

CREATURE CONSERVE

Bringing Artists and Scientists Together to Save Species

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

CREATURE CONSERVE

MISSION

We bring artists, creative writers, and scientists together to foster informed and sustained support for animal conservation.

VISION

By working together to study, celebrate, and help protect all living creatures, everyone participates in conservation.

PLAN

We provide the funding, expertise, and oversight needed to establish, sustain, and promote art/sci collaboration.

STRATEGY

We connect art and science to inspire conservation action.

GOALS

- Give artists interested in science the opportunity to research and respond to the problems facing animals today.
- Give scientists working in conservation the opportunity to explore the artistic, humanistic, and emotional side of their work.
- Inspire collaboration among artists and scientists working with animals.
- Inspire conservation action by bringing artists and scientists together to save species.
- Demonstrate conservation is something we can all do.
- Follow best practices for non-profit boa ds.

OUR PROGRAMS

- Exhibits & Events
- Scholarships
- Field Studies
- Workshops
- Network Growth

Cover: "Asphalt Tundra" by Michael Boardman features one of many snowy owls that caused consternation for security officials at the airport in Portland, Maine during winter 2018, an "irruption" year. From the Creature Conserve exhibit, "Urban Wildlife: Learning to Co+Exist." Snowy Owl photo by Peter Green.



"Share the Ancient Roads" by Elizabeth Mordensky captures the vigor and spirit of the iconic American Bison, while exposing the very real danger bison and other wildlife face in the presence of modern civilization.



"Bat Bones" by Lee Fearnside was inspired by research by Dr. Lisa Cooper of Northeast Ohio Medical University, who is studying the longevity of bats, including their ability to renew the collagen fibers within their bones as they age – their bones don't become brittle like ours but stay flexible.

Both pieces are from the 2020 Creature Conserve exhibit, "Urban Wildlife: Learning To Co+Exist."

ANIMALS NEED OUR HELP

Art reminds us we are all connected. It deepens our understanding of this interdependency and offers context. It helps us explore how we feel about animals and our relationships with them. It is also far more likely to inspire a change in our behavior than a string of scientific facts. Our strategy is to connect art and science to inspire conservation action.

Animals are central to our lives. Our success as a species is due in large part to them. We rely on animals for commerce, companionship, clothing, food, medicine, sport, and, spirituality. Sadly, our actions have had dire consequences. Science tell us the ripple effect on human health and society will be disastrous. Most animals will not survive our massive presence on earth unless we intervene.



Our programs make it easier for artists, creative writers, and scientists to explore the human connection to nature, creating new pathways to a healthier world for all animals. We encourage art/sci collaboration wherever possible. Participants in our programs learn from each other, create and innovate together, and, combine their skills to reach wider audiences with a more inclusive message.

RECONNECTING ART WITH SCIENCE

Guyanese Amerindians Kenneth Butler (scientist), Luarondo John (artist) and Eldon Allicock (artist) launched their "Surama Village Wildlife Trails" field study in 2020. The team will work together to map wildlife distribution in and around their home community and then share the results by publishing both the data and unique works of art. Artwork by Luarondo, "Watching the Spotted Owl."





OUR PROGRAMS

Our programs include exhibits & events, field studies, network growth, scholarships, and workshops.

'Urban Wildlife: Learning to Co+Exist" exhibit.

Ancestors" by Jeanne Dodds.



EXHIBITS & EVENTS

We develop exhibits & events that explore the problems facing animals today - and, their solutions - through art that is informed by science and emotionally charged.



NETWORK GROWTH

We coordinate and host a variety of online activities designed to support our scholars and attract new ones.





SCHOLARSHIPS

We provide scholarship stipends for artists, creative writers, and scientists as they explore the human connection to nature, creating new pathways to a healthier world for all animals.



FIELD STUDIES

We support a new more creative and collaborative approach to biodiversity field studies, one in which artists and scientists work together.



WORKSHOPS

Our workshops give participants the opportunity to practice making conservation science more accessible, meaningful, and relevant.

