

RecoveryReview

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

Finally Free - A Golden Eagle's Fight

Golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are one of two species of eagles that inhabit Alberta. The other species is the easily recognizable bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Golden eagles are found across North America, but prefer mountainous habitats. They are large raptors; a healthy adult can have a wingspan measuring 2.3 meters (7.5 feet) and weigh as

much as 6.5 kilograms (14 pounds).

One particular eagle (pictured below) was found near Exshaw, Alberta in early November 2012. Alberta Fish and Wildlife transported the eagle to AIWC's facility, but the exact details regarding his rescue are unclear. AIWC staff examined the eagle and ascertained he was suffering from lead poisoning. He was also lethargic, suffering from hypothermia. A blood sample

was taken and staff discovered the level of lead in his blood was definitely toxic.

Lead poisoning occurs most commonly when an animal eats food that is contaminated with lead shards. Golden eagles prey primarily on rodents and hares, but when food is scarce they will feed on a variety of food items. Being opportunists, all eagles will feed on carrion. They have been observed feeding on the remains of

deer killed by human hunters, as well as coyotes that have been shot. Although it is impossible to know how this eagle was poisoned, it is most likely the eagle acquired lead poisoning by swallowing the lead shards as he fed on the remains of an animal killed by human hunters. After the initial diagnosis, AIWC staff knew they needed to act quickly. It takes a couple of weeks for symptoms of lead poisoning to appear. This eagle would have suffered a slow death had it not been discovered.

Lead poisoning in raptors is treated through an intricate process called chelation therapy, plus a complex variety of medications, fluid therapy and a select combination of vitamin supplements. Patients suffering from lead poisoning react to treatments differently, making each case unique.

Golden Eagle *cont. on p3*



~ by C. Vavasour-Williams

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VISION: AIWC strives to enrich the lives of Albertans by nurturing a strong appreciation and respect for wildlife.

MISSION/MANDATE:

To contribute to wildlife conservation in Alberta by:

- Providing comprehensive and humane rehabilitation programs for injured and orphaned wildlife;
- Promoting awareness and encouraging greater stewardship of native wildlife through engaging education programs;
- Researching wildlife issues that improve rehabilitation protocols and support the broader scientific community; and
- Helping people co-exist peacefully with wildlife by providing humane solutions for wildlife 'invasions' on personal and public property.

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Submissions/Comments may be sent to the above address.

★ Happy 20th ★ Birthday AIWC



Join AIWC in celebrating 20 years of saving wild lives through

Rescue, Rehabilitation & Release

Check our website often for information on all the special birthday events happening throughout the year!

www.aiwc.ca

Red crossbill (Loxia curvirostra)
 This red crossbill was found on January 23, 2013 on the ground in a residential neighbourhood in Airdrie, Alberta.
 Since he had sustained a soft-tissue injury to his right shoulder, he remained at AIWC for a couple of weeks until he recovered.



Golden Eagle *continued from pt*



The treatment is a complicated process and recovery is slow. This eagle spent the past winter indoors at the Centre. During the first few days of treatment his prognosis was poor, but staff were guardedly optimistic that he could overcome the effects of poisoning and its associated complications. The eagle's slow recovery was closely monitored and gradually his condition began to improve.

By the time the warmer weather returned, the eagle was healthy enough to be moved outside into a large enclosure where he could begin to improve his cardio-vascular fitness. After several months without flying, it would take some time for him to regain the strength and ability he would need to fly long distances. Gradually, he was able to fly multiple lengths of the enclosure with ease.

The eagle was ready for release in early April 2013! On a sunny spring morning, staff drove the eagle to the site of the eagle migration pathway in the Kananaskis region. After a brief period to get his bearings he was once again flying free!

NOTE: Before its release, AIWC submitted a sample of this eagle's blood to the University of Calgary. Researchers at the university have begun a study examining the genetic differences between local resident golden eagles and migratory golden eagles. AIWC staff and volunteers are eagerly awaiting the results of the genetic testing.

