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News

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TWO SAINT LOUIS ZOO CONSERVATION PROGRAMS NAMED IN TOP 10 WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES FOR 2007

The Saint Louis Zoo was named in The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Top 10 Wildlife Conservation Success Stories for 2007 announced today. The Zoo is recognized for conservation efforts with lemurs in Madagascar and Grevy's zebra in Kenya and Ethiopia. Both programs are part of the Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Institute conservation initiative.

"We are thrilled to be recognized for our important conservation work," said Saint Louis Zoo President Dr. Jeffrey Bonner. "The Saint Louis Zoo's WildCare Institute focuses its efforts in 12 conservation programs around the world, and we are very proud that two of them were recognized in this year's 'Top 10' list."

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are spearheading new efforts to protect wild animals - in some cases bringing them back from the brink of extinction.

"AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are leaders in wildlife conservation and education," said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. "The 2007 Top 10 list is just a small sample of the important work of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums."

In the last five years, AZA-accredited facilities funded 3,693 conservation projects in more than 100 countries. Annual spending on conservation averages nearly \$70 million per year. The Saint Louis Zoo's WildCare Institute is supported by an annual grant and endowment from the Zoo Friends Association, the Mary Ann Lee Conservation

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Conservation programs
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Carousel, and private donations, providing over \$1,000,000 a year in support for wildlife in their native habitats.

Top 10 Wildlife Conservation Success Stories in 2007

1. Terrific toadlets

Habitat loss, pollution and disease are hitting some of the smallest creatures on earth the hardest. Frog populations have been in sharp decline the past few decades, but a fortunate native species is getting a helping hand from scientists. Staff at the Detroit Zoo are raising 40 juvenile Wyoming toads, one of the most endangered amphibians in the United States. The species is now considered functionally extinct in the wild, with the last remaining individuals only found in zoos and aquariums across the country. The Detroit Zoo has successfully released more than 6,000 tadpoles, toadlets and toads in Wyoming since the program's inception in 1995. Recent good news indicates that the recovery efforts may be paying off: this summer in a monitored protected area, conservationists discovered the first clutch of Wyoming toad eggs found in the wild in ten years.

2. Mice on the move

This summer, Santa Fe Community College Teaching Zoo in Gainesville, Florida, began housing 52 Perdido Key beach mice to protect the species from extinction. The mice originated from the University of South Carolina, but needed to be relocated after damage from Hurricane Ivan. There are only a few hundred individuals left in the wild, inhabiting just one barrier island off the coast of Pensacola. Researchers fear that a hurricane could be disastrous to the beach mice, potentially causing the species to become extinct in the wild. Should an event wipe out the wild population, the Zoo will be able to repopulate the beach mouse's habitat.

3. The right stuff for right whales

The world's rarest large whale, the right whale, has been the topic of interest for scientists at the New England Aquarium this past year. Fewer than 350 North Atlantic right whales currently exist in the world, and are threatened by ship collisions and

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Conservation programs
add two

entanglement in fishing gear, habitat loss, pollution, and disease. The New England Aquarium's Right Whale Research Project recently developed a test to learn more about the reproductive rates of the endangered species. This information is critical in helping these giant sea creatures survive.

4. Loose lemurs

Black-and-white ruffed lemurs born in zoos are getting a feel for their new home at the Betampona Natural Reserve in eastern Madagascar. The Madagascar Fauna Group (MFG), an international consortium of zoos and other institutions, coordinated the plan to return the lemurs to the wild. The released individuals are being monitored and have fared well so far, with four offspring born from four reintroduced lemurs.

The Saint Louis Zoo has served as world headquarters for Madagascar Fauna Group since 2003. Saint Louis Zoo Senior Vice President for Zoological Operations Dr. Eric Miller and Primate Curator Ingrid Porton serve as chair and vice-chair of this group. The Zoo's animal management, veterinary and research staff have been leaders in endangered species reintroduction techniques and animal health monitoring.

5. International sea turtle success

The Kemp's ridley sea turtle population is in bad shape, but thanks to cooperation between U.S and Mexican officials, the species can rest assured that their nesting sites will be safe. The Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas, and Mexican conservation workers have protected the turtle's nesting sites on beaches in Tamaulipas, Mexico and Padre Island National Seashore. The Zoo reports an increase by the hundreds each year on the Mexican Gulf Coast, indicating success of the program.

