



ZSL KENYA NATIONAL DELIVERY PLAN

ZSL's plan to support conservation impact within Kenya 2026 - 2035

OVERVIEW

DELIVERING ZSL'S GLOBAL STRATEGY

We are pleased to share ZSL's national delivery plan for Kenya from 2026 to 2035. ZSL is incredibly proud of its history of conservation within Kenya.

From the beginning of our engagement in Kenya, we have sought to help our partners achieve their conservation goals whether that has been through the rescue of highly threatened species, support to local communities or the development of national strategies and a deep understanding of the factors driving wildlife loss and recovery solutions. The National Delivery Plan sets out how we will deliver the goals of ZSL's global strategy within Kenya.

ZSL's global vision is of a world where wildlife thrives and we have set out our purpose to inspire, inform and empower people to protect and restore wildlife. The world is currently in the grip of a climate and biodiversity crisis. This is leading to wider ecological failures that directly threaten the natural processes – such as plant pollination, carbon capture, soil health and weather patterns – governing our planet. Without wildlife, we all stand to lose.

Despite this crisis, we believe that nature can recover, that people are at the heart of that recovery and that solutions must be based on the best evidence available. This is especially true for Kenya, where so many people must cope with the complex challenges of living alongside wildlife populations.

Our approach begins by harnessing knowledge, in all its forms, to provide the necessary evidence to understand the drivers of wildlife decline and identify conservation responses. Our wildlife health and co-existence research has demonstrated how science can drive practical solutions to protecting species and supporting the problems communities also face.

From the start, we engage with the communities living alongside wildlife to build lasting relationships and co-design interventions that improve their livelihoods, reduce human-wildlife conflict and increase protection for both people and wildlife.

We then evaluate these interventions to understand better what is working and what doesn't. This enables us to develop models that can be scaled to have a much wider impact globally.

Our global strategy sets out four areas of impact, or pillars, that build on ZSL's history and expertise with species, habitats, training and engagement (see next page). This is a structure that is replicated within this Delivery Plan.

We start with a focus on the recovery of key species: those that are most threatened and/or perform key ecological roles within their environments. Our restoring habitats pillar co-develops models that improve habitat connectivity and human co-existence with wildlife. We use this experience to develop teaching and training models for everyone from school children to professionals to integrate nature into education and support the skills needed to tackle the biodiversity crisis. Finally, we seek to create broader change for nature through the integration of these approaches into business and policy decision-making, both nationally and internationally. The following pages set out how we will bring this global approach to life in Kenya.



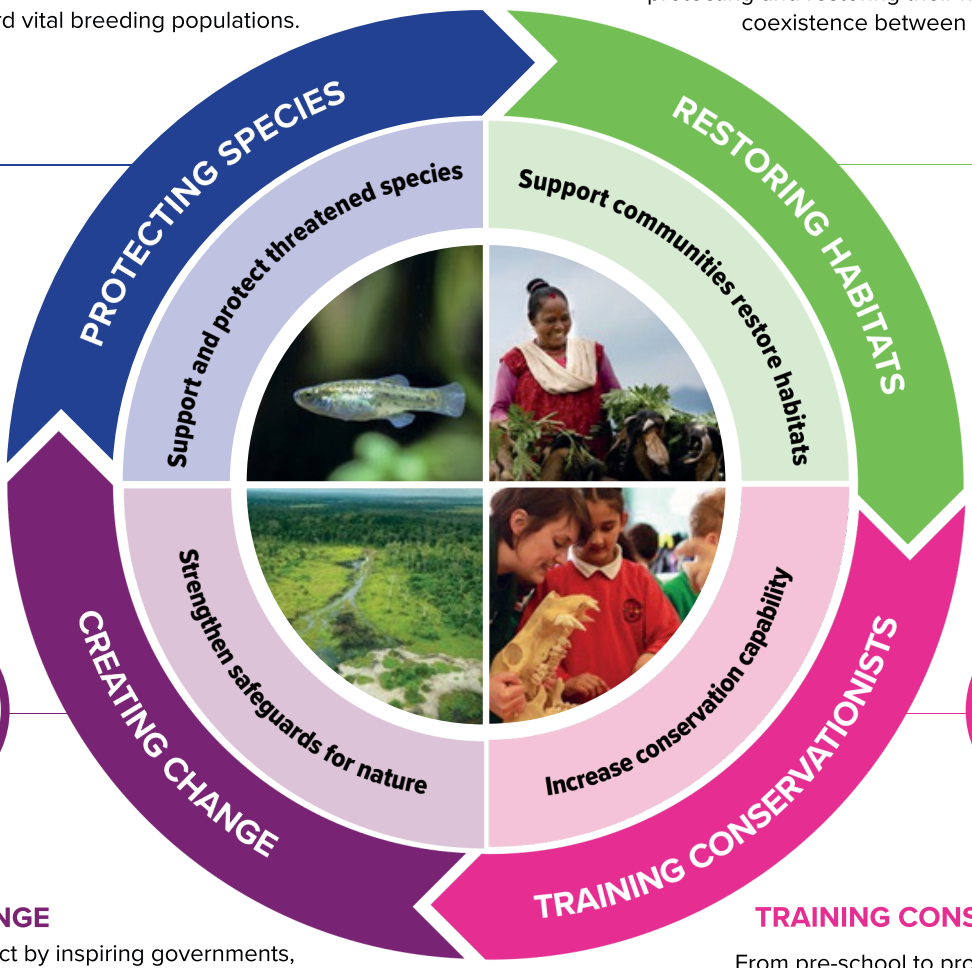
ZSL's global conservation impact model, which provides the basis for our Kenya National Delivery Plan.

