

Back on Their Feet (Literally!)

By F. Kennedy

With its long, earlike tufts, intimidating yellow-eyed stare, and deep hooting voice, the great horned owl is the quintessential owl of storybooks. This powerful predator can take down birds and mammals even larger than itself, but it also dines on daintier fare such as tiny scorpions, mice, and frogs. They are one of the most commonly found owls in North America, equally at home in deserts, wetlands, forests, grasslands, backyards, cities, and almost any other semi-open habitat between the Arctic and the tropics.

When clenched, a great horned owl's strong talons require a force of 28 pounds to open. These owls rely on this deadly grip to hunt, so it is no surprise that when their talons get injured, they are unable to hunt, with dire consequences.

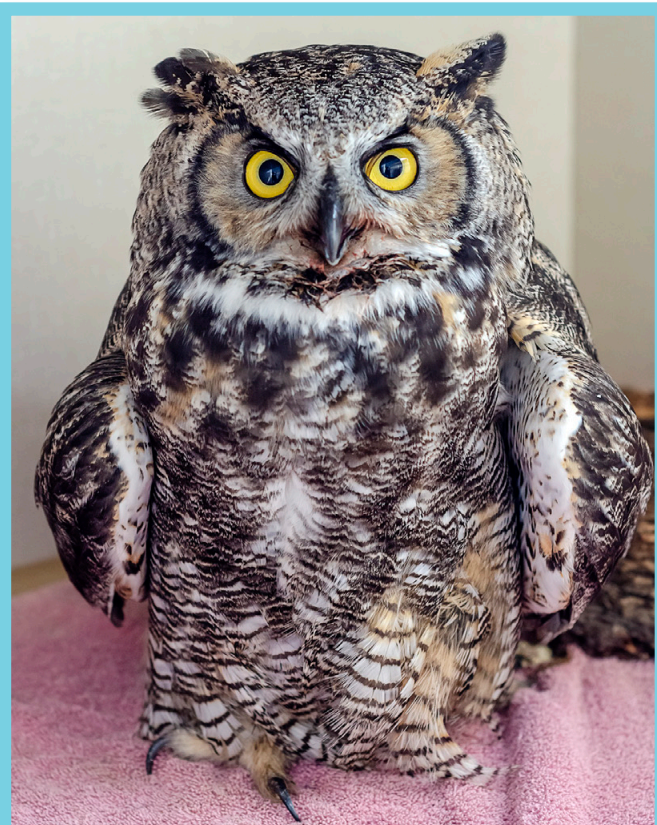


Great horned owl patient with bandaged toe

On February 16, two female great horned owls were admitted at AIWC with toe injuries: one from the Carstairs area with an injury to her left foot, and the other from the Priddis area, with injuries on her right.

Both patients were severely emaciated and had to be gradually introduced to small amounts of food (introducing emaciated animals to food too quickly can cause a potentially fatal condition called refeeding syndrome).

They are both responding very well to their treatment and are in the process of reconditioning for release.



Great horned owl patient after feeding

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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

When I looked back at my update from this time last year, the COVID-19 pandemic was in its early days and now we are one year in. As we knew then, wildlife will continue to need our help and now is no different.

Spring is here and with it comes the arrival of hundreds of animals in need, as well as the release of some of our overwintering patients, including two more moose calves (see page 3 for their story). Thank you for all of your contributions to their care.

In addition to releasing overwintering animals, we have been hard at work fundraising for essential medical equipment to enhance our wildlife rehabilitation program. Our wildlife hospital is a fully accredited veterinary hospital through Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. As such, we have diagnostic, surgical, and x-ray facilities on-site. However, our x-ray facilities were outdated and were no longer able to meet the demand we place on them.

Due to the support of Nickle Family Foundation, Imperial Oil Resources, and Tricia and Harlan Sterner, we were able to update our x-ray system and the difference is amazing. No longer do we have to battle with a processor to get an image of a patient, the system is now seamless and this reduces the stress on our patients and the amount of time we have them in hand to take x-rays. Thank you Nickle Family Foundation, Imperial Oil Resources, and Tricia and Harlan Sterner!

