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Newsletter

2026
Volume 1

Save the Date
2026 Annual Gathering

IUCN Congress
Bringing the World Together

Looking Out
New Tools Protect Giraffes



**San Diego Zoo
Wildlife Alliance**

21 16

Newsletter

2026
Volume 1



SHAWN DIXON
President and CEO

As we step into 2026, I'm thrilled to share an inspiring look back at the work that's setting the stage for an incredible year ahead. From our delegation's impactful presence at the International Union for Conservation of Nature last fall, to a historic milestone for the Frozen Zoo®, and exciting updates on conservation efforts through our Southwest Conservation Hub, there's so much to be optimistic about.

In the pages ahead, you'll find stories of hope and progress that demonstrate what's possible when we come together for wildlife and the planet we share. This promising start to the new year is only possible because of you. Your steadfast support fuels our mission and opens doors to new opportunities for wildlife, people, and the planet.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey.

Together for wildlife,

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

Shawn Dixon
President and Chief Executive Officer
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance

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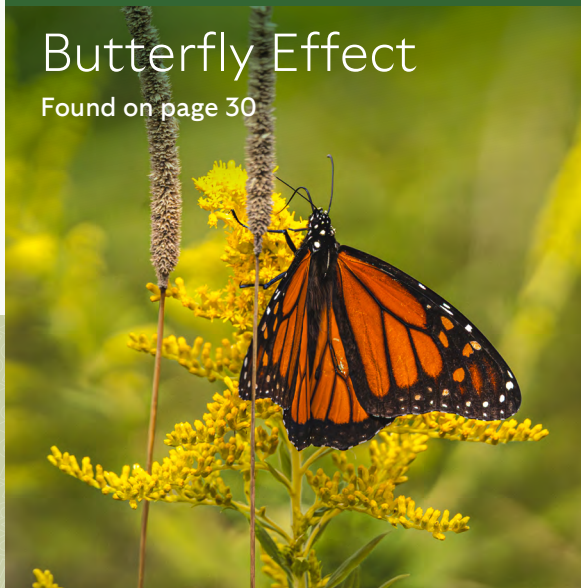
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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Our conservation work takes us to locations near and far, and the media coverage it receives is equally widespread.

Renowned events ranging from Southern California to Abu Dhabi, as well as **major milestones** throughout our Conservation Hubs, have **grabbed headlines and helped us share our mission in numerous outlets.** You can discover more about these stories as you read through the issue.

Our social media kicked off 2026 with some *beary* special content. We had furry fun with **Janu-beary, a look at all things ursine.** By sharing about the bears we care for and our global conservation efforts, our followers were delighted to learn more about these iconic mammals. After only a month, our accounts have already received **113.7 million** views this year.

The *Journal* is celebrating its centennial! The 100th anniversary issue highlights a century of inspiring stories and the ways we're continuing that legacy today through our global conservation initiatives. Dive in and discover the remarkable journey of our publication, our organization, and our allies who are helping us create a world where all life thrives.

SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE JOURNAL



JAN/FEB 2026

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS
of sharing wildlife
conservation



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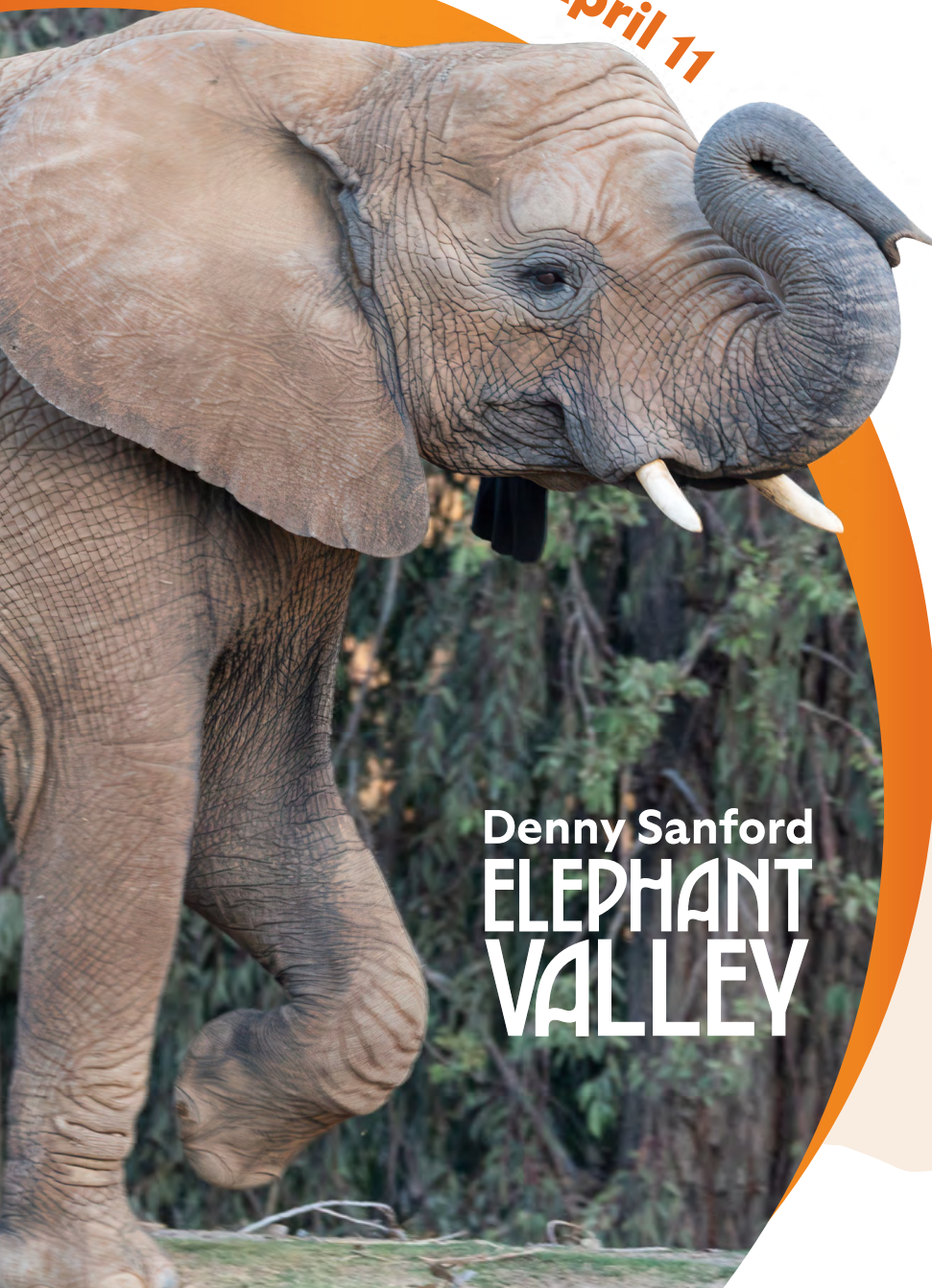
SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE



TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

2116 ADVISORS ANNUAL GATHERING

Save the Date for April 11



**Denny Sanford
ELEPHANT
VALLEY**

We welcome you to your fourth **2116 Advisors Annual Gathering on Saturday, April 11, 2026** at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. We're honored to once again recognize you and your tireless commitment to wildlife conservation with this exclusive event.

This year we'll explore **genetic rescue and the intersection of science, ethics, and real-world impact**. You'll enjoy an exclusive brunch at the brand-new **Mkutano House at Denny Sanford Elephant Valley** and hear from an exciting lineup of guest speakers.

Join us as we discuss the key scientific approaches changing the future for our planet's wildlife.



Formal invitations will be sent in the coming weeks. In the meantime, if you should have any questions regarding the Annual Gathering, reach out to Erin Decker at edecker@sdzwa.org or (619) 685-3213.

We can't wait to see you there!





SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

2116 ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Petersen



Pat McTigue, Robyn Badger, Stephanie Petersen, and Eamonn Farrell at the Safari Park.

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance is honored to recognize Stephanie Petersen for her wholehearted support, joyful spirit, and steadfast commitment to wildlife and community.

Stephanie's connection to the San Diego Zoo began in childhood. Born and raised in San Diego, she grew up wandering the Zoo's pathways as a freckle-faced animal lover whose sister affectionately nicknamed her "Spot." That early love of spotted animals, especially

giraffes and cheetahs, sparked a lifelong admiration for wildlife and a deep bond with this special place.

Her generosity to San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance began with a meaningful gift supporting the tortoise habitat in Denny Sanford Wildlife Explorers Basecamp. Since then, her giving has blossomed. She helped welcome caracal cubs to the Zoo and supported key elements of Elephant Valley, including the terrace and veranda at Mkutano House. She continues

to uplift experiences that inspire guests and strengthen our mission.

Stephanie's enthusiasm is matched only by her capacity for joy. She loves tours, gatherings, and opportunities to learn more about wildlife. A devoted supporter of R·I·T·Z, she not only purchases tables and hosts friends each year but also joined the event committee to help bring the celebration to life. Last year, she reserved an entire Roar & Snore evening so friends and family could share the wonder of waking up to wildlife. She even plans to celebrate a milestone birthday at Mkutano House this year.

She and her late husband Andro operated hotels, including Kings Inn San Diego, and built a life grounded in hospitality, adventure, and community. Guided by these values, as well as her generous heart and vibrant spirit, Stephanie is *elephan-tastic* in every way. We are deeply grateful for the leadership, kindness, and joy she radiates for wildlife and the people who care for them.



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

2116

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

THE 2116 ADVISORS

**We gratefully acknowledge you, our 2116 Advisors,
for your dedicated support and inspired guidance.**

Jim and Karen Allen

Dianne L. Bashor

Rolf and Mary Benirschke

Wally Benson

Nathan Bingham and Michele Agosti

Jessica Heinz* and Jerry Block

James T. Bonner Jr.

