



the future of

A WILD IDEA

2020 IMPACT REPORT



celebrating & building on

**125
YEARS**



**WE DEDICATE THIS REPORT
TO THE COUNTLESS PEOPLE
WHO HAVE BUILT THE ZOO
INTO WHAT IT IS TODAY —
AND TO THOSE WHO ARE
CARRYING THIS WILD
IDEA INTO THE FUTURE.**



the birth of a

WILD IDEA

Unexpectedly and without any fanfare, a wild idea sprang to life in 1895.

When the City of Omaha purchased the land for Riverview Park, it was setting the foundation for what was to become Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium. What began as a simple gathering place for picnics, fishing and baseball games has grown steadily over 125 years to achieve its status today as one of the world's best zoos.

As the years passed, picnics became throngs, so that last year, the Zoo welcomed 1.9 million visitors through our gates. Our educational programs reached 150,000 children. And 14,000 animals were under our care. Now, in this challenging, unprecedented year of 2020, we mark a transition point — from where we've been to where we need to go. In this report, you'll see how we continue to define what it means to be a global leader in animal conservation, care and education.



Dedicated to the sustainability of animals and their habitats.

In 1896, the first animals the Zoo acquired included a moose purchased for \$150 and some pond fish that cost one dollar — total. Since then, we've expanded our range and goals considerably. Now, global conservation lives as the wild, beating heart of our mission. Our conservation program dedicates our people, expertise and significant financial resources to the long-term survival and sustainability of species in zoos, and in their natural ecosystems and habitats around the world. This bold mission encompasses a wide range of disciplines, such as reproductive science, comparative nutrition, genetics and veterinary medicine.

our conservation efforts at a glance



We support 60 conservation projects that help protect endangered species in Madagascar, Africa, Asia, North and South America, and our oceans.



The Zoo's total contributions toward conservation exceed \$2.8 million. This includes \$473,000 toward conservation science that advances animal care and species sustainability, and \$2,387,000 toward projects working to protect species in their natural habitats.

Our conservation department benefits from the expertise of eight Ph.D. scientists and seven Master's-level scientists.

REPRODUCTIVE SCIENCES

In the very early days, births at the Zoo typically meant a new baby deer, fox or badger. Our commitment to ensuring the ongoing survival and growth of animal species hasn't changed — just our scope.

Today, our own conservation scientists are spearheading advanced reproductive techniques for felids, rhinos, reptiles and amphibians.

This includes artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization and even embryo transfer.

Tigers are a special passion. We are the only Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) facility to build a dedicated, off-exhibit tiger-breeding center to improve the sustainability of zoo-managed Amur tigers. Our Tiger Genome Resource Bank has already banked the genetic material of more than 43 AZA-managed tigers (across all three managed subspecies) from 29 different zoos. The goal is to bank 100% of tigers in the Species Survival Plan as part of a broader effort to use artificial insemination to maximize genetic diversity within zoos as a backstop against extinction.





COMPARATIVE NUTRITION

Part of the everyday duties of Riverview Park's original sole caretaker was the feeding of all the animals, from coyotes to mountain lions. Our interest and focus in animal nutrition has obviously come a long way since then. Our program in comparative nutrition leads current research in the field, seeking to analyze and maximize the impact of nutrition in a number of areas, such as general animal behavior, carnivore diets, reproductive health in felids, and fish propagation.

Our vice president of conservation, Dr. Cheryl Morris, brings unique expertise in carnivore clinical nutrition and serves as clinical nutrition advisor to Species Survival Plans. Currently, she is working with the Maned Wolf SSP to correct nutrition-related issues affecting the sustainability of that population.

CONSERVATION GENETICS

The world of the Zoo originally confined itself to less than 100 acres of parkland on the banks of the Missouri River. Now, the island of Madagascar off the southwest coast of Africa is as much a part of the Zoo's mission as Omaha, Nebraska. Our work in Madagascar has become a flagship program of our conservation genetics team as they research ways to improve wildlife-management efforts and reduce the risk of extinction.

Approximately 90% of the plants and animals found in Madagascar exist nowhere else on the planet, and all of these are being driven to extinction due to deforestation, hunting and the pet trade. In response, the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership (MBP) was created in 2010 as a Malagasy NGO dedicated to the protection of Madagascar's wildlife and forests. Reforestation efforts of the program reached a 2019 goal of three million trees planted with assistance from the Malagasy communities surrounding our four research sites.



current genetic research initiatives



Discovered 24 species of lemur, two chameleon, and one gecko.

Sequenced the genome of the greater bamboo lemur.

Analyzed paternity of multiple species including Galapagos tortoises and African elephants.



Conducted behavioral studies on aye-ayes, greater bamboo lemurs and northern sportive lemurs.

Studied ecotourism impact on behaviors of diademed sifakas.



