

RECOVERY REVIEW

BACK TO THE WILD FOR BLACK BEAR SIBLINGS

by Jennea Frischke

Black bear cubs in care, June 2023



On March 29, 2023, our team was dispatched to pick up three abandoned American black bear cubs : two dark brown coloured females with white chests, and a light cinnamon coloured male. Not all black bears are black, and this cinnamon colour is the result of a genetic mutation that is similar to albinism in humans.

When these 9 week-old triplets arrived they each weighed under 3 kg, making them some of the smallest cubs we've ever cared for. They were treated with subcutaneous fluids for dehydration upon arrival, but otherwise arrived in good health with no injuries. For the first couple of weeks, they were kept indoors and bottle fed. Once weaned, the three bears were bowl fed soft foods, including oatmeal (and yes, the temperature was juuuuust right). Once moved outside, they were started in a small enclosure, and after more

growth, they were moved to our large mammal enclosure where they stayed until release. The water feature was a favourite, where they enjoyed splashing and play fighting. Proteins were added to their diet in August, and each bear was soon eating two large buckets of food twice a day!

The cubs were released on October 18, 2023 at very healthy weights — each over 45 kg. Alberta Fish and Wildlife gave them tracking collars, ear tags, and microchips. After several days exploring the wilderness, the three bears successfully denned for the winter: the two females in one den, and the male on his own.

Bears are among the most expensive patients we care for at AIWC because of the quantity of food they need during their growth spurts. Thanks to your support, we are able to rehabilitate animals like these three adorable bear cubs.

Female black bear cub during pre-release exam



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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 31 | Issue 1 | Winter 2024

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DESIGNER: S. Potter

PRINT: Little Rock Printing

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Submissions/comments may be sent to info@aiwc.ca

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

A very happy new year to you all! I have taken over the Executive Director reins while Holly is on maternity leave, and am proud to be leading our fantastic team of staff and volunteers into 2024. We're starting off strong thanks to your support of our Give the Gift of Saving Wildlife campaign, which raised over \$105,000 in December. We cannot thank you enough for your generosity. 2023 was a challenging year for many people financially, and the fact that AIWC was not only able to make our fundraising goal, but exceed it, speaks to the incredible dedication of our supporters. Thank you!

In 2023 we cared for over 1,670 animals and responded to over 7000 calls on our wildlife hotline. While the overall number of patients was slightly lower than 2022, we saw a huge increase in some patient numbers, particularly waterfowl. Having large increases of one kind of animal is always challenging, as we have limited numbers of enclosures suitable for each species. We are working hard this winter to refine our policies and increase pool space wherever possible in case we see another influx of ducklings this spring.

We also cared for many severely injured patients this year, who were only able to return to the wild thanks to the tireless efforts of our full-time veterinarian and the rest of our fantastic rehab team. For animals like barbed wire-entangled great horned owls, an emaciated black bear cub, or a kestrel burned by wildfire, having consistent, long-term medical care gives hope of recovery where there would otherwise be none.

As we begin preparations for the busy spring and summer season, I want to extend gratitude from the entire AIWC team. It is thanks to your support that we are able to offer so many injured and orphaned wild animals a second chance. We could not do what we do without you!

Sincerely,

Katrina Terrill
Acting Executive Director



EDUCATION/VOLUNTEER UPDATE: THANKS FOR OWL YOU DO

by Alexandra Kellington, Community Engagement Coordinator

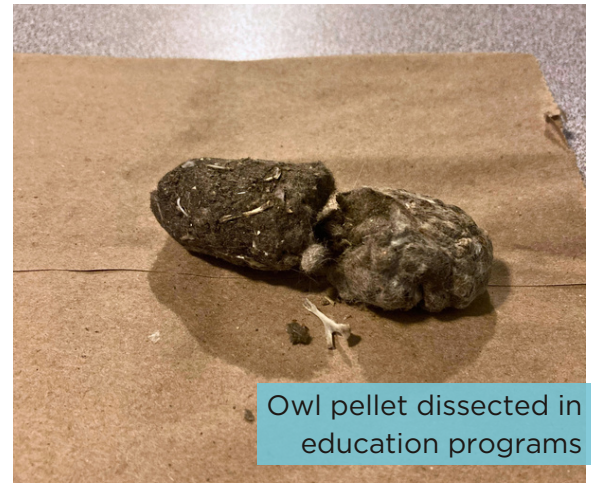


I would like to start off by saying a warm hello to everyone. My name is Alex and I am the new Community Engagement Coordinator here at AIWC. I am in this role while Katrina, our Community Engagement Manager, is taking on the Acting Executive Director role. I have had the chance to meet many of our wonderful volunteers and it's been a privilege to see all the hard work our volunteers do. I got to welcome a new group of volunteers in the Fall 2023 recruitment season and it's been great to see them capably step into their roles.

