



**Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc.**  
INTRODUCTION TO BIRD  
CARE AND RESCUE

Version 1.2



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# INTRODUCTION

This course is designed to give you an introduction to the care of a variety of bird species found in South Australia. The manual is written to be used in conjunction with the SOWFI Introduction to Bird Care and Rescue training. This course will introduce you to:

- Rescue and assessment of species
- Common illnesses and injuries
- Housing requirements
- Diet and identification of various species
- And method of release

If you ever have questions during your time with Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc. (SOWFI) please contact your assigned district co-ordinator(s) or if unavailable a species specialist.

## BEFORE BECOMING A CARER

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It is a requirement of Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc. members that before birds are placed in their care all bird carers are:

- To complete an interview
- Be a current financial member of Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc.
- Have attended a 'Introduction to Bird Care and Rescue' course
- And your 'buddy' has checked that you have the necessary equipment required to provide appropriate care to birds, including all cages and aviaries.

Please remember that our primary precedence is the care and welfare of the animals that we are entrusted with; their lives and future of the species might also rely on it. All recommendations and assistance supplied via a district co-ordinator, experienced carer, advanced carer, or species specialist should not be seen as a query about your abilities. Anybody determined to be neglectful or not supplying suitable care or no longer have the essential facilities can be refused animals, until the issues are appropriately addressed.

## WHAT AM I COMMITTING TO?

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From the beginning, carers are to be aware of the end result you are aiming for; **an independent bird that has the skills to survive in the wild**. Carers should also be aware of the commitment to:

**At least two birds** - Birds should be raised in groups of two or more if possible. Being exposed to others they will learn to communicate with other birds and learn their language and behaviour from each other.

**Weeks of care** - Birds can be in care as long as 6 weeks. When you take on an animal, please consider how long it will be with you and whether you have holiday plans. You will need to organise a carer to take them while you are away, so please check before committing. Your co-ordinator may be able to help with this. Releasing a bird before they are ready because you are going away is not a good reason.

**Cost of care** - Caring for birds is not free. Feed and supplements can be bought through SOWFI's wholesaler. Carers are responsible for obtaining their equipment: baskets, heat mats, syringes, towels, cages, and aviaries. A district co-ordinator and senior member of the team can direct you to places to purchase this equipment.

Carers should also begin caring with the understanding that:

**Not all birds survive** - While we would like to think we can save all the birds that come into our care, they do not always survive. It is impossible to always identify if a bird is sick or has internal injuries. Be prepared that some may die, all you can do is be alert to signs that something may be wrong and seek vet treatment.

**Hard decisions may need to be made** - If a sick or injured animal is unlikely to recover to a releasable state or is suffering, you may have to make the decision to end its pain and let it go with the knowledge that the decision is the most kind for the animal. Most vets will make this call for you, but some are not as familiar with birds and may ask your opinion. Information in these notes will help prepare you for some cases but if you are faced with this decision and are not sure, you should call out for advice and support. Call your district co-ordinator, an experienced carer, advanced carer, or species specialist. Do not put injured adults through long invasive treatment. To adults we are predators. Living with us for any length of time causes great stress which can cause heart failure and death.

**Some birds may not be releasable** - Some birds may recover from injuries but not be well enough to survive in the wild, for example losing a wing. Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc. does not support keeping non-releasable animals. If you decide to keep them, you should consider the quality of life the animal will have and be aware that some birds can live for more than 30 years in captivity. If you believe a bird is not releasable talk to a district co-ordinator about the options.

**Permits are required** - Most species of bird in South Australia are protected. You must apply for your Wildlife Carer Permit from Department of Environment and Water (DEW).

## RESCUE AND ANIMAL RECORDS

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In SOWFI, our primary method of data collection is through webforms found in the volunteers section of our website, as this was the easiest way to collect data while ensuring privacy for all members.

Below is a step-by-step guide (that is also available for download on the website) to record a rescue.

Please note that the rescue form contains many fields. Only the first 2 are compulsory (the date/time of the report, and the animal group), however, the more information that can be captured, the more useful the report will be. It is understood that not all the fields will be relevant to every rescue, and sometimes not all information will be known.

- The date/time of report can either be typed or completed by pressing the calendar icon and selecting the date/time (Approximate time is fine)
- The animal group can be selected from the drop-down list
- Please enter any information you have about the person or organisation that requested assistance. This will make it easier if they need to be contacted later about release
- If the circumstances were unusual or noteworthy, please enter a brief description
- Start typing your name (or the name of the person who did the rescue if filling in the form on their behalf). Select your name from the search results that appear
- Select the status of the rescue as of at the time of completing the form
- Enter the street and suburb of the rescue (or where the report was made if no rescue occurred)  
This is particularly important for rescues where an animal comes into care. If a rescue took place,

please continue, and enter the animal details. If no rescue occurred, scroll down, and submit the form

- If you do enter details of an animal, the species field is compulsory, but all known details should be entered. Start by typing the species common name, and select from the search results
- Choose the most relevant reason that the animal needed rescue (to the best of your knowledge)
- Complete the life stage of the animal at the time they were rescued. Enter the gender (if this has been ascertained) and select the current status of the animal in the outcome field. This can be updated later if it changes
- If you have chosen to name the animal, enter their name and press submit

You will then receive a success message once the form is submitted. Provided a valid email address is held for the member conducting the rescue, an email will be sent within a few minutes, confirming details of rescue, and providing links to update animal details or transfer the animal to a new carer.

## HYGIENE

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When handling any bird particularly the sick, hygiene is extremely important. After handling any bird, it is good practice to sanitize your hands after handling a bird and between handling birds to prevent disease transmission. F10 make a good hand sanitising gel although most alcohol-based hand sanitising gels are fine to use in most cases. Cages must be kept clean, even more so if the cage is used to house a sick bird to prevent disease transmission.

After cleaning a cage, it is essential to disinfect the cage with F10 SC disinfectant spray between housing different birds. Other disinfectants such as household disinfectants are inadequate as they do not kill the diseases birds get, especially PBF. F10 is not toxic to animals so does not need to be washed off.

When raising baby birds, their nests will need cleaning multiple times a day to prevent poop build up sticking to their feathers and feet. Tissue or cut up puppy training pads are useful to line the nests and can be changed easily. When feeding baby birds, it is important to sanitize hands prior to feeding, human skin can transfer bacteria and/or fungus such as candidiasis to your baby bird and can potentially kill it.

## HANDY ITEMS TO HAVE ON HAND

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- Vetafarm polyaid plus for sick birds, Passwells first aid food for sick birds
- Vetafarm spark for rehydration, Vetafarm worm out gel for gastrointestinal worms
- Aristopet mite and lice spray, Vetafarm coccivet coccidia treatment, Vetafarm probiotics
- Vetafarm scaly face treatment (Ivermectin) useful for treating parasites, heat mat
- Desk lamp with 60W incandescent downlight globe or 40W blue globe, plastic tube for crop feeding
- 1mL, 3mL, 5mL and 10mL syringes, crop needle set, feeding spoon, lectade for oral rehydration
- 25.5G needles for subcutaneous rehydration, glucose powder for adding to food and giving to sick birds
- 5% IV glucose solution for administering subcutaneously to sick birds

### **Food supplements.**

- Wombaroo honeyeater and lorikeet mix or Passwell complete lorikeet
- Wombaroo insectivore mix or Vetafarm insectapro
- Passwells hand raising mix, Vetafarm Neocare or Wombaroo granivore mix

## FARMING MEALWORMS

You require 2 boxes with lids, to the lids drill some small holes for ventilation but not large enough that the beetles can escape.

