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WAZA

World Association
of Zoos and Aquariums

news

STRONGER TOGETHER

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDBOOK FRAMEWORK

Paola Cerdán
Head of Conservation & Animal Welfare
World Association of Zoos and Aquariums



27 May
Taipei Zoo

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STRONGER TOGETHER: RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL STUDBOOKS

WAZA launches the new International Studbook Framework at the 6th Joint TAG Meeting in Taipei Zoo, creating a stronger foundation for collaboration, data sharing and species recovery worldwide



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear WAZA Friends, The Joint TAG Meeting is a flagship event showcasing the impact of WAZA's Committee for Population Management. It brings together colleagues from across the global zoo and aquarium community to drive forward the goal of sustainable animal populations within our institutions so as to help deliver our shared conservation mission.

The 6th JTAG has just been held at Taipei Zoo and was the first to be held in Asia. I must thank our hosts at Taipei zoo for their incredible hospitality and creating the ideal environment for meaningful discussion, collaboration and progress. This created the foundation for the unique and essential connections between regions, institutions, expertise and conservation efforts that the WAZA network makes possible.

Effective population management is driven by data, demographics and planning. Yet what became increasingly clear in Taipei was that meaningful impact depends on something even more fundamental: collaboration. The quality of our decisions depends on our ability to share knowledge, build trust and work together across organisational and geographical boundaries.

This spirit of collaboration was reflected in the launch of WAZA's new International Studbook Framework. Developed by the WAZA Committee for Population Management, with contributions from experts across our global community, the framework represents an important step forward in strengthening global coordination around species population management.

What excites me most is not simply the framework itself, but what it represents: a shared global commitment to working together, aligning efforts across regions and creating dynamic opportunities especially for those species for which zoos and aquariums are uniquely placed to ensure their survival.

Crucial to this work are our Studbook Keepers and Species Managers. WAZA is deeply grateful for your dedication and expertise. As a global community, we must ensure that these vital roles

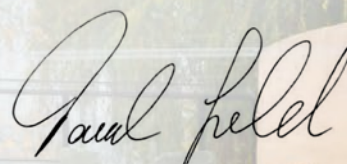
receive the resources they deserve. Without the commitment of Studbook Keepers and Species Managers, we cannot maintain the sustainable populations that underpin so much of our conservation work.

As our community navigates increasingly complex conservation challenges, the ability to collaborate effectively across regions and commit the appropriate resources will become ever more important. The 6th Joint TAG Meeting and the launch of the WAZA International Studbook Framework demonstrate the power of bringing people, knowledge and institutions together in pursuit of shared conservation goals.

In this edition of WAZA News Magazine, you will find two articles that explore these developments in greater detail. Together, they highlight an important truth: conservation is strongest when expertise, data and people are connected.

My sincere thanks go to Taipei Zoo for their outstanding hospitality, to the WAZA Committee for Population Management for their leadership, and to everyone who contributed to the success of both the meeting and the framework.

Together, we continue to demonstrate that conservation is strongest when we work as one global community.



Yours aye,
David Field FRSE
WAZA President



CEO'S LETTER

Dear WAZA Members and Friends. Over the past few weeks, I have been reminded once again that one of WAZA's greatest strengths is not simply the programmes we deliver, the frameworks we develop or the goals we pursue. It is our ability to bring people together.

In June, this was demonstrated during the 2026 WAZA Mid-Year Meeting, which welcomed over 230 registered delegates from across regions, cultures and time zones. While delivered online, the meeting reflected something far greater than a virtual event. It reflected the strength of a truly global community willing to learn from one another, share experiences and work together towards common goals.

Held under the theme *Stewards of Tomorrow: Leadership Across Differences, Impact Without Borders*, the meeting focused on a topic that is becoming increasingly important across our profession: leadership.

Conservation is often viewed through the lens of species, habitats and biodiversity outcomes. Yet meaningful conservation impact also depends on strong institutions, capable people and effective leadership. The species recovery programmes, education initiatives and conservation partnerships we value today rely on organisations that are resilient, adaptive and prepared for the future.

Throughout the meeting, delegates explored how leadership can be developed, supported and sustained. From succession planning and mentorship to professional development programmes and organisational culture, the conversations reminded us that investing in people is ultimately an investment in conservation itself.

We also heard inspiring perspectives from keynote speakers Sujata Biswas and Dr Ken Chandler, alongside practical examples from colleagues across the WAZA community who are helping develop the next generation of leaders in their regions and institutions.

Importantly, the meeting also provided an opportunity to reflect on WAZA's own role in supporting our members and strengthening our association. During my update to delegates, I was pleased to share progress on several initiatives designed to strengthen WAZA's foundations for the future, including the introduction of our first dedicated Member Policy and the development of a new Position Statement process.

These initiatives are grounded in a simple belief: effective conservation requires strong institutions. Strong institutions require clarity, accountability and a willingness to continuously improve.



Another highlight was the launch of our new *Convos with CEOs* sessions. These conversations demonstrated the value of creating spaces where leaders can openly discuss challenges, exchange ideas and learn from one another. The enthusiasm and engagement from delegates reinforced something we know to be true: leadership is strengthened when it is shared.

The Mid-Year Meeting also marked a milestone in accessibility for WAZA. For the first time, we introduced AI-powered live translation, helping participants engage with the programme in their preferred language, making the event more inclusive for our global membership.

As we look ahead to the second half of 2026, I remain optimistic about what our community can achieve together. The challenges facing wildlife are significant, but so too is the expertise, commitment and collaborative spirit that exists across WAZA.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the Mid-Year Meeting and, more importantly, to the collective strength of our community.

Together, we continue to steward not only today's responsibilities, but tomorrow's opportunities.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M Zordan'.

Dr Martín Zordan
WAZA Chief Executive Officer

ZOOMONITOR COMMUNITY – POWERING UP BEHAVIOUR RESEARCH WITH MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATIONS

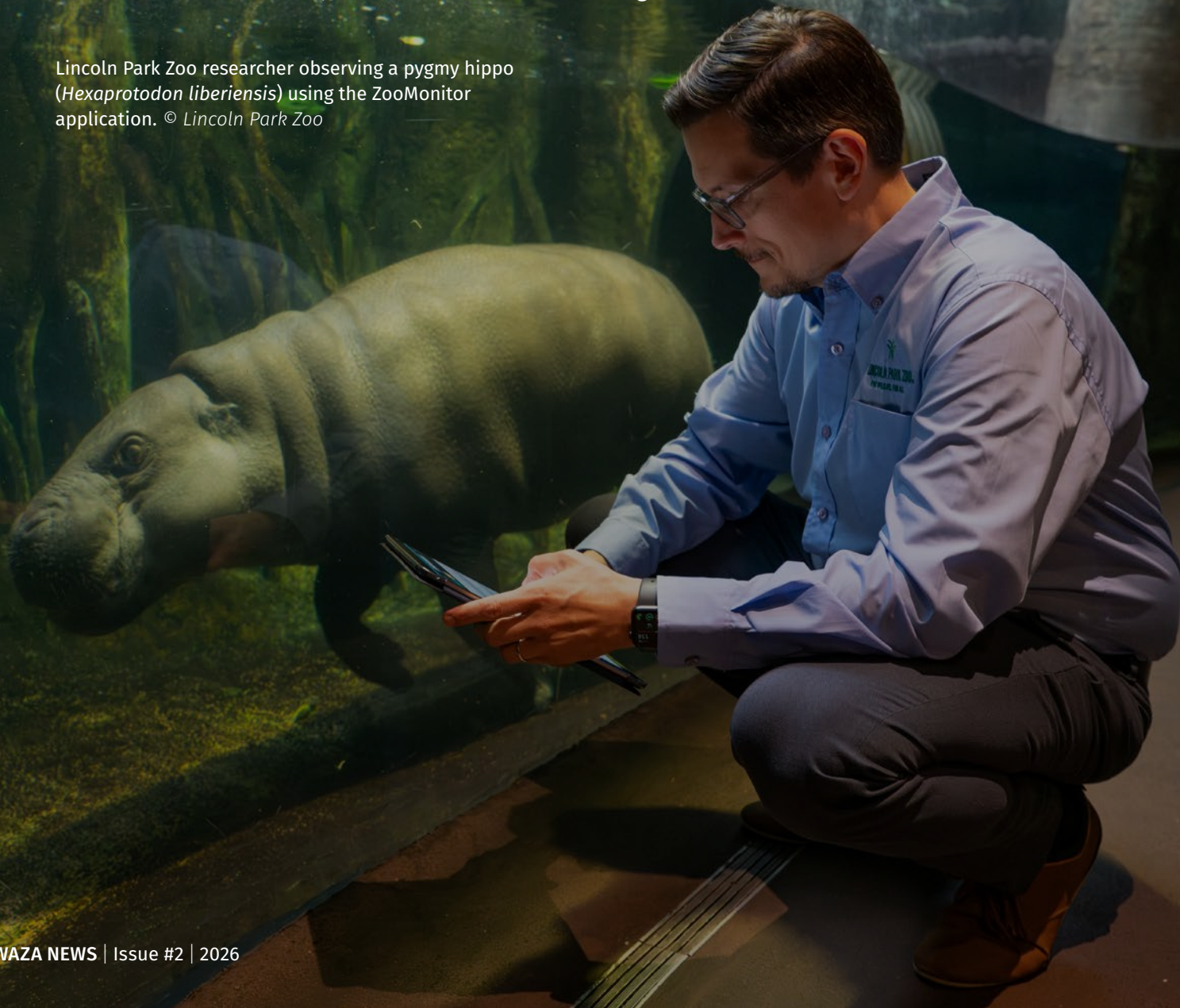
Jason D. Wark, Ph.D., Director of the Animal Welfare Science Program at Lincoln Park Zoo

The ZooMonitor application was created by Lincoln Park Zoo and built by Tracks Data Solutions to provide zoos and aquariums with a free, easy-to-use tool for recording animal behaviour and informing evidence-based decisions that enhance animal welfare (Wark et al., 2019).

Since its release in 2016, ZooMonitor has become a leading tool for evaluating animal behaviour in zoos and aquariums, with more than 2,000 users around the world. ZooMonitor was originally designed as an internal tool for individual zoos and aquariums to learn about the animals in their care. However, the value of sharing data across organisations through multi-institutional studies is well recognised (Watters et al., 2009; Whitham and Wielebnowski, 2013) and was

recently highlighted in the 2025 WAZA Animal Welfare Strategy (WAZA, 2025). To address this need, Lincoln Park Zoo expanded the ZooMonitor app to facilitate collaborative behaviour research across organisations. With the growth in behaviour monitoring, the ZooMonitor platform is uniquely positioned to help bridge gaps across zoos and aquariums and advance robust insights that can enhance the welfare of animals in managed care.

Lincoln Park Zoo researcher observing a pygmy hippo (*Hexaprotodon liberiensis*) using the ZooMonitor application. © Lincoln Park Zoo





Map of organizations registered for ZooMonitor. © Lincoln Park Zoo

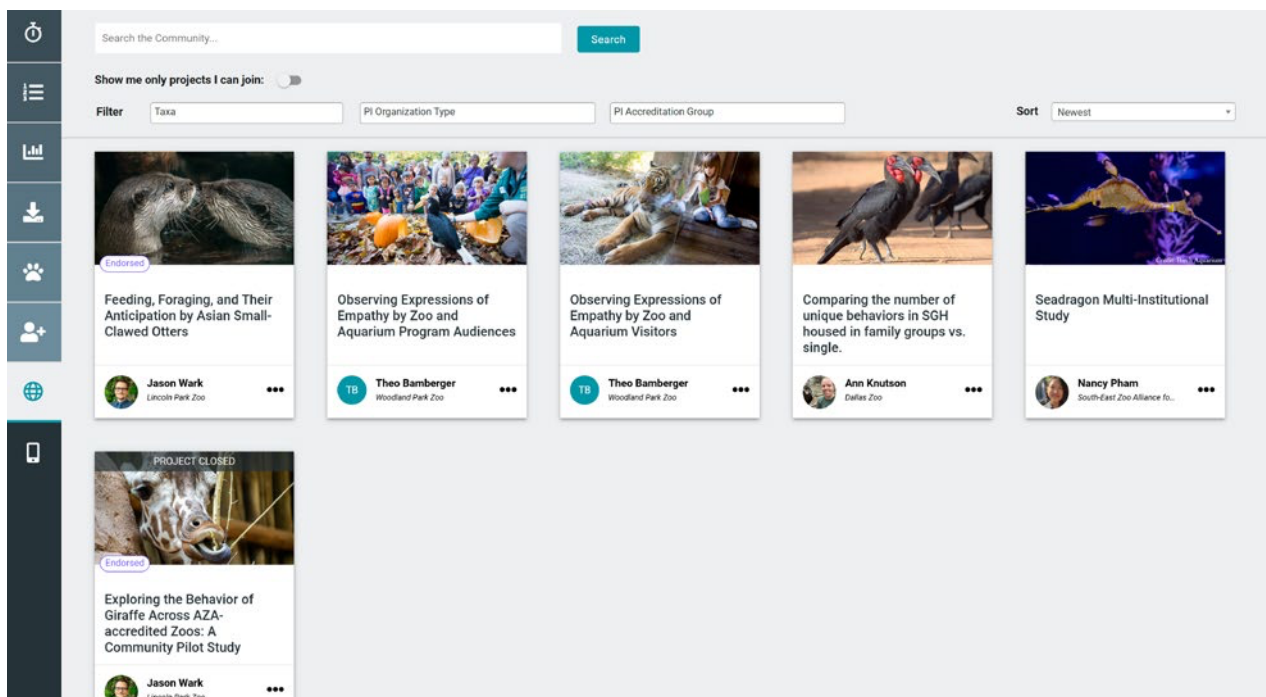
Importance of Multi-Institutional Research

Researchers in zoos and aquariums face an inherent challenge – each organisation typically cares for a relatively small number of individuals from a broader population. Thus, research findings from one organisation may not be applicable to animals cared for at other organisations. Furthermore, many important welfare questions we might ask – such as whether habitat size influences welfare or what is an appropriate social group size for a species – are difficult, if not impossible, to answer within a single organisation, as it may not be feasible to experimentally alter these dimensions.

Multi-institutional research capitalises on the variation in housing and husbandry across organisations as a 'natural experiment'. By comparing individuals across organisations, researchers can generate key insights into how care may influence behaviour and welfare. For example, a large, multi-institutional study on African and Asian elephants within the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) found that elephants spent more time walking when they experienced a greater number of social groups (Holdgate et al., 2016). Similarly, a multi-institutional study of clouded leopards identified lower glucocorticoids – hormones associated with the stress response – in cats living in habitats with greater enclosure heights (Wielebnowski et al., 2002).

Beyond evaluating specific housing and husbandry factors, large, multi-institutional studies can also contribute to a broader understanding of species-typical behavioural repertoires of animals living in zoos and aquariums. Identifying species-typical behaviour patterns can help determine what 'normal' behaviour looks like for a species (e.g. chimpanzees, Whitham et al., 2023; dolphins, Lauderdale et al., 2023). From a population management standpoint, this knowledge can then guide recommended care practices to promote or mitigate certain behaviours as well as highlight research needs when evidence-based care practices have not yet been established. Within an organisation, population-level data can also serve as a behavioural benchmark, helping managers contextualise individual behaviour.

