

Two Long-Term Tenants

By J. Kaiser

While AIWC is no stranger to long-term patients, it is very uncommon for a patient to stay with us for more than a year. Most injuries that can be healed will be in that time, and most young animals will have matured enough to make it on their own in the wild.

For every trend, there are exceptions, and for AIWC, these two patients are the exceptions. The first great horned owl was admitted back in May 2020 after getting caught in some farm equipment in rural Alberta. He suffered severe feather damage and was emaciated after being grounded for a long time and unable to hunt for himself.

The severe feather damage has resulted in a delayed molt. His long-term stay is because, unlike other species of birds, owls do not replace all their feathers every year, but instead only complete partial molts, so it will take some time for this owl to molt all of his feathers.

The second great horned owl was admitted in November 2020, and you may remember reading about her in our winter 2021 issue.



Female (left) & male (right) great horned owl patients



She was admitted after being caught in a gas flare and also suffering extensive feather damage. Like our other owl patient, she will be in care until she has replaced all of her damaged feathers.

To aid in their recovery, AIWC's staff veterinarian performed a feather imp on each of the patients. Imping is a technique that replaces broken or damaged feathers with a match from a previous molt or a different bird. These feathers remain in place until the owl undergoes a natural molt, meaning they will be able to move around in their enclosure much easier, reducing stress levels and increasing their chances for a successful release.

Each of these patients have now been in care for more than a year, and will likely remain in care for several more months, residing in one of AIWC's outdoor enclosures, until they are ready and able to survive on their own.

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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.

Volume 28 / Issue 4 / Fall 2021

Volunteer Appreciation:	3
Education Update:	4
Four Bear Cubs:	5
Pied-billed Grebe:	5
Adopt a Pine Siskin:	6
Western Painted Turtles:	6
Abundance of Ungulates:	7
Bald Eagle Soaring Free:	7
Grounded Ugly Duckling:	8

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Executive Director Update

By Holly Lillie, Executive Director

Another year is coming to a close and yet again, it will be one we will never forget. We have dubbed this year the “Year of the Mammal” at AIWC as we have seen an incredible diversity of mammal species admitted to the hospital in 2021, ranging from a baby badger, to baby beavers, baby flying squirrels, moose, bear, and more.

On average we see predominantly more birds than mammals, but in many cases, mammals can be more labour intensive – especially as babies. They require around-the-clock care, including regular feedings through the night, unlike baby birds who only require care during daylight hours (which can still be long in the summer months!).

Each animal we admit is assigned a unique case number on arrival and we track their progress through the hospital. Logging every patient admitted into an online database has enabled us to better track trends, and this year we saw a significant decrease in the number of nestling and fledging songbirds admitted. Part of this could be attributed to more widespread knowledge about natural behaviours of wildlife and people calling in to our wildlife hotline before acting, but we also had a severe heat wave in Alberta this summer and sadly we expect many animals were lost during that.

As there seems to be light at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are shifting their focus back to climate change. In their recent Vital Signs report, Calgary Foundation found that 65% of Calgarians are concerned about climate change.

While we do not know the total number of animals admitted to us as a result of climate change, we are starting to see ripples, such as fewer baby birds admitted in a year there is a devastating heat wave and drought. In contrast, we saw more mammals admitted and can directly link their admittance to us as a result of human behaviour in some way (mother hit by car, for example).

Every action has a consequence. I encourage all of us to look at ways we can reduce our individual and collective impact. Wildlife populations are a good indicator of the health of our environment, and we need to listen. Small steps can lead to big changes.

2021 has been challenging. AIWC has experienced a decrease in donations, understandably, as each of us navigates the impact of the pandemic on our individual situations and to the economy.

I ask that this Christmas season, you please consider AIWC in part of your Christmas giving, in whatever you can. Every little bit truly does help. Your donation will ensure that we can continue to provide care for Alberta’s wildlife in need for a long time to come.

