African elephant

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

Amur tiger

FUNDING TO CZS PROJECTS

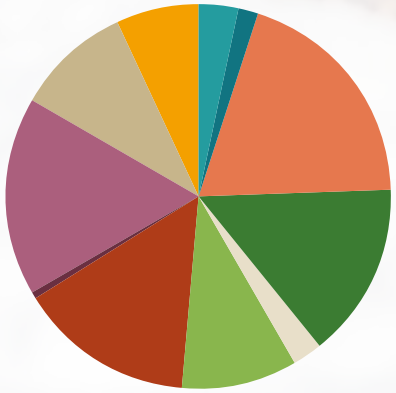
Colchester Zoological Society (CZS) provides both financial and technical assistance to global conservation projects, aims to raise awareness among local people in community programmes and supports conservation research.

The money Colchester Zoological Society receives is split every year between the numerous projects our charity supports.

In 2025, £255,000 was given to the
UmPhafa Nature Reserve

and the remaining funds were distributed as follows:

- AEECL Lemur Conservation - £1,736.83
- E.A.Z.A Elephant TAG (EEHV) Fund - £854.04
- Elephant Orphanage Project - £10,000
- Free the Bears - £7,500
- Komodo Survival Program - £1,321.12
- Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Centre (LPRC) - £5,025
- Orangutan Foundation - £7,500
- Red Panda Network - £209.87
- Save the Rhino International - £8,547
- VulPro - £5,999.84
- WildCats Conservation Alliance - £3,469



In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of

£255,000

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.

Interns

UMPHAFA NATURE 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.

NOVEMBER 2025 GAME COUNT OF VISIBLE SPECIES

Blesbok	41	Giraffe	35	Red Hartebeest	33
Buffalo	32	Impala	252	Warthog	213
Common Reedbuck	1	Kudu	250	Waterbuck	51
Duiker	3	Mountain Reedbuck	0	Wildebeest	140
Eland	51	Nyala	60	Zebra	331

NEW SPECIES RECORDED FOR THE YEAR INCLUDE

Mammals – Cheetah / Little free-tailed bat / Egyptian free-tailed bats

Birds – Dwarf bittern / Lesser moorhen / African jacana

48 interns visited in 2025, which included groups from ARU Writtle, the University of Suffolk and East Coast College and we recruited a new student intern, Ethan, who completed his nature diploma certificate over the year. One of our interns also published a paper on the African red toad.

We have seen a reduction of 37% in poachers being inside the Reserve in 2025, compared to 2024. Quarter 1 saw a poacher arrested for trespass and sentenced to six months in prison. In Quarter 2, we lost 35 fence standards and the fence was stolen in Quarter 4 on two separate occasions. Thankfully, in December, our usually busy period for incursions, none were reported! The reduction in poaching could be based on a number of factors – increased numbers of cameras, aerial patrols and, at the latter end of the year, joining the police forum.

Game count figures provided totals for 2025 - we have seen a reduction in animals, probably due to the increased leopard population which has made an impact. We released 32 blesbok onto the Reserve in 2025, but numbers are showing a reduction as they appear to be one of the preferred leopard prey items.

Some species were moved off the Reserve in 2025, including four juvenile giraffe, eight male kudu, one male waterbuck, 55 wildebeest, 102 zebra and four leopards. We are over the carrying capacity for giraffe, kudu, eland and warthog, so plan to remove individuals of these species in 2026. All leopards removed are creating a founder population at another reserve and are all doing very well, with the last report that the female had given birth to cubs.

The highlight of 2025 was the arrival of cheetah. Despite the loss of two males (one male to natural causes and the second to leopard predation), the remaining male and female have been successfully released and are roaming the Reserve.

2025 saw a good amount of rain; the dams are looking much better and hopefully the upward trend continues into 2026.

Giraffe and calf

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

Cheetah

KEY EVENTS ON THE RESERVE

UMPHAFA
NATURE RESERVE

January 2025
- Female cheetah arrived.
- African jacana and lesser moorhen recorded.

February 2025
- Female cheetah released from the boma onto the Reserve.
- Team started to bait for leopard capture to move individuals off of the Reserve due to high population numbers.
- Savsim came and assisted us in improving the health and skills of our field rangers. Savsim are a non-profit organisation who support conservation in wildlife protected areas by harnessing the skills and experiences of uniformed veterans.

