

WILD
UTAH
PROJECT



WILD UTAH PROJECT
IMPACT REPORT 2020

Science-based wildlife conservation

Conservation strategies with **lasting impact**



Executive Director Josh Wood examines milkweed for signs of monarchs as part of our Utah Pollinator Pursuit project.

In the face of climate change and vanishing wildlife, we each want to take action. While we can feel powerless against such enormous forces threatening the world we love, there is something pushing us forward to combat these challenges: we have the hope that comes with working together.

Sure, one person fighting to protect precious wildlife and land can feel overwhelmed. But a group of people united behind a common cause is a powerful force. The kind of impact community-based work makes possible—that deeply rooted, lasting impact—is what Wild Utah Project is about.

We have built a diverse network of thousands of volunteers, scientists, organizations, and donors all dedicated to conserving habitat and protecting wildlife in the West. Our ability to provide science-based strategies for effective conservation is made possible by this collective effort.

As we reflect on our years of building a united force for conservation, we look ahead to what we can accomplish. Hundreds of people contribute thousands of hours to provide data that is crucial to protecting the wildlife and lands we love. Donors who give what they can allow conservation to continue no matter what comes, like we saw during this year's pandemic. Everyone's efforts combine to build something bigger than each of us.

We still have work to do. There is wildlife in critical need, habitat to restore, and members of our communities we've yet to reach. We invite you to keep working with us for an impact that lasts.

Thank you for making our work possible. Here's to the coming year!

Joshua Wood
Executive Director

OUR MISSION

Wild Utah Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that **provides science-based strategies for wildlife and land conservation.**

Photo by Leslie Roberts (edited)

A CRITICAL QUESTION FOR A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE

What do sensitive species in the West need to thrive?

Answering this question is crucial for natural resource managers and decision makers across the West. They depend on reliable data as they work to keep our wildlife and lands healthy. However, some of the most important questions are changing as we reckon with a shifting landscape. As westerners witness drought, climate change, rapid development, and other impacts threatening sensitive ecosystems, we recognize our treasured wildlife need our help.

We're on a mission to provide that life-sustaining support.

We use sound science to identify conservation needs and recommend key strategies to heal wildlife populations and their habitats. With a growing number of community scientists, partners, and supporters joining our ranks, we believe we can ensure that our wildlife persist for generations to come.





Wild Utah Project and partners survey for bats along wetland habitat as part of our stream restoration and pollinator projects.

Our conservation priorities

1. Promoting habitat connectivity
2. Protecting species in conservation need
3. Restoring vital habitat



A community scientist completes a datasheet for our Wasatch Wildlife Watch project.



Our strategy

Applying objective conservation science

In a world of ever-shifting ideas and politics, a reliance on careful data is central to finding conservation solutions with lasting impacts.

Establishing strategic partnerships

Collaboration is at the core of our work. As we engage partners with diverse interests and backgrounds from a shared value of conserving wildlife, our impacts are strengthened over the long-term. Our partners include habitat management agencies, decision makers, academia, and other nonprofits, among others.

Facilitating community engagement

In addition to positively impacting wildlife and the land, community science fosters a crucial connection between people and their environment. We work to engage many groups in conservation, from hunters to hikers to birders.

2020 AT A GLANCE

Thanks to your help and our organization's solid footing, when the pandemic struck, we adapted rapidly and were able to increase our impact despite challenges. More volunteers than ever before joined our conservation team.

With your support, we...

Repatriated wildlife species to habitats in their historic ranges

Restored vital riparian and stream habitat

Connected 1,150+ volunteers to local conservation

Elevated conservation planning for species in need

Applied community-collected data to identify important wildlife habitat use areas in Wasatch Mountains

Ensured new habitat and wildlife information was available to decision makers

Collaborated with 23+ partners including resource managers to implement wildlife plans

Integrated inclusion into project planning and central organizational practices/culture



Community scientists at work. Photos: Stream resotation by Lindsay Aman (top, edited), a rosy-finch flock by Lynne Spriggs (bottom left, edited), surveying for rosy-finches by Angela Snow (bottom right, edited)





OUR PROGRAMS

Wasatch Wildlife Watch

Amphibian & Aquatic Habitat Assessments

Stream & Riparian Restoration

Rosy-Finch Project

Utah Pollinator Pursuit

Wetlands and Waterbirds

Wasatch Wildlife Watch

Goal

Facilitate or improve wildlife movement across the Wasatch Mountains

Strategy

The Wasatch Wildlife Watch Project engages community scientists in gathering and analyzing native wildlife and habitat-use data along the wild-urban interface using motion-activated trail cameras. Baseline habitat-use data and occupancy modeling for native wildlife will inform future landscape-level decisions about habitat connectivity, such as wildlife over- and underpasses. This will benefit both humans and wildlife throughout the Wasatch Mountains.

