EARS

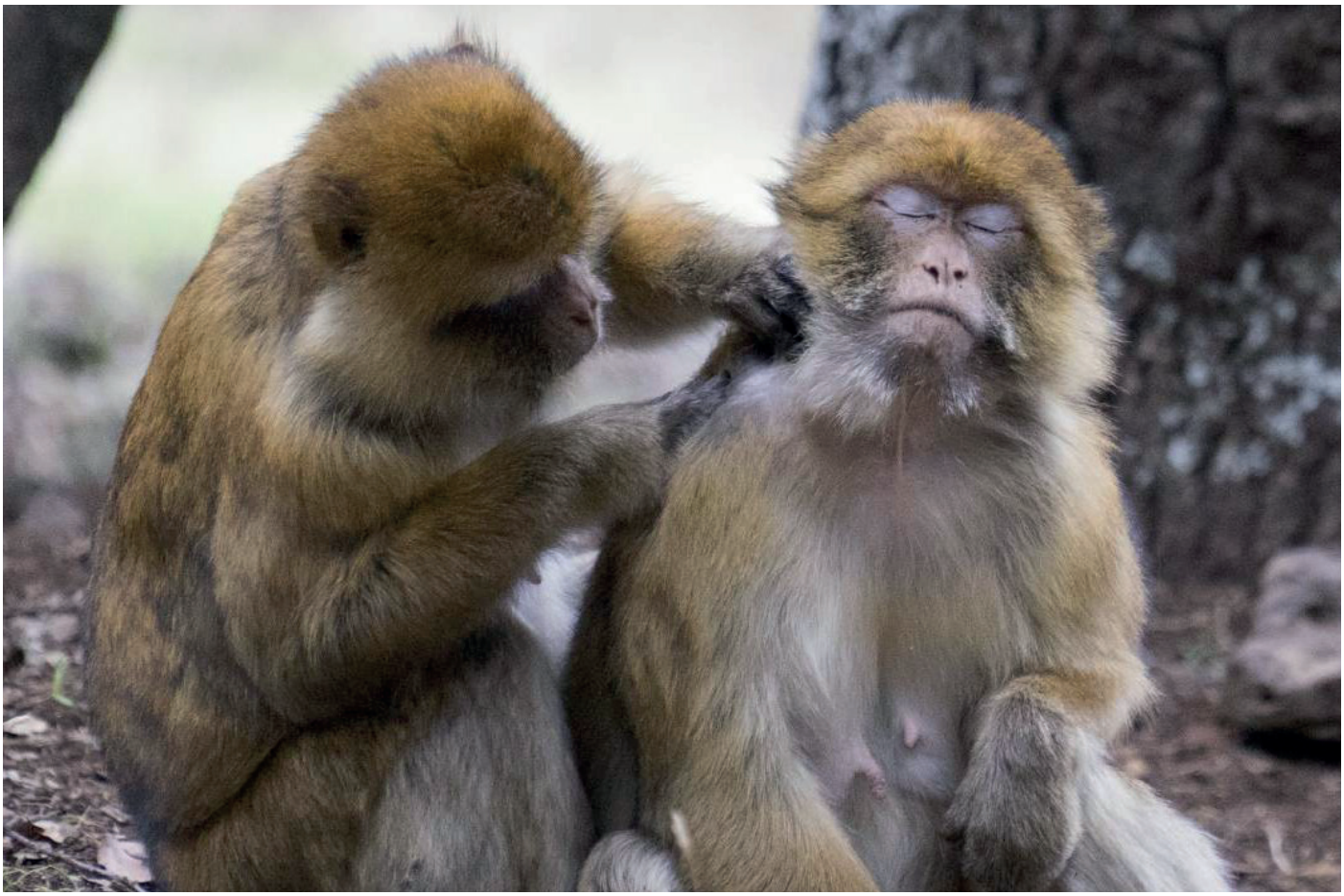
EUROPEAN ALLIANCE OF RESCUE CENTRES
AND SANCTUARIES

# Wildlife Rescue In Zoos:

## opportunities & challenges

# CONTENTS

# Executive Summary



Wildlife rescue is already recognised at the national, EU and international level as forming an integral part of existing policy and legislation aimed at supporting conservation and stopping illegal wildlife trade. Wildlife rescue also plays an essential role in housing wild animals confiscated, seized or surrendered as a result in changes in legislation on private ownership, use of wild animals in entertainment and enforcement of zoo legislation.

Meeting the demand for housing of rescued animals is a huge challenge - there are simply not enough facilities to house them all. The scale of the problem was highlighted by a survey conducted by the European Alliance of Rescue Centres and Sanctuaries (EARS), in collaboration with European Association of Zoos & Aquaria (EAZA) in which 112 facilities reported 22,216 requests to house rescue animals in 2017 alone. Expansion in capacity of rescue centres and sanctuaries is limited as most are already at capacity and creation of new facilities is possible but costly. Zoos already play a key role in the housing of rescued wildlife but there is significant potential to contribute even further if the benefits and opportunities were better understood. Wildlife rescue may not be a good fit for some zoos for a variety of reasons (space, collection planning, strategic goals). However, there are likely many zoos not currently involved in rescue work that could reap its benefits.

Through interviews with zoos already involved in rescue work we set out detailed case studies that highlight the benefits zoos may incur by becoming more involved in rescue work. These include participation of rescue animals in captive breeding programmes, management of invasive alien species, assisting governments in housing confiscated animals, bringing an end to the use of wild animals in exploitative entertainment, opportunities for public policy campaigns, improved visitor engagement and building staff morale.

However, there are also costs and challenges associated with wildlife rescue that may not exist for 'traditional' zoo animals. It is important these are considered so that any decision to increase involvement in wildlife rescue is fully informed and planned for appropriately. These include additional risk of disease and the need for strict quarantine and health screening, additional time and resources for veterinary and behavioural issues and the risk of negative visitor perception if communications are not in place and properly planned. There is also a regulatory barrier in many countries, with rescue work not being properly recognised as a valid function of a zoo. There are solutions to many of these challenges and with the right planning and collaboration with other stakeholders they need not be a barrier to increased involvement in rescue work.

Should a zoo decide to engage in wildlife rescue work it is important to consider an 'intake policy' in which criteria are set for which rescue animals will be prioritised. This will be different for each zoo but could include species/taxa to be housed, the source of the animal, suitability for exhibition and potential for inclusion in captive

breeding programmes. Issues of ownership and who is responsible financially for the care of the animals are also important considerations, as is ensuring that the rescue is 'sustainable'; in other words, ensuring that a rescued animal is not simply replaced at source later on. Another important decision for zoos involved in rescue work is the mode in which rescue animals come into their facility. Rescue can be 'direct' whereby the zoo receives the animal directly from the point of initial rescue. In some cases, zoos may even become involved in the rescue itself. Other zoos may feel more comfortable taking animals that have been rescued and already undergone quarantine, rehabilitation and, where necessary, resocialisation. Collaboration with the rescue community would greatly aid this approach. Whatever approach is taken, it's essential that each zoo ensures any rescue work undertaken is done so on its own terms and within its wider strategic goals.

For those facilities involved in rescue work, and for governments and other stakeholders responsible for finding housing animals, better coordination is needed. Rescue centres, sanctuaries and many zoos receive rescue requests daily that often cannot be fulfilled and a significant amount of time and effort is spent by authorities and other third parties trying to find housing for confiscated, seized or surrendered animals. This can result in duplication of effort and the best options for housing animals left unexplored due to lack of awareness of the rescue facilities available across Europe. At present there is no single point of reference available by which a request for housing of a rescued animal can be submitted. Developing such a resource would be highly beneficial and would require a coordinated approach between government and rescue centres, sanctuaries and those zoos involved in wildlife rescue. By having such an approach, we can better ensure that all options for housing seized and confiscated wildlife are explored and that the most suitable housing can be allocated.

Attempts to better co-ordinate rescue responses is already underway. In the United States the Association of Zoos & Aquaria (AZA) has set up the Wildlife Confiscation Network (WCN) in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The purpose of the WCN is to create a coalition of reputable and trusted animal care facilities that can provide immediate medical care and housing for trafficked wildlife.

The WCN can help provide a model for improving wildlife rescue coordination in Europe but there is now an initiative underway in France as well. In January 2025, the Ministry for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forestry, the Sea, and Fisheries (MTEBFMP) awarded the AFdPZ (French Association of Zoological Parks) the first public contract aimed at creating a centralized service for state services, to organize, coordinate, and monitor the placement of live wild animals seized by authorities. With the contract awarded, the AFdPZ has now established the Wildlife Seized Animals Assistance Service (SAASS) to meet the requirements of the mission, which is also part of the objectives of the revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, adopted in November 2022.

There is increasing recognition of the role zoos can play in wildlife rescue and the need for greater co-ordination between all stakeholders.

# Introduction

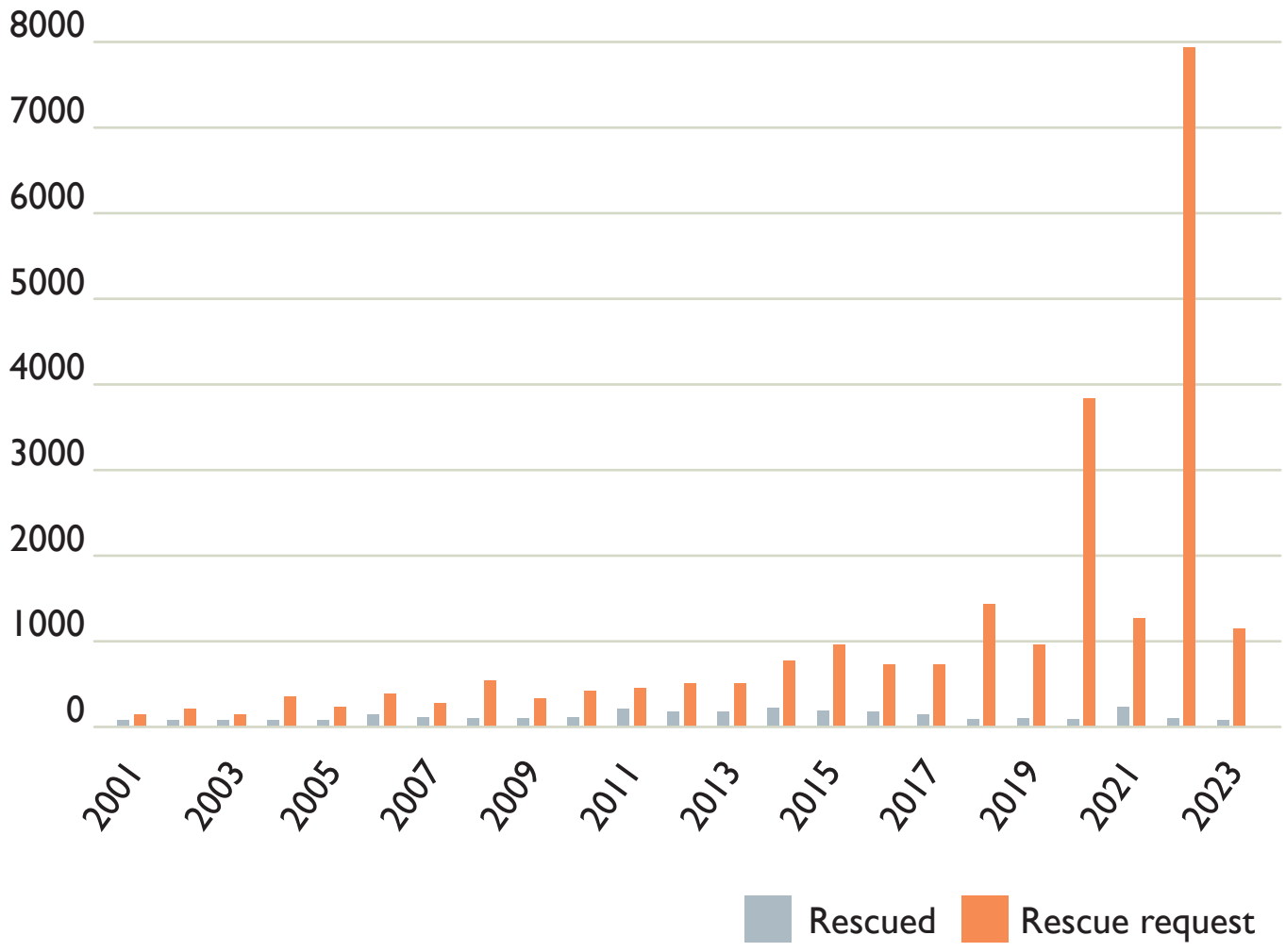
Across Europe there is a significant demand for facilities able to house and care for seized, confiscated and surrendered wild animals. These animals come from a variety of sources including illegal trade, circuses, substandard zoos, invasive species, private ownership and laboratories.

