

FUND for  
WILD  
NATURE 



**Annual Report**  
**2023**

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Page 10 American Marten, Savannah Rose Wildlife  
Page 11: American Beaver, Adam Burnett  
Page 12: Brown Pelican, Jeanete Edwards  
Page 13: Black Crowned Night Heron, David Parks  
Page 14: Pika, Savannah Rose Wildlife  
Page 15: Eastern Box Turtle, Wendy Eager  
Page 16: Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, Guy Alsentzer  
Page 17: Spotted Owl, Monica Bond  
Back: American Beavers, Adam Burnett

**Our Mission:**

The Fund for Wild Nature invests in bold grassroots organizations and innovative conservation efforts that meet emerging needs for protecting biodiversity and wilderness.

The Fund for Wild Nature is supported entirely by donations from individuals like you. We have no endowment – our ability to make grants depends upon the continuing generosity of our contributors. We invite you to join our many donors whose contributions are making a tremendous difference for wild nature. The Fund is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization #87-0386717. Donations may be made by mail or on our website and are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

**Fund for Wild Nature**

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## FROM THE BOARD

Helping heroes—that’s one good way to summarize what you are doing when you contribute to the Fund for Wild Nature. Indeed, one of the amazing activists who is assisted through your donations to the Fund—Denise Boggs of the forest protection group Conservation Congress—recently received the Hero Award from wildlife conservation organization Grizzly Times, which is also a Fund for Wild Nature grantee. In announcing the award, Grizzly Times had this to say about Denise:

“Denise is one of the most tenacious “no holds barred” environmental activists we have been privileged to meet. For over forty years, she has advocated for protecting wild places in the face of hostile government agencies, notably the U.S. Forest Service. In doing so, she has helped preserve sometimes little-known and underappreciated ecosystems on behalf of us all.”

The wildlife activists at Grizzly Times don’t just identify heroes; they are heroes. Grizzly Times co-founders Louisa Willcox and David Mattson have long been at the forefront of grizzly bear protection. Their work combines science, law, on-the-ground knowledge, and vigorous outreach with an unwavering commitment to wild nature.

Their work is needed more than ever as the federal government is seeking to remove Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for the grizzly bear populations in the Greater Yellowstone and Northern

Continental Divide ecosystems. Without ESA protection, those grizzlies will be at risk of intensive hunting.

We can catch a sad glimpse of what that may look like by viewing what recently happened in Alaska where 94 unprotected brown bears (including cubs) were killed in just over one month in 2022 by hunters shooting from helicopters. Meanwhile, the state of Montana is already making plans for more grizzly killing if ESA restrictions are removed there, similar to what happened after ESA protection was taken away from wolves.

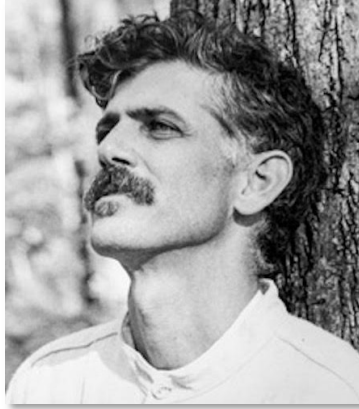
Therefore, it is crucial to stop the US Fish and Wildlife Service from its efforts to de-list grizzly bears under the ESA. Louisa and David of Grizzly Times are poised to play a central role in this difficult battle, and they need all the help they can get. The Fund for Wild Nature has stepped up to provide additional resources to them at this key time. We recently gave Grizzly Times our first Badger Boost grant of 2024.

The Badger Boost was created from a special bequest to the Fund that provided a new way to give larger grants to our partners at crucial times when extra assistance is needed. Grizzly Times is a great example of how this Badger Boost is being put to good use. Meanwhile, at the same time, through your donations, we are continuing our regular grantmaking to assist a broad array of heroic grassroots activists throughout the country who are on the frontlines of protecting wildlife and wild places.

Thank you so much for your essential contributions as together we help heroes like Louisa and David of Grizzly Times, Denise of Conservation Congress, and the many other grantees described in this annual report who are working to defend grizzlies, wolves, forests, deserts, oceans, and all of wild nature.



