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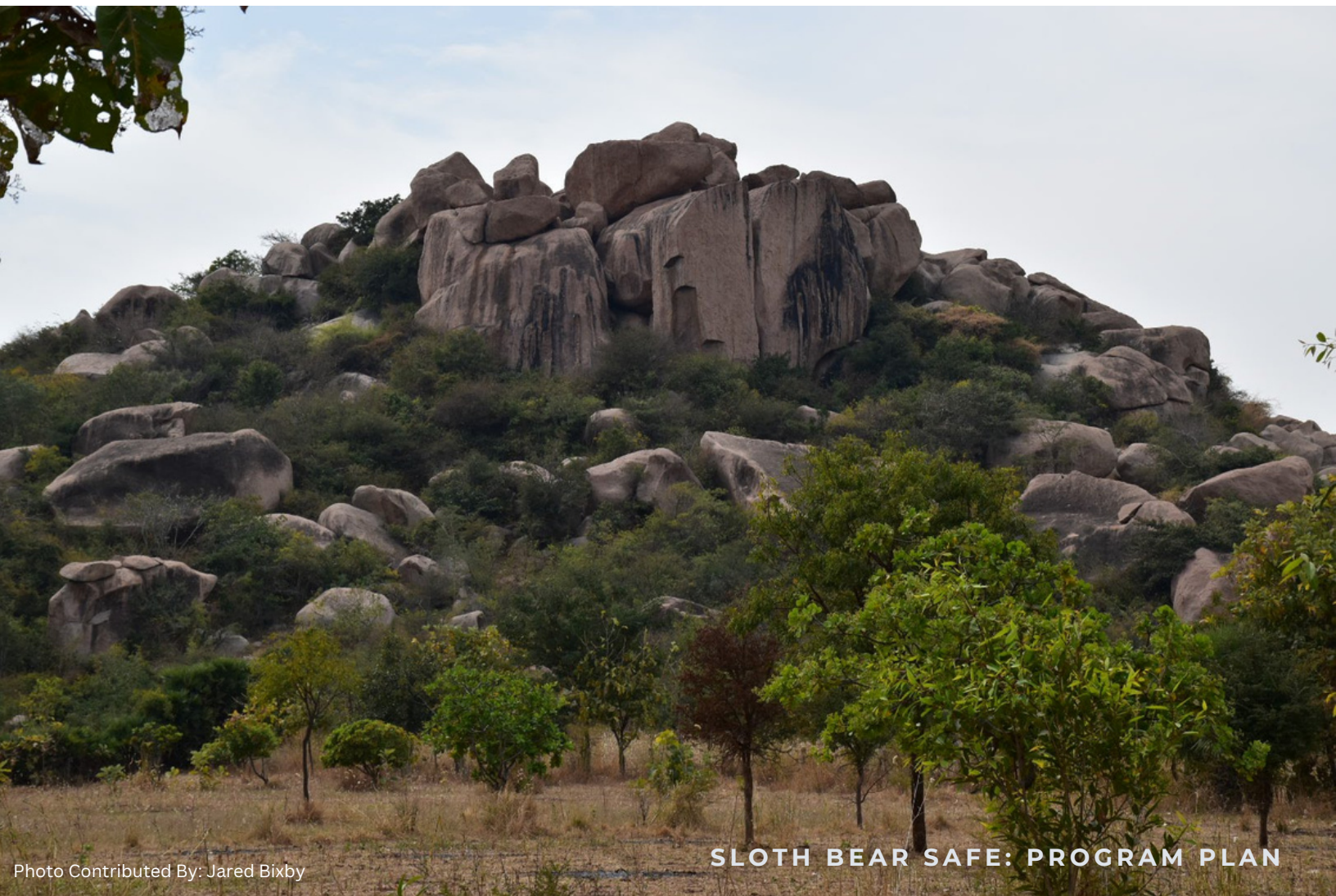
**SAVING ANIMALS
FROM EXTINCTION**

SLOTH BEAR

PROGRAM PLAN

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CONSERVATION TARGET

The Sloth Bear SAFE program is focused on the two sloth bear subspecies *Melursus ursinus ursinus* and *Melursus ursinus inornatus* found in India and Sri Lanka. The subspecies *Melursus ursinus ursinus* is also found in Nepal; however, the primary actions of the Sloth Bear SAFE program will focus on the populations in India and Sri Lanka.

CONSERVATION STATUS

The sloth bear has been listed as Vulnerable on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species since 1990 (Dharaiya et al. 2020). Major threats to this species are habitat loss or degradation (often related to human population growth) and retaliation from human-bear conflicts (Johnsingh 2003, Chauhan 2006, Yoganand et al. 2006, Bargali et al. 2012, Bargali and Sharma 2013). To a slightly lesser degree, poaching and inadvertent anthropogenic risks pose threats to sloth bears (Seshamani and Satyanarayan 1997, Johnsingh 2003, Chauhan 2006, Arun et al. 2022).

