



Recovery Review

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Vol. 24 / Issue 1 / Winter 2017

AIWC Saving Owls with Leading-Edge Treatments

By J. Cooke

Alberta is home to 11 species of owl, and this past fall and winter, AIWC has treated patients from many of those species, sometimes entering into innovative partnerships to save lives and rehabilitate them. Here are a few of their stories.

A northern saw-whet owl was found in a yard in September suffering from torticollis, an asymmetrical head or neck position, likely caused by a blunt



Northern saw-whet owl

force trauma, such as a collision with a car or a window. The bird's head was twisted at nearly a 180 degree angle in this case. AIWC staff are working with the Marda Loop Veterinary Clinic and part of his treatment involves using an underwater treadmill every week, a machine normally reserved for the rehabilitation of four-legged patients. This pint-size owl, which inhabits the woods across the province, is making good, gradual progress and is expected to reach full recovery in a few months.

This snowy owl was found three hours away in Rolling Hills, Alberta. He was suffering from rodenticide poisoning, which occurs when the owl



Snowy owl flight conditioning

eats a rodent that has been poisoned, and when the owl was found, he was unable to fly. After weeks of treatment and flight conditioning in an outdoor enclosure, he was released back to the wild in late December!

A long-eared owl was recently admitted with ulcers on both eyes, a typical symptom of a head injury. The ulcers have been treated, and the bird now has no risk to his vision. It's interesting to note that owls hunt as much with their ears as their eyes; experiments having shown that even blind owls can catch prey in the dark. The long-eared owl spends the winter months in the south, sometimes as



Long-eared owl

far as Mexico, so since this particular owl missed his migration, he will over-winter with AIWC until he can be released in the spring.

Finally, this great horned owl was found in a ditch a few minutes from AIWC and gave our staff a bit of a chase through the woods. The owl had cut himself on barbed wire and had a large wound, but no muscles or tendons were damaged. Staff were able to suture the cut, and the owl's prognosis is very good. The great horned owl is the largest "eared" owl in Alberta, and the official bird of our province.



Great horned owl

There are many considerations involved in treating wild birds, from their physiology to the likelihood of rehabilitation – we are thrilled that we have been able to treat and heal so many of our feathered patients!



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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

With a new year comes a fresh start, but also a time of reflection as we look back on the past year and the challenges and successes we faced.

Some Highlights of 2016:

- We said "hello" to new staff: AIWC was extremely happy to welcome Michelle, our Development and Communications Coordinator, and Katrina, our Education and Community Engagement Coordinator.
- We were fortunate to receive \$100,000 from the Government of Alberta through their Community Facility Enhancement Program. This funding was assigned to our mortgage as debt reduction support. Over the coming years we aim to transform the house on AIWC's property into an education centre.
- AIWC's first children's book, *Scared Skunk*, written by authors Michelle and Denver Suttie, was launched! *Scared Skunk* is a perfect fit for children grades K-4, however, anyone at any age can learn from its true story and interesting skunk facts.
- Two volunteer orientation sessions were held with 40 new volunteers recruited. In 2016, volunteers donated over 10,000 hours to our organization, fulfilling a variety of roles such as: wildlife rehabilitation assistant, rescue driver, hotline responder, fundraising, newsletter and blog writers, and construction/site maintenance.
- 3,850 individuals were reached through our education program. Through outreach programming, we're working to create strong co-existence between Albertans and wildlife.
- Over 500 animals were released back into the wild where they belong!
- A video of the baby beaver we have in care went viral in July on social media. It has since reached over 15 million people worldwide! The beaver kit continues to do well in care and hasn't let fame get to her (or him).
- In April, the board of directors and staff met to work on a strategic plan for the organization for the next 4 years. During this session, AIWC's vision and mission were reimagined. These are the guiding forces for everything we accomplish at AIWC:

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

This year has brought a large increase in the numbers of animals admitted to our centre, and 2016 was our busiest year yet. We attribute some of this to more awareness about AIWC, but also because human/animal encounters and conflicts, are rising.

