

CROW Case Of The Week:

# Red-Shouldered Hawk

by Emilie Alfino

An adult red-shouldered hawk came in to the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW) on September 20. He was found in the Tanglewood development in South Fort Myers.

The hawk was found in a backyard just laying on his side. When he arrived at CROW, staff found him alert and responsive although quite dehydrated. "His body condition was fair, he just didn't want to stand," said CROW Wildlife Rehabilitator Robin Bast. "We were thinking he might have a fracture." Staff took X-rays, but nothing untoward showed up.

"He did have deep pain and sensitivity in his leg, which is a good sign that his nerves are still working," Bast explained. "We test for pain by using a hemostat, a surgical tool similar to forceps. We squeeze the animal gently, and he should feel it and pull back. If he doesn't, it means he can't feel it."

The bird had neurological deficits when he came in; he was weak and "not quite all there for some reason," according to Bast. "There was no sign of outward injuries so we thought it was likely trauma that caused neurologic symptoms".

Because the patient was so dehydrated, staff inserted an IO catheter (IO means *interosseous*, or "inside the bone") to more quickly deliver fluids, as opposed to subcutaneous absorption. The IO method is much faster at getting fluids through the body.

Staff ran some basic tests that are usually run on birds – for bacteria, infection, and other problems. "We found some unwanted bacteria in his gut," said Bast. "That could have been responsible for part of his weakness." She put her patient on Baytril, an antibiotic, and started basic supportive care.

It turned out that the bird's right leg had the most issues. By the next day, he could move his left leg but could only grip with his right leg. He couldn't perch but was making some improvement nonetheless.

Two days after his arrival at CROW, staff removed the catheter, as the hawk was hydrated enough to continue to care for him using subcutaneous and oral fluids.

"At this point he started being more eager to eat," said Bast. "We were still hand-feeding him, but instead of us having to open his mouth and actually place the food in, he was grabbing for it."

On September 26, the hawk was eating on his own quite well and also starting to perch on his own. He would fall off from time to time so he wasn't entirely "with it," as Bast explained, but he was getting better.

The patient completed his week's round of antibiotics on the 27th. He stayed inside for one more day and then moved to one of the smaller outdoor flight cages.

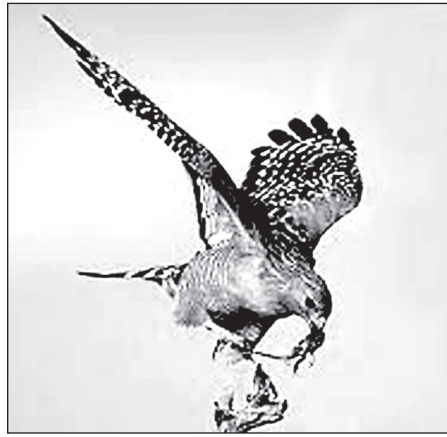
"He was flying around really well out there so we decided to give him more space," Bast stated. "We wanted him to gain energy and stretch those flight muscles."

But it soon became clear that the hawk was feeling very stressed, according to Bast. "We entered the cage two times a day to clean and feed him and he would show stressed behavior."

He was ready to be free of his cage and was released October 4. "I would have liked him to stay three or four more days to get stronger, but it was better for him to go than to be as stressed as he was," Bast explained.

The bird was released in Tanglewood, where he was found. Bast was present for the release.

"I opened the carrier door and he didn't want to come out at first," Bast recounted. "I pulled out the towel that was on the



Red-shouldered hawk in flight



Close-up, red-shouldered hawk

bottom of the carrier.

Then he made a nice, strong flight down the block and up into a palm tree. That last flight you see of a healthy bird makes the rehabilitation effort all worth it."

CROW (Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.) is a nonprofit wildlife hospital providing veterinary care for native and migratory wildlife from the Gulf Coast of Florida. The hospital accepts patients seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mail donations to PO Box 150, Sanibel, FL 33957. Visit [www.crowclinic.org](http://www.crowclinic.org) or call 472-3644.\*

