

BY SCOTT ELDER

# MONKEY

## A monkey in danger finds a safe new home.

# Rescue

**T**he baby spider monkey couldn't be in a more unnatural situation. Instead of living in the jungles of Peru, clinging to his mother and swinging high in the tree-tops, he is cooped up in a dark, tiny basement in New York City. A man bought him illegally from a breeder and is keeping him as a pet. A visiting couple sees the pet and is horrified by the baby animal's condition. The monkey, named Udi, is in such bad health that he cannot even stand on his weak legs. To move around, he must drag himself across the floor.

**DESPITE UDI'S CRIPPLING** health problems, the black-furred baby is friendly and desperate for physical contact. The couple convinces the owner that Udi needs medical treatment and a better home. They take the monkey and begin searching for help.

Fortunately, the couple finds the Jungle Friends animal sanctuary in Gainesville, Florida, which rehabilitates and cares for primates. Kari Bagnall, the founder of

Jungle Friends, is shocked when she sees Udi. "I can't believe how little he is," she says. At 14 months old, Udi weighs just four pounds. "He should have been about twice that size," she says.

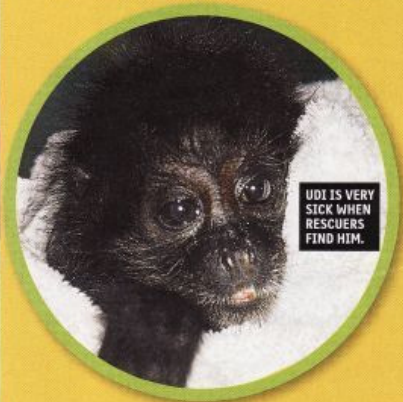
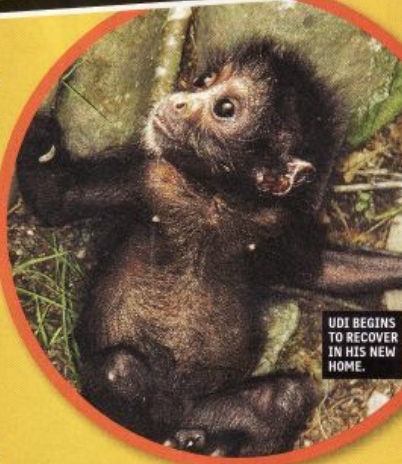
**BAGNALL RUSHES UDI** to a veterinarian, who takes x-rays that confirm her fears: Udi's awful diet has stunted his growth and made his bones soft and dangerously fragile. His teeth are even worse. "They're just kind of floating around in there, not really fixed in position," says Bagnall. "He has such a horrible overbite, it's probably very difficult for him to eat."

Although she'd like to introduce him to the other monkeys at Jungle Friends so that he can get the companionship he needs, Bagnall knows Udi is far too weak for monkey mingling. "He has this outgoing personality, but his body just can't do what he wants to do," says Bagnall.

**WILD SPIDER MONKEYS** eat mostly fruit, so Bagnall begins nursing Udi to health by feeding him bananas and apples, along with spaghetti and beans to build up his strength and size. Every day Udi plays outside on the grass and watches the other monkeys climb in their habitats. Being outside isn't just good for Udi's spirits—exposure to a little sunshine, which he lacked in the dark basement, helps make healthy bones.

**UDI'S PROGRESS SURPRISES** everyone. In one week, he is strong enough to walk on his own. "It's amazing!" says Bagnall. "It shows how quickly a good diet, some exercise, and sunshine can change your world."

Udi's body may be stronger, but he is weak and has never been outside. His



first lesson at monkeying around is learning to swing from a rope. "We swing on them ourselves to show him how it's done," Bagnall explains. "Then we hold him up. He's a little unsteady at first, but watching him swing for the first time is so great!"

**BAGNALL INTRODUCES UDI** to the other spider monkeys at Jungle Friends, one at a time. At first she worries they might not hit it off, but "they all really love him," Bagnall says.

Soon Udi moves into a large habitat shared by three other spider monkeys. They swing, climb, playfully chase each other, and groom each other's coats to relax. The four spider monkeys are more than just jungle friends; they've become an adoptive family.

"Now, seven years later, he's in such great shape," says Bagnall. "Even his overbite is better. He's like the king of his own little jungle!"

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THANK YOU!**

