

RecoveryReview

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

Rescue Abroad!

AIWC staff and volunteers have a passion and commitment to wildlife welfare that does not end the moment they walk out the Centre's door. They are always ready to lend assistance day or night, at home or at work. For some, the opportunity to assist wild species in exotic locations is all part of traveling abroad. This is the story of a green sea turtle hatchling my Mom and I stumbled upon when we were vacationing in Barbados.

On the island, we stayed at a luxury hotel in the parish of St. James. The property is beautifully obscured from the main road by a long, winding palm tree-lined lane. Lush manicured tropical gardens surround the driveway and the hotel, providing habitat for many species of birds, insects, reptiles and a group of green monkeys (*Chlorocebus sabaenus*).

While walking down this driveway late one afternoon, we stumbled upon a recently hatched green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) crawling clumsily uphill over the asphalt's uneven surface. Our initial amazement at being lucky enough to see a sea turtle quickly turned to worry as we realized this was obviously not a safe or proper place for a baby. With no one in sight, we gently picked up the turtle and headed inside.

Although the front desk attendant was somewhat surprised to see an animal in our hands, he mentioned that hotel guests often find hatchlings mistakenly crawling up the driveway. "They are heading towards the bright lights," he explained. We

~ by C. Vavasour-Williams



gazed at the little turtle and looked visibly worried. He motioned for us to walk to the end of the property and set the hatchling down in the sand facing the ocean. "There is less tourist activity on that part of the beach." He paused. "Before it gets too dark..."

The sun was setting fast. We rushed to the area of the beach where the attendant had pointed and gingerly set the hatchling down. Now on the sand, the tiny turtle continued his journey to the ocean and quickly disappeared into the waves gently lapping at the shore.

At dinner that night, my Mom and I marveled at our discovery and pondered the worrying realization that human-related threats towards wildlife are a global issue. Humanity's continuous encroachment into wildlife habitat often creates unintentional threats that have the potential to seriously impact species' abilities to thrive. This realization should be the motivation each of us needs to help out when and where we can. Relocating a displaced turtle was neither time consuming nor labour intensive, but the satisfaction of being able to protect a wild animal was a reward that my Mom and I will remember for the rest of our lives.

*For AIWC volunteers,
the opportunity to
assist wildlife is all
part of traveling
abroad*

learned that green sea turtles hatch during the night and instinctively head towards the moon's bright reflection on the ocean's surface. With hotels being built along the beaches of Caribbean islands, hatchlings commonly head towards the bright lights of the seaside developments instead. "Another example of humans interfering with nature," the attendant continued. He

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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

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Submissions/Comments may be sent to the above address.

Marigold Memorial Fund

AIWC is proud to honour the life and service of one of its most beloved Education Ambassadors, Marigold the skunk, through the Marigold Memorial Fund.

The fund will be devoted to providing for the health, quality of life, and enrichment for the current Education Ambassadors, as well as any future Ambassadors AIWC may be fortunate enough to host.

If you would like to donate to the fund, please call 403-946-2361 or mail your donation to AIWC, Box 68, Madden, AB TOM 1L0. Please mark your donation for "Marigold". All donations of \$15.00 or more will be acknowledged by a charitable tax receipt.

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened."

~ Anatole France



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Species Profile:

Waxwings

Bohemian & Cedar

~ by T. McDougall

Bohemian Waxwing



Alberta is lucky to host both varieties of waxwings in North America: bohemian waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*), and cedar waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). These birds fly in an undulating, synchronized group before converging on fruit-laden trees. This flight pattern allows birdwatchers to recognize a flock of waxwings before actually identifying individual birds to determine the species.

Although adult cedar and bohemian waxwings have similar colouring, the bohemian is darker and reddish brown in colour, with yellow and white wing spots and red on the under part of the tail. In contrast, cedars are lighter in colour, with a slight yellow tinge on the underbelly, and sports only red wing spots. Both species have a head crest and black face mask, although the cedar's mask wraps around the sides, making it look more bandit-like than the bohemian.

Waxwings are known for feasting on the berries of the mountain ash tree, a popular ornamental tree in local yards. As the berries freeze, they may ferment. In the winter when the bohemian waxwings (year-round residents) feast on these tasty, tainted berries, they become somewhat drunk, and end up flying erratically or stumbling about. It is also the reason bohemians are common 'window strikers' requiring care at AIWC.

The cedar waxwing, our summer migrant, also has some interesting feeding habits. If a bird's crop is full and it is thus unable to eat anymore, it will pass the food down a 'line' of waxwings until a hungry bird gobbles it up. The cedars are one of the last birds to nest in Alberta, therefore allowing them to take full advantage of burgeoning berry crops to feed their young nestlings. They are prone to consuming fermented berries as well due to their late nesting habits.

