

2023 UNFOLDED



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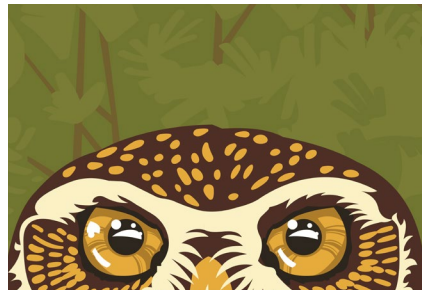
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01

Ceo's Message

Shaping the Future: A CEO's Message to Our Community



2023 was a remarkable year for your Wilder Institute. As President and CEO, I am honoured to lead such a passionate team dedicated to wildlife conservation, raising awareness, and engaging local communities abroad to help foster economic solutions that benefit both wildlife and people.

With a proven history of success, we know that it is possible to bring endangered species back from the brink. Through cutting-edge scientific approaches, our dedicated teams are tirelessly working to safeguard species at risk and return them to the wild, where our planet needs them to be.



In the pages of this report, you will discover the remarkable achievements and milestones we have reached together over the past year. We have continued our vital conservation efforts, both locally and globally, embarking on 18 collaborative conservation initiatives, aiding 27 species at risk in their journey towards recovery and sustainable existence. These efforts have not only made a tangible impact on the environment and its inhabitants but have also served as an inspiration for future generations.

Our commitment to raising awareness and inspiring action remains unwavering, as we strive to inspire the next generation of conservationists and environmental stewards.

“Thank you for being part of this journey and making 2023 such an impactful year.”

As I reflect on the past year and look ahead to the future, I am filled with gratitude. None of this would be possible without our incredible community. To our dedicated staff and volunteers, generous supporters, cherished members, and our global allies, I extend a heartfelt thank you. Your continued generosity, enthusiasm, and advocacy are driving forces propelling us forward. And we must also not forget the small, everyday actions, as these are the ones that truly resonate. Your individual choices for nature and wildlife, and the knowledge you impart within your circles, ripple outwards. Thank you for being part of this journey and making 2023 such an impactful year.

With your continued support, I am confident that your Wilder Institute will continue to thrive as an example of conservation excellence for generations to come. Thank you for supporting wildlife conservation.



Dr. Clément Lanthier
CEO

Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo



02

Creating a Wild Future, Together

Creating a Wild Future, Together

Wilder Beginnings: A Chick's Brave Journey



Nestled safe under its mother's wing, a young greater sage-grouse chick cautiously peers out at the world. Recently hatched at our Wildlife Conservation Centre, this little chick is taking its first steps into the great outdoors.



In the wild, the greater sage-grouse calls the Canadian prairies its home. This vast grassland ecosystem is the perfect place for this endangered prairie bird to find its preferred food source — silver sagebrush. Only a few weeks old, this little chick will soon need to fend for itself, but where does one even begin?

A faint stir in the soil catches the chick's attention, prompting it to muster the courage for its maiden hunt. The little chick takes its first, albeit clumsy, leap and eventually captures its prey — a delicious worm all for itself!

Under the watchful eye of its mother, and the diligent care of our Animal Care, Health & Welfare team, the chick has successfully braved its first outdoor adventure. This crucial milestone, mastering the art of hunting, will serve this little one well when it is eventually released into the wild. For now, the chick can continue to grow and learn the skills it needs to survive from the safety of our conservation centre.

Year after year, we tirelessly fight to give species at risk a vital second chance at thriving and we couldn't do it without your support. Whether its welcoming newborns and hatchlings, facilitating awe-inspiring releases into the wild, or engaging communities through educational initiatives, with patience, dedication, and hope our efforts underscore our shared commitment to biodiversity's flourishing future and we couldn't do it without the community's support.

2023 Conservation Highlights

Burrowing Owls

26 burrowing owls were released as part of the head-starting program in collaboration with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Last year's release marked our largest cohort to date, including the milestone release of our 100th burrowing owl from the program!

Greater Sage-Grouse

40 greater sage-grouse were released into Alberta and Saskatchewan's prairie habitats, a program supported by the Alberta Environment and Protected Areas and Climate Change Canada. Meanwhile, back at our Wildlife Conservation Centre, 48 chicks hatched and joined our breeding flock.



Half Moon Hairstreaks

77,166 lupine plants were searched for signs of half-moon hairstreak larvae – later in the season our team was rewarded for their diligence when we observed a female half-moon hairstreak laying eggs in the wild for the first time.

Whooping Cranes

Two whooping cranes hatched at the Wildlife Conservation Centre and were transferred to the International Crane Foundation for release into the Eastern Migratory Population.



