



## Natural Disaster Strikes Hard and Heavy: 2012 Superstorm Sandy affected 24 states

*By Concetta Ferragamo*

**H**urricane Sandy was one of the largest Atlantic hurricanes in recorded history, second to Hurricane Katrina. Sandy's wind span measured some 1,100 miles. Approximately 285 people were killed from Sandy's wrath which spread over seven countries. CNN reported that Super-storm Sandy clobbered 24 States in the United States spreading across the entire east coast, from Florida through the state of Maine. From there the storm went west across the Appalachian Mountains onto Michigan and then Wisconsin. Sandy had the most impact on the New Jersey shore and the New York City areas. As Sandy traveled to Pennsylvania, the super-storm dispersed and died out. Hurricane Sandy hit the United States on October 29, 2012

and did not fully disburse until October 31, 2012.

As with all natural disasters, Sandy was devastating to so many. Homes were destroyed. Businesses were lost. Streets and tunnels were flooded. In many areas power was lost for up to several weeks. This meant that many people had no heat as well. The damage estimated from Sandy has been estimated at over \$71 billion (USD, 2012).

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. has a strong Disaster Relief team comprised of Regional Directors and others who are located throughout the United States. Fred Smith is the AFA Disaster Relief committee chair. The Disaster Relief team expedites response time and notifies local volunteers as need

arises in any given area. If you are in a disaster area and in need of assistance with your birds, or you know of anyone in need of help with their birds, you can call anyone listed on our disaster hotline. <http://www.afabirds.org/drf2008.shtml>.

A message from Disaster Relief Chair, Fred Smith: "I am proud of the work that was done by the Regional Directors and their helpers. By the time the storm passed, we had 'boots on the ground' with Concetta Ferragamo, Ed Maher, Terry Jones, Lanette Raymond, Diane Hyde and Lisa Bono working very hard at making contacts and assessing the need for help. Since Concetta was central in the area, I appointed her as the co-coordinator. Concetta and Eddie did a fabulous job, and along with the state

coordinators and other AFA members they were able to help the public in a time of crisis. This was another instance where AFA worked to help aviculturists in their time of need".

**New Jersey State Coordinator, Terri Jones reported:**

In the wake of Super-storm Sandy, the Jersey Shore and Staten Island were devastated. Entire communities were destroyed, homes wiped away, often leaving nothing but foundations where families once lived. Many people were forced to evacuate quickly and were unable to take their animals with them. But due to the experiences gained in past storms, many shelters now do allow people to bring in pets. The problems arose after the initial evacuation, when people were unable to return to their homes and were forced to move into hotels or look for rental units. These housing arrangements seldom allowed pets.

A plea went out to the New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York Bird Clubs for members who could provide foster care for birds, not only for the short term, but also for an unknown period of time, as many people did not know how long it would be before they could return to their damaged homes or rebuild new ones. The responses were immediate and heartfelt. I was able to develop a list of over 20 people who were willing to offer assistance. It was not only individuals that responded, but businesses



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did as well. Mike Abatto, from Abba Foods, called to tell me he had opened up two rooms in his warehouse and was able to take in as many birds as necessary. He would provide food and cages. Joe Aversa, Route 4 Aquarium, a pet store in Fair Lawn, NJ, rented a huge generator and opened their doors, not only to birds, but to fish, reptiles and other pets that were heat sensitive. (Remember, power was out for over a week in most areas.) Joe also politely refused free food - he said this was his way to give back to his community.

**New York East, State Coordinator, Dr. Lanette Raymond reported:**

Hurricane Sandy will continue to



**Ocean City, NJ on October 29, 2012**

affect parrots and parrot owners on Long Island for some time. Initial evacuations displaced the largest number of parrots and their owners for a relatively short period of time. Many of these were able to return to their homes in time to be radically affected by the subsequent

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and further reaching (in terms of long term inconvenience) ice storm. Electrical and heat outages lasting for up to 2 weeks added a new group of parrots and parrot people to "those in need". During this phase of the combined disaster, the AFA and more locally, the Long Island Parrot Society, LIPS was able to locate and connect members and non-members with resources and fostering options. Additionally and proactively, LIPS solicited volunteers among our email list who would be willing to provide fostering.

A second wave of need was expected and became apparent as "emergency housing" options expired and longer term "temporary housing" was required and acquired by those who were still not able to return home. Where emergency housing was found to be flexible with regard to pets, temporary housing needed to take into account a much longer time horizon, and was far less flexible as a result. A number of parrots in foster care were at this time relinquished to new homes or were fostered for this reason. In both of these phases, providing the parrots with food, toys, cages, play gyms etc., whether they were headed to new families starting from scratch, or back to homes that no longer had a collection of supplies, was a major focus of our efforts.