95% of the animals we care for are injured or orphaned due to human activities. The most common causes of injury are window strikes, vehicle collision, hitting power lines, barbed wire, fishing line entanglement or ingestion, domestic cat and dog attacks, and exposure to toxins.

As the demand for our services increase, so does the pressure to ensure funding to keep AIWC operational now and in the future. Thank you for your wonderful support, and for generously contributing crucial funds to directly help wildlife.

Sincerely,

Holly Duvall, Executive Director



Adoption Option: *White-tailed deer*

By C. Vavasour-Williams

These two white-tailed deer fawns were admitted to AIWC within days of each other in the early summer of 2016.

The first was discovered struggling in a river near Bragg Creek, Alberta. She was pulled from the fast-moving river and transported to AIWC. Luckily, her examination revealed only a minor abrasion on her right hind leg. Weighing only 3.9 kilograms, she was possibly orphaned and had accidentally wandered or stumbled into the river while searching for her mother.

Two days later, a second white-tailed deer fawn was admitted - this time a young male who was transported from Calgary. His examination revealed no significant findings; it is possible he was accidentally kidnapped by well-meaning citizens who did not know that fawns are naturally left alone during

the day, and thought he was orphaned instead. The second fawn was placed with the first, and together they are growing into healthy adult deer.

Both fawns will spend the winter in AIWC's care, and one warm sunny spring day they will be released in a rural wooded area.

Adopting one of our fawn patients, or any other AIWC patient, helps with the costs directly associated with their care and rehabilitation. As part of your adoption, you will receive an adoption certificate, a glossy 8x10 photograph of your patient, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the adoption.



White-tailed deer fawns in their enclosure

For more details and to adopt, visit us online at www.aiwc.ca/support-us/adopt-an-animal or call 403-946-2361.

Thank you for helping us to keep them forever wild!

Gulliver, Education Ambassador, 2013-2016

By H. Duvall, Executive Director

Gulliver, or Gully as he was usually called, was admitted as a kit (baby skunk) in summer 2013. He was found all alone outside a yoga studio in Calgary. It was evident the moment he arrived that he was a very special animal.

It soon became clear that this little skunk kit would not be suited to a life in the wild - he relied on humans too much and was very (too) friendly with people.

After careful review, the decision was made for Gully to become an AIWC education ambassador. Education ambassadors play an important role at AIWC, helping educate the public about the hazards wildlife face. Gulliver's Travels became the title for the many trips Gully took each year as an AIWC representative.

Gully has been a cherished member of the family at AIWC, and it is with great sadness that we announce his passing on December 17th, 2016. We will forever miss him and his rambunctious personality.

Gully was incredibly smart; he knew when you had food in your bag, and would pretend to give you kisses so he could smell what you may have eaten that day (such a charmer!). He loved having fresh towels and blankets to make his own bed/nest at night, and he especially enjoyed a little game he'd invented, where he'd hop on a towel and have you pull him across the floor.

Skunks are some of the most misunderstood wildlife in Alberta, yet they fill such an important role in our ecosystem. Gully impacted the lives of all he met and he was able to help distill the fear and misconceptions so common with his species.

Thank you, Gully, for all you did. We love and miss you so much.



Education Update: *Fashion, Factoids & Fundraising - Teaming up with Kay Pike Fashion*

By K. Jansen, Education and Community Engagement Coordinator

December saw a very unique program for AIWC's Education department: an internet-based question/answer period with the Kay Pike Fashion Channel!

Kay Pike is a local artist and model, who is internationally known for her live body-painting demonstrations. Most of Kay's projects involve her painting herself to look like 2-dimensional comic book characters - some of which can take up to 14 hours to complete!

