

Recovery Review

Quarterly Bulletin of the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife Conservation through Education & Rehabilitation

**AIWC 20 Year Special Retrospective Edition:
Wildlife Wisdom ~ Past & Present**

AWESOME AMBASSADORS

~ by T. MacDougall

Education Ambassadors are an integral part of AIWC. Not only do they offer extra value to our education programs, they are the face of AIWC's message of conservation, rehabilitation and education. These wonderful personalities give everyone who interacts with them an immediate and unique connection to wildlife that they may not have had otherwise.

Not just any patient can be chosen to be an Education Ambassador. AIWC has very strict policies regarding choosing animals for this role. The most important policy is that Education Ambassadors cannot be candidates for release; if they can go free, we will ensure they do. For example, Blackjack sustained a head injury

and lost an eye which rendered him incapable of being able to survive if he had been released.

The Education Ambassador must also be psychologically capable of life in captivity, a very stressful state for a naturally wild creature. Further, it is necessary that the candidate is calm and adaptable enough to interact with people on a regular basis.

AIWC has provided a home for a small number of Education Ambassadors and foster parents over the years. All of them have been unique teachers in one way or another, and have offered people a brief look into the eyes of an animal that once knew what it was to be wild.



FLASH

**GREAT-
HORNED
OWL**

**1995-
2004**

GANDALF

**GREAT-
GREY
OWL**

**2006-
2008**



MARIGOLD

**STRIPED
SKUNK**

**2003-
2011**

**BLACK
JACK**

**SWAINSON'S
HAWK**

1995-2012



Boo

**SAW-WHET
OWL**

**1995-
2002**

RUBY

**RED-
TAILED
HAWK**

**2010-
2014**



GULLIVER

**STRIPED
SKUNK**

**2013-
PRESENT**



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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.

From the archives ...

You are invited to take pause and reflect upon the words of wisdom imparted through past Recovery Review issues that are scattered throughout these pages.

The AIWC Song

This incredible song was written by Paul Hann and Ms. Sheila McMurray's 2010 Grade 3M Class of AE Bowers Elementary School in Airdrie. AIWC inspired the students to create a song paying tribute to AIWC and the wildlife that comes through its doors. In return, the students inspired all those at AIWC that the work we do is appreciated by others, and that the next generation will be even more respectful and compassionate towards the wild animals who share this land.

Chorus

A-I-W-C
 Heal the wildlife, set them free
 A-I-W-C
 Love and care will hold the key

Dan the rescue man, the volunteers
 Helping wildlife for years and years
 Giving time so people know
 That helpless animals have a place to go

Repeat Chorus

The bobcat, the beaver...left behind
 The dog attacked the porcupine
 The great horned owl with the broken wing
 The injured babies in the spring

Repeat Chorus

If you want information, they'll give you a talk
 With Marigold the skunk and Blackjack the hawk
 Be a good neighbour in your country or town
 We share the earth, don't let them down

Repeat Chorus

Love and care will hold the key

**Recovery Review,
 Vol. 17, Issue 2, Summer 2010**



[A]s parents, teachers or wildlife educators, we need to work together to ensure that this [love and] respect [for wildlife] translates into action; children learn from the examples we set for them.

**Greta Millenaar:
 Life isn't always Ducky, Vol. 3, Issue 4, Winter 1998**



Follow the exciting world of wildlife rehabilitation by adding AIWC to your Facebook & Twitter accounts!



Fun at the front of the class

Beaver skull, coyote puppet, projector, hawk wing, newsletters, pencils, owl pellets...these are just a few of the many items I bring with me to education programs! For the past several years now, I have been an AIBC Education Program Presenter. I deliver one-hour long presentations to groups of students (kindergarten to Grade 12), groups of Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, children at libraries, and the occasional group of adults. The presentations start with an explanation of what AIBC does, followed by interactive information on specific wild animals. I end by sharing reasons why wildlife ends up at AIBC, and empower the audience members with ways they can prevent wildlife injuries and fatalities.

