



Wildlife Conservation Society

Annual Report 1996



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
FOUNDED IN 1895 AS THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Participants in the Society's centennial safari, "Footseps Across Africa," enjoy the view of Kenya from a hot-air balloon.

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The City of New York, through its Department of Cultural Affairs, provides part of the annual operating support for the Bronx Zoo/Wildlife Conservation Park and the Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation, both of which occupy City-owned buildings on City-owned property.

The Wildlife Conservation Society administers the Central Park, Queens, and Prospect Park Wildlife Centers for the City's Department of Parks and Recreation, which provides annual operating support for the Centers.

The Society also receives annual funds from the Natural Heritage Trust, a program of the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation.

COVER: MONARCH BUTTERFLY.
BACK COVER: SCHOOLCHILDREN VISIT THE BUTTERFLY ZONE AT THE BRONX ZOO.

“The Zoo has become a new kind of institution in which individuals and groups of animals are ambassadors for the survival of their species in nature.”



Above: *Preparing for a late spring opening, Associate Curator of Mammals Edward Spevak and Horticulture Curator Robert Halpern (foreground) confer on the planning of the Butterfly Zone as it rises on the great mall of Astor Court.*

Right: *Erika Talesnik with monarch butterflies.*

people and wild

BRONX ZOO

With a wildlife population of 3,955 mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, plus countless invertebrates, the Bronx Zoo is the heart of the Wildlife Conservation Society's worldwide activities. The Zoo opened in 1899, fulfilling the Society's charter, and serves as the flagship for four other WCS facilities in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, as well as the St. Catherines Wildlife Survival Center in Georgia.

The changing role of zoos from taxonomic inventories to conservation parks has been pioneered in large part at the Bronx Zoo. Through breeding programs, environmental exhibitions, educational curriculums, an emphasis on science, and innovative designs and graphics the Zoo has become a new kind of institution in which individuals and groups of animals are ambassadors for the survival of their species in nature. In this cross-disciplinary endeavor, the Bronx Zoo is today headquarters for local, national, and international programs in field conservation, ecological education, wildlife health sciences, and exhibition design.

Last year, 2,056,114 people came to the Zoo, where they visited Wild Asia, JungleWorld, Baboon Reserve, the World of Birds, the World of Reptiles, Himalayan Highlands, and many other dramatic habitat environments. We created a new theater of wonder and education in the great Butterfly Zone, which opened on Memorial Day Weekend, May 25-27, for a four-month run. In the elegant botanical and musical setting of a huge tent, stretching 170 feet along the Astor Court mall in the shape of a giant caterpillar, 121,380 visitors enjoyed the more than 1,000 butterflies and moths of over three dozen species during the first month of operation. Through the butterflies themselves, as well as special areas for breeding and incubation, inventive graphics, and a maze highlighting the dangers of butterfly life, visitors also learned about the fascinating life cycle of these invertebrates, why their numbers are declining, and how WCS and other conservation organizations are trying to save them in all their diversity.

Mammalogy

Many wildlife species have become threatened in our national parks by the very success of those parks for people. In July 1995, the department helped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rescue four grizzly bears, two females and two males, in Montana and Wyoming. Classified as "nuisances" too accustomed to humans and human habitations, they had previously been unsuccessfully relocated and were scheduled to be destroyed. Three of the bears already had buckshot in them that would be difficult to remove. Consequently, all four animals were moved to the Bronx Zoo, where they immediately became public favorites in the refurbished big bear habitat.

Other important additions came through breeding. A female Indian rhinoceros, named Dailey after trustee and chairman of the Wildlife Crisis Cam-

paign Dailey Pattee, was born on December 28, 1995. The calf is our first second-generation rhino and an important birth in saving this highly endangered species. Her parents are Ella, the first rhino born at the Bronx Zoo, named for our late trustee, Mrs. William Ward Foshay, and Vinu, a male brought from the Metro Toronto Zoo as part of the Indian Rhino Species Survival Plan.

Representing another species that WCS has helped protect, both in Ethiopia and at the Zoo, was our newest gelada baboon, born in November. This young male can be seen exploring or riding around on his mother or aunt in the spectacular Baboon Reserve. The Reserve's other new residents this spring were four young hyraxes born earlier.

An unexpected birth occurred in the montane rain forest of JungleWorld. Gibbons are typically born about 730 days apart, but in October a male white-cheeked gibbon was born just 276 days after a previous birth. There were concerns that the mother might not care for both offspring before the elder one was weaned, but she proved to be more than up to the task, and the entire family can be seen swinging through the tall trees of JungleWorld.

An unusual family of four white-cheeked gibbons at home in JungleWorld.



