

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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WCN WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING:

Laura Merkl for her work on the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors.
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Cecilia Hayes for her contribution to the organizational development of our team.
The photographers who allow WCN to use their stunning photos to advance conservation.
Our committed volunteers, without whom we could not do what we do.

Cover: The white rhino is the most numerous of the world's five remaining rhino species. WCN's Rhino Recovery Fund supports programs that protect all rhinos from poaching, habitat loss, and other threats across Africa and Asia.

Cover photo © mantaphoto

Design: Monica DuClaud
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2020 Fierce optimism in challenging times

This year delivered strange and often painful new realities, but also illuminated the qualities that make us resilient: fierce optimism, trust in sound science and data, gratitude for our community of conservationists and supporters, and pride in the impact we have made for wildlife and people around the world. **2020 was no match for what a powerful network of steadfast supporters and dedicated conservationists can do together.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic reached every corner of the globe, our community took action. Our Partners distributed masks, brought food to local communities, set up hand washing stations, and disseminated health information in northern Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, and beyond. These humanitarian efforts were not a departure from their wildlife conservation efforts—they are conservation itself, part of the undeniable link between healthy wildlife populations and healthy communities. Throughout the pandemic, our Partners continued to do great things for wildlife. They discovered spectacled bears in entirely new areas, they became the first to rescue and rehabilitate an injured Ethiopian wolf, they celebrated a saiga antelope baby boom in Kazakhstan, and they helped establish an enormous marine protected area in Patagonia, protecting 464 species of mammals, fish, reptiles, plants, and birds. **What these conservationists have done for wildlife during this most difficult year is nothing short of remarkable.**

Like our Partners, WCN adapted quickly to the challenges of 2020. Unable to host our traditional in-person events, we took our Wildlife Conservation Expos to a digital stage, allowing us to triple the number of attendees and connecting people from over 60 countries. Additionally, with so many conservationists struggling from an abrupt lack of funding, we established an Emergency Relief Fund while also providing emergency support through our Wildlife Funds. This support helped keep anti-poaching rangers in the field and maintained salaries for local people employed in conservation. Through the Pangolin Crisis Fund, we granted an unprecedented \$1 million to stop the consumption of pangolins and other wildlife, aiming to prevent future wildlife-related pandemics. And remarkably, in the face of such great difficulties, WCN launched the Rhino Recovery Fund to help all rhino species rebound to safe population levels. **Finally, because of the generosity of our forward-thinking supporters, we ended the year having raised and deployed a record amount of revenue for wildlife.**

Ultimately, this year showed us how strong we are when we unite to save our planet’s irreplaceable wild places and wild animals. Heartened by this strength, we embrace the coming year with passion, gratitude, and hope.



JG Collomb

Jean-Gaël Collomb, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Charles Knowles

Charles Knowles
President and Co-founder

OUR MISSION IN ACTION

We find conservationists who deploy bold, effective solutions to save wildlife and we provide them with support to bring those solutions to life.

Conservation is as much about helping people as it is about helping wildlife. We support conservation work that invests in the well-being of local communities and fosters coexistence between people and wildlife. And with an eye towards the future, we provide scholarships and grants to empower the next generation of conservationists, building local leadership in conservation around the world.

No one organization or person can save wildlife alone, so we emphasize collaboration. Through opportunities like our Wildlife Conservation Expos, WCN connects conservationists and supporters and acts as a convener, creating a community working together to save wildlife.

We believe our donors deserve to know how their money is helping wildlife. Through transparency and efficiency, 100% of our donors' designated contributions goes to the work they care about and they know the impact of their investment.

Partner Network

Our Partner Network is a select cohort of on-the-ground conservationists who operate on the frontlines and have the know-how to make wildlife conservation work. We offer these conservationists ongoing, in-depth support, providing the financial resources, tools, and services they need to effectively protect wildlife.

For highlights from our Partners go to pages 12-13 and 28-29.

Wildlife Funds

We establish Wildlife Funds when we see a need and an opportunity to protect threatened wildlife across a larger landscape. By investing in specific, time-bound projects from institutions big and small, we harness the power of multiple organizations working to save a species throughout its entire habitat.

For a closer look at each Wildlife Fund go to pages 30-37.

OUR MISSION IS TO PROTECT
ENDANGERED WILDLIFE BY
SUPPORTING CONSERVATIONISTS
WHO ENSURE WILDLIFE AND
PEOPLE COEXIST AND THRIVE.

A close-up photograph of an Ethiopian wolf standing in shallow water, looking towards the left. The wolf has reddish-brown fur and a white muzzle. The background is a blurred natural setting.

**“WILDNESS REMINDS US WHAT IT
MEANS TO BE HUMAN, WHAT WE
ARE CONNECTED TO RATHER THAN
WHAT WE ARE SEPARATE FROM.”
— TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS**

Ethiopian wolf © Avalon.red-Alamy Stock Photo

2020 IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

With support from our donors and through the strength of our network, we have had a greater impact on wildlife conservation than ever before.

94%

Percentage of WCN funds that went to support programs in the field.

80,000+

Number of people in local communities around the world provided with education opportunities by WCN's Conservation Partners.

128

Scholarships awarded to date to emerging conservationists across 42 countries.

63

Number of countries from which WCN has received donations.

\$32.2M

Amount raised for conservation in 2020.

92+

Number of wildlife species protected by WCN around the world.

4,850+

People who attended our virtual Wildlife Conservation Expos in 2020.

4★

Rating WCN received from Charity Navigator, America's leading independent charity evaluator—a top ranking amongst wildlife conservation nonprofits.

60+

Number of field conservationists who have attended virtual WCN workshops.

492

Number of projects to date supported in 45 countries by WCN's Wildlife Funds.

17

Number of wildlife Conservation Partners.

1,670+

Number of staff and members of local communities around the world provided with employment opportunities by WCN's Conservation Partners.

