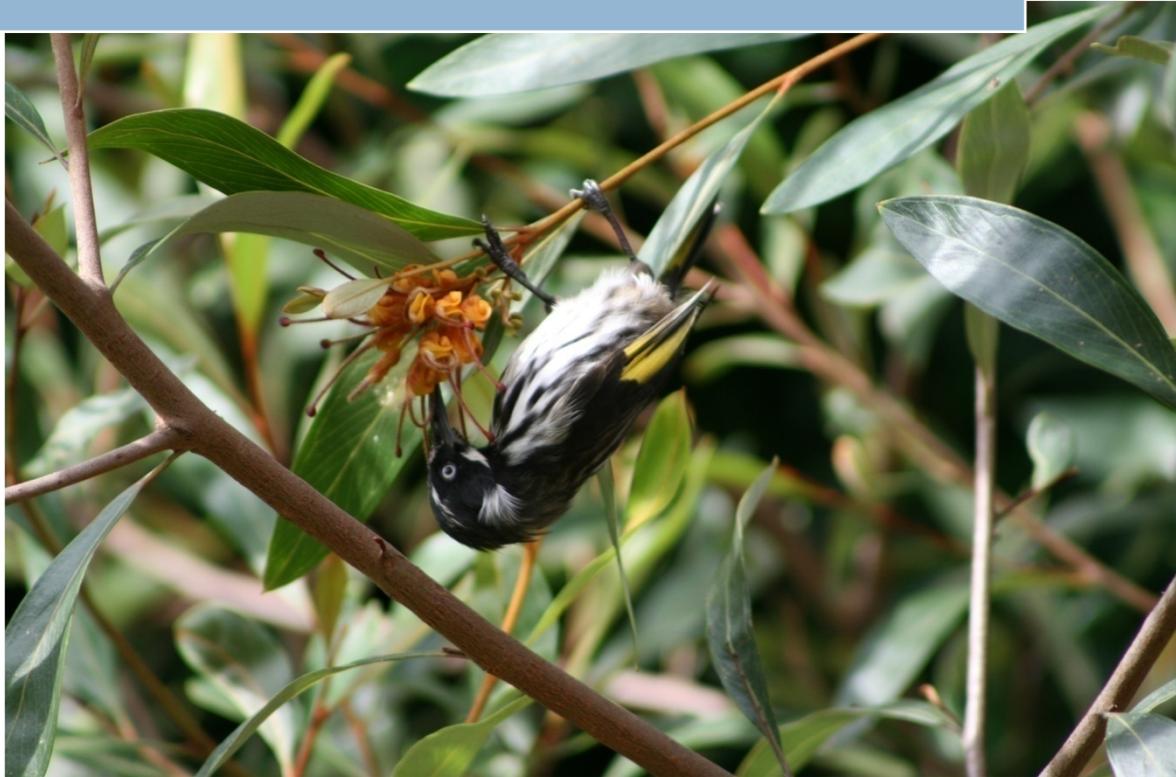


Stress Management of Native Birds



Workshop

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Adult Birds

by Jill Dark

A dictionary definition of stress is:

1. "the force on a body which produce deformation or strain"
2. "a disturbing physiological or psychological influence which produces a state of severe tension in an individual"

Shock is defined as:

"a sudden collapse of the nervous mechanism caused by violent physical or psychic factors".

In these notes I regard shock as an immediate reaction to trauma caused by injury and/or capture. Stress is a long term influence which can be influenced by many factors, including inadequate care. Some species of bird are more susceptible to stress than others.

Careful handling can minimise damage and lead to a better outcome for the bird.

Rescue and Transport

Do not take pets on a rescue.

Handle the bird as little as possible. If it has not been caught try and observe it first. It may be obvious that a wing is broken or perhaps it is suffering from concussion. To catch a bird, gently place a towel over it and place bird and towel in a lined carry cage. Line your cage with a soft material such as polar fleece. Do not use newspaper or a ragged towel. A perch is not required. A small bird may need extra padding so that it cannot move about and risk further damage during transport. Completely cover your cage with another towel.