Vancouver Island Marmots

17 Vancouver Island marmot pups were born at the Archibald Biodiversity Centre, while 13 marmots from last year's litters were released into the wild by the Marmot Recovery Foundation.

In addition, we completed our 4th full season of data collection for a collaborative supplemental feeding study for wild Vancouver Island marmots at study sites on Vancouver Island.

Northern Leopard Frogs

432 northern leopard frog tadpoles were released into B.C. waters in collaboration with the B.C. Northern Leopard Frog Recovery Team.

In addition, we collected skin swabs from 87 young-of-the-year northern leopard frogs to get an idea of disease prevalence in the reintroduced population.



03

Empowering Communities, Preserving Nature

Empowering Communities, Preserving Nature

Shea Butter Cooperative: Empowering Women, Nourishing Communities

Did you know that shea butter, a staple ingredient in various products worldwide, is both a commodity and a source of empowerment for millions of women in rural Africa?

Our collective efforts bore fruit as the women of the Wechiau shea butter cooperative produced over 140,000 kg of organic shea butter in 2023 alone.

In 2008, with our generous supporters' assistance, the Wechiau Numbu Shea Butter Processing and Marketing Cooperative was established in the Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary in Ghana. Since then, nearly 2,000 women have gained a sustainable source of income through the cooperative. This, in turn, has contributed to the betterment of the entire community by improving livelihoods for families, providing educational opportunities and enabling infrastructure enhancements. However, challenges loom on the horizon. One of the most pressing is climate change, which threatens the future of the shea industry and the livelihoods it supports.

To address these challenges, our collaborative efforts include scientific assessments of shea tree health and socio-economic surveys of the surrounding communities. Through this work, we are gaining insights to support sustainable management practices.

Our collective efforts bore fruit as the women of the Wechiau shea butter cooperative produced over 140,000kg of organic shea butter in 2023 alone, a testament to their dedication and the success of this cooperative.



Together, we are creating economic opportunities while fostering a harmonious relationship between people and nature in the Sanctuary.

When species survive, communities thrive.

Your Wilder Institute is committed to finding innovative solutions that benefit both wildlife and local communities. This commitment has been a cornerstone of our work since 1996, requiring patience, trust-building, and continuous learning.

Over the years, our experience clearly illustrates the direct involvement of local communities directly in conservation programs is a winning approach. For conservation to be truly effective, it must be inclusive, providing tangible benefits to all involved. With biodiversity and human well-being so inextricably linked, conservation must be practiced in ways that alleviate poverty, improve community livelihoods, and promote equality. This is what the field of community-based conservation strives to be.

In 2023, we once again joined forces with like-minded organizations to empower communities and safeguard the environment.

2023 Collaborative Effort Snapshot

- Co-designed and supported the implementation of a biodiversity monitoring plan in the Avu Lagoon Community Protected Area.
- Co-developed and supported the launch of a Young Rangers-in-Training Program to ensure a continuous and reliable influx of new rangers and to increase the engagement and participation of youth in the management of the Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary.
- Made strides with Rhino Ark as part of the Kenya Mountain Bongo Partnership, and completed a comprehensive Bongo Management Plan, written by 14 authors and guided by the Wilder Institute.
- Supported the establishment of a mountain bongo release site deep within the Mt. Kenya Forest ecosystem and completed the first phase of construction.
- Supported the installation of 30 camera traps at Mt. Kenya to monitor biodiversity, particularly the elusive mountain bongo.
- Helped establish 14 Wildlife Clubs in forest adjacent primary schools at Mt. Kenya.
- Celebrated the first honey sales through the Eburu National Forest Honey Cooperative, in Kenya. In addition, we supported the launch of the Innovators Program to grow the capacity of 15 exceptional beekeepers in the Eburu National Forest Honey Cooperative, who will then share their knowledge with other beekeepers. These exciting steps forward support the local community's goal of generating sustainable income through honey production, while easing human pressure on forest resources.
- Collaborated with our partners at the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership and the University of Calgary with a long-term monitoring project for black-and-white ruffed lemurs. The project monitors 15 lemurs across three field sites in Kianjavato, Madagascar.
- The first three graduate students at the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria started their work in January as part of the Cross River Gorilla Initiative. This initiative is made possible in collaboration with the Nigerian Conservation Foundation and the Centre for Biodiversity Conservation Research.



When thinking about wildlife conservation, it may be easy to place biodiversity as the sole focus. Conservation is not only an important tool to drive change for species at risk, but also essential for driving development, equality, and well-being for people. Effective conservation can deliver benefits to both human life and wildlife, which is what we seek to do through the practice of community-based conservation.



