



2015 ANNUAL REPORT



The Wolf Conservation Center teaches people about wolves, their relationship to the environment, and the human role in protecting their future.







MESSAGE FROM BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF OF THE WCC



Dear Friends of the Wolf Conservation Center:

Feared and admired, cursed and revered, wolves are the stuff of legends and a symbol of America's vanishing wilderness. Their reputation is larger than life; their role in the restoration of America's wildlife heritage is bigger still. Inspired by the importance and plight of the iconic species, Hélène Grimaud founded the Wolf Conservation Center (WCC) in 1996 to save wolves from the brink of extinction and to teach the broader message of conservation, ecological balance, and personal responsibility for improved human stewardship of our World.

At the close of 2015, it is remarkable to see how much the WCC has grown in prominence and influence! All of us at the WCC were gratified to see the completion of several long-term efforts to expand our educational reach and contribute to wolf survival. At the same time, we undertook amazing new initiatives that we hope that will have even greater impact in the coming years.

Just a few of the high points from 2015 were:

- ❖ **Continued Success:** onsite and offsite education programs and special events reached over 35,000 people,
- ❖ **Welcomed Critically Endangered Pups:** Beyond being adorable, five red wolf pups born at the WCC represent the Center's active effort to save a species from extinction.
- ❖ **Call of the Wild:** release of WCC's own captive-born, critically endangered Mexican gray wolf M1141 to his ancestral home on the wild landscape in Northern Mexico,
- ❖ **Awareness and Action Center:** Created a forum for environmental supporters to become effective and educated agents of change in our society,
- ❖ **Expert Testimony:** WCC staff testified in public hearings about USFWS's proposals that affect the future of the last wild population of critically endangered red wolves,
- ❖ **Established P.A.C.K. Fellowship:** Created forum for dedicated youth advocates to create and collaborate on projects promoting protection and preservation of wolf populations in North America,
- ❖ **"Family Walk for Wolves":** Our third annual event that gave hundreds of local supporters an opportunity to celebrate the cornerstone of our nation's environmental law – the Endangered Species Act,
- ❖ **Robust Support on Social Media:** Surpassing TWO MILLION supporters on Facebook – expanding our educational reach far beyond the boundaries of our facility.



 MESSAGE FROM BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF OF THE WCC 

As satisfying as these accomplishments were, many challenges remain...

Wild Mexican wolves and red wolves face serious recovery challenges that will affect their success as the very law that was meant to protect them- the Endangered Species Act- is under fire. Now is the time for all of us, indeed every American who believes in the importance of our natural heritage, to make their voice heard. WCC will continue to put pressure on lawmakers to make a more wild future possible.

But we won't give up.

As always, we thank all our donors, volunteers and staff whose invaluable dedication and support make it possible for us fulfill our missions. We look forward to a productive year in 2016 in which we will take significant steps to strengthen our capacity to meet challenges of the present and future while continuing our efforts to ensure the survival of the inspiring and essential wolf.

Warmest wishes,

The Board of Directors and Staff of the Wolf Conservation Center



OVERVIEW OF THE WOLF CONSERVATION CENTER



Strong and wild, wolves once roamed across most of the United States. More than a symbol of wilderness, science tells us that wolves are a vital part of many varied ecosystems. But after centuries of an unremitting slaughter by humans, this misunderstood predator was brought to the brink of extinction.

Over the last several decades, however, efforts have begun to right this horrible wrong: to reintroduce and restore these magnificent creatures to their rightful places in our landscapes, in our hearts and in our culture.




The WCC has been part of this effort for almost two decades. We have nurtured wolves, educated hundreds of thousands about their plight, and fought for their habitat and protection.

THE WOLF CONSERVATION CENTER IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



The Wolf Conservation Center (WCC), founded in 1996 by H el ene Grimaud, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit environmental education organization located in South Salem, NY. The WCC's mission is to recover wolf populations in North America by teaching about wolves, their relationship to the environment, and the human role in protecting their future. The WCC accomplishes this mission by educating adults and children about their importance and plight, mobilizing support and advocating for these species which cannot speak for themselves, and participating in two federal wolf recovery programs.

