

How Birds Destroy Their Cages

From bendable bars to toys left in splinters, a bird's home is nothing more than a giant chew toy

By Jessica Pineda

Birds use their beaks to chew apart toys, furniture and sometimes, their homes.

When people think of destruction in the cage, most imagine the bright colorful wooden toy they placed in their parrot's cage only to find that all that remained 10 minutes later were splinters. From my days working in a bird specialty store, I remember the bird owners who, after being show a wooden toy, would exclaim, "My bird will eat that in two minutes!"

Part of owning a bird is learning to live with a bird's incessant need to chew. Yet, while a bird has to chomp, it won't always chew that pretty toy you bought it. Sometimes they go for its perches, it's ladders and other items you classify in the do-not-destroy-it department.

It's usually the unusual items that are chewed on that baffle the owners the most. One particular case was with Laura Doering, editor of BIRD TALK magazine and her nanday conure, Ollie. "I had gotten a tent for him, which had a hard black bottom. Afterward, I began to find black shavings in the bottom of his cage. It took me a while to figure out where they were coming from. He had been chewing away at the bottom of his tent."

Melissa Kauffman, BIRD TALK's group editor, said her cockatiels Natty Bird and Carlisle are picky about what gets destroyed. "Carlisle loves bells a little too much and ends up taking bells off his toys. Natty Bird loves to chew wooden ladders up and mirrors that have a wooden backing are no match for a cockatiel beak."

Sometimes our birds surprise us by the way they go about chewing up a chew toy. My parrotlet T.K., had a kabob toy hanging by a rope in his cage. One day I came home to find his kabob toy on the bottom of his cage, the rope frayed and showing evidence of being chewed by a beak. I only hoped he hadn't been sitting on the kabob when he was chewing on the rope!

If only birds lived to the motto, as Kauffman put it, "Don't chew where you live."

How has your bird destroyed its cage? Submit your stories to share with other bird owners.