

Before addressing the list of concerns which you have provided, it is important to stress that in our community of 50-60 active admin volunteers who talk almost every day, none of these questions had been raised as a serious concern.

The only hotly debated topic that has arisen recently is the value/necessity of board certification for avian vets, which is *not* a concern listed in the allegations below. The people making these allegations have made incorrect interpretations of data, misunderstood the nature of bromethalin exposure, and misrepresented our mission, as our answers below demonstrate. We are disappointed that what appears to be a personal agenda has been taken into a public forum without first trying to engage in inquiry and constructive conversation within the organization.

Mickaboo has an established whistleblower policy that was created precisely for raising concerns of this nature. Given that the person or persons who contacted you did not use that policy, we will conduct a review ourselves, and share the findings with our Board of Directors and admin volunteer team. If it would be helpful for your reporting, we would be happy to share the results of our own internal review conducted by our compliance officer with our team when available.

Our activities, and expenses, are fully shared among our volunteers; nothing is hidden. The group who chose not to use this policy have immediately discredited themselves as not having the same core values as our team.

To ensure this point is clear, we would like to state that Mickaboo Companion Bird Rescue is run entirely by volunteers and has no paid staff.

1. Mickaboo's Mission Statement with regards to rescue of SF Wild Parrots
 - On the front page of our website, we enumerate how we meet our goals, point 2 of which is that we "Take in and rehabilitate injured or sick conures from the San Francisco "Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" flock." This could not be more clearly stated.
 - Additionally, as we state at <https://mickaboo.org/about-us>:
"At Mickaboo, our underlying principle is that Every Bird Gets An Equal Chance. Once a bird is in our care, we provide all the medical and supportive care that s/he requires. We do not "triage" birds or spend more money on large species than small. We only euthanize a bird when s/he is suffering without the possibility of recovery. We provide hospice care for terminally ill birds who are not suffering."
 - Parrots are not domesticated pets, whether they were bred privately at home, by bird mills for pet store chains, or are escaped strays or from feral flocks formed in new habitats from escaped captive populations. They are all parrots, and Mickaboo gives every one of these birds an equal chance. Until now, nobody in our community has ever suggested that feral (or stray!) parrots should not be worthy of the same care as those surrendered to us from homes. Mickaboo has

taken in sick and injured members of the SF Wild Parrot flock since 2003 and if you meet them - they are the same adaptable and smart species whether they are under our care as the result of illness, poisoning, or injury or continuing a life without interference out into the urban wilderness.

2. Common medical issues and treatment of SF Wild Parrots

- A small number of SF Wild Parrots with physical injuries are treated and then released back to the flock, or placed in foster care and made available for adoption if not releasable. Their treatment times are typically shorter.
- The majority of SF Wild Parrots that come into Mickaboo display signs of exposure to the rodent poison bromethalin. This is an uncommon issue for companion bird rescues, and has created a unique and costly challenge for us. Mickaboo chose to help fund the research that led to the identification and confirmation of bromethalin as the poisoning agent as a key step toward understanding and effectively addressing the issue, and we now know the following:
 - i. Birds exposed to bromethalin have an approximately 50% survival rate in our experience. If they survive the initial three months after exposure, their condition often stabilizes.
 - ii. There is no way to test for bromethalin levels (or even presence) in a living bird. Therefore, birds suspected of bromethalin exposure are provided with medical support, and we wait to see if they decline or stabilize on their own timeline. During this time, a hospital stay is the only practical option given the care involved and the facilities available to us.
 - iii. The birds who do survive are less stable physically, and often require a modified environment (the specific modifications depend on the level of exposure). They do, however, have a measurable and meaningful quality of life (described in detail in #3 below). Mickaboo has done reviews regarding quality of life at several times for the birds who have stayed at For the Birds (FTB) for prolonged periods of time, and we also have a euthanasia policy specific to the SF wild parrots which is shared with FTB and would be shared with other vets as needed, and is also saved in our internal wiki system.

