

SOME BIRDS PREFER HOME
FURNISHINGS TO TOYS

SEARCH & DESTROY

Compiled by Crystal Apilado with an
introduction by Laura Doering

Right now, a wicker chair sits helpless as its twigs are snipped off one by one, a computer is rendered useless by way of stolen keys and a door jam is looking vulnerable and naked, with its rubber tip now a crumbled heap nearby. Yes, homes across America (and beyond) are under assault, falling victim to strong beaks and curious feathered minds, which begs the question, "Do you know where your bird is right now?"

There is good reason behind the phrase "bird-proof your home." It protects the health and well-being of your bird, and it saves you a costly remodel. That said, "bird-surprises" can still pop up in a bird-proofed room. In less than the time than it takes you to read this sentence, your bird, sitting contently on your lap, could very well have reached beside you and chewed off the on/off button of your phone. That's exactly what my Amazon did years ago, which essentially made it impossible to make calls or end calls.

Yes, the home for many birds is viewed as a giant playground, filled with stuff to chew off and rip apart. What follows are real-life examples of the damage birds on search-and-destroy missions can inflict.



THE FEMALE SOLOMON ISLANDS ECLECTUS, *E. RORATUS SOLOMONENSIS*
"CHAINSAW-ENSUS," has a driving inner desire to remodel any house in which she resides. From about the age of 6 months, she will travel around the home, looking for wooden furniture, door tops, cabinet doors, end tables, as well as window and door molding. Even the flavor of ceiling beams appeal to her. She feels like she must round off any unnatural corners on the surface of any piece of wood she encounters. This is her quest in life.

The first tell-tale sign your home is being remodeled for you is the faint, slight sound of wood being whittled away on. It sounds like a giant mouse chewing wood. Second clue is when you notice nicks out of bird accessible wooden areas



of your home, increasing to long lines of nibbles taken from them. Third clue is seeing the bottom of your coffee table legs shrinking in diameter, with new knurling patterns coming to the surface.

Over the years I have tried many techniques to deter the ever changing surface of the delicious wooden window sills and beams in my home. First, I simply used

duct tape and ran it along the chewed places. But a busy beak peeled duct tape off like a banana peel in a few days. Gorilla tape has been working longer lately, and she has left this latest attempt alone for several months now. I question the contents that make up duct tape and the like, and it might not be the best idea for that reason.

My second method of saving my sills was hardware store-bought metal "L" shaped strips, with screw holes in them cut to length and screwed into the wood over all accessible corners and edges. These work well because my bird hasn't chewed into wood the "L" shaped metal is protecting. Wood corners are irresistible to birds; not a metal-covered corner they can't munch into easily.

Third thing I do that really works, but must be watched and replaced, is I buy 1/2-inch by 4-inch, untreated pine lumber, cut it to the size of my window frame, attach it with metal clips, and let my Eclectus chew away on it. Birds will go for this with gusto in the beginning, thanking you for giving them a tasty piece of natural wood to whittle on. Be warned though, they may move on to a previously undiscovered piece of the house within a day or two. Perhaps it is the lovely seasoning in the fresh beam area?

Fourth method for birds on cutting down the interest in home-chewing is to supply lots of toys with destructible parts to keep their interest up. I have three sets of toys I rotate every few weeks to keep them fresh and new. Birds do forget toys if they haven't seen them in a while and find them very interesting once again after two rotations.

Baskets and wreaths from the dollar store are a great favorite too for the aggressive chewers. Make sure they are untreated before you buy them of course. These straw and woven items provide hours of whittling fun.

My home is an older building and I don't mind these odd fashion statements festooning my sills and cabinet corners. It keeps the whittling to a minimum and I can rationalize the decor as shabby sheik.

Photos of my Solomon Islands Eclectus, Ginger, with baskets and wreaths from the dollar store, showing how proud of the beam-rounding job she did, and the new fresh pine inserts in the window sill area.

— Susie Christian, California (Ginger, Solomon Islands Eclectus)