

RECOVERY REVIEW

IT'S A BIRD, MAYBE A BAT? NO, IT'S A SQUIRREL!

BY VIVIAN HINDBO



On arrival at AIWC at 3.5 weeks.



Moved to an outdoor enclosure at 8.5 weeks.



Exploring their new space, and becoming more active.

On May 14th, 2026, AIWC admitted three northern flying squirrel kits that a Calgary resident rescued from attacking magpies. At only three-and-a-half weeks old, their eyes were closed, leaving them completely helpless. Sadly, two of them did not survive.

During the first few days, the surviving female squirrel required round-the-clock feeding. Because there are no staff on site at AIWC overnight, a staff member needed to take the squirrel home at night. Northern flying squirrels typically require overnight feeds until their eyes open, at which point they can switch to being formula-fed every three hours during the day only. Once their teeth come in, we slowly introduce them to solids, including pine cones, browse with buds, dandelion leaves, clover, lichen, seeds, and nuts. We also provide a small piece of a fruit or vegetable each day, as well as worms to supplement their diet.

Our squirrel kit will be released at the end of summer once she has demonstrated all the natural behaviours needed to survive independently in the wild: showing proper fear around people, skillfully climbing and foraging around her enclosure, and building a nest and food stash. Because she was found in a busy Calgary neighbourhood, we likely won't release her back where she was found, as we typically do. She will be taken nearby to a safer environment where flying squirrels have been known to thrive.

FUN FACTS ABOUT NORTHERN FLYING SQUIRRELS

-  They are nocturnal forest dwellers, with large black eyes for night vision.
-  They don't actually fly but glide, using their tails as rudders.
-  They have been observed making turns of nearly 180 degrees while in the air.
-  They can glide up to 45 metres!



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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PHOTOS: AIWC Staff & Volunteers.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

When we last connected in the spring, AIWC was preparing for what we anticipated would be another demanding wildlife season. We knew the months ahead would bring thousands of injured and orphaned animals through our doors, hundreds of calls from concerned community members, and the annual challenge of balancing urgent patient needs with the resources available to us. What we could not have predicted was just how busy this season would become.

Since May, our team has experienced one of the busiest summers in AIWC's history. We are currently on track to surpass our 2025 patient numbers by approximately 4%, and at our peak have cared for more than 291 patients at one time, well above our typical daily average of 200-230 patients during the summer months. Behind every one of those numbers is an individual animal requiring specialized diets, medical care, rehabilitation, and countless hours of dedicated attention from our staff and volunteers.

As always, every patient presents unique challenges. From orphaned songbirds requiring frequent feedings to injured mammals recovering from trauma, each success story is only possible because of the dedication of our wildlife rehabilitators, veterinary team, hotline responders, rescue drivers, volunteers, and administrative staff, who continue to work tirelessly every day. We have also seen continued growth in community engagement and demand for wildlife support.

Our hotline rings daily with questions about orphaned hares, fledglings leaving the nest, skunk kits trapped in window wells, and countless other wildlife concerns, each requiring thoughtful guidance and species-specific advice. Supporting our community through education and outreach remains a vital part of our mission, helping people better understand Alberta's wildlife while preventing unnecessary admissions whenever possible. This summer has been a powerful reminder that wildlife rehabilitation is truly a community effort. Every donation, volunteer hour, medical supply, and bag of food contributes directly to the care of our patients, and we are continually inspired by the compassion shown by our supporters.

As we move through the remainder of the season, we are incredibly grateful for everyone who has stood alongside AIWC and continues to support our mission, whether by participating in our upcoming 50/50 Raffle, taking part in our September Online Silent Auction, volunteering their time, or making a donation. Together, you make it possible to provide lifesaving care to Alberta's wildlife, not only during our busiest months, but throughout the entire year.

Thank you for continuing to help give Alberta's wildlife a second chance!