Keep an eye out for these unique and colourful birds. Waxwings are a delight to observe throughout the seasons.



Cedar Waxwing

This adult male pileated woodpecker was admitted with an old, infected gash on his right thigh. It is possible he received the injury from a cat or dog, as woodpeckers spend a lot of time foraging on the ground. Caring for his wound involved a slow process of drawing out the infection, as well as debriding

(removing) the surrounding feathers so the injury site could be kept clean. The wound healed wonderfully, but more time was needed for the bald patch to fill in with insulating feathers. In the meantime, this lively character bided his time with wood-pecking. This activity soon led to his figuring out how to open and escape from his securely latched enclosure - something only woodpeckers have ever managed at AIWC. They use vibration and pecking at just the right time to spring the latch. He got so good at it that a special top-opening enclosure was devised to securely house him. It worked, it foiled the great Houdini! When his feathers had grown in, he was officially released - much to his presumed delight.

Farewell to our Founder



In May 2011, the staff and volunteers at AIWC bid a final farewell to our Founder Dianne Wittner.

Dianne spent twenty years of her life in service to the organization, beginning with her original vision of what AIWC could become, followed by her subsequent efforts to turn that into reality.

As many of you, our members, know, Dianne is a very special woman. She is extremely caring, compassionate, and gentle towards wild animals. No ordinary wildlife biologist, Dianne is tremendously knowledgeable in wildlife rehabilitation and husbandry. She is an incredible teacher, an inspiring speaker, and an amazing human being.

Wherever Dianne's steps may lead her, we wish her a safe and happy journey.

Thank you for all you've given to AIWC ... We will miss you!

Snow Goose Challenge

~ by D. Thompson

Have you ever peeked inside the trunk of a rescue driver's car? You might see nets of various sizes, leather gloves, towels, blankets, paper towels, wire clippers, tissues, margarine tubs, duct tape, and, most importantly, transport boxes of all shapes and sizes. As a rescue driver, one of the AIWC volunteers who feels lucky when groceries squeeze in alongside my equipment, I felt prepared for a variety of situations. Then, on November 16th, I got a simple call about a snow goose that challenged my trunk's contents.

I had already been to the Centre to escort Blackjack (AIWC's Education Ambassador) to his education program appearance at Cardel Place when I received the call. A good Samaritan had dropped off a goose at a veterinary clinic and I agreed to pick him up before returning to AIWC. But after hanging up, I was left standing in the parking lot peering into my car's trunk, thinking 'Just how big is a snow goose?' I had no idea since I had never seen one before, even though they migrate semi-annually through Alberta. Since none of the boxes in my car seemed suitable, I quickly drove the few blocks home,

scrambled through my basement until I found a box I hoped would be appropriately sized, and prepared it for goose transport. Only then was I good to go.

The goose had already won the hearts of the employees at Fish Creek Pet Hospital, and it was evident why: he had snowy white plumage, with a dusting of black on the tips of his wings, and the ebony edges of his pink bill seemed to give him a mischievous grin. I was happy to see he was feisty, as this indicated he was not as affected by his condition as he could have been. Thankfully, from a rescue driver's perspective, he fit into the box.

Examination at the Centre revealed a mid-shaft fracture of the right ulna (wing bone). The goose also had an old scabbed wound on the right side of his cere (the fleshy membrane at the base of the upper bill). Further, this survivor was covered in feather mites and was emaciated. The injured wing was immobilized

in a bandage so the fracture could set, and his other ailments were tended to.

