

Living Riveted While Protecting Our Natural World



Nature calls to people like Dale Weiler and Loti Woods. A retired couple living on three acres in the gentle foothills of western North Carolina, Dale and Loti are no strangers to the trails and forests, the rocky outcroppings and the lush valleys that blanket this section of the Appalachian Mountains. And they frequently travel beyond their home state in an [Airstream Atlas Touring Coach](#) on trips that bring them closer to the natural world they love so much. It's given them a particular insight into the world that lives just beyond the trail's edge.

But what began with a shared passion for the outdoors has transformed into this couple's mission, as they celebrate some of North America's most critically threatened animals.

"Just getting out into nature didn't feel fulfilling enough," said Dale of that *aha moment* when he realized his life's new mission. "We didn't feel like we

were making a difference."

Heeding the call to do more with their love of the natural world and all its inhabitants – especially the ones that don't get all the attention – the couple founded [Weiler Woods for Wildlife](#), a conservation organization dedicated to preserving the natural world and protecting its underdogs.



"We realized that we wanted to focus on animals in North America," said Dale, "especially the animals that aren't as well-known, the ones that are misunderstood and underappreciated."

The focus on the underdogs began with a chance encounter the couple had with a litter of red wolf puppies at the North Carolina Zoo.

"After falling in love with them at the zoo, we learned more about the red wolf," said Loti, who writes on her blog, [Loti's Lens](#), about the work Weiler Woods for Wildlife does across the country and the creatures they support. Her experience taught her that while the plight of the gray wolf draws a lot of public attention, the lesser-known red wolf faces an even steeper uphill climb to stability as a species.

"The only wild population left in the world is in our home state of North Carolina in the Eastern part of the state, but as of December 2021 there are less than 20 now left in the wild," Loti said. "The rest – about 250 – live at red wolf conservation organizations where they are cared for and bred by humans with the hope that eventually they'll be reintroduced into the wild."

While Loti brings a passion for writing to the cause, Dale turned a late-blooming talent into a way to support critically threatened wildlife. A retired engineer, Dale began sculpting in his late 40s and the hobby turned into a true passion. Now in his 70s and inspired by this true underdog story, Dale began sculpting a red wolf art piece that might inspire others to take up the cause for one of North America's most critically threatened species.



Dale's beautiful bas-relief carving of a red wolf mother and pup in gorgeous Utah alabaster became the basis for castings that the couple donate to conservation organizations to aid the groups' fundraising and public education efforts.

"It began with using my art as a means to educate the public about wildlife

and to raise money," said Dale. "It's grown into a great way to financially support the organizations that are doing great work out in nature, and to offer the expertise we've gained over our careers in the corporate world to help these groups be more successful."

Like many, the pandemic changed the way Dale and Loti wanted to travel. Eschewing the international jaunts they had long enjoyed, the couple began searching for a safer and more flexible way to see the world.

"We wanted something that was comfortable, maneuverable, and something we could park easily wherever we went," said Dale. After considering several brands, the couple settled on an Airstream Atlas Touring Coach which they appropriately named "The Underdog." Before his career as an engineer, Dale was a Navy pilot, and his background drew him instantly to the legendary craftsmanship and powerful performance of this partnership between Airstream and Mercedes-Benz®.



"It's about quality," he said. "Having an aircraft background and roots in airframe manufacturing brought it closer to home. The Airstream just

radiated quality."

At first, they assumed their motorized Airstream would give them the freedom to go where they wished and bring along their own personal accommodations.

"We thought we'd buy it and do our travels and that'd be the end," said Loti. But quickly, The Underdog became a mobile basecamp for their conservation efforts – traveling the country to unveil castings of Dale's red wolf sculpture at fundraising events and conduct workshops to help support the groups they work with.



While Dale and Loti came to the Airstream Atlas with very little knowledge of what it takes to own and operate a recreational vehicle, they found it easy to get acclimated and embraced the challenge and reward of setting off on extended adventures. They've met many Airstreamers – and many Atlas owners who, like them, are ready for adventure.

"There's an interesting combination of qualities that Atlas owners have," said Dale. "Many are technically inclined, and like Loti and I, they're

adventurers – they embrace the challenge, and they love to get out into some really cool places.”

More and more, the couple have met Atlas owners out on extended months-long trips circling the country or heading up into the wilds of Canada.

“Many of them are getting into boondocking too, which is something that we never considered. They’re really excited about the freedom you have with your own vehicle,” said Dale of the Atlas owners that, like them, are energized by seeking out new horizons. “You can’t be afraid to step outside the box – embrace change. It’s stretched us, but it’s been a great learning experience. We can’t wait for our next trip.”