



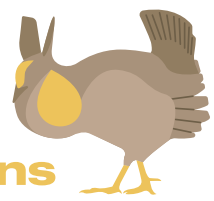
# Saving Wildlife Impact Report

2025




# 2025 Saving Wildlife Successes

Hatched and released  
**87 Attwater's prairie chickens**  
 to save these critically endangered birds from extinction.



Partnered with 1,200 community members to restore  
**150 acres of critical lemur habitat**  
 in Madagascar.




Trained youth to protect  
**18 green sea turtle nests**  
 in Tortuga Bay, Galápagos.



Removed  
**4,827 lbs. of litter pollution**  
 from Texas habitats to protect local wildlife from illness and injury.



Shared sustainable farming practices with  
**3,808 households**  
 in Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect okapi habitat.



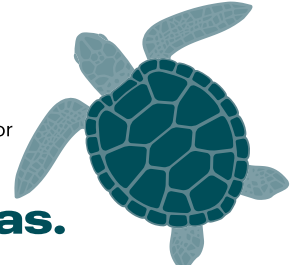
Planted  
**3,000 bamboo seedlings and 100,020 trees in Rwanda**  
 to reduce human dependence on gorilla and grey crowned crane habitat.



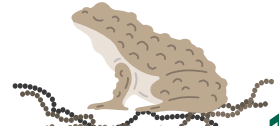
Rescued  
**36 Sunda pangolins**  
 from illegal wildlife trafficking and released them back into the wild in Malaysia.



Rescued and provided critical care for  
**149 wild sea turtles in Texas.**



Propagated and released  
**1,599,654 Houston toad eggs**  
 into the wild to save this Texas toad from extinction.



More than  
**900 Houston Zoo staff and volunteers**  
 are saving animals in the wild.



Certified  
**120 Brazilian beekeepers**  
 in using giant armadillo-safe practices to reduce competition for honey.



Trained  
**220 volunteers**  
 in safe snake handling to reduce fear-based snake killing in India.



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The Houston Zoo Saving Wildlife Impact Report is a reflection of the work the Zoo has accomplished to save wildlife locally and globally, in collaboration with our wildlife conservation partners. This report is organized by geographic region and details accomplishments from 2025.





**Mission:**  
**Connect**  
**communities**  
**with animals,**  
**inspiring action**  
**to save wildlife.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, Houston Zoo advanced its role as both a trusted community-based conservation organization and a global conservation leader, demonstrating that conservation succeeds when wildlife and people thrive together. Across our zoo campus, our Houston community, and our global partnerships, we invested in solutions that save animals, restore ecosystems, and strengthen the livelihoods of the people who share space with wildlife.

This year, our conservation work, and the work of our conservation partners, delivered measurable wins for wildlife at scale. From helping secure UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status for more than one million acres of habitat in Malaysian Borneo, to maintaining five consecutive years of zero rhino poaching across Namibia's largest unfenced rhino landscape, our partners proved that with Zoo support and long-term commitment, they could achieve lasting results. In Colombia, restored tropical dry forests supported the return of native tamarins while creating scores of stable conservation jobs. In Texas, newly protected coastal lands now safeguard wintering whooping cranes for generations to come. Across Africa, Asia, and the Americas, Houston Zoo restored habitat, promoted human-wildlife coexistence, and supported vulnerable populations through locally led action.

Just as importantly, 2025 reaffirmed conservation is a human endeavor. Our investments supported Indigenous beekeepers in the Amazon, women-led conservation livelihoods in East Africa, community rangers protecting rhinos on foot, and local restoration crews replanting forests tree by tree. These efforts reduced threats to wildlife while generating income and strengthening security and growing stewardship rooted in place.

Here at home, Houston Zoo continued to model conservation in action. Staff and volunteers planted nearly 18,000 native plants, removed abandoned crab traps from Texas bays, restored habitat for endangered Houston toads, and provided lifesaving care to injured sea turtles along the Gulf Coast. Through hands-on training, our team built conservation capacity while delivering restored wildlife habitat at local bays, bayous, and beaches. At the same time, innovative storytelling, including a documentary produced with Houston's NBC affiliate, celebrated lion-saving success in Kenya with our whole Houston community, connecting distant impact with shared responsibility.

Altogether, Houston Zoo invested more than \$4.2 million directly into wildlife-saving work in 2025, supporting partners across four continents and strengthening the systems that allow conservation to endure. The Houston Zoo investments you make possible are protecting wildlife, supporting communities locally and around the world, and are powering lasting change.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to conservation that is collaborative, community-centered, and grounded in measurable impact. The challenges facing wildlife are complex, but the successes highlighted here demonstrate what is possible when passion for mission, community leadership, and unity through authentic partnership come together. With the continued support of our board of directors, members, donors, staff, volunteers, and partners, Houston Zoo will keep building a future where communities locally and around the world are connected to animals and inspired to save wildlife.

“Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference.”

—Jane Goodall



# WILDLIFE-SAVING COLLABORATIONS

## NORTH AMERICA

- Baylor College of Medicine
- Conservation Planning Specialist Group
- Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders
- Galveston Bay Foundation
- Hermann Park Conservancy
- Houston Audubon
- Houston Parks and Recreation Department
- International Crane Foundation
- National Park Conservation Association
- National Park Service
- Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce — Whooping Crane Festival
- San Antonio Bay Partnership
- SPLash: Stopping Plastic Litter Along Shorelines
- Texas A&M University
- Texas Black Bear Alliance
- Texan by Nature
- Texas Conservation Alliance
- Texas Native Cats
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Texas State University
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service

▣ Texas

▣ Belize

▣ Galápagos Islands

▣ Colombia

▣ Brazil

▣ Bolivia

## LATIN AMERICA

- ALPZA: Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- Armonía Bolivia
- Belize Zoo
- Charles Darwin Foundation/ Giant Tortoise Movement Ecology Program
- Fundación ECOS
- ICAS: Instituto de Conservação de Animais Silvestres
- Lowland Tapir Conservation Initiative
- Projecto Ariranhas
- Fundación Proyecto Tití

▣ Nigeria

▣ Uganda

▣ Kenya

▣ Rwanda

▣ Democratic Republic of the Congo

▣ Mozambique

▣ Namibia

▣ Madagascar

## AFRICA

- Conservation Heritage-Turambe
- Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund
- Ewaso Lions
- GERP: Groupe d'etude et de recherche sur les primates de Madagascar
- Gorilla Doctors
- Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
- Madagascar Fauna & Flora Group
- Niassa Carnivore Project
- Northern Rangelands Trust
- Okapi Conservation Project
- Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association
- Save Giraffes Now
- SMACON: Small Mammal Conservation Organization
- Somali Giraffe Project
- Turtle Survival Alliance

▣ India

▣ Borneo

▣ Indonesia

## ASIA

- Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society
- Hutan
- International Elephant Foundation
- International Rhino Foundation
- Pangolin Aware
- Satucita Foundation
- Seratu Aatai



# NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE

Partner with

**21 wildlife conservation organizations.**

Houston Zoo has worked to **save wildlife in this region since 2004.**

**Over 100 Zoo species** are found in this region, which are being protected by our partners' efforts.



“

The Houston Zoo has been one of the International Crane Foundation's strongest partners in Texas for many years. When we decided to take this next big step to acquire and manage a whooping crane sanctuary, the Houston Zoo was one of the first in line to help us. Their two-year commitment both to help with the acquisition and the initial restoration work was vital to protecting this land. We look forward to many more years of partnership in whooping crane conservation with the Houston Zoo!

**DR. CARTER CROUCH**  
*International Crane Foundation*



## HOUSTON ZOO AND INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION PARTNER TO SAVE WHOOPING CRANES

In 2025, Houston Zoo supported the International Crane Foundation to secure critical habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast where endangered whooping cranes spend the winter each year. Zoo funding contributed to the purchase of 1,150 acres of land that is now permanently protected for cranes and other native wildlife.

This conserved landscape includes wetlands and coastal prairie that provide whooping cranes with safe places to feed, rest, and shelter during the winter months. Land conversion to subdivisions and RV parks is the biggest threat to whooping cranes on the Texas coast. Protecting land from development ensures whooping crane pairs have ample habitat as the population continues to slowly increase and highly territorial pairs disperse northward occupying more of their historic winter range along the coast.

Beyond supporting land acquisition, Houston Zoo also helps fund on-the-ground operations led by the International Crane Foundation in Texas. This support includes conservation outreach with hunting outfitters, where identification guides are provided to hunters to help them distinguish endangered whooping cranes from legally hunted sandhill cranes. This support contributes to ongoing conservation work in the region where whooping cranes overwinter, strengthening habitat protection and stewardship.

Working together, Houston Zoo and International Crane Foundation are ensuring whooping cranes have Texas habitat to return to each winter after their 2,500-mile migratory flight from far north Canada. Once down to just 16 individuals, it is these safe and protected lands that are needed to continue whooping crane recovery now numbering some 800, one of the greatest wildlife comeback stories in conservation.



## DECADES OF SAVING SEA TURTLES PAYS OFF

Conservation works, and green sea turtles are living proof! Once listed as Endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, green sea turtles have now been officially downlisted to Least Concern, a rare milestone that shows what sustained conservation action can achieve.

