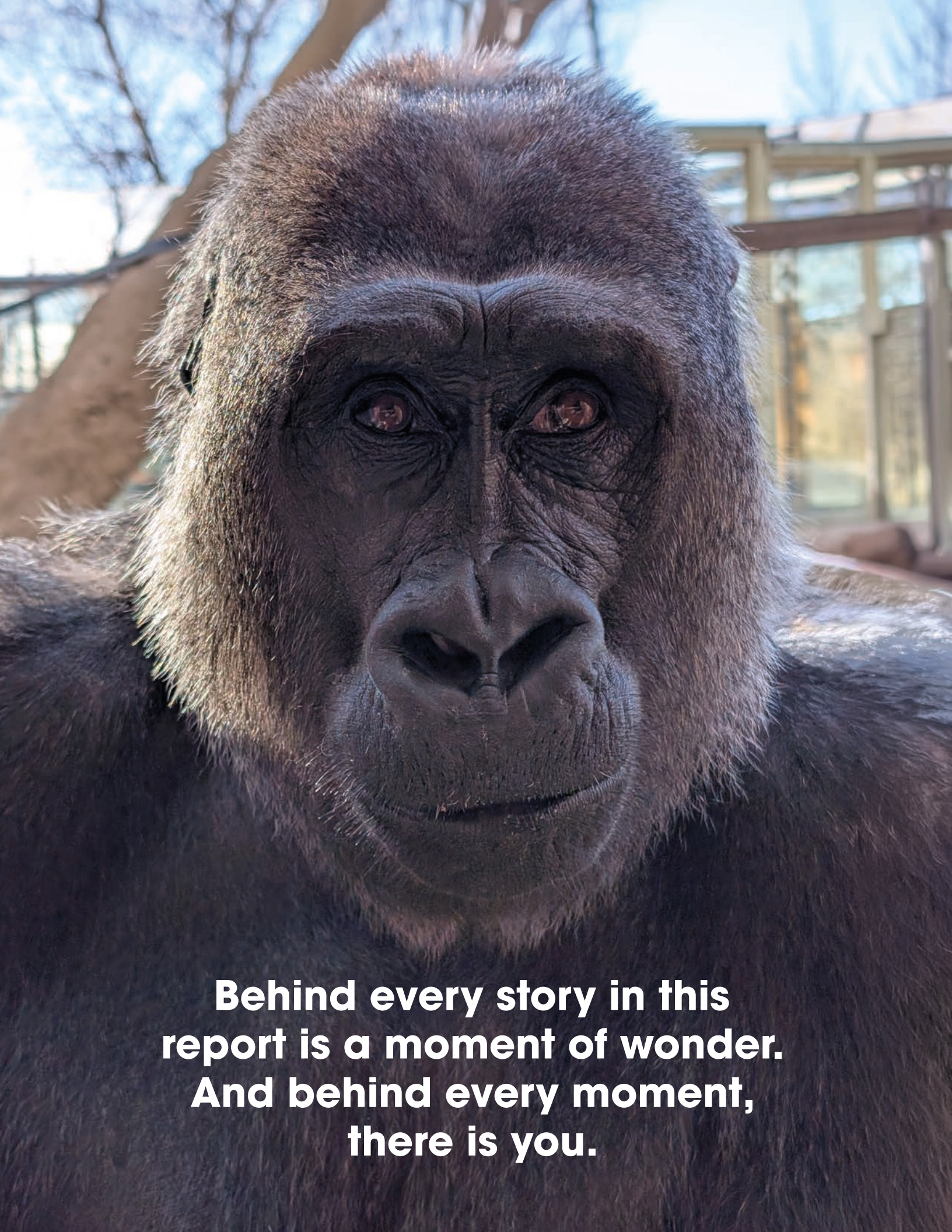


Your 2025 Gratitude Report

The Work Behind the Wonder

*Stories of Care,
Conservation,
and Connection*





**Behind every story in this
report is a moment of wonder.
And behind every moment,
there is you.**

A Year of Care, Curiosity, and Conservation

Dear Friend, some moments stay with us, not because they were planned, but because they were real. A quiet observation in the field. A breakthrough after months of uncertainty. The first time an animal takes a step into a new space.

This year's Gratitude Report captures those moments from 2025.

Told through the voices of the people doing the work, these "field notes" invite you behind the scenes into the care, curiosity, and commitment that define your Wilder Institute's Calgary Zoo. From right here on zoo grounds to conservation sites across Canada and around the world, each story reflects what your support made possible this past year. Together, they reveal the work behind the wonder: the everyday acts of care, conservation, and connection that make lasting impact possible.

