

CROW Case of the Week: Peninsula Cooter

by Brian Johnson



On July 25 Tina Ford found an adult male Peninsula Cooter who had been struck by a car on Del Prado Blvd. in Cape Coral. “He had a chunk missing from his shell on his right rear side,” said Dr. Amber McNamara. “He had about four smaller fractures dotted across the top of his shell and multiple abrasions. When these turtles get hit by a car, they sometimes pop up or skid across the pavement, which causes further injuries. It’s amazing they survive at all.”

CROW provided him with two types of pain medication and antibiotics. They placed him in a tub in very shallow water, but as soon as he stuck his head out to get a drink,

blood gushed out of his mouth.

“He had pale mucous membranes and made a gurgling noise when he breathed,” said Dr. Amber. “He had a pretty guarded prognosis -- at best.” Not surprisingly, the cooter did not feel like doing much the first few days, and sat quietly in his cage in ICU, mostly under a heat lamp. Sometimes he would soak in the water available to him. Staff continually applied soothing SSD cream to his fractured carapace.

They kept a close eye on him, and on August 13 transferred him to the Reptile Room on the ground floor of the hospital. With the gurgling noise resolved, staff introduced him to deeper water in a bathtub. He did well in the tub, though showed no ability to dive. Often trauma will cause air to become trapped within the body cavity and can severely limit a turtle’s ability to submerge. His diet was smelt and lettuce.

On August 27 the cooter was looking frisky enough to make a trip to the 900-gallon salt water tank in the sea turtle complex. He thrived in the new space, which featured a resting area on top of the water and palm fronds at the bottom to hide in. However, he still could not find his diving legs. “It was just a matter of having patience and giving him the time he needed to do his own physical therapy and work the air out,” said Dr. Amber.

At last, on October 30, staff reported seeing him swim to the bottom of the tank and staying submerged without much effort.

“He will be ready for release soon,” said Dr. Amber.

If you would like to contribute to CROW in its extraordinary mission, please send your check to:

Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Inc.

P.O. Box 150. Sanibel, FL 33957

(239) 472-3644, EXT: 2

For additional questions E-mail: development@crowclinic.org