Even with years of experience under my belt, sometimes I still get a bit nervous before some presentations. When I am about to deliver a presentation to a junior high class, it is almost certain I will be nervous! Grade seven to nine classes can be a tough crowd. Often, these students are not very interactive. I really have to work in order to get some of them to participate in answering my questions, but they warm up eventually. At the other end of the spectrum are the exceptionally eager elementary kids. Most of the time, they are bursting with enthusiasm, many of them shooting their hands up into the air to answer one of my wildlife-related

Like many others, I believe that with foresight, compassion, teamwork and responsible planning, a healthy balance [between growing human needs and conserving nature] can indeed be reached.

Janna Mariano-Groza:
A Fine Balance
Vol. 10, Issue 3, Nov 2004



~ by L. Daoust

questions.

Among the many programs, the most popular are "Birds of Prey," "What's in Your Backyard?," and "Supremely Skunks." Perhaps my favorite, though, is "Bat Basics." Having worked with bats at AIBC and knowing how incredibly beneficial, adorable, and cool bats are, I am very fond of these tiny mammals. Bats are among the many wild animals in Alberta that are feared and misunderstood. By teaching kids and adults about them, I am



Baltimore Oriole

Known far and wide for their wonderful singing voices, Baltimore orioles (*Icterus galbula*) are important to Canada's economy and responsible land stewardship initiatives since they are one of a suite of species that provide biological (i.e., non-chemical) control of insect pests. These lovely birds are known to eat spiny or hairy caterpillars (including fall webworms, tent caterpillars, and gypsy moths) that are known to be destructive to common agricultural crops. This juvenile was found in Strathmore and was showing signs of dehydration and heavy breathing, likely from blunt force trauma with a vehicle or window. She was brought to the Centre on July 29th. After a week of recovery, she was declared healthy upon reassessment and released into known oriole habitat.

'If people thought more about the consequences of their actions and took time to act responsibly, half the battle would already be won.'

Kristina Norstrom:
The Human Factor - Accident or Malice?
Vol. 3, Issue 1, Spring 1997

changing the way people feel about and view bats. Plus, the younger students and I do a short activity in which we pretend we are bats flying about, using echolocation and eating mass amounts of insects. The students have so much fun playing this game, and it is very entertaining for me to see their fervor.

I love delivering AIBC's programs! It is an extremely rewarding pursuit. I enjoy the thirst for knowledge, willingness to learn, eagerness, and excitement of my audiences. I am inspired by the concern others express for wild animals when we discuss ways they become injured. This concern, paired with the knowledge that I am sharing my experiences about the benefits of wildlife and how we can help protect them, gives me hope not only for the future of wildlife, but for the present as well. I am fulfilled in knowing that I am making a positive difference for our wild neighbors.

Charismatic Cormorant

Shakespeare sometimes used the word, "cormorant" as a synonym for voracious, gluttonous, or greedy, so it is no wonder these migratory seabirds have battled a bit of an image problem.

This charming double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) came to AIWC in August after being found in southeast Calgary, unable to fly. The initial exam indicated a possible blunt trauma to his chest and fractures to his sternum (breastbone). During his stay, he was also treated for feather lice.

This guy definitely did his best to live up to the reputation given to his species by the Bard by devouring a healthy (and expensive!) diet of fish – mostly herring. Once he improved, he graduated from his initial cage to AIWC's indoor pool where he enjoyed the rest of his stay, usually swimming or perched up where he could watch AIWC volunteers and staff coming and going down the hall.

He was strength tested in preparation for release and, after practicing taking off

in the outdoor runway, the cormorant was released on October 6th south of Calgary, along the Bow River. He was released in time to meet up with a group of cormorants spotted in the area and he likely accompanied them for their migration to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, where most double-crested cormorants from Alberta



~ by J. Kaiser

spend the winter.

