

**Raptor Research Foundation
Neotropical Raptor Network
2021 Virtual Conference – Boise, Idaho, USA**
Conference Report



Prepared by: **David L. Anderson**, The Peregrine Fund, Local Organizing Committee Co-Chair,
Dan Varland, Coastal Raptors, RRF Conference Committee Chair,
Sarah Schulwitz, The Peregrine Fund, Local Organizing Committee Co-Chair

Acknowledgments

Aquila Sponsors



Falco Sponsors



Symposia Sponsors



Travel Awards



Joan Morrison



Michael Dupuy

Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|----|
| Acknowledgments | 2 |
| Table of Contents | 3 |
| Planning | 4 |
| Location and Venue | 6 |
| Boise Centre on the Grove | 6 |
| Lodging | 7 |
| Registration | 9 |
| Conference Schedule | 13 |
| Scientific Program, Symposia, and Posters | 14 |
| Social Events | 16 |
| Icebreaker | 16 |
| ECCR Reception | 16 |
| Awards Ceremony | 17 |
| Program Book & Conference Website | 17 |
| Sales and Gifts | 18 |
| T-shirts | 18 |
| Swag bags/registration packet | 18 |
| Sponsors & Vendors | 19 |
| Sponsors | 19 |
| Vendors | 20 |
| Wings to Fly Travel Awards | 21 |
| 2020 Travel Awards | 21 |
| 2021 Travel Awards – Hybrid Conference | 21 |
| 2021 Travel Awards – Virtual Conference | 22 |
| Financial Report | 22 |
| Budget Estimates for Hybrid Conference | 22 |
| Profit-loss calculation | 25 |
| Final Thoughts | 26 |

Planning

The host and local organizer for the 2020/2021 conference was **The Peregrine Fund**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Boise, Idaho. The first proposal to hold the 2020 RRF conference in Boise was written in 2017 by Sarah Schulwitz and Erin Katzner of The Peregrine Fund (henceforth “TPF”), with guidance from Rick Watson, TPF President. Sarah led the planning process as Co-Chair of the Local Organizing Committee until December 2020, when she ceded her role to David Anderson for personal and professional reasons. From December 2020 through writing this final report, David Anderson served as Co-Chair with guidance from fellow Co-Chair Rick Watson. The local committee decided to honor Sarah by retaining her title as Co-Chair in recognition of the tremendous amount of work she did planning the conference and for her assistance in transitioning David into his new role.

All reporting on the 2021 RRF conference must be made in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Planning for the 2021 RRF conference began in 2017, with the full intention of holding an in-person conference in Boise, Idaho, in October 2020. In March 2020 while the pandemic was in its early stages and the world in full alarm, the decision was made to postpone the conference until October 2021 under the assumption that the pandemic would be over or lessened by that time, allowing for an in-person meeting to be held safely.

In 2020, RRF held a “Virtual Event” 8 - 10 December in lieu of a fully-fledged conference. TPF was not involved in the planning, and this was not a full conference. The program included one plenary speaker, three workshops, a members meeting and an awards ceremony. The schedule did not include a scientific program with paper sessions.

The following year the decision to continue planning an in-person conference, with one day of activities recorded and made available virtually post conference, was ratified by the RRF Board of Directors on 3 March 2021. From this point forward, the conference was a hybrid event with both in person and virtual components.

However, the Delta variant of COVID-19 surged in the summer of 2021, filling intensive care units of Idaho hospitals to capacity, at which time the State of Idaho implemented state-wide “crisis standards of care.” On 18 August 2021 the Conference Planning Committee made the only wise decision remaining and agreed to host an all-virtual conference. This decision left 52 days, or approximately 7.5 weeks to pivot from four years of planning a hybrid conference to an all-virtual conference.

For all these reasons, this report details the process for planning an in-person/hybrid meeting, followed by the planning process for an all-virtual meeting. The conference was held 8 – 12 October 2021. The RRF board meeting was held on 8 October, while 9 October saw the first day of the 2-day

lead symposium and 4 virtual workshops. The full scientific program ran from 10 – 12 October with a final workshop, also virtual, held on 21 October.

During 2020 and early 2021, the RRF Conference Planning Committee and the Local Planning Committee each met monthly. During the early planning process, as many as 21 TPF employees performed diverse roles, from organizing fieldtrips and workshops, to ordering SWAG, recruiting and organizing volunteers, and soliciting donations for symposia and travel awards. From August 2021 up to conference time, the rate of scheduled meetings accelerated to bi-weekly, then weekly, until during the final two weeks before the conference when multiple meetings were held each week.

Peregrine Fund staff involved in planning the hybrid conference, and their roles.

Local Conference Committee

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| David L. Anderson Co-Chair | Erin Katzner Virtual Conference Management | Daniel Young Program Book Design | Alicia Leacox Chief of SWAG |
| Sarah Schulwitz Co-Chair | Amy Siedenstrang Logo Design | Marta Curti Neotropical Raptor Network Coordinator | Jennifer McCabe Sponsors & Vendors |
| Richard T. Watson Co-Chair | Tate Mason Field Trip & Transportation Coordinator | Michael Henderson Workshop Co-coordinator | Neil Paprocki Workshop Co-coordinator |
| Jessica Gordon Volunteer Coordinator | Taylor Rollison Technology | Matthew Danihel Outreach & Communication | Craig Lochner Accounting |
| Kit Stevens Accounting | Heather Meuleman Entertainment | Joell Brown Administration | Marilyn Eagleton Internal Committee Communication |

RRF Conference Committee (Dan Varland, Chair)

RRF Conference Committee

Dan Varland
Libby Mojica
Rob Bierregaard
Douglas "Sandy" Boyce

Location and Venue

The in-person/hybrid conference was to be held in Boise, Idaho, location of The Peregrine Fund headquarters offices. Boise is a mid-sized city of 200,000 people; the greater population of the Treasure Valley, where Boise is located, is estimated at 750,000. Boise is serviced by the Boise Airport, a regional airport with flights to and from all over the United States, and is located 10 minutes by car from downtown Boise. After the conference was moved to an all-virtual format, it was still hosted virtually by Peregrine Fund staff based in Boise.

