

Mission Statement

The Indianapolis Zoo empowers people and communities, both locally and globally, to advance animal conservation.



Indianapolis Zoo

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Global Center for Species Survival Created at Zoo *Partnership between Indianapolis Zoo, International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission will support thousands of conservation experts*

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — A groundbreaking partnership agreement has been reached that creates the first Global Center for Species Survival (GCSS), to be located at the Indianapolis Zoo in Indianapolis, Ind., United States. Dr. Rob Shumaker, president of the Indianapolis Zoological Society, Inc. and leaders from the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) [Species Survival Commission](#) (SSC) signed into effect an agreement that establishes the new GCSS. The signing took place on Oct. 7 during the IUCN's SSC Leaders Meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Opening in 2020, and made possible through a \$4 million start-up grant from [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#), the GCSS will solidify the Zoo's role internationally as a hub for species conservation efforts. In the 70-year existence of the IUCN, the world's largest and most important environmental conservation organization, this partnership is the first of its kind. It broadens the capacity of the SSC to support leading conservationists as they tackle critical issues the planet is facing, including loss of biodiversity, global climate change and illegal wildlife trade.

"It's no exaggeration to say that every significant conservation project in the world will be touched by the Global Center for Species Survival," said Shumaker. "This is the next important step in our Zoo's commitment to advancing animal conservation, and it fundamentally transforms our ability to make a genuine difference in protecting the natural world."

The SSC, a science-based network with representation from almost every country in the world, formulates action plans to save species and provides information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services and their support to human livelihoods. This information is used to develop and define the Red List, which identifies and evaluates species threatened with extinction. The work of the IUCN also informs the United Nations on worldwide species conservation issues.

Michael Crowther, who will retire as Indianapolis Zoo CEO at the end of 2019, worked with SSC leaders in 2017 to develop the concept as a way to accelerate the progress from conservation needs assessment and plan development to concrete action programs that will truly save species. Through this partnership, the Zoo will expand its ability to connect science and scientists with the public, as it has for decades through internationally recognized exhibits and programming, and through the [Indianapolis Prize](#), the world's leading award for animal conservation.

"The Indianapolis Prize identifies conservation champions who aren't just trying hard but actually succeeding," said Crowther, "and the Global Center for Species Survival will apply an outcome-based project planning model throughout the world while also making it clear to the

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public and policy makers that there are proven paths to success. The natural world has serious challenges, but we also have the science and the people to address them.”

The GCSS will employ a team of nine experts based at the Indianapolis Zoo who will enhance the efforts of more than 9,000 SSC wildlife experts worldwide working to save threatened species. The Zoo and SSC are in the process of recruiting these new team members and constructing a new operating space within the Zoo. Along with being home to the team’s offices, the GCSS will also be the location for international meetings and conferences, furthering economic benefit to the community and solidifying the Zoo’s efforts to make Indianapolis one of the world’s most conservation-literate cities.

“The Indianapolis Zoo fosters meaningful learning about conservation science by helping visitors connect their experiences with animals to conservation work that is protecting animals around the world,” said Ronni Kloth, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for community development. “The Global Center for Species Survival promises to further strengthen these efforts while enhancing the Zoo’s national and global reputation.”

“The Global Center for Species Survival represents a turning point for global species conservation,” said Dr. Jon Paul Rodriguez, chair of the IUCN SSC. “The IUCN SSC strongly believes that this partnership will change the way in which the global network of leading conservationists works together to save species. Indianapolis will be a hub for world-leading expertise and capacity building by working to bridge the gap between experts across the conservation spectrum; from zoo professionals, field practitioners, academics, to government officials.”

Famed conservationist and 2018 Indianapolis Prize Winner Dr. Russ Mittermeier is also the chair of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group. Mittermeier has seen firsthand how the Indianapolis Zoo has had a positive impact on making real change for wildlife.

“The Indianapolis Prize has demonstrated that the frequently complex and esoteric concept of conservation can be understood by the general public and may also be appealing and exciting when presented in an accessible manner,” said Mittermeier.

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Media Note

Multimedia to accompany this story is available [here](#).

About the Indianapolis Zoo

The Indianapolis Zoo empowers people and communities, both locally and globally, to advance animal conservation. Located in White River State Park downtown, the Indianapolis Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the American Alliance of Museums as a zoo, aquarium and botanical garden. Visit IndianapolisZoo.com

About the IUCN Species Survival Commission

With over 9,000 members, the Species Survival Commission (SSC) is the largest of the six expert commissions of IUCN and enables IUCN to influence, encourage and assist societies to conserve biodiversity by building knowledge on the status and threats to species, providing advice, developing policies and guidelines, facilitating conservation planning, and catalysing conservation action. Visit www.iucn.org/theme/species/about/species-survival-commission

[About Lilly Endowment Inc.](#)

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation based in Indianapolis. The Endowment was created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family - J. K. Lilly Sr. and sons Eli

and J.K. Jr. - through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with its founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of [community development](#), [education](#) and [religion](#). Although the Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion, it maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.