

Disaster Planning and Rescue, Part II

By Mary Ellen LePage

Aviculturists around the globe may experience hurricanes, tornados, straight-line windstorms, floods, earthquakes or fires, and depending on where they live, they may have to endure snow and ice storms in winter or sandstorms in desert locations. Each type of disaster has its own timeline and fury, and each requires its own set of plans to help assist bird owners that may be affected. Bird people should plan for disasters and learn how to rescue their birds and the birds of others.

Plan, Plan, Plan

The first step is to think about supplies that might be needed during any given emergency situation. Transporting birds requires cages or carriers and it may be wise to store pre-assembled or collapsible carriers where they can be accessed quickly. Make sure to equip the carriers with perches and water dishes. A tub that contains towels, nets or gloves may be wise, too, for catching birds that are not so tame.

These things should be assembled and stored now as there may not be time when disaster strikes. If storage is a problem, hang them from the ceiling in your garage. Some people store emergency cages and carriers in the same area as the bird's permanent cage or flight. If cages/flights are locked, key all locks the same, if possible. Otherwise, much time will be lost fumbling for the proper keys.

Make sure birds are easily identifiable through leg bands and/or microchips. You might want to have duplicate records stored elsewhere so they will be retrievable and you can easily prove ownership.

Plan ahead and identify several locations to which birds may be relocated. Find someone with a barn, garage or maybe even a vacant store that is likely to be out of the danger zone and where you will have permission to keep the birds.

Will there be tools needed to get into

cages or catch the birds? It might be wise to set up a tool box for emergency uses, complete with wire cutters and other hardware. Depending on the disaster, a chainsaw may be necessary as well.

Develop an evacuation plan. Obviously, the more birds that will be involved, and the larger they are, the larger the transit vehicle you'll need. If rental vehicles must be used, make sure they have ventilation to the cargo section. Remember, in many emergencies, roads are blocked or police do not allow passage, so rescue vehicles may not be able to get to you. If an emergency is imminent, you need to get out before the roads are closed. Do not wait. Anticipate that the longer you wait, the more gridlocked the roads will be with others trying to evacuate and there may not be any gas, food or water available.

In cases where you do not evacuate, but stay on the property and shelters, you need to plan for your own generator, food, and water. If stocking up ahead of time, replace the supplies of food and water regularly to avoid spoilage. During emergencies there may be long periods without electricity, communication and available supplies. Know your GPS coordinates so rescuers can find you if street signs are destroyed.

Draw up and post your written evacuation or shelter plan in an obvious place so rescue workers can find it if needed. The plan should contain contact information for you and your veterinarian, give instructions for how to catch the birds, which birds can go in the same carrier, how to retain the identity of the pairs, diet instructions and any health issues. Specify and map the location of birds, food and water, carriers, capture equipment, chainsaw and tools. Have a checklist of what you need to take with you.

The decision of whether to evacuate is often made at the last minute. Often this decision includes whether to evacuate the birds. In some storms, the birds may be able to weather it out and this would be preferable over the stress of capture and relocation.

With fire approaching, the smoke danger also needs to be evaluated.

When in doubt, get out! Some disasters do not give sufficient warning to make decisions easily. Remember, your safety comes first. If you need help, contact the American Federation of Aviculture through the main business office at (512) 585-9800 or email them at afaoffice@afabirds.org.

Instructions for Bird Rescuers

Rescue only those birds whose lives are threatened. Solicit experienced bird handlers to help with the rescue. The American Federation of Aviculture is ready to try to locate help for you.

Many times, the hardest part of an evacuation is getting to the area where the birds need to be rescued. Roads may be blocked by police to keep you from entering the disaster area. It will help if you have proof that you are a legitimate rescue team working to obtain access to the area. Your truck or vehicle can be marked with an AFA sign and logo. These magnetic signs can be obtained from the AFA office. You may also get T-shirts or name cards designating you to be an AFA disaster relief volunteer.