Boise Centre on the Grove

The Boise Centre was contracted as the venue for the in-person conference due to their excellent reputation as a conference center and capacity to host a multi-day meeting with 400-500 participants. We considered having the conference at Boise State University but decided against it because classes would be in session at that time. The Boise Centre is located in downtown Boise, conveniently close to lodging, dining, Boise State University, and less than 15 minutes from the Boise Airport.

Initially, the conference was scheduled to be held 4 - 10 October 2020, with considerations to avoid Boise State University home football games when competition for hotels would have been greater. In March 2020, Boise Centre agreed to reschedule for October 2021. Available dates at the venue were limited and thus we settled on the chosen dates for a postponed conference.

Because the in-person conference was cancelled, we cannot provide expenses for hosting the conference at the Boise Centre. That said, we can state the contract amount for the Boise Center, which was \$15,400. The price included:

- 5 meeting rooms
- 1 exhibit hall intended as space for vendors and coffee breaks
- 1 icebreaker room
- 1 poster session room
- 1 banquet room
- 1 event office
- access to a secure room for storing valuables
- space in the main lobby for registration tables

The Peregrine Fund deposit schedule to The Boise Centre was as follows:

1st Deposit - \$1000, 8/14/2017

2nd Deposit - \$1000, 10/1/2017
3rd Deposit - \$5,450, 10/1/2018
4th Deposit – \$4,000, 10/1/2019
5th Deposit – Remainder, 10/1/2020

Due to the excellent working relationship between The Peregrine Fund, RRF and Boise Centre staff, staff at the Boise Centre understood our predicament with the surge in COVID-19 cases in Idaho and worldwide and decided to return our payments in full.

The venue would have offered room discounts following the event based on food and beverage purchased at Boise Centre (exclusive of service charge, tax, and cash sales) and room nights used (at local hotels):

- If \$50,000 or more in food and beverage is consumed, and 500 or more room nights are used, the room rental will be discounted by 60%.
- If \$49,999 - \$40,000 or more in food and beverage is consumed, and 400 or more room nights are used, the room rental will be discounted by 50%.
- If \$39,999 - \$30,000 or more in food and beverage is consumed, and 300 or more room nights are used, the room rental will be discounted by 40%.
- If \$29,999 - \$20,000 or more in food and beverage is consumed, and 200 or more room nights are used, the room rental will be discounted by 30%.
- If less than \$20,000 in food and beverage is consumed, and fewer than 200 room nights are used, the room rental will not be discounted.

We estimated that we would have received the 40% or 50% discount depending on planned attendance.

In addition to venue rental, the Boise Centre would have charged us for the following major expenses:

- Food and beverage plus 20% service fee and tax
- Audio/Visual plus 20% service fee and tax
- Dedicate WIFI for the duration of the event
- Event Security (to be contracted by approved security company, 1 guard per 250 attendees)
- Poster boards for poster session

Lodging

Primary lodging for the conference was to be held at two downtown hotels, the Red Lion and Hampton Inn. The contract with the Hampton Inn contained certain clauses protecting Hampton from financial losses (contract language below).

- *Attrition: If the event is held, but the Hotel does not realize the total revenue anticipated from your event, Group agrees to pay performance damages. The damages owed will be the amount necessary for the Hotel to receive no less than 75% of the total anticipated revenue from the event. (Total Block Size = 460 room nights / 75% of Block = 345 room nights).*
- *Total Group Block Cancellation:*

| <i>Date of Cancellation</i> | <i>Percentage owed</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Date of signing to 120 days in advance</i> | <i>No fee</i> |
| <i>119 days to 90 days in advance</i> | <i>25%</i> |
| <i>89 to 60 days in advance</i> | <i>50%</i> |
| <i>59 days or less in advance of event</i> | <i>75%</i> |

Although the in-person conference was canceled with only 52 days remaining before the conference start, Hampton Inn released the TPF and RRF from financial liability due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic. The Red Lion contract contained no such financial protection clauses.

In addition, prior to the pandemic we had also worked out an arrangement with a local hostel intended for students. They agreed to hold all beds (~18) for our attendees. However, during the pandemic, the hostel went out of business.