Meeting this demand is a huge challenge - there are simply not enough facilities to house these animals.

In 2018, to try to gauge the extent of the problem, the European Alliance of Rescue Centres and Sanctuaries (EARS), in collaboration with European Association of Zoos & Aquaria (EAZA), undertook an online survey of 112 facilities including rescue centres, sanctuaries and zoos. The facilities, located in 24 countries, reported receiving requests for housing rescued animals involving 22,216 individuals in 2017. This is likely to be an underrepresentation of the true number of animals involved as there are many more facilities involved in rescue that did not complete the survey and many of those that did only had records for animals they accepted – records were not kept in cases where animals were refused.

The challenge in meeting demand for rescue wildlife is further demonstrated through data collected by AAP – Animal Advocacy and Protection, an NGO that runs one of the largest wildlife rescue centres in Europe. Data collected between 2001 and 2023 compares the total number of rescue requests they received each year with the number of animals it was able to accept.

## Rescued vs Rescue Request




The story is the same across Europe with rescue centres, sanctuaries and many zoos struggling to meet the increasing demand for housing of rescued wildlife.

By their very nature, wildlife rescue centres and sanctuaries use all their capacity for housing rescued wildlife. Any increase in capacity would only be possible through expansion of existing facilities, outplacement/relocation or creation of new ones. While this is possible it is costly and will take place at a scale that currently makes it unlikely to meet current or future demand for housing.

Zoos already play a key role in the housing of rescued wildlife. Of the 112 facilities that responded to the EARS survey, 66 of them were EAZA members. We know that many more are actively involved in rescue work and are often the only facilities available in their country to house rescued wildlife. While wildlife rescue may not be a good fit for some zoos for a variety of reasons (space, collection planning, strategic goals), there are likely many zoos not currently involved in rescue work that could and would get more involved if the benefits and opportunities of wildlife rescue were better understood.

Through the use of case studies this report aims to look at the experiences of zoos already involved in rescue work to examine the benefits and challenges they have experienced and demonstrate the opportunities wildlife rescue can bring to many more zoos in helping them to achieve their conservation, education and animal welfare goals as well as raise their profile and improve visitor engagement.

First, we provide a summary of how wildlife rescue currently fits within current conservation policy frameworks.

# The role of wildlife rescue in conservation policy

Wildlife rescue is already recognised at the national, EU and international level as forming an integral part of existing policy and legislation aimed at supporting conservation by stopping illegal wildlife trade.

## EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking

On 10 November 2022 the European Commission adopted a revised EU Action Plan[1] in order to put an end to wildlife trafficking. The revised plan, which builds on the original Action Plan adopted six years previously, will direct EU efforts in combating wildlife trafficking until 2027.

The EU is a hub for global wildlife trafficking and has a key role to play in the fight against it. The reported value of the illegal wildlife trade in the EU was a minimum of €4.7 million in 2019 but is likely to be much larger. EU Member State authorities consistently seize wildlife in various commodity types ranging from medicinal, corals, reptiles, birds, plants, and mammals. Since 2017, there have been on average over 6,000 annual seizures involving CITES-listed wildlife in the EU. [2]

During the launch of the revised Action Plan, Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries said:

> We have a human, economic and environmental duty to dismantle wildlife crime. Since the 2016 Action Plan, the EU and its Member States have been working hard to address the threat of wildlife trafficking. We are now building on this wealth of experience and going further: with targeted strategies to reduce demand, training and further specialising our police, prosecution and judiciary, and taking full advantage of the international fora at our disposal.

Within the plan the following key objective and actions have been included for EU Member States to implement:

- Improve access to care for seized or confiscated live animals or plants.
- Expand networks of specialised rescue centres at the national level and share information about the centres at EU level.
- Increase efforts, where appropriate, to effectively reintroduce seized live specimens to the wild.

The role of wildlife rescue is therefore already recognised within the flagship EU strategy to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Spain was one of the first countries to adopt the Action Plan at the national level. Spanish legislation establishes the ownership of seized specimens to the State and gives the CITES Management Authority (MA) the duty to determine where these specimens will be deposited. This responsibility has led the MA to establish a 'CITES Rescue Centre network' nationally, consisting of 29 rescue centres, sanctuaries and zoos. Every time Enforcement Authorities seize a specimen, a specific protocol is applied to find the best available destination within this network. Criteria for placement include important aspects such as location, specific requirements, availability of the centre, experience with the species etc. Zoos included in the network benefit from the recognition of the wildlife rescue work they do and the exhibition of these animals (after the corresponding quarantine) with potential for educational opportunities. This can be a very important preventive tool to inform the public about what the animal has been through, having arrived at that facility from illegal trafficking.

1. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=COM:2022:581:FIN
2. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6538

María Pita Fernández of the Spanish CITES MA:

> The participation of the zoos in the EAZA Ex situ Programs is fundamental, so seized animals can participate wherever is possible, so they can contribute to the conservation of the species.

Aware that the number of individuals in need of housing is increasing, the Spanish MA has set the goal of returning as many seized specimens as possible to their country of origin. To achieve this, collaboration between rescue centres, zoos and governments is crucial. The first successful example of this collaboration is quite recent, with the transfer to the Republic of Congo of 34 Grey Parrots Psittacus erithacus recently seized in Spain and cared for within the Spanish network of CITES rescue centres and zoos. The birds were transferred to the Tchimpounga Sanctuary, (Jane Goodall Institute) where they will undergo a period of acclimatisation prior to their release into their natural environment.

## CITES Conference Resolution 17.8

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species. CITES remains one of the cornerstones of international conservation. There are 184 member Parties (member countries) to CITES and trade is regulated in more than 38,000 species.

> This convention is one of the best tools we have for addressing international wildlife crime, and countries must hold each other accountable in order to make it even more effective.

Leigh Henry, Senior Policy Advisor, Species Conservation & Advocacy. WWF. [3]

Within its regulatory framework, CITES has adopted Conference Resolution 17.8 in which there are guidelines for the 'disposal' of confiscated live animals. It states that when deciding on the disposal of confiscated animals, managers must ensure both the humane treatment of the animals and the conservation and welfare of existing wild populations of the species involved. It sets out three principal options for confiscated animals:

1) maintenance of the individuals in captivity
2) returning the individuals in question to some form of life in the wild; and
3) euthanasia.

The Resolution contains a decision tree to help CITES Management Authorities in each country decide what should be done with a confiscated animal. If it is ascertained that release back to the wild is not possible (usually the case) then captivity is recommended as the next best option to consider – with placement in zoos or rescue centres given as the first option within the decision tree.

The role of wildlife rescue is clearly defined as playing an important role within the CITES framework. Furthermore, it is set out as a one of the first options to consider for governments. Providing housing for CITES-confiscated animals can therefore directly strengthen government efforts to stop illegal trade in endangered animals.

3. https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/cites

# BENEFITS OF ZOO RESCUE: CASE STUDIES

If more zoos are to become active in wildlife rescue it is important to demonstrate the different ways in which it can be beneficial. EU and CITES guidance give clear recognition for the role of wildlife rescue in supporting conservation through combatting illegal trade. However, there are a range of different ways that zoos can benefit from becoming more involved in wildlife rescue. The case studies included here provide examples of these benefits through first-hand accounts of those zoos already active in wildlife rescue work.

# CASE STUDY:

## **Chester Zoo** – Wildlife Rescue & Captive Breeding

Milli and Toni bonded well in their new enclosure at Chester.

## About Chester Zoo

Chester Zoo is one of the largest zoos in the UK, home to 37,000 animals over 128 acres of zoological gardens. It is also one of the most popular zoos in Europe, receiving approximately 2 million visitors every year. Founded in 1931, the zoo is a member of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and is recognised for its integrated approach to wildlife conservation, which is delivered through its 'Conservation Masterplan', the zoo's roadmap for tackling global wildlife extinction.

Chester Zoo participates in a number of conservation breeding programmes including the critically endangered Black rhino, Colombian spider monkey, Javan green magpie and the Mountain chicken frog..

## Conservation Breeding in Zoos

Ex situ conservation literally means off-site conservation and refers to the caring for and breeding of animal populations outside their native environment for extended periods. Nowadays, rather than taking animals from the wild, most zoos breed their animals and strive to maintain viable populations of species in zoos, through cooperative breeding. This helps create insurance populations of a large variety of species, reducing the likelihood of extinction such as in the case of habitat loss or a future catastrophe in their wild habitat. In some cases, animals are reintroduced into the wild from zoo populations (Bearded vulture – Gypaetus barbatus, Przewalski horse – Equus ferus przewalskii, European bison – Bison bonasus).

When caring for populations outside of wild populations it is important that they are managed to maintain genetic diversity and to prevent inbreeding. EAZA Ex situ Programmes (EEPs) are population management programmes for animal species managed by EAZA Members, with the aim of maintaining healthy populations of healthy animals within EAZA and beyond. Together with Regional Collection Plans and Long-term Management Plans, EEPs are one of the pillars of EAZA's population management structure. Currently EAZA manages programmes for over 400 different species. In total 34% of species in Chester Zoo's care and 85% of all mammals are included in EAZA EEPs.

In its response the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030[4], EAZA makes clear the importance of ensuring genetic diversity within any ex-situ breeding programme:

Genetic diversity is a crucial factor in the long-term survival of species as well as in the resilience of entire ecosystems and the provision of ecosystem services. Loss of genetic variation is one of the major threats to population persistence. Therefore, measuring and safeguarding genetic diversity should be a key element of the conservation, restoration and management of nature.

EAZA remains committed to contribute to maintaining genetic variation of wild populations. One of the common goals of our ex situ activities is to improve the demographic and genetic viability of our zoo and aquarium populations which can consequently support wild populations by translocating individuals from the EAZA Ex Situ Programmes (EEP) where needed and by sharing our experts' knowledge in this area. This is one of the key contributions of ex situ management for conservation, recognized by the IUCN.

In certain cases wildlife rescue, and the introduction of new individuals as a result, can therefore play a significant role in supporting ex-situ conservation in zoos.

## Malayan Sun Bears at Chester Zoo

The IUCN's Red List[5] currently classifies Sun Bears as 'Vulnerable'. Threats include forest clearing and conversion, road building, poaching, and conflict with people. These threats are amplified because they act synergistically: for example, roads and shrinking forest patches provide greater access to poachers; additionally, diminished or degraded habitat reduces food availability for bears and increases the interface with humans and agriculture, which together prompt bears to seek human-related foods and increase their likelihood of being killed as a consequence. Sun bears are also specifically targeted for their body parts, which are used in Traditional Asian Medicine[6].

In 2015 two sun bears – a female named Milli (8) and a male called Toni (11) - arrived at Chester Zoo from the Rare Species Conservation Centre in Kent. They were the first sun bears to live at the zoo since 1976.

Before coming to the UK in 2013 the pair had been rescued in Cambodia as cubs by conservation and animal welfare NGO Free the Bears. Their mothers were killed by poachers and the pair were subsequently kept as pets and mistreated in poor conditions. The introduction of these two bears, and indeed any individuals from outside the existing European zoo population, is significant. At present there are 35 sun bears being cared for in seventeen EAZA zoos but breeding is challenging. Clive Barwick, EEP Coordinator for the Malayan Sun Bear summarises the problem:

**In recent years the number of successful pairs has reduced to worrying levels, even previously successful pairs show a lack of consistency. Narrow genetic variation in the EEP population is a problem, compounded by an ageing population. There are 3 F1 pairs of which only 2 pairs are or have successfully bred, plus an F1 male only recently paired with a breeding aged female in France. …. being able to import from Sanctuaries is a positive option.**

Three years after arriving at Chester Zoo, Milli and Toni bred successfully and in May 2018 Milli gave birth to a bear cub named Kyra ('sun goddess'). This was the first successful captive birth of a sun bear ever recorded in the United Kingdom.

4. https://www.eaza.net/assets/Uploads/Position-statements/2020-EAZA-Response-to-EU-Biodiversity-Strategy-2030-Position-Statement.pdf
5. https://www.iucnredlist.org/
6. https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2019-041-En.pdf

The Curator of Mammals at that time, Tim Rowlands, expressed what it meant to the zoo:

> Chester Zoo was specially selected to work with Milli and Toni and continue their care following the harrowing and horrible experiences they had in their younger lives. It's simply fantastic that we've been able to help them come this far and have a cub together. It's momentous for them and, with it being a UK first breeding of this species, momentous for the zoo too.

Millli and Toni remain at Chester Zoo where it is hoped they will repeat their successful breeding in the future. Kyra is now cared for at Paradise Wildlife Park in Hertfordshire (UK) where she is now paired with a 14-year-old male originally from Singapore Zoo. They mate regularly but as yet there has been no pregnancy.

