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Newsletter

2026
Volume 2

***Denny Sanford
Elephant Valley***
Grand Opening

***Better Together
with AZA***
A Massive Accomplishment

***Madagascar
Meets San Diego***
New Garden at the Zoo



**San Diego Zoo
Wildlife Alliance**

21 16

Newsletter

2026
Volume 2



SHAWN DIXON
President and CEO

It's with great pride that I introduce this commemorative issue, anchored by a historic milestone: the grand opening of Denny Sanford Elephant Valley. This reimagined habitat is not just a spectacular home for our herd, but a vital link connecting our community to global elephant conservation.

While Elephant Valley takes center stage, our commitment to wildlife continues thriving in many forms. In this issue, we celebrate our renewed AZA accreditation and the community generosity driving our Cars for Conservation program. You will also uncover how we are pioneering wildlife healthcare in unexpected ways, from advanced genetic rescue for birds to delicate surgery on a ghost mantis.

Each story highlights a different facet of our unified mission to save species. Thank you for your continued partnership in making this impact possible.

Together for wildlife,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn Dixon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Shawn" and "Dixon" being capitalized and prominent.

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

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Sound the trumpets! We're celebrating **Elephant Valley's grand opening**, and the media has done the same, sharing news of this transformative milestone far and wide. They've also covered inspiring wildlife rescues, births at our parks, and much more. Learn all about it throughout the issue.

As guests start exploring Elephant Valley at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, our online fans have enjoyed the action too. Our social media channels have taken followers from around the world deep into this immersive savanna experience. These popular posts have helped us reach **401.5 million views so far this year**.

The March/April edition of the *Journal* has marked the moment with a **special commemorative Elephant Valley issue**, diving into its dynamic features and the herd thriving there. And the recent May/June edition explores how **our community of global partners** helps us make a difference for conservation every day.

SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE JOURNAL



MAR/APR 2026

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

Denny Sanford
Elephant Valley



MAY/JUN 2026

BUILDING A WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

Around the World



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE



TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

ANNUAL GATHERING 2026

Genetic Rescue: What Are the Limits?

AT THE SAFARI PARK

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 2116 Advisors Annual Gathering in April.

This exclusive brunch event, at the fabulous Mkutano House in Denny Sanford Elephant Valley, featured a lively conversation about genetic rescue that took Advisors into the heart of where science, ethics, and real-world impact intersect.

We also thank our panelists for sharing with us their invaluable insights:

Dr. Craig Callender from UC San Diego, Ben Novak from Revive & Restore, and our very own Dr. Oliver Ryder and Dr. Nadine Lamberski.





SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE



TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

WELCOME TO DENNY SANFORD ELEPHANT VALLEY

Celebrating the largest and most transformative project in our organization's history



Denny Sanford Elephant Valley at the Safari Park is now open.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

It was a moment like no other: a yearslong collaboration guided by our many talented teams, finally coming together for the entire world to experience. **On March 5, guests officially stepped into Denny Sanford Elephant Valley for the very first time**, walking alongside these gentle giants while creating

unforgettable memories with family and friends.

Helping us celebrate the opening were some of those closest to us, including cherished allies and supporters. We were thrilled to honor this special day with many people who made Elephant Valley

possible and to share our heartfelt thanks for their generosity. Because of their support, and yours, **visitors from around the globe are enjoying the extraordinary lives of elephants, making connections with wildlife and discovering how this species can thrive.**

MAKING NEWS

We were delighted to welcome media on grounds for this hugely historic day.





SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE



TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

EXCLUSIVE TRAVEL OPPORTUNITY

Join San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance on a transformative

JOURNEY TO KENYA

FEBRUARY 15–25, 2027



Limited to 14 guests and accompanied by a San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Host

This isn't just another trip. It's an opportunity to connect with our visionary conservation partners. In collaboration with Emboo, Sarara, Lewa, and Loisaba Conservancies, embark on a journey to see the impact of our work, meet local community members who are the true guardians of the land, and witness bold conservation in action.

Join us to experience the magic of Kenya's wilderness in a way that few ever do.

