

## Flood *continued from p1*

care. One fawn passed away during those two tense days, but the other arrived at AIWC just in time to receive life-saving IV fluids, incubation, and treatment for pneumonia. At the same time, two white-tailed deer fawns had also been brought to the Centre. One, drowning in the waters flowing through the Calgary community of Montgomery, was pulled to safety by a courageous woman. The other was a particularly skittish newborn discovered in the devastated town of High River. Months later, these three flood victims are now spunky juveniles who, along with another mule deer fawn orphaned when his mother was killed by a car, appreciate a more peaceful setting in AIWC's spacious fawn field.

**H**undreds of ducklings waddled through AIWC again this year, but this time many of them were there because they had been washed out when the flood waters raged through their homes along the river banks.



### Two Clutches of Orphaned Mountain Bluebirds Rescued

One of the earliest songbirds to migrate back to our area each spring is the mountain bluebird. They are easy to observe as they nest and raise their young in boxes built, maintained and monitored by enthusiastic and knowledgeable birders. Their closely spaced nesting boxes can be found on low fence posts along many country roads (aptly referred to as 'bluebird Trails'). AIWC successfully raised and released two clutches of orphaned mountain bluebird babies this summer. In both cases, the bluebird parents had not been observed bringing food to their young for a lengthy time, so the monitors brought the babies to the centre.



*Mountain bluebirds are a threatened species. The babies are banded by their monitors while still very young.*

### Great Horned Owl Sears Feathers Mysteriously

This great horned owl was admitted to AIWC in March with severe feather damage consistent with flying through a methane flare. Her flight and tail feathers were seared and ragged. Using a delicate plucking technique, staff members were able to promote the growth of new tail feathers. It is a long process; if too many feathers are removed at one time the owl could suffer metabolic and nutritional issues. She could be with us up to a year while her plumage regenerates.

### Busy Summer Of House Finches

House finches are a year-round resident in Alberta, and their numbers and range are increasing. They can be found at birdfeeders in our cities, and the brightly colored plumage of the males brightens the dreary winter days. They have two or more broods each year which would explain why three clutches of orphaned house finch babies were admitted to AIWC over a two month period this summer. The tiny tufted babies were fed by staff with a special "baby bird mush" and progressed to eating their adult diet - seeds, vegetation, and small insects - before they were successfully released into the wild.

*While mostly red, male house finches can display an orange or yellow plumage depending on their diet.*



# RecoveryReview

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

## Surviving The Floods

**Southern Alberta  
June 2013**

~ by J. Kozak & J. So

*When local rivers flooded, they destroyed without mercy. The impact this event had on humans and domestic animals is largely known. What is near impossible to know is the number of wild animals who lost their homes and lives. Thanks to the brave efforts of compassionate finders and the AIWC Wildlife Rescue Drivers, a few of these wild flood victims were located, and they received AIWC's life-saving emergency care before all was lost.*



**A** fledgling bald eagle living near the Calgary community of Cranston got a genuine shock when the brush pile she used as a base for flight practice was washed downstream in the merciless current of the swollen Bow River. Discovered two-and-a-half kilometers from her nest, she was in a pathetic state – looking more like a drowned rat than stately raptor. The eagle remained at AIWC for a few days until she was fully recovered and well-fed. Then, she was returned to a safe location near the original nest site to be reunited with her parents.

**A** solitary young coyote pup managed to scramble up a hill when her den was flooded in the valley below. The vulnerable pup's luck ran out shortly after, when she was trampled by a protective doe. Though the pup was found and brought to AIWC, the brain trauma she sustained culminated in seizures and, while AIWC staff did their best, the coyote pup passed away.

**I**n severe downpours, birds in nest boxes lacking proper drainage will often become hypothermic or even drown. An orphaned clutch of nestling bluebirds (*read more about these delightful characters on page 8*) was lucky to avoid this fate when they were found by a Bluebird Monitor. Though initially cold and soaking wet, the orphans made a fine recovery.

