

Aviary Caretaker

ARRIVING ON TIME AND CONSISTENCY OF ATTENDING SHIFTS

- The shift occurs on the same day every week
 - *Occasional time off can be accommodated*
- Shift starts at 9:30 am when the volunteer attends a check-in meeting with staff
- Shift ends when the volunteer has completed their routine checklist
- Typical shifts are 3-4 hours
- A commitment to volunteering in the Aviary Caretaker program for a minimum of 1 year

INCLEMENT WEATHER

During certain times of the year, weather prohibits some cleaning activities and volunteers from being able to do their shifts safely. It is your responsibility as a cleaner to check the weather forecast for the time of your shift. If the temperature is at or below 35°F, please skip your regular shift. If you come in for cleaning at this temperature, we will ask you to rake a portion of our trail. The hoses will be frozen, and staff will not be able to move the birds.

If there is inclement weather your shift may be cancelled, otherwise it is your choice to determine what is best for you. If it is snowing or thunder storming and you are nervous about coming in for your shift, please stay home. However, you should still follow the directions below if missing a shift due to weather conditions.

ABSENCES

In the event of an absence (planned or otherwise) the appropriate staff should be notified by the volunteer.

If needing to miss a shift within 48 hours of the shift, volunteers should call the Rehabilitation Center line at 704-875-6521 x 125 and leave a voicemail. The voicemail does not need to state information other than who they are and what shift they will be missing. You should also email the RBC team in case of any miscommunication.

If missing a shift for a planned absence or outside of the 48-hour window, volunteers should contact the RBC team via email.

Email: rbc@carolinaraptorcenter.org

EMERGENCIES

If an injury occurs to either guest, staff, or bird, notify staff immediately. Call the Rehabilitation line.

CELL PHONE USAGE

Should be kept put away when in sight of visitors. *Exception- Using your phone to fact check or play some media to enhance the visitor's experience.

Volunteers should always appear approachable and ready to assist visitors.

COMMUNICATION WITH VISITORS

As a volunteer, you are always a representative of CRC to the public. When you are out on the display trail caring for the birds, a visitor may stop you to ask a question. You are an important part of the visitor's experience and will want to make it a positive one. Please use the following guidelines when answering the public's questions.

1. Never raise your voice at a visitor.
2. When people ask a question, if you do not know the answer, just say, "I don't know that's a great question!" or refer them to another volunteer. Never, ever make up answers. Distributing incorrect or misleading information to the public can give our organization a bad reputation and it can also cause people to be misinformed about raptors. Ask staff for more information if you are not sure of an answer.
3. If you have read something in a book, on the Internet, or saw something on TV, do not assume it is true. Ask a staff person before giving the information to the public. You would be amazed at the amount of inaccurate information regarding raptors.
4. If you do hear another volunteer tell the public something that to your knowledge is incorrect, wait until they have finished talking, then take them to one side and ask the person where they got their information. (Even if it is a volunteer who has been here longer than you.) If neither of you is sure who is correct, ask a staff person. If you do not feel comfortable questioning another volunteer, tell a staff person what you heard and who said it so that the information can be verified. Remember that this is not a judgment of who is right or wrong but a continuing commitment to EXCELLENCE in ALL we do.

PERSONAL VISITORS

Friends and family should not "hang out" with you while you are volunteering.

Why? Volunteers should be engaged and focused on their tasks.

Volunteers with personal visitors must check in with Visitor Services staff. Personal visitors must always remain on public trails and are not allowed access to education trails, rehabilitation trails, or trails behind enclosures.

BIRD BEHAVIOR

RBC volunteers are encouraged to voice their concerns about a birds' condition, behavior or weight to senior Bird Care Staff, an Education staff member or Rehab staff member. If they feel that verbal concerns are not addressed adequately and promptly, use written communication with RBC members or via email if you remember at a later time.

Cleaning with a bird inside:

When cleaning enclosures with birds inside, careful consideration should be made to ensure that cleaning strategies do not place excess stress on the birds. Stress may be caused by over-stimulation, or distress from being placed in a situation which causes fear or loss of control. Some of the signs of stress may include but are not limited to; tight grip on the perch, panting,

biting, dilating pupils, loose stools and/or watery mutes, feathers pulled in tight to the body, wrists held slightly away from body and wings drooping, “whiny” vocalizations, gular fluttering, and escape and avoidance behaviors – such as quick darting look or crouching. Other behaviors such as hackling, hissing/clacking, mantling, are also indicators of stress that are to be avoided.

To avoid these behaviors, caretakers should be aware of the bird's location and behavior throughout the cleaning process. Birds should be given enough space to safely fly or move away from the caretaker or any tools at all times. Working in a clockwise or counterclockwise motion, ensuring to move tools and cleaning supplies carefully, should minimize instances that a bird may feel trapped.

Caretakers are not allowed to forcibly remove birds from areas to clean. This includes but is not limited to; shaking perches, walking abruptly/in close proximity to birds, spraying them with a hose, using the rake or other tools to move birds away, etc. If a bird does not move from a perch/area on their own, cleaning of that area will be postponed.

