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Angel Bird Update: Chacco, the Rose-breasted Cockatoo By Louisa Jaskulski



One of Chacco's earliest pictures in Mickaboo's care was this: a bird slumped over in a hospital cage, sleeping with a hospital collar over his head to prevent plucking of a self-inflicted wound in his chest. He also had a fabric sling placed around his body to secure an injured left wing.

After Chacco's general health became stable enough for surgery, the dead tissue in and around Chacco's wing and keel bone was removed. Chacco continued to improve physically under the expert medical care of For the Birds, an avian vet clinic in San Jose. However, his psychological health (the source of his self-inflicted wounds), frail when he entered Mickaboo's care, needed constant attention.

Chacco was adopted earlier this year by a wonderful Mickaboo volunteer and veterinary technician. In her words, here is her update on Chacco's continuing progress.

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Chacco is the most emotionally challenging bird I have ever fostered or adopted. He was very reactive for quite a few weeks - his capacity to go from fairly calm to screaming / thrashing / flailing panic attacks is startling. And he does not want to relate to me when he is in the midst of his episodes. All I can do is to give him his medicine and then hold and rock him until he calms. If he is really sprung, he will start right back up as soon as I put him down, and on days when he has done that over and over and over, I admit he begins to work my last good nerve. But I take a deep breath and we get through it.

I have gotten better at knowing what to listen for. His tone changes quite a bit depending on if he is genuinely distressed, vs. just wanting me to rush over to him *right this minute, if you please*. I do want to respond when he is winding up to that frantic breakdown / screaming kind of episode; I try not to respond or give an attention reward when he is acting out for attention. At times, of course, the attention-getting behavior will morph into a melt down, and must be dealt with accordingly.

I am happy to say that the meltdowns are lessening in frequency, intensity and duration. My birds rarely feel the need to respond and join in the vocal fray anymore.



The bottom line is that he has "good" relatively calm days, and other days where he is more agitated. There is usually no reason for the agitation that I can tell.



I am basically trying to re-parent him, to give him the opportunity to be as independent as he can safely be. Improvements include these:

- (1) He now will walk around more of the floor after he sees that no Cockatoo-Eating Dragons have entered the premises.
- (2) He plays with toys a lot more.
- (3) He is eating more kinds of foods.
- (4) He is putting his head down for me to skritch - this is new, and it is wonderful.
- (5) He is thriving in a larger enclosure.

Because it seemed to me that he has a lot of energy and needed more room, I put him in my 24" wide x 18" deep x 24" tall glass ExoTerra terrarium. I removed the screen top, and instead have put a large stainless steel Avian Adventure floor grate over the top of the enclosure to hold the long 2.0 Ultraviolet tube light. I can also hang toys from the grill.

Based on Chacco's level of fear of anything new when he got here, I expected Chacco to take several days to be comfortable in such a large enclosure. Much to my delight, when I put Chacco in he was immediately happy, relaxed and eating. The space has a piece of log furniture he can navigate over, a 12" rope perch wrapped in Vet Wrap and a soft towel which lays on its side, food and water dishes, and toys.

He is so happy in there that I have ordered the larger-sized terrarium for him.

I also ordered a 30" x 18" x 36" Zilla Outdoor Habitat - these have a tight but very smooth screen - This will work well to be able to have him safely out on my screened-in deck on nice days to catch some ambient sun and breeze.

June 9, 2017 update: I am so very happy to tell you that our boy wandered over to me while I was working at the computer and nudged my toes, then put his head down for a skritch. He kept gently pushing toward me, so I put my hand in front of him - and LOOK WHO STEPPED UP!!! TOTALLY ON HIS OWN, NO NUDGING ON MY PART AT ALL. He stayed on my hand for about 5 minutes, and then I put him back down again. I figured that was enough for the first time.

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Thanks to you, our generous supporters, Mickaboo could help Chacco in his time of need. Help us continue to assist our feathered friends by donating [online](#) or sending a check to: Mickaboo, PO Box 697, San Jose, CA 95106. Any amount is appreciated and helps!