

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

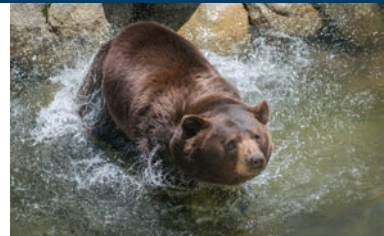
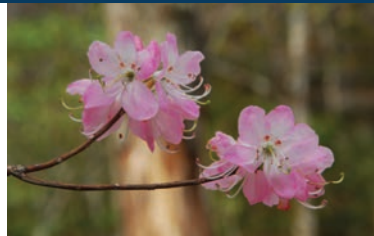


PASSION

COMMUNITY

CONSERVATION

SUSTAINABILITY



*Wonders never cease*





## OUR MISSION

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

## Letter From the President & Executive Director

Friends,

There has been a great deal of uncertainty and change over the last few months, and we hope you and your families have weathered the storm. Our thoughts have certainly been with you, and we are all looking forward to brighter days ahead.

The arrival of Spring reminded me of the resilience and beauty of the natural world. I have also noticed the beautiful way neighbors have cared for one another. People have offered help and encouragement, and we have found our way through this together.

mountain. In addition, in April a new grandfather.com website was launched to help us to tell our story and educate fans far and wide.

Even more exciting, Grandfather Mountain will soon be able to reach even more guests, provide more educational opportunities and better engage visitors. In 2019, we announced a capital campaign for a new Conservation Campus, which will include the new Wilson Center for Nature Discovery. Here at the mountain, we've been busy as bees —

*It was a successful year with our second-highest attendance ever and we could not have done it without you!*

It is a comfort to know we are part of something bigger than ourselves. You are a member of the Grandfather Mountain family, and for that we are grateful. Together, we enable our guests to experience and connect with nature and leave inspired to cherish it.

I hope you will enjoy this report on the activities and accomplishments of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation in 2019. It was a successful year with our second-highest attendance ever, and we could not have done it without you!

We are pleased to share how we have expanded our educational programs. We reached more people than ever through educational encounters on the mountain and embarked on a new program to educate students from Avery County Schools, both in their classrooms and at the

preparing for construction, breaking ground on the new facilities and working on plans for what's to come. We hope you'll make plans to visit Grandfather Mountain when the Conservation Campus becomes a reality, if not before.

Now, more than ever, we appreciate your support of Grandfather Mountain and your donations. We hope you'll take some time to read this report to learn more about the impact you help us make and how we're sharing this place with others to inspire a love of the natural world in them, too.

Sincerely,

Jesse Pope  
President and Executive Director



**10,522**

students  
participated in  
curriculum-based  
environmental  
education  
programs

Learn more at  
[grandfather.com](http://grandfather.com)







## Making Sure Nature Endures



Every day, Grandfather Mountain moves mountains to achieve our mission of inspiring conservation of the natural world. We do this by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders found here.

In late 2019, the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation broke ground on a new Conservation Campus. With a planned opening in 2021, the project will inspire guests like never before.

The Conservation Campus will almost double the size of the Nature Museum, with all-new exhibits covering natural history, flora, fauna, the local environment and more; add 10,000 square feet of new education space, three classrooms for smaller groups and increased capacity for larger groups; restore the ADA-accessible auditorium; provide new outdoor learning spaces, including an amphitheater with terraced seating and a pavilion; build new office space for park educators and animal habitats staff to prepare enhanced educational programs; add larger, more modern food service facilities to serve educational groups; expand capacity for hosting conferences, seminars, receptions and community events; and more.

**“We’re working to share the wonders of Grandfather in ways that are broader and deeper than ever before,”** said Jesse Pope, president and executive director of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation.

The new Wilson Center for Nature Discovery will also include a dozen all-new, interactive exhibits, which will focus on the biodiversity and preservation of the high-elevation forests of the Southern Appalachian region. There will be an interactive 3D map of Grandfather Mountain; a geology/mineral display;

# 13,831

visitors participated in a “Peaks and Profile” or other interpretive, Junior Ranger or Grandfather by Night program

More educational opportunities at [grandfather.com](http://grandfather.com)

flora and fauna walls; and an interactive field guide and depictions of the physical evolution of Grandfather Mountain, its climate and its important role in migration paths for birds and animals.

