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**ST. LOUIS ZOO ESTABLISHED WILDCARE INSTITUTE IN 2004**  
**Zoo Makes Major Commitment to Conservation Centers Around the Globe**

A leader in worldwide efforts to save endangered species and habitats, the St. Louis Zoo took its wildlife conservation work to a new level with the establishment of the St. Louis Zoo's WildCare Institute in May 2004. The Institute is an umbrella organization for 12 major conservation centers around the globe, from Niger to Nicaragua, from Madagascar to Missouri, plus other Zoo conservation initiatives.

The WildCare Institute is privately funded by a \$19,000,000 commitment from the St. Louis Zoo Friends Association, a restricted gift to the endowment trust that was newly created and for general expenses of the Institute. This fund has grown significantly through the years to support both Zoo operations and the Institute, by means of direct investments and outright or deferred gifts. Additional funds were generated from ridership on the Zoo's new Mary Ann Lee Conservation Carousel.

"Launching the WildCare Institute was one of the most momentous steps the St. Louis Zoo has ever taken," says Dr. Jeffrey P. Bonner, president of the Zoo. "Zoos used to think their conservation role was to reproduce endangered species. Now we realize that's not going to be enough. Today we know there probably will not be many habitats around in the future to support animals in the wild."

"Our WildCare Institute is not just a means to help some of the endangered species about which we care," he emphasizes. "It's a relatively new way of working through many partnerships to help animals, ecosystems and people all at the same time."

Dr. R. Eric Miller was named Director of the new WildCare Institute. For the past 10 years Miller was the Director of Animal Health and Conservation at the St. Louis Zoo. He has been a veterinarian at the Zoo since 1981.

"We've developed the WildCare Institute so that we can take a more holistic approach to conservation," says Miller. "We have been working on wildlife recovery and management, breeding for possible future reintroductions to the wild wherever possible, and studies of nutrition, reproduction, health and behavior.

"We also work on the human element in these ecosystems," he adds. "We work on community development, conservation education, ecotourism and cultural anthropology. We can't make a change for the species if we don't consider the environment and the people."

Some of the St. Louis Zoo's efforts will include:

**Avian Health in the Galapagos Islands:** Studying the health of the endemic birds of the Galapagos to prevent their extinction from diseases; training Ecuadorian scientists and rangers to recognize and test for disease in conjunction with University of Missouri-St. Louis.

**Bosawas Biosphere Reserve in Nicaragua:** Helping the indigenous people develop a Wildlife Management Plan and gain legal title to their homeland; training native biologists to manage existing wildlife so people can hunt sustainably.

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**Grevy's Zebras in the Horn of Africa:** Studying the numbers and behaviors of the endangered Grevy's zebra and the African wild ass; helping teach African communities how to share their grazing land with these wild equids.

**Lemurs in Madagascar:** Studying the health and genetics of endangered lemurs, and teaching local students and rangers how to manage and protect the remaining lemur populations.

**Mountain Vipers in Armenia:** Studying the little-known habits of rare mountain vipers; teaching local communities the value of these snakes, as well as how to farm in more habitat-friendly ways.

**Antelope in the Sahara-Sahelo Region of Africa:** Helping survey the numbers of critically endangered addax; working to establish a reserve for these and other near-extinct desert antelope.

**Hellbenders in Missouri:** Sponsoring water quality studies of the hellbender's habitat; starting a captive breeding program to supplement wild populations of this declining amphibian.

**American Burying Beetles in Missouri:** Conducting surveys to see if critically endangered American burying beetles still live here; developing a captive breeding program if there is a need to re-introduce captive-bred beetles into the wild.

**Humboldt Penguins in Peru:** Establishing a breeding reserve for the Humboldt penguins; supporting improvements in the Peruvian fisheries industry; raising awareness of marine conservation issues.

**Horned Guans in Mexico and Guatemala:** Studying the habits of the horned guan to develop a recovery plan for this endangered bird; teaching local communities how to farm in more habitat-friendly ways.

**Echidnas and tree kangaroos in Papua New Guinea:** Sponsoring field studies on rare long-beaked echidnas and tree kangaroos; educating clans with a goal of establishing a refuge for endangered wildlife.

**Cheetahs in Africa:** Helping survey the health and numbers of wild cheetahs; working to reduce conflicts with livestock by teaching ranchers how to co-exist with cheetahs and other predators.

**Antelope in the Sahelo-Saharan region of Africa:** Helping survey the numbers of critically endangered addax, and working to establish a reserve for these and other near-extinct desert antelope.

"Partnerships with universities, conservation organizations, government agencies and field researchers are the key to the success of the WildCare Institute," says Miller. "We continue to add partners as we go. We want to make it possible for other zoos and conservation organizations to be able to take on specific projects, or smaller parts of big projects, to help the cause."

The WildCare Institute is currently incorporating a Conservation Training Consortium to train park wardens and other natural resource managers for the future.

Distinguished scientists and conservationists around the world are serving as Conservation Fellows to advise and assist the Zoo on its conservation centers.

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