Despite their value, multi-institutional studies have remained rare as they can be challenging to conduct. One major barrier is the logistical challenges in coordinating and standardising training on behaviour identification (i.e., inter-observer reliability) and data collection methods across geographically dispersed organisations – a prerequisite for reliable data. Additional challenges include identifying interested participants, securing organisational approvals, monitoring data collection progress over time, and maintaining effective communication with study participants. Collectively, these challenges underscore the need for new tools to support collaborative research efforts.



Screenshot of multi-institutional research projects in ZooMonitor Community. © Lincoln Park Zoo

Expanding ZooMonitor to Address Multi-Institutional Research Challenges

In 2024, Lincoln Park Zoo launched ZooMonitor Community, an expansion of the ZooMonitor data collection app to support collaborative behaviour research studies. This three-year project was made possible in part by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (MG-245613-OMS-20), a federal funding source for zoos and aquariums in the United States. These new features, which are available to all ZooMonitor users, enable researchers to create, share and manage multi-institutional studies directly through the ZooMonitor platform.

Guided by feedback from an international advisory group during the design and development of ZooMonitor Community, new features were built to directly address many of the inherent logistical challenges in multi-institutional research. Researchers can embed protocols and other training materials, including any documents, videos, or web links, directly into their project. Researchers can also add research proposal forms and any other documents necessary for organisational research reviews (e.g., letters of support, approval letters for animal care and use or human-subjects research). Projects can be

flagged by researchers as endorsed by relevant zoo and aquarium groups (e.g., Taxon Advisory Groups), enabling ZooMonitor users to easily identify priority research studies.

To ease the burden in managing multi-institutional studies, ZooMonitor Community projects include built-in project management tools, supporting researchers in tracking progress during their study. For example, they can track how many observation sessions each organisation has conducted and, when needed, send pre-made emails to nudge participants to complete certain tasks, such as filling out surveys or syncing data. Data privacy settings for studies can be customised based on the sensitivity of the project, allowing identifiable data to be shared with researchers or data pseudo-anonymised by the ZooMonitor platform, when greater privacy is needed. Communication tools within the platform also allow researchers to share updates, confirm that messages have been viewed, and maintain a centralised record of study communications. Finally, projects can be published publicly to ZooMonitor Community, making them visible to all ZooMonitor users, or kept private and accessible only via an invitation code from the researcher.

ZooMonitor Community in Action

As a pilot project of ZooMonitor Community, Lincoln Park Zoo researchers conducted a study to evaluate giraffe behaviour within zoos accredited by AZA over a one-year period. This study included 18 zoos across the United States and 66 giraffes, making it one of the largest evaluations of giraffe behaviour ever conducted in zoos. One key finding from this study was that the amount of time giraffes spent displaying natural foraging behaviours, such as browsing, was higher than had been reported in past multi-institutional studies on giraffes, which may reflect the attention of zoos in promoting goal-based behaviours and signify an encouraging sign of progress in our care (Wark and Cronin, 2024). This study also identified behavioural effects of several organisational factors, such as the size of habitats, number of giraffes in a herd, and whether the zoo had public feeding opportunities (Wark and Cronin, 2025). In some cases, null findings were equally informative, such as the finding that outdoor habitat size, which varied widely across participating zoos,

did not influence the amount of time giraffes spent locomoting (moving from place to place). Together, these findings illustrate the unique insights that can only be gained through multi-institutional studies.

Several additional studies within ZooMonitor Community are currently underway. Lincoln Park Zoo researchers recently launched a multi-institutional study examining feeding-related anticipatory behaviours of Asian small-clawed otters. With support from the AZA Animal Care and Wellbeing Grants Fund, this two-year study is evaluating the impact of food predictability for otters and exploring the potential of automated feeders to mitigate anticipatory behaviour. Other researchers are leading ZooMonitor Community projects on a variety of species, including southern ground hornbills and weedy seadragons. Recently ZooMonitor has also been used for studying visitor behaviour and engagement to improve the visitor experience.

Community > **Project Details** > **Create Shared Project - Exploring the Behavior of Giraffe Across AZA-accredited Zoos: A Community Pilot Study**

Overview	Project Team	Description	Methods	Training And Testing	Study Questions	Sharing
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Community Project Name
Give your project a descriptive name that gets people interested and excited to join.

Exploring the Behavior of Giraffe Across AZA-accredited Zoos: A Community Pilot Study

Import Methods

Methods imported from IMLS Giraffe Pilot Project [Sync Methods](#)

Note: A copy of this project will be created in your account for this Community project.

Cover Image
Add a cover image for your project (jpg or png files only).

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Note: We recommend uploading images in 16:9 aspect ratio and larger than 500 px width for best display. ([Click here for help](#))

[Save](#) [Delete Project](#)

Screenshot of a ZooMonitor Community project showing configuration steps. © Lincoln Park Zoo

ZooMonitor Community is also being used within zoo associations (e.g., DAZA Danish Association of Zoos and Aquariums) to share behavioural data for benchmarking and communication.

Multi-institutional studies such as these are needed to develop robust insights that advance animal welfare in zoos and aquariums. We hope

that new, freely accessible and purpose-built tools like ZooMonitor Community can lower longstanding barriers to collaboration, stimulate large-scale behavioural research and accelerate the development of evidence-based care practices. To learn more about ZooMonitor, please visit zoomonitor.org.

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SAVE THE DATE

May 19, 2027



ACCREDITATION IN LATIN AMERICA: 17 YEARS OF CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Carmen T. Linares A., Coordinator of the Accreditation and Ethics Committee at the Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (ALPZA), and Director of Conservation Education at Africam Safari, Mexico

At the Latin American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (ALPZA), after 17 years of collaborative work, a robust Accreditation Process has been established, one that every institution and professional in the region has come to embrace as their own, consequently integrating continuous improvement as an organic process within the Association's development and within the institutions themselves.

Having an accreditation process is fundamental for ALPZA, as it establishes a common framework of excellence, ethics and responsibility for all member institutions regardless of their size, country, or level of development. Through clear and technically structured standards, both credibility and legitimacy are strengthened.

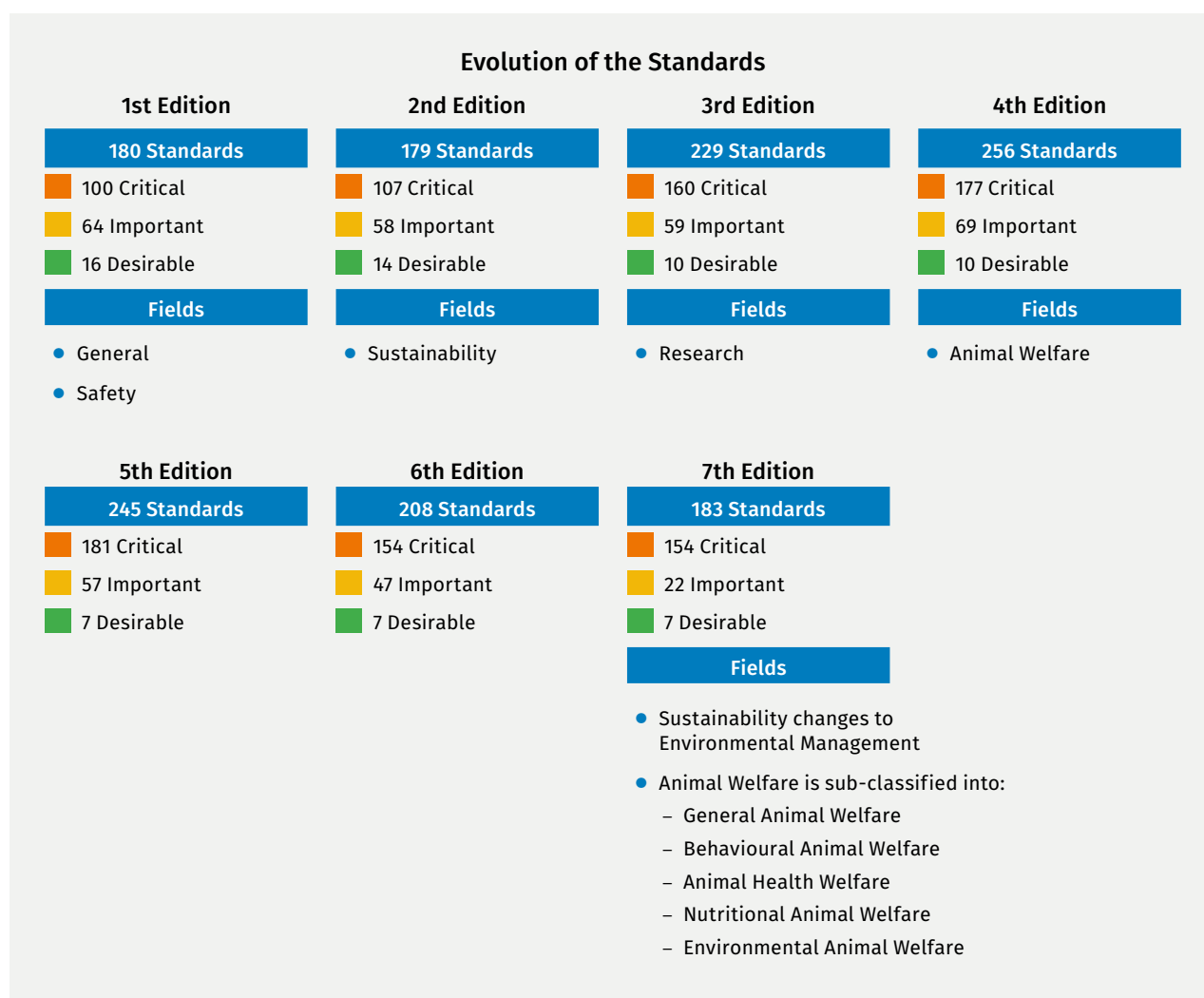
Furthermore, it facilitates integration and collaboration among professionals and institutions, promoting the exchange of knowledge, skill-building and the consolidation of a shared vision regarding the role of zoos and aquariums as key actors in biodiversity conservation.

Axis deer (*Axis axis*) © Zoológico Guadalajara

Accreditation has been a structured and strategic process that has evolved over the years, solidifying significant changes designed to strengthen trust among the association's members and with the process itself, thereby shaping the technical standards of the entire region. Thus, in 2025 – following the execution of various process-related activities involving the arduous work of 71 professionals, 11 ALPZA committees, and 35 inspectors – the accreditation standards were successfully updated. Standards range from General Standards, such as G-4 and G-5 on Animal Population Plans, which require institutions to maintain a detailed, organised and up-to-date record of the animals kept in their care, to standards requiring institutions to establish policies for the acquisition and disposal of

animals and plants (G-6, G-7, G-8 and G-9). Other standards address areas such as animal welfare, research development and sustainability.

Currently, the Accreditation Process is in its seventh edition, and includes 183 standards organised across seven distinct domains. Each domain represents a core area of institutional performance and is evaluated through a set of specific standards. However, this was not always the case; a comparison with its early stages clearly illustrates the journey: initially, the process addressed five domains through 180 standards. Over time, the fields under review were restructured and expanded – as were the number of standards, the specificity and clarity of their descriptions, and the methodology used for their review.



The seventh edition reduced the number of standards from 208 to 183. This reduction stems primarily from the consolidation of existing standards, aimed at making the review process more cohesive. Additionally, 16 new standards were introduced to complement and elevate the level of rigour, seeking to incorporate the areas outlined below that are fundamental to institutional operations:

- **General:** Encompasses philosophical, administrative and legal aspects.
- **Research:** Promotes the integration of scientific research in support of conservation.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Promotes operations that incorporate legal and ethical environmental practices, as well as strategies designed to minimise environmental impact through conscious resource use.
- **Education for Conservation:** Promotes educational initiatives as a fundamental component of species conservation.
- **Conservation:** Evaluates the institution's commitment, professionalism and impact regarding its conservation efforts.
- **Safety and Security:** Focused on ensuring the safety and security of both people and animals and on directing efforts toward identifying and preparing to address any type of contingency.
- **Animal Welfare:** Reviews systematic, professional and efficient efforts designed to guarantee the holistic well-being of the entire animal population, focusing on the Five Domains Model.

In addition to the challenge of maintaining clear, up-to-date and rigorous standards, two fundamental components have been the focus for success: the implementation of mechanisms that reinforce impartiality and objectivity throughout the entire process and the selection, evaluation and training of inspectors.

The first and most valuable resource that provides alignment and clarity is the Accreditation Manual, which explains each standard – clearly stating what must be ensured during the review process – thereby aligning interpretations for both institutions and inspectors.

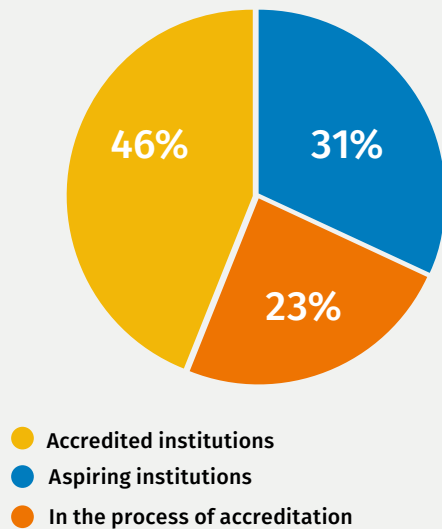
To reinforce impartiality and objectivity, institutions are protected – particularly their proprietary know-how – by excluding inspectors from the same country in which the institution is based. Furthermore, institutions may strike one additional candidate from the list of inspectors available for the process. The sole exception to this rule applies in cases involving a Brazilian institution; in such instances, it is ensured that a Portuguese-speaking inspector serves as a member of the on-site inspection team – regardless of whether they hail from the same country – with the express objective of guaranteeing clear and fluid communication.

The inspection teams consist of four members and ensure that observation, analysis and discussion are conducted from enriched perspectives, thereby fostering impartiality in educated decision-making.

Finally, to bring the process to a close with objectivity and as unbiased as possible, an accreditation commission is formed to review the entire case. This commission comprises nine members – an interdisciplinary group possessing extensive mastery and knowledge of the standards, as well as a strong commitment to confidentiality – thereby safeguarding both the institution and the professionals involved in the process.

The second component that has been crucial throughout the history of accreditation is the personal integrity and professionalism of the 35 inspectors from seven countries across the Americas, who bear the enormous responsibility of bringing about the practical application of standards within institutions. Everything begins with a carefully crafted profile that seeks knowledge, experience, credibility and a mastery of soft skills – qualities which, combined with ongoing processes of training, 360-degree evaluation and feedback, ensure the supply of the world's finest professionals to carry out this important yet complex Accreditation Process.

STATUS OF MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

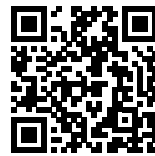


To date, the results show that out of 48 member institutions, 46% are accredited – 50% of which represent re-accreditations. Additionally, 23% are currently at some stage of the Accreditation Process, while 31% of institutions hold the status of aspiring members. One of the current challenges the association faces is providing aspiring institutions with the widest possible range of tools. These tools enable institutions to integrate standards into their operations that support efficient and effective conservation work, while upholding the highest levels of animal welfare and ensuring safety for both people and animals.

