

Recovery Review

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

Injured Snowy Owl Leaves Impression At AIWC

By J. Cooke

At about 45 cm tall (18 inches), and with a wingspan of over a metre, snowy owls are one of North America's largest owls and Canada's second largest. Adult males are pure white, while females have white plumage that is banded. Their toes and claws are covered with feathers, equipping them for frigid temperatures.

While most owls are nocturnal, snowy owls are both nocturnal and diurnal, meaning they are also very active during the daytime. Their large yellow eyes cannot move, but they can turn their heads 270 degrees using their fourteen neck vertebrae.

The snowy owl diet ranges from small rodents to large hares and lemmings. In fact, the owl population is closely connected to the lemming population; when lemming populations increase owl numbers also increase.

This injured adult male snowy owl was brought to AIWC in February with extensive injuries. Staff did the best they could to tend to his wounds, which included soft tissue damage to his wings, a fractured leg, and eyesight issues. Although no one knows exactly how the owl was injured, there is speculation that he may have been hit by a car or possibly electrocuted. Since owls often hunt near country roads where voles and mice can be easily preyed upon while crossing, vehicle collisions are a frequent reason owls and other raptors are admitted to AIWC for care with serious injuries.

In the end, after weeks of attentive care, medical staff determined that he would never make even a partial recovery and it was unlikely he would ever fly or hunt sufficiently again, so the difficult decision was made to euthanize him.

These beautiful birds are found year-round in the Arctic regions of North America. They descend to the tree line and the tundra during breeding season, but local bird enthusiasts know they can be viewed southeast of Calgary between November and March. Record numbers of snowy owls were spotted in Eastern Canada and in the US last year due to high populations of the birds. Scientists are watching to see if another successful nesting season will result in another irruption of birds heading south this year.

If you live in a rural area and are interested in protecting snowy owls or any other owl species, consider the following suggestions: do not use poison for pest control; leave dead trees standing where possible to provide much needed habitat; and remove barbed wire from your property as it is not uncommon for owls and other birds of prey to get tangled in it. The more we all work to preserve the habitat and food sources of these majestic birds, the less likely it is they will end up at AIWC as casualties of human contact.



The snowy owl in his outdoor enclosure



The snowy owl in care at AIWC, unable to stand at first



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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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Education Update: A Class Act *By N. Mohan*

AIWC's recent visit to Bridlewood School Kindergarten in Calgary was wonderful in many ways. We knew we were entering a special place when we saw the beaver lodge in the middle of the double classroom, with the theme "I am the River - Stories about Resilience". We were impressed by the enthusiasm, passion for wildlife, sophistication, and kindness of the students and their teachers. They were familiar with many of the animals we talked about since they live on the edge of the city, and learned "see a baby hare, leave it there" well.

Volunteer Brandy Chalmers noted how quiet and thoughtful the students were when they gathered around Gulliver (the striped skunk)'s pen for their first view of a real skunk, up close and personal. "Why is his head so small?" asked one boy (good question!).

It was heartwarming to see that in one corner of the classroom, the students and teachers had set up their own AIWC clinic with an animal examining table, bandages on puppets, and plastic medical instruments!



Far Left & Far Right: AIWC classroom clinic at Bridlewood School Kindergarten Centre; Brandy Chalmers with students and Gulliver the Education Ambassador

They were also incredibly generous: the students donated funds they raised, as well as much needed supplies for the clinic from the AIWC website wishlist. What a great way to feel connected to wildlife, and really help out!

After the program, many of the children were talking about Gulliver and how they learned not to move baby animals they might find in the wild. Teacher Lynwyn Foran-Aebli also told us that when parents were invited to explore the various play centres in the set up in the classroom with the children, many chose to show their parents "AIWC".

To book an AIWC Education Program for a classroom or group, please contact: 403-946-2361 or email: education@aiwc.ca

Wildlife Baby Shower Fundraiser and On-Site Presentation

Sunday, May 29, 2016 • Time: 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm • Presentation: Wildlife Families

To register for our onsite talk, visit our website aiwc.ca, e-mail us at education@aiwc.ca, or call us at 403-946-2361.



Robin nestlings

- Refreshments will be provided from 1:00 - 2:00 pm
- At 2:00 pm there will be a presentation on Wildlife Families
- Following the presentation there will be a guided tour of sections of our wildlife hospital and time to meet our education Ambassadors; Gulliver (striped skunk) and Griffin (red-tailed hawk)

Spring has sprung and with it comes injured or orphaned wildlife babies. In 2015, AIWC provided care for over 1,000 baby animals. Each year demand for our services grows, and our patient intakes so far in 2016 are already significantly higher than this time last year.

