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WAZA
World Association of Zoos and Aquariums

news

WAZA Turns 90: Honouring a Legacy, Shaping the Future

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WAZA Membership as of 8 April 2025

Affiliate:	9
Association:	19
Corporate:	39
Institution:	287
Life:	101
Honorary:	32

Future WAZA Conference

2025: Cali Zoo, Colombia, 26 to 30 October 2025

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Kia ora/ Hello WAZA community. This year marks an extraordinary milestone in WAZA's history – our 90th anniversary. As we reflect on nearly a century of global collaboration, advocacy and leadership in the zoo and aquarium community, it is an opportunity to celebrate our shared achievements and reaffirm our vision for the future.

To honour this occasion, our first issue of the year features exclusive interviews with eight distinguished former WAZA Presidents and recipients of the Heini Hediger Award, our highest individual recognition. Their leadership has shaped WAZA into the organisation it is today, guiding our members through evolving challenges, fostering global cooperation, and strengthening the role of zoos and aquariums in conservation. Through their insights, we gain a deeper understanding of the progress we have made and the opportunities that lie ahead.

From its inception, WAZA has been more than just an association – it has been a unifying force for nature. Our unique role is built on three pillars: convening power, global advocacy and setting the bar for excellence. Over the decades, WAZA has brought together institutions from across the world, providing a platform for global collaboration and shared learning. We have provided a strong voice for our members, advocating for the essential role of zoos and aquariums in conservation, education, animal welfare and sustainability. While continuously raising standards, ensuring that our zoo and aquarium community not only meets but exceeds expectations in these critical areas.

While we celebrate our rich history, we also look ahead with ambition and purpose.

Our commitment to conservation is stronger than ever, as demonstrated by the current development of WAZA's 2030 Conservation Goal. This initiative will see WAZA members actively contribute to halting extinctions, restoring populations and securing a future for threatened species. It is through the dedication of our members and partners that we will continue to make a lasting impact.

As we embark on this anniversary year, I invite you to reflect on the journey we have taken together and the immense potential and possibilities that the future will bring. The strength of WAZA has always been its community – a network of passionate professionals dedicated to a common cause. Thank you for being part of this legacy and for your unwavering commitment to shaping the future of leading zoos and aquariums worldwide.

Here's to 90 years of progress, collaboration and excellence – and to the many more ahead.

Ngā mihi/ Warm regards,

Karen Fifield MNZM
WAZA President

CEO'S LETTER

Dear WAZA Members and Friends,

Looking back on my journey with WAZA, I am reminded of a defining moment in 2016, the WAZA Accreditation Summit. At the time, I had the privilege of attending as a representative of the Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (ALPZA). I vividly recall the discussions we had. We imagined a world where every continent had regional associations conducting robust, welfare-based evaluation processes for zoos and aquariums. It was a bold ambition, one that seemed distant then but has now become a defining criterion for WAZA membership.

Nine years later, we have made extraordinary progress. Today, we are steadily advancing towards our goal of achieving full compliance among all WAZA institutional members. The 2016 summit was more than just a meeting; it was a catalyst for transformation. The conversations we initiated back then laid the foundation for significant, lasting change, much like the recent WAZA 2030 Conservation Goal Summit and Workshop, held in Seattle in March of this year. This pivotal gathering brought together WAZA members to refine one of our core strategic pillars: Transformative leadership – Redefining Excellence in Zoos and Aquariums.

You will find a dedicated article on this in the current issue of the magazine. At the heart of this commitment is Resolution 79.2: The WAZA 2030 Conservation Commitment Goal. This resolution committed WAZA to the development of the WAZA 2030 Conservation Goal, a goal with the general objectives that:

- All WAZA member institutions actively contribute to halting extinctions, reversing declines, restoring populations and securing a future for threatened species.
- All WAZA regional associations develop a standardised system for their zoo and aquarium members to document and report conservation efforts, ensuring a unified approach to tracking global impact.

This event was a crucial step towards the finalisation of this framework, which will be put to a vote at the 2025 WAZA Annual General Assembly.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our members. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the WAZA Conservation Subcommittee, the WAZA Executive Office, Seattle Aquarium for hosting, Woodland Park Zoo for a fantastic icebreaker and all the participants who contributed their expertise and passion.

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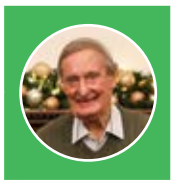


1989–1991

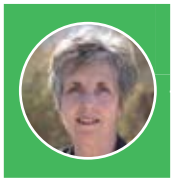
Prof. Roger John Wheater
Edinburgh Zoo

1994–1995

Prof. Dr. Gunther Nogge
Cologne Zoo

2002–2003

Dr Alex Rübel
Zurich Zoo



2006–2007

Ms Karen Sausman
The Living Desert

2008–2009

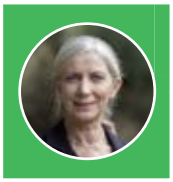
Prof. Dr. Gordon McG. Reid
Chester Zoo

2012–2013

Prof. Dr. Jörg Junhold
Leipzig Zoo

2014–2015

Mr Lee Ehmke
Houston Zoo



2017–2019

Dr Jenny Gray
Melbourne Zoo

Prof. Roger John Wheater

Professor Roger John Wheater, a renowned figure in the world of wildlife conservation, has had a distinguished career that spans several decades, significantly shaping the direction of progressive zoos and aquariums. As a former President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), he has been instrumental in advocating for global conservation efforts and fostering international collaboration. Under his leadership, zoos and aquariums have not only focused on animal welfare but have also placed greater emphasis on education, scientific research and community involvement. In this interview, Professor Wheater reflects on his leadership and the role of zoos and aquariums in conservation, and his vision for the future of wildlife preservation.

Visionary leadership in conservation

You have had a distinguished career in zoological leadership, with a significant focus on conservation and animal welfare. How do you view the role of progressive zoos and aquariums in global conservation efforts, and what key changes do you believe have been most impactful in recent years?

I entered the zoo world in 1972 following eleven years as Chief Warden of Murchison Falls National Park and latterly as Director of Uganda National Parks. I was very aware of the importance of involving a wide range of people in our conservation efforts. In my interview for the appointment as Director (now CEO), I emphasised the importance of captive animal welfare, backing up conservation efforts in the wild, conducting research, providing educational opportunities for all, and the need for strong links between zoo and conservation organisations.

The interviewing committee liked what they heard and I was offered the job. Thus was set the way forward for The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) and indeed the knowledge that I would have the backing of a highly supportive Board of Trustees. Thus through the criteria pursued in Edinburgh I was able to influence how the zoos of the world might link together on research, conservation activities and educational opportunities.

Over fifty years later the degree of combined activities on breeding programmes, release to wild populations, sharing of research outcomes (particularly those related to welfare issues) and the sharing of education initiatives have continued to rise.

Innovations in zoo design and visitor engagement

Zoos and aquariums have evolved to become centres of education and conservation. How do you see the evolving role of zoos and aquariums in engaging the public, and what innovative approaches have you championed to make the visitor experience more immersive and educational?

In your opinion, what is the next frontier in zoo design and visitor interaction to further strengthen the link between wildlife conservation and the public?

In Edinburgh Zoo and the Highland Wildlife Park we are continually examining new ways of presenting the collection and in particular emphasising the need for conservation activities in the wild. There is a real willingness to share the successful programmes through the various bodies dealing with education prospects. The use of volunteers to inform the zoo visitors has proved very successful in many institutions. Public lectures given by appropriate staff are very important. In my own case I have given approximately 750 talks and lectures to adult groups and schools. In a world in which wild space is reduced to the detriment of the many creatures who inhabit it, it is so very vital that the general public understand the need for conservation management.

We at RZSS made every effort to alter the *ex situ* habitats to more closely resemble the wild habitat. This was particularly successful in our first big project with our chimpanzee accommodation. The result of our being able to mix most of the group resulted, surprise surprise, in a number of young chimps!

Following a suggestion by Dr Jeremy Mallinson of the Jersey Zoo we developed The Anthropoid Ape Advisory Panel (AAAP) which I was asked to chair and did so for 14 Years. The group brought together management of Gorilla Chimpanzee and Orang's by almost all the zoos responsible for these species in their breeding programmes to ensure as wide a spread of available genes as possible. The AAAP was handed to The British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) to be part of their wider programme of *ex situ* breeding that had been developed over the previous years.

It is relevant to mention that I was asked to advise on various aspects of zoo operations at Belfast, Johannesburg and for the Indianapolis and Oman collections.

Advancing global representation and collaboration

As WAZA President from 1989 to 1991, you led a significant transformation in the organisation. Your efforts in making WAZA a more inclusive and globally recognised organisation were groundbreaking. How did you approach the task of convincing regional and national associations to become part of the broader WAZA framework?

The late Colin Rawlins (IUDZG President in 1966) was the first to raise serious concerns about the Unions ability to truly represent the world zoo and aquarium community. In 1985 as First Secretary I wrote, at Council's request, a discussion paper on how the Union might develop to truly represent this community. This was at a time when issues relating to standards of animal husbandry, conservation through *ex situ* breeding, environmental education and non-invasive research were being received in IUDZG and in a growing number of regional and national zoo associations. These issues were raised by IUDZG, but its actual influence was essentially confined to its somewhat restricted membership. Although there was some interest in the proposal, the majority of members felt that change was not necessary, and that the status quo should be maintained.

> **"In a world in which wild space is reduced to the detriment of the many creatures who inhabit it, it is so very vital that the general public understand the need for conservation management."**

The subject was raised again at subsequent meetings but only became of serious concern when The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) informed us that our constitution did not conform to their interpretation of an internationally represented body and demoted us to the status of a national organisation. By happy coincidence I had met Lee Talbot the then Secretary General of IUCN when I was in Uganda and was able to persuade him to hold off demoting us as we were already considering the need for constitutional change. At the same time zoos in South America were bemoaning the fact that there was truly no representative body for zoos and aquariums worldwide. I attended a conference in Washington where a demand for a more inclusive body was debated. I was able to inform the conference that this was being actively discussed by IUDZG.

In 1991 I drafted some major constitutional changes in response to the concerns that had been raised and circulated them to the membership prior to our annual conference in Singapore. The twenty-seven resolutions to be debated and hopefully approved, were presented individually.
The major changes proposed were:

- That currently qualifying organisations would continue in membership despite any change in the CEO.
- That zoos and aquaria known as 'Commercial Collections' would be eligible for membership providing they met the standards of the current membership.
- That membership should include representation from regional and national organisations providing that their requirements for membership of the organisation accorded with IUDZG.

The other resolutions related to changes required to facilitate operation of the constitution and a resolution was included on the change of name. This failed to get the two thirds majority required and it was a year or two before it was changed.

Prof. Dr. Gunther Nogge

Prof. Dr. Gunther Nogge is a distinguished zoologist renowned for his extensive contributions to zoological research and zoo management. Serving as the director of the Cologne Zoo from 1981 to 2007, he played a pivotal role in transforming the institution into a centre for conservation and education. Beyond his directorial achievements, Professor Nogge has been an active researcher, contributing valuable insights into animal nutrition and behaviour. His tenure in 1994 and 1995 as President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) further underscores his commitment to global collaboration in wildlife conservation. In this interview, Professor Nogge reflects on his illustrious career, his research endeavours, and his vision for the future of zoological institutions.

Visionary leadership in zoo development

During your tenure as director of the Cologne Zoo from 1981 to 2007, you oversaw significant transformations. What motivated your vision for the zoo's development, and how did you determine the priorities for these changes?

Although the Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens (IUDZG), now WAZA, was co-initiator of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), only a few zoos realised that they were now cut off from the import of wild caught animals of the endangered species. They had no plan for how to maintain their animal collection in the long run.

Could you elaborate on the challenges encountered during these transformations and the strategies you employed to engage the community in these initiatives?

The challenge was to establish coordinated breeding programmes in Europe based on the model of the North American Species Survival Plans (SSP) of 1982. In 1985, there was no European zoo association, so I invited all European IUDZG-members to Cologne to establish the European Breeding of Endangered Species Programme (EEP). Another reason for the invite was to have a voice in Brussels, so we founded a zoo and aquarium association within the European Community in 1988, which was converted into a pan-European Association (EAZA) in 1993.

Proposed by the legendary Ulie Seal, The International Species Information System (ISIS) had been founded as early as 1974. But it was used almost exclusively by American zoos. For several years Cologne Zoo was the only German zoo to participate. Therefore we refounded ISIS in 1988 as a true international membership based self-help organisation.

Strategic planning and conservation goals

Under your leadership, the Cologne Zoo initiated several conservation projects. What strategic planning and partnerships were essential to the success of these initiatives?

The essential stimulus for me came from the Captive Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), today the Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG). Since the early eighties I was a member of its strategic committee. In 1986, at a meeting in Cologne, we developed a 'Policy Statement On Captive Breeding', which was incorporated in The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Conservation Strategy 'Caring for the Earth'.

How did these developments align with the zoo's broader conservation objectives, and what impact did they have on local and global conservation efforts?

In the focus of Cologne Zoo's first cooperative conservation projects were Przewalski Horses with a long time release project in

the Hungarian puszta, Lemurs, Lion-tailed makaques, Spectacled Bears and Bali mynahs. I myself was engaged in conservation projects in Nepal having founded and chaired for many years the German Chapter of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation.

Leadership in WAZA

As a highly respected voice in the international zoo community, you have witnessed the evolution of WAZA's role in conservation. In your view, what has been WAZA's most significant contribution to the global zoo and aquarium community?

Only one year after the first environment summit in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro WAZA published its World Zoo Conservation Strategy (WZCS).

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in advancing WAZA's mission, and how did you work to overcome them?