There is still a long road ahead, much work to be done, and ambitious goals to achieve; yet, there is a certainty that today we are talking about more than just an Accreditation Process. We are talking about a collective commitment built over more than 17 years – one grounded in the knowledge, ethics and conviction of hundreds of professionals

across Latin America. We are talking about a process in which continuous improvement plays a decisive role, for it ensures that standards and methodologies evolve in tandem with scientific, technical and ethical advancements related to conservation and animal welfare. The impact of this process is profound, as it strengthens the technical capabilities of institutions, fosters innovation and transforms accreditation into a dynamic and transformative endeavour.

Each standard, each evaluation and each technical discussion reflects something deeper: a responsibility toward life, toward conservation and toward the future of zoological institutions. Accreditation is not an end in itself; rather, it is a way of operating – a way of making decisions and leading with consistency, transparency and excellence, day in and day out. Beyond merely obtaining formal recognition, accreditation fosters an organisational culture in which it serves as a living mechanism for improvement – one that reinforces credibility within the community and guarantees our adherence to the highest standards promoted globally.



Accreditation Process and Standards of the Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (ALPZA)

<https://www.alpza.com/acreditacion>



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FROM OBSERVATION TO INSIGHT: APPLYING AI IN MODERN ANIMAL CARE AT OCEAN PARK HONG KONG

Howard Chuk, Executive Director of Zoological Operations and Conservation, Ocean Park Hong Kong

Danny Chu, Head of Information Technology, Ocean Park Hong Kong

The year 2026 finds the global community at a fascinating crossroads. From the precision of smart city logistics to the predictive power of personalised medicine, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an undeniable part of the modern fabric. While still in its early stages of adoption, the zoological world is also making significant strides in unlocking the transformative potential of AI in daily animal care.

At Ocean Park Hong Kong, we do not view ourselves as having 'solved' the AI puzzle. Instead, we see ourselves as active participants in a much larger, ongoing learning process. By sharing our early

experiences – both the successes and the steep learning curves – we hope to act as a catalyst for a growing conversation across the globe to explore how these tools might enhance the lives of the animals in our care.

Golden Snub-nosed Monkey (*Rhinopithecus roxellana*) © Ocean Park Hong Kong

Bridging the Knowledge Gap

While AI has made substantial advancements in domestic agriculture and wildlife population monitoring, a significant knowledge gap remains within the highly specialised environment of zoos and aquariums (Liptovszky and Polla, 2025). For decades, the gold standard for tracking individual animal behaviour has relied almost exclusively on human observers, a method that is increasingly seen as a bottleneck to modern husbandry. Relying on manual monitoring introduces inherent limitations, such as inter-observer bias where different researchers may interpret subtle movements inconsistently. Furthermore, ‘observer effect’ is often triggered – either animals behave differently when observers are present, or observers may unconsciously interpret animal actions in a way that aligns with their own expectations (Tuytens *et al.*, 2014). The physical constraints of staffing also mean that monitoring is often fragmented, leaving critical nocturnal or private behaviours unrecorded.

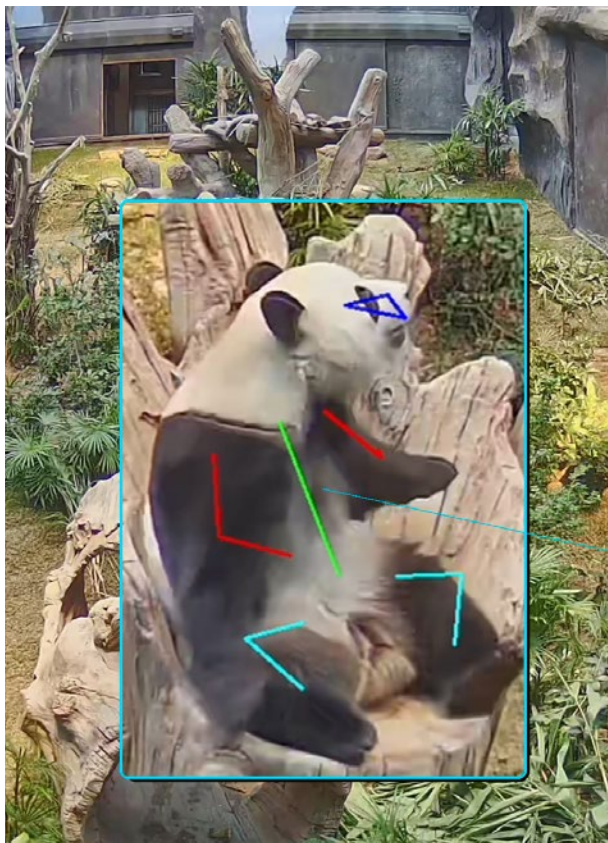
Instead of continuing with these traditional, labour-intensive methods, our team was inspired to explore digital tools that provide a more continuous, objective view of animal behaviour. By utilising AI technology monitoring, we can achieve a non-intrusive, round-the-clock

approach that remains unaffected by human fatigue or subjective interpretation. Choosing a starting point for such a complex journey required looking back at our past scientific work. We turned to the giant panda (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) as our pilot species, a decision largely inspired by the 2024 study led by our in-house researchers Iris Tan and Dr Eszter Matrai.

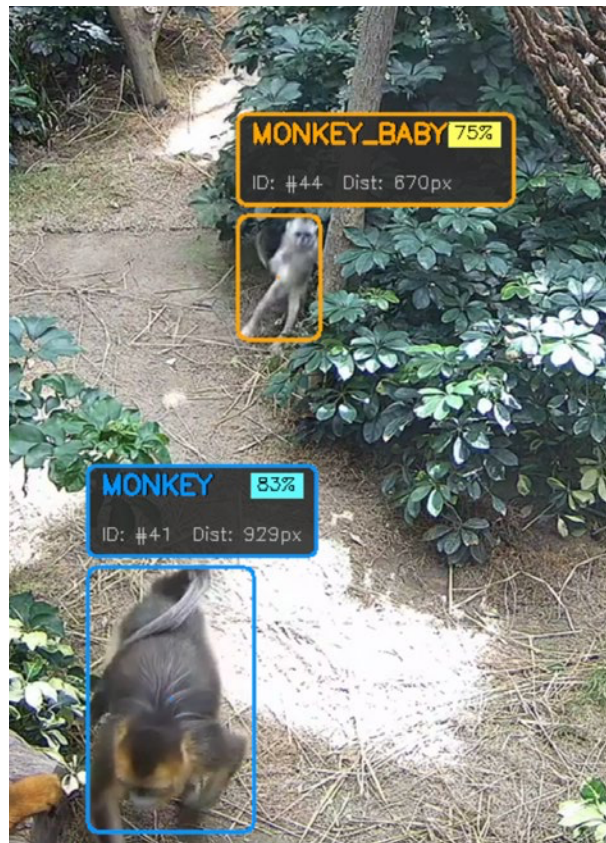
The research we conducted on our late, beloved giant panda An An served as a milestone in geriatric care, demonstrating how meticulous tracking of movement could provide vital indicators for health assessments and personalised care for ageing animals (Tan, Matrai and Martelli, 2025). However, that study also highlighted the intense labour involved in manual data collection and entry. Our current exploration into AI is designed to bridge this gap by automating the collection of raw behavioural data. This technological shift will ensure that our experts and animal care specialists are no longer tethered to the repetitive task of logging movements, allowing them to redirect their specialised skills toward direct, hands-on care that enhances the lives of the animals under our care.



An An, male giant panda (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) © Ocean Park Hong Kong



AI monitoring system analysing behavioural data for a Giant Panda (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) © Ocean Park Hong Kong



AI monitoring system analysing a group of Golden Snub-nosed Monkeys (*Rhinopithecus roxellana*) © Ocean Park Hong Kong

The Challenge of Data and the Multi-Level Approach

One of the most challenging hurdles in this journey is the nature of machine learning itself. Teaching software to recognise a specific species and distinguish between nuanced behaviours requires an immense volume of data. Simply ‘showing’ the computer a species is not enough; to enable the system to differentiate between behaviours such as resting, foraging and climbing, it must be trained on thousands of image frames extracted from footage, each of which must be manually annotated. To manage this steep learning curve, we have adopted a phased approach, beginning with highly visible species and progressing toward those with greater physical complexity.

Our research began with the giant panda, leveraging the physical characteristics of our newest residents. From a machine learning perspective, the giant panda is a helpful ‘entry point’. Since they are a relatively large terrestrial species with slow movements and distinct black-and-white markings, they provide high-contrast

visual data that is easier for computer vision models to identify. Furthermore, pandas are often stationary for extended periods while eating bamboo, which allowed us to train our pose recognition models on stable, clear ‘skeletons’ before introducing more complex movements.

Building on these foundational successes, we moved to the next level by applying the same technology to our golden snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus roxellana*) family. This transition represented a significant technical jump. Unlike the methodical movements of a giant panda, golden snub-nosed monkeys are incredibly agile and active. Teaching the AI to fixate on an individual monkey like the juvenile Little Red Bean while she jumps, climbs or huddles with her mother, Le Le, requires much more sophisticated frame-by-frame tracking. These active primates are helping us refine our algorithms to handle speed and social complexity, ensuring the software does not lose track of an animal when it moves behind a branch or a companion.

Future Horizons: From Land to Water

Our ultimate ambition is to refine this technology enough to eventually apply it to the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*) that reside in our facilities, which represents perhaps the most complex challenge in animal monitoring. Recent research by Matrai *et al.* (2021, 2024) underscores just how sophisticated these animals are, revealing complex social behaviours such as multi-partner cooperative problem-solving, intersexual differences in play, and even prosocial food-sharing. Because dolphins live in a three-dimensional underwater environment and are in nearly constant motion, tracking them requires a system that can account for the visual distortions of water and light reflections while covering a large, multi-dimensional habitat. Successfully monitoring a species that never truly stands still would be a breakthrough in our understanding of marine mammal welfare, allowing us to map their spatial utilisation and social vocalisations with unprecedented accuracy.

Our learning journey also extends to the next generation through the development of practical teaching content for schools in Hong Kong. By bringing real-world animal care data into the classroom, we hope to show students that innovation and care can go hand-in-hand. At Ocean Park Hong Kong, we are still uncovering the full potential of AI. It is an ongoing learning process – one that requires patience, humility and a willingness to explore. However, the insights we have gained into the lives of our pandas and monkeys suggest that the effort is well worth it.

As we move forward, we believe there is immense value in fostering a culture of knowledge exchange across the industry. For members of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and the wider conservation community, the current era presents a unique opportunity for dialogue. We believe that open conversations regarding these digital platforms can help us all understand which practical solutions are actually working in a daily husbandry context. Whether or not AI becomes the primary pillar of zoo research for every institution, the conversation itself is vital for ensuring our industry remains at the forefront of science-based care. We look forward to exchanging these insights with our fellow zoos and aquariums, so that

together, we can continue leveraging technology to elevate the care and wellbeing of the animals we all love.

About Ocean Park Corporation

Ocean Park Corporation is a non-profit statutory body and a registered charitable institution. Its vision is to create a world where we take action to conserve our environment and grow positively with nature. Since its opening in 1977, Ocean Park Hong Kong has evolved into a world-class conservation and education hub. We create fun and meaningful experiences grounded in nature and complemented by leisure and adventure elements, to foster environmental stewardship.

For more information, please visit oceanpark.com.hk and waterworld.oceanpark.com.hk.

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FROM ARCHIVE TO INFRASTRUCTURE: HOW CANGO WILDLIFE IS HELPING BUILD THE DATA FOUNDATION FOR AI-ERA CONSERVATION

Douglas Eriksen, CEO, Cango Wildlife | Director, Zindalo | Founder, Project ZOAA

Cango Wildlife is in its 40th year of operations. In that time it has contributed to species preservation, conservation breeding, wildlife education, and the kind of sustained, expert-led animal care that you would expect from an accredited institution.

Like most zoological facilities, Cango Wildlife has been generating detailed biological records since its inception. Health histories, reproductive data, genetic lineages, behavioural observations across multiple generations of individual animals in the care of the same institution. It is the kind of longitudinal, verified biological intelligence that is impossible to replicate. That data has done exactly what it was designed to do: inform the decisions that keep animals healthy, breeding programmes viable, and populations genetically sound. In essence, zoological

facilities have been quietly generating the most important biological dataset on earth.

What that data has not done and what it was never designed to do – is leave the building.

Project ZOA (Zoological Open Architecture) began as an attempt to change that. We believe the data sitting inside zoological institutions globally is not just a conservation resource – it is missing infrastructure for the AI systems now making decisions about the natural world.



Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) at Cango Wildlife
© Cango Wildlife, 2025

The Reasoning Gap

AI can already identify almost every known species. It just can't save them ... yet.

Research released in October 2025 by Shinya Uryu of Tokushima University, since peer-reviewed and published in *Ecological Informatics*, is the most comprehensive evaluation of AI conservation reasoning conducted to date. Five leading large language models were tested against 21,955 species across four core IUCN Red List assessment components. The results reveal a paradox that demands a response from every conservation institution on earth.

Taxonomic classification accuracy scored 94.9%. Conservation status reasoning, the assessment of extinction risk, ecological pressure and survival trajectory, scored just 27.2%.

A gap of 67.7 percentage points, in the same systems, on the same species.

These are not underperforming models. They are among the most capable ever built, and the gap held across all five without exception. For scale, the study reports a majority-class baseline of 32.2%, the score obtainable by guessing the single most common Red List category every time, with no knowledge of any species at all.

The gap is not closing, because it cannot be closed by better models alone. Uryu attributes the failure to inherent architectural constraints rather than data limitations alone: the models capture the ordinal structure of the Red List but cannot apply the thresholds that separate one category from the next. Errors cluster between neighbouring categories, most often Endangered mistaken for Vulnerable. The machine recognises that a species is in trouble. It cannot judge how much.

But architecture is only half of it. Where models perform, they perform where the evidence base is richest, and they degrade sharply where it is thin: mammals score 50.8% on status assessment, amphibians 33.5%, plants 19.3%. Performance tracks the shape of what has been written down. Uryu's own recommendation is that future work prioritise balanced data across the tree of life rather than architectural change alone.

Which points at the deeper problem. The relational, causal, ecosystem-level intelligence that conservation reasoning requires does not exist in a form a machine can learn from. There is no machine-readable map of how species depend on each other. No structured record of what happens to a watershed when a keystone predator disappears. No verified, queryable account of which species are structurally load-bearing within an ecosystem and which are not.

