cages, but they never ring them. Mirrors are ignored, and they run from or attack sparkly items. The one exception is Zeke, the Eclectus, who happens to have a penchant for diamonds. I don't consider these toys, but he always wants the ladies' rings and earrings if they contain decent sized diamonds. My man has taste!

Heather Rosen, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Cheeky T. is a 6-year-old green-cheeked conure that is not a toy-lover. For a time, however, he did fall madly in love with a stainless-steel cockatiel mirror that I had placed in his cage to keep him company.

Cheeky T. would scream at the mirror and bash it into the bars of his cage for hours on end in a Tony Soprano-like rage as if to remind the poor thin layer of metal who was in charge. He spent so much time giving it a piece of his mind that it eventually became so completely covered in scratches that he could no longer see his reflection.

I was forced to remove the mirror altogether. He pined for it for a couple of days, then turned his attention to everything stainless steel in the kitchen.

Cheeky T. had never been a big fan of the thousands of dollars' worth of gorgeous, colorful, expensive rope, plastic and wood toys I've bought him over the years, but found my kitchen a wonderful place to play.

Cheeky T. likes to pace in front of my huge stainless steel mixing bowl. He taps out a funky rhythm on the bowl with his busy beak and bobs his head in time with the "music." He spends his time shredding paper towels, taking frequent breaks to admire his reflection in the stainless-steel trim of the toaster oven. Shiny espresso spoons, ladles and other utensils also received by Cheeky T.'s kissing sounds and clucks of approval, Cheeky T. is the ultimate parrot Blingmaster, if ever there was one.

Karen Bastis, Florida

Treasurer, Florida West Coast Avian Society Inc (Bird Club)

I have several cockatiels, most of which were lost birds in need of a home. As with many 'tiels, some of them are in love with their own image. Monkey, a pied male 'tiel, will religiously wolf whistle, then make a clicking sound at the sight of himself in a mirror. I make the same noises back at him while he gazes at himself in the mirror. Now, even if he's nowhere near a mirror, he will go running to see himself if I do the wolf whistle and click at him. It's amazing how he can pretend that the source of the sound is the mirror and not me a few feet away.

Patricia Phillips, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada

My blue-crowned conure Blue's favorite toy is made from shiny dangling red acrylic pieces joined to cross bars with stainless-steel screw eyes and with a shiny stainless-steel bell at the bottom of the center post. Blue was found outdoors 6 years ago at which time we gave him that toy. That toy followed him to two different homes before he was returned to us 4 years ago. That toy has been his constant companion except for the occasional trip to the dishwasher.

Patricia A. Garofano, New Jersey

I have two 5-year-old grey cockatiels, Sidney and Max, that love anything sparkly and "blingy." Max loves to bite my gold watch when I'm having breakfast before work. He likes to pull out the little wind button that stops the time. Later in the day when I check my watch, it still says 7:30 a.m.! Maybe that's his way of saying, "Please don't go to work today. Stay home with me instead."

Bradley Baldwin, Illinois

President, QC Parrot Society

I have a peach-fronted conure named Bob. He loves to play with shiny toy bells. Whenever I am in the bird room he just has a blast ringing the bells and making sure that I know he is having fun with them. When my cockatiels are out playing, they love to play with my shiny watch and any shiny rings that I have on at the time. They constantly play with the shiny toys in their cages.

Linda Upham, Florida

I have an America yellow Pacific parrotlet named Luna who is in love with his image in his "hall of mirrors" toy. The mirror has 5 sides, giving him many angles to see himself. Luna's new mirror image has become his girlfriend. He chatters, tweets and preens his new found love endlessly. His eagerness to jump up on his front perch for some chat with me, has turned into an aggressive body fluffed and tail fanned charge to protect his sweetheart image. He chatters obsessively, scolding me to stay away from his "girlfriend." Luna will scurry back to his mirror, and give quick pecks and reprimands to make the girlfriend image stay put, and not venture toward me. Although he's not the biggest bird in the house, we won't intimidate his "big bird" ego. He's the "Knight in shining Armor" protecting his image.

Bonnie Krom, Maryland

Our quaker, Beepers, loves shiny toys and loves to look at himself. He has his own set of silverware. He likes his forks more than his spoons. He carries, drags and tosses them around the floors and his cage area. He also yells at them when the mood strikes him. We know his forks are more favored than the spoons because he plays with them the most. He also tries to weave them in his cage but he just doesn't understand why they don't bend to meet his needs. He has a stainless steel kitchen soap dish that he pushes and flips around from the living room to the kitchen. He gets very upset when any piece of his silverware set is missing.

Connie Metz, Pennsylvania

Eight years ago, I adopted an eight month old female cockatiel that I named Greta. She came with a very colorful toy made of pony beads in the shape of a person. The hands and feet have small bells that hang from them. To this day Greta still grabs the "little man" and shakes him so the bells ring. Four years later I got Greta a mate. A male cockatiel we call Mikey. Mikey pushes around on the playland, with his beak, a reflective metal food dish until he gets it into the corner where it will not move anymore while tapping on it. Along came a baby pearl cockatiel named Lily. As the musician in the family, Lily likes to play the wind-chimes. I have a small hummingbird wind-chime which Lily will pull on the threads that the shiny chimes hang from so they clank together and make noise.

Anne Rose Farr, Florida

Secretary, Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club

My Amazons absolutely love shiny bells and keys. My caiques love shiny bells and ring them for attention. They've learned I'll come running when they ring those bells!

Janna Place, California

Vice-president, Central California Cage Bird Club

Diamonds are a lovebird's best friend and to save my bling from baby beaks, I created a training necklace by stringing toys with chains, bells and sparkly beads into a loop to wear when I'm teaching them manners. Ollie, Chatterly, Beauty and Beastie jump on board for playtime without a clue they are in school. It didn't occur to us that canaries like the bling until we caught our white canary, Spike, singing to the 2-sided mirror in the cage of our budgies. We filled his cage with mirrors and bells and dangly chains, which he plays with between serenades.

Renee Quimby, Minnesota

Ruby, the 11-year-old Eclectus, gets out of her cage and always makes a bee-line for the large silver bell on top of a macaw cage. She preens the outside and sticks her head up inside. It covers her whole head! She looks like a clown at a party wearing a lampshade.

Wendy LaBanca, Love Tiels Aviary, Rhode Island

Many of my cockatiels love shiny toys such as bells and mirrors. With the mirrors, my boys especially love chatting to the 'other tiel' in the mirror. They think it's their buddy. Many of my tiels love bells with the noise they make. I have some bigger bells that some of my boys will wear as a hat on their head or put their head inside and whistle away. They seem to like the sound the bells make and the way their 'voice' sounds inside. Some of my tiels are leary of the shiny toys for a while until they realize it's not going to hurt them. Once they realize this, they have so much fun playing with anything shiny.