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*Cover image: Goodfellow’s tree kangaroo in our new exhibit at Bristol Zoo Gardens*
Victoria crowned pigeon
Welcome to the 2018 Annual Review for Bristol Zoological Society. I’m delighted to say that it has been another successful year for the Society, with great progress across our many conservation projects as well as fantastic fundraising achievements, exciting animal arrivals, and a busy calendar of events and activities at both Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project.

I was particularly proud to see the outstanding success of our fundraising campaign to build a new forest enclosure for a gorilla family group at a primate sanctuary in Cameroon. Almost £22,000 was raised through a public campaign and a £10,000 donation by Bristol Zoological Society. Another highlight this year was the opening of our new enclosure for Goodfellow’s tree kangaroos, an Endangered species that we hope we will breed. We were thrilled to receive the support of Sir David Attenborough for our project to build a new research station in Madagascar to help our work with partners to ensure the survival of Critically Endangered lemurs. Work has begun on the £110,000 research base and we look forward to it being completed in 2020.

We welcomed Dr Justin Morris as our new Chief Executive in the summer. Justin has significant experience in not-for-profit organisations including the Natural History and British Museums and brings with him a great understanding of visitor attractions, public engagement and commercial strategy. The next 12 months are certain to be a very busy and exciting time for the Society, under Justin’s leadership. Work is well underway on creating our new exhibit, Bear Wood, at Wild Place Project, and our many conservation breeding programmes will continue across the two zoos. Our conservation, education and research efforts go from strength to strength and I am incredibly proud to be part of such a diverse and ambitious organisation. Our great many achievements would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers and trustees as well as the vital support of our many sponsors, partners and donors.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Dr Bryan Carroll who stepped down as Chief Executive Officer in July 2018 after 23 years at the Society. We were delighted that Bryan’s achievements were recognised by receiving the Outstanding Achievement Award by the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) and the Zoological Society of London’s Outstanding Contributions to the Zoo Community award. We wish him all the best in his retirement.

Charlotte Moar
Chair of Trustees
As the new Chief Executive of Bristol Zoological Society, I'm thrilled to join such an historic and much-loved institution and have the opportunity to play a part in the next chapter of the Society’s history.

I joined in the summer, just as we opened a new poppy garden at Wild Place Project to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The beautiful and poignant display contained more than 100 varieties of poppies and is believed to be the first time so many different varieties have been grown in one place. We held a ceremony to open the garden and were pleased to welcome guests including members of the armed forces, the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Peaches Golding, the Royal British Legion, and Filton and Bradley Stoke MP, Jack Lopresti.

Among the many other highlights of 2018 was receiving planning permission for, and work beginning on, the creation of a new British woodland exhibit at Wild Place Project, called Bear Wood. The exhibit will open in the summer of 2019 and transport visitors back to a time when the woodland was inhabited by bears, wolves, lynxes and wolverines, all of which will be on display. Bear Wood will also highlight the effects of woodland loss on our native wildlife and what we can all do to help address this.

It’s an exciting time for the Society as we embark on an ambitious new direction, underpinned by a new strategy to 2025. Our strategy continues our commitment to our significant conservation and education programmes, for which we rightly have a worldwide reputation. However, we will in parallel begin to deliver a bold new vision for Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project, defining what zoos should look like in the 21st century whilst continuing to ensure a fun and engaging day out for all.

At the heart of our mission is saving wildlife together with all the people that we engage and inspire in everything that we do. Last year we welcomed almost 700,000 visitors to Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project and we want to continue to grow the number of people we engage, not only at our zoos but throughout the communities in our region. Our visitors and supporters are incredibly important to us, and we recognise that engaging with them is our greatest opportunity to save wildlife - and we must empower them to do it with us. As the great Sir David Attenborough said, “No one will protect what they don’t care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced”.

Dr Justin Morris
Chief Executive
WHO WE ARE

Bristol Zoological Society is a conservation and education charity, which runs and operates Bristol Zoo Gardens, Wild Place Project and the Institute of Conservation Science and Learning. We welcome approximately 700,000 visitors each year to our two attractions, inspiring them with the beauty and diversity of nature.

Bristol Zoo Gardens first opened its doors to the public in 1836 and since then, we have welcomed millions of people, fascinating generations of visitors with the wonders of the natural world. Today our mission focuses on saving wildlife together, through conservation science, working to protect species and habitats across the globe, encouraging sustainable behaviours, developing the conservationists of the future and giving families a great day out.

Bristol Zoological Society is governed by twelve trustees who freely give their time to ensure that we deliver our charitable objectives. We care for nearly 10,000 animals of 400 species, from lions, gorillas, lemurs and giraffes, to turtles, flamingos, tarantulas and penguins, and many more in-between.

Our participation in captive breeding programmes is vital for species on the very brink of extinction and our conservation efforts are worldwide - from helping reintroduce white-clawed crayfish into UK rivers to working with communities in the Philippines to save the Critically Endangered Negros bleeding-heart dove.

This year saw the launch of our five-year Conservation Master Plan, which sets out how we will deliver the three key strands of our conservation work – conservation breeding; field conservation and science; and behaviour change and advocacy. This important master plan will ensure that we transition into a locally and globally renowned conservation organisation, achieving defined and measurable conservation outcomes.

We are an ambitious and forward-thinking charity. Not only have we developed Wild Place Project into a successful visitor attraction since its opening five years ago, but we have further plans to grow and develop the Society over the coming years, not least with the opening of our newest exhibit, Bear Wood, at Wild Place Project in summer 2019.

Our vision is for wildlife to be a part of everyone’s lives and for people to want to protect wildlife now and for the future. We are proud of the work we do, both within our attractions and through our conservation projects around the world.
Bristol Zoological Society is a pioneer and leader in zoo-based wildlife conservation, and I am pleased to say that 2018 has been yet another year of great achievements, contributing significantly to our commitment of saving wildlife together.

Some species are now totally reliant on zoos to survive, which is why the success of our captive breeding programmes is so important. This year saw a number of notable breeding successes, including a Lake Alaotra gentle lemur, a golden lion tamarin and a pygmy slow loris at Bristol Zoo, and four Kirk’s dik-diks and a white-belted ruffed lemur at Wild Place Project.

The dedication and expertise of our staff has shone through once again this year. Our bird team hand-reared a Sumatran laughing thrush after its mother abandoned her nest during a thunderstorm. Sumatran laughing thrushes are one of several bird species that are heavily impacted by the Southeast Asian songbird trade, and each individual bird is vital to the captive breeding programme mandated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). We brought in additional mountain chicken frogs from ZSL London Zoo, and a female blue-eyed black lemur from Apenheul Zoo to be paired up with our young male. We also welcomed Kala, a female western lowland gorilla from Hannover Zoo, into our troop at Bristol Zoo and hope she will breed with our silverback, Jock.

Our zoo research work has continued apace with the creation of a ‘lemur boot camp’ to test the cognitive skills of zoo-housed lemurs, and the ‘gorilla game lab’ project, with the University of Bristol, to develop a new cognitive enrichment device for our gorillas.