PROTECTING SPECIES

We work aroundthe world – from remote areas to urban landscapes – to protect and regenerate threatened wildlife. In our Zoos we care for rare species and safeguard vital breeding populations.

RESTORING HABITATS

We work in partnership with local communities and governments to ensure a future for rare species by protecting and restoring their homes, and improving coexistence between wildlife and humans.



CREATING CHANGE

Wescale up our impact by inspiring governments, businesses and people to make changes in favour of wildlife, helping to protect more species and restore nature around the world.

TRAINING CONSERVATIONISTS

From pre-school to professors, we train the next generation of wildlife advocates and conservationists, to continue the fight for wildlife and protection of the natural world.

ZSL IN KENYA

The National Delivery Plan is founded on a longstanding history of support and collaboration within Kenya, stretching back over 35 years. Our plan is designed to support key national objectives for wildlife conservation in the country.

1991
ZSL seconds staff to the newly formed Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to support the first Rhino Monitoring Programme and establish the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary and build capacity to eradication of rinderpest

2001
African Wild Dog Research Project established in Samburu-Laikipia ecosystem

2007
Cheetah Conservation Initiative established, supporting National Action Plans and transboundary habitat connectivity

2016
ZSL country office registered, providing on-the-ground support to KWS in Tsavo Conservation Area for black rhino monitoring and security

2016–19
Rhino Impact Investment Project piloted in Tsavo – world's first financial bond dedicated to protecting a species

2019
Community-based conservation programme established by ZSL, working to promote human-wildlife coexistence on the northern border of Tsavo

2020–23
Support to Tsavo communities scaled up, including microfinance and livelihoods initiatives and human wildlife conflict mitigation; KWS ranger capacity for conflict resolution increased

2024
Three new projects launched: carnivore monitoring in Tsavo and tackling illegal wild meat trade; empowering rangers; mentoring Kenyan conservationists

Our targets and activities have been designed and consulted to align with the National Wildlife Plan 2030 and support the goals of:

KWS Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028

Goal 1: Flourishing wildlife populations

Goal 2: Resilient ecosystems with rich biodiversity

Goal 3: Community participation and enhanced benefits from wildlife conservation

Goal 4: Robust and well-performing organisation

Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI) Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

Goal 1: Provide leadership and coordination in wildlife research and provision of scientific data and information

Goal 2: Provide leadership in training and capacity building to support wildlife conservation and management

Goal 3: Strengthen institutional capacity



PROTECTING SPECIES

Kenya has a long history of flagship species conservation initiatives, supported by many stakeholders. ZSL specifically seeks to address species recovery challenges where there are identified gaps or opportunities for which our global expertise is best suited.

