

A black bear cub is climbing a tree trunk in a lush green forest. The cub is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. It has black fur with a light-colored patch on its chest. The tree trunk is light brown and has several horizontal branches. The background is a dense forest of green foliage.

# COLCHESTER

## ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

Charity previously known as Action for the Wild

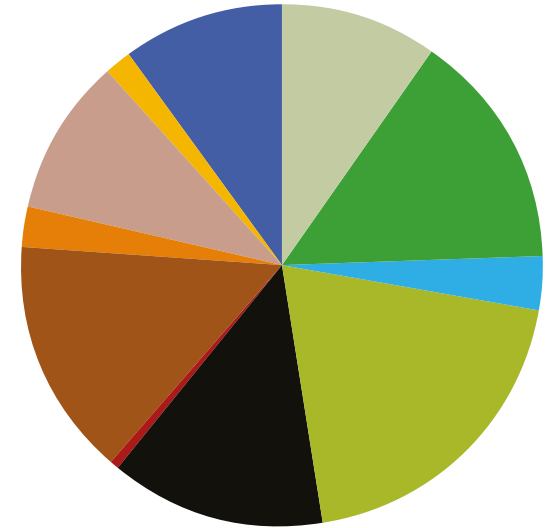
# ANNUAL REPORT 2024












# COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY PROJECT FUNDING

Colchester Zoological Society (CZS) provides both financial and technical assistance to global conservation projects, aims to raise awareness among local people in community conservation programmes and supports conservation research. The money Colchester Zoological Society receives is split every year between the numerous projects our charity supports.

**In 2024, £379,005 was given to the UmPhafa Nature Reserve**

**and the remaining funds were distributed as follows:**



	Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Centre (LPRC) - £4,973.34
	Free the Bears - £7,500
	AEECL Lemur Conservation - £1,747.34
	Elephant Orphanage Project - £10,000
	Save the Rhino International - £6,900
	Red Panda Network - £214.92
	Orangutan Foundation - £7,500
	Komodo Survival Program - £1,290.43
	VulPro - £4,994.22
	E.A.Z.A Elephant TAG (EEHV) Fund - £866.63
	Ghostfishing UK - £5,000



In 2024, CZS  
gave a contribution of  
**£379,005**

to ensure the continued running of the reserve; from employing field rangers, maintenance and intern staff, to ensuring continued protection of wildlife species, as well as hosting interns and providing them with the opportunity to learn about conservation management of a reserve.

# UMPHAFA Nature Reserve

The UmPhafa Nature Reserve was formed in 2005.  
In October 2024, the UmPhafa Nature Reserve was given protected area status under South African law.

## 2024 GAME COUNT OF VISIBLE SPECIES

Blesbok	59	Giraffe	40	Red Hartebeest	13
Buffalo	30	Impala	304	Warthog	254
Common Reedbuck	7	Kudu	193	Waterbuck	40
Duiker	15	Mountain Reedbuck	5	Wildebeest	185
Eland	72	Nyala	56	Zebra	303

## NEW SPECIES RECORDED FOR THE YEAR INCLUDE

**Mammals:** African Wild Cat

**Birds:** Purple Crested Turaco

**Insects:** Baboon Spider

**Amphibians:** Painted Reed Frog / Boettgers Dainty Frog

We hosted 56 interns this year, including students from Writtle University College, University of Suffolk and East Coast College. A new South African student intern also joined for the year. The interns assisted with research on the bottlebrush tree and with vegetation surveys as part of the rangeland condition assessment of the Reserve, led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. 34 students from the University of KwaZulu Natal also visited for their annual soil studies trip.

Poaching continues to be an issue, but thankfully at a lower level than 2023, with a total of 25m of fence stolen, 16 animals taken and 22 incursion attempts, however there was a higher number of instances of trespassing by poachers, with or without dogs, with 84 poachers recorded in the Reserve in 2024 and one snare found. Incursion attempts did follow a downward trend over the year, likely due to increased cameras, the purchase of a thermal drone, and improved patrolling, along with the buffalo acting as a deterrent. Donations of binoculars and cameras also assisted the field rangers in their work.

Game count figures provided good totals for 2024, higher than 2023, even though animals were lost to a particularly cold snap.

