

## Adopt A Patient: North American Beaver

By V. Hindbo

The North American beaver is a semi-aquatic mammal found throughout the majority of the United States and Canada. It is the largest rodent in North America and the second largest in the world, next to the capybara of South America. Adults weigh between 16 to 32 kg and a large beaver can measure up to 1.3 m long (including its 30 cm tail).

The beaver's survival is inextricably linked to the logging of trees for both food and shelter. Most of the beaver's diet consists of tree bark and cambium (the soft tissue under the bark). With its long, sharp and strong incisors, a beaver cuts down an average of 216 trees a year – some up to 40 cm in diameter! This impressive builder constructs dams to enlarge its underwater habitat (some as high as 5.5 m high) and lodges for feeding and resting (most about 2 m high and 5 m in diameter). The ponds created by dams benefit the ecosystem by creating wetland habitat for other species, filtering downstream water, and preventing flooding.

A North American beaver was rescued and admitted to AIWC on June 16th after his lodge on the Red Deer River was washed away during the heavy rain in June, when an entire month's worth of rain fell in a little over two days! He was found along the shore, down-river from his lodge, with no parents or siblings in sight. He came in weighing only 1 kg and still required specialized formula feedings. It took him a few weeks to settle into care but, as soon as he did, he had a very healthy appetite and started to gain an appropriate amount of weight.



He has now progressed to an outdoor enclosure where he has a large pool to swim in. He is given fresh branches every day as part of his diet and as building materials. He has already started to construct a den for himself with the sticks we provide to him. As of October, he was weighing over 6 kgs! Because beaver kits (babies) stay with their parents for at least two years in the wild, he will be spending two years with us at AIWC until he is released in the summer of 2024.



*Juvenile North American beaver patient*



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](http://aiwc.ca) for more info.**

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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 29 / Issue 4 / Fall 2022

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## Executive Director Update

*By Holly Lillie, Executive Director*

2022 is drawing to a close and it has brought new challenges. From the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), to an increase in patient admissions, and a staggering increase in calls to our wildlife hotline. It's true that no year is ever the same, but our constant is that the demand for our services continues to grow each year.

From three orphaned black bear cubs, to a poisoned bald eagle, to an orphaned baby beaver, several white-tail deer and mule deer fawns, robins, warblers, bats, skunks, ravens, and much more. So far this year we have cared for over 1,800 animals across over 140 different species.

And it isn't just our wildlife rehabilitation program that has seen more demand. Our wildlife hotline is provided to all Albertans (and even those outside of the province) to assist with their questions and concerns about wildlife. The hotline is manned by staff and volunteers 365 days of the year and by the end of September of 2022 we have already responded to more calls than in all of 2021. By investing in the wildlife hotline, we can better triage patients that need to come into care, and also provide education on healthy animals that do not need our care, such as a healthy baby white-tailed prairie hare. We've responded to over 7,000 calls so far in 2022!

While there were challenges this year, there were also lots of highlights. A poisoned bald eagle was returned to the wild and is flying free once more, an orphaned baby beaver is thriving (learn more on page 1), and hundreds of animals have been returned to the wild after receiving the care they needed.

On April 20, 2023, AIWC will celebrate its 30th anniversary but it won't just be this day that we will be celebrating this amazing milestone. We will be celebrating this achievement throughout the year and will keep you updated of exciting events to come.

AIWC would not have survived the last 30 years without you. It's because of your support that AIWC is able to live out its mission. I know 2022 has been another challenging year for many and as a result we have seen a decrease in donations. I ask that this Christmas season you please consider including AIWC in part of your Christmas giving. No amount is too small and every donation ensures that we can continue to provide for Alberta's wildlife in need for the next 30 years to come.

Thank you for all you do to support AIWC. We hope you and yours are well.  
Season's Greetings!

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie

Executive Director





## Three Little Black Bears

By J. Kaiser



*Three little black bear cubs practising their climbing skills*

In our summer newsletter (which you can find on our website if you missed it), we told you about two orphaned black bear cubs admitted to AIWC for care. Then, in July a third cub was admitted, rounding out this year's trio of bear cub patients.

She was found in the Waterton area after her mother was killed by a vehicle. After an intake exam which found her underweight and dehydrated, but otherwise healthy, and once she had completed the necessary quarantine period, she was introduced to our two other bear cub patients in their large outdoor enclosure.

The three of them have been bulking up for winter and will be released this fall in time to establish a den for winter hibernation. AIWC looks forward to working closely with Alberta Environment and Parks for both their release, as well as monitoring them afterwards.

## An Aged Bat?

By J. Kaiser

“Hoary” is an old English word meaning whitened or greyed with age, or old and familiar, so when you see a hoary bat up close, you can certainly see where they got their name, with the white tipped fur almost making them look covered in frost. They are Canada's largest species of bat, and are one of the migrating bat species, leaving in September and October to spend winters in warmer climates.

