



RESTORING CONNECTIONS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE IN A CHANGED WORLD

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The Wildlife for All staff and coalition partners came together in Reno, Nevada at the end of July to present a panel discussion on the need to reform state wildlife management to protect biodiversity at the biennial North American Congress of Conservation Biologists. With over 300 conference presenters and nearly 500 people in attendance, it was a stimulating opportunity for WFA staff to come together to learn, share and explore.

And, it was the first time our team, Kevin, Mikaila and Robyn were all together in person! We normally work remotely from our homes in Las Cruces, NM, Bellingham, WA and Tulalip, WA, but for the conference rented a home in Reno to share. We were joined there by Dr. Michelle Lute of Project Coyote, and Don Molde of the Nevada Wildlife Alliance.

It was a terrific "team building" opportunity as we cooked together, hung out on the patio in the evenings and walked to conference presentations. Working remotely offers us the unique opportunity to truly be a nation-wide organization, but nothing really beats sharing a drink and laughter face to face.

For our Monday morning presentation, Executive Director Kevin Bixby was joined by coalition partners, Michelle Lute, Jeremy Bruskotter, and Don Molde for a panel discussing the imperative and challenge of transforming state wildlife management to align it with modern ecological knowledge and changing public attitudes. Over 60 people participated in the discussion in person, online or through our livestream. You can [watch the live stream HERE](#).

Coalition partner Fred Koontz also presented at the conference, offering a definition of the term "conservation." [Watch his brief talk HERE](#).



With dozens of workshops, field trips, symposiums, contributed sessions, poster sessions, interactive sessions and speed sessions each day, there was a lot to take in! Each evening, we gathered over drinks to talk about what we learned, what inspired us and what questions we had.

We each chose one session to share with you –

From Kevin, WFA Executive Director:

There were many great sessions, but if I had to choose one it was the inspiring story about how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service led by Lisa Heki succeeded in bringing Lahontan cutthroat trout back from the brink of extinction in Nevada. The story involved finding a previously unknown wild population of LCT in a tiny stream in Utah, restoring a stretch of badly degraded river (Truckee River) and finding enough water for the fish in a dry stream system. A quintessential example of how conservation requires enormous amounts of persistence, leadership and luck.

From Mikaila, WFA Campaign Associate:

I attended a panel about urban ecology and one of the things that struck me was how the characteristics of cities negatively impact biodiversity. These features include habitat loss through fragmentation, chemical use, the urban heat island effect, high ambient noise, and an increase in non-native species. Biodiversity is already threatened with a massive sixth extinction, and human populations are on the rise. This means bigger cities and decreased biodiversity. Improving future urban planning can help slow the loss of biodiversity, but wildlife management agencies nationwide also need to take this into account when creating policies that impact our public trust – wildlife!

From Robyn, WFA Membership Manager:

I was inspired and energized by the panel discussion "Incorporating Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Into Conservation Standards," in particular the presentation by Leander Lacey of Lacey Consulting Services. He spoke about the need to include communities in conservation studies: "The conservation and conservation planning frameworks we have today are a result of a field that did not start with Indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA+ communities, racial diversity, or people across the gender spectrum. For this reason, our ability to make true global change is limited." By applying JEDI principles to actively include community members, conservation studies and efforts have better outcomes and more committed, caring communities to carry the work forward.

We ended our time in Reno with a happy hour meet and greet at Lead Dog Brewing. Over 30 people from across the US representing more than a dozen organizations gathered over drinks and snacks to talk about their work and how wildlife management reform could impact their areas of conservation. We enjoyed stimulating conversations, played cornhole, and made new f connections that will sustain us as we return to our home communities to carry on the important work of protecting nature, wild lives, and wild lands.

