

# American Wildlife Conservation Foundation

## Annual Report for 2020

### **President's Report** --- Daniel Leete.

The year 2020 was a difficult year for the AWCF. Covid 19 permeated almost every aspect of the organization. In January 2019 we had a meeting in Cazenovia in a heavy snowstorm, and even with Ross Cloutier, Executive Director of Helicat CA flying all the way from Kamloops, British Canada, several Board members were not able to attend the meeting. The remainder of all Board meetings were held online during the year.

The 2020 Officers for AWCF included Daniel Leete--- President, Gary Goff--- Vice President, Dr. Paul Curtis --- Secretary, Dan Wentworth --- Treasurer. The Board members included, Mark Brown, Mike Cavanaugh, Ron Giegrich, Joe Lamendola and Gary Will.

One of the Vice President's duties is to provide free education programs for the public. Gary Goff started with some ambitious programs, one, a collaborative effort including a residential experience, but all were either cancelled or postponed due to Covid. (See Gary's report for more information.) Gary worked hard, and I appreciate his efforts.

It was exceedingly difficult to raise funds. We had started plans for an evening hosted by Rick Stifel's company to garner financial support from some generous donors, but again, Covid 19 intervened, so it was canceled. We also could not identify people from AWCF that would be available to implement this type of event.

Conversations with three colleges/universities to sponsor another intern were all stopped. Perhaps after Covid 19 is in "control" the internship program can continue.

We were able to gain \$1,465 in donations for the portfolio, which has reached its highest level in years, despite Covid 19. *We do not have an endowment, rather just a portfolio. Could be a good board meeting topic.*

Resistance on the part of several Board members curtailed the development of the Helicat MOU, as did the Covid 19 virus, not allowing across-the-border travel between Canada and the United States. In addition, we could not find two members to coordinate our participation in the MOU's international Grants Committee.

The highlights of the year for me were twofold: (A) the continued work by Robert Gotie, chair of the Grants Committee. (See the Grants Committee report for more information.) (B) The continued production of the AWCF Newsletter helped to promote the AWCF by a series of publications every quarter. So many people have responded to this Newsletter, letting us know how much they appreciated the quality, clarity, and in-depth science-based information which was provided. Katie Stuart - editor and producer of the Newsletter - has resigned. She worked tirelessly, putting in many hours, to create this publication. The Newsletter is probably the

most important vehicle to spread the word about the benefits that the AWCF provides to the citizenry of the United States. Thanks go to Katie for her work.

Finally, we note the passing of Ned Holmes a long-time board member, and two former Presidents, Dr. Robert Chambers and Herb Doig.

**Vice President's Report.** Gary Goff *The following was reorganized. I removed the dates of rescheduled events in some cases.*

Due to the social distancing constraints brought on by the COVID pandemic, all planned educational events for 2020 were postponed, cancelled or modified. The one-day workshop on "Use of aerial drones in wildlife management" scheduled for July 30, 2020, co-sponsored and hosted by Paul Smith's College, will be re-scheduled.

We have been very fortunate to find speakers and co-hosts to present future webinars. I wish to thank recipients (Martin Feehan, Paul Jensen, Carolyn Mostello and Patricia Szczys) of AWCF funding for agreeing to deliver presentations on the subject matter of their research. Cornell Cooperative Extension's ForestConnect forestry webinar series <http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceforestconnect/> will broadcast the first two webinars and The Great Old Broads for Wilderness [www.greatoldbroads.org](http://www.greatoldbroads.org) and will broadcast the tern webinar, tentatively scheduled for spring 2021. AWCF likewise greatly appreciates the assistance of the above two organizations!

<http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceforestconnect/subscribe/>

Nov. 18, 2020 Martin Feehan, Ph. D. student, Dept. Of Natural Resources, Cornell University. "Management of Suburban White-tailed Deer in Fort Drum: the link between forest regeneration and critical bat habitat". Dr. Paul Curtis and Raymond Rainbolt co-authored the presentation. This webinar is archived at <https://youtu.be/zgfhFB2HO7o>

March 17, 2021 Paul G. Jensen, Adjunct Associate Professor, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Department of Environmental and Forest Biology, Syracuse, NY. "Ecology of American martens in the transitional boreal-deciduous forests of Adirondack Park" will be rescheduled, spring or summer 2021.

The webinar from Carolyn Mostello, Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and Dr. Patricia Szczys, Dept. Biology, Eastern Connecticut State Univ. "Common and Roseate Tern Conservation in the Northeastern US" will also be rescheduled.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as AWCF vice president for the past two years. I look forward to continuing to be an active member.

