



COURTESY OF JAFET VELEZ-VALENTIN/Hurricane Irene took out power and blocked supplies to the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Project's facility.

When Disaster Strikes, We Can All Help

By Mary Ellen LePage

Recent months have brought what seems like an outbreak of natural disasters. Hurricanes Irene and Lee pummeled the east coast and Gulf states with torrential rains and winds, causing damage and flooding that devastated entire states. While the East coast was drowning, Texas and surrounding areas have suffered from extreme heat, drought, crop loss and numerous devastating fires destroying tracts of land the size of Connecticut. And as if that was not enough, earthquakes have shaken buildings in areas where they are not common. These disasters have caused disruptions of electrical power, road closures and have forced many from their homes in the affected areas.

What happens to our birds when disaster strikes? How can we help? The American Federation of Aviculture's Disaster Relief team stands ready to help with resources donated by our members and associates.

AFA board member and Northeastern Regional Director Concetta Ferragamo had her bird store demolished by the raging floods. She saved her birds by evacuating them the day before the water rose. When asked about her store, she said that "it was horrific." Her store, Parrot Safari Toy Factory, in Binghamton NY, "looks like a bomb went off in there." Despite her own massive losses, Ferragamo is helping other flood victims by being the distribution center for food purchased by AFA.

The Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Project was also hit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rio Grande Field Office, Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Project, has a successful program that has increased the species from a total of 13 wild birds, to 70–80, because of release programs. Additionally, they hold another 320 in captivity. Jafet Velez-Valentin, aviary team leader, reported that, aside from the damage from fallen trees and a blockage on their access road, they needed thousands of dollars in propane to run their generator during the extended power outage.



CHASE FOUNTAIN/TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT/Bastrop State Park forest after September's historic fire, which burned nearly 2 million trees.



ANDREW SANCHEZ/This aviary, although completely destroyed by a fire in Texas, was evacuated by its owner before being engulfed in the flames.

During these catastrophic events, communication is often knocked out and it is difficult to locate bird owners in need of help. After past disasters AFA moved into the affected areas and helped our bird owners with distribution of food (generously

donated by AFA and bird food manufacturing companies), temporary relocation of birds, and cage and facility repair, as well as tree removal. We remain prepared to help today. AFA is a federation of affiliated bird clubs and individual members throughout the country. The members of these local clubs (if they are not affected as well) are ideally suited to identify needs and to locate resources that are needed in their areas.

How to help

We should all be part of the AFA disaster relief effort. Those who are not close enough to give physical help to these disaster areas can still help to restore damaged bird facilities by donating to the American Federation of Aviculture's Disaster Relief Fund. The more you support us, the more we can help others. All donations are tax deductible. Please donate to the American Federation of Aviculture at www.afabirds.org or

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.

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AFA is accepting donations to our Disaster Relief Fund so we will be ready for the next emergency. The birds and their caregivers thank you for any help you can give.