

Recovery Review

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

Alberta's Bird: *The Great Horned Owl*

By J. Dooley

Each year the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation takes in several owls who have been injured by vehicle collisions, electrocutions, and poisonings as well as a number of orphaned owlets each spring.

In 1977, the province had Alberta's children vote on which bird they thought should be Alberta's official provincial bird, and the great horned owl won. The provincial bird is meant to symbolize Albertans' concern for the longevity of future wildlife, and each

sighting of a great horned owl should serve as a reminder to mind and respect our local wildlife populations. Like all birds of prey, they are a protected species.

Great horned owls, one of the eleven species of owls found in our province, are common throughout the province and are a resident bird, meaning they do not migrate away from Alberta for the winter. They are easy to recognize by the two large tufts of feathers on top of their heads that looks like ears or horns. They have large, round yellow eyes, white and brown plumage, and their feet are completely covered in feathers. To scare away predators, they snap their beaks to make a loud clapping sound and hiss (not unlike a cat).

Great horned owls hunt at night, but can occasionally be seen on dark afternoons and evenings. Their diet is primarily made up of



other birds, small mammals and rodents, and large insects. Though not the largest owl found in Alberta (that distinction goes to the great grey owl), great horned owls are powerful and strong, with the ability to carry animals much heavier than themselves, meaning they can successfully hunt large prey,

including skunks and geese.

Great horned owls mate for life and nest earlier in the year than most other birds, laying two to three eggs in February or March. In most cases, their eggs are laid in abandoned nests built by crows and hawks. Both parents attend to the young, and by five to six weeks old, owlets begin learning to fly.

By nesting earlier in the season, the owlets are provided with ample time to learn hunting skills before becoming self-sufficient adults. This becomes one of the greatest priorities when rehabilitating orphaned owlets; ensuring they properly learn how to hunt on their own before release.

During the summer of 2015, AWIC took in

a clutch of four abandoned great horned owlets.

These owlets were raised together over the summer from juveniles into early adulthood. They spent fall residing in AIWC's outdoor flight cage where they practiced their hunting skills. Once those were mastered, they were released back to the wild in October, before winter settled in.

It costs AIWC \$8 per day to feed one great horned owl, and every dollar counts! Please consider donating today to help provide our wildlife patients with a second chance.





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UPDATES

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 or emailed to info@aiwc.ca.

Forever Home Update *By H. Duvall, Executive Director*

As of September 29, \$59,580 has been raised for our AIWC Forever Home Campaign! This amount will be matched by Dr. Sovanna Khuong of Deerfoot Meadows Dental who has agreed to match up to \$250,000 in donations!

We are now at 35% of our goal to raise \$750,000 to pay off our mortgage on the land. Moving forward, we will continue to have the campaign as an option to our donors, but focus more resources on operational funding for AIWC.

With the funds in place, we now have payments for our mortgage secured for the next two and a half years and will continue to expand on this to ensure we do not need to use operating costs for our payments.

With the change in the economic climate, we also have to take into account the decrease in donations to our centre and plan accordingly for the future.

To stay up-to-date on our AIWC Forever Home Campaign, please visit our website at: <http://www.aiwc.ca/support-us/aiwc-forever-home/>

Thank you for supporting AIWC and helping to ensure we have a forever home!



AIWC's Education Programs *By B. Wright*

Education Team Honours Long Time Supporter

AIWC's Education Team honours a teacher who has, year after year, both supported AIWC's Wildlife Education Programs and orchestrated a multitude of fundraisers with all her grade three classes.

Her name is Sheila McMurray, from A. E. Bowers School, in Airdrie. Through her yearly fundraisers, Sheila has raised over \$10,000 towards helping orphaned and injured wildlife in Alberta!

Sheila has also instilled a caring attitude for wildlife in all the students who have passed through her classroom over the years.

On September 24, Sheila booked a Wildlife Rescue program and fundraiser for her students. Holly Duvall, Executive Director, attended to do a kick-off speech, and seizing the opportunity to honour one of our loyal supporters, Katherine Pederson,

'Education Update Con't on page 3'

ADOPTION OPTION: Eurasian Collared Dove

By C. Vavasour-Williams



The Eurasian collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), most commonly referred to as the collared dove, is a species of dove native to Asia and Europe. In the 1970s, several collared doves were accidentally released from captivity in the Bahamas; within ten years they had migrated north to Florida and in the following decades have spread as far west as California, as far north as Alaska and as far east as Nova Scotia.