The story of Millli and Toni at Chester Zoo demonstrates the very direct way in which involvement in rescue work can lead to huge opportunities for zoos with regards to ex-situ conservation. While many wild animals in need of rescue may not be suitable or high priority for conservation breeding due to their unknown origins, inbreeding or conservation status, there are opportunities that can be explored through better collaboration between the rescue/sanctuary and zoo communities.

There are other examples of rescued animals contributing to ex-situ conservation. AAP - Animal Advocacy and Protection have outplaced rescued animals to 24 EAZA zoos since 2019. A notable example being Talapoins rescued by AAP that have subsequently successfully bred in Apenheul Zoo (2022) and Réserve Africaine de Sigean (2023).

There are also other as-yet unexplored opportunities for collaboration. The Barbary Macaque is the most seized mammal species in the European Union following intensive poaching from the wild for use in the pet and tourist industry. This has resulted in a big increase in this species being brought into rescue centres. AAP have received 403 requests to receive Barbary macaques in the past ten years and have only been able to take 142 of these. The possibilities for collaboration with zoos in Europe, to consider the inclusion of some of these seized Barbary Macaques in zoo-based breeding programmes, are currently being explored.

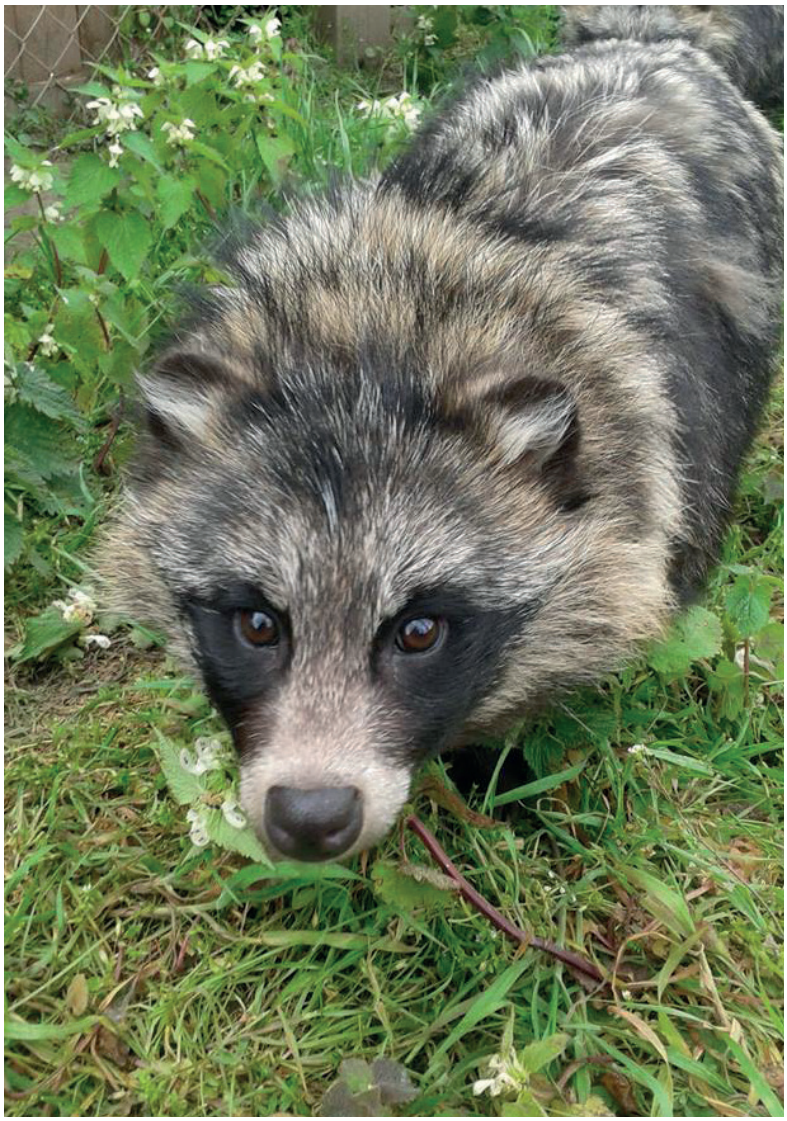
# CASE STUDY:

## **Ark Wildlife Park** – Supporting management of Invasive Alien Species

### About Ark Wildlife Park

Based in the UK, Ark wildlife park first opened to the public in October 2016 with the aim of offering homes to animals in need from the exotic pet trade and educating the public on the unsuitability of keeping many of these non-domesticated animals as pets. The Ark currently covers a 10-acre site with access to adjacent land for future projects. The Ark currently employs 15 people (zookeepers, maintenance and café staff) with annual visitors numbering 37,000 and growing year on year.

Over the course of the last six years the Ark has grown, taking on a variety of animals, from a caiman kept in a bath tub, primates seized by authorities across Europe as well as ex laboratory animals; wildcat species such as servals kept in flats or seized from owners after breaching license conditions or in the case of an F1 savannah cat, brought into the country illegally from Russia before being seized by UK authorities. The majority of animals at Ark come direct from the public once the fantasy of keeping an exotic animal doesn't match the expensive and disheartening reality.



The Tanuki is listed as an invasive species in the EU Invasive Species Regulation.

### Invasive Species Management

Invasive alien species (IAS) are animals and plants that are introduced accidentally or deliberately into a natural environment where they are not normally found, with serious negative consequences for their new environment. They are a major threat to native plants and animals in Europe and are one of the five major causes of biodiversity loss. They can also cause significant adverse impacts on the economy (their economic impact in the EU was estimated at around EUR 12 billion per year[7]) as well as human health.

Invasive Alien Species are deemed to be such a severe threat that in 2015 the EU introduced a regulation to help tackle the problem. The Invasive Alien Species Regulation (Regulation (EU) 1143/2014) includes a set of measures to be taken across the EU in relation to invasive alien species. The core of the Regulation is the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern (Union List). The species included on this list are subject to restrictions on keeping, importing, selling, breeding, growing and releasing into the environment.

From the beginning the Ark has been involved with helping the authorities to manage invasive species and holds an invasive species license. Several popular exotic pet species have been included in IAS legislation due to threat they pose, many of which have come to Ark via the government (DEFRA), the RSPCA or private individuals. Animals are also often handed over directly by owners or are reported by members of the public after having been seen in the wild, usually as a result of accidental escape or release by irresponsible owners. Without swift action these animals pose a direct threat to biodiversity in the surrounding environment and beyond.

By accepting these animals at the Ark, not only do they receive a secure home, they can also help educate the public on the issue of exotic pets becoming invasive species and the potential negative impact they can have on our UK native species.

7. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/invasive-alien-species_en#:~:text=They%20can%20also%20cause%20significant,as%20severe%20allergies%20and%20burns.

Two tanukis currently housed at the Ark.

## Japanese raccoon dogs – an invasive species

The Japanese raccoon dog (Nyctereutes viverrinus) is a canid species native to Japan and traditionally believed to be a sub-species of the Common Raccoon Dog (Nyctereutes procyonoides). It is a fox sized mammal with black-grey fur, short legs and tail. They look cute and cuddly and have become increasingly popular as pets in recent years, being available to buy online. Being wild animals, they are highly unsuitable to be kept as pets and as such are often released into the wild by owners who can't cope.

The raccoon dog is widely recognised in Europe as an invasive species of serious concern and has been placed in the top 100 of invasive species in Europe[8]. It has been found to cause substantial ecological damage to native fauna in the 1.4 million km2 it has colonised by secondary expansion so far in Europe[9].

In a 2019 study, funded by Defra and in collaboration with the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat[10] invasive non-native species were reviewed. The aim was to identify those species which were not yet present in the wild in Britain but have the potential to have most negative impact. Of 243 species reviewed, two mammals were included as highest risk: the raccoon and the raccoon dog.

Helen Roy, principal scientist at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and one of the authors of the study:

> We assessed many, many potentially invasive non-native species. Raccoons and raccoon dogs, were ranked within the top 15 most worrying invasive non-native species.

The study went on to state that the pet trade was the most likely route of entry for this species into the environment.

8. https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/RSS_RA_Nyctereutes_procyonoides-1.pdf
9. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=3784
10. https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/RSS_RA_Nyctereutes_procyonoides-1.pdf

Raccoon dogs are important predators of small vertebrates of conservation concern (birds and amphibians), and game species. They are also thought to compete with native carnivores for den sites and carrion, which may result in range shrinkage of some native species with marginal populations and limited food supply (e.g red foxes, and badgers in the Scottish highlands). Raccoon dogs are also a vector for rabies, Echinococcus multilocularis and Trichinella species[11].

## Japanese raccoon dogs at The Ark

The Ark is currently home to seven Japanese raccoon dogs, each coming to the Ark through a variety of circumstances.

Cloud, a white raccoon dog was handed over by the RSPCA after escaping from its owner's home. The owner didn't even realise she was a raccoon dog having purchased her from a pet market as an Arctic fox. Her escape made it into a local newspaper, and she was eventually captured by the RSPCA. Her enclosure was deemed unsuitable for her to return to despite the owner's objections.

Suku is a male Japanese raccoon dog and came to the Ark after they were contacted by a member of the public who had spotted him in their back garden. A small team from the Ark spent a couple of nights tracking Suku down in the village of Kirton with the permission of the local police and with information gleaned through sightings reported on social media. The Ark team was able get a rough idea of his territory and routine and on the second night of tracking managed to find and capture him. The owner came forward and released the Suku into the care of the Ark.

The Ark's other Japanese Raccoon Dogs came in as direct hand overs from owners, with one pair being kept in a residential flat, locked in a crate after biting the owner and the owner being too scared to do anything with them. He had only purchased the animals the previous week.

The Ark currently also houses seven common raccoons which are also classified as an invasive alien species. Four arrived at the Ark when a university's animal care dept was closed due to campus restructuring. Most of the animals onsite were rehomed, but with raccoons being covered by IAS legislation the university struggled to rehome this group of animals. The other three raccoons were all handed in by private owners, with one coming from a mobile petting zoo when the owner realised the new legislation meant they could not take the raccoon out if its enclosure. Another came from a pet shop which kept the raccoon as a "mascot" for the shop, the third was a privately kept pet.

By assisting the authorities in managing invasive species, the Ark is playing an important role in tackling what is recognised as one of the major threats to biodiversity in the UK and Europe as a whole. Furthermore, once at the Ark the animals themselves can form part of educational outreach to visitors to ensure they know that it is illegal to keep invasive species as pets, thereby reducing the risk of more invasive species entering the wild.

11. https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/RSS_RA_Nyctereutes_procyonoides-1.pdf

# CASE STUDY:

## **Karpín Fauna** – Assisting in the housing of confiscated animals

### About Karpín Fauna

Karpín Fauna is a wildlife shelter located on a 19-hectare estate located in the municipality of Carranza - Karrantza Harana, in Bizkaia, Spain. It opened its doors for the first time in 1995 and at that time functioned as a zoo exhibiting European fauna as well as a recovery centre for injured autochthonous fauna. Within a few years it ceased to be a wildlife recovery centre and operated solely as a zoo. In 2006, at the proposal of the workers themselves, aware of the existing problem of the continuous abandonment of exotic animals and illegal trafficking, the centre began to specialise in the rescue of wild animals, both exotic and native fauna. From that year onwards, the centre began to operate exclusively as a rescue centre and gradually intervened to prevent the reproduction of the species that previously existed in the park. At present Karpín Fauna works exclusively in the rescue of animals confiscated due to illegal trafficking or possession, abandoned exotic pets and non-recoverable animals of native fauna mutilated by illegal hunting.

### Housing of seized or confiscated wildlife

There are many reasons why a wild animal may need to be seized and/or confiscated by the authorities; all situations will involve some degree of illegality. The animals in question may have been intercepted while being illegally trafficked or may be illegally owned. In some cases, it may be possible for the animal in question to be owned legally but the legal requirements have not been met (proof of ownership and other paperwork, adequate housing, public safety and veterinary requirements). In all cases, enforcement measures should be taken to implement legislation aimed at supporting conservation, animal welfare or human safety. As such it can be a major priority for the authorities in question. Where some form of illegality is suspected the usual process is first for the animal to be seized while legal proceedings take their course. Depending on the outcome of the legal proceedings the animal will then either be returned to the owner or confiscated. If confiscation takes place the animal usually becomes the property of the State. From point of seizure right the way through to confiscation the authorities have the challenge of finding housing for the animals in question. This can last weeks, months or even years depending on the situation and the details of the legal case. It is therefore a serious challenge for the authorities involved to find adequate facilities to place the animals during seizure and/or confiscation.

