

Celebrating 1-year of Black Bear Cub Rehabilitation

By R. Selkirk

As we approach the month of May, AIWC will be celebrating our one-year anniversary of becoming permitted to rehabilitate black bear cubs under 12-months of age. The investment into our facility upgrades, enabled through the generous support of donors like you, has been paying dividends all year by allowing us to care for our bear cub patients.

Our second black bear cub patient of 2019, as some of you may remember, was a male admitted in December at 10-months of age. He has spent a quiet winter keeping to himself in his straw fortified den, made truly private through his construction of a makeshift door which has kept him hidden from view. Thankfully, a discreet den peephole has allowed our staff to keep an eye on him.

AIWC has also admitted our third bear cub patient into care since receiving our permit. A cinnamon-coloured female black bear cub, admitted in late February at 12-months of age, has proven to be a much livelier patient. She came into care severely underweight and riddled with parasites, but her condition quickly improved during her first month of care. Since being moved to the outdoor enclosure, soon after her arrival, she has spent her time exploring her new surroundings, climbing and playing.

Though initially cared for in adjacent enclosures, starting in April, AIWC staff began slowly introducing the cubs to one another; patients tend to recover much quicker and experience less stress with company of their own species. So far, AIWC is pleased to report the introductions have gone well. Both bear patients have gained a significant amount of weight, are in good health, and are due to be released later this spring.



*AIWC's second black bear cub patient of 2019
outside his den.*



*AIWC staff preparing to examine our first bear cub
patient admitted in 2020.*



**ALBERTA INSTITUTE
FOR WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION**

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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.

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Update from the Executive Director

By H. Lillie, Executive Director

In the span of a few weeks, life has changed dramatically for all Albertans as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well.

In March, the Government of Alberta released a listing of essential services in the province and we are thankful to be counted among them. Nature still goes on, even in light of a pandemic, and our busy wildlife baby season is here.

Already we have seen an increase in patient admissions to our hospital compared to this time in 2019. We know that the hazards to our local wildlife remain, no matter what crisis is impacting humans, so we anticipate another busy summer here at AIWC.

As you know, we are funded entirely by donations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the fundraisers we planned for this year have been disrupted. If you are able, will you please provide an emergency gift today to help rescue, rehabilitate, and release Alberta's injured and orphaned wildlife?

Like everyone, we are taking every day as it comes and planning long-term is challenging in light of COVID-19. We will continue to do our best to ensure that AIWC stays operational, and we are confident that with your support, we will get through this pandemic and be stronger for it. Please consider donating today in support of wildlife in need, every little bit truly helps.

Thank you for your continued support during this crisis.

Sincerely,
Holly Lillie
Executive Director

AGM Postponed!

AIWC's 2019 Annual General Meeting is postponed to remain in compliance with provincial restrictions on gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All active AIWC members will receive notification in the mail when the AGM is called later in 2020.



Standby for the Red Eye: Northern Goshawk Recovery to Release

By: C. Bogstie

The Northern goshawk is nationally recognized as a threatened species with only an estimated 1,000 mature individuals living in Canada each year. As adults, these stealthy aviators are known for their large, bulky stature, distinct grey barred underparts and orange to red coloured eyes. In contrast, when immature they are identified by their brown streaky appearance and yellow eyes.

Largely found in large patches of forest, these generalist predators eat a diet consisting of smaller birds and mammals including red squirrels, grouse, and thrushes. Due to their relatively small population size and their preference in habitat, northern goshawks are considered an indicator species for forest health and biodiversity, meaning their protection contributes to overall ecosystem balance and stability.

Last fall a juvenile northern goshawk patient was admitted into AIWC's care, suffering from a left clavicle fracture and severe head trauma after colliding with a window in the Calgary area. Once he had recovered from his injuries, he was moved into an outdoor enclosure for a 10-day period. During this time, he was able to condition his flight capabilities and was banded prior to his release on November 29th.

It is thanks to the support of people like you that AIWC is able to care for patients like this goshawk and give them a second chance at life in the wild!



Northern goshawk in outdoor enclosure

Wayward Muskrat Patients Find Temporary Homes at AIWC

By: H. Lippman

Home to North America and adapted to a semi-aquatic life, muskrats reside in and around freshwater bodies such as marshes, beaver ponds, streams and lakes.

It was therefore quite a surprise when, on January 10th of this year, a Nanton homeowner found a muskrat hiding in the basement, close to the water heater, but not close to any bodies of water!

The homeowner called AIWC, and when the muskrat was admitted to our clinic, he was found to be dehydrated and had a possible respiratory infection. From the beginning, he started eating well on the provided diet of fruits, vegetables, fish and worms. A couple of weeks and several rounds of antibiotics later, the patient has gained weight and recovered from the infection. His fur condition has also improved nicely and again provides the waterproofing muskrats need in order to swim and float without much effort for long periods of time.



