

Encounter Experts

Dorian G Drage - Owner/Vice President/Handler
Background Summary

Over twelve years experience in exotic animal husbandry in various professional and volunteer capacities.

Bachelor of Science Degree in Zoology, supplemented with internships in avian care.

Complete understanding of a wide variety of exotic species, and their appropriate care.

Excellent reputation within the Biology community, and extensive network of connections in this area.

Select Experience

Southern Utah University Zoology Research Field Program

Program Assistant and Teaching Aide

For the past four years, I have served as assistant and teaching aide for the Southern Utah University Zoology Field Research Program conducted annually at the La Jolla tide pools in southern California. As program assistant, I help undergraduate SUU students design and adapt research projects dealing with a wide variety of mammalian, invertebrate, and avian species, including: insects, intertidal invertebrates, sea lions, seals, sea anemones, urchins, crustaceans, gulls, turns, pelicans, cormorants, and many others. I participated in the program as a student in 2000.

Utah Division of Wildlife, Cedar Valley Raptor Survey

Research Assistant

As Research Assistant, I worked to spot, identify, and count birds of prey during two separate two-month research programs evaluating the health of diurnal raptor populations in the Cedar Valley of Southern Utah. Birds I successfully identified from a distance included a variety of Buteos and Accipiters. Several owl species were also counted to supplement the raptor population study.

Utah Division of Wildlife, Gunlock Reservoir Songbird

Survey Research Assistant

I assisted with mist-netting, identifying, and banding songbird populations in the Gunlock Reservoir area as part of a complete study evaluating the health of these populations. This study also included a live mammal trapping component, which I assisted in as well.

Best Friends Animal Sanctuary

Intern

As an on-site intern with the "Wild and Feathered Friends" department of the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, I assisted a team of veterinarians in the rehabilitation, feeding, medicating, cleaning, and evaluating of health for re-release into the wild, of a large population of injured birds, including: Great Horned Owls, Prairie Falcons, ducks, geese, ravens, doves, pigeons, and indoor birds such as parrots, cockatiels, and cockatoos. As part of this internship, I also directly shadowed the Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator, and took visitors on tours of the facilities during which I described the animals, their enclosures, and the methods used to ensure high-quality care for the animals.

Southern Utah University Psychology Department

Student Researcher

As part of an "Experimental Analysis of Behavior" course, I successfully conditioned a pigeon to respond to positive operant conditioning, including the use of a Skinner Box, and establishing ad-lib and running weight statistics.

Cary Drage - Owner/President/Handler

Cary Drage's earliest childhood memories are of family pets. Things started out rather conventionally: dogs, cats, and a fish aquarium that came as a gift from a great uncle. Soon, however, the one fish tank grew into six, with occupants ranging from common goldfish to newts, crabs, aquatic frogs, crayfish and salamanders. Before he was ten, National Geographic magazines lay scattered on Cary's bedroom floor, where other boys his age might have had comic books. During junior high, Cary grew to love Biology, Earth Sciences, and Art. He drew, painted, or somehow worked animals into nearly all of his art assignments.

Cary secretly acquired his first pet lizard when he was 16. His parents didn't find out until several months later, when the lizard made an unannounced morning visit to the bathroom where Cary's mother was getting ready for the day.

As an adult Cary has expanded his interest, understanding, and husbandry of the animal world. He has conducted research at the University of Utah and instructed community members in biology and zoology. He is an active member of the American Federation of Aviculture and The Aviculture Society of Utah. Cary served the latter organization in various offices, including President, for over six years. During this time Cary led outreach programs teaching the public about exotic birds at community events and trade shows.

Cary has worked in the pet industry in some capacity for 26 years. For 13 of those years, he managed a Salt Lake City pet store that boasted the state's largest collection of reptiles. Cary oversaw the reptile breeding program, which included exotic Boa Constrictors and Pythons. During this time, he presented dozens of pet shows at schools, Boy Scout

activities, and fairs. He also appeared frequently on television programs, discussing pet care for different types of animals. Later, Cary directed operations for five locations of a large corporate pet store chain, where he worked for 11 years. During this time, Cary enjoyed the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tour the endangered bird breeding program at Busch Gardens in Florida.

Cary is a passionate proponent of responsible pet care and ownership. He volunteers regularly for rescue programs and shelters, and has helped many adoption groups in Utah place hundreds of homeless pets in loving homes.

Cary's own home is always shared with a veritable jungle full of animal friends. In addition to ever-present dogs and cats, at one time or another, Cary's personal menagerie has included spiders, insects, lizards, monitors, snakes, turtles, tortoises, a wide variety of birds, rabbits, chinchillas, guinea pigs, and human children (the most wild and unpredictable animal Cary has ever encountered).

Cary is the proud father of seven children, each of whom shares his passion for animals in some way or another. Cary's oldest is Dorian, with whom he is partners in Creature Encounters.