

Is that a fish? Is that a beaver? No, it's a muskrat!

By C. Collins

After they were seen wandering alone around a sawmill in Rockyview County, this juvenile common muskrat came into AIWC on February 14. They were underweight, severely dehydrated, and had a depressed demeanor.

AIWC staff began supportive care (fluids and a slow reintroduction of food). Initially, the enclosure for the muskrat had a fleece blanket to snuggle, a shallow pool, and den made of bark and blankets.

During their first week at AIWC, they were eating well and appeared to start feeling better. They were then moved to a larger enclosure that had water in the bottom and an elevated wood 'house' filled with straw – to mimic their natural environment.



Common muskrat patient on top of their "house"

During this time, they were offered green vegetables, dry food (specific to rodents to meet their nutritional needs), and had access to aspen, poplar, and willow wood, as these make up a significant portion of their diet in the wild. A recent check-up showed no abnormalities and the muskrat has continued eating well and has been spending plenty of time swimming.

After a few weeks in care, the muskrat's weight more than doubled to 1.38kg! This muskrat patient will remain in care waiting for the warmer weather, and will be released once waterbodies open up this spring.



Common muskrat patient in their pool



30
YEARS
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1993-2023

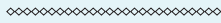
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MISSION:

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

Despite a later start to spring in Alberta, we are starting to see the signs of our busy baby wildlife season approaching, with admitting our first baby hare of the year on March 6 (a week earlier than last year), and three black bear cubs on March 29. Learn more about their story on page 3.

On April 20, AIWC turned thirty years old! While it's an amazing milestone, and not one achieved without the support of you, our donors, volunteers, staff, and community, it's also bittersweet. Far too often the animals we admit are as a result of human conflict in some way (such as a vehicle collision, hitting a window, or a domestic cat or dog attack).

From now until September we can expect to admit over 1,500 injured and orphaned animals. Many of them will be young babies, and many of them will have been orphaned after their mothers have been killed. It's a sad reality that without intervention, these animals would not survive. Thankfully, with your support, we are able to provide them with the care they need until they can return to the wild.

Our 12th annual Wildlife Baby Shower is live and our goal is to raise \$30,000.00 to help support the needs of our patients this spring and summer. We hope to rely on your support to meet this fundraising goal.

Thank you for your continued support, whether it's been for the last 30 years or just the last few months. We truly could not live out our mission without you. It is thanks to you that hundreds of animals receive the lifesaving treatment they need before returning to the wild. Thank you!

Sincerely,

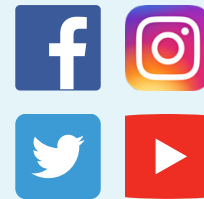
Holly Lillie

Executive Director



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us on Twitter (@AIWC) and
Instagram (@albertawildlife)!



The Triplets

By H. Lillie

No day is ever the same at AIWC, or any wildlife rehabilitation centre. Some days that can be thrilling, and other days it can be exhausting, but at the end of each day comes a great sense of gratitude that we are able to help wildlife in need.

On March 29, 2023 we received a call about three black bear cubs in need. Their den site had been disturbed and their mother left. Unfortunately, the cubs were far too young to follow her, and far too young to survive on their own. They were monitored for a couple of days to see if mum would return but she did not.

The cubs were transferred to AIWC for care and although a bit dehydrated, they were otherwise in good health. At intake we estimated them to be approximately 9 weeks old and there are two females and one male.

At this age they still require milk formula that is designed specifically for black bears but they are growing leaps and bounds. They will remain in our care throughout the summer and we anticipate a release in fall 2023, in line with the provincial black bear rehabilitation plan.

We have a 100% success rate with black bear cubs and are proud that each of the cubs we have released have hibernated when released in the fall and gone on to wake up in the spring and start their new journeys in the wild. Thank you for your support of these cubs!