04

Dancing for Survival: A Love Story Among Whooping Cranes

Dancing for Survival: A Love Story Among Whooping Cranes

Just south of Calgary, amidst the sprawling landscape of the Archibald Biodiversity Centre, a remarkable tale unfolds – a tale of love, perseverance, and tireless efforts to save a species from the brink of extinction.

Conservation actions taken today can shape the future of our shared natural world.

Your Wilder Institute leads Canada's only conservation breeding program for the majestic whooping crane. Through our work, we aim to maximize the genetic diversity of the whooping crane population, ensuring its resilience in the face of adversity. With meticulous care and unwavering dedication, we nurture a breeding flock of these endangered birds, safeguarding each egg, chick, and adult under our watchful eye. This endeavour demands not only scientific expertise but also a keen understanding of the intricate dynamics of crane behaviour.

Enter 'Tim' and 'Bombadil', a power (crane) couple whose bond exemplifies the very essence of this effort. United by both genetic compatibility and a mutual display of affection, they have become the epitome of conservation success.

Whooping cranes are known for their elaborate courtship dances, a spectacle of grace and devotion. Year after year, Tim continues to woo Bombadil with his impressive dance moves. Their courtship has been going strong for nearly

a decade! Together, they have successfully hatched nine precious chicks. Some they parent-reared together, while some were foster-reared by other whooping crane pairs who have had difficulties reproducing.

In 2023, this union bore fruit once more, as Tim and Bombadil welcomed two offspring, 'Reed' and 'Harp', into the world – a pair of fledglings destined to make their mark on history. In a significant contribution to global wildlife conservation efforts, Reed and Harp were transferred to Wisconsin for release by the International Crane Foundation, have been working together to support whooping cranes for more than 30 years. It is through endeavors like this, where expertise and resources are shared, that biodiversity truly benefits.

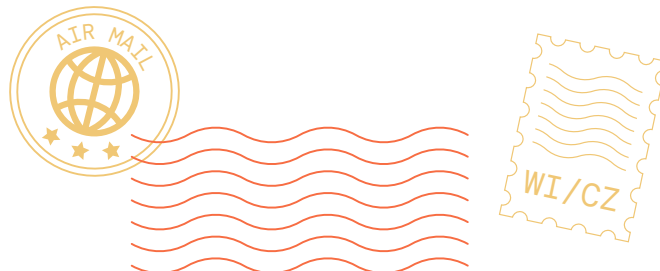


As these young whooping cranes spread their wings and take flight in the heart of Wisconsin's wetlands, they highlight how conservation actions taken today can shape the future of our shared natural world.

With 702 whooping cranes left in the wild, each new addition to the population is a small victory contributing to the larger recovery efforts of its species. These cranes carry with them the potential to increase the genetic diversity of their wild counterparts and strengthen the entire population.

Conservation knows no bounds, and the success of this moment speaks to the collaboration it takes to help protect species at risk. Under the direction of the Whooping Crane Recovery Team (an international group of whooping crane experts), your Wilder Institute alongside many collaborators including the International Crane Foundation, have been working together to support whooping cranes for more than 30 years. It is through endeavors like this, where expertise and resources are shared, that biodiversity truly benefits.

Thank you to our corporate sponsors for helping to make this vital work possible.

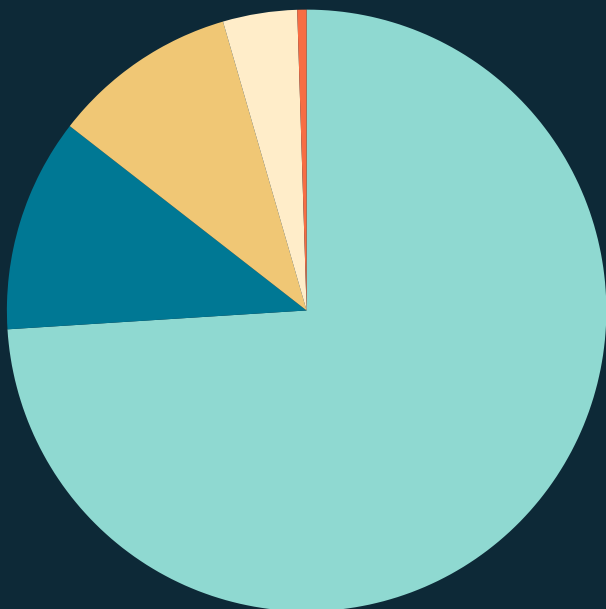




05

Making the Impossible, Possible

Making the Impossible, Possible



Total Wilder
Institute Giving:

\$2,116,067

Where your support goes:

- Conservation Translocations - 74%
- Greatest Need - 11.5%
- Capital - 10%
- Community Conservation - 4%
- Endowment - 0.5%



**THANK
YOU!**

Please contact donations@wilderinstitute.org
if you want to learn more!