Historically, our work has focussed on large mammals, ZSL aims to expand its impact on carnivores, such as wild dog and cheetah, while increasingly targetting the overlooked species that are either cryptic or evolutionarily distinct. We have the science, expertise and longstanding species research programmes to enable us to meaningfully contribute to the recovery of key populations in Kenya.

A critical component of ZSL's work over the last 35 years has been to support black rhino recovery and growth - helping establish Kenya's first Rhino Monitoring Programme and the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary in Tsavo West National Park, home to 18% of the country's population. From 2016-23, we partnered with KWS and Tsavo Trust to enhance protected area management: mentoring monitoring teams, providing vehicles and equipment, and investing in infrastructure such as firebreaks, water pipelines and ranger outposts. These efforts contributed to a continued black rhino population increase over the last eight years, with 13 rhinos born in 2023, a 7% rise from 2022.

Two other longstanding programmes of work in Kenya are being led by ZSL's Institute of Zoology. First, the African Wild Dog Research Project, in partnership with Mpala Research and KWS, has worked in the Ewaso ecosystem since 2001 to reduce human-wildlife conflict and vaccinate domestic dogs against rabies to protect people, livestock and wildlife from the disease. Results from the project have informed management strategies for wild dog across Africa.

Second, the Cheetah Conservation Initiative, established in 2007, has been supporting the Government of Kenya with Cheetah National Action Plans and capacity development for cheetah conservation. The programme focuses on strengthening connectivity in cheetah landscapes and working with communities on conflict mitigation and sustainable livelihood development.

Kenya is a critical hub for EDGE species conservation, being home to 84 EDGE species, including 14 endemics. Through ZSL's EDGE Fellowship programme, we have supported 10 early-career conservationists in Kenya, providing funding, technical training, and mentorship, with a focus on projects reptiles and amphibians.



PROTECTING SPECIES



By 2030:

Populations of at least three national priority threatened species will be stabilised.

To achieve this, we will:

- Expand targeted conservation initiatives for key predators – wild dog and cheetah – within the Tsavo and Ewaso ecosystems.
- Support greater understanding concerning the status of key marine species including sharks and rays along the Kenyan coastline.
- Explore opportunities to support the conservation of highly threatened antelopes.
- Support technical and research needs for black rhino recovery in Ewaso ecosystem and Tsavo.

By 2030:

The status of three EDGE species will have been assessed and conservation measures put in place to restore their ecological functionality and viability, leading to population increases by 2035.

To achieve this, we will:

- Prioritise identification of conservation actions for EDGE species in Kenya and promote their funding with partners and donors.
- Explore sustainable funding options for sustained actions to recover key EDGE species.
- Provide ongoing engagement with past Kenyan EDGE fellows to support recovery measures.



RESTORING HABITATS

ZSL has taken a community partnership approach when it comes to restoring habitat in Kenya, focussing on equitable conservation beyond protected areas to connect key landscapes for threatened species and foster peaceful human-wildlife coexistence.

ZSL's Cheetah Conservation Initiative has been working on human-wildlife coexistence for over a decade along the Kenya/Tanzania border, developing a toolkit specifically to help communities mitigate conflict with carnivores as well as supporting land-use planning and policies to restore connectivity for cheetahs and other wide-ranging species.

In 2019, we expanded our work in partnership with communities in northern Tsavo to focus on mitigating carnivore conflict. We started with supporting predator-proof kraals for over 80 households that have been 100% effective. Then we co-developed livelihood and microfinance support to improve the financial security and resilience of the most vulnerable households. Over the last eight years, we supported over 750 households through 38 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) saving £35,000 and enabling new livelihoods opportunities. Evaluations highlighted that, between 2020 and 2023, the wellbeing of participants improved by 41% and their perceived ability to cope with wildlife conflict rose by 24%. At the same time there was a 56% decrease in illegal natural resource use within the region, demonstrating the potential to deliver effective approaches to improving co-existence with wildlife.

Running alongside community initiatives, our teams collaborate with local and regional authorities to provide best practice and training guides for rangers to de-escalate conflict, build trust and develop positive people-park relationships.

The formation of Wildlife Coexistence Committees, where conflict can be addressed, has further enhanced collaboration. In forest protected areas, ZSL has worked alongside Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to strengthen institutional capacity in participatory forest management through curriculum enhancement, as well as Training of Trainers (ToT) and ranger training. The training also covered key aspects of ecosystem management.