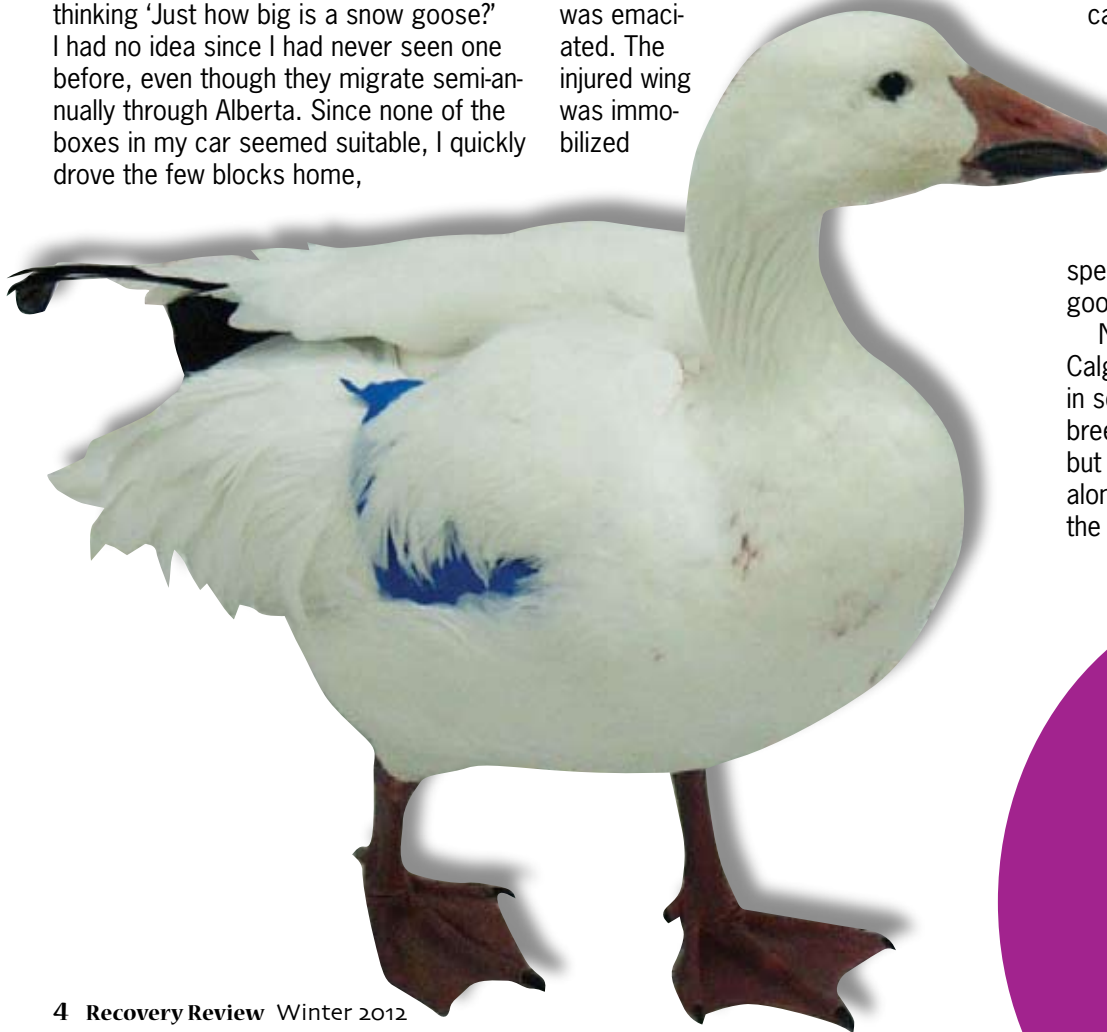
Snow geese are easily stressed and therefore eat poorly in captive situations. This patient required tube feeding



for much of his stay. However, it did not take him long to heal and, once it was confirmed that his bones had sufficiently calcified, the bandages were removed.

On January 6th, "my" snow goose was transferred by air to the Wildlife Rescue Association of British Columbia, where he spent the next month rebuilding his muscle strength. He was then released in balmy southern BC where he will spend the rest of the winter with the snow goose flocks.

Now that spring is settling upon Calgary, I find myself looking to the sky in search of snow geese flying north to breed. I hope they all make the trip safely, but for the geese needing assistance along the way, a willing rescue driver with the perfect transport box awaits.



If you'd like to help save any of the many wild patients at AIWC, please call

403-946-2361

or visit our website at

www.aiwc.ca

to find out how

Banded Hawk Flies Again

~ by D. Hanna

It was late September when a banded Swainson's hawk came to AIBC with a mid-shaft fracture along his left ulna (wing bone), and various abrasions. Further examination found he had a pellet in the caudal (near the tail) part of his lower abdomen. It should be noted here that, in Alberta and throughout most of the Swainson's migratory range, it is illegal to shoot any raptor with any sort of weapon.

Radiographs showed that the break in his wing bone was properly lined up and did not require surgery, so the wing was bandaged and immobilized for the dura-

tion of the healing process. Of greater concern was the pellet in his abdomen, that required surgical removal by one of AIBC's volunteer veterinarians. The raptor's lead levels were checked and luckily no lead was found in his bloodstream.

His most intriguing characteristic was the band on his leg. Upon further investigation it was found the band came from Argentina, where Swainson's hawks migrate every fall. Letters were sent to the proper officials in Argentina, but so far AIBC has yet to receive a reply. Like a passport stamp, the band proved he had

journeyed to the far ends of the Earth.

