

Iowa Bird Owners Respond To Those In Need

Bird community was prepared to deal with flood and tornado damage in Iowa.

By Rachael Brugger

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Iowa Governor, Chet Culver, declared the 83 counties experiencing the storms state disaster areas.

Despite the thunderstorms, tornadoes and flooding that began May 25 across the state of Iowa, few bird owners living there have felt the need to reach out for rescue or shelter assistance.

"It's obvious that those with birds, either pet owners or breeders, have prepared in advance and it has paid off for them," said Fred Smith, coordinator of the Disaster Relief Program at the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. (AFA).

The bird community has pulled together to help those in need of help.

"I am told by a person in charge of all the temporary shelters in Iowa that the "bird people" have for the most part initiated their evacuation plans on their own," Smith said. "There are very few birds that are in need."

The main requests that Smith said he has received have been for volunteer help at temporary shelters caring for animals. Bird owners immediately responded to the need, which, Smith pointed out, usually happens in disaster situations.

Other Iowa-area bird shelters have offered their services but, like the AFA, have received few requests for help.

"It doesn't appear that any birds are having to be rescued or sheltered," said Mike Hutchinson of the Iowa Parrot Rescue in eastern Iowa, an area still battling flood waters. "I have been in touch with just about everyone who would have been involved – humane [societies], animal controls and the State Disaster Command Center. Nobody has any reports of any birds needing help."

The rescue still wants to be prepared to assist where needed and has announced on its website that in order to save room for possible refugees, the rescue will only accept birds that are in a state of emergency until Iowa has recovered from the flooding.

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Brad Baldwin of the QuadCities Parrot Society said he was surprised that he has not received requests for help with the flooding in northwestern corner of the state. However, according to reports from the State of Iowa press office, flood waters in the northern part of the state are receding.

Other major Iowa-area bird clubs and rescues were contacted about their involvement with the flood recovery, but did not return comments in time for the publication of this article. Those organizations include the Mid-America Cage Bird Society and the Avicultural Society of Chicagoland.

Smith said the AFA will continue to be involved with the flood-damaged areas. "There may be more requests for assistance in the future as flood waters rise further down the Mississippi."