

# RECOVERY REVIEW

## EIGHT ORPHANED DEER FAWNS BEGIN ANEW

by KATIE GRANT



Fawns drinking formula



Fawn basking in sunshine in the ungulate enclosure



Fawns feeding on browse

This summer, AIWC raised eight deer fawns – two white-tailed deer and six mule deer. As is often the case, vehicle-wildlife collisions led to the orphaning of several fawns. White-tailed deer patient 25-693 was found on the side of the road after his mother was struck by a vehicle. Mule deer patients 25-592 and 25-594 were both found wandering the roadside without their mothers, while mule deer patient 25-948 had been seen running along a highway calling out for his mother for two days. White-tailed deer 25-430 had a dramatic start to life, born on the side of the road immediately after her mother was struck.

Mule deer 25-914 came to AIWC after her mother was confirmed deceased. Meanwhile, the youngest of the group, twin mule deer patients 25-651 and 25-652 were discovered together after spending some time in human care before being transferred to AIWC. It is not recommended for members of the public to care for fawns themselves, as they require specialized nutrition and medical attention. When found, they should always be transferred to a proper facility such as AIWC, where they will receive the correct care.

On intake, each fawn was placed in a quiet, darkened room with supplemental heat to reduce stress. Many were dehydrated, and were stabilized with fluids before being gradually introduced to a specialized milk formula. Over time, their diet transitioned to natural browse, water, and pellets. Now, all eight fawns have been fully weaned and receive a van-full of fresh branches and leaves each day. As they grew, the fawns were gradually given more space, eventually gaining access to AIWC's full ungulate (deer/moose) enclosure. Strict protocols are followed to reduce human contact, including having a small handful of caregivers who wear masks and coveralls and keep voices low around the enclosure. These steps ensure the fawns retain their wild instincts, which are vital for survival when they are released back into their natural habitat.

It is also important to remember that not every fawn found alone needs help. Both mule and white-tailed newborn fawns are almost entirely scentless, which helps them avoid detection by predators. Mothers will leave them hidden for long stretches of time while they forage, returning only a few times a day to nurse. Unless a fawn is clearly injured, calling out repeatedly, or its mother is confirmed dead, the best thing you can do is leave it where it is and contact a wildlife rehabilitation centre for advice.

While this strategy protects them from many natural predators, fawns are still vulnerable to dangers such as predator attacks and encounters with pet dogs. Keeping dogs leashed in areas where deer are present can prevent unnecessary injury or orphaning. Vehicle collisions remain one of the leading causes of wildlife admissions in Alberta. With your support, AIWC can continue to provide a second chance for animals like these fawns. Together, we can make sure stories that begin with loss end with freedom.



**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.

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 Robyn C. Dunlop at 403-946-2361.

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Submissions/comments may be sent to [info@aiwc.ca](mailto:info@aiwc.ca)

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

As of September 6, 2025, AIWC has admitted more injured and orphaned animals than in all of 2024 – a 14% increase in admissions. Each year brings its own challenges, with factors like weather patterns, human-wildlife interactions, disease outbreaks (such as avian flu), and natural population fluctuations all playing a role. While circumstances change, one thing remains constant: the growing demand for our services.

Over 150 different species have been admitted to AIWC so far in 2025. One striking case is that of the mountain cottontail. In AIWC's 32-year history prior to 2025, we had cared for only 11 of these rabbits. This year alone, we've admitted 40! Like many species, their populations naturally rise and fall over time, and 2025 has certainly been a boom year for them. Thanks to your generous support, we've been able to meet this increased demand and continue providing excellent care to wildlife in need.

On a personal note, by the time you read this, I should be at home snuggled up with my newborn daughter. I'll be going on my second – and final – maternity leave from AIWC in October 2025 and plan to return in fall 2026. In my absence, Robyn Cunningham-Dunlop will be stepping in as Acting Executive Director. Many of you already know Robyn: she has been with AIWC for nearly eight years, first as Office Manager and, earlier this year, moving into the role of Fundraising and Development Manager. Robyn brings incredible experience and will provide wonderful leadership while I'm away. You can reach her at [robyn.dunlop@aiwc.ca](mailto:robyn.dunlop@aiwc.ca) or 403-946-2361.