Below is a chart with the course of action to be taken based on bird behavior when cleaning enclosures.



Bird Health and Wellbeing

Wild animals instinctually mask injuries and illnesses to prevent predation in the wild. Aviary Caretakers must be diligent, keen observers of all collection animals. Subtle changes in behavior can be key indicators of illness. A visual and behavioral assessment should be performed of each animal during every shift. Each animal is an individual, and Caretakers must learn what is “normal” for each animal. Report any evidence of illness, injury, or abnormal behavior to the Bird Care Staff immediately.

Common signs of injury may include:

- Lethargy or laying down
- Closing one or both eyes
- Lameness or limping
- Wing droop

LOCKS AND LATCHES and DOUBLEDOR SYSTEM

Enclosures are secured with both an outer lock and with latches. Latches are generally located by the door handle on the inside and outside of the door. Some doors which are warped or have gaps that a predator could crawl through will have additional latches to secure the door. When entering an enclosure with a bird inside you will always unlatch the door to enter and then latch the door behind you to keep the bird from escaping. Always lock the enclosure when you leave even if the bird is not in the enclosure. Should you encounter a lock which will not open WD40® is located in the RBC room in the cabinet under the computer.

All enclosures have a system of two doors that prevents the escape of birds while caretakers are entering/exiting enclosures. These areas are known as a "double door system/area" or "keeper area". At least one set of doors must be latched shut at all times during entering or exiting. When the caretaker is fully inside or outside of the enclosure, both doors should be latched/locked.

Report damaged locks and latches to senior staff and record it in the “Maintenance Log.” In case of a bird escape, senior staff should be notified immediately. Refer to the protocol for Escaped Animals.

INSPECTING ENCLOSURES

Providing our animals with a clean, safe habitat is critical for optimal welfare. Caretakers should inspect the enclosures for any signs of disrepair.

The following should be reported to Bird Care Staff and recorded on the “Maintenance Log” located in the Resident Bird Care Building:

- Missing turf on perches
- Loose or rotten posts/perches/walls
- Exposed nails or screws
- Missing large amount of substrate
- Broken latches/locks
- Holes in a wall or roof
- Signs of predator entry
- Damage to signs

CLEANING ENCLOSURES

Introduction

We all enjoy living in a clean and tidy environment, and our birds are no exception. A clean habitat is necessary for good overall welfare for an animal. By keeping enclosures cleaned and disinfected frequently, staff and volunteers at CRC can provide birds with an environment that is free of debris, bacteria, and unwanted illnesses. To maintain healthy habitats, all enclosures should be cleaned at minimum of once each week.

To prevent the spread of germs and zoonotic diseases, all staff and volunteers should wash their hands frequently as well as any tools used in the cleaning process. Items should be thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected. Tools used during this process should be dedicated solely for the task of enclosure cleaning and not cross contaminate with other items.

Cleaning Supplies

Simple Green— Simple Green is an environmentally friendly, non-toxic, and biodegradable cleaner used to clean bird enclosures. Simple Green is the only approved cleaner for cleaning enclosures. It can be used to aid in scrubbing of surfaces such as walls, perches, and substrates. After spraying objects with Simple Green, allow the solution to sit for one minute and then rinse off thoroughly with water. Simple Green should always be diluted at a ratio of 1 cup:1 gallon and should never come into direct contact with birds.

Pellets:

A pellet, in ornithology, is the mass of undigested parts of a bird's food that some bird species occasionally regurgitate. The contents of a bird's pellet depend on its diet, but can include the exoskeletons of insects, indigestible plant matter, bones, fur, feathers, bills, claws, and teeth. Owl pellets, unlike our other birds of prey at Carolina Raptor Center, can contain full skeletons of their prey. These pellets are used for educational purposes and should be saved. Owl pellets can be set to dry out in a designated area after cleaning. Pellets from other birds of prey (hawks,

eagles, falcons, vultures, etc.) can be thrown away with other debris from cleaning as they do not contain the skeletons.

* Please note, only DISPLAY owl pellets will be saved as ambassador owls do not usually receive whole prey items.

Feathers:

Molting is the process of a bird shedding old, worn feathers to replace them with fresh plumage. A molt can be partial (replace only some of a bird's feathers) or complete (all replaced at once). The time it takes to molt varies for different species and birds may molt up to several times a year. After molting, these feathers can be found in enclosures. They can be large and/or small in size.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA), is a United States federal law, first enacted in 1916 to implement the convention for the protection of migratory birds between the United States, and Great Britain (acting on behalf of Canada). The statute makes it unlawful without a waiver to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or sell birds listed therein as migratory birds. The statute does not discriminate between live or dead birds and grants full protection to any bird parts including feathers, eggs, and nests. Over 800 species are currently on the list.

At CRC, there are numerous birds that are considered "Non-native" and do not fall under the protection of this act. The feathers of these birds that are in "good" condition (intact, smooth, and clean) are used to promote CRC in our gift shop, guest experiences, and as programing tools. The feathers of the following species should be collected and placed in the proper receptacle, labeled accordingly.