You are part of something extraordinary. Because of you, animals received world-class care, new life was welcomed and protected, and critical conservation efforts moved forward in meaningful ways. You helped create spaces where people connect with wildlife, and where those connections grow into something lasting.

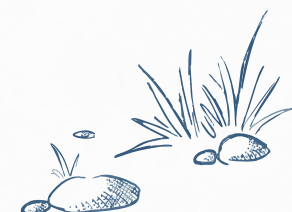


In the pages ahead, you'll hear directly from the people behind this work. You'll meet the newest member of our gorilla troop, Johari, whose introduction marks an important step for gorilla conservation. You'll step into the field with teams working alongside communities through the Kinship Program and Wilder Canada Action Plan. You'll witness discovery in its purest form, with the identification of one of Alberta's rarest species, the curiously isolated hairstreak.

You'll also see moments of care and wonder closer to home, from the birth of a Malayan tapir calf to the dedicated work of our Animal Health team, and the everyday experiences that shape how visitors connect with wildlife.

Every story in this report happened because of you. Thank you for making this work and these moments of wonder possible.

*With gratitude,
Steven Ross*
Chief Development &
External Relations Officer



From Watermelon Watch to Welcome Day

When zoo staff learned we were expecting a tapir calf, we knew it was going to be a big moment. Malayan tapirs are Endangered, so news like this naturally attracts a lot of interest. When we shared that a female tapir, Sempurna, had joined our zoo as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan breeding recommendation, people were already invested in her story and curious about what might come next. Then we found out she was pregnant.

Tapirs have a 13.5-month gestation, so once we were ready to share the news publicly, it felt like starting a long countdown. We worked closely with our Animal Care, Health & Welfare team, tracking changes in Sempurna's behaviour, diet, and habitat as she got closer to giving birth.

Watermelon Watch came out of that. Sempurna looked like she was smuggling a watermelon, and knowing tapir calves are born with a distinctive spotted pattern, it felt like the perfect way to build excitement and keep people following along.

What stood out was how people connected with her. Reading through social media comments, I'd see people tagging their friends, especially other expectant mothers, saying "this is you right now!" There was this shared understanding. People could relate to the waiting, the discomfort, and the anticipation in a very human way.



We were also sharing how her care was evolving behind the scenes, from habitat modifications to adjustments in her diet. We shared ultrasounds and tracked udder development as it happened, giving people a real-time look at the process. Regular spotlights on Sempurna's gestation gave people a window into the level of care and planning that goes into these moments.

When the calf, Nyawa, was finally born, it was incredibly hard to wait to share the news. And when she stepped onto habitat for the first time, hearing that collective reaction from guests was unforgettable.



For many, this was their first real introduction to tapirs. They're not a widely recognized species, and it's common to hear people asking questions. Watermelon Watch created an opportunity to tell that story, to share what makes tapirs unique, and to highlight the conservation challenges they face in the wild.

It also reinforced why people support this work. We saw many comments saying, "this is why I support the zoo." Seeing the level of care helped make that connection tangible.

Looking back, that's what made Watermelon Watch so meaningful. It brought people into the process, helped them feel connected to the outcome, and showed how their support plays a role in moments like this.

Even now, as Nyawa grows, people are still following along. That sense of connection hasn't gone away, and that's something special to be part of.

*With gratitude,
Sonia Jarmula*
Social Media & Content Advisor



A New Chapter for the Troop

The biggest milestone for the gorilla troop in 2025 was the arrival of Johari, a 24-year-old western lowland gorilla recommended to join the troop through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan.

What stood out most throughout the introduction process was that Johari never wavered from being a kind and gentle personality. From the beginning, she treated every new introduction with calmness and respect. Everything she did, and continues to do, is thoughtful and allows the troop to continue adjusting to this big social change. We are very lucky to have her with us.

Introductions like this are a process, not an event.

Each step involved evaluating comfort and stress levels, not only for Johari and male silverback Jasiri, but also for the troop members temporarily separated from the family during introductions. It was a balancing act, ensuring new routines and groupings were given time and opportunity to adapt on both sides.



Johari arrived on June 27. After her quarantine period, the first stage began with mesh introductions and opportunities for her to explore the holding and habitat spaces on her own. Because Jasiri would be the first full-contact introduction, the Animal Care, Health & Welfare team started building small routines of separation with him ahead of time, helping reduce stress across the troop.

