

Rehab Easy Reference Sheet

Caring for Birds

There are over 750 species of birds native to Australia. Native birds can be found in all types of habitats in South-east Queensland. We have a variety of both nocturnal and diurnal birds, sea and water birds and migratory species. Native birds account for approximately two-thirds of the wildlife that require rescue and care.

Do I need a Permit to care for birds?

Yes. You will need a REHABILITATION PERMIT to care for birds.

A Rehabilitation Permit can be obtained from a licensed wildlife care group such as Wildcare.

Remember all Australian native wildlife is protected in Queensland. You cannot keep them without an appropriate Licence.

Do I have to do any training to care for birds?

Yes. Birds have specialised dietary and housing needs. They often come into care due to illness, injury or as a result of being orphaned. You must have a good understanding of their anatomy and biology, be able to learn to recognise signs of injury and illness, as well as gain confidence in providing emergency care for them.

In Wildcare, you will need to complete the following training workshops in order to care for birds:-

- Orientation Program – compulsory for all members
- Rescue and First Aid for Native Wildlife (Basic) - compulsory for all members
- Wildlife Habitat and Plant Identification
- Native Birds (Basic)
- Native Baby Birds

Is caring for birds difficult?

Caring for common species of native birds is an excellent place to start as a wildlife rehabilitator. Most common species are relatively hardy and suitable for new carers. Adult birds require minimal commitment (other than feeding, cleaning and medicating) however like all of our native wildlife, they do have specialised requirements.

Remember:-

- Native birds are either **nocturnal** or **diurnal** so there is sure to be a particular species that will best fit in with your lifestyle.
- Native birds have a **varied diet** – you must be able to obtain and provide their natural diet every day.
- One of their greatest **predators** is domestic pets – they must be housed away from your pets to not only reduce stress but to ensure that their natural fear of these animals is not diminished. Remember their survival in the wild is dependent on it!
- Baby diurnal birds need to be fed regularly throughout the day and we need to imitate this feeding schedule when hand-raising them. However they do sleep all night, unlike baby marsupials!
- Older juveniles, sub-adults and recuperating adult birds are a great place to start for new wildlife rehabilitators.

Once you have cared for a variety of the more common species of native birds, then you may decide that you want to move on to caring for more specialised species or younger baby birds.

Remember, we raise to RELEASE!

We must care for wildlife in a way that ensures their survival once returned to the wild.

What equipment do I need to care for birds?

Birds need to be housed and cared for during rehabilitation to prevent further injury, prevent escape, minimise stress and to allow them to display their natural behaviour.

A few things we must consider when housing birds include:-

- Many birds require only short-term care to enable them to recuperate from minor injuries. These birds require smaller cages and enclosures to minimise flight and allow them to heal.
- During the final stages of rehabilitation, birds will often require access to a large flight aviary to enable them to develop their muscle tone and flight skills. Some wildlife volunteers specialise in this final stage of rehabilitation.
- All enclosures must be suitable to the species of bird being housed and must include suitable natural branches and other fixtures (such as ponds for water birds) to imitate as closely as possible their natural habitat.
- Enclosures must be snake and rodent proof.
- A variety of feeding bowls will be required including stainless steel coop cups for holding food and water.

Below is a brief overview of some of the equipment that birds require. The Wildcare bird training workshop and manual covers their requirements in more detail.

Rescue Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of cardboard boxes, pet carriers and cages in a variety of sizes suitable for different species • Clean, plastic buckets for reuniting baby birds with parents • Clean, second-hand towels to line transport carrier/boxes
Orphaned Birds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding equipment (syringes, tweezers, small feeding bowls) • Artificial bird nests (such as ice-cream containers, small cane baskets) • Small pet carry cage • Verandah-style small aviary/cage • Branches for perching and water containers for holding fresh vegetation • Specialised heating equipment (if caring for baby birds)
Adult Birds <i>Critical Care Stage</i> <i>Intermediate Care Stage</i> <i>Pre-Release and Final Rehabilitation Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid wire mesh enclosures with sturdy branches lined with shade cloth to prevent wing damage • Coop cups for water and food • Small water containers for holding fresh vegetation • Size of enclosures will depend on the species of bird but will range from 0.5m L x 0.5m W x 0.5m H to 0.8m L x 0.8m W x 0.8m H • As above • Size of enclosures will depend on the species of bird but will range from 1.5m L x 1.0m W x 1.0m H to 2.0m L x 2.0m W x 2.0m H • Fittings will depend upon the species and are outlined in the Wildcare bird training course and manual • Large outdoor aviary that must include adequate amount of shade with some areas where access to sun is possible • Size will vary depending upon species but will range from 4.0m L x 2.0m W x 2.0m H to 6.0m L x 3.0m W x 2.0m H • Enclosure must include a variety of natural branches and adequate space for flight practice • Coop cups for water and food • Large water containers for holding fresh vegetation

Critical Care Stage - designed to reduce an animal's level of physical activity for a short period of time and to provide easy access for monitoring, treatment and feeding.

Intermediate Care Stage – allows sufficient space for some physical activity while enabling the animal to be readily caught for monitoring and treatment.

Pre-Release/Final Rehabilitation Stage – allows an animal to regain better physical condition, display natural behaviour, acclimatise to normal weather conditions and reduce human contact.

The measurements for enclosures listed above are sourced from the *Code of Practice – Care of Sick, Injured and Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland* (EHP). In some circumstances, Wildcare's housing requirements exceed the CoP suggestions.