

AZA-Accredited Zoos and Aquariums Are Saving Endangered Animals From Extinction

Millions are invested by AZA members to help species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Silver Spring, Maryland (May 17, 2019) – Zoos and aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) annually invest nearly \$50 million to protect over 200 species listed as endangered or threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Endangered Species Day – May 17 – puts the focus on the collaborative conservation efforts underway by AZA members to help save the world’s most vulnerable animals from extinction.

The protection of endangered species is at the core of the AZA’s mission. AZA SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction® (SAFE) was established in 2015 to harness the collective expertise, resources and reach of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums to save species and promote wildlife protection. Now celebrating its fourth year, SAFE has expanded to 21 species or taxa threatened with extinction. Over half of AZA’s 236 accredited zoos and aquariums are involved; helping to make a difference for an array of species protected under the US Endangered Species Act.

“The professionals working at AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums around the globe have pledged to do more and better conservation and, through SAFE, are working collaboratively to protect threatened and endangered animals around the world,” said Dan Ashe, President and CEO of AZA. “Our goal is to save the most vulnerable wildlife from extinction and protect them for future generations. It’s a responsibility we all share on behalf of this planet, on Endangered Species Day, and every day.”

Of the nearly \$50 million, AZA and its accredited facilities dedicated \$1 million or more in 2017 to the conservation of each of nine species: African elephants, northern white rhino, giant panda, California condor, cheetah, tiger, elkhorn coral, lion, and black-footed ferret. Four of these animals are species which AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are directly supported through the SAFE program:

- \$1.6 million directed to cheetah: Through SAFE, AZA facilities seek to increase cheetah populations in Southern Africa through addressing the illegal wildlife trade, promoting human-wildlife coexistence, and developing large carnivore monitoring techniques.
- \$1.1 million directed to elkhorn coral: Through SAFE, AZA facilities seek to increase the abundance and enhance the genetic diversity of wild coral through direct restoration and repopulation, land-based nurseries and cryopreserved collections.

- \$1 million directed to African lions: Working with the Lion Recovery Fund, SAFE African Lion seeks to double the number of lions in the wild by 2015 by mitigating conflict between farmers and lions, monitoring lion population numbers and distribution, and addressing habitat loss.
- \$1 million directed to black-footed ferret: AZA-accredited facilities worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to save the black-footed ferret from extinction, and help re-populate its natural range.

“From the start, SAFE has been about providing AZA members with a way to do enhanced, more focused conservation work,” said Peggy Sloan, Chair of the AZA Board of Directors. “As the threats to wildlife and wild places grow, we have to be more effective in our approach to collaborative conservation. I am impressed with the strides our community has made to grow SAFE to what it is today- an AZA member-led conservation program we can be proud of.”

Recent AZA research shows people in the United States underestimate the number of animals protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, believing it is less than one-tenth the actual number of over 1450 species. While nine in ten people in the U.S. are willing to take steps to help save animals from extinction, they are unsure of how they can help. SAFE’s public engagement projects help to connect the nearly 200 million guests who visit AZA-accredited facilities each year to larger conservation change.

Recognizing that people want to take action and are willing to purchase products that help endangered species, AZA has partnered with Wines That Rock, LLC to launch the Wildlife Wine Club. Sales of the wine will help further AZA and its members’ efforts to save species at risk of extinction. The wines, available beginning on Endangered Species Day, will feature animals threatened with extinction. One hundred percent of AZA’s net proceeds will support SAFE conservation programs and animal welfare worldwide. Additional information about the wines can be found at <http://www.wildlifewineclub.org>.

As an organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, AZA is proud to serve as a resource for those who want to do and know more, whether it is tips to help save animals from extinction starting with your back yard and daily routines, updates on the species that are part of the SAFE program, or the latest news on government policies.

To learn more about SAFE species and the projects AZA members are working on, visit <https://www.aza.org/safe>.

About AZA

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and ten other countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in saving species and your link to helping animals all over the world. To learn more, visit www.aza.org.

About SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction

SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction combines the power of zoo and aquarium visitors with the resources and collective expertise of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and partners to save animals from extinction. Together we are working on saving the most vulnerable wildlife species from extinction and protecting them for future generations. To learn more, visit www.aza.org/aza-safe.

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