My first task as president of WAZA in 1993 was to present the WZCS at an international press conference in Brussels. I encouraged the translation of this important document in as many languages as possible. My main concern, however, was the implementation of the strategy. So we conducted a strategic planning workshop at Cologne, the result of which was a document called 'Zoo Future 2005' and adopted at the AGM at Dublin in 1995.

Contributions to zoological research

Your research has covered a wide range of topics, from parasitology to animal behaviour. Looking back, which of your studies do you believe had the greatest impact on the practices of progressive zoos?

My main concern was to strengthen the relations between the academic and the zoo world to make better use of zoo animals for research work. As a professor I was authorised to lecture at the university, and I recruited more than a hundred students for research projects over 25 years. In addition I established the position of a research officer at the zoo to coordinate and supervise the research projects.

How has zoological research, including your own, contributed to improving welfare standards for animals in human care?

Feeding, in particular of primates, prevention of stereotype behaviour patterns by the introduction of environmental enrichment, in particular for bears, primates and elephants.

Engagement with the public and future vision

Throughout your career, you have engaged with the public to promote understanding of wildlife conservation. How important is public education in the mission of zoos today?

The contribution of zoos to the conservation of nature by breeding and reintroduction of endangered species is limited. Quantitatively more important is the zoos' task to raise the public awareness of the need of nature and environment conservation. So we improved our educational displays at the zoo and built up the first service of volunteers for guided tours in Germany.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for the future role of zoos and aquariums in global conservation efforts?

I believe the role is clear now. Of course everything can be improved. But it will be most important that all zoos and aquaria identify themselves with that role. This is the challenge for WAZA.

> "Quantitatively more important is the zoos' task to raise the public awareness of the need of nature and environment conservation."

Dr Alex Rübel

Dr Alex Rübel, former Director of Zurich Zoo, stands as a pillar in the global conservation community. With nearly 30 years of leadership, he transformed Zurich Zoo into one of the world's most modern and influential conservation institutions. A driving force behind the zoo's shift toward an internationally recognised centre for animal welfare and education, Dr Rübel's legacy extends far beyond Zurich. As a former WAZA President and recipient of the prestigious Heini Hediger Award, his contributions have shaped the zoo and aquarium community globally. In this interview, Dr Rübel reflects on his journey, WAZA's pivotal role in conservation, and his vision for the future.

The transition of Zurich Zoo into a global conservation hub

Under your leadership, Zurich Zoo evolved into a world-leading institution focused on both animal welfare and global conservation. Could you reflect on this transition and the key decisions you made that helped shape the zoo's transformation, not just in Switzerland, but globally?

My personal goal in leading the zoo and WAZA has been to develop the zoos to be ambassadors and players in the conservation of endangered wildlife and landscapes. The focus is on the visitor and public support for the zoo's goals, which require exemplary animal welfare and a visible and credible commitment to conservation.

How did you manage to balance the traditional roles of a zoo with the increasingly important focus on scientific research and conservation?

My credo: Less is more: quality over quantity, only keep species for which you can provide a high standard of welfare, have the financial resources to do so, and whose keeping contributes to the zoo's objectives.

The role of education and public engagement in advancing conservation

Education and public engagement were always central to Zurich Zoo's mission under your leadership. In your view, how essential are these elements in advancing global conservation efforts, and what steps did you take to ensure that visitors were not only educated but also inspired to take action for wildlife protection?

In an urban environment, our greatest strength is conservation education, which we motivate with fascinating enclosures for exciting animals. The Masoala Rainforest and the Lewa Savanna, combined with projects in the wild, have been crucial in motivating visitors to donate the funds which allowed us to carry out our conservation projects.

Were there any particular programmes or exhibitions that you found especially impactful in changing the mindset of visitors regarding the importance of conservation?

Combining our exhibits – Masoala Rainforest, Kaeng Krachan Elephant Park and Lewa Savanna – with real projects in the wild was crucial in encouraging visitors to give us the funds to realise the respected, cutting-edge field projects.

Contributions to WAZA and global collaboration

You were not only a former WAZA President but also a recipient of the Heini Hediger Award. Could you share some of the key moments from your time with WAZA that you believe significantly contributed to the organisation's global influence on animal welfare and conservation?

With Peter Dollinger we set up a professional WAZA office, which enabled us to develop WAZA into a professional membership organisation. Together with the Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG) I initiated the 'Building a

Future for Wildlife – The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy'.

As a leader within WAZA, you helped strengthen the bonds between zoos and aquariums worldwide. How do you view the role of international collaboration in addressing pressing conservation challenges such as biodiversity loss and climate change?

These are global issues that need to be addressed globally. International cooperation between zoos and conservation organisations is essential to tackle these problems effectively and to influence the public's perspective of zoos in a positive light.

Vision on animal welfare and conservation

Throughout your career, you have been a strong advocate for animal welfare and conservation. Looking back, are there any particular personal experiences or moments that have deeply shaped your philosophy and approach to conservation?

Having visited many zoos I saw the huge potential of good zoos for conservation and followed thereby the thoughts of Heini Hediger, my predecessor.

As we celebrate WAZA's 90th anniversary this year, what advice would you give to emerging conservation leaders in the zoo and aquarium community, particularly in terms of balancing science, public education and the ethical care of animals?

Zoos have a good future if you realise that a zoo is only as strong as its weakest link. It is essential that science, public education, conservation and ethical animal care are equally strong and can be funded. If not, it is necessary to focus on fewer exhibits of higher quality.

Personal Reflections

What personal experiences or mentors influenced your path into zoo management?

William (Bill) Conway and Ulie Seal were my heroes. Bill based his exhibits on education and conservation goals, Ulie founded IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), which gave us the link to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the methods to achieve valuable conservation projects.

> **"In an urban environment, our greatest strength is conservation education, which we motivate with fascinating enclosures for exciting animals."**

Dr Rübel © *Zurich Zoo*

Ms Karen Sausman

Karen Sausman's career in zoology has left a significant mark on the zoo and conservation community, particularly through her leadership at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens located in California, US. Serving as the institution's director, she transformed the zoo into a hub for both conservation and education, fostering community engagement and spearheading key wildlife conservation initiatives. Under her direction, The Living Desert became a recognised leader in desert conservation and environmental stewardship. Her journey reflects a deep passion for animal welfare, a commitment to environmental sustainability, and a pioneering spirit in advancing the role of zoos in global conservation efforts.

Leadership in zoo development and conservation

As the long-serving director of The Living Desert, you led a major transformation, especially in desert conservation and education. Can you share some key milestones from your time there that have had the most lasting impact on the zoo's mission?

In 1970 I was employed by the Board of Directors of a new charitable organisation called the Living Desert Reserve. They wanted me to develop and manage a local 'nature center' to educate children about the local desert around them. They had secured 350 aces of natural Sonoran-Colorado Desert. While they envisioned a simple building and some nature trails rather like visiting a nature park, I dreamed of developing a zoo and gardens dedicated to interpretation and conservation of deserts.

Over the next 40 years I educated myself in designing and managing the development of The Living Desert and its mission of conservation of the world's deserts. First came the North American Desert gardens and the development of an education department to collaborate with local schools. This was followed by the first large mammal exhibits. Every effort was made to exhibit species from deserts on other continents – parallel and/or convergent evolution – to develop the realisation that deserts are really full of life with fascinating plants and animals. The next step was to be able to fund breeding facilities for a variety of endangered desert species from our local desert and from some of the desert regions of Africa.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in advocating for conservation, and how did you overcome them?

Preconceptions of deserts being empty, uninteresting places and the inhospitability of the climate were the two biggest challenges for The Living Desert.

Legacy of The Living Desert

As you reflect on your tenure at The Living Desert, what do you consider your greatest legacy, and how do you hope the institution continues to impact conservation in the years to come?

I believe that The Living Desert's strengths are its unwavering focus and dedication to creating awareness of the fascinating natural world of arid lands and leading efforts to save endangered desert species and landscapes worldwide.

The Living Desert is renowned for its focus on the wildlife of arid lands. What inspired you to create an institution dedicated specifically to desert ecosystems?

I fell totally in love with desert ecosystems after moving to California to continue my education. On my first visit to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM) near Tucson, I found the perfect blend of a zoological and botanical facility that was also doing conservation work throughout the Sonoran Desert. Its Director at that time, Bill Woodin, encouraged me to follow my dream of working in a zoo. Despite the fact that he had just

offered me a position at ASDM, he encouraged me to accept the position as the Naturalist/ Manager of an empty 350 acres in Palm Desert that ultimately became The Living Desert. I took the concepts from ADSM and broadened them to become 'deserts of the world'.

Leadership in WAZA and global impact

As the first female President of WAZA, you led the organisation during a transformative period in global conservation efforts. What do you consider to be the most important initiative you championed during your leadership, and how did it shape the global zoological community's approach to conservation? Additionally, how did breaking this gender barrier influence your experience as a leader in the field?

My goal for myself has always been to be the best director of a zoological and botanical garden/ conservation organisation that I could be. Not the best female director. I believe if you have a passion for what you are doing and you establish a series of long term goals, you can achieve your dreams. At the time of my presidency, WAZA was still transitioning from the original framework of the IUDZG to becoming a much more inclusive organisation with a much broader mandate. The prior presidents and current board members continued to work together as a team. This enabled the WAZA Board to focus on various issues in a cohesive fashion. Thus, I focused on the issues facing the newly developing organisation, trying to keep the momentum moving forward smoothly. We were a great team.

Receiving the Heini Hediger Award in 2009 was a major recognition of your lifelong contributions to the zoological field. What did this honour mean to you, both personally and professionally, especially in light of your wide-ranging roles as a director, author and conservationist?

Being born and raised in a modest area of the inner city of Chicago, I found my early fascination with wildlife and wild places by being able to visit Lincoln Park Zoo for free and to watch the earliest live TV zoo programme – Zoo Parade. Ultimately I was able to volunteer at the Zoo while in college and realised very quickly that learning about and caring for wild creatures was important to me.

> **"The key to our success was to always realise that we had to be a valuable part of our local communities."**

After moving to California I met Bill Wooden and several California Zoo directors who encouraged me to join the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), originally the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA), the US zoo directors' organisation which happened to be meeting in Los Angeles that year. I joined the organisation in 1970. Twelve years later, I went as a guest to my first IUDZG (now WAZA). To become the President of WAZA and then to receive the Heini Hediger Award was beyond anything I could have dreamed about. As I told the members that incredible day – always remember that in some zoo today a young person is falling in love with our planet and the mission of zoos and aquariums. Encourage them for our planet depends on them.

Community engagement and public education

The Living Desert has always been known for its strong community involvement. How did you build and maintain a connection between the zoo and the local community, and why do you think community engagement is so critical for zoos today?

The Living Desert was started in 1970 as a US public charity. It had no governmental support of any kind other than a 50-year lease from a local water agency on 350 acres of empty desert flood plain far from any local communities for a US Dollar a year. Every decision about what facilities needed to be built and when to build them was dependent upon what we absolutely needed based on a 10-year master plan I developed and was approved by our Board of Directors which, in turn, was then totally dependent on the local community to donate the funds. Over the 40 years I was there the plans and programmes grew and are still growing.

Prof. Dr. Gordon McGregor Reid

Prof. Dr. Gordon McGregor Reid, a prominent figure in global conservation, led Chester Zoo as its CEO and Director since 1995, shaping it into one of the world's most influential and innovative zoos. Under his leadership, Chester Zoo spearheaded cutting-edge wildlife conservation initiatives and built strong global collaborations with various conservation organisations. His commitment to preserving wildlife habitats, advancing education, and promoting biodiversity has earned him accolades, including an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Manchester Metropolitan University. In this interview, Dr McGregor Reid reflects on his journey, Chester Zoo's evolution, and his contributions to the broader conservation community.

Visionary leadership in conservation

Since taking the helm at Chester Zoo in 1995, you have guided the institution through numerous milestones, including substantial expansion and enhanced conservation efforts. What key leadership principles have driven this success, and how have you navigated the complex challenges in balancing animal welfare, visitor engagement and conservation goals?

Mentorship is vital for everybody. I am deeply indebted to several mentors for providing encouragement, guidance and advice. This notably includes Dr Michael Brambell. He was my predecessor (as the Director of Chester Zoo) and a major figure in the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens – the parent organisation of the World Zoo Organisation (WZO) which evolved into WAZA.

I am a great believer in teamwork, whether it's Chester Zoo, WAZA, affiliated zoo organisations, conservation NGOs or other stakeholders. No individual or organisation can successfully do everything all on their own. First identify the tasks, the teams and the individuals that need to be engaged and keep these in balance when moving towards goals in conservation, education, science and other aspects – including visitor engagement, marketing and commerce. These goals need to be specific, measurable, realistic and timebound – set within the agreed Vision, Mission and Values of the organisation. From this, a clear, prioritised Strategy must emerge – agreed by the team and delivered via a Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP). This SIP covers all necessary resources and 'who does what by when?' and for example charts progress towards set conservation or animal welfare goals.

Your leadership has been instrumental in redefining how zoos engage with the public and the importance of educating visitors on conservation issues. How have you seen the role of zoos evolve in the public eye, and what do you believe is the future of zoo-based education as part of a broader conservation movement?

