

Puddles the Blue Goose

COSTUME CARE GUIDELINES

revised 3/1/02

Most Importantly...

Please read the entire guidelines so that Puddles stays healthy and has a long life. There are also important tips to keep the costume-wearer healthy and tips for portraying the image of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Below are some of the most important things you'll need to keep in mind:

1. Hands-off the bill!

Try not to touch the bill of the goose. The yellow will quickly begin to show dirt.

2. Always bird with a buddy.

The costume-wearer/performer should always have a spotter - a second person to guide them and help them because their vision and movement will be awkward.

3. Puddles likes her showers cold.

Wash the costume in cold water, and hang to dry. DO NOT expose to hot water or dryer. The head is not washable.

4. Safe & hangin' out to dry.

Find a safe, secure place to store all of the costume components. Store the head on a shelf, neck down. Hang the body to dry *immediately* after use.

5. Stay Healthy!

You must be in good physical condition to wear this costume. Costume should not be worn in extreme heat or for prolonged periods (20-40 min. max.), driving or operating machinery, performing gymnastics, doing anything that may put strain on the neck, or performing anything that requires vision or mobility.

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Sources:

www.mascot.com

www.mascot.net

Peter J. F. Stobie, Kalamazoo Nature Center

I. Becoming Puddles

A. Before you put on the costume:

- ✍✍ Work with a spotter.
The person in costume will always need to have a spotter--a second person to help them and guide them.
- ✍✍ Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!
Make sure you drink plenty of fluids before the event. Some professional mascots wear camelback style water bags under their costumes, filling them with a mix of ice and sports drink fluids.
- ✍✍ Plan your performance.
20-40 minutes are usually the maximum recommended time to stay in costume. If your event will be longer than that, you need to plan how and where you will give yourself breaks to keep yourself healthy. ***If Puddles is in a parade route - she needs to ride, not walk.*** The costume is too hot to safely walk in a parade.
- ✍✍ Splish splash - take a shower or bath.
This will help keep the inside of the costume clean. **DO NOT COVER YOURSELF WITH ANTIPERSPIRANT!** You need to sweat in the costume to regulate your body temperature. To help curtail the smell, use baby powder on the inside of the costume or some freshener on the outside for the public.
- ✍✍ Dress for the weather.
If you'll be using the costume in warm weather, wear clothing that will help keep you cool, like loose-fitting shorts and a cotton T-shirt. Extra socks and a headband/bandanna are needed to change into. Make sure the headband is on tight so that it won't slip down and impair your vision! Also, have a dry change of clothes for after the event. If you'll be using the costume in cold weather, consider wearing long johns. Choosing polypropylene or another synthetic material will help you stay warm in the costume.
- ✍✍ Check it out.
Take a look at the costume and check its general condition (Is it clean? Any damage?). Check the knees, elbows, and the groin area for wear and tear. Check straps, zippers, buttons, snaps, etc.

B. Trying on the costume

Puddles needs a valet - someone to help you get dressed. Put the costume components on in the following order:

- ✍✍ In hot weather or warm conditions, insert frozen gel packs into the strap-on holders.

- ✍✍ Tights. No socks, unless they are the short kind that won't show over the feet. You may want to consider wearing aqua shoes to give you a non-skid surface inside the slippery feet.
- ✍✍ Body
- ✍✍ Clothing items that go over the costume body (Puddles' clothes). Will Puddles have extra accessories (outdoor gear, binoculars, fishing poll, sash, etc.) appropriate for the event?
- ✍✍ Feet
- ✍✍ Dry band or head band.
- ✍✍ Head - make sure it fits properly.
- ✍✍ Gloves

C. Get familiar with the costume

When you put on the costume, you may be surprised at how it feels. Before the big day, take time to get familiar with the costume parts, one at a time, before putting on the whole ensemble. This will give you time to discover what limitations (lack of peripheral vision, oversize extremities) you will have while in the costume, and to figure out how to move with the various components.

Put the head on. Like a scuba diver submerged for the first time, putting on the components may make you feel a bit claustrophobic. Keep calm, breathe normally, and take your time getting used to the costume. When you try out your new, oversized feet, try walking as if you have on snowshoes, or with a cowboy's swagger. This will help prevent you from stumbling.

Get used to the feel of just walking around and moving your arms and legs. You might want to practice in front of a full length mirror. Use the mirror to practice eye contact and body expressions. (Make sure Puddles' eyes are looking at the public). With the help of a spotter, try moving around the site that you'll be in - figuring out how to move on stairs or around obstacles or in close quarters. Always practice a new move before you go out in public.

