

Article from "The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion"  
Published October, 2017

## Another Heartbreaking Rescue: Canary Update

By Michelle Yesney



This is a status report on our most recent big rescue, which was especially tragic because the owner had died unexpectedly and many of the birds turned out to be very ill.

### Background

In late July, Mickaboo received a request for help with rescuing a large flock of domestic birds from a life-threatening situation. The birds' owner had died a week before but had not been discovered right away, and a caring neighbor was frantic about the condition of the caged birds kept in the backyard of the Silicon Valley home. This neighbor gave Mickaboo volunteers access to the birds and acted as a liaison in getting the birds out. When volunteers arrived, they found a wide variety of species, including tiny finches, canaries, doves, lorikeets, and even a large cockatoo.

The birds' cages had not been well maintained. The neglect was such that on the second visit, volunteers found that the yard was overrun with rats after dark — dozens of rats. As you may know, rats prey on small animals and carry a number of infectious agents that can be fatal to birds. Once the rodents were discovered, all of the birds were removed within 24 hours by volunteers from Mickaboo, Palomacy, and Wing and a Prayer Loriidae Preservation and Restoration Rescue.

### Update

The most difficult aspect of this rescue has been the large flock of canaries kept in the backyard. The entire flock of beautiful and varied birds was in terrible health. Several have died, and it is likely that more will soon, despite specialized veterinary care. They were found to be infected with malaria and canary pox, both carried by mosquitoes — canaries are susceptible to several mosquito-borne diseases, so outdoor aviaries should include protective screening — as well as cryptosporidium, an intestinal parasite; macrorhabdus, or avian gastric yeast; and parasitic nematodes. Not all of the canaries were afflicted with all of these things, but some did have everything listed above, and none of them were free of illness. Neither malaria nor canary pox is curable, although they are not always fatal. They do, however, weaken the bird and shorten its life expectancy.



The aviary from which the canaries were rescued.

Because there were so many very sick birds needing veterinary care, this has been the single most expensive rescue in the entire history of Mickaboo. In addition to the canaries, many of the other birds also had various ailments, and one cockatiel was blind. We decided to treat the birds for the conditions that could be treated and give supportive care to save as many as possible.

We would not have been able to sustain this rescue at all if not for our extraordinary volunteers making incredible efforts. For example, late one evening while Sarah Lemarié and Jaime Bodiford were locating and evaluating the birds, they were horrified to realize they were surrounded by rats, some even sitting at eye level on top of nest boxes. The two volunteers notified the rest of us and, along with fellow volunteer Tammy Doukas, organized a complete removal the next day. Because of the improvised design of the cages, the volunteers had to cut off a padlock, cut their way through cage wire, and even crawl through accumulated rat and bird droppings to rescue all of the birds.

There were 31 canaries kept on the property — an unusually large number of these small birds, especially for Mickaboo, which doesn't receive very many canaries. One long-time volunteer with a big heart, M.A. Samuelson, offered to foster all 31 of them. After it became clear that the birds would require an unusually long treatment and recovery period, with no guarantee of full

recovery, M.A. built an aviary for them. Designed to protect them from the environment while providing room to fly and exercise, this aviary would give them the best chance to recover.



The canaries' new home.

We were extremely fortunate that M.A. had the space and the willingness to create such a fantastic indoor/outdoor aviary space suitable for this large canary flock.

Some of the canaries are still hospitalized, as are a few of the other birds from the same backyard rescue. The medical bills continue to mount up. But most of the birds, including the canaries, will survive and live comfortable and happy lives.

*[Editor's note: veterinary costs for this rescue have exceeded \$20,000 and are continuing to rise. Your financial support would be very appreciated; checks may be sent to Mickaboo, PO Box 697, San Jose, CA 95106. Online donations may be made at [www.mickaboo.org](http://www.mickaboo.org).]*