

Grant Report to Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund

Cascadia Wild would like to thank the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund for their generous support of our community science project, the Wolverine Tracking Project.

The Wolverine Tracking Project trains and organizes volunteers to collect data on rare carnivores on the Mt Hood National Forest. The project has two main goals: to conduct long-term monitoring of rare carnivores (wolves, Sierra Nevada red fox, Pacific marten, and wolverine) to support and inform better wildlife conservation and management practices, and to connect Oregonians to the wildlife and wild places that makes Oregon such a special place to live. The project utilizes three different types of surveys: camera surveys, year-round; snow tracking, winter only; and scat surveys, summer only. This report documents activity from mid April, 2022 to March 31, 2023, which corresponds to our summer 2022 and winter 2022-23 seasons.

Survey findings

The project had one huge, unanticipated finding -- helping document the wolverine that recently passed through the Portland area. The wolverine was first reported by a volunteer with the project who recognized the importance of the sighting which was made by her neighbor. This shows how important the educational component of a community science project can be, with ramifications that can extend well beyond the scope of the project itself.

Surveys on Mt Hood detected an additional two of our target species. Red fox were detected at three different camera sites and Pacific marten were detected during one tracking survey, adding to information about these species. Thirteen potential red fox and wolf scats were also collected and handed over to ODFW for genetic analysis. In addition, numerous other species were recorded to add to long term records.

Trainings

Trainings for the summer season took place in May and June, and surveys were carried out May through October. Trainings for the winter season took place in November and December and surveys were carried out December through April. During covid, our trainings moved online, and this year we continued to keep them this way. Online trainings were held for each type of survey. In addition, camera and snow tracking volunteers had an optional field training as well, repeated three times to allow for small group size, better learning opportunity, and more a more covid-safe atmosphere. Trainings covered not only how to carry out the survey, but also information on our target species and outdoor safety, and are an important part of the project.

Survey effort

- Number of volunteers: 229 (150 anticipated)
- Number of cameras maintained: 19 (19 anticipated)
- Miles of tracking surveys completed: 11.3 (35 anticipated)
- Miles of scat surveys completed: 153 (175 anticipated)
- Number of trips for non-regular volunteers: 0 (4 anticipated)

The project engaged over 150% more volunteers than anticipated, a testament to how much people want to be engaged in wildlife projects such as this. Survey effort was close to anticipated, except for the tracking surveys. Nine out of the 20 scheduled trips were cancelled, 7 due to winter storms and 2 due to sickness of the trip leader.

In addition to organizing regular volunteers, each year we also try to organize special trips for groups that don't usually have access to the outdoors. Much of this work, however, has still not recovered from being put on hold during covid. Only one trip, with Cascade Education Corps, an organization which provides job skills to at-risk teenagers, was scheduled this year; however, it was cancelled due to sickness of all but one of their students that week. We are looking forward to re-fostering additional connections in the future.

Social media and online engagement

To further engage volunteers, a weekly newsletter was sent with highlights from the surveys as well as other interesting wildlife information. To reach the general public, survey highlights were also shared weekly on facebook, instagram, and twitter, and a monthly blog posted on our website.

Research report

Every year in early May, at the end of the winter season, a research report is written with the project's findings and shared with the agencies and organizations who use the data, including: Mt Hood National Forest, US Forest Service Pacific NW Research Station, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Carnivore Research Group, OSU's Institute for Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife wolf biologists, Hood River County Forestry Department, Cascades Carnivore Project, and Defenders of Wildlife. The report for the timeframe covered by this grant will be out soon.

Budget

	Projected annual budget	Actual budget (April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023)
Wolverine Tracking Project Coordinator Salary	\$22,000	\$26,500
Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator Salary	\$7,000	\$0
Supplies (replacement cameras, parking passes for volunteers, batteries, misc supplies)	\$2,500	\$2754
Volunteer events	\$500	in-kind donations
Overhead (rent and insurance)	\$4,500	\$5,024
Total	\$36,500	\$34,278

The final budget was similar to anticipated. Many donations were received to fund our end-of-season volunteer celebration events, from local businesses, volunteers, and Cascadia Wild board members. The project coordinator's salary was increased slightly to keep up with inflation, as this position is indispensable to the project. Our previous winter's intern generously went above and beyond her job requirements and carried out many of the duties of a volunteer and outreach coordinator for the beginning of the summer season. With funds tight, we decided not to hire a part time volunteer and outreach coordinator after she left.

Summary

We at Cascadia Wild are very grateful to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund for selecting us as a grant recipient. With funds from this grant, we were able to continue to carry out the Wolverine Tracking Project, offering a chance to volunteers to learn about wildlife and interact with the natural world, while collecting important data on rare carnivores. Healthy ecosystems start with people who are passionate about the natural world, and we are grateful to be able to continue to carry out this work.