

WANT EVEN LESS FREE TIME? Get a parrot!

by Jenny Drummey

Preparing food. Cleaning cages. Grooming and bathing. Playing and socializing. Shopping for food and toys. Refurbishing toys and rearranging the cage. These are just some of the tasks that occupy the time of a busy parrot owner. If you're thinking of getting a bird, or even adding to your flock, consider the amount of time you'll have to spend caring for that parrot. If time is money, you'd better start saving now if you want to properly care for your bird.

Ann's Story

With 3 large macaws and an umbrella cockatoo, Ann has her hands full. She spends 45 minutes, twice a day, preparing food for her flock. Cleaning cages can take 30 minutes to an hour "depending on which thing I did that day (whose cage I cleaned, if I clean the floor, scrub the tree, or wash the toys). I can't do it all everyday. Some cages get deep cleaning on one day, but not all."

Another daily chore is socializing. "I am very dedicated to that and spend 2 plus hours a night, where we are talking, eating, and playing together."

Weekly tasks for Ann's flock include bathing (45 minutes a week), making toys (1 to 2 hours a week), and going places to get things for them or shopping online (2 hours a week). "I used to spend a lot more time doing that, before Phoenix Land-ing started selling toys!" Ann says.

Wendy's Story

Wendy cares for 3 umbrella cockatoos, and to save time with food preparation, once a week she spends about 3 hours cutting up food for the fruit salad and vegetable array. "This enables me to get their food ready each morning in about 15 minutes." Wendy says. Daily food preparation for dinner is 30 minutes.

Wendy spends 90 minutes a day cleaning her birds' cages and 30 minutes each day cleaning the perches. She admits, "I like my birds to not live in filth, so I'm a bit anal." She is also constantly doing general cleaning. Wendy also socializes with her cockatoos 4-6 hours each day.

Weekly activities include bathing. "The weekend drenchings turn my typical shower into a near 30-45 minute activity. Each bird plays in the water for about 5 minutes" Wendy says. Along with showers, her birds are groomed: Wendy files their nails 30 minutes each week.

Her flock benefits from a dynamic environment. Wendy spends 2-4 hours each week on cage design, replacing and rotating toys. They "love this 'open the toy box' time - lots of yelling."

Finally, there's toy shopping. Wendy spends 2 hours each week at this task, which she says, is probably an "under-statement, but if I tell you how much time I actually spend, it'd appear I don't work a real job."

Jenny's Story

I am caring for 5 birds: An umbrella cockatoo, an African gray, a Quaker, a Red-bellied parrot, and a blue-streaked lory. Sometimes it does not seem possible that I am faced with so many bowls to fill after a long day! I spend about 30-40 minutes, two times a day, preparing food. Daily cage cleaning, 20 minutes (Thorough cage cleaning every 3 days: 1.5-2 hours).

I spend a lot of time shopping for food and other miscellaneous items. I go to the grocery store A LOT, maybe 3-4 hours a week. Time for bathing and grooming, including showers or baths, is 2 hours a week.

The amount of time I spend socializing with my flock depends on the bird and their needs. I hang out with them all on and off at different times throughout the day. If I'm home, I've got a bird with me in the room (unless I'm asleep)!

There's also rearranging toys in cages and creating foraging opportunities, which takes an hour a week. And I am always thinking about ways to make their lives better.

Birds are not only a lot of effort, they take a lot of time. As Dawn says: "Having a bird is a HUGE amount of work. And it really is a daily grind and they come to expect it...no lie. It is a LOT more than handing out food and water. Obviously I get something back or I wouldn't do it, but new owners have to think long and hard about the extra burden it puts on family. It takes a really special spouse and kids to agree to this noisy, messy, bossy creature in your home."