



International Association of
Avian Trainers and Educators

POSITION STATEMENT

HOUSING

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BACKGROUND

Shelter is one of the basic components of a healthy life. Wild birds and those under human care require access to appropriate shelter for both physical and psychological well-being.

POSITION

IAATE recognizes housing options and designs are diverse.

IAATE strongly recommends enclosure design should:

- Take into consideration the natural history of the species and the specific requirements of the individual.
- Allow for movement by the individual being housed.
- Allow for light, photoperiod, and ventilation.
- Provide the bird with the choice to access/escape the elements.
- Promote health and safety of the birds, staff, and guests.
- Provide a safe, structurally sound environment appropriate for the geographic region.
- Adhere to all government regulations.

IAATE recommends routine inspection and maintenance of enclosures to avoid bird escapes or injury and illness of birds, staff, and guests.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

Inappropriate housing may result in poor feather/foot condition, injury, escape, illness, or death.

Construction and Materials

Location should be chosen to minimize undue disturbance. The enclosure size will vary with the size of the bird, whether it is flighted or nonflighted, the number of birds occupying the cage, and the traits of the particular species. It should also allow for sufficient movement to accommodate feeding, roosting, and maintenance behaviors without harm to the bird or damage to its feathers. Single enclosures for multiple birds should be large enough for birds to distance themselves from each other when desired.

Housing should be constructed of materials that will not entangle or cause injury to the bird and should be regularly inspected and maintained. Housing should be constructed so that predators cannot enter, and entry of pests is minimized. Material considerations include, but are not limited to coating, toxicity, durability, strength, opacity, ease of cleaning, and insulative property.

When developing a housing layout, possible interactions and disease transmission between neighboring birds should be considered. Shared walls should be constructed so that birds cannot injure or stress their neighbors. When considering non-solid walls, the size of the mesh





and the space between vertical bars or slats should be determined based on the size of the bird.

Enclosures must have proper drainage with substrate that allows for effective cleaning to ensure the health of the birds. The floors must not be abrasive to the birds' feet.

Climate should be considered when designing enclosures and selecting materials. All enclosures should be well ventilated and whenever possible allow access to natural light. When determining light cycles for indoor housing, the photoperiod of the bird's home range should be taken into consideration.

Group Management

When choosing to manage birds in groups, careful consideration should be given to only house non-aggressive individuals of compatible species together. Breeding opportunities within the group should be based on the facility's collection plan. For more information refer to IAATE's Position Statement on Collection Planning.

Perching

An adequate number of appropriately sized perches must be provided for each bird in the enclosure. Perches should vary in size and material. Birds with limited flight ability should have perching designed to meet their individual needs. For birds that chew, such as parrots, all materials provided should be non-toxic. Perching should be easy to clean and replace. Perching choices may include, but are not limited to, natural materials, untreated wood, and wrapped pvc, as well as bow and block perches for raptors.

Bathing

All birds should have regular access to bathing opportunities. Bathing considerations include bath pans for sand or water, water features, misters, and access to natural precipitation. Bath pans and water features should be shallow enough for the bird to easily enter and exit, and be deep and wide enough to take a full bath. Access to misters and natural precipitation should be by the bird's choice. Bath pans and water features should be regularly cleaned. Bath pans should be placed away from walls and areas where feces collect.

Raptors

For raptors that are jessed, whether tethered or not, housing should be inspected to ensure that the bird's equipment cannot get caught or snagged. For more information, refer to IAATE's Position Statement on Tethering.

If birds tend to hang on enclosure walls, alternative materials such as slats, solid walls or vertical bars may be used.





Enrichment

Housing should allow for safe and varied enrichment opportunities tailored to the bird's natural and individual history and should encourage natural behavior when appropriate. For more information, refer to IAATE's Position Statement on Enrichment.

Safety

Shift/secondary containment areas are recommended for birds that may pose a safety concern or escape risk. All bird areas should be secure from unauthorized entry.