I have always viewed animal welfare, conservation/sustainability, education and science as a 'four legged' table. Remove any one 'leg' and the 'table' becomes less useful, or even unstable. When I started out as Chief Curator of Chester Zoo in the early 1990s, conservation was not always at the forefront of management or staff thinking and there were no lists of endangered species in our collection, and no field support programmes existed for threatened species in the wild. This situation was widespread in zoos globally at that time – with the notable exception of Jersey Zoo under the visionary leadership of the late Gerald Durrell. There was also little or no mention of animal welfare, veterinary care, conservation or scientific support in zoo visitor interpretation. Accordingly, hostile animal rights organisations such as Zoo Check painted zoos in an unfavourable light. This, in turn, depressed visitor figures and incomes – making it more difficult to progress conservation missions and maintain the organisational viability of zoos and zoo organisations. Of course modern day zoos

have made huge positive advances since then through greatly improved management teams and staff practices. There has been major progress in animal nutrition, veterinary care and behavioural enrichment in zoos. Progress has also been made in conservation breeding initiatives for threatened species and in collaborative reintroduction programmes, and importantly conservation outreach initiatives in the wild such as community education, anti-poaching support and rewilding.

Research and scientific contributions

Throughout your career, you've been involved in both practical conservation efforts and scientific research. Can you discuss some of your key research contributions to the field of wildlife conservation and how they have influenced the strategies employed at Chester Zoo?

My background lies in the academic world of universities and natural history museums. Hence, when moving into zoo management, l have always favoured research-based investigations to resolve practical animal management issues in zoos, including stress assessment, behavioural enrichment, reproduction, genetics, taxonomy, nutrition, disease and veterinary care. Indeed, l think that this approach can be usefully applied in the evaluation of, for example, education programmes, visitor needs or preferences and the effectiveness of zoo marketing. One can also apply this approach in the field: for example, in determining that wild elephants avoid trampling on crops interplanted with pepper. This greatly reduces human-elephant conflict and the mortality rates for both!

Global leadership in WAZA

As President of WAZA, you played a pivotal role in strengthening the global network of zoos and aquariums. What were some of the most significant contributions you made during your tenure, particularly in aligning the efforts of zoos worldwide towards common conservation goals?

l was invited to join the (then) World Zoo Organisation Council by President Willie Labuschagne. Knowing that Chester Zoo had developed both as a successful conservation organisation and as a prospering business, he asked me to establish the first WZO Marketing Committee. I accepted the challenge and our team, working with an external consultancy, looked at the Vision, Mission and Values of the WZO, its organisational structure, brand and logo. I already knew, from my work in the aquarium sector, that many of these institutions felt marginalised. Hence our team came up with the name World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, with a new logo and the strapline: 'United for Conservation'. This proposal was well received by the Council, regional associations and member institutions and was fully adopted. We also organised annual WAZA Marketing Conferences so that, professional zoo marketeers, fundraisers and public relations staff from all regions could, for the first time, meet up to exchange ideas and best practice. l also helped forge the global Amphibian Ark (WAZA-IUCN/CPSG)

Personal reflections on a career in zoology

From your early career beginnings to your current leadership role, what experiences or individuals influenced your path in conservation and zoo management the most? What have been some defining moments in your career that shaped your philosophy on wildlife preservation?

My zoological studies have often highlighted for me the 'territorial imperative' found in many animal species, including humans. This creates a propensity in humans to engage in unproductive arguments, conflicts and wars. Even in the arena of conservation, there is often much unhelpful rivalry between organisations. The big lesson is to reduce such tensions, forge friendships, cooperate, share skills and resources and work in harmony as a team for the good of the planet, its plants, animals and natural habitats.

> **"Mentorship is vital for everybody. I am deeply indebted to several mentors for providing encouragement, guidance and advice."**

Prof. Dr. Jörg Junhold

Prof. Dr Jörg Junhold, Director of Zoo Leipzig, has been instrumental in shaping the zoo into one of the leading institutions in Europe. With a career spanning over 25 years, Junhold has overseen significant developments, including the completion of the 'Zoo of the Future', which prioritises sustainability and innovative animal habitats. His vision for the future of zoos goes beyond education and conservation; he emphasises the integration of modern science, environmental responsibility and public engagement. In this interview, Prof. Junhold shares his journey, the challenges he has overcome, and his plans for Zoo Leipzig's role in global conservation efforts in the future.

Leading Zoo Leipzig through transformation

Over the years, Zoo Leipzig has undergone significant transformations under your leadership. Could you share what inspired your vision for the zoo's future and how you have balanced modernisation with maintaining the zoo's legacy?

When the Wall fell in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1989, the zoo had to deal with a huge investment backlog in the 1990s. We had to redefine ourselves. My vision was to create a zoo that prioritises animal welfare, education and conservation, while showcasing animals in environments as close to their natural habitats as possible. Balancing modernisation with the zoo's legacy has been important; we needed to embrace innovation while respecting our rich history. The 'Zoo of the Future' project reflects this balance, focusing on sustainability and animal well-being.

As Zoo Leipzig approaches the final stages of the 'Zoo of the Future' project, what challenges have you faced in making this vision a reality, particularly with regard to sustainability and animal welfare?

The biggest challenge in realising this vision has been integrating sustainable practices – like renewable energy and water recycling – while ensuring animal well-being and visitor engagement. Overcoming financial hurdles, such as the economic crisis in 2008/2009 and the pandemic from 2020 until 2022, has made the ultimate reward – creating a world-class, sustainable zoo – worth the effort.

Sustainability and innovation in progressive zoos

Sustainability is a core focus in your plans for Zoo Leipzig. How do you see the role of zoos in contributing to environmental conservation beyond just showcasing animals, and what specific initiatives have you led to make the zoo a model for sustainable and progressive practices?

Zoos are now hubs for research, conservation and education. At Zoo Leipzig, we focus on reducing our environmental footprint while educating the public on habitat protection. We integrate green technologies and work with local and international partners to restore ecosystems, such as supporting regional hamsters and forest conservation.

Could you highlight any specific conservation projects or green technologies that have been integrated into the zoo that you're particularly proud of?

One initiative I'm proud of is the Tropical Experience World Gondwanaland, designed with sustainability at its core. This exhibit uses a closed-loop water system to recycle water and significantly reduce consumption, setting an example for sustainable habitats. And I am proud that we were awarded the German Sustainability Award in 2024.

The role of zoos in shaping public attitudes toward conservation

Public engagement is a critical part of the zoo's mission. What do you think is the most effective way to inspire long-term behavioural change in visitors, especially when it comes to conservation?

Inspiring long-term behavioural change requires consistent, meaningful engagement. By creating emotional connections between visitors and animals, we help them understand the importance of conservation.

WAZA's role in global conservation and your involvement

As a key figure in the zoo community and former WAZA President, you've worked closely with WAZA to strengthen the role of zoos and aquariums in global conservation efforts. How would you describe the importance of WAZA's role in advancing the collective mission of the global zoo community? Could you share any specific initiatives or projects you were involved in during your time with WAZA that contributed to shaping the global conservation agenda?

WAZA unites zoos and aquariums globally to address conservation challenges. Its platform fosters collaboration, research-sharing and partnerships that strengthen the role of zoos in global conservation. During my time as WAZA President, I emphasised the importance of coordinated global breeding programmes and followed The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) One Plan Approach for conservation, ensuring zoos are active partners in protecting endangered species. Moreover animal welfare became one of my main focus areas. For me, WAZA was and is a large, inspiring think tank of highly committed conservationists.

Leadership and the future of zoos

Looking ahead, what advice would you give to the next generation of leaders in the zoo community, particularly in balancing tradition with progressive ideas?

Looking ahead, my advice to future leaders is to balance the core values of animal well-being, conservation, and education with bold, innovative ideas. While tradition provides a foundation, addressing the challenges of today requires embracing new technologies and sustainability models, ensuring zoos continue to evolve and remain relevant in the coming decades. We must remain a recognised player in wildlife management and global species conservation, maintaining professional excellence and always keeping our finger on the pulse. Lastly, we should speak out on issues of strong political importance.

> "Zoos are now hubs for research, conservation and education."

Malayian Tapir in the Gondwanaland rainforest © *Zoo Leipzig*

Mr Lee Ehmke

Mr Lee Ehmke, President and CEO of the Houston Zoo since 2015, has significantly influenced the institution's strategic direction and conservation initiatives. Under his guidance, the Houston Zoo embarked on a comprehensive redevelopment plan, transforming half of its exhibits to enhance animal welfare and visitor engagement. Notably, the Galápagos Islands exhibit, which opened on 7 April, 2023, exemplifies his commitment to immersive and educational habitats. Ehmke's tenure reflects a dedication to innovative exhibit design and a collaborative approach to global conservation challenges. In this interview, he shares insights into his journey and the evolution of the Houston Zoo, and his vision for the future of wildlife conservation

Visionary leadership in zoo development

Since joining the Houston Zoo in 2015, you've spearheaded a significant redevelopment plan, transforming half of the zoo's exhibits. What inspired this ambitious vision, and how did you prioritise which areas to develop?

A key strategy was to closely align the Zoo's collections, exhibits and interpretation with the global and regional field conservation programmes and partnerships supported by the Zoo. At the same time, there was an opportunity to significantly improve the guest experience and animal welfare infrastructure throughout the 100-year-old zoo campus, which guided prioritisation from a menu of potential projects identified in the Zoo's master plan. Essentially, the idea was to re-arrange the zoo into a series of experiential zones that facilitate storytelling about saving animals in the wild.

Can you discuss the challenges faced during this transformation and how you engaged the community and stakeholders in the process?

The physical challenge of transforming a relatively small (55 acre) zoo organised primarily in the taxonomic tradition into ecological, zoogeographic exhibits required a major shift in perspective by staff. Finding ways to engage zoo staff and guests in personal behaviours that help protect and save wildlife and wild places was key to achieving internal and community buy-in to the understanding that the zoo's primary role is conservation.

Innovative habitat design and visitor experience

Your approach to creating 'sensitive and imaginative' habitats has been widely recognised. How do you balance the natural behaviours and needs of the animals with the educational and immersive experiences desired for visitors?

Guided by the principle that nature is the norm (and the corollary that 'nature never goes out of style'), the creation of highly detailed naturalistic spaces shared by animals and people is the starting point. From there, devising ways to facilitate natural behaviours though innovative training and enrichment programmes (for animals) and compelling interpretive programmes (for visitors) combine to create great exhibits.

Could you share an example of a habitat redesign that particularly enhanced both animal welfare and visitor engagement?

A display of Giant Tortoises in the Galapagos islands exhibit features highly varied terrain, with steep slopes, rocky lava fields and muddy low spots, mirroring the environment the reptiles inhabit in the wild. Since moving from traditional zoo housing to the new exhibit, the tortoises are far more active and are in better physical condition, attracting much longer dwell time by visitors. In surveys, zoo guests report significantly increased perceptions of excellent animal welfare in this new habitat.

Strategic planning and conservation goals

The Houston Zoo's 'Keeping Our World Wild' campaign exceeded its fundraising goal, leading to significant developments like the opening of South America's Pantanal and the Kathrine G. McGovern Texas Wetlands. What strategic planning and community partnerships were essential to this success?

A key strategy was to develop exhibit concepts based on illustrating places in the world where the zoo is engaged in conservation and working directly with the partners in those areas to elicit the best interpretive narratives to communicate the issues and solutions to the zoo's guests. The capital campaign focused on the 'big picture' of creating a zoo-based conservation organisation, with individual exhibits serving as building blocks of that transformation.

How do these developments align with the zoo's broader conservation objectives, and what impact have they had on local and global conservation efforts?

The alignment is 100%. Messaging focuses on the conservation programmes and locations that the exhibits are representing, provides guests with 'take home' actions, and a portion of the capital campaign funds raised is used to directly support the field conservation activities.

"Finding ways to engage zoo staff and guests in personal behaviours that help protect and save wildlife and wild places was key to achieving internal and community buy-in to the understanding that the zoo's primary role is conservation."

Leadership in WAZA and global conservation efforts

During your tenure as President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) from 2014 to 2015, what initiatives did you champion to strengthen global collaboration among zoos and aquariums?

Two major strategic documents were completed during my Presidency: 'Committing to Conservation: The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy' and 'Caring for Wildlife: The World Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare Strategy'. During that period, WAZA Council also began formulating the WAZA 2023 Animal Welfare Goal, which has been a critical tool for the reputational improvement and alignment of the global zoo and aquarium community. I was also engaged in an effort with the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums to develop a consensus policy regarding the acquisition of animals from the Japanese dolphin drive fisheries.

Mr Lee Ehmke © *Daniel Ortiz*

Dr Jenny Gray

Dr Jenny Gray, CEO of Zoos Victoria since 2009, has significantly advanced the organisation's mission to combat wildlife extinction. Under her leadership, Zoos Victoria's four institutions have become global exemplars in conservation and animal welfare. Dr Gray's diverse background includes degrees in engineering, transportation, business administration and ethics. Her tenure has been marked by innovative conservation initiatives, a commitment to ethical zoo practices, and a dedication to gender equality within the workforce. In this interview, Dr Gray shares insights into her multifaceted career, the transformative projects at Zoos Victoria, and her vision for the future of zoological institutions.

Transformative leadership at Zoos Victoria

Since becoming CEO in 2009, Zoos Victoria has seen significant growth in both visitor numbers and conservation programmes. What strategies have you implemented to achieve this transformation?

Zoos Victoria has had a very clear strategy of becoming a Zoo-based, conservation organisation and ensuring that "No Victorian, terrestrial, vertebrate species go extinct on our watch." These two strategies have shaped everything we do. We have focused on the most vulnerable Victorian species, and our research, field work and *ex situ* breeding programmes have helped our visitors get to know and love our most endangered species. We are certified carbon neutral, have reduced our carbon footprint by 70% and have also run numerous campaigns inspiring our visitors to take action for wildlife.

How do you measure the impact of these strategies on both animal welfare and public engagement?

We have a clear animal welfare code and assess the welfare of every enclosure every year, constantly looking for improvements.

We use Net Promoter Score (NPS) to test visitor satisfaction with each member and any online ticket purchase surveyed post visit. We ensure that visitor actions are measurable and manage behaviour change campaigns against clear engagement targets.