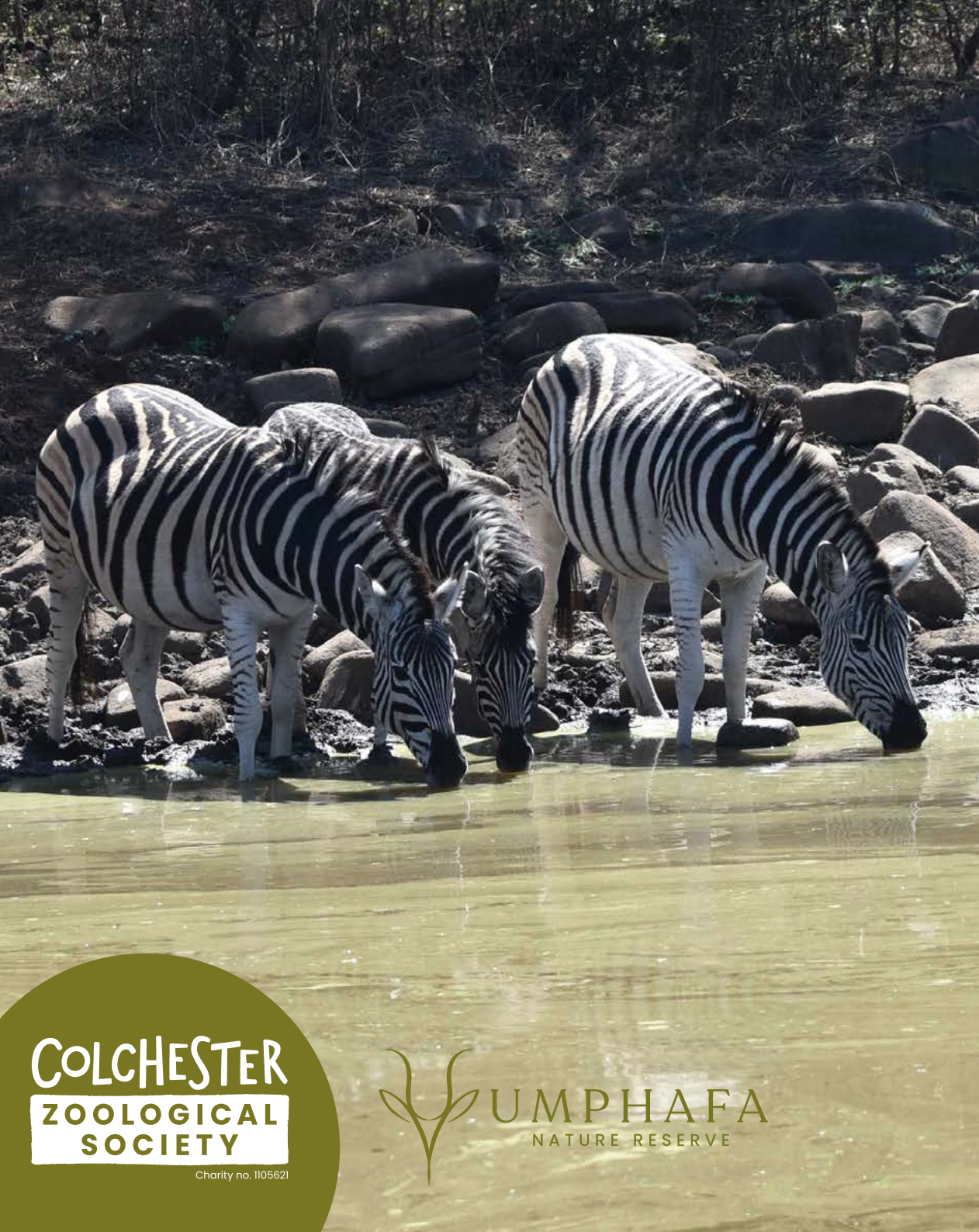
2024 saw no improvement in rainfall levels, so planning ahead, the team purchased a rake and baler to make hay to ensure the animals have food in stock for the winter of 2025. Two additional boreholes were also drilled in 2024 so the team will be able to top up some of the dams to ensure constant water sources.

**In 2025, the team shall again be hosting interns to help with the Reserve management tasks and will continue to focus their efforts on protecting species, bringing in new animal genes with the highlight of releasing cheetah onto the Reserve; a first release of this species!**

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Charity no. 1105621

**UMPHAFA**  
NATURE RESERVE



## KEY EVENTS ON THE RESERVE

### January 2024

- Buffalo herd started to calf.

### February 2024

- 4 juvenile giraffes captured and moved off the Reserve; 2 males and 2 females.
- 2 male wild dogs arrived.
- The field rangers and management staff started security training and testing.

