



WCS

A Progress Report





We Stand for Wildlife.SM

WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. We focus on protecting the iconic species and places least affected by human impact. Our dedication to wildlife spans more than 120 years, and today we run the world's largest field programs for great ape, elephant, and tiger conservation. We harness a constellation of expertise across our New York zoos and aquarium to conserve wildlife, advance veterinary health, stimulate learning, and inspire action.

This WCS Progress Report provides our generous supporters with updates and insights on core conservation activities.

In this edition, you will find stories that illustrate the growing impact of our zoos and aquarium, including new Andean bear monitoring efforts, shark research in Long Island's Great South Bay, and unique local educational programs. This report also includes updates on several ongoing field conservation efforts, including elephant monitoring in Mozambique, iguana health screenings on Grand Cayman Island, and tiger reintroduction in the Russian Far East.



WCS Parks: Gateways to the Wild

In an increasingly urbanized world, zoos and aquariums inspire people of all ages to care about nature, and can also make an important mark on the wild. Through dedication, partnerships, and science, WCS's parks advance conservation and help wildlife prevail.

Strengthening Global Impact

WCS is leveraging our 12 decades of experience to help strengthen partnerships among leading zoos and aquariums across the country to expand their role in conservation. Jim Breheny, EVP and General Director for WCS Zoos & Aquarium, has been elected Vice Chair of the Board of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and will serve as Chair of the Board beginning in 2017. In January, our New York Aquarium was elected to the Executive Committee of the Aquarium Conservation Partnership (ACP). Alongside others such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, this important new group aims to use aquariums as powerful tools to influence conservation policy, including strengthening shark conservation legislation, as well as banning microbeads and other harmful plastics that threaten oceans.

WCS has also created a new zoo-based initiative called Partners in Field Conservation. Our hope for this initiative is that, by 2020, we can reach 50 million people across the country and mobilize an additional \$50 million annually for field conservation efforts. While today our 5 New York facilities host more than 4 million visitors annually, we envision WCS's conservation message reaching visitors across the United States at each member institution. 🍷

Our new initiative, Partners in Field Conservation, has three main objectives:

- 1** Strengthen the conservation content and impact of zoo and aquarium exhibitions and education programs across the country.
- 2** Expand investments in field research and conservation programs to protect priority species and landscapes through partnerships.
- 3** Build a national constituency for conservation and mobilize action on key issues that impact wildlife in the U.S. and abroad.



Giving Cottontails a Boost

Since some of us regularly see rabbits dash through our own backyards or local parks, it may come as a surprise that certain rabbit species are under serious threat.

New England cottontail rabbits have lost the majority of their habitats to development and other activities. Today, only 14 percent of the New England cottontail's native range remains. This dramatic decline has led the IUCN to list the species as Vulnerable.

To boost the wild population of New England cottontails, WCS's Queens Zoo started breeding the species in 2015 as part of a collaborative, multi-organizational effort. In the fall, 11 young rabbits—known as kits—were born at the Queens Zoo and sent to their native habitats in New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Once the rabbits were acclimated, biologists released them into suitable forest and thicket-lined habitats where the scientists continue to monitor them. This strategy has already halted the decline and allowed the species

to rebound in certain areas of its range. During a recent review, this stabilization was cited as the reason that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has not declared the species “threatened” or “endangered.” Saving this species also helps save the rabbits’ habitat, benefitting populations of many other at-risk native mammals, birds, and reptiles. 🐾

NEW ENGLAND COTTONTAILS

IUCN Status: **VU VULNERABLE**

14% of native range remains

11 kits reintroduced by WCS Queens Zoo





Bringing Back the Andean Bear

WCS PARKS

In fall 2015, WCS's Queens Zoo introduced Nicole, a three-year-old female Andean bear, to Bouba, a male Andean bear that arrived at the zoo from France in 2013. These animals are one of only a handful of breeding pairs of this species in the nation. They were brought together as part of the Species Survival Plan, a program designed to manage sustainable populations of threatened and endangered species that are managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Andean bear, or spectacled bear, is the only bear species endemic to South America. But over the past several decades, deforestation has caused a dramatic decline in its populations, and recent estimates suggest that fewer than 18,000 of these bears now survive in the wild. This threat will only worsen in coming years as urban populations continue to expand throughout the Andes-Amazon region. To combat the decline, WCS and the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo formed the Andean Bear Conservation Alliance, which focuses conservation efforts on the 12 largest key areas of Andean bear habitat that are most in need of protection.