- To the boxes as a 2:1 mix of wheat or oat bran to insectivore mix and blend, the insectivore mix will gut load your mealworms and make them more nutritious for your birds. Add your purchased mealworms to this mix. On top of the substrate place some folded newspaper and sliced carrot, the sliced carrot provides moisture to the mealworms
- During winter it is necessary to give the mealworms warmth, a heat mat can be used for this, or the boxes can be wrapped in heat cable. Allow the first cycle of mealworms to pupate and turn into beetles. Halve the beetles and add these to the second box set up exactly the same as the first box. These beetles will lay thousands of eggs and will start off your colony. Remove any dead beetles

Leave the boxes until the eggs hatch, you will start to see very small mealworms under the folded newspaper. Allow the mealworms to grow to a larger size and harvest by sifting them out of the bran and insectivore mix. Replace the mix in the 2 boxes and add some of the harvested mealworms back to the boxes to restart your colony. Mealworms can be stored in takeaway containers in some of the bran/ insectivore mix substrate and stored in the fridge, this will keep them from pupating.

## FARMING CRICKETS

Crickets can be grown in large 90L containers with lids, the larger the better. The more containers you have the better as crickets don't like being housed in close proximity to each other and will kill each other if they are. To the boxes add 2 inches of perlite to the bottom of the boxes, add a small dish of water with a sponge in it so the crickets do not drown when going for water.

- Place a desk lamp or lamp fitting in each box with a blue 40W globe, also place the bottom part of the egg carton in the box for the crickets to hide under and some carrot. You can now add your crickets to the boxes. Feed the crickets ground up cat food mixed with insectivore mix in a 2:1 ratio. Add a breeding box, a takeaway container filled with dirt which is kept moist and placed under the lamp, this is where the eggs will be laid. Crickets don't like wet environments; the perlite will ensure the environment is kept dry
- You will see females laying their eggs in the dirt, if holes are being dug this means that your eggs are being eaten. To prevent this, you can place a section of fly screen over the dirt. This will prevent digging but still allow laying
- When the crickets start to hatch the box will need to still be kept moist. Allow some of the crickets to hatch in one box then move the nest to the next box and so on to spread your crickets out.

You may need to thin the colony, the thinned-out crickets can be killed by freezing and fed to your bird's dead. Do not feed dead crickets that have died in any other way, these release a foul-tasting chemical and will put your birds off of crickets. To continue breeding replace the dirt in the nest box and start again. You should expect hundreds of crickets from breeding around 30 crickets.

# RESCUE

Before leaving for a rescue try to obtain as much information as possible before you leave so you have the right equipment with you to undertake the rescue. Often a rescue can involve more than just one person, even an injured bird can move very fast especially in open spaces. It is handy to take someone with you or where possible get the help of any bystanders.

Towels, sheets, and blankets always come in handy to throw over a bird and allow you to safely pick up the bird however you will need to be able to get close enough to the bird to do this. Fruit tree netting and sheets can be useful when trying to catch water birds in water, a stone or small rock can be tied into the corners to make it easier to throw the net further if the bird isn't particularly close.

A net with a long handle is very useful, such as the landing nets used for fishing, you can't always get close enough to the bird to throw a towel over it. Try to find a net with a close weave as the bird is less likely to become tangled in it. When handling high and moderate risk birds (see below), it is useful to have some sturdy gloves such as thick gardening gloves or welding gloves.

When out on a rescue think safety first, always be aware of your surroundings before attempting a rescue. Be careful when rescuing around busy roads, if a bird is in the middle of a busy road call the police or traffic control to stop the flow of traffic until the bird can be secured. It is not safe to climb trees to secure a bird, particularly if the bird is quite high. Call the local fire department, if not busy they can use their cherry picker to assist in securing the bird. If a bird is stuck up a power pole or on power lines you must call SA power networks for their assistance to secure the bird.



Image from: wikipedia.com

## BIRDS AND RISKS

There are risk factors when handling different birds that you need to be mindful of and precautions to ensure your safety need to be taken.

- **Small insectivores** - e.g. swallows and martins are low risk birds and don't need special precautions
- **Pigeons** - e.g. crested pigeons and peaceful doves are low risk category birds
- **Honeyeaters** - e.g. new hollands, wattlebirds and noisy miners are low risk category birds
- **Fresh water birds** - e.g. flat beak birds such as ducks and swans are low risk category birds however due to their size, they can be hard to manage, best to use a sheet or large towel when handling. Pointed beak birds such as herons carry a greater risk and should always be handled with a towel
- **Large Insectivores** - e.g. kookaburras, tawny frogmouths, magpies, and ravens. These birds are moderate risk birds, their beaks have a moderate clamp force, so it is best to handle these birds with a thick towel
- **Parrots** - e.g. galahs, sulphur-crested cockatoos, rosellas, corellas, lorikeets etc. are high risk birds so need to be handled with caution. They have hooked beaks which gives them a high bite risk. The claws particularly in larger parrots can be sharp and very strong. When handling these birds always use a thick towel. To protect yourself from the feet, get them to grasp a small rolled up towel.
- **Carnivores** - e.g. owls, hawks, eagles are high risk category birds, these birds have very sharp hooked beaks and very sharp claws used for tearing apart their prey. Always handle with a thick towel and gloves. Like with parrots, a small towel rolled can be used to occupy the feet. Some



carnivorous sea birds can be high risk too, these birds can try and attack your eyes when they feel threatened so safety glasses should be used as a precaution.

## BIRD ANATOMY

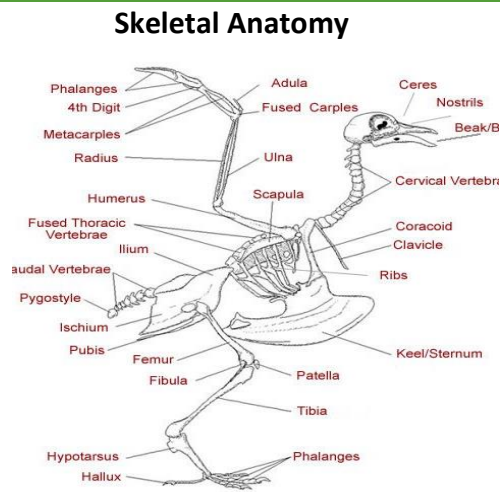


Image from: [animalcorner.org](http://animalcorner.org)

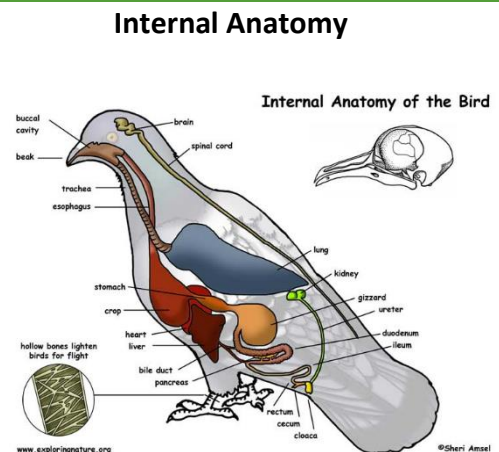


Image from: [exploringnature.org](http://exploringnature.org)

## INITIAL EXAMINATION OF THE BIRD

When the bird first comes into care it is necessary to check for the obvious things that need urgent attention. Check for any sign of bleeding or obvious fractures that need immediate attention. If there is obvious bleeding it is paramount to stop the bleeding, birds don't have a lot of blood so a small amount of bleeding can actually be quite significant. To stop and bleeding corn flour or castor sugar can be used, this will aid the formation of a blood clot.

