

BirdNote®

*Stories about birds,  
the environment, and more*

Annual Report 2021



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***“BirdNote enriches my life and gives me hope! Thank you!”***

***– Lisa G., Redwood City, CA***



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# A Message from our Executive Director

**BirdNote has always had a magical ability** to draw people in, invite them to pay attention to birds, and inspire them to care about the world that birds inhabit. I'm thrilled to report that in 2021, more people in more places listened to BirdNote for more time than ever before. *BirdNote Daily* continues its 17-year run, now on over 250 public radio stations. In 2021, we released the second season of our podcast *Threatened* and premiered *Bring Birds Back*. Both of these podcasts are already so popular that they rank in the top 2% of all podcasts globally.

We have many people to thank for setting us up for success and continued growth in 2021—in particular, the record number of people who donated to BirdNote last year, the dedicated members of our Board of Directors, and two of the longest-serving BirdNote team members in our history, Sallie Bodie and Ellen Blackstone, who both bid farewell to BirdNote (at least on paper) in 2021.

While a pandemic, the increasing ravages of climate change, and political turmoil have impacted everyone on the planet over these past two years, let's remember that we can always invite forces of harmony and healing into our shared experience. Paying attention to the lives of birds and creating shared experiences in the joy of birding are things that require little more than a few moments each day, and it is our honor and privilege to be working to invite people into those moments, inviting a practice of mindfulness and care for the world around us. Thank you for taking a moment to review our Annual Report, for celebrating BirdNote's 2021 successes with us, and for being part of what we hope will become even bigger successes in 2022.



**Nick Bayard**

Executive Director



**Birdnote is an independent media production organization** that brings joy, inspiration, and hope to millions of people around the world who value birds and the environment we share.

## Our Mission

Birds connect us with the joy and wonder of nature. By telling vivid, sound-rich stories about birds and the challenges they face, BirdNote inspires listeners to care about the natural world – and take steps to protect it.

## Vision

As listeners tune in to the lives of birds, their connection with nature deepens. They become champions and stewards of places important to birds and people.



# Stories that Inspire

**“People frequently ask me how I know so much about birds. I respond with, ‘I listen to BirdNote every morning!’”**

**– Karen B., Oakwood, OH**



**BirdNote Daily**, BirdNote’s flagship two-minute radio program, continues to grow as we expand the scope of our storytelling.

**The Migrations Series** celebrates the wonders of bird migration with this series of *BirdNote Daily* episodes written by science reporter Ariana Rimmel.

**The Spark Bird Series** captures the “birding origin stories” of everyone, from ornithologists to bus drivers to comedians. Notable guests include sculptor and musician Walter Kitundu, comedian Tig Notaro, and ornithologist and writer J. Drew Lanham.

In April, BirdNote celebrated **Poetry Month** by sharing nature-inspired poems written by contemporary authors. The poets featured in 2021 were Wendy S. Walters, Timothy Steele, Traci Brimhall, and Heid E. Erdrich.

**BirdNoir**, a true thriller, follows Michael Stein – Private Eye – as he uses deduction and detective work to identify a mystery bird.

BirdNote hosts engaging virtual events, featuring ornithologists, storytellers, and regional conservation experts alike.

**The BirdNote Storytelling Series** presented an evening of inspiration from the collection of essays titled, *When Birds Are Near: Dispatches from Contemporary Writers*.

**Unraveling the Mysteries of Migration** explored new technologies that allow scientists to study bird migration in greater detail than ever before, solving some long-standing questions and leading to new ones. Host Ariana Rimmel led panelists Scott Weidensaul (author, *A World on the Wing*), Marcela Castellino (Flyway Conservation Specialist, Manomet), and Julia Wang (BirdCast Project Leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology) in a panel discussion that delves into the big mysteries of migration.

**Winter Birds in the Skagit Valley**, presented by BirdNote and KNKX Public Radio, took over 1,700 attendees on a virtual journey through the farmlands, wetlands, estuaries, marine waters, prairies and forests of the Skagit Valley of western Washington State. Hosted by Dr. Trina Bayard, the event featured

special guest panelists Stephanie Fernandez, founder of Skagit Guided Adventures; Jeff Osmundson, President of Skagit Audubon Society; and Fern Naomi Renville, Dakota storyteller and theatre artist.





