

LOS ANGELES



ZOO



LOS ANGELES ZOO

CONSERVATION STRATEGIC PLAN

2023 Annual Report

A Road to Conservation

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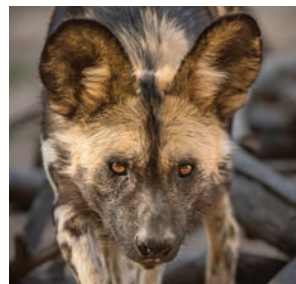
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01

Growing Our Roots



The Los Angeles Zoo is a special kind of conservation organization. Yes, we save wildlife: the Zoo has played a lead role in returning California condors to the wild, and we helped avert the extinctions of southern mountain yellow-legged frogs, peninsular pronghorn, and other species. Just as importantly, we create connections to nature and enrich our communities through partnerships such as the Migrant Education Program and the new Teen Council for Conservation. This deep relationship with our communities and our ability to lead and support impactful conservation efforts go hand in hand. Over the last year our conservation roots have multiplied and strengthened, digging deeper to ensure that our impact continues to grow—not just through the end of our Conservation Strategic Plan in 2026, but for decades to come.

PHOTO BY JAMIE PHAM

Growing Our Roots



In November 2022, the L.A. Zoo Conservation Division collected hundreds of coast live oak acorns from the Zoo's Oak Woodland Restoration Area, and after 10 months, 80 oak tree saplings are growing in the Zoo's new Native Plant Propagation Station. But it took luck, perseverance, and work to ensure the success of these brand-new trees. As acorns, they averted insect damage, spent weeks cooling to simulate natural processes, and were potted and cared for by Conservation interns, staff, and volunteers. They were faced with challenges of unrelenting heatwaves and unprecedented rainfall, and those that made it through were strengthened by the process. Now, as their leaves multiply and their roots dig deeper, their foundations expand and reinforce. Soon, these young trees will be transplanted into the ground as part of future L.A. Zoo restoration projects, maturing and supporting the greater ecosystem in which they exist. And, the growing of strong roots at the outset will be critical to their success in the coming years.

COAST LIVE OAK PROPAGATION

100s
ACORNS
COLLECTED



10
MONTH
PROCESS



80
SAPLINGS
GROWING

COAST LIVE OAK
Quercus agrifolia



The journey of these young trees and their strong potential future mirrors that of the L.A. Zoo's conservation program over the last two years. Since the launch of the L.A. Zoo Conservation Strategic Plan 2021-2026 (CSP) in July 2021, the Conservation Division has been coordinating an ongoing process to strengthen our internal capacity through new hires, additional training, and a more inclusive Conservation Committee.

We've also implemented strategies to prioritize projects that will have the greatest potential for impact. Through this process, existing partnerships—such as those with GRACE Gorillas, Painted Dog Research Trust, and the Wildlife Trust of India—have been reinforced, and our collaborative network has been expanded with diverse new partners, including USC Wrigley Institute for Environment and Sustainability, Theodore Payne Foundation, and Rewilding Argentina. These strategies have allowed us to develop a portfolio of projects in each of the six focal areas identified in the plan.

In this Annual Report, you'll read about our recent work in each of the six areas, and learn how, through growing our roots, we are furthering our vision: to create a just and sustainable world where people and wildlife thrive, together.

(Opposite page) Nurtured in the Zoo's Native Plant Propagation Station, these oak saplings will take root in future restoration projects. Photo by Jamie Pham

(Below) With a broad crown of evergreen foliage, this coast live oak on Zoo grounds provides deep shade, and its acorns attract a variety of wildlife. Photo by Jamie Pham



Conservation Strategic Plan

Guiding Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

We respect people, their land, the wildlife they share it with, and their pursuit of livelihoods

We empower communities, build capacity, and strive to make a positive change in peoples' lives.

PRINCIPLE 2

Conservation is at our core

We don't just talk conservation, we live it. Our commitment is evidenced by our investment in our programs around the world, our animal care, our sustainability efforts, and our people.

PRINCIPLE 3

Conservation starts at home and extends around the world

We provide our expertise and engage our community to protect nature and wildlife in the greater Los Angeles area and globally.

PRINCIPLE 4

Conservation is a team effort

We all succeed when we work together. We all contribute our knowledge and experience, and with our projects, provide opportunities to develop everyone's skills, making a difference for conservation.

PRINCIPLE 5

We are both leaders and collaborators in conservation

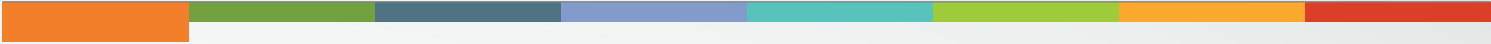
While we seek to demonstrate leadership, we recognize that conservation partners are vital and collaborate with a wide range of organizations such as academic, corporate, governmental, and NGOs to develop projects that succeed. Our reach extends globally as we team with other respected organizations to find solutions for wildlife in crisis.

PRINCIPLE 6

We are a zoo without borders

We work outside our boundaries, collaborating with communities to create shared conservation solutions. We seek out and break down barriers to increase access to nature and sustainable resources, empower our staff and the communities where we work to conserve wildlife and improve the world we share.





Human-Wildlife Co-Existence

For wildlife to survive, humans must thrive; reducing negative interactions between the two is critical

California Conservation

California has one of the highest rates of endemism and biodiversity in the world, making conservation in this region critically important

Illegal Wildlife Trade

Combating the trade that threatens many of the world's wildlife species and endangers human health taps into our core strengths

Areas of Focus

Social & Environmental Justice

For conservation to be successful, all people must have opportunities to engage in ways that are just and equitable

Evidence-Based Conservation

Basing conservation action on research is the only way to increase efficacy and ensure long-term success

Conservation Translocations

As threats to habitats increase, translocations, reintroductions, and releases of threatened animals are important to halting extinction and recovering populations



02

Conservation Culture



One of the most important strategic goals of our Conservation Strategic Plan is to build a genuinely inclusive, deeply rooted culture of conservation throughout the Zoo. Furthering our impact starts from within, and in January 2021, we introduced the Conservation Committee, an internal working group, to meet those goals. This past year, the group grew from just under 50 to 63 interdivisional staff and volunteers. The committee empowers shared ownership, instills pride, and encourages continuous evolution and growth of our impact.

Everyone at the Zoo has a role in conservation.

PHOTO BY CARL MYERS

Prairie Dog Habitat Transformation



PAST

The habitat was the long-time home for the prairie dog family. The group's advanced age required them to move for specialized care, leaving this habitat empty.



PRESENT

In December 2022, Zoo staff repurposed this habitat and planted a pollinator garden to provide a safe space for migrating and local wildlife to eat and rest.



FUTURE

The L.A. Zoo's Vision Plan reimagines the Children's Zoo as a sustainable California landscape with expanded native habitat for local wildlife.

Laying the Grounds Work

This year our grounds maintenance team, led by Senior Park Maintenance Supervisor Robert Gonzales, worked hard to transform several areas of the Zoo with native plants obtained through our partnership with Theodore Payne Foundation. They planted a pollinator garden in an unused prairie dog habitat and replaced a cactus garden with native plants near the entrance of our Zoo. The division also led the way in encouraging both colleagues and Zoo patrons to make responsible choices when it comes to planting for native wildlife. Senior Gardener Andrew Lyell wrote a popular blog post for the Zoo's website, and many team members shared stories and photos through the staff newsletter of the steps they take daily to keep conservation top-of-mind on the job.





“The feeling of wanting to do right by our Zoo, our partners, the communities we work with, and the animals we care deeply about was a quick way to shed the anxiety, roll up my recently purchased safari-shirt sleeves, and get to work.”

**—MAURA MESSERLY,
MANAGER OF VISITOR
ENGAGEMENT, WHO
TRAVELED TO INDIA TO
ASSIST WITH INDIAN
GHARIAL CONSERVATION**

Sending All Kinds of Experts

Funds from the Diane and Mark Montgomery Conservation Fellowship sent Zoo staff abroad this year to help protect species in India and South Africa. In response to stated needs from our global partners, we’re prioritizing getting veterinarians, educators, animal keepers, and others in the field to address the 360-degree issues faced by conservationists and the communities they work in. Our growing culture of conservation creates opportunities for experts throughout the Zoo to support on-the-ground conservation efforts with our partners.

(Above) The Zoo’s Maura Messerly attends a meeting between community leaders and representatives of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Wildlife Trust of India. This community group will be piloting collaborative techniques to promote human-wildlife coexistence. Photo by Subrat K. Behera/Wildlife Trust of India

(Opposite page) Important pollinators, bees are critical to our native ecosystems. New Zoo native gardens will support bees and other wildlife. Photo by Jamie Pham



Zero-Plastic Zoo

For the first time last year, Zoo staff and volunteers participated in July's international Plastic Free Ecochallenge. It was a rallying moment for our community; the team dubbed itself Angeleno Plastic Eliminators, or Team APE. During the challenge, team members were encouraged to report on actions they were taking to reduce plastic and to communicate about those actions with others.

2022 Plastic Free Ecochallenge

Team APE

BY THE NUMBERS



246
TEAM
MEMBERS



SECOND PLACE
TEAM OUT OF
310

PLASTIC KEPT OUT OF LANDFILLS

2,371
BOTTLES



4,957
CONTAINERS



969
STRAWS



1,463
CUPS



1,968
CUTLERY



“Zoo staff are at the forefront of sustainability because of the work that we do in saving animals from extinction, so the community follows our lead when we provide opportunities.”

