

CONSERVATION MASTER PLAN 2022-2031

Becoming a zoo-based conservation
organisation of national and global
significance

We are Dublin Zoo. Our purpose is to save wildlife and inspire a passion for nature; to be a place where our visitors become active conservationists and help us achieve our vision: a world where people live in harmony with nature.





Common curlew (*Numenius arquata*), one of Ireland's most endangered birds.





Contents:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| A Global Biodiversity Crisis | 6 |
| Our Conservation Impact (...so far) | 8 |
| Our Approach to Conservation | 18 |
| Our Conservation Master Plan | 27 |
| Conservation Breeding and Reintroduction | 30 |
| Protecting Ireland's Wildlife | 35 |
| Protecting Wildlife Globally | 38 |
| Evidence-Based Conservation | 43 |
| Conserving Genetic Diversity | 47 |
| Behaviour Change and Empowerment | 50 |
| Creating Conservation Scientists | 55 |

Introduction

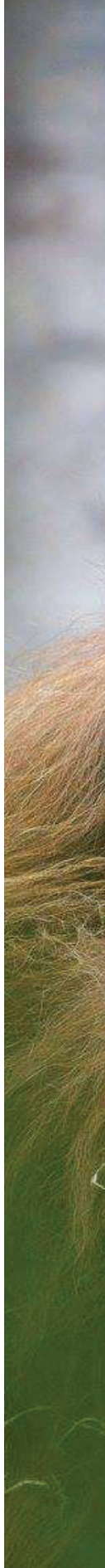
Our planet is currently facing a sixth mass extinction event, while at the same time the people living alongside wildlife are also threatened by the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. Zoos and aquariums have been playing an active role in wildlife conservation and education for decades; however, the global biodiversity crisis we now face requires us to rethink what zoos do, and what they can achieve.

Dublin Zoo is already a world-class zoo, with substantial conservation impact through our involvement in the breeding of threatened species, our support for conservation and research projects in the wild, and our conservation education and advocacy work. These three strands form the basis of all zoo-based conservation. However, in response to the global biodiversity crisis, a paradigm shift is required to both meet the conservation needs of the 21st century and to achieve the ambitious goal, set out in our 10-year vision 'Dublin Zoo 200', of becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global significance by 2031.

This will necessitate further increasing the conservation relevance of our animal collection, while also working in closer collaboration with conservationists and partners in the field, helping to secure a future for wildlife and their habitats, and promoting human-wildlife co-existence. This first-ever Conservation Master Plan for Dublin Zoo aims to build on our conservation successes to date, and provides a clear roadmap to help us transition into a zoo-based conservation organisation, integrating all of our conservation efforts to achieve measurable conservation impact. This integrated and collaborative approach is critical if we are to effectively tackle the complex and inter-related threats to biodiversity, both in Ireland and around the globe.


Simultaneously, Dublin Zoo is one of the most-visited attractions in Ireland, welcoming over 60 million visitors since opening our doors in 1831. Community is central to the success of Dublin Zoo, and we aspire to create opportunities for Irish people to learn about and connect with wildlife, helping to foster a sense of environmental responsibility and ownership. We must harness our social influence and empower all of our visitors to change their behaviours and take action for wildlife in their daily lives, and we must do this while continuing to provide engaging experiences with wildlife that are accessible to all.

Working with the global zoo and aquarium community, we have a duty to use our collective social, political and financial power to become an integral force for the conservation of global biodiversity. The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy has guided the development of this Conservation Master Plan. Working collaboratively with our conservation partners, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, we aim to become a national focal point for species conservation in Ireland, while also influencing policy development globally to create a world where people live in harmony with nature.



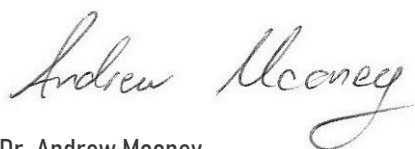






This Conservation Master Plan, which sits under the overall 'Dublin Zoo 200: Vision 2021-2031', identifies the strategic actions necessary to achieve our ambition of becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global significance over the next decade. At its core are seven strategic areas of conservation where Dublin Zoo has the potential to increase our impact and achieve defined and measurable conservation outcomes. Each of these areas is underpinned by a set of clear actions, which will help us tackle the threats to biodiversity and support both national and international conservation initiatives, such as Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The targets and actions set out in this plan are both bold and ambitious; however, now is the time to take action and assume a leadership role in the conservation of wildlife. If achieved, these actions will make a significant contribution to the conservation of global biodiversity and will position Dublin Zoo as a leader in wildlife conservation.

In 2031, we will celebrate our bicentennial. When we look back on the 200-year history of Dublin Zoo, we want to be able to say we have done everything in our power to conserve wildlife and empower people to take action. We can do more, and this Conservation Master Plan is the first step on that journey.



Dr. Andrew Mooney
Conservation and Research Officer, Dublin Zoo

A Global Biodiversity Crisis

We are witnessing the sixth mass-extinction event in Earth's history, with over one million species now considered threatened with extinction according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). These extinctions are likely to lead to catastrophic environmental change, threatening the stability of our ecosystems and putting the lives of millions of people at risk. Despite best efforts to prevent biodiversity loss and increase awareness, human activities are continuing to push wildlife populations to the brink of extinction. The causes of biodiversity loss are well known and manifold, including habitat loss, climate change, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources, and invasive species. In Ireland, a significant proportion of our own biodiversity is currently vulnerable to extinction, and over 90% of our assessed habitats have an unfavourable conservation status. The numbers are clear; urgent and transformative action is needed to address the causes of biodiversity loss and prevent imminent extinction for thousands of species.