## Threatened, Season 2

*Threatened* is a podcast about answering the call to protect the birds and places we love. In July 2021, BirdNote released the second season of the show.

The songs and sounds of birds are all around us. What can we learn when we stop to listen? In season 2 of *Threatened*, host Ari Daniel explores stories from around the world about people who are taking action on behalf of our fragile ecosystems and the birds that depend on them. Season 2 begins with Sunny Tseng, a PhD student at the University of Northern British Columbia and a researcher at the Endemic Species Research Institute in Taiwan. The unexpected appearance of a Siberian Crane in Taiwan put Sunny on a life-changing path. Another episode of *Threatened*, season 2, features The Joe Farm in Newbern, Alabama. Despite the odds, the Joe Farm creates a safe space for birds and birders.

You can catch up on both seasons of *Threatened*, and stay tuned for the third season coming in July 2022.

## Bring Birds Back, Season 1

*Bring Birds Back* is a new longform podcast about the joy of birds and the ways that humans can help them through simple, everyday actions.

Few people know that the population of breeding birds in North America has declined by nearly one-third since 1970 — a loss of 2.9 billion birds. Even fewer know that some of the solutions are within reach. It all starts at home with our pets, our windows, and even the coffee we drink.

Like many birders, host Tenijah Hamilton discovered her love of birds during the pandemic. In *Bring Birds Back*, she invites listeners to join her in appreciating the beauty and mystery of the birds all around us and taking action on their behalf. Tenijah speaks with bird enthusiasts from many different backgrounds, identities, and communities. Listeners follow along with her as they learn how to bring birds back together.

The first season of *Bring Birds Back* was sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The podcast received critical acclaim from The Natural Resources Defense Council, *Outside Online* and the *Podcast Delivery* newsletter.





## New BirdNote Voices in 2021

Dr. Wenfei Tong is a biologist with a passion for understanding and conserving the natural world. Wenfei has written and narrated multiple popular *BirdNote Daily* episodes in 2021, including “The Power of Albatross Partnerships,” “The Best Nest,” and “Feathered Females in Charge.” Wenfei’s two books, *Bird Love* and *How to Read A Bird*, use scientific discoveries to show how much humans and birds share, including some of literature’s most basic themes. Her ultimate aim is to inspire as many people as possible to care for and thus protect birds.

### **Bring Birds Back podcast:**

Tenijah Hamilton is the host of BirdNote’s hit podcast, *Bring Birds Back*. Tenijah is an experienced science communicator and educator. Over the course of *Bring Birds Back* season 1, Tenijah led listeners through the many troubles that birds face today, and the many ways that everyday people can help them.

### **Threatened, season 2:**

The second episode of *Threatened*, season 2, was produced by Claire Reynolds, reporting from western Georgia. Listen to “Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and the Endangered Species Act” at Birdnote.org.

Producer Jay Avery brought us *Threatened*, season 2, episode 3: “Swallow-tailed Kites in the Black Belt.” This story brings us to the Black Belt region of Alabama, where we go on a birding tour and learn about the Swallow-tailed Kite, as well as The Joe Farm of Newbern, Alabama.

