



NEWS RELEASE

- For immediate release -

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Calgary Zoo Head of Conservation Research receives international recognition

As species around the globe vanish at an unprecedented rate, organizations such as the Calgary Zoo are stepping in with their knowledge and expertise to help conserve and recover the animals and plants that so desperately need our help.

Calgary, AB - Dr. Axel Moehenschlager, Head of the Centre for Conservation Research (CCR) at the Calgary Zoo has received international attention from the foremost global conservation organization. Moehenschlager was appointed North American and Caribbean Section Chair for the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Reintroduction Specialist Group, the recognized global authority for information relating to species status. Moehenschlager's experience and the success of his team in species reintroduction, such as the recovery of swift foxes in Canada, has earned the respect of other conservation scientists.

Reintroductions are a method of returning species to their historical ranges through either breeding in facilities such as zoos or by moving them from other parts of their range. "Successful reintroduction offers hope for the future of many endangered species in regions where they have become extinct in the wild" Moehenschlager says.

The IUCN is the top international environmental-focused organization and the Reintroduction Specialist Group supports reintroduction efforts throughout the world. Its role is to provide scientific expertise and evaluations on how reintroductions should be conducted, establish a network linking reintroduction practitioners, and to revise and create new guidelines for reintroducing animals inside or outside their historic ranges. This role will focus on reintroductions that pertain to ecosystems throughout the continent and the Caribbean region.

"Humans have been moving animals around for millennia – sometimes in ways that benefit nature, sometimes not", says Moehenschlager. In some cases, introduced animals have wreaked havoc on ecosystems and displaced native species – for example rabbits and rats in Australia and New Zealand. "Our goal in the IUCN Reintroduction Group is to create new guidelines that tackle these difficult issues", he explains. "It will definitely be a challenge, but I believe there is hope and I'm excited to have been asked to contribute."

Dr. Moehrenschlager spearheads an extensive conservation research portfolio with national and international partners. His extensive experience in reintroductions spans more than twenty years. Since 2003, he has led a team of scientists under the Husky Energy Endangered Species Program at the CCR, who among other research, study ways to increase the success of reintroduction programs for many North American species including whooping cranes, burrowing owls, black-footed ferrets and swift foxes. That experience is a major reason why Moehrenschlager has been asked to share his expertise beyond Canada's borders.

“While reintroductions can offer incredible hope for the recovery of an ecosystem, our conservation challenges are far greater than bringing a single species back from the brink of extinction”, explains Moehrenschlager. “The best thing we can do is to prevent a situation where we need to reintroduce species in the first place. We need to use all the tools at our disposal, such as protecting habitats, reducing threats to wildlife and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources that harmonize our needs and those of nature.”

Moehrenschlager takes over from the late Dr. Devra Kleiman, who was best known for her efforts to reintroduce endangered golden lion tamarins in Brazil.

Key supporters of reintroduction research programs at the Centre for Conservation Research include:

Canadian Wildlife Federation, Cenovus Energy, Government of Canada, Husky Energy, Parks Canada Agency, Wildlife Preservation Canada, World Wildlife Fund

Media Information: For interviews with Dr. Axel Moehrenschlager, please see his contact details below. You can also reach Trish Exton-Parder at (403) 232-9381.

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The Calgary Zoo is part of a professional, accredited association and member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) comprised of caring, trusted experts committed to ensuring that many endangered and threatened species are part of the world's future. AZA and CAZA advocate on behalf of animals with a unified and consistent voice, and collaborate with others committed to their long-term survival. The Calgary Zoo participates in many Species Survival Plans (SSP), a network among accredited institutions designed to breed endangered species in captivity to ensure the best possible genetic diversity and maintain healthy populations in human care. Through our conservation, education and research programs, many animals in our care play an essential role in the survival of their species in the wild.

The Calgary Zoological Society is a charitable organization. Charitable Registration #118824192 RR0001