With heartfelt gratitude,

Robyn Cunningham-Dunlop

Acting Executive Director



GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL 26-197

BY ROXANNE SELKIRK

In May, we admitted a golden-mantled ground squirrel patient that was found far from home. Commonly mistaken for chipmunks, you may have seen one of these squirrels on a visit to the Rocky Mountains or foothills. They generally live in alpine meadows and boulder fields above treelines. You can imagine our surprise when we received a report of one of these critters in Lethbridge who needed our help.

We suspect our squirrel patient hitched a ride to Lethbridge from their home via a wheel well or another inconspicuous form of transport. After arriving in Lethbridge, this curious critter likely ingested rodenticide that may have been left outside to target pests such as mice. Upon being admitted at AIWC, we found this squirrel was very lethargic and was barely able to move. We were relieved this patient responded well to fluids, Vitamin K, and oxygen. After a few weeks in our care, we were able to release this wayward wanderer back to an appropriate habitat.

Golden-mantled ground squirrel during their intake examination and again after a few days in care.



Mink on intake at just a few weeks old with their eyes still closed, and again after two weeks in care.



AMERICAN MINK 26-503

BY COURTNEY COLLINS

The American mink (*Neogale vison*) is a semi-aquatic mammal found along coastlines and in wetlands across Canada. Minks are opportunistic carnivores with a diet consisting of fish, crustaceans, birds, rodents, and amphibians. As predators, they also help to regulate many of these species' populations. Since minks require clean water and dense vegetation, their presence is often an indicator of a healthy ecosystem.

On June 4, an American mink was admitted after being found alone in Fish Creek Park. She was estimated to be three to four weeks old upon intake and is only the fourth mink to be cared for at AIWC.

Since minks have a very fast metabolism, she required formula feeding every two hours for the first two weeks in care. Now she is slowly being weaned off formula and introduced to different meats, mainly fish. Currently, her favourite fish is salmon! Once she is approximately eight weeks old, her coat will be waterproof, and she will be introduced to a pool for swimming. She will continue to be cared for at AIWC until she can hunt and survive on her own, which is estimated to be in late summer or early fall.

This incredible species is an important part of the ecosystem. If you see an animal in distress, please give AIWC a call.

STEP INTO THE WILD WITH AIWC

BY ALEX KELLINGTON

Did you know that we run education programs all year round? Our education programs are not just for school groups; we book groups of all ages and types to learn about the wonders of wildlife! We are having a great summer so far, speaking to groups about wildlife here in Alberta, and are currently booking programs for our 2026-2027 year.

Each program includes a presentation of your choice and select biofacts. Get a chance to feel an owl wing, or a bear claw, or see how a skunk's teeth allow them to eat all kinds of food. These hands-on programs are a great way to learn about our wildlife neighbours and encourage an appreciation for these amazing animals.

If you are interested in booking any one of our programs, you can find more information on our website at www.aiwc.ca or send an email to education@aiwc.ca.

A SNEAK PEEK AT OUR PROGRAMS!

ABCs - ALBERTA BEAR CARE - Introduces the incredible lives of Alberta's two bear species.

BAT BASICS - Introduces Alberta's nine bat species and their life histories.

BIRDS OF PREY - Acquaints participants with the different birds of prey found in Alberta.

CARING FOR CARNIVORES - Explores why carnivores are an important part of our ecosystems.

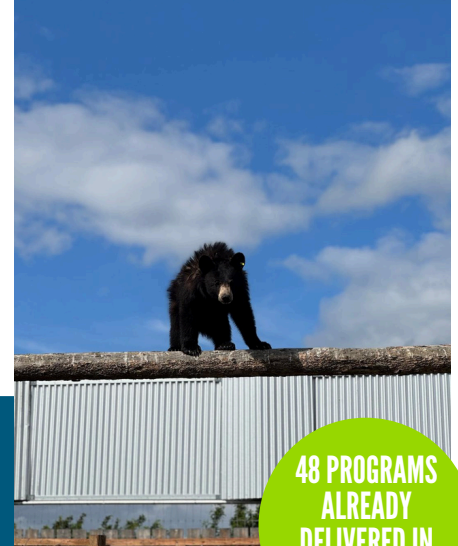
WETLANDS WILDLIFE - Introduces learners to wetland ecosystems, exploring the types of wetlands found in Alberta.