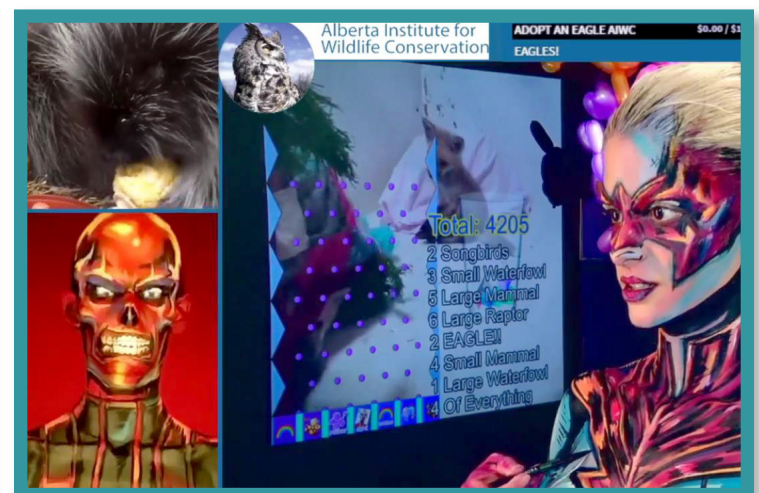
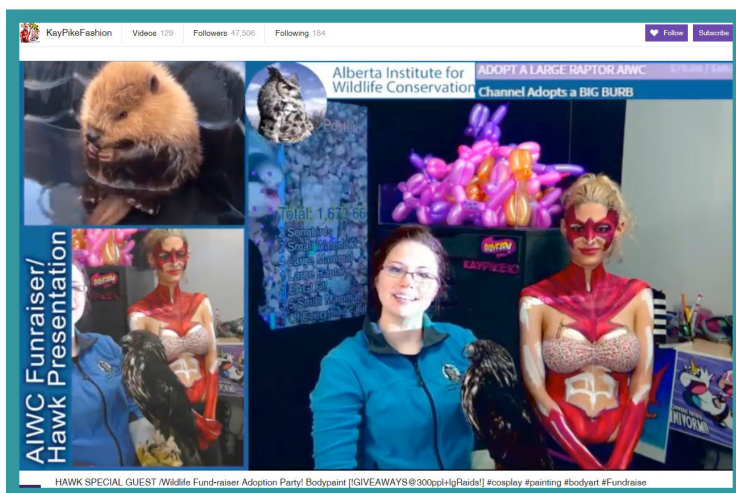
Kay and her husband Moose are also extremely passionate about wildlife; for their December 14th show, Kay and Moose decided to put on a fundraising event for AIWC, showcasing videos and photos from our social media pages and encouraging members of their audience to donate to AIWC. Beginning in the early afternoon and going to almost 5:00 a.m. the next morning, Kay finished the body painting project: the character of Hawk from the DC comic series *Hawk and Dove*. As an additional bonus for their audience, Kay and Moose invited both myself and AIWC's educational ambassador Griffin to make an appearance on the show!

During AIWC's segment, Griffin was presented to the online audience, while I answered questions from the nearly 700 viewers. It was absolutely fantastic to see the interest in AIWC from people all over the world, including the US, Australia, the UK, and New Zealand. Questions ranged from inquiries about Griffin's care at AIWC, to red-tailed hawks in general, and even about Alberta's wildlife management policies.

Kay's audience was also keen to help support AIWC in any way they could; over the course of the entire event, over \$4,200 was raised for AIWC patients! Thank you so much to Kay, Moose, and all of the Kay Pike Fashion Channel audience members for their support!

If you're interested in checking out Kay's work, head to her Twitch.tv channel or Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/KayPikefashion/>.

Interested in booking an AIWC Education Program for a classroom or group? Please call (403) 946-2361 or email education@aiwc.ca.



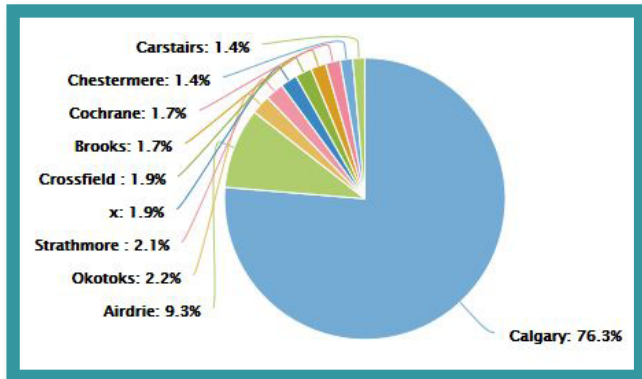
Kay Pike Fashion fundraising event for AIWC.

