

A stylized logo consisting of the numbers '21' stacked above '16'. The '2' and '1' are connected at the top, and the '1' and '6' are connected at the bottom. The logo is white and centered on a dark green rectangular background.

21
16

Newsletter

2025
Volume 2

21 16

Newsletter

2025
Volume 2



Your invaluable support over the years has taken San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance on a journey of innovation and exploration. There is no clearer example of this than the establishment of the Frozen Zoo® and the evolution of our Wildlife Biodiversity Banking program.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of this groundbreaking project, we also honor your role as a steadfast advisor. Thanks to you, we continue building on a vision that began in 1975 with Dr. Kurt Benirschke—one that has become an extensive resource for the world.

The hope that sparked a revolutionary idea decades ago carries on today as we help protect nature for generations to come.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn Dixon". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Shawn Dixon

Interim President and Chief Executive Officer
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

50 YEARS OF THE FROZEN ZOO



Marlys Houck, Curator of the Frozen Zoo, working with cryopreserved samples.

This year we mark a major milestone for conservation: the 50th anniversary of our Frozen Zoo. For half a century, this invaluable resource has been leading the way for the future of life on Earth. As the world's most extensive bank of cryopreserved wildlife cell lines and gametes, it is an irreplaceable genetic treasury for protecting the planet's wildlife, communities, and the ecosystems we all share.

Because of the Frozen Zoo, we are more equipped than ever to reverse global species loss. As the world's most extensive resource of its kind,

it holds samples from more than 11,500 individuals of 1,300 species and subspecies, including over one quarter of all vertebrate species categorized as extinct in the wild—a staggering and unprecedented achievement. This collection offers unparalleled opportunities to strengthen gene pool diversity, promote sustainable populations, and safeguard the wildlife that need us most. At a time when over 46,300 species worldwide are threatened with extinction, the Frozen Zoo empowers us to prepare solutions today that will address the conservation challenges of tomorrow.

“ 50 years in, the Frozen Zoo is just getting started. Thank you for helping make it possible. ”

Throughout this issue and throughout the year, you'll read stories about how this dynamic resource is making a tangible difference for wildlife and ecosystems around the world. We can only do this work because of the support of you, our 2116 Advisors. Through your visionary leadership, we are taking bold new steps to understand, preserve, and restore the wondrous diversity of life on our planet.



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

2116

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

2116 ADVISORS SPRING WEBINAR

A deeper look at our Frozen Zoo



Thank you to all who joined us for our 2116 Advisors Spring Webinar in April. This exclusive digital event offered participants a fascinating look at our Frozen Zoo and what is on the horizon for the future of innovative conservation science.

Our own Nadine Lamberski, D.V.M., Dipl. ACZM, Dipl. ECZM (ZHM), Marlys Houck, CG(ASCP)CM, Aryn Wilder, Ph.D., and Chris Kyriazis, Ph.D., served as special guest panelists and shared their firsthand experience with revolutionary science at work through the Frozen Zoo. They spoke

about the successes we've already seen with Pacific pocket mice and Hawaiian honeycreepers thanks to this invaluable resource and how we are now expanding our efforts to protect even more species from extinction.

They also announced our plans to establish frozen zoos at four pilot sites in Hawai'i, Kenya, Peru, and Vietnam. By enhancing biobanking capacity in these hubs, we and our partners can preserve exponentially more genetic diversity while empowering others to do the same across the globe.

“Thank you to all 2116 Advisors for helping us fulfill our vision of a world where all life thrives.”



To watch webinar, please visit link at: sdzwa.org/2116-frozen-zoo



2116 ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Denny Sanford

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance thanks Denny Sanford for his remarkable and longstanding generosity.

Denny Sanford has been the driving force behind several of our most meaningful projects. **Wildlife Explorers Television** brings heartwarming educational programming to 25 million children and their families every year in hospitals around the world. At the San Diego Zoo, **Denny Sanford Wildlife Explorers Basecamp** is a hub of play and education that encourages young conservationists to develop a deep bond with wildlife. And soon, **Denny Sanford Elephant Valley** will transform the heart of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park into a savanna oasis where guests can connect with elephants, and our conservation efforts to protect them, like never before.

Denny keenly understands the power of our two parks to ignite a lifetime of wonder and discovery. He can often be found sharing the Zoo and Safari Park with friends and family—and he especially enjoys visiting his namesake, Denny the gorilla, at the Zoo's Western lowlands gorilla habitat. Denny's love for wildlife is evident throughout every corner of our grounds.



Denny Sanford Panda Ridge.

Most recently, as giant pandas returned to the Zoo, Denny's tireless dedication inspired us all again. In honor of his most recent transformational gift, we have named the pandas' expansive, immersive new habitat **Denny Sanford Panda Ridge**. Here, Xin Bao and Yun Chuan thrive across lush, dynamic landscapes, inspiring countless visitors as they learn about their conservation story and connect with wildlife in ways that last a lifetime.

Because of Denny's new transformational gift, and gifts from many others, we are able to celebrate this incredible milestone. His support has helped shape unforgettable experiences that inspire millions to connect with wildlife and conservation. We extend our deepest gratitude to Denny for his extraordinary contributions and his enduring impact.



THE 2116 ADVISORS

We gratefully acknowledge you, our 2116 Advisors, for your steadfast support and inspired guidance. And we offer a hearty welcome to the new members who have joined over the past year.

Jim and Karen Allen	Berit and Tom Durler	Jerry Block and Jessica Heinz
Dianne L. Bashor	Chris and Vicki Eddy	Robert and Stephanie Horsman
Rolf and Mary Benirschke	Art and Danielle Engel	Murray* and Victoria Hutchison
Wally Benson	J.J. Fetter and John Reichel	Megan and Keith B. Jones
Nathan Bingham and Michele Agosti	Tom and Jane Fetter	Chancellor Pradeep Khosla
James T. Bonner Jr.	Elizabeth Jane Finley	Gary Knell
Charlene and Terry* Brown	Myrna Frame	Rosemary Love and Chuck Weikert
Malin Burnham	George* and Alison Gildred	Linda Lowenstine and Richard Lander*
Anita Busquets and Bill Ladd	Carol Ann Greenfield and Larry David Greenfield, M.D.	Diane McKernan Lyman and Steven Lyman
Kathleen Cain Carrithers	Hee-Won and Craig Grosvenor	Annie and David Malcolm
Javade Chaudhri and Gail Lau Kee	Rick and Tory Gulley	William H.* and Barbara J. May
Carolyn Condon	Clifford Hague	Susan and Craig McClellan
Adam Day	Linda Linell Harris	Barbara J. Menard
Lloyd and Dee Decker	Deborah A. and David A. Hawkins	Carol A. Millard
Alice and Doug Diamond	Helene Hoffman and Frank Trousdale*	Leslie Ann Miller
Christine and Kris Dickinson		



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

Together we are creating a world where all life thrives.
Thank you for all you do to make it possible.

