



# Angel Wings

*A monthly journal for human angels who make a positive difference in companion birds' lives.*

August 2014  
Volume 9, Issue VIII

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## Angel Toys For Angels

### August's Featured Toys



[Paper Shredders](#)

Small - Medium Birds



[Colorful Beads](#)

Small - Medium Birds



[Jeweled Chimes](#)

Small - Medium Birds

Check out all the



## Nine Years

Nine years; a lot can happen in nine years. Lives change for better or for worst, best friends made and loved ones lost. So many new changes in technology, smart phones, tablets, our world is changing and becoming more throw away and portable.

One thing that doesn't change is love. Love for our feathered friends. Birds in need will remain a constant in our lives, with the need for groups like PTA growing each and every year. This last year PTA has made over 2,157 toys and helped 9 rescues. This brings the grand total to 22,933 toys and 136 sanctuaries, rescues and individuals that have benefited from the generosity of our valued Angels.

With heartfelt thanks we acknowledge the toy makers, the supporters the people behind the scenes, who together, all help to make the life of a bird so much brighter and happier, increasing the quality of their lives. Thank you Angels, another year well done!



#### ANGEL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Watch for upcoming events, news, website updates, etc. here



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#### On Being An Angel...

'Sana from Oregon shares: I wouldn't trade being an Angel for anything. Sometimes life gets crazy, and it seems like I can't find one more minute in the day. But then, I stop and think of the simple joy of one more bird who's been through a lot getting a new toy, and one more rescue worker getting to hand out that toy, and I find I do have a few more minutes, the dishes can wait - Like I really needed an excuse for that, huh?

Bridget from Ohio says: Besides the obvious helping birds in need, I have met some great people who are dedicated and give up a lot of their time and money to be part of PTA.

Vicki from Arkansas says: There is so much emphasis put on puppy mills and cat mills by all the different charities that birds seem to be left out. The number of "bird mills" is grossly overlooked in society. Many emergency situations seen by Parrot Toy Angels are from rescue situations where birds are being mistreated. The wonderful rescues and sanctuaries that are out there are doing what they can to help, but there are so many. Funds for these groups are limited, they are always in need of toys, cages, food or money for the food and vet care. Groups like ours, PTA, do what we can but our funds are limited too. The Angels donate money, toys and time without a return. We have two annual auctions to raise money along with having

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toys for sale on our website to help alleviate some of the costs. Please, if you are considering a companion bird, check on adoption first before purchasing from a store. Also consider joining us on our venture of "Making a difference...one bird at a time".



### Grain and Veggie Bake

This recipe is mine but the concept came from Patricia Sund. She says "So easy, you'll wonder why you even asked." You can find Patricia at [Parrot Nation](#)

1 cup garbanzo beans soaked overnight, skimmed, cooked (boiled for at least 10 minutes and simmered for 20 minutes)  
1/2 cup quinoa  
1/2 cup muesli  
1/4 cup hulled millet  
1/4 cup kamut  
1/4 cup bulgur wheat, quick cooking  
1 tbsp. chia seeds  
1 tbsp. flax seeds  
1 cup chopped mixed greens, I used turnip and collards  
1/2 bag cranberries, mine were frozen  
1/2 cup frozen corn  
1/2 cup green peas  
1 large carrot, shredded  
1 cup whole wheat ditali pasta

Lightly spray a 13 x 9 pan. Put all of the above in and cover with water. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour covered. 30 minutes uncovered. That's it, so easy. Don't overfill your pan because this expands as it cooks.

### Beak-A-Boo News - Issue VIII

Yup, I'm back! Boo here, and boy is it warm here! Mom's keeping me cool, letting me have a shower when I want and misting me often too. I also have a fan that blows over part of my cage so I can feel the breeze on my feathers, I love, love, LOVE that!

I got to go watch a 'fireworks' show last month. I knew sumthin was up when mom made me go to bed early, then got me up again when it was dark, and made me get into my harness. Then we got in the car and drove a long way, and I fell asleep in mom's lap. Finally we got there, and it was like.. no where..just a dark place with lots of cars. I was confused, but mom got out chairs and we sat outside in the cool air and folks kept coming over to talk to me, I liked that part.

After a while, everyone sat down and got quiet, and I was bored, so I did a few super chicken yells, then crawled under my blanky and tried to go back to sleep. Then I heard some noises, and came out to see. There were these bee-you-tee-ful lights in the sky. They made noises but it was far away and not scary. I watched and watched and talked and yelled and everyone else did too. They musta liked the lights as much as me. It didn't last too long, and soon we got back in the car and went home. I slept in mom's lap under my blanky the whole way, and I was nice and rested when we got home, but mom made me go to bed anyway. I was really hoping we could stay up, so when mom went back to bed, I did super chicken yells for a while. Didn't work!