The first full-contact introduction between Johari and Jasiri took place on July 30. From there, the team worked through different social scenarios over several months, allowing the gorillas to build relationships, establish boundaries, and develop trust. Johari spent time with each individual before the troop gradually came together as a full group of seven.

One moment that stood out involved Okabe, the youngest of the troop. He was immediately drawn to Johari, often playing with her through the mesh while his mother, Yewande, watched closely. Once full-contact introductions began, it took time for Yewande to relax with Okabe approaching Johari.



Throughout it all, Johari continued to do all the right things socially and never overstepped her bounds. Over time, both she and Okabe were given the "green light" to spend more time together without the troop reacting.

Behind the scenes, every stage of the introduction relied on constant communication, changing routines, targeted enrichment, and ongoing observations. Some days meant increasing introductions when things were going well, while others required shorter interactions to keep them positive.

Long days, flexibility, teamwork, and the support behind it all made this progress possible. Watching these relationships take shape has been incredibly rewarding.

Because of donor support, the team was able to dedicate the time, care, and flexibility needed to support each stage of this complex introduction process, helping create the conditions for Johari and the troop to continue building trust together.

*With gratitude,
Carrie Coleman*
Animal Care Supervisor –
Rainforest/Penguins

More Than Skin Deep

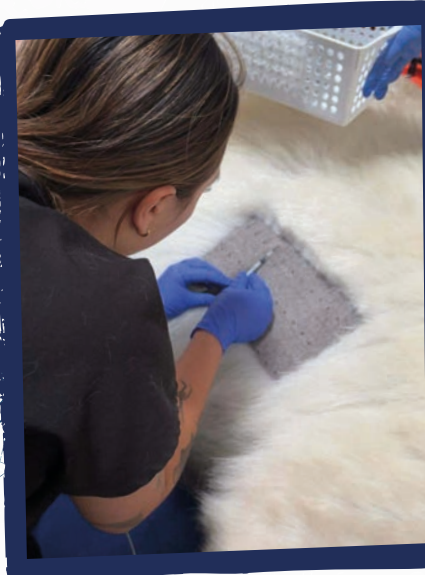


Veterinary care at the zoo ranges from everyday checkups to more complex, long-term cases.

One case that stood out in 2025 was with male polar bear, Siku, who is afflicted by allergy-induced skin disease.

In early 2025, Siku was experiencing significant discomfort. The condition, similar to eczema in people, caused persistent itchiness that led to self-induced skin wounds. Initial treatments, including antihistamine therapy, had little effect.

In March, he was switched to a veterinary medication commonly used in dogs with similar conditions. The change made a noticeable difference, reducing his itchiness and allowing his skin to heal.



With the goal of better understanding his condition, Siku was anaesthetized on May 30 for a comprehensive exam and allergy testing with a consulting veterinary dermatologist. During the procedure, a large patch of fur was shaved and 56 different allergens were administered into the skin at specific sites. Overall, Siku was found to be in good health, but the testing revealed a range of allergies, including dust and storage mites, grasses and weeds, alfalfa, and a yeast known as Malassezia.

From there, his care became more targeted. Alongside his ongoing medication, he began daily sublingual immunotherapy delivered in a small amount of seal oil. This involves administering micro-doses of these allergens over time to build up his tolerance.

Siku remained stable through much of the year. In November, he experienced another allergic flare-up which required additional treatments and, on the advice of the consulting veterinary dermatologist, a shift to a different medication. This change resulted in greater control of his condition.



Allergy-induced skin disease can have wide-ranging impacts on an animal's health and wellbeing. It can be painful, disrupt sleep, and lead to secondary infections, sometimes changing behaviour in noticeable ways. Managing it requires ongoing attention and adjustment.

Siku's care reflects the complexity of managing the health and wellbeing of animals in our care, from ongoing monitoring and adapting treatments to working with veterinary specialists when new insight is needed. It requires coordination across teams and a shared understanding of how small changes can affect the whole.

It's a collective effort, supported by the people, expertise, and resources behind the scenes that make this level of care possible.

*With gratitude,
Dr. Doug Whiteside*

Head Veterinarian & Senior
Manager Animal Health & Welfare



Growing the Next Generation

One of the things I love about camp is that it's a human story.

Impact can be hard to describe. You can talk about programs and outcomes, but it doesn't always feel tangible. Camp is different. You can walk through the zoo and actually see it — kids in their burgundy hats, laughing, learning, asking questions. In 2025, more than 1,400 kids took part in camp programs across the zoo.