6. Black and white is all the rage

The critically endangered Grevy's zebras are a hot conservation topic thanks to the Saint Louis Zoo and its 126 international partner zoos, universities, governmental and non-governmental conservation organizations and private

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Conservation programs
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donors. The Zoo has collaborated with African conservation organizations, such as the Grevy's Zebra Trust and the Northern Rangelands Trust, and other international zoos to spread awareness of Grevy's zebra around the world. Across their range in Kenya and Ethiopia, Grevy's zebras are threatened by poaching and competition from livestock, but efforts to raise awareness have been paying off and benefiting the wild populations. The Zoo's Grevy's zebra conservation support in the Horn of Africa, coordinated by Martha Fischer, curator of mammals at the Zoo, has also benefited many other species which share their habitat. The Zoo conserves this species not only in the wild, but also here at home. Over 30 Grevy's zebra foals have been born and raised at the Saint Louis Zoo over the past five decades. Fischer coordinates the AZA Grevy's Zebra Species Survival Plan, a cooperative breeding program that manages the animals at 36 AZA zoos that participate.

7. Saving "Jaws"

For the third time since 2004, the Monterey Bay Aquarium has placed a young white shark on public exhibit. The shark was caught accidentally in commercial fishing gear off Southern California. Through its White Shark Research Project, the aquarium has worked since 2002 to learn more about white sharks in the wild, and has since tagged and tracked 10 juvenile white sharks off Southern California. The Aquarium's hope in exhibiting a white shark is to change public attitudes and promote greater protection for these much-maligned ocean predators. White sharks are in decline worldwide, in part because they are slow to reproduce and also because of growing fishing pressure that is decimating all shark species. Their fearsome reputation has also made them a target of trophy hunters and the curio trade. Monterey Bay Aquarium's attempts to change this perception could help save the species.

8. Blue skies for butterflies

Floridian zoos have teamed up to protect the small but mighty butterfly. The Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network, which includes Brevard Zoo, Central Florida Zoological Park, Disney's Animal Kingdom, Jacksonville Zoo, Lowry Park Zoo, and Miami MetroZoo, is working to survey butterfly populations throughout Florida. Saving

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Conservation programs
add four

this small creature is no small task, and volunteer citizen scientists trained by the zoos conduct monthly counts of butterflies in both natural and man-made habitats on zoo grounds. This information allows researchers to monitor the population and look into potential threats to the fragile species.

9. Marmot Island

The Vancouver Island marmot is the most endangered animal in Canada. Native to British Columbia's Vancouver Island, these critters are being threatened by massive habitat destruction in the wild. Their current wild population is estimated at nearly 50 animals, but thanks to breeding centers devoted to the species, such as the Toronto Zoo, the population is now around 150. Calgary Zoo in Alberta was the first to successfully breed the marmots at their facility, and produced an impressive five litters in 2007. The pups will be reintroduced in Mount Washington, British Columbia, where they will undergo pre-release conditioning to improve survivability in the wild. Veterinarians at the Calgary Zoo were also recently awarded an AZA Conservation Endowment Fund (CEF) grant to study diseases impacting Vancouver Island marmot populations at the breeding institutions and in the wild.

10. The regal eagle's recovery

This year, America's national symbol, the bald eagle, was removed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species List. This was a grand feat for the species which just a decade ago faced dwindling populations. The San Francisco Zoo has been instrumental in breeding and releasing captive eagles, and has reintroduced more than 100 bald eagles over the past 22 years. The Zoo reports about 200 nesting pairs of bald eagles in California today.

About Saint Louis Zoo and WildCare Institute

The Saint Louis Zoo is widely recognized for its innovative approaches to animal management, wildlife conservation, research and education. One of the few free zoos in the nation, it attracts about 3,000,000 visitors a year. Saint Louis Zoo launched its WildCare Institute in 2004 to further numerous wildlife conservation projects around the world. The Zoo partners with other zoos, universities, field biologists and government agencies to develop a holistic approach: wildlife management and recovery, conservation science and support of the human populations that coexist with wildlife.

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Conservation programs
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About AZA

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, the AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats.

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