

**Raptor Research Foundation
2022 Conference – Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA**

Conference Report



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Travel Awards



Joan Morrison



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RRF 2022 Conference Scorecard

Total Attendance	198
Total Programs	134
Plenary Speakers	3
Scientific Speakers	98
Posters	33
Symposia	1
Workshops	6
Field Trips	2
Sponsors	10
Final Profit (Loss)	-\$2,704

Planning

The local host organization for the 2022 conference was **The Tropical Audubon Society**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit headquartered in Miami, Florida. The planning process began after the 2017 Salt Lake City conference when local committee chairperson, Donna Marain, spoke with former RRF Conference Chairperson Dan Varland about RRF's interest in hosting a conference in South Florida. RRF had only had a conference in Florida once before—in the 1980's in Gainesville. RRF had reached out to birding groups in South Florida previously but had not received much interest. Donna Marain reached out to the Tropical Audubon Society (TAS) and planning began in earnest in May 2018 when RRF put TAS in contact with Kathy Webber to assist with a venue search. Kathy Webber, the secret weapon of any RRF conference success, had the Herculean task of finding an affordable venue in a larger city than typical RRF conference locations in the height of tourism season. In September 2019, after several rounds of searching, Kathy found the Embassy Suites by Hilton Fort Lauderdale – 17th St.

Around the same time, several local partner organizations were approached for their interest in co-hosting the conference. The Florida Ornithological Society has a spring and fall meeting annually and hadn't located a meeting in South Florida in some time. FOS leadership decided to host their fall 2022 meeting concurrently with the RRF meeting at the Embassy Suites. Because the meeting would be held in Broward County, the South Florida Audubon Society was approached and agreed to assist with planning. The SFAS brought on the South Florida Conservation Network as an additional local partner. The final application to host the 2022 RRF conference in Fort Lauderdale with all four local co-hosting organizations was submitted to the RRF Board in January 2020.

All reporting on the 2022 RRF conference must be made in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 conference was originally going to be in-person in Boise, Idaho and the 2021 conference was being planned as an in-person event in Malaysia. COVID forced a pared-down virtual conference to occur in fall 2020. The COVID vaccine became widely available in spring 2021, potentially opening the door for a return to in-person events. The Malaysian meeting was scrapped, and the Boise meeting was shifted to 2021. We were still planning for an in-person meeting, but seven weeks prior to the scheduled dates, the conference was converted to a virtual event due to the Delta variant's surge in COVID cases nationwide, with Boise being particularly hard hit—Boise's hospitals were at capacity treating COVID victims.

Monthly planning meetings for the 2022 conference began in November 2021. COVID trends were closely watched to determine whether an in-person event would be wise. Conference planning couldn't begin in earnest until the end of January 2022, when the RRF board officially sanctioned an in-person meeting. In addition to this uncertainty, the conference-related leadership of RRF (president, conference chair, and scientific chair) and FOS (president) changed over in early 2022, meaning everyone involved was new to the conference planning process. The conference website went live, and registration opened in March 2022, which required a huge coordination effort from all involved. From August 2022 up to conference time, the rate of scheduled meetings accelerated to bi-weekly, then weekly.

As the first in-person conference after COVID with all new leadership, many lessons were learned. But ultimately, the conference was a success, especially given the many uncertainties and complicating factors.

Thank you to the local volunteers involved in the planning process: Brian Rapoza, Field Trips Coordinator for the Tropical Audubon Society, Joe Barros, President of the Tropical Audubon Society, and Ana Lima, Communications Director of the Tropical Audubon Society, who were all very involved from beginning to end; Doug Young, President of the South Florida Audubon

Society, and Katie Hendrickson of the South Florida Conservation Network, who found many of the local vendors that made our conference a success; and Jim Cox, Mary Mack Gray, Ann Hodgson, and Ann Paul of the Florida Ornithological Society, all of whom were very involved in planning as leaders of the Florida Ornithological Society.

Thank you as well to the incredible team at RRF including Rob Bierregaard (President), Sandy Boyce (Conference Chair), and Kim Titus (Scientific Chair) who worked endless hours to make this conference a success. Thank you to former leaders, Dan Varland (Conference Chair) and Libby Mojica (Past President) who answered many questions and calmed our nerves with their experience and knowledge. Thank you to Megan Judkins, who made the entire conference website, and Christy Classi, who handled all things registration and all online payments, both monumental undertakings all on their own. And a huge thank you to RRF Conference Committee member Hankyu Kim who miraculously pulled together our entire conference program book in just over two weeks. Thanks as well to Neil Paprocki for handling the workshop planning and Michael Academia for helping out at the registration table on Tuesday, the busiest day.

