

New heights.

ANNUAL REPORT

GRANDFATHER
MOUNTAIN®
STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION



PASSION



COMMUNITY



CONSERVATION



SUSTAINABILITY

2017



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Most of our guests know Grandfather Mountain as a peaceful place – one where they can unplug, unwind and embrace the natural world. You can crest Linville Peak for a view of forever; blaze new memories on an alpine hiking trail; witness a cougar leaping from tree to tree.

Look closely, and you'll see the mountain is abuzz with activity, continuing the momentum from a very strong 2017. It's been a momentous year, and I'm happy to tell you about the many milestones we've reached in this special place we all hold so dear.

- With almost 274,000 visitors, Grandfather Mountain had one of its busiest years ever.
- Guests were able to enjoy more educational programs than ever before and flocked to take advantage of them. Overall, participation was up significantly over last year.
- While Grandfather was humming with excitement among human visitors, 2017 saw lots happening in the animal habitats, as well. The habitats have a new elk area, with three new residents to delight visitors. The cougar cubs Grandfather Mountain rescued in 2016 are thriving and enjoying their new home. And there's a new otter — he was found as an orphan and couldn't survive on his own.
- The mountain continues to participate in many scientific studies and partner with organizations to help preserve the wonders of nature all around us.

And there's more. We hope you'll take the time to read about all the wonderful things going on here. We look forward to sharing the new initiatives underway that will advance the mission of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, as we work to enhance the park and our guests' experience here.

Onward and Upward!

Jesse Pope



SUSTAINABILITY

Grandfather Goes Green(er)

Grandfather Mountain has always been a place of preservation of nature and a gateway to the wonders of the Earth's natural beauties. To further communicate that message, the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation has decided to expand its budding green initiatives.

Grandfather's Green Team is comprised of employees from each department of the mountain. The team seeks to make changes to various facets of the park — such as implementing new technologies, education and lifestyle changes. All to help fulfill its vision:

To educate and empower employees and guests to make conservation-minded decisions through utilizing best practices in sustainability.



New employee mugs will reduce the use of disposable cups — to both reduce our carbon footprint and save money.

- BY THE NUMBERS -

Grandfather Mountain welcomed
273,824 guests
through its gates in 2017.

The busiest months were
July (47,049 visitors) and
October (38,268 visitors).

This represents the park's **second**
busiest year in three decades,
just behind 2016, which saw
282,968 guests.

Outstanding Customer Service

Grandfather Mountain's staff exemplified customer service in 2017, coming in No. 1 in secret shops.

Grandfather is one of 21 members of the Southern Highland Attractions tourism organization, which hosts four secret shops per season, as well as phone shops, which the mountain also topped in first place.

"We couldn't be prouder of our staff!" said Harris Prevost, vice president of operations. "We are competing against 20 of the finest attractions in the Southeast, so what we did really means something."

"We couldn't be prouder of our staff!"

-Harris Prevost, V.P. Operations



COMMUNITY

Bridging Education With Outdoor Fun

Looking back on 2017, Grandfather Mountain made extraordinary headway in fulfilling its vision of becoming the world's best nonprofit nature park — and North Carolina's top field trip experience.

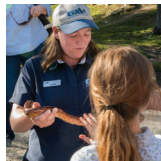
The mountain's Department of Education and Natural Resources connected more than 80,000 guests to Grandfather through interpretive and educational programming, improving its facilities and managing the park's fragile ecosystem. This included full renovations of the cougar and elk habitats, new programming for adults and partnerships with local universities to increase the park's use by field researchers and scientists.

The sum indicates an increase of nearly 10,000 guests from 2016. Breaking it down by the numbers:

- **10,445 students** enjoyed a **SCHOOL PROGRAM** on the mountain
- **2,594 guests** took part in **DAILY NATURALIST PROGRAMS**
- **58,310 visitors** participated in **ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS**
- **5,538 people** visited **INTERPRETIVE TABLES**
- **1,589 guests** attended **SPECIAL EVENTS**
- **526 children** completed **JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAMS**
- **1,144 potential visitors** were informed through **OUTREACH**

In addition, the park's rangers devoted 328 hours toward trail maintenance, with volunteers contributing an additional 127. That doesn't include the 301 total work hours toward natural resource management (NRM) — surveying and mapping invasive species within the park, assisting the naturalist staff in rare plant population counts and working with outside agencies on special scientific projects. Volunteers added 32 more NRM hours to that total.