Further afield, in the Philippines, our team were thrilled to spot a Critically Endangered Negros bleeding-heart dove in the wild and catch it on video for the first time in a decade. We have also made huge progress on building a new research base in the Ankarafa Forest in northwestern Madagascar. This year, I travelled to Madagascar to host an IUCN Red List Assessment workshop for lemurs in my role as Deputy Chair of the IUCN Primate Specialist Group. Working with colleagues from around the world, we assessed the conservation status of all 111 lemur species and updated action plans for their continued survival. This helps highlight where we must focus our attention over the coming years and demonstrates the importance of collaboration between the international conservation, research and zoo communities in the protection of species and habitats.

We hope you enjoy reading more about our many successes across the year.

Dr Christoph Schwitzer
Chief Zoological Officer & Deputy Chief Executive
Children from the Bristol Children’s Hospital were among dozens of families from across the city that enjoyed free visits to Wild Place Project to connect with nature, as part of our new Wild Detectives programme, thanks to a Nature Connect grant of £10,700 from the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

Western lowland gorillas are one of Africa’s most threatened great ape species and this year we launched a new conservation project to protect the species in Equatorial Guinea. Working in partnership with the University of the West of England, we have produced a five-year strategic plan for conserving gorillas in the area of Monte Alén National Park, which includes the creation of a new research base.

In May, we opened a new exhibit for Goodfellow’s tree kangaroos at Bristol Zoo Gardens. Our pair of tree kangaroos, Kitawa and Mian, are part of a European conservation breeding programme. The exhibit also includes information about sustainable palm oil production and links to a sustainable palm oil campaign we ran throughout the summer.
In the summer, Sir David Attenborough gave his support to our project to build a new field station in Madagascar to help save Critically Endangered lemurs. Work began on the £110,000 research base this year, which is being developed by Bristol Zoological Society, Grant Associates, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios and BuroHappold Engineering. The development of the field station is a key part of our Conservation Master Plan 2018–2022.

We marked the centenary of the end of the First World War by creating a garden of more than 100 varieties of poppies at Wild Place Project. Special guests were invited to an opening ceremony, including members of the armed forces, the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Peaches Golding, and local MP, Jack Lopresti. We also opened a WWII air raid shelter to visitors to Wild Place Project in the summer.

One of our reptile keepers caught the amazing moment a tiny emerald tree monitor lizard hatched in the Reptile House at Bristol Zoo Gardens. The photo captures the special moment, as the lizard took its first breath. Bristol Zoological Society collaborates in a breeding programme, along with other European zoos, to safeguard the future of this species.
This year has seen the successful breeding of countless threatened species and the arrival of hundreds of animals as part of our involvement in vital conservation breeding programmes. We participate in 93 conservation breeding programmes for species at Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project and our staff coordinate the European breeding programmes for 15 species, working to achieve our mission of saving wildlife together.

Just a few of our many success stories this year included the hatching of two Critically Endangered Utila spiny-tailed iguanas for the first time in seven years. The first baby black marsh turtle in a decade also hatched at Bristol Zoo Gardens - descended from a group of 10,000 rescued turtles destined for the Chinese food trade in 2001. This year we bred our third generation of the delicate and difficult-to-breed Lord Howe Island stick insect, a species once believed to be extinct. We expect our females to produce more eggs in early 2019. The breeding project was awarded Silver at the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) annual awards this year.

Keepers worked round-the-clock to hand-rear a number of animals, including a new-born red titi monkey which survived against the odds at the start of the year, after its mother died giving birth and keepers stepped in to hand-rear the infant primate. Bristol Zoo is believed to be just the second zoo in the country to have successfully hand-reared a titi monkey.

At Wild Place Project a white-belted ruffed lemur was born in the spring; this subspecies of ruffed lemur is Critically Endangered in its native Madagascar, mostly owing to forest loss and illegal hunting.

Our successful breeding programme for the Critically Endangered Desertas wolf spider continued this year, with nine new captive populations set up at other institutions from spiders reared at Bristol Zoo Gardens. The project also won Gold at this year's BIAZA awards. In 2019 we will travel to Madeira to discuss future plans for the project.

We also successfully bred our Chapa bug-eyed frogs – a UK first for this Endangered species – and subsequently exported some of the young to Riga Zoo for further breeding. Animal transfers such as this are an important part of collaborative working with other zoos and during 2018 we imported and exported hundreds of animals to further the breeding programmes for many species.
Desertas wolf spider

Photo credit: Emanuele Biggi
As a leading conservation and education charity, Bristol Zoological Society has a world-class reputation. The many achievements of the Society in 2018 have only been possible due to the knowledge, expertise and commitment of our 270 colleagues and more than 350 volunteers who support the organisation across our two zoos as well as in our field projects in 10 countries around the world.

Our research and conservation work is carried out to the highest ethical standards, and our Conservation, Ethics and Sustainability Committee of trustees and lay members held four meetings in 2018 to ensure that these standards are maintained. Our conservation work is framed by a five-year Conservation Master Plan which we launched this year. The purpose of this plan is to strategically guide our global conservation activities in our 14 flagship projects.

We are recognised as leaders in understanding and improving animal welfare among UK zoos and have been at the forefront of developing a new zoo animal welfare assessment tool and best practice guidelines for the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) this year. This will allow our animal keepers, vets and researchers to more effectively record and monitor animal welfare. We trialled it successfully in 2018 and will be rolling it out further in 2019. As part of our animal welfare research programme, we developed the ‘gorilla game lab’ with the University of Bristol; a new ‘cognitive enrichment’ device for the western lowland gorillas at Bristol Zoo Gardens.

Our in-house veterinary team perform hundreds of veterinary procedures every year. This year’s clinical cases included life-saving surgery to remove the infected eye of a two-week old Lake Alaotra gentle lemur. The team also successfully performed delicate abdominal surgery on a cane toad that had suffered a prolapse. Vets and keepers saved a newborn white-belted ruffed lemur born at Wild Place Project after its mother failed to show interest and the baby became cold and dehydrated. Bristol Zoological Society vet, Richard Saunders, was named Vet of the Year at the Ceva Animal Health Awards for Animal Welfare. The awards were held to celebrate the achievements of people who go ‘above and beyond’ to better the lives of animals around the world.
Vet Rowena Killick examines an Aldabra giant tortoise
OUR GLOBAL WORK

Avon Gorge & Downs
United Kingdom
We are working in partnership to manage, monitor and raise awareness of this site of international conservation importance.

Desertas wolf spiders
Madeira, Portugal
We are helping to restore the habitat for the Critically Endangered Desertas wolf spider, and bolstering the population through captive breeding.

Lemur leaf frogs
Central valley, Costa Rica
We are surveying the historic range of these Critically Endangered frogs to establish their current distribution, as well as breeding them in our Amphibian Group at Bristol Zoo.

Wild Place Project native species
United Kingdom
We are monitoring populations of native species on site at Wild Place Project to ensure we are conserving the wildlife with which we share our habitat.

Kordofan giraffes
Cameroon
We are conserving the Critically Endangered Kordofan giraffes in northern Cameroon by working with the Conservation Service of Benoué National Park and the surrounding communities to reduce illegal activity and protect the habitat.

Western lowland gorillas
Central Africa
We are working to conserve the Critically Endangered western lowland gorilla in Central Africa by protecting habitat and combating the threats of the bushmeat trade.
White-clawed crayfish
United Kingdom
We aim to identify and protect all remaining Endangered white-clawed crayfish populations within the southwest of England and to reintroduce captive bred crayfish to secure ark sites.

Invasive weeds
United Kingdom
We are organising local teams of volunteers to control the spread of invasive weeds that disrupt local ecosystems and working with the UK government on biosecurity protocols and invasive species management plans.

