

Annual Report of the American Wildlife Conservation Foundation For 2019 (January 1 - December 31, 2019)

The American Wildlife Conservation Foundation, first established in 1911, provides an annual report after the close of each calendar year. The following is the annual report for 2019.

President's Report: Daniel C. Leete

2018 was an average year for the AWCF. We added 13 new members: Our Secretary's report will add more information on membership. Our endowment portfolio grew by \$33,663.68. We engaged a new financial advisor. Our Treasurer will expand on the financial information. We sponsored a number of free public education programs. Our Vice President will report on those various programs. Our electronic newsletter grew substantially. Our Editor will provide more information about our newsletters. We created a Memorandum of Understanding with Helicat-Canada with the goal of increasing funding for more grants and administrative support, and I will give you more information on this new project in the next paragraph. Additionally, we sponsored our first Intern in a cooperative relationship with Wells college.

The Board of Directors, with help from AWCF members Dr. Richard Capella, Jon Schwartz and Rick Capozza, took a big risk this past fall in building a partnership with Helicat-Canada. A "Memorandum of Understanding" was created with Helicat-Canada in British Columbia. This memorandum of understanding was written to establish a new fund-raising opportunity for clients associated with their organization. The Executive Director of Helicat Canada, (Ross Cloutier), initially contacted the AWCF, suggesting that the two organizations shared some common goals. The memorandum of understanding was recently completed with both Boards agreeing to create a new source of funding for both organizations. We are looking forward to donations to start accumulating for AWCF through this venue in February 2020.

Nicole D'Aurizo, a student enrolled in Wells College, completed the first AWCF internship. Nicole helped bring our board into a new social media presence on Facebook.

2020 promises to be a challenging year for the environment. It is our plan - with your assistance - to do as much as we can to support scientific research and public education to conserve our natural resources.

Vice President's Report: Gary Goff

As VP, my duties include scheduling administration meetings, filling in for the Pres. when necessary, and planning education events.

Quarterly meetings scheduled and conducted:

--January 16, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer Co., Herkimer, NY

Special presentation by Josh Stiller, NYSDEC Biologist on topic of status and management of mute swans in NYS.

--April 8, Reg. 4 DEC Headquarters, Schenectady, NY

Special presentation by Mike Clark, NYSDEC Biologist on topic of status and management of black bears in NYS.

--July 15, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Madison Co, Morrisville, NY

--Oct 17, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida Co., Oriskany, NY

President Daniel Leete was unable to attend so I presided over the meeting.

Special presentation by Paul Curtis, Cornell Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist, on topic of measuring impact of deer on forest regeneration.

Educational Events:

In addition to the special presentations given at the quarterly meetings above, I arranged and conducted a public information seminar on the topic of "Insects, Pollinators, and Grassland Birds: links, importance and meeting challenges", hosted by The Finger Lakes National Forest, at Hector Ranger Station, Hector, NY, on May 29, 2019. There were three presenters from Cornell University, attendance was 40, made up of the general public, landowners, volunteers, and farmers. Summer intern, Nicole DiAurizio assisted with accommodations at the seminar and wrote up a summary for the July AWCF newsletter.

Planning is underway for the next education event on the topic of "Use of Drones in Wildlife Conservation". This relatively new technology is currently and promises to be of even more substantial value to wildlife research and natural resource conservation in general. AWCF has the opportunity to highlight and promote major advances in the

application of this technology. Paul Smith's College and The NY State Chapter of The Wildlife Society are co-sponsors. The day-long event will take place at the Paul Smith's campus and is tentatively scheduled for a Saturday in late July or early August.

Secretary's Report: Paul Curtis

A membership renewal request and application form was sent to all unpaid AWCF members on 2 February, 2019. The address for renewals was changed to Treasurer Daniel Wentworth's home in Union Springs, so that he can handle membership checks directly. Daniel routinely sent me membership updates for the master Excel roster file. As of 31 December 2019, 33 members were paid for 2019 out of 71 members on the roster (1 gratis membership for Bryan Green, Auditor). Twelve members paid for 2018 but did not renew in 2019. Also, 24 members on the AWCF roster did not pay dues for either 2018 or 2019. In addition, The AWCF e-mail list was updated and 13 new members were added in 2019.

I assisted Vice President Gary Goff with organizing AWCF Board Meeting locations. The summer meeting was held on July 15 at the Madison County CCE Office in Morrisville. I alerted members about the meeting via e-mail, and sent out the meeting agenda in advance. The fall AWCF Board Meeting occurred at Oneida County CCE, and I provided a Zoom connection so that people could see and participate in the meeting online. I also prepared meeting minutes following each of the AWCF Board Meetings in 2019. I distributed those to Board Members for review and comment. There still needs to be a process established for archiving those minutes on the AWCF web site.

The AWCF Board discussed changing the grant proposal cycle from two to one per year, and awarding larger grant amounts. It was decided not to do this without advance notice to AWCF members and making appropriate changes on the web site. This issue still needs to be resolved in 2020. I also coordinated a Zoom conference call on 3 October for Board Members to discuss an early version of the Helicat Canada MOU proposal. Much time was spent by the board discussing the pros and cons of different versions of the draft MOU during fall 2019.