Global collaboration

In your TED Talk, you emphasised the importance of collaboration in conservation. During your three years as President of WAZA, how did you work to strengthen global partnerships among zoos and aquariums?

I was fortunate to travel extensively during my tenure as WAZA President. I ventured to China to meet and invite colleagues to join our conferences and get to know our work. I was able to attend regional conferences and meet colleagues. Around the world I have met amazing, passionate people all committed to addressing the challenges for species in their region.

Leadership at WAZA

As President of WAZA, you led the organisation during a pivotal time for global conservation. What were the most significant initiatives you championed during your tenure, and how did they shape WAZA's role as a global leader in conservation?

I'm incredibly proud of the work that we've done to set up Reverse the Red, as a global partnership between the IUCN SSC, WAZA and other partners. The partnership identifies that we could be the first generation that's able to increase the abundance and distribution of endangered species, facilitating a reversal in conservation status.

We believe that we are able to move species that are already endangered away from the precipice of extinction. Reverse the Red has created a serious conservation voice for zoos and aquariums at the table.

**WAZA serves as a convening voice for the global zoo and aquarium community.
How did you work to strengthen WAZA's influence in shaping policies and driving conservation action?**

WAZA is the global voice for good zoos and aquariums. Over the last decade we have improved welfare standards, ethical operations and our commitments to conservation. I believe that we should be bold and commit to saving species.

Influence of literature and public engagement

You've expressed a passion for reading books on animals, zoos and ethics. Which books have most influenced your leadership philosophy and approach to conservation?

I read widely, particularly science fiction and business non-fiction. A book I return to often is Aldo Leopold's Sand Country Almanac, it is a beautiful account of how country can recover. I also love Jane Goodall's books, they inspire us to always feel uncomfortable, so that we do more for the beings in our care.

Your TED Talk on the role of zoos in saving species has garnered over 11,000 views, demonstrating significant public interest. What inspired you to step into public engagement, and what impact do you hope your message has on global audiences?

With 8 billion people on the planet, our actions have a huge impact. I believe that we need to inspire people to take actions that are good for the planet. Zoos and aquariums globally have a massive audience, I believe that talking to the public and engaging with the public is a vital part of what we're able to do. Zoos and aquariums must focus on using our audience as a force for good.

Advocacy for gender equality

Zoos Victoria's Gender Equality Plan reflects your commitment to inclusivity. What motivated this focus, and what challenges have you encountered in promoting gender equality during your career?

At many times in my career, I have been the only woman in my workplace. I have felt what it is like to be different and to be treated differently. I have made a commitment within the workplaces that I lead, that we will strive to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. It is not always an easy road to travel, but it is certainly important to the people that we work with.

"I'm incredibly proud of the work that we've done to set up Reverse the Red, as a global partnership between the IUCN SSC, WAZA and other partners."

Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon © *Miroslav Bobek*

Bob Davidson welcomed the attendees to the Seattle Aquarium in their newly opened Ocean Pavilion © *Paula Cerdán*

ADVANCING THE WAZA 2030 CONSERVATION GOAL: A GLOBAL EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN AND MEASURE CONSERVATION ACTION

Paula Cerdán, Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare, WAZA

In early March, members of the WAZA Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Committee (CESC) and key partners gathered in Seattle, US, for a three-day workshop to advance the development of WAZA's 2030 Conservation Goal. The workshop brought together 18 participants from 12 different regions. This ambitious goal will see all WAZA member institutions actively contributing to halting extinctions, reversing declines, restoring populations and securing a future for threatened species, and regional association members having a system in place for their zoo and aquarium members to document and report their conservation efforts.

This workshop marked the first step for the WAZA Conservation Subcommittee following the approval of Resolution 79.2 during WAZA's Annual General Assembly in November 2024. This resolution formally committed WAZA to developing a conservation goal for the organisation and its global membership. The 2030 Conservation Goal builds on WAZA's previous commitments, including the WAZA 2023 Animal Welfare Goal and the ongoing work towards the 2027 Population Management Goal, and now increases the focus on conservation action and measurement.

The workshop was hosted by Seattle Aquarium, a WAZA member since 2023, with an additional icebreaker event held at Woodland Park Zoo, who are also a WAZA member and sit on the WAZA Council. These settings provided an ideal environment for in-depth and focused discussions about conservation action and regional reporting mechanisms.

18 participants from 12 different regions joined the three-day event © *WAZA*

Key outcomes of the workshop

Over the three days, participants – led by Dr Onnie Byers of the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG) and guided by a very ambitious agenda – brainstormed, engaged in more structured discussions, participated in activities, tackled challenges and collaborated to shape a framework for conservation monitoring within WAZA's regional and national associations.

This was no small task, but by the end of the workshop, attendees had:

- Defined the requirements for regional associations' conservation monitoring systems.
- Outlined an extensive list of key conservation components, activities and indicators and started defining which of those would be included in these regional systems.
- Identified links between these indicators and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), especially those targets where the zoo and aquarium community is particularly well placed to contribute.

By integrating these indicators consistently into regional conservation monitoring systems, WAZA will be able to strengthen conservation action from all its members, as well as track conservation efforts globally, and better showcase the impact of the zoo and aquarium community in global conservation forums and conventions. This will also enable WAZA to report to the Convention on Biological Diversity on how the community is supporting specific biodiversity targets.

"The workshop was an incredible opportunity to explore challenging issues as we worked together to develop a framework that could be proposed to and eventually applied across regions. It was not easy, but I feel incredibly proud of everyone who worked so hard in Seattle. Our thanks to all those who travelled long distances to join us, and to our hosts, who looked after us so well." said Dr Judy Mann, Chair of the WAZA Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Committee. She added: "This is an enormous step forward for the WAZA community and I look forward to seeing this process evolve as we truly integrate conservation into all our operations".

As WAZA continues to refine the 2030 Conservation Goal, the success of this initiative will rely on the collective commitment and collaboration of our global membership. The insights and outcomes from this workshop mark a critical milestone, but they are just the beginning. Over the course of 2025, WAZA will work closely with its members and partners to develop a robust system for tracking, reporting and enhancing conservation efforts globally.

Together, we have an opportunity to increase and demonstrate the vital role that zoos and aquariums play in safeguarding wildlife and ecosystems worldwide.

SEATTLE AQUARIUM

WOODLAND PARK ZOO

IUCN'S 'ONE PLAN APPROACH' PHILIPPINE CROCODILE CONSERVATION PROJECT WINS 'REVERSE THE RED' 2025 SPECIES PLEDGE VIDEO CONTEST

Prof. Dr. Thomas Ziegler, Cologne Zoo, Germany & Rainier Manalo, CPPI, Philippines

In February 2025, the conservation project to preserve the Critically Endangered Philippine crocodile *(Crocodylus mindorensis)* won the 'Reverse the Red' 2025 Species Pledge Video contest. This Philippine-European collaboration is a wonderful example of The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 'One Plan Approach' and the 'Reverse the Red' movement. This project illustrates what modern, progressive zoos that work together with local partners can achieve for improved species conservation and downgrading endangered species statuses.

The Philippine crocodile repatriation clearly shows how *ex situ* measures, such as conservation breeding projects coordinated by scientifically managed zoos, can actively contribute to not only supporting *in situ* conservation in the country of origin, but in some cases even making them possible in the first place. This is in the spirit of the conservation zoo, which, as a modern ark provides its expertise, facilities, time and money to endangered species to ensure their survival.

But first things first: with a population size of not much more than 100 wild individuals, the IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) already recommended increased *ex situ* Philippine crocodile conservation more than a decade ago, which led to the establishment of the European conservation breeding programme (now the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria *ex situ* programme EEP), which came into force as a studbook in April 2012, run by the first author together with Cologne Zoo's Terrarium section keeper Anna Rauhaus. For this reason, Philippine crocodiles from the Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center (PWRCC) were exported to Europe and the participating institutions in Europe committed to supporting them. Support is provided in the form of keeping and breeding, public relations and crocodile conservation in the Philippines through annual support to the Mabuwaya Foundation in the north of the country.

Crocodile release site in the Siargao Island Protected Landscape and Seascape (SIPLAS) © *T. Ziegler*

Shortly after the transfer to Europe, genetic studies in the Philippines reported hybrids with saltwater crocodiles in holdings that were morphologically indistinguishable from purebred Philippine crocodiles. To rule out the possibility that hybrids had reached Europe, genetic screening was carried out, which confirmed that all animals kept in Europe as part of the EEP were purebred (Hauswaldt et al. 2013, Ziegler et al. 2015).

Soon afterwards, the first breeding success of the species for Europe took place at Cologne Zoo in 2013, followed by further offspring at the Czech Crocodile Zoo in Protivin, The Zoological Society of London (ZSL London Zoo) and the Danish Crocodile Zoo in Eskilstrup. The number of holdings in the EEP quickly doubled, as did the number of animals from the original 15 to well over 50. After the first breeding, they focused on natural breeding at Cologne Zoo from 2015, i.e. nest building, egg laying, hatching and growing up in the mother's enclosure.

At the second Crocodile Forum in the Philippines, held at the University of the Philippines, Los Banos, in March 2019, the first author and EEP coordinator was asked by Crocodylus Porosus Philippines Inc. (CPPI) about the repatriation of genetically tested, purebred offspring from Europe for population restocking in the Philippines. CPPI is committed to protecting Philippine crocodiles in the south of the country. Shortly afterwards, CPPI, represented by co-author Rainier Manalo and the president Vicente P. Mercado, visited Europe and decided to repatriate genetically tested crocodiles. They selected the naturally bred juveniles from Cologne Zoo, as young raised together with the mother are perfectly socialised and therefore ideally suited for release into the wild.

The first repatriation proved to be a difficult undertaking, as the covid crisis intervened and a few days before departure in March 2020, the capital of the Philippines was placed under general quarantine and the flight to Manila was cancelled. However, nine months later, in December 2020, Dodong and Hulky, the natural breedings from 2015, were finally repatriated to their home country. A second repatriation from Cologne to the Philippines took place in 2023 (Ligaya, Mayumi and Mutya, the 2021 natural breeding). The repatriations were supported by Cologne Zoo, the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP) and the Zoo Species of the Year campaign 2021 – The Crocodile.

The campaign logo developed by Cologne Zoo's zookeeper Christian Niggemann, was a defining element of the repatriation. It featured a young Philippine crocodile piloting an aeroplane with the landmark of Cologne (the Cologne Cathedral) on its fin and the Philippine national flag on its flank. The logo which symbolised both the 'One Plan Approach' and 'Reverse the Red', has already coined numerous articles, social media posts, badges and even a game bank note to illustrate to young people the importance of cooperation with the countries of origin ('Together for conservation') through population restocking. The repatriation was also featured in various TV formats, such as in documentaries by 'i-witness' and 'Born to be wild' in the Philippines, as well as in the well-known children's programme '1, 2 or 3' in German-speaking countries.

The repatriated crocodiles were first quarantined at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center, Metro Manila, a wildlife sanctuary of the Philippine government, then housed in an interim semi-wild facility in Tarlac, because the covid crisis had delayed the completion of a semi-wild facility located directly on the release site in Paghungawan Marsh.

The opening of this Philippine Crocodile Research and Education Center (PCREC) in Barangay Jaboy, Pilar directly in the Siargao Island Protected Landscape and Seascape (SIPLAS), which was completed with financial support from Cologne Zoo, ZGAP and the Zoo Species of the Year Campaign 2021 – The Crocodile, finally took place on 14 October, 2024. The official ceremony was attended by CPPI, who implemented the project, as well as representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR, BMB), local authorities and the mayor, among others.

The PCREC in Paghungawan Marsh with its semi-wild facility serves as a breeding site for the Critically Endangered Philippine crocodile in order to provide young animals for future releases. The PCREC not only contributes to the conservation of this rare species, but also offers visitors the opportunity to experience these fascinating crocodiles up close and learn about modern 'One Plan Approach' conservation. From there, the reintroduced Cologne crocodiles can be released into the habitat at any time to strengthen the weakened natural populations.

This hope-giving project is also listed as a success story on the homepage of 'Reverse the Red' https://www.reversethered.org/stories/philippine-crocodile.

Further natural broods are currently ready for a third repatriation at Cologne Zoo. The EEP participants were also encouraged to take part in the repatriations.

In addition to the reintroduction in the SIPLAS Reserve on Siargao, there are further plans to increase the natural populations in the Philippines – in the spirit of 'Reverse the Red'. The species is to be reintroduced to the island of Mindoro, where it was previously extirpated. Originally, the Philippine crocodile was discovered there and was named after the island *(C. mindorensis)*. Currently, CPPI is committed to creating a protected area on Mindoro, where bred individuals can be released at a later stage.

This collaboration between Europe and the Philippines for improved crocodile conservation, supported by Cologne Zoo's director Professor Theo Pagel, was submitted as a short video by Noah Ryll, Dr Matthias Markolf, Anna Rauhaus and the two authors of the Reverse the Red 2025 Species Pledge Video contest, which it subsequently won.

It is a positive example of what international friendship and cooperation can achieve in species conservation – made possible by the philosophy of the 'One Plan Approach' and 'Reverse the Red'.