### March 2024

- Female wild dogs arrived.
- 3 spotted eagle owls arrived from FreeMe Wild and released.
- 2 large spotted genets arrived from FreeMe Wild and released.
- The field rangers and management staff started security exams with written and practical shooting tests.
- First aid training for field rangers and management.

### April 2024

- Cheetah permit arrived.
- Started bonding procedure with the wild dogs.
- 101 blesbok delivered.
- Male kudu captured for movement off the Reserve.
- 10 ostriches delivered; 2 males 8 females.
- Electric converted to solar on the Reserve's fences.

### May 2024

- Wildebeest and zebra captured for movement off the Reserve.
- Thermal drone purchased.

### June 2024

- New male giraffe delivered.
- 4 new camera traps purchased.



## KEY EVENTS ON THE RESERVE

### July 2024

- Wild dogs left.
- African wild cat released.
- 2 new male giraffes released.
- 3 male red hartebeest delivered.
- Cheetah collars arrived.

### August 2024

- Released 9 buffalo including a calf.
- Spotted another African wildcat on the Reserve.
- 10 common reedbuck released.

### September 2024

- The wild dogs that left in July had 5 pups at their new home Makalali. These were the only dogs bonded successfully this year.
- State vet checked the buffalo fence and it passed.
- 56 kudu and 20 zebra captured for movement off the Reserve.

### October 2024

- The team undertook a block burn of 27% of the Reserve.

### November 2024

- 3 male eland arrived.
- Spotted eagle owl had 2 chicks.

### December 2024

- Eskom electricity supply switched off with conversion to solar.

# FISHER'S ESTUARINE MOTH

The Fisher's estuarine moth is a rare and highly threatened species. The main stronghold of the species is centred on a remote island in Essex located in the Walton Backwaters, called Skipper's Island, which is part of Hamford Water National Nature Reserve. Sadly, a seawall breach in 2020 has meant that approximately 70% of suitable habitat on the island has been lost to rising sea levels. Over the last 20+ years, a collaborative project has been underway to create new habitat for the moth's larvae to feed on, with Hog's fennel planted across numerous sites in north Essex, as part of a landscape-wide conservation approach.

Colchester Zoo began working on this programme in 2008, setting up a captive breeding and release programme, with egg batches produced at the zoo released into newly created habitat sites to ensure the long-term survival of this species.

As of 2024, the majority of the 35 plots have now been colonised, and the captive breeding programme was paused, having achieved its objective to provide moths for release into new habitat.

Colchester Zoo, however, continues its involvement with the project by annually monitoring Hog's fennel plant condition, scrub encroachment, larval feeding signs and adult moth counts at two of the newly created sites; Cudmore Grove and Copt Hall, to help monitor the establishment of the moth at these sites.

In addition, Colchester Zoo's Zoological Director and Team Leader of Reptile Section sit on the Fisher's Estuarine Moth Steering Group with partners from the Essex Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency, Tendring District Council, Butterfly Conservation and the National Trust to continue to work to safeguard the future of this species.

This project is a fantastic indicator of the success of an invertebrate breed and release programme, working in collaboration with various conservation organisations to increase the population size of this species.

# SAVE THE RHINO INTERNATIONAL



The Minister for the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment has announced that 420 rhinos were illegally killed in South Africa during 2024, and, of this total, 232 rhinos were lost to poaching in KwaZulu Natal.

Whilst these figures represent a decrease on the previous year, demonstrating that current conservation efforts are having a tangible impact, ongoing investment into park rangers is essential, as rangers are on the frontline in their role to ensure the integrity of conservation areas and the safety of rhinos within these landscapes.

## 2024

- This donation helps towards Hluluwe-iMfolozi National Park's objectives to reduce annual poaching levels, by enabling increased patrol coverage, decreased reaction time and by improving ranger welfare while on duty.
- The first quarter of 2024 saw rhino carcasses continue to be found following poaching incidents. Following a major dehorning operation in April, the next quarter saw a reduction in rhino poaching and overall, this decrease continued for the rest of the year. Unfortunately, there is still a market for dehorned rhino, so the teams remain ever vigilant to ensure continued protection of the reserve's rhinos.
- Field ranger training sessions continued in the Park in 2024, new uniform provision, ongoing efforts to maintain the field ranger camps and the purchase of new equipment, such as tents, and ration packs, all help build the ranger units' capacity, helping to ensure individuals are more effective during deployments in the field.

