

KNOWLEDGE BASE

The Case of the Missing Research Legacy



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For over a dozen years now I've chaired the Conservation Research Grants Program, which began its legacy as the Grants-In-Aid Program, for the Boone and Crockett Club. I feel deeply privileged on several accounts.

For one, it's professionally and personally rewarding to have a hand in facilitating the conduct of needed research on big game species and their management. For another, it's highly satisfying to see graduate students use these grants to launch their careers in the wildlife profession. And, it's a real honor to help carry on a 60-plus year legacy that includes iconic projects and people in the field of wildlife science.

Most of what I know about the program's past comes from project lists, each of them incomplete in some respect, and update articles that B&C members have written for editions of the *Records of North American Big Game* books. The Club's early investments in research go back to the 1940s, with studies examining wolf depredation in Alaska and ecological studies of bighorn sheep. The Grants-in-Aid Program was formally established in 1948 by the newly-created Conservation Committee. Project lists show that in the decades since, the Club has provided grants to support around 150 research projects spanning a diversity of subjects and locations throughout North America. Especially in the early decades, the lists read like a Wildlife Science Hall of Fame: Durward Allen's pioneering work on the wolves of Isle Royale, which became the longest continuous study of a predator-prey system in the world; the Craighead brothers' famous work on Yellowstone grizzly bears; the work of Canadian legend Ian McTaggart-Cowan on the wolves of Mount McKinley; Maurice Hornocker's ground-breaking studies on mountain lions and other carnivores; and on and on.

Getting access to the results of these studies is fairly easy. They may be found in the original journal articles in which the researchers published their findings, or in any number of textbooks in ecology and wildlife management. But what more is there to the story of Boone and Crockett's long history of involvement in big game research? This question has come up often among B&C staff and members, along with rumors about a

stash of records that had been kept for the Grants-in-Aid (GIA) Program. But where were they? This mystery of the missing GIA records persisted for more years than I've been with the program.

In April, thanks to a fortuitous turn of events, the mystery was solved! The story was related to me by Abra Loran, Assistant Controller for the B&C Club. She and Controller Jan Krueger had been searching high and low for certain old personnel files, with no success. There was one place left to check: the crawl space under the B&C headquarters building, which was the final resting place for old accounting records. I don't know whether Abra drew the short straw, fell victim to rank, or simply is a brave soul. I only know it was she who crawled into the bowels of the B&C Headquarters, discovering not only the misfiled personnel records, but as well, roughly 10 boxes bearing the label "GIA Records." Eureka! Various B&C staff paused in their duties to cart the boxes upstairs into the light of day and historical investigation.

The significance of this discovery is best conveyed by Abra herself:

Going through those boxes was really neat. You know you're holding a piece of history when the accounting records I found were on extra large ledger paper, which is way before my time. That's one aspect of working for the Boone and Crockett Club that I love, the history. In one day I found the mystery employee records and the GIA boxes. It was an awesome day! ■

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Abra reviewing the GIA files she located in the crawl space at B&C Headquarters in Missoula, Montana. Background image shows the east pack of wolves from Durward Allen's wolf studies on Isle Royale dated 1975.