**Secretary's Report** Dr. Paul Curtis

The following report includes major activities conducted by the American Wildlife Conservation Foundation during the 2020 calendar year. Helicat Canada MOU, Ross Cloutier-

Ross described the Helicat Canada mission and their conservation priorities. Helicat Canada formed in 1978, been around 50 years with a mission of research, education and skier advocacy. The organization is funded by membership fees. Estimated 120,000 skier-days annually, operator pays \$3/skier-day = \$360,000. About \$160,000 runs the association and pays staff. About \$1.50/day goes into a fund for research and education. Helicat is looking for skiers to contribute more funds to research and education. Their new Wildlife and Environmental Research (WER) fund hopes to generate tax-exempt donations from skiers in partnership with AWCF. Also, Helicat members will charge guests \$5/skier-day to support the WER fund. In the past, 10 businesses contributed \$173,000 to the WER fund to conduct caribou and wolverine research. Helicat wants a true partnership with AWCF; both groups have a say in research approved. Five theme areas for WER fund: 1. Wildlife habitat conservation; 2. Climate change impact; 3. Sustainability initiatives; 4. Indigenous relations; and 5. Safety (avalanche research). WER web page created: [www.helicat.org/wildlife-and-environmental-research-fund](http://www.helicat.org/wildlife-and-environmental-research-fund). A joint grants committee with AWCF membership needs to be established. Helicat Canada already has a 9- member grants committee to screen proposals. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the ski industry was closed, and this MOU did not move forward. At the 11 November, 2020 AWCF Board Meeting, the Board voted to end the MOU agreement.

Public Education Programs, Gary Goff- As Vice President, Gary spent considerable time organizing a workshop on the *Use of Drones in Wildlife Conservation*, which was tentatively scheduled for 31 July, 2020, at Paul Smith's College. It was to be co-sponsored by the College and the NYS Chapter of The Wildlife Society. However, this program was postponed to 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. I assisted Gary with developing two AWCF public education webinars.

The first webinar was held on 18 November, 2020 (at noon and 7 pm) in collaboration with Dr. Peter Smallidge's *Forest Connect* webinar series. This presentation by Cornell University Page of 3 8 graduate student Martin Feehan focused on deer research and bat conservation at Fort Drum that was partially supported with AWCF research funding. A second webinar is being planned for late spring 2021. Paul Jensen from NYSDEC will be discussing American marten movements and habitat use in the Adirondacks.

The first AWCF Board Meeting was held in-person on 7 February, 2020. I also set up and facilitated the scheduled AWCF Board Meetings on 11 June and 11 November via Zoom because of the pandemic. I distributed the agenda developed by President Daniel Leete to all members via e-mail. I also prepared meeting minutes following the AWCF Board Meetings, and my Secretary's Report. I also maintained the roster and group e-mail lists and was responsible for the distribution of the nominated slate of candidates.

### **Treasurers Report.** Dan Wentworth

The AWCF Portfolio is with Stifel Investment Banking Company. After considerable losses with the market drop due to the COVID19 pandemic, the AWCF portfolio ended the year, up \$16,055

from its year-end balance in 2019. The Finance Committee opted to transfer \$7000 from the portfolio to checking. AWCF also received two anonymous gifts that totaled of \$1,065 and were added to the portfolio. In addition, two memorial gifts (\$150) were received from a member and a donation of \$150 from our tax preparer, Mr. Marshall.

Final balance 2019: \$278,332

First Quarter 2020: \$209,609

Second Quarter 2020: \$242,666

Third Quarter 2020: \$257,818

Fourth Quarter 2020: \$294,387 (December 29, 2020)

The checking account is balanced as of December 29, 2020, however, there remains one check outstanding written for \$100 to the NYS Department of Law for 2019 taxes. M Burton Marshall Tax Services, who prepares the AWCF taxes assures the treasurer that AWCF is not in a unique situation and that New York State is behind on processing many tax returns.

Checking Account balance as of December 29, 2020: \$7029.77 (Checkbook balance is: \$6929.77, including the outstanding check).

2020 Deposits: \$3960.00 (Dues and Donations - not including those gifted to the portfolio) 2020 Payments: \$14,861.60 (Includes payment to 6 grantees for a total of \$12,062; and administrative expenses, taxes, and fees of \$2,799.60.)

Deposits for 2020 exceeded 2019 by \$875.

Note: Expenses were down, despite handing out more in grants in 2020 than in 2019.

### **Grants Committee.** Bob Gotie

We began the year with 5 committee members and with regret we said goodbye to Dr. Peg Sauer, a long time and valued member of the Grants Committee. Other pressing activities have precluded her from continuing with the Grants Committee. Her expertise will be sadly missed.

A total of 20 grant applications were received by the 1 February, 2020 deadline; 15 from colleges, five from other organizations. Not all proposals met AWCF criteria or mission statement. The committee used the numeric scoring system (started in 2018) to rank proposals. Three proposals were funded, 2 for \$2,000 and 1 for \$2,500. The proposals and locations were reported in the July AWCF newsletter.

The Grants Committee also received 13 grant applications by the close of 1 August, 2020. Of the 12 applications reviewed six were received from colleges or universities, five were from other institutions or organizations and one was from an individual. The combined AWCF outlay for the August cycle was \$5,562.00. Two applications received two weeks beyond the February cycle deadline were removed from review.

