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From Pet Fair to Adoption: Our Palomacy Story

Guest Post by Stephanie DeMartile



The DeMartile Family

It all started with a pet fair. One day I took my kids to a pet fair with no intentions of getting another pet. We looked around at the dogs and cats...and then we saw ... THE BIRDS!!! We walked up and started talking to the volunteers, petting the pigeons and doves, and simultaneously, falling in love. Elizabeth was so full of knowledge. I went home determined to have those birds!

Within a month or so my husband had built an aviary. Palomacy was there to help every step of the way, ensuring we knew how to properly and safely construct it and supplying us with resources.

In the meantime I joined Palomacy's [Facebook group](#) and started educating myself through other people's experiences and questions/answers. Then there was the monumental task of picking out our perfect pigeons. I looked at the adoptable birds online, and instantly knew I had to have Captain Cardamom. After probably bugging Elizabeth to death, we set up a time that I could meet him when our aviary was complete. I knew he was "the one" before I even got there. He was, and shortly afterwards Elizabeth brought him to my house, along with a couple of possible mates.



The Aviary



Captain Cardamom



Beatrice



Stephanie welcoming Wallace

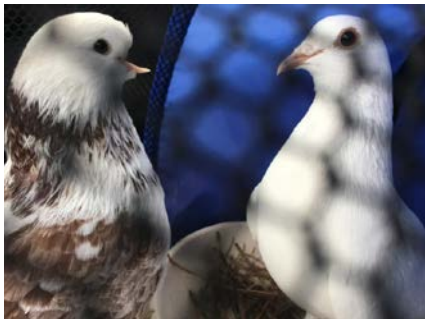
I could not believe how much time she spent with my family, teaching us everything from pigeon anatomy and what is normal vs. what is not, to how to administer medications to general info about pigeon behavior. For someone who had never had experience with birds, it was priceless time that I highly valued and made me feel like I could do this! You can tell how much she genuinely cares for and wants the best for each and every bird. We ended up adding a married pigeon couple, Marty & Cricket, to our aviary the following day per my impatient request!



Marty and Cricket

We started having issues between the males and I had nothing but support from Elizabeth during the process of figuring out what we should do. After much debate Elizabeth mentioned trading the birds out for Fleetwood and Hootie. I had expressed interest in Fleetwood before, but he was a special needs pigeon Elizabeth had carefully looked after for the past 2.5 years, and I was a newbie. But after working with me and seeing my love and passion for these animals, she thought Fleetwood might be a good fit for our family. He was a gentle bird that was stressed in her busy foster aviary environment and could use a nice, small, quiet flock environment to call home. He was a good complement to gentle Captain Cardamom who was getting beaten up my

other current male resident. I jumped at the opportunity! I felt that Fleetwood was meant to be with us and couldn't wait to have him (and his mate Hootie)! Again Elizabeth brought them to me. She wanted to make sure things went smoothly for him and that it was the right decision for all birds involved. She taught me how to hand feed Fleetwood, who had had the upper portion of his beak ripped off by a predator prior to rescue and was unable to self-feed.



Fleetwood and Hootie on their way



Captain Cardamom eyeballing new birds



Stephanie and Fleetwood

It was daunting, but with Elizabeth's faith in Fleetwood and me, and her constant availableness to me in the coming weeks, I felt assured and excited for the learning process. Over the following weeks a lot went on. Potential mates were taken back and a new forever mate was found for Captain Cardamom! The bully birds went back to foster care. Lol And then my resident boys started fighting. Again I looked to Elizabeth Young as well as Patti Delaney, a Palomacy adopter and volunteer who reached out to me when she saw I was struggling for a peaceful aviary. Those women gave me step-by-step advice about daily for several weeks until we established peace!!! I could not have done it without Palomacy's support and endless knowledge in pigeon social behavior. I was determined to keep my birds and I had faith in their experience...and it paid off! Every day I go out and visit my birds and am absolutely filled with joy. They are a beautiful and magical addition to our yard aesthetically, and they are so much fun to watch and interact with!

They make my heart happy is the best way I can say it. My children love them and are making such wonderful memories. Today, two months after starting this journey, we have adopted four little pigeons who are visibly happy to be there, and that makes ME happy. I am grateful to Palomacy for coming into our lives and filling a void where I didn't know one existed. I could never be without pigeons after having them. I had no idea there was such a need for fosters and adopters or how many of these sweet birds get euthanized every year. That made me even happier to be able to be a part of the Palomacy family and help get a few into forever homes (making room for more in foster care). I cannot say enough about this

rescue and the people involved. I continue to ask questions and be involved and Palomacy continues to educate us and cheer us on every step of the way! We hope to add another couple to our family in the future. Thank you Palomacy for doing what you do!



Savannah helps feed Fleetwood



Summer admires her flock



Savannah and her flock

Author's bio-

I live in the SF Bay Area with my aviary-building husband, Jerry, and my two beautiful daughters, Savannah (9) and Summer (3). We have two crazy little dogs and four pigeons, Captain Cardamom (aka "Charming"), Snow (formerly known as Gail), Fleetwood and Hootie (having just lost a beloved rat named Bullseye).

I work as a caregiver for a close friend who suffered a severe traumatic brain injury when we were young. I also dabble in family portraiture on the side, and am part of the 18th District PTA Executive board. In high school I worked as a vet tech and used the majority of my earnings to rescue animals from the local animal control shelter before they were euthanized. I fostered them in my mom's condo, until I found proper forever homes.



What an amazing mom I have! She recognized how important being able to do this was to me and allowed her home to be a bit of a zoo to support me, and for a very good cause! Helping those that cannot help themselves has been the constant in my life and the only way I feel complete.

It's hard to balance family life with what I want to accomplish with rescue. Marriage means compromise and limits on how many animals I can bring into our lives, and having bills to pay means my money cannot be devoted to enough animal causes to make me satisfied. It's an internal struggle I'll have forever. I want to do MORE!

I feel we are all here with the ability to "help." That means different things to different people. But if we all help where we can, what a world it would be! The addition of pigeons to my life has brought me a joy and a peace I can't even explain. I don't fully understand it myself to be honest! LOL I just love them. I feel like they feed my soul in a way that is so special. The closest examples I can think of would be the feeling you get when you look at your child and are filled with love and pride, or the deep happiness playing an instrument brings. It's magical.

I'm so grateful that they came into my life and there's no way I could ever be without them again. I feel pigeons have huge potential as companion and therapy animals for the disabled, as well as for those suffering from illness or depression. There are so many possibilities for these amazing creatures. I think the key is creating awareness of all of the purposes they could positively serve, which is what Palomacy does. They aren't just there for us to eat or to crap on our cars. They are amazing, intelligent, entertaining little birds that are highly underestimated and deserving of our love, care and respect!

To learn more about pigeons as pets, please visit Palomacy at www.PigeonRescue.org

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