

Fruits and Nuts for Macaws

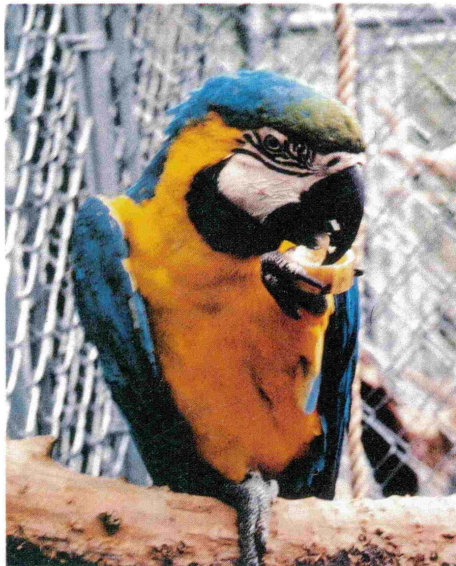
by
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Fort Bragg, California

Unfortunately there is no agreed upon, scientifically based, universal diet for parrots in captivity. There are many different formulas and combinations of ingredients each with its own few adherents. I think that everyone, though, will agree that a captive bird's diet should include as many items as possible that are found in the bird's natural diet. And if some precise ingredient can't be found then a close approximation would be appropriate.

In the wild, macaws eat a wide variety of things but their diet includes a high percentage of fruits and nuts. I feel that it is wise to include a variety of these fruits and nuts in a captive diet. The following information is not necessarily rock hard scientifically researched dietetic doctrine. It is a compilation of experience developed over the years as I have worked with macaws in captivity. Some of you may differ with some of my recommendations but here, in my own situation, these fruits and nuts in the specified portions have been very satisfactory. I recommend the following data for your serious consideration.

Nuts for Macaws

Nuts should be fed in the shell for the



A blue and gold macaw enjoying a fruit snack.

large macaws. The small macaws should have their nuts broken open, but let them extract the nut meat. Nuts are an additive to their diet which provides essential protein, amino acids, minerals and vitamins. For Hyacinthine, Lear and Glaucaus, their regular diet is almost exclusively nuts, with only fruits, vegetables, and Purina Monkey Chow added. Nuts in general, are high in protein, amino acids, B vitamins, folacin, and phosphorus. Feed any one of the following different kinds of nuts twice a week for extra nutritional value. Rotate the type of nut for variety.

ALMONDS: Large macaws, 6 to 8 nuts; small, 3 to 4. High in protein, amino acids, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, thiamine, and riboflavin.

BRAZIL NUTS: Large macaws, 4 to 6; small, 2. High in protein, amino acids, potassium, phosphorus, thiamine and calcium.

FILBERTS or HAZELNUTS: Large macaws, 6 to 8; small, 2 or 3. High in amino acids, riboflavin, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, thiamine, and has Vitamin A.

PEANUTS: Should be fed daily in macaw mix. High in protein, amino acids, potassium, thiamine, riboflavin, phosphorus, niacin and Vitamin E.

PECANS: Large macaws, 3 to 4; small, 2. High in thiamine and potassium.

PINE NUTS or PINYON NUTS: Large macaws, 8 to 10; small, 4 to 5. Use as a special treat only as they are very expensive. In the shell preferred. High in thiamine, riboflavin, phosphorus, and protein.

WALNUTS: Large macaws, 2 to 3; small, 1. High in calcium, protein, amino acids, potassium, phosphorus and riboflavin.

All nut shells will be played with long after the nut meat has been eaten. They provide lots of fun and enjoyment. It is best to buy nuts in the fall and winter of the year, November through February. This is when you can buy bulk amounts of nuts at lower prices because of the holidays. A bag of 50 lbs. will last a long time if you only have a few macaws, provided they are not Hyacinths. Nuts are best stored in a clean, covered trash can. They can be kept indefinitely if stored in a cool and dry place such as a garage until needed. A small amount can be kept near the birds for use during the week.

With baby macaws I feed a couple of nuts a few times a week to get them used to the different kinds of food they will be eating. These nuts are fed *only* after the baby macaw is eating seed on his own. And I crack the nuts for them and let the baby extract the meat.



Greenwing macaw eating a piece of fruit.

Fruit for Macaws

Feed any *one* of the following fruits each day. Rotate the type of fruit for variety.

All fruit should be fed raw, and where appropriate, with well washed skins. Fruit should be part of their daily diet. Whenever you can, buy a case of apples direct from the growers to save money and provide a longer term supply. Apples which are a staple in the macaw diet, can be kept refrigerated or stored in a cool garage. *Never* feed any fruits or vegetables that you would not eat yourself. Over ripe fruit, under ripe fruit, or spoiled fruit should not be fed.