Charlene and Terry* Brown

Matt Brown

Malin Burnham

Anita Busquets and Bill Ladd

Kathleen Cain Carrithers

Tom Chapman

Javade Chaudhri and Gail Lau Kee

Carolyn Condon

Michael Cunningham

Adam Day

Lloyd and Dee Decker

Alice and Doug* Diamond

Christine and Kris Dickinson

Berit and Tom Durler

Chris and Vicki Eddy

Art and Danielle Engel

JJ Fetter and John Reichel

Tom and Jane Fetter

Elizabeth Jane Finley

Myrna Frame

George* and Alison Gildred

Carol Ann Greenfield

and Larry David Greenfield, MD

Craigar Grosvenor

Rick and Tory Gulley

Clifford Hague

Linda Harris

Deborah A. and David A.* Hawkins

Helene Hoffman and Frank Trousdale*

Robert and Stephanie Horsman

Murray* and Victoria Hutchison

Megan and Keith B. Jones

Chancellor Pradeep Khosla

Gary Knell

Rosemary Love and Chuck Weikert

Linda Lowenstine and Richard Lander*

Diane McKernan Lyman and Steven Lyman

Annie and David Malcolm

William H.* and Barbara J. May

Susan and Craig McClellan

Barbara J. Menard

Carol A. Millard

Leslie A. Miller

Nelson M. Millsberg

Bryan and Julie Min

Susan and Frank Oddo

Greg and Karla Ogilvie

Ruth Ann and Paul Parker

Stephanie Petersen



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

**Together we're creating a world where all life thrives.
Thank you for everything you do to make it possible.**

Maryanne Pfister
 Peter and Sandra Phillips
 Kenji Price
 Evelyn and Ernest Rady
 Jamie Rappaport Clark
 Caroline and John Raymond
 Charles E. and Lucinda Richardson
 Jon Paul Rodriguez
 Cami and Tom Rosso
 Louis T. and Penny Rosso
 Jeff Saikhon
 T. Denny Sanford
 Philip Seeger
 David Shaw
 Darlene V. Shiley
 Elizabeth and Peter Shoemaker
 Lauren and Steve Simpson
 Rosa and Bob Sinnott
 Gwendolyn Sontheim
 Lisa and Wayne Stelmar
 Mark Stetter
 Marguerite Stewart
 Cathy Stiefel and Keith Behner
 The Stone Family
 Steven and Cathy Tappan
 Karen Valentino
 Andrew and Elizabeth Vassiliadis
 Carol Vassiliadis

Kathryn and Don Vaughn
 Corinne Verdery
 Meris Von Jenef and Andrew Roth
 Helga Margie Warner
 and John H. Warner Jr.
 Joanne C. Warren
 Dr. Charles Wheatley
 T. 'Aulani Wilhelm
 Dennis and MaryAnn Wilson
 Karen Zable Cox

**We also offer a warm welcome
to the new members who have
joined over the past year.**

Steve Benninga
 Doug Dawson
 Taner Halicioglu
 Helen and Leo Larson
 Dr. Sue E. Moore
 Dr. Beth Shapiro
 Babs Soller

*In memoriam
List as of February 20, 2026



Photo Credit: Cheryl Ramalho

— 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. More than 5.5 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

ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

COLLABORATE



A young viewer watching the Wildlife Explorers Channel.

CHANNELING HOPE

As our allies everywhere know, there's something truly transformative about experiencing the wonders of wildlife. The vibrant energy of lemurs or the quiet grace of elephants can bring us awe, understanding, and even a sense of peace. These moments, big or small, remind us of our connection to the world and help spark hope, even when life feels overwhelming.

Guided by our belief in the healing power of nature, we launched the **Wildlife Explorers Channel** in 2015. Thanks to the generous support of Denny Sanford, this

free, 24-hour programming is broadcast in children's hospitals, Ronald McDonald Houses, hospice facilities, and retirement homes. By bringing the sights and sounds of the natural world to residents and their families, the channel offers a calming, educational experience and a welcome distraction from difficult circumstances.

Now in its 11th year, the Wildlife Explorers Channel has grown from a handful of locations in the American Southwest into a global network, spanning 48 U.S. states and 14 countries, including Ukraine, Kenya,

India, and New Zealand. Now we've achieved a remarkable milestone: **the channel is broadcasting in its 400th facility**, spreading the power of wildlife to more communities than ever before.

With each new location we partner with, we open another window to possibility and comfort for those who need it most. Together, we're proving that the simple act of connecting with nature can change lives—one screen, one species, and one smile at a time.



The Pandamonium Package at the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina hotel.

ROOM TO GROW

Reaching new audiences with fresh, inventive approaches often requires thinking outside the box. Sometimes, however, it's thinking innovatively inside four walls that does the trick. That's what happened when **we partnered with the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina hotel to debut the Pandamonium Package**. This collaboration celebrates Xin Bao and Yun Chuan, the giant pandas we have the honor of caring for at Denny Sanford Panda Ridge at the

San Diego Zoo, and the conservation of their iconic species.

The stay begins in the one-of-a-kind Panda Retreat room, decorated with lavish black-and-white accents along with nods to the bears' primary food source of bamboo. Greeting travelers upon arrival are curated amenities, including a giant panda plush, themed cookies, and more.

In addition to being a unique getaway, this package also gives guests a chance to discover our

mission. For fun beyond the hotel, visitors receive Zoo tickets and an Inside Look tour to connect with wildlife up close.

Partnerships with local businesses like this help us design moments that go beyond a typical visit to the Zoo. When we find new ways to create unforgettable experiences—each more imaginative than the last—we can inspire audiences both old and new to become allies for wildlife.

MAKING NEWS

As guests enjoyed the sweeping views of the Panda Retreat room, news of this launch swept across the nation.

The San Diego
Union-Tribune

Forbes

ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

INNOVATE



The IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.

BRINGING THE WORLD TOGETHER

With each biological sample we collect in the Frozen Zoo, we grow this resource's ability to safeguard endangered species. At the same time, our global community of dedicated biobanking partners is always growing as well. Recently at a prestigious international event, we united these two powerful forces for an unprecedented initiative.

Every four years, **the International Union for Conservation of Nature**

(IUCN) brings together experts, leaders, and decision makers for the World Conservation Congress.

We were proud to send a delegation to the recent gathering in Abu Dhabi and play an active role in shaping conservation priorities on a global scale.

The centerpiece of our efforts was a press conference calling on partners to join our ambitious goal of **biobanking every endangered species by 2075**. Thanks to this

event, more than 100 professionals from 45 countries were inspired to join us. As we step boldly into the Frozen Zoo's next chapter, it's more important and more possible than ever to protect the species that need us most.

While at the Congress, we also voted on critical international policy, a privilege only a select group of zoos has. And we contributed to the education pavilion, where we showcased our learning programs across our eight Conservation Hubs, highlighting the integral role of zoos in engaging wildlife allies.