**—CAROL ARMSTRONG,
DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY
AND CAPITAL PROGRAMS,
L.A. ZOO**

(Right) Zoo staff, volunteers, and visitors can add their own sightings to the Los Angeles Zoo Native Wildlife Project on iNaturalist. Photo by Jamie Pham

(Opposite page) Zoo Custodian Luis Salazar with Team APE's mascot, April. The plush primate added a bit of fun to the Zoo's sustainability efforts in 2023. Photo by Rocio Andrade

Our Culture Includes Everyone

In December 2022, we created the L.A. Zoo Native Wildlife iNaturalist Project to support citizen science in our conservation efforts. Citizen science projects engage members of the general public in scientific research—usually by collecting data. The project has helped inform the Zoo and our communities about the local biodiversity within the Zoo, contributing to City-wide efforts to document our plants and animals. Top Contributor Peggy Wu logged 1,332 observations in the app.



“iNaturalist is awesome, since anyone with a smart phone can participate wherever they are. Not only does the data assist scientists with their research, uploading observations is super fun—and a little addictive!”

—PEGGY WU, L.A. ZOO RESEARCH ASSISTANT



03

California Conservation

California has one of the highest rates of biodiversity of any U.S. state. Los Angeles itself is a biodiversity hotspot, one of only 36 worldwide. These facts and many environmental threats we face make protecting California's biodiversity more important than ever. Conservation programs in the Los Angeles area will help and offer new opportunities to engage local communities, nurture a lifelong commitment to conservation, develop related career paths, and create local conservation events for the L.A. Zoo team. By being trailblazers in efforts to save California's native wildlife, we lead by example.

PHOTO BY JAMIE PHAM



A Team Effort for California Conservation

The Conservation Committee brings together Zoo staff and volunteers to participate in the ongoing development of the conservation culture at the L.A. Zoo, while building conservation knowledge and practicing vital conservation skills. This committee identifies actions and implements initiatives that result in measurable progress in the areas of greatest need. It focuses on California conservation.

Saving Songbirds

The Zoo’s Conservation Committee is focusing on the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Saving Animals from Extinction - North American Songbird (SAFE-NAS) initiative, whose goal is “to reduce the threats to North American songbird and secure sustainable wild populations of these species throughout their ranges.” As an AZA Program Partner for this SAFE program, the L.A. Zoo is taking part in several suggested native songbird conservation initiatives.



(Top) Volunteers join the Committee’s efforts to remove mustard, a fast-growing invasive species, from Griffith Park. Photo by Carl Myers

(Left) Being saved from extinction is not just for the birds! In June, the Zoo became an official AZA partner in the SAFE program for monarch butterflies. Photo by George Stoneman

2023 CONSERVATION COMMITTEE BY THE NUMBERS



60 participants



17 divisions

New Homes for Native Birds

Teams from across the Zoo partnered with local experts from Theodore Payne Foundation to evaluate the existing bird gardens located throughout the Zoo and identify optimal spaces for new native bird gardens. While some existing gardens, such as the California bird garden, were found to be thriving, others, such as the North American garden, were unsuccessful. We identified two new spaces in the Zoo to install native bird-friendly gardens: one in an unused animal habitat and another near the entrance of the Zoo. The new gardens are planted and growing, maintained by Conservation Committee volunteers and the Zoo’s Grounds Maintenance team.



(Top) Guests were fueled with coffee—and information—at our first Bird-Friendly Coffee Tasting. The coffee was generously provided by the Zoo’s concessions partner, SSA Group and is available for sale in the Zoo’s gift shops. Photo by Jamie Pham

(Right) The Zoo’s bird gardens use drought-tolerant native plants to provide birds food and shelter throughout the year. Photo by Jamie Pham



Beans for Birds

One of the action items in the SAFE-NAS plan is to promote Bird Friendly coffee and educate the public on its importance. Bird Friendly coffee farms help to maintain critical habitats for migrating birds, and purchasing Bird Friendly-certified coffee supports the preservation of these spaces, protects biodiversity, and fights climate change on a global scale. The Zoo’s Conservation Committee held a public coffee tasting event to increase awareness of North American songbird conservation and sustainable coffee production.

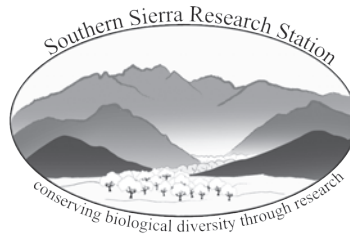


BIRD-FRIENDLY COFFEE BY THE NUMBERS

-
- 10** gallons of coffee served
-
- 634** people engaged
-
- 99%** first time sipping bird-friendly coffee

Tracking Our Progress

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus) uses automated radio telemetry to track hundreds of birds, bats, and insects, contributing directly to the research and conservation of migratory animals. There are Motus stations installed all around the world, but few exist in California, and there were previously none in Los Angeles, despite it being an important flyway path for birds migrating north-south. This year, the Zoo partnered with the Southern Sierra Research Station to install the first Motus tower in Los Angeles within the Zoo’s grounds. Together with future community engagement programming and a long-term banding and tagging project, information from the new system will contribute directly to the SAFE-NAS Action Plan.



A team installs L.A.’s first Motus tower on Zoo grounds. Now active, this station will capture signals transmitted from animals in Griffith Park and beyond. Photo by Earyn McGee

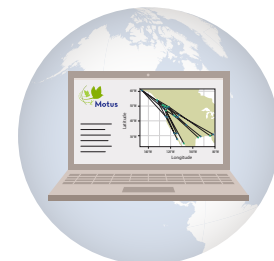
MOTUS: HOW IT WORKS



1. Radio tags are put on animals



2. Stations collect data from tags



3. Data is processed and used for research and conservation



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Theodore Payne Foundation

This year the Zoo's Conservation Division developed a partnership with Theodore Payne Foundation (TPF), a trusted horticultural society in Los Angeles. In addition to collaboration on the plant palette for and installation of two new bird gardens at the Zoo, this partnership will include the creation of new co-branded signs and messaging that call the public to action on the importance of bird-friendly gardens.

“Theodore Payne Foundation is excited to work with the L.A. Zoo to increase native plantings and local ecological education throughout their property. Using native plant landscaping to restore habitats within the urban core of Los Angeles is an affordable and effective way to combat the extinction crisis. Sharing this knowledge with Zoo visitors creates an opportunity to increase the ecological value of home gardens, supporting the unique ecosystems of our region.”

—EVAN MEYER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION



A team from Theodore Payne joined Zoo staff in planting the new native bird-friendly garden along the north corner of the Zoo's Children's Discovery Center. Photos courtesy of Theodore Payne Foundation



Earth Day Celebration

Sixty tenth-grade students from the North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet joined staff from the L.A. Zoo and Theodore Payne Foundation for the spring installation of a second new bird-friendly habitat. The tenth-grade class was separated into three groups to learn and engage in planting, removing invasive plants, and recording iNaturalist observations. Their efforts supported stewardship of habitat for local biodiversity and helped achieve desired metrics in the Zoo’s SAFE-North American Songbird program.



Students from the North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet plant a native bird-friendly garden. Photo by Jamie Pham



BIRD-FRIENDLY HABITAT BY THE NUMBERS

238

Plants planted



100s

Invasive plants removed



100

iNaturalist observations recorded



Restoring Native Habitat

In 2022, the L.A. Zoo Conservation Division initiated conversations with the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) to explore partnership opportunities for improving local environments and promoting native biodiversity. RAP identified litter and invasive plant removal in Griffith Park’s West Trail as an important area of need, and the Zoo responded with gusto. Zoo staff and volunteers initially took on the project, eventually joined, as word spread and passersby took notice, by Zoo members and the community at large. In the first year, 164 participants volunteered their Saturday mornings to remove more than 80,000 invasive plants in the monthly events.

INVASIVE PLANTS REMOVED



3,075
COCKLEBUR
Xanthium



345
CASTOR BEAN
Ricinus communis



2,779
FENNEL
Foeniculum vulgare



8
TREE TOBACCO
Nicotiana glauca



74,497
MUSTARD
Sinapis arvensis



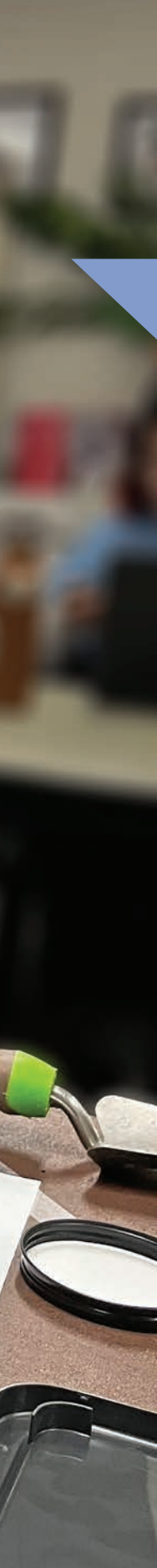
(Top) Volunteers assist in habitat restoration efforts in Griffith Park, making space for important native flora. Photo by Carl Myers

(Bottom) A team member finds a bird’s nest in the West Trail site. Habitat and wildlife surveys are an important part of the restoration project. Photo by Carl Myers



04

Social & Environmental Justice



Most conservation challenges are rooted in human issues. Advancing social and environmental justice is key to addressing these challenges. As we continue to see communities disproportionately impacted by climate change and other environmental impacts, it is vital to center our efforts, engagement, and action on justice. The L.A. Zoo is committed to conservation that advances lasting relationships with nature and environmental identity for all people—regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, or income—to shape a more just and sustainable future.

L.A. ZOO PAID CONSERVATION INTERN AND USC STUDENT SEDONA SILVA SURVEYS INVERTEBRATES AS PART OF HER ON-GROUNDS RESEARCH PROJECT. PHOTO BY ANNA BECKER

Expanding Opportunities Through Paid Internships


For college students without the financial ability to take an unpaid internship, the Zoo’s Paid Internship Program (PIP) offers a gateway to zoo and conservation careers. This innovative program launched in 2021 with just two interns. Now in its third year, the greatly expanded program welcomed 21 interns from diverse communities across Los Angeles, providing a welcoming space for them to learn about and contribute to conservation. In the Conservation Division, interns engaged in hands-on scientific inquiry projects focused on native species and ecosystems. One intern remarked, “Opening the field to students who look like me, talk like me, and have the same interests as me was really emotional and important to my growth.”



