

Article from "The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion"
Published October, 2014

Adopting Clementine

By Xavier Heydt, guest author



It's only been about a week since I first welcomed Clementine, a young rescued King Pigeon, into my home, but she (we think she's female, time will tell) has already become so much a part of my life that I can't imagine her not being a part of it. Clem was pulled by Elizabeth Young (the ever-diligent founding director of MickaCoo) from San Francisco Animal Care and Control (where she had been taken after being found wandering aimlessly around San Francisco's Hunters Point). Only four weeks old, Clementine had most likely been purchased at a live-meat market and "set free" by well-meaning but sadly uninformed people who were not aware of how totally unsuited to "wild life" King Pigeons (or indeed any domesticated animal) are. Being the

lucky bird that she is, Clementine managed to escape the tragic fate that befalls most of these "freed" birds, but ended up in a still dire situation - an always-full shelter.

Although I was actively looking to adopt a King Pigeon at the time, Clementine was not listed on the SFACC's website (likely because of how recently she'd arrived) and although she's turned out to be an absolutely perfect match for me, I most likely would've never found out about her had Elizabeth not helped me in my search. Despite her busy schedule, she found the time to look for a pigeon that would be a good fit for me (I'd never kept a bird as a pet previously) and as soon as she sent me Clementine's photographs, I knew we'd found "the one". I conveyed my excitement to Elizabeth, she helped me find a large, comfortable cage for Clementine, brought her to my house and stayed to teach me about "Basic Pigeon Care 101" (although I still plan to learn much more) and provided the medications Clementine would need for her respiratory infection plus a baggie of the recommended high-quality pigeon feed, probiotics and an anti-parasitic. Even though I'd done my fair share of online research and thinking about how to set up a healthy, safe home environment for an adopted bird, the amount of personalized advice and equipment that Elizabeth provided has already proved invaluable in ensuring a speedy recovery for Clementine and helping me handle the stresses of first-time bird ownership. Strangely enough, we both ended up having the same name in mind: Clementine. Whether through bird-to-human telepathy or simple coincidence, the name stuck immediately.

As far as Clementine herself, she's already a bundle of charm and personality at only five-and-a-half weeks old. From the first moment I met her, we got along famously. She's become very comfortable and is making great progress. Her favorite activities including perching on my shoulder, sitting in her wicker basket, hopping in and out of her cage using a ramp I made, preening herself at breakneck speeds, mistaking freckles for seeds and squeaking with excitement whenever presented with food or water. Though she can be feisty, she's been extremely friendly, easy going and constantly entertaining for all those around her. Though my girlfriend Kimberley and I had initially been hesitant to adopt any sort of bird as a pet due to their (often undeserved) reputation for loudness, destructiveness (which may lead to nasty bites with hard-billed birds) and demanding nature, King Pigeons (all pigeons) are an exception to many of those concerns. Being soft-billed, they are incapable of causing injuries to humans; their beaks aren't capable of breaking the flesh and when they nibble at you it's more endearing and entertaining than frightening. Pigeons are also very quiet, with young pigeons ("squeakers") like Clementine squeaking and adults making a calming "cooing" sound. I'm shocked that pigeons and doves are not more popular amongst bird-lovers than they are.

Adopting Clementine has been one of the most positive experiences I can remember and although caring for a pigeon shouldn't be taken lightly (as in the case of any animal), it's brought me, my girlfriend and all others who've met Clementine in the short time I've had her great happiness and satisfaction. Although Clementine's story has taken a sharp turn for the best there are still many, many other pigeons that deserve a caring home out there. In addition to the relationship I've had with MickaCoo as an adopter, I also do volunteer work (including my own freelance string-foot pigeon rescue work) for them and I can say without a doubt that they work diligently to improve the lives of pigeons throughout the Bay Area (and even in more far-away places!) and find homes for amazing but under-served creatures like Clementine. If you decide that you want to make a difference for the pigeons and doves of the Bay Area, be it through adoption, fostering or donation, you're very lucky to have an organization as incredible as MickaCoo so close to home. Visit www.PigeonRescue.org to learn more!

