



PRAGUE ZOO

WE HELP THEM TO SURVIVE

SPRING 2023



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Photo © Dyrnsakhan Gambatar

When I came to Prague Zoo in 2010, I spent the very first weekend in the director's office. Among other things, I wrote a "decalogue" on how to approach in situ projects. I deemed it to be absolutely essential that zoos take part in biodiversity conservation – and I wanted Prague Zoo to lead the way for others.

It has been over thirteen years since then and the things we have achieved in this area have gone way past my wildest dreams. The Return of the Wild Horses, the Wandering Bus, the conservation of and research into gharials, the release of Egyptian vultures and many other projects that we either organize directly or support have helped in saving many endangered species and have gained international recognition.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of the public and the zoo's founder. The Prague City representatives have always fully understood that a zoo is not here simply to "show off the animals", but that it has other tasks as well. This led to the One Crown from Admission Fees project being set up, which generated funds for our zoo's in situ projects by deducting CZK 1 from each ticket. Over time this amount was gradually increased and in May 2023 the Prague City Council approved the proposal by the 1st Deputy Mayor, Jana Komrsková, to raise it to CZK 8.

This brief overview is a means to show where these funds – as well as the contributions from our many, many supporters – are currently going.

Miroslav Bobek, Director of Prague Zoo

Since 2011, Prague Zoo, in cooperation with the Czech Army, has transported a total of 34 horses in nine flights to Great Gobi B Strictly Protected Area.





Photo © Miroslav Bobek

THE WILD HORSES RETURN TO THE DZUNGARIAN GOBI

The Przewalski's horse (*Equus przewalskii*) is an iconic animal for Prague Zoo – and Prague Zoo is a key institution for this the last species of wild horse. Prague Zoo began breeding Przewalski's horses in the 1930s and, together with the breeding programme in Munich, was a key player in the species' conservation after World War Two. At the end of the 1950s, a world conference focused on rescuing the Przewalski's horse was held at Prague Zoo (it was here that the horse's world studbook was entrusted to Prague), and later a Prague Zoo representative first voiced the idea of reintroducing the Przewalski's horse to its homeland.

2011 saw a significant new chapter opening for Prague Zoo, it was then that it organized its first air transport of Przewalski's horses from the Czech Republic to western Mongolia. In the following years, a total of nine such transports took place, all of them working

An army CASA aircraft with Przewalski's horses on board lands on the unpaved airfield at Bulgan Sum.



Photo © Jaroslav Šimek



Photo © Miroslav Bobek

Thanks to Prague Zoo, a 140-metre well for drinking water was built near the acclimatization pens in Takhin Tal.

closely with the Czech Army and using CASA military aircraft. 34 horses were transported in all. The thirty mares that made it to the Dzungarian Gobi had over eighty foals, as well as ten grandchildren and even their first great-grandchildren. In addition, a CASA aircraft was also used to make one transport within Mongolia.

At the same time, Prague Zoo also supported the Great Gobi B Strictly Protected Area and the long-term sustainability of returning Przewalski's horses to the Dzungarian Gobi. Over the years, it has purchased a number of off-road vehicles and motorcycles, had a well sunk, rebuilt a hospital in a nearby village, funded the construction of posts for the rangers, supported research work, and so on.

Although there were significant losses of Przewalski's horses in the Gobi B over the last winter, their numbers are still high enough that it is not necessary to think about further transports from Europe. Prague Zoo will continue to support the work of the Strictly Protected Area's staff, but, as concerns reintroducing horses, it has started to focus on other locations.

PRZEWALSKI'S HORSES HEAD EAST...

In 2019 Prague Zoo staff, together with Mongolian colleagues, started paying serious thought to the idea of starting another reintroduction project for Przewalski's horses, this time to eastern Mongolia. The autumn of the same year saw the first research trip and selected sites in eastern Mongolia were looked into.

The plan, which should contribute to strengthening the long-term sustainability of wild horse populations in Mongolia, was welcomed by the local conservation authorities and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia. The project is coordinated by Prague

A view of the Valley of Monasteries landscape in eastern Mongolia, where the planned reintroduction of Przewalski's horses is to take place.





Photo © David Rauch

Mongolian-Czech team, which completed a field trip in January.



Photo © Miroslav Bobek

Zoo and involves professional institutions, especially universities, from both countries. We Help Them to Survive Mongolia is a non-profit organization set up to take care of actually running the project.

Using remote sensing methods to assess satellite data, a broader region of eastern Mongolia, defined during a reconnaissance trip in autumn 2019, was given an initial evaluation. The assessment took in parameters such as vegetation cover and its quality, the availability of water resources, local climatic conditions, etc. Based on the results obtained, four sites were subsequently identified for on-site follow-up surveys.

The first of the field studies was conducted in 2021. It looked at the issue of tick-borne diseases in horses. The main part of the field research, an extensive feasibility study, started in May 2022 with an initial survey of the four sites chosen in an attempt to prioritize them. Using this as the basis, Prague Zoo

staff went on two further trips. The main objective was to verify the areas' carrying capacities, including an assessment of possible competition with the herbivores already present. Following the second of these trips, in January 2023, the Valley of Monasteries area was identified for the horses' reintroduction.