This hawk's wounds and his broken wing have now healed sufficiently for him to reside in the outdoor flight cage where he is gaining needed flight exercise and strength for his release in the spring.

He has proven to be as tough as an *hombre* (or, should I say, *aves de rapina*) from a Sergio Leone movie and, when he is ready to join his brethren in the wild, I picture this raptor flying high with the sun on his back...then a scene fade out with the appropriate theme music in the background...

NEST BOXES

Spring Preparation Tips

Clean Nest Boxes

- Always wear gloves, a mask, and eye protection as nests have parasites and pathogens in them
- Use a scraping tool to get all the nest material off the bottom of the nest box
- Spray the house out with a diluted bleach mixture and let air dry
- Wash your hands thoroughly when finished

Nest Box Materials

- Never use houses made of plastic or metal as they get too hot inside for the birds. Instead, use gourds, wood or any other natural, breathable material
- You may paint/stain the outside of the house but NEVER the inside!

Help Birds Find Nesting Material

- Fill old suet feeders

(cage style) with short fur from your pet's brush (long pieces are strangling and entanglement hazards), grasses, and small twigs. Hang the suet cage and enjoy watching the birds take the goodies!

~ by
L. Daoust

Diabolical Disposal

Imagine being hungry, thirsty, and cold. Imagine being wet. Now imagine also being alone, terrified, and stressed. On top of those very uncomfortable feelings, imagine being helplessly trapped in a dangerous situation you absolutely could not escape. One young skunk found himself in such a situation on a cold, rainy day this past July.

Sebastien Gagnon had been doing renovations in his house and had taken some debris out to the dumpster. Here he discovered a disturbing sight: a juvenile skunk in a live trap had been disposed of IN the dumpster!

Upon receiving a call regarding the skunk in distress, Roy Hoskins promptly headed over to the caller's house in the Calgary community of Beddington.

Appalled and disgusted, Roy hoisted out the trap and transferred the skunk into a crate. He then put the crate into his van so the animal could warm up since the youngster was shivering and likely hypothermic. Roy canvassed the neighbourhood, knocking on as many doors as he had time for. He asked the homeowners

if they had any information about the skunk. Some people were very sympathetic towards the skunk and others were apathetic. No one had or was willing to give any information.

It seems a large percentage of the population still holds very negative and uneducated opinions about skunks. The truth is skunks are extremely beneficial animals and amazing neighbours! A wild skunk's diet consists of 25% rodents (mice, voles, etc.) and 75% insects (moths, crickets, grasshoppers, beetles, etc.).

A skunk sprays as a last resort only. They utilize several warning signs before spraying a potential predator. These warnings include stomping their front feet on the ground and scooting back, lifting their tails and turning their bums towards the threat, and hissing or growling. These shy creatures avoid spraying if at all possible as it is very physiologically demanding on their bodies to make more spray and they do not want to be left vulnerable without

their main defense.

This little skunk was exceptionally lucky that a kind gentleman happened to see him and care enough to take action to help. A very happy ending to what would have been a painful, frightening demise.

I hope the person who committed the heinous action saw Roy's interview on CTV news that night and learned some valuable information about the advantages of skunks. We all need to spread the word to help our wild friends!



If you witness an inhumane action against any species of animal or find an animal in distress, please report it to the appropriate authorities (Fish and Wildlife, Calgary Humane Society, Alberta SPCA, or municipal animal bylaw officers).



In October 2011, AIWC tried out a brand new fundraising initiative ...

we held a book sale!

Assisted by an organization called "Books Between Friends", AIWC volunteers donated books they no longer needed. Those books were added to the many books already on site. Members of the public (and some AIWC volunteers) came out and did a little shopping to stock up their reading collection for the winter.

The total raised from the book sale was

\$1000.00!



Thank you to everyone who made purchases, donated books, and volunteered their time!



*Please help us
make a difference in
the lives that follow.*

Planned giving is a way to carry forward your passion and concern for wildlife. It is a wonderful way to ensure AIWC continues its outstanding efforts to rescue, treat, and release Alberta's injured and orphaned wildlife.

Chances are, you already donate generously to us. Have you considered leaving a lasting legacy that will continue to make a difference after you are gone? Calgary's continuing development guarantees that the past trend of increasing human-wildlife conflict will mean a greater need than ever for AIWC's wildlife services. That is why your support is so important and why a legacy gift will help us prepare for the future. Bequests are mutually rewarding and allow us to initiate goals that might otherwise be out of reach.