You're seeing young people who care about the natural world, who are curious, who are hungry to learn, but who are also just having a great time at the zoo. That's the immediate impact. But what's just as important is what happens later.

Camp is an investment. You're planting a seed. Years from now, that connection to nature stays with them. They become people who care, who advocate, who make choices that support wildlife and wild places. That's the long-term impact.

The impact is immediate, and it stays with them long after camp ends, made possible by the support behind programs like this.

What makes our programs unique is how immersive they are. Over a full week, kids aren't just visiting the zoo — they're part of a shared experience. They build relationships with staff, volunteers, and each other. They follow a story, explore ideas, and see how everything connects.

And in some cases, they leave something behind.

This year, one of our teen groups worked with the Horticulture team to plant native species on zoo grounds. Some of those participants have been coming here since they were very young, and now they're contributing to something lasting.

This kind of experience matters. It builds confidence and shows them their actions can shape the spaces around them. The next time they visit, they won't just see a garden, they'll see something they helped create.



We also see it in the way people come back. Staff who were once campers. Parents who attended camp now bringing their own kids. It becomes a lifelong relationship, not just with the zoo, but with the natural world.

Time spent in nature, learning together, and being part of a community matters. It builds confidence and helps young people see themselves as someone who can make a difference.

And the conversations that start here don't stay here. They continue at home, at school, and with friends.

That's where real change begins.

You can see it in the kids walking through the zoo today, and you can trust that it will continue to grow for years to come.



*With gratitude,
Chris White*
Youth Program Coordinator



Wilder Canada Action Plan: From Vision to Action

The Wilder Canada Action Plan is about making sure no species falls through the cracks.

Across Canada, many conservation efforts focus on habitat protection and reducing threats. That work is essential. But some species need more – direct, hands-on intervention to survive.

That's where our work begins.

Over the past year, the focus has been on three things: building the foundation to support that kind of action, developing a national framework to direct action where it's needed most, and ensuring that our efforts are both effective and inclusive.

Much of this work happens before anything is visible on the ground.

A key part of the process has been narrowing focus. In Canada, there are more than 600 species listed under the Species at Risk Act, with nearly 300 identified as potential priorities for conservation translocation action. From that starting point, the team has worked through multiple stages as part of the Species Prioritization Process to identify a smaller group of species representing the strongest opportunities for effective conservation translocation action — the deliberate movement of organisms from one site for release at another for conservation benefit.

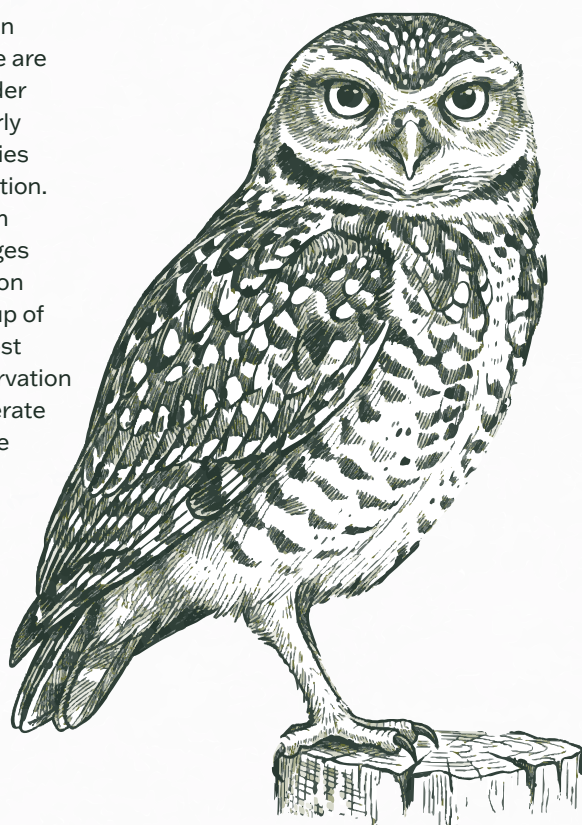
It's detailed, methodical work, but an important part of prioritizing where and how we grow our conservation impact in Canada. The process is working. We're beginning to see where meaningful progress can happen over the next few years. At the same time, the work has extended far beyond data.

Across the country, new relationships are forming as we connect with Indigenous and local communities, governments, other conservation organizations, and researchers, often in areas where our organization has not traditionally been involved. Freshwater fish, mussels, plants, and other underrepresented species have become part of the conversation. It's been both enriching and humbling.



Bringing together diverse groups and knowledge systems takes time. It requires listening, flexibility, and a willingness to approach conservation in new ways. It's not always simple, but that depth is what makes the work stronger.