As part of this conservation effort, WCS scientists are developing new tools and protocols to evaluate and understand the current distribution of bear populations. One example is Colombia's Chingaza National Natural Park, where we detected

a 20 percent reduction of bear occupancy. This drop confirms the need to re-evaluate current management systems to help bear populations bounce back. We have now scaled up the monitoring program and are implementing it throughout the species'

The Andean Bear Conservation Alliance focuses conservation efforts on the 12 largest key areas of Andean bear habitat that are most in need of protection.

range. WCS is also helping to create public education and stewardship programs for local people and organizations that will help build regional support to conserve the Andean bear.

Scott Silver, Director of WCS's Queens Zoo, is a key member of the Andean Bear Conservation Alliance. Another participant is Kira Topik, Program Officer for WCS's Latin America and Caribbean Program, who explains: "The idea is for zoos and others to provide financial support for *in situ* conservation practices for the bears, while also uniting to support knowledge sharing and a network for *ex situ* bear research."

You can see these charismatic bears and support our conservation efforts by visiting the Queens Zoo any time of the year. 🐾



WCS PARKS

Transformation Continues at NYA

With the superstructure of the building complete and the steel framing of the spiral entry erected, the New York Aquarium's *Ocean Wonders: Sharks!* has begun to resemble the architectural marvel hinted at in the renderings. On the exterior, remaining work includes installing the wrap-around shimmer wall and precast concrete paneling, as well as finishing the lighting and other decorative details. Most of the construction activity is now taking place inside. Gallery partition walls are in place and the building's electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems are being installed throughout the facility. Exhibit tanks have been hydro-tested and are now being made watertight. Filtering, monitoring, and other systems are being installed to support the myriad of marine species to come.

Much of the artistic work in the crafting of the exhibits is happening offsite. A team of designers, fabricators, and media developers continue to refine the look and feel of the exhibits to create the right environment for the many complex marine environments that *Ocean Wonders* will showcase. Prototyping and fabrication have begun on the casting of artificial coral, lighting, and audio, just some of the many details of each exhibit that will make *Ocean Wonders* an interactive and highly immersive experience. Visitors will encounter the richness and diversity of marine ecosystems and the vibrant underwater environment just off New York shores. ♡

Visit nyaquarium.com/blog to view renderings of *Ocean Wonders: Sharks!* and more updates on the Campaign for the New York Aquarium and NY Seascape Program.



Restricting the Use of Microbeads

The Microbead-Free Waters Act, signed in December 2015, was a major step forward in improving the health of the nation's ocean, lakes, and rivers. WCS helped disseminate scientific studies showing the negative impacts of plastic pollution to key decision makers, including President Obama and members of Congress. This critical engagement helped secure passage of this bill into law. The federal bill bans rinse-off cosmetics containing plastic microbeads, which serve as exfoliants. WCS is currently working with Council members and other environmental NGOs to gain cosponsors for a New York City bill, which would include a study to assess the impact of other products containing microbeads on New York City waterways.

WCS engaged members and online activists in support of banning products containing microbeads on the city, state, and federal level. ♡

BAN THE BEAD

63 letters to U.S. senators and members of Congress

2,205 letters to New York City Council members

3,878 letters to state senators and assembly members



RESEARCHERS FROM THE AQUARIUM'S NY SEASCAPE PROGRAM TAGGED TEN NEW SAND TIGER SHARKS IN 2015.

Shark Nursery Discovered in New York

New York Aquarium scientists recently discovered a nursery area for sand tiger sharks in Long Island's Great South Bay. Over the past four years, our researchers used acoustic and satellite tags, devices that enable remote tracking of marine animals as they swim through their environment, to collect a wealth of information on sharks in local waters. The data confirmed the existence of the nursery in Great South Bay, one of the rich estuaries found along Long Island's south shore. The Great South Bay provides sand tiger sharks up to five years in age with a place to feed and grow. The nursery also gives juvenile sharks protection from predators, including larger sharks.

The discovery is important because the sand tiger shark has been heavily depleted by overfishing and is listed as a "Species of Concern" by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service. Because a female shark gives birth to only one or two pups every two years, this sand tiger shark population will need years to rebuild. Protecting the nursery will help promote sand tiger shark recovery in the coastal waters of the eastern United States. Recreational and commercial fishing for sand tiger sharks is prohibited in Great South Bay and in all state and federal waters. However, like most coastal and offshore waters in New York, a great deal of boating, recreational fishing, dredging, and other human activities take place in the

bay, posing potential threats to these sharks and other marine wildlife.