WHO'S IN YOUR BACKYARD? - A highly interactive program focusing on the common wildlife found throughout Alberta.

SUPREMELY SKUNKS - Explores the life history of skunks and why skunks actually make good neighbours!

We are accepting both in-person and virtual program bookings for 2026 and 2027!

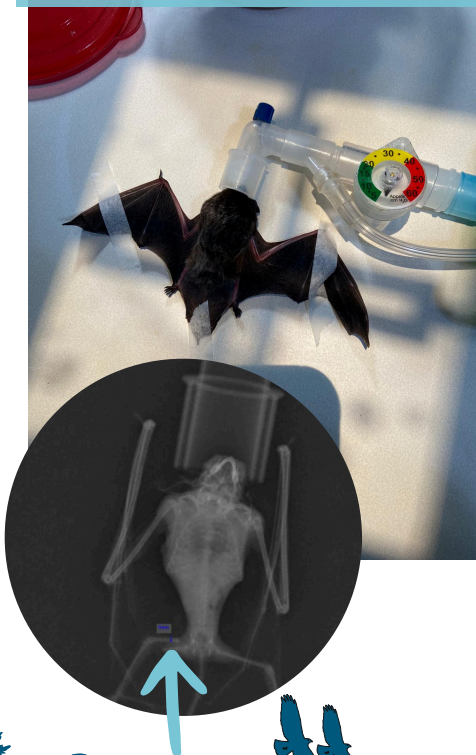
Book your program today.



48 PROGRAMS
ALREADY
DELIVERED IN
2026!

1,706 PEOPLE
REACHED

Silver-haired bat during X-ray examination, with radiograph showing a left femur fracture (arrow).



SILVER-HAIRED BAT ON THE MEND

by CARLEY GOODREAU

A silver-haired bat was admitted to the clinic on May 16, 2026, after being found injured in Airdrie. Following intake, a physical exam and X-rays revealed a fracture of the left femur, a serious injury for a creature that relies on strong limbs for climbing, flying, and, importantly, hanging upside down by its legs to roost.

On May 27, Dr. Cara performed surgery on the bat to stabilize the fractured bone with a pin. This procedure was her first time surgically pinning a bat limb! This is an impressive feat, considering silver-haired bats are typically less than ten centimetres long, head to toe. Imagine how tiny the leg Dr. Cara worked on was, and how precise the surgery had to be for such a small bone! Every day and every patient at AIWC is unique, and the clinic is lucky to have staff that are up to any challenge.

The bat is currently on cage rest to give the fracture the best chance to heal properly. They are eating and walking well, which are encouraging signs of healing. The clinic team is optimistic that the injury will heal successfully and that this resilient little bat will eventually be ready for release.

GREAT HORNED OWLS 26-131 AND 132

BY JENNEA FRISCHKE

When patients 26-131 and 26-132 came into our care, these great horned owl siblings looked more like cotton balls than the owls they are today. These siblings arrived together after they were displaced from their nest during a windstorm in Carstairs. They were approximately three weeks old when they came into care.

Patient 131 did not have any significant injuries and was re-nested on April 27 after only a short stay at AIWC. Their original nest had been destroyed, so they were placed with a surrogate family instead. Their reintegration was closely monitored, and the foster parents willingly accepted the young owlet.

Patient 132, however, came in with fractures to both humeri (the upper arm bones). Injuries like these require significant stabilization and, in many cases, surgical pinning to ensure the fractures remain properly aligned. This helps preserve normal range of motion while the bones heal and grow. They had a much longer road ahead and will remain in care until they have fully healed and are developmentally ready for release.