2020 Impact

“Heat maps” for wildlife habitat use across the Wasatch have been created, which will inform conservation decisions affecting key wildlife corridors. Scientific publications are currently using project data to research human impacts on wildlife communities.





Community scientists learn to set up wildlife cameras at a 2019 training

KEY STATS

2,345+
wildlife camera stations
managed

240,000+
camera images gathered
and analyzed by volunteers

700+
volunteer community
scientists

PARTNERS

Biodiversity and Conservation Ecology Lab, University of Utah
Utah's Hogle Zoo
U.S. Forest Service
Salt Lake City Open Space and Public Lands
Natural History Museum of Utah
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources





Stream & Riparian Restoration

Goal

Restore 100 miles of degraded stream throughout the Intermountain West

Strategy

Volunteers join us to improve the health of degraded streams throughout Utah and build human-made beaver dams. These low-tech, low-cost structures are a simple way to improve habitats quickly. They also pave the way for potential beaver re-establishment, which further improves stream habitat. We support research at restoration sites to understand the ecological and economic values of healthy streams.

2020 Impact

For the first time, we supported beaver re-introduction and re-establishment on two streams. We documented improved stream condition from our 2019 sites. Grazing management was improved on three sites with landowners.



KEY STATS

1,000+
willows and pollinator-
friendly plants planted

150+
volunteers helped restore
degraded western streams

250+
beaver dam analogues built on
9 streams, covering 2.7 miles

PARTNERS

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
University of Utah
Utah State University
Trout Unlimited
Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Utah Army National Guard, Camp Williams
Snyderville Basin Special Recreation District
Two private landowners



Photo by Lindasy Aman (edited)



Amphibian & Aquatic Habitat Assessments

Goal

Increase population viability of boreal toad throughout the species' range in Utah and identify opportunities for habitat restoration and reintroduction of toads

Strategy

Along with our community scientists, we document boreal toad presence, population demographics, and breeding habitat condition data throughout Utah's current and historic breeding locations. This information is essential for amphibian and aquatic habitat managers tasked with prioritizing how and where to focus their conservation and restoration efforts.

2020 Impact

Captive-bred toads were released at two repatriation sites, which is a major step for this declining species. Restoration efforts for 2021 were prioritized and funded based on project data.



Community scientists search for boreal toads in high alpine meadows

KEY STATS

100+
field surveys completed

40+
volunteers gathered data
about boreal toads

150
site visits were made to
boreal toad habitat

PARTNERS

Utah's Hogle Zoo
University of Utah
Utah State University
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah Geological Survey
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service





Rosy-Finch Project

Goal

Document an increase in rosy-finch populations and conserve western alpine habitat

Strategy

Community scientists across the west record rosy-finch sightings, helping scientists answer questions about the mysterious alpine bird in the face of climate change. Additionally, a network of Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID)-enabled bird feeders collect demographic data on Utah's rosy-finches. This information means we will be able to recommend ways to conserve them in coming years.

2020 Impact

Through partnerships with stakeholders like ski resorts, in 2020 the project expanded into seven states and includes all three species of rosy-finch. Our methods are proving successful, and we are starting to understand the species' movement and abundance. We strengthened relationships that will allow us to facilitate a region-wide conservation strategy for all three species.



Community scientists survey for rosy-finches

KEY STATS

283

Rosy-finches captured and banded

200+

community scientists from seven states

350+

bird surveys made to date

PARTNERS

Tracy Aviary

Utah State University

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

U.S. Department of Defense

U.S. Forest Service

15+ ski resorts and conservation organizations including Alta Ski Area and Bridgerland Audubon Society





Utah Pollinator Pursuit

Goal

Increase populations of Utah's monarch butterfly, western bumble bee, other native pollinators, and the plant communities they rely on

Strategy

Community scientists across Utah document pollinators and potentially suitable habitat for the monarch butterfly and western bumble bee. Both species have the potential to be considered threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This information is important for wildlife and habitat managers to prioritize restoration projects for crucial breeding and feeding habitats in support of these species, which are facing massive declines.