3. Quality of life for SF Wild Parrots in care

- The birds in hospital care are able to move, climb, eat by themselves, show an interest in each other, and enjoy opportunities to have time in the sun. Like their fostered/adopted and wild peers, they enjoy communal activities like synchronized vocalizing and bathing, and exhibit individual preferences about things like foods and toys. They enjoy fresh food daily and they do not require any invasive or painful procedures in order to maintain weight. The most severely

impacted with GI issues have a special diet to help them maintain good GI motility.

- Some of them may periodically develop GI issues that require them to move into an incubator; they are treated as any critically ill avian patient would be and when/if treatment is effective they move back into the room dedicated to the wild parrots.

4. Expected outcomes for SF Wild Parrots

- SF Wild Parrots with treatable injuries or illness are treated and then released back to the flock. However, most wild flock intakes by Mickaboo are casualties of bromethalin exposure, not physical trauma. Their situation was so unique that we had to help fund a study to understand its nature.
- The concerns mention 'significant recovery'; however, this demonstrates a lack of understanding regarding how the surviving birds stabilize. As a neurotoxin, bromethalin exposure results in significant neurological damage. Therefore, markers of recovery include easily-perceived milestones such as the bird's stability, motor control, ability to move safely, and enjoyment of a range of activities, as well as medical issues such as gastrointestinal tract motility. Depending on the level of exposure, the birds can stabilize and be cared for but they may need a modified set up of varying levels. A good example of this is Beale and Clay:

<https://youtu.be/51BQWPqgnoE?si=irKBHmrWzXEDUXI2&t=1097>



- As the numbers at the end of this section show, Mickaboo has been able to adopt out over half of the SF Wild Parrots that survived their original intake issue and were not releasable. Many of these are bromethalin exposed birds who had a lower exposure, and are much easier to care for with very few accommodations.
- In our experience, it is hard to find foster homes that are able to care long term for those birds who require extra care, and housing with extensive modifications. Our organization has a set of very dedicated experienced homes who are the core team that have demonstrated the ability to safely care for these and other similarly-impaired birds. 
- The wild parrot volunteer team has been, and remains, happy to discuss neurological damage, recovery, and care with anyone in the community who shows an interest.
- Total outcomes, over time: as of April 2025, 264 wild SF conures have come into Mickaboo since 2003.
 - i. 48 have been released back to the wild flock after rehabilitation
 - ii. 97 passed away while in our care (and of those, 67 passed in the first 90 days)
 - iii. 67 have been adopted out to homes
 - iv. 39 are living in foster homes; many of these birds have special needs but can be well cared for by experienced foster parents 

v. 13 are in care at For The Birds

- Having invested in identifying the root cause of the issue (bromethalin) - Mickaboo has engaged with the city of San Francisco (Dr Chris Geiger, August 2019) to communicate our findings and discuss the use of bromethalin in SF.

5. Cost of treatment for birds in longer term care at For The Birds

- The medical boarding of birds is a standard rate, and it is the lowest available to us at this scale (\$680 for 2 weeks, \$480 for 2 weeks if no treatments).
- Where possible, we look for and engage lower cost alternatives; these are very hard to find at the same standard of care. Mickaboo has one avian veterinarian who volunteers for us and has 9 SF Wild Parrots in her care, some of whom need the same specialist care as those at FTB.
- Mickaboo spent \$764k on medical expenses in CY2024. 77% of those costs were for care at FTB. See attached PDF for a full breakdown of our medical spending 2022-2024.
- We have always been transparent about our veterinary spending; every online adoption fair and fundraising post mentions our \$50k/month approx veterinary costs and we make every effort to minimize our overheads so that over 95% of our funds go towards medical care for the birds.

Yes, subjectively, anyone asked might say that our annual spend is “a lot of money”. All of Mickaboo’s invoices are itemized and saved, and the care for each bird is as transparent in our systems as we are able to document. We do not put price tags or caps on the cost of care for any bird, regardless of species or size. The priority for us is the welfare of the bird, not the total running cost of any care required.