It is also important to note that young owlets can easily imprint on people, as can many young wildlife species. To help prevent this, AIWC staff minimize talking around the owlet and often wear face coverings during care. We also provide enrichment, such as stuffed animals or feathers, to mimic the presence of a parent or sibling while providing comfort, warmth, and reducing stress.

As soon as healing allows, young owlets are moved into outdoor enclosures where they can learn to perch, practice flight, and develop natural hunting and foraging behaviours. During this stage, animal care interaction is kept to a minimum to encourage them to retain their instincts and prepare for life in the wild.

Your donations are imperative in helping us provide specialized care for orphaned and injured wildlife before they can be successfully returned to nature, just like these adorable young owls.



Owlets 26-131 and 26-132 on intake.



Owlet 26-131 after re-nesting with foster family.



Owlet 26-132 recovering from injuries in care.



YBSA beak progression. Pictures were taken 16 days apart.



LITTLE DRUMMER BOY

BY ZOE JOY

Did you hear that yellow-bellied sapsucker? This isn't an old-fashioned insult; it is actually the name of a medium-sized bird in the woodpecker family. You can spot this bird by its distinct red crown and a bold, white strip along their wing. Many times, a rhythmic drumming sound will accompany their presence, as they are hard at work for their next meal. The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) was presented with an injured male in early May who arrived in our care after a window collision. Unfortunately, this little guy was battling head trauma and a badly injured upper beak, which is an integral part of their survival.

Unlike a typical woodpecker who searches for insects in dead wood, a yellow-bellied sapsucker will focus on healthy trees to get to the sap beneath. Their tree drilling will create 'sapwells', which are rows of holes in the tree bark. With the 'brush-like' tip of their tongue, they use the sapwells to lap up sap along with any insects as an added bonus. A male yellow-bellied sapsucker will utilize dry wood, though not for food; they will drill holes in dead hardwood trees to create nesting spaces. This bird also has an ecological impact, with their sapwells providing an energy-rich food source for hummingbirds, butterflies, small mammals, and more.

Upon intake at AIWC, the attentive staff confirmed the patient's beak, injured in the window collision, was not broken. The male bird was prescribed rest and given time to regrow keratin in his beak. In just under a month, this lucky bird (and his tough little beak) made a miraculous recovery and was released back into the wild. If you hear some drumming in a nearby tree, it might just be this yellow-bellied sapsucker with his second chance at life!

KEEPING A GREAT GREY OWL FAMILY TOGETHER

BY KATIE GRANT

On June 7th, AIWC admitted two very special patients. A mother great grey owl and her dependent owlet were brought into care after the mother was unfortunately struck by a vehicle. Because the owlet was still at an age where it relied entirely on its mother for survival, our team decided to admit them both to ensure they could stay together during the recovery process.

Upon arrival, the owlet was found to be in good health, but the mother's condition was concerning. She was quiet and lethargic, suffering from head trauma and a corneal ulcer in her right eye. Our medical team immediately began a treatment regimen including pain medications, specialized eye drops, fluids, and food.

After just a couple of days of intensive care, the mother perked up. Seeing her strength return, we were able to move the pair into one of our outdoor flight enclosures.

Being outdoors allows the mother to regain her flight conditioning while continuing to raise her young in a natural environment. They will remain in our care until the mother is fully healed, at which point they will be released back into the wild together.

Great grey owls in care. Adult (above), owlet (below)



NEST ON THE MOVE

BY ZOE JOY

Could you imagine if your home uprooted one day and moved with you still in it? That was the unfortunate reality for a few baby red-breasted nuthatches in May of this year; their nest was found amongst wood from a cut-down tree. The babies were miraculously recovered and brought into The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) for immediate care. Red-breasted nuthatches are known to favor old wood for their nesting sites. A male nuthatch will create cavities in the tree to invite females in. The construction of these nest cavities is completed in 18 days, a grueling but hopefully rewarding task. An interesting fact about this species is that, if a female and male have already mated, they become a team. The mated birds will create cavities together for nesting, even stealing nesting materials from other birds' nests. After the nest construction and mating ritual are complete, a female will lay anywhere from two to eight eggs and will breed only once per year. The female will then incubate her eggs for up to two weeks while the male brings her food, but the teamwork doesn't stop there. Once their babies are born, both parents will make over 100 feeding trips to the nest per day.

