



CREATURE CONSERVE

Growing Art-Sci Pathways for Wildlife Conservation

IMPACT REPORT 2023-24

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CREATURE CONSERVE

WHY WE EXIST

Wildlife populations are declining around the world because of human impacts. We are all part of this problem, yet too few of us are part of the solution. Now is the time for a more inviting and inclusive approach to wildlife conservation, open to diverse perspectives from the arts, humanities, sciences, traditional ecological knowledge, and beyond.

MISSION

We are growing a creative community that combines art with science to cultivate new pathways for wildlife conservation.

VISION

Everyone works together to make saving species and their habitats more accessible, meaningful, and relevant for all.

PLAN

We bring together artists, designers, writers, scientists, traditional knowledge holders, and other experts in a supportive, welcoming space to learn about threats to wildlife, share empathy for animals, exchange ideas, and find opportunities for growth at the intersection of art, science, and conservation.

STRATEGY

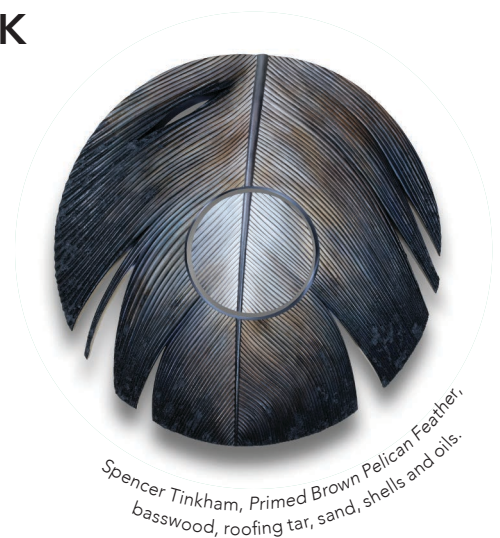
By combining art with science, we make it easier for everyone to explore the human connection to nature and create new pathways to a healthier world for all animals.

GOALS

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

OUR WORK

- Administration
- Media
- Networking
- Programs
 - Curatorial
 - Mentorship
 - Scholarship
 - Workshops



Graphic Design by Peter Green. Top of page: *Creature Conserve Banner* by Franco Zacha.

Cover: Peter Green, *Green Frog*, photograph (left). Angela Baron, *Leopard Frog Pen & Ink with New York State Habitat & Access Stamp*, mixed media of digital pen & ink illustration on cotton rag paper and printed stamp on thermal licensing paper (right).

ANIMALS NEED OUR HELP

Animals are central to our lives. We rely on them for companionship, clothing, food, medicine, sport, and spirituality. We live together in our homes, farms, cities, towns, and wilderness areas. We compete for the same basic needs: air, food, water, shelter, room to move, and each other. After millions of years of shared evolutionary history, our species is now the dominant animal. Sadly, our actions have had dire consequences for most of the other animals on Earth. Few will survive our massive presence unless we intervene. At Creature Conserve, we define wildlife conservation as taking action to live in balance with wild animals and protect the habitats that sustain them and us.

A GLOBAL DILEMMA

Wildlife conservation is a global dilemma. It is a solution to a human problem, one that requires a diverse, multiple, interconnected approach. Even as we consider the specific role an organism plays in its environment, we also consider its role in the larger ecosystem, the human-dominated planet. From this perspective, we view wildlife conservation as essential for a just and peaceful world, one that allows wild animals to co-exist with humans and domestic animals in settings ranging from backyards and city parks to farms and nature reserves.