For practicing and on the day of the event, a spotter's simple "left", "step up", and "toddler behind you" helps out so much! Think about other things you might be asked to do in costume and practice them (signing autographs, posing for pictures, etc.).

Be aware of any part of your body that might be peeking out of the costume, and any part that seems ready to fall off (a tail, a torn arm). Every hook has an eye! If you look long enough, you'll find the clasp!!!

DO NOT LET ANYONE SEE YOU CHANGE!!! Part of the beauty of a mascot is the mystery of the actor. Before your event, seek out a private room where you can change and store your clothes, keys and wallet. (Ideally, this will be where the costume is hung up to dry before returning it.) Also, you should be able to retreat there in the case of a possible emergency.

D. Acting Up

The most important thing to remember is that your human identity will be set aside for a time. Therefore you have the opportunity to act as someone you're not - Puddles the Blue Goose. This is not a suggestion for causing trouble, but it is a chance for you to portray an ideal character, devoid of faults. Remember that every act, big or small, will be watched by every eye, whether you realize it or not. Make sure your act doesn't get you in trouble!!! If there is a problem, know who to go to before the event starts, and what is the permissible action you can take in questionable matters.

What to Do:

1. Getting clobbered by kids: Walk away. Tell a responsible adult.
2. You get injured during performance:
Conservatively, walk away. Go to your changing room and assess the damage. Inform your contact person as to what happened.
3. Scared Child: Pull your actions in. Make slow, slight movements so that the child feels less threatened. If the child continues to cry, walk away.
4. Hugging/Touching Children: Fear this! Don't let our hand stray to any part of a child (or anyone else for that matter) that could be interpreted as unacceptable. Many mascots have lost their jobs due to "straying hands", and with costumes that have long fingers. You know what this means!!!

What Not To Do:

1. Getting clobbered by kids: Don't retaliate, keep your cool.
2. You get injured during performance: Don't keep your energy level up and damage yourself more. Don't take off your costume, or any part unless it's a dire emergency. If you must do this, you are probably hurt enough to break character. Grab your spotter's sleeve and have them break up any crowd. Have that person shield you as you take off anything you need.
3. Scared Child: Don't push a child to stop crying. Don't sneak up on toddlers. Don't tower over a frightened child.
4. Hugging/Touching Children: When dealing with children, I have always practiced "the head and back" rule. When interacting with them, you either mess up their hair, pat them on the head, etc. When hugging them, it is always on the back, above the belt. (Credit to Rochester Moose)

The E's of Mascotting:

Entrance: Set your mark, with a big entrance. Let people know that you've arrived in style. A noisemaker (goose call) grabs attention. Consider banging on the entrance door before opening it, stomping on the floor, or letting your shoes rap hard and loud against the tiles. Wave your arms. Most of all, grab that attention! Puddles needs her own definitive walk (probably a waddle).

Exaggeration: You're in a huge costume, wearing huge feet, a huge head, and needing a huge ego to fill out the costume. You need to double or even triple the actions you would normally do so that your costume doesn't hide what you're doing. Make sure that you use your whole body. Walking is usually suggested as a march. Try not to drag your feet, but pick them up off the ground. A smooth wobble, a jump in your step, or even a childlike excited bounce adds character to your steps. If you're waving to thousands, make sure the people in the upper rows can see you.

Emotion: Practice a number of emotions-- happy, sad, angry, scared, excited-- in front of a mirror with your head on. Learn where the facial features of your costume are and use them the way any human would. Once you've mastered some emotions using your head and arms, try using the rest of your body as well. Shivering, slow motion, jumping up and down, skipping and elation are great emotions to try. Remember that the costume will hide a lot of your gestures--make sure you exaggerate!

Energy: Mascots aren't expected to run out of gas before they're done. If you're starting out DON'T GO CRAZY. Play it cool--don't pour out tons of energy, but know when to throw the punch line. If you do run out of breath and you can't get to the changing room, move to a chair or a bench and use your arms to keep your motions going while you catch your breath. Don't feel like you have to be Daffy Duck (high-strung) throughout the performance. Remember that Bugs Bunny always got the credit for keeping his head and seeming to have the last laugh!