Habitat has been lost, degraded, and fragmented by overharvest of forest products (e.g., timber, fuelwood, fodder, fruits, honey), the establishment of monoculture plantations (e.g., teak, eucalyptus), over-grazing, extraction of minerals, quarrying, settlement of refugees, and expansion of agricultural areas, human settlements, and roads (Santiapillai and Santiapillai 1990).

Poaching, mainly for the commercial trade in bear parts, has been reported (Servheen 1990, Garshelis et al. 1999, Yadav et al. 2012), but its current extent and impact on bear populations are uncertain. Compared to other Asian bear species, commercial trade in sloth bear parts appears to be relatively low (Burgess et al. 2014). Poaching occurs for local use such as male reproductive organs used as aphrodisiacs; bones, teeth, and claws used to ward off evil spirits; and bear fat used for native medicine and hair regeneration (Santiapillai and Santiapillai 1990, Seshamani and Satyanarayan 1997, Chauhan 2006). Occasional rashes of poaching incidents have been reported. For example, in Madhya Pradesh in 2014, at least 8 male bears were found professionally poached, as indicated by the skillful removal of their reproductive organs, gallbladders, and claws (Basu 2014, Naveen 2014). Two of the dead bears were found near the buffer area of Khana Tiger Reserve, while the others were found in less protected forests in the state. The manner in which the bear parts were removed led many to speculate that the poaching may be taking place on a larger scale and that the parts may have been removed for international illegal wildlife trade.

CONSERVATION STATUS

continued

The capture of cubs, which often includes the killing of the mother bear, for use as street-show "dancing bears" used to be a threat in some parts of India but has been controlled to a significant level (Seshamani and Satyanarayan 1997, D'Cruze et al. 2011). However, the practice persists to a small degree in southern Nepal. It is unclear if the practitioners were always in Nepal or if they crossed the border to Nepal from India due to the political pressure to end the practice in India. Several dancing bears were confiscated at the Nepal-India border while they were being brought into India (K. Satyanarayan, pers. comm, 2015). Additionally, a cub was rescued that was being smuggled into Nepal with clear signs that it was to be sold for use in the dancing bear practice (Wildlife SOS 2015). These rescues suggest that a threat to wild sloth bear populations from the dancing bear trade still potentially exists.

In some parts of the range, encounters between people and sloth bears have led to numerous serious human injuries and many deaths (Rajpurohit and Krausman 2000, Bargali et al. 2005, Dharaiya and Ratnayeke 2009, Ratnayeke et al. 2014, Garcia et al. 2016, Debata et al. 2017, Dhamorikar et al. 2017, Singh et al. 2018, Sharp et al. 2020). Such incidents occur where people frequently use bear habitat and where the habitat has become severely degraded, prompting bears to seek food and water in areas in closer proximity to humans. Most attacks occur when humans and bears surprise each other in thickets or around rock outcrops, where visibility is obstructed; the bear(s) rush at, pursue, and knock down the person and often attack the face. Attacks generally occur when people are most active in the forests collecting natural products. However, in areas where there are an abundance of naturally occurring caves that bears use as resting dens, attacks during the day are relatively rare (Sharp et al. 2022). Bears that attack or threaten to attack people may ultimately be destroyed. Sloth bear attacks outside protected areas are increasing, and the growing hostility of local people towards bears has made bear conservation more difficult (Bargali et al. 2005, Dharaiya and Ratnayeke 2009, Mardaraj 2014). Increasing numbers of sloth bear attacks appear to be related to rising human populations (Ratnayeke et al. 2014).

Sloth bears fall victim to different anthropogenic hazards, including (but not limited to) snares, small crude explosive devices, open wells, and roads (Arun et al. 2022). Snares and explosive devices are generally not set out for bears, but rather for wild boar and hare; sloth bears are killed all the same. Open wells present a threat for sloth bears and other wildlife. If the fall does not kill the bear, they are trapped and will die slowly unless rescued. Sloth bears also fall victim to vehicle collisions on roads. In the manuscript "Severe conservation risks of roads on apex predators," Quintana et al. (2022) listed sloth bears as the most at-risk predator from road expansion. In the state of Karnataka, female sloth bears fell victim to anthropogenic risks more often than males (68% vs. 32%), and 23% of the females had cubs or were pregnant (Arun et al. 2022). This finding may represent a further threat to small populations.

