

CROW Case Of The Week:

Cooper's Hawk

by Emilie Alfino

People go to hospitals to get well, but birds of prey are more likely to get hurt there than helped. On August 5, a Cooper's hawk was found in the parking lot of Cape Coral Hospital. He came to CROW with absolutely no history, as is often the case.

"Cooper's hawks are very high-stress patients; you have to be very cautious handling them because they can injure themselves or even die from the stress," said Dr. Jess Brugler. "We have special hoods we can put over them so they can't see, and it helps them calm down."

The hawk was slightly thin but otherwise in pretty good shape except for his left wing where the equivalent of a person's forearm is located. "I noticed some swelling," Dr. Jess said. "He just wasn't using the wing quite right."

An X-ray was taken and showed he had a fracture of his radius. "The best news is that it was a very short fracture and the bone was still in very good alignment, with his bones right next to each other," Dr. Jess explained. "That's probably why the swelling wasn't worse than it was." It also was a closed fracture, meaning the skin wasn't broken.

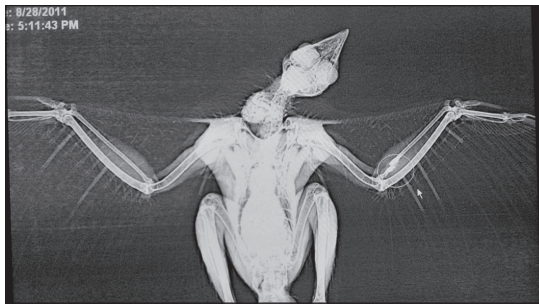
In fractures like this, even in humans, the other "forearm" bone, the ulna, serves as a kind of internal splint, Dr. Jess explained. "With most fractures like this, we would put a bandage on his wing to keep him from flapping that wing, but we decided not to do that with him," the doctor said. "He was put in a quiet cage and left alone. We kept the ICU lights out to keep it dark in there. You could say we put him on 'cage rest.'"

Three days later, staff rechecked him to see how the swelling was and gave him an injection of calcium. A lot of calcium is used to heal bones and Dr. Jess didn't want the hawk's other bones to get brittle as a result.

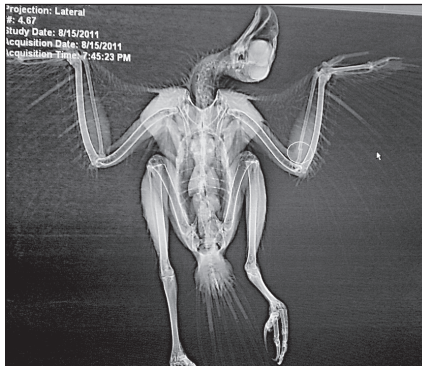
On August 22, his cage had to be cleaned, so he was taken out. He had been eating really well and was fairly quiet. It gave Dr. Jess a chance to palpate the fracture area, and she could feel that his bone was starting to heal but remained a little bit unstable. "I wanted to leave him alone for a few more days," Dr. Jess said.

A week later, another calcium injection was administered, just to be safe. More X-rays were taken and the bone appeared to be worse – but looks can be deceiving. "It's actually just new bone being formed around the fracture and that can make it appear to be swollen or misaligned. It was healing really well and it was very stable," said Dr. Jess.

That course of treatment continued for about another week and then the hawk was moved outside to a small flight cage so he could practice flying. He was only there for a few days when he started getting showing stress, as he was bumping into walls because he wanted to keep flying. "We wanted to get him back



After: On August 28, the fracture was healing well



Before: It was lucky the bones stayed in good alignment when fractured

home to Cape Coral as soon as possible, but not to the hospital parking lot," said Dr. Jess.

The Cooper's hawk was released on September 2 in a wooded area in Cape Coral as close to his home territory as possible.

"This case is a really good example of how we can keep these birds calm and quiet and they can heal amazingly well on their own," Dr. Jess concluded. "These guys are just fantastic in their ability to heal."

CROW (Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.) is a non-profit 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. Call 472-3644 or visit www.crowclinic.org.✪



A Cooper's hawk in flight

