

Lincoln's Sparrow: *Melospiza lincolnii*

By R. Maerz

A secretive bird by nature, the pint-sized Lincoln's sparrow is rarely seen in the wild. This dainty skulker seldom breaks cover, so enterprising birders learn to locate a Lincoln's sparrow by listening for its gurgling wren-like song and bright chip call.

Sadly, in September 2021, during the long journey south, one was caught by a cat near Sundre, Alberta. A life-or-death struggle ensued, and although this bird had a lucky escape, they lost all their tail feathers and suffered a long laceration down their back. This plucky survivor was extremely fortunate not to have any wing damage and was still able to fly. However, migrating is a tough journey for a fully-feathered bird, and the loss of tail feathers meant this patient would need to overwinter at AIWC.

After several months in care now, our patient has made a full recovery and sports a fine set of new tail feathers. When the fellow Lincoln's sparrows return to Alberta in May 2022, this patient will be returned to the wild once again.



Lincoln's sparrow posing



Lincoln's sparrow in indoor enclosure



Lincoln's sparrow hiding



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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

While it may not feel like it just yet, spring is on the way and thanks to your help, we are in great shape to meet the influx of patients that will undoubtedly be coming our way in 2022.

You helped raise over \$120,000 through our Give the Gift of Saving Wildlife campaign at the end of 2021. This is a tremendous amount and is already being put to work caring for the animals in our care currently, ranging from a bald eagle suffering from lead poisoning, to a bohemian waxwing recovering from a window strike, and many more. Thank you!

There are very few constants in the world of wildlife rehabilitation. We never know what animals we will get in on a given day, or when baby hares will start to be born, but we do know that every year the demand for our services grows.

With this in mind, we continue to work on our strategic planning goals and are looking ahead to AIWC's future. How can we best use the land we operate AIWC on? How many of our enclosures do we need to repair, rebuild, or replace (some still being used today were built in the 90s!)? These questions and more will take a high priority in 2022 as we plan for the future to ensure we can best serve Albertans and Alberta's 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 Patient: Great Horned Owl

By J. Kaiser



Great horned owl patient in flight-conditioning enclosure

Sometimes things look too good to be true. That was the case in December for this great horned owl patient who thought she found an easy meal after locating a duck coop on a rural property near Water Valley. Unfortunately for the owl, dinner was protected by netting she did not notice until it was too late and she became tangled in it. Her finders discovered her hanging by her wing and promptly called AIWC for help.

Upon admission, her wing injuries were obvious and included lots of bruising, swelling, and some missing and damaged feathers. She was also suffering from head trauma, including an injury to the left eye.

After over a month in care at the time of writing, her recovery has progressed well, and her appetite has remained strong. Her wing wraps have been removed and she was moved to AIWC's large outdoor raptor enclosure in mid-January to begin flight conditioning in preparation for release.

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 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!

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

Familiar Winter Backyard Bird Recovering from Head Trauma

By J. Kaiser

AIWC's fifth patient admitted in 2022 was a Bohemian waxwing. Admitted from northeast Calgary, this familiar winter passerine was admitted with head trauma, swelling around the left eye, and bruising on the keel (chest) and shoulders. While unconfirmed, these injuries are strong signs of a likely window strike, which can be common for this species in the winter; waxwings are known to eat frozen berries which can be fermented and result in intoxicated birds unable to coordinate their flight movements with their usual grace. Typically, the birds will recover from their inebriation on their own, unless they get themselves into trouble.

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!



Bohemian waxwing patient enjoying some blueberries



Education Update: Monthly Virtual Talks - Open to All!

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

While circumstances have certainly made in-person education programming more difficult, there have also been opportunities to engage more people on a wide variety of different platforms. One of the most rewarding initiatives from AIWC's education team has been instituting monthly online talks from October through April, which has allowed us to reach supporters all across Canada! These live one-hour sessions focus on a different topic each month, ranging from mating behaviours (last year's Valentine's Day special!) to an in-depth look at bats, wetland animals, and many others. The talks are geared towards wildlife enthusiasts of all ages, and always include plenty of time for questions and answers from program participants. Many of our participants have remarked on how much they've learned from these events – it just goes to show that no matter what age you are, there is always something new to learn about our wild neighbours!

We are continuing our Virtual Talk series into 2022, with talks for January to April already scheduled. Be sure to check out our website or the insert included with this newsletter for more information about the different talk topics; up first is a session on the best ways to help winter wildlife, followed by an in-depth look at hares and rabbits, caring for black bears, and AIWC's annual Baby Shower presentation!

If you are interested in learning more about the virtual talks we offer, or to register for one today, simply head to our website at <https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/events/> or e-mail us at education@aiwc.ca.

Psst! Did you know AIWC has a free video tour of the facility? You can check it out on our [YouTube page!](#)



White-tailed prairie hare leveret



Black bear cubs

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

Pheasant Successfully Nursed Back to Life

By F. Kennedy

Growing up, my dad was a bird breeder. Some of my favourite memories are the crows of the ring-necked pheasant roosters and watching their beautiful colours.

The males are beautiful birds, with iridescent green, blue-green or purple heads, and a distinctive white ring around their necks and copper-coloured bodies. The female colouring is much more subdued, but no less beautiful, with their sandy-brown mottled plumage.

Ring-necked pheasants were introduced to the United States over 200 years ago. They are originally from Asia, but can now be found across most of the southern regions of Canada. They have become an integral part of the Alberta ecosystem, able to withstand harsh winters.

