



European Zoos unveil revolutionary new breeding programmes

Amsterdam, 19 June 2018: Following several years of consultation, discussion and planning, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) announces the first nine EAZA Ex Situ Programmes (EEP) (population management programmes) for its 400 plus Member zoos and aquariums. The new EEPs, all for canid (dog & hyena) species, reflect a revolutionary new approach to the monitoring and management of animals at Europe's most progressive zoological institutions; this approach recommends strategies for the protection of zoo populations based on the specific roles that individual species can play in conservation, research, or education. Until now, population management and breeding at zoos has been conducted on a "one size fits all" approach however, the expanding diversity of species who can benefit from population management has meant that a new set of methods are required.

Some zoo animals may be critically endangered; some may have been driven from a specific habitat. The public may have preconceptions about some species that hamper conservation and fundraising efforts. Some animals are emblematic of their habitat, shaping their environment by the evolutionary niche they occupy. Others may be bred as part of efforts to reintroduce animals into the wild, or to raise awareness of conservation issues that may not be well understood by the public or legislators. It is because of this wide variety of issues that EAZA, more than thirty years after the establishment of the first EEPs ("European Endangered species Programme" in the original title) has conducted a full evaluation of the methods and reasons for managing zoo populations of different species. The new style EEPs will increase the focus on the contribution that zoo animals can make to overcoming these obstacles and supporting better public education, better field conservation, better insurance populations, and better research in European zoos and beyond.

"If we look at the Hyena species which will have their own EEPs from now on, we can see that they have a bad name with the public. The role of the new EEPs will be to show that these fascinating creatures have a fascinating social life, and a role to play in removing disease carrying carcasses from the savannah," says Dr. Bengt Holst, Chair of the EAZA EEP Committee which oversaw the reforms to the EEP system: "we hope that in the future, the word hyena will not be used as an insult, but will instead be emblematic of the incredible variety of life, and how each species contributes to the health of the world's ecosystems. The EEP will be instrumental in this process in Europe."

EEPs on the new model have been set up for the following species: Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*), Maned wolf (*Chrysocyon brachyurus*), Dhole (*Cuon alpinus*), Painted dog (*Lycaon pictus*), Bat-eared fox (*Otocyon megalotis*), Bush dog (*Speothos venaticus*), Fennec fox (*Vulpes zerda*), Spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*), and Striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*).

These EEPs are only the first of up to four hundred such programmes which will be established or converted from the old system over the next five years. This is a bold step for zoos and aquariums, and one which illustrates the ongoing commitment of EAZA and its Members to make the strongest possible collective contribution to conservation, education and research. The new system also illustrates clearly the continuous progress of EAZA zoological institutions from menageries back in the last century to scientific centres of excellence for European communities – a progress which will continue to evolve over the decades to come.

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About the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria

EAZA is a non-profit conservation organisation, with Members across Europe and the Middle East. Its mission is to facilitate cooperation within the European zoo and aquarium community towards the goals of public education and engagement, scientific research and nature conservation. EAZA believes that zoos and aquariums have a strong role to play in the conservation of nature and wildlife both at our Member institutions and out in the field, and believes that wild animals in human care are central to this mission.

EAZA is Europe's key centre of excellence for scientific knowledge about wild animal welfare and management, and one of the continent's foremost environmental education networks. With more than 400 Members in 47 countries, of which 26 are EU Member States, EAZA is the world's largest regional zoo association and is represented in EU Member States through National Zoo Associations and individual zoos.