WCN'S GLOBAL REACH TO DATE

WILDLIFE FUNDS



ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND
SAVE THE ELEPHANTS & WCN
Africa and Asia



LION RECOVERY FUND
WCN
Africa



PANGOLIN CRISIS FUND
WCN & SAVE PANGOLINS
Africa and Asia



RHINO RECOVERY FUND
WCN
Africa and Asia

MULTI-CONTINENT



GLOBAL PENGUIN SOCIETY
LED BY DR. PABLO BORBOROGLU
Worldwide (based in Argentina)



MARALLIANCE
LED BY DR. RACHEL GRAHAM
Worldwide (based in Belize)



SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
As of 2020, WCN has awarded 128 scholarships to promising young conservationists from 42 countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.



SMALL WILD CAT CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
LED BY DR. JIM SANDERSON
Worldwide

LATIN AMERICA



ANDEAN CAT ALLIANCE
LED BY DR. ROCIO PALACIOS
Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru



PROYECTO TITÍ
LED BY ROSAMIRA GUILLEN
Colombia



SPECTACLED BEAR CONSERVATION
LED BY ROBYN APPLETON & RENZO PIANA
Peru

ASIA & EASTERN EUROPE



SAIGA CONSERVATION ALLIANCE
LED BY ELENA BYKOVA & DR. E.J. MILNER-GULLAND
Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, Uzbekistan



SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY
LED BY DR. RODNEY JACKSON & ASHLEIGH LUTZ-NELSON
Bhutan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia

AFRICA



CHEETAH CONSERVATION BOTSWANA
LED BY REBECCA KLEIN
Botswana



CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND
LED BY DR. LAURIE MARKER
Namibia



ETHIOPIAN WOLF CONSERVATION PROGRAM
LED BY DR. CLAUDIO SILLERO
Ethiopia



EWASO LIONS
LED BY DR. SHIVANI BHALLA, RESSON KANTAI DUFF & JENERIA LEKILELEI
Kenya



GREVY'S ZEBRA TRUST
LED BY BELINDA LOW MACKEY
Kenya



NIASSA LION PROJECT
LED BY DR. COLLEEN BEGG & KEITH BEGG
Mozambique



OKAPI CONSERVATION PROJECT
LED BY JOHN LUKAS
Democratic Republic of Congo



PAINTED DOG CONSERVATION
LED BY PETER BLINSTON
Zimbabwe



SAVE THE ELEPHANTS
LED BY DR. IAIN DOUGLAS-HAMILTON & FRANK POPE
Kenya

A close-up photograph of a spectacled bear (Tremarctos ornatus) standing in a forest. The bear has dark brown fur and a distinctive light-colored, mottled patch on its face, resembling a mask. It is looking directly at the camera with a slight open mouth. The ground is covered with dry, brown leaves and some rocks. The background is a blurred forest floor.

CONSERVATION RISES TO A CHALLENGING YEAR

DEPLOYING EMERGENCY SUPPORT

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world, it took countless lives and livelihoods. It also had a serious economic impact for conservation. Many conservation organizations, which count on tourism dollars, found themselves struggling. Others who work off the tourist path found it hard to cover the costs of their programming as many individual and institutional donors could no longer provide funding.

In response, **WCN created an Emergency Relief Fund** to help conservationists continue their core programs during these difficult times. Additionally, our Wildlife Funds provided emergency funding to several grantees so that rangers could remain in the field protecting wildlife.

Clockwise from top left: Lion Recovery Fund grantees received funding for critical programs. Anti-poaching K9 patrols are conducted all across Africa. WCN Scholars received support to protect animals like grey crowned cranes. Proyecto Titi continued their education programs with ERF funding. Ranger patrols protected wildlife from poaching during the pandemic. MarAlliance working with hammerhead sharks in the Caribbean.



\$2.4M IN WILDLIFE FUND EMERGENCY GRANTS

The **Lion Recovery Fund** and **Rhino Recovery Fund** collectively issued \$2.4 million to grantees to mitigate income shortages created by the loss of tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. These emergency grants played a critical role in ensuring core conservation services continued and rangers remained in the field to protect lions, rhinos, and countless other wildlife.

18 SCHOLARS GIVEN EMERGENCY SUPPORT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Several **WCN Scholars** received emergency funds to reshape their fieldwork plans, purchase personal protective equipment, get tested for COVID-19, and transition to virtual classes.

\$424,800 IN EMERGENCY RELIEF

To address the unprecedented need for financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, WCN created an **Emergency Relief Fund** (ERF) to support conservationists in our Network. The ERF issued over \$424,800 in emergency grants for Partners and grantees to continue core programs, such as anti-poaching patrols, and support local communities that assist with conservation efforts.

Photo credits clockwise from top left: Peter Lindsey; ©Scott Ramsay; ©Subair Cheerathodi/Alamy Stock Photo; PT; PDG; ©Pete Oxford.

HELPING PEOPLE HELPS WILDLIFE

There is an undeniable link between helping people and helping wildlife. If the people who live alongside wildlife are suffering, protecting wildlife cannot be their priority. Conservation succeeds when it addresses the needs of these communities. Our Partners' humanitarian efforts make conservation work for both people and wildlife.

PROVIDING PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

Our Partners helped local communities stay healthy during the pandemic by providing them with safety materials. **Andean Cat Alliance** and **Cheetah Conservation Botswana** (CCB) developed safety posters conveying proper healthcare information, and both CCB and **Niassa Lion Project** set up hand washing stations in local towns. **Okapi Conservation Project** produced regular radio broadcasts that became the primary form of communication and source of public health information for everyone in Okapi Wildlife Reserve during the pandemic.

OFFERING PUBLIC HEALTH SUPPORT

In response to the pandemic, **Painted Dog Conservation** provided five community clinics and local schools with personal protective equipment, sanitizers, and an ambulance.