CONSERVATION STATUS

continued

The only natural threat to sloth bears is tigers (*Panthera tigris*). Where sloth bears and tigers still overlap in India and Nepal, sloth bears make up roughly 2% of a tiger's diet (Biswas and Sankar 2002, Sankar and Johnsingh 2002, Reddy et al. 2004, Andheria et al. 2007, Ramesh et al. 2009, Kapfer et al. 2011). The threat of tiger predation likely accounts for the aggressive nature of sloth bears (Joshi et al. 1999).



SLOTH BEAR SAFE PROGRAM GOAL

The Sloth Bear SAFE program will work to accelerate knowledge generation and transfer about sloth bears that will support increased conservation action to stabilize declining populations through stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and public awareness.

RECOVERY PLAN

The National Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan for India was developed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Indian Government in 2012, utilizing the strategic planning guidelines set forth by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission (IUCN SSC) in 2008. While this plan is over 10 years old, many of the threats identified remain issues for sloth bear populations.

Recommendations in the National Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan for India that the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan works to address include:

3.6.2 Management of Bear-Human Interactions

Awareness creation for stakeholders on bear behavior and the philosophy of co-existence in addition to strengthening of indigenous conflict reduction measures to reduce crop and livestock depredation by bears. Strengthen the conflict management teams with equipment, training, and capacity building.

Development and maintenance of a conflict database for regular monitoring.

3.6.4 Research and Monitoring

Population estimation of bears using noninvasive methods to be initiated.

3.6.5 Capacity Building

Specialized training modules for forest personnel in wildlife management and on wildlife-human conflict management for local communities

3.6.8 Ex Situ Conservation and Bear Welfare

Enhancement of technical inputs in the management of bears in captivity.

Other aspects of the National Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan for India are relevant to past work supported by AZA-accredited members but are not currently included in this plan. The Sloth Bear SAFE program will primarily focus on the above recommendations and seek to include other objectives in the future based on the needs of the conservation field partners.

PROGRAM OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Sloth Bear SAFE Program is comprised of a steering committee, program partners, and members. All parties have input on program plan development and are responsible for its coordinated implementation.

The Steering Committee is comprised of the Program Leader, Vice Program Leader, Secretary, two at large members, field partner representatives, and advisors. At large members are nominated by other Steering Committee members when a position is vacant and then approved by Steering Committee members and program partner representatives. Field partner representatives and advisors are non-voting members of the Steering Committee in aspects of budget allocation. The program leaders work closely with the field partners within range countries to ensure alignment with the recovery authorities in each country.

Program Partners must meet one of the following requirements, and indicate as such, through a signed Statement of Institutional Support that is updated annually. The requirements below are minimum requirements and Program Partners are encouraged to support the SAFE Program Plan to the fullest extent possible.

1. **Platinum Program Partner** - Minimum commitment of \$1,500 annually with at least \$1,000 of the \$1,500 being a monetary donation and the remaining \$500 can be monetary or in-kind support. Platinum Partners can serve on the Steering Committee, will be recognized with their logo in the Program Plan, recognized in various resources developed by the Sloth Bear SAFE through the action plan, and will gain access to the Sloth Bear SAFE logo for their own promotional efforts.

2. **Gold Program Partner** - Minimum commitment of \$1,000 annually with at least \$750 of the \$1,000 being a monetary donation and the remaining \$250 can be monetary or in-kind support. Gold Partners can serve on the Steering Committee, will be recognized with their logo in the Program Plan, and will gain access to the Sloth Bear SAFE logo for their own promotional efforts.

3. **Silver Program Partner** - Minimum commitment of \$500 monetary donation annually. Silver Partners will be listed in the Program Plan and will gain access to the Sloth Bear SAFE logo for their own promotional efforts.

The Program Leader, Vice Program Leader, Secretary, and at large members must be currently employed at an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) institution that has committed to being a Program Partner at either the Platinum or Gold level. Silver-level Program Partner staff can serve as advisors, on committees to support the work of the Sloth Bear SAFE, and/or attend planning and reporting meetings. While strongly encouraged, advisors do not need to be employed at an institution that has committed to a particular Program Partner level. However, a signed Statement of Institutional Support form that indicates support of staff participating as an advisor is required.

PROGRAM OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE *continued*

The following are the basic responsibilities for each of the Steering Committee members:

Program Leader: Schedules and leads Sloth Bear SAFE meetings and serves as the point person with field partners and advisors.

Vice Program Leader: Serves as treasurer, leads meetings in the absence of the Program Leader, and serves as point person with standing committees.

Secretary: Takes minutes at all Sloth Bear SAFE meetings or designates someone to record minutes in their absence, tracks Program Partner commitments, maintains an active roster of the Steering Committee, standing committees, field partners and advisors, supports the Program Leader and Vice Program Leader with communication to members.