Sanje mangabeys
Tanzania
We are monitoring the population of the Endangered Sanje mangabey monkey and working to understand the threats to their survival in the Udzungwa Mountains.

Livingstone’s fruit bats and mongoose lemurs
Comoro Islands
We are supporting a local NGO, Dahari, to conserve the Critically Endangered Livingstone’s fruit bat and mongoose lemurs, as well as helping to protect the forests on the island of Anjouan.

Lemurs
Northern Madagascar
We are working on the conservation of threatened lemurs and sacred ibis in northwestern Madagascar, as well as the protection and restoration of their habitats.

Bleeding heart doves
The Philippines
We are focused on the protection of the forest habitat for the Critically Endangered Negros bleeding heart dove, as well as working on the conservation of Visayan warty pigs.

African penguins
South Africa
We are monitoring Endangered African penguin populations in wild colonies, working with a local rehabilitation centre, SANCCOB, to rescue, rear and release abandoned penguin chicks, and tracking penguins to understand how they are affected by threats such as over-fishing and climate change.
As one of the world’s most beautiful and majestic animals, giraffes are instantly recognisable and loved the world over. They are also an iconic image of the African landscape. But these striking creatures are quietly slipping towards extinction. As such, the conservation of Kordofan giraffes is becoming a race against time.

Our conservation project focuses on protecting one of the few remaining populations of Kordofan giraffes left in the wild, in Bénoué National Park and the surrounding protected areas, in the North Region of Cameroon.

Kordofan are one of nine giraffe subspecies. Despite being one of the most populous giraffes in European zoos, the situation facing these animals in the wild is challenging. It is estimated that as few as 2,000 individual Kordofan giraffes may be left in Africa, out of a total giraffe population of about 80,000. They are only found in the savannahs and woodlands of Central Africa where their main threat is competition for food with herders bringing their cattle into the national parks and stripping leaves from the trees to feed their herds. This leaves little food for giraffes during the prolonged dry season. They are also threatened by poaching.

It is estimated that the subspecies has suffered an 80 per cent population decline in the past 30 years, and this year Kordofan giraffes were up-listed to Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, making conservation projects such as ours more vital than ever.

During our trip to Bénoué National Park at the start of the year, we continued our efforts to determine the population size of giraffes in the national park. We did this by examining the animals’ unique spot patterns collected via photographs and camera trap images, which we keep in a database. Counting individual animals this way, along with records of new infants in observed groups, helps us to improve our estimate of the number of remaining giraffes in this region.

Throughout the year we continued our support of anti-poaching patrols in Bénoué National Park. The resources we provided permitted an additional 10 days of patrols per month. We also brought uniforms and sturdy boots and socks for the eco-guards of the park, donated by Dribuild – sponsors of our giraffe exhibit at Wild Place Project. The patrols are critically important to limit the illegal intrusions of cattle herders, poachers, gold miners and charcoal producers whose presence affects wildlife including Kordofan giraffes.
Wild Kordofan giraffes in Cameroon

Photo credit: Michael Lorenz
Kordofan giraffes continued... This year also saw the beginning of a new phase of our Kordofan giraffe conservation project – liaising with regulated hunters to gain a better idea of the population dynamics of Kordofan giraffes over the whole region. Networking and communicating with hunters and managers of hunting zones is crucial as more than 70 per cent of the protected areas around the Bénoué National Park are community hunting and trophy hunting zones. We have started by initiating discussions with three hunting zones in the region. In all three zones, the stakeholders expressed an interest in collaborating to protect the giraffes.

We also conducted a six-day wildlife survey, hiking along the Bénoué River which is the eastern border of the park, to record numbers of common hippopotamuses and Nile crocodiles. We were pleased to discover that the number of hippos, which are classified as a Vulnerable species, has remained stable from a previous survey in 2016. Such surveys are a vital component of species monitoring and information gathering in order to help inform our conservation efforts in the future.

This year, with the support of the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, we have also funded new camera traps to initiate a wildlife monitoring project in Bénoué National Park. The devices have been recording footage of species rarely observed such as African leopards, spotted hyenas and eastern giant eland, as well as Kordofan giraffes. Pictures from the cameras are then sent back to Bristol by a programme manager based in Cameroon. In time, we hope to discover more about the giraffes’ movements and the way those within the National Park interact with others in neighbouring areas.

We are able to make a significant impact in terms of our conservation efforts because we have spent time on the ground in Cameroon and worked with the National Park team to come up with effective solutions to the threats facing Kordofan giraffes that can be implemented quickly and efficiently.
Kordofan giraffes

PROJECT STATISTICS

In the last two years

12 SURVEY TRANSECTS established
covering 108 km

12 GIRAFFES INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIED by spot patterns

5 DRONES DONATED to Cameroon Conservation Service

Conservation Service members trained in DRONE PILOTING

36

Protecting SEVEN THREATENED SPECIES in Bénoué National Park

ARRESTS during BZS supported patrols

15 CAMERA TRAPS placed in Bénoué National Park

Gold miners Poachers Total: 45
SPOTLIGHT ON
Lemurs: Sambirano region,
Northern Madagascar

Madagascar is one of the world’s most important hotspots for biodiversity, yet local people are forced to use unsustainable livelihood practices, putting great pressure on the forests, or destroying them entirely. This means many of Madagascar’s large number of rare and endemic animals, including lemurs, are now on the brink of extinction.

For the past 13 years we have been working on the conservation of threatened lemurs and sacred ibis in northwestern Madagascar, as well as the protection and restoration of their habitats. We work primarily in the Sahamalaza-îles Radama National Park, collaborating with local organisations, Mikajy Natiora Association, and AEECL (Association Européenne pour l’Etude et la Conservation des Lémuriens), a collaboration of 30 European zoos that work collectively to support the study and conservation of lemurs and their habitats.

This year we made huge progress breaking ground on a new research base in the heart of the Ankarafa Forest. We are working with donors and collaborators from the South West region of the UK, Grant Associates, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (FCBS) and BuroHappold Engineering (BH), to create an internationally recognised field station for students and researchers. In July, we took representatives from FCBS and BH to visit the national park. We imported a brick-making machine to produce Interlocking Stabilised Soil Block (ISSB) bricks which do not need to be fired in kilns, thereby avoiding the need to burn locally-felled wood. By November, 11,000 ISSB bricks had been made to construct buildings to accommodate 12 people and shower and toilet facilities. In December, the foundations for the new buildings were dug and laid, ready for above-ground construction in early 2019.

This year we received funding for seven Malagasy researchers to work in the national park, following our successful application for an IUCN SOS threatened species grant. This team has established a new tree nursery at the Ankarafa camp to provide seedlings for experimental reforestation plots. They have also begun to map the forest fragments around Ankarafa, and undertake surveys to obtain baseline measures of lemur population size and distribution. Three MSc students and their Malagasy counterparts conducted research in the national park and the nearby cacao plantations this year, to further our understanding of how lemurs cope in fragmented ecosystems, including agroforestry.