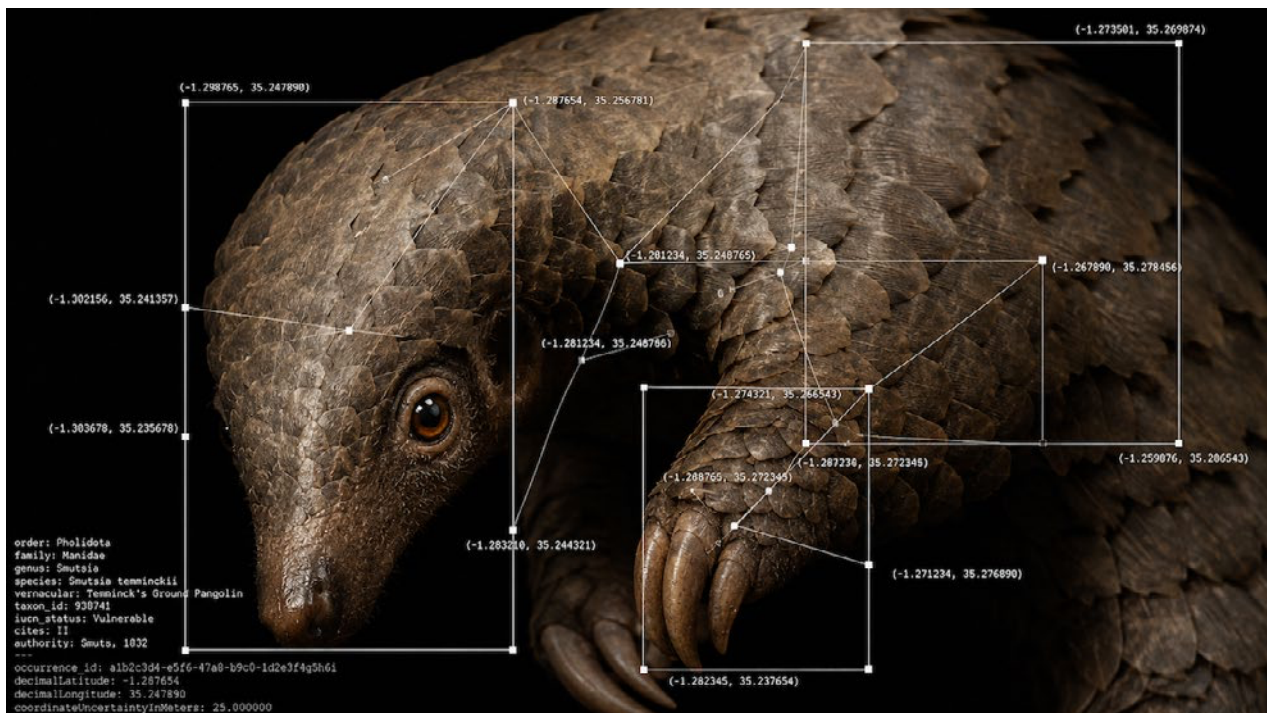
A model cannot reason its way to a conclusion the evidence base has never recorded. That is the data problem. And the data that would begin to solve it is already being generated, every day, inside institutions exactly like ours and exactly like those represented in the WAZA network. It has simply never been built into something a machine can read.

The Foundation Is Missing

Existing biodiversity data standards represent genuine and hard-won progress. Darwin Core provides a widely adopted framework for occurrence data. The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) has aggregated more than three billion occurrence records contributed by over 2,500 publishing institutions. But as set out in a Perspective published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in March 2026, these standards do not connect the full chain from field observation to decision-relevant knowledge. Darwin Core's architecture requires all data to reference a single core record,



Photo of Douglas Eriksen holding the WEF Award for Project ZOA in Davos © Douglas Eriksen, Cango Wildlife



Pangolin Data Overlay © Generated using Dall-E, Project ZOA 2026

appropriate for documenting that a species was observed somewhere, but structurally insufficient for representing what happens to an ecosystem when that species disappears. GBIF has acknowledged these limitations and is actively developing a new data model in response.

Meanwhile, the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures released a formal blueprint in November 2025 for a proposed Nature Data Public Facility – an institutional acknowledgement at the highest level that current biodiversity data is insufficient in quality, verifiability, and decision-usefulness for the world now demanding it. Every major framework governing nature globally points at the same gap. The demand is written into policy but the supply does not yet exist.

Project ZOA: Architecture for Ecological Intelligence

Project ZOA is the infrastructure response to this gap. ZOA is being developed under Zindalo (Cango Wildlife's innovation arm) and received the Startup Innovation Award for Top AI Sustainability Project at the World Economic Forum 2026 in Davos. Its core product is the Ecological Intelligence Dataset (EID): a cryptographically verified, relationally structured, machine-readable biological

knowledge graph designed to be queried by AI systems, integrated into nature risk models, and deployed as the verification layer that current conservation data cannot provide.

ZOA is distinguished from existing standards in three specific ways. First, cryptographic provenance at the record level: every biological event anchored with a verifiable chain of custody, trustworthy not by institutional reputation but by mathematical proof. Second, relational structure rather than occurrence lists: species interactions, causal dependencies, and ecological network topology mapped in an architecture that enables AI systems to reason about what degrades when a species is lost. Third, explicit design for machine consumption: an API-queryable ground truth layer, not a human-readable database behind an institutional login.

ZOA is not a replacement for any existing data standard. It is designed as a connective layer on top of them, with the potential to integrate with the physical monitoring infrastructure institutions already operate. Camera trap networks, environmental DNA sampling, acoustic monitoring, and field observer protocols can all feed ZOA's provenance architecture without requiring changes to the devices or the people using them. The downstream destiny of that data changes, but the collection methodology does not.

Technical architecture is being developed with Ross Eyre and Ché Coelho, technical co-founders of Project ZOA. The result is an architecture designed simultaneously for institutional data provenance, causal ecosystem reasoning, and machine-readable output at scale.

What It Unlocks

The conservation outcomes that become possible when this infrastructure exists have no precedent. Species health assessment improves fundamentally when records from animals in human care are connected to wild population data in a single verified model. Reintroduction decisions made on fragmented surveys become decisions made on a complete biological picture: individual health history, reproductive capacity, disease vulnerability, and habitat condition, synthesised for the first time. The same verified baseline that informs a breeding recommendation simultaneously satisfies a nature finance disclosure requirement. Conservation science and conservation funding are no longer in separate conversations.

For AI systems, the 27.2% conservation reasoning accuracy is not a ceiling, it is a floor set by absent infrastructure. The models being trained now will shape land use planning, habitat allocation, and species management policy for decades. Every verified record contributed to the EID before those systems are finalised is a contribution to the biological intelligence they will reason from.

Zoological Institutions as Founding Nodes

The data required to close this gap is not absent from the world. It is distributed, unconnected, and architecturally incompatible with the systems that now need it. Troudet et al. established in 2017 that the richest biodiversity regions on earth are among the least documented in global databases, with taxonomic bias strongly correlated with preference for charismatic vertebrates. The institutions best positioned to correct that bias are zoological facilities operating in precisely those regions.

Species360's Zoological Information Management System now holds records on more than 22,000 species and over 41 million individual animals across more than 1,400 member institutions in over 100 countries, making it the largest body of knowledge on animals in human care anywhere in the world. No satellite constellation, no eDNA programme, no remote sensing platform produces data of this depth and longitudinal fidelity for individual species across multiple generations. The Arabian Oryx exists today because zoological institutions held verified biological records for nine founder individuals and coordinated breeding decisions across continents. The California Condor was brought from 27 individuals, all of them in human care, in 1987 to 607 birds by the end of 2025, of which 392 were free-flying in the wild, by the same method. These outcomes were produced by institutional biological intelligence. ZOA is the infrastructure that makes that intelligence and methodology legible to the systems now governing planetary outcomes.

Through WAZA and its regional networks, zoological institutions already constitute the most sophisticated inter-institutional coordination infrastructure in conservation – the potential governance substrate on which a federated data standard can be built. Cango Wildlife, as ZOA's primary development site and pilot facility, is demonstrating what this transformation looks like in practice: an established conservation facility becoming a verified data node without displacing its existing mission, teams, or infrastructure. The methodology is designed to be replicated.

The Invitation

The window in which this infrastructure can be established before AI systems lock in their ecological reasoning on inadequate data is not indefinite. The WAZA network spans precisely the institutions and geographies that can make the difference, but only while the window is open.

The immediate ask is specific: a data audit to understand what each institution holds; a conversation about aligning existing protocols with ZOA's provenance architecture; and

participation as a founding node in the network being built.

The data that has always circulated within zoological infrastructure has never had a pathway to the systems that now determine conservation outcomes at scale. ZOA is that pathway. What we do with that connection in the next five years will determine whether biodiversity becomes mathematically embedded

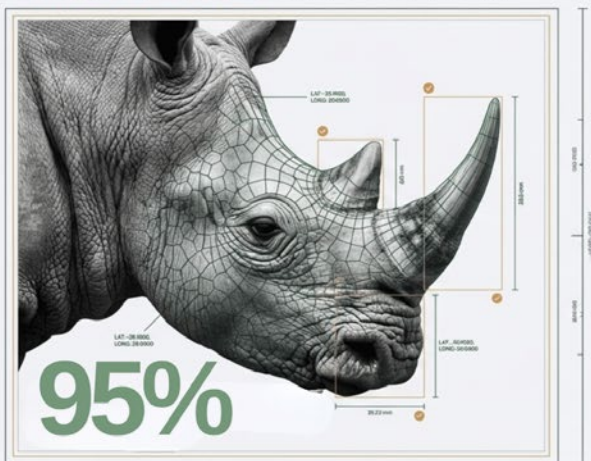
in the systems governing our planet – or remains invisible to them.

Author Note: Project ZOA (Zoological Open Architecture) is developed under Zindalo LTD. Recipient of the Startup Innovation Award for Top AI Sustainability Project, awarded at the World Economic Forum 2026 in Davos. Technical co-founders: Ross Eyre and Ché Coelho. Primary implementation and development site: Congo Wildlife, South Africa.

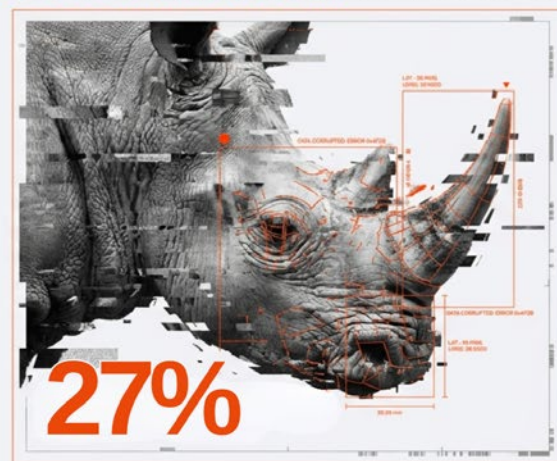
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TAXONOMIC RETRIEVAL



CONSERVATION REASONING



AI LLM Performance on Conservation Reasoning Infographic © Created by Douglas Eriksen, Generated using Notebook LM, Congo Wildlife, 2026

THE ZOO OF THE FUTURE: A PLACE TO EXPERIENCE AND TAKE ACTION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

Antoni Alarcon Puerto, Director of Barcelona Zoo

At a time when the planet is facing an unprecedented acceleration in biodiversity loss, modern zoos have the opportunity and the responsibility to redefine their role. Barcelona Zoo is immersed in this process of profound transformation, with the aim of becoming much more than a place to visit: a centre of knowledge, inspiration and action for the preservation of biodiversity.

This paradigm shift responds to an undeniable reality. Global climate change, habitat degradation and species extinction threaten the balance of ecosystems and directly affect human well-being. In this context, zoos can act as a bridge between society and nature, bringing the complexity of environmental challenges closer through transformative experiences that create an emotional connection with visitors.

Barcelona Zoo has placed this mission at the core of its identity. Following the approval of the New Model in 2019, the institution has embarked on a new phase guided by a clear purpose: to preserve the planet's biodiversity by creating positive experiences that drive actions for change.

From Contemplation to Action

One of Barcelona Zoo's main aspirations is to evolve from a contemplative model to an experiential and participatory one.

This transformation is based on a fundamental idea: conservation is only possible if society feels involved.

For this reason, the Zoo of the future is conceived as a space where people can discover the value of biodiversity through immersive narratives, naturalised enclosures and interactive tools that foster learning through emotion.

Visitors will be able to dive into real conservation stories, learn about threatened species and understand the relationship between ecosystems and human life. Technology, museography and immersive spaces will play a key role in turning each visit into a memorable experience.

This approach also places younger generations at the centre of the strategy. The Zoo aims to help shape future citizens who are more aware of and committed to preserving the planet.

Cuida'ls. Learning about the importance of biodiversity © Barcelona Zoo

A New Narrative for Understanding Biodiversity

The Zoo's transformation is also reflected in the way the visitor experience is organised. The new conceptual model is based on three major areas of knowledge: the Zoo's origins, evolution and biodiversity.

This journey will make it possible for visitors to understand how life on Earth has evolved and why preserving its current diversity is so important. More than a simple thematic organisation, this approach is a way to create emotional and intellectual connections between people and the natural world.

The facilities will be designed to tell stories. Stories of adaptation, survival, fragility and hope. Stories that help explain why the disappearance of a species is not an isolated phenomenon, but a loss that affects the entire planet.

Bioscope: A New Gateway to Knowledge

One of the most emblematic projects of this transformation is the Bioscope, a new centre of knowledge scheduled for completion in 2030.

The Bioscope will offer an interactive journey to understand the origin and evolution of biodiversity through immersive experiences and multimedia elements. The space will combine scientific dissemination, museography and species observation to bring visitors closer to ecosystems that are often unknown yet essential to ecological balance.

With a total area of more than approximately 3,500 square metres, the Bioscope is conceived as a benchmark educational and scientific facility. Its *unique* architecture will be selected through an international competition, already underway, and it will be part of the integration of the Zoo into the *Ciutadella del Coneixement* (the Ciutadella Knowledge Hub). This initiative will transform Ciutadella Park and its surroundings into a leading European hub for knowledge, outreach, research and innovation.

The works, which have already begun, will also open the Zoo more fully to city life, increasing its visibility and turning it into a meeting point and a space for reconnecting with nature.

Other ongoing projects include *Aïllats*, an immersive space focused on the uniqueness of island species, and *Descobrim la Mediterrània* (Let's discover the Mediterranean), a new area that will allow visitors to immerse themselves in a Mediterranean landscape and discover its rich and significant biodiversity.

Animal Welfare and Sustainability as Core Pillars

The transformation of Barcelona Zoo cannot be understood without two fundamental principles: animal welfare and sustainability.

The new enclosures are designed to ensure more naturalised environments, adapted to the biological and behavioural needs of each species. Animal welfare is no longer a complementary aspect, but rather a structural criterion in the design of all spaces.

At the same time, the Zoo is working to incorporate environmental sustainability criteria throughout the project, including energy and environmental efficiency, landscape integration and reduction of environmental impact.

In this regard, a European LIFE project is being carried out together with Liberec Zoo and several Catalan and Czech universities, focusing on the treatment of wastewater from animal facilities through artificial wetland systems. The results so far have been very positive, opening up new opportunities to recycle and reuse water while enhancing the surrounding landscape.

Fostering Alliances for Biodiversity Preservation

Unfortunately, the increasing number of endangered species and the loss of habitats make zoos and aquariums essential in the fight against biodiversity loss.



Cuida'ls. Learning about the importance of biodiversity © Barcelona Zoo

These institutions must promote research and conservation, not only to carry out breeding programmes under human care, but also because many aspects of wild animal biology cannot be studied in their natural habitats, especially in species whose populations are declining and whose individuals are difficult to find and observe.

Research is key. Strengthening it requires effective communication among zoos and aquariums and active participation in associations such as the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the Iberian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AIZA). Close collaboration among veterinarians, biologists, universities and research centres is also essential.

For years, the Barcelona Zoo Foundation has promoted biodiversity conservation and research projects, establishing itself as a benchmark in the scientific and environmental fields and in the protection of endangered species. Between

2009 and 2025, the Foundation developed more than 700 initiatives, including projects, grants and services related to research, conservation and scientific outreach.