At Large Member: Actively participates in Sloth Bear SAFE meetings, participates in committee work as appropriate, and volunteers to record minutes in the absence of the Secretary.

The Sloth Bear SAFE currently has two standing committees, an Education and Outreach Committee and a Fundraising Committee. The education advisor(s) will chair the Education and Outreach Committee, and the Vice Program Leader will chair the Fundraising Committee in lieu of no other volunteer. Additionally, the Steering Committee may establish other committees as needed with a majority vote. All action items will be led by either a committee or a member of the Steering Committee.

The Sloth Bear SAFE will maintain the following advisor positions:

1. Wildlife Conservation Committee Liaison
2. Education Advisor
3. Project Trip Advisor
4. Sloth Bear Species Survival Program Representative
5. Bear Taxon Advisory Group Representative
6. Global Center for Species Survival Representative

Additional advisors may be added at any time by a majority vote of the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee Members and Program Partners shall commit to three year terms of service/partnership with the Sloth Bear SAFE. Program leaders, program partners, and members are derived from AZA facilities, most of which house sloth bears in a zoo environment, or have strong conservation commitments to species that share sloth bear habitat. Upon the end of their three year commitment, they will have the opportunity to extend their commitment.

PROGRAM OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

| Program Role | Name | Organization |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Program Leader | Jared Bixby | Saint Louis Zoo |
| Vice Program Leader | Laura Bernstein-Kurtycz | Little Rock Zoo |
| Secretary | Christine Verador | Woodland Park Zoo |
| At Large | Sarah Shearer | Fresno Chaffee Zoo |
| At Large | Lyn Heller | Zoo Miami |
| Field Partner Representative | Thomas Sharp | Wildlife SOS |
| Field Partner Representative | Dave Garshelis | IUCN Bear Specialist Group |
| Field Partner Representative | Nishith Dharaiya | Wildlife & Conservation Biology Research Foundation |
| Field Partner Representative | Chandima Fernando | Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society |
| Education Co-Advisor | Angelica Bazinet | Roger William's Park Zoo |
| Education Co-Advisor | Kaden Borseth | Smithsonian's National Zoological Park |
| Project Trip Advisor | Stacey Tabellario | Smithsonian's National Zoological Park |
| Wildlife Conservation Committee Liaison | Lisa Kelley | Saint Louis Zoo |

PROGRAM OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

| Program Role | Name | Organization |
|---|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Sloth Bear Species Survival Plan Representative | Debbie Thompson | Little Rock Zoo |
| Bear Taxon Advisory Group Representative | Travis Vineyard | Cleveland Metroparks Zoo |
| Global Center for Species Survival Representative | Justin Birkhoff | Indianapolis Zoo |



Photo Contributed By: Woodland Park Zoo

BUILDING ON AZA COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS

Sloth bears are an important part of the AZA community. Currently, there are 36 sloth bears in 16 AZA institutions, with more institutions planning on bringing sloth bears into their collection plans. Sloth bears are currently a Provisional Species Survival Plan (SSP) and are under the purview of the Bear Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). Sloth bears have been a focal species of the TAG for many years, expanding to 16 zoos with sloth bears in their care. These AZA member zoos have also provided annual support for conservation efforts.

The Sloth Bear SSP program has historically collaborated with field conservation partners that work all over sloth bear range lands in India and surrounding countries (Sri Lanka and Bhutan). Between 2018 and 2021, twelve AZA zoos provided funding and in-kind support for sloth bear conservation projects. This includes over \$441,000 in funding for conservation projects and support of other conservation initiatives. These include capacity building programs where sloth bear keepers and educators traveled to India to work with field partners that specialize in sloth bear rescue and research opportunities, both in-situ and ex-situ, that lead to a better understanding of sloth bear behavior and biology. Currently, the Sloth Bear SSP endorses projects throughout India. Other conservation projects supported by AZA institutions within India and surrounding countries that are not directly focused on sloth bears also benefit the species as they cover range areas where sloth bears reside.

From a public engagement standpoint, AZA institutions have started recognizing and celebrating Sloth Bear Day each year on October 12 and have historically celebrated sloth bears during the annual Bear Awareness Week events.



Photo Contributed By: Jared Bixby

SLOTH BEAR SAFE OBJECTIVES

RANGE MAPPING PROJECT

Objective 1 Sloth Bear SAFE will support the IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group (BSG) in the production of a new sloth bear range map.

Rationale

The IUCN SSC's BSG is working on developing new range maps for four Asian species of bears - Asiatic black bears, brown bears, sun bears, and sloth bears. The Sloth Bear SAFE will focus its support on the data collection that will be integrated into the new sloth bear range map. The range map is a critical element in assessing the sloth bear population for the next Red List assessment (estimated to be in 2026). The current published range map used by the Red List was created by the BSG in 2016-2017. This aligns with the recovery plan in Section 3.6.4.



