

AIWC Cares for Three Over-wintering Swainson's hawks

By J. Kozak

AIWC typically sees an increase in the late summer and early fall of juvenile raptor patients who often get themselves into trouble navigating our traffic and roadways. Sometimes the patients sustain injuries so severe that they do not heal in time to leave for their winter migrations. AIWC is currently over-wintering three such Swainson's hawks.

Patient 18-873 is a female, arriving from northeast Calgary, where she was found standing on a roadway, seemingly unable to fly. She was admitted on August 24th and was diagnosed to have a clavicle (collarbone) fracture.

The second hawk, patient 18-905, is a male who arrived from High River. He was admitted on August 31st after being found along the side of the road. Upon examination by AIWC staff, he was found to have a proximal clavicle fracture as well as an infection.

The third Swainson's hawk, patient 18-1003, is a male from southeast of Calgary, where he was also found on the highway, not moving. He was admitted on September 23rd and was diagnosed to have severe head trauma, likely the result of being hit by a car.

Alberta's Swainson's hawks migrate in large groups to Argentina for the winter, which means travelling over 10,000 kilometres. This makes Swainson's hawks one of the longest migrating raptor species. Although these three patients didn't make their migration journey this fall, they are all doing well in care, and will be returned to the wild in the spring when the hawks return to the province.



Swainson's hawk indoors for the winter



Our three overwintering Swainson's hawks



Swainson's hawk exploring outdoor enclosure



Box 68, Madden, AB T0M 1L0
 (403) 946-2361
 info@aiwc.ca
 www.aiwc.ca

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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Striped Skunk Patient	3
AIWC's First Patient of 2019:	3
Education Update:	4
An Abundance of Bats:	5
2018 by the Numbers:	6
Merlin Sponsorship:	7
A Raven's Recovery:	8

EDITOR: J. Kaiser
COPY EDITORS:
 A. Wingenbach, K. Pederson

DESIGNER: D. Cresswell
PRINT: Little Rock Printing

CONTRIBUTORS:
 C. Bogstie, J. Kaiser, J. Kozak,
 H. Lillie, M. Mezei, K. Pederson,
 C. Vavasour-Williams

PHOTOS:
 AIWC, D. Cresswell

Submissions/comments may be sent to the above address or emailed to jennifer.kaiser@aiwc.ca

Update from the Executive Director

By H. Lillie, Executive Director

In the blink of an eye, 2019 is here and, through your support, AIWC is proud to be starting our 26th year of caring for wildlife in need.

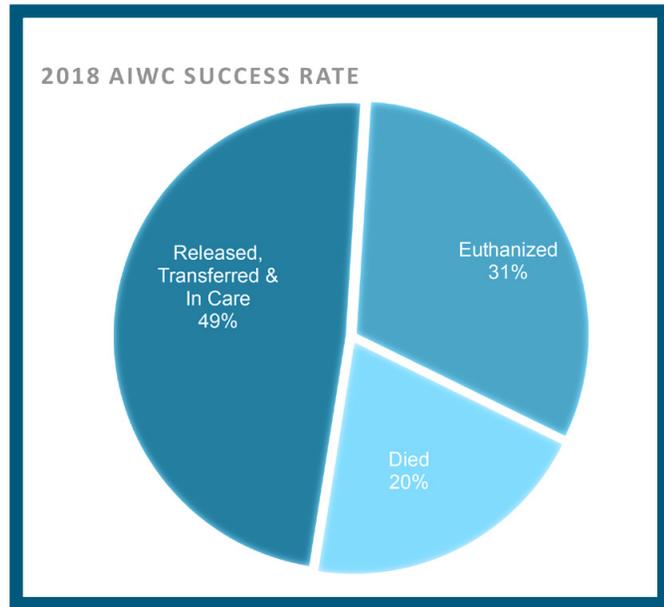
Last year, 1,066 injured and orphaned animals were admitted into our care. We achieved another terrific success rate, boasting a 49% rate for patients in 2018, which is well above the national average of 33%. Thank you for your support in helping us to provide the best possible care to our patients!