## Grassroots Activist of the Year



Andy Mahler is the winner of Fund for Wild Nature's Grassroots Activist of the Year Award for 2024. A few miles outside the town of Paoli, in the unglaciated hill country of southern Indiana, there's a 90-acre grove of old-growth hardwood forest called Pioneer Mothers. From 1816 to 1940, the land had been owned by the Cox family, who refused to log even a tree from the grove of titanic oaks, hickories, beech and tulip poplars. However, after the last of the Cox family died, the forest was sold to a local timber company, which planned to clearcut it. A local uprising ensued, led by some of the community's most prominent women, who raised money to buy the property and donate to the US Forest Service on the condition the forest would never be logged. The grove, which was named Pioneer Mothers in their honor, is now a Research Natural Area on the Hoosier National Forest and is one of only a handful of remaining old-growth groves in the Ohio Valley.

Forty-five years later another local revolt would take place in the same rural county over plans to clearcut the Hoosier National Forest. This uprising would be led by a man who lived not far from the Pioneer Mothers grove with his wife, Linda Lee, on an inholding inside the national forest, they called the Lazy Black Bear. His name is Andy

Mahler, a descendant of the Bohemian composer. The son of academics, Mahler grew up in Bloomington, about 45 miles north and an entire cultural epoch away from Orange County. Linda was a school teacher and Andy ran the farm. The couple spent much of their free time riding horses on the forest trails near the Lazy Black Bear. Then in 1985, Andy learned that the new management plan for the Hoosier National Forest had scheduled clearcuts and logging roads on the local trail network. Lots of clearcuts and as many as six-miles of logging roads per square mile of land.

And that wasn't all. The plan also called for oil and gas drilling, gypsum mining and 115 miles of Off-Road Vehicle trails. Reflecting the usual cultural insensitivity of the Forest Service, some of the ORV trails were slated for a part of the forest called Little Africa, which received its name from one of the earliest settlements of free blacks and escaped enslaved people in Indiana along Lick Creek. The forest settlement was a refuge from the slave patrollers who roamed southern Indiana looking to kidnap black people and sell them south of the river. By the time of the Civil War, dozens of black families, along with some white Quakers, lived in the hollow, where the center of the community was the African Methodist Church. After the war, black families began to move out of Orange County to the cities, where jobs were more plentiful and racial animosity less fervent. By 1902, the last black family in Little Africa had sold their land and much of the area, including the ruins of the church and cemetery, was eventually acquired by the Forest Service. In 1985, the agency thought it might be a good idea to turn the entire area into a haven for dirt bikes.

The Forest Service, an agency whose arrogance rivals that of the Pentagon, had no idea of the political landmines it was setting for itself. But it soon found out, the hard way. The Agency was accustomed to encounters with environmentalists from Indianapolis and Bloomington, who'd waged a bruising 10-year-long battle in the 70s and early 80s to win a wilderness designation for a 13,000-acre roadless tract south of Bloomington named after the botanist Charles Deam. But they'd never had to confront a backwoods rebellion from the people who lived in and near the forest. And that's exactly the kind of rebellion Andy Mahler set

about igniting, when he formed a local group to fight the Forest Service called Protect Our Woods or POW.

At less than 200,000 acres (about the size of some ranger districts in the West), the Hoosier is one of the smallest national forests in the country. It doesn't have sprawling tracts of old-growth forest. It doesn't have any large predators. It doesn't have any mountains or whitewater rivers. None of that matters to the forest's defenders, who note that its ridges and hollows, seeps and rock shelters harbor an astonishingly high level of botanical diversity.

Mahler was able to read and understand the dense and impenetrable prose of the Forest Service plan and EIS and explain what it meant in plain language to the people who lived near the forest and hiked and rode horses on its trails, hunted for morels and chanterelles in its hollows, watched the migration of warblers stream through in the spring and the colors of the hills some called the Little Smokies explode in blazing colors in the fall.

But the struggle for the future of the Hoosier Forest soon took on national implications. It was the first plan under the National Forest Management Act to be released in the Eastern Region. The fate of the Hoosier plan was going to set a precedent and the precedent Andy Mahler wanted to set was the end, not just of clearcutting, but the end of logging on national forest lands.

What became known as the Zero Cut movement began in southern Indiana and that scared the hell out of the top bureaucrats in the Forest Service, then in the grips of the chainsaw mad Reagan administration, most of whom probably couldn't find the Hoosier on a map.