COMBINING ART WITH SCIENCE

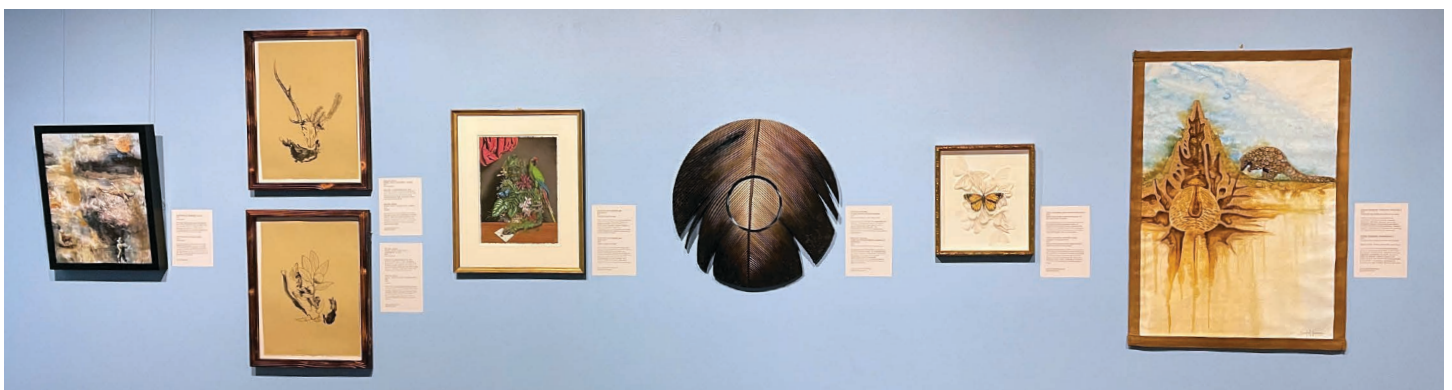
Art taps into our emotions and our subconscious. It reminds us that all life is connected; we are animals, too. It deepens our understanding of this interdependency and helps us explore how we feel about animals and our relationships with them. It creates context (cultural, historical, social, political) and space for our conversations about wildlife conservation. It makes the scientific and traditional knowledge we use to make decisions more accessible, meaningful, and real. It also makes the solutions more actionable. Art is far more likely to inspire a change in our behavior than a string of facts.



Nayana Rathmalgoda, *In Our Hands: Rhino*, "Re-Imagining Conservation: From Many Viewpoints," oil paint (hand embellished museum giclee canvas).

GROWING ART-SCI PATHWAYS FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

We recognize that many creatives, especially those in underserved communities, have limited access to experts with scientific and traditional knowledge, and few if any opportunities to get involved in on-the-ground conservation. Similarly, few experts working to restore species and their habitats have established connections with artists, designers, and writers. Combining art with science makes it easier for everyone to explore the human connection to nature and create new pathways to a healthier world for all animals. Participants in our programs learn from each other, create and innovate together, develop new skills, and use their combined talents to reach a wider audience and improve conservation outcomes.



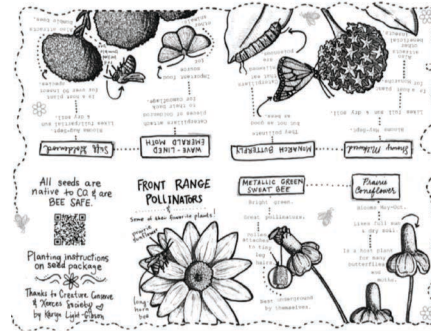
Gallery view of "Re-Imagining Conservation: From Many Viewpoints," National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson, Wyoming.

OUR PROGRAMS

We bring together artists, designers, writers, and scientists in a supportive, welcoming space to learn about threats to wildlife, share empathy for animals, exchange ideas, and find opportunities for growth at the intersection of art, science, and conservation. Our programs include curatorial programs, mentorship, scholarships, and workshops. They take place in person and online. We welcome people at all skill levels, from all backgrounds, and in all countries.



Jenn Houle, Plant Paint
Cross-Pollinate: Monarch.



Karyn Light-Gibson, Front Range
Native Plants and Pollinators Zine.

CURATORIAL PROGRAMS

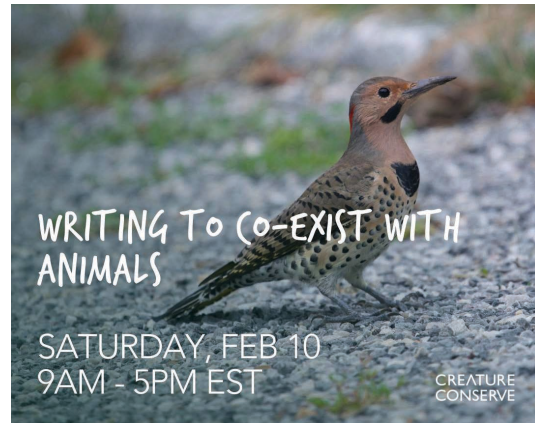
We curate juried exhibits & events for artists and writers who are combining the arts with science to showcase and engage viewers in art-sci conservation projects. We also host Curatorial Fellows and Scholars who are exploring new ways to create exhibitions and public programs.

SCHOLARSHIPS

We provide scholarship stipends for artists, designers, writers, and scientists to support their creative process, including making art informed by science that inspires conservation action. Successful applicants receive feedback and guidance from our program leaders and free access to our online workshops.



Marcos Carpio, The Rain Spirit.



Lucy Spelman, Northern Flicker.