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**ZOOLOGICAL**  
**SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

In 2024,  
Colchester Zoological  
Society contributed

**£6,900**

to purchase rifle  
safes and to meet  
emergency repairs  
of equipment.

# ORANGUTAN FOUNDATION



The Orangutan Foundation is working to save orangutans by protecting their tropical forest habitat, working with local communities, and promoting research and education.

The Orangutan Foundation operates five orangutan post-release monitoring camps within the Lamandau Wildlife Reserve, a reserve spanning almost 160,000 acres in Indonesian Borneo. At these camps, field teams care for orphaned orangutans in a soft-release programme and continuously monitor orangutans in the surrounding forest. The young orangutans in the soft-release programme learn forest skills necessary for life in the wild and, once fully prepared, are then ready for release.

From time to time, situations arise where the team help with the rescue and translocation of orangutans stranded in threatened areas, such as community land and fragmented sections of forest. Veterinary assistance ensures the highest welfare standards are available to expertly treat these orangutans straight away before release into the Lamandau Wildlife Reserve.

Approximately 550,000 acres of critical rainforest habitat continues to be protected through guard posts and patrols, with over 5,000 orangutans in Lamandau Wildlife Reserve and Tanjung Puting National Park safe-guarded through the habitat protection programme.

2024

- One new birth to female orangutans in the Lamandau Wildlife Reserve.
- After seven years of learning, one of the orphaned orangutans graduated from the soft-release programme, starting a new chapter in the Lamandau Wildlife Reserve.
- 36,500 saplings were planted in over 30 hectares of degraded rainforest. A total of 7,000 plants from 7 different species were used in this process to increase local rainforest diversity and success rates.
- Fortunately, the dry season was not as arid as expected, with only two forest fires needing to be extinguished in Lamandau Wildlife Reserve. Staff also built wells - 'boreholes' - to encourage the growth of wetter, fire-resistant vegetation, and to provide water sources for firefighting in fire-prone forest areas.

In 2024, CZS  
gave a contribution of  
**£7,500**  
to cover a vet salary,  
post-release monitoring  
of the Bornean orangutan  
population in the Lamandau  
Wildlife Reserve and  
veterinary equipment  
for a wildlife clinic.

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**ZOOLOGICAL**  
**SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

# LEMUR CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (AEECL)



The AEECL aims to advance the understanding and conservation of Madagascar's lemur populations through scientific research, captive propagation and protection of their natural habitat.

Investment in local communities through education, resource management and communication helps ensure the communities of today can forge a safe haven for wildlife tomorrow.