**Over 1 million species are now
considered threatened with extinction.**

Our Conservation Impact

Dublin Zoo is already a significant supporter of conservation, contributing to biodiversity conservation through our breeding of threatened species, our support for conservation and research projects in the wild, and our conservation education and advocacy work. Since 2009, we have donated more than €1.25 million to conservation efforts in the wild, working with more than 20 conservation partners around the world. Simultaneously, we welcome more than 1.2 million visitors every year to our zoo and engage more than 60,000 learners across our formal education programmes, connecting Irish people with wildlife, and highlighting the actions we can all take to conserve biodiversity.

As our 10-year strategic vision 'Dublin Zoo 200' demonstrates, Dublin Zoo is committed to becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global significance by 2031, increasing our conservation investment and impact. We must build on our conservation successes to date, learning from our experiences and creating new strategic collaborations to tackle the threats to biodiversity, both in Ireland and around the globe.



Between 2007 and 2019, nine Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) calves were born at Dublin Zoo.

...so far

CONSERVATION BREEDING

>400 Animals in our care

38 Conservation breeding programmes

>70 Species

2 Breeding programme coordinators at a European level

HISTORY

190

Over 190 years of caring for and conserving wildlife

SUPPORT

>€1.25

Million spent on conservation and research since 2009

FIELD CONSERVATION

25 Conservation partners

>20 Countries around the world

>30

Species conserved in the wild



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

>1.2 Million visitors engaged per year



60,000 Learners in formal education programmes per year

FUTURE

1

Conservation Master Plan to increase our impact and become a global conservation leader

Our Conservation Partners

Over the last 20 years, Dublin Zoo has created lasting relationships with field conservation partners, both in Ireland and around the world. These field conservation projects work to save more than 30 threatened species across more than 20 countries, with particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. These regions are considered biodiversity hotspots, yet they also face some of the greatest threats to biodiversity. All of our conservation partners also work in close collaboration with local communities and other stakeholders, helping to create a sustainable future for wildlife and promoting human-wildlife co-existence.





Case Study:

Lowveld Rhino Trust

Save the Rhino International

Dublin Zoo has been supporting Save the Rhino International since 2009, through their partner, the Lowveld Rhino Trust in Zimbabwe. Dublin Zoo has provided more than €120,000 in support to this project to date, which has been used to track and monitor black (*Diceros bicornis*) and white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*), treat snare and bullet wounds, and translocate rhinos. The ongoing hard work of the Lowveld Rhino Trust Team in monitoring and protecting the rhinos of the Buby Valley has allowed them to supply a new founder population to Gonarezhou National Park, reintroducing rhinos to an area from which they were previously eradicated by poaching.

"Dublin Zoo's long-term support for Save the Rhino International and the Lowveld Rhino Trust has provided a reliable foundation for the protection of globally important populations of black and white rhinos in Zimbabwe. The intensive monitoring and, when necessary, care and protection of these rhinos, along with active engagement with local communities and other stakeholders, has enabled them to thrive in times when global rhino populations face great challenges. The rhinos in the care of the Lowveld Rhino Trust are now helping to repopulate other former rhino habitats from which rhinos were previously eradicated by poaching, thanks in no small part to consistent support from the Zoological Society of Ireland and the team and visitors at Dublin Zoo."

- Jon Taylor, Managing Director, Save the Rhino International



Case Study:

Scimitar-Horned Oryx Reintroduction Programme

The scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*) was once widespread across North Africa; however, in 2000, it was declared Extinct in the Wild on the IUCN Red List due to hunting and competition with agricultural herds for food and water. Thanks to a successful *ex situ* breeding programme for the species, oryx are now being reintroduced into protected areas within parts of their historic range. Dublin Zoo is part of the European breeding programme for the scimitar-horned oryx, which has been used to supply animals for this reintroduction. Since 2007, Dublin Zoo has also been supporting a project to reintroduce the scimitar-horned oryx in Tunisia. This project, which is run by Marwell Zoo, now supports a population of over 200 scimitar-horned oryx which roam across four national parks.

“We are particularly grateful to Dublin Zoo for their long-term support of our actions in North Africa. It is thanks to such contributions that we have been able to monitor reintroduced animals and maintain an effective and productive collaboration with our Tunisian partners for more than 30 years. We believe that the restoration of populations to the wild and the conservation of their habitats require a long-term commitment, and we are making that commitment thanks to our supporters, including Dublin Zoo.”

- Dr. Marie Petretto, Program Coordinator for Tunisia, Marwell Wildlife



Snow Leopard Trust

"We couldn't do this kind of work without the committed partnerships of organisations like Dublin Zoo. They have supported us since 2009, and we have made great strides in our conservation efforts since then. We want to thank everyone at Dublin Zoo and those who support Dublin Zoo. If you are supporting the Zoo you are actually helping to ensure a future for snow leopards."

- Jennifer Snell Rullman, Assistant Conservation Director, Snow Leopard Trust



Photo: NCF India/Snow Leopard Trust.

Okapi Conservation Project

"The support from Dublin Zoo is critical to our work protecting the forest home of okapi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Empowering communities to protect the surrounding forest while also providing for their own aspirational needs creates a win-win situation that benefits both people and animals while building trust among the communities where we work."