Space is extremely limited and selling out quickly!

To learn more or reserve your spot, please contact
Erin Decker at edecker@sdzwa.org or (619) 685-3213.

This trip is operated in partnership with Journeys With Purpose.



SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

2116

TWENTY-ONE SIXTEEN ADVISORS

2116 ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Nelson M. Millsberg



San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance is proud to recognize Nelson M. Millsberg for a lifetime of generosity and dedication to wildlife.

A native to our region, Nelson grew up near the San Diego Zoo and fondly remembers visiting as a boy. Those early experiences sparked a lifelong love of animals and a deep appreciation for the Zoo's work to protect them.

Nelson and his wife Elaine raised three daughters—Bobbie, Betsy, and Jennifer—to share this passion. Dogs have always been an important part of Nelson's life, and several beloved pets are honored across the Zoo and Safari Park through named features, including Beau's Bridge, Harry's Hideaway, and Maggie's Pond.

From 2002 to 2005 he served on the Wild Animal Park Committee, contributing time, insight, and

enthusiasm to the park's continued growth. And as a retired attorney and real estate owner, he helped relocate 149 towering palms from his mobile home parks to the Safari Park's savanna, where they continue to thrive.

Nelson is especially proud of supporting the platypus habitat in Walkabout Australia and helping bring platypuses to the United States. He was also inspired by the vision for Elephant Valley and recently supported both Stormi's Corridor Bridge and the upper level of Mkutano House.

Nelson takes great pride in the role we play as a global safety net for wildlife, from the care provided at the Paul Harter Veterinary Medical Center to the groundbreaking conservation science of the Frozen Zoo®. And he has seen this work in action by joining San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Adventures to Antarctica, Madagascar, and around the world.

We are deeply grateful for Nelson's enduring generosity and his passion for protecting wildlife for generations to come.



— 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



Three-panel mural at Elephant Valley by Paul Jimenez of Ground Floor Murals.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

PAINTING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ELEPHANTS

Though they may seem unrelated, art and conservation go hand in hand. Both require creativity and hard work, and they remind us in striking, emotive ways of the richness of our world. Art depicts the essence of life while conservation protects it. And we've now seen proof of this twice thanks to a talented local muralist.

Last year, Paul Jimenez of Ground Floor Murals painted a wall downtown to remember three beloved animals at the Zoo that had recently passed away. As a local San Diegan who visited the Zoo as

a child, he suffused his portraits of Kalluk, Nicky, and Maka with warmth and respect, and gained national attention for it.

With his passion and perspective in mind, we asked Paul to create **a custom, three-panel mural to greet guests as they enter Elephant Valley.**

One panel shows Umngani, a member of the herd at the Safari Park known for her long tusks, representing her species' strength and resilience. On another panel are Ndlula and her calf Zuli, highlighting the next generation of thriving

elephants. And in the center is an elephant in its native African savanna habitat, inspired by Kenya's Reteti Elephant Sanctuary. It bridges our vital conservation efforts at the Safari Park and those with partners around the world.

Paul's mural, like art and conservation themselves, reminds us of **our shared responsibility to protect what's important.** By engaging communities, fostering collaboration, and encouraging reflection, we can bring people together to honor and sustain the planet's wildlife in creative, powerful ways.



Dan Ashe, chief executive officer of AZA (right), celebrated with our own Kristi Burtis, Shawn Dixon, Pat McTigue, and Ralph Serrato.

AT THE ZOO / SAFARI PARK

BETTER TOGETHER WITH AZA

We achieve more when we're united, which is why we're proud to be part of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). This prestigious global institution is the accrediting body that ensures participating organizations are achieving the highest standards in animal welfare, guest experience, education, conservation, and more.

We recently celebrated a massive accomplishment because of this collaboration. After a monthslong process, it's official: **the Zoo and Safari Park have been accredited by the AZA once again.**

Accreditation started last year with a written application, followed by a meticulous inspection at both locations. These reviews were incredibly productive: for each, we were awarded high praise in areas such as horticulture, animal care, retail, and staff and volunteer know-how. Officials even noted that their inspection at the Zoo was one of the best they've ever conducted. Finally, we assembled for a mandatory in-person hearing in front of the Accreditation Commission.

