

Handy Summary of the WZACS from Perth Zoo

Editors' note : *Dr. Susan Hunt of the Perth Zoo has shared with us a handy summary of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy. This summary would make a nice inclusion in an Annual Report or Newsletter of a zoo, and even a printed handout for zoo staff, volunteers, and selected visitors.*

An official version of the WZACS Summary is pending. In the meantime zoo managers can use this one for a variety of educational and publicity purposes. We hope some countries will translate this into their local language while we wait for the longer version of the Summary. Editor.

BUILDING A FUTURE FOR WILDLIFE THE WORLD ZOO AND AQUARIUM CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Intent: To highlight the major aspects of the recently released, World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy

Background

In 1993 the first World Zoo Conservation Strategy (WZCS) was released. It was a central guiding document to the global approach of zoos and aquariums. In May 2005, an updated WZCS was launched at the conference of the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquarium.

The aim of the WZCS is to harness the energy and commitment of zoos to promote a sense of common purpose, leadership and partnership with fellow conservationists and environmentalists and to inspire the community to work towards global sustainability. The WZCS has been developed in the context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 and reflects the recent priorities and push for sustainability globally.

The strategy notes:

Only zoos, aquariums and botanic gardens can operate across the whole spectrum of conservation activities, from ex-situ breeding of threatened species, research, public education, training and influencing and advocacy, through to in-situ support of species, populations and their habitats; they uniquely have a massive 'captive audience' of visitors whose knowledge, understanding, attitude, behaviours and involvement can be positively influenced and harnessed. They have a huge resource of technical skills and dedicated people. (WZCS p9)

WZCS Strategies

Integrating Conservation: Zoos must be directly involved with conservation programs in the wild and must work effectively within their organisations and with other groups to ensure conservation outcomes. Zoos fundamental culture and values must be sustainability, conservation, social and environmental responsibility.

Conservation of Wild Populations: Zoos have invaluable staff expertise to advise on wildlife health issues; contribute to conservation projects in the wild through their staff,

through funding, training and breeding species for reintroduction to the wild in conjunction with relevant conservation agencies.

Science and Research: Zoos must realise their capacities as contributing to conservation based scientific research and integrated with the broader research community.

Population Management: Zoos must complement in-situ conservation programs for endangered and threatened species by becoming centres of expertise in small population management, capable of self-sustaining reproduction and linked to regional and global programs.

Education and Training: Education must be a central and driving force in zoos; zoos must leaders in conservation education, motivating action in conservation and sustainability.

Communication; Marketing and Public Relations: Effective and trusted communication from zoos about conservation and wildlife sustainability is central to zoo's effectiveness. Integrated communication strategies that are transparent and inclusive should be developed by zoos.

Partnerships and Politics: Using their unique position, expertise and committed staff, zoos should link with other key stakeholders to further conservation outcomes.

Sustainability: Zoos should act as examples of environmental sustainability, implemented sustainable practices and promoting these to their visitors and stakeholders.

Ethics and Animal Welfare: Zoos should exceed benchmarks for best practice animal management and welfare in the care of animals, design of exhibits and animal enrichment. All actions of zoos should be taken in the context of species' survival and zoos should manage through documented welfare and ethics procedures.

In broad summary, the President of the World Zoo Association, Mr Ed McAlister has stated that the new zoo strategy's message is to secure the future of the world's fauna through zoos and aquarium action in:

- Committing to conservation in the wild as a main goal. Advancing research within and outside of zoos and aquariums.
- Developing education programs that teach informed environmental concerns.
- Using the collective power of global or regional associations to influence political change relating to the environment.
- Operating zoos to the "highest ethical business standards" to attract funds for conservation action.
- Advocating the role of zoos to the public, "directly confronting issues" and being steadfast in the pursuit of a conservation mission.