This spirit of collaboration strengthens our ability to create an unprecedented safety net for global wildlife. We're constantly seeking ways to expand our conservation impact, and this empowering event enabled us to rally behind goals that will redefine what's possible for the planet we all share.

MAKING NEWS

Media coverage of our press conference helped share our mission even wider.





Marlys Houck working with cryopreserved samples.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD

Our experts are some of the most dedicated in their fields. From our passionate educators to our devoted scientists, each member of our team helps ensure wildlife are protected and cared for every day. They also serve as influential ambassadors who can explain the impact and importance of our initiatives to the public. **Marlys Houck, CG(ASCP)^{CM}, Elizabeth J.F. Williams Endowed Curator of the Frozen Zoo, recently did this on a global stage when she appeared on PBS's "Human Footprint,"** offering a glimpse into her work and why it's critical to conservation.

"Human Footprint" explores how human society has affected the planet and its wildlife. In the episode "Vanishing Act," host and biologist Shane Campbell-Staton engages with specialists from around the world who focus on safeguarding threatened species. Marlys's segment explains the history and capabilities of the Frozen Zoo and the key objective behind it: to preserve what is precious today and restore what could be lost tomorrow. At the end of the segment, the host holds a vial containing cells of a critically endangered species, perfectly encapsulating their fragility and

how we as humans have a hand in doing something about it.

Participating in this project allowed us to reach millions of viewers and provide them an opportunity to learn about biobanking in an accessible way.

Thanks to the efforts of Marlys and her team, we can continue saving wildlife while also inspiring others to care as deeply as we do.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

INSPIRE



The 2026 Rose Parade was another giant success! We're thrilled to share that we won the **Grand Marshal Award** for most outstanding creative concept and float design at this year's event.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

ROSE-COLORED FUTURE

A new year often brings new opportunities for growth, adventure, and learning—all moments we're thrilled to experience when Elephant Valley opens this year. **To celebrate the largest and most transformative project in our history, we took part in the iconic Rose Parade once again** after several years of resounding success and international impact at the annual event.

Our float, "Giant Strides Together," represented the reimagined habitat and the elephants at the heart of it. Using bright, colorful flowers and other natural materials, the display depicted the abundance of Elephant Valley, from lush trees and glittering water to Mkutano House and more. At the center were four recognizable faces from the herd at the Safari Park: matriarch Swazi and her daughter Qinisa, as well as Umngani and her daughter Mkhaya. With each

purposefully designed detail, the float sparked excitement and anticipation for the unforgettable moments awaiting guests.

Participating in this globally recognized event gave us an influential platform to share more about the Safari Park and what we're doing to save, protect, and care for elephants across the globe. With the possibilities of 2026 ahead, we're sure "Giant Strides Together" inspired viewers to add visiting Elephant Valley to their New Year's resolutions.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

MAKING NEWS

"Giant Strides Together" made headlines just as giant.





Soar above it all and experience the breathtaking views of the Safari Park.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

HIGH-FLYING ADVENTURE

Soaring over the savanna is an experience usually reserved for the birds. It's often hard to imagine seeing the world from such heights and taking in all its splendor.

The Safari Park's newly reopened **Flightline Safari** has changed all that. This zipline experience gives guests a breathtaking perspective while fostering a deeper connection with the wildlife we care for every day. A longtime favorite of our thrill-seeking visitors, **it's now back and better than ever, enhanced with new features to make it even more unforgettable.**

Adventurers start on a truck safari to the Safari Park's sprawling savannas, where they may discover wildlife such as giraffes, rhinos, or antelope. Then they head toward the launch platform and zip through the air on an exhilarating ride that spans the length of the savannas and reaches speeds of up to 55 miles per hour. It's more than just an adrenaline rush: **guests take in a panoramic view of the wildlife below and the Safari Park's surrounding landscapes, a showcase of how truly interconnected we all are.**

Since its reopening, Flightline Safari has already inspired nearly 2,000 visitors with an electrifying experience only we can provide. It's a unique way to immerse yourself in the awe-inspiring tapestry of life and become one with the savanna—no wings required.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

THRIVE



Kimara and her mother thriving at the Zoo.

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

LITTLE STRIPES, BIG POSSIBILITIES

A wobbly figure inquisitively navigates its surroundings, using a busy nose to investigate. With a shiny, black-brown coat and incredibly long, striped legs, this species is truly one-of-a-kind. **It's not a deer, a horse, or a zebra—it's Kimara, an okapi thriving at Lost Forest.**

This little one joined us last fall as the first okapi to be born at the Zoo since 2021. Since okapis are endangered, Kimara's birth is truly a reason to celebrate—every little addition is critical to the future of the species. **Her arrival helps support global populations as**

part of a collaborative Species Survival Plan Program with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. As she continues to grow up big and strong alongside mom, we'll continue working to ensure this unique calf's species can thrive too.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

MAKING NEWS

This unique youngster stood out in headlines, too.





Dainty bamboo palm.

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

NEW DISCOVERIES IN BLOOM

With all the knowledge that exists around us, it would be tempting to feel like we know the whole story about wildlife. Yet the world is vast, and we can always learn something new when we take the time to look a little closer. We put this attitude into action when we collaborated with Don Hodel, a partner from University of California's Agriculture and Natural Resources department, to help our team inventory palms at the Zoo.

The group encountered a set of plants in Fern Canyon that Don was unable to identify during their work. Using samples of the mystery flora, Don crafted a description that would serve as a guide for further research, comparing the plant's characteristics against those of more than 100 similar species.

After a thorough, monthslong investigation, his conclusion was monumental—the palm was a new, undocumented species.

