

2008

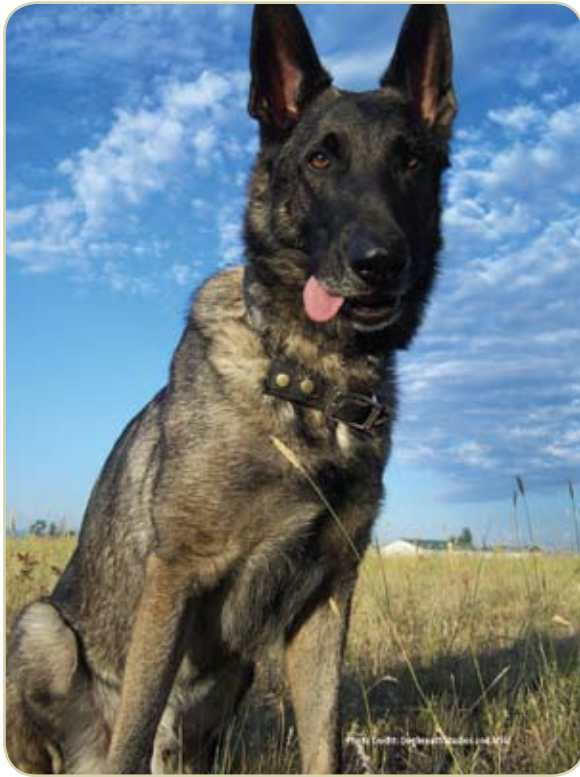
Annual Report



Working Dogs
for Conservation



Photo Credit: Tyler Roady



A Year of Tremendous Progress

Thanks in huge part to the Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation 2008 was a phenomenal year for Working Dogs for Conservation. Their generosity allowed us to expand the detection directions of our dogs, helping us explore new areas for the use of this unique technology and ultimately make a bigger contribution to conservation. Through our Detection Directions program we uncover new applications for conservation dogs so that they can further assist researchers and managers in their efforts to save endangered species and the habitats upon which they depend.

In addition, receiving this support gave us the opportunity to grow as an organization, expanding our outreach and education efforts, helping us rescue an additional shelter dog to bring on to our team and launch into a whole new and exciting phase. Without this support we could not have had such a tremendously successful year.

We also received support for our Dog Life program through Planet Dog Foundation, further helping us in our efforts to bring-on new conservation dogs by

searching shelters throughout Montana for candidate dogs. Through their specialized training in wildlife detection work, these high-energy 'toss away' dogs go from being "unteachable" to being something truly exceptional—they become working dogs, critical members of scientific teams that conduct important conservation work that ultimately benefits wildlife populations and the environment. Through our Dog Life Program we provide a happy, healthy home for our dogs from the day they are acquired through retirement and beyond.

Finally, we were honored to participate in events at the Wildlife Conservation Network's annual Expo this year. This amazing opportunity allowed us to reach new members of the global conservation community, demonstrating the capabilities of our specially trained dogs for a wider audience of researchers and philanthropists interested in supporting conservation efforts. Looking back on 2008, we are proud of our many accomplishments and thankful for those who helped us make them possible. As we move into 2009, we aim to build on this support, continuing our forward momentum, growth and expansion.

The Year in Numbers:

- ✓ A total of **12 dogs** have been trained onto **16 target scents** and **6 dogs** have been maintained in their ability to detect **18 target scents**.
- ✓ Target scents in 2008: **scats** of fisher, marten, black bear, grizzly bear, cougar, snow leopard, wolf, kit fox, Franklin's ground squirrel and moose; **live animals**, including wolf snails, bog turtles and dehsert tortoises; **plants**, including dyers woad, Kincaid's lupine and spotted knapweed.
- ✓ Dog/handler teams spent **260 days in the field** on **15 projects in 9 states**.
- ✓ We attended **2 meetings** and gave 5 demonstrations, sharing the unique skills of our conservation dog/handler teams with **1,286 people**.
- ✓ Our work appeared in **13 popular press articles**, we produced **7 reports** on our work and wrote **1 book chapter** on the use of dogs as a non-invasive research method for the detection of carnivores.



“Dogs, in most cases, are more accurate and quicker than people are.”

Alice Whitelaw, WDC co-founder

The dogs even surprised their handlers one day when they refused to alert on lupine at a new site. It turns out the lupine was a different species, and it was the handlers who had made a mistake.

