

## Who Me? A Long-eared Owl's Journey Back to the Wild

By C. Bogstie

Often overlooked due to their less frequently heard calls and impressive camouflage ability, the long-eared owl is widespread in North America. Their prey preferences (including gophers, mice, voles, and sometimes smaller birds or even lizards) mean that long-eared owls are most commonly found roosting in groups in dense foliage near large meadows that are ideal for hunting.

Once spotted, they are identifiable by their characteristic “surprised” expression, which can be attributed to the long ear tufts, which stand straight up giving the appearance of exclamation points. These features aren’t just for looks; they enable an acute sense of hearing which is crucial for catching prey in darkness – a result of their nocturnal lifestyle.

In late 2019, AIWC admitted an injured female long-eared owl, who showed signs of acute trauma. After performing a fluorescein stain on both eyes, it was determined that this patient was suffering from severe head trauma, consistent with a window strike. The patient had severe corneal ulcers and swelling and required immediate attention.

Initially, this owl was treated with three days of subcutaneous fluids, antibiotic eye drops and pain medication to alleviate dehydration and pain. Her appetite was luckily not an issue throughout her treatment as she consistently feasted on two mice per day (a sufficient amount based on her body weight). Unfortunately, after 3 weeks, more intense treatment was required, as the ulcers were not healing. After an additional few weeks of stronger antibiotic drops, she was finally ulcer-free and she was federally banded and released to an outdoor enclosure to begin adapting to the climate and to start flight conditioning.

After she was flight conditioned and fully acclimated to winter in Alberta, AIWC was able to release her near where she was found!



*Long-eared owl patient getting used to the winter weather in an outdoor enclosure*

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**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. Lillie, Executive Director*

A new year, a new decade! Thanks to your support, AIWC is starting its 27th year of rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing injured and orphaned wildlife.

In 2019, we admitted 1,481 animals, an increase of over 400 animals compared to 2018! Due to your support, we were able to meet this demand for services and still maintain our high standards of care, ending the year with a 47% success rate. The national average success rate in wildlife rehabilitation is 33%.

The best defense mechanism of wild animals is not displaying when they are injured, so sadly when they do come into care they are often in critical condition. We constantly strive to provide the best level of care to our patients, and it is shown through our consistently high success rate.

As we start 2020, we look forward to continuing to be a safe haven for wildlife in need, providing wildlife education to members of the community, and providing learning opportunities through volunteering and summer student positions.

I am so proud of the work that AIWC accomplishes, of our vision and mission, and that as each year passes, we continue to grow stronger. Your support is crucial to our existence.

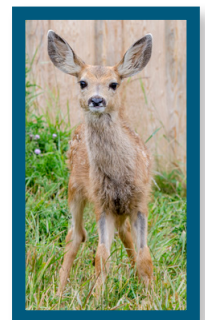
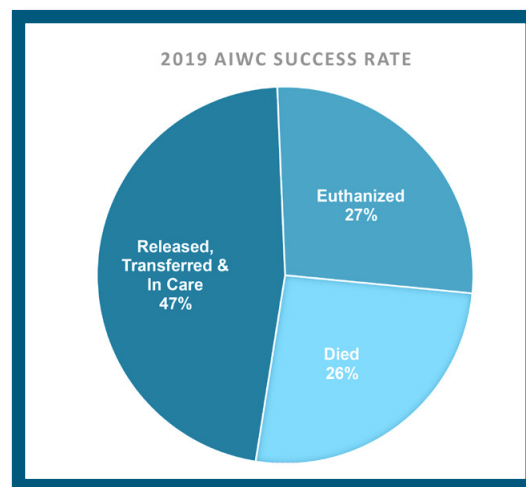
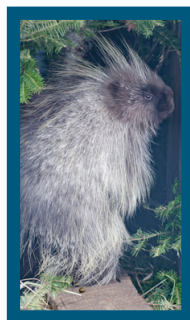
Thank you for your generous support in 2019 to ensure that wildlife continue to receive the critical care they need. Your support has saved lives in need and we hope we can rely on your continued support in 2020.

Thank you for caring for Alberta's wildlife!