Among the most notable initiatives is the conservation project for the Montseny brook newt (*Calotriton arnoldi*), a species endemic to Catalonia and critically endangered, carried out in collaboration with the Government of Catalonia and the Provincial Councils of Barcelona and Girona. The programme works to ensure the species' survival through habitat improvement, preservation of genetic variability, and the involvement of local stakeholders in its conservation.

Other highly relevant conservation projects in collaboration with the Government of Catalonia include the reintroduction of the northern bald ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), together with the Alive Foundation and Jerez Zoo, and the conservation programme for the European polecat (*Mustela putorius*), which is highly threatened in Catalonia.

The Foundation also participates in various initiatives developed jointly with the Balearic Government for the conservation of the Ibiza wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis*) and the Mallorcan midwife toad (*Alytes muletensis*).

These projects are complemented by recovery programmes for emblematic species such as the otter, further expanding the range of actions aimed at preserving biodiversity.

In the scientific field, the Foundation develops innovative biobank and cryoconservation projects in collaboration with Pompeu Fabra University and the Autonomous University of Barcelona. These initiatives make it possible to preserve biological samples, cell lines and genetic material from threatened species, contributing to biodiversity research programmes.

Finally, in the marine field, the Barcelona artificial reef park project is a flagship initiative. Developed jointly with the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM-CSIC) and the University of Barcelona, it aims to restore marine biodiversity and recover degraded ecosystems through the

installation of artificial biotopes and ongoing ecological monitoring. This project helps strengthen the environmental sustainability of Barcelona's coastline and promotes research into marine ecosystems.

A Space to Experience and Act for Biodiversity

The future of zoos lies in becoming institutions capable of generating positive impact beyond their facilities. Barcelona Zoo aims to be part of this new generation of spaces committed to conservation, education and emotional connection with nature.

Its value proposition can be summed up in a clear idea: to offer an immersive experience that promotes knowledge of biodiversity, emotionally connects people with nature and inspires actions for change.

Protecting biodiversity is not only about conserving species. It is about preserving our future.



The forthcoming project, Aïllats, focused on island biodiversity © Barcelona Zoo

FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPACT: STEP FORWARD WITH A SPECIES PLEDGE

Megan Joyce, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator at Reverse the Red

Around the world, zoos and aquariums are demonstrating that conservation action is most effective when sustained, collaborative and focused on measurable outcomes. Through the Reverse the Red Species Pledge, hundreds of organisations are making visible and meaningful commitments to support national and global biodiversity goals and recover threatened species. Rather than standalone efforts, these pledges reveal a growing, connected picture of conservation expertise and partnerships actively being mobilised for species recovery.

From *ex situ* breeding and population management to habitat restoration, reintroductions, monitoring and community engagement, WAZA members are among the most active contributors to this growing global database. Zoos and aquariums are demonstrating how coordinated *in situ* and *ex situ* action can deliver real outcomes for species in the wild, while also strengthening collaboration across the wider conservation community.

One of the newest pledges comes from Canada, where the Toronto Zoo, the Wilder Institute, and the Marmot Recovery Foundation announced a joint Reverse the Red Species Pledge for the Critically Endangered Vancouver Island marmot. Once numbering fewer than 30 individuals in the wild in 2003, the species has rebounded through decades of coordinated conservation action – including breeding, habitat management,

translocations, monitoring and reintroductions – to approximately 427 individuals across 37 active colonies. This example underscores how long-term, multi-partner commitment can move species from crisis towards recovery.

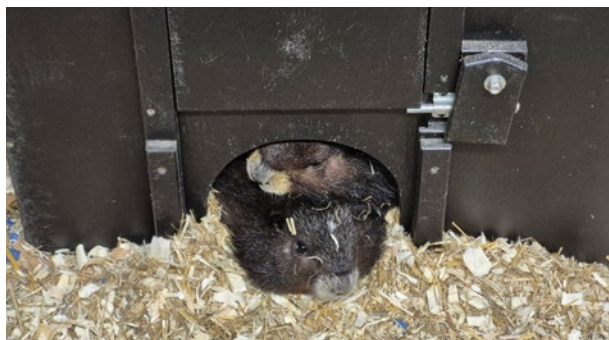
The ambition of these commitments is also reflected in the Reverse the Red Accelerator Award. The inaugural winners demonstrate the value of targeted investment in recovery. Among them, Bristol Zoological Society is accelerating recovery efforts for the Critically Endangered turquoise dwarf gecko, while the Zoological Society of London is advancing recovery of the Extinct in the Wild Potosi pupfish. These initiatives highlight the critical role of zoos and aquariums in restoring wild populations while working with communities, partners and collaborators.

As the Species Pledge grows, so does the collective ability of the zoo and aquarium community to turn conservation ambition into coordinated action for species recovery worldwide. WAZA members have the chance to lead this momentum by making at least one Species Pledge and joining a global movement committed to turning shared responsibility for threatened species into measurable impact.



Make a Pledge

Act Together, Spread Hope,
Recover Species
Join conservation partners
worldwide in committing to
strategic, coordinated actions
to recover wild populations and
meet global biodiversity targets.



Vancouver Island marmot (*Marmota vancouverensis*),
© The Toronto Zoo

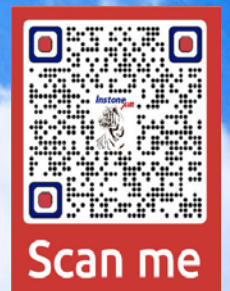
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CONNECTING REGIONS, ADVANCING POPULATION MANAGEMENT: INSIGHTS FROM THE 6TH JOINT TAG MEETING

Thalia Pelegrin, WAZA Conservation and Animal Welfare Assistant
Paula Cerdán, WAZA Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare

From 25–28 May 2026, the 6th Joint Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) Meeting brought together zoo and aquarium professionals from around the world for four days of discussion, collaboration and knowledge exchange in Taipei.

Hosted by Taipei Zoo, the meeting marked an important milestone as the first Joint TAG Meeting held in Asia, bringing together 117 delegates from 23 countries and 75 organisations. For the first time, participation expanded beyond TAG Chairs and Vice-Chairs to include a wider range of colleagues supporting conservation and population management. Despite long-haul travel and considerable jet lag for many attendees, discussions remained lively from the outset, fuelled by enthusiasm, bubble tea and a shared commitment to conservation.

6th JTAG 2026 at a glance

- 117 delegates
- 23 countries represented
- 75 organisations
- First Joint TAG Meeting held in Asia
- Three days of committee and side meetings
- Two days of plenary sessions and workshops
- 30 presentations
- Five workshops and breakout discussions
- One New International Studbook Framework launched
- Countless cups of bubble tea consumed (official number unavailable)



Group photo of participants at the 6th Joint TAG Meeting, hosted by Taipei Zoo © Taipei Zoo



WAZA Committee for Population Management (CPM) © Taipei Zoo

A Front-Row View of the Joint TAG Meeting

Following two days of the Southeast Asian Zoo Association (SEAZA) committee meetings, the WAZA Committee for Population Management (CPM) meeting and a Global Population Biologist session, the Joint TAG opened with a cultural performance by a nationally recognised youth choir. The performance provided a fitting welcome before participants turned their attention to the challenges and opportunities facing global population management.

The welcome provided by Taipei Zoo set the tone for the entire week. From multiple welcome dinners and an icebreaker event to a zoo night and farewell dinner, the hosts demonstrated that hospitality is very much a professional skill. Delegates quickly immersed themselves in local culture, sampling everything from bubble tea to the famously divisive stinky tofu, while evening explorations of Taipei's bustling night markets became an unofficial extension of conference networking.

The first session focused on strengthening connections between *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation through the One Plan Approach. Dr Sonja Luz, CEO of Mandai Nature, explored opportunities and challenges associated with integrating conservation efforts across institutions and sectors. Complementary presentations from Dr Eric Tsao of Taipei Zoo and David Barclay of The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) highlighted wildlife rescue, reintroduction and the Scottish Wildcat programme as examples of collaborative conservation in action. Discussions emphasised a recurring theme throughout the meeting: meaningful partnerships depend on trust, communication and proactive collaboration.

The second session explored how zoo and aquarium population management aligns with broader conservation frameworks. Presentations examined connections between the WAZA Population Management Goal, the forthcoming WAZA Conservation Goal, Reverse the Red, the IUCN Species Survival Commission and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity

Framework. Additional talks highlighted collaborative conservation initiatives, support for Extinct in the Wild species and emerging discussions around collection planning. Conversations continued over coffee and a surprisingly popular assortment of animal-shaped cookies, including pangolins and pheasants.

The day concluded with an interactive discussion on resource limitations, including time, staffing, funding and expertise. Participants explored opportunities to reduce duplication, share knowledge and strengthen cooperation across regions. Between sessions, delegates sought refuge from Taipei's early summer temperatures in the shaded pangolin habitat, where many informal conversations and networking opportunities continued.

The second day opened with discussions on one of the most significant challenges facing managed populations: space. Presentations examined how demographic trends, conservation objectives, animal welfare considerations and societal expectations influence population management decisions. Workshops provided opportunities to compare regional experiences and explore the diversity of perspectives surrounding these complex issues.

A major highlight of the meeting, and a significant milestone for global population management, was the launch of the new International Studbook (ISB) Framework. Presented by Paula Cerdán, Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare at WAZA, the framework represents more than 18 months of collaborative work and reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that species data supports conservation as a truly global endeavour. See page 48 for more information about the new framework. The launch underscored a simple but important principle: conservation works best when knowledge, expertise and responsibility are shared across regions rather than managed in isolation. A case study presented by Janno Weerman from Rotterdam Zoo demonstrated how the approach

has already supported progress within the Red Panda ISB. Additional presentations explored open-access studbook management, standardised data collection and wildlife biobanking, highlighting the importance of collaboration in evidence-based conservation decision-making.

The programme also examined species and populations that often receive less attention despite representing a significant proportion of managed collections. Case studies covering aquatic species, reptiles, amphibians, birds, tapirs and Australian endemic mammals demonstrated the need for flexible approaches tailored to different taxa.

The meeting concluded with a participant-led open forum where delegates identified and discussed priority topics for the future. Key themes included governance and leadership within the population management community, strengthening inter-regional collaboration and understanding how cultural and institutional perspectives influence the application of population management tools. Facilitated by WAZA CPM Executive members Candice Dorsey, James Biggs and Raymond van der Meer, the discussions provided a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences and explore practical solutions and upcoming challenges for WAZA.

Collaboration continued beyond the formal programme through a series of TAG meetings organised by SEAZA, bringing together colleagues from multiple regional associations to continue discussions on shared priorities.

Beyond the Programme

Providing space for connection and collaboration remains one of the most important ingredients for effective global population management, and the value of bringing together diverse perspectives, expertise and experiences from across the zoo and aquarium community was demonstrated once again in Taipei.

As the first Joint TAG Meeting held in Asia, the event strengthened relationships across regions while reinforcing a shared commitment to advancing species conservation through collaboration. Discussions tackled some of the most complex challenges facing managed populations, from space limitations and data sharing to global conservation alignment and inter-regional cooperation.

Beyond the meeting rooms, delegates experienced Taipei Zoo's remarkable hospitality through a programme that included welcome events, evening gatherings, a zoo night and a farewell dinner. New collaborations were formed over local food, discussions continued through night market visits and countless conversations took place while exploring the zoo grounds. By the end of the week, participants left with new ideas, stronger professional networks, a greater appreciation for bubble tea, and perhaps slightly stronger opinions about stinky tofu than when they arrived.

As the zoo and aquarium community continues working towards increasingly coordinated approaches to population management and conservation, such forums remain essential for strengthening relationships, sharing expertise and aligning efforts across regions.

The Lead-Up to JTAG: Building Momentum for Global Population Management

Prior to the Joint TAG Meeting, the WAZA Committee for Population Management convened workshops focused on implementing the new International Studbook Framework and advancing the WAZA 2027 Population Management Goal. CPM Executive members also participated in a joint workshop with SEAZA, creating valuable opportunities to exchange experiences, discuss regional priorities and strengthen collaboration. These preparatory sessions helped build momentum for the discussions that followed during JTAG itself.



6th Joint TAG Meeting banner
© Taipei Zoo



WAZA President David Field FRSE at the 6th Joint TAG Meeting
© Taipei Zoo

ONE GLOBAL COMMUNITY, THREE GOALS, ONE DIRECTION

Paula Cerdán, WAZA Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare

Thalia Pelegrin, WAZA Conservation and Animal Welfare Assistant

How does a global community with hundreds of member institutions, dozens of associations, different cultures, different legislation and different priorities move in the same direction? Without shared frameworks, progress can be difficult to monitor, successes harder to identify, and opportunities for collaboration easier to miss.

One answer lies in the development of WAZA's global Goals: strategic, time-bound commitments that provide a common direction while allowing flexibility in how regions achieve them. Through these Goals, WAZA members are creating common approaches to animal welfare, population management, and conservation, while learning from each other's successes and challenges.

Today, three Goals form the foundation of this work: the 2023 Animal Welfare Goal, the 2027 Population Management Goal, and the

forthcoming 2030 Conservation Goal. Together, they address three interconnected pillars of modern zoo and aquarium practice: animal welfare, population management, and our community's contributions to conservation.

As the global association for zoos and aquariums, WAZA helps bring regions together around shared ambitions while recognising the diverse cultural, legislative, and operational contexts in which members work. The Goals provide a framework that supports collective progress while allowing regions the flexibility to determine how best to achieve it.

A WAZA Goal is a strategic, time-bound commitment designed to strengthen collaboration, support continuous improvement, and align efforts across the global community.

Western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) at BIOPARC Valencia
© BIOPARC Valencia

The three Goals at a Glance



23AWG

Animal Welfare Goal
World Association
of Zoos and Aquariums

2023 Animal Welfare Goal (23AWG)

Objective: Establish robust animal welfare evaluation processes across all WAZA regional and national associations and ensure member institutions are assessed through those frameworks within five years of approval.

More information
can be found here.



27PMG

*Population
Management Goal*
World Association
of Zoos and Aquariums

2027 Population Management Goal (27PMG)

Objective: Strengthen population management across the WAZA community through professional, science-based regional frameworks that promote institutional participation.

More information
can be found here.



30CG

Conservation Goal
World Association
of Zoos and Aquariums

2030 Conservation Goal (30CG)

Objective: Establish regional frameworks that support meaningful conservation contributions by member institutions, while enabling consistent measurement and reporting of conservation impact across the global WAZA community.

More information
can be found here.



Why do the WAZA Goals Matter?

- Create shared frameworks while respecting regional diversity
- Support peer learning and collaboration across the global community
- Strengthen a shared identity and sense of purpose as WAZA members
- Amplify the collective voice of zoos and aquariums globally
- Align community efforts with international conservation priorities

Progress Update

2023 Animal Welfare Goal

The 23AWG continues to demonstrate how a shared global framework can support meaningful progress while accommodating regional implementation approaches. To date, 11 regional and national associations have successfully established approved animal welfare evaluation systems. This means that institutions across multiple regions are now being assessed through structured animal welfare evaluation processes, creating greater consistency and helping identify opportunities for continuous improvement. Most recently, WAZA

has celebrated the achievement of the 23AWG by the African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) and the Iberian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AIZA).

With many associations now having approved frameworks in place, the focus has shifted towards implementation. Associations are actively evaluating member institutions.

This work is progressing steadily. As of April 2026, more than 50% of WAZA member institutions

have been evaluated and found compliant under approved national or regional association frameworks. That figure continues to increase as evaluations are completed across the global membership.