If there are any obvious breaks such as open fractures with protruding bones then it is urgent to get the bird to the vet, these kinds of are very painful and it is best to euthanise the bird and alleviate suffering.

If there are no other urgent requirements, then the bird should be left for half an hour in a warm dark place to settle and to minimise stress.

### Examination of the bird.

1. Is the bird fluffed up? If so, this can indicate the bird is unwell, sick birds often feel cold and will need to be warmed (see housing below)
2. Does the bird fall asleep in front of you? this indicates the bird is sick and weak, a wild bird should never fall asleep in front of you if healthy
3. Pull the wings out and watch to see if they contract normally, abnormal contraction may indicate a break or ligament injury
4. Are the bird's wings hanging normally? a droopy wing can indicate a break or soft tissue damage. Feel along the bones along the length of the wing to locate any swelling or breaks. Sometimes you may see bruising which indicated the location of the wound, the area may also feel warm to touch.
5. Check the birds vent, a messy vent can indicate a bird has diarrhoea and means the bird may have a gastrointestinal infection. If the vent is caked, it will need to be cleaned as it may be inhibiting the bird from pooping
6. Check the weight of the bird, to do this feel the keel bone or sternum along the breast of the bird. If the keel bone is very sharp, the bird is under weight and indicates the bird either hasn't been eating due to illness or has an inability to digest food due to a gastrointestinal infection. A normal weight bird should be well rounded with very little keel bone protrusion. If a raptor comes in to care and is under weight, this can mean a lack of available food as well as an illness

7. Check the hydration of the bird (see hydration section below)
8. Check the pupil reflex, this can be performed by taking the bird into a dark room and shining a bright torch into each eye. If the pupil contracts, then it is unlikely there is any kind of head injury. If the pupil fails to contract, then a head injury is present. It is not uncommon for only one pupil to not contract with head injuries the failure of only one pupil to contract still means a head injury is present
9. With a small stick check the grip strength of the feet, poor grip strength can mean injury. Never use your finger to measure grip strength, some birds have sharp claws and can grab tight causing injury especially as some refuse to let go. If a bird has a club foot this can indicate injury, magpies in particular with club feet can be a result of metabolic bone disease. In raptors a swollen foot known as bumble foot is an infection in the foot and will require vet treatment
10. Pull the legs out to see if they pull back normally, failure to spring back can indicate a possible pelvic injury. If the legs are paralysed, then it is highly likely there is a serious neurological condition or pelvic injury, and urgent vet attention is required
11. Check the body for puncture wounds caused by cats and dogs, look for matted feathers as this can indicate a wound. If puncture wounds are found, then take the bird to the vet as soon as possible as it will need immediate antibiotics
12. Check the throat for trichomoniasis or worms (see illness section below). Trichomoniasis and throat or gape worm are common in birds such as raptors, magpies, ravens, and pigeons

## HYDRATION

Once any bleeding or broken bones are addressed, Hydration is the next biggest consideration when a bird first comes into care. Most birds come into care are dehydrated if unwell, particularly birds that obtain most of their moisture from their prey such as raptors, kookaburras, and tawny frogmouths.

To check the level of hydration, moisten the feathers on the breast of the bird to expose the keel bone. When you can see the skin, pull the skin sideways across the keel bone and release. If the skin springs back fast then the bird is well hydrated, if it doesn't spring back or springs back very slowly then the bird is critically dehydrated. To rehydrate the bird, 15% of the bird's body weight in mL needs to be given per day on top of their normal drinking and what is acquired through feeding. For example, you would give 15mL of fluids to a 100g bird. The easiest way to rehydrate a bird is by giving fluids subcutaneously, the best place is in the leg to avoid air sacs in the body. A vet or species specialist can show you how to do this. Alternatively, fluids can be drizzled on the top of the beak or where the 2 parts of the beak join, this will run into the beak and the bird should swallow it. Never syringe water directly into the bird's beak, it is very easy to drown the bird doing this. If a bird is critically dehydrated and you aren't able to give subcutaneous fluids, then it is essential to get the bird to the vet.



Image from: [petbarn.com](http://petbarn.com)

Fluids used for rehydration are Hartmann's solution for subcutaneous injection, Vetapark spark or Lectade for oral rehydration. If these solutions are not available, water for injection or saline can be used subcutaneously. For oral rehydration, **sugar can be dissolved in warm water with a pinch of salt** added as a homemade mixture. If none of this is available, then straight water can be given orally.

# ILLNESSES AND INJURIES

In many cases where a bird presents as ill, the cause of the illness is not obvious which makes it very hard to treat, it is essential to consult a vet with any ill bird. Below are the more common illnesses in birds.

## Treating shock.

Most sick or injured birds are in shock when they first come into care. Shock can kill a bird if bad enough so needs to be treated. After the initial assessment, place the bird in a warm dark space for about an hour. A heat mat can be used to warm the bird but make sure there is space for the bird to move away from the heat if it was to become too hot.

## PSITTACINE BEAK AND FEATHER DISEASE - PBFD

Psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFD) a virus that largely affects parrots and is incurable, and bird with this disease must be euthanised. PBFD is a multifaceted disease, it affects the immune system as well as the beak, the skin, and feathers. Due to the effect on the immune system commonly birds will die of another disease as a result of the lack of immunity before the PBFD itself kills the bird. PBFD in most parrots initially presents as the bird looking very dirty and tatty, this is a result of the loss of the protective dust on the feathers. As the disease advances the bird will start losing feathers, the body feathers are lost first followed by the wing and tail feathers. The beak will look shiny as a result of this loss in feather dust and will over grow and become deformed.

PBFD presents differently in lorikeets compared to other parrots and can be harder to diagnose. Generally, lorikeets will only lose their primary flight feathers and tail feathers initially, but these can grow back creating contagious carriers. Lorikeets don't have feather dust so carrier status can't be determined by that. Lorikeets can often grow cysts as a result of the disease which can get quite large but not all carriers will grow them.

As it is so hard to determine the carrier status of a lorikeet, a feather can be pulled to check for the presence of the disease. A wing or tail feather can be pulled, if the quill is smooth then it is less likely the bird is a carrier of PBFD but unfortunately can't definitively rule it out. If the quill is crimped and bent on the end, contains dry blood, or looks chunky then beak and feather is highly likely. The only 100% definitive way to determine PBFD in an asymptomatic lorikeet is a DNA test.



Image from: [pinterest.com](#)



Image from: [northernstar.com](#)

*(Refer to Appendix 1 - Illnesses and Injuries for additional picture)*

## PSITTACOSIS

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Psittacosis is another parrot disease that is **highly contagious to other parrots and to humans** causing lung infections in humans. This disease is a bacterial respiratory infection which presents as gunky eyes and nose, profuse green diarrhoea and the birds are usually emaciated. Treatment is a 45-day course of antibiotics, usually doxycycline however the illness never completely goes away. Recovered birds become contagious carriers and can relapse in the future. For this reason, birds diagnosed with this illness should not be released and should be euthanised.

