

A Bohemian Waxwing with an Appetite

By J. Carlielle

During Alberta's long winter it is always delightful to see nomadic flocks of bohemian waxwings descend into our urban neighbourhoods, searching for fruit and berry trees. In spring, these birds migrate to subarctic areas to breed and raise their families.

At our clinic early in March, a solitary and feisty bohemian waxwing gobbled copious amounts of mountain-ash berries while gazing at himself in a mirror. Waxwings often eat their own weight in berries each day, so as you can imagine, this results in staff and volunteers doing extensive cleanup activity! Waxwings are normally social birds, rarely alone, so the mirror helped to reduce this patient's stress. He was found in Priddis with injuries which included a wing fracture, likely caused by an encounter with an unsupervised cat.



Bohemian waxwing patient with bandaged wing



Bohemian waxwing patient with reflection for company

His initial treatment included antibiotics, pain medication, and the securing of his wing with a wing wrap. After careful monitoring in intensive care, he improved and was moved to a larger indoor enclosure. Soon, his wrap will be removed, his wing will be examined and, if all is well, he will start physiotherapy and then be placed in an outside flight-conditioning pen. Later in April, he will be released into a flock of wild bohemian waxwings to join them on their migration to their breeding grounds.

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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



The first sign of wildlife baby season is always the arrival of hares and on March 8, 2022 we welcomed our first baby white-tailed prairie hare (jackrabbit) of the year. This little one was found running around a busy street during a cold snap. He is recovering at our hospital and he will be returned to the wild soon.

While we are open to care for wildlife year-round, the spring and summer seasons are our busiest. On any given day during this time, we can have 200-300 animals in care! 153 species of animal were cared for at AIWC in 2021, ranging from eagles to moose, bear, flickers, foxes, porcupines, swallows, and more!

It's all hands-on deck as we meet the demand of our busy seasons. Thankfully our newest volunteer recruits are just finishing their training, resulting in AIWC having over 140 active volunteers. Through the support of grants, we are also able to hire seasonal staff to support the organization's mission.

As you can imagine, stocking food for so many animals require a lot of space! Until recently we have struggled with two regular household fridges. Stocking the fridge with fresh produce always felt like a game of Jenga – but not a fun one ;-). Now, thanks to the wonderful support of the Sterners, we have two commercial fridges supporting our needs as we enter our peak seasons. It was no easy feat getting these into our building, as always, a huge thank you to all our volunteers for their time and passion.

Thanks to you, over 1,700 animals were cared for at AIWC last year. Without you, AIWC would be unable to live out its mission. We are so thankful for all you do to support Alberta's wildlife in need and hope to continue to rely on you throughout 2022.

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

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie

Executive Director



The Road Ahead

By Jennifer Kaiser, President, Board of Directors

It's an exciting time for AIWC. We survived a second(!) pandemic year, and still provided care to successfully return hundreds of animals back to the wild, as well as reached new audiences with our education program as we transitioned to more life online.

In February, the Board of Directions (virtually) gathered to talk about AIWC's future and set goals for the coming years. While it's easy to focus on the day-to-day operations of the clinic, it's important to take a step back regularly and think in longer and broader terms. We created our 2022 Strategic Plan to guide our operations by determining the goals of the organization and how we will prioritise our resources.



A bird's eye view of AIWC

We started with our core values:

STEWARDSHIP – At AIWC we are responsible stewards of the organization securing the growth, sustainability, and legacy of wildlife.

ACCOUNTABILITY – At AIWC we are accountable to our wildlife and human communities, including our donors, members, staff and volunteers, industry colleagues, and ourselves.

COMPASSION – At AIWC we are fostering the co-existence with, and compassionate and ethical treatment of wildlife.

IMPACT – At AIWC we are maximizing our impact through education, outreach, and social awareness.

With these values in focus, we discussed AIWC's challenges, opportunities, and risks, as we looked to the years ahead, putting together a plan that will set AIWC up for success.

The Strategic Plan targets four main objectives of AIWC:

- A focus on fundraising efforts to ensure continued financial viability of the organisation;
- Improve infrastructure of the AIWC facility;
- Properly manage human resources of AIWC to ensure retention of knowledge and foster internal harmony;
- Increase public awareness of AIWC and proper wildlife conservation and rehabilitation.

With a focus on these four objectives, AIWC will experience success in the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife, and expand our reach in the community through education on wildlife. And we couldn't do it without the support of our wonderful community! We're excited to grow with you and are so grateful to have you all on our team as we head into this new phase of growth and look to seize every available opportunity.

If you'd like to read the full Strategic Plan, head to our website (aiwc.ca) and click on "About Us".



Education Update: In-Person Events are Back!

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

After two years of off-and-on live programming, AIWC's education team is starting in-person programs and educational booths again for Spring 2022! While virtual programs have been a great way to reach new audiences from all over Canada (and even some outside of the country), our education team has definitely been missing those special in-person interactions. There truly is nothing like an in-person event to spur some great conversations, and being able to add in tactile experiences is another wonderful bonus.

One of our first in-person events this year was the Friends of Fish Creek's "Get to Know... Owls and Beavers" event at the end of March. Our wonderful public awareness volunteers were on hand with biofacts and interesting facts about both species and spoke to more than 125 people in just two hours! One of the most engaging activities was our "guess the feather" activity, where people had to use their sense of touch (after sanitizing, of course) to guess which of the assorted feathers belonged to an owl. The trick? Owl feathers are extremely soft, with ragged-looking edges that allow for their silent flight!

In-person events and programs are a wonderful way to get in touch with our community, but we'll be continuing to offer virtual programs as well!