Excerpt from: “A Nose for Natives: Can Dogs Help Locate Rare Plants?” by Jen Newlin Bell for The Nature Conservancy Magazine.



Sniffing to Save Dwindling Prairies in the Willamette Valley

Due to agriculture, urbanization and development, prairie ecosystems in the Willamette Valley in Oregon have virtually been eliminated. As these ecosystems dwindle, native plants, such as Kincaid’s lupine, have faded, but so too have the organisms that depend on these plants for their survival. The Fender’s blue butterfly, dependent on Kincaid’s lupine, once thrived in the prairies of Oregon, but they now occur in 32 small sites totaling 408 acres.

To assist in efforts to save this butterfly, lupine and prairies in the Willamette, along with the Oregon Wildlife Institute and The Nature Conservancy, we continued testing the use of dogs to identify populations of this threatened plant species. For a dog, locating a plant is a much more challenging endeavor than, say, locating a scat in the woods. Since the dogs work in a sea of plants and are being asked to sniff out a specific chemical ratio produced by a particular species, sniffing out plants takes a more detailed, focused effort.

Despite the highly technical skill required, dogs demonstrated that they were capable of recognizing the scent of Kincaid’s lupine, alerting their handlers to the location of these plants in the field, exhibiting a high degree of accuracy and ignoring non-target plant species. **We covered over a mile of transects on 364 plots**, putting this accuracy to the test. **Our dogs made only 5 errors** (an error rate of only 1.5%). Truly impressive.

This work demonstrated that detection dogs are a very promising noninvasive monitoring technique for rare, native plant populations, meriting further investigation. Building from these data, we aim to return to the Willamette Valley to assist in management efforts there and we will also be expanding our plant detection program in 2009 to include more rare native plant species as well as exotic, invasive species. Collaborations with key partners are already underway.

Victory in the West:

WDC dogs help save critical habitat in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

The rugged landscape of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem provides crucial habitats for numerous wildlife species, but within its valleys, the human population is rapidly increasing and so too are the developments and infrastructure supporting this growth. Unfortunately for many wildlife species, this increase drastically reduces the number of linkage zones, which serve as corridors between core habitats, making it increasingly difficult and dangerous for many animals to move. Since these corridors are critical for the maintenance of healthy, genetically diverse populations, they are essential for the survival of a variety of species.

Running along the Idaho-Montana border, the Centennial Range is one of the few eastwest oriented ranges in the area with the potential to provide a linkage zone for carnivores between Greater Yellowstone and central Idaho wilderness areas.

From 2004 to 2008, Working Dogs for Conservation dog/handler teams worked with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), collecting critical data to help determine the habitat selection and movement patterns of four carnivore species: wolves, grizzly bears, black bears and mountain lions through this potential linkage zone. Our dogs covered over 1500 km, crossing seven land ownerships, collecting 754 scat samples. WCS researchers used these data to map the occurrence of these critical carnivores between protected areas of Yellowstone and Idaho.

Thanks to our team of dogs, including Wicket (pictured above) who had a **record breaking day** on the final day of the project – **locating 52 scats in one day** – we're proud to report that **this work led to the protection of wildlife corridors by closing more than 40 miles of roads and preventing a development in a sensitive area.**

New Additions:

Thanks to support from Planet Dog Foundation and the Arthur L. & Elaine V. Johnson Foundation, WDC was able to rescue two potential conservation dogs and the happy endings abound.

After spending a year-and-a-half at Pintler Pets, a shelter in Anaconda, MT, we came across a dog we lovingly call Fatty--his medium frame boasted 76 pounds when we got him! Though he stood out to us in initial evaluations, it's not clear if he will go to work for WDC. Despite his aptitude for this vocation, WDC Associate Director Aimee Hurt, her husband and pack of dogs have all fallen for Fatty, deciding



"The dogs have allowed us to develop a data-set and models for multiple species of are, large carnivores simultaneously, that would not have been possible using traditional research methods."

*Jon Beckmann
Conservation Ecologist,
Wildlife Conservation Society*

to incorporate him into their fourlegged family. Home and happiness are important accomplishments for our Dog Life program. Whether or not Fatty ultimately straps on a WDC vest, he clearly has succeeded. Meanwhile, we found a second dog, a Border collie named Orbee, who hails from a shelter in Dillon, MT, a small ranching community where stray Border collies are not at all uncommon. True to his breed, he has been incredibly quick to learn and is well on his way to becoming a conservation dog!