2020 was a record breaking year for patient admissions and this year AIWC celebrates its 28th birthday. 28 years of saving wildlife, with over 32,000 animals cared for since our founding.

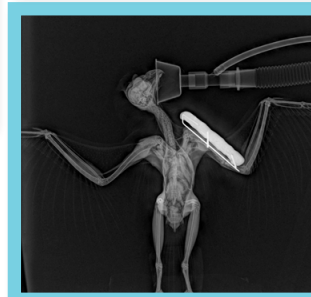
As we brace for a busy spring and summer, we hope to continue to rely on you. Your support ensures that AIWC continues to have one of the highest success rates for patients in the country. Thank you for all you do for Alberta's wildlife in need, AIWC could not live out our mission without you.

Have a wonderful spring. I hope you and yours remain safe and well.

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie

Executive Director



Remembering Katherine Pederson

After rescuing a bird in need outside her home in Calgary, Katherine Pederson learnt of AIWC and knew she wanted to help. Starting in 2006, Katherine and her husband, Ted Gilson, became devoted volunteers of AIWC.

Ted and Katherine began as rescue drivers but both would go on to fulfill many roles. From rescue driver, to board member, to photographer, newsletter editor, bookkeeper, and running AIWC's adoption program, Katherine supported the organization in any way she could.

From moose rescues, to duckling releases, and so much more, Ted and Katherine went on many adventures together for AIWC. We are deeply saddened to share that on January 17, 2021, the world lost a bright star in Katherine as she passed away.

Katherine has left a lasting impact at AIWC and is sorely missed. Her years of service are an inspiration to us all. She saved countless lives and her commitment to animals in need was unwavering. We love you, Katherine.



Moose Twins Return to the Wild

By J. Carlielle

At sunrise, two large moose calves walk out of the horse-trailer and without looking back gallop off in different directions. The willow, aspen, scrub, and wetlands of their new home make it the perfect moose habitat. Later, the brother and sister calves are spotted down the valley, together again.

Ten months ago, these two moose were small two-week old orphans. Without their mother's guidance and protection, their future survival was unlikely. AIWC provided expert care, special milk formula, and satisfied their prodigious appetites with massive supplies of willow, birch, and aspen browse.

Over the winter they were eating machines; their weight increased eightfold, and when they were released, they weighed 270 to 310 kgs (600-700 lbs)! Despite all the hard work, it was truly a privilege to successfully rehabilitate these young moose.

Their release back to the wild was the best possible ending for this story.



Moose calf after release



Education Update: Classroom Dissections and Virtual Presentations!

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

While in-person presentations are still on hold for now, we have been having a blast doing virtual presentations for local classes and extra-curricular groups. Our virtual programs are delivered in a highly interactive way, with lots of time for questions from the program participants, so students have an opportunity to exercise their curiosity. Program participants are genuinely thrilled to have an opportunity to talk to a wildlife expert, whether they are in their classroom or at home, and so a lack of questions is never a problem! Some of our favourites from recent programs include “do you look after dinosaurs?”, “why are owls so light?”, and “can we donate to help the animals?” – the last of which was a huge hit with our staff!

In addition to offering a highly engaging program style, groups also have the opportunity to add additional components to their programs. One of the most popular add-on activities recently has been our owl pellet packages, which are delivered to the teacher or group leader ahead of the program date. The packages include a fully autoclaved (sanitized) owl pellet, a bamboo skewer to aid in dissection, a bone chart and dissection guide, and an AIWC magnet to keep on your fridge or magnet wall.

We recently partnered with Bearspaw School’s virtual Grade 1 classes to bring both pellet dissections and our “World of Owls” program into their homes. These students are all doing school from home, so having a guest speaker was a great treat! During the presentation we discussed the different kinds of owls living in Alberta, listened to some of the sounds owls make, and talked about how owls were able to see and hear so well. We also learned about what owls eat, and how we can use owl pellets to figure out what kind of food our owls have been munching on! The pellet packages were distributed to each and every student ahead of time, and following the presentation their teachers led them through the dissection activity.

Virtual programs are a fun and interactive way for learners of all ages to discover more about their local wildlife species. In addition to doing presentations for schools, AIWC also delivers programs for after-school programs like guides and scouts, and even takes custom bookings for virtual family presentations! If you are interested in checking out our program options, or are interested in booking a presentation, head to our website below!



