



Houston Zoo Wildlife Conservation Program

Mission: Houston Zoo connects communities with animals, inspiring action to save wildlife.

Vision: Houston Zoo will be a leader in the global movement to save wildlife.

The Houston Zoo's wildlife conservation program has many facets to ensure success in protecting animals from extinction. We provide financial and technical support to community-based conservation projects that are committed to education, research, awareness-development, capacity-building and demonstrated efforts to reduce threats to wildlife in their focus areas. The Zoo invests in projects that are relevant to the Zoo's institutional goals and animal collection. We work within our own Houston Zoo community to affect changes in behavior that will reduce threats to wildlife both locally and globally.

Wildlife conservation projects selection:

Partners are selected based on focal species and regions represented in the Zoo's collection and/or with a critical need for recovery in the wild. The Zoo uses information and recommendations from our extensive conservation network of professionals to assist with the selection process. We gradually build relationships and monitor impact as we scale up our support. Partners need to communicate consistently, align with our zoo expertise and resources, and demonstrate a commitment to long-term conservation efforts. Projects must be directed by a local leader, native to the project area, or, be in the process of training local leaders from the communities in the area

Our conservation efforts are collaborative in nature and incorporate partnerships with other like-minded organizations (ie. Wildlife organizations, universities, medical centers, etc.). The Houston Zoo promotes collaboration within the conservation community by funding programs that unite numerous wildlife efforts for greater impact.

Criteria for selection and evaluation of conservation partner projects:

We evaluate our partners using the following weighted criteria to track and ensure conservation success.

1. **Partner Relationship:**

- a. Consistent and thorough in communication with Zoo
- b. Mutually beneficial
- c. Respectful relationship
- d. Network approval
- e. Clearly identified goals and objectives
- f. Achieved annual results agreed upon by zoo and partner (this is not for new projects. This is added when we run current projects through criteria)

2. **Region/Species:**
 - a. Aligns with regions of Zoo collection/master plan
 - b. Species of critical conservation need (IUCN threatened or above and data deficient)
 - c. Protects more than 1 zoo taxon
3. **Long-term community based planning & growth**
 - a. Local leader or plans to integrate local leadership
 - b. Project leader lives more than 6 months each year in region
 - c. Majority of budget spent locally
 - d. Education, threat reduction, community development programs in place
4. **Partnerships**
 - a. Local government and policy alignment
 - b. Strong regional partners (NGOs, communities, parks)
 - c. Strong international partners (zoos, IUCN)
5. **Staff Participation**
 - a. Project aligns with zoo staff skill sets
6. **Threats**
 - a. Threats to species/region align with Zoo programs (Take Action, Education)

Wildlife Conservation Partner Projects:

Project/Wildlife Focus	Region	Threat Reduction Initiative (Take Action)
Sea Turtle Rehabilitation and Recovery	Texas (Upper Texas Coast/Galveston Island)	Sustainable seafood, Plastics
Houston Toad Reintroduction and Recovery	Texas	Pollinators/eliminating fertilizer use
Attwater's Prairie Chicken Reintroduction	Texas	Pollinators
Pride , protecting lions and other wildlife in 3 countries. (Niassa Lion Project, Ewaso Lions, Ruaha Carnivore Project and Lion Guardians) through education programs, gov't partnerships and research.	East Africa – Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya	
Gorilla Doctors, GRACE, Conservation Heritage-Turambe , protecting mountain and Grauer's gorillas by collaborating with educators, veterinarian support, rehabilitation and	Eastern Africa – Rwanda, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo	Cell phone recycling