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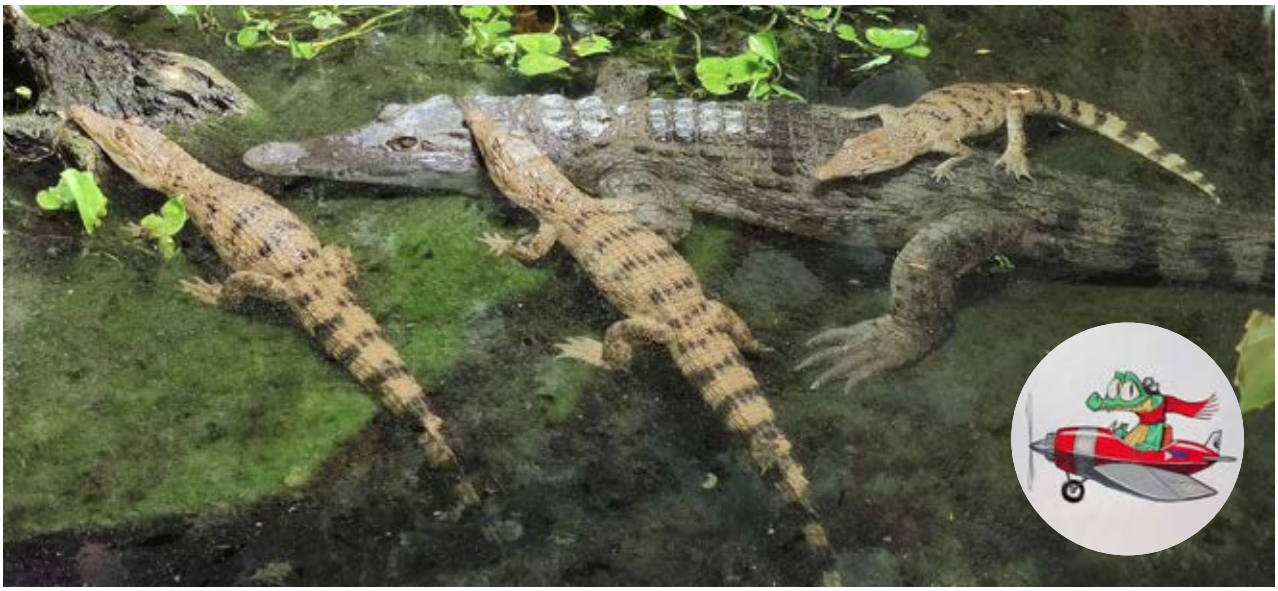

Philippine crocodile mother Mindo with offspring Ligaya, Mayumi, Mutya, in April 2023, shortly before the second repatriation © *A. Rauhaus.* Logo: *Repatriation Comic © C. Niggemann*

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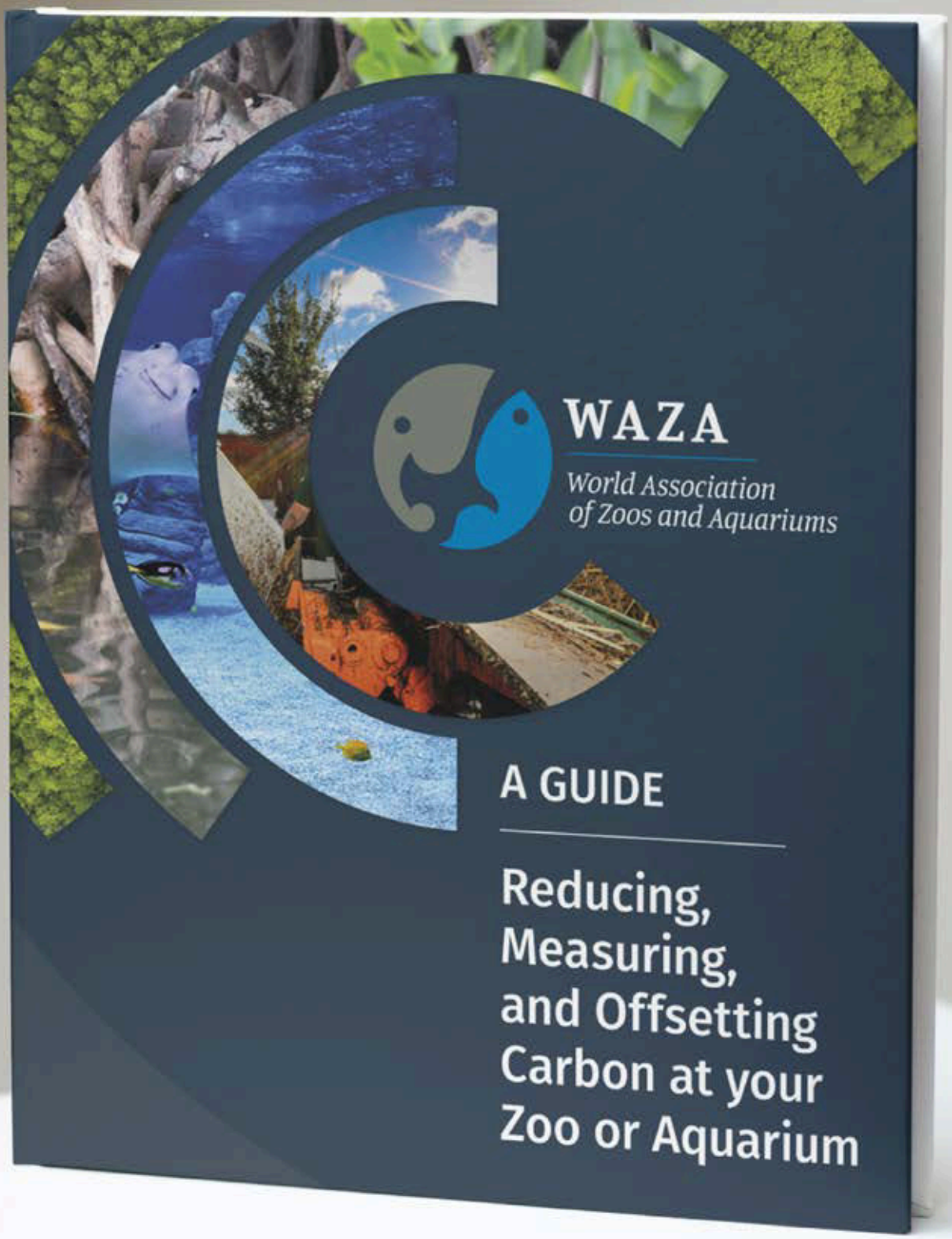

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY OF LEHMANN'S POISON FROG: A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE TO SAVE A CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES

Carlos Andrés Galvis Rizo, *Head of the Populations Department at the Cali Zoological Foundation (FZC)*

The Anchicayá region, located in Valle del Cauca, Colombia, is home to one of the most unique and beautiful species in the animal world: the Lehmann's poison frog *(Oophaga lehmanni)*. This little jewel of nature, with its bright colours and famous toxicity, has captivated scientists and nature lovers alike. However, its beauty and rarity have made this species a desired target for illegal harvesting, which has put its existence at serious risk. This frog, which was once a species with stable populations in its habitat, today struggles to survive in a world increasingly threatened by human intervention.

It has a striking colour, with a pattern of large black areas and red stripes, which has attracted the attention of illegal animal collectors around the world. This particularity and its extreme endemism have made it an object of desire in the illegal species trade, where specimens are extracted to be sold at excessive prices. This species, with its small distribution range, has been greatly affected by the illegal pet trade. The massive extraction of individuals can result in the disappearance of their populations.

Beyond illegal trade, the Lehmann's poison frog faces another threat, deforestation, which results in habitat degradation. The Anchicayá forests that support the Lehmann's poison frog are being displaced by agriculture, illicit crops and livestock. The loss of these habitats not only decreases the space for the frogs to live, but also affects local biodiversity, causing environmental degradation.

Oophaga lehmanni is classified as 'Critically Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This means that, if current threats persist, the species could become extinct in the near future. To understand the level of risk, it is important to consider that Lehmann's poison frog is found in an extremely restricted geographic area. According to studies by the Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca (CVC), populations of this species have declined drastically in recent years. Between 2016 and 2018, in collaboration with the Universidad del Valle, research was conducted to estimate the size of populations in the Anchicayá National Protected Forest Reserve. What was discovered was alarming: many of the frog's historic populations no longer existed, and those that remained were in danger of disappearing.

The disappearance of historical populations, together with the decrease in the number of individuals, has generated an urgent call for its conservation. It is not only a matter of saving a species, but of protecting an entire ecosystem of which it is a part. The extinction of this species would be one more sign of the growing loss of biodiversity in the world, which would affect not only other species, but also the human communities that depend on these ecosystems.

Lehmann's frog © *Cali Zoo*

Although the situation is critical, all is not lost. Several institutions have joined forces to save the Lehmann's poison frog from extinction. The Cali Zoo, in collaboration with the Universidad de los Andes, the Universidad del Valle, the Colombian Association of Herpetology, the CVC, the Zurich Zoo, the National Natural Parks of Colombia, the Colombian Ministry of Environment, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Anchicayá community leaders, have implemented a conservation programme that includes scientific research, community participation and other *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation strategies.

One of the key strategies has been reproduction under professional care at the Cali Zoo for subsequent release. Since this process began, 180 individuals have been released into the wild. Release efforts continue, and the released individuals are closely monitored with the participation of the local communities. These efforts not only seek to re-establish the population of the species, but also to raise awareness in the communities about the importance of preserving their local biodiversity.

The participation of local communities is fundamental. Through educational programmes and income alternatives, a new relationship with nature is being promoted. The communities that cohabit with Lehmann's frog now can be guardians of their territory, contributing to the protection of a species that is now seen as an invaluable natural heritage and has generated a sense of belonging.

Lehmann's poison frog is a clear example of how a species can be affected, but also, at the same time, benefits from its charisma. Its beauty and toxicity have made it vulnerable to illegal trade. However, the collective effort of scientists, conservationists and local communities shows that extinction is not inevitable.

Through research, education and community involvement, a path towards the recovery of this species is being created.

The story of Lehmann's frog should serve as a reminder that, to save biodiversity, it is not enough to protect endangered species; we need to rethink our relationship with nature and act with actions that promote and benefit its conservation. If we fail to do so, species like the *Oophaga lehmanni* could be the next to disappear, and the world will be a sadder and less colourful place.

Lehmann's frog © *Carlos Galvis*

Members of the Cali Zoo, the Regional Autonomous Corporation of Valle del Cauca (CVC), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and local community members during the release of Lehmann's poison frog (*Oophaga lehmanni*) in October 2024 © *Regional Autonomous Corporation of Valle del Cauca (CVC)*

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Taipei Zoo with the commission of the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency, has been involved in the rescue and care of endangered species © *Taipei Zoo*

TAIPEI ZOO CELEBRATES ITS 110TH ANNIVERSARY AND PLEDGES COMMITMENT TO REWILDING FOR CONSERVATION

Chien-chu Wu, *Media Liaison Officer, Education Department at Taipei Zoo*

Taipei Zoo, a globally renowned metropolitan zoo, is located near Taiwan's northern mountains, which are rich in biodiversity. To celebrate its 110th anniversary in 2024, Taipei Zoo has adopted the theme 'Devoting to Rewilding' to highlight its commitment to wildlife conservation. Over the past two decades, Taipei Zoo has made significant contributions to both *in situ* and *ex situ* wildlife conservation efforts. The zoo has chosen 13 key conservation species that it has been involved in conserving, including the Formosan black bear, leopard cat, Eurasian otter, Chinese pangolin, koala, red panda, Asian elephant, Malayan tiger, Malayan tapir, Vietnam pheasant, western lowland gorilla, Taipei frog and Roti Snake-necked Turtle, to showcase its vital role in integrated conservation efforts both locally and globally following the One Plan Approach (OPA).

Taipei Zoo, as a public institution, plays an important role in lifelong learning and social education in Taipei City. Its mission is to provide the public with intellectual recreational services and promote wildlife conservation education, connecting people with nature. In its efforts to combat the global loss of biodiversity and save endangered species, the zoo has focused on international professional collaborations and has actively encouraged the public to participate in and support conservation actions. Taipei Zoo has worked closely with government agencies responsible for natural conservation, universities, research institutions, community groups and NGOs. The zoo has garnered support from the public and instigated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives well as lobbying city council members and Taipei City Government for conservation funding. These are essential components of the OPA coordinated conservation programme.

Turning the Tide, Reverse the Red

Taipei Zoo established the 'Wildlife Rescue Center' in 1996, in collaboration with the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency of Taiwan's Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), specifically to shelter endangered wildlife that were rescued but could not be released back into the wild. While reptiles are the primary focus, the centre also cares for amphibians, mammals and birds. Due to international regulations and disease control considerations, most animals are unable to return to their original habitats in the short term. Taipei Zoo actively collaborates with international conservation organisations, providing endangered species the opportunity to form *ex situ* populations through breeding programmes to maintain their numbers and genetic diversity. The zoo also engages in field research and other conservation activities, such as release and monitoring programmes and a biobanking project, to help reverse the endangered status of these species.

Devoting to Rewilding

In 2024, Taipei Zoo's 110th anniversary theme 'Devoting to Rewilding' was developed to highlight 13 conservation programmes of endangered species that Taipei Zoo has been working on and to share the spirit of the OPA with the visitors:

- Ensuring the population and genetic diversity of endangered species through *ex situ* breeding programmes.
- Conducting field surveys to understand the ecological needs and threats facing species (particularly native species), in line with national conservation strategies for endangered animals.
- Promoting habitat restoration work to restore and protect the natural environments of native species, supporting their population growth and survival.

Baby pangolin born on October 25, 2024© *Taipei Zoo*

13 CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES OF ENDANGERED SPECIES THAT TAIPEI ZOO HAS BEEN WORKING ON:

Ensuring the population and genetic diversity of endangered species through *ex situ* breeding programmes

Conducting field surveys to understand the ecological needs and threats facing species (particularly native species), in line with national conservation strategies for endangered animals

Promoting habitat restoration work to restore and protect the natural environments of native species, supporting their population growth and survival

Pangolin Conservation

Since 2004, Taipei Zoo has actively conducted research on the Chinese pangolin, which was rescued and housed at the zoo's Wildlife Rescue Center. This research covers the pangolin's diet, physiology and behaviour and the zoo has developed expertise in the captive husbandry and breeding of pangolins, making it a global reference for conservation efforts. In 2024, under the umbrella of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), Taipei Zoo, along with other experts, established the Pangolin EEP (EAZA *Ex situ* Programmes), marking a milestone in pangolin conservation. The zoo's stable *ex situ* breeding populations offer hope for bolstering wild populations in the future.

