



INDOT Crew Gives Injured Owl a Chance for Survival

(Posted Feb. 24, 2016) A routine day of taking care of what we have for an INDOT maintenance crew turned into anything but normal in the Fort Wayne District on Feb. 1.

Fort Wayne Unit 1 Foreman Jason Caskey was checking on a crew repairing a cable barrier along I-69 near the border of Allen and DeKalb counties when crew members told him they had found something else that needed to be taken care of — an injured owl.



Fort Wayne District crews spotted this owl in the median of I-69.

Caskey let his crew members get back to work, and he stayed with the owl and began making calls. After contacting the district office and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, an employee of Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehabilitation was on the scene within an hour.

Caskey said when Lisa Yates from Soarin' Hawk arrived, she wanted to know how close he was able to get to the bird. "I told her I could pretty much walk right up to it," said Caskey.

Yates said that's when she knew the bird couldn't see.

"She never moved until I physically touched her," said Yates of the female owl.

Yates complimented INDOT employees for handling the situation perfectly, adding that Caskey showed a great deal of care for the owl.

"He was very interested in the bird," said Yates. "He was very worried about her, and asked a lot of questions. He watched everything that I did. He was awesome."

A later examination confirmed that the owl — a species known as a barred owl — was completely blind in one eye, but had some light sensitivity in the other. If the owl's vision continues to improve, it may be placed in an educational program. Yates said the owl— now named Dottie —has shown some improvement, but still needs to regain enough vision to be able to find food and navigate its surroundings.

Yates said the concern that INDOT had for the owl has a positive impact beyond just one bird. The story made the news as far south as Georgia, and Yates said the story has driven a lot of traffic to the Soarin' Hawk website.

"Donations are up, and I've got 19 people ready to start new volunteer orientation next month," she said.

Yates said the awareness raised by this story will make a difference across the state.

"I like knowing that there are people out there who are keeping an eye out for birds that may need help," she said.

Lisa Yates of Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehabilitation holds Dottie the owl (right photo) within an hour after Fort Wayne District crews found the bird in the median of I-69 near the border of Allen and DeKalb counties (bottom photo).