Thank you for all you do to support AIWC. We pride ourselves on providing an excellent standard of care and it’s due to your generosity that we can do this.

I hope you and yours remain safe and well. Season’s Greetings from all of us at AIWC.

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie

Executive Director



2021 Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

This year's volunteer appreciation celebration was an online event full of fun, games, and only minor technical glitches! Though it is still difficult to arrange large gatherings, we wanted to ensure that we celebrate our amazing volunteers who have done so much for us and Alberta's injured and orphaned wildlife species this year. In fact, 2021 has been seen some of the highest numbers of volunteer hours in AIWC's history – as of the time of this writing in October, we are several hundred hours over the entirety of 2020! We also had a number of volunteers celebrating milestone volunteer anniversaries with us, including:

- Kayle Paustian, Board Member (10-year anniversary)
- Amy Grenier, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Assistant (5-year anniversary)
- Bonnie Weiss, Blog Writer (5-year anniversary)
- Brandee Fildey, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Assistant (5-year anniversary)
- Christie Wichert, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Assistant (5-year anniversary)
- Irene Danielson, Rescue Driver (5-year anniversary)
- Justin Ebbert, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitation Assistant (5-year anniversary)
- Maureen Perry, Public Awareness and Blog Writer (5-year anniversary)

If you are interested in joining the AIWC team, we are currently accepting applications for our January 2022 intake session! 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.



Kayle Paustian celebrating 10 years volunteering with AIWC

Follow AIWC online!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter (@AIWC) and Instagram (@albertawildlife)!



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Education Update: New Wildlife Education Program: Caring for Carnivores

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

One of our education team's favourite things to do is create new programs for groups with special requests. However, sometimes a program topic is requested so often that we simply decide to introduce it as an option for all future bookings! This is how our newest education program "Caring for Carnivores" got started, with many people asking for a presentation about these important but often misunderstood species.

"Caring for Carnivores" focuses on members of the *Carnivora* order living here in Alberta, including weasels, bears, canines, and felines. During the program, we discuss how to tell similar species apart, how scientists study these elusive animals, and of course, how we look after them at AIWC!

Most importantly though, we make sure to dispel some of the myths surrounding these species, and show people safe, responsible ways to live in harmony with their local carnivores. Even during our first few presentations, we've found that many students (and their parents!) aren't too aware of their local carnivores, or are very afraid of them. We know that people are often worried about their pets and children, and we want to help them learn about how to keep their families safe without resorting to extremes, like shooting or poisoning carnivores.

Education on this subject is absolutely critical, and we are pleased that the Calgary Libraries will once again be partnering with us to bring these programs to their audience in late November/early December. You can check out the "Caring for Carnivores" program times on the Calgary Library website at <https://calgarylibrary.ca/events-and-programs/programs/>.

If you are interested in checking out our program options, or are interested in booking a presentation, head to our website below!



Red fox kit



Long-tailed weasel



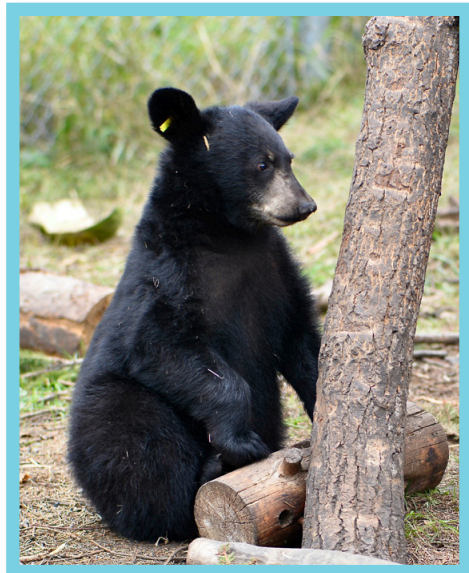
Bobcat

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



Four Bear Cubs Prepared for Return to the Wild

By V. Hindbo



Bear cub patient

In our summer issue, we introduced you to four orphaned black bear cubs in our care: twin females, a single female and a single male. Since then, each of our patients has been perfecting their climbing skills on the elevated log structures in their large outdoor enclosure, conditioning their bodies, and acclimating to the weather. AIWC staff have been hiding berries and other food items around the enclosure so the cubs learn to forage and hunt for food on their own.