E. Words of wisdom from a Professional Mascot

If you talk to Mascots who take their job seriously and are good at what they do, the most important part is its character. That is up to you to develop, even if it's just for one day. Here are some guidelines from the Universal Cheerleading Association, with some other ideas added to fluff them up.

When you first get the costume, put it on and take a look at its characteristics. From this you must build your character's attitude. Is it tough, goofy, shy, bashful, erratic, etc.? What kind of feet does it have? How about its tail? Look closely at the features of the head. Does it have a beak, tufts of feathers, eyebrows, etc.? After looking at all these characteristics, ask yourself how each of these play a role in developing your character. Since your face doesn't have controllable expression, you need to use everything else to bring it out.

The most important feature of your character is the walk. The walk will portray your character's attitude. Look at Charlie Chaplin, Groucho Marx, Columbo--any other character that has a unique walk. You can just watch people. Keep your mascot's characteristics in mind and develop a walk unique to it. Remember to try and incorporate some of its natural features specific to the species it's modeled after. I.e., – neck bobs, waddles, wing stretch, etc.

Etiquette:

Never Talk!

It's hard to communicate through the head anyway; your voice gets muffled. Use body language and physical expression to get your message across. Much of your audience will be children, and hearing a weird voice can freak them out.

Use Constant Motion.

You always need to have something moving. Otherwise, you are just a person dressed in an animal suit. A mascot is much more than that. During the National Anthem, I would sway while at attention. Constant Motion, very important!

Stay in Character When in Costume.

All eyes are on you! Even when you are heading to your changing room, you are in character until you are behind that door and it's shut! Never remove your head in public.

Try Not to Use Motions that are Offensive.

Remember who you represent, and those that have to wear the costume after you. Portray a positive character.

Be aware of your fitness and take regular water breaks.

I would go through six bottles of water per game during the hockey season. Try to keep your time in the costume between 20-40 minutes. You passing out is not a positive portrayal of the character.

Exaggerate your Movements.

You are a real life Cartoon Character. Everything needs to be huge. The costume will swallow your movements. When you wave, it should be shoulder to shoulder and across the head.

Props – Simple props are anything you find at the site you are working. I.e., broom, construction cone, newspaper, butterfly net, etc. It is up to you to make this prop into anything you like via pantomime. Advance props are those props that you bring with you to the site. Special bag, squirt gun (if allowed), toy car, bicycle horn, etc.

Working with Children - You can be a child's incredible memory or worst nightmare. Read the situation and always be aware of who you are approaching. Never sneak up

on children under seven. If the situation turns bad, walk away; you can turn around at a safe distance and attempt a wave back. You can't please everybody, but do your best not to be a nightmare.

Working with Animals - Do not approach horses, dogs, or wildlife. You are a very large, threatening thing in their eyes. Avoid them at all costs.

Mascotting can be a lot of fun! However, it is a lot of work. Remember who you are representing. Other than that have a blast and stay hydrated.

Currently Outreach Coordinator with the Kalamazoo Nature Center, Peter J.F. Stobie has attended Mascot Training Camps, and performed as Northern Michigan University's Wildcat Willy from 1994-96, and as the mascot from 1998-2000 for the Michigan K-Wings Hockey Team.

II. Taking Care of Puddles

As a representative of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, Puddles needs to look her best in public. Regular cleaning and maintenance will keep the costume in good shape, and give Puddles a longer life.

A. Cleaning & Repair Kit

- ✂✂ safety pins - in several sizes
- ✂✂ sewing needles
- ✂✂ thread (matching the costume's color)
- ✂✂ swatches of matching color fabric for patches
- ✂✂ sewing scissors
- ✂✂ jars of contact cement (small jars with brush under the lid)
- ✂✂ dog hair brush
- ✂✂ pliers
- ✂✂ masking tape
- ✂✂ spray bottles of non-corrosive laundry stain remover
- ✂✂ cleaning cloths
- ✂✂ Febreze
- ✂✂ Resolve
- ✂✂ End Bac or other anti-bacterial agent
- ✂✂ the cleaning and repair log book

B. Washing Instructions:

Body: The body, tights, and gloves are completely washable. Cold water, gentle cycle. DO NOT expose to hot water or dryer. To remove matting from the fur, brush the affected areas with the dog hair brush, one small section at a time. Then give the entire costume a gentle brushing to improve the fur's appearance. Do not brush excessively.

