

# RecoveryReview

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

## Ambassador of Awe

~ by J. So

**B**lackjack lorded above all who walked AWC's halls as he peered down from his favourite perch. Throughout the past seventeen years, beloved Blackjack served as AWC's incredibly

handsome Education Ambassador and valued hawk foster parent. Those who were privileged enough to know him also considered him to be a treasured friend.

It was a vehicular collision that led Blackjack to AWC's doors on August 18, 1995 when he was but a fledgling. The near-fatal accident cost him his eye, and trauma to his brain resulted in the loss of his predatory instincts. With no depth perception for hunting or manoeuvring around obstacles, he was assessed as being non-releasable. However, his remarkably calm temperament meant he could potentially handle the stresses of captivity and thus, he began training as an Education Ambassador. He was perfect! In this role, he served as a bridge between our increasingly human-centred existence and the intriguing, beautifully complex natural world. He quite literally turned heads when people saw him. Most amusing was when Blackjack would awake from a nap during a busy, noisy Folk Music Festival, Mayor's Environmental Expo or similar venue. He would yawn and

**See Ambassador cont. on p8**

**Blackjack**  
Swainson's hawk

*AIWC's dear resident and Education Ambassador 1995-2012*



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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
- 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.

# AIWC 2013 Wildlife Food Pledge Fundraiser!

Spring and summer are AIWC's busiest seasons of the year, and extra food and supplies are needed to care for the injured and orphaned wildlife that will be coming through our doors. From now until May 30, 2013 you can help by participating in the Wildlife Food Pledge. Gather pledge DOLLARS and qualify for some great prize draws, or just make a donation!

The fundraiser is open to everyone, so invite your friends and family to gather pledges.

The more you raise, the more chances you have to win!!

See the Wildlife Food Pledge form enclosed with this newsletter for all the details!

Help support AIWC's life-saving work!

2 months food for 1 educational animal  
**\$300**



2 month supply of produce  
**\$150**



AIWC would like to welcome Greg Pauling as a new board director.

Thank you for joining our team!

## Book an AIWC Education Program

Ask about our corporate talks, workshops, and guest speaker topics. Guaranteed to entertain and amaze, AIWC can add flavour to your class, meeting, or special event.

education@aiwc.ca  
 403-946-2361  
 www.aiwc.ca

# Species Profile:



## Common muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*)

*Huddled on concrete steps in Crossfield, this displaced muskrat suffered multiple puncture wounds and a deep, infected gash on the side of his face. He also had a broken jaw. Amazingly tolerant of the ministrations required to treat him he is now healthy and whole, awaiting the return of open water so he can go free.*

## AIWC's New Membership Program

We have revamped our membership program to reduce administrative work and focus membership revenue towards a time of the year when resources are most needed. As many of you know, spring is the beginning of AIWC's busy season so the first day of spring (March 21) was chosen as the date all memberships expire.

### How it works:

Purchase a membership (new or renewal) between March 21 and November 21, 2013 and it will be valid until March 21, 2014. Purchase a membership after November 21, 2013 and your membership will be valid until March 21, 2015 (up to 16 months).

You will receive a membership package in the mail containing your personalized card, a welcome letter, a list of participating retailers offering **Member Only discounts**, and invitations to a **"Talk & Tour"** and the **AGM**. The retailer list details the discounts offered and currently includes: The Wild Bird Store, Fairplay Stores, The Horse Store, All In The Wild Gallery, Bow Point Nursery, Wild About Flowers and the Loose Moose Theatre Company. Check our website often for updated lists as we are continually sourcing additional offers. You must show your card to access the discount (the card is not transferrable).

The "Talk & Tour" is an opportunity for our members to come to the Centre for a wildlife related presentation followed by a guided tour of the entire facility. The first Talk & Tour is April 21, 2013. "Dispelling Myths: The Truth About Coyotes" by coyote expert and AIWC founder Dianne Wittner. Dianne has spent many years working with and studying coyotes.

If you would like to purchase a membership you can do it online at [www.aiwc.ca](http://www.aiwc.ca) or download an application and mail or fax it to AIWC (details on the form).