MAKING AND DISTRIBUTING PROTECTIVE MASKS

2,600 masks

Cheetah Conservation Botswana

4,000 masks

Grevy's Zebra Trust

700 masks

MarAlliance

Each Partner commissioned these masks from local people, generating income for their communities.

100,000 face shields to healthcare workers
Okapi Conservation Project



TAKING EDUCATION TO A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

To reach people during quarantine, our Partners transitioned their education programs to virtual formats. **Cheetah Conservation Fund** hosted video conferences and made pre-recorded lessons for schools in Namibia. **Global Penguin Society** and **Proyecto Tití** produced digital activity books and adapted educational services for remote learning. **Save the Elephants** provided reading materials and internet access for 145 high school students across Kenya, and **Saiga Conservation Alliance** was able to host their annual Saiga Day festival online in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

Opposite page: Cheetah Conservation Botswana educating school children about cheetah conservation. Painted Dog Conservation distributing healthcare equipment during the pandemic. Above: A local man receives a box of food from Proyecto Tití staff. Women produce facemasks at Okapi Conservation Project's community center. Families participate in Saiga Conservation Alliance's virtual Saiga Day Festival.



African elephants © Frank af Petersens

Taking Wildlife Off the Menu

PANGOLIN CRISIS FUND | ASIA

Hundreds of vendors and patrons filled the open-air stalls in Wuhan's sprawling Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market. Among the array of fresh produce and seafood, a wild animals section boasted 75 wildlife species available for sale. Included in this ill-fated menagerie were pangolins—gentle mammals covered head to tail in armor-like scales. In early 2020, research indicated that wildlife consumed from this market was the probable source of the coronavirus that spread across the globe. As scientists posited that COVID-19 transmitted from bats to pangolins to people, the Pangolin Crisis Fund (PCF) saw an opportunity to save endangered pangolins and prevent similar pandemics in the future. Thanks to the generosity of a visionary donor, the PCF issued a \$1 million dollar grant to WildAid aimed at stopping consumption of pangolins and other endangered wildlife in Asia. This unprecedented investment focuses on ending demand for pangolins and closing the markets and restaurants that put endangered wildlife on the menu.



©Paul Hilton

Pangolin scales and body parts are used in traditional medicines throughout Asia.

Throughout Asia, pangolin meat is prized as a delicacy and their scales are falsely believed to hold medicinal properties. This demand for pangolin parts and products drives a cruel trade that has made pangolins the world's most trafficked mammal. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that

the clandestine industry threatening pangolins also poses dire health risks for people. As long as there is a desire to consume pangolins, the poaching and trafficking of these animals will persist and the world could be one meal away from the next global pandemic.

Ending the demand for endangered wildlife is crucial, but doing so requires influential messaging and ongoing public campaigning, participation from businesses and governments, and time to change hearts and minds. PCF partner, WildAid, has the existing programs and relationships in Asia and the expertise in developing demand reduction media campaigns needed to be successful. During the pandemic, many Chinese citizens demanded action against the illegal wildlife trade, while the Chinese government fast-tracked legislation to stop wildlife consumption. The PCF and WildAid seized on this opportunity to amplify messages highlighting the risk to public health and build on the public support for shutting down wildlife markets.

Working with local partners, WildAid launched a series of initiatives to change consumer habits. In Vietnam, an animated video campaign developed by WildAid and CHANGE has already reached over 12 million people. In several Chinese cit-



©WildAid

WildAid campaign billboards in a Chinese airport.

ies, influencers in WildAid's multi-faceted campaign on social media, TV, and outdoor digital screens share the message to stop consuming wildlife to hundreds of millions of viewers. As these campaigns persuade the public, WildAid and partners are also working at the policy level to encourage governments to ban the illegal trade and consumption of wildlife, which has already resulted in Vietnam's Prime Minister announcing a directive to close wildlife markets and trade.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating, but it has also given the world an exceptional opportunity to learn from this tragedy. We must stop demand for pangolins and other wildlife to save them from extinction and save ourselves from the next wildlife-related pandemic. ■

Campaigns in Vietnam included workshops that inspired over 100 companies to incorporate wildlife protection into their policies and culture.



“I am continually impressed by how WCN promotes donor involvement and education with frequent online events and the twice-yearly Expo. In 2020, their pivot to virtual Expos was smooth and swift and the resulting conferences were every bit as enlightening and inspiring as they were in previous years, while expanding the audience beyond those who would have traveled to the San Francisco Bay Area to attend.”

SANDRA FARKAS
WCN SUPPORTER SINCE 2012



The Resiliency of Conservation

GREVY'S ZEBRA TRUST + EWASO LIONS | KENYA

It wasn't long after daybreak when Sintiwan Lekilia left her home, the sun still hung low in the sky casting a warm honey-colored tint over the open savanna. It's a 45 minute walk to the Grevy's Zebra Trust (GZT) camp and Sintiwan wanted to get there early. When she arrived, she settled into the workshop amongst an array of zebra-striped cloth, thread, and recently sewn facemasks. Across the hills, Jisana Tampushi is hammering loudly—adding the finishing touches to a 'tippy-tappy', a hand washing station operated by a foot pedal. The contraption has attracted a group of curious children, eager to learn from Ewaso Lions (EL) how to properly wash their hands to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Throughout 2020, the collaboration between local people and conservationists at GZT and EL have helped the communities and wildlife populations in northern Kenya stay healthy in the face of a destructive pandemic.



Sintiwan wearing and sewing GZT's Nkirreten masks, which comply with World Health Organization standards.

GZT and EL have worked together before. They both operate in the same area and employ many of the same conservation techniques. This year, the pandemic forced both groups to adapt. Meetings they once held with locals to reduce conflict with lions now happened in smaller groups and at a safe distance. GZT's Nkirreten Project, a women's

empowerment project that Sintiwan participates in, typically makes sanitary pads, but has expanded to include facemasks. Together, EL and GZT set up hand washing stations and disseminated healthcare information to boost community safety. As a result, their partnership and the community-led nature of their work has made this area particularly resilient to the health impacts of the pandemic.

