

Bird Safety Corner

Physical Hazards

We've spent a lot of time in this column talking about various chemical exposures, particularly airborne, so it's time to mention a few physical hazards that are, unfortunately, also responsible for a fair amount of injuries and deaths to companion birds.

Ceiling fans are lovely and help cool off a room. Unfortunately they can also cause serious injury and death for flying birds, who can't necessarily anticipate where the blades are going. Many companion birds have been decapitated by fan blades. Even birds with trimmed wings who are startled may fly up into a fan, so don't assume a fan is safe around birds who don't normally fly. Having a ceiling fan over a cage can make birds nervous because of the movement, so locate cages away from fans. It's best not to have ceiling fans on at all around birds and to keep them disconnected, if at all possible, so they cannot be turned on by accident. Remember that even if you get to the fan quickly to turn it off if your bird takes flight, fans take time to slow down, so you may not be able to avert disaster.



Toilet lids should always be kept down. Not just the seat (guys, I'm talking to you!), but the lid itself. Most companion birds cannot swim, and a small bird who lands in a toilet can quickly drown. While I'm not sure this has happened, potentially a small bird could even get flushed down a toilet! Even if you have only large birds, do you really want to have to fish your parrot out of a toilet and clean him off? Yuck!! Keep the lid down at all times!!

Bathtubs full of water are also death traps, so don't leave full tubs unattended. If you are filling a tub, know where your birds are at all times. It doesn't take long to drown.

Doors and windows carry all kinds of danger. Most obviously, birds can escape outside through doors and windows. Birds might fly into windows and mirrors since they don't recognize the presence of glass. By the way, the most common cause of death from birds flying into windows outside is head injury, not broken neck. Bird necks are





actually quite flexible. If your bird stuns itself flying into a window or mirror, place it in a box on a soft towel, cover the box, and take it to the vet as soon as possible. Early treatment is imperative. Another danger from doors and windows is the risk of being crushed. Birds may perch on top of a door or on the floor in front of a door and get injured if the door is inadvertently closed.



Beds and couches aren't dangerous in and of themselves, but they become death traps when you're on them with your bird. While it may be fun to lie down with your bird perched on your hand or shoulder, if you fall asleep and roll over, you can crush or suffocate your bird, even the big ones! Remember how much bigger you are than them! I know, I know. You were only going to lie on the couch for a bit while watching TV. Next thing you know, you're waking up to an infomercial, and Polly is nowhere to be seen. Think of how you would feel if you crushed your bird. There's something about lying back on furniture that makes us fall asleep, so just don't put yourself in that position with your bird. People assume a bird will move out of the way if they roll over, but there are plenty of heartbroken people who will tell you otherwise.



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