This young hoary bat was admitted to AIWC in early September after being found on a sidewalk in northwest Calgary. At first, he had no obvious injuries, and it was a mystery as to why he wasn't flying. After a couple of weeks of supportive care and treatment for suspected head trauma, he began to become more active and engage in more normal bat behaviour. He's been gaining weight, and his condition continues to improve, however he will need to over-winter with AIWC since he has missed his opportunity to migrate.



*Hoary bat snoozing on his log*



## Education Update

By T. Scully, AIWC Community Engagement Coordinator

It is the season of virtual talks again! September kicked off with a talk about ghost moose, which are moose that are so overwhelmed by winter ticks they begin to lose their fur and colour. We saw a fantastic number of people attend that event and hope to continue those numbers throughout the next few months as we talk about anthropomorphism of animals, the balancing act of ecosystems, and differences and similarities between humans and wildlife. Check out our events page for more info on that!

We're also thrilled to be seeing more in-person programs happening at schools, retirement homes, after-school programs, summer camps and more! Kids and adults are so much more engaged when we can speak with them face-to-face, and let them discover and handle some of our amazing biofacts. These biofacts allow people to do some hands-on learning without putting themselves or wildlife at risk.

If you are interested in booking an in-person or virtual program for any age, head to our website below for more information and our request form, or get in touch via [education@aiwc.ca](mailto:education@aiwc.ca) with any questions!

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

## Small Sparrow Sings a Different Tune

By J. Kaiser



*White-throated sparrow patient with wing-wrap*

This white-throated sparrow was admitted to AIWC for care in September after being caught by a cat near Crossfield, Alberta. Suffering from a fracture to the right humerus (upper wing bone), this feathered patient remains on cage rest with their wing wrapped to reduce further injury. As with all cat victims, a round of antibiotics is also key to recovery, since the bacteria in a cat's saliva can be just as deadly as any injury.

For winter, many white-throated sparrows migrate to the southern and eastern United States, with the smaller females migrating further and returning to Canada later than the males, allowing the males to establish territory by the time they return.

The white-throated sparrow is also the subject of an incredibly unique recent study where it was discovered that the song of male white-throated sparrows was changing. Most bird species have unique

calls that do not change, but researchers, according to a July 2020 issue of the journal *Current Biology*, began to observe a change in the call of the white-throated sparrow that began in British Columbia in the early 2000s with group of sparrows that over-wintered in central BC. The change quickly made its way east through the population; in Alberta in 2004, about half of the male sparrows were singing the new song, but by 2015 all sparrows west of central Ontario were using the new tune.

The study's hypothesis on the explanation for the change in song is that the new song has resulted in success in the male sparrows gaining territory and attracting female interest, but the research continues. If you'd like to read more, I recommend searching for the article "Continent-wide Shifts in Song Dialects of White-Throated Sparrows" by Ken A. Otter in the journal *Current Biology* – it's a fascinating read! In the meantime, keep your fingers crossed that this sparrow patient makes a full recovery.





## Caring for an Angry Bird

By H. Lippmann

An angry bird?! You could say so, due to the eastern kingbird's latin name *tyrannus tyrannus*, and their strong protective behaviour - even birds larger than themselves will be attacked fiercely when entering their territory! They love fields, yards, pastures, grasslands, and wetlands to hunt, mate, and spend their days, perching on treetops, fences, and utility poles, catching flies. Since they live in monogamous pairs, the other mate will join the battle should one arise.

This scenario could very well be the reason why our patient kingbird was found in late August in the middle of the road, with a serious injury to his left shoulder that rendered him unable to fly, possibly from vehicle contact. A feisty patient, he started eating on his own after just two days in care. After about one month he was even able to be transferred to his outside enclosure for flight reconditioning.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, it was soon revealed that he was not going to be able to regain his ability to fly, which not only means he would miss the fall migration to South America, but also that he would not be able to snatch the flying insects that make up most of his diet.

As a result, AIWC staff made the difficult, yet compassionate decision, both for this patient, but also many others in 2022. AIWC is proud to report an average success rate of 45% over the past three years (well over the industry average), but we cannot forget those who do not make it, and the dedicated staff and volunteers providing care to each of them.

"A wildlife rehabilitator should strive to provide professional and humane care in all phases of wildlife rehabilitation, protecting the welfare, respecting the wildness, and maintaining the dignity of each animal in life and in death. Releasable animals should be maintained in a wild condition and released as soon as appropriate. Non-releasable animals have a right to euthanasia."- National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association Code of Ethics.



Eastern kingbird patient

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## Slow Recovery for a Fast Hawk

By J. Kaiser

Given that sharp-shinned hawks can reach speeds around 90km/hour when chasing prey (most commonly songbirds), it's no wonder this patient was admitted to AIWC with some serious injuries after colliding with a window in Cochrane, Alberta in late September.

