

The Fenn Bell Conservation Project
The Fenn Bell Inn
Fenn St, Allhallows
Rochester, Kent
ME3 8RF



Conservation Policy

Conservation is at the forefront of all the work we do at The Fenn Bell Conservation Project. Since opening in 2017, we have been aiming to reach and improve our conservation efforts through in-situ practices, ex-situ practices and education.

Species Monitoring

As of March 2021, we have been conducting bumblebee species and habitat surveys across two one mile transects at the Isle of Grain coastal park. As of April 2024, we further added a broader pollinating species monitoring scheme. This is where we lay a 50X50cm quadrat over a targeted flower species and measure the total number of pollinating insects that are seen interacting with the target plant species within a ten-minute time period. Around our site we contribute to species abundance surveys across all native taxon's, by the recording of each species, its abundance and location. We share our data sets with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's BeeWalk scheme, the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme and iNaturalist. This allows us to contribute to both national and global scientific data pools for species abundance and distribution. Moreover, all monitoring schemes and management activities allow us to continually develop and strengthen our staff members conservation skills.

Native Species Habitat Protection and Management

In 2022, we dedicated an area within our zoo to build a British Wildlife Area. In this area we have installed bug hotels, log piles, a pond, native trees & hedgerows as well as native wildflowers, bird boxes and bat boxes. We use no pesticides or herbicides across the site, on the gardens or wild areas and if any flora management is needed our keepers and volunteers carry this out by hand. In addition to this area, an additional area in the zoo is left unmanaged for wildlife, with only the grass around the perimeter being cut to prevent it from growing over pathways.

As of October 2024, we have been working alongside residents of the Isle of Grain in habitat creation and habitat management. This is in the form of planting wildflower areas, mowing, raking and other such tasks that are in required for the management of a native wildflower meadow. This further improves our staff's conservation skills, as well as boosting local biodiversity and engaging with the local community.

Population Management

One quarter of the species housed at The Fenn Bell Conservation Project are represented on an EEP (EAZA Ex situ Programme). In 2021, we had success in breeding critically endangered Black and White Ruffed Lemurs (*Varecia variegata*) allowing us to contribute to the captive population management of the species.

As of March 2024, our Head Keeper, Connor, became a member of the Fishing Cat Species Committee, working alongside its members, representatives from the felid TAG (Taxon Advisory Group) and directly with the EEP coordinator on the production of a Long-Term Management Plan for the species. The goal of the management plan is to define the long term genetic and demographic goals for the programme, an action plan for all strategies, including genetic management, data collection, research, education, and in situ support.

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Conservation Education

To engage with our members of the public throughout their whole visit we have a variety of signage across our site.

- Species information – Each enclosure has on it a sign which tells people the common and scientific name for the species, their natural habitat, captive and wild lifespan, feeding habits, adaptations, conservation status and threats.
- Global Habitat – Around our zoo we have signs highlighting different habitat types across the world. These signs also highlight key conservation concerns within each habitat.
- Climate Change – We also have signs dedicated to informing visitors about climate change, the effects it is having around the world and how they can help tackle climate change issues at home.
- Conservation Charities – There are also signs that highlight the work of the in-situ conservation charities that we support financially. Including the AEECL, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, IOSF, VulPro and Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance, highlighting the importance of their work and how our visitors can also support them.
- British Wildlife signage – Around our British wildlife area we have education signage so that our visitors can learn about how bug hotels, log piles, ponds, native hedgerows & flowers, bird boxes and bat boxes are helping to create a habitat for our native species.

Keepers are encouraged to engage with our visitors whenever possible through public talks, conversations and our animal experiences. Where they are encouraged to discuss the animals in their care as well as the conservation issues they face. We also further the spread of this message through the use of our social media platforms and website to further extend our outreach discussions in these topics.

We have thousands of students visit our site annually on school trips, where keepers will provide students with a guided tours and educational talks, once again highlighting key conservation issues for the animals we house. Additionally, keepers participate in outreach visits to local schools, sharing their conservation knowledge, targeting people from all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds.

In 2024, we developed a programme to better our work with primary schools across Kent, mainly in the Medway, Gravesham and Dartford areas. Providing them with resources for habitat creation, species monitoring programmes and improving their wildlife education. Starting in March 2024, we have reached over 11,000 students and have since had a number of these schools actively participating in and contributing to native species monitoring schemes. This all contributes further to national and global data pools of species abundance and distribution.

Annually, a vast number of students and general members of the public come to The Fenn Bell Conservation Project for work experience, volunteering placements or to conduct research project. Keepers have also attended numerous conferences to share their vital work. This allows us further opportunities to share our conservation knowledge and skills to a wider audience, whilst also encouraging greater active participation.

Please see our education plan for more in-depth information.

Fundraising

Since 2020, we have been holding an annual Zoo Do! Charity fundraising event, which to date has allowed us to raise over £16,000, for the in-situ conservation charities that we support. Including the

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AEECL, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, IOSF, VulPro and Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance, highlighting the importance of their work and how our visitors can also support them.

Moving Forward

We are planning to further contribute to conservation monitoring schemes, by carrying out additional habitat and species surveys during the Autumn and Winter months. Additionally, we would like to invest in camera traps, which will allow us to further improve our species monitoring on site.

We aim to showcase our bumblebee species and habitat monitoring with local students and members of the public by inviting them to join us on our surveys. This will allow us to further improve our conservation education as well as share our conservation skills with others. Moreover, we aim to develop secondary school and college level educational resources, further allowing us to share conservation knowledge with students of a higher level.

We have recently had a new pair of EEP registered Asian Small-Clawed Otters (*Aonyx cinereus*) join us at The Fenn Bell Conservation Project. We hope to breed these individuals as recommended by the EEP coordination, contributing to the captive population genetic management for the species.

We will continue our work with current programmes as well as looking to join more EEP programmes as outlined in our Collection Plan, furthering our support for at risk species.