Finally, in September we teamed up with Redmaids’ High School in Bristol to develop a student-led research project using camera traps to evaluate biodiversity in the national park.
Our new research base in the Ankarafo Forest is being built using Interlocking Stabilised Soil Block bricks which do not need to be fired in kilns, thereby avoiding the need to burn locally-felled wood.
This year, we launched a major new conservation project in Equatorial Guinea to protect one of Africa’s most threatened great ape species, western lowland gorillas. The collaborative approach between our conservation team and the University of the West of England will see the creation of a research base in Monte Alén National Park, where our team will focus their efforts on protecting western lowland gorillas.

The exact number of western lowland gorillas in the wild is not known because they inhabit some of the densest and most remote rainforests in Africa. In 2005, it was estimated that around 2,000 individuals lived in the Monte Alén National Park, but current numbers are unknown.

The species is threatened with habitat loss from deforestation and the threat of bushmeat hunting. As a result, researchers estimate that gorilla numbers overall have declined by more than 60 per cent over the last 20 to 25 years. Their dwindling numbers are reflected across five other African countries where western lowland gorillas are found: Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo and Gabon. Recent estimates are that as few as 360,000 remain across these countries.

In mid-2018 we conducted a recce visit to Monte Alén National Park to explore the area as a potential new field site. The national park and connected forest habitat is considered a site of ‘Exceptional Importance’ for gorilla conservation as it holds more than five per cent of the global population of gorillas. This region is also highlighted for its high ‘irreplaceability value’, meaning it must be preserved in order for effective conservation of the target species to occur, and where the same level of conservation impact cannot easily be achieved by conserving another region.
Western lowland gorilla

Photo credit: ©Ian Bickerstaff 2018
Western lowland gorillas continued... This is the first time in more than a decade that conservationists and research teams have focused their attention in the area of Monte Alén National Park and, as part of the project, we have produced a five-year strategic plan for conserving western lowland gorillas in the region. This activity is in partnership with The Biodiversity Initiative – an NGO focused on creating an inventory of the wildlife of Equatorial Guinea.

Human behaviour change is a crucial part of the project, and our aim is to promote behaviours that conserve gorilla habitat among local communities. We will also be implementing policy, advocacy, and action planning work with the Equatoguinean government to encourage better enforcement of laws against primate hunting.

We have undertaken forest surveys to assess the level of hunting pressure and wildlife abundance around the edge of the national park. Our preliminary observations indicate heavy hunting pressure, with extensive signs of hunting and trapping on the trails from each village.

During the trip, we met with farmers to discuss the challenges of crop-raiding gorillas, and the perceptions of damage to local crops by these animals. This recce visit was essential to help us confirm the need for dedicated conservation effort in this region and to identify the key target activities on which to focus those efforts. In 2019, we will be systematically monitoring the gorilla population to determine its size and distribution in relation to human pressures in the forest, and will work with local farmers to understand their concerns more fully.
Looking over the valleys of Monte Chocolate, in Monte Alén National Park.
The elusive Negros bleeding-heart dove is among the rarest bird species in the world and is native to the Western Visayan islands of Negros and Panay in the Philippines. The Philippines are considered to be one of the world’s “hottest” biodiversity hotspots because of their amazing wildlife and rapid deforestation. The beautiful and rarely seen Negros bleeding-heart dove, so-called for its bright, blood-red chest patch, needs high-quality, low elevation tropical forest to survive. However, 50 per cent of the country’s forests have already been cut down, mainly to grow crops. Now it is feared there are less than 300 pairs of Negros bleeding-heart doves left in the wild, and as such the species has been classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

We have been working in the Philippines since 2000, and in May this year our conservation team travelled to Panay Island in search of the dove in the largest remaining area of suitable habitat. The bird is so rare that it has only been filmed in the wild a handful of times, and yet, this year, we were able to catch it on video for the first time in a decade.

By conserving this species and its habitat, we are also benefitting a host of other rare and threatened species including Visayan warty pigs. As such, this year our conservation team also began an island-wide survey of other mammals and birds on the islands of Negros and Panay in order to better understand how wildlife is responding to intense human pressures. We will continue to monitor these populations going forward, both to understand how they are faring and to help us target our conservation actions in the most effective ways.

Since this year’s expedition, our team, working with local partner organisation PhilinCon, have set up nine camera traps to monitor the bleeding-heart doves and were rewarded with further footage of this shy bird. These encouraging results have prompted our team to plan more conservation measures for 2019. They include supporting alternative livelihood programmes for local communities which will reduce habitat degradation, recruiting local forest rangers, and drafting a Conservation Action Plan for the birds with the support of the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group.

We have also been working with specialist conservation breeding centres in the Philippines, which are safeguarding the Negros bleeding-heart dove and other rare species in captivity, and we intend to continue this important partnership throughout next year and beyond.

Bristol Zoological Society’s conservation project in the Philippines is kindly sponsored by Airbus.
This year our researchers filmed a Negros bleeding-heart dove in the wild for the first time in a decade.
SPOTLIGHT ON
African penguins: South Africa

Bristol Zoo Gardens’ Seal and Penguin Coasts exhibit is one of the most popular attractions in the Zoo. It links directly with one of our flagship conservation projects, which works to protect African penguin colonies in the wild.

Between 2001 and 2013 alone, the global population of African penguins fell by 70 per cent, leaving approximately 18,000 – 22,000 breeding pairs in the wild. The main causes of this decline are overfishing off the coast of South Africa and Namibia, and climate change. African penguins are now classified as Endangered.

Our African penguin conservation project consists of three main areas. The first is to work with a local rehabilitation centre, SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds), to rescue, rear and release abandoned penguin chicks. Together we have established the Chick Bolstering Project to investigate the effectiveness of bolstering declining African penguin colonies by reintroducing hand-reared chicks which have been abandoned by their parents. This year 374 abandoned chicks underwent rehabilitation at SANCCOB.

The second element is to participate in a long-term monitoring programme of wild African penguins at a key breeding colony on Robben Island. In June 2018, a member of our conservation team spent time on Robben Island assisting in data collection for the programme.

Finally, the project aims to analyse the movement and ecology of penguins at all life stages, to better understand how they choose and use breeding colonies. We track penguins to understand how they are affected by threats such as overfishing and climate change. This allows us to provide crucial data to the South African government which can be used to determine the best size and location for future Marine Protected Areas.

Another major area we are working on is to better understand how immature African penguins choose breeding sites – something that is currently very poorly understood. This year we secured funding, in conjunction with the University of Exeter, for a PhD studentship that will investigate this topic. The project will involve analysing our large historical dataset on these animals, as well as using GPS trackers.

In addition, we will investigate how penguins and fish (their prey) move around the breeding colonies and Marine Protected Areas. This will be done by using innovative techniques, such as environmental DNA. This is DNA that is naturally shed into the environment by passing animals and which can be detected in samples of the water. This method lets us know that penguins have been in the area without us having to see them directly, a much more cost-effective technique that is also non-invasive.
African penguin on Robben Island, South Africa
SPOTLIGHT ON
Lemur leaf frogs:
Costa Rica

The lemur leaf frog is a small, charismatic frog species, native to Central America. These bright yellow-green frogs are Critically Endangered and their numbers in the wild have fallen by 80 per cent over the past 15 years due to a fungal disease, known as chytrid fungus, which has attacked amphibians across the world. Lemur leaf frogs are now known to occur naturally only in a single site in Costa Rica, on the edge of the Veragua Rainforest Reserve in Limón province. This suggests that these tiny frogs have either undergone a significant range contraction or occur more sparsely than previously recorded. They have been introduced to new sites in the region, however, where they do seem to be thriving.

