

# People and Carnivores

# TRACKS

## 30 Years of Protecting Wild Carnivores

Working out of a tiny, closet-sized office in 1992, Tom Skeele became executive director of Predator Project, the first name of the organization now called People and Carnivores. Loaded with enthusiasm and youthful ignorance, Tom and his wife Carla, along with friend Phil Knight, formed Predator Project in Bozeman, Montana to stop wildlife killing.

Tom, Carla, and Phil first met in the late-1980s when they were involved with Earth First! – a self-proclaimed radical environmental advocacy group formed in the southwest. When Tom and Carla later moved to Bozeman, they reconnected with Phil and envisioned a new group focused on saving wildlife, specifically grizzly bears, wolves, and other persecuted species.

“We recognized the need to separate from the activism of Earth First! to the practical work of wildlife and predator protection here in the Northern Rockies,” said Phil when recently recounting the early days of Predator Project. Work quickly began to slow wildlife killing agencies like “Animal Damage Management” (now called “Wildlife Services,” an agency within the US Department of Agriculture). As Phil put it, “The animal fatalities [carried

out by Animal Damage Control] were disgusting.” The trio agreed this was the place they needed to start.

After about a year, both Carla and Phil left Predator Project, while Tom leaned further into fighting predator control work, which no other nonprofits were focusing on.



Support for wolf reintroduction into Yellowstone National Park was gaining momentum in the early 1990s, making Tom’s work even more important. Gray wolves were released into the Park in 1995 and 1996.

Over the next few years, Predator Project added lynx, fisher, martens, and wolverines – the meso-predators and forest carnivores – to its wildlife protection work, and a bit later some prairie grassland species. The group’s name changed to Predator Conservation Alliance to better align the moniker with the programs, and shortly after that, human-carnivore conflict prevention was added. Adding the coexistence program was visionary, as a few years after the Yellowstone reintroduction, wolves would have an impact on private lands outside the park and conflicts would become a hot button issue and a reason for control

*Cont’d on page 3*





## PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

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## From The Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This year marks P&C's 30th year working to protect wild carnivores and predator species. The group was incorporated in 1992, before wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone. At its founding, the organization was called Predator Project and despite three name changes over the years, we have always fought for carnivore/predator species. Along the way, there was a prairie predator program (prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, and a forest carnivore program (martens, wolverines, fisher, and lynx). Wolves, bears, and lions have always been at the heart of the mission.

I have been privileged to be a part of P&C for 11 of these 30 years. The process of looking back through our history, reading old strategic plans and newsletters, talking with past staff and board members, and reflecting about our growth has been educational and humbling. Many smart and committed people came before, and everything that's been done for wildlife reinforces our resolve to help sustain biodiversity in the Northern Rockies for years to come.

While this year's milestone is an achievement for the organization, this is a challenging moment for wildlife. Hundreds of wolves have been killed in the region this winter, and new laws threaten bears and lions. With so many large carnivores being hunted and trapped, every animal is important to keep alive. So, progress can feel slow at times, and policies can present temporary setbacks. But by preventing conflicts, we have helped wolves travel into neighboring states and expand their range. Grizzlies are closer than ever to recolonizing historic habitat in central Idaho. We are making gains for wild carnivores.

**You are the reason this is possible.** We all have to work together to "help people and predators coexist" and "keep the wild in the west" as we've said in the past. But none of it can happen without your dedication to wildlife, your trust in this organization, your encouragement, and your financial support. From the current staff and board of directors of People and Carnivores, thank you for being there for wildlife.

*Lisa.*

Lisa Upson

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**"For 30 years, dedicated staff from People and Carnivores have been preventing conflict where it matters most: In the field with their boots on the ground and their hearts and minds focused on carnivores and the people living with them. Countless lives of both have been enriched by their work."**

**- Mike Phillips, Director of the Turner Endangered Species Fund, Project Leader for wolf restoration in Yellowstone 1994-1997, and former MT state Senator**

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## 30 Years of Protecting Wild Carnivores, cont'd

actions. A similar trajectory has defined the growth of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population.