To share this exciting update, our experts co-authored an article with Don in the journal *PalmArbor*, officially naming the species *Chamaedorea delicata*, or the dainty bamboo palm.

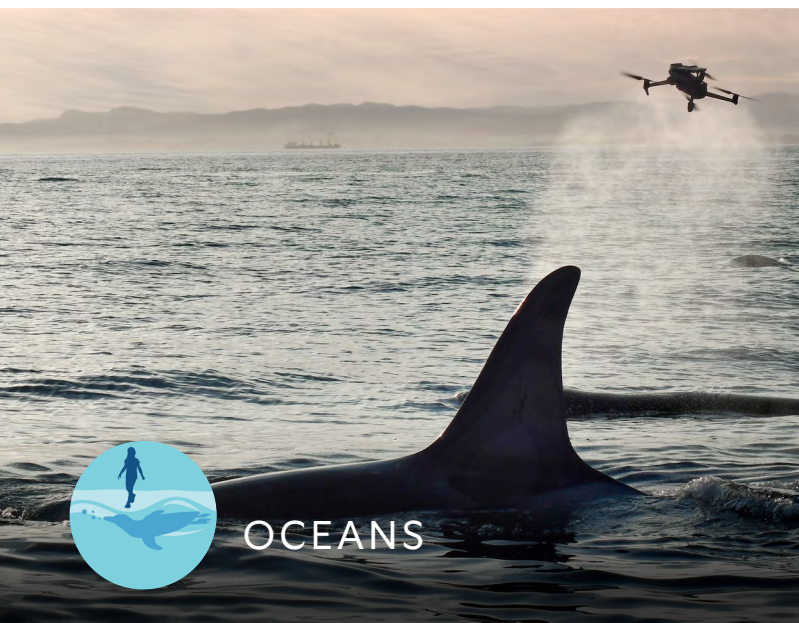
This discovery is a testament to our teams' ability to skillfully care for plants and their curiosity to continuously learn. **Publishing these findings could have the potential to contribute to further scientific discoveries**, stemming from something that was hiding under our noses all along.

MAKING NEWS

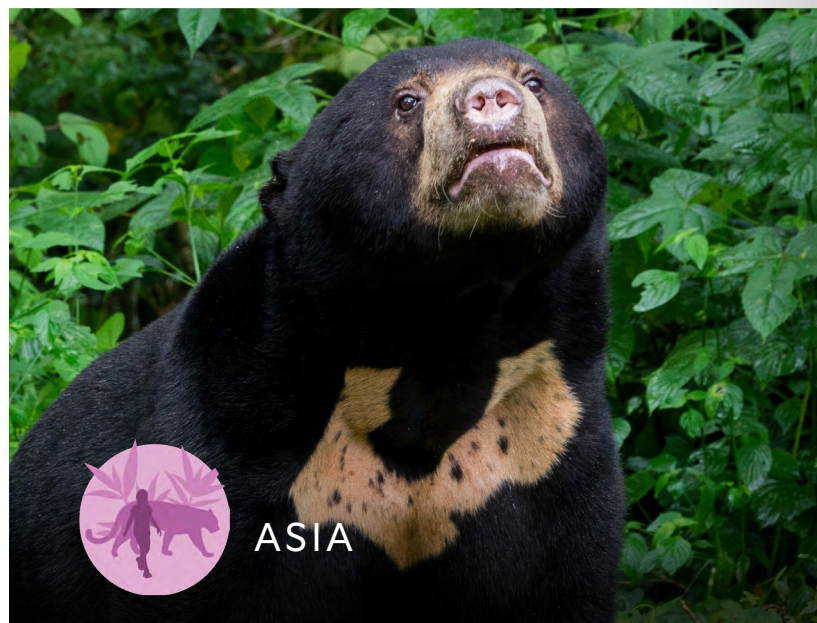
The plant world has grown, and we were happy to share it with the following news outlets.



CONSERVATION HUBS



OCEANS



ASIA



AMAZONIA



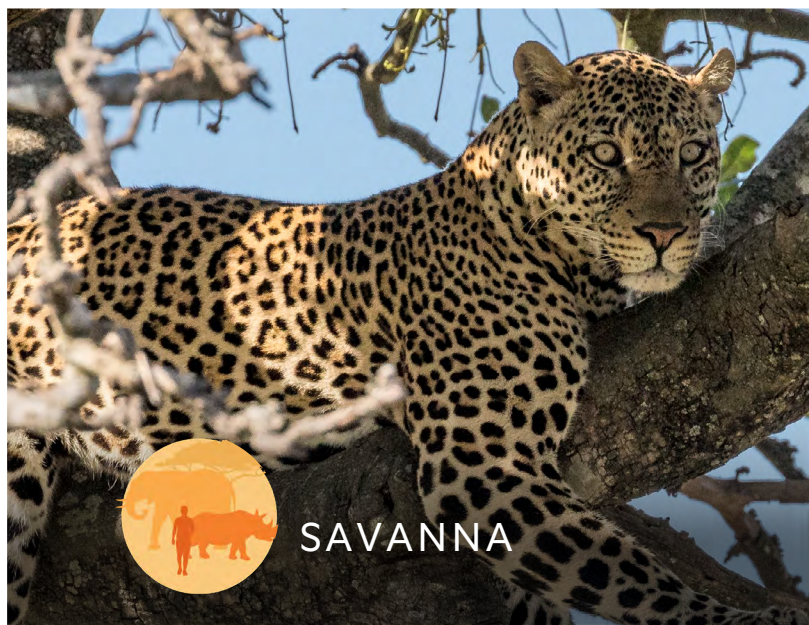
SOUTHWEST



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 scale our work.