2024

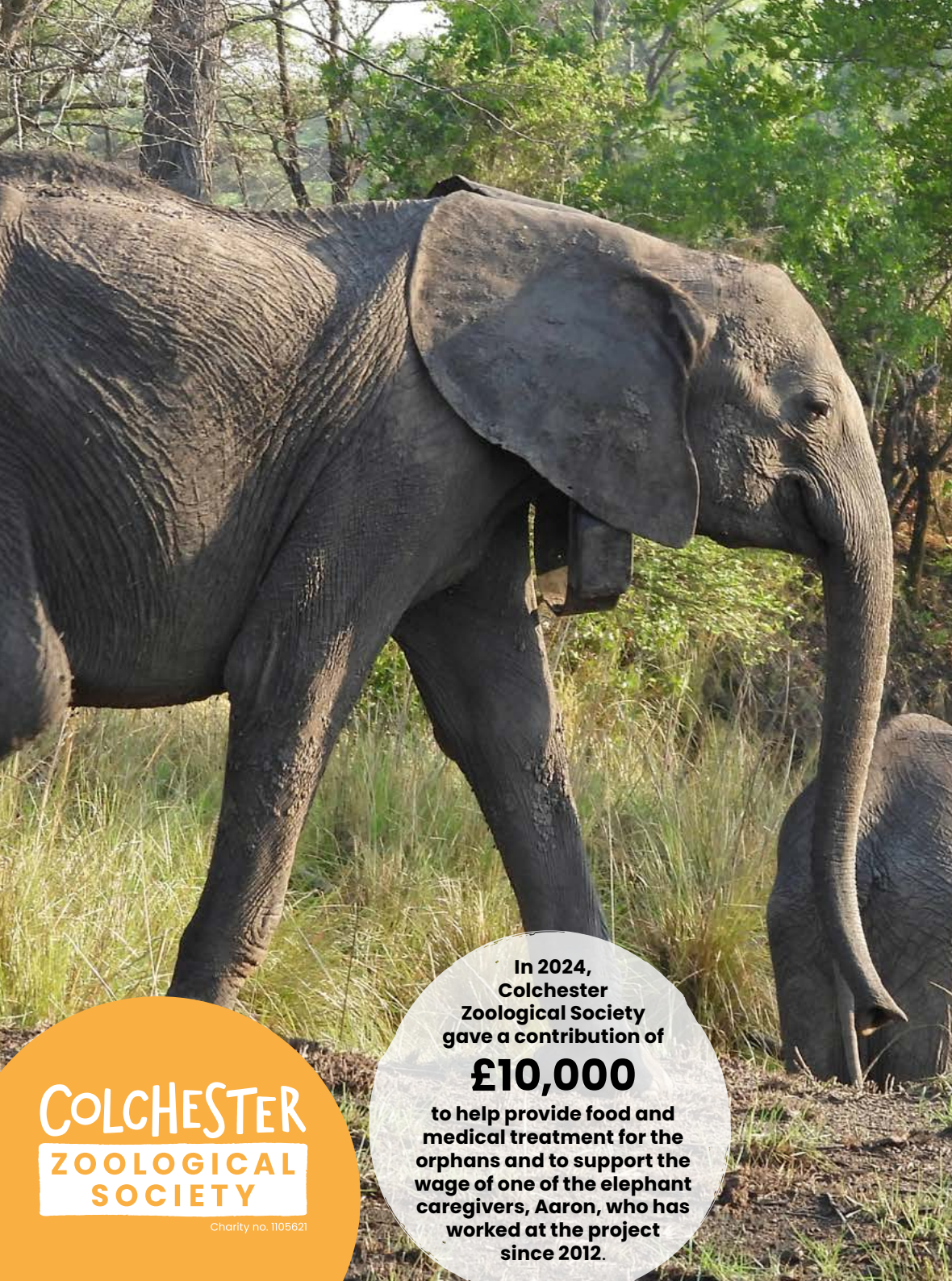
- During the Regional Reforestation event, 50 trees were planted in Anahidrano village. During the planting season, 6,586 young plants from four species were provided by the 2 community nurseries and these were planted over 4ha.
- AEECL support the women in local communities in Antsohihy and in celebration of International Women's Day in 2024, provided 25 T-shirts, and a special celebration meal to all participants who represented AEECL.
- The team attended the biodiversity annual event in Anjiabory which included a celebration lunch, information stands, speeches by the authorities in attendance and networking with the NGOs who work in the Sofia region. AEECL donated to support the celebration.
- A Master's research student, supported by AEECL, studied at various locations throughout the area, looking at 'assessing the potential for soil restoration in rice paddies in the Sahamalaza region, using soil tests and social science.' The AEECL helped the student to organise her research permit, organised a Malagasy student to assist her and supported her data collection.
- The AEECL hosted another day of road repairs which saw 178 people attend from four villages and approximately 17km of road either fixed or newly created. Most of the worst sections were fixed and AEECL provided food for the event.
- AEECL subsidises 78 teacher wages from 3 communes to ensure they are earning a salary whilst teaching the children good skills, including nature-based studies. By subsidising their salaries, the AEECL can improve the educational programmes of the local communities.

**COLCHESTER**  
**ZOOLOGICAL**  
**SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

In 2024, Colchester  
Zoological Society  
gave a contribution of

**£1,747.34**  
in membership fees  
to support the work  
of AEECL.



# ELEPHANT ORPHANAGE PROJECT

The Elephant Orphanage Project (EOP) is working to rescue, rehabilitate and release elephants that have been orphaned as a direct result of poaching.

2024

At the end of 2024, a total of 26 orphans were under the Elephant Orphanage Project's care or monitoring, spanning the six stages of release:

- 5 elephants in Stage 1 in rehabilitation at the Lilayi Elephant Nursery.
  - 12 elephants in Stage 3 at the Kafue Release Facility in the protective boma overnight.
  - 6 elephants at Stage 5 spending nights outside the boma and spending less than 50% of their time with the orphan herd.
  - 3 elephants at Stage 6 living full time in the wild.
- Stage 5 elephant female Chamilandu and her herd continue to periodically visit the Stage 3 release phase orphans to socialise on their daily walks and, throughout the last quarter of the year, maintained a consistent home range within 5 - 7 km radius of the Release Facility. These encounters evidence the strong bonds forged between the elephants and the trust they have built over time.
- Some of the Stage 5 orphans; Tafika, Rufunsa, and Mosi, have begun to explore other areas of the Kafue National Park, likely in search of more abundant and nutritious food sources. This break away from Chamilandu's leadership and expansion of their range marks their growing independence and confidence in navigating the wild. Tafika ventured south and explored overlapping ranges with wild herds; this behaviour is essential for long-term survival and adaptation in male African elephants.
- After five months of exploring the wild, Stage 6 sub-adult bull Musolole, now 13.5 years, made an unexpected return to the Kafue Release Facility, reuniting with the orphans, likely in search of water due to the drought. He had been spotted in a group of around 50 wild elephants just 2 weeks before his return in excellent body condition.
- In November, an orphaned elephant was captured. He was in poor condition, which is currently very common during this extreme drought, but he was already of weaned age, so rather than go to Lilayi Elephant Nursery, he was immobilised to provide some basic medical treatment and immune boosters and relocated to an area closer to the National Park, away from settlements with more plentiful vegetation. Subsequent reports by the monitoring Rangers confirm he joined with a herd and moved off towards the Park.

In 2024,  
Colchester  
Zoological Society  
gave a contribution of

**£10,000**

to help provide food and medical treatment for the orphans and to support the wage of one of the elephant caregivers, Aaron, who has worked at the project since 2012.

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ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

# ELEPHANT HERPES VIRUS (EEHV) RESEARCH FUNDS APPEAL



Elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV), of which there are seven species and several subspecies, continues to be a devastating infectious disease posing a significant threat to the long-term conservation of Asian elephants in zoo populations. One in every six young Asian elephants born in western zoos develops an acute, haemorrhagic disease (EEHV-HD) as a result of an EEHV infection. Affected animals almost always succumb to disease, often within one to two days after the first clinical symptoms appear. EEHV-HD is the most common cause of death of young Asian elephants in zoos; 56% of all mortality among elephant calves is caused by this disease.

The disease is also found in wild populations, where infections and fatalities are more challenging to track, and more recently, African elephants have been shown to be affected as well.

## 2024

- Promising lines of research work continue, with researchers at the University of Utrecht making remarkable progress towards developing a vaccine against EEHV.
- A scientific paper was published in 2024 highlighting progress with the work to better define which animals are at risk of EEHV-fatal haemorrhagic disease (EEHV-HD) using blood tests from 164 Asian elephants in European zoos. The study strongly suggested which young elephants with low antibody levels were at risk of developing fatal EEHV-HD, confirmed by the fact all 23 studied fatalities had such low antibody levels (which represents a large subset of 56% of the total reported fatalities).
- Overall, the research found that specific testing can be used to identify animals at risk of EEHV-HD and further research will now look to determine the exact antibody level above which animals are protected against EEHV-HD.
- The future of zoo elephant populations depends on understanding how to manage this awful disease. In the long term, research serves to protect captive elephants against fatal EEHV-HD and contribute to the preservation of this endangered animal species.

**COLCHESTER  
ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

In 2024,  
Colchester Zoological  
Society contributed  
**£866.63**  
to support research  
projects that strive  
towards finding a  
solution to this  
fatal disease.

# CENTRE DE REHABILITATION DES PRIMATES DE LWIRO



Founded in 2002 by two Congolese government institutions, The Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Centre (LPRC) was formed to provide a permanent solution for the escalating number of orphaned primates confiscated around Kahuzi-Biega National Park (PNKB). The centre plays a vital role in caring for confiscated wildlife and in working to stop the illegal animal trade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

## 2024

- At the end of 2024, Lwiro serves as a sanctuary for 129 chimpanzees, 108 monkeys of 14 different species, 46 parrots, 3 tortoises and a porcupine.
- The centre is committed to delivering high-quality wildlife health and welfare services, emphasising long-term captive care, with a strong focus on rehabilitation and conservation education.
- In 2024, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of £4,973.34 towards the purchase of essential sustenance, promoting the health and vitality of the primates residing at Lwiro. Over six weeks, from April 2024 to May 2024, the donation facilitated the provision of fresh fruits and vegetables to a total of 287 animals housed at LPRC. This initiative not only adds variety to their diet, but also enhances the overall quality of nutrition, contributing to the holistic well-being of the primates.
- The support enables the LPRC to maintain its care capacity, ensuring the continued reception of confiscated animals. This not only aligns with LPRC's mission, but also contributes to compliance with Congolese law.
- A significant portion of the funds was dedicated to supporting local women farmers in Lwiro. This not only ensures a regular supply of fresh and diverse nutritional options for the primates, but also sustains the livelihoods of local farmers, providing them with a sustainable income source that helps protect Kahuzi Biega National Park from exploitation.