2027 Population Management Goal

Associations continue to make steady progress towards achieving the 27PMG.

Three associations have already achieved the Goal: the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria and the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia. The rest of associations are advancing the development of their self-assessments and population management frameworks, with additional submissions expected before the end of 2026.

WAZA Goals are a knowledge-sharing and collaborative exercise. Recently, to support this work, key members of the SEAZA Species Management Committee, alongside members of the Committee for Population Management Executive Group representing the associations that have already met the 27PMG, and observers from AAWHC and JAZA, convened during the week of the sixth Joint Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) meeting in Taipei. The workshop brought together experts across several regions to listen to the development of SEAZA's population management framework and to exchange knowledge and advice, discuss practical approaches and strengthen alignment with the Goal's requirements.

The workshop demonstrated one of the core strengths of the WAZA Goals: they are not simply assessment exercises, but opportunities for peer learning and collaboration. Associations that have already achieved the Goal are helping others navigate the process, accelerating progress and strengthening consistency across regions.

2030 Conservation Goal

Following more than a year of consultation and collaborative development involving WAZA members, Regional Associations, the WAZA Conservation Committee, Reverse the Red, IZE, and the WAZA Council, the 30CG is now approaching its final development stages.

The process has brought together diverse perspectives from across the global community, helping shape a Goal that is both ambitious and practical, while remaining relevant across different regions and operating contexts.

For decades, zoos and aquariums have contributed to species conservation in countless ways. Yet demonstrating our collective contributions at a global scale has remained challenging. The 30CG aims to address this by creating a more consistent way of measuring and communicating conservation contributions across the WAZA community.

What Comes Next?

While significant progress has been made, important work remains ahead. For the 23AWG, the focus is on completing institutional evaluations across the WAZA membership. For the 27PMG, WAZA will continue supporting associations as they finalise and submit their frameworks for review. For the 30CG, efforts are focused on finalising the framework and common indicators ahead of approval and launch at the WAZA Annual General Assembly in Cologne.

Looking Ahead

Together, these Goals demonstrate how a diverse global community can work towards shared ambitions while respecting regional realities, capacities, and priorities.

Beyond the frameworks themselves, the Goals strengthen our global community in multiple ways. They encourage collaboration through peer review and shared learning, establish global benchmarks for professional practice, create common ground through consistent evaluation frameworks, and provide recognition and leadership across the zoo and aquarium community.

In a world where conservation challenges increasingly cross borders, the strength of the global zoo and aquarium community lies not only in what it achieves individually, but in what it can achieve together.

ADVANCING GLOBAL STANDARDS AND MULTILATERAL CONSERVATION POLICY

Loïs Lelanchon, WAZA Head of Partnerships and Advocacy

WAZA's continued engagement in international policy and technical standard-setting forums remains central to ensuring that the expertise of the global zoo and aquarium community contributes meaningfully to the development of practical, science-based conservation frameworks. Over recent months, WAZA has maintained active participation across several major international processes, including the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP15), the ongoing review of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Live Animals Regulations (LAR), and preparations for upcoming meetings under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Collectively, these efforts reflect WAZA's strategic commitment to strengthening the role of the zoological community in shaping international conservation policy, improving operational standards, and supporting evidence-based approaches to biodiversity conservation and animal welfare.

CMS COP15: Strengthening Ecological Connectivity for Migratory Species

CMS COP15, held in Campo Grande, Brazil, in March 2026, brought renewed international attention to the importance of ecological connectivity as a cornerstone of migratory species conservation. The meeting convened governments, intergovernmental organisations, conservation NGOs and scientific experts to address the growing pressures facing migratory species worldwide, including habitat fragmentation, climate change and unsustainable use.

A key outcome of the meeting was the strengthened recognition that ecological connectivity, defined under CMS as 'the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth', must be integrated more effectively into global conservation planning and implementation. Discussions throughout the conference highlighted that protected areas alone are insufficient if the ecological corridors, migratory routes and transboundary landscapes connecting them continue to degrade.

Whooping crane (*Grus americana*)
© International Crane Foundation

Parties adopted a series of decisions and resolutions reinforcing the importance of connectivity conservation across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening transboundary cooperation, improving the integration of connectivity considerations into spatial planning and infrastructure development, and supporting restoration initiatives that maintain functional migration systems.

The outcomes of CMS COP15 also reinforced the growing alignment between CMS implementation and broader global biodiversity objectives under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Connectivity conservation is increasingly recognised as essential not only for migratory species, but also for ecosystem resilience, climate adaptation and the long-term effectiveness of protected area networks.

For the zoo and aquarium community, these discussions are highly relevant. Modern conservation practice increasingly depends on integrated approaches that connect *ex situ* and *in situ* expertise, species management, habitat restoration and policy engagement. Zoos and aquariums continue to contribute valuable scientific knowledge, population management expertise, field conservation support and public engagement that can strengthen the implementation of international biodiversity commitments.

CMS COP15 further demonstrated the importance of sustained multilateral cooperation in addressing complex conservation challenges that extend across national borders. As pressures on migratory species continue to intensify globally, international coordination and science-based policy frameworks remain essential to ensuring effective conservation outcomes.



Continued Engagement in IATA Live Animal Regulations

WAZA has also sustained its active engagement in the ongoing review and refinement of the IATA Live Animals Regulations, the globally recognised standards governing the safe and humane transport of live animals by air.

Participation in the development of these standards is essential for the zoo and aquarium community. International animal transfers play a critical role in conservation breeding programmes, population management, veterinary care, rescue operations and collaborative conservation initiatives. Ensuring that transport standards remain scientifically informed, operationally achievable and welfare-focused is of significant importance.

In March 2026, WAZA participated in the 62nd meeting of the IATA Live Animals and Perishables Board (LAPB62) in Montreal, Canada, through its representation on the Live Animals Working Group. Through this mechanism, which continues to support ongoing sector engagement ahead of each LAPB meeting, WAZA provides an opportunity for the global zoo and aquarium community to contribute input and raise operational considerations within the IATA review process.

Several developments emerging from LAPB62 are particularly relevant to zoological institutions. Amendments were adopted for container requirements relating to beneficial insects, bees and butterfly pupae, including strengthened measures designed to improve transport protection for butterfly pupae. In parallel, IATA established a dedicated focus unit to address inconsistencies in the classification and transport requirements for wild, feral and domestic horses.

One of the most significant current initiatives involves the technical review of Container Requirements 32 to 34 relating to the transport of primates. This review focuses on container design, materials, construction specifications and illustrative guidance associated with primate transport.

To support this process, WAZA coordinated an extensive consultation with primate

experts across regional zoo and aquarium associations, mobilising Taxon Advisory Group representatives and specialist experts from institutions across Asia, Europe, North America and Oceania. Contributions have focused on ensuring that revised standards reflect practical operational experience, species-specific welfare considerations and current zoological expertise.

This collaborative process demonstrates the value of maintaining zoological representation within international standard-setting mechanisms. By providing coordinated technical input, WAZA helps ensure that evolving transport standards remain grounded in professional practice and aligned with high animal welfare expectations.

WAZA's engagement with IATA also reflects a broader objective: strengthening recognition of zoos and aquariums as trusted technical partners capable of contributing constructively to international regulatory and operational discussions.

Looking Ahead: CITES AC34 and CBD COP17

WAZA's international policy engagement will continue throughout 2026 with sustained participation in two major upcoming biodiversity processes: the 34th meeting of the CITES Animals Committee (AC34) and the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP17).

The CITES Animals Committee plays a central technical and scientific role within the Convention, addressing issues relating to species management, trade regulation, non-detriment findings, transport, and implementation challenges associated with international wildlife trade. Discussions at AC34 are expected to address a range of topics relevant to zoological institutions, including animal transport, species-specific trade management and ongoing implementation matters arising from previous CITES decisions.

WAZA's continued participation within the CITES process supports the organisation's long-standing objective of ensuring that the expertise and operational realities of

professionally managed zoos and aquariums are appropriately considered within international wildlife trade discussions. Maintaining constructive engagement within these technical forums is essential to promoting practical, science-based and conservation-focused policy outcomes.

Preparations are also underway for CBD COP17, which will represent another major milestone in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. As governments increasingly shift from policy negotiation towards implementation and monitoring, discussions are expected to focus heavily on resource mobilisation, target implementation, species recovery, protected and conserved areas, and mechanisms for tracking progress toward global biodiversity goals.

For WAZA and its members, CBD COP17 represents an important opportunity to further demonstrate the contributions of zoos and aquariums to global biodiversity objectives through conservation breeding, species recovery programmes, field conservation partnerships, education, research and public engagement.

Across all of these processes, WAZA's approach remains consistent: ensuring that the global zoo and aquarium community continues to be recognised as a credible, collaborative and solutions-oriented partner within international conservation policy and standard-setting discussions.

At a time when biodiversity loss, habitat fragmentation and climate pressures continue to intensify, sustained engagement within multilateral environmental processes remains essential. By contributing technical expertise, operational experience and conservation knowledge, WAZA and its members continue to help shape international frameworks that support both biodiversity conservation and high standards of animal welfare worldwide.



INTEGRITY, CREDIBILITY AND AMBITION

Rosa Pons, WAZA Head of Communications

Reflections from David Field FRSE First Months as WAZA President

Since taking office as President of WAZA in November 2025, David Field has spent the past months engaging with members across the globe, listening to diverse perspectives and helping shape the association's priorities for the years ahead.

As Chief Executive of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) and a long-standing contributor to the international zoo and aquarium community, David brings both operational experience and a strong global outlook to the role.

In this interview David reflects on leadership, integrity, conservation impact, animal welfare, population management and the evolving role of WAZA in an increasingly complex global landscape.

You stepped into the WAZA presidency in November 2025. What has been the biggest difference between your expectations and the reality of the role?

The time has passed really quickly and I keep waking up every morning or sometimes in the middle of the night asking myself "why did I do it"? It has been an incredible six months and probably the biggest realisation for me has

been how much WAZA is valued by our members and by the community. I have been involved with WAZA for many years and experienced its ups and downs; it is a remarkable institution. One consistent theme from attending different conferences, whether it was the Director's Policy Conference for AZA or SEAZA, is the warm welcome I and WAZA have experienced.

It has been clear that our colleagues place great value on our involvement, and the conversations have given us valuable insight into how we can best serve the membership, what they want to tell us, and what they want to see from WAZA. It has been hugely enlightening.

My experience at the SEAZA conference was incredible. I want to thank SEAZA for their generous welcome and really interesting discussions about WAZA's value. I do apologise for my performance as a Spice Girl at their Annual Gala event.

When you sit at the centre of a global network like WAZA, now as President, patterns start to emerge. In the first six months, what tensions or maybe opportunities have become clearer to you?

Running a modern zoo or aquarium has become much more challenging than it used to be. Organisations are expected to deliver meaningful conservation outcomes while managing rising

David Field FRSE,
President of WAZA © RZSS

costs, securing funding, meeting increasingly high public expectations and maintaining the trust and confidence of society to operate.

It is harder and harder every day for us to achieve what we want to achieve. But despite all those challenges, there is an increasing relevance, importance and significance for what we offer as progressive zoos and aquariums.

We are in demand from conservation authorities. We are in demand from people. We offer such incredible social and cultural value. We are seeing more and more people coming to our institutions because they want to get close to nature and they believe in what we do. So despite all those difficulties and challenges in our operating environment, the pattern is clearly that we are in even more demand and we need our governments, our patrons and our visitors to recognise that and support us more.

Where do you see the greatest diversity of realities across WAZA members and where have you found maybe more alignment than you expected?

The diversity of realities is resources. It might be our operating budget, it might be our ability to attract staff, it might be our ability to get animals but it is resources. I sit in an organisation that is fairly well resourced but again I look across the pond to other areas operating on a small budget and it is a real challenge.

On the other hand, what is incredible and where the alignment comes is our ambition. We can be the richest and most well-resourced zoo in the world but we have the same ambitions as one that just has a couple of exhibits. And the alignment comes further. It is reflected in what we achieve. It doesn't matter how many resources you've got. It doesn't matter what your budget is. Each and every one of our members is achieving conservation impact. We can still do it, whether it is one species, 10 species or 20 species. The alignment comes in that we are educating people. We are saving species, and the level of resources doesn't matter. Our ambition is that we all want to do more. And that is exciting. That gets me out of bed in the morning.

The WAZA 2030 Conservation Goal is currently being shaped, with the ambition of approval at the Annual General Assembly in October this year. From your perspective, what are the most important benefits that this Conservation Goal will bring, both for individual members but also for the global community as a whole?

It is just incredible that we, as a community, are taking on this challenge. We are undertaking some of the most incredible conservation work. We are truly saving species. We are truly educating people towards conservation. But it is time we were recognised for it. This WAZA Conservation Goal will give us that. It is the word of this interview: integrity. It'll give us credibility. It'll give us recognition for what we are already doing.

But it is going to nudge us to do more. That is what we are like in this community. When we reach one level, we'll think, *we can go a little further; we can go a little further*. Every member will be inspired to do more. So, it is a really, really powerful Goal that we are going to put together that will recognise the incredible contribution of our zoos and aquariums now. It will nudge us to do more. And in the end, we will reverse the decline of more species. We will educate more people. We will achieve greater conservation impact.

In the last few months, WAZA has been working on a new International Studbook Framework to strengthen global alignment in ex situ population management. I know you've been a big part of this group. From your perspective, what practical difference will this project make for members and how will it enhance collaboration across regions?

This is another thing that I am super excited about. I used to be Chair of the Committee for Population Management. We had such an exciting time when we put the WAZA 2027 Population Management Goal together. It was brilliant. I think we made huge progress. But those International Studbooks, we wanted to give it more purpose. It needed reinvigorating, a new framework.

I used to be the Golden Lion Tamarin Studbook Keeper for EAZA some time ago. With the SSP coordinators and the International Studbook



David Field FRSE, President of WAZA, presents at the 6th Joint TAG Meeting hosted by Taipei Zoo in May 2026
© Taipei Zoo

Keepers every year we used to gather together and then decide on all the animal moves globally. I'd bring all the regional data together from Europe. Together we would really be able to see the benefit of understanding not just the genetics and the demographics but also understanding the regional perspective. It was brilliant and I saw the amazing opportunity that we had where we brought a global perspective, or rather we brought the regional understanding to a global perspective to create a sustainable population for a critically endangered species.

What the CPM team has done now with this new framework has actually put that into reality. It is super exciting and when we are in a situation where we are being asked to establish populations, *ex situ* populations for all those species that require it, where the sustainability of many of our populations in many of our

regions are under pressure. Some global coordination, some global thinking is going to really help this along.

When we have brilliant programmes like the Extinct in the Wild Action Partnership that is run by ZSL, I want to set the challenge. Why shouldn't every Extinct in the Wild species have an international studbook? In time, why not for every Critically Endangered species as well? But let's start with Extinct in the Wild species.

That is what comes next: turning this International Studbook Framework into a real, tangible goal.

You've also been highly involved in initiatives like Reverse the Red, which is clearly gaining a lot of momentum across the community. From your perspective, what is driving that energy and how do we sustain it over time so we can get this momentum growing?

Well, to be honest, it had a really good name. Reverse the Red was something that just translated brilliantly. But what sustains it is the people.

