

Northern Harrier Improving Daily

By J. Cooke

A juvenile female northern harrier is recovering well after being admitted into care at AIWC in September 2020. On arrival, she was severely emaciated and missing all the flight feathers on her left wing, likely from a collision with a swather or other farm equipment.

These distinctive members of the hawk family are noted for their disc-shaped faces that look and function similar to an owl's. The stiff facial feathers help to direct sound to their ears as they listen for mice and voles under the ground cover.

This juvenile was gradually introduced to food, initially through a liquid formula, then given meat without bones or feathers for easy digestion. We are happy to see that she has responded extremely well, gaining 350 grams!

She will overwinter with AIWC and should go through a full feather moult this year, after which she can be released. In the meantime, in order to ensure she is as comfortable as possible, AIWC's staff veterinarian performed a feather imp on the patient. Imping is a technique that replaces broken or damaged feathers with a match from a previous moult or a different bird. In this case, AIWC was able to obtain female northern harrier feathers from a provincial laboratory. These feathers will be in place until she undergoes her natural moult, and means she will be able to move around in her enclosure much easier until then, reducing her stress levels and increasing her chances for a successful release.



Northern harrier close-up



Northern harrier in outdoor enclosure

AIWC.CA has a new look!

Check out our new website for more information on AIWC, including upcoming events, newsletter archives, easy ways to shop, donate, volunteer, or book an education program, and so much more!



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MISSION:

AIWC is committed to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. We provide expert advice and education that fosters an appreciation of wildlife.

Our Vision:

Preserving the legacy of wildlife.

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Executive Director Update

By Holly Lillie, Executive Director

Winter is here, the days are gradually getting longer, and we have a new year with hopefully some light at the end of the tunnel.

Thanks to your support, we weathered 2020 and cared for more animals than ever before in our 27-year history. Over 2,050 animals received care at AIWC in 2020, ranging in species from moose calves, to black bear, to cedar waxwings, to pine grosbeaks, Wilson’s snipe, and much more. In fact, we saw a record 162 different species at AIWC last year.

Our Give the Gift of Saving Wildlife campaign raised over \$85,000.00 – a wonderful achievement and we are so grateful for all of your support. You truly make a difference to the lives of animals in need.

Now that a new year is here, we start preparing for our busy spring and summer months. Each year the demand for our services increases and thanks to you, we are able to meet this demand.

We are excited to work on more of our strategic plan goals, professional development for our staff so we can continue to maintain our high standards of animal care, and look at additional ways we can educate members of the public about wildlife.

Thank you for all you continue to do for Alberta’s wildlife. I hope you have a wonderful year ahead and I hope you and yours remain safe and well.

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie

Executive Director



Adopt a Great Horned Owl: Help Her Take Flight Again!

By F. Kennedy



Great horned owl patient

The great horned owl is one of Canada's most common birds of prey. Most people who have spent time in nature have observed this majestic bird or have heard its legendary hooting.

This great horned owl probably had an unfortunate incident involving a gas flare. He came to us with all the flight feathers on his left wing and some on his right wing singed.

Because of the severe damage to his feathers, he will have to complete a full molt cycle to replace all his flight feathers. Unlike other birds, owls do not replace all their feathers every year, but instead only complete partial molts. Therefore, it is likely that this owl will be staying in care for up to two years before he could be released. Similar to the northern harrier patient mentioned on page 1, AIWC staff also performed a feather imp on this owl to ensure his comfort and success.

AIWC's adoption program gives animals a second chance. Your gift of adoption will truly help to care for this magnificent bird!

Adopting this owl patient, or any other current AIWC patient you see in the newsletter or on social media, helps with the costs directly associated with their care and rehabilitation. As part of your adoption, you will receive a certificate, a glossy 8x10 photograph of your patient, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the adoption. Thank you for helping us to keep them forever wild! Adopt a patient online by visiting <https://aiwc.ca>

On a time crunch or want to save paper! You can now send and receive adoptions electronically! See aiwc.ca for more info.

You can help AIWC by purchasing raffle tickets from our 50/50 cash raffle!

The chance to win cash while contributing to charity!

Total Jackpot Potential: Up to \$20,000!

The lottery will launch on February 17th and run to March 17th, 2021.

Get your tickets at aiwc.ca.

Please share the news with friends, family, and co-workers!

Over 2,000 animals were brought to AIWC last year and fundraisers like this are critical in keeping our doors open to care for wildlife in need.



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Education Update: AIWC's Talk Events Move Online!