The chytrid fungus is widespread in Costa Rica and represents perhaps the greatest threat to amphibian persistence. Chytrid morbidity is shown to be an increased threat to tropical amphibians at higher elevations, due to chytrid thriving at lower temperatures, so there is a need to determine the extent to which this is a problem for lemur leaf frogs and co-occurring species.

We are working with a number of organisations on this project which aims to ascertain the approximate population size of these distinctive frogs and to discover more precisely where they are living. The study has won praise from naturalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough, who said: “I wholeheartedly support the campaign to save the lemur leaf frog. It is, after all, one of the world’s most unusual and rarest amphibians – and it is in real trouble.”

In 2018, our field team visited 29 sites within the range of the lemur leaf frog, in search of these elusive amphibians. The frogs were seen in only two of these locations, which were both the result of previous translocations. The calls of many other frog species were recorded during an acoustic survey and we have subsequently set up an automated method for identifying the frogs from recordings.

A new collaboration has begun with the Veragua Rainforest Foundation in Costa Rica to begin studying the remaining natural population. The work carried out in 2018 was made possible due to a $10,000 grant from the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.
Lemur leaf frog from the Caribbean lowlands of Costa Rica

Photo credit: Ron Holt
Spotlight On
Sanje mangabeys: Tanzania

There are seven recognised species of Cercocebus mangabeys. All are at high risk of extinction and all are relatively understudied. They are found across Africa, from the sooty mangabey in the west (Ivory Coast) to the Tana River mangabey in the east (Kenya).

Also known as ‘white-eyelid’ mangabeys for their distinctive white eyelids which they flash in threat displays, these species are highly terrestrial, spending a large amount of time on the forest floor rather than up in the trees like the majority of primates. Given that a large part of their diet is fruit, they are important seed-dispersers, maintaining the health of the forest to the benefit of all wildlife. Part of the reason they are so little-known is that they are usually found deep in the forest, in regions that are difficult to access and not often visited by tourists or researchers.

Bristol Zoological Society has partnered with the Sanje Mangabey Project to aid in the conservation of one of the least studied of the Cercocebus mangabeys, the Sanje mangabey. The species is endemic to the Udzungwa Mountains of south-central Tanzania, also known as the Galapagos of Africa, because of the large number of species found here and nowhere else on the planet. The mangabeys are listed as Endangered due to declining population size, habitat loss and forest fragmentation. The species is divided between two isolated forests: the well-protected Udzungwa Mountains National Park and the relatively unprotected Udzungwa Scarp Nature Reserve.

In 2018, we conducted an analysis and determined that the population has undergone an estimated 31 per cent decline in the last 15 years. Alarmingly, this leaves a total population size of only 3,000 monkeys remaining in the world. As the human population in the region is growing at a rapid rate, leading to forest disturbance and increased hunting, it is essential that we work with local and international stakeholders to ensure the protection of the Sanje mangabey and its remaining habitat. Thus, in 2019, we will begin supporting ranger patrols in the unprotected nature reserve and work on a Conservation Action Plan for the species.
Wild Sanje mangabey with infant, Tanzania
As well as caring for, and working to protect, species around the world, we are also committed to conserving native wildlife on our doorstep.

**Native species surveys at Wild Place Project**

The UK conservation team expanded its remit this year to include a comprehensive base-line survey of a range of native taxa across Wild Place Project, including ground flora, trees and hedgerows, terrestrial invertebrates, butterflies, moths, hoverflies and bees.

Bird transects were carried out weekly and regular nest box checks and bird ringing took place during the nesting season. Our badger survey and vaccination programme continued, ensuring that our resident badger population remains healthy, and our mammal tunnels revealed that we do have hedgehogs living on site. The small mammal traps caught a variety of small rodents including yellow-necked mice.

A comprehensive bat survey revealed that 14 species of bats use our woodland and meadow areas. Our reptile surveys showed that we have a healthy breeding population of grass snakes, and the reptile mats are also a firm favourite for nesting voles. We have all three species of newts on site including the protected great crested newt. Gathering this information allows us to understand how native species use this site and helps us to ensure we develop the site sympathetically for native species and habitats.

**Wetland restoration at Wild Place Project**

In 2018, we launched our ‘Go Wild for Wetlands’ project to restore wetland areas within Wild Place Project, in line with our native species strategy for the site. The two-year project, funded by the Enovert Community Trust, includes restoring the large Webb’s Brake wetland complex and other satellite ponds throughout the site as well as creating new ponds.

Over the next two winters, we will be digging out the ponds, pruning trees, removing invasive plants and planting the ponds with native aquatic species. We will also be carrying out surveys of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife before, during and after the project, to monitor the success of this programme. We are hoping to see a significant increase in our aquatic biodiversity.
Corporate volunteers from Virgin Media helped clear and restore a Victorian pond at Wild Place Project, as part of our new project to restore wetland areas across the site.
Native species continued...

White-clawed crayfish

The white-clawed crayfish is the UK’s only indigenous freshwater crayfish and is a keystone species of our aquatic habitats. It is globally Endangered throughout its range, both within mainland Europe and the UK.

We continued our successful white-clawed crayfish conservation project this year, producing more than 600 crayfish hatchlings in our hatchery at Bristol Zoo Gardens. The hatchlings will be reared at the Zoo until they are large enough to be tagged and then released, either as part of river supplementation programmes or for release into captive-bred safe ‘ark’ sites.

In 2018 we launched our CRAYARC project, funded by the Disney Conservation Fund. This project includes setting up crayfish ark sites and monitoring the 17 ark sites we have set up in the South West over the past 15 years. It is important for us to assess all ark sites and develop a plan for each of them to ensure they thrive in the future. The Disney Conservation Fund will also allow us to spend time and resources setting up three new ark sites during 2019/20.

We also produced some interesting research showing that size grading and splitting the juvenile crayfish into single-sex groups, even at as young as six months of age, can help growth rates and survival in captivity.

Invasive species

Bristol Zoological Society is part of the RAPID LIFE+ three-year invasive species project, aiming to establish a regionally-based framework across the UK to deliver Invasive Alien Species (IAS) management, raise biosecurity awareness among target audiences, conduct IAS eradication and control programmes, and link in with international programmes.

As part of this programme we have been delivering our first invasive signal crayfish control programme at a local angling club in Somerset, looking at different techniques to help reduce this invasive population, while raising awareness of invasive alien species.
White-clawed crayfish

PROJECT STATISTICS

In the last two years

60 breeding females at BZG

5,700 white-clawed crayfish hatched

17 Ark sites established since 2008 showing a presence of crayfish 70%

1,000,500 anglers

1,500 restaurants

8,800+ students at BZG

52,000+ divers

White-clawed crayfish released

TOTAL: 5,640
The role of zoos has evolved in recent decades, with both formal and informal learning opportunities now at the forefront of our guiding principles. At Bristol Zoological Society, we aim to inspire, educate and entertain the conservationists of the future, to help us achieve our mission of saving wildlife together.

We welcome tens of thousands of school pupils across our two sites every year. In 2018, numbers taught on site, including school and other groups, totalled 38,726 across both attractions. We offer a wide range of tailored education sessions, incorporating the early years foundation stage through topics such as Polar or African Experience, right through to A-Level and beyond, with subjects including adaptation, animal welfare and wildlife conservation. Our Discovery Days for Rainbows, Cubs, Brownies and Guides proved popular once again this year, with 720 children joining us to find out about endangered species, pets and animal care.

