

Post-Conference Summary Report

Name of Event: **4th International Meeting on Zoo Research, Conservation and Biodiversity (IMZRCB)**

Date of Event: **April 3 to 6, 2024**

Location of Event: **Hybrid (In-person at the Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen and Online via Microsoft Teams)**

Number of Persons Attending: **67**

Hosting Organization: **Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen GmbH**

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IMZRCB 2024 Conference Summary

The Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen held its 4th International Meeting on Zoo Research, Conservation and Biodiversity (IMZRCB) on April 3 to 6, 2024. Due to its hybrid nature, the event was attended by a total of 67 people representing 15 countries around the world. Attendees were able to connect and learn about zoo research projects and ongoing initiatives to protect biodiversity and enhance conservation efforts. There was a mix of students, veterinarians, conservation biologists and senior scientists presenting their work on a broad range of topics covering many taxa.

This year, the Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen celebrated its 50th anniversary. Accordingly, the conference theme was “50 years of the Serengeti-Park, and what an animal park of this dimension has, in those 50 years, really contributed to animal conservation and biodiversity in the local area and back in nature”. For instance, the successful reintroduction of Kai, a southern white rhino born at the Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen, to the Etosha National Park in Namibia in 1996 was an inspiration for future reintroduction of *ex-situ* captive white rhinos as well as other rhino species to communal or private *in-situ* nature reserves. You may also discover other works of the Serengeti-Park through its research department and new Forschung Center (<https://serengeti-park.de/tiere/spdr>) and previous conservation projects, safari school (<https://serengeti-park.de/tiere/safari-schule>), and Serengeti-Park Foundation (<https://www.serengeti-park-stiftung.de/>).

On April 3, the conference began with an icebreaker evening and a presentation by Ulla Lohmann. She introduced the audience into her life as an expedition photographer, starting from memories of her youth, getting in touch with indigenous people in remote parts of the world, and ending with her specialty of abseiling into volcanos with her partner and team, and shooting astonishing media content. She has provided content for BBC, National Geographic, TERRA X and many more.

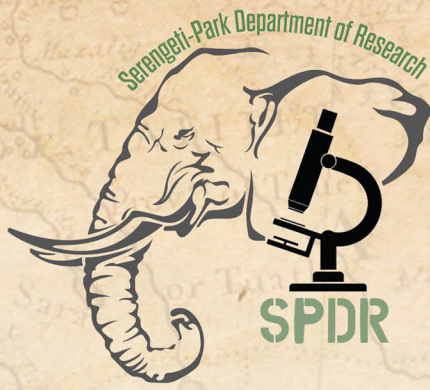
On April 4, opening remarks were delivered by the CEO and owner of the Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen, Dr. Fabrizio Sepe. A focus of his speech was on the high flooding situation recently experienced by the park, the increased prevalence of such events in a changing climate, and how it was important that we continued to come together for a purpose rooted in our commitment to the future of our planet and all the remarkable species that call it home. His wife, Dr. Idu Azogu-Sepe, who is the head of the Serengeti-Park Department of Research and General Chair of the IMZRCB conference, commented on

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the unique conference and the highly complex topic of sharing ideas, initiatives, and proactive grounds to make a huge impact on animal welfare, conservation and protection of the ecosystem. She introduced a special issue cooperation with the Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens that was tailored to participants of this 4th IMZRCB. Lastly, she also highlighted the Flagship Species Support Program of the conference and the potential to evolve the program.