Block room reservation and rates for Hampton Inn. Room rate was \$145/night.

| ROOM AND RATE INFORMATION | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Day/Date | Room Type | Total Rooms |
| Thurs, October 7 | Standard Guestroom (5 K + 110 2Q) | 15 |
| Fri, October 8 | Standard Guestroom (12 K + 23 2Q) | 35 |
| Sat, October 9 | Standard Guestroom (30 K + 60 2Q) | 90 |
| Sun, October 10 | Standard Guestroom (30 K + 60 2Q) | 90 |
| Mon, October 11 | Standard Guestroom (30 K + 60 2Q) | 90 |
| Tue, October 12 | Standard Guestroom (30 K + 60 2Q) | 90 |
| Wed, October 13 | Standard Guestroom (12 K + 23 2Q) | 35 |
| Thurs, October 14 | Standard Guestroom (5 K + 10 2Q) | 15 |
| Total rooms | | 460 |

Block room reservation and rates for Red Lion Inn. The rate for both room types was \$99/night.

| ROOM AND RATE INFORMATION | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Day/Date | Room Type | Total Rooms |
| Fri, October 8 | 2 double beds | 10 |

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | 1 standard king | 5 |
| Sat, October 9 | 2 double beds | 45 |
| | 1 standard king | 15 |
| Sun, October 10 | 2 double beds | 45 |
| | 1 standard king | 15 |
| Mon, October 11 | 2 double beds | 45 |
| | 1 standard king | 15 |
| Tue, October 12 | 2 double beds | 45 |
| | 1 standard king | 15 |
| Wed, October 13 | 2 double beds | 10 |
| | 1 standard king | 0 |
| Total rooms | | 265 |

Registration

Registration for the hybrid conference (in-person with one day recorded) opened on March 1, then closed on August 18, when the conference was changed to all-virtual. Once the conference structure changed, all who had registered for the hybrid conference (n = 256) were refunded in full on August 23. In contrast to past conferences, we don't have the customary count of registrations per early, mid, and late time periods because the registration for the in-person conference was incomplete before it was voided for the all-virtual conference.

The registration period for the virtual conference was 25 August – 12 October. Note that the last day of registration was also the last day of the conference. Nearly all conference activities were recorded to be made available for 90 days after the conference, thus providing an incentive to register right up to the last day. There were 623 total registrations from 40 countries, with the United States accounting for 519 registrations. Twenty countries were represented by a single registrant each.

Registration for the hybrid conference and then finally the all-virtual conference was handled by Classi Management Services (CMS) under contract with RRF. CMS is an independent management company whose business it is to assist nonprofit organizations with their day-to-day operations. RRF hired CMS to manage registration for the 2020 Virtual Event. This was the first time CMS was employed for conference registration.

In 2021, CMS handled financial transactions related to the conference, which included attendee and exhibitor registrations. While CMS was also capable of accepting sponsorship contributions, these were handled by TPF. CMS acknowledged receipt of payments by email and deposited fees from

transactions. Their registration responsibilities also included collecting attendee profile information and conference badge information. Conference announcements to the RRF membership and registrants only were written by TPF and RRF and forwarded to CMS for distribution.

Communications and payments were facilitated through the RRF Member Portal, managed by CMS through the CMS website, Wild Apricot. The cost for CMS services was \$18 per registrant.

Fee schedule for the hybrid conference planned for October 2020 and subsequently October 2021.

| Registration Type | Early 1 Mar-30 Jun | Mid 1 Jul-30 Aug | Late 31 Aug-14 Oct |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Regular (Member) | \$347 | \$377 | \$432 |
| Student (Member) | \$236 | \$246 | \$256 |
| Early Professional (Member) | \$264 | \$274 | \$284 |
| Retiree/Emeritus (Member) | \$279 | \$299 | \$319 |
| Single Day (Member) | \$187 | \$187 | \$187 |
| Regular (Non-Member) | \$387 | \$417 | \$472 |
| Student (Non-Member) | \$256 | \$268 | \$278 |
| Early Professional (Non-Member) | \$291 | \$301 | \$311 |
| Retiree/Emeritus (Non-Member) | \$306 | \$326 | \$346 |
| Single Day (Non-Member) | \$227 | \$227 | \$227 |
| Guest | \$217 | \$234 | \$251 |
| Virtual -one day recorded ^a | \$100 | \$100 | \$100 |

^a Recordings were to be made available to in-person registrants at no additional charge.

Fee schedule for the virtual conference held in October 2021.

| Registration Type | Fee |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Regular | \$100 |
| Student | \$50 |
| Early Professional | \$50 |
| Retiree/Emeritus | \$50 |
| Plenary Speaker | 0 |
| Sponsor | 0 |
| Wings to Fly Travel Award | 0 |
| Volunteer | 0 |
| ECRR RRF Members ^a | 0 |

^a First 50 to register. All others paid \$50.

Actual registration count and total revenue by category.

| Registration Revenue | Count | Revenue |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| ECRR RRF Members* | 0 | \$0 |
| Student Registration | 63 | \$3,150 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Early Professional | 67 | \$3,350 |
| Regular | 287 | \$28,700 |
| Retiree/Emeritus | 42 | \$2,100 |
| Unpaid registrations | 6 | \$0 |
| Total - Paid registrations | 465 | \$37,300 |

Actual registration count and total expense for comped registrations.

| Registration Expense - Comped Registrations | Count | Expense |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| ECRR RRF Members* | 50 | \$2,500 |
| Plenary Speaker | 4 | \$400 |
| Volunteer | 18 | \$900 |
| Travel Awards | 71 | \$5,100 |
| Lead symposium | 15 | \$750 |
| Steppe symposium | 8 | \$400 |
| Wings to Fly general award | 21 | \$1,050 |
| Wings to Fly - Reimburse travel | 1 | \$1,600 |
| Wings to Fly - NRN Member | 26 | \$1,300 |
| Sponsor | 14 | \$1,400 |
| Vendor | 2 | \$200 |
| Total - Comped Registrations | 159 | \$10,500 |

Registration count by country.

