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## A New Life for Baby: Helping Birds Recover After Owner Loss By Sarah Lemarie



(Editor's note: This article was written by the volunteer who led this Mickaboo rescue.)

Back in March of this year, Mickaboo was contacted by an elderly lady who had two birds she wanted to rehome. I offered to visit her and meet the birds to learn more about them so we could begin to help.

Upon going to see her, I quickly realized how sad the circumstances had become for this lady and the birds. She had two birds - an amazon and a ringneck. After over twenty years of care, their original owner (a relative) had passed away, leaving this lady to live alone and care for the birds. As her own health issues increased, her ability to allow them out of their cages had dropped. The birds were left inside very small cages with limited opportunities to give the cages a thorough and much needed cleaning. Both birds were living on a mix of bird seed and dry toast - a poor diet which unfortunately their original owner had always provided. Despite the current caretaker's best efforts, both birds were suffering from substandard care and neglect.

It was clear that while this lady cared about the birds, it would be a relief to her to find them new homes. Looking at the birds, I could see that while the amazon and ringneck were both being kept in less than ideal small and unclean cages, there was clearly something very wrong with the ringneck. The amazon seemed alert, vocal, and active, but the ringneck was hunched, quiet, and immobile. While the owner was willing to look after the birds while we found foster homes, we suddenly had an emergency on our hands.

We quickly put the call out to get transport and approval to take in the ringneck for veterinary evaluation while we concurrently found the bird a foster home.

'Baby' the ringneck was swiftly collected the next day by another volunteer and taken to For The Birds for evaluation and treatment. His issue was simple - with his older age and limited out-of-cage time, he had lost full use of his feet. Having become immobile, fecal matter had begun building up, to such an extent that it was blocking his vent and creating a painful and dangerous health issue. If left untreated for much longer, the condition would have been fatal.

A straightforward procedure to remove the buildup - which had grown to the size of a golf ball - and a course of antibiotics addressed his issues. Very soon Baby was ready to move to a foster home and start a new life.

With the pain and problems of his blockage addressed, Baby was a different bird! Baby moved to a new foster home with a special cage set up, with low perches and a new healthy diet of fresh fruit, vegetables, and pellets. While he still takes a daily dose of medication for his general pains and aches, he is blossoming in his new home with improved care and attention. Baby loves to have head scratches and will even step up gingerly for his foster mom, using his beak very gently to hold on because his feet are not quite up to the task of proper perching.



Baby, before his rescue. He's behind the right-most door.

He may be elderly, but his new home has given him a new lease of life. Baby even enjoys climbing up the sides of his cage a little -- he is still adventurous within his means! He quickly began preening, bathing, and making tiny little vocalizations as he settled into his new environment and began playing with toys.

Baby's story may have a happy ending, but it is also a strong reminder to us all to plan ahead. What might become of our birds if something were to happen to us as their owners? Even well-intentioned caregivers can struggle to offer the best care if they have other challenges. Make sure you identify someone who is prepared to care for your birds and understands the basics of good bird care - and maybe even refer them to a Mickaboo class.

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*The Amazon mentioned in this story was taken in by a relative of the owner.*