

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF FOSTER PARROTS, LTD. & The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary



Sanctuary residents, Gus and Molly, with an important message.

Photos by Brian Jones

One Final Fundraising Push as THE 2015 YEAR COMES TO A CLOSE!

Nine years ago as Foster Parrots Founder, Marc Johnson, and then Co-Director, Karen Windsor, stepped carefully around the filth and debris that littered the old, abandoned property known as Chickadee Farms, it was impossible to imagine anything positive ever coming from such a tragic and decrepit place. Now as this old farm continues to transform and blossom, it is known for the promise and hope it brings rather than for the lives it once extinguished.

The 2015 year has been one of Foster Parrots' most exciting and challenging years yet. Physical sanctuary development has been in full swing through most of the year, throwing some daunting obstacles in our path in regards to program implementation and routine operations, but also forcing us to re-examine and re-shape our vision for the growth of the organization. The result has been a clearer, more well-defined plan forward and a stronger foundation under our feet. Through all of these changes the Foster Parrots Family continues to grow as a community of like-minded people with common values and a shared dream of creating a world in which the guiding principles are compassion for animals and respect for the planet. We can never thank you enough for being a part of this family.

Sight For Sore Eyes: The Magoo Update



He walks deliberately about the floor of the enclosure, foraging for tidbits dropped by the birds above. His impressive black beak searches out the nuts while disregarding the less desirable pellets. Watching this Moluccan cockatoo engage in natural, foraging behavior wouldn't be noteworthy or remarkable in any way if it wasn't for the fact that, three years ago, he was completely blind.

Magoo was one of nine parrots rescued from a Texas breeding ranch auction in October of 2010 in a collaborative rescue effort between Foster Parrots and Virginia veterinarian, **Dr. Kim Danoff**. Like all of the birds we received from that auction, Magoo arrived with serious health issues, not the least of which were mature cataracts in both of his eyes. Blind, defenseless and terrified, Magoo clung to the perceived safety of his cardboard box, lunging and posturing compulsively against invisible or imagined threats. Without sight and in light of his deep distrust and fear of humans, Magoo had no chance of achieving any level of quality in his life.

An examination by **veterinary ophthalmologist, Dr. Kenneth Abrams** of Warwick, Rhode Island, revealed that acute retinal damage in Magoo's left eye was irreversible, but Magoo's right eye was, in fact, eligible for cataract surgery. A campaign was launched to raise money to pay for the surgery. On May 10, 2012 four boarded veterinary specialists gathered at **Ocean State Veterinary Specialists, Inc.** in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, to perform cataract surgery on this old, wild caught cockatoo who had not had use of his eyes for many, many years. Present were **Dr. Kenneth Abrams**, NEEWS head veterinarian, **Dr. Hank Wietsma**, and OSVS resident veterinarians **Dr. Lucy Spelman**, and **Dr. Julie Decubellis**. Post surgery examinations confirmed a positive outcome and a smooth healing process.

The improvement in the quality of Magoo's life has been dramatic. While he still enjoys the security of a box, his world has expanded drastically as he makes use of his entire 25' x 15' environment, traveling between the 6 or 8 different boxes that have been provided for him, foraging casually for nuts and treats, and regarding his Moluccan cockatoo friend, Bebe, with only mild interest as Bebe joyfully bops about the enclosure around him. With 4 other Moluccan cockatoos perched on the branches above, Magoo is in every way a member and participant in this dynamic avian community. Knowing where Magoo came from and understanding the hopelessness and horror inherent in standard parrot mills, we are grateful to have had the chance to transform the life of this extraordinary creature.

Magoo would like to express his gratitude, once again, to the amazing veterinary team who worked to restore his sight, and to **"The Crazy Bird Ladies"**, a wonderful group of avian advocates who were instrumental in raising the funding that made Magoo's cataract surgery possible.