2020 Impact

Our project documented the first observation of the rare *Bombus suckleyi* species in Utah in at least two decades, suggesting presence of the western bumble bee (a species it is dependent upon) and impacting future research and conservation. Preliminary questions about how monarchs and bumble bees use Utah habitats were answered. Using data gathered by our community scientists, we are assisting habitat managers in prioritizing research and habitat restoration in areas that are essential to monarch butterflies and western bumble bees .

Photo by Amanda Barth (edited)



Community scientists record data on milkweed, and pollinators

KEY STATS

500+
field surveys for these
species & habitats completed

172
monarch butterfly sightings
and 100+ habitat visits

217
bumble bee sightings

PARTNERS

Utah Division of Wildlife
University of Utah Department of Wildland
Resources
Utah Monarch Enthusiasts Group
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service

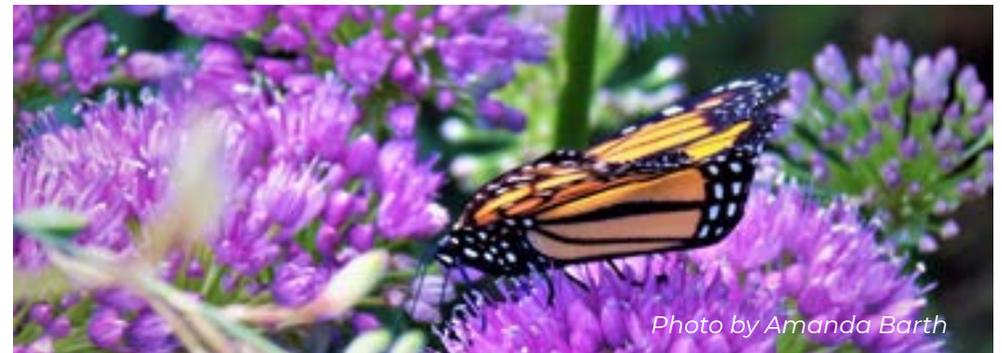


Photo by Amanda Barth



New this year: Wetlands and Waterbirds

Goal

Sustain and restore wetland habitat for waterbirds on 300,000 acres of Great Salt Lake (GSL) wetlands

Strategy

We interviewed wetland managers to learn about challenges and opportunities in conservation of Great Salt Lake wetlands. The result was the first-ever Needs Assessment for Great Salt Lake wetlands from a manager perspective.

2020 Impact

The Needs Assessment has already received overwhelming support from a community of managers and conservationists alike. Using the Needs Report's recommendations, we are beginning to fund and implement projects for 2021 and beyond.



Wild Utah Project staff conduct bird surveys on Great Salt Lake wetlands

KEY STATS

250+

stakeholders reached to support GSL conservation

30+

hours of interviews to assess manager needs

Publication

Published and promoted a report for GSL conservation

PARTNERS & PARTICIPANTS

Key Partner: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Great Salt Lake Ecosystem Program

**The Nature Conservancy
National Audubon
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Private duck hunting clubs
Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands
Division of Water Quality**



ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

Utilizing professional skills to support our work

Wild Utah Project staff are expert in their respective fields and continue to provide professional services to our community. Our fee-based work remains rooted in objective science and furthers our mission. Services include landscape-level planning, ecological monitoring, and other important conservation projects. Our role in this work creates better outcomes for our natural resources, such as improving community involvement in landscape-level conservation planning and mitigating impacts to local bird populations.

In 2020, our projects included avian monitoring at The Nature Conservancy's Shorelands Preserve, stakeholder engagement for the Lower Bear River Conservation Action Plan, developing an Environmental Dashboard for the Central Wasatch, and wildlife habitat connectivity planning in the greater Canyonlands region.