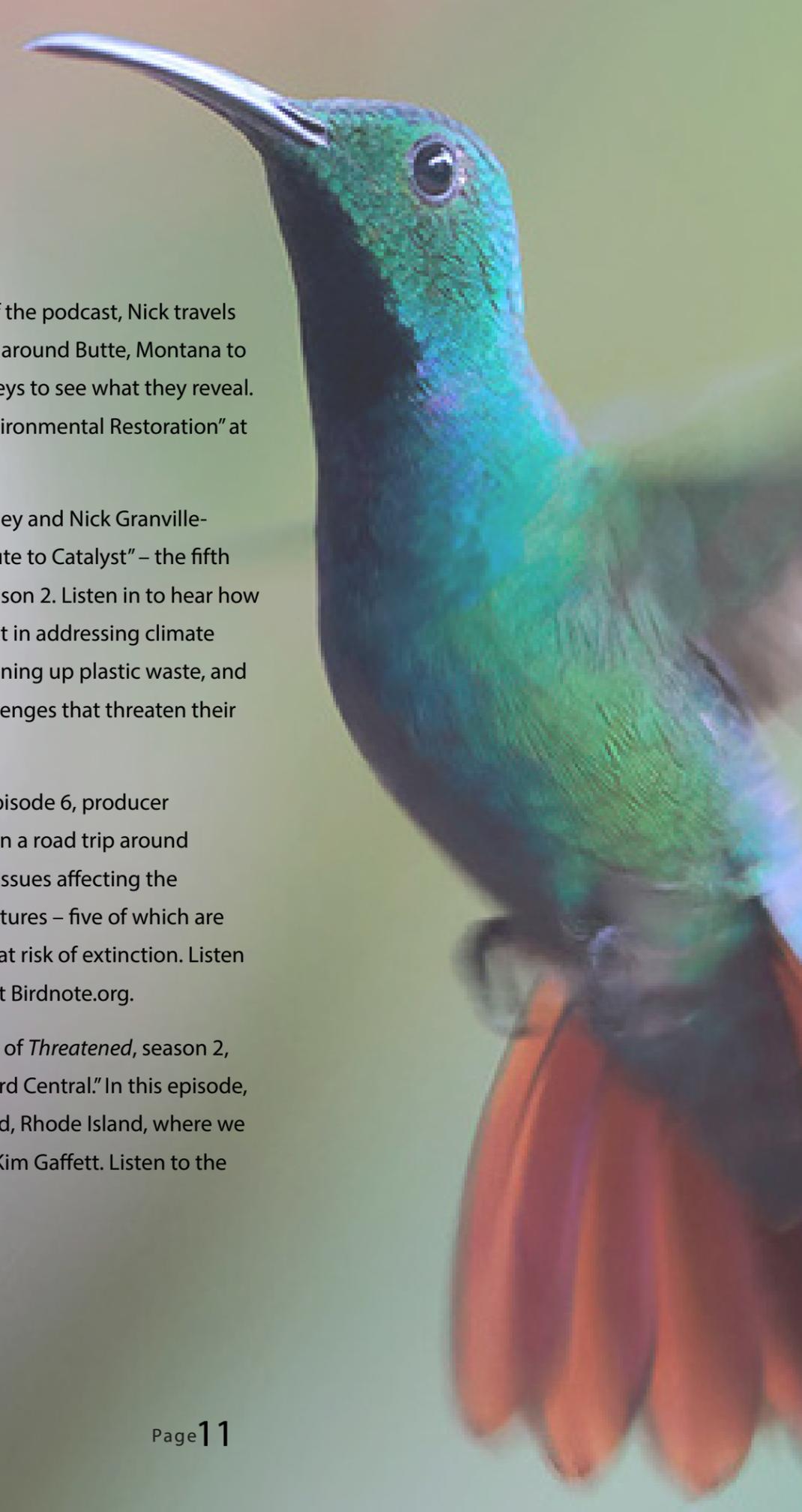
*Threatened*, season 2, episode 4 was produced by reporter Nick

Mott. In this installment of the podcast, Nick travels through the polluted area around Butte, Montana to peer into the lives of Ospreys to see what they reveal. Listen to “Ospreys and Environmental Restoration” at Birdnote.org.

Producers Paul Drury-Bradey and Nick Granville-Fall brought us “Puffins: Cute to Catalyst” – the fifth episode of *Threatened*, season 2. Listen in to hear how puffins could spark interest in addressing climate change, reducing and cleaning up plastic waste, and other human-caused challenges that threaten their existence.

In *Threatened*, season 2, episode 6, producer ish Mafundikwa takes us on a road trip around Zimbabwe to explore the issues affecting the country’s six species of vultures – five of which are critically endangered and at risk of extinction. Listen to Vultures in Zimbabwe at Birdnote.org.

Ben James is the producer of *Threatened*, season 2, episode 7: “Block Island, Bird Central.” In this episode, Ben takes us to Block Island, Rhode Island, where we meet master bird bander Kim Gaffett. Listen to the episode at Birdnote.org.