Houston Zoo has played a role in this recovery for decades, by tackling threats to sea turtles both in the water and on shore. Along the Texas coast, Zoo veterinarians and two dedicated keepers provide critical care to stranded turtles affected by cold stunning, fishing gear, boat strikes, and plastic pollution. **In 2025 alone, Houston Zoo saved 149 sick or injured sea turtles, including 87 green sea turtles, through life-saving veterinary work.**

Beyond rescue and rehabilitation, the Zoo focuses on prevention and threat mitigation. Houston Zoo was the first zoo in the country to eliminate single-use plastics on campus, regularly leads beach and bay cleanups, and designs behavior change campaigns to reduce human impacts on wildlife along the coast. Over the past decade, Zoo staff have documented more than 400 sea turtles in their care that were

harmed by litter and marine debris, reinforcing the importance of reducing plastic and fishing-related threats.

The downlisting of green sea turtles is proof that long-term, collaborative conservation works, and Houston Zoo remains committed to ensuring all seven sea turtle species can one day share in this success.



“

I started working with sea turtles in the mid 1980s. At the time, green turtles were practically unheard of on the upper Texas coast. If one came in, I'd drive to Galveston just to see it. In recent years, there has been a conspicuous rise in green turtle nesting in South Texas, a truly exciting development which will be fun to watch in the upcoming years.

**DR. JOE FLANAGAN**, Senior Veterinarian  
Houston Zoo





## STAFF TAKE ACTION FOR WILDLIFE

Houston Zoo's Saving Wildlife Training Opportunities program turns learning into action by giving Zoo staff and volunteers hands-on experience doing real, measurable work that directly benefits wildlife and their habitats. Through these field-based opportunities, participants actively contribute to wildlife conservation alongside partners across Texas.

Over the past year, staff and volunteers planted 17,887 native plants, restoring coastal prairie, forested areas, and urban green spaces that support pollinators, migratory birds, small mammals, and highly endangered species like Attwater's prairie chickens. They also cleared over 34 acres of invasive, non-native vegetation in Bastrop, Texas, helping recover habitat for the endangered Houston toad. Along the Texas coast, teams removed 56 abandoned crab traps from San Antonio Bay, preventing ghost fishing that can trap and kill blue crabs, sea turtles, river otters, and diamondback terrapins, all animals that play critical roles in coastal food webs. Closer to home, staff removed 4,827 pounds of litter pollution from beaches, bays, and bayous, reducing the risk of entanglement and injury and to wildlife.

Beyond the numbers, the program builds conservation capacity within the Zoo itself. Participants gain practical skills, deepen their understanding of local ecosystems, and leave opportunities better equipped to connect guests to wildlife-saving actions through authentic, first-hand stories. By empowering staff and volunteers to take part in fieldwork, the Saving Wildlife Training Opportunities program strengthens Houston Zoo's culture of conservation and delivers tangible benefits for wildlife in our community.

## NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE IMPACT

### Threat Reduction

Helped purchase **1,150** acres of land in Calhoun County, Texas, to establish a sanctuary for wintering whooping cranes along the Texas coastline.

Planted **17,887** native plants across the greater Houston region to create habitat for local wildlife.

Cleared non-native species from **34+** acres of land in Bastrop, Texas, to recover habitat for Houston toads.

Removed **56** abandoned crab traps from San Antonio Bay to prevent ghost fishing.

Removed **4,827** pounds of litter pollution from the greater Houston region to protect local wildlife from illness and injury.

Diverted **4,426** small electronic devices from landfills.

### Propagation, Rescue, and Release

Hatched and released **87** Attwater's prairie chickens to save these endangered birds from extinction.

Rescued and provided critical care for **149** wild sea turtles in Texas.

Propagated and released **1,599,654** Houston toad eggs into the wild to save this Texas toad from extinction.

### Education

Distributed **383** brochures across **26** hunting outfitters in Texas and Oklahoma to reduce accidental hunting-related whooping crane deaths.

### Capacity Building

Trained **66** team members from **12** Texas conservation organizations in community-based social marketing methods to increase the effectiveness of behavior change campaigns.

Trained **437** zoo staff and volunteers to plant native plants, restore local habitat, and remove invasive species across **53** different Saving Wildlife Training Opportunities.

“

The Zoo constantly offers methods of interacting or being more engaged with nature in and outside the Zoo. I've personally been able to attend several Saving Wildlife Training Opportunities across the Greater Houston area, and what gives me hope is how I've noticed little changes in how I approach my day-to-day. I think about the single-use plastics in my home and how I can phase them out, and I understand the value of native plant life. I think about how, through my role, I get to give the animals in our collection a natural environment through intentional craftsmanship, and how that helps connect communities to animals, inspiring action to save wildlife.”