If the bird is already caught when you arrive check that it is safe and comfortable in the caller's box, and, if so, leave it there. If you have to transfer it use a towel and pick the bird up gently and quickly.

Place the box or carry cage in your car and secure it so that it cannot move during transport.

Turn the radio off and try to keep children quiet.

If it is a hot day place the box in the coolest part of the car but try and avoid draughts at all times.

Shock

All sick or injured birds which come into care are suffering from shock. Unless the bird requires immediate veterinary attention take it home and treat it for shock first.

Symptoms:

Decreased body temperature (bird can feel cold to touch)

Increased heart rate

Fluffed up appearance

Eyes closed or pupils dilated

General weakness and inability to fly

Dehydration

Treatment:

Place the bird in a warm, dark place (lined carry cage or cardboard box) with extra heating (28 - 32°) if the weather is cool. Line your cage with polar fleece.

If using a towel, be careful, as small claws can become caught. Do not use newspaper. At this stage a perch is not required. For heating use a heat pad or a lamp with a 40watt light globe. Place your heat source to the side of the bird, not underneath. The bird can then move away if it wishes. A damp sponge can be placed in the cage to prevent further dehydration.

If the bird is well enough to drink, offer lukewarm "Spark" mixed according to directions. If the bird does not drink of its own accord drip fluid into the tip of the beak with an eye - dropper. Be careful not to drip the fluid directly into the beak as you risk drowning the bird. Leave the bird quietly in the box for 2-3 hours. Do not try and feed the bird during this time.

Parrot Diseases

Beak and Feather Disease

In Cockatoos

- damaged, missing, dirty feathers
- overgrown or damaged beak
- shiny black beak and feet

In Lorikeets

- missing or stunted flight feathers
- missing all or most of tail

Psittacosis

Mostly affects Crimson Rosellas

- Respiratory disease
- Discharge from eyes and nostrils
- Extremely low weight (sharp keel)
- Transferable to humans so exercise extreme caution. Use gloves and mask.

Hexamita

Mostly affects King Parrots

- Extremely low weight (sharp keel)
- Diarrhoea

Housing

For correct housing you must know what species of bird you are looking after, as your cage should be set up accordingly.

The cage should be large enough for the bird to spread its wings at the very least. Small birds should be housed in a smaller cage.

Most birds, except parrots, should be kept in a lined cage to minimize feather damage as well as stress.

Use polar fleece or leaf litter on the base of the cage. Clean your cage regularly.

Perches, branches, flowers, etc should be added according to species to make the bird feel comfortable and safe.

Ground birds, such as quail or Bassian Thrush, need bushes or grass clumps to hide behind. Honeyeaters should have native flowers, small insectivorous birds, lots of foliage to forage in. Owlet-nightjars need a hollow log or box to shelter in during the day.

The cage should be in a sheltered position where the bird can get light and air, but should not be placed in a draft. Towels or fleece can be used to cover part of the cage if necessary.

Do not place your cage on the ground. Very few birds spend their life on the ground and they can feel very vulnerable.

If your cage is outside beware of predators. Goshawks, butcherbirds and any other large meat-eater will kill or terrify your bird.

Keep your cage away from domestic pets. Dogs and cats are perceived by birds as a threat.

Kookaburras and Tawny Frogmouths are often happier in a small lined aviary.

Cages and aviaries should be rat and mouse-proof. This is particularly important when caring for seed-eating birds such as parrots and pigeons.

Feeding

Ideally, suitable food for whatever species you have in care should be available at all times.

Insectivorous birds usually will have to be fed live food, as they do not recognize food unless it moves.

Many birds will not eat if they think you are observing them.

Do not force-feed any bird unless it is absolutely necessary.

Foods such as meat or honeyeater/lorikeet mix, which are inclined to spoil, should be replaced regularly.

Fresh water should be available at all times, both for drinking and bathing. Do not place water under perches where it can be fouled by droppings. Dishes should be shallow so the bird cannot fall in and drown.

Pre-release

Make sure your bird can fly before you release it. It should be tested in an aviary big enough to fly in. It should be able to fly up from the ground as well as horizontally.