| Country | # Registrations |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| USA | 519 |
| Canada | 20 |
| UK | 11 |
| Argentina | 8 |
| Spain | 6 |
| South Africa | 4 |
| Australia | 3 |
| Colombia | 3 |
| Ireland | 3 |
| Mexico | 3 |
| Mongolia | 3 |
| Norway | 3 |
| Peru | 3 |
| Brazil | 2 |
| Costa Rica | 2 |
| Hungary | 2 |
| India | 2 |
| Japan | 2 |
| Russia | 2 |
| Saudi Arabia | 2 |
| Austria | 1 |
| Botswana | 1 |
| Chile | 1 |
| Denmark | 1 |
| Dominican Republic | 1 |
| Ecuador | 1 |
| Germany | 1 |
| Guatemala | 1 |
| Honduras | 1 |
| Iceland | 1 |
| Iran | 1 |
| Israel | 1 |
| Malaysia | 1 |
| Nepal | 1 |
| Nicaragua | 1 |
| Philippines | 1 |
| Poland | 1 |
| Puerto Rico | 1 |
| Slovakia | 1 |
| Taiwan | 1 |
| Total countries | 40 |

Conference Schedule

Friday, 8 October:

- RRF Board of Directors meeting (originally planned to take place on TPF campus)

Saturday, 9 October:

- Brief welcome preceding the lead symposium
- Lead symposium, day 1 of 2, 10:00 – 4:45
- Workshops (virtual):
 - Harnessing raptors with transmitters
 - Writing and peer review
 - Field and in-hand raptor identification
 - Techniques for handling, auxiliary marking, and measuring raptors after capture.
- Icebreaker reception 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Sunday, 10 October:

- Welcome and announcements, 8:30-9:00
- Plenary speaker, Karen Steenhoff, 9:00 – 10:00
- Lead symposium, day 2 of 2. 10:00 – 4:45
- Symposium: *Global priorities for raptor conservation*
- Concurrent sessions = 4 (including 2 symposia) 10:00 – 4:45
- ECCR reception 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- Poster session, single session 6:00-7:30

Monday, 11 October,

- Welcome and announcements, 8:30-9:00
- Plenary speaker, Sergio Lambertucci, 9:00 – 10:00
- Symposia: *The full annual cycle of the American Kestrel; Conservation of Eurasian steppe ecosystems, with a focus on top avian predators; Global solutions for raptor fatalities on powerlines*
- Concurrent sessions = 4 (including 3 symposia), 10:00 – 4:45
- Andersen Award talks

Tuesday, 12 October

- Welcome and announcements, 8:30-9:00
- Plenary speakers, Rick Watson and Chris McClure, 9:00 – 10:00
- Symposia: *Barred Owl invasion of North America; Prairie Falcons: What we know and don't know; Raptor propagation; Human/raptor interface in archeological research*

- Concurrent sessions = 4 (including 4 symposia), 10:00 – 4:45
- Awards ceremony and acknowledgments, 5:15 – 6:15 p.m.

Thursday, 21 October

- Workshop, Total canopy access for raptor biologists (presented virtually), 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Scientific Program, Symposia, and Posters

A diverse team of partners formed the Scientific committee (Julie Garvin, Chair)

RRF Scientific Program Committee

Julie Garvin | Michael Academia | David L. Anderson

Nate Bickford | Adam Duerr | Leah Dunn

James Dwyer | Teresa Ely | Mark Fuller | Phil Detrich

Marie-Sophie-Garcia-Heras | Michael Henderson

Todd Katzner | Pat Kennedy | Mark Martell

Tate Mason | Jennifer McCabe | Chris McClure

Trish Miller | Lisa Takats Preistley | Miguel Saggese

Sarah Schulwitz | Deborah Shalders | Vince Slabe

Matt Stuber | Russell Thorstrom | Mike Tinch

Kim Titus | Munir Virani | Beth Wommack

Abstract submission dates for the hybrid-turned virtual conference, were:

- 1 February - abstract submission opens
- 15 February - symposia proposal submission deadline
- 29 February - early review abstract submission deadline (for international travelers who are applying for a travel award)
- 15 March - notification of early abstract acceptance
- 30 April - general abstract submission deadline
- 15 June - notification of general abstract acceptance

Full symposium titles and plenary speakers are listed above in the Conference Schedule section.

Symposia were actively solicited by the Scientific Program Committee and TPF. Nine symposia were planned for the conference but one was withdrawn prior. Symposia presenters, content, and organization were organized primarily by the symposia chairs, with frequent coordination with the Scientific Program Committee.

Symposium attendance. Numbers are approximate and derived from average number attending virtually at any one time.

- Lead symposium, day 1: 106
- Lead symposium, day 2: 96
- Steppe symposium: 27
- Barred Owl invasion: 81
- Global priorities for raptor conservation: 40
- Global solutions for raptor electrocutions: 56
- Raptors in archeology: 32
- American Kestrel: 92
- Prairie Falcons: 76
- Raptor propagation: 63

Number of participants in RRF conference scientific programs, 2016 – 2021.

| Program Component | 2021 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Plenary speakers | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Symposia | 8 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 6 |
| Round-table Discussions/Panels | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Full length talks* | 216 | 107 | 123 | 127 | 121 |
| Lightning or abbreviated talks | - | 15 | 14 | 13 | - |
| Posters | 27 | 59 | 64 | 31 | 20 |

*Full length presentations, 15-20 minutes each depending on the year, include talks in general sessions, symposia, and Andersen Award sessions.

