

Crates are not one-size-fits-all

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Zoological Managers of the Bird Department

speaker notes in italics



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abstract:

In the avian world, birds are not one size fits all. Due to the diversity between species, care must be taken when selecting how and what to ship each bird in. We try to ensure that each bird is looked at not only within their species but also as an individual. There are many different styles of crates that can be used for avian shipments and how does one decide which crate is best? There are several factors that staff at the Saint Louis Zoo take into consideration when deciding which crate to use for a shipment and how to prep that crate. The items staff evaluate are: how is the bird being shipped, what type of crate, what size crate, how much ventilation does the crate have, what sort of padding is needed, is the shipment a single bird or multiple birds, and what are the airline guidelines and behavioral guidelines for the individual. Once these items have been addressed, we are hoping attendees will have a baseline knowledge about how to prepare an avian crate for transport and which crates work well for which species.

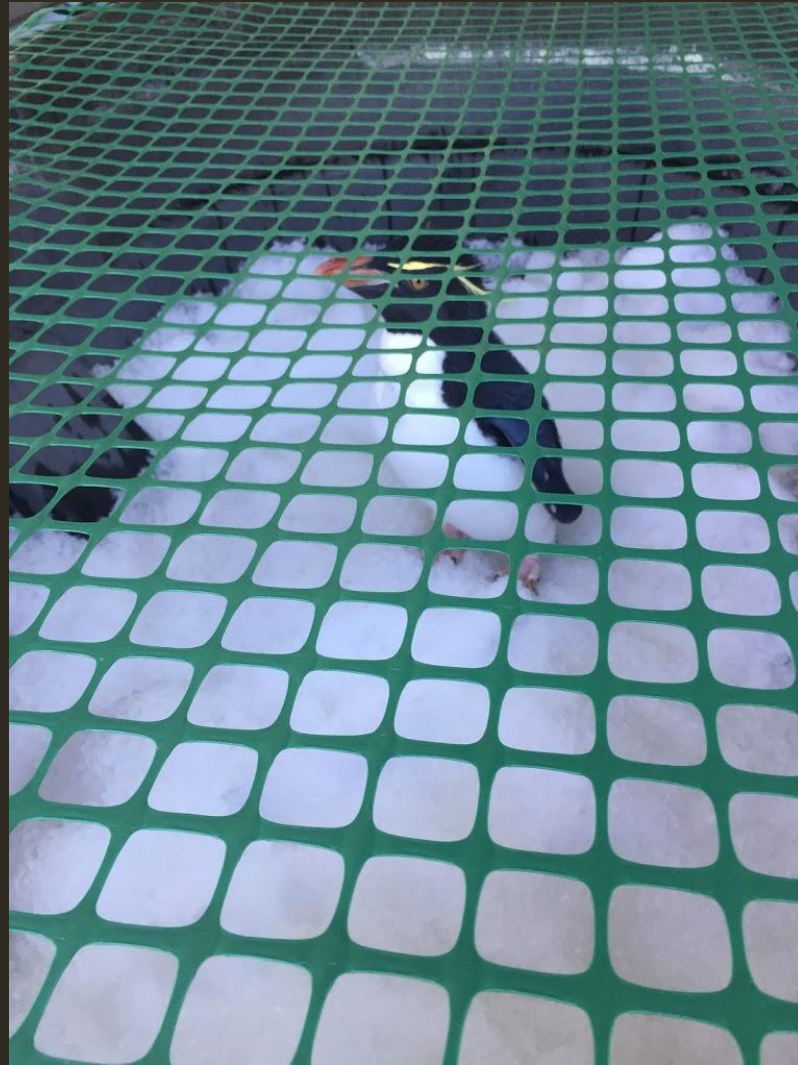
Crates are not one-size-fits-all

- Store-bought crates
 - Sizes and species
 - Modifications
 - Pros/Cons
- Custom crates
 - Sizes and species
 - Considerations in design
 - Pros/Cons



Crates are not one-size-fits-all

- Air Shipping
 - Species
 - Timing
 - Airline Guidelines
 - Pros/Cons
- Ground Transport
 - Species
 - Timing
 - Pros/Cons



Store-bought crates: Sizes

- Sizes
 - 00 – 19”x12”x 14”
 - 100 – 20”x14.5”x14”
 - 200 – 27”x20”x19”
 - 300 – 32”x22”x23”
 - 400 – 36”x22”x23”
- *We group our crates by size into a number system grouping similar sized crates*
- *The number system help us keep track of our crates and who has them and will be sending them back after transport*
- *Sizes are approximate. Different brands and manufacturers produce slightly different sized crates.*