I have to give a shout out to Mike Clifford. His enthusiasm, his passion, his kind of strategic understanding of how Reverse the Red could work in reality was brilliant. And all the partners on the Executive Team as well. People like Loïs Lelanchon, who sits on the WAZA Board, are driving this work forward and ensuring it aligns with our policy work.

But beyond the people, I think Reverse the Red gives us a very tangible goal. It asks every one of our members to make a species pledge. We already have around 1,700 species pledges through Reverse the Red, and we could have many more. That doesn't mean every institution or WAZA member needs to make 100 or 200 pledges. Just one pledge can make a difference. Reverse the Red is a fantastic initiative. Get involved.

In these first months, when the responsibility has felt particularly heavy, what helps you as David, as a human being, regain clarity and perspective?

It is the WAZA community. Every time I needed to find a way through it, there is always somebody in the WAZA community that is there. The Council

is brilliant and the WAZA Executive Office in Barcelona too. They are passionate. They are inspirational. They are dynamic. They are brilliant. And that is what keeps me going.

What is one thing that the global zoo and aquarium community must get right in the next five years?

Our integrity, our credibility and our ambition must never fail.

What final message would you like to share with the WAZA community?

You are brilliant. The community is an inspiration. But let's also not forget our main inspiration, which is our animals. Going out and seeing them. The pleasure our animals bring to us and to our visitors. Let's protect, value and love our animals.

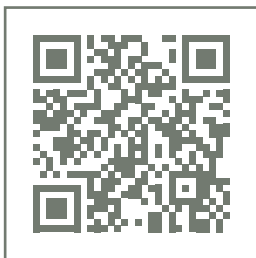
David Field FRSE first months as WAZA President have reinforced both the challenges and the opportunities facing the global zoo and aquarium community. While he acknowledges increasing challenges worldwide, he also sees a community whose relevance, impact and ambition continue to grow.

Across every topic discussed — from conservation and animal welfare to population management and community building — one message remains consistent: progressive zoos and aquariums achieve more when they work together. For David, WAZA's role is not only to support that collaboration, but also to help demonstrate the credibility, integrity and measurable impact of the global zoo and aquarium community.

Ultimately, however, his closing reflection brings the conversation back to its simplest and most important point: the animals remain at the heart of everything the community does. They are the inspiration behind the work, the reason for the ambition and the motivation to continue striving for a thriving future for species worldwide.

PREFER TO WATCH?

Scan the QR code to watch the full video interview with WAZA President David Field FRSE and hear more of his insights on leadership, collaboration and the future of the global zoo and aquarium community.



David Field FRSE
WAZA PRESIDENT, RZSS CEO

SHAPING THE FUTURE: WAZA COUNCIL ADVANCES KEY PRIORITIES FOR A THRIVING GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Rosa Pons, WAZA Head of Communications

In April 2026, the WAZA Council gathered in person at ARTIS Zoo, a WAZA member in Amsterdam, for its first face-to-face meeting of the year. Over two days of productive discussions, strategic planning and collaboration, Council members addressed some of the most important priorities facing the global zoo and aquarium community.

Bringing together leaders from across the world, the meeting provided an opportunity to review progress, strengthen partnerships and shape the direction of WAZA's work in the years ahead. From conservation and population management to advocacy, education and global collaboration, discussions reflected both the complexity of today's challenges and the collective ambition of our community to deliver meaningful impact for nature.

Advancing a Shared Vision for Conservation

A key focus of the meeting was the continued implementation and evolution of WAZA's strategic conservation agenda.

Council reviewed progress relating to the WAZA 2030 Conservation Goal. Discussions explored how WAZA can further support members in demonstrating and amplifying their conservation contributions while ensuring alignment with international biodiversity targets and global conservation priorities.

Strengthening Global Population Management

Council also discussed recent developments in collaborative global population management, including the launch of the new WAZA International Studbook Framework.

African savanna elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) roaming the savannah habitat at BIOPARC Valencia © BIOPARC Valencia

The framework represents an important step forward in strengthening the governance, sustainability and long-term effectiveness of International Studbooks. Developed through extensive consultation and collaboration, it provides greater clarity around roles, responsibilities and oversight while recognising the critical contribution that International Studbooks make to global species conservation.

By supporting coordinated, science-based population management across regions, the framework reinforces WAZA's commitment to maintaining healthy, genetically diverse and sustainable populations that contribute to conservation outcomes worldwide.

Advocacy on the Global Stage

Representing the collective voice of the global zoo and aquarium community remains a key priority for WAZA.

Council reviewed ongoing advocacy efforts and discussed WAZA's engagement in major international conservation forums, including events such as CMS COP15.

Council emphasised the importance of continuing to strengthen relationships with international conservation bodies, policymakers

and strategic partners to advance shared conservation goals and increase recognition of the role that progressive zoos and aquariums play in protecting wildlife.

Strengthening Global Impact

Council also reviewed progress relating to Reverse the Red, the global movement co-founded by WAZA and the IUCN Species Survival Commission.

Discussions focused on opportunities to further strengthen engagement, expand participation and increase visibility of the movement as it continues to grow globally.

The meeting also marked the extension of WAZA's Memorandum of Understanding with the International Zoo Educators Association, reaffirming a long-standing and highly productive partnership dedicated to advancing conservation education worldwide.

Celebrating Leadership in Population Management

Alongside strategic discussions, the meeting provided an opportunity to celebrate an important milestone for the WAZA 2027 Population Management Goal.



The WAZA Council meeting at ARTIS Zoo, held in April 2026, brought together Council members to discuss strategic priorities and the future direction of the Association. © WAZA



WAZA President David Field FRSE delivers his opening address during the WAZA Council meeting, highlighting the importance of global collaboration and leadership in advancing conservation and animal welfare. © WAZA



Commemorative plaques were presented to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), and the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia (ZAA) in recognition of their successful achievement of the Goal.

Their accomplishment demonstrates strong leadership, professional excellence and a commitment to science-based population management. It also serves as an inspiring example of what can be achieved through collaboration, shared global standards and long-term strategic planning.

As more regional and national associations progress through the process, the Goal continues to strengthen global alignment and reinforce the role of zoos and aquariums as responsible conservation organisations.



Looking Ahead

The Amsterdam meeting highlighted the breadth and diversity of WAZA's work and the collective commitment of Council members to supporting a strong, united and forward-looking global community.

Whether advancing conservation goals, strengthening population management, shaping international advocacy, expanding strategic partnerships or celebrating member achievements, the discussions reflected a shared belief that collaboration remains our greatest strength.

As WAZA continues to develop its future strategic direction and support members around the world, the outcomes of this meeting will help guide collective action towards a common vision: a thriving planet where zoos and aquariums are recognised as essential partners in conservation and education.

WAZA extends its sincere thanks to President David Field FRSE, Vice President Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis, all Council members and our hosts at ARTIS Zoo for their warm hospitality and their commitment to advancing our shared mission.



WAZA

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**25-29 OCTOBER 2026
COLMGNE | GERMANY**



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VOICES FROM THE WAZA COMMITTEE FOR POPULATION MANAGEMENT (CPM)

The launch of the new WAZA International Studbook Framework marks an important milestone for global population management. While the Framework itself provides the structure for stronger international collaboration, it is the expertise, commitment and collaboration of the people behind it that will bring it to life.

The WAZA Committee for Population Management (CPM) plays a central role in strengthening cooperation between regions, supporting capacity building and advancing strategic approaches to species population

management across the global zoo and aquarium community. Following the launch of the Framework at the 6th Joint TAG Meeting, we invited members of the CPM to reflect on one simple question:

What excites you most about the new International Studbook Framework, and what key transformation do you think it could bring to the way we work together and manage species globally?



► **DAVID FIELD FRSE**
WAZA President

International Studbooks have always carried real cachet, but in recent years they have lost some of their prominence. The new International Studbook Framework restores their purpose and relevance, particularly for those species that require global collaboration and whose very survival depends on the collective efforts of WAZA's zoos and aquariums.



► **DOLF DEJONG**
The Toronto Zoo

What excites me most about the new International Studbook Framework is the opportunity it creates for truly coordinated, global conservation action. When studbook data is accessible, standardized, and interconnected globally, we can anticipate population needs before they become critical, identify collaboration opportunities across borders, and make collective decisions with a level of precision and speed we simply haven't had before.



► **RAYMOND VAN DER MEER**
European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA)

The most exciting aspect of the new ISB framework is its focus on enabling global collaboration through shared datasets. By formalising the creation and maintenance of international studbooks, the framework supports more coordinated and transparent population management across regions. This provides an important step forward in aligning efforts globally, ultimately increasing our collective impact in saving species and securing a future for wildlife.



► **CHRISTIAN OLACIREGUI**
Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (ALPZA)

What most excites me is that WAZA's new International Studbook Framework facilitates interregional collaboration for an efficient and impactful approach to protecting biodiversity: bringing international resources and perspective to the most biodiverse region in the world is pivotal for our contributions to conservation.



► **TRACY REHSE**

African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC)

The new International Studbook Framework will build a cohesive approach to managing populations that are represented within more than one region. I believe it will allow for greater communication between regions, and population managers will be better equipped to make informed decisions and recommendations about their individual regions, when they are also able to see a global overview.



► **KAZUTOSHI TAKAMI**

Japanese Association of Zoos & Aquariums (JAZA)

The new international studbooks will be a more efficient and practical tool for global cooperation. An open and collaborative approach is essential for achieving realistic goals. I look forward to using them to create a framework that will enable our colleagues around the world to connect and collaborate more closely towards our shared goals.



► **WENDY CHUA**

Southeast Asian Zoos and Aquariums Association

No more duplication of efforts to maintain the studbook, which will also promote a stronger and more cohesive working relationship between the different regional coordinators.



► **KATELYN MUCHA**

Species360

As someone who helped shape this framework and builds the tools that support it, I'm most excited about the shift to shared global datasets. ZIMS for Studbooks and PMx are built for shared data, regional filtering, and cross-population demographic and genetic insights are core to what these tools do. Species360 is proud to have supported the development of this framework and is ready to support its implementation.



► **KRISTINE SCHAD EEBES**

Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)

What excites me most about the new International Studbook Framework is its clear potential to strengthen and better support truly global population management. By aligning processes and expectations across regions, it should make it easier for studbook keepers and population managers to share data, coordinate recommendations, and collectively manage species with a more unified strategy.



► **KUMIKO HARA**

Japanese Association of Zoos & Aquariums (JAZA)

What excites me most about the new International Studbook Framework is its ability to bring WAZA members closer together through a shared approach to population management. The key transformation it could bring is a shift from regional perspectives to truly global coordination, enabling us to manage populations more strategically and contribute more effectively to species conservation worldwide.



► **JOHN ANDREWS**

Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)

I see this proposal as a clear commitment to increased collaboration, where regions are able to work in parallel more efficiently and will be a great step forward in allowing International Studbooks to be powerful resources for global conservation.



► **PAULA CERDÁN**

WAZA Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare

The new International Studbook Framework recognises a simple reality: conservation only works at scale when we work together. It creates a more connected approach to species data and expertise, helping us move from isolated efforts to truly global collaboration, ensuring that knowledge is shared, efforts are aligned, and every contribution can maximise outcomes for species.

STRONGER TOGETHER: RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL STUDBOOKS

Paula Cerdán, WAZA Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare

For decades, International Studbooks (ISBs) have played an important role in the management of zoo and aquarium populations around the world. Built through the dedication and tight collaboration between countless studbook keepers, registrars and population biologists, they have helped maintain genetic and demographic knowledge for generations of animal species globally.

But as WAZA continues to strengthen its role as a facilitator and convenor for global cooperation, and as conservation challenges evolve, so too must the systems that support the way we collaborate and share data globally as one community.

This is the context behind the proposed new framework for International Studbooks which was recently launched during the 6th Joint TAG Meeting, hosted by Taipei Zoo from 25–28 May 2026.

At its heart, the proposal asks a simple but important question:

What if there was only one database per species that is maintained collaboratively across regions?

A System Already Moving Towards Collaboration

In many ways, the proposal did not emerge from theory alone, but from recognising and formalising collaboration patterns that already exist across the community.

One of the most important insights informing the proposal came directly from the international studbook keepers themselves.

In early 2025, WAZA surveyed International Studbook keepers to better understand how ISBs currently function in practice, how they collaborate with regional partners and where challenges remain. Responses were collected for 69 of the 131 active ISBs, representing a 52% response rate.

The results revealed something both encouraging and revealing: collaboration across regions is already happening extensively and takes many shapes.

In fact, 68% of respondents reported working regularly with their counterparts in more than one regional association. Many ISB keepers described ongoing communication



Paula Cerdán, Head of Conservation and Animal Welfare at WAZA, presents the new International Studbook Framework during the 6th Joint TAG Meeting hosted by Taipei Zoo in May © Taipei Zoo

with regional programmes, shared analyses, collaborative planning and support for transfers between regions.

At the same time, the survey also highlighted that this collaboration is far from consistent.

Some ISBs reported strong, active communication and efficient approaches to collaboration, while others described irregular contact, limited data exchange or working largely in isolation. Several respondents identified communication gaps, inconsistent reporting and challenges around data access as key barriers limiting the effectiveness of international coordination.

In many ways, the survey confirmed that the zoo and aquarium community is already moving towards greater global collaboration – but without a consistent structure that supports it.

The issue is not a lack of willingness to work together. Rather, it is that collaboration often depends heavily on individual relationships, regional practices or informal arrangements. In fact, 58% of survey respondents reported relying primarily on calls or emails to update ISB datasets. While these approaches have supported collaboration for many years and continue to do so, current tools and platforms now allow for more integrated, transparent and efficient ways of managing data.

The proposed framework seeks to address this by building on tools and systems that have evolved significantly over recent decades.

From Independent Efforts to a Shared Global Dataset

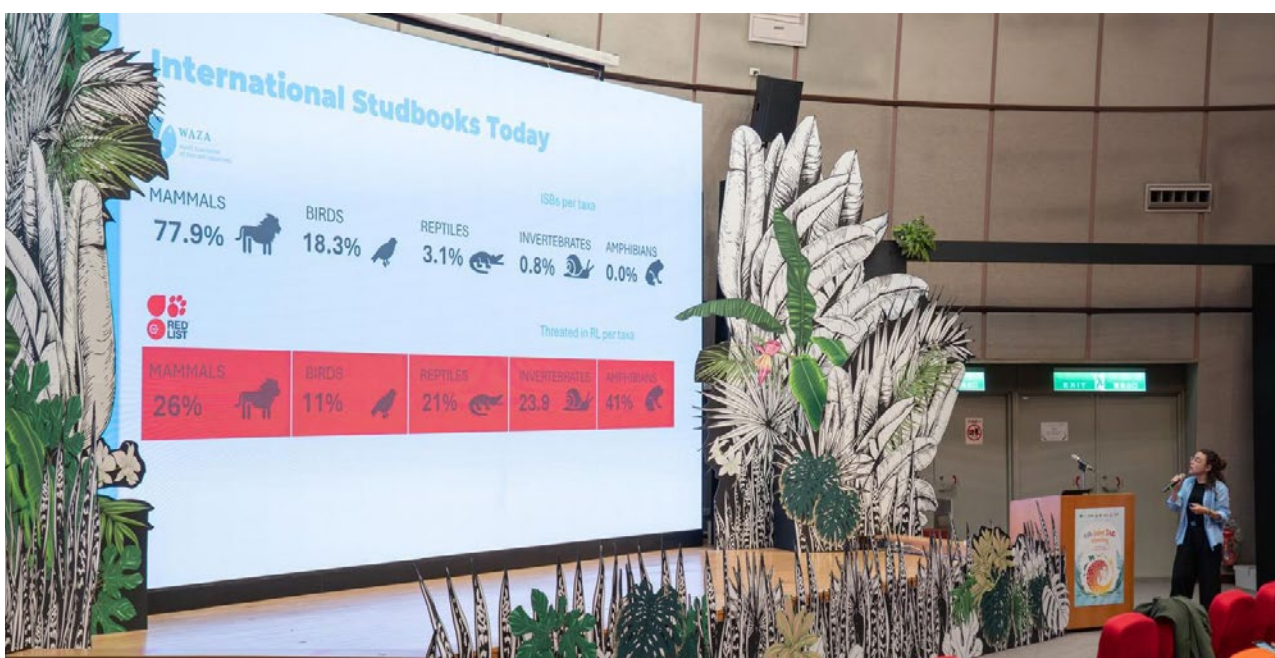
Historically, International Studbooks have often been structured around a single keeper or institution responsible for compiling and maintaining data from across regions. While this model has achieved enormous success, it can also create bottlenecks, uneven participation, limit collaboration, and create challenges in maintaining continuity over time.