In the early 2000s, the nonprofit's leadership did some soul searching and decided to make a strategic transition to focusing on wildlife coexistence. "We had to make sure there were still critters on the ground, which we did through our previous policy work," said Tom. "Now that they were there, we had to ask ourselves how we were going to keep them there and live with them."

Because of the pluck, foresight, and fortitude during the early years, Tom, Carla, and Phil created an organization that Tom and other staff were able to grow into a legacy of wildlife protection, now People and Carnivores. Thirty years later, the organization not only carries the mission forward, but has established itself as a leader in the field of carnivore conflict prevention and coexistence.

"People and Carnivores has provided our staff with invaluable expertise in the use of tools such as electrified fencing and fladry, and we have collaborated on a number of projects to reduce conflicts between humans and large carnivores. We highly value our partnership with P&C, and look forward to future projects!"

- Kari Eneas, Wildlife Biologist, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation



PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES



## OVER THE YEARS

### 1992

Predator Project was incorporated, to focus on reforming predator lethal control programs. The Predator Friendly ranching program was also launched.

### 1995-1996

Gray wolves reintroduced to Central Idaho and to Yellowstone National Park

### 2003

After wolves started leaving Yellowstone Park, the organization's first coexistence program was initiated: Coexisting With Predators.

### 2004

The Range Riders program was introduced and, while riders had been used in other countries, using range riders to prevent wolves from preying on cattle was novel in the US.

### 2007

The nonprofit's name was changed to Keystone Conservation to present a collaborative approach, and to recognize that predators were "keystone" species.

### 2011-2014

Several tools were pioneered including fladry and the fladry spool, a bear spray rental program, and holistic range management – an update of the range rider.

### 2015

Keystone Conservation merged with People and Carnivores to leverage resources and similar program work, which required a name change to People and Carnivores.

### 2017

Our 25th anniversary and we were so busy building our programs, we missed it! We added our NW MT program as well as several tools, including guard dogs and coexistence toolkits. Our Bear Smart Community work was also started this year.

### 2019

The first grizzly bear confirmed in central Idaho in a decade. Kerry Gunther, Yellowstone's Chief Bear Biologist once said, "We used to manage the bears, now we manage the people."

### 2020

The Bitterroot Ecosystem program was added, for grizzly bear recolonization in Idaho and for wolf connectivity to Yellowstone and Glacier.

## 2022 AND BEYOND

See our Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals!

# Gaining (on the) Ground

30 years of conserving wild carnivore populations, biodiversity, and ecosystems



## WORK

**Implementing field projects** to keep carnivores away from people and property, including innovating several tools on public and private lands: Fladry and temporary fencing, range riders, bear poles, coexistence toolkits, guard dogs, garbage security, and a US Bear Smart Community program

**Educating and training** community members, practitioners, and managers in front country and backcountry conflict prevention tools and techniques

**Advocating** for alternatives to killing and policies that maintain healthy populations of wild carnivores as well as provide for conflict prevention resources to landowners and organizations

## OUTCOMES

**Helping countless wolves, bears, cats, and other wildlife** avoid human attractants and unnatural food sources so they can stay wild and keep moving

**Increasing social tolerance** for large carnivores and capacity for applying prevention solutions in communities

**Advancing conflict prevention** into a leading conservation strategy around the region and increasing resources for coexistence work

## IMPACT

**Wolf and grizzly bear populations** have grown and expanded their range, and are beginning to connect

**Grizzly bears** are close to recolonizing central Idaho (and may go further, as wolves did)

**Black bears and mountain lions** are benefitting from conflict prevention and holding steady.

When we protect top predator species we naturally protect many other wildlife species.

“People and Carnivores has been an outstanding partner with the Forest Service in our conservation and public education work over the years. They have great relationships with the communities, which puts them in tune with what projects are most needed on private and public lands. It’s always a joy to call P&C when we have project ideas because they are always there to help.”