If you have consulted other bird rescues with regards to subjective ‘acceptable costs’ for reference, we would urge you to consider the relative size and scale of each operation. Mickaboo has 113 active foster homes as of April 2025 caring for 456 birds. Mickaboo has a reputation for treating sick and injured birds, as we will always prioritize giving them care. Many local animal shelters and members of the public bring sick and injured birds to Mickaboo that they cannot afford to treat *specifically* because they are concerned the birds will not thrive or receive treatment in other situations.

- We understand that our significant veterinary costs are higher than they would be, if we had our own facility and a visiting veterinarian. However, the fixed costs involved in the overheads of that configuration would be a trade off that we believe would have not been viable for us over the 28+ years of our operation.

6. ‘Disproportionate’ costs for SF Wild Parrots

- As all of the SF Wild Parrots come to us sick or injured, and the majority have neurological damage as a result of poisoning, yes their care is costly. As a general principle, Mickaboo prioritizes taking in the parrots most desperately in need, and these birds are undeniably sick or injured individuals who are definitely

in need of urgent care and treatment. The care and the expense are consistent with our stated values and general operating principles.

7. Context for medical costs and funding

- Over 95% of our funds raised are put towards providing medical care for birds who need it; we strive to reduce all other overheads in order to make this possible.



For The Birds provide the best medical boarding rate available to us.

See point 15 for further comment regarding use of funds.



Tammy Azzaro's professional role as an RVT and alleged conflict of interest

- Tammy Azzaro has worked at For The Birds twice:
 - i. 10/10/20 - 8/7/21, one day a week
 - ii. 6/1/22 - 8/19/22, one day a week
- Tammy worked at Bay Area Bird Hospital from 1994 until 2023, and is still on their contact list for cover on a one-off as-needed/as-available basis.
- Tammy has worked at Wildwood Veterinary Hospital for several years and is currently one of two full-time staff there.
- Tammy externed at Medical Center For Birds
- Mickaboo Companion Bird Rescue has used both Medical Center for Birds and Bay Area Bird and Exotics Hospital since our inception.
- There are many years prior to 2020 (when Tammy first worked at FTB in any capacity) when Mickaboo's largest veterinary expenditure was at FTB, due to the number of birds treated and cared for at this facility in a specific year.
- All board members are aware that Tammy is a veterinary technician who works at multiple Bay Area avian vet offices. Mickaboo's proportional spending has not changed significantly relative to Tammy's place of work over time. Tammy's experience is an invaluable asset to Mickaboo in helping us determine how to handle each new avian medical issue, including where to treat birds based on the symptoms, the facilities available at each vet, and to some extent location with respect to the foster home for potential follow-up visits.
- It is worth noting that in the Greater SF Bay Area, there are very few dedicated avian veterinary offices that meet our standards for quality care, and we rely on **all** of them. They all either give us a rescue discount on their base rates and fees, or make donations to us to support our work. We have held events and collaborated with multiple of them at various times in Mickaboo's history, and not in alignment with Tammy's place of work at that time.

9. 'Concerns' about Billy, Bowley and Poppy's length of stay

- It is always our goal that any bird brought to a hospital for treatment will ultimately find a placement in a home (with the exception of Wild Flock conures who are healthy enough to be released back to their flock, in which case that is the goal).
- These three birds are among the most strongly affected by bromethalin toxicity. Due to their risks of seizures and falling, they are safer in For The Birds' care

than in a foster home. We are satisfied that they enjoy a meaningful quality of life; as discussed in response 3.

