



# Angel Wings

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

March 2012  
Volume 7, Issue III

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In this month's issue:  
Angel Announcements  
Brown Rice & Grains  
Recycling, Angel Style  
Behavior of Same Sex, Bonded Birds  
Brassica Vegetables  
Rikki Sez  
Featured Fid ~ Greater Vasa Parrot  
Don't Eat That!  
Paper Toy Parts  
Owning a Special Needs Parrot  
Help Us

This issue of Angel Wings is dedicated to Gaby Grey



Fly free, little one

## Angel Toys For Angels

### March's Featured Toys



[Cubes & Balls](#)  
Large to X-Large Birds



[Beep Beep](#)  
Small to Medium Birds



[Trumpets](#)  
Small Birds

Check out all the  
[Angel Toys for Angels](#)  
now!

**ANGEL ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
Watch for upcoming events, news, website  
updates, etc. here



ON THE SITE:

♥ [New Items](#) ♥

## ANNOUNCING

We're gearing up for our  
**2012 Spring Auction.**  
We appreciate any and all  
donations. Help us make this the  
best auction yet! All donations are  
tax deductible.

♥ ♥ ♥



♥ ♥ ♥



**Brown Rice and Grains**  
By Toni Fortin

3 cups brown rice  
1 cup hulled millet  
1 cup buckwheat groats  
1 cup wheat berries

**Recycling, Angel Style  
Straw Toy**  
By Wyspur Kallis



Supplies you will need:  
Plastic drinking straws  
Small zip ties  
Finger traps  
Scissors



Using the scissors, cut the bendable part of the  
straws off and discard.



Stuff straws into the finger traps, using enough  
to pack the finger trap tightly.



1 cup washed & chopped collard greens  
1 cup washed & chopped turnip greens  
2 cups soaked, cooked dried peas  
1 medium zucchini shredded  
1 large organic carrot shredded  
3 cups frozen corn niblets  
2 cups fresh broccoli  
2 cups sprouts

The first 4 ingredients go into the rice cooker. Treat your grains like rice and proceed with the directions your cooker came with. When rice and grains are finished, put all in a large bowl. Add your frozen corn niblets and broccoli. Mix and let cool. Then add zucchini, carrots, peas, greens and sprouts. Mix gently. Place in bags or containers and it's ready for the freezer. I rotate with mash every day just taking out enough for 2 days.



♥ ♥ ♥

Center a zip tie around the middle of the stuffed finger trap. Pull tightly.



Using the scissors, cut the zip tie as close to the toy as possible so as not to leave any sharp edges. Now you can offer this awesome toy to your feathered love one and watch the shredding begin.

♥ ♥ ♥



♥ ♥ ♥



♥ ♥ ♥

## Behavior of Same Sex, Bonded Birds

By Delta Holder

I am always very interested in watching bird behavior and learning what it is all about. I'd like to share an experience that I had with two of my parrots:

I had a maroon bellied conure named Chaz and a green cheek conure named Chico. Chico was 2 years old when I brought Chaz into our home. Chico was a wonderful, tame pet before Chaz arrived. Chico picked out Chaz from the flock of babies and the two were inseparable from that day. For a long time, I figured the incredible bond they shared was because Chaz was female, but both of them were DNA sexed and they both were males. This then became even more interesting to me as I watched Chaz mature and saw the relationship they developed. During their growth, though Chico was the oldest, he stepped back and let Chaz take on the leader role. I found that quite intriguing to see one take the leader role as a male mate would and the other take the follow role of the female mate. Chico would have food - he'd hold it in his foot and he would share it with Chaz while still holding it. When Chaz had food in his foot, he would not share with Chico. I found this rather selfish from a human standpoint, but they both seemed

happy to have it happen this way. Even during bedtime (they shared a cage), Chaz would not go into bed until Chico was in first. They cuddled up at night and never left each other's side.

These two were out of their cages all day and could fly and move about as they wished. During these times, I was able to observe more behaviors that I found interesting. Never once did you see one without the other. Chaz would always call for Chico if they separated and Chico would always fly to him. Chico would call to Chaz as well and he would come, but not as quickly.