From May 1 to 31, 2016, we are asking for your help to raise \$12,000 for AIWC to support our costs during our peak seasons of Spring and Summer. On any given day during this time we can have up to 300 animals in care, the majority of them babies that need to be fed specialized formula and diets from every 15 minutes to every 3 hours.

To wrap-up our baby shower, we will

be hosting an on-site talk on Sunday, May 29, from 1:00 - 4:00 pm at our facility.

To make a donation to our 2nd Annual Wildlife Baby Shower Fundraiser, please fill out the insert in this newsletter or visit our campaign page at: www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/alberta-institute-for-wildlife-conservation/wildlifebabyshower

Donations of the following items are most welcome: apples, lettuce, oranges, corn on the cob, frozen blueberries, kale, ground beef, cottage cheese, smelts, toilet paper, Kleenex, paper towels, extra-large garbage bags, and puppy pads.

ADOPTION OPTION *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

By C. Vavasour-Williams



Only \$40 to adopt a songbird

The American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) can be found across Canada, south through the

United States and into northern Mexico. Crows are highly adaptable and can be found in almost all habitats, both naturally occurring and man-made. Crows inhabit farmlands, open woodlands, prairies, small towns and major urban cities. The crow is a permanent resident in most of the United States, but most Canadian crows will migrate some distances south to escape the most harsh winter weather.

The American crow is an omnivore, meaning that it feeds on a variety of plant and animal food sources. Crows will feed on invertebrates, seeds, eggs, various grains, carrion and scraps of human food. They will also prey on mice, frogs and other small animals. The American crow is one of only a few species that has been observed modifying and using tools to obtain food.



Bald Eagle nesting

This American crow was one of the first patients admitted to AIWC in 2016. The crow was transported to AIWC on January 15, 2016. Originally spotted in a southeast Calgary neighbourhood, the finders became concerned that the crow needed care after the bird was observed for over a week seemingly unable to fly. At AIWC, his examination revealed that he was a juvenile and that he had previously sustained a fractured bone in his right wing. The fracture had calcified, but the old injury had resulted in feather damage, many primary and secondary feathers on his wing had been broken, rendering him flightless.

Adoption Option continued on Page 4

Least Weasels Return To The Wild!

By H. Duvall

Few areas in the world have more diverse wildlife than Alberta. Our province is home to 587 wildlife species, including 411 bird species, 93 mammal species, 65 fish species, and 10 species of amphibians.

One of the smallest mammals that calls Alberta home is the least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*). They are the world's smallest carnivores and, in order to survive, must consume at least a third of their body weight each day.

In early November 2015, AIWC admitted two of these carnivorous mammals after they were found in the middle of a road together and were being attacked by other animals.

Fortunately, neither of them had any wounds. Since they were juveniles and had been found in an unusual location, we wanted to ensure they were prepared to survive in the wild before we released them.

When they were admitted they were also still fully brown, which was

unusual; least weasels that are found in northern ranges such as here in Alberta begin to turn white in the fall to better camouflage themselves for winter. We checked for sightings of least weasels around the province, and discovered that almost all in the wild had already turned white - but not the ones in our care.

With every patient we admit, AIWC's goal is to ensure we provide them with the best chance of survival in the wild when they are released. Therefore, in addition to testing the eating and hunting capabilities of these two little weasels, we also wanted to keep them in care until they had naturally changed colour and wouldn't be as visible to predators in the wild against the white snow, which meant over-wintering them.

On March 19, 2016, after almost five months in care here at AIWC, the weasels were released together back into the wild! Although they still hadn't turned completely white at the time of their release, it

was no longer a concern. They had successfully waited out winter, and sightings of least weasels showed that, due to the warmer weather this spring, many of them were already changing back to brown again! These two weasels were well prepared for life in the wild and ready to fit right in!



Least weasels being released back into the wild after months of care at AIWC.



Adoption Option, continued from Page 3

Primary feathers are the longest and narrowest of the wing feathers. These feathers are the principle source of thrust that moves a bird forward through the air. Secondary feathers are shorter and help provide lift by creating the overall shape of the bird's wing.

This crow will need to undergo a feather moult before he is once again able to fly, and will stay in care at AIWC until that time.

Adopting this crow or any other AIWC patient helps AIWC with the expenses associated with their rehabilitation, including food and medication. 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.