Despite a reputation of devouring a disproportionately large number of fish and having an unusually large appetite, studies of double-crested cormorants do not actually support this claim. The average cormorant consumes about half a kilogram of fish per day. This is about average compared to other waterbirds of similar size. However, they are known to use their impressive diving and fishing skills to target high-protein fish, thus providing themselves with a richer diet than other seabirds.

With striking, mostly black plumage, double-crested cormorants get their name from the white or black tufts found above the eyes of breeding adults. Double-crested cormorants are monogamous, and both male and female birds care for three to four young each year. They are a long-lived species, known to live up to twenty-three years in the wild. Double-crested cormorants have a healthy population in the province. They reside throughout central and southern Alberta; in Canada they are found as far east as the Great Lakes region of Ontario. We are incredibly fortunate that our province is graced with such fascinating birds, and that this particular patient has a renewed chance to be included among our province's charismatic characters!

Hawk Eye on Recovery

~ by J. Loader

On October 2nd Fish & Wildlife brought in an extremely dehydrated broad-winged hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) from the Brooks area. Broad-winged hawks are a protected species in Alberta and their status is classified as 'sensitive' in the General Status of Alberta Wild Species Report. Broad-winged hawks migrate to Central and South America every year, and wooded areas are invaluable for their journey. The location

this hawk was found in and his injuries suggested that his migration was interrupted by a moving vehicle. There was extensive bruising to his lower sternum (breastbone), blood in one of his eyes and in his glottis (located in the back of a bird's mouth). He also had a raspy breathing pattern. This raptor made a remarkably quick recovery, after being successfully treated by dedicated staff and volunteers. AIWC's wonderful volunteer, Mary-Jane Hunter, released the hawk on October 10th. Being struck by a vehicle is one of the main causes of admission in patients brought to AIWC. To avoid collisions, we advise that drivers and passengers pay close attention to both the road and the surrounding areas where wildlife could be present. Make safety fun by creating games that involve spotting as many wild animals as possible.

the animal and make a quick phone call to AIWC can make the difference between life and death.



[W]ith most of our patients, 'survival of the fittest' had no hand to play. Fitness is rarely a factor when wildlife faces artificial hazards...

**Greta Millenaar:
Raptor Report- Barred Owl
vs. Barbed Wire
Vol. 6, Issue 3, Summer 2000**

Passengers of all ages can delight in spotting these fascinating critters on their road trips! Sometimes these situations are unavoidable; however, pulling over to aid

Waterbirds
make up 1/3 of
AIWC's patients.
Here are just a few...



Education an Integral Part of AIWC

~ by J. So

A large portion of our work at AIWC involves caring for wildlife, but another major part of our contribution to conservation is sharing the information we learn with others. We hope that everyone might one day co-exist effortlessly with local wildlife.

Another major part of education is keeping our own staff and volunteers abreast of the latest innovations and developments in the wildlife rehabilitation realm. This way, we can always provide the best care for the patients entrusted to our organization. Often on their own dollars, AIWC representatives have attended annual symposiums hosted throughout North America by the National Wildlife Rehabilitators' Association (NWRA) and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council; the biennial Alberta Wildlife Rehabilitators' Association (AWRA) conferences,

of which we hosted one (2009) and were instrumental in organizing a second (2011); and, specific events such as workshops hosted by the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre. AIWC Founder Dianne Wittner was even invited by the International Fund for Animal Welfare to Russia as part of an international team learning about the enhancement of bear rehabilitation. That's a lot of learning!