**A** finder in Turner Valley had a true dilemma when she discovered twin newborn mule deer fawns lying between a washed-out road and a steep cliff eroded by the swollen Sheep River. Although the finder knew to bring the fawns to AIWC for professional care, all of the local roads were damaged or closed, and there was no way to get the fawns out of town. Using the limited resources available, the finder did her best to provide

*See Floods continued on p8*

**AIWC Wildlife Hotline: 946-2361**



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p (403) 946-2361 • f (403) 946-5689  
charitable #14041 6140 RR0001

www.aiwc.ca

**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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PHOTOS: AIWC, K. Pederson, D. Thompson, S. Bessant, L. Daoust, T. Gilson

Submissions/Comments may be sent to the above address.

introducing ...

**GULLIVER**  
the striped skunk  
and new AIWC  
Education Ambassador

~ by S. Bessant



Our special new Education Ambassador is a striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) kit we have fondly named Gulliver! This name was selected from a number of suggestions, and Gulliver's Travels will be an apt name for the many trips, tours and adventures Gulliver will experience with us and our supporters.

Gulliver was picked up from the Fish Creek 24 Hour Pet Hospital after being found outside a yoga studio. He was there wandering around alone. Gulliver's finder, Rachel, saw him curled up and whining, apparently orphaned. Fortunately Rachel scooped him up into a bucket and took him to the clinic.

From the moment he arrived at AIWC, it was clear to everyone Gulliver is a special guy. He is friendly, good humored, and very cute! He runs after everyone and loves to socialize and eat. Typically male striped skunks are 10% larger than females, and Gulliver's appetite is certainly bigger than that of our beloved and fondly remembered Marigold.

Gulliver has been on several educational outings already and has enjoyed each one. Although frightened skunks may stamp or spray, Gulliver is extremely well behaved. He is very well suited to his role as an Education Ambassador for AIWC.

Perhaps on your next visit to AIWC you may see the map on the wall indicating all the places Gulliver has travelled!



Our Thanks

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

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

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# The Osa Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre Costa Rica

~ by D. Thompson

The sun is high in a cloudless sky and a light breeze cuts through the 34°C heat. Three hundred pan-tropical spotted dolphins skim through the water, surfing on the wake of the eco-friendly boat speeding among them. Along the coastline of steep rainforest cliffs, scarlet macaws court and howler monkeys roar. This tropical fjord on the southwest coast of Costa Rica is the Golfo Dulce. National Geographic calls it, "the most ecologically intense place on earth". We simply call it paradise.

It's January, and we four AIWCers have travelled to Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula to enjoy a week away from civilization. Today we've traveled 18 kilometers down a dubious dirt road from our rented bamboo house to tour the Golfo Dulce aboard a boat and visit Costa Rica's answer to AIWC: The Osa Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre (OWRC).

The OWRC's 700 acres are situated on the north coast of the gulf as part of the Piedras Blancas National Park. The only way to reach it is by boat. Can you imagine if AIWC's rescue drivers could only access our facility from the water? Our



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boat idles and we hop into the warm shallow water, wading to the black sand beach where the OWRC's founder, Carol Patrick, awaits.

Carol explains that the OWRC's philosophy is to provide care for injured, orphaned, and displaced wildlife with a goal of releasing them back into the wild while promoting conservation through education and community outreach. Does this sound familiar? She leads us along a path through the jungle where we are joined by Sweetie, a resident spider monkey. Sweetie takes my hand and draws it to her chest. I realize that I am to scratch, and I comply, only to have Sweetie point to a different spot - this one on her neck. I scratch that too, happily resigning myself to the role of monkey groomer.

