

RECOVERY REVIEW

THE KITTEN WHO BEAT THE ODDS

by Vivian Hindbo

Bobcat kitten in care,
September, 2024

It is never good news when an animal requires our care, but there was some excitement at AIWC when four bobcat kittens arrived at our clinic on June 7, 2024- the first bobcat patients in over a decade! Fish and Wildlife brought the kittens to us when they were presumed orphans after being observed alone for over 48 hours in northwest Calgary. At just three or four weeks old, the kittens required formula feeding via syringe and were gradually exposed to solid food.

Sadly, nine days after the kittens were admitted, morning caregivers arrived at our clinic to find that three of the four siblings had passed away from what was later determined to be a sudden E. coli infection. With the kittens appearing perfectly healthy the prior night, this was a tremendous shock to our team.

While waiting for test results, the remaining kitten was quarantined indoors and given a strong antiviral/antibiotic treatment. By mid-July she was weaned from formula and moved to a small outdoor enclosure while a larger space

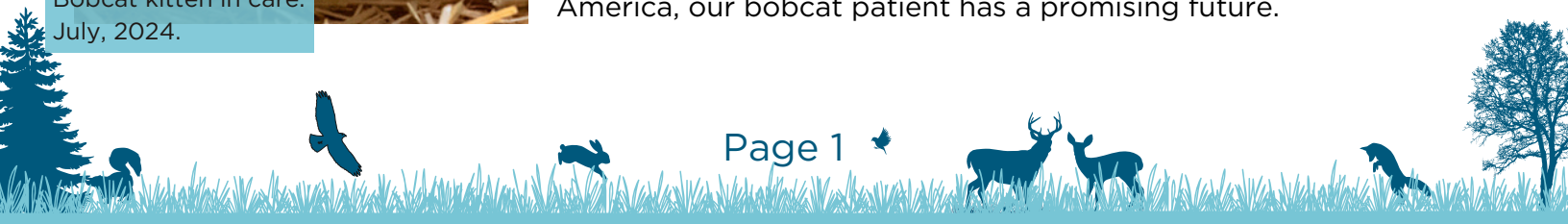


Bobcat kitten in care.
July, 2024.

was being cat-proofed. In mid-August she was moved to the larger enclosure, with newly built cat "furniture," including tire swings and climbing walkways.

She's now becoming a strong and athletic little cat! In mid-September she weighed three kilograms (the average adult female bobcat weighs between four and fifteen kilograms). Even with all her progress, our bobcat patient still needs to be with us until spring of 2025 to hone her skills for survival in the wild.

With bobcats being the most successful wild cat species in North America, our bobcat patient has a promising future.



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

It's hard to believe that 2024 is already drawing to a close, and what a year it has been at AIWC! Already we have admitted over 1700 animals, which is more than the entirety of 2023, and they keep on coming. We have also answered over 6500 calls on our wildlife hotline this year, ensuring that members of the public can access expert advice for all local wildlife issues.

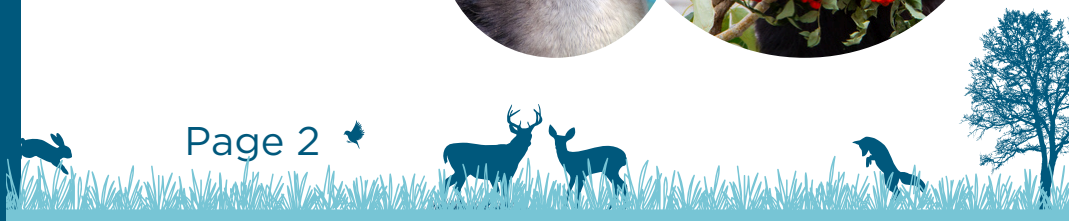
2024 has seen some of our most medically, and emotionally, challenging cases to date, including a badly injured red fox (see page 5) and the bittersweet story of the first bobcat kitten admitted to AIWC in a decade (see page 1). Thanks to our incredible clinic staff and volunteers, we have been able to offer the best possible care to these highly challenging cases, and support each other through the ups and downs that working with critically injured wildlife can bring.