Mahler and his pals in the backwoods knew some vital things that the Forest Service didn't. First, locals, even in the most conservative redoubts of a very conservative state, didn't like seeing their favorite haunts logged and they didn't trust the Agency to tell them the truth about what they were up to. Also, Andy's friend Bob Klawitter, a former IU professor who decamped to woods during the Vietnam War, had done a forest inventory of the Hoosier region showing there was more than enough forest on private lands to sustain the needs of the local industry and that subsidized timber sales on federal forests would only depress the price nearby private landowners could get for their timber.

Finally, Mahler was able to convince his local Congressman, Frank McCloskey, to include in one of his constituent mailers a survey that asked whether they supported logging on the Hoosier National Forest: 69% said no and the opposition approached 79% for those under the age of 35. “We knew then, we were really on to something,” Mahler said.

Mahler was right. The Hoosier plan was dead, vanquished by an unlikely coalition of urban greens, back-to-the-landers and rural folk. Commercial logging came to an end on Hoosier for the next 30 years. The racist ORV plan was defeated, along with the obnoxious oil and gas leasing and mining projects.

As the Forest Service began to freak out over the implications of the defeat of their plan for the Hoosier, Mahler began to broaden his vision. The precedent being set, he was eager to extend it. “We began to think bioregionally,” Mahler said. “The boundaries between these forests, and even the states, are artificial. My friend Leah Garlotte said, a river isn’t a border, it’s the heart, the bloodstream of a forest ecosystem.”

Out of this idea, Heartwood was born. Andy and Linda decided to go wherever people in the Ohio Valley were resisting the Forest Service. “Even if it was one or two people, we wanted to meet them, learn from them and join forces,” Mahler said. The search took them to the Wayne in southern Ohio and the Daniel Boone in northern Kentucky, the Shawnee in southern Illinois and the Mark Twain in the Ozarks of Missouri. “When we’d finally meet, it was often at the end of what Linda and I began to call a Heartwood driveway,” Mahler said. “A rutted gravel lane that the winds through the woods for a quarter of mile to a cabin.”

The gospel Andy was spreading was the end of logging on federal forests and that the movement that could end it was going to be led by the people who lived in and near those forests. The other message Andy delivered to anyone who would listen, and more and more activists were, was that in order for people to trust Heartwood they couldn’t compromise on their vision. “We weren’t going to sell out,” Mahler said. “We weren’t ever going to be complicit in the destruction of forests.”

The next precedent was set on the Shawnee National Forest, where after a bitter struggle to stop the Fairview timber sale, which involved 79-day occupation, mass arrests and a Forest Service logging operation over the objections of the entire Illinois congressional delegation, a



permanent injunction banned logging on the forest for the next 17 years. There is now a movement to make the Shawnee the nation's first national park and climate preserve.

Even as Heartwood expanded into the Alleghenies, Adirondacks, Appalachians and beyond its heart remained back in Indiana, where bi-annual gatherings of activists convene for a long weekend of workshops, war storytelling and music at the Lazy Black Bear. These forest councils are where old campaigns were celebrated and new ones born.

The problem, of course, is that few victories are permanent. As David Brower said, "Our opponents' victories are usually forever. When we win, it is usually just a stay of execution. That's why we need to be eternally vigilant." And so, it is with Andy Mahler. Thirty years after crushing the Forest Service and ending commercial logging on the Hoosier, the Agency is striking back, right in Andy and Linda's backwoods. In the fall of 2021, the Forest Service unveiled a massive logging, burning and road building scheme across a 30,000-acre area known as Buffalo Springs. Though the name Buffalo Springs doesn't appear on any known map of the region, it didn't take Andy long to detect that the logging and burning was scheduled to take place just down the road from the Lazy Black Bear.

So, the old warhorse was summoned out of his stable for one last big fight to protect the forests of southern Indiana. Mahler went to work, doing what he'd done so many times in the past, pouring over the plans, deciphering the new coded language of the Forest Service, where the clearcuts of old were now dressed up as "vegetative treatments" for the seemingly benign purpose of ecological restoration. But it was clear: this project was more of an ecological blitz than a recovery plan that threatened, among others, two endangered species of bats that inhabit the caves of the world's greatest karst zones.