**COLCHESTER  
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SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

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towards the purchase  
of essential sustenance,  
promoting the health and  
vitality of the primates  
residing at Lwiro.

# FREE THE BEARS



Free the Bears (FTB) is working to protect, preserve and enrich the lives of bears throughout the world by offering a safe sanctuary for bears rescued from the illegal wildlife trade.

## 2024

• In 2024, a record 34 bears were rescued. This included the world's largest rescue of threatened bear cubs, involving 16 tiny cubs ranging in weight between 1.3kg and 4kg. Sadly, one of the cubs didn't make it, however, the 15 survivors are now healthy and strong.

Many of the other bears rescued were also orphaned cubs, two of which had horrific wounds from wire snare traps, although thankfully both are now on the road to recovery. Older bears were also rescued, that had been caged for many years, including a golden moon bear.

All of these bears have been spared a life of pain, fear and suffering and will join the hundreds of rescued bears at Free the Bears' sanctuaries.

• In 2024, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of £7,500 towards Free the Bears; £6000 towards the expansion of the Laos sanctuary's sun bear facilities to help create a second facility and new group of sun bears during 2025, as four sun bears were rescued in 2024.

The other £1,500 towards recruitment of a new Behavioural Research Assistant and sample collection from a male sun bear who will have an implant fitted to control sperm production.

This represents a rare opportunity to integrate behavioural observations with hormonal monitoring to analyse the effects of contraceptive use on male social and reproductive behaviours to help inform future contraceptive practices in captive bear populations.

In 2024,  
Colchester Zoological  
Society contributed  
**£7,500**  
towards Free the Bears  
to improve facilities and  
research work at the Laos  
Luang Prabang Wildlife  
Sanctuary.

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ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

# VULPRO



**African vultures are some of the most threatened species on the planet, with some populations having declined by over 80% in the last three decades. VulPro has been at the forefront of vulture conservation, conducting extensive breeding surveys and analysing trends across southern Africa since 2010.**

**By identifying critical nesting sites and understanding the challenges facing breeding vultures, VulPro contributes invaluable data to the fight for their survival.**

## 2024

- Researchers employ a combination of walking, drone, and driving surveys to carefully observe and document the presence and behaviour of vultures at each nest. Each nesting site is monitored a minimum of twice a year, allowing for comparisons of breeding success at the start and end of each season and enabling the calculation of annual reproductive rates.
- In 2024, VulPro's tree nesting monitoring activity took place across 20 different properties, where the team recorded a total 137 vulture tree nests.
- Long-established monitoring sites provide valuable data on recent population trends, revealing mixed trends across sites in 2024 when compared to previous years. Continuous monitoring will be essential to track these trends further and to implement targeted conservation actions where needed.
- Monitoring efforts further expanded to include an altogether new area. This led to the interesting discovery of a hooded vulture nest hidden away along the bank of the river. With fewer than 50–100 breeding pairs of hooded vultures remaining in South Africa, this discovery is of immense conservation significance.
- Long-term data collection is crucial for understanding vulture population dynamics, identifying emerging threats, and prioritising conservation efforts. As VulPro detect declining trends and shifts in populations, data provides valuable insights into the scale of these changes, helping to inform broader population assessments like those used for the IUCN Red List.

In 2024,  
Colchester Zoological  
Society contributed

**£4,994.22**

towards vulture monitoring  
expenses covering researcher  
costs to monitor breeding sites  
of the critically endangered  
tree nesting African  
white-backed vulture.

**COLCHESTER  
ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621



# RED PANDA NETWORK FOREST GUARDIAN SPONSORSHIP

The Red Panda Network (RPN) established the world's first community-based monitoring programme for red pandas and their habitat through empowering, educating and engaging Nepalese local communities in red panda conservation, along with providing livelihood incentives.

One of the key initiatives contributing to the success of the programme is the Forest Guardian (FG) programme. Forest Guardians are on-the-ground partners, who are employed to monitor and protect red panda habitat and support red panda conservation through multiple activities, such as monitoring red panda populations and habitat, generating population estimates, identifying threats and developing threat mitigation strategies.

They are also involved in carrying out anti-poaching patrolling and work as panda trackers during eco-trips. Each Forest Guardian also works within their respective village to build awareness of the importance of red pandas to the local ecosystem.