The chosen site will be further surveyed in 2023, but, at the same time, there will be ongoing negotiations with the relevant authorities. The talks will concern the construction of the reintroduction centre.

... AND OFF TO KAZAKHSTAN IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Historically, the Przewalski's horse was also found in Kazakhstan and its reintroduction to the local steppes has long been considered. Prague Zoo has been repeatedly approached on this matter and the negotiations that started in autumn 2022 have brought the implementation of a similar project much closer. When the Czech Prime Minister, Petr Fiala, visited Astana, Prague Zoo's director, Miroslav Bobek, was also there to sign a memorandum of cooperation on returning Przewalski's horses to Kazakhstan. He did so with Nurlan Kylyshbayev, the chairman of Kazakhstan's Forestry and Wildlife Committee, on 24 April 2023.

Immediately after this signing there was a reconnaissance trip to assess those sites that had been preliminarily chosen for the reintroduction of Przewalski's horses. From the beginning, the main focus was on two of them: Altyn Emel (Golden Saddle) in the south-east of the country and Altyn Dala (Golden Steppe) in central Kazakhstan.

Altyn Emel already has several Przewalski's horses. It is what remains of a Kazakh-German project from the 2000's. However, it suffered significant shortcomings in its organization and, above all, the Altyn Emel area is not suitable for Przewalski's horses.

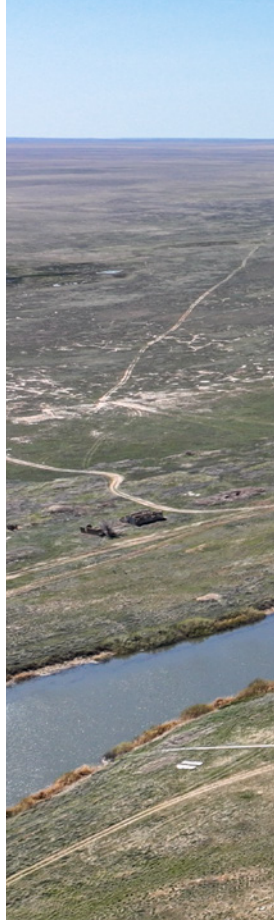


Photo © Tomáš Hulík

Aerial shot of the landscape around the Alibi reintroduction centre in Altyn Dala.



In contrast, the Altyn Dala site appears to hold the best prospects. It is an area of almost 7,000 km² of fertile steppe with no domestic animals, with plenty of water and a suitable terrain profile. As in Altyn Emel, the basic infrastructure for a reintroduction project is already in place in Altyn Dala. This was built several years ago with the aim of releasing Przewalski's horses, however, when this project was abandoned, due to the lack of legislative protection for the horses at the time, it was used to reintroduce Turkmenian kulans.

Currently, the Przewalski's horse is listed in Kazakhstan's Red Book of Endangered Species, and preparations are underway to transport the first Przewalski's horses to Kazakhstan, possibly as early as spring 2024.

THE LAST REFUGE OF WILD CAMELS

It was only relatively recently that the wild Bactrian camel (*Camelus ferus*) was genetically confirmed as a separate taxon. Approximately one million years of independent evolution separate it from the ancestors of the domestic Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*). Current estimates put its numbers at just 450 to 800 individuals living in the Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area in south-west Mongolia. A further 600 or so occur in three areas of China. Besides habitat loss and poaching, the biggest problem is hybridization with domestic Bactrian camels.

Wild Bactrian camels are extremely shy.
Photo from the Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area.



Photo © Miroslaw Bobek



To the layperson, the wild Bactrian camel may seem indistinguishable from the domestic Bactrian camel. With a bit of experience, however, it can be distinguished at a glance.

Gobi A is absolutely crucial for the species' survival. Here Prague Zoo works with The Wild Camel Protection Foundation to provide long-term expert assistance in managing the in-range breeding programme for wild camels and takes part in monitoring them and research. In April 2019, Prague Zoo signed an agreement to support the construction of a security fence at the wild camel breeding station (the only one of its kind in the world) at Zakhyn Us in Gobi A. Then, in April 2023, it provided funding for building a new breeding centre at the Toli Bulag site at the north-eastern edge of Gobi A. In recent years, support has also been directed towards managing the Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area, for example by funding a communications network or providing rangers with motorcycles.

There are plans to create an insurance population of wild Bactrian camels in European zoos. As part of its redevelopment of the Plains exhibit, Prague Zoo is preparing space for a possible "Prague" group of camels.



WANDERING BUS

In January 2023, it was ten years since the Wandering Bus made its first journey. Prior to this project, the book *Gorilla Fairy Tales* and other educational materials were distributed to school children living around the Dja Biosphere Reserve in Cameroon and other areas where western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) live. The aim was to encourage African schoolchildren to see gorillas as fascinating living creatures and not simply pieces of meat on a plate. In other words, to counter illegal hunting. The Wandering Bus further develops this initial idea. Schoolchildren from around the Dja Reserve attend an awareness raising programme and then go on a Wandering Bus journey lasting several days and taking in the primate rescue station in Méfou. There they also complete an educational programme – and, most importantly, they meet the gorillas face to face.