MENTORSHIP

We provide a support system for artists, designers, writers, and scientists as they collaborate and explore the human connection to nature, creating new art-sci pathways to a healthier world for all creatures. We also host Mentorship Fellows who are developing the reach and relevance of our Mentorship community.

WORKSHOPS

We give participants the opportunity to build their leadership skills and practice making conservation science more accessible, meaningful, and relevant. They consist of single or multiple sessions, including presentations, feedback opportunities, and access to supporting materials.

CURATORIAL PROGRAMS

EXHIBITIONS: "RE" SERIES

What if conservation took on new forms?

Arts Curator Heather McMordie produced "Re-Imagining Conservation" in two locations: one in partnership with the Urban Soils Institute in New York at Swale House on Governors Island, subtitled "From the Ground Up," and one in Jackson, Wyoming at the National Museum of Wildlife Art subtitled "From Many Viewpoints."

This East-West pairing of exhibitions featured 56 visual artists, 10 writers, and 2 performers from around the world. Total visitation was 26,000 with over 1,000 visitors at Swale House and 25,000 at the National Museum of Wildlife Art.



DG House, *Together We Dance*, acrylic on cradled birch panel, "From Many Viewpoints."



Pooja Venkatachalam Kumar, *Interactive Aesop's Fables For Children*, digital print on poster board, "From the Ground Up."



Rachel Frank, *Rewilding Offering Hand*, Oysters, fabric, thread, hand-sculpted ceramic oyster shells and hardware, "From the Ground Up."

ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

Eight exhibiting artists from "Re-Imagining Conservation" were awarded artist-in-residence scholarships to spend 1-2 weeks at Swale House. During their time on Governors Island, each artist hosted one or more public programs that included demonstrations, performances, and readings.

NEW: CURATORIAL FELLOWSHIP

Our inaugural Curatorial Fellow, Haley Peters, designed and curated "Art of the Tides" during April 2023 at Sin Bakery in Providence, Rhode Island. The exhibition featured work by five Providence-based artists under 25 and focused on the artists' relationships with Rhode Island waterways.



CURATORIAL PROGRAMS

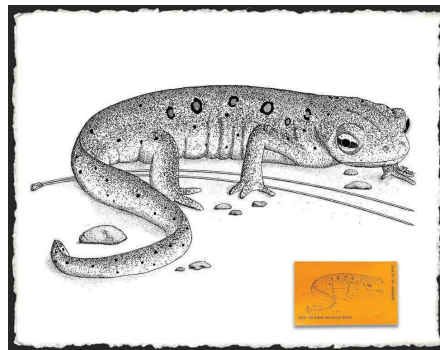
RE-IMAGINING CONSERVATION: FROM THE GROUND UP

What if we imagine human-animal-soil interactions in ways that support healthier lives for all species?

The importance of soil to the future of conservation was the focus of “Re-Imagining Conservation: From The Ground Up” at Swale House on Governors Island, New York. In this exhibition, Heather and her co-curators Margaret Boozer (Co-Director, Art Extension Service, NYC Urban Soils Institute) and Mary Mattingly (Founder, Swale) asked viewers to consider the role healthy soil plays in supporting a healthy ecosystem, which in turn supports healthy animals and healthy people.



Eileen Holland, *Consider the Burying Beetle*, 4-color risograph print.



Angela Baron, *Eastern Newt Pen & Ink with New York State Habitat & Access Stamp*, mixed media of digital pen & ink illustration on cotton rag paper and printed stamp on thermal licensing paper.



Madison Woods, *Destination Unknown*, watercolors from Ozark pigments.

From the Swale House guest book:

- Thank you! Magical reminder that there's more to life than we see!
- Beautiful Exhibition. This was inspired+



Gallery view of “Re-Imagining Conservation: From The Ground Up,” Swale House, Governors Island, New York, New York.