The start of each year is always a busy time for us at AIWC, marking the beginning of six months of preparation for the upcoming busy spring and summer seasons. Almost overnight, it seems, we go from having just one or two dozen patients in care to well over two hundred as soon as spring has sprung.

2019 will be another busy year for us at AIWC. Our Board of Directors and myself will be engaging in a Strategic Planning session in February and we are excited to start work on an Emergency Wildlife Response Unit, funded by Inter Pipeline Ltd. This facility will aid wildlife in the event of an emergency impacting them such as oil spill or wildfire, but will also be used onsite at AIWC to act as overflow space and a quarantine area for patients as needed.

Thank you for your generous support in 2018 to help ensure that wildlife continue to receive the critical care they need, saving wild lives in need. Here's to looking forward to another great year!

Sincerely,
 Holly Lillie (formerly Duvall)
 Executive Director



Pepé Le Pew is that you? - Our over-wintering striped skunk patient

By C. Bogstie

Oftentimes misunderstood as a pest, the striped skunk – a member of the weasel family – is actually a vital pest-control mammal keeping mice, grubs and larvae populations under control in large areas of North America.

In a way, they are the hermit crab of the land mammals; striped skunks tend to inhabit abandoned dens left by foxes or woodchucks or, if in an urban area, they tend to make their homes in people's sheds or under their porches. Despite being infamous for their deterring odour, striped skunks are not considered aggressive and prefer to retreat from humans and other threats.

At the end of September 2018, a juvenile male striped skunk was found pinned by fencing under a Calgarian's deck, unable to move. After two to four days of being trapped, AIWC was called and he was rescued and brought to care. Upon initial examination, he was believed to be suffering from a spinal injury due to the trauma of being pinned, which was shown through lack of movement in his hind end and no response to stimulus on his back paws.

He was put in an incubator to warm up and given fluids

and other supportive care. The x-ray revealed no spinal damage and that his lack of movement was solely due to inflammation. He has since made a full recovery and is doing exceptionally well! He is now just waiting out winter with a stay at AIWC until he can be released to find a new denning site in the spring.



Striped skunk patient keeping warm in the straw



Our first patient of 2019!

This female snowy owl is our first patient of the year. She was admitted with multiple fractures and a very feisty personality. AIWC staff quickly started to see some of those fractures heal, and we are looking forward to her continued recovery!



That's a Wrap Folks: 2018 Education Programs

By M. Mezei, Education Assistant

Another year of AIWC education programs has come and gone! 2018 featured many school programs, library presentations, on-site talk and tours, and booths.

The final education program of the year was at Royal Oak School in Calgary, where the "World of Owls" program was presented to six classes of eger grade one students.

The program included an owl pellet dissection, during which the students worked in teams to determine what the owl that produced their pellet had eaten. Many skulls, feathers, and fur were found, and the most common refrains heard were "I found a bone!" and "Teacher, come look!". The program also included an interactive presentation about owl adaptations, diet, life cycle, and habitat, during which the kids enthusiastically raised their hands to ask questions and tell stories. Some insightful questions were raised, including:

"How do I contact AIWC?"

"What do I do if a bird crashes into my window?"

"Do cheetahs eat owls?"



The ultimate goal of AIWC's education programs is to reduce the number of animals admitted to our clinic each year. For this reason, education programs always finish with a discussion about what we can all do on a daily basis to prevent human-wildlife conflict. Simple measures like closing trash bins, keeping pets on leash, and slowing down on the highway all help. And the more people who hear the message, especially at a young age, the better!



If you are interested in learning more about owls (or other amazing Alberta wildlife), you can book one of our education programs for yourself at <https://www.aiwc.ca/education/topics/> or by calling 403-946-2361.

Follow AIWC online!

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



Our most popular social media post on Instagram in 2018 was of our mule deer fawn on July 2nd just a few days after she was admitted. She was successfully released in October with our other mule deer fawn patient.