### Assisting the authorities in placing seized/confiscated animals

Karpín Fauna regularly assists the Spanish authorities in their enforcement efforts by providing housing to many seized and confiscated wild animals. Below we provide some examples.

### Confiscation of a Talapoin

On 9 June 2017, an Angolan Talapoin that had been confiscated by the Ertzaintza's Environment section was brought to Karpín Fauna. It was an adult male that was located when its owner appeared bleeding in the street while on his way to a hospital after being bitten on the neck by the monkey.

The first time this monkey was registered was in the Valencian pet registry in 2007 and it was listed as an animal born in 2000. It was owned by a street photographer, but the original origin of the animal is unknown due to lack of documentation. It is assumed to have been illegally trafficked.

The animal was passed from one owner to the next until it was registered in the Basque Country pet register by its then owner. The monkey subsequently attacked the owner's father and so was confiscated by the Environmental Section of the Ertzaintza. The animal was then transferred to Karpín Fauna where it remained for 4

One of the talapoins once it was housed at Karpin.

months. Finally, it was transferred to another rescue centre in Alicante, AAP Primadomus, to be socialised with other specimens of its species.

After a period of rehabilitation and resocialisation at AAP Primadomus the Talapoin was transferred to Apenheul Zoo and then on to Copenhagen Zoo.

## Puma confiscation

In 2008 a female puma called Luna arrived at Karpín Fauna after being confiscated in 2006 when she was about two years old.

Luna was confiscated from an photographer in Tenerife due to the lack of documentation and the conditions in which she was kept. The first part of her story is not very clear, although it is suspected that she entered the Canary Islands from illegal trafficking. After her seizure, she was kept for two years in a dog enclosure in a dog hotel in Tenerife.

At the beginning of 2008, thanks to the kind collaboration of Fundación Neotrópico in Tenerife and DEPANA in Catalonia, procedures were initiated with the General Customs Administration and the Centre for Technical Assistance and Inspection of Foreign Trade to make it possible to transfer Luna to Karpín Fauna's facilities. It took many months of paperwork to make this journey a reality, but finally, on 2 November 2008, Luna arrived to Karpín Fauna.

# Other confiscations

Since 2000, Karpín Fauna has accepted 58 animals from 28 species resulting from seizures or confiscations. Authorities have also been assisted through the housing of a further 400 animals from 35 species following abandonment or loss by private owners.

Below is a list of the species from seizures and the number of specimens of each species taken in:

- Barbary macaque (Macaca silvanus), 6.
- Crab-eating macaque (Macaca fasciculata), 6.
- Common marmoset and hybrid of common and black brush (Callithris spp), 7.
- Squirrel monkey (Saimiri sp), 1.
- Miopithecus talapoin), 1.
- Lion (Panthera leo), 2.
- Leopard (Panthera pardus), 1.
- Clouded panther (Neofelis nebulosa), 1.
- Puma (Puma concolor), 1.
- Serval (Leptailurus serval), 2.
- Leopard cat (Prionailurus bengalensis x Felis catus), 1.
- Savannah cat (Felis catus x Leptailurus serval), 1.
- Dingo(Canis lupus dingo), 2.
- Raccoon (Procyon lotor), 2.
- Red deer (Cervus elaphus), 1.
- Indian porcupine (Hystrix indica), 2.
- Parrot-parrot (Psittacus erithacus), 1.
- Gyrfalcon (Falco rustucolus), 2.
- Saker falcon (Falco cherrug), 1.
- Bengali owl (Bubo bengalensis), 2.
- American owl (Bubo virginianus), 1.
- Green iguana (Iguana iguana), 3.
- Olive Ridley turtle (Testudo graeca), 1.
- Alligator snapping turtle (Macrochelys temminckii), 1.
- Snapping turtle (Chelydra serpentina), 5.
- Aquatic monitor lizard (Varanus salvator), 1.
- Chlamydosaurus kingii (Chlamydosaurus kingii), 2.
- Royal python (Pythonregius), 1.

We now detail the species taken in due to abandonment or loss and the number of specimens of each species taken in:

- Crab macaque (Macaca fasciculata), 2.
- Common marmoset (Callithris jacchus), 4.
- Puma (Puma concolor), 1.
- Brown bear (Ursus arctos), 1.
- Wolf (Canis lupus), 2.
- Ring-tailed coati (Nasua nasua), 2.
- Meerkat (Suricata suricatta), 4.
- Ferret (Mustela putorius furo), 21.
- Indian peacock (Pavo cristatus), 40.
- Macaw (Ara ararauna), 1.
- Nymph (Nynphicus hollandicus), 1.
- Parakeet (Melopsittacus undulatus), 1.
- Emu (Dromaius novaehollandiae), 7.
- Duck (Anas sp), 5.
- Green iguana (Iguana iguana), 18.
- Bearded dragon (Pogona vitticeps), 2.
- Spectacled caiman (Caiman crocodilus), 1.
- Yemen chameleon (Chamaeleo calyptratus), 2.
- African spurred tortoise (Centrochelys sulcata), 1.
- Carbonaria tortoise (Geochelone carbonaria), 2.
- Black-backed tortoise (Testudo graeca), 15.
- Mediterranean tortoise (Testudo hermanni), 4.
- Greek tortoise (Testudo marginata), 1.
- Freshwater turtles (Trachemys sp., Chrisemys sp., Graptemys sp., Mauremys sp., Cuora sp. and Emys orbicularis), more than 250.
- Royal python (Pythonregius), 1.
- Reticulated python (Malayopython retuculatus), 1.
- Indian python (Python molurus), 1.
- Boa constrictor (Boa constrictor), 1.
- Cornfield snake (Pantherophis guttatus), 2.
- California king snake (Lampropeltis californiae), 1.

This extensive list covers only one moderately sized zoo in the north of Spain and overall demand for housing of confiscated animals is much higher. Only by developing and expanding a larger network or rescue facilities can this demand be met.

# CASE STUDY:

## **Knuthenborg Safaripark** – Supporting government policy

### About Knuthenborg Safaripark

Knuthenborg Safaripark was founded in 1969 in Denmark. It currently stands at approximately 400 hectares with 50 full time and 200 part time staff. It receives approximately 300,000 visitors per year and has been a member of EAZA since 2006. It is |currently involved in a number of EEPs including the white rhino and sable.

Since 2021 Knuthenborg has taken a new strategic direction in terms of its goals and ambitions and will work to ensure they only house animals from the following categories:

- Endangered species being bred in captivity for reintroduction into the wild.
- Endangered species being bred in captivity for genetic reserves.
- Rescued animals.
- Domesticated animals.

The elephants bonded as a group and living in their enclosure at Knuthenborg.

### Wild animals in circuses

The use of wild animals in circuses has become a topic of great debate in recent years as the ethics of using wild animals for entertainment came into question in the public debate. The majority of Europeans appear to be in favour of banning wild animals in circuses. A public opinion poll was conducted in 2021[12] and found the following:


The elephants were forced to perform unnatural tricks while at the circus.

- The use of wild animals in circuses is cruel and wild animals should not be used for public entertainment: **68% agree**
- The European Union should ban the use of all wild animals in circuses: **62% agree**
- The European Union should guarantee that cruel uses of animals are not allowed: **83% agree**
- Circuses that still use wild animals must reinvent themselves by developing high quality shows with human performers: **69% agree**
- Circuses showing wild animals is educational: **20% agree**

Animal Welfare is a likely key factor in this shift in public opinion. In 2023 AAP – Animal Advocacy and Protection released a report looking at circus animals it has taken into its rescue centre[13]. The report showed that 89% of the exotic animals rescued from European circuses suffered from mental or physical trauma. Almost 8 out of 10 animals suffered from multiple veterinary or behavioural problems. In addition, there are clear human safety concerns. In an updated report published by Eurogroup for Animals in 2021[14] the number of serious incidents in which wild animals came into contact with members of the audience was summarised. The report revealed that between 1995 and 2018 there were 478 incidents involving 889 wild animals, accounting for 99 injuries and 13 deaths.

While no European Union-wide ban on the use of animals in circuses is in place, public opinion is reflected in the fact that the vast majority of EU Member States have already banned or restricted the use of wild animals in circuses.

12. Eurogroup for Animals commissioned an opinion poll to Savanta ComRes who interviewed citizens from Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Spain.
13. https://en.aap.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2023/02/AAP-2023-THE-DARKNESS-BEHIND-THE-SPOTLIGHTS-FINAL-gecomprimeerd_compressed.pdf

## Implementing a ban in Denmark

In 2016, following public debate and an increasing concern for the welfare of wild animals used in circuses the Danish government introduced legislation to ban the use of wild animals in circuses[15].

As in many other countries banning wild animals in circuses, one of the key challenges for the Danish government was finding facilities that can care for the animals. Perhaps the most challenging of all was finding the right housing for the remaining four circus elephants in Denmark.

These four elephants were captured from the wild in Africa around 40 years ago as part of a programme of culling. Three of them Lara, Djungla and Jenny, lived together, performing in a circus called 'Circus Arena'. They travelled from city to city during the circus season and were often rented out to other European circuses during the winter. When travelling they would be held in temporary outdoor pens during the day and in a smaller indoor pens at night – each enclosure being around 5mx5m. They were chained at night. The fourth elephant, Ramboline, came from a circus named 'Circus Trapez'. She was living without any other elephants but was instead housed with a camel in very poor conditions.

Following the proposal to ban the use of wild animals in circuses there was a significant amount of public debate over what should happen to the elephants. After a number of other options were considered and then rejected, Knuthenborg Safaripark stepped forward and offered to provide a permanent home for the elephants. Knuthenborg was supported by Dyrenes Beskyttelse (Animal Protection Denmark) who had been instrumental in getting the ban introduced in the first place.

The proposal to house the elephants included a newly built enclosure for the alongside the adoption of the best management systems possible to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare possible. The enclosure cost €6m and was finally completed in May 2020 – costs were covered through fundraising efforts by Knuthenborg. At 14Ha the enclosure is the largest elephant facility in Europe and includes a large lake, many trees, a sand pit and numerous high feeders. The winter stable has an area of +2,000m2 with all the necessary modern facilities for management of elephants. Knuthenborg developed management practices to closely follow guidelines set by EAZA for the care and management of the elephants[16].

The arrival of the elephants at Knuthenborg was met with huge public and press interest with numerous articles published online and in print.

Just before their arrival, Minister of Agriculture Mogens Jensen said:

> Now I am just looking forward to seeing them in their new home. It's definitely been worth it. The whole aim has been to secure the elephants a good retirement. They need a decent future. One that we have secured with this collaboration with Knuthenborg Safaripark and Dyrenes Beskyttelse.

When the elephants arrived at Knuthenborg they were very stressed and showing high levels of blood cortisol and demonstrating significant stereotypical behaviour. After a period of adjustment they improved significantly and are now doing well, spending their time interacting and exploring their huge enclosure in search of food.

The elephants have made a big impression on the staff at Knuthenborg and visiting public, both of which have shown huge support for the rescue of the elephants. Just as importantly, by providing the housing required, Knuthenborg has played a key role in helping the government to implement their policy at the national level. As more countries ban the use of wild animals in circuses there is a clear role for zoos in supporting governments in delivering this policy.

Anne Sofie C. Meilvang of Dyrennes Beskytelse highlighted the leading role Knuthenborg has played in implementing this important policy initiative:

> The ban on wild animals in circuses could not have been implemented if Knuthenborg Safaripark had not offered to provide a new home for the elephants. These years, many European countries ban wild animals in circuses, and there will be many former circus animals in need of a new home. We hope that Knuthenborg Safaripark can serve as inspiration for solutions in other European countries.

14. https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/files/eurogroupforanimals/2021-08/E4A-Circus_Report-09-08-2021.pdf
15. https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2018/20#idfbb37cb3-d3f2-44e9-ae69-79cb002a5521 16. https://www.eaza.net/assets/Uploads/CCC/BPG-2020/Elephant-TAG-BPG-2020.pdf

# CASE STUDY:

## Parc Animalier d'Auvergne – Staff engagement

Tawa when she first arrived at the zoo.

## About Parc Animalier d'Auvergne

Parc Animalier d'Auvergne was created in 1981 in France and became a member of EAZA in 2013. It extends over 45 hectares of land with 62 species and 350 animals. There are 26 members of staff and 105,000 visitors come every year. Parc Animalier d'Auvergne is focused on endangered species, with 80% of the species it houses included in EAZA Ex situ Programmes (EEPs).

Over the years Parc Animalier d'Auvergne has been involved in various wildlife rescues including ex-circus animals and numerous from zoos that had to close down due to bankruptcy.