The new proposal introduces a different approach: a federated, collaborative system built around shared responsibility.

Under the proposed framework, an ISB is redefined as:

'A global shared dataset maintained collaboratively across regions to support coordinated population management at a global scale.'

This may sound like a subtle change in wording, but conceptually it represents a significant shift.



Delegates learn about WAZA's newly launched International Studbook Framework during a presentation delivered by Paula Cerdán at the 6th Joint TAG Meeting in Taipei © Taipei Zoo

To use an analogy, we are moving away from multiple encyclopaedias produced independently by different publishers, often duplicating the same information, and toward a Wikipedia-like system: dynamic, collaborative, continuously updated and interconnected, while maintaining strong oversight and data quality control.

The emphasis moves away from viewing the ISB primarily as a separate dataset, often duplicating regional information, and towards understanding it as a living, continuously maintained global resource at the species level. This approach strengthens collaboration between the participating regions while supporting their regional programme needs.

In practice, this means:

- Regional coordinators retain responsibility and expertise within their own programmes and data subsets.
- An international coordinator facilitates alignment and communication across regions, and brings in data from regions facilities that lack a coordinator.
- Data management becomes more collaborative and transparent.
- The shared dataset becomes, where relevant, the foundation for global analysis, planning and decision-making.

Importantly, the proposal is about creating a structure that allows regions to contribute to, and benefit from, a coordinated global system while recognising different capacities, priorities and operational realities. At the same time, the framework creates opportunities for greater knowledge sharing and collaboration across regions.

Why This Matters

The need for stronger international coordination is becoming increasingly evident.

Many managed populations are no longer viable when considered solely within a single region. This is already widely recognised across multiple programmes within our Regional Associations, where international collaboration has become essential to support long-term sustainability.

At the same time, zoos and aquariums are increasingly being called upon to demonstrate measurable conservation impact. In the face of accelerating extinction rates, our community not only has the responsibility, but also the expertise, to contribute meaningfully to reversing species decline, and structures and data management systems that support this have become essential to deliver on these efforts.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have also clearly reinforced the expectation that *ex situ* populations should increasingly operate as part of broader global conservation approaches.

This was also reflected clearly in the survey responses.

ISB keepers identified a wide range of current and future roles for International Studbooks beyond traditional record-keeping, including:

- supporting research
- facilitating reintroduction and translocation efforts
- strengthening collaboration with *in situ* partners
- contributing to conservation planning
- helping combat illegal wildlife trade through improved tracking of individuals.

These expanding expectations require systems capable of supporting not only data storage, but active coordination and collaboration at scale.

What Is New in the Proposed Framework?

While the proposal builds on existing practices and expertise, several aspects represent important new developments.

1. First, the framework formalises a federated governance model. Rather than relying on a single individual acting as the central authority, responsibilities are distributed more clearly across regional and international roles.



The new International Studbook Framework, developed to strengthen global population management collaboration, was introduced by Paula Cerdán during the 6th Joint TAG Meeting © Taipei Zoo

2. Second, the proposal introduces a stronger emphasis on shared data access and collaborative management through ZIMS for Studbooks, supporting more transparent and efficient coordination.
3. Third, governance, accountability and participation expectations are articulated more explicitly than in previous ISB guidance documents. This includes recognising that regions may participate at different levels while still contributing to the broader global framework.
4. Finally, the framework reflects the evolving landscape of modern conservation practice by recognising the importance of range-state engagement, ethical data governance and Indigenous data sovereignty. With conservation becoming increasingly collaborative and interconnected, the way information is shared, accessed and governed must also evolve to support more inclusive, transparent and equitable partnerships.

Perhaps most significantly, the framework recognises that successful international coordination depends not only on technical systems, but also on trust, communication and shared understanding.

This was one of the clearest messages emerging from the survey. While many respondents supported the proposed direction, they also emphasised that implementation would require careful attention to communication, relationship-building and realistic transition timelines.

A Shared Resource for a Shared Future

The proposed ISB framework does not seek to replace the enormous expertise and commitment that already exists within regional programmes and existing studbook networks. Rather, it aims to strengthen the connections between them.

In many ways, the proposal simply formalises what many coordinators are already trying to achieve: working together across regions to manage populations more effectively at a global level. And in fact, there are a few studbooks that are already operating following this same model (e.g. red panda)

The future of conservation increasingly depends on collaboration that transcends institutional and regional boundaries. International Studbooks are another key tool that must evolve to support that future, not only as repositories of information, but as platforms for coordination, partnership and shared decision-making.

But this shift is not just about data.

It is about creating a system that allows the global zoo and aquarium community to work together more effectively for the long-term future of the species in its care.

In an increasingly interconnected and demanding conservation landscape, rethinking the way we work and being willing to challenge the status quo may be more important than ever. Achieving meaningful impact will require collective change, shared commitment and stronger alignment across our community.



Hippo (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) © Dubai Safari Park



Greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)
© Zoológico Guadalajara

WAZA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

WAZA welcomes two new
Institution Members

Dubai Safari Park, United Arab Emirates

Dubai Safari Park is one of the largest wildlife parks in the region, home to more than 3,000 animals representing over 300 species. The park offers immersive wildlife experiences designed to connect visitors with biodiversity and promote awareness of conservation. Through a combination of educational programmes, immersive encounters, and community engagement, Dubai Safari Park aims to inspire understanding of wildlife and encourage positive conservation action.

Zoológico Guadalajara, Mexico

Established in 1988, Zoológico Guadalajara has become a major zoological institution in Latin America, with a strong focus on conservation, research, animal welfare and public education. Its design follows the natural landscape, creating a setting that combines visitor experience with environmental awareness. The zoo offers a wide

range of immersive habitats, including aquatic, tropical and safari-style exhibits. Zoológico Guadalajara plays an active role in regional conservation programmes, supporting the management and recovery of endangered species while contributing data and expertise to collaborative breeding initiatives.

WAZA welcomes three new Corporate Members

Jain & Associates, India

Jain & Associates is a landscape architecture and planning consultancy with more than three decades of experience specialising in the planning and design of zoological parks, biological parks and safari parks across India. The firm works closely with government agencies and interdisciplinary experts to develop projects that integrate animal welfare, conservation, sustainability and visitor engagement. Sustainability is an important part of the firm's approach, with projects designed to respond to local environmental and cultural contexts.

JH Global, Inc., United States

Led by Julie C. Henry, JH Global, Inc. supports the zoo and aquarium community through leadership development, executive coaching and facilitation of learning and leadership programmes. Julie works closely with leaders in conservation-focused institutions to strengthen professional practice and organisational effectiveness. As a former senior zoo and aquarium leader, she brings extensive experience in conservation education, leadership development and organisational strategy across the zoo and aquarium field.

Digonex, United States

Digonex provides automated, algorithm-driven pricing solutions that support zoos and aquariums in managing attendance, optimising revenue and enhancing the visitor experience. Its technology uses economic modelling and real-time data analysis to generate daily or time-slot-based pricing recommendations tailored to each institution's objectives. Digonex works with attractions and institutions in the visitor sector, supporting financial resilience while maintaining accessibility and alignment with conservation and education missions.



Barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*) enclosure
© Jain & Associates



JH Global, Inc Logo © JH Global, Inc



Digonex Logo © Digonex

UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL STUDBOOKS (ISBS)

Changes between 30 January and 15 May 2026

International Studbooks

Published International Studbooks

- **Clouded Leopard** (*Neofelis nebulosa*), 2025 ed. – Jilian Fazio (Turtle Back Zoo)
- **Vicugna** (*Lama vicugna*), 2025 ed. – Lena Bockreiß (Münchner Tierpark Hellabrunn)
- **Indian Rhino/Greater one-horned rhino** (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), 2025 ed. – Beatrice Steck (Zoo Basel)
- **Goeldi's monkey** (*Callimico goeldii*), 2025 ed. – Sheila Wojciechowski (Chicago Zoological Society)

Vacant International Studbooks

- Buff-crested bustard (*Lophotis gindiana*)
- Aruba Island rattlesnake (*Crotalus durissus unicolor*)
- Alaotran gentle lemur (*Hapalemur alaotrensis*)

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



Lychee Shield Bug (*Chrysocoris stolliei*)

© Barcelona Zoo



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 Kenton Kerns



Kenton Kerns

Curator, Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute
Golden Lion Tamarin
International Studbook Keeper
AZA Golden Lion Tamarin SSP Coordinator & Studbook Keeper
AZA Golden-headed Lion Tamarin Studbook Keeper



ISB kept and featured: *Leontopithecus rosalia*
ISB host Organisation: Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute
Year Started as ISBk: 2024

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

When I started at the Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute (SNZCBI), I was immediately drawn to golden lion tamarins (GLTs). I also met Dr Jennifer Mickelberg, the then-ISBk for GLTs, and I consider myself lucky to have called her both a friend and mentor. I absorbed as much lion tamarin information as I could from her, volunteering to help with international shipments, studbook updates and conservation projects. After she passed, I felt honoured to take on the ISBk role in 2024 to continue both SNZCBI's and Jennifer's legacy.

Although the ISB keeper refers to an individual, I act more as a team lead for a group dedicated to GLT conservation and international collaboration. Our Regional Coordinators for the areas of focus (Brazil, European Association of Zoos and Aquariums,

Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia and Association of Zoos and Aquariums) work together in the ZIMS studbook to keep the data up to date. Each region plans population recommendations separately followed by periodic check-ins and as-needed global planning to ensure all regions are meeting their genetic benchmarks.

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

The GLT ISB has been and continues to be a fantastic example of an ISB directly supporting conservation in the wild. The historic collaboration of 43 international institutions reintroducing 146 captive-born GLTs to the wild between 1984 and 2001 helped turn the tide as the species hurtled towards extinction with as few as 200 animals in Brazil's Atlantic Coastal Forest in the early 1980s. Scientists estimate that about 50% of the wild GLT population, last measured to be 4,800 animals, is descended from zoo-born tamarins.

The ISB does important double duty: (1) ensuring zoo visitors can see an incredible, charismatic animal at institutions around the world and (2) acting as an insurance population for the very real threats that continue to affect the species' Atlantic Forest habitat. I represent the ISB during annual strategic planning in Brazil with the Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado (AMLD, the GLT Association), ensuring that our efforts to keep a global genetically diverse population could support reintroductions into the wild habitats if required to do so again.

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

Are there examples of discoveries in veterinary care, nutrition, housing, breeding manipulation, etc.,

based on the larger available sample sizes present in an aggregated dataset? Is there any ongoing or published research utilising the data? This happens often! With such strong regional networks, we are able to bounce issues and ideas off of each other and discuss if anyone else has had experience with what seems like a unique situation. We have a strong network of advisors and a great community within our small primate Taxon Advisory Groups. The ISB plays a role in many different conversations. We've had requests to join research projects since our data is so robust and has so many instances of different social groups (such as looking at the natural reproductive suppression of subordinate females) and health changes (such as determining if we can define standardised levels that represent diabetes in the species).

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

The GLT ISB is authorised by the Brazilian government, and we work with them and other NGOs like AMLD to utilise a One Plan approach to secure the future of the species. Last year, the ISB presented to multiple Brazilian police agencies (federal, state and local) about the important work zoos are doing to combat wildlife trafficking.

When a yellow fever epidemic broke out in GLT habitat in the late 2010s, scientists began testing a vaccine on GLTs. At the same time, the GLT ISB

prepared to ramp up transfers and breeding so that a diverse population of animals could be reintroduced into the wild again. This isn't sustainable forever – we must ensure that the wild habitat and population are robust and protected – but we can provide the backup insurance plan that will keep GLTs around while we try to protect the *in situ* environment.

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

As long as there are threats to GLT habitat, we'll need the GLT ISB to keep a genetic reservoir for emergencies. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to manage a smaller *ex situ* population if the *in situ* population is robust, which would then provide opportunities for us to evolve those GLT spaces in zoos and aquariums to a different endangered species.

Ideally, we'd be able to have further resources distilled from our data – information about social groups, behaviour and medical issues – that could be utilised to create best practice recommendations.

I hope to see the GLT ISB team continue to update the studbook in a seamless way as we do now with multiple editors coordinating internationally. Adherence to data conventions ensures we're inputting standardised information, and having a collaborative group of GLT ISB experts greatly increases our responsiveness and effectiveness.



Golden Lion Tamarin (*Leontopithecus rosalia*)
© Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation
Biology Institute



Golden Lion Tamarin (*Leontopithecus rosalia*)
© Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation
Biology Institute

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stay up to date with key events in the global zoo, aquarium, and wildlife conservation community. Submit your event listings. Send details to communications@waza.org

Events from August to December 2026

AUGUST

ZAA Conference 2026

4–7 August 2026
Auckland, New Zealand

Action Indonesia Day (GSMP)

9 August 2026
Online Event

EAZA – International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species

23–27 August 2026
Belfast, Ireland

SEPTEMBER

CAZA Annual Conference

14–18 September 2026
Canada

2026 Deutsche Tierpark-Gesellschaft Seminar

23–25 September 2026
Hof, Germany

AZA 2026 Annual Conference

26 September –
1 October 2026
Portland, United States

EAZA Annual Conference

29 September – 3 October 2026
Paris, France

OCTOBER

2026 IZE Conference

12–16 October 2026
Cape Town, South Africa

2026 AAZV 58th Annual Conference

17–22 October 2026
Oklahoma, United States

CBD COP 17

19–30 October 2026
Yerevan, Armenia

CPSG Annual Meeting

22–25 October 2026
Cologne, Germany

81st WAZA Annual Conference

25–29 October 2026
Cologne, Germany

NOVEMBER

81st Meeting of CITES Standing Committee

2–6 November 2026
Geneva, Switzerland

34th SEAZA Annual Conference

16–20 November 2026
Cebu, Philippines

IAAPA Expo 2026

16–20 November 2026
Orlando, United States

Ring-tailed lemur (*Lemur catta*) at
BIOPARC Valencia © BIOPARC Valencia



6th Joint TAG Meeting

25-28 May 2026 @ Taipei Zoo, Taiwan



WAZA

World Association
of Zoos and Aquariums

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