**DIEGO OROZCO**, Exhibit Fabricator  
Houston Zoo



# LATIN AMERICAN WILDLIFE

Partner with

**9 wildlife conservation organizations across 5 countries.**

Houston Zoo has worked to **save wildlife in this region since 2004.**

**Over 140 Zoo species** are found in this region, which are being protected by our partners' efforts.

**7 conservation partner staff salaries** supported by Houston Zoo.



“

We believe in the power of partnerships to achieve our goals and our mission. It is not possible (or good) to do this work alone. We feel strong alignment with the Houston Zoo's values and approaches to conservation, and our partnership has created opportunities for financial support as well as professional exchanges that enrich our projects. We feel deep gratitude and look forward to future collaborations with the Houston Zoo in the years to come.

**ROSAMIRA GUILLEN**  
*Fundación Proyecto Titi*





## PROTECTING HIVES, SAVING GIANT ARMADILLOS

With support from Houston Zoo, Indigenous beekeepers in Brazil’s Xingu region are finding new ways to protect both their livelihoods and one of the Amazon’s most iconic mammals: the giant armadillo. Houston Zoo funding made it possible for the Instituto de Conservação de Animais Silvestres to work directly with Indigenous communities to reduce conflict between beekeeping and wildlife, while respecting local knowledge and traditions. This work builds on ICAS’s long-running *Armadillos and Honey* initiative, which began in 2015 and now supports a growing network of beekeepers across Brazil. Today, the program has helped certify approximately 120 beekeepers from five Brazilian states, strengthening coexistence between people, pollinators, and wildlife.

The Xingu Indigenous Territory spans 6.67 million acres and is home to 16 ethnic groups who have practiced community-led beekeeping for more than two decades. In recent years, giant armadillos began damaging beehives, causing honey production to drop sharply and increasing conflict between beekeepers and armadillos. At the invitation of Indigenous beekeepers, ICAS helped design and test giant-armadillo-friendly hive protection systems chosen by the beekeepers themselves.

These mitigation measures were installed in multiple apiaries across the territory, and six months later, beekeepers reported no further armadillo incursions at protected sites, along with renewed confidence in expanding honey production.

By supporting solutions shaped by Indigenous leadership, Houston Zoo is helping protect giant armadillos while strengthening sustainable livelihoods, showing how coexistence can guide conservation in the Amazon.

## TEENS PROTECTING GALÁPAGOS WILDLIFE

This past summer, 13 Zoo Crew teens from the Houston Zoo’s Teen Programs traveled to the Galápagos Islands for a 10-day, conservation-focused experience that brought classroom learning into direct contact with wildlife and community-led conservation. Working alongside local Galapagueño youth and conservation professionals, the teens participated in hands-on research, community science, and environmental monitoring across Santa Cruz Island.

In the highlands of Galápagos National Park, Zoo Crew supported ongoing giant tortoise research by tracking individuals, collecting data, and learning how long-term monitoring informs species protection. Along the coast at Tortuga Bay, the teens partnered with the Molas Ecology Club to conduct microplastic surveys, collecting data used to

understand pollution threats to sea turtles and other marine species. They also attended the inauguration of a new ECOS-Galápagos National Park monitoring station, built with Houston Zoo support, which will enable nighttime wildlife monitoring and expand youth engagement in conservation.

This trip reflects the broader work Houston Zoo funds through Fundación ECOS: year-round environmental education, community science, and youth leadership programs that empower local young people to protect Galápagos tortoises, sea turtles, mangroves, and coastal ecosystems. By learning alongside ECOS staff and youth leaders, Zoo Crew teens saw firsthand how sustained investment in local capacity creates lasting conservation impact, while discovering their own role in saving wildlife, both globally and back home in Houston.



“

The Galapagos trip meant the world to me. Being able to share this experience and learn from such dedicated and passionate people brought the idea of conservation straight to our hands. We could see generations of conservation success and efforts thriving right in front of us. This trip has made my aspirations for the future more reachable, thank you Houston Zoo!

VERITY THOMSON  
Zoo Crew Teen





## PLANTING TREES, CREATING CONSERVATION JOBS

Houston Zoo supports large-scale forest restoration in northern Colombia through its long-standing partnership with Fundación Proyecto Tití. Together, we are helping protect and recover the tropical dry forests of South America. **With Zoo support, Proyecto Tití restored 100 acres of degraded land in 2025, planting over 16,000 native trees and maintaining survival rates above 70% three years after planting — a strong indicator that forest structure and function are returning to the 2,200-acre reserve.**

This forest recovery is made possible by creating stable, local jobs tied directly to conservation. Houston Zoo’s support helps employ community members as field assistants, nursery staff, and restoration workers who are responsible for collecting native seeds, growing saplings, planting trees, and monitoring forest health year-round. In 2025, Proyecto Tití provided 23 permanent, and 10 temporary local jobs, with 70% of its team hired from nearby communities. Having trained staff on the ground every day increases forest protection, reduces illegal logging and hunting, and allows for the early detection of threats to wildlife. As restored forest expands, these local teams play a critical role in maintaining safe habitat for animals like cougars, jaguars, macaws, and other forest-dependent species now returning to the reserve.

