

Zoos and Aquariums ‘Show the Wild Face of Climate Change’ on International Day for Biological Diversity

The world’s zoos and aquariums call for action on climate change

May 28, 2014 –On May 22, zoological institutions and aquariums around the world participated in a day of action to “Show the Wild Face of Climate Change” in observance of the UN International Day for Biological Diversity. The initiative shined a spotlight on the risk to biodiversity posed by climate change, and united the world’s zoo and aquarium community in calling for urgent action on climate change.

“The ‘Show the Wild Face of Climate Change’ initiative was the largest single-day global zoo event in history,” said George Rabb, President Emeritus of the Chicago Zoological Society and former Chair of IUCN’s Species Survival Commission. “The success of this day for climate change action is a good omen for future campaigns to engage zoos to recruit their visitors and members as global citizens with responsibilities for the global commons of the atmosphere, waters, available lands, and biodiversity.”

Through photographs, educational programs, and activities for their visitors, zoos and aquariums illustrated the connection between climate change and the survival of the animal species in their care, and expressed their commitment to returning the planet to safe levels of atmospheric CO₂.

Seventy-one organizations from 25 countries and spanning all seven continents and all regions of the globe submitted, and shared through social media, more than 250 photographs of animals along with the logo of the climate change initiative “Zoos & Aquariums for 350.” Over 150 species were represented, ranging from familiar species like polar bears, orangutans, and cheetahs to the lesser known Polynesian tree snails, Kemp’s ridley sea turtle, and Malayan flying fox.

350 parts per million is considered the upper safe limit of carbon in the atmosphere. Currently, levels are around 400 ppm and rising. Impacts from climate change such as ocean acidification, sea level rise, extreme weather events, and interrupted seasonal cycles all have potential to negatively affect wildlife, and many species are already experiencing these disruptions.

“Show the Wild Face of Climate Change” put a face to the urgency of addressing climate change and indicated zoological institutions’ solidarity with the global climate change movement led by 350.org. The photos and their descriptive captions, which can be viewed, downloaded, and shared by visiting <https://flic.kr/s/aHsjWNxCqt>, will be presented to government decision makers around the world to continue to raise awareness about this issue.

The activity was organized by Zoos & Aquariums for 350, a climate change initiative spearheaded by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, a specialist group of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN).

About Zoos & Aquariums for 350: Zoos & Aquariums for 350 invites zoos, aquariums, and other conservation organizations to join a global movement to address climate change through divestment from fossil fuels, carbon reduction and offsetting, and education initiatives such as “Show the Wild Face of Climate Change.”

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About the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group: CBSG's mission is to save threatened species by increasing the effectiveness of conservation efforts worldwide. CBSG provides species conservation planning expertise to governments, Specialist Groups, zoos and aquariums, and other wildlife organizations.

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