We will continue to repeat the entire process every five years to maintain this crucial badge of honor. **The confirmation helps us**

communicate to the public that we exceed rigorous standards, continuously setting the bar higher. It also connects us with the vast expertise of the AZA community.

Thanks to the proficiency, passion, and dedication of our many talented teams—as well as the collaboration between the Zoo, the Safari Park, and the AZA—this experience was a great success. As we celebrate, we're already looking forward to what else we can accomplish together in the future.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

MAKING NEWS

The following platforms picked up the story of this major milestone.



ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

INNOVATE

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

A RARE KIND OF CARE

Every day is different in wildlife healthcare. Some days we're performing a root canal for Bo, a lion at the Safari Park. Other days we're helping Maizey, a North American porcupine, give birth via C-section at the Zoo. Our specialists are experts in their fields, providing both routine and critical support for over 15,000 animals across our two parks.

Recently, they performed surgery on a species they don't often see as a patient.

Ghost mantises are African insects that resemble dry, crunchy leaves. At approximately two inches long, they typically weigh only as much as a single penny. They're unique

wildlife, and these characteristics can sometimes make their care more nuanced, especially in surgery.

When a ghost mantis at the Zoo sustained a hernia, our team responded using adaptive, innovative methods. Utilizing microsurgical tools, including a probe and forceps, we replaced the tissues and covered them with a fat pad to prevent re-herniation. We then applied a protective medical paste to the site until her body wall sealed. After the procedure, daily wound care and antibiotics were provided.

This milestone, the very first of its kind, helped save her life, and gave us valuable lessons too. As the field of insect medicine develops, what we learn is vital to informing insect health worldwide. Procedures like this one exemplify our dedication to the wellbeing of every species we have the honor of caring for here and around the world, no matter the size, situation, or condition.



A ghost mantis after a successful hernia procedure at the San Diego Zoo.



Cryopreserved samples stored in our Frozen Zoo can help secure the future of threatened bird species.

AT THE SAFARI PARK

BIRD'S EYE ON GENETIC RESCUE

Endangered species aren't saved in a day, as much as we wish they could be. For many threatened wildlife, conservation experts maintain intricate, comprehensive, and long-term strategies designed to protect their future. These can include approaches such as ecosystem preservation or capacity building with local communities.

One of our most influential resources to help safeguard wildlife is our Frozen Zoo. Cryopreserved samples can support genetic rescue, a strategy that reintroduces

lost genetic diversity back into populations through cutting-edge techniques.

We're working with partners at Revive & Restore and the California Institute of

Technology to advance genetic rescue in birds. While our collaborators have developed systems to collect primordial germ cells (early precursors of sperm and eggs), these are difficult to gather from endangered species. We're now expanding their work by creating methods to also culture and freeze adult germline stem cells. These are mature cells

that can make sperm or eggs, and additionally, be recovered post-mortem. Focusing on this alternative kind of sample provides a powerful extra tool for rescuing and preserving genetic lineages.

Developing protocols to save different cell types, and then banking them in the Frozen Zoo, are vital steps toward promoting resilience and enduring success.

With partners by our side, we're strengthening the already thorough, forward-thinking plans set in place to secure the future of birds.

ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

INSPIRE



Photo Credit: Scripps Institution of Oceanography / UC San Diego

Dr. Rae Wynn-Grant, Dr. Jack Gilbert, Dr. Christian Walzer, and Dr. Nadine Lamberski at SXSW.

BRINGING BIOBANKING CENTER STAGE

Can the power of science safeguard Earth's most at-risk wildlife? This is just one of the questions attendees were pondering when they arrived at **Dr. Nadine Lamberski's session during South by Southwest (SXSW) in March.**

Nadine, our chief conservation and wildlife health officer, took part as a panelist at the annual event hosted in Austin, Texas. This popular experience comprises noteworthy conference sessions, professional

development, live showcases, screenings, and more across diverse, timely topics.

