



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIA

TAG Reports 2023



CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	3	21 SONGBIRD	25
GLOSSARY	4	22 MONOTREME AND MARSUPIAL	26
1 TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATE	5	23 PROSIMIAN	27
2 FRESHWATER TELEOST	6	24 CALLITRICHID	28
3 MARINE TELEOST	7	25 LARGER NEW WORLD MONKEY	30
4 ELASMOBRANCH	8	26 AFRO-EURASIAN MONKEY	30
5 CORAL	9	27 GIBBON	31
6 JELLYFISH	9	28 GREAT APE	32
7 AMPHIBIAN	10	29 SMALL MAMMAL	34
8 REPTILE	11	30 CANID AND HYAENID	35
9 RATITE	13	31 BEAR	36
10 PENGUIN	14	32 SMALL CARNIVORE	37
11 CICONIIFORMES AND PHOENICOPTERIFORMES	15	33 FELID	39
12 WATERFOWL AND PELECANIFORMES	16	34 MARINE MAMMAL	40
13 RAPTOR	17	35 ELEPHANT	41
14 GALLIFORMES	18	36 EQUID	42
15 GRUIFORMES	20	37 RHINOCEROS	44
16 CHARADRIIFORMES	21	38 TAPIR AND SUIFORM	45
17 PIGEON AND DOVE	21	39 CATTLE AND CAMELID	45
18 PARROT	22	40 DEER	46
19 TOUCAN AND TURACO	23	41 ANTELOPE AND GIRAFFID	48
20 HORNBILL	24	42 CAPRINAE	49
		BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES 2023	51

Cover image

Four years after their return to the wild – thanks to the joint efforts of the Government of Rwanda, the organisation African Parks, the EAZA Rhino Taxon Advisory Group, the Black rhinoceros EAZA Ex situ Programme and its participating zoos – two zoo-born black rhinos (*Diceros bicornis*) successfully bred. What great news for the survival prospect of the species! On the picture, female Jasiri with her calf born in 2023 © Drew Bantlin

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37 RHINOCEROS

TAG Chair: Lars Versteeg (Beekse Bergen, Hilvarenbeek, the Netherlands) • **Vice Chair:** Katharina Herrmann (Berlin Zoo, Berlin, Germany)

INTRODUCTION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The vision and mission of the EAZA Rhinoceros TAG is to have a healthy, viable population of free ranging and intensively managed rhinos ranging through intact ecosystems, where they are valued and cherished both locally and globally, and to ensure all populations in human care are healthy, self-sustaining and genetically viable and are capable of being an effective tool in support of rhino conservation in the wild.

In 2023, the TAG pushed through with plans progressing towards a 'One Plan Approach' in collaboration with every established rhino organisation worldwide. This is a long-term effort of the TAG. After multiple brainstorm sessions, many actions were captured for further discussion. For now, the actions are centred around the *ex situ* rhino community and linked to the EAZA Rhino RCP and LTMPs. Per species, these actions are now being divided and subgroups created for further follow up. The *in situ* angle will, in the future, be further incorporated aiding the creation of a comprehensive plan.



White rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) © Borås Zoo

POPULATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENTS

In the EEP for the white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*), development is consistent and very positive. However, there are future challenges. The number of births has outnumbered the number of deaths for many years in a row possibly creating a future surplus challenge. In 2023, the population grew to 359 animals (146 males and 213 females) due to 18 births and only five deaths. The EEP and its participants need to become extremely creative. All participants are asked to create separation exhibits for potential surplus, and the EEP is pro-actively searching for additional holders. The balance between breeding (for health and behaviour reasons next to demographic reasons) and maximum capacity is tricky. Contraception is not easy, and one risks losing breeding animals for life.

The black rhinoceros EEP population continued to grow slowly during 2023. With the death of the last Southern black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis minor*) during the year, the EEP population is now predominantly composed of Eastern black rhinoceros (*D.b. michaeli*). The results of a genetic study on the EEP population indicate that there is a low level of genetic mixing in the population, introduced through the import of a 50% *D.b. minor* male from Japan in 2000. The number of international transfers remained low, as was the case during the COVID-19 years, however the urgent welfare issues resulting from a large new zoo facility being cancelled were mostly resolved. Work continues to get the Memorandum of Understanding approved for the proposed translocation of three females to the Grumeti Reserve in Tanzania. A new request for two males to be transferred to the Thaba Tholo Reserve in South Africa is being reviewed and there has been a request for a male from the Japanese black rhinoceros Coordinator. The population remains an extremely important resource for conservation translocations to Africa and new holders are being sought to maintain genetically healthy sustainable population.