Some of the most meaningful moments have come from being in communities. Time spent listening, learning, and engaging directly with community members has reinforced that conservation is not only about species, but about the systems they exist within. The land, the water, and the people connected to them all shape the outcome. That perspective is central to the Wilder Canada Action Plan.



It's an approach grounded in inclusive conservation – creating space for a wider diversity of people and organizations to participate, lead, and contribute to conservation work. Strengthening capacity through shared tools, knowledge, and networks is essential if this work is going to grow. We won't be successful if we do it alone.

It's not always the most visible work, but it's what allows everything else to take shape.

Looking ahead, that foundation will continue to grow.

Plans are underway to launch a national grant stream, the Wilder Impact Fund, designed to amplify and empower community-led wildlife conservation initiatives across Canada. At the same time, the next wave of programs is beginning to take shape, guided by our species prioritization process and the relationships built over the past year.



There are different types of translocations, including:

- Wild-to-wild
- Head-starting
- Conservation breeding or propagation with reintroduction — raising plants or animals under human care to boost wild populations.



It's still early, but the direction is clear.

What began as a plan is becoming something tangible, rooted in collaboration, shaped by community, and designed to implement conservation action where it's needed most.

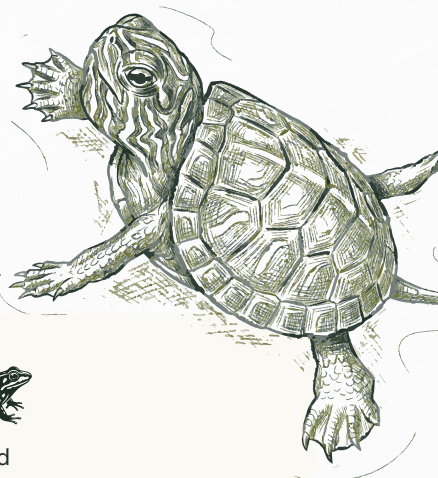
And while much of the work may happen quietly, its impact is already making noise.

With gratitude,
Jessica Steiner

Senior Manager,
Wilder Canada Action Plan
&

Sarah Falconer

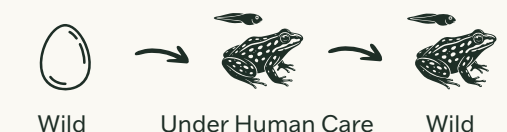
Conservation Associate,
Wilder Canada Action Plan



WILD TO WILD TRANSLOCATION



HEAD STARTING



CONSERVATION BREEDING & TRANSLOCATION



The Kinship Program: Wildlife, People, and Place

It really started with conversations. In the early days of the Kinship Program, my role was to spend time listening, learning from Magnetawan First Nation about the work that has already been happening for years, and understanding where the community wants to go next. From there, it was about exploring how we could support that work in a way that feels respectful, collaborative, and grounded in trust.

