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### **Bird Friends Come to Aid of Lost Parrot**

By Francie Waller



We all know that oranges are good for you, and for one lucky Amazon parrot an enormous, luscious orange tree proved to be not only a safe haven from predators, but was also chock full of easy-access nourishment! Evidence of his long-time diet was seen in the piles of half-eaten oranges under the tree. He had struck gold with this location!

In early January 2013, Mickaboo volunteer and Cockatoo Coordinator Doris Muller observed an Amazon flying in her hometown of Vacaville, California. Several people had seen him in different locations within a five-mile radius. After being loose for several weeks, the Amazon finally found a temporary home in one of the largest orange trees in the area. It was loaded down with hundreds (and perhaps as many as a thousand) of fresh, ripe oranges.

Doris, a parrot parent for more than 30 years, feared for the parrot on many levels. Vacaville, a farming community, is home to many hawks and other predators. Also, night temperatures were dipping down into the 20's and 30's. This is not a huge deal for wild birds, but most pet birds would be unable to survive this type of cold for long without succumbing to illness.

Together with several other Mickaboo volunteers, including Shelley Parks and Colleen Schulmann (who brought along her Amazon, Watson), Doris tried to come up with a good idea to capture this beautiful bird. A variety of capture techniques can be used but each situation is quite different, so Doris went several times to the site to observe the bird and figure out the best plan.

Sometimes a bird can be sprayed with water to weigh it down so that it cannot fly, but this should never be done at night or in the cold. Food can be thrown on rooftops to draw a bird in, and occasionally the rescuer can climb a tree to coax a bird down, though this will often make a bird climb higher. And, this tactic works best if it is the owner who coaxing the bird to come down.

When the bird was first sighted, several concerned people gathered to help try to catch it. A couple of people attempted the use of a pool net but Doris gently discouraged this as she was afraid it might cause the bird to fly away, which it did. Once he was spotted in the orange tree a couple weeks later, she got the owner of the home next to the orange tree to become involved with the rescue. This woman became the "spotter", keeping an eye on the Amazon when others were not around.

Two ideas were finally "hatched". The first was to hoist a small cage up into the tree with enticing foods, leaving it for a period of time so the bird would become comfortable going in and out of the cage. The second was to bring another Amazon into the yard, as sometimes the call of its own species will interest a bird enough to come down closer to investigate.

The women decided to try the cage technique since Watson, Colleen's Amazon, was not very vocal - therefore not grabbing the interest of the bird in the tree. Doris took a small cage and filled it with nuts, pellets and fruit, including oranges. The plan was to ultimately hoist the cage up into the tree with a rope, where the bird perched and seemed most comfortable. First they left the cage on a table for him to become accustomed to it. The next day the property owner elevated the cage using stacked-up tubs. This

was to get the cage closer to the tree, as well as protect the bird from the homeowner's cats (which were becoming quite interested in the bird).

The Amazon began going happily in and out of the cage tasting the delicious-looking treats offered. Occupied with his new bounty of snacks, the Amazon became temporarily distracted and the homeowner was able to close the door. Needless to say the ladies were thrilled! With happiness and relief, Doris loaded up the cage and bird into her car and took him home.



Once home, Doris lavished all sorts of nuts, fruits and vegetables upon the Amazon. Ironically, despite his obvious happiness with food galore, he was still interested in eating oranges! One would think he would have been tired of them. Warm inside the house, and obviously content, the Amazon began to vocalize. He became quite the chatty fellow, whistling, barking and telling Doris that he was a "good boy"!

Affectionately nicknamed "Julius" by Mickaboo volunteers, the Amazon continues to reside with Doris Muller. She plans to keep him with her until she can reunite him with his owner. Daily, she diligently contacts Parrot 911, local animal shelters, Craig's List, pet and feed stores and veterinary offices trying to find a listing for a lost Blue-Fronted Amazon.

Doris can now be added to the ranks of the unofficial "Mickaboo Search and Rescue team". Scott Shipley and Katie Slider have also helped with similar bird rescues in the past - including "Juicy", another Amazon found in an orange tree. Dedication, persistence and a love for parrots are what drive the volunteers of Mickaboo Companion Bird Rescue.