During her discussion, Nadine and fellow panelists addressed the gravity of safeguarding wildlife from risks such as rapid environmental change, habitat loss, and disease. They then inspired guests with how approaches in biobanking and resources like advanced digital tools can extend a lifeline to threatened species so they can thrive into the future.

SXSW draws in hundreds of thousands of people each year, providing us the opportunity to talk about our expertise on a massive stage. Thanks to Nadine and her influential presence on the panel, we were able to answer critical questions regarding how science can indeed safeguard Earth's wildlife—and what we're doing to help.



Photo Credit: Getty Images

Our Cars for Conservation program has proven to be successful in sparking generosity.

DRIVING OUR CONSERVATION EFFORTS FORWARD

Generosity comes in many forms, and our devoted allies support us throughout the year with inspiring variety. The number of ways people give is matched only by the number of conservation efforts they enable by doing so.

For two decades, our **Cars for Conservation** program has allowed supporters to give back in a novel way. They can donate their used car, motorcycle, RV, or boat, and the proceeds fund our critical conservation operations. It's a win-win-win: people part with items they no longer need, the vehicles can find renewed purpose, and it all helps protect wildlife around the world.

Since the program's inception, **820 vehicles have been donated, raising over \$860,000 to fuel our work.** It's proof that when creativity meets generosity, truly remarkable things are possible. Whether it's a New Year's resolution, spring cleaning, or end-of-year giving, there's one more way for our cherished family of donors to help ensure a brighter tomorrow for wildlife everywhere.

ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

THRIVE

AT THE SAFARI PARK

GLASS HALF FOAL

For humans and wildlife alike, younger generations can encourage hope. Their boundless energy and inquisitive nature feel encouraging, like they have the power to inspire a better and brighter tomorrow. This is also true when it comes to threatened wildlife, though it may look a bit different. For them, little ones can help increase their species' global numbers.

Przewalski's horses, for example, were once abundant across grassy Asian landscapes before the population started to shrink, finally disappearing from native habitats in the 1980s. Thankfully, they've been on the rise due to our collaborative conservation efforts—and **two foals recently born at the Safari Park are living proof of this good news.** Delivered one month apart, they are the first foals we've welcomed here since 2023.

As the pair continues to grow alongside their herd, they too will foster hope. **Their arrivals are critical because each foal strengthens Przewalski's horse populations and furthers our work to protect them into the future.** Together they embody all that's possible—including our promise to make every effort we can so their species thrives.

Heather and Galtai playfully gallop at the Safari Park.



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A broad-shelled snake-necked turtle travels waterways with its neck fully extended.

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

HEALING ON TURTLE TIME

Though turtles have a reputation for being slow, many species are surprisingly fast. Broad-shelled turtles, for example, are strongly adapted to their native Australian waterways, zipping through wetlands as they prey on fish and invertebrates. So when these speedy reptiles are in distress, they need similarly quick action to keep them safe and healthy—even if the care itself takes a while.

Recently, a broad-shelled snake-necked turtle contracted a bacterial infection that resulted in a shell defect. Our team brought

him to the Zoo's hospital, the Jennings Center for Zoological Medicine, for intensive care. The comprehensive treatments included multiple surgical procedures, advanced bandaging techniques, and other supportive measures. We also collaborated to create a special temporary habitat that met all his biological and medical needs.

The turtle stayed at the hospital for seven months while he healed. Because reptiles often have long recoveries, our experts affectionately call this process

“healing on turtle time.” After a lengthy but steady recuperative period, the turtle fully recovered and triumphantly returned to his primary habitat.

This effort illustrates **our dedicated commitment to the highest standards of healthcare for wildlife, no matter how long it takes.** Our world-class facilities and decades of expertise fortunately make this kind of journey possible. Though turtle recovery may be slow, our teams move fast to ensure these reptiles, and all species, receive the thorough, attentive care they need.

CONSERVATION HUBS



 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.