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie

Executive Director





## Welcome to 2020 and Another Year of Saving Wildlife!

By K. Pederson

AIWC's first patient of 2020 was a great horned owl. He was found on the highway near Cardston, unable to fly. Upon examination at AIWC, his injuries were found to be consistent with electrocution. The current had entered at one of his wrists, travelled up the arm and across the body, then exited through his other wing. His prognosis is guarded at time of writing, but he has a healthy appetite and is eating well, which is good news! Our first patient of the year is thought to be a male, as male great horned owls are smaller than females.

Great horned owls are year-round (non-migratory) residents of Alberta so have the opportunity to have a long courtship before mating season begins as well as a longer time to care for their owlets after hatching. A mated pair is monogamous and will have one brood per year, and usually two or three owlets will be raised by both parents for six weeks. By comparison, a Swainson's hawk (migratory), a common Alberta visitor in the summer will only have half that time with their babies.

This will be first of many wild creatures AIWC will care for in 2020, and we thank you for your support!



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## First Bear Cub Released and Second on the Road to Recovery!

By J. Cooke

AIWC has successfully released one of two American Black Bear cubs that were admitted to care in 2019!

The first, as regular readers will recall, was an orphaned female found in June. She made significant gains in health and weight, and at the end of October, she was examined by our veterinary team, then microchipped and ear-tagged before being released with the help of Alberta Environment & Parks. We were delighted when she entered her den for hibernation shortly after her release. She will have enough fat stores to get her through to the spring, and, we hope, little to no recollection of her human caregivers when she awakes.

Our second bear was admitted on December 3rd, after being found near the town of Valleyview. This approximately ten-month-old bear was extremely weak, underweight, hungry and unable to walk properly. A full-body exam revealed severe dehydration and many intestinal parasites. After being dewormed and treated with subcutaneous fluids, he was well enough to be moved to our outdoor enclosure. He continues to put on weight and is enjoying exploring, climbing and fortifying his den with straw. He will most likely choose to stay awake all winter, not having enough reserves to hibernate at this time, but will be ready for release in early spring.



*Black bear cub practising climbing*



# Education Update: Community Engagement Partnership with Bow Habitat Station

By Katrina Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

One of the greatest assets to AIWC is the strength of our community partnerships, and over the years we have been able to teach thousands of people about AIWC because of the help our partner organizations provide. One of these partner organizations is the Bow Habitat Station & Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery, who have been donating fish to AIWC for years in order to feed some of our pickier patients, including merganser ducklings! In addition to donating food for the animals, this year Bow Habitat Station also invited us to their monthly “What’s Up With...?” events in order to spread the word about AIWC, and provide information to the community on how people can best look after their local wildlife.

Occurring on the first Friday of every month, each “What’s Up With...?” event focuses on a single topic, from bats and rodents, to large ungulates, to how to live with urban wildlife. This allows us to inform people about many different issues, even repeat visitors can learn something new each month! Through events at the Bow Habitat Station in 2019, we reached 514 people, and raised over \$500 through donations and merchandise sales. We are very happy to continue this partnership into 2020, including presenting at Bow Habitat Station’s special “Wild about Wildlife” event on April 4th.



*Merganser duckling*



Each interaction with someone at a booth has its own special value. From letting someone know that they can call us to rescue an animal, to seeing a child’s wonder as they touch an owl feather for the first time, every moment helps put people on a path to caring for wildlife for years to come. Making these connections is what the Public Awareness team is all about, and we are so grateful to our community partners for giving us the opportunity to reach new audiences.

Having booths and presentations at community events is a fantastic way for us to spread the word about AIWC, and help educate members of the public on what to do when they find a wild animal who is injured or orphaned.

If you know of an event in your community that AIWC should attend, please get in touch with our Community Engagement Manager at 403-946-2361, [education@aiwc.ca](mailto:education@aiwc.ca).