As we approach the holiday season, I kindly ask for your continued support of AIWC. Our online store, [www.aiwc.shop](http://www.aiwc.shop), has a fantastic selection of gifts perfect for the nature lovers in your life. In late November, we'll also be launching our *Give the Gift of Saving Wildlife* campaign, with a goal of raising \$85,000 to support our mission. More details can be found at [aiwc.ca](http://aiwc.ca). Every contribution – no matter the size – makes a meaningful difference and helps us continue our vital work caring for Alberta's wildlife.

Thank you for your steadfast support of AIWC. In my eleven years with this organization, it has been an absolute privilege to witness its incredible growth, which would not have been possible without you. I'm so proud of the work we do together to protect and care for Alberta's wildlife.

Wishing you and your loved ones all the joys of the season, from our entire team at AIWC.

**Season's Greetings!**

*Holly Lillie*

Executive Director



Red squirrel at AIWC

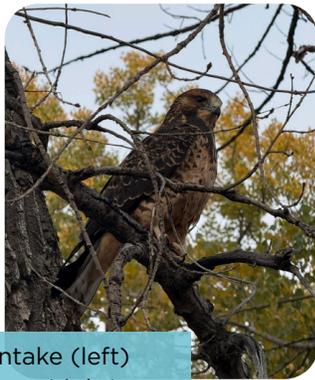


# RAISIN' SWAINSON'S

by SIOBHAN HEROLD

Patient 25-1053 was brought to AIWC in July after falling from their nest in southeast Calgary. With big eyes that had just begun to open and a coat of fluffy grey down, it was clear this patient was a Swainson's hawk hatchling. On intake, this hawk was thought to be only eight to twelve days old and weighed a meager 55 grams.

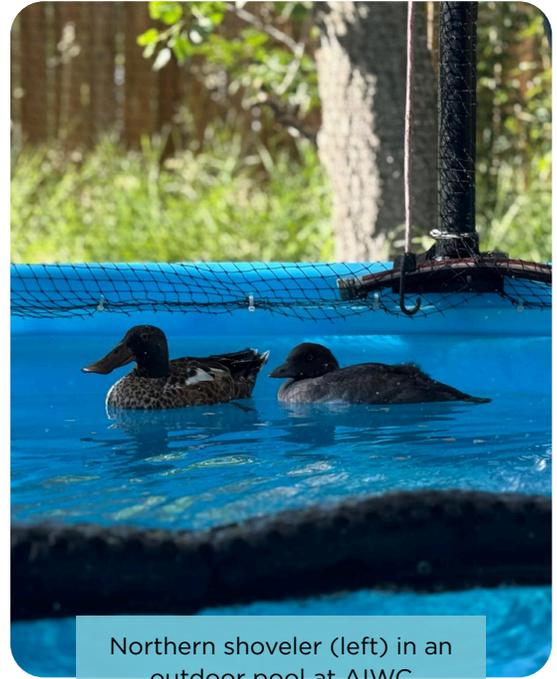
The young raptor was immediately placed in an incubator on site and treated for mild dehydration. Like most bird nestlings, this hawk was hungry! Young raptors don't need to be fed nearly as often as young songbirds, but feeding a raptor from such a young age presented its own challenges. Young hawks are susceptible to imprinting on human caretakers, which can lead to aggressive behaviour and troubles socializing with other members of the same species later on. To avoid imprinting of the young nestling, AIWC's rehabilitation team wore a make-shift hawk mask during feeding.



25-1053 on intake (left) and at release (right)

Once this patient was ready, they were moved into an outdoor enclosure with other Swainson's hawks to meet their growing need for space. In early September, animal care staff noticed patient 25-1053 was not bearing weight on one foot and, after x-rays, it was found that they had a fracture in the lower bone of their left leg. To recover safely under close supervision, the patient was moved inside and equipped with a splint to heal the bone.

After two and a half weeks of close monitoring, this hawk's fracture had healed over nicely and they were moved back outside to continue flight conditioning with the other Swainson's hawks on site. At the beginning of October, patient 25-1053 was released back into the wild with another Swainson's hawk in time for fall migration.



Northern shoveler (left) in an outdoor pool at AIWC

## SHOVELER EN ROUTE

by HEIKE LIPPMANN

Wildlife depends on all of us and every small or big effort that ensures their well-being is appreciated.

In June, an awesome human being found a northern shoveler near Fort McMurray and was able to fly him on a plane to Calgary. The shoveler was admitted to our care with a large chest wound, of unknown cause. He was started on both pain medications and antibiotics, as well as daily bandage changes and wound care. In order to ensure he got enough calories and proper nutrition, he needed to be gavage fed (fed through a tube that is inserted through the mouth to the stomach) three times a day as he did not self-feed.