Photo Contributed By: Christine Anne

The BSG is standardizing the protocol for data collection and integration for all bear range maps so they are comparable across bear species. The maps will be critical in directing future conservation efforts, for example, showing areas of the population that need to be studied further or connected to other parts of the population with corridors.

The Sloth Bear SAFE will fund travel within India to collect initial data and, if necessary, fund a second trip to confirm data. Sloth Bear SAFE will support a team of project assistants to manage the logistics of gathering and organizing the data, as well as uploading the data into an agreed upon database prior to handing it over to a PhD student (identified and funded by the BSG with support from the Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute), who will do the data analysis and map building. Finally, Sloth Bear SAFE will support any printing costs associated with this effort and cover the cost of one publication for the project assistants.

RANGE MAPPING

SUPPORT THE IUCN BSG (BEAR SPECIALIST GROUP) IN PRODUCTION OF A NEW SLOTH BEAR RANGE MAP.

| Strategy | Action | Year | AZA Member | Field Partner | Budget | Metrics |
|--|--|--------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1) Support the IUCN Bear Specialist Group to gather data on the presence or absence of sloth bears for a new range map. | Support data collection (both initial and a confirmation trip for final map accuracy) by supplying funds for travel within India to government offices to help individuals fill out maps (for those states that have not yet been funded). | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WCB, WSOS | \$9,000 over three years to support travel, lodging, and meals. | Data for range map is collected and submitted to project assistants for the following states: 1) Maharashtra 2) Rajasthan 3) Madhya Pradesh 4) Odhissa 5) West Bengal 6) Assam 7) Meghalaya 8) Uttar Pradesh 9) Goa 10) Bihar 11) Jharkhand 12) Uttarakhand These states do not require in person data gathering - telecommunication will suffice: 1) Arunachal Pradesh 2) Mizoram 3) Nagaland |
| | Support data collection (both initial and a confirmation trip for final map accuracy) by supplying funds for travel within Sri Lanka and staff salary to help individuals fill out maps. | 2023 to 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, SLWCS | \$1,500 over one year - \$600 for travel, \$300 for communications costs, & \$600 for staff = \$1,500 | Data for range map are collected by SLWCS staff for Sri Lanka and submitted to IUCN SSC BSG. |
| 2) Support staff time in overseeing collection of the range map data from all necessary states in India and handling any logistics prior to data analysis. | Support a staff to handle all data logistics (collecting, organizing, entering into computer) prior to handing data over to PhD student for analysis, to ensure data set is complete. | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WCB | \$13,000 over three years to support 2 staff members at approximately \$180 per month | Full set of data entered into computer to hand off to PhD student for analysis. |
| 3) Support printing & publication costs | Support printing costs necessary to produce any maps needed for collecting data | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WCB, WSOS, SLWCS | \$700 | Production of paper maps for use in data collection. |
| | Support publication costs for project assistants. | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WCB | \$1000 | One published paper from project assistants (WCB students) |

SLOTH BEAR SAFE OBJECTIVES

HUMAN BEAR CONFLICT



Photo Contributed By: Nishith Dharaiya

Objective 2 Sloth Bear SAFE will support field conservation partners in formalizing, expanding, and assessing the impact of human-sloth bear conflict mitigation efforts in India and Sri Lanka.

Rationale

Human-bear conflict is a key concern identified within the National Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan of India (2012) Section 3.6.2 and is a the primary concern in Sri Lanka. Human-bear conflict is primarily the result of human population growth and expanding human use of bear habitat.

Sloth Bear SAFE will support field conservation partners in their current and ongoing efforts to mitigate human-bear conflict by assisting in securing needed resources, expanding efforts beyond current capacities, formalizing efforts, and enhancing the evaluation of efforts.

Working with the Wildlife & Conservation Biology Research Foundation (WCB), the Sloth Bear SAFE will support expanding access, implementation, and evaluation of a deterrent stick program already in place. The Sloth Bear SAFE will also bolster training for wildlife rangers, educators, and research staff about wildlife conflict mitigation in range countries, which will include training and implementation of patrol enhancement software, such as the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART). The application of this software will allow rangers, teachers, and community members to better track sloth bear conflict incidents to identify the geographical locations, circumstances, outcomes, and physical injury data.

Beyond resource support, the Sloth Bear SAFE will help the Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society and (SLWCS) formalize an educational program and support evaluation efforts to understand the impact of this program on human-bear conflict. We will also support WCB and Wildlife SOS in the expansion of their educational programs.