Despite the breeding recommendations issued by the EEP Coordinator for the greater one horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) in February, there was only one birth in 2023: a male at Parc Animalier de Branféré (France). The skewed sex ratio – 44 males and 43 females as of 31 December 2023 - and the increasing numbers of male calves are a serious problem in this EEP, and solutions will need to be found to house single bulls or bull groups. Given that about 15 of these 43 females are post reproductive or have long lasting problems with breeding, the sex ratio is very problematic.

In autumn, the greater one-horned rhinoceros LTMP was published. In addition, a task force was formed for this species. The Vet Advisor, Fabia Wyss (Basel Zoo, Switzerland), has developed an information sheet on the use of contraception in greater one-horned rhinoceros which is available from the EEP Coordinator upon request. She has also produced a research proposal to examine the EEP population for antibodies and antigens of EHV1 and EHV4. This was sent to all holders with the request to collect samples.



Greater one-horned rhinoceroses (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) © Basel Zoo

COLLABORATIONS AND MEETINGS

During the EAZA Annual Conference, a meeting was organised with Save the Rhino International and included nutritional, veterinary and educational presentations. The Rhinoceros TAG values all the worldwide cooperation and is encouraging all holders to join forces for rhinoceros conservation.

Next to the cooperation with Save the Rhino International and the International Rhino Foundation, the three EEPs have strong collaborations to rhinoceros conservation partners all over the world. The TAG is pushing very hard to increase global cooperation and regularly exchanges information with the AZA Rhino TAG. The EAZA rhino *ex situ* community is represented in the IUCN African Rhino SG. Topics like rewilding, sustainable use, legislation and wildlife mitigation are only a few examples of joint effort documents worked on.

CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH

As said before, as part of the cooperation between EAZA and Tanzania, preparations are ongoing to establish an Memorandum of Understanding and transfer three zoo-born Eastern black rhinoceros to Grumeti. Another initiative is the cooperation with Thabo Tholo to send unrelated males to their game reserve.

38 TAPIR AND SUIFORM

No report was submitted by the EAZA Tapir and Suiform TAG for 2023.

39 CATTLE AND CAMELID

TAG Chair: James Burton (Chester Zoo, Chester, United Kingdom) • **Vice Chair:** Marcel Alaze (Münster Zoo, Münster, Germany)

INTRODUCTION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The EAZA Cattle and Camelid TAG had another successful year and completed many of the priorities set for this two-year period.

New members joined the TAG bringing additional expertise to strengthen our work. The TAG has a new Vet Advisor,

Rebecca Amos (Highland Wildlife Park, UK). We also have two new Research Advisors, Lewis Rowden and Sam Turvey (ZSL London Zoo, UK), who will support the TAG in developing a number of research projects and advise on other projects.

With these new enthusiastic TAG members, we look forward to achieving much more in 2024. Priorities for 2024-2025 are currently being developed.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENTS

Lena Bockreiß (Munich Zoo, Germany) became the new Vicuña EEP Coordinator and International Studbook keeper at the end of 2023, following a thorough handover from Christian Schmidt (Zürich Zoo, Switzerland). We acknowledge Christian's huge input to the TAG, being EAZA's longest serving Coordinator.

Nadja Lane (Jersey Zoo, UK) took over the European bison EEP Coordinator role and is working closely with Douglas Richardson (Peak Wildlife Park, UK) on transition.

The review of the gaur (*Bos gaurus*) status as a phase out species is involving all holders and is on-going. We held a call to hear thoughts about future management during the year and discussions will be completed in 2024.

COLLABORATIONS AND MEETINGS

Presentations on *in situ* activities for tamaraw (*Bubalus mindorensis*), wild camel (*Camelus ferus*), saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*), anoa (*Bubalus spp.*) and banteng (*Bos javanicus*) were given at the TAG meeting at the EAZA Annual Conference.

The GSMPs for anoa and banteng held the fifth international awareness raising day 'Action Indonesia Day'. Lots of visitor events and activities were conducted by EAZA Members. Many TAG members are working with our Indonesian zoo colleagues to support cooperative breeding, animal welfare, and fundraising.

The tamaraw became an EEP in 2022, for EAZA Members to support conservation efforts in its range in the Philippines. A Tamaraw Conservation Workshop was held in 2023 with government, local and international stakeholders to work towards developing a feasibility assessment for translocation or *ex situ* management, using decision science. The assessment will result in options provided to the Philippine government for the conservation of the species going forward. The long-term aim is a tamaraw meta-population that is thriving, while ensuring local communities and indigenous peoples are respected and able to live alongside them.

In August 2023, Zoo Berlin and Tierpark Berlin (Germany) together with WWF hosted a celebration commemorating the 100th anniversary of the efforts by zoos and select private holders to save the European bison (*Bison bonasus*) from extinction. This anniversary was not just a landmark for European bison conservation, it also represented the 100th anniversary of the zoo community's first coordinated effort to save a species.

The TAG Chair contributed to selection of priority species for