Finally, thank you to all our incredible vendors who supported this conference: Robin Raymond of Phoenix Printing Group in Augusta, Georgia for working nights and weekends to put together our beautiful conference book in such a short timeline, Stefanie Smith of the Embassy Suites Fort Lauderdale for being the best, most knowledgeable host a conference could ask for, Kathy Webber of Maritz Global Events for being a miracle worker, Chef Paul Lobeck of The Dancing Palate for putting together an amazing off-site dinner at the last minute while simultaneously making a stressful planning process enjoyable, and Shane LeMar of Shane LeMar Entertainment for handling all of our technology needs with friendliest attitude and the most supportive team. We, the conference planning team, really lucked out with all the incredible people we got to work with to make this event a success.

Bystander Intervention

Prior to the meeting, we (most of the board and officers) participated in a virtual “Bystander Intervention” training session. The purpose of the session was to prepare us for how to intervene when we witnessed an obvious case of bullying, sexual harassment, or other inappropriate behavior.

Location and Venue

During the venue search, Kathy Webber searched Monroe, Miami-Dade, and Broward counties for an affordable venue. We ultimately landed at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Fort Lauderdale – 17th St, who welcomed us with such warmth and generosity from the very first site visit. Fort

Lauderdale is a cosmopolitan city of just under 190,000 people within 36 square miles. However, it is in the center of the larger Miami metropolitan area which houses 6 million people across 6,000 square miles. The Embassy Suites is located a very convenient ten minutes north from the Fort Lauderdale International Airport, a very convenient ten minutes south of downtown Fort Lauderdale, and a very convenient ten minutes west of the beach. South Florida's most iconic natural areas, like Everglades National Park and the Florida Keys, however, are located more than an hour away.

Embassy Suites by Hilton Fort Lauderdale – 17th St

The Embassy Suites was contracted as the venue for the in-person conference due to their capacity to host a multi-day meeting with an estimated 400 participants, their incredibly welcoming staff, and their \$139 room rate, which is high for the typical RRF conference, but the most affordable offer we received in our region. The Embassy Suites also included numerous complementary amenities for conference guests, including free cooked-to-order breakfast each day, free WiFi, and two complementary happy hour drinks each night. The Embassy Suites is located just south of downtown Fort Lauderdale, conveniently close to the beach, dining, a few local birding spots, and the Airport.

Kathy Webber set up the contract for the conference. As the first in-person conference post-COVID, we had no way of knowing what attendance would be. A joint conference and the return to in-person might boost attendance, but COVID concerns and the higher priced city might depress attendance. We contracted for 840 group room nights in the hotel. This is much higher than prior RRF conferences because FOS's portion of the conference would extend into the weekend, after the bulk of RRF's conference was done. Additionally, the last in-person conference in Fort Collins, CO had sold-out their 531 contracted room-nights by over 100 rooms. The cut off for advance registration was initially set for September 14th, though the Embassy Suites generously extended this deadline by an additional week due to the sluggish demand. Rates were agreed at single/double for \$139, which could sleep six people. There were slight issues with last minute registrants who missed out on the contracted rate despite the deadline extension and ultimately booked lodging nearby in Air BNBs or budget hotels. Hotel management provided discounted room rates to last minute registrants even after the deadline but, the hotel staff answering phone inquiries were not always aware of this policy. There were also slight mismatches in room demand. At the beginning of the conference demand was higher than we had contracted for, causing some registrants to book other accommodations nearby for those dates.

Including rooms booked after the 14 September deadline, our RRF guests booked 597 room nights. Our contract required us to book at least 80% (672) of our contracted room nights or be

financially liable for the difference. Additional rooms booked pre- or post-conference would be credited to the minimum. Hurricane Ian, a Category-4 storm, had ripped through the west coast of Florida the week before our conference. Our hotel, being pet-friendly and open to long-term stays, hosted many Floridians who had fled the storm and could not yet return home. The hotel was able to book the rooms we had contracted to those Floridians, as well as regular tourists boarding cruises in the nearby port, so we were not held financially liable.