Hope: An Eclectus Story



When we read the account of injuries sustained on two different occasions by Hope, a female eclectus parrot, at the hands of her guardians we knew she needed to be removed from a potentially life threatening situation. Her first injury happened when she was inadvertently flung against a wall after biting a teenager in the home. The second injury, this time to her leg, also happened in reaction to a sudden, unexpected bite. When Hope was brought to Foster Parrots and we came face to face with the guardians who had caused her injuries, however, it was clear that they were not monsters or horrible people. They were just people who didn't understand eclectus behavior. They were people who had been excited about the prospect of having a parrot as a pet, but were unprepared for the reality. They were people who had made a mistake.

Hope's injuries had resulted from reflex reactions to her bites, not from retaliations or punishments. But many people are faced with instances of aggression in their parrots. Behavior training can be a valuable tool to help us achieve compatibility between parrots and people when aggression is an issue. It's important to understand, however, that the humans of the household need the training every bit as much as the birds do. Many people take on the care of a parrot based on misconceptions about what parrots are and about what the human-avian relationship will be like. Parrots are not little dogs with feathers. They are not always motivated to be compliant, reasonable or even likable.

While we're passing judgment on the suitability of any given parrot as a pet, parrots are actively passing judgment on the suitability of any given human as a guardian. When we talk about "behavior training", we are really talking about a school of thought that values the ethology, the perspective, *and the wishes* of the parrot, and teaches guardians how to better read and understand their birds so that they can begin to nurture a more positive human-avian relationship.

Eclectus parrots – and especially females – can be extremely difficult parrots to keep as "pets", and clues to the difficulties they face in captivity can be found by understanding their unusual, natural behavior in the wild. Most parrots form exclusive and even life-long "pair bonds" in the wild, but eclectus' do not pair-bond like other parrot species. In the wild males and females will mate with a variety of partners. Males spend their days flying between nest holes, attending to a number of nesting females and females rely on a variety of male attendants. While most nesting parrots will share parental duties, female eclectus' are territorial even to the exclusion of the males and will not allow males to enter the nest. In fact, a female eclectus is *all about the nest*. Whereas most large parrot species go through a hormonal cycle and nest only once per year – or even every two years - female eclectus' in the wild have been observed occupying their nests up to 11 months out of a year.

In captivity in the home environment that relentless eclectus drive to nest and to defend territory frequently results in injuries to humans in the household and inevitably culminates in excessive damage to prized pieces of furniture, baseboard molding and cabinetry. Many female eclectus' are content to spend most of every day inside a box or a favorite cabinet. Chewing, shredding and creating piles of debris can be the primary activities in her daily life, as can be *defending* her territory against perceived intruders. Attempting to re-route these behaviors in order to render a female eclectus more sociable, more compatible and more like "a normal pet", human care-givers can spend a lot of time locking drawers and cabinets, removing boxes and shreddable material, covering baseboards and molding and otherwise trying to control the natural impulses of a bird who was born to nest. Perhaps instead of working against natural behavior we need to find a way to make peace with it.



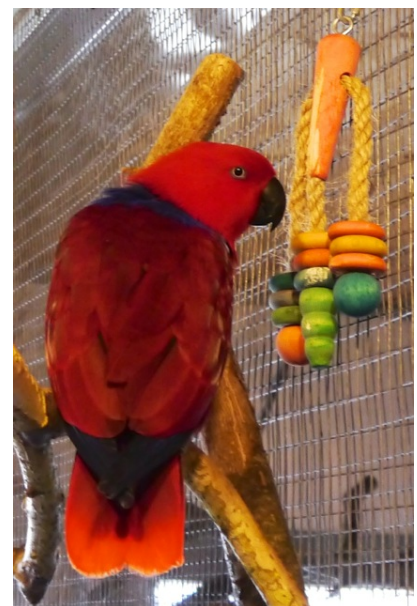
Dr. James Hahn, the guardian of a female eclectus named Ro Laren, concurs. "We cannot change the instinctual behavior of Ro Laren. I bring her out of her aviary most afternoons to be with "the flock" because that's what we think she needs, but that's not necessarily what Ro thinks she needs. She'll stay with us for about 5 minutes and then she will turn around and head back up the stairs to return to her aviary and to her nest. Forcing her to stay longer with us only frustrates her.