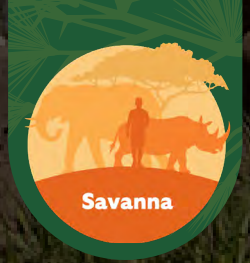




SAVANNA CONSERVATION HUB

Our New World of Impact

Elephant Valley serves the species, guests, and global conservation



AT THE SAFARI PARK

Elephants are influential in many ways. Take the individuals we have the honor of caring for at the Safari Park. Here, they affect their habitat in the ways they move, eat, and behave. Swazi, the herd's matriarch, impacts the wellbeing of the group by sharing her deep knowledge with the others, both old and young.

Now, the newly unveiled Elephant Valley will be just as influential as it helps us save, protect, and care for elephants here and around the world.

This reimagined experience was inspired by elephant ecosystems in the dynamic and biodiverse African savannas. Each intricately designed detail was crafted to create moments that celebrate the species, even mirroring the year-round variations in how native grasslands appear, sound, and smell.

Members of the herd will lean on their natural instincts as they interact with the world around them and one another throughout the vast magnitude of Elephant Valley. In their glimmering watering holes, elephants will have the opportunity to wade, swim, and explore together, strengthening the bonds between them.

And when they're hungry, they can find African thorn trees plentifully available. Our horticulture experts curated and cultivated more than 350 individual plants for the habitat, and this flora will provide both nutritional sources and engaging experiences.

The effects of Elephant Valley will also be felt globally as we connect the vital work happening here with

the collaborative, community-led programs happening through our Savanna Conservation Hub. Because the species is endangered, these initiatives are critically important. What we're doing to care for elephants in San Diego helps inform care for them throughout their native landscapes.

Our talented teams have created something truly extraordinary for elephants and allies alike thanks to their expertise and dedication. **Open only a few short months ago, the impact of Elephant Valley is already apparent, and we're honored to be at the beginning of another influential chapter in wildlife conservation.**



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

The herd at the Safari Park explores their dynamic new habitat.

MAKING NEWS

The Elephant Valley effect can be seen throughout the news too.



OCEANS CONSERVATION HUB



An Unexpected Rescue

Conservation efforts, like ecosystems, are interconnected

As vast as Earth's oceans are, they're filled in every corner with wildlife. These ecosystems are a rich, dense network of existence, countless species together creating a balance that sustains them all. This means when we care for one species, we care for the many species they share their spaces with, and the ripple effect of our efforts can have surprising outcomes.

Our teams have been monitoring killer whales in the Salish Sea, off the coast of Washington State and British Columbia, using nonintrusive drones. Recently experts discovered a different species in distress. **A near-threatened Steller sea lion had a plastic packing strap wrapped around its neck and cutting into its skin.** Such a sight is always

alarming but unfortunately all too common as plastic pollution continues to affect our planet's bodies of water.

We quickly partnered with organizations in the region to locate the sea lion and further assess the situation. Once we'd gathered more information and prepared for intervention, we delicately removed the plastic from its neck, ensuring not to worsen the injury in the process, and then monitored its wellbeing. Our drones provided invaluable information through every step of the tricky rescue operation. Thanks to swift and careful action, the sea lion is now doing well and swimming through the sea once again.

Because of our work focused on killer whales, we were able to help a sea lion that may not have survived otherwise. This incident underlines how a threat to one species is a threat to many species, but the technologies we develop and the collaborations we form can make a real difference to them all. Just as wildlife come together to create their vibrant ecosystems, we can come together with our partners to protect those wildlife when they need us most.

Sea lions are an integral part of their ocean ecosystems.

MAKING NEWS

News outlets helped us spread the word of our work with sea life.





AMAZONIA CONSERVATION HUB



Closing the Distance Between Us

Fostering vital connections in the Peruvian Amazon



The Peruvian Amazon, or “the lungs of the world,” makes up nearly two-thirds of Peru’s land.

As a global conservation organization, we’re accustomed to collaborating with partners around the world. The more we work with international experts, across our planet’s rich ecosystems, the more we see how small our world truly is. This is the very heart of our efforts to protect wildlife and their habitats, and it’s our duty to share our expertise with others.