No Petting" by Emily Schnall

CREATURE CONSERVE

EXHIBITS & EVENTS

"Insectivorous and Winsome" by Eloise Narrigan explores the benefits of bats, including their role in pollination and insect control – the Little Brown Bat eats up to 1000 insects in one hour, helping to limit crop damage and protect us from mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and West Nile virus. From the 2020 Creature Conserve exhibit, "Urban Wildlife: Learning To Co+Exist."

Artist Sofiya Shukhova joined forces with scientist Naomi Clark-Shen in 2020 to create 100 unique kites designed to inspire the public, scientists, and artists to learn more about rays, their trade, and conservation. Together, they are planning a "Flying Kites for Rays" event for spring 2021 in Singapore, one of the countries where various species of rays are consumed as a delicacy, and a place where kite flying is a much-enjoyed hobby.





FIELD STUDIES

In 2020, we supported artist/scientist teams working in Guyana, South America (left, artwork by Eldon Allicock), Kenya, Africa (center, Fred Mepukori sharing artwork by community members) and in Brooklyn, New York, USA ("Birdlink" by Anina Gerchick.)



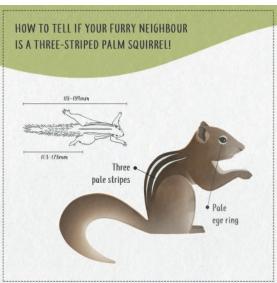




SCHOLARSHIPS

For the first time, we supported several scholars working in conservation in India. Avni Gupta (scientist) and Muskan Gupta (artist) began a Community Engagement project "Combining Art and Science to Encourage Protected Area Ecotourism in India" that will continue into 2021. Pooja Gupta also started a year-long Research Project "Squirrels of India" designed to study, celebrate, and protect the numerous species of squirrel native to her home country.





"Indian Rock Python, Keoladeo Protected Area" by Muskan Gupta (left)

"Three-striped Squirrel ID plate" by Pooja Gupta (right)

WORKSHOPS

Artist scholar and activity leader Franco Zacharzewski collaborated with scientist Claire Greenwell to teach our first "Behind the Research Paper" online workshop, which was offered free of charge to visual artists. The goal was to explore new ways to make the scientific findings in Claire's research accessible, understandable, and relevant by making them visual. In the process, Franco also developed a template for future workshops.



NETWORK GROWTH

In 2020, we developed six new online activities designed to support our scholars and attract new ones. These are: Artist Talks, Community Space (using Slack), the Mentorship Program, Online Workshops, Scientist Q & A, and Theme Weeks (on Instagram).



ARTIST TALKS

Artist Talks feature conversations with artists who use scientific information and/or collaborate with scientists to create art about animal conservation. They are hosted, edited, and shared by Elif Ilkel, our 2020-21 Social Media Leader.

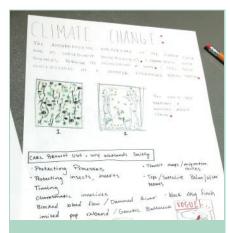


MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Our Mentorship program is designed to be a support system for artists, creative writers, and scientists as they collaborate and explore the human connection to nature, creating new pathways to a healthier world for all animals.

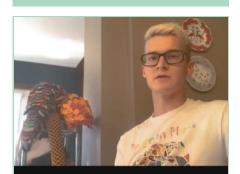
Derek Russell is our 2020-21

Mentorship Program Leader.



ONLINE WORKSHOPS

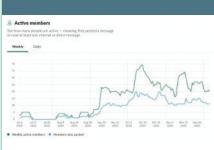
Our online workshops give participants living and working anywhere in the world the opportunity to learn from our scholars and practice making conservation science more accessible, meaningful, and relevant.



What products are involved in the trade?

SCIENTIST Q & A

Our Scientist Q & A sessions give everyone a chance to hear directly from artists and scientists who are working together to solve conservation problems. They are recorded on Zoom, edited by us, and shared on our social media.



SLACK COMMUNITY SPACE

The Creature Conserve Slack space was designed to make it easy for artists, creative writers, and scientists within our network to find each other, ask for and offer critique and feedback, and share opportunities including exhibition and funding opportunities.



