



# SAFINA CENTER

*Voyages 2024*

The Safina Center  
2024 Annual Report





**"I have been travelling quite a lot and have seen other remote areas in the world. Yet, this was one of the most spectacular hikes I ever did. Not only because of the views, but it was very moving to witness and realize the power of water. Water in all forms, water in glaciers melting into ice-cold water reaching our seas and creating life. Life is water and water is life."**

—"Sailing Tilvera to the North," by Safina Center Fellow Belén Garcia Ovide

Photo: Natural lakes and pools on our way on top of Svartisen glacier. ©Belén Garcia Ovide  
Cover photo: A puffin during the Summer Solstice in Grimsey Island ©Nico Schmid

# The Safina Center

## MISSION STATEMENT

At the Safina Center we advance the case for life on Earth by fusing scientific understanding, emotional engagement, and a moral call to action. We create an original blend of science, art, music, and literature in the form of award-winning books and articles, scientific research, photography, films, sound-art, and spoken words. We bear first-hand witness and then we speak up, we speak out, and we teach.

Our work is designed to inspire and engage others to devote their time and energies to conservation of wild things and wild places. We firmly believe that the challenges we face cannot be conquered or alleviated without instilling new values, and our work has proven its capability to do so.

The Safina Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit based on Long Island, N.Y.

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## FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

### Voyages? Absolutely!

By Carl Safina

"We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring," wrote T. S. Eliot, "Will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time."

Exploring, whether traveling real physical distances or exploring the universe within, brings that most important thing: perspective. To gain it, one has to go voyaging, literally and figuratively, outside the familiar, beyond one's comfort zone—and then turn around and look back, like being out in space looking at Earth for the first time and realizing that our planet is small and beautiful and fragile.

As you'll read in these pages, we at The Safina Center indeed go outside our comfort zones, past horizons old and new. We gather perspective. And we share what we have seen, what we have learned, what we think and feel about our human place in the world. And how lucky we are. And what we feel compelled to do about it.

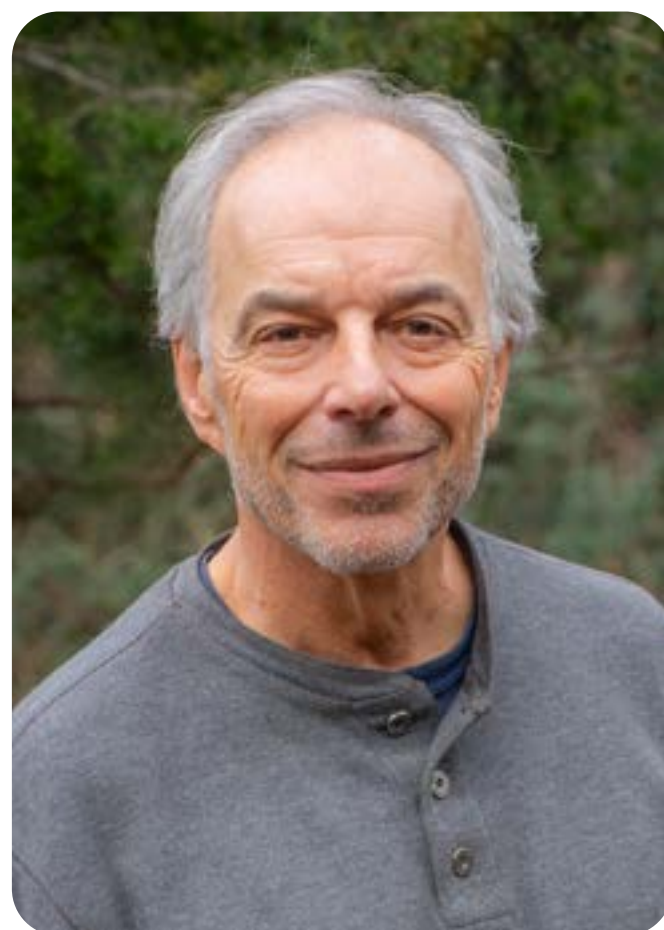
We share our perspective in the form of books and teachings, visual art, and the foundational practice of simply welcoming people into an inclusive, expanding circle of care and conscience—for humanity and the planet and all living things.

Our fellows are the future. Our support for them helps lay the groundwork for great things.

One goal of our fellowships is propulsion into tomorrow. We know it works, because our alumni stay in touch as they continue their voyages, doing everything from advancing science research in the White House, to exposing slavery in high seas fishing, to keeping Alaska safe for salmon and bears, to recording sounds of the natural world, to getting people outdoors.

That's a wide swath, because our mission is nothing less than continually "making the case for Life on Earth."

In this report you'll see why the work of our fellows, and the joy they bring to it, and the heart they pour into it, continually inspires me.



Carl Safina. ©Patricia Paladines.

## OUR APPROACH

The Safina Center sets itself apart from most environmental non-profits through our creative approach towards targeting peoples' hearts and minds. Our global and diverse team creates literature, films, visual art, music, educational content, research projects, and more, with the purpose of moving the needle regarding the injustices committed to the world's wildlife, environment and people.

**Our purpose is nothing less than making a case for life on Earth.**



In Madagascar, Alain Rasolo and local wildlife expert Rajeriarison Emile work together creating an educational course that will teach local children about butterflies and moths. ©Alain Rasolo

## OUR FOUNDING

The Safina Center was founded by New York Times bestselling author and MacArthur "Genius Fellowship" winning ecologist Dr. Carl Safina in 2003, alongside Mercédès Lee, Mayra Mariño, and Carrie Brownstein. Carl Safina holds the inaugural Endowed Research Chair for Nature and Humanity at Stony Brook University.

## WHAT WE DO

We support a world-class team of writers, artists, photographers, filmmakers, and podcasters through our fellows program. Perhaps more importantly, our Launchpad (early-career) Fellows are—with your help—launching professional careers that will carry their important work into the coming decades.