We recently did this by bringing together several inspiring institutions in Peru. **Our team visited the country to facilitate connections** between two

top-tier veterinary schools in Lima, on the Pacific coast, and two wildlife shelters in Puerto Maldonado, on the edge of the Amazon. Though the cities are more than 500 miles from each other, they share a dedication to finding new ways of helping the region’s wildlife.

This new relationship gives the shelters access to the schools’ vital pathology and disease-testing resources. Every day, staff at the shelters take in animals living at the human-wildlife interface. Having the right tools to investigate

diseases is therefore critical for the health of both wildlife and the people who share their habitats. The groups are also exploring the possibility of necropsy training workshops to further enhance capacity.

This commitment to collaboration in Peru will make a lasting difference for the Amazon’s many species. Though the physical distance between us may be great, we are united in our passion for conservation, something that brings us closer together than ever.

Making a Giant Impression

A new addition to the Zoo is strengthening the future for her species

AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

Anteaters have certainly made a name for themselves. Swiftly consuming around 30,000 ants and termites each day, what they go by suits them perfectly. Recently, **we welcomed a giant anteater to the Zoo** that comes to us with an equally iconic name of her own: Laura Garcia.

Upon arrival, Laura Garcia used her long, super-sensing snout to investigate her habitat over several weeks, and as she became acquainted, she got to know her wildlife care team too. She was then gradually introduced to Orion, the

10-year-old male anteater already thriving at the Zoo, whom she has grown familiar with as they share their expansive environment.

This exciting step in Laura Garcia’s journey comes as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP) program for giant anteaters, which helps ensure enduring, healthy, and genetically diverse populations.

We’re working to protect this vulnerable species and their native

habitats through our Amazonia Conservation Hub, and the individuals we care for at the Zoo are at the heart of this work.

Wildlife like Laura Garcia help strengthen global populations of giant anteaters. Thanks to our collaboration with AZA partners, this species will have the opportunity to thrive into the future, ensuring no one will forget the renowned name “anteater” anytime soon.

Laura Garcia, a 12-year-old female giant anteater.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.



MAKING NEWS

These outlets devoured the news about Laura Garcia and her influential arrival.







Food for Thought

Discovering how changes in bamboo affect giant pandas

AT THE ZOO / SAFARI PARK

Have you ever wondered what's inside the food you're eating—that is, on a molecular level? For some of our experts, they think about it all the time, and they're most passionate about wildlife diets. **These specialists pay particular attention to bamboo**, the main food source for giant pandas around the globe, including Xin Bao and Yun Chuan at the Zoo's Denny Sanford Panda Ridge.

We've been advancing the art of growing this vital sustenance since planting our browse program's first bamboos approximately 50 years ago. Half a century

later, we continue to strengthen this program through regular evaluation. **Each quarter, our wildlife nutrition and browse teams collect samples from multiple locations throughout the Zoo and Safari Park to study their nutritional value.**

We carefully strip the leaves from the collected stems, similarly to how a giant panda does it to consume the plant. Cutting the stems with shears can change the nutrient composition, so it's important that we pull each individual leaf by hand. These leaves are then sent to an external laboratory for analysis.

The data reveals the way fluctuations in heat, water, and soil affect bamboo nutrients throughout the seasons. By studying this information, we're gaining valuable insights into how these changes align with the eating inclinations of Xin Bao and Yun Chuan.

Discoveries like this help us better understand the giant panda pair while also supporting our comprehensive approach to wildlife health. Now we have a stronger perspective into how to continue providing exceptional care—all because we took a look deep inside the food we grow.

We're excited to celebrate the **50th anniversary of our renowned browse program.** Browse, or plant materials, supports critical parts of our comprehensive care by providing wildlife essential food sources, dynamic experiences, and more. Thanks to the expertise and dedication of our teams, we're growing acres and acres of vital varieties needed to ensure the thousands of species we care for thrive.