The collared dove is a relative of the Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) and gets its name from the black half-collar at the nape of its neck. The collared dove has adapted

to living in urban environments; bird feeders and backyard plants provide a consistent source of high quality food items. Large populations of these doves can also be found living near established farms where spilled grain around grain silos or where livestock are fed provides another excellent source of food.

Collared doves feed mainly on seed and cereal grains such as millet, sunflower, wheat and corn. They will also feed on some berries as well as invertebrate species. Collared doves are ground foragers; they peck at grain and seeds that have been scattered beneath bird feeders or on

the ground on farms. Flocks commonly number between ten and fifty birds, and it is uncommon to see solitary collared doves.

This collared dove was discovered by a homeowner in Black Diamond, Alberta on September 16, 2015. The dove had been attacked by a domestic cat. The dove was transported to AIWC; her examination revealed a large puncture wound under her left wing, as well as several smaller cuts. She was missing a lot of feathers on her left wing as well as on the left side of her body. Staff treated her puncture wound and cuts. It will take several weeks for her feathers to grow back in, she will remain at AIWC until all of her injuries have healed and she is once again able to fly.

Adopting this dove or any of our other wild patients helps AIWC with the expenses directly associated with their rehabilitation, including medication, medical supplies, and food. In return, donors receive an adoption certificate with a glossy 8x10 photograph, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the donation. For more details visit: www.aiwc.ca/support-us/adopt-an-animal/

SMALL \$10 Members \$8
LARGE \$15 Members \$12
2016
2016

'Education Update Continued'

AIWC Board Member, presented Sheila with a commemoration plaque and framed painting by Marigold, the striped skunk, one of AIWC's previous education ambassadors.

For Spring 2016, Sheila has already booked one of our Outdoor Wildlife Education Excursion programs for her grade 3 students.

Thanks so much, Sheila, for all you do, both helping to fund the care of orphaned and injured wildlife, as well as helping educate young Albertans about our local wildlife, instilling in your students the knowledge and desire to care for our most precious resource!



The Stowaway:

North American Opossum (*Didelphis Virginia*)

By J. Kaiser

Between patient intakes, animal rescues, and calls from the public to our Wildlife Hotline (403-946-2361), no two days at AIWC are identical, and expecting the unexpected becomes its own routine for centre staff and volunteers. However, every once in a while, something truly unusual happens that piques everyone's interest.

That is certainly the case when it comes to AIWC's first ever opossum patient, admitted earlier this fall!

If you're thinking to yourself, 'we don't have opossums in Alberta', you would be correct. This mischievous character hitched a ride on a trailer in Ontario and made his way west.



Thankfully, upon arrival in Alberta, he was discovered right away and brought into AIWC. Upon examination, he was found to have survived his journey well, albeit hungry and quite dehydrated, he was without any other injury.

Of course, that doesn't mean he could be released right away. Since opossums are not native to Alberta, he would not have other opossums to create a family with, and even if he did manage to thrive in an unnatural environment, releasing a potentially

invasive species is both incredibly irresponsible and potentially destructive to Albertan ecosystems.

Opossums are the most common marsupials in the Western Hemisphere ("possums" are found in the Eastern Hemisphere). The North American opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) is the only marsupial native to Canada, and like all marsupials, their young are born at a very early stage of development and stay in the mother's pouch for up to four months.

Contrary to popular belief, adult opossums are too heavy to hang by their tails, and use their prehensile tails as a fifth limb for balance when climbing. Opossums are also known for "playing dead" when they feel threatened, which is an involuntary response and sometimes it takes them up to four hours to regain consciousness.

Knowing he cannot stay in Alberta, and after a few days of supportive care to ensure he was healthy, AIWC began making arrangements to send the opossum patient on another long journey - this time back east, where he can be released back to the wild where he belongs.

Thankfully, an anonymous donor stepped in to donate airfare for his journey. AIWC then also made arrangements for his transfer to the Toronto Wildlife Centre. They received him back in Ontario on October 9, and ensured he was fit



and healthy before releasing him back to his natural ecosystem.