## The war in Ukraine and wildlife rescue

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine it quickly became apparent that many captive wild animals in the country were under direct threat. Privately owned animals were being abandoned and many zoos and rescue centres found themselves in the middle of combat zones or without access to the basic supplies.

In May 2022 an informal coalition of NGOs came together to try and co-ordinate a response to this crisis. They included the European Alliance of Rescue Centres and Sanctuaries (EARS) along with many of its members – rescue centres and sanctuaries around Europe. EAZA also became a key member and the work began to try and evacuate animals where necessary or to ensure food and medical supplies were made available to zoos and rescue centres in need.

For those animals in need of evacuation, efforts were made to match them with appropriate facilities in Europe with the capacity and space to house them.

In June 2022 the group was in communication with Poznan Zoo in Poland, which had received a number of animals from a wildlife rescue NGO based in the Ukraine. Poznan Zoo was acting as a 'halfway house' for the animals brought across the border but ultimately, they needed to be moved on to permanent homes. Parc Animalier d'Auvergne were in a position to help and agreed to take a female lion.

# Tawa's rehabilitation

The lion, Tawa, is believed to have been born in 2019. Upon arrival at the zoo she was in reasonably good health but was extremely anxious and aggressive towards humans. Following a full inspection under anaesthesia Tawa was placed in her initial enclosure, which had been prepared in advance with visual barriers, a raised platform and various hanging structures for enrichment.

It was decided Tawa would be introduced to an existing male lion at the zoo named Tsavo. The lions were placed adjacent to each other but physically and visually separated to start with. When visual barriers were removed there was initially a lot of aggression between them and Tawa spent a lot of time trying to hide from Tsavo. Gradually though, and under careful observation, they began to show more positive interest in each other, with Tawa also displaying more submissive behaviour toward Tsavo. Five months after Tawa's arrival the two lions were placed in physical contact. Two months after that they were interacting positively. The two animals are now housed together permanently and Tawa's overall psychological state appears to have improved dramatically.

The rescue has generated a lot of interest from the visiting public and has been warmly regarded by the general public and press.

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of the rescue for the zoo was the effect it had on the staff, who rarely got the opportunity to work on the rehabilitation of an animal coming from such a difficult situation. It was a great team effort with all the staff - educators, communicators, keepers and vets – working together to prepare for the lion's arrival and subsequent rehabilitation. The communication department were able to raise press interest and this helped to raise the funds necessary for the transportation from Poland. The education team worked quickly to communicate to visitors about the rescue and the story of Tawa. Keepers worked tirelessly every day to ensure her welfare and integration with Tsavo while vets closely monitored her health to ensure a full physical recovery.

> She is very different now. At her arrival she was very anxious and now she is very calm in the enclosure. Clémence (Zookeeper)

> It was difficult to think that she will be able to be in contact with our male lion. But we succeeded to do that and this is a great story. Léa (Zookeeper).

The work carried out by the zoo has been a real source of pride and served as a great way to bring the different staff members together.

Tawa in her enclosure after a period of rehabilitation.

# CASE STUDY:

## **Wildheart Animal Sanctuary** – Wildlife rescue and campaigning

### About Wildheart Trust

The Wildheart Trust in the UK was founded in 2017 by Charlotte Corney having previously operated as the Isle of Wight Zoo, which was itself founded in 1976. It has the equivalent of 35 full time staff, 40 volunteers and is governed by a Board of Trustees. It operates on a site of approximately 8Ha.

As a part of its transition in 2017 the Trust decided to transition its collection to consist of 100% rescue animals. It was decided that focusing on rescue would be much more impactful given the size of the site and its limited ability to be involved in captive breeding. It was believed that focusing on rescue would put the Trust in the best position to achieve its strategic goals to support conservation and ending animal cruelty.

The Trust houses a range of species but its focus is on rescued big cats, primates and small mammals. The Trust is also actively engaged in conservation projects on the Isle of Wight itself including a collaborative effort with Amazon World, Hampshire Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation to conserve and protect the Reddish Buff Moth, the only UK population of which is found on the Isle of Wight. The Trust is also part of the White tailed Sea Eagle Project Steering Group on the Isle of Wight - a project in partnership between the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation and Forestry England that has released 25 birds into the wild since 2019.

One of the servals on the day of rescue. It had suffered a broken leg.

### The exotic pet trade in felids

The use of exotic felids in the pet trade has become increasingly popular in recent decades with wild felid species being bred with domestic cats to produce hybrids. These hybrids are exceptionally beautiful and have a strong appeal to an increasing section of the public. Where domesticated cats are bred with Servals, the hybrids are known as 'Savannah Cats' and were first bred in the mid 80s.

In addition to their intrinsic appeal, the popularity of keeping exotic hybrid cats as pets has been fuelled by high profile celebrities on social media. In 2019, pop star Justin Bieber allegedly paid US$35,000 (£28,000) for two sibling F1 savannahs, named Tuna and Sushi. They regularly appeared on his Instagram feed which, at the last count, had 309 million followers. Meanwhile, another savannah cat known as Stryker has clocked up millions of likes on the same platform[17]. This exposure on social media, coupled with online sales, has led to a boom in trade, with F1 hybrid Savannah Cat kittens selling for as much as £20,000.

Such demand has led to a surge in the keeping of Servals in Europe for use in breeding and in the keeping of Savannah cats as pets. In the UK alone there are 158 small and medium exotic cats or F1 hybrids registered as pets in the UK[18]. However many more will be unregistered and only F1 hybrids need to be registered so there are a much larger but unknown number of hybrid exotic cats kept as pets. Even more worrying are the source animals – those used for breeding. These animals are often kept in small inadequate accommodation and treated as a commodity in this lucrative trade.

Servals and other exotic felids require specialised and complex housing, care and husbandry to ensure their health and welfare.[19] The breeding of exotic felids with domestic cats causes a number of issues, including a whole new generation of animals that are not fully domesticated and can therefore be particularly challenging to keep as pets. They can be extremely energetic with a strong instinct to run, jump and hunt, they are more vocal than domestic cats and they require a lot of human interaction to keep them stimulated. They also have strong instincts to scent mark, leading to excessive urination inside the home. These behavioural traits become stronger the closer you get to F1 generations and an associated increase in 'wild' DNA.

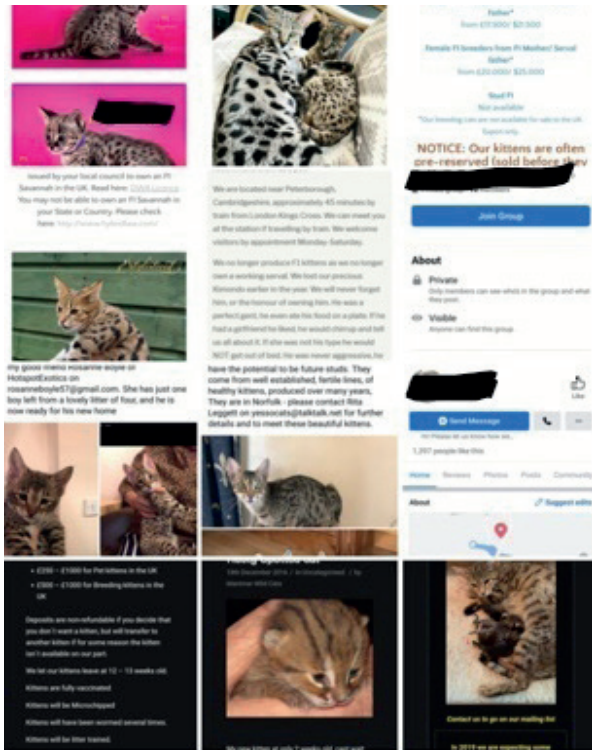
17. https://www.instagram.com/strykerthecat/?hl=en 18. https://www.bornfree.org.uk/dwamap/
19. https://aszk.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Serval-Leptailurus-serval-Hayward-A.-2012.doc 20. https://cites.org/eng/app/index.php

As a result of the increase in trade, and the difficulty in keep these animals as pets, rescue centres are becoming inundated with requests to house unwanted or confiscated exotic felids. AAP - Animal Advocacy and Protection, has reported a 40 fold increase in the number of Serval and Savannah cats coming into their facility since 2019 and recently reported that they were at full capacity

While the Serval is not currently regarded as endangered in the wild it is protected under CITES Appendix II i.e. a species "which is not necessarily now threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade is closely controlled." [20].

## The Wildheart Trust SERVIVAL Campaign

In 2021 the Wildheart Trust rescued two male Servals that had been caught up in the exotic pet trade. Xirus and Tafkap were discovered with malformed and broken bones in a house in France. Part of the illegal pet trade, these cats were likely destined to be bred to service the Savannah Cat market and were kept in isolation because they fought so much when together. They were only 16 weeks old when discovered and had originally been smuggled out of the Czech Republic where they were likely stripped from their mother and forced into a life of pain and suffering.



Examples of social media ads selling hybrid cats.

As part of this rescue and having seen first-hand the suffering involved in the trade of exotic cats, Wildheart Trust took the decision to initiate a wide-reaching campaign aimed at both raising public awareness and pressing the government to tighten regulations on the breeding and keeping of exotic hybrid cats in the UK.

The SERVIVAL Campaign has the following three key objectives:

- Educate the public on the animal welfare issues involved in the trade and discourage ownership of exotic felids as pets
- Ban the hybridization of exotic felids with domestic cats in the UK
- Ban the import of hybrid cats from F1 to F4 generations into the UK.

As part of the campaign, Wildheart Trust delivered a petition with 18,000 signatories to 10 Downing Street in June 2022 and has held numerous parliamentary sessions with members from across the house, who have all pledged their support. The campaign is supported by a number of organisations including BIAZA and the RSPCA as well as the majority of zoos in the UK that hold Servals in their collection. Social media platforms were used as part of the campaign and outreach was very successful with 75,000 people being reached by mid 2023.

When asked about the impact of the campaign on the organisation as a whole, Lawrence Bates, Chief Operating Officer at Wildheart said:

> The SERVIVAL campaign had a huge positive impact on our brand. It springboarded the organization to the fore in the political realm, it attracted influencers from diverse backgrounds helping the message to be spread to new audiences and it lifted our profile globally as organisations from across the world joined in World Serval Day. The uplift in social followers on our channels was tangible and it enabled us to build a campaigning supporter base and connections to help continue to drive this and future campaigns forwards.
>
> The campaign has gathered such momentum over the years and taken on a life of its own. Its been very rewarding to see what is possible through collective campaigning and it has definitely steered the future direction of our charity as we look to champion animal welfare in other areas as well.

Through the approach taken Wildheart has been able to help many more animals than just those they rescued. By addressing the core drivers behind the trade in exotic felids - and taken a comprehensive approach at the public policy level - they are creating sustainable solutions to the very problems that lead to the need for wildlife rescue in the first place.

# CASE STUDY:

## **Marcelle Natureza** – Public outreach and education

### About Marcelle Natureza

Marcelle Natureza was founded by Gerardo Guitián and his daughter Loli Guitián in 2003 to provide the public with a place to enjoy nature and encourage respect for the environment. This was achieved in large part by the fact that it is located within the Terras Do Miño Reserve (2002, UNESCO), the second largest Biosphere Reserve in Galicia in Spain. In 2013, Marcelle became a member of the AIZA and has also been part of the CITES authorized rescue centres since 2023.

Over the years the objectives of the centre expanded to include providing accommodation for animals in need of rescue. This resulted in the creation of a native fauna rehabilitation centre in 2011 and, in 2012, with facilities to house exotic species like primates rescued by AAP - Animal Advocacy and Protection. Currently, all animals admitted to the centre are rescued animals.

Marcelle Natureza has an area of 21 hectares that are divided into two main areas, 13 of them dedicated to enclosures for single or mixed species and another 8 hectares housing several species coexisting in a state of semi-freedom. This area can only be visited with a guide and there are also several enclosures for housing animals for whom, due to their past, continued exposure to humans can be detrimental to their well-being.

### The role of wildlife rescue in education

Education plays a central role in the work carried out by any progressive zoo – indeed it is a requirement stipulated within the EU Zoos Directive. In addition to providing information about the animals being viewed by the visiting public, zoos play an active role in promoting conservation, sustainability and animal welfare. Key to this is engaging the public. As EAZA states on its website[21]:

> Education … is not just about sharing knowledge of the natural world: it's about involving people in conservation and helping them form connections that will benefit not only animals and their habitats, but also help people to learn more about themselves.

Furthermore, in its Education Strategy[22] WAZA states:

> By explaining animal needs along with welfare and management processes, zoos and aquariums can facilitate audience respect, empathy, and positive connections to animals and the natural world.

Every animal in a zoo can be considered an opportunity to achieve this connection and rescue animals can play a key role in helping to achieve this.