Xin Bao spends at least 12 hours eating bamboo each day.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

PACIFIC ISLANDS CONSERVATION HUB



Tech That Soars

Collaboration helps us share methods that protect at-risk birds



The Maui Bird Conservation Center in Hawai'i, operated by San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance.

When you go to the doctor to take a test, it can sometimes feel like an eternity as you wait for your results. These are the insights that lead to solutions you've been looking for, so when it takes a long time, it can set your recovery back. For threatened wildlife, experts similarly have a lot of inquiries that need to be answered fast, especially when it comes to threats posed by disease.

Recently, our San Diego-based teams joined our colleagues at the Maui and Keauhou Bird Conservation Centers to help answer questions about the health of Hawaiian birds. **During our trip we conducted technical trainings with new, innovative equipment: handheld PCR units.**

Our laboratory team members spent months validating the machines to detect avian malaria in Hawaiian forest birds. This disease is a major threat as mosquitos continue to introduce it to bird populations that lack immunity. Often, avian malaria is deadly once individuals are exposed.

The portable devices can be used to test birds coming into our conservation centers, birds that will be relocated to other sites, and birds actively showing signs of sickness. Implementing this technology, and training others how to use it, will help us understand the health of these birds in an efficient way.

These units are critical for the future of Hawaiian forest birds as they can provide quick results, typically in under two hours.

This allows our teams to make fast, informed decisions about the management and health of the birds we care for at the conservation centers as well as those living in native forests.

With this impactful resource in our toolkit, we won't have to wait an eternity to get the answers to our questions. We can take matters into our own hands instead, getting what we need, when we need it.

Endemic to Kaua'i, 'akeke'e have faced population declines of more than 99% in the past two decades.



SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION HUB



Keeping Pronghorn SAFE

A new way to protect an important desert species

AT THE SAFARI PARK

Tearing through a vast desert landscape is a blur of brown and white. The pronghorn is the second-fastest land mammal on Earth, behind only the cheetah, and is capable of reaching up to 60 miles per hour. Built for speed with large lungs and specialized hooves, they can deftly evade predators before slowing down to graze and rest.

Despite their speed, **peninsular pronghorn are unable to outrun the threats they face.** Over the past 100 years, the population of this antelope subspecies has dropped by 80 percent due to urban development, shifting environments, and illegal hunting. Once abundant across Baja California, Mexico, and even into California State, they were reduced to just a handful of individuals in small pockets of the Mexican peninsula.

We've been committed to helping this endangered species for years. We are honored to oversee the collaboration between zoos that protect pronghorn, and since 2014, the Safari Park has managed the peninsular pronghorn studbook, a comprehensive history of the individuals these institutions care for.

Now there's a new initiative in place to build on our efforts.

Through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), we've helped establish a SAFE program for peninsular pronghorn. SAFE, which stands for Saving Animals from Extinction, focuses the collective expertise of AZA-accredited institutions to protect the future of threatened and endangered wildlife. We've collaborated on several SAFE programs over the years, including giraffes, red pandas, monarch butterflies, thick-billed parrots, and more.

In partnership with The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens and the Los Angeles Zoo, we plan to take an extensive census in Baja California, understand their population genetics, and potentially translocate pronghorn to ensure genetic diversity.

SAFE provides us a robust roadmap for the recovery of these remarkable pronghorn.

And as an extension of the work we're already doing, it recommits us to the safety of wildlife in our own region. When it comes to protecting endangered species, there's no time to waste, so we'll keep our efforts speeding along as fast as the pronghorn we're saving.

Pronghorn horns have a bony core covered by a keratin sheath.





AFRICAN FOREST CONSERVATION HUB

Madagascar Meets San Diego

The newest garden at the Zoo is officially open



AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

Just 250 miles off the coast of Mozambique is a world all its own. The nation of Madagascar, the fourth-largest island in the world, is home to an unparalleled natural heritage. Its lush rainforests, high granite peaks, arid deserts, and vibrant coral reefs weave together to create a sprawling web of landscapes that support an abundance of life.

Because the island is separated from mainland Africa, many of the species there are endemic, meaning they're found nowhere else on Earth. This makes Madagascar a rich biodiversity hotspot for both

flora and fauna. It also means any threats to the species can be especially destructive.

