

Earl Gray

Guest Post by [Heather Hamilton, Palomacy: It's Pigeon Diplomacy](#)
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It is difficult to write about Earl. The words on paper never seem to do justice to the wonder that he is.

Earl became part of our family in November 2019. My husband and I adopted our feather baby Earl about a week after we married. After following Palomacy on social media for about a year, and then attending the Mascoorade where I spent the evening cuddling recently rescued squab survivor Courageous, I reached out to Elizabeth and Jill letting them know that I was interested in fostering to adopt. I let them know I wanted a pigeon with special needs. Not long after, Earl joined the family.



Waqar, Courageous & I at Mascoorade

Earl was about two at that time. He had been injured as a fledgling which left him with nerve damage- unable to stand, walk or fly. The exact nature of the injury is unknown though we suspect he was hit by a car or a hawk. However, his feet and legs are mobile and he's able to flap his wings. For the first year and a half of his life, Earl lived with the family who found him grounded in the parking lot. The family loved Earl and was well intentioned but they didn't know how to care for a pet pigeon (and, unable to walk, Earl had special needs). He didn't get any expert help until they found Palomacy. My understanding is that most of his time was spent in a crate under a table. After two months of care coaching, he was surrendered to Palomacy and became a foster bird.



En route to Palomacy

Getting to know Earl has been wonderful. At first, I thought he was perpetually angry. He made noises I didn't understand, and he bit me when I got close. My thought was to give him space. And I gave him space. Over time, I learned that Earl was not angry. And also with time, Earl learned that he can trust me. I cared for him, I never harmed him or gave him any reason to fear me. And then, we found ourselves in a relationship built on trust. Earl taught me, possibly for the first time in my life, what building trust in a relationship looks like. After that trust became our foundation, the love began to grow. I love Earl to my core and I say with confidence the feeling is mutual.



Earl



Earl is a great adventure buddy

While Earl doesn't walk or fly, he sure does scoot! When he wants affection, he scoots himself to me wherever I am in our studio apartment. Because of Earl's handicap, he usually lays on the same side of his body. When I have him, I hold him perched on my thumb and he preens the wing he usually cannot reach. It is my service to Earl, and it is my honor. I have OCD and watching him meticulously clean his wing is very therapeutic for me. The nights when Earl's feeling frisky, my finger gets all the love. It's beyond precious.

Earl has another lady in his life, and that is our daughter Peach we adopted so that Earl could also have a pigeon companion.



The day we met Peach

Peach is a sassy independent Fantail Mindian and also the queen of the castle. She loves Earl dearly. Peach lays eggs about every 6 weeks. The eggs are not fertilized*, yet she and Earl hopelessly and endearingly take care of those eggs. Earl won't let me near them and protects Peach when she is sitting

on them. Earl scoots around picking up grass and twigs to help build the nest. He scoots his way to the eggs and when he's next to them, uses his beak to position them under his body as best he can.



Earl and Peach and me



Peach & Earl



Peach preening Earl

Earl is a pigeon, a pigeon who cannot fly. Some may not understand the value of this being. The inherent value of this creature – this loving, caring, loyal, assertive, genuine animal. But I know the miracle that is Earl, and I know that my life and this world is better because of his existence. Never underestimate the inherent value of life.

Heather, Earl’s mom, lives in San Francisco with her husband, Waqar, and their two pigeon children, Earl and Peach. Heather has been in San Francisco for many years, earning her BA in environmental studies & urban agriculture from USF and her JD from Hastings College of the Law. Heather now practices plaintiff’s side employment law at a small firm in Oakland. Heather says her life has forever been changed, for the best, by Palomacy and the unexpected bonds she has created with her pigeon children.

Editor’s Notes:

*Always check for and replace fertile eggs with fakes to prevent hatching. There are far too many unreleasable pigeons literally dying for homes to breed more. And never assume eggs laid with a male pigeon around (even special needs) are infertile. Make sure you know how to tell the difference and swap with fakes if there is any doubt. Learn more about [Hatch Prevention](#). Palomacy has a saying, “We don’t have to start with euthanasia.” While Earl’s injury has left him unable to stand, walk or fly, he is still very capable of living a happy, healthy and dignified life. He loves his family, avian and human; he’s full of ideas and inspiringly good at scooting in fulfillment of them; he’s a master of the leisure arts including sun and water bathing, zenning out in nest-sitting bliss and a great traveler. Earl does not feel sorry for himself. He loves life and with good care, is making the best of every opportunity. There is another saying, “Pigeons bloom where planted” and Earl is just one of myriad examples we have seen. Not every pigeon can survive their injuries and recover enough to live happily but please, never start with euthanasia. Get help from a pigeon-friendly expert so that you provide the best care possible.

Our [Palomacy Help Group](#) is an incredible resource available to coach 24/7. Learn more about [caring for rescued pigeons](#).