Because their community work supports the local pastoral economy, GZT and Ewaso Lions were also able to withstand the worst financial downturns of the pandemic. As the travel industry grinded to a halt in 2020, it heavily impacted many conservation organizations that rely on tourist dollars. Although GZT and EL faced their own unique funding challenges, tourism and conservation are not linked where they operate. Untethered from tourism, their conservation work with locals to protect livestock from hungry lions and manage rangeland habitat for the highly endangered Grevy's zebra was able to continue with relatively minor adjustments.

Community engagement is the cornerstone of conservation for GZT and Ewaso Lions, and it cannot function without trust. This trust is strong due to years of working together to help wildlife and people coexist. Additionally, the bond between conservationists and locals is close because these conservationists are not outsiders, they are from the same communities where they operate. Because they are so rooted in the area, conservationists weathered the pandemic right alongside their communities, strengthening trust even more.

When people are hungry or sick, caring for wildlife, understandably, cannot be their priority. This is why humanitarian efforts and protecting wildlife



Jisana showing children how to use a 'tippy-tappy'.

As locals, GZT and EL staff helped remote villages that are inaccessible to government COVID outreach and partnered with CHAT (Community Health Africa Trust) in their health care efforts during the pandemic.

go hand-in-hand. In this unprecedented year, GZT and Ewaso Lions banded together and worked with local people—producing masks with Sintiwan and strengthening health services with Jisana—to ensure their communities were safe and that their efforts to protect wildlife never wavered. In doing so, they demonstrated the truly resilient nature of community-led conservation. ■

“It’s been a challenging year, but the WCN Partners have not allowed a pandemic to alter their efforts to protect the species that they care so passionately about. From combating poaching to creating sanitation stations, WCN conservationists are keeping wildlife and communities safe. They bring us to tears and give us awe in their resilience to adversity. Over the 11 years that we have been supporting WCN, we have come to know many of the conservationists personally. The more we learn about them, the more we respect their dedication and sacrifices for conservation. We are proud to support these truly exceptional people doing truly exceptional work to save truly exceptional species.”

— DONNA HOWE AND JUAN LOAIZA
WCN SUPPORTERS SINCE 2010





CONSERVATION'S BRIGHT FUTURE

Orphan Rhinos Get a Second Chance

RHINO RECOVERY FUND | SOUTH AFRICA



WCN launched the Rhino Recovery Fund in 2020 to protect rhinos from wildlife crime and to restore their landscapes, improving the health of rhino populations and benefiting local people.

Above: Arthur and his friend Summer. Opposite page, clockwise: Arthur recovering from injuries. Rhinos in CFW's rewilding program. Arthur being fed during rehabilitation. Arthur's rescue.

With a mouthful of grass, Arthur lifted his head to glance at Summer grazing nearby. Arthur never wants to be far from Summer—in two years, their emotional bond has grown as sturdy as their mammoth physiques. The pair were orphaned when their mothers were poached for their valuable horns in South Africa's Kruger National Park. Arthur, just three months old at the time, was found by rangers and helicoptered to safety, under veterinary supervision, to the Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary (CFW). It is there that Arthur met his dearest friend, Summer, and where together, these young white rhinos are learning to be wild again.

Arthur had serious injuries when he first arrived at CFW—machete wounds on his back and foot sustained while defending his mother. CFW, experts in caring for orphaned calves, began Arthur's rehabilitation and introduced him to a group of other rescued rhinos, including

Summer, called a 'crash'. This year Arthur began his transition from rehabilitation to rewilding, a process that enables temporarily captive rhinos to learn how to survive and breed on their own in a wild landscape, without human intervention. It is this rewilding process that prompted WCN's newly launched Rhino Recovery Fund (RRF) to invest in Care for Wild.

Generally, CFW's rewilding process starts with grouping together very young rhinos who need direct care within CFW's Intensive Protection Zone. As they grow and are weaned, these rhinos are taken to a larger area, part of a provincial reserve, where they mix with older rhinos and continue their rehabilitation process. These 20–30 rhinos will be released into different parts of the reserve at different stages, able to move about freely over thousands of acres of wilderness. With each step of the process, their interactions with humans diminish and the rhinos develop social skills and a group dynamic. Over time, these orphans become more alert and their natural grazing patterns and reproductive behaviors emerge, eventually learning to live as wild rhinos.

While the RRF does not typically grant to orphanages or sanctuaries, it supports rewilding rhinos. In 2020, the RRF provided emergency funding to expand CFW's reserve into a 4,570 acre protected area with a six-member Anti-Poaching Unit. This expansion will allow for Arthur's crash to be released and protected in the wild, and will provide additional secured land to black rhino habitat. The RRF is also investing in the reserve as part of its commitment to community engagement. The reserve is comprised of private and community land and some of the communities are working with CFW to convert their land into profitable commercial farming. As the communities benefit from this additional income, they will have a vested interest in rhino conservation and in ensuring the reserve is managed well.

Rhinos need a lot of space, and their populations are at precarious levels. Expanding the reserve for rewilding rhinos helps establish a healthy population in a suitable habitat. And for orphans like Arthur, it means a second chance at being wild. ■

All photos on this spread ©Care for Wild



A Safer Home for Patagonia's Penguins

GLOBAL PENGUIN SOCIETY | PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

Explorers in the seventeenth century sailed the cobalt waters off Patagonia's northern coast through a group of islands called Complejo Islotte Lobos (CIL). At night, their boats swayed and rocked over the waves while a slew of Southern right whales swam alongside them. Spray from these spouting whales reflected in the moonlight, creating a scene the explorers described as 'a sea of candles'. Centuries later, Dr. Pablo Borboroglu walks around CIL's pebbled shoreline observing another wildlife marvel—9,000 pairs of nesting Magellanic penguins. In 2020, Pablo's organization, Global Penguin Society (GPS), helped CIL become Argentina's 40th national park. This protected status will safeguard not only this penguin colony, but over 460 species of plants and animals, including the spouting whales still swimming in these same waters.

