

Annual Report of the American Wildlife Conservation Foundation

2018

The American Wildlife Conservation Foundation (AWCF) currently consists of supporting and corporate members, with interests in research, habitat management and educational outreach related to fish and wildlife resources. The official year of AWCF is the calendar year. All information in this report is complete through December 31, 2018.

From the Desk of the President, Gary Will

2018 was another successful year for the Foundation. A few new members were added to the roster and came from various backgrounds. No major gifts were received this year. As with many portfolios across the nation the stock market was not kind. Fortunately, the Finance Committee decided in the summer to reduce exposure and convert some aspects of the portfolio to cash. As a result, the \$24,000, deposited into the checking account will serve to provide grants and pay expenses for 2019 and probably 2020. It is hoped the remaining \$230,000 will begin to grow as the market becomes more positive. The portfolio continued to be administered through Morgan/Stanley. Richard Capozza was the Foundation's legal counsel.

Eight seminars were held in the spring and fall. The topics included: research on Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail, Fisher, Timber Rattlesnakes, Piping Plovers, Loons, Sturgeon, Earthworms and the use of "sound" to monitor wildlife populations. Besides educating people these seminars also helped advance the mission of the Foundation with other groups.

Once again, the Foundation met its objective of sponsoring five well written grant applications all dealing with species research. Exactly \$11,500 was distributed amongst researchers. The website continued to be well managed as interest continues to increase.

Katie Stuart, from New Hampshire, was able to coordinate the creation of a newsletter and an updated membership brochure. The newsletter will provide members with information concerning new discoveries in natural resource science and management, as well as provide information on upcoming programs, AWCF activities, and other conservation related information.

Transition continued in 2018. Unfortunately, the Nominating Committee fell short of its obligation to providing a list of candidates for the election of officers and Board members at the September members meeting. Thus, it was necessary to develop a list of candidates and proceed with a vote at that meeting. The new officers include: Daniel Leete, President, Gary Goff, Vice President, Dr. Paul Curtis, Secretary, Dan Wentworth, Treasurer and Finance Officer. Board of Directors include: Mark Brown, Ron Giergic, Joe Lamendola and Gary Will.

Looking forward, the task of the Foundation continues to support the three objectives of research, habitat management and conservation education. The need to recruit additional members and new funding sources continues to be paramount. New members will be the officers board members of the Foundation in the future.

From the Desk of the Vice President, Daniel Leete

The Vice President of AWCF has two basic annual goals. The first involves coordination of seminars, member and Board of Director meetings. The second goal is to enrich the endowment of this foundation.

Membership: The AWCF membership numbers remained static compared to 2017. The organization lost a few members from the previous year, but new memberships made up for those losses.

Public education Programs: In previous years, the average number of free public education programs was two per year. In 2018, the AWCF offered eight programs. The topics included:

The Piping Plover: A Threatened and Endangered Species

Loons: How Invasive Species are Impacting their Population

Sturgeons in Lake Ontario

Saving the Chittenango Ovate Amber Snail

The Return of the Fisher

Bio Acoustics and the Natural World

Timber Rattlesnake Research and Results

Earthworms in Natural Habitats of the Northeast: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Several of these programs were provided in collusion with other organizations such as the Finger Lakes National Forest. The average attendance for each program was 32 participants, also up from the previous year. There are good indications that in 2019, when programs that interest the public are offered collectively with other active natural resource organizations, the number of programs and the number of participants should increase. Gary Goff (Lake Placid), the new Vice President, will be taking over this program.

Endowment: This has not been a good year for the endowment for two reasons: (1) no significant contributions to the endowment were made during the year, and (2) the endowment suffered due to the significant losses incurred in the financial markets toward the end of the year. Still, enough money was available to make the payments for the grants selected by the Grants Committee.

