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Featured Volunteers: Chloe Redon & John Graziano By Shauna Hill



In this newsletter I want to introduce you to a couple of awesome volunteers, Chloe Redon and John Graziano, who started by helping with the technology side of Mickaboo, and ended up helping with the sick/injured members of the wild conure flocks of San Francisco, made famous by the book and movie "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill". They have really helped Mickaboo expand its website, and their work with the wild conures has helped many of these magnificent birds. They also created and delivered advanced education classes to help our volunteers care for the many birds under Mickaboo's wing.

SH: Tell us a little about yourselves, Chloe and John.

CR: John and I both happened to grow up in Wisconsin, but we met in California at Pixar Animation Studios. We were both in the high-tech industry.

However, our real interests and studies in school were of the less-employable but more interesting fields of art and music.

John is a jazz pianist (as well as a political activist) and I am a graduate in Art History. So our interests are pretty broad and have now come to include everything Avian!

SH: What started your love for birds and how did you join Mickaboo?

CR: My first bird was a cockatiel named Tweek. When he died I wanted to donate his cage and that's how I found Mickaboo. I had always wanted to volunteer for an animal rescue but was worried about the emotional aspects, and that it might make me too sad. Then, I saw that Mickaboo needed volunteers for the tech team. I felt that it would be a good match for us, and that doing tech work would give us a little distance from any sad rescue stories.



Tweek



Jake, their stunning Amazon foster bird

I was a technical writer at the time and Mickaboo was just beginning to organize its internal and external documents on our internal wiki and public web sites. I jumped right into organizing content and writing documents on how to use our internal tools. It was a perfect fit for my skill set and my obsessive-compulsive nature.

John and I helped with database work too. Together with Matt (Mickaboo's technology lead) and a small technology team, we customized Mickaboo's ASM database to better fit Mickaboo's specific needs.

Several years ago, I worked with a then-new volunteer, Shelley, who rewrote our external website with Drupal.

However, we didn't stay hidden behind the screen of tech work forever. We started looking at Mickaboo's "See Our Birds" pages and got pulled into one after another of the bird stories. Those stories led John and me to fostering, at first budgies, lovebirds, and then a Cockatoo, an Amazon, and a Pionus came through our house as fosters.

SH: Can you tell us about the work you are doing with the Wild Flock of San Francisco. How did you both start helping with them?

CR: I can say that the biggest change to our lives happened when we saw the movie "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" and discovered that Mickaboo was the point-person for rescuing the sick and injured flock members since 2003. We fell in love with that flock and took a hike up Telegraph Hill, lucky enough to see the flock in the trees on the Filbert steps. We had brunch at Julius' Castle by Coit Tower and watched the flock camouflaged amidst red berry trees. We wandered through North Beach stopping in bookshops and cafes before heading over to Ferry Plaza in hopes of catching the flock roosting. And we did. John said that was the happiest day of his life.



Beale. Montv. Clem. Bix. Jules. and Moosh

After that, I remember telling the Conure Coordinator that John and I would foster all of the ones coming in. That's right . . . I was that dumb and entranced.

It didn't take long before we realized the enormousness of the offer and had to rescind, but not before adopting one (Hancock) and not before ending up with, at one time, 15 birds, mostly fosters, many on medications, and some with special setups.

Filbert, one of the most memorable, had a broken spine and despite having to pull himself around in his tank, he made "tools". He used toys in his cage to build up his perch so he could see out better!



Hancock



Filbert

Eventually we joined the Conure team, and later the Telegraph Hill Conure team when it branched off. Mickaboo has just passed a milestone of rescuing, now, over 150 birds from the flock. John and I have learned a lot over the years about how to care for disabled birds, since many of those little guys have neurological and balance issues, or broken spines and wings. I feel as if we've become "experts" at cage setups and on getting them to trust humans.

One of the standouts in that category was April, who suffered some neurological health problems and then was "scalped" by a hawk or crow. Her nickname now is "Little Sunroof." And while she has recovered beautifully and has a best friend, Lyon, John did take some cute videos of her back when she was wearing "snowshoes" to try to correct her crooked feet.

Video links to April, one of the Telegraph Hill Conures:

April's new shoes:

<https://www.facebook.com/jvgraziano/videos/vb.710110361/10151310556920362/?type=3>

April gets some exercise:

<https://www.facebook.com/jvgraziano/videos/vb.710110361/10151322022295362/?type=3>

April gets her first look at the sky in six months after leaving the vet:

<https://www.facebook.com/jvgraziano/videos/vb.710110361/10151275841980362/?type=3>

SH: I understand you both have done a lot on our advanced education classes. Can you tell us about these classes?

CR: As we became more involved with Mickaboo our mutual interest in science led us to research avian behavior and needs. We started by reworking the paper-outline-based Basic Bird Care class into a slideshow format. The incredible Education team of Mickaboo teachers has worked with us to improve the class over time, adding or revising information as we learn more.

John then became fascinated with avian vision and was surprised at the lack of information about proper lighting. So he spent several years researching the topic in his spare time, leading to a three-hour class on "[Avian Vision and Lighting](#)" which he's taught throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

John also does free 1-on-1 behavior consultations for our volunteers, dealing with advanced behavior problems like aggression, biting, and flock socialization.

There is still so much to do as a Mickaboo volunteer. I'd love to see more organizational and process improvements. John and I hope to create some advanced classes on "Clicker Training" and "Understanding Parrot Behavior". I'd like to work with volunteers to create better "Welcoming Your New Bird" educational material and shoot short "How To" videos for the Mickaboo YouTube channel.

Now that I'm retired, Mickaboo could very well become a full-time job if I let it. But I also have sewing, swimming, and reading to do, not to mention a lot of bird cages to clean and a new aviary with flowers to plant.



John and Chloe's beautiful aviary! At left, two Telegraph Hill conures, Walt and Spencer, are shown enjoying their time in it.

SH: Such a beautiful and peaceful aviary you have built! Thank you both for all your hard work with and dedication to Mickaboo, and to the many birds and volunteers who have benefited from that hard work. It is greatly appreciated.



Bialy (middle right) enjoying time in the aviary.

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