



Save Our Seabirds

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“Chrissy”

The Rescue:

An injured Sand Hill Crane was reported to local resident and our number 1 rescuer Lynn Zablo on the eve of Thanksgiving 2006. She acted quickly and brought the injured bird to our only location at the time in Wimauma, FL. I examined the crane and found that she was a female with a very bad break on her left leg below the ankle.



The Treatment:

The crane's injury was not reparable so we had to have it amputated. Before the amputation, in order to save her, we had decided to develop a prosthetic. Normally, any long legged bird would have had to be put to sleep as they cannot survive with one leg, not even in captivity. I asked Lynn to help me develop a prosthetic which I described to her would have to be able to accommodate this long legged bird and her 10 lb body. Lynn asked her stepfather to help with the idea, as he is quite handy. Together we developed our first Sandhill Crane prosthetic. It was not pretty, but it was a good start and functional. Lynn's stepfather attached a 2 inch PVC tube to a 1/4 " PVC tube that made an extension from the amp site to the ground. I then completed the initial design by adding a sink stopper to the end of the 1/4 in tube as a foot to give it wider ground coverage.

Now all we had to do was to get Chrissy to walk in the prosthetic. Easier said than done!

Every day I walked Chrissy 5 times a day for about 1/2 hr each time to get her to realize she could walk on it. I did this every day up until 3 days before Christmas. I had to make Christmas dinner for my family and asked Lynn to take over the therapy of walking her. Christmas Eve Lynn called and said she had a surprise for me. I never dreamed it would be Chrissy walking. But she put her on the ground and she walked like a champ. Hence her name. She has been our walking educational tool ever since.



Outcome:

Eventually, Chrissy received a custom designer prosthetic when Kevin Carroll (who created Winter the dolphin's tail) and his son came to SOS and gave her a more comfortable update. She now struts around as a resident of SOS.



Save Our Seabirds will be working with Cornell University on a project identifying where in the US our Sandhill are migrating from and which ones are a native sub species of Sandhill. Because it is not possible to tell migratory from year-round cranes by looking at them, deeper studies are required. To assist with this study, Cornell University, in Ithaca, NY, has agreed to help us determine where some of the migrating Sandhill Cranes have come from. They will be testing feather samples to measure hydrogen, carbon and oxygen to determine their specific diet and where in the country those dietary elements are found. I have been collecting feathers for over a year from the Sand hills that have come to our hospital to have Cornell labs test them.