## THROAT WORM AND GAPE WORM

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Both of these are worms that affect the throat commonly of magpies, ravens, and raptors. Minor infestations can be treated using Panacur or Ivermectin. When infestations are extensive, the worms need to be removed manually followed by treatment with Panacur or Ivermectin.

*(Refer to Appendix 1 - Illnesses and Injuries for pictures)*

## COCCIDIA

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Coccidia is another disease common in parrots and pigeons, it is a protozoal gastrointestinal infection which destroys the mucosa of the intestine. This destruction results in starvation of the bird as they are unable to absorb food, so birds often present very thin. The vent is usually caked as a result of diarrhoea however by the time these birds come into care, they are so dehydrated they often no longer have diarrhoea. Treatment is with Baycox which is an anticoccidial however most birds come in to care with the disease far too advanced to be treated and should be euthanised.

## TRICHOMONIASIS

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Trichomoniasis also known as canker is a protozoal infection infecting the mouth and throat of birds and it is common in magpies, ravens, pigeons, and raptors. It presents as a yellowish to white growth in the mouth and throat and when bad can infect the sinuses also. Mild infections can be treated with metronidazole, infections that are extensive particularly sinus involvement should be euthanized as recovery can be very long.

*(Refer to Appendix 1 - Illnesses and Injuries for picture)*

## AVIAN POX

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This is a virus that affects mostly young birds and is very common in magpies. The virus presents as nodules which can grow on the feet and face. The virus itself isn't life threatening and it can be compared to cold sores in humans. The position of the lesions can present a problem particularly if they are growing around the eyes or nose. If the bird can be caught it can be treated in a number of ways using betadine, F10 hand gel or cold sore cream. The lesions once treated can relapse until the bird is older and has developed immunity to the virus.

*(Refer to Appendix 1 - Illnesses and Injuries for picture)*

## METABOLIC BONE DISEASE

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This is a human made disease mostly in magpies due to well-meaning people feeding inappropriate food to birds. It commonly presents with broken beaks, clubbed feet, swollen joints followed by loss of balance and as the disease progresses further, more extensive broken bones and organ involvement. By the time these birds are caught the disease has progressed so much that it is irreversible. Broken beaks never grow back and hinder the bird's ability to catch food. Birds with any of these symptoms should not be released and be euthanised.

*(Refer to Appendix 1 - Illnesses and Injuries for picture)*

## CONCUSSION

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This is a very common injury in birds, it occurs when birds fly into things such as windows or are hit by a car. Concussion often gets worse before it gets better and can last up to 10 days depending on severity. Whether a bird is concussed or not can be determined by whether their irises contract or not when a bright light is shone into the eye as previously described.

Treatment is anti-inflammatories such as meloxicam or aspirin and vitamins that can be added to drinking water. Vitamins B and C are good for treating nerve damage and can speed up recovery. **Do not put the bird near any warmth**, this can cause the brain to swell more and make the concussion worse.

## NEUROLOGICAL INJURY

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Aside from concussion, birds can obtain spinal injuries from flying into things such as windows and being hit by cars. Birds with spinal injuries commonly can't move well and may twist around. Birds should be supported by placing them between 2 parallel rolled up towels so they can sit in a straight position. Birds really need their mobility limited to help the injury to heal. Treatment is the same as for concussion using meloxicam or aspirin and vitamins. Birds with spinal injuries may not be able to feed themselves so may need hand feeding.

## BROKEN BONES

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It really depends on the position the break is to determine whether or not the bird will be viable for release and this needs to be assessed case by case. Most birds with wing breaks do not ever fly again so should be euthanised. All broken bones require vet attention and x-rays. Never attempt to strap a broken bone without an x-ray, you can do more harm than good.

# HOUSING FOR BIRDS

When rescuing a bird, you will require a carrier to contain it, a top opening cat carrier is the easiest to manage a bird in. Front opening carriers can be difficult to manage the bird which is not desirable particularly when handling high safety risk birds. Carnivorous birds such as raptors and sea birds need to be housed in soft carriers or a cardboard box, it is extremely important to not damage any feathers with these birds which regular can do.

Baby birds and sick birds coming into care require warmth

- Unfeathered chicks need to be warmed to 36°C
- Feathered chicks 28°C
- Fledgling 24°C

- Sick or injured birds 28°C

It is essential to have an incubator or a brooder for unfeathered chicks. Older babies and the sick and injured can be warmed using a desk lamp in a covered cage or box. Foam boxes make great makeshift brooders and can be purchased from the fruit and veg department in the supermarket, just ask. The box used needs to be large enough to accommodate the lamp and the bird.

Older birds can be housed in a regular wire cage large enough for the bird to be able to spread their wings and tail, a cage that is too small will cause feather damage. Raptors are never to be housed in a wire cage, a cage can be lined with shade cloth, a solid wooden box or a soft dog carrier can be used.

Birds require aviary time in a flight aviary once they are ready to gain fitness. For small birds such as swallows and martins, a 2m aviary is sufficient. For birds such as rosellas and lorikeets, a 3m aviary is required. For larger birds such as magpies and ravens a minimum aviary size is 5m. Raptors should never be housed in a wire aviary, aviaries for these birds need to be made from shade cloth or nylon cat enclosure netting.

For smaller raptors the minimum size needs to be 5m, for larger birds such as eagles a minimum size of 16m is required. When it comes to aviaries, bigger is always better. When housing a new bird that has just come in you need to consider quarantine, any new birds coming in should be housed separately for a week prior to mixing with other birds of the same species. Predation is another consideration, never house birds near each other that are prey, for example don't house swallows next to a magpie, raven, or raptor as this will cause stress in the prey bird.

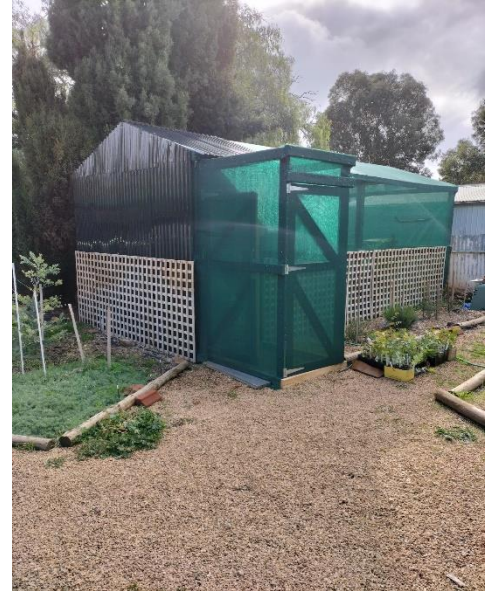


Image from: Bonny Honen

Self-feeding chicks such as ducklings, masked lapwings, moorhens, and coots require space and warmth, a large dog carrier with a desk lamp is great when small. A dog play pen is handy for outdoor housing during nicer weather or indoor housing with a lamp when the birds have outgrown the dog carrier. These birds will require a minimum of a 5m flight aviary with a pond, a half plastic clam shell will be sufficient.

