Wild Animal Initiative

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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Letter from the Board President

Wild Animal Initiative has taken on a vital role in its work to put a spotlight on wild animal welfare as a research subject.

- Christine Perry
As president of the Wild Animal Initiative Board, I’ve been in awe, not only of the growth and change taken on by Wild Animal Initiative this past year, but also of the organization’s thoughtful, cautiously optimistic, and enthusiastic approach.

In 2021, Wild Animal Initiative welcomed many new faces, hiring several key staff members as well as expanding and changing roles for existing staff members. Wild Animal Initiative has taken on a vital role in the work to put a spotlight on wild animal welfare as a research subject. With a new grants program underway, the board looks forward to seeing the beginnings of major change that can grow in this area. Development goals set early on were surpassed, and Wild Animal Initiative was named an Animal Charity Evaluators Top Charity for the second year in a row.

Board members are focused on building the board’s foundational processes, knowledge base, and cultural norms to establish a supportive and collaborative governing body that serves the organization’s needs. It’s an exciting time for Wild Animal Initiative, and on behalf of the board, we look forward to a bright future of meaningful progress for wild animals.

For the animals,

Christine Perry
Wild Animal Initiative Board President
Conversation with Wild Animal Initiative leadership

Founded in 2019, Wild Animal Initiative has spent the last three years honing its mission and selecting strategies with great potential to improve the lives of wild animals.

In 2022, Executive Director Mal Graham stepped into the role of strategy director, and Deputy Director Cameron Meyer Shorb filled the role of executive director.

In this interview, Mal Graham and Cameron Meyer Shorb share their reflections on 2021 and their thoughts on Wild Animal Initiative’s future direction.

How did Wild Animal Initiative bring wild animal welfare into focus in 2021?

MG: I’m excited about the way our informal networking — sending researchers to conferences and having interactions on an individual level — has really paid off in terms of illustrating the non-status quo ways we can think about wild animal welfare. Historically, people tended to think about welfare in terms of minimizing human impact. But now in these conversations, we’re sharing new perspectives and saying things like, “Instead of using fertility control as just an alternative to lethal control, let’s also think about the ways fertility control could improve the animal’s health.” We’re reframing these interventions to show how they can reduce competition and disease, or have other welfare benefits that aren’t typically considered from an ecological standpoint.

CMS: Launching our grants program was another way we brought wild animal welfare into focus last year. It gave us an opportunity not only to spell out exactly what it can look like to advance wild animal welfare science, but also to materially support the researchers exploring that frontier. Offering grants helps us start many more of those conversations Mal was talking about, while also providing a clear path forward for people interested in continuing the dialogue.
What did Wild Animal Initiative accomplish in 2021 that makes you most proud?

MG: I’m proud of so many things we’ve accomplished that it’s hard to narrow down to just one. It’s huge that we secured the first major investment in genuine, wild animal welfare-focused science. I’m also very proud of the work we did to grow our services program. Even if people have funding for research, they might not find a career in wild animal welfare sustainable yet, because you need a community. That’s the problem we’re trying to solve. In 2021, I conducted a working group with postdocs who wanted to work on wild animal welfare but weren’t sure how to make that happen. Our services program is taking steps to address those gaps.

How does wild animal welfare research differ from related research fields?

CMS: In this time of global change, there’s widespread consensus that animals are in dire need of human help, but much of the research to date has ignored wild animals’ experiences. The questions that conservation biology has tried to answer have focused on species and ecosystem preservation — which isn’t the same as asking how animals can live good lives free of disease, starvation, and other challenges. That’s an obvious need and a big gap in knowledge, and that’s the gap Wild Animal Initiative is trying to fill.

MG: Wild animal welfare is a discipline that centers on the experience of the animal. I definitely want to acknowledge that there are individual scientists and projects asking questions about the experiences of animals in other fields, but wild animal welfare combines certain research questions in a unique way. Which animals have experiences that are morally relevant? What are their lives like in the wild? What can we do to help them in a responsible way? We focus on the animal as the reason for the question. It’s distinct from studying animals to preserve biodiversity or to maintain an ecosystem service for human benefit.