I noticed as they grew closer and closer that my pet relationship with Chico diminished to nothing. Chico was an amazing talker and stopped talking when he bonded to Chaz and although he was passive in their relationship, he would attack me and bite me if I got close to Chaz. During the whole process Chaz was still friends with me and would punish Chico for hurting me.

As they matured and reached mating behavior, this is what I found so interesting with two birds of the same sex. Once their nesting instincts kicked in, they would find their spot (at the time was under my couch) and they used that as their "nesting" area. This is where it became strange to me. They would go through the motions of mating, even to the point of taking turns trying to impregnate each other. Then, as they went through the nesting motions, it was Chaz who stayed under the couch and Chico who protected it. I found this so interesting because outside of nesting behavior Chaz took on the male role and Chico the female role, but during nesting season, the roles were reversed. They went through 5 years of this behavior and though every time it amazed me, I let them be who they were... parrots.

Neither of them are now with me as Chico was overdosed by a vet and Chaz was killed by one of my larger parrots. They are both now flying free and high and bonding again over Rainbow Bridge. What is so amazing about these two is that they both died at the age of 5 years. Though far too young for my liking, I found it very ironic that they were both the same age considering how close their relationship was. I miss them both very much, but will never forget the intriguing lives they lived with me and how much I loved watching them interact.

This only proves that any bird, any sex, can bond and have relationships outside of the norm.



## Brassica Vegetables

By Lori M. Nelsen

Cruciferous vegetables are members of the plants in the mustard (Brassicaceae) family which include broccoli, rutabaga, cauliflower, kale, Brussels sprouts, bok choy, cabbage, mustard greens, collard greens, arugula and even wasabi!

These vegetables are known as cruciferous because they form from flowers that have four petals in the shape of a crucifix, or cross. This genus includes over 30 wild species and hybrids

Rikki Sez

[Rikki will try and answer frequently asked questions here.](#)

which include weeds and escapees from cultivation.

Brassicas are also known as cancer-fighting cruciferous vegetables. They provide high amounts of vitamin C, soluble fiber, 3,3'-diindolylmethane, sulforaphane and selenium with potent anticancer properties. They are rich in indole-3-carinol which boosts DNA repair and appears to block the growth of cancer cells. They are also a good source of carotenoids with broccoli topping the list of high levels. UC Berkeley has discovered that the Brassica vegetables are helpful to the immune response system boosting antiviral, antibacterial and anticancer activity. However, these Brassica vegetables contain goitrogens which suppress thyroid function which are inhibited by cooking. Other vegetables not in the brassica family that can have goitrogen activity include spinach, radishes and sweet potatoes. Even some fruits such as strawberries, pears and peaches may cause decreased thyroid function when eaten in large amounts.

The Brassicas are an important part of your parrot's diet. To prepare: wash well and either feed raw or steam slightly to reduce the goitrogens. Boiling reduces the level of anticancer compounds, but steaming or microwaving do not result in significant loss.

SOURCES:

[Wikipedia](#)  
[Health Mad](#)  
[South Texas Institute of Health](#)



*Bird Cages Galore  
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Why buy a Bird Cage from Bird Cages Galore??  
Because we do not "just sell" top quality cages



Rikki, I have two older brothers. Mom says they are sun conures. I might be bigger than they are, but I am the baby of the family. I hate it when Mom ignores me to play with them. She won't let the three of us perch together because one will bite me and I bite back. She gets mad if I scream and holler in my cage while she is playing with them. What should I do?  
Signed, Sad in OH

Dear Sad, I am sure your Mom loves all of you the same. It sounds like some sibling rivalry going on and it is best if your Mom does keep you apart. She probably tries to spend equal time with all of you. Maybe you can make the best of things by playing with your toys when she is playing with your brothers. Try to be nice and maybe Mom will even talk to you and give you attention at the same time.



