



Active
For Animals

Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul. - Ed Abbey



Founder's Report

Dear friends of **Active for Animals**, as I look back on our activity and achievements in 2023, I want to take a moment to recognize the significance of the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, which was signed into law back in 1973 by President Nixon. Nixon called on the 93rd United States Congress to pass comprehensive endangered species legislation. Congress responded with a completely rewritten law, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which was signed by Nixon on December 28, 1973. That law, while not perfect, has resulted in the successful recovery of several iconic species such as the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcons, Grizzly Bears, Manatees, the Maguire Primrose and Gray Wolves.

In addition to the Endangered Species Act, the Nixon Presidency also saw the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), often called **The Washington Convention**, opened for signatures on 3 March 1973. **Clearly, 1973 was a significant year for endangered species!**

The reason for sharing the importance of 1973 in protecting endangered species is that **Active for Animals** along with our collaborative partner, Australia based **Nature Needs More**, spent a good deal of the year working with bipartisan US congressional members, senators and government agencies, as well as US ambassadors, based in the embassies throughout continental Africa and their counterparts in Washington DC. Our focus being to ensure that the endangered species traded between continental Africa and the USA is being done in a transparent and sustainable way, which is not currently the case. This has certainly been **Active for Animals'** biggest year to-date. Please read on as I share what is unfolding in **Active for Animals Transparency Matters Project** and the push to implement a solution that one day will protect over 40,000 of the most endangered wild species worldwide.

The other big drive for the year was our **One Small Step** initiative and a big thanks to everyone who took the time to sign and send one of our ambassador letters. **Active for Animals** was delighted to play our small part in pushing for Safe Wildlife Passage with our ambassador program to educate and raise awareness about the importance of safe wildlife passages and migration corridors. Progress has been made, spearheaded partly by the US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration.

Thank you for your continued interest and support in my efforts to make a difference for endangered wildlife. I hope that you will join me in 2024, as we collectively become more **Active for Animals**.

James Dunton
Founder, **Active for Animals**

Active for Animals' Mission

“To inspire people around the world to get active in helping endangered animals.”

As outlined in our 2020 Annual Report (our inaugural annual report) I wanted an organization name that I felt simply and honestly described what was needed in the face of the current extinction crisis. Inspired by the words of Rober Swan, *“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”*, **Active for Animals** was born. I for one can confirm that real activity, beyond social media, brings real hope for the future of the natural world.

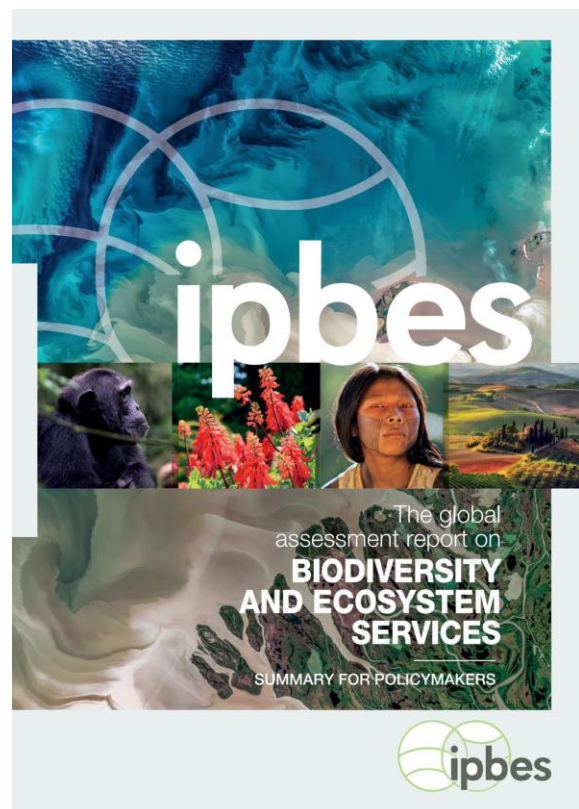
In previous annual reports, this mission section has introduced some of the model’s scientists have developed to aid our understanding of the risks of biodiversity loss. This year I want to profile the landmark May 2019 IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) report into the global extinction crisis.