March 2025
- A female and male leopard were transferred to another reserve.
- Durban Natural Science Museum came and recorded two new bat species as part of their efforts to research small mammals in the area.

May 2025
- Two male cheetahs arrived.
- Game capture removed 102 zebra and 55 wildebeest.
- 55 blue cranes visited the ryefield.

June 2025
- Two new buffalo calves born.
- The team started to bond the two male cheetah.
- Game capture removed eight male kudu and one male waterbuck.

August 2025
- Male cheetah, Tswalu, passed away from unknown, natural causes.
- Male cheetah, Duma, was released onto the Reserve.

September 2025
- Male cheetah, Balula, arrived from Babanango. He had a broken foot so needed a period of rehabilitation in the boma.

October 2025
- The pair of cheetah met for the first time on the Reserve, although no mating was seen.
- Another female and male leopard were captured and transported to another reserve.
- 32 blesbok were delivered.

November 2025
- Male cheetah, Balula, was released on to the Reserve.

December 2025
- Looked after and released two jackal buzzards from FreeMe Wild.
- Male cheetahs, Duma and Balula, met for the first time - after a few days Duma moved to another side of the Reserve where he was killed by a leopard.
- Two male and two female giraffe were relocated to new homes.
- Another buffalo calf was recorded on the Reserve.

COLCHESTER 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.

2025

In 2025, young plants were transferred from the production sites to the reforestation area during the rainy season (January and February). The local population is paid for transporting the young plants and for digging the holes. The Andranotsiritry forest is the target location for the 2025 reforestation campaign; 7,819 seedlings of seven species were planted, covering approximately nine hectares.

The AEECL participated in various celebrations organised by the local authorities, including a reforestation event, Women's Day in March and a cultural celebration in May that symbolises the agreement between the local population and the Madagascar National Parks.

Support also continued for foreign students and researchers helping make their research effective and impactful. The AEECL provided field support for students studying amphibians in Sahamalaza Iles-Radama National Park (SIRNP) in Northwest Madagascar and microbiota and parasites in blue-eyed black lemurs

Monthly support was provided for teachers in three municipalities, with subsidies paid for 10 months of the year to ensure teachers carry on delivering education to students and to teach about conservation and the work of the AEECL, so future generations will support and protect the ecosystems around them.

AEECL worked to ensure effective data collection of lemur surveys across the Sahamalaza Iles-Radama National Park (SIRNP). Monthly surveys were conducted to assess female reproduction of blue-eyed black lemurs; this research contributes to the protection and understanding of the species by providing key information on their reproductive biology and health. Results found that, in Ankarafa, each year one to three females per group give birth compared to one female per group in Anabohazo. A second study looked at population estimates, as the species is endemic to this region. Assessment of lemur distribution, presence, and density in the forest fragments of the National Park found that blue-eyed black lemurs were estimated at 0.89 individuals per hectare in Ankarafa and 0.93 individuals/ha in Anabohazo.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of

£1,736.83

in membership fees to support the work of AEECL.

Blue-eyed black lemur

COLCHESTER 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 the 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 free-ranging Asian elephant populations where infections and fatalities are more challenging to track; over 120 deaths have been attributed to EEHV-HD since 2003. In recent years, multiple young African elephants in zoos succumbed to EEHV-HD as well.

Over the past few years, researchers have worked to understand why some elephants get severely ill from this virus while others do not. They found that the antibodies a young elephant gets from its mother at birth protect it from the virus causing disease. However, these antibodies slowly disappear over two to three years. If an elephant has not encountered the virus by then, it is at high risk of dying from an infection.

2025

Until just a few years ago, little was known about the EEHVs and the disease they may cause (EEHV-HD). For that reason, a research project with the eventual aim to develop a vaccine for and treatment against EEHV-HD was started at Utrecht University. Initially, the team developed new, reliable diagnostic assays with which antibodies against the EEHVs can be detected.

In addition to development of the assays, they have assessed what virus component would be the most suitable antigen for an EEHV vaccine. They have now developed a candidate vaccine against EEHV1A; subspecies 1A has been responsible for the vast majority of EEHV-HD cases to date and they have trialled the vaccine on zoo elephants with limited side effects. The aim now is to vaccinate young elephants that do not have any antibodies against the virus and are therefore at risk of getting seriously ill. It is important that vaccinated animals produce sufficient amounts of antibodies against the virus so the elephants will need to be monitored long-term to see if these antibodies (and thus vaccination) protect them against disease when they first come into contact with the virus.

