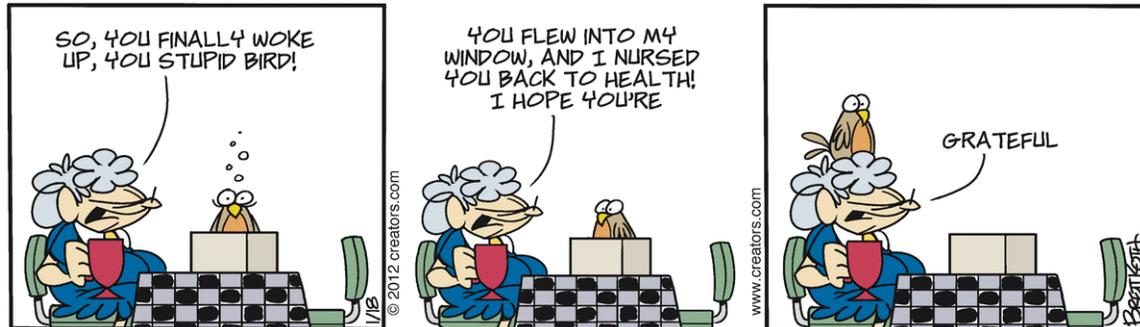


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## All About Mickaboo's Special Needs Birds

By Lucy Macmillan



"Fostering special needs birds is an absolutely critical part of what Mickaboo does. While most of our birds are pretty normal, some birds come to us with injuries or physical damage that will remain for the rest of their lives". - Michelle Yesney, Mickaboo's Chief Executive Officer, on the importance of caring for special needs birds as part of Mickaboo's mission.

Special needs birds are so designated because of injuries sustained while at their former home or when they escaped, or because of their health due to disease or neglect, or simply because of old age or genetics. Regardless of the conditions whereby these birds require extra care, Mickaboo is dedicated to helping these animals enjoy their lives while *quality* of life can be sustained. Currently Mickaboo has ~50 special needs birds in foster care. Profiled here are a few of these birds who, despite their limitations, will make wonderful companions for the right persons who recognize how special they are. We also demonstrate how rewarding fostering can be and how you can participate in this important volunteer effort.

### *Some of our Special Needs Foster Birds*

**Violet:** Meet Violet, a beautiful blue budgie. Violet came to Mickaboo with a hernia, probably from trying to lay too many eggs too often (a common problem with companion birds in captivity). One of Mickaboo's vets repaired the hernia and now she is fully recovered, although she has a tiny pouch on her lower abdomen. This pouch doesn't limit Violet in any way. In fact, Violet is quite active and social with her present foster parents and loves to play and run or fly around. Violet even taught herself how to play basketball – see her YouTube [video!](#)



Violet shares a cage with Mulan, a splay-legged special needs budgie. The two get along well so Mickaboo hopes to keep these two special girls together.



**Rowan:** This is Rowan, a "special needs" normal grey cockatiel.

Rowan came to Mickaboo with pneumonia, possible metal poisoning, and multiple infections of the sinuses and respiratory system. After being treated by a Mickaboo vet with antibiotics, chelating agents, and nebulizers, Rowan's health greatly improved, but he will probably always require extra care. His nostrils still get clogged easily and, among other things, he needs high humidity and frequent mist baths to help control that.

Despite his challenges, Rowan is much like any other normal cockatiel; he

sings, chews on toys, climbs around, and whistles at himself in the mirror. He has also made friends with his foster dad and some of the other cockatiels in his foster home. Rowan would like to go to a permanent home where he can make friends with birds and people just like he has now. If you can give Rowan a little extra care and attention and maybe let him share the shower with you every morning, I bet he would love to go home with you.

**Azul:** Azul is a beautiful 30-year old blue fronted Amazon. Azul came to Mickaboo with cataracts but she acts like most any other Amazon in a companion situation. She takes treats from her foster parents, eats well and plays somewhat quietly. Since Amazons can live 50 years or more, Azul is still considered a bit of a youngster despite her compromised eyesight. Azul is a gentle bird and would make a great companion in a quieter, low-key household.



**Felix:** Felix is a beautiful 18-year-old pied cockatiel that joined Mickaboo's special needs flock in late May. Felix had been dropped off by his former owner at a local pet store – his cage was filthy and there was no food, just dirty water. His feet or knees were injured and he could not walk well. A Mickaboo volunteer picked Felix up from Bay Area Bird Hospital where he was given antibiotics and pain medication (for severe arthritis in his knee) and he has been in quarantine at his temporary home, as is standard for a new bird coming into a household with other birds.

His foster parent has learned to set up housing for a tiel that can sort of fly, but can't walk well. His feet are practically on top of each other and he will likely have some mobility limitations the rest of his life. But the gallant little fellow is starting have some fun, even trying to climb his cage. He has really taken to a toy that none of his other tiel housemates even looked at - chewing off bits and using it as a perch. As with most cockatiels, Felix will likely be even happier once he completes his 30-day quarantine and he can be with other birds.

#### *Why Foster or Adopt Special Needs Birds*

The many Mickaboo volunteers who foster special needs birds share the satisfaction and rewards of doing so. For many, the reason is because the birds themselves provide such positive life lessons. Birds don't waste their time feeling sorry for themselves. They don't sulk or become angry because they cannot do some of the things other birds do or things they used to be able to do. They generally adjust and move on, adapt, and with the good care and attention of a foster parent or adopter, can live a perfectly happy, healthy life.

Many foster parents end up adopting their foster bird for this reason. While it may be easy to attach to a new young bird, similar to getting excited about a cute little puppy or kitten, the extra time and patience sometimes needed to care for a special needs bird can create a strong attachment. For example, handling a bird that needs to be medicated daily can result in a bond of trust between the animal and the caregiver that may not otherwise occur. Watching a special needs bird improve with help, medication, or changes in its physical environment to maximize its quality of life can also be very rewarding. Many foster "parents" simply end up falling in love with their special needs foster and end up adopting the bird, as they can't imagine life without it.

Consider adopting or fostering one of our special needs birds or contributing to its care. Visit our ["special needs birds"](#) website to view these special birds or to contact their adoption coordinator.