Rooms booked by the registration deadline, September 14th		
Day/Date	Contracted amount	Amount booked
Sat, Oct 1	1	1
Sun, Oct 2	4	4
Mon, Oct 3	35	35
Tues, Oct 4	125	92
Wed, Oct 5	200	101
Thurs, Oct 6	200	107
Fri, Oct 7	200	97
Sat, Oct 8	100	72
Sun, Oct 9	14	14
Mon, Oct 10	2	2
Total rooms	881	525

The Hotel catering costs was the largest budget expense. The hotel required an \$18,000 food and beverage minimum, not including the 9% tax and the 23% service charge. We easily surpassed this requirement by spending \$28,790.70. The DEI lunch was sponsored by Cellular Tracking Technologies, which covered that cost.

Hotel Food and Beverage Expenses	
Meal	Cost
RRF Board of Directors lunch	\$372.63
Icebreaker Reception	\$5,350.89
Morning coffee breaks	\$6,495.42
Afternoon coffee breaks	\$2,987.26

Poster session	\$2,283.80
DEI lunch (sponsored)	\$830.72
Awards Dinner	\$10,469.98
Total	\$28,790.70

Registration

Registration for the conference opened on March 25th and 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 originally hired CMS to manage registration for the 2020 Virtual Event.

Fee schedule for the 2022 joint RRF/FOS conference.

Registration Type	Early	Mid	Late
	Mar 25 – Jun 15	Jun 16 – Sep 8	Sep 8 – Oct 9
Regular (Member)*	\$200	\$230	\$285
Student/ECRR (Member)	\$100	\$110	\$120
Retiree/Emeritus (Member)	\$150	\$160	\$170
Regular (Non-Member)	\$240	\$270	\$325
Student/ECRR (Non-Member)	\$120	\$130	\$140
Retiree/Emeritus (Non-Member)	\$170	\$180	\$190
Single Day	\$80	\$90	\$100
FOS only	\$80	\$90	\$100

*FOS members could attend both conferences at the RRF member rate.

Actual registration count and total revenue by category.

Member	59
Student/ECRR	58
Retiree/Emeritus	12
Non-member	17
Non-member Student/ECRR	22
Non-member Retiree/Emeritus	3
Single Day	4
FOS Member Only	2
FOS Member Only Full Conference	3

ECRR Volunteer	2
Gratis Registration	1
Sponsor Registration	7
Wings to Fly	4
TOTAL	194

Registration Revenue	
From Christy's 12 Oct. Report	
RRF Regular Member:	\$12,895.00
RRF Student or ECRR Member:	\$6,240.00
ECRR volunteer (Comped)	\$330.00
W2F registrations (Comped)	\$690.00
Director's Travel (Comped)	\$230.00
RRF Retiree/Emeritus Member:	\$1,840.00
Non-RRF Member:	\$5,015.00
Non-RRF Student or ECRR:	\$2,440.00
Non-RRF Retiree/Emeritus:	\$530.00
Single Day:	\$1,000
FOS member upgrade:	\$840.00
Poster Session:	\$385.00
	\$32,435.00
Comped registrations	\$1,250
Total Registration Revenue	\$33,685.00

Conference Schedule

Tuesday, 4 October - RRF Board of Directors meeting from 8am to 5pm. Icebreaker reception at 5:30pm.

Wednesday, 5 October – Welcome and plenary speaker, Dave Mindell from 8:15am to 9:50am. Concurrent sessions from 10:30am to 5:10pm. DEI lunch. ECRR social at 5:30pm. Off-site dinner at the Museum of Discovery and Science from 7pm-9pm.

Thursday, 6 October – Announcements and plenary speaker, Susan Wilde from 8am to 9:30am. Concurrent sessions from 10am to 5:10pm. Poster session from 6pm to 8pm. Women in Raptor Research off-site social from 8pm to 9pm.

Friday, 7 October - Announcements and plenary speaker, Robert Fletcher from 8am to 9:30am. Concurrent sessions from 10am to 3:20pm. RRF business meeting from 3:40pm to 4:40pm. Evening Awards Banquet from 6pm to 9pm.

Saturday, 8 October – Field trip to Curry Hammock Hawk Watch and glass-bottom boat tour from 6am to 5pm. Workshops from 8am to 5pm. FOS conference from 1:15pm to 6pm.

Sunday, 9 October – Field trips, including Everglades National Park and glass-bottom boat tour from 6am to 5pm.

Live Streaming

This was the first year that we used Zoom to stream our morning award announcements and plenary speakers as well as the lifetime achievement awards at the closing banquet. RRF members were able to sign up in advance for the Zoom sessions to watch live. In addition, the plenary talks were archived and posted on YouTube. We had a good number of viewings on the YouTube channel, so this is something we should continue doing.

