



Submitted Photo

This American Bittern was found injured in a backyard in Calgary in October. Now that she has been nursed back to health, the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation needs some help getting her south for the winter.

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Wildlife centre needs help to get injured bird on its way

Nov 26, 2010 06:00 am | By [Stacie Snow](#) | Airdrie City View

An American Bittern bird that was found in a Calgary backyard just over a month ago, has recovered from her multiple fractures and now needs a helping hand getting to an appropriate southern habitat for the winter.

Veterinarians and biologists at the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) in Madden have given her the 'green light' as far as her health is concerned but arranging a safe trip has proven challenging.

The rare bittern was discovered in a backyard in the Midnapore area on Oct. 19.

X-rays showed she had a fractured radius and ulna of her left wing and a fractured toe on her left foot. She was also thin, weighing in at just 470 grams.

"Five weeks later, her fractures are fully healed and she is flying well," said AIWC biologist and founder Dianne Wittner.

"Her weight has nearly doubled to 750 grams today. However, she has missed migration and keeping her all winter at the wildlife centre is not in her best interest due to the exorbitant cost of feeding her (about \$25 a day) and the risk of self-injury in a lengthy captivity."

Bitterns suffer in high stress situations, so even though AIWC has devoted an indoor room to her care, biologists at the centre agree the ideal thing for her now would be freedom, added Wittner.

Bitterns migrate south for the winter, some travelling as far as Central America.

Transporting her across international borders is prohibited by law, but another option remains.

"A population of American Bitterns over-winters off the southwest coast of British Columbia where the water remains open and food is readily available all year," said AIWC biologist, Tara Tamasi.

Tamasi has been in communication with staff at the Wildlife Rescue Association of BC, which has agreed to release the bird in prime habitat if she can be transported there.

Permits are required to transport her across provincial borders so local Fish and Wildlife officials will be involved in the legal process.

"The bittern must be flown to Vancouver via airplane, ironic for a species that is known to fly long distances during migration," said Wittner.

"The cost of rescuing and maintaining this bird to date is already high at about \$2,000."

Now, AIWC needs to raise about \$600 for her flight as well as a custom-built carrier that will prevent injuries enroute.

Add to that her expensive diet and considerable medical bills, the bittern is one of the more challenging species admitted to AIWC in recent months.

"Bitterns are a 'sensitive' species (in Alberta) that we can't afford to lose," said Wittner.

"They are an important species in wetland ecologies and hard to find. AIWC provides this service to the general public, in protection of all native wildlife, without government support."

For more information on AIWC or to donate, visit www.aiwc.moonfruit.com

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January 2011

Wednesday

5

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[December](#) [February](#)

[ADULT SCRABBLE CLUB](#) Airdrie Public Library - 7:00pm to 8:30pm

Event Type:

Regular Meeting

Time(s):

7:00pm - 8:30pm

Venue:

Airdrie Public Library

Event Dates