WHAT WE DO AT THE WCC

-  **Nurture wolves,**
-  **Educate adults and children about their importance and plight, and**
-  **Mobilize support and advocate for these species which cannot speak for themselves.**



Nurture Wolves

We are home for up to 30 wolves, most of them kept off exhibit with the goal of one day releasing them into their wild ancestral landscapes. We are the preeminent facility in the eastern United States for the captive breeding and pre-release of endangered wolf species.

The WCC participates in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) and Recovery Plan for the Mexican gray wolf and the red wolf, which are among the rarest mammals in North America. Both species at one time were completely extinct in the wild. Under the aegis of the Endangered Species Act, reintroduction efforts in the past decade have established small, wild populations of about 100 red wolves and 75 Mexican grays. To-date, four wolves from the Center have been given this extraordinary opportunity.

Educate the Public

We teach approximately 40,000 people a year about the importance of these predators and their impact on our lands, waters and culture. Our Ambassador Wolves and other programs reach people both at our 28-acre facility in South Salem, NY, and in schools, museums, libraries and nature centers throughout the Northeast. Our wolves aid students in understanding the importance of their wild counterparts by opening their minds to the value of keystone species and healthy ecosystems.

The WCC's newly developed interdisciplinary curriculum in wolf education deepens the educational experience the Center can provide and expands the organization's geographic reach.

Mobilize Support

Our thousands of supporters are guided and directed to make their voices heard on numerous issues that continue to impact wolves in the wild. We believe every individual has the ability and responsibility to affect the world, as well as a powerful voice to safeguard the future for generations to come.

We are able to engage with a vast number of learners and supporters through our robust social media effort. Consistent, professional effort has resulted in over two million people following our work on Facebook where they are alerted to ways they can help save wolves locally and across North America, communicate effectively with their elected representatives, and encourage personal responsibility for improved human stewardship of our World.



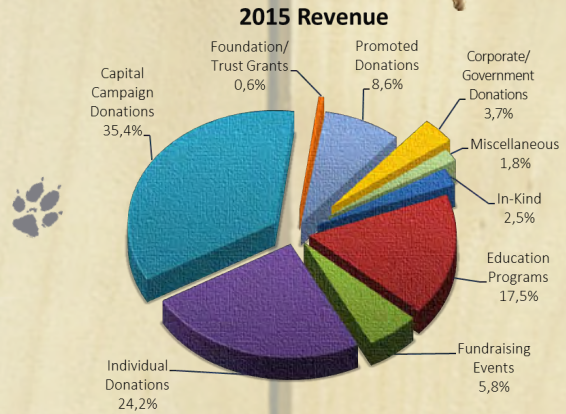


2015 INCOME AND EXPENSES (AUDITED)



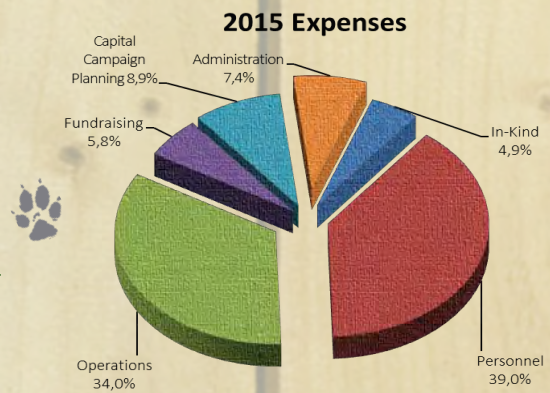
SOURCES OF FUNDS

In-kind.....	\$41,301
Education Programs	\$ 290,798
Fundraising Events.....	\$95,783
Individual Donations.....	\$ 402,135
Capital Campaign Donations.....	\$ 587,019
Foundations / Trust Grants.....	\$10,000
Promoted Donations (Merchandise)	\$ 141,939
Corporate / Government Donations.....	\$60,665
Miscellaneous.....	\$ 29,607
Total Revenue	\$ 1,659,247



USES OF FUNDS

In-kind.....	\$41,301
Personnel.....	\$ 328,999
Operations	\$ 286,997
Fundraising	\$48,844
Capital Campaign Donations.....	\$ 74,767
Administration.....	\$62,270
Total Expenses	\$ 843,178



ASSETS

Current Assets	\$1,160,216
Fixed Assets	\$2,830,273
Capital Campaign Donations.....	\$ 246,500
Total Assets.....	\$ 4,236,989



LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

Liabilities.....	\$ 489,381
Accumulated Fund Balance.....	\$2,931,539
Net Income	\$ 816,069
Total Liabilities	\$ 4,236,989



EDUCATION PROGRAMS

WOLF

All over the world conservationists, citizens and governments alike struggle to find a balance between people and wildlife as expanding human populations put them in closer proximity with predators, more than ever before. Our society seems to be at odds with how to fully protect and integrate wolves into our wildlife spaces, and our culture, in ways that avoid conflict without causing harm. Ultimately, achieving this goal will not be easy. It will require a sustained and shared effort by all those who value these natural treasures. In fact, our nation's future relies on a well-educated public to be wise stewards of wildlife and of the very environment that sustains us all.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
~ Nelson Mandela






Attempts to find a satisfactory solution for wolves living alongside their human guardians is the broader discourse under which our mission and education goals have evolved. It is our belief at the WCC that environmental education can best help us make the complex, conceptual connections between economic prosperity, benefits to society, environmental health, and our own well being. We think that ultimately, the collective wisdom of our citizens gained through education will be the most compelling and successful strategy for future conservation initiatives.

Through the well-informed naturalists who run education programs and work with our Ambassador wolves, the WCC teaches the broader message of conservation, ecological balance, and personal responsibility for improved human stewardship of our world. By providing science-based information, the WCC allows wolves and humans to better coexist in our fragile environment. It also improves our efforts to successfully restore endangered wolves to their ancestral homes in the wild and offers direct exposure to an elusive predator people might not ever see in the wild.

The WCC education and ambassador-wolf programs introduce the community to the importance of a healthy planet and healthy ecosystems. They are designed to conform to New York State Standards for Science Education and touch on a variety of disciplines from biology to history.

In 2015, Education Programs included the following:

-  On-site programs at the WCC facility in South Salem, NY. Our permanent wolf residents are wonderful representatives for their species, giving everyone who attends our programs a better understanding of the responsibility we have in protecting their future.
-  Off-site programs in schools, museums, libraries and nature centers throughout the Northeast in which a visit from our traveling ambassador wolf, Atka, is the highlight. Children and adults alike are left in awe by their up-close-and-personal encounter with one of these powerful animals. As a 14-year-old, Atka has now officially gone into retirement and greets visitors from his enclosure at the WCC.
-  Classroom learning through our innovative, "Interdisciplinary Curriculum in Wolf Education –Tracks to the Future," program is enabling middle school students to learn and master many of the Common Core State Standards in Language Arts, Reading, Math, Science and Social Studies while integrating wolf conservation into the curricula. The integration of this material deepens the educational experience the Center can provide and expands the organization's reach.



Visitors to the center

The WCC conducted 476 on-site education programs during 2015. Some highlights include outstanding attendance for our long-running "Wolves of America," "Wolf Camp for Kids," and "Sleeping with Wolves Overnight Adventure" programs, along with several new offerings. Programs are conducted year-round, Tuesday through Sunday, so WCC supporters can behold the wolves throughout the year and in each season.

As we begin 2016, we are vigorously planning ways to accomplish our educational mission and expand our outreach. We have already taken significant strides to strengthen our capacity to better meet challenges of the present and the future. As a result of all this hard work and dedication, we expect to see a dramatic increase in the number of visitors we serve and improved outreach throughout the Northeast.





ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM



At the Wolf Conservation Center we are privileged to participate in a federal program called the Species Survival Plan (SSP) focusing on two of the rarest mammals in North America: Mexican gray wolves and red wolves. Both of these magnificent species were completely extinct in the wild, until recently when conservationists worked to return both of these wolf species to their ancestral homelands.

Mexican Gray Wolves–Natural History

The Mexican gray wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) or “lobo” is the most genetically distinct lineage of gray wolves in the Western Hemisphere. Most of our historical and biological information about wild populations comes from trappers’ journals and reports throughout the southwest. Mexican wolves were once found in diverse habitats including mountain woodlands, probably because of the favorable combination of cover, water, and available prey like deer, elk, rabbits, and small mammals.

Adult Mexican wolves typically weigh 65-85 pounds, average 4.5-5.5 feet from nose to tail, and stand 28-32 inches at the shoulder. Like all wolves, the lobo is a social creature with an intricate system of communication and social structure. They breed from late January through early March, and give birth to an average of four to six pups about 63 days later.