**BirdNote begins behind the microphone.** In addition to familiar favorites Michael Stein and Mary McCann, new producers, narrators and storytellers joined forces with BirdNote to share the joy and wonder of birds.

Ariana Rimmel, pictured above, is a chemist turned journalist who is passionate about exploring the world through the lens of science and discovery. Ariana wrote and narrated each installment of the Migrations series on *BirdNote Daily*. Ariana continues to use their expertise in ornithology and science communication when narrating, writing, and producing many new *BirdNote Daily* episodes.

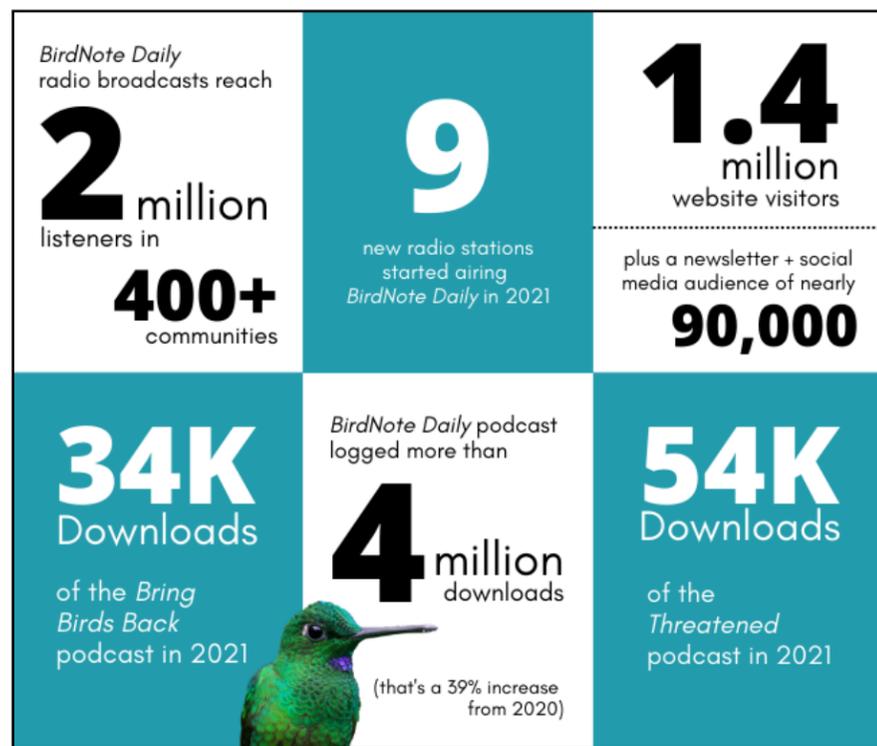
# A Growing Base of Support

***"I was inspired to donate after realizing that I can now identify some of the bird calls I hear while puttering in my garden."***

**- Suzanne M., Mountain View, CA**

Thank you for making 2021 our best year ever! **In 2021, BirdNote raised more dollars from more contributors than any previous year in our history.** BirdNote fans can be found in all 50 states and internationally. We received nearly 7,000 donations from more than 3,000 amazing individuals like you, raising more than \$1.1M to create compelling programs that inspire care for our natural world. These figures represent 8% more donors than in 2020, and a whopping 81% growth in our donor base from 2019. Thank you!

