



WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS AND
AQUARIUMS

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Increasing the Relevance of Zoos for Conservation

Zoos and aquariums play an important role in the conservation of wildlife. In recent years the focus of the zoo and aquarium community's involvement has shifted from *ex situ* activities, such as conservation breeding, and education and motivation of the public, to a more holistic approach, which increasingly includes *in situ* conservation and sustainable development. A new World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, taking into account recent developments and providing guidance for the next decade, has been adopted by the members of WAZA - The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and this is to be officially launched in May 2005. With a view of implementing the new strategy, zoo directors from the Alpine area met in central Switzerland to discuss how to tackle the new challenges and to agree on a series of actions.

At the invitation of Goldau Nature and Animals Park and under the umbrella of the WAZA – The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, zoo directors from Austria, Bavaria and Switzerland met with conservationists, scientists and journalists to discuss their future role in conservation. The meeting took place from 17 to 19 February 2005 on top of the Rigi Mountain in Central Switzerland. More than 20 presentations, discussions in plenary and four working groups, resulted in a series of decisions and recommendations:

- Conservation breeding, being a core competence of zoos, should be strengthened by giving endangered species or subspecies a priority in the collection plans.
- To improve their role as PR agencies for threatened wildlife, the zoos will reinforce their education and communication departments.
- The zoos will seize responsibility for *in situ* conservation. Recognizing that the resources of each zoo are limited, they will cooperate to this effect among themselves, with zoos outside the Alpine area and with like-minded organizations.
- Although conservation projects overseas may appeal more to the public, the zoos will not neglect local issues. With a view of providing habitats for endangered native wildlife they will ecologically upgrade the zoo grounds.
- The zoos will establish “green concepts” for increasing the sustainability of their operations and will strive to set an example for responsible use of natural resources.

- The zoos will jointly develop a strategy for improving the perception of zoos as partners in conservation.
- The zoos will jointly examine whether and how they could enhance the International Convention on the Protection of the Alps.
- When working *in situ*, the zoos will not only involve the relevant international organizations, national and local authorities and the local population, but also the local zoos.
- The zoos will reinforce their partnerships with other scientific institutions.
- The zoos will strive to make full use of their fund-raising potential. This could include the establishment of specific budget lines or funding mechanisms.
- The zoos will jointly develop a system for assessing their contributions to conservation.
- The zoos will carefully monitor both the source and destination of funds collected and spent for conservation. They will use funds effectively, efficiently and in a transparent way. To this effect they will publish relevant information in their annual reports.
- Each zoo will know, for each species in its collection, the reason why it is kept and will communicate the rationales for keeping the species to the staff and the public.
- Each zoo will develop a communication and information strategy with a view to establishing a positive relationship between the public and wildlife and, in particular, with a view to motivating the public to take positive action in favour of wildlife conservation. A staff member of each zoo will be assigned responsibility for coordinating the development of the communication and information strategy, and the zoos will jointly organize a workshop for these staff members.

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