Marketing: This year saw a valuable change in marketing. Through the efforts of Katie Stuart (an AWCF member from New Hampshire), the organization now has an up-to-date brochure. Katie also helped to create an electronic newsletter, first published in November. Through the efforts of Mike Cavanaugh (Albany), and the AWCF website webmaster, several positive changes were made to the website including a new membership application form and the addition of a button for access to all current newsletters. Dr. John Davis (Albany), is currently involved in making changes to the grant information and application processes.

From the Desk of the Treasurer and Finance Officer, Dan Wentworth

Finance Report

2018 has not been a good year for the AWCF Portfolio. At the end of December 2017 the portfolio was valued at \$276,384.59. After a \$24,000 withdrawal and market losses of \$23,710.66, as of December 31, 2018 the portfolio is valued at \$230,836.96. The withdrawal was deposited into the M&T Bank account in September to fund the organization through the remainder of the year and well into next year. It covered this fall's grants and will cover next spring's grants.

1st Quarter 2018 Portfolio balance: \$273,829.54

2nd Quarter 2018 Portfolio balance: \$275,087.38

3rd Quarter 2018 Portfolio balance: \$283,000.81 (Peak of year, balance after withdrawal.)

4th Quarter 2018 Portfolio balance: \$230836.96 (As of December 31, 2018)

Treasurers Report

Check book balanced as of December 31, 2018, no outstanding payments or donations.
Balance: \$23,316.06

Deposits: \$26,605.00 (Includes \$24,000 transfer from Portfolio)

Payments: \$14,745.17 (Includes \$11,500 in grants and \$3,245.17 in AWCF administrative expenses, taxes and fees)

From the Desk of the Secretary, Dr. Paul Curtis

In 2018, the American Wildlife Conservation Foundation had 68 members on the roster, with 33 members up-to-date with dues payment, totaling \$1,650. Most of new memberships were the results of recruitment efforts by Vice-President Daniel Leete. An e-mail list was created to quickly and easily contact members. Membership renewal notices, along with an application form and flyers, were mailed in March 2018. In April 2018, we held an AWCF Board of Directors meeting near Savannah, New York, at the Audubon Center. John Davis supplied a report on the annual grant process, and three were selected for funding out of the 24 reviewed. The first, entitled "*The Impacts of Targeted Shrubland Management Techniques on Non-target Species*," was submitted by Amanda Cheeseman from SUNY -ESF in Syracuse. The second one funded was, "*Do Leg Bands Affect Survival of Common and Roseate Terns*" submitted by Dr. Patrica Szczys, from Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic. The third grant recipient was Chad Seewagen, at Great Hollow Nature Preserve & Ecological Research Center located in New Fairfield, Connecticut. The title of his research project was, "*Species-specific Effects of LED Light Pollution on the Foraging Activity of Northeastern Bats*." The Grants committee will again be selecting three more projects for the fall proposal cycle.

One research project progress report was received on 23 April from Donovan Drummey at the University of Massachusetts concerning his American marten study. On 2 November, another research progress report was received from Drs. Paul Jensen and Stacey McNulty at SUNY-ESF for the project "*American marten movements and space use relative to pulses in mast production and prey fluctuations.*" SUNY ESF's Research Foundation, which is administering the AWCF grant, requested a change in the order of Principal Investigators listed on this grant to Dr. Stacy McNulty as the PI, followed by Dr. Paul Jensen as the Co-PI. This change was approved by the AWCF Board, and a letter was sent to Drs. Jensen and McNulty.

Secretary duties also included recording and disseminating minutes of board meetings, updating the membership roster in an Excel spreadsheet, and distributing the AWCF newsletter to members during April and November 2018. A donation thank you letter was sent to M. Burton Marshall in March. Press releases were sent to AWCF members prior to free public educational programs concerning "Lake Ontario Wildlife" on 24 May at the Salmon River Fish Hatchery, on 18 July at the Great Swamp Conservancy, and 22 August at Finger Lakes National Forest. AWCF Bylaws were distributed to new Board members after the meeting and election on 20 September. Dr. Tim McCay from Colgate University provided a presentation concerning native and non-native earthworms at the September Board meeting.