After one month, he was finally ready to be put in a pool. We chose to add him in an enclosure with other ducks, including a mallard and green winged teal, to keep his stress level low. After 45 days in our care, he was healed up enough and was released back to the wild in a suitable habitat.

Without the awareness and commitment of the finder, and the hard work of our team, this shoveler would likely have not recovered. Please call AIWC or your nearest wildlife rescue if you find orphaned or injured animals.

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# DUCKLINGS, DUCKLINGS, DUCKLINGS!

by JENNEA FRISCHKE

We have had another record year for duckling intakes at AIWC. This year we had just under 400 ducklings, 267 being mallard ducklings. Outside of mallards, we had scaups, goldeneyes, wigeons, teals, shovelers, wood ducks, mergansers, gadwalls, redheads, and ruddy ducks! Each year we continue to break our record for the most mallards we have ever admitted during the summer and are expecting this trend to continue. Increased numbers of duckling patients may indicate rebounds in waterfowl populations recovering from Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Our rehab team works diligently to make sure the ducklings are safe and well cared for. We have a “Brooder Room” where the youngest ducklings are kept. Each tub in our brooder room houses a group of three to eight ducklings at a time until they are old enough to be moved to a larger enclosure. It’s important not to give ducklings too much space when they are first learning to swim. They are not fully waterproof when first born, can tire easily, and risk drowning if not monitored closely. Each tub has a feeder tray, a space to stand on when they’re tired of swimming, and a heat lamp overhead to keep things at the optimal temperature, because ducklings can not moderate their own body temperature. Growing ducks are allowed free access to feed at all times. We also supplement their pellet food with wild plants. These cuties are some of our messiest patients, and require cleaning three times a day!

All ducklings are closely monitored to make sure the waterproofing on their feathers develops well. It is important to make sure there is waterproofing around areas of injury, which are treated with bandages and medication to help with healing and foster feather regrowth. Without waterproofing, ducks are unable to swim much and can develop foot sores.

In these cases, they are often treated with antibiotics and given special “booties” to wear that help heal and prevent further wounds. These booties consist of vet wrap with a gauze cushion to take the pressure off the feet while waiting for waterproofing to come in. Once healed enough, booties are removed, and the feet are treated with a dermal bandage.

Orphaned ducklings can die very quickly from hypothermia, dehydration, or the lack of proper nutrition within 24-hours. If you spot ducklings alone for more than 20 minutes, call our hotline!



Juvenile red-necked grebe in an outdoor pool



Juvenile ruddy ducks enjoying some pool time



Wood duck (top) and common merganser (bottom) resting over the pool

## BATTY FOR BATS

by CARLEY MACKIE



Little brown bat in care at AIWC



Silver-haired bat during feeding



Big brown bat during feeding

2025 has proven to be the year of bats, with the clinic seeing a surge in admissions this season – 30 and counting since the beginning of summer! With migration season continuing through early fall, we expect to see more bat admissions to come. Alberta has nine species of bat that each migrate some distance. Three species leave the province for winter and may travel as far as Mexico and the Southern USA, or as close as Southern British Columbia. The remaining species hibernate in caves, coulees and abandoned buildings in Alberta. For some species, like the hoary bat, migration patterns remain a mystery.

Some of the grounded bats admitted this year have been found in unusual places – bathrooms, rain buckets, and walls – while others have sought temporary shelter in doorframes and sheds. Patient 25-1348, a little brown bat, arrived in care covered in cooking oil, while others, like patient 25-1073, were injured by cats. Some bats were found just resting on the ground. A few bat patients only needed rest before making a full recovery and being cleared for release.

Some bats had more complex injuries. Silver-haired bat 25-1558 had a firm swollen area on one of the digits of her left wing; and it wasn't clear if this was a soft tissue injury or a fracture. An x-ray showed that there was no fracture, so clinic staff started antibiotics to treat infection causing the swelling. She is currently off antibiotics and building muscle by flight conditioning in the bat room to get ready for her release.

Bats are at risk from many interactions, including habitat loss, predators, a contagious fungus called white nose syndrome, and even wind turbines. In Alberta, bats are protected animals under the Wildlife Act, and both provincial and federal governments are involved in monitoring and making efforts to recover the population. Two species, the little brown bat and the northern long-eared myotis, are classified as endangered due to the rapid spread of white nose syndrome. To learn more about bats, and the effect of wind turbines during migration season, check out AIWC blog posts from June 14, 2023 and August 20, 2024.

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## TANGLED: A HOODED MERGANSER'S CLOSE CALL

by COURTNEY COLLINS

The hooded merganser, *Lophodytes cucullatus*, is a small diving duck with an oversized, collapsible hood or crest of head feathers. Females of this species have a muted colouration of grey/brown feathers with a red-brown/cinnamon head crest and reddish-brown eyes. Males have a more striking colouration with a black upper back and neck, a large bright white circle on the head, and chestnut wings with yellow eyes.

This male merganser was admitted to AIWC in late July after being found entangled in fishing line. The fishing line had constricted his right leg and caused loss of secondary flight feathers. He was started on medication immediately and was able to be moved into the pool and start self-feeding relatively quickly. After a few weeks, there was no signs of infection, and the flight feathers were growing in nicely. He was then moved into an outdoor pool, and medications were stopped. After one month at AIWC, he was fully healed and was released back into the wild.

Fishing line often causes irreversible damage and/or death to wildlife, and this merganser was very lucky not to have any permanent damage. Please be sure to collect and appropriately discard your fishing gear.

If you have questions, or see a bird in need of help, please contact AIWC or your nearest wildlife rescue.



Hooded merganser before release.

## AIWC'S THREE LITTLE BEARS

by VIVIAN HINDBO



American black bears on climbing structure

In early June, 2025, we admitted three orphaned black bear cubs, all estimated to have been about four months old. Although all were a bit thin and dehydrated, they were otherwise healthy. We administered oral fluids to rehydrate them and slowly introduced them to food once they were stable. They were initially fed specialized bear formula and oats, then introduced to fruit and vegetables, and eventually to protein. By the time bear cubs are ready for release, they will each eat up to four pounds of food per day!

Although the cubs came in separately, they had all bonded and spent their days playing or cuddling. With massive appetites, they did a great job at foraging for food items within their enclosure. At AIWC, we consider rehabilitation of black bear cubs to be successful if they are healthy, have grown to a proper weight, are showing natural behaviours (food recognition, foraging, climbing, etc.), are appropriately socializing with other bears, and have shown an appropriate fear of humans.

On September 1st, we conducted a pre-release medical exam and all passed with flying colors. All three cubs were released in mid-October. We coordinate the exact date and location for bear releases with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, who equip each bear with a radio collar and monitor them for a year to ensure they have successfully denned for the winter and have avoided human populations.

Since we began caring for black bear cubs in 2019, we have admitted 22 cubs. Post-release monitoring has shown our rehabilitation efforts have had a 100% success rate! We are honoured to play a role in giving these black bear orphaned cubs a second chance at life in their natural habitat!

# WILD GIFTS THAT GIVE BACK

by ROBYN CUNNINGHAM-DUNLOP

What do you get for the family member who has everything?...Or how do you skip the mall crowds and still find a gift that feels truly meaningful?

This holiday season, consider sponsoring one of AIWC's wild patients on behalf of someone special. Each sponsorship helps provide lifesaving medical treatment, food, and enrichment for injured and orphaned wildlife in our care.

Sponsorships have become one of our most cherished programs, not only because they directly fund rehabilitation, but because they offer something unique to share during the holidays—a gift that gives back to both the recipient and to wildlife in need.

From owls to foxes to the occasional beaver, your sponsorship makes that possible!

Whether tucked under the tree, slipped into a stocking, or shared digitally with loved ones near and far, sponsoring a patient is a powerful way to spread joy—and compassion—this season.

Give a gift that gives back—to wildlife and your loved ones.

What you will receive:

Beaver at AIWC

- A personalized certificate with your name.
- An 8x10 photo of the patient they're helping to support.



## CERTIFICATE OF SPONSORSHIP

{{name}}

Date of admission:  
May 29, 2024

Has fostered the care of a  
North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)

Reason for admission:  
Developmental

### Patient History:

The North American beaver is a semi-aquatic mammal found throughout the majority of the United States and Canada and is the largest rodent in North America. They can grow to weigh between 25 and 70 pounds and have very distinct features which make them easily recognizable. They are known for their webbed feet, long front teeth which they keep sharp by gnawing on trees, and their long, flat, black tails. These tails not only help it to swim faster but are also used to make alarm calls to signal danger by slapping it against the water. They are monogamous and typically mate for life.

