

## **CROW Case of the Week: Pileated Woodpecker**

**By Brian Johnson**

CROW's network of friends includes a group of residents from Captiva and North Captiva who regularly make rescues and help with transportation by land and sea. The Jensen brothers from Jensen's Marina, Greg LeBlanc and Barb Renneke from Captiva Kayak, and McCarthy's Marina have all played vital roles over the years of getting an injured animal, frequently a pelican or some type of water bird, to CROW.



Kristie Anders, the education director at the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF), has made dozens of rescues, and recently teamed with her husband Red, renowned for his skill handling injured wildlife, to help a pileated woodpecker. The Anders travel with two empty cat carriers.

The bird was found on North Captiva on March 12 by Erin Condon, a past extern at CROW. Red Anders picked up the woodpecker and took a boat to Captiva, then drove the bird to the Sanibel clinic.

“He had a fractured coracoid,” said CROW Veterinarian Dr. PJ, referring to a bone that attaches from the shoulder to the breastplate. “We see this injury in birds of all sizes, from a wren to an eagle. The good news is they can usually heal themselves. The key is to keep them in a contained place

and provide them with adequate nutrition and rest--without handling.”

Staff gave the woodpecker pain medication and fluids and put him in a cage in ICU with food and water. Despite the trauma to his shoulder, the woodpecker felt bright and alert, and in no time was pecking everything in sight. “He didn't last long in ICU.” said Dr. PJ. “You want a quiet environment for your emergency patients so he had to move.”

Staff shifted him to the small aviary, where he soon found new ways to cause trouble. “They have access to wood that leads to the roof,” said Dr. PJ. “He pretty well destroyed a lot of the wood on the walls and ceiling. Cat and Joe Stahl had to make continual repairs.”

They put dead logs into the aviary for him to work over, which kept him busy for periods of time. No surgery would be needed; the staff would give him supportive care – in addition to the wood – and let the coracoid heal.

On March 22 they moved him to the woods mammal complex. CROW students noted that the wild woodpeckers on the property came to his cage, but as Dr. PJ discussed in "morning rounds", these were not pleasant social visits; woodpeckers are highly territorial, and the visits were of an adversarial nature. However, the patient was safe in his cage.

On March 25th the woodpecker got a little lift on a test flight, but not much. Staff continued to bring him into the clinic every five days to weigh him and monitor his condition. The turning point came on April 8. “He made a beautiful flight – very strong, and with a number of loops,” said Dr. PJ. CROW put in a call to Kristie Anders, and she picked him up on her way home from SCCF on April 9. She drove him to McCarthy's Marina, where she rents a dock for her boat, and zipped across the water to North Captiva.

She returned to the Condon property and released him where he was found, near a cabbage palm. “He flew to the palm, about three feet up,” said Anders. “The funny thing was seeing him walk backwards down the tree to the ground. He flew to another tree, and when I left him, after 15 minutes, he was in the crown of a cabbage palm.”

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

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