- Lucas Meers, Program Officer, Okapi Conservation Project



Photo: Okapi Conservation Project.

Sphenisco

“The support of our member zoos, including Dublin Zoo, is very important to Sphenisco. Dublin Zoo has been a supporter of Sphenisco since 2008, providing financial support to projects in Peru and Chile working to save Humboldt penguins. This support has been instrumental in addressing the threats Humboldt penguins face, raising awareness of the actions local communities can take to protect them, and highlighting the role of zoos in international species conservation.”

- Dr. Christina Schubert, Vice President, Sphenisco



Photo: Sphenisco.

WildCats Conservation Alliance

“Since 2003, Dublin Zoo has contributed over €50,000 towards the conservation of wild tigers through the initiative WildCats Conservation. This has supported projects working to reduce key threats to wild tigers by protecting species, habitats and people in important landscapes. It has also contributed to the collection of data for better understanding of population dynamics and tiger behaviour, which in turn informs conservation management strategies.”

- Esther Conway, Manager, WildCats Conservation Alliance



Photo: WildCats Conservation Alliance/WCS.

Case Study:

Wildlife Trust of India

Right of Passage Project

In 2022, Dublin Zoo began partnering with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) to help conserve and protect Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in the wild. Dublin Zoo supports WTI as part of their National Elephant Corridors project, called Right of Passage. This project has been working for over two decades to identify and protect elephant corridors all over India, while simultaneously working with local communities to improve their livelihoods and promote sustainable human-wildlife co-existence. To date, 101 elephant corridors have been identified, six of which have already been secured for elephants. WTI is also involved in political advocacy with national and state governments to allocate resources for further corridor securement.

"We are thankful to Dublin Zoo for their support towards WTI's Right of Passage project, which aims to provide safe passage to Asian elephants through their identified corridors in India while simultaneously strengthening human-elephant coexistence. The contribution from Dublin Zoo will be used to support the installation of signboards in select priority corridors. These signboards will inform relevant stakeholders on the location of these corridors for any decision-making purposes, in addition to informing the general public and vehicle commuters to be cautious while passing through a corridor, educating people on the importance of corridors and their links to the wider landscape."

- Upasana Ganguly, Manager and Head of the Right of Passage: Wildlife Corridors Project, Wildlife Trust of India



Case Study:

BirdWatch Ireland

Raptor Research and Monitoring

Dublin Zoo has been partnering with BirdWatch Ireland since 2012, helping undertake research and monitoring of raptors in Ireland. This initial partnership focused on a research, monitoring and conservation programme for barn owls (*Tyto alba*) over a three-year period (2012 – 2014). Since 2015, Dublin Zoo has provided further support to continue and expand the research and monitoring efforts for barn owls in Ireland, including the expansion of conservation and education initiatives. This work has achieved significant conservation successes both on a local scale, through protecting and safe-guarding traditional barn owl nest sites, as well as providing detailed insights on foraging behaviour and habitat use which have been used to inform policy, habitat management and the development of mitigation measures for roads. Barn owls are a Red-listed species in Ireland and Dublin Zoo is continuing our partnership with BirdWatch Ireland, expanding the monitoring efforts to new areas which have not previously been assessed.

“Underpinning all of our barn owl conservation efforts is the long-term monitoring of their populations in Ireland, allowing trends in the population to be assessed and conservation priorities to be identified. This long-term monitoring has been funded by Dublin Zoo since 2012, informing and directing all of our conservation measures, in addition to facilitating site-specific conservation actions (such as improvements to nest sites and ensuring nests are protected).”

– John Lusby, Raptor Officer, BirdWatch Ireland



Our Approach to Conservation

One Planet. One Plan.

Conserving global biodiversity and promoting human-wildlife co-existence are both extremely complex tasks and require extensive collaboration between many stakeholders if they are to be achieved. Dublin Zoo's expertise and skills in animal care, conservation breeding, visitor engagement, education and advocacy, all provide a solid *ex situ* conservation framework. However, we cannot do this on our own. We rely on our conservation partners and supporters to help link our *ex situ* conservation efforts with *in situ* efforts in the field, working with local communities to conserve wildlife and promote human-wildlife co-existence. This is referred to as the 'One Plan' approach, which was developed by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG).

The 'One Plan' approach is central to our Conservation Master Plan, and encourages integrated species conservation planning, considering all populations of a species, both inside and outside of its natural range, and under all conditions of management. The aim of the 'One Plan' approach is to create viable populations of species which are thriving in healthy ecosystems. To achieve this, the approach brings together the zoo community and the field conservation community, promoting collaborative conservation planning with defined roles for all stakeholders. This integrated approach allows the global conservation community to manage the *in situ* and *ex situ* populations of a species together under a single plan. This approach is strongly encouraged by the IUCN, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), and regional zoo associations, such as the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).







