

WAZA Project Branding

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Background

Unnoticed by many members a “WAZA *In situ* Conservation Strategy” was adopted at the 2001 Annual Conference held in Perth (see p. 41 of the Perth Proceedings). This decision was taken after Ulie Seal had presented his report on the three CBSG-facilitated *in situ* Conservation Workshops jointly organized by WAZA and Regional Zoo, Associations in 2000/2001 at Cologne, San Jose and Chonburi. As even less members were aware of what precisely had been recommended by these workshops, Council directed the Executive Office to produce an executive summary. This was published in 2004 under title “*In situ* Conservation Campaign of Zoos for the New Millennium” (There are still some spare copies available from the Executive Office).

The workshops had recommended that WAZA, with a view of becoming a globally recognized global conservation organization, should organize global conservation campaigns should focus on suitable high profile *in situ* projects, which were to be identified under defined criteria, and WAZA-branded.

The Criteria Issue

However, when the Executive Office went towards implementing this recommendation and presented a proposal for a branding process, which incorporated the criteria proposed by the Cologne Workshop, opposition in principle was encountered from certain corners. In addition, one had to realize that under the prevailing circumstances WAZA had no possibility to implement global campaigns. Council therefore changed the strategy by giving a mandate to the Executive Office to brand projects and promote them through the WAZA print publications. To this effect it did not seem necessary to have selective criteria, other than that the projects should be implemented or supported by members of the WAZA Network, that they should comply with the applicable legislation, follow IUCN Guidelines as closely as possible and, consequently, should not appear to be controversial.

The few critics of this approach are usually not aware, that the WAZA Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare, which is binding for all WAZA Members, contains the following provisions:

All release-to-the wild programmes must be conducted in accordance with the IUCN/SSC/ Reintroduction Specialist Group Guidelines for Reintroductions.

No release-to-the-wild programme shall be undertaken without the animals having undergone a thorough veterinary examination to assess their fitness for such release and that their welfare post release is reasonably safeguarded. Following release, a thorough monitoring programme should be established and maintained.

The Code of Ethics will soon be complemented by “WAZA Guidelines for Member *in situ* Conservation Involvement” and “Ethical Guidelines for the Conduct of Research on A



Practical Experience

Using the Scharnstein Waldrapp Project and the Gobi B Takhi Project, the Office started a pilot phase in summer 2003. At its 2004 Mid-Year Meeting, Council gave green light to go ahead, and from July to December 2004 another 25 projects received the WAZA Brand. With additional support from Council, who allocated CHF 15,000 to the programme, the Executive Office continued the exercise in 2005, and from January to the beginning of September another 25 projects were branded, bringing the total up to 54.

The only problem encountered so far is that there seem to be more project owners than projects. As a general rule projects submitted for WAZA branding are carried out in partnership between one or several zoos, one or several NGOs, and one or several Government agencies – and of course all of them claim ownership. The Office tried to address this problem by introducing an application form which allows for branding either the project or the support (i.e. the zoo component) of a project. Also all known stakeholders are explicitly acknowledged in the WAZA website entries.

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The Purpose of the Exercise

The WAZA-branding of *in situ* or combined *ex situ-in situ* projects is, however, to some extent still a cumbersome exercise because it is badly understood by, and leads occasionally to discussions with members of the zoo and conservation community who believe that the WAZA brand should be something extraordinary, awarded to outstanding projects only. As pointed out above, this is a marketing tool which should create a win-win situation: On one hand the brand promotes the projects as they will profit from being associated with WAZA, which is accepted as a reputable organization by International Conventions and Governments, and from additional publicity through WAZA. The project organizations may use the brand for fundraising, and even may get either some funding from the WAZA budget or having been raised from third parties by WAZA. On the other hand, the brand allows the WAZA Executive Office to better market the zoos as a force in conservation.

More and better marketing is desperately needed while many zoos and zoo-related organizations do a great job in conservation, they completely miss to market their efforts and achievements in an effective way. E.g., most reintroduction projects could not be carried out without animals provided by zoos. Nevertheless, these projects are usually communicated to the public as projects run by a government agency, a national park, or an NGO, and the zoos' contribution is just mentioned in passing – or not at all. And if zoos attempt to market their conservation activities, they do it under hundreds of different names and logos, which is completely ineffective in comparison to the large conservation organizations. Even EAZA with its annual Europe-wide campaigns and AZA, which has undertaken major efforts, including the creation of an 'Aza' critter, are insignificant brands in comparison to major conservation organizations. This can easily be demonstrated by the number of hits shown by GOOGLE for the following terms (9 September 2005):

ALPZA	231
SAZARC	1240
SEAZA	736
PAAZAB	982
BIAZA	9,310
VDZ + Zoo ¹	11,100
ARAZPA	14,200
WAZA + Zoo ¹	26,200
EAZA + Zoo ¹	34,300
AZA + Zoo ¹	235,000
Birdlife	1,760,000
IUCN	3,460,000
Greenpeace	9,330,000
WWF	10,300,000
CITES	37,900,000

Value Added by WAZA

Nevertheless, the WAZA brand adds value to the marketing efforts of zoos and project organizations as WAZA, in pursuing its PR role, focuses at a global scale specifically

on governments. The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, in which 13 WAZA-branded projects are referred to – in combination which pictures – and the WAZA Magazines, which contained until now articles on 20 WAZA-branded projects, were distributed a.o. to the CITES Authorities of 169 countries, as well as to UNEP and the secretariats of all relevant International Conventions. Another target audience of the WAZA Executive Office is the own constituency. WAZA members have easy access to WAZA branded projects through short articles in WAZA news or as presentation in WAZA conferences or in other zoo publications. So far some 20 projects could profit from these opportunities.

Through the WAZA website an increasing number of visitors is reached worldwide visits and other parameters have seen a growth in the order of 400% within a little bit more than two years.

By the end of August 2005, a total of 51 projects with 41 background stories, some 330 pictures and 40 maps were presented on the WAZA website.

The WAZA-branding exercise has lead to regular contacts and a closer cooperation with a number of conservation organizations, zoo-based conservation agencies or conservation-focused zoo consortia, including Endangered Wildlife Trust, Back to Africa, Southern Africa Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds, Cheetah Conservation Botswana, Marwell Zimbabwe Trust, Luangwa Wilderness e. V., Tenkile Conservation Alliance, the Australian Organutan Project, St. Louis Wild Care Institute, International Takhi Group, Konard-Lorenz Research Institute, waldrappteam. at, Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, Zoologische Gesellschaft fur Arten- und Populationschutz, Stiftung Artenschutz, Societe Zoologique de Paris, Cuc Phuong National Park – and more to come.

Photos from the magazine could not be included here but they describe the following

1. Radio-collared khulan or dziggetai (*Equus hemionus hemionus*) at the Gobi B. WAZA-Project 04017 implemented by the International Takhi Group. © Christian Walzer, ITG/ Vienna University
2. Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex ibex*) from Langenberg Wildlife Park released at the Julian Prealps in Italy. The monitoring or releases animals is mandatory under the WAZA Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare. WAZA-Project 05013. © Christian Walzer, Vienna University.
3. The waldrapp ibises (*Geronticus eremita*) of the Scharnstein Migration Project after their arrival in Tuscany. WAZA-Project 03001 © Johannes Fritz waldrappteam.at
4. www.waza.org - visits/months May 03-Aug 05 .