This marine research is an initiative of the NY Seascape Program based out of the New York Aquarium to study and protect the more than 40 species of sharks and rays that frequent New York waters. In 2016, the NY Seascape team will expand their efforts with more shark tagging, health

The discovery is important because the sand tiger shark has been heavily depleted by overfishing.

studies, and habitat assessments. They will address questions such as how much of the bay is used by these sharks, the number of young sharks in the bay each summer, and what the sharks are eating. Public outreach is already underway to help improve the conservation status of sand tiger sharks and other local sharks and rays.

Sharks will be the central focus of *Ocean Wonders: Sharks!*, the 57,000-square-foot exhibit currently under construction at the New York Aquarium. Visitors to the expanded Aquarium will see new interactive exhibits with 100 species that thrive in the New York seascape, including sharks and rays, and will learn how to make everyday choices to protect them. 🐾

WCS Health: Protecting the Vulnerable

Over the last few decades, it has become clear that conservation, our own health, and the health of wild and domestic animals are all inextricably linked. WCS has more than a century of hands-on veterinary work, disease surveillance, and groundbreaking scientific research to its name. The following are just a few examples of the ways we harness our veterinary expertise to improve the health of wildlife species around the globe and in our New York zoological parks.

Solving the Saiga Mystery

In the spring of 2015, in what is now being called one of the greatest mysteries facing conservation, roughly 200,000 saiga died within 2 weeks—more than 50 percent of the world's total population. Scientists are attributing the die-off to a pathogen, perhaps coupled with external factors from vegetation or changes in weather. This antelope species once thrived across Central Asia's grassland steppe region in the millions, but poaching spiked in the 1990s, leading the population to decline by 95 percent in only 20 years. Focused conservation efforts successfully brought the saiga back from the brink of extinction by the end of 2014, but this recent mass die-off means their numbers are once again at a critical level.

In response to the die-off, the international community including several WCS biologists and veterinarians came together in October 2015 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan at a United Nations-backed conference to devise strategies to save the saiga from imminent extinction. The group agreed on a five-year conservation plan that outlines specific actions to deal with these threats. Plans include the need to more closely monitor and ramp up research on saiga health, increase anti-poaching efforts, and manage the rapid increase in development in the region.

WCS has been working on saiga conservation for the last decade, with a focus on the highly threatened and isolated saiga population in Mongolia, and we plan to help implement the new workplan in this region. This will include the development of a project to monitor and assess health threats to saiga in Mongolia that we hope can be scaled up across the other range states. 🐾

A photograph of a saiga antelope with its young calf. The adult is in the foreground, and the calf is slightly behind it. Both are looking towards the right. The background is a dark, textured landscape.

SAIGA

200,000 saiga died in two weeks

50% of population lost

Key threats: disease, infrastructure, poaching

WCS Action: Implement conservation plan in Mongolia; scale up to other range states



WCS CHIEF VETERINARIAN DR. PAUL P. CALLE (RIGHT) EXAMINES ONE OF THE GRAND CAYMAN IGUANAS AT THE BREEDING CENTER ON GRAND CAYMAN ISLAND.

Saving the Grand Cayman Iguana

The Grand Cayman iguana, which lives only on Grand Cayman Island, once numbered in the thousands, but by 2002 plummeted to a remnant population of less than 20 wild iguanas. In an effort to bring this endangered species back from the brink of extinction, WCS's zoological health team began working with the National Trust for the Cayman Islands Blue Iguana Recovery Program and the Cayman Islands Department of the Environment in 2001. The recovery effort involves captive breeding and rearing of the iguanas in order to release them back into the wild, to build and ultimately stabilize the wild population once again.