In 2024, our flagship species was the Rhinoceros! We were happy to support the Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park Monitoring and Security Project of Save the Rhino International, a UK-registered charity with the goal to realize its vision for all five rhino species to thrive in the wild, by collaborating with partners in Africa and Asia. The Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park (HiP) in South Africa is renowned as “the birthplace of the rhino” following Operation Rhino’s efforts to save the Southern white rhino from the brink of extinction. Located in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, it now shelters the second largest black rhino population in South Africa, after Kruger National Park. Detailed monitoring of individuals within a rhino population is a cornerstone of their effective protection and management, meaning that poaching can be counteracted more effectively and important information on the biology of the populations, such as breeding performance and constraints (for example, density dependence), can be gathered. Save the Rhino works with partners to support monitoring of rhino populations in HiP through the enhanced use of camera traps. Furthermore, improved security inside the park has extra benefits for its wider ecology and biodiversity, ensuring additional and improved protection of a variety of other species of conservation significance (threatened, protected and endemic). There was a special presentation by Dr. Jo Shaw from Save the Rhino International on the status of *in-situ* rhino conservation. We are excited to announce that we raised EUR 1,111 for the HiP project through a silent auction that included animal prints, donated artworks, t-shirts, and books.

New to the conference was the Expert panel discussion, with the topic of “the future of holding animals and how to leverage the past”. Five expert panelists Dr. Paul Rose, Dr. Marina Scheumann, Jon Taylor, Dr. Michael Böer and Marjo Hoedemaker, expressed their opinions on reintroduction/ conservation measures, effective ways of communicating to every aspect of society, and animal surplus policies. Notable points include how to step outside of the bubble of the zoo and connect more with the outside community; bringing children closer to nature to build their personal connection and love of preserving it; what are we trying to achieve with conservation as a zoo and what’s the human-wildlife conflict impacting the species?; following ethics and convincing the stakeholders on the actions that are being taken; breed and feed policies that follow the natural life cycle of the species and to work to communicate their endpoint; and adaptation processes required to reintroduce ex-situ animals to an in-situ environment which should involve the local community.

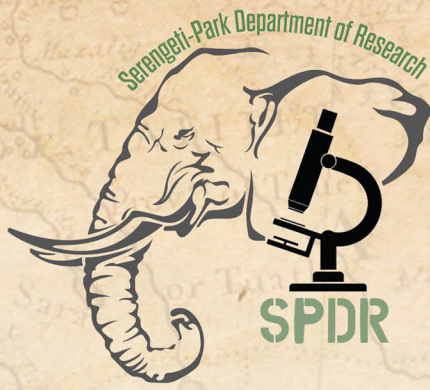
The list of impressive speakers and their thought-provoking topics are listed below. Notably, from our keynote speakers, we listened to presentations on “Conservation impact and the roles of zoos, hope, and Conservation Optimism” (Jon Taylor, Conservation Optimism) and “Emotions in humans and their closest living relatives” (Dr. Mariska Kret, Leiden University). These talks among many other comprehensive presentations served to highlight research and conservation aspects for endangered populations, conservation toolkits for *in-situ* and *ex-situ* efforts, building of strong social connections through a deepened understanding of emotional expressions, animal welfare and insights into species

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communication, guidelines for developing technology for animals in zoos, improving zoo design that is evidence-based, human-wildlife conflict, sedation techniques for bison, and designing appropriate diets for great apes. The second conference day was concluded with a gala night dinner and silent auction.

On the morning of April 6, conference attendees went on a guided bus tour through our animal park, with special viewing of the feeding for our barbary lions. This concluded our conference program.

In summary, this year's IMZRCB conference had a strong focus on zoo research and conservation. Through its offerings, we continued to expand on our commitment to create clear and tangible future goals on how to help the planet's biodiversity from a local level. Furthermore, this focus provided the foundation for building community with attendees from different disciplines and was characterized by a personal atmosphere. Many thanks to our invited speakers, presenters, attendees, sponsors, and collaborators!

Next year's 5th IMZRCB conference will take place from April 2 to 5, 2025. We will provide opportunities to network with zoo researchers, conservationists, and scientists in strengthening the platform for the zoo community, while also enjoying our themed lodges and tours of the Serengeti-Park. With growing experience and a growing community, we will try to improve every aspect of our conference experience resulting in a knowledge exchange in a friendly environment of the park.