Our work with communities is guided by our global FAIRER (Fair, Accountable, Inclusive, Respectful, Ethical and Reflective) framework, which is ZSL's overarching strategy for rights-based conservation and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Together with several national organisations in Kenya, ZSL is exploring future models of community-led conservation.



RESTORING HABITATS

By 2030:

Through co-development with at least 10 communities living around protected areas, we will have supported sustainable reductions in habitat degradation, illegal wildlife offtake and conflict with wildlife.

To achieve this, we will:

- Implement ZSL's FAIRER approach to community-led conservation in Kenya supporting at least four community-led conservation programmes.
- Expand community support programmes to protect livestock, increase positive interactions with protected areas and provide locally relevant income generation opportunities.
- Support enhanced connectivity between protected areas that enables movement for wide-ranging species and mitigates conflict, leading to the protection of 5000ha of functioning wildlife corridors by 2035.

By 2035:

We will have supported sustainable increases in national rangeland health, leading to more climate resilient landscapes for people and wildlife.

To achieve this, we will:

- Support the development of the national action plan for rangeland health, with measurable targets for improving rangeland conditions and reduced land degradation.
- Complete a rangeland health assessment in the Tsavo Conservation Area, identifying priority zones and key areas for habitat connectivity.
- Establish a robust monitoring framework for wildlife movement across priority landscapes to assess connectivity for three threatened species (eg African wild dogs, cheetah and lions) working in partnership with communities and government.



TRAINING CONSERVATIONISTS

Throughout ZSL's history in Kenya, we have focused on sharing skills, knowledge, and expertise from our conservationists, scientists, and zoos to empower conservationists and communities to protect and restore wildlife and natural heritage.

Our commitment to ranger training has seen a longstanding programme of partnership and capacity development for both technical and people-related skills. This has included collaboration with KWS and KFS to integrate modules on human-wildlife conflict de-escalation, trust-building, technology use, and fostering positive people-park relationships, in addition to law enforcement, and ecosystem management into their curricula for ranger training.

To support monitoring in and around protected landscapes, ZSL has long provided capacity development for use of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool). ZSL has trained over 500 rangers in SMART and supported 30 partner organizations in its implementation. More recently, we have taken a leading role in the development of capacity for the SMART-EarthRanger Conservation Alliance (SERCA) and Kenya will be a key focal region for future activity.

Since 2007, ZSL's EDGE Fellowship programme has supported 10 EDGE Fellows in Kenya, including one scale-up awardee. These early-career conservationists receive advanced training to help them protect some of Kenya's rarest and most threatened species, fostering the next generation of conservation leaders.

Through our longstanding research and conservation work in Laikipia on wild dog recovery, ZSL has built extensive practical experience with health interventions that have positive impacts for people and wildlife. We have also expanded our wildlife health training with the delivery of the 'Interventions in Wild Animal Health' course, in Kenya in partnership with WRTI (Wildlife Research and Training Institute), KWS, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and The University of Edinburgh (UoE). The course equips wildlife vets with practical skills for addressing human-livestock-wildlife conflict, animal translocations, best practice in wild animal anaesthesia techniques, sampling techniques for infectious disease screening, pathological examination in the field, and disease surveillance scenarios.

At a community level, ZSL provides education and outreach support within our broader wildlife co-existence programmes to develop a broader understanding of the values of wildlife and trade-offs involved in conservation. Our community education programme is now working with 26 schools, engaging 7,020 learners in rhino conservation activities to inspire, inform and empower the next generation of conservation leaders.



TRAINING CONSERVATIONISTS

By 2030:

We will have strengthened conservation capacity across Kenya through training over 500 professionals.

To achieve this, we will:

- Support wildlife rangers, conservationists and scientists through tailored training programmes, including curriculum design and delivery.
- Create internal capacity to coordinate and lead education and training initiatives linked to ZSL's global Conservation Education programmes.
- Collaborate with partners in Kenya to share lessons and learn from best practice to scale training and education opportunities.

By 2030:

Co-developed education programmes will be active throughout all communities we work with agreed learning objectives identified and impacts tracked.