The captive-bred iguanas must undergo full health screenings before they are released. WCS health experts have traveled to the island every year since 2001 to perform these individual screenings, as well as larger, population-scale screenings of a subset of the captive and

wild adults. In 2015, WCS's Dr. Paul P. Calle and Anne Gilewski made the trek, and unfortunately discovered that the majority of the breeding adult iguanas that had previously been released in one of multiple release sites had been killed by dogs. In addition, an infectious disease was discovered in the wild adults, resulting in at least one confirmed death. Back at the Bronx Zoo, Drs. Ken Conley and Tracie Seimon investigated the cause of the infectious disease. Using tissue microscopic examination and molecular testing, they were able to determine that the cause of the problem is a type of bacteria that has never been identified before. Our health experts are now working to develop a new test to detect the organism, which will aid in future screenings of iguanas for release, and increase our understanding of the nature of the disease across the wild iguana population. 🐾

A Stowaway Cobra



In December 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service called upon WCS to rescue an Indian cobra, a protected species native to Southern Asia, which appeared to be an accidental stowaway on a container ship destined for Newark, New Jersey. The approximately 18-inch long snake was found in poor condition, dehydrated, cold, and exposed to oil residue in one of the ship's cargo holds. The Bronx Zoo's Avishai Shuter and Kevin Torregrosa located the venomous snake eight floors below the deck and safely secured it in a locked bucket before transporting it to the Bronx Zoo's Wildlife Health WCS Health

Center. Once there, WCS veterinarians treated the snake and closely monitored its health. Unfortunately the cobra did not survive; a necropsy revealed it succumbed to residual effects of the harsh environmental conditions it was exposed to while on the ship.

The Bronx Zoo is frequently called upon by local and federal agencies looking for experts to assist in challenging exotic wildlife situations. This is just one of the many ways WCS's zoos and aquarium and Zoological Health Program contribute to the protection of wildlife. 🐾

Elephants: Globally Threatened Icons

As an iconic and environmentally important species, WCS is committed to saving elephants worldwide. The stories that follow illustrate some of our efforts to stop the killing of elephants and protect their habitat, and stop the trafficking and demand for elephant ivory.



How To Save a Forest Elephant

Experts from WCS and partner organizations have come together to publish *Studying Forest Elephants*, a groundbreaking how-to manual for scientists, wildlife managers, park rangers, and government officials. The book is the first of its kind for African forest elephants and is the product of nearly a decade of work from more than 20 experienced researchers, including 5 of WCS's leading elephant experts.

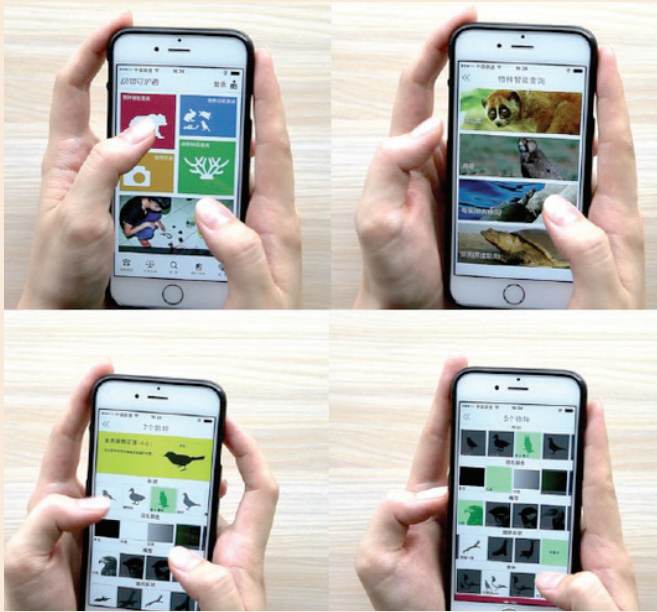
At a time when elephants are rapidly disappearing, *Studying Forest Elephants* will be a crucial tool for the conservation community to better understand the biology and conservation needs of the species. Forest elephant lives are still largely a mystery, and the more we can understand how elephants function and interact

with their environment, the better we can protect them. The book reviews current scientific knowledge of forest elephants and identifies important areas for further study, before delving into instruction on identifying and establishing study sites, performing censuses, conducting behavioral and genetic studies, and performing acoustic monitoring. It also covers assessment of human activities including poaching, organizing protection activities, and disseminating information to guide larger-scale conservation. WCS's hope is that the book will facilitate greater coordination and cooperation among all conservation and government agencies so that we can more effectively protect elephants across the board. 🍷

Collaring Elephants in Mozambique

In November 2015, conservationists from WCS, the Government of Mozambique's National Administration for Conservation Areas, and other partners successfully fitted satellite GPS tracking collars on 20 elephants in Mozambique's Niassa National Reserve. This reserve hosts the largest elephant population in the country, but has seen losses of more than 60 percent in the past 3 years. The real-time location data from the collars, combined with aerial surveillance and ground patrols, will strengthen targeted protection efforts and facilitate rapid responses to poaching threats. The collaring data will also inform land-use planning across various sectors, which will help to secure habitat and connectivity to protect elephants over the long term. 🍷