In total we reviewed 32 applications: 21 were received from colleges or universities, 10 from other institutions or organizations and 1 from an individual. All proposals were well written, but not all met our whole mission and focus on wildlife research, wildlife conservation, habitat conservation and management, human-wildlife interaction and public education. It is those proposals that meet all or most of AWCF's mission and focus, at least by our committee's selection protocol, that will receive funds from the foundation. Selecting a grant recipient incorporates a process of evaluating the merits of each proposal by each member of the committee. Individual evaluation by the committee forms the first stage of the grant selection process. Our job of evaluation is helped by a numeric scoring system that began in 2018. Although it is not perfect, it does allow for greater objectivity when reviewing each grant application. The second stage employs the "Cavanaugh Protocol", whereby we rank each proposal across each committee member's review of the merits for funding a proposal. Selection then becomes a matter of those proposals receiving the highest rank and fitting into our budget for the cycle. Our collective review revealed only two proposals unanimously selected by the full committee worthy of funding for both cycles. Likewise, two proposals were unanimously rejected. We chose 4 other proposals from the remaining 'Maybe' group for both grant cycles best meeting our selection protocol.

Below are the projects AWCF funded in 2020. A brief synopsis of the content in each proposal are covered in the two earlier reports submitted for the February and August cycles to the AWCF secretary. For the year 2020 our total outlay for the six grants was \$12,062.00

Dr. Amber Roth, Assistant Professor, amber.roth@maine.edu, School of Forest Resources, Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Conservation Biology, University of Maine, 5755 Nutting Hall, Orono, ME 04469. *"Assessing the long-term effects of an expanding gap silvicultural system on the avian assemblage at the Acadian Forest Ecosystem Research Program"*. Request: \$2,000.00

Lucas Haralson, Master's Student, lucas.haralson@usm.edu, School of Biological, Environmental and Earth Sciences, University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5018, Hattiesburg, MS 39406. *"Assessing mercury concentrations in Alligator Snapping Turtles (Macrochelys temminckii) and Red-eared Sliders (Trachemys scripta elegans) in Mississippi"*. Request: \$2,000.00

Leyna Stemle, PhD Student, leynastemle@miami.edu, University of Miami, 1301 Memorial Drive, 113 Cox Science Center, Coral Gables, FL 33146. *"Assessment of immature Gopher Tortoise Survivorship, spatial ecology and habitat use using novel technology"*. Request: \$2,500.00

Ms. Allison Litmer, PhD Student, University of Arkansas, 1 University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701. arlitmer@uark.edu, No Phone Number, Project Title: ***"Influence of climate change and prey availability on prairie lizards (Sceloporus consobrinus)"***. Request: \$1,570.00

Dr Christopher Rota, Assistant Professor, Division of Forestry & Natural Resources, West Virginia University, P.O. Box 6125, Morgantown WV 26506. Christopher.rota@mail.wvu.edu, No Phone Number, Project Title: ***"Quantifying the effects of local habitat factors, patch size, management activities and landscape context to optimize wildlife openings for game bird occupancy and overall avian diversity"***. Request \$1,992.00

M.S. Salvador Gonzalez-Guzman, Education Coordinator, Conservacion de Fauna del Noreste A. C., Calle Granada # 2100B entre Primera y Segundo, Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico. sgonza@uabc.edu.mx, No Phone Number, Project Title: ***“Nest tracking for burrowing owl in urban and suburban areas at Bahia de Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico”***. Request: \$2,000.00 USD

**Newsletter** Katie Stewart

I produced two editions of the AWCF Newsletter: on 1 July, and 1 October, 2020. The newsletter was sent via e-mail to all AWCF members, whether they were active, or currently inactive. It was challenging to receive updates and final reports from grantees in advance of the newsletter release. A few grantees did not respond at all, although more recent award recipients tended to be more cooperative in sending notes and updates for the newsletter. The January 2021 newsletter will be my last contribution as the AWCF Newsletter Editor. The AWCF Board will need to determine how to handle the newsletter in the future.

**Web Site**. Mike Cavanaugh

Getting more “junk” messages and spam on the AWCF web site. The current software does not have a good spam filter. Most legitimate questions are answered in a few days. Get funding requests from many countries and international organizations with several good projects, but this doesn’t fit the “North America” grants criteria. Suggested using the “Cavanaugh Protocol” to decide grants. Focus on things everyone on the committee likes, reject everything no one likes.

**Nomination Committee**. Gary Will

Gary Will was chairman of the 2020 Nominating committee. He was assisted by Dr. Paul Curtis, whoas co-chair distributed the ballot for the slate of candidates for the officers and board members. The ballot was sent out to 28 currently paid AWCF members. Paulreceived 13 returned ballots, and all unanimously supported the entire slate of proposed candidates.

Thus, these are the people that will be guiding AWCF in 2021 and 2022.**Officers:** President: Brian Dam, Vernon, NY; Vice President, Bill Schwerd, Ballston Spa; Secretary, Dr. Paul Curtis, Baldwinsville; Treasurer, Dan Wentworth, Auburn.**Board of Directors:** Gordon Batcheller, Petersburg; Mark Brown, Warrensburg; Mike Cavanaugh, Slingerlands; Ron Giegerich, Manilus; and Robert Gotie, Truxton.

*Edited on January 30, 2021*