- Jenna Roose, Wildlife Biologist,  
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

270

bear poles built on public or tribal lands

100

coexistence toolkits given or loaned

225

miles of temporary fencing/fladry

475

bear resistant canisters distributed

Countless

wild carnivores kept alive

# “Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals”

Some days it's easy to get lost in the details of preventing human-carnivore conflict in the settled and the wild landscapes of the Northern Rockies—in things like building electric fence, placing guard dogs, and helping communities address bear attractants—but we also understand the importance of planning for what we want to create in the future.

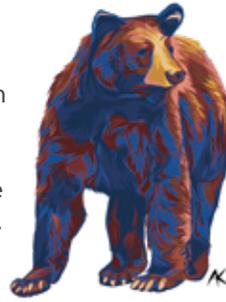
In 2000 when we were known as Predator Conservation Alliance, staff and board developed a list of “Big, hairy, audacious goals” to work towards, and they made good progress by pioneering some of the tools we use today. Here is a summary of P&C's big hairy audacious goals for 2022 and beyond. Over the last 30 years, we've seen wolves and grizzlies return to areas where they were absent for decades. Coming back to places that were once home, these animals encounter habitats increasingly altered and fragmented by human use. On landscapes that are now shared, preventing conflicts can mean the difference between life and death for individual animals – especially important when wildlife policies work against them.

In order for wild carnivores to expand their range, connect with others, and to serve as keystone species for biodiversity and intact ecosystems, they need to travel. It is precisely because wildlife moves that no one person or organization can protect them; to keep carnivores alive and away from unnatural food sources, we engage landowners and wildlife managers in shared problem solving.

Here is what we envision and will work for in the coming years.

## Wolves

The Northern Rockies remains a robust, source population of wolves. Wolves continue to successfully disperse from this region and begin to recolonize in new areas: In Utah and Nevada, more of them in OR and WA, other areas of Colorado and California, to the east, and importantly, they connect with Mexican wolves to the south. What once was the Northern Rockies “distinct population segment” under the Endangered Species Act becomes the Western US wolf population.



## Black Bears

Black bear coexistence in the Northern Rockies serves as an example to other areas of the country. As we expand human-bear conflict prevention infrastructure, black bears are recognized as important species alongside grizzlies. Offensive hunting policies such as baiting and hound hunting are reversed in part because conflicts are mitigated, tolerance increases, and policies begin to reflect these gains.

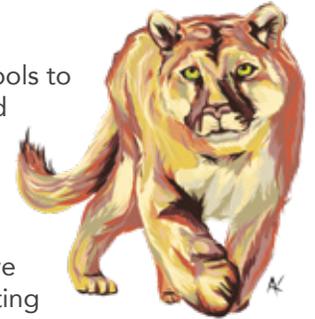
## Grizzly Bears

Grizzly bears live and reproduce in central Idaho (the Bitterroot Ecosystem). Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem bears connect and interchange naturally with those from wildlands to the north and west. Northern Rockies grizzlies continue to wander west from Montana and Idaho, spurring us to wonder whether grizzlies might even venture from here towards the west coast and into the North Cascades.



## Mountain Lions

Lions, along with information and tools to coexistence with them, increase and expand throughout the Northern Rockies. Individuals and agencies adopt a conflict prevention approach rather than the common lethal control used today. Aggressive hunting policies such as hound hunting are reversed in part because conflicts are mitigated, tolerance grows, and policies reflect this.



We also envision that when these goals are met, whole communities will coexist with wild carnivores and resources will be widely available. Coexistence tools and practices will be common and a part of daily routines. Even with continued development, more people will participate and more wild carnivores will stay alive and moving. We believe that the mountains and valleys of the Northern Rockies are better—more whole, natural, interesting, and sustaining—because we share them with wolves, grizzlies, black bears, mountain lions and the biodiversity they support.

“The world would be uglier, more boring, and more lonely without the wolves, bears, mountain lions, and other predators of our American landscape.

I appreciate People and Carnivores' work to protect these important species.”