Over the years, GPS has safeguarded vast sections of Patagonia's coast and has had a hand in creating Argentina's marine-based national parks. Once these areas are under government protection, destructive activities such as illegal fishing, pollution,

and coastal development are more easily deterred. In CIL, this is not only good news for penguins and other wildlife, but also for the people living nearby.

There are only two towns close to CIL, one of which was built around mining. Those mines shut down a few years ago, leaving many people jobless and the area hungry for a new industry. Around the same time, the local government asked GPS to make a management plan for the area. It was that process that sparked the idea to make CIL a national park—a solution that would protect CIL's penguin colony and vast ecosystem while also generating a new tourism economy for the struggling local communities. Though coordinated by Dr. Laura Reyes and Pablo from GPS, creating the management plan was a full collaboration that included groups representing fisheries, mining, tourism, education, government, and Indigenous People. Together, these groups identified the economic and ecological value of the area, the threats to that value, and the solutions to those threats. The process also revealed CIL's significant cultural worth—archaeologists found ancient aboriginal fishing holes and 3,000-year-old

grave sites on the islands—sparking a resurgence of cultural pride in the area. This collaboration culminated in a management plan that identified national park designation as the best way to establish formal oversight to conserve CIL's wildlife and attract tourists eager to see the penguin colony. The government agreed and in late 2020, it officially made CIL a national park.

Penguins are relatively new to CIL, they only built their colony there about 20 years ago. As climate change altered conditions in the ocean, many fish stocks migrated and the penguins followed their food supply to an uncertain future at the very top of Patagonia. In fact, CIL's colony is the northernmost population of Magellanic penguins along the entire Atlantic Ocean. Geographically, these penguins have reached the end of the line, but fortunately, as a designated national park, they could thrive here for generations. This means that while seventeenth century explorers may not have found penguins in CIL, future explorers will. ■

As a national park, CIL (top) protects sea lions, Southern right whales, and other wildlife in addition to penguins.

Over the last decade, GPS helped promote laws that extend Argentinian national parks' jurisdiction into the ocean, establishing the country's first marine protected areas.

CIL is closer to Buenos Aires than other penguin colonies, meaning it can attract tourists to revive the struggling local economy.



J. Ferrada



J. Ferrada



How Traditional Voices Protect Snow Leopards

SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY | CENTRAL ASIA

Maria Azhunova's boots crunched through the bright snow. She exhaled a wide plume and the town emerged behind her dissipating breath. The trek across the slopes of Siberia's Republic of Buryatia was familiar to her and the immense warmth of being in her family's ancestral home outweighed the cold mountain air. Coming home always reminded Maria of the importance of her mission to preserve Buryat culture and the communal knowledge of all Indigenous Peoples across Central Asia. A crucial part of this mission is the protection of a key spiritual icon, the snow leopard. In 2020, Maria's work as Director-Elect of the Land of Snow Leopard Network (LOSL) has been instrumental in improving conservation of these rare cats through the power of Indigenous voices.

Snow leopards live in the mountains of 12 Central Asian countries alongside many different cultures of Indigenous Peoples. Through LOSL, Maria elevates Indigenous voices by working to ensure they take prominent leadership roles in conservation manage-



Maria Azhunova

Maria (above) plans to use her \$100,000 Stanford Bright Award to build upon LOSL's 2020 successes, including starting a nomadic pastoralism and culture academy, growing LOSL's membership, and drawing more attention to snow leopard conservation.

Snow Leopard Conservancy has helped grow LOSL to over 100 members across four countries.

LOSL elevates the voice of Indigenous Peoples and their traditional ecological knowledge.

ment. Since her teenage years, Maria has helped Indigenous elders and shamans direct their cultural knowledge to protect wildlife. As the daughter of Indigenous Buryat activists, Maria believes she inherited the "conservation gene" from her parents. Now, as the figurehead of LOSL, she is the bridge connecting scientists with Indigenous leaders and their traditional ecological knowledge.

As part of her role at LOSL, Maria acts as a cultural liaison with the Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC), who facilitated LOSL's founding in 2013 and continues to provide it with funding and technical support. SLC recognizes that Indigenous Peoples are key to snow leopard survival, collaborating with them to find conservation strategies that address their needs. For example, SLC helps livestock herders build predator-proof corrals and installs lights and other deterrents to protect their flocks. SLC and LOSL work in tandem—LOSL identifies communities experiencing snow leopard activity and then collaborates with SLC to reduce human-leopard conflict through solutions led by Indigenous Peoples.

For Indigenous communities, the snow leopard is a sacred totem and a spiritual protector, a touchstone to their ancestral beliefs. This reverence is channeled into direct conservation action through LOSL's ceremonies, trainings, and other initiatives. In 2020, these programs had a strong impact for snow leopards.



Beth Duncan

Thanks to LOSL community outreach, local herders in Tajikistan released, rather than killed, four snow leopards caught raiding their livestock. LOSL members are also collecting data about snow leopards, their prey species, habitat changes, and poaching incidents, which helps shape SLC's conservation efforts. Additionally, LOSL is finding increased sightings of snow leopards where Indigenous People protect them, proving that conservation strategies that empower Indigenous communities will yield positive results.

Maria is inspired by Indigenous Peoples' commitment to protecting snow leopards, and takes pride in being her homeland's ambassador to the wider world. And the wider world has taken notice, as Maria received the 2020 Stanford Bright Award for her dedication to conservation. Thanks to her work and that of LOSL, Indigenous voices are leading the way forward for snow leopard conservation. ■



"It is wonderful to have complete trust in an organization which has identified good people fighting good fights, which tells us the truth, and which distributes donations in the most effective way possible. Now more than ever is the time to contribute what we can."