Our education program saw many successes in 2023, a highlight of which was partnering with the Calgary Public Library to present 27 wildlife programs both in person and virtually. In December, I was also able to facilitate our first owl pellet dissection since 2022, when we paused that activity due to the highly pathogenic avian influenza. Students at that program got to learn about the 11 species of owls we have in Alberta, and see hands-on the contents of an owl pellet.



Wildlife education and awareness is an important part of protecting wild species, so we are so appreciative of all our volunteers and supporters who help make that happen.



Owl pellet dissected in education programs

The winter and spring calendars are available for booking! If you are interested in learning more about our programs, please head to our website at www.aiwc.ca/get-involved/wildlife-education/wildlife-education-programs/ or e-mail us at education@aiwc.ca.



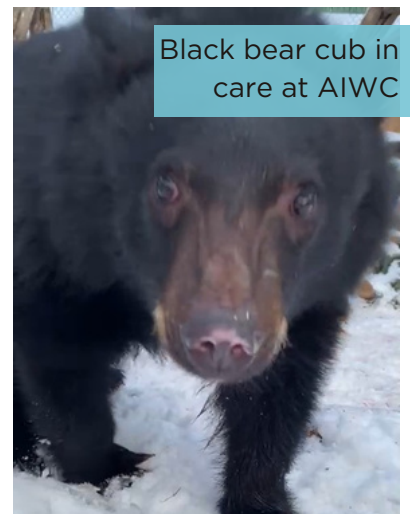
BLACK BEAR BIRTHDAY PARTY 2024

by Scottie Potter, Communications Coordinator

January is a special time of year in Alberta — it's when almost all black bears are born in the province. We decided to celebrate last month with a "Black Bear Birthday Party" across social media! By sharing black bear cub themed content throughout January, we sought to raise awareness about the science and efficacy of rehabilitating black bears and returning them to the wild.

We also released the first episode of a new video series called *Alberta Wildlife Insider*, all about the rehabilitation of black bears. You can find the episode at www.youtube.com/@alberta_wildlife

You can also find all the content from the party by searching #BlackBearBirthdayParty2024 on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube.



Black bear cub in care at AIWC

GREAT HORNED OWL RETURNS TO THE SKY

by Sydney Nelson

On September 16th, 2023, a Great Horned Owl arrived at AIWC with a spinal injury. The most common reasons owls need treatment at AIWC involve human impacts, like car accidents, powerline collisions, or lead poisoning. On arrival, this owl could not even stand up, and relied on AIWC staff for feedings for two weeks before starting to eat normally.

By October 10th, they were flying well again. In flight, owls are nearly silent because of how their wings and feathers are structured, making them excellent birds of prey. Unfortunately, this great horned owl faced another challenge when they suffered from soft-tissue strain while flying, but when they healed, they were released on October 19, 2023, about a month after being admitted.

Great horned owl in outdoor flight pen

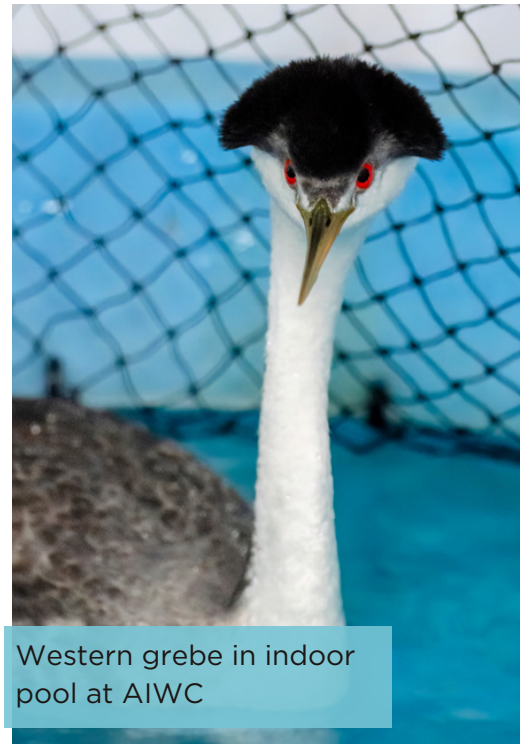


DANCES WITH GREBES: AN UPDATE ON WESTERN GREBE PATIENT'S SHORT STAY AT AIWC

by Courtney Bogstie

The western grebe is a diving bird species classified as “threatened” in Alberta. Considered a indicators of wetland health, grebes require large undisturbed aquatic habitats with healthy fish populations and consistently deep water levels to allow for diving. The western grebe is therefore vulnerable to habitat loss due to human activity.