### Marcelle Natureza: Education & animal welfare

Rescued animals may come from a variety of sources including the pet trade, substandard 'zoos', laboratories, fur farms or circuses. In most cases these animals have, until the point of rescue, received inadequate care and lived in housing that does not meet their physical and psychological needs. At Marcelle Natureza most of the rescued animals have had a very sad and difficult past resulting from neglect or abuse - each has a story to tell. Through telling these stories Marcelle have discovered that rescued animals provide great opportunities in public outreach and changing the way visitors think about captive wildlife and what is required to ensure they are looked after properly:

> Visitors coming for the first time might not be doing so to visit our rescued animals in particular, but once they have come, they have seen them and they have learned about their past, our experience is that they do come back, because they create a bond and they like to support initiatives like ours. For us it is a privilege to make visitors part of this happy end, because without their visit and contributions, we could also not give these animals the second chance they deserve.
>
> Esther Valderrábano, Curator

21. https://www.eaza.net/conservation/education/
22. https://www.waza.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/10.06_WZACES_spreads_20mbFINAL.pdf

Below we share examples of animals rescued by Marcelle Natureza. In each case they tell the story of the animals' history and the effect this has had on them. Visitors are shown how the animals are now cared for, to address and alleviate the physical and psychological impacts the animals have endured.

## Private pet ownership: Marmosets

One of the rescued marmosets currently housed at Marcelle.

Evidence suggests that the housing of primates kept as pets or entertainers is frequently, if not usually, inappropriate in size, structure, and environment. Cages are often very small and limited to the indoors. Cages for hamsters and parrots kept are often used to house these primates[23]. This creates a problem for welfare as a lack of environmental stimulation and impoverished conditions in growing primates can result in poor brain development and impaired cognitive abilities. [24] [25]

Other constraints of a domestic setting are inappropriate temperature and humidity resulting in the loss of digits and tail tips, as well as chilblains and other circulatory disorders. Many primates require humidity levels of up to 75% and are prone to respiratory problems if the atmosphere is too dry.

Nutrition is frequently compromised by a poor diet, which can contribute to health issues such as heart disease, metabolic bone disease, raised cholesterol, and diabetes. Callitrichids in captivity are susceptible to a condition known as 'Marmoset Wasting Syndrome' which is believed to be responsible for 70-80% of deaths in captivity. Metabolic bone disease is also a common health issue for pet primates. It is manifested in a wide range of disorders, including rickets, osteomalacia and osteoporosis. Symptoms can also include shortening of the jaw, curvature of the spine, tremors, and extreme lameness. The most common cause of metabolic bone disease is a lack of exposure to direct sunlight or ultraviolet light [26] [27] UV radiation.

In 2017 a pair of marmosets, Golliat and Burriana, were seized by the authorities and rescued by AAP because the owner could not prove their origin. After being rehabilitated at AAP they were transferred to Marcelle.

Upon arrival they were already an established pair but their physical condition was still not good, so this formed the focus of subsequent rehabilitation. Provision of an appropriate diet - especially tamarin cake - made them gain weight and increase their vitamin D values, the deficiency of which causes metabolic bone disease. By improving the quality of their diet together with the UVB lamps which help to bind calcium, the condition of these animals improve very significantly.

Outreach and messaging differs depending on the age of the visitor. For children there is a dedicated space, near to the marmoset enclosure, with illustrations that recreate the story of the marmosets. Staff show the poster to the visitors, especially children, and through the drawings they explain the story of Golliat and Burriana. Having the animals close by enables the message to be conveyed in a very direct way.

After listening to the story of the Golliat and Burriana, and seeing the care they now receive, the vast majority of visitors gain a very clear understanding of the complex needs of these animals. They also better understand that primates should not be kept as pets due to the suffering caused.

Marcelle often hear comments such as:

> "It is incredible how selfish we are…"
>
> "Humans only think about money…"
>
> "It is very sad how much these animals suffered because of our selfishness…"

## Lab animals: Crab-eating macaques

At present, the number of primates used in animal experimentation remains high. Although regulation of their use has been introduced in a large number of countries, there are countless individuals that do not have a proper place to live after being used in research because there is rarely money made available to build suitable facilities.

In May 2014 AAP transferred a big group of crab-eating macaques previously used in research to a purpose-built facility at Marcelle Natureza. They arrived in a socially stable group from a laboratory and some of them suffered severe gastrointestinal disorders.

Housing ex-laboratory animals is difficult because their physical appearance can often be significantly affected. They may also have other illnesses caused by the continuous administration of laboratory drugs; for example obesity, extreme thinness and diseases such as diabetes or immunological problems.

Since their arrival in Marcelle, the veterinary care and feeding of this species have been very strict due to the health problems that experimentation has caused in them. The main problems they present are at the gastrointestinal level, so the choice and quantity of food must be made to avoid further damage. In addition, veterinary care involves a continuous individual check-up and analysis that allows early detection of other alterations.

These macaques were not born in the wild and certainly could not survive in the wild, so it is necessary to ensure a high level of welfare to alleviate the consequences of captivity as well as to reverse as much as possible the physical problems resulting from experimentation through the necessary veterinary care. Furthermore, at a behavioural level, these animals have not received natural learning, so it is very important that numerous ethological evaluations be carried out and an environmental enrichment program designed that promotes the social connection of all individuals.

The macaques do not initially get the attention of the visitors when they pass by as they are not an especially attractive species. However, with the help of educational boards and the explanation of guides visitors learn about their past and gain a greater appreciation for the animals and the care they now receive. From that moment, they are no longer a grey monkey but an individual with a history and with a new life to enjoy at Marcelle Natureza.

## Closure of substandard zoos: Brown bears

In 1999, to ensure all zoos meet key responsibilities, and to strengthen the role of zoos in nature conservation, the EU introduced the Zoos Directive[28]. Zoos found to be contravention of the national laws implementing this Directive can find themselves facing closure. One of the key requirements is that animals should be provided with proper housing and care. Since the introduction of the Directive many zoos have been closed for failing to ensure this and ensuring good welfare for their animals. When this happens the animals at the zoo need to be either euthanised or relocated to new facilities.

In 2011 Marcelle Natureza rescued a family of brown bears from a zoo in Spain that closed its doors due to its inability to adapt to the requirements of the EU Zoos Directive. The primary reason was its inability to guarantee adequate levels of welfare for their animals.

When the three bears arrived, they showed sever signs of stress due to the prolonged time they had been kept under unsuitable conditions. They had psychological problems that needed to be addressed at an individual and group level.

The female suffered from a constantly high level of anxiety that prevented her from performing natural behaviour and needed to continually develop a stereotype that consisted of walking from point A to point A repetitively. Furthermore, sometimes fear and aggressive responses were triggered when she saw, for example, a person with a stick in their hand or reacted negatively to some smells, causing panic attacks that required the need for pharmacological treatment. In the case of the youngest male, a lack of abnormal activity and a certain inability to interact with his conspecifics was detected. Finally, in the case of the older male, his main problems were related to a very poor state of teeth with a large number of infected teeth and a very bad coat.

All of this took a lot of energy and time from the staff and it was not easy to diagnose the triggers of their fears and to work on their desensitization, which included the design of an environmental enrichment program and management training. This is a process that takes years of recovery since it is also necessary to adapt to the seasonality of the species. It is vitally important that they reduce activity during the winter months and avoid any type of alteration at that time. In this way, the animals have more information about their environment, they feel safer and can make the decision based on what their body demands. During the final rehabilitation phase, part of this training was transferred to an area visible to the public, allowing Marcelle Natureza to explain the recovery of these animals and the treatment used in each case.

When they arrived, the bears were seen by the public demonstrating severe abnormal behaviour and poor physical condition. At first this was perceived as a problem by the visitors and raised many questions. However, once Marcelle Natureza explained their history and the help they were receiving to recover, the visitors' opinion changed completely. The story of these bears turned into a powerful educational message that allowed Marcelle Natureza to explain the negative impact of poor husbandry and management.

Some of the visitors feedback was:

> These kind of zoos are very necessary to rehabilitate the animals that have suffered so much!

> The best experience for me has been to discover the capacity bears have to recover from these traumatic situations

> When you explain the reason why the female would get stressed we learned how humans can influence animal behaviour and impair their welfare

## Fur industry: Foxes

Marcelle Natureza have experienced an increase in rescue requests for animals coming from fur farms. This may possibly be due to the increasing negative public opinion about the use of these animals which has led to more countries changing their legislation and banning fur farms. For these animals, adapting to a natural environment is often highly complex as they were previously housed in a small cage and in social isolation from birth, preventing the development of a natural behaviour.

Marmer and Totoro are a pair of foxes with very different origins. Totoro was sold via the internet in the Netherlands when she was still a cub and had several owners because they did not know how to take care of her and could not keep her at home. Marmer was found stray in Eindhoven in the Netherlands nearby a fur farm – it is believed he escaped. AAP rescued these two animals and after their socialization and sterilization they were transferred to Marcelle Natureza.

In the case of behaviourally complex species it is really important to house them in an environment where they can choose the extent to which they wish to be seen, not only by visitors but also by their keepers or each other. In the case of an animal from the fur industry it is very common for them to develop fearful behaviour in relation to open spaces and so they often stay hidden. For these animals it is very important that they feel their enclosure as a safe place and for this they choose a natural soil where they can make their caves without limit in depth. To do this, the design of the facility must be adapted through the construction of an underground perimeter closure. In addition, the creation of multiple hiding spaces so that the animal can choose if it wants to be seen.

One of the fur farm foxes enjoying its new life at Marcelle.

This can be a problem for zoos with visitors complaining about the impossibility of seeing the animals (some even question the existence of the animal in the facility!). However, based on the experience at Marcelle Natureza, when the situation of the animals and their history is explained, the visitor becomes 'invested' in the animal's welfare and actively learn how to adapt their behaviour around the animals. Marcelle have found this to be extremely rewarding for the visitors and any sightings of these 'rare' animals is highly sought after and valued.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# **Wildlife rescue in zoos** – Challenges

Wildlife rescue can contribute to supporting government policy and legislation, conservation, public education, ex-situ conservation and animal welfare. It can also help engage visitors, staff and create PR and media opportunities.

However, there are also costs and challenges associated with wildlife rescue that may not exist for 'traditional' zoo collections. It is important these are considered so that any decision to become more involved in wildlife rescue is full informed and planned for appropriately.

## 1. Risk of disease and quarantine

The management of disease is clearly an extremely high priority for all zoos. While the keeping of any wild animal requires careful management and veterinary care to ensure disease is controlled, rescue animals present unique challenges.

The origins of many rescue animals are often unknown or unclear. Furthermore, up until the point of seizure/surrender most animals will not have received adequate veterinary care. There are a wide range of diseases found in rescue animals following seizure or confiscation, some of the most common include[29]:

- Primates: Trichuris sp., Entamoeba spp., Ascaris sp., Campylobacter, Yersinia pseudotuberculosis, STLV, Hepatitis B, Herpes B/simplex, (Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex , low frequency but when it occurs big impact)
- Carnivores: Baylisascaris spp , Giardia sp., Trichuris sp., Campylobacter, Canine Distemper virus, (Rabies virus, low frequency but when it occurs big impact)
- Rodents: Eimeria sp., Campylobacter, Oxyuris spp., leptospira spp.
- Birds: Trichomonas, Capillaria infestation, Avipoxvirus, Botulism.
- Reptiles: Roundworms, flagellates, blood mites and less commonly nido-virus, cryptosporidium and paramyxomatosis.

Without proper measures being taken the introduction of rescue animals therefore has the potential to increase the risk of new diseases entering existing zoo populations.

There is also increased risk to zoo staff and even members of the public, with rescue animals known to be carriers of various zoonotic diseases including Campylobacter spp, Herpes, Hepatitis and Rabies. In a study undertaken by AAP[30] zoonotic pathogen testing results revealed that of the 262 exotic pets included in the analysis, 36 animals (13.7%), carried one or more parasitic, viral or bacterial zoonotic pathogen. In other words, roughly 1 in every 7 exotic pets rescued by AAP carried at least one zoonotic agent upon arrival. 13 of those 36 infected animals (36%) carried multiple zoonotic pathogens.

Adequate quarantine is therefore essential for any rescued animal but many zoos may be unwilling or unable to carry this out. In such cases there is an opportunity for collaboration with rescue centres, many of which are equipped and experienced in dealing with rescue animals of unknown origin and so would be able to mitigate the risk of disease.

## 2. Rehabilitation: Veterinary and behavioural challenges

Due to their unique background and history, rescue animals often bring with them a complex set of veterinary and behavioural needs that are not usually present in 'zoo animals'. These in turn can bring additional costs.

