



Recovery Review

Every wild life matters

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Vol. 24 / Issue 4 / Fall 2017

Nearly 600 Wild Animals Receive a Second Chance

By J. Kaiser

At AIWC, the end of summer signals the end of the busy patient season. On our busiest days in June, we might admit up to 30 new patients in a single day, many of them babies. As those baby animals grow up, and as injuries heal, the fall months become the time when most of our patients see their return to life in the wild. So far in 2017, almost 600 wild animals have been released back to the wild!

Some of those released include the dozens of ducklings who grow up in our care and are released once old enough to fend for themselves. Also released in a nearby wetland was our killdeer patient, who was admitted as a young orphan.

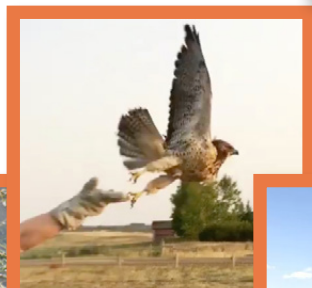
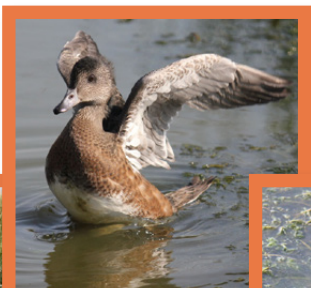
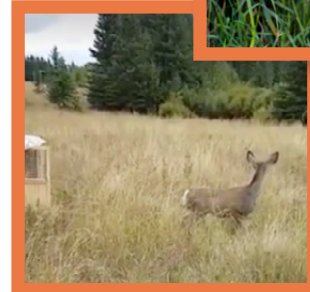
We admitted a record number of Swainson's hawks late in the summer – many of them juveniles with critical wing injuries or trauma. Luckily, and thanks to the care of our expert staff, they were able to recover in time to meet their migration in late September.

September also meant back to the wild for one of our longest-term raptor

patients, a merlin who was admitted in 2016. He was admitted after sustaining methane flare damage to his wings, and after 11 months in our care to enable him to go through a full feather moult, he was able to begin his second chance!

We also said goodbye to many baby mammals, including dozens of skunks, our baby woodrat patient, and three deer fawn patients. Each of our fawns (one mule deer and two white-tailed deer) were admitted for various reasons (orphaned, injured), and they are now thriving out in the wild, back where they belong.

Seeing our patients return to the wild is one of the greatest gifts we get here at AIWC, and we couldn't do it without the support of our amazing community. We thank everyone who helps us provide critical care for Alberta's wildlife, from sponsors and donors to our amazing volunteers. When you help us, it allows us to help wildlife in need, and there are now hundreds of animals back in their natural habitats as a result!





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VISION:

Every wild life matters.

MISSION:

AIWC is committed to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. We provide expert advice and education that fosters an appreciation of wildlife.

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Update from the Executive Director

By H. Duvall, Executive Director

On a warm Wednesday in July, our 1,000th patient for the year was admitted: an adult great horned owl.

All patients admitted to our centre are fully examined to understand the extent of their injuries/condition and so staff can create an appropriate treatment plan. Upon this bird's examination, it was found that the owl was suffering from a left wing fracture in her humerus bone.

Earlier in 2017 we were able to add a part-time veterinarian, Dr. Nicole Rose, to our staff team and she has been instrumental in enhancing AIWC's standards of care. As such, she was able to perform surgery for this owl's fractured bone. After 7 weeks of rehabilitative care, the great horned owl was released back to the wild!

So far in 2017, 567 wild animals have been given a second chance at freedom and returned to the wild where they belong. 567 individuals, that had they not come to AIWC, may not have otherwise received the critical treatment they needed to recover.

Your support makes rehabilitating wildlife possible, and makes a difference to the lives of hundreds of individual beings, ranging from owls with fractured wings, to orphaned deer fawns. You make a difference and we cannot thank you enough for your support of Alberta's wildlife.

This Christmas season, please consider donating to AIWC to help ensure that injured and orphaned wildlife can receive the help they need, not only today, but for years to come.

Thank you for supporting wildlife in need!

Season's Greetings from all of us at AIWC.

Sincerely,

Holly Duvall, Executive Director



Beaver Patient Finds a Buddy!