This report confirmed that:

1. **Direct exploitation for trade is the most important driver of decline** and extinction risk for marine species.
2. Direct exploitation for trade is the **second most important driver of decline** and extinction risk for terrestrial and freshwater species.

Collectively the world’s seafood industry is the biggest driver of decline for marine species. It is imperative that wealthy countries lead the way. As individuals, we can make a contribution to change by looking at what is on our plate.

After seafood, the industries who are the biggest users of wild species are fashion and furniture. Other significant industries are medicine (both Western and Traditional Asian), exotic pets, gourmet foods, cosmetics and fragrances and jewelry.

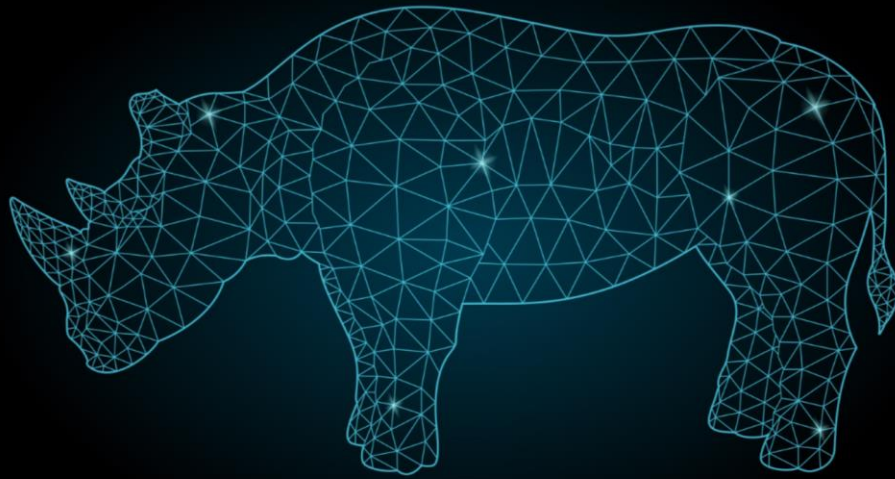


As consumers we have choices to make but individuals can do much but only so much. We need our governments and political representatives to drive change on behalf of future generations.

Afterall, ***“We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.”***

Real activity brings real hope for the future of the natural world and future generations. I hope **Active for Animals'** mission statement inspires you to become more involved in 2024.

Our Projects and Campaigns



Transparency Matters Project

"If corruption is a disease, transparency is a central part of its treatment." **Kofi Annan**

The landmark May 2019 IPBES report into the global extinction crisis confirmed that direct exploitation for trade is the most important driver of decline and extinction risk for marine species and the second most important driver for terrestrial and freshwater species. This includes the 41,000 most commercially valuable species in the world, traded internationally under the CITES.

The CITES regulator still relies on a paper-permit system created when it was launched in the 1970s. Just how can this be the case for the trade in wild species, which is known to be one of the most valuable trades in the world?

In September 2023, CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero wrote,

