



# THE ONE PLAN APPROACH

## With Apologies to Shakespeare

*What's in a name? That which we call an integrated, inclusive, science-based  
species conservation planning process that includes all populations of the species  
regardless of where they are found*

*By any other name would be as effective;*

*So One Plan approach would, were it not One Plan approach call'd,*

*Retain that dear perfection which it owes*

*Without that title.*



## What's in a Name?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group's (CBSG) approach to species conservation planning – integrated, stakeholder inclusive and science-based – has been essentially the same for almost 30 years. Our processes for collaborative development of management strategies and conservation actions by all responsible parties to produce one, comprehensive conservation plan for a species is not a new concept, nor is it a concept unique to CBSG. Such integrated conservation efforts have led to several well-known conservation successes, including golden lion tamarins in Brazil, Puerto Rican crested toads in the Caribbean, and Arabian oryx in the Middle East. Previous CBSG workshops for species, such as the Okinawa rail, red-headed wood pigeon and black-footed ferret, developed integrated species conservation plans across an interactive wild *ex-situ* spectrum. Other examples include African penguins, Tasmanian devils, and western pond turtles in Washington State.

We coined the term One Plan approach in 2011 with the goal of directing attention to the importance of integrated species conservation planning, and making this approach more commonplace and effective. The results have been astounding. The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) focused an entire issue of its magazine on the topic (WAZA 2013) and made it the theme for its 2013 Annual Conference. The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria's (EAZA) 2014 conservation forum will have a One Plan theme, and this issue of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) magazine is themed on this concept.

Our community has known for quite some time that, as habitats are increasingly altered and wild populations impacted by human activities, a growing number of the world's species depend on continuing management for their survival. These species require conservation action, not only to avoid extinction but to achieve conservation as defined by WAZA (2005): "securing, for the long term, populations of species in natural ecosystems and habitats", and more specifically by Redford, et al. (2011): "maintaining multiple populations across the range of the species in representative ecological settings, with replicate populations in each setting. These populations should be self-sustaining, healthy, and genetically robust – and therefore resilient to climate and other environmental changes." Scott, et al. (2010) stated that 84 per cent of the species listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act could be classified as "conservation reliant" and will require continuing, species-specific interventions.

## Zoos Play a Unique Role, Have a Unique Responsibility

We are all trying desperately to save species, and the definition of conservation is, for the most part, agreed upon. What differs is the way in which various conservation partners can best contribute.

What is unique about the zoo and aquarium community is your ability to hold and breed living things and to secure populations from threats in the wild, while concurrent conservation activities battle these threats. This is a role that is increasingly essential as a greater number of threatened species become in need of what only zoos and aquariums can offer – intensive management in intensively protected areas. The captive spaces that we have must be used in support of conservation, and this is only going to happen if we truly do adopt a One Plan approach.

The real value of zoos and aquariums to species conservation can only be realized by working in collaboration with wild population managers, and vice versa. Achieving conservation requires effective planning which, in turn, requires integration and the optimal use of limited resources across the spectrum of management. This sounds obvious but in fact species conservation planning has traditionally followed two parallel but separate tracks.

The zoo and aquarium community develops long-term goals for *ex-situ* populations, sometimes without a clearly defined rationale for maintaining the species, identification of the threats faced by the species in the wild, or the opportunities for supporting wild populations. Meanwhile, field biologists, wildlife managers and conservationists monitor wild populations, evaluate threats and develop conservation strategies and actions to conserve threatened species in the wild. These processes often take place without sufficient involvement from the international zoo community; intensively managed populations are rarely considered as part of wider metapopulations from the start, if at all.

While each management plan strives for the viability of a particular population, too seldom are these plans developed together to maximize the conservation benefits to the species. When existence in the wild is threatened, populations of that species, wherever they are, are of potential conservation value. A planning process that includes all populations of a species, inside and outside their natural range, would thus be a tremendous enhancement to species conservation.

There is a wide array of threat mitigation options offered by intensive population management. How these might promote conservation of the species in the wild should be considered at the start of a planning process. Options include source populations, assurance populations, research populations, and head-start programs. In turn, wild populations will boost the long-term viability of *ex-situ* populations by supplying genetic founders.

## The Answer is Collaboration

Population management across a continuum that bridges wild and intensively managed conditions can serve as an important tool to bring species towards fully conserved status. The AZA community is actively building links with the Species Survival Commission (SSC) Specialist Groups and field conservation agencies. Its members are committed to making the captive community's specialized skills and valuable conservation resources available to their conservation colleagues. CBSG is placed at the interface between the zoo community and the global species conservation community and can help connect these critical players and facilitate an improved contribution of the zoo community to successful species conservation globally. In fact, this is the mission of CBSG's newest Regional Network, CBSG North America.

The CBSG stakeholder inclusive, participatory workshop process is ideally suited to implementation of the One Plan approach. In addition, the newly revised IUCN SSC Guidelines on the *Use of Ex Situ Management for Species Conservation* calls for just such an approach, and the SSC/Global Species Programme strategic plan, which guides the work of CBSG and all other SSC Specialist Groups, includes the application of the One Plan approach over the next quadrennium.

CONTINUED, PAGE 20



The One Plan approach is a working model of how the benefits of conservation collaboration can be fully realized. The name One Plan approach has joined many efforts of integrated conservation and united them under the same title. The results will be integrated conservation plans that mobilize the full suite of skills and resources available to species in trouble, giving them a better chance at a future in the wild. We look forward to continuing One Plan approach collaborations with our AZA colleagues and others in the international conservation community.

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ONNIE BYERS IS THE CHAIR OF THE IUCN'S CONSERVATION BREEDING SPECIALIST GROUP

### References

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### RED PANDAS GO GLOBAL

In October of 2012, the Red Panda Species Survival Plan® (SSP) had the honor of becoming a Global Species Management Plan (GSMP). Recommendations made at the first GSMP were for a six-year period (one red panda generation). While the SSP has been working with other regional programs over the last 20 years, the establishment of an official GSMP for the red panda has many advantages. The prime advantage is the facilitation of transfer of animals between the regional breeding programs. The SSP is the only region currently managing both sub-species of red pandas. Because of this, we will actively be both importing and exporting animals to strengthen both our regional population and our partner regions. Several transactions are already in the works. In

addition, the red panda GSMP goals are to update/develop global husbandry and management guidelines; identify red pandas not in any of the accredited regional programs and bring them under the GSMP umbrella and tighten links with field conservation.

Currently the GSMP is supported by the following regional zoo associations: Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) in North America, Central Zoo Authority (CZA) in India, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) in Europe, Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums (JAZA), African Association of Zoos and Aquariums (PAAZAB) and Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia (ZAA).

By working together as partners in a global effort, husbandry and management standards and experiences will be more easily shared leading to a better and more global approach to red panda management in the future. However, undoubtedly the most important result of this global recognition will be to raise the profile of the red panda which should promote its conservation both within zoos and in the wild.