It has been my honour to act as AIWC's Executive Director over the past year while Holly Lillie was been away on maternity leave. Getting to know so many of our donors, sharing stories of AIWC's successes, and seeing the support and love of our community has been a true privilege. I know that AIWC will continue to thrive with Holly retaking the reins shortly, and I will be right there cheering the organization on and lending my support wherever I can.

As we finish up the final months of 2024, I hope that you will think of AIWC in your holiday giving plans. Whether it be a small amount, a larger contribution, or signing up for a membership or monthly donation, your support makes what we do possible. It is thanks to you that we have been able to care for so many animals this year, and your holiday giving ensures we will have the means to continue live out our mission in 2025!

Sincerely,

Katrina Terrill
Acting Executive Director



TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR WINDOWS BIRD SAFE THIS WINTER

By Scottie Potter

To birds, windows can be invisible, and reflections of foliage and sky can entice birds to fly toward them, resulting in strikes. According to Environment Canada, window collisions may kill as many as 45 million birds each year. At AIWC, we've seen over 80 wildlife patients come through our doors in 2024 with injuries caused by window strikes.

Although cases of window strikes peak during spring and fall migration seasons, windows are a persistent threat for birds that overwinter in Albertan backyards, including Bohemian waxwings, pine grosbeaks, and even great horned owls.

Thankfully, there are actions we can all take to reduce the number of birds striking windows around our homes:

Close your curtains or blinds

While these will not deter all birds, curtains can help. Vertical blinds kept half open are most effective at distorting reflections, helping to prevent collisions.

Turn off lights at night

Migrating birds are drawn towards light emanating from windows at night, which puts them at risk of collision once the sun rises. Turning unused lights off at sunset lowers light pollution and keeps birds on their migration track.

Northern saw-whet owl in care after colliding with a window



Install Window Collision Tape

Window tape is often the most efficient way of preventing birds from colliding with windows. When installed across an entire window, the dots on this tape make a window obvious to a bird's eye, significantly reducing the chance for collisions.



You can purchase Feather Friendly window collision tape at www.aiwc.shop

Or by scanning the QR code:



RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

by Courtney Collins

The ruby-throated hummingbird is the most common hummingbird in Canada and can be found in central and southern Alberta. These incredible birds can beat their wings 55-75 beats/second. This means they are also able to expertly maneuver in flight and can also hover in place. This hummingbird species also migrates each year across the Gulf of Mexico into Central America.

This immature male hummingbird came into care recently after a large windstorm blew him out of a tree. He was cold and fluffed with his eyes closed at the time of intake.

Hummingbirds consume nectar from flowers along with small insects, including gnats and mosquitos. As nectar is their primary food source, this hummingbird was fed sugar water every half an hour for a few hours total until he perked up and was able to fly again. After a few more hours in AIWC's care, the hummingbird was released on the same day where he was originally found.



Ruby-throated hummingbird during feeding

LARGE AND IN CHARGE: A PORCUPINE'S RECOVERY

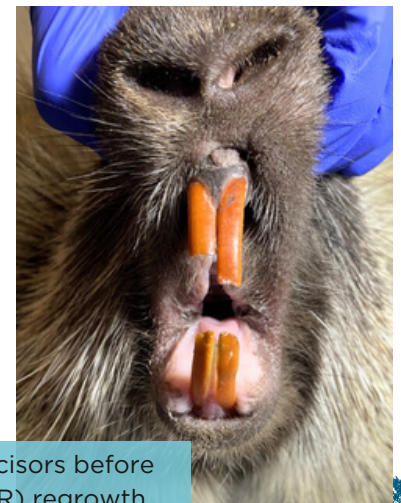
by Carley Goodreau

The clinic sees a wide range of interesting animals, and patient 24-1050 was no exception! This summer, AIWC admitted this incredibly large porcupine, weighing fourteen kilograms. Most North American porcupines weigh around nine kilograms, making our patient heavier than most porcupines on record! His size and condition made him a challenge to treat, but thanks to the hard work of clinic staff, he's already back in the wild.