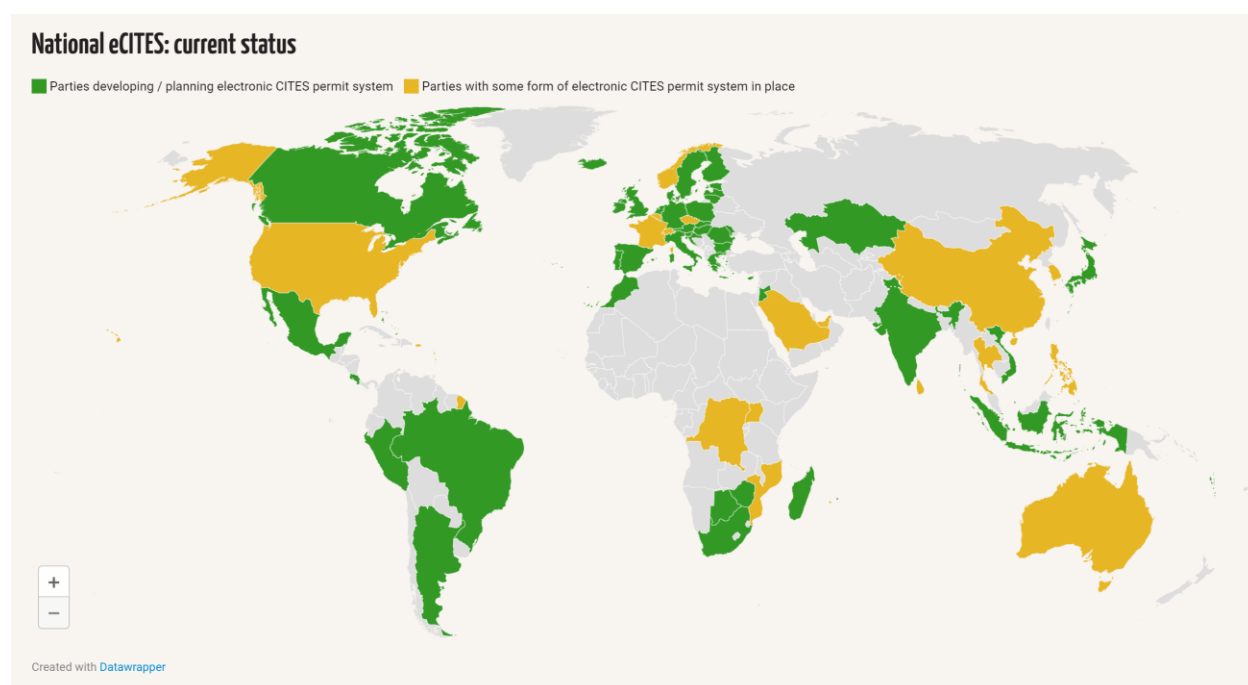
"Unfortunately, problems can arise with the use of paper documentation, including fraudulent use. Complications in keeping track of documents during issuance, transportation, and verification could result in forged paper documents. This may involve declaring false information, altering documents, reusing them, or even theft. There also have been cases where lost paper permits were used illegally due to delays in reporting and the extended duration of subsequent notifications among Parties."

And in July 2023, CITES previous Secretary-General, John Scanlon, commented on Boston's News Station, WBUR,

“We have a paper permitting system which is a 50-year-old permitting system that's open to fraudulent use and corruption, whereas in 2023 we should have a fully automated system”.

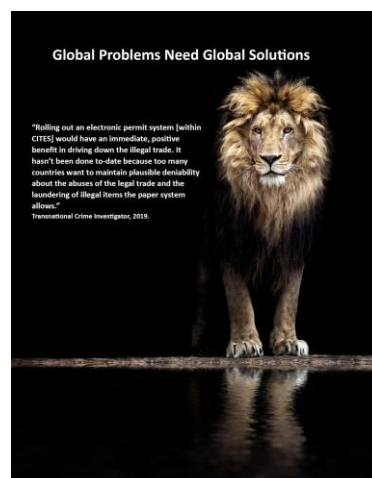
This is why, in March 2023, **Active for Animals** launched the **Transparency Matters Project**.

Implementing a modern, electronic permit system was first discussed by CITES in 2002. As highlighted in the map below, as of today only **19 of CITES 184 signatory parties** have modernized their trade permit system, and most only in the last couple of years. (Amber: Implemented eCITES, Green: Developing/planning eCITES, Gray: No plans to update the CITES paper-permit system)



A cost effective, off-the-shelf system was developed several years ago and is finally getting the publicity it needs, with a dedicated website launched in September 2023 and a corresponding promotional video about the eCITES system.

In May 2023, **Active for Animals**, together with our Australia based collaborative partner, Nature Needs More, wrote to President Biden to ask the administration to consider a donation of less than US\$12 million over the next 3 years to roll out a CITES electronic trade permit system in all the 49 countries of continental Africa who still use the 1970s paper system. **So why Africa?** Currently only 3 countries in continental Africa (DRC, Uganda and Mozambique)



Letter to President Biden

have CITES electronic permits. South Africa launched an eCITES system on the 1st of April 2023, though this has yet to be formally announced by the CITES.