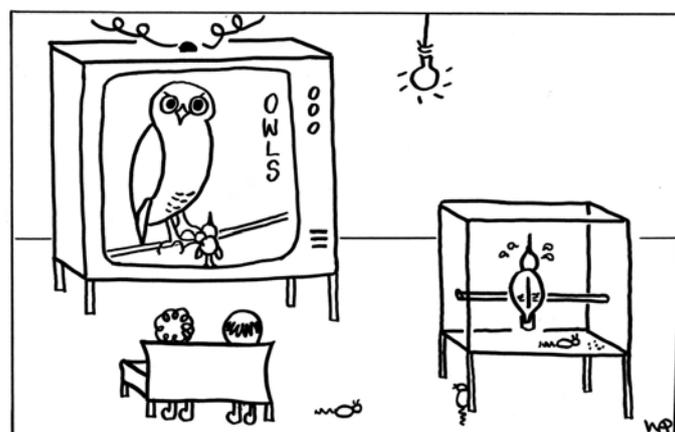
Release

Do not keep birds in care any longer than necessary.

Adult birds should be released back into their own territory, where they were originally found. This is very important for territorial birds, such as kookaburras or magpies. If released into the wrong territory they could be killed or chased away by the owners.

Diurnal birds should be released during the day, nocturnal birds at night.

Feed birds before release.



Stressed !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Who me.....?

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Young Birds

by Lynda Hyde

Hatchlings/Nestlings –

These birds are totally reliant on their parents for food, protection and shelter. They are in rapid development phase. Most of their energy is going towards growing.

When a bird is separated from its parent by:-

- falling from or being removed from nest
- animal attack
- weather conditions
- unsuitable environment

It can Result in Energy being rapidly lost, when:-

- the bird becomes cold or hot
- distress calls are used
- there is a lack of food
- injury occurs

These stressors retard growth while the bird tries to keep itself alive.

Before coming into care they could have already experienced multiple stressors

more Stressors can then kick in with:-

- Change in diet
- Loss of parental care
- Loss of natural environment
- Loss of siblings

Rescue

Make sure that the bird is kept warm; use a polar fleece 'nest' to keep the bird snug, cover small chicks lightly with a soft tissue. Avoid additional heat too soon, as you can easily over heat.

Housing

A pet carrier or similar for unfeathered or pin feathered chicks, a heat source may be required (alongside, not under)

Feathered chicks require a larger area, even when they are still in the nest. A suitable size for the size of bird, i.e. a lined budgie cage for wrens, thornbills, finches. Larger lined

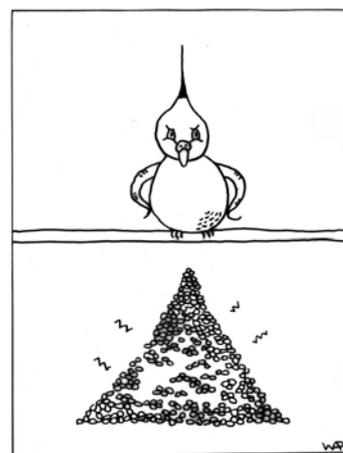
cages for magpies, wattlebirds etc. Place polar fleece on the floor and arrange foliage around the nest, chicks need enough room to preen, stretch their wings and legs, and to be able to perch when the time comes. Keep out of drafts in a quiet location, away from pets and people. Fresh air and filtered sunlight is essential for growth and health.

Feeding

- It is important that chicks are positively identified before feeding.
- Do not force-feed, chicks should be bright and gaping. (Pigeons do not gape)
- Chicks are fed during the day, dawn to dusk.
- Healthy chicks should be let rest for an hour in the middle of the day
- Small insectivorous birds, wrens, thornbills etc require feeding at 5 - 15 minute intervals, larger species less often .
- Grain eating birds; parrots, pigeons, finches are fed 4 to 10 times a day depending on species, after the crop has almost emptied.

Hygiene

- Keep a strict hygiene regime at all times
- Clean any spilt food from feathers and around beak .
- Remove droppings immediately.
- Check feet and vent regularly.



Room service here sucks!!

Fledglings.