Beyond our extensive fellows program, we are proud to have a wide circle of Creative Affiliates—highly accomplished and exceptionally creative people who share and amplify one another's messages and work, and the work of the Safina Center.

Our network of fellows and affiliates shed light on solutions to the world's most pressing human-induced problems: climate change, social injustice, biodiversity loss, and the decay of wild places.



In Iceland, Belén García Ovide prepares to take water samples from where a whale has dived. As part of the eWHALE project, Ovide collects samples of seawater to test for environmental DNA, which can provide details about specific whales, species, families and even diets. ©Marianne Rasmussen



# WHO WE ARE

## Staff



**MAYRA MARIÑO**  
Business Manager



**CARL SAFINA**  
Founding President



**LOUIS PAGILLO**  
Media & Outreach Manager  
Fellows Program Manager

## Creative Affiliates

We are pleased to have a wide circle of **Creative Affiliates**, highly accomplished and exceptionally gifted creators who share and amplify one another's messages and work, and the work of the Safina Center and our fellows.



**ISABELLA  
ROSSELLINI**  
New York | USA  
Model, Actress, Filmmaker, & Farmer



**JANE ALEXANDER**  
Nova Scotia | Canada  
Actress, Writer, &  
Conservationist



**JON  
BOWERMASTER**  
New York | USA  
Writer, Filmmaker, & Adventurer



**DR. KATHLEEN  
DEAN MOORE**  
Oregon & Alaska | USA  
Philosopher, Environmental Advocate, & Writer



**LINDA LEAR**  
Maryland & South Carolina | USA  
Biographer & Environmental Historian



**DR. LORI MARINO**  
Utah | USA  
Neuroscientist & Animal Behavior Expert



**LUANNE RICE**  
Connecticut | USA  
Novelist



**PAUL WINTER**  
New York | USA  
Musician & Musical Adventurer



# LAUNCHPAD FELLOWS

Our **Launchpad Fellowship** is designed to kickstart projects undertaken by promising young venture-level talent, helping launch early careers and create an affiliation of like-minded kindred spirits. The fellowship honors Kalpana Chawla, a dynamic, nature-loving astronaut who perished aboard the space shuttle Columbia in 2003. After her passing, her family established an endowment to the Safina Center to be used for this purpose.

**The Launchpad Fellows carry on the conservation ethic of Kalpana through their work.**



**Alain Rasolo**  
**Toamasina | Madagascar**

Wildlife artist focused on showcasing Madagascar's rich biodiversity through painting, travel sketchbooks, and comics.

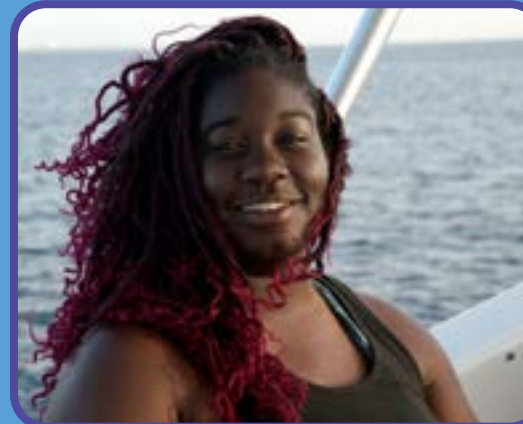
**Katlyn Taylor**  
**Antarctica & Oregon | USA**

Whale watching guide, eco-tour guide, and marine biologist. Host of the WhaleNerds podcast.



**Jasmin Graham**  
**Florida | USA**

Shark scientist, educator, and author. President and CEO of Minorities in Shark Sciences (MISS).



**Alex Chege**  
**Lamu Archipelago | Kenya**

Photographer and PhD student studying the evolutionary biology of coastal primates through Stony Brook University



**Marlowe Starling**  
**Florida | USA**

Environmental journalist writing about climate, conservation, and culture. Featured in New York Times, Sierra, Hakai, and more.



**Belén Garcia Ovide**  
**Húsavík | Iceland**

Marine scientist, guide, sailor, and ocean conservationist. Researches whales and ocean plastics while inspiring others through ecotourism sailing trips.



**Melissa Roshko Randall**  
**New York & Pennsylvania | USA**

Writer focused on food studies and film. Editor for NYU's Bite Magazine. Mentored by Safina Center Fellow Paul Greenberg.

# SENIOR FELLOWS

To accelerate the creation of exceptional and transformative work, our Senior Fellowship helps support a small group of hand-picked distinctive leaders for up to three years, and our in-Residence Fellows for longer.



**Dani Khan Da Silva**  
**Senior Fellow, Ontario | Canada**

Award-winning documentary photographer, director, and leader. Founder and Executive Director of Photographers Without Borders.

**Priya Parrotta**  
**Senior Fellow, Washington DC | USA**

Author, historian, songwriter, singer, and multimedia artist. Founder and Director of Music & the Earth International.



**Kike Calvo**  
**Senior Fellow, Colombia and USA**

Award-winning photographer, writer, and children's author. Founder of Little Explorer, Big World and Colombia Photo Expeditions.



**Erik Callender**  
**Senior Fellow, New York | USA**

Educator, children's author, and television host. Founder and host of the PBS children's television series *Menghayati!*



## IN-RESIDENCE FELLOWS

Our writer and conservationist-in-residences are fellows who are well-established and perpetually renewed. They make regular contributions to their respective fields and receive the same support as our senior fellows.

**Paul Greenberg**  
**Writer-in-Residence, New York | USA**

Educator and New York Times bestselling award-winning author of six books on the environment and technology.



**Raffi Khatchadourian**  
**Senior Fellow, New York | USA**

Journalist and staff writer for the New Yorker. Researching whaling and the conflict over whales in the nineteen seventies and eighties.



