



NATURE FIRST

The Alliance for Responsible Nature Photography

2022 Annual Report

January 2023



About Us

Nature First was founded to promote the protection and preservation of the world's natural and wild places through inspiring, educating, and uniting everyone making photographs and videos in nature, empowering them to be ambassadors of the natural world.

Key Accomplishments in 2022

Articles


This year we published 22 articles related to our mission of promoting responsible nature photography and encouraging its use for the protection of the natural world. These articles addressed such diverse issues as how to protect underwater environments, responsible macro photography, specific areas of the world that photographers are helping to protect, as well as interviews from respected photographers from across the globe about how they apply the ethos of Nature First to their photography.

Ambassadors

In 2022 our ambassador program really began to take shape under the leadership of Andres Puiggros. He reorganized the program creating better communication and cooperation between ambassadors and helped them to more effectively spread the Nature First ethos across the globe. Under his leadership the program grew to 58 Nature First ambassadors in 16 nations. These ambassadors promote the Nature First Principles and ethos to nature photographers within their context, helping to advance the cause in a way that honors the unique culture, language, and environmental challenges being faced.

Communication

We expanded our social media presence onto additional platforms in 2022 and grew all of our audiences significantly. We used social media to promote responsible nature photography and to highlight ways that photographers were using their photos to make a difference in the natural world. We also put out regular newsletters with helpful information, and participated in many different interviews with magazines and podcasts.



Membership

Nature First members are those who have committed themselves to following the Nature First Principles in their photography. This is a significant commitment for a photographer to make and so we are delighted to have grown the membership by another 9% this year. We now have 5,240 Nature First members in 77 nations.




Partners

Our partner program also made some advances under the leadership of Josh Meier. Our partnership program consists of organizations that are committed to the advancement of the Nature First Ethos. We had four new silver level partners join this year as well as an additional bronze partner. We also greatly improved our communication with Nature First Partners, seeking ways to mutually support each other.

Presentations

Nature First members and ambassadors have been active in representing Nature First at events ranging from art shows to photography festivals all over the world, helping to spread the word about Nature First. The director of our ambassador program also flew from his home in Chile to speak to AFONA, a gathering of hundreds of nature photographers in Argentina. Through these types of outreach the knowledge of Nature First is spreading.



Staff


Nature First is primarily run by its volunteer staff. These are individuals who have taken on major roles within the organization, such as the leaders of our major programs, communications, social media, website development, etc.. In past years we've struggled to keep everyone communicating well and on the same page. In 2022 we hired Tracy Gross to work part time as our Director of Operations. Tracy brought her years of experience in the nonprofit world to Nature First. She was that vital link between all the parts, helping everyone to stay connected and move together in a cohesive way. As a result of her energy, passion, and wisdom, the organization was able to function much more effectively..

Our volunteer staff gave hundreds of hours of their time to advance the cause of responsible nature photography. They were involved in driving strategic initiatives, expanding international programs, growing membership, writing and editing articles, creating graphics, coordinating social media, operating and upgrading the website, writing letters, organizing and attending meetings, translating materials into their local language, and much more. The importance of their contribution to Nature First cannot be emphasized enough.

Website

In early 2022 we were finally able to obtain the domain name "NatureFirst.org". Previously we had to use "NatureFirstPhotography.org". This new domain name is much easier to remember and share.

In the autumn of 2022 the Nature First website was completely overhauled and moved to a new server. It was built on a new platform allowing us to have much more flexibility and to address some underlying problems that we were having with the website. One of the more visible changes is that we now have much better support for additional languages. A membership directory was also developed to help Nature First members connect with one another. There are also many other changes to the website that may not be so obvious, but which will help us move into the future.




Challenges of 2022

Despite some very good steps forward to help strengthen the core structure of Nature First, we continued to struggle with a nearly continuous turnover of our core staff, making it challenging to make significant progress. The main reason for this turnover is because our staff are volunteers and each position is nearly a full-time job. Nearly all of our volunteers have full time jobs and families, making it impossible for them to give the time that is needed. There simply is more work to be done than can reasonably be done by a volunteer staff. The board recognizes that for Nature First to achieve its big goals it requires a paid full-time staff of several people.

Adding to this challenge, we were unable to raise enough funding for the organization even at its current state. Nature First members generously donated just over \$4,000 in 2022 but our expenses were \$34,000 and that only included one part-time staff member. We had hoped to raise enough to increase our Director of Operations hours in 2023 and hire another part-time employee, but with a \$30,000 deficit, covered by the board, we can't even bring them back in 2023.

Moving Forward in 2023

Because of the ongoing challenge of volunteer turnover and the lack of desperately needed funds, Nature First will be making some significant changes. In 2023, we will greatly reduce our volunteer programs - the Ambassador, Partner, Communication, Social Media and Technology programs. We know that this will be a huge disappointment to many. We are looking for new ways to continue some of these important activities, but in a more sustainable, people-healthy way that fits within our realistic budget. This is not the end of Nature First, it's the start of reinventing how Nature First can accomplish its mission within our limitations. Nature First is not an organization, it is an ethos which each of us can continue to live and to promote.



Financial Report

Nature First Statement of Activity

January - December 2022

Revenue

Contributed income	
Direct Donations	625
PayPal	3,924.49
Total Individual Donations	\$ 4,549.49
Total Contributed income	\$ 4,549.49
Total Revenue	\$ 4,549.49

Expenditures

Advertising & marketing	175.37
New sletter	725.94
Online Advertising	89.28
Promotional Materials	126
Social media	74.9
Website	1,177.70
Total Advertising & marketing	\$ 2,369.19
Charitable Contributions	150
Contract & professional fees	
Accounting fees	1,135.65
Total Contract & professional fees	\$ 1,135.65
Office expenses	
Bank fees & service charges	13.27
Information Technology	75
Licenses and Permits	243.5
Shipping & postage	278.9
Total Office expenses	\$ 610.67
PayPal Fees	136.33

Payroll expenses	
Taxes	2,869.98
Wages	25,817.93
Workers' compensation insurance	522
Total Payroll expenses	\$ 29,209.91
Travel	\$ 720.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 34,331.75
Net Operating Revenue	-\$ 29,782.26
Net Revenue	-\$ 29,782.26

Nature First is a 501c3 nonprofit organization in the United States with tax id: 86-1225718

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