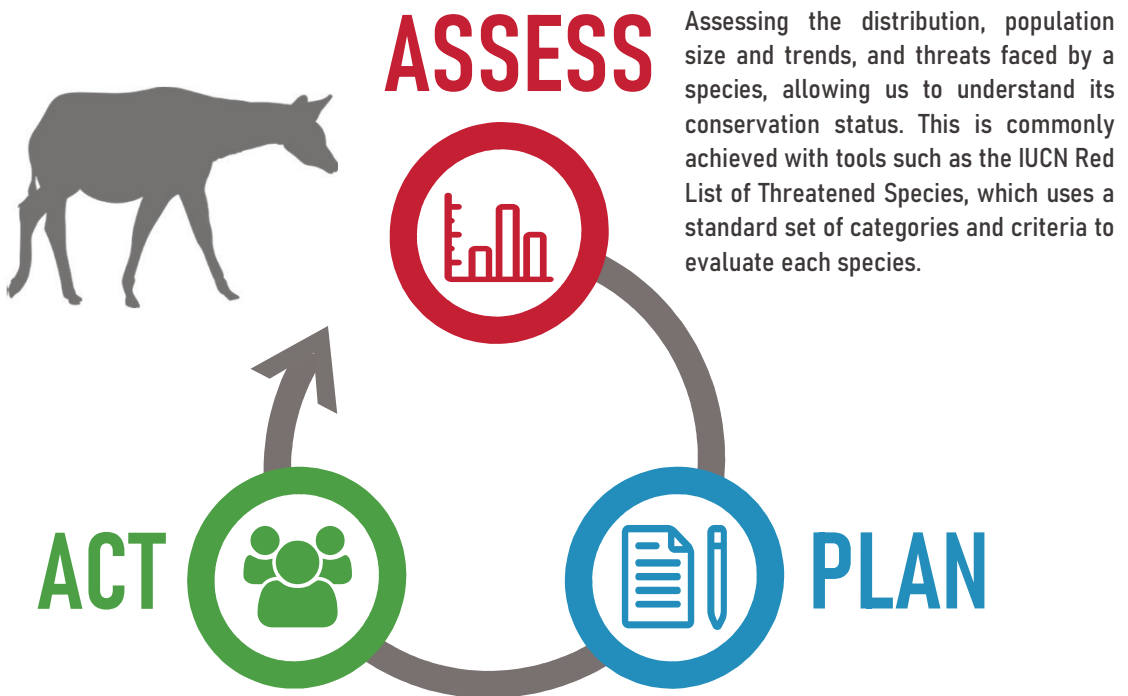
By adopting the 'One Plan' approach, we can integrate all our conservation activities for a species, including conservation breeding, field conservation and research, and conservation education and advocacy. This allows us to move beyond just managing populations of species in zoos, creating opportunities to tackle broader threats to biodiversity, and influence the actions of people, organisations and governments. By 2031 we will ensure that conservation is considered and incorporated into everything we do. Using the 'One Plan' approach, we will scale up our conservation efforts, finding new and integrative approaches to tackle the threats to global biodiversity, transforming Dublin Zoo into a world-class conservation organisation.

Central to this endeavour will be the creation of an IUCN National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo, which will be headquartered in Society House. This centre will allow Dublin Zoo to develop the capacity for species conservation assessment, conservation planning and action, building strategic partnerships with the IUCN SSC, various government departments and State bodies, and Irish universities and conservation groups. By increasing capacity at the national level for each of the three conservation cycle steps, and by uniting stakeholders to catalyse action, we will mobilise a national conservation network. Simultaneously we will be able to empower local communities, measure conservation impact, and amplify conservation successes, showcasing stories that celebrate best practices and impact, while also generating optimism and hope for conservation.



The Species Conservation Cycle

The IUCN's Reverse the Red initiative is a global movement that promotes strategic cooperation and action to ensure the survival of wild species and ecosystems. The aim of this initiative is to reverse the current negative trends in species survival by promoting collaborative action; guaranteeing the survival of species and ecosystems, while also empowering local communities around the world. Reverse the Red is based on the three essential steps which make up the IUCN SSC's Species Conservation Cycle: Assess, Plan and Act.



Assessing the distribution, population size and trends, and threats faced by a species, allowing us to understand its conservation status. This is commonly achieved with tools such as the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, which uses a standard set of categories and criteria to evaluate each species.

The implementation, monitoring and review of the species recovery programme and action plan. This can include everything from habitat protection, to conservation translocations, *ex situ* management, and invasive species control. The IUCN Green Status of Species can be used to monitor progress and measure the success of any conservation interventions, providing opportunities to review and adapt action plans as necessary.

Bringing together stakeholders, with a diversity of perspectives and experiences, to create an effective, inclusive and evidence-based species recovery programme and action plan. This should include representatives ranging from governments to local communities, alongside species experts and scientists. The aim of this plan is to find mutual agreement on conservation goals, and identify accountable parties to ensure conservation actions are implemented effectively.



Dublin Zoo Conservation Fund

Dublin Zoo has donated more than €1.25 million to conservation and research efforts to date, working with conservation and academic partners around the world to deliver conservation impact. However, the ambitious goals and targets set out within this plan will require significant investment to be realised, and to transform Dublin Zoo into a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global significance by 2031.

To help achieve this reality, we will create the Dublin Zoo Conservation Fund, which will help formalise and diversify the range of conservation income streams available to us over the next decade. Under the umbrella of the Dublin Zoo Conservation Fund, we aim to increase our support for conservation efforts fivefold over the life of this plan. This will include exploring innovative opportunities to increase conservation donations, both in-person at Dublin Zoo, and virtually through our website. We will also explore new opportunities for corporate partnerships, academic and industry grants, and state support, all of which will help us achieve our conservation goals and overall mission.

This central fund will be used to finance the range of conservation and research activities outlined in this plan, and will result in greater transparency and reporting of our conservation expenditure moving forward. Such accountability is critical if we are to use our resources effectively for biodiversity conservation, allowing us to continually monitor the impact of our conservation actions towards their intended outcomes.