PAID INTERNSHIP PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS


21 Interns served in 3 L.A. Zoo divisions:

- 16** Conservation
- 4** Learning & Engagement
- 1** Communications

8  City of Los Angeles council districts represented

3,200  Approximate hours of paid experience gained

14  Colleges and universities represented

5  Unique conservation studies completed



(Left) During an April field trip, Teen Conservation Council members toured Catalina and learned about the island's history, biodiversity, and ongoing conservation efforts. Photo by Carl Myers

(Opposite page) Workshops and hands-on inquiry projects gave Paid Internship Program (PIP) participants a window onto conservation careers. Photo by Anna Becker

Creating Pathways to Conservation Careers

In November 2022, the L.A. Zoo launched the Teen Council for Conservation (TCC), a program focused on conservation, social and environmental justice, and climate change. Thirty high school students (ages 14 to 18) were selected from across Los Angeles, representing communities that have been historically excluded from conservation careers. To reduce financial barriers to participation, councilmembers received a stipend and travel reimbursement. Over the course of nine months, the students investigated social and environmental issues and developed campaigns to help mitigate and raise awareness of these issues in their communities. Workshops with conservation professionals from around the globe and field excursions to sites such as the Catalina Island Conservancy provided opportunities for students to gain leadership and community-building skills while also setting a course for future action.

“I feel more passionate about conservation than I did coming into the program now that I have gotten to meet people who work in that particular area of study. I definitely want to pursue environmental studies in the future.”

—JENNIFER TORRES, TCC
COUNCILMEMBER, CD 6

2023 BY THE NUMBERS



**9-month
program**



30 students



14 council districts

Building Community Through Birding



Birds can be a gateway species—a means of access to the wider world of wildlife and its conservation. Birdwatching is a low-cost activity that is accessible to anyone and leaves no impact on the environment. Participation in the U.S. has been increasing

since 2020, especially among people of color. In December 2022, the Zoo hosted its first event with Black Birders of L.A. coordinated by the nonprofit organization Outdoor Afro. In addition to birding throughout the Zoo, attendees met with our avian experts to learn about our work with California condors and other critically endangered species.

Among the participants was Dr. Earyn McGee, whose doctoral research focused in part on reducing barriers to black women in natural history careers. Connections made that day (and her deep background in community engagement and science communication) led to McGee signing on as the Zoo's Coordinator of Conservation Engagement in early 2023.

“I went to Outdoor Afro events to find community. My friend T’Essence [Minnitee] invited me to an event she was organizing in partnership with the L.A. Zoo, a birding tour in December 2022. I attended because I thought I’d have fun. I never thought I’d leave with a job opportunity.”

**—EARYN MCGEE, PH.D.,
COORDINATOR OF
CONSERVATION
ENGAGEMENT, L.A. ZOO**

2023 BY THE NUMBERS



3 events



65 participants

(Left) Birding events strengthened our relationship with Outdoor Afro, while providing a space for Black Birders of L.A. members to connect to nature. Photo by Carl Myers

Bridging the Gap

Coordinated by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Migrant Education Program (MEP) provides hands-on science education and a social support system to children of migratory workers. Many of these kids switch schools up to three times a year as their parents relocate for seasonal work, which can lead to academic and social stress or gaps. This program gives students opportunities to experience new learning environments that enhance their social and cognitive development. The L.A. Zoo is one of those places. Forming new friendships and focusing on animals takes attention away from disruptions in family life, language barriers, and other obstacles to learning.



(Left) Animal Keeper Kathryn Vivian fields questions about orangutans from Migrant Education Program students. Photo by Learning & Engagement

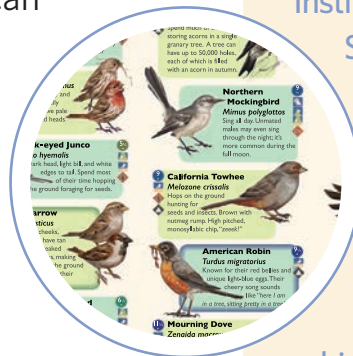
(Above) Birding at the Zoo has just gotten easier thanks to our new illustrated field guide.

Helping Beginning Birders

Inspired by the Zoo's birding and conservation tours with Black Birders of L.A. and Outdoor Afro, the Zoo partnered with the USC Wrigley Institute for Environment and

Sustainability to create an easy-to-use, illustrated "Birds of the L.A. Zoo" field guide. The guide provides birding basics and highlights 22 of the most common

birds visitors might observe on Zoo grounds, from Allen's hummingbirds to great blue herons. Beautifully rendered illustrations were created by USC Wrigley Program Intern Rika Mizoguchi, who worked with the Zoo to design the guide from the ground up. It will be used in special bird-related programming and sold in the Zoo's International Marketplace shops, where 100% of proceeds will support the Zoo's bird conservation efforts.



2023 BY THE NUMBERS



45 students
(grades 1-5)



1-month program



8 Zoo visits



05

Illegal Wildlife Trade



The illegal wildlife trade increases the threat of extinction many animals already face due to habitat loss, human activities, and climate change. Many species like pangolins, rhinoceroses, and Asian songbirds are being unsustainably hunted for consumption, medicinal use, ornamental practices, and other purposes. In 2022 alone, 561 rhinos were killed in South Africa; most were victims to illegal poaching.

PHOTO BY MIKE VEALE/GLOBAL CONSERVATION FORCE



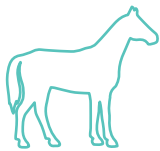
2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT

2

Xhosa community members
hired and trained as rangers

12

Community members
trained in anti-poaching
techniques



1,692

Miles patrolled on horseback

671

Patrol hours

90%

Average patrol efficacy

Expanded patrol territory,
bringing elephants and
cheetahs under the scope of
GCF protection

Riding for Rhinos

The vast majority of the world's rhinos live in South Africa, where the top threat to their survival is poaching, driven by black market demand for rhino horn. Since 2018, the L.A. Zoo has partnered with Global Conservation Force (GCF) to support anti-poaching efforts in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This partnership helped establish horseback Anti-Poaching Units (APUs) at the Amakhala and Kariega Game Reserves. These mounted units patrol daily in territory that vehicles cannot access, increasing maneuverability and saving thousands of dollars in fuel costs.



GLOBAL
CONSERVATION
FORCE



“Global Conservation Force extends great thanks to the Los Angeles Zoo for supporting the various aspects of the Mounted Unit Projects, and we are exceptionally grateful for your support. The generous grant has given us the ability to ensure the project moved forward, continues to protect wildlife, and offers meaningful conservation jobs to local communities.”

—MIKE VEALE, CEO, GLOBAL CONSERVATION FORCE

(Above) Horses increase the distance rangers can cover—and the speed at which they can conduct patrols. Photo by Natasha Frolander/GCF

(Opposite page) An L.A. Zoo grant funded salaries for two anti-poaching rangers and a training course for new recruits. Photos by Natasha Frolander (left) and Roxane Losey (right)



2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT



12

Law enforcement officers in El Jobo (a known poaching hotspot) received training in wildlife trafficking, confiscations, and how to identify a bird that is being kept illegally



12

Scarlet macaws released to the wild



2,300

Yellow-naped parrots counted

Recovering Endangered Parrots in Costa Rica

Based in Costa Rica, the mission of the Macaw Recovery Network (MRN) is to protect and recover endangered parrot populations in the Americas. MRN's focal species include the scarlet macaw and the yellow-naped parrot—two species in residence at the Los Angeles Zoo. Costa Rica is a stronghold for both species.

Support from the Los Angeles Zoo has enabled MRN to conduct a country-wide yellow-naped parrot census, which determined that there are more of these birds in Costa Rica than previously estimated. The results from this census have helped determine the best way to support the recovery of the species in Costa Rica, shifting focus from rescue and captive breeding to community outreach and prevention of poaching of wild nests.

MRN's breeding center and sanctuary in Punta Islita was established in 2013 to care for injured wild parrots and surrendered or confiscated pet parrots.



Offspring of these birds are released to the wild in cohorts to aid the species recovery. In February 2023, MRN released 12 juvenile scarlet macaws from the breeding center.



They were extensively monitored throughout their first month post-release and given supplementary food as a means of supporting them as they transition to independence in the wild.



(Top) In Costa Rica, scarlet macaws are missing from much of their former range. Photo by Corel Raffel

(Left) Zoo funding enabled a country-wide census of yellow-naped parrots. Photo by Macaw Recovery Network

(Right) Officers attended a workshop to improve enforcement of wildlife trafficking laws. Photo by Macaw Recovery Network

“Support from the Los Angeles Zoo has contributed directly to the conservation of two iconic species in Costa Rica, the scarlet macaw and the critically endangered yellow-naped Amazon parrot.”

—SAM WILLIAMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MACAW RECOVERY NETWORK



2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT



8

New nest boxes sponsored

2X

Per month nest box
monitoring



15

Chicks fledged

7

Total number of fledglings
from L.A. Zoo nest boxes
since 2019

Boosting Blue-Throated Macaw Populations

Since 2019, the L.A. Zoo has partnered with Bird Endowment, Inc., in support of its mission to prevent the critically endangered blue-throated macaw from going extinct. This species was nearly wiped out by the illegal pet trade, a threat that has now been reduced thanks to the implementation of stricter laws. Today, deforestation—which results in a lack of natural nesting trees—is the primary threat to blue-throated macaws.

Bird Endowment's Nido Adoptivo ("foster nest") project installs artificial nest boxes in the Laney Rickman Reserve to increase nest site availability. This has greatly increased the number of nesting pairs, resulting in a more stable and growing wild population. As of last year, a total of 113 macaws have fledged from Nido Adoptivo nest boxes, representing about 25% of the total wild population—and that number is climbing.

The Zoo's support also helps fund related activities essential to protecting blue-throated macaws, including monitoring illegal trafficking and guarding nest sites.