An Abundance of Bats

By J. Kaiser

In 2017, AIWC admitted only 17 bat patients all year, so you can imagine the surprise of our staff and volunteers when we admitted 33 bat patients in the three-month period of August to October in 2018. Throughout the whole year, AIWC admitted 41 bats, which in one of our highest years on record for bat intakes!

Alberta is home to nine species of bats, and our 2018 patients represented four of them: big brown bat, little brown bat, silver-haired bat, and a lone hoary bat. Hoary bats are not a common patient at AIWC, and are the largest bat species in the province.



Hoary bat patient

Of the bat admissions, three patients are currently over-wintering with AIWC: one big brown bat, and two little brown bats.

The big brown bat was found indoors in October, grounded and not responsive, and was brought to a local veterinary clinic for transfer to our care. He has an incredible appetite, but because brown bats hibernate for winter in communal

hibernaculum, he will over-winter with AIWC and be released in the spring.

The two little brown bats were admitted separately in the fall, but for similar reasons – both were also grounded and one was found with his wing frozen to the ground in the snow. Both are also doing well in care and healing from their respective injuries, but because little brown bats hibernate as well, they will remain in care until the spring.



Little brown bat patient

Grounded bats are a common reason they are admitted into our care; most bats cannot take off from flat surfaces. If a bat ends up on the ground, they are usually stuck there unless they can crawl to a vertical surface where they will then take off by dropping from an up-side-down hanging position. To see a bat in the colder months – especially on the ground – is incredibly uncommon and often a sign they are in distress. Never hesitate to give AIWC a call for help and instruction if you think you see a bat in need of help.

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/

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2018 by the Numbers

By J. Kaiser

On paper, 2018 may seem like one of AIWC's quieter years, but it certainly didn't appear that way from the clinic halls.

Despite only admitting 1,066 patients in 2018 (down from 1,412 in 2017), AIWC still provided care to over 122 different species of Alberta wildlife and admitted 21 patients in a single day in June, at the height of our busy summer season. Even in the colder months, when it is the quietest, we get an average of one new patient per day, and are currently over-wintering 13 patients.

We suspect that part of the decrease in admissions is attributed to our increased focus on public education in 2018 and dedicated hotline management to field the calls received from the public each day. The more we can prevent healthy wildlife from needlessly coming into our care, such as in the case of frequent accidental kidnappings of baby hares and birds we see each summer, the more wildlife is left to thrive where it should be – in the wild with their natural parents.

For those patients who do end up in our care, AIWC continues to boast quality care and a success rate of 49% for 2018, well above the industry average.

Overall, our distribution between avian and mammal patients remains steady; birds continue to make up the vast majority of our intakes (75%). 2018 didn't see any admissions of reptile or amphibian patients (together called herpetiles).

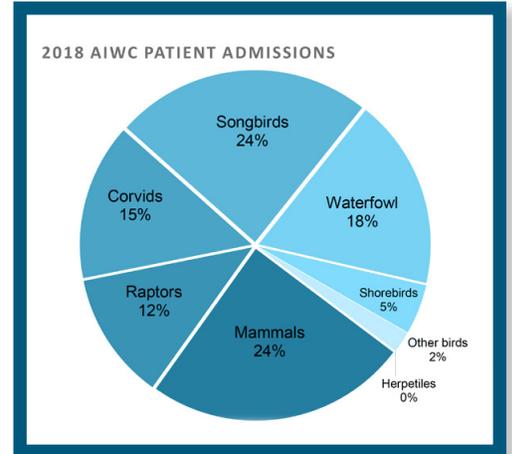
White-tailed prairie hares were our most common patient of the year at 98 (16%), with black-billed magpies and mallards sharing second place (13% each).

Despite overall intakes being down for the year, we saw an increase in some individual mammal species from previous years, including bats (read more on page 5), porcupines, and red squirrels. And although previous years set records for skunks, the striped rodents were still a common sight around AIWC in 2018, with 65 admitted into care (and 87% of those released back to the wild!).