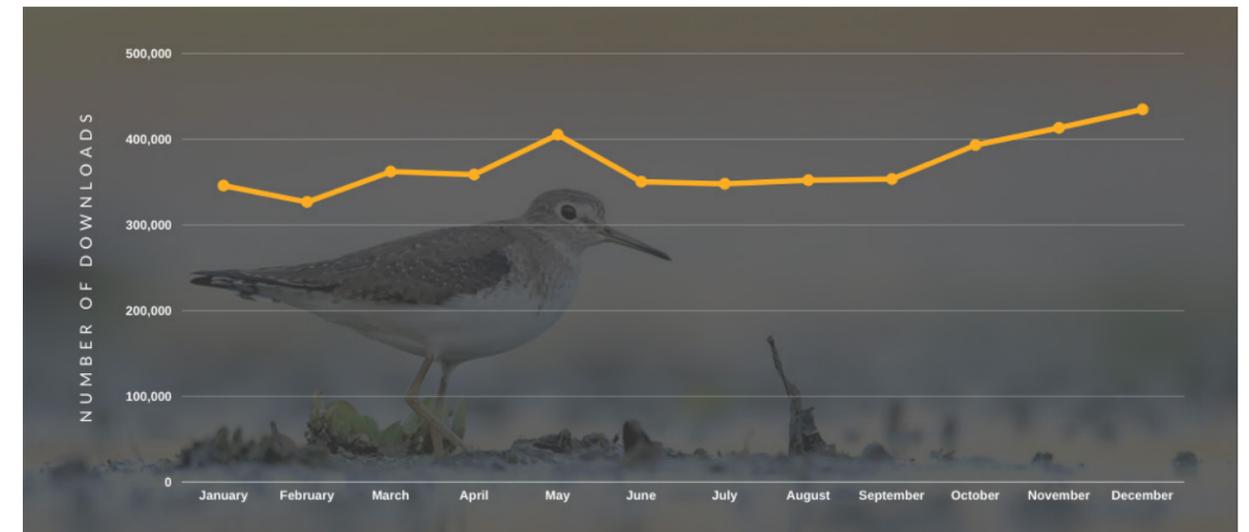
## Expanding BirdNote's reach



**BirdNote's audience has grown tremendously** in 2021. From *BirdNote Daily* to our longform podcasts, we are excited by how far the BirdNote community is expanding.

# BirdNote Daily Downloads

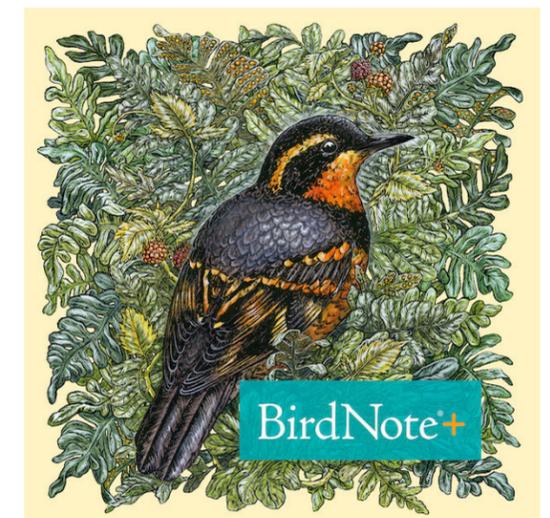
From January thru December 2021, BirdNote amassed a total of **4,442,275 downloads** via online streaming services among BirdNote Daily and longform podcasts.



## Introducing BirdNote+

In May 2021 we launched BirdNote+, an optional premium podcast feed subscription service. BirdNote+ enables podcast fans to support BirdNote's conservation mission and programming through a modest monthly donation

BirdNote+ subscribers receive bonus content features such as an ad-free listening experience, access to "behind-the-scenes" interviews with show hosts, and advance invitations to virtual events. As always, BirdNote's content remains fully accessible and free of charge to everyone, and the BirdNote+ experience is an avenue for pod fans to financially support our work and mission.



# Centering Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility

**BirdNote operates on the simple premise** that the joy of birds is a unifying force between people of all walks of life. In 2021, the BirdNote team began working with The Aspire Group to draft and implement a statement regarding Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility in our organization. We are pleased to share that this statement became official policy, per a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors.

The long and ongoing history of racial oppression in the United States and the centering of white people and privileged

groups throughout much of the mainstream environmental movement requires us to intentionally practice antiracism in our organizational processes and media production. BirdNote is committed to creating the inclusive environmentalism we want to see in the world.