Photo © Miroslav Bobek

A new Wandering Bus has been running in Cameroon since 2018. The original bus, which has driven tens of thousands of kilometres in challenging terrain since 2013, is now parked in front of the Dja Reserve, Prague Zoo's new gorilla pavilion.

However, gorillas are not the only topic of the Wandering Bus. It also aims to raise awareness about other groups of animals, for example, pangolins, and nature conservation in general. Gradually, its travels have expanded to include a stop at the village of Kabilone II, where Manfred Epanda Aimé, one of Prague Zoo's long-time collaborators, has built a base that has accommodation, a model plantation operating on agroforestry principles and a nature trail through the rainforest. Here, the children also receive an educational programme. Apart from this, Prague Zoo supports a conservation and education programme directly in Kabilone II, which involves local people.



Photo © Miroslav Bobek

The staff at Prague Zoo's Education Department prepared a conservation "textbook" for Cameroonian children and tested the first version with them.

This year will see the Wandering Bus making another stop, an experimental farm for breeding palm weevils (whose larvae can be a substitute for bushmeat) near Yaoundé. Above all, however, it is planned to build an education centre and accommodation at the Méfou Centre. This means the children on the Wandering Bus will not have to spend the night in Yaoundé and it will expand the centre's educational capacity.

It is very encouraging that, based on the results of the Wandering Bus project, Prague Zoo has been approached by the Dja Biosphere Reserve's management to prepare a comprehensive proposal of educational activities for the entire reserve, which should be funded by the EU. The fact that the local pastor, Maurice Ekoalea Mvolo, has decided to translate Gorilla Fairy Tales into the local Bajwe'e dialect is also very gratifying. Its publication is tied in with his other educational activities aimed at the local population.

SUPPORT FOR PROTECTED AREAS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The most important area of Prague Zoo's work in Central Africa is the Dja Biosphere Reserve in Cameroon. That is where the Wandering Bus runs from and where material support has been and is once again flowing in to. At the start, ten or more years ago, this support consisted mostly of the bare essentials for its rangers: boots, tents, backpacks and so on. Gradually it was expanded, but after changes in the reserve's management it was discontinued because there were no guarantees that it would be used as intended. This support was only renewed in 2021. At the time Prague Zoo financed the production and placement of 96 signs marking the boundaries of the reserve. This increases the local population's awareness of the existence of a restricted zone and, as a result, makes it easier to protect the area, which is affected by poaching and illegal logging. Prague Zoo also used its funds to purchase computers and other equipment for the reserve's workers. It is planned to buy an all-terrain vehicle for the rangers in 2023. This will make it easier for the rangers to patrol the roads leading out of the reserve and to crackdown on poachers or bushmeat traders.

Photo © Mircošar Bobek



Thanks to Prague Zoo's financial support, 96 signs marked the boundaries of the Dja Biosphere Reserve.

In Cameroon, we give long-term support for the fight against poaching.

Photo © Olivier Le Que



Very recently Prague Zoo has also become involved with the Ngoyla Reserve, which is also in Cameroon and lies on the migration corridor of animals going from the Dja region deeper into Central Africa. The management of this reserve is endeavouring to develop environmental education with a focus on the youth living near the reserve's borders. Prague Zoo has been giving financial support to these efforts since 2021.

Stimulated by Czech diplomacy, Prague Zoo has also focused on the Kahuzi-Biega National Park, which is located in South Kivu in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and is key to protecting the critically endangered eastern lowland gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*). The architect Prof. Zdeněk Fránek has designed an educational and social centre for this national park, similar to the buildings he designed for the Méfou Centre.

The gorillas kept at Prague Zoo are “ambassadors” for gorillas living in the wild. Pictured here is an eastern lowland gorilla in Kahuzi-Biega National Park.

Photo © Miroslav Bobek





Czech Republic

- crucian carp
- dice snake
- European green lizard
- European ground squirrel
- eastern baton blue and others

