

Noah's Ark Zoo Farm Conservation Strategy 2011

Noah's Ark Zoo Farm looks to inform the public of the conservation value of the natural world through education and through our participation in appropriate projects, both in-situ and ex-situ.

As a growing zoo attraction, Noah's Ark Zoo Farm recognises the importance of conservation in protecting the longevity of species and the responsibility we have to educate the public about conservation efforts.

This is an area we are looking to continually develop, particularly this year as we begin to forge important research relationships with key Universities in the South West; offering students the chance to work with us and our extensive animal collection as we move forward.

During 2009 and 2010 we have recognised our strengths lie in our commitment to local conservation efforts, particularly projects aimed at protecting and managing our local environment, its animals and plants and its people.

A particular focus in 2011 so far has been on promoting green transport and environmentally friendly activities to our visitors; simple measures which can have important consequences.

Noah's Ark is involved in a variety of in and ex-situ conservation activities, listed below:

Ex-Situ Conservation:

Siamang Gibbons: Noah's Ark Zoo Farm participates in the EEP for Siamang Gibbons. We currently have an adult pair and their recent firstborn; this being the first successful breeding of this particular female Gibbon who is on loan from Tywycross Zoo.

We realise the importance of protecting endangered primates and are able to communicate this to our visiting public through displays and our website.

We also maintain small populations of Ring-tailed and Black and White Ruffed Lemurs, encouraging breeding where appropriate, helping to build successful captive groups of these two important species listed on the IUCN Red List.

Tigers: With the now global realisation of the endangered status of the tiger in the wild, it is important for captive populations to be kept well and bred, where appropriate. We value the Bengal-type tigers in our collection, recognising the public interest in the species and use the daily Big Cat Keeper Talk to educate a large audience as to the threats to the animals in the wild, as well as discussing their biology and adaptations.

Southern White Rhinos: It is hoped long term that our two White Rhinos may breed, enabling us to help increase the numbers of species and protect them for future generations to learn about and appreciate.

In-situ Conservation:

Noah's Ark contributes widely to the conservation of British flora and fauna, conducting biodiversity surveys, holding public educational events and assisting local wildlife groups in their important projects.

Bat Surveys: Noah's Ark Zoo Farm conducts bat studies on local populations, making use of the prime rural habitat adjacent to the zoo and farm. This information has previously been supplied to BRERC (Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre). We are considering working more closely with the Avon Wildlife Trust to provide access to our farmland on a more regular basis for their independent studies.

Biodiversity Surveys: Noah's Ark Zoo Farm Head of Grounds and Conservation Officer performs periodic site biodiversity studies to assess impacts of our building activities on the local native species, tailoring our approach to planning to consider the local environment.

Nesting boxes: As part of their yearly activities, our Grounds Team provide nesting boxes for a variety of bird and bat species known to make use of our farm fringes for seasonal breeding. This project is incorporated into our Events calendar, where the public are invited to take part in fun and informative workshops building their own nest boxes during National Nest Box Day, whilst listening to informative talks.

Rainwater Harvesting: Many thousands of gallons of rainwater are collected through a special system of roof drainage and water butts – these are used for crop and vegetation watering in some areas.

Reed bed effluent: Noah's Ark Zoo Farm is one of the first zoo attractions to use a unique system of reed bed filtration which takes animal effluent and conserves water by a step-wise filtration pathway, returning organic matter to the growth of reeds as part of the process.

Wind Turbine: Noah's Ark has been highly praised for its innovation in energy conservation and green tourism – 2009 saw the awarding of Silver in the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS). Inspectors were particularly impressed with the 15kW Wind Turbine which can provide a third of our electricity every year, returning unused power to the National Grid.

Browse: Over 12 acres of vegetation has been planted to provide nutrition browse for appropriate animals in our collection, particularly the giraffes, tapirs and camels amongst others. Special silage processing is carried out to provide high quality vegetation as part of a varied diet for our animals – this is revolutionary within the industry and is an area we are looking to extend and assist other collections in following our lead.

Other Events: World Wildlife Day and other nature-themed events are held throughout the year for visitors to join in, raising awareness about native and foreign exotic species and the threats to wild populations. Outside speakers and charities are sometimes invited to distribute information leaflets and resources to interested visitors and enhance the learning experience.

***Cane Rats in Cameroon*:** Noah's Ark Zoo Farm contributes financially to an important Send a Cow project in Africa aimed at discouraging the taking and killing of bush animals as bushmeat, through education and practical solutions.

The charity Send a Cow was set up by Noah's Ark Zoo Farm owner Anthony Bush with a small group of British Farmers in the 1980's – Send a Cow work in rural African communities to help establish self-sufficient communities with the distribution of livestock, planting material and educational resources.

The Cane Rat project involved providing an alternative and sustainable meat source to poor communities; through this provision and through education, the taking and killing of important endangered bush animals decreased, helping protect vulnerable populations.