## LOOKING AFTER A SICK OR INJURED BIRD

Sick birds appear friendly and are generally very easy to handle, they don't have the energy to try and fight. All sick bird should see a vet when they first come in for treatment although many sick birds are too far gone when they come in and should be euthanised. Sick birds that can be treated are usually dehydrated and hydration will need to be corrected before feeding (see section on hydration). Sick birds generally won't self-feed and will need to be crop fed or force fed. Vetafarm Polyaid plus or Passwells first aid food are both good for crop feeding sick birds, they are easily digestible and contain additional vitamins a bird will need to recover.

Insectivores or carnivores can be force fed a meat mix combined with either Polyaid plus or first aid food. If a bird comes in with a treatable break, then it will need its movement to be restricted, for wing injuries for instance do not house in a cage large enough a bird will try to fly in, a smaller cage is more suitable in this instance. Birds with leg injuries will commonly reside on the bottom of the cage, if the bottom of the cage is constructed of wire, then it is necessary to cover it to give a more solid floor, a towel or a few layers of newspaper can achieve this.

Sick or injured birds will usually be on oral medication, for parrots it is easiest to wrap the bird in a towel and syringe medication under the tongue and they will lick it up. For non-hooked beak birds, it is easier to syringe the medication into the side of the beak or directly down the throat.

## FEEDING



Image from: youtube.com

Adult birds that come in sick will generally need force feeding (see section on caring for sick and injured birds). Meat eating birds can be force fed by placing a small ball of meat in the back of the throat, the beak is then held closed and the throat rubbed until the bird swallows. Birds such as parrots and pigeons will need crop feeding.

Baby parrots can be syringe fed by placing a syringe into the side of the beak then syringing the food across the beak at the same rate as the bird swallows the food. Parrots can also be spoon fed using a teaspoon with the sides bent up, these spoons can also be bought from a pet supplier. To spoon feed, hold the tip of the spoon to the end of the beak and lift the spoon to pour the food into the front of the beak. This is to be repeated until the crop is full. Alternatively, parrots can be crop fed using a metal crop needle. The birds species specialist or vet can show you how to crop feed.

Pigeons can be crop fed or what is called glove fed. Pigeons can be crop fed using a soft flexible plastic tube roughly 10 cm long fitted to the end of a syringe. Pigeons are ideal to learn to crop feed on as they don't require a metal needle and have large

throats, it is almost impossible to cause harm to the pigeon when crop feeding. To glove feed, fill a small bottle or small jar with warmed liquid pigeon food. To the top of the bottle or jar place the palm of a rubber glove and secure with a rubber band. Take some scissors and make a hole in the glove large enough to for the pigeon's beak into. Place the pigeon's beak into the hole in the glove and tip the jar or bottle upside down, the pigeon should drink the food. Glove feeding can be messy which is why crop feeding is preferred, always clean the bird after feeding. The crop volume of both parrots and pigeons is roughly 5% of their body weight in mL, for example a 100g bird has a minimum crop volume of 5mL. Feed the bird this amount as a minimum however, if the bird wants to take more then continue to feed until the crop is full.

Meat eating birds such as magpies, ravens and magpie larks are very easy to feed and can be fed using a skewer or tweezers. Alternatively, your fingers can be used to place the food in the birds mouth. High bite risk birds such as raptors should always be fed with a skewer or tweezers. These birds should be fed a minimum of 15% of their body weight each day, if the bird wants to take more than this then offer it.

For small baby birds fed a liquid diet such as swallows and martins, it is easiest to feed using a pipette or dropper. Small birds when fed solid foods such as puppy kibble or meat can be fed using a toothpick as their beak is too small to offer it with your fingers. All baby birds should be fed from dawn until dusk.



Image from: Marian MacLucas

# BIRD DIETS, CARE & REHABILITATION

## GRANIVORES

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### PIGEONS AND DOVES



Photo credits: wikipedia.com

e.g. crested pigeon and peaceful dove

#### **Captive diet.**

Babies - Granivore mix (Passwells hand raising mix or Vetafarm neocare. If Wombaroo is used, then Vetafarm probiotics must be added) warmed to 36-38°C

Adults - Budgie seed, chopped greens, peas, and corn

Baby Birds can be crop fed or glove fed until fledged. Once fledged then these birds can be weaned. To initiate weaning offer-soaked budgie seed to begin with, the bird will start to pick at it rather than eat it so the bird will still require hand feeding. Once the bird starts feeding hand feeding can be gradually cut back by one feed per day until completely weaned.

#### **Feed frequency.**

- For an unfeathered bird is 2 hourly from dawn till dusk
- 4x per day for a feathered bird
- 2 times a day for a fledgling providing it is self-feeding

Always make sure the crop is empty before feeding, it is easy to feel the crop as when full there will be a predominant bulge in the neck.

#### **Rehabilitation.**

In the wild, pigeons feed on seeding grasses and are typically ground feeders. General seeding weeds such as barley grass and wild oats can be collected and scattered on the floor of the aviary.

Budgie seed and chopped greens can still be offered but should be scattered along with the seeding grasses and not fed in a bowl.



## PARROTS



Photo credits left to right: wikipedia.com, Bonny Honen, pinterest.com

e.g. sulphur-crested cockatoo, galah, Adelaide rosella

### **Captive diet.**

Babies - Granivore mix (Passwells hand raising mix or Vetafarm neocare. If Wombaroo is used, then Vetafarm probiotics must be added) warmed to 36-38°C

Adults - Parrot mix (large for larger parrots such as galahs and small for smaller parrots such as rosellas), leafy greens and mixed vegetables

Baby parrots will gape for food and are very easy to syringe feed, alternatively they can be crop fed. Birds should be fed a minimum of 5% of their body weight per feed until fledged when they can be weaned. To initiate weaning, offer small, soaked parrot seed, the bird should gradually start picking at it. You can also offer finely chopped greens. Continue hand feeding until the bird is completely self-feeding.

### **Feed frequency.**

- 2 hourly for unfeathered babies
- 4x a day for a feathered babies
- 2x daily for fledged birds that are also self-feeding to some degree

It is important to make sure the crop is empty before feeding.

### **Rehabilitation.**

In the wild parrots eat a variety of seeds, these include seeding grasses, tree seeds such as gum and wattle seeds and cereal crops, for rehabilitation it is necessary to collect these. Branches containing tree seeds can be hung in the aviary to simulate where they are found in the wild while grass seeds can be scattered on the ground. Oaten or wheaten hay can be spread on the floor of the aviary, this contains the seed heads of these cereal crops and can simulate wild foraging behaviour. Alternatively, pea straw can be spread then parrot mix can be scattered through it.

# INSECTIVORES

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## SWALLOWS, MARTINS AND WILLIE WAGTAILS



Photo credits: wikipedia.com

e.g. welcome swallow, tree martin, willie wagtail

### **Captive diet.**

Babies - 2 scoops of Wombaroo insectivore mix, 1 tsp baby apple puree, ½ tsp glucose powder add water until a runny consistency and warm to 36-37°C

Adults - 1kg mincemeat, 2 cups Wombaroo insectivore mix, ½ cup of baby puree

Babies will gape for food and are very easy to feed with a pipette, dropper or small syringe, they will take roughly ½-1mL of food at a time. Babies need feeding often and are very time consuming.