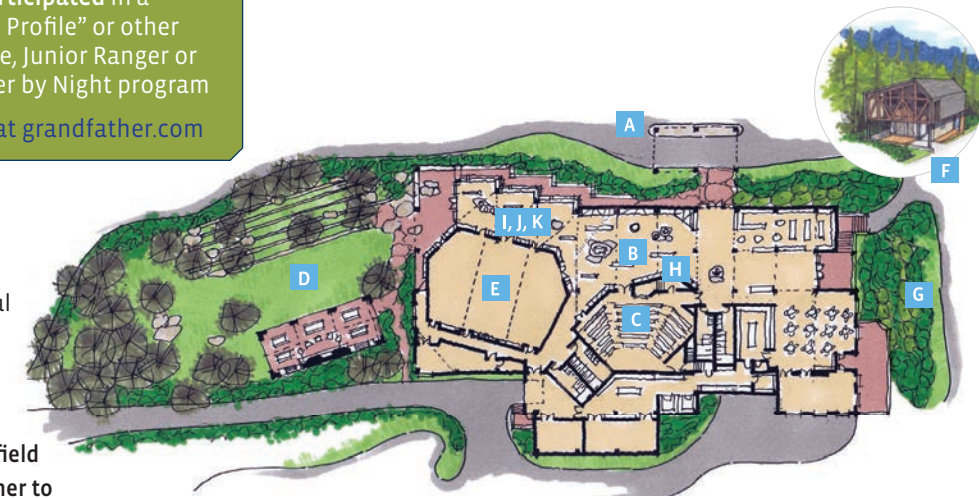
**“Whether it’s schoolchildren coming for a field trip or conservation experts visiting together to share new knowledge, guests will gain an even greater appreciation of nature and become even more passionate about protecting and preserving it,”** Pope said.

The Stewardship Foundation is grateful for the dedication and support of our donors. Donations are still needed to make it a reality, and those interested may contribute online at [grandfather.com/fulfillingpromises](http://grandfather.com/fulfillingpromises) or in person through Grandfather’s round-up program, where any purchase at the park’s retail stations (including the restaurant, gift shops, fudge shop and gatehouse) can be rounded up to the next dollar to benefit the campaign.

**“Even a small donation can leave a legacy as big as all outdoors,”** Pope said.

All of us at Grandfather Mountain look forward to making this dream a reality, and we appreciate your support.

**“Grandfather Mountain is a unique mountain, a unique ecological center ... and this is about taking our young kids and letting them learn about it. It’s something that I think we need in our country more now than ever,”** said Bob Wilson, a major donor for the campaign for whom the Wilson Center for Nature Discovery will be named.



## Conservation Campus Named Donor Recognition

|                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Wilson Center for Nature Discovery | Bob & Susan Wilson           |
| B. Exhibition Gallery                 | Paul & Susie O’Connell       |
| C. Auditorium                         | Luther H. Hodges Jr.         |
| D. Outdoor Learning Space             | Joseph H. & Terry Williams   |
| E. Classroom 2                        | William S. & Frances H. Rose |
| F. Animal and Habitat Office          | Ginny Burton                 |
| G. Botanical Garden                   | Monroe & Becky Cobey         |
| H. Flora Wall                         | The Dickson Foundation       |
| I. Tree Timeline                      | The McLendon Family          |
| J. Extreme and Wild Winds             | Connie & John McLendon       |
| K. Shadow Play                        | Joanie & David Andrews       |

*We would like to thank the many generous donors who are making the vision of the Conservation Campus a reality and to acknowledge the following contributions of \$15,000 and above.*

A.J. Fletcher Foundation, Jon & Lisa Barrett, Thomas W. Bunn, The Cannon Foundation, John Crosland, Frank & Mary Cain Driscoll, James & Barbara Goodman, B. Kelly & Meredith Graves, Richard & Mary Hill, Lory Lockwood, Catherine Morton, Judy Morton, Bruce & Mary Rinehart, Sally and Russell Robinson II, Dan & Gail Settle, David & Cathy Thompson, George Ware, Tony Watts, Michael & Katherine Weaver, Bill & Pat Williamson, Pink Willis

*All gifts of \$1,000 and above will be permanently recognized.*





## Sustaining Nature

Grandfather Mountain is also dedicated to the care of the abundant wildlife, flora, fauna and other natural resources on the mountain. In 2019, resource management staff participated in projects to track species and migration routes; monitored species and nests; surveyed trees and propagated tree species to ensure health; and removed invasive species.

Grandfather Mountain participated in the annual Hawk Watch, a citizen science effort from the Hawk Migration Association of North America at over 300 official sites. The program tracks hawks and migration routes to generate data for land management decisions. This year, Grandfather Mountain had 57 volunteers

and three official counters participate in the program, with almost 617 volunteer hours logged.

Peregrine falcon eyries were also monitored in conjunction with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. These powerful birds of prey became endangered between the 1950s and 1970s, due to pesticide use. Their populations have rebounded in many parts of the world, thanks to recovery efforts. Grandfather Mountain is proud to have been one of North Carolina's original release sites.