A collaborative approach to conservation



Working alongside the landowner and our many partners, we established willow- and pollinator-friendly plants on the Miller Creek restoration site

As detailed on the project pages, we are proud to work alongside many local, state, and federal government agencies, other non-profits, academic institutions, and private landowners. We believe that **conservation is enhanced when diverse partners work together** from a shared value of wildlife and habitat. Partnerships not only build capacity, but also create projects with broader buy-in and more successful outcomes for our wildlife and habitats.

We are part of multiple working groups to both add our science-based strategies to the conversation and learn from others. This supports more effective and sustainable conservation plans for western species.

WORKING GROUPS WE PARTICIPATE IN

Utah Bat Conservation Cooperative

The goal of the group is to conserve bat populations, communities, and habitats in the State of Utah through the cooperative efforts of its members. We strive to integrate bat research into our existing project work by gathering acoustic monitoring data regarding bat presence and habitat use along riparian corridors and the wild-urban interface.

Watershed Restoration Initiative

Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) was developed as the state's major program to fund watershed improvement projects. We provide meaningful input at the project development stage to create better conservation outcomes. In 2020, Janice Gardner was nominated and served as the Chair of the Central Region committee. Recently, some of the strongest partnerships for restoring wildlife species such as beaver and boreal toad have been forged within the WRI framework.

Wildlife Action Plan

A diverse group of stakeholders, including Wild Utah Project, developed Utah's Wildlife Action Plan with the goal of managing native wildlife and habitats to prevent listings under the Endangered Species Act. Currently, we engage in developing and implementing conservation strategies focused on Wildlife Action Plan species of conservation need and vital habitats.

Wildlife Connectivity Working Group

This group aims to coordinate efforts related to wildlife connectivity throughout Utah, learn collaboratively about related issues, and to strategically plan to increase wildlife connectivity across Utah.



Great Salt Lake Advisory Council

We attend and participate in Council meetings where the sustainable use, protection, and development of the Great Salt Lake are discussed.

Western-Wide Rosy-finch Working Group

Staged to formalize in 2021, this group is comprised of dedicated researchers, managers, and rosy-finch experts across the west. These meetings allow more effective rosy-finch conservation by sharing outcomes and technical advice.

East Canyon Watershed Committee

Many of our stream restoration sites are rooted in this committee, where we develop collaborative projects, share opportunities, and voice concerns.

Riverscape Restoration Network

This network connects restoration practitioners across the west and is a venue for sharing research, project outcomes, and creating collaborations.

Our conservation team

2020 STAFF

Joshua Wood, M.A.

Executive Director

Mary Pendergast, Ph.D.

Conservation Ecologist

**Janice Gardner, M.S.,
CWB®**

Conservation Ecologist

Kim Howes

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Research Associate

2020 INTERNS

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Brigham Young University

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Portland Community College

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University of Utah

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University of Utah

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Board Secretary/Treasurer

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Jaimi Butler

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University of Utah

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RiverRestoration

Paul Parker, MLA

HawkWatch International, retired

Steve Slater, Ph.D.

Hawkwatch International

Laura Welp, M.S.

