



## Rescue at the Raceway

Phoenix International Raceway (PIR) is one of the premier racing tracks in the United States. The popular sport attracts hundreds of thousands of fans when it's racing week at PIR. The facility is top notch and a bee hive of activity during the week. The noise of the race cars and the excitement of the fans make for an experience that is special to all. When the races are over and move on to another venue, PIR literally becomes a ghost town. A small group of permanent staff handles the duties of keeping the track and facilities ready.

In mid July, Southwest Wildlife received a call from one of the PIR staff indicating they had a fox in one of their very large maintenance warehouses. It had been seen inside the building for the last few days and with the high temperatures, they were worried the fox might be in trouble.

I arrived at PIR by noon, and the temperature reading outside was 111 degrees. When I went inside the metal warehouse building with a few of the staff employees, it must have been well over 115. After searching the large room, which was filled with equipment and supplies used to support the raceway, we finally saw the little critter run from one set of shelving to another, and then to another.

It did not look like this was going to be an easy rescue, since there were so many places for the fox to hide. It looked like a young gray fox and it definitely needed help fast, as it was scared and panting heavily.

After a few attempts to net the young fox, I decided to enlist the services of the two PIR staffers. With some luck, we were able to get the fox to move towards a stack of pipes that were about 10" in diameter and about 8' long. It ran into one of the pipes to hide. I took the big net and placed it over the other end of the pipe while the helpers took a mop and pushed it slowly through the other end. Reluctantly, the fox jumped out the opened end and right into the net.

As I transferred the youngster into the crate, I could tell it was not in very good shape. I placed the crate in my SUV facing forward so the air conditioning would help him cool down. After driving approximately 10 minutes toward Sonora Veterinarian Clinic, it seemed as if the little fox was not breathing. I stopped the car and looked closely at my passenger. It was still alive, but barely.

When I arrived at the Clinic, we rush the fox into the examining room and the vet was waiting to look at the patient. After an examination, she indicated that she had never seen an animal so dehydrated and yet still alive. They began fluids and I left thinking my rescue wasn't soon enough to save the fox.

A week later, I learned that he had survived! Better still, I was pleased and surprised to find out that he didn't have any kidney damage, which is common in this type of situation.

After another week under the care of the clinic staff, the fox came to Southwest to continue his rehabilitation. After his recovery was complete, he was moved into an enclosure with other gray foxes. Eventually, the group was released into the wild to run free again. We made sure our release site was far, far away from any housing.