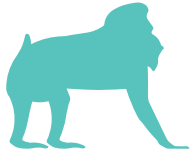
“THANK YOU Los Angeles Zoo for your generous support of Bird Endowment and our partner Armonía as a 2022–2023 Nido Adoptivo Nest Box Sponsor on the Laney Rickman Reserve in Bolivia. Your support is truly making a difference!”

—DOROTHY PATERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BIRD ENDOWMENT

(Top) A pair of blue-throated macaws on an artificial nest box in the Laney Rickman Reserve in Bolivia. Photo credit Armonia Bolivia

(Bottom) Nest box “LA2” is one of eight sponsored by the L.A. Zoo. Photo credit Bird Endowment





**2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS
WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT**



New veterinary clinic including surgery, microscopy, and sample preparation



Major progress made on health checks for drills

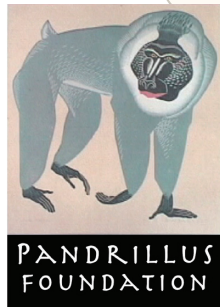
2

Hired and trained Nigerian veterinary graduates

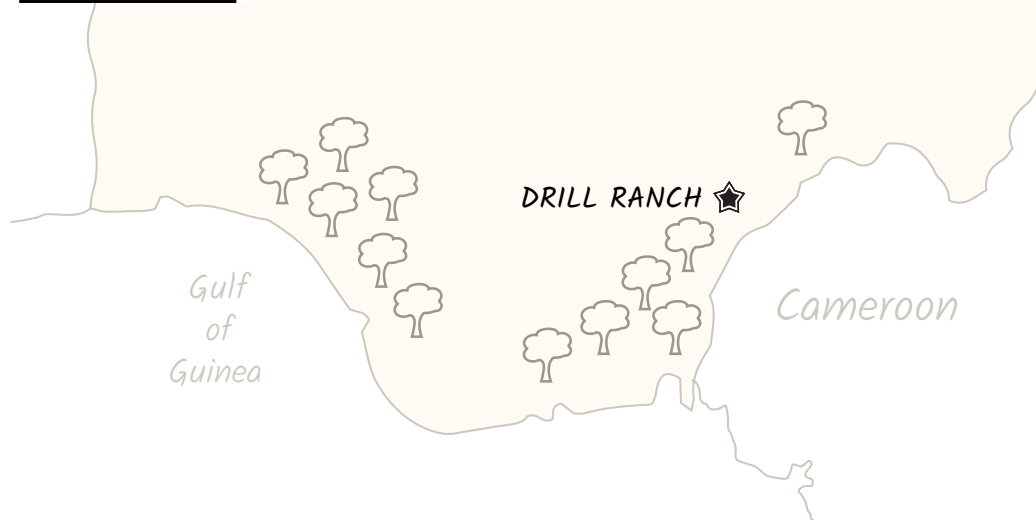


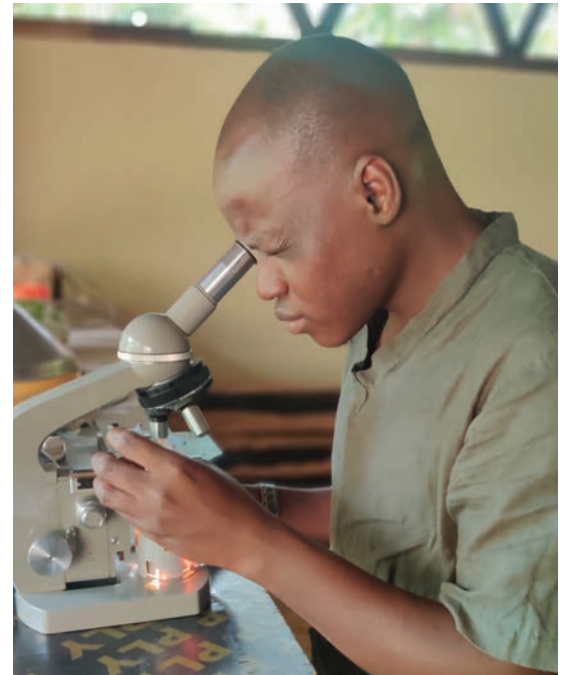
Protecting Rare Primates

The L.A. Zoo has long supported the Pandrillus Foundation in its work to prevent the extinction of the highly endangered drill monkey. The species is threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation, and poaching. Legal and illegal logging has made once remote habitat accessible to hunters. Drill Ranch, the foundation’s rehabilitation and breeding center in Nigeria, rescues orphaned drills whose mothers were shot by poachers. Annual support from the L.A. Zoo helps with primate care at Drill Ranch, including food, veterinary support, animal care staff, and enclosure maintenance at two project sites.



Nigeria





(Left) Drill Ranch keeper Gabriel Oshie prepares to feed the drills. Fresh produce is purchased from local farmers and children who collect wild forest fruit after school for pocket money. Photo courtesy of Pandrillus

(Right) Veterinarian Obed Ogbe checks lab samples in the new solar-powered veterinary clinic. Photo courtesy of Pandrillus

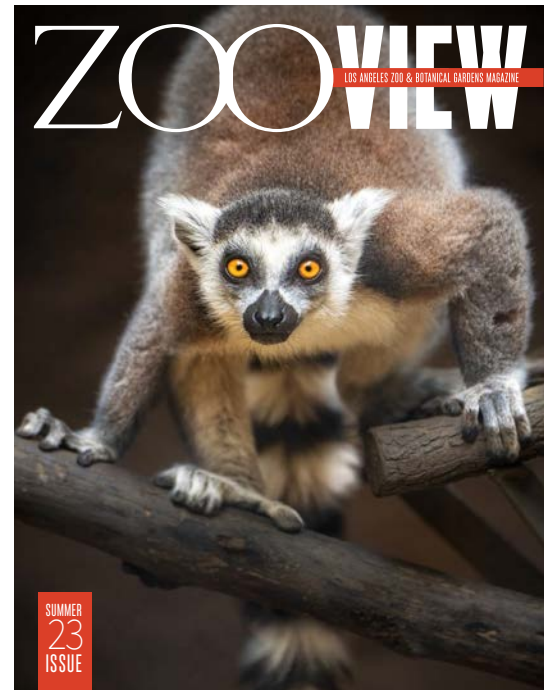
“Drill Ranch is privileged to have trained the first generation of hands-on wildlife veterinarians in Nigeria; former veterinary staff are now university lecturers.”

—LIZA GADSBY, CO-FOUNDER, PANDRILLUS FOUNDATION

Combating the Illegal Pet Trade

Global demand for exotic pets fuels the illegal capture and trade of millions of animals, many of which suffer and die in the process. The illegal wildlife trade increases the threat many animals already face due to habitat loss, climate change, and human activities. It also carries disease risk.

To bring attention to the problems inherent in exotic pet ownership, the Los Angeles Zoo joined the “Not a Pet” campaign in partnership with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ Wildlife Trafficking Alliance and the International Fund for Animal Welfare. We kicked off the campaign in March 2023, sharing stories about our animals that were rescued from the illegal pet trade via our website, social media, member magazine, and a series of attention-getting signs in the Zoo. The key messages are that exotic pets are difficult to care for, and the illegal pet trade is cruel to wildlife and also poses health risks to humans.



(Above) Zoo View's illegal pet trade issue mailed to 43,523 households.



**ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS**



ifaw
International
Fund for
Animal Welfare



2022-2023 CAMPAIGN BY THE NUMBERS

19

Social media posts



162,971

Social media impressions



20,847
People engaged via e-blast



5
Campaign signs on Zoo grounds



(Left) Many of the L.A. Zoo's Madagascar radiated tortoises are here because they needed a safe home after federal agents removed them from the illegal pet trade. Today, these tortoises are part of important Zoo-led breeding programs to fight their species' extinction. Photo by Jamie Pham



06

Human-Wildlife Coexistence

Conflicts between humans and wildlife pose significant threats to species conservation and the safety and livelihoods of local community members. This challenge requires solutions that promote coexistence, meeting the needs of both people and animals to reduce negative interactions between them. Whether the challenge is with crop-raiding elephants in Borneo or coyotes in Los Angeles, this principle is basic to the long-term survival of wildlife around the globe and essential for local communities to thrive.

PHOTO BY JAMIE PHAM



2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT

Provided training in human-
elephant coexistence

Worked with farmers
to implement elephant
deterrence strategies

Established response
strategies in crop damage
areas

Conducted assessment to
identify elephant-friendly
community options

Expanded camera trap
monitoring and field surveys

Documented elephant
movements and habitat use

Shared biomonitoring
findings with area managers

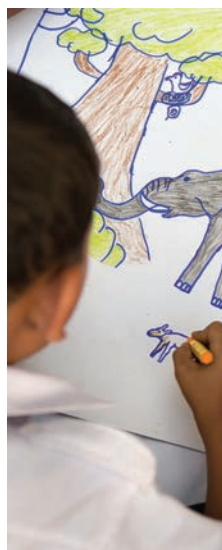
Led community event to plant
300 "elephant tree" species
in Prey Lang Forest