"To better accommodate her – and to preserve our home – we got her an enormous walk-in aviary. We provide a box and other chewing enrichment. Ro Laren's aviary is her territory. I alone am permitted to enter unscathed. If my husband, Stephen, tries to enter, she will attack and the bite is extremely damaging and painful. In fact, even when he is trying to change her food dishes from outside of the aviary she will often turn around and try to hit him with her enormous morning poop! Ro Laren *will* bite the hands that feed her. So we have had to learn to understand and respect *her* needs. This is the arrangement that works for Ro Laren."

Hope And The NEPPCO Network

Hope received a full vet check with Foster Parrots and we were relieved to find that the recent injury to her leg was painful but not serious. She was transferred for adoption services to our NEPPCO partner, **Lazicki's Bird House & Rescue**, located in Warwick, Rhode Island. Lazicki's behavior training and high profile adoption program can be credited with placing dozens of parrots annually into good quality adoptive homes. Until Foster Parrots' adoption center is completed – and certainly well beyond that time – we will rely on NEPPCO adoption partners like **Lazickis** in Warwick, Rhode Island, **Northeast Avian Rescue (NEAR)** in New York and the **MSPCA at Nevin's Farm** in Massachusetts, all of whom work to find good homes for great birds.

The NEPPCO network has proven to be an invaluable community of devoted people and organizations who have committed their lives to helping parrots in captivity. Exchanging information about birds in need of placement and pre-screened adoption applicants, we have been able to expand services to a larger number of birds, and this has been especially important in emergency situations when the availability of resources can mean life or death for a parrot. Our other NEPPCO adoption partners include **A Helping Wing** (NY), **The Center for Avian & Exotic Medicine** (NY), **The Connecticut Parrot Society** (CT), **The Parrot Club** (CT), **The New England Veterinary Medical Center** (CT), and the **Northeast Bird Clinic** (CT).



Digit Update: A Survivor's Story

From the corner of her eye she caught the movement of something small and brown scoting across the floor toward her. It took her several moments to understand that what she was looking at was a very tiny baby Goffin's cockatoo. It was caked in filth. It had no feet. It was using its stumps and wings to propel itself across the cold, dirty, concrete floor. Watching the little cockatoo struggle, Patti was overcome with a full sense of the anguish, tragedy and suffering of hundreds of parrots who had been imprisoned here, who had languished, lost hope and died here with no one to care. She was overcome by the grief of suddenly understanding what she had done to her own precious birds when she had entrusted them to the care of Martha Scudder. She reached down, scooped up the little baby bird and felt it press itself against her, desperate to be comforted and to be close to something warm. She had failed her parrots and with no way to gain access to the aviaries or locate Ivy amongst dozens of other cockatoos, her last surviving parrot was doomed. She could not save them. But she could save this one. The little baby Goffin's Cockatoo, whom she would name Digit, was stolen away by Patti in a paper bag. Over the next 20 years she would pour all of her grief and guilt into her love for this one little survivor.



The above was an excerpt from Foster Parrots' December 2014 Newsletter, which detailed the Story of Digit, the Goffins cockatoo who was rescued from the infamous Scudder's Parrot Depot two decades ago by Patti Millet. Letting go of Digit and trusting anyone to love and care for him as she had was nearly impossible for Patti, but her fear of leaving his fate to chance as she grew older compelled her. When she reached out to Foster Parrots early in 2014 to ask for help, all she had to say was "Scudders"...