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

While we hope to return to doing on-site talks later this year, we decided to do something a bit different for our last two talks of 2020, and move them online instead! Online presentations turned out to be a wonderful alternative, and allowed folks from all across Canada to tune in to the presentations. Our All About Owls presentation in October was a particular favourite for families, and we received a lot of e-mails after the presentation from kids who wanted to learn more!

We will be continuing monthly online talk events until it is safe to resume in-person gatherings again. In the meantime, if you would like to register for one of our talks or see the list of upcoming events, please head to our website at [https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/events/!](https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/events/)



Short-eared owl patient

Book your wildlife education program or virtual presentation today!
<https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/wildlife-education/>

Free Little Deer

By F. Kennedy

In our Fall newsletter we told you the story of the Three Little Deer - two white-tailed deer fawns who were admitted in May and June respectively, and a little mule deer who came into our care in August.

The two white-tailed deer were both orphaned and suffering from dehydration and digestive issues. The smallest (1.9 kg) was the tiniest ever to be admitted to AIWC. They were bottle fed with species-specific formula which helped them to gain weight in no time at all. They also became best friends and helped each other through this difficult time.

The mule deer suffered some serious head injuries after a motor vehicle collision. He responded extremely well to the treatment he received and appears to have no long-lasting effects from his injuries.

We are extremely happy to report that the three little deer were released on October 19, 2020 and are now free little deer.

Thank you to our capable and passionate staff, and to the support of our wonderful community whose support makes these stories possible!



White-tailed deer fawn release

2020 Milestone Volunteer Celebrations

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

With 2020 being.... well, what it was, we at AIWC want to take some time to thank all of the incredible volunteers who have helped us get through this crazy year. Though there were several months where we were not able to have volunteers on site, we still had folks assisting us with offsite activities, including rescue driving, helping to answer hotline calls, and writing both for the blog and the newsletter you are reading now!

Sadly, we were not able to put on our regular Volunteer Appreciation Night to recognize all of the amazing achievements of our volunteer team in person; however, we decided to take a little space in this newsletter to highlight some of the individuals who celebrated milestones with us in 2020. In particular, one of our clinic volunteers has just finished her 20th year volunteering with us, and we wanted to say a special thank you for her years of amazing dedication.

Wanda joined AIWC all the way back in 2000, when AIWC was still known as the Rockyview Recovery Centre. When she first arrived on site, Wanda was one of a small and elite team of volunteers – in fact, she joined before there were even any rehab staff (aside from the founding Executive Director) on the payroll! Since then, things at AIWC have certainly changed, and Wanda has stood fast with us through them all. Her years of experience have been an invaluable resource for generations of staff and volunteers, and she has been instrumental in training many of the people currently with the organization. We are incredibly grateful to have Wanda on the volunteer team, and hope she continues to assist us with rehabilitating injured and orphaned wild animals for years to come.

Wanda wasn't the only person celebrating a milestone volunteering anniversary in 2020! We also want to say congratulations to the following individuals:

- Anne W., Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Assistant (15-year anniversary)
- Shannon P., Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Assistant (10-year anniversary)
- Gerry D., Rescue Driver (5-year anniversary)
- Justine C., Writer and Marketing (5-year anniversary)
- Kathleen M., Public Awareness and Fundraising (5-year anniversary)



Wanda, 20 years of volunteering with AIWC

While COVID-19 has put a temporary halt on volunteer training, we are always accepting applications for new volunteers! You can apply at <https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/volunteer/> anytime, and we will contact you once we are ready to resume training. You can also e-mail us with any volunteer-related questions at volunteer@aiwc.ca.

GO GREEN IN 2021!

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Small and Feisty, Recovered Nicely: Northern Saw-whet Owls.

By R. Selkirk

In this day and age, you are not likely to be too familiar with the sound of a saw being sharpened on a whetstone. You may be surprised to learn that you are familiar with a sound so similar, that it inspired the name of a small owl species. That sound is the call of the northern saw-whet owl.

While we do our best not to pick favourites while treating animals in care, there is no denying that our northern saw-whet owl patients are popular! While displaying many customary owl features, such as rounded heads and forward-facing eyes, their compact size sets them apart from many other owls we care for. Fully grown, these owls weigh around 65-151 grams and have a modest wingspan of 42-48 cm.

We cared for two northern saw-whet owl patients in November 2020. The first patient was admitted on November 3rd following a window strike which left him with head trauma and soft tissue damage to his right shoulder. While he took a bit longer than usual to recover from his injuries, he was consistently feisty throughout his care and had a big appetite.

