

Colorado State University

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Environmental Enrichment of Wild Birds used for Research and/or Teaching

Wild caught birds used for research and/or teaching can be housed in a wide range of settings, from individual cages to large free flight areas. They may be housed indoors, outdoors, or a combination of the two. The most common wild birds studied at this institution include corvids, robins, pigeons, sparrows, and finches. Regardless of the species, housing type, research or teaching goals, these birds must be provided with an appropriate level of environmental enrichment. Key environmental enrichment approaches are:

Social grouping/enrichment Human interactions

All birds are housed socially consistent with study design and compatibility and able to see and hear birds of their own or compatible species unless the attending veterinarian determines that it would endanger their health, safety, or well-being. Individually housed birds must be approved by the IACUC. Compatibility is assessed by the research and veterinary team through observations to prevent animal welfare concerns.

Environmental enrichment

Manipulanda, perches, hides, flight/exercise areas, grooming opportunities e.g., baths, sand, hay.

Small birds (sparrows, robins, starlings, black birds): ability to fly or extend wings, grooming opportunities, group housed, roosts, water bath, hides, nest house, nesting material, and access to natural sounds and sunlight. Studies involve feeding a diet containing test compounds therefore additional feed sources are not appropriate.

Large birds (pigeons, crows): ability to fly or extend wings, grooming opportunities, group housed, shredded paper, balls, roosts, and multiple feed locations. Crows or similar may receive mouse carcasses.

Human interactions

May not be appropriate for wild birds as human interaction is not routine in the wild.

Nutritional enrichment

Opportunities to forage, natural diets, varied diets, supplements must complement standard feed and not lead to nutritional imbalance, dietary insufficiency, or intoxication. Solid floors with hay or straw, hanging feeders, and browsing materials to provide nutritional supplements.

Restraint

Restraint for bird manipulations are described in the approved IACUC protocol. Manual restraint is typical.

Exemptions

Any exemption from the enrichment plan, other than for veterinary concerns, must be reviewed and approved by the IACUC

Resources

1. Institute for Laboratory Animal Research. [*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*](#). 8th ed., (National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 2011.).
2. Standards for Birds Not Bred for Use in Research Under the Animal Welfare Act. Federal Register / Vol. 88, No. 34 / Tuesday, February 21, 2023 / Rules and Regulations. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/02/21/2023-03357/standards-for-birds-not-bred-for-use-in-research-under-the-animal-welfare-act>.
3. AAV Enrichment Tips. <https://www.aav.org/blogpost/1778905/AAV-Enrichment-Tips>
4. Suggested Guidelines for Bird Enrichment. <https://www.aazk.org/wp-content/uploads/Suggested-Guidelines-for-Bird-Enrichment.pdf>