

Featured Volunteer: Sarah Lemarie

By Shauna Hill



This month we are highlighting a volunteer who recently went to extraordinary lengths on short notice to help rescue a large flock of birds from an unhealthy and life-threatening situation. Sarah Lemarié has answered the call for volunteer help without hesitation on many occasions, and Mickaboo would not be able to improve the lives of nearly as many birds without the involvement of people like her. Mickaboo volunteer Shauna Hill interviewed Sarah so we can learn more about what she does and why she does it.

SH: Where were you raised, your family — human and non-human — occupation, hobbies?

SL: I grew up in rural Scotland. We always had a dog-and-cat duo at home that got along well. There was an old couple down the road who had a budgie boy named Bobby, and he could talk, and I would go and visit him and listen to him burble away. Growing up, I was always

intrigued by parrots, but everything I learned about them said they made really bad pets and not to get one. So I left it at that, and just thought they were super cool animals.

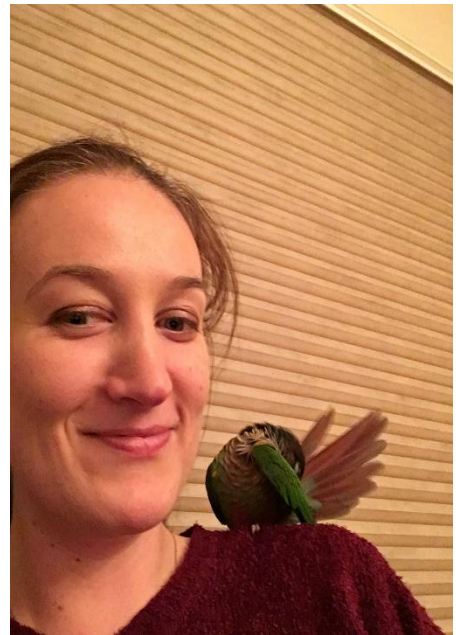
My family moved to Texas many years ago — oil — so I visit them there often. My daytime job is at PlayStation, where I work on the network business side as a program manager. At home, I like to play the piano and talk to and train all my foster birds. When I'm not working or doing that, I'm probably cleaning up bird mess.

SH: I bet it was beautiful growing up in Scotland. How awesome that Bobby at least sparked an interest in birds. There are probably a few of us who are thinking it must be pretty cool to work at PlayStation! How did you hear about Mickaboo?

SL: I spent many happy hours on YouTube watching parrot videos! Somehow, through those, I learned of Mickaboo online. When we moved to California five years ago, I thought I might get to meet more parrots if we started volunteering, so I applied to volunteer. I'd say it worked out; I've met lots of birds! :)

SH: What volunteer opportunities have you enjoyed with the organization?

SL: I love the fundraising events like the Spring Fling and Holiday Party. I recently got into making feather earrings [with naturally molted feathers] to raise money, inspired by another volunteer, and it's really fun to make, sell and wear them! But most of all I love fostering the birds and getting to know them, and helping them move on to a better situation with more confidence in people and a better chance to be happy. Doing home visits is a ton of fun too, as you get to meet all sorts of people who are really into birds — and sometimes they keep in touch.





I am starting to teach the bird care classes too, which is a great way to keep up my bird education. And boy, is there a lot to learn. My newest role is Lead [Coordinator] for the Telegraph Hill Conure team. The SF flock birds are amazingly charismatic and charming, and such an iconic part of San Francisco, and it's an honor to be able to help them.

SH: I know one of your fosters is Lemongrass, a lovebird who lost his mate and needed a new foster home, so speaking for the lovebird team I can't thank you enough for that. Are there any experiences that stand out from volunteering with Mickaboo?

SL: The list is long! There have been exciting ones such as the military macaw that was free-flying around south San Jose and living in a tree near a family that called us [for help rescuing him]. He was a gorgeous bird. Then there was a very sad surrender of a macaw whose owner could no longer keep her after 17 years; very emotional.

I've been involved with two aviary rescues where the conditions had fallen into a terrible state after the owners passed away. Those are very challenging to handle.

Earlier this year I "remote rescued" two birds who were in a very bad spot — one had really taken a turn for the worse and we thought might not make it. That was almost more stressful, as doing everything over the phone, you feel so helpless not to be able to personally, physically offer assistance, and it's hard to know if it will work out. But it did, and both birds are fine and adopted now, which is fantastic.

It's really hard to pick out just one. Every incident is a chance to improve a bird's quality of life. We're doing an [adoption fair](#) in October that will be huge fun. You get to meet lots of people and lots of birds! Come and join us on October 29th at For Other Living Things [in Sunnyvale, CA]!

SH: Those aviary rescues are challenging, and certainly require a huge effort to move the birds to safety in a short period of time. Exciting news about the upcoming adoption fair! What would you say to others considering volunteering with Mickaboo?

SL: Go for it! Try and meet as many of us as you can in person — it really helps to get to know the team. Mickaboo is a big group, and it takes a while, but it's so rewarding to be able to get involved. Just about every team needs more help! You have to persist a little as there are so many processes and groups involved, but I'm always happy to help a new volunteer orient themselves and figure out which aspect of helping Mickaboo they'd like to get into.

SH: Thank you, Sarah, for digging in and helping out in so many ways and on such urgent rescues. This organization is certainly thankful that you found us and joined the ranks.