What do parrots and humans have in common? Unraveling connection between longevity and brain size

When it comes to lifespan, birds truly stand out. Lifespan tends to increase with an animal's body size, roughly speaking, as size tends to correlate with a slower metabolism. Thus, the bigger the animal, the longer they live. But a bird tends to live much longer than a comparably-sized mammal, despite having a speedy metabolism.

One theory is that birds' ability to fly means they are less at risk from predators, which reduces their risk of being eaten, alleviates stress, and frees up bodily resources for healing and growth.

And among birds, parrots are the aging champions. The confirmed longest-living bird was Cookie, a Major Mitchell's cockatoo, who lived at the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois for all but one of his 83 years.

So what sets parrots apart? In 2013, scientists from Texas A&M found that scarlet macaws possess a lot of genes associated with longevity, brain development, heart thickness, and cardiovascular fitness. Five years later, researchers at Oregon Health and Science University turned up other salubrious genes in the genome of blue-fronted Amazon parrots, supporting DNA damage repair, slowing down cell death from stress, and limiting cancerous cell growth.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.