By investing in conservation jobs, Houston Zoo is helping ensure that local people have a stake in keeping their forests standing, creating safer, more stable habitats for wildlife over the long term.

Photo Credit: Proyecto Titi / Marcelo Ortega

## LATIN AMERICAN WILDLIFE IMPACT

### Threat Reduction

- Certified **120** Brazilian beekeepers in using giant armadillo-safe practices to promote coexistence.
- Vaccinated **193** domestic dogs and **20** cats to reduce disease spillover to wildlife.
- Protected **395,000** acres of Pantanal habitat through community-led fire management across **25** ranches.
- Trained youth to protect **18** green sea turtle nests in Tortuga Bay, Galápagos.
- Protected **86** Eastern Santa Cruz giant tortoise nests.
- Liberated **119** giant tortoise hatchlings from life-threatening entrapments.

### Community Enhancement

- Launched **one** women-led artisan group producing biodiversity-themed goods.
- Created **23** permanent and **10+** temporary jobs linked to forest restoration and conservation.
- Supported **55** families through conservation agreements, providing alternative income and livelihood stability.

### Education

- Reached **200+** Brazilian schools through environmental education and road-safety campaigns.
- Delivered conservation education programs to **2,400+** Colombian children to promote not keeping wild animals as pets.
- Engaged **8,000+** people in place-based conservation outreach and awareness programs.
- Reached **133** tourists through sustainable wildlife-tourism talks in the Pantanal.
- Produced and distributed **500** giant otter identification guides for tourism professionals.

### Capacity Building

- Onboarded **50** new community members into community-based fire brigades to help prevent forest fires in the Pantanal.
- Convened **32** stakeholders in a national Theory of Change workshop informing Brazil’s Giant Otter Conservation Plan.
- Equipped **30** Brazilian tourism professionals with wildlife-safe boating guidelines to promote coexistence.
- Trained **10** Galápagos National Park rangers in updated sea turtle monitoring protocols and inquiry-based teaching methods.



# AFRICAN WILDLIFE

Partner with  
**15 wildlife conservation organizations across 8 countries.**

Houston Zoo has worked to  
**save wildlife in this region since 2004.**

**Over 230 Zoo species** are found in this region, which are being protected by our partners' efforts.

**82 conservation partner staff salaries** supported by Houston Zoo.

Houston Zoo and KPRC filmed  
**“Saving Lions: The Pride of Kenya” documentary**

which aired across Greater Houston, December 2025.

Two partners were chosen as Houston Zoo's  
**2025 Wildlife Warriors.**



“

Being in partnership with Houston Zoo means being extended family due to the connection between our organizations. Thank you so much for being a strong example of partnership. We are grateful to partner with you.

**DR. DEO RUHAGAZI**  
*Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association*



“

I just want to thank you all for such an amazing trip. This was my 2nd time ever visiting a zoo and I must say the hospitality and the welcoming you gave touched my heart and has given me a totally different outlook on the important role Houston Zoo is doing in conservation. I am so impressed by all the work you all are doing and for all the tremendous support you have not only given to Ewaso Lions but to all other conservation projects. I am so grateful.

**TOBY OTIENO**  
*Ewaso Lions*



## RESTORING PRIDE TO KENYA'S LANDSCAPE

In 2025, Houston Zoo, in partnership with local news station KPRC 2, helped bring global lion conservation closer to home through an hour-long documentary featuring the work of Houston Zoo's partner, Ewaso Lions. This film showcased how community-led conservation is protecting lions in northern Kenya while supporting the people who share their landscape.

Filmed in the Samburu region, the documentary followed Ewaso Lions' locally driven approach to reducing negative human-lion interactions and rebuilding conditions that allow lions to thrive. The story featured programs such as Warrior Watch, which trains Samburu warriors to monitor lions and prevent conflict before it occurs; Mama Simba, which empowers women through conservation-linked livelihoods and habitat recovery; and Lion Kids Camp, which inspires conservation leadership among local youth. And the best part is, these efforts are working! Lions that were once living alone on this landscape are now forming prides, signaling a return to natural social structures and healthier population dynamics. This shift reflects reduced conflict, improved tolerance, and a landscape where lions can once again live as they are meant to.