Kazakhstan

- Przewalski's horse

Bulgaria

- Egyptian vulture

Cameroon

- western lowland gorilla
- pangolins and other species threatened by poaching

Paraguay

- Chacoan peccary

Brazil

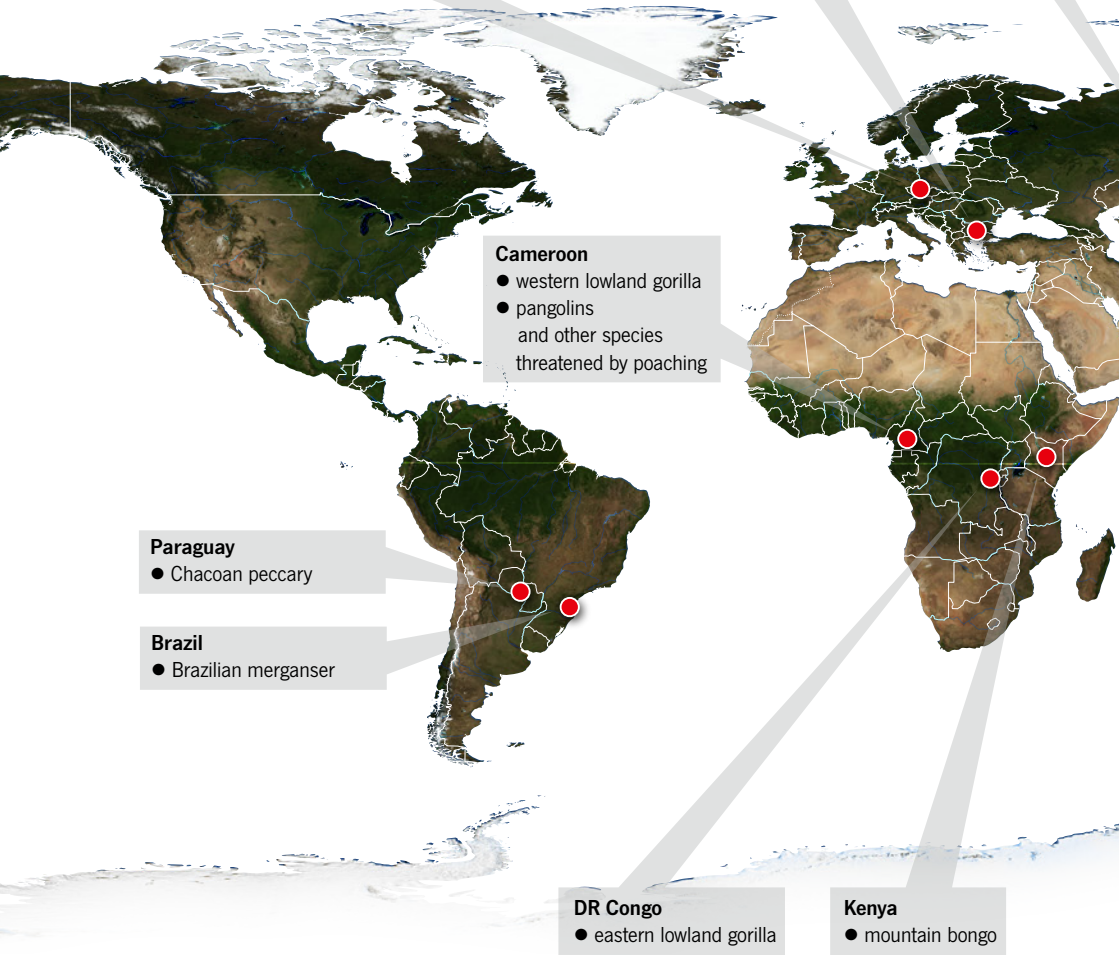
- Brazilian merganser

DR Congo

- eastern lowland gorilla

Kenya

- mountain bongo



Mongolia

- Przewalski's horse
- wild Bactrian camel

Laos

- saola
- pangolins

Vietnam

- northern buffed-cheeked gibbon
- Edwards's pheasant

Indonesia

- pangolins
- songbirds

Bhutan

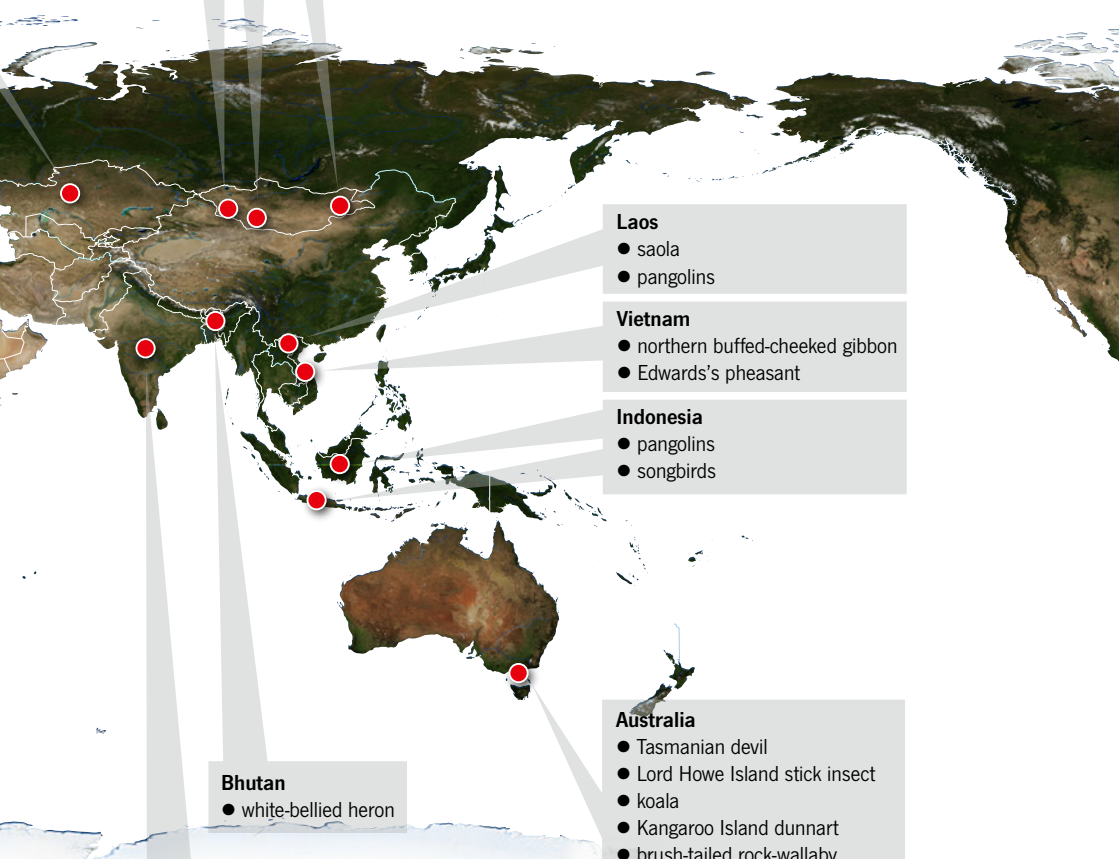
- white-bellied heron

India

- gharial

Australia

- Tasmanian devil
- Lord Howe Island stick insect
- koala
- Kangaroo Island dunnart
- brush-tailed rock-wallaby
- mountain pygmy possum
- southern corroboree frog
- western swamp turtle



GHARIALS ON THE CHAMBAL

Morphologically and evolutionarily, gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*) are exceptional crocodiles endemic to the Indian subcontinent. Back in the 1940s there were as many as 10,000 adults living in the large river basins. Today, their total number is estimated at less than 1,000 adults. The main threats they face are not only river pollution, dam building and overfishing, but also illegal sand mining, which destroys the places where gharials can lay their eggs.

Working in cooperation with the Gharial Conservation Alliance, Prague Zoo has long been involved in protecting the most important population of gharials living on the Chambal River. In recent years, conventional telemetry has been used to collect not only valuable data on the spatiotemporal use of their habitat, but also important and

Gharials are the most water-bound of all crocodylians. Their narrow, pincer-like jaws are adapted to catching fish, which form the main component of their diet.



Photo © Miroslav Bobek



Tagging a crocodile with a transmitter.

hitherto unknown information about their life and reproduction. At the same time there is awareness-raising and conservation work with local communities, schools and local authorities, including the conservation departments.

Between 2017 and 2020, a 425 km stretch of the Chambal River was monitored annually, as it has roughly 80% of the total population of gharials on it. In 2021, despite the difficulties associated with the covid-19 pandemic, we were able to keep monitoring the gharial population, albeit in a more limited manner, we initiated capacity building for the Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Forest Department and we ran education programmes targeting local communities.

In 2022, monitoring was resumed to the previous extent, with 31 gharials under continuous telemetric monitoring, and a number of environmental awareness programmes were organized.

In addition, the funds provided by Prague Zoo will be used for project coordination and monitoring work, capacity building and expanding awareness-raising and education programmes.

HELPING EGYPTIAN VULTURES