Going into springtime we expect a third round of displacements, due to reconstruction and renovation projects that were impractical in colder months. These are somewhat less likely to affect parrot owners, but important for the



**Breezy Point, NYC**

parrots themselves who are particularly sensitive to fumes, drafts, airborne particulates, or the like, associated with even relatively minor home improvements. These factors have affected parrots (from budgies to macaws) and flocks (from single birds, to individually caged flocks, to larger aviaries). It is likely that factors like the local economy and its effect on local employment over the course of the coming year will also impact recovery.... the trick is to find ways to ease transitions.

**Message from AFA member, NJ first responder, Lisa Bono:**

What I saw in my community was heartbreaking. What I observed my clients and the bird community do was simply, amazing. Afterwards, as our clients arrived at our shop, The Platinum



**Atlantic City, NJ**

Parrot, I sighed a sigh of relief in just seeing them. People started to gather at the store to talk about what they had been through and to check on others. People started to ask what they could do to help. Donations started arriving, Lafeber's and Zupreem being two of the first to send relief food. Bird clubs and people from other states (and countries) called to see

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what they could do to help. We purchased cages, toys and various items for the birds in the shelters. I hand delivered what I could to people. We left notice with shelter managers in case they needed anything more.

I need to thank the AFA Disaster Relief Team for their help and guidance during such a stressful time. This experience was new to me, but not to everyone at the AFA. Not only were they ready to assist financially if needed, they offered me emotional support which was even more important at that time.

**Commercial member Marc Marone of Parrots of the World shared his Hurricane Sandy and the aftermath experience.**

Marc's store is on Long Island. They had no power for 24 hours, no heat for 8 days and no phone service for several days. He had no power at home so they stayed at the store, "It was more

comfortable." Marc stated that there was constant military patrolling the streets at all times, so there was no fear for safety or security.

Even though he had no power, people kept showing up at his door. He did not turn people away. "This was a crisis and we need to help anyone that we can." Marc related that he had an idea what Noah, from the Bible story Noah's Ark, may have felt like. He had well over 200 birds being boarded. Everything that you can imagine was brought in to him. There were animals stacked in cages and carriers everywhere and anywhere. And when they ran out of cages and carriers he had to get innovative. Keeping in mind that this was a crisis situation and that people had nowhere else to go, temporary holding tanks were conjured up in a split second. As long as the animal was safe and could be cared for the goal was achieved. His studio quickly became a makeshift boarding facility. Some

owners came to visit their pets until the gas shortage struck. Then very few people could visit. The number of boarders grew daily, people now arriving on foot.

Marc mentioned that he worked closely with the local animal shelter. Cats and dogs went to the pound for shelter and everything else came to Parrots of the World for boarding. Marc and the shelter took turns exchanging animals. Marc mentioned that with the gas shortage and limited access to roadways people could not just go wherever they felt like. It was necessary to accommodate the people and help them by transporting their animals to the most suitable location for boarding.

Marc shared a heart wrenching story about a special family. There was a woman that showed up at his door with no shoes on. She had with her a cage that held a Green Cheek Conure and a Goffins cockatoo. They were well behaved cage companions. Her story was

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remarkable and most moving to Marc. The family was from Breezy Point. It was night time and transformers were exploding which caused random fires to break out. She relayed that the sound of the exploding converters sounded like bombs going off. The woman grabbed a kayak and one surfboard and tied them together to create a "kontiki contraption." She placed her two children in the kayak. The older girl was approximately 10 years old and her brother was a bit younger. The woman then placed the travel cage that housed the Conure and the Cockatoo in the kayak with the children. They had three dogs join the children and the birds in the kayak and on the surfboard. The woman then proceeded to pull the kontiki through the dark murky water filled streets which were canals at that point. The only illumination that helped the woman to see her way through to safety as she pulled the kontiki was her burning home

behind her. The family survived and their pets were cared for. They lost their home and belongings.

Hurricane Sandy hit Long Island on October 29, 2012 and that is when the boarders started coming in. It continued for quite a while after that as well. The last boarding animal went home on Saturday, February 23, 2013. There are many families still displaced, so long term boarding had to be developed. Many families have not been able to go back to their homes, and insurance companies have only partially come through for a large portion of the community. Marc said that the businesses that did not get destroyed from the storms (hurricane and then blizzard), are getting destroyed from lack of business. It will take some time for the area to come back to "life" again and until then, businesses will suffer a great deal.

In closing Marc wanted to point out something very important. The animals

adapted well; very well. He did not have any bad experiences. The staff was calm and collected and the animals followed their lead. The animals did not care about where they were or how they were housed in this crisis situation. Temperatures were about 45 degrees and everyone (human and animal) survived just fine. His only challenge was keeping the reptiles warm enough. Marc said that heat packs worked super and recommended them for anyone that needed emergency heat for animals. Marc also shared that when in a crisis situation, panic is not an option. Being prepared mentally is as important as being prepared with supplies. People need to help each other and make the best of every situation. "When Sandy struck it felt like 911 all over again. It was a crisis and we all needed to just do whatever we could do to get through it all."

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