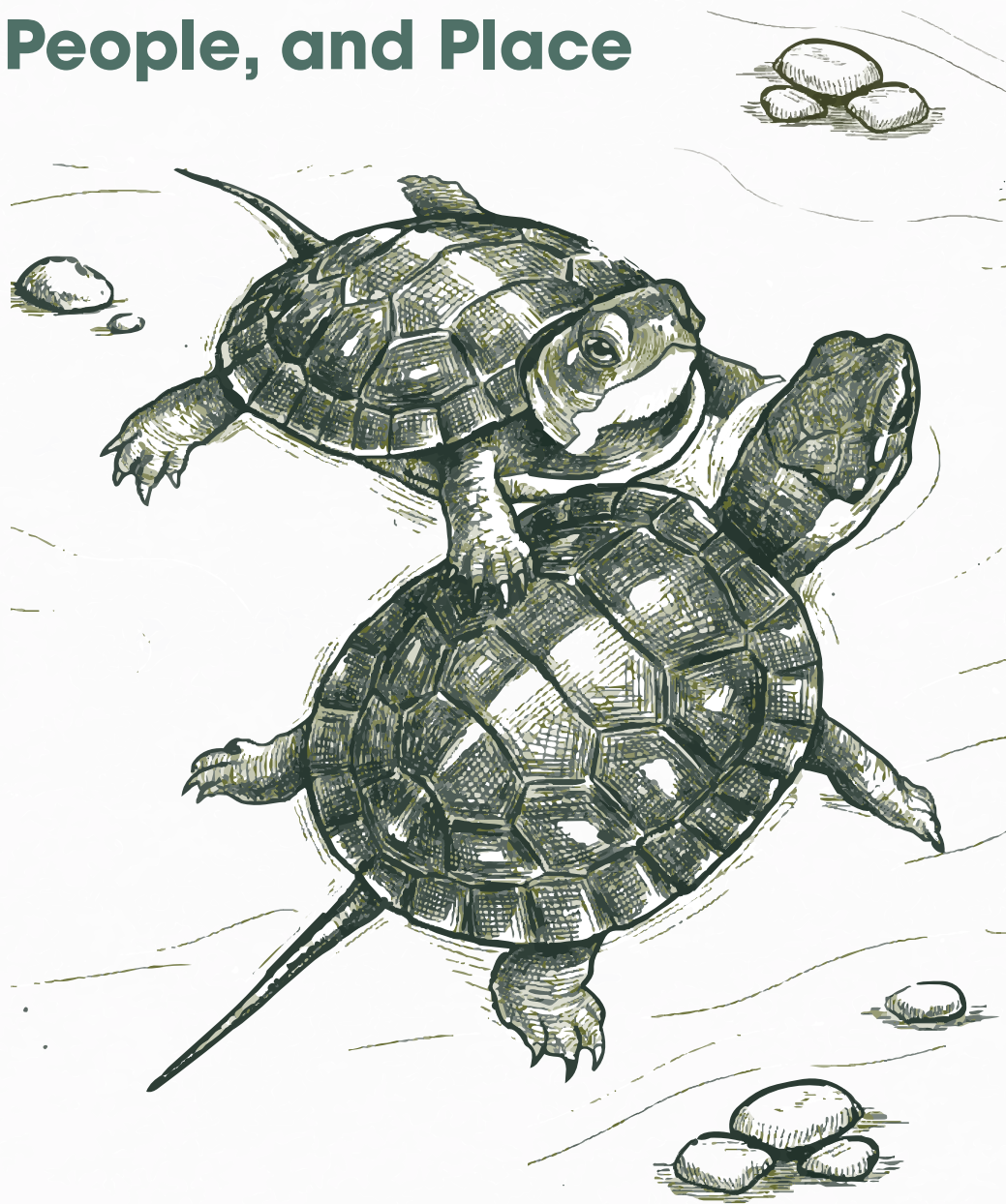
Now, that vision is beginning to take shape.

One moment that has stayed with me happened in August, when we were invited to attend a turtle release and community ceremony. It was the first time the partnership was shared more formally, but what stood out most to me was something quieter.

Community members made matching ribbon skirts for me and Nadine Perron, Environmental Management Biologist with Magnetawan First Nation. It was such a meaningful gesture, rooted in culture, and it really showed me that this is something the community values and wants to celebrate.

That sense of connection continues to guide the work.

A lot of what we've done this past year has involved spending time with community members, listening to their observations, their experiences on the land, and what matters most to them. One of the clearest messages that has come through is that everything is connected.



Even though we're starting with turtles, this work is about much more than a single species. It connects to the land, the water, and all living things.

Freshwater turtles are a powerful example of that connection. They play different roles at every stage of their lives. When they're young, they're low on the food web. As they grow, they help maintain wetland health by feeding on plant matter and animal remains. Even after they pass, their shells return nutrients to the environment.

They're sometimes called the janitors of the wetland.

Despite having existed for over 250 million years, turtles are increasingly vulnerable today. They take a long time to mature, and very few make it into adulthood. The ones that do are incredibly important. When a turtle is lost, especially an adult female, the impact can extend across generations.



That's why this work matters.

During nesting season, we focus on identifying nests laid in high-risk areas, like roadsides. Once a turtle has finished laying her eggs and returned to the water, the eggs are carefully collected and placed in controlled incubation environments. When the hatchlings emerge, they are released into safer wetlands where they have a better chance of survival.

It takes patience and care, but it can make a meaningful difference.

Support from donors has been essential in making this possible. It has allowed us to expand capacity within the community, bringing in additional team members during critical times like nesting season, and supporting flexible roles that make it easier for more people to be involved.

That flexibility means we can respond to what is needed most, in ways that reflect the priorities of the community.

At the heart of this work is a concept called "Two-Eyed Seeing." It's about bringing together different ways of knowing, like Western & Indigenous science, and recognizing that both are equally valuable. That perspective is shaping how we move forward together.

For me, success isn't just about the number of turtles. It's about building something the community believes in and wants to be part of. When people feel connected to the land and the species, that's when the impact really grows.

This is still the beginning.