Leopard Cat Conservation

Through the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Program led by the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency of MOA, Taipei Zoo has partnered with the Biodiversity Research Institute to promote a conservation breeding programme for the endangered leopard cat. The zoo rescues injured leopard cats that cannot be released back into the wild, and conducts research on their mating behaviours, reproductive cycles and raising young. The programme aims to expand the *ex situ* population and, after training, release them into suitable habitats to establish new wild populations. From 2022 to 2024, three batches of offspring born at the zoo have been released into the wild to strengthen the leopard cat population.

Taipei Zoo rescues injured leopard cats that cannot be released back into the wild and conducts research on their mating behaviors, reproductive cycles, and raising young © *Taipei Zoo*

Eurasian Otter Conservation

The Eurasian otter is a protected species in Taiwan, once widely distributed across the island's lowland regions. However, the population has not been sighted on the main island for many years, with Kinmen Island being the only region with a stable population. Taipei Zoo has spent over a decade collecting field data and analysing otter scat to establish a comprehensive database of DNA profiles, paternity and sex identification. This work provides essential information for future genetic rescue efforts and translocation programmes. In addition, the zoo has worked with the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency to monitor and protect otter populations in Kinmen and set up an emergency rescue network and conservation medicine research for otters.

Taipei Frog Conservation

The Taipei frog, named after the city where it was first discovered, was once widely distributed across lowland wetlands, ponds and terraced fields in western Taiwan. However, its habitat has been severely fragmented due to land use changes and pesticide pollution, causing its population to decline sharply. The frog has nearly disappeared from the greater Taipei area. Since 1995, Taipei Zoo has conducted surveys of Taipei frog populations, identifying a significant decline. To prevent its extinction, the zoo has initiated a conservation breeding programme to rapidly increase its population *ex situ* and has conducted rewilding trials in suitable wetland areas within the zoo. These efforts aim to re-establish the frog's population in its native range.

Yellow-margined Box Turtle Conservation

Taipei Zoo, under the commission of the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency, has been involved in the rescue and care of endangered turtle species, including the yellow-margined Box Turtle. Since 2006, Taiwan has faced numerous

smuggling incidents involving large numbers of these turtles. The zoo has not only developed the techniques to monitor their health and disease status but also to track individuals that were reintroduced back into their natural habitats.

International Collaboration

Taipei Zoo has not only achieved remarkable results in local conservation but has also established extensive collaborations with zoos, aquariums and conservation organisations worldwide. In 2024, the zoo collaborated with the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) to participate in EAZA *Ex situ* Programmes (EEP), including the successful breeding of Vietnam pheasants, which is crucial for their future conservation efforts. As part of its commitment to reversing global biodiversity loss, Taipei Zoo continues to work alongside international partners to create *ex situ* populations, ensuring the long-term survival of species through breeding programmes.

The zoo has also partnered with France's Le Parc des Félins to house two Malayan tigers and start a regional *ex situ* breeding programme to ensure the survival of this critically endangered species. Additionally, Taipei Zoo is involved in international conservation efforts for species such as the red panda, koala, Malayan tapir, gorilla and African wild ass, engaging in cross-border genetic exchange and collaborative breeding programmes to maintain genetic diversity in *ex situ* populations.

Public Conservation Education and Engagement

Taipei Zoo is dedicated to promoting conservation education, offering various activities to increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation. By focusing on species such as pangolins, leopard cats and Eurasian otters, the zoo organises educational events and animal-themed days that engage the public, encouraging support for conservation efforts. These activities aim to foster a deeper connection between people and nature, while addressing global challenges such as climate change, sustainable development goals (SDGs), the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and net-zero emissions by 2050.

Western Lowland Gorilla © *Taipei Zoo*

Conclusion

Taipei Zoo's efforts in wildlife conservation, international collaboration and public conservation education not only enhance the preservation and breeding success of native species but also strengthen the zoo's role in global biodiversity conservation. In 2024, the zoo hosted the 32nd Southeast Asian Zoos and Aquariums Association (SEAZA) conference, with over 300 participants from 30 countries, setting a new attendance record. This milestone represents the recognition of Taipei Zoo's partnership with international zoos, aquariums, and conservation organisations and highlights its significant role in the global conservation network.

By deepening its expertise in species conservation and extending its educational reach, Taipei Zoo will continue contributing to global wildlife conservation in the years ahead.

TAIPEI ZOO 110
DEVOTING TO REWILDING

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR THE CARE AND CONSERVATION OF GIRAFFE CONNECTS GLOBAL GIRAFFE CARE TEAMS WITH EXPERTS, ONLINE RESOURCES AND EVENTS

Rachel Wright, *Public Relations and Social Media Manager at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo*

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo (CMZoo) established The International Center for the Care and Conservation of Giraffe (the Giraffe Center) in 2022, with a goal to improve the lives of giraffe in human care by serving as a central resource. The Giraffe Center is a concentrated effort by CMZoo to connect giraffe experts and to expand educational programmes to improve and enrich the lives of giraffe in human care throughout the world, and inspire conservation action.

The Giraffe Center is led by giraffe care experts at CMZoo, in Colorado Springs, U.S., who connect giraffe care teams from around the world. They host workshops, scientific research, webinars and more for giraffe care teams in zoos.

In January 2025, experts from around the world gathered at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, in Palm Springs, California, for the Giraffe Center's Giraffe and Okapi Conference. More than 100 specialists, keepers, conservationists and researchers from 11 countries attended the four-day conference to share their experiences and expertise in giraffe and okapi care.

Giraffe Workshop © *Dalton B*

“It was truly inspiring and fulfilling to see professionals from all aspects of giraffe and okapi care come together to share and learn from each other,” Amy Schilz, senior animal behaviorist at the Giraffe Center, said.

The momentum of giraffe and okapi care conferences had slowed in recent years, and the Giraffe Center team saw an opportunity to revive the exchange of ideas among giraffe and okapi professionals. Attendees, speakers and presenters gathered from around the world, including the U.S., Brazil, Canada, Belgium, England, Namibia, Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Australia and the Netherlands.

This rich diversity meant attendees had access to a range of topics on improving the lives of giraffe and okapis in human care. They explored wild giraffe eating habits, and nutritionists discussed how different food types affect physiology. Experts shared insights for incorporating more browse (natural tree branches and leaves) into giraffe diets, and then led an open panel discussion where attendees could pose questions on any aspect of giraffe and okapi care. Another panel focused on creating a full lifestyle of positive reinforcement for giraffe in human care, as opposed to creating sporadic enrichment opportunities.

One of the highlights of the conference was ‘Browse Day,’ when breakout groups discussed securing browse, improving enrichment and feeding tactics, growing browse farms and identifying toxic plants. Jason Bredahl, CMZoo’s curator of environmental enhancements, presented at Browse Day.

“I keep telling people, browse is the way,” Jason said. “As animal care professionals, we always want to improve the lives of our animals. CMZoo has dedicated full-time employees, including me, to study how to do that, and this conference allows us to share the methods and data with others who can improve their animals’ lives.”

The data shows, basically, that for CMZoo’s giraffe herd, nothing beats browse. Jason describes the herd seeing browse like a dog when its owner comes home from work.

Giraffe Workshop © *Caitlin G*

Giraffe Okapi Conference, poster presentation showcasing presenters project © *Amy Schilz*

Giraffe Workshop © *Caitlin G*

They drop whatever they're doing and make a beeline for the browse, even excitedly taking it out of staff members' hands before they can hang it for them. Khalid, CMZoo's breeding bull, enjoys stripping bark and leaves from branches so much that staff joke that he's just leaving 'browse bones.'

Browse is more than fun for giraffe; it's mentally and physically stimulating for the herd – and nutritious. To enjoy this giraffe-approved meal, they must travel to multiple browse locations and then spend time working to strip leaves and branches. Animals want to work for rewards, and eating browse is much more difficult and enriching for an animal, compared to scooping hay from a feeder. At the conference, attendees got insights that CMZoo's environmental enhancements team has worked for years to study. They returned to their home herds with a head start, guidance on how to make it work at their own facilities and a support system.

Attendees also gained valuable insight into okapi care and conservation, hearing first-hand from conservationists who work directly with okapis in the wild.

"I remember walking by a group at the end of the night, and hearing one of the okapi conservationists tell stories of his field experiences to the okapi caretakers," Amy said. "That was the moment for me. It reinforced how important it is for us to all meet, share and do this work with each other's support."

The conference fostered an important sense of camaraderie and support among attendees.

"My favourite thing was watching a room full of people who barely knew each other become friends," Amy said. "Now, if they have a challenge, they have a support system to reach out to. That kind of professional network is invaluable, especially for those who are newer to the field. Shared knowledge ultimately improves care for okapi and giraffe all over the world – and that's what we all want."

Looking ahead, the Giraffe Center will co-host a specialised workshop at West Midlands Safari Park in England in July. This hands-on event will focus on giraffe behaviour and training, continuing the commitment to advancing best practices in giraffe care.

For more information on professional memberships, workshops and more, available for giraffe and okapi care teams, visit giraffecenter.cmzoo.org.

DEFORESTATION: A CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE

Catherine Barton, *Policy Lead Deforestation-Free Commodities and Regenerative Agriculture at Chester Zoo and Co-Chair of the WAZA Deforestation Free Commodities Working Group*

Deforestation, habitat degradation and habitat conversion are major environmental crises. Now the second leading cause of climate change, after burning fossil fuels, deforestation contributes significantly to both of these crises, which we as global conservation zoos are tackling collectively. The huge conservation challenge of habitat loss however doesn't seem to be slowing down. Deforestation is of particular concern in tropical rainforests, as these forests are home to much of the world's biodiversity. Alongside the environmental impacts, the social implications are also concerning, with rural communities being negatively impacted by habitat loss.

Latest data from Global Forest Watch (World Resources Institute) states that the total tropical primary forest loss in 2023 was 3.7 million hectares, the equivalent of losing almost 10 football (soccer) fields of forest per minute.

In 2021 the Glasgow CoP26 Declaration on Forests and Land Use, was signed by 145 countries, committed to working collectively to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. Despite declines in forest loss in Brazil and Colombia in 2023, the global deforestation rate the same year was still 2% higher than the baseline from 2018–2020, according to the Global Forest Watch, and therefore we seem to have derailed off the track to even attempt to meet the 2030 goal.

What is driving deforestation?

The leading cause of deforestation is agriculture, with almost 90% of global deforestation attributed to agricultural production. Human food consumption, a growing human population and an increasing demand and shift in the food we consume is at the centre of this issue. In the UK, the Climate Change Committee, set up to advise the UK and devolved Governments on climate change, states that what we eat and how we produce it is central to tackling the climate crisis.

For the food service and hospitality industry, which WAZA and its members are part of, understanding and tackling this connection should be a vital part of our mission in our conservation efforts to save species.

Kesuma the Sumatran orangutan © *Chester Zoo*

60%

of commodities such as cattle, palm oil and soy combined are responsible for tropical deforestation

36%

of all tree cover loss is driven by beef production, making it the biggest agricultural driver of forest loss

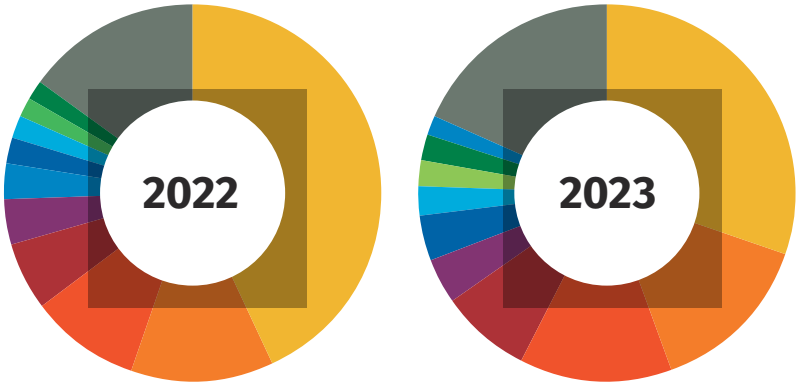
75%

of the worlds soy is used for animal feed

14%

growth is expected in global meat production from 2021 to 2030

Top 10 countries for primary forest loss in 2022 and 2023



- Brazil
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Bolivia
- Indonesia
- Peru
- Colombia
- Laos
- Cameroon
- Madagascar
- Papua New Guinea
- Malaysia
- Other countries

GLOBAL FOREST WATCH

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Forest risk commodities

Forest risk commodities are products whose production have involved deforestation or habitat conversion in the producing country. Imported deforestation is the amount of this deforestation driven by food and forest production that is imported. Each country has an imported deforestation footprint associated with these commodities; the key ones of current concern being cattle, soy, palm oil, rubber, coffee, cocoa and forestry products.

Commodities such as cattle, palm oil and soy combined are responsible for 60% of tropical deforestation, with beef production being the biggest agricultural driver of forests loss, accounting for 36% of all tree cover loss associated with agriculture. The meat industry also drives deforestation through the expansion of soybean cultivation for export as animal feed, where around 75% of the worlds soy is used for animal feed. In addition, global meat production is expected to grow by 14% from 2021 to 2030.

By focussing our attention on ensuring that the products we consume do not contribute to deforestation or forest degradation worldwide we can begin to curb the negative impacts of these commodities. So that agricultural production results in thriving industries, supports local people and protects vital ecosystems.