OCEANS CONSERVATION HUB



Mist Opportunities

Breathing new life into killer whale conservation

A lock of hair. A piece of tissue.
A seed fallen to the ground.
Biological samples like these can provide a wealth of knowledge about animals and plants, helping researchers understand more about them and their habitats. When wildlife are elusive, however, samples can be hard—or even impossible—to gather.

Killer whales are one of these elusive animals, though their impact is unmissable. Known as an indicator species, the health of killer whales reflects the health of the ecosystems that support them. This is especially true for Southern Resident killer whales, which are native to the Salish Sea, an area nestled alongside Washington State and British Columbia. Here, human activity has led to the dramatic loss of Chinook salmon, the whales' preferred prey, and has caused the whale population to become critically endangered.

Fortunately, we're now learning more about their status by pioneering ways to collect a unique kind of sample: breath.

Drones are helping us acquire these samples safely, efficiently, and without ever coming into contact with the whale. From nearby boats, pilots expertly fly the devices through the mist of a whale's breath plume to pick up exhaled droplets on attached petri dishes.

The process helps determine the individual's health by obtaining essential information like reproductive hormones, signs of disease, and more.

This contributes to vital records scientists can use to safeguard killer whales in the Salish Sea and beyond.

To continuously improve our practices, we recently completed a study illuminating how to increase the amount of DNA extracted from samples. We and partners also developed and led a two-day "drone academy," where we trained pilots and increased their capacity to secure this remarkable data.

This work is critical to the future of killer whales around the globe. **Together, we're creating a clearer window into how populations and their greater ecosystems are doing, helping scientists uncover how they can best support both.**

With these tiny but mighty breath samples, researchers can continue to gain an oceans-deep understanding of this iconic wildlife.

MAKING NEWS

Word of our work in the water swam across headlines.





A drone at sea monitoring killer whales.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.





The Greatest Gift of All

Developing inroads for collaborative bear conservation



Photo Credit: Vladimir Borzykin

Sun bears live among the tropical forests of Southeast Asia.

A gift is more than just an object: it's a symbol, a message, and a connection. Through the act of giving, a simple item can take on profound meaning, sparking joy and strengthening bonds. Yet, on occasion, the impact of a gift can extend in unexpected ways and create ripples we may not foresee.

Gift giving in Vietnam is an important part of building ties between family members and business colleagues. **Bear bile** in particular is regarded as a token of gratitude as it's used in traditional medicine and even drinking culture. This practice, however, has maintained demand for the product, which is often extracted from bears that are killed or kept in

illegal bear bile farms.

Our teams addressed these concerns by collaborating with leaders in north-central Vietnam on an awareness and behavior-change campaign. We first conducted community surveys in the region to understand local customs, and we led a study that uncovered the potential benefits of addressing gift giving directly within influential social groups.

Turning this research into action, however, required building trust with local leaders, so we worked diligently to cultivate strong, respectful relationships within the area. Together we began to identify equally desirable, alternative

behaviors to using bear bile, such as plant-based bile alternatives and other gift options not derived from wildlife. This collaboration revealed new ways to support overall bear conservation while still honoring Vietnam's heritage.

This awareness campaign has contributed to the tremendous success of our larger bear conservation efforts in the country. **Together we have reduced bear bile consumption in Vietnam by a staggering 93% in six years.** As our relationships in the region continue to deepen, we can achieve even more for bears and other species that face poaching risks. That's a gift that will keep on giving for generations to come.

PACIFIC ISLANDS CONSERVATION HUB



Giving Props to Our Partners

A half-century of expertise informs orchid conservation in Palau

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

Orchids make up one of the largest and most varied plant families on Earth, and Palau is a center of their biodiversity.

Dotted across the island nation's lush forests are nearly 100 native orchid species, including more than 30 that exist nowhere else in the world. These exquisite flowers play an irreplaceable role in Palau's intricate ecosystems, as their striking colors, shapes, and scents attract a wide range of pollinators.

Those same colors, shapes, and scents sadly also attract wildlife traffickers. The illegal wildlife trade, along with habitat loss and other factors, have caused many of these orchid species to become endangered.

Fortunately, our teams have decades of expertise in protecting and caring for them. We recently celebrated the **50th anniversary of our Orchid Program**, and through it we continue to foster our longtime partnership with Palau, joining together to safeguard the country's orchids.

Working with our partners, we collect orchid seeds in Palau and transport them to the Zoo for propagation. This process allows us to safely grow and nurture new plants in a carefully controlled environment. We also employ micropropagation, where we cultivate thousands of plants from tiny tissue samples. These efforts serve two critical purposes: **producing orchids to**

reintroduce into native Palauan habitats, and maintaining vital assurance populations here in San Diego.

We're also committed to supporting community-led conservation in Palau. Our team provides trainings to local partners on seed collection and propagation techniques, building their capacity to lead these initiatives. By imparting this knowledge, we help empower communities to become stewards of the wildlife they share their ecosystems with.

Thanks to this powerful partnership, orchids of all shapes and sizes in Palau have a future as bright as their vibrant petals. As we embark on the next 50 years of our Orchid Program, we remain steadfast in our shared mission of protecting these bold blooms—in San Diego, across the Pacific Islands, and around the globe.

Orchids flourish across the lush islands of Palau.



Photo Credit: Norimoto



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.



AUSTRALIAN FOREST CONSERVATION HUB



Innovation for Invertebrates

Insect samples banked in our Frozen Zoo for the first time

AT THE ZOO / SAFARI PARK

Lord Howe Island stick insects are unlike many invertebrate species. They're incredibly large, often growing to the length of an adult human's hand. They're also nocturnal, and when they do sleep, they pair off, resting closely together as the male protectively covers the female with his legs.