2016 in Review

By J. Kaiser

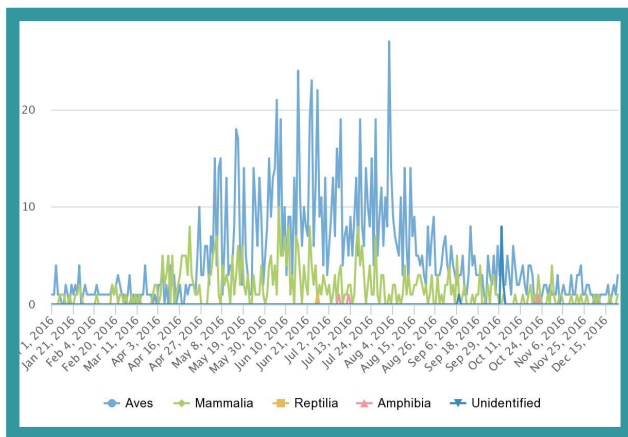
2016 was AIWC's busiest year yet, with 1,889 orphaned or injured wildlife patients from 137 different species admitted – a 13% increase from 2015!

The vast majority of our patients (76%) are admitted after being found in the city of Calgary, or brought to Calgary veterinary clinics for transfer to our centre.



Admission by city in 2016

April to September continues to be AIWC's busy season, with the influx of baby animals and return of migratory species; during this time, we may see more than 30 new patients in a single day.



Admissions by day

The best part of 2016 is that we were able to give 527 animals a second chance and return them back to the wild! Another 30 currently remain in care, many waiting for spring to arrive before being released.

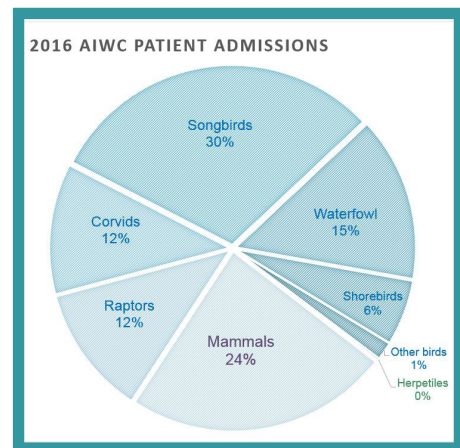
Birds remain the most frequent patient (76%), but we also continue to see an increase in mammals admitted for care (10%). Perhaps our abundance of skunks speaks largely to the increase – we admitted 86 striped skunks in 2016, representing a 21% increase from 2015 and the largest number ever recorded at AIWC. We are thrilled to report most of our skunk patients (87%) were able to be returned to the wild!

The number of bats admitted also drastically increased (87%) from 2015: 56 bats of different species came through our doors, with nine remaining in care until spring.

Black-billed magpies, American robins, and mallard ducks are the most common birds we admit. The Canada goose just missed the podium: 109 admitted, the majority as young goslings, and, happily, 81 released back to the wild.

Swainson's hawk admissions also increased, admitting 60 of them throughout the year. We also cared for nearly double the number of merlins from previous years: 34!

As always, the least-common patients are the herpetiles (reptiles and amphibians); in 2016 we admitted three tiger salamanders and one painted turtle.



2016 AIWC patient admissions

Of course, we wouldn't be able to help any wildlife without the generosity of the AIWC community – volunteers, donors, and everyone who helps make what we do possible. Thank you for your continued support and here's to many more success stories in 2017!



A Few Of Our Over-Wintering Patients

By J. Tippe

Merlin



This merlin was admitted to AIWC in October 2016 after being caught in a methane flare. The methane flare caused him to lose his tail and flight feathers, rendering him unable to fly. As birds of prey, merlins without the ability to fly cannot survive in the wilderness. This merlin will be staying in AIWC's care until at least April when he will moult his burned feathers to grow in new feathers, allowing him to take to the sky once again.

Common Muskrat



A female muskrat was admitted to AIWC in December after she was found living in a Calgary family's garage, after the pond she had been living in froze over. Fortunately, there are no physical injuries and she will be released as soon as the ponds thaw in the spring. She is one of two muskrats over-wintering with us.