### **Feed frequency.**

- Unfeathered babies need feeding every 15 minutes
- Every 20 minutes when feathered
- Half-hourly for fledged birds

When weaning offer mealworms and small crickets and any small garden bugs, the movement will attract the bird's attention and they will gradually show interest in self feeding. Also offer the meat mix as an alternative supplement however it will be the insects, they go for first.

### **Rehabilitation.**

These birds in the wild catch flying insects off the wing so it is essential to attract small moths and other flying insects to the aviary. This can be achieved by placing a small battery powdered led light in the aviary which will attract insects, also dried gum leaves hung in the aviary will attract small moths. Supplement insects should also still be offered as well as meat mix. Once the bird can catch flying insects it can be released.

## SPOTTED AND STRIATED PARDALOTES



Photo credits: ebird.org

e.g. spotted pardalote, striated pardalote

### **Captive diet.**

Babies - 1 scoop of Wombaroo insectivore mix, 1 scoop Wombaroo nectivore mix, ½ tsp glucose powder mix to a runny custard consistency and warm to 36-37°C

Babies and adults - 1 scrambled egg, 2 scoops of Wombaroo insectivore mix, slightly warmed for babies

Babies will gape for food and are very easy to feed, they can be fed liquid food using a pipette roughly ½-1 mL, if fed the egg mix, they will take food off the end of a toothpick. These birds are also very time consuming.

### **Feed frequency.**

- Unfeathered babies need feeding every 15 minutes from dawn to dusk
- Every 20 minutes when feathered
- Every 30 minutes when fledged

The egg mix is used for weaning, these birds are fairly slow to wean therefore will require hand feeding until they show interest in picking up food.

### **Rehabilitation.**

In the wild these birds primarily eat lerps and insects, often ants in trees. For rehabilitation it is best to find gumtree with lerps and hang these branches in the aviary, these will also attract insects. Where this is not possible, mist a gum branch with water and place in a garbage bag, add a few scoops of Wombaroo nectivore mix and shake. This will encrust the leaves with a fine coating of nectivore mix which will also attract insects, these branches can be hung in the aviary. Continue to offer the egg mix as a supplement.

## MAGPIE LARKS

### Captive diet.

Babies and adults - 1kg ground chicken frames, 2 cups of Wombaroo insectivore mix, ½ cup baby apple sauce or soaked puppy kibble dipped in baby apple puree

Baby birds will gape and can be fed using a toothpick or just using your fingers.

### Feed frequency.

- Unfeathered birds every 30 minutes
- Feathered birds fed hourly
- Fledged birds can be fed 4x per day

Birds will eat roughly 15% of their body weight per day. These birds are very easy to wean, you can offer meal worms or crickets and their movement will attract the bird's attention. Meat mix can be left in the cage between feeds and the birds will eventually show interest and start self-feeding. Another method is to offer a ball of meat too large for the bird to just gulp which it will ultimately need to drop, the bird will then gradually learn to pick at the dropped ball of meat. Until you know that the bird is self-feeding properly, continue to hand feed.

### Rehabilitation.

For rehabilitation it is important to offer a range of insects, these can be collected garden insects or crickets, mealworms and cockroaches can be bought. Lining the floor of the aviary with pea straw can also help attract insects to the aviary and also provide something for the bird to forage in.

## AUSTRALIAN MAGPIES

### Captive diet.

Babies and adults - 1kg ground chicken frames, 2 cups of Wombaroo insectivore mix, 1/3 cup calcium carbonate can be added to boost calcium levels in deficient birds or soaked puppy kibble

Baby birds will gape and are very easy to feed, food can just be given to them on either a skewer or by hand and they will take it.

### Feed frequency.

- Unfeathered babies require feeding half-hourly from dawn until dusk
- Feathered birds require feeding 2 hourly
- Fledged birds require feeding 4x per day

Weaning is easy, magpies wean very quickly. Food can be placed in their cage, and they eventually show interest and start to feed. Mealworms, crickets, and other garden insects can be given also, the movement attracts the magpie's attention, and they start to pick at them. Magpies should be fed a minimum of 15% of their body weight per day.



Image from: Bonny Honen



Image from: Bonny Honen

### **Rehabilitation.**

Magpies need to learn how to forage for insects, pea straw can be spread on the ground to provide a medium to forage in and this will also attract insects into the aviary. Insects need to be given and thrown throughout the aviary to encourage foraging however will need to supplement feed with a captive diet.

## **KOOKABURRAS**

### **Captive diet.**

Mice, small rats, insects, one-day-old chicks

Baby kookaburras will gape and can be fed pinkie mice when unfeathered increasing in size as the bird grows. Kookaburras are whole animal feeders so it is preferred that they are fed their food whole however, mice and rats can be cut up to feed. Fledged birds can be weaned by offering moving insects, this will also teach them how to catch live food. It is against the law in south Australia to feed live rodents, frozen rodents can be purchased at most pet stores and reptile shops.

### **Feed frequency.**

- Unfeathered kookaburras require feeding every 30 minutes
- Every 2 hours when feathered
- 4x per day when fledged



Image from: Bonny Honen

Never feed a kookaburra mince, they have very short tongues, and they are unable to remove the mince when it gets stuck in their beaks.

Adult kookaburras will not self-feed when captive, they will require force feeding 4x per day when captive. Force feed cut up mice or rats, these can be dipped in egg to help them slide down.

To wean a kookaburra, offer live insects and size appropriate rats or mice.

### **Rehabilitation.**

Kookaburras are ambush predators which means they sit up high and pounce on their prey, prey should be placed on the ground to encourage this. Kookaburras can also be supplemented with insects; this will encourage foraging. Kookaburras are very territorial birds, adults in care must be returned to the wild within a week of being in care during breeding season and 9 days outside of breeding season. Raised babies must be released as soon as rehabilitated, all birds must be released exactly where they were found or are otherwise unreleasable.

## TAWNY FROGMOUTHS

### Captive diet.

Mice, rats, insects, one-day-old chicks

Baby tawnys will gape, if they don't, they have hair like feathers on top of their beaks which when brushed will encourage the bird to open its beak. Tawnys are whole prey feeders so it is best to offer them the whole animal although cut up animals can be offered. Unfeathered tawnys should be fed whole pinky mice, the size can be increased as the bird grows. Adult tawnys are notoriously resistant to self-feeding when captive and will require force feeding 4 times per day, it is easiest to feed cut up rats or mice. When weaning tawnys offer moving insects, this will attract the bird's attention, size appropriate rats or mice can be placed on the floor of the cage and the bird will eventually show interest.



Image from: Bonny Honen

### Feed frequency.

- Unfeathered tawnys require feeding every 30 minutes
- Every 2 hours when feathered
- 4x per day when fledged

### Rehabilitation.

Tawnys are ambush predators and should have their food placed on the ground. Offer insects as well as size appropriate prey so that they can learn to catch moving prey. Tawnys are nocturnal so are very sedentary during the day, it is best to offer older birds' prey at dusk, before bed and first thing in the morning. Offer insects at night-time when the bird is most active. Tawnys should be released at dusk and should be released where found.