Nelson M. Millsberg	Elizabeth and Peter Shoemaker	<i>We also offer a warm welcome to the new members who have joined over the past year.</i>
Bryan and Julie Min	Lauren and Steve Simpson	
Susan and Frank Oddo	Rosa and Bob Sinnott	
Greg and Karla Ogilvie	Gwendolyn Sontheim	
Ruth Ann and Paul Parker	Keith Behner and Cathy Stiefel	
Stephanie Petersen	Marguerite Stewart	
Maryanne Pfister	The Stone Family	
Peter and Sandra Phillips	Steven and Cathy Tappan	
Kenji Price	Karen Valentino	
Evelyn and Ernest Rady	Carol Vassiliadis	
Jamie Rappaport Clark	Kathryn and Don Vaughn	
Jon Paul Rodriguez	Helga Margie Warner and John H. Warner Jr.	
Louis T. and Penny Rosso	Joanne C. Warren	
Jeff Saikhon	Dr. Charles Wheatley	
T. Denny Sanford	T. 'Aulani Wilhelm	
Philip Seeger		
David Shaw		

**In memoriam*

Dennis and MaryAnn Wilson

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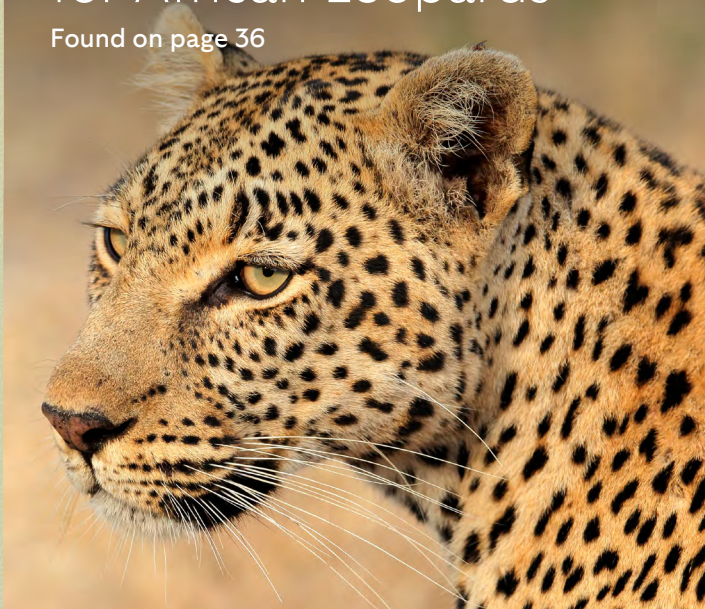
SAVANNA

A Hopeful New Chapter for
African Leopards 36

HUB HIGHLIGHT

A Hopeful New Chapter for African Leopards

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Our mission continues to inspire allies around the world. Remarkable wildlife births, new guest experiences, and our award-winning Rose Parade float have spread the message of our conservation work far and wide, including to local news channels, Los Angeles Times, and even ESPN. Catch up with the stories listed below.

VIRAL MOMENT

The elephant family at the Safari Park warmed hearts during a recent earthquake that shook Southern California, forming an “alert circle” to protect the young elephants while the adults assessed the situation. All wildlife we care for are safe, and **the mega-viral moment has helped us reach 582.7 million social media views so far this year.** Look for more about this incredible story in the next issue.



And, of course, the *Journal* continues to bring exciting, heartwarming, and informative stories to our members. No matter where you turn, our efforts to create a world where all life thrives are making an impression on a global scale.

Here are some of our latest media highlights:

SWEEPSTAKES WINNER IN 136TH ROSE PARADE®

PRESENTED BY HONDA FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance's Intricate Float
Honored Historic Arrival of Giant Pandas 40

SAN DIEGO ZOO SAFARI PARK LAUNCHES SAFARI EXCURSIONS

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SAN DIEGO ZOO CELEBRATES THE BIRTH OF TWO SLOTH BEAR CUBS

The Cubs Were Born to Mother 'Shala' in December 44

SAN DIEGO ZOO WELCOMES FEMALE KOALA JOEY

San Diego Zoo Welcomes Female Koala Joey and Celebrates a Century of Koala Conservation 46



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE JOURNAL

MAY/JUNE 2025

CONTINUING HOPE through wildlife conservation



— HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING — ACROSS THE ALLIANCE



Allies in Conservation

When wildlife thrives, all life thrives

Two leading wildlife parks

We are a global conservation organization uniquely positioned with two leading wildlife parks: the San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park. Nearly six million guests from around the world join us each year to connect with wildlife and the natural world we share. It's a life-changing experience that stays with each ally long after they leave. Our global reach extends even further, touching one billion people in 150 countries each year through our social media and communication platforms.

San Diego Zoo

San Diego Zoo
Safari Park

Eight global hubs

As a conservation alliance, we partner with other experts and communities in eight strategic regions worldwide: our Conservation Hubs. By uniting our strengths, expertise, and resources in these rich, biodiverse hotspots, we have a greater impact as we work together to safeguard the future of the planet, its wildlife, and the ecosystems we all share. Because when wildlife thrives, all life thrives.

AFRICAN FOREST

AMAZONIA

ASIA

AUSTRALIAN FOREST

OCEANS

PACIFIC ISLANDS

SAVANNA

SOUTHWEST

Collaborate



Girl Scouts San Diego at Denny Sanford Panda Ridge.