By H. Duvall and J. Kaiser

As loyal Recovery Review readers may recall, in June 2016, AIWC admitted a lone baby beaver (beaver kit); she was given intake number 16-946. She had been found in northwest Calgary, suffering from wounds to her tail, and our best guess is that she was picked up by a predator and then dropped.

She made a full recovery from her wounds and overwintered with AIWC. After extensive research, it was determined that she needed to remain in care until she is 2-3 years old to properly prepare for her return to life in the wild, since that is the same amount of time she would spend with her parents in the wild. She has progressed incredibly well in care and we are very happy with her progress, but she had always been alone... until recently!

In June 2017, AIWC admitted a male beaver after he was found stuck in a northwest Calgary storm drain, suffering from deep bite wounds on his lower back. He was assigned patient number 17-536 and is about two years old.

He responded well to medical treatment, made a full recovery from his injuries, and was moved to an outdoor enclosure neighbouring our female beaver patient.

Beavers are primarily nocturnal, so AIWC staff didn't see the two beavers interacting until one evening they were observed walking along the fence line together. Introducing strange beavers to one another can sometimes be very challenging, but we were thrilled to see these two bonding together on their own, so the decision was made to slowly make introductions.

After several supervised introductions throughout the summer that all went very well, the two beavers in our

care are fully introduced and now live together in one large outdoor enclosure. They can often be found deep asleep in one of their "lodges" during the day and appear to be the best of friends.

(You can tell them apart in photos because our female patient, 16-946, is a lighter, blonder colour than her new friend.)

Our beavers becoming buddies is great news for both of them! 16-946 still requires several months of care before she can be released to the wild, and our young male patient, 17-536, was most likely evicted from his territory and wasn't yet able to thrive on his own. By bonding at our wildlife rehabilitation centre, they can now be stronger together both here and for life in the wild.

They will be released together in spring 2018.



Beaver Buddies

Make a Donation... and Double It!

Your donation will help a wild animal in need; your employer's donation can help another! Many companies offer donation matching programs and often all that is required is a copy of your donation receipt. Check with your human resources department today!



Education Update: *Calgary Library Partnership*

By K. Jansen, Education and Community Engagement Coordinator

Over the past few months, AIWC's education team has been partnering with Calgary libraries to bring our wildlife education programs all over the city. Currently, we are focusing on programs such as "What's in Your Backyard?" which aim to get participants thinking about ways they can tell if an animal has been in an area. These clues can include things such as feathers, nests, tracks, and even poo – always a favourite topic of conversation with the younger audiences!

Partnering with the Calgary Public Library also enables AIWC's education team to bring wildlife advice to a wider audience and talk about AIWC's mission to many individuals who may not have heard of our organization. By teaching the library audiences to think critically about what kinds of animals are around them, and what they can do to preserve wildlife in their own backyards, we hope to foster a lifelong appreciation for wildlife within many different Calgary communities.

We will be continuing this partnership with the Calgary Public Library into the winter and spring of next year as well, with a variety of feature programs including: World of Owls, Birds of Prey, and Wetlands Wildlife. These programs are open to all Calgary Public Library members, and take place at different locations all around the city.

For more information, or to register for the program nearest you, please visit <https://events.calgarypubliclibrary.com/programs/online-registration>

P.S.: Did you know that AIWC is now offering virtual tours of our facility? If you are interested in booking a tour, or an AIWC Education Program for a classroom, birthday party, or other group event, please give us a call at (403) 946-2361, or email us at education@aiwc.ca.



*Pictured: Shawnessy Library.
Source: <https://calgarylibrary.ca/>*



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Read our weekly blog!

Visit <http://www.aiwc.ca/news-and-events/blog/> to read more
about AIWC patients and events!



Least Weasel Back in Fighting Form after AIWC Treatment

By J. Cooke

One of AIWC's recent patients is also one of its smallest – a least weasel who was found on a city of Calgary bike path and then brought to a local veterinary clinic.

Upon admission at AIWC, this normally active, shy, and fierce hunter was observed to be lethargic, which is a sign of possible neurological damage. He also accepted food from staff and ate it without hiding – another worrisome sign, as these tiny mammals typically take prey and stockpile it in their burrows.