HUMAN BEAR CONFLICT

SUPPORT FIELD CONSERVATION PARTNERS IN FORMALIZING, EXPANDING, AND ASSESSING IMPACT OF HUMAN-SLOTH BEAR CONFLICT MITIGATION EFFORTS IN INDIA AND SRI LANKA.

| Strategy | Action | Year | AZA Member | Field Partner | Budget | Metrics |
|---|--|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|--|---|
| 1) Provide resources for communities to reduce human bear conflict within range countries | Support a research project to assess the use and impact of bear deterrent sticks. | 2023 to 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee | WCB | \$2,500 for research & \$3,040 for deterrent sticks | Provide 500 deterrent sticks to community members with a 75% use rate that results in reduction of sloth bear attacks in areas used by 30% |
| | Assess feasibility of importing bear spray into India. | 2023 to 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee | WCB, WSOS, SLWCS | In-Kind | Develop a report for the Sloth Bear SAFE steering committee that outlines the feasibility of this action and recommendations for future actions |
| 2) Expand established human/bear conflict education and awareness programs of WCB & Wildlife SOS. | Recruit 1 education program manager for both WCB & Wildlife SOS | 2023 to 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee | WCB, WSOS | \$36,000 over 3 years | Expanded education and outreach programs will result in increased affinity toward sloth bears of youth by 10%, a reduction in individuals that believe in sloth bear myths, and a reduction in individuals that view sloth bears as a threat by 10% |
| | Recruit and hire 3 educators for WCB and Wildlife SOS | 2023 to 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee | WCB, WSOS | \$40,000 over 3 years | Successfully support field partners in recruiting, hiring, and funding 3 educators annually. |
| | Support housing and transportation costs for new education staff | 2023 to 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee | WCB, WSOS | \$76,000 over 3 years | Successfully secure funding to support field partners in providing required housing and transportation for SAFE supported education staff. |
| | Purchase technology equipment for education presentations by both WCB and Wildlife SOS | 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee | WCB, WSOS | \$13,000 - video projectors, cameras, and field gear | Secure funding for field partners to purchase identified technology equipment that supports human/bear conflict education programming. |

HUMAN BEAR CONFLICT *continued*

SUPPORT FIELD CONSERVATION PARTNERS IN FORMALIZING, EXPANDING, AND ASSESSING IMPACT OF HUMAN-SLOTH BEAR CONFLICT MITIGATION EFFORTS IN INDIA AND SRI LANKA.

| Strategy | Action | Year | AZA Member | Field Partner | Budget | Metrics |
|--|--|-------------|--|--------------------|--|---|
| 3) Support SLWCS in formalizing a human/bear conflict education and outreach program. | Assess current efforts of SLWCS, the education and outreach efforts of WCB & Wildlife SOS, and the community needs to develop a program plan. | 2023 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | SLWCS | In-Kind | Development of a program plan that will support the piloting and assessment of an education and outreach program. |
| | Support the development of materials identified in the program plan | 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | SLWCS | \$5,000 plus in kind design work | New materials designed and produced to support piloting and assessing the education and outreach program |
| | Support piloting and assessing the implementation of the program plan. | 2024 - 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | SLWCS | \$15,000 over two years | Data collected will demonstrate if the pilot program impacted community views on sloth bears, in particular on myths related to sloth bears, whether a sloth bear is viewed as a threat and whether individuals like or have a neutral feeling about sloth bears. |
| 4) Software training for wildlife rangers, educators, and research staff for wildlife conflict data gathering for mitigation in range countries. | Identify a software solution to support human/bear conflict mitigation, like SMART program or other similar software solution, and develop an implementation plan. | 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee & Indianapolis Zoo | WCB, WSOS, & SLWCS | In-Kind | Develop a plan to implement an identified technology solution. |
| | Train personell how to use the software | 2024 - 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee & Indianapolis Zoo | WCB, WSOS, & SLWCS | TBD - based on solution and training option selected | At least 90% of individuals trained demonstrate proficiency with the software. |
| | Pilot the use of the identified software. | 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee & Indianapolis Zoo | WCB, WSOS, & SLWCS | TBD - based on devices needed to implement | At least 75% of individuals trained on the software implement it in their work to gather data related to human/bear conflict with sloth bears that can be used to influence future actions. |

SLOTH BEAR SAFE OBJECTIVES

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Objective 3 Sloth Bear SAFE will build new relationships and support current relationships that help facilitate the exchange of information between in-situ partners, ex-situ partners, and the various audiences each serves.

