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## Duckie, a Mickaboo Miracle

A Story of Courage, Challenges, Grace, and Love  
Or, Why We Do the Things We Do

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Meet Duckie, a male Yellow Nape Amazon. His leg band said he was 25 years old. When he came into our care, he was a mess. He has had big medical bills. But he has a strong spirit, a big heart, and is a loyal friend. I am so glad that Mickaboo gave him a chance - his story shows the miracles Mickaboo makes possible.

We don't know what happened to him. I wish I could look into his one good eye and he could tell me his story, like I think he wants to. We do know that sometime in April 2013 he was brought to Northgate Veterinary Hospital in Manteca by people who said they found him as a stray on the street. The veterinarian there took him in and diagnosed an old healing left wing fracture and hazy left eye. She treated him, and contacted Mickaboo to ask us for help finding him a home. He was described as an overall healthy bird, and that perhaps what looked like clumsiness was because he was young.

Mickaboo's Amazon coordinator Karen Watkins responded, and the amazing Melissa Lovett (Mickaboo volunteer) came and got him. Melissa was immediately concerned that Duckie was actually an older bird, maybe arthritic, having seizures, with open mouth breathing.

Thus began five weeks of hospitalization at Medical Center for Birds where several tests were done to figure out what was wrong and how to stabilize him. Turns out Duckie had been shot at least twice, and suffered extensive injuries. He had seizures when he was handled, or when he had pain, and it took time to work out a triplet of medications which, given together twice a day, controlled his seizures. He had a heart infection, systemic infections, an injured eye and left wing. He was not socialized. The staff of Medical Center for Birds worked very hard with him and he slowly got stronger, though he was still very unsteady. He had no tail.

It was a big but necessary hospital bill.

Duckie was released to me for foster care on June 5, 2013, taking 5 medications twice a day. He was living in a big plastic tub with perches 1" off the floor because he was so prone to falling. Fortunately we liked each other, and though he was still very emotionally and physically damaged, he decided to trust me. Even after all he had been through, and his still fragile condition, when he started to feel safe with me he became friendly, funny and interactive. But he made it clear that he did not want anyone to pet him - he had a clear personal space perimeter of several inches and would give a quick bite if I violated it. He liked toys, and he liked to eat. He was frustrated at his inability to climb up and down like a normal parrot and would yell out loud in obvious frustration at his limitations. He was quite a handful! And he still had no tail.

He came under the veterinary care of Dr. Chris Sanders at Wildwood Veterinary Hospital. Radiograph / ultrasound review and additional ultrasounds by veterinary consulting radiologist Dr. Sam Silverman

revealed fluid on the brain as the cause of the seizures and lack of balance, so we added Prednisolone to his list of twice-daily meds to try to reduce the brain swelling. There was immediate marked improvement in his balance - he could now climb down (much harder to do than climbing up if you have brain damage), and he walked with more confidence. He moved into a giant adapted guinea pig cage with an elevated floor where his perches could be 3-5" from the floor, and he had more room to move around with more toys.

There was one difficult and unexpected side effect from the Prednisolone. Even though he was only taking a low/medium dose, it made Duckie lose his appetite. Most patients (human or other animal) who take steroids experience polyphagia, or increased appetite – but not Duckie. He was happy, more active with better balance, alert, playing with toys - but he had decided that food was optional, no matter what I offered. I was very worried, because birds with their fast metabolism cannot tolerate not eating for long without serious consequences.



We lowered the Prednisolone dose, and I launched into several weeks of hand-feeding him Harrison's Recovery Formula, 15cc twice a day, in ¼ cc increments using a syringe (in addition to 6 oral medications twice a day!!). This necessitated restraining Duckie in a towel, often for half an hour at a time, which offended his dignity. So he would struggle and get mad at me while I told him that we had to do this if he did not eat on his own because I was not going to stand there and let him die. But we got through it. His body acclimated to the medication, and I finally found a big dry fruit and mixed nut block which he would eat on his own.

During this difficult period, Michal Murage, a friend of Karen Watkins, performed Shamanic prayer rituals for him at no charge. Even though she lives some distance away, her loving spiritual support may have helped speed his recovery, and I thank her.

Duckie has now been with me for six months. He is doing great. His appetite is back. He is still getting all those medications, now at somewhat reduced doses. He gets regular blood work to assess how the Prednisolone is affecting his system (so far, so good).

He is living in a normal parrot cage and can walk hanging upside down from his cage top. He negotiates up and down almost as well as a non-injured bird. None of this was possible before.

Duckie is curious and affectionate. I believe that he was owned by someone who loved him and gave him good care. He announces his joy at being alive and being a part of a bird room and with kindly human company with gusto and enthusiasm. He loves toys, and plays and eats well. He will probably need medications for the rest of his life, but getting his medication is a game for him, and he is actually very good-natured about it. He has a great sense of humor and is a good companion.



Duckie likes people - he enjoys attention and interaction. He steps up onto a perch with no problem and can be easily moved around. He will do well with a person or family which appreciates his courage and strength in recovering from this trauma with so much grace. (Let us know if you want to adopt him!)

Is Duckie worth all the money that Mickaboo has spent on him? Is he worth the enormous amount of time, effort and love I have poured into him?? ABSOLUTELY. He is a proud alpha male Amazon, and sometimes we argue - but he is starting to let me pet him. Every day he teaches me about courage and determination, and he makes me laugh. His spirit lights up the room.



And he is growing a tail.

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