

## IT'S ONLY A TROPICAL STORM, RIGHT?

### Sea Biscuit Wildlife Shelter

Winds were forecast to be 50-70 mph. High tide was at 8 pm but the winds wouldn't arrive until midnight or 1:00 am.

Hurricane prep consisted of getting all the 40 birds inside the clinic. A few volunteers helped to catch the hawks and owls and put them in kennels and stacked them up indoors downstairs in the clinic. 3 pelicans and 2 Canada geese were on the floor. I'm glad they had webbed feet! All ducks, songbirds, marsh birds and gulls were high and dry.

All loose equipment, was tied down under roof and the van was moved to a 9.5' elevation on the second-row oceanfront lot. Security cameras in operation and doors sealed against high winds and water. At 9 pm, birds and clinic director went to sleep, barely noticing gusty winds outside.

At midnight, thumps and bumps were getting louder as tree branches and debris hit the building. At 12:30 am a look out the window revealed WAVES COMING DOWN THE STREET!!

The security cameras in the clinic area showed several inches of seawater inside with freezers and appliances barely above it. No more sleep for any of us tonight.

Our power and internet still worked and the water slowly started to drop down both on the street and in the clinic

In the relatively calm morning hours, the damage was remarkable. Beach sand had washed over the streets and many vehicles were swept from their parking places. Debris was everywhere...lots of homes off their foundations. A roof across the street had torn off and landed in front of my vehicle.

Several of our loyal volunteers arrived to clean up. Mops, and wet vacs were in use all day and wet paperwork was hauled off to the curb or porch for drying.

The town had to disconnect water and power in order to make necessary repairs and it was over a week before those services were restored. So, we learned how to use generators and a plea to the community rewarded us with plenty of water in bottles and big jugs for washing and drinking. Local Animal Rescue groups collected money for supplies.

None of the birds were injured and many more came in the next few days. 7 more juvenile pelicans were found that had been washed off their nests and needed a week or more to learn to fish and fly.

If left to the elements, most of these birds would not have survived. The phones started ringing early and continued all day. Lots of tiny mammals like squirrels and possums were found and referred to other facilities, 14 new birds arrived by dusk. Happily, none of our rehab birds had any ill effects from the storm.

**We were thrilled and humbled by the response of our supporters' donations. Rehabbing is an adventure but I am not looking forward to another storm story!**