TIGER WEEK

Theme Weeks are designed to be shared on Creature Conserve social media. Each host chooses an animal, ecosystem, or conservation effort they wish to spotlight, makes a series of posts featuring their own art/science work on the topic, and invites others to participate.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2020

Our top priority for the year was to increase the number of artists, creative writers, and scientists engaged in our programs. We began 2020 with new online applications for field studies and scholarships, new templates in place for workshops, and plans for our exhibit, "Urban Wildlife: Learning to Co+Exist."

Thanks to excellent work by our volunteer staff and talented scholars, we accomplished these goals and more. By summer we had substantially increased our social media presence, received more scholarship applications than ever, shipped the exhibit to Wyoming, and laid the groundwork for the launch of a new program, Network Growth.

We asked three scholars to lead various aspects of network growth: Sofiya Shukhova for online activities, Elif Ilkel for social media, and Derek Russell for mentorship. Together, they did a terrific job, developing and testing a variety of new online activities. The response exceeded our expectations.

Thirteen scholars (ten artists, three writers) taught their first workshops on topics of their choice. Five hosted theme weeks – pangolins, tigers, salt marshes, wolves, and bees. Six pairs of mentors/mentees started working together with Derek. Our Instagram following tripled as Elif posted artwork and videos from ten artist talks and three scientist Q&As. Sofiya coordinated all, including setting up a community space on Slack and welcoming dozens of members. We even brought in enough in workshop fees to cover a significant portion of stipends paid to instructors.

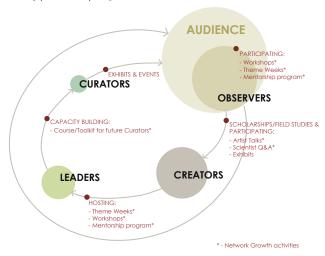
Altogether, we supported 34 scholars - a diverse group of visual artists, creative writers, and scientists representing seven countries, including India, Kenya, Guyana, Mexico, Singapore, Turkey, and the United States.

Finally, we made an update to our mission statement, adding "creative writers" to our audience given the interest in and success of our writing workshops to date.



Sofiya's work as a scholar was especially important in 2020. She helped develop and launch our new network growth program designed to encourage "observers" to become "creators," creators to become "leaders" and leaders to become "curators." Ultimately, the cycle also helps us engage a wider audience with works of art and creative writing about conservation that are both informed by science and emotionally charged.

Sofiya Shukova is our 2020-21 Network Growth Leader. In this graphic, she shows how our programs support this progression.



IN THE NEWS



Creature Conserve Founder and Leader Dr. Lucy Spelman was profiled in ecoRI News: ecori.org/eco-people/2020/3/25/re-nowned-conservationist-created-nonprofit-to-inspire-artists-and-scientists-to-work-together

WyoFile

Creature Conserve exhibit, "Urban Wildlife WY: Learning to Co+Exist" was featured in Wyofile: wyofile.com/contemplating-the-coexistence-of-humans-and-animals

EXHIBITS & EVENTS

- We completed 2 exhibit calls for art one for RI area artists, and one for WY area artists - and made our selections. These included 5 artists from Wyoming and 14 from Rhode Island, increasing the total number of artworks in the exhibit by 19.
- "Urban Wildlife in WY: Learning to Co+Exist" was on display at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson as of October 10, 2020 and continues there through January 10, 2021.

NETWORK GROWTH

- 34 of our scholars (24 artists, 2 writers, 8 scientists) participated in our new online network growth activities.
- Our social media following on Instagram more than tripled to 1493 by the end of the year.
- Our first ever online artist workshops, attracting 67 participants and 79 observers, filled within days.
- We hosted 10 Artist Talks, 5 Theme Weeks, and 3 Scientist Q&A sessions.
- Our new community space (Slack) is active with 80+ members.
- Our first cohort of 6 mentees, each paired with a Creature Conserve scholar as mentor, began work in November.

SCHOLARSHIPS

- We supported 34 scholars in 2020 up from 18 in 2019, and 8 in 2018. Of these 34, 27 were visual artists, 5 scientists, and 2 creative writers.
- 13 scholars received funding to participate as "leaders" of our new network growth activities, 5 as Theme Week leaders, and 8 as Workshop instructors.
- 16 scholars applied to our scholarship program and received funding to carry out specific projects as "creators" (3 artist residency, 5 community engagement, 7 field studies, and 1 research.)
- 5 received fee waivers for workshops.
- Of the 62 scholars Creature Conserve has supported to date, all have continued to apply their skills toward conservation.