North American porcupine in care

On July 17, 2024, C-Train staff called in about this porcupine, who was spotted acting strangely near the Tuscany LRT station. He showed signs of head trauma and had a broken incisor, raising concerns about his overall health. Like all rodents, porcupine teeth grow continuously throughout their lives, so this patient needed time for his incisor to grow back while receiving supportive care. He was released one month later on August 17. We are grateful for the support of the community to be able to continue providing care for the diverse wildlife that comes through our doors.



Porcupine's incisors before (L) and after (R) regrowth.

Great horned owl 24-164
with owl plush, April 2024



GREAT HORNED OWLS 24-164 & 24-269

by Katie Grant

On April 30, 2024, a great horned owlet arrived as a fledgling that had fallen from its nest. Unfortunately, the nest was too high for us to return the owlet, so it stayed in our care. The second owlet came into our care on May 24, 2024, after being mistaken for injured or orphaned. Having two owlets together reduced their chances of habituation, but our team still took standard precautions which involve wearing face masks and sometimes printing a picture of a great horned owl to put over their face. The team also used puppets to tweezer feed the owlets.

The pair were moved to an outdoor space which gave them room to practice flight and “branching” which refers to the period when an owlet is not yet able to fly but uses its talons to walk on branches. On June 20, 2024, they were moved to the new Runway to continue their flight conditioning. Flight conditioning lasts for a few weeks until they can get proper lift, are able to bank, and can fly silent. They were also tested with live prey to ensure they can hunt in the wild. room to practice flight and “branching” which refers to the period when an owlet is not yet able to fly but uses its talons to walk on branches.

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FROM TRAP TO FREEDOM: A FOX'S JOURNEY TO HEALING

By Chelsea Blythe

On July 26, 2024, a juvenile red fox was brought to our clinic from Rocky View County. Concerned citizens found her with a paw caught in a gopher trap, and her attempts to escape left her with broken teeth and exposed bone near her gumline.

Thankfully, Dr. Cara was able to suture her injuries, and her adult teeth quickly grew in to replace the damaged ones. After her paw healed, she moved to our large outdoor enclosure. There, she joined seven orphaned foxes, all of whom were featured in last month's newsletter. The healing and socialization process was crucial for these young animals to prepare for a successful release back into the wild. On September 16, all eight of the young foxes were released back to their natural habitat!

Red fox undergoing surgery to suture gumline



386 DAYS OF CARE FOR A WILDFIRE SURVIVOR

by Scottie Potter



American kestrel mid-moult, July 2024

You might remember this superstar American kestrel from previous newsletter issues! For those that aren't familiar, this little hawk was driven from the Shuswap area of British Columbia to AIWC by concerned citizens fleeing wildfires on August 28, 2023. Thankfully, she didn't receive any significant burns to her flesh, but the fires did leave her flight feathers badly singed. To recover, she needed to go through a full moult of the damaged feathers, a process that only takes place in the spring and summer for her species.

AIWC received special permission from the governments of British Columbia and Alberta to care for the kestrel during her long-term stay, and she quickly gained a reputation among staff and volunteers as a highly vocal and active patient. The first stage of her moult began in May 2024, with new flight feather shafts pushing out the old ones. By August, she had fully completed her moult and was moved to a large outdoor enclosure to stretch her flight muscles.

Over a year after the kestrel's intake, a team of volunteers graciously undertook the 600 kilometer journey back to Kelowna to return this beautiful bird back to the wild on September 17, 2024.

CUTE BUT DEADLY - AN UPDATE ON FOUR LEAST WEASEL KITS

By Courtney Bogstie

The smallest carnivore in North America, the least weasel is an opportunistic predator which prefers mice and voles but will resort to fish, lizards, and insects in the absence of smaller rodents. Though perhaps appearing snuggle-worthy and even "cute" with their tiny heads and slender furry bodies, they are also voracious carnivores and have been known to keep up to 50 prey items in their burrows at a time!