Wildlife Guardian App Wins Prestigious Tech Award

In November 2015, WCS's China program received a prestigious Tech Award for its Wildlife Guardian app. In China, the end point for much of the world's illegal wildlife trade, this mobile phone-based application allows users to quickly and reliably identify elephant ivory and hundreds of other commonly traded species—a task that is otherwise extremely challenging. Law enforcement officials often have only a few moments to decide whether or not to let an item through a checkpoint, leaving room for uncertainty and error. Wildlife Guardian provides a quick check for individuals with no background in biology, using a simple process-of-elimination approach to easily identify wildlife products from ivory to the claws of the world's big cat species. The app was launched in 2011 and—with strong support from Chinese authorities—is now being used throughout the country by law enforcement officials in airports and major potential markets. The app has already proven successful in stopping individual smuggling incidents. Additionally, information on where ivory and other illegal wildlife products are sold or detected can be easily shared, helping us and our government partners to monitor and disrupt the supply chains on which global wildlife crimes depend. Watch a video of the app in action by going to: wcs.org/WGApp.

The Tech Awards, presented by Applied Materials, announced a total of 10 international laureates who are using technology to benefit humanity. The China Wildlife Guardian App was one of two winners in the Intel Environment Award category. This is the first time in the award's history that a Chinese team has been selected. 🍵

96 ELEPHANTS

WCS's 96 Elephants campaign, named for the number of elephants killed every day for their ivory, promotes public advocacy across all 50 states to ban U.S. ivory sales for good. These are just a few examples of the campaign's latest wins for elephants.



Grown our national coalition to include more than 200 organizations in 45 states.



Delivered 164,238 comments to the White House in support of a federal ivory ban.



Partnered with celebrity influencers, including Billy Joel and Arnold Schwarzenegger, to inspire millions of people to take action for elephants.



Delivered 39,833 comments to USFWS in preparation for CITES CoP17, urging all countries to close their domestic ivory markets.



Advocated for the passage of domestic ivory bans in California and Washington, and for the newly proposed bans in 5 other states.

Coming Home: Restoring Species to Native Habitats

There is no greater feeling than coming home. But for our friends in the wild, home can be an uncertainty due to threats like development, poaching, and other human activities. WCS is committed to protecting critical habitat for vulnerable species. The following stories demonstrate some of the ways we re-establish wildlife populations in their historic ranges.



ZOLUSHKA STANDING UNDER
A HUGE KOREAN PINE TREE
WITH TWO SMALL CUBS
HUDDLED BENEATH HER.



Reintroduced Tiger Zolushka: “Cinderella” Becomes a Mother

In December, the conservation community celebrated the exciting news that Zolushka (Russian for Cinderella)—the orphaned tiger that WCS helped rehabilitate and release back into the wild—had become a mother. After years of hard work, tenacity, and hope, WCS and partners received camera trap footage from the Bastak Reserve, a 162-square-mile protected area in the Pri-Amur region of the Russian Far East, that showed Zolushka with 2 healthy cubs. This marks the first time that a rehabilitated tiger has mated and given birth in the wild. Not only is this good news for tiger reintroduction efforts, but it also represents the beginning of a new generation in former tiger range.

Zolushka's story began in February 2012, when hunters found her as a starving and freezing four-month-old tiger cub. After 16 months of careful rehabilitation,

“The discovery of Zolushka’s cubs is real proof that conservation on the ground, conducted by groups working in partnership, can and does work. Zolushka and her cubs are proof that tiger habitat lost long ago is coming back in the Russian Far East.”

—CRISTIÁN SAMPER, WCS PRESIDENT & CEO



ZOLUSHKA RECEIVED MEDICAL TREATMENT BY WCS AND PARTNERS AFTER BEING FOUND ORPHANED IN THE FOREST. THE TEAM HAD TO AMPUTATE A PORTION OF HER FROSTBITTEN TAIL.

biologists decided that she was ready for reintroduction into the wild. The team of scientists strategically picked the Bastak Reserve for her release not only because it is suitable tiger habitat with plenty of prey, but because this former tiger territory had been devoid of these animals for over 40 years. Zolushka's second chance was a rare opportunity to re-establish tiger populations in wild lands where they once thrived.