It’s also different from an intellectual perspective. We’re studying something that’s not directly for human benefit, and in doing so, we’re opening up a large number of uninvestigated intellectual questions. I’m really excited to see where those questions lead.

What are your plans for 2022?

CMS: I think 2022 will be defined by a new emphasis on giving back to the research community. We’ve never tried to hide the fact that we want to see a paradigm shift in science: We think addressing the needs of wild animals is important, neglected, and urgent. So, when we were just starting out, we often found ourselves asking researchers for support. Now we can offer support to them. In part, that’s because our donors have invested more and more in our programs, allowing us to hire more experts and design new services. It’s also because we’ve met more and more scientists who have been wanting to help wild animals all along.

Giving back will take lots of different forms. In 2022, that’s going to include publicizing the work of our first grantees; offering more grants on a broader range of topics; building out our online research community; mapping paths into wild animal welfare research from different areas of expertise; planning events; and more!
Bringing wild animal welfare into focus

What is welfare?

By welfare, we mean the quality of an animal’s life from that animal’s point of view. Welfare requires sentience: the ability to subjectively experience things like pleasure or pain. Welfare itself is a mental property, but it is influenced by physical factors such as nutrition, environment, health, and the ability to express desired behaviors. Only individuals experience welfare directly, but welfare can be analyzed at the population or community level by totaling the welfare of all the individuals within the system.
Who we are

Wild Animal Initiative seeks to understand and improve the lives of wild animals. We believe humans have a responsibility to help wild animals whenever we can. But to know what kinds of help are most effective, we need a richer understanding of wild animals’ lives. We support research on wild animal welfare, putting a spotlight on the positive and negative experiences that wild animals face in their daily lives.

What we believe

We envision a world in which people take responsibility for improving wild animals’ lives and have the knowledge they need to do so effectively. The transdisciplinary perspective of wild animal welfare draws upon ethics, ecology, animal welfare, and other scientific fields to gather the knowledge we need, facilitating evidence-based improvements to wild animals’ quality of life.

What we do

Wild Animal Initiative supports the growth of a scientific field dedicated to understanding and improving the lives of wild animals. Significantly improving the lives of wild animals at scale will require evidence-based interventions, policy changes to enable them, and widespread public support for those policies. The diversity of animal species and the complexity of ecosystem interactions requires a wider range of researchers than any one organization could support. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a scientific field dedicated to wild animal welfare. Supporting the growth of that community of scientists and practitioners is the fastest way to make progress on responsibly improving the lives of wild animals. It is also the most reliable way to ensure that progress continues into the future.

Why it matters

Through this work, we hope to decrease suffering and increase positive experiences for wild animals of all kinds. We want to prevent suffering whenever possible, no matter who is experiencing it. We’re particularly interested in wild animals because life in the wild can be so challenging. We share this planet with at least tens of trillions of wild animals. If we can make changes that help even a fraction of them, we will have improved the lives of a huge number of individuals.
In 2021, Wild Animal Initiative set the stage for action, making tangible progress on the high-impact objectives we selected in our earliest days. We received funding requests from hundreds of wild animal welfare researchers, raised millions of dollars for research grants, and published research in an academic journal.

In April, news website *Vox* wrote the most in-depth article to date about Wild Animal Initiative, interviewing then Executive Director Mal Graham and outlining the basic principles of wild animal welfare. We appreciated the opportunity to spread our message to a wider audience and help others gain more understanding for the work we do.

Wild Animal Initiative partially funded research on a viral *epidemic* in frigatebird chicks off the coast of French Guiana. In addition to providing funding, we helped organize a crowdfunding effort. The project was fully funded by June.