There were no field trips at the virtual conference. Field trips planned for the hybrid conference were:

- Raptors and songbirds at Lucky Peak field station
- Owls at Lucky Peak field station
- Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area: Habitat, Culture, History, and Birds
- A raptor tour of southwest Idaho
- World Center for Birds of Prey/The Archives of Falconry
- Idaho Botanical Gardens/Table Rock

The virtual conference was held by Zoom. Each registrant received a Zoom link via email to attend the virtual conference. The conference consisted of a single “centralized” Zoom “room” that we called “the lobby,” and several separate breakout rooms. Each time that all registrants needed to meet simultaneously, they reported to the lobby. This included morning welcoming and acknowledgments, plenary talks, entering the conference for socials or the poster session, and the awards ceremony. When several separate spaces were needed to accommodate distinct groups of

participants (concurrent sessions, icebreaker social, ECCR social), then multiple virtual breakout rooms were opened; to access a virtual room the participant simply needed to click on the room of their choice accessed from the lobby.

To manage the Zoom conference, we used three separate primary hosts located in three distinct locations. Three locations were used in case one or even two hosts lost internet or power, in which case a third host was available to manage the conference. The role of the primary hosts was to open or close breakout rooms, answer questions for people searching for a particular room or session, and have the authority to silence microphones or even eject participants from the conference if necessary due to Code of Conduct violations (this never happened).

The virtual conference included plenary sessions, workshops, a scientific program, an awards ceremony and a members meeting. All participants were given the option to present in person or to provide a recording. The decision to allow recordings was made to accommodate speakers from distant time zones and those who might experience unreliable internet or power during their presentations.

Each concurrent session was supervised by a moderator and a session host. Moderators performed the normal functions they would at an in-person conference: introduce speakers, watch time, cut off speakers when needed, moderate questions. The session host was responsible for technology, including: playing pre-recorded talks, turning microphones and cameras on or off as needed, assisting presenters with technology questions, and ensuring that the RRF Code of Conduct was followed.

Social Events

Planning social events that were actually “social” was a challenge given the virtual conference format, but we found that it could be done! We describe solutions that worked for us below.

Icebreaker

The icebreaker consisted of several rooms, each with a theme: bring your pet, bring your kids, close calls (stories of events we were lucky to survive), diversity and inclusion, old-world raptors, Neotropical raptors, etc. We pre-assigned two “skills” to each room so that every room had at least two people to carry on a conversation and be a presence when participants arrived.

ECCR Reception

Similar to the Icebreaker, the ECCR Reception consisted of separate rooms with different topics or themes (e.g., grad school, career advice). Supervision of the ECCR reception was more organic/less structured than the icebreaker but worked well.

Awards Ceremony

The Awards Ceremony traditionally takes place at the banquet. Of course, the banquet was not possible in 2021 given that it was a virtual conference. Nonetheless, we upheld the tradition of an annual awards ceremony. It was held as the final event of the conference with Sofi Hindmarch, RRF Awards Committee Chairperson, graciously presenting the full slate of awards (table below).

Awards Presented at the 2021 conference.

| Awards | Awardees | Country |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Leslie Brown Memorial Grant | Kudzanai S. Dhliwayo | Zimbabwe |
| Stephen R. Tulley Memorial Grant | Siddhartha Regmi | Nepal |
| Dean Amadon Grant | Hannah Toutonghi | USA |
| Oscar Beingolea Raptor Research Grant | Sandra Cuadros | Peru |
| | Ester Vallejo Santamaria | Colombia |
| Tom Cade Award | Peter Lindberg | Sweden |
| Fran and Frederick Hamerstrom Award | Carol L. McIntyre | USA |
| James R. Koplin Travel Award | Christopher Vennum | USA |
| | Laura Echavez | USA |
| | Jaime Carlino | USA |
| | Mercy Melo | USA |
| President's Award | Joel Pagel | USA |
| | Kate Davis | USA |
| Lifetime Achievement Award | Bob Berry | USA |

Program Book & Conference Website

The program book was designed by Dan Young of The Peregrine Fund. It was created in an on-line, [digital book format](#) that could be paged through, yet which contained hyperlinks to sponsors and other conference information, e.g., the Oxford Abstracts website. The program book was downloadable in PDF format. Presentation abstracts for the scientific program were not available at conference time for inclusion in the program book. After the conference the abstracts were added to the program book, then posted on the RRF website under [Conference Planning](#) along with other information on conferences.

For the hybrid conference, we had considerable discussion whether to print the book or provide digital copies only. Part of the discussion was whether we would have a conference app, which would have negated the need for a book. When we decided not to have an app as an option for the hybrid conference, offering digital and hard copies of the book became the plan. In the end, the digital format was the only practical option once a decision was made to hold a purely virtual conference.

Conference information was maintained on the RRF website and was managed by Megan Judkins, RRF's website coordinator. Additions and edits to the website were topics of constant discussion during planning meetings, especially when the conference pivoted from hybrid to virtual. At this point, much of the content required a re-write.

Sales and Gifts

T-shirts

TPF's Alicia Leacox designed a t-shirt for the conference. These were marketed through *CustomInk* (<https://www.customink.com/>). CustomInk fundraisers are a type of crowdsource campaign in which the organizer crafts the messaging, designs a shirt, and markets the shirt to their constituents. Each order ships individually to the purchaser. A total of 179 t-shirts were purchased, with \$2,681 in profit from sales.



Swag bags/registration packet

We planned to offer swag bags for the hybrid conference. We made the decision to invest in quality merchandise and avoid the cost of low-quality bags. Instead, swag was to be distributed in paper bags. The quality item was planned to be a travel mug with a conference logo that conference participants could use during the conference and treasure thereafter. Other swag items were to include lanyard with name tag, promo inserts from vendors, and promo inserts from the Boise Chamber of Commerce describing local attractions.