On 18th November 2020, the 'Save Dublin Zoo' fundraising campaign was launched, appealing to the Irish public to help raise vital funds to keep our gates open during the COVID-19 pandemic. The response to the campaign was overwhelming, with more than €2 million raised in just 48 hours. This monumental achievement demonstrates the love and respect the Irish people have for Dublin Zoo, and our fundraising potential. Moving forward we will build on this success to create consistent and diverse income to support our conservation and research efforts globally.

Formalisation and diversification of conservation income streams.



Increased transparency and reporting of conservation expenditure.





Our Conservation Master Plan

This Conservation Master Plan identifies the key actions necessary to achieve our ambition of becoming a zoo-based conservation organisation of national and global significance over the next decade. It spans the period 2022-2031, and sits under the overall 'Dublin Zoo 200: Vision 2021-2031', alongside the physical Master Plan for Dublin Zoo and a number of related strategy documents. At its core are seven strategic areas of conservation where Dublin Zoo aims to achieve increasingly strong conservation outcomes. Each of these inter-linked areas is underpinned by a set of clear actions that will help us to tackle the threats to biodiversity and promote human-wildlife co-existence, leading to improved conservation outcomes for species and their habitats, both in Ireland and around the globe.

- 1. Conservation Breeding and Reintroduction**
- 2. Protecting Ireland's Wildlife**
- 3. Protecting Wildlife Globally**
- 4. Evidence-Based Conservation**
- 5. Conserving Genetic Diversity**
- 6. Behaviour Change and Empowerment**
- 7. Creating Conservation Scientists**

Our Conservation Master Plan

STRATEGIC AREAS

7 Strategic Areas where Dublin Zoo has the potential to achieve increasingly strong conservation outcomes



Actions to position Dublin Zoo as a world-leader in wildlife conservation

42

DUBLIN ZOO

The addition of an area in the Zoo for the conservation of native Irish species

Working in closer collaboration with our conservation partners to co-design and lead projects to conserve species in the wild



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPECIES SURVIVAL

With the capacity for species conservation assessment, conservation planning and action



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

3 Dedicated behaviour change campaigns

Engage people from under-represented socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds



SUPPORT

Establishment of the Dublin Zoo Conservation Grants Programme



2022-2031

CONSERVATION BREEDING

75% of the species in our care considered threatened with extinction

Greater representation of amphibians, fish and invertebrates



A Biodiversity Action Plan for our 28-hectare site



The Zoological Society of Ireland Conservation and Research Conference

CONSERVATION SCIENCE

Dublin Zoo Conservation Scholarship Programme

Greater academic links and teaching opportunities

Enhanced internship programme



POLITICAL ADVOCACY

4TH Defined contributions to the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan



Contributing to 13 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

13

BIOBANK

Ireland's first National Wildlife Biobanking Hub



1. Conservation Breeding and Reintroduction

The IUCN increasingly recognises that conservation breeding and management by zoos and aquariums can play a crucial role in the recovery of threatened species. As emphasised in the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, “no other group of institutions has the scientific knowledge and practical experience to keep and breed thousands of animal species, thereby offering enormous potential for contributing to wildlife conservation”. Numerous species exist in the wild today solely as a result of *ex situ* conservation intervention and subsequent reintroduction, including the scimitar-horned oryx, California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) and Przewalski’s horse (*Equus ferus przewalski*).

Dublin Zoo currently cares for over 400 animals of more than 70 species. Our dedicated staff have the skills, knowledge and expertise to care for, breed, rescue and rehabilitate these animals throughout their entire lives. However, in order for our conservation efforts to be successful, we need to ensure that we work collaboratively with other zoos and aquariums to maintain both genetically and demographically sustainable populations. Dublin Zoo currently participates in international breeding programmes (called EEPs) for 38 species, and Dublin Zoo staff coordinate the conservation breeding programmes for two of these species at a European level. These managed populations are critically important insurance populations and reservoirs of genetic diversity for an increasing number of threatened species. Additionally, *ex situ* conservation also provides unique opportunities for people to see and connect with species from around the world, and provides a platform for our field conservation partners to share their conservation success stories. By framing our conservation stories around flagship species, we can engage our guests with our conservation mission and goals, building our reputation as a locally and globally renowned conservation organisation.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Target 4 of the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD, and Objectives 2 and 6 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By managing populations of threatened species, and securing their future, we will also be contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15).





We will widen the scope of the animals in our care to include a greater number of conservation-dependent amphibians, fish, invertebrates and native species.

Actions:

1.1 We will increase the proportion of species in our care that are part of conservation breeding programmes, or for which we support conservation planning or field conservation activities, from currently 54% to at least 75% over the lifetime of this plan. Emphasis will be placed on those species for which the Dublin Zoo population can play a direct conservation role, such as restocking or head-starting of wild populations.

1.2 We will maximise our contribution to international conservation breeding programmes through our continued support and coordination of important EEPs, and will increase our level of support wherever possible.

1.3 We will widen the taxonomic scope of the animals in our care to include conservation-dependent species of amphibians, fish and invertebrates, as well as native Irish species.

1.4 We will select species for *ex situ* management in close collaboration with our conservation partners, guided by national and international mandates, in line with the IUCN SSC 'Guidelines on the use of *Ex Situ* Management for Species Conservation', and based on our own expertise and facilities, in addition to the ambassadorial and educational role the species will play in achieving our conservation goals.

1.5 We will develop the skills and capacity to respond to emerging situations that require *ex situ* conservation and management intervention, including the establishment of dedicated *ex situ* facilities at Dublin Zoo.