A muskrat patient in one of AIWC's indoor pool enclosures

Thanks to an observant Innisfail resident, another muskrat was also rescued on January 25th. He was found wandering around on a road, and upon admission was discovered to be dehydrated but otherwise generally healthy, leading staff to believe he is probably a juvenile male who was evicted from his pond by older muskrats and was having trouble finding a suitable new location with open water to spend the rest of the winter.

Thanks to the community, both patients are now enjoying the remainder of the winter in indoor pool enclosures, and will stay in supportive care until being released in spring at suitable new locations.



Education Update: Wildlife Education is Now Online!

By K. Terrill, AIWC Community Engagement Manager

Times change quickly and in education, adaptation is the name of the game! While our education team had made tentative plans to develop an online educational database later in 2020, we decided to move up the timeline for this project due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In order to make sure people are still able to learn about wildlife education while sticking close to home, we are proud to now offer a regular education video series focusing on some of the more misunderstood wildlife species in and around the Calgary area! Our first video, "Skunks 101", was released on April 1, and within 24 hours over 300 people had already viewed the video over Facebook, Instagram, and our website!

Skunks 101 is focused on sharing some of the lesser known facts about skunks, as well as addressing some of the common fears that people have regarding them. During this 15-minute pre-recorded presentation, we also discuss the major threats to skunks that live in human-dominated areas, and how we humans are able to help by making a few simple changes in our own daily routines. We have placed this video, along with a companion at-home activity sheet under the new "Wildlife Education - Online" tab on the AIWC website (head to <https://www.aiwc.ca/education/wildlife-education-online/> if you'd like to check it out for yourself!)

While there continue to be restrictions on public gatherings, AIWC plans to continue offering wildlife education presentations for anyone who is interested. If you would like to set up a live webinar presentation for your group, or have any questions/suggestions regarding future video presentations, please e-mail us at education@aiwc.ca.



Birthday? Classroom or Group Event? Book your AIWC education program today by visiting www.aiwc.ca/education/topics/ or emailing education@aiwc.ca

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AIWC's New Wildlife Emergency Response Unit

By H. Lillie, Executive Director

In 2015, AIWC entered into a 5-year partnership with Inter Pipeline Ltd. to support our initiative focused on improving the enclosures used for aquatic birds and mammals. Through this support, we were able to build an aquatic bird building and pre-release facilities for aquatic birds and mammals.

In 2019, the final phase of this partnership got underway with the support of Inter Pipeline Ltd. and the Government of Alberta; through the Community Facility Enhancement Program, we were able to build a Wildlife Emergency Response Unit.

This customized mobile trailer has been built as a medical unit to support injured wildlife impacted by disaster events. It will provide emergency medical triage and stabilization to wildlife directly at disaster sites, which may include weather related events such as overland flooding and wildfires, and also human-made disasters such as oil spills. The unit will also assist local wildlife or disaster needs, and, when not in field use, will also support AIWC's operations by acting as an overflow triage and recovery space for animals.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to postpone our plan to have the trailer available for public viewing at our 4th Annual Garage Sale event initially scheduled for May. We will keep you updated if and when a new date is decided, but in the meantime, we hope you enjoy these photos.



Wildlife emergency response unit mobile trailer



Inside view of the mobile trailer



Spring Wish List

By H. Lillie

May through to September is our peak time for animal care at AIWC. On any given day, we will have 200 to 300 individual animals in care.

Listed below are our most needed items to help us get through this time. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have introduced controls for accepting wish list items to protect everyone. Please call us at 403-946-2361 to arrange a no-contact drop-off at our facility.

For our full wish list, please visit our website: <https://www.aiwc.ca/support-us/wish-list/>

Produce:

- Fresh/frozen blueberries
- Carrots
- Frozen corn kernels



Meat/Dairy:

- Lean ground beef
- Smelt fish
- Eggs
- Plain yogurt
- Cottage cheese



Cleaning Supplies:

- Extra-large garbage bags
- Dish-washing liquid
- Paper towels



Misc. Supplies:

- Pens
- Printer paper
- Gift cards for any gas stations, grocery stores, or hardware stores

Did you know?

Over 1,000 wildlife babies are admitted to our centre each year! These supplies will go to support their wellbeing until they can be released back to the wild. Thank you for your support!

Beautiful Barred Owl Receives Second Chance

By T. Jordan-Smitham

A gorgeous and feisty barred owl came to the Animal Institute for Wildlife Conservation on December 15th, 2019. His visit was a result of head trauma, which included a severe eye injury that was most likely caused by hitting a building. He was found in northwest Calgary, where there are no large coniferous forests, which is unusual because barred owls typically inhabit old, mixed, wood forests or Aspen parkland ecoregions in the Rocky Mountain Foothills.

Thankfully for our fine feathered friend, someone noticed a group of corvids picking on him. AIWC volunteers were able to help rescue him and bring him into the centre for care. Upon examination by AIWC staff, he was determined to be in reasonably good body condition aside from the traumatic head injury.