Photo of the conference travel mug with logo.



Sponsors & Vendors

Sponsors

Sponsors of the RRF 2021 conference.

\$1000 Level (Travel Awards and Falco)

Boise Convention & Visitors Bureau: Falco - \$1,000 unrestricted
Power Line Sentry: Falco - \$1,000 unrestricted
TE Connectivity: Falco - \$1,000 unrestricted
Geo Trak Inc.: Falco - \$1,000 unrestricted
Idaho Department of Fish and Game - \$1,000 unrestricted
Raptor Resource Project: TRAVEL Awards \$1,000
Golden Eagle Audubon Society: TRAVEL Awards \$1,000
Michael Dupuy: TRAVEL Awards - \$1,000
Nick Dunlop: TRAVEL Awards - \$1,000
Joan Morrison: TRAVEL Awards - \$1,000
Coastal Raptors: TRAVEL Awards - \$1,000

\$5000 Level (Travel Awards, Aquila, and Symposium)

IdentiFlight International, LLC: Aquila - \$5,000 unrestricted
USGS: Aquila - \$5,000 unrestricted
Kaddas Enterprises: Aquila - \$5,000 unrestricted
Sierra Pacific Industries: Aquila - \$5,000 unrestricted
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary: TRAVEL Awards - \$5,000
Burket-Plack Foundation: : STEPPE Symposium - \$5,000
Morris Animal Foundation: LEAD Symposium - \$5,000

\$10,000+ Level (Travel Awards and Symposium)

Raptor Research Foundation: TRAVEL Awards - 10,000

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emirates Falconers' Club: TRAVEL Awards - \$10,000 |
| The Mohamed bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund: TRAVEL Awards - \$10,000 |
| Trust for Mutual Understanding: STEPPE Symposium - \$10,000 |
| Ricketts Conservation Foundation: LEAD Symposium - \$10,000 |

Vendors

Fifteen vendors registered for the hybrid conference. They paid \$400 for a single table in the vendor room and received one free conference registration in return. Vendor contact names and email addresses listed below will help future conference planners contact potential vendors. To attract conference-goers to the vendor room, we had planned to have coffee breaks in the vendor room. Sponsors at or above the \$1000 level were offered partially or fully discounted vendor booths. Because the conference was no longer to be held in person, vendors were given the option to have their fees returned; some wanted their money returned but most allowed us to keep it for the positive side of the financial ledger.

| Organization | Contact Name | Contact Email | Charge |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Lotek | Sean Walls | | \$300 |
| Identiflight | Tom Hiester | | \$0 |
| Nick Dunlop Phototography | Nick Dunlop | | \$350 |
| North Star Science and Technology, LLC | Michael Blake Henke | | \$400 |
| Natures Educators | Devin Jaffe | | \$400 |
| Cell Tower Osprey Management | Michael Blake | | \$400 |
| Power Line Sentry | Alex Mackewich | | \$350 |
| Holohil Systems Ltd | John R. Edwards | | \$400 |
| TE Connectivity | Stephen Parker | | \$350 |
| Geo Trak Inc. | Keith LeSage | | \$350 |
| Eagle Electrocuton Solutions | Libby Mojica | | \$400 |
| USGS | Todd Katzner | | \$0 |
| Kaddas | Todd Jones | | \$0 |
| IBO | Greg Kaltenecker | | \$0 |
| Sierra Pacific | Dan Tomascheski | | \$0 |

Wings to Fly Travel Awards

TPF raised a significant amount of money from sponsors, including \$36,350 to support travel by covering travel expenses and conference registration fees to qualifying participant, and another \$45,000 to support participation in the Lead and Steppe symposia. Herein, our description of Travel Awards is complicated by the pandemic, which caused us to plan for an in-person conference in 2020, and then in 2021 a hybrid conference which was canceled for a virtual conference. Donations (\$36,350) for travel exceeded expenses for comped registrations (\$10,500), and the balance (\$25,850) will be forwarded to the 2022 RRF conference to support travel. The Peregrine Fund and supporting sponsors are to be named for this donation.

Complicating the situation still further was that four sponsors offered a total of \$50,000 in travel and registration funding for specific symposia: Trust for Mutual Understanding (\$20,000) and Burket-Plack Foundation (\$5,000) donated for participants in the Steppe symposium; Morris Animal Foundation (\$5,000) and Ricketts Conservation Fund (\$20,000) donated funds to support travel for the Lead symposium. These funds are held and will be managed by The Peregrine Fund accordingly. Funding from Burket-Plack was refunded (and hence does not show in the profit-loss calculations). We will use funding from Ricketts Conservation Fund to underwrite publications resulting from the Lead symposium. Funding from Trust for Mutual Understanding will be used for an international meeting of participants from the Steppe symposium.

2020 Travel Awards

In 2020, the travel award process consisted of two steps, with applicants submitting: 1) an abstract to be reviewed by a Science Committee (note: not the RRF Scientific Program Committee), and 2) a budget requesting support for travel expenses (airfare, food, lodging) and conference registration cost. The Wings to Fly committee reviewed applications to determine if requests were reasonable and to set final award amounts. For applicants who submitted accepted abstracts, awardees were selected to represent diverse geographic areas. Selections were also based on maximizing the number of participants that could be funded, given the amount they requested (thus, applicants requesting less were given higher priority). Awardees would receive free registration (via online discount code) and were to receive travel expense reimbursement upon arrival at the conference. Except for registration fees which were waived during the registration process, US travelers were to receive a check and international travelers were to receive cash in US currency. Once the 2020 conference was postponed to 2021, we decided to honor all travel awards promised in 2020 for the 2021 conference. Cash awards for the 2020 conference ranged from \$605 to \$2,160.