Gotta run, but here's your Beak-A-Boo tip of the month: When it's really hot, take EXTRA baths in your water dish. Yup, it's small, and not really very good for getting wet, but it'll make mom change your water even MORE often if you leave a feather in it and yell and look pitiful. Have a great month, feathered fans!





<>As always, my girls say "I like it, I like it, and it's good!"



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Birds and Fumes  
By Constance Lee Menefee

Have you ever wondered why birds are so susceptible to fumes?

It's because of the way they are built to breathe. A large portion of a bird's body cavity is taken up with air sacs. As a result, birds are exposed to more contaminants with each breath than we are. Bird lungs have an opening on each end through which air flows into interconnected air sacs in the neck, chest, and abdomen. Most birds have four paired air sacs, plus a single unpaired sac for a total of nine. Some of the air sacs also enter into bones. Birds require two complete inspirations and two complete expirations to circulate air through their respiratory tracts. Humans, by comparison, require one inhalation and one exhalation. (You can think of human lungs like balloons: air comes in an opening on one end, expanding the lungs, all the gases are exchanged, and then the air comes back out the same opening to be exhaled.)

Despite their more intricate respiratory system, parrots breathe more rapidly than we do: a large parrot at rest requires 25 to 40 breaths per minute, compared with 12 to 16 breaths per minute for us. A canary requires 60 to 100 breaths per minute!

That's why it's so important to provide our birds with the best air possible, taking reasonable precautions to avoid exposing them to fumes, toxins, perfumes, aerosol sprays, stale air, and organisms that are present in our air and dust, outside and inside our homes.



Play Stands -- Fun or Boring?  
By Kim Perez

Many people love to have play stands for their birds as they serve several purposes: They allow the birds out-of-cage time, some are portable and allow a bird to be taken to

different rooms of the house, they provide enriching activities and can be a social place for birds to get to know one another.

But is there truly a difference among all of the play stands out there? YES!

T-Stand or Portable Perch. These can be just a plain stand or one that includes food and water dishes. PROS: Portability, bird has access to food and water; CONS: Boring, nothing to actually do, bird might jump down and wander around the house.



Extravagant PVC type play stands. These usually have multiple 'branches' and places for birds to stand. The PVC is textured or covered with vet wrap. They come in different colors now, as opposed to the boring white they all used to be. PROS: Room for multiple birds, places to hang toys, food and water access; CONS: Birds will almost always sit on highest perch, so toys will only get pooped on and not played with, confined area with little to do, cost (they are pricey).



Wood Play Stands. The wood play stands can have the same features as the PVC, but there is a stand out there designed specifically to eliminate all of the cons from your play stand experience. PROS: Toys in usable area and can be switched out when one is destroyed, bird can't sit above the toys and be a bored look-out, access to food/water, larger stands have room for multiple birds and multiple play areas, price; CONS: None.





Above photos courtesy of FunTime Birdy

Homemade Play Stands. Here's where the bird owner can let their creative juices flow. There are literally thousands of examples online for what you can incorporate into your own play stand. You can build them out of PVC, wood, natural branches or a combination. Add climbing nets, their favorite toys, and even foraging areas for the most fun. PROS: Cost, custom features; CONS: Limitations of your own ability and creativity!



Photos and creativity by Rinus En Mary



Above photos and creativity by Celine Celestine (left) and Christina Ross (right)



Above photos and creativity by Michelle Durushia-Samuelson

To see larger pictures of the play stands shown above, [Click Here](#)



A Toy Chest? For ME?  
By Ilona Peterson

Rikki Sez

You, being the loving, responsible parront, have hung play-toys and foraging toys everywhere. Great job! Me too! And as much as mine loved all the toys hanging everywhere, there was one place that was truly special: the toy chest.

In reality, as you can see by the photo, this was not really a toy chest, it was my toy parts chest. They discovered it one afternoon when I forgot to close the lid. And here they came, from all parts of the room. Little keet, Dinky, flew there first...next my CAG, Gaby, flying circles in the living spotted the chest... and last, my tiel, Chibi. Gaby had the most fun, being the biggest and able to pull things out and toss them out of the chest.



Dinky, Chibi & Gaby enjoying their toy chest

However, this was not a place to be unsupervised, yet. That evening I removed all the dangerous things and put in the PTA footers and toy parts. Then I went through the kitchen grabbing things like plastic measuring spoons, wooden spoons, and treats that I then wrapped. Truly, I am not sure which one of us had the most fun. I couldn't wait for the next day. It was a joy to watch. I was greatly rewarded by the contents being tossed everywhere, and three very busy little birds happily playing.