You may need to remove minor stains or matting from Puddles' fur. First, brush away the dirt or excess stain residue using a dog hair brush. If some dirt or residue remains, try to remove them with a well rinsed, wet cloth. If the stain or soiling persists, spray the affected area with stain remover and sponge clean. **WARNING:** before applying the stain remover, test it on a small, obscure part of the costume (or a swatch of patch fabric) to ensure it will not cause the colors to run.

The manufacturer recommends using Resolve non-aerosol spray carpet cleaner to spot clean heads and bodies.

Foam Padding: Remove all foam padding from net covering. Re-fasten velcro to itself before washing covering. Cold water wash gentle cycle. Cool dryer.

The foam itself may be hand washed from time to time as needed. Cold water. Squeeze out excess water. Drip dry. Drying may be sped up by turning a fan on the wet foam. Do not expose to heat.

Vinyl Feet: Wash with damp cloth. May spray inside with antibacterial spray as needed.

Head: The fur on the head may be spot cleaned with a gentle detergent or water solution and a brush. Blot dry with a cloth and let air dry. The inside of the head is waterproof, and may be washed with the same detergent and water solution. You may also spray with an antibacterial spray as needed. Drying time may be shortened by turning the head on its side and directing a fan into it. **BE AWARE OF WARNING LABELS ON ANY PRODUCTS YOU USE, AND MAKE SURE THAT THEY HAVE TIME TO COMPLETELY DRY AND AIR OUT BEFORE BEING WORN AGAIN!**

Wearers will perspire while in costume. Allow the costume to dry completely before storing away, especially if storing in a plastic container.

C. Minor Repairs

Thoroughly inspect the costume before returning it, using the inspection checklist. Note any major defects so that they can be repaired under warranty if possible. Make minor repairs if needed, and record them in the maintenance log. Minor repairs you might have to repair include:

- ✂ ✂ clipping off loose treads
- ✂ ✂ hand sewing ripped seams (make sure to use a matching thread color)
- ✂ ✂ replacing broken or lost clasps, hooks, snaps, buttons and rings
- ✂ ✂ hand sewing (or pinning) temporary patches in place
- ✂ ✂ spot gluing eyes, etc. back into place (or hand sewing if that is more appropriate)

All minor repairs should be completed before the costume is cleaned, just in case the cleaning process aggravates the damage.

D. Major Repairs

Major repairs will need to be conducted whenever minor repairs fail to permanently fix defects to the costume. **Notify Kristi Neilson at Minnesota Valley NWR immediately if the costume is in need of major repairs. Never attempt to conduct these repairs yourself unless you have the proper training, as this could void the warranty.** Major repairs on the costume include:

- ✂✂ hand sewing or machine mending tears in the fabric other than at the seams
- ✂✂ gluing fur back on the foam structure when the two become separated
- ✂✂ replacing worn out soles on the feet
- ✂✂ replacing worn away, singed or heavily matted sections of costume fur
- ✂✂ glue or otherwise reattach separated joints in the costume
- ✂✂ wholesale replacement of body parts (including design modifications)

III. Puddles in a Box...or not

When Puddles is not in use, she needs to be stored outside of her carrying bags. Pull the costume inside out. Hang the costume (from a shower curtain bar). If you have one, place a fan on the costume overnight. Spray a little disinfectant on it while it is drying out. If you can, wash the costume.

The body liner and any additional clothing will also need to be hung to dry. Always hang the body liner on a clothes' hangar immediately so it keeps its shape. Never store it standing upright on the floor as this will cause the liner to compress. When not in use or hung up, lay the liner on its side. To reduce odors during storage, you should spray the body and inside the feet with Febreze or other odor remover. Also, use End-Bac or another anti-bacterial agent. Make sure the costume has time to air out the chemicals before wearing it, so you don't asphyxiate.

You should place the head on an open shelf by itself, with the neck base facing down to let air circulate through it. To reduce the chances of theft or accidental damage, all costume components should be stored by themselves in a secure, well-ventilated room or locker. Don't leave Puddles' parts laying around where the public can see them!

Thaw ice packs out and dry them outside before sending them to their next destination.

Appendix A
Puddles the Blue Goose
Costume Inspection Checklist

Inspection Date: _____

Site and Event: _____

User: _____

Cleaning Required	Yes	No
Head:		
Fur Body:		
Feet::		
Outer Clothing:		
Accessories (hat):		

Repairs Required	Yes	No
Head:		
Fur Body:		
Feet::		
Outer Clothing:		
Accessories (hat):		

Are any further repairs or cleaning needed? Additional comments (please use the back if necessary).

