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Success Story: Mieli of the Strange Beak
By Kymberleigh Richards



Mieli the budgie is one of Mickaboo's success stories, after a lot of good luck along the way.

He came to San Francisco Animal Care and Control (SFACC) as a stray in April of 2010 and was treated for a bad case of scaly mites at Bay Area Bird Hospital. Although he made a full recovery, his beak now grows abnormally, especially the lower beak, so he was labeled as a "special needs" bird on the assumption that he would require frequent visits to the vet for beak trimming. (If you look carefully at his picture, you can barely make out the extended lower beak segment. His upper beak actually sits behind the lower beak as a result.)

As it happened, it was only in February of that year that I adopted two Mickaboo budgies. Buddy was the one I saw on the website and he reminded me so much of a much-beloved former budgie (Chatterbox) that I started the process to adopt him as a companion for my then-current budgie, Tiki. Sadly, Tiki developed an inoperable tumor while I was going through the adoption process, so Mickaboo found me a second budgie to adopt at the same time, named Chance.

Buddy, though, wasn't destined to stay with me for long, and not only developed a tumor himself, he passed away in June on the way home from the vet. Chance was very upset, having first been paired with a budgie friend who he had quickly bonded with and now being a solo bird (living with a person who, in his eyes, took his friend away from him). I was offered the opportunity to adopt Mieli, which I did -- along with Apollo, so as to make it up to Chance by giving him two new flock members -- in July.

He'd had a beak trim right before he came here, so he didn't need one when he got his "well bird" introduction to his vet. It looked like he was going to need one within six weeks or so and sure enough, that lower beak started to grow ... and it looked long enough to need a trim after a little over a month. So I made an appointment to bring him to the vet.

I woke up the the morning before the appointment to see the lower beak had seemingly trimmed itself! We went through that routine a couple more times before I finally found out how he self-trimmed it ... I saw him rubbing the lower beak against the mineral block in the cage until it was sufficiently thin for him to snap it off with his upper beak. My natural reaction of "oh, aren't you the smart little boy" was met with that typical "of course I'm smart ... I'm a budgie" look.

Mieli is the most social one in his current flock, which consists of Mickaboo budgies Apollo, Chaos, himself, and the most recent additions of Miracle and Volvo*. He is the only one who will come to my hand readily even when there is no treat waiting. I marvel at the fact that the budgie who was going to be the one that needed extra attention instead became the one to give the most attention to his person.

Of course, we'll never know if he got out of his original home accidentally or if he was released because they didn't want him anymore (or maybe when he developed the scaly mites his original caretakers couldn't afford the vet bill and tossed him aside), but whoever had him first certainly missed out on a wonderful little companion.

I've had budgies since I was 12 years old, and I'm pushing 60 now. And I've loved every one of them, no matter if they were with me for mere months (Buddy), several years (Chatterbox), or somewhere in between. Mieli is one of those budgies who can tell when he's found his true forever home, and to call him a Mickaboo success story is an understatement.

* Chaos came in June of 2011 (and his adoption is a story in and of itself); Chance passed away in January of 2012. Miracle and Volvo came in March of this year to free up foster space in the Mickaboo system for incoming budgies.