2. Protecting Ireland's Wildlife

With over 31,000 recorded species, Ireland has a rich biodiversity spanning terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, many of which support important populations of wild plants and animals. These species and environments provide critical ecosystem services and immeasurable economic, cultural and societal benefits. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of Ireland's biodiversity is currently threatened with extinction, and 91% of our assessed habitats have an unfavourable conservation status. The threats and pressures faced by Irish wildlife include habitat loss, climate change, pollution, and invasive species. However, under national and EU legislation, we have an obligation to protect and conserve our biodiversity, something which is mirrored in the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy. Dublin Zoo is committed to protecting Irish wildlife and has already built partnerships with many Irish conservation organisations, such as BirdWatch Ireland and the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, providing support to help protect a range of native species and their habitats. Our location in Phoenix Park, and our expansive 28-hectare site, also provide excellent habitats for a wide variety of native species.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Targets 4 and 16 of the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD, and Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By managing populations of threatened Irish species, and working with our conservation partners to secure their future, we will also be contributing to Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15). By working with the Irish Government to influence biodiversity-related policies, we will be contributing to Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).



We will become a recognised leader in the conservation of native Irish species and their habitats, creating a National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo.

Actions:

2.1 We will create an IUCN National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo, with the capacity for species conservation assessment, conservation planning and action. To achieve this, we will build strategic partnerships with organisations such as the IUCN SSC, various government departments and State bodies, and Irish universities and conservation groups.

2.2 We will develop an Irish eco-region at Dublin Zoo, showcasing and protecting native species. This will highlight Ireland's unique and threatened biodiversity and will provide an opportunity to engage and educate our visitors on the steps we can all take to conserve native species and habitats.

2.3 We will manage our 28-hectare site as a quality habitat for native species, creating a detailed Biodiversity Action Plan, and feeding into existing national and local strategies, such as the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021–2025.

2.4 We will work with volunteers and local partners, such as the Office of Public Works and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to conserve and restore Irish wildlife and habitats, beginning locally in Phoenix Park and extending throughout Dublin and Ireland.

2.5 We will use our convening power to serve as a hub for other conservation organisations, facilitating meetings and partnerships between independent groups to encourage a unified approach to national biodiversity conservation.

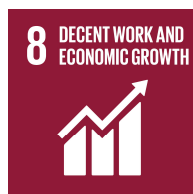
2.6 We will lobby all levels of national government on key issues relating to biodiversity conservation, and will provide advice and evidence when new policies and legislation are being formulated and drafted. To ensure we are effective, we will also participate in relevant national committees, conferences and summits.



3. Protecting Wildlife Globally

The global biodiversity crisis we face cannot be solved within our own walls. To achieve successful conservation outcomes for global wildlife, we need to work in partnership with local communities, supporting the *in situ* conservation efforts needed to protect species in the wild and creating long-term and sustainable conservation solutions. The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy directly calls on zoos to create or support field conservation projects, and to create a clear connection between the animals within a collection and a relevant conservation project in the field, allowing visitors to learn about the conservation status of animals they see when they visit a zoo. Over the last 20 years, Dublin Zoo has created lasting relationships with both Irish and international field conservation partners, many of which are linked to threatened species at Dublin Zoo. These field conservation projects operate across more than 20 countries on four continents, with particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and all are involved in local education and/or capacity building. To be effective, conservation actions to save threatened species must also be directed at improving the lives and health of the local communities which share the same resources and habitats. Therefore, it is crucial that our conservation actions amplify local voices to co-create human-centred solutions, creating a sense of ownership and equity that promote sustainable human-wildlife co-existence. Furthermore, Dublin Zoo helps build global capacity for integrated conservation planning through our support of the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Targets 3, 4 and 20 of the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD, and Objectives 1 and 6 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By working with our conservation partners to secure a future for wildlife, we will also be contributing to Life Below Water (SDG 14), Life on Land (SDG 15), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17). Similarly, by involving local communities, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and preventing human-wildlife conflict, we will be contributing to No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), and Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8).





Nubian giraffe at Kigio Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya. Photo: Giraffe Conservation Foundation.

We will expand our conservation partnerships and assume an action-driven, leadership role in the conservation of global wildlife.

Actions:

3.1 We will increase our capacity to contribute to global species conservation status assessments and plans through the establishment of an IUCN National Centre for Species Survival at Dublin Zoo.

3.2 We will significantly increase our financial support for field conservation projects through the Dublin Zoo Conservation Fund, and we will create a dedicated Emergency Response Fund to ensure we are ready to respond to global conservation crises.

3.3 We will establish a Dublin Zoo Conservation Grants programme, which will provide financial support to small conservation projects in Ireland and developing countries (either ongoing or pilot projects). Small grants will be awarded annually based on the perceived conservation value of the project.

3.4 We will continue to concentrate our conservation efforts and support on the broad ecoregions represented at Dublin Zoo. To achieve this, we will enhance existing strategic partnerships with field conservation projects and develop new ones where appropriate.

3.5 We will create clear criteria for the selection of field conservation partners, ensuring all projects have clear goals, expertise and support in place, in addition to aligning with Dublin Zoo's values and mission.

3.6 We will assume a proactive leadership role in the conservation of global wildlife, working in closer collaboration with our local conservation partners and utilising our technical skills and expertise to co-design and lead projects. We will promote regular staff exchanges and capacity building initiatives.