Store-bought crates: Sizes

- Smallest species
 - Golden White Eye
- Largest species
 - Vulture or Swan
- Modifications
 - Perch
 - Mesh
 - Water/food dishes
 - Carpet and/or shavings



- *Other species - ducklings, red billed hornbills*
- *Modifications are similar for any crate.*
- *A perch is placed for perching birds. Perching birds will get shavings placed in bottom of the crate.*
- *You can see that this crate has no mesh for comparison. More about mesh on another slide.*
- *Water/food dishes included for transport, more details on another slide.*
- *Ground birds and ducklings may get a small carpet in the bottom for traction as well as shavings. Often this carpet is ziptied or glued to the bottom of the crate.*
- *Carpet may also be affixed to the inner top of the crate for birds that might be inclined to jump up and could injure themselves on the hard plastic.*

Store-bought crates: Modifications

- Perch
 - Any approved browse
 - Wooden dowel rod
 - Suitable size for species
 - Secure with washers and wood screws



Store-bought crates: Modifications

- Mesh
 - Cross stitch plastic
 - Durable
 - Easy to cut to size
 - Not easily pulled apart by birds
 - Durable fabric
 - Sometimes used
 - Easier for large pieces
 - More privacy
 - Higher risk of coming apart



More details about mesh:

- *Cross stitch plastic mesh that can be bought at any craft store is what we use the most. It is very durable, easy to cable tie to the inside of crates & easy to cut into desired shape. It comes in small sheets so multiples need to be pieced together for larger crates.*
- *Fabric is used occasionally. It's easier for covering holes on larger crates, when you need bigger pieces. It's more opaque, gives bird more privacy.*



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Store-bought crates: Modifications

- Water/food dishes
 - Hang on the side dishes
 - Small cups
 - Combo dish
- *We use a few different types of dishes.*
- *Hang on the side dishes work well and fit through the plastic mesh well.*
- *For smaller crates where those won't fit side by side, we sometimes use smaller dishes that we can cable tie to the door of the crate.*
- *On some occasions, we have used a small portion cup glued to the inside of a large hang on the side dish to serve as a water and food compartment combo.*



Store-bought crates: Modifications

- Carpet
 - Felt
 - Plastic-backed

More Details about carpet:

- *Felt type: tight fibers, low risk of nails getting caught, easy to clean, dries quickly for day to day, multipurpose use, lightweight*
- *Plastic-backed type: very sturdy and durable, more rigid, does not dry as quickly, heavier than felt types.*
- *Use these for long legged birds such as plovers, herons, egrets, ibis. Have also placed in duck crates as well.*



Store-bought crates: Pros/Cons

- Pros

- Easy to clean
- Easy to disassemble
- Variety of sizes
- Overall lightweight
- Easy to obtain
- Multipurpose

- Cons

- Modifications to ship
- Storage space

- *Plastic cleans off relatively easily & can be disinfected.*
- *Can be taken apart if need be.*
- *Sizes are variable, can serve*
- *Lightweight for shipping out & for receiving back from institution.*
- *Easy to obtain - can order online or run to any PetCo/PetSmart*
- *Multipurpose- use for variety of husbandry tasks in the day-to-day: weights, bird moves, awaiting veterinary check up, transport to hospital, etc. We even use them as off-habitat hides, nestbox bottoms for penguins, etc.*



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Custom crates: Dove/passerine

- Dove/passerine
- Design considerations
 - Divided sections
 - Ventilation
 - Weight
 - Carrying, handles
 - Food/water cups
 - Padded top



- *This crate has divided sections between two individual compartments.*
- *It is typically used for shipping doves, small passerines like cardinals, starlings, robins, bob-white quail and similar species.*
- *Ventilation is provided through mesh on sides.*
- *Wood makes these crates durable, but also a little heavy.*
- *Small handles make these safe and easy to carry.*
- *Lid is secured with screws.*



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Custom crates: Barbet Apartment

- Not designed at Saint Louis
- Design considerations
 - Many divided sections
 - Weight
 - Carrying, handles
 - Foam-lined lids
 - Ventilation
 - Food and Water Access



Cannot take credit for the barbet apartment! It was an interesting custom crate so wanted to include it here in case someone might find the design inspiring.

Many divided sections useful in this case to send multiple small birds to the same institution.

This is a moderately heavy crate. It could have been easier to manage if it maybe had handles.