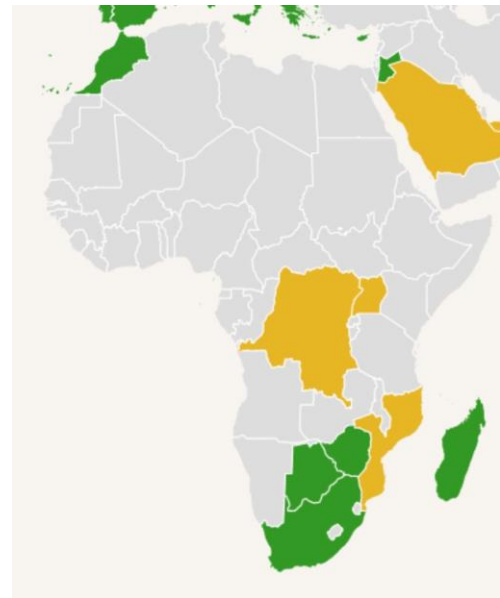
The commercial trade of CITES listed wild species and their derivative products makes up an important part of the exports from African countries to the US. Of the CITES signatory countries based in continental Africa:

- 12 list the USA as their primary trading partner and
- 22 countries list the USA in their top 3 trading partners.

Research published in 2015 provided clear evidence of the prevalence of documentation discrepancies in CITES trade data for Appendix I and II species exported out of 50 African nations (to 198 importing countries/territories) between 2003 and 2012. The data represents 2750 species. Of the 90,204 records downloaded from the CITES database:

- **Only 6542 (7.3%) were free from discrepancies** and
- Increases in discrepancy-rates between 2003 and 2012 suggest that the trade was monitored less efficiently in 2012 than it was in 2003.

The eCITES map makes it clear that too many countries in continental Africa have no plans to update the CITES paper-permit system. Undoubtedly for many countries this is because of the lack of funds needed to implement this system.



In addition to writing to President Biden, we also wrote to 32 U.S. Ambassadors to the countries of continental Africa and their counterparts, based in Washington DC:

U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso



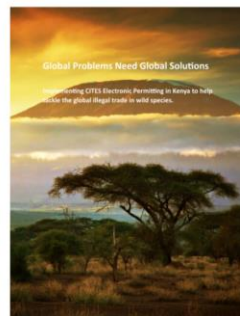
U.S. Ambassador to Namibia



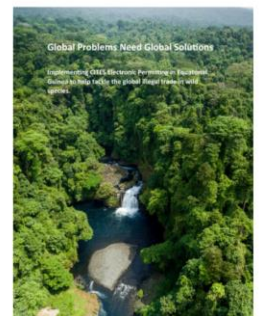
U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon



U.S. Ambassador to Kenya



U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea



All this culminated in a week of meetings in Washington DC, with congressional staff from both sides of the aisle and several agencies including Fish & Wildlife, US Trade, The World Bank, the Bureau of African Affairs and USAid.



Alexander Calder sculpture in the Hart Senate Office Building



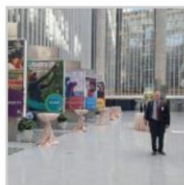
Checking email before our meeting.



Senator Merkley of Oregon



Senator Blumenthal CT



World Bank Lobby



Senator Heinrich, New Mexico



Senator Whitehouse, RI



Senator Tillis, North Carolina



Outside the Supreme Court Building



View of the Capitol Building



Getting in some site seeing at the Lincoln Memorial



Ready to meet with members of US Trade



In front of Capitol Building

We spent a good deal of time explaining how the endangered species trade is regulated by CITES. And that CITES uses a 1970s paper-based permit system that is out of date and unsuitable to facilitate a modern trade environment. This allows for the vast majority of illegally harvested wildlife to be laundered into legal markets with the help of fraudulent CITES permits (faked, reused, altered etc.).