To a greater or lesser degree, vultures are endangered on every continent where they live. Of the European species, the most endangered is the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*). Prague Zoo has been focusing on its conservation and return to the Bulgarian mountains for over a decade. Its main partner is the non-profit organization Green Balkans.

Egyptian vultures and Eurasian griffon vultures in the “vulture restaurant” in the Rhodopes, Bulgaria.





Photo © Miroslav Bobek

In 2013, thanks to Prague Zoo's support, three aviaries were built in the rescue and breeding centre in Stara Zagora. They were used for breeding and looking after injured or exhausted birds from the wild. In September 2016, Prague Zoo also funded a "vulture restaurant" that was built near the village of Partizani in central Bulgaria; one of the main problems vultures face is a lack of food that is not contaminated with foreign substances. Subsequently, a Subaru Forester all-terrain vehicle was purchased for the organization's needs. Egyptian vultures' nests are mostly built in rock formations and are 1 to 1.5 kilometres apart as the crow flies, however, in the Stara Planina Mountains, this relatively short distance means detours of up to tens of kilometres in mountainous terrain.

First and foremost, however, is the fact that, since 2015, Prague Zoo has provided Bulgaria with eight vultures from its own breeding and also transported or organized the transport for them. So far (2018–2022), 15 vultures have been released in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains using the delayed release method. Six of these individuals are still alive and five have already returned to Bulgaria, which is considered a great success in conservation circles.

Historically, Prague Zoo has bred the most Egyptian vulture chicks in Europe and maintains the European Stud Book and Breeding Programme (EEP) for them. Since 2000, when the first Egyptian vulture was bred at Prague Zoo, a total of 35 chicks have hatched, 28 of which have been successfully reared.

In 2022, five Egyptian vultures from Lebanon and one Egyptian vulture from Syria came to Prague Zoo. Four of these vultures were found to have been shot during their regular migration route and it was the first time this species had been transported to the EU from outside Europe. The "Middle Eastern" vultures are now housed in a coupling aviary in Prague Zoo's breeding facilities to give them the opportunity to naturally choose a mate.

SAVE THE CRUCIAN!

In the Czech Republic the crucian carp (*Carassius carassius*), once a common fish in our pools, the lower reaches of rivers and ponds, is now threatened with extinction. The main causes are the loss of suitable water habitats and competition from the invasive Prussian carp (*Carassius gibelio*). Prague Zoo, working with the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), the Czech University of Life Sciences and the Czech Angler's Union, has been involved in rescuing it and returning it to the wild.