MADELEINE AND JERRY COHEN
WCN SUPPORTERS SINCE 2012

An Extraordinary Friendship

OKAPI CONSERVATION PROJECT | DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Okapi © Jiri Hrebicek

Opposite page:

Mr. Gelo and his family on his farm in Okapi Wildlife Reserve. OCP reimburses Mr. Gelo for the crops that Nembongo eats so that their observations can continue without affecting his livelihood.

Camera trap photos mark the dates of some of Nembongo's routine visits to Mr. Gelo's farm.

OCP helps Mr. Gelo staff his farm. Mbuti Pygmies help tend the land and plant crops.

As the morning light reached through the canopy, Richard Gelo turned to his crops and waited for signs of movement. The visitor he was expecting first found his farm nearly a year ago. Since then, these occasional pit stops had become regular. Before long, Mr. Gelo's guest emerged from the thick jungle of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve snout first. Nembongo, one of the Democratic Republic of Congo's elusive and endangered okapi, casually munched on Mr. Gelo's bean plants as the two peacefully shared a quiet morning. This connection between a wild okapi and a human is the first of its kind ever witnessed by conservationists.

Named after the area where Mr. Gelo lives, Nembongo is a rarity among a rare species. Okapi are nearly impossible to see in the wild; they are solitary animals that blend seamlessly into their habitat and make little sound. Naturally shy and skittish, okapi immediately flee when their sharp ears detect humans nearby. Yet at a short distance, Nembongo appears comfortable with Mr. Gelo, which makes his

routine visits to the farm quite historic. Nembongo's visits also provide a unique chance for conservationists at the Okapi Conservation Project (OCP) to see a wild okapi in person.

The opportunity to reliably locate a wild okapi is priceless for OCP, since most knowledge about okapi comes from researching those in zoos and sanctuaries. In over 30 years, this is the first truly wild okapi that OCP has been able to study in person. Monitoring Nembongo allows them to learn more about wild okapi behavior and food preferences, which will help them better understand the conservation needs of the species.

When Mr. Gelo first told OCP about these special encounters, the conservationists began gathering information about Nembongo's morning and evening visits. They positioned camera traps on the farm near the crops and shoots that Nembongo likes to eat, to better understand how frequently he feeds there. That Mr. Gelo gave the conservationists unfettered access to his land to study Nembongo is a testament to the trust between him and OCP.

Mr. Gelo already had a strong relationship with OCP before he connected with Nembongo. He participates in OCP's agroforestry program, which supports both the reforestation and agricultural sustainability of the Reserve, including Mr. Gelo's land. Through the program, OCP provides seeds, tools, and funding to Mr. Gelo to hire staff for his farm. The staff are primarily Mbuti Pygmies, who help cultivate the crops that Nembongo eats. This program safeguards and improves okapi habitat while also helping farmers like Mr. Gelo thrive, and creates the stable conditions that make the unprecedented friendship between Mr. Gelo and Nembongo possible.

Mr. Gelo is the only farmer to have such a unique connection with an okapi, and takes great pride in the trust he has built with this intrepid animal. As the relationship between these two becomes better known, OCP hopes it will inspire others to develop a passion for protecting the forest for okapi like Nembongo. ■



Faustin Mbuza



Faustin Mbuza

PARTNERS' ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BABY BOOM

530

saiga calf births
(a record high)

Saiga Conservation Alliance

11

new lion cubs

Ewaso Lions

8

new painted dog pups

Painted Dog Conservation

10

new cotton-top tamarins

Proyecto Titi

90

new elephant calves

Save the Elephants

IMPROVING WILDLIFE HEALTH

200

domestic dogs vaccinated
by **Niassa Lion Project**,
protecting nearly 1,000 lions
and 400 painted dogs

2,642

domestic animals vaccinated
by **Ewaso Lions**

3,200

domestic dogs (93% of
dogs near Bale Mountains
National Park) vacci-
nated by **Ethiopian Wolf
Conservation Program**



ANTI-POACHING PATROLS

9,860

miles patrolled on foot by
Grevy's Zebra Trust's
Ambassadors and Warriors

10,252

miles covered by **Painted
Dog Conservation's** 896
patrols

5,290

sq. miles protected by the
ICCN ranger base built
by **Okapi Conservation
Project**

5,400

bushmeat snares
removed by **Painted Dog
Conservation**

SHAPING POLICY

After ongoing advocacy by the Coalition for Sustainable Fishing, which includes **MarAlliance**, the Belizean government banned gillnet fishing, which will save countless marine wildlife. With a coalition of organizations, **Global Penguin Society** campaigned against microplastic pollution, leading to a new law in Argentina forbidding production and importation of products containing microplastics. Thanks to awareness campaigns supported by **Painted Dog Conservation**, killing a painted dog in Zimbabwe now carries a nine year prison sentence.

DISCOVERING NEW WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

Our Partners discovered new pockets of wildlife that give them hope for the future. **Andean Cat Alliance** identified eight new Andean cats via camera traps in Chile, Peru, and Argentina and experienced a rare, in-person Andean cat sighting. **Spectacled Bear Conservation** discovered spectacled bears in an area of northwest Peru previously thought to be uninhabitable.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

7

new livestock guarding
dogs placed with herders by
Andean Cat Alliance

15

new livestock guarding
dogs placed with farmers
by **Cheetah Conservation
Botswana**

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Local communities are key to conservation. **Okapi Conservation Project** built a women's center, providing socio-economic empowerment for women and encouraging community participation in conservation. **Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation's** Ugandan partner, Embaka, united over 600 former poachers as an anti-poaching group to protect African golden cats.

Opposite page: A pair of saiga antelope calves. Painted Dog Conservation rangers remove bushmeat snares. Vaccinating domestic animals protects nearby wildlife from disease. Belize's gillnet fishing ban will prevent countless shark deaths. Above: New sightings of elusive Andean cats give hope for population growth. Proyecto Titi grows thousands of tree saplings in their nursery. Cheetah Conservation Botswana's livestock guarding dogs greatly reduce human-cheetah conflict. Grevy's Zebra Trust helps regenerate vital grazing habitat.