As a nonprofit organization, Wild Animal Initiative is supported entirely by the generosity of people dedicated to improving the world. In June, we received a *$3.5 million grant* from Open Philanthropy, a research and grantmaking foundation. This grant represents a significant portion of our budget, and because it’s earmarked for wild animal welfare research, we started making plans to find researchers with projects we could fund.
We established the Wild Animal Initiative Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee in 2021. With this committee, we aim to create a work environment that cultivates equity, diversity, and belonging; model a norm of counteracting systemic inequity and exclusion in the scientific community we are building; and foster transparency and accountability in how we deal with injustices both within the organization and the spaces in which we operate. In 2021, the committee reviewed our salary algorithm, hiring practices, and grantmaking for opportunities to minimize bias. The committee includes both employees and board members.

Wild Animal Initiative’s first call for proposals went live in August, with the theme of welfare for juvenile wild animals. We had no idea how many expressions of interest we would receive, but we were stunned and elated to hear from 297 teams in search of funding for their research projects. We set to work reading each response and narrowed the projects down to a shortlist of projects that best matched our research priorities. Final selections were made in early 2022.

For the second year in a row, Animal Charity Evaluators (ACE) named Wild Animal Initiative as one of their top charities, the highest ranking they give to nonprofits. ACE awards this honor to animal advocacy organizations that are “working effectively and are able to do the most good with additional donations.” In its 2021 writeup, ACE commended our responsible and thorough approach to wild animal welfare, highlighting the strength of our programs.

Ending the year on a high note, Grants Manager Luke Hecht’s published paper, “The importance of considering age when quantifying wild animals’ welfare,” appeared in the December issue of the journal Biological Reviews. The paper explores how welfare varies based on an individual animal’s age, and states that “in order to understand better and improve the state of wild animal welfare, more attention should be directed towards young animals and the particular challenges they face.”
Grants program

Wild Animal Initiative’s Grants Program supports research that helps understand and improve the lives of wild animals. By providing financial support to researchers, the program aims to increase knowledge and grow the field of wild animal welfare science.

Black-tailed prairie dogs (Cynomys ludovicianus) live in groups called towns made up of family units. As males reach sexual maturity, they typically leave their family group to seek more distantly related mates. Prior research suggests this is a perilous time of life, with higher death rates among dispersing males. As human activity transforms prairies into urban and agricultural land, this shift may increase average dispersal distances for black-tailed prairie dogs and make their journeys even riskier. By collecting data on yearling black-tailed prairie dogs, researchers could assess the welfare of dispersing and non-dispersing individuals, gaining a better understanding of the circumstances that lead to improved or worsened welfare.

This fictional study, written by Wild Animal Initiative, provides an example of the kind of research we want to fund. We used this narrative when conducting our first formal search for projects in 2021, implementing a funding strategy that will move us closer to understanding how to improve the lives of wild animals on a large scale and bring wild animal welfare more closely into focus.

Choosing a theme

By funding rigorous, ethical, impactful, and practical scientific research, Wild Animal Initiative seeks to develop a critical mass of promising and reputable researchers studying wild animal welfare to enable new growth for the field. By funding research performed by a diverse cohort of academic and scientific organizations, we also want to increase the number and variety of institutions that practice wild animal welfare science.
As we considered themes for our first call for proposals, juvenile animal welfare emerged as a top priority. While only some individual animals survive to experience adulthood, all animals who are born experience life as a juvenile member of their species. We already prioritize work on the most numerous wild animals, such as rodents, fish, and invertebrates. With some species producing so many young, the same logic led us to prioritize research into the early lives of wild animals.

In July, we opened our call for proposals, soliciting research on the welfare, ecology, and everyday experiences of juvenile wild animals. We advertised our call for proposals far and wide, utilizing social media, university mailing lists, our newsletter emails, and networking to spread the word.

At the end of August, the submission window closed, and we had nearly 300 expressions of interest to review. We were pleased to see the volume of interest from the scientific community, demonstrating an interest in studying wild animal welfare and pursuing our grants.