- David Quammen, award-winning author and scientist

# From the Carnivore Coexistence Lab: Interview with Adrian Treves, Ph.D.

Adrian Treves, Ph.D. is Director of the Carnivore Coexistence Lab at the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research related to predator ecology and large carnivore coexistence is world renowned. We asked Dr. Treves to answer a few questions about coexistence today. To read the full interview with Dr. Treves, go to [peopleandcarnivores.org/30years](http://peopleandcarnivores.org/30years).

## **You founded the flagship carnivore coexistence lab in the US. What motivated you to start the lab and what is its mission?**

At the lab we value strong scientific inference using the highest scientific integrity. Public scientists have a duty to advocate for (a) the broadest public including future generations of all life, (b) for good governance, (c) for fulfilling the duties of public trustees, and (d) for the best available science. Consistent with all that, the mission of the lab is to conduct research, outreach, and education to hold governments accountable to the broad public interest for preserving nature, and regulating its use.

## **What are the major challenges in people living with large carnivores such as wolves and bears, and what from history might explain these challenges?**

This is a complex topic and goes back centuries. Today, large carnivores are difficult to live alongside particularly for owners of livestock/domestic animals or where people claim ownership of wild animals that are prey of large carnivores, like deer or elk. Some large carnivores also make us fear for our personal safety. Further back, our relationship to crops and domestic animals that we use for food, clothing, or safety are fundamental to understanding how we perceive and manage large carnivores. Because bears eat all the foods we can and more, and because big cats and wolves eat ungulates, most crops and livestock claimed by people were also the focus of competition with carnivores throughout history. Also, as dogs were domesticated, wolves were a threat because they killed dogs that cultures relied on and wolves bred with dogs which could ruin careful breeding programs. Interestingly, cultures that had little or no relationship with dogs, such as some tribes and first nations, can reasonably be said to have shared a history of colonizing North America alongside the gray wolf.

## **What is the role of efforts to prevent or reduce human-carnivore conflicts?**

Scientists and practitioners have been making huge strides in developing and learning about non-lethal methods to prevent wildlife threats to people and property. These methods are generally preventive and proactive, not reactive and vengeful like lethal control is. The first question that must be answered about any predator control method is whether it is effective at protecting the human interest, such

as domestic animals. If it is not effective, all the other questions need not be asked – it doesn't matter if it is costly or cheap, easy to implement or technical, socially acceptable, or humane. if it is not effective, then we need to turn to another method.

This seemingly commonsense approach for protecting human interests from wild carnivores has largely been ignored relative to lethal management. People asking the government to kill predators forget (or don't care) that a dead wolf or bear is not the same as a protected sheep herd or chicken coop. The idea that if you kill a predator animal, you solve a problem is not borne out by research.

Research shows that bullets, though relatively inexpensive, are not necessarily effective. The methods that are often more effective are the ones that deter carnivores and keep them wild because they may return to wild food sources they evolved to eat and won't be replaced by another predator that may cause more damage. Moreover, there are studies that show that killing can actually exacerbate predation by carnivores. To be clear, I am not saying lethal control can never work or isn't sometimes needed; I am saying that the way it has been practiced in the US is not effective or rational. Most carnivore-killing is not selective for the problem individual and most carnivore-killing that is selective leaves a vacancy that will be filled by another predator that may also lack wild food alternatives or prefer the human source. In this case the cycle continues with more conflict and more killing and isn't focused on solving the problem. Preventative methods are a wiser compromise and are often effective, while simultaneously also meeting the public interest of protecting native predators.

I write and speak a lot about non-lethal methods because there is experimental evidence they are effective. Research shows that livestock guarding dogs, fladry, scare devices, herding/range riding and eye-spots on cattle rumps work as large carnivore deterrents when designed and used correctly. Electric fences and night-time enclosures have a strong track record of success worldwide as well, although they have not been studied experimentally as much. Several of these methods look very promising against coyotes too, and scientists have done many experiments on methods to keep bears away from fixed properties like crops and dumpsters.