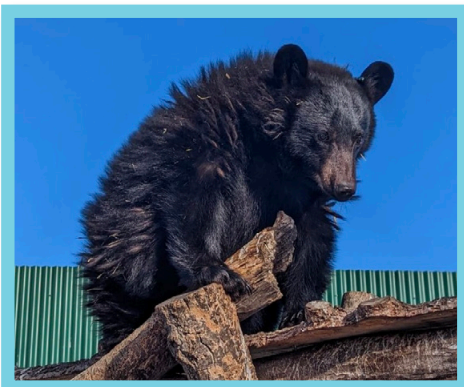
Black bear cub triplets

Adopting these patients, 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 Positive Turn for The Black Bear Cub; An Update

By J. Gaume



Black bear cub climbing

This American black bear cub was brought into our facility in December in rough shape, covered in porcupine quills. He was emaciated, weighing in at only 17kg, and unable to walk on his right paw due to the immense swelling brought on by the quills. With his unstable health, he was unable to hibernate or thrive on his own, and needed immediate attention from our medical team. After x-rays and bloodwork, the quills were removed from the bear cub and resulting infections started to subside!

With ample food available to him, he started to gain weight in a speedy fashion. In one short month, the cub tripled his weight to 50.5kg, reaching an ideal body condition for his age and size. This was due, in part, to his love for meat, berries and hard-boiled eggs.

With his weight gain, he was initially quite active in his enclosure, utilizing the climbing structures in his environment. Now, this black bear cub has been opting to stay in his den, sleeping heavily as winter comes to a close. However, when the sun is shining, he is often spotted outside, via our camera system, sunbathing in his large outdoor enclosure.

We appreciate your support as we bring this cub back to living-in-the-wild standards, and will keep you updated on his progress.



Education/Volunteer Update:

By T. Scully, AIWC Community Engagement Coordinator

It's been a real pleasure meeting our new volunteers who have joined us during the most recent recruitment period. We're all gearing up for a busy spring and summer, and the wonderful enthusiasm and passion they have shown is so exciting to see. Our current volunteers have been stepping up in a huge way, helping our new volunteers and filling shifts left, right, and centre.

Our in-person programs are also back in full-swing with a very busy spring booked, which is exciting! The wonderful Katrina will be returning from maternity leave soon as well, stepping back into the Community Engagement Manager role once again.

The variety of programs being booked at the moment means we're able to share so much knowledge with the public, particularly school-aged kids.

If you are interested in booking an in-person or virtual program for any age, please visit our website at aiwc.ca for more information and to submit a request form, or get in touch via education@aiwc.ca!

Book your wildlife education program or virtual presentation today!

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

Wonders of the Wild

By H. Lippmann

Our young female brown bat patient was found in a horse blanket in early November. The initial examination noted a small hole in her left wing with a slight discoloration, as well as dehydration, but otherwise she was alert and in decent condition.

For a week, she was being monitored in a reptarium (a small, soft-sided enclosure), received subcutaneous fluids, and was being hand-fed with mealworms. After, she was placed in our indoor bat flight room with another patient, a silver-haired bat, who missed their window to migrate to their wintering grounds. Besides being checked daily, both had been woken up for fluid treatment and feeding every 10 days over the winter. After becoming more alert, our staff had to daily hand-feed about 20-30 mealworms to each bat and provide oral fluids, as both refused to eat on their own due to the unnatural environment they found themselves in.

The young female's wing healed nicely and both bats are flying very well. They even developed a friendship and have been seen eating together and snuggling with each other, which is quite unusual but a joy to watch. Both patients will be released in the spring when they would naturally awake from hibernation or return from migration, respectively.



Silver-haired bat patient

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When Less is More in Patient Care

By R. Selkirk

When it comes to treating some of our more common species at AIWC, you may be mistaken for thinking that our highly skilled clinic staff simply follow a predetermined standardized care plan. However, this couldn't be further from the truth. While we don't give our patients names (instead we track them using numbers), we still think of them as individuals with unique needs that require patient-specific care.

We admitted a bohemian waxwing patient on March 6 this year with a straightforward and common story. The waxwing was found in SE Calgary laying on the ground, likely injured from flying into a window (known as a window strike). The initial examination and follow-up tests revealed that our patient was suffering from head trauma and a left coracoid fracture (inner collarbone area) resulting in a droopy wing. Our patient was given fluids, pain medications, and a wing wrap, which secured the injured wing close to their body for optimal healing.