2021 Travel Awards – Hybrid Conference

In 2021, we sent a Google form to all 2020 travel award nominees asking them to indicate their interest in participating in the conference. Because not all were planning to attend at that point, we had unused travel money remaining. Going forward at that point, in the interest of meeting the needs of the greatest number of presenters, we limited award amounts to \$500 cash and free registration. In other words, award totals in 2020 and 2021 were not the same. To further simplify the process, awards were selected on a first-come, first-served basis, meaning in the order in which the applications were received.

2021 Travel Awards – Virtual Conference

Once the conference was switched to an all-virtual format, there was no longer any need to travel! We still had thousands of dollars of travel money, and the desire to facilitate attendance by as many participants as possible. We therefore decided on this award schedule, offering “free” (comped) registration to:

- All Wings to Fly recipients (44 total)
- Neotropical Raptor Network members, the first 70 to register (26 total)
- ECCRs, the first 50 to register.

The precise number of travel award recipients for the lead and steppe symposia is unknown. This quandary is a result of having a single discount code for travel costs that all travel recipient awardees used; this meant we were unable to track travel registrations by symposium type.

Qualifying participants included any presenter for either the lead or steppe symposia who applied for financial support, and a separate travel award called “Wings to Fly.” The Wings to Fly travel grants were made available to any presenter who applied by an early deadline.

Financial Report

The RRF conference fee schedule was designed to be an all-inclusive event, meaning that the price of registration included social events. Therefore, it was necessary to calculate the costs of the conference that were shared by participants, which was difficult.

Budget Estimates for Hybrid Conference

Our original goal was to have 500+ participants at the conference, thus we structured the number of conference meeting rooms based on this goal. Per person costs (e.g., food, SWAG) were estimated for each item and then multiplied by 500 (i.e., we estimated \$23 in food per person for the 3-hour evening poster session and multiplied that by an estimated 500 people: \$11,500). Food and beverage plus 20% service fee and tax at the Boise Centre was estimated to be the largest expense (appx. \$66,000). Per their contracts, all food and beverage served was to be purchased and prepared through the Boise Centre thus eliminating the possibility of cost savings by bringing in outside food and beverage. We estimated that we would receive the 60% post-event discount (see Location and Venue section above) on venue room rental fee because of the amount of food and beverage plus room nights expected.

We used the estimated expenses minus known sponsorships, estimated venue discount, and estimated vendor revenue to estimate the actual baseline cost for each person. After including a 10% contingency to that baseline cost, we estimated the actual per person attendance cost for 500 participants to be **\$293.70**. To estimate the number of attendees per registration type and fee (i.e., student-member, etc.) we used 2019 RRF Conference attendance data, scaled to 500 participants. We set the student fees at all registration times (early, mid, late) to be below the actual cost of

attendance and the other registration fees were set to subsidize the lost revenue from students. We set the fees such that we landed in an estimated profit margin of approximately **\$16,000**. Of course, the actual profit/loss would have been impacted by actual registration outcomes, an uncertainty that is a bit nerve-wracking for any event planner aiming for high attendance but low profit margins. As planned, we were only netting an estimated profit of \$32/attendee; upon revisiting major expenses, such as the food costs during the summer of 2021, the profit margin per attendee may have been substantially decreased (for example, Boise Centre told us that food costs were significantly higher in 2021 than when we planners set registration fees in 2019).

After we set registration fees and opened registration, we received additional unrestricted sponsorships or revenue from USGS, Sierra Pacific Industries, Kaddas Enterprises, and T-shirt sales, amounting to nearly \$18,000.