*Predator Ecologist Adrian Treves, Ph.D.*

*Cont'd on page 7*

## Adrian Treves cont'd

### Where are we headed in the next decade and what more can be done?

Scientific understanding has been slower to surface than social constructions about large carnivores in North America. Ecologists are beginning to recognize that ecosystems are not structured as a pyramid with a wide base of vegetation sustained by sunlight and therefore predictably built from the bottom up. Instead, the view that the top-down effects of predators support higher biological diversity and healthier ecosystems than those without top predators is slowly being recognized.

Also, our understanding that killing predators may have adverse effects may also become more widespread. Traditionally, owners of livestock and crops have assumed that killing wildlife would always reduce threats to their property. Since 2016 though, a dozen scientific reviews of studies from around the world have concluded that the picture is far more complex. When wolves are killed in one place, a neighboring ranch or farm may see an uptick in predation, and this joins decades of similar findings related to killing coyotes and cougars.

The emergence of social science is also promising. A common claim about the social tolerance for large carnivores has been steadily undermined by social scientific evidence. This claim says that carnivore numbers must be limited by "social carrying capacity" and that killing them or allowing such killing will raise tolerance for them, such as: "Just let us kill carnivores and we will be okay with them on the landscape." But this turns out to be a thinly-veiled argument for one person's or organization's preference for a certain population size.

Finally, the non-lethal tools and practices in prevention that I referred to above are advancing. For carnivore deterrence, the most promising tools seem to be electric fences, enclosures or other barriers especially those for young livestock, and livestock guards (dogs or humans). While science, policy, and cultures evolve, at least we have these tools to coexist now.

### Missing the annual report?

Usually our spring newsletter includes our annual report, including information about P&C's programs and finances for the last fiscal year (ending 9/30). For our FY2021 annual report, please visit [www.peopleandcarnivores.org/annual-reports](http://www.peopleandcarnivores.org/annual-reports).

### What is most promising?

Coexisting peacefully with other life and particularly life that is difficult to live alongside, like carnivores, takes ingenuity, hope for a better future, and a willingness to take risks or try new things. In my view, coexistence with minimal conflict and the fight against extinction has strong support in the broader public, and there is growing (albeit slow) cultural change on many landscapes thanks to effective tools and innovations like those People and Carnivores use. We also have powerful new allies in young people and in the fight for environmental justice. There are challenges, but all of this prompts an outward-facing vision of a healthier planet that includes large carnivores.



### What is your favorite large carnivore and why?

Personally, I love watching big cats for their stealth, poise, and coloration, but wolves need our empathy and understanding if they are to survive and be seen wild and free by our grandchildren.

To read the full interview with Dr. Treves, go to [www.peopleandcarnivores.org/30years](http://www.peopleandcarnivores.org/30years)

To learn more about Dr. Treves' work and the Carnivore Coexistence Lab, visit <http://faculty.nelson.wisc.edu/treves/>

## To the Founders and Former Staff, Volunteers, and Board Members

This milestone tells a story of grit and determination, both that of wild carnivores and spirited humans. The foresight and vision of those who came before laid the foundation for critical work that has been accomplished over the last 30 years. As we continue to pave the way to an American West with thriving wildlife and wild carnivore populations, as well as communities preparing to live alongside them, we remain deeply grateful for the contributions of those who led the way before us. Witnessing the hopeful outcomes from three decades of advocating and working for wild carnivores has only strengthened our resolve to continue this vital work. Thank you, from all of us at People and Carnivores.

With gratitude,  
Lacy Kowalski  
President, People and Carnivores Board of Directors

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## PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

### Create a Future for Wild Carnivores

Create a conservation legacy by protecting wolves, bears, lions and other wildlife for the next 30 years and beyond. Including People and Carnivores in your trust and estate planning will make a difference in years to come. Future generations deserve to see wolves and grizzlies in the wild, and together we can ensure their future. For more information about how to name People and Carnivores in your will or other estate plans, contact Lisa Upson at [lupson@peopleandcarnivores.org](mailto:lupson@peopleandcarnivores.org) or 406/587-3389.

**30**  
**YEARS**

Protecting Wild  
Carnivores



[www.peopleandcarnivores.org](http://www.peopleandcarnivores.org)