

WildCare Institute Update

March 2013

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.



American Burying Beetle

The WildCare Institute Center for American Burying Beetle Conservation recently issued a summary report

of its reintroduction of Zoo-bred burying beetles—a first for the species. June 5, 2012, marked the date for reintroducing 118 American burying beetle pairs in Southwest Missouri in the 4,040-acre Wah'Kon-Tah Prairie. Zoo-trained staffers reintroduced the beetles through a project jointly managed by the WildCare Institute Center; the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; the Missouri Department of Conservation; and The Nature Conservancy. Random checks on the underground broods showed a total of 395 larvae (scientists think there are more larvae than random checks show). These 395 should result in an estimated 1,185 new adult American burying beetles in an area that had shown no sign of these beetles. More than 7,000 of these insects have called the Zoo's Insectarium home since the Zoo became involved in saving this species.



Center for Native Pollinator Conservation

In 2010, Ed Spevak, Center Director and Curator, Invertebrates, and the Saint Louis Zoo hosted and helped organize a workshop on the Conservation of North American Bumble Bees. Partners in developing

this workshop were the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign and the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service. Fifty-two attendees from across North America, Europe and Japan, representing research, government and conservation organizations, developed a strategy for North American Bumble Bee conservation. This meeting led directly to the formation of the IUCN SSC Bumblebee Specialist Group (BBSG) to focus on bumble bee conservation worldwide; 2011 was spent organizing and inviting members to the BBSG.

In the recently issued first report on its activities, BBSG included among its major 2012 activities an assessment in China where Bumblebees of China has developed a collection of more than 30,000 identified specimens. The Chinese have created an assessment database. In 2012, more than 6,000 bumblebees were added to the assessment.

The European Region Group completed preliminary assessments for all 68 species that occur within the region and met with specialists to examine all available information on European bumblebees. European data are available as maps on www.zoologie.umh.ac.be/hymenoptera/page.asp?id=169

Japan is developing control methods against naturalized populations of alien bumblebees used successfully to pollinate tomatoes in greenhouses. These bees have threatened the survival of native species. The National Institute for Environmental Studies is developing a new method and strategy for eradicating naturalized European bumblebee populations in Japan.

The Mesoamerican Region Group conducted a workshop and collaboratively established conservation and management priorities for bumblebee species native to Mexico and Guatemala. Several institutions in the region are working to assess the conservation status of native bumblebees, focusing on distribution, health status and genetic diversity of bumblebee populations. The team has started assessments for all of the 24 bumblebee species of South America.



Saharan Wildlife Recovery Center

The Saharan Conservation Fund (SCF) North African Ostrich Recovery Project recently published an annual report about the efforts to save this species that has disappeared from 95 percent of its former

range. The Zoo's WildCare Institute assumed a leadership role in the international zoo community to help establish the SCF as the first non-governmental organization of its kind devoted exclusively to addressing the silent crisis of extinction of wildlife in North and West Africa. In 2004, the SCF started an ostrich conservation program with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Ratite Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). Now the recovery project hosts eight birds and has established surveillance programs to protect the birds. In 2012, three breeding pairs laid 45 eggs. By year-end 2012, an Adopt-an-Ostrich Program to support the acquisition, caring and feeding of the ostrich in Niger had raised \$33,677 from 21 partner organizations.



Center for Conservation in the Horn of Africa

The year was a bad one for African elephants who continue to suffer from poachers. In 2012, 108 poached elephants were

reported by the Northern Rangelands Trust conservancies. The WildCare Institute Center supports the Northern Rangelands Trust, a community-led initiative, dedicated to a union of Kenyan communities that are dedicated to field conservation and educational programs. Residents of the 18 Northern Rangelands Trust Communities are working to cooperatively restore habitat and protect wildlife. New research shows that for African elephants, countries with good education protect animals better than those where schools are lacking and corruption is rife. However, even in areas where there is relatively good enforcement and supportive communities, poaching is occurring, the report shows.



Center for Conservation in Punta San Juan, Peru

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. Thanks to this coalition, Punta San Juan and 32 other important penguin breeding sites were incorporated into Peru's Protected Areas System in 2009. In February 2013, Saint Louis Zoo Bird Zoological Manager Anne Tieber and Bird Keeper Frank Fischer participated in the annual census, helping to cover over 1,500 kilometers (932 miles); they also helped count 10,000 birds. This count has been critical in determining the population trends of the birds after a 1997-1998 El Nino event nearly wiped out the Humboldt penguins in addition to other marine mammals and birds. In recent years, numbers of penguins continue to be strong and relatively stable.



Center for Conservation in the Galápagos Islands

Center Director Dr. Patty Parker, Des Lee Professor of Zoological Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and the Zoo,

reported that in 2012 Center staff with colleagues have published 15 articles in scientific journals and several chapters in edited volumes. Three students who have worked on Center activities received graduate degrees in 2012.