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

A SWEET FUTURE

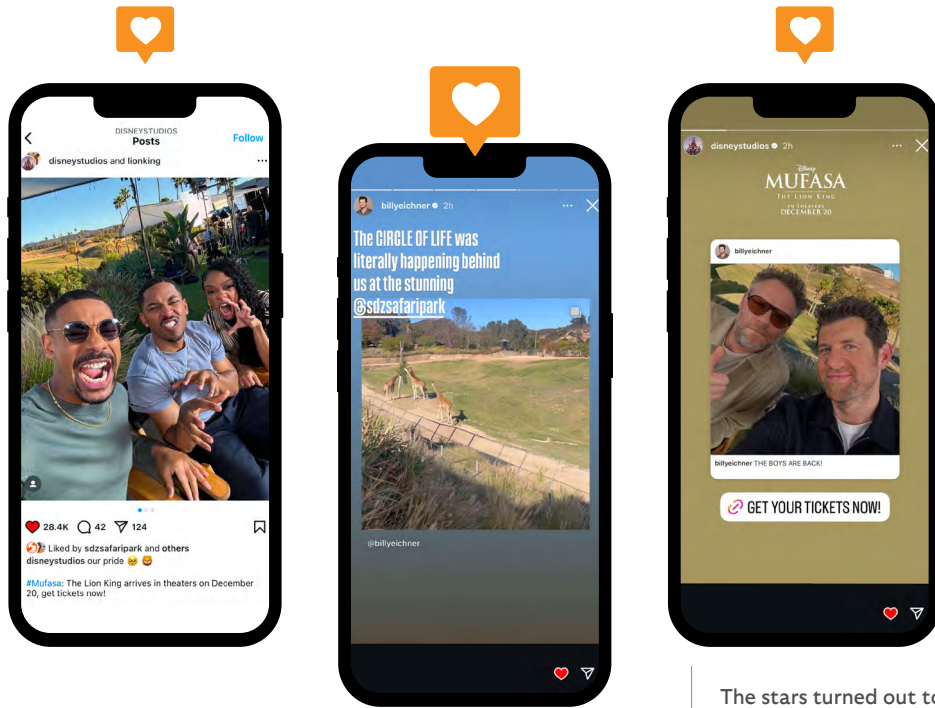
It turns out we have a lot in common with the Girl Scouts. Both world-famous in our own rights, we've each been influential in our region for more than a century—and most importantly, we share the goal of inspiring future generations to dream big. For the Girl Scouts, it's by empowering young participants to build confidence and take charge of their future. And for us, it's by fostering in our allies a passionate understanding of how conservation can protect wildlife across the globe.

The recent arrival of giant pandas Xin Bao and Yun Chuan at the Zoo has inspired millions to envision what is possible when we unite to create a greater world. **So when Girl Scouts San Diego announced the mascot of this year's famous cookie program would be the giant panda, it only made sense to kick off their season at Denny Sanford Panda Ridge in a show of common purpose for our community.**

The lucky young guests received a private tour of the immersive panda habitat and heard from inspiring female trailblazers, including

Erika Kohler, senior vice president and executive director of the San Diego Zoo, and Nicki Boyd, curator of mammals, ambassadors, and applied behavior. They even presented Xin Bao with her very own Girl Scout membership card, surely the first time a panda has ever received such an honor.

This partnership highlighted the power of collaboration in achieving shared goals and creating meaningful experiences. When we work together, we can help ensure individuals of all ages recognize their potential and make a difference.



The stars turned out to the Safari Park to promote *Mufasa: The Lion King*.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

HOLLYWOOD'S BRIGHTEST VISIT THE SAFARI PARK

Lion pride was on full display at the Safari Park as the cast and creators of *Mufasa: The Lion King* visited to promote the new Disney film. Though Simba himself didn't make an appearance, it was an exciting collaboration that showcased everything the Safari Park has to offer in a spectacular fashion.

Big stars also meant reaching bigger audiences and gaining new allies for wildlife. The Safari Park's Instagram account gained nearly 2,400 followers over just that weekend alone. Lin-Manuel Miranda shared his heart-pounding ride on Flightline Safari live on Instagram, reaching his 1.2 million followers. Seth Rogen did media interviews with the beautiful vistas of the Safari Park behind him. And Billy Eichner engaged with our accounts

via comments and direct messages after sharing his adventures with his 836,000 followers.

Disney Studios even shared a collaborative post with the Lion King account on Instagram, highlighting the Safari Park in the background. The post has been liked over 45,000 times, helping us spread the word about how proud we are about conservation.



Innovate



Megan Owen, Ph.D.,
Vice President of Conservation Science
of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance.



The Frozen Zoo was at the center of our presentation at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

AT THE FROZEN ZOO

EXPANDING OUR INFLUENCE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

For the first time, we sent a delegation to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Held in Cali, Colombia, this event brought together leaders from around the world to discuss topics critical for the protection and restoration of biodiversity.

Our delegation was led by Dr. Megan Owen, vice president of conservation science, who presented on our history

of innovation through the Frozen Zoo and how we are blazing a trail for the future, through strategic partnerships and targeted application of biobanking for conservation. Highlighting our recent partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which will enable us to scale and accelerate this biodiversity innovation on a global level.

In addition to our collaboration with

the zoo and aquarium community, this conference was an invaluable opportunity to connect with international, Indigenous, and state partners. **Relationships like these bring important and varied perspectives and expertise into our work and help us determine where our efforts are needed most. This conference offered us a powerful opportunity to expand our conservation impact in a myriad of new ways.**

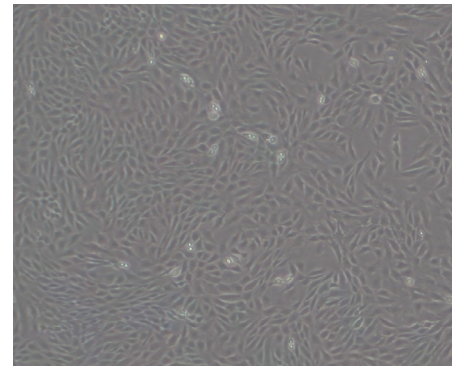
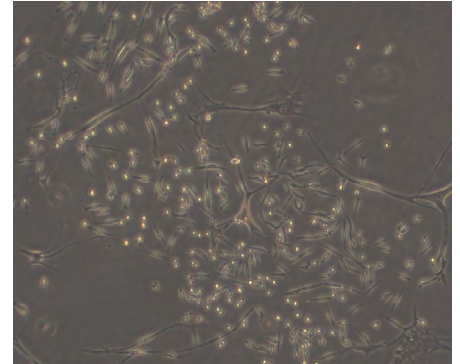
AT THE FROZEN ZOO**RARE SUBSPECIES BANKED
IN THE FROZEN ZOO**

Hidden within the White Mountains of New Mexico, the Peñasco least chipmunk scurries throughout its open, grassy habitat. Though small in size at just over four inches long, this rare species plays a big role in shaping their environment. They're considered an indicator species, meaning their presence—or absence—can reflect the overall health of their ecosystem. And unfortunately, just one declining population remains.

*Peñasco least chipmunk
in New Mexico.*

We've partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help protect this threatened species, studying tiny samples from two chipmunks in hopes of preserving their cells in our Frozen Zoo. **One sample grew sufficiently enough to bank a cell line—a groundbreaking achievement, as it marks the first time we've ever established cells for this species.** These safeguarded samples now provide a lifeline for the chipmunks' future, preserving their genetic legacy for current and future conservation efforts. And that's a very big deal.