There is so much potential for this program to evolve over time, guided by the community and what's needed most, as well as the support of donors like you. It has already been incredibly rewarding to be part of, and I'm excited to see where it goes next.

The team behind this work is much bigger than the people you see in the field. It includes community members, conservation staff, and supporters who all play a role in making this possible.

Thank you for being part of it.

*With gratitude,
Donnell Gasbarrini, MSc
Conservation Program Manager*



Curiously Isolated Hairstreak:

The Story of a Newly Recognized Species

When I first started working on what we thought was a regional population of halfmoon hairstreak in 2021, our team quickly realized there wasn't a lot known about the butterfly.

We knew when and where it flew — between July and August on the Blakiston Fan in Waterton Lakes National Park — and that it was an isolated population. Beyond that, there were still major gaps in our understanding of its life history: we didn't know what plant the larvae fed on, whether it had associations with ants (as many hairstreaks do), or why this population was so curiously isolated.

Working alongside a strong field team, we began piecing those answers together.

One of our first discoveries was that the Waterton hairstreak feeds on a different lupin and relies on a single ant species, unlike populations in British Columbia. Combined with the 450 km separating it from any other population, it was clear something didn't line up.



That's why the focus now is on strengthening the population. We're monitoring habitat, managing invasive species, and beginning to bring individuals into human care so we can learn more and support future population growth.

For me, being part of this discovery has been incredibly exciting.

It's rare to find a new species, and even more meaningful to be able to contribute to protecting it. There's still a lot we don't know, and that process of discovery is what drives this work forward.

This species has been here for thousands of years, largely unnoticed. Now that we know it's here, we have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to make sure it continues.

*With gratitude,
James Glasier, PhD*
Conservation Population Ecologist
Curiously Isolated Hairstreak



So, we looked at the genetics.

When we ran the full genome analysis, everything came together. The data showed that this population had been isolated for around 40,000 years, surviving through multiple glacial periods without reconnecting with other populations.

At that point, it became clear this wasn't just an isolated population or subspecies of the halfmoon hairstreak, but it was its own unique species, which we dubbed the curiously isolated hairstreak in 2025.

One of the most interesting discoveries was its relationship with ants. Unlike related species that partner with several ants, this hairstreak relies on just one — the Ponderosa meadow ant — which protects and shelters the caterpillars underground in exchange for nutrient-rich secretions. This level of specialization is remarkable, and often it's easier to find the ants first, then the larvae sharing their habitat.

Despite having persisted for tens of thousands of years, this species is now considered Endangered. Its entire population exists within a single, small area, making it especially vulnerable. Invasive plants are reducing habitat quality, and any major natural disasters could have serious consequences.



Kenya Mountain Bongo Program:

Rooted in Community



The energy is unmistakable. Beneath a marquee tent at the Eburu Forest fire tower, overlooking the forest below, people are singing, dancing, and flipping through new bird guidebooks, pointing out species they know by heart. There is a sense of pride that is hard to describe.

"This is theirs," I keep thinking. "They own this completely."

The guidebook has just been launched, and for the Community Conservation Champions who created it, this moment has been a long time coming.

I have been working in Kenya for 14 years, and this work blends reintroduction science and community-based conservation. We are trying to recover the critically Endangered mountain bongo, which has all but vanished from its former range and exists only in Kenya. If we cannot save them here, they are gone from the wild.

But the work does not start with the species. It starts with people.

Over time, I've learned that when you take the time to listen, everything changes. You are no longer trying to convince people. You are working alongside them.

During COVID, we started a Community Conservation Champions program. These were people who kept showing up, asking how they could help. They were not paid — they simply cared about the forest. With training and tools, they began leading their own work.

They formed two groups: one focused on medicinal plants, the other on birds. Month after month, they built on knowledge already present in the community but never captured in this way.

After a couple of years, they wanted to aim for something more: guidebooks.

The first, on medicinal plants, is now used in schools and shared locally. The bird group followed, producing a guide featuring 36 common species. Seeing them hold that book, it is clear this is about more than identification. It is about ownership and connection.



That connection is essential to the future of the mountain bongo. With fewer than 65 individuals left in the wild, nothing will work unless the people living alongside the forest support it.

That is why everything we do connects back to community, from employment and education to projects like the guidebooks. It also extends to the work we are doing now to prepare for the return of the bongo.



In 2025, we reached a milestone with the approval of a 15-year lease for forest land on Mount Kenya, creating space for research and reintroduction while also working with community members to grow the plant species bongo rely on.