The cubs are getting along splendidly, playing with each other as bear cubs are wont to do. When not playing, they spend most of their time eating – and eating. Between the four of them, the cubs are eating close to 20 kg of berries every day! They have all been packing on their winter weight and getting ready for hibernation this fall. We estimate their current weights to be around 34 kg each.

The four cubs will be released this fall with enough time to explore their new territory and establish a den for hibernation. AIWC looks forward to working closely with Alberta Environment and

Parks for both their release, as well as monitoring them afterwards.

We want to thank our AIWC community for your support that enables us to do this important work – because of you, these four orphans have a second chance at life in the wild.



Three of AIWC's bear cub patients enjoying a meal

One Part Bird, Two Parts Submarine: the Pied-billed Grebe

By C. Bogstie

Appropriately having a Latin name that means “feet at the buttocks”, the pied-billed grebe is an aquatic bird with impressive diving and buoyancy abilities. Everything from their lobed toes, to their chunky bodies and long necks enables their success as water inhabitants. Their perfectly positioned hind feet and almost non-existent tail aid in their ability to catch crustaceans, fish and aquatic insects.

However, all of these adaptations that make them so successful in an aquatic environment render them virtually unable to take flight from the ground and makes them unsteady when walking. Sometimes after rainstorms, pied-billed grebes are found on or beside paved roadways as the pavement has the appearance of a water body when wet. In these cases, if the bird is uninjured from the crash landing, it is likely still stranded on land and in need of assistance to make it make to water.

On July 18th, AIWC admitted a juvenile pied-billed grebe that was found in the middle of a field. As it did not yet have its adult plumage or fully grown flight feathers, it was still in need of parental support, including food supplementation. The juvenile had also sustained mild injuries to its feet from attempting to walk on land for a prolonged length of time. However, after being in one of AIWC's pool enclosures full time during rehabilitation, those injuries were quickly resolved. The grebe was successfully released on August 16th. As nature's submarine, it's hard to say if this pied-billed grebe is swimming, sinking, or simply floating away the fall!



Juvenile pied-billed grebe patient



Adopt a Patient: Pine Siskin Recovering from Window Strike

By J. Kaiser

Pine siskins are a small species of finch that can be found year-round in southern Alberta. They can be a common sight around sunflowers in the summer and in a mixed flock at your back yard bird feeder in the winter.

Unfortunately, this tiny patient had a run-in with a residential window in Calgary in September that landed him in AIWC's care. He was transported to Fish Creek Pet Hospital for care until he was transferred to AIWC. Upon admission, he was found to have head trauma and an injury to his left shoulder.

Once his wing wrap is removed and he's ready to be done with his cage rest, this patient will be moved into a larger enclosure with other songbird patients in preparation for release.

Sadly, injuries like this are both frequent and preventable. If you find your windows a risk to local songbirds, check out AIWC's online shop at <http://aiwc.shop> to pick up some Window Collision Tape. This highly effective kit from Feather Friendly Technologies ensures the birds see the glass and can avoid running into it. Order yours today!



Pine siskin in indoor enclosure

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! Visit aiwc.ca for more info.

A Case of Mistaken Identity: Western Painted Turtle Patients

By R. Selkirk



Western painted turtle after being released back into the wild

While many AIWC patients arrive in a state of distress and require various levels of intervention and rehabilitation, sometimes we receive patients who are perfectly healthy! This was the case for two western painted turtle patients who were admitted on August 19th.