In addition to an increased risk of disease, rescue animals may often have chronic illnesses brought about by exposure to disease, poor diet and inadequate housing. Many will also have physical injuries, caused as a result of abuse or neglect, that require immediate and often ongoing veterinary care.

In addition, some rescue animals will have undergone severe psychological trauma leading to abnormal behaviour such stereotypies, self-mutilation, increased fear or aggression toward humans and con-specifics. All of these require additional time and resources to manage, especially at the beginning. Furthermore, where the animal in question is a social species it can be difficult to assimilate individuals into existing groups or to form new ones with a group of rescue animals. Overseeing this can take up a lot of staff time.

29. This list is by no means exhaustive.
30. https://www.aap.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021_InfectedUndetected.pdf

Despite these challenges, the experience of many rescue centres in Europe attest to the incredible capacity of these animals to recover once they get the right management and care. Learning these skills can be incredibly regarding and is something that can be addressed through collaboration with rescue centres experienced in the rehabilitation of rescue animals.

## 3. Visitor perception

Discussions with zoos involved in rescue work have identified shared challenges with regards to the visiting public. Most people visiting zoos quite rightly expect to find animals in good physical health and exhibiting behaviour similar to that of a wild-living counterpart. Concern for animal welfare is increasing amongst large sections of public and visitors to zoos are increasingly likely to register their concerns if they see something that causes concern in this regard.

Rescue animals are far more likely to show physical signs of illness and injury as a result of their often extremely challenging life in captivity. This could include weight loss/gain, missing limbs, missing teeth, deformities, bald patches, scars and other disabilities that could prevent a normal range of expected behaviour. Some may show increased signs of fear or aggression while others may exhibit inappropriate levels of interest in visitors. Stereotypical behaviour is also a common problem and is particularly distressing to watch in many cases.

As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, with careful management these physical and psychological issues can be addressed. However, in some cases a complete and full recovery is not possible, and the signs of a previous life are visible to anyone viewing rescued animals in their enclosures. This can lead to distress and upset for visitors if they do not understand the animal's background, with some visitors assuming they are zoo animals that have lived their lives in captivity and so must have gotten sick or injured as a result of neglect or abuse that has taken place at the zoo. This can understandably result in complaints and the reputation of the zoo being wrongly called into question.

The key to solving this problem is communication with visitors. At the very least signage is recommended at the enclosure of any rescued animals; to explain their background and any problems, physical or psychological, that may still be evident. Including this information in keeper talks is also a great way to ensure visitors understand what has happened to the rescue animals and the effect is has had on their health and wellbeing. Where rescue animals form a significant part of a zoos collection it is may also be worth considering how rescue work is included in the zoo's wider communication strategy; including the 'About' section of their website, social media and TV/Press.

Through these measures visitors can better understand that rescue animals are housed at the zoo and their expectations are managed before they actually come to see the animals. Those zoos that have improved their communications around rescue animals have found that the response from visitors is overwhelmingly positive and supportive.

## 4. Lack of recognition for rescue work within EU and national frameworks

The traditional role of a zoo is widely understood to be to promote conservation and educate the public. To ensure all zoos meet this responsibility, and to strengthen the role of zoos in nature conservation, the EU introduced the Zoos Directive in 1999[31]. Sixteen years after the law's adoption, the EC published the EU Zoos Directive Good Practices Document[32] to clarify how the Zoos Directive should be implemented by the Member States to streamline those practices.

In summary the EU Zoos Directive requires Member States to take measures to ensure all zoos implement the following conservation measures:

- Participating in research from which conservation benefits accrue to the species, and/or training in relevant conservation skills, and/or the exchange of information relating to species conservation and/or, where appropriate, captive breeding, repopulation or reintroduction of species into the wild.
- Promoting public education and awareness in relation to the conservation of biodiversity.
- Accommodating their animals under conditions which aim to satisfy the biological and conservation requirements of the individual species.
- Preventing the escape of animals in order to avoid possible ecological threats to indigenous species and preventing intrusion of outside pests and vermin.
- Keeping of up-to-date records of the zoo's collection appropriate to the species recorded.

31. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:31999L0022
32. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/17af359e-e215-42e8-8fa5-5e90e3041297/language-en/format-PDF/source-277044033

The Directive is implemented by Member States through national licensing and inspection systems aimed at ensuring the above requirements are being met by all zoos.

Understandably zoos focus much of their efforts and resources ensuring they fulfil their licensing requirements and so decision-making, policy and strategic direction are heavily influenced by the requirements as set out in the Directive and national licensing requirements. As there is no mention of wildlife rescue in either the Directive or the Good Practices Document (from a licensing point of view at least) there is often little or no recognition for rescue work carried out by zoos during the inspection process. Some zoos have been told by licensing inspectors that rescue work is not an activity in which they should be engaged. In other cases, inspectors are positive and supportive of the rescue work. It appears zoos engaged in rescue work are often at the mercy of inspectors' personal opinion and attitudes towards wildlife rescue in zoos. Certainly, from a licensing and regulatory point of view, there is no formal provision or recognition of rescue for most licensing requirements across Europe.

This lack of incentive for undertaking rescue work – even when it has direct or indirect benefits for conservation – could be a key reason why more zoos do not get involved in wildlife rescue and could be a challenge for those currently active in this area. For those zoos that meet opposition to their rescue work from zoo inspectors there may even be pressure to stop the rescue work in order to maintain their license.

The solution to this begins with revisions to the EU Zoos Directive and changes to national legislation to recognise rescue work as a valid – but optional - function of a zoo. This way not all zoos are required to be involved in wildlife rescue – but those that are get due credit. There is also scope to more explicitly acknowledge the role of zoos in promoting conservation through wildlife rescue through future revisions to the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

## 5. Reduced housing for captive breeding and conservation

By accepting rescue animals a zoo is of course using exhibit space that may otherwise be used for 'traditional' zoo collections. In truth most rescue animals are unsuitable for captive breeding for a variety of reasons including genetics and physical/behavioural issues, not to mention the fact that many of the species commonly in need of rescue are not classed as endangered. So does including rescued animals reduce the amount of captive breeding they can do?

In theory, for zoos that are heavily focused on captive breeding – through EAZA's EEP programme[33] - the housing of rescued animals may prevent them from fulfilling their organisational objectives by reducing exhibit space for captive breeding. However, in reality there is no zoo in Europe in which all of its animals are engaged in captive breeding and most zoos still house animals of limited or no conservation value. Engagement in wildlife rescue and managed captive breeding is perfectly possible in most cases as has been shown in the examples set out in this report.

33. https://www.eaza.net/assets/Uploads/CCC/Other/EEP-infographics-approved.pdf

# Approaches to wildlife rescue in zoos

Should a zoo make the decision to engage in wildlife rescue there are a number of things to consider including what animals they would be prepared to accept (intake policy), the mode by which they want to receive the animals (directly or via a rescue centre following initial rescue and rehabilitation) and the extent to which rescue animals will form part of the zoos overall collection.

## Intake policy

For any zoo that has made the decision to engage in wildlife rescue the first thing to have in place is an intake policy. This provides a basis by which zoos can decide what rescue animals they will accept. By having such a policy in place a zoo can ensure that any resources it dedicates to wildlife rescue has maximum impact with regards its own organisational goals. Having clear criteria for animal intake helps the zoo allocate its resources effectively and consider the available space, staff expertise, and financial resources they have so that they can provide adequate care for the rescued animals.

An intake policy can take into account a range of factors and will help the zoo link any rescue animals it accepts to wider strategic goals achieving the most impact and making an efficient use of the resources. It should also ensure there is a clear agreement as to what the role of all stakeholders are and who will cover the various costs involved:

## What species or taxa should be accepted?

A zoo may decide to focus on certain species or taxa. This may be as a result of the facilities and expertise available for those species. It may also be that a zoo decides to accept species for which there are currently very few options within the wildlife rescue community (assuming they have the skills and facilities to do so). By doing this they are filling a gap within the current wildlife rescue capacity in Europe. Birds, reptiles and amphibians fall into this category. Other considerations may include the level of public engagement or PR/media interest the species or taxa creates..

## Is the animal suitable for public exhibition?

In some cases, rescued animals will be unsuitable to be put on display to the visiting public. This should be ascertained before any decision is made to accept an animal. Other options, including rescue sanctuaries or sanctuaries closed to the public, would likely be the best option in these cases.

Can the animal contribute to ex-situ conservation?
It could also be that a zoo decides to only accept endangered species of known origin that can be used in captive breeding, which is sometimes but not always possible with rescued animals.

Where did the animal come from?
The decision to accept an animal may be influenced by what situation it has come from. A zoo may decide to focus on taking animals that can have an impact in specific areas. Examples may include:

- Helping to counter illegal trade and working with CITES authorities
- Helping deal with the problem of sub-standard zoos forced to close
- Addressing the most extreme welfare cases regardless of species involved
- Animals that need rescuing as a result implementing specific government policies e.g., banning of wildlife in circuses or restrictions on wildlife as pets i.e. positive lists.

## Who is paying for the care of the animal?

It may be that zoos only accept animals if there is an agreement in place with the authorities (or other third party) to cover the ongoing care costs for the animal/s in question and any adaptations to enclosures that are needed. Such funding may not always be available but having such a policy in place can ensure any wildlife rescue that takes place is financially sustainable.

## Who will own the animal?

It may be possible to have ownership of a rescued animal signed over at the point at which they are accepted into the zoo. In other cases, and depending on the laws of the country in question, the animal may remain the property of the authorities or other third party. Having clear policies in place about how ownership is dealt with should form an important part of an intake policy and be an important consideration when negotiating/planning the rescue of an animal..

## Will the rescued animal be replaced by another animal?

It is important to ensure that any rescued animal is not simply replaced by the original owner at a later date. Examples may include privately owned animals or old/unwanted animals at zoos or circuses. It is possible in these and other situations that the owner of the animal simply replaces the seized/surrendered animal at a later date. In such cases the impact of the rescue is significantly reduced and it could even encourage more trade. This should be a key consideration when deciding whether or not to accept an animal. By ensuring the rescued animal is not replaced - a so-called 'non-replacement' policy - it is possible to make the rescue 'sustainable' and has maximum impact.

## Payment for animals

In all cases it is essential that zoos do not pay for rescued animals so as to not encourage the drivers that led to the animal requiring rescue in the first place.

## Modes of rescue

As well as having a well-defined intake policy, deciding the route by which rescued animals arrive at the zoo is an important aspect to be decided in advance. It could be that zoos take a rigid approach to this or make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Either way the pros and cons of the different approaches need to be considered.

**Direct rescue**

Zoos may choose to get involved in the rescue from the very start of the process, directly assisting authorities or other third parties with the planning and logistics of the seizure/confiscation and helping with subsequent care and transport to the zoo. In cases where the animal is being surrendered voluntarily the zoo might even negotiate the transfer directly. At the very least the zoo would serve as the first point of care for the animal.

The rehabilitation process would then also take place at the zoo, starting with the quarantine period in an approved facility so that the animal goes through the necessary health checks and lab analysis to discard any infectious disease which could endanger the rest of the population. During this phase the animal also needs to receive any urgent veterinary treatment as needed and be transitioned to an appropriate diet as in most cases they arrive malnourished and in a very poor condition (under- or overweight). Once the animal has gained strength and recovered physically, trained staff would need to make sure the animal receives the necessary attention to treat possible behavioural abnormalities and/or socialise the individual if it belongs to a social species. This process aims to help the animal recover both physically and mentally so that they can function adequately (in a group if necessary) and have a good quality of life in captivity.

Involvement at this level requires specialist knowledge and facilities that may not be available in some cases. Specifically quarantine requirements under EU law are difficult to meet in a zoo setting. It also requires significant staff resources. However, involvement in the entire rescue process can build public support and press interest as well as PR and fundraising opportunities. It is also reported by zoos already involved in rescue to be hugely rewarding for staff and management.

**Indirect rescue**

It may be decided not to get directly involved in the rescue itself or the immediate care of the animal following seizure or confiscation. Instead, it may be preferable to receive the animal once the rescue and rehabilitation process is complete. In such cases collaboration with the wildlife rescue community is necessary.

There are numerous dedicated rescue centres and sanctuaries in Europe that specialise in the care and rehabilitation of rescued wildlife. While many of them provide lifetime care for the animals they rescue, others work to outplace animals once the rescue and rehabilitation is complete. By coordinating with such facilities zoos can opt to receive animals that are ready for placement in lifetime care. They have been quarantined and received treatment for any urgent health conditions that have resulted from their time in captivity prior to rescue. Any longer-term health problems or psychological issues will likely have been identified and so zoos can make an informed decision about which rescue animals they receive.