## Saw-whet Owl

### *Aegolious acadicus*

*With its bright, inquisitive eyes and its charmingly diminutive size, it's no wonder the saw-whet owl was voted by netizens to be the star of Telus Mobility's 2011 promotional campaign.*

~ by A. Tong



The charismatic northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolious acadicus*) was first described scientifically in 1896 by John Henry Keen, a missionary who worked in what is now Nova Scotia. When Keen encountered this little owl, one wonders if he realized that the saw-whet owl is one of the smallest owls in Canada. Adults measure seventeen to twenty-two centimetres in length, with a 42-56 centimetre wingspan. They typically weigh about 80 grams.

Saw-whet owls live in all but the most northern parts of Canada. Coniferous forests are where most saw-whet owls can be found, although many spend the winter season in mixed or deciduous forest. Riparian areas (the habitat where land meets a stream or river) also serves as a home for many of these birds, perhaps because of the abundance of prey found there. The location of a particular saw-whet owl plays a large part in what makes up its diet. Most of these owls subsist on small mammals like mice, shrews and voles, but on the West Coast, crustaceans, frogs and aquatic insects are also devoured.

Saw-whet owls employ a 'sit and wait' hunting strategy. This means they drop onto their prey from low hanging hunting perches. In times of plentiful prey, saw-whet owls have been known to eat only the heads of their prey animals. They are also known to cache their prey during winter months. Cached food is thawed by these owls by 'brooding' (similar to the way a female incubates her eggs) the frozen prey. Due to their diminutive size, saw-whet owls in turn are preyed upon by larger owls such as great horned and spotted owls, smaller hawks like the Cooper's and broad-winged hawks, corvids, and American martens. If they can successfully evade predators, these owls live up to seven years in the wild, and up to sixteen years in captivity.

The saw-whet owls' name comes from its distinctive call. This bird is also known as the Acadian owl, blind owl, Kirkland owl, sparrow owl and Queen Charlotte owl.

# Upcoming & Ongoing Fundraisers

## • From now until April 30 Shell's Fuelling Change

AIWC is in top spot to win \$100,000 from Shell and you can help us win it!  
*It's as easy as 1, 2, 3 ...*

1. Register on Shell's website  
**fuellingchange.com.**

2. Shop at Shell (any purchase counts, even just a pop!)  
Save your receipt.

3. Redeem those receipts on the website for votes (every receipt is worth 50 votes!!) Locate AIWC in the \$100K category ... 'Wild Lands for Wild Lives' ... and cast those votes for us!

**The top three win! AIWC is currently in 1st place, so let's make sure we stay there!!  
IMAGINE WHAT WE COULD DO FOR OUR WILD PATIENTS WITH THIS MAJOR CONTRIBUTION!!**



## • 2013 AIWC Calendars On Sale! Only \$10

This year's calendar features AIWC patients in a convenient 8"x10.5" size. Please email [info@aiwc.ca](mailto:info@aiwc.ca) to place your order.

## • April 20 Wild Alberta Expo

Held in conjunction with the annual Climb & Run for Wilderness at the Calgary Tower. AIWC will be there with lots of information and some cool merchandise for sale! Drop in from 9am to 2pm.

## UPDATE

### Coppers For Critters

A big thank you to all the folks who donated their pennies (and pennies' 'buddies') for the critters. The final tally raised was \$557.14! Amazing support!! Thank you to Lynda Alderman for spearheading this initiative!

## • May 25 First Bottle Drive of 2013! 9am-3pm, at Fish Creek Bottle Depot

That's lot's of time to start saving your beverage containers (don't forget to save your milk and juice containers). Volunteers are always needed for this fun event! The more volunteers we have, the more money we make, so save the date and bring your family and friends to help AIWC! Sign up to drive or go door-to-door at **info@aiwc.**

### Can't wait until May?

Contact **info@aiwc** and we'll be happy to send someone to pick up from you.