Since antibodies are very important for the protection against EEHV-HD, they are also looking into the possibility to use EEHV-specific antibodies as a (prophylactic) treatment against EEHV-HD. Serum or plasma of adult elephants with high levels of EEHV-specific antibodies could be administered to elephants at risk of EEHV-HD in order to increase their EEHV-specific antibody levels, so-called passive transfer of antibodies.

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.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed

£854.04

to support research projects that strive towards finding a solution to this fatal disease.

Asian elephant

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

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.

2025

In 2025, the Elephant Orphanage Project had 26 elephants undergoing care or monitoring, spanning the six stages of release:

- 16 elephants in rehabilitation (four elephants in early rehabilitation at the Lilayi Elephant Nursery and 12 elephants at the Kafue Release Facility who remain inside the protective boma overnight).
- 10 elephants actively monitored (seven of these remaining with the orphan herd less than 50% of their time and three living full time in the wild and being monitored).

The 8th June saw the rescue of a 10-month-old calf, Nanzhila. She had been seen alone for five days before walking into a camp and successfully captured for rehabilitation. The orphans at the nursery responded warmly to her and 3-year-old Bupe has taken on a peaceful leadership role.

Female orphans Chikumbi and Ndewa transitioned from the nursery to Kafue Release Facility on the 11th June. At over 3 years of age, they have settled in well, integrated with the herd and grown in confidence.

15-year-old Kavala self-released on the 1st of June, joining Chamilandu's released herd, and has also now had contact with wild herds.

Chamilandu's released herd have shown stable cohesion over the course of the year. On the 16th of November, she welcomed her second offspring, this time a female calf, Lulangilo Dawn. She was supported, protected, and encouraged by other released and wild elephants, including her 6-year-old male calf Mutaanzi David.
Her journey - from tragedy and rescue, through rehabilitation, release, and now successfully raising her calves as wild elephants - is a living testament to what long-term protection and care can achieve.

In 2025, 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.

African elephant orphan and carer

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

FISHER'S ESTUARINE MOTH

Fisher's estuarine moth
© Micky Andrews

The Fisher's estuarine moth is a rare and highly threatened species. The main stronghold of the species 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 Zoological Society 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. The captive breeding programme has now paused as the majority of the new habitat plots have now been colonised.

2025

Colchester Zoological Society, 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 created sites; Cudmore Grove and Copt Hall, to help monitor the establishment of the moth at these sites.

In addition, Colchester Zoological Society's Zoological Director and Team Leader of Reptile Section are members of 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.

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

FREE THE BEARS

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed

£7,500

towards Free the Bears to improve the facilities and health care at the Luang Prabang bear sanctuary in Laos.

Malayan sun bear

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.

Over 300 rescued bears are currently receiving expert care across FTB sanctuaries. To date, 168 bears have been rescued and provided with a safe home in Laos, along with more than 180 other threatened wildlife of 40 different species. 2024 marked the busiest year for rescues and a further 16 bears were rescued in 2025 (13 of these being rescued in Laos).

The need to rapidly increase construction across the Laos site to house new arrivals, while continuing to ensure the sanctuary meets its potential for education, research and training, remains more important than ever before, especially as, in 2025, the Laos government, in collaboration with Free the Bears, closed the first bear bile farm in Laos, saving three moon bears and marking a major step toward ending bile farming.

2025

The plan is to house all sun bears in one area, maximising opportunities for social integrations and maintaining flexibility to adjust group compositions as animals mature.

£6,000 will be used to develop Bear House 12, featuring a main 6-den bear house with more spacious dens allowing sun bears to rest at height, plus in-built enrichment stores and a research/training den to support operant conditioning programmes* and conservation-focused research projects in areas such as metabolism, reproductive physiology and dental health. A satellite house featuring two further dens will allow for distancing when required (e.g. sexually mature males) with capacity to also house additional arboreal species, such as gibbons or binturong. Three forest enclosures, covering a total area of approximately 6,000m², will be linked through raceways to allow maximum flexibility and a large green roof, promoting sustainable construction practices, will improve thermoregulation within the bear house and allow for uninterrupted viewing of the bears within the enclosures for behavioural studies.