The idea to save the crucian carp appeared in 2020 when Prague Zoo was looking for a meaningful use of the former millrace in the lower part of the zoo. The first crucian carp were obtained thanks to experts from the Biological Centre of the CAS and the Czech Angler's Union. The others were obtained by reaching out to the public, which also identifies suitable locations for their future reintroduction – zachrankarase.cz.

The crucian carp has two forms. In small, oxygen-poor pools, it survives as a tiny, slender fish with a black spot in front of its tail fin. Pictured here is a deep-bodied form from larger ponds, often inhabited by predatory fish as pike.



Photo © Rostislaw Štefánek



The haul from the former millrace at Prague Zoo before it was drained and cleaned in December 2020. Only then could the crucian carp be released into it and the project could begin.



Small crucian carp before being released into the pond U Kamenného stolu in Prague's Vnoř district.

Currently, crucian carp are kept in several ponds in the zoo's grounds. They are starting to be reintroduced to other water bodies. The first pond to be chosen is called U Kamenného stolu and it is located in Prague-Vinoř. It was first stocked with fish belonging to the pure Labe (Elbe) river lineage in November 2022.

Just recently, Prague Zoo has set up cooperation with Prague City's Forest Management (LHMP), where two rainwater settling tanks (at Kunratice and Motol districts) are being prepared so crucian carp can be bred in them and then distributed to other partners. Working with the Association of Local Authorities (SMS ČR) and the mayors of the municipalities concerned, several tanks suitable for stocking with crucian carp have been identified in the Central Bohemian Region. Pilsen Zoo has also joined the project as a regional partner.

HELPING WHITE-BELLIED HERON CONSERVATION

The white-bellied heron (*Ardea insignis*) is critically endangered with woefully few of them in the wild. Their total number is estimated at less than 60, with 23 individuals living in the Kingdom of Bhutan. Prague Zoo has also joined the effort to save the white-bellied heron. It has trained Bhutanese colleagues, taken part in preparing a project for a breeding facility in the Changche Tsirang District and is providing expert guidance on breeding. It also provides veterinary material and supplies for rearing white-bellied herons and, most recently, its staff has been carrying out veterinary operations in the field.



Photo © Royal Society for the Protection of the Nature, Bhutan

An adult white-bellied heron hunting in the Burichhu River.

SAVING SONGBIRDS IN JAVA

Prague Zoo has provided long-term support for songbirds via the Cikananga Conservation Breeding Centre in Java, this primarily concerns the Javan green magpie (*Cissa thalassina*), the Sumatran laughing thrush (*Garrulax bicolor*) and the Javan pied myna (*Gracupica jalla*), which are some of the rarest and most endangered birds in the world. Thanks to this support, it was possible to build new aviaries or facilities for breeding insects and to carry out awareness-raising and educational activities.



Photo © Petr Hamernik

Prague Zoo has successfully reared several Javan green magpies.

THE RETURN OF AN EXTINCT BEAUTY

The Edwards's pheasant (*Lophura edwardsi*) is often presented as the most endangered pheasant species in the world. It has not been spotted in the wild since 2000, so the species is currently declared extinct in the wild. However, in the framework of the EAZA and the World Pheasant Association (WPA), the ex-situ population of Edwards's pheasants still numbers over

1,000 individuals, giving hope for renewing the population in its native range. Prague Zoo has been breeding the Edwards's pheasant continuously since 1949. This is why it has decided to co-finance the construction of a breeding centre in Vietnam, thus helping to secure a more sustainable future for this unique species and eventually return it to the wild.

Photo © Václav Šilha



Over 150 chicks of this rare pheasant have hatched at Prague Zoo.

SEARCHING FOR THE MYSTERIOUS SAOLA

The Saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*) is often described as an enigmatic animal, and quite rightly so. The oryx-like ungulate, which is actually a bovine, only became known to science in 1992 when it was spotted on the border of Vietnam and Laos. However, even after nearly three decades, no biologist has yet managed to study the saola in the wild. Prague Zoo has given long-term support to the search for this species, which is, of course, also done in conjunction with the research and protection of many other animal species. Prague Zoo cooperates with the Saola Working Group and the Saola Foundation for Annamite Mountains Conservation.

Photo © archiv Saola Working Group



There are very few photos of the saola...

HELPING “LIVING PINECONES”

Sometimes called “living pinecones” due to their scales, pangolins (*Pholidota*) are the most illegally traded mammals in the world. Both their meat is consumed, and their scales are sold, mainly for use in traditional Chinese medicine. Prague Zoo focuses on protecting them, primarily as part of its activities in Cameroon, however, in the past, it has also financed the construction of two rescue stations for pangolins in Southeast Asia – one in Laos, run by Free the Bears, and one in Indonesia, which is run by Yayasan Peduli Kelestarian Satwa.



Photo © Free the Bears

Pangolins confiscated from poachers in Laos’ Pangolarium – a wildlife sanctuary near Luang Prabang that Prague Zoo helped build.