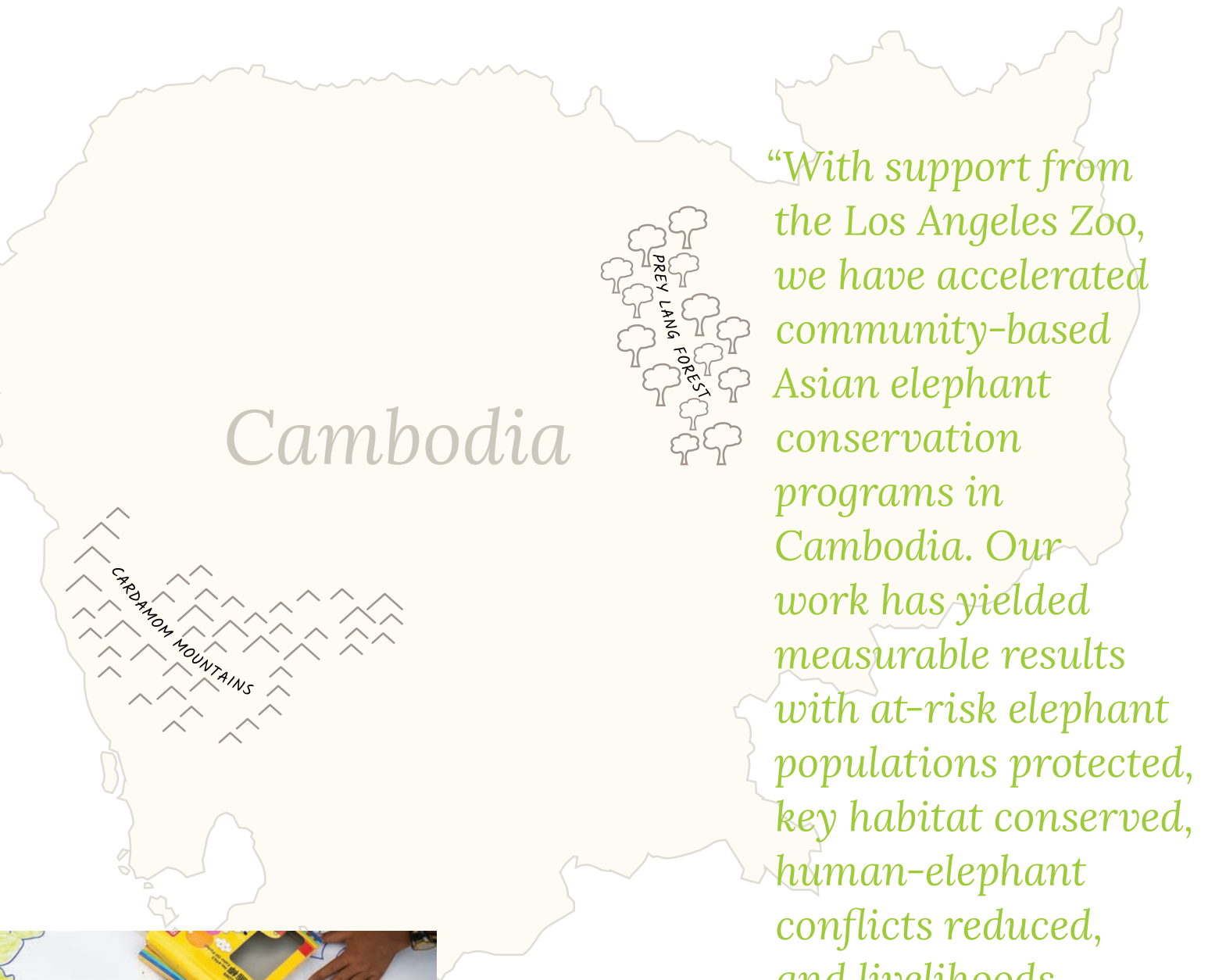
Joined the "Zero Snare
Campaign" to discourage
snare use while promoting
alternative livelihoods

Hosted a community
event about the
consequences of snaring

Healthy Ecosystems for Humans and Elephants

One of the Los Angeles Zoo's longest-running international conservation partners, Wild Earth Allies (WEA) supports the recovery of at-risk Asian elephant populations in Cambodia in two key areas, the Prey Lang Forest and the Cardamom Mountains. These areas represent 1.7 million acres of critical habitat where elephants are threatened by unsustainable forest practices and human-elephant conflict. WEA is implementing targeted actions to ensure that elephants and other threatened species flourish in healthy forests that also sustain traditional livelihoods. Key strategies include biomonitoring and research, habitat restoration, improving livelihoods, and environmental education.





“With support from the Los Angeles Zoo, we have accelerated community-based Asian elephant conservation programs in Cambodia. Our work has yielded measurable results with at-risk elephant populations protected, key habitat conserved, human-elephant conflicts reduced, and livelihoods of indigenous and under-served populations improved. We are sincerely grateful for this long-term partnership.”



(Left) Asian elephants in Cambodia. Photo by Allison Shelley for Wild Earth Allies

(Right) Children draw elephants during a Wild Earth Allies environmental education event near Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary. Photo by Allison Shelley for Wild Earth Allies

—KATIE FROHARDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WILD EARTH ALLIES



2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT

14

Critically endangered
Grauer's gorillas maintained

40,000

Fast-growing tree seedlings
planted in the village of
Kagheri to provide a source
of sustainable fuel

100

Women attended
fuel-efficient stove-building
workshop in Kagheri

6,000

People reached at World
Gorilla Day celebration

50

Solar-powered radios
purchased and distributed to
community members



Combining Radio and Stoves to Save Gorillas

Conservation tools don't need to be complex. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education (GRACE) Center is demonstrating just that. With a grant from the L.A. Zoo, GRACE supplied local residents with simple tools—cookstoves and radios—as part of its mission to create a healthier future for both people and gorillas.



Cookstoves are more fuel-efficient and healthier than traditional methods of cooking, thus they reduce the need to cut down forests and the health risks associated with open flames.



Radios were distributed to community members to increase listenership of new radio content created by GRACE educators. With an estimated listening audience of 15,000+ people, Radio Tayna allows GRACE to reach a wide audience with its message of "Healthy Gorillas, Healthy Forests, and Healthy People," which was communicated through dramas, informative sessions, and interviews with local leaders and community leaders.

A Grauer's gorilla at the GRACE sanctuary. Photo by Andrew Bernard



(Left) Participants in a stove-building workshop in Kagheri. Photo courtesy of GRACE

(Top right) Members of the local Women's Association prepare seedling bags for the community woodlot in Kagheri. Photo courtesy of GRACE

(Bottom right) Led by GRACE Educators, students celebrate World Gorilla Day in September 2022. Photo courtesy of GRACE

“Because of GRACE programs, community members now understand the importance of planting trees, building fuel-efficient stoves, and teaching their children about gorillas and the forest.”

—HONORÉ KAMBALE MASUMBUKO, DRC EDUCATION MANAGER



The L.A. Zoo has partnered with GRACE since 2015. GRACE's mission is to rescue, rehabilitate, and release Grauer's gorillas and support gorillas and their habitats by engaging local communities to further conservation efforts in just and equitable ways.



2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT

Planted the first Miyawaki
“pocket forest” on semi-arid
communal land in Africa

3

Pocket forests planted
at schools

42

Acres cleared of toxic,
nonnative plants

2

Schools added to conservation
education program

Expanded school
conservation clubs

Identified community
members who wish to be
“pocket forest guardians”

302

Classroom visits, reaching
1,516 students

Collected data to inform
WVC mitigation measures

Continued advocacy for
speed limits in wildlife areas

Road to Recovery for Painted Dogs

The Painted Dog Research Trust (PDRT) works to protect and increase the range and population size of endangered painted dogs in Zimbabwe. When PDRT founder Dr. Greg Rasmussen began studying painted dogs in 1987, the species was little known and widely misunderstood. Through field research and community-based conservation, the PDRT has worked to clear up misperceptions about painted dogs that have historically led to their persecution. More recently, the PDRT has made it a top priority to address wildlife vehicle collisions (WVC), an increasing and devastating threat to painted dogs and many other species.

With funding from the Ornato Advanced Field Studies Grant, L.A. Zoo Curator of Education Rosalio Rubio traveled to Zimbabwe in May 2023. Over the course of three weeks, Rosalio worked with PDRT staff to develop a curriculum for education outreach, assisted with camera trap maintenance and data analysis, and created a community conservation club for local schoolchildren. He also filmed 360-degree video that the Zoo’s Learning & Engagement team plans to utilize in a virtual reality experience that will allow guests to see what it’s like to be immersed in the African landscape.



“Over the years, the L.A. Zoo’s support has been not only consistent but made a huge difference, and so embodies our motto ‘Your Support Is Their Survival.’”

**—DR. GREG RASMUSSEN, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PAINTED DOG RESEARCH TRUST**



The L.A. Zoo has partnered with the PDRT since 2018, providing supplies including satellite collars and camera traps to monitor the movements, behaviors, and survival of painted dog packs. In 2021, we convened a workshop to explore additional collaboration opportunities to support the PDRT utilizing the Zoo’s unique expertise.



(Top) Rosario Rubio (L.A. Zoo) teaches schoolchildren in Zimbabwe to record wildlife data on donated iPads. Photo courtesy of Rosario Rubio

(Bottom) Vehicle collisions are a serious threat to painted dogs. Photo courtesy of Rosario Rubio

(Left) Yearlings from a painted dog pack at Zambezi National Park. Photo courtesy of PDRT



2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS WITH L.A. ZOO SUPPORT



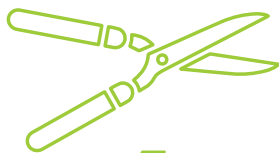
Designed a GIS (Geographic Information System) to analyze tapir dynamics

8

Monitoring stations collected data continuously

12

Expeditions conducted to identify threats, maintain cameras, and retrieve data



4

Trails maintained to facilitate patrols and research

14

Community workshops held on agroecology, rural tourism, and environmental education

A Holistic Approach for Tapirs

In an area known as the Colombian Massif in the southern Andes, mountain tapirs inhabit a biological corridor between two national parks. This corridor is very important for the tapirs but also vulnerable to human degradation. The Mountain Tapir Project, with the support of the Los Angeles Zoo and the Cali Zoo, is working to develop a conservation model for the species in this corridor, which can be replicated in other areas. The project takes a holistic approach, building on three fundamental pillars: ecological research, community development, and conservation education.

“The best alternative to achieve the long-term conservation of the mountain tapir in its natural environment is to ensure that its presence benefits the local communities living around its habitat.”

—CARLOS GALVIS, POPULATION MANAGER, FUNDACIÓN ZOOLOGICA DE CALI

The research work is focused on generating an intensive monitoring strategy utilizing camera-traps, satellite telemetry, and population genetics. The local community has been involved with this research work and is integral to its long-term success.