I promoted the May 29 AWCF educational program on pollinators at Finger Lakes National Forest and sent an announcement to several Cornell Cooperative Extension list-servs and volunteer groups. I also distributed quarterly copies of the AWCF Newsletter. These newsletter files were prepared by Newsletter Editor Katie Stuart. All AWCF members on the roster received an e-mail attachment in PDF format, and the most recent edition was sent on 31 December 2019.

Several administrative duties were completed throughout 2019. I prepared a formal report with election results for the AWCF audit and tax reporting. I developed a brief biosketch for the AWCF web site. I worked with the new student intern, Nicole D'Aurizio, to determine if current AWCF members used or accessed Facebook. It appears very few AWCF members use Facebook based on responses received. In addition, I reviewed and distributed an AWCF Membership Survey developed by Dan Wentworth in December 2019. The goal was to gather information concerning ways to better serve and boost AWCF membership. Finally, I prepared Secretary's 2019 Annual Report for the 7 February, 2020 AWCF Board Meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Dan Wentworth

Finance Report 2019 Year End

The AWCF Portfolio increased in value by \$33,663.68 over the course of the year. At the end of August, the Finance Committee chose to switch Brokers and switched from Morgan Stanley to Stifel Investment Services and go back to our previous Account Manager who had left Morgan Stanley a couple of years ago. No major changes were made to the investments with this switch. There were no cash withdrawals from the Portfolio, but there were two \$50 memorial donations deposited to the Portfolio.

First Quarter Balance: \$253,378
Second Quarter Balance: \$260,121
Third Quarter Balance: \$263,299*
Fourth Quarter Balance: \$278,332*

*The third and fourth quarter reports were from Stifel.

The Checkbook balanced as of December 31, 2019, no outstanding payments or donations.

Balance: \$11,831.37

2019 Deposits: \$3,085
(Dues and donations.)

2019 Payments: \$15,371.69

(Includes \$11,40 in grants paid out and \$3,891.69* in AWCF administrative expenses, taxes and fees)

*Note: AWCF spent more than it earned in donations and memberships on administrative cost.

Grants Committee Report: Robert F. Gotie, Chair

The current Grants Committee consists of 5 members. Together we evaluated 32 grant applications in 2019: Nineteen in the Spring Cycle and 13 in the Fall cycle. Twenty-one applications were from colleges or universities and 11 were from other institutions. The Spring cycle used an evaluation form designed the Fall of 2018 by Peg Sauer and Mike Cavanaugh. This evaluation form made it easier to objectively rate each proposal.

We modified it somewhat to further increase objectivity for the Fall cycle. **(Figure 1.)** The form has 3 major points and a 4th to list 3 merits of the proposal. The total score an applicant can receive, if they meet the three major points completely by a reviewer, is 12. Each Committee member for each application employs the “Cavanaugh Protocol”, which uses a numeric evaluation score: worth funding (9 or more points), No way (0-5 points), Maybe (6-8points). Each member is also provided a summary form listing each application and their score as they view it for each of the sub-categories. **(Figure 2.)** At the end of the evaluation period we summarized the committee’s findings across each application and applied a second level of scrutiny: Worth funding = 4 or more members judging a proposal worth funding, Maybe Worth funding = all other combinations of worth/maybe adding to 4 members or more, Not Worth funding = any combination of worth/maybe/no way only adding to 3 members or less. **(Figure 3.)** These reviewing platforms will undoubtedly evolve further in 2020, as we gain more experience with the review process.

Applicants who pay particular attention to our mission and focus their objectives on the following areas: Species Conservation, Human-Wildlife Interaction, Habitat Conservation and Public Outreach, will have a better chance of receiving a grant. These are the areas we look hard at when reviewing a grant application. Deadline for the next grant cycle will be February 1, 2020.

We selected a total of 5 grant proposals to receive funding in 2019 for a total of \$11,480. Below is a brief description of the proposals granted AWCF funds.

Applications Selected for an AWCF Grant

1. Assessing the Impacts of Landscape Change on Grizzly Bear Movement Behavior and Population Success in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta by Alejandra Zubiria Perez, MSc. Student, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia. Amount requested and received: \$2,000 (USD).

The grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) has experienced a significant decline in its' range due to human encroachment throughout its' historic range. It is considered a threatened population in Alberta, Canada. Expanded human development in Alberta has resulted in a serious reduction in suitable habitat with an attendant increase in human-wildlife conflict often resulting in translocation of problem bears. Although bears are translocated to wild places away from humans, many animals return to developed areas or become reproductively isolated and no longer become important components of the resident population.

This study will identify the factors leading to the success of translocated grizzly bears and to an understanding of how future changes in the landscape may affect and perhaps aid in the management of this threatened species. The study will involve computer simulation modelling coupled to GIS data to determine what landscape features are important for grizzly bear success, assess whether translocated bears wander differently than resident individuals and; it will identify important landscape details that will improve survival of grizzlies translocated to habitat outside of their own home range.