## 2024

- In 2024, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of £214.92 to help sponsor a Forest Guardian. Currently there are 126 professional Forest Guardians and, in 2024, the red panda holders in European Zoos provided support for 25 of these.
- The funds are used for capacity and skill-building training, supporting children and siblings with education scholarships, installing solar systems, and providing guardians with field gear and monitoring equipment.
- All forest guardians receive training on community-based red panda monitoring and anti-poaching patrolling, which includes training on camera trap handling, installation and data management, to enable them to monitor and establish red panda monitoring blocks.
- This support benefits not only the red pandas, but provides employment and development within the local community, giving them a sense of pride in protecting this endangered species, with income generated from sustainable means.

In 2024,  
Colchester Zoological  
Society contributed

**£214.92**

to help sponsor a forest  
guardian to monitor  
and protect red panda habitat;  
as well as educate  
communities on the  
importance of the  
red panda.

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ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

# KOMODO SURVIVAL PROGRAM



The Komodo Survival Program (KSP) aims to protect and monitor Komodo dragons and their habitat with the involvement of the local community.

## 2024

- Over the course of the year, the Komodo Survival Program (KSP) team conducted a number of community awareness meetings in different hamlets and villages, informing the community that there are protected animals in their area and encouraging them to always preserve the Komodo dragon habitat. They also trained naturalist guides to increase the capacity of guides, so that the guides' knowledge regarding Komodo dragon ecology can be conveyed to visitors.
- Workshops were also conducted focused on analysing camera trap data to estimate Komodo dragon site occupancy at all monitoring sites on Flores, on safe techniques for handling and measuring Komodo dragons and mitigating human-wildlife conflicts using Rinca Island's abundant Komodo dragon population and on data interpretation and scientific report writing.
- Camera trapping sessions were conducted in a number of locations in Flores, with a total of 18 out of 26 camera traps recording the presence of Komodo dragons.
- Two educational programmes for school children were also carried out with a total of 37 students participating in ecological sessions about the Komodo dragon.

In 2024,  
Colchester  
Zoological Society  
gave a contribution of  
**£1,290.43**  
to support this  
project.

**COLCHESTER**  
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**SOCIETY**

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# GHOSTFISHING UK

Ghost Fishing UK was established in 2015, and is an award-winning charity dedicated to removing 'ghost gear' from the seas around the UK.

Ghost gear is fishing gear, such as nets and shellfish traps, that have been lost by fishermen during the course of their work. The lost gear continues to catch marine life, as it is designed to do. Ghost gear is a source of marine pollution, but because it was designed to catch animals, it has a disproportionate impact on wildlife, marine and coastal habitats, and food security.

Ghost Fishing UK is made up of volunteer scuba divers, who have been trained to remove this lost fishing gear from the seas. The purpose is to remove, where possible, lethal entanglement hazards to marine life from the marine environment.

## 2024

- Ghostfishing UK divers undertook numerous recovery missions in 2024.
- The team travelled to Plymouth to search for a large trawl net and freed a large 1m wrasse trapped in it, before the net was safely recovered.
- The team worked on the wreck of the Vale of Leven, a steam drifter in 26m depth within the Rampion wind farm, where they removed several large and hazardous chunks of net before clearing the wreck of pots.
- The team recovered a gill net and mass of rope floating under Swanage pier, which sadly had already claimed the life of one fish. This gill net was a large hazard to both the abundant marine life under the pier, as well as the huge numbers of recreational divers who visit the pier for leisure and training. 8 lobster pots were also recovered on day 2 of the dive; these pots will be returned to the fishing community where possible or broken down for materials and recycled if they are in too poor condition.
- The team travelled to Holy Loch to recover some lost creel pots after Storm Bert broke a storage barge apart – over 60 pots were recovered and 2,934 live crab, 136 prawns, 16 hermit crabs, 13 ling, 7 cod and 3 wrasse were saved.
- 263m of gill net was found in the shallows of Jennycliff Bay, which is a small pebble beach within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. After the divers had surveyed and secured the lift bags, masses of net were recovered to the surface along with all the trapped life and litter the net had been catching. Once the net was eventually on deck the trapped life was released, including 72 spiny spider crabs, 30 velvet swimming crabs and 9 edible crabs.

In 2024,  
Colchester  
Zoological Society  
gave a contribution of

**£5,000**

to help remove abandoned,  
lost or discarded fishing  
gear from UK waters.

**COLCHESTER**  
**ZOOLOGICAL**  
**SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621



**COLCHESTER**

**ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

Charity no. 1105621

Charity previously known as Action for the Wild

**THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR SUPPORT**