## Sponsor a recovering animal!..

Each issue of the *Recovery Review* will feature one of AIWC's current patients up for 'adoption'. By donating a fixed amount for a featured animal, donors choose how their money is spent. In return, the donor receives an adoption certificate, a glossy 8x10 photograph, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the donation. AIWC's 'adoption option' is particularly popular as a gift!

### LARGE WATERFOWL (\$70): TUNDRA SWAN (*Cygnus columbianus*)



Tundra swans, also known as whistling swans, are the most common and widespread of the two swan species native to North America. The other species is the larger trumpeter swan.

This tundra swan was admitted to AIWC on November 13th, 2012. The swan was discovered wandering in a back alley in Brooks, Alberta. Unable to fly away when approached, the swan's examination revealed it was mildly hypothermic and thin. It also had some cuts on both of its feet, most likely caused by walking on concrete. Luckily, it had no other significant injuries.

Tundra swans migrate to estuaries along the east and west coasts of North America. This swan's injuries had not healed in time for it to make winter's migration. It is currently housed at AIWC with another tundra swan recovering from similar injuries. Both swans will overwinter at AIWC and will be relocated to an appropriate pond or lake when tundra swans return to Alberta in the spring.

**Adopting this swan will help AIWC pay for the expenses associated with his rehabilitation. But wait! Both swans can be adopted together for only \$100; why not adopt both of these gorgeous swans for a double dose of Wonderful Feelings?**

Adopting any of our wild patients helps AIWC pay for the expenses associated with their rehabilitation.

More info [www.aiwc.ca](http://www.aiwc.ca)  
or 403-946-2361

# The Darling Range Wildlife Shelter

PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

~ by S. Bessant

Last fall I was privileged to offer support and assistance to the Darling Range Wildlife Shelter over a four week period. I came home with some wonderful ideas that will be implemented at our Centre. I also experienced hands-on care of several species of Australian wildlife, such as galahs (a red breasted cockatoo), laughing kookaburras, red wattlebirds, red kangaroos, Australian magpies, Australian coots, ducklings, black swans, bobtails, and ravens. Caring for these unique species was a new and exhilarating experience.

One of the most memorable experiences was being confronted by a dugite! The dugite is a brown snake whose venom is among the most lethal in Australia. It was creeping around in the tool shed where I was looking for sheers to cut branches for the wattlebird enclosure. I am so afraid of snakes I froze on the spot. When it occurred to me the snake may think I was a tree, I quickly backed into the wall of the shed before turning to run! I then understood why so many of the volunteers wear tall rubber boots and long pants while working at the Centre, no matter how warm the weather.

The Darling Range Wildlife Shelter does not have veterinarians or biologists on staff. Therefore, when an injured patient arrives, it is assessed by the volunteer in charge of the shift, then placed in a 'hot box'. A 'hot box' is really an incubator used for close monitoring. If a patient requires immediate treatment it is taken to a local vet. There, further assessment is made, and treatment is decided upon and given. The patient then goes back to the Shelter to receive the prescribed care.

When a joey (a juvenile kangaroo) is ad-

mitted to the Shelter and it requires round the clock care, it is sent to home care. I met Marie, a long term volunteer, who has raised thirty-one joeys. Marie looks after up to four joeys at a time, providing milk and nurturing care until they are old enough to be looked after at the shelter. Cloth bags are a substitute for the mother kangaroo's pouch and the joeys are quite comfortable there.

As the joeys grow they are relocated to larger enclosures. The interaction they have with volunteers is reduced and several safety precautions are implemented. Two people go into the enclosure at a time, and each person holds a rake or broom in front of them for protection in the event of an aggressive kangaroo.

One of the most enjoyable jobs at the Shelter is feeding the joeys, and one of the least is chopping lettuce. Shelter volunteers chop at least fifteen heads of lettuce per shift! This

The volunteers and staff at the Darling Range Wildlife Shelter are dedicated and committed to wildlife and their care. They will do whatever it takes to educate the public, and rehabilitate for release the wildlife in their care.

I can say for sure this Shelter is aptly named! The wildlife and the people who care for them are most certainly 'darling'!



is fed to the ducklings at the Shelter who simply devour it. When everyone was busy elsewhere and I was not sure of what to do, I chopped lettuce. That sound attracted the Australian magpies to come looking for lunch. They regularly wait by the door for their meal.