Total forest replacement by analyzed commodities (2001–15)

Commodity	Deforestation (2001–15, Mha)
Cattle (pasture as a land use)	45.1
Oil Palm	105 (of which 6.2 were direct)
Soy	8.2 (of which 3.9 were direct)
Cocoa	2.3
Plantation rubber*	2.1
Coffee	1.9
Plantation wood fiber**	1.8

Although some commodities have recent data, which makes it possible to estimate deforestation in additional years, all commodities have deforestation data through at least 2015, so total deforestation from 2001 to 2015 is used here for comparability. See Goldman et al. (2002) for more information *Rubber data is only available for Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia. ** Wood fiber data is only available for Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Vietnam.

GLOBAL FOREST WATCH

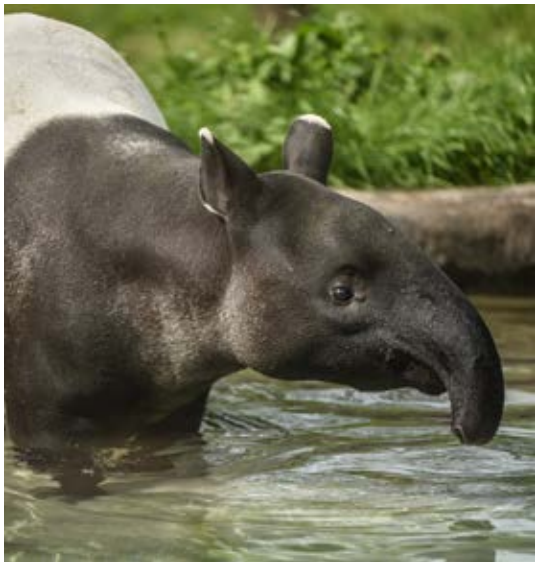
WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

What are Governments doing?

Policies on illegal deforestation imports have so far focused on timber only, however alongside the aforementioned Glasgow declaration, both the UK and EU are implementing legislation on imported deforestation from wider commodities outside of just timber. The UK is introducing due diligence legislation through the Environment Act 2021 to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains to tackle illegal deforestation in palm oil, soy, beef, leather and cocoa supply chains. The due diligence provisions will make it illegal for larger businesses operating in the UK to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. The primary legislation was passed over three years ago and we are waiting for the UK government to provide a clear timeline for when the secondary legislation will come into force.

The EU has moved faster however, despite a 12-month delay announced at the end of 2024, and the EU Regulation on Deforestation Free products (EUDR) will come into play at the end of 2025. The legislations differ slightly in their detail, however the premise is the same and progression of any legislation looking at the issue of imported deforestation is a step in the right direction.

Governments worldwide are increasingly aligning their deforestation policies with international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). Both frameworks emphasise the urgent need to halt biodiversity loss and promote sustainable



Malayan tapir impacted by oil palm production in Malaysia © *Chester Zoo*

Oil palm plantation © *Cat Barton Chester Zoo*

Jaguar impacted in the wild by soy production in South America © *Chester Zoo*

land use. The SDGs highlight deforestation as a critical issue linked to climate change, poverty and food security, while the KMGBF sets global targets to protect ecosystems (e.g. Target 2 and 3) and enhance sustainable production and consumption (e.g. Target 10 and 16).

What actions are WAZA and its members taking?

The global zoo and aquarium community has a pivotal role to play in reducing our deforestation footprint. As procurers ourselves – selling and using food for both human and animal consumption, with field projects in key production countries and industry links across sectors, we can promote the use of deforestation-free and sustainable products. Advocating for less destructive practices within agriculture, to reduce meat and dairy consumption and to source food locally. Our collective action as members can reach industry, government agencies and a global audience to help create the positive change needed.

WAZA has convened a palm oil working group for a number of years, to consider solutions to the palm oil issue and to propose actions that members can take to support the use of sustainable palm oil. This has led to, amongst other projects, the set-up of the global PalmOil Scan app.

Collectively, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Auckland zoo, Zoos South Australia and Chester Zoo have led the development of the app in their respective countries, scoring companies on their sustainable palm oil commitments and policies and turning this into a behaviour change tool for both the industry and the public. However, palm oil is just one of the forest risk commodities of concern.

The WAZA CESC Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee expanded this remit in 2024 and the Deforestation-Free Commodities Working Group was set up. The sustainable palm oil work continues, but has now been expanded to cover key forest risk commodities including soy, coffee, cocoa, cattle and timber. Over the next two years, the group plans to expand activities, bringing together examples of work completed in WAZA member institutions, both regional members and individual organisations, and is working to develop recommendations, case studies and country relevant information to support WAZA members to tackle this conservation issue.

The group is keen to hear from WAZA members on field related, procurement or behaviour change projects related to forest risk commodities in order to expand our knowledge and inclusion of member activities. If you are able to share any work so far, or are interested in assisting the group, please contact the WAZA office secretariat@waza.org.

PalmOil scan

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ZOOS VICTORIA'S ASIAN ELEPHANT HERD FINDS A NEW HOME

Ethan Jenkins, *Communications Advisor at Zoos Victoria*

After years of planning and training, Zoos Victoria (which operates Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Werribee Open Range Zoo and Kyabram Fauna Park) has successfully and safely transported their herd of nine Asian elephants from Melbourne Zoo to Werribee Open Range Zoo. Positive signs have already emerged that they're becoming very comfortable in their expansive new home. This historic move marks the beginning of a new chapter for both the elephants and Werribee Open Range Zoo, as they settle into their state-of-the-art habitat.

Home Sweet Home

The Elephant Trail is designed to elevate the visitor experience while prioritising animal welfare and is unlike anything seen at an Australian zoo before. It has six large habitats with mud wallows fit for roaming, foraging and socialising, and is the same size as Melbourne Zoo's entire footprint.

It also includes two very large pools that collectively hold nearly two-million litres of water and offer approximately 1,300m² of swimmable space. Two specially designed elephant barns are equipped with state-of-the-art healthcare training spaces and a communal sleeping area filled with 3,300 tonnes of sand.

Additionally, two impressive overpasses will allow the elephants the option of movement between habitats, offering a visitor experience that will be nothing short of extraordinary. The new habitat offers the herd an unparalleled space to thrive.

Elephants exploring new home © *Zoos Victoria*

The Great Migration

The first to make the journey was Luk Chai, a 15-year-old Asian elephant bull who initially arrived at Melbourne Zoo from Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo in 2020. In the early hours of the morning, years of training by the keepers ensured Luk Chai voluntarily entered his custom-built crate at Melbourne Zoo. Once he was comfortable and secure, the crate was transported by crane onto the back of a flat-bed truck, ready to be transported to Werribee Open Range Zoo. For a brief moment, a four-tonne Asian elephant sailed safely through the air!

Keepers monitored Luk Chai remotely via cameras as the truck and police escort vehicles made their way to Werribee Open Range Zoo. Upon arrival, he safely exited his crate and began exploring his brand-new bull barn. This marked the beginning of a carefully coordinated operation to transport the remaining eight elephants over the course of five days.

The move involved an extraordinary collective effort: a 21-person keeper team, logistics experts with cranes and trucks, veterinarians from both zoos, the Department of Transport and Victoria Police. Each elephant was transported in three separate cohorts, completing the journey safely and reuniting as a herd in their new home.

The arrival of the rest of the herd in two remaining convoys – Mek Kapah (52-year-old), Kulab (25), mums Dokkoon (32), Num-Oi (24) and Mali (15), and their two-year-old calves Aiyara, Kati and Roi-Yim – saw them band together to explore their new environment.

As the elephants exited from their air-conditioned crates, they trumpeted and exchanged vocalisations, touching trunks and flapping their ears – behaviours that signal excitement, affection and a strong social bond. The herd explored their new world-class habitat for the first time, sharing an emotional reunion.

Werribee Open Range Zoo Elephant Trail Project Officer and Zookeeper Lucy Truelson described the awe-inspiring moment: “They are celebrating and really enjoying their new surroundings. They’re playing, exploring the landscape and they’ve slept beautifully. All these things show us that they’re content, confident, happy and thriving. This is everything we could have hoped for.”

The Elephant Habitat at Werribee Open Range Zoo
© *Zoos Victoria*

Asian Elephant herd explore their new home
© *Zoos Victoria*

The move marks the first time in its 41-year history that Werribee Open Range Zoo will be home to elephants. Mark Pilgrim, Director of Werribee Open Range Zoo, expressed his excitement: “Werribee Open Range Zoo is thrilled to welcome the entire elephant herd to their new home. This move represents a groundbreaking moment for us, and we cannot wait to see these magnificent animals thrive in their expansive new habitat.”

Sheri Horiszny, Director of Melbourne Zoo, reflected on the significance of the move: “Moving the herd to Werribee Open Range Zoo marks the end of an incredible chapter here at Melbourne Zoo, but it’s also the beginning of an exciting future for these elephants. While it’s hard to say goodbye, we know this move will provide them with the space and environment they need to thrive for generations to come.”

Would you or someone in your team like to keep an International Studbook? Would you like to know more about Global Species Management Plans?

Get in touch with the WAZA Executive Office at conservation @waza.org

Or visit www.waza.org to learn more about these programmes and how to get involved

UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL STUDBOOKS (ISBS)

Changes between 15 October 2024 and 15 March 2025

International Studbooks

Published International Studbooks

- **Indochinese sika deer** *(Cervus nippon pseudaxis)*, 2024 ed. – Jan Pluháček (Zoo Olomouc)
- **Somali Wild Ass** *(Equus africanus somaliensis)*, 2024 ed. – Beatrice Steck (Basel Zoo)
- **Pygmy hippopotamus** *(Choeropsis liberiensis)*, 2024 ed. – Beatrice Steck (Basel Zoo)
- **Indian Rhino/Greater One-horned Rhino** *(Rhinoceros unicornis)*, 2024 ed. Beatrice Steck (Basel Zoo)
- **Matschie's Tree Kangaroo** *(Dendrolagus matschiei)*, 2024 ed. – Davi Ann Norsworthy (Lincoln Children's Zoo)

ISB Transfers

- **Blue-eyed Black Lemur** *(Eulemur flavifrons)*, from Peggy Hoppe to Britt Keith (Duke Lemur Center)
- **Chinese Alligator** *(Alligator sinensis)*, vacancy filled by Philip Mayhew (Albuquerque Biological Park)
- **Vietnam Pheasant** *(Lophura edwardsi)*, vacancy filled by Sarah Patterson (Zoological Society of London)

Vacant International Studbooks

- **Buff-crested Bustard** *(Lophotis gindiana)*
- **Aruba Island Rattlesnake** *(Crotalus durissus unicolor)*

Juvenile panther chameleon © *Zurich Zoo, Albert Schmidmeister*

BEHIND THE ZIMS

A Q&A with WAZA International Studbook keepers

Behind the ZIMS aims to showcase the behind the scenes work of International Studbook Keepers and their management using Species360's Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS), to show the relevance and contributions of WAZA International Studbooks in the work we do in wildlife conservation and professional population management.

Q&A with Christopher Holmes

Christopher Holmes

Curator of Birds, San Diego Wildlife Alliance – San Diego Zoo

Blue-billed Curassow Crax alberti International Studbook Keeper

AZA Galliformes TAG Chair and AZA Blue-billed Curassow SSP

ISB kept and featured:	*Crax alberti. This species is critically endangered.*
ISB Host Organisation:	San Diego Wildlife Alliance – San Diego Zoo
Year Started as ISBk:	2007

> "The ISB has helped with the conservation of this species by forming a direct link to conservation actions of the species in native Colombia"

For how many years have you been acting as the species' International Studbook Keeper (ISBk) and why did you become an ISBk?

I have been the keeper of this international studbook since 2007, although this species started as an AZA regional studbook in 1993 and was managed by Trey Todd of the Houston Zoo until he retired in 2006. When Trey retired, I applied to have this species become an International Studbook to increase the information and understanding of the population of this species. At that time, the AZA population was extremely small, and I wanted to make sure that the genetics represented outside of Colombia were better understood and managed. This programme would not have attained as much success that it has if it were not for Christian Olaciregui of the Barranquilla Zoo, Colombia, Jan Dams the EAZA Galliformes TAG Chair, Geer Scheres former EAZA Cracid TAG Chair, Andreia Pinto of Parque Ornitológico de Lourosa and Kimio Honda formerly of Wildlife Conservation Society. All these people and more have contributed to assisting with acquisitions and transfers, and filling in the gaps of knowledge for this studbook.

How has the International Studbook (ISB) contributed to the species' conservation? What do you see as the value of your ISB?

The ISB has helped with the conservation of this species by forming a direct link to conservation actions of the species in native Colombia. The ISB has sponsored different husbandry workshops that have occurred in Colombia to increase capacity.

One of the workshops that I am most proud of was the first incubation workshop to be hosted in Colombia in 2014, which was taught by Susie Kasielke formerly of the Los Angeles Zoo. This workshop was funded by the Houston Zoo, Dallas World Aquarium, and the Nashville Zoo and was hosted at the Aviario Nacional de Colombia in Cartegena, Colombia. At the end of the workshop the equipment that was painstakingly imported from the United States was donated to Colombian zoos, with the aim to support the training of as many Colombian colleagues as possible. The lessons taught at this workshop and donated equipment helped not only with the Blue-billed Curassow programme but other avian programmes for other priority species in Colombia.

How has the ISB contributed to *ex situ* conservation in practical terms?