£1,500 will be used to improve capacity for the use of rescued sun bears in ex-situ conservation-focused research through operant conditioning and specialist facility design. Planned activities include voluntary blood draws and the use of blood-pressure monitoring cuffs to help better understand causes of hypertension, closer examination of visual indicators of oestrus in females, and trained teeth-cleaning to reduce incidences of periodontal disease. Bear House 12 will be the first facility to incorporate a dedicated internal space for such training sessions, allowing the team to conduct this work in a secure space with fewer distractions for both bears and trainers. This space will also be utilised as a high-reward enrichment area, encouraging the bears to voluntarily engage in training sessions and opening up the possibility of allowing prolonged access for activities that require a longer duration.

* Operant conditioning - a learning process where voluntary behaviours are strengthened or weakened by their consequences, focusing on how rewards shape actions.

COLCHESTER 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.

2025

Over the course of the year, the team conducted a number of community awareness meetings, including in Sambinasi Village, North Flores. Over the past four years, they have supported the Baar tribe in conducting research and compiling information on the Torong Padang Peninsula, one of the region's key ecological corridors and home to a population of Komodo dragons.

On the southwest coast of Flores, the team conducted a series of social studies aimed at assessing the socio-economic conditions and community perceptions related to Komodo dragon conservation. This approach is essential for developing social mapping, identifying patterns of human–Komodo encounters, and building mutual trust among community members.

A three-day workshop to strengthen technical capacity in processing and analysing wildlife monitoring data, as well as enhancing scientific communication skills, was carried out for five personnel, including rangers, technicians, and Forest Ecosystem Controllers.

Annual camera trapping surveys were conducted in the Golo Mori region, located along the west coast of Flores. The survey aimed to monitor the presence and distribution of Komodo dragons. A total of 30 camera traps were strategically deployed across the landscape, with Komodo dragons recorded at 18 locations, indicating a relatively wide distribution across the monitored area.

In a village along the southwest coast of Flores, a targeted environmental education initiative was delivered at three educational institutions, reaching a total of 115 students and 11 accompanying teachers. The programme seeks to foster a sense of environmental stewardship among the younger generation and build long-term support for biodiversity conservation at the community level.

Annual camera trapping surveys were conducted at three key sites: Wae Wuul Nature Reserve, Longos Island, and Pota District. At Wae Wuul Nature Reserve, a total of 17 out of 26 camera traps successfully recorded the presence of Komodo dragons, confirming continued occupancy in this protected area. On Longos Island, 11/20 camera traps captured Komodo activity and in Pota District, Komodo dragons were documented at 9/19 camera trap stations, further supporting evidence of their occurrence in this region. At all three monitoring sites, the presence of dogs was recorded; dogs represent a serious ecological threat, as they act both as competitors and predators within Komodo dragon habitats. Effective management and mitigation of dog presence in Komodo habitats remains essential to safeguard the species and its prey base.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed £1,321.12 to support this project.

Komodo dragon

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

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).

2025

2025 was one of the most challenging in Lwiro's history. An armed militia invaded DRC and quickly captured South Kivu, where the sanctuary is located. The ongoing war between militia and government forces profoundly affected work, creating grave risk for staff, disrupting logistics, and making even simple tasks difficult and dangerous. Yet, their mission never stopped during this period of significant uncertainty.

In 2025, Lwiro serves as a sanctuary for 130 orphaned chimpanzees and 97 monkeys. 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. Providing nutritious food for over 200 primates daily is their largest operational expense and vital for survival, recovery, and eventual reintroduction.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of £5,025 towards the purchase of essential sustenance, promoting the health and vitality of the primates residing at Lwiro. The ongoing armed conflict in the region has severely disrupted supply chains, increased food insecurity, and limited access to resources.

The donation facilitated the provision of over 9,730 individual meals to 278 rescued animals over five weeks in July 2025. 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 sustains the livelihoods of local farmers, providing them with a sustainable income source that helps protect Kahuzi Biega National Park from exploitation.