“Wolf conservation has become a dramatic expression of the goodness of the human spirit. It shows that we respect the rights of other life-forms, even when they may cause problems. It shows that we are capable and committed to correcting the mistakes of the past. Wolf restoration is a touchstone for measuring our reverence for what we have inherited and for the legacy we leave our children.”

~ Mike Phillips



(Former Yellowstone Wolf Restoration Project Leader)

Conservation



Our knowledge of the Mexican wolf is limited because wild populations were effectively eliminated before they could be studied. Toward the turn of the century, high cattle stocking rates and low populations of native prey, such as deer and elk, caused many wolves to prey on livestock. This led to intensive efforts to eradicate wolves in the United States. Wolves were trapped, shot and poisoned by both private individuals and government agents. Bounties were paid. By the mid-1900s, Mexican wolves had been effectively eliminated from the United States, and Mexican populations were severely reduced. The Mexican wolf was listed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered species in May 1976, and was considered extinct in the wild, with only a handful remaining in captivity.

Mexican wolves were common throughout their range in the mid-1800s. In 1998, captive wolves were reintroduced into the wild as part of the SSP under the Endangered Species Act. In 2003 the WCC was accepted into the SSP for the critically endangered Mexican

gray wolf and has played a critical role in preserving and protecting this imperiled species through carefully managed breeding and reintroduction. The Wolf Conservation Center’s role in the SSP program is as a breeding and management program designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of captive-based animal populations. It is a coordinated effort among zoos, conservation centers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Mexico’s Fish & Wildlife Agencies, and is managed under the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The goal of the Recovery Plan is to restore Mexican gray wolves to a portion of their ancestral range in the southwest United States and Mexico.

WCC

The seven Mexican gray wolves at the WCC occupy four enclosures in the WCC Endangered Species Facility. These enclosures are private and secluded, and the wolves are not on exhibit for the public, to ensure they have a greater probability of being successful if they are released into the wild as part of the recovery plan.

To date, the WCC remains one of the three largest holding facilities for these rare species and three Mexican gray wolves from the WCC have been given the extraordinary opportunity to resume their rightful place on the wild landscape. Today in the U.S., there is a single wild population comprising 97 individuals.



Red Wolves–Natural History

The red wolf (*Canis rufus*) is one of two species of wolves in North America, the other being the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*). As their name suggests, red wolves are known for the characteristic reddish color of their fur, which is most apparent behind the ears and along the neck and legs, but are mostly brown and buff colored with some black along their backs. Intermediate in size compared to gray wolves and coyotes, the average adult red wolf weighs 45-80 pounds, stands about 26 inches at the shoulder and is about 4 feet long from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail.

Red wolves are social animals that live in packs consisting of a breeding adult pair and their offspring of different years, typically five to eight animals. Red wolves prey on a variety of wild mammals such as raccoon, rabbit, white-tailed deer, nutria, and other rodents. Most active at dusk and dawn, red wolves are elusive and generally avoid humans and human activity.



Conservation

Once common throughout the southeastern United States, it was the belief that the red wolf caused widespread cattle losses that led to extensive predator control programs in the early part of the twentieth century. Fear and a misunderstanding of the animal led to indiscriminate killing for bounties. The red wolf was also affected by land clearing and drainage projects, logging, mineral exploration, and road development that encroached on its forest habitat.

As government-sanctioned predator control programs were carried out with a vengeance, the red wolf was totally removed from extensive areas of its former range, while in other areas its social structure was destroyed by removal of pack members. At the same time, deforestation in eastern Texas and Oklahoma caused an eastward surge of the coyote. These factors resulted in red wolf and coyote interbreeding when red wolves were unable to find mates of their own species.

After being declared an endangered species in 1973, efforts were initiated to locate and capture as many wild red wolves as possible. Of the 17 remaining wolves captured by biologists, 14 became the founders of a successful captive breeding program. Consequently, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) declared red wolves extinct in the wild in 1980.

By 1987, enough red wolves were bred in captivity to begin a restoration program to return the species to a portion of their traditional range in the southeast United States in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern North Carolina.

Nowhere else on the planet are wild red wolf populations viable and secure.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to review the program (a decision is expected in summer of 2016), to determine if USFWS should continue, modify, or terminate the program that manages the last remaining wild red wolves on our planet. Until then, it has halted all captive-to-wild releases. The current estimate puts the only wild population of red wolves at their lowest level (50 – 75) since the late 1990s.