At Wild Place Project, our outdoor learning programme encourages young people to connect with nature and develop an understanding of the natural world. Subjects include ‘brilliant biodiversity’ and ‘learning from lemurs’. Our educational offering at Wild Place Project continues to grow and thrive and we developed a range of new sessions this year, including evolution, forest school and changing seasons. A total of 6,153 school pupils were taught in 360 education sessions across the year – our highest number since Wild Place Project opened five years ago.

We continued our partnership with Redmaids’ High, and their sponsorship of our lemur walk-through enclosure at Bristol Zoo Gardens, for the second year. During their zoo visits, pupils learnt about threatened lemur species and this year they raised funds to help the Society purchase new camera traps, which will be taken to Madagascar to monitor lemur activity in the wild and aid our research work. This is more than a fundraising project however, as the pupils will also work with us to learn how to decide where to effectively place camera traps in the field in Madagascar and help to analyse the images as they are sent back. Years five and six pupils from the school also created lemur-themed postcards to sell in the Zoo gift shop. All proceeds from sales of the postcards go directly towards our lemur conservation work.
Bristol Zoo Gardens’ themed, on-site classrooms accommodate students from early years foundation stage to A-Level and beyond.
Inspiring future conservationists continued... This summer we delivered our eight-week Wildlife Conservation evening course to adult participants, offering a unique insight into the conservation activities of Bristol Zoological Society. We also helped 51 arachnophobes overcome their fears through our six ‘Living with Spiders’ courses, and our new promotional video reached an audience of more than 27,000 on social media.

In September we welcomed more than 300 Higher Education students to Bristol Zoological Society’s Institute of Conservation Science and Learning, based at Bristol Zoo Gardens. We teach on seven degree courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate, in collaboration with the University of the West of England (UWE), University of Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College and the University of Gloucestershire. Over the year, we increased our Higher Education lecturing team to nine to reflect our growing Higher Education provision. Course subjects range from conservation biology and primatology to animal health and welfare, and communication for conservation. We were pleased to achieve 100 per cent student satisfaction for one of our Foundation Degree in Science courses, Integrated Wildlife Conservation, run in partnership with UWE.

In addition to their busy clinic schedule, our in-house veterinary team also provided exotic animal clinical and didactic teaching, electives and assessment to more than 300 undergraduate veterinary students. Our Higher Education team supervised 62 undergraduate projects, 40 Masters projects and nine PhDs in 2018; a total of 111 students.

Our specialist library is also increasingly popular with Higher Education students, and is a rare asset for a zoo to have. This year we deposited the Society’s extensive archive collection, holding over 183 years of our history, with Bristol Archives.

We finished the year by awarding the Bristol Zoological Society Alumni Award to two former students from our courses that have shown considerable dedication to the field of conservation. Despite being early in their careers, Jack Weatherington and Daniel Hending have already had a positive impact on conservation efforts in the UK and Madagascar, respectively. The Society also sponsored two UWE awards: the UWE Undergraduate and Postgraduate Conservationist of the Future Awards. The awardees, Maria Stuart (FdSc Integrated Wildlife Conservation) and Holly Dillon (MSc Advanced Wildlife Conservation in Practice), were awarded their prizes at the UWE graduation ceremonies.
Our education and outreach sessions offer the opportunity to get up-close to some of our smaller animals.

Photo credit: Simon Pizzey
Bristol Zoological Society has been at the heart of the Bristol and regional community since it was established in 1835. Today we play an active role through schemes such as our ‘Zoo to You’ outreach visits to a variety of groups, from scouts and brownies to retirement homes and hospitals.

In 2018, 122 children and 29 adults from a range of community groups were given free visits to Bristol Zoo Gardens as part of our Access to Nature bursary scheme. The scheme, which is supported by City West Commercials and Western Power, offers groups who would not normally have the resources or chance to visit us, the opportunity to enjoy an out-of-classroom learning experience.

This year we also invited families from across the region to join a series of free wildlife workshops at Wild Place Project. The programme, called Wild Detectives, aimed to offer outdoor learning opportunities to families from urban or deprived areas, or families which are less able to access nature. The project was a huge success, attended by 175 adults and 315 children who enjoyed activities including wildlife surveys, bushcraft, planting and den-building. We welcomed groups from Southmead Development Trust, Bristol Children’s Hospital, a mental health organisation for young people called Off The Record, and a family health and wellbeing social enterprise organisation called Imayla. The Wild Detectives project was made possible thanks to a Nature Connect grant of £10,700 from the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), and due to its success, we intend to continue it in 2019.

We marked National Tree Week in November by inviting youngsters from Abbeywood Tots Day Care Nursery, in Filton, to plant the first of 150 native trees that will form a new tree corridor at Wild Place Project. We also work to engage people beyond our two zoos, by attending popular events such as the Bristol Festival of Nature every year. We deliver programmes to more than 50 community groups in Bristol annually and this year supported Action for Conservation in outreach sessions to local secondary schools. Volunteers from Bristol Zoo Gardens delivered 41 community outreach visits across the year – reaching roughly 4,500 people. Taking a selection of the Zoo’s smaller animal species, we engage with local communities about the history, conservation work and amazing animals of Bristol Zoo Gardens.

Our Bristol Community Plant Project involves our team of gardeners working with community groups and schools across the city to grow different varieties and species of *Calendula*, more commonly known as pot marigold. The project, sponsored by Cedar Care Homes, is managed centrally by our horticulturalists at Bristol Zoo Gardens, but the plants are grown at different sites across Bristol, reducing the chance of cross-pollination.
Families from across the region joined our free Wild Detectives workshops at Wild Place Project this year
Working with our community continued... This year, the *Calendula* collection was awarded ‘full collection’ status by Plant Heritage. It is one of the first official collections to concentrate on annual plants and the first to enlist the help of the community to run it. It is also thought to be the most comprehensive collection of *Calendula* species ever assembled.

We continued as a key partner of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project, which aims to protect and manage the Avon Gorge and Downs and raise awareness about the importance of this unique site. In 2018, more than 11,100 people engaged with the Project through walks, talks, education sessions, courses and events. Highlights included taking part in the Clifton Suspension Bridge ‘From Garden to Gorge’ event; running activities at the Bristol Festival of Nature; taking part in the Lord Mayor’s ‘At home’ event; wildlife mask making with children at Cycle Sunday and running stalls at both the Downs Festival and University of Bristol Welcome Fair on the Downs.

Almost 2,000 school children and Higher Education students participated in education sessions run by the Project, including schools from areas of deprivation that had never participated before. We covered the transport costs for these groups with a grant from the John James Foundation and welcomed 303 pupils from five new schools as part of the scheme. We also welcomed 241 children from play schemes and uniformed groups, including two new groups from areas of deprivation which took up our offer of free transport, enabling 41 children to enjoy an educational visit to the Downs.

This year we developed a new ‘Downs Challenge Programme’ in partnership with Imayla, which saw children complete different ‘challenges’ to discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs. It included learning about peregrine falcons, discovering minibeasts and spiders, and braving the dark to learn about bats and moths.