Last May Foster Parrots manager, Monica Armstrong, flew out to Washington State and brought Digit back to his new home at the sanctuary. His extremely soft, clean white feathers matched the padded environment Patti had created for him and had shown Monica how to replicate in order to protect his deformed feet. Together Patti and Monica made sure that Digit's life would remain as unchanged and comfortable as possible, despite his move across the country. Always having been enveloped in love and treated with the utmost care and gentleness, Digit himself is unusually gentle, sweet and patient – unlike pretty much any other crazy, wacky, nutty Goffins cockatoo we have ever known!

Monica took Patti's place as the doting, primary care-giver, and with memories of his origins all but erased, all Digit knows about humans is that they are overwhelmingly kind and loving. But in October of this year Monica's attention to every detail of Digit's life and comfort at the sanctuary detected a concerning change in Digit's demeanor. He was a little less bright and the soft pads of his feet were developing sores despite his customized perches and specialized foot care. An exam by NEEWS veterinarian, Dr. Hank Wietsma, revealed a nasty, localized infection. What ensued was a period of intensive treatment that included a course of antibiotics and hand-feedings twice a day to boost his weight and ensure his body had the nutritional ammunition it needed to battle the infection. It was during this time, I believe, when we really began to understand the emotional complexities of this tiny creature, and the role he would assume at the sanctuary.

Now completely recovered from his illness, little Digit uses his stumpy legs and beak to pull himself across the floor of his padded cage environment to a spot where he can sit bathed in full sunlight. He gives himself a long, full-body preening, and the expression on his face and in the spark in his eyes can only be described as a smile.

Given his tragic beginnings and the precise chain of events that brought Digit and Patti Millet together, the fact that Digit survived at all is something of a miracle. His birth defects force us to confront issues of "quality of life". What is the value of the life of a bird who will not only never be able to fly, but will also never be able to walk? Whose happiness and social fulfillment necessitate a higher level of one-on-one human participation than most people could ever possibly invest? How much time do we owe one little bird?

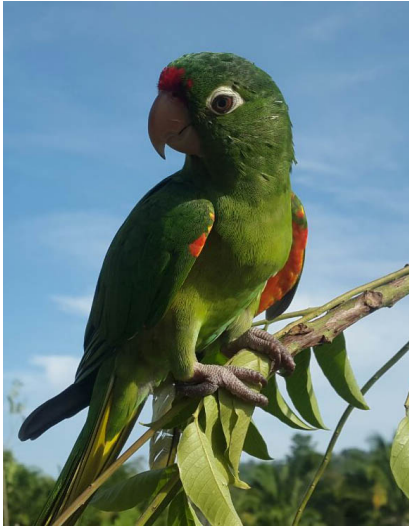
In order to make sure Digit would get the support he needs, a call went out to the Foster Parrots staff and volunteers, asking anyone with a few minutes during the course of the sanctuary work day to come and spend some time with Digit. People have lined up around the block to get their chance. It would be an understatement to describe Digit as the most spoiled little prince on the planet. But as I watch people sit with Digit, stroke his soft feathers and engage him in quiet conversations, it occurs to me that the people who come to work at the sanctuary often seek out the birds to fill some need they have in their own lives, and maybe this tiny little bird forces people to slow down, let go of their stress and worries, and savor the simple joy of connecting. It could be that Digit is giving far more than he's getting.



When we contemplate the value of a life or what constitutes Quality of Life, the answer has to lie not in one's physical limitations, but in one's capacity to give and receive love, to derive enjoyment from day to day events, and to foster the connections with other living beings that make life precious.