Most meetings started off with the representatives bringing up elephants and rhinos, hunting trophies and zoos and poverty alleviation. In every meeting we had to reframe the issue from iconic species and poverty alleviation to global scale commercial trade, and explain that after seafood, fashion and furniture were the key profitters from the trade in wild species and that the large businesses profiting from this trade were not contributing to the costs of regulation. It begs the question, how have the large conservation organizations, who do have access to government, left political representatives so in the dark as to the scale of this industrial commercial trade?

While everyone we met acknowledged that \$12million in the context of Washington DC was pocket change, they also agreed that the lack of understanding of CITES and the trade means we have our work cut out for the next two years. Because no one we met understood much about trade, which meant no one knew which department should be leading and driving this modernization.

The next stage of the project will involve:

- Stakeholder awareness-raising, education and capacity building.
- Creating a network of advocates.
- Uncovering funding opportunities to roll CITES electronic permitting out globally, currently only 19 of the 183 CITES signatory countries have modernized to digital permits.
- Responding to requests for information on CITES, trade and the solutions needed from both sides of the aisle.
- Awareness-raising, education and capacity building of the interested parties in Washington DC.

The aim of all this is they support a request for funding, including leading a result for funding with the Appropriations committee. The goal is to secure a USAid donation before July 2025. Why July 2025? **Because this will be the 50th Anniversary of CITES coming into force globally. All the political representatives acknowledged that this was a great milestone to work towards.**

One Small Step Project



Active for Animals is delighted to play our small part in supporting people to get active on key wildlife issues. The **One Small Step** campaign has been designed to help everyone to take their first step into conservation and get **Active for Animals**. Our ambassador program works on everything from the exotic pet trade, shark finning, safe wildlife passages, rhino horn and more.

During 2023, **Active for Animals** decided to add octopus farming to our suite of **One Small Step** projects.

Dear Governor,

I was shocked and saddened to read the statistics on wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Across the country, there are one to two million collisions between vehicles and large animals each year. These accidents cause more than 26,000 human injuries, around 200 human deaths together with the untold suffering of the animals involved.

In addition, the economic costs are significant, with wildlife collisions cost \$8 billion per year for things like vehicle repair, medical expenses, towing and the removal and disposal of animal carcasses.

Roads are also fragmenting wildlife populations, leading to unhealthy genetic isolation and localized extinction. While much of the media attention is on large animals, such as mountain lions, moose and black bears, reptiles and amphibians are killed at alarming rates.

My request is that our State does more to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, particularly around migration paths that are hot spots for collisions.

As we build new roads or fix old ones, can we factor in more wildlife-friendly crossing into the design and signage? I think it is particularly important to do this where roads are known to cross wildlife corridors.

All the research shows that a wide variety of animals use overpasses and underpasses once they are available. It's great that cameras are put at these crossing points because we can watch the wildlife who use them.

While some states have created new legislation to support the Safe Passage and Wildlife Connectivity, I think it is important that this done throughout the country. Thank you for your consideration.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Age: _____ Signature: _____



Dear Restaurant Owner,

I am writing to you to request that you remove shark fin soup from your menu.

I acknowledge that this is a traditional Chinese dish and at the same time I believe that it is necessary for all humanity to reflect on any aspects of our cultural heritage that may now be doing the extinction crisis. By deciding to stop the consumption of fin species, such as sharks, we can all play our part in tackling biodiversity loss. Only then will we secure our planet's rich heritage for our children, grandchildren, and all future generations.

There is ample evidence in the daily news that our collective indifference to the consumption of wildlife will result in a much more difficult world for our children. We can not pretend we don't know that our actions today would impact the lifestyles of tomorrow. It is time to reflect on:

"We not only inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."

Sharks are a keystone species, a species on which many other species in an ecosystem depend on. By removing sharks, we are negatively impacting the ongoing health of our ocean ecosystems.

I urge to you to read the letter I have enclosed, written by a marine biologist. Her words are very powerful.