Grandfather Mountain's dedicated staff looks forward to continuing its mission of preserving the mountain and inspiring conservation through 2018 and beyond.



Mile-High Engagement

In 2017, the naturalists made progress on several strategic planning objectives and goals, one of which was developing programs that are both diverse and accessible.

To accomplish this, they looked up — a mile up, to be exact.

Boosting interactive programming at the Mile High Swinging Bridge, one of Grandfather's most iconic features, bridged education with outdoor fun. These programs targeted the mountain's casual visitors — those who might not intentionally seek out naturalist programs offered in other areas.

As a result, program attendance in this area increased by 40 percent compared to 2016 — a boost of more than 1,000 visitors.

Grandfather Presents

Wonders never cease at Grandfather Mountain — even after business hours.

In 2017, the mountain introduced its evening lecture series, Grandfather Presents.

Held throughout the summer, this monthly series highlights well-known and engaging speakers. 2017's events featured National Geographic Adventurer Jennifer Pharr Davis, wildlife artist Ryan Kirby, naturalist and UNC-TV host Tom Earnhardt and best-selling author Leigh Ann Henion.

- CITIZEN SCIENCE -

Also in 2017, the naturalist department implemented a broad range of citizen science projects in correspondence with state-wide conservation researching.

These projects include:

SALAMANDER SURVEYS
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Red Spruce Surveys
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Project NestWatch
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Rare Plant Survey
N.C. Natural Heritage Program

Hawk Migration Survey
HawkWatch International

Bird Point Counts
Audubon Society

Pollinator Collection & Identification
N.C. State University

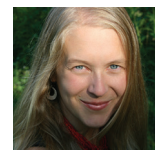
2017 at Grandfather Mountain

10,445 students
enjoyed a school program

58,310 visitors
participated in animal encounters

Mile High Swinging Bridge
programs increased by
40% in 2017

Each event hosted approximately 70 attendees and gave guests a way to deepen their relationship with the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation.



Clockwise: Jennifer Pharr Davis, Ryan Kirby, Tom Earnhardt and Leigh Ann Henion.



CONSERVATION

A Tail Of Two Cougars

The mountain adopted two sibling cougar cubs in March 2016. Found on an Idaho man's property, emaciated and searching for food, they'd been orphaned before they could learn to hunt.

Grandfather Mountain was lucky to have friends in Bob and Susan Wilson, who provided financial support for renovations to the cougar habitat and volunteered their plane to retrieve the cubs.

The existing cougar habitat was renovated to accommodate Logan and Trinity, thanks to generous support from the Wilsons, Jim and Barbara Goodman and the A.J. Fletcher Foundation.

Logan and Trinity join Aspen, a 14-year-old cougar and favorite of the habitats. Due to their age differences, and the fact that Aspen was born in captivity, the three do not share a living space. Instead, they alternate time spent in the habitat.

According to Grandfather Mountain habitats curator Christie Tipton, the cats' first day in their new home couldn't have gone better. "They were so excited," she says, "running around, tackling each other, chasing each other, climbing the trees, sharpening their claws."

"Logan is very curious about everything. Trinity is definitely more wary, but she's obviously the biggest daredevil." Logan and Trinity are adjusting to their new surroundings — sunning on rocks, leaping from tree to tree, wrestling and enjoying life as a big cat.

Through habitat visits, daily enrichment programs, behind-the-scenes tours and the Keeper for a Day program, guests can learn more about the cougars, black bears, river otters, bald eagles and elk that call Grandfather Mountain home.



Uno Makes A Splash

Things are looking up for a certain pup. Uno, a juvenile North American river otter, joined the Grandfather Mountain family in November 2017, having been found orphaned in the Asheville area earlier that year. After spending time with a wildlife rehabilitator in Lincoln, N.C., it was determined he was unfit to be released back into the wild.