Conservation Update: Hatched To Fly Free in Costa Rica

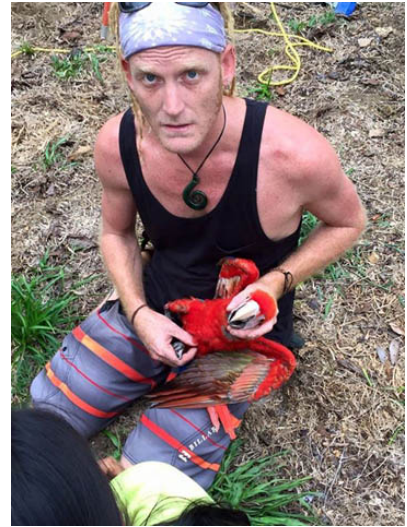
In 2014 New Zealand born conservationist, Christopher Castles and Foster Parrots joined in a partnership to carry on Chris' work in Costa Rica and to establish a new breed and release initiative, "Hatched To Fly Free". Since that time loyal, long-time advocates of Chris' work and many new supporters have invested in HTFF, building a solid foundation under the project and funding the beginning of the infrastructure that will shape the project over the years to come. Rescue and Rehabilitation work has already begun even without the full benefit of a medical clinic and other physical facilities planned for construction in 2016 – 2017.



Shushi – First rescue, now free



Maverick – Successfully rehabbed



Injured Fledgling – April 2015



Pirate – Now receiving services



First HTFF aviary construction completed in 2015

Land has been prepped and planted with hundreds of fruiting trees, flowering vines and shrubs specifically chosen as food sources for wild and released parrots. Security gates have been installed and roads have been graded and graveled. Partnerships have been formed with associate organizations including **The Wild Macaw Association** and **Sanctuario de Lapas El Manantial** as HTFF establishes a series of new release sites. Plans are now in place for HTFF to receive its first breeding pairs of scarlet macaws in 2016.

For detailed information about our progress over the past year, HTFF's **2015 Annual Report** can be accessed through Hatched To Fly Free and Foster Parrots' websites and FaceBook pages.

Construction plans over the next year include:

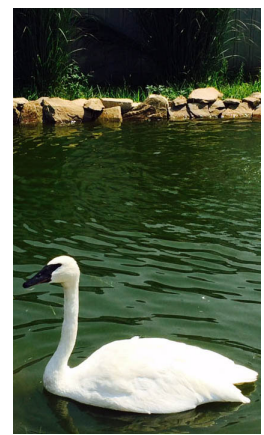
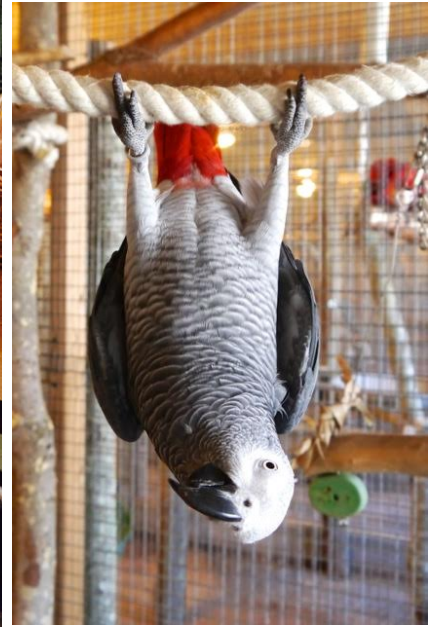
- Medical Clinic & Nursery
- Central Building with Kitchen
- Staff & Intern Quarters
- Breeding Aviaries

**One-time or monthly recurring donations in support of HTFF
Can be made c/o Foster Parrots! 100% of donations designated for
HTFF go straight to the project.**

**Please consider becoming a Conservation Partner
by sponsoring the construction of a building or aviary.
Sponsors retain naming rights.**

**For sponsorship information please contact Chris Castles at
Hatchedtoflyfree@gmail.com**

Scenes From The Sanctuary 2015



Photos By Brian Jones

Facility Development 2015 – The Lola Legacy

When Foster Parrots moved from Massachusetts to Rhode Island in 2007, we set out to transform an old chicken farm formerly known as “Chickadee Farms” into a place of peace and safety for hundreds of parrots and other displaced, captive exotic animals. This was the culmination of **The Lola Project**, Foster Parrots’ inaugural campaign to establish a lifetime care facility for unadoptable parrots. Lola, an old, wild-caught macaw who had suffered terrible abuse and isolation before coming into our care in 2002, was Foster Parrots’ mascot and symbol for all parrots in captivity who languish in darkness and in loneliness – and then have their day in the sun. Lola passed away peacefully in February of this year.