NORTHERN BUFFED-CHEEKED GIBBON CONSERVATION IN VIETNAM

The northern buffed-cheeked gibbon (*Nomascus annamensis*) lives in the rainforests of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and, unfortunately, is also an endangered species. Their decline in the wild is mainly due to habitat degradation along with illegal hunting. For the successful conservation of northern buffed-cheeked gibbons, it is necessary to strengthen law enforcement, environmental awareness and the scientific knowledge about this species that has hardly been studied at all. Prague Zoo financially supports these activities in Vietnam, where roughly 80% of all the remaining individuals are found.

THE ONLY MERGANSER SOUTH OF THE EQUATOR

The Brazilian merganser (*Mergus octo-setaceus*) is the only surviving species of *Mergus* in the southern hemisphere. There are about 250 individuals in the wild; in the 1940s and 1950s, the species was even considered extinct. 2006 saw the creation of the Action Plan for Brazilian Merganser Conservation in collaboration with the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) and the Itatiba Zoopark, the only institution in the world that currently breeds Brazilian mergansers in captivity. Thanks to Prague Zoo's support, it was possible for colleagues from Itatiba Zoopark to purchase, for example, a backup generator, a new filtration system, or telemetry equipment.

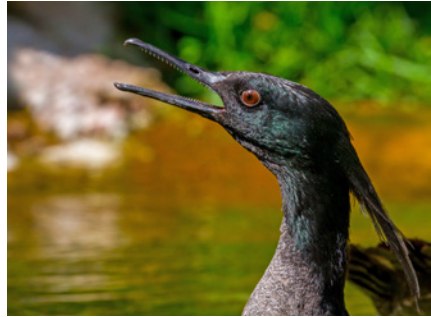


Photo © Kleber Fernandes

The Brazilian merganser. It could be bred at Prague Zoo sometime in the future

CHACOAN PECCARY CONSERVATION

The Chacoan peccary (*Catagonus wagneri*) is an endangered artiodactyl endemic to the arid Chaco region of western Paraguay, south-eastern Bolivia and northern Argentina. Prague Zoo has been breeding the Chacoan peccary since 2016, and that same year saw it begin its support for the El Centro Chaqueño para la Conservación e Investigación (CCCI), a Paraguayan NGO that aims to protect this rare species.



Photo © Václav Šilha

Peccaries regularly breed at Prague Zoo and the birth of each new piglet is great news for European breeding.

A FOREST FOR BEAUTIFUL ANTELOPES

Mountain bongos (*Tragelaphus eurycerus isaaci*) are the rarest of all forest-dwelling antelope species. As a result of habitat loss, poaching and disease, their populations are declining dramatically – currently less than 100 individuals and they are among the most endangered large mammals in the world. Prague Zoo has therefore decided to support a programme to reintroduce them into the wild in Kenya, specifically through financial support for reforestation – planting forest species as an essential habitat for these antelopes that are closely bound to the forest.

HELP FOR AUSTRALIA

The first Australian project that Prague Zoo got involved in was the conservation of Tasmanian devils (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) on Maria Island off the coast of Tasmania. Apart from this, it does fundraising to develop a vaccine against the transmissible facial cancer, which is decimating Tasmanian devil populations in the wild.



Download
the brochure in PDF
in Czech and photos

Reacting to the devastating fires of 2019 and 2020, Prague Zoo announced a collection that raised an incredible CZK 23 million (about AUD 1.5 million). The zoo has joined in to help the animals directly affected by the fires. First and foremost, however, it has been working for a long time to protect other endangered species whose situation was worsened by the fires. These include the southern corroboree frog (*Pseudophryne corroboree*) and the mountain pygmy possum (*Burramys parvus*). The QR code will take you to a separate brochure with more details (in Czech).

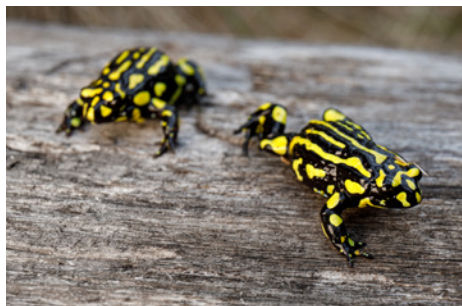


Photo © Miroslav Bobek

Working with Zoos Victoria, Prague Zoo also takes part in a project to save the unique and critically endangered Lord Howe Island stick insect (*Dryococelus australis*), whilst there are even plans to breed it in Prague in the future.

A pair of southern corroboree frogs;
image from Kosciuszko National Park.

PRZEWALSKI'S HORSES AT DÍVČÍ HRADY

In 2021, Prague Zoo placed some Przewalski's horses (*Equus przewalskii*) in a nearly 20-hectare enclosure in Prague's Dívčí hrady, an area that is closely tied to the Prokopské údolí valley, which is highly valuable biologically. The project aims to rejuvenate the grassland, act as a presentation for Przewalski's horses and also contribute to restoring the native vegetation and an overall increase in biodiversity. Plans are also underway to reintroduce the European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) to the site.

The grazing of Przewalski's horses helps restore the original steppe flora and fauna.