 10. Concerns about Boomer the Macaw; cared for at FTB since 2020

- Boomer is an incredibly special bird who has been through an immense amount of trauma, neglect, injury, and surgery. You can see the specialized set up that Boomer requires here:
<https://youtu.be/q8xXmj7B5gU?si=VNVsVhAbeX-Dal4b&t=327>
- Since that presentation was made, his condition has advanced and he now additionally has clusters of seizures. His care is very high maintenance now, to the point where we have decided that it is appropriate and in his best interests to remain at FTB. We expect that if we attempted to place him - even in a highly experienced home - he would very quickly have a medical complication that would require him to return to the hospital. In fact, that was what ended his last foster placement.
- More information about Boomer's original 2013 intake and initial medical issues (which have since become more complex) is here:
<https://mickaboo.org/newsletter/oct13/work/3Boomer.pdf>

11. For The Birds as a "Go to" hospital

- As we teach in the Mickaboo basic bird care class, birds are prey animals who hide signs of illness and injury...until they can't. Therefore, when our foster homes report signs of an illness or injury, we take it seriously. We determine where to take our avian patients based on urgency, location of patient and vet, availability of appointments, and lastly cost 
- We have found that FTB has the most capacity for unplanned appointments for urgent medical issues, and is our lowest-cost option for urgent care and medical boarding.
- We also regularly take birds to Medical Center for Birds, Wildwood Veterinary Hospital, and Dr Luehma  (housecalls and emergency out of hours) for treatment. The location of the bird and the availability of appointments will determine the best option given each bird's situation.
- We also use animal eye specialist hospitals on an as-needed basis upon referral.
- **For the SF Wild Parrots, the size of our 'flock' at FTB has been decreasing over the last three years.** We had as many as 20 SF Wild Parrots at FTB in May 2022. We have been working hard to reduce that number any time we can find qualified, more cost effective resources. It is a significant and very problematic man-made challenge, entirely created by rat poison, and not something that any other parrot rescue has had to face 

 12. Access to hospitalized birds at For The Birds vs other avian vet clinics

- As a rule, we do not expect our admin team to visit birds undergoing hospital treatment at any vet. Usually, veterinarians provide updates to us, and those can include photographs or video where it is helpful 

- In unusual circumstances, 'visits' with inpatient birds can be arranged although it effectively becomes an appointment at the vet, which takes up staff time, and should be done for a specific and justifiable reason 
- Prior to Covid19, relevant admin volunteers, including two members of the wild parrot team, were able to regularly visit Mickaboo birds who were in long-term care at FTB. Covid protocols restricted visitation (at FTB and elsewhere) significantly 
- Senior Mickaboo staff (Tammy Azzaro, Michelle Yesney, Sarah Lemarié) have been able to visit the longer term birds being cared for at FTB. 
- We are not responsible for the 'access policy' of any avian veterinarian. Our observations are that there are many differences between each veterinarian clinic, from their billing frequency to the procedures, equipment, staffing levels, protocols and specialisations for certain treatments. We work with all the avian veterinarians where we have good outcomes for the birds' treatment, and obviously do not have control over any of their business policies.
- As an organization, Mickaboo, rather than the foster home, takes responsibility for making treatment decisions for foster birds. These decisions are made by our medical director Tammy Azzaro, so that each bird benefits from her many years of experience in the avian medical field. Veterinarians may communicate primarily with Tammy and send updates to her. Information is then shared with relevant volunteers (e.g. administrative volunteers coordinating that bird species, and the foster home). The volunteers on species teams will change over time, and veterinary clinics often do not know who is the active volunteer contact for a certain species or bird. Therefore, Tammy as the medical director is a knowledgeable and consistent contact for them.

13. Euthanasia policy and authorization

- Mickaboo's euthanasia policy has not changed; we have always agreed to euthanize birds who are suffering and have no possibility of recovery. This is stated on our 'About Us' page. Tammy regularly authorizes euthanasia in consultation with all of the vets we work with; however perhaps for obvious reasons it's not something we regularly post to our community about and so it is not a very visible piece of Tammy's work or a metric that most volunteers would be aware of.
- There are 16 documented cases of euthanasia since 2020 that took place across all the vets we work with; at least 8 of those were at For The Birds (Blu, Rockie, Delta, Nobby, Jayme, Jonah, Wee Wee).