In 2025, the Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Centre was honoured with the GFAS Outstanding International Sanctuary of the Year Award. It is proof that even in the most remote and difficult places, a standard of excellence is possible.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed

£5,025

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

Chimpanzee

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

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 four orangutan post-release monitoring camps within the Lamandau Wildlife Reserve, a reserve spanning almost 160,000 acres. At these camps, field teams care for orphaned orangutans in a soft-release programme and continuously monitor orangutans in the surrounding forest.

The orangutans in the soft-release programme learn the skills necessary for an independent life in the wild, namely nest building and foraging for food, and they are released once they have mastered these skills. One of the vets visits each camp weekly to provide medical monitoring and care for orangutans and other animal species when required.

2025

As habitat loss and forest fires continue to encroach into forests year on year, the need for wildlife veterinary aid becomes more critical so the 2025 donation from Colchester Zoological Society aims to support this vital work.

Male orangutan, Adib, around 10 years old, was released in April 2025 and 10-year-old female, Mona, was released in October 2025. As with every release, the orangutans were followed for 10 days post release to ensure that they were adapting to an independent life in the wild.

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. Four infants were handed over in 2025 to join the soft-release programme and will spend the next 7-8 years being cared for by staff as they learn the skills required to allow them to eventually live independently in the wild.

To date the team have recorded over 100 orangutan births in the wild with five births in 2025. Four ex-captives - Mores, Holahonolulu, Sugih and Acuy - as well as Amina, Acuy's daughter, all gave birth to healthy infants and are settling in well to motherhood. These births mark the success of reintroduction programmes for orangutans and highlight the importance of conserving optimum habitats for future generations; this is a genuine indicator that the protected habitat is a sanctuary for this critically endangered species.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of

£7,500

to cover veterinary care, post-release monitoring of orangutans within the Lamandau Wildlife Reserve, Indonesian Borneo, and veterinary equipment.

Bornean orangutan with baby

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

RED PANDA NETWORK
FOREST GUARDIAN SPONSORSHIP

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed

£209.87

to help sponsor a Forest Guardian. Currently there are 156 professional Forest Guardians with 78 community forests monitored by these guardians; the red panda holders in European Zoos provided support for 25 Guardians.

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 Programme (FGP). 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.

2025

The Guardians conduct meticulous quarterly monitoring on the red panda and other species in their community forests. They walk transects, record vegetation data, and document every sign of red pandas. This data is the lifeblood of the Red Panda Network's conservation strategy, allowing for adaptive, evidence-based protection.

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 their red panda monitoring blocks.

The FGP provides stable employment and income in impoverished and remote areas, allowing the Guardians to support their families and invest in their children's education. Furthermore, the programme builds expertise; the training in scientific monitoring and wildlife tracking creates highly skilled professionals. In this model, the Guardians themselves and their families become the primary economic beneficiaries of a thriving ecosystem.

Red panda

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

SAVE THE RHINO INTERNATIONAL

Save the Rhino International is working to accelerate rhino population recovery by strengthening law enforcement and anti-poaching initiatives, disrupting organised crime networks linked to the illegal wildlife trade, and amplifying the resilience of critical rhino habitats.

Save the Rhino International is committed to safeguarding the future of rhinos and their landscapes, and empowering the individuals that rely on them through conservation actions.

2025

Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) holds one of the most important rhino populations in Africa. Today, its black and white rhino populations are both recognised as Key 1 (i.e. >100 individuals). Regrettably, rhino poaching and the illegal international trade in rhino horn remains a significant threat to rhinos at HiP and across the globe. The displacement of poaching pressure by international, national, and local organised crime syndicates to KZN continues to remain a high risk.

HiP is aiming to reduce annual poaching levels by enabling increased patrol coverage, decreased reaction time and by improving ranger welfare while on duty. The pressure on rangers, and risk to their personal safety, has been immense during the >14 years of the South Africa rhino-poaching crisis, and continues while they are drawn into law-enforcement responsibilities.

The success of rhino conservation in HiP continues to depend on the dedication and resilience of field rangers who patrol some of the most challenging terrain in South Africa. These rangers work across five sections of the Park, often on foot and in extreme conditions, to monitor wildlife, deter illegal activity, and respond swiftly when needed. To carry out this work effectively and safely, it is essential that they are properly equipped, including with durable, appropriate uniforms. Quality uniforms are more than just clothing, they offer protection from the elements, help prevent injury, and ensure rangers can carry out their duties in comfort and with confidence.

