



Vancouver Avian Research Centre

Research - Conservation - Education

VARC Bird Field First Aid Protocol

Protocol for stressed and injured birds:

1. Any bird that appears to be stressed, injured, or is not behaving naturally, i.e. not flying, should be taken to the Bander in Charge (BIC). If the BIC is not immediately available, the bird should be retained in a dark bird bag or covered box until the BIC can conduct the examination.
2. The BIC will examine the bird for injuries while keeping the head covered if possible.
3. The BIC will then treat any obvious injuries or place the bird in a covered box to allow the bird to recuperate. If the condition of the bird does not improve after 30 minutes, the bird should be monitored until the end of the banding session and then taken to Wildlife Rescue Association (WRA) depending on the type and severity of injury. The BIC should also assess whether removing the bird from the park for treatment at WRA will put an active nest at risk (e.g. incubating female with vascularized brood patch).

Treatment for the following injuries:

1. Blood found in mouth
 - I. If blood found in mouth is not due to a minor tongue injury, it should be kept in a covered box until the end of the banding session
 - II. Following the banding session, the bird should be taken to WRA
2. Puncture wound
 - I. If the wound is recent and the cause of the injury is known (e.g. attempted predation) the wound can be flushed with saline solution and the bird can be released if bleeding does not persist
3. Bloody pin feathers or small cuts
 - I. Flush with saline solution
 - II. If bleeding persists, gauze can be taped over the area and the bird can be kept in a covered box until bleeding stops
4. Ticks
 - I. Ticks can be carefully removed using tweezers
 - II. Flush the area with saline solution after removal

5. Conjunctivitis

- I. Any bird with conjunctivitis should be taken to WRA for treatment

6. Air sacs

- I. The BIC should assess the situation to determine whether the bird should be treated or taken to WRA
- II. If it is likely that the bird has an active nest or dependent nestlings the air sac can be punctured and flushed with saline before the bird is released
- III. Alternatively, if the bird is not breeding or is a hatch year bird, it should be taken to WRA for treatment

7. Fractures and Dislocations

- I. A bird with a broken thigh or broken wing should be taken to WRA for treatment
- II. A small break or fracture can be splinted and taped with micropore tape before the bird is released
- III. A dislocation can be flushed with saline solution and taped with micropore tape before the bird is released

Additional Considerations:

1. An updated first aid kit will be kept at the station and should be brought out and ready for each banding session.
2. Only dark coloured (preferably black or dark brown) bird bags should be used to retain any bird.
3. Under normal circumstances birds should be processed in approximately 2 minutes. Trainees should be monitored to ensure that birds are processed in a reasonable amount of time.