

Article from "The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion"

The Adventures of Marty: A Tiny Canary Who Got a Second Chance

By Vincent J. Hrovat



from his hospital tank. The dark spot in the middle of his wing is one of his injuries.

The canaries are just about the smallest, and, some would think, most fragile birds that Mickaboo takes in.

The second part of that is not entirely correct. While they are tiny, soft-billed songbirds, canaries are also tough and resilient, though they sometimes need a little help.

This is a story about a canary who, with a lot of toughness and a few lucky breaks, got himself out of a very bad situation and is ready for a forever home.

Marty was found outdoors in the suburbs of Contra Costa County. A woman noticed that her cat had just grabbed onto something small and orange, and she heard a small, not-cat-like peep

emanate from the cat's mouth.

The woman promptly intervened and retrieved a brightly colored canary from her cat's jaws, still alive but bleeding and terrified. She realized that the canary needed medical attention, so immediately took him to her local animal shelter in Martinez (which is how Marty got his name).

The shelter veterinarian who examined Marty determined that he needed specialized avian veterinary care that he couldn't provide at the shelter. His wing bones could have cracked during his ordeal, and he needed antibiotics since mammal saliva can contain bacteria that are very harmful to birds.

Mickaboo maintains relationships with many animal shelters across the greater Bay Area, including the Contra Costa Shelter in Martinez. So the shelter veterinarian called Mickaboo directly and asked us to help.

Mickaboo volunteers routed this information to their canary coordinator. She immediately put out an emergency call to all volunteers requesting a pickup from the shelter and transport to one of our preferred avian veterinarians. Luckily, we were able to get in and pick up Marty as the shelter was about to close on a Friday afternoon.

Since he was a stray and subject to the shelter's standard hold period in case his owner came looking for him, Marty was not technically a 'Mickaboo' bird yet. He remained a ward of the shelter during his stray hold, while Mickaboo provided him the immediate medical and supportive care that he needed. The fact that Mickaboo can work so closely with the shelters as needed has saved the lives of a lot of birds.

Marty spent his first night in my home under observation, in a plexiglass tank. His wings and thorax were no longer bleeding, but the wounds from the cat bite were still obvious. He promptly started eating seed and drinking water, though he was not yet interested in greens. While he was emaciated from his time outdoors, his droppings showed no signs of bleeding in his digestive tract, which can be a dangerous and sometimes fatal side-effect of insufficient feeding. Safe and stabilized for now, he settled in and slept.



While recovering, Marty enjoyed trying new foods and bathing in his water dish.

The first thing the next morning, we made an ASAP appointment at Medical Center for Birds, where Marty ended up spending the weekend. The doctors there got him started on the path to recovery with intramuscular antibiotics, anti-pain, and anti-inflammation medications and his wounds were cleaned and dressed. He had a hematoma (blood bruise) on one wing and a deep puncture wound on the other, but, fortunately, he hadn't lost much blood and had no damaged bones or internal injuries.

He remained quiet throughout his stay at the hospital – none of the singing and warbling that we'd expect to hear from a male canary -- which made us wonder whether 'he' was a Martina instead of a Marty.

Marty was released from his hospital stay on Monday morning and went into Mickaboo foster care with me,

where he got a larger cage and wider variety of toys and food. Within less than an hour, he started whistling, took a bath in his water dish and tore into a sprig of broccoli. He was feeling much better and appreciated the extra space!

Marty was on a regimen of oral meds for ten days. Two of them, he took like a champion. He'd reach up to grab the syringe tip and would drink it all down. The third one, which was chalky and yucky, we saved for the end. Neither of us enjoyed it, but, as I explained to him, it was the antibiotic, and he needed it to counter the evil cat saliva. He took it, albeit grudgingly when he got a few kind words at the same time.

Marty's singing started out as a long, monotone whistle, something like a tea kettle. He began to add intervals and trills as he got settled in, and I started playing him a 10-hour loop of singing canaries from YouTube. He seemed to very much appreciate this and has built up much more of a repertoire. There's little doubt now that he's a male.



Sometime during his medication and recovery period, we got the all-clear from the shelter that Marty's hold period was up, and nobody had come for him. As of this writing, he's on our web page and available for adoption. Marty is a gorgeous bird, with mahogany brown mottled into his Tang-orange colors. He's alert, energetic, a great singer, and loves trying new healthy foods. I'm sure he will appreciate being around other canaries in a large cage or aviary.

A lot of stars had to align for Marty's story to be where it is now. He was lucky to have been found by a caring woman, taken to a shelter where he could be seen immediately by a veterinarian, and promptly referred to Mickaboo, where he could get the specialized, supportive care that he needed. Now, he's ready to go back to just being a canary and enjoying his life with a loving adopter.

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Feeling much better and ready for a forever home!