**White-winged crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*)**

*One of AIWC's very first patients of 2013, this white-winged crossbill was found sitting on the ground below a window of a residence in southwest Calgary. Blunt trauma from the window strike had resulted in a swollen left eye. After two weeks recovering from her injury, she and three other white-winged crossbills in care were released.*

# Annual General Meeting

**Mark The Date!**

**May 30, 2013  
7:00 PM  
at the  
AIWC Annexe**

**This is a great opportunity to ask questions and mingle with fellow members.**



# VOLUNTEER IN PROFILE: BARB WRIGHT

When it comes to rescues, Barb Wright is a driver extraordinaire! She is always willing and able to help animals in distress. Barb has often dropped everything to rescue an owl, a duckling or a magpie. No matter the species, they all receive equal compassion and care.

Barb has been with AIWC since 2004 and continues to do shifts as a rescue driver while being an instrumental force in many other areas. Her main passion is education and Barb has taken the role of volunteer Education Coordinator to a new level. She is responsible for booking AIWC presentations, arranging presenters and handlers, finding transportation for Education Ambassadors en route to events, facilitating tours, and organizing the Education Team and their meetings. Did I



men- tion her organizational skills? Barb's organizational skills should never be underestimated. Perhaps her experience as an event planner is what she relies upon when it comes to getting everything on track. She has even helped AIWC organize two amazing provincial conferences for the Alberta Wildlife Rehabilitators' Association.

Barb is always professional, polite, prompt and efficient in her dealings with clients. AIWC has received many com-



pliments on the interaction clients and volunteers have with her.

Barb has also been known to assist at public relations booths when needed. Is there anything she will not do? We think not!

As volunteers go, Barb is top notch. She fulfills so many roles - we would be lost without her.

***Thank you so much, Barb!***

# Our Thanks

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

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

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• A.E. Bowers Elementary School • S. Barclay • G. Burns • R.H. Harper • M.J. Hunter • R. Jensen • J. So • R. Swanson • G. Watkins

## FOXES - \$500-\$999

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## PRAIRIE HARES - \$50-\$100

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### GRANTS

- The Jackie and George Palmer Fund at The Calgary Foundation
- AWRA
- Shell Canada Limited
- The Calgary Foundation



### Tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)

*Salamanders spend winter months deep underground to escape the harsh Alberta winter weather, so it was rather unusual to find one above ground, on a driveway no less, in the middle of November. This diminutive fellow will overwinter at AIWC and be released late in the spring when the ground has thawed.*

## **Ambassador** *continued from p1*

fluff up his feathers, then turn his head to look at the people staring back, their jaws-dropped because they thought he was a prop and not a real bird!

Members of the Education Team never took it personally when kids who experienced an education presentation months or even years before forgot the speaker, but inquired about Blackjack by name. He was enchantingly memorable. Plus, he did not mind if people offered him the occasional belly stroke or talon touch...but not too much, as a wing flap or indignant glare would indicate. He knew how to patiently express his limits, and his will was always respected.

Blackjack's temperament was almost directly opposite to what is typically expected of a Swainson's hawk, a species with a well-deserved reputation for being feisty. His presence, though, was enough to encourage the baby hawks fostered under his care to express their wild sides. Looking up to him, the little ones would learn how to eat with raptor manners and they matured into strong-willed birds of prey.

On his days off, Blackjack would bask in the sun, enjoy a misting or spend time entertaining visitors and staff. As he grew older, his days off became more frequent and he was semi-retired some years ago so he could rest his aging body. He was still going on some short outings, though; he seemed to enjoy the enrichment he received from the trips.

At the Centre, he was cherished through to the end of his days and will forever live on in our hearts.



*Dear Blackjack, your stoic presence and willing heart were a blessing to the people you met, the young hawks you helped on their journey to freedom, and the wild places and lives your influence encouraged humans to respect. It is with sadness and gratitude that we say farewell.*

*Your wild spirit now flies forever free.*