Still dependent on their parents for food and protection, newly fledged birds spend most of their time waiting to be fed, preening, exploring and experiencing the elements. When in care we need to mimic this environment, an aviary during the day with plenty of foliage, perches and water for bathing. It may be necessary to put very young or weak, birds in a smaller cage overnight in a more controlled environment, especially if there is only one bird.

- buddy birds with others of same age and species, a single bird can easily humanise
- soft release with support feeding is recommended, but only where there are correct habitat and conditions .
- do not release birds that are still begging or using begging calls, unless they have been adopted by same species adults and are able to fly strongly.

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Managing Stress in Water Birds

by Leigh McKechnie

Reasons Water Birds come into Care

Separation from parent (This in itself has many causes. It is possible to reunite chicks with parents)

- Injuries sustained from Motor Vehicle Collision
- Loss of Habitat
- Weather Conditions
- Disease
- Injuries sustained from Animal Attack
- Human Actions, (Can be well intentioned and sometimes not)
- Entrapment
- Unsuitable Environment
- Entanglement (sometimes causing serious injury)

Symptoms of Stress/Shock

'Preservation Reflex' - a compromised bird appears healthy by exercising its capacity to mask distress.

- Loss of motor skills
- Fluffed up appearance
- Loss of appetite
- Little or no attempt to preen feathers
- Dirty or dishevelled feathers
- Bird is cold to touch
- Loss of colour in beak/legs
- Tail bobbing and panting
- Easy to handle and does not put up a fight or protest
- Pacing cages/aviaries
- Distress peeping in chicks calling for parents
- Abnormal droppings
- Boredom – environment unstimulating

Managing Stress – Rescue

Birds will become stressed not only because of their health being compromised but by being in contact with humans.

- A lined rescue cage helps to protect birds from being further compromised by feather damage.
- Limit visual stress by providing a good quality covering for the cage that blocks out light.
- Stable flooring supports the bird by preventing slipping and sliding about. No smooth/hard surfaces and nothing that has threads for claws to be caught in.

- Source of heating at one end or side of the cage (when bird is immobile) allowing the bird the chance to escape the heat if it gets too hot.
- Stabilise the cage in transit by securing it with a seat belt.
- Eliminate potential stressors that impact the senses such as music, human voices, smoking...

Stress Management and Immediate Care

When possible prepare the tools you will need for immediate care upon getting the bird home.

- Keep the bird in a dark, quiet and warm environment.
- Limit handling. If you believe the bird may have a broken limb/wing take it to a vet who knows how to examine the bird without causing further damage.
- Keep to the following order – Gently allow the bird to increase temperature, Rehydrate, then when there is improvement offer some food.
- Assume that all birds are compromised/stressed and initially need rehydration, even ducklings and birds that may not appear to have anything wrong with them.

Stressors in Captivity

Compromised health – the bird is sick and/or experiencing pain from injury.

- Energy being directed into recovery
- Loss of parental care and/or social group
- Change in diet
- Loss of natural habitat
- Human contact (affects all the senses)
- Unfamiliar or distressing noises e.g. pets, television, music, voices
- Unfamiliar smells
- Poor hygiene

Housing

- Varies with age, degree of mobility and manner of injury/sickness.
- Adults can be kept in water bird friendly aviary – with access to clean water for preening, eating and keeping nostrils healthy (Dirty nostrils can lead to respiratory disease)
- Natural flooring i.e. dirt, grass, mulch and leaf litter so to avoid bumble foot while also encouraging natural behaviours such as foraging.
- DO NOT use hay or straw as bedding for water birds as this can result in a respiratory disease called Aspergillosis.
- Provide secure hiding areas for ducklings and compromised adults.
- Access to unfiltered sunlight for Vitamin D.
- Protection from predators both domestic and wild.
- Heat sources for ducklings and compromised adults should be available BUT ALWAYS give the birds the option of moving away from the heat. No heat boxes.
- Remember Wood Ducks mainly graze for food and Pacific Blacks need to feed off the water by dabbling.

