

**CROW Case of the Week: Northern Flickers**  
by Brian Johnson



On June 25 Phyllis Cheeks found three baby Northern Flickers on the ground, dislodged from their nest. The 90-gram woodpeckers were just starting to fill in their feathers and could not yet fly.

With no mother or nest visible, Cheeks took the orphans to CROW. "They all had different presentations," said CROW's Dr. Amber McNamara. "One was alert, another was dull and the third was lying on his side and vocalizing in an uncomfortable way."

McNamara surmised that the third baby may have taken the brunt of the fall to the ground. The little bird was given the homeopathic remedy arnica (for trauma) and butorphanol (pain medication). They were all given fluids and put in an aquarium in ICU for the rest of the day. The trio was in generally good body condition and it was clear that they had been well-fed and taken care of. "The next morning they were quite noisy," said McNamara. "They were chirping and very chatty."

CROW staff fed them soaked kitten chow. "They really came alive as we started to feed them," she said.

Staff started off with small meals and gradually increased them, adding worms and insects. The babies were in a rotation of 6-8 other baby aquariums that required feedings approximately once per hour. "It's a huge job to keep all the birds at CROW fed," said McNamara. "We give a big thank you to all our baby bird feeders."

After four days the Northern Flickers were moved to a cage that was arranged with palm tree bark and tree branches to give them a place to hide and material to peck and probe. The birds enjoyed their make-shift habitat and continued to eat and develop their motor skills.

On July 6 staff transferred them to a flight cage outside. "This was a great spot for them," said McNamara. "There are a lot of branches to cling to, and decaying branches and bark with bugs. This species spends a lot of time on the ground."

The cage also added the feature of a perch that would allow them to stand vertically and peck into a tree.

Their feathers are coming in nicely and they are now flying around the cage. McNamara said their release is imminent.

Northern Flickers, noted McNamara, are a little bigger than Red-Bellied Woodpeckers and a little smaller than Pileated Woodpeckers.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology gives the following description: "Northern Flickers are large, brown woodpeckers with a gentle expression and handsome black-scalloped plumage. On walks, don't be surprised if you scare one up from the ground. It's not where you'd expect to find a woodpecker, but flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. When they fly you'll see a flash of color in the wings – yellow if you're in the East, red if you're in the West – and a bright white flash on the rump."

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) 395-0050

For additional questions E-mail: [crowdvlpmnt@aol.com](mailto:crowdvlpmnt@aol.com)