A lot of people and organizations have come together to ensure this opossum made it back home where he can be returned to the wild, and AIWC would like to extend our sincerest thanks for everyone's support helping this truly unique patient!

Keep up-to-date with
AIWC'S LATEST NEWS
by reading our blog!

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



AND follow on us



Facebook and
Twitter (@AIWC!)

Wildlife Cruelty Bulletin *By N. Martel*

The Origins of The Link

The link between animal abuse and human violence is well-documented. The FBI started probing into the matter in the early 1970s when it was discovered that virtually all of their serial sexual and homicidal offenders had demonstrated acts of cruelty towards animals, including wildlife, as children. However, the history of the link began much earlier than that.

The human-animal bond dates back thousands of years, as attested to by Aboriginal cultures around the world with deep connections to wildlife. Somewhere along the way, exploitation of animals confirmed a growing belief in their subordinate status and made them easy targets of abuse, which has placed violence against animals on a continuum that awareness and education are only just beginning to address.

The first animal protection laws were aimed at beasts of burden (horses and donkeys), and evolved to include companion animals. Wildlife was not originally part of any meaningful protections. Historically, Canadian law has made (and continues to make) exceptions for accepted animal use practices such as hunting, trapping, and pest control, which often cause significant suffering. These issues remain sensitive for many people and governmental and social expectations are that humane practices will be adhered to. Other

abuses of wildlife diverge from these practices and it is at this juncture that the law, the link, and animal protection intersect to address the problem.

Research into the link has shed an important light on many facets of animal abuse, such as pets as early domestic violence victims. Wildlife has only begun to emerge as an important demographic of victims in the last decade or so. Children abusing wildlife have sometimes self-disclosed that they did it because a) the likelihood of getting caught was low (wildlife have no owners), and b) they felt a high from having complete control over the animal. The usual elements of the link present when pets are abused (to hurt someone, for example) are removed where wildlife is concerned and such cruelty can be indicative of deeper psychological issues.

Thankfully, wildlife centres such as AIWC, as well as law enforcement agencies, are becoming more

**NOT ALL VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME
CAN CALL 9-1-1**



Reporting acts of abuse and cruelty towards wildlife to the proper authorities can ensure that there is a record on file pointing to an area of geographical interest. It doesn't often lead to charges, but it helps to identify possible markers of abuse, such as poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence going on in a given area.

aggressive in their reporting and offering stronger investigative support toward any acts of cruelty directed at wildlife, leading to earlier intervention strategies to help combat animal cruelty. We can all actively push this progress along.

Report cruelty, every time.



AIWC is incredibly fortunate to have a team of dedicated, passionate, and incredibly hard-working volunteers. Each year, over 10,000 hours are

Thank You To Our Volunteers!

By H. Duvall, Executive Director

donated by our volunteer team and without their help AIWC could not operate. Volunteers assist in a variety of roles, but often go above and beyond for unexpected tasks and call-outs for emergency help.

This past year has seen a multitude of changes and improvements at AIWC, from new staff, to purchasing the land we have resided on, to updating animal treatment protocols, and we cannot thank our volunteers enough for providing their support and feedback throughout all of this.

Each year we hold a volunteer appreciation night and we would

like to thank everyone who was able to make it to this event in September - we hope to see you all again next year!

Congratulations to the following volunteers who received their AIWC jackets for years of service: Shannon, Judy and Sheila (5 years!), Anne and Laurie (10 years!), Tammy, Monica, and Wanda (15 years!) and Bev for 20 years!

Thank you, AIWC Volunteers, for helping us through another busy summer season!

JOIN THE TEAM:

Call-Out For New Volunteers!

Are you interested in volunteering at AIWC? We are now accepting volunteer applications and will begin orientations in early 2016!

AIWC depends on an army of dedicated and passionate volunteers to assist the staff members with many aspects of the operation of our organization. Volunteering is a truly rewarding experience with all efforts directly going to help wildlife.

Help is needed in a variety of roles, such as rescue driver, wildlife rehabilitation assistant, hotline, education, administration, fundraising, construction, and writing.