By partnering with KPRC 2 to tell this story, Houston Zoo amplified the impact of Ewaso Lions' work far beyond the field. The documentary reached households across the Houston region, connecting local audiences to measurable conservation success and the people making it possible. Through this collaboration, Houston Zoo strengthened the bridge between Houston and Kenya, demonstrating how those near and far can help wildlife recover and inspire continued action to save lions in the wild.

## STANDING WITH RANGERS IN CRISIS

In April, Houston Zoo's partners at the Niassa Carnivore Project in northern Mozambique experienced a devastating attack by armed insurgents. The violence claimed the lives of several Mozambican soldiers, two security staff, and two Niassa scouts. Another scout was critically injured and evacuated for lifesaving medical care, while two colleagues remain missing and are presumed dead. The project's headquarters and the Mariri Environmental Centre were also heavily damaged, cutting power and communications across a landscape that supports lions, African wild dogs, leopards, and other threatened wildlife.

In moments like this, protecting wildlife depends on protecting and caring for the people on the ground. The Houston Zoo's Ranger team responded quickly through their Crisis Fund, which exists to provide rapid support when conservation partners face urgent threats that cannot wait. Crisis funding covered the replacement of solar panels, batteries, and wiring destroyed during the attack. Restoring

solar power allowed electricity and communications to come back online, enabling staff to stay connected, monitor the reserve, and rebuild early warning systems critical for both human safety and wildlife protection.

Reliable power also meant patrol bases, control gates, and scout posts could resume operations, helping prevent poaching, support carnivore monitoring, and maintain a conservation presence across the reserve during a period of instability. This support allowed Niassa's team to move from immediate crisis response into recovery, while keeping conservation programs active in a landscape where wildlife had endured the disruption alongside people.

Through timely crisis funding, Houston Zoo helped ensure that both people and wildlife at Niassa could continue to be protected, even in the face of violence and uncertainty.



“

**We are determined to continue with our work. Conservation brings security, and community work is the only antidote to the extremism of the insurgents. Houston Zoo's support continues to be vital and instrumental to both conservation work and making sure that conservation creates stability and safety.**

**DR. COLLEEN BEGGS**  
*Niassa Carnivore Project*





## FIVE YEARS WITHOUT RHINO POACHING

For the past five years, Houston Zoo's partners at Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) have achieved something extraordinary: zero rhino poaching in the Kunene North-West region of Namibia. This area is one of the largest unfenced rhino landscapes in Africa, where black rhinos move freely across communal conservancies and face constant risk from poaching. Keeping rhinos safe here requires people on the ground, every day, in some of the most remote terrain in the country.

Houston Zoo's support has played a direct role in making this level of protection possible. Zoo funding helps sustain IRDNC's rhino monitoring team and the community rhino rangers they support, covering core needs like staff salaries, field allowances, patrol food, uniforms, and transport. These essentials allow rangers to remain in the field for extended patrols, often walking long distances in harsh conditions to track rhinos, record sightings, and detect threats early.

With this support in place, IRDNC teams have maintained a strong, year-round field presence across six communal conservancies. **In 2025 alone, rangers logged over 3,100 miles on foot, recorded 380 rhino sightings, and accumulated 1,350 field patrol days. That constant presence is one of the most effective deterrents to poaching.**

This success also reflects the strength of community-led conservation. Local leaders and rangers take pride in protecting rhinos as part of their cultural and economic future. By investing in people on the ground, Houston Zoo is helping ensure that rhinos remain safe in Kunene.

## AFRICAN WILDLIFE IMPACT



### Threat Reduction

Installed **30** eco-friendly trash bins and **one** water tank to reduce littering and disease transmission near gorilla habitat.

Planted **3,000** bamboo seedlings and **100,020** trees in Rwanda to restore and reduce human dependence on gorilla and grey crowned crane habitat.

Vaccinated over **2,000** dogs to prevent the spread of disease to wild carnivore species.

Partnered with **1,200** community members to restore **150** acres of critical lemur habitat.

Deployed **12** giraffe rangers to patrol **9,300** miles to reduce poaching, snaring, and vehicle collisions in Kenya.

Deployed **16** rhino rangers in Namibia, helping maintain the region's zero-poaching record for the last **5** years.

Upgraded **133** livestock corrals in Mozambique to reduce carnivore predation and promote coexistence.

Removed **247** snares targeting wetland and forest wildlife in Rwanda.



### Community Enhancement

Donated **54** lambs to new student families in Rwanda to establish school-based livelihood programs.

Supported **48** beekeepers with training and technical monitoring to establish conservation-linked livelihoods in Madagascar.

Established self-sufficient food gardens for **240** families to reduce reliance on critical lemur habitat for food.

Created **20** Malagasy jobs linked to conservation tourism and research.

Distributed **5,000** lime seedlings and planted **1,500** acacia trees to increase farmer income and reduce reliance on giraffe habitat.