PROTECTING WILD PLACES

44,478

acres designated as a marine
national park in Patagonia,
Argentina, with help from
Global Penguin Society

185

acres added to the
Proyecto Titi forest reserve,
now totalling 645 acres

9,000

saplings planted by
Proyecto Titi to restore
50 acres of forest

1,532

acres of grazing habitat
restored by **Grevy's Zebra
Trust**

111,000

acres designated as critical
spectacled bear habitat with
help from **Spectacled Bear
Conservation**

EMPOWERING LOCAL LEADERS

Ewaso Lions launched the Beyond Boundaries program to address power, privilege, and race in conservation. **Snow Leopard Conservancy** supported education initiatives led by Indigenous leaders in Tajikistan, resulting in herders releasing 11 snow leopards that killed livestock. **Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation** created nine global working groups staffed by over 150 local members to protect 12 small cat species.



ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

ESTABLISHED IN 2013

GOAL

TO END THE IVORY CRISIS AND
SECURE A FUTURE FOR ELEPHANTS

OVERVIEW

The ongoing elephant poaching crisis in Africa is driven by an international ivory trade which thrives on poverty, corruption, and greed. Although elephant poaching has declined across much of east and southern Africa, the ivory trade continues and the Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF) remains committed to ending it. As other threats to elephants' survival are coming to the fore, the ECF has expanded to include projects promoting human-elephant coexistence.

STRATEGY

The ECF is a joint initiative of Save the Elephants and WCN. The ECF funds the best ideas and most urgent actions to safeguard the future of elephants, working with a coalition of individuals, scientists, conservation organizations, and governments, to:

- ▶ Stop the killing of elephants
- ▶ Stop ivory demand
- ▶ Stop the trafficking of ivory
- ▶ Encourage human-elephant coexistence

HIGHLIGHT

ECF partners have provided evidence of illegal ivory sales in Asia which galvanized local law enforcement agencies to close down markets, with ECF support. China and several Southeast Asian countries have now almost totally eliminated the open sale of ivory.

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK
AND SAVE THE ELEPHANTS

As of year-end
2020 the ECF
has supported:

321
projects

90
grantees

40
countries

The ECF has
disbursed:

\$25
million
to support
on-the-ground
conservation
efforts.



LION RECOVERY FUND

ESTABLISHED IN 2017

GOAL TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF AFRICAN LIONS BY 2050

OVERVIEW

Lion populations have declined by half in just a quarter century. But, lions can return.

The Lion Recovery Fund (LRF) was created by WCN to give conservation-ists the support they need to address the biggest threats to lions.

STRATEGY

The LRF invests in projects designed to:

- **Protect lions** from poaching, inci-
dental capture in snares, retaliatory
and ritual killings, and other threats.
- **Protect habitats** from destruction
by unsustainable development
practices such as farming, mining,
logging, and charcoal production.
- **Protect prey** from poaching for
bushmeat, excessive competition
with domestic livestock, destruction
of migratory pathways, and other
threats.

HIGHLIGHT

In 2020, the LRF provided African
Parks with two grants to develop a
21,200 sq. mile wilderness area in the
Central African Republic. Their plan is
to create a landscape free of human
interference by creating corridors for
people and livestock. This project has
the potential for very significant recov-
ery in lion numbers and for protecting
other wildlife, like chimpanzees and
African wild dogs.

MANAGED BY
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK

As of year-end
2020 the LRF
has supported:

145
projects

56
grantees

21
countries

The LRF has
disbursed:

\$13.3
million
to support
on-the-ground
conservation
efforts.



PANGOLIN CRISIS FUND

ESTABLISHED IN 2019

GOAL

TO SAVE PANGOLINS
FROM EXTINCTION

OVERVIEW

There is no animal on Earth like the pangolin, yet most people have never even heard of them. Despite their relative obscurity, pangolins have the unfortunate distinction of being the most illegally trafficked wild mammals in the world.

Pangolins are hunted to supply a rampant illegal global trade in their scales, meat, and body parts. Because of demand—mostly in Asia, where pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and their scales are believed to have medicinal qualities—all eight species of pangolins are threatened with extinction.

STRATEGY

The Pangolin Crisis Fund (PCF) was created by Save Pangolins and WCN to invest in the best projects to stop the poaching of pangolins, stop the trade and demand for pangolin products, and raise the profile of this little-known animal.

HIGHLIGHT

In less than two years, the PCF has already invested in projects that focus on protecting all eight species of pangolins, issuing grants across Africa and Asia.

**A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK
AND SAVE PANGOLINS**

As of year-end
2020 the PCF
has supported:

13
projects

14
grantees

10
countries

The PCF has
disbursed:

\$1.4
million
to support
on-the-ground
conservation
efforts.



RHINO RECOVERY FUND

ESTABLISHED IN 2020

GOAL

TO PROTECT RHINOS FROM WILDLIFE CRIME AND RESTORE THEIR LANDSCAPES

OVERVIEW

Thousands of African rhinos have been killed for their horns which are prized for false medicinal purposes, and Asian rhinos have dwindled to near extinction. Additionally, rhinos are losing their habitat to unsustainable development.

But there is still hope for rhinos. The Rhino Recovery Fund (RRF) believes with the right support, most rhino species can recover their populations.

STRATEGY

The Rhino Recovery Fund has two primary investment strategies:

- **Rhino Guardians** – We invest in projects designed to stop rhino poaching and end the trafficking and demand for rhino horn.
- **Rhino Landscapes** – We invest in projects that restore functioning habitat to support wild rhinos.

HIGHLIGHT

Within its first few months, the RRF was able to invest in every major rhino range area in the world, with the exception of Botswana and Malawi. This funding aided programs that support four of the five remaining rhino species across two continents.

