

RECOVERY REVIEW

BEAR HUGS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

by Roxanne Selkirk

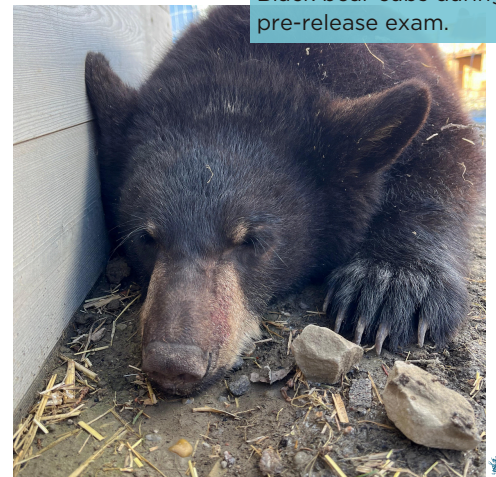
Black bear cubs in care.
August 2024.



In the depths of an Alberta winter, summer can feel like an eternity ago. For those of you who remember the warmer days of many moons past, you may remember our Summer 2024 Newsletter which introduced two black bear cubs, patients 24-192 and 24-438. While their patient IDs may not ring a bell, you may recognize the cubs from photos we included of them exploring our new outdoor Bear Den enclosure.

While these cubs arrived separately, one in May from Rocky Mountain House and the other in June from Bragg Creek, we paired them together to enhance their experience in our care. When we last updated you, the cubs were spending their days cuddling in their den and packing on pounds in preparation for their upcoming release.

We're pleased to report that our little bear cub patients successfully bulked up, each gaining over 30 kilograms! Confident that they were in good condition to make it through winter, our team cleared them for release in November. They were driven to separate locations close to where they were originally found, and are confirmed to be snoozing as they wait for spring to arrive.



Black bear cubs during
pre-release exam.

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

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, I am happy to have returned from maternity leave and working alongside our dedicated staff and volunteers to ensure a bright future for Alberta's wildlife. Reflecting on 2024, we have much to be proud of, and it's all thanks to your unwavering support.

Your generosity during our Give the Gift of Saving Wildlife campaign in December raised an incredible \$115,000—surpassing our goal and setting us up for success as we enter our busiest time of year. We are truly humbled by your contributions, especially in a time when many are facing financial challenges. Your dedication inspires us daily, and we are so grateful to have such a passionate community of supporters.

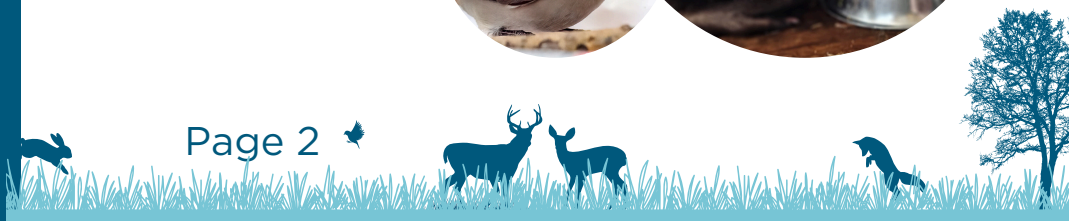
Last year, we cared for over 1,750 animals and responded to more than 7,100 calls on our wildlife hotline. These numbers represent the growing need for wildlife rehabilitation services across the province. Among our patients were many unique cases requiring extraordinary care, including two orphaned black bear cubs in the summer, and several birds of prey caught on barbed wire. Thanks to the skill and commitment of our team, these animals were successfully rehabilitated and returned to the wild.

Looking ahead, we are focusing on enhancing our facilities to better meet the needs of incoming patients. With spring just around the corner, we are preparing for the influx of orphaned and injured animals, particularly waterfowl and songbirds. Every improvement we make is driven by our mission to provide the best care possible, and it's only achievable because of you.

From all of us at AIWC, thank you for making 2024 a remarkable year for wildlife in Alberta. Here's to another year of giving second chances to the animals who share our world!

Sincerely,

Holly Lillie
Executive Director



EDUCATION & COMMUNITY UPDATE

By Alex Kellington

We are so grateful to our community for joining us in learning about our wonderful wildlife neighbours. In 2024, we were able to connect with over 5,000 people through our public awareness events and educational programming!

Did you know that most black bear cubs are born in late January to early February in their mother's winter den? Or that bears communicate with each other by rubbing on trees to leave their scent? These are just a couple of facts that we shared with a group of learners early this year during one of our education programs, "Alberta Bear Care". They also got to see the difference between black and grizzly bear claws.

Grizzly bear claw



Black bear claw



There are many ways to learn about wildlife! In addition to programs, you can also visit our booth at the Bow Habitat Station this spring to learn about the wild animals that call Alberta home. More information about the Bow Habitat Discovery Days can be found online at <https://bowhabitat.alberta.ca/whats-on/discovery-days.aspx>



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.



