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WHAT IS FAZA?



**Grant's zebra**  
*Equus quagga boehmi*

 © Opel-Zoo

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## WHAT IS EAZA?

In the last decades, and more gradually over the centuries before, humankind has been developing its technologies and societies to dominate the planet and improve our lives. This development has made life significantly easier and more rewarding for many of us, but it has come at a devastating cost to the other species with whom we share the space.

The latest estimate of this cost is that animal species are going extinct a thousand times quicker than would be the case if humans were not so successful at shaping their environment – a success that if it continues will surely end the existence of not only many of our most iconic and beloved species, but also the lesser known species that shape their ecosystems and allow human life to continue. With the many pressures that the world's authorities face to continue to improve the lives of their citizens, the long view that will help us reverse the tide of destruction is not always present in government or among the people that it represents. Plainly, we need to increase people's understanding of the relationship between our ways of living and their effects on the long-term future of the planet; but it's also evident that we need to protect animal and plant species until we come to our collective senses and learn to live more sustainably. We also need to know more about how to do better in education and conservation through scientific research, and we need to manage insurance populations of animals so that whatever the short-term pressures, the possibility remains to save their species and rebuild their wild populations.

There is therefore an urgent need for education about nature and sustainability, intervention in policymaking to ensure that nature is part of the political conversation, conservation both in the field and remote from it, and scientific inquiry to make our efforts count more. All of these functions are, uniquely, to be found in specialist institutions across Europe, Western Asia and beyond. These institutions are accredited zoos and aquariums, and in our region, they are represented and coordinated by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA).

EAZA's activities pool the resources of over 400 Members to make zoos and aquariums active and effective centres of excellence. Our Members work together as the only dedicated network of such institutions in the region, and since our foundation in 1992 we have developed a suite of scientifically based methods that allow zoos and aquariums to play a central role in the conservation of species, while also increasing public understanding of the webs of life and the role we all need to play in protecting our living planet.

Run from an Executive Office in Amsterdam and with experts working at all of the zoos and aquariums in our network, EAZA designed and administers a state of the art system of species-specific *ex situ* conservation programmes; monitors and works to improve the care and welfare of animals in our institutions; collaborates on educational resources and approaches to increase the effective spread of biodiversity and sustainability knowledge; engages with governments and other partners at all levels to ensure that the voice of nature is heard, recognized and cherished; helps non-Member zoos and aquariums to find their own place and increase their effectiveness as conservationists and educators; encourage and guide scientific research across and between disciplines; and ensures that every Member is working at the same high level through a suite of guiding documents backed by a robust peer review system.

In short, EAZA Members have created a vibrant community of zoos and aquariums that are recognized by partners as diverse as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the European Commission, the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and many others as specialists in species conservation and public engagement.

EAZA Members act as the interface between communities across Europe and Western Asia and the natural world both locally and on the other side of the world. We make it possible for people to experience the thrill of seeing wild animals and then act to protect them. Our Members and accredited zoos and aquariums across the world have saved numerous species that would otherwise have gone extinct and are working to protect many others, either directly through *ex situ* conservation and support for *in situ* conservation, or indirectly through education, research or representation. We care for animal species both familiar and obscure, large and small, terrestrial, airborne or aquatic through Best Practice Guidelines informed by animal welfare science, and share our passion for all of them as widely as we can, both in person and via the latest communications technologies. We reintroduce animals back into habitats that we know can support them, and many of our Members work to restore habitats that currently cannot. We employ thousands of highly qualified professionals working across an extraordinary range of disciplines and areas of expertise, and we bring significant economic advantages to our communities along the way.

The commitment of the founders of EAZA in 1992 was to work together to ensure that zoos and aquariums make a truly valuable contribution to nature and their communities. This is a mission that evolves with the state of our knowledge, and we are committed to a process of continual development across every area of zoo and aquarium operations. Our communities and our planet need the skills and passion that we gather in our institutions and across our network. We are EAZA, and this book is aimed at introducing the main aspects of our work so that you the reader can also be involved in our mission. Welcome to the largest regional zoo and aquarium association in the world: welcome to an established network of progressive zoos and aquariums saving species together with you.