Least weasel kit in care

On July 16, 2024, four least weasel kits were taken to AIWC from Enchant, Alberta, after their nest was disturbed. Least weasel kits are born blind and require a lot of maternal care until they are weaned at approximately four weeks old. The kits, weighing just 25 grams each, were provided a combination diet of formula and small pieces of mice to help them continue to grow. Additionally, they were given toilet paper tubes and towels to hide in during their stay, as least weasels generally prefer to spend their time safe in their burrows. The kits were eventually healthy enough and big enough to be returned to nature and were released on September 7, just under two months after they were admitted.



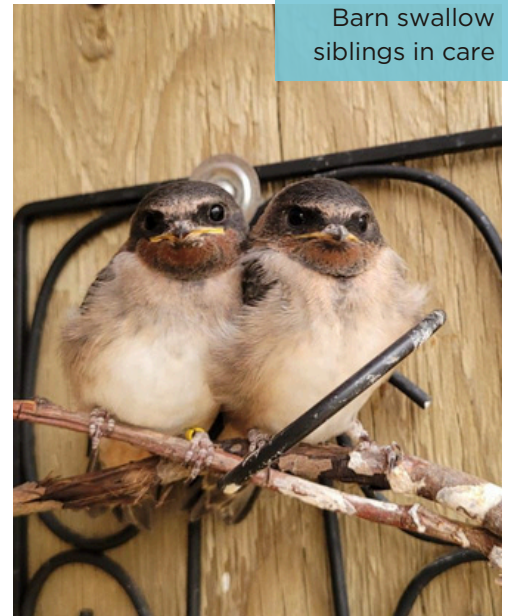
TWO CUTE SWOOPERS

by Heike Lippmann

These barn swallow siblings were found mid July 2024 in the water under a bridge on Ghost Lake. There are several scenarios that could have led to their dilemma:

- they were orphaned and went looking for food,
- their nest got destroyed, or
- they were pushed out by siblings, before they were able to fly.

Luckily, the finders were nearby and rescued the two nestlings, who were initially admitted to the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society and then were transferred to AIWC, as the CWRS was at capacity.



Barn swallow siblings in care

Our dedicated team started syringe feeding the two siblings and they were soon upgraded to tweezer feeding their favorite meal, live mealworms, regularly around the clock. Both began to fledge at the end of July and soon were able to take mealworms off of tweezers while still flying. The fledglings developed strong wings in order to survive their first flights and were able to be released on August 8 after just over 3 weeks in care.

Great horned owl in care

FLY HIGH, OWL!

by Julia Guame



After being stuck by a car in Okotoks, this great horned owl was admitted to AIWC where it underwent surgery to fix the fractures in its wing. The owl responded well to the surgery and was transferred to an outdoor enclosure to encourage stretching and exercise. At this time, it was noticed that the owl flew with a slightly drooped left wing - the wing that was operated on. Although its flying abilities did not seem to be impaired, the owl was started on pain medications to see if the droop stopped. The wing droop persisted and thus, the droop was determined to not be caused by pain. The owl continued healing and did not show any signs of discomfort or issues with flying.

After almost 4 months of successful flight training and conditioning in the outdoor enclosure, the Great horned owl was deemed a successful candidate for release. On June 30, 2024, the Great horned owl was released from AIWC's care, back into the wild where it belongs.

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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 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 Katrina Terrill at 403-946-2361.

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ALBERTA WILDLIFE INSIDER CONTINUES

by Scottie Potter, Communications Coordinator

The final *Alberta Wildlife Insider* installment of 2024 was released on September 25, 2024, and features young “teenage” hawks in need. In late summer, juvenile hawks begin arriving at AIWC with a variety of injuries, most frequently due to vehicle collisions. As these inexperienced raptors haven’t learned how dangerous roads can be, they are often struck while feeding on roadkill or chasing prey into oncoming traffic.

Come behind-the-scenes with us and learn how we help these hawks get back to the wild in time for the fall migration!



To watch all episodes of *Alberta Wildlife Insider* head to www.youtube.com/@alberta_wildlife

Or scan the QR code here:



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/

