

WAZA makes international news promoting zoos as leaders in biodiversity conservation



WAZA encouraged zoos to celebrate World Environment Day with a theme from International Year of Biodiversity. WAZA announced in this connection that Zoos and aquariums worldwide receive more than 700 Million visitors annually and spend about US\$ 350 Million on wildlife conservation each year. The zoos of South Asia were included in these figures thanks to their cooperation in sending us their visitor figures for 2008 and replying a short survey. This worldwide survey, conducted for the occasion of the World Environment Day on June 5th approached 12 national and regional zoo and aquarium associations, covering all regions of the world to provide a figure regarding the following two questions:

i. How many visitors did your member institutions receive annually and ii. how much money was spent on wildlife conservation by your member institutions.

Wildlife conservation in this context encompasses in situ conservation of wild species and habitats, including related ex situ work). Dr. Gerald Dick, Executive Director of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) stated that "We have to make clear, that zoos and aquariums worldwide provide a valuable contribution to the protection of biodiversity".

He went on to say "For some species, like the California Condor, zoos played a crucial role for their survival. Experts from zoos and aquariums contribute enormously to the protection of endangered species which otherwise would be lost forever. Currently amphibians and corals face extinction threat and are on top of our agenda."

Zoos and aquariums worldwide receive more than 700 million visitors annually. This figure is unparalleled by any other global group of conservation oriented institutions. This corresponds to 11% of the global human population, indicating that about one in ten people experience human-animal interactions at zoos and aquariums each year. Visitors are not only the targets of environmental education but also a primary source of funding for zoos and aquariums. The world zoo and aquarium community reportedly spent about US\$ 350 Mio on wildlife conservation.

This amount is most certainly an underestimate, given that only about half of the associations' submitted figures on conservation expenditures. The figures on visitor numbers and financial expenditures suggest that the world zoo and aquarium community plays an important role in environmental education and conservation of endangered species. Two examples of species conservation projects include the Cat Ba Langur in Vietnam and the Snow Leopard in Mongolia.

This is not the only news of WAZA. WAZA now has a new office quarters in the conservation centre in Gland at IUCN'shq. On 4 June the inauguration ceremony of the centre was conducted drawing nearly 400 guests with special guests Bertrand Piccard, Prince Albert of Monaco and the Foreign Minister of Switzerland Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey. IUCN's Director General, Mrs Julia Marton-Lefevre mentioned WAZA several times in her speech and WAZA has been visible in a special exhibit area. WAZA now is one of three partners together with the Ramsar Convention on wetlands and the MAVA foundation for nature.

We of the zoos in South Asia can be very proud to be associated with WAZA whose profile is growing by leaps and bounds.

Definitions (as in the Convention on Biological Diversity)

"Ex-situ conservation" means the conservation of components of biological diversity outside their natural habitats

"In-situ conservation" means the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.

You can download the complete report at : http://www.waza.org/files/webcontent/documents/Visitor_numbers_conservation_expenditures_report.pdf
You can also find background information about WAZA projects at:

http://www.waza.org/files/webcontent/documents/WAZA_Project_Examples.pdf
· Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project, Vietnam (PDF)
· Snow Leopard Conservation Programme, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan (PDF)

You can download facts about the International Year of Biodiversity at : <http://www.waza.org/en/site/conservation/2010-year-of-biodiversity>
or an overview of WAZA Conservation Projects at: <http://www.waza.org/en/site/conservation/waza-conservation-projects/overview>
or on

World Environment Day on 5 June 2010 and WAZA at: <http://www.waza.org/en/site/conservation/world-environment-day>

And, for more information contact WAZA Marketing & Communications Officer, WAZA:
Ulrike Fox, at ulrike.fox@waza.org