Rationale

As identified in the Sloth Bear SAFE goal, generating and sharing knowledge is a critical component to the conservation of sloth bears. That is also supported in the recovery plan under Section 3.6.8. Not only are sloth bears one of the least studied bear species, the sharing of the knowledge known is also limited. Thus, Sloth Bear SAFE will support efforts to generate and share knowledge among AZA institutions, field partners, and our audiences. In addition, a strong stakeholder engagement and public awareness program is important to keep focus and interest on sloth bears to ensure the efforts of Sloth Bear SAFE can be carried out fully. Finally, there are other relationship and collaboration opportunities yet to be explored, as the Sloth Bear SAFE does not currently have a field partner focused on the Nepal portion of the sloth bear range.

Specifically, the Sloth Bear SAFE will collectively work to identify key conservation messages around sloth bears to elicit empathy towards sloth bears in ex-situ audiences. These messages will be paired with an education and outreach toolkit that AZA member institutions can utilize for programming during International Sloth Bear Day and other audience engagement.

To further stakeholder engagement, facilitate continued strong partnerships, and enhance information sharing, the Sloth Bear SAFE will establish an annual trip to India for AZA member animal care staff to engage and support staff at one of Wildlife SOS's bear rescue centers. The Sloth Bear SAFE will also facilitate the exchange of information between veterinarians from AZA member institutions and wildlife veterinarians in India and Sri Lanka.

Strengthening and building new relationships will be key to the future success of Sloth Bear SAFE. Thus, engaging more directly with IUCN SSC BSG will be critical.

Through this engagement, other opportunities may become apparent through additional collaborations with other AZA SAFE programs and other field partners in Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

BUILD NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS THAT HELP FACILITATE THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN IN SITU PARTNERS, EX SITU PARTNERS, AND VARIOUS AUDIENCES EACH SERVES.

| Strategy | Action | Year | AZA Member | Field Partner | Budget | Metrics |
|---|--|--------------|--|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 1) Develop an ongoing public awareness and education campaign | Work with in situ partners to identify messages connected to conservation issues facing sloth bears | 2023 to 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | WSOS, WCB, & SLWCS | \$150 for Zoom account and in kind | Development of 3 core messages connected to development of an enhanced range map for sloth bears, habitat degradation, and human/bear conflict. |
| | Utilizing in situ partner messages, develop an ex situ toolkit for conservation messaging | 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | WSOS, WCB, & SLWCS | \$3,000; Zoom account, printing, mailing, other supplies | Development of a toolkit that builds from the 3 core messages and includes resources for social media posts, staff and volunteer guest engagement, graphics, and education programs |
| | Utilize messaging toolkit during International Sloth Bear Day and through regular guest interaction | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | | In-Kind | At least 60% of all sloth bear holding facilities will utilize the toolkit and report impact/reach to Sloth Bear SAFE |
| 2. Engage ex situ partner staff in supporting in situ partner needs associated with sloth bears | Implement an animal care workshop to facilitate exchange of information and skills between AZA member staff and Wildlife SOS staff | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee & National Zoo | WSOS | In-Kind | An annual project trip to Wildlife SOS's Agra Bear Rescue Facility that consistently reaches capacity. |
| | Implement a workshop program to facilitate capacity building of wildlife veterinarians in Sri Lanka. | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee & National Zoo | SLWCS | In-Kind | Demonstrate an increase in knowledge and skills around anesthesia in at least two wildlife veterinarians. |
| | Develop a digital library to facilitate sharing of best practices for care of sloth bears, education and outreach, and volunteer management. | 2024 to 2025 | SAFE Steering Committee, National Zoo, & RWP Zoo | WSOS & SLWCS | In-Kind | A digital resource library that is utilized by field partner and AZA member staff at least twice a year. |
| | Develop a webinar series to facilitate sharing of sloth bear related knowledge between in situ and ex situ partners | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee & RWP Zoo | IUCN SSC BSC, WSOS, WCB, SLWCS | \$550 per year; Zoom account and speaker per diem | At least 80% of all sloth bear holding facilities have a staff member that participates in 50% of all webinars hosted. |

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

BUILD NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS THAT HELP FACILITATE THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN IN SITU PARTNERS, EX SITU PARTNERS, AND VARIOUS AUDIENCES EACH SERVES.

| Strategy | Action | Year | AZA Member | Field Partner | Budget | Metrics |
|---|---|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--|---|
| 3) Facilitate the development of new partnerships and strengthening of current partnerships through coordinated efforts | Sloth Bear SAFE steering committee member participation in IUCN meetings connected to sloth bears | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN BSG | In-Kind | A member of the Sloth Bear SAFE steering committee is identified as a liaison to the IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group, and attends relevant meetings. |
| | Facilitate communication between Sloth Bear SAFE, the IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group, and the Bear TAG to identify collaboration opportunities with the larger Asian Bear Range Map Project | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN BSG | \$2,500; Cover registration and travel of IUCN SSC BSG member to AZA annual conference | Sloth Bear SAFE hosts at least one meeting to facilitate communication between IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group and Bear TAG. |



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SLOTH BEAR SAFE OBJECTIVES

FUNDING

Objective 4 Sloth Bear SAFE will engage in strategies to ensure Program Partners are capable of meeting the funding needs of the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan to achieve the overall goal of the program.