The turtles were sold as pet red-eared slider turtles, which is a commonly confused domestic species. Their new owner gave them excellent care before realizing they were in fact Alberta's only native turtle species: western painted turtles. The condition of the turtles was really a testament to the top-quality care they were provided with, as turtles can be high-maintenance pets and caring for one is not for the faint of heart!

The kind owner parted ways with their new pets and handed them over to AIWC to facilitate their introduction into the wild. They were given a clean bill of health after a few days of observation, and were released to the while where they belong.



AIWC Provides Care for an Abundance of Ungulates

By V. Hindbo

Did you know that an ungulate is a large mammal with hooves? The category includes horses, deer, pigs, camels, sheep, rhinoceroses, giraffes, and even hippopotamuses.

This summer, AIWC admitted a two-week old moose calf after his mother was hit by a car. Thankfully, he has thrived under staff's care, eating lots of browse, and is weaned from his formula.

AIWC rescued another moose calf from a barbed-wire fence. He was brought to the clinic for a check-up, and fortunately had no serious injuries, but was dehydrated. AIWC staff treated him overnight with intravenous fluids. The next day, his mother returned to the area where he was found and AIWC acted quickly to reunite them – the best place for a wild animal is always with their natural parent(s) in the wild. Not to mention, a single moose calf typically spends over 300 days in care, and can cost up to \$20,000 to rehabilitate!

AIWC currently also has four white-tailed deer fawns and one mule deer fawn in our care. All were orphaned, which typically happens because the mother has been killed, usually hit by a car or killed by poachers. The fawns are all doing well, are fully weaned, and are eating lots of browse. They will be released this fall, in time to join nearby winter herds.



White-tailed deer



Moose calf



Mule deer

Soaring Free

By F. Kennedy



Juvenile bald eagle patient in outdoor enclosure

The bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, is an enormous bird. *Haliaeetus* denotes "sea eagle," and *leucocephalus* refers to its white head. The majestic bald eagle is Canada's largest bird of prey.

On July 27th, AIWC admitted a juvenile bald eagle, who was one of this year's hatchlings. We are unsure of the sex. They were found in the middle of the road and we suspect they were hit by a car. Luckily, they did not sustain any fractures or serious injury, but suffered from head trauma and a mild infection.

They were a fast healer and had a great appetite from day one, with their preferred food item being quail. After 36 days in care, they made a full recovery and were released back to the wild on September 1st.

Although its total numbers have declined greatly since Europeans came to North America, the bald eagle is still fairly common in western Canada and in Alaska. However, local populations in parts of Canada and the United States are endangered or extirpated. In this light, it makes it so much more special when we can rescue one of these magnificent birds.



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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

A Grounded Trundra Swan

By H. Lippmann

One of the most aesthetically beautiful birds on earth (in this writer's opinion, anyway!), a female tundra swan, was brought to AIWC this summer with a fractured, but still well-aligned, femur.

The juvenile swan was discovered lying in a field, surrounded by a number of other swans, who stayed with her until she was rescued.

Upon admission, a fecal exam also showed she was suffering from several parasites, which AIWC staff promptly began treatment for as well.

The swan spent her days floating around in one of AIWC's pool enclosures, so that there is no weight on her leg as she healed. At night, her leg was splinted to the body and she was put in a net bottom to prevent pressure points from accumulating.

Over the four and a half weeks the swan was in care, she kept up her appetite and recovered well. When she was ready to join the wild, she was released into a flock of local swans.

From here, our swan patient and her flock will migrate to their wintering areas, either the Atlantic or Pacific coast of the USA, feeding on aquatic plants, roots, grains and some shellfish. They will return in the spring to their breeding grounds in the tundra of the Canadian Arctic and Alaska, migrating approximately 6,000 km twice a year, and earning their name of tundra swans. Impressive!



Juvenile tundra swan patient

AIWC Centre Hours

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

May to August: 9:00a.m. – 8:00p.m.

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/