You may want to give to a specific AIWC program or you may prefer to let us determine the greatest need. Planned giving can help your own financial picture while helping save wildlife you care about. If you think a lasting legacy might be for you, contact your lawyer and state your bequest using AIWC's full name and charitable registration number. You may also contact us at the Centre, at any time.



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Our Thanks

AIWC gratefully acknowledges:

- Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation
- Acorn Fund
- Cenovus Employee Foundation
- Donmar Foundation
- EnCana Cares Foundation
- Grant MacEwan Charitable Foundation
- Nickle Family Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- The Calgary Foundation – DT Kayra Fund
- The Calgary Foundation – Grateful Heart Foundation Fund
- The Calgary Foundation – MacEwan Family Foundation
- Vancouver Foundation

**AIWC Christmas Adoptions and
Food Pledge raised a combined
total of \$35,050!!!**

**CONGRATULATIONS to the following
Food Pledge contest winners:**

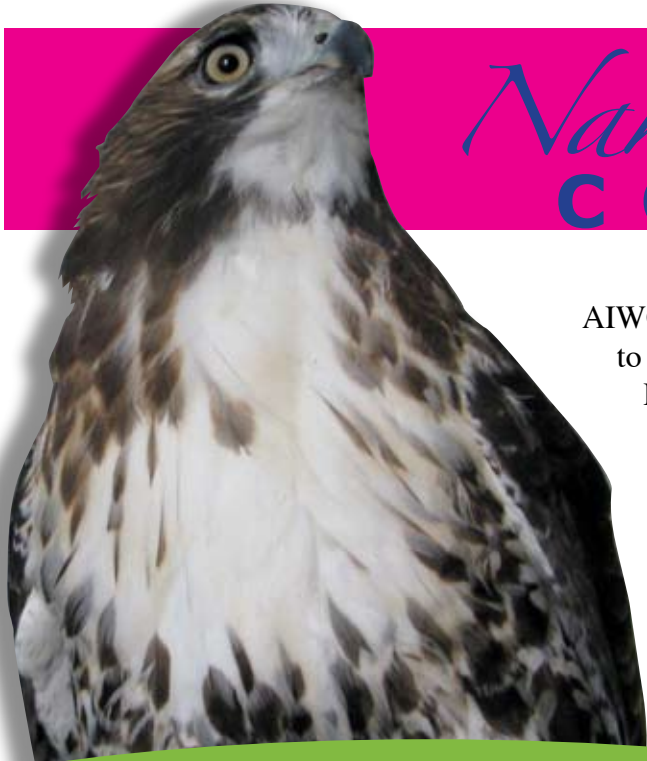
GRAND PRIZE: Sony Handycam DCR-SX45 Video Camera (silver) - ADELE LANGER

2ND PRIZE: Framed Denis Mayer Jr. wildlife print (coyote) - MARY TAYLOR

3RD PRIZE: Family portrait session with 1 - 8"x10" print courtesy of Janet Horbacio Photography - EILEEN EASTON

4TH PRIZE: 2 - 2012 AIWC calendars & 2 AIWC t-shirts - DELL WIEBE

Thank You to all the individuals
who generously donated to AIWC
and helped Alberta wildlife!!!



Name the Hawk CONTEST

AIWC is having a contest to name our newest Education Ambassador, a red-tailed hawk. She will help AIWC spread the message about conservation and the need to protect & respect our environment.



Win

naming rights, and a framed certificate with a picture of this majestic hawk

\$5 fee per entry

CONTEST RULES:

- Open to everyone, of all ages, except for the judging committee members.
- Starts April 1, 2012; closes April 30, 2012 at 11:59 pm. All entries must be postmarked no later than April 30, 2012. Results will be announced May 15, 2012.
- A completed entry form must accompany each individual entry.
Additional entry forms can be found at www.aiwc.ca under the "Contests" tab.
- If the winning name is submitted by multiple entrants, a winner will be randomly drawn from those entrants.
- The Judges' decision is final. AIWC does not accept responsibility for entries that are lost or delayed during transportation.

CONTEST ENTRY FORM

Mail to: Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Box 68, Madden, AB T0M 1L0

Name: _____

Address: _____ City/Prov _____ PC _____

Phone No.: _____ Cell No: _____

E-Mail: _____

Hawk Name to be entered: _____

Method of Payment: Cheque Visa Mastercard

Card Number: _____

Expires: _____ Name on Card: _____

I understand that by entering this contest AIWC reserves the right to publish the winner's name in their quarterly newsletter and/or local newspapers.

Yes!

I would like to support AIWC with a donation for the care and treatment of wild patients.

\$ _____

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