3.7 We will continually review and measure the success of our conservation actions in each of the field conservation projects we support. To achieve this, we will determine key metrics for each field conservation project to help us assess if our conservation actions are effectively achieving their intended conservation goals.

3.8 We will work directly with our conservation partners to engage audiences and support communities living alongside wildlife in the field, ensuring that mutual learning and capacity building takes place, promoting sustainable human-wildlife co-existence.

3.9 We will become a political advocate for our sector at a European and global level. We will become a member of the IUCN and further develop our contributions to specialist groups and task forces, using our conservation advocacy to drive policy change.



Students on International Tree Day. Photo: Okapi Conservation Project.



4. Evidence-Based Conservation

Conservation actions must be underpinned by evidence-based research if they are to be effective and sustainable. Although we share deep emotional connections with our animals and the natural world, our conservation actions and decisions need to be based on robust scientific data to increase the efficacy of our actions and ensure long-term success. In line with the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, Dublin Zoo actively conducts, facilitates and supports scientific research that directly impacts conservation action and animal welfare. The animals in our care provide a unique opportunity to collect critical data needed to protect their counterparts in the wild. Working with our conservation and research partners, we aim to apply zoo-based research to enhance conservation outcomes in the wild. For example, Dublin Zoo has been working with the Snow Leopard Trust to test remote sensing cameras. Under the supervision of our animal care team, we have tested cameras in our snow leopard habitat to better understand their ability to successfully detect individual snow leopards, which will help develop methodologies that can be deployed safely in the wild to monitor snow leopards throughout their native range. Conservation research doesn't stop with our animals, and research on people, and their attitudes towards wildlife, is critical to the successful implementation of conservation actions and interventions. With over 1.2 million visitors a year we are perfectly situated to leverage and improve our conservation communication through evidence-based research, promoting more wildlife-friendly behaviours.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Objectives 2 and 5 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By working with our conservation partners to improve conservation outcomes in the wild using innovative evidence-based research, this strategic area will contribute to Life Below Water (SDG 14), Life on Land (SDG 15) and Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9). Similarly, by disseminating research findings and building robust academic partnerships with universities, we will also be contributing to Quality Education (SDG 4) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).



We will expand our efforts to conduct, facilitate and support research needed to inform conservation action and animal welfare, actively seeking out new research opportunities and partnerships.

Actions:

4.1 We will expand our efforts to conduct, facilitate and support scientific research that directly impacts conservation action and animal welfare at Dublin Zoo and beyond, providing research opportunities for students, researchers and Dublin Zoo staff.

4.2 We will develop institutional research priorities, focussing on evidence-based conservation, population management, and animal welfare science. We will also continue to support, and, where possible, initiate, multi-institution research projects, working with the global zoo and aquarium community to inform conservation and management action.

4.3 We will develop new strategic research partnerships with experts in appropriate scientific disciplines, local universities and conservation organisations, helping us address the institutional research priorities for the animals in our care.

4.4 We will work with our conservation partners to identify opportunities to utilise Dublin Zoo's resources for the research needed to improve conservation outcomes in the wild.

4.5 We will engage in social science research to help us better understand the motivations and perceptions of our national and international visitors, and will actively investigate ways to improve conservation education outcomes and promote positive behavioural change.

4.6 We will enhance dissemination of research findings through appropriate channels, aiming for peer-reviewed publications wherever possible, and will increase our representation at national and international scientific meetings and conferences.

4.7 We will further the public engagement of conservation science and research, and will actively develop opportunities to share our research stories with the public and our visitors.



African wild dog research and monitoring, Zimbabwe. Photo: Painted Dog Conservation.



5. Conserving Genetic Diversity

One of the greatest threats to biodiversity today is the loss of genetic diversity associated with huge population declines. This loss of genetic diversity impacts the fitness of already threatened species and populations, making it difficult for them to adapt and recover. However, by collecting and storing genetic material (biobanking), including tissue samples, gametes (sperm and eggs), and viable cells, we can potentially reintroduce once-lost genetic diversity back into a population, helping to recover threatened species. Dublin Zoo is already a proud partner of the innovative Frozen Ark project, which works with partners across the globe to preserve the DNA of endangered species, helping to preserve genetic diversity and conserve species. By preserving genetic material from threatened species in our care, we can demonstrate a clear and tangible commitment to long-term species conservation, placing Dublin Zoo at the forefront of integrated conservation planning. Working with our partners at the EAZA Biobank, the Frozen Ark and the new Nature's SAFE initiative, we will help secure a genetically healthy future for wildlife, both in Ireland and beyond.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Target 13 of the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD, and Objectives 2 and 5 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By working to secure a genetically healthy future for wildlife, we will also be contributing to Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15).



We will secure a genetically healthy future for wildlife, both in Ireland and beyond, establishing Ireland's first National Wildlife Biobanking Hub at Dublin Zoo to collect and preserve genetic samples.

Actions:

5.1 We will develop Ireland's first National Wildlife Biobanking Hub at Dublin Zoo, which will collect and preserve genetic samples from not only Ireland's zoos and aquariums, but also native Irish wildlife.

5.2 We will investigate opportunities to work with academic and industrial partners to increase our biobanking capacity and ability to preserve viable cells.

5.3 We will work with international partners to develop clear strategies to prioritise species for biobanking efforts, ensuring that our resources are used appropriately and conservation opportunities are not overlooked.

5.4 We will contribute to the research and planning of global biobanking initiatives through active research projects and working in close collaboration with the EAZA Biobank Working Group and the IUCN SSC Conservation Biobanking Specialist Group.