A grant from the OVO Foundation enabled us to work with five refugee families on our ‘Wild Adventures Family Project’ in partnership with Bridges for Communities, the Inner City and East Bristol Health Improvement Team and the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge. The project offered families the chance to learn about British wildlife and introduced them to the Avon Gorge and Downs. We also provided space for them to connect with other refugees and the local community and to spend time together as a family. Overall, this was a hugely successful pilot project with significant impacts on wildlife knowledge, connection to nature and social integration.
Children and carers from Abbeywood Tots Day Care Nursery helped plant native trees at Wild Place Project to mark National Tree Week in November.
OUR GARDENS

We maintain one of the South West’s most important plant collections.

Trees, shrubs and plants from around the world can be found within the 12-acre gardens at Bristol Zoo Gardens, including outstanding herbaceous and annual displays, the monkey puzzle tree, tree ferns, Wollemi pine and the purple-berried flax lily. Interesting species such as the walking iris from South America and native plants like the Bristol onion and Bristol rock cress are also found here.

This year the team continued their 18-year tradition of success at the Bristol in Bloom awards, winning the John and Pat Mortell Bristol in Bloom Perpetual Trophy for gardening excellence. An ‘edible garden’ was also created at Bristol Zoo this year, by pupils from Cleve House School in Knowle who won a competition to design a garden that could help feed the animals at the Zoo.

Meanwhile, at Wild Place Project, we marked the centenary of the end of the First World War by creating a garden of more than 100 varieties of poppies. Special guests were invited to an opening ceremony, including members of the armed forces, the Royal British Legion, the Lord Lieutenant, Peaches Golding, and Filton and Bradley Stoke MP, Jack Lopresti.

As well as creating beautiful displays for our visitors to enjoy, the Society’s horticultural team works hard behind the scenes to grow a range of plants to feed the animals, as well as rare plant species such as Calendula, as part of the Bristol Community Plant Collection.

This year, our talented team also began the lengthy process of growing one of the biggest flowers in the world – the titan arum. Also known as the corpse flower, the titan arum is a tropical plant famous for smelling like rotting meat. It can grow up to three metres tall, with giant, umbrella-like flowers, which can grow to three metres in circumference. The titan arum plant is classified as Endangered on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species. Our horticulturists expect it to flower for the first time in five to seven years, and we eventually hope to be able to display this magnificent plant to our visitors.
Three members of the Buglers Association of The Light Division and Rifles sounded the Last Post at the opening of a new poppy garden at Wild Place Project, to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War.
Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project offer an exciting and memorable day out to almost 700,000 visitors each year. Inspiring and engaging our visitors is a fundamental part of our mission of saving wildlife together - they are our greatest potential source of conservation action.

This year we launched a new campaign, in partnership with We The Curious, a science centre in Bristol, to promote the use of sustainable palm oil. Palm oil is the most widely used vegetable oil in the world yet only 19 per cent of the global production is certified as sustainable by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Visitors to Bristol Zoo Gardens were inspired to send emails to UK supermarkets thanking them for using sustainable palm oil in their own brand products and asking them to clearly label these products. Alongside delivering the campaign, we were invited to join the UK Roundtable on Sourcing Sustainable Palm Oil, and have started engaging with a number of organisations to develop a sustainable palm oil alliance in Bristol.

The palm oil campaign was delivered by a team of rangers in our new Tree Kangaroos of Papua New Guinea exhibit. The new exhibit, which we opened in the spring, is home to two Goodfellow’s tree kangaroos, Mian and Kitawa. We hope the pair will breed in the near future as the species is listed as Endangered and is part of a European conservation breeding programme.

This year we also opened a new aviary for threatened birds from the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia, including Luzon bleeding-heart doves, Bali starlings, Palawan peacock pheasants and pied imperial pigeons – species under threat in the wild mainly due to deforestation.

As well as being home to more than 400 species, our attractions offer the perfect backdrop for an array of events and activities. This year we continued our busy calendar of events at both sites, including seasonal activity trails, an open-air production of Alice in Wonderland at Wild Place Project, our hugely popular Friday Twilight events at Bristol Zoo Gardens, Christmas and Valentine’s cinema screenings, and a successful Christmas Grotto at the Zoo.

Interacting with our visitors is hugely important, not only to ensure they receive the best possible experience, but to maximise informal learning opportunities and to inspire them about the natural world. Throughout 2018 our team of rangers at Bristol Zoo Gardens spoke to 133,304 visitors at talks and engaged with 101,234 visitors whilst ‘busking’ around the Zoo. They delivered 510 sessions to visitors taking part in ‘meet and greet’ experiences, delivered 71 ‘keeper for the day’ experiences, and led 104 tours for guests staying at The Lodge. This year we also launched a new, behind-the-scenes gelada experience at Wild Place Project.
Bristol Zoo Gardens’ main lawn is popular with visitors in the summer months.
**Engaging our visitors continued...** Our dedicated team of more than 350 volunteers help in almost every department across the Society and are fundamental to our success. In 2018 they donated more than 53,000 hours to help us achieve our mission and vision. This year alone, at Wild Place Project, they supported 360 education sessions including 99 ‘Wild about Wolves’ sessions. They also helped children make 111 stick men, and plant 135 pots of seeds, facilitated 76 minibeast handling sessions and helped build our replica biplane for younger visitors to play on. Our 97 ranger volunteers manned the lemur walk-through enclosure at Wild Place Project for 363 days in 2018, interacting with tens of thousands of visitors and inspiring them about the five species of lemur we have here. We developed a new series of games and activities for volunteer rangers to use across Wild Place Project, to engage visitors in hands-on learning. This included minibeast encounters, ecosystem ‘Jenga’ and biofact handling.

At Bristol Zoo Gardens, our volunteers delivered more than 1,000 animal encounters, engaging with over 20,500 guests. They delivered 41 community outreach visits reaching roughly 4,500 people. Volunteer rangers interacted with more than 100,000 guests around the site and the dedicated volunteers in the Activity Centre painted more than 8,300 faces throughout the year.

As well as inspiring guests at our two attractions, we also reach hundreds of thousands of people via our digital and social media channels. We grew our following on Facebook this year to more than 66,500 for Bristol Zoo Gardens and to more than 20,300 for Wild Place Project. This summer we also hosted a TV production company which filmed at Bristol Zoo Gardens, throughout the night, for three nights. The documentary, called *Nocturnal Britain*, was presented by Miranda Krestovnikoff and aired on Channel 5 at the end of the year. A television crew also followed our team of vets for two days, as part of a series called ‘Fearne & Rory’s Vet Tales’ for the BBC’s Cbeebies channel.
Our team of rangers intensify visitors’ experience and their engagement with the natural world.
Bristol Zoological Society is fortunate to have support from the local and regional community as well as from many businesses, sponsors, donors and supporters who are critical to our success.

This year a total of £2.7 million was raised to help fund the Society’s important work at Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project, as well as our vital conservation and research projects globally. We successfully retained 100 per cent of our corporate partners and were pleased to welcome new supporters such as Nessy Learning Ltd, the new lead sponsor of our gorilla house at Bristol Zoo Gardens.

We began the year with a fundraising appeal to raise £10,000 for orphaned western lowland gorillas in Africa. With support from numerous local companies, we raised almost £12,000 in just two weeks, boosted to nearly £22,000 by the Society’s own donation of £10,000. This enabled a team from the Society to fly out to Cameroon to help build new enclosures at Ape Action Africa, a primate sanctuary near Yaoundé, which we have supported for over 20 years. We also supported a crowdfunded research project to create a genetic family tree of our captive Livingstone’s fruit bats – a Critically Endangered species from the Comoro Islands. The campaign won the support of celebrity broadcaster and author Stephen Fry, who tweeted: “What could be nobler than saving a beautiful bat from extinction?” His support helped the campaign reach its target of £7,500.