One thing we discovered is that if a PowerPoint presentation has an imbedded video, it is a disaster (unintelligible audio) on the Zoom recording. There's a workaround for this. The speaker has to provide the original video, which can be spliced into the Zoom recording using iMovie. Consult Rob Bierregaard for details!

Scientific Program, Symposia, and Posters

A diverse team formed the Scientific Program Committee (Kim Titus, Chair)

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

- 25 March, abstract submission opened
- 10 April, early abstract submission deadline for international travelers
- 1 May, Symposium proposals due
- 6 May, notification of early abstracts acceptance for international travelers
- 15 May, abstract submission deadline.
- 15 June, notification of general abstract acceptance

Plenary speakers are listed above in the Conference Schedule section. Despite active solicitation, only one symposium (on Caracaras) was developed. The symposium content and organization was organized by symposium chairs, Miguel Sagesse and Joan Morrison.

Below is the number of participants in RRF conference scientific programs, 2017 – 2022.

Program Component	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017
Plenary speakers	3	4	2	3	2
Symposia	1	8	3	6	4
Round-table Discussions/Panels	0	1	3	2	0
Full length talks*	98	216	107	123	127
Lightning or abbreviated talks	0	0	15	14	13
Posters	31	27	59	64	31

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

A moderator and host were present at each session. Moderators performed their normal functions: introducing speakers, watching time, cutting off speakers when needed, and helping with questions. The session host was responsible for technology and ensuring that the RRF Code of Conduct was followed.

Mentoring

This was the first conference where our Mentoring Committee played an active role in the conference. The committee sponsored pairings between mentors (established RRF meeting goers) and mentees (those who self-identified in their registration that they wished to be paired with a mentor). We had 24 mentees paired with 11 mentors. The process went well on its inaugural voyage. Mentors helped their first-time attendees learn the ropes of attending a scientific meeting and introduced their attendees to the old guard members at the meeting.

Workshops

Six workshops were held on Saturday October 8th. Discounted rates were available for Early Career Raptor Researchers (<3 years post-graduation) and students who are current RRF members.

Classes were taught by leading experts and focused on hands-on skill building that is typically not available in college courses. Class sizes were kept small to provide an intimate and interactive learning environment.

Advanced Molt and Aging in Raptors [half day, ending at noon]. This workshop described the basics and process of molt used in aging raptors. Then the knowledge was applied to photos and wings of specimens to further enhance understanding. (Instructors: Caitlin Davis, Andrew Kratter, Nicole Ricahrdson, Bryce Robinson, and Jesse Watson)

Harnessing Raptors with Transmitters [half day, ending at 1pm]. An essential skill is attaching transmitters safely to raptors. Several different options and methods were demonstrated and discussed. Hands on experience was gained by attaching harnesses to raptor carcasses. (Instructors: Trish Miller, Vincent Slabe)

Techniques for Handling, Auxiliary Marking, and Measuring Raptors after Capture: A bird in the Hand is Worth Two in the Bush [all day]. Hands on experience was available for applying butt-end and lock-on U.S.G.S. leg bands, feather, and patagial markers for small and large raptors. Students learned and practiced proper handling and measuring techniques. (Instructors: Teresa Ely, John Smallwood, and Dan Varland)

Illustrating Raptors [half day, afternoon]. Enhancing work through use of illustrations was discussed. Skills in developing raptor illustration were learned including approaches, steps, and prioritizing how to create the best raptor representation. (Instructor: Bryce Robinson)

Scientific Writing for Publication [half day, morning]. The principles of clear and direct writing were emphasized. How to structure a manuscript, present data effectively (tables and figures), correct grammar, and usage were presented. Practice writing and editing were given using examples. The publishing process was covered. (Instructors: Joan Morrison, Chris McClure)

Raptor Necropsy [half day, afternoon]. Raptor anatomy, necropsy technique, and diseased tissue were covered. Practical approaches to conducting necropsy, gross tissue examination and sample collection for disease and contaminant diagnostics were covered. (Instructor: Charlotte Cournoyer)

Social Events

Sharing knowledge is one of the best parts of the conference, but a very close second is reconnecting with old friends and making new ones, too! The Social Events are made just for this, so we make sure to set aside time each day of the conference for these opportunities.

The icebreaker occurred in the Aqua room, just past the hotel bar but before the pool. Complimentary drink tickets, in addition to the complimentary happy hour drinks for hotel guests, accompanied hors d'oeuvres and a great first night.