NATURE'S FLYING WONDER

by Vivian Hindbo

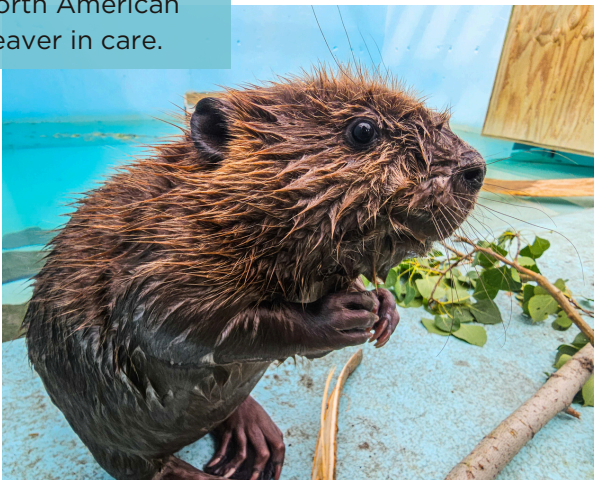
On September 21, 2024, a big brown bat was admitted to AIWC for care. This bat, with striking blonde fur (their fur colour ranges from chocolate brown to blonde), was found in SW Calgary, very lethargic, on her back, and unable to right herself. We found she had a swollen left wing, which we treated with cage rest, pain medication, and anti-inflammatory medication to reduce the swelling. Initially, we fed her a diet of mealworms and superworms using tweezers, as she would not feed on her own. However, once she got the hang of feeding, this hungry insectivore was eating several worms at a time.



Big brown bat in care while flight conditioning.

Flight conditioning is necessary for all our flying patients, including bats, to ensure they have the skills needed for a successful release. We moved this bat to an outdoor enclosure on October 9 for flight conditioning, where she quickly demonstrated great improvement in her flight. On October 11, we released the big brown bat to coincide with hibernation. It is important to release bats while the temperature is still above 4°C so they are able to safely reach their hibernacula. We hope our patient sleeps well throughout the winter.

North American beaver in care.



ORPHANED BEAVER UPDATE - RECOVERY IS GOING SWIMMINGLY!

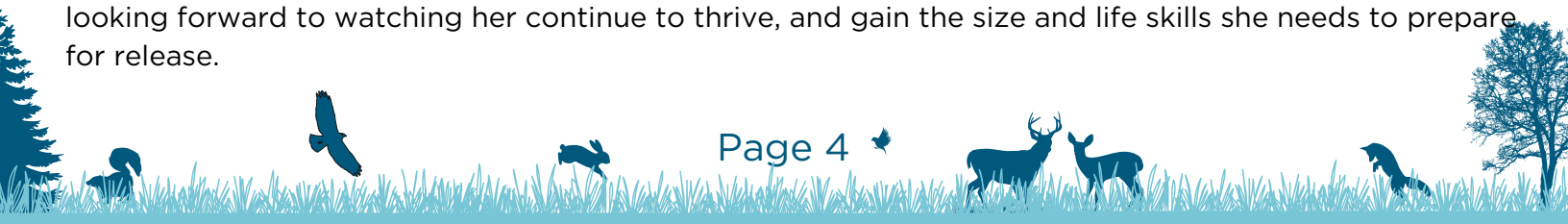
by Carley Goodreau

We have an update on the orphan beaver that entered care last May — she is doing very well! You may remember this tiny beaver was kicked out of her lodge near Edmonton by her parents, and arrived to us at one week old, resistant to feeding and very small.

Since the last update, this girl has been busy! While on formula, she tripled in weight by mid-July. After weaning off formula, we found out that she has quite the affinity for sweet potatoes, and continued to eat solids and browse.

The young beaver moved to the outdoor Aquatic Mammal enclosure in August, where she spent the summer and some of the fall. With the deeper pool in this enclosure, she began to practice her building and caching skills with the branches in the enclosure.

She hasn't stopped growing since her intake, and now weighs 10 kilograms. Adult beavers typically weigh between 17-32 kilograms, so she has a ways to go before she reaches full size. She is spending the winter in an indoor enclosure with a pool and has all the browse to feed on that she could want. Her release is set for Spring 2026, as she is still too young to survive alone without her parents. We are looking forward to watching her continue to thrive, and gain the size and life skills she needs to prepare for release.



NORTHERN GOSHAWK 24-1693

by Courtney Collins

Northern goshawk in care.



The northern goshawk is a bird of prey that can be found across Alberta. As adults, these incredible raptors have a striped grey and white abdomen and solid grey back, and reside in old growth mountain and boreal forests. This means they are generally only seen in southern Alberta during migration.