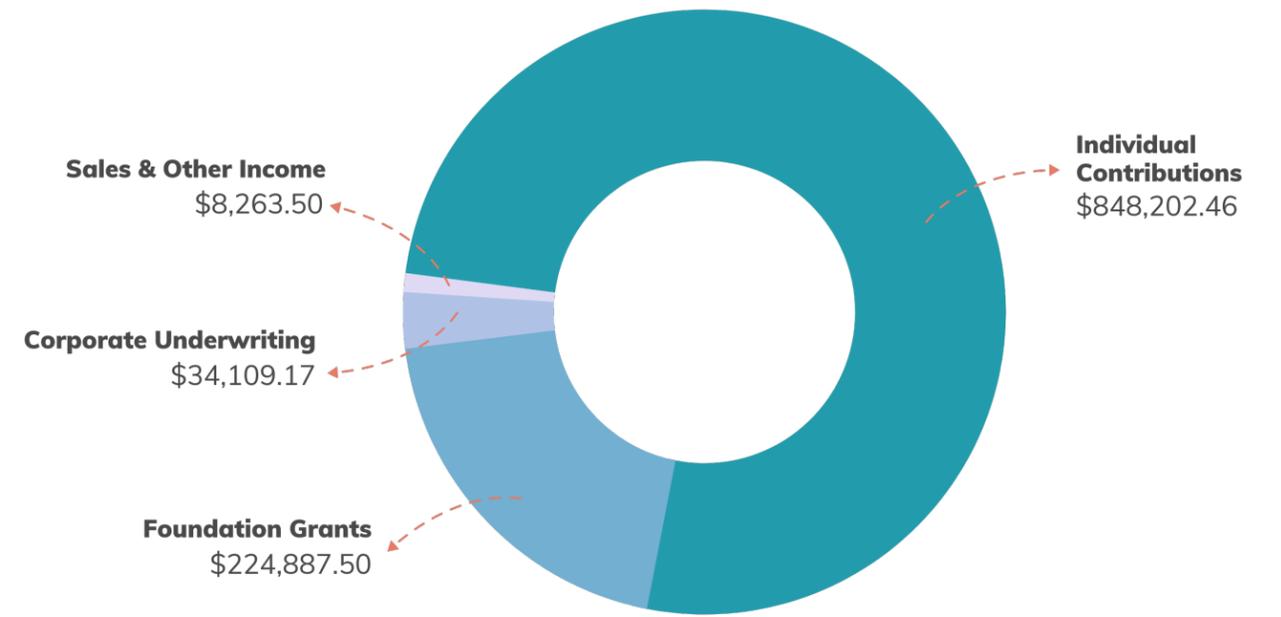
Now that BirdNote's IDEA statement is official policy, the work toward achieving the goals and tactics around this policy can take place. In 2022, BirdNote plans to ensure that our content lives up to our IDEA values as outlined in the statement. We will also work toward developing a BirdNote team that reflects the diversity of the audience we seek to reach. This work will allow us to reach a broader and more diverse audience. Finally, we will establish equity as a leadership practice and priority.

We are excited by the support BirdNote is receiving from listeners, donors, and other folks in the BirdNote community around the execution of our IDEA objectives. Thank you for taking this journey with us.