"He was just too friendly to be released," says Christie Tipton, chief habitats curator of Grandfather Mountain. In other words, Uno's affection toward humans would prove dangerous for him in the wild. That's where Grandfather Mountain came in, adopting the pup and offering him a home as an animal ambassador. Along with his neighbors — black bears, bald eagles, cougars and elk —, Uno will help guests learn about the important role these animals play in the ecosystem.

About one-and-a-half years old, Uno delights his keepers and visitors with aquatic antics, frolicking fun and splashing shenanigans. "He's pretty independent, but once he gets bored with his toys, he'll start chirping a lot, wanting us to pay attention to him," assistant habitats curator Emma Noto says. "But he's super interactive with his toys right now, just loving all the new stuff he's been getting, so everything is just very exciting for him."

He's particularly fond of stashing toys in the corners of his habitat, "which is funny, because I don't think any of our other otters have ever done that," Noto explains. Uno is also a fan of rocks. "We got him this tiny little children's chair, and when we came to feed him, he'd placed all of his little rocks on the chair."

Guests can welcome Uno to Grandfather Mountain by buying him a treat from the habitats' Animal Wish List on Amazon.com. Through this list, donors can choose a gift for their favorite animal, purchase it online and have it delivered straight to Grandfather Mountain for their immediate enjoyment.

To see the list, visit <http://bit.ly/GMAmazonWishlist>.



2018 Calendar of Events

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS - FREE

- MARCH 26** All About Black Bears Workshop
 - MAY 19-20** Methods of Teaching Environmental Education
 - NOV. 3-4** Methods of Teaching Environmental Education
 - NOV. 5** All About Elk Workshop
- Info/register: email judi@grandfather.com, or call (828) 733-2013.

INCLUDED WITH ADMISSION

- JUNE 1-9** The Remarkable Rhododendron Ramble
- JUNE 13** Animal Birthday Party
- AUG. 1** Animal Enrichment Day
- SEPT. 8** Junior Ranger Day
- SEPT. 15** Girl Scout Day
- SEPT. 16-22** Hawk Watch
- OCT. 13** Fantastic Fall Color Ramble
- OCT. 27** Beary Scary Halloween

ADDITIONAL COST PROGRAMS

- JUNE 1-3** Nature Photography Weekend
- JULY 12-15** Grandfather Mountain Highland Games
- AUG. 18-19** Camera Clinic
- SEPT. 29** Creatures of the Night & Bonfire Delight

ADULT FIELD COURSES (Additional Cost, Discounted for Bridge Club)

- APRIL 28** Spring Migration in the Canadian South
- MAY 30** Extreme Weather of Grandfather Mountain
- JUNE 16** Grandfather's Geology by Foot
- JULY 21** The Rare Plants of Grandfather's Rocky Summits
- AUG. 11** Fungi of the Cloudland Forest
- AUG. 25** Exploring the Disappearing Spruce-Fir Forest
- SEPT. 15** Celebrate Migration on Grandfather Mountain

AFTER HOURS PROGRAMS (Additional Cost, Discounted for Bridge Club)

- JUNE 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 AND JULY 6, 13, 20, 27** Grandfather By Night
- JUNE 21** Grandfather Presents: Tom Butler, Foundation for Deep Ecology
- JULY 19** Grandfather Presents: Julia Roberson, The Ocean Conservancy
- AUG. 16** Grandfather Presents: Amy Greene, Best-Selling Appalachian Novelist

PLEASE VISIT [GRANDFATHER.COM](http://grandfather.com) FOR MORE INFORMATION, INCLUDING TIMES AND REGISTRATION.



Elk Calves Find Shady Grove On Grandfather Mountain

Elk have arrived on Grandfather Mountain, and guests are bugling with excitement.

The three calves arrived in December 2017. They're named Doc, Merle and Watson — after world-famous bluegrass/folk icons and High Country natives Doc and Merle Watson — thanks to a submission from a naming contest and fundraiser.