Notably, the western grebe can be spotted during mating season performing elaborate dances which include the presentation of reeds instead of roses, and running across the water’s surface – also known as “rushing”. On October 8, 2023, a call to AIWC was made after a western grebe was found grounded and unable to fly. The veterinary team found a left wing fracture upon arrival,



Western grebe in indoor pool at AIWC

though thankfully it was well aligned. Despite relying on force-feedings of fish, the grebe patient was bright, alert, and reactive from intake onwards. Known for “walking” on water more than on the ground, keeping this grebe from open water was not a long-term solution. Luckily the grebe did not use their wing much while in care allowing for a complete healing of the fracture. Once cleared by staff, this western grebe patient was successfully released on November 10, 2023 to dance another day in nature!

SWAINSON'S HAWK SUCCESS STORY

by Courtney Collins



Swainson's hawk in care
in outdoor enclosure

This Swainson's hawk was admitted to AIWC on September 1, 2023, unable to fly, with a ruptured crop (an expanded pouch near the throat that is part of the digestive system). The rupture was sutured closed, and the hawk was started on a diet that included small pieces of clean meat. The hawk ate well on its own and was reassessed every few days to ensure it was healing.

On September 14, the hawk was moved to a larger enclosure as the wound was improving. On September 19, a small hole was found in the crop, which was sutured closed again. On September 22, the hawk stopped eating on its own and caretakers had to force-feed and tweezer feed small pieces of clean meat. This new feeding routine revealed that the crop was not emptying as it should and there was trauma to

the area. To reduce this, caretakers only force-fed the hawk once daily.

On October 6, the hawk was moved to a small outdoor enclosure in an attempt to reduce stress and encourage self-feeding. By October 12, the hawk was self-feeding again, the wound looked good, and an exam showed that tissue surrounding the wound was healthy. On October 16, the wound had healed further, and the last sutures were removed. Finally, on October 19, 2023 the hawk was released back into the wild in good body condition.

FROM FREEZE TO FLIGHT: A COMMON LOON'S COMEBACK

By Roxanne Selkirk

As diving birds, common loons are reliant on water to be able to fly, and need to run on open water for around 30 meters before they can gain enough speed for takeoff. This unique flying requirement can leave loons vulnerable to frozen lakes or human-made structures, such as roads, that they can confuse for water when choosing a place to land.

We received a loon patient in late October who was found unable to fly after a recent freeze. The loon was healthy, but needed some time to recover before embarking on their migration journey. Loons spend their winters along the Pacific and Atlantic coastlines of North America, and it's important they make it there before the inland lakes freeze over. We were grateful to see our loon patient recover quickly, and after just three days of recovery, they were released to continue on their journey to the coast.



Common loon in indoor
pool while in care

Black bear cub during intake exam



Black bear eating an apple in outdoor enclosure

BEAR NECESSITIES

by Bonnie Weiss

An American black bear born this past year made its way through the doors of the AIWC clinic on November 2, 2023. The bear had been found wandering alone around the Westlock area and was significantly emaciated (a mere 13 kg).

Our new bear cub guest was slowly weaned back onto food, to avoid refeeding syndrome. He was so hungry at first that he would gorge on most of his food immediately. High protein food items were introduced first, and protein intake was increased daily. After a short period of time, complex carbohydrates were introduced into his diet. After just two weeks in care, he went from 13 kg up to 19 kg.

Currently, he is on a diet of fish, meat and fresh produce, appearing satisfied and full after his meals. He displays preferences in food as well – apples, pears and squash appear to be his top three favourites.

The plan for this American black bear is to release him back to his natural habitat in June – after the spring bear hunt is complete.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING

by Katie Grant

On October 26, 2023, this Bohemian waxwing was admitted with a fractured right clavicle after having flown into the front window of a home in Calgary. Thanks to the quick reaction of the homeowner who recognized the waxwing was injured, the bird was brought to an emergency veterinary hospital and then transferred to AIWC for proper care.

The waxwing was bright, alert and reactive while in our care, and perched well right from the beginning. Following three weeks of cage rest, the waxwing was moved to a larger enclosure for flight conditioning. It was evident that this little bird was determined to get back into the wild, showing perfect flight and proving difficult to catch while in the larger enclosure. On November 22, 2023, the waxwing was cleared for release into the wild.