*A microscopic view of cell samples
from a Peñasco least chipmunk.*



Inspire

A MILESTONE RECOGNITION FOR OUR PARKS

The Zoo and Safari Park are home to a breathtaking variety of plants. Between the two locations, over two million individual plants create lush landscapes and explorable gardens that captivate visitors every day. Our parks also serve as havens for endangered plant species—conserving them, fostering biodiversity for future generations, and teaching guests about their importance in the world’s ecosystems.



Old World Succulent Garden at the Safari Park.

Protea Pincushion flower at the San Diego Zoo.



The Zoo and Safari Park are now blossoming in a whole new way: **they have been collectively accredited as a Level IV arboretum through the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program.** It recognizes botanic gardens that meet the highest standards of professionalism, development, capacity, and impact. Accredited arboreta must have the support of scientific staff, offer public engagement, participate in data sharing, and maintain living conservation collections. **Fewer than**

50 organizations in the world have achieved this accreditation, and we are the only Level IV arboretum in San Diego County.

Level IV is the highest possible level to achieve. Our eligibility is not only a testament to the hard work and care that our teams put into plant preservation, but also a critical component of our conservation mission to protect and care for all wildlife across the globe.



*Erika Kohler,
Senior Vice President
and Executive Director
of the San Diego Zoo.*

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

**A PRESTIGIOUS HONOR
FOR ERIKA KOHLER**

We offer a round of applause to Erika Kohler, senior vice president and executive director of the San Diego Zoo, for winning a **Businesswoman of the Year award from San Diego Business Journal**. She was recognized in the Nonprofit Organization category for her years of dynamic and inspiring governance. Under her guidance, the Zoo has flourished as a global leader in wildlife conservation, education, and community engagement.

Erika has been with San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance for 10 years. She is responsible for the overall operation

of the 100-acre Zoo, overseeing horticulture, wildlife care, guest services, entertainment, and more. Through her leadership, she has fostered tremendous attendance growth, implemented new events, and executed critical health and safety protocols for both wildlife and guests.

By recognizing trailblazers like Erika who go above and beyond for their cause, the award inspires future generations of women to strive for success and make an impact in their fields. We're proud to have Erika on our team paving the way for future women leaders and conservationists, in San Diego and beyond.



Thrive



Meerkat pups at the San Diego Zoo.

foraging or standing “sentry” to alert the rest of the group to threats.

Additionally, our teams recently refreshed the habitat to the benefit of meerkats and guests alike. We added a heated cave to make their home even cozier, and enhanced their care area to provide additional opportunities to thrive. A portion of the visitor viewing area was converted to glass, inviting children to better experience the world of this sociable and energetic group just above ground level.

With their growing family and renovated habitat, the meerkats continue to thrive, embodying the lively spirit and strong bonds that make them so unique.

Soon thereafter, a fifth meerkat pup was born, named Nesibindi, meaning bold in Zulu.



AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

A DOUBLE DOSE OF NEWS FROM THE DEN

New heads have been popping out of the burrows of the meerkat habitat. **Four pups were recently born**, and this young quartet has wasted no time in scampering about their home. Meerkat mobs spend a lot of their time grooming and playing together while taking turns at certain duties, such as



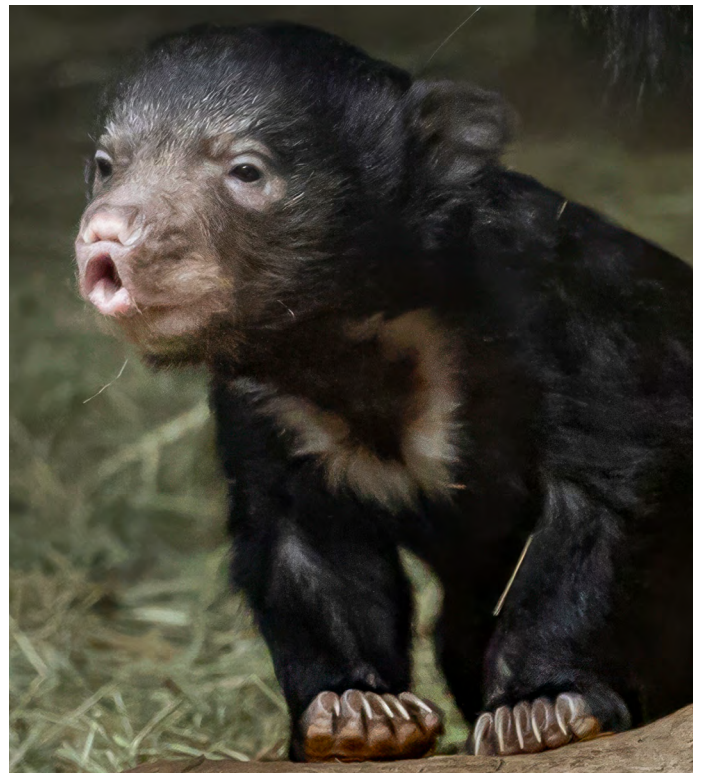
Sloth bear Shala and her two cubs at the San Diego Zoo.

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

AN INSEPARABLE TRIO

Sloth bear Shala has welcomed two new cubs: a female named Shehani, which means magic, regal, and shining, and a male named Kumar, which means prince. After bonding as a family behind the scenes, mom decided everyone was ready to begin exploring their habitat. Sloth bears are the only bears that carry their young on their back, and Shala is showing her cubs the ropes as they grasp onto her long fur. As they grow older, Shehani and Kumar will venture out on their own, but for now, this tight-knit team is doing it all together.

Shehani makes her adorable first coos, trills, and squeals.



CONSERVATION HUBS



AUSTRALIAN FOREST



ASIA



PACIFIC ISLANDS



OCEANS



Click tile to
jump to hub

Eight Global Hubs

Our eight Conservation Hubs around the world represent biodiverse regions where we can best apply our expertise and where we are currently most invested. Our goal is to make the greatest impact for wildlife, local communities, and ecosystems. With teams on the ground, these Hubs also help us build on new and existing alliances to increase the scope of our work.



SOUTHWEST



AMAZONIA



AFRICAN FOREST



SAVANNA



A New Era for Koala Conservation

This little joey is growing alongside a century-old partnership

Peekaboo, we see you! **For the first time in two years, koala joeys were born at the San Diego Zoo.** After spending time growing in their moms' pouches, these mini marsupials have started poking their heads out to explore their big new world. Their arrival is not only an exciting occasion; it's also a testament to our conservation efforts and partnerships, and a powerful symbol of hope for this vulnerable species.

The joeys' debuts are perfectly timed as we celebrate 100 years of koala conservation and care at the Zoo.