conservation organizations in the region. Local staff capacity building.		
Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association , wildlife trade reduction, education, rehabilitation, release and translocation of crowned cranes to historical habitat	Rwanda	
Okapi Conservation Center , protection efforts, research and educating locals	Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa	Cell phone recycling
GERP , Protecting lemurs and other wildlife by collaborating with all other conservation organizations in the region. Local staff capacity building. Protection efforts, research and educating locals.	Madagascar	Paper recycling/wood awareness
Painted Dog Conservation , protection efforts, research and educating locals.	Zimbabwe, Africa	
Hirola Conservation Program , conducting research, protection efforts, habitat recovery, research and educating locals.	Kenya, Africa	
Namibia's Black Rhinos , community-based outreach inspiring pro-rhino attitudes and behaviors among locals.	Namibia, Africa	
Mar Alliance , conducting research and protecting sharks, rays, sea turtles and other marine wildlife by collaborating with conservation organizations and government in 5 countries.	Central America	Sustainable seafood, Plastics
Panama Amphibian Rescue & Conservation Project (PARC-EVACC) -conducting research and educating locals.	Panama	
Lowland Tapir Conservation Initiative -conducting research and educating locals.	Brazil's Pantanal and Cerrado	Paper recycling
Giant Armadillo Project / Giant Anteater -conducting research and educating locals.	Brazil's Pantanal and Cerrado	Paper recycling
Argentina Marine Wildlife conducting research, protecting marine wildlife (sea turtles, seals, sea lions, penguins, and whales,) by collaborating with zoos, aquariums, researchers, and government officials in the region	Argentina	Sustainable seafood, Plastics

Ecology Project International -conducting research and educating locals	Galapagos Islands, Ecuador	Sustainable seafood, Plastics
Danau Girang Field Centre -conducting research, conflict reduction, illegal wildlife trade research and local capacity building to protect elephants, small carnivores and pangolins. Partners with NGO's, Sabah Wildlife Department, and agroforestry / palm oil plantations.	Sabah, Borneo - Malaysia	Palm oil, paper
Hutan: Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project - conducting research -orangutan ecology and conservation status, adaptation to degraded and fragmented habitat, conflicts reduction, including improved land use and reforestation, community engagement/local capacity building and education.	Sabah, Borneo - Malaysia	Palm oil, paper
Painted Terrapin (Batagur) Conservation , Terrapin conservation, local anti-poaching efforts, illegal wildlife trade research, research and educating local communities.	Sumatra, Indonesia	Palm oil, Paper
Proyecto Titi , Cotton top tamarin and blue billed curassow conservation, illegal wildlife pet trade research, monitoring/research and educating local communities.	Colombia	Palm oil, Paper, Plastics
Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society , Snake and other wildlife conservation, local anti-poaching efforts, illegal wildlife trade research, research and educating local communities.	Eastern Ghats, India	
International Crane Foundation , Whooping Crane conservation, research and educating local communities.	Aransas, Texas	Sustainable seafood, Plastics, Pollinators

Evaluation of conservation partner projects:

To ensure partner projects continue to meet our conservation program criteria, are moving towards achieving their conservation goals, and are most effectively using our funds and resources we facilitate:

- Participation in programming
- Face-to-face visits with partners
- Frequent communication

The Zoo assists conservation partner projects through:

- Improvement of local livelihoods

- Training and capacity building
- Funding mechanism
- Marketing and media exposure
- Conservation networking
- Field assistance
- Reducing threats through Take Action programs

Conservation partners provide the Zoo with:

- Assistance/credibility with media
- Donor identification and cultivation
- Assistance and participation in zoo programs
- Conservation training and education

Zoo staff Conservation Collaborator's projects:

Houston Zoo staff are collaborating and assisting with guidance of specific conservation efforts to enhance their efforts and are integrating other staff members in to assist with the work.

- Blue-billed Curassow conservation, Colombia
- Coral Restoration Foundation, Florida
- Marianas Avifauna Recovery Project, Saipan and Guam, Mariana Islands
- WildTracks (Howler monkey rehabilitation and release), Belize

Houston Zoo Conservation Research Associates:

We provide funding for the salaries of research and education staff from our field conservation projects.

- Dr. Jonah Ratsimbazafy, Lemur conservationist and research, Madagascar
- Dr. Farina Othman, Danau Girang, Elephant conservationist and research, Borneo
- Dr. Olivier Nsengimana, Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association, Veterinarian and conservationist, Rwanda
- Agostinho Jorge, Niassa Lion community and elephant-beehive fence project programs manager, Mozambique
- Rachel Amador, PRIDE Lion Conservation Alliance Development Director
- Gabriel Massocato, Giant Armadillo Project conservationist and researcher, Brazil
- Valerie Akuredusenge, Director, Conservation Heritage Turambe, gorilla conservation educator, Rwanda
- Monga Kiete, Okapi Conservation Project, Okapi conservation educator, Africa
- Joko Guntoro, Painted Terrapin conservationist and researcher, Sumatra, Indonesia