Like many invertebrates, however, Lord Howe Island stick insects are vital to their ecosystems, consuming and decomposing plant material and supporting food webs. Unfortunately, this critical collaborator is also critically endangered. There are only a few dozen living in the Lord Howe Island Group, a cluster of volcanic islands located between Australia and New Zealand.

We're harnessing the power of the Frozen Zoo to safeguard their future. **We recently banked**



You can connect with Lord Howe Island stick insects on your next visit to the Zoo when you journey to The McKinney Family Spineless Marvels habitats.

sperm from two Lord Howe Island stick insects, marking the first time we've ever cryopreserved insect cells.

Images of these samples will also be uploaded to our Sperm Atlas, an educational database tool available to researchers and conservationists everywhere.

This significant milestone is as singular as this species, and an important step in protecting them. **Saving these samples**

in the Frozen Zoo will enable further research and conservation efforts for Lord Howe Island stick insects. It

also helps strengthen biobanking efforts for other invertebrates, expanding our work to protect some of Earth's most influential wildlife so ecosystems around the world can continue to thrive too.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

MAKING NEWS

These news sources helped share our story of another Frozen Zoo first.



Reaching the Summit

Our echidna collaboration goes global



Australia's echidnas: spiky, shy, and unique.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

Echidnas are remarkably adaptable wildlife. They live in highlands, deserts, and forests of every state in Australia, as well as parts of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Despite their wide native ranges, however, these spiny mammals are elusive, and with some species listed as critically endangered, learning about how to protect them is crucial.

We hold an annual Echidna Summit at the Safari Park to do just that, and it's expanding in exciting new ways. Our wildlife care team first held the summit

internally to address challenges in short-beaked echidna reproduction. The following year, we invited care specialists from other zoos to join us. And at our most recent gathering, specialists from Los Angeles, Ohio, and the Netherlands attended in person, with even more from around the world joining virtually.

During the summit we presented on our successful conservation breeding program and invited guest speakers to discuss veterinary care, nutrition, endocrinology, and ambassador

echidna programs. As we share knowledge and expertise, we continue to expand our collective understanding of echidnas and how we can best care for them.

By joining a global network of echidna teams, we're supporting their care and conservation across Australian ecosystems. While there's still much to learn about echidnas, this international collaboration helps ensure they thrive up in the mountains, down in the deserts, and everywhere in between.





Tools for Success

New labs strengthen conservation efforts in the Amazon

Imagine trying to mow the lawn using just a pair of scissors or cooking for a crowd but lacking enough pots and pans. Without the right resources, large and complicated tasks can become even larger and more complicated. This is especially true for something as vital as our conservation efforts. And for experts in the dense and incredibly biodiverse Peruvian Amazon, having the necessary tools is critical to their success.

One of these tools is DNA barcoding, a method used to identify species in shared databases and record critical genetic information. Our studies

found there's a severe lack of data logged from Peru, leaving many native species absent from major global repositories. One reason is that Peruvian experts didn't have the capabilities needed to efficiently contribute to the deficit. Professionals previously relied on partners and services in other countries to document and sequence samples from Amazonian wildlife.

Today it's becoming easier thanks to capacity-building initiatives. **Teams created a lab in-country equipped with the advanced technology required to do the work without needing to export a single sample.** This initiative

has generated an increase in Amazonian DNA barcodes, and has done it faster than ever before. In the span of approximately five years, researchers developed new genetic barcodes for 1,858 specimens, increasing Peruvian representation in one database by 110% for mammals and 36.5% for birds.

Because of these improvements, conservationists can better understand wildlife living in the Peruvian Amazon and determine strategic next steps to save those that are threatened—proving that having the right tools makes the tall task of conservation more possible than ever.

A vibrant macaw in the Amazon forest.

SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION HUB



Butterfly Effect

Efforts in San Diego empower conservation countrywide

AT THE SAFARI PARK

Southern California is a butterfly biodiversity hotspot, with more than 160 species native to the region. Whether flitting across woodlands, deserts, or coastal areas, these radiant insects make an impression wherever they go. And as pollinators, they're vital to the health of plants throughout these ecosystems.

Because of agricultural and urban development, however, butterfly habitats have decreased and fragmented, putting their populations at risk. **We're harnessing our decades of expertise in butterfly care and conservation to protect them, and two recent initiatives helped us advance our efforts.**

Our team participated in the latest **annual butterfly count** in collaboration with the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). Over the course of a single day, participants walked through designated areas in San Diego and counted all the butterflies they observed. This local data on

population sizes and distribution will be incorporated into NABA's annual report, which provides conservationists with a wealth of information from across the continent. By tracking results over multiple years, we can also study the effects of habitat loss, climate instability, and pesticides on species.

At the same time, we partnered with Monarch Joint Venture to host the **third annual North American Monarch Institute**. This event brought together teachers from Southern California to learn more about monarch conservation and pollinator gardens. The 16 educators participated in community science programs, attended research talks, and visited the Zoo's Butterfly Jungle. They also learned about the propagation of milkweed, a native plant that sustains monarchs and other butterfly species.

The weeklong program will continue to make a difference, as the participating teachers can now apply for garden grants to support native pollinators at their own schools.

By investing in butterfly conservation here in San Diego, we're contributing to collaborative efforts across the region, the country, and beyond.

Together with a passionate network of partners, we're helping ensure these important insects can reach even greater heights.