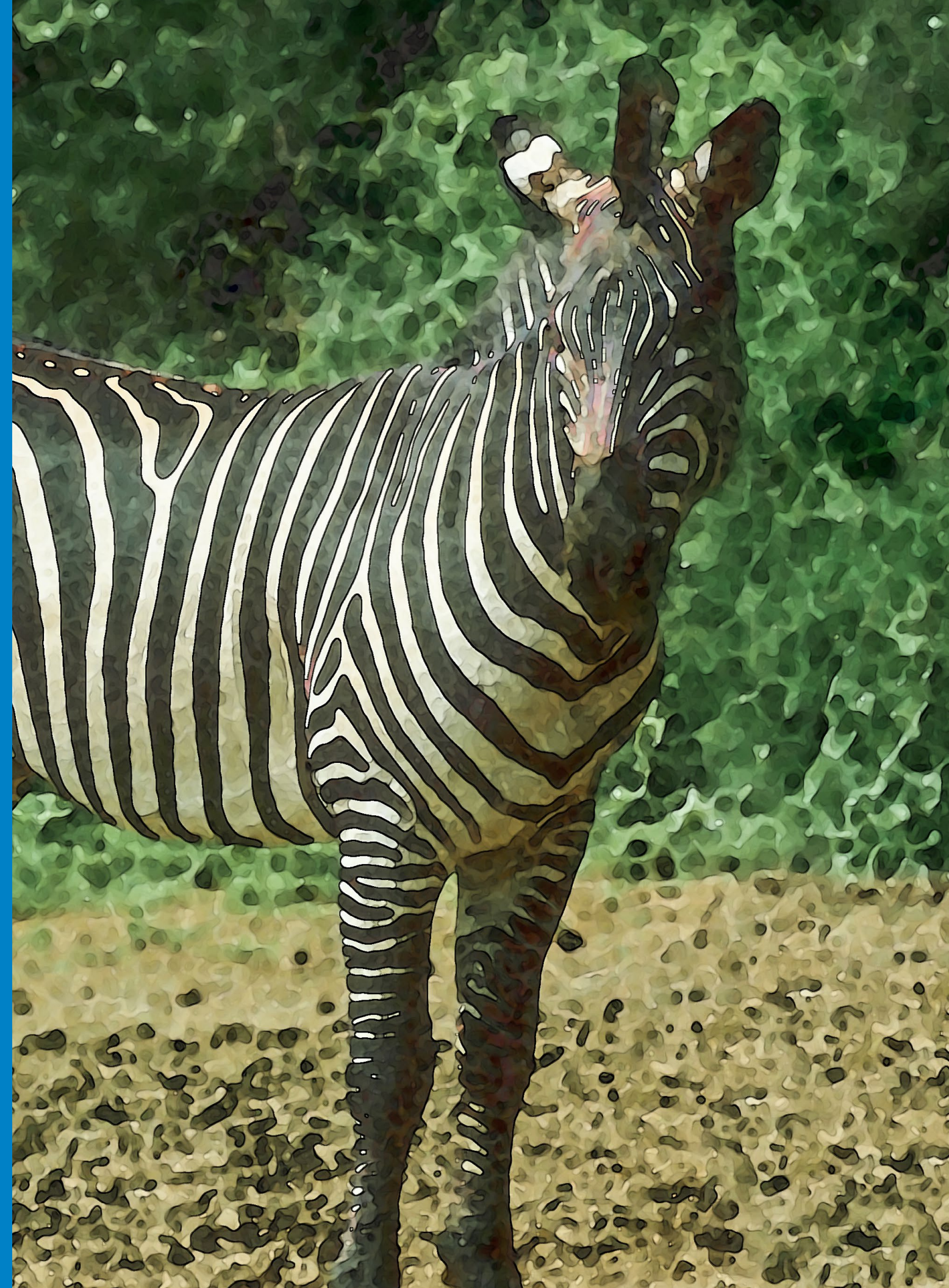
CONSERVATION MEDICINE

In the early days of the Riverview Park Zoo, local veterinarians and benefactors provided care to the small collection of animals. Today, our exemplary staff veterinarians and veterinary technicians not only serve the many thousands of animals at the Zoo, but are often asked to provide their unique skills and expertise on field conservation projects far outside our gates.

In 2019, our team worked with Nebraska Game and Parks and South Dakota State University to safely capture and evaluate 48 female bighorn sheep, which often suffer from complications of pneumonia, resulting in very high lamb mortality. Our team administered medications and conducted ultrasounds on ewes to confirm pregnancies. Transponders were then placed in ewes to notify researchers of lambing-time, so they can offer medical support to bring more healthy lambs into the world.

RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

The wild idea that began 125 years ago has evolved in directions no one could have imagined. In fact, sometimes the wild we conserve today is planted in the ground, not roaming on four paws. Our rare and endangered plants program works with up to 150 species, with a focus on plants from the United States, Bermuda, Madagascar, South Africa, Panama, Costa Rica and China. Seeds and spores from rare plants are sent to our lab from around the world and cultured in-vitro in sterile conditions. When the plants are large enough to survive in the wild, they can be reintroduced into their environment.





EDUCATION

For our wild idea to have a future, we must connect the next generation to the wild. To help them understand that what's at stake in our work is to preserve habitats and ecosystems. To stabilize and increase populations of endangered and threatened animals. We must teach them how our future and the future of the wild are one and the same. That's why our wild idea has always been to educate. It's the part of our mission that, just maybe, is the most critical of all.

HERE IS WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

LAST YEAR



3,548 CLASSES

Conducted 3,548 classes and outreach programs, reaching 134,658 people.

50,000 HOURS

Our volunteers put in more than 50,000 hours of donated time, resulting in more than 550,000 visitor interactions.

157 CLASSES

Our Wildlife Safari Park in Ashland, Nebraska conducted 157 classes and outreach programs, reaching 10,052 people.

1,359,065 GUESTS

Reached 1,359,065 guests through scheduled talks and interactive conservation stations on Zoo grounds.

A wild idea lives when we all know we belong to the wild.

The celebration of our 125th anniversary is about the future, not the past. In facing probably the most challenging year in our history, the importance of our mission has come in to even sharper relief. We must keep moving forward. In these all-to-brief pages, you've seen where we've been, where we are and where we are going. What we ask of you is simple. Be part of the story. Help shape our future. Embrace a wild idea.





3701 S 10th Street
omahazoofoundation.org
402.738.2073