## CROWS AND RAVENS



Photo credits: wikipedia.com

e.g. little raven, little crow

### Captive diet.

1kg ground chicken frames, 2 cups of insectivore raising mix, 2 cups of mixed vegetables (peas, corn, carrot etc.) plus rats, mice, day-old chicks, insects

Baby crows and ravens are very easy to feed, they will gape for food, and you can use your fingers or a skewer to feed them. Corvids are omnivores and have a vast diet so it is best to offer them a variety of food from a young age which will help with rehabilitation later on.

### Feed frequency.

- Unfeathered babies require feeding half hourly
- Feathered chicks require feeding 2 hourly
- 4x per day for fledged birds

Crows and ravens wean fairly quickly and easily, place food in their cage and they will gradually show interest and self feed. Offer insects, a mix of soft fruit and vegetables plus their meat mix. Birds should be fed 15% of their body weight per day.

### Rehabilitation.

Crows and ravens are basically scavengers and have a vast diet which make rehabilitation easy. Offer rats, mice, insects, and roadkill, if you can find a good one, cut up fruit and veggies as well as the supplement meat mix.

## NECTIVORES

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### HONEYEATERS



Photo Credits: wikipedia.com

e.g. new holland honeyeater, white plumed honeyeater, silver eye honeyeater

### Captive diet.

2 scoops of Wombaroo lorikeet and honeyeater food, ½ scoop of Wombaroo insectivore mix, 1 tsp baby apple puree add water until mix is a sloppy custard consistency and warm to 36-38°C for babies

Baby honeyeaters gape for food and can be fed easily with a pipette or dropper, they generally take ½ ml of food per feed.

### Feed frequency.

- Unfeathered every 20 minutes
- Half-hourly when feathered
- Hourly when fledged

Honeyeaters are quick to wean, start by dipping the tip of their beak in the food and holding them until they start lapping. This will introduce them to weaning introduce weaning then it won't take long for them to do this by themselves.

### Rehabilitation.

Honeyeaters primary diet is nectar, in the wild they feed from many different flower kinds both native and introduced species. Offer a large variety of flowers, particularly those found local to the release site. Young birds may not go directly for the flowers initially, to encourage them lightly mist the flowers with water, place them in a plastic bag with a couple of scoops of nectivore mix and shake. This will encrust the flowers and offer a familiar food to what they were raised on to get them used to feeding from flowers.

### WATTLEBIRDS AND NOISY MINORS



Photo Credits: ebird.org

e.g. red wattlebird, noisy miner

### Captive diet.

Soaked puppy kibble coated in a slurry made from Wombaroo lorikeet and honeyeater food, warmed for babies or 2 scoops of Wombaroo honeyeater mix, ½ scoop of Wombaroo insectivore mix to 100mL water feed warmed to young birds

Baby wattlebirds and noisy minors are essentially insectivores when young with the parents feeding mostly insects. To feed break a piece of the coated puppy kibble in half and offer it using a toothpick. If using the wet mix feed using a syringe, babies will gape when food is offered.

### Feed frequency.

- Unfeathered birds require feeding every 30 minutes
- Feathered fed 2 hourly
- 4x a day when fledged

To wean place a dish of the coated puppy kibble in the cage, when feeding take pieces from the dish and offer so they begin to see where the food is coming from then they will eventually go for it. If feeding liquid diet hold the tip of the beak in the food and wait for them to lick it, after being introduced to the food they should gradually start taking it themselves.

### Rehabilitation.

Wattle birds and noisy minors' main diet is nectar from flowers and insects, like with honeyeaters offer a wide range of flowers, these can initially be coated with dry nectivore mix to attract the bird initially. Also offer meal worms, crickets, and other garden bugs. Adult wattle birds need to be released where found, raised birds can be released from the aviary. Adult noisy minors must be released back into the wild within 3 days of coming into care, these birds are so territorial and aggressive that the released one will be killed if left too long. Raised babies must be returned to the wild in large creches although this won't necessarily guarantee their safety against the aggressive wild birds.



## LORIKEETS



Photo credits left to right: wikipedia.com, Lisa Depalo, ebird.org

e.g. musk lorikeet, rainbow lorikeet, purple crowned lorikeet

### **Captive diet.**

Unfeathered and feathered - Passwells hand raising mix or Vetafarm neocare warmed to 36-38°C

Weaning and fledglings - 3 scoops of Wombaroo honeyeater and lorikeet mix or Passwells complete lorikeet, ½ Wombaroo insectivore mix, 1 tsp baby apple puree made up to 100mL

Adults - Wombaroo honeyeater and lorikeet mix or Passwells complete lorikeet

Babies will beg for food and can easily be fed with a syringe. birds should take a minimum of 4-5% of their body weight in mL per feed.

Lorikeets are very easy to wean and unlike other birds will wean when feathered at around 5 weeks of age rather than when fledged. To wean place some weaning food in a shallow dish, a lid from a small jar is perfect. Place the tip of the container up to the bird's beak and slowly tip the container and the bird should drink the food. Gradually hold the container lower and lower until the container is on the ground and the bird should start to self-feed.

### **Rehabilitation.**

The wild diet of lorikeets is nectar from flowers, fruit and occasionally insects.

For rehabilitation it is necessary to collect native blossoms such as gum flowers, bottle brush and grevillea.

To encourage the bird to feed from the flowers lightly mist the flowers with water, place them in a bag with 2 scoops of nectivore mix and shake. This will coat the flowers with nectivore and help the bird to associate flowers with food.

# RAPTORS



Photo credits left to right: Bonny Honen, wikipedia.com, Cheryl Brentson

e.g. nankeen falcon, peregrine falcon, barn owl

**\*\*Raptors are a specialist species and if care is required for more than 24 hours, the species specialist needs to be contacted and these birds should be transferred to a specialist carer\*\***

## **Captive diet.**

Rabbit, rats, mice, day-old chicks, large insects

Baby raptors will take food when offered with tweezers, offer the food initially at the height of the chicks head then gradually offer the food lower and lower with the aim that the chick will learn to pick up the food by itself. Then feathered a baby raptor needs to be hacked.

In brief, 'hacking' is a process where the bird is placed on a perch in a large wooden box at the release location. The box has a small feeding door where food can be given so that the bird cannot see you when feeding. The box contains slots on one side so that the bird is able to see out and a door large enough to release the bird once fledged. The bird is continued to be fed once released until it has learnt to hunt for itself. The aim of 'hacking' is to minimize imprinting and soft release into the wild. Fledged birds cannot be hacked and will need to be raised in an aviary.

## **Feed frequency.**

- Unfeathered babies require half-hourly feeding
- Feathered birds require feeding 2 hourly
- Fledged birds require feeding twice a day

NEVER house a raptor in a wire cage or aviary, this will cause feather damage and render the bird unreleasable until the feathers are replaced which can be up to 2 years. Raptors require specialised housing and equipment. It is best to temporarily house a raptor in a cardboard box or soft dog carrier.

## **Rehabilitation.**

Raised babies require release by hacking. Fledged birds need to learn different food types in a very large shade cloth aviary. Birds need to be offered rats and mice of various sizes, rabbit, day old chicks, large insects. Adult birds must be released back to where they were found.