BY WAY OF THE ARROW

Three white-tailed prairie hares (*Lepus townsendii*) have been admitted to AIWC for arrow wounds in the last three months. The first came on March 24th with a cheap plastic arrow that caused severe damage. The arrow pierced sideways through the hare's abdomen and splintered inside, fracturing its ribs on both sides and causing damage to the musculature and skin. The hare had been surviving in this injured state for about a month before three AIWC volunteers were able to capture her, within the confines of a fenced yard. A huge abscess exuded from the tunnel created by the arrow, right through its midriff. How the arrow missed piercing the gastrointestinal tract is a miracle! After treating the massive infection, the hare is now healthy and expected to be released by the second week of July! Although stressed and in pain, the hare never fought or struggled, even when treatment was required twice a day and took up to 30 minutes at a time.

A week after receiving that hare, another hare came in with the same affliction. This time, a different type of arrow had pierced the hare's jaw. Capture was made easy because the hare got stuck in a fence due to the arrow. Unfortunately, the damage was too severe for rehabilitation and it was humanely euthanized. On the second last week of May, yet another arrow-injured hare arrived. This one had been shot through the eye. After removing the affected eye, the hare made a speedy recovery and was released in early June.

We would like to extend a gracious thank you to the veterinarians who made the rehabilitation possible for these two hares. Thank you Dr. Sandra Bitner and Dr. Jody McMurray! Thank you to all of the donors and members of AIWC as well. Your support allows us to keep helping wildlife!

~ by J. Loader



Wear AIWC!!

AIWC has a great stock of Hoodies and T-shirts for sale! Please email info@aiwc.ca to order yours!



Hoodies – **\$35.00**
(\$30.00 for Members)



Hoodies come in navy blue, light grey and dark grey.



T-shirts – **\$20.00**
(\$15.00 for Members)



Unisex T-shirts come in navy blue, fushia, yellow and light green.



Womens long sleeve T-shirt is available in white only.

Fundraising UPDATE

AIWC has WON \$100,000.00 from Shell!!

Thank you to Shell and everyone who voted for AIWC's mammal enclosure project through **Shell's Fuelling Change** initiative. We are over-the-moon excited to design and build a state-of-the-art enclosure for our mammal patients. The animals will thrive in this species-specific, inter-changeable, and natural environment!

AIWC has a NEW RESCUE VEHICLE donated by LUSH Cosmetics

A huge thank you to LUSH cosmetics for this timely and much needed rescue vehicle. The Wildlife Conflict Solutions team will be the primary user of this cool new van. Look for it driving around the city of Calgary and surrounding communities promoting AIWC and rescuing wildlife.

Thank You Airdrie Food Bank

While the Airdrie Food Bank's first priority is feeding people, it does receive produce that is at the end of its shelf life. They share these items with AIWC on a weekly basis to feed our patients. AIWC would like to thank the Airdrie Food Bank. Their contributions are gratefully appreciated and we look forward to a long collaboration with this exceptional organization.

Bottle Drive Results

AIWC raised \$1,534 from its first Bottle Drive of 2013! It was a successful and fun day thanks to our dedicated volunteers AND their families. Our drivers picked up beverage containers from AIWC supporters and their contributions added much needed funds to the Bottle Drive effort. **Our next Bottle Drive will be held on July 27 at the Fish Creek Bottle Depot from 9:30 to 3:00.** AIWC members and supporters are invited to join AIWC volunteers as drivers, sorters or going door-to-door. **Please email info@aiwc.ca to sign up!**

Can't wait for July? Or, dread going to the Bottle Depot? Email info@aiwc.ca and we will be happy to send someone to pick up from you!

Food Pledge Results & Draw Winners

The 2013 Food Pledge raised \$8576.50!!

A huge thank you to all the contributors and collectors of pledges!

The lucky winners of the draws are:

Danika Jones – Camera
Janet & Jason McLeod – Wildlife Print
Karen Kines – Family Portrait Session
Wendy Dempster won 2 AIWC T-shirts and 2 AIWC mugs.

And special thanks to the sponsors of the Food Pledge:

- The Camera Store
- Denis Mayer Jr.
- Janet Horbacio Photography
- Seitel Solutions

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CHARITY POT PARTY!

Lush Cosmetics is hosting a Charity Pot Party for AIWC at their Sunridge Mall location
Saturday, July 13
noon to 4

Please drop by to say hello and get all the latest info on AIWC and our newest patients. *Snacks and drinks available. Donations always welcome!*

Species Profile: Woodchuck

Marmota monax

~ by L. Daoust

Much like people seeking a tan, woodchucks love to be out sunning themselves. The only difference is woodchucks are quite comfortable stretched out on a rock!

The woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) is a member of the squirrel family Sciuridae. These beautiful animals weigh approximately three kilograms, or six and a half pounds, as adults. Woodchucks have broad heads, robust bodies, short powerful legs, and very strong claws for digging. Their bushy tails are dark brown or black, and their upper body is grizzled dark brown while their lower body is reddish brown.

Woodchucks are found in boreal forest, parkland and the foothills regions where woodlots have been broken by pastures and meadows. Woodchuck burrows are created under tree stumps, rocks, and edges of buildings. These burrows may measure up to thirty feet in length. The burrow entrances are conspicuous since they are eight to twelve inches wide and large mounds of soil can be found close by.

For most of the year woodchucks are solitary animals. However, in the summer mates may share a den. Woodchucks mate soon after emerging from hibernation in late March or early April. A mere four weeks after mating, four or five blind, furless babies are born in grass-lined nests underground. By one month of age, the young are mobile. Juvenile woodchucks emerge from their dens in June and are weaned shortly after. At two months of age the juveniles disperse to live on their own. Woodchucks may live up to ten years but the average lifespan is probably much shorter.

The woodchuck diet consists of various grasses, weeds, clover and alfalfa. These mammals have also been known to raid gardens and picnic areas for a meal. They will eat insects



and occasionally the young of ground nesting birds. During the spring, before green vegetation is available, these animals will consume twigs and buds.

The woodchuck is known by several monikers but is most often referred to as the groundhog. They are the main character in Groundhog Day folklore, supposedly making the very important decision about when winter will end. They are also sometimes referred to as whistle-pigs, undoubtedly gaining this nickname from the shrill whistles they make while running for cover, perhaps from predators such as foxes, coyotes, and bobcats.

Woodchucks play a very interesting role in our ecosystem. As they are a major hole digging mammal in North America, they turn over great pieces of earth, fertilizing and aerating millions of tons of soil each year. By digging holes they also provide homes for animals such as foxes, rabbits, snakes, and skunks.

If you keep a watchful eye during early morning or late afternoon in the right habitat, you may just be lucky enough to spot one of these intriguing animals!

Sponsor a recovering animal!...

Sometimes extraordinary situations require extraordinary measures. This old adage has been used often enough to seem like a worn out cliché. But a recent wildlife rescue by Roy Hoskins proves that sometimes the meaning behind clichéd old adages still applies.

Last April, Roy faced the daunting task of rescuing two great horned owlets in the Foothills Industrial Park region of Calgary. With heavy machinery operating in the area along with various physical hazards, the area the owlets (at that time they were at the branchling stage) were in was obviously dangerous for humans and animals alike. Equipped with steel-toed boots and a reflective vest, Roy was well suited to work in an industrial zone and his expertise allowed him to subdue the two owlets who were in sight of their protective parents.

While the owlets were healthy, their situation was not safe. The fateful endings of previous years' owlets prompted us to remove this pair. The two owls were placed together in an outdoor flight pen and they will remain at AIWC until their flight feathers have completely grown in and they are ready to be self-sufficient. This could take up to a year, meaning the extraordinary measures to ensure the owlets' well-being continues! Please consider becoming one of AIWC's extraordinary sponsors by "adopting" these featured owls, or any other patients in AIWC care.

Adopting any of our wild patients helps AIWC pay for the expenses associated with their rehabilitation.

for more info www.aiwc.ca or 403-946-2361

Each issue of the *Recovery Review* will feature one of AIWC's current patients up for 'adoption'. By donating a fixed amount for a featured animal, donors choose how their money is spent. In return, the donor receives an adoption certificate, a glossy 8x10 photograph, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the donation. AIWC's 'adoption option' is particularly popular as a gift!

LARGE RAPTOR (\$60):
GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*)



VOLUNTEER IN PROFILE:

BILL MCDUGALL



Bill has always had a strong appreciation for wildlife and the outdoors. He was raised on a farm where he learned to work with animals from a young age. Bill even considered attending vet school for a time. Instead, he decided to major in Environmental Biology, and began volunteering with the Alberta Society for Injured Birds of Prey in Strathcona County (near Sherwood Park) while studying at the University of Alberta. After moving to Calgary, Bill decided that he wanted to continue working with injured wildlife, and that is how he ended up applying as a volunteer with AIWC twelve years ago.