2. Fall and Winter Activity of Northern Long Eared Bats (*Myotis Septentrionalis*) in the Outer Cape, Cape Cod, MA by Sarah-Jayne Collins, Graduate Student, SUNY ESE, Syracuse, NY. Amount requested and received: \$1,980.

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) has caused a significant decline of bat populations throughout the northeastern US in the last few decades. Bats, like the northern long eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), winter in inland caves in Massachusetts and their documented mortality rate is in excess of 90%. Little is known about the fall migration behavior of this species from Cape Cod, MA where bat populations are maintaining higher numbers. Ongoing acoustic monitoring suggests this species is remaining year-round in the Outer Cape Cod Region.

This study will focus on where bats on Cape Cod overwinter and the interaction of this species with little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*), a species whose population is now estimated at less than 1% of their pre-WNS population. The study will involve acoustic monitoring, bat trapping, WNS assessments and radio telemetry to identify bat species presence, movements across the landscape during the fall migration and fall preferences for roost sites. This study will benefit bat conservation measures by increasing our knowledge that can be incorporated into appropriate management actions by The National Park Service and the State of Massachusetts. The Mass

Audubon Society at Wellfleet Sanctuary have partnered with this study to help with access on private property.

3. Line Transect vs. Mark-Recapture: A test of Gopher Tortoise Population Monitoring Techniques by Dr Jeffrey M. Goessling, Assistant Professor, Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, FL. Amount requested and received: \$2,500

Gopher Tortoises (*Gopherus Polyphemus*) are a species of conservation concern in Florida, because of the rapid increase in human development in their historic range. Researchers have recently petitioned for Federal protection under the Endangered Species act. Although many studies are underway by private and government agencies, significant gaps persist in demographic characteristics needed for understanding population viability. Most survey methods of this species today focus on line transect distance measurements or mark-recapture studies to estimate population size. They clearly provide point estimates, but are prone to error due to seasonal movements of tortoises with large home ranges.

This study will compare estimates of gopher tortoise population extent, density and distribution between an existing long-term mark-recapture study and a line transect study at a Nature Preserve in St. Petersburg, Fl. The principal Investigator is currently employing a mark-recapture project with recent work resulting in the capture and marking of 108 tortoises on this same preserve. With a tortoise burrow scope a line-transect survey will now be possible in both winter and summer.

4. Density, dispersal, and source-sink dynamics of black bears (*Ursus americanus*) in Massachusetts, USA. Thea Kristensen, Laboratory Coordinator, Amherst College Biology Department, Amherst, MA. Amount requested and received: \$3,000.

Ms Thea Kristen will be conducting a long-term study of Black Bear demography in the state of Massachusetts. Her study will entail DNA Sampling of Black Bear hair taken from hair sampling stations across the state. Using this sampling strategy will allow for density and abundance estimates in different habitat types across Massachusetts, as well as identification of Black Bear metapopulation dynamics and patterns of relatedness, population structure and dispersal. Citizen outreach to incorporate citizen sightings of black bears will also be utilized.

5. Accumulation and Toxicity of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Subsistence Harvested Northern Fur Seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) Brianne Soulen, PhD Candidate, Brianne.Soulen@unt.edu, student of Aaron Roberts, Professor, Department of

Biology, Director, University of North Texas, Advanced Environmental Research Institute, Denton TX. Amount requested and received: \$2,000.

Ms Brienne Soulen will be analyzing the level of persistent organic pollutants in the tissues of Northern Fur Seals. Little is known about contaminant accumulation of toxic chemicals in this species, like Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (a component of flame retardants) and a widely used surfactant containing perfluoroalkyl. Both compounds are persistent and ubiquitous in the environment. And, both move easily into other organisms through diet. Northern Fur Seals are readily consumed by native Americans in the Aleut community of Alaska. The data gathered in this study will shed light on the risk of consumption of marine mammals and be shared with the Aleut community on St. Paul Island where the study will take place.

Newsletter Editor: Katie Stuart

2019 was a learning year for both the technical and formatting content and experimenting with new features for the newsletter. An important facet is advanced planning for future issues and locating grant awardees that are ready to share interim or final reports, obtaining guest writers with diverse stories, and finding future opportunities to share good wildlife and conservation experiences. 2019 saw the addition of Nature Sleuth, the Conservation Book Report, and Guest Writers. An essential element of 2020 will be formalizing accountability for the grant winners and ensuring that they are checking in with the AWCF Board and Grant Committee process so that research results are published and shared with AWCF members via the quarterly newsletter. We hope to continue with Species Watch, spotlighting species in peril and how you can help. We are going to try a Photographer's Corner to share beautiful work by amateur and professional wildlife photographers. We're also expanding the list of people and organizations who will be receiving our newsletters. If you have other ideas on how we can spread the word on AWCF, its mission, and add to the newsletter, I'd like to hear from you (katiestuart33@gmail.com). Thanks and here's to a productive and successful 2020!