Supported **50** Kenyan herders with emergency water access during drought.

Enabled **\$3.25 million** USD in conservation-linked income across **46** conservancies in Namibia.

Shared sustainable farming practices with **3,808** households in Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect okapi habitat.



### Propagation, Rescue, and Release

Saved **8** gorillas from snare traps.

Released **4** critically endangered Grauer's gorillas back to the wild.

Provided critical veterinary care for **8** injured or confiscated animals in Rwanda.



### Education

Hosted **759** in-person and **133** virtual delegates for the International Primatological Society Congress in Madagascar.

Reached **10,000+** Kenyan, Rwandan, and Mozambican schoolchildren through place-based conservation education programs.

Created wildlife-friendly learning spaces at **5** Kenyan schools.

Reached over **132,000** people through **750+** conservation awareness events.

Broadcast **10** national environmental trivia episodes across Rwanda to increase knowledge of local wildlife.



# ASIAN WILDLIFE

Partner with

**7 wildlife conservation organizations across 3 countries.**

Houston Zoo has worked to

**save wildlife in this region since 2004.**

**Over 200 Zoo species**

are found in this region, which are being protected by our partners' efforts.

**13 conservation partner staff salaries**

supported by Houston Zoo.



“

Our team and myself are greatly indebted to Houston Zoo's continued support that has allowed us to achieve unprecedented success in achieving conservation goals.

**MURTHY KANTIMAHANTI**  
*Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society*



“

The relationship with the Zoo gives me strength and a sense of belonging. I am a Zoo family member that is assigned in Borneo. The team members always feel so proud and we wish to keep inspiring Zoo members, staff, and supporters.

**DR. FARINA OTHMAN**  
*Seratu Aatai*





## AN AWARD-WINNING FUTURE FOR ELEPHANTS

In 2025, Dr. Nurzhafarina “Farina” Othman received the prestigious Whitley Award, recognizing her groundbreaking work in Malaysia to secure a future for Bornean elephants in working landscapes dominated by oil palm agriculture. For Houston Zoo, this honor reflects years of partnership, having supported Dr. Farina’s work since its earliest stages and standing alongside her as that vision grew into the creation of Seratu Aatai, a globally recognized conservation organization.

Through her leadership of Seratu Aatai, Dr. Farina has redefined how conservation can function within agricultural landscapes. Her work brings large and small oil palm plantations together to implement elephant-friendly practices and improve landscape connectivity within heavily modified environments. By fostering collaboration across plantation boundaries, this approach is reducing barriers to elephant movement and supporting coexistence between wildlife and agricultural operations.

Houston Zoo support has helped fuel the science and community engagement behind this work. Recent efforts include installing seven satellite collars to track elephant movements, identifying three priority wildlife crossing sites along a 12-kilometer highway, and completing population surveys that estimate **approximately 150 elephants** in the Lower Kinabatangan, with additional populations assessed across northern Sabah. At the community level, Zoo funding has supported the training and expansion of local wildlife wardens, electric fencing for **15 smallholder farms**, and education programs reaching **250 students** in elephant range communities.

The Whitley Award recognizes Dr. Farina’s leadership and proven approach to coexistence that shows that elephants and people can share the same landscape when conservation is collaborative and rooted in local partnership. For the Houston Zoo, this moment stands as a powerful affirmation that long-term partnership achieves lasting impact for wildlife.

## A UNESCO WIN FOR BORNEO'S WILDLIFE

In 2025, Houston Zoo supported a major conservation achievement alongside its long-standing partner, Hutan: the designation of the Kinabatangan region of Malaysian Borneo as a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve. This recognition marks a significant step forward for landscape-scale conservation in one of Southeast Asia’s most biologically important regions.

Spanning forests, wetlands, river systems, villages, and agricultural lands, the Kinabatangan Biosphere Reserve represents one of the largest coordinated conservation landscapes in the region. The designation brings international recognition and long-term protection to a mosaic landscape that supports Bornean orangutans, Bornean elephants, and **more than 250 recorded bird species**.

Houston Zoo’s investment supported scientific monitoring, community engagement, and coordination needed to reach this milestone. These efforts promote conservation outcomes across the floodplain, including maintaining stable populations of approximately **866 orangutans and 200-250 Bornean elephants**, while reducing threats through wildlife patrols and human-wildlife coexistence strategies.

This designation provides local governments and NGOs with a unifying framework to guide land-use planning, conservation action, and community stewardship across an entire river basin. Together with Hutan, Houston Zoo is helping secure a resilient future for one of the world’s most important wildlife landscapes, delivering a lasting win for both people and biodiversity.





## HOPE IN THE FOREST FOR RHINOS

Healthy forests are essential to the survival of the Sumatran rhino, and to the many species that share its habitat.