Western Watersheds Project

Mark Bailey

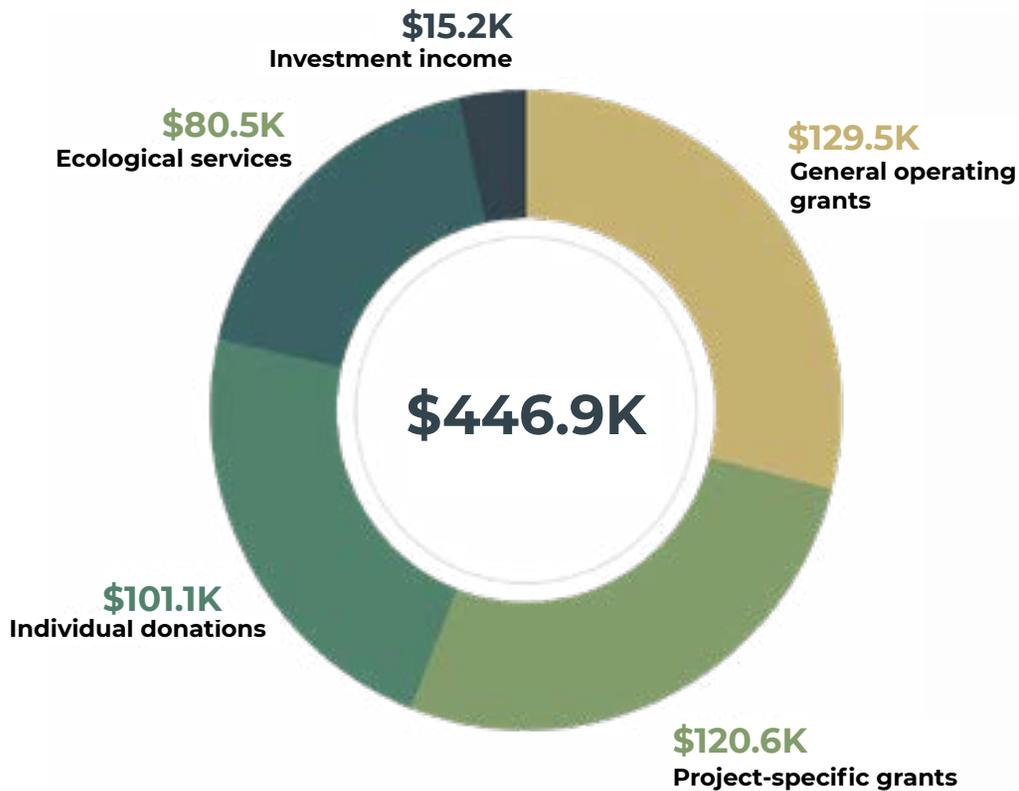
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Kathleen Metcalf, M.S.

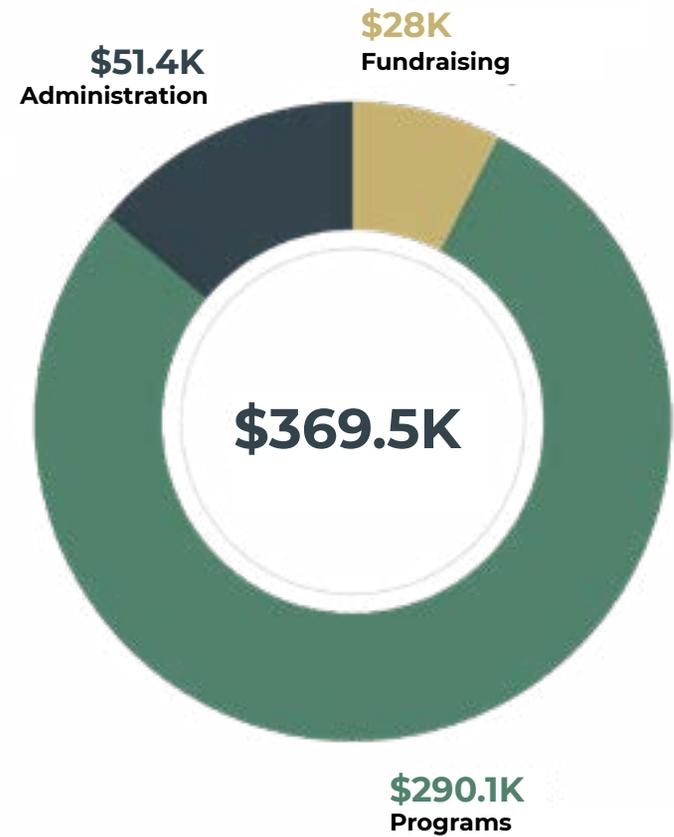
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2020 Financials

2020 Income



2020 Expenses



*Full 990 will be posted at www.wildutahproject.org/accountability in summer 2021

Thank you to our 2020 Funding Partners:

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 JEPS Foundation
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 The Fanwood Foundation
 The Nature Conservancy
 The Walbridge Fund
 Tracy Aviary Conservation Fund
 Trout Unlimited
 Union Pacific Foundation
 Utah State University
 Utah Zoological Society
 Wilburforce Foundation
 XMission

...And all our generous individual donors!

If you are able to give, **please consider donating** to ensure that this work continues. Visit www.wildutahproject.org to make a tax-deductible donation today.

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Since 1996, Wild Utah Project has provided the science to conserve both **wildlife and habitat connectivity** for vital corridors on a large scale.

Thank you for making our work possible.