MANAGED BY
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK

As of year-end 2020 the RRF has supported:

15
projects

17
grantees

8
countries

The RRF has disbursed:

\$1.3
million
to support
on-the-ground
conservation
efforts.

A MESSAGE FROM WCN STAFF

Like many other organizations, WCN looked very different in 2020. We swapped out our conference rooms for Zoom meetings—working together while our dogs barked in the background and our cats walked across our keyboards.



We adapted to our new reality and never lost focus on the work we are all so passionate about. Most of all, it was the sincere kindness and generosity of our donors and the never-give-up spirit of conservationists that rallied us every day. We want to thank all of these incredible people for inspiring us during a really hard year.



EVERY ANIMAL HAS A STORY

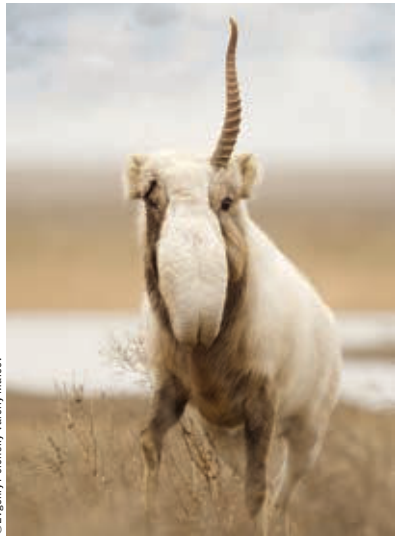
Every year, WCN’s network of conservationists and supporters protect thousands of animals, each with its own unique story. Here are just a few of those stories—these individuals embody the power of saving a single animal and the positive impacts that reverberate from one caring act.

Didi PAINTED DOG

Didi is a painted dog kept safe by **Painted Dog Conservation**’s anti-poaching work in Zimbabwe. She became the alpha female of her pack in 2015, and this year, she had her fifth litter. Over the years she has had a total of 52 pups, some of which have formed their own packs. Didi is possibly the most successful painted dog on record, and a perfect example of how protecting just one animal can help an entire population grow.



© Will Burrard-Lucas



© Evgeniy Polonsky / Valeriy Malev

Bully SAIGA ANTELOPE

Bully is a feisty saiga antelope, whose herd is closely monitored by **Saiga Conservation Alliance** in Russia’s Stepnoi Reserve. He lost one of his horns in a territorial fight with another male, but the perseverance of this tough ‘unicorn’ allowed him to thrive despite this loss. Bully stands as a symbol of the saiga antelope’s resilience, bouncing back from hardship with ample spirit.



© Gerachew A.

Terefe ETHIOPIAN WOLF

Terefe is the first Ethiopian wolf that conservationists have ever rehabilitated away from its pack for a prolonged period of time. **Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Program** rescued Terefe after he was found with a gunshot wound, enlisting the best veterinary care for him. He made a full recovery after several months and was released back to the wild, where EWCP continues to monitor his health.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Statement of Revenue and Expenses

CALENDAR YEAR ENDING 2020

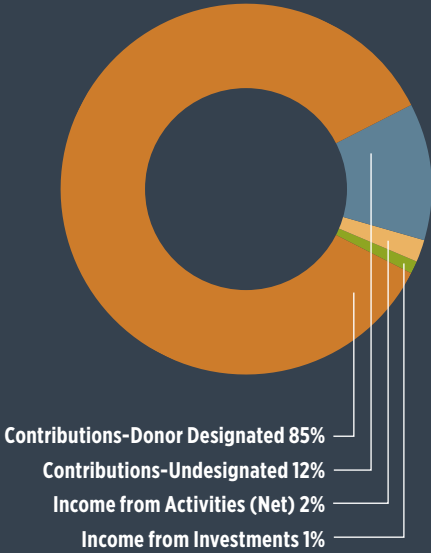
REVENUE

Contributions – Donor Designated	\$ 28,209,304
Contributions – Undesignated	\$ 3,861,352
Income from Activities (Net)	\$ 521,752
Income from Investments	\$ 502,322
Total Revenue	\$ 33,094,730

EXPENSES

Program Grants and Services	\$ 27,390,129
Management and General	\$ 1,418,177
Fundraising	\$ 167,806
Total Expenses	\$ 28,976,112
Change In Net Assets	\$ 4,118,618

2020 TOTAL REVENUE



Statement of Financial Position

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020

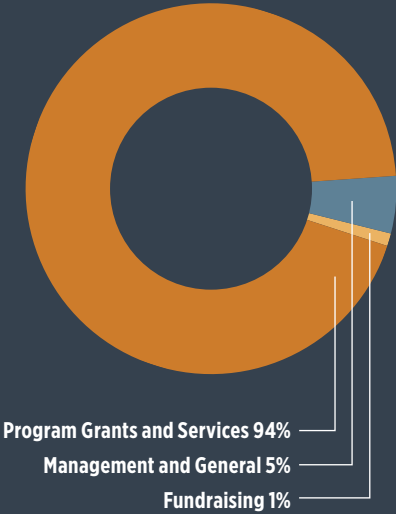
ASSETS

Unrestricted Cash and Equivalents	\$ 5,072,335
Restricted Cash and Equivalents	\$ 20,074,716
Grants and Pledges Receivable	\$ 530,000
Scholarship Fund	\$ 1,996,286
Mary S Boardman Fund	\$ 2,486,688
Property and Equipment (Net)	\$ 53,575
Other Assets	\$ 330,435
Total Assets	\$ 30,544,035

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$ 6,024,822
Beginning Assets	\$ 20,400,595
Change in Net Assets	\$ 4,118,618
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 30,544,035

2020 TOTAL EXPENSES



WCN maintains Charity Navigator’s highest possible 4-star rating. Charity Navigator is America’s leading independent charity evaluator, and rates over 8,000 charities on their Financial Health and Accountability & Transparency.

Complete financial reports are available upon request. Wildlife Conservation Network is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 organization – #30-0108469



WCN

Wildlife Conservation Network

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