



Too-Using by the African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*)

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NOTE

Tool-Using by the African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*)

Our pet African grey parrot (origin: Cameroon), living in a free-flight wood and screen indoor cage (3 x 2 x 1 m), uses 1.5-4cm long splinters of wood to scratch the skin on the posterior part of its head. It obtains these splinters by prising them off the pine posts in its cage. It then carries them back to its perch in its beak in flight, or while walking across the screen wall. When walking on the screen, it uses its beak as a third foot, but carefully avoids dropping the splinter. On the perch, it grasps the splinter at right angles to the long axis of the foot and then uses it to dig into its feathers. It transfers the splinter to the other foot (via its bill) to scratch the other side of its head. It appears more dexterous in this behavior with the left foot than the right, and sometimes reaches under its head with its left foot to scratch the right side of its head with the splinter, or turns its head upside down to reach the back side. Scratching behavior with a particular splinter may last for several minutes before the stick is dropped or chewed into fragments. After this behavior appeared spontaneously (at the age of about 11 months), we found that it uses match sticks placed in the cage for the same purpose. It also allows humans to scratch its head and solicits attention to this purpose.

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