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Spring Has Sprung and Love is in the Air

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It's spring and the birds and the bees are doing their thing; looking for mates and trying to reproduce. For those of us who are caretakers of captive birds this presents certain challenges. In this article we will take a high level pass of things to watch out for, based on my own experience with my birds.

With the arrival of Spring many of our feathered charges, both males and females, will become pumped full of hormones telling them to mate. During this time you will see different behaviors than you might expect. For me and my two male Blue Fronted Amazons (BFA), it means that one or both of them will engage in seasonal behavior: digging to prepare a nest, biting or threatening to bite to defend their territory, and engaging in bizarre sounds or behavior as they seek, *ahem*, sexual relief.

Here are a few examples of what I've had to deal with in the past couple of weeks:

1. A new hole chewed in my front room carpet when I wasn't looking. This was done by my younger BFA, Cookie Jr. He has also been exploring an empty box I gave him to chew on – he instead prefers to go inside it and to entice his 'mate', Cookie Sr., an older male BFA, to join him.



Hole in carpet created by Cookie Jr.



Cookie Jr. showing spread tail feathers in territorial display.

2. Territorial behavior while defending their cages or the bird room. This can mean anything from loud noises and spread wings directed at us humans, to bites.

3. Strange sounds and behavior, particularly as one bird tries to attract a mate or mate with another bird (or in some cases, a human).

[No photo of 'enthusiastic' birds provided]

4. Wounds, to fingers or toes in particular

[No photo of my chewed toes either]

The important thing to remember during Spring is, it's not the bird's fault. As the ones with the bigger brains we need to anticipate this behavior, and not put ourselves or our birds in situations where either of us can be harmed. At the same time we can try to reduce their hormonal behavior by:

1. Not providing nesting boxes or material they can use to nest.
2. Giving them at least 12 hours of uninterrupted nighttime sleep.
3. Knowing they may be prone to biting or flying at you, so not giving them the opportunity.

Remember, we humans have bigger brains: it's our duty to use them to keep us and our feathered friends safe.