Northern saw-whet owl patient

Book your wildlife education program or virtual presentation today!

<https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/wildlife-education/>

A Pair of Little Brown Bats

By H. Lippmann



Little brown bat close-up

AIWC currently has two female little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) in care, that have arrived within days from each other in the middle of August. One was admitted with metacarpal fractures, which are fractures on both wings that needed to be treated with splints, and the other suffered from a head trauma. It took them both more than a month to heal, and unfortunately, both girls missed their window to hibernate, which normally starts in September.

These tiny patients have spent the winter in an indoor flight enclosure and were able to regain their strength by eating on their own like champions and practising flying. As soon as enough insects like mayflies, moths, mosquitoes and midges are out and about, the two will be released, likely together as they have bonded closely, roosting right next and on top of each other.

Although they are quite common in Alberta,

due to the devastating impact of a fungus causing the white-nose syndrome, little brown bats have been listed as federally endangered in Canada. Even though some people are scared of them because of their looks, they play an important part in our ecosystem. Without touching them, please call AIWC to report any injured or distressed bats that you may encounter.



Little brown bat patient

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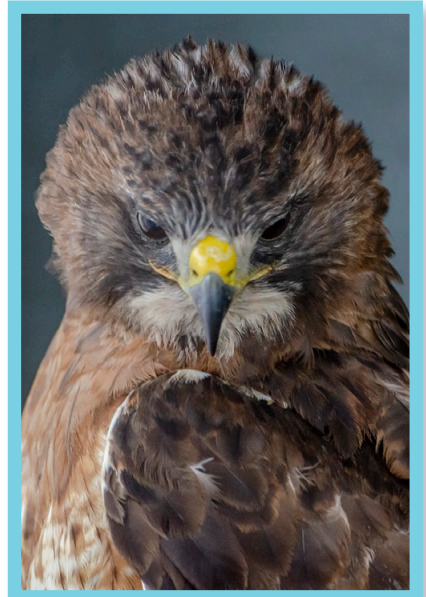
Adopt a Patient: Swainson's Hawk

By V. Hindbo

AIWC admitted this elegant raptor to our hospital as a juvenile in August of 2020 with a number of injuries, including a fractured left ulna (a bone in his wing). AIWC's veterinarian successfully pinned the fracture and after weeks of rest, the injury fully repaired and he was able to move to an outdoor enclosure so he could begin flight conditioning to regain mobility before being released. Although he made a full recovery, it was not soon enough for him to join his species for migration in the fall, and will remain in care until May. In the meantime, he likes to spend much of his time in our large, outdoor, flight pen – when it isn't too cold!

Adopting this 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 8×10 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!

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



Swainson's hawk close-up

White-winged Crossbills

By J. Kaiser

2021 is just getting started and AIWC has already admitted more white-winged crossbills this year than it has in the previous four years combined. So far, 6 white-winged crossbills have been admitted to AIWC, all with injuries consistent with window strikes: primarily head trauma and wing injuries. Sadly, two patients succumbed to their injuries, while three have already been returned to the wild, and one remains in care, receiving treatment for head trauma and eye injuries.

Crossbills are a medium-sized finch, named after their unique bills, which allow them to remove seeds from cones. Common throughout the province year-round, they are a popular find for backyard birders: females and young male white-winged crossbills are yellow in colour, while the adult males are reddish-pink. Both sexes have black wings with two distinctive white bars, and they are typically found in large flocks.



Female white-winged crossbills in outdoor enclosure



Porcupine Patient Puzzle

By R. Selkirk

One of the greatest challenges when working with animals is overcoming the fact that we don't speak the same language. When a North American porcupine was admitted to AIWC in late February without any obvious injuries, our clinic staff started detective work in hopes of picking up clues to optimize his care.

Our eagle-eyed staff quickly noticed unusual porcupine behaviour, specifically in the patient's reluctance to climb and explore his enclosure and instead opting to sit hunched over in a corner. Symptoms consistent with head trauma and infection were detected, along with a discovery of gas build-up in his stomach, revealing that he was likely experiencing significant pain.