Photo Credit: Chad Harder

"The dogs that they've [WDC] taken are more or less strays and then to think here they have a job and they're really doing something for mankind, it's awesome."

*Pat Phillip
Director of Pintler Pets, Anaconda, MT*

Income

Contributed support

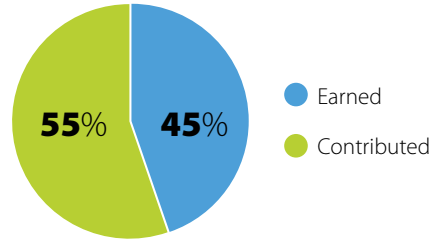
In-kind donations	78,128
Monetary Contributions	103,204

Earned revenues

Project revenue	143,640
Misc (Merchandise)	1,863

Total Income **326,835**

Income by Source



Expenses

Programs

Salary/contractor fee	138,847
Project travel & expenses	50,448
Dog supplies & vet services	38,396
Donations to shelters	1,275

Admin/general operating

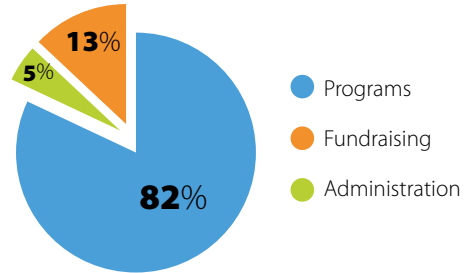
Salary/contractor fee	28,632
Office supplies/misc	7,638

Fundraising

Salary/contractor fee	5,021
Merchandise/misc	9,000

Total Expenses **279,257**

Expense by Activity



We are thankful for all of our Supporters and Project Partners in 2008:

Arthur L. and Elaine V. Johnson
Foundation
Animal Welfare Institute
Disney Worldwide Conservation
Fund
Dog Dynamics
Planet Dog Foundation
Wildlife Conservation Network
Edward Bangs
Tracy Blashill
Anne Fogel-Burchenal
Ellen Cheng
Shannon Cunniff
Lucy Danziger
Keith Farquhar
Walli Finch
Michelle Freeland
Florence and Steven Goldby
Sophy Hagey
Catlin Hill
Kennon and Bob Hudson

Delbert Hurt
Tammy Hurt
Victoria Kamenetsky
William Kitchen
Julie Larsen Maher
Ann Leschen
Marilynne Manguba
Marie Martinez
Elizabeth Moore
Brian Morgan
Monica Pokorny
Denyse Racine
Tyler Roady
Judith Sirota
Barbara Socie
Andrew Stephens
Cheryl Strayed
Patricia Tucker
Louise Wilson

Partners:

Desert Research Institute
Environmental Site Restoration, Inc
International Snow Leopard Trust
MSU Western Transportation Institute
New Jersey Division of Fish &
Wildlife
Oregon Wildlife Institute
Research Corp of University of
Hawaii
Smithsonian Institution
The Nature Conservancy, Oregon
*University of Montana, Dr. Ray
Callaway*
University of Illinois
*USFS- Rocky Mountain Research
Station*
USFWS- San Luis National
Wildlife Refuge
Wildlife Conservation Society

What's Ahead...

2009 Promises Plenty

- We're heading to the Wai'anae Mountains on O'ahu with the O'ahu Army Natural Resources Program and the University of Hawaii, exploring dogs as a possible option for use in eradication efforts of the exotic, invasive wolf snail (*Euglandina rosea*). Linked to the extinction and decline of numerous endemic snail species in every area they have been introduced, wolf snails are among the 100 "World's Worst" invaders.
- We're continuing our work in the lab, using dogs to differentiate Snow Leopard scat among the scat of over-lapping species, helping researchers reduce costs of DNA analysis.
- We're exploring the use of dogs to help plant ecologists understand and eradicate exotic, invasive species as well as locate rare, endangered native species.



Photo Credit: Chad Harder

Megan Parker
Executive Director

Aimee Hurt
Associate Director

Alice Whitelaw
Programs Director

Deborah Smith
Conservation Director

Kathryn Socie
Development & Communications Director

Working Dogs for Conservation is a 501c3 Non-profit which accepts tax deductible donations

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