**Birthday? Classroom or Group Event? Book your AIWC education program today by visiting [www.aiwc.ca/education/topics/](http://www.aiwc.ca/education/topics/) or emailing [education@aiwc.ca](mailto:education@aiwc.ca)**

## Follow AIWC online!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter (@AIWC) and Instagram (@albertawildlife)!



This Big Brown Bat was found in downtown Calgary, unable to fly. Big brown bats are year-round residents in Alberta, and can be found roosting and hibernating in buildings, trees, and caves. She’s recovering well and will be released in the spring when the rest of her species emerges from hibernation.





# Sponsor a Patient: Moose Calves Over-Wintering with AIWC

By C. Slade



*Moose calf in the snow*

The Latin name *Alces alces* is called a “moose” in North American English but is called an “elk” in British English. The name “elk” in North American English refers to a completely different species, *Cervus canadensis*. Moose are the largest and heaviest species of the deer family. Adult male moose are called bulls, adult females are called cows, and babies are called calves. In Canada there are half a million to one million moose.

Moose inhabit the boreal forests and mixed forests of the Northern Hemisphere. Forests provide a variety of edible

plants, protection from predators, and offer protection from both the extreme hot and cold temperatures that occur seasonally across its range. Moose eat a variety of both terrestrial and aquatic vegetation including willow and birch, young trees, a variety of shrubs and a variety of pond grasses.

This moose calf had been observed in the vicinity of her dead mother along the side of a road near Grand Prairie, Alberta for nearly a month before a call was made for AIWC to assist with her rescue and rehabilitation. In early August 2019, after having been driven 1211 kilometers, the calf arrived safely at AIWC’s facility. Her examination revealed no significant injuries and she appeared to be a healthy, but orphaned, calf.

After spending some time in quarantine to confirm that she did not have any transmissible diseases or parasites, she was introduced to a moose calf that had been admitted earlier this summer. The two calves quickly bonded and together they will spend their time foraging on willow while growing into healthy adult moose. Both moose calves will overwinter at AIWC’s facility and should be released in the summer of 2020. There are significant costs associated with housing these two over the winter. With your generous donations they can continue to become strong and healthy in preparation for their return to the wild.

Sponsoring one of AIWC’s moose patients, or any other current AIWC patient you see here or on social media, helps with the costs directly associated with their care and rehabilitation. As part of your sponsorship, you will receive a certificate, a glossy 8x10 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!

## 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/](http://www.aiwc.ca/wildlife-hospital/after-hours-assistance/)

## GO GREEN IN 2020!

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# 2019 by the Numbers

By J. Kaiser

As usual, 2019 was a very busy year for AIWC, especially compared to 2018. In 2019, we saw 415 more patients than we saw in 2018, which was an increase of 39%, and AIWC provided care to 151 different species in throughout the year.

Of AIWC's 1,481 patients admitted in 2019, we're proud to report 47% of those patients were given a second chance at life in the wild.

Looking back at the last five years, AIWC admitted just over 7,500 patients since 2015, with an average success rate of 48%.

Mammal admissions accounted for some of the increase – and not just because we admitted our first two black bear cubs after being certified by the province. We cared for 22% more mammals in 2019 than we did in 2018. A large population of these patients were young white-tailed prairie hares, whose admissions spiked by 47% in 2019. Unfortunately, the reason many of these baby hares are admitted to AIWC is entirely preventable: the accidental “kidnapping” of healthy babies found alone and incorrectly presumed abandoned, or those attacked by domestic dogs and cats. Baby skunks, which typically make up a large proportion of mammals admitted to AIWC in the summer months, actually saw a decrease of 23%

compared to prior years; AIWC only admitted 50 skunks in 2019, and is pleased to report 93% of them were returned to life in the wild.