There were days when I put the chest on the dining room table and just let them have at it. The lid was secured in the open position during that time. It provided hours in entertainment "of their choice" throughout the day. As I learned with my children...they did not get this every day, this kept it really special.

Your toy chest does not have to be this big...just big enough for them to dig in, toss out, and choose their toy. The good

Rikki will try and answer frequently asked questions here.



Rikki, Ouch! My nail was bleeding last time I was trimmed at the vet's office. They put some stuff on it to stop the blood. What was that they used?  
Signed, Curious

Dear Curious, He probably used a styptic powder. Styptic powder is an antiseptic clotting agent that is most often used in pet grooming. Much like a styptic pencil, which is made of alum, the powder stops bleeding by contracting the blood vessels. I prefer using corn starch, as it doesn't sting and doesn't cause any damage to the blood vessels, but it will stop the bleeding. Some folks use flour, or even baking soda to stop the bleeding when a nail is trimmed too short.



Rikki, My big sis and brother are nothing but white dust balls. Dust all over the furniture and sometimes even floating in the air. Mom says it's because they're Toos and I'm a conure. Why do they have dust?  
Signed, Tired of Dust

Dear Tired, Cockatoos have a special type of feather that makes this dust. As the bird preens, the dust flies into the air, covering everything and is breathed in by people (and other birds). However, you can reduce the powder by lightly spraying any newspapers at the cage bottom with water before moving them, wiping down the cage daily, and encouraging the cockatoo to bathe often. Having a high-quality HEPA filter, and cleaning the filter frequently will help a lot as well.



Rikki, I was playing and having fun and a feather broke. Yeah some red stuff came



thing is that PTA has these great buckets you can hang in their cages, or secure to the top or side, and fill with our wonderful footers and toy parts!! A toy chest can come in any size and shape. Try it !!!!



out. Mom said it was a blood feather. It sure hurt when she pulled the rest of it out. Why?

Signed, Sore Feathers

Dear Sore, A blood feather is one that is still growing, and therefore the shaft is still filled with blood. If it gets broken, you can keep bleeding and that's not good. It hurts to pull the feather out because it's up under your skin and wasn't really ready to come out like they do when you are molting. But a moment of pain is better than bleeding, that will make you sick if it doesn't stop.

Do you have a question for Rikki?  
Please send it to The Editor at  
[editor@parrottoyangels.org](mailto:editor@parrottoyangels.org)



## Aspergillosis - Part 2

By Constance Lee Menefee

If you missed Part 1 of Aspergillosis, you can read it in our [July issue of Angel Wings](#)

### Keeping aspergillosis at bay

If you're careful, you should be able to keep your birds safe from aspergillosis. First, if you purchase a bird, buy from a reputable breeder or from a clean, well-maintained bird store. If adopting from another home, have the bird thoroughly checked by a veterinarian, follow suggested quarantine procedures, and keep a close eye on the bird's behavior and any subtle changes. Try to find out as much of the bird's history as possible, including whether its current behavior deviates greatly from the 'species'. Doris Wilson thought her new Amazon, Pepper, was a "sweet bird" because he was so quiet when she brought him home. "It was for another reason entirely," she says now. "He was a pretty sick bird. We worked on him for at least one year before he was on the good side of illness."

Pepper was malnourished and had a bacterial illness, which Wilson treated. But by then he had "developed lots of small illnesses because he didn't get off to a healthy start," she says, including a bad fungal infection - aspergillosis - that did not appear until later. Pepper is one of the lucky ones - he is now healthy.

Maintain your parrot's good health. Provide a stimulating environment, but allow your bird 10 to 12 hours of sleep and minimize stress. Be sure he's getting adequate nutrition, especially vitamin A, which protects from a variety of respiratory problems. Carrots, yams, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes are the best food sources of vitamin A. Your veterinarian can discuss overall diet and determine if he needs other supplements.

Make sure you don't provide any place for aspergillus molds to grow. Avoid corn cob, shells or shredded materials for bedding; it retains too much moisture. Most veterinarians recommend unprinted or black and white newspaper as tray liners. Change paper daily to prevent growth on damp paper, droppings, and food. Change more often if the environment is warm or the paper is wet, and don't store disposed materials in the bird's room.

Avoid stirring up dust in your bird's room. Dust can contain spores and is a general respiratory irritant. A HEPA (high efficiency particulate arresting) air filtration unit will cut down on dust. HEPA filters are constructed to trap the tiniest particles, spores, and some organisms floating in the air. You might also consider investing in a vacuum cleaner that uses a HEPA filter, so you don't blow particles from other parts of the house back into the bird room.

