



International Association of
Avian Trainers and Educators

POSITION STATEMENT

COLLECTION PLANNING

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BACKGROUND

Facilities house birds for a variety of purposes including exhibits, breeding, or presentations/shows. Collection planning is the process through which the facility's future plans and goals are evaluated and decisions are made regarding acquisition or disposition of birds.

POSITION

IAATE strongly recommends all facilities have a collection plan.

IAATE strongly recommends a thorough collection plan includes careful consideration of the following:

- Compatibility with facility mission statement.
- Appropriateness of species and individual birds to further the goals of the exhibit, program, or presentation/show.
- Available space.
- Animal welfare.
- Proper housing.
- Funding.
- Social dynamics of birds within the enclosures/exhibits.
- Skill level of staff.
- Compliance with government regulations.
- Climate/environmental factors.
- Breeding potential.
- Alternative placement options.

IAATE suggests all facilities develop a euthanasia policy as part of their collection plan.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

Decisions regarding acquisitions based on the marketability and the popularity of the species can lead to situations in which birds are not appropriate for a particular program or exhibit. A well thought out collection plan can help alleviate costly errors that require staff time and efforts to relocate birds.

A comprehensive collection plan addresses the following:

Compatibility with facility mission statement

In order to present a clear educational message through exhibits, programs, or presentations/shows, chosen species should support the facility's core values and mission statement. For example, some facilities focus on indigenous wildlife, animals from a particular geographic region, or specific taxonomic orders of birds.





Appropriateness of species and individuals to further the goals of the exhibit, program, or show.
A thorough collection plan is based on the facility's goals for the exhibit, program, or presentation/show. Goals may include educational messaging, conservation action, species propagation, or entertainment. Housing and dietary needs, lifespan, social dynamics, and species-specific behaviors should be researched as part of the collection planning process.

Once appropriate species are identified for a collection plan, individual birds' characteristics should be evaluated. Physical condition, history of public interaction, tractability, method of rearing, medical history, housing requirements, age, and social history are all essential to comprehensive collection planning.

Available Space

Adequate quarantine space and appropriate housing based on a particular bird's needs must be available prior to acquisition (see IAATE Housing Position Statement). Dimensions of the theater/presentation area and the proximity of the audience should also be considered in determination of suitable species in relation to behavioral goals.

Animal Welfare

All collection plans, regardless of size, should have in place an animal welfare protocol to evaluate their collection. IAATE recommends each facility include a team of individuals, at various levels, that can fairly evaluate welfare information and make the best decision possible for the collection's well-being. The welfare of the collection should reflect comfort and health. The birds should not suffer from unpleasant states such as fear, pain, avoidance, or distress. Because physical, mental, and emotional states can vary daily, it is important to consider these states in combination with one another over time to provide an assessment of a bird's overall welfare. All birds should be well-nourished, safe, and able to develop and express species-typical relationships, behaviors, and cognitive abilities.

Funding

The cost of the initial acquisition, transportation to the facility, any necessary housing or exhibit modifications, ongoing maintenance, enrichment design and implementation, food costs, and medical care should be calculated to determine whether a bird is suitable for long-term placement at a particular facility.

Social dynamics of birds within the enclosures/exhibits

The natural and individual history of birds to be housed or exhibited in groups should be considered before acquisition. Adequate housing must be available in the event that birds need to be separated. Staff should be available to monitor introductions and compatibility.

Skill level of staff

A comprehensive collection plan includes evaluation of the current levels of staff education and experience. When necessary, staff training and professional development opportunities should be made available prior to acquiring or breeding birds.





Compliance with government regulations

All governmental regulations should be researched and understood in order to ensure compliance when creating a collection plan. In some cases, regulations or policies may prohibit certain species or restrict certain behaviors. Prior to acquisition, certain medical tests may be necessary or specific housing requirements may need to be met.

Climate/Environmental Factors

The collection plan should consider the facility's ability to provide protection from, and access to, weather conditions as well as housing at the appropriate temperature year-round based on a species' needs. It is also important to consider seasonal changes that may limit when individual birds may be exhibited outdoors, transported for programs, or safely flown in presentations/shows.

The facility's ability to evacuate or secure the entire collection must be factored into the collection plan based on the likelihood of natural disasters such as earthquakes, wildfires, or extreme weather.

Breeding Potential

Breeding potential/opportunity should be considered when assessing a bird for inclusion in a collection plan. Reproduction/breeding behaviors may impact collection size, housing, and husbandry needs, suitability for public interactions, handling potential, and social dynamics. If birds are housed together but offspring are not part of the collection plan, protocols should be established for managing breeding.

Consideration should also be given to the conservation status of the species and the facility's participation in managed breeding programs, such as a Species Survival Plan®.

Alternative Placement/Housing Options

A collection plan should include contingencies to accommodate a bird that does not meet the expectations of the acquisition for reasons such as incompatibility with current collection birds, program goals, exhibit focus, or behavioral goals. Strategies may include transfer of the bird from presentation/show to exhibit, relocation to another facility, etc.

Euthanasia

At some point, facilities that house live animals will make decisions regarding euthanasia. It is beneficial to create a euthanasia policy during the collection planning process outlining situations when euthanasia is considered by the facility to be necessary and ethical. Euthanasia can be an emotional and controversial subject; an established policy can promote objective decision-making when animal welfare issues arise.