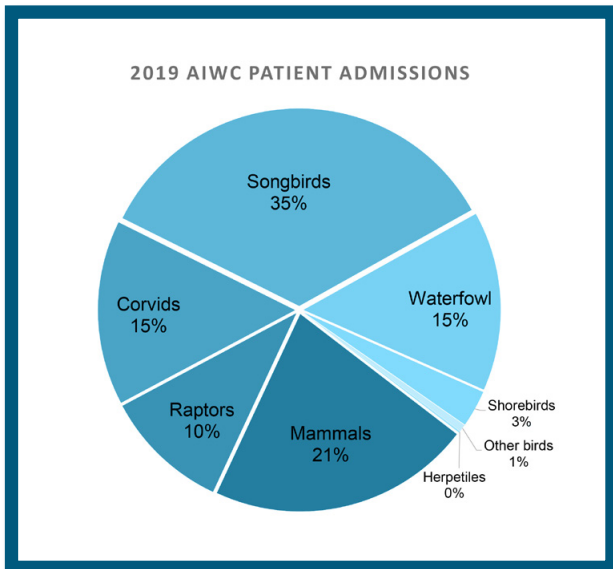
Reptiles and amphibians (collectively, herpetiles) is always the smallest category of AIWC patients, and 2019 saw only two (which was two more than 2018): a tiger salamander and a boreal chorus frog, both of whom were successfully rehabilitated and released.



*AIWC admitted 6 northern saw-whet owls in 2019. One of them remains in care continuing to recover.*

Birds, as usual, make up the vast majority of AIWC's patients (78%). The most familiar avian visitors to AIWC in 2019 were black-billed magpies (142), American robins (115), and mallards (105). Swainson's hawks (41) and great horned owls (33) were the most common raptor patients admitted for care, and AIWC saw a 22% increase in the number of raptors admitted.

Corvids and songbirds account for much of the increase in patients admitted compared to 2018. AIWC admitted 224 corvids throughout the year (43% more than 2018 and the most in a year since prior to 2015), and 512 passerines and other birds, which is almost double what was admitted the year prior.





AIWC would not be able to provide the critical care needed by our patients without the generosity of the wonderful community that supports our services. From our staff and volunteers, to our donors, to those who contact us for help and advice or simply just tell their friends and family about AIWC and share our patient stories, it is your contributions that ensure wildlife in need receives the care they need and deserve.

2020 has already continued with the busy pace of the prior year, with 35 patients in care in early January, which is more than double both 2018 and 2017. Please consider donating today to help get 2020 off to a healthy start at the clinic.




*An Alder flycatcher in care, September 2019.*



*A juvenile cedar waxwing in care – one of 38 cedar waxwings admitted to AIWC in 2019.*

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**AIWC MEMBERSHIPS**

***It's Time To Renew Your Membership!***

Current AIWC memberships expire on March 21, 2020. 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.

**Your membership fee entitles you to:**

- A mailed, paper copy of The Recovery Review, our quarterly newsletter;
- Our emailed ENews;
- Discount prices on select AIWC merchandise;
- Discounts at local businesses; and
- The opportunity to participate at the AIWC Annual General Meeting.

**There are three 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; or
- Call 403-946-2361

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) plans to raise \$500,000 this year through fundraising campaigns and initiatives. It will cost the organization approximately \$25,000 to raise this amount. Funds raised will go to support AIWC's mission. For further information, please contact Holly Lillie, 403-946-2361.

**Patient profile: Northern Goshawk**

*By J. Kozak*

A male Northern goshawk was admitted to AIWC for care in mid-October, following a collision with a window in Calgary. His early diagnosis was a left clavicle (collarbone) fracture and head trauma. Further testing found that he had a distal clavicle fracture in addition to a proximal clavicle fracture.

During recovery, he received anti-inflammatory and pain medication for two weeks, and his wing was bandaged for three weeks.

Following a week of indoor cage rest, he was moved to the outdoor flight pen where he could acclimate to winter temperatures while stretching and strengthening. Progressing from this, he was moved to AIWC's longer outdoor runway enclosure, where AIWC staff ensured he flew laps twice a day to further recover and flight test. This exercise showed continued positive results, which led to a successful release in December, when he was returned to the Weaselhead area of SW Calgary.

Northern goshawks are considered a large forest raptor, with a range spanning across North America but situated mainly within old growth and mature mixed forests. Among the trees, their short and powerful wings prove to be a great asset in allowing them to rapidly accelerate while their long tail provides for quick adjustment in flight direction as they pursue prey or keep intruders away from their nesting zones.



*Northern goshawk patient*



*Northern goshawk in outdoor enclosure*