**Hob Osterlund**  
**Conservationist-in-Residence, Hawaii | USA**

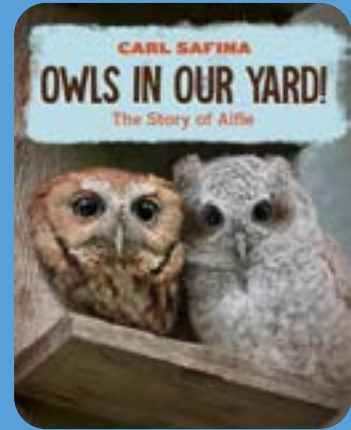
Founder of the Kaua'i Albatross Network, author, and documentary producer.





# YEAR IN REVIEW

## Books



### ***Owls in Our Yard! The Story of Alfie***

**Carl Safina. Published by W.W. Norton, 2024.**

A children's book about the story of Alfie, an orphaned screech owl that author Carl Safina and his wife Patricia rescued and later released. As time passed, Carl realized that his bond with Alfie was greater than just saving her life—it offered wisdom, joy, and magic to him in return.

### ***Sharks Don't Sink: Adventures of a Rogue Shark Scientist***

**Jasmin Graham**

**Published by Penguin Random House, 2024.**

The uplifting story of a young Black scientist's challenging journey to flourish outside the traditional confines of academia, inspired by her innate connection to nature's most misunderstood animal—the shark.



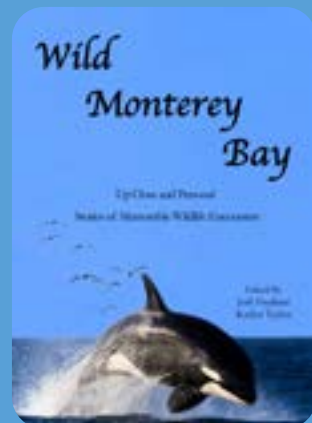
### ***Wild Monterey Bay***

**Katlyn Taylor & Jodi Frediani**

**Published by Travis House Publications, 2024.**

"What's your most memorable wildlife encounter in Monterey Bay?"

Editors Katlyn Taylor and Jodi Frediani interviewed over 40 people about their experiences with the rich wildlife in Monterey Bay, California. This collection of essays showcases the incredible ecosystem and the people who interact with it.



## Films & Television



### ***Menghayati! Season 2***

**PBS Children's Television Series  
Directed and Hosted by Erik Callender**

Join Erik Callender The Reptile Guy for a fun-filled journey into nature to meet curious creatures in the wild, while connecting children and families to the natural world and each other.

Season two highlights Costa Rica's diverse wildlife.

### ***Sharks Unknown***

**YouTube Web Series on PBS Terra  
Directed and Hosted by Jasmin Graham**

Jasmin Graham travels the country visiting marine scientists to learn about strange, bizarre, and unique sharks and elasmobranch behaviours.



### ***Nuraga Bhumi***

**Documentary Film  
Directed by Dani Khan Da Silva**

With only 400-600 Sumatran tigers remaining in the wild, a team of Indigenous women have devoted themselves to protecting the critically endangered species. Dani Khan Da Silva shares an intimate look into the lives of the Nuraga Bhumi Institute and their efforts to protect their forests and save the tiger.

## Podcasts



### **The Safina Center Podcast**

Hosted and Produced  
by Louis Pagillo

Interviews, news, and more from our Media and Outreach manager Louis Pagillo, featuring fellows, affiliates, and others within our network.



### **The WhaleNerd's Podcast**

Hosted and Produced  
by Katlyn Taylor

Self-proclaimed Whale Nerd Katlyn Taylor covers whale-related news, shares updates from her travels, and interviews scientists, artists, writers, and fellow whale nerds.



Events and Speaking



MISSIVERSARY 2024

St. Petersburg, Florida – USA

An in-person gathering in celebration of Minorities in Shark Sciences’ 4th anniversary, and the opening of their first office space. Hosted at If I Brew the World Brewery. MISS was co-founded by its president and CEO, Safina Center Fellow Jasmin Graham.

SVIVS Conference

Húsavík, Iceland

Belen Garcia Ovide and the Skjálfandi Marine Protection Group (SVIVS) gathered in Húsavík, Iceland to discuss environmental policies that could protect their surrounding ocean. The president of Iceland was in attendance.



TEDxBoston’s Planetary Stewardship Conference

Boston, Massachusetts – USA

Carl Safina and over 30 other speakers gathered in Boston for TedxBoston’s annual planetary stewardship conference. Through the lens of Alfie the owl, Dr. Safina spoke about our relationship with the natural world and the human values that separate us from our surroundings.



Music & the Earth: An Immersive Experience

Stockholm, Sweden

An hour of original music by Priya Parrotta, paired with photographs presenting the natural world and our deep and storied cultures. Premiered at the World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations in Stockholm, Sweden



VOYAGES

Throughout 2024, our global team of fellows traveled across the globe to collaborate, speak, research, gather data, and learn from local communities. From Antarctica to Asia, the Safina Center team has stepped foot on every continent in the last year, sharing their values-changing work while finding inspiration in new places, people, and experiences.

Through their voyages, our team of fellows have highlighted places and beings across the globe that are struggling under the many forces our planet suffers from today. Yet they’ve also inspired hope by highlighting changemakers, researchers, creatives, and the people who are making a case for life on Earth.

This section and the following map highlights just some of the many voyages we took throughout 2024.



Katlyn Taylor conducting a tour in the Southern Ocean. ©Katlyn Taylor



Jasmin Graham sits beside Tonya Wiley, Founder of Havenworth Coastal Conservation, during a shark survey. ©Cassie Wegeng



Erik Callender and Pepo Montsant, with a camera covered in frog eggs in Costa Rica. ©Erik Callender



Marlowe Starling posing with a striped sea robin onboard the Cap’n Bert in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island.©Gretchen Ertl/ Metcalf Institute, University of Rhode Island



# Voyage with the Safina Center





# FELLOW SPOTLIGHT

**Alain Rasolo** is a Malagasy wildlife artist with a background in Environmental Science and Biodiversity Conservation from the University of Toamasina (ISSEDD). Painting nature in watercolour is his preferred means of expression, making extensive art pieces (paintings, educational posters, travel sketchbooks etc.) about the island's rich biodiversity and culture. He also works in graphic design and crafts.