The DEI lunch was put together by the DEI Committee and sponsored by Cellular Tracking Technologies. The Raptor Research Foundation broke new ground at our 2022 Annual Conference in Fort Lauderdale. The atmosphere was fun and festive as they held their very first diversity, equity,

and inclusion event October 5th. Attendees came together to celebrate unity and embrace the strength of diversity.

Over 40 people made their way to the luncheon, which was open to all registered attendees. The excitement was palpable as the DEI Committee went above and beyond, treating participants to delightful box lunches for an unforgettable experience. The committee gave everyone "Celebrate Diversity" ribbons, spreading the message of unity and inclusivity throughout the entire conference. The vibrant sea of ribbons became a symbol of solidarity, filling the air with positivity and inspiration.

RRF's Early Career Raptor Research (ECRR) Committee hosts a social for RRF members who are starting their journey in raptor research. This year, the social took place on Thursday late afternoon, just before the evening poster session. Highlights from the 2022 ECRR social include: A raffle in which artwork, jewelry, and other items created by fellow ECRRs were raffled to the event participants. Funds from the ECRR Committee annual budget were allocated to compensate the folks who contributed their pieces which allowed us to not charge any fees to anyone who entered the raffle (two tickets per guest). This prompted greater participation and was a successful endeavor that we plan to continue in future ECRR socials at the annual meetings.

Former committee co-chairs Teresa Ely and Chris Vennum culminated their term and welcomed the incoming committee chairs, Elizabeth Meisman and Laura Echávez, as they stepped into their new roles.

The off-site dinner was held after hours at the Museum of Discovery and Science and was catered by The Dancing Palate. Guests could walk around the first-floor exhibits, learning about Florida ecology while enjoying excellent mojitos by Chef Paul and his team who then served an incredible sit-down dinner. COVID considerations led us to choose a catered dinner rather than a buffet as had been done at past conferences, leading to additional costs.

The poster session on Thursday is a mix of social and science, allowing members to present their work amid hors d'oeuvres and drinks. After the poster session, a group of our women raptor researchers convened off-site enjoy a bit of comradery and share tall tales of their experiences in the field.

Finally on Friday, the Awards Ceremony banquet hosted members of both RRF and FOS while celebrating the accomplishments of our fledgling, international, and distinguished senior members.

Awards

At this meeting we broke from our traditional practice of announcing all the awards at the closing banquet. We now have so many awards that the announcement process would take too much time, so we chose to use the approach that the American Ornithological Societies use for their awards, which is to spread out the announcements over the course of the meeting.

Each morning after updates on meeting logistics and before the plenary speakers, we announced a different set of awards. On Wednesday we announced the Wings to Fly travel awards recipients. On Thursday we introduced the research grant winners for the Cade, Hamerstrom, Tully, Beingolea, and Panuccio grants.

On Friday morning we named the winners of the Andersen Awards for best student paper and poster, as well as the Koplín Travel Awards. At the closing banquet, we announced the lifetime Hamerstrom and Cade lifetime achievement awards, as well as two Partners in Raptors awards in conjunction with The Peregrine Fund and the Western Society for Vertebrate Zoology. We closed the evening with Rob Bierregaard awarding Libby Mojica the President's Award in recognition of her outstanding four-year presidency.

Research and Travel Awards

Award	Recipient	Nationality	Amount
Amadon	Matias Juhant		\$2,000.00
Amadon	Neil Paprocki	U.S.	\$1,500.00
		Sierra	
Brown	Papanie Bai Sesay	Leone	\$2,500.00
Tully	Dakota Vacarro	U.S.	\$2,000.00
Beingolea	Mayra Natalia Parra Salazar	Colombia	\$2,000.00
Panuccio	Jason Gregg		\$1,500.00
Koplín Travel	Natasha Murphy	Ireland	\$500.00
Koplín Travel	Brooke Poplin	U.S.	\$500.00
Koplín Travel	Diego Gallego Garcia		\$500.00
Koplín Travel	Stacia Novy	U.S.	\$500.00
Koplín Travel	Matthew Bowers	U.S.	\$500.00
Koplín Travel	Philip Kavouriaris	U.S.	\$500.00
Wings to Fly	Zahra Didarali	Indonesia	\$1,977.00
Wings to Fly	Ulises Balza	Argentina	\$2,130.00
Wings to Fly	Bold Batbayar	Mongolia	\$2,500.00
Wings to Fly	Marton Horvath	Hungary	\$1,793.00
Andersen (Poster)	Meghan Beatty	U.S.	\$175.00

Andersen (Paper)	Michael Academia	U.S.	\$375.00
TOTAL			\$23,450.00

Lifetime Achievement and Distinguished Service Awards

Award	Recipient	Nationality
Hamersrom	Dr. Pat Kennedy	U.S.
Cade	Dr. José Hérrnan Sarasola	Argentina
Partners in Raptors w/ The Peregrine Fund	Simon Thomsett	Kenya
Partners in Raptors w/ Western Soc. For Vertebrate Zoology	John Schmitt	U.S.
President's Award	Libby Mojica	U.S.

