

CROW Case of the Week: Baby Otters

by Brian Johnson



Every time Dr. Amber McNamara turns around another baby otter has come in through the front door. They are at 7 and counting, with plenty of more months to come. “We have a lot, but the most I ever remember is 10 at one time,” said Dr. Amber. “CROW has become known as having one of the best facilities to raise orphaned baby otters, and so we get single babies transferred to us from across the region.”

Baby #1 arrived at the end of January after being found in Bokeelia on Pine Island by Don and Debra Smith. They noticed two little babies in their yard and called CROW. They were instructed to keep an eye on them for an hour and give the mother otter a chance to come back.

“Unfortunately, the mom did not return,” said Dr. Amber.

The two otter pups went to a CROW drop-off site, but one did not make it through the night. The survivor weighed about 1 kilogram when admitted to the clinic on Sanibel. “She was big for one of the first babies of the season,” said Dr. Amber. “She was a little dehydrated and pale, but otherwise looked pretty good.” The little girl was served a meal of tiny pieces of fish, soft scrambled eggs and high-fat milk. She spent her first week in the walk-in cage, where she was provided with a large water bowl, sand bowl and hiding place. She soon hit on a routine of splashing in the water, rolling in the sand -- rinse and repeat. “She liked to burrow in the sand, which was her way of taking care of her fur,” said Dr. Amber. “They know how to groom themselves from an early age.”

Looking mobile and strong, staff transferred her to the outdoor Otter Complex on February 5. She spent five days in the den enclosure -- acclimating -- before being let loose to the swimming area. “She was cautious at first about going in the water, but we soon had reports of her going into the deep end to swim, and playing with her toys,” said Dr. Amber. “One thing nice about the Otter Complex is that we can clean, feed, and monitor them without them seeing us. She’s thriving -- but desperate for company.”

She won’t have to wait long -- a batch of four new otters will be moving in with her at the end of February. “She will be the big sister and show them how she swims,” said Dr. Amber.

The other otters have come from the Clearwater Aquarium, the Naples Conservancy, St. James City, and Cape Coral. The otters will stay at CROW until the early summer, when they will be old enough to survive in the wild.



We are always working to make a difference and can only do it with your help.

Please send your donation to CROW at:

**Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife
P.O. Box 150
Sanibel, FL 33957**

For more information, please call CROW at (239) 472-3644, ext. 231 or email to development@crowclinic.org

Thank you for your support!