We work to protect and care for the island's wildlife to ensure their future, and now there's a new way for you to experience some of them for yourself: **the new Malagasy Garden has opened at the Zoo.**

This shady, serene alcove along Center Street offers a chance to relax for a few tranquil moments while appreciating plants native to Madagascar's forests. Palm, fig, and baobab trees thrive alongside the colorful blooms of periwinkles and

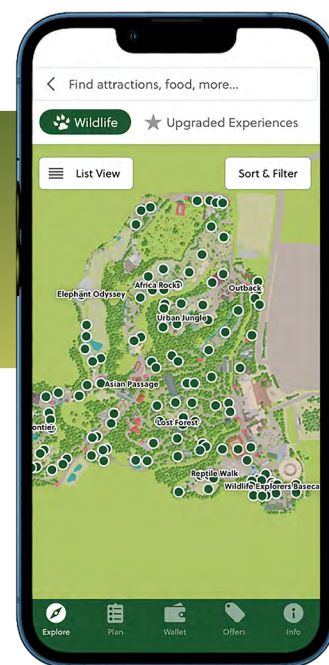
birds of paradise. As you stroll or sit in the garden, you can also learn more about these species and what makes them so important to their African ecosystems.

This garden helps us achieve simultaneous goals: protecting and caring for Madagascar's plants, and cultivating an appreciation for them in our visitors. **Just by visiting the Zoo, allies like you are making our conservation work in Africa possible.** So on your next visit, be sure to stop by the garden and appreciate a few of the species you're helping save every day.

Need help finding the Malagasy Garden? Download our **free Zoo app** for interactive GPS maps, as well as info on daily schedules, fun activities, dining, shopping, and more. There's also an app for the Safari Park, so your next visit to both parks will be the most immersive yet.



Download our
free Zoo app



AUSTRALIAN FOREST CONSERVATION HUB



Sequencing the Secrets of Survival

How DNA analysis can help us protect koalas worldwide

Are we adventurous or cautious, social or solitary. The shape of our ears, the color of our hair, the kinds of food we can eat. Our genes help define who we are, and the same is true for animals and plants. This powerful window into how species live and thrive is why wildlife genomics is one of the fastest-growing fields in conservation biology.

It can also help us understand factors that put wildlife at risk, including diseases. **Koala retrovirus (KoRV)**, for example, is a significant threat to koalas in native habitats and those cared for at zoos. It's associated with lymphoma, leukemia, and other cancers, and it may predispose koalas to infections and fertility issues.

KoRV has actually integrated into koala DNA and therefore gets passed down genetically to future generations from birth, which has spread the virus widely. This

is especially concerning for a vulnerable species already faced with native habitat loss from drought and bushfires.

We're now analyzing KoRV in all-new ways to improve conservation outcomes for the species. We partnered with Illumina, a San Diego-based genomic sequencing company, and an international team of experts to sequence whole genomes from 91 koalas, all of whom are or were cared for at the Zoo. These DNA sets included individuals both living and deceased, and many of the genomes came from samples preserved in our Frozen Zoo. Together they now constitute **the largest high-quality koala genomic database ever created.**

Our research is already yielding results. We've confirmed KoRV integrates in multiple genome sites, and through family tree analysis, we discovered some

DNA sites have been genetically eliminated in the population at the Zoo, which is a hopeful sign. We also developed models to identify koalas at higher risk, which we'll apply to conservation breeding plans to reduce KoRV's effects while preserving genetic diversity. As we continue our research, we'll share this resource globally to further koala conservation efforts and ensure their long-term survival.

This large-scale program is helping us better protect and care for this iconic species.

It also exemplifies how zoos can contribute meaningfully to understanding and mitigating disease threats to wildlife. Thanks to innovation and collaboration, as well as the limitless possibilities of our Frozen Zoo, we can keep hope woven into the DNA of koalas around the world.



Scan this code to discover more and share with others.

MAKING NEWS

An array of online outlets shared about this important genetic research.





*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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