In October, ground was broken and construction begun in the southwest corner of the Zoo on Congo Gorilla Forest. This 6.5-acre habitat and education complex will be home for lowland gorillas, okapis, mandrills, guenons, red river hogs, and other equatorial African species. The Forest will enhance the breeding program for these endangered species and involve visitors more directly in their fate through interactive exhibits and choices to support WCS projects in the Equatorial African forest.

Meanwhile, at the old Great Apes House, the five baby gorillas born in 1994, including twins Ngoma and Tambo born to Patty-cake and Timmy, have been added to Timmy's troop. The old silverback continues to be the protective patriarch, watching the babies closely among his charges.

The department continues to work actively in the Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs) and Species Survival Plans (SSPs) of the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Zoo mammal personnel—including General Curator Jim Doherty, Assistant Curators Ed Spevak and Pat Thomas, and Collections Manager Penny Kalk—participate in more than half of the mammal TAG and SSP committees. The aim of these zoo conservation programs is to maintain genetically and demographically healthy populations of animals that also serve as indicators of the status of wild environments, for our visitors, of what is happening to wildlife and wild places around the world. The department was also assisted by dedicated interns funded through the generosity of the Robert G. and Jane V. Engel Foundation.

Ornithology

After the 1899 aviary collapsed during a snow storm in February 1995, planning began immediately for the resurrection of the great structure in a new form, and funding was received from donors large and small. The new and larger aviary, now called the Russell B. Aitken Sea Bird Colony in tribute to major donors Mr. and Mrs. Russell B. Aitken, is scheduled to open in spring 1997. It will continue the theme of a South American coastal habitat and will house many of the same species as before, including Inca terns, gray gulls, cormorants, and penguins. There will be new entrances, an enlarged pool, and an extended public path exiting at the north end.

Renovation continued on the first floor of the World of Birds, with major backing from the Wallace Fund. A new ceiling, climate-control equipment, graphics, and labels were installed. New exhibits include those for birds of paradise, completed in summer 1995, and for bee-eaters, scheduled for fall 1996. The remaining lower-floor exhibits will be renovated in fiscal year 1997.

Nineteen birds from Papua New Guinea—lories and other parrots—entered the collection as a gift from Ann and Barry Love, who have been associated with conservation in that country for 17 years. The Loves are long-time friends of the Research and Conservation Foundation of Papua New Guinea, which WCS helped found. Included in the group at the World of Birds is a species never before seen in North America—the purple-bellied lory.



Indian rhino Dailey, named for Trustee Dailey Pattee, browsing with her mother, Ella, named for the late Ella Foshay.

Animal Census (at Dec. 31, 1995)

BRONX ZOO (WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARK)

	Species and subspecies	Specimens owned	Births/Hatchings				
MAMMALS				Sphenisciformes—Penguins	1	3	0
Marsupialia—Kangaroos, gliders	3	37	0	Pelicaniformes—Pelicans, cormorants, etc.	4	19	0
Insectivora—Hedgehogs, tree shrews	3	19	7	Ciconiiformes—Hérons, storks, flamingos, etc.	13	112	2
Chiroptera—Bats	6	514	137	Anseriformes—Swans, ducks, geese, screamers	39	293	17
Primates—Apes, monkeys, marmosets, etc.	29	177	23	Falconiformes—Vultures, eagles	6	11	0
Edentata—Sloths	1	1	0	Galliformes—Maleos, curassows, pheasants, etc.	26	115	14
Lagomorpha—Rabbit	1	1	0	Gruiformes—Cranes, rails, etc.	13	61	0
Rodentia—Squirrels, rats, gerbils, porcupines, etc.	36	520	308	Charadriiformes—Plovers, gulls, etc.	17	71	6
Carnivora—Bears, cats, dogs, etc.	20	81	8	Columbiformes—Pigeons, doves	14	44	8
Pinnipedia—Sea lions	1	5	0	Psittaciformes—Parrots	48	115	0
Proboscidea—Elephants	1	7	0	Cuculiformes—Touracos, cuckoos, etc.	5	13	0
Hyracoidea—Hyraxes	1	15	14	Strigiformes—Owls	3	3	0
Perissodactyla—Horses, rhinos, etc.	5	46	1	Caprimulgiformes—Frogmouths	2	4	0
Artiodactyla—Cattle, sheep, deer, antelope, etc.	26	419	55	Coraciiformes—Kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, hornbills, etc.	14	53	10
Totals	133	1,842	553	Piciformes—Barbets, toucans, woodpeckers	5	5	0
				Passeriformes—Perching birds	68	167	6
				Totals	284	1,105	63
BIRDS				REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS			
Struthioniformes—Ostriches	1	2	0	Chelonia—Turtles	46	411	29
Rheiformes—Rheas	1	1	0	Crocodylia—Alligators, caimans, crocodiles	10	278	1
Casuariiformes—Cassowaries, emu	3	5	0				