While we commenced a conventional treatment plan, our patient alarmingly stopped eating and began losing weight within a few days. Our staff had to think fast – songbirds are notoriously stressed patients and we needed to work out what we could do to help our waxwing relax and heal. We removed the wing wrap, believing that may have caused this individual bird too much stress. Thankfully, we were right! With the wing wrap removed, our little waxwing patient started eating more of their favourite food (Mountain Ash berries) and they returned to a normal weight. It turns out this bird just needed a more hands-off approach; namely a safe space to heal on their own. We still have this waxwing in care, their fracture is healing up nicely, and we expect to release them back into the wild soon.



Bohemian waxwing with mountain ash berries

Romeo Looking for His Juliet – Over-Wintering Clay-Coloured Sparrow

By C. Bogstie



Clay-coloured sparrow patient

Although considered numerous in most of North America, the clay-coloured sparrow has a population considered in decline. In Canada particularly, populations are estimated to have decreased by half in the past 50 years from the loss of habitat due to the increase of agriculture, livestock, and development.

Like other songbirds, clay-coloured sparrows enjoy seeds, grasses, and insects. Unlike their fellow songbirds, male clay-coloured sparrows will occupy long branches for singing performances during mating and are considered monogamous during a given mating season. While they often find new partners at each breeding season, they are quite the romantics and are famously loyal for the duration of a mating season to one partner.

At the end of November of last year, a male clay-coloured sparrow was transferred from WildNorth rehabilitation clinic in Edmonton, as songbirds, including sparrows, are social animals and experience increased stress when solitary. Due to his missing tail feathers and missing right wing primary feathers (essential for flight), as well as his low weight, this clay-coloured sparrow could not be released in time for migration and as such required overwintering. The presence of two cedar waxwings overwintering at AIWC meant he could

recover with friends and his mental well-being would be taken care of while he recovered, since WildNorth did not have any songbirds at the time that were overwintering.

Upon arrival at AIWC, the clay-coloured sparrow was placed in an indoor flight room with the two waxwings (who have since become his very good friends) as his flight feathers were successfully growing back in good condition. When the weather becomes consistently warmer, he will be moved to an outdoor enclosure for acclimation prior to his release once his species migrates back to the prairies this spring.

This spring, be on the lookout for this little Romeo, singing to his (seasonal) Juliet!



Our Beaver Patient Has Been Keeping Busy

By V. Hindbo

In our Fall 2022 newsletter, we introduced you to the North American beaver kit (baby) we admitted in June 2022. He weighed only 1 kg and required specialized formula feedings. After settling in for a few weeks, he developed a healthy appetite and is now 13 kg. (In fact, his appetite was so healthy we recently put him on a diet!)

Throughout his lengthy stay with us, he has kept himself busy: eating, building, and swimming. Each day we provide him with fresh browse (wood sticks of poplar, willow, and aspen) from which he eats the bark and buds and then uses as building materials. He spent the summer in an outdoor enclosure with a large pool, where he immediately began to construct a den for himself with the sticks we provided.

Because his outdoor pool would have frozen in the winter, and beavers require access to water at all times (they urinate and defecate into water), we have housed him inside with an indoor pool for the winter. He has managed the transition to the indoors quite well. He spends his days constructing a home with browse and straw around the crate in which he sleeps, and also spends quite a bit of time swimming in his pool. As soon as the weather remains consistently above freezing overnight, we will move him back to an outdoor enclosure for the summer.



American beaver patient next to his indoor pool

A Scentsational Young Fella!

By B. Weiss



Striped skunk patient

On February 6, 2023, a striped skunk was admitted to AIWC. One of our volunteer rescue drivers picked him up from a porch in Calgary, where he appeared non-responsive.

Upon intake, it was determined that he was a juvenile male, with good body weight, normal body temperature and no dehydration. Some lesions were found on his front paw, muzzle and back, but they were minor and mostly healed. X-rays and bloodwork showed a healthy young male skunk! Antibiotics and pain medications were administered and he was dewormed.

He was closely monitored by our team and by February 15, when he was showing signs of normal behaviours such as eating and drinking on his own, he was moved to an outdoor enclosure. Two den sites were set up and foliage and logs were added to help create a more natural environment for him. Our temporary guest sleeps during the day (in one of the dens) and appears at night to feed – which is natural skunk behaviour.