At the 2116 Advisors Annual Gathering in September, guests took home milkweed grown by students in our Native Biodiversity Corps. This plant is essential for sustaining monarch populations. Your milkweed is helping butterflies in San Diego thrive!





A monarch butterfly shows off its bright orange wings.



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SAVANNA CONSERVATION HUB



Searching for Solutions

New data contributes to national census for the first time



An African leopard rests in a tree in Kenya.

How do you monitor the population status of an elusive species? It's a complex question experts often ask themselves when learning about African leopards. Common methods, such as aerial tools and driving surveys, have proven ineffective due to leopards' low-profile nature.

Instead, we can utilize trail cameras to make observations in an unobtrusive way. We recently did this on a large scale, completing

a three-month assessment of African leopard populations in collaboration with partners in central Kenya. Leveraging 150 trail cameras across more than 600 square miles, we were able to gather data that shines a light on the species' current status. The information collected is now being analyzed and will enable **the inclusion of leopards in Kenya's National Wildlife Census for the first time.**

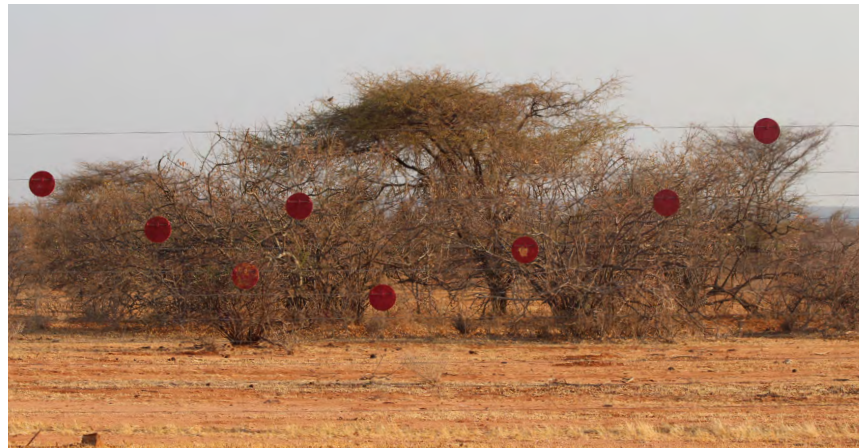
This major milestone provides a foundation for a national leopard population estimate, **advancing conservation efforts for the species and informing next steps for the experts working to protect them.** Thanks to trail cameras, we can start to answer an important question that helps us safeguard some of the world's most secretive wildlife.

Looking Out

Designing inventive tools to protect giraffes

As the tallest land animals on Earth, giraffes tower over their savanna habitats with a graceful, quiet command. Their influence also carries weight—up to 3,000 pounds of it, in fact. Although they possess this mighty presence, the species still faces serious threats. Some are obvious, such as a lion preying upon a young calf. Others may come as more of a surprise.

In northern Kenya, giraffes often encounter risks from human-created infrastructure, including roads and power lines. At Sera Conservancy, one of our partners in Samburu County, giraffes were



Giraffe fence deterrents in Kenya.

getting stuck in the fencing that surrounds their rhino sanctuary.

Together, we devised a unique alert system utilizing light flashers to help keep the wildlife safe.

This tool was developed thanks in part to the knowledge of our teams in San Diego and the study they did to influence the design. Using flashers at the Urban Jungle habitat at the Zoo, we observed how the giraffes responded to certain colors and shapes of the harmless, non-threatening deterrent.

Building on our efforts here, we then tested red and yellow flashers at Sera Conservancy.

Community members even participated by helping install the devices as part of their World Giraffe Day celebrations. **Since the implementation of this initiative, no giraffe fatalities have been recorded.**

These successful results can now inform next-step strategies. **The data we and our partners gathered will assist experts as they work to mitigate fence entanglement on a larger scale,** keeping giraffe populations protected from this unexpected predator far into the future.



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A Delicate Balance

Protecting chimpanzees and communities in Cameroon

In the lush, biodiverse forests of Africa, where life flourishes in extraordinary abundance, it's necessary for many species to coexist in the same spaces. All wildlife play an important role in maintaining the careful balance of the habitats they thrive in, and chimpanzees act as vital seed dispersers in theirs.

Humans are also an integral part of this balance. Sometimes, however, the equilibrium can shift, and when wildlife and people compete for resources, complications often arise. This has sadly been the case in areas east of the Ebo forest in Cameroon, where habitat loss has bred new challenges in human-wildlife conflict.

As local farming communities have cleared land for agriculture,

particularly for cocoa farms, **chimpanzees' forest habitat has become increasingly smaller and fragmented.** This has forced them closer to human settlements in their search for food. Such encounters can lead to direct physical interactions, posing risks for both humans and chimps and fostering an atmosphere of fear and tension.

To address this fragile dynamic, **we've united with partners in Cameroon on a multifaceted response strategy.** It began with the installation of noninvasive trail cameras to better understand chimpanzee population size, composition, and range. With that information, we met with local villages to raise awareness about chimp behavior and ways to reduce encounters and conflicts. And

we're working collaboratively with communities to explore alternative livelihoods that would minimize encroachment into the remaining forest.

Together we can create systems and find solutions that benefit both wildlife and the people they share their ecosystems with. By combining research, expertise, and teamwork, we are fostering a world where chimpanzees can thrive and humans can prosper alongside them. This shared path forward is how we protect each individual species and the intricate web of life that sustains us all.

A chimpanzee eats wild berries in the forests of Cameroon.

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



The 2116 Advisors is a distinguished advisory group named in recognition of San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance's centennial legacy and its bold vision for the century ahead. These respected allies provide insight, guidance, and support to help achieve lasting impact for wildlife and the planet.

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