# WATER BIRDS

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## HERONS, IBIS, SPOONBILLS AND STORKS



Photo credits left to right: ebird.org, wikipedia.com, ebird.com

e.g. white-faced heron, Australian white ibis, spoonbill

### **Captive diet.**

1 scrambled egg, 2 scoops of Wombaroo insectivore mix, 2 scoops of chick starter  
Crickets, mealworms, snails, white-bait, mice

These birds self-feed from hatching, to encourage this the food can be placed on a plate and by tapping your finger on the plate this encourages the birds to come and take a look. Another method is to float some of the food in their water dish, this can be messy but will get the bird's interest. Birds should eat around 15% of their body weight per day ad lib.

### **Rehabilitation.**

In the wild these birds forage in the water so we need to recreate this so that they can learn this behaviour. Insects can be dropped into the water as can small fish such as white bait that can be bought from a bait shop. A plastic half clam shell/sandpit makes a good depth pond for the bird to forage, place a brick step inside and out so the bird can get in and out. These birds need to be released at a location where there is a permanent water source which commonly is where they were found.

## COOTS, MOREHENS AND SWAMP HENS



Photo credits left to right: ebird.org, wikipedia.com, ebird.com

e.g. Eurasian coot, dusky moorhen, Australasian swamphen

### **Captive diet.**

1 cup of chick starter, 1 cup of chopped greens (not cabbage)

These birds also self-feed from hatching which can be encouraged to eat in the same way as herons, ibis, spoonbills, and storks. Leave food on a plate or in a dish and allow the bird to feed ad lib approximately 15% of their body weight per day.

### **Rehabilitation.**

The native diet of these birds includes native grasses, reeds, algae, and clover which can be collected. Also, they will eat mealworms, crickets and other collected insects which should be given to enable the bird to develop its hunting skills. Birds need to be released at a permanent water source.

## DUCKS



Photo credits: wikipedia.com

e.g. pacific black duck, wood duck

### **Captive diet.**

Duck or chick starter, mealworms, crickets and other insects, green vegetables chopped up except cabbage

Ducklings also self-feed from hatching, they can be encouraged to eat by tapping their dish or throwing their food in a small dish of water. It is important to note that ducks are not waterproof until they reach around 4 weeks old, they get their water proofing in the wild from the mother's feathers. Do not put a dish of water in the enclosure that they are able to swim in until they are 4 weeks old.

Allow the ducks to feed ad libitum and they will eat roughly 15% of their body weight per day.

### Rehabilitation.

In the wild ducks mostly eat plant material and a few insects. Along with offering captive food, collect native grasses preferably from the release site to supplement the diet. Ducks must be able to swim for release so a large pond is needed in the aviary, a half plastic shell will work. Ducks must be released where there is a permanent water source.

### MASKED LAPWINGS

#### Captive diet.

1 scrambled egg, 2 scoops of chick starter, 2 scoops of Wombaroo insectivore mix  
Mealworms, crickets, collected insects

Babies are self-feeding from hatching, food can be placed on a dish or in the water to initiate feeding. Birds will feed ad libitum approximately 15% of their body weight per day.

#### Rehabilitation.

Masked lapwings often forage on open grasslands as well as in water, to develop the foraging behaviour, pea straw can be spread on the aviary floor and the food including insects can be spread through it. Mask lapwings generally learn to forage fairly quickly. Birds can be released into an area with other masked lap wings either by water or in open grasslands. Adults can be territorial so must be released where found.



Image from: Natalie Logan

### SEA BIRDS



Photo credits left to right: wikipedia.com, ebird.com, wikipedia.com

e.g. silver gull, cormorant, Australasian grebe

**\*\*These birds are a specialist species, if a bird comes in and requires care for longer than 24 hours, contact AMWRRO on 08 8262 5452 or 0411 057 551 or Wildlife Welfare Organisation (SA) Inc. on 0434 114 628\*\***  
Sea birds require very specialised care and handling. For temporary housing, house in a soft dog crate or cardboard box until the bird is transferred to a skilled carer.

#### Captive diet.

Fish, day-old chicks, insects

## IMPRINTING

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Imprinting is where a bird becomes tame through over handling or incorrect handling. Tame birds are not releasable. Imprinting usually occurs in raised babies, to prevent this bird should only be handled when fed and when the cages are cleaned out. Birds should not be kept in the same room where people and other animals frequent such as the lounge room, where possible they should be shut away in their own room.

Birds should not be made familiar with predator animals such as cats and dogs as they will not last long in the wild when released they see them as friendly. Birds that are too tame may land on people which is not desirable. To prevent imprinting in raised birds it is important to crèche with others of their own species, always let your district co-ordinator know what you have in care to make finding a crèche easier. Crèches are also important, so the birds learn how to interact with others of their own species. Never hold or cuddle birds, whilst they may be cute wanting to sit on you it is not doing them any favours when released.

## RELEASE

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Generally, to be released a bird must be able to take off and land, they must be able to land on branches including a moving branch. The flight aviary needs to be set up with at least one branch only accessible through flight so you can tell if your birds can fly properly and have lift, also one perch should move (not be solidly fixed) so that the birds can practice landing on moving branches. Ducks and other swimming waterbirds must be able to swim. Prior to release the birds should be able to forage for their natural foods and recognise the natural foods. See individual notes on rehabilitation requirements under the specific species in diet and care. Adult birds need to be returned to their own territory, where they were found. Many birds are territorial so if the location where found is unknown then the bird is unreleasable. Birds that have come in with injuries or illness must be fully recovered and rehabilitated prior to re-release.

### HOW LONG SHOULD A BIRD BE IN CARE?

Babies need to be in care until they are self-feeding, can fly and recognise their wild food. This is variable depending on how young the bird was when it came in to care and the type of bird it is. In some cases, such as in Australian magpies it is not good to release babies in breeding season so may be kept a little longer than necessary and released once breeding season is over.

- Stunned birds may only require an hour or 2 in care to recover then may be released right away, at most these birds should be in care for a day.
- Cat and dog attacked birds will require 7 days on antibiotics then a further 7 days fitness in a flight aviary prior to release.
- Concussed birds will require 4-10 days in care to recover then a further week in a flight aviary for fitness prior to release.
- Neurological problems are variable and depends on the rate of recovery from the injury causing the neurological issue.
- For sick birds, the duration of the course of the antibiotics followed by a few days of observation to ensure the bird is well followed by 7 days fitness in the flight aviary.
- Broken bones 3 weeks for the break to heal then 3 weeks rehabilitation and fitness in the flight aviary.
- Wounds, how long it takes the wound to heal then a further 7 days fitness in the flight aviary.

It is important to note that not all birds can spend a long duration in care, particularly those with broken bones. Adult birds will be stressed the whole time in care so it may be kinder to euthanise rather than keep a bird for 6 weeks in care.

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Finally, to the birds of South Australia - thank you for giving us such interest, knowledge, and joy. It is a great privilege to assist you however we would prefer that you stay safe and in your trees.

## **Additional References**

Fauna Rescue of South Australia 2012 Rescue Notes

Wildlife ARC Training Manual for Bird Carers 2010

Wombaroo Feeding Guidelines for Native Birds, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 2018

NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Rescue and Immediate Care Manual 2007

# APPENDIX 1 - ILLNESSES AND INJURIES

**Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD)**



Image from: wikipedia.com

**Trichomoniasis**



Image from: Owl Rescue Centre

**Throat Worm**



Image from: facebook.com

**Gape Worm**



Image from: paritpeadia.net

**Avian Pox**



Image from: facebook.com

**Metabolic Bone Disease**



Image from: avianmedicine.net