Field Trips

The two RRF Field trips were to Curry Hammock/John Pennekamp State Parks and the Southern Everglades National Park. Field trips were on Saturday (Florida Keys) and Sunday (Everglades), the two days after our closing banquet. Unfortunately, this conflicted with workshops. This is a perpetual problem with our conferences, and one without an easy solution.

The first half of the Curry Hammock/John Pennekamp all-day trip was spent at the Florida Keys Hawkwatch, the southernmost migration monitoring station in the continental United States, which holds the world record for most Peregrine Falcons counted in a day (about 1,700!) and in a season. We enjoyed a good raptor migration and a pair of Short-tailed Hawks that put on quite a show. After spending the morning hawk watching and birding, attendees ended the day in John Pennekamp State Park with a two-hour glass-bottom boat tour of the parks coral reefs and all the marine wildlife that call them home.

Everglades National Park was the first national park to be protected for its biological diversity, rather than the geologic features of prior parks. Driving south through the Everglades, attendees traveled through several iconic South Florida habitats such as sawgrass prairie, cypress domes, hardwood hammocks, and mangrove forest. We observed a variety of wildlife including American Alligators. We left our fair share of blood with the local mosquitos! Views in all directions, were amazing, and each stopping point produced great birds, some of which, including the diminutive Brown-headed Nuthatch were added to several life lists.

Program Book & Conference Website

Hankyu Kim pulled together the conference program book in an incredibly short amount of time. It was created as a Google word document that was then given to the incredible Robin Raymond of Phoenix Printing Group for design and printing. During registration, conference guests were asked their preference for digital or print versions of the program book and we ordered printed copies accordingly. The printed version was so popular at the conference that many attendees who had requested a digital version during registration asked for a printed copy after seeing it in person. Phoenix Printing can ship their products to any future conference location for any organizers looking for an incredibly kind, responsive, fast, and patient design and printing firm.

The most up-to-date version of the conference program and schedule was available on the powerful Oxford Abstracts, which was accessible by scanning a QR code on the conference program book. Posters were also printed and posted on the meeting room doors to reflect last-minute changes.

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 in the early days around the website's publication date.

Sales and Gifts

T-shirts

TAS's Rafael Galvez designed the conference logo, which became the front of the conference t-shirt and materials bag. Ninety-five shirts were purchased during the conference. Christy Classi developed an online store to handle credit card purchases at the registration table at the last minute. Conference guests did not enjoy this work-around, so future conference organizers should work with Rich Van Buskirk to ensure they are able to handle credit card payments at the registration table.

Swag bags/registration packet

Swag bags were assembled ahead of time to include two Level-3 masks, a COVID test kit with two tests, and a complimentary customized mug. The bags also included promotional materials

sponsors that sent promotional materials. One-hundred twenty-five bags included printed program books for those who requested them. Name tags, inserted into lanyards, alphabetized, and given out at the registration desk. Color-coded place cards depicting meal choices for the banquet and off-site dinner were paper clipped to the attendees' name tags.

Sponsors & Vendors

Sponsors

Local Sponsors	Amount	Comments/Sponsor Level
FPL	\$5,000	Aquila Sponsor
Leica Store Miami	\$2,500	Buteo Sponsor
Kaddas Enterprises	\$5,000	Aquila Sponsor
Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida	\$1,000	Falco Sponsor
Cellular Tracking Technologies LLC	\$2,500	Buteo Sponsor
HOLOHIL	\$1,000	Falco Sponsor
Donna Marain	\$1,000	Falco Sponsor
GeoTrak	\$1,000	Falco Sponsor
ROB	\$1,000	Falco Sponsor
CTT - Special for DEI Luncheon	\$1,328	Paid at the hotel by CTT
TAS Seed Money - conference deposit	\$2,500	
Total - Sponsorships/Donations	\$23,828	

Vendors

Six vendors registered for the conference. Non-profits paid \$75 and for-profit companies paid \$300 for a single table. Vendor contact names and email addresses listed below will help future conference planner's contact potential vendors.

One serious mistake we made was putting the vendors in an out-of-the way hall where there was no foot traffic. Future conferences need to put the vendors front-and-center.