Suffering from head trauma and a right shoulder injury, this sharp-shinned hawk will begin recovery with several weeks of cage rest, a wing wrap to reduce mobility and prevent further injury, and medication for pain and infection.

While some sharp-shinned hawks may remain in Canada year-round, most move south for the non-breeding season, meaning this patient will over-winter with AIWC and be released in the spring when the hawks return to the province.



*Sharp-shinned hawk with wrapped tail and wing*

## Franklin's Gull Soars Again

By J. Kaiser



*Juvenile Franklin's gull looking to the sky*

Found in northwest Calgary in late July, this juvenile Franklin's gull patient was admitted to AIWC for care after he wouldn't fly away.

Upon intake, staff noticed he was underweight and seemed to have some head trauma, as well as injuries to his left leg. Like many patients, we will likely never know what happened that brought him into our care.



Thankfully for this patient, his wounds healed over time with cleaning, care, and medication. After 6 weeks in care, he was fully healed and released in time to find somewhere warm to spend the winter.

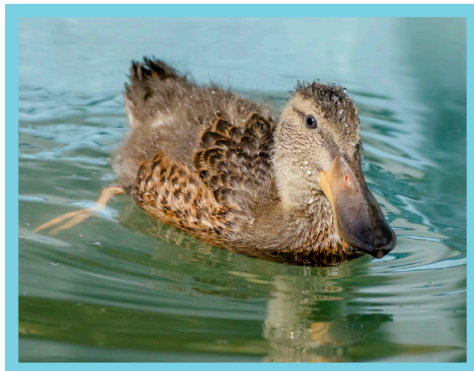


## Duckweed Dish – Five Star Rating from Northern Shoveler Ducklings

By R. Selkirk

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a built-in colander as a mouth? Perhaps not, but if you take a moment to imagine having spatula-shaped bill with over one hundred tiny projections along the edge (to strain out water and keep in food), you'll be one step closer to knowing what it's like to be a northern shoveler duck! They are easy to identify due to their large bills and vibrant green heads. Northern shovelers, also known as spoonies or spoonbills, are widespread and common to see in Alberta when they aren't spending the cold Canadian months in the United States or Mexico.

Earlier this year, an unfortunate car accident left a brood of northern shoveler ducklings orphaned. AIWC was able to step in and take these ducklings under our care. While they weighed only between 30 and 35 grams upon arrival, they quickly gained weight filling up on our carefully planned menu – though duckweed was by far their favourite dish. After 28 days of eating their fill and splashing in our pools, they were big enough to be released. We wish them a happy migration down south for the winter.



*Northern shoveler ducklings enjoying their outdoor enclosure pools*

## Red Fox on Long Road to Recovery

By J. Kaiser

Spotted in a field near Cochrane, Alberta in late August, this red fox patient was found suffering from a large injury on his left side and was thankfully rescued and brought to AIWC for treatment. He was also found to be emaciated and suffering from dehydration. Staff put the patient on a robust treatment plan to treat his injuries that were also showing signs of infection.

After several weeks of supportive care, his condition continues to improve, but he still has a long road ahead. Like many of your pet dogs at home, he is not a fan of his cone, which is an unfortunate necessity to keep him from licking his wounds. Every day brings a new challenge at AIWC, and our intrepid staff had to get creative in order to fashion a cone strong enough that our fox patient wouldn't simply chew through!

Keep your fingers crossed for a full and swift recovery!



*Red fox patient with his head-cone*



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## AIWC MEMBERSHIPS

### 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](http://aiwc.ca); or
- Call 403-946-2361

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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.

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## WILDLIFE HOTLINE: 403-946-2361

### Beautifully Blue and They Can Sing Too!

*By C. Bogstie*



*American robin patient all grown up*

American robins have a wide geographic range including the majority of North America, and are considered a species with increasing populations. Their resilience to human alterations to their habitats, and their flexible diets that consist of worms and insects as well as berries and fruits, are some of the reasons for their status as the most widespread thrush species.

While they may have variable diets, American robins have been known to indulge in honeysuckle berries and, when exclusively eaten, these singing birds become intoxicated. These whistling worm-lovers are distinctly identifiable, with male robins having rust-coloured chests and yellow beaks with grey backs, while females have much duller feather colours. The females are responsible for those Tiffany blue eggs that have inspired many crayons and paint colour alike.

On August 12th, a robin nestling was admitted to AIWC after being abandoned in the Canmore, Alberta area, with no parents or nest in the area. Despite being severely dehydrated and cold at intake, the nestling began gaping for food shortly after receiving fluids and being warmed up. This resilient patient spent 26 days receiving care before they were released back into the wild. While the beginning of winter sees a reduction in robins sprinting through lawns and parklands, they are still present – just look up into the trees!

## 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. – 7:00p.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/](http://www.aiwc.ca/found-a-wild-animal/after-hours-assistance/)