"The shark helps balance the ecosystem; if you kill ONE shark, you're killing hundreds of other marine species. Sharks are the heart of the ocean. These wonderful animals deserve our compassion. We are privileged to be their custodians and we must all take responsibility to ensure their survival in the wild."

I hope you agree to stop selling shark fin soup at your restaurant. Removing shark fin soup from your menu is such a small sacrifice to make. But deciding to do this will be a big step forward in ensuring all our children live the same prosperous lifestyle we have been privileged to enjoy.



I thank you for your consideration.

Signed _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

State: _____

Dear Governor,

I am writing to you to request that our State tightens the laws and regulations associated with the private ownership of exotic animals, for both commercial purposes, such as in privately owned zoos or as personal pets.

As someone who is very worried about the extinction crisis, I believe too little is known about the exotic pet trade.

By deciding to more strictly regulate and monitor the private owners of endangered and exotic animals, we can all take our part in tackling biodiversity loss. Only then will we secure our planet's rich heritage for our children, grandchildren, and all future generations.

There is ample evidence in the daily news that the trade in endangered and exotic species can be detrimental to an animal's welfare. We cannot pretend we don't know the distress that it can cause if a wild animal is housed incorrectly or may be able to exhibit its natural behavior.

I hope you will lead our State Government to implement stricter laws and controls over the ownership of endangered and exotic wildlife. It is a small sacrifice for people to make.

By deciding to do this, it will be a big step forward in ensuring all our children have the same opportunities to take great joy in knowing that we share our planet with such amazing wild species.

Observing animals in the wild and being in nature has brought me great pleasure over the years and, for me, want to ensure that the laws of our State are not contributing to the extinction crisis.


I thank you for your consideration.

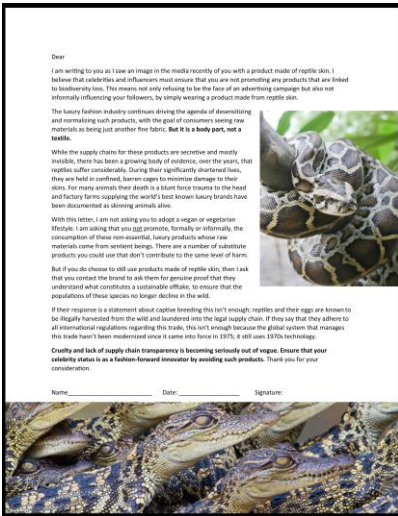
Signed _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

State: _____





In 2023, the Biden administration announced \$110 million will be awarded to improve wildlife road crossings across the US.

The Transportation Department's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced that the \$110 million in grants will be awarded to 19 wildlife crossing projects across 17 states.

The department noted that this funding is part of a new program in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which also makes \$350 million available over five years to allocate to the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program.

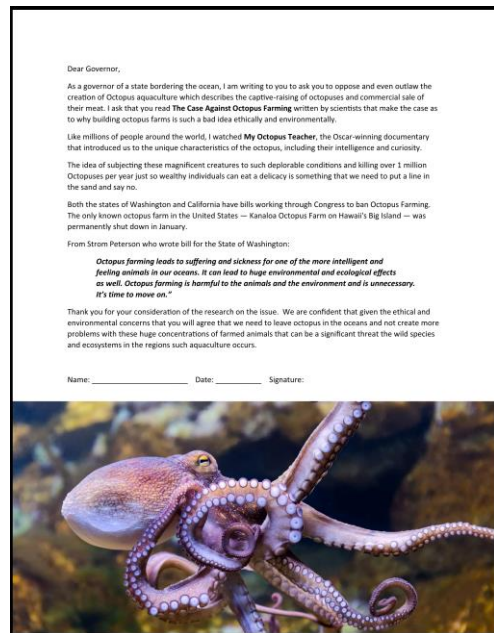
Become an Octopus Ambassador

Given the interest and success of the One Small Step campaigns, **Active for Animals** would like to introduce our new campaign to ban octopus farming.