Like many of the OWRC's patients, Sweetie was a victim of the pet trade. After habitat destruction, the capture and sale of animals from tropical forests is the second largest cause of species loss in Central America. Costa Rica is vulnerable to wildlife trafficking due to its extraordinary biodiversity. Animals snatched from their habitats for the wildlife trade suffer immensely. They are smuggled in lunch boxes and stuffed into toilet paper tubes, hair curlers and hubcaps. It is estimated that as many as 90% of these animals die before they reach a pet shop. The lucky ones are brought to rehabilitation centres like OWRC, and a small percentage may eventually be released back into the wild.

The tour takes us to several different jungle enclosures, each housing non-releasable animals: scarlet macaws, all four of Costa



Rica's native monkey species, kinkajous, sloths, a tayra, and an ocelot. When Carol learns that we are wildlife rehabilitators, she offers to show us the clinic. It's a fifteen minute hike through the jungle, ducking under fallen trees and scrambling up and down hills. The clinic itself is a rough cabin sitting high on a hill. It serves as an examination room, intensive care unit, kitchen, pharmacy, and lodging for the intern. There is no question that money is tight.

The OWRC admits far fewer patients than AIWC and thus releases fewer as well. The politics are overwhelming - each animal to be released requires a 30-page release document to be sent to the government for approval!

How does the OWRC survive with so many obstacles? The same way that AIWC does. With a small but dedicated staff. With passionate volunteers and interns. With caring supporters who donate time and time again.

We wave goodbye to Carol and Sweetie and clamber into the boat, reflecting that wildlife rehabilitators face many of the same challenges whether in Costa Rica or in Canada. We may be treating different species, but the goals are the same: to aid and protect the wild animals that humans threaten, and work towards a world in which we can all co-exist.

## Species Profile:

~ by L. Daoust

### Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*

Boldly coloured Western meadowlarks have bright yellow underparts, a black "v" on their chest that makes them look as though they are wearing a necklace, mottled brown upperparts, a brown and buff striped head, long, pinkish legs, a short tail, and white outer tail feathers. The yellow breast, black "v" and white outer tail feathers help the meadowlark attract mates. Unfortunately, these features also attract predators. Hawks, falcons, and foxes focus on these bold characteristics during pursuit. In order to hide, a meadowlark will simply turn its back to the predator or tuck away its white tail feathers, helping it quickly blend into the surrounding grass.

The Western meadowlark's scientific name, *Sturnella neglecta*, was given to it by John James Audubon and reflects



*With its head thrown back and its beak open wide, the male western meadowlark belts out its iconic tune for all to hear. This boldly coloured bird is one of the most easily recognized birds in Alberta.*

the tendency of early explorers to overlook the bird because it is so similar to the Eastern meadowlark. In fact, the two meadowlarks were once believed to be the same species.

Western meadowlarks prefer wide open spaces in grazed pastures, rangelands, grasslands and roadsides. Nests are built by the female in depressions in the ground such as cow hoof prints or ones made by the bird's bill. The depression is lined with soft grasses and flexible stems of shrubs. Some

nests are simple bowls, but many are more complex with the surrounding vegetation being woven into a waterproof, protective dome above. The entrance is located on the side. Some nests have an entrance tunnel several feet long. It can take six to eight days for the female to construct her nest. Three to seven heavily spotted white eggs are laid and incubated for thirteen to fifteen days. Males, who often have two mates at the same time, bring food to the nest once the eggs have hatched and chase intruders away.

When feeding, these birds walk or run along the ground grabbing insects such as grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, ants, as well as spiders. They also feed on seeds.

Once abundant, Western meadowlark populations have been declining over the past several decades. This is likely due to the conversion of grassland into tilled agricultural land and residential developments, the use of pesticides, and the increase of invasive plant species. With educated decision making and proper management, the Western meadowlark may once again thrive and continue to be a mascot of Alberta's prairies!