Narrowing the choices

Over the course of several weeks, team members read hundreds of expressions of interest, always keeping the call’s selection criteria at the front of their minds. In addition to focusing on juvenile wild animals, the projects had to address two key questions: “What are the subjective experiences of wild animals like?” and “What strategies can we use to improve the welfare of wild animals responsibly?”

The team looked for projects with high potential to motivate more wild animal welfare research, and they short-listed projects unlikely to attract funding from elsewhere. Highly valuable projects included those that focused on highly numerous species or that would inform our understanding of multiple kinds of animals instead of a single species.

Wild Animal Initiative selected 50 projects to move forward, and each team set to work completing and submitting their full proposals.

“Because we received so many high-quality submissions, it was really tough selecting just 50 expressions of interest to advance to the full proposal stage,” says Science Director Vittoria Elliott.

Final selections

Proposals came rolling in, with the window for submission closing in December. With so many great proposals, our research team faced the immense challenge of choosing which projects to fund.

“We learned so much from this first call,” Elliott says. “We received applications from a diverse group of applicants, which is super exciting. I’m optimistic that we will continue to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds and fields in our future calls.”

This work carried into 2022, but to avoid leaving the story on a cliffhanger, please visit our website for updates!

Humans have a responsibility to improve our treatment of wild animals, which requires improving our understanding of their welfare. This is particularly important for large populations of small animals such as insects, who are both very important and very neglected. By funding this research, Wild Animal Initiative is playing an essential role in scientific progress and, as a result, moral, legal, and political progress.

—Jeff Sebo, Director of the Mind, Ethics, and Policy Program, New York University
Wild Animal Initiative’s Services Program helps build the field of wild animal welfare science by providing resources to researchers. The program’s services include training, networking, external funding, early-career development support, and advising for promising and prominent scientists.

Magnificent frigatebirds (Fregata magnificens) tend to be involved parents. Mother and father frigatebirds bring food to their chicks for months, and they guard their nest fastidiously against other colony members. After fledging, young magnificent frigatebirds continue to be fed by their mother for several more months.

Recently, a novel virus took hold in a magnificent frigatebird colony at the Grand Connétable Nature Reserve, a small island in French Guiana. Up to 90 percent of infected chicks die, a concerning statistic for wild animal welfare. When Wild Animal Initiative learned of a proposed project to investigate the frigatebird epidemic, we saw an opportunity to make a difference and bring wild animal welfare into focus by offering our services to the project’s principal investigator, Manrico Sebastiano.

Wild Animal Initiative worked with Sebastiano to set up a crowdfunding campaign. With financial support from Wild Animal Initiative and individual backers, the campaign reached its funding goal of $5,900 in June 2021. By having the second highest number of individual donors in the competition, the project unlocked an additional $750 in challenge grant funding.

“I’m really excited about all the things this project can teach us about how to improve the well-being of animals in the wild,” says Executive Director Cameron Meyer Shorb.
Epidemic investigation

Sebastiano’s project explores the connections between frigatebird chick mortality, the novel virus, and mercury contamination. His research team hypothesized that adult birds with higher mercury loads provide less parental care and abandon chicks earlier, making chicks more susceptible to the disease.

“Chemical contaminants like mercury can interfere with the function of the hormone prolactin, which regulates parental care behavior in birds,” Sebastiano writes on his crowdfunding page.

In French Guiana, mining activities are causing a dramatic increase in mercury contamination. By equipping adult male and female frigatebirds with GPS tags over several months, Sebastiano and his team plan to monitor their behaviors, with particular interest in their blood mercury levels.

“This project will represent a fundamental contribution to our understanding of how environmental change can trigger infectious disease outbreaks in wild animal populations,” he writes.

Welfare implications

Because this case combines several common threats to wild animal welfare, understanding the dynamics at play could advance efforts to help animals worldwide.

Like the frigatebirds of Grand Connétable, wild animals everywhere can suffer from disease. Even when diseases don’t result in death, they can cause prolonged or intense suffering. Every disease is different, but by focusing on the environmental factors that contribute to poor health, Sebastiano’s study is well-positioned to produce results with applications beyond this specific case.