For more information on volunteering at AIWC, please visit our website at: <http://www.aiwc.ca/volunteer/>



Thank You To Our Summer Crew!

By H. Duvall, Executive Director

As our patient numbers increase, joining the staff team at AIWC is a daunting task even for those experienced in the field of wildlife rehabilitation.

In the past, May has been the month for students to learn the ropes of working in a wildlife hospital, but this year we saw goslings, ducklings, and nestling songbirds arrive three weeks earlier than usual!

This year we were lucky to have an amazing team of three summer students: Shannon T, Laura M, and Kathryn P, and two interns: Erica W and Kaleigh E.

Spring and summer are our peak seasons for animal care and intakes and we can't thank our summer crew enough for all of their hard work, patience, and dedication. They adapted extremely well to the busy life at AIWC and their passion for our wildlife patients and their care was wonderful to see.

Thank you on behalf of all of us at AIWC!

FAQ:

Why are the geese still here?

By J. Kaiser

In the fall and early winter months, a common phone call received by our Wildlife Hotline is concern for geese, ducks, and waterfowl who seem too stubborn to migrate.

In truth, migration lasts much longer than many realize, with some species beginning in June, and some migrations taking place as late as December - especially for those species who do not travel far, but typically only head west to open ocean water for the winter.

In many cases, swans, geese, and

other shorebirds and waterfowl may stick around as long as bodies of water are not frozen.

In almost all cases, if the bird seems able-bodied, there is nothing to worry about even if you're seeing them late in November and there is snow on the ground. Eventually, a combination of environmental and biological factors will prompt them to head south naturally.

Of course, migration is also when birds at risk of being 'left behind' due to an injury or illness become more noticeable. If you see a bird (or any other animal) that appears to be sick or injured, please call our Wildlife Hotline to arrange a rescue: 403-946-2361.



Thank You

to all of the outstanding individuals, corporations, and foundations who generously contribute crucial funds to directly help wildlife in distress. To see our donor list online go to [aiwc.ca](http://www.aiwc.ca) and visit <http://www.aiwc.ca/individual-donors/> and watch your name move up the list throughout the year as you donate!

TALES OF RESCUE DRIVERS:

An Unwitting Hitchhiker

By J. Kaiser

Unbeknownst to his chauffeur, this hoary marmot travelled from Kamloops, B.C., to Calgary in a vehicle engine compartment in August.

Luckily uninjured from his journey, the marmot then escaped into a Calgary neighbourhood, and began feasting on nearby flowerbeds.

Spotted right away as an unusual sight in the city, AIWC was called to help him out, and our rescue drivers attended to the task.

After some failed trapping attempts, rescue drivers caught the marmot a couple of days later with a net and some help from the neighbours.

The marmot then went on his second road trip - albeit a shorter one. Rescue drivers transported him out to Kananaskis, back to his natural alpine subregion, just in time to begin preparing for hibernation.



Give The Gift Of Helping Wildlife!

By H. Duvall, Executive Director

Thanks to our donors, we have been able to provide care to wildlife in need since 1993, and so far this year 1500 wild animals have passed through our doors, each of them either injured or orphaned.

This year, your donations have gone towards helping hundreds of animals in care, including:

- 152 mallards, many of them ducklings that were separated from their mother
- a mule deer fawn that was separated from his mother when he was less than 24 hours old
- 46 great horned owls, many of them injured as a result of barbed wire; and
- 22 bohemian and cedar waxwings, many of them admitted after hitting windows

Why not give the gift of helping wildlife this Christmas? Your donation ensures we can continue to provide wildlife with a second chance. We have a variety of gift options for your wildlife-loving family and friends:

- Adopt An Animal
 - Gift recipients will receive a colour photo of their adopted animal and an adoption certificate.
- Donate in Memory or Recognition
 - Donations can be mailed to us or made online through CanadaHelps. Please visit our website for more information.
- Purchase a 2016 Calendar
 - Look to page 3 for more details.
- Become a member or gift a membership to a loved one
 - Benefits include a mailed copy of our quarterly newsletter and discounts on AIWC merchandise and at local businesses.
- Donate to AIWC's Forever Home Campaign
- Donate to AIWC's Fall Migration Party Non-Event:
 - Our Fall Migration Party is a non-event and is our largest fundraising event in 2015 for operating costs. Non-Event fundraisers allow AIWC to raise crucial donations without the costs associated with hosting an event.