The Watsons have a storied history with Grandfather Mountain, as the nonprofit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation's former president, the late Jim Morton, was a dear friend of the Watson family. Doc even lent a hand with Morton's construction of the mountain's famous Profile Trail.

Hailing from a private elk farm in central North Carolina, Doc, Merle and Watson (the elk, that is) are now sitting on top of the world. Once grown, they'll bring more than a literal ton of beauty and wonder to the mountain.

At one time, the elk population was abundant in the Western North Carolina High Country. But their numbers were decimated by over-hunting and loss of habitat in the 18th and 19th centuries. Eventually, they were entirely eradicated from the region.

In 2001, the National Park Service began reintroducing elk into Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and they've been thriving there ever since.

"Although we don't yet have elk restored in the wild here in Northwestern North Carolina, it's likely a matter of time before herds from Great Smoky Mountains National Park or from Virginia or Tennessee make it here," Grandfather Mountain executive director Jesse Pope explains. "As recent as the late 1700s, elk would have roamed in the vicinity

of Grandfather Mountain. Nearby towns of Banner Elk and Elk Park were named for this majestic animal."

Grandfather opted to adopt three male elk, a bachelor herd, based on research and the recommendations of experts. While members of bachelor herds are known to live together peacefully, that's not necessarily the case with mixed herds, in which bull elk can grow aggressive during mating season.

"Their personalities are really starting to shine through," says Christie Tipton, Grandfather's chief habitats curator. "We see them playing with each other all the time, and they're usually hanging out where people can see them."

The elk habitat was under construction through most of 2017. After the park's resident white-tailed deer passed away earlier that year, the habitat underwent significant renovations to accommodate these new residents.

The renovations were made possible by generous support from the A.J. Fletcher Foundation and Jim and Barbara Goodmon. "Their financial support, encouragement and enthusiasm for the project helped make this beautiful addition to the mountain a reality," Pope says. "We really can't thank all our donors enough for their love and support of the mountain this year. This would not have been possible without them."

Thanks to their efforts, Doc, Merle and Watson are enjoying their own spacious shady grove.



OUR MISSION

To inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain.

OUR VISION

At more than a mile above sea level, Grandfather Mountain offers its guests a unique vantage point to the natural world. By bridging outdoor fun with education, the mountain provides an experience in nature unlike any other, filled with wonder, warmth and adventure.

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION

Board of Directors

Gordon Warburton, *Chairman*
Jon Barrett
Michael Leonard
Catherine Morton
Judy Morton
Mary Rinehart



Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, Inc.
Statement of Financial Position
Income Tax Basis | 31-Dec-17

OUR VALUES

Passion —

With its incredible scenery and diverse ecosystems, Grandfather Mountain ignites a sense of wonder in its guests, volunteers, donors and employees.

Community —

Grandfather Mountain provides a positive, uplifting atmosphere that embraces employees, guests, volunteers, donors and partnering organizations as valuable members of a larger team — and a bigger picture.

Conservation —

Through education, research and science in action, the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation continues to protect the mountain's remarkable natural resources, including globally imperiled flora and fauna.

Sustainability —

With tomorrow in mind, the mountain challenges its staff to seek out best practices to improve the organization's environmental and economic security.

ASSETS	AMOUNT
CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$3,751,123
Inventories	307,785
Accounts receivable	4,499
Total current assets	4,063,407
EQUIPMENT, NET	7,644,546
INVESTMENTS	4,261,711
Total assets	15,969,664
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	81,419
Total current liabilities	81,419
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	15,538,752
Temporarily restricted	349,493
Total net assets	15,888,245
Total liabilities and net assets	15,969,664
UNRESTRICTED	
Net sales	2,283,856
Cost of goods sold	946,080
Gross profit	1,337,776
Admission fees and other operating revenue	4,268,137
Investment Gains	389,304
Contributions	504,367
Total net revenue	6,499,584
Program expenses	3,167,642
Operating expenses	1,756,455
Fundraising expenses	54,315
Total expenses	5,924,492
Change in Net Assets	1,438,845