WCC

In 2004, the WCC joined the recovery effort as a participating organization in the Red Wolf SSP and has played a critical role in preserving and protecting these imperiled species through carefully managed breeding and reintroduction. To date, the WCC has welcomed two red wolf litters (2010 and 2015) and a single red wolf from the WCC has been given the extraordinary opportunity to resume his rightful place on the wild landscape. In the spring of 2015, webcam-watchers all over the globe were thrilled to witness the birth of six red wolf pups at the WCC.



While the WCC is thrilled to participate in the SSP and Recovery programs, the surviving populations for both red wolves and Mexican gray wolves are tenuous, and there are many obstacles facing these species. While the potential halt of the red wolf recovery program is discouraging, we see so many visitors fall in love with our WCC wolves that we remain hopeful about the future success of both introduced populations. With the backing from our community, volunteers, staff and sponsors we are even more encouraged to spread the word about these populations and further broaden our base of support.





 **IN-KIND DONORS**



The WCC would also like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their in-kind donations. We sincerely appreciate their contributions.

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AWARENESS AND ACTION



The value and importance of conserving species and ensuring biodiversity is an accepted axiom of the 21st century. The importance of a keystone predator such as the red wolf to a balanced and resilient ecosystem is undeniable. That our policies should be motivated by these basic scientific principles is a must.

Every voice raised in support of wildlife and wild places can make a difference. And when we all work together we can make big things happen. The WCC educates tens of thousands of supporters annually via education programming about (1) the issues that impact the future of fragile populations of wild wolves in the USA and Canada, and (2) the tools that will enable them to become active and authentic voices that advocate for responsible decision-making. We also facilitate a myriad of robust social media campaigns that help raise the visibility of wolf and wildlife conservation; these initiatives have attracted over two million supporters worldwide. Coupled with personal meetings, phone calls, writing letters and emails to



"Science and environmental law can help us learn to share landscapes with fierce creatures, but ultimately, coexistence has to do with our human hearts."

~ Cristina Eisenberg,
The Carnivore Way



elected representatives and others, such measures are essential and can have an enormous impact on potential policies that can affect wolves in all 50 (fifty) states and Canada.

With both the natural and political challenges continuing to face wolves, our work ahead has never been more important. We are confident that we are making a difference. We remain committed to mobilizing support and advocating for these essential species which cannot speak for themselves.

THE NORTHEAST WOLF COALITION



With those words, conservationist Aldo Leopold began a serious dialog about the state of wild lands and wildlife in the American landscape. For those of us who live in the Northeast, this conversation has never been more critical. For more than a century, the northeastern United States has been regaining its wildness. Where forests had been largely cleared in 19th century, the woods have returned. Where wildlife such as moose, bear, beaver—even deer—had been eliminated, these animals have rebounded. While this is cause for hope, this remarkable recovery seems incomplete.

The decline of large predators and other apex consumers at the top of the food chain has disrupted ecosystems all over our continent, and it is arguably humanity's most pervasive influence on the natural world. For our region, the wolf is the missing component of our regional ecology and one of the top predators that once called the Northeast its home.



Recognizing the need for this apex predator and the potential for its recovery in the Northeast USA, the Northeast Wolf Coalition was established in March 2014 as an alliance of conservation organizations in New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut and beyond.



The Coalition's work is guided by some of our nation's best and brightest conservation scientists to ensure the foundation of its work is based on the application of the best available and most current scientific principles. The Coalition believes the return of the wolf will reflect a more fully functional and wild Northeast, with wolves fulfilling dynamic and evolving ecological functions in the changing environments that comprise our region.

As conservationists in the 21st century, we are faced with the challenge of helping nature continue to heal and flourish for future generations. Thus, the need to explore the critical factors that affect the wolf's return and its potentially positive impact to the natural biological diversity of the Northeast has never been more important. As co-founder of the Northeast Wolf Coalition, the Wolf Conservation Center continues to take a leadership role in this mission.





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The WCC is home to ambassador wolves that visitors can observe in spacious natural enclosures. We also have over 20 wolves as part of our participation in Species Survival Plans for critically endangered Mexican gray wolves and red wolves. To learn more about us or to arrange a visit, please go to our website and follow us on Facebook & Twitter. 

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