This juvenile northern goshawk was found with head trauma and an injured eye and foot in a Northwest Calgary yard. They were brought into care on October 15,

2024 and started on pain and anti-inflammatory medications. During the vet check, a small tear across their retina was found.

After one week, their x-rays came back normal, and the retinal tear was static. They were moved to the outdoor runway enclosure in late October. Weekly eye assessments were continued in the large enclosure, and they were very quick to eat any food. After 1.5 weeks, the retinal tear had improved significantly, and they were released on November 8 to continue their migration south.

CARING FOR ORPHANED DEER FAWNS

By Chelsea Blythe

Spring 2024 brought seven orphaned and injured deer fawns—five mule deer and two white-tailed deer—to AIWC for intensive rehabilitation. Some were injured or orphaned, while others were mistakenly taken from the wild in well-meaning but unnecessary rescues. Regardless of their circumstances, these young fawns required round-the-clock care to survive and thrive. In their early weeks at AIWC, the fawns relied on staff for six formula feedings per day and even needed assistance with basic bodily functions.



Two mule deer fawns shortly after release.

As they grew stronger, they transitioned from milk to a leaf-based diet, a crucial step in preparing them for life in the wild. To meet their high dietary needs, staff made daily trips to collect up to 180 kilograms of fresh browse—just one example of the immense effort required to raise these delicate patients. On October 16, 2024, they were transported to a beautiful, secluded property teeming with natural resources and ample space to roam. There, they took their first steps back into the wild, where they belong.

Raising fawns is one of the most labor-intensive wildlife rehabilitation efforts, but seeing them return to nature makes every challenge worthwhile.

TWENTY CENTIMETERS OF CUTENESS


by Heike Lippmann

In mid-October, the cutest little northern saw-whet owl arrived at our clinic after being hit by a car, showing signs of head trauma and a fractured shoulder blade.

She was placed on oxygen on and off for the first couple of days, as well as started on pain meds and antibiotics. Even with her injury, she was capable of short bursts of flight. However, she was put on cage rest and received a wing wrap to stabilize her shoulder. She immediately started self-feeding in care, eating approximately 1-2 whole mice per day, which, besides voles, is main prey of saw-whet owls.

After three weeks, our little patient healed well and was moved to an outside enclosure for exercise.

On November 27, 2024 she was released back to a mixed-wood forest. You will rarely see her again but her sharp high-pitched, repeated “too-too-too” call is a common evening sound in evergreen forests from January through May. If you live in a heavily wooded and not too dry area, you may attract a pair by hanging up nest boxes before breeding season.



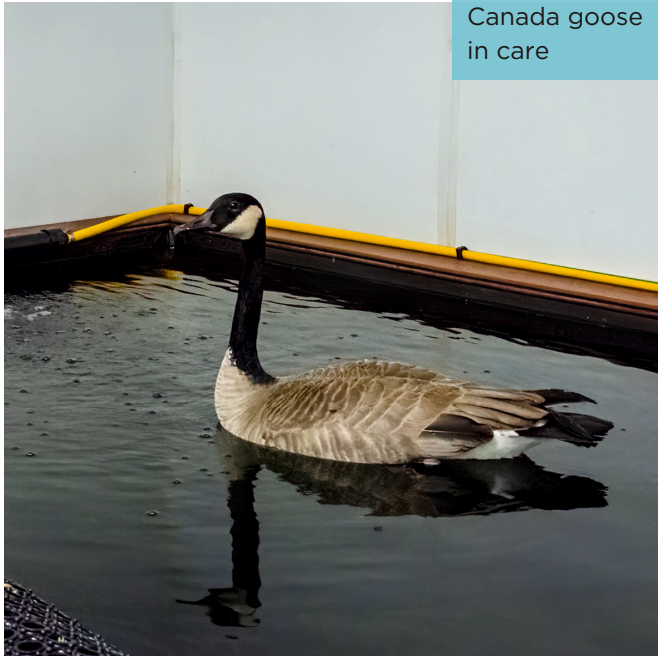
Northern saw-whet owl in care

A CANADIAN ICON'S RECOVERY

by Scottie Potter, Communications Coordinator

On December 18, 2024, an injured Canada goose arrived at the clinic from Northeast Calgary. Upon examination, staff discovered that the goose not only had 4 airgun pellets in their body cavity, but also had a fractured radius. After a few days of rest, the clinic team treated the goose's wounds and were able to remove two of the pellets. The wing was also wrapped to maintain the stability of the broken radius.

By early January, the goose's wing had healed well enough for the wrap to be removed and the goose was moved to a larger enclosure with a large pool, and a few weeks later was moved to an outdoor space that allowed for flight conditioning. By the end of January, the goose was flapping well and was given the clear for release. After a brief cold spell, the goose was released on February 8, 2025.