14. Specific interest in euthanasia applied to SF Wild Parrots

- Euthanasia is fairly infrequent among the cohort of bromethalin-exposed birds. As mentioned in response 2, there is no test for bromethalin exposure in living birds. When we receive a bird exhibiting the neurological symptoms consistent with possible bromethalin poisoning, the course of action is to provide supportive medical care through the initial three months, and hope they can survive through

this period. Approx 50% of exposed birds will survive with deficits but quality of life, and 50% will die, generally of a fatal seizure.

- The point of the statement about “considering euthanasia at the three-month mark” that Sarah made at the meeting with the SF Commission of Animal Control and Welfare from Jan. 2024 was meant to convey that we generally do not consider euthanasia for bromethalin-exposed SF Wild Parrots *prior to* the three month mark (assuming we can keep them comfortable) because we know that if they do survive the initial three months, they are more likely to survive long term, and can adapt to their new situation with experienced care and the company of their own species.
- If euthanasia does become necessary, Mickaboo has a specific euthanasia authorization agreement for the SF Wild Parrots at For The Birds, included at the end of this document. This is also saved in our internal wiki and of course, with FTB.
- The question as asked - how many wild conures have we euthanized at FTB in the last three years - incorrectly assumes that all of the sick wild conures have been treated there. However, they have not. So the answer to the question is 1 (Reed, on Oct 21, 2022). However, the **full** total of euthanized wild parrots in the last three years is five. Four of the wild parrots were cared for by our volunteer vet who we have collaborated with specifically to attempt to manage our SF Wild Parrot costs (Panama, Acorn, Merlin and Zellie).
- Going back to 2006, our system shows that we have opted to euthanize at least 25 wild SF Parrots based on their condition. See attached report at end of this document.

15. Views on using funds to build a sanctuary, hire behaviorists, provide classes, move SF Wild Parrot care to a ‘spinoff group’

- Firstly, Mickaboo does offer behavior advice and free classes that address a wide variety of common situations that many people caring for parrots are likely to encounter. Education is one of our core pillars and all 600+ members of our community have gone through our free bird care class. As a rescue, we have counselled many people who, rather than needing to surrender their birds, have been able to successfully keep them with the advice and encouragement of one of our knowledgeable volunteers.
- Building a sanctuary, or creating a whole new organization to care for the SF Parrots, would both be major undertakings that have significant costs, commitments and impacts of their own.
 - i. We would encourage any volunteers who feel they would have the time, resources and commitment to execute either of those initiatives to reach out and discuss their proposal, as our evaluations of these ideas to date have not led us to conclude they are realistic for Mickaboo or in the best interests of all parties.
 - ii. There are many major considerations for both of these concepts that are too numerous to list; however for the sake of argument, foster-based

rescue networks are generally able to rescue and help many more birds than sanctuaries. Mickaboo is not a sanctuary, and that is a different mission and goal than the one that we have publicly committed to.

- iii. For this group of self-identified volunteers to suggest that paying for care for 'expensive' birds such as Boomer and members of the SF Wild Flock is not within our mission statement and to *a/so* suggest that we should instead put our resources toward a sanctuary (which is definitely not within our mission statement) feels quite disingenuous. If this group was truly concerned with Mickaboo's mission, they would not make multiple suggestions that breach it.

A final note; obviously, Mickaboo has many additional policies and processes that do not pertain to these responses. We are happy to answer further questions and share more information as needed to demonstrate that we take our responsibilities to the birds, and our supporters, seriously.

Response signed and prepared by:

Tammy Azzaro, President of the Board, Founder and Medical Director

Pamela Lee, CFO and Development Director

Michelle Yesney, CEO Emerita

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Appendix

1. Euthanasia authorisation for SF Wild Parrots at FTB:
"2023-06 For The Birds THC Euthanasia Authorization - Mickaboo Volunteers - Mickaboo Wiki.pdf" (attached file)
2. Veterinary expenditure 2022-2024:
"Analysis - bird care exp - Mickaboo+Companion+Bird+Rescue_Transaction+Report.pdf" (attached file)
3. Euthanised Wild Conures - report:
"Euthanised Wild Conures - Mickaboo Volunteers - Mickaboo Wiki.pdf" (attached file)