Thank you for your continued support of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation and ensuring we can serve Calgary and southern Alberta for many years to come!

Happy Holidays!

To donate, please visit our website www.aiwc.ca or call (403) 946-2361



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MYTH BUSTING:

The Highly Adaptive Coyote

By J. Kozak

In this edition, we break down the familiar myths surrounding the coyote. What makes them so interested in livestock? Are they truly a huge risk to pets or children?

The coyote (*Canis latrans*) belongs to the wild dog family, which in Alberta also includes the gray wolf, red fox, and swift fox. Coyotes are incredibly versatile hunters and though the majority of their diet is small mammals, they will also eat birds, snakes, and insects. Nearing winter when food sources start to become scarce, they will also resort to fruit and tree leaves.

Coyotes may commonly be considered a threat, nuisance, or an aggravation, and, as a smart predator whose population thrives when food sources are readily available, it is no surprise they are associated with the term "wiley".

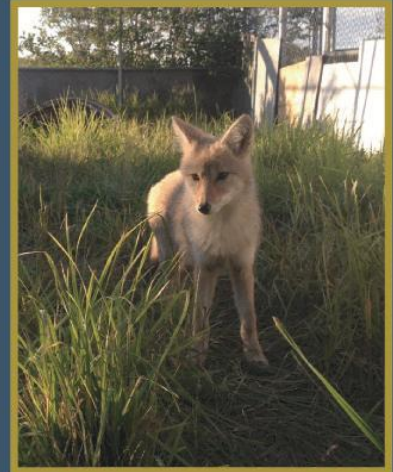
An integral part of the food chain, helping to maintain healthy ecosystems and species diversity, coyotes do not just help control rodent and small mammal populations; they also help regulate populations of mid-sized predators such as skunks and foxes.

Coyotes are naturally wary of humans, and even though they've proved they can thrive in urban areas, and can be easily habituated to human environments, it is due to the readily available food sources provided by urban development.

Access to food regulates the birthrate of coyote litters and humans play an important role in this. To maintain coyotes' natural distance from humans, we must avoid intentionally and unintentionally feeding them. This means avoiding any attempt to lure in a coyote with food, as well as ensuring that trash, pet food, and livestock feed are securely stored.

Children, of course, should always be taught to not feed wild animals, and if a coyote approaches people, they should be scared off with loud noises. If we encourage their natural avoidance of humans, we can avoid unpleasant encounters with urban and rural coyotes.

Coyotes can see cats and small dogs as potential prey, and can show an interest in larger dogs, sometimes even mating with domestic dogs, so it is important to keep your pets safely on leash or under close supervision when



Remember, should you ever encounter an animal in need, please call AIWC's Wildlife Hotline at 403-946-2361.

AIWC MEMBERSHIPS

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 entitles you to:

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

Four Ways To Join:

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

Effective September 1, AIWC's centre hours have changed for winter:

Monday - Friday 8:00am - 6:00pm

Saturday & Sunday 9:00am - 5:00pm

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

<http://www.aiwc.ca/wildlife-hospital/after-hours-assistance/>

Make A Donation - And DOUBLE IT!

Your donation can help an animal in need; your company's donation can help another. Many companies offer donation matching programs for their employees and often all that is required is a donation receipt from you. To inquire if your company has such a policy, check with your human resources department. Every dollar helps!

hiking in the wilderness or walking in an area with a known coyote population (noting that coyotes have a home territory of up to twenty square kilometres).

In rural areas, coyotes are commonly thought of as pests, as they prey on smaller accessible livestock. These instances can be greatly reduced by including guard animals within the livestock, such as llamas, donkeys, and large breed dogs. Other options to deter coyotes include motion-activated lighting, secure fencing, and keeping animals indoors at night. Loose feed and grains that attract rodents can also result in attracting coyotes who are interested in hunting the rodent population.

The very qualities that make coyotes adaptable and opportunistic hunters are the same qualities that mean they are perceived as threats. However, it is possible - and preferable - to peacefully coexist with our wild neighbours - we just have to outsmart them!

WILDLIFE HOTLINE: 403-946-2361