The Blue-billed Curassow is a traditional pet species in some parts of Colombia. The Colombian zoos have always had the most difficult birds to work with, as their birds are all confiscated, imprinted, ex-pets of unknown age. The ISB has worked hard to help Colombian zoos navigate breeding these birds which is not an easy task. The husbandry workshops and training that have been provided by the AZA and the EAZA regions have helped to navigate some of these issues. Through its dedication and commitment to this species, the Aviario Nacional de Colombia became the first facility in Colombia to hatch a Blue-billed Curassow in human care in 2014, followed by the Barranquilla Zoo in 2023. The ISB played a minor role in these successes, but it must be noted that it is the dedication of these institutions, and their keepers that has made these significant hatches possible.

How do you see your work as an ISBk supporting conservation action for the species in the wild?

One of the interesting things about this ISB is that the AZA, EAZA and JAZA regions had vastly different removal dates of their founders from Colombia. The AZA population was founded with wild birds from Colombia from the 1960s/1970s/1980s, the EAZA population was founded from birds transferred from the wild in the 1980s, and JAZA was founded by birds from the wild transferred in the 1980s. This means that these founders and the next generations of birds could represent genetics that are now lost to the wild. Managing these bloodlines carefully as a conservation resource for Colombia is the ISBs main purpose.

Blue-billed male © *Hannah Caster of St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park*

What do you see as the next chapter or role for International Studbooks?

A project of extreme interest for this ISB is conducting genetic testing on the entire *ex situ* population to better understand relatedness across all populations. This testing will need to occur in Colombia to ensure that all birds are part of the process as the export of genetic samples from Colombia is currently not possible. The next long-term step for the ISB is to export birds from the AZA region to EAZA and to Colombia. These exports will safeguard the genetics of this population with multiple international satellite populations.

My view of the purpose of an ISB has changed drastically since starting this programme. When I started it, it was for the success of the species but more and more it has become about our Colombian colleagues and their successes. My knowledge of Curassow husbandry was passed down from the experiences of many generations of animal care professionals, at all levels (Keeper, Supervisor, Curator, etc.) and by working closely with Colombian institutions this programme has been able to pass knowledge of these past failures and successes to the Colombian programme for this species, enhancing it. In turn Colombia has shared their experience which has formed a greater understanding of this bird and its biology.

The ISB provides a documented multi-generational insight to form a model of what issues a fragmented wild population of this species may experience. Only together with the genetics housed in Colombian institutions can this population have long-term sustainability and successes that will be reflected in Colombia.

WAZA RECEIVED THE ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL (RSPO) INNOVATION AWARD

In November 2024, WAZA was awarded the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Innovation Award, at the Annual Roundtable Conference on Sustainable Palm Oil (RT2024) held in Thailand.

The award acknowledged the work of WAZA and our members Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Chester Zoo, Auckland Zoo and Zoos South Australia in developing the PalmOil Scan app. The application empowers consumers to contribute to wildlife conservation through informed purchasing decisions, making it easier to choose products made by companies committed to Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO). The app's success has also encouraged more companies to improve their palm oil sourcing policies, contributing to broader industry change.

The RSPO Innovation Award recognises innovative approaches to challenges in any area of the palm oil sector and is a part of RSPO's Excellence Awards for 2024.

Tracey Gazibara, Executive Vice President of Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and co-chair of the WAZA deforestation free commodities working group and Inke van der Sluijs, Director Market Transformation at the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) receiving the Innovation Award © *RSPO*

WAZA AT THE 78TH MEETING OF THE CITES STANDING COMMITTEE

From 3 to 8 February 2025, WAZA attended the 78th Meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Standing Committee, with several member associations and institutions participating as observers.

Representatives from the zoo and aquarium community, including WAZA, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, engaged in discussions on critical conservation issues.

The meeting addressed crucial policy matters linked to the implementation of CITES, in anticipation of the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CITES CoP20) scheduled to take place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan later this year, from 25 November to 5 December 2025.

Key outcomes of the meeting included:

- Progress on strengthening enforcement against wildlife crime
- Improving the traceability of trade in CITES-listed species
- Enhancing cooperation between countries to combat wildlife trafficking
- Supporting more sustainable trade practices.

AZA, EAZA AND ZAA MEET THE WAZA 2027 POPULATION MANAGEMENT GOAL

Thalia Pelegrin, *Conservation and Animal Welfare Assistant*

The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) launched its 2027 Population management Goal (27PMG) during the 79th WAZA Annual Conference in 2024.

Following this, WAZA, through the Committee for Population Management, is pleased to announce that the first set of reviews towards the fulfilment of the 27PMG have been concluded and that three member regional associations successfully met the Goal in February 2025. These were: Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia (ZAA). This accomplishment marks a significant step in advancing professional, science-based population management and aligning regional frameworks to facilitate global efforts to conserve biodiversity.

With biodiversity loss accelerating at an unprecedented rate, the role of zoos and aquariums in conservation has never been more vital. The WAZA 27PMG supports and aligns itself to global biodiversity frameworks and their objectives like Target 4 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which aims to halt species extinction, protect genetic diversity, and manage human-wildlife conflict.

The aim of the WAZA 2027 Population Management Goal is to ensure that member national and regional associations develop a population management framework that reflects specific professional and effective elements of population management. The 27PMG was created to support the global zoo and aquarium community's critical role in species conservation and biodiversity protection. By working towards the achievement of this Goal, WAZA takes another significant step in positioning itself as a global leader advancing conservation and animal welfare in zoos and aquariums.

Asian small-clawed otters © *Edinburgh Zoo*

The objectives of the 27PMG are:

By December 31, 2027

- WAZA Regional* associations must have a science-based population management framework that reflects the specific professional and effective elements of population management as approved by WAZA.
- WAZA Regional associations must require participation of its institutional members in their population management framework, such that there is institutional responsibility for effective and impactful population management.

* *Without the oversight of a Regional association, this responsibility will lie with the operating National association.*

About the 27PMG

The journey towards achieving the 27PMG first began in April 2022 at the 4th Joint Taxon Advisory Group Chairs Meeting in Long Beach, California. Key topics were raised and discussed including population management and its challenges and successes, which encouraged the development of the 27PMG and led to the development of its framework in March 2023 when WAZA's Committee for Population Management (CPM) met in Amsterdam. Representatives from regional associations, including ALPZA, AZA, EAZA, PAAZA, SEAZA and ZAA, participated in these discussions, ensuring the framework's inclusivity and global application.

The framework of the 27PMG was built on six fundamental elements essential for robust and effective population management:

1. **Goal-Driven Species Selection:** Prioritising strategic approaches based on global and regional conservation needs.
2. **Sourcing, Transfer and Destination Policy:** Ensuring legal, ethical and sustainable practices in animal acquisition, transfers and disposition.
3. **Data, Tools and Science:** Leveraging high-quality, science-based data for informed decision-making.
4. **Animal Welfare:** Placing animal well-being at the forefront of population management decisions.
5. **Engagement and Participation by Members:** Fostering collaboration and shared responsibility.
6. **Capacity Building and Staff:** Ensuring the availability of appropriate resources and trained professionals.

Fowler's toad © *Memphis Zoo*

Partula snails © *Edinburgh Zoo*

Following WAZA Council approval, the CPM and WAZA's Executive Office developed a suite of supporting documents and a Self-Assessment Tool to aid associations in implementing and evaluating their population management frameworks. In July 2024, AZA, EAZA and ZAA participated in a pilot review of the framework and assessment tool, demonstrating their readiness and commitment to meeting the goal. This resulted in their successful achievement of the Goal in February of this year.

Reflecting on progress and upcoming efforts

David Field, Chair of the WAZA Committee for Population Management and Vice President of WAZA reflected on the major milestone stating "The first three WAZA member regional associations meeting the 27PMG, sets an inspiring achievement that underscores our community's dedication to advancing and ensuring professional and effective population management. This achievement is cause for celebration, it will ensure that the WAZA 27PMG gains momentum and is the next step our members take on their journey towards effective population management".

Further to the achievement of the goal, a key aspect of the pilot review has been to appraise process of completing the assessment. Raymond van der Meer, EAZA Director of Conservation and Population Management reflects that "doing such an evaluation is important as it provides you with opportunities to learn from experiences and finetune your process. Having a WAZA 2027 Population Management Goal we commit ourselves to establishing a benchmark for population management across regional associations and ensure that populations are managed professionally and effectively. Achieving the WAZA 27PMG is a celebration for EAZA and its members. It will further promote collaboration among leading zoos and aquariums, as well as national and regional associations, ultimately leading to a greater contribution to conservation from our community."

As WAZA and its member associations strive to meet the 27PMG, the global zoo and aquarium community moves closer to realising its vision of being a trusted leader in conservation and animal welfare.

As the remaining member regional associations continue working towards the December 2027 deadline, this process will foster opportunities for cross-regional learning, the exchange of best practices and greater alignment of population management frameworks worldwide.

WAZA AT THE IUCN WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS 2025: POWERING TRANSFORMATIVE CONSERVATION

WAZA is pleased to announce its participation in the upcoming International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC), taking place in Abu Dhabi, UAE, from 9–15 October 2025. The IUCN WCC is the largest gathering of nature conservation experts, leaders and decision-makers in the world and is set to shape global priorities for nature conservation and climate change for the coming decade and beyond.

As part of its commitment to global conservation, WAZA is actively engaged in shaping conservation policy through the IUCN motions process. Motions, which lead to Resolutions and Recommendations, are a key mechanism for guiding IUCN's policy and Programme, influencing third parties, and shaping international conservation efforts. Since 1948, IUCN's 1,466 Resolutions and Recommendations have played a crucial role in setting the global conservation agenda, supporting international conservation law, and addressing emerging issues that impact biodiversity and wildlife conservation at multiple levels. These motions are debated and voted upon by the Members' Assembly, IUCN's highest decision-making body.

In this context, WAZA is proud to co-sponsor key motions that are of particular relevance to the global zoo and aquarium community. These motions reflect WAZA's dedication to strengthening conservation policies and practices:

- Task Force on Exploring Standardised Genetic Diversity Assessments
- Addressing wildlife trafficking and the seizure of live wild animals through care, awareness-raising, and training
- Scaling Collaborative Action for Threatened Freshwater Fishes Through *ex situ* Conservation
- Mitigating the Impact of Natural Disasters on Wildlife Through the Implementation of Specific Measures (Prevention, Relief, Restoration).

In addition to shaping conservation policy, the IUCN WCC plays a crucial role in electing IUCN's leadership. One of its key functions is to elect the President, Treasurer, Regional Councillors and Chairs of Commissions, who will form the IUCN Council. This Council is responsible for overseeing and guiding IUCN's global activities. Eligible IUCN Members will cast their votes online during the Members' Assembly at the 2025 Congress, with the election results announced during the final sitting of the Assembly.

Beyond policy engagement, WAZA will also be actively involved in networking and outreach opportunities at the Congress. A key highlight of WAZA's participation is our involvement in the Species Pavilion by Reverse the Red, a collaborative space that will showcase successful conservation initiatives and facilitate dialogue among conservationists. In addition to this, WAZA is exploring participation in further events, which will be confirmed in the coming months.

We warmly encourage all members planning to attend the Congress to get in touch. By coordinating efforts and engaging in social and networking events, we can collectively strengthen the presence and impact of the zoo and aquarium community.

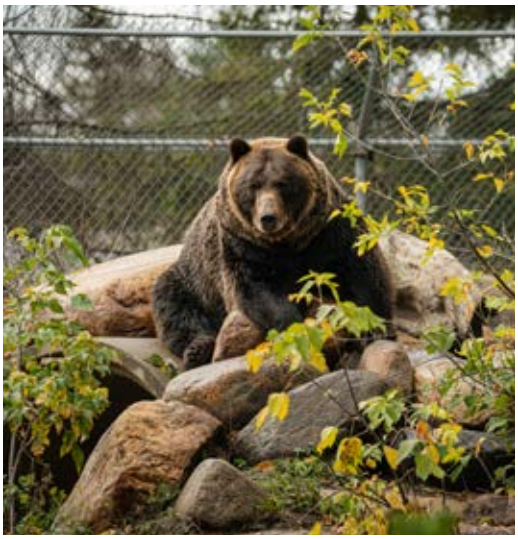
We look forward to seeing you in Abu Dhabi as we work together to make a meaningful difference for wildlife and biodiversity. For more information or to coordinate participation, please contact Loïs Lelanchon, WAZA Head of Partnerships and Advocacy at advocacy@waza.org.

IUCN World Conservation Congress Abu Dhabi 2025

REVERSE THE RED

WAZA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

© *Louisville Zoo*



© *Saskatoon Zoo*

© *ZSL Whipsnade Zoo*

WAZA welcomes three new Institution Members

Louisville Zoological Garden, US

Louisville Zoological Garden maintains comprehensive animal welfare programmes and focuses its conservation efforts on species recovery, sustainable practices and community engagement through partnerships and education. They support and participate in a variety of programmes, including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) initiatives, Global Species Management Plan (GSMP) efforts and regional projects in Kentucky, United States.

Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo, Canada

The Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo is the only accredited zoological facility in Saskatchewan, Canada. Originally a tree farm established in 1913, it expanded in 1972 when the Saskatoon Zoo opened within the park. Home to approximately 250 animals, their mission is to create memorable experiences to connect visitors to wildlife, their habitats and to inspire conservation actions.

ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, UK

Whipsnade Zoo is part of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), a science-driven conservation charity dedicated to restoring wildlife in the UK and globally. As the UK's largest zoo, Whipsnade combines scientific origins with practical knowledge to protect wildlife and habitats, focusing on four key impact areas: protecting species, restoring habitats, training conservationists and creating change.

WAZA also welcomes the International Congress of Zookeepers (ICZ), as an Affiliate Member

The International Congress of Zookeepers (ICZ) was established in 2000. Their mission focuses on enhancing professional animal care through several key initiatives: building a global network of animal care professionals, supporting regional associations, facilitating knowledge and skills exchange, promoting professionalism through training and resource sharing and supporting keepers involved in conservation projects.

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