

Our “Bubby”

☒ As we all know, global warming – accelerated by humankind’s thoughtless actions – is causing unusual and unpredictable weather patterns. Here in Kent, we barely had any winter at all. Consequently, many spring flowers bloomed a month early and, no doubt, the poor animals and birds didn’t know *what* was going on. In fact, Jeff and I can vouch for that, as we had our own experience and story to tell... when a pair of collared doves jumped the gun and hatched a chick *far* too early, in what was to have been the middle of winter. It was when the chick fluttered to the ground as a fledgling – and we thought it had been abandoned – that our story began...

Feb. 1

I was on the way next door to have tea with our neighbour, when I saw a wet, bedraggled, half-dead baby dove on the pavement, huddled against our brick wall.

Just couldn’t help myself... I picked the poor thing up, and ran it indoors to Jeff. I figured that – at best – it would dry off and perk up, and we could take it to a vet; OR, at worst, it would at least spend its last few minutes dry and warm, in the hands of someone who cared.

Thinking the baby wouldn’t last long – and not really wanting to be around to see its demise, I left it in the hands of my compassionate Jeff; and I continued to the neighbour’s for tea.

When I returned home, and to my utter amazement, Jeff opened the door; and sitting on his wrist was a very dry, fluffy, baby dove – with the sweetest, little ebony eyes I’ve ever seen! He seemed quite content, and very curious.

We decided to look up information on the internet – re: finding baby birds on the ground – to see what our next step

should be. We were surprised to find out that our 'bubby' (combination of 'lovey dovey' and baby!), was called a *fledgling*, which had fluttered down out of the nest. The parents would undoubtedly know where it was, keep watch over it, and feed it. The most interesting revelation was that people could handle baby birds, and that the parents would still continue to look after them. This is due to birds' poor sense of smell. It would take between 2 days and 2 weeks for the baby to fly.

We immediately took our Bubby outside to our front garden, where it hid behind the rosebush. Two adult doves appeared in the cherry tree across the street, and remained there, peering in our direction. We remained, unobtrusively, in the living room, waiting to see what would happen. Once the doves thought the 'coast was clear', the mommy dove flew down first, checked on bubby, and promptly fed him. Papa dove appeared a few seconds later, and the family was reunited. Shortly after Bubby's lunch, mama and papa flew away once more, no doubt looking for more food.

Later on that afternoon, Jeff told me he was concerned about Bubby's safety overnight, as there are foxes in the neighbourhood. It didn't take long for us to decide that mama and papa could take the day shifts, while we took the night shifts.

I retrieved one of my pie plates and put a folded tea towel in it...and voilà! Bubby had his 'pie plate nest'! Jeff brought him inside, and into the 'nest' he went – quite happily I might add – and like all new parents, who know their 'babies' are safe, Jeff and I went to bed and had a peaceful night's sleep!

Feb. 2

In the morning, Bubby – along with his pie plate nest – was put outside for mama and papa's day shift of watching and

feeding. For the first couple hours, Bubby hid behind the rose bush again, but then came out to sun himself, while he waited patiently for his parents and his *breakfast!* He had a lovely day, and as usual, he and his 'nest' were brought back inside later that afternoon.



Feb. 3 ?

As the days passed by, mama and papa continued to feed Bubby faithfully, while Jeff and I supplemented his meals with bird seed and water. Needless to say, Bubby grew steadily, gradually losing his soft, grey down; and growing feathers, instead. Meanwhile, Jeff and I continued to bring our Bubby inside each night. Bubby was quite happy to sit on our shoulders and peruse the indoor 'scenery'.



One day when we went outside, we found Bubby sitting on top of the brick wall between our garden and that of the neighbour's. Our Bubby was learning to fly!

Just a little at first, granted, but every little bird has to start somewhere!



Feb. 6

When we went outdoors in the late afternoon, we found Bubby sitting in the cherry tree across the street. He was sitting on a branch beside a streetlight – and in a very *bare* tree, he was a 'sitting duck' (or sitting dove) for any sparrow hawk in the neighbourhood. Although we were very proud of his flying progress, we were also worried about leaving him there overnight. So being conscientious 'parents', Jeff found our ladder and broom, and across the street we went... The original

plan was that Jeff would climb the ladder and nudge Bubby with the broom, so he would flutter to the ground, where I would scoop him up, and take him 'home'. However, when Jeff got near Bubby with the broom, Bubby simply hopped on the broom and rode it down like a lift! How simple was that!

Feb. 8

While I was away that morning, Jeff got a phone call from a neighbour (by that time, we had our own 'Neighbourhood Watch'!), telling him that Bubby was on the pavement; and if he wasn't put back in the garden, he would probably be hit by one of the many cars passing down our street. Jeff rushed outside, but by then Bubby had developed a far more independent streak; and when Jeff made a grab for him, Bubby 'mutated' into his 'Road Runner' persona – Beep! Beep! – and dashed across the street...leaving Jeff with nothing but a few tail feathers.

Feb. 9

We felt so badly about poor Bubby's tail feathers, and were very concerned that it might stop him from flying until they grew back. And Bubby?...Well, we weren't sure whether he was embarrassed or thoroughly annoyed...

Feb. 11

We needn't have worried! When we went outside that afternoon to bring Bubby indoors, he was once more sitting in the cherry tree; and when we approached it to retrieve him, he flew off to a roof across the street (He wasn't taking any chances...no way was he losing any more of *his* tail feathers!)

We knew then that our Bubby was all 'grown up' (!), and that from then on, he would be living his life with his family, as a 'real' bird. *Our* job was finished!

Feb. 12

Jeff and I suffered from 'empty nest syndrome' (literally!), and were keeping an eye open to catch sight of Bubby – with our fingers crossed, that all was fine.

Feb. 13

Jeff was sure he'd seen Bubby next door. We both hoped he was right.

Feb. 14

What a relief...We saw Bubby sitting on the back of our patio chair, still minus a few tail feathers!– but looking perfectly healthy and content. Jeff and I are sure he dropped in, just to check that everything was okay at home!

Epilogue: Bubby is now an adult bird, and comes home several times a day – along with his relatives, and mates – to feed on the birdseed we put out for them. I suppose there are some who might criticize Jeff and I for what they might see as 'interfering' with Mother Nature. However, we see it as an act of kindness to save Bubby from the affects of global warming – which is *definitely* caused by human interference.

As for now, however, Jeff and I look forward to seeing Bubby with his own family, one day!

Jody Anderson

☒ *"Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little." -Edmund Burke*

"There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build, and yet leave a landscape as it was before." -Robert Lynd