He is doing well at this time and the plan is to release him once the weather warms up and there are abundant food sources available for this omnivore.

AIWC at NWRA Conference

By Jenna Anthony & Dr. Cassandra Lapham-Simpson

In the beginning of March, our Rehabilitation Manager, Jenna Anthony, and Veterinarian, Dr. Dr. Cassandra Lapham-Simpson, attended the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) conference in Wilmington, Delaware. The NWRA is an annual conference that aims to promote the rehabilitation and conservation of wildlife. The organization comprises a diverse group of individuals, including wildlife rehabilitators, veterinarians, biologists, educators, and conservationists.

As a wildlife rehabilitator, attending this conference has been one of the most rewarding experiences of their careers. Not only did this event provide an opportunity to network and learn from colleagues in the field, but it also offered a chance to stay up to date on the latest research and care protocols in wildlife rehabilitation. They were able to expand our knowledge on topics like highly pathogenic avian influenza, chronic wasting disease, rabbit hemorrhagic disease, oiled wildlife, wildlife critical care, surgical management of wounds, and diseases of reptiles.

One of the most significant benefits of attending a wildlife rehabilitation conference is the opportunity to learn about emerging issues and challenges facing wildlife. One topic that has been of particular concern in recent years is chronic wasting disease (CWD), a contagious neurological disease that affects deer, elk, and moose. At the conference, they were able to attend multiple sessions on this topic, where experts shared the latest research on how the disease is spreading, what we can do to prevent transmission, and the ethical dilemma surrounding the future of ungulate rehabilitation.

One of the most impactful sessions they attended was on oiled wildlife response. Oil spills can have devastating effects on wildlife, and as a rehabilitator, it's important to be prepared to respond appropriately to such emergencies. Tri-state Bird Rescue ran the session on responding to oil spills, as they provide wildlife rehabilitation services to oiled wildlife, conduct research, and education to promote effective spill response and prevention. The session provided a comprehensive overview of the different stages of an oil spill response, including wildlife triage, common medical problems, and cleaning techniques.

They also attended multiple sessions on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), which made its way to North America last year and greatly impacted wild bird populations and wildlife rehabilitation centers. This disease also has significant consequences on domestic poultry populations and our food supply. The session focused on what role wildlife rehabilitators have in the community when responding to these outbreaks, the important measures that need to be taken to minimize the risk of transmission to other birds in their facility and most importantly to the staff that are working with these infected animals.

Additionally, AIWC's veterinarian had the opportunity to present on a couple of challenging wildlife cases and participate in a wildlife medicine panel discussion. It was great to share some interesting clinical cases from AIWC to a larger wildlife veterinary community.

Overall, it was an exciting and informative week attending the NWRA conference. It allowed us to network with colleagues, learn from experts in the field, and discuss wildlife cases.



Dr. Cassandra presenting at the NWRA conference





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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.

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- 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

Water Off a Goldeneye's Back

By S. Nelson



Goldeneye patient on net-support

When a common goldeneye was found in southeast Calgary on March 12, lethargic and with snow frozen to their abdomen, they didn't appear to have any apparent injuries. An intake exam revealed that they were underweight and not waterproof.

Water birds like goldeneyes need to waterproof themselves because they spend most of their lives in lakes and rivers. They use their bills to spread oil through their feathers and 'zip' them up like tiny zippers, protecting their inner feathers from water and allowing them to thermoregulate. When these birds can't waterproof themselves, they may spend too much time on land where they risk developing pododermatitis (pressure-induced sores) on their feet. This goldeneye required a careful balance of time in water versus time on dry ground to recover.

The goldeneye was housed in a net-bottomed enclosure when they weren't in a clean pool of water. AIWC staff monitored the goldeneye in the pool before moving the bird to the net-bottomed enclosure, where warm air was blown on them to encourage preening. It took over one week of these water-and-warm-air cycles for the waterbird to become fully waterproof. They managed the stress well, but they did develop some minor pododermatitis lesions on their feet.

Fortunately, the goldeneye continued eating and managed the cycling well. The patient is gaining weight now, and their feet are healing. They are now in a pool full-time, practising diving and flying, and they will likely be eligible for release soon.

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. – 9:00p.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/