Ducklings

DO NOT allow ducklings under the age of 3 weeks to swim or get saturated - this can result in pneumonia and death. In the wild their mother has a gland from which she waterproofs the ducklings to protect them. At this age provide shallow sources of water only (Depth of nostrils is a good guide)

- Give birds access to sunlight each day (Bunny hutches are good)
- Older Ducklings can drown and therefore need a non-slip water source with easy access in and out.
- Provide ducklings with a shallow dish to the depth of their nostrils so that they can clean them and avoid respiratory complications developing.
- Mother duck broods ducklings at approximately 32 degrees. Appropriate heat sources include heat pads and lamps with 40W globes.
- Remember to avoid heat stress give them an area that they can escape to away from the heat.
- They require something to cuddle up to/under in order to mimic being close to mum and siblings.
- Refrain from over handling them.
- Always try to buddy up ducklings this increases their chance of survival.
- Smaller birds require space don't be tempted to limit this. In the wild they cover considerable distances.

Masked Lapwings - Chicks

- Similar to ducks/ducklings with regard to heat, flooring.
- Keep water sources shallow.
- Provide lots of insects and allow for the bird to forage for food – make it interesting.
- Chicks have especially vulnerable legs and need natural flooring that is level.
- Protect the wattles and feathers by housing in lined aviaries and cages – distressed chicks and adults can damage these body parts on mesh.

Limiting Stress upon Release

Release can be a stressful time for birds, particularly those raised in captivity that must now learn many things that cannot be taught by humans. It can be a very steep learning curve for these birds as they try to integrate socially, become independent feeders, understand dangers in the wild and learn how to fly which often results in injuries for some who are clumsy at first.

- Birds raised in captivity ought to be soft released and monitored during their transition. Numerous members have suitable soft release sites with appropriate habitat and existing populations of each species.
- Release adult birds back in the region where they came from – some mate for life and this practice limits the spread of disease.
- Observe the bird once released for as long as possible to ensure it is managing.
- Choose a time in the early morning make sure the weather is suitable.
- Feed the bird before release.
- Make sure the bird has good mobility prior to release. © Leigh McKechnie 2009

Polar Fleece

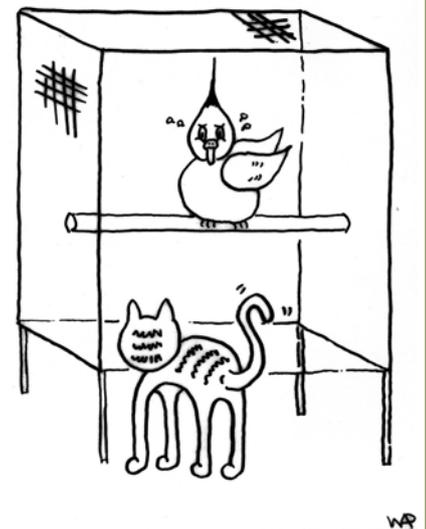
This fabric comes in a vast number of thickness colours and qualities. It is ideal for use in bird care by providing.

- Comfort
- Warmth
- Lightness
- No frayed edges or loops
- Holds shape, doesn't compact down
- Washes well, dries quickly
- Can be cut into various sizes without the need to hem
- Hydrophobic, holds less than 1% of its weight in water when fully soaked and simultaneously is highly breathable.
- Environmentally friendly. Some brands are made from recycled plastic PET bottles.

Be Prepared

Before examining your bird prepare a well lit area and assemble the things you may need

- Spark - rehydrating fluid
- Dusting powder - for mites lice, flat flies
- Saline solution
- Eye dropper for administering fluid – plastic or glass
- Syringe
- Tweezers
- Scissors
- Magnifying glass
- Tissues and good quality paper towels
- Cotton buds (ear)
- Mask and Rubber gloves
- Pre boiled water
- Micropore tape
- Polar fleece / towels



Some birds start to recover or develop quite quickly. Have their next accommodation ready, for a stress free transition.

- Padded cage
- lined cage
- suitable perches
- heating
- foliage
- food
- water

Stress Management of Native Birds



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Cartoons by Wendy Pepper

Photos by Lynda Hyde

These workshop notes remain the property of the authors.

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