

CROW Case of the Week: Eastern Gray Squirrel
by Brian Johnson



On July 5 Julie Bruno pulled off her third animal rescue of the year for CROW when she saved an injured Eastern Gray Squirrel. Previously in 2009 she had rescued a baby Virginia Opossum and an egret.

This time Julie was talking to her neighbor, Carl, on her property out in Buckingham when she saw the creature running in circles in her front yard. Because of the oak trees on her land she frequently sees squirrels zipping about.

She grabbed a fishing net, and with Carl's help scooped up the squirrel and placed him in a carrier. As it was a Sunday there were no CROW "drop-off" clinics open nearby, but she made arrangements, after speaking with CROW staff, to take the squirrel to a volunteer at the Sanibel Causeway.

"When the animal arrived he was lying on his side in the box and when he tried to move he ran in tight circles," said CROW Veterinarian Dr. PJ Deitschel. "He was suffering from significant head trauma, and had one of the worst cases of nystagmus (abnormal movement of the eyes when at rest) that I have ever seen. His eyelids were swollen and he had a slow pupillary reflex. He appeared to be non-visual."

Despite these neurological deficits, the animal was very reactive when handled. Staff gave him valium, pain medication, anti-inflammatories, homeopathic medicine and fluids, and placed him in a quiet cage. "The best thing was to leave him alone – he was hyperactive to touch and very stressed," said Dr. PJ.

An evening to regroup in silence and safety did miracles for him. "The next day we were very happy to see the animal still alive," said Dr. PJ. "He had relaxed quite a bit." For the next couple days he hid under the towels in his cage. He started eating on his own on Day 3, and no longer went in circles. By Day 5, said Dr. PJ, he was "tentatively exploring his cage with a mild head tilt...this case was becoming a quick turnaround, just the kind we like." His vision gradually appeared to return as he differentiated between darkness, light and movement.

On Day 10 he felt ready to say goodbye to his cage and began "chewing up his towels and making a mess." Staff transferred him outside to the 10x10 foot squirrel compound. "Pretty quickly he was able to run across the ground and jump onto branches," said Dr. PJ. "We gave him a week outside due to the severity of his injury. By Day 17 he was running with normal agility, and we released him. It was quite the amazing recovery."

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

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