The second owl was admitted on November 25th after also striking a window – an unfortunate commonality that many of our avian patients share. This patient was a great eater as well and he made a speedy recovery.

While we received these patients a few weeks apart, both owls were able to be released together on December 8th and we trust they are enjoying life back in the forest.



Saw-whet owl patient 1



Saw-whet owl patient 2

Short Stay for Bald Eagle

This bald eagle was admitted to AIWC in late December after being found laying in the snow. Luckily, he was found quickly and the prompt rescue by his finder was a big factor in his recovery. Upon arrival at AIWC, diagnostic work revealed that what he had just eaten contained large amounts of lead and rodenticide. Poisoning cases are notoriously difficult to treat, but thankfully for this patient, he was in care before most of his poisoned meal had been digested, and he was able to undergo treatment right away. After just 13 days in care, the eagle had recovered and was flying free again on January 10th!

The sooner an animal in distress comes into care, the better their chances are for survival. If you see an animal that is acting strangely or appears in distress, don't hesitate - call us right away for direction and advice!



Bald eagle patient

The Stripper Twins

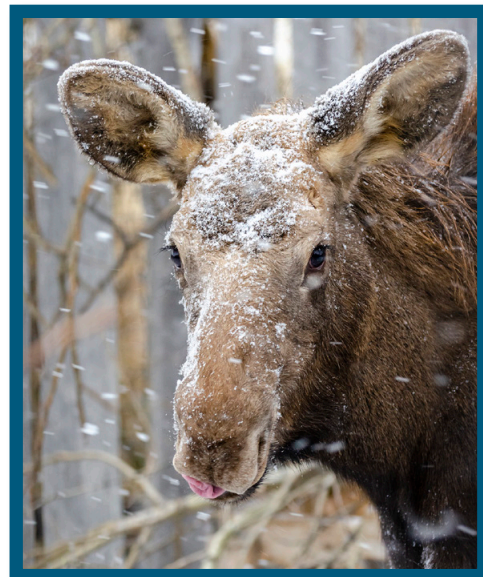
By H. Lippmann

Did you know that the word “moose” is derived from the word moosh in the Algonquian language? It means “stripper and eater of bark” ...and munching away is what our current moose twin patients are doing as soon as they get a hold of some browse!

You may remember these twins from our previous issue. The calves had a rough start in life when their mother was killed in early June when they were only about two weeks old. Naturally, they were traumatized and very stressed from that experience. With the help of the local community, they were brought to safety at AIWC and are since doing very well in care.

From the beginning, they preferred browse, especially aspen, to the specialized milk formula and by the end of December have gained around 400-450lbs each. They are still wary and cautious around their two AIWC caregivers, but this is a good sign; it will ensure that they keep required distance from humans when they are released this coming spring.

If you are able to donate aspen, willow, or birch browse, please call! We would like to provide our twins with their favourite food, so they can put on even more weight and have the best chance to grow up to be beautiful adult moose roaming Alberta’s foothills later this year.



Moose calf patient in a snowstorm

Not all that floats is a duck! – American Coot Update

By C. Bogstie

While at first glance they may appear duck-like, the American coot is distinctly different in many aspects. The American coot most notably does not have webbed feet but rather large splayed feet with lobes to aid in mucky treks. The American coot is common to many waterways and can be found across North America prior to their migration south for breeding season. With a distinguishable grey body and white beak consisting of a faint red strip, the American coot amusingly requires a running start on the water surface involving exhibitionist-level wing flapping in order to take flight. These birds are far from shy and can be heard often as easily as seen. They are particularly protective of their territory and can become aggressive if they feel this is threatened.

American coots are mostly herbivores, eating algae, cattails, grass and water lilies. They are also opportunistic eaters and are not opposed to a meal consisting of insects and small crustaceans.

On November 8, an American coot was found injured and grounded in the middle of a road – possibly the result of a car collision, although this was difficult to confirm. He had severe head trauma, damage to his left eye resulting in the presence of blood in the eye, and a right clavicle fracture. Unfortunately, waterfowl such as coots are very resistant to eating on their own while in care. He was no different, however, after a few weeks he was able to be housed with another coot in care and his appetite returned in full!

After over a month in care, he responded extremely well to treatment and regained his ability to fly after the wrap on his wing was removed. He made a grand exit from care on December 15 as he was released back into the wild. He could very possibly be the noisy floater occupying the water hazard at the golf course this summer – he won't be shy!



American coot patient