Vendor	Amount
Buteo Books	\$400.00
Cell Tower Osprey Management	\$340.00
North Star Science and Technology, LLC	\$340.00
Mystery vendor	\$300.00
Coastal Raptors	\$300.00

Eagle ILF Program	\$300.00
HOLOHIL	\$300.00
Hawk Migration Association of North America	\$75.00
GeoTrak	\$350.00
Total-Table Fees Received	\$2,705.00

Financial Report

Budget Estimates for the Conference

Conference planning is always a guessing game—much more soothsaying than science, which makes budgeting difficult. The most accurate predictor of conference attendance is the number of posters and papers presented, but these numbers are not available until long after the budget must be submitted and approved by the board.

On top of the normal vicissitudes of the process, the 2022 conference planners had to guess how people would feel about coming to this first in-person, post-COVID conference.

Our original goal was to have 300 participants at the conference, but because attendance fell well below this number and correlated revenue also fell below what we had planned for in our application to host. Moreover, additional costs were incurred to guard against COVID transmission.

We were saved from a substantial (thousands of dollars) loss by Hurricane Ian. We significantly overestimated the number of room-nights we would need in part because we included the projected number of Florida Ornithological Society members as needing rooms for the whole conference, when in fact most of them were just present for the last two days. Fortunately for us, Hurricane Ian displaced enough people from central Florida that the hotel sold all our unused rooms.

Closing the Books

When we finished paying all the bills, the conference had a net loss of \$2,704, which was split equally between co-hosts RRF and the Tropical Audubon Society. Had we not spent just over \$3,000 on COVID test kits, the conference would have had a very modest (ca. \$300) profit.

A more detailed look at the final transactions: At the close of the conference, expenses exceeded revenue by \$204. However, “revenue” included \$2,500 of seed money that TAS had contributed at the beginning of the planning process. So, when we exclude that from revenue, our net conference loss was \$2,704. As per our contract with TAS, conference losses are divided equally between RRF and TAS, so each organization suffered a loss of \$1,352.

When the books were closed, TAS had \$4,401 in the conference account. \$2,500 of that was their seed money, so we backed that out, it left \$1,901 in the cash account. TAS sent us \$3,253, which left them with a loss of \$1,352. RRF’s loss of \$1,352 is absorbed in our books.

Final accounting 2022 RRF and FOS joint meeting

EXPENSES		REVENUE	
Category	Expenses	Category	Revenue
Comped Fees	\$ 1,250.00	Registration Fees	\$ 33,685.00
Venue	\$ 28,790.70	Swag	\$ 2,820.00
Program Book	\$ 4,536.00	Vendor	\$ 2,705.00
Swag	\$ 9,416.12	Sponsors - Unrestricted*	\$ 23,827.68
COVID supplies	\$ 3,200.00	RRF Costs	\$ 2,453.35
Accessibility	\$ -	Cash bar income	\$ 576.00
Speaker Fees	\$ 3,862.44	Workshop Fees	\$ 1,990.00
Misc (Poster display boards)	\$ 2,142.00	Social Event Fees	\$ 10,536.00
Credit card fee	\$ 1,840.47	Field Trip Fees	\$ 5,752.50
Workshops			
Off-site Dinner	\$ 13,734.50	Total Revenue	\$ 84,345.53
Room Rental/AV Services	\$ 9,824.00		
Field Trips	\$ 5,953.44	*Includes TAS seed money	
Total Expenses	\$ 84,549.67		
Total Revenue	\$ 84,345.53		
Profit (Loss)	\$ (204.14)		
Less TAS seed money	\$ (2,500.00)		
Net Conference loss	\$ (2,704.14)		
50% Profit (Loss)	\$ (1,352.07)		
TAS Final Balance	\$ 4,401.15		
TAS withdraws seed money	\$ (2,500.00)		
TAS balance	\$ 1,901.15		
TAS pays RRF	\$ (3,253.22)		

TAS balance \$ (1,352.07)

A spreadsheet with a more detailed breakdown of income and expenses is archived on the RRF Google Drive [here](#).

