

**CROW Case of the Week: Barred Owl**  
**by Brian Johnson**



Patient No. 3000 for the Year 2009 arrived on August 13 after a nasty whack against a car. Shirley Barr brought him in. The creature probably could not have expected to live another 48 hours in the wild as he had fractured both the radius and ulna in his right wing and the tarsometatarsus in his left leg. Staff administered pain medication and fluids to keep the bird comfortable. He spent the first night lying down, not able to do much, tired and dehydrated.

Yet this plucky little owl was standing proudly on his towel in the morning, his bad leg useless at his side, but at least in proper alignment. He clacked at Dr. PJ.

CROW staff anesthetized the barred owl to take radiographs and were happy to find that the fractures were mid-shaft, clean, and simple. They continued his treatments of pain medication, fluids, electrolytes and Yunnan Paiyao to help stop internal bleeding.

Dr. PJ performed surgery that second day, inserting a pin in the radius, which she expected would bring the ulna into alignment without the necessity of a second pin. "It was a nice surgery, no real problems," she said. Staff added antibiotics to his regimen.

The owl had no interest in the food left in his cage that night, but he did start trying to pull off the Sam splint affixed to his injured leg.

Staff hand-fed him pieces of food during the next day, which successfully jump started his appetite. He ate well for the rest of his stay at CROW.

By Day 5 the owl had chewed off most of the Sam splint, prompting Dr. Amber McNamara to fashion a different splint with more padding and foot stirrups. The owl objected to this one, too, and by Day 8 it was in tatters. Next in line was a vet-lite splint, which becomes flexible in hot water and molds to the limb.

On Day 13 they anesthetized the raptor, performed physical therapy, and palpated a good callus forming at the fracture site on his wing. He was switched to minimal handling and allowed to stretch his injured wing freely. So far, so good.

On Day 17 Dr. PJ removed the pin from the fractured wing as she became moderately concerned that the pin was shifting and could potentially disappear into the bone. "You don't want to lose the pin," she said.

As the owl was tolerating his third splint, staff left it on.

On Day 25 the staff transferred him to the outdoor Cannon Flight Cage after he was getting rambunctious in the small ICU cage. He had full range of motion with his wing at this time, and was ready to test his flight. Staff removed the vet-lite from his leg.

Right away he made little aerial forays around the cage, and within one week earned a trip to a larger cage, where he again distinguished himself. "This bird had an obvious urge to do his own physical rehab," said Dr. PJ. "He regained full function of both the wing and leg very quickly."

On Day 47 CROW returned the Barred Owl to the wild.

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

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