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed

£8,547

towards ranger uniform to help build the rangers' capacity to ensure they are more effective during deployments in the field.

Black rhinoceros

COLCHESTER 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.

2025

The monitoring schedule is carefully aligned with natural breeding stages; the team aim to survey each site twice per breeding season, once at the start and once at the end of the breeding period. Visiting each site twice is essential, as it confirms nest occupancy, then assessment of the success of each breeding attempt. This data helps identify trends in vulture reproduction, evaluate population health, and guide development of targeted conservation strategies.

Researchers employ a combination of walking, drone, and driving surveys to carefully observe and document the presence and behaviour of vultures at each nest.

In 2025, VulPro's tree nesting monitoring activity took place at key tree-nesting sites across South Africa, including Dwaalboom, Mareetsane, Marloth Park, Roedtan and Boshof, across more than 30 different properties.

The second annual visit to Dwaalboom, covering approximately 4,000 km², recorded 92 active nests; this highlights both the stability and ongoing expansion of this vital African white-backed vulture colony, with a large increase in activity since 2024. Unfortunately, sites, such as Boshof, the Steenbokpan and Roedtan, showed rapid decline and are a worrying sign; continuous monitoring will be essential to track these trends further and to implement targeted conservation actions where needed.

Overall breeding activity remained strong across the region, with many nests successfully progressing and new activity observed in areas not previously recorded; a total of 189 active nests were counted at the end of the second visit.

Sadly the 2024 discovery of a hooded vulture nest in Marloth Park was met with a grim ending in May 2025, with the breeding pair of hooded vultures, as well as the last pair of white-headed vultures in the area found dead amongst over a hundred other vultures in a mass poisoning incident. With fewer than 50–100 breeding pairs of hooded vultures remaining in South Africa, these deaths are a devastating loss for both species.

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 2025, Colchester Zoological Society contributed

£5,999.84

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

African white-backed vulture

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

WILDCATS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Amur tiger

In 2025, Colchester Zoological Society gave a contribution of

£3,469

to support this project.

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

WildCats Conservation Alliance channels public and zoo support for wild tiger and Amur leopard conservation projects. WildCats has mobilised over £5m to support 103 monitoring, protection, conflict resolution, firefighting and awareness-raising projects since the year 2000.

2025

WildCats supports projects in five tiger range countries within Asia, including:

- Thailand – Indochinese tigers live in the highlands of Khao Laem National Park where they are under pressure due to a shortage of prey, disease, conflict with people, poaching and habitat loss. Funding is used to conduct surveys and ranger patrols, with rangers skilled in modern monitoring techniques, to build a clearer picture of tiger numbers, prey and threats, as well as improve disease monitoring and emergency response. Outreach in high-risk communities and educational awareness partnerships work to address illegal grazing and poaching. Funding is also used to tackle illegal tiger trade by linking online wildlife-trade monitoring with Thailand's new enforcement systems, including knowledge sharing workshops for local law enforcement officers.

- Nepal – Parsa National Park is home to Nepal's largest Bengal tiger population where habitat quality is under pressure. Funding will support a census to provide updated data on tiger numbers and track population trends in comparison to the last census in 2022. Habitat quality will also be improved to support and increase tiger prey base population numbers to ensure tigers have everything they need within the national park to reduce their conflict with surrounding villages.

- Indonesia – Kerinci Seblat National Park holds the largest wild population of Sumatran tigers. Since 2000, WildCats has helped support actions to combat habitat loss, prey depletion, and human-tiger conflict, with the aim of increasing tiger numbers. Since 2017, WildCats has also been supporting a community outreach and guardianship programme to support ex-hunters with alternative livelihoods, such as training them to carry out patrols to deter poaching, along with collaboration with local leaders to strengthen tiger protection via increased awareness and public campaigns.

- The Amur region - across this transboundary landscape they are funding two large scale projects; these cover a range of technical assistance support for national park staff through SMART training, providing equipment, population monitoring of both Amur leopards and tigers and community focused projects. Funding will enable analysis of 18 months of data from a connectivity study conducted in the Ussurisk Nature Reserve which began in 2025.

- An exciting tiger and Amur leopard project in northeast China will also launch in 2026 that supports a new multi-year collaborative project focusing on addressing barriers to landscape connectivity.


Chimpanzee
COLCHESTER
ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Charity no. 1105621
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT