

RECOVERY REVIEW

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

by VIVIAN HINDBO

A Calgary resident had an unexpected visitor in the early fall of 2025: a Costa's hummingbird. The Arizona and California deserts are the favored habitat for Costa's hummingbirds, where they nest during the late winter and spring. In the summer, they migrate to California and Baja to avoid the desert heat. Costa's hummingbirds have been known to wander far from their customary territory (considered "vagrant"), including several sightings in the Pacific Northwest, and even some sightings as far as Alaska! Our patient is the fifth of the species to be seen in Alberta.



Costa's hummingbird in care, December 2025

Our hummingbird patient was found by a member of the public in their Calgary yard. Upon advice from AIWC, they monitored her for over a month in the hope that she would migrate. When she was still there in November, when the temperature dropped, AIWC decided to bring her into care.

On intake, she was completely healthy other than being a bit thin and dehydrated. We suspect this was due to her living mainly on sugar water for the last month.



Costa's hummingbird in care, December 2025

In care, she is given Nektar (a nectar substitute that is a mixture of the vitamins, proteins, etc. that she would normally get from the nectar in flowers), fruit flies, and bloodworms (to meet her protein needs), and flowers (a natural source of nectar).

Luckily, we are able to monitor her through surveillance cameras, limiting her interaction with animal care staff.

Our hummingbird patient will be released in the spring once other hummingbirds have migrated back to the area, most likely in May.



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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.

AIWC plans to raise **\$1,500,000** 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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Winter Birdwatching 101	3
American Crow 24-1745	4
Winter Wings	4
Squirrelling Away for the Winter	5
A Salamander's Smile	6
Share the Love	7
Helpful AIWC Resources	8

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

As we move into the early weeks of 2026, all of us at AIWC are still feeling an incredible sense of gratitude for the compassion and generosity shown by our community over the past year. Thanks to you, 2025 became one of the busiest — and most impactful — years in our organization's history!

Together, we cared for 2,103 injured and orphaned wild animals, representing more than 150 different species from across Alberta. Our wildlife hotline rang steadily throughout the year, with 7,037 calls answered by our dedicated team.

These numbers are remarkable, but what they truly reflect is something far more meaningful: a community that shows up, time and time again, for animals that cannot advocate for themselves.

Winter is often seen as a quieter season for wildlife, but here at the centre, it is a time of steady care, preparation, and reflection. Many animals admitted late in the fall remain with us through the colder months, healing and regaining strength for release. At the same time, our team is preparing for the spring surge, when admissions traditionally rise sharply. We have already welcomed 23 patients into care since January 1 — from disturbed Tiger Salamanders and displaced Muskrats to injured Long-eared Owls. The year is already shaping up to be both interesting and busy once again.

It is a true privilege to step into 2026 as Acting Executive Director. Having been part of AIWC for nearly eight years (as of March!), I have witnessed firsthand the deep compassion that fuels this organization — from donors and volunteers to staff and supporters across the province.

Thank you for beginning another year alongside us and for continuing to make second chances possible for Alberta's wildlife.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Robyn Cunningham-Dunlop
Acting Executive Director



WINTER BIRDWATCHING 101

by Heike Lippman

To observe our feathered friends via a feeder, you have to consider what is best suited for your property and the type of bird you like to watch or feed.

Always choose bird-friendly feeders to avoid them getting stuck or trapped. Use different feeder types (platform, tube, suet) at varied heights to cater to different species.

What seeds you should be using depends on the birds you like to see. There are delicious blends on the market for a variety of birds. Suet is perfect for attracting birds that love insects in their diet. It should only be used in cold winters as it spoils quickly when it gets warm.

As for location, it's best to avoid placing feeders too close to trees or poles that are sturdy enough for a predator to attack from. Avoid placing them too far into an open area, where birds cannot find cover.

To offer hiding places, you can also grow plants on nearby arbors or pergolas.

- Platform feeders closer to the ground are accepted by doves and juncos
- Suet cakes near upright trees work great for woodpeckers and nuthatches
- Tube feeders are perfect for small songbirds like chickadees, finches, and nuthatches.
- Hopper feeders attract a wide range of birds, including sparrows and grosbeaks.

Feeders must be protected from rain, snow, and sun so as not spoil the seeds.

If you have lots of squirrels in your area, the ideal spot for a feeder is 1.5 meters off the ground, 2 meters away from any structures, and 3 meters from anything hanging above.

Also, regular cleaning of your feeders and baths every couple of weeks, more often in wet weather or high-use periods, is essential. Don't forget to clean the ground below them, too.

After disassembly of your feeder, scrub all parts with hot soapy water or a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) to kill germs. Then rinse everything thoroughly with clean water, and allow the parts to dry completely before assembling and refilling to prevent mold and disease.

Feeders need some consideration and work, but are a worthy addition to your yard.



Blue jay with peanut



Red-breasted nuthatch at suet feeder in winter



AMERICAN CROW 24-1745

by COURTNEY COLLINS

American crow in care
after moulting



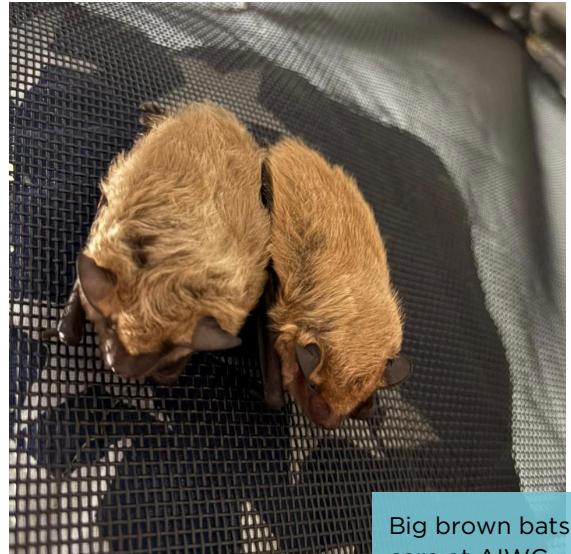
On November 19, 2024, after one month of rescue attempts, an American crow was brought into AIWC from Airdrie. Upon admission, they were unable to fly due to poor feather quality. Almost all their primary and secondary feathers had breakage, and many body feathers were mid-molt. Feather condition like this is often seen in birds with poor nutrition, though we can't know this for sure in this particular crow. X-rays were taken at admission with no findings, and the only required medical treatment was for parasites. For the treatment of feathers, time and a nutritional diet (including supplements) were

needed for them to regrow fully. Once new feathers had regrown, flight conditioning to rebuild stamina and endurance was the next hurdle. After some time working on their flight, they were released on December 7, 2025, over a year after they were admitted!

WINTER WINGS

by ROXANNE SELKIRK

Alberta's nocturnal wildlife usually goes unnoticed, but today we're bringing two patients out of the shadows who you would be unlikely to ever spot in the wild. We are currently caring for two female big brown bats with very different stories. Our first patient was admitted after sustaining significant injuries to her wings during an animal attack. The second patient was unfortunately disturbed while hibernating and needed somewhere safe and quiet to wait out the winter. AIWC was happy to help!



Big brown bats in care at AIWC

While the "snowbirds" of the bat world migrate south, the hardy big brown bat stays to brave our cold Canadian winters. Don't let the name spook you. Big brown bats only weigh around 20 grams - roughly the weight of four nickels. These bats often prefer human-made structures like attics, barns, or garages over caves for group hibernation. To survive, they enter torpor, a state of deep sleep where they drastically lower their heart rate and drop their body temperature to match their surroundings.

Waking up from torpor is energetically expensive. A roused bat burns through precious fat reserves needed to survive the winter. If disturbed too often, they may run out of energy before spring. This is why our release protocol is strictly seasonal. Because insect snacks are non-existent in January, these two are booked for an extended stay at AIWC until the spring thaw brings the insects back.

SQUIRRELLING AWAY FOR THE WINTER

by CARLEY MACKIE



Squirrel during early days of care at AIWC



Squirrel in care at AIWC



Red squirrel investigating spruce cones

An orphaned baby American red squirrel was brought into care near the end of September when he was around five weeks old. At this age, the baby squirrel would still be nursing from his mother, so we began feeding him formula three times a day.

Squirrels typically start nibbling on solid foods at 6 weeks, but continue with milk during this transition. Right away, the squirrel was offered solid foods, which helped him learn how to feed himself. At the same time, the amount of formula he was given was reduced slowly, while more solid food was added until he was completely weaned off the formula.

When we were sure that the squirrel could feed himself, he was moved into a larger enclosure that introduced the squirrel to outdoor elements. He learned to climb and search for a variety of food that staff hid around the enclosure, in crevices of logs, and buried in leaf litter.

Squirrels have a natural drive to stash food to survive the winter, and begin stuffing nuts and seeds in crevices and soil. Squirrels will cache a large quantity of food to prepare for winter, and due to the timing of this squirrel's intake, he wouldn't have had time to create a big enough stash to be released. He will spend the winter in care to ensure he has access to enough food, and will be released in spring when more food is naturally available.

To help the squirrel along in his reintroduction to the wild, we are planning a soft release onto a property where someone can help him start on the right foot. The nest box that he will spend the winter in will be hung in a tree. He'll have a chance to become familiar with the area and have the food cache he built up in his nest box over the winter. The ideal location for the soft release is an area natural to red squirrels with good food and water sources, plenty of natural coverage, and no obvious predators.