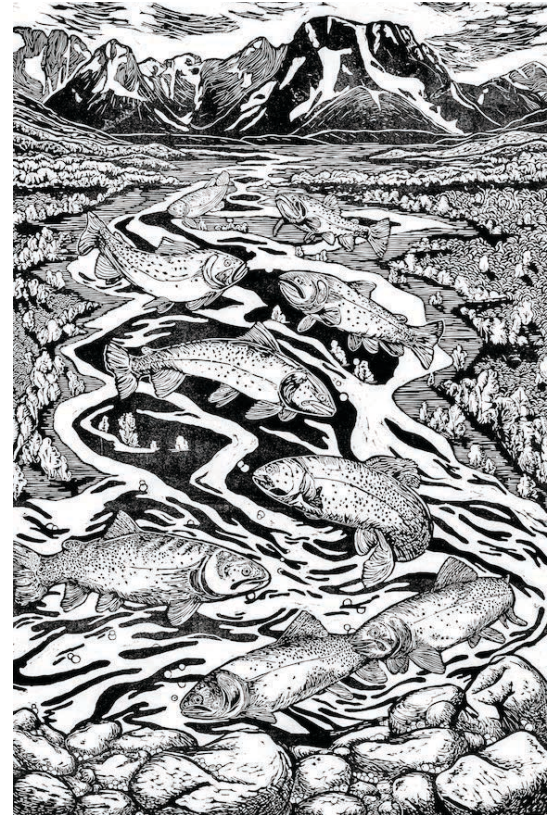
CURATORIAL PROGRAMS

RE-IMAGINING CONSERVATION: FROM MANY VIEWPOINTS

What new futures might we find when we change our point of view?

The future of conservation was the focus of “Re-Imagining Conservation: From Many Viewpoints” at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming. In this exhibition, Heather and her co-curator Julia Spencer (Associate Curator of Education and Outreach, National Museum of Wildlife Art) asked viewers to imagine a future in which conservation action is multidisciplinary, inclusive, and connected.

Heather and Julia also hosted two artist panels, one online and one at the Museum, that addressed the same themes.



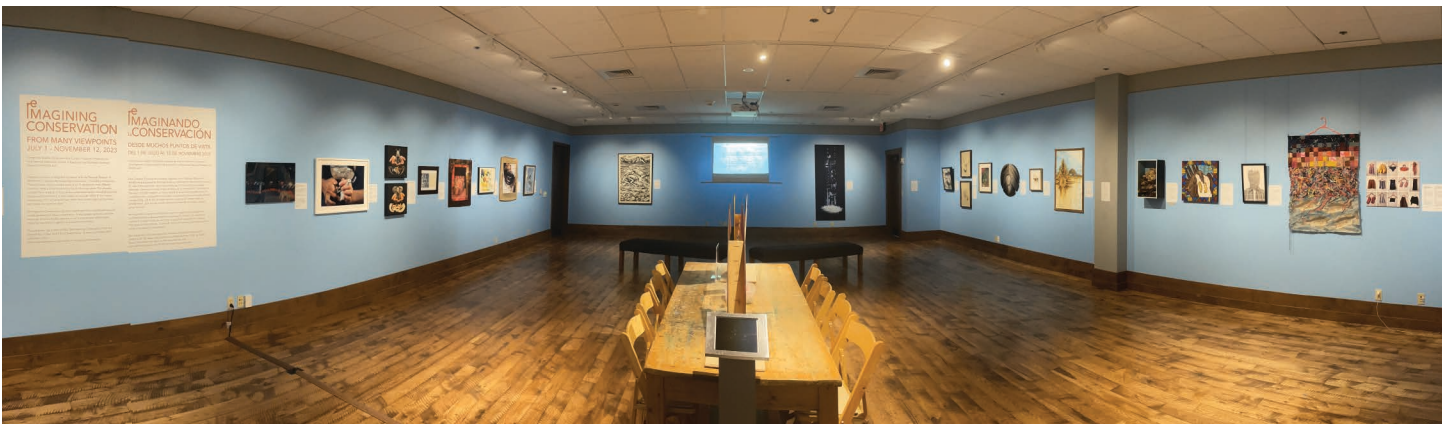
Ava Reynolds, *Spread to Snake*, woodblock printed on sailcloth.



Angel Smith, *Navaho Churro*, colored pencil.



Cindy Rinne, *Follow Your Path*, fiber art.



Gallery view of “Re-Imagining Conservation: From From Many Viewpoints,” National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson, Wyoming.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

We awarded 13 scholarships in 2023 – ranging from \$225 to \$1,500. The funds were spent on art supplies, creative time, logistical support, travel, and conference fees. Countries represented included Botswana (1), Canada (1), India (2), Kenya (1), UK (2), and US (6).

Since Creature Conserve was founded (2015), we have provided stipends for artists, designers, writers, and scientists to support their creative process, including making art informed by science that inspires conservation action. To date, we have awarded scholarships to 87 individuals.

LEAH WIDDICOMBE

Mentorship Support Scholarship
Shirt-to-Dirt

Leah ran a citizen science project to understand how long plant-based fabrics like linen biodegrade. She sent participants linen fabric samples to bury in their yards and asked them to upload photos of unearthed linen to our online database biweekly for 8 weeks. The result was a visual database of linen biodegradation.