Rationale

Each action item identified will take time and resources to accomplish. However, the Sloth Bear SAFE program plan will not succeed without a solid funding objective. Thus, the development team determined separating these efforts from the other objectives was critical.

A base budget will be built from Program Partner annual support. This base budget will require the Sloth Bear SAFE Steering Committee to prioritize action items each year to be funded through this mechanism. The Sloth Bear SAFE recognizes the diversity of AZA sloth bear holding facilities and wants to provide opportunities for all to engage in meaningful ways, no matter their individual capacities. Thus, a tiered approach to Program Partner participation was developed.

Understanding the base budget will not meet all the needs of the program plan, Sloth Bear SAFE will establish a fundraising committee that will be responsible for identifying grant opportunities, working with field partners to apply for appropriate grants, and developing multiple fundraising mechanisms that allow other opportunities for AZA zoos, American Association of Zookeepers (AAZK) chapters, and individuals to contribute to these efforts.



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FUNDING

ENGAGE IN STRATEGIES TO ENSURE PROGRAM PARTNERS ARE CAPABLE OF MEETING THE FUNDING NEEDS OF THE SLOTH BEAR SAFE PROGRAM PLAN TO ACHIEVE THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE PROGRAM.

| Strategy | Action | Year | AZA Member | Field Partner | Budget | Metrics |
|--|---|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1) Each program partner fully participates in the implementation of this Program Plan. | Each program partner commits to supporting the SAFE program plan annually at a tier that is achievable by their organization. Support should be in addition to direct costs associated with SAFE Project Trips. | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | N/A | \$45,000 over 3 years | Annual report indicating an average contribution of \$1,000 was made to action items identified in the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan by each program partner. |
| 2) Submit grant applications to fund identified actions within the Program Plan. | Submit an application to the SAFE Granting Program annually. | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WSOS, WCB, SLWCS | \$30,000 over 3 years | Apply for funding annually to support the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan. |
| | Submit an application to the Conservation Grants Fund as appropriate. | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WSOS, WCB, SLWCS | \$30,000 over 3 years | Apply for funding annually to support the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan. |
| | Create team or dedicate individuals to explore additional eligible grants to apply for. | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WSOS, WCB, SLWCS | N/A | Develop a list of grant opportunities that the Sloth Bear SAFE qualifies as an applicant or a Program Partner can apply to on behalf of the Sloth Bear SAFE. |
| | Submit additional grants opportunities to fulfill our resource based actions. | 2024 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | IUCN SSC BSG, WSOS, WCB, SLWCS | \$30,000 over 3 years | Apply for funding annually to support the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan. |
| 3) Develop an annual fundraising campaign. | Create a model fundraising event that each program partner can replicate at their facility, like Bourbon for Bears. | 2023 to 2024 | SAFE Steering Committee & Sunset Zoo | N/A | 60,000 over 3 years | Each year, 50% of Program Partners host a fundraising event that increases the amount of funds contributed to the Sloth Bear SAFE Program Plan by an average of \$20,000 annually. |
| | Utilize an online crowdfunding platform to support raising funds | 2023 to 2026 | SAFE Steering Committee | N/A | \$30,000 over 3 years | In 3 years, generate at least \$30,000 from individual and non-Program Partner donations. |

SUPPLEMENTAL FIELD PARTNER PROJECTS

The Sloth Bear SAFE values the experience and expertise our field partners have developed around the species. While this Program Plan is focused in scope, we acknowledge each field partner is engaged in numerous other projects related to sloth bears. These projects range from population monitoring in protected areas to increasing our understanding of sloth bear natural history. All projects are important in furthering our ability to protect sloth bears.

The Sloth Bear SAFE Steering Committee asks Program Partners to first consider supporting the actions identified within the SAFE Program Plan. Once support has been dedicated to the Program Plan, the Program Leader and Vice Program Leader are available to help Program Partners identify other projects to support as needed.



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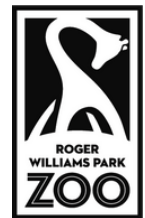
PARTNERS & SPECIAL THANKS

PROGRAM PARTNERS

PLATINUM LEVEL



GOLD LEVEL



SILVER LEVEL

SUPPORTER

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium



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