The least weasel is not only the smallest member of the weasel family located in Alberta, it is one of the continent's smallest carnivores. They have an oversize appetite; however, the least weasel must

eat between 40-60% of its body weight every day to survive. With sharp teeth and claws, they can successfully hunt not only mice and shrews, but gophers and even rabbits. Their rather gruesome hunting method is to pierce the brain with their canines and save what they can't immediately eat for later.

Least weasels are found across all natural regions of our province and are classified as secure, though they are in danger in many parts of North America. Their coats are brown in summer and transition to completely white in winter. These pint-sized predators are preyed upon by owls, coyotes, and larger members of the weasel family.

The least weasel in AIWC's care was treated with medication for

pain and swelling and kept under close observation. After several days, he started to show incredible improvement: eating voraciously, hiding, and making warning calls to staff who would come near his enclosure.



Once fully recovered, he was tested for his ability to successfully hunt and passed with ease. He was released back to his territory one sunny Saturday in October.



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Joanna Macdonald: 10 Years and Counting

By K. Jansen, Education and Community Engagement Coordinator

AIWC's volunteers are an integral part of our organization, and many have been with us for years. This year, Joanna Macdonald is celebrating her 10 year anniversary as an AIWC volunteer, so I sat down with her to chat about her experiences, the inspiration behind the AIWC mural she recently finished in the clinic, and her advice for new volunteers.



Joanna Macdonald With Hawk Patient

Joanna began volunteering with AIWC back in 2007, after hearing about the organization from a former co-worker. Her exact words upon discovering AIWC were “I get to work with wildlife?!” and she applied to volunteer immediately afterwards. Since then, Joanna has experienced many special moments as an AIWC volunteer; however, her favourite moments continue to be working with the baby mammals, especially seeing unique or unusual patients such as baby badgers or this year’s bushy-tailed woodrat.

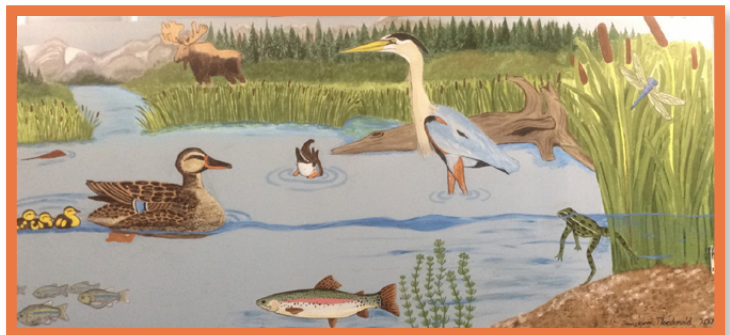
Of course, being here for 10 years means that you also experience some not-so-fun moments – particularly when it comes to cleaning up after the animals! Joanna’s arch-

nemesis is definitely the laundry, which she compares to the ocean. “Never turn your back on it, or you’ll find yourself drowning!” is her motto when it comes to getting loads started and folded. Truer words have never been spoken – at the height of summer, when over 200 patients are in care, we can need to wash nearly as many towels each day!

Most of Joanna’s volunteer work over the last 10 years has focussed on assisting staff in the clinic. However, she has also lent her skills as a painter by helping AIWC brighten up the clinic space, and make it a more enjoyable atmosphere for all. Her clinic mural (pictured below) was painted after AIWC was able to purchase our current property. As Joanna tells it, “once we knew we were staying, we really needed something to break up all the blue [paint on the walls]! Because there was so much blue, it really lent itself to a water scene, and I wanted to showcase all different types of water animals.”

As a long-time AIWC volunteer, Joanna often assists with training new clinic volunteers, and has lots of good advice for anyone looking to become involved in AIWC’s volunteer program. “There will be moments when it gets really tough. It’s a long drive, with hard shifts – but even on the hard days, there will always be something that makes it worth it!”

Though there are definitely less-than-glamorous moments, Joanna remains pragmatic and cheerful about her future with AIWC. As she laughingly stated at the end of our interview, “there’s nothing wrong with getting dirty for a good cause, and I look forward to getting pooped on for the next 10 years!”



Joanna's Wildlife Mural

Sponsor an AIWC Patient: Red-tailed Hawk

By C. Vavasour-Williams

The red-tailed hawk is one of the most common and widely distributed hawk species in North, Central, and South America. In Alberta, red-tailed hawks prefer boreal forest habitats but they will also occasionally nest in wooded areas on the prairies.