Because most wild animals die young, understanding juvenile mortality will help us better understand wild animal welfare. Despite the fact that so many wild animals die as juveniles, the earliest stages of life are often the least-studied.

The case study at Grand Connétable shows promise for helping to fill that gap. Its confluence of ordinary threats — parental neglect, malnourishment, and infection — are relevant to the welfare of many species.

Looking ahead

Sebastiano and his team will report their findings in the coming years. By supporting researchers who study wild animal welfare, we can build a robust network of academics who advance the field.

“It is indeed very exciting to be able to contribute to improve the conservation status and well-being of wild animals,” Sebastiano writes on the project’s crowdfunding page. “Thank you for your support and the support received [from] Wild Animal Initiative!”

As Wild Animal Initiative’s Services Program grows, we plan to expand and diversify the services we offer to scientists, with resources that could include seminars and meetings, research libraries, research community building, and more. We want to do whatever we can to support the careers of people dedicating their time to understanding and improving the lives of wild animals.

“It is indeed very exciting to be able to contribute to improve the conservation status and well-being of wild animals. Thank you for your support and the support received [from] Wild Animal Initiative!”

— Manrico Sebastiano, Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle
Research program

Wild Animal Initiative’s Research Program serves as a model within the research community, providing a clearer picture of the field and establishing a standard for others to follow. The program establishes research priorities, defines the scope of the field, and contributes high-quality scientific output.

American black bear cubs (*Ursus americanus*) spend the first 18 months of their lives with their mother and littermates, growing from 12 ounces at birth to more than 100 pounds as young adults. As black bears transition from helpless cubs to independent adults, the challenges they experience change significantly. Cubs are more vulnerable to predation and malnutrition, and many don’t make it to adulthood.

“In order to understand better and improve the state of wild animal welfare, more attention should be directed towards young animals and the particular challenges they face,” writes Grants Manager Luke Hecht in his 2021 paper, “The importance of considering age when quantifying wild animals’ welfare.” The paper, published in the journal *Biological Reviews*, uses the example of the American black bear, among others, to illustrate how the day-to-day lives of wild animals change based on their age.
age. By publishing papers such as this one, Wild Animal Initiative brings wild animal welfare into focus. This work helps build the scientific literature available to researchers interested in wild animal welfare science, a relatively new scientific discipline.

**Age and welfare**

The positive and negative experiences of animals who die young may look vastly different from those of animals who live to old age, and when considering welfare, it’s important to understand and measure those differences. In his paper, Hecht proposes a framework for quantifying wild animal welfare at a population level, incorporating age into the calculation.

“Most wild animals live for only a small fraction of their potential lifespans,” Hecht writes in his paper. “Therefore, the welfare of healthy adults, who tend to be most visible, cannot be taken as representative. In most cases, interventions to improve wild animal welfare may be of the greatest benefit where they focus on the youngest individuals.”

Hecht’s framework, which accounts for age-specific variation in welfare and survivorship, offers a nuanced way to look at wild animal welfare through the lens of age.

“I expect one contribution of this paper will be drawing attention to the potential importance of age as a determinant of individuals’ welfare,” Hecht says, pointing to juvenile animals as a priority for further study.

**Supporting goals**

Published papers such as this advance Wild Animal Initiative’s goals in three ways: They set priorities for future work in the field, they provide examples of what wild animal welfare science looks like, and they contribute hypotheses and frameworks for understanding the big picture.

Hecht’s paper on juvenile animal welfare informed the theme for Wild Animal Initiative’s first call for proposals. It also helped applicants better understand the topic and guided them as they crafted their expressions of interest.

To a newcomer, it’s challenging to know how wild animal welfare science relates to other fields or what makes it a distinct area of research. By publishing papers, Wild Animal Initiative seeks to create examples of wild animal welfare research, providing clarity to scientists who are interested in the field but unsure how their own work could overlap.