The social component of the project is as important as the research, which is why the Mountain Tapir Project has been supporting local people in strengthening food security by promoting the establishment of organic vegetable gardens and encouraging rural tourism initiatives and the fair marketing of sustainable local products.

Finally, the educational component focuses on promoting knowledge of local fauna, flora, and water resources. The project has been advocating for the inclusion of topics related to local biodiversity in the curricula of schools and colleges located in the rural sector adjacent to tapir habitat.



(Top left) Establishing organic gardens will reduce pressure on mountain tapir habitat. Photo by Fundación Zoológico de Cali

(Top right) Well-maintained trails facilitate research and patrols. Photo by Fundación Zoológico de Cali


(Right) An L.A. Zoo-funded camera trap recorded this image of a mountain tapir in Colombia.





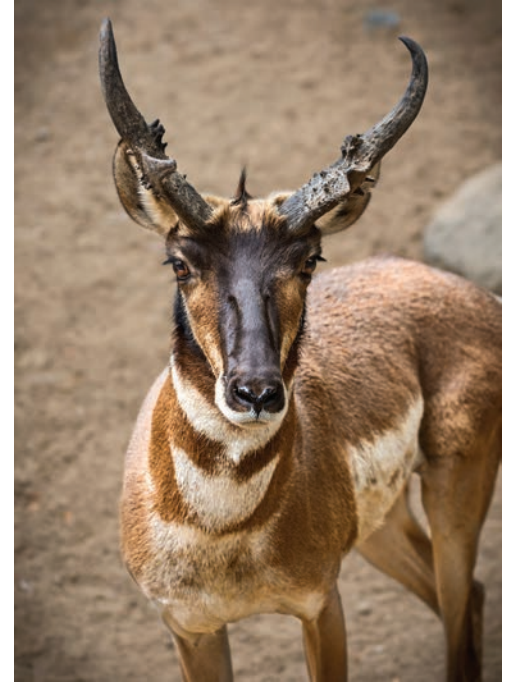
07

Conservation Translocation



Numerous species exist in the wild today because of conservation translocations. These translocations are used to reintroduce extinct species or to release more individuals into threatened wild populations to rapidly grow their numbers and genetic diversity. The L.A. Zoo is a global leader in conservation translocations. We have been integral to the recovery efforts of species in California, and our support has advanced translocation programs for species around the world. We will continue fighting to save species from extinction through successful translocation programs both here and across the globe.

PHOTO BY JAMIE PHAM



Peninsular Pronghorns

(Left) The Visitor Center's design places the exhibitry in the center of the space, leaving the windows open to views of the surrounding land. Photo by Jake Owens

(Center) The L.A. Zoo launched a successful breeding program for peninsular pronghorn in 2006. Photo by Jamie Pham

(Right) The L.A. Zoo team traveled to Baja for the grand opening of the Visitor Center. Photo by Jake Owens

The L.A. Zoo has long provided critical funding, advisory support, and on-the-ground assistance to the Peninsular Pronghorn Recovery Project (PPRP) in Mexico, paying special attention to forging community partnerships in the region. In 2022, Zoo staff facilitated the transformation of the Visitor Center at the PPRP, bringing in local design firm Museográfica to bring the PPRP's vision to life. "It was not us deciding what the story was," says L.A. Zoo Director of Learning & Engagement Dan Keeffe. "It was the story the PPRP felt was important to tell—and we lent our ability to organize information to that process."

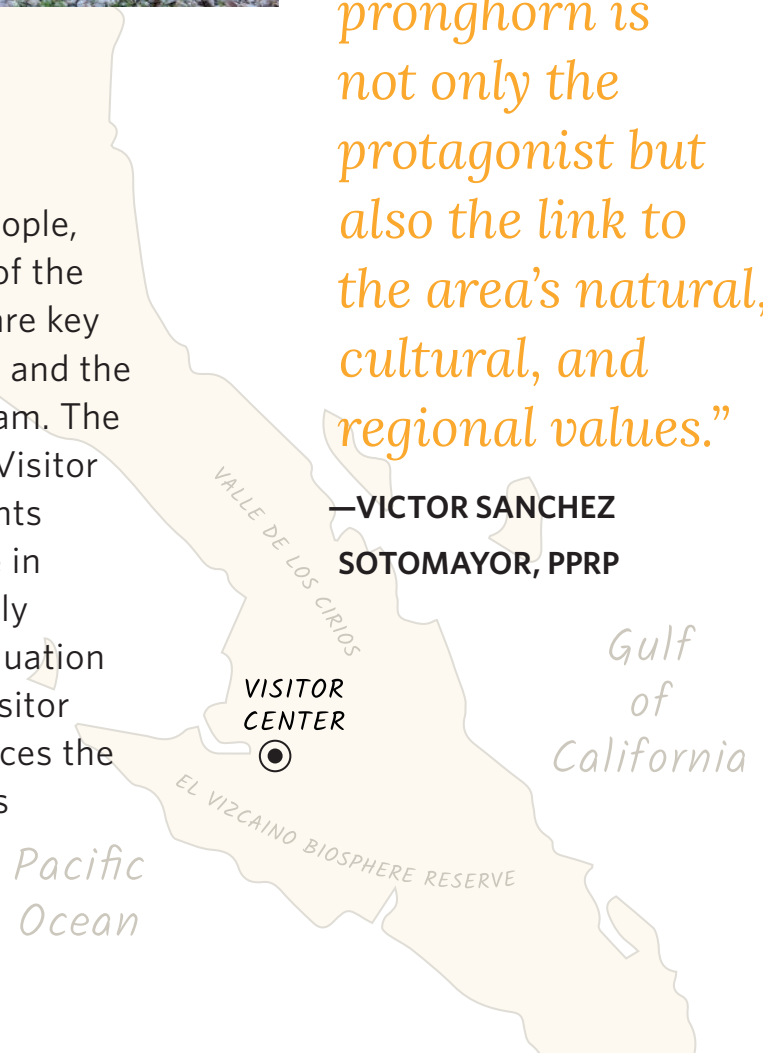
After more than a year of work, the Zoo team traveled to the Visitor Center for the grand opening on November 5, 2022.



“Through a generous donation from the L.A. Zoo—and with their team’s expertise and effort—it has been possible to create an exhibition in which the peninsular pronghorn is not only the protagonist but also the link to the area’s natural, cultural, and regional values.”

—VICTOR SANCHEZ
SOTOMAYOR, PPRP

The event was attended by nearly 100 people, including community members; leaders of the farming collectives (called *ejidos*), who are key stakeholders in pronghorn conservation; and the general of the military in Baja and his team. The event was an unmitigated success. The Visitor Center and the conservation achievements it represents is now a point of high pride in the community. The Zoo team is currently working with the PPRP to set up the evaluation systems necessary to ensure that the Visitor Center meets its long-term goals, advances the conservation of pronghorn, and supports the local communities.



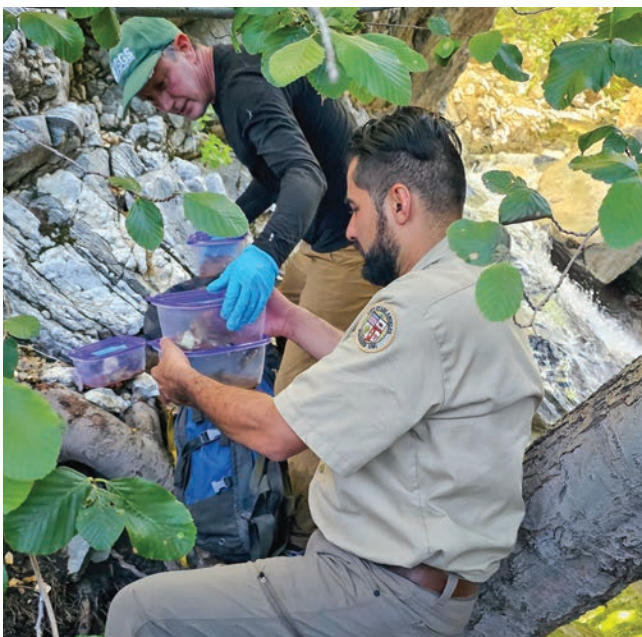
Southern Mountain Yellow-Legged Frogs

The southern mountain yellow-legged frog was once widespread in the San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and southern Sierra Nevada mountains, but is now on the brink of extinction. For more than fifteen years, L.A. Zoo staff have contributed their husbandry expertise to the Southern Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog Recovery Program, a collaborative endeavor with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and other partners.

Last year our frogs produced more than 1,000 offspring. We handed 851 tadpoles

over to USGS biologists, along with 15 subadult frogs that were rescued as tadpoles from the 2020 Bobcat fire. All were released back to the wild. We also transferred several hundred tadpoles to the Santa Ana Zoo and the Aquarium of the Pacific to raise to adulthood, essentially head-starting them for future release.

Since 2007, when our breeding colony was established, nearly 6,000 zoo-bred offspring have been released into the San Gabriel Mountains and surrounding habitats.





6,000

Zoo-bred frogs
released since
2007

(Left) Southern mountain yellow-legged frog. Photo by Jamie Pham

(Opposite page, left) L.A. Zoo Animal Keeper Carlos Tirado assists USGS in a recent release of southern mountain yellow-legged frogs. Photo by Sam Abundis

(Opposite page, right) Zoo-raised frogs are released in secluded streams in parts of their historic range. Photo by Adam Backlin/USGS

“For almost the last decade, the L.A. Zoo has been a phenomenal partner in the captive breeding and head-starting of the southern mountain yellow-legged frogs and their recovery in Los Angeles County. The L.A. Zoo has contributed exceptional facilities and captive care to this program, and the numbers of frogs released back into the wild reflects that professional skill set that they bring to this critical frog recovery program. The zoo has been an amazing partner ensuring the long-term persistence of this species in the wild.”