This ring-necked pheasant hen was admitted to AIWC on November 4, 2021 with a left clavicle fracture and severe head trauma. Like many of our patients, the cause of her injuries is unknown. She was extremely weak on intake and was reluctant to eat. AIWC staff had to assist in feeding her for a couple of weeks while she gained her strength. She responded well in care and has made a full recovery. She was released back into the wild on December 10, 2021.



Ring-necked pheasant in indoor enclosure



Female ring-necked pheasant closeup

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A Ruby in the Rough – Common Redpoll Patient

By C. Bogstie

The polar bears of the songbirds, the common redpoll is a notoriously active, chatty bird belonging to the finch family. Despite their relatively small size and stature, these winter finches can be found nesting in the arctic and into southern Canada. During food scarcity (not cold weather) in the North, these birds tend to fly south as far as the northern United States. Undeterred by freezing temperatures, these songbirds are far from shy eaters and can be found in flocks foraging mainly on seeds (willows and catkins are also known favourites) as well as insects. With a ruby red cap on their heads and streaking down their backs, it isn't hard to distinguish the common redpoll from the closely related goldfinch. These birds have a tendency to nest and eat within a few feet of the ground, they can be particularly vulnerable when courting, nesting or foraging.



Common redpoll patient

On November 14, AIWC admitted a common redpoll that had been caught by a cat and had been left with a left wing droop. As these birds are an extremely stressed species, they can become severely distressed in captivity, to the point of passing away if they are handled for too long. Therefore, the clinical team at AIWC took a hands-off approach to caring for the redpoll. His wing was wrapped, and he was given pain medication as well as antibiotics (which is standard care in cases involving cat bites). He has since made a successful recovery including self-feeding, strong flying and loving millet sprays. Listen for the 'zit-zit' sound of the flight call this spring as it may be this ruby red romantic taking flight!

A Prickly Start to 2022

By J. Kaiser



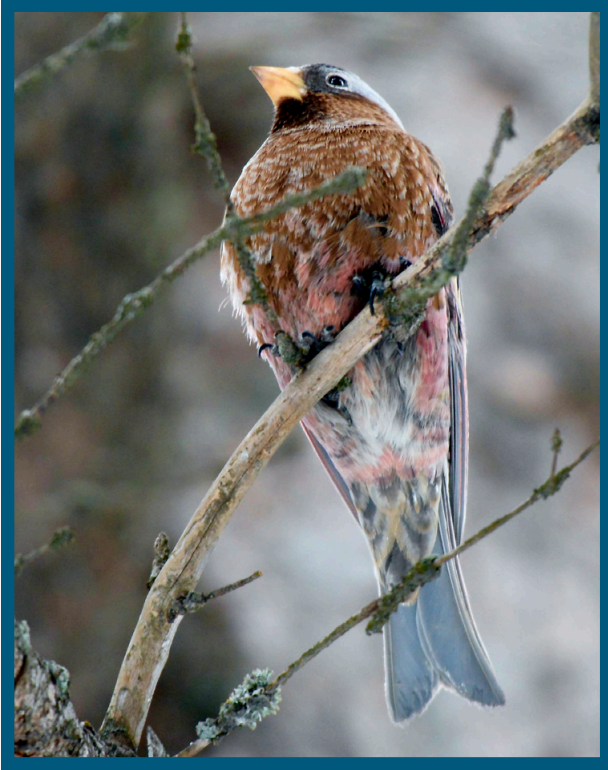
North American porcupine patient

On January 3, 2022 patients started to come in, beginning with a porcupine who had been seeking shelter in a back yard near Carstairs. The homeowners observed the unusually subdued rodent, and brought him to AIWC for help after noticing he was missing several quills. Upon examination, he was also suffering from a significant flea infestation.

Despite these setbacks, the patient remains very feisty and mobile, and actively explores his enclosure. AIWC staff are treating his infestation but he luckily has no other serious injuries and is expected to be able to return to the wild in short order.

A Traumatic Window Collision With a Rosy Ending

By J. Carlielle



Gray-crowned rosy finch after release

Did you know that gray-crowned rosy finches spend the summers nesting high in the mountains raising their young far from human habitation? But after the breeding season in late October, this female had a traumatic experience at a lower altitude when she collided with a window in Okotoks.

Fortunately, she was brought into AIWC where she was treated for severe head trauma and beak injuries. She was monitored, fed lots of mealworms, and housed in a peaceful enclosure to speed her recovery. After a month of skillful care, there was good news: she was fully recovered, and she was released close to where she was found, but well away from windows.

Gray-crowned rosy finches aren't common patients at AIWC and are rarely seen in central Alberta away from mountains. They are beautiful finches with gray crowns, brown bodies, and delightful rosy-tinged stomachs, tails and wing feathers. In the fall, they congregate in flocks and spend the winter at lower altitudes feeding on the ground eating seeds from grasses and weeds. lucky enough to see one, they are not fearful and are easy to observe.

Thanks to all of you for making our work and good news stories possible. Never underestimate the impact you can have in preserving and protecting Alberta's incredible wildlife. You can learn more about how to stop birds from colliding with windows on AIWC's blog at: <https://www.aiwc.ca/blog/how-to-prevent-winter-window-strikes/>

Rough-legged Hawk Recovers at AIWC

By J. Kaiser

On January 10, AIWC's 8th patient of 2022 was admitted for care: a rough-legged hawk admitted with severe head trauma from the Calgary area. He was also dehydrated and AIWC staff started him on antibiotics and pain medication right away. While still early in his care, prognosis is optimistic.

Rough-legged hawks, named after the insulating feathers on their legs, are winter visitors to Alberta, typically passing through from their breeding grounds in the arctic as they head south, though some will stay in the province all winter. Keep your fingers crossed that this patient recovers in time to head back north in the early spring.



Rough-legged hawk patient