MRINMAYI DALVI

Elif Ilkel Memorial Scholarship
Snaring Survival

Mrinmayi was able to continue an ongoing project: a multifaceted wildlife conservation education and awareness initiative that includes an art installation crafted from real wire snare traps confiscated from poachers, as well as prototyping other conservation education tools. Her focus is the wildlife trade in India.



MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Mentorship runs from September through the end of March each year and takes place exclusively online. This year, with the help of Mentorship Fellow Lauren Frausto, we supported 11 mentee/mentor pairs. Their art-sci wildlife conservation projects ranged from developing a brand identity for skin products inspired by Ecuadorian frogs to a collaborative workshop that uses marine soundscapes to connect artists and scientists. Lauren also designed, launched, and led the first season of the Creature Conserve Writer's Circle.

MAREN PROPHIT

Mentee, 2023-24

As the Songbirds Fly

For her project, Maren explored how birds navigate cities and how glass windows disrupt their vision. She created a series of paintings that focus on the massive loss of birds as a result of building collisions and what is being done to alleviate it.

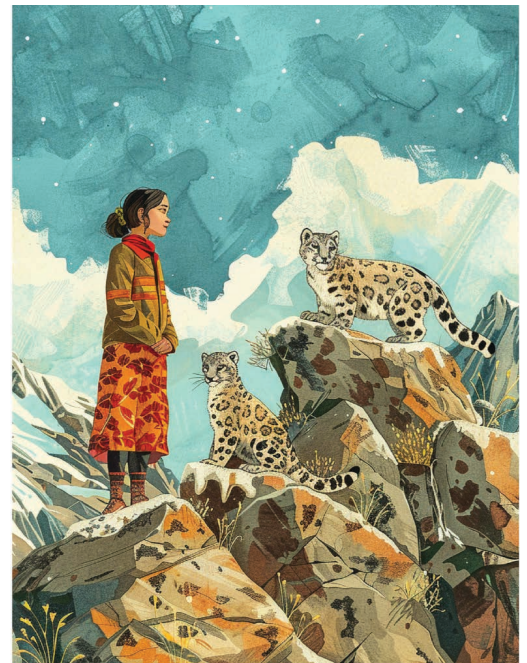


SANTA NIBEDITA

Mentee, 2023-24

Whispers of the Mountain

For her project, Santa explored the impact of resource extraction on the lives of people and snow leopards in the Himalayas. She created a narrative for a story that highlights how the historical equilibrium in this fragile ecosystem has been disrupted.



WORKSHOP PROGRAM

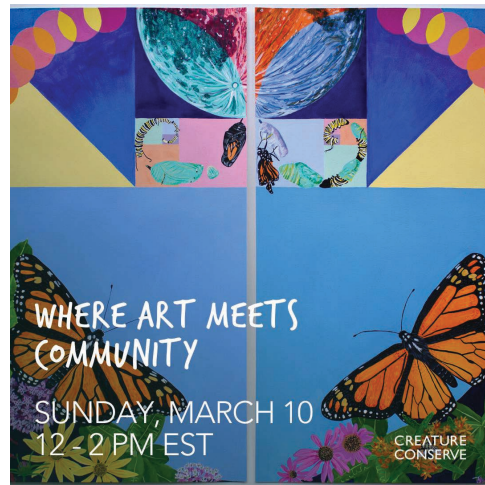
Workshops consist of single or multiple sessions, including presentations, feedback opportunities, and access to supporting materials. We offered three skill-based and five professional development workshops during our 2023-24 season, one per month, beginning in September and ending in March. All were online via ZOOM. Our workshops are free of charge for exhibiting artists, scholarship recipients, and mentorship program participants.



Poster art by Sophy Tuttle.

FINDING YOUR CREATIVE HOME

Artist Sophy Tuttle and writer Susan Tacent each offered a professional development workshop to help participants find their art-sci creative home. They shared their experiences, including tips for effectively pitching works of art or writing (e.g., gallery proposals, writing submissions.) Participants also brainstormed ideas for related conferences, exhibitions, festivals, newsletters, online forums, teaching opportunities, residencies, and workshops.