Photo © Petr Hamernik

DICE SNAKES IN THE ZOO'S GROUNDS

The dice snake (*Natrix tessellata*) is one of the rarest reptiles occurring in the Czech Republic and is protected as a critically endangered species. The Troja population is one of the most numerous. Prague Zoo carries out research on this population and takes care of large areas of wintering grounds in the rocky outcrop around the Zakázanka path.



Photo © Mikušas Velenský

Twice a year, thousands of critically endangered dice snakes migrate through the zoo's grounds.

THREEFOLD INCREASE IN EUROPEAN GREEN LIZARDS

The European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*) is a critically endangered species in the Czech Republic. Its distribution is restricted to small, isolated, local populations located beyond the northern limit of the species' continuous range. This is also true for the European green lizard population at Prague Zoo, whose extinction has been averted thanks to restoring the habitat on the local rock outcrop. In 2015, the population status was assessed and proposals for measures to stabilize and strengthen it were formulated. Compared to the last survey in 2015, total European green lizard numbers had increased roughly three times by 2022.



Photo © Jan Straka

The European green lizards at the zoo like to bask on the wall by the pond near the cable car.

Photo © Miroslav Bobek



RENEWING THE GROUND SQUIRREL POPULATION

Habitat loss, the disappearance of pasture, changes in the way grasslands are mown and culling have led to a dramatic decline in the number of European ground squirrels (*Spermophilus citellus*)

The European ground squirrel in the zoo's grounds.

over the 20th century. Prague Zoo has joined a conservation programme for them. In 2006, a 130 m² aviary was built in the zoo's grounds beneath the Sklenářka building, where ground squirrels were still present in the 1960s. In that and the following year, more than 20 ground squirrels were released into the aviary and they began to breed, by 2010 a stable colony had formed. This was strengthened in 2011 with additional individuals that had been caught. Nowadays, the ground squirrels have already spread around the area, and some are even outside the zoo's grounds.

REINTRODUCING THE EASTERN BATON BLUE TO SKLENÁŘKA

The critically endangered eastern baton blue (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*) is only found in a few small populations in the country. The Sklenářka building in Prague Zoo's grounds is a distinctive feature and it is here that suitable conditions for the butterfly's reintroduction have been restored through sheep grazing and cutting back trees. This was done in 2021 and monitoring was carried out in the following year. The project continues today, and one of the things it does is to finance the construction of a breeding facility for the eastern baton blue, without which further reintroductions would not be possible.



Photo © Miroslav Bobek

Eastern baton blue pupae ready to be placed in the site.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT US?

We are grateful for any support that helps us in our endeavours to protect endangered species. You can make a donation simply by visiting our zoo – 8 CZK from each entry now goes to in situ projects. However, you can also buy merchandising intended to support them or make a direct contribution to our collection account We Help Them To Survive (IBAN: CZ24 0100 0000 4368 0466 0247, SWIFT code: KOMBCZPPXXX). Another option is to send a donation SMS in the form of DMS OHROZENEDRUHY 30 (or 60 or 90 or 190) to 87 777. Finally, you can take part in the programmes our keepers have prepared voluntarily.



Photo © Tereza Mhaliková

MEETING THE DEVILS

Under the guidance of head keeper David Vala, the programme's participants will learn a lot of unique interesting facts not only about Tasmanian devils, but also about the other inhabitants of Darwin Crater. In addition to an expert talk, the programme includes a commented feeding of the devils, eastern grey kangaroos and red-necked wallabies.



David Vala feeding the devils.

KEEPER FOR HALF A DAY IN DARWIN CRATER

The participant prepares food for kangaroos, echidnas or long-nosed potoroos and has a go at feeding them. Together with an experienced keeper, the participant can then watch how the devils are fed and assist when weighing the animals or giving them veterinary training.



Photo © Petr Hamernik



BREAKFAST WITH THE PANGOLINS

A unique look into the Indonesian Jungle Pavilion at a time when the pangolins have daylight in their nocturnal exhibit. They are also fed during the programme.



Purchasing the experience contributes to pangolin conservation in their homeland!

STOP BY THE ANTELOPES

An expert talk by an experienced keeper covering interesting facts about hippo breeding, the diet of sable antelopes and introducing mountain bongos, which are threatened with extinction in the wild. The one-hour programme also includes a short tour of the breeding facilities, which visitors do not otherwise have the chance to see.



Photo © Mirosław Bobek



You will get to see the mountain bongos really close up

FACE TO FACE WITH A PREDATOR

A visit to the background areas that are usually closed to the public. It has been specially adapted for two purebred female Cuban crocodiles, Kalypso and Sappho. The exclusive programme, accompanied by an expert talk, concludes with feeding these fearsome creatures.



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Back cover photo:
A male western lowland gorilla in Congo's
Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park.

Photo © Miroslav Bobek

WE HELP THEM TO SURVIVE

YOU CAN SUPPORT ENDANGERED SPECIES

- By visiting the Zoo – 8 CZK from every ticket goes to our conservation programmes.
- By buying “We Help Them To Survive” souvenirs at the Zoo or in our online shop.
- By making a donation using the touch screens in the Zoo’s grounds.
- By transferring any amount you want to the We Help Them To Survive collection account: IBAN: CZ24 0100 0000 4368 0466 0247, SWIFT code: KOMBCZPPXXX.