The arrival of the first koalas in 1925 ignited a transformative partnership with Taronga Conservation Society Australia that has changed the future for Australian wildlife and their unique ecosystems. Together we've worked to combat threats to wildlife and ecosystems, including deforestation, disease, and wildfires. **In honor of our century of collaborative conservation, Taronga has named the joeys Inala, which means place of peace or rest, and Bunji, which means friend.**

But there's no time to rest for our conservation teams. Inala and Bunji symbolize the next chapter in our legacy of commitment and collaboration, serving as a reminder of our successes and the importance of our ongoing efforts to save, protect, and care for koalas and other vulnerable wildlife. 🦘

Koala joey Inala at the San Diego Zoo.





Our teams set up trail cameras to learn more about species like macaques, shown at right.

Charting a Roadmap for Conservation in Vietnam

Setting the standards for success in a biodiversity hotspot



Home to tropical rainforests, coral reefs, freshwater wetlands, and countless other ecosystems, Vietnam is one of the most biodiverse countries on Earth. Its landscapes are filled with diverse wildlife—including many species threatened with extinction. This vital region was therefore the perfect setting for conversations that connected groups from both sides of the Pacific.

Our team traveled to Vietnam to lead a Conservation Standards workshop and develop transformative strategies for wildlife rescue.

Conservation Standards is a framework for strategic planning and adaptive management that we apply to all our conservation programs in order to improve our conservation, environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes using existing tools and methodologies.



Vietnam is home to a stunning array of wildlife.

This particular workshop supported our academic and government partners in designing and monitoring projects focused on rescuing and breeding threatened and endangered wildlife endemic to the country's north-central region. The intent moving forward is for government partners to provide clear conservation goals for the area and an outline of steps to achieve those goals. This will

help us better understand where our support will have the most impact.

This opportunity was a continuation of an important relationship between our two countries. By combining local expertise with global strategies, we can continue to create sustainable solutions and secure a brighter future for Vietnam's unique wildlife for generations to come. 🌿



Following the workshop, our team met with a local wildlife rescue center to better understand their capabilities, needs, and opportunities and discuss long-term strategies for improving their processes. Native species such as Annamite striped rabbits, macaques, and Pu Hoat leaf-litter frogs will directly benefit from this international teamwork. 🌿

SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION HUB



Soaring Higher

An endangered parrot population is on the rise



A thick-billed parrot rests in a plumeria tree.

Thick-billed parrots certainly know how to make an impression. With vibrant green and red feathers and piercing yellow eyes, they are a striking sight. But because of the illegal pet trade and habitat loss due to logging, they are unfortunately a rare sight among the pines and oaks they call home. Their native range once extended from Arizona and New Mexico to Venezuela, but today they are found only in the forests of Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental mountains.

We have been working to conserve these unique birds for over two decades, and we were recently rewarded with some exciting news. A thick-billed parrot census, carried out jointly with our partners in protected areas of Chihuahua, Mexico, found **the current population of approximately 2,500 individuals is at least 10% higher** than that recorded 12 years prior. Even more promising, the number of thick-billed parrots is expected to continue to increase as sustainable forestry management

practices are consolidated by the region's communities.

Cross-border collaboration has proven to be a vital force in addressing the challenges faced by species in the Southwest. **Together with government agencies and community groups, we are ensuring the recovery of species that might otherwise be lost forever.** For these vivid birds, hope is soaring brightly right alongside them. 🌿

Planting Progress

Collaborating on a binational effort to protect native flora

From the small, brilliant California poppy to the towering Mexican giant cactus, the Southwest is home to fascinating flora of all shapes and sizes. Unique species like these can be found across the bordering states of California in the United States and Baja California in Mexico. Unfortunately, many of these plants are at risk of population decline, so preserving them takes a collaborative, binational effort.



*Our teams collaborated to learn more about plant species like the *deinandra floribunda* and *astragalus tijuanaensis* shown below.*

Despite sharing many of the same threatened species, conservation strategies between conservation groups have been uncoordinated—until now. Alongside partners from both countries, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance helped publish a catalog of Baja California's native flora. Our teams specifically improved distribution maps, a tool that will help

experts easily find these taxa (plant types) in the region. **In total, this comprehensive inventory identified 2,352 local plant taxa, of which 22% are categorized as protected.**

Now, for the first time ever, experts working to safeguard these plants' futures share the same information. Data gathered will

help conservationists develop unified strategies, and these findings will be used to support legal recognition for vulnerable plants. With this binational approach, we're ensuring wildlife on both sides of the border thrive, from the small to the tall. 🌱



AMAZONIA CONSERVATION HUB



A Rare Encounter in the Field

Sightings of Andean bears are uncommon, but unforgettable

Conservation science is a field of proof and reason, driven by the expectation that we're making a positive impact for wildlife and the ecosystems we share. This is especially true when we work to protect species that are so elusive, teams don't typically see them in the field, and instead must work from trail camera images and evidence wildlife leave behind.

Sometimes, though, wildlife affirm our work in spectacular fashion.

Our team in Peru regularly conducts field work in Manú National Park to monitor, research, and protect Andean bears. We trek into the mountain range's remotest highlands to maintain trail cameras and collect noninvasive biological samples, such as hair and feces, to study bear



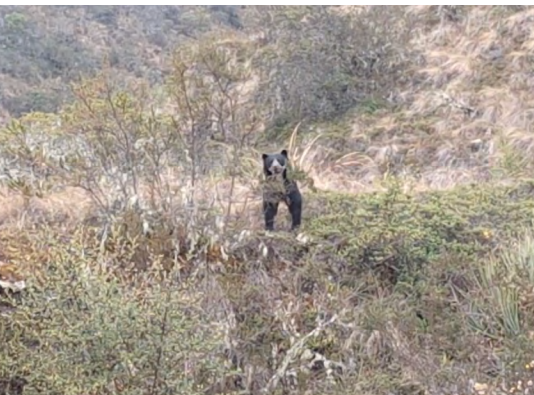
One of our team members and, below, the Andean bear they spotted in Peru.

behavior, genetics, physiology, and evolution. These are valuable tools that don't require us to interact with the bears, allowing them to live undisturbed in their native habitat.

So our team was thrilled when they were surprised by an uncommon sighting. While working in the park, they glimpsed one of these elusive bears roaming the area's grassy slopes. It lingered for a bit at a close but safe distance, offering our conservationists a spectacular view of its natural behaviors. The bear eventually

continued on its way, but it was a moment our team won't soon forget.

Getting to see wildlife firsthand in their native range is an honor we never take for granted. To witness the beauty of a species thriving in its natural habitat, even if only for a fleeting moment, reinforces the importance of our conservation efforts and inspires us to continue. 🐾



Andean bears are an elusive yet majestic species.