Among raptors, we noticed the most significant decrease in great horned owl patients, only admitting 27 of them in 2018, which is a decrease of about 46% from most prior years. Swainson's hawks, however, continued to be a frequent patient; AIWC admitted 48 of them, which is about average.

And as usual, most of our patients come from the City of Calgary (72%), with Airdrie patients next (13%).

Of course, we wouldn't be able to help any of our patients without the generosity of the AIWC community – volunteers, donors, and everyone who helps make what we do possible. Thank you for your continued support!



One of 26 Canada geese admitted into our care in 2018 – 73% of our Canada goose patients received a second chance at life in the wild!



This black-billed magpie was admitted in October 2018 as a juvenile with poor body condition. Due to the damage to his feathers, we assume from poor nutrition, he is overwintering with us and we are waiting for him to go through a natural feather moult.

Sponsor a Patient: Merlin

By C. Vavasour-Williams

This adult merlin was discovered near the Enmax power station near Bowden, Alberta on October 5, 2018. His examination revealed that nearly all of the feathers on both of his wings, his abdomen and the majority of his tail feathers had been significantly burned, likely from having been caught in a methane flare. Additionally, he had bruising to both of his wings.

He remained in an indoor enclosure in the AIWC clinic for two weeks so that staff could closely monitor the swelling and bruising to his wings. In consultation with our staff veterinarian, it was decided that he would overwinter at AIWC because the damage to his feathers was extensive and his feathers would not grow back in time for him to migrate south for the winter. Most of our province's merlins migrate to the southern United States and northern South America

for the winter, with only a few remaining in Alberta year-round.

In mid-October he was moved to a larger outdoor enclosure to work on flight conditioning. He's been moved inside for the winter since then, but it moved back outside when we have periods of warm weather. He continues to have biweekly assessments to monitor his rehabilitation, and, in a few months when his new feathers have grown in, he will be ready to be released.

Sponsoring this merlin, 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 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!



Merlin in outdoor enclosure



Merlin being monitored in indoor enclosure

Window Decals \$10.00 per set - available from www.aiwc.shop



Box 68, Madden, AB T0M 1L0
(403) 946-2361
info@aiwc.ca
www.aiwc.ca

AIWC MEMBERSHIPS

It's Time To Renew Your Membership!

Current AIWC memberships expire on March 21, 2019. 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.

A Raven's Recovery

By K. Pederson

This common raven was found unable to fly in the Big Hill Springs area and was admitted September 13, 2018. His examination revealed that he had a broken wing, was underweight, and very dehydrated. As the wing injury was quite extensive, AIWC staff can only surmise that he was hit with some force; most likely a vehicle collision. Both the radius and ulna bones on his right wing were broken (these are the two large bones running from the elbow to the thumb in humans).

The staff veterinarian at AIWC performed a pinning operation on the wing, which stabilizes the bones until they heal. This type of surgery is not often attempted, as in most cases the injuries have already fused together and calcified. But this raven defied the odds and both the radius and ulna bones were able to be pinned.

Ravens are known for not being very cooperative patients; pulling their pins out and constantly tearing their bandages and wraps off. This raven was a model patient! He withstood his time in confinement and immobility without complaint for the four weeks it took for the bones to meld and heal properly, and did no damage to the pins or dressings. During his stay with AIWC, his spirits were high and feisty as he was given lots of enrichment, games to play, and puzzles to figure out, which is incredibly important stimulation because ravens are highly intelligent creatures.

After three months of care at AIWC, this adult raven was released in late December in the area he was found. Ravens mate for life, and he could have had a mate waiting for him; they establish territories when sexually mature.

Thank you to the wonderful and skilled staff and volunteers that enabled his successful recovery, and to the wonderful support of the AIWC community who makes this care possible!



Raven patient with bandaged wing



Raven patients in outdoor enclosure

Missing myth busting? Send your wildlife questions to jennifer.kaiser@aiwc.ca and we'll answer them in an upcoming newsletter!