From the Desk of Outreach Chair, Mike Cavanaugh

Website

The website content has been updated on a semi-regular basis with information about the Foundation, and its meetings. The "Wildlife in the News" which highlights current wildlife related issues that may be of interest to AWCF membership. The site was updated in January, September and November 2018.

Approximately 31 individual inquiries/correspondence were received through the "Contact Us" section of the website. Most were related to funding opportunities or application procedures. All were answered in a timely fashion. The installation of a "Bot Detector" designed to eliminate e-mails that were automatically generated, commonly called "spam" was useful this year but the perpetrators seem to have found a way around it. Approximately 40% of the correspondence we received this year were spam and phishing schemes. All were isolated and deleted.

The biggest remaining issues are: 1) the large number of inquiries (25%) from countries not allowed in the AWCF By-Laws (Europe, Africa, South America, Asia) and; 2) a large number of questions (35%) about deadlines, indirect rate and other information already covered in the application webpage.

Another issue is a general misunderstanding of the role of AWCF. We get questions like "What can you tell me about ferrets?", "I have to do a report", "I have 19 acres of land - what should I do?" "I just graduated and I'm looking for a job" or "I have this nifty device that helps call in the biggest bucks in the state - would you like to invest?" Most of these inquiries receive a standard response...

“Our foundation is small, and does not maintain an office or staffing, nor do we undertake projects on our own. Most of our work is done through providing small grants for research or education.”

The Grant Committee

It was a busy year for the grants committee. With the addition of two new members we gained new insight about grants. A total of \$11,500 was distributed. A variety of subjects was covered this year in the different applications.

The first grant, entitled “*The Impacts of Targeted Shrubland Management Techniques on Non-target Species*,” was submitted by Amanda Cheeseman from SUNY -ESF in Syracuse. The second grant funded was, “*Do Leg Bands Affect Survival of Common and Roseate Terns*” submitted by Dr. Patrica Szczys, from Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic. The third grant recipient was Chad Seewagen, at Great Hollow Nature Preserve & Ecological Research Center located in New Fairfield, Connecticut. The title of his research project was, “*Species-specific Effects of LED Light Pollution on the Foraging Activity of Northeastern Bats*.” The fourth grant, entitled “*Efficacy of Entomopathogenic Fungi Against Winter Ticks*”, was submitted by Dr. Bruce Parker, University of Vermont. The next grant was submitted by Mr. John Jacobs, from the Northeastern Wisconsin Audubon Society, entitled, “*The Wisconsin Red-Shouldered Hawk Telemetry project*”. All projects were funded at a \$2,000 level except the Red- Shouldered Hawk project which was granted at \$4,500.

The quality and quantity of applications continues to increase and improve.

From the Desk of Katie Stuart, News Letter and Membership Brochure Coordinator

Daniel Leete requested an update to the AWCF brochure. In addition, he suggested the development of a AWCF newsletter. I had no prior experience in putting together newsletters or brochures, so it became a challenge! For the AWCF brochure, MS Publisher was used. While it worked, as I tried test printing at local commercial printers, I found they were not used to the MS Publisher format and are more accustomed to working with Adobe and other professional products. For the newsletter, I talked with several folks to get recommendations on what software to use. Several were recommended including Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Corel, Elements, and more. Based on a recommendation from Daniel, I decided to test MacBook’s (Apple) Pages and tried one of their templates for the first time. Ultimately, I had to learn some additional editing skills to make the newsletter work before converting it into an Adobe .pdf for distribution. As a highly visual person I would use more photographs and think about other ways to stimulate the visual senses while reading about AWCF’s goals, plans, and projects. Reader input is extremely

valuable and would hope to hear from readers on what they think will improve the presentation of ideas and content. Both the brochure and newsletter were rewarding projects and expanded my knowledge of working in electronic media. I would expect future endeavors to continue building this knowledge in new directions.