As a hindgut fermenter, porcupines often experience digestive issues due to poor diet and dehydration. By identifying these issues, our clinic staff have given him targeted care, which has him well on the road to recovery.

While he is now happily exploring his enclosure and climbing around once again, our clinic detectives have continued running further diagnostics to make sure they aren't missing any additional pieces of this porcupine puzzle.



North American porcupine

Merlin: A Companion Fit for Nobility

By C. Bogstie

Known colloquially as “pigeon hawks”, merlins are undeniably members of the falcon family. Merlins are the second fastest falcon species, having the ability to reach speeds surpassing 70 km/hr when on the hunt. As opportunity hunters, merlins enjoy diets consisting of small birds, large insects (sorry, dragonflies!), rodents and, of course, pigeons. With a distinguishable mustache-resembling line extending down the eye, the merlin was once a popular companion to ladies of nobility.



The merlin patient with his tail wrapped to ensure no damage to his feathers while in care

On March 22nd, a male merlin was admitted to AIWC shortly after being found grounded under a deck. His shoulder had significant swelling and there was bruising on the top part of his beak, known as his cere. It was suspected he had been involved in a window strike, which would be consistent with his injuries upon arrival to AIWC.

Fortunately, he did not sustain any fractures or series injury and was able to recover with pain medication and supportive care, as he did have head trauma. He was quick with his recovery and was soon moved to an outdoor enclosure where he has been undergoing conditioning in preparation for his release later this spring.



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Buy Your Membership Today!

By purchasing an annual membership, you support local wildlife, conservation, and education at AIWC for a yearly fee of \$35 per person or \$45 for a family.

Your membership fee entitles you to:

- A mailed, paper copy of The Recovery Review, our quarterly newsletter;
- Our emailed ENews;
- Discount prices on select AIWC merchandise;
- Discounts at local businesses; and
- The opportunity to participate in the AIWC Annual General Meeting.

There are three easy ways to purchase or renew your membership:

- Complete and mail in the membership section of the insert attached;
- Complete the secure online form at aiwc.ca; or
- Call 403-946-2361

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) plans to raise \$965,000 this year through fundraising campaigns and initiatives. It will cost the organization approximately \$65,000 to raise this amount. Funds raised will go to support AIWC's mission. For further information, please contact Holly Lillie at 403-946-2361.

WILDLIFE HOTLINE: 403-946-2361

Cedar Waxwings Recovered After A Winter of Care

By J. Cooke

We are happy to report that five cedar waxwings that were admitted into care separately in late September 2020 have all recovered well. Each one had suffered coracoid (shoulder) or clavicle fractures, an injury commonly found in window strikes. Sadly, window strikes are a hazard that causes approximately 25 million bird deaths each year in Canada.

Cedar waxwings are slightly less common in Alberta than their bohemian waxwing cousins, arriving to the province late in May and departing in October. These birds were put on four weeks of cage rest, some of them with wrapped wings, and were treated with pain medication. By then, however, it was too late for them to resume their migration, so they remained in care with AIWC over the winter. Their accommodations shifted between the outdoor aerial insectivore enclosure in warmer weather and indoors during cold snaps.

Cedar waxwings can be found congregating in groups near fruiting trees and shrubs, from mountain ash to ornamental cherries or apples. These five patients delighted in an assortment of berries and grapes, as well as mealworms. Now that their injuries are healed, they will be released as soon as weather conditions permit.

We can all do our part to avoid bird strikes by placing bird feeders between 1-5 meters away from windows and sticking tapes, film, or decals on panes. Check out AIWC's online shop (aiwc.shop) to purchase some window collision prevention tape from Feather Friendly Technologies.



Cedar waxwings in outdoor enclosure

AIWC Centre Hours

Our clinic is open to the public to admit patients and accept donations and supplies as follows:

May to August: 9:00am – 8:00pm

September - April: 9:00a.m. – 5:00p.m.

(with modified hours on select holidays)

Please call our Wildlife Hotline at 403-946-2361 before dropping off an injured or orphaned animal.

For after-hours assistance, please refer to our website for more information:

www.aiwc.ca/found-a-wild-animal/after-hours-assistance/