© Hajanirina Randrianarivony

▲ Painting of Simone, Ranomafana's last remaining greater bamboo lemur, by Alain Rasolo

"As a wildlife painter, exploring Ranomafana National Park is a journey filled with awe and learning. Its diverse inhabitants and landscape provide abundant inspiration for me in my work.

Being a Safina Center Fellow gives me a precious sense of freedom, letting me explore and paint even more of the forest and its wildlife. This year, among other species, I painted a series of portraits featuring Ranomafana's three species of bamboo lemurs, two of which are critically-endangered. These paintings are part of a collection that will be printed for use in local schools and future exhibitions. Painting Simone in particular, the last remaining greater bamboo lemur (*Prolemur simus*) in the park, was a reminder of my perpetual conservation work. My role is not just to share her beauty, but to try to bring awareness to her, the fragility of her home, and the challenges it faces.

I'm involved with the VOI Mitsinjo, a local community organization that manages part of the

Ranomafana rainforest. Together, we secured a grant that will pay for their new welcome booth, the trail system, and several rest areas.

Thanks to the fellowship and some of the proceeds from my gallery, we were able to build a 15-meter reinforced concrete footbridge that connects the forest of Ambatolahidimy and the twin waterfalls of Andriegna. This was also made possible with the help of some of the organization's members in providing the necessary manpower. The bridge will make VOI Mitsinjo's forest more accessible for tourists and the local community. I see this as a way to help pay forward the empowerment and freedom the Safina Center fellowship has given me, and offer a hopeful vision of what lies ahead.

I am sincerely grateful for what this fellowship has allowed me to accomplish in the past three years. I look forward to building on this momentum as I continue expanding my reach and impact through my creative work."

# FELLOW SPOTLIGHT



## DANI KHAN DA SILVA

is an award-winning documentary photographer, director, and leader who collaborates with brands and organizations such as National Geographic, Patagonia, and Nia Tero. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Photographers Without Borders, a non-profit organization that supports grassroots community initiatives with storytelling media. She is also the co-Founder of the Sumatran Wildlife Sanctuary.

"I can't thank the Safina Center enough for making my work possible over the past three years. With their support I have been enabled to: write my first book on the changing face of conservation, which features numerous voices who are revolutionizing the field; make inroads in pre-production on a documentary in Polynesia on the topic of interspecies communication with a Polynesian knowledge keeper; make stories about orcas and the Coast Salish people who protect them—stories that have graced the front page news headlines across Canada, and across North American platforms such as Patagonia and National Geographic with millions of readers; and complete a short documentary in Sumatra, Indonesia about the Indigenous women who are reclaiming their teachings and applying them to conservation to protect their critically endangered tiger relatives. Science is about keeping the sparks of curiosity alive, and it is important to nourish the many sparks around the world who dare to be curious. I am so incredibly grateful to the Safina Center for helping me feel seen, for nurturing my ideas, and for making space for someone like me to thrive in this world."



Photos: Safina Center Fellow Dani Khan Da Silva filming the documentary *Nuraga Bhumi*, which follows an all-Indigenous female ranger team as they take measures to protect the critically endangered Sumatran tiger.

©Dani Khan Da Silva



Alain Rasolo

Public Works

Finished the construction of oloNala Gallery and Shop at Ranomafana National Park, Madagascar

Designed and helped build tourism-focused development projects in local rainforests

Designed a photo op for the Madagascar National Parks service in Ranomafana

Art

Drafted a design for a mural at the Ranomafana Nature Centre

Painted a portrait of the last remaining greater bamboo lemur in Ranomafana’s rainforest



Alain Rasolo posing at the finished oloNala Gallery and Shop at Ranomafana National Park, Madagascar. Here, Rasolo and other local artists will display and sell their work, create art, and hold educational classes about art and wildlife. ©Alain Rasolo

Alex Chege

Research

Received doctoral candidacy through the Department of Ecology and Evolution at Stony Brook University

Spent the Summer researching coastal primate diets in Lamu Archipelago, Kenya

Belén Garcia Ovide

Conservation & Research

Completed multiple citizen science expeditions to Iceland’s designated Hope Spot

Conducted eDNA surveillance with the eWHALE project

Provided sighting and eDNA data on Northern bottlenose whales to HYPMO Project

**Outreach & Activism**

Organized an environmental conservation conference in Iceland with the Skjálfandi Marine Protection Group, featuring the country’s president

Filmed a citizen science expedition to Svalbard for an upcoming documentary

Produced infographics educating the public on Marine Protected Area Day

Katlyn Taylor

Writing & Podcasting

Continues to host the WhaleNerds podcast

Published *Wild Monterey Bay* with Jodi Frediani

Jasmin Graham

Books & Writing

Wrote and released *Sharks Don’t Sink: Adventures of a Rogue Shark Scientist*

“How Japanese-American Scientist Eugenie Clark Spearheaded the Study of Sharks” — Literary Hub

Research

Launched the ICONIC Oceans Program with Minorities in Shark Sciences

Completed multiple shark surveys in Sarasota Bay.

Interviews

“How A Shark Scientist Forged Her Own Path” — Science Fridays Podcast

“The surprising thing sharks can teach us about life” — The Washington Post

“Marine biologist Jasmin Graham explores the secret world of sharks” — NPR’s On Point

“Actor Anthony Mackie and marine biologist Jasmin Graham talk sharks” — Popular Science

“Jasmin Graham on breaking barriers in marine science” — CBS Mornings

Marlowe Starling

Writing

“How do cats land on their feet?” — Live Science

“Why do we lose so much hair?” — Live Science

“Caribbean startups are turning excess seaweed into an agroecology solution” — Mongabay

“Florida growers eye agroecology solution to devastating citrus disease” — Mongabay

“Do animals really have instincts?” — Live Science

“Are kale, broccoli and Brussels sprouts really all the same plant?” — Live Science

“Why don’t humans have gills?” — Live Science



Marlowe Starling (right) chats with Riley Secor, a doctorate student in marine science at University of Rhode Island, about the disappearance of winter flounder from Narragansett Bay. ©Gretchen Ertl / Metcalf Institute

“A Tiny Gecko with a Big Personality and Even Bigger Problem” — Hakai Magazine

“Consider the Condor” — Desert Magazine

“What Would It Take to Bring Renewable, Reliable Power to Puerto Rico?” — Sierra

“How removing a dam could save North Carolina’s ‘lasagna lizard’” — National Geographic

“Inside Florida’s Ban on Lab-Grown Meat” — Sentient

“Unsilencing the Desert” — Yes Magazine

“Pining for the Rocklands” — The Marjorie

Hob Osterlund

Conservation

Continued managing Laysan albatross (mōlī) nesting grounds on private land

Outreach & Activism

Organized and funded the creation of a mōlī mural

Wrote four public service announcements for community radio KCCR and KONG radio

Created signs with educational material on Laysan albatross for private land

Speaking

Featured speaker at the Kaua’i Visitor Industry’s first-ever Wildlife Summit.

Princeville Mo’olelo presentation on conservation



Draft sketch of a mōlī mural at Kukui Grove Shopping Center in Lihu’e, by Patrick Ching. The wingspan of the mōlī in flight will be life-sized to encourage people to compare their own wingspans and to take selfies.

Dani Khan Da Silva

Film

Completed *Nuragha Bumi* short film documentary with National Geographic

Filmed *Path to Ta’aroa* documentary with National Geographic

Filmed *Kayah and the Orcas* 4-episode documentary series with National Geographic

Books

Interviewed several sources and created first draft of her book *Rematriation: Indigenized Conservation Towards Co-Liberation*

Erik Callender

Television & Magazines

Edited and released season 2 of the PBS children’s television series *Menghayati!*

Began filming season 3 of *Menghayati!* in the Northeast U.S.

Launched the first issues of *Menghayati! Magazine*

Outreach

Spoke at the “Immerse in Change” environmental conference in San Jose, Costa

Paul Greenberg

Writing

“Saving a Sea Monkey Sanctuary” — Hakai Magazine

“The Brothers Who Set the New York Restaurant Scene Afloat” — Eater

“Feel the Earth on Earth Day” — Medium, with Bill McKibben

“The Haus on the Hill” — Adirondack Life

“Can a Scientist and an Owl Be Friends?” — Audubon

“Elevating the Art of Italian Ingredients” — Departures Magazine

Teaching

New York University course: “The People vs. The Sea” graduate seminar, spring 2024

New York University graduate thesis advisee on four Animal Studies theses

Speaking

Four Fish lecture with Friends of Boca Grande, Florida

Priya Parrotta

Art & Music

Composed music for her upcoming album, *Atlas*

Created the hour long audio/visual “Music & the Earth: An Immersive Experience,” and debuted at the World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations

Education

Designed a course for the University of Puerto Rico based on her doctoral research about the tourism industryand Waikiki Beach

Kike Calvo

Books

Published *Water Girl: The Girl Who Saved the Planet*

Published *A Book of Animals: A Giggle of Groups*

Published *The Magical Musical Journey*

Activism and Education

Tour guide for Colombia Photo Expeditions

Donated thousands of bilingual children’s books to remote communities in South America.

Melissa Roshko Randall

Writing

Produced two stories for Paul Greenberg’s blog about community gardens and sustainable urban agriculture

Produced two stories about agriculture and gardening in London



# HIGHLIGHT

## Like Many a Hero, Flaco the Owl Made His Choice

by Carl Safina

This article originally appeared in the New York Times on February 26, 2024.

**F**laco the owl is gone, but his life had all the elements of a classic hero's story, not soon forgotten.

Born in captivity, he lived a dozen years in a comfortable cage in the Central Park Zoo where little happened and less was needed. His was a safe existence. But it was also a life without agency. Then, a little over a year ago, someone released him.

On Friday, when he died of acute traumatic injury, perhaps from a collision with a Manhattan apartment building's glass windows, his death offered us a chance to reckon with the question at the heart of many a hero's journey: Can we put a price on freedom? Flaco's liberation from his comfortable confinement came at a cost—he spent the final year of his life free, but threatened from all sides by a booming city. Was it worth it?

Almost from the moment he was released, Flaco became a symbol of hope for many of the people who followed his story and recognized parts of themselves in him. Some saw him as the embodiment of the American dream, an outsider who had come to Manhattan and made a life for himself here, like millions of others who arrived penniless and unconnected in their quest for freedom. Others saw him as a poignant reminder that you can find happiness even if you're alone (as the only free-living Eurasian eagle-owl in the Western Hemisphere, he had no chance of ever finding a wild mate).

As a result, as he flew around the city, landing on rooftops and crosswalks from the East Village to the Upper West Side, we were terrified that he'd succumb to the dangers of city life. Flaco had no experience living outside a cage, and New Yorkers initially

doubted his chances of survival. We worried that he'd eat a rat with enough poison in its system to kill him. (After Barry, the wild barred owl, was killed by a maintenance truck in 2021, a necropsy showed that she had ingested so much rodenticide that it might have compromised her agility). And we worried about his chances with oncoming traffic.

On Christmas Day, The Wall Street Journal even issued a stern command: "Capture Flaco." "If he remains free," one of the paper's editors wrote, "rat poison or something worse will kill him."

But Flaco never looked back. Though the animal literature is peppered with stories of animals—usually pets—who suffer hardships and return home, Flaco never retreated to the zoo. Perhaps freedom itself was the home he'd discovered.

And though we feared for him, his new life thrilled us.

How many of us, our circumstances familiar and safe, are too timid to seek our more fully realized selves? How many of us, viewing our confinements as nothing out of the ordinary, have long stopped wondering what our wings are for? In one of his most surreally profound moments, Flaco turned the tables on all of us—photographed staring into the playwright Nan Knighton's apartment through a window grate, as if declaring his human viewers the captives, behind bars we built for ourselves.

Have we not all yearned for a life beyond the scope of the one we lead? Flaco showed that our yearning is not misplaced, that we were not merely projecting. His choice reaffirmed a truth: that given a chance, living things choose agency and freedom of movement.

In my own turns as a wildlife rehabilitator, falconer and conservation biologist, I have often observed that when the power of choice is returned to them, animals prefer to take their chances in a free-living existence. Just before the Covid-19 pandemic, my wife and I helped rehabilitate a nestling screech owl found near death, whom we named Alfie. Once she was fit to fly, Alfie briefly came and went from the enclosure that had become her secure home, but she soon chose the larger life.

Humans and owls last shared a common ancestor several hundred million years ago, but a preference to rediscover who we were born to be seems to be a truth universally shared. William Butler Yeats wrote in his poem "The Second Coming" of the falcon "turning and turning in the widening gyre," oblivious to the calls of the earthbound falconer. In Homer's "The Iliad," Achilles declines a long and peaceful life for one that is glorious and short. Ridley Scott's film "Blade Runner" tells us that the life that burns twice as bright burns half as long. Even those of us who are not mythic heroes confront the trade-off and make our choices.

In life, Flaco's single year of freedom proved vastly more thrilling and resonant to us than his anonymous years of cage-bound safety, proving

that freedom is worth the cost, even when it comes bundled with danger.

News of Flaco's death came to me in an eerily timed coincidence. Just as I was doing a little maintenance on Alfie the screech owl's nest box, my wife, Patricia, came outside, near tears, to convey the sad news of Flaco's demise and the sadder likely cause. Every year, window collisions kill more than half a billion birds in the United States alone. There are solutions: People can hang sheer drapes in their windows or put stickers invisible to the human eye onto the panes to ward off birds; contractors can install bird-friendly glass. But too many windows remain untreated and lethal, especially those that reflect trees and grass.

Alfie—having survived at least one window collision that I witnessed—is coming up on her sixth birthday this spring. We still see her frequently around our backyard. Of course I worry about hawks and stray cats preying on her and about her flying across roads with zooming cars. But her movements and choices are hers. Using that nest box I was cleaning, Alfie has raised 10 wild owlets with two wild mates. Which shows again, I guess, that the prospects of discovering who one was born to be can still outweigh the perils. And we can pay it forward.



Flaco the owl perched on a water tower above a building in Manhattan in December. ©Paul Beiboer

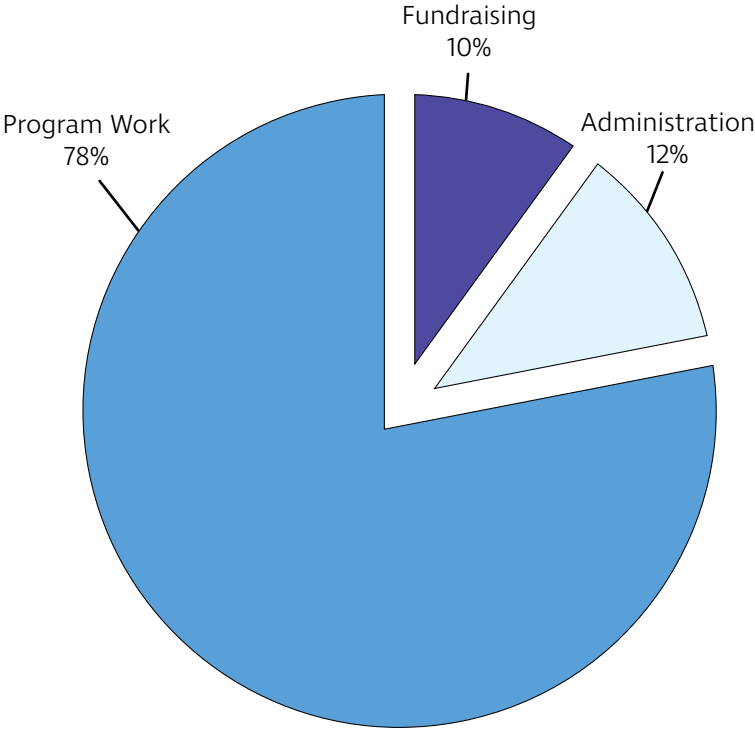


# FINANCIALS

## Statement of Financial Position As of May 31, 2024

<b>Assets</b>	
Current assets:	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$228,613
Investments	1,545,658
Promises to give	150,000
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	5,213
Property and equipment, net	529,108
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$2,458,592</b>
<b>Liabilities and net assets</b>	
Liabilities:	
Accrued expenses	\$29,286
Fiscal sponsorships	108,873
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>138,159</b>
Net assets:	
Without donor restrictions	2,164,183
With donor restrictions	156,250
Total net assets	2,320,433
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$2,458,592</b>

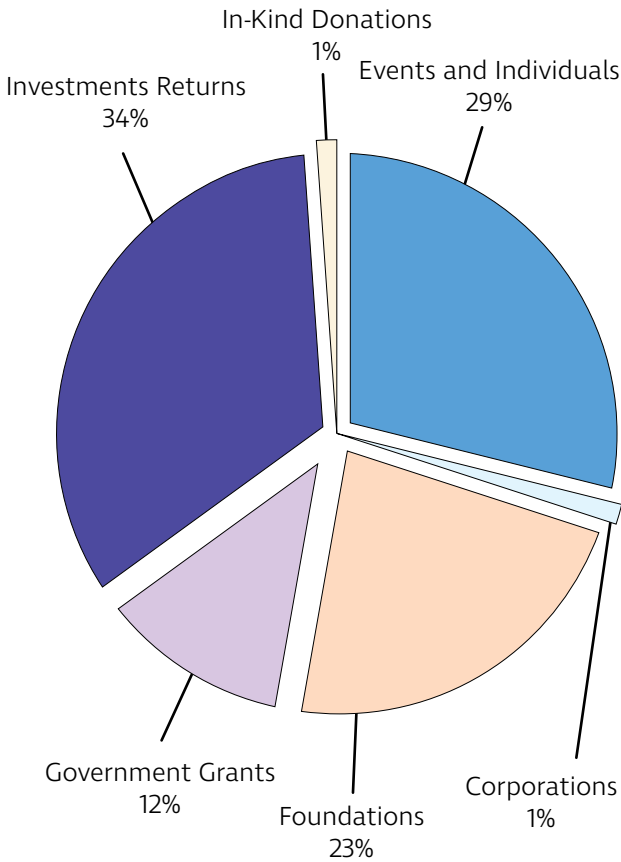
## 2024 Total Expenses



## Statement of Activities Year ended May 31, 2024

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
<b>Public support and revenue</b>			
Contributions	\$238,236	\$139,750	\$377,986
Government grant	125,000	-	125,000
Event Income	174,944	-	174,944
In-kind contributions	19,640	-	19,640
Investment return, net	359,641	-	359,641
Total public support and revenue	917,461	139,750	1,057,211
Net assets released from restrictions	113,500	(113,500)	-
<b>Total public support and revenue including net assets released from restrictions</b>	<b>1,030,961</b>	<b>26,250</b>	<b>1,057,211</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Program work	482,442	-	482,442
Supporting services:			
Administration	71,087	-	71,087
Fundraising	63,728	-	63,728
Total supporting services	134,815	-	134,815
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>617,257</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>617,257</b>
Change in net assets	413,704	26,250	439,954
Net assets - beginning of year	1,750,479	130,000	1,880,479
<b>Net assets - end of year</b>	<b>\$2,164,183</b>	<b>\$156,250</b>	<b>\$2,320,433</b>

## 2024 Operating Revenue



# PRAISE FOR THE SAFINA CENTER

"Jasmin Graham is one of the most influential shark scientists in the world today, and *Sharks Don't Sink* should be on every marine biologist's bookshelf. Her keen scientific mind, sense of humor, and vision for a better world shines through every page."

David Shiffman, book review

"Coincidentally, it was Hob Osterlund's book, *Holy Mōlī*, that led me to Carl Safina's book, *Eye of the Albatross*, and further, to learn more about various albatross species and become motivated to support their conservation, both in Hawaii and in New Zealand."

Roz Young, Website comment.

"Thank you, Carl Safina, for all you do for the sake of wildlife and their habitats."

Joanne Harrison, Website comment,

"I support Alfie, Carl, & the Safina Center... I invite you to read about Alfie in Carl's books and to read his other works. They just might open your heart & make the world a better place!"

Dana Waite Esposito, Instagram comment.

"Thank you, Carl, for your article showing us how much we humans have in common with the animals we love. But even more important is that your article stresses how much animals have to teach us about how we, too, can fly more freely than we think -- despite the risks we (and they) are willing to take that justify the journey. Thanks so much!"

Anonymous comment

"I'd like to think that [Carl Safina], as the only real planetary writer, did get a response from an animal that must have recognized that she truly existed for you as a fellow being... I have been in awe of [Carl's] books."

Nuri Pierce, Bird Book Club

"I was so happy to speak with [Carl] again because our first conversation was so foundational to a lot of my thinking in the years that Planet Critical has been developing."

Rachel Donald, host of the Planet: Critical Podcast

Laysan albatross flying over a beach at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge.  
©Hob Osterlund



# DONOR SPOTLIGHT

## Q&A with Peter Warny, founder of the Peter H. Warny Conservation Fund



Peter Warny holding a rat snake in Florida while surveying potential conservation properties, 2024. ©Shane Aud

### Q: What can you tell us about the Peter Warny Conservation Fund?

A: The Peter H. Warny Conservation Fund is a private memorial fund that sponsors and supports ecological conservation of land and habitats in Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, New York and Rhode Island as well as in Madagascar and Costa Rica. Primarily a “working Foundation,” we also help with goods and services to accomplish specific tasks of restoring and managing wetlands and other habitats.

Since 2013, focus has also been on sponsoring books and educational videos about ecological projects for all ages.

### Q: What moved you to support the Safina Center?

A: Several decades ago, while fishing with Carl, I heard of his extraordinary vision and plan to work with fellow scientists and ecologists to globally help fish, plants and all wildlife forms as well as promote studies of culture, art and music. Carl has steered his vision into what has become The Safina Center.

We are still friends and I feel lucky and proud to be a small part of helping to accomplish those goals Carl set forth many long years ago.

### Q: What inspired you to become a philanthropist?

I am 72 years old and I know I want to help “good people doing good things in good places.” That is how I would describe the Safina Center, a model for all my eco-travels to conservation projects in swamps, forests, prairies and deserts.

### Q: What are some things we can do as individuals to help take care of our wildlands?

A: Individuals become inspired by examples of accomplishments they can see. As nature diminishes and humanity increases the challenge is for both to coexist. This is not an easy task but I feel it can be done by individuals and groups focused on a vision such as the goals of the Safina Center and others around this planet.

### Q: You’ve had a long history with one of our fellows, Erik Callender. Can you describe how you two met?

A: I first met Erik Callender when he was around 10 or 11 years old. His mother would bring him to meetings of the Long Island Herpetological Society when I was presenting talks about the field ecology of reptiles and amphibians. Even at that young age Erik knew that he wanted his life to involve nature and zoology.

I hope Erik’s journey continues with help from The Safina Center and my encouragement and friendship.



# HELP US DO WHAT WE DO

In 2011, we established an endowment fund to honor the memory of our dear friend and board member, Dr. Eric Gilchrist, as well as astronaut Kalpana Chawla, who took Carl Safina’s first book into space with her aboard the ill-fated Columbia shuttle. Their steady support for The Safina Center has continued beyond their passing through bequests that now serve as the seed for our endowment.

Their generosity continues to inspire us.

### Paul and Patricia Kuehner Family Foundation Endowment in honor of Albert Cardone:

Patricia Kuehner’s father, Albert A. Cardone, had a lifelong passion for the marine environment. In fact, he is the one who first put a Carl Safina book in her hands and introduced her to the great work you all are doing. He sadly passed away a couple of weeks ago, and his family has suggested sending donations to the Safina Center in his memory.

## FOUR WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

### Online:

Visit: <http://safinacenter.org/donate>

### Telephone

Call: +1-(631)-675-1984

### Mail:

Please send your tax-deductible donation to:

The Safina Center  
80 North Country Road  
Setauket, NY 11733

Please make your check payable to:  
“The Safina Center”

### To the Safina Center Endowment Fund:

Please contact Mayra Mariño, business manager:

by phone: +1-(631)-675-1984

or via email: [mmarino@safinacenter.org](mailto:mmarino@safinacenter.org)



King penguin colony at Salisbury Plain, South Georgia. ©Katlyn Taylor



# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

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# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends of the Safina Center, Each year, we reflect and celebrate the vibrant community we have built at the Safina Center. I want to take a moment to highlight the remarkable work of this organization and fellowship program that has become such a critical element of our effectiveness. Our fellows embody the spirit of inquiry and dedication that drives our mission to create a more just and compassionate society. The Safina Center fellowship program is designed to cultivate the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and changemakers. Through rigorous study, mentorship, and hands-on experience, our fellows engage deeply and illuminate pressing issues, contributing their insights and skills to our collective efforts. They are on the front lines “making the case for life on earth,” sharing their work to inspire the rest of us. Their commitment to fostering dialogue, understanding, and action is truly inspiring. I am immensely proud of our fellows’ dedication and passion in their respective fields. They embody the values of the Safina Center, and their contributions are invaluable to our mission. As we look to the

future, I am excited to see how their journeys will unfold and how they will continue to influence positive change in the world. I invite all of you to engage with our fellows, attend their presentations, and support their initiatives. Together, we can amplify their voices and extend the impact of their work.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the Safina Center. Together, we are building a community that fosters learning, growth, and transformation.

All the best,  
**B. Eric Graham**



## WELCOMING OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



### Robert Reuter:

I was introduced to Carl Safina’s inspired writing some twenty years ago with the gift, from a friend, of “Song for The Blue Ocean” and coincidentally a standing room only lecture at Stony Brook University. It was good news for our community when Carl and Patricia Paladines settled in the Setauket Historic District. Our paths crossed frequently as Carl and Patricia engaged with local

environmental causes, and with the local jazz music scene! My own appreciation and understanding of the natural world grew along with Carl’s expanding catalog of writings and the incredible work of Safina Center Fellows and Creative Affiliates. The messages of appreciation, urgency and hope resonate. I was privileged to help the Center acquire an historic building for their headquarters. Carl and Mayra (the Great) Marino could have just gotten office space but chose to be embedded in an historic neighborhood in a most meaningful way. As a designer with a background in architecture and product design, I hope to encourage the Safina Center’s attention to the relationship of the natural world and the built environment.



### Daniela Kronemeyer:

Over the past few years I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Carl and past Safina Center Fellows through a series of various environmental programming initiatives curated for both the Southampton Arts Center and the Peter Matthiessen Center. It has been a joy to help bring the work of the Safina Center to a wider audience. In this spirit, there has been a wonderful harmony

between the work I do to bring important environmental awareness initiatives and that being done by Carl and his impressive team.

In many ways the goal “to inspire and engage people to devote their time and energies to conservation of wild things and wild places” has greatly helped shape the work that I do with nonprofits dedicated to environmental conservation, Indigenous traditions & rights, and spiritual practice.

I am honored to be a new member of the Safina Center’s impressive board and I deeply look forward to sharing my skills to encourage a more conscious way of connecting with the natural world.

# COMING HOME

Since 2015, The Safina Center has been the proud owner of the historic Alexander Hawkins House—constructed in 1730—now our headquarters, an integral part of the Safina Center family in a historic district of Long Island 50 miles east of Manhattan.

After our state assemblyman, Steven Englebright, began the process of saving the house by means of a historic preservation grant, Robert Reuter, now our Board Treasurer, provided the pivotal bridge loan that allowed us to buy it while we waited for the historic preservation grant to reimburse us. Under this deal, we agreed that if we ever vacate, we will gift it to another not-for-profit—a win for us and potentially for some future organization. As you can imagine, a three-century-old building is “This Old House” on steroids. Within the last year the house needed extensive restoration to prevent structural failure. Another historic preservation grant allowed us to hire a team of historical restoration experts. After a full year of major work, we once again have a home to return to after our voyages.



The Alexander Hawkins House, as featured in a 1933 survey. Image taken from the Library of Congress.



The Alexander Hawkins House in 2015.



Dislocated foundation stones, which caused part of the house to sink and created a shelf that trapped water inside.



The Alexander Hawkins House with new siding and finished renovations.  
©Zachary N. Studenroth



From left to right: Mayra Mariño, Cady, Jude, Carl Safina, and Chula outside of the newly-renovated Safina Center office.

## CREDITS

### Staff:

Dr. Carl Safina — President  
Mayra N. Mariño — Business Manager  
Louis Pagillo — Outreach & Fellows Program Manager

### 2024 Annual Report:

Louis Pagillo — Designer, Producer, and Writer  
Mayra N. Mariño — Editor  
Carl Safina — Editor and Writer  
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