Staff and senior (aka seasoned) volunteers also share the knowledge gleaned through AIWC in hopes that experiences learned locally will help fellow rehabilitators throughout the world. AIWC representatives have delivered talks at several NWRA symposia and every AWRA conference. Within the organization, the learning never stops! For example, aside from the standard two

hour orientation session, Centre Volunteers receive a specialized manual as well as four hours of in-class training, followed by sixteen to twenty-four hours of apprentice experience with a seasoned volunteer. AIWC Wildlife Rescue Drivers training also includes orientation, then eight hours of training associated with a comprehensive manual. To compliment hands-on experience, volunteers participate in a variety of training sessions depending on their skill levels (e.g. understanding how to responsibly raise wild babies; learning phone protocols; discovering the importance of necropsies; learning how to perform examinations). AIWC's thought-provoking volunteer forums are also intense and plenty of fun, especially since topics range from ethical discussions to species-specific talks by guest speakers.

For me, the 'synthetic veil' that city life tends to impose on us has been lifted from this city slicker and my eyes have been opened to the natural world around us. It is most important that the work done at AIWC continues, helping injured wildlife that comes into contact with the modern world.

Dennis Hanna:
The Great Goosecapade
Vol. 10, Issue 1, April 2004

Teaching, in its many forms, will always be key to the future of wildlife.

Dianne Wittner:
Tolerance Leads to Joy
Vol. 10, Issue 2, July 2004

For humans, listening to a bird-song can be one of the many joys of the spring and summer seasons. We listen for pleasure while birds sing for the continuation of life itself!

Robyn Maerz:
The Singing Planet
Vol. 13, Issue 2, Summer 2006

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It is possible to enjoy wildlife and the outdoors with pets as long as owners are aware of the risks, use caution, and respect the other animals who call the outdoors home.

Tamara McDougall:

Mauled Muskrat

Vol. 18, Issue 2, Summer 2011

We are all responsible for helping wildlife in distress!

Leah Daoust:

The Importance of Stopping
Vol. 14, Issue 4, Winter 2007

2013 ADMISSION #1484

~ by D. Hanna



A homeowner in the city of Cochrane, Alberta took a picture of a red fox known to frequent her property. In doing so, she noticed something slightly awry with the fox's lower jaw. She contacted AIWC about the issue and Roy Hoskins, AIWC's Wildlife Conflict Solutions Director, was dispatched to investigate the case. Roy decided to set a humane live trap to capture the fox. The vixen proved to be a wily one and she managed to retrieve the bait without springing the trap on the first night. The second attempt to trap her proved successful and the next morning Roy brought the captured fox to AIWC.

This vixen, AIWC patient number 1484 of 2013, was examined by Dianne Wittner, AIWC's Founder and Director of Wildlife Care and Operations. She noted the fox had several broken teeth along her front lower mandible, the mandible itself was chipped, and there was minor damage to her gums. One of AIWC's long-standing volunteer veterinarians, Dr. Veronica Barkowski, was called in to consult on the case. Dr. Barkowski's Veterinary Medicine

Degree includes a specialization in dental procedures, so the red fox could not be in better hands! Oral surgery was performed to repair the vixen's jaw, remove the broken teeth, including one canine, and repaired the damage to her gums. Though the broken teeth will never grow back, repeated tests at the Centre demonstrated that her hunting prowess was in no way compromised. She could still easily ferret out her prey (mainly small rodents) and was thus an excellent candidate for release back to the wild. Her release would be advantageous for the local rural community since foxes help reduce small rodent populations. What a positive outcome for both fox and mankind!

Permission was obtained to release the fox in Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park. Both Dianne and Roy attended the release. When her kennel was first opened,

she looked about to get her bearings. It did not take long for her to bound off into the wild lands, eagerly sniffing and foraging about on the hunt for her first catch back in the wild. Later that day, Roy received a phone call from the initial finder happily reporting that the fox had returned to her property and was eagerly digging after a mouse - thus fulfilling her true destiny in the wild. Red fox admission #1484 is truly much more than an AIWC patient number. She has been returned to the wild and we at AIWC eagerly look forward to a day, perhaps next spring, when we learn she is raising the next generation of rodent control: her own batch of young!

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