—DR. ROBERT FISHER, CONSERVATION BIOLOGIST, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

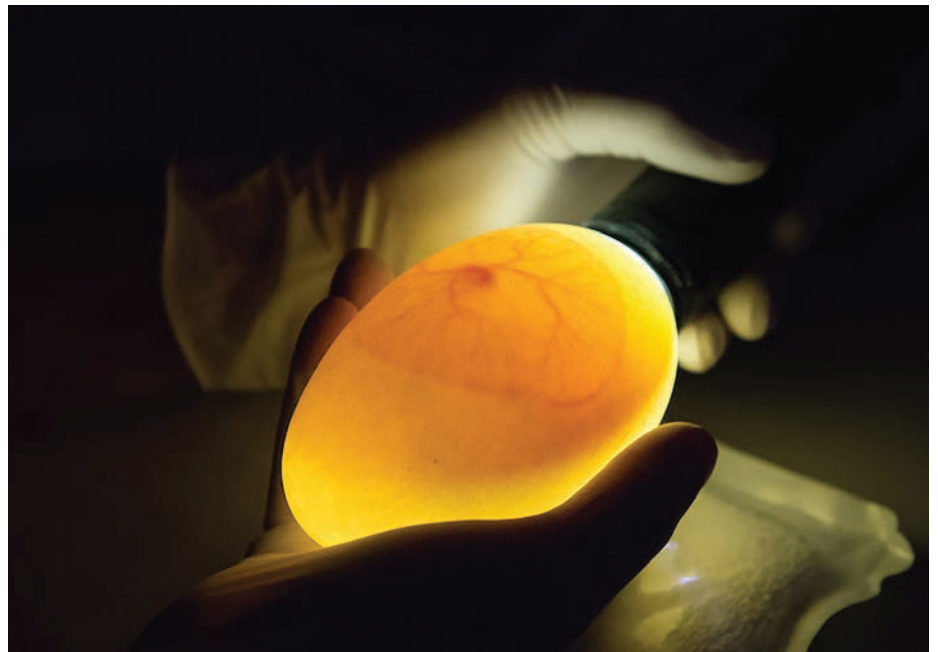


California Condors

The Zoo continues to be a leader in the conservation of California condors. Our experts assisted field biologists with nest entries in southern California in the summer and fall of 2022 and sent eight condors hatched at the Zoo in 2021 to the wild for release. The Zoo hatched 14 condors in 2022, and our condor team continued to pioneer the use of double brooding (having a breeding pair raise two chicks at once), with four double broods in 2022. The team also treated six California condors that came in with medical issues. Four of those birds were able to be rehabilitated and re-released to the wild.

(Top) Perhaps no species better represents the L.A. Zoo's commitment to conservation than the California condor. Photo by Jamie Pham

(Right) Eggs are carefully monitored throughout the incubation process. Photo by Jamie Pham



2022-23 CONDOR ACTIVITIES BY THE NUMBERS



8 released



14 hatched



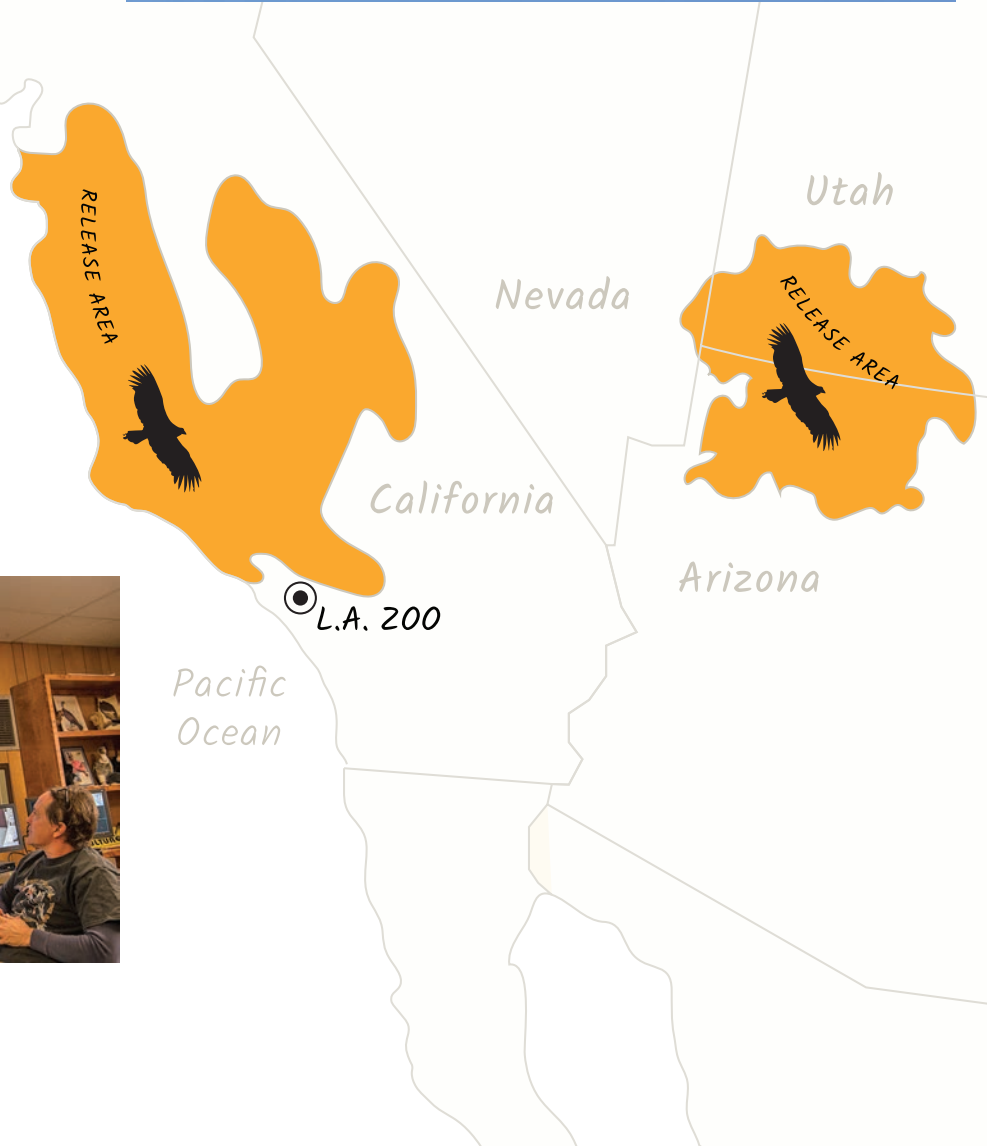
6 treated

Thanks to collaborative conservation efforts, the world population of California condors, which dipped to as low as 22 in the 1980s, has climbed to more than 550 individuals.



(Right) Captive-bred condors are released into the wild yearly at sites in southern, central, and northern California; Arizona; and Baja California, Mexico. Photo by Jake Owens.

(Below) A bank of video monitors allows keepers to manage condors while staying out of the birds' sight. Photo by Jamie Pham





30 Bearded
Vulture
decline in
South Africa



(Left) Accessing nest sites required the team to rappel down remote cliff faces. Photo by Shannon Hoffman

(Below, top) Two bearded vulture eggs in a wild nest. Photo by Graeme Bruschi

(Below, bottom) Chandra lent her condor expertise to the task of raising newly hatched vultures. Photo by Chandra David

Bearded Vultures

Expertise from the L.A. Zoo has been invaluable farther afield, as well. Veteran California condor Keeper Chandra David traveled to South Africa last year to help with the recovery of another vulture in crisis: the bearded vulture. Within hours of landing in-country, she was braving freezing temps and frozen waterfalls, rappelling down cliff faces to gather available eggs. (Bearded vultures often lay two eggs but raise only one of the chicks, so collecting the second egg is not detrimental to the wild population.) “Chandra’s input and observation into our operations was invaluable, and I learned exponentially from having her work as part of the team,” says Shannon Hoffman of the Bearded Vulture Breeding Programme. The group successfully raised and hatched five eggs and expects to release birds in 2026.



Javan Warty Pig

The Cikananga Conservation Breeding Center (CCBC) is dedicated to the conservation of endangered and critically endangered species endemic to Indonesia, using captive breeding and release into the wild. CCBC Breeding Center Manager Bertie Ferns sent his thanks for the grant that the L.A. Zoo awarded his organization in 2022. "As one of our largest sponsors, the support from L.A. Zoo in 2022-2023 has been invaluable for our *ex-situ* conservation breeding program of endangered Javan warty pig. This year our local population reached its largest number ever, surpassing the mark of 50 individuals, and our breeding successes included multiple first-time parents and founder individuals. With a successful conservation breeding program such as this, we are then delighted to be able to have direct *in-situ* conservation impact by contributing to reintroduction programs in East Java."



(Top) Warty pigs are named for the pronounced facial warts on adult males. Photo by CCBC-YCKT

(Center) Each piglet born at the breeding center represents a big step toward the species' recovery. Photo by CCBC-YCKT

(Left) The success of the breeding program enabled CCBC to translocate nine Javan warty pigs to Baluran National Park in 2022. Photo by CCBC-YCKT



L.A. ZOO FIELD TEAM 2022-2023 ACHIEVEMENTS



Visited gharial habitat and
nest sites



Conducted wildlife surveys



Assessed potential
incubation center sites



Met with field teams,
government representatives,
and partners

Engaged with community
members on human-wildlife
coexistence

Gained support of local
stakeholders

Gharial Nests in India

Once abundant throughout South Asia, Indian gharials now exist only in parts of India and Nepal, where fewer than 1,000 mature individuals are estimated to remain. The Los Angeles Zoo is home to four Indian gharials in human care, which are part of the global efforts to ensure survival of this species. Since 2015, the Zoo has supported gharial research and conservation through our annual conservation grant program, including partnering with Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)'s efforts to locate, protect, and monitor gharial nest sites along India's Gandak River—home to the largest breeding population located outside a protected area. In Spring 2023, we sent a three-person team to support WTI in expanding the Indian Gharial Recovery Program's efforts through building an incubation center that will temporarily relocate eggs away from floods until they hatch and to identify and plan for the development of a community education center. Both efforts will aid in the survival of more eggs.