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

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,
Instagram (@albertawildlife) & Twitter (@AIWC)





We all share a responsibility to take care of Alberta's Wildlife

BANDS ARE ONLY \$10 EACH
All Profits Directly Support AIWC

Did You Know: 95% of AIWC's patients are injured or orphaned due to human activities. The most common causes of injury are window strikes, vehicle collisions, domestic dog and cat attacks, fishing line entanglement or ingestion, hitting power lines or barbed wire, and exposure to toxins.

Each Albertan can be a stakeholder in the care and well-being of Alberta's wildlife and we are asking you to join us by **#BandingTogether**

Show your support by purchasing your own environmentally friendly **#BandingTogether** silicon band. 100% of the proceeds from the sale of our bands supports AIWC's care of orphaned, injured, and oiled wildlife in Alberta.

To learn more visit our website:
<http://www.aiwc.ca/banding-together>



LEAVE THE HARE THERE

FAQ:

Did you know hares are born without a scent so they are less likely to be found by predators? The mother intentionally leaves them alone throughout the day, returning only a couple of times (typically dusk and dawn) to feed them.

Wild hares are precocial, meaning they are born with their eyes open and they are fully furred, unlike domestic rabbits. Within a day of being born, they are able to move around and even nibble on grass. They are adapted to being alone, and it's completely normal for them to run around and be in a different spot from where their mother left them.

Baby hares fare best with their mothers, and have a better chance of survival in nature than they do being raised by any rehabilitation centre. Hares may have more than one litter in a summer, so you may see babies in Alberta as late as August!

If you find a baby hare in a dangerous location, such as on a road or in a window well, it is acceptable to pick them up and put them in a safe spot close to where you found them. Don't worry - mothers do not reject their young if the scent of humans is on them. Of course, you can gently rub the baby down with grass to remove some of the human scent that may attract predators, such as domestic cats and dogs.

Otherwise, if you see a baby hare, leave it right there!

If you come across a baby hare or other animal and aren't sure what to do or are unsure if they need help, please call AIWC at 403-946-2361 prior to intervening.



Baby white-tailed prairie hares, also called leverets.



Baby mammals require specialized, species-specific formula, so please do not feed any baby wildlife while waiting for rescue!

surrounding noises and other stressors. After the animal is gently secured, place the container in a warm area out of direct sunlight. Keep the container away from pets, children, and any noisy objects that will increase the animal's stress level, including televisions. The less the animal has to worry about, the better the hope for a swift recovery.

Thank you for doing your part!

I found an injured animal, what should I feed it while I wait for you to pick it up?

By J. Kozak

The first step to take when finding a potentially injured animal is to call AIWC's Wildlife Hotline for advice (403-946-2361) and keep an eye on the animal in need.

Since the injury could be due to a wide range of problems, AIWC staff will provide guidance on determining if the animal is in need of care, and how you may help.

One thing to remember whenever you find injured wildlife and they are awaiting transportation to a wildlife rehabilitation centre: do not try to give them any food or water.

Providing food could trigger further complications, such as when an animal is severely dehydrated or emaciated and is not well enough to digest solid food. Not to mention, feeding wildlife requires knowledge about species-specific diets (for example, not all songbirds eat the same thing), and they can become sick from eating something inappropriate.

There is no need to provide the animal with water while waiting for rescue either. In most cases, a stressed out animal is more likely to knock over any food or water

placed with them, simply creating a mess and getting them wet. They will also be too distracted to be concerned with eating or drinking.

Ultimately, it is best to let the trained staff at the centre assess any nutritional needs upon the animal's admission to AIWC.

However, there are still many steps you can take to help out!

While waiting for help to arrive, or if preparing for transportation to a veterinary clinic, find a secure container (such as a cardboard box or laundry basket) that will provide a quiet, dark place for the animal. As well, minimize

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

By J. Metz

Spring, my favourite season, has arrived. Winter in Mexico has been fantastic - beautifully warm with plenty of tasty insects and small fruits to enjoy - but it is time for me to head north. Every year I look forward to returning to my birthplace and where I first learned to fly.

"Chur-lee, chur-lee" I call to my flock of mountain bluebirds. Between twenty and one hundred of us are set to depart in a cloud of bright blue after fueling up for the long trip ahead. We need to return to our breeding grounds by May.

As we travel, we stop along the way to feed and rest. We are equally adept at foraging for food on the ground and in trees as we are at snatching insects out of the air while mid-flight. Some of the flock will remain for the season in Sierra Nevada, Great Basin Desert, and the western Great Plains, while the rest of us will continue our trek to the beautiful Alberta Rockies, prairies, and even further north to Yukon and Alaska. Some will venture west into central British Columbia and others towards the east ending up in western Manitoba - known for its incredible mosquitoes.