Grandfather Mountain pays careful attention to the mountain's flora and fauna, surveying them regularly to ensure their health. Beech trees were resurveyed in 2019 for Beech Bark Disease. Red spruce and Fraser fir cones were collected and sent to Mayland Community

**597**  
dedicated hours by  
staff and volunteers  
to manage invasive  
species and protect and  
monitor Grandfather's  
biodiversity

Want to volunteer?  
Visit [grandfather.com](https://grandfather.com)

College in Spruce Pine, N.C., to be propagated and sent back for replanting.

While not as exciting as some projects, one of our resource management staff's most important jobs is removing invasive species to ensure the health of native plants. In 2019, they removed at least five species, some completely by hand, to protect endangered species nearby.

These projects, to preserve and protect the natural resources of Grandfather Mountain, are done behind-the-scenes. They're rarely noticeable to guests. However, these efforts help ensure that today's guests can experience the wonders of nature at Grandfather Mountain and that their children and grandchildren will be able to, as well.

## Sharing Wonder Beyond Grandfather Mountain

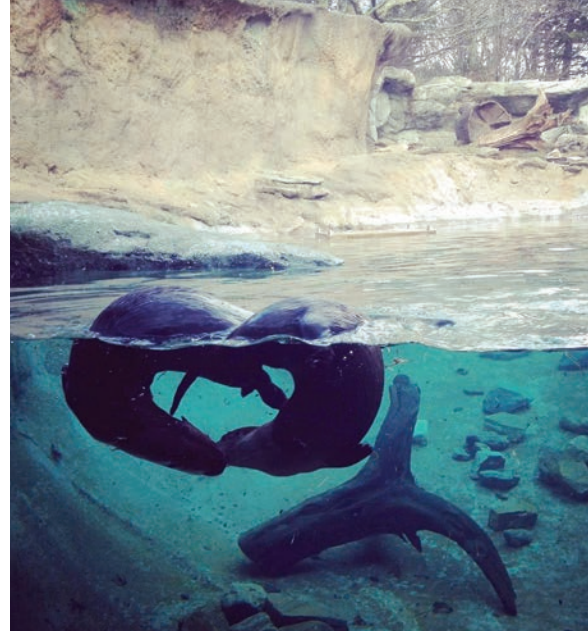
As the conservation campus becomes a reality, the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation is developing other ways to share the wonders of nature beyond the mountain.

Beginning in the fall of 2019, in a partnership with Avery County Schools and its director of curriculum and instruction, education staff started working with every first-grade student in Avery County for six in-depth interactions. Five of the programs took place at schools in a naturalist-led inquiry, with the sixth being a field trip to Grandfather Mountain. Students participated in the Adopt-an-Animal program through Grandfather Mountain's Environmental Wildlife Habitats and will continue to receive updates on their animal's seasonal activities and natural history.

We plan to expand this type of program, integrated into the Standard Course of Study, to children of different ages within and beyond the county. Partnerships like this will enable us to expand our reach and maximize the impact of the new Education Center and Conservation Campus.

Almost **\$10,000**  
given in **scholarships** for field trip  
transportation and programming  
cost assistance to Title One  
schools in N.C.  
To help fund scholarships,  
go to [grandfather.com](https://grandfather.com)





## In Memory of Aspen

In March, Grandfather Mountain lost a beloved long-time resident of its wildlife habitats — Aspen, the Western cougar. He didn't recover from surgery to remove a tooth and diagnose other ailments, and had to be humanely euthanized. Aspen was 15 years old, which is two years older than Western cougars typically live in the wild.

“Aspen was such a great ambassador of his species and for Grandfather Mountain,” said Jesse Pope, president and executive director. **“Everyone that met him was in awe of his gentle nature and his interest in meeting those who visited with him.”**

Aspen was born at a wildlife park in Colorado. His mother was considered too old to bear kittens, so he and his siblings

were hand-raised by staff. Grandfather Mountain was able to give him a home, and he immediately stole the hearts of everyone here. He spent his youth playing with toys, pouncing on keepers, chasing the cats, nursing on blankets and licking his keepers' heads. “Such personal interaction is integral to instilling and developing trust between young animals and their keepers,” Pope said.

When Aspen was old enough to move into the main cougar habitat, he was introduced to his new feline family, Sheaba and Nikita. “Aspen became fast friends with his cougar family, particularly Nikita, and they could often be seen playing chase games, snuggling and grooming with each other,” said

**61%** increase in participation in Keeper Talks  
Learn about our animals at [grandfather.com](https://www.grandfather.com)

Christie Tipton, Grandfather's chief habitats curator, who noted Aspen's special fondness for his keepers and other visitors. **“No matter where he was in the habitat, as soon as he saw his keeper friends at the overlook or on the other side of the fence, he would light up and start calling to them immediately.”**

Aspen will be missed by everyone at Grandfather Mountain. He is survived by Logan and Trinity, a sibling pair of Western cougars. They were found orphaned as cubs in Idaho and were rescued by Grandfather Mountain in 2016, with the generous support of Bob and Susan Wilson.