Through its partnership with the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), Houston Zoo supports targeted reforestation efforts in Sumatra focused on restoring native forest habitat. By funding the planting of native trees and the removal of invasive vegetation, these efforts are rebuilding forest conditions that allow wildlife to return and thrive.

As forest conditions improve, signs of recovery are clear. Monitoring within restored areas has documented 160 species of birds, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians returning to the landscape, an indication that these forests are once again capable of sustaining a diversity of animal life.

These restored forests are critical for the future of the Sumatran rhino. In the summer of 2025, conservation teams discovered evidence suggesting a previously unknown Sumatran rhino population may still persist on the island, reinforcing the importance of habitat protection and restoration.

At the same time, Houston Zoo supports IRF's breeding efforts at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary, helping stabilize and grow the global population, currently estimated at just 34–47 individuals. Zoo funding is supporting the construction of new sanctuary space, expanding capacity to increase the population by up to 30 percent in the coming years.

Together, these efforts are protecting forests, strengthening ecosystems, and preserving hope for one of the world's rarest large mammals.



## ASIAN WILDLIFE IMPACT



### Threat Reduction

Responded to **300+** snake rescue incidents, preventing panic-driven killings.

Spent **150** nights tracking and redirecting Bornean elephants away from farms and oil palm plantations to promote coexistence.

Prevented swiftlet nest poaching incidents in Pangli Forest Reserve during **9** consecutive months of community guarding.

Protected **123** painted terrapin nests through community-led nest protection.

Saved **1,900+** painted terrapin eggs from illegal harvest and natural predation in **107** nests.

Connected **37,000** acres of palm oil plantation and sanctuary lands in Malaysia, allowing Bornean elephants safe passage.



### Propagation, Rescue, and Release

Released **100+** king cobra hatchlings from **4** nests into safe forest habitat.

Released **1,222** painted terrapin hatchlings into the Tamiang River estuary.

Rescued and released **36** Sunda pangolins back into the wild.



### Education

Distributed **10,000** school activity booklets promoting coexistence with snakes.

Reached **1,000** children and **100** educators through education events focused on protecting pangolins.

Educated **300** fishermen across **8** villages on how to prevent painted terrapin bycatch.

Educated **250** students from **10** schools on elephant behavior, safety, and coexistence.



### Capacity Building

Trained **220** volunteers in safe snake handling to reduce fear-based snake killing in India.

Delivered **72** English language training sessions over **6** months for reforestation and field teams.

Trained **50** volunteers in pangolin care, creating an active responder group.

Established a consortium of **7** oil palm plantations to design an elephant movement corridor.



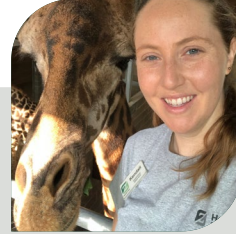
## A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION



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By getting involved in wildlife-saving opportunities, I've been able to bring those experiences home and share them with my family. My eight-year-old niece, in particular, gets excited whenever I tell her about the work we're doing to protect wildlife. What started as simple storytelling has grown into something more meaningful. She now asks thoughtful questions about the animals and habitats we're helping and even wants to know how she can get involved herself. Seeing her curiosity and enthusiasm has shown me that conservation protects wildlife and inspires the next generation. By sharing my experiences in an accessible and engaging way, I've helped spark an early interest in caring for the natural world.

**KAYLEE FRANSEN**, Housekeeping  
*Houston Zoo*



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I think Houston Zoo's conservation work is so important. As a zookeeper, I share my knowledge and passion for the animals I care for with the public in the hopes of inspiring them to care about animals as well. I always want my enthusiasm for animal care and conservation to be evident and to encourage my audience to feel that same emotional connection to the natural world. We have a beautiful jewel of a planet that humans have lived on for a long time, and we've only skimmed the surface of truly understanding it. Protecting the wild spaces of the world is crucial to our long-term success as individuals and as a species.

**KENDALL MOORE**, Hoofstock Keeper  
*Houston Zoo*



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Everyone in the Zoo plays a role in supporting our conservation partners all around the world. Whether we're on the administrative side helping the Zoo run in the background, or working with the animals daily, it takes all of us to make the Zoo successful, which in turn helps save animals in the wild. I love seeing how the work we do at the Zoo directly impacts animal protection worldwide and knowing that even a small, thoughtful action can add up to meaningful change.

**AMY DISISTO**, Human Resources Coordinator  
*Houston Zoo*



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The most rewarding thing about our work is when we hear that our previously rehabbed turtles have been found elsewhere in the world! This reassures us that these animals are surviving once placed back out in the wild and they go right back to their normal lives.

**CODY MACON**, Sea Turtle Hospital Keeper  
*Houston Zoo*



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