Like millions of people around the world, I watched **My Octopus Teacher**, the Oscar-winning documentary that introduced us to the unique characteristics of the octopus, including their intelligence and curiosity. Research has confirmed octopuses exhibit cognitive and behavioral complexity, and they appear capable of experiencing pain and suffering. Widespread observations of octopus as curious and exploratory creatures have been confirmed by experimental work. Once octopuses have solved a novel problem, they retain long-term memory of the solution. One study found that octopuses retained knowledge of how to open a screw-top jar for at least five months. They are also capable of mastering complex aquascapes, conducting extensive foraging trips, and using visual landmarks to navigate. As these patterns of behavior suggest, octopuses have sophisticated nervous systems and large brains.

Exploiting these intelligent creatures for profit is shameful. This is the time to protect octopuses from the scale of suffering that other animals already endure on factory farms.

Check out the **Active for Animals One Small Step Ambassador** campaigns.



Fundraising

At the start of 2022, **World Games For Wildlife** was rebranded as **My Wildlife Challenge**, based on feedback from event participants, who felt it was important to acknowledge that the extinction crisis will be one of the biggest ‘challenges’ this decade.

Even with this re-branding it was difficult for **Active for Animals** to create the necessary momentum to drive this type of fundraising activity. As a volunteer organization, we don’t have the ‘time’ to give this the attraction it needs. As a result, in 2023 we concluded the **My Wildlife Challenge** initiative and started to develop alternative fundraising strategies.

Financial Statement

Active for Animals is delighted that we earned a Candid (GuideStar) 2023 Silver Seal of Transparency. The organization has achieved this Silver Seal for three consecutive years.

Active for Animals form 990 can be viewed on the IRS website as well as our Determination Letter.



Accomplishments And Goals

Active for Animals Accomplishments 2023 Included:

- Discussions with key members of Congress that could lead to finally funding a rollout of a CITES electronic permitting solution for continental Africa and eventually the world.
- **Active for Animals** is delighted to have played our small part in supporting people to get active on key wildlife issues, leading to, in 2023, the Biden administration announcing \$110 million will be awarded to improve wildlife road crossings across the US.
- Building on our USA campaigns to get people more involved, we continued to drive letter writing campaigns and encourage people to take One Small Step...for wildlife.
- Maintaining a **Silver Star of Transparency** from Candid (Guidestar) for three consecutive years.
- Educating **Active for Animal's** supporters about the need to re-examine our relationship with nature, based on biodiversity loss, climate change and the risks of emerging pandemics.

Active for Animals Goals for 2024 Include:

- Work with members of Congress to secure the \$12m necessary to fund the rollout of the electronic permitting solution across continental Africa.
- Work with major online platforms in the United States to utilize AI solutions to significantly reduce wildlife traffickers' ability to use these platforms for illegal sales of animals and animal parts.
- Continue to Expand the One Small Step Campaign to include "Become an Octopus Ambassador" to work to shut down the growth and development of Octopus farming.
- Aid public understanding of the risks of biodiversity loss and how stopping this decline is everyone's business.
- Strengthening **Active for Animals** ability to raise funds for key projects, so we can do more.



Thank You

This work could not have been achieved without the support of a number of individuals and organizations. While this list is by no means exhaustive, given the people who have helped over the last year, **Active for Animals** would like to acknowledge the following:

1. The research organizations and scientists that took the time to help me understand the specific conservation issues and challenges facing endangered species.
2. Everyone who has donated to and supported **Active for Animals** throughout 2023
3. My extended family, all of whom have listened and encouraged my passion, with many getting active for My Wildlife Challenge and in the One Small Step initiatives.
4. The management team at Golf Associates where I work during the week have been very supportive and flexible to allow me to continue the programs for **Active for Animals**, especially the time needed for Washington DC meetings.
5. A very special thanks goes to a very special person who has always supported me and encouraged me to follow my heart, from the rolling hills of eastern Tennessee, Ms. Sunny Esser.
6. I would also like to especially thank Dr Lynn Johnson who has been my North Star for the past eight years and who I finally got to meet in person this year during our trip to Washington DC.

As always, this work is dedicated to my wildlife loving daughters, Tatum and Drew, you both provide my inspiration and drive.