As the young nuthatches get older, the feeding trips increase to over 300 times per day to support their growth! Needless to say, these baby birds require relentless care in their early months, even causing a 'ragged appearance' in their sleep-deprived and hard-working parents. The babies and adults will then stay in a family group for weeks after leaving the nest for the first time. Similar to the parent birds, the team at AIWC had to provide around-the-clock care to the four hatchlings that were brought in. The hatchlings were so young and arrived as orphans with their eyes still closed. With some nurturing and lots of feedings, the rescued babies grew quickly and were released in early July. The four patients also became very special guests while in the AIWC facilities, representing the first orphaned red-breasted nuthatches AIWC has successfully raised and released. Another exciting milestone for our rehabilitation program!



Red-breasted Nuthatches in care, after they started fledging.



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Every portrait is carefully created by hand, with clients receiving a digital proof before painting begins to ensure the final piece captures their unique story.

Special Partnership Offer: 25% of each eligible sale is donated directly to AIWC!

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Become an AIWC Member Today!

Support local wildlife, conservation, and education through an annual AIWC membership. Flexible membership levels are available for individuals and families.

Membership includes:

- Quarterly Recovery Review newsletter (digital or mailed)
- Discounts on select AIWC merchandise
- Participation in AIWC's AGM

Join or renew by mail using the attached insert, online at aiwc.ca, or by phone at **403-946-2361**.

Want to Volunteer?

Join more than 145 volunteers supporting wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, outreach, and more. Volunteer recruitment opens twice yearly (January and September), with some remote roles available.

No experience required. Applicants must be 18+. Learn more and apply at aiwc.ca.

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

Go Green with AIWC

Help us reduce paper use by switching to a digital newsletter. To receive Recovery Review by email instead of mail, contact us at info@aiwc.ca.

Charitable #: 14041 6140 RR0001

HELPFUL AIWC RESOURCES

Review this page to learn more about reporting injured wildlife, volunteering, becoming a member, and other ways to support AIWC.

SUPPORT AIWC 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! Use the promo code **'AIWC'** to give us 100% of the earnings.

skipthedepot.com/a/iwc



THERE ARE SO MANY MEANINGFUL WAYS TO SUPPORT WILDLIFE BEYOND MAKING A DIRECT DONATION!

Bring Wildlife Education to You: Have an event, classroom, or community group looking for a unique experience? AIWC offers engaging in-person and virtual education programs for all ages. Learn more about Alberta's wildlife! Programs are now booking for the year ahead. Email education@aiwc.ca.

Double Your Impact: Many employers match charitable gifts, doubling your donation through workplace giving programs. Check our website to see if your employer participates. aiwc.ca/support-us/matching-gift-programs/

Shop with Purpose: Support wildlife by purchasing AIWC merchandise, shopping our [Amazon links](#), or donating needed items through our [Wish List](#).

Give in Other Meaningful Ways: Support AIWC by voting through [MyGivingCircle](#), donating [shares and securities](#), or exploring our [Leave a Legacy](#) giving program.

Every action helps wildlife. Visit aiwc.ca/support-us to explore all the ways you can make a difference.

AIWC HOURS

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

May to August: 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Sept to April: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

(Exceptions on select holidays)



Please call our Wildlife Hotline at **403-946-2361** before dropping off an injured or orphaned animal.



**FOUND AN INJURED,
ORPHANED, & SOILED
WILD ANIMAL**
FILL OUT OUR FORM