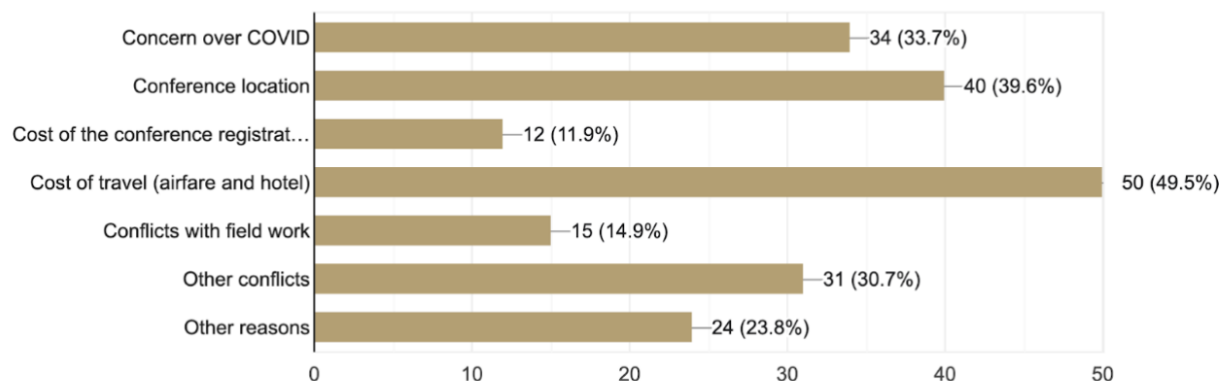
Post-Conference Survey

After the conference, we circulated a survey to both the conference attendees and the RRF membership as a whole. Our principal objective was to get the attendee’s feedback on their experiences at the meeting and to survey members who did not attend to see what factors led to their decision to skip this year’s meeting.

Comments on the overall experience were largely positive, with some amusing contradictions where one attendee thought it was great that we didn’t have music at the closing banquet and the next comment lamenting the lack of music!

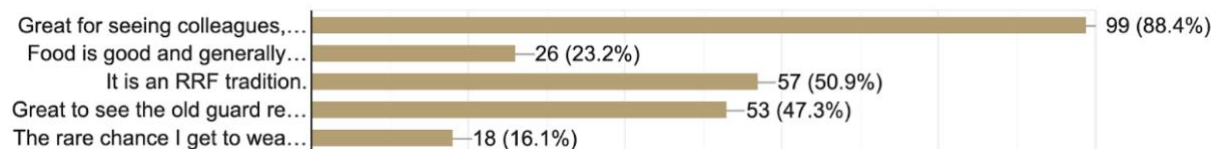
1. If you did not attend the conference this year, please share your reasons. (Check all that apply.)

101 responses



A. I usually participate in the banquet - if so, why? (Please mark all that are relevant.)

112 responses



We also included questions about any negative experiences members had during the meeting. We had 97 members respond to this question. Somewhat disturbingly, 9.3% of the responders

reported an uncomfortable event. Some of the comments related to overly aggressive questions at the end of paper presentations or during the poster session.

Final Thoughts

Planning a week-long conference for 200-400 attendees is a monumental task, and in 2022 it was especially frenetic because the conference planning committee had to wait until the end of January to get the go-ahead from the RRF board to proceed with an in-person event. On top of that, the Conference Committee chair, RRF president, the Scientific Program Committee chair, and the local committee were all “riding in their first rodeo.” That said, the team of rookies, with lots of support from many people and advice and encouragement from seasoned veterans of RRF conference planning, somehow pulled it off.

While things seemed hectic and frenetic from our side of the event, the consensus from the attendees was that for the most part, it all seemed to be flowing very smoothly. If only they knew!

We make the following recommendations to aid future conference planners and, ultimately, to improve the conference experience for both attendees and planners.

1. Don't underestimate the time or labor needed to plan a conference. It takes a committee!
2. It is never too early to start lining up sponsors and vendors. Some organizations allocate a fixed amount for donations, so making initial requests the year before the conference may get us a place in the organization's budget for the next year.
3. Keep a shared document on a Google Drive with running minutes of all the conference planning meetings and tasks to be completed.
4. Use a shared Google Drive spreadsheet tracking conference finances. Originally developed by staff of The Peregrine Fund (including Erin Katzner) as planning for the ill-fated (COVID) conference that was to take place in Boise, the spreadsheet finally was put to use as we managed the Florida meeting. The current instar, in use as we get ready for the Albuquerque meeting, has some more bells and whistles and is proving very useful.
5. Get written agreements and quotes early. Looking over previous conference budgets can be a good first step to guesstimate costs, but you don't want to be surprised at the last minute by local variations in costs, a last-minute vendor cancellation, or a spike in inflation.
6. Estimating the number of hotel rooms to contract for is a very important step in the process and must be done conservatively. There is a large potential downside for overestimating room occupancy, as RRF and the local host committee are responsible for paying for rooms not booked by conference attendees.