At the beginning of this journey we could not have anticipated the extent to which Foster Parrots would grow in demand as a rescue and educational resource for the community and region. With this increase in demand and our expansion of public services, the need to update the sanctuary building to meet current public safety, fire and ADA regulations become necessary if we hoped to continue to act as a resource for not only our surrounding community but for the animal welfare community at large.

Over the past year we have renovated our Quarantine and Medical rooms, created a “geriatric ward” for our elderly parrots, and installed emergency fire safety doors and a series of handicap ramps throughout the sanctuary. Additionally, our new Memorial Garden provides a retreat where beautiful etched stones and flowering plants honor the memories of sanctuary residents who have passed, and offers you, our supporters, a special place to memorialize cherished pets who have passed away.

A great deal of work still lies ahead if we hope to meet additional mandated code requirements. Over the next year Foster Parrots will be seeking funding for installation of a whole house fire alarm system, 2 firewalls, a main entrance handicap ramp and no fewer than 3 new aviaries that will help improve the quality of life for some of our special needs birds.



How You Can Help:

- **Honor the memory of a cherished parrot, pet or person by purchasing a stone for the NEEWS Memorial Garden. The cost of each stone is \$650. Checks should be accompanied by a note bearing the name and species of your loved one, a one sentence, personal message and your contact information. Further information about the NEEWS Memorial Garden can be found on the Foster Parrots website: www.fosterparrots.com**
- **Become a “Brick & Mortar Supporter” by sponsoring construction of an aviary or other major facility development project. Major sponsors retain naming rights for their projects, and sponsor dedications are publicly displayed on attractive plaques at the sanctuary. Please contact Danika@fosterparrots.com if you wish to discuss a major sponsorship gift.**
- **Sponsor an aviary! Aviary sponsorship represents a deeper investment in the lives of sanctuary residents. Annual, one-time gifts of \$1,000 or automatic monthly donations of \$83 through PayPal or Network For Good ensure a solid foundation under sanctuary residents and the organization as a whole. A choice of aviaries can be found on the Foster Parrots web site.**



ANNOUNCING FOSTER PARROTS’ NEW WEBSITE!

We’ve gotten a facelift! Sanctuary Director, Danika Oriol-Morway, and Foster Parrots Photographer & Graphic Designer, Brian Jones, have been hard at work over the last month redesigning our site and streamlining information to create a new, more user-friendly and visually attractive web presence. Our new web site offers expanded information about sanctuary operations, the lives of our birds, educational content and opportunities for supporter involvement! Please check us out at: www.fosterparrots.com

ALSO....

For day-to-day activity and information don’t forget to follow us on FaceBook!
<https://www.facebook.com/fosterparrots/>



Foster Parrots Year-End Mini Match!

Each year Foster Parrots launches 3 dedicated fundraising initiatives:

- **The March Matching Fund Drive** is our biggest and most important fundraising effort, pulling in nearly a quarter of our annual operating funding and setting the stage for activity through the upcoming year.
- **The Fall Fundraiser Extravaganza** is our way of giving back by providing an incredible day of open house tours, delicious vegetarian cuisine, music, dancing and amazing raffle and auction prizes.
- **The Year-End Mini Match** has become a vital fundraising event, helping us to fill those final holes in our budget and to meet the year ahead with hope and anticipation.

Pledging your support for one or more of these annual initiatives directly impacts the lives of over 400 birds and animals at The New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary and supports all the work and programs of Foster Parrots!



Donations Can be made on-line via PayPal or Network For Good by visiting www.fosterparrots.com

or by check to:

Foster Parrots, Ltd.
PO Box 650
Rockland, MA 02370

We love our supporters!
Without you, none of this would be possible!

**Please consider supporting our Year-End Mini Match!
A Matching Fund of \$3,300
has been established to inspire support!**

