

Wild Welfare US – Working across the globe to promote enhanced captive animal welfare outcomes

Margaret Whittaker, Executive Director, WWUS

Email: margaret@wildwelfare.org

Website: wildwelfare-us.org (coming soon) but please visit wildwelfare.org for now

Wild Welfare US (WWUS) was formed in 2022 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit; we work closely with our sister organization, Wild Welfare, a UK-based charity founded in 2012. The mission of Wild Welfare US is to end the suffering of captive wild animals around the world by uniting the world's leading animal welfare organizations and captive wildlife facilities to provide expert, practical and sustainable solutions to improve animal welfare. We are dedicated to assuring that all animals under human care can thrive and live a good life. Building constructive relationships is at the heart of what we do, and our multi-modal approach builds capacity amongst those responsible for captive animals. We focus our efforts on the development and implementation of strategies that yield long-term and sustainable changes and demonstrate that a constructive, inclusive approach is key to making a positive difference for animals.

WWUS and WW both collaborate on and have independently operated projects which allows us to wisely use our resources and get the most bang for the buck - while creating positive change for animals.

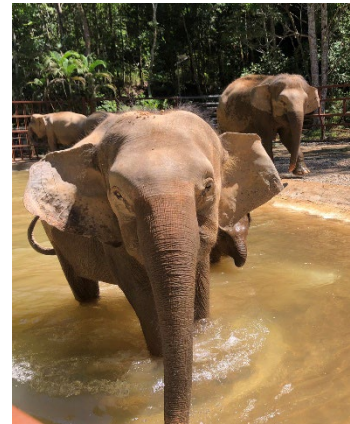
WWUS is presently focused on two long-term projects as well as smaller projects. One current effort involves partnering with the Sabah Wildlife Department's (SWD) Lok Kawi Wildlife Park, in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, Borneo. LKWP is home to rescued, non-releasable native wildlife that came to captivity due to human-animal conflict and confiscated, native and non-native wildlife. This work has been generously supported by The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee; WWUS is grateful for this support.

LKWP is home to 16 Bornean elephants who are there due to human-elephant conflict, or injuries which prevented their return to the wild. We are transforming the LKWP's elephant care system by training staff in



comprehensive care using Protected Contact (PC) management, working to redesign existing facilities to better support PC, training the elephants to voluntarily participate in their health and husbandry care, and working with SWD leadership to continue enhancing the psychological, physical, and behavioral health for captive elephants. With guidance from WWUS, LKWP staff, Brent Boniface and Florian Marcus, achieved voluntary blood collections; they are pictured

with the willing participant, Amoi, in the background.



Our other significant project is working with the Brazilian Zoo Association (AZAB) in the development and implementation of their Welfare Certification process. Welfare auditing is one of WW's core competencies. In support of this, we've developed a third party, external auditing process based on WW's internationally applicable Core Standard of Welfare Practice for Captive Wild Animals which provides a robust, evidence-based procedure for the systematic and forensic auditing of captive animal welfare and encourages facilities to examine and improve practices.



AZAB has 47 member institutions with animals representing the country's remarkable biodiversity; sadly, many of these animals are in captivity due to illegal trafficking or other anthropogenic causes, leaving facilities overpopulated and overburdened with confiscated animals. Additionally, many zoos have outdated physical structures and management practices, and inadequate staff training with few capacity-building opportunities.

To address this challenge, AZAB leadership sought our assistance in the development of an animal welfare certification process to monitor and evaluate the practices that influence animal welfare, and the subsequent provision of constructive feedback with the singular purpose to enhance welfare. We continue to assist AZAB's welfare committee as they further enhance and grow their welfare certification program. In 2023, AZAB formally adopted the Wild Welfare Core Standard and beginning in 2025, AZAB Welfare Certification will require compliance with this robust Standard.

WW staff have participated in all certification site visits since 2018, however moving forward, we will mentor AZAB's Welfare Committee to produce a fully self-sufficient and sustainable Welfare Certification program. Towards this end, we have conducted workshops teaching auditors to use the WW Core Standard, and to further develop their skills, consistency, and professionalism as they carry out the audits. WWUS will continue to mentor the entire process and offer assistance to AZAB members such that they may achieve Welfare Certification. We will assist with SOP development, behavioral management program development and implementation including positive reinforcement training techniques and environmental enrichment programs development.



Wild Welfare US has smaller projects centered on developing skills for animal managers and caregivers that promote the continued enhancement of animal welfare. We partner with Animals Asia Foundation in China to present workshops on Behavioral Management for an array of species, as well as taxon-focused workshops such as teaching comprehensive elephant foot care. WWUS is thrilled to partner with GFAS exploring ways that together we promote advances in animal welfare and care. With this in mind, we are excited to participate in the GFAS Sanctuary Awards Week this coming October and will deliver a presentation introducing Behavioral Management and how it can directly enhance animal care and welfare, including unique needs of rescued animals. We are a small team doing mighty things and therefore we count on our amazing partners as we carry this work forward.