Accepting animals from rescue centres also allows a greater degree of planning in terms of what animals the zoo accepts and deciding when the transfer of the animal takes place. Reputable rescue centres have strict intake policies so zoos can be more confident the rescue is 'sustainable' and has maximum impact (although zoos should always perform their own due diligence and ensure that the animal they rescue complies with their own intake policy).

## How many rescued animals should be housed?

The benefits and challenges associated with wildlife rescue within zoos have been set out in this report as well as the way in which zoos may wish to engage in wildlife rescue. An important consideration for a zoo, should it decide to become involved at all in wildlife rescue, is the extent to which it wants rescue animals to form part of its overall collection.

Decisions must be made by each zoo depending on its capacity (enclosures and staff), expertise, animal collection plans and strategic priorities.

Zoos may decide to take a reactive approach to rescue work – taking animals in urgent cases but no more than this. In such cases the number of rescue animals compared to the main collection would be limited. Nevertheless, the impact can still be significant – both in terms of helping meet the demand for housing and in the positive impacts felt by the zoo.

In other cases zoos may incorporate the rescue work they do into their strategic priorities and set targets for ensuring a certain percentage of their overall collection are rescued animals. The rescue work itself may even lead these zoos to become more engaged in the related issue. For example the Wildheart Trust and its rescue of Servals leading to them starting a campaign to ban the use of exotic cats in the pet trade.

While far more rare, there are also examples of zoos deciding to have a collection consisting entirely of rescued animals. Again, Wildheart Trust is one such zoo (previously known as the Isle of Wight Zoo). De Zonnegloed in Belgium is another example having made the decision to house only rescued animals.

Whatever the approach taken, it is essential that each zoo decides what is right for it and does not feel pressured into taking animals when it does not fit with its own strategic goals or if it does not possess the adequate housing or expertise to care for the animals in question. It may be helpful for zoos to formalise their approach to wildlife rescue with regards the collection planning - be explicit about whether or not rescue animals will form a part of their overall collection and, if they do, be clear about the resources they will allocate to it.

# Coordination between the zoo and rescue community: a rescue network

The benefits of coordination between the authorities, zoos and rescue centres have already been highlighted. Such coordination is certainly beneficial in cases whereby zoos opt to accept animals from rescue centres following initial rescue and rehabilitation. However, even in cases where zoos accept animals directly, improved communication between all facilities accepting rescued wildlife is essential to avoid duplication of effort and share information. Better, more centralised coordination of wildlife rescue in Europe brings wider benefits. This report sets out the gap between the demand for housing for rescued animals and the housing that is currently available. Rescue centres, sanctuaries and many zoos receive rescue requests daily that often cannot be fulfilled and a significant amount of time and effort is spent by authorities and other third parties trying to find housing for confiscated, seized or surrendered animals. This can result in duplication of effort and the best options for housing animals left unexplored due to lack of awareness of the rescue facilities available across Europe. In particularly there is often a very 'nationalistic' approach from the authorities, with only in-country options being explored rather than looking further afield for better options in other countries. At present there is no single point of reference available by which a request for housing of a rescued animal can be submitted. Developing such a resource would be highly beneficial and would require a coordinated approach between rescue centres, sanctuaries and those zoos involved in wildlife rescue. By having such an approach, we can better ensure that all options for housing animals are explored and that the most suitable housing (assuming any is available) can be allocated. Another huge benefit of this approach is the ability to collect more comprehensive wildlife rescue data that can help inform strategy and planning – both in terms of direct rescue work (ensuring rescue facilities have the skills and capacity needed to meet demand) and in assisting the development public policy efforts (campaigns and lobbying) to address the key drivers leading to the need for wildlife rescue in the first place.

There are currently two initiatives that serve as excellent models for how this co-ordination can take place – one in the United States and one in Europe:

## Model 1: The Wildlife Confiscation Network (USA)

Attempts to better co-ordinate rescue responses is already underway in the United States where the American Zoo Association (AZA) has set up the Wildlife Confiscation Network (WCN) in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The purpose of the WCN is to create a coalition of reputable and trusted animal care facilities who can provide immediate medical care and housing for wildlife that are trafficked through U.S. ports of entry, allowing wildlife law enforcement to concentrate on their core functions: the investigation and prosecution of criminals. The WCN is currently piloting in the Southern California region with plans to expand nationwide. Participants in the WCN include San Diego Zoo, Los Angeles Zoo and Santa Barbara Zoo. The project is building momentum and is rapidly becoming the go-to point of contact for USFWS when confiscations take place. WCN ensures the quality of participating facilities through a rigorous process of screening and employs a full time member of staff to oversee this as well as coordinate rescue responses in collaboration with USFWS and WCN participants. Work is already underway to codify the work being done by WCN at the federal level through the introduction of an Act at Congress.34 The Act has not yet been voted into law but if and when it is it would be a huge step in recognising the valuable role of zoos, rescue centres and sanctuaries play in combatting illegal wildlife trade.

## The Act states:

(1) accredited zoos, aquariums, science centers, wildlife sanctuaries, and similar facilities play invaluable roles in the rescue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction of threatened and endangered species of animals; and

(2) to the maximum extent possible, such activities, including the educational display and interpretation of such species, should be encouraged, facilitated, and incentivized. It goes on to state that the Secretary of State shall establish a voluntary, cooperative program to assist Federal wildlife law enforcement agencies with the placement and care of confiscated animals, to be known as the "Wildlife Confiscations Network":

## The Act states the Network shall:

(1) establish a cooperative and coordinated response protocol for the care and welfare of confiscated animals;
(2) create and maintain a database of qualified zoological facilities and other organizations that are members of the Network that can provide immediate triage needs and long-term housing and care for confiscated animals;
(3) establish a committee within the Network to review and approve or reject applications for inclusion in the Network …
(4) act as the single point of contact for Federal wildlife law enforcement agencies to assist in the placement and care of confiscated animals in qualified zoological facilities. The Act also sets out the framework for the provision of grants to support the work of participants in the Network. The WCN could provide a basis for improvements in wildlife rescue coordination in Europe and help to ensure the best and most efficient use of the rescue capacity available as well as ensuring animals are placed in the most appropriate facilities.

## Model 2: Wildlife Seized Animals Assistance Service (SAASS) (France)

In November 2024, the Ministry for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forestry, the Sea, and Fisheries (MTEBFMP) awarded the AFdPZ (French Association of Zoological Parks) the first public contract aimed at creating a centralized service for state services, to organize, coordinate, and monitor the placement of live wild animals seized by authorities. For several decades, the French Association of Zoological Parks (AFdPZ), established in 1969, and its 106 members have regularly been called upon by competent authorities (vet services, OFB, Gendarmerie, OCLAESP, Customs, etc.) to place wild animals that have been seized, confiscated, found, or abandoned. This initiative, the first of its kind in France and in Europe, aims to formalise the co-ordination of this work moving forward, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders including rescue centres, sanctuaries, zoos & aquaria.

With the contract awarded, the AFdPZ has established the Wildlife Seized Animals Assistance Service (SAASS) in December 2024 to meet the requirements of the mission, which is also part of the objectives of the revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, adopted in November 2022. The service currently has two full time staff members employed by AFdPZ and dedicated to this mission.

Rodolphe Delord, Chair of AFdPZ, stated:

> We are honored by the trust that the Ministry for Ecological Transition has placed in us by assigning this essential mission. The creation of the Wildlife Seized Animals Assistance Service (SAASS) marks a decisive step forward in the fight against wildlife trafficking and in biodiversity preservation, efforts in which we are fully committed.

The objectives of this mission are multiple:

- Create a database validated by the Ministry that lists authorized facilities in France and neighboring countries capable of welcoming these animals.
- Coordinate the placement of wild animals to optimize the search for hosting locations.
- Ensure follow-up of animals throughout the process, from their reception in facilities to their long-term care.
- Monitor, and share data and numerical indicators on the annual recorded animal flows in France
- Raise awareness among stakeholders about wildlife trafficking and the need to ensure appropriate living conditions for seized animals.

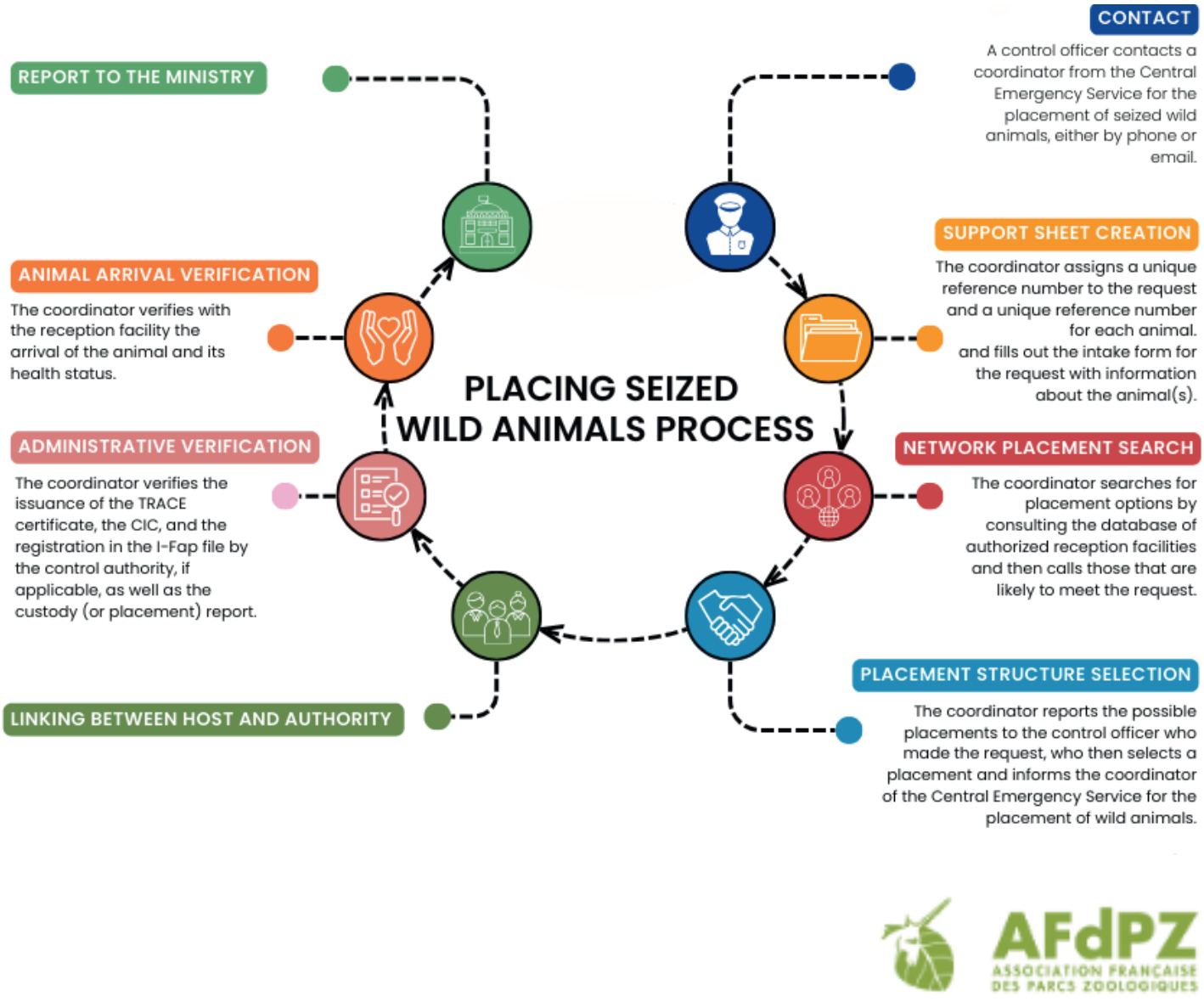
This collaboration also allows all parties to address other crucial issues such as animal welfare, environmental, health and safety concerns.

Once fully rolled out, this initiative will enable the implementation of national regulations by facilitating the seizure of wild animals and ensuring their placement in appropriate environments and care. It will maximize the conservation potential of certain individuals from endangered species and ensure traceability with dedicated records to monitor and fight trafficking. Moreover, it will share expertise on the handling, transport, and housing of wildlife, reduce the risks of zoonotic diseases, and protecting both human and animal populations in terms of public health. It will also have a direct positive effect on animal welfare, with significant reduction in delays between confiscations and placement of animals in appropriate facilities.

Below is a schematic of how the process of wildlife rescue will be co-ordinated:

SAASS

SERVICE D'ASSISTANCE AUX ANIMAUX SAUVAGES SAISIS




AFdPZ
ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE DES PARCS ZOOLOGIQUES

The SAASS serves as a clear model that could be taken forward on a wider European basis. Both EARS and AFdPZ stand ready to answer any questions and discuss how this could be achieved.