

NEWS FROM...



Top Ten Wildlife Conservation Success Stories in 2007

SILVER SPRING, MD, (December 18, 2007) - The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) today announced its top 10 wildlife conservation success stories for 2007. From amphibians to zebras, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are spearheading new efforts to protect wild animals - in some cases bringing them back from the brink of extinction.

"AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are leaders in wildlife conservation and education," said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. "The 2007 Top 10 list is just a small sample of the important work of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums."

In the last five years, AZA-accredited facilities funded 3,693 conservation projects in more than 100 countries. Annual spending on conservation averages nearly \$70 million per year.

Top 10 Wildlife Conservation Success Stories in 2007

1. Terrific toadlets

Habitat loss, pollution and disease are hitting some of the smallest creatures on earth the hardest. Frog populations have been in sharp decline the past few decades, but a fortunate native species is getting a helping hand from scientists. Staff at the [Detroit Zoo](#) are raising 40 juvenile Wyoming toads, one of the most endangered amphibians in the United States. The species is now considered functionally extinct in the wild, with the last remaining individuals only found in zoos and aquariums across the country. The zoo breeding partnership, led by [Central Park Zoo](#) and [Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo](#), has successfully released more than 6,000 tadpoles, toadlets and toads in Wyoming since the program's inception in 1995. Recent good news indicates that the recovery efforts may be paying off: this summer in a monitored protected area, conservationists discovered the first clutch of Wyoming toad eggs found in the wild in ten years.

2. Mice on the move

This summer, [Santa Fe Community College Teaching Zoo](#) in Gainesville, Florida, began housing 52 Perdido Key beach mice to protect the species from extinction. The mice originated from the University of South Carolina, but needed to be relocated after damage from Hurricane Ivan. The [Brevard Zoo](#), [Florida Aquarium](#) and [Palm Beach Zoo](#) have since shared in the responsibility of caring for and studying the mice. There are only a few hundred individuals left in the wild, inhabiting just one barrier island off the coast of Pensacola. Scientists fear that a hurricane could be disastrous to the beach mice, potentially causing the species to become extinct in the wild. Breeding studies have commenced to safeguard their numbers.

3. The right stuff for right whales

The world's rarest large whale, the right whale, has been the topic of interest for scientists at the [New England Aquarium](#) this past year. Fewer than 400 North Atlantic right whales currently exist in the world, and are threatened by ship collisions and entanglement in fishing gear, habitat loss, pollution, and disease. The New England Aquarium's Right Whale Research Project recently developed a hormone test to learn more about the reproductive rates of the endangered species. This information is critical in helping these giant sea creatures survive.

4. Loose lemurs

Black-and-white ruffed lemurs born in zoos are getting a feel for their new home at the Betampona Natural Reserve in eastern Madagascar. The [Madagascar Fauna Group](#) (MFG), and the Duke Lemur Center coordinated the plan to reintroduce zoo-bred lemurs to the wild, with the help of other MFG partners and institutions, including Salt Lake City's [Hogle Zoo](#) , the [Los Angeles Zoo](#) and the [Santa Ana Zoo](#) . The released individuals are being monitored and have fared well so far, with four offspring born from three reintroduced lemurs.

5. International sea turtle success

The Kemp's ridley sea turtle population is in bad shape, but thanks to cooperation between U.S and Mexican officials and scientists, the species can rest assured that their nesting sites will be safe. The [Gladys Porter Zoo](#) in Brownsville, Texas, and Mexican conservation workers have protected the turtle's nesting sites on beaches in Tamaulipas, Mexico and Padre Island National Seashore. The Zoo reports an increase in nests by the hundreds each year on the Mexican Gulf Coast, indicating success of the program.

6. Black and white is all the rage

Grevy's zebras are the hot topic in animal awareness thanks to the [Saint Louis Zoo](#) . The Zoo has partnered with several Kenyan non-profits and other zoo partners to spread awareness to communities in the zebra's home range across Kenya. Grevy's zebras are threatened by poaching and competition from livestock, but efforts to raise awareness in Kenyan villages have been paying off and benefiting their wild populations, reports the Zoo. Several communities have established livestock-free conservation areas, which benefit not only the zebras, but all forms of wildlife in the region. Additionally, over 30 Grevy's zebra foals have been born and raised at the Saint Louis Zoo over the past five decades.

7. Saving "Jaws"

For the third time since 2004, the [Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) has placed a young white shark on public exhibit. The shark was caught accidentally in commercial fishing gear off Southern California. Through its White Shark Research Project, the Aquarium has worked since 2002 to learn more about white sharks in the wild, and has since tagged and tracked 10 juvenile white sharks off Southern California. White sharks are in decline worldwide, in part because they are slow to reproduce and also because of growing fishing pressure that is decimating all shark species. Their fearsome reputation has also made them a target of trophy hunters and the curio trade. The Aquarium's hope in exhibiting a white shark is to change public attitudes and promote greater protection for these much-maligned ocean predators.

8. Blue skies for butterflies

Floridian zoos have teamed up to protect the small but mighty butterfly. The Florida Butterfly Monitoring Network, which includes [Brevard Zoo](#) , [Central Florida Zoo](#) , [Disney's Animal Kingdom](#) , [Jacksonville Zoo](#) , [Lowry Park Zoo](#) , and [Miami MetroZoo](#) , is working to survey butterfly populations throughout Florida. Saving this small creature is no small task, and volunteer citizen scientists trained by the zoos conduct monthly counts of butterflies in both natural and man-made habitats on zoo grounds. This information allows researchers to monitor populations and look into potential threats to fragile butterfly species.

9. Marmot Island

The Vancouver Island marmot is the most endangered animal in Canada. Native to British Columbia's Vancouver Island, these critters are being threatened by massive habitat destruction in the wild. Their current wild population is estimated at nearly 50 animals, but thanks to breeding centers devoted to the species, such as the [Toronto Zoo](#) , the population is now around 150. [Calgary Zoo](#) in Alberta was the first to successfully breed the marmots at their facility, and produced an impressive five litters in 2007. The pups will be reintroduced in Mount Washington, British Columbia, where they will undergo pre-release conditioning to improve survivability in the wild. Veterinarians at the Calgary Zoo were also recently awarded an [AZA Conservation Endowment Fund \(CEF\)](#) grant to study diseases impacting Vancouver Island marmot populations at the breeding institutions and in the wild.

10. The regal eagle's recovery

This year, America's national symbol, the bald eagle, was removed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species List. This was a grand feat for the species, which just a decade ago faced dwindling populations. The [San Francisco Zoo](#) has been instrumental in breeding and releasing captive eagles, and has reintroduced more than 100 bald eagles over the past 22 years. The Zoo reports about 200 nesting pairs of bald eagles in California today.

About AZA

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, the AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats.

The Palm Beach Zoo is a non profit zoological organization located at Dreher Park in West Palm Beach. Its mission is to provide an open-air classroom of living creatures to foster awareness, appreciation and respect for the natural world. The zoo is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Support for the zoo is also provided by the Palm Beach County Tourist Development Council, the Board of County Commissioners and the Palm Beach County Cultural Council.

Palm Beach Zoo is located at 1301 Summit Boulevard, just east of I-95 between Southern and Forest Hill Boulevard. Admission: Regular \$12.95, Seniors 60+ \$9.95, Children 3-12 \$8.95, under 3 years and Zoo Members are free. The zoo is open every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.) For more information visit www.palmbeachzoo.org.

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**Palm Beach Zoo • 1301 Summit Boulevard, West Palm Beach FL, 33405-3098
(561) 547-WILD • www.palmbeachzoo.org**