APPLES: Medium apple cut into eight pieces. Feed large macaws 2 pieces; small macaws 1 piece cut into small bite size pieces. Has potassium and small amount of Vitamin A. Remove seeds.

BANANA: Feed only ripe (many brown spots on yellow). Not black, green or plain yellow. Large macaws, 2 one-inch thick pieces with skin left on; small macaws ½" thick piece cut in half. High in potassium, has Vitamin A.

BERRIES: (black, blue, raspberries) Large macaws, 6 to 8 berries; small macaws, 4 or 5. Good in potassium and Vitamin A.

CANTALOUPE: When in season. Large macaws, 3 or 4 one-inch cubes. Leave skin on. Small macaws, 2 one-inch cubes cut in to small pieces. High in Vitamin A and potassium.

CHERRIES: (sweet, raw) Remove pits. When in season. Large macaws, 6 to 8; small macaws, 3 to 4. Good in potassium and Vitamin A.

FIGS: When in season. Fresh not dried. Large macaws, one; small macaws, one half. Good in potassium.

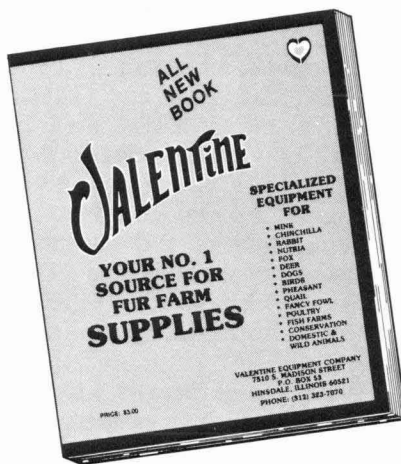
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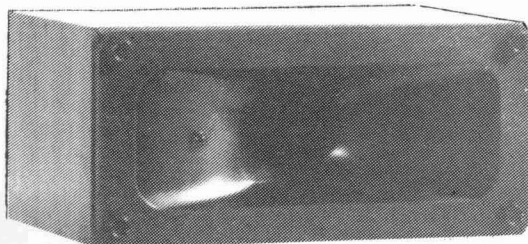
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macaws, 5 to 6; small, 3. Macaws love them, with or without seeds. A wonderful treat. Good in potassium and Vitamin A. **HONEYDEW MELON:** When in season. Leave skin on. Large macaws, 3 to 4 cubes; small macaws, 2 one-inch cubes cut into small pieces. High in Potassium.

ORANGE: Remove seeds. Take off skin (too many pesticides on skin). Large macaws, 1 or 2 sections; small macaws, 1 section cut into small segments. High in thiamine and Vitamin C. Feed once a week or once every two weeks only.

PAPAYA: When in season. Large macaws, 1/4 papaya cut into 1" cubes; small macaws, 1/16th papaya cut into small pieces. High in Vitamin A and Potassium.

PEACH: When in season. Remove pit. Large macaws, 1/2 peach cut into smaller pieces; small macaws 1/8 peach cut into smaller pieces. High in Vitamin A and potassium.

PEAR: When in season. Remove seeds. Large macaws, 1/4 pear cut into 1" cubes; small macaws, 1/8 pear cut into smaller pieces. Good in potassium.

PLUM: When in season. Remove pit. Large macaw, 1/2 medium size plum, cut into quarters; small macaws, 1/4 medium size cut into smaller pieces. Good in potassium and Vitamin A.

PINEAPPLE: Large macaws, 2 one-inch cubes; small macaws one one-inch cube cut in half. Leave skin on. High in thiamine.

POMEGRANATE: Large macaws, cut into one inch segments and feed 3 or 4; small macaws, 2 segments. High in potassium.

STRAWBERRIES: When in season. Large macaws, 4 or 5 berries; Small macaws, 2 or 3 cut into small pieces. Good in Vitamin C and potassium.

WATERMELON: When in season. Large macaws, 4 to 6 one-inch cubes; small macaws, 2 or 3 one-inch cubes cut in half. Leave skin on, and don't worry about the seeds. High in Vitamin A and potassium.

As a general rule you must *remove all pits and seeds as many are toxic*. The exceptions are melons, pomegranates, and figs.

Leave skin on all fruit except oranges (which can't be effectively washed free of pesticides). The skin helps the birds to hold on to slippery fruit and avoids getting them so messy. I feed all fruit at room temperature. Once baby macaws are starting to eat seed I feed them a little fruit every couple of days to get used to different kinds of food. For these babies I *do peel* all fruit until I see that they are eating seed on their own. •