Mahler knew that even after 30 years, people's attitudes about logging or the Forest Service hadn't changed. They didn't like the former and didn't trust the latter. And many were even more incensed about the agency's newest menace: prescribed burning—the choking smoke from previous burns had sickened several residents so badly they had to be taken to the hospital. After months of outreach and organizing, the opposition to the sprawling assault on Buffalo Springs began to solidify.

Protect Buffalo Springs signs sprouted up in nearly every yard and business across Orange County. Banners were draped from buildings in downtown Paoli and a billboard denouncing the plan greeted travelers on Highway 37, the main north-south corridor through the Hoosier National Forest.

Eventually, the county commissioners came out against it, including three Trump supporters. The Chamber of Commerce now opposes it. And, most significantly of all perhaps, the Farm Bureau, rarely an ally and usually a fearsome foe of environmentalists, announced its displeasure with the Forest Service's Buffalo Springs plan.

The battle isn't over. But the odds have shifted and the Forest Service knows it. So the agency may recalibrate and await an opportunity to strike again. But Andy Mahler and Heartwood aren't going anywhere. This forest is, after all, where they live and its very existence is why they live there.

Andy Mahler's fearless and innovative approach to grassroots activism in the effort to protect forests, rivers and wildlife across the Central Hardwood region exemplifies the kind of work the Fund for Wild Nature seeks to support through the donations we collect, so we think it is deserving that Andy receives the Fund's Grassroots Activist of the Year Award for 2024.



## 2023 Grantees

New grantees are underlined



**Alaska Wildlife Alliance, AK \$3,000**

Protecting bears and wolves near the Mulchatna caribou herd calving grounds through litigation, regulations, and community outreach.

**Alliance for the Wild Rockies, MT \$5,000**

Funding a lawsuit to overturn the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest’s decision to eliminate over one million acres of Canada lynx habitat without public comment.

**Applegate Siskiyou Alliance, OR \$3,000**

Safeguarding native forests and forest-dwelling species from public lands logging using activism, advocacy, and litigation.

**Arizona Mining Reform Coalition, AZ \$5,000**

Defending Oak Flat from Rio Tinto’s proposed mine by using the public permitting process to create permanent protection.

**Battle Creek Alliance, CA \$3,000**

Protecting Battle Creek watershed from cumulative impacts to forests, habitat, plant and animal species and water quality by data collection and research used for advocacy.

**Beaver Institute, MA \$3,000**

Defending beavers from lethal trapping, thereby protecting ecosystems they create and sustain.

**Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, OR \$5,000**

Safeguarding forests in eastern Oregon from ecologically destructive projects through field survey, public comment, and litigation work.

**Bold Visions Conservation, MT \$3,000**

Working to create a 1.6 million acre Madison-Gallatin National Wildlife Monument to protect 4,942 native plant and animal species from threats such as development and trapping.

**Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology, OR \$3,000**

Protecting native forests from improper fuels reduction projects by educating activists and the public about harmful effects of thinning and burning.

**Friends of the Bitterroot, MT \$3,000**

Defending wildlife and forest ecosystems, bull trout critical habitat, and grizzly bear linkage zones by litigating logging projects.

**Friends of the Pelicans, Inc., FL \$3,000**

Maintaining the diversity and abundance of Florida's seabird populations through advocacy, intervention, and education.

**Friends of the Wild Swan, MT \$4,000**

Challenging harmful plans, projects, timber sales, and road building to protect grizzly bears, bull trout, lynx, and other wildlife.

**Gallatin Wildlife, MT \$3,000**

Advocating for wildlife corridors and connectivity enhancement to enable wildlife, particularly grizzly bears, to freely move.

**Kentucky Heartwood, KY \$4,000**

Protecting federally listed species and old-growth forests from logging through field-based documentation, outreach, and legal means.

**Klamath Forest Alliance, CA \$4,000**

Safeguarding native forests and wildlife of the Klamath-Siskiyou Region using activism, advocacy, and litigation.

**Malama na Honu, HI \$2,900**

Saving Hawaiian green sea turtles (Honu) from intentional or inadvertent harassment while they bask on Poipu Beach, Kauai, Hawaii.

**Native Ecosystems Council, MT \$3,000**

Protecting wildlife species on western U.S. public lands by fighting logging and slashing/burning projects.

**NYenvironcom, NY \$3,000**

Stopping sewage contamination in the Basha Kill by forcing Dragon Springs to cease wastewater violations and remediate damage.