To achieve this, we will:

- Review our existing education programmes in Kenya and engage leading education providers to identify best practice and collaboration opportunities across our two priority landscapes.
- Grow our existing local engagement and education programmes as part of our wildlife co-existence programmes of work.
- Launch at least two new education partnerships within our priority landscapes to expand our reach and impact.
- Investigate a career connections pathway between existing education programmes, potential youth early careers programming with local partners, the EDGE fellowship and Interventions of Wildlife Health to ensure a viable next step for support in career development.

By 2035:

We will have enhanced veterinary capacity across Kenya, training at least 50 wildlife vets.

To achieve this, we will:

- Collaborate with WRTI and other partners on the continued delivery and development of the IWAH training programme in Kenya.
- Explore how the ZSL wildlife health centre can support the integration of veterinary wildlife capacity into the development of the One Health agenda in Kenya.

By 2035:

We will have supported at least five early career conservationists to protect and recover EDGE species in Kenya.

To achieve this, we will:

- Promote the EDGE Fellowship programme for Kenyan applicants and support ongoing engagement with EDGE alumni to further grow their impact.
- Identify the pipeline of EDGE fellows through working with local partners and implement a programme to support career development through the EDGE fellowship.



CREATING CHANGE

For over 35 years, ZSL has supported partners in Kenya to develop and deliver species conservation strategies and action plans that enable the country to meet national and global biodiversity targets.

Our focus has been on species at high risk of extinction, or those for which Kenya forms an important part of their range. A key highlight has been the support provided to priority setting for black rhino recovery. ZSL supported the establishment of the National Rhino Programme at KWS and seconded a staff member to be the first coordinator. ZSL helped to formulate the first black rhino management strategy in 1993 and has contributed to the subsequent six action plans for the species. ZSL has supported all components of the strategy from capacity building to establishing monitoring systems, habitat and population assessments, translocations and protected area management. We have also supported action plans for the African wild dog, cheetah, elephant, hirola and pangolins.

To help policy-makers access the knowledge and guidance they need for species conservation at a national scale, ZSL sits on the Rhino Steering Committee, the Kenya Large Carnivore Technical Committee, Kenya-Tanzania Borderlands Carnivore Coalition and most recently the National Rangeland Health Working Group. We also support a National Carnivore Coordinator within KWS to help implementation of the Cheetah National Action Plan, providing training, mentoring and project funding and are looking to support WRTI on a Bushmeat Research and Monitoring Programme.

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ZSL is also at the forefront of developing innovative financial products to provide sustainable funding streams for conservation to ensure national wildlife policies and species actions plans can be supported in the long-term. Kenya was the hub for the pilot-development of the world's first impact bond for species recovery through the Rhino Impact Initiative that led significant investment into rhino recovery within Tsavo. This led directly to the design and launch of a bond delivered in two landscapes in South Africa. Currently ZSL has led the design phase for an outcomes-based bond focussed on human wildlife co-existence. By seeking investment both nationally and internationally our goal is to raise significant capital to support communities in HWC hotpsots areas across Kenya, helping to reduce conflict with wildlife and enable more efficient compensation mechanisms.



CREATING CHANGE

By 2030:

ZSL has supported national policy makers further integrate nature into decision-making.

To achieve this, we will:

- Support the Kenyan Government with data and technical capacity to develop and/or deliver at least two species action plans and the country's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan targets.
- Support the National Red List Committee to develop a National Red List and Living Planet Index for Kenya
- Support the delivery of a National Rangeland Health Initiative to aid the monitoring and evaluation of rangeland health initiatives.
- Support the government establish and then contribute to a multi-institutional bushmeat research and monitoring programme.

By 2030:

A wildlife co-existence bond, or equivalent, will be active and channelling private investment into community initiatives to reduce conflict with wildlife.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop a national partnership to seek the financing and guide the design for bond.
- Engage international funding agencies, philanthropy and corporate partners to seek outcome payers into the bond.
- Co-design recipient projects with communities to ensure that proceeds are appropriately focussed at the appropriate level.