PACIFIC ISLANDS CONSERVATION HUB



A Lesson Like No Other

Training the next generation of conservation heroes

Ask any conservation expert what spurred their love for their work, and you very well might hear a story about an inspiring science class in school. It's where future conservationists often discover how to protect our planet's wildlife and ecosystems, one exciting lesson at a time.

That's never been more true than for six high schoolers in Hawai'i. Through an innovative program with our scientists, they are stepping beyond the traditional capacity of a high school science class, and incorporating cutting-portable molecular technologies to drive ground-breaking solutions to real-world challenges.

Remarkably, these students are leading the effort to sequence the genome of the palila, a critically endangered honeycreeper native to



Students in their classroom lab.

the upper slopes of Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano on Hawai'i Island. Utilizing palila cells banked in the Frozen Zoo, our team is working with the students to prepare, sequence, and analyze the birds' DNA. By learning how to execute laboratory processes, integrate computational analysis, and interpret the results, they are helping unlock the conservation potential of the cells' genetic diversity.

As the program inspires these young conservationists, they in turn are inspiring their community. They regularly meet to discuss Indigenous data sovereignty, including the question of who owns the information they are generating. This concept centers Hawaiian communities and

their ability to guide the work that affects their home. At the end of the program the students will get to determine how their data is used and by whom, an important decision that mirrors how conservation leaders approach their work every day.

This program will last a full school year and possibly longer, offering an unparalleled chance to deepen their learning and grow the invaluable collection at the Frozen Zoo. With hands-on experiences that go far beyond textbooks and lectures, these high schoolers are helping save a species on the brink of extinction while honing the skills and passion needed to become tomorrow's pioneers in conservation science. 🌱



Mentoring the next generation of biobanking scientists will help species like the palila thrive.





OCEANS CONSERVATION HUB



A Canadian Collaboration Thrives

A new partnership is helping turn the tide for polar bears

The Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the world, and as a result, sea ice is melting at an alarming rate. This spells trouble for species like polar bears, whose existence is dependent on healthy oceans and sea ice. Indeed, this marine mammal's scientific name *Ursus maritimus* means “sea bear,” and they rely on the ice to hunt and find mates. Now a partnership in Canada aims to help protect this critical habitat.

Together with several Indigenous organizations, government agencies, and universities, **we contributed to a proposal focused on evaluating sea ice ecosystem biodiversity in Canada’s southern Hudson Bay and James Bay.** The project aims to understand how various factors affect wildlife in the Arctic so we can develop and implement solutions that will mitigate impacts to polar bears and other sea ice dependent wildlife.

Notably, we were the only non-Canadian organization invited to join, reflecting the strength of our partnerships. By combining Indigenous knowledge with cutting-edge scientific expertise, this collaboration offers hope for the future of these critical Arctic ecosystems and the polar bears that rely on them to thrive. 🐻



Polar bears at home in their icy Canadian ecosystem.

Forecasting the Future of Conservation

*Advanced genetic technology is giving us a
powerful vision of what is possible for polar bears*

As climate instability in the Arctic pose a serious threat to polar bears, **genetic forecasting is helping guide the ways we respond.** This groundbreaking technique uses genetic information from wildlife to help estimate their likelihood of surviving future threats. By predicting tomorrow's potential problems, we can take needed action today.

Our team used genetic forecasting to evaluate polar bears across the Canadian Arctic. They looked at which populations are less likely to adapt successfully to warming waters and changing food sources due to sea ice loss. It turns out that bears in the high Arctic are at the greatest risk, a finding that will help us triage the most vulnerable populations and guide even more effective strategies in the future. 🐻





Soccer Tournaments Unite Cameroon Around Conservation

Recent events found a fun way to connect with local communities

Soccer is the most beloved sport on Earth, with an estimated 5 billion people engaging with it per year. It's especially popular in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa, and unites communities around local teams and their shared passion. Our conservation efforts also strive to unite people around a shared goal: protecting our planet's wildlife and ecosystems. So for our partners in Africa, integrating soccer into their initiatives can be a way to create connections that make a powerful difference.

We recently supported two tournaments in Cameroon to engage communities in the importance of the region's biodiversity. The Chimpanzee Guardian Clubs, a grassroots initiative that unites locals to support on-the-ground conservation in the Ebo forest, recently held their third Chimpanzee Cup soccer event. Over 150 people west of the forest participated in the games and took part in a music competition, film screenings, and first aid training. We also supported an inaugural Chimpanzee Cup for residents to the east of the forest, and more than 150 people from five villages participated.

The lush Ebo forest region is home to countless endangered species and plays a critical role in climate regulation, storing vast amounts of carbon and helping mitigate the impacts of climate instability. Protecting it is essential for safeguarding biodiversity everywhere. These events are a unique way to create wildlife allies and foster awareness of the critical biodiversity of the Ebo forest as well as the conservation efforts that benefit all who share these ecosystems. Sometimes it just takes a soccer ball to kick things off. 🏆

Soccer is an important part of Cameroon culture — just like the Ebo forest.