- Elisa Panjang, Pangolin conservation and research, Borneo
- Hilmar Salazar, MarAlliance, shark, ray and sea turtle conservationist, Belize
- Megan Chevis, MarAlliance, shark, ray and sea turtle conservationist, Panama
- Gaby Ochoa, MarAlliance, shark, ray and sea turtle conservationist, Honduras
- Mario Alves, Giant Anteater Project, Brazil
- Corinna M. Holfus, Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator, International Crane Foundation

Wildlife Conservation Affiliate Organizations:

We collaborate with and provide support for the following wildlife conservation organizations that have long-term commitments to conservation outcomes and impact that align with the Zoo.

- **Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders (EWCL)** – Wildlife professional leadership training program designed and directed by conservation thought leaders to empower the next generation of conservation leaders
- **Center for Conservation Peace Building (CCPB)** – Wildlife professional training program for conflict transformation and peace building
- **International Elephant Foundation** – Worldwide elephant conservation funding and awareness
- **International Rhino Foundation** – Conservation focused on all 5 species of rhinos with species specific programming in Asia and Africa
- **Jane Goodall Institute** –Tchimpounga Rehabilitation Center and community education programming in the Republic of Congo
- **Photo Ark** –National Geographic campaign to spotlight the importance of all animals in captivity and to raise awareness about the value of all biodiversity
- **Teton Science Schools**- Conservation and education programing in Yellowstone National Park
- **Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG)** -provides resources and guidance to increase impact and collaborate conservation efforts
- **Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN)** –wildlife organization that supports community-based conservation efforts worldwide
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** –Sea turtle conservation and rehabilitation, Texas
- **Wildtracks** –Howler monkey rescue and rehabilitation, Belize
- **Texas Black Bear Alliance** –Black bear conservation, Texas
- **Grevy’s Zebra Trust** –Grevy’s zebra conservation, Kenya
- **Malaysian Tiger Conservation Project** –WCS lead tiger conservation, Malaysia
- **AZA SAFE** – targeted, collaborative Zoo conservation effort to save species from extinction
- **Project Dragonfly** (Miami University of Ohio)- Global conservation education program working to build an alliance of individuals with first-hand knowledge of inquiry-driven, community-based learning for the benefit of ecological communities.
- **Save Vietnam Wildlife** – wildlife organization, committed to protecting and increasing populations of threatened wildlife in Vietnam. A focus on pangolins, the most trafficked mammal in the world.

- **BCI (Bat Conservation International)** – wildlife organization that works to conserve the world’s bats and their ecosystems to ensure a healthy planet. Creating a world in which bats and humans successfully coexist.

Take Action Programs:

The Zoo’s mission of “Connecting communities with animals, inspiring action to save the natural world” is supported by our Take Action programs. Each program highlights threats species we have at the Zoo face in the wild. Guests are presented with actions they can make in their daily lives to help save animals in the wild.

Current Take Action Programs:

- **Electronics (Cell phone) Reduction and Recycling:** Recycle unused handheld devices/cell phones to save wildlife like gorillas, chimps and okapi.
- **Ocean-friendly Seafood Awareness:** Choose fish that has been caught in a responsible way by downloading the Seafood Watch app to save wildlife like sharks and rays.
- **Plastic Reduction and Recycling:** Reduce the use of plastic by using fabric bags when you go shopping to save wildlife like sea turtles.
- **Paper Reduction and Recycling:** Purchase recycled content paper products (toilet paper, paper towels) to reduce the use of paper to save forests that wildlife like bears need to survive.
- **Deforestation-free Palm Oil Awareness:** Become more aware of what ingredients are in the products you buy and only purchase items that contain sustainable palm oil. Use the Houston Zoo website to ask companies such as Kraft, Kellogg’s and General Mills to commit to saving wildlife like elephants, tiger, clouded leopards and orangutans through more sustainable palm oil production.
- **Pollinator Awareness:** Visit the nine pollinator gardens on Zoo grounds and plant what you see there in your yard. Buy colorful flowers like pentas, salvia and verbena from local nurseries and plant them in outside pots or your garden to provide homes and food to pollinators like birds, bats, butterflies and bees.