Rikki, My mommy puts newspaper in the bottom of my cage every week. My cage gets messy and stinky. How can I get her to change it everyday? I'm ashamed that I have to live like this.  
Signed, Ashamed in my cage

Dear Ashamed, I couldn't live like that. I hear that many parrots poop outside their cage when their mommies don't change their papers. Tell your mommy you are breathing in all that bacteria which isn't good for you. The whole room stinks and not just your cage. It's just plain unsanitary. It takes all of five minutes to change the paper in your cage.

at reasonable prices, provide free shipping and a free toy with each cage; we offer first rate customer service and will answer your questions about most bird-related matters. Visit us on the web, browse our selection, join our discussion forum and sign up for our free Newsletter, [The Caged Bird Courier](#).

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



## Featured Fid ~ The Greater Vasa Parrot

By Wyspur Kallis



The Greater Vasa Parrot (Genus: *Coracopsis* Species: *Vasa*) is one of the most unusual parrots in the world. They are found in Madagascar and surrounding islands of the Indian Ocean. Their appearance is somewhat similar to the Congo African Grey, but with a longer tail, no red markings and an elongated neck. According to World Parrot Trust, they are rarely seen as cage birds while some other sources indicate a growing popularity. Avian Web reports that "Vasa owners describe their pets as fun, mischievous and very intelligent."

Greater Vasas are around 20 inches long with a wing length of 11.77 x 12.68 inches (299 - 322 mm), and the adult weighs in at around 500 grams. Coloration is generally grey and black with more grey on upperparts and streaks of black elsewhere. Outer webs of primary feathers can be blue and grey while the tail can show shades of brown.

In the wild these birds tend to flock together in large groups, especially when feeding or roosting and are officially treated as harmful by locals due to crop destruction. IUCN classifies this bird as "least concern," which indicates a fairly healthy population, but nevertheless threatened.



During the breeding season, females will change their colors from gray to light brown. During this time the female will molt the feathers on her head and the skin on her face will turn a orange/yellow color. Average clutch size is 3 to 4 eggs with an incubation time of 17 to 18 days with the chicks fledging in around 7 weeks and the babies fully fledged in 10 weeks. Baby Vasas have rather large upper mandibles and prominent round feeding pads located at the tip of the mandible instead of the base as they are vigorous feeders.

Vasa Parrots have a diet which includes pellets, seeds, various nuts, fruits and vegetables. The Vasa is one of the only parrots that has been observed taking a dirt bath, water bath, or occasionally a sand bath.

Ornithologists in Madagascar working on having the Greater Vasa Parrot reclassified, feel that the Vasa Parrot actually requires meat in their diet. They are, therefore, being thought of as the genetic link between parrots and raptors; for the Vasa Parrots - unlike other parrots -- hunt in the wild.

#### SOURCES:

[World Parrot Trust](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

[Birdchannel.com](#)



#### DON'T EAT THAT!

By Angel Savannah

A Meyer's Parrot was brought in to our vet clinic with food poisoning recently. The bird was vomiting and lethargic and the owner wondered if it was the chocolate she had fed it. Fortunately, we were able to treat and save the bird. When I handed the client a list of unsafe foods for birds, the client glanced at it and said she already had a very similar list from the breeder of her bird.

I asked the client why she had given her bird chocolate if it was listed as unsafe by her bird's breeder. She said that she loved chocolate and just wanted to share it with her bird. It dawned on me, that people may not realize just how unsafe some foods are for their birds.

Chocolate is toxic to many animals, including our feathered friends. The alkaloid substance [theobromine](#) is the toxin in chocolate. There are sources which spell out exactly how many ounces you can give your pet before they begin to show signs of poisoning.

***DON'T GIVE BIRDS CHOCOLATE!*** Why take a chance with the amount before you fatally poison your pet?

There are some other foods on the unsafe list and I will touch on them briefly:

Avocado - all of the parts can be toxic. There are both anecdotal reports and controlled studies of avocado toxicity in birds. Avocados contain a toxic fatty acid called

#### Paper Toy Parts

By Kim Perez

Birds just love to chew paper! Anyone with an important document within beak shot of a parrot knows that. My kids have handed in a lot of homework with beak holes in it and the teachers always get a kick out of them saying that their parrot ate their homework.