## Keeping Our Animals Safe, Healthy and Happy

The health and well-being of the resident animals at Grandfather is one of our top priorities. One way we do this is by providing the wildlife habitats where they live. Most are built around their native environments and offer acres for them to roam as they please — out of sight, if they desire, or time alone to lounge in the sun.

We make sure the animals receive the best possible care. In 2019, these efforts included training animals to help give them a better quality of life, staff training and learning from professionals around the country, and planning to help the animals as they age.

Last year, habitat staff worked with the bears and elk at Grandfather Mountain to train them to accept medical help and other treatments. This will help keep the animals and keepers safe when such needs arise.

Association of Zoo Keepers conference to learn with keepers from across the country, while others completed animal welfare courses. The mountain named its first training coordinator, Carol Burns, to oversee such efforts. She has developed extensive programs to help trainers expand their knowledge and skills, along with preparing new trainers.

Giving habitat animals the best care requires understanding the animals' needs as they age. Last year, staff assessed middle-aged and older animals on a variety of measures to determine their current quality of life and track impacts that may be hard to discern on a day-to-day basis as they age.

**Grandfather Mountain understands that our mission — to inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain — starts with helping protect the wonders in our care.** We also understand that many guests experience our mission by interacting with our animal programs. We set out each and every day to give them the best possible care. It's our privilege to constantly seek ways to do this better than ever.

Staff also had the benefit of additional training. Some attended the annual American

**83,393** people participated in Animal Encounter programs

Get to know the animals at [grandfather.com](https://www.grandfather.com)





## OUR VISION

To be the world's best not-for-profit nature park by providing an excellent experience filled with the discovery and wonder of Grandfather Mountain's vast natural resources.

### GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

## OUR VALUES

### PASSION

Ignite wonder in our guests, volunteers, donors and employees by sharing our knowledge of and excitement for the incredible scenery and ecosystems that thrive at Grandfather Mountain.

### COMMUNITY

Provide a positive, uplifting atmosphere that embraces employees, guests, volunteers, donors and partnering organizations as valuable members of a larger team.

### CONSERVATION

Continue to protect Grandfather Mountain's remarkable natural resources, including globally imperiled flora and fauna.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Challenge our staff to seek out best practices to improve our organization's environmental and economic security.

## Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, Inc.

### Statement of Financial Position

Income Tax Basis December 31, 2019

| ASSETS                                      | AMOUNT            |
|---|-------------------|
| CURRENT ASSETS                              |                   |
| Cash and cash equivalents                   | \$7,676,462       |
| Inventories                                 | 174,640           |
| Accounts receivable                         | 2,123,592         |
| <b>Total current assets</b>                 | <b>9,974,694</b>  |
| EQUIPMENT, NET                              | 7,460,036         |
| INVESTMENTS                                 | 4,739,585         |
| <b>Total assets</b>                         | <b>17,997,090</b> |
|   |                   |
| NET ASSETS                                  |                   |
| Without donor restrictions                  | 17,409,073        |
| With donor restrictions                     | 4,646,271         |
| <b>Total net assets</b>                     | <b>22,055,344</b> |
| <b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>     | <b>22,174,315</b> |
| WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS                  |                   |
| Retail sales                                | 2,653,159         |
| Admission fees and other operating revenue  | 4,867,683         |
| <b>Total Operating Revenues</b>             | <b>7,520,842</b>  |
| OPERATING EXPENSES                          |                   |
| Program expenses                            | 3,989,854         |
| General and administrative expenses         | 983,982           |
| Cost of retail sales                        | 1,117,205         |
| <b>Total operating expenses</b>             | <b>6,091,041</b>  |
| <b>Change in net assets from operations</b> | <b>1,429,801</b>  |
| Non-operating revenues (expenses)           |                   |
| Contributions                               | 2,636,063         |
| Fundraising expenses                        | -76,103           |
| Investment gains (loss)                     | 780,833           |
| Disposal of property/equipment              | -31,463           |
| <b>Change in Net Assets</b>                 | <b>2,313,769</b>  |

**Thank you** for being a part of the Grandfather Mountain family and for all you do to advance the mission, vision and values of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. We are grateful for your commitment and partnership. Because of you, more children than ever before participated in conservation and science education programs at Grandfather Mountain in 2019. Without you, many of them would never have had that opportunity.





[grandfather.com](http://grandfather.com)

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

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