**Palm Springs Wildlife Advocates, CA \$4,000**

Saving bird nests and nature's food chain by preventing tree trimming and reducing/removing rodenticides.

**Philmont Beautification, Inc., NY \$3,000**

Safeguarding 93 bird species identified in a Biological Survey Study of Summit Lake and adjacent lands from tree clearing by litigation.



**Public Lands Media, OR \$5,000**

Using media to defend forests from logging projects threatened by ineffective fire prevention thinning programs and fuel reductions.

**RESTORE: The North Woods, MA \$3,000**

Fighting climate change, preserving biodiversity, and benefitting people by protecting New England forests from logging and development.

**San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council, CO \$3,000**

Stopping large-scale development in habitat for the Canada lynx along Wolf Creek Pass on the continental divide.

**Snake River Waterkeeper, ID \$3,000**

Restoring endemic native salmonids in the Snake River Basin by using the Clean Water Act to curtail illegal pollution into rivers.

**Swan View Coalition, Inc., MT \$3,000**

Protecting grizzly bears, bull trout, and other wildlife by limiting logging, roads, commercial recreation on the Flathead NF via objections and litigation.



**Tennessee Heartwood, TN \$5,000**

Safeguarding habitats on public lands in Tennessee and the region through forest watch, research, legal advocacy, and movement building.

**The Forest Advocate, NM \$5,000**

Educating the public, elected officials, and the Forest Service about conserving the Santa Fe National Forest and communities.

**Turtle Rescue of the Hamptons, NY \$3,000**

Restoring native Long Island turtles through a comprehensive onsite breeding and release program.





**Upper Missouri Waterkeeper, MT \$3,000**

Protecting over 100 miles of habitat for the imperiled Yellowstone cutthroat trout through enforcement of stormwater pollution permits.

**Washington Wildlife First, WA \$3,000**

Helping maintain protections for wolves in Washington by keeping them on the state endangered species list.

**Water Climate Trust, CA \$3,000**

Safeguarding endangered aquatic species from excessive water diversions through instream flow requirements and water funding principles.

**Yellowstone to Uintas Connection, ID \$5,000**

Protecting public lands by submitting science-based comments on many Forest Service and BLM projects at the scoping, analysis, and decision levels and by litigation.

## Badger Boost Grants

The Fund for Wild Nature received a generous bequest in 2021. In recognition of the extinction crisis, our board of directors decided to disburse these funds for special situations where feisty biodiversity groups--those we've supported for many years--need a larger grant than what we typically provide. We used the bequest to create the Badger Boost program. The invitation-only Badger Boost grants enable small but bold and highly effective regional grassroots groups to boost their capacity to protect wild nature.

- **Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project**

We provided a second Badger Boost grant of \$30,000 to **Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project** in 2023 to support their important regional forest habitat defense. Their work ensures a future for many native species such as American marten, northern goshawk, pileated woodpeckers, northern spotted owls, bull trout, and Mid-Columbia River steelhead.



# Financial Statement

<b>Financial Position on January 1</b>	<b>Year 2022</b>	<b>Year 2023</b>
Assets	\$239,159	\$247,420
Liabilities (unpaid grants)	\$40,500	\$23,000
Net Assets	\$198,659	\$224,420

## Statement of Activities

### Support and Revenue

Contributions, unrestricted	\$192,507	\$199,600
Investment Income	(\$170)	\$15,353
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$192,337</b>	<b>\$214,954</b>

### Expenses

Grants awarded	\$155,500	\$113,900
Administration and Fundraising	\$11,076	\$11,495
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$166,576</b>	<b>\$125,395</b>

Change in Net Assets	\$25,761	\$89,559
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<b>Financial Position on December 31</b>	<b>Year 2022</b>	<b>Year 2023</b>
Assets	\$247,420	\$319,879
Liabilities (Dec 31 unpaid grants)	\$23,000	\$5,900
Net Assets	\$224,420	\$313,979

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### **Hauser-Badger Boost Fund included below**

Badger Boost grants awarded	\$60,000	\$30,000
Hauser-Badger Boost Fund on Dec 31	\$385,916	\$355,916
Net Assets on Dec 31 including Hauser-Badger Boost	\$610,336	\$669,895



## **Fund for Wild Nature**

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