WHERE WE WORK

Tsavo Conservation Area

Covering over 42,000 km^2, the Tsavo Conservation Area is East Africa's great semi-arid wildlife stronghold: a vast, connected landscape where the long-term future of conservation depends on successfully combining ecosystem restoration, climate resilience and community-led coexistence. It is composed of the Tsavo East, Tsavo West, Chyulu Hills National Parks, South Kitui National Reserve, ranches in Galana, Taita, Kulalu and Amboseli and adjacent private and communal lands. The protected portion of the TCA (25,000 km^2) in Kenya represents almost half of the country's protected areas.



The complex is home to a wide range of biodiversity and is a stronghold of one of Kenya's key black rhino populations – it holds 18% of the country's black rhinos. ZSL began working in Tsavo on the final cases of rinderpest infection in Kenya as well as the founding of the Ngulia sanctuary and recovery of the black rhino population. Until 2023, ZSL provided on-the-ground support for monitoring and security patrols within Ngulia; transmitter exercises and translocations; annual night censuses to count the population through physical sightings; camera-trap monitoring and the construction of essential park infrastructure such as ranger posts, water piping and tanks and KWS facilities.

Since 2023, we have taken a more holistic approach to the landscape, focussing more on the increased issues around co-existence with wildlife, support to local community wellbeing, building ranger capacity and supporting platforms to establish positive relationships between communities and KWS. Currently, our wildlife work focusses on assessment and conservation of wild dog and cheetah populations to explore management options across large areas and through trans-boundary initiatives into Tanzania.

Laikipia

The Laikipia plateau forms part of the Ewaso ecosystem, between the highlands of Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Range to the south and the arid rangelands of northern Kenya. It is a globally important savanna landscape where exceptional wildlife conservation occurs alongside pastoral livelihoods, making it one of Africa's most influential and challenging examples of balancing biodiversity, people and land use. This region has been the long-term home of the African Wild Dog Programme that has studied the complex dynamics between wild dog, people and infectious disease.



Our programmes have demonstrated the positive impacts that vaccination of domestic dogs against rabies could have to reduce the impact of the disease in wild dog, while providing tangible and welcomed benefits to local communities. Our research has also shown that climate change is exacerbating the pressures on wild dog. Both Laikipia and Tsavo may represent important landscape refuges for the species as other African hotspots are more adversely impacted. Therefore continued efforts to manage wild dog within this landscape are vital and this landscape will remain the centre of ZSL's work on wildlife health within East Africa.



Nationwide

Through our training, convening, SERCA and nature finance work, ZSL deploys its expertise to partners and landscapes across the country. Institutional capacity-building supports government agencies such as KWS, WRTI and KFS to more effectively deliver their national level mandates.

APPENDIX

Priority species for ZSL

We have identified an initial list of priority species within Kenya as potential conservation targets, based on their Red List status and the location of key populations. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and will be refined over time, based on emerging needs and priorities.

Group	Common name	Scientific name	National priority species	IUCN Conservation Status
Mammals	Aders' duiker	*Cephalophus adersi*	Yes	CR
	African lion	*Panthera leo*	Yes	VU
	African wild dog	*Lycaon pictus*	Yes	EN
	Black rhino	*Diceros bicornis*	Yes	CR
	Cheetah	*Acinonyx jubatus*	Yes	VU
	Giant pangolin	*Smutsia gigantea*	No	EN
	Golden rumped sengi	*Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*	Yes	EN
	Grevy's zebra	*Equus grevyi*	Yes	EN
	Ground pangolin	*Smutsia temminckii*	No	VU
	Hirola	*Beatragus hunteri*	Yes	CR
	Masai giraffe	*Giraffa tippelskirchi*	Yes	EN
	Sable antelope	*Hippotragus niger*	Yes	LC
	White-bellied pangolin	*Phataginus tricuspis*	No	EN
Reptiles and amphibians	Kenya horned viper	*Bitis worthingtoni*	No	VU
	Kenya montane viper	*Montatheris hindii*	No	NT
	Kinangop river frog	*Phrynobatrachus Kinangopensis*	No	VU
Birds	Lappet-faced vulture	*Torgos tracheliotos*	Yes	EN
	Sokoke scops owl	*Otus ireneae*	Yes	EN
	White-headed vulture	*Trigonoceps occipitalis*	Yes	CR
Fish	Guitarfish spp.			CR
	Scalloped hammerhead shark	*Sphyrna lewini*		CR



For further information, please contact:

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