

## **WOODY Third Chance Kookaburra**

Early in 2005, I came home early one evening to find a kookaburra sitting in a box in my family room. It was only a young bird, but he was in bad condition. He was so thin you could literally cut your finger on his sharp keel bone. He was unable to even hold his head up. So knowing that in the morning I would probably be on digging detail, still I got out the hospital box and warmed him up. I also got out the mince mix and warmed that, made it into a slurry, and started to 'pour' small amounts down his throat each hour. I didn't have much hope this little lad was going to be there in the morning. But I persisted. Each time he fell asleep his little head knocked on the side of the box and he would shake himself awake. He sounded like a little woodpecker, hence his name. In the end, I propped his head up on folded towels so that it would not droop, and he stayed asleep.

Next morning there he still was. Not bonny by any stretch, but still fighting. It took me several weeks to get him into a decent enough condition that he could go outside into the aviary. Over this time it had become apparent that Woody was a hand raised bird. He had, however, no concept of hunting. So the hard work began. First I got him into flying condition and used to being outside, then I started throwing his food. He had catch it if he wanted to eat it ~ he caught it!! From there we went on to live food, easy to catch at first, then food he needed to get himself. Within three months he was doing so well, we took the chance and let him out. Such pleasure to see him fly! He came home for supplement feeding twice a day, then once a day, then every second day. Such progress from a little bird whom we thought was a goner.

Then the sad arrived. I looked down our paddock to see something hopping up it towards our house. At first what I was seeing did not compute, but then I realised it was Woody. Why was he hopping? I rushed outside to pick him up, to discover that every flight feather on his left side was missing. There was no injury, just no feathers. I put him back in the aviary. The next day, when I went down to feed him, all his flight feathers in his tail and his right side were lying on the floor. I was so distressed. What had happened to him? After speaking to a couple of bird carers, the consensus was that his feathers had fallen out from the point of starvation. Now we had to wait for them to regrow.

A whole year and a quarter has passed since Woody came hopping home. Just before Easter this year, he had his third chance at freedom. Supplement feeding morning and night, then night only, now he comes in when he wants to or if he sees me in the house. Last week, he brought me a lizard! I was so

thrilled - not so much about the poor old lizard but to know that my boy was now a genuine article kookaburra! He always lets me know when he is in our yard by calling me, and when I go outside, he comes down to my feet. There can be 'downs' to being a carer, but then there are the joys like this!

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