



Checklist for birds of prey visiting your school

Inviting a team of birds of prey to your school to work with the children is a fantastic way of engaging them in the natural world and bringing a specific topic to life. The best bird of prey sessions will not only engage the students and educate them about these incredible birds but they will demonstrate high standards of welfare and knowledge with the birds they bring. Sadly, due to the increase in people offering this service the standards have also dropped with it. It is also worth bearing in mind that cheaper options are not always the safest option despite a tight budget you should expect to pay between £250 – 600 per day for a good quality bird of prey company.

<p>Public Liability Insurance – Make sure you get sent a copy of this prior to the visit taking place – Check the expiry date. You should never entertain a company that does not have it in place. Read the fine details as insurance companies often have specific clauses for Birds of prey like age limits on handling birds.</p>	
<p>Risk Assessments – Make sure these are sent to you before the visit and check that they are specific to your venue and what you have agreed to take place with the birds. All responsible companies should be able to supply these for you.</p>	
<p>Animal Activities Licence - The Performing Animals Licence has been replaced by this stricter piece of legislation. Any organisation using birds of prey for commercial gain must have this licence in place. Check the renewal date.</p>	
<p>Animal Transport Licence (Type 1) – Anyone transporting animals for commercial purposes should also have a Type 1 ATL for journeys over 65km (40 miles) and under 8 hours. Most companies will fall under this. The licence is in place to protect the welfare of the animals in transit and for disease control.</p>	
<p>DBS Check (CRB) – This is at the discretion of the school as we find that most visits will not involve the supplier being left alone with the children or vulnerable adults and take place in a public area.</p>	





<p>Bird certificates – Whilst we would not expect the school to check or know how to check all individual bird certificates it is worth being aware that certain species must by law have a closed ring and an Article 10 paperwork for commercial use. Wild birds of prey or rescued/rehabilitated birds should never be used and it is illegal.</p>	
<p>Monies – There are several organisations with birds of prey claiming to be rescues, sanctuaries or community interest companies. Sadly, we have found these are often the worst offenders for poor standards and they use the rescue title to get work. If you allow the organisation to take donations or charge for a service check is the company registered in anyway. Always check charitable and company registration status.</p>	

If you are not sure about any of the above when trying to book a bird of prey supplier feel free to get in touch with us and we'll happily help. Once you have booked the supplier look at what to expect below.

What to look for or expect

If all the boxes above have been ticked, then you should have yourself a reliable and suitable bird of prey organisation but while they are with you below are a few points for best practice that you should expect from the organisation for the welfare of the birds and the safety of your pupils.

- Make sure you discuss what is going to take place prior to the birds arriving and find out if the supplier might need anything
- If the birds are to be tethered on display they must by law be supplied with water and with a barrier between them and the pupils
- The birds' travel boxes, perches and equipment should be clean and free from faeces. Suitable perches and quality equipment should be used always
- It is not good practice to place tethered birds on raised objects like tables or perch birds on foreign objects for photos
- Pupils should not be allowed to freely walk amongst tethered birds of prey - a barrier should be in place at all times





- The bird's feathers should be clean and not broken. The bird should look alert, content and not stressed by the situation
- Handling should not be allowed by pupils, even for a fee or donation. Being handled by lots of individuals can cause stress for the birds and it encourages the desire to stroke the birds more
- Photography opportunities should not be encouraged as this only exasperates the problem of multiple people handling the birds - It is about encouraging respect for the birds
- Stroking of the birds should never be permitted regardless of what the organisation says as it is not good for the bird's plumage, there is a potential chance of zoonotic diseases, birds of prey are not like dogs or cats – they get no pleasure from being stroked despite what you may be told. If the organisation wishes to show what feathers feel like, the best practice is to use old moulted feathers they have brought with them
- The handling by the organisation should be carried out by trained staff and using appropriate equipment. Sitting birds on their heads or shoulders for show is very bad practice
- Any flying displays indoors or outdoors should be carefully planned – Urban areas can be risky places to fly birds of prey and windows can be very dangerous for birds whilst flying
- Hopefully the information given by the handler will be at an appropriate level for the pupils to understand and be relevant and factual. Some handlers often have the tendency to over dramatize information so don't be afraid to ask questions. If this is the case don't be afraid to point this out to the handler.

We are not asking you to become experts in birds of prey but until legislation becomes tighter on the commercial use of birds of prey your support in using reputable organisations is needed. If you are unsure of any organisation offering birds of prey visits, please contact us and we will be happy to advise you further.

*Raptor Aid
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