WORKSHOPS

- We organized and hosted or co-hosted 8 workshops.
- Of these, 3 were for creative writers (writing with science) and 5 for visual artists (making science visual.)
- 5 were online for the first time, each very well attended.
- Topics included fair tern conservation, orca and salmon co-recovery, tiger genetics, and urban wildlife-human interactions.
- Guest speakers included 7 biologists, a journalist, and a tribal leader.
- The total number of workshop participants was 164, including 117 visual artists, 43 writers, and 4 scientists.
- 2 of our in-person workshops were supported by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, RISCA, one for visual artists and one for creative writers. The third was supported by the National Museum of Wildlife Art.
- Co-hosts included the Endangered Species Coalition, What Cheer Writers Club, and Cleaver Magazine.
- Funds collected from workshop fees largely offset the cost of the stipends awarded to the scholars who served as instructors and their guest speakers. We expect the funds raised from fee-based workshops to meet or exceed the cost of administering them in the future.

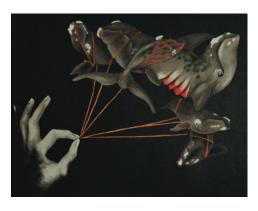
FUNDRAISING

- We received a total of \$30,000 in funding from three private foundations, and received an invitation to a fourth for next year.
- We also received a \$10,000 grant from the National Museum of Wildlife Art.
- We raised over \$3000 in a month via Instagram and Facebook to support a new event for 2021, Flying Kites for Rays.

METRICS CONTINUED

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

- The total number of artist, creative writer, and scientist participants in our programs in 2020 was 216 – three times as many participants as 2019 alone.
 This total included 160 visual artists, 43 creative writers and 13 scientists. This group of talented individuals participated in one or more of our programs:
 - Exhibits & Events (19)
 - Scholarships and Field Studies (34)
 - Network Growth (26)
 - Workshop instructors (10), guest speakers (9), and attendees (164)
- Since we launched our programs in 2016, we have brought together a total of 326 artists, 43 creative writers, and 73 scientists, resulting in over 220 works of original art for public display.



"Northern Right Whale In the Grip" by Derek Russell makes it clear that the fate of this species is in our hands. We have the ability to remove the threats – noise pollution and net entanglement – or not.

From the Creature Conserve 2020 exhibit, "Urban Wildlife: Learning to Co+Exist."

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

BEHIND THE RESEARCH PAPER ARTIST WORKSHOP

"What a well-organized and thought-provoking workshop! Franco did a terrific job of thoroughly explaining everything we needed to know in terms of background and the assignment, and he was patient, thoughtful, and respectful with his responses. Claire's presentation was also really good – I appreciated the behind-the-scenes look at what she was going through (esp the parts that did not make it into the research paper itself) as she did this research. Thank you so much!"

OR(A SALMON (O-RE(OVERY ARTIST WORKSHOP

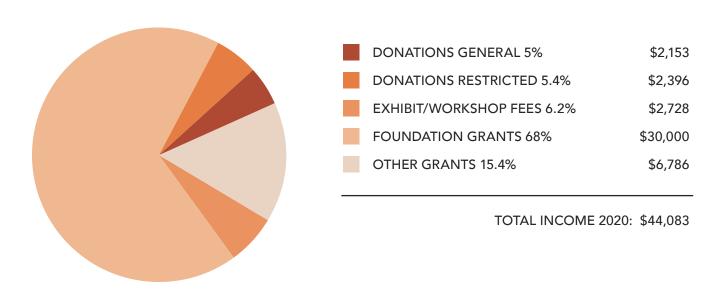
"This workshop was so inspiring and educational. I love the concept...it is totally in my wheelhouse and I'm so appreciative of the opportunity to learn the science and work with others to restore Orca and Salmon in the Salish Sea."