On her own, Zolushka successfully acclimated amid the abundance of badgers, wild boar, and red deer, but one problem still lingered. With tigers missing from this landscape for decades, Zolushka remained a solitary Cinderella. This dilemma was miraculously solved when a lone wild male arrived, apparently making the 124-mile journey west from the northern-most portions of current tiger range in Russia. Soon after, tracks of Zolushka and her "prince" were found together, but Zolushka still required time to mature and become ready for motherhood.

The team's patience was ultimately rewarded on December 9, 2015, when Ivan Polkovnikov, the reserve inspector responsible for monitoring Zolushka, returned from the field with historic photos: Zolushka standing under a huge Korean pine tree, with two small cubs huddled beneath her.

Zolushka is one of five tigers that have been reintroduced into former tiger

territories within Russia. Despite a setback with one tiger who was transferred back after roaming into human communities and repeatedly preying on livestock, the remaining tigers all appear to be doing well.

"This is a watershed event not just for Zolushka, but for the entire population of Amur tigers."

—DALE MIQUELLE, WCS RUSSIA DIRECTOR

With another female and male from this group recently pairing up, we have hope for even more cubs in the future. Zolushka's story is truly a sign of hope for tigers everywhere.

WCS Russia Director Dale Miquelle and WCS President and CEO Cristián Samper were both encouraged by the good news. According to Dale Miquelle, "This is a watershed event not just for Zolushka, but for the entire population of Amur tigers." Said Dr. Cristián Samper, "The story of this Cinderella is no fairy tale. The discovery of Zolushka's cubs is real proof that conservation on the ground, conducted by groups working in partnership, can and does work. Zolushka and her cubs are proof that tiger habitat lost long ago is coming back in the Russian Far East." 🐾



Bringing Bison Home to Blackfeet Nation

In April, 88 bison were transferred from Elk Island in Alberta, Canada to the reservation of the Blackfeet Nation near Browning, Montana. This is a “homecoming” for these bison, who are descendants of those that were originally captured on Blackfeet land in 1873. This historic event cannot be overstated in its significance, and is a great step forward in restoring this ecologically and culturally important species to native lands.

The story begins in 1873 when Samuel Walking Coyote of the Pend d’Oreille tribe and three Blackfeet companions captured several calves orphaned during a hunt on Blackfeet land. Walking Coyote trailed these calves over the continental divide and placed them on pastures in the beautiful Flathead Valley in western Montana. By 1884, Walking Coyote’s herd had grown to 13 bison. He sold ten of the animals to Michel Pablo and Charles Allard, who formed the Pablo-Allard herd

on Montana’s Flathead Reservation. This herd eventually became the largest in the United States and played a key role in the preservation of bison by restocking and supplementing many public conservation herds, including those at Yellowstone National Park. When the U.S. government initiated plans to open the Flathead Reservation to homesteaders in 1906, Pablo sought a large grant for grazing land for his herd, but was denied. He eventually sold his herd to the government of Canada. The animals were shipped to Elk Island National Park by train with the last shipment sent out in June of 1912.

Fast forward to December 2015 when the Blackfeet Nation and WCS opened a dialogue with Elk Island about returning some of the animals to their ancestral homeland in the Blackfeet Reservation. After thorough health inspections, 88 bison that were considered surplus were transported to the reservation by



truck on April 4. A stop was made during the six-hour journey for ceremonial blessings given by the Blackfeet tribe. Upon arrival, the bison were unloaded at the 9,000-acre ranch known as the Buffalo Calf Winter Ranch on the Two Medicine River in Montana.

This fall, approximately 20 of the bison will be moved again to Oakland Zoo as part of the Zoo's 56-acre "California Trail" expansion. The newly arrived bison will be allowed to breed naturally, and each year offspring will be returned to the tribal lands in Montana. Both Oakland Zoo and Blackfeet Nation will share in educational programs and support their shared interest in promoting bison conservation and culture preservation. The bison herd at the Buffalo Calf Winter Ranch will form the source stock for future restoration efforts on larger landscapes along the Rocky Mountains once final land arrangements are complete.