AIWC staff and volunteers called him “feisty” because he had a lot of fight in him. Often, when people think of an animal that has fight in it and won’t back down, we think of animals with four legs such as a coyote or a cougar – well, this guy seemed to have more fighting spirit in him than the two of those animals combined! This showed us how strong his will to live was and is the reason why we do what we do: to give our patients a fighting second chance!

After approximately six weeks of care, he recovered from his injuries and was back to good health. He was among AIWC’s first releases in 2020, returning to the wild on January 31st.



Barred owl patient with wing bandages



Sponsor an AIWC Patient: An ‘Ear-full’ of Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

By: C. Slade

This year, AIWC has overwintered five cedar waxwings because none of their injuries had healed in time for them to make their migrations south with the other waxwings, which head to the southern half of the United States, Central America, and the far northwest regions of South America to escape the winter weather.

The first cedar waxwing patient was admitted in early September with head trauma, the second and third were both known to have sustained right shoulder injuries as a result of flying into windows, the fourth patient had sustained a left wing injury, and the fifth patient, admitted in October, had sustained a right wing injury (also a known result of flying into a window).

Each of these birds will have been in care for over 200 days before they are able to be released. By the new year, the waxwings had all recovered from their injuries and have been living together in a large indoor enclosure where they can practice flying and await warmer temperatures and the return of their species to the province so they can be released back to the wild.

And did you know... a group of cedar waxwings can be called a “museum” or an “ear-full”. If you’re lucky enough to encounter a large group in the wild, you’ll soon learn where that second name comes from!

Sponsoring one of AIWC’s cedar waxwing patients, or any other current AIWC patient you see here or on social media, helps with the costs directly associated with their care and rehabilitation. As part of your sponsorship, you will receive a certificate, a glossy 8×10 photograph of your patient, and a tax receipt for the full amount of the sponsorship. Thank you for helping us to keep them forever wild!



One of AIWC’s juvenile cedar waxwing patients

Patient Profile: A Winter Swainson’s Hawk?!

By K. Schmitz



A young Swainson’s hawk was found in Southeast Calgary and admitted to AIWC in late February. His finders called AIWC after they witnessed him being unable to fly. He came to us in very rough shape, and upon examination, staff discovered he had a considerable number of broken feathers, blunted talons, and indications of bumblefoot (a bacterial infection of the feet).

It is very unusual to find a Swainson’s hawk here in Alberta in February; they all should be enjoying the Argentinian sun, already beginning their migration back north for spring. One can only guess what caused him to miss his migration, but it is a testament to his tenacity that he made it through our cold winter months.

Now in care, this Swainson’s hawk patient will need a few months to regrow his feathers and allow his feet to heal so that he can successfully hunt and fly again in the wild. While these hawks are fierce predators, they are also incredibly social birds, so we hope to release this little guy back to his fellow hawks in mid-summer.



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Buy Your 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:

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- Our emailed ENews;
- Discount prices on select AIWC merchandise;
- Discounts at local businesses; and
- The opportunity to participate at 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; or
- Call 403-946-2361

The Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) plans to raise \$500,000 this year through fundraising campaigns and initiatives. It will cost the organization approximately \$25,000 to raise this amount. Funds raised will go to support AIWC's mission. For further information, please contact Holly Lillie at 403-946-2361.

Return to the Wild: A Tail of Two Calves

By H. Lillie

After several months (303 days for the first calf admitted, and 234 days for the second, to be exact), we are thrilled to share that the two moose calves that have been in our care since last summer are now back out in the wild where they belong!

For those who do not know the stories of these calves, we received the first calf after she fell down a hill, away from her mother and sibling, and was caught in some debris. She was freed and left in the area in attempts to reunite with her family, but sadly after 24-hours the mother had still not returned, so she was admitted to AIWC for care.

The second calf came to AIWC when we received a call about an orphaned moose calf north of Grand Prairie after her mother had been hit by a car and was killed. When several other plans to help her had fallen through, we knew we were the last hope for this calf to be rehabilitated and returned to the wild. 1,211 kilometers of driving is what it took to get this moose calf to our wildlife hospital northwest of Calgary.

Due to your support, we were able to care for both calves throughout the winter, giving them time to grow and prepare for life back in the wild. In early April, the calves were released northwest of Calgary in excellent moose habitat.

It really did take a "village" to support these girls. From our staff that provided them with daily care, to our volunteers and members of the community that dropped off fresh branches for them to eat, to Moose Mamas and Northern Lights Wildlife Society for all of their support and advice, and to everyone that donated funds, all of it contributed to the wellbeing of these calves and helped get them back to the wild. You have been alongside us on this incredible journey to get these calves back out to the wild.

We could not carry out our mission without you, and these calves are an excellent example of how you are making a difference to the lives of wildlife in need. Thank you!



The first moose calf patient with one last look back before returning to her life in the wild.



Our second moose patient admitted from the Grand Prairie area, shortly after release.