**Looking at the big picture**

Wild Animal Initiative expects this paper will be one of many to come as we aim to better understand the lives of wild animals. The paper has already received two citations, demonstrating how Wild Animal Initiative’s research products support the academic community.

“I’m excited to see this research published,” Hecht says. “It has both influenced my own thinking and supported Wild Animal Initiative’s other work and priorities.”

“By doing rigorous and carefully selected research, Wild Animal Initiative is making a huge difference for wild animals. Their work on wild animal welfare addresses the three key issues at stake in the field: what are the lives of wild animals like, how can their welfare be assessed, and what can be done to improve their situation. Because these topics are both very important and often neglected, the contributions of Wild Animal Initiative’s researchers may prove crucial in terms of both increasing knowledge and raising more interest in them.”

— **Oscar Horta**, Board Member, Animal Ethics
Fundraising summary

People of all walks of life came together to make 2021 our best year yet. New supporters joined the cause, and continued supporters — many of whom have been with us since the beginning — stepped up their support. Read on to learn more about the support Wild Animal Initiative received in 2021.

"We believe that supporting Wild Animal Initiative at this early stage offers serious potential for massive impact," they write in their grant announcement, and we’re glad to have their support as we grow.

Open Philanthropy granted $3,500,000 to Wild Animal Initiative in June. These funds are restricted to go entirely towards our own grants program, which we use to seek out and fund promising research projects on wild animal welfare. By accelerating the growth of our network of collaborators, these funds also multiply the impact of donations to our other programs.

I support Wild Animal Initiative because I view their efforts to incubate and catalyze core research as invaluable to wild animal welfare. Furthermore, the characteristic thoughtfulness of the staff and their work continues to inspire confidence in me as a donor who seeks effective giving opportunities to help animals. I am deeply grateful for their work — thank you, Wild Animal Initiative team!

— Rob McAdam
2021 Donor
Fundraising data

Unrestricted Support

$995,152 Grants
$580,800 Contributions
$1,535,952 Total

Restricted Support

Open Philanthropy
Grantmaking for wild animal welfare research

$3,500,000

Anonymous
Wild animal welfare policy research

$50,000

Top supporters, by amount

Open Philanthropy
Centre for Effective Altruism
Max and Deborah Hayes Stone
Anonymous
Animal Charity Evaluators
Effektiv Spenden
Isaac Rose-Berman
Anonymous
RC Forward
Zach & Lucas Freitas-Groff
Foundation to Decrease World Suck
Anonymous
Daniele Rosman
Dan Hageman and the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation
K & L Fund
Allison Smith and David Chudzicki
AE Studio
Martin Jässing
Christian Clouston & Stien van der Ploeg
Anonymous
Theo Summer
In 2021, Wild Animal Initiative remained a financially healthy organization, and by the end of the year, we had raised much more than we spent. This was partially thanks to the $3.5 million grant restricted specifically for wild animal welfare research grantmaking in 2022 and beyond. With plans to hire critical positions in 2022, we also needed to build up our capacity.

Approximately 68 percent of our costs in 2021 were program expenses — that covers items such as researcher salaries, conference attendance, and publication costs. We also invested in our general administration: 24 percent of our expenses were used to strengthen our operations and organizational stability. Additionally, around 8 percent of our costs were fundraising expenses. We largely stuck to our budget projections throughout the year, and we didn’t overspend.

Due to having a small operations staff, we encountered a potential risk in our finance processes — namely, a lack of proper segregation of duties. We have since hired additional staff and are increasing internal controls to reduce the risk for fraud or mistakes.
### Financial Position on December 31, 2021

#### Current Assets

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<td><strong>Total Current Assets</strong></td>
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#### Total Liabilities and Net Assets

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<td>Other accrued liabilities</td>
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<td><strong>Total Current Liabilities</strong></td>
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#### Net Assets

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<td>With donor restrictions</td>
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#### Total Liabilities and Net Assets

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,088,236</strong></td>
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#### Functional Expenses 2021

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<td>Program expenses</td>
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<td>General and administrative expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$536,981.00</strong></td>
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2021 activities

