



AZA's Strategic Plan for Thriving Elephant Populations

Talking Points

Our Shared Commitment to Elephants at Home and Abroad

- The power of being able to see, smell, and hear an elephant is a transformative experience. As people understand the plight of elephants in the wild, they are moved to help us save them. AZA-accredited members are committed to ensuring a future for elephants.
- AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are often the only way children can connect with wildlife and nature firsthand. The vast majority of people will only ever experience an elephant at a zoo, where they can also learn how to take action to help the species in other parts of the world.
- As an AZA-accredited zoo, the public can be assured that our elephants are receiving exceptional care, with a strong elephant wellbeing program that includes nutrition, welfare, exercise, and enrichment.
- Thousands of elephants are illegally killed every year to fuel the global demand for elephant ivory and elephant products. If poaching rates continue, the long-term survival of elephants is uncertain.
- By visiting elephants in AZA-accredited facilities, guests help make possible the field conservation, anti-poaching, research, habitat restoration, reduction of human-elephant conflicts, and community-based initiatives necessary to protect wild populations.
- AZA facilities' conservation efforts begin at home with the elephants in their care, but their efforts extend to Asia and Africa to ensure a future for elephants worldwide. AZA-accredited members continue to answer the call to action by providing support to elephant conservation around the world. Each year, AZA-accredited facilities invest millions of dollars to support hundreds of field conservation projects that benefit elephants.

Creating a Paradigm Shift

- In the face of declining populations in human care, the AZA community has committed to a collective effort of to secure a future for elephants in accredited zoos.

- In 2021, AZA formed the Elephant Strategy Task Force with representatives from various stakeholders, including the Animal Population Management Committee, Elephant Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), current and former elephant holding facilities, and others.
- The Task Force spent two years gathering and reviewing data while engaging with the AZA elephant community. The resulting recommendation from the AZA elephant community is a paradigm shift for elephants in AZA facilities -- a commitment to reverse the declining population trend and assure a future where elephants thrive at AZA-accredited zoos.
- In July 2023, the AZA Elephant Strategy was approved by the AZA Board of Directors, and funding was committed to support near-term implementation.
- As a community, we now have a shared vision for elephants in our care, a collective picture of success, and metrics to track our progress.

Strategic Priorities for Thriving Elephant Populations

1. *Ensuring elephants thrive in our care.*
 - We go from individual care and welfare standards to going above and beyond those standards, ensuring elephants thrive in our care.
2. *Collaborative, TAG-led decision-making*
 - We go from individual facility decision-making to collective, TAG-led decision-making.
3. *Clear expectations and accountability*
 - We go from individual responsibility to clear expectations and effective accountability within the AZA community.
4. *Centralized Resources and Information*
 - We go from dispersed to centralized resources and information.
5. *A Unified Voice for Elephants*
 - We go from individual voices for elephants to a collective, unified authority.

Next Steps

- The strategy is complete, but the work is just starting.
- Over the next two years you can expect to see work on the tenets of the strategy, including:
 - Reviewing and revising elephant accreditation standards and drafting an Animal Care Manual.
 - Assessing and documenting community needs and assets for elephants.
 - Reimagining the AZA Elephant Program Annual Report.

- Formalizing the Breeding and Transfer Plan process, including developing criteria to guide the process for placement of reproductively viable animals as they become available.
 - Developing facility-specific, long-range plans for elephants.
 - Creating an elephant communications toolkit for facilities with elephants.
 - Establishing an African elephant SAFE program to facilitate collaborative conservation.
- A call to action:
 - Read the strategy.
 - Ask questions.
 - Be engaged.
 - Turn commitments into actions.
 - Work collaboratively on positive storytelling.