This red-tailed hawk was found on the side of a road in a southwest Calgary neighbourhood on September 19, 2017. Upon admission, AIWC staff thoroughly examined the hawk and discovered that he had a right distal radial fracture (a fractured bone in his right wing). He was also very thin, presumably from being unable to successfully hunt with his broken wing. Although the cause of his injury is unknown, it is possible that he accidentally collided with a vehicle as he was flying in the vicinity of the road.

He will spend the first few weeks indoors where staff can monitor his recovery as his fractured bone heals, and then be moved to a larger outdoor enclosure where he will be able to strengthen his flight muscles.

He will remain in AIWC's care until his wing has healed. If he has not healed in time to make his migration south with the other red-tailed hawks, he will remain in care with AIWC over the winter, since he is not equipped to handle the harsh weather, and will be released in the spring when he would naturally return to Alberta.

Sponsoring this hawk, or any other current AIWC patient, helps with the costs directly associated with their care and rehabilitation. As part of your sponsorship, you will receive a certificate, a glossy 8×10 photograph of your patient, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the sponsorship. Thank you for helping us to keep them forever wild!



Red-tailed Hawk

Shop With AIWC And "Adopt" Your Very Own Wild Animal Today!

By symbolically adopting one or more wild animals, your proceeds help AIWC continue our nearly 25 years of rescuing and rehabilitating injured, orphaned, and oiled Alberta wildlife.

Visit our online store at aiwc.shop or fill out the form included in this newsletter and mail it in to "adopt" your very own wild animal.



You will receive a 7" plush toy animal of your choice and an adoption certificate.

Price: \$48 each, including shipping





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By purchasing an annual membership, you support local wildlife, conservation, and education at AIWC for a yearly fee of \$35 per person or \$45 for a family.

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- Discount prices on AIWC merchandise;
- Discounts at local businesses; and
- The opportunity to participate at the AIWC Annual General Meeting.

There are four easy ways to purchase or renew your membership:

- Complete and mail in the membership section of the insert attached;
- Complete the secure online form at aiwc.ca;
- E-mail info@aiwc.ca; or
- Call 403-946-2361

WINTER HOURS

AIWC is open every day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to admit wildlife in need of care.

For after-hours assistance, please refer to our website for more information:

www.aiwc.ca/wildlife-hospital/after-hours-assistance/

WILDLIFE HOTLINE: 403-946-2361

Myth Busting: Who migrates for winter?

By J. Kozak

The leaves are changing colour, the mornings are getting colder, and the days are getting shorter. While humans can put on layers and survive the change in temperatures, birds instead migrate to more ideal surroundings. But do all birds migrate? And do they all migrate away from Alberta?

The short answer to the question is that birds will only remain in areas that provide a food source to them.

Owls, for example, are fortunate, because they have year-round opportunities to feed, which is why most of our owl species remain in the province throughout the entire year. Snowy owls, in fact, migrate to Alberta from the north for the winter, and just like our resident owls, hunt hares, rabbits, and other small rodents.

We are used to saying goodbye to familiar raptor species in the fall such as Swainson's hawks who migrate to South America. However, we do get winter raptor visitors such as rough-legged hawks, who migrate through Alberta from their nesting grounds in the arctic. If the weather is mild enough, you may find some spending the winter here.

And though we bid farewell to many songbirds in the fall, there are still many species who stay, such as Bohemian waxwings, often coming from the forest into towns and cities in search of food in the winter. These colourful passerines are well-known winter patients at AIWC; after they eat frozen, fermented berries, they are usually admitted suffering injuries from incidents such as window strikes after they attempt 'flying under the influence'.

Similarly, unlike their corvid relatives the American crow, the black-billed magpie is also a year-round resident in Alberta, thanks to their varied diet and habit of storing food for short times when they find it in abundance.

Perhaps the species of bird most synonymous with migration is the Canada goose, but even then there is a healthy population who remain in southern Alberta year-round. For Canada geese, the priority is open water, so as long as there is still access to the Bow river, you are likely to still see geese there, even in the winter months.

That concludes this edition of myth busting. While many species travel thousands of kilometres to avoid the frosty conditions, there are many who stay to endure it with us, or those who travel here from even colder climates, so it's best to keep your birding binoculars at hand year-round!



Bohemian Waxwing