*This juvenile Western meadowlark came to AIWC from the Mossleigh area. He was found on June 26, 2013 with his left leg and wings caught on a barbed wire fence. This bird had bruised and swollen metacarpals, small lacerations, and a bruised radius and ulna. Five maggots were also extracted from his leg wound. Luckily, this gorgeous bird made a full recovery and was released.*

# Wear AIWC!!

AIWC has a great stock of Hoodies and T-shirts for sale! Please email [info@aiwc.ca](mailto: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.

# AIWC's 2013 Amazing Interns & Summer Students

~ by K. Pederson



Brittany Wiszniak



Shannon Toy

Summer vacations and lazy days in the sun? Not for the hard-working AIWC interns, Brittany Wiszniak and Thea Braun, and summer students Cheyenne Nadbrzezna and Shannon Toy!

This team dedicated their time and talents to AIWC this summer, helping staff with animal care and treatment as well as running volunteer shifts.

Leading volunteer shifts enabled them to improve their organizational and people skills; while working closely with staff allowed them to gain tremendous knowledge in wild animal and bird care.

Thea, who will be applying for vet school, noted that she enjoyed learning about "the medical aspects ... [such as] physiology and [the] medications required for treatment".

Cheyenne, an intern for AIWC last summer, said her favorite part of the job is "examining and working with the baby animals and birds". The experience of a summer position at AIWC provides an intense learning curve, and the knowledge and skills gained will carry on after their time at AIWC is over.

Shannon "keeps a very close eye out for any injured wildlife wherever I am," and Brittany, new to AIWC this year, said she is "more environmentally conscious, and I've gained a deeper understanding of how human actions affect wildlife".

A big thank you to 'The Class of 2013!' We all enjoyed working with you!



Cheyenne Nadbrzezna

Thea Braun



## Fundraising UPDATE

### An Evening for the Animals

This annual event hosted by long-time volunteer Heather MacEwan-Foran and her dedicated family raised \$11,000, a record high! Every dollar was donated to AIWC and will help us continue the important work we do. The weather was beautiful and this allowed the guests to mingle and explore Heather's beautiful property. As in years past, the food and entertainment set the tone for a relaxing evening filled with laughter, and visiting with fellow volunteers and AIWC supporters. On behalf of everyone at AIWC (that includes our furred and feathered patients!) our heartfelt thanks to Heather and her very special family.



### Dread going to the Bottle Depot?

Email [info@aiwc.ca](mailto:info@aiwc.ca) and we will be happy to send someone to pick up from you!

### Donate a Car to AIWC

Ready to get rid of your old clunker (car, bike, boat)? **Donate A Car Canada** will send AIWC a cheque and you will receive a tax receipt! Check out their website at [www.donatecar.ca](http://www.donatecar.ca)

### Westjet Tech-Ops 2013 Golf Tourny

Westjet's Tech-Ops department hosted a Golf Tournament on August 17, 2013 with all proceeds going to AIWC. \$12,000 was raised!! A huge thank you to the organizers and participants for their generosity and support.



### Kids Care!

School was out, and Ariane, Kiarra, Shivaun, Matthew and Anthony got busy! The girls (pictured left) entertained at the entrance to the Bearspaw Farmer's Market, delighting customers with their violin playing skills.



The boys (left) were busy with bottle collecting. The children (aged 5 to 11) dedicated 3 Sundays this summer to raising funds for AIWC, and their efforts brought in over \$600!

AIWC sincerely appreciates the hard work of these kids and their parents.

### 2014 Calendars ON SALE Oct. 1

The AIWC 2014 Calendar will be available in 2 sizes this year. A convenient 8" x 10.5" and the standard 11" x 17" will feature an AIWC patient each month. E-mail: [info@aiwc.ca](mailto:info@aiwc.ca) and pre-order today!



Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation



Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

## LUSH FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS



LUSH Cosmetics has put AIWC on the cover of their fresh handmade moisturizer 'Charity Pot'

### CHARITY POT PARTY!

Visit the AIWC booth in the LUSH store at Sunridge Mall **Saturday, Oct. 12 - Noon to 4** Snacks and drinks available. Donations always welcome!