Our sincerest gratitude to our wonderful colleagues at the Serengeti-Park Hodenhagen for their kindness and enthusiasm in making this a successful event. Your collective support allows us to bring awareness to biodiversity issues, and the impact of zoo and field research on conservation efforts.

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Speakers and presenters for IMZRCB 2024

Keynote Speakers

Jon Taylor – Conservation impact and the roles of zoos, hope, and Conservation Optimism

Dr. Mariska Kret – Emotions in humans and their closest living relatives

Invited Speakers

Ulla Lohmann – How a visit to the Safari Park as a child led Storyteller Ulla Lohmann to a journey into the center of the Earth

Dr. Ann Göth – Home and away: Using knowledge of common megapodes (aves: Megapodidae) to aid the conservation of endangered species

Dr. Jo Shaw – Status of global in-situ rhino conservation in 2024

Dr. Thomas Hildebrandt – The northern white rhino rescue program provides a role model for other critically endangered mammalian species

Dr. Daniel Tost – Black grouse in the Lüneburg Heath – research and conservation efforts for an endangered population

Lars Versteegen – Rhino Conservation: Truth or Dare

Sue Tidwell – A journey to understanding African wildlife conservation

Jon Coe – Improving Zoo Design with Better Science Integration: a Designer's perspective

Dr. Ilyena Hirskyj-Douglas – Is There a Need for Policies and Guidelines on Developing Technologies for Animals in Zoos?

Dr. Berit Michler – Raccoons in Germany – Management of a controversial newcomer

Invited Workshop Presenters

Dr. Joeke Nijboer and Tjalling Huisman - Designing appropriate diets for great apes: still a challenging task (Part 1 & 2)

Dr. Xavier Manteca Vilanova – How to assess and improve the welfare of zoo animals: fundamental principles and applications

Symposium presenters

Daniel Moloney – The Conservationist's Toolkit: A new framework tool to aid in the development and management of conservation efforts both in-situ and ex-situ.

Dr. Paul Rose – The importance of animal welfare inputs as the foundation of positive animals welfare outputs

Dr. Marina Scheumann – Insights into vocal communication in white rhinoceros: How can it be used to improve management

Michou Weimar – The Wild, the Domestic and the Stealthy: Mapping Seasonal Livestock Depredation by Spotted Hyenas

Tim Hofmann – Enhancing Cheetah Conservation through Wildlife Detection Dogs

Maximilian Rometsch – Effects of mixed-species display on the behaviour of the rock hyrax (*Procavia capensis*)

Dr. Malin Berit Held – Sedation of American bison (*Bison bison*) with butorphanol, azaperone and detomidine (BAD)



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Yvonne Pohlner – Comparing ex and in situ personality and wellbeing of gorillas: The development of a new toolkit for the One Plan Approach

Poster Presenters

Rick Meulendijks – Case study on monitoring native wild birds in zoos

Dr. Frank-Uwe Michler – Long-term field research as a basis for effective racoon management in Germany

Expert panel discussion

Dr. Paul Rose

Dr. Marina Scheumann

Jon Taylor

Dr. Michael Böer

Marjo Hoedemaker

Best Presentation Winners

Dr. Marina Scheumann (Best talk)

Rick Meulendijks (Best in-person poster)

Travel Award Winners

Michou Weimar

Daniel Moloney

Planning Committee

Dr. Idu Azogu-Sepe (General Chair and Finance Chair)

Phillip Martens (Program Chair)

Janine Riesener (Activity Co-Chair)

Ruth-Marie Stecker (Activity Co-Chair)

Jordan Harris (Volunteer)

Sponsors and Cooperation

The Zoo Scientist

Journal of Zoological and Botanical Gardens

Ecology and Diversity

Fruchthof Northeim

Ahlers Getränke

Recker Feinkost

Chefs Culinar

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Group Picture



Dr. Fabrizio Sepe



Jon Taylor



Dr. Mariska Kret



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Members of IMZRCB committee with Ulla Lohmann



Safari Jeep Tour



Gala night dinner

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