This work takes time and requires many voices to come together.

After years of effort, that collaboration is starting to show. The program is growing, and we are being asked for input and leadership.

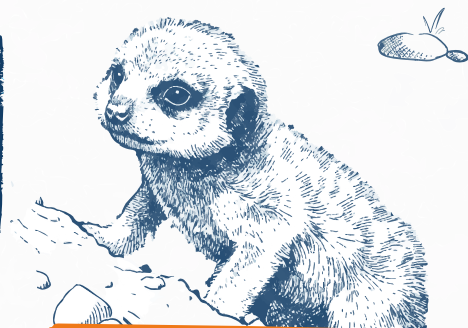
That progress has been hard earned, and while it's something to be proud of, it belongs to everyone who has been part of the journey — from community partners to those supporting the work along the way. Each plays a role, and together, it's what makes this kind of work possible.

*With gratitude,
Donna Sheppard*
Conservation Program Manager

Tiny Arrivals, Big Impact.

21
Births and hatches at the zoo

1,661
Births and hatches through Wilder Institute conservation programs



Lomas, a Humboldt penguin chick



Three critically Endangered lemur pups — Isalo, Hazo, and Asara



Rock hyrax pups Tibesti, Etosha, Kavango, and Karas



Two slender-tailed meerkat pups, Kalahari and Khoti, were born into the zoo's mob



Two whooping crane chicks hatched at the Archibald Biodiversity Centre — the first at the facility

In 2025, new life was welcomed both here at the zoo and through our conservation programs around the world.

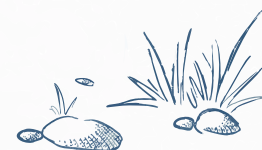
From 21 births and hatches on zoo grounds to 1,661 through Wilder Institute conservation programs, each one represents a step forward for species survival.

From first breaths to first steps, these moments are more than milestones. They are signs of progress, care, and hope for the future.



Bison calves Apapom and Ok'takii joined the Wild Canada herd

With gratitude,
Cara Johnson
Zoological Records Specialist



Thank You for Your 2025 Support

Every story in this report began with people.

People caring for animals before sunrise. People restoring habitat in the field. People asking questions, sharing knowledge, and working together to protect wildlife.

And behind every one of those moments was you.

In 2025, supporters from 10 countries, 10 Canadian provinces, 3 territories, and 14 U.S. states came together to make this work possible.

Together, you gave \$11,828,555 in support of the Calgary Zoological Society and Wilder Institute.

Because of you, care continued. Conservation moved forward. New partnerships took shape. And moments of wonder became moments of impact.

Together, Behind the Wonder

Throughout this report, you've stepped behind the scenes into moments of care, conservation, and connection from 2025. You've heard directly from the people doing this work every day, from animal care teams and veterinarians to conservation scientists, educators, and community partners around the world.

But these stories are only part of the picture.

Beyond these pages, your support continued to power countless other moments, both seen and unseen. Moments like treating wild northern leopard frogs in the field, helping reduce deadly fungal infection rates from 75% to just 9% and giving these vulnerable animals a stronger chance at survival.

Moments like the opening of Savannah Crossing and the revitalization of Savannah Plains, creating immersive new spaces designed to support animal wellbeing while deepening connections between people and wildlife. And moments like breaking ground on Imagine Asia, a transformative new experience that opened in July 2026, that will inspire future generations to care about wildlife and wild places.

Your impact also extended far beyond zoo grounds. In partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Wilder Institute launched Canada's first Centre for Species Survival Human Dimensions, helping advance a future where conservation solutions are shaped not only by science, but by people, communities, and shared knowledge.

Some of this work happens in public view. Much of it happens quietly, through daily acts of care, long-term planning, collaboration, and persistence. All of it matters.

Together, these efforts represent something bigger than any one story. They reflect a shared commitment to protecting wildlife, supporting communities, and creating meaningful change for the future.

And none of it happens without you.

Thank you for standing behind this work and for helping make these moments of wonder possible, not only in 2025, but every day.

Total raised for 2025
\$11,828,555



WAYS TO GIVE

Financial support for the Wilder Institute's Calgary Zoo can be provided in a variety of ways: from annual gifts and ZooCare contributions, to donations for special projects and planned gifts. We invite you to review our projects and programs to see what might interest you.

For more information, please contact the Development Office at the Wilder Institute's Calgary Zoo.

The Wilder Institute's Calgary Zoo's 2025 Gratitude Report is printed in limited quantities. For a digital copy, visit gratitudereport.calgaryzoo.com.

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