Like all of WTI's efforts, the gharial program is built upon the heavy engagement and inclusion of local communities. Field surveys are conducted by WTI biologists and local fishermen, whose deep knowledge of the river and its wildlife is integral to the conservation success.

■ *This field work was made possible through the Diane and Mark Montgomery Conservation Fellowship.*

“It’s a matter of great satisfaction that L.A. Zoo has agreed to strengthen the ongoing conservation efforts. A total of 37 adult gharials, 50 sub-adults, 49 juveniles, and 81 yearlings were observed during a recent survey. Now, this entire stretch of the river should be declared as a conservation reserve for gharials.”

—SAMIR KUMAR SINHA, JOINT DIRECTOR, WTI



(Top) At an incubation site, a baby gharial begins to break out of its leathery shell. Photo by WTI



(Left) The L.A. Zoo and WTI team surveys for gharials and other wildlife near the proposed incubation center sites. Photo by Jitendra Gautum



“We don’t want to just send a giant otter down there and then call it a day, we want to contribute to increasing their chances of success, even if the chances are already really high.”

—L.A. ZOO’S DR. JAKE OWENS

(Right) Flying into the field site in Iberá National Park. Photo by Jake Owens

Giant River Otters

Giant otters are currently extinct in Argentina, but a giant otter reintroduction will soon be happening in Iberá National Park, where L.A. Zoo’s Dr. Jake Owens traveled in December 2022. He went to offer his expertise in consortium building, partnership development, and conservation planning to the newly forming International Giant Otter Alliance. The Alliance will build and organize shared access to knowledge resources, expertise, and funding sources in order to increase the success of the translocations.

FUNDACIÓN
REWILDING
ARGENTINA





(Top) Giant otters are listed as endangered on the IUCN red list of threatened species. Photo by Jake Owens



(Bottom, left) While in Argentina, Dr. Owens participated in the translocation of a rehabilitated maned wolf. Photo by Jake Owens



(Bottom, right) A team conducts a giant river otter survey. Photo by Jake Owens

Argentina

PARAGUAY

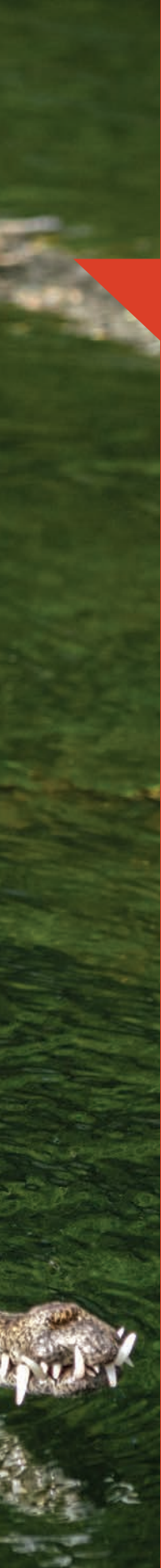
BRAZIL





08

Evidence-Based Conservation



Research is integral to conservation action. Conservation must be based on fact-driven principles that can come only from research. As emotional as our motivations may be, our solutions must be grounded in scientific data, with evaluation strategies built into all our efforts. This is essential to tracking and increasing our impact.

PHOTO BY JAMIE PHAM

Ensuring Evidence-Based Support

Each year, the Los Angeles Zoo, in partnership with the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA), provides funding through its annual conservation grants program to support the efforts of our conservation partners around the world. Through a rigorous grant application and selection process, we evaluate projects to ensure they are consistent with the objectives of our Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP). The process requires that applicants identify the specific outcomes the work will achieve if successful and methods to evaluate their progress. Importantly, we ask applicants to reflect on the evidence that supports the potential effectiveness of their proposed work, a critical—but often overlooked—step in conservation planning. The Zoo has partnered with the University of Cambridge Conservation Evidence Partnership and officially signed on as a Conservation Evidence Champion to inform our programs and demonstrate our commitment to incorporating conservation evidence throughout our efforts.



**Conservation
Evidence**

Providing Evidence to Improve Practice

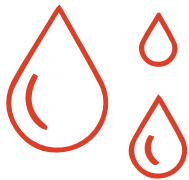




PUERTO RICAN CRESTED TOAD DISEASE ASSESSMENT



Samples are collected from
toads in human care and wild
populations



Samples are collected
from wild ponds and zoo
enclosures



L.A. Zoo funding will pay for
analysis of 110 samples

Disease Research for Critically Endangered Amphibians

The Puerto Rican Crested Toad Conservancy (PRCTC) is a nonprofit organization consisting of a consortium of zoos, individuals, and organizations working together for the long-term survival of the Puerto Rican crested toad. Its mission is to establish self-sustainable populations of Puerto Rican crested toads and to implement conservation actions that will mutually benefit humans and other native species.

It is imperative that amphibians used in reintroduction efforts are free from diseases that could negatively impact wild populations. Recently, a novel pathogen has been detected in this toad and other amphibian species in human care. It is unknown whether this potential pathogen is a disease threat or simply an opportunistic bacterium. The Los Angeles Zoo provided funding to institute research in managed and wild populations to identify ways to test for the bacterium. This important research will determine whether the pathogen is a concern to reintroduction activities, and if identified as a threat, will assist in development of protocols and treatments to successfully protect amphibians.



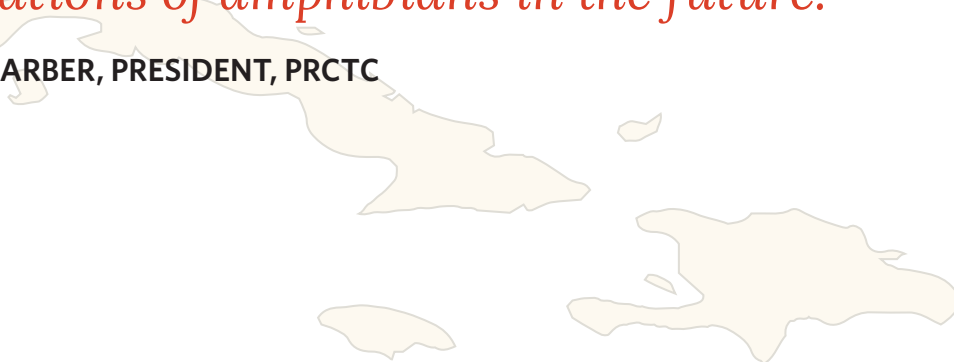


“Support from the L.A. Zoo enabled us to start a rapid assessment of a new potential disease threat. Outcomes from this research will assist in the development of disease screening and treatment protocols if deemed necessary to safeguard managed and wild populations of amphibians in the future.”

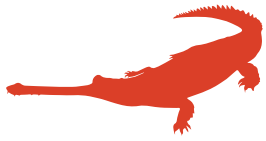
—DIANE BARBER, PRESIDENT, PRCTC

(Left) The only toad native to Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican crested toad has suffered rapid population declines. Photo by J.P. Zegarra

(Right) The Zoo stepped in to help the PRCTC rapidly assess a potential disease threat to these toads. Photo by D. Barber



Puerto Rico



Securing a Future for Gharials



(Left) A tracker listens for the beeping signals of a radio-tagged gharial. Photo by Gharial Ecology Project

(Right) The Indian gharial is one of the world's most endangered crocodilians. Photo by Gharial Ecology Project

One of the most distinctive—and endangered—crocodilians is the Indian gharial. The species' last stronghold is the National Chambal Sanctuary (NCS), a 2,100-square-mile protected area in northern India. Recent surveys suggest that a robust adult population exists in the upper NCS, but yearlings and juveniles are absent despite the annual production of hatchlings. With support from the L.A. Zoo, the Gharial Ecology Project of the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust is seeking to fill in major gaps in understanding gharial ecology in the upper NCS, specifically the species' seasonal movements and utilization of resources.

In 2022, we funded the purchase of 20 VHF tracking radios to be deployed on juvenile gharials that have been “head-started” in captivity and released to upstream river sites. Data on the seasonal activities, behaviors, and movements of these individuals will be collected and compared to those of wild gharials in the region—information that will be vital to informing future conservation actions for the species.



Zoo Expertise in the Field



With fewer than 2,500 remaining in the wild, information about mountain tapir biology is limited. Los Angeles Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Jordan Davis-Powell knows the species well—L.A. is one of only two zoos in North America that care for mountain tapirs. In October 2022, she traveled to Ecuador’s Llanganates National Park to study how tapirs use their habitat, how their health challenges compare to those in human care, and the relationship between local residents and tapirs—all important objectives for conservation planning.



The most threatened tapir species, mountain tapirs are difficult to find in the wild. Davis-Powell and her teammates spent long hours trekking through thick jungles to locate their subjects. Each field exam takes about 30 minutes, during which tapirs are anesthetized and fitted with GPS tracking collars. Tapirs undergo a thorough health assessment, and biological samples are collected.

■
Dr. Jordan Davis-Powell’s trip was made possible by the L.A. Zoo Veterinarian Advanced Studies Grant, funded by an anonymous donor.

“This research will improve our care and management of mountain tapirs in the wild and in human care.”

—DR. JORDAN DAVIS-POWELL

(Top) Dr. Powell examines a wild tapir. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jordan Davis-Powell

(Bottom) GPS tracking collars will gather valuable data on tapir behavior and habitat use. Photo courtesy Dr. Jordan Davis-Powell

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In addition to the support of our donors, we would like to acknowledge the work that staff and volunteers do throughout the Zoo each day that supports our shared mission in conservation. This includes the fundraising activities of the Angela Collier World of Birds Theater and Show and the ADOPT (Animals Depend on People, Too) program, which both directly fund projects around the world through our Annual Zoo Conservation Grants Program.



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*Saving Wildlife.
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