The bison, North America's largest land mammal, once roamed the continent freely, helping sustain plains and prairie ecosystems as a keystone species through grazing, fertilization, trampling, and other activities. Bison shaped the vegetation and landscape as they fed on and dispersed the seeds of grasses, sedges, and forbs. Several bird species adapted to or co-evolved with grasses and vegetation structures that had been, for millennia, grazed by millions of free-ranging bison. Bison remain integrally linked with the spiritual lives of Native Americans through cultural practices, social ceremonies, and religious rituals. More than 60 tribes are now working to restore bison to over 1,000,000 acres of Indian lands in South Dakota, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Montana, and other states. WCS is thrilled to be able to play a role in this initiative, building on our century-long history of bison conservation. 🍷

THE TRANSFER OF 88 BISON TO THE RESERVATION OF THE BLACKFEET NATION IS A GREAT STEP FORWARD IN RESTORING BISON TO NATIVE LANDS.



WCS Education: Activating a Movement

By 2020, WCS aims to build a conservation movement—a diverse and influential global community that is invested in and empowered to save wildlife and wild places. One of the best ways to do this is to inspire young people to spend more time in nature. The following WCS Education programs are helping stimulate young leaders and inspire change.



Supporting Free Programs for NYC Students

WCS is collaborating with the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to provide free camp experiences through the STEM Matters NYC initiative. Among our parks, we project that more than 300 NYC students will engage in our week-long programs, providing 30 hours of science-based activity for this audience. Our partnership with the DOE has grown since the summer of 2014

and now provides opportunities at all five of our facilities. During the school year, WCS Education helps support field trips through the DOE's Budding Scientist program, which reached over 900 students in the 2014–15 academic year. WCS's Education team looks forward to growing this partnership with NYC DOE and providing unique and beneficial experiences for new participants. 🐾



Bridging the Gap: Promoting Wildlife Science Careers

To address the need for greater diversity within the fields of wildlife and conservation science, WCS developed Bridging the Gap, a youth development initiative for New York City high school students. This initiative helped identify best practices to connect science with students' everyday lives, and aid them in pursuing a career in conservation science. Over the course of 3 years of Bridging the Gap, 150 students from 100 high schools in underrepresented communities throughout all 5 of NYC's boroughs took part in at least 150 hours each of internships, college readiness seminars, mentoring sessions, and career planning workshops—more than 22,000 hours total. Data collected throughout the program shows that Bridging the Gap's school-to-career, community-mentoring model helped foster the students' interest and readiness for higher education. By the end of the program, 82 percent of participants said they plan to pursue science, technology, engineering, or

mathematics (STEM) careers, and 88 percent were enrolled in a university.

The program involved more than 65 WCS staff members from a range of departments. Their participation was critical to introducing the students to the many different conservation-focused career options available. These relationships have since continued

**82 percent of participants
said they plan to pursue
STEM careers.**

to grow through partnerships in other career-based programs for students. Key takeaways from this initiative have been shared with local, national, and international audiences through presentations, articles, and webinars. Additionally, findings from Bridging the Gap have informed our practices in other current programs working with underserved audiences. 🍷



Wildlife Conservation Corps

Wildlife Conservation Corps is a new education program WCS launched to train conservation-minded students to campaign for wildlife and habitats. Once accepted, participants receive over 135 hours of training and exploring social marketing and advocacy strategies as they implement a mini campaign within their local communities. The program is currently based at the Bronx Zoo and includes participants who all go to school in the Bronx, making it easier for them to create a unified local campaign.

During the pilot program, the students, inspired by WCS's Blue York

campaign (blueyork.org), created a campaign called "Turn the Tide" to build awareness in the Bronx around microbeads and the threats they pose to local waters and marine life. With training from WCS experts and educational sessions with partner organizations, the students learned about natural history, conservation, environmental policy, and social media marketing. Throughout the six-month program, they gathered data from research and peer surveys before creating an original poster, stop-motion animation video, social media image shares, and a presentation

to share at their schools, community events, and online. The program culminated with a participant-planned-and-executed Youth Ocean Conservation Summit in April 2016. Overall, the Corps helped participants build their confidence in leadership, collaboration, and public speaking, and provided valuable professional skills, all while advocating for conservation within their community.

Ultimately, we would like to grow the program to include student groups at each of the WCS zoos and aquarium, with tailored campaigns across all five boroughs. 🌊

**Thank you for helping
us save wildlife and wild
places around the globe.**

Learn more at wcs.org



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Executive Editor: Mary Deyns Brandão

Managing Editor: Sarah Walker

Writers: Jennifer Orlando, Sarah Walker, Christine Westphal

Art Direction: Drew Albinson

Staff Photographer: Julie Larsen Maher

Editorial Support: Aria Isberto

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