A SALAMANDER'S SMILE

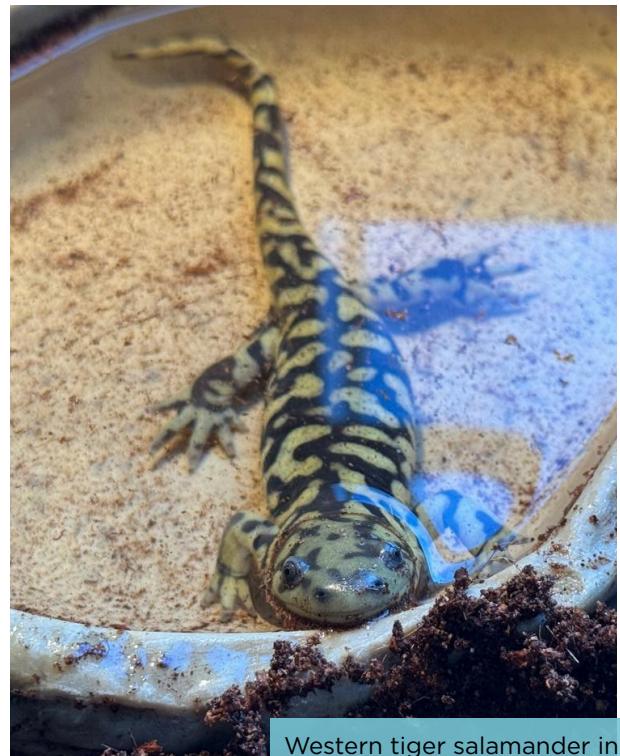
by SCOTTIE POTTER

A rare patient arrived in care on January 6, 2026: a western tiger salamander. Also called the barred tiger salamander, these amphibians are one of two salamander species that call Alberta home. Although they are found throughout the province in a variety of habitats, they are rarely seen, as adult salamanders prefer to spend their time underground. During fall, salamanders will travel up to a kilometer to find a proper site to brumate (the amphibian version of hibernation).

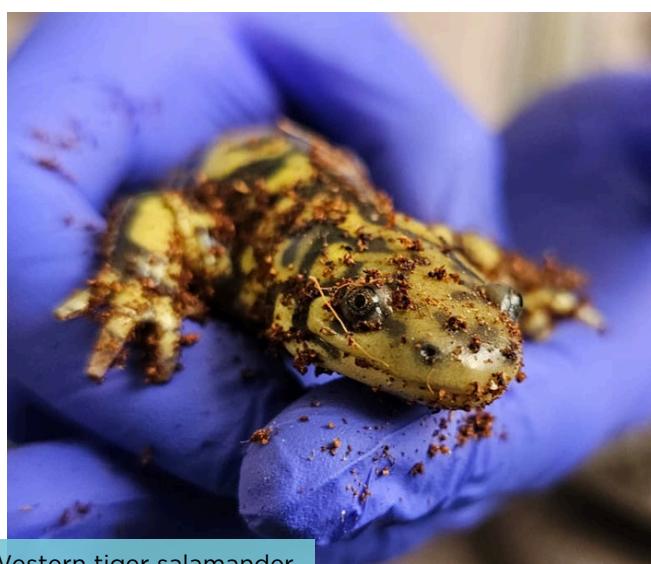
This salamander was found in a greenhouse on Olds College campus, and likely found her way there while searching for a brumation den.

She was initially rescued by the finder with the hope of safely overwintering her and releasing her in the spring. However, recognizing that specialized care would give her the best chance for a successful release, they reached out to AIWC, and she was brought into our care for the season.

The salamander is now relaxing in a comfortably soggy terrarium with plenty of mealworms to keep her fed until spring.



Western tiger salamander in care at AIWC



Western tiger salamander in care at AIWC



Western tiger salamander in care at AIWC

SHARE THE LOVE!

Each February, our Sponsorship Program becomes one of the most heartfelt ways to celebrate love — for partners, friends, family, or anyone who has a soft spot for wildlife.

When you sponsor a patient at AIWC, your recipient receives a personalized certificate and photo of the animal whose care they've helped support. Sponsorships can be delivered instantly by email or sent as a beautifully printed certificate by mail, making them a thoughtful last-minute or keepsake gift.

But beyond the gesture, sponsorship is a meaningful act of compassion. Every sponsorship directly contributes to that animal's rehabilitation — helping provide specialized diets, medical treatment, safe shelter, and enrichment during recovery. It's a Valentine that represents healing, second chances, and kindness toward Alberta's wild neighbours.



What you will receive:

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



Valentine's Day is all about connection, and wildlife sponsorship offers a unique way to honour someone you care about while extending that love to animals who urgently need it.

Whether you choose an owl, salamander, beaver, hare, or another patient close to your heart, your gift becomes part of their recovery story.

Celebrate love a little differently this year!

Visit aiwc.shop for more info.





Module 3, Compartment 3, Madden

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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.

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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

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

AIWC is supported by over 145 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 January 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.