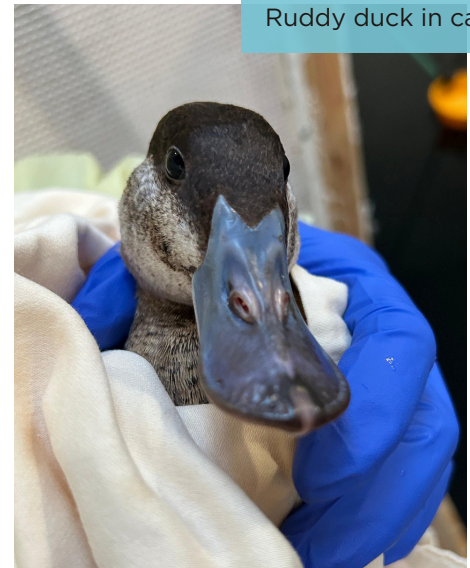


Canada goose in care

RUDDY DUCK

by Jennea Frischke

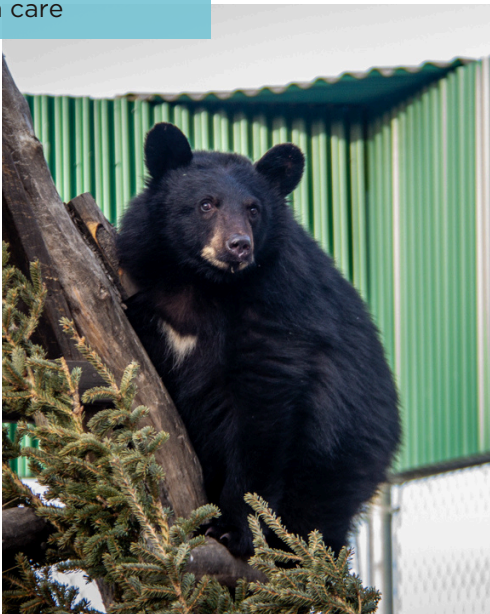
On October 25, 2024, this juvenile ruddy duck, was found with a very large wound on the right side of his chest and he was brought into AIWC for care. We are unsure of the cause but, considering the depth of injury, it was most likely a form of impalement. The area was treated with bandages and medication to help with healing and foster feather regrowth around the injury for better waterproofing. Diving ducks usually don't put much pressure on their feet because they are usually on soft ground or on water full-time. Not being able to swim for an extended period of time unfortunately caused the development of foot sores for this patient. He was treated with antibiotics and wore special "booties" to help him heal. Since then, his feathers have regrown to cover the healed wound, ensuring we will stay warm on cold water. Prior to going back in the water, his booties were removed. To help the sores finish healing, his feet have been being treated with a dermagel.



Ruddy duck in care

His favourite snack is superworms. He is served these worms out of blue or orange bowls that float on the surface of the water. Overall he is doing well, and he is spending all of his time in the pool.

Black bear cub
in care



BLACK BEAR RESCUED FROM STARVATION

by Scottie Potter, Communications Coordinator

A highly emaciated black bear cub arrived at the AIWC clinic on December 9, 2024 after it was determined he'd been on his own for some time. We suspect his mother was killed and he was struggling to survive without her experience.

At just 15 kilograms, he was incredibly underweight for his age, and would not have been able to enter hibernation on his own. To prevent a metabolic shock to his system (called refeeding syndrome), staff slowly reintroduced food to the bear during his first few weeks in care. Starting with simple proteins, like eggs, moving up to meats, and eventually fruits and vegetables, this process helped the young cub acclimate to a proper diet once again.

Due to his poor condition at intake, it is unlikely that the bear will hibernate, although he has gained over 10 kilograms, and will continue to pack on the pounds until he is released in spring 2025.

**Buy your
AIWC 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 E-news
- Discounted prices on select AIWC merchandise
- 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 Holly Lillie at 403-946-2361.

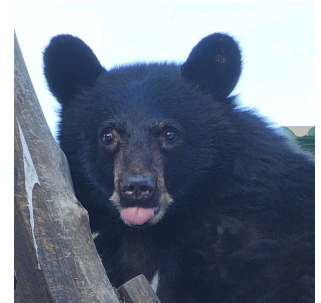
SPONSOR-A-PATIENT

by *Scottie Potter*, Communications Coordinator

If you'd like to have a big impact on a animal's journey to recovery, please consider sponsoring one of our current wildlife patients!

Many of the patients currently available to sponsor, including a beaver, bobcat, and black bear, require long stays in our hospital before they are ready to return to the wild.

Looking for a meaningful gift for the wildlife lover in your life? Sponsorships make for excellent gifts for birthdays and holidays! Share the heartwarming stories of wildlife recovery with your loved ones, all while supporting the AIWC's wildlife rehabilitation mission!



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



Visit aiwc.shop 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/