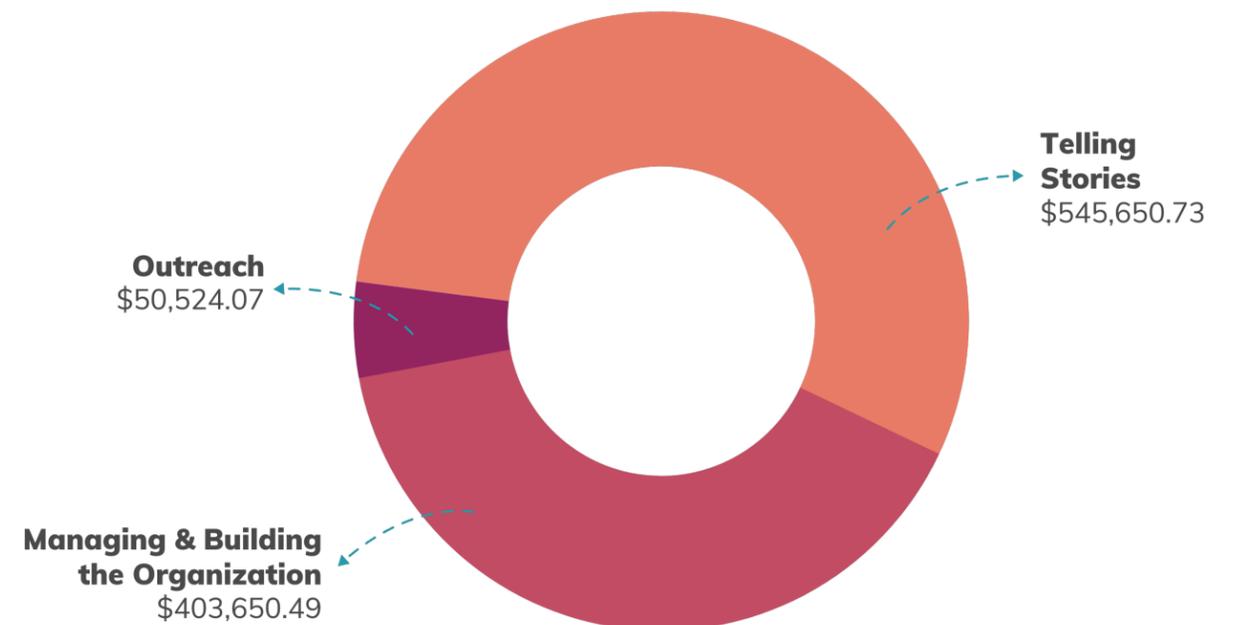


# Funding Snapshot

## Operating Revenue: \$1.1 Million



## Operating Expenses: \$1.0 Million



## Recognizing BirdNote Partners

Audubon  
for sharing BirdNote stories  
online, through social media, and  
in Audubon magazine.

BirdNote's  
contributing  
photographers  
who freely share their images  
for use on our website, in  
social media, and in other  
communications.

Cognition Studio  
for in-kind contributions of  
web and design services, and  
to Kristine Johnson for serving  
as design advisor for the new  
BirdNote website.

KNKX  
BirdNote's flagship radio  
station, along with more than  
200 stations and outlets in  
North America, for sharing our  
programs.

The Macaulay  
Library of the  
Cornell Lab of  
Ornithology  
for providing most of the bird  
sounds and video content  
featured in BirdNote shows.

Sasquatch Books  
for publishing the BirdNote Field  
Journal, *BirdNote*, the book, and  
"BirdNotes" note cards.

Seattle Audubon  
Nature Shop  
for being our exclusive retail  
partner for all your shopping  
needs.

Victor Emanuel  
Nature Tours  
for serving as BirdNote's  
adventure trip outfitter.

Mark Wittow of  
K&L Gates LLP  
for pro bono counsel on legal and  
intellectual property matters.

## How to Listen

1

**On the Air:** find a station near you  
that broadcasts *BirdNote Daily*.

2

**Online:** listen on the BirdNote  
website or sign up for our weekly  
email newsletter.

3

**Via podcast:** follow *BirdNote Daily*  
through your favorite podcast app,  
such as Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

4

**YouTube:** listen to *BirdNote Daily*  
and our longform podcast series in  
video form on YouTube.

5

**Follow us on social media.** Enjoy photos,  
stories, audiograms, and videos every day:

- Like us on Facebook.
- Connect with us on Twitter.
- Follow us on Instagram.
- Spin our videos on TikTok.



# Thank You!

BirdNote is made possible by the incredible support of our passionate donors.  
Thank you for your generosity over the past year. We're excited to show you what we have in store for 2022.

## **BIRD IMAGES**

*Vermilion Flycatcher*

*Glacous Gull*

*American Avocet*

*Barred Owl*

*Northern Mockingbird*

*Sandhill Cranes*

*Hepatic Tanager*

*Snowy Plover*

© Mick Thompson

*Green Breasted Mango*

*Solitary Sandpiper*

© Greg Lavaty

## **Photo of Tenijah Hamilton**

© *Tasnia Malek*

## **Photo of Ariana Rimmel**

*Courtesy of Ariana Rimmel; taken while recording for BirdNote*

## **Illustration of Atlantic Puffins**

*by Clint McMillen at Braincloud Design*

## **BirdNote+ Logo Illustration**

*by Emily Poole*

BirdNote is incorporated in  
Washington State.

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