As a female of the species, I am more concerned about finding the perfect nesting site than I am about choosing a mate. Successful courtship will be determined by location and nest quality, rather than on such superficial qualities as looks and singing ability. Although, I must admit, we females do enjoy the rivalry amongst the males as they compete for our attention.

In addition to seeking out summer residences among the grasses, shrubs, and trees of the woodland areas, we are also known to take up residence in man-made nesting boxes provided the location is suitable. The nesting box is set up well in advance of our arrival, and the entry way is of the correct size so as to avoid unexpected guests. We may return to the same nesting cavity year after year.

There are occasions where some of my friends have an extended stay up north after an unexpected encounter with a feline or squeaky clean window. Fortunately, we are very well cared for by the folks at the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) until we are healthy and ready to rejoin our flock.

After establishing our nests and selecting a mate, we are ready to start our families. Our clutches are typically four to eight eggs and will hatch in approximately two weeks. It is not uncommon for us to have two broods in a season. Eighteen to twenty-one days after hatching, our young are ready to take their first flight. We will spend the summer foraging, flying and rearing our fledglings before heading south in autumn.



Young mountain bluebird in care at AIWC

AIWC's Annual General Meeting

Thursday, May 26, 2016

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Charlesglen Toyota
7687 110 Avenue NW, Calgary

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation
Board of Directors invites all
members to join us at our
Annual General Meeting

For any questions regarding AIWC's AGM, please
contact Executive Director, Holly Duvall, at
holly.duvall@aiwc.ca or at (403) 946-2361.

Please RSVP attendance to Holly by May 20, 2016.

Not yet a member?

Sign up online at aiwc.ca and receive discounts for
all on-site talks and more!



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MYTH BUSTING:

I found an injured animal but am afraid to touch it for fear of contracting rabies or another disease.

By J. Kozak

In this edition, we will be discussing whether or not it is safe to directly handle injured wildlife due to concerns that you could get a disease such as rabies.

First, rabies is a very serious concern even though the risk of humans contracting rabies is extremely low. In Alberta, rabies is predominately associated with bats, but can also be found in skunks, coyotes, raccoons, and foxes. If you find an injured animal that has a risk of carrying rabies, it is incredibly important that you proceed with caution, and avoid making direct contact with them - use thick gloves, a towel, and protect your eyes and mouth from possible fluid transfers. If the animal is healthy enough to attempt to scratch and bite, **do not** try to rescue them. Simply observe them from a safe distance until an experienced AIWC wildlife rescue driver can safely contain them. Likewise, if you have been bitten or scratched by a rabies-vector animal, seek immediate medical attention.

When it comes to handling non-rabies-vector animals, there are still certain zoonoses and parasites that, although rare, may still be transmitted. For example, wild mammals may have fleas, ticks, or lice, and wild birds such as owls or hawks may have feather lice. However, most lice are species-specific and will not jump to humans as we are not an ideal host for them.

In most cases, it is safe to briefly handle an injured wild animal for the purposes of securing them in a box or kennel for transportation.

To minimize contact (and reduce the chances of the animal trying to bite or scratch you), use a towel when you approach them, placing it over their head, and pick them up through the towel. Always wear gloves, and

AIWC MEMBERSHIPS

It's Time To Renew Your Membership!

Memberships expired March 21, 2016; all new and renewed memberships will be valid until 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 entitles you to:

- A mailed, paper copy of 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

There are 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

GO GREEN FOR 2016!

Receive the Recovery Review straight to your inbox, saving paper and postage!

To add yourself to the email distribution list, please send an email to info@aiwc.ca

As The Days Get Longer, So Do AIWC's Hours!

Starting May 1, centre hours are extended to 8:00 pm through the summer to account for greater patient volumes and natural animal activity.

be sure to wash your hands after. If you have pets at home, you may want to put clothing directly into the laundry to avoid transferring ticks or fleas to them.

Of course, if you're at all unsure or nervous, wait for help to arrive. AIWC has a dedicated team of rescue drivers who have the training and equipment on hand to answer calls for help for most wild species found in Alberta. Do not put yourself at risk or in harm's way.

As always, if any wild animal that you find appears to be injured or orphaned, you should be calling AIWC's Hotline (403-946-2361) for help and to arrange a rescue.



AIWC staff wearing proper protective gear to examine a pelican

WILDLIFE HOTLINE: 403-946-2361