Large disaster areas in the United States are supervised by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration Incident Command System. Each disaster has an incident commander who controls the operation. All government disaster workers (police, firefighters, etc.) ultimately report to him or her. If stopped by the police, ask to contact the incident commander or a representative to obtain permission to enter the area.

If you cannot obtain permission to enter the area, there may be locals who can direct you to alternate routes to get to your destination. However, do not risk your life or welfare to enter a dangerous area.

If time allows, determine where you are going to take the birds to safety. Any building that is safe and secure can be used. If

See Disasters, Page 14

2012 Call for Papers

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.
38th Annual Convention
Aug. 16–18, 2012
“Aviculture—Under One Wing”
Omni Colonnades
San Antonio, Texas

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. is a national, nonprofit educational organization established in 1974 whose purpose is to represent all aspects of aviculture and to educate the public about keeping and breeding birds in captivity.

We invite you to submit a proposal to present a paper at our annual convention. Proposals should be submitted in the form of an abstract, accompanied by a brief biographical sketch identifying the author's experience with the topic to be presented and other relevant information. Please consider submitting multiple abstracts as you have the opportunity to give more than one presentation.

- Abstracts will be accepted through Feb. 1, 2012. Receipt of abstracts will be acknowledged and applicants will receive timely updates from the speaker committee.
- If the abstract is accepted, you will be required to sign a speaker's contract and return the contract promptly. A short bio and a current, high resolution photograph is also required. Speakers will not be officially confirmed without receipt of a signed contract. Speakers are required to submit a paper to be published in the convention proceedings and in the *Watchbird*, the official journal of the AFA. Final Papers for the proceedings must be received no later than April 15, 2011 to be included in the convention proceedings.

- AFA will provide a complimentary convention registration package and one banquet ticket to each confirmed speaker. All other arrangements, including guests, transportation and hotel accommodations are the responsibility of the speaker or the speaker's sponsor.

Abstracts are short summaries of the paper you wish to present and should be no more than 250 words. They must include the name of the author(s), mailing address(es), email and all phone contact information for the author(s). Please include the name of your company, organization, aviary or other affiliation. If there is more than one author, please indicate if one or both will present.

Presentations will be allotted 50 minutes and may include a brief question and answer period. Audiovisual equipment will be made available and will be specified in the contract.

Abstracts, biographies and final papers may be submitted by mail, as an email, or as an MS Word email attachment to the speaker chair, or faxed to the AFA office. Please identify it as “AFA 2012 Convention Abstract.”

AFA requires non-exclusive publication rights to the accepted papers to be included in the Convention Proceedings and the *Watchbird*, the official journal of AFA.

Speaker Chairwoman—Georgia Hayes
Phone: 281-852-8403
speakerchair@afabirds.org

American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.
P.O. Box 91717
Austin, TX 78709-1717
Phone: 512-585-9800
Fax: 512-858-7029
www.afabirds.org

Disasters, from Page 13

you have already rescued the birds and need a place to take them, AFA will help you locate places to house the birds.

Have as many carriers as your vehicle will hold, or look for carriers on the premises. You may need a chainsaw, wire cutters and other tools. Look for a disaster plan on the premises. If carriers are not available, crates, plastic storage boxes with

ventilation holes and cardboard boxes can be used. Even paper bags may be used for the small birds.

Have bird nets and towels that may be needed for catching the birds. In your disaster planning meetings prior to the emergency, learn how to catch a wild bird. You may be able to get this training from members of local AFA bird clubs.

Try to identify pairs so they can be repaired after they are relocated. Use markers

to annotate crates or carriers with locations etc. Do not remove any leg bands.

If you are unable to locate food and supplies for the birds, contact AFA for assistance. After evacuation, try to locate the birds' owners and tell them where each of the birds has been relocated.

The American Federation of Aviculture, on behalf of the bird owners, appreciates any help you can give to successfully rescue birds and return them to their owners.