- Eurasian eagle owl
- Chaco owl
- King vulture
- Lesser yellow-headed vulture
- Red-legged seriema
- Laughing kookaburra
- Lanner falcon
- Saker falcon
- Ground hornbill
- Grey crowned crane
- Hooded vulture
- Andean condor

Hoses:

All enclosures have a hose nearby to use for spraying down enclosures and refilling water pans. Nozzles of hoses and handles of hose pumps should be placed in the "off" position and wrapped up in an orderly fashion before putting tools away. When cleaning, the hose may be placed through the side of the enclosure/mesh material to allow easy access into the enclosure. The hose may also be placed through the doorway of the enclosure only IF the double door system is able to be in place.

Perches:

Perches and the surrounding areas should be clear of all debris (leftover diet, guts, leaves, fecal matter/mute, etc.) scrubbed, cleaned/disinfected*, and washed off thoroughly with water. Cleaning/disinfecting* solution must be rinsed off completely to prevent contamination of a bird's food or contact or ingestion of chemicals. Perches that are decomposing, missing artificial turf, have become smooth, or missing, should be reported to senior staff, and recorded on the

“Maintenance Log” sheet located in the food prep room. Perching must be approved by staff before replacing in enclosure. Volunteers may not change out perching in enclosures.

Brick/Rock Areas:

Leftover food should be removed from the enclosure prior to cleaning. All designated food areas as well as other bricks, large stones, etc. must be thoroughly cleaned/disinfected*, scrubbed until debris (guts, leaves, fecal matter/mute, etc.) is removed, and rinsed. Cleaner/disinfectant* chemicals must be washed away completely to prevent contamination of bird food or accidental contact with the chemicals.

Raking:

Raking is used to rake up debris (pine needles, leaves, feathers, etc.) into piles to collect and discard. Once these items have been raked into piles, they should be bagged and discarded into the trash. During the raking process, caretakers should be careful not to throw away large amounts of substrate that may have been piled up with the debris.

Raking is also used to even out and rotate the gravel/substrate in an enclosure. By rotating the substrate, caretakers can increase the rate of decomposition and break up debris, thus leading to a cleaner environment for the animal.

Substrate:

All substrates should be cleaned, disinfected*, and rinsed off thoroughly. Debris such as leaves, and pine needles should be picked up and thrown away. Fecal matter/mute should be broken up with a rake or brush, disinfected*, and rinsed off thoroughly.

Substrate should lay evenly on the ground of the enclosure. If a small amount (1 or 2 buckets of pea gravel) is needed to level out an enclosure, caretakers may collect gravel and bring it out to the enclosure. Caretakers should report to senior staff if an enclosure requires more substrate than the above amount.

Bath pans:

Enclosures should contain a bath pan of minimum dimensions necessary to allow the individual to submerge and bath freely without bumping its wings on the sides of the pan. Bath pans should be cleaned/disinfected*, scrubbed, and rinsed thoroughly before filling with fresh water. Bath pans should be kept full, to within one inch of the top, for easy bathing access. Special considerations may need to be taken for birds that have an amputation or physical injury, preventing them from moving easily in and out of the bath pan.

Bath pans will not be filled if the temperature is below 35 degrees Fahrenheit. Pans at this temperature should be flipped over and leaned against the side of the enclosure.

Roofs

The roofs of enclosures should be inspected during the cleaning process. Roofs should allow sunlight to pass through as well as provide safety for the birds from outside elements and predators. Caretakers should look for any holes in predator proofing material as well as anything that may affect the integrity of the roof and report to senior staff if found.

Leaves, smaller sticks, gumballs, etc. can be cleared off by the individual caretaker. For Volunteers, debris can be cleaned off by using a hose to spray it off the roof. If large amounts of debris remain after hosing, volunteers should notify staff. Staff may then use a ladder to get on top of the roof and brush the items off with a rake or remove them by hand.

Walls

Walls of the enclosure should be inspected during the cleaning process and any sign of damage should be reported to senior staff. Caretakers should make notes of signs of rotting, holes, attempted predator entry, etc.

For cleaning purposes, walls should be clear of all debris (guts, leaves, fecal matter/mute, etc.) scrubbed, cleaned/disinfected*, and washed off thoroughly with water. Occasionally algae will accumulate on walls, and it will turn green. If this happens, notify senior staff and a group may be scheduled to help.

Additional Cleaning of Display Enclosures

Display enclosures are seen daily by the public and have additional requirements to maintain the standards of CRC.

- Signage/Railing – All signage and railing to enclosures should be free of debris, scrubbed, cleaned/disinfected* and rinsed off thoroughly.
- Trail - The public trail in the immediate area of the enclosure should be raked to remove excess leaves, branches, sticks, etc. This will aid in keeping the trail tidy, as well as providing guests with a safe area to observe our birds.
- Doors/locks - Debris should be cleaned off doors and locks to keep them operational.