Beavers are nocturnal, meaning they are most active at night; they have an excellent sense of smell but have poor sight and hearing. Because they spend a lot of their time in the water, beavers are equipped with transparent eyelids which help them see underwater. They also have scent glands on their underside which secretes a liquid that covers their fur and makes it waterproof.

This North American beaver was rescued after being rejected by her parents. Whether due to a developmental issue or her mother's inability to nurse, she was no longer accepted into the family. Now weighing 8.40 kg, she's growing daily and is bright and alert, but it's a long road ahead. In the wild, young beavers remain with their parents for 2-3 years before dispersing, so she will likely stay in our care until spring 2026.

Her diet currently consists of a variety of browse, with her favorites being poplar, aspen, and willow; and she's also developed a liking for cattails, which were introduced a couple of weeks ago. Thank you for your generous support in making her care possible!



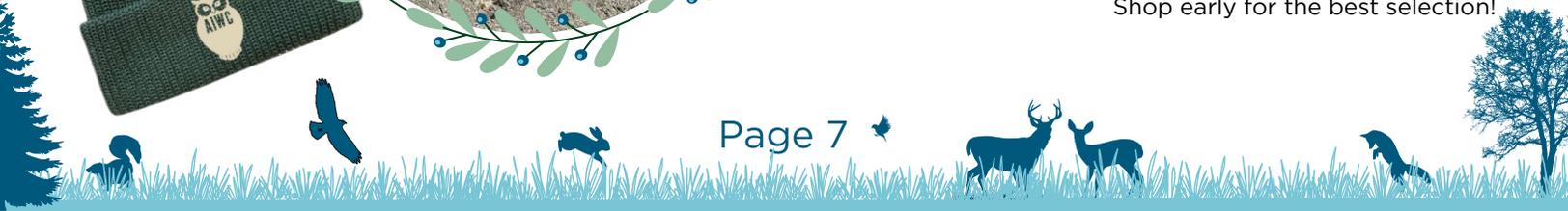
WANT SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF TOO? CHECK OUT OUR NEW AIWC MERCHANDISE!

Sending a sponsorship to a loved one, but still want a little something to unwrap yourself?

Or maybe you'd like to pair a sponsorship with a cozy keepsake? Our brand-new AIWC merchandise is here just in time for the holidays! From travel mugs and toques to coffee, stickers, iron-on patches, and our new crewnecks and hoodies, there's something for everyone on your list – including you.

Each purchase directly supports AIWC's patients so, no matter what you choose, your gift gives back. Order select items through the order form insert, or explore our full collection online at [www.aiwc.ca](http://www.aiwc.ca) or by phone.

Shop early for the best selection!



Module 3, Compartment 3, Madden  
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(403) 946-2361  
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www.aiwc.ca

**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 Individual, \$25 for Seniors/Students, \$45 for a Family, or \$250 for a Corporation.

**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**

**Go Green with AIWC**

We're always looking for ways to reduce our environmental footprint—and that includes saving paper wherever we can!

If you'd prefer to receive a digital copy of this newsletter instead of a printed one, just let us know at [info@aiwc.ca](mailto:info@aiwc.ca).

**Charitable #: 14041 6140 RR0001**

**HELPFUL AIWC RESOURCES**

Looking for ways to support wildlife or get involved with AIWC? Check out the helpful resources below—from reporting injured animals to donating bottles and going green with your mail preferences!

**SUPPORT AIWC WITH YOUR BOTTLES THROUGH SKIPTHEDEPOT!**

**Turn Bottles into Lifesaving Care!**



Your empty cans and bottles can help wildlife in need—just **schedule a pickup** through **SkipTheDepot** and select AIWC as your charity. It's free, easy, and supports our rescue and rehabilitation efforts! **Scan the QR code** and use the promo code '**AIWC**' to give us 100% of the earnings.



[skipthedepot.com/aiwc](https://skipthedepot.com/aiwc)

**WANT TO VOLUNTEER?**

AIWC is supported by over 125 active volunteers who play a vital role in wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, and release, as well as supporting our hotline, blog, newsletter, and public outreach efforts. We host two volunteer recruitment sessions each year, in February and September. Applicants must be 18 years or older, and some remote, at-home roles are available. If you're interested in joining our team, visit our website and fill out an application ahead of the next session!

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



**FOUND AN INJURED,  
ORPHANED, OR OILED  
WILD ANIMAL**  
FILL OUT OUR FORM



**AIWC HOURS**

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

**May to August: 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 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.