Sir David Attenborough gave his support to our project to build a new field station in Madagascar to help save threatened lemurs. The plan has been drawn up by conservationists from Bristol Zoological Society, as well as our partners – Bath-based landscape architects Grant Associates, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios and BuroHappold Engineering.
Our dedicated team of volunteers help in a range of departments across the Society.
Making our work possible continued... We launched our public Bear Wood fundraising campaign in the summer and successfully secured funding from organisations including Garfield Weston Foundation, South Gloucestershire Council, Oak Foundation, Nisbet Trust and The Fraxinus Trust. We also received funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas. The campaign was also boosted by our charity abseil event in June which raised £3,831, and our first corporate golf day in October which raised £5,119. We finished the year with our annual Christmas gala dinner event, which raised a record breaking £32,382 for the Bear Wood appeal. We are set to achieve our fundraising target of £3.82 million by the time the Bear Wood exhibit opens in the summer of 2019.

In addition to corporate support, we are fortunate to have more than 350 dedicated volunteers who help in various roles across the Society, some of whom have supported us for more than 25 years. Our volunteers work with us in all areas of activity to enhance our programmes, and in particular support our education, public engagement and outreach work, as well as giving valuable time to help our horticulture, maintenance, animal and landscapes teams. We continue to be very grateful to them, as well as all our partners and supporters, who help us achieve our mission of saving wildlife together.
Staff from the OVO Foundation took part in a corporate volunteering day at Wild Place Project.
2018 was a challenging year, with total visitor attendance figures at Bristol Zoo Gardens 8.6% lower than in 2017, whilst at Wild Place Project total attendance increased by 0.9%. A new Strategy for the Society will be launched in 2019 to address this situation.

Overall income in the year was £13.6m (2017: £11.6m) which is an increase of £2.0m. However, this income includes the exceptional fundraising campaigns undertaken for the Bear Wood project which resulted in £2.3m (2017: £1.1m) of income in the year. If we exclude these balances, income was £11.3m (2017: £10.5m), an increase of £0.8m. £0.7m of this relates to the decision to bring the operation of the retail stores in-house from November 2017.

The total expenditure for 2018 of £11.8m is an increase of £1.2m or 11% on 2017. £0.5m of this increase is a direct result of the in-house retail operation. The remaining increase reflects the growth and investment in Wild Place Project and continued cost growth at Bristol Zoo Gardens.

Despite the financial position in 2018 we have been able to continue to support the full range of our conservation and education activities and through our new Strategy we will ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Society.

Bristol Zoological Society income and expenditure in 2018

Income
- Bristol Zoo Gardens (57.4%)
- Donations & legacies (13.6%)
- Investment income (3.9%)
- Commercial trading operations (12.8%)
- Conservation & research projects (3.1%)
- Wild Place Project (9.2%)

Expenditure
- Bristol Zoo Gardens (65.5%)
- Wild Place Project (11.2%)
- Conservation & research projects (4.9%)
- National Wildlife Conservation Park (0.1%)
- Fundraising (2.6%)
- Commercial trading operations (14.7%)
- Investment management costs (0.9%)
We would like to thank all our partners, supporters, donors and event participants who have worked with us throughout 2018 and who share our mission of saving wildlife together.

• Abbeywood Tots
• Accolade Wines
• Admiral
• Amarelle
• Airbus
• Avent Interiors
• AXA
• Aztec Hotel & Spa
• Bank of Ireland
• Bannister Charitable Trust
• Barclays
• Barton Willmore
• Beard
• Bear Wood Guardians
• Blackstar Solutions
• Briggstow Institute
• Brinsea
• Bristol Airport Team
• Bristol Post Office SSC
• Bristol Sport
• Bristol Water
• Burges Salmon
• BuroHappold Engineering
• Cedar Care Homes
• DAC Beachcroft
• Darwin Escapes
• Deeley Freed
• Disney Conservation Fund
• DoubleTree Hilton
• Dribuild
• Ecosulis
• Ecosurety
• Enovert Community Trust
• Enterprise Car Club
• Etherton Education
• European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas
• Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
• Force Club
• Fraxinus Charitable Trust
• Friends of the Society
• Garfield Weston Foundation
• Gemini West
• Global Wildlife Conservation
• Gorilla Guardians
• Grant Associates
• Holiday Cottages
• Honda
• HSH Motor Group
• Immediate Media
• IOP Publishing
• IUCN Save Our Species Lemur Fund
• Jelf
• John James Bristol Foundation
• Mages Group
• Mama Bears
• Marat Karpeka Lemur Foundation
• Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation
• Michelmore
• Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund
• My Claim Solved
• N3 Graphics
• National Geographic
• Nessy
• NERC
• Nisbets
• Oak Foundation
• Olympus Academy Trust
• Osborne Clarke
• Ostrava Zoo
• OVO Foundation
• Pauline Meredith Charitable Trust
• Primate Conservation, Inc.
• Primate Society of Great Britain
• Redmaids’ High School
• Rolls Royce
• San Diego Zoo Global
• Silva Care
• Smith & Williamson
• South Gloucestershire Council
• Sparkle Cleaning
• St Monica Trust
• TLT
• Tockington Manor School
• Tomato Source
• Total Produce
• UWE
• Veolia
• Walls
• What’s Right
Bristol Zoological Society is a bold and ambitious charity with a clear mission, focused on saving wildlife together – not only at our two visitor attractions, but also through working with threatened species in the wild and in collaboration with the hundreds of thousands of people that we engage and inspire every year.

This year we began planning our new Strategy for the next five years, which will see exciting developments across Bristol Zoological Society to ensure our continuing success. We also launched our Conservation Master Plan 2018–2022 which outlines our strategy for conservation action over the next five years. Our commitment to conservation will continue to be a key priority, and over the next five years we will work in 10 countries on four continents to conserve 18 target species. We will undertake wildlife population monitoring at 12 field project sites around the world and here in the UK, and will share our message with four million people who will visit our zoos during that time.

A significant highlight this year was starting work on creating a major new exhibit at Wild Place Project, called Bear Wood. The exhibit is set to open in July 2019 and will be home to Eurasian brown bears, Eurasian wolves, Eurasian lynxes and wolverines. Bear Wood will transport visitors back in time to when British woodland was inhabited by these impressive species. Guests will follow a raised walkway through the trees, winding through seven and a half acres of woodland, and see these remarkable species in an ancient woodland habitat as they would have been hundreds of years ago.

Bear Wood will engage visitors with why the conservation of woodland is so important and will show the effects of woodland loss on our native animals - it is a story of what was, where we are now and what is still at stake.

The project has won the backing of celebrities including Sir Tony Robinson and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, as well as television presenters Prof. Alice Roberts, Miranda Krestovnikoff, and Dr Rhys Jones. We very much look forward to sharing this significant new development with our visitors, partners and supporters in 2019, along with our wider strategic plans for the future, as we continue our commitment to saving wildlife together.

Back cover image: South American fur seal at Bristol Zoo Gardens
European brown bears will be among the species in our new Bear Wood exhibit, opening in summer 2019