Winter

- We coordinated with closely aligned organizations to define the ways we could foster the growth of an academic field dedicated to wild animal welfare.
- Our team gathered for a virtual version of our annual strategy retreat, where we refined our vision of Wild Animal Initiative’s long-term objectives.
- The Project 4 Awesome community voted Wild Animal Initiative as one of their top charities.
- An article about Wild Animal Initiative and wild animal welfare in The Highlight by Vox brings wild animal welfare to a broader audience than ever before.
- We submitted a public comment urging the EPA to consider an avian pesticide’s impact on wild animal welfare.

Spring

- We summarized the historical context and welfare implications of the UK’s new gray squirrel contraceptive plan in a research note.
- We adopted a salary algorithm to ensure pay equity and transparency as we grow.
- We backed a research project to study a novel virus killing nine out of every ten magnificent frigatebird chicks born each year on a small island off the coast of French Guiana.
- We also helped set up a crowdfunding campaign for the frigatebird project, raising thousands of dollars for wild animal welfare research.
- Author Emma Marris quoted now Executive Director Cameron Meyer Shorb in her book, Wild Souls: “Deputy Director of the Wild Animal Initiative Cameron Meyer Shorb says that only focusing on the harms that humans have done to other species isn’t enough. Fixing those threats to animals’ welfare makes us feel good about ourselves, but a wild kangaroo doesn’t care if it dies in a fire caused by climate change or a ‘natural’ fire. Both are equally horrific. A life in the wild, Shorb says, is filled with pain and suffering — fear of predators, injuries and illness, coldness and hunger.”
Summer

- We hired Science Director Vittoria Elliott.
- We gave a lightning talk at Animal Aid’s [webinar on the ethics of invasive species management](#).
- We received a $360,000 [grant](#) from the Effective Altruism Animal Welfare Fund.
- We launched a $3 million fund to support novel research in wild animal welfare.
- We issued our first [call for proposals](#), with a focus on the welfare and ecology of juvenile wild animals.
- We hosted a Q&A session about applying for funding from Wild Animal Initiative.
- We hired Communications Manager Cat Kerr and Content Specialist Amy Klarup.
- The postdoc working group discussed more ways Wild Animal Initiative can support researchers interested in wild animal welfare.
- We received 297 expressions of interest in response to our inaugural call for proposals.
- An article in *Frontiers in Marine Science* on the academic debate around fish sentience cited our work on population ecology and wild animal welfare.

Fall

- We invited 50 promising applicants to submit full proposals for their research projects on the welfare and ecology of juvenile wild animals.
- We posted our first Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee Progress Report online.
- For the second year in a row, Animal Charity Evaluators named Wild Animal Initiative a Top Charity, their highest award.
- We published a [paper](#) on age-specific variation in wild animal welfare in the December issue of the journal *Biological Reviews*. The paper introduces the concept of “welfare expectancy” as a way for modeling welfare at the population level.
- We published our plans for upcoming projects in 2022.
We’re excited about work on wild animal welfare because most animals on earth live in the wild, humans impact the lives of wild animals in many ways, and hardly anyone is currently researching their welfare or how we might help them. Other major funders aren’t funding Wild Animal Initiative, which presents a unique opportunity for the Animal Welfare Fund. We think Wild Animal Initiative is a thoughtful and well-run organization that may build a successful research community focused on helping wild animals.

- Effective Altruism Animal Welfare Fund
Our team

**Executive**

Cameron Meyer Shorb  
Executive Director

Mal Graham  
Strategy Director

**Science**

Vittoria Elliott  
Science Director

Simon Eckerström Liedholm  
Researcher

Luke Hecht  
Grants Manager

Hollis Howe  
Researcher Services Coordinator

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Board President

Ignacio Moore  
Director

Josh You  
Board Secretary

Nikolai Gates Vetr  
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Stien van der Ploeg  
Board Treasurer

Emily Hatch  
Director (term ended mid-2021)
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