White paper made for household use in printers, copiers, etc. is perfectly safe for birds to chew and you can do many different things with it to make it even more appealing for birds. You can roll it or fold it into exciting shapes and then string it onto their toys.

You can also use colored paper - both copy paper and construction paper. Construction paper was originally called sugar paper as it was used to make bags to hold sugar. It is a little rougher in texture than other paper types as it has not had any refining done to it. The lack of extra processes makes this a very safe choice for kids and our birds.

A type of paper you should not use is tissue paper. When this meets up with water, a common occurrence in the world of birds, it turns to a slimy mush which could definitely cause problems in a bird's crop.

A paper product which makes a fun toy part for our birds is a coffee filter. The

persin that is associated with cellular necrosis and is toxic to most pets, including dogs, cats, rabbits and even horses. Because of the high toxicity it is best to avoid all together.

Fruit Pits - many of them are toxic to birds, including apricot, peach, cherry and even apple seeds.

Iceberg lettuce - Not toxic to birds, but there is little nutritional value in iceberg lettuce. This, coupled with its 'cleaning effect' in the digestive system, can clean a bird out, cause diarrhea and leave them vulnerable to bacterial infection. It is better to give them kale, collard, spinach, or leaf lettuce in moderation.

Caffeine - increases heart rate and can cause cardiac arrest.

Salt, sugar and fat - remember the rule - if it's not healthy for you, it certainly isn't healthy for your bird.

While most fruits and vegetables are safe for your birds, some of their plants' -parts are not. Try to acquire organic foods so as to avoid pesticides and other chemicals that may be used in the growing process.

For more curious readers, if you Google "foods toxic to birds," you will have more than 20 million findings to peruse. If you have any questions regarding your findings, please confer with your avian vet.



best ones to use are the unbleached filters.

My African Greys love the filter toys. They love to just rub the filters around in their beaks and run their tongues over every little wave. These toys can last anywhere from 1 - 4 weeks with each of my Greys. They will tongue them for a while, and then one day they will chew up the whole thing.

Some other paper parts we can use in toys include sno-cone cups and white paper condiment cups. These are intended for use with food, making them safe. Sometimes the condiment cups don't work well singly because the toys can't sustain that flimsy of a material, but if you use multiple cups, it truly increases the strength. It also takes birds more time to get through the multiple layers of this toy.



## Owning a Special Needs Parrot

By Leigh Anne Stewart

Owning a special needs parrot takes a huge commitment as they are a lot of work. This is Ricky, my special needs Red Lored Amazon. She was hatched with deformed legs and feet. She can't fly, perch or walk. She was found in a city park in a small travel cage, alone and scared. My friend, who has many birds of her own, asked me if I could take Ricky, and the rest is history.



She gets around the bottom of the cage by using her wings as oars to move her forward and backwards. When she reaches the side of the cage, she will use her beak to pull herself up into a sitting position. Her permanent cage is a small wire dog kennel. I decided on this type of housing so that Ricky could see out, and we could see her all the time. I must bathe Ricky several times each week to keep her clean. She actually loves her baths and they tend to relax her.



The wire kennel is perfect for placement of her toys. I use jute rope and string wooden blocks, plastic toys and whatever I have and weave the rope with the toys around the wire down low where Ricky can reach them. She really enjoys playing with the different toys. She especially loves her pom poms. She sleeps under them and they act as a way for her to escape out of our site. It reminds me of when my children were small and they would hide under blankets held up by the dining room chairs to hide from Mom and Dad.

Many of the ideas that I come up with to make Ricky more comfortable are trial and error. It's a learning process each day. Since there is no hand book on the proper way to care for a special needs parrot, I try to think like a parrot would think. Although Ricky likes me, she really is in love with my husband. He spends a lot of time with her. She will do all of her cool tricks for him the instant she sees him. You can just tell when a parrot is in love with their owners.

For those considering caring for a special needs parrot, it is very rewarding. Most special needs parrots are placed into a sanctuary because they are "unadoptable." I can't imagine my life without Ricky in it. She has taught me patience, understanding and how to be a better parrot owner. She will spend the rest of her life with my husband and me.



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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