If you are interested in learning more about our programs, or to register for one today, please head to our website at <https://www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/wildlife-education/wildlife-education-programs/> or e-mail us at education@aiwc.ca.



Friends of Fish Creek's "Get to Know... Owls and Beavers" event

Book your wildlife education program or virtual presentation today!

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

Great Grey Owl has a Long Road to Recovery

By J. Kaiser

In late March, this great grey owl patient was found sitting in the middle of the highway near Bragg Creek, Alberta. He suffered from severe blunt trauma, likely due to a vehicle collision. Among his many injuries were eye damage, bruising around the ear, a fractured toe, and several other bruises and scrapes.

Upon admission, AIWC staff cleaned his wounds and administered antibiotics and pain medication. Thankfully, after a couple of days in care and his condition was more stable, an x-ray revealed no additional fractures. After almost two weeks in care, the patient has been eating and flying well, and his eye injuries are healing well. His prognosis remains guarded as his foot injuries will need to resolve entirely in order to ensure his survival in the wild. Keep your fingers crossed!



Great grey owl patient



Not Enough Junk in the Trunk: Big Brown Bat Winter Residents

By R. Selkirk



One of three current big brown bat patients

Have you ever wondered where bats disappear to during the winter? Surprisingly enough, there is no one-size-fits-all answer for the nine bat species that call Alberta home! While a few species choose to migrate to warmer climates (such as the hoary bat, eastern red bat, and silver-haired bat), the rest fatten up and find somewhere cozy to hibernate through the winter months.

Cold snaps in autumn can catch some of our bat friends unawares, and the combination of decreased insects and colder temperatures can result in bats becoming stuck on the ground. This was the case for our three big brown bat patients who were admitted to us in October 2021. While our clinic team were able to clear the bats of having any injuries, they were all found to be very thin. Although hibernating bats travel far less than migratory bats, their journeys from summer to winter habitats are generally between 300 and

500 kilometres. Fat stores are important for this journey, and also keep them warm through their hibernation period.

We decided to give our patients a helping hand and housed them in an indoor bat enclosure over winter. They have all gained weight since being admitted and are doing well. Our team are looking forward to moving them to an outdoor flight enclosure once spring temperatures rise, and they will be released once bugs are plentiful enough to support wild foraging.



Big brown bat patient close-up

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Wilson's Warbler

By V. Hindbo

As most birdwatchers know, warblers are notoriously difficult to identify. These busy little birds are typically found in foliage near the ground, foraging for berries and a variety of insects – and rarely staying still long enough to be easily identified. Fortunately, the bright yellow plumage of male Wilson's warblers, and their distinctive black caps, make them among the most recognizable of the warblers. (The females' plumage is a muted olive colour.)

Last September, we admitted a male Wilson's warbler patient after he struck a window and suffered a fracture of his left shoulder. Although he has since made a full recovery, he was not ready for release in time for the fall migration. We housed him with other songbirds that missed their migrations, so he has some form of socialization and a flock to spend time with. We will release him when Wilson's warblers return to the area during spring migration. He has fully moulted and is ready to attract a mate with his bright yellow plumage.

Wilson's warblers typically mate with a different partner each breeding season. Although females incubate the eggs and brood the nestlings, the males help with feeding the nestlings and fledglings. Males also take on guard duty: when he or his mate detect a predator near the nest, they may feign a broken wing to draw the predator away.

According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, the Wilson's warbler population declined 61% between 1966 and 2015. The steep decline is attributed primarily to loss of habitat on both breeding and wintering grounds, and along migratory pathways. Environment and Climate Change Canada (Government of Canada) has identified Wilson's warblers as a priority for conservation and/or stewardship.



Wilson's warbler patient

A Prickly Rodent

By H. Lippmann



North American porcupine patient in outdoor enclosure

As you may recall from our previous issue, one of our first patients of 2022 was a North American porcupine patient who was found in a backyard near Carstairs. We are pleased to report he has recovered well in care (romaine lettuce is his favourite snack!) and he is scheduled to be released in a few weeks if he keeps thriving.

Did you that porcupines are the second-largest rodent in Canada, with beavers being the largest? In some Indigenous cultures, the porcupine stands for innocence, humility and trust; in others, for self-defence and protection.

During confrontations, a porcupine will try to seek shelter, and if they can't, they will chatter their teeth and pivot on their front feet, tucking their head between their shoulders for protection. Keeping their back to the enemy, porcupines will stomp their back feet and raise their quills for added protection. Contrary to popular belief, they cannot "throw" or "shoot" their quills.



Visiting Wildlife Haven in Manitoba!

By H. Lillie, Executive Director

In March, AIWC's Rehabilitation Manager, Jenna Anthony, and I had an amazing opportunity to spend a couple of days at Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre in Manitoba. They have been rehabilitating wildlife in need since 1984 and provide care for over 3,000 animals each year!

The purpose of the trip was to learn more about their facility and share learnings from the ever-evolving field of wildlife rehabilitation and non-profit management.

Wildlife rehabilitation is a unique field and it is essential to be continuously learning and collaborating with others. In addition, much of the issues that face Canadian wildlife centres – like building structures to withstand huge amounts of snowfall – do not face many of our southern friends and it's great to discuss what works and what doesn't! It was wonderful to spend time at another centre, and share and learn to better help wildlife in need all across the country.

Thank you, Wildlife Haven, for having us!



Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre,
photo courtesy Wildlife Haven



Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation staff,
photo courtesy Wildlife Haven

Adopt a Patient for Mother's Day!

Mother's Day is coming up on May 8th, and adopting a 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.**