Estimated expenses and budget for 2021 hybrid conference

| ESTIMATED EXPENSES (<i>based on 500 attendees</i>) | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Boise Centre Venue Room Rental Fee | \$17,900.00 | |
| Dedicated Wi-fi (plus technology tax) | \$1,430.00 | |
| Audio Visual (plus service fee and tax) | \$8,270.00 | |
| Additional Labor Fee (plus service fee and tax) | \$1,400.00 | |
| Security Guards (required by venue) | \$2,800.00 | |
| Plenary Speaker Fee/Stipends | \$4,180.00 | |
| Poster Board Rental | \$2,230.00 | |
| Shuttle for mobility impaired attendees staying at Red Lion Inn | \$635.00 | |
| Workshop additional expenses | \$525.00 | |
| Registration Fee for 9 TPF Staff Members | \$1,820.00 | |
| Registration Discount for 20 Event Volunteers | \$1,155.00 | |
| 10 free registrations for sponsors | \$2,930.00 | |
| 10 included registrations for vendors | \$2,930.00 | |
| Credit Card Fees incurred by Online Registration | \$6,000.00 | |
| 1 drink ticket for use at Boise Centre (1/person) | \$4,000.00 | |
| Food for Poster Session at Boise Centre (\$23/person) | \$11,500.00 | |
| Food for Icebreaker at Boise Centre (\$19/person) | \$9,500.00 | |
| Banquet at Boise Centre (\$34/person) | \$17,000.00 | |
| 6 coffee breaks at Boise Centre (\$16 per person) | \$8,000.00 | |
| Water Stations in Presentation Rooms | \$540.00 | |
| Boise Center F&B Service Fee (20% of planned food/beverage) | \$10,110.00 | |
| Additional Boise Center F&B Service Fee (incurred on final bill b/c cash bar) | \$1,600.00 | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boise Center F&B Tax (6%) | \$3,735.00 | |
| Post-Banquet After Party (off-site) | \$2,500.00 | |
| WCBOP Party (\$45 per person, but TPF subsidized - see sponsorships below) | \$22,500.00 | |
| Program Books | \$6,500.00 | |
| SWAG (tumbler w/logo + bag) | \$6,250.00 | |
| Name Badges + accompanying costs (ribbons, etc.) | \$1,000.00 | |
| Miscellaneous/Incidental - Not yet considered | \$5,000.00 | |
| RRF Seed Money Repayment | \$1,500.00 | |
| Estimated Expenses TOTAL | \$165,440.00 | |
| | | |
| SPONSORSHIP/ESTIMATED DISCOUNTS (Accounted for when Setting Registration Price) | | |
| Boise Centre 60% Room Discount | \$10,740.00 | |
| TPF Subsidize WCBOP Party | \$7,500.00 | |
| UNRESTRICTED SPONSOR - Identiflight | \$5,000.00 | |
| UNRESTRICTED SPONSOR - Lotek | \$2,500.00 | |
| UNRESTRICTED SPONSOR - BCVB | \$1,000.00 | |
| RRF Seed Money | \$1,500.00 | |
| Vendors | \$3,700.00 | |
| Sponsorships/Estimated Discounts TOTAL | \$31,940.00 | |
| | | |
| (Estimated Expenses TOTAL) - (Sponsorships/Estimated Discounts TOTAL) | \$133,500.00 | *this was used to estimate actual per-person cost of attendance for 500 people |
| | | |
| Actual Cost Per Participant (500 participants) | \$267.00 | |
| Actual Cost per participant with 10% Contingency - Used to Estimate Registration Fee Table | \$293.70 | |

Profit-loss calculation

All revenue sources and totals from 2021 RRF conference.

| Revenue | Total |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Registration Fees | \$37,300.00 |
| Swag - Conference shirts and mugs | \$2,681.60 |
| Vendor | \$1,900.00 |
| Sponsors - restricted registration and travel funds for Wings to Fly | \$3,950.00 |
| Sponsors - Unrestricted | \$23,900.00 |
| Sponsors - Restricted funds from RRF for ECCR | \$2,500.00 |
| Sponsors - Restricted for lead and steppe symposia | \$1,150.00 |
| Workshop Fees | \$0.00 |
| Social Event Fees | \$0.00 |
| Field Trip Fees | \$0.00 |
| Total Revenue | \$73,381.60 |

All expense sources and totals from 2021 RRF conference.

| Expenses | Total |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Registration and Travel Fees - comped | \$10,500.00 |
| Swag | \$2,942.43 |
| Misc | \$1,607.09 |
| Credit card fee | \$3,788.00 |
| Workshops | \$0.00 |
| Catering | \$0.00 |
| Field Trips | \$0.00 |
| Room Rental/AV Services | \$200.00 |
| Total Expenses | \$19,037.52 |

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| PROFIT - LOSS | \$54,344.08 |
|----------------------|--------------------|

There is one final expense that needs mentioning. RRF paid a consulting fee of \$1,080 to Matt Podolsky (Wild Lens Collective) to link conference presentation recordings to the conference schedule in Oxford Abstracts through Vimeo where the recordings had been saved by TPF. This cost was covered by RRF outside the conference budget and so is not reflected in the profit-loss calculations.

Final Thoughts

Planning the 2021 conference was a monumental task. The Peregrine Fund was able to muster ca. 20 staff members to take on specific tasks. Co-Chairs Sarah Schulwitz and David Anderson worked nearly full-time during their tenures. We make the following recommendations to aid future conference planners and, ultimately, to improve the conference experience for both attendees and planners.

1. Budget for and hire a conference planner. If possible, retain this person for consecutive years. There are professionals trained in this business. Hiring a conference planner would improve the quality of the planning process and reduce time demands on volunteer staff. Plans that required days, weeks, or months of planning by co-chairs would have been more efficiently handled with probably better result by hiring a consultant. The consultant would know certain information that was unknowable to novices, like reasonable fees for food, lodging, and ideas for transporting attendees between events, selecting menus, etc. The budget was one of the most difficult aspects of the conference to plan and calculate, and hiring a consultant would have simplified the process while ensuring realistic pricing.
2. Hire staff to address technology issues. Hosting the virtual conference and assembling the conference videos required more time than anyone imagined. In facilitating the Zoom conference, TPF's Erin Katzner did the work of 2-3 people. As with the professionals in conference planning, there are professional technicians skilled at working with complex technologies. We recommend consultant Matt Podolsky of Wild Lens Collective as a starter. Matt linked the videos made of presentations to presentation titles in the conference schedule, thereby making it easy for registrants to access information they wanted to view following the conference.
3. Drastically simplify registration schedules. Simpler fee schedules are easier to calculate, advertise, explain, and select from and should help with estimating final conference profit/loss. Our planned fee schedule listed 30 different registration prices (early, mid, and late registrations x 10 categories). This complex fee schedule was complicated to calculate and manage.
4. Provide a mechanism for email communication between conference planners and attendees. We used Google groups to receive, manage, and redirect as necessary all conference emailing. Although using some email tool like Google groups is absolutely necessary, Google groups was clunky and hard to manage, and we recommend future conference planners try a different platform.
5. Don't underestimate the time or labor needed to plan a conference. Three years to plan for the 2020 conference was barely enough, and the ~30 total people who participated in planning the conference struggled to keep up. Good luck!