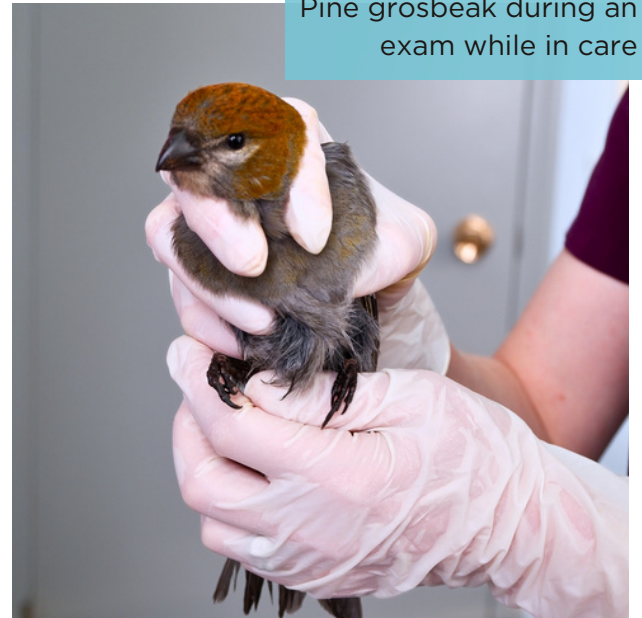
Bohemian waxwing in care at AIWC.

PINE GROSBEAK 23-1645

by Kendra Thomas

On November 12, 2023 a resident of Crossfield, AB found an injured immature male pine grosbeak. The young bird had a squinty right eye, crackling breath, and a dull disposition. The resident dropped the bird off at Fish Creek Pet Hospital, where AIWC volunteers retrieved it and brought it to our clinic. Once it arrived at AIWC, the pine grosbeak was assessed by our team, who identified that it had possible trauma to its air sac.

Within two days, the pine grosbeak was beginning to show signs of recovery; its injured eye was showing signs of healing and had begun perching again. A few days later it was flying well, although it continued to have a crackly breath. Due to its respiratory symptoms, the grosbeak was kept in an indoor enclosure to facilitate further recovery. On November 28, just over two weeks after its arrival, the bird had fully recuperated from its respiratory symptoms and was placed in an outdoor enclosure to encourage exercise. By December 4, the pine grosbeak had been cleared for release to the wild.



Pine grosbeak during an exam while in care

THE GREAT HORNED OWL'S JOURNEY

by Chelsea Blyth

On September 23, 2023, a Great Horned Owl was struck by a vehicle in Airdrie, bearing a coracoid (shoulder) fracture, head trauma, and a retinal tear.

Following a dedicated rehabilitation process, the patient exhibited improved alertness by September 30. By mid-October, progress was remarkable, prompting a transition to an outdoor enclosure to encourage flight exercises. However, persistent symptoms of eye damage hinted at the challenges ahead.

Undeterred, the owl defied the odds, taking to the skies once more by the end of October. The subsequent weeks witnessed continued improvement as the resilient bird gained weight and regained strength. Finally, on November 12, 2023, the fully-recovered great horned owl was released back into the wild.



Great horned owl in outdoor enclosure

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- 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
- Call 403-946-2361

AIWC plans to raise \$1,100,000 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 Katrina Terrill at 403-946-2361.

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SPONSOR A RECOVERING ANIMAL IN AIWC'S CARE!

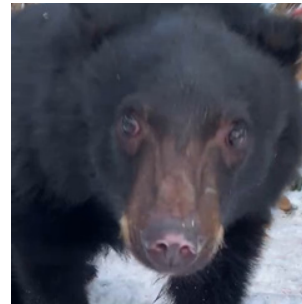
by Robyn Cunningham-Dunlop, Office Manager

As we bid farewell to 2023, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support of AIWC's 'Sponsor a Patient' program. Your dedication has been instrumental in providing essential care to our wild friends.

In 2023, we witnessed a fascinating shift in sponsorship trends. While the total annual sponsorships decreased, our digital certificate realm continued to thrive, constituting 40% of total sales. The convenience of an e-mailed certificate is gaining popularity, especially among our new wildlife advocates.

Your support not only makes a meaningful contribution to our cause but is also eligible for a tax receipt! An extra incentive for your generous contributions, helping us continue our vital work.

Thank you for being a vital part of our wildlife community. Together, we can make a positive impact in 2024!



Sponsorship packages include a certificate, a glossy 8x10 photo of your patient, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the sponsorships.

On a time crunch or want to save paper?
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Visit aiwc.ca for more info.

AIWC Hours

Our clinic is open to admit patients and accept donations/supplies at these times:

May to August: 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
September to April: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.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:
www.aiwc.ca/found-a-wild-animal/after-hours-assistance/