RESTOR(Y)ATION: OR(APOESIS

"Thank you for this exceptionally inspiring workshop, and for the combination of science and poetry"

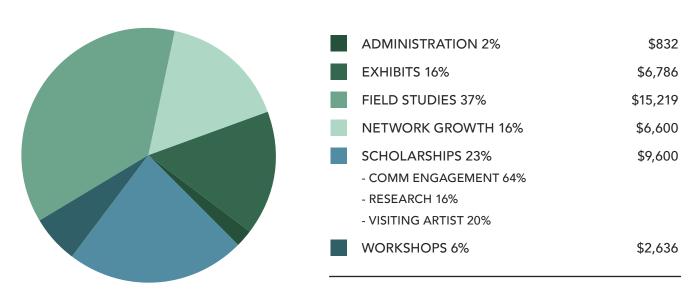
INCOME

In 2020, we raised the majority of our funds from foundations as in past years. We also substantially increased our income from our workshops. Our total income was \$44,083.38.



EXPENSES

We spent a total of \$41,672.82 in 2020, nearly all of it on our programs. As in the past, our administrative costs were minimal.



TOTAL EXPENSES 2020: \$41,673

TESTIMONIALS FROM SCHOLARS



HEATHER M(MORDIE

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with Creature Conserve for this Community Engagement Artist Scholarship. Especially following the completion of my MFA, this was an important professional step in expanding my connections with like-minded artists and scientists and beginning to identify the larger community that my work is in conversation with.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of the experience was being able to connect with artists around the world who, like me, are making work inspired by salt marshes. Hearing from other artists and connecting with the international community of Creature Conserve made me appreciate the biodiversity of salt marshes even more.

ALICE LANGLOIS

This fall I was contacted out of the blue by the Sitka Center for Arts and Ecology to do a month long residency, with only six days to decide if I could go. Thankfully, with the help of Creature Conserve, I was able to make it out to the beautiful Cascade Head region on the central coast of Oregon to pursue a project of my choosing while fully immersed in the environment. The residency program at Sitka Center gives artists, musicians, writers, and ecologists the chance to make their work while being able to explore and be inspired by the unique Cascade Head ecosystem.

With this experience I got a head start on an animated short film exploring the lives of terrestrial snails; it provided me with the time to research, begin production, and source natural materials from my surroundings with which to animate. I was also able to engage with an environment I had never seen before, exploring landscapes and wildlife that were incredibly inspiring. As an artist whose work focuses primarily on ecology and nature, this was an unforgettable experience, and was made possible by Creature Conserve!



MORE FROM OUR CREATURE CONSERVE SCHOLARS

Since our first year of programming in 2016, we have welcomed 326 artists, 43 creative writers, and 73 scientists into our network. Below are a few highlights.













ABOUT CREATURE CONSERVE

Board of Directors: Abby Adams (Secretary), Chloé Bulpin, Samantha Dempsey, Nick Jainschigg (Vice Chair), Punita Koustubhan, Cameron Little, Nicole Merola (Clerk), John Pearson, Melissa Torres (Treasurer), and Lucy Spelman (Chair).

In her 2015 TEDx talk, **Creature Conserve founder Dr. Lucy Spelman** describes how her work as a zoo and wildlife veterinarian led her to seek new ways to engage people in conservation by connecting art and science. Over the course of her career, she has treated animals of all kinds, from cockroaches to giant pandas. She has lived in Rwanda, where she managed the veterinary team responsible for the world's only mountain gorillas, has served as Director of the Smithsonian National Zoo, and is a published author. In addition to scientific articles, she contributed the title story and co-edited the others in "The Rhino with Glue on Shoes" (Random House, 2008) and wrote the text for the popular "National Geographic Animal Encyclopedia" (2012).

She has taught biology to architecture, art, and design students at the Rhode Island School of Art and Design since 2010 and continues to practice veterinary medicine at Ocean State Veterinary Specialists.

Artists have always been interpreters of our time. Through their eyes, the science of saving species and the importance of taking a one-health approach to conservation becomes accessible, meaningful, and relevant—and, the source of positive change.

- Dr. Lucy Spelman, Founder, Creature Conserve



"Hands Off" by Emily Schnall

CREATURE CONSERVE

Bringing Artists and Scientists Together to Save Species

Find out more at creatureconserve.com and follow @creatureconserve on Instagram.

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