Bill started working weekly volunteer shifts as a hands-on Centre Volunteer. With his background and previous volunteer experience, he quickly settled into clinical work quite comfortably. By his own admission, Bill did not get caught up in the 'cute factor' of the animals that much and preferred to help the animals by completing all the necessary tasks in a timely manner.

Bill's 'get it done' attitude served him well during busy summer months at AIWC!

That philosophy also helped him switch gears from being in the clinic to being on AIWC's Board of Directors. In Bill's full time occupation, he had been learning sales and managerial skills and he thought he could apply these skills to help AIWC. He has taken many positions on the Board over the years, including Chairman and he is currently holding the position of Vice-Chair.

In his down-time, Bill likes to camp, hike, and go cycling with his two sons. Bill also likes to travel, preferably to places with lots of sun, beaches and wildlife. During the winter, he enjoys snowmobiling and skiing, provided his injured knee does not act up! Bill has also recently acquired a cruising motorbike that he is looking forward to taking out on the open road.

Whatever Bill does, his passion for AIWC is tangible and we are all incredibly grateful to have him as a leader in our organization!



New Arrivals

Introducing two of AIWC's most recent patients. While they may resemble baby crocodiles, they are in fact tiger salamanders. They get their name from the striped pattern running along their body.

The finder, not knowing it was illegal to keep these two male salamanders, surrendered them to AIWC. They weighed 134 grams and 106 grams upon arrival. The one male had become a master at begging for food (a trait not unheard of in this particular species) and thus was overweight. Since the weight of an average tiger salamander is 126 grams they have been switched to a healthier, more natural diet and portion sizes have been adjusted accordingly.

Before being released, these salamanders must prove to be free of the Chytridiomycosis disease. This fungal disease thickens the skin, causing the amphibian to become unable to absorb electrolytes like sodium and potassium. AIWC is committed to being a partner in the front-line detection of this fatal disease and tests all amphibians admitted.

Our Thanks

...to all the outstanding individuals who generously contributed crucial funds, aiding wildlife in distress!!!

The individual donor list is calculated cumulatively from November 1st to October 31st of each year. WATCH YOUR NAME MOVE UP THE LIST AS YOU DONATE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

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Migration Interrupted!

~ by K. Pederson

At the end of April, staff and volunteers bid a bittersweet farewell to the two tundra swans (also known as whistling swans) that spent nearly six months in our care and had been featured for the AWC 'Adoption Option' sponsorship (Winter 2012 Recovery Review). The first swan was found in mid-November, wandering in an alley in the town of Brooks. The second swan, only days later, was found sitting on a gravel road near Kathryn, Alberta. They were both on their migration from the Arctic Tundra to the Pacific Slope, but misfortune put a stop to their journey. When they were admitted, both birds were underweight and unable to fly. One of the swans had a piece of its foot webbing missing, and both birds were suffering from pressure sores, a condition caused by walking on rough or hard surfaces for too long.

Although found nearly 100 kms away from each other, the swans quickly bonded. When the swans were separated during treatment, the smaller bird would call out constantly, until her 'AWC mate' would be returned to the adjacent enclosure. After successful treatment, they were moved to a larger area with an indoor pool, and housed together for the remainder of their stay. Their gentle deep 'honks' could be heard throughout the clinic, and a closed circuit camera gave visitors a chance to see the swans interact. The swans soon got used to their routine at AWC, and would waddle gracefully down the hall and wait patiently while their bedding and pool water were replaced (Twice a day! Two big birds make a big mess!)

As soon as spring was in the air, staff kept their ears and eyes open for any sign of returning swans. Only then could our winter visitors be set free. Finally, in late April the tundra swans were driven to a large lake known to be a staging area for migrating swans. Surprisingly, the larger swan took flight as soon as the crate door opened, leaving his roommate on her own! She called to him, but could not know that he had flown a short distance to an adjacent pond. The very next day, at least 50 migrating swans joined the AWC swans and the lake was full of noisy, busy, big white birds. Within the week, all the swans were gone...the lake was calm and quiet...migration continued!

