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Measuring and Growing AZA Conservation Impact



© Mike Wallace, San Diego Zoo

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Paradigm Shift

Conservation Centers of Excellence



The Need for AZA Conservation Engagement



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- Wildlife is under growing threat and pressure
- AZA-accredited zoo and aquarium conservation is impactful
 - Needs to be better understood
 - Deserves greater recognition

Conservation in the AZA Community



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- Proven partners in species conservation and recovery
- Participation in >1700 conservation activities annually; financial contribution unknown
- Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Programs didn't distinguish between conservation focused on:
 - sustaining populations in AZA-accredited institutions
 - sustaining populations in the wild

Changes to SSP Program



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- AZA Board approved a plan to de-couple field conservation from *ex situ* population management within SSPs
- Now SSPs can independently focus on:
 - cooperative management to increase population sustainability within AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums
 - **species-specific field conservation efforts**

Three Primary Challenges



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1. Define “field conservation” for the AZA community
2. Collect appropriate information about accredited zoo and aquarium conservation activities
3. Identify and apply a framework to evaluate SSP-related conservation activities and impact

Challenge 1: Define Field Conservation



© Tracy Trout, Western North Carolina Nature Center

- Developed by FCC
- Shared among stakeholders
- Brought to Directors in January 2011
- Definitions of “Green Practices” and “Conservation Education” will be developed independently during 2011

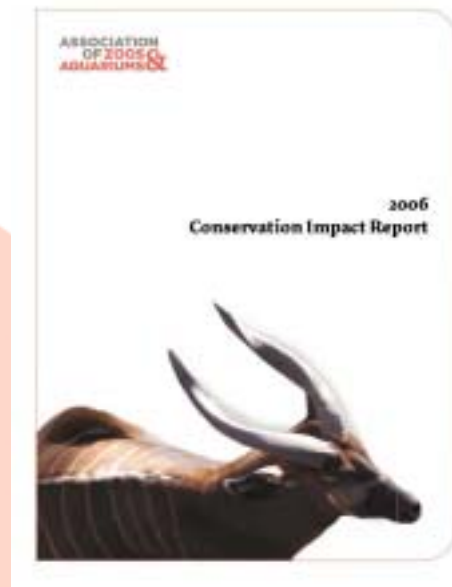
Field Conservation



© Tina Carpenter, Houston Zoo

- **WAZA**
 - Conservation is the securing of long-term populations of species in natural ecosystems and habitats wherever possible.
- **Zoo-based Conservation**
 - The use of living collections of animals in captivity to secure the long-term survival of species in natural ecosystems and habitats, through *ex situ* management, research, fundraising, education, awareness and advocacy.

Challenge 2: Capture Institutional Conservation Activity



- Annual Report on Conservation and Science (ARCS) - members describe conservation activities *with impact in the field*
- Project “topics” complement the new field conservation definition
- AZA Board looking for 100% response rate

Focus on Financials



© National Aquarium in Baltimore

- 2010 ARCS will focus, per Board and AZA President, on financial resources dedicated to conservation efforts *with an impact in the field*
- Requests for 2010 information recently sent
- Data will capture actual conservation expenditures of AZA members



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Expected Outcomes

- Report about projects and expenditures
 - Circulation among global partners, government agencies, other partners
 - Available online
- Expenditures announced at AZA Annual Conference and will serve as a baseline for tracking expenditures over time

Challenge 3: Develop SSP Impact Assessment Framework



© Cathy Burkey, Dallas Zoo

- A Conservation Assessment Working Group will develop criteria and a process to assess SSP conservation achievements/impacts
- Criteria and process to be developed, with recommendations to be approved by the Board – goal is by end of 2011.

Apply Conservation Criteria to SSP Programs



© Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo

- FCC will then assess SSPs and identify their conservation levels
- Assessments will be based on current *in situ* conservation action and/or research that has measurable conservation outcomes

Conservation is Important - We Want to Do More



American painted lady

© Jaret Daniels, University of Florida

- AZA Board and WAZA are both encouraging zoos and aquariums to do more
- Understanding and increasing conservation impact could facilitate regulatory processes related to enhancement requirements

Your Role

- Share evaluation frameworks
- Contribute to your institution's 2010 ARCS submission – include financial information
- Look for SSP Field Conservation updates from the Conservation Assessment Working Group and provide feedback



Where We Are Going



© Julie Schmidt, Brevard Zoo

- Utilize a standardized definition of “field conservation” within the AZA community
- Collect appropriate information about AZA-accredited zoo and aquarium conservation activities
- Identify and apply a framework to evaluate SSP-related conservation activities

Why This is a Priority – A Conservation Goal



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To solidify AZA-accredited institutions' role as centers of conservation excellence, invested in the sustainability of animal populations both in their care, and in the wild.



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Thank you!

For questions, feedback, or information on evaluation frameworks, contact:

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