

# WildCare Institute Update

**December 2012**

**Created in 2004 to bring together conservation initiatives under a single organization, the Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Institute is dedicated to creating a sustainable future for wildlife and for people around the world. The Institute and its 12 centers take a holistic approach to troubled ecosystems by addressing three key ingredients in conservation success: wildlife management and recovery, conservation science and support of the human populations that coexist with wildlife.**

*Here's the latest news on the Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Institute Center activities.*



## **Ron Goellner Center for Hellbender Conservation**

The Saint Louis Zoo's Ron Goellner Center for Hellbender Conservation, Missouri Department of

Conservation and United States Fish & Wildlife Service announced on October 31 that between September 22 and October 1, 2012, eight female Ozark Hellbenders laid eggs in artificial nest boxes provided in their simulated stream habitats. All three populations of Ozark Hellbenders maintained at the Zoo produced eggs: Current River – three clutches; North Fork of the White River – three clutches and Eleven Point River – two clutches. By the end of November, approximately 1,000 larvae had hatched from the approximately 2,809 fertile eggs.

This marks the second time that Ozark Hellbenders have been bred in captivity. In November 2011 the Zoo announced the world's first successful breeding of the species. The significance of this second reproductive event is twofold: 1) all three river populations of Ozark Hellbender reproduced, and 2) the North Fork of the White River population has been maintained indoors for the past eight years.

At the annual Marlin Perkin's event on November 1, the Saint Louis Zoo Conservation Award went to Dr. Jeff Briggler, Herpetologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation. Over the past decade, his work with Missouri's amphibians and reptiles has taken Dr. Briggler to every corner of the state

and a variety of habitats, ranging from prairies to swamps to forests. Since 2001, he has worked with the Zoo to lead the hellbender conservation efforts in Missouri and is considered one of the nation's leading hellbender experts.

## **Center for Native Pollinator Conservation**

Ed Spevak, Center Director and Curator, Invertebrates, participated in the Museums Connect Colloquium in Washington D.C. on September 27 and 28. Along with the American Alliance of Museums and the U.S. State Department, this colloquium brought together the year's Museum Connect grant recipients (funds are provided by the U.S. State Department) to discuss program strategies and implementation.



The Saint Louis Zoo, the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi and Tohono Chul Park in Tucson, Arizona, received a grant for \$86,000 for their P.A.U.S.E - Pollinators/Art/Urban Agriculture/Society/ and the Environment project. Ten students have been selected from the Saint Louis area representing Washington University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, Webster University, and Lewis and Clark Community College (see picture). They will join eight students from Tucson and ten from Nairobi. These young people will develop local community gardens, incorporating best pollinator practices for agricultural fruit and vegetable production. They will also create graphic and sculptural art pieces that serve as bee habitats to illustrate the relationship between

art and nature. The P.A.U.S.E. project was officially kicked off November 8 with a video conference between participants in St. Louis, Tucson and Nairobi, when students met and learned about the project. More information about the project can be found on the Zoo's website and at the P.A.U.S.E. Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/PAUSEbuzz](http://www.facebook.com/PAUSEbuzz))

Ed Spevak attended the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) conference in Washington, D.C. October 17-19. Ed co-chaired the Bumble Bee Taskforce of NAPPC and presented the P.A.U.S.E. project.

### **Center for Conservation in Madagascar**

Dr. Sharon Deem, Director of the Zoo's Institute for Conservation Medicine, and Ingrid Porton, Co-Chair of the Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group (MFG), completed a biomedical survey on lemurs in the Betampona Natural Reserve, Madagascar.

### **Center for Sahelo-Saharan Conservation**

Supported by the Wildcare Institute, the Chad Scimitar Horned Oryx Reintroduction initiative issued a report on a three-day workshop conducted in May when 32 delegates from 16 international organizations and government agencies gathered in Chad. Participants focused on the reintroduction of scimitar-horned oryx to the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve in central Chad. Prospects look good for a reintroduction in the near future.

### **Center for Conservation in the Horn of Africa**

There was good news for the critically endangered species Hirola, which was translocated into the Ishaqbini Hirola Sanctuary in Kenya. The Saint Louis Zoo has long provided support for this critically endangered species.

### **Center for Conservation in Punta San Juan, Peru**

Center Director and Saint Louis Zoo Curator of Birds Michael Macek and Bird Keeper Kim Washington this summer participated in the third sustainable guano harvest since 2001 in Punta San Juan, Peru. The Center for Conservation in Punta San Juan, Peru helped to coordinate the participation of 24 international

and 24 Peruvian observers to oversee the harvest. The threatened Humboldt penguin is found only along the rugged Pacific coast of Peru and Chile, where some of the world's most fertile guano (bird excrement) fields provide a soft substrate for penguin nesting burrows.

Punta San Juan sustainable harvest protocols have reduced the direct harvest impact from a 10 percent penguin population loss to zero. Since 2004, the Center and its partners have also conducted an annual comprehensive penguin census of the entire Peruvian coast—a critical step toward species management and recovery. The conservation coalition also entered into a memorandum of understanding that secured Punta San Juan until it and 32 other important penguin breeding sites were incorporated into Peru's Protected Areas System in 2009.

### **Donation to Save Turtles**

Turtles are the most threatened class of animals in the world. In the U.S., an active conservation effort for their protection and breeding has been The Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA). Recently the San Diego Zoo announced a \$100,000 match challenge to jump-start a breeding facility for many of the most threatened species. At the annual Association of Zoos and Aquariums meeting in September, the WildCare Institute joined the challenge with a \$10,000 donation.

### **Funding for Field Conservation (FC) Programs**

WildCare Institute partner, Grevy's Zebra Trust received \$9,860 in Institute funds to establish a conservation council in El Barta, Northern Kenya. Funds also were provided for research using gray wolves as models for training semen collection and freezing techniques with the goal of using these techniques to increase the population of endangered Ethiopian wolves; for this project, \$7,316 went to Zoo Research Director Dr. Cheryl Asa and Director for Conservation in the Horn of Africa and Zoo Curator Martha Fisher. In addition, \$10,000 went to Mali Elephant Project researchers working to save elephants in that African nation.