Inspiring the Next Generation

Creativity met biodiversity for students in Africa

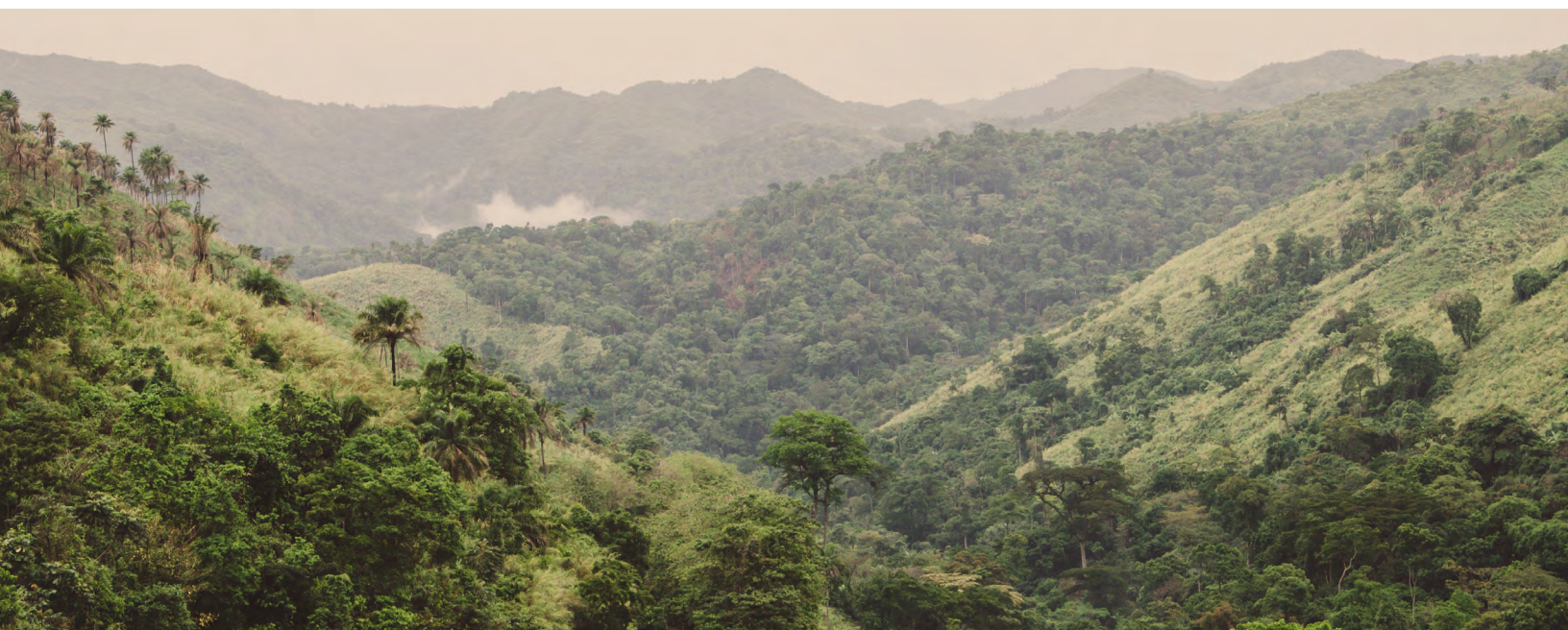
A recent three-day event at the Mbakaou Wildlife Education Center in Cameroon celebrated biodiversity conservation in fun and creative ways. **Fifty children ages 6 to 17 engaged in painting, drawing, and singing about wildlife in their communities.** Hosted by our partners, this was a particularly important opportunity for students who prefer nonverbal communication styles to express themselves through their art.

The Mbakaou Wildlife Education Center is only four years old, but it has already become a beacon for the community. It offers local primary, secondary, and high school



students opportunities to learn about biodiversity, both in the classroom and outside of school hours. By tapping into students' creativity, they are finding new ways to create young conservation allies. 🌿

Students at the Mbakaou Wildlife Education Center are learning more about the wondrous ecosystems around them.





A Hopeful New Chapter for African Leopards

One of Africa's keystone species sees conservation success

Apex predators are known for their strength, reigning as the ultimate hunters in their domains. With breathtaking speed, razor-sharp instincts, and unmatched agility, they are nature's powerhouses. This position of prominence also makes them keystones of their ecosystems. By regulating prey populations and shaping their habitat's dynamics, apex predators maintain the delicate balance of their ecosystems.

But even apex predators are vulnerable to the devastating effects of habitat loss and poaching, and African leopards are no exception. Recently the recovery potential for African leopard was evaluated through the IUCN SSC's Green Status, which also tracks the success of

conservation interventions. This marks an opportunity to pause and reflect on conservation efforts for this majestic and vital species.

While the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species evaluates extinction risks for wildlife around the world, the Green Status of Species offers a complementary perspective by showcasing conservation successes, recovery potential and pinpointing opportunities for continued growth. Our San Diego and Kenya teams met for intensive workshops to determine the current recovery potential for African leopards through the Green Status. They identified assessment regions for these big cats and evaluated their viability to thrive within each of

those areas. From this information, they calculated the species' Green Score, which indicates how far African leopards are from a "fully recovered" state. **Happily, the leopards are no longer classified as endangered by the IUCN.**

These decisions offer further insights into how we can protect and care for other species across the African savanna. Milestones like this remind us that dedicated conservation efforts and international teamwork yield remarkable results that have far-reaching impact. **African leopards are returning to their place of strength—and in turn are strengthening their ecosystem.** 🐾





African leopards keep a watchful eye in their native habitat.



MAKING HEADLINES



Seen Around the World

Stories highlighting extraordinary work

The San Diego Zoo and Safari Park make our mission, conservation work, and partnerships possible. In turn, our conservation work around the world exemplifies the importance and impact of saving wildlife, offering powerful stories to share with our audiences everywhere.

Here are some of the top news releases making headlines around the world. These stories highlight the extraordinary work being done in San Diego and in native habitats across the globe by our experts.





AT THE ZOO

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Named Sweepstakes Winner in 136th Rose Parade® Presented by Honda for Second Consecutive Year

The Alliance's Intricate Float Honored Historic Arrival of Giant Pandas

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance won top honors at the 136th annual Rose Parade® Presented by Honda with a float commemorating the historic arrival of giant pandas. For the second consecutive year, the Alliance received

the Sweepstakes Trophy given for most beautiful entry, encompassing float design, floral presentation, and entertainment. The San Diego Zoo's float, "Friendship Across the Earth," transported viewers across Asia's

magnificent ecosystems and honored Yun Chuan ("yoon chu-an") and Xin Bao ("sing bao"), the first giant pandas to enter the United States in 21 years. Five-year-old male Yun Chuan and four-year-old female Xin Bao made

their public debut at the San Diego Zoo on August 8, 2024—designated “California Panda Day” by Governor Gavin Newsom. The 2025 Pasadena Tournament of Roses theme, Best Day Ever, celebrated life’s best moments.

“To receive the Sweepstakes Award is in itself such an honor, but to do so this year feels especially momentous,” said Paul Baribault, president and chief executive officer, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. “In 2024, we had the once-in-a-lifetime experience of watching as Yun Chuan and Xin Bao brought the world together. They represent what is truly possible when we come together with a shared purpose, commitment, and trust in one another.”

Intricate designs of Xin Bao and Yun Chuan traversed the dramatic ridgeline at the center of the float. Surrounded by a bounty of bamboo, Xin Bao, whose name means “precious treasure of prosperity

and abundance,” gently turned her head as she listened to the lyrics of “Best Day Ever,” and looked ahead to the new year. Next to her, Yun Chuan savored bamboo shoots. Named in honor of his grandmother, one of the first pandas at the San Diego Zoo, Yun Chuan celebrates a generational legacy between San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance and its conservation partners.

The striking orange stripes and regal reverence of Connor the Malayan tiger also featured on the float. Swinging high above cascading waterfalls, red pandas Lucas and Adira were seen frolicking among treetops. Riding below were San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance team members Dr. Megan Owen, Jana Biedenweg, and Dr. Xiaoxing Bian: a global conservation leader, a wildlife expert, and a scientist.