Be careful how you maintain humidity. Dry air can be hard on a parrot's respiratory system and some parrot owners use a cool or warm vaporizer, but these can quickly grow bacteria and mold. Make sure you clean vaporizers according to the manufacturer's instructions. If you have the opposite problem - a damp basement or too much mold-friendly humidity in your home in general - ask your veterinarian about dehumidifiers.

Never expose your bird to fumes. Many disinfectants and air fresheners can sicken or kill birds. Cigarette smoke alone may not be fatal, but constant exposure can damage tissue and increase susceptibility to infections, including aspergillosis. Also, be careful with food. Never feed moldy fruits or vegetables and wash fresh foods well. Remove any raw foods after a few hours - sooner if you live in a warm climate. Don't leave damp seed and pellets in the cage. Avoid stirring up dust, which can contain irritants, including mold spores. Make sure any seed mixes you buy are dry and dust free. Check nuts for mold - peanuts in shells are a common source of aspergillus spores - and don't feed if you are in doubt. Froggie loved peanuts, so to be on the safe side I have chosen not to feed even human-food grade peanuts to my birds. I feel more comfortable using unshelled nuts like walnuts and almonds as a treat.

I have also removed all plants from my parrots' living space. It is too easy for a curious bird to get into mulch and soil, both potential sources of mold. Several times I found Froggie in my hanging spider plants, tossing pine chips on the floor. Could he have gotten spores from that? You can create an interesting and stimulating environment for your parrots with safe objects. If possible, weigh your birds regularly. I bought a postal gram scale that weighs within 2 grams. You can find one at online stores like Drs. Foster & Smith.

Some birds are spared

Aspergillosis is not always a death sentence. Sometimes medical intervention works; in rare cases it can go away by itself, according to Dr. James Harris, owner of Mayfair Veterinary Clinic in Sandy Bay, Tasmania, Australia, and author of ParrotChronicles.com's Ask Dr. Harris column. "On rare occasions, a small localized pocket of fungus is walled off by the body and the bird recovers," he said. "This is sometimes found in wild birds as a coincidental finding on a necropsy."

Two new human anti-fungal medications - Lamisil and Voriconazole - are showing promise in treating aspergillosis in wild birds at The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Robert Dalhausen, a veterinarian and avian researcher based in Milford, Ohio, has used Lamisil to cure many cases of aspergillosis in his practice. He reported some of his case histories at the Association of Avian Veterinarians Conference in 2002.

It's not necessary to become paranoid about aspergillosis. Some exposure to disease-causing organisms is inevitable. The good news is that healthy, unstressed birds, like healthy humans and other animals, are able to cope with low levels of the aspergillus mold without developing disease.

Still, it's a good idea to know your bird's habits and behavior. Take reasonable precautions to keep his environment safe and clean. If he shows any of the symptoms of aspergillosis, take him to the veterinarian pronto. If your bird should have a fungal

infection, and you or a family member is immune-suppressed from medication (like steroids), disease (like AIDS), or under severe stress, you should discuss this with both your veterinarian and your physician. If your living environment has contributed to aspergillus in your parrot, it might be a threat to you as well.



Parrot Toy Angels gives thanks to the author, Connie Menefee for allowing us to reprint this article.

Connie Menefee has worked as a researcher in the field, laboratory or library since 1974. She has won several awards for poetry and wrote a weekly small-business column for two years. She currently writes on a variety of topics and does medical and business research. She is owned by nine parrots.



### Angels Wanted!!

Have these stories got your toymaking talons twitching? Do you want to help make a difference in somebirdie's life? Come join our ranks! We have Angels from all different backgrounds and walks of life, and there's always room for another generous heart.

Click here for: [Angel Application](#)

Click to join Parrot Toy Angels Yahoo! Group:



Not a toy maker? Come join our Facebook Group:



### Help Us Help the Birds...

Our Angels generously donate their time making toys for our needy feathered friends. Quality toy-making supplies are expensive and shipping charges are outrageous. That's why we need your support to help keep us going. Every dollar amount, large or small, is gratefully accepted. Donations are tax deductible.

We also welcome donations of toymaking parts and supplies. A receipt will be issued for every donation. Contact us at [Parrot Toy Info](#) for further information on donating.



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While PTA at all times tries to ensure any information provided in this newsletter is accurate, all articles are submitted by volunteers, and we are not avian professionals and make no claim as to the suitability of featured products, food, or toys for your particular bird. PTA strongly recommends that you ensure that all toys are safe, that you make sure your bird is fed a well balanced diet, and that you always provide continuing medical care through your avian vet.

Do you have a question or comment? Perhaps you have an idea for our newsletter, or simply want to share a story on how an Angel has touched your life. Drop us a line at: [editor@parrottoyangels.org](mailto:editor@parrottoyangels.org)



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