Custom crates: Seriema

- Seriema or similar
- Design considerations
 - 29"x19"x29"
 - Tall for long legs
 - Small holes for ventilation
 - Weight
 - Mesh area for food and water access
 - *Shavings substrate*
 - Handles



Custom crates: Crane

- 32"x19.5"x42"
- Long legged, large birds
- Design considerations
 - Grip strips
 - Small door
 - Mesh for ventilation



Custom crates: Pros/Cons

- Pros
 - Flexibility in design
 - Meet airline guidelines
- Cons
 - Ease of cleaning
 - Overdesign
 - Weight
 - Low multipurpose function

Flexibility in the design of the crate can allow us to make whatever we want. If we need something very specific, our FM team can make it for us in house. If we can dream it, they can make it.



Air Shipping: Species

- Small to large species
 - Cardinals
 - Doves
 - Cuckoos
 - Jays
 - Macaws
 - Vultures
- Consider durability more than the physical size of the bird

When considering air shipping to transport a bird, small and large birds are both good candidates.

Consider individual needs, species tendencies, and general durability of the bird type

More on reasons for ground transport on another slide.



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Air Shipping: Timing

- Season
 - Weather is a factor
- QT Availability
 - Receiving
- Coordinating between institutions
- Never on a Friday



Air Shipping: Timing

- *Season - We don't want to put more stress on already stressed birds:*
 - *We don't ship in the dead of winter or in the hottest week in our summer. Airlines have their own restrictions as well.*
- *Quarantine availability:*
 - *When sending or receiving, institutions work closely with the accepting quarantine unit to assure they can receive the animals.*
- *Between institutions:*
 - *Staff availability, opening of new habitats, vacation season etc. Everyone has a lot going on.*
- *We never ship on a Friday to be sure delays don't get an animal stuck somewhere over the weekend.*

Air Shipping: Airline Guidelines

- Prep for success!
 - Do the research
 - IATA Live Animal Regulations
- Documentation
- Properly labeled
 - Assistant registrar
- Crate is secure
 - Cable ties
 - Metal connections
- Food and water



Air Shipping: Pros/Cons

- Pros
 - Staff time
 - Bird travel time
- Cons
 - Low bird monitoring
 - Stress level
 - More restrictions



Air Shipping: Pros/Cons

Pro:

- Staff time is less than a ground transport. Still have to prep and get it to the airport, but less time directly involved.*
- Flying can be extraordinarily faster than driving. For this reason, flying is the only reasonable mode of transport in some cases.*

Con:

- Avian care professionals are not monitoring your bird. Trust that the airline is handling them carefully, but you cannot intervene if there is an issue.*
- Stress level of the bird could be higher if species is delicate, cannot directly control the transport environment to suit the individual – noise, temperature, etc.*
- There is much more flexibility when wanting to move a penguin for example, can't put ice in the bottom of a crate to be shipped by an airline.*



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Ground Transport: Species

- Delicate, large, or species with special needs
 - Cranes
 - Flamingos
 - Penguins

Large birds with long legs are a concern. Being able to monitor them during transport and make sure they don't injure themselves can be helpful.

We like to drive cranes or long legged birds when possible.

Also easier as the crates are larger and some airlines can't accommodate the crate size



Ground Transport: Species

- Much more flexibility
- Weight of birds and materials not as much of a concern

We prefer to transport penguins by driving because of their temperature sensitive nature.

Can use regular ice instead of ice packs.

Also they are more comfortable with more space



Ground Transport: Pros/Cons

- Pros

- Flexibility
- Constant monitoring
- Adjust if needed
- Multiple birds
- Staff opportunities

- Cons

- Time
- Cost



Ground Transport: Pros/Cons

Pro:

- *Birds constantly monitored by professional staff that knows the individuals. Can make adjustments on the go if needed. Can address a desheathed nail, dumped water dish, etc.*
- *Can send multiple birds along on the same transport. Whether all to the same institution, or another along the way.*
- *Staff has opportunity to gain the experience of a transport. Meet individuals in our field from another Zoo. In many cases have the chance to visit the receiving institution's facilities and learn more about their habitats, care and husbandry.*

Con:

- *Because of time involved driving, many times by both the sending and receiving institutions meeting in the middle. Can be a bit of a constraint.*
- *This also makes coordinating a ground transport more challenging. Both parties sometimes need to find a shared time where they can handle to lose staff for the whole day.*
- *The time the birds are involved in the actual transport may be longer when compared to catching a flight.*
- *Can be must more expensive, once staff time, gas, potential hotels are considered.*



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Thank you!

- Questions?



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