Atop the 55-foot float, viewers got a glimpse of the vivacious landscapes and more than 700,000

individual plants that are cared for by horticulturists at the San Diego Zoo. More than 3,100 diverse plant species are part of this accredited botanical garden and arboretum and are vital to San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance’s ongoing conservation efforts worldwide. Individual plants grown and propagated at the San Diego Zoo—including yellow groove, golden, and black bamboo—were transported to Pasadena and added to the float.

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance has a reputation for awe-inspiring floats. Its 2024 float, “It Began With a Roar,” celebrated the San Diego Zoo’s 107-year history and also received top honors with the Sweepstakes Trophy. Its float in 2023, “Celebrating 50 Years of Conservation” in celebration of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park’s 50th anniversary, received the Animation Award for most outstanding use of animation.

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FEATURED MEDIA OUTLETS





AT THE PARK

San Diego Zoo Safari Park Launches Safari Excursions

A Vibrant Gathering Place for Guests Seeking Wildlife Connections

The San Diego Zoo Safari Park is pleased to announce the opening of Safari Excursions, a beautiful check-in spot and gathering place for your safari. Safari Excursions is an experience of its own, a hub of connection and community and a wonderful addition to the park's already beloved safari offerings. The launch of Safari Excursions marks the

completion of a project years in the making. Located about 30 minutes north of the San Diego Zoo, the San Diego Zoo Safari Park is the perfect place to make lasting memories while experiencing incredible wildlife up close.

Designed with comfort and inspiration in mind, Safari Excursions serves

as the hub for all safari departures. Guests can check in, meet their guides, and take in the stunning surroundings before their excursion begins. It is a unique starting point for a safari adventure, inviting guests to share stories or simply soak in the excitement as a safari adventure draws closer. With thoughtful touches at every turn, the new Safari Excursions

check in area has the story of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park woven into each detail and spotlights San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance's conservation efforts across the globe.

Safari highlights include:

A **Behind-the-Scenes Safari** allows guests to venture deep into the Safari Park and get a closer look at their favorite wildlife. During these small-group tours, guests venture to exclusive areas not accessible to the public, where a knowledgeable guide shares how we care for wildlife and carry out conservation work in San Diego and around the globe.

On a **Wildlife Safari**, guests will travel in the back of a covered, open-air safari truck with an expert guide as they venture into one of our expansive savanna habitats to get an up-close view of a variety of birds and mammals.

Roar & Snore Safari is an overnight camping experience that overlooks the East Africa savanna habitat, the Safari Park's largest. Seasoned campers may enjoy a Classic or Vista tent, while those who prefer a more luxurious experience should check out our Premium tents. Campers enjoy walking tours, meals and up-close wildlife encounters.

Safari Excursions is now open to the public and inviting guests to embark on their unique safari experiences. Safari Excursions is designed with inclusivity and universal accessibility in mind, offering a fully ADA-accessible space and ensuring every guest can explore comfortably. With each visit to the San Diego Zoo Safari Park and the San Diego Zoo, wildlife allies help support San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance in its commitment to saving species worldwide by uniting expertise in wildlife care and conservation science with a dedication to inspiring passion for nature.



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FEATURED MEDIA OUTLETS



AT THE ZOO

San Diego Zoo Celebrates the Birth of Two Sloth Bear Cubs

The Cubs Were Born to Mother 'Shala' in December



The San Diego Zoo recently welcomed two sloth bear cubs to first-time mother Shala. Just as they do in native habitats, Shala and cubs spent several weeks bonding in their private den.

The cubs, now mobile enough to explore on their own, can be seen with their mother in their habitat along Upper Center Street at the San Diego

Zoo. Sloth bears are the only bears that carry their young around on their backs, with the cubs grasping onto their mother's long hair as she searches for food. Guests may be able to see the cubs catching a ride on Shala's back!

Currently, the sloth bear remains vulnerable. This, in large part, is due to poaching and habitat destruction. Sloth

bears play an important role in their habitats as seed dispersers. San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance is a proud partner of India's Wildlife SOS sloth bear rescue facility, helping to fund conservation science and education programs.



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FEATURED MEDIA OUTLETS





AT THE ZOO

San Diego Zoo Welcomes Female Koala Joey and Celebrates a Century of Koala Conservation

The San Diego Zoo is overjoyed to announce the arrival of a new female koala joey and celebrate an extraordinary 100 years of friendship with Taronga Conservation Society Australia. To honor this partnership, Taronga has named the joey Inala (“in-ah-lah”), which means place of peace or rest and is from the Wakka Wakka/Jungara (“yung-garrah”) area in Queensland, Australia.

This year marks 100 years since the first two koalas arrived in San Diego as a gift from the children of Sydney, Australia, to the children of San Diego, sparking a century-long commitment to koala care. Since 1925, the San Diego Zoo has become home to the largest population of koalas and operates the most successful koala breeding program outside of Australia.

Born to mother Adori, the young marsupial turned seven months old on Valentine’s Day and is the first koala

birth for the Zoo in two years. The joey is doing well and has begun exploring outside her mother’s pouch. At times she can be spotted tucked on her mom’s belly or riding on her back. Inala is still nursing, but will taste eucalyptus leaves on occasion and will continue to eat more eucalyptus as she grows older.

Koala joeys are born incredibly tiny (roughly the size of a jellybean), hairless, blind, and still developing. Guided by their senses of smell and touch, they make their way into their mother’s pouch to nurse. They typically stay in the pouch for up to seven months and often remain close to their mother for one to three years.

Dedicated experts from San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance study koala populations both at the Zoo and in their native Australian environments. These efforts aim to better understand the species’ unique ecology, reproductive behaviors, and

overall health. The findings from this work are instrumental in advancing conservation initiatives for koalas and ensuring their survival for generations.

Despite ongoing conservation work and the species’ popularity, koalas are classified as endangered in Queensland, New South Wales, and The Australian Capital Territory under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act of Australia. Main threats to this species in their native habitat include fragmentation, disease, and bushfires—such as the wildfires in 2019–2020 that burned 59 million acres (roughly the size of the U.K.).

Guests can see the new joey and her mother in their habitat at the San Diego Zoo’s Conrad Prebys Australian Outback. Visit sandiegozoo.org to plan your next visit.

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FEATURED MEDIA OUTLETS



AXIOS San Diego



*Thank you for your support in making
everything we do possible.*



San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance 2116 Advisors is
an exclusive group of philanthropists, conservation leaders,
and conservation scientists providing counsel and support to
help us fulfill our vision of a world where all life thrives.

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