Mallard



This mallard duck was admitted in January 2017, after being found in Calgary alone and not flying away. Upon examination, it was found he sustained injuries to both wrists and was missing some tail feathers. Luckily, the wounds did not impact his ability to fly, and he was exhibiting good flight after a few days of treatment. He will remain in care in AIWC's aquatic bird facility while his wounds heal. Since some mallard ducks and other species do remain in Alberta for winter as long as there is open water, if he continues to heal well, he will not have to wait until spring to be released.

North American Porcupines



A young female porcupine was found orphaned in a Calgary backyard in June. Juvenile porcupines do better with companionship, so the Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton transferred a juvenile porcupine they had



recovering in care after a dog attack to keep her company. Both porcupettes need time to learn how to forage for their own food and will be staying at AIWC throughout the winter to learn these crucial life skills before being released as adults in the spring.

North American Beaver



This beaver was admitted as a baby in June after being caught by a predator and then dropped onto a golf course. She suffered a wound to her tail in the attack, but has since made a full recovery. Beavers stay with their families for two to three years, so because this beaver was separated

from her family at such a young age she will be in the care of AIWC for the remainder of the time she'd be with her parents in the wild, to learn essential survival skills.

American Crows



AIWC has two American crows over-wintering this year. They both have poor tail and wing feathers, and one had fractured digits, which have since healed. Both American crows are flightless without their tail and wing feathers, so they will be staying with AIWC until they moult in the spring and regrow their tail and wing feathers, which will allow them to take flight once again.

Join AIWC for the 5th "Bunnies for Bunnies" Easter Fundraiser!



Easter is just around the corner, and so is AIWC's busiest season of the year! You can help support the care of injured and orphaned wildlife by ordering delicious Purdy's chocolates. 25% of all sales are donated to AIWC!

Purdy's has made ordering your Easter chocolate bunnies and other chocolate goodies easy. Just go to www.purdysgpp.com to register, search for Group number **27575** and start shopping!

Order deadline date is March 30, 2017. You will be contacted for pick-up/delivery arrangements and receive your order no later than April 10. Orders accepted from Calgary and area only.

If you have any questions please contact us at info@aiwc.ca.

Thank you for your support!



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AIWC's LATEST NEWS by
reading our blog!**

<http://www.aiwc.ca/news-and-events/blog/>

**AND follow us on Facebook,
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& Twitter (@AIWC)!**





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AIWC MEMBERSHIPS

It's Time To Renew Your Membership!

Current AIWC memberships expire on March 21, 2017. 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 AIWC merchandise and events;
- 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: *Blind as a Bat?*

By J. Kozak

Are bats blinded by daylight? Can they see in the dark? What does it mean to say "blind as a bat"?

There are two main groups of bats. The first, Megachiroptera, are mostly medium or large-sized bats. These species have pronounced visual centres and big eyes, and use sight and smell to find their dinner, mostly in the form of fruit.

The second group, Microchiroptera, are the kind of bats found in Alberta; they are smaller and primarily feed on insects. These species use echolocation to navigate and locate their prey. Echolocation is when an animal emits calls, which bounce off of objects and return as echoes. The difference between call and echo helps them establish their surroundings. Although this is their ideal method to navigate, it doesn't mean that the mammal is completely blind. These bats still have eyes and can see clearly in the daylight; they are just more capable hunters at night using echolocation.

Little brown bats, a common Alberta species, produce 50 to 500 calls per second. When seeking out prey or determining their surroundings, the bats emit calls at a relatively low rate, which increases when they are actively chasing prey.



Big brown bats (left) and silver-haired bat (right)

There are currently nine bats of three different species (little brown bat, big brown bat, and silver-haired bat) over-wintering at AIWC, awaiting release in the spring when there are insects to hunt.

In conclusion, this myth is busted! Bats are not blind – it's simply a matter of them having a more advanced ability to travel during the night by means of echolocation. This ability makes them effective insect hunters, making them valuable for the ecosystem, and great neighbours to have around!

GO GREEN IN 2017!

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