



Playing with your food may be discouraged at the dinner table, but it's different for companion birds. At first glance, a foraging bird may look like he's merely playing

with his food. In truth, foraging is an essential part of natural bird behavior necessary to keep birds physically and mentally active. Learn how to incorporate and encourage foraging behavior to have a healthy and happy companion bird.

Foraging fundamentals

Foraging can best be described as the collective activity of searching for and finding food. Since the availability of food is uncertain in nature, foraging is a complex and time-consuming activity. In fact, birds spend a fair portion of their day foraging for food in the wild. Though it is principally a survival strategy for finding and obtaining food, foraging has other benefits.

Physical and mental stimulation

During the course of foraging, birds expend considerable amounts of physical and mental energy. Birds must travel to areas with food, locate food items, acquire it and, in many cases, they need to figure out how to extract the edible portions. In some sense, foraging makes the meal significant and worthwhile. Companion birds that are not provided the opportunity to forage are deprived of a significant amount of physical and mental stimulation.

Incorporating foraging activities

Providing foraging activities for your companion bird does not have to be difficult or complicated. Think of it as a game of Hide-and-Seek for your bird. However, if foraging is new to your bird, start slow. Integrate foraging activities into familiar items such as your bird's [food dish](#) or [crock](#). Cover or wrap the dish with a clean paper towel or coffee filter. Let your bird see you hide his food. This will pique his curiosity and make him want to investigate. Before long, your bird will understand the foraging game and be ready for more complicated and stimulating challenges.