6. Behaviour Change and Empowerment

Nearly all threats faced by wildlife are linked to human behaviours and actions. Unfortunately, wildlife threats such as overfishing, poaching and climate change cannot be solved by conservation breeding programmes, but instead require wider, societal change. Zoos and aquariums can help create a culture of conservation in society, and have the potential to influence visitors to create more wildlife-friendly behaviours. This is potentially the most important role of zoos in contributing to conservation, and we are dedicated to working with our visitors, communities, suppliers and politicians to educate, inspire and empower a societal shift towards more pro-conservation behaviours. With over 1.2 million visitors a year (more than 25% of Ireland's population), Dublin Zoo is perfectly positioned to create opportunities for everyone to get involved in conservation, empowering and enabling people to take action for wildlife. Dublin Zoo already has strong informal and formal education programmes. Dublin Zoo's dedicated Discovery and Learning Team reaches approximately 60,000 learners each year through formal school, community outreach, and weekend and holiday programmes. We also engage with a wide variety of special groups, including individuals with ill health and asylum seekers. However, there are opportunities for further growth in this area, including the instigation of dedicated behavioural change campaigns, and initiatives to proactively engage people from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds in conservation learning and action. This will allow us to build an audience that is more diverse across age groups and ethnicities, reflecting the diversity of Dublin and Ireland, and actively engage those who have previously been under-represented.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Target 16 of the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD, and Objectives 1 and 3 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By educating our visitors, engaging under-represented groups, and encouraging people to make sustainable lifestyle choices, we will also be contributing to Quality Education (SDG 4), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13).





We will become a leader in conservation empowerment, offering innovative and inspirational engagement programmes to elicit conservation action from our visitors.

Actions:

6.1 We will make the conservation issues we highlight relevant to our staff's and visitors' lives and inspire people to choose pro-environmental behaviours and to take direct and indirect action for wildlife and the natural world.

6.2 We will coordinate an annual Native Species Weekend at Dublin Zoo, bringing together conservation partners from across Ireland to share their stories with our visitors and staff, promoting pro-environmental behaviours.

6.3 We will run at least three dedicated behaviour change campaigns, underpinned by behavioural theory, creating measurable behaviour change among our visitors. These campaigns will focus on issues in Ireland where our visitors can make a direct difference to conservation, allowing them to become advocates for the natural world.

6.4 We will proactively engage with groups from socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds that are currently under-represented among our visitor base and work with them to make the Zoo, and conservation education, accessible to all.

6.5 We will continually review and measure the effectiveness of our conservation education actions, ensuring we are achieving the greatest possible conservation impact.







7. Creating Conservation Scientists

As we face a global biodiversity crisis, there has never been a greater need for well-trained conservation scientists to help prevent extinction and safeguard the natural world. We are committed to cultivating the next generation of conservationists through our formal Education and Higher Education programmes. By engaging students of all ages in our conservation education programmes, we believe that we can develop the skills, knowledge and competencies necessary to solve complex and real-world conservation problems. Over 60,000 learners already visit Dublin Zoo annually to participate in conservation education experiences. Our Discovery and Learning team has already developed strong primary and secondary school educational programming, but we now want to develop stronger links throughout third-level education. Dublin Zoo is surrounded by some of Ireland's best universities and research institutions, providing an opportunity for us to develop robust academic partnerships and support evidence-based conservation research. We will partner with third-level education providers to jointly develop Higher Education courses in conservation science, support conservation research, and share our expertise to help create the next generation of conservation scientists.

Alignment: This strategic area aligns with Objective 5 of the draft fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan. By working with academic partners to cultivate the next generation of conservation scientists, this strategic area will also be contributing to Quality Education (SDG 4), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).



We will position ourselves as a leader in conservation science education, creating robust academic partnerships to jointly develop Higher Education courses and support postgraduate conservation research.

Actions:

7.1 We will develop a new partnership model with local universities to jointly develop third-level programmes in conservation science at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, cultivating the next generation of conservationists. This will involve the direct delivery of lectures and practical classes on-site at Dublin Zoo, providing access to a unique and invigorating learning environment. Dublin Zoo educators and scientists will deliver these sessions and will be available for the co-supervision of postgraduate research projects.

7.2 We will establish the Dublin Zoo Conservation Scholarship programme, which will provide support to postgraduate students (MRes and PhD level) to undertake conservation research of relevance to Dublin Zoo. Our Conservation Scholars will be supervised by Dublin Zoo scientists and will be partly sponsored by Dublin Zoo. To achieve this, we will collaborate with funding bodies and academic institutions, assisting students in securing financial support and academic co-supervision.

7.3 Through our paid zoo internship programme we will provide more opportunities for undergraduate students of all socio-economic backgrounds to engage in wildlife conservation and research. These conservation and research internships will culminate in an individual research project and presentation.

7.4 We will provide long-term support for all of our conservation graduates through Zoo Mentors and the development of an alumni network. This will provide our graduates with professional networks and clear pathways to help them further their conservation careers.

7.5 We will establish a Zoological Society of Ireland Conservation and Research Conference, and a series of regular conservation lectures and panel discussions, inviting Irish and global conservationists to share their stories and inspire others.

7.6 We will establish the Dublin Zoo Conservation Prize, which will be awarded annually to an outstanding figure in the realm of wildlife conservation.





**We are Dublin Zoo. We save wildlife and
inspire a passion for nature – one
person, one family at a time.**



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