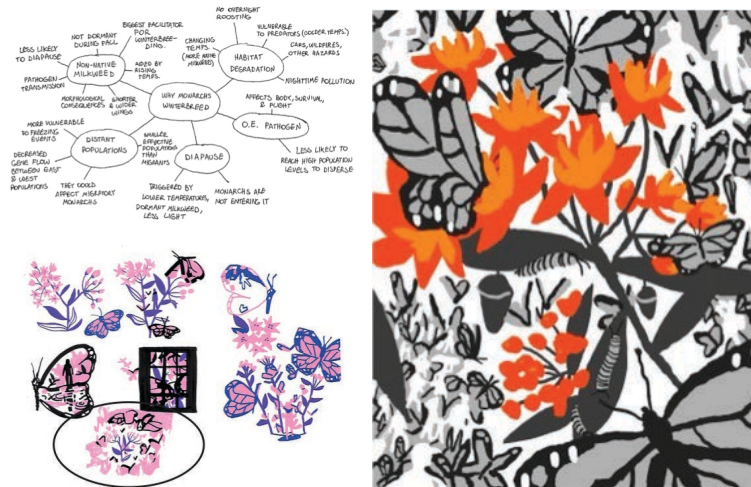
Poster art by Jenn Houle.

WHERE ART MEETS COMMUNITY

Artists Heather McMordie and Jenn Houle teamed up to offer a professional development workshop for everyone interested in opening up their art-sci wildlife conservation work to the larger community, i.e., working “in community.” They shared examples of various methods they use to connect and collaborate with a community through - and because of - art.

BEHIND THE RESEARCH PAPER

Artist Franco Zacha taught his signature workshop, “Behind the Research Paper: Making Science Visual.” The goal is to help artists unveil the narratives behind research to create art that promotes wildlife conservation. The topic was monarch butterfly migration and the invited scientists were experts from the University of Georgia.



Artwork by Franco Zacha: Monarch butterfly mindmap, thumbnail, final painting.

METRICS

Creature Conserve Scholars are the artists, designers, writers, and scientists who we support and who play active roles in our programs. They include exhibiting artists, mentors, mentees, program leaders, scholarship recipients, workshop instructors and speakers.

1. Maintain or increase the number of Scholars from year to year.

- We supported 143 Scholars in 2023-24.

This total included 21 Scholarship Recipients, 68 Exhibiting Artists, 10 Workshop Instructors, 2 Workshop Experts, 16 Mentors, 15 Mentees, 1 Curatorial Fellow, 1 Mentorship Fellow, 4 Webpage Contributors, and 5 Program Leaders.

- Since our first year of programming (2016) we have supported 445 Scholars.

2. Support a diverse and international group of Scholars each year.

Participants in our programs represented three Indigenous Nations (Masai, Narragansett, and Mashpee Wampanoag) and 23 countries (Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Canada, France, Germany, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Scotland, Slovakia, Taiwan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States).



Madeline Von Foerster, *Die Botschaft*, "Re-Imagining Conservation: From Many Viewpoints," gouache and pastel on paper.

3. Track the activities of prior year Scholars and support them whenever possible.

- Our prior year scholars continued to be very active in our programs — serving as curators, mentors, and workshop instructors.
- Artist scholar (2020), mentee (2022), exhibiting artist and mentor (2023) Anna-Marie Lamond curated "Ajoleteria" in collaboration with the Chinamperos, or "floating island farmers" and scientists at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM who are working together to protect habitat for the endangered axolotl.

4. Offer workshops that encourage and support art-sci collaboration in conservation.

- We offered eight workshops for 133 participants (104 artists, 11 writers, 17 scientists, and 1 social scientist).
- Of these, three were skill-based workshops that gave participants the opportunity to explore new ways to combine art and science to improve conservation outcomes, and five were professional development modules that gave participants the opportunity to build their leadership skills.

5. Maintain or increase the number of program participants from year to year. (Scholars + Workshop participants)

- Total participation was 276 (143 Scholars + 133 Workshop participants).
- Our seven-year total is now 1,347.

METRICS

6. Continue to grow and interact with our target audience via social media.

- Our Instagram following increased by 16% to 4546 from 3800.
- Our E-newsletter readership doubled from 560 to 1,132.

7. Expand support from co-hosts/supporting organizations including conservation non-profits.

Creature Conserve received substantial in-kind support valued at \$30,000 from our exhibit partners in 2023: Swale, US Soils NYC, and the National Museum of Wildlife Art. We also received a cash grant of \$6600 from the National Museum of Wildlife Art to support our participation in two public events.

8. Directly serve an increasing number of individuals actively engaged in art-sci wildlife conservation.

In 2023 we engaged with over 31,000 individuals.

This total includes:

- 5,954 artists, designers, writers, and scientists participating in our programs as Scholars (143), taking our Workshops (133), reading our Newsletter (1,132), and interacting with our Instagram account (4,546), and 26,000 members of the general public who visited our exhibitions and events.



Taylor Griffith, *Ghost Net #2*, "Re-Imagining Conservation: From Many Viewpoints," cyanotype on canvas.

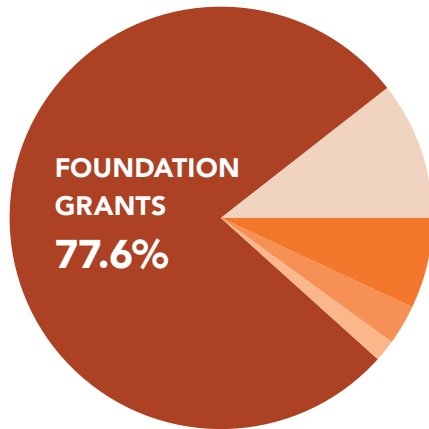







Ajoloteria by Anna-Marie Lamond is a picture card game made with ink and watercolour designed to highlight the precarious situation facing the wild Mexican Axolotl at Xochimilco, Mexico City, and its shrinking wetland ecosystem.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2023

INCOME

In 2023, we raised the majority of our funds from foundations as in past years. Our total income was \$71,626.

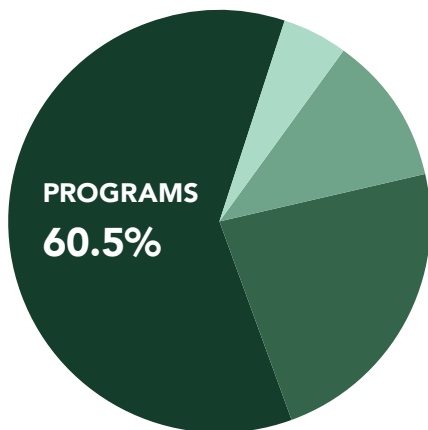






	DONATIONS GENERAL 7.2%	\$5,077
	DONATIONS RESTRICTED 2.8%	\$2,021
	EXHIBIT/WORKSHOP FEES 1.9%	\$1,384
	FOUNDATION GRANTS 77.6%	\$55,600
	OTHER GRANTS 10.5%	\$7,544

TOTAL INCOME 2023: \$71,626

EXPENSES

We spent a total of \$71,561 in 2023, nearly all of it on our programs.



	ADMINISTRATION 5.1%	\$3,619
	MEDIA 11.5%	\$8,250
	NETWORKING 22.9%	\$16,375
	PROGRAMS 60.5%	\$43,317
	- Curatorial Programs 19.5%	\$13,919
	- Mentorship 12.0%	\$8,570
	- Scholarships 24.0%	\$17,228
	- Workshops 5.0%	\$3,600

TOTAL EXPENSES 2023: \$71,561

SCHOLAR FEEDBACK

LIZ BATEMAN

Art+Sci Research Scholarship Recipient

Illustrating Nova Scotia's Imperiled Native Minnows

After working in fisheries biology for several years, I discovered a lack of information and visual identification materials available for minnow species in my province, so I wanted to create illustrations of every native species to help watershed groups and other biologists identify them in the field but also to call attention to the fact that these overlooked fish species are under threat of predatory invasive species and changing environmental conditions. I wrote many grant applications but no funding organizations would support me as my project was artbased rather than field or lab research. Thankfully, Creature Conserve bridged that gap between art and science and saw the value in my project proposal and those of many others all around the world. This has been such a positive experience and I hope to stay connected with Creature Conserve and the community around it even after my scholarship project is complete.



LEE FEARNSIDE

Mentor Support Scholarship Recipient

Oak Openings

In this project, I especially enjoyed the aesthetic discussions with [my collaborator, scientific illustrator] Domenic Pennetta, figuring out how to combine two distinct mediums, and conversations with local conservationists and park officials about how to create chance encounters that encourage new ways to think about conservation. My original concepts changed and shifted through these conversations - the true beauty of collaboration is in that process. I am grateful to Creature Conserve not only for the financial support of this project, but for building community, as I met Domenic through a Creature Conserve workshop.

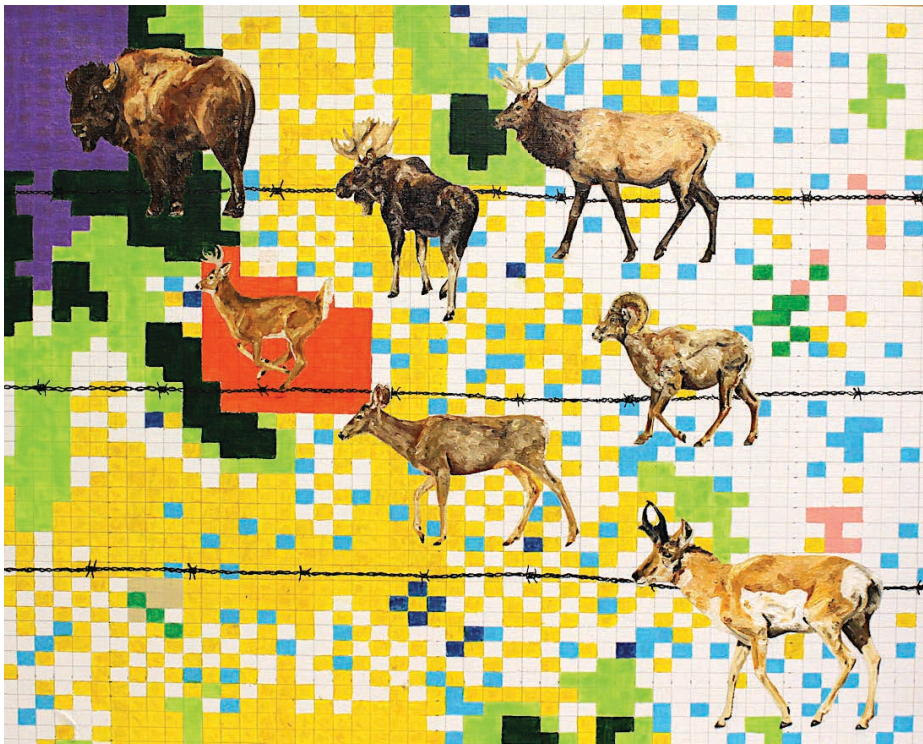


OUR COMMUNITY

GROWING A CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Conserving the many creatures on this planet requires collaboration between creatives (artists, designers, writers), experts (researchers, scientists, and traditional knowledge holders), activists (social, environmental, and racial justice), and citizens.

At Creature Conserve, we are committed to building a community that is diverse, just, and inclusive. We recognize that bringing people together via our programming is just the first step. Wildlife conservation works only when we all get involved. This is the role of community in conservation: a group of people with different cultures and backgrounds who are inspired to work together towards common goals. When we begin to activate communities of people, we inspire others to work collaboratively to protect not only their families and their traditions but also the world at large, including wild animals and their habitats.



Jessie Knirsch, *Less Fencing, More Migrating*, "Re-Imagining Conservation: From Many Viewpoints," oil, acrylic, marker, pen, and pencil on canvas paper.

CORE VALUES

Creativity
Curiosity
Inclusivity
Empathy
Equity
Opportunity
Positivity
Reciprocity

OUR CORE TEAM

Abby Adams

Project Administration
& Board Secretary

Samantha Dempsey

Board Member
& Core Team Liaison

Alex Hopwood

Media Manager

Christopher Kondrich

Poet-in-Residence

Shiri Lev

Network & Content Strategist

Heather McMordie

Arts Curator

Derek Russell

Mentorship Director

Dr. Lucy Spelman

Executive Director
& Ex Officio Board Member

Susan Tacent

Writer-in-Residence

ABOUT CREATURE CONSERVE

Executive Director and Founder: Dr. Lucy Spelman

Board of Directors: Melissa Torres (Chair), Abby Adams (Secretary), Dr. Bianca Brown (Treasurer), Samantha Dempsey, Maeve Donohue, Nick Jainschigg, Cameron Little, Dr. Nicole Merola (Clerk), Sophie Nieman, Dr. Kate Smith, and Dr. Lucy Spelman (Ex Officio.)

In her 2015 **TEDx talk**, Creature Conserve Founder and Executive Director Dr. Lucy Spelman describes how her work as a zoo and wildlife veterinarian led her to seek new ways to engage people in conservation by connecting art and science. Over the course of her career, she has treated animals of all kinds, including some of the rarest on earth: black-footed ferrets, giant pandas, giant otters, mountain gorillas, and Komodo dragons. She served as the Director of the Smithsonian's National Zoo from 2000-2005 and lived in Rwanda from 2006-2009 as the field manager for the Gorilla Doctors. She has taught biology to architecture, art, and design students at the Rhode Island School of Design since 2010 and continues to practice veterinary medicine at Ocean State Veterinary Specialists. She is co-editor of *Creature Needs* (available December 2024) and *The Rhino with Glue On Shoes* and author of *National Geographic Kids Animal Encyclopedia*.

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



Emily Schnall, *Hands Off*, digital media.

